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Issue brief-Final Draft
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Race & Ethnicity

Presidential Campaign and the 1st Amendment

Description

This issue brief will discuss the connections between the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and the religious preferences of the American citizens. It will also focus on the history of the American Presidents' religious affiliations with regards to the Presidential campaign.

Key Terms

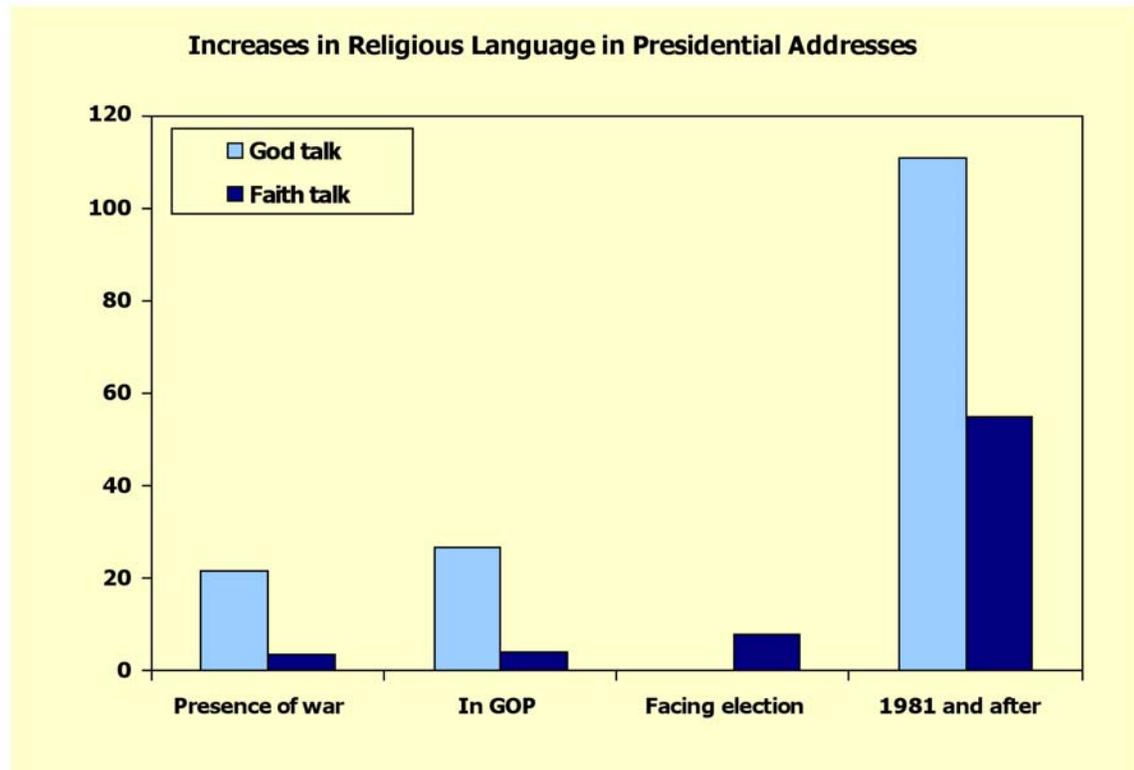
Socioeconomic status (SES), Presidential campaign, religious affiliation, economic development and productivity,

Issue Brief

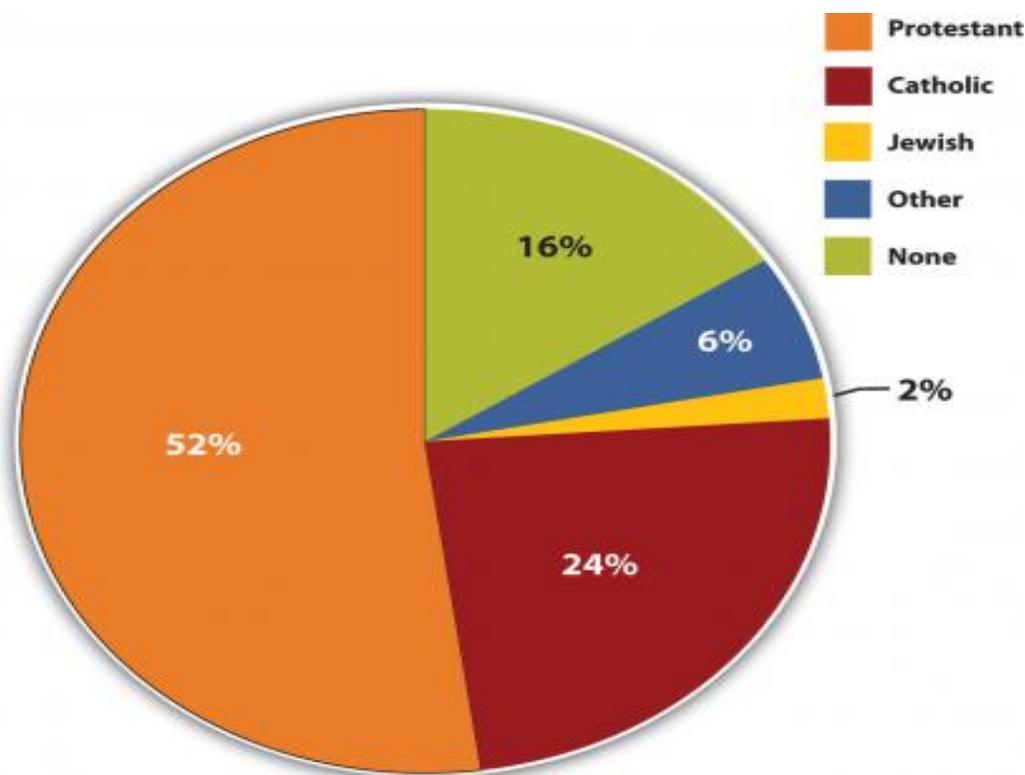
With the installment of the United States Constitution into the American Government citizens have been granted a sense of freedom to carry out multiple functions of every day life. The founding fathers of the U.S. Constitution were conscious of the issues that were occurring amongst its states as well as being aware of the possible concerns that may arise in later years. With this in mind, James Madison wrote a list of ten amendments in 1789, also known as the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment said, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances" (Bill of Rights). The members of Congress who ratified the Constitutional Amendments in 1791 were interested in allowing their nation the freedom to practice any religion they wished. They gave people the right to speak their mind on governmental policies in order to get a better understanding of the nation's beliefs.

