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CHAPTER FOUR

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND POLICY ALIGNMENTS

The general policy preferences of the three major institutional players—the House, the Senate, and the president—are a product of elections. Elections are selection devices. They are intended to be competitive processes in which some candidates win and others lose. The winners arrive in Washington with certain personal policy views and an idea of what their supporters expect of them. Collectively, the winners give shape to the balance of policy preferences within the House and Senate and determine at least the broad contours of agreement and disagreement among the House, the Senate, and the president. Policy alignments change to some degree with each congressional and presidential election.

The connection between elections and policy is far from perfect. For one thing, election outcomes are influenced by factors other than the policy views of voters and candidates. For another, forces beyond constituency opinion and members' personal views are at work on most issues before Congress. Organized interest groups, expert and editorial opinion, and vote trading often influence policy choices. Moreover, most of the specific policy questions faced by Congress and the president do not arise in election campaigns. And yet, elections determine whether the House, the Senate, and the White House are controlled by the same party, whether they lean in a liberal or conservative direction, and whether they are likely to agree on major policy questions.

Until the 1994 elections brought Republican majorities to the House and Senate, Democrats had dominated Congress for six decades. Between 1932 and 1994, Republicans controlled a majority of House and Senate seats in only two Congresses (1947-1948 and 1953-1954) and had a Senate majority without a House majority for three Congresses (1981-1986). Divided party control of Congress and the presidency has been common in the post World War II era. Between 1952 and 2003, divided control occurred in 26 of 51 years, or 34 of 51 years if the periods of split control of Congress between 1981-1986, and 2001-2002 are included. If the Republican Party maintains control of both houses of the 108th Congress (2003-2004) for their duration, George W. Bush will become the first Republican president since Dwight Eisenhower to enjoy a Congress in which his party control both houses.

Elections influence the legislative game beyond the party affiliations and policy positions of members of Congress and presidents. Most members seek reelection, and they seek legislative opportunities and resources that will further that goal. As we see in later chapters, the structure and function of virtually every major feature of Congress—committees, parties, personal offices, and staffs—reflect the influence of electoral considerations.¹ The timing of elections gives the legislative game a natural rhythm. All legislation must pass within the two-year life span of a Congress or be reintroduced in the next Congress. Legislative leaders always adjust the congressional schedule to fit the timing of party conventions, primaries, and general election campaigns.

Modern candidates for Congress face an electoral system that is highly decentralized and candidate-centered. The system is governed as much by state law as by federal law. Political parties endorse candidates for Congress but they do not formally control the selection of candidates to run in the general election. Rather, any person who meets basic eligibility requirements may run in a primary election to gain a place on the general election ballot under a party's name. With few exceptions, candidates build their own campaign organizations, raise their own campaign money, and set their own campaign strategies. And they do so in 435 different districts and fifty different states, each with a unique blend of economic, social, and political conditions. The winning candidates emerge from their campaigns with strong individualistic tendencies, which they bring with them to the halls of Congress.

This chapter describes the formal rules and informal practices that shape congressional election outcomes. It then looks at different types of candidates and at the advantages of incumbency. Next, national patterns in congressional elections, including the forces underlying divided party control of Congress and the presidency, are considered. Finally, the chapter discusses the effect of elections on policy.

The Rules Governing Congressional Elections

More than two thousand candidates run in congressional primary and general elections in any single election cycle. Their candidacies are governed by a web of rules provided by the Constitution, federal and state law, and, for incumbents, House and Senate rules. The rules have become increasingly complex as Congress and state legislatures, as well as the federal courts, have sought to prevent election fraud, to keep elections fair, and (on occasion) to tilt the rules in favor of one type of candidate or another. The rules concern eligibility for office, filing requirements, campaign finance restrictions, use of congressional staff, and many other matters. By shaping the strategies of candidates seeking election or reelection to Congress, these rules influence election outcomes and the political composition of the House and Senate.

Replacing Candidates on the Ballot: Variations in State Law

Article I section 4 of the U.S. Constitution leaves the “times, places, and manner of holding elections for senators and representatives” to the state legislatures. As a result of this, ballot access laws vary considerably by state. These differences have come to light in recent years as a result of tragedies and scandals impacting ongoing Senate election campaigns.

In Missouri, then governor and Senate Democratic candidate Mel Carnahan was killed in a plane crash on October 16, 2000, less than three weeks before the 2000 general election. Missouri law does not permit ballot changes within six weeks of the general election so Mel Carnahan’s name remained on the ballot and he won the election posthumously. As was widely expected prior to the election, Democratic Governor Roger Wilson appointed Carnahan’s widow, Jean Carnahan to fill the Senate seat until a special election could be held in 2002.

In Minnesota, tragedy struck October 25, 2002, as Senator Paul Wellstone, his wife, and several staff members were killed in a plane crash. Senator Wellstone’s death occurred less than two weeks before the 2002 general election in which he was seeking re-election to Senate. Minnesota law allows parties to fill ballot vacancies caused by death up to four days prior to the general election. In this case the Minnesota Democrats’ central committee nominated former Senator and Vice President Walter F. Mondale to take Wellstone’s place on the ballot. Rather than printing new ballots to reflect the change in the Senate race, Minnesota used a supplementary ballot for the Senate race that had to be counted by hand. This change caused considerable controversy over how to deal with absentee ballots returned prior to Senator Wellstone’s death that was settled by the state supreme court. Mondale ultimately lost the race to former St. Paul, MN mayor Norm Coleman.

In New Jersey, incumbent Senator Robert Torricelli’s (D) chances of reelection in 2002 were severely hindered by an investigation of his fund raising practices and other alleged ethical lapses. While Torricelli was never formally charged, he concluded in late September 2002 that he would be unable to win the November general election. Torricelli elected to withdraw from the ballot and allow the state Democratic party to replace him on the ballot. However, New Jersey law appeared to forbid ballot changes within 51 days of an election. Eventually the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the implied right, under the state’s constitution, of the voters of New Jersey to have a choice on election day outweighed the statutory ban on substituting candidates within 51 days of the election. The Democrats replaced Torricelli with former senator Frank Lautenberg, who subsequently won the general election contest.

The Constitution: Eligibility, Voting Rights, and Chamber Size

Eligibility. The Constitution requires that members of both houses be citizens of the state from which they are elected. Members of the House must be twenty-five years old and must have been a citizen of the United States for seven years, while members of the Senate must be thirty years old and must have been a U.S. citizen for nine years. Candidates may be younger than twenty-five for the House and thirty for the Senate, although they must have reached the required age before being sworn into office. And House members must reside in the state but not necessarily in the district they represent, though most do. Representatives serve two-year terms. Senators serve staggered, six-year terms, with one-third of the seats up for election every second year. Representatives' and senators' terms begin at noon on January 3 following each election or soon thereafter as the House and Senate may determine by law.

Voting Rights. The Constitution leaves the “times, places, and manner of holding elections for senators and representatives” to the states, although Congress may enact (and has) certain federal regulations concerning elections. For example, in 1845 Congress fixed the date for congressional and presidential elections as the Tuesday following the first Monday in November, although this change was not fully implemented until 1880.² Constitutional amendments have added several rules limiting the ability of states to regulate the right to vote in federal elections. The Fourteenth Amendment (ratified in 1868) bars restrictions based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude (slavery); the Nineteenth Amendment (ratified in 1920) bars restrictions based on gender; and the Twenty-fourth Amendment (ratified in 1964) prohibits poll taxes (a tax that must be paid before a person can vote). Most recently, the Twenty-sixth Amendment (ratified in 1971) guaranteed the right to vote to persons eighteen years of age or older.

Chamber Size. By implication, the Constitution sets the size of the Senate—each state has two senators. Since the late 1950s, when Alaska and Hawaii joined the union, the Senate has had one hundred members. The Constitution guarantees at least one representative for each state, but the specific size of the House is not dictated by the Constitution and instead is set by law. For more than a century, the House grew as the country's population grew and states were added to the union. Since 1911, federal law has left the House at 435 voting members. With the House's size fixed, a growing population has produced districts of growing size—most districts now contain about 600,000 citizens, a far cry from the 30,000 originally provided by the Constitution. A House vacancy because of death or any other cause must be filled by a special election, which is called by the state's governor.³ A Senate vacancy, according to the Seventeenth Amendment, may be filled by election or appointment by the state's governor, as determined by state law. Generally, state laws provide for a temporary appointment followed by an election at the time of the next regularly scheduled federal election to fill the remainder of the term.

Federal Law: Apportionment and Campaign Finance

Apportionment. After each decennial census, changes in the distribution of population among the states must be reflected in the allocation of House seats. Fifty seats are allocated automatically because of the requirement that each state have at least one representative. But the constitutional requirement that seats “be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers” leaves ambiguous how to handle fractions when allocating all other seats.⁴ Congress, by law, establishes the formula for apportioning the seats. Population shifts over the past half-century have resulted in a redistribution of power from the industrial Midwest and Northeast to the South and Southwest (see Chapter 1). In addition, since 1967 federal law has required that states with more than one House seat must create districts from which only one representative is elected (single-member districts).

Campaign Finance. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971, and important amendments to it in 1974, 1976, and, most recently in 2002, created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and established limits and disclosure requirements for contributions to congressional campaigns. The regulations were a response to scandals involving secret contributions to presidential candidates of large sums of money from wealthy individuals and corporations, some of which was used for political dirty tricks. FECA restricted the size of contributions that individuals, parties, and political action committees (PACs) can make to candidates for Congress. FECA created no restrictions on how much congressional candidates may spend, and the Supreme Court has barred limits on how much a candidate or family members may contribute to their own cause. The law required groups and candidates to report contributions and expenditures to the FEC.

Under the law, membership organizations, corporations, and labor unions may create PACs to collect money from organization employees or members in order to pad resources for campaign contributions. Because PACs may contribute more than individuals, there is a strong incentive to create PACs, which grew in number from 608 in late 1974 to more than 4,000 in the mid-1980s and have remained just over 4,000 in number since then. The largest growth was in PACs tied to corporations, which numbered 1,731 in mid-1992, but growth has occurred in all categories—labor union PACs, trade association PACs, PACs formed by cooperatives, and PACs not connected to any organization.⁵

The limits on contributions reflect a judgment that contributions from the wealthy and corporations may be harmful to the system and that party participation is more desirable. The basic rules on contributions provide that

- individuals may contribute larger sums to candidates and parties than to PACs;
- parties may contribute larger sums directly to candidates than may PACs;
- parties may coordinate a certain amount of spending with candidates, while PACs cannot; and
- parties may spend unlimited sums on party-building and civic projects, which often benefit their candidates.

