



# What are Campaigns For? The Role of Persuasion in Electoral Law and Politics

*James A Gardner*

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Election campaigns ought to be serious occasions in the life of a democratic polity. For citizens of a democracy, an election is a time to take stock-to reexamine our beliefs; to review our understanding of our own interests; to ponder the place of those interests in the larger social order; and to contemplate, and if necessary to revise, our understanding of how our commitments are best translated into governmental policy-or so we profess to believe. Americans, however, are haunted by the fear that our election campaigns fall far short of the ideal to which we aspire. The typical modern American election campaign seems crass, shallow, and unengaging. The arena of our democratic politics seems to lie in an uncomfortable chasm between our political ideals and everyday reality. *What Are Campaigns For?* is a multidisciplinary work of legal scholarship that examines the role of legal institutions in constituting the disjunction between political ideal and reality. The book explores the contemporary American ideal of democratic citizenship in election campaigns by tracing it to its historical sources, documenting its thorough infiltration of legal norms, evaluating its feasibility in light of the findings of empirical social science, and testing it against the requirements of democratic theory.

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