1993

Immune from Review?: Threshold Issues in Section 1983 Challenges to the Delegate Selection Procedures of National Political Parties

Kevin R. Puvalowski

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol62/iss2/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fordham Law Review by an authorized editor of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.
INTRODUCTION

Consider the following hypothetical political party policies. First, in a continuing effort to emphasize strong "family values," the Republican Party prohibits atheists from serving as delegates to its 1996 national convention. To be eligible to serve, each prospective convention delegate must profess a devout faith in God. In addition, the party designates certain splinter religious groups as "cults;" cult members also are not welcome to serve as delegates.

At the same time, the Democratic Party expands the "Equal Division Rule," its affirmative action program, so that it becomes a strict quota system. Under this new policy, the Democratic National Committee will decide how many persons of each race, gender, religion and sexual orientation will serve as delegates to the 1996 convention. Non-minority party members in many areas will be unable to serve as delegates to the convention.

In general, individuals like the atheist Republican or the non-minority Democrat who are excluded from serving as delegates to their party's convention in the hypotheticals above cannot mount successful constitutional challenges to their party's actions. Most courts have interpreted Supreme Court precedent to mean that political parties are immune from judicial review—either because party action does not constitute state action, or because the claim against the party is a nonjusticiable political question. Indeed, the current "Equal Division Rule" of the Democratic Party was upheld by the Fourth Circuit partly because the claim was

1. The 1992 Republican National Platform stated that "America must remain neutral toward particular religions, but we must not remain neutral toward religion itself or the values religion supports." The Platform: Party Stresses Family Values, Decentralized Authority, Cong. Q., Aug. 22, 1992, at 2560, 2563 (text of the Republican National Platform). In addition, in 1989, President Bush responded to a question regarding the patriotism of atheists: "I don't know that atheists should be considered citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God." Jennifer Spevacek, Atheist Drops By to Wave the Flag, Wash. Times, July 27, 1989, at A4.

2. The "Equal Division Rule" was adopted by a resolution of the 1976 Democratic National Convention. This rule requires that each state delegation contain an equal number of men and women delegates and alternates. The rule was embodied in the Party Charter at the 1980 convention and now applies to all organs of the party. See Bachur v. Democratic Nat'l Party, 836 F.2d 837, 838-39 (4th Cir. 1987); Mary T. Boyle, Note, Affirmative Action in the Democratic Party: An Analysis of the Equal Division Rule, 7 J.L. & Pol. 559, 583-85 (1991).

3. See infra notes 138-40 and accompanying text.

4. See infra notes 145-62 and accompanying text.
held to be a political question.\(^5\)

Section 1983 of Title 42 of the United States Code\(^6\) provides a vehicle through which an individual can bring a constitutional challenge to a national political party's delegate selection procedures. Two threshold questions arise in an action brought against a political party under section 1983. The first\(^7\) considers whether the party's act of selecting delegates arises "under color of law"\(^8\) or, to put it differently, whether the action constitutes "state action."\(^9\) Courts use the state action doctrine to examine whether the relationship between a private actor and the state is sufficient to make constitutional scrutiny appropriate.\(^10\) The second threshold question addresses whether the claim is nonjusticiable under the political question doctrine.\(^11\) The political question doctrine tests whether the federal judiciary is the appropriate forum in which to resolve the controversy.\(^12\) Traditionally, federal courts have employed this doctrine to avoid deciding cases that do not lend themselves to normal judicial standards or that involve policy determinations that should be decided by the legislative or executive branches.\(^13\)

This Note examines whether an individual should be able to bring a constitutional challenge to a political party's delegate selection procedures under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. In particular, this Note explores the role that the threshold issues of state action and justiciability\(^14\) play within such an inquiry. Part I provides an overview of the state action and

\(^5\) See Bachur, 836 F.2d at 841.

\(^6\) See 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (1988). Section 1983 imposes liability in law or equity upon any person who, while acting under color of state law, deprives another person of a constitutional or federal statutory right. See id. Therefore, to state a claim under this statute, "plaintiffs must allege: 1) that they have been deprived of a federal right, and 2) that the person who deprived them of that right acted under color of state or territorial law." Jackson v. Michigan State Democratic Party, 593 F. Supp. 1033, 1044 (E.D. Mich. 1984).


\(^10\) See infra notes 16-32 and accompanying text.


\(^12\) See infra notes 33-46 and accompanying text.

\(^13\) See infra notes 33-46 and accompanying text.

\(^14\) Throughout this Note the terms "justiciability" and "political question doctrine" are used interchangeably. Although justiciability also includes other doctrines such as
political question doctrines. Part II traces the Supreme Court's treat-
ment of challenges to political party behavior. Part III examines the
conflicting approaches used by lower courts in addressing the threshold
issues in section 1983 challenges to a political party's delegate selection
procedures. Part IV argues that a closer look at the Supreme Court's
state action and justiciability jurisprudence suggests that political parties
should not be insulated from constitutional challenges to their delegate
selection activities. Finally, this Note concludes that, despite the differ-
ing approaches taken by the lower courts, Supreme Court precedent in
related contexts suggests that the courts should proceed beyond the
threshold issues of state action and justiciability to adjudicate the merits
of challenges to the delegate selection procedures of political parties.

I. THE STATE ACTION AND POLITICAL QUESTION DOCTRINES

Courts use the state action and political question doctrines to analyze
whether the judiciary has the power to resolve a particular constitutional
claim. The state action doctrine considers whether the Constitution ap-
plies to the challenged conduct; the political question doctrine analyzes
whether the judiciary is the proper forum for resolving a particular con-
troversy. This section discusses these threshold issues.15

A. The Requirements of State Action Under Section 1983

In general, the Constitution does not apply to private conduct. Except
for the Thirteenth Amendment, the provisions of the Constitution are
binding only on the federal and state governments.16 For example, the
First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law"17 that in-
fringes on certain rights, and section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment
provides that "[n]o State shall"18 fail to protect certain rights.19 There-
fore, only the federal or a state government, or a government or state

15. A more comprehensive survey of the state action and political question doctrines
is beyond the scope of this Note. For a fuller explanation of the doctrines see John E.
Nowak & Ronald D. Rotunda, Constitutional Law §§ 2.15, 12.1 to 12.5 (4th ed. 1991);

16. See Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co., 111 S. Ct. 2077, 2082 (1991); Ripon
U.S. 933 (1976); Tribe, supra note 15, § 18-1, at 1689 & n.1; Henry C. Strickland, The

17. U.S. Const. amend. I (emphasis added). In full, the First Amendment provides:
"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 griev-
ances." Id.

18. U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1 (emphasis added). In full, section 1 provides:
All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdic-
tion thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they
reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privi-
leges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive
agent, can violate a citizen's constitutional rights.20

Under section 1983, if a plaintiff alleges that a private party violated one of his constitutional rights, the plaintiff must demonstrate some connection between the state and the private action in order to show that the defendant acted "under color of law."21 Courts use the state action doctrine22 to determine whether that connection between the state and the private action is sufficient to transform the private act into an act of the state. If a plaintiff shows a sufficient nexus between a defendant and the government23 or if the private party is carrying out a function traditionally reserved to the government,24 the private party is treated as having taken on the qualities of, and therefore the responsibilities of, the state.25

Although the state action analysis is not mathematically precise and must be made on a case-by-case basis,26 the Supreme Court recently has enunciated a two-pronged test for determining whether an action may be

any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Id.

