Chapter Three
History and Development of Congress

Draft 1.1

Congress was created to handle certain types of conflict that were bound to arise in the complex “extended Republic” that the Constitution created. In Chapter 1 I suggested that there is a generic danger inherent in any complicated society: without well-constructed institutions, conflict can spiral out of control. Even among people of good will, there is never a grand political bargain that can be struck that somehow can’t be undone. In Chapter 2 I argued that the “national” Congresses that existed before and during the Articles of Confederation were poorly constructed, further imperiling an independent United States.

With the introductory material from the previous two chapters behind us, we are now in a position to begin examining Congress systematically. In this chapter, I take as broad a view of Congress as I can, surveying over 200 years of congressional history, with the goal of understanding two general questions: First, within particular periods of congressional development, how have the basic institutional elements that define a legislature—rules of procedure, the committee system, and parties—been structured for Congress to do its work? Second, with these elements in place and fairly stable for long periods of time, what has been the policymaking environment that has characterized each of these periods?

In this chapter, the discussion is organized chronologically, as is traditionally done whenever a book or a book chapter has the word “history” in the title. History, after all, is about sequence. Still, I will try to avoid telling a “one-damned-thing-after-another” series of stories about Congress, and so I will impose a structure on the stories I tell. Congressional politics derive its energy from the electoral arena, and so the best way to organize large swaths of
congressional history is according to the ebb and flow of electoral dynamics. As it so happens, scholars of the electoral system have noted that American political history can be divided into eras in a surprisingly neat way. For fairly long stretches at a time, the basic contours of nationwide partisan conflict remain fairly stable. The same (usually two) parties compete against each other, year in and year out, over the same issues. The same people—or demographic types—tend to support the same parties throughout. Shorter-term shocks to the political system, such as wars and recessions, may favor one party’s fortunes over the other’s, but during these periods a return to normalcy in the economy or society returns electoral competition to past patterns.

These relatively stable periods of party competition are occasionally broken, through calamitous political, social, or economic developments, such as the Great Depression or the Civil War. When the basic grounds on which the parties compete are shaken to the core, this opens up the possibility that future electoral competition will be quite different from the past—perhaps because new issues have entered politics, new groups have been mobilized into politics, or old groups have shifted partisan allegiances.

Scholars of the party and electoral systems call these long periods of stable partisan competition party systems. They call the calamitous periods in between critical periods and the elections that correspond to these periods as critical elections. These same scholars are largely agreed that there have been five party systems, and some argue we are now in the sixth. Those systems, traditionally defined, are the following:¹

(1) Experimental system, 1789–1820, characterized by elite politics and contested by the Federalists (more elite) and Republicans\(^2\) (less elite).

(2) Democratizing system, 1828–54/60, emerging from a multifactional politics in the 1810s and 1820s and an expansion of the electorate, contested by Whigs (pro-commercial) and Democrats (pro-agrarian).

(3) Civil War system, 1860–93, formed around the Civil War and resulting in a largely regional politics contested by Democrats (southern) and Republicans (northern).

(4) Industrial system, 1894–1932, organized mostly according to those advantaged by the rise of industry (Republicans) and those disadvantaged by it (Democrats), with the same regionalism remaining from the previous party system.

(5) New Deal system, 1932–?, energized by new voters who were mobilized in 1930 and 1932, pushing the Democrats to the “left” and the Republicans to the “right,” with regional vestiges of the two previous systems still in place.

Some argue that a sixth party system emerged in the 1960s, which was more ideological than the New Deal system, in which the liberal Republicans were pushed into the Democratic party and conservative Democrats were pushed toward the Republicans.


\(^2\)Do not confuse the supporters of Jefferson, who were called Republicans, with the modern political party that also goes by the same name. Because of the possible confusion across historical eras, some scholars refer to the earliest Republicans as either Jeffersonians or as Democrat-Republicans.
This periodization is a useful starting point for organizing a discussion of 200+ years of congressional history, for two reasons. First, a robust periodization like this is helpful because congressional politics derives its energy from elections. If electoral competition is stable, then politics should be stable—and the institution of Congress will likewise be stable. When elections are in a state of flux, this also presents opportunities to members of Congress (MCs) who wish to use the institution of Congress to further the agendas of emerging political blocs to advance those agendas.

Second—and speaking more practically—it is striking how relatively stable Congress has been during the partisan systems identified by electoral scholars and how fluid Congress has been surrounding the critical periods of change and realignment. While any periodizing scheme comes with dangers that it will overly simplify the dynamics of politics, one can go a long way by simply noting that the evolution of congressional politics closely parallels the evolution of party politics.

I take only one major deviation from the mainstream of party scholarship in the pages that follow. The “New Deal realignment” stood prior electoral politics on its head, replacing one longstanding majority party (the Republicans) with another (the Democrats). Yet this realignment in the electorate only changed congressional personnel. The institution itself was not changed very much in any fundamental sense. Hence, my own periodization of congressional politics merges together the industrial and New Deal systems into what I call the “textbook” system of congressional politics.

By “stable” I don’t wish to imply that congressional politics is quiet or conflict-free during these periods. A better adjective may be “predictable.”
In Figure III-1 I have therefore sketched out the five major periods of congressional history—what I will call *congressional systems*, in deference to the term *party systems* that is used in the study of political parties. Each congressional system is characterized by a combination of an electoral equilibrium that supports an organizational equilibrium.

In Table III-1 I have summarized the basic contours of these equilibria. I have also characterized the basic elements of the critical election periods that set off each separate congressional system.

The remainder of this chapter is divided according to the congressional systems I have just outlined. In each section I discuss the electoral “crisis” that demarcated the new congressional system from the old. I then go on to discuss the major institutional features that grew up during these congressional systems and were supported by the electoral system as it emerged.

I. The Experimental Era, 1789–1812

I have termed the first congressional system “experimental,” because that is precisely what the earliest members of Congress did—they experimented. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Congress under the Articles of Confederation had tried out many different divisions of labor. The states, too, had many different ways of organizing their legislatures.\(^4\) The Constitution gave each chamber of Congress the right to make its own rules and organize its own internal affairs. Neither chamber immediately hit upon a grand organizing principle that was last unchanged for very long.

Tab. III-2   In the background of congressional organization was the electoral environment. Well before the advent of the mass media, or even universal suffrage, politics was a fairly elite business in the late 1700s. Most states had property restrictions governing who could vote, and thus electorates were fairly small. Table III-2 shows the size of voter turnout in the earliest elections for which we have data. Identifiable party factions did not form immediately, but by the elections of 1794 and 1795, the party labels “Republican” and “Federalist” were used nationwide to identify the partisan affiliations of congressional candidates. Federalists formed around a core of supporters of Alexander Hamilton, the first Treasury Secretary, who favored strong national programs to provide for the commercial development of the United States and stronger ties to Great Britain. Republicans formed around a core of supporters of Thomas Jefferson, the first Secretary of State, who put greater faith in state and local governments than Hamilton, and who opposed Hamiltonian plans for commercial development. Finally, the Republicans tended to side with France in the European conflicts of the day.

The legislative theory that governed the basic flow of legislation in the earliest years of Congress has been termed “Jeffersonian,” after followers of Jefferson who believed that the whole Congress, and not subsets like committees, should hold a tight reign over legislation. For most of this period, legislation proceeded as follows. A subject would be introduced on the floor of one of the chambers, say the House, and a general debate would ensue. As the debate wound down, someone would make a motion that the matter be referred to a committee to consider the matter in light of the debate and report back to the chamber. In the earliest years, this ad hoc (or

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select) committee would then report back to the chamber with a more refined set of ideas and possible further debate. Then, another committee would be appointed to draft a bill for final passage. The bill would then be reported back to the House for final debate, possible amendment, and final passage.

As time progressed, the two ad hoc committees involved in turning an inchoate proposal into legislation would be reduced to one, with the initial committee being authorized to report back immediately with a bill. Even with this minor streamlining, the logic underlying the flow of legislation remained unchanged: from the floor, where basic principles were established, to committee, where details were specified, and then back to the floor, where the law was finally approved.

As is typical of most legislatures with a lower and upper chamber, the lower chamber of the U.S. Congress (the House) was much more active in originating legislation than the Senate. In those few cases where the Senate initiated legislation, the flow of business paralleled the House: Senate floor debate —> ad hoc committee —> Senate floor debate and passage. In most cases, however, the Senate simply received the House bill, referring it immediately to an ad hoc Senate committee, which was directed to consider the bill and report it back to the Senate with a recommendation about what action to take. The Senate, which met in secret until 1795, often had little to do while awaiting the House to send it legislation. Thus, it frequently adjourned early and allowed senators to attend to business or listen in to the public House sessions.

The second major institutional feature of Congress we are interested in is its leadership structure, and here both chambers exhibited a simple set of practices early on. The House Speaker possessed some authority to help guide legislation, through his power of recognition and
right to appoint committees. Yet, it is commonly agreed that only one of the Speakers before 1812—Sedgwick (6th Congress, 1799–1801)—used his parliamentary assets in a brazenly partisan fashion. The Vice President, as the constitutionally-designated presiding officer of the Senate—was never given parliamentary rights even closely resembling the House Speaker’s, nor was the President *pro tempore*.

