

Stephenson Jr.

Campaigns and the Court

The U.S. Supreme Court in Presidential Elections

Over two centuries of American history the Supreme Court has often become a significant issue in presidential elections, with voters acutely aware that the dominance of one party at the polls may translate into that party's dominance on the nation's highest court. Should Americans presume that votes at the ballot box will have an effect on votes at the Supreme Court on what our Constitution means? Donald Grier Stephenson Jr. explores the periods when the Court has been an issue in elections and when it has not; investigating ten elections in which the Court was clearly an issue and looking also at the election of 1992, in which it could have become a major issue but did not. Drawing from four areas of political history party evolution, presidential campaigns, as well as judicial and constitutional development Stephenson presents a sophisticated inquiry into the relationship of the Supreme Court to the electoral process and considers whether this recurring electoral phenomenon is a beneficial feature of democratic politics or one that ought to be met with concern.

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