

**Nicholas Carnes.** *The Cash Ceiling: Why Only the Rich Run for Office – and What We Can Do about It.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018, 344 pp. (\$29.99 cloth, \$19.99 paper).

*The Cash Ceiling* is a well-written and comprehensive examination of why there are so few working-class candidates in American politics. This book is a sequel to Carnes' first book *White Collar Government: The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making* (The University of Chicago Press 2013). In Chapter 1, Carnes introduces his central argument that the uncertainty and costs associated with American elections disincentivize working class citizens from being recruited and running for office. He notes that while workers make up half the workforce, they are few and far between in the halls of power. The underrepresentation of the working class results in economic policies that mirror the preferences of wealthier professionals and not the demands of workers.

Chapter 2 is critical in analyzing the scarcity of working-class candidates. Carnes reviews some common theories behind the underrepresentation of workers in American legislatures. He critiques a common notion that workers are not qualified for office and that voters have internalized this fact and vote accordingly (or not vote as the case may be). Carnes systematically examines if workers as a category are perceived as less qualified than professionals in running for office. He draws upon his own unique and impressive survey of political party leaders and citizens in studying traits that are important in evaluations of quality candidates. The survey asks respondents about three different types of qualifications: general (politically active, active in community, etc.), professional (occupations), and personal (assertive, hard worker, etc.). Carnes argues that both party leaders and voters identify similar personal traits (honesty and hard work), and more importantly, that professional and workers identify similar levels of these traits in themselves. He concludes workers are perceived as qualified and that many workers choose not to run.

However, voters and party leaders did report traits in the other two categories of qualifications (general and professional) that indicate at least a soft preference for professional candidates. First, both party elites and voters identified professional occupations such as business, law, and education as desirable backgrounds for political candidates. Second, voters and party leaders emphasized quality candidates as those who are active in politics and their community. And again, professionals scored higher on these traits than did workers. Carnes acknowledges these gaps but argues that these perceptions can't explain the large occupational differences of political candidates. This is true, the socioeconomic gap is staggering. Although I would have liked to read more about why the similarities in personal traits, which seem rather universal and banal, are more important in determining a quality candidate than voter evaluations of a candidate's professional experience and political engagement.

Chapter 3 studies the problem of why working-class citizens do not run for office. Carnes finds that political elites are less likely to recruit workers because of perceived differences in both resources and ambition. In a unique survey of state legislators, he finds that sitting legislators view workers as having resource and time restrictions that might hurt them running for office. Carnes notes that workers are structurally disadvantaged in campaigning in two ways: one, from not being embedded in social networks with wealthier professionals, and second, workers can't afford to lose wages from taking time off to campaign. A unique survey of candidates shows that workers (as compared to professionals) are more concerned about losing their income or job when running for office. Carnes also shows that states with higher levels of economic inequality correlate with fewer working class legislators. He convincingly shows that it is not a lack of ambition but political recruitment by elites that helps explain the shortage of workers in political office.

Chapter 4 examines the institutional barriers for working class candidates. Carnes extends his argument that elections are also expensive, uncertain, and salient to recruiters and party insiders who view working class candidates as risky recruits. He studies how campaign costs and recruitment serve as obstacles to workers who might run for office. Carnes finds in an analysis of statewide and district characteristics that larger and more expensive elections produce fewer working-class office holders. Additionally, recruiters rely on their social networks to identify new candidates and these elite networks have few workers in them. Party chairs also have negative attitudes about workers' ability to fundraise and win elections that bias their recruitment of working-class people. However, party recruiters with connections to workers and unions recruit more working-class candidates.

After identifying the hurdles for working-class candidates, Carnes then turns to examine the various plans to address the dearth of workers in American politics. Carnes separates the numerous plans into pretenders and contenders. He concludes that popular solutions such as publicly financing elections and increasing legislators' salaries are not targeted enough at workers to increase their participation in campaigns. Other potential solutions like reenergizing unions, and redistributing wealth are categorized as too unrealistic to help workers into politics. The strategies that he finds more promising address the recruitment and personal financing difficulties of working-class candidates. Carnes claims that the most promising programs are candidate schools, seed money, and political scholarships. There are not enough of these programs for him to systematically evaluate their viability, but these programs do directly address problems identified in his earlier analysis of working candidates.

This is an important contribution to both work on representation in American politics and studies on how income inequality influences politics. The amount and varied analysis thrown at the problem of the underrepresentation of the working class is impressive. Carnes makes a convincing argument about how elections and campaigning as currently constituted create institutional barriers for workers becoming involved in public service. There are some questions that arose from reading this book that I would hope Carnes or other researchers explore

in the future. How has the shift from industrial to service jobs changed what it means to be working class? Is there a lack of social capital among the working class compared to professionals that influence running for office? If personal financial burdens are a factor in why workers don't run, then why were there not more working class officeholders when workers were firmly middle class in the 1950s and 1960s? Most importantly, how does class intersect with race and gender in disincentivizing citizens to run for office? Since women and racial and ethnic minorities are so prevalent in the American working class it is hard to divorce these characteristics from class in analyzing the barriers to entry into the political class.

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