American Political Parties

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American Political Parties: Why They Formed, How They Function, and Where They're Headed.


Writing a book always incurs more than the usual number of obligations. We are grateful to the University of Kansas Press, particularly David Congdon, for sharing our vision and guiding this project toward publication. We are also indebted to the reviewers, especially Mark Brewer and Samuel Rosenfeld, who greatly assisted us in making this a better book. We are grateful to the Catholic University of America and the dean of Arts and Sciences for helping to fund this work. We are likewise grateful to our students who have asked us incisive questions and helped to sharpen our thinking about American politics. Once more, we dedicate this book to our daughters, Jeannette White and Gabrielle Kerbel, who have followed our work from childhood into adulthood.

This book is completed during a time of intense partisan polarization and disillusionment with politics. We remain optimistic about the future, although we know that our democracy is in danger and the events described in this volume are ones we could have hardly imagined. But our optimism is rooted in the fact that the history of American political parties is one of constant adaptation and renewal. Once more, we are at a moment where renewing our parties will, we believe, ultimately strengthen our democracy.