19. The Thirteenth Amendment, however, has no similar qualifier and, therefore, is binding on individuals as well as the government. Section 1 provides that: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." U.S. Const. amend. XIII, § 1.


22. The analysis of the "under color of law" requirement of section 1983 and the "state action" doctrine are identical. See supra note 9.


25. See Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co., 111 S. Ct. 2077, 2082 (1991) ("Although the conduct of private parties lies beyond the Constitution's scope in most instances, governmental authority may dominate an activity to such an extent that its participants must be deemed to act with the authority of the government and, as a result, be subject to constitutional constraints.")

26. Professor Laurence H. Tribe, for example, recognized that state action cases cannot be placed into neat categories. He wrote:

The Court itself has acknowledged the stubborn individuality of the state action cases. "[F]ormulating an infallible test" of state action, the Court has said, is "an impossible task." "Only by sifting facts and weighing circumstances can the nonobvious involvement of the State in private conduct be attributed its true significance." Professor Charles Black no doubt spoke for the consensus in concluding that, viewed doctrinally, the state action cases are "a conceptual disaster area."

deemed the action of the state. In _Lugar v. Edmondson Oil Co._, for example, the Court held that state action was present when two requirements were satisfied. First, the deprivation of constitutional rights must be caused by "the exercise of some right or privilege created by the State or by a rule of conduct imposed by the State or by a person for whom the State is responsible." Second, the deprivation must be caused by someone who fairly can be called a "state actor." Whether a particular case satisfies this standard is often a factual inquiry, and the Court has done little more than suggest certain relevant factors that lower courts should consider. The factors that militate in favor of a finding of state action are a reliance on government assistance, the performance of a "traditional government function," and an aggravation of the injury "in a unique way by the incidents of governmental authority."

B. The Justiciability of Political Questions

Courts use the political question doctrine to examine whether it is appropriate for the judiciary to decide a particular issue. Separation of powers concerns make courts wary of infringing on the executive and legislative branches' policy-making prerogatives. Although several commentators have argued that the political question doctrine is no longer viable, as recently as January 1993 the Supreme Court has invoked the doctrine in refusing to decide an issue that concerned the impeachment powers of Congress.

The Supreme Court has enunciated a two-pronged test for determin-
ing whether a case presents a nonjusticiable political question. The first prong of this doctrine considers whether the courts must make an impermissible policy determination to resolve the case. In applying this prong, courts analyze whether one of the other branches of government has the exclusive authority to resolve the issue. To make this determination, courts interpret the constitutional provision at issue and ask whether the Constitution has reserved the resolution of the issue to an-

37. The leading case on the political question doctrine is Baker v. Carr, 369 U.S. 186 (1962). One commentator has stated that subsequent political question doctrine "cases have done little to expand or improve upon" Justice Brennan's work in Baker. Mulhern, supra note 34, at 105; see, e.g., Davis v. Bandemer, 478 U.S. 109, 121 (1986) ("The outlines of the political question doctrine were described and to a large extent defined in Baker v. Carr.").

In Baker, the Supreme Court reviewed the voter apportionment scheme for electing representatives to the Tennessee state legislature. The district lines had not been redrawn for over 60 years and several areas, urban centers in particular, were significantly under-represented in the legislature. See Baker, 369 U.S. at 191-93. The Court concluded that the political question doctrine was not implicated because the doctrine only affected the relationship between the federal judiciary and the other branches of the federal government, see id. at 226, and held that the Equal Protection Clause claim could be sustained. See id. at 237.

In Baker, the Court articulated the concerns present in any suit involving a political question:

Prominent on the surface of any case held to involve a political question is found a textually demonstrable constitutional commitment of the issue to a coordinate political department; or a lack of judicially discoverable and manageable standards for resolving it; or the impossibility of deciding without an initial policy determination of a kind clearly for nonjudicial discretion; or the impossibility of a court's undertaking independent resolution without expressing lack of the respect due coordinate branches of government; or an unusual need for unquestioning adherence to a political decision already made; or the potentiality of embarrassment from multifarious pronouncements by various departments on one question.

Unless one of these formulations is inextricable from the case at bar, there should be no dismissal for nonjusticiability on the ground of a political question's presence.


Although the Court has largely "rested on this statement of the political question doctrine," Mulhern, supra note 34, at 106, it has often condensed the above formulation into the two-pronged test mentioned in the text. See Nixon, 113 S. Ct. at 735; Davis, 478 U.S. at 125; see also Wymbs v. Republican State Executive Comm., 719 F.2d 1072, 1082 (11th Cir. 1983), cert. denied, 465 U.S. 1103 (1984).

38. See Nixon, 113 S. Ct. at 735.

39. See id.; Davis, 478 U.S. at 125; Goldwater, 444 U.S. at 998 (Powell, J., concurring).

40. Justice Brennan, writing for the Court in Baker v. Carr, explained it this way: "Deciding whether a matter has in any measure been committed by the Constitution to another branch of government . . . is itself a delicate exercise in constitutional interpretation . . ." 369 U.S. at 211. See Goldwater, 444 U.S. at 998 (Powell, J., concurring); Powell, 395 U.S. at 519.
DELEGATE SELECTION CHALLENGES

Courts use the second prong of the test to examine whether there are judicially manageable standards for resolving the controversy. The Court has explained that lower courts should use this prong to determine whether "the duty asserted can be judicially identified and its breach judicially determined, and whether protection for the right asserted can be judicially molded." Whether a particular case satisfies this two-pronged test cannot be determined with absolute precision—this standard does not provide a catalogue of instances in which the doctrine may be invoked. Rather, a court must analyze "the precise facts and posture of the particular case" to determine whether the claim presents a nonjusticiable political question. Moreover, the concepts that these prongs address are not completely distinct. It may be that a case has no judicially manageable standards because it involves a policy determination that must be decided by another branch.

II. PAST CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL PARTY BEHAVIOR

For over fifty years, the Supreme Court has struggled to define the limits of state regulation and judicial power with respect to the actions of political parties. The Supreme Court has examined this area of law in three lines of cases. First, in the White Primary Cases, the Court struck down the Texas Democratic Party's attempts to exclude African-Americans from voting in the Democratic primary election. Second, in O'Brien v. Brown and Cousins v. Wigoda, the Court specifically addressed challenges to the delegate selection procedures of a political party. Finally, in several recent decisions, the Court has considered the propriety of state attempts to regulate party activity.

A. The White Primary Cases

The White Primary Cases were the first instances of judicial intervention into political party affairs. In a series of decisions spanning twenty-six years, the Supreme Court struck down the Texas Democratic

42. See Nixon, 113 S. Ct. at 735; Goldwater, 444 U.S. at 998 (Powell, J., concurring); Powell, 395 U.S. at 517-18; Baker, 369 U.S. at 217.
45. See id. at 735.
46. See id.
47. The first of the White Primary Cases was decided in 1927. See Nixon v. Herndon, 273 U.S. 536 (1927).
48. See discussion infra part II.A.
49. 409 U.S. 1 (1972) (per curiam).
51. See infra notes 111-32 and accompanying text.
Party's repeated attempts to exclude African-Americans from voting in state Democratic primary elections. In so doing, the Court held for the first time that political parties could be considered state actors for some purposes.