The strongest legislative leaders who have been identified during this period were not members of Congress at all. The first, Alexander Hamilton, derived his leadership authority from his position as the first Secretary of State and the source of the most credible recommendations for getting the young nation’s financial house in order. Yet, political divisions quickly emerged precisely over Hamilton’s active role in guiding legislation, and by the third Congress (1793–95) the House had created a permanent, *standing* committee on Ways and Means to provide financial advice to the House, thus skirting Hamilton’s influence. Thomas Jefferson also provided legislative leadership to the House following his election as president in 1800, which corresponded with the Jeffersonians taking control of both the House and Senate. Like Washington before him, Jefferson relied on his Secretary of the Treasury (Albert Gallatin) to provide strategic leadership to his partisans in Congress. Furthermore, Jefferson was willing to intervene in the choice of House leaders, arranging for the appointment of his floor leader as chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

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6The first rules adopted by the House of Representatives called for committees to be chosen by a ballot of the whole House. However, this provision quickly proved unworkable—the House was spending almost all of its time electing committees and doing little actual work—and was quickly changed to provide for the Speaker to appoint the committees unless the House directed otherwise.
II. The Democratizing System, 1820–1860

The electoral developments that helped put an end to the experimental system were associated with the War of 1812 and its aftermath. The period preceding the War itself witnessed the ascent of one of the most innovative House leaders in its history, Henry Clay, who led off a decade of institutional flux when he seized the Speakership on the first day he was a member of the House (1811) and then actively orchestrated the declaration of war against England in 1812. Upon ascending to the Speakership, Clay promoted a change in the House rules that gave the Speaker greater latitude in controlling debate on the floor, and particularly limiting the tactics that opponents of legislation might use to obstruct business. Combining a firm control over floor debate with deft attention to the composition of committees, Clay and his followers held the legislative upper hand to an unusual degree in American history.

From the perspective of the development of Congress, the most important direct effect of the War of 1812 was to fundamentally upset the incumbent structure of national partisan politics in three ways. First, the Republicans by-and-large supported going to war against England while the Federalists did not. The patriotic fervor that was whipped up during the War had the effect of undercutting popular support for the Federalists. Even worse for the Federalists, however, was the Hartford Convention, called by a host of New England Federalist politicians in 1814 to discuss their grievances with the national government that arose through the conduct of the War. Secession was discussion, though rejected. Although the Hartford Convention was a failure, it

made the Federalists seem not only anti-war, but anti-American. Popular support for the Federalists vanished, leaving the Congress a virtual one-party legislature by 1815.

The War of 1812 destroyed what was left of the two-party system organized along the Federalist-Republican axis, replacing it with a structure of politics that was factional, but not partisan. Foreign policy receded into the distance as the major organizing issue of partisan conflict. Slavery issue came rapidly into view and quickly dominated national politics. The debate over the first Missouri Compromise, which began in 1819, caused regional animosities to erupt and linger for the first time in American history. Those animosities were an active feature of congressional voting patterns and electoral competition until the 19th Congress (1825–27). National leaders—men such as Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren—worked hard to forge new partisan organizations that spanned the two regions, and in the end created parties in which regional issues such as slavery and the tariff were submerged. Nonetheless, the trans-regional coalitions that the two political parties (Democrats and Whigs) developed into were fragile. Regional issues were only just below the surface, providing the possibility that a regionally-based factionalism could split either party (or both) at any given moment.

The breakdown of the old partisan system in the 1810s sowed the seeds for new legislative behaviors. Going forward, fear that the submerged regional animosities might suddenly surface greatly influenced legislative behavior until the Civil War.

The most important formal institutional development in Congress during the second congressional system was the establishment of standing committee systems in both chambers. Gradually throughout the early 19th century, the House had been abandoning its reliance on *ad hoc* select committees for separate bills and petitions, adding instead a host of standing
committees. During the 1810s and 1820s momentum in favor of the standing committees gathered quickly, so that by 1830, all senators and House members were members of standing committees; by then select committees in both chambers were the exception, rather than the rule.

Why did both chambers move so swiftly to install standing committees as the normal route for the consideration of legislation? Although this organizational change is arguably the most consequential in the history of Congress, virtually no contemporary members of Congress commented on the changes, either in the press accounts of the day or in the journals and letters they wrote. Therefore, scholarship into the development of the committee system during this period has been partially speculative. Yet, piecing together fragments of direct evidence, along with puzzling through this period aided by theory, political scientists have developed four general explanations about why the congressional committee system became entrenched, and why this entrenchment occurred in the 1810s and 1820s, rather than before or after.

(1) The role of Henry Clay. Henry Clay and his War Hawk allies took Congress by storm upon entering the House in 1811. Determined to go to war against England and united as a bloc, the Clay-led House majority easily controlled the House politically in the early 1810s. However, as the War started going poorly, support for Clay waned. Later, once the War was over, it became impossible to hold together this political coalition by relying on a shared antagonism toward England. As a vehicle to bind together his political coalition, Clay doled out valued committee assignments to potential allies. In other words, strengthening the House committee system was a major vehicle that Clay used to bolster his political
strength. Once strengthened, it was difficult to pull this power back from the committees.⁸

(2) **Workload demands.** Much of the growth of the committee system in the 1810s and 1820s came through the creation of committees that pored over requests from constituents for special consideration from the federal government. Some of these requests concerned the distribution of public lands in the newly-acquired territories west of the Mississippi River; others concerned the payments of pensions to survivors of veterans of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812; and still others simply handled claims against the federal government to redress economic harms caused by actions of the federal government. All of these matters were eventually referred to new claims, lands, and pension standing committees in the two chambers.

(3) **Oversight of the executive branch.** The War of 1812 led to the growth and increasing complexity of the national government. The greatest growth in the size of the House committee system came through the creation of six committees in 1816 that were charged with the task of auditing the various departments of the national government.

(4) **Institutional competition.** During the 1810s, a host of factors prompted senators to become more active in initiating legislation and aiding constituents. This

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activism, in turn, prompted Senate leaders to propose a streamlining of Senate legislative procedure. At the start of the 16th Congress, the Senate took a major detour in its institutional development, replacing its scores of select committees with a much smaller number (12) of standing committees. The Senate thus, nearly overnight, acquired a set of committees in which policy expertise could be developed independently of the House and the executive branch. The House, in turn, responded by finishing its conversion to standing committees, due to its members worried about losing the upper hand in policy disagreements with the Senate.

Each of these explanations can be grounded in the rational calculations of individual members of Congress. The explanation that emphasizes the role of Henry Clay highlights the strategic calculations an individual leader might make to advance his own political ambitions. The explanations that emphasize growing workloads address a problem common to all organizations—how to parcel out the work while retaining control over the decisions that are finally made. The institutional solution sought by both chambers of Congress in managing its workload—referring its work to committees composed of members rather than to delegate to the executive branch—illustrates how Congress usually trusts advice from political peers (who share the same electoral imperatives) over advice from political outsiders (whose goals often differ significantly from legislators.)

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In overseeing the executive branch, Congress faced the problem of how to exert policy control over an entity that had grown unwieldy as a consequence of the war effort. Thus in its earliest days, Congress was faced with what economists call a *principal-agent* problem. And finally, as the two chambers engaged in a type of institutional arms race, expanding each standing committee system apace, we witness members of both chambers trying to keep control over policymaking to themselves, lest they lose initiative and influence to their rivals.

Each of these explanations for the expansion for the committee system resonates with research into the more modern Congress—as well it should. The legislators who endowed Congress with a strong, well-articulated committee system in the 1810s and 1820s were practical politicians trying to achieve a mix of electoral and policy goals. It is not surprising that the mix of motivations identified by historians of Congress to explain this committee system development

10The classic and simplest example of a principal-agent relationship exists between an employer and an employee. The employer wants a certain amount of work done as well as possible while the employee presumably wants to do only well enough to please the boss. The boss can’t always observe directly what the employee is doing, and thus the employee has an incentive to *shirk*. In wisely designing the principal-agent relationship, the boss attempts to align the incentives of the employee more directly with the desires of the boss. So, for instance, the boss might pay the employee as a function of the profits of the firm to encourage her to work hard and keep costs down.

A similar relationship exists between chamber majorities and anyone it delegates legislative decisionmaking to. Committee members and members of the executive branch do not automatically share the policy goals of the chamber majority. Comparing committees with executive branch officials, committees have the advantage in that they are more easily monitored by the whole chamber and committee members more readily share the electoral goals of other chamber members. Executive branch officials often possess greater expertise, so the tradeoff is generally between greater expertise from people the chamber can’t trust so much *versus* less expertise from people the chamber can trust more. The classic way of solving this dilemma—which is evident in the earliest days of congressional development—is to delegate the ultimate authority over giving the chamber advice to a committee composed of peers and then authorizing the committee to consult with executive branch officials and anyone else they choose.
mirror the motivations of modern legislators who have tried to reform the committee system more to their liking.

