

**The Creation of an Endangered Species:
Party Nonconformists of the U.S. Senate**

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Abstract

The Creation of an Endangered Species: Party Nonconformists of the U.S. Senate*

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Party nonconformists--that is, moderate to conservative Democrats and moderate to liberal Republicans who had policy preferences different from the mainstream of their party--have largely disappeared from the Senate. As nonconformists disappeared from both parties, each caucus became less ideologically diverse and congressional parties polarized. Much of the research on party polarization in Congress has focused on the House and on the realignment in the South that led to the demise of conservative Southern Democrats. Yet we show that there are parallel trends of escalating partisanship in both parties in both the House and Senate. The explanations of why Senate parties polarized and why Republican nonconformists have disappeared, however, are less clear. Part of the explanation of polarization in the House applies to the Senate--the most likely cause is electoral and electoral changes in the South provide an answer for the disappearance of nonconformist Democrats. But since state boundaries are not subject to partisan gerrymandering and since moderate and liberal Republicans have also disappeared, there must be additional electoral processes that produced more homogeneous parties in the Senate. This paper seeks to provide a more complete understanding of how and why Senate parties polarized. We find:

1. Partisan nonconformists were elected disproportionately from states that favor the other party-- i.e., nonconformist Democrats tend to come from "red" states and nonconformist Republicans tend to come from "blue" states.
2. The ability of a party's candidates to win on the other party's turf has changed over time, but this change has not affected both parties equally. In particular, Democrats' ability to hold seats in red and competitive states has declined since the early 1980s, while Republicans have maintained their ability to hold Senate seats in blue states and they are more successful in competitive states.
3. When a party does win on the other party's turf, the likelihood of electing a mainstream partisan has increased over time. Moderate and conservative Democrats have disappeared because there are just fewer Democrats elected in red and competitive states. Republican success in blue and competitive states has not declined, but nonconformist Republicans have disappeared because mainstream Republicans can win in states that once elected moderates.
4. The ability to elect mainstream Republicans in blue and competitive states is due in part to changes in Senate electorates and the preferences of Republican voters.

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The Creation of an Endangered Species: Party Nonconformists of the U.S. Senate

Five Democratic Senators decided not to seek reelection in the 2004 elections. Three of these Senators--Zell Miller (D-GA), John Breaux (D-LA), and Ernest Hollings (D-SC)--were among the six most conservative Democrats in the Senate. Their conservative policy preferences clearly did not conform to the liberal mainstream of the Democratic Party. Republicans in the conservative mainstream of the Republican Party replaced all three of these Democratic nonconformists. Republican nonconformists--that is, moderate to liberal Republicans--have been disappearing from the Senate as well. As a result, both parties in the 109th Senate will be more ideologically homogeneous internally and more ideologically distant from each other. The number of party nonconformists in both parties has dwindled to the point that this political animal has become an endangered species in American politics.

As with most endangered species, there was a time when moderate and cross-pressured Senators were common. These party nonconformists were often strong-willed individuals who did not hesitate to oppose their party on important policy decisions have populated the U.S. Senate. In past decades, Senators of the likes of Richard Russell (D-GA) and Jacob Javits (R-NY) reminded us of the limitations of party when explaining the behavior of Senators. The creation of this endangered species, however, has fundamentally altered the Senate. Increasingly, Senate policy debates have become battles fought out by two ideologically coherent teams. On most major policy matters, few Senators' votes are really in doubt.

Party polarization in Congress started in the House in the 1970s. Past research provides a convincing explanation of how and why House parties polarized. There is consensus that the primary cause is electoral. The explanation focuses on electoral changes in the South that led

to the disappearance of moderate and conservative Democrats. The Goldwater candidacy in 1964 along with the Democratic Party's endorsement of significant civil rights legislation including the 1965 Voting Rights Act resulted in an evolution of the race issue in American politics (Carmines and Stimson 1989). This issue evolution produced a regional realignment that transformed the South from a solidly Democratic region to a solid part of the Republican base. This new electoral environment made it difficult for Democrats to maintain their hold on southern congressional seats. As a result, some Democrats, even conservatives who remained out of their party's ideological mainstream, lost their seats to more conservative Republicans. Even where incumbency protected southern Democrats from defeat, Democratic hold on these seats proved temporary as the Republicans captured them when they became open. Thus, when these Democratic nonconformists left Congress (either through retirement or defeat), they were replaced by mainstream conservative Republicans (Aldrich 1995; Aldrich and Rohde 2000, 2001; Jacobson 2000; Fleisher 1993; Fleisher and Bond 2004; Rohde 1991).

Although the decline of conservative Southern Democrats explains much of the party polarization in the House, it reveals only part of the picture. Republicans also have become more unified and confrontational (Fleisher and Bond 2004). Jacobson (2004) argues that party polarization in the South and non-South reflects increasingly divergent electoral constituencies. In the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, partisan gerrymanders reinforced the trend toward polarized House parties by further reducing the number of House districts in which both parties are competitive (Jacobson 2004).

The greater ideological homogeneity produced by an alteration of the electoral landscape set the stage for the majority party in the House--first the Democrats and then the Republicans--to provide their party leaders with the tools to exert greater control of the

legislative process (Aldrich 1995; Aldrich and Rohde 2000, 2001; Cooper and Brady 1981; Rohde 1991, Sinclair 1995). House rules enable a unified majority party to pass legislation on which there is consensus in the majority party caucus, and these rules do little to protect the minority party's right to participate in the formulation of policy.

Yet party polarization in Congress extends beyond the House. Recent research documents parallel trends of escalating partisanship in both parties in both the House and Senate (Binder 1996; Fleisher and Bond 2000, 3-4; 2004). The explanation of why Senate parties polarized, however, is not clear (Rae and Campbell 2001). To some extent, party polarization in the Senate was a puzzle. The expectation of less partisan polarization in the Senate than the House was based on two significant House-Senate differences. First, Senators face a different electoral environment than House members. Statewide Senate constituencies that are typically more diverse than House districts suggested that Senators would be inclined toward compromise and moderation to balance more diverse constituency interests. Second, Senate rules, most notably the filibuster and the right to offer non-germane amendments, protect the power of both individual senators and the minority party. Chamber rules that protect minorities led to an expectation of less partisan voting in the Senate (Rohde 1991; Sinclair 1989). Although these expectations were reasonable at the time they were offered, current political trends have proved them wrong. The evidence clearly shows that the Senate has become as polarized along party lines as the House. Like the House, polarization in the Senate is the result of changes in both parties.