In *Nixon v. Herndon*, the first of the *White Primary Cases*, the Supreme Court invalidated a Texas statute that explicitly excluded African-Americans from voting in Democratic Party primary elections. The Court relied on the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to strike down the state's election law that expressly prohibited African-Americans from voting in primary elections. Because the plaintiff was challenging only the state election law, state action was explicit and, therefore, no state action analysis was necessary.

The Texas legislature responded to the Court's decision by enacting a statute that authorized each party's executive committee to determine primary voter qualifications; the Democratic Party's Executive Committee promptly passed a resolution barring African-Americans from voting in the party's primaries. The Court invalidated the party's action in *Nixon v. Condon*, reasoning that because the executive committee's authority came from the state rather than from the party, the committee was a representative of the state and, therefore, a state actor. As such, the party's actions were subject to Equal Protection Clause scrutiny and were invalidated on those grounds.

The Texas Democratic Party then adopted a resolution at the state party convention that excluded African-Americans from party membership. In *Grovey v. Townsend*, the Supreme Court concluded that, because the convention itself made the decision to exclude, there was no state action present. Unlike *Nixon v. Condon*, the convention's authority came solely from the party and not from the state. The discrimination was wholly private action and, therefore, not subject to constitutional challenge.

Nine years later, in *Smith v. Allwright*, the Supreme Court overruled *Grovey*, concluding that the party's regulation of the primary election constituted state action. The Court in *Allwright* relied on its decision in

---

54. See id. at 540-41.
55. U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1.
58. 286 U.S. 73 (1932).
59. See id. at 88.
60. See id. at 88-89.
63. See id. at 54-55.
64. See id. at 55.
66. See id. at 664.
United States v. Classic, 67 a case holding that Congress could regulate primary elections for Representatives to Congress. 68 The Allwright Court expanded on Classic's reasoning, 69 holding that when the primary election is by law an integral part of the general election process, the party's regulation of that primary constitutes state action under the Fifteenth Amendment. 70

Finally, in Terry v. Adams, 71 the last of the White Primary Cases, the Supreme Court struck down a parallel voting structure whereby white members of a county party would hold a private election to select a candidate before the official primary. 72 Although there was no majority opinion, the plurality relied on Smith v. Allwright and concluded that, because the winner of the private primary was the de facto winner of the general election, the private primary was an integral enough part of the general election machinery to constitute state action for purposes of the Fifteenth Amendment. 73

It is noteworthy that the Court never mentioned the political question doctrine in the White Primary Cases. Although the Court invoked the political question doctrine in other cases during that same time period, 74 each of the White Primary Cases was decided on its merits. By implica-
tion, the Court found that each case presented a justiciable claim.\textsuperscript{75}


The Supreme Court did not again have occasion to consider the state action or political question doctrines as they related to political parties until the early 1970s when two cases arose from disputes at the 1972 Democratic National Convention. As a result of conflicts between state election laws and party rules, two sets of delegates were selected to serve at the convention for each of several states.\textsuperscript{76} After the convention's credentials committee selected one set of delegates (the "chosen delegates") over the other (the "excluded delegates"), the excluded delegates sought injunctions in both federal and state courts. These related cases, \textit{O'Brien v. Brown}\textsuperscript{77} and \textit{Cousins v. Wigoda},\textsuperscript{78} reached the Supreme Court on appeals from a federal court injunction and a state court injunction, respectively.

In \textit{O'Brien v. Brown},\textsuperscript{79} in a special term just three days before the convention was scheduled to begin,\textsuperscript{80} the Supreme Court stayed an injunction issued by the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.\textsuperscript{81} The Court of Appeals had affirmed a decision of the district court to enjoin the chosen delegates from participating in convention activities, despite the fact that the party had deemed them the most fit to serve.\textsuperscript{82} In staying the injunction, the Supreme Court sternly warned lower courts not to interfere with a political party's affairs:

[N]o holding of this Court up to now gives support for judicial intervention in the circumstances presented here, involving as they do relationships of great delicacy that are essentially political in nature. Judicial intervention in this area traditionally has been approached with great caution and restraint. . . . \textit{The convention itself is the proper forum for determining intra-party disputes as to which delegates shall be seated}.\textsuperscript{83}

The Court was concerned about the "[h]ighly important questions"\textsuperscript{84} of justiciability and whether the actions of the party's credentials committee constituted state action.\textsuperscript{85} The Court reserved final resolution of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} See Rotunda, supra note 7, at 960 (\textit{White Primary Cases} are examples of cases involving political issues that the Court found justiciable).
\item \textsuperscript{76} For a more detailed explanation of the facts relating to the controversy, see \textit{Cousins v. Wigoda}, 419 U.S. 477, 478-81 (1975).
\item \textsuperscript{77} 409 U.S. 1 (1972) (per curiam).
\item \textsuperscript{78} 419 U.S. 477 (1975).
\item \textsuperscript{79} 409 U.S. 1 (1972) (per curiam).
\item \textsuperscript{80} See id. at 2.
\item \textsuperscript{81} See id.; see also \textit{Brown v. O'Brien}, 469 F.2d 563 (1972).
\item \textsuperscript{82} See Brown v. O'Brien, 469 F.2d 563, 575 (1972).
\item \textsuperscript{83} \textit{O'Brien}, 409 U.S. at 4 (emphasis added) (citations omitted).
\item \textsuperscript{84} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{85} See id.
threshold issues of justiciability and state action, however, until it could receive a full briefing.  

Although the O'Brien Court did not overrule the earlier findings of state action in the White Primary Cases, the Court limited these cases to their facts. For example, the Court distinguished Smith v. Allwright and Terry v. Adams as cases involving "invidious discrimination based on race in a primary contest within a single State." In Cousins v. Wigoda, the Court again declined to decide the threshold issues of state action and justiciability. In Cousins, the Court reviewed the propriety of a state court injunction that prohibited the chosen delegates from serving at the convention even though the party had selected them. The excluded delegates had obtained both federal and state court injunctions enjoining the chosen delegates from participating in convention activities. Although the Supreme Court had stayed the federal injunction in O'Brien, the Illinois appellate court upheld the state court injunction. The chosen delegates ignored the state injunction, however, and consequently were held in contempt of court. When the case reached the Supreme Court three years later, the Court concluded that the state court did not have the authority to enjoin the party in this manner because the party's constitutional right of political association protected it from such interference.

As it had done in O'Brien, however, the Court in Cousins declined to decide the state action and political question issues. Because Cousins involved a controversy concerning the state judiciary's power over a political party, as opposed to a controversy between an individual and a

---

86. See id. at 4-5. As will be shown below, the Court again refused to decide these issues even after fuller briefing in Cousins. See infra note 104 and accompanying text.
87. See supra notes 52-73 and accompanying text.
89. 321 U.S. 649 (1944).
90. 345 U.S. 461 (1953).
93. See id. at 484 n.4.
94. See id. at 478-81.
97. See id.
98. The Cousins Court explained:

     The National Democratic Party and its adherents enjoy a constitutionally protected right of political association. "There can no longer be any doubt that freedom to associate with others for the common advancement of political beliefs and ideas is a form of 'orderly group activity' protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments. . . . The right to associate with the political party of one's choice is an integral part of this basic constitutional freedom."

