Congressional Historical Eras and Electoral Discontinuities

A dawning new era?

**Critical periods**

1800: Experimental
1812-20
1850: Democritizing
1860-65
1900: Civil War
1896-1912
1950: Textbook
1964-1968
2015: Post-Reform

**Congressional systems**
1789-1812 (Experimental system)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral dynamics</th>
<th>Organizational dynamics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During critical period</td>
<td>During cong’l system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Elite electorate (Table 3.2)</td>
<td>- Feds vs. Reps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-&quot;previous q” developed in the House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Democritizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Civil War</td>
</tr>
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<td>1896-1912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1968</td>
<td>Post-Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1812-20
(Transition from Experimental to Antebellum systems)

- Electorate expands
- Federalists discredited
- Slavery now an issue
- Napoleonic Wars end
### 1820-60
*(Antebellum system)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral dynamics</th>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Comms.</th>
<th>Party leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Mass electorate</td>
<td>Committees take agenda control</td>
<td>-Standings dominate selects -comm chairs compete w/ Speaker</td>
<td>-Van Buren tries to make Congress a partisan organ, but… -Regional divisions complicate Speakership selection (next slide) -Senate leadership remains weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Whigs vs. Dems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Timeline:**
- **1800-1850**: Experimental
- **1850**: Democritizing
- **1860-1865**: Civil War
- **1896-1912**: Textbook
- **1964-1968**: Post-Reform
- **2012**:
Balloting for Speaker

- Candidates receiving votes
- Candidates receiving 10 or more votes

Year

Number of candidates

1800 1820 1840 1860 1880 1900

Year
Balloting for Clerk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of ballots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diagram:**

- **X-axis:** Year (1780 to 1900)
- **Y-axis:** Number of ballots (0 to 20)
- The graph shows peaks in the number of ballots in the years 1800, 1820, 1840, and 1860.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cong.</th>
<th>Ballots</th>
<th>Name, State</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Name, State</th>
<th>Largest party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>John W. Taylor, N.Y.</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andrew Stevenson, Va.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andrew Stevenson, Va.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andrew Stevenson, Va.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andrew Stevenson, Va.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>John Bell, Tenn.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>“”</td>
<td>“”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>James K. Polk. Tenn.</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>James K. Polk. Tenn.</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Robert M.T. Hunter, Va.</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John White, Ky.</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John W. Jones, Va.</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John W. Davis, Ind.</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robert C. Winthrop, Mass.</td>
<td>Whig.</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Linn Boyd, Ky.</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Linn Boyd, Ky.</td>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Nathaniel Banks, Mass.</td>
<td>Amer.</td>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Effect of the Balance Rule

Stylized House

Slavery

Gov’t Activism

Stylized Senate

Slavery

Gov’t Activism

$W_H(\phi)$

$W_S(\phi)$
The Effect of the Balance Rule

Slavery

Gov’t Activism

$W_S(\phi)$

$W_H(\phi)$
1860-1865
(Transition from Antebellum to Civil War System)

• South excluded from national elections
• Party support highly regionalized
# 1865-1896
(Civil War System)

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<tr>
<td>Dems. v. Reps.</td>
<td>“Reed Rules” in the House</td>
<td>Parties take control of committee rosters</td>
<td>Party polarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem. Strength in the South</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Appr. devolution</td>
<td>Party “strong”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. strength in the North</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucus organization in House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife-edged partisan margins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Steering committee in the Senate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Timeline
- **1800**
  - Experimental
- **1812-20**
  - Democritizing
- **1860-65**
  - Civil War
- **1896-1912**
  - Textbook
- **1964-1968**
  - Post-Reform
- **2012**
Ideological divisions

52nd Cong.  
(1891-1893)

80th Cong.  
(1947-48)
1896-1912
(Transition from Civil War to Textbook systems)

• Economic dislocations create Progressive/Populist movements
A Word about Senate Elections

• State legislative elections often brought about chaotic balloting
• Stories of corruption in Senate elections led to Progressive calls for reform
• Rise of third parties gave major parties an incentive to create a duopoly of power
• 17th amendment: popular election of senators (1914)
• Still parties become more prominent
The Process

State election (~Nov.)

Nomination? (~mid-Jan.)

Bicameral balloting (2nd Tuesday of session)

Canvass

Bicameral majority?

Joint ballot

No

Yes

Winner
% joint ballot elections for Senate

Joint ballots --- all

Year term begins
General elections
Special elections

1870 1880 1890 1900 1910

Year term begins
General elections
Special elections

1870 1875 1883 1887 1891 1899 1895 1900s 1910s
Counterfactual: What If No Popular Elections?
Counterfactual:
What If Popular Election before 1917?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1912-1968 (Textbook system)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational dynamics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Regional support for parties</td>
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**Timeline:**
- **Experimental:** 1812-20
- **Democratizing:** 1860-65
- **Civil War:** 1896-1912
- **Textbook:** 1964-1968
- **Post-Reform:** 2012
Regional parties

Source: Kenneth Martis, Historical Atlas of Congressional Parties in the United States Congress
Regional parties
Rise of careerism: The House

Update of Figure 3.5
Rise of careerism

Update of Figure 3.5
Rise of careerism

Update of Figure 3.5
Rise of careerism

Update of Figure 3.5
Rise of careerism: The Senate

![Graph showing the rise of careerism in the Senate over time. The x-axis represents the years from 1800 to 2000, and the y-axis represents the percentage (Pct). The line chart includes data points and a Lowess fit line.]
Senate & House Careerism Compared

Year
1800 1850 1900 1950 2000
Pct
0
.2
.4
.6
.8

Senate
House
1968-1974
(Transition from Textbook to Post-Reform system)

- Anti-war sentiment divorces supporters of strong defense from Dems.
- Civil Rights movement divorces southern Whites from Dems, but reinforces Black affiliation with Dems.
1974-now
(Post-Reform System)

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Reps conservative, Dems. Liberal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Regionalism <em>per se</em> deemphasized</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Floor proceedings open up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Comms important, but....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Parties resurgent</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Leaders more assertive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Republicans esp.)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Loss of regionalism in parties

80th Congress (1947-1948)

(Comment the color reverse)

113th Congress (2013-2014)

Source: Martis atlas

Rise of Party Unity Voting (Update of Figure 3.4)
Decline of Conservative Coalition
(Update of Figure 3.7)
New Electoral Environment? New Organizational Environment?

- **Election**
  - Voters more partisan
  - Districts more partisan
  - Party committees play greater role

- **Organization**
  - Party leaders more prominent & partisan
  - Committee membership more partisan
    - Chairs
    - Seats
    - Link to finance
Congressional Historical Eras and Electoral Discontinuities

A dawning new era?

1800 - Experimental
1812-20
1850 - Democritizing
1860-65 - Civil War
1896-1912
1900 - Critical periods
1950 - Textbook
1964-1994 - New Partisan
2015

Congressional systems