The parties—the Republicans more than the Democrats—have used these opportunities to greatly expand the activities of their national campaign committees and the contributions they make to candidates.

The law emphasizes public disclosure of contributions and expenditures by candidates, parties, and PACs. Full disclosure of all contributions must be made in reports to the FEC, all contributions of more than \$50 must be individually recorded, and the identity of donors of \$100 or more must be provided. Detailed reports on expenditures are required as well.

FECA has plenty of loopholes, however. Contributions may be bundled, for example, by gathering many individual or PAC contributions and offering them as a package to a candidate. Lobbyists and other interest-group leaders can use bundling, without violating the limits on the size of individual contributions, to make very conspicuous contributions to candidates who might not pay much attention to much smaller, separate contributions. Furthermore, the law did not regulate “soft money” contributions, which by the late 1990s had taken on increasing importance in congressional and presidential campaigns. Soft money was contributed by wealthy individuals and corporations to political parties, to be used for television ads for the party (not specific candidates), party staff and office expenses, voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts, and other purposes that are not directed by, but obviously benefit, the party’s candidates. This loophole allowed individuals and PACs that had reached their limit in direct contributions to a candidate’s campaign to contribute money to a party organization that can work on the candidate’s behalf.

By the late 1990s, many had come to believe that the soft money loophole was allowing candidates, parties, and donors to effectively circumvent the rules established by FECA. After almost a decade of bitter debate, proponents of campaign finance reform including Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) and Russ Feingold (D-Wisconsin), succeeded in convincing Congress to ban most uses of “soft money” with the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA)—sometimes known as “McCain-Feingold.” In addition to the ban on soft money, the BCRA increased the amount of hard money that individuals could contribute to campaigns, created exceptions to the hard money limits for candidates facing self-financed candidates, and restricted “issue advocacy” by independent groups in the sixty days prior to an election (see Table 4.1).

There are many legal obstacles for the new campaign finance reform law. The Supreme Court has ruled that the free speech clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution applies to campaign spending. The argument is that individuals and groups must be free to spend money to express themselves. This interpretation of the First Amendment makes it unlikely that the Court would let stand the current restrictions on when groups can spend money to advocate issues. This issue is currently under consideration in the federal courts.

Table 4.1. Congressional Campaign Contribution Limits Under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002.		
Type of Contributor	Limits	Additional Provisions And Explanations
Limits on Contributions from Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2,000 per candidate for primaries • \$2,000 per candidate for runoff • \$2,000 per candidate for general election • \$95,000 total per two-year election cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$37,500 to candidates ○ \$57,500 to parties and PACs • unlimited independent spending. 	<p>The \$2,000 limit on contributions to a candidate for the general election triples if a House candidate faces a self-financed opponent. A more complex formula raises the limit for Senate races.</p> <p>Independent spending is spending by an individual or political action committee for or against candidates without coordinating with a candidate.</p>
Limits on Contributions from Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000 per House candidate. • \$17,500 per Senate candidate. • Parties can either spend independently or in coordination with a candidate, but not both. • State parties may contribute an additional \$10,000 per candidate and \$18,440 in coordinated spending. • 2 cents per voting-age person in the state in coordinated spending. 	<p>The Senate limit of \$17,500 applies to House candidates in single-district states.</p> <p>Coordinated spending is party spending for services provided to a candidate.</p>
Limits on Contributions from Political Action Committees (PACs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000 per candidate for primaries • \$5,000 per candidate for general election • \$15,000 per calendar year to a political party • unlimited independent spending 	<p>Independent spending is spending by an individual or political action committee for or against candidates without coordinating with a candidate.</p>

A separate loophole was generated by a 1996 Supreme Court ruling that eliminated limits on how much parties could spend on congressional campaigns, as long as the spending was not coordinated with individual candidates' campaigns.⁶ The ruling paved the way for a sharp increase in fundraising and spending by the congressional campaign committees. The Senate Republicans immediately set up a special unit to raise funds for

these “independent” expenditures.⁷ Total expenditures by the parties’ congressional and senatorial campaign committees exceeded \$550 million for the 2002 election cycle.

The “Millionaires’ Amendment.” The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo* that money spent on gaining political office is protected speech invalidated restrictions on personal spending contained in FECA. In recent years many candidates for Congress and other offices have spent a considerable amount of their personal fortunes in their quests for office. Jon Corzine (D-New Jersey) is the most notable having spent in excess of \$60 million in his successful quest for the Senate. However he is not alone, Maria Cantwell (D-Washington), Mark Dayton (D-Minnesota), and Peter Fitzgerald (R-Illinois) each spent in excess of \$10 million self-financing their successful bids against Senate incumbents.⁸ Despite the fact that most self-financed candidates are not successful—Michael Huffington spent more than \$28 million in his unsuccessful bid for a Senate seat in California—many have raised questions about the impact of self-financing on the electoral process.⁹ Critics argue that self-financing allows the wealthy to “buy elections,” thus excluding citizens of more modest means from elective office. For their part, self-financed candidates often argue that by paying for their own campaigns they assure the public that they are not influenced by campaign contributions from organized interests.

The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA) addressed the issue of self-financed candidates in the so called “millionaires’ amendment.” The BCRA addresses the issue of self-financing in two ways. First, it restricts the amount candidates can raise to repay themselves to \$250,000 for loans to their campaign. Advocates of this restriction argue that candidates will be discouraged from self-financing if they cannot repay themselves later. Secondly the “millionaires’ amendment” allows candidates running against self-financed candidates to raise additional hard money. Under the BCRA candidates can only accept donations of \$2,000 per election from an individual donor, yet if they are facing a self-financed candidate this limit triples to \$6,000 for House races, and at least this much for Senate races. Advocates point out that this provision will “level the playing field” for candidates facing self-financed opponents.

It is unclear whether these provisions of the BCRA will deter self-financing, as most candidates do not seek repayment for loans made to their campaign. Nor is it clear if the provision increasing hard money limits for candidates facing wealthy opponents will withstand legal challenges that it does not treat all candidates equally.¹⁰ It does seem likely however, that the millionaires’ amendment will alter the strategic calculus faced by both wealthy candidates and their potential opponents.

State Law: Redistricting and Primaries

State laws continue to regulate many aspects of congressional elections. They exhibit a bewildering array of provisions. Two sets of state laws—those governing the drawing of district lines and those governing the process of gaining a place on the ballot—are particularly important.

Redistricting. Among the most sensitive issues governed by state laws is the drawing of district lines for House seats. Because the composition of House districts can make the

difference between winning and losing, the two major parties and individual politicians, particularly incumbents, often fight fierce battles in state legislatures over the alignment of districts. These battles are renewed every ten years after the decennial census.

Following the 2000 census, the seven least populous states—Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming—were each allocated a single at-large House district, so redistricting was not an issue. Of the other states, thirty-seven began by using the normal process of having the state legislature enact redistricting legislation.¹¹ But in response to the controversial character of redistricting decisions, the other states adopted some special procedure—an independent commission, a combination of commission and legislative action, or some other special rules. Incumbent members of Congress often seek to influence state redistricting decisions, but their influence varies. Redistricting tends to be most controversial when a state loses one or more seats and must pit incumbent members against each other in consolidated districts.

States face two significant constraints when drawing district lines. First, federal law—the Voting Rights Act—requires certain states to submit their plans to the U.S. Department of Justice or a federal district court for approval before implementing them. These are states where discriminatory barriers to voting were or now may be a problem—a total of sixteen in 2001.¹² Since 1982 the Voting Rights Act has barred districting plans that have the effect of diluting the voting power of racial minorities by splitting their vote among districts, even if there is no evidence of deliberate discrimination.

Second, the Supreme Court has moved to set standards to limit certain kinds of gerrymandering—the manipulation of district lines for political purposes—as well as some unintentional districting outcomes. The clearest court directive is that House districts must be equal in population, within a very narrow margin. In addition, the Court indicated in 1986 that districting plans designed to advantage one political group (such as a party) over another may be unconstitutional. But just what constitutes impermissible “political gerrymandering” is not clear.

Racial gerrymandering is another matter. Following the 1990 census, the federal courts at first let stand very oddly shaped congressional districts created to give blacks a voting majority. These new districts were critical to the election of more blacks and Hispanics to the House of Representatives in 1992. But between 1993 and 2001, the Court made a series of rulings concerning the constitutionality of districts drawn with racial motives. The decisions have forced federal courts to determine whether other factors justified the redrawing of those districts’ lines. By 2001, following the new Supreme Court rulings, courts had ordered “majority-minority” districts to be redrawn in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

Political and legal complications abound in redistricting. Failure to adopt a timely redistricting plan or to meet legal standards often leads a federal district court to design and impose a plan. After the 2000 census, federal courts became involved in redistricting in at least ten states, and state courts became involved in several others.¹³ Several states

did not have settled district lines until the summer of 2002, forcing some of them to extend the filing deadline for congressional candidates for the 2002 elections.

Primaries. State laws that govern the placement of candidates on the November general election ballot are remarkably varied. All states provide for primary elections as the means for choosing candidates from the two major parties for the November ballot. The standard primary is held for candidates seeking to represent one of the two major parties on the November ballot. In 2002, the earliest standard primary elections for House and Senate seats were in California, on March 5. The last standard primary was in Hawaii, on September 21. But ten states require that a candidate receive a specified percentage of the primary vote (more than 50 percent in most cases) before being placed on the November ballot; if no candidate wins the specified percentage, a run-off primary election is held soon thereafter.¹⁴

Furthermore, states vary in the way they regulate voting in primary elections. Most states have closed primaries: Voters must register in advance as either a Republican or a Democrat and may vote only in that party's primary. Open primaries, used in nine states, allow voters to choose to vote in either party's primary at the polling place on election day.

Nearly all states have a system of plurality voting in the general election. That is, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if that candidate receives less than a majority of the total vote. Consequently, if more than two candidates are on the ballot (usually a candidate from each major party, plus minor party candidates), the winner may receive far less than half of the votes.