     419 U.S. at 487 (quoting Kusper v. Pontikes, 414 U.S. 51, 56-57 (1973)).
99. See id. at 489-91.
100. In Cousins, the Court only decided the narrow issue of whether the state court could enforce its contempt order against the party members who participated at the con-
political party, the decision did not require resolution of the state action and justiciability issues. Accordingly, the Court once again reserved judgment on these issues.

Cousins may represent a retreat from some of the sweeping language of O'Brien. Even after receiving a full briefing, the Cousins Court refused O'Brien's invitation to resolve the threshold issues. The White Primary Cases, for example, limited to their facts in O'Brien, were cited favorably by the Court in Cousins. The Cousins Court listed the White Primary Cases as examples of cases that may be used to determine whether state action exists in delegate selection challenges. In his concurring opinion, Justice Rehnquist bitterly complained that Cousins constituted a "virtual repudiation" of O'Brien. In particular, he questioned the majority's apparent resurrection of the White Primary Cases.

C. Recent Cases Involving Political Parties

Although the Court in O'Brien and Cousins failed to resolve the state action question, the decision did not have to go through a state action analysis in this case. The Court refused to decide the broader issue inherent in the suit—whether the party was a state actor. See id. at 483 n.4. Moreover, because Cousins involved a review of a state court decision, the separation of powers concerns inherent in the political question doctrine also were not implicated. See id.; supra note 33 and accompanying text.

101. Because the parties in a criminal contempt proceeding are the state against an individual, state action is explicit. The Cousins Court noted "that 'in the context of the instant case, it is not necessary to determine whether Convention action is 'state action.'" Cousins, 419 U.S. at 483 n.4.

102. See id. The Court still has not resolved these issues. See Boyle, supra note 2, at 563 n.20.

103. See Rotunda, supra note 7, at 959 ("Cousins, however, now seems to have effectively repudiated any broad reading of O'Brien."); Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-22, at 1113 ("The Court apparently recognized that its comments in O'Brien were questionable[] in Cousins v. Wigoda.").

Interestingly, the seemingly different approaches taken by the Court in these decisions cannot be attributed to a change in the Court's makeup—the same nine justices that decided O'Brien also decided Cousins.

104. Because O'Brien was decided in a special term only three days before the convention was scheduled to begin, the Court in that case declined to decide the state action and justiciability issues "without [the benefit of] full briefing and argument and adequate opportunity for deliberation." O'Brien v. Brown, 409 U.S. 1, 5 (1972) (per curiam).

105. See supra note 91 and accompanying text.


107. See id.

108. Justice Rehnquist wrote:

Footnote 4 of the Court's opinion disclaims any intimation of views on [state action and justiciability] .... But immediately following the disclaimer, the Court proceeds to cite numerous opinions of courts of appeals and district courts, as well as law review commentaries, which to the unsophisticated mind might seem to portend an answer to each of these questions.

109. Id. at 494 (Rehnquist, J., concurring in judgment).

110. See id. at 493-94.
DELEGATE SELECTION CHALLENGES

action and political question issues, these decisions reaffirmed the strength of the associational rights of political parties.\(^\text{111}\) Since Cousins, the Supreme Court has decided several cases concerning the extent to which a state can regulate a political party's actions. These cases established that a state can only regulate political party activity when it has a compelling interest to do so.\(^\text{112}\) Although these cases do not provide any guidance on the threshold issues of state action and justiciability, they have nevertheless reinforced the primacy of a political party's associational rights.\(^\text{113}\)

For example, in Democratic Party of the United States v. Wisconsin ex rel. La Follette,\(^\text{114}\) the Court addressed a conflict between party rules and state election laws. Wisconsin election laws, which provided for an open primary system,\(^\text{115}\) contradicted Democratic Party rules, which provided that only publicly declared Democrats could participate in the selection of delegates.\(^\text{116}\) The Wisconsin Supreme Court held that the party could not disqualify the delegates selected under the election law.\(^\text{117}\) The United States Supreme Court reversed, holding that the state's asserted interests were not sufficiently compelling to outweigh the associational rights of the party.\(^\text{118}\)

The Supreme Court again emphasized the importance of a political party's First Amendment associational rights in Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut.\(^\text{119}\) Here, Connecticut election laws provided for closed primaries.\(^\text{120}\) Seeking a broader base, the Republican Party wanted to allow independent voters to participate in its primary election.\(^\text{121}\) The party sought a declaratory judgment that it could conduct a

\(^{111}\) See supra note 98 and accompanying text.

\(^{112}\) See Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm., 489 U.S. 214, 225 (1989) ("Because the ban burdens appellees' rights to free speech and free association, it can only survive constitutional scrutiny if it serves a compelling government interest."); Democratic Party of the United States v. Wisconsin ex rel. La Follette, 450 U.S. 107, 124-26 (1981) (because interests advanced by the state are not compelling, intrusion into the party's affairs is not justified).

\(^{113}\) Although these cases demonstrate the Court's basic unwillingness to intervene into party affairs, ironically, they also decrease the need for strict threshold standards because they provide parties with added protection on the merits. See infra notes 225-28 and accompanying text.


\(^{115}\) See id. at 110-12. An "open primary" is a primary election in which a voter does not have to be a party member to participate. An independent voter or even a member of a different party, therefore, can vote in an open primary.

\(^{116}\) See id. at 109-10.

\(^{117}\) See State ex rel. La Follette v. Democratic Party of the United States, 287 N.W.2d 519, 543 (Wis. 1980).


\(^{119}\) 479 U.S. 208, 214 (1986).

\(^{120}\) See id. at 210-12. A "closed primary" is a primary election in which only declared members of a particular political party may participate. Independent voters and members of other parties cannot vote in a closed primary.

\(^{121}\) See id.
primary open to independent voters. The district court held for the party, and the Second Circuit affirmed. The Supreme Court also affirmed, holding that the state did not have a compelling interest sufficient to justify interference with the party's associational rights.

The Court addressed another controversy between a political party and a state in *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*. In *Eu*, California election laws forbade political parties from endorsing candidates in a primary election. These statutes also regulated certain aspects of a party's organization and composition. The Court invalidated these laws because they unnecessarily burdened political speech and the associational rights of political parties.

These cases demonstrate that states may regulate political party activity only if there is a compelling state interest. A court will weigh the rationale underlying any attempt to interfere with party affairs against the significant associational rights of the party. Although weighing the relative constitutional interests of the litigants does not directly affect the resolution of the threshold issues of state action and justiciability, the fact that a political party's associational rights will ordinarily protect it from interference on the merits of a dispute may eliminate the need for strict threshold standards. Because the party's associational rights have been strengthened, only the most egregious examples of party conduct will be enjoined; the risk of inappropriate judicial interference, therefore, has been lessened.