At the same time the standing committee system was developing into a complex and defining feature of the American Congress, the party leadership system was developing in fits and starts. The House and Senate each had different manifestations of this phenomenon, but the result was the same: once the era we are examining came to a close in 1860, neither chamber had developed a party structure or leadership apparatus that rivaled the committee system.

Fig. III-2 In both chambers, the looming reality that hung over party leadership from 1820 to 1860 was the regional divide opened by the Missouri Compromise and the issue of slavery. Although the Whig and Democratic parties, which grew up during this period, were national parties, they each had northern and southern wings, leading to the possibility that the parties themselves could fly apart, with the regional wings defecting, joining the corresponding regional wing of the opposite party. Additionally, the national party system was fertile ground for the development of third parties, such as the American (“Know-Nothing”) and Free Soil Parties. To illustrate the fragility of party politics during the second congressioa system Figure III-2 graphs out a measure of the number of parties that had members in each Congress.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\)The measure of the effective number of parties in each Congress is based on a measure of market concentration used in economics called the *Herfendahl index*. Applied to parties, the Herfendahl index is constructed by finding the fraction of the chamber’s seats held by each party, and then summing the square of those fractions. A legislature with three parties, one with half the seats and two with one-quarter of the seats would have a Herfendahl index of 3/8 because

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\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^2 = \frac{6}{16} = \frac{3}{8}
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The reciprocal of the Herfendahl index is the measure of the effective number of parties in a legislature. In this example, there are effectively 2 1/3 parties because 8/3 is the reciprocal of 3/8.
Party chaos in the electorate often translated to party chaos in Congress. One important manifestation of this chaos occurred in antebellum speakership elections. Under the rules of the House, Speakers must be elected by a majority of the chamber who are present and voting. Whenever one party is clearly in the majority and members of that party are loyal to it, electing the House Speaker is trivial: the majority party nominates its leader and then votes as a unified front for his election. The majority is guaranteed. But, if there is no majority, or if the majority has disloyal factions, then electing the House Speaker is anything but trivial. In these circumstance we may observe multiple Speaker candidates from a single party and multiple ballots to resolve the contest.

Which is what we observe in the antebellum period. From 1820 to 1860, the House elected Speakers 22 times. Nine times it took more than one ballot to make a selection. The average number of ballots needed to finally select a Speaker in these nine elections was 33. The most protracted and bitter speakership contests occurred in the 26th Congress (1839), when it took 14 days and 11 ballots to elect a Speaker, the 31st Congress (1849, 18 days, 63 ballots), the 34th Congress (1855, 2 months, 133 ballots), and the 36th Congress (1859, 2 months, 44 ballots).

A good example of how regionalism could intrude into the established party system was the balloting for Speaker in the 34th Congress. The 34th Congress was elected in 1854 and 1855, on the heels of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Much like reaction to the Missouri Compromise in 1819, the Kansas-Nebraska Act brought underlying regional animosities

\[12\] Until the late nineteenth century, several states held elections in odd numbered years.

\[13\] The Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the Missouri Compromise, organized two new western territories, and allowed residents of the territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery.
to the fore. Complicating divisions over slavery, however, was an anti-immigrant political movement whose followers are often called the “Know-Nothings,” but whose politicians marched under the banner of the American Party. Americans came mostly from the north, but they also had southern adherents, too.

In reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a hodgepodge of northern representatives—former Whigs and Democrats—came together under a loose alliance that identified itself simply in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. While this group would form the core of the Republican party, at this time they were simply labeled the Opposition. While the Democrats were the largest party in the 34th House, they weren’t a majority. Without a majority party to organize the House, the only thing obvious at the beginning of the 34th Congress was that the speakership balloting would be protracted.

The Democratic party, which had been reduced to a southern core with a few middle-Atlantic and Midwestern sympathizers, was cohesive and proposed a single candidate, William Richardson, from Illinois. The anti-Nebraska forces were split two ways: between north and south and between American and Opposition blocs. Consequently, four major opponents emerged to battle the Democratic speakership candidate on the first ballot: Nathaniel Banks (American, Massachusetts), Humphrey Marshall (American, Kentucky), Lewis Campbell (Opposition, Ohio), and Henry Fuller (Opposition, Pennsylvania). On the first ballot, Richardson received 72 votes, Campbell 52, Marshall 30, Banks 20, Fuller 17, and 16 other candidates split the vote of 30 other House members.

14 In addition to these five candidates, each of whom received at least 17 votes, 16 other House members received at least one vote on the first speakership ballot.
Throughout this book, I rely on the research of Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, who have developed a statistical technique to estimate the ideal points of members of Congress based on their observed roll call votes. I will discuss this technique in Chapter 9. For this discussion, all you need to know is that Poole and Rosenthal claim that their technique uncovers the ideal points of members of Congress, assuming they are voting according to the logic of the spatial model we discussed in Chapter 1. While their technique uncovers ideal points in a multidimensional space, the first dimension by far has the greatest power in explaining how people vote on particular roll calls. In the modern era, members who are on one end of the space tend to be known as extreme liberals, while the ones who are at the other end of the space tend to be known as extreme conservatives. Thus, it is convenient to think of the first dimension as simply the well-known left-right, or liberal-conservative, continuum.

Fig III-3 The top half of Figure III-3 uses a one-dimensional spatial model to show how the voting emerged on this first ballot. The upper panel shows the estimated ideal points along a left-right dimension of all the House members who supported each of the five major Speaker candidates on the first ballot. Triangles show the left-right ideal points of the candidates. While the left-right spatial location of the Speaker candidates helps to explain who voted for whom on the first ballot, regional and nativist (anti-immigrant) factors—which are accounted for by other dimensions in the policy space—intervened, as well. So, for instance, southern Americans (who were mostly on the left of the dimension) supported Marshall, while northern Americans supported Banks. The non-American Opposition vote was likewise split between the westerner Campbell and the easterner Fuller.

Over the next two months, leaders of the various factions tried out new Speaker candidates, attempting to find the right combination of ideological correctness and regional appeal that would attract a majority of the chamber. Eventually the Democrats settled on William Aiken, of South Carolina and an Opposition-American alliance emerged that supported Banks. Still,

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16In other words, the further left (right) the Speaker candidate is, he further left (right) his supporters.
enough slavery extremists on both sides of the issue refused to accede to these compromise candidates (particularly Banks), so that neither could quite get a majority. The contest was only resolved once the House finally agreed to settle the matter via a plurality vote (i.e., the highest vote-getter, regardless of whether it was a majority).17

The lower half of Figure III-3 shows the left-right location of Aiken and Banks, along with the ideal point locations of their supporters. The final vote is described almost perfectly by the one dimensional spatial model. However, it took over a hundred ballots before bargaining among factional leaders could achieve a reduction of the choice to just two major candidates. Banks, in turn, rewarded his supporters by favoring anti-Nebraska men in the appointment of committees, even though he sought to placate the south by appointing one of their own, John A. Quitman (Dem., Miss.) to chair the Military Affairs Committee.

Lacking a Speaker, the Senate did not have quite the pyrotechnical displays in choosing its party leaders. Still, the underlying regional tensions manifest themselves within the Senate by the choice of the vice president. The choice of vice president was critical for the maintenance of the balance rule that emerged following the Missouri Compromise of 1820.18 The balance rule operated by admitting Missouri and Maine together as slave and free states and then setting in motion a pattern of always balancing the admission of slave and free states together. Thus, even though the House would grow to possess a large anti-slavery, northern majority due to population

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growth in the north, the Senate maintained an even balance between the two regions. Helping to reinforce this balance rule was a practice developed by the two parties of balancing their presidential-vice presidential tickets between north and south, also.

Table III-3  
Table III-3 shows the balancing of tickets of the Whig/Republicans and Democrats from 1836 to 1860.\textsuperscript{19} Except for the regionally-structured campaign of 1840, it was almost always the case that whenever a party chose a northerner for president, it chose a southerner for vice president, and vice versa. The most egregious violation of this pattern occurred at the end of the time period, when the Republicans ran two sets of northern candidates in the 1860 presidential election. So, what mortified southerners about the election of Abraham Lincoln was not only his moderation on the issue of slavery expansion, but the fact that his party had abandoned allegiance to the balance rule, eliminating the pro-southern veto that had been institutionalized at the national level for almost half a century.

That the vice president was chosen to help the parties deal with their electoral needs, rather than to help lead the Senate from within, is one reason why the vice president, though the constitutional head of the Senate, never developed as the actual leader of the Senate. The experience of John C. Calhoun (vice president in the 19th, 20th, and 21st Congresses) helps demonstrate the strategic disadvantage facing vice presidents who wished to take the legislative lead. At the start of the 19th Congress, the Senate rules specified that the “presiding officer” would appoint Senate committees. Heretofore the vice president had rarely functioned as the Senate’s presiding officer, leaving the matter to the president \textit{pro tempore} or some other senator

\textsuperscript{19}This discussion of the president-vice president balance rule is taken from John Aldrich, \textit{Why Parties}, University of Chicago Press, pp. 129–31.
who happened to be holding the chair. Calhoun, however, upset this practice by insisting on appointing the Senate committees himself. His committee assignments reflected strongly his policy views which were, by and large, radically different from the mainstream of the chamber. Consequently, the Senate moved to take the right of making committee assignments away from the vice president, vesting it first in the president *pro tempore*, and then in a ballot of the whole Senate.