Part of the explanation of polarization in the House probably applies to the Senate as well--the most likely cause is electoral and electoral changes in the South provide part of the answer. But since state boundaries are not subject to partisan gerrymandering, there must be

additional electoral processes that produced more homogeneous parties in the Senate. Furthermore, while electoral changes in the South account for much of the demise of conservative Democrats, moderate and liberal Republicans have also largely disappeared. This paper seeks to provide a more complete understanding of how and why Senate parties polarized. We begin by documenting the disappearance of moderate and cross-pressured Senators in both parties.

The Declining Number of Moderate and Cross-Pressured Senators

To document the disappearance of moderate and cross-pressured Senators, or as we shall call them--party nonconformists--we need to establish some means to identify such members. We begin with a traditional left-right ideological continuum that arrays members of Congress from most liberal to most conservative. The ideological distribution tends to be bimodal with Democrats concentrated on the left and Republicans on the right. But there is also variance within each party so that in many Congresses the tails of the party distributions overlap in the middle of the continuum (Poole n.d.; Poole and Rosenthal 1997).

It is in this middle range where the tails overlap that we find the moderate and cross-pressured members. Bond and Fleisher (1990) defined cross-pressured members as those with ideological preferences closer to the center of the other party than to their own. Yet because the distribution of ideological preferences is relatively continuous, there is considerable variation within both mainstream and cross-pressured factions. Both parties, for example, contain moderates. Moderates have policy preferences in the middle of the ideological spectrum that differ from the dominant ideology of both parties. Like cross-pressured members, moderates are partisan nonconformists in that they frequently dissent from positions of their party leaders and most members of their party caucuses.

To examine the relative numerical strength of moderate and cross-pressured members, we need a reliable and valid measure that will allow us to make comparisons of the ideological distributions of Senate Democrats and Republicans overtime. Poole and Rosenthal's (1997) DW-NOMINATE Scores have gained wide acceptance as an indicator of ideology that are comparable across Congresses within a particular party era (Poole 2000).¹ DW-NOMINATE scores are based on all non-unanimous roll call votes and range from -1.00 (most liberal) to 1.00 (most conservative). Following Fleisher and Bond (2004), we use -0.20 and +0.20 as *a priori* cut-points to divide this continuum into liberal, moderate, and conservative categories. This procedure identifies three groups within each party--mainstream, moderate, and cross-pressured members. Mainstream Democrats are Senators with DW-NOMINATE scores less than -0.20 and mainstream Republicans are those with scores greater than +0.20. Moderates are members with scores in the middle of the distribution. Recognizing the different ideological tendencies in the parties, we define moderate Democrats as moderate liberals (Democrats with scores between zero and -0.20 on the liberal side of distribution) and moderate Republicans as moderate conservatives (Republicans with scores between zero and +0.20). Cross-pressured members are liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. Any Democrat on the conservative side of the scale (scores greater than zero) is defined as a cross-pressured Democrat and any Republican on the liberal side (scores less than zero) is a cross-pressured Republican. Although these are arbitrary cut points, they provide a reasonable standard to

¹ Although roll call based measures have been criticized (Jackson and Kingdon 1992), there is evidence that they are reliable and generally valid proxies of members' ideology at any one point in time (Herrera, Epperlein, and Smith 1995; Hill, Hanna, and Shafqat 1997; Smith, Herrera, and Herrera 1990). An alternative to DW-NOMINATE is Groseclose, Snyder and Levitt's (1999) annual liberalism scores constructed by the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) adjusted for time. These indicators are highly correlated ($r > .90$). ADA scores are less useful for our purposes than DW-NOMINATE, because ADA penalizes for absences, which can make a very liberal member look more moderate.

identify liberals, moderates, and conservatives in each party, and to compare changes in their relative prominence in each party caucus over time. Using other cut points changes the number of individuals in each category in each Congress. The trends over time, however, tell the same story regardless of which definition is used (Fleisher and Bond 2004).

Figure 1 shows that party nonconformists from both parties were once common in the Senate, accounting for one-third or more of the Senate membership from the 1950s through the 1970s. Nonconformists began to disappear in the early 1980s, dwindling to fewer than ten in recent Congresses.

[Figure 1 about here]

Much of the explanation of party polarization in Congress has focused on the decline of conservative Southern Democrats. This analysis reveals that nonconformists were once common in both parties and they have all but vanished from both parties. From the 1950s to the 1970s, both parties had substantial numbers of nonconformists. There is a relatively linear decline in the number of nonconformist Democrats in the Senate from about 20 in the 1950s to fewer than five in recent Congresses. The Republican pattern is more varied. In the 1950s, Republican nonconformists were less common than their Democratic counterparts (averaging about 14), but the number of moderate and liberal Republicans began to increase in the early 1960s, averaging about 19 throughout the 1970s. Among the non-conformist Republicans elected during the 1960s and 1970s are Edward Brooke (R-MA), Mark Hatfield (R-OR), and Charles Percey (R-IL); they joined the ranks of holdover non-conformists such as Clifford Case (R-NJ), Jacob Javits (R-NY) and Hugh Scott (R-PA)(Rae 1989). Moderate and Progressive Republicans were not only winning positions in the Senate but they were successful in electing fellow non-conformists to the House and to several Governorships. A moderate Republican--

John Lindsay--even succeeded in winning the mayoralty of staunchly Democratic New York City. The electoral gains of moderate Republicans, however, were short lived. The nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964, followed by Richard Nixon's nomination in 1968 and landslide reelection in 1972 set the stage for Ronald Reagan and the ultimate triumph of the mainstream conservative faction of the Republican Party. Following the intra-party gains made by the Goldwater conservatives in the battle to control the party's infrastructure, moderate and progressive Republicans began fighting a losing battle for the future of the Republican Party. Beginning in early 1980s, we see a steady decline in the number of nonconformist Republicans. By the 1990s, nonconformist Republicans were as scarce as nonconformist Democrats.