In sum, the Supreme Court's jurisprudence concerning challenges to political parties has been inconsistent. The *White Primary Cases* demonstrated that political parties may be considered state actors for some purposes. *O'Brien v. Brown* suggested that courts should use the state action and political question doctrines to insulate parties from judicial re-

---

122. See id. at 213.
127. See id. at 216-19.
128. See id.
129. See id. at 231-32.
130. See supra note 112 and accompanying text.
131. See Tashjian v. Republican Party of Conn., 479 U.S. 208, 214 (1986) ("The freedom of association protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments includes partisan political organization."); Democratic Party of the United States v. Wisconsin ex rel. La Follette, 450 U.S. 107, 122 (1981) ("[T]he freedom to associate for the 'common advancement of political beliefs,' necessarily presupposes the freedom to identify the people who constitute the association, and to limit the association to those people only." (citations omitted)).
132. Because a challenge to party behavior must implicate a compelling interest in order to prompt judicial intervention into party affairs, there is little danger of unwarranted judicial interference. Strict threshold standards, therefore, are not necessary and the merits may be reached. See infra notes 225-28 and accompanying text.
DELEGATE SELECTION CHALLENGES

view. The Court seemed to retreat from *O'Brien*, however, in *Cousins v. Wigoda*. Although recent cases have made it clear that political parties have strong associational rights that will protect them from most judicial interference on the merits of a dispute, these cases did nothing to resolve the status of the threshold questions of state action and justiciability. As we shall see, this inconsistent treatment by the Supreme Court has led to differing approaches in the lower courts.

III. ANALYSIS OF LOWER COURT DECISIONS

The inconsistent messages that the Supreme Court has provided on the issues of state action and justiciability have been reflected in lower court decisions. Although no party has lost a delegate selection challenge after *O'Brien* and *Cousins*, the conflicting approaches used by the Court in these decisions has produced inconsistent applications by the lower courts. Accordingly, an examination is warranted into how the lower courts have addressed delegate selection challenges since *Cousins v. Wigoda*.

A. Lower Courts’ Resolution of State Action Issues

Lower courts have arrived at different conclusions as to whether delegate selection constitutes state action. The Second Circuit has hinted that state action may be present in political party delegate selection. On two occasions, that circuit has indicated in dicta that the delegate selection procedures of a political party will constitute state action if a state grants the party's candidate automatic access to the general election ballot.

Other courts, however, have held that a political party's delegate selection activities do not constitute state action. These courts have reasoned that the mere fact that a state law authorizes the selection of a candidate is insufficient to turn the private selection decision into state action. They conclude that the party's private action can touch on the state's interest in elections without rising to the level of state action.

133. See supra notes 79-91 and accompanying text.
134. See supra notes 92-102 and accompanying text.
135. See supra note 113 and accompanying text.
136. See supra notes 79-91 and accompanying text.
139. See *Cavallo*, 1985 WL 3921, at *4.
140. See id.
Several lower courts presented with state action questions in delegate selection challenges have refused to decide the issue. Following the Supreme Court's example, they have reserved judgment on the state action issue and instead either have decided the cases on justiciability grounds or have ignored the threshold issues of state action and justiciability altogether and decided the cases on the merits.

B. Lower Courts' Resolution of Justiciability Issues

The question of whether delegate selection challenges pose nonjusticiable political questions is also unsettled. Several courts, including the Eleventh Circuit, have expressly held that a delegate selection challenge is a nonjusticiable political question. These courts follow O'Brien's reasoning that a party convention—and not a courtroom—is the proper place for resolving intra-party disputes such as delegate selection challenges. Also relying on O'Brien, the Eleventh Circuit distinguished the White Primary Cases of Smith v. Allwright and Terry v. Adams, arguing that the Court's quick intervention in those cases was attributable to the political party's invidious discrimination.

In contrast, the Sixth Circuit reached opposite conclusions concerning justiciability in two cases decided just one year apart. One suit challenged a delegate selection mechanism contained in the state election law, while the other challenged the selection procedures contained in

141. See supra notes 76-102 and accompanying text.
143. See Wymbs, 719 F.2d at 1077.
144. The District of Columbia Circuit noted, for example: "We recognize that 'state action' and 'justiciability' are often regarded as threshold issues. We see nothing illogical about passing over them, however, and we certainly do not lack authority for doing so." Ripon Soc'y, Inc. v. National Republican Party, 525 F.2d 567, 578 n.28 (D.C. Cir. 1975) (en banc), cert. denied, 424 U.S. 933 (1976).

Although Professor Laurence H. Tribe suggests that the Supreme Court is increasingly using threshold issues to dispose of difficult cases, see Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-22, at 1113 n.9, cases like O'Brien and Cousins may simply be examples of cases in which the threshold issues are more difficult to resolve than the merits.
146. See supra note 83 and accompanying text.
147. See Wymbs, 719 F.2d at 1082-83; Stuckey, 372 S.E.2d at 460.
150. See Wymbs, 719 F.2d at 1082 n.27.
152. See Heitmanis, 899 F.2d at 522-23.
DELEGATE SELECTION CHALLENGES

party rules. The former case was determined to be justiciable while the latter was not. While the Sixth Circuit's distinction would certainly be relevant for state action analysis, its application to the political question doctrine is dubious—the political question doctrine traditionally has reflected separation of powers conflicts and concerns over the policy determinations necessary to resolve a controversy, rather than the identity of the parties involved.

Yet another analysis has been suggested by the District of Columbia Circuit and the Fourth Circuit. These courts have argued that the analysis required to determine the justiciability issue is similar to the analysis required to determine the claim on its merits. These courts have concluded that they cannot determine the justiciability issue without first analyzing the implicated constitutional rights of the litigants. In each instance, recognizing the Supreme Court's silence on the matter, these courts likewise reserved the justiciability issue and concluded on the merits that the party's associational rights outweighed the challenger's interests.

IV. JUDICIAL REVIEW OF A POLITICAL PARTY'S NOMINATION ACTIVITIES

As the previous section pointed out, the lower courts have taken different approaches to the resolution of the state action and justiciability questions following the Supreme Court's reservation of these issues in O'Brien and Cousins. More recent Supreme Court state action and justiciability decisions in other contexts, however, shed significant light on these issues. These decisions make it clear that the courts should not use the threshold issues of state action and justiciability to insulate political

153. See Thompson, 1989 WL 40176, at *1 (claim that delegate selection procedures were per se racially discriminatory held nonjusticiable).
154. See Heitmanis, 899 F.2d at 526.
156. For example, if the state election law is being challenged, state action is explicitly present—the adoption of the statute is the action of the state. If the party rule is being challenged, the state action doctrine analysis must be employed to determine whether the party is deemed a state actor. See supra notes 16-32 and accompanying text.
160. See id.; Ripon Soc'y, 525 F.2d at 578.
161. See Bachur, 836 F.2d at 841; Ripon Soc'y, 525 F.2d at 576.
162. See Bachur, 836 F.2d at 840-42; Ripon Soc'y, 525 F.2d at 578. See also Boyle, supra note 2, at 573 ("By concluding that the merits of the dispute were indistinguishable from the justiciability issue, the court of appeals merely avoided resolving an issue upon which the Supreme Court has yet to give guidance." (citations omitted) (commenting on the Fourth Circuit's decision in Bachur)).
parties from judicial review. Moreover, several important doctrinal developments have emerged since O'Brien and Cousins that decrease the need to dismiss cases on threshold issues. Furthermore, important policy considerations support reaching the merits in challenges to a political party's nomination activities so that a fair electoral process can be better ensured.