At the dawn of the Civil War the organizational character of both chambers was similar in many respects, even as they differed in obvious ways (like by size and regional composition). A large committee system had developed in both chambers and much of the original legislative work was lodged there. Committee membership was fluid, reflecting partially the high turnover of members, but also reflecting the fact that slightly different factions controlled each chamber from one Congress to the next, requiring the reshuffling of the power system, much like cabinet portfolios are shifted every time a government in a parliamentary system faces an election. Party leaders tried valiantly to overcome deep regional animosities, but the need to manage regional cleavages undermined leadership positions as foci of real power. Leaders were chosen, on an *ad hoc* Congress-by-Congress basis, to help manage the regional crisis of the moment.

III. The Civil War System, 1865–1896

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Calhoun by this time had emerged as the strongest exponent of a strong view of states rights and of a limited federal government. The Senate, of course, was tightly balanced between states right and national rights points of view, and so Calhoun’s unabashed stacking of the Senate committees strongly angered northern senators and even discomfited moderates in the chamber.
The obvious political break point in the middle of the nineteenth century was the Civil War, fought from 1861 to 1865. Although the political consequences of the War for the nation as a whole were immense, the changes that were wrought in Congress have been underappreciated by historians and political scientists. As far as Congress is concerned, the most important electoral discontinuity brought by the Civil War was the exclusion of the south from the national electorate, depriving the Democratic party of its long-running majority on the national scene, allowing the Republican party to rule in a virtual one-party state for a decade.

The war helped to make partisan affiliations within the electorate even more regionally-structured than they had been in the past, producing a “solid South,” loyal to the Democratic party for the next century, a (less) solid North, tending toward the Republican party, and a highly competitive Ohio River Valley, which could go either way. Additionally, while the Republican party held sway over Congress and the presidency in the 1860s, it worked to undo the effects of the “balance rule” that had operated before the Civil War. In particular, through a series of highly partisan maneuvers, the Republican Congress admitted to the Union a host of low-population western states that had strong Republican tendencies (like Nevada), keeping from statehood some higher-population states with Democratic tendencies (like Utah). The strongly Republican Dakota territory was split in two, creating two new Republican states where there had been a single medium-population Republican territory.

The most important consequence of this strategy of “stacking the Senate”21 was that once the southern states were readmitted to the Union under Reconstruction, Republican and

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Democratic strength in Congress was matched perfectly, even though the Democrats returned to majority party status, in terms of the affiliations of voters. This creation of a Democratic-dominated House and Republican-dominated Senate produced what was then the longest period of chronically-divided control of the federal government in the nation’s history—a period that was unmatched until recent history. Republicans and Democrats found themselves locked in intense partisan combat at the polls and on the floor of Congress. This combat not only affected which policies were passed (or failed to pass due to deadlock), but significantly affected the internal organization of Congress.

Fig. III-4 In both chambers the committee systems had been fully fleshed-out during the antebellum period. What the post-Civil War period brought was greater structuring of the committees along partisan lines. This is illustrated in Figure III-4, which shows the percentage of committee chairmen in both chambers who belonged to the majority party. Before 1860 that figure only occasionally approached 100%. After a period of transition in the 1860s, that figure generally hovered around 100%. Before 1860 the party composition of the committees changed yearly, usually driven by the necessity to knit together intra-party coalitions to help organize both the House and Senate. From roughly 1870 until the present, the majority party has almost always held more than half the seats on all the committees and almost always has held all the committee chairmanships. The only systematic deviation from this pattern occurred in the Senate, which had so many committees after the 1880s that it sometimes had more committees than members of the majority party, prompting the appointment of minority party committee chairs simply to fill out the committee rosters.
Corresponding with a stronger partisan structuring of the committees in both chambers was the generally stronger and more central role played by party leaders. On the House side, the job of the party leader was simplified as a consequence of the stronger regional alignment of the parties. Democrats mostly represented the south and farmers; Republicans mostly represented the north and urban dwellers. There were enough exceptions to make the parties less than perfectly homogeneous, but now the homogeneity was sufficient to keep inter-party struggles from breaking out on the floor. Contrasting with the antebellum period, only once since 1859 has there been a serious contest for the Speakership.22

Because the Senate lacks a focal organizing vote like the House’s speakership balloting, the stronger tug of partisanship in the Senate after the Civil War had fewer obvious organizational manifestations. It was easier to organize the Senate most Congresses, too, only this didn’t show up in balloting for Speaker. The one exception to this statement came in the 47th Congress, when the number of Republican and Democratic senators was evenly matched and the Senate deadlocked briefly over which party would get to control majorities on the committees.

During the post-Civil War period the Senate emerged as one of the centers of partisan power in the United States. Reformers derided the Senate during this period as a “Millionaires Club,” since so many of its members had become rich, particularly through the financing and building of the railroads. What this slogan misses is a more subtle characteristic of the Senate after the Civil War: The millionaires who populated it were also many of the most important party officials of their eras. They gained election by consolidating political power in their states.

22That one exception was in 1923 (68th Congress) when Progressive Republicans nominated their own candidate for Speaker and threw the House into a nine-ballot, two-day struggle over organizing.
By controlling state politics first, they dominated elections to state legislatures. In a very real sense, therefore, the constitutional theory that senators would be responsive to states primarily through their legislatures was turned on its head—it was the state legislature that was in many cases responsive to the senator.\(^{23}\)

The greater cohesion of the two parties’ individual constituency bases, coupled with the close partisan margins produced by the elections, opened the way for party leaders to acquire greater power to lead their parties. The classic example of this came in the passage of the Reed Rules during the 51st Congress (1889–91).

The elections of 1888 had returned a bare majority for the Republicans. The partisan margin stood at 173 seats for the Republicans and 156 for the Democrats, with one vacancy. Following that election 15 Republicans who had been declared losers by state election officials appealed those decisions to the House where, according to the Constitution, the House could determine who rightfully held the seat. During this era, contested elections cases were more often than not decided in favor of the party holding a majority in the House—presumably even in many cases where the minority party candidate was the rightful winner.\(^{24}\) Understanding the partisan nature of contested elections cases, it’s not surprising that Republicans who lost by narrow margins would appeal to a Republican-controlled House. And, given the close partisan margin already in the House, it’s not surprising that Democrats would skeptically regard any proposal to resolve a contested election case in favor of a Republican.


One of the Republicans who appealed his electoral defeat to the whole House was Charles B. Smith, who had lost his election to James M. Jackson in the 4th District of West Virginia by only three votes—19,834 to 19,837. After considering his contest, the House Elections Committee recommended that Smith be seated. Upon calling up the resolution to seat Smith instead of Jackson, the Democrats objected that the election challenge was being unjustly decided. Speaker Reed, who was presiding at the time, ignored the protests of the Democrats and led a roll call to seat the Republican Smith. At the end of the roll call, the votes were in: 161 had voted to seat Smith, 2 had voted against seating Smith, and 165 members of the House had failed to respond to their name when it was called. Among all Republicans who were members of the House at that time, they voted 161-0 to seat Smith, with 5 absent; one Democrat voted in opposition to seating Smith, and 160 were absent.

Since 163 members had voted and 165 were silent, a quorum (i.e., half the members of the House) was absent. Under the Constitution half the elected members of the House must be voting in order for the House to transact any business. According to the Constitution, the only thing Speaker Reed could do in the absence of a quorum was adjourn the House, try to get a quorum, and try the vote to seat Smith another day.

Reed chose a different tactic, though. Although 165 House members had failed to vote, that did not mean that 165 House members were absent. Indeed, most of the 165 non-voters were in the House chamber at the time the roll call was taken. These Democrats had participated in a disappearing quorum, whereby members refrained from voting, hoping the lack of a quorum would kill the measure. Here is an excerpt from the Congressional Record that describes what Reed did next:
THE SPEAKER. On the question the yeas are 161, the nays 2.

MR. CRISP. No quorum.

THE SPEAKER. The Chair directs the Clerk to record the following names of members present and refusing to vote: [Applause on the Republican side.]

MR. CRISP. I appeal–[applause on the Democratic side]–I appeal from the decision of the Chair.

THE SPEAKER. Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Bland, Mr. Blount, Mr. Breckinridge of Arkansas, Mr. Breckenridge of Kentucky.

MR. BRECKINRIDGE, of Kentucky. I deny the power of the Speaker and denounce it as revolutionary. [Applause on the Democratic side of the House, which was renewed several times.]