As nonconformists disappeared from both parties, each caucus became less ideologically diverse and the party medians diverged. The standard deviation of DW-NOMINATE scores indicates ideological diversity. Figure 2 shows that the ideological diversity in both party caucuses declined over time. The distance between the median DW-NOMINATE score in each party indicates how polarized the parties are. Figure 3 shows that Senate parties have moved farther apart from the 1950s to the 2000s.

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Thus, Senate parties polarized because the departure of ideological misfits resulted in more ideologically homogeneous party caucuses. Although not the focus of this research, some have speculated that the disappearing middle in the US Senate has had a profound effect on the functioning of the Senate as a legislative institution. Binder (1996), 38) notes, "the movement away from the center has been accompanied by a coarsening of politics." In a similar vein, Rae and Campbell (2001, 17) commenting on the trends toward increased polarization in the Senate note "more partisanship in the Senate is likely to lead to more gridlock and frustration inside

the chamber, among the wider public in Washington, and beyond.” We turn now to a discussion of electoral changes that might account for these changes in Senate partisanship.

The Sources of Party Discipline

Although parties in the US are less disciplined than are those in parliamentary democracies, party cohesion in Congress varies over time. In general, party cohesion in legislatures results from a combination of two forces, one internal to the legislature and one external. Internal forces that lead to party discipline include the legislative rules and the power and skills of party leaders who exercise those rules. The external source of party discipline is electoral. Voters determine the composition of the legislature. If partisan constituencies across different regions of the nation have diverse policy preferences, then partisan representatives in the legislature will reflect that diversity. If the electoral system produces more homogeneous partisan constituencies across the nation, then legislative parties will become more ideologically homogeneous internally and more divergent from each other.

Both internal and external forces influence party cohesion in legislatures, but the relative weight of each varies across political systems. In parliamentary democracies with highly disciplined parties, the power of party leaders may be the primary determinant of partisanship in large part because these party leaders exercise substantial control over the electoral environment (e.g., control over party nominations and over the constituency in which a candidate runs). In the US, external forces are more important, and the power of party leaders to affect the electoral fortunes of members is limited. Previous research shows that the homogeneity of partisan constituencies across the nation is the most important condition for cohesive parties in Congress (Aldrich and Rohde 2001; Cooper and Brady 1981).

Thus, partisanship in the US Congress is “conditional.” If members of Congress represent partisan constituencies with diverse policy preferences, then each party contains a sizeable minority of party nonconformists that will resist giving party leaders power to pressure members to support mainstream party policies that conflict with preferences of their constituencies. However, if electoral changes produce more ideologically homogeneous party constituencies, then a more ideologically homogeneous majority party caucus--which by definition contains fewer party nonconformists--adopts reforms that empower leaders to forge party discipline to pass key issues on the party agenda (Aldrich 1995; Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Rohde 1991).

We have shown that nonconformists began to disappear from both parties during the 1970s and 1980s. Partisan nonconformists can disappear in one of two ways: replacement and conversion. *Replacement* occurs when a mainstream partisan replaces a moderate or cross-pressured member who leaves Congress because of electoral defeat, running for another office, retirement, or death. *Conversion* occurs when a partisan nonconformist either moves into the party’s ideological mainstream or switches to another party or to independent. Replacement is by far the most common path through which partisan nonconformists disappeared from Congress, and the large majority of these replacements occurred when a nonconformist retired and left the seat open. Only a small fraction of nonconformists disappeared through conversion (either changing parties or changing their votes to move toward their party mainstream (Fleisher and Bond 2004).

Why Did the Nonconformists Disappear?

Although it is that clear electoral changes are the primary reason for the decline of party nonconformists, the precise mechanisms leading to their demise are less clear. We propose to

look at the following propositions that together might explain the disappearance of party nonconformists--including moderate and liberal Republicans--from the Senate:

1. Partisan nonconformists were elected disproportionately from certain types of constituencies;
2. The ability of a party's candidates to win in those constituencies has changed over time;
3. When a party does win in those constituencies, the likelihood of electing a mainstream partisan has increased over time; and
4. The ability to elect mainstream partisans in states that once produced moderates is due in part to changes in the preferences of partisan voters.

Type of States Electing Party Nonconformists

Where have party nonconformists traditionally been most successful? We would expect a party to be most likely to win with a nonconformist in a constituency favoring the other party. In current political language, Republican nonconformists should come disproportionately from "blue states" and Democratic nonconformists should come from "red states." The basis of this expectation is that to win on the other party's turf, a candidate must attract a substantial number of crossover votes. One way to attract crossover votes is to take policy positions that appeal to the other party's voters. Such policy positions are likely to be more moderate or even contrary to the mainstream of the candidate's party.

The idea of winning on the "other party's turf" must be modified somewhat when applied to Democrats. From the end of Reconstruction until the 1960s, the South has been solidly Democratic. Thus, non-conformist southern Democratic Senators were hardly winning in Republican states. Yet, even though southern voters were solidly Democratic in presidential,

congressional and state elections, southern voters clearly had different policy preferences from Democratic voters outside the South. Across a range of issues, both domestic and foreign, southern voters held views that were often closer to the conservative Republican mainstream than to the liberal Democratic base. Southern Democrats in Congress reflected these policy preferences, and they often voted with Republicans as part of a “conservative coalition” (Brady and Bullock 1980; Manley 1973). Since the movement of the South into the Republican ranks began in 1964, our measure of state partisanship is based on presidential election returns from 1964 to 2000 to pick up the southern realignment.

For non-conformist Republicans, the dominant picture suggests that they were elected from the Northeast (e.g., Javits, R-NY, Case, R-NJ) and the rust belt states of the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest (e.g., Mathias R-MD) that contained large urban and minority populations. Others (e.g., Hatfield and Packwood, R-OR) were elected from the far west and a number were elected from the prairie states of the agricultural mid-west (e.g., Pearson and Kassebaum R-KS). In spite of the contribution from a number of regions, the general pattern is that most non-conformist Republicans were elected from constituencies thought to be supportive of the Democratic Party.