A. Delegate Selection as State Action

Recent Supreme Court decisions interpreting the Court's two-prong state action test\textsuperscript{163} suggest that a political party's delegate selection procedures constitute state action under section 1983. The Supreme Court has interpreted the first prong of the state action test as considering "whether the claimed constitutional deprivation resulted from the exercise of a right or privilege having its source in state authority."\textsuperscript{164} For example, in Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co.,\textsuperscript{165} the Court held that a private litigant was a state actor while carrying out a peremptory strike of a prospective juror in a civil suit.\textsuperscript{166} In Georgia v. McCollum,\textsuperscript{167} the Court extended the application of this state action rationale to criminal cases.\textsuperscript{168} In each case, the first prong of the state action test was satisfied because the peremptory challenge of a potential juror held "no significance outside a court of law."\textsuperscript{169} Because peremptory challenges have no significance outside of court, the Supreme Court concluded that the peremptory strikes were the result of "the exercise of a right or privilege having its source in state authority."\textsuperscript{170}

Applying the above analysis, the nomination procedures of a political party, including the selection of convention delegates, may be viewed as constituting state action—nomination activities hold no significance outside the context of electing representatives to government office.\textsuperscript{171} When a party nominates a candidate for government office, it exercises "a right or privilege having its source in state authority."\textsuperscript{172} Nominating a candidate for public office simply has no relevance outside the government-sanctioned election process. Accordingly, under the reasoning of

\textsuperscript{163} See supra notes 26-32 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{165} 111 S. Ct. 2077 (1991).
\textsuperscript{166} See id. at 2083.
\textsuperscript{167} 112 S. Ct. 2348 (1992).
\textsuperscript{168} See id. at 2354-57.
\textsuperscript{170} Edmonson, 111 S. Ct. at 2082-83.
\textsuperscript{171} One lower court has used the Edmonson analysis in the same way: "Just as litigants exercising peremptory challenges are serving an important function within the government and acting with its substantial assistance, banks drafting conversion plans are in a limited sense also called upon to perform the government's protective function by preparing plans that meet the statutory fairness requirements." Lovell v. Peoples Heritage Sav. Bank, 776 F. Supp. 578, 588 (D. Me. 1991) (citation omitted).
\textsuperscript{172} Edmonson, 111 S. Ct. at 2082-83.
DELEGATE SELECTION CHALLENGES

Edmonson, a political party's delegate selection procedures satisfy the first prong of the state action test.

Delegate selection activities also satisfy the second prong of the state action test.\(^\text{173}\) By applying this second prong a court determines whether a party can be fairly deemed to be a state actor. Although this test is largely a factual inquiry,\(^\text{174}\) the Court has pointed out that several characteristics are particularly relevant to this analysis.\(^\text{175}\) Among the factors that militate in favor of a finding of state action are a reliance on government assistance, a performance of a traditional government function, and an aggravation of the injury through incidents of governmental authority.\(^\text{176}\)

The non-financial\(^\text{177}\) support that major political parties receive is sufficient to satisfy the second prong of the state action test and thereby transform the party into a state actor. This finding of state action is most supported by the so-called "state non-financial facilitation"\(^\text{178}\) line of cases.\(^\text{179}\) In these cases, state action was found where the government facilitated the private action, or provided the context in which the private action took place. The rule of these cases is that state action exists when a private party makes use of a state procedure with the assistance of state officials.\(^\text{180}\) Courts applying this rationale have found state action in cases that involved jury peremptory challenges,\(^\text{181}\) state pre-judgment at-

\(^{173}\) See supra notes 26-32 and accompanying text.
\(^{174}\) See Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co., 111 S. Ct. 2077, 2083 (1991); see also supra note 30 and accompanying text.
\(^{175}\) See Edmonson, 111 S. Ct. at 2083.
\(^{176}\) See id. at 2083; see also Georgia v. McCollum, 112 S. Ct. 2348, 2355 (1992).
\(^{177}\) Although government assistance is one of the relevant characteristics of the state action test, financial assistance by itself is insufficient to transform the aid recipient into a state actor. The Court in Rendell-Baker v. Kohn, 457 U.S. 830 (1982), a case involving a private school that received much of its funding from government contracts, held that financial support alone is insufficient to constitute state action. See id. at 840-41. "As long as the financial benefit is not provided according to constitutionally impermissible criteria," Snyder, supra note 7, at 1079, the assistance does not transform the private party into a state actor unless it "constitutes compulsion or encouragement of that private action." Id. The mere fact that political parties receive large amounts of financial assistance from the states and federal governments is, therefore, insufficient to constitute state action.

\(^{178}\) This is Professor Rotunda's term. See Ronald D. Rotunda, Modern Constitutional Law: Cases and Notes 461-76 (1989).
\(^{179}\) See, e.g., Georgia v. McCollum, 112 S. Ct. 2348 (1992) (criminal defendants who strike jurors due to their race are state actors because the state has provided a context in which to act); Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co., 111 S. Ct. 2077 (1991) (private litigants in a civil suit who strike jurors in peremptory challenges are state actors); Washington v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 458 U.S. 457 (1982) (non-neutral allocation of government power transforms private parties into state actors); Reitman v. Mulkey, 387 U.S. 369 (1967) (statute making it easier to discriminate violates Equal Protection Clause and transforms private action into state action).
Private action taken under statutes that facilitated discrimination, and instances in which a bank engaged in conduct pursuant to statutory authorization. In contrast, mere financial assistance or state regulation of an activity is not enough to result in a finding of state action.

Non-financial facilitation giving rise to state action results where the state gives the nominee of a political party automatic access to the general election ballot. By affording this automatic access, the state provides sufficient non-financial assistance so as to allow a political party to be fairly considered a state actor. Doctrinal justification for this conclusion may be traced to Smith v. Allwright, in which the Supreme Court employed this rationale to transform a political party's regulation of a primary election into state action. Applying the Supreme Court's reasoning to other political party actions, it follows that all nomination activities, including the selection of convention delegates, should constitute state action. Professor Laurence Tribe has advocated extending the

---


185. Financial assistance without more is insufficient to justify a finding of state action. See Rendell-Baker v. Kohn, 457 U.S. 830 (1982) (private school that received nearly all of its funding from the state was not a state actor as long as the decision was not made nor compelled by the state); Blum v. Yaretsky, 457 U.S. 991, 992 (1982) (private nursing home that received nearly all of its funds from government sources not a state actor unless decision made or compelled by government).

186. The Court has demonstrated that regulation does not imply state action as long as the regulation does not mandate the unconstitutional action. See Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-23, at 1120 (recent Court decisions cast doubt on whether state regulation of the nominating process is sufficient to constitute state action); see, e.g., Blum v. Yaretsky, 457 U.S. 991 (1982) (involving the transfer of Medicaid patients); Jackson v. Metropolitan Edison Co., 419 U.S. 345 (1974) (involving a state-regulated utility monopoly); Moose Lodge No. 107 v. Irvis, 407 U.S. 163 (1972) (involving a state-licensed establishment).

187. The nominee of each major political party is given automatic access to the general election ballot in every state. See Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-23, at 1121; see, e.g., Tashjian v. Republican Party of Conn., 479 U.S. 208, 211 (1986) (major party candidates automatically accorded general election ballot access).

188. See Mrazek v. Suffolk County Bd. of Elections, 630 F.2d 890, 895 n.8 (2d Cir. 1980); Montano v. Lefkowitz, 575 F.2d 378, 383 n.7 (2d Cir. 1978); Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-23, at 1121; see also O'Brien v. Brown, 409 U.S. 1, 12-13 (1972) (per curiam) (Marshall, J., dissenting) (as long as state recognizes "fruits" of party selection, nomination activities are state action).