Louisiana has the most distinctive system. It puts all candidates for a House or Senate seat, regardless of party, in a single primary election. Prior to 1997 this primary occurred in October, and if a candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote they were elected to office without a general election. If no candidate won a majority, the top two vote getters, regardless of party, were placed on the ballot in the November general election. Because only two candidates would compete in the general election, if a general election were necessary, one candidate would win a majority (in the absence of a tie). In late 1997, the Supreme Court struck down the Louisiana primary election law. Because a candidate could be, and often was, elected in the October primary, the Court ruled that the Louisiana law conflicted with the federal law setting the date for congressional elections as the Tuesday following the first Monday of November.¹⁵ Following this ruling Louisiana shifted the primary to the date for the general election with a runoff following if no candidate attains a majority.¹⁶

Election Practice Reform. In the wake of the 2000 presidential election debacle, Congress sought to expand the federal role in national elections by making it "easier to vote and harder to cheat." Congress enacted legislation 2002 that authorized almost \$4 billion to aid states in improving the mechanics of the election process. Close to \$1 billion of this authorization was to assist states in replacing the infamous "punch card" voting machines that were the source of controversy in Florida in 2000, as well as

replacing other outdated voting technology. The law also required that states must allow voters to cast “provisional ballots” in federal elections if their registration status is unclear. Upon demonstrating that the voter is properly registered, these provisional ballots are then to be counted as actual votes. The law seeks to reduce voter fraud by requiring identification for first-time voters, and a state-issued identification is now required in order to register to vote.¹⁷

House and Senate Rules: Staff and the Frank

The House and Senate have established rules to limit incumbents’ use of their official offices, accounts, staffs, and other privileges for campaign purposes. Generally, incumbents may not use their offices or staffs for campaign purposes. For example, they may not accept campaign contributions in their official offices. Staff members are required to take leave without pay to work on their bosses’ campaigns.

Dating back to the first Congress, members have been permitted free use of the mail by using their signatures in place of stamps. The use of their signature, called the frank, is now regulated by a 1973 law that prohibits the use of the frank for purposes “unrelated to the official business, activities, and duties of members” and for “mail matter which specifically solicits political support . . . or a vote or financial assistance for any candidate for any political office.” In 1989, the House limited the number of district wide “postal-patron” mailings that could be sent. The rules forbid explicit partisan and campaign references and allow that only a limited number of references to the member can occur on each page.

The rules also bar mass mailings within 60 days of a primary or general election in the Senate and within 90 days in the House. Many members still use the frank within the 60-day period for mailings of fewer than 500 pieces, to target certain groups within their districts or states, and members still use the frank more in election years than non-election years. However, the 1989 rule change combined with a further tightening of member allowances in 1995 have reduced the amount of money spent on franked mail from over \$100 million in 1988 to less than \$20 million in 1999.¹⁸ Member allowances for franked mail were further reduced in 1995, for example, twenty-two House members sent four or more (sixty-five in one case) separate batches of between 400 and 499 letters within sixty days of the November election.¹⁹

Until 1992, House members could send mass mailings at taxpayer expense to individuals living outside their district. Responding to a court ruling of that year, the House banned all mailings to more than 500 persons outside a member’s district.²⁰ The restriction is a problem for members whose districts are redrawn in an election year and seek to quickly communicate with their new constituents. The restriction also constrains members who are contemplating running for a statewide office, such as a Senate seat or governorship, who want to reach a larger electorate.²¹

The Candidates

Personal ambition, more than any other factor, seems to drive people to run for Congress in the modern era.²² In recent years, party organizations have become increasingly active in recruiting candidates. And interest groups, ranging from environmental groups to women's groups to manufacturing associations, seek candidates who reflect their viewpoint to run for Congress as well. Nevertheless, the initiative for the vast majority of candidacies rests with the candidates themselves. They are self-starters— independent political entrepreneurs who personally assess the costs and benefits and assume the risks of running for Congress.

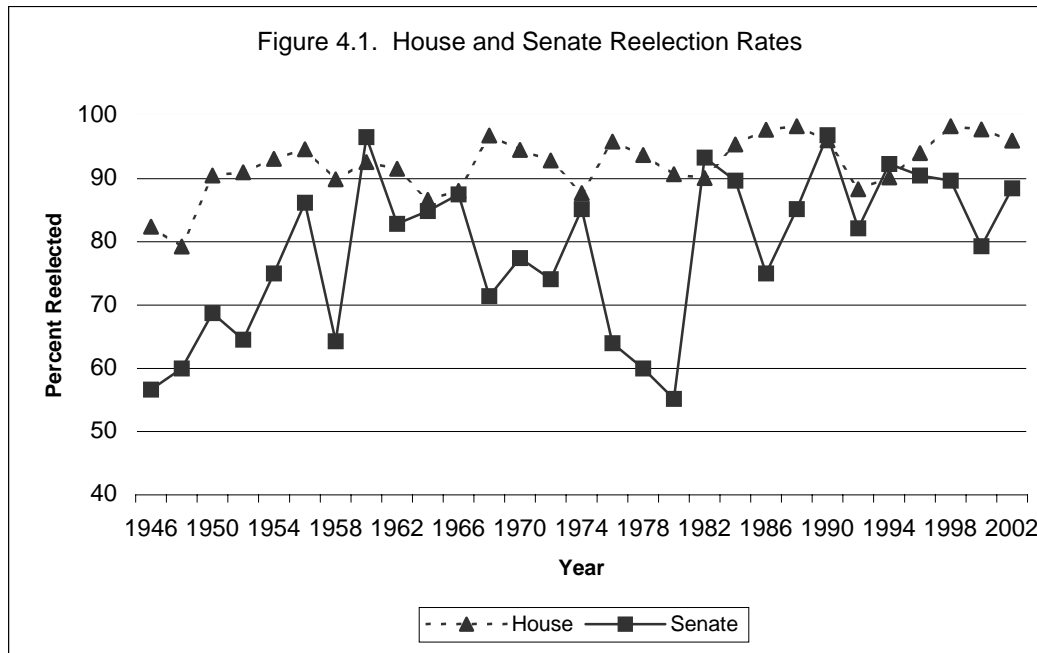
Conventional wisdom suggests that Congress is an ossified institution filled with well-entrenched incumbents. As usual, conventional wisdom is half right and half wrong. Incumbents are advantaged and usually win reelection when they seek it. But it does not take very many voluntary retirements and electoral defeats in each election for substantial change in the membership to occur over just a few elections. Despite the fact that approximately 90 percent of incumbents seek reelection, in 2003, 245 of the 435 members of the House had been first elected in 1994 or later. In the Senate, 45 of the 100 senators serving in the 107th Congress (2001-02) had served less than one full term.

Three types of congressional candidates should be distinguished: incumbents seeking reelection, challengers to incumbents, and candidates running in districts or states with an open seat (that is, where the incumbent either is not seeking reelection or, in the case of the general election, was defeated in the primary). As Figure 4.1 illustrates, several clear patterns have emerged in recent decades:

- Most incumbents run for reelection and win;
- House incumbents are more successful than Senate incumbents in the typical election; and
- even in the House, the percentage of incumbents who successfully seek reelection has not grown systematically.

Clearly, the odds are stacked against challengers, although challengers for Senate seats are more successful as a group than are challengers for House seats.

The high rate of success for incumbents seeking reelection has led observers to note an incumbency advantage—something about the incumbent officeholder, his or her office and campaign resources, or the electorate gives incumbents a built-in advantage over challengers.

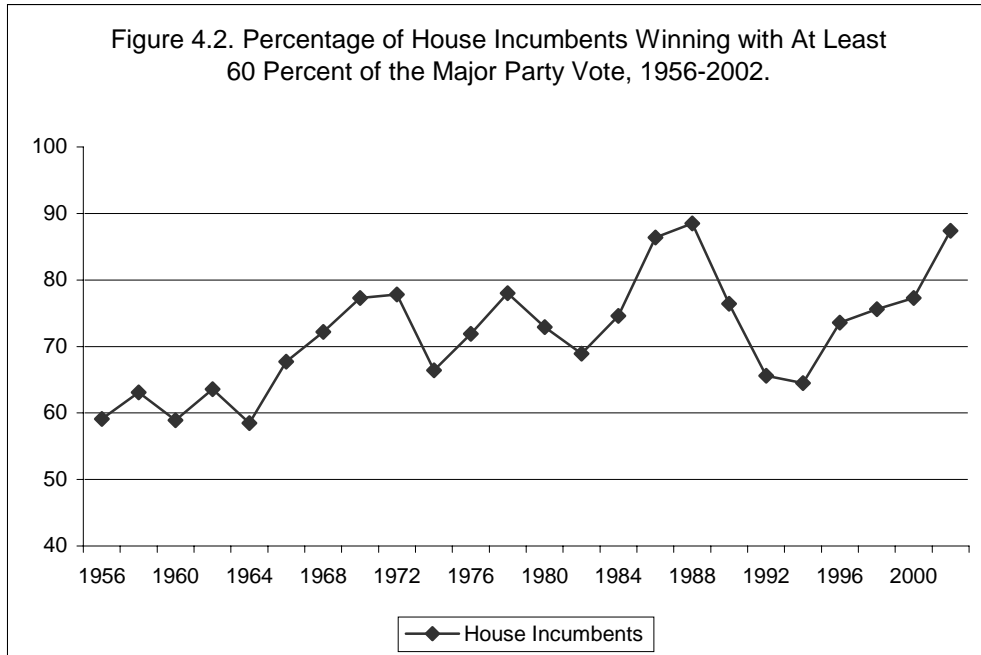


Sources: Ornstein et al. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002*; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2000 and 2002 Elections*. Note: The percentage of those seeking reelection who are successful is reported.

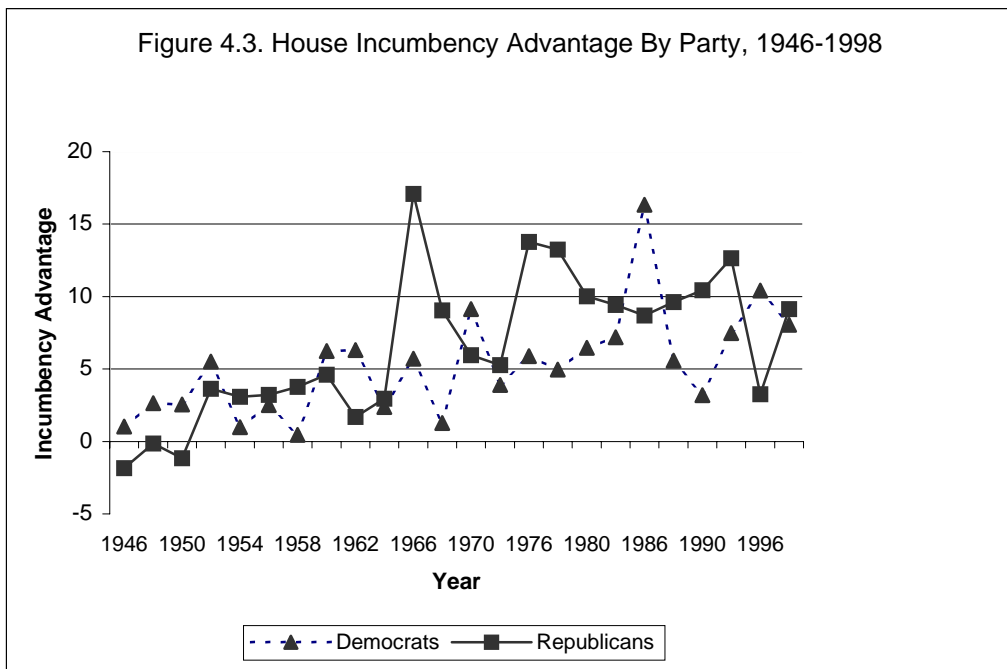
One indicator of the increasing strength of incumbents' advantage is the percentage of incumbents reelected with at least 60 percent of the vote. As Figure 4.2 indicates, this percentage was higher in the 1980s than in the previous three decades. The percentage dipped in the 1990s when incumbent Democrats suffered losses, but by 2002 was back to levels seen in the late 1980s. This measure can be misleading. Any national shift in voter preferences favoring the majority party will push up most incumbents' margin of victory even if nothing associated with incumbency played a role. A better measure would provide a statistical adjustment for how well the candidate did in the last election and how advantaged or disadvantaged his or her party is nationwide. Such a measure, illustrated in Figure 4.3, indicates the advantage of incumbency corrected for the local and national advantages enjoyed by the incumbent and his or her party.²³

The House incumbency advantage exhibited a large upward shift from 1964 to 1966. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the incumbency advantage was something less than 5 percentage points in most elections. Since then, the incumbency advantage has averaged close to 10 percentage points. The enlarged advantage has tended to vary by party, with Republicans often enjoying the largest benefits of incumbency.