Rather than rely on regions to identify Democratic and Republican states, we use the behavior of voters in presidential elections. To estimate the partisan preferences of states’ electing non-conformist Senators, we construct a *normal Democratic Party vote* based on the behavior of the state’s voters in presidential elections. To estimate a state’s normal party vote, we first calculated a normed Democratic vote for each presidential election defined as the Democratic percentage of the two-party vote in the state in each election minus the national Democratic percentage. This measure removes short term, election specific forces from the

underlying measure of state partisanship. To identify Democratic, competitive, and Republican states in the pre- and post-polarized periods, we used the average normed Democratic presidential vote for the presidential elections in the pre-polarized period (1964 to 1980) and in the polarized period (1984 to 2000). For each period, we ranked the states from most to least Democratic and divided states into pro-Democratic (the 17 most Democratic states in the period), pro-Republican (the 17 states that ranked lowest on this measure), and competitive (the 16 states in the middle of the ranking).

Table 1 shows that both Republican and Democratic nonconformists tend to be elected on the other party's turf. Most moderate and liberal Republican Senators come from Democratic states, and most moderate and conservative Democrats come from Republican states. An additional one-fourth to one-third of party nonconformists comes from competitive states. Note that the tendency for party nonconformists to be elected in states where the other party is favored or competitive states has changed very little over time.

[Table 1 about here]

Change in the Ability to Win on the Other Party's Turf

Although the tendency of nonconformists to win on the other party's turf has changed little overtime, a decline in non-conformists may be due to a decline in the probability of winning on the other party's turf. Table 2 shows the probability of a Democrat or a Republican holding a Senate seat in red, blue, and competitive states in the 87th to the 97th Congresses (1957-1982) and in the 98th and subsequent Congresses. We see that the ability of Democrats to hold seats in red states declined from 57 percent in the early period to 32 percent in the recent period. This decline is consistent with the argument that centrist Democrats disappeared because the Democratic Party was less competitive in states that tilted Republican.

Republicans, however, have maintained their ability to hold Senate seats in blue states over time, and even increased slightly from 66 percent in the early period to 70 percent in the period since 1982. Thus, the decline in the number of non-conformist Republicans is not due to Republicans becoming less competitive in blue states. Furthermore, note that party fortunes have reversed in competitive states. In the early period, Democrats were more successful in competitive states, but since the early 1980s, Republicans are more successful. Thus, Republicans have maintained their ability to win in blue and competitive states, while Democrats' success in red and competitive states has declined.

[Table 2 about here]

Change in the Type of Partisan Elected on the Other Party's Turf

These changes in Democratic fortunes can explain the disappearance of moderate and conservative Democrats--there are just fewer Democrats elected in red and competitive states. Since Republican success in blue and competitive states has not declined, the disappearance of nonconformist Republicans must mean that mainstream Republicans can win in some states that once elected moderates. We see in table 3 that in the early period, 87 percent of Republicans elected in blue states were nonconformists. In the recent period, conservative Republicans are about as likely to win in blue states as are moderate to liberal Republicans. In competitive states, the percentage of mainstream Republicans elected increased from barely half (54 percent) in the early period to three-fourths (77 percent) in the recent period.

[Table 3 about here]

Changes in Voter Choices and Behavior

Why have Republicans been able to increase their ability to win with mainstream partisans on the other party's turf, while Democrats have not? In general, the behavior of

voters in these states must have changed. At least three interrelated explanations may account for change in voters' behavior:

1. Changes in the recruitment and nomination of candidates resulting in more elections in which voters must choose between two mainstream partisans;
2. Changes in activities of party officials and activists whose contributions, financial and otherwise, are vital to the success of candidates; and
3. Changes in voter preferences that increase the probability of voting for a mainstream candidate.

Change in Candidate Recruitment. Although candidates for Congress are primarily self-starters (Kazee 1994, 13), ambitious politicians typically climb a relatively structured political ladder that to get to Congress. Successful Senate candidates are frequently those with electoral experience. A typical career ladder for Senators includes service either as a member of the House of Representatives or as Governor (Canon 1990, 51). Although the number of amateurs elected to Congress increased in the 1970s, most successful candidates for Congress are individuals who climbed the various rungs of the ladder in pursuit of a political career. The trend has swung back toward more politically experienced candidates in recent years. Herrnson (2000) found that only four of the 100 Senators in the 106th Congress had not held previous elected office.

Regardless of whether the path to Congress goes through local and state offices or not, the vehicle that transports successful politicians through a political career is the political party. A crucial early decision that every aspiring politician must make, therefore, is the choice of a political party. Moreover, given the political and legal barriers facing minor parties in the U.S., the choice is effectively limited to the two major parties.

We suspect that there has been a change in the relative weight of the criteria on which individuals base this early political decision. For most politicians, the choice of a party reflects a combination of (1) the ideological fit between their own policy views and the party's platform, (2) personal and familial experiences, and (3) political expediency. Individuals tend to gravitate toward the party that meets most of these conditions. For many nonconformist Democrats and Republicans, the lack of ideological fit was less important than one or more of the other considerations. Recall, for example, that Phil Gramm was first elected to Congress as a Democrat. When the congressional seat where he lived came open in 1978, it was clear that the Democratic nominee would be the overwhelming favorite to win. A staunch conservative, Gramm ran as a Democrat because political expediency outweighed the lack of ideological fit with other Democrats. After winning a closely contested primary, Gramm won a lopsided victory in the general election against a weak Republican candidate, and coasted to easy reelection in 1980 and again in 1982. He cosponsored President Reagan's budget cuts in 1981, exploiting his strategic position on the Budget Committee to defeat the Democratic leadership's alternative. When Democrats organized the 98th Congress after the 1982 election, embarrassed Democratic leaders punished this disloyalty by declining to reappoint Gramm to the Budget Committee. In a much-publicized move, Gramm resigned his seat in Congress, switched parties, and won a special election as a Republican. With a large campaign fund and the advantages of incumbency, running as a Democrat was no longer politically necessary. Indeed, the statewide publicity he received from the party switch and special election victory set up his successful campaign for the Senate two years later.