190. In Allwright, the Court held that, because the state first compelled the party to select a candidate for inclusion on the ballot, and thereafter accepted the party's selection for inclusion on the general election ballot, the party's actions constituted state action. See id. at 664.
Allwright state action analysis to the context of delegate selection and the Second Circuit has agreed with this position in dicta.

Furthermore, because the selection of a candidate through the primary election system could be construed as a public function, parties may be considered state actors in their nominating processes even if the state has not afforded the benefit of ballot access. For example, in Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co., the Court cited Terry v. Adams as a case in which a private party performed a traditional government function. In Terry, the last of the White Primary Cases, the Supreme Court found state action to exist because the party’s action had become “an integral part, indeed the only effective part, of the elective process that determines who shall rule and govern.” Because the nominating activities of the major political parties have such a significant impact on the general election result, it can be argued that a party’s procedure to select a candidate is “an integral part ... of the elective process,” and therefore should be considered a public function. It follows that all integral steps of the nomination process, including the selection of convention delegates, should be subjected to constitutional scrutiny.

In light of the above analysis, the state action doctrine retains its vitality in defining the limits of appropriate judicial intervention. Under this formulation, the only political party activities that would constitute state action are nomination activities and the regulation of primary elections. Professor Tribe has argued that the White Primary Cases and later state action decisions support the proposition that, while nomination activities

193. Professor Rotunda wrote:
   Terry v. Adams supports the argument that even if the state withdrew from such regulation, the pre-election selection process might still be an integral part of the election. It is immaterial under Terry whether or not the state has given a preferred position on the ballot to the nominee of a completely private primary.
   Rotunda, supra note 7, at 956 n.114 (citation omitted).
195. 345 U.S. 461, 469 (1953).
196. See Edmonson, 111 S. Ct. at 2083 (1991); see also Georgia v. McCollum, 112 S. Ct. 2348, 2355-2356 (1992) (citing Terry in support of the proposition that the state cannot avoid its constitutional responsibilities by delegating a public function to a private party).
197. 345 U.S. at 469 (Black, J., announcing the judgment of the Court).
199. See Rotunda, supra note 7, at 956 (because convention delegates are responsible for nominating a candidate, the selection of delegates is an integral enough part of the nomination process to support a finding of state action); Carman, supra note 197, at 691 (arguing that Smith v. Allwright and Terry v. Adams support finding of state action).
of a party are state action, all other party activities constitute private action—and are, therefore, beyond the reach of constitutional challenge. Accordingly, the state action doctrine still plays its traditional role of determining the boundary between public and private action.

B. The Justiciability of Delegate Selection Challenges

The political question doctrine also should not prohibit courts from examining challenges to the delegate selection procedures of political parties. As previously discussed, the Supreme Court has developed a two-prong test for determining whether a claim is nonjusticiable under the political question doctrine. Because challenges to political party action do not offend either prong of the political question doctrine test, courts should reach the merits in claims against political parties.

The first concern of the political question doctrine is whether an impermissible policy determination must be made to resolve the dispute. A policy determination is deemed inappropriate if it is the type of decision that should be made by one of the other branches of government. The Court has tested this concern by inquiring whether there is "a textually demonstrable constitutional commitment of the issue to a coordinate political department." A challenge to a political party's delegate selection procedures does not infringe on the rights of the executive branch or Congress. The separation of powers concerns that underlie this doctrine are simply not implicated. Justice Marshall pointed out that "the full

200. See Tribe, supra note 15, § 13-23, at 1119. Professor Tribe wrote:

Read in the context of other state action cases, the White Primary Cases seem to support the proposition that all activities of political parties that are closely related to the nomination of a candidate who will receive some preferential state treatment as the nominee of a political party are deemed the state's responsibility; other activities of political parties constitute private action. Id. (footnote omitted); see also Rotunda, supra note 7, at 952 ("An analysis of the White Primary Cases and their progeny indicates that . . . all integral steps in an election for public office are public functions and therefore state action subject to some constitutional scrutiny.").


202. See supra notes 37-46 and accompanying text.

203. See supra notes 38-41 and accompanying text.

204. See United States v. Munoz-Flores, 495 U.S. 385, 394 (1990) ("[T]he doctrine is designed to restrain the judiciary from inappropriate interference in the business of the other branches of Government."); Japan Whaling Ass'n v. American Cetacean Soc'y, 478 U.S. 221, 230 (1986) ("The political question doctrine excludes from judicial review those controversies which revolve around policy choices and value determinations constitutionally committed for resolution to the halls of Congress or the confines of the Executive Branch.").


206. One author, commenting on a Fourth Circuit delegate selection case, argued that
convention of the National Democratic Party... is most assuredly not a coordinate branch of government to which the federal courts owe deference within the meaning of the separation of powers or the political question doctrine." Indeed, far from infringing on Congress's prerogatives, the Court has concluded that Congress designed section 1983 to provide for the private enforcement of federal rights.

Constitutional challenges to the acts of political parties also do not offend the second prong of the political question doctrine test. The test's second prong examines whether judicially manageable standards exist for resolving the controversy. In a constitutional challenge to a political party's delegate selection procedures, a court would have to weigh the constitutional rights of the challenger against the associational rights of the party. Such a balancing of the litigants' relative constitutional and statutory rights implicates standards that are applied by federal courts every day. Far from being unmanageable, challenges based on free exercise, establishment, equal protection, due process, and many other constitutional rights have long histories of judicial resolution with standards rooted in established doctrines. A court may not avoid deciding a particular case simply because the case's resolution will have political ramifications.

Some authorities have argued that only challenges to political party actions based upon claims of race discrimination or Fifteenth Amendment violations are justiciable. Both Justice Frankfurter and Justice

"it is doubtful that a political question was raised since... the separation of powers doctrine... is not implicated." Boyle, supra note 2, at 573 (commenting on Bachur v. Democratic Nat'l Party, 836 F.2d 837 (4th Cir. 1987)).


208. See Wyatt v. Cole, 112 S. Ct. 1827, 1830 (1992) ("The purpose of § 1983 is to deter state actors from using the badge of their authority to deprive individuals of their federally guaranteed rights and to provide relief to victims if such deterrence fails."); Allen v. McCurry, 449 U.S. 90, 100-01, 110 (1980).

209. See supra notes 42-43 and accompanying text.

210. See, e.g., United States v. Munoz-Flores, 495 U.S. 385, 395 (1990) ("[T]he inquiry, which involves the analysis of statutes and legislative materials, is one that is familiar to the courts and often central to the judicial function."); Goldwater v. Carter, 444 U.S. 996, 999 (1979) (Powell, J., concurring in the judgment) ("Resolution of the question may not be easy, but it only requires us to apply normal principles of interpretation to the constitutional provisions at issue."); O'Brien v. Brown, 409 U.S. 1, 12 (1972) (Marshall, J., dissenting) ("Both these determinations are well within the range of questions regularly presented to courts for decision, and capable of judicial resolution.").

211. See Japan Whaling Ass'n v. American Cetacean Soc'y, 478 U.S. 221, 230 (1986) ("[O]ne of the Judiciary's characteristic roles is to interpret statutes, and we cannot shirk this responsibility merely because our decision may have significant political overtones."); Baker v. Carr, 369 U.S. 186, 209 (1962) ("[T]he mere fact that the suit seeks protection of a political right does not mean it presents a political question.").

