

Not Just Politics As Usual: Making American Democracy Work in an Era of 'Fake News' and Hyperpartisanship



Lauren Bell

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Germantown Campus

High Technology and Science Center (HT) • Globe Hall

Lauren C. Bell is professor of political science and dean of academic affairs at Randolph-Macon College, in Ashland, Virginia. She is a former American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow (1997–1998) on the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary and a former United States Supreme Court fellow (2006–2007) at the United States Sentencing Commission in Washington, DC. She is the author of *Filibustering in the U.S. Senate* (Cambria Press, 2011), *Warring Factions: Interest Groups, Money, and the New Politics of Senate Confirmation* (The Ohio State University Press,

2002) and *The U.S. Congress, A Simulation for Students* (Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005) as well as co-author of *Slingshot: The Defeat of Eric Cantor* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2015) and *Perspectives on Political Communication: A Case Approach* (Allyn & Bacon, 2008). Her work has also appeared in or been cited by *The New York Times*, *Newsweek.com*, *The Washington Post*, *Roll Call*, *The National Journal*, *The Huffington Post*, *Foreign Affairs.com*, Wisconsin Public Radio, Share Radio (London), the Canadian Press, the London School of Economics and Political Science's *American Politics and Policy Blog* and *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

The framers of the US Constitution designed the American system of government to be slow and deliberate, with built-in checks and balances. But today, it seems that political news moves at the speed of light; it can be overwhelming to keep up with daily political developments. Media outlets and politicians accuse each other of bias and spreading "fake news." Name-calling and hyperpartisanship are the coin of the realm these days. Fewer than two in five people approve of the President, and fewer than one in five approve of Congress. Many people tune out, but restoring our system of government and making it work for diverse communities is only possible with sustained public engagement and the practice of active citizenship.

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