Like Gramm, a number of Senators have switched parties in mid-career moving to the one that provided the better ideological fit. Richard Shelby (R-AL) moved to the Republican

Party because it provided a more compatible home to his conservative preferences while Jim Jeffords (I-VT) moved out of the Republican Party for the same reason.

For many career politicians, the choice focusing on which party is better suited to pursue a political career is made prior to running for and holding political office. While many factors can influence that career defining choice, over time, we suspect that ideological compatibility has come to dominate other considerations that once led aspiring politicians to associate with one party rather than the other. Individuals with views outside of a party's ideological mainstream have become less likely to associate with that party in the first place. In some cases, the lack of ideological fit can overcome even strong familial ties to a particular party.

For individuals whose policy views define them as moderates, the choice of finding a party from which to pursue public office is particularly difficult because the mainstream of both parties holds policy positions that are at odds with the preferences held by moderates. In addition, because getting elected requires winning primary elections, the task is made more difficult if the electorate consists of more intense and more ideologically extreme voters. Overtime, we suspect that the likelihood that voters will have a non-conformist partisan for whom to vote has declined over time. Since a large percentage of Senate candidates are former House members and there has been a decline in the number of non-conformist House members (Fleisher and Bond 2004), the size of one of the non-conformist pools has declined. Although the evidence is less readily available, we suspect that the disappearance of non-conformist politicians is true in state legislatures. Thus, the disappearance of non-conformists in the Senate is in part a function of the changing composition of the pool of candidates from which Senate candidates are nominated.

Change in the Activities of Party Leaders. In addition to the self-selection of a party affiliation by prospective candidates, the recruitment process also seems to have changed in ways that discourages the emergence and nomination of moderate and cross-pressured partisans. Since most congressional candidates are self-starters who win a nomination in direct primaries, party leaders have little direct control over who wins the right to be the party's standard-bearer. Successful candidates must appeal to the political preferences of voters in the local constituency, rather than preferences of national party leaders or fellow partisans from other regions. If voters in the local constituency have preferences that differ from those of partisan voters in other districts, the successful candidate is likely to reflect local preferences and be a moderate or cross-pressured member of Congress.

Although party leaders and activists cannot control the nomination process, they do engage in a number of activities to encourage certain individuals to run for Congress and help them get the resources necessary for a successful campaign. In recent decades, state and national party organizations increasingly influence the recruitment of congressional candidates. In addition to encouraging certain individuals to run, these party organizations have become more active in training and tutoring candidates on how to run an effective campaign for Congress. And perhaps most importantly, these party organizations are active in helping candidates raise adequate campaign funds to make a viable electoral effort (Herrnson 2000).

Starting with the Goldwater nomination in 1964 and continuing through the Nixon and Reagan years, the conservative wing of the Republican Party gained control of the national party organization. Furthermore, the conservative movement's control extends to the local level. In a number of states, grass-roots conservative groups have succeeded in taking control of the state party organization and winning local political offices. These local party and

government offices serve as rungs on the political career ladder. As the local Republican Party apparatus falls under the control of conservatives, they are more likely to seek out individuals to run for political offices who themselves are conservative. Republicans with moderate or liberal orientations not only are less likely to get the support of the party organization, they also may have to run against candidates who have such support. In the 1970s, a number of non-conformist Republican Senators faced significant challenges from the conservative wing of their own party. Some like Case (R-NJ) and Javits (R-NY) lost tough primary battles to candidates who were more conservative than they were (Rae 1989). Others, like Brooke (R-MA) survived such a challenge by moving to the right only to lose to a mainstream Democrat in the general election (Rae 1989).

In addition, conservative gains in the control of the party apparatus have shifted the orientation of party leaders. Traditionally, local party leaders were more interested in gaining the spoils that flow from electoral success and thereby primarily motivated in winning. Thus, in pursuit of majority status, the parties were “big tents” open to a diverse ideological membership. However, as the Goldwater and later Reagan conservatives secured control of the Republican Party machinery, party leaders shifted their orientation by placing greater emphasis on “being right” on the issues. In addition, toleration for local variation in the ideological profile of party candidates lessened as the Republican Party sought to nationalize elections under the conservative banner.

Nonconformist Democrats are likely to face the same types of barriers as nonconformist Republicans. Potential Democratic candidates who are perceived as not being supportive of labor or whose positions run counter to those of the various environmental, pro-choice, or gun control groups that support Democratic candidates will have a much tougher time raising

campaign funds and attracting the support needed to win a seat in Congress. In addition, leadership PACs under the control of prominent politicians, especially party leaders, play a role in funding election campaigns. Because these party leaders have an interest in recruiting colleagues who will loyally support the leader's policy agenda, the likelihood is low that money from such PACs will go to non-conformist partisans.

As a result, the pool of potential candidates and the candidates recruited to run are more uniformly anchored in the ideological base of the party. Whereas political expediency may have once attracted ambitious politicians to a particular party, that is much less likely now. Rather than having an easier time fulfilling their political ambitions, those out of touch with a party's ideological core may find it more difficult to win a party nomination as a nonconformist even if their views are anchored in the political center of the election constituency. Although it is unlikely that a non-conformist incumbent will be defeated, the prospect of replacing one non-conformist with another has declined precipitously in recent decades (Fleisher and Bond 2004). When a non-conformist leaves office, the recruitment process is structured in a way making it likely that even if voters in a state might prefer a more moderate representative, they are frequently given a choice between a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat. Regardless of who wins, the result is one less nonconformist in Congress.

Changes in Voter Preferences. Finally, voters have a crucial role to play in this process party polarization in the Senate. The move toward party polarization of elected representatives cannot be sustained unless voters are willing to elect these more ideological partisans.

There is evidence of increased party polarization of voters since the mid-1980s. At least some voters anchored in the core of each of the parties have become more ideologically

extreme over the period covered by our study (Fleisher and Bond 1996, 2001; Jacobson 2000).