Senators' constituencies are often larger and more diverse than representatives' constituencies, and thus Senate races are often more competitive than House races.²⁴ Incumbent senators find it more difficult than do incumbent House members to build a large base of support that will sustain them from election to election. The long six-year term may contribute to the interelection variability in support for senators. Whatever the reason, Senate incumbents face a much higher probability of defeat than do their House counterparts.



Sources: Ornstein et al. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002*; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2000 and 2002 Elections*.



In contrast to the pattern in elections involving incumbents, contests for open seats have become more competitive in recent decades. Between 1946 and 1964, only 20.3 percent of House open-seat contests produced a change in the party that controlled the seat; between 1966 and 2000, the percentage rose to close to 30. The trend is sharper in Senate open-seat races—41.3 percent yielded party change between 1954 and 1964, and more than 50 percent did so between 1966 and 2000.²⁵ Obviously, Senate open seats generally produce more change in party control than do House open seats, again reflecting the keener competition in Senate races.

Explaining the Incumbency Advantage

Political scientists have worked hard to pin down the causes of the declining competition for seats held by incumbents and have discovered that many factors contribute to it. Influences include the declining importance of party identification in voting, an expanding incumbent advantage in campaign resources, more nonpartisan constituency service, imbalances in campaign funding, the quality of the candidates challenging incumbents, and more contact with voters.

The Decline of Party Identification

A major factor in incumbents' success is that their party holds the advantage in the district or state they represent. Democratic constituencies tend to elect and reelect Democrats; Republican constituencies tend to elect and reelect Republicans. For House districts, according to one estimate, the expected vote for incumbents, subtracting the vote attributable to their incumbency, has varied from between 55 and 60 percent for most of the period since the late 1940s.²⁶ The party advantage is somewhat smaller in the Senate. Appropriate estimates of the personal incumbency advantage, such as the one reported in Figure 4.3, adjust for the underlying party advantage.

But party is a major element of the story of incumbency. The decline of party identification in the general electorate in the latter half of the twentieth century probably contributed to incumbents' advantage.²⁷ As voters' psychological attachment to a major party weakened, the proportion of the electorate voting for congressional candidates in a reflexive, partisan way declined. This enlarged pool of "floating" voters and weak partisans produced more ticket splitting. The proportion of the electorate voting for the candidate of one party for one office and the candidate of the other party for another office—whether measured for House-Senate splits or House-president splits—nearly tripled from the 1950s through the 1980s, before declining in recent election cycles.

For congressional incumbents, weak partisanship and ticket splitting present both danger and opportunity. The danger is that incumbents' natural base of support among fellow partisans is weakened, as there are fewer votes guaranteed for their party. This makes the electorate more unpredictable. Indeed, there is now more election-to-election volatility in incumbents' vote margins than there was in the 1950s—so much more that it nearly offsets the average incumbent's margin of victory. The increase in volatility accounts for the fact that incumbents now receive a larger share of the vote but do not actually win at a much higher rate.²⁸

Yet incumbents also have the opportunity to exploit the weakened base of support for potential challengers from the other party. In the main, incumbents have done so. In 1958, 16 percent of the electorate defected from their expressed party identification to vote for a House incumbent, and 7 percent defected to vote for a challenger. In 1984, the percentages were 46 and 9, respectively, indicating a tremendous increase in the vote-getting ability of House incumbents. Unfortunately, no comparable figures are available for the Senate of the 1950s. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Senate incumbents drew about 33 percent of the electorate in defections, compared with only about 11 percent for challengers. Clearly, House incumbents have been more successful than Senate incumbents at stimulating defection.

Congressional Speaking . . .

Political scientists often use the *swing ratio* to gauge the bias of an electoral system. The swing ratio is the percentage of seats won by a party for a 1 percent increase in its average nationwide vote. In a system of perfect proportional representation, the number of seats a party wins is proportional to the number of votes received, so the swing ratio is 1.0. A party winning 55 percent of the vote, for instance, would win 55 percent of the seats.

In single-member districts, a small percentage increase in the vote for a party may produce a large increase in the number of seats it wins (narrow defeats might be turned into narrow victories). For House elections, the swing ratio has been about 2.0 in the twentieth century, indicating that a party gains two seats for each additional 1 percent of the nationwide vote it gains. The increasing incumbency advantage has reduced the House swing ratio in recent decades. Incumbents, who average more than 60 percent of the vote, can lose 5 or 10 percent of the vote and still retain their seats. This means that the system is less responsive—seat changes are smaller for the same change in nationwide vote.

The translation of votes into seats has worked to the Democrats' advantage in recent decades. In 1992, for example, the Democrats won 50.8 percent of the nationwide vote in House elections but won 59.5 percent of the seats. Republicans complain that this reflects biases in how district lines are drawn. It appears, however, to be due to the large number of districts in which Democrats have a slight advantage over Republicans.

Expanded Perquisites of Office

Incumbents may contribute to the demise of party loyalty and the rise of ticket splitting by de-emphasizing their own party affiliation or even openly opposing the positions taken by presidents, presidential candidates, and other visible leaders of their party. Probably more important, though, is that incumbents exploit their individual resources to combat electorate volatility and expand their base of support into the enlarged pool of independent voters. Their resources, which are discussed in Chapter 5,

include a sizable personal staff distributed between their Washington and home offices, their committee staffs, office and stationery budgets, the use of the frank, a travel allowance, access to and influence over the White House and executive agencies, media access, and the expertise of the congressional support agencies.

All of these resources have grown since the 1960s and legislators can use them to attract favorable publicity at home. Staff members, often with the assistance of experts in support agencies, help members write legislation and timely amendments that are popular at home. Committee and subcommittee staff assist their bosses in organizing hearings, some of which are held away from Washington and many of which attract media attention. Stationery allowances and the frank permit members to send mass mailings directly to their districts or states. In 1992, incumbents facing the stiffest challenges tended to use the frank the most.²⁹ Travel allowances make it easier for members to return home more frequently to appear before groups. And Congress's own radio and television facilities now permit members to make live and taped appearances on local television more frequently.

Expanded Constituency Service

Incumbents' official resources also can be used to improve their personal standing with their constituents.³⁰ Additional staff and home offices have allowed members to provide personal services to constituents. Many of these services fall under the heading of "casework"—efforts to solve constituents' and local governments' problems with federal agencies. Perhaps the most common problem involves a constituent's eligibility for social security benefits. The expansion of federal programs since the mid-1960s has fostered this ombudsman role for members. Unlike legislating, which forces legislators to take sides on controversial issues, casework is a nonpartisan activity for which members can gain credit. The emphasis on personal service and de-emphasis on controversial issues facilitate more candidate-oriented and less party-oriented campaigns. Other resources—travel allowances, stationery budgets, and new satellite communications—give members more opportunities to publicize their legislative and casework activity.

Of course, the expansion of members' resources and the growth of constituency service have another side. In a large country with a large, complex federal bureaucracy, members perform a genuine service on behalf of constituents with real problems with government agencies. Legislators often justify their resources on the grounds that they are meeting the needs and expectations of their constituents. It is not surprising that members advertise their good works and get credit from voters for doing them.

Redistricting

One seemingly obvious explanation for the increase in the incumbency advantage is redistricting. With the Supreme Court ruling in *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964) that districts had to approximate a "one person one vote" standard, many states had to redistrict for the first time in decades. In 1962 Michigan's largest district contained more than 800,000 residents, while the smallest contained less than 200,000. This massive wave of redistricting is timed almost perfectly with the increase in the incumbency advantage seen in Figure 4.3.

For many years political scientists were unable to demonstrate that redistricting in the wake of *Wesberry v. Sanders* was responsible for the increased incumbency advantage. Recently, political scientists Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz have demonstrated that redistricting in the 1960s played a significant role.³¹ They point out that redistricting was dominated by Democrat-controlled state legislatures and federal courts staffed by Democratic judges. These authorities “packed” Republican voters into a few overwhelmingly Republican districts while spreading Democratic voters across more districts so as to increase the number of seats Democrats could be expected to win. This packing of Republicans produced a large number of seats that were virtually guaranteed to elect Republican members, but decreased competition in many other seats that were controlled by Democrats. Thus, they conclude that the increase in incumbency advantage was largely attributable to this increase in the number of safe Republican seats.

Biased Campaign Funding

Like the weakening of party attachments in the electorate, changes in campaign finance laws and the introduction of PACs have been a mixed blessing for incumbents.³² The expanded resources and activities of party committees and PACs create a potential threat to incumbents. By recruiting, funding, and providing campaign services to challengers and even organizing mass mailings and media campaigns against incumbents, PACs and party committees can neutralize some of the advantages of incumbents. Republicans have proved to be especially adept at this strategy. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia) successfully recruited many of the Republican challengers key to the Republican takeover of the House in 1995, while many Republican Senate candidates were able to take advantage of fundraising visits by President Bush during the 2002 election cycle.³³

Of course, incumbents generally do not sit idly by as potential challengers are recruited and trained. In fact, by using their committee and subcommittee chairmanships, party posts, and other sources of influence, incumbents have done a good job of staying ahead of challengers. As Table 4.2 shows, the incumbent advantage over challengers in PAC contributions, as well as in total contributions, is huge and has been growing since the 1970s. Moreover, PAC contributions have constituted an increasing share of campaign contributions to incumbents, especially House incumbents, and to open-seat candidates, but have comprised a declining share of contributions to challengers. To look at it differently, 60 percent of PAC contributions went to incumbents in 1980, but the figure was an astounding 81 percent in 1990.