MR. BLAND. Mr. Speaker, I am responsible to my constituents for the way in which I vote, and not to the Speaker of this House. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

MR. SPEAKER. Mr. Brookshire, Mr. Bullock, Mr. Bynum, Mr. Carlisle, Mr. Chipman, Mr. Clements, Mr. Clunie, Mr. Compton.

MR. COMPTON. I protest against the conduct of the Chair in calling my name.

THE SPEAKER (proceeding). Mr. Covert, Mr. Crisp, Mr. Culberson of Texas [hisses on the Democratic side], Mr. Cummings, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Enloe, Mr. Fithian, Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Hare, Mr. Hatch, Mr. Hayes.

MR. HAYES. I appeal from any decision so far as I am concerned.

THE SPEAKER (proceeding). Mr. Holman, Mr. Lawles, Mr. Lee, Mr. McAdoo, Mr. McCrea.
MR. MCCREARY. I deny your right, Mr. Speaker, to count me as present, and I desire to read from the parliamentary law on that subject.

THE SPEAKER. The Chair is making a statement of the fact that the gentleman from Kentucky is present. Does he deny it? [Laughter and applause on the Republican side.]

A few days after Reed had established the precedent of breaking the disappearing quorum, the rules were changed to strengthen the hand of the Speaker and the majority party against attempts by the minority to delay legislative action. Two changes were made. First, the rules were changed to prohibit members from making *dilatory* motions. A dilatory motion is one that is made purely for the purpose of delaying action, such as endlessly moving to adjourn or making a host of trivial amendments to a bill. With this rules change a Speaker could swiftly move to take a vote on a measure and not entertain motions from the minority.

Second, the quorum in the Committee of the Whole was reduced from a quorum of the whole House (165 at that time) to a plain 100. In Chapter 7 we will examine in some detail how the Committee of the Whole operates. For now it is sufficient to know that Committee of the Whole is the legal fiction that the House uses to expedite the consideration of legislation and the debate of amendments. As the name implies, the Committee of the Whole consists of all members of the House. The rules are generally more relaxed in Committee of the Whole, but the rules also allow for less debate for each motion that’s made. The Speaker also does not preside when the House is meeting in Committee of the Whole, allowing him to take care of his own and his party’s political business while the House works on legislation. Because the Committee of the Whole is
not, technically, the House, any amendments it approves must again be approved by a formal
session of the House. However, amendments that are defeated in Committee of the Whole may
not again be considered by the House. Thus, Committee of the Whole is a powerful legal fiction.
By reducing the quorum in Committee of the Whole to 100, it was made much more difficult for
the minority party to grind business to a halt by being absent from the chamber.

Reed also developed the Rules Committee as a strategic partisan weapon. Before
Reed’s Speakership, the Rules Committee didn’t have much work. Its primary task was the
consideration of any rules changes that were proposed. Because most of these changes occurred
at the start of a session, the Rules Committee usually worked hard in the opening weeks of a
Congress to modify the rules, and then it went into legislative hibernation.

The problem Reed solved with the deft use of the Rules Committee was that of
scheduling. Under the rules of the House, all bills that are reported out of committee go onto a
long list, called the House Calendar. Under the rules, the House is supposed to consider
legislation in the order in which it appears on the calendar, meaning the first matter reported from
committee is supposed to be considered first by the House. Naturally, with such an ordering
device, it is possible for important legislation to become bogged down behind trivial matters. By
the 1880s the House had tried to deal with this problem by allowing certain committees—notably
Ways and Means and Appropriations—to report their bills to the House floor at any time. Thus,

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25See Stanley Bach and Steven S. Smith, Managing Uncertainty in the House of
Representatives, Washington, Brookings.

26There are actually two main House calendars: The House Calendar, for all regular
legislation, and the Union Calendar, for financial matters. Other calendars are also maintained to
order the consideration of minor or odd legislative matters, like the District of Columbia or
matters considered under suspension of the rules.
at least money matters could get considered whenever they were ready, jumping over other non-financial legislation. However, even this device was unsatisfactory, since it gave significant agenda-setting power to the chairs of the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees. Aware of the power their wielded, they often roamed the House floor with a few bills stuffed in their pockets. If it looked like something was going to come to the floor that he objected to, the chair of the Ways and Means Committee could gain recognition, bring up a tax bill, and block the consideration of the other business.

Reed’s solution to the agenda-setting problem was to endow the Rules Committee with another role—that of reporting out resolutions setting the time for the consideration of legislation. These resolutions were called *special orders*, but are now popularly known as *rules*. As the chair of the Rules Committee, then, Speaker Reed took back from his committee chairs some of the authority to direct the legislative agenda.

Fig. III-5 Thus, through a combination of factors—electoral and institutional—the parties following the Civil War were distinct and cohesive. A commonly-used statistic that is used to illustrate this fact measures the incidence of *party unity voting*. A *party unity vote* is one in which at least half the members of one party take a position on a roll call vote that is in disagreement with at least half of the members of the other party. The incidence of party unity voting in the House graphed in Figure III-5 is simply the fraction of all votes taken during a particular Congress in which a majority of the Democrats opposed a majority of the Republicans. During the Civil War congressional system, partisan unity was high by historical standards and grew throughout.

IV. The Textbook Era, 1912–1968
Two related electoral developments in the 1890s provided the basis for the undermining of the Civil War system and the ushering-in of the Textbook system. Those two developments were the elections of 1894 and 1896 and the rise of the Progressive fissure within the Republican party. Political scientists have identified the elections of 1894 and 1896 as providing the cleanest example of a set of critical realigning elections. Both followed the Panic of 1893, a severe economic downturn that was so bad that it was known as the Great Depression—until an even worse depression came along in 1929. The Panic of 1893 occurred under the presidency of a Democrat, Grover Cleveland. Consequently, the Democrats were hammered in the midterm election of 1894, falling from a 220–126 membership edge in the House in the 53rd Congress (1893–95) to a 104–246 deficit in the 54th (1895–97).\(^{27}\)

The social upheaval that had been spawned by the Panic of 1893 carried over into the presidential election of 1896. In that election, the two parties took strong and distinct stances on two important issues of the day: the protective tariff and the gold standard. Based on the positions historically held by the two parties, but thrown in sharper relief by the effects of the Panic, the Republicans nominated William McKinley on a platform that promised to raise tariffs in order to protect American industries against import competition; the Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan on a platform promising a further easing of tariffs. Bryan’s candidacy is better known, however, for his zealous stance against the gold standard, exemplified by his fiery “Cross of Gold Speech” made at the Democratic convention. In short, the Republicans held to a doctrine of “hard money” (i.e., a gold standard), while the Democrats favored the striking of silver coins and the deflation of the currency.

\(^{27}\)Other parties held ten seats in the 53rd Congress and seven in the 54th.
Tab. III-4 The stances taken by the two parties’ presidential candidates in 1896 had the effect of shifting around partisan support in the country in subtle ways. The regional voting realignment is summarized in Table III-4, which reports the average vote received by Democratic, Republican, and other party candidates in different regions between 1886 and 1900. The election of 1896 did nothing to change the stranglehold that the Republican party held over New England or the Democrats over the South. The industrial and more prosperous agricultural regions—the Northeast, and East North Central states—moved from being competitive to being strongly Republican. Voters in the least prosperous agrarian regions—the West North Central and the far West—shifted some of their support away from the two major parties in favor of more populist parties that responded directly to the economic dissatisfaction in these regions. These included the Progressive, Populist, and Silver parties.

By the net nationwide movement of about 7% of the vote in favor of the Republicans, the elections of 1894 and 1896 transformed Congress from an institution characterized by close partisan margins to one in which the Republican party was clearly dominant nationally. In most regions of the country the Republicans were also the dominant party, but not in all. Democrats still held tight to the deep South, and they continued to hold a slight edge in the Border states. Overall, most congressional districts became safely aligned with one of the parties, depending on the region the district was in.28

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An important change in election laws nationwide had a further effect on electoral dynamics in Congress. During the 1880s and 1890s, almost every state adopted ballot reform laws in order to clean up voting fraud and regulate party competition. While the laws differed in their particulars from state-to-state, most adopted two ballot reforms that changed the electoral landscape of Congress for good. First, all states adopted the Australian ballot, which was the innovation of having the state (rather than the parties) print up ballots which were then cast in secret. Second, nearly all states required political parties to hold primaries to choose party nominees for Congress. The first reform helped loosen the tie between voters and parties by making it easier for voters to pick and choose among candidates for various offices. The second reform helped loosen the tie between politicians and parties by making it easier for renegade party members to contest the party’s nomination for Congress.

The combination of ballot reforms and partisan realignment in the 1890s ended up giving members of Congress greater latitude in plotting out their own electoral careers. With open primaries the norm, party organizations could no longer automatically cut short the congressional career of an incumbent who had served in the House “long enough,” in favor of someone else in the party who had patiently waited his turn. And, with safer electoral margins, House incumbents could be assured that they would be around for a long time, making a career in the House more of a possibility for more people. Consequently, turnover in House membership dropped significantly at the onset of the twentieth century. (See Figure III-6.)