In particular, ideological polarization has been sharpest among the strong partisans who are the most likely to participate in primaries or to contribute financial and other resources to candidates' campaigns. And while strong partisans are not as numerous as was the case in the 1950s, the percentage of strong partisans in the electorate has increased from lows around 25 percent in the 1970s to 30 percent or more since 1982 (see Figure 4).

[Figure 4 about here]

To be sure, many voters remain unaware of or indifferent to the ideological position of the candidates. Yet as the percentage of ideologically driven candidates increases, ideological consistency among voters should also increase. Abramowitz's (2002) analysis of voting behavior in Senate elections shows that this is indeed the case. Abramowitz goes beyond noting the strengthened relationship between ideology and vote choice in Senate elections. He shows that the composition of the Senate electorate has changed. In the 1970s, self-declared conservatives comprised less than 40 percent of the electorate; by the 1990s, they were more than 50 percent. Not only were there more conservatives than was the case earlier, but the Republican share of the conservative vote increased by more than 15 percent (Abramowitz 2002). Finally, Abramowitz notes that the ideological basis of Senators reelection constituencies (i.e., Democrats liberal and Republicans conservative) holds without regard to the region of the country from which the Senator is elected. Following that logic, we would expect that largely conservative voters elect Republican senators, even when Republicans win in blue states.

Using our classification in which we divide states into three groups--pro-Republican, competitive, and pro-Democratic--we calculated the partisanship of the Senate electorate in

each type of state. During the earlier period (1960 to 1980), Democratic identifiers outnumbered Republicans in each type of state. Table 4 shows that partisanship of the Senate electorate has changed in the period since 1980. In the most Republican states, Republican identifiers outnumbered Democrats in the recent period. In the other two categories (competitive and pro-Democratic), Democratic identifiers still outnumber Republicans, but the gap is smaller than was the case earlier. In the most pro-Democratic states, the Democratic edge in party identification has fallen from 14 percent to less than 9 percent. As a result, Republican candidates in pro-Democratic states need fewer crossover votes to win than was the case previously.

[Table 4 about here]

We also look at how Republican identifiers who voted in Senate elections in each type of state identify themselves on the ideological spectrum and how they evaluate conservatives. Table 5 shows that in the recent period, Republican identifiers were more likely to classify themselves as conservatives and to have warmer feelings toward conservatives than was true earlier. This finding holds without regard for the partisanship of the state. It is true that Republicans in pro-Democratic states were slightly less likely to identify as conservatives or have warm feelings toward conservatives but the differences across type of state were slight. Looking at the sub-group of strong Republican identifiers, the ideological orientation and evaluation are more extreme than for all Republicans in each region. Thus, even in pro-Democratic states, the path to a Republican Senate nomination is largely made by conservative voters and influenced by the activities of conservative party leaders and allied interest groups.

[Table 5 about here]

Conclusion

Like the House of Representatives, the US Senate has polarized along partisan and ideological lines. In a significant way, the polarization of Senate parties is due to the creation of an endangered species whose numbers have dwindled over the past quarter century. The disappearance of party non-conformists in the ranks of each party's caucus changed the Senate. Without a significant number of non-conformists, Senate parties have become more homogeneous internally while the parties have grown more distant from one another.

Although the disappearance of non-conformist partisans holds for both political parties, the results presented in this paper suggest that the causal processes are different for each of the parties. For Democrats, the decline in the number of non-conformists resulted from a declining competitiveness in states that produced the largest number of atypical Democratic senators. Incumbency, which allowed the Democrats to temporarily hold on to some of these positions, slowed but could not halt the process. For Republicans, the decline in party non-conformists was not due to a decline in the competitive posture of the party. Even in states where the Democrats were strongest, Republicans have not suffered a decline in their electoral fortunes. In the most competitive states, the prospects of electing a Republican senator increased during the most recent period studied. Instead, the decline in the number of Republican non-conformists is most likely due to changes in the recruitment, nomination and electoral constituencies of Republicans. The pool of potential Republican Senate candidates contains fewer moderate or liberal Republicans; the pathway to their party's nomination is more difficult for politicians with ideologies outside of their party's mainstream; and the party's base, even in states that lean Democratic, has become more conservative.

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Figure 1
 Number of Party Nonconformists in the Senate 1953-2004