During the ratification of the Bill of Rights, Congress was also introducing a new form of government, which included an executive branch that was given the power to enforce laws passed by legislation. The executive branch "is vested in the President of the United States, who also acts as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces."¹ Throughout history, the President has had an astounding influence on the American government and its citizens. The question that then arises is, "Being that our country has been given the freedom to choose religion, how has the nature of the Presidential campaign in time of elections, war and GOP been influenced by the Presidents' religious affiliations?"

¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/executive-branch>



The numbers in the graph recorded by Mark Huckabee show how the Presidents have used "God talk" during their major addresses. The Presidents of the last 29 years have shown a tremendous increase in using God as a common term in addressing the nation. The graph also illustrates that in the history of our Presidency, Presidents never use specific "God talk" during the campaign prior to elections. In the presence of war and GOP however it is more common to use God as a social strategy than talk about Faith. It may be hypothesized that Presidents feel God is a more solid substance that the nation can believe in rather than having faith in an unknown being. When a country is in a time of crisis they need reassurance that they can still be strong. In considering the President, one may compare their social status to that of their presidential election by the America people.



George H.W. Bush				
Gerald Ford				
Franklin Roosevelt				
Chester Arthur	Ronald Reagan			
Franklin Pierce	Dwight Eisenhower			
Zachary Taylor	Woodrow Wilson			
John Tyler	Benjamin Harrison			
William Harrison	Grover Cleveland ¹	Bill Clinton	George W. Bush	William Howard Taft
James Monroe	James Buchanan	Jimmy Carter	William McKinley	Millard Fillmore
James Madison	James Polk	Harry Truman	Rutherford Hayes	John Quincy Adams
George Washington	Andrew Jackson	Warren Harding	Ulysses Grant	John Adams

Episcopalian Presbyterian Baptist Methodist Unitarian

Andrew Johnson				
Abraham Lincoln	Lyndon Johnson	Theodore Roosevelt	Richard Nixon	
Thomas Jefferson	James Garfield	Martin Van Buren	Herbert Hoover	John F. Kennedy

No formal affiliation Disciples of Christ Dutch Reformed Quaker Catholic

Calvin Coolidge	Barack Obama ²
Congregationalist	United Church of Christ

Finke and Starke present a circle graph above that gives a clear percentage of the religious preferences in the United States as of 2005. Protestants and Catholics are the dominating religions in America and rightfully so, since it was Christianity that this country was founded on. The next graph also complements the percent of Protestant and Catholic citizens in the U.S. because most Presidents have associated themselves with Episcopalian, a form of Protestant and Catholicism. It is strange that only one President has been baptized as Catholic though most of these religions share common beliefs.

The presidential campaign of Barrack Obama in 2008 has certainly been one that exemplifies the significance of religious affiliation. Prior to the election, anti-Obama's created a video that proclaimed Obama to have a connection with the Muslim faith. At an address in Columbia, South Carolina Obama denied all assertions against him. Through the rest the campaign, Obama had to make it clear that he was a believer in God and Christ.² The reason for his stern affirmation that he is a Christian is due to the history of the American Presidents. The vast majority of the country's Presidents have associated themselves with the Christian faith along with a strong belief in God. There are many states that find religion to be very influential in deciding who will head their country, most notably, the southern states. Christianity has been notoriously coupled with strong and successful governments. It makes sense then that Obama and past presidents would want to correlate their religious affiliation with the successful Christians and also that of their citizens.

Key Points

- The ratification of the 1st Amendment has given Americans the freedom to practice religion and speech.
- The 1st Amendment has had a large affect on the election campaigns by allowing Presidents the freedom to affiliate with any religion they choose.
- Presidents have to choose to associate themselves with a religion that is popular throughout the country in order to gain social and economic status.
- Protestant and Catholicism are the two largest religions in today's society and have proven to the foundation of the Presidents religious affiliations.
- Barrack Obama' conflict with his religious associations has had an affect on his popularity amongst America.

Works Cited and General References

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² <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22767392/>

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