Table 4.2. Sources of Campaign Funds in House and Senate Elections: 1984-2000.

House					
	Individuals	PACs	Party	Candidates/ Others^a	Total (millions of dollars)
<i>Incumbents</i>					
1984	47.6%	43.2%	1.7%	7.5%	131.5
1990	47.5%	47.7%	0.4%	9.4%	183.5
1996	53.9%	40.4%	0.5%	0.8%	281.6
2000	50.9%	42.1%	1.0%	0.5%	361.9
<i>Challengers</i>					
1984	50.7%	23.5%	5.4%	20.4%	45.9
1990	52.9%	18.0%	2.4%	26.7%	37.7
1996	57.7%	17.5%	1.2%	20.2%	121.6
2000	56.5%	15.0%	3.0%	21.0%	128.3
<i>Open Seats</i>					
1984	49.1%	28.6%	3.8%	18.5%	18.7
1990	47.6%	30.5%	2.1%	19.8%	30.1
1996	54.3%	20.0%	1.1%	22.2%	102.1
2000	45.6%	18.8%	3.0%	29.4%	121.9
Senate					
<i>Incumbents</i>					
1984	69.0%	24.0%	0.6%	6.4%	74.8
1990	68.6%	24.9%	0.5%	6.0%	118.8
1996	68.3%	23.7%	0.5%	4.4%	81.8
2000	58.5%	24.3%	5.4%	5.8%	137.2
<i>Challengers</i>					
1984	72.5%	18.5%	1.3%	7.7%	31.9
1990	59.9%	16.0%	1.5%	22.6%	49.3
1996	57.4%	8.8%	0.5%	30.0%	79.2
2000	54.3%	8.4%	3.9%	25.0%	77.3
<i>Open Seats</i>					
1984	51.5%	10.0%	0.4%	38.1%	40.8
1990	48.6%	32.9%	1.4%	17.1%	10.2
1996	54.3%	31.7%	0.6%	24.1%	124.1
2000	55.5%	7.0%	5.0%	28.5% ^b	172.8

^aCandidates' contributions to their own campaigns make up most of this category. Interest earned on accounts and other small sources of income are included as well.

^bNote this number is inflated by the spending of Jon Corzine (D-NJ), without his spending this number would be 2.0%

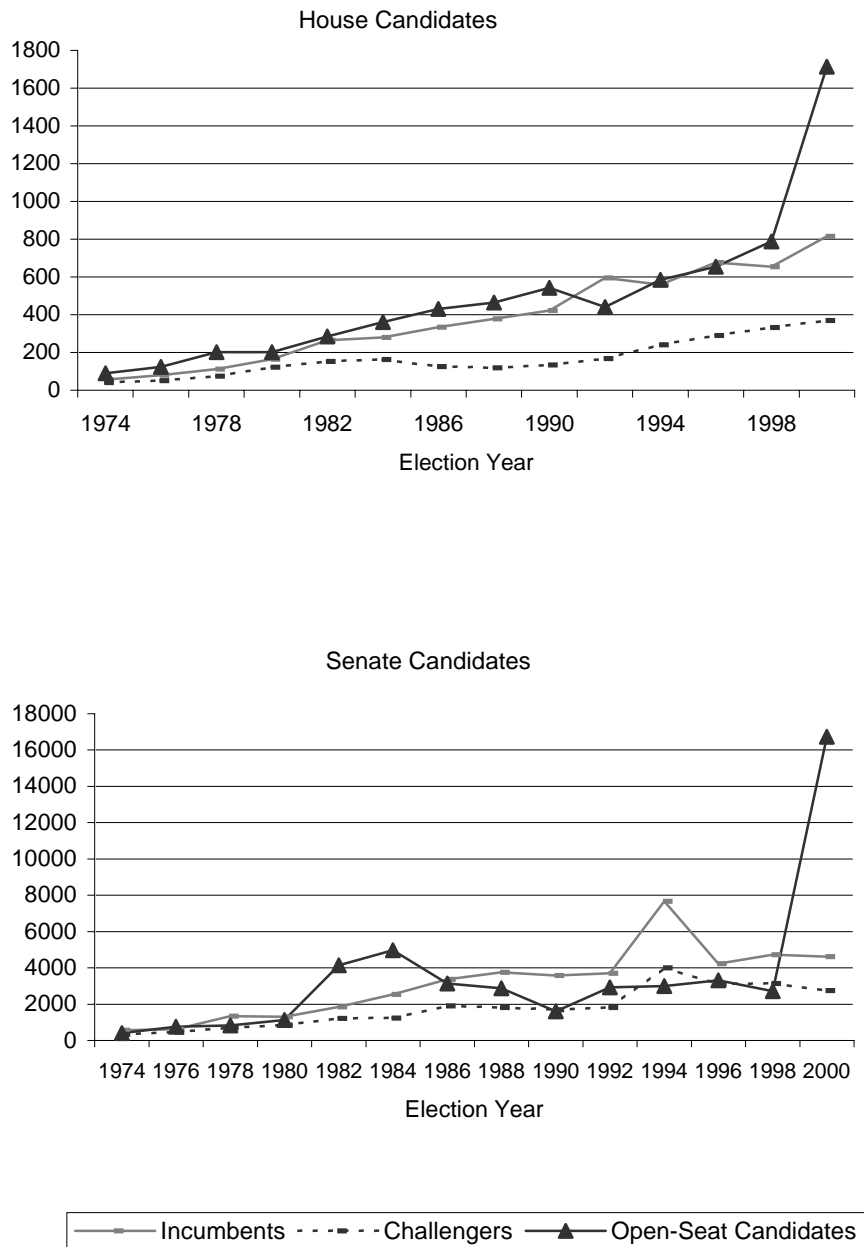
Further, as the competition over majority control in Congress has intensified the parties themselves have turned more attention to bolstering the resources of their own incumbents. Following the controversy surrounding the impeachment of President Clinton in 1998-99, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-TX) created a fundraising plan dubbed ROMP (Retain Our Majority Program) in which incumbent Republicans donated over \$1.5 million to the campaign funds of Republicans who were thought to be vulnerable during the 2000 election cycle. The stated goal of ROMP was to insure that vulnerable incumbents had enough money to “scare off” potential challengers.³⁴ This increasing role for the parties in fundraising is reflected in Table 4.2.

The flip side of contributions is expenditures. Figure 4.4 shows the historical record of spending by congressional candidates. The incumbent-challenger spending ratio increased from 1.5:1 in 1978 to 3.7:1 in 1990 for House races and from 1.9:1 to 2.1:1 in Senate races for the same years.³⁵ By the year 2000, challengers improved their competitiveness, reducing the ratio to 2.2:1 in House contests and 1.6:1 in Senate contests. Still, the gap between House incumbents and challengers remains larger than it was in the early 1980s. In Senate campaigns, the gap between incumbents and challengers has grown, but it is not quite as large as the gap for House campaigns. Open-seat candidates for the House show increases that parallel those of incumbents. In fact, open-seat candidate spending consistently runs ahead of incumbent spending, primarily because open-seat races are more contested and stimulate more spending on both sides.

The fundraising capacity of incumbents gives them a tremendous advantage over challengers. Indeed, incumbents now raise large sums early to deter potential opponents from entering the next race and to protect against unforeseen challenges.³⁶ Incumbents’ emphasis on deterrence and risk avoidance is evidenced in their efforts to raise far more money than they end up spending.³⁷ These surpluses, along with fundraising efforts initiated just after an election, give the incumbents a huge—and growing—head start on any potential challengers for the next election. The average House incumbent seeking reelection in 1978 had about \$13,000 on hand at the beginning of his or her term. That amount increased to nearly \$444,000 in the term before the 2000 election. The comparable numbers for Senate incumbents are \$29,000 and \$1,200,000.³⁸

Note that fundraising by incumbents should not be judged solely by its effect on their reelection prospects. After all, members often seek higher office. Representatives with an eye on the Senate or senators looking toward the presidency often convert funds for such a purpose. And FEC rules enable a candidate to easily redirect funds from his or her campaign for one office to a campaign for another. In a future race, the member may be the challenger, needing large sums of money just to become competitive. Consequently, there is a strong incentive for the ambitious politician to raise more than he or she might ever need to gain reelection.

Figure 4.4 Campaign Expenditures by Type of Candidate
(in Thousands of Dollars)



Note: For the open-seat candidates' averages vary greatly because of the small and variable number of open-seat candidates.

Source: Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael Malbin, *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 2002), pp. 87-88, 93-94. Reprinted by permission.

Candidate Quality

Congressional elections are primarily contests between local candidates, each of whom has a mix of personal and political attributes that influences voters' evaluations of them. If one party fails to field a quality candidate, or perhaps any candidate at all, the other party is greatly advantaged. In fact, candidate quality, as measured by candidates' previous political experience, is strongly related to electoral success for both challengers and open-seat candidates.³⁹ Members of Congress have always known this.

Declining quality among challengers may underpin incumbents' increasing margins of victory in recent decades. Over the past three decades, the quality of challengers did not decline at a steady rate, so challenger quality cannot account for the continuous increase in incumbents' vote margins from 1964 to 1990.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the quality of House challengers did decline in the 1980s, which may help explain the fall-off in challengers' fundraising and the even higher reelection rate for incumbents in 1986, 1988, and 1990. Contributors, quite naturally, may have been less willing to give money to candidates who seemed unlikely to win. Moreover, the 1980s' decline in challenger quality in House races affected the Republican party more than the Democratic party, making it very difficult for the Republicans to dislodge the Democratic majority. The decline among House challengers may have ended in 1992, a year in which an anti-incumbency mood seemed to encourage potential challengers. Republicans attracted far more quality candidates to challenge Democratic incumbents in 1994, when they dislodged the Democrats as the majority party, but the parties have been relatively equal in this regard for recent elections.

The record in House open-seat contests, where no incumbents are present to scare off potential opponents, is very different in recent decades—the quality of open-seat candidates in general elections has improved.⁴¹ By one estimate, the number of high-quality open-seat candidates (those with experience in elective office) has nearly doubled since the 1950s.⁴² This pattern, which contrasts sharply with the pattern for challengers, helps explain why open-seats races have become more competitive as races between incumbents and their challengers have become less competitive.