Before going on to explore the effects of lower turnover rates on congressional politics, I want to return briefly to a development I alluded to earlier: the ideological fissures created in the Republican party (particularly) as a consequence of the election of 1896. The Panic of 1893 had its greatest long-term negative economic consequences on the upper Great Plains states and the far west. These regions had provided strong support for the Republican party stretching back to the admission of these states before and after the Civil War.\(^{30}\) The conservatism of Republican party leaders in the face of the economic distress of this region undercut support for the GOP in the Great Plains. Even though Great Plains voters were disenchanted with the Republican party, they were unlikely converts to the Democratic party, which still bore the stain of the Civil War and slavery in the minds of many western voters. Instead, this region became ripe territory for parties espousing a populist message, distinct from Democratic candidates who might run on similar platforms. Rather than draw from a previously Democratic base, these populist parties appealed mostly to disaffected Republicans. In some cases, these parties’ candidates were successful—most of the “third party” House members from the 1890s and 1900s came from the Great Plains and the mountain west.

Trying to outflank the more populist parties, Republican candidates in western states themselves also tried to appeal to the anti-establishment vote. Therefore, even among many western Republican members of Congress, party loyalty was not all it had been only a decade before. Thus, although the Democrats and Republicans were, on the whole, cohesive, congressional Republicans harbored a small wing of approximately twenty members who were

dissatisfied with the conservative tendencies of the party mainstream—a wing that would 
destabilize the party in significant ways.\(^{31}\)

Cracks in the Republican facade appeared in the election of 1894 and 1896, although more 
than a decade would transpire before those cracks showed up on the floor of Congress. The 
populist-conservative Republican divide came to a head under the speakership of Joseph “Uncle 
Joe” Cannon (Rep., Ill.). Cannon was a conservative Speaker (58th–61st Congresses, 1903–11) 
who had little patience for the form of progressive Republicanism exemplified in the person of 
President Theodore Roosevelt. Cannon adhered to a classical doctrine of party responsibility: 
Parties, in Cannon’s view, should clearly distinguish themselves from each other. Having staked 
out a position, each party should work to achieve that position. Should a policy course prove 
unworkable or unpopular, the right thing for a party to do would be to tough it out in the 
electorate. His beef with progressives within his own party was two-fold. First, he simply 
 disagreed with much of what they stood for, such as greater regulation of business and reform of 
the political system. Second, he objected to progressives’ muddying the Republican message. If 
Progressive Republicans had a problem with the mainstream of the party, they should leave. 
Cannon had been willing to implement his views on party responsibility through his actions as 
Speaker, blocking legislation of which he disapproved and punishing renegade Republicans 
through his committee assignments.

Dissatisfaction with Cannon among the insurgents grew throughout the first decade of 
the twentieth century. One complaint that the insurgents lodged against Cannon was that he

presided over the Rules Committee with an iron fist, using it to keep off the floor any legislation that he personally disapproved of. Dissatisfaction over Cannon’s tight control over the agenda resonated beyond the small group of insurgents who were most at odds with Cannon, since virtually all committees had seen legislation favored by a majority get bottled up by the Rules Committee. The insurgent’s idea was to remove the Speaker from the Rules Committee, making it less of a leadership tool. Cannon was easily able to rebuff this proposal, but he was unable to keep total control over the agenda.

At the end of the 60th Congress (1909), Cannon agreed to the creation of a parliamentary device called *Calendar Wednesday* that gave a small degree of agenda control back to the various legislative committees. Calendar Wednesday operated like this: At a set time each Wednesday (thus the name), each committee of the House would be called on, alphabetically. When a committee was called, the chair of the committee could bring up a bill that had been approved by his committee. The House would then get two hours to consider the bill. After a committee’s bill had been considered, it would have to wait its turn until it came up on the alphabetical list again.

The Calendar Wednesday provision proved so cumbersome in getting alternative legislation to the House floor that the insurgents quickly abandoned it and returned to their designs on the Speaker’s powers more broadly. The elections of 1908 helped the insurgent cause significantly. Following the election there were 219 Republicans and 172 Democrats. If 30 insurgent Republicans could be convinced to side with the Democrats in changing the House rules, the anti-Cannon forces would have a 202–189 margin. While the insurgent Republicans weren’t in the parliamentary driver’s seat, their chances against Cannon were the best they had ever been.
At the opening of the 61st House (1909–11), the insurgent Republicans were loyal to their Speaker, voting unanimously for Cannon against the Democratic Speaker nominee Champ Clark, of Missouri. Right after Cannon’s election as Speaker, he entertained a motion that the House adopt the rules of the 60th Congress as the rules of the 61st. This had always been considered a pro forma motion, allowing the House to proceed immediately with the business of organizing committees without having to re-consider its rules from scratch. This time things were different: The insurgents joined with the Democrats to oppose this motion, leaving the House without any formal rules. Champ Clark then moved that all the past House’s rules be adopted, with three changes: first, the Speaker would no longer be allowed to appoint committees; second, the Speaker would be removed from the Rules Committee; and third, the Rules Committee would be enlarged from 5 to 10 members.

Clark’s motion was also narrowly defeated, 180–203, this time because Cannon had convinced a small group of conservative Democrats to support him rather than Clark. Rep. John Fitzgerald authored a compromise that allowed the House to proceed with its business. Under the compromise a consent calendar was created, allowing minor, uncontroversial legislation to come to the floor more easily.

Agitation among insurgent Republicans and Democrats for further reform continued apace. Finally, St. Patrick’s Day 1910, Rep. George Norris (R, Nebr.) tried again, offering a resolution to reform the House rules which was similar to the one Clark had offered on opening day. Cannon ruled Norris’s motion out of order. Norris appealed Cannon’s ruling, arguing that a motion to amend the rules was always in order, being privileged by the Constitution. A majority of the House supported Norris’s appeal, 182–160. It then proceeded to debate Clark’s motion,
spending 29 hours in continuous session. At the end of that time, the House voted 191–156 to strip the Speaker of his committee-appointing power and his membership on the Rules Committee. Rebuffed, Cannon immediately offered to entertain a motion declaring that the Speakership was now vacant. Rep. Albert S. Burleson (D, Tex.) obliged the Speaker, but the insurgent Republicans returned to the fold to table this motion. In the end, much of Cannon’s formal power had been stripped from him, but he was still Speaker.

Speaker Cannon was swept out of the House in the 1910 election along with enough of his Republican colleagues that the Democrats won control of the House for the first time in two decades. Thus, it was up to the Democrats to figure out how to bypass the Speaker in nominating committees and controlling the House agenda. In theory, the full House now made committee appointments. In practice, the Democrats decided to establish the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee as its Committee on Committees. The Republicans decided to use a separate Committee on Committees.

For controlling the House agenda, the Democrats decided to use the Democratic caucus. The House Democratic Caucus is simply the organization of all House Democrats. The caucus passed a rule requiring all Democrats to vote for any measure supported by 2/3 of the caucus—to oppose the caucus would result in being “read out of” the party. Historians have attributed the caucus’s activity with the passage of the Underwood Tariff, the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, and antitrust legislation in 1914.32

The 62nd and 63rd Congresses were heady ones for the Democrats. Yet as the decade of the 1910s proceeded, the unity of the party waned. The Republicans, temporarily in the minority, attacked the Democrats’ use of the caucus to control the agenda, and promised to abandon “King Caucus” once they returned to power. The Republicans did return to control of the House in 1918, and they made good on their promise not to control the House floor via the caucus mechanism.\textsuperscript{33}

As 1920 drew near, the House had re-established a new institutional equilibrium to replace the one in place before the revolt against Cannon. The party mechanisms that had coordinated the policymaking process, periodically using coercion against reluctant rank-and-file members, no longer existed. Leadership in the House was dispersed, shared between formal party leaders and the chairs of the committees.

Lacking a strong mechanism to exchange party loyalty for plum committee assignments and to punish disloyalty by yanking those assignments, the two parties adopted a strong form of the \textit{seniority system}, much of which remains in place to this day. The seniority system, as it developed in the 1910s, had two components. The first was a property rights system in committee assignments: While a member couldn’t just choose which committees he wanted to serve on, once on a committee, he could not be taken off against his will. The second was a rigid mechanism to pick committee chairs: The member with the longest continuous service on a committee got to chair it whenever the chairmanship came open. From 1912 to the 1970s, these

\textsuperscript{33}There are vestiges of this promise today in the names of the party organizations in the House. The Democrats still call themselves the Democratic \textit{Caucus}, while the Republicans call themselves the Republican \textit{Conference}, under the theory that “conference” implies simple consultation among co-equal members, while “caucus” implies the use of nefarious coercive means to extract compliance out of party members.
two prongs of the House seniority system were almost never violated. Combining the longer House careers that became more common after the election of 1896 with the seniority norm that emerged after 1912, we see the core elements of the “textbook Congress” that ruled American policymaking for much of the twentieth century.

