
Partisanship is a dirty word with a bad reputation. Instead, scholars have advocated bipartisanship in theories of the common good, and politicians promise the same in their campaign speeches. Yet in the American political system, parties are seen as essential to democracy by serving myriad critical functions. For example, they hold elected officials accountable, engage and educate the citizenry, and form legislative majorities. Russell Muirhead's thought-provoking volume is a defense of "better partisanship, not less partisanship," which he calls the "party spirit."

The first part of the book both defines and defends party spirit from a theoretical perspective. It is the good side of partisanship that provokes citizens to vote, volunteer, and unite in protest. Party spirit inspires us to become good democratic citizens. It also brings politicians together to advance the common good. It is akin to...