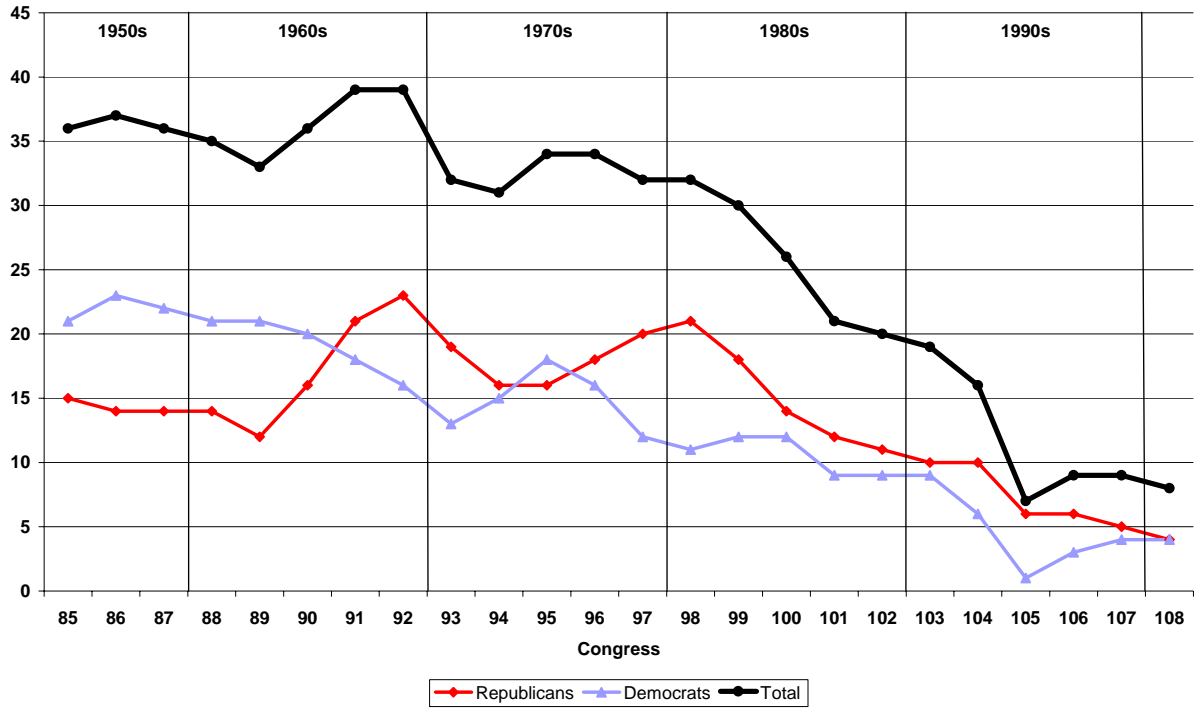


Figure 2
Declining Ideological Diversity of Senate Parties

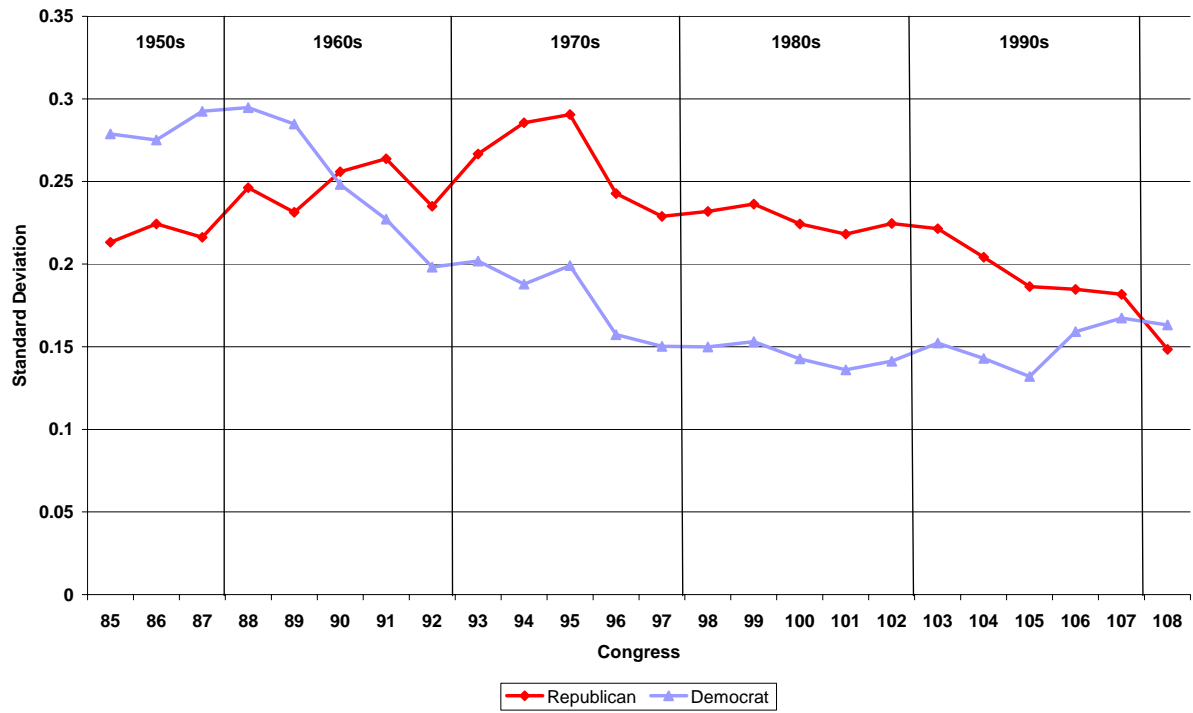


Figure 3
Increasing Ideological Distance between Senate Parties

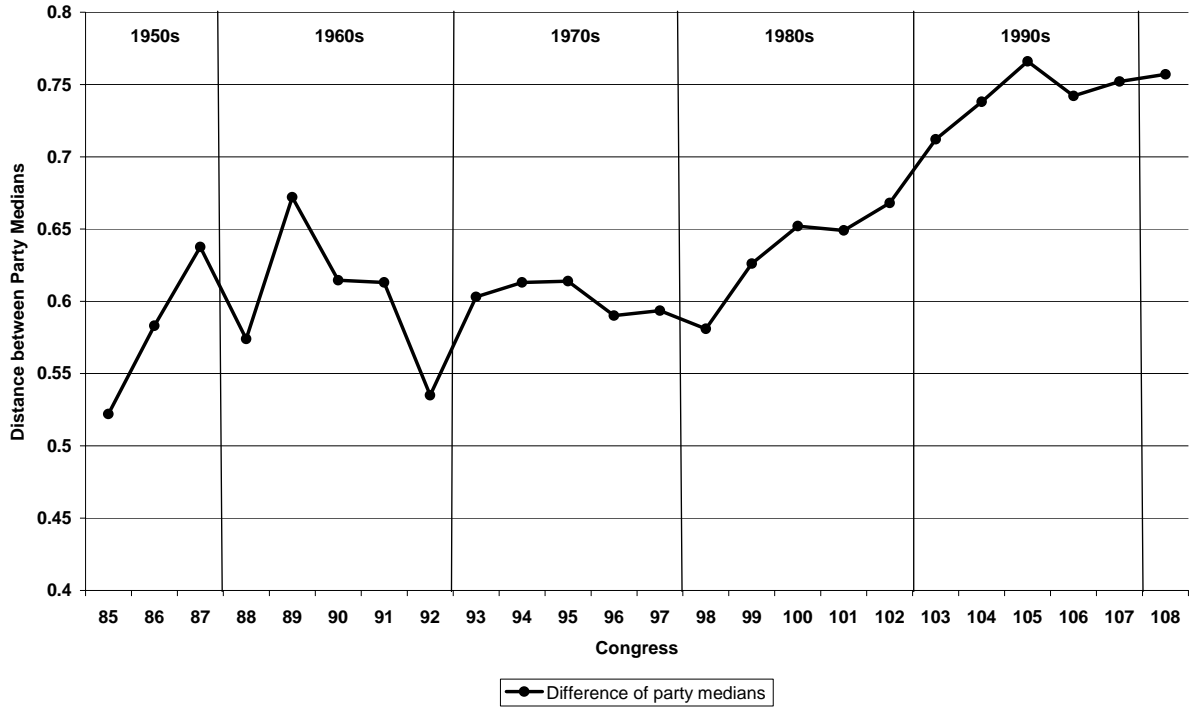


Figure 4
Strong Partisans in the Electorate

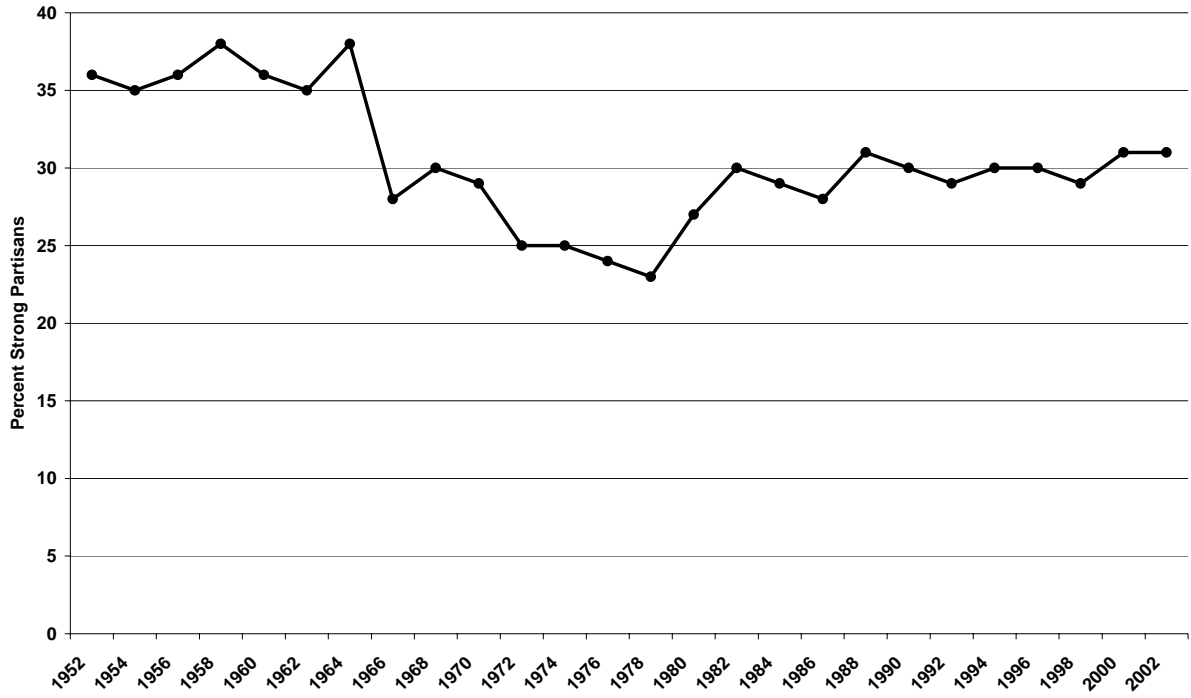


Table 1
Type of States Electing Party Non-Conformists to the Senate
87th to 107th Congress

Period	Party	Republican States	Competitive States	Democratic States	Total
87th to 97th Congress (1961-1982)	Republicans	17%	27%	56%	100% N=217
	Democrats	60%	33%	8%	100% N=211
98th to 107th Congress (1983-2002)	Republicans	12%	36%	52%	100% N=115
	Democrats	56%	35%	9%	100% N=86

Table 2
Party Winning the Senate Seat by Partisanship of the State
87th to 107th Congress

Period	Party	Republican States	Competitive States	Democratic States
87th to 97th Congress (1961-1982)	Republicans	43%	41%	34%
	Democrats	57%	59%	66%
	Total	100% N=368	100% N=352	100% N=374
98th to 107th Congress (1983-2002)	Republicans	68%	51%	30%
	Democrats	32%	49%	70%
	Total	100% N=336	100% N=332	100% N=332

Table 3
Type of Republican Holding a Senate Seat by Type of State
87th to 107th Congress

Period	Type of Partisan	Republican States	Competitive States	Democratic States
