

Inside the Bell

Do Politicians Lie To Us?

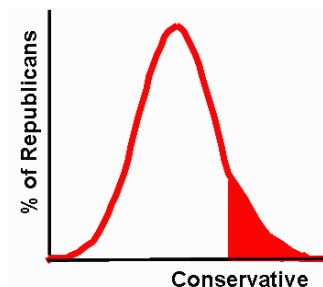
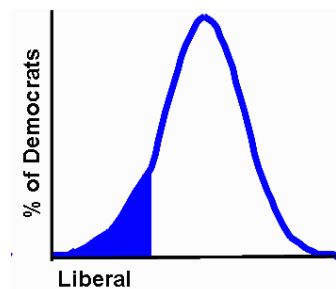
Of course they do. The better question is “Why do politicians lie to us?”

In the United States, we have two political parties. Yes, there are other parties than just Democrats and Republicans, but how many of those other parties actually matter? Therefore, successful candidates for office, at almost every level, are either a Democrat or a Republican. These parties are composed of huge numbers of individuals with similar political beliefs and principles.

As in any large organization, political parties are led by a small number of highly motivated and dedicated individuals who organize the membership and set the agenda. The composition of the Democratic Party, for example, is similar to the diagram at the right.

Democrats, as a whole, have a broad range of opinions, but the highly motivated Democrats tend to come from the more liberal wing of the party.

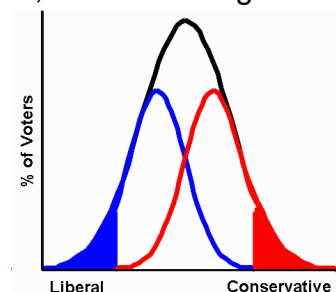
To gain the nomination of the Democratic Party, a candidate must appeal the minority of the party members who control the agenda. In other words, Democratic candidates must embrace liberal positions whether or not they actually internalize the arguments. During the primary and nominating conventions, these candidates demonstrate the left ideals their leadership requires.

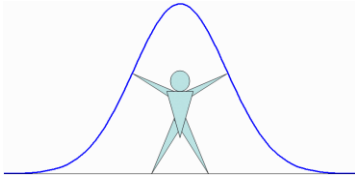


The Republican Party is no different, just conservative rather than liberal. The Republican Party membership as a whole have a broad range of opinions but the highly motivated and dedicated individuals who organize and set the Republican agenda tend to come from the more conservative wing of the party. To gain the Republican nomination a candidate must appeal to this conservative minority of the party. Successful Republican nominees

demonstrate the rightist ideals these leaders require.

So far, so good. Democratic candidates exhibit Democratic ideals and Republican candidates exhibit Republican ideals. However, voters in the general election represent a broader range of opinions than either the Democrats or the Republicans. Overall, the actual distribution of voters is more like the diagram at the right. Significant numbers of “independent” voters add considerable additional decision makers to the population. Candidates who had to express opinions at the margins to gain their respective party nomination, must now appeal to a total population considerably more centrist to win the general election.





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Candidates who appealed to their party leadership to gain the nomination must, once the general election is underway, now appeal to a less activist population to actually win office. Thus the lie. Whether a candidate lied to the party to gain his party's nomination or is lying to the nation to win the general election cannot be determined. The important point is that the candidate is forced to lie to one or the other, or both. To do otherwise is to fail to gain political office.

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