Contact with Voters

Incumbents' increasing advantage appears to be the product of several mutually reinforcing developments in the electorate's partisanship, incumbents' resources and behavior, campaign finance practices, and the decisions of potential candidates. Note also that scholars have eliminated several other possible explanations for incumbents' increasing vote margins.

The incumbency advantage, the competitiveness of open-seat elections, and House-Senate differences are all revealed by patterns in voters' contacts with candidates. Voters have somewhat more contact with small state Senate incumbents than with House incumbents, but the big difference lies between House and Senate challengers. Voters report far less contact with House challengers than with most Senate challengers, reflecting the vast difference in visibility and campaign resources for challengers at the two levels. In fact, Senate challengers do not lag much behind Senate incumbents in voter

contact. One reason for this is the notoriety of many Senate challengers. People of wealth, celebrities, and well-known politicians make up a larger proportion of Senate challengers than of House challengers. Many Senate challengers simply have a head start on their House counterparts.⁴³

Fear of the Challenger

Senator Alben Barkley told the following story about one of his colleagues:

One of the funniest things I have ever seen in either the House or Senate cloakrooms was a performance which Congressman [J. Thomas] Heflin staged just before his lost race for the House. It was generally known that he was ambitious to run for the Senate, hence, it was important for him to retain his House seat as a springboard. There were rumors that a particularly strong man was considering running against him, and Heflin was frankly worried. About a week before the deadline for qualifying petitions to be filed he sent his administrative assistant down to Montgomery, the Alabama state capital, to “watch developments.”

Come the fateful evening when, at midnight, the deadline would elapse, and Heflin was carrying on like an old horse with the heaves. The House had a night session in progress, but every half hour Heflin was in the cloakroom telephone booth, ringing up his assistant in Montgomery. His voice was as penetrating as a steamboat whistle, so those of us sitting in the cloakroom could hear his end of the conversation through the phone door: “That you, Jim?” he shouted. . . .”Where are you? . . . Right in the Secretary’s office, are you right where you can see everything that goes on? . . . Stay right there!”

This went on at intervals until one minute after midnight, Alabama time, when the deadline had elapsed. Congressman Heflin went in to place the crucial call “Well... what did he do? Did he file? . . . What! He filed! You say he filed. He filed against me?... Oh-oh, you say he didn’t file against me, and he can’t file now!”

Then Heflin came out of the phone booth. He filled his lungs with air, drew himself up like a pouter pigeon, and looked around at all of us...”Damn his hide!” he boomed, with the old Heflin voice back in perfect form. “I wish he had filed. I’d have beat hell out of him.”

Source: From *That Reminds Me*, by Alben W. Barkley. Copyright 1954 by Alben W. Barkley. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

The form of voter contact for which incumbents enjoy the biggest advantage over challengers is contact through the mail. This is true of both House and Senate incumbents, which suggests that incumbents’ franking privilege and funding for mass mailings give them an important edge over the competition. Open-seat candidates have more contact with voters than do challengers but have less contact than do incumbents.

This is expected. After all, in comparison with challengers, open-seat candidates tend to be better qualified, more familiar to voters, and more successful at raising campaign funds. For the same reasons, Senate open-seat candidates are more successful than House open-seat candidates in reaching voters.

National Patterns in Congressional Elections

Although the local candidates and their personal and political characteristics are the major determinants of congressional election outcomes, national forces appear to be an influence worth at least several percentage points in most congressional races. Such a small effect may seem quite unimportant, but it is more than enough to determine the outcome in many close contests. The state of the national economy, the public's evaluation of the president's performance, and the public leaning conservative are strongly related to which party is most successful in congressional elections. When the economy is weak, the president's performance ratings are low, or the public mood is out of sync with administration policy, candidates of the incumbent president's party are less successful. By influencing the outcome in at least a few races, such forces shape the partisan and ideological balance in the House and Senate.⁴⁴

National forces may be felt in congressional elections in several ways. Voters and financial contributors sometimes reward or punish congressional candidates for national conditions. To the extent that they do, potential candidates have reason to assess the odds of winning. In any given year, potential candidates of one party may decide to stay out of congressional races when conditions do not seem favorable, reducing the pool of quality candidates that the party is able to field. Weak candidates, of course, attract few contributions, build ineffective campaigns, and are not likely to win. Thus, anticipated and actual choices made by voters, contributors, and potential and actual candidates combine to reward the candidacies of the party credited with good times and to punish the party blamed for bad times.

This description of the influence of national forces has one serious weakness: It cannot account for the frequency of divided party control between Congress and the presidency. The influence of national conditions generally pushes voters in the same direction for congressional and presidential elections. To be sure, idiosyncratic factors—a presidential scandal, for example—might occasionally produce a Congress and president of different parties. And yet, in 17 of the 26 two-year Congresses between 1952 and 2003, divided party control existed. All of the Republican presidents in that period, except George W. Bush, served with a Democratic House and, usually, a Democratic Senate.⁴⁵ In 1995-2000, Democratic president Clinton served with a Republican Congress.

It turns out that the effects of national forces, including presidential popularity, on congressional elections are not invariant. In fact, important changes have occurred in recent decades.

Presidential Election Years and the Coattail Effect

The “coattail effect” refers to the ability of popular candidates at the top of the ticket to attract voters to candidates of the same party for other offices. The coattail effect is thought by some to be generated by a spillover process—the popularity of the top candidate becomes associated with all candidates from the same party in the minds of voters. Such coattail effects may amount to rewarding all candidates of the same party for good times (or blaming all candidates of a party for bad times). Or perhaps the party of a strong top candidate, whose strength may come from favorable economic conditions, attracts better candidates for lower offices. Conversely, the pull might actually be in the other direction—popular congressional candidates draw support to their party’s presidential candidate. Whatever the mechanism at work, coattails, when they exist, have an important consequence: They produce a change in voting in the same partisan direction for presidential and congressional elections, and they encourage the election of a president and congressional majorities of the same party.

The best evidence mustered by political scientists indicates that the presidential coattail effect is irregular but has declined since mid-century.⁴⁶ One indicator is the increase in ticket splitting: More and more congressional districts and states have produced a majority of votes for a representative or senator of one party and for the presidential candidate of the other party. At the level of the individual voter, peoples’ choice for president has weakened as a predictor of their choice for House and Senate candidates. Nevertheless, some marginal coattail effects remain, usually of a magnitude of between 1 and 4 percentage points.⁴⁷

The weakened coattail effect is consistent with the expanded incumbency advantage. Incumbents may have been able to insulate themselves from negative public evaluations of presidents of their own party. They do so by working hard to associate themselves with the needs of their local district or state, distancing themselves from party labels, and advertising their personal attributes. How much they can divorce themselves from their party is limited, however, because they are listed with a party label on most state ballots, and challengers work hard to show the connection when it is advantageous to do so.

Midterm Elections

For congressional elections held in the middle of a presidential term—called midterm elections—there is no concurrent presidential contest. Yet for House midterm races, the number of congressional seats the two parties win is predicted well by the state of the economy and the public’s evaluation of the president’s performance.⁴⁸ But candidates of the president’s party are not credited or blamed for economic conditions in midterm contests as much as they are in presidential election years, when the choice of a presidential candidate is also on voters’ minds. In Senate midterm elections, economic conditions are even more weakly related to partisan seat gains or losses than they are in the House.

Midterm elections are distinctive for two reasons. First, turnout among voters is lower in midterm elections than in presidential elections. Without the stimulus of a highly visible presidential contest, turnout is often 10 to 15 percentage points lower in a midterm

election. In recent midterm elections, less than 40 percent of the nation's adult population has voted. Turnover varies widely among states and districts, however, and surges in midterm election turnout are related to the competitiveness of congressional races. Incumbents must be wary of challengers who can stimulate turnout and create uncertainties about the size and composition of the November electorate in midterm elections.⁴⁹

Second, for most of the 20th century political scientists could safely predict that the president's party would gain seats in Congress in presidential election years but lose seats in midterm elections. This pattern held for House seats in every midterm election from 1938-1994 and for Senate seats in all but three midterm elections from 1934-1994. In 1990, for example, the Republicans lost a net of eight House seats and one Senate seat. Between 1946 and 1996, the president's party suffered an average loss of about twenty-four seats in midterm elections, compared with an average gain of about nine seats in presidential election years.

The election outcomes in 1998 and 2002 have bucked this familiar trend. In 1998 Democrats managed to win a net gain of five House seats and lost no Senate seats, while in 2002 Republicans gained seven House seats and three Senate seats. The common thread running through both of these elections is that both occurred while the president enjoyed extraordinarily high public approval ratings.

Furthermore, the president's party tends to lose more House seats in the midterm election of the president's second term than in the president's first term. By one estimate, which took into account other factors that influence House elections, the president's party does about twice as poorly in the second term as in the first term. Recent elections suggest this pattern may be changing: Republicans lost only five seats in 1986 and as noted above Democrats actually gained seats in 1998. The second-term effect is weaker for Senate elections, which may reflect the fact that fewer Senate seats of the president's party are vulnerable in any one election.⁵⁰

A reasonable explanation of the difficulty confronted by the president's party in midterm elections is the exposure thesis. This thesis holds that the more a party gains in one election above its average or natural level for recent decades, the more seats it is likely to be holding in states and districts that generally favor the other party. The party that gains in a presidential election year becomes vulnerable to losing seats two years later in the midterm election. The number of seats won in the presidential election year that are above the party's average indicates how "exposed" the party will be to seat losses at the midterm. Actual results are influenced by national conditions and the president's popularity.⁵¹

The jury is still out on the exposure thesis. Evidence for the thesis in recent House election results is mixed. In 1992, the Democrats lost ten seats in the House, but their presidential candidate won. Their 1992 losses should have kept their losses in 1994 low as well, but obviously they did not. Instead, the Democrats lost fifty-three House seats and majority control in 1994. The 2000 and 2002 House elections are more consistent

with the exposure thesis. Republican gains in 1992 and 1994 may have put them ahead of the level of voters' long-term sympathies for them. Consequently, and consistent with the exposure thesis, they lost seats in the next three elections. In 2002, they gained eight seats while their candidate for president won a narrow electoral college victory.