In the Senate, the electoral changes begun in the 1890s also had an influence on politics in the chamber, although the contours of those changes aren’t as well-known among students of Congress. The election of 1896 also acted to make the Senate even more safely Republican than it had previously been. At the same time, the insurgent movements that arose from the Panic of 1893 eventually had the effect of changing the electoral environment of the Senate profoundly. The most obvious formal transformation of the Senate came in the passage of the 17th amendment to the Constitution in 1913.

Proposals to institute the popular election of senators had been floated since at least the 1860s, but the western reform movements of the 1890s increased agitation for this change. Not surprisingly, the House was much more eager to pass the popular election of senators than the Senate. As early as 1893 the House passed a resolution proposing an amendment to the states, but it died in Senate committee. By 1910, 28 of the 46 states had laws providing for the nomination of Senate candidates in party primaries. The legislatures were not bound by the primaries, however, and in some cases senators were elected who hadn’t even appeared on the ballot. Reformers continued to agitate for reform, leading to the submission of a resolution to the
states in 1912 which became the 17th amendment to the Constitution when it was ratified in 1913.\textsuperscript{34}

The effects of the 17th amendment were not dramatic, but they were substantial nonetheless. Scholars have identified three long-term effects of the amendment. First, the amendment mitigated the older trend of senators being selected from political dynasties. After the 17th amendment passed, more ordinary folks were elected. Second, the 17th amendment facilitated the incorporation of the Senate into the standard political career ladder. Before popular election of senators, it was common for new senators to enter the Senate directly from the private sector. Afterwards, entry from the realm of politics became much more common. Third, the 17th amendment forged a stronger link between shifting partisan fortunes in the states and the partisanship of the senators elected from the states.\textsuperscript{35}

Within the Senate, the most important formal change came on the floor rather than in committee. As the twentieth century came into view, the committee environment of the Senate was quite different from the House: The Senate had more standing committees than the House and nearly as many seats on committees to fill. Consequently, senators hardly could be considered to be “specializing” by doing committee work—in 1910 the average senator served on 7.3 committees, compared to 2.0 for the average House member.


The real innovation in Senate rules during this period was curbs put on the filibuster in 1917.\textsuperscript{36} The filibuster refers to the Senate practice of using that chamber’s lax rules of debate for parliamentary advantage. In particular, before 1917 the Senate had no procedure in its rules to cut off debate, nor did it have a very strong germaneness\textsuperscript{37} rule.

The use of the Rule became an issue in 1917, in a famous case involving the Neutrality Bill of 1917. The bloc holding up the Neutrality Bill was limited to eleven, but by coordinating their speaking and holding the floor at the end of the 64th Congress, they were able to keep the bill from coming up for a vote, thus killing it. President Woodrow Wilson made the opposition of this band of “eleven willful men” a national issue. Feeling electoral pressure and called into special session by Wilson, the Senate hurriedly passed Rule XXII of the Senate.

Rule XXII provided a way to limit debate on a bill, called cloture. The cloture requirement has changed several times since then, but the idea was simple: debate could be cut off in the Senate only after 16 senators had signed a petition asking that debate be cut off and a subsequent vote of 2/3 of the Senate actually voted to stop debate.

V. The Post-Reform Congress

Each of the electoral watersheds I have discussed thus far, which ended up altering congressional politics in important ways, developed over a fairly well-defined period of time. The most recent electoral watershed has been less well-bounded chronologically, and some scholars even deny its

\textsuperscript{36}Sarah A. Binder and Steven S. Smith, Politics or Principle? Filibustering in the United States Senate, Washington, Brookings, 1997.

\textsuperscript{37}A germaneness debate rule is one that limits debate to the subject matter at hand. Lacking a germaneness rule, debate can be on literally any subject.
existence. Keeping that in mind, if we were to examine the electoral bases of the two political parties in 1960 and 1980, we would discover that support for the two parties’ congressional candidates changed in important ways. Most obviously, the regional organization of the two parties’ core support eroded. There was no longer a “solid South” standing behind a bloc of Democratic officeholders. More subtly, but equally significant, non-southern farming areas and suburbs were no longer uniformly Republican. To a first approximation, the transformation that occurred can be summarized as follows: The old party division, organized along a combination of economic and regional lines, was replaced with a new division, organized ideologically. This new organization of the party system has in turn produced a new ordering of congressional politics. Some of that internal reshuffling is still occurring in the late 1990s.

The purpose of this final section is to delineate how a realignment of partisan sentiments in the congressional electorate developed into a realignment of congressional politics from the 1960s to the 1990s. Much of the material in the chapters that follow examine the congressional politics of this era. Therefore, I will not dwell on the details of contemporary congressional politics. Rather, I will focus on the transition to the current era and point out the major trends that provide the context for later discussion.

The Civil War established a basic regional structure to the American party system that persisted for over a century. A salient substantive feature of that regional structure was to endow the Republican party with a history of support for Civil Rights measures and to endow the Democratic party with a history of opposition to the same measures. As politics moved forward from 1865, however, other issues, independent of race, muscled their way onto the national agenda and into the platforms of the parties. The most important set of these issues pertained to
the degree of federal involvement in economic development and, more generally, the strength of
the federal government in addressing national social concerns. As the twentieth century unfolded,
the Democratic party became more associated with federal government activism, with the
Republican party associated with a less active federal government.

By the middle part of the twentieth century, tensions within both parties—but especially
among Democrats—began to build over how to reconcile their historic stances on race with their
more modern stances on social policy. The Democratic base contained two blocs of voters who
were at odds: liberal (mostly northern) voters who favored an activist federal government and
civil rights for Blacks, and conservative (mostly southern) voters who favored a less-activist
federal government and opposed extending civil rights protections to Blacks. The Republicans
were less conflicted, but they, too, contained a combination of “liberal” and “moderate” voters on
questions of social activism who mostly favoring civil rights for blacks. Figure III-7 illustrates
these divisions schematically in terms of the spatial model we explored in Chapter II.

Fig. III-7 During the 1930s and 1940s the various administrations led by Franklin Roosevelt
succeeded in expanding significantly the role of the federal government in everyday national life.
Consequently, Congress found itself frequently considering some policy change along the “social
program” dimension illustrated in Figure III-7. As drawn, the median voter along the left-right
dimension may be either a southern Democrat or an eastern Republican. While not nearly as
frequent an occurrence, civil rights questions were often on the agenda, too. As Figure III-7 is
drawn, we would expect the pivotal voter on a civil rights issue to be either a northern Democrat
or a Midwestern Republican. Therefore, Figure III-7 illustrates in a simple form the basic
coalitional problem that both parties often faced: to pass legislation, it was necessary to build
coalitions across parties. Conversely, whenever a coalition was built around a piece of legislation, members of each party were likely to find themselves on both sides of the issue. Hence deep partisan divisions.

Such divisions were in evidence earlier in Figure III-5, which showed the prevalence of party unity votes in the House. After rebounding somewhat during the early Franklin D. Roosevelt years, levels of party unity voting continued to drop throughout most of the middle twentieth century, which is consistent with the notion that most coalitions were being built with members from both parties on each side.

Fig. III-8 Another measure of the lack of party cohesion measures support for something called the "Conservative Coalition." "Conservative Coalition" is a phrase developed to describe the most common form of cross-party coalition formation in the mid-twentieth century: one bringing together southern Democrats with Republicans (of all stripes). A Conservative Coalition vote is defined as any roll call vote in which a majority of northern Democrats votes against a majority of southern Democrats and Republicans. Figure III-8 reports the percentage of all roll call votes in any particular year in which the Conservative Coalition appeared. This cross-party voting pattern

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38An example of a Conservative Coalition vote was the roll call taken on House passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. On that vote, northern Democrats voted 187–3 in favor, southern Democrats voted 41–54 against, and Republicans voted 35–96 again.

Be warned that the label "Conservative Coalition" is controversial, since it implies that the voting pattern of Northern Democrats opposing Republicans and Southern Democrats comes about through conscious coalition-building behavior. During the height of the Coalition’s life, leading conservatives vehemently denied that this pattern was anything other than like-minded members of Congress just voting together. See John F. Manley, “The Conservative Coalition in Congress,” in Congress Reconsidered, Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (eds.), New York, Praeger, 1977.
rarely appeared before the mid-1940s, but from then until the early 1980s, roughly one-fifth of all roll calls witnessed the coalition’s appearance.

Although the regular appearance of the Conservative Coalition continued through the 1970s, the seeds of its destruction were sewn in the 1960s. The most dramatic factor undermining the regionally-based party system no doubt rests in the consequences of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the resulting shift in voting patterns in the south. The Voting Rights Act had one major direct effect and one major indirect effect.

The major direct effect of the Voting Rights Act was the enfranchisement of southern African Americans, who grew to support the Democrats gradually beginning with the presidency of FDR. Eventually southern Blacks flocked to the polls to vote in Democratic primaries. Savy Democratic politicians, even those who had in the past opposed Civil Rights legislation, had to become responsive to the desires of this expanded Democratic electorate. Thus, the major direct effect of the Voting Rights Act was to make southern Democratic voters (and hence, politicians) more pro-Civil Rights and more pro-activist federal government.