87th to 97th Congress (1961-1982)	Mainstream	89%	54%	13%
	Non-Conformist	11%	46%	87%
		100% N=157	100% N=132	100% N=149
98th to 107th Congress (1983-2002)	Mainstream	97%	77%	48%
	Non-Conformist	3%	23%	52%
		100% N=232	100% N=167	100% N=100

Table 4
Party Identification of Senate Electorates in Pro-Republican, Competitive and Pro-Democratic States 1961 to 2002

Period	Party	Pro-Republican	Competitive	Pro-Democratic
1961-1982	% Democratic	52.2%	54.6%	52.7%
	% Republican	39.3%	36.8%	38.7%
1983-2002	% Democratic	45.2%	53.4%	50.9%
	% Republican	48.5%	40.2%	42.3%

Table 5
Ideological Orientations of Republican Identifiers by Type of State and Period

		Ideological Self-Identification⁺		Ideological Feeling Thermometer*	
		All Republican Identifiers	Strong Republican Identifiers	All Republican Identifiers	Strong Republican Identifiers
Early	Pro-Rep	50.8	62.5	61.5	63.0
	Neutral	51.4	62.7	60.6	63.4
	Pro-Dem	50.8	63.4	59.0	63.1
Late	Pro-Rep	62.0	75.6	64.2	70.8
	Neutral	62.9	74.5	63.7	70.3
	Pro-Dem	60.7	77.6	61.6	67.6

+ Percentage indicating a conservative identification without regards to strength of the attachment (other options were liberal, moderate and no opinion)

* Scores above 50 indicate a pro-conservative orientation; 50 a neutral orientation and below 50 a pro-liberal orientation.