Divided Party Control Between Congress and the Presidency

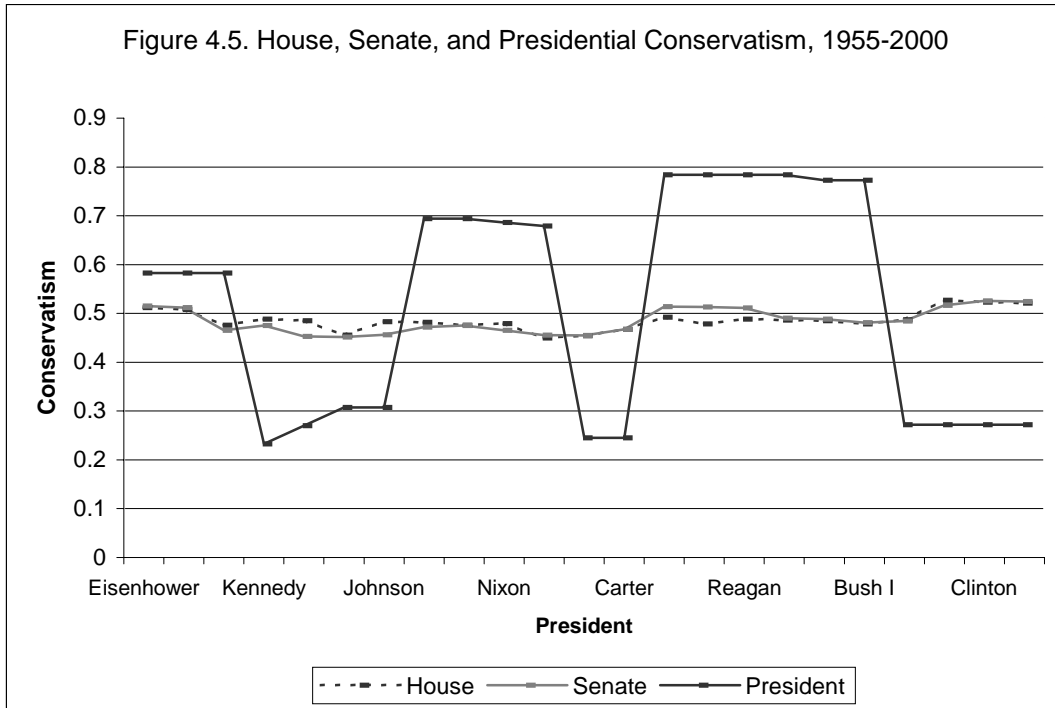
Explaining the frequency of divided party control between Congress and the presidency since mid-century has proven difficult.⁵² It is natural to suspect that the culprits are midterm elections, which uniformly work against the president's party. Between 1952 and 1996, however, presidential election years produced divided control about as often as did midterm elections (seven versus eight).

The immediate cause of divided control is split-ticket voting by a large number of voters—voting for House and Senate candidates of one party and a presidential candidate of the opposite party. But just what has led to the increase in split-ticket voting is unclear. The decline of partisanship among voters facilitates ticket splitting by reducing the voters' loyalty to either party. And the increasing polarization of the parties may have produced dissatisfaction with both parties and a desire to have the parties balance each other. If so, then divided party control between Congress and the presidency may reflect a deliberate choice by a segment of the electorate.⁵³

Congressional Elections and Policy Alignments

Assessing the effects of elections on public policy is tricky. We can never be sure what kinds of policies would have been enacted had the cast of players within Congress and the White House been different. Moreover, some of the factors that influence election outcomes, such as changing public attitudes, directly affect both old and new decision makers and might produce policy changes even if little turnover in Congress occurs. To complicate matters further, we usually cannot determine the policy preferences of members until they cast roll-call votes. This means that we usually cannot distinguish members' policy views immediately after an election from positions they take later on, which are influenced by new events, presidential demands, interest group lobbying, and other political forces.

Even when election results appear to clearly predict future policy directions, there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between election outcomes, the ideological alignment of the three lawmaking institutions, and eventual policy outcomes. For example, the 1986 elections clearly produced a more liberal Senate—Republicans lost eight seats and gave up majority control. But the White House remained in the hands of Ronald Reagan, a conservative Republican president, whose concurrence was required to get liberal legislation favored by Congress enacted into law. Thus, although the Constitution provides the means (elections) for changing the policy views represented in Congress and the White House, it also established rules for the electoral and legislative systems that reduce the chances that changing views will be translated directly and immediately into new public policy.



Ideological Outlook

Figure 4.5 demonstrates the effect of elections on the changing ideological position of the House, the Senate, and the presidency in recent decades.⁵⁴ High scores indicate a conservative outlook, and low scores indicate a liberal outlook. Not surprisingly, the line for the presidency varies widely as it moves back and forth between Democratic and Republican control. Democratic presidents take a more liberal position than the typical member of the House or Senate, and Republican presidents take a more conservative position. In contrast, the ideological positions of the House and Senate are more stable, which reflects the tendency of single elections to produce only a small change in the overall membership of Congress.

The patterns revealed in Figure 4.5 are consistent with what might be expected. During most of the period since the 1950s, all presidents have faced challenges in gaining cooperation from the two houses of Congress. As we might expect, Republican presidents Nixon (after his first two years), Ford, Reagan, and Bush differed from the Democratic houses of Congress by a larger margin than did Democratic presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter. Republican President Eisenhower, however, did not differ a great deal from the Democratic Congresses that he faced in the late 1950s.

Moreover, the 1980 and 1986 elections, which produced a change in party control of the Senate, are associated with changes in the ideological placement of the Senate relative to the House and the presidency. The Senate became more like the Republican White House after the 1980 elections, although still not as conservative as the administration. After the 1986 elections, the Senate reverted to its usual place, close to the House, with Presidents Reagan and Bush taking far more conservative positions.

The patterns in Figure 4.5 are important because they show that elections shift the ideological alignment of the three institutional players. They indicate that the House and Senate are usually not too distant from each other, and the president is often the outlier. If left to their own devices, presidents probably would produce more radical shifts in policy than they are allowed to do in the three-player game. Nevertheless, important shifts do occur within Congress as well. Congress moved considerably farther away from President Clinton following the 1994 election, leading to a conflictual six years of divided government.

Realigning Elections

Some of the sharpest changes in direction in public policy in American history have been associated with realigning elections. Political scientists define realigning elections as contests in which a large number of voters shift their loyalty from one party to the other, resulting in a clear benefit to one party at the congressional and presidential levels.⁵⁵ The three major realignments in U.S. history—the elections of 1860, 1896, and 1932—produced large differences in the parties' policy positions; placed the House, the Senate, and the presidency in the hands of one party; and created large majorities in Congress for the advantaged party. The result was a sharp reduction in ideological distance between the House, the Senate, and the president and a substantial shift in public Policy.⁵⁶ The 1932 election, for example, was followed by the creation of social security, a new system for regulating banks and financial markets, agricultural assistance, publicly insured home owners' loans, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and many other federal programs.

But realigning elections are rare. They may even be a thing of the past, the trend toward weakening partisanship in the last half of the 20th century appears to have reversed itself in recent years, yet neither party appears to have received disproportional gain from this shift. The clearest pattern from Figure 4.5 is that change tends to be small, and change in one institution—particularly in the presidency—often is not matched by changes in the others. Indeed, much of the public's cynicism about politics in the last two decades appears to be associated with a feeling that little changes with elections.

The Divided-Government Debate

The extended period of divided party control of government under Presidents Ronald, Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and, for a short time, George W. Bush have rekindled a debate about the policy consequences of divided control of government. Many observers have characterized the period as one of political deadlock: Conservative presidents have checked the initiatives of a liberal Congress, and the liberal Congress has blocked the proposals of conservative presidents (and, under Clinton, vice versa). Partisan competition exacerbates the already difficult task of gaining agreement among the House, the Senate, and the president. This depiction of the state of American national government has led many critics to recommend radical reforms, so we must know whether it is accurate.⁵⁷ Does divided party control of government make any difference?

The Mayhew Thesis. Political scientist David Mayhew investigated the question of divided control in his book *Divided We Govern*. He examined the frequency of major congressional investigations of the executive branch and the enactment of major legislation for the period between 1947 and 1990. During that period, one party controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency for eighteen years and neither party controlled both houses and the presidency for twenty-six years (including 1981 to 1986, when Republicans controlled the Senate and White House but not the House). He found that “unified as opposed to divided control has not made an important difference in recent times” with respect to either the undertaking of high-profile investigations or the rate at which important laws are enacted. Mayhew concluded that “it does not seem to make all that much difference whether party control of the American government happens to be unified or divided.”⁵⁸

Mayhew’s somewhat surprising findings call attention to the forces in American politics that lead to cooperation between the House, the Senate, and the president. All three institutions must respond to the same national problems, and they share many constituents. Furthermore, members of Congress and presidents both have strong electoral incentives to establish a positive record of accomplishment. And even if public opinion varies greatly among different congressional constituencies, shifts in public mood, which are produced by changing conditions and events, tend to propel all elected officials in the same direction.⁵⁹

Other Evidence. Nevertheless, evidence seems to show that divided party control does make some difference. To make sense of patterns in the direction of public policy over time, we must take into account the ideological distance between the House, the Senate, and the president at specific points in time.⁶⁰ After all, divided control may not always cause a large gap between the policy positions of the president and the two houses of Congress, nor is it true that unified control insures ideological alignment between the president and Congress.⁶¹ We have seen that ideological distance between the House, the Senate, and the president is related to party control. In addition, we can examine direct measures of policy agreement and disagreement among the three institutions. In fact, three such measures—the rate of success for presidential proposals, presidential success on congressional roll-call votes (see Table 4.3), and presidential vetoes—show the expected differences between unified and divided control. The president’s recommendations are adopted less frequently under divided party control, the president’s position on roll-call votes wins less frequently, and the president resorts to the veto more frequently under divided control than under unified control.⁶²

Others have pointed out that differences between the president and Congress are not the only causes of legislative gridlock. Factors such as the level of consensus between the two houses of Congress and within each chamber of Congress, along with the strength of congressional parties are also important determinates of legislative productivity.⁶³ Scholars have also pointed out that many institutional features of the lawmaking process such as the bicameral nature of Congress and the 2/3 majority required to override presidential vetoes impact the lawmaking process as much if not more than partisan affiliation of the players.⁶⁴

A fair conclusion is that the party balance in Congress, a direct product of elections, is an important force among the many different forces that shape relations between the House, the Senate, and the president. Because party control is related, albeit imperfectly, to ideological distance, it affects the degree to which the president's policies are accepted by Congress and vice versa. Other forces are at work as well, and many of them push the House, Senate, and president in the same direction even when partisanship divides the three institutional players.

Table 4.3. Presidential Success Rates on Roll-Call Votes: The Effect of Majority Control and Party Size, 1953-2000 (Percentage Successful)

President's Party as Percentage of Chamber	Majority		Minority	
	More than 56%	50-56%	44-50%	Less than 44%
House	82.2% (14)	82.7% (2)	53.2% (14)	49.1% (16)
Senate	80.6% (16)	83.4% (7)	64.5% (18)	59.5% (6)

Note: Each cell is the mean presidential success rate for the Congresses of that type (the number of years of that type is indicated in parentheses). The success rate for each Congress is the percentage of roll calls on which the president took a position and the president's position prevailed.