The major secondary effect of the Voting Rights Act came on the heals of the consequences of making the southern Democratic party more like its northern wing. Die-hard southern conservatives, abandoned by their party, were ripe for the picking by the Republican party. The result of all this shifting around was that by the mid-1980s, the parties were aligned as is sketched out in Figure III-9: Democrats were liberal on both Civil Rights and social welfare issues, and Republicans were conservative. Although there was still some regional differentiation,

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the differences were not so great as they had been twenty years before. Rather than being regionally structured, the parties had become ideologically structured.

In the transition from regionally- to ideologically-structured parties, the internal organization of Congress came under strain, as well. Most of these strains came about because the operation of the seniority system tended to favor members of Congress who came from one-party regions of the country—in the case of the Democrats, this meant conservative southerners. For much of the 1950s and 1960s, this resulted in southern Democrats chairing more than their share of committees, and thus taking more of a lead in legislating than the average Democrat was comfortable with.

On the leadership side, both parties adopted strategies to share leadership across their major regional divides. Among Democrats, this led to the creation of the “Boston-Austin” connection, so-named because of the pattern of naming the top two Democratic leaders, one from New England and the other from the middle south. Among Republicans, this led to a pattern of balancing leadership tickets between representatives from the northeast and the Midwest, creating a “Wall Street-Main Street” axis.

Because the Democratic party controlled Congress for virtually all the post-World War II period (until 1995), the electoral strains were eventually resolved as the Democrats changed how they organized the House for business. The early 1970s saw a flurry of activity aimed at “reforming” the institutions of Congress, increasing the capacity of Congress to act in the policy realm and increasing the power of the Democratic caucus over its committees. In Chapter 8 we will examine in detail what some of these reforms were. The most important in the House were two. First, the right to make committee assignments was taken away from the Democratic
members of the Ways and Means committee and given to a party committee that was dominated by the Speaker and other Democratic party leaders. Second, the seniority system was altered to provide for an automatic ballot each Congress to ratify nominees for committee chairs. In the first year the mechanism was used, three House committee chairs were deposed and replaced by other Democrats.

Few formal changes were made in the leadership structure of either chamber, but the informal leadership practices changed, too. In particular, both parties became increasingly willing to give their leaders latitude to enforce party discipline and to set the legislative agenda in a more aggressive fashion, so that more legislation would bear more of an obvious partisan cast.

The current period of the “Post-Reform Congress,” therefore, is quite different from the previous period of the Textbook Congress. The two parties are now more ideologically cohesive than they were in the past generation. Committees still dominate policymaking and the seniority system still operates. However, members who want to rise to the top of committee leadership (particularly in the House) must not stray too far from the party’s mainstream, lest they be passed over for a more loyal committee member when their opportunity arises.

The most dramatic events of the post-reform era in the House involved the transition of control over the House from the Democrats to the Republicans in the aftermath of the 1994 election, instituting a partisan changing of the guard for the first time in a generation. Even though the newly-ascendant Republicans instituted a number of institutional changes themselves, such as term limits for committee chairs, their general behavior was still consistent with recent trends in congressional politics. Particularly, parties have remained cohesive and committees have remained the workhorses of the chambers.
What is unclear is what will happen as a consequence of the Republicans instituting term limits of their committee and party leadership. If these changes hold and the Republicans continue to control Congress for a long time, then the effects of the rise in congressional careerism, which began around 1900, will likely be reversed. Yet if the present is like the past, a new congressional equilibrium is unlikely to clearly emerge for many years to come.

VI. Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to lay out, in bare details, the historical background of congressional political development. In reading such a history, it is easy for the trees to obscure the forest. The most important historical themes to take away from this discussion are these: First, there is a logical linkage between changes in the electorate and changes in internal congressional politics. The two don’t change in lock-step with each other, but the two sides of the congressional equation never stay out of balance for long. Second, at any given moment in congressional history, the institution has developed according to a logic that is broadly consonant with the outlines of Chapter 1. At every time and every place, members of Congress have seen the institution as a vehicle for achieving their larger political goals. As the American political universe has evolved, those goals have changed, and so too has Congress. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that at any given moment—and not just in the present—the institution of Congress has evolved based on choices, and those choices are grounded in the politically sophisticated calculations of expert politicians. The following chapters will now take us closer to the present (with a few backward glances) to understand more completely contemporary congressional politics.
Figure III-1. Congressional historical eras and electoral discontinuities.

Critical periods

Congressional systems


Democrizing Civil War Textbook Post-Reform
Figure III-2. Effective number of political parties in the House and Senate, 1st to 105th Congress.
Figure III-3. Spatial summary of the vote for House Speaker in the 34th Congress.

First ballot

Banks (A)

Campbell (O)

Fuller (O)

Marshall (A)

Richardson (D)

Last ballot

Aiken (D)

Banks (A)
Figure III-4. Percentage of standing committee chairs held by members of the majority party, 1st to 49th Congress, 1789–1887.
Figure III-5. Prevalence of party unity votes in the House of Representatives, 51st–104th Congress (1889–1997).
Figure III-6. Membership turnover in the House of Representatives, 2nd–105th Congress (elections of 1790–1996).
Table III-7. Schematic view of the spatial location of members of Congress in 1960.
Figure III-8. Appearance of the Conservative Coalition, 1929–199*.

Source: Vital Statistics, Table 8-5; Brady and Bullock.
Table III-9. Schematic view of the spatial location of members of Congress in 1980.
Table III-1. Summary characteristics of organizational and electoral features during congressional systems and electoral features during critical periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>During critical period</th>
<th>During congressional system</th>
<th>Electoral dynamics</th>
<th>Organizational dynamics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1789–1812</td>
<td>Elite electorate; Federalist support commercial development; Republicans support agrarian development</td>
<td>Floor supreme; “previous question” developed in the House</td>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Experimental system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ad hoc select committees dominate</td>
<td>Ad hoc select committees dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812–20</td>
<td>Electorate expands; Federalists discredited; Slavery introduced; Napoleonic Wars end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820–60</td>
<td>Mass electorate; Whigs support commercial development; Democrats support agrarian interests</td>
<td>Committee take agenda control in both chambers</td>
<td>Standing committees dominate selects; committee chairmen sometimes compete with House speakers for power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Antebellum system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860–65</td>
<td>South excluded from national elections; party support highly regionalized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>During critical period</td>
<td>Electoral dynamics</td>
<td>Organizational dynamics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865–96</td>
<td>Democratic strength in the South; Republican strength in the North; Republicans support</td>
<td>“Reed Rules” in the House</td>
<td>Parties take control of committee rosters; appropriations devolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Civil War</td>
<td>commercial development; Democrats tilt toward the agrarian; knife-edge partisan margins</td>
<td></td>
<td>Party polarization; party leaders dominate in both chambers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896–1912</td>
<td>Economic dislocations create Progressive and Populist movements where Republicans are</td>
<td>Same regional orientation as before; Democratic party picks up significant progressive and urban wings</td>
<td>Battles over filibuster prominent in the Senate</td>
<td>Committees dominate decisionmaking; congressional careers committee-centered; committee consolidation in 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Textbook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912–68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Electoral dynamics</td>
<td>Organizational dynamics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968–74</td>
<td>Antiwar sentiment divorces supporters of strong defense from the Democrats; Civil Rights movement divorces southern Whites from Democrats but reinforces Black affiliation with Democrats</td>
<td>Rules: Republicans conservative; Democrats liberal; regionalism per se deemphasized</td>
<td>Committees: Floor proceedings opened up</td>
<td>Party leadership: Resurgent; partisan voting blocs more cohesive; leaders more assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974–now (Post-Reform system)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Committee continue to dominate, but leadership responsive to parties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III-2. Turnout as a percentage of the adult population in the elections of 1790 and 1791 (second Congress) and 1800–01 (seventh Congress), for states with complete electoral returns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1791–93</th>
<th>1801–03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table III-3. Regional balance in party tickets, 1936–60. (Source: Aldrich 1995, table 5.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Democratic Party</th>
<th>Whig, Republican Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Van Buren (N.Y.)</td>
<td>Johnson (Ky.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Van Buren (N.Y.)</td>
<td>None*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Polk (Tenn.)</td>
<td>Dallas (Pa.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Cass (Mich.)</td>
<td>Butler (Ky.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Pierce (N.Y.)</td>
<td>King (Ala.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Buchanan (Pa.)</td>
<td>Breckinridge (Ky.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Douglas (Ill.)</td>
<td>Fitzpatrick (Ala.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*State parties chose their own vice-presidential nominees.*
Table III-4. Mean party vote in House elections by region, 1888–1900 (Source: Brady 1988, Table 3.2)

a. Republicans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New England</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>E. North Central</th>
<th>W. North Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Border</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 86–92</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 94–00</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff.</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New England</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>E. North Central</th>
<th>W. North Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Border</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 86–92</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 94–00</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff.</td>
<td>-9.2</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>-5.5</td>
<td>-9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Other parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New England</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>E. North Central</th>
<th>W. North Central</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Border</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 86–92</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. 94–00</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>