O'Connor,\textsuperscript{213} for example, have advocated the use of different justiciability standards for race and non-race cases.\textsuperscript{214} Recently, however, the Supreme Court held that the same justiciability standard should apply to both race and non-race cases. In \textit{Davis v. Bandemer},\textsuperscript{215} a redistricting challenge based on non-racial grounds, the majority\textsuperscript{216} expressly rejected a two-tiered approach and held that the characteristics of the complaining group were irrelevant.\textsuperscript{217} The Court has since reaffirmed this holding.\textsuperscript{218}

\section*{C. Doctrinal Developments}

Since \textit{O'Brien v. Brown},\textsuperscript{219} several important developments have demonstrated that courts can proceed beyond the threshold issues of state action and justiciability in challenges to political party nomination activities. These developments show that the merits in these disputes can be reached without offending the basic policy interests inherent in \textit{O'Brien}'s admonishment to lower courts to avoid interfering with party affairs.\textsuperscript{220} Several factors demonstrate that current Supreme Court jurisprudence can adequately protect political parties from inappropriate interference without requiring a dismissal of the case on threshold issues.

First, judicial experience since \textit{O'Brien} has shown that political parties have repeatedly prevailed in these challenges even when the merits have


\textsuperscript{214} Recall also that \textit{O'Brien v. Brown} distinguished the \textit{White Primary Cases} of \textit{Smith v. Allwright} and \textit{Terry v. Adams} as cases involving "invidious discrimination based on race in a primary contest within a single State." \textit{O'Brien v. Brown}, \textit{409 U.S. 1, 4 n.1 (1972)} (per curiam); \textit{see also} \textit{Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.}, \textit{489 U.S. 214, 232 (1989)} (distinguishing \textit{Allwright} as a case involving derogation of the litigant's civil rights).

\textsuperscript{215} \textit{478 U.S. 109 (1986)} (involving a dilution of voting rights that did not produce a racially discriminatory effect).

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{See id.} at 125. Indeed, this was the only part of the opinion which commanded a majority.

\textsuperscript{217} \textit{See id.}

\textsuperscript{218} Writing for the Court in \textit{United States v. Munoz-Flores}, \textit{495 U.S. 385 (1990)}, Justice Marshall explained that the political question doctrine "is designed to restrain the Judiciary from inappropriate interference in the business of the other branches of Government; the identity of the litigant is immaterial to the presence of these concerns in a particular case." \textit{Id.} at 394.

\textsuperscript{219} \textit{See supra} notes 79-91 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{220} \textit{See O'Brien v. Brown}, \textit{409 U.S. 1, 4 (1972)}; \textit{supra} note 83 and accompanying text.
been reached. In fact, Cousins v. Wigoda is an example of a case in which the Court was able to protect a political party’s prerogatives without dismissing the case on a threshold issue. Moreover, several lower courts have reached the merits of delegate selection challenges, either by refusing to resolve the threshold issues of state action and justiciability, or by holding that the threshold issues and the merits cannot be separated. In each case, the political party’s associational rights have protected it from inappropriate judicial intervention.

Second, because the Court has made it clear in cases since O'Brien that political parties have strong associational rights, there is less danger of inappropriate judicial meddling into party business. Three recent Supreme Court decisions involving state attempts to regulate political party behavior have shown that only the most compelling interests will justify interference into party affairs. Ironically, although these cases demonstrate the Court’s basic unwillingness to inject itself into party matters, the added protection that these cases provide to a party on the merits decreases the need for strict threshold standards. By resolving cases on their merits instead of resorting to formulaic threshold standards, courts will have the flexibility to address cases involving outrageous party behavior. Therefore, courts will be capable of remediing instances of invidious discrimination, such as those in the hypotheticals about the atheist Republican and the non-minority Democrat, while, at the same time, the party’s strong associational rights will protect it against judicial overreaching.
D. Additional Policy Considerations

An additional factor that should not be overlooked is that the American system of government may be adversely affected if delegate selection challenges are summarily dismissed on threshold issues. Some authorities have argued that it is antidemocratic to allow a lifetime-tenured federal judge the power to intervene into party affairs. Because the two major political parties in this country hold an oligopoly on opportunities for political expression at the national level, however, allowing the Democratic and Republican parties free reign to act in contravention of the Constitution is itself antidemocratic. As Professor Ronald D. Rotunda has persuasively argued, the White Primary Cases should govern delegate selection challenges because "there is a proper and necessary place for the courts as overseers of the political process." The courts will be unable to perform adequately their role as overseers unless they can proceed beyond the threshold issues and reach the merits of a challenge.

CONCLUSION

Although the Supreme Court has struggled for over fifty years to define the scope of judicial review of political party behavior, it has never should be invalidated), cert. denied, 188 Ga. App. 912 (Ga. 1988); see also Rotunda, supra note 7, at 939-40.

229. Justice O'Connor wrote:

The preservation and health of our political institutions, state and federal, depends to no small extent on the continued vitality of our two-party system, which permits both stability and measured change. . . . To turn these matters over to the federal judiciary is to inject the courts into the most heated partisan issues. . . . The consequences of this shift will be as immense as they are unfortunate.

Davis v. Bandemer, 478 U.S. 109, 145 (1986) (O'Connor, J., concurring); see also Colegrove v. Green, 328 U.S. 549, 553-54 (1946) (Frankfurter, J.) ("It is hostile to a democratic system to involve the judiciary in the politics of the people."). These authorities argue that improper acts by political parties will self-correct in the marketplace of the electorate. See Davis, 478 U.S. at 152 (political gerrymandering is a self-limiting exercise) (O'Connor, J., concurring); Lubecky, supra note 227, at 827 (even without judicial oversight, parties do not have unfettered discretion); Philip B. Kurland, Mr. Justice Frankfurter and the Constitution 64 (1971) (when people have demanded democracy in the past, they have received it without judicial intervention).

230. See supra note 197 and accompanying text.

231. Professor Rotunda wrote:

Having based Cousins on the transcending importance of national political parties and their candidate selection process, it would be anomalous for the Court to look with favor on the argument that national parties may discriminate on the basis of some suspect classification. Nor would the Cousins Court be charmed by an assertion that a disenfranchised minority need only join some other, more tolerant party.

Rotunda, supra note 7, at 946.

232. Id. at 963; see also Stuckey v. Richardson, 372 S.E.2d 458, 461 (Ga. Ct. App. 1988) (Deen, J., dissenting in part) (judiciary has duty to require fair political process to ensure a meaningful right to vote), cert. denied, 188 Ga. App. 912 (Ga. 1988).
clearly articulated the roles that the state action and political question doctrines play in this context. Lower courts at times have used the threshold issues of state action and justiciability to immunize political parties from judicial review.

A close examination of Supreme Court state action and political question doctrine decisions, however, suggests that a political party's delegate selection procedures should not be immune from constitutional challenge. Political party nominating activities, including delegate selection, constitute state action. Moreover, because separation of powers concerns simply are not implicated, challenges to party actions do not present non-justiciable political questions. Rather, challenges to political party action should be resolved on the merits of each case; on the merits, the party's strong associational rights will protect it from judicial interference in all but the most egregious instances of party behavior. By proceeding beyond the threshold issues of state action and justiciability, the courts will best be able to discharge their responsibility of assuring that our electoral system is administered fairly.