Source: Based on information from Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin, *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2000-2001* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2002), pp. 168-169.

Conclusion

The electoral arena has changed in important ways in recent decades. New laws and court decisions have greatly complicated the rules governing congressional elections, and are sure to continue to do some in the coming years. The power of the president's coattails has declined, PACs have blossomed and gained a critical role in financing campaigns, and parties have taken on a greater role in financing campaigns. Campaigns have become more candidate-centered and less party-oriented, with candidates often spending large sums of their own money to gain a seat. Perhaps most importantly, congressional incumbents, particularly House incumbents, have gained important advantages over challengers.

Although congressional elections are primarily contests between local candidates, they have had critical national consequences. Time and again, national conditions and

elections have altered the ideological alignment between the House, the Senate, and the president. Since mid-century, elections have regularly produced divided party control of government, which has increased conflict between the branches of government and made it more difficult to assign credit and blame for government performance.

NOTES

¹ David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), and Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5th ed. (Addison Wesley Longman, 2001), pp. 211-236.

² Michael Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the 1st Through 105th Congresses* (London: McFarland and Company, 1998).

³ The record of House special elections between 1954 and 1978 is discussed in Lee Sigelman, "Special Elections to the U.S. House: Some Descriptive Generalizations," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (November 1981), pp. 577-588.

⁴ David Butler and Bruce Cain, *Congressional Redistricting* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 17-23. Because the number of seats allocated to a state affects the careers of its politicians and its political influence in the House, the formula for allocating seats has been considerably debated over the years. The method of equal proportions for apportioning House seats has been used since 1950. The system gives each state one seat and allocates the other 385 seats in succession to the highest-priority state, which is based on a division of each state's population size by $n(n - 1)$, where n is the number of seats given so far to the state (the formula corrects for dividing by zero). Following the 2000 census, the system was challenged in the federal courts by the state of Utah, which lost one of its House seats due to way citizens on mission work in other countries were counted (resolution of this case?).

⁵ The FEC tallied 4,124 PACs in mid-1992. Federal Election Commission, "FEC Releases Mid-Year PAC Count," July 23, 1992.

⁶ *Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Finance Committee v. Federal Election Commission* (1996).

⁷ Tim Curran, "New Funds to Flow to GOP Senate Candidates," *Roll Call*, August 26, 1996, pp. 2, 12; Eliza Newlin Carney, "Party Time," *National Journal*, October 19, 1996, p. 2214.

⁸ Data taken from the Center for Responsive Politics, <http://www.opensecrets.org>.

⁹ Jennifer A. Steen, *Money Isn't Everything: Self-Financing Candidates in U.S. House Elections, 1992-98*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of California – Berkeley, 2000).

¹⁰ Jennifer A. Steen, "The Millionaires' Amendment," in *Life After Reform: The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in Practice*, ed. Michael Malbin, Rowman and Littlefield.

¹¹ "Redistricting Outlook: State by State." *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, January 13, 2001, p. 116, and Butler and Cain, *Congressional Redistricting*, pp. 91-116.

¹² These included states requiring a test to register as of 1964, states with fewer than 50 percent of the voting-age population registered to vote, and states with more than 5 percent of their voting-age population a non-English-speaking minority that also printed only English election materials and had less than 50 percent registration in 1972. See

Gregory L. Giroux, "The Hidden Election: Day of the Mapmaker," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, February 19, 2000, p. 344.

¹³ "Redistricting in the States," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, October 24, 1992, p. 3357.

¹⁴ "Primary Calendar," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, February 16, 2002, p. 449.

¹⁵ *Foster v. Love* (1997).

¹⁶ In the 2002 election cycle one House seat and the Senate seat up for election were decided by a December runoff.

¹⁷ David Nather, "Provisions of the Federal Voting Standards and Procedures Law," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, November 2, 2002, pp.2870-72.

¹⁸ Ben Pershing, "Reforms Slash Franking Costs," *Roll Call*, September 28, 2000, pp. 1, 36.

¹⁹ Glenn R. Simpson, "Election Mailings Flout Frank Rules," *Roll Call*, March 11, 1993, pp. 1, 17.

²⁰ Beth Donovan, "House Bans Franked Mail Sent Outside District," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, August 1, 1992, p. 2247. The prohibition became a part of the House rules in 1993.

²¹ The Senate Rules and Administration Committee and the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards have established dozens of more specific rules and guidelines to clarify the law and chamber rules.

²² Linda L. Fowler and Robert D. McClure, *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for Congress* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Thomas A. Kazee, "The Decision to Run for the U.S. Congress: Challenger Attitudes in the 1970s," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 5 (1980), pp. 79-100; and Louis Sandy Maisel, *From Obscurity to Oblivion*, rev. ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986).

²³ We thank Professor Jonathan Katz for the estimates of incumbency advantage. For background on how the measure is calculated Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution*, Cambridge University Press. A different statistical approach but similar findings can be found in Andrew Gelman and Gary King, "Estimating the Incumbency Advantage Without Bias," *American Journal of Political Science* (November 1990), pp. 1142-1164.

²⁴ Frances E. Lee and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Sizing Up the Senate: The Unequal Consequences of Equal Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

²⁵ Open-seat statistics calculated from Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin, *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2002), pp. 67-68.

²⁶ Gary C. Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*, pp. 31-32. Also see John R. Alford and David W. Brady, "Personal and Partisan Advantage in U.S.

Congressional Elections, 1846-1986,” in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1989), pp. 153-169.

²⁷ Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952-1988* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

²⁸ Gary C. Jacobson, “The Marginals Never Vanished: Incumbency and Competition in Elections to the U.S. House of Representatives,” *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (1987), pp. 126-141.

²⁹ Glenn R. Simpson, “Surprise! Top Frankers Also Have the Stiffest Challenges,” *Roll Call*, October 22, 1992, pp. 1, 15.

³⁰ Morris P. Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

³¹ Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz, *Elbridge Gerry’s Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

³² Gary C. Jacobson, “Parties and PACs in Congressional Elections,” in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1989), pp. 117-152; Paul S. Herrnsen, “Money and Motives: Spending in House Elections,” in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 6th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997), pp. 100-131.

³³ John Mercurio, “Helping Hand: President Bush Helps Senate Contenders Raise Record Haul During Last Three Months,” *Roll Call*, April 18, 2002, pp. 13, 16.

³⁴ Jim VandeHei, “DeLay Trying to Protect Majority,” *Roll Call*, March 25, 1999, pp. 1, 25.

³⁵ Sorauf, *Inside Campaign Finance*, pp. 67, 86.

³⁶ See Janet Box-Steffensmeier, “A Dynamic Analysis of the Role of War Chests in Campaign Spending,” *American Journal of Political Science*, (April 1996). Also see, Jay Goodliffe, “The Effect of War Chests on Challenger Entry in U.S. House Elections,” *American Journal of Political Science* (October 2001), pp. 830-44.

³⁷ After the 1990 election, House incumbent candidates ended the campaign with a total surplus of \$77 million, up from just less than \$64 million in 1988. Republican Senator Phil Gramm, for example, spent \$12.5 million in his Texas reelection campaign but still had \$4.5 million to spare. In 1990, many House incumbents had surpluses of more than \$100,000; Gramm and three other senators had surpluses of more than \$1 million. Chuck Alston, “1990 Election Spending Dips; The Big Question Is Why,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, February 23, 1991, p. 490.

³⁸ Sorauf, *Inside Campaign Finance*, pp. 67, 86. Also see Robert S. Erikson and Thomas R. Palfrey, “Campaign Spending and Incumbency,” *American Journal of*

Political Science 60 (May 1998). Current numbers calculated with data from <http://www.commoncause.org>.

³⁹ Gary C. Jacobson and Samuel Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983).

⁴⁰ Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*, p. 63.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-72.

⁴² Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*.

⁴³ On the background of candidates for Congress, see David T. Canon, *Actors, Athletes, and Astronauts: Political Amateurs in the United States Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, Chapter 6, and James A. Stimson, *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), Chapter 5.

⁴⁵ Note that for following the switch in party affiliation of Senator James Jeffords (I-VT) in 2001, President G.W. Bush faced a Republican House and a Democratic Senate, thus we include the 107th Congress as an instance of divided government.

⁴⁶ John A. Ferejohn and Randall L. Calvert, "Presidential Coattails in Historical Perspective," *American Journal of Political Science* (February 1984), pp. 127-146.

⁴⁷ James E. Campbell, "Presidential Coattails in Senate Elections," *American Political Science Review* (June 1990), pp. 513-524, and *The Presidential Pulse of Congressional Elections* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993); Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, pp. 146-148.

⁴⁸ For a summary of the statistical models, see Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Tom W. Rice, *Forecasting Elections* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1992), Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴⁹ Gregory A. Caldeira, Samuel C. Patterson, and Gregory A. Markko, "The Mobilization of Voters in Congressional Elections," *Journal of Politics* (1985), pp. 490-509.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁵¹ Bruce I. Oppenheimer, James A. Stimson, and Richard W. Waterman, "Interpreting U. S. Congressional Elections: The Exposure Thesis," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1986), pp. 227-247. Also see Robert S. Erikson and Gerald C. Wright, "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections," in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 6th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997), p. 135.

⁵² Fiorina, *Divided Government*; Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*.

⁵³ Fiorina, *Divided Government*, Chapters 4 and 5.

⁵⁴ These scores are transformed Common Space Coordinates from Keith Poole, "Estimating a Basic Space From a Set of Issue Scales," *American Journal of Political Science*, (July 1998) pp. 954-993. Available for download at <http://voteview.uh.edu>.

⁵⁵ Jerome M. Clubb, William H. Flanigan, and Nancy H. Zingale, *Partisan Realignment: Voters, Parties, and Government in American History* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980).

⁵⁶ For the broadest study of the subject and discussion of other literature, see David W. Brady, *Critical Elections and Congressional Policy Making* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁷ James L. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 103 (1988), pp. 613-635.

⁵⁸ David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-1990* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991). Quotes are from pp. 4, 198.

⁵⁹ Stimson, *Public Opinion in America*.

⁶⁰ David W. Rohde, "Divided Government, Agenda Change and Variations in Presidential Support in the House," paper presented at the Conference in Honor of William F. Riker, University of Rochester, October 1990.

⁶¹ Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁶² Steven S. Smith, *The American Congress* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), Chapter 3.

⁶³ Sarah A. Binder, "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96," *American Political Science Review*, September 1999. See also John J. Coleman, "Unified Government, Divided Government, and Party Responsiveness," *American Political Science Review*, December 1999.

⁶⁴ Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*.