

**A Delayed Return to Historical Norms:  
Congressional Party Polarization After the Second World War\***

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**ABSTRACT:** Although a rich body of research has explored the sources of party polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives, it has focused only on the House since the late 1970s. Drawing on a dataset of historical election outcomes, legislative voting, and survey data, we take an alternative approach that examines both the U.S. Senate and the House in their broader historical contexts. We argue that the unusually bi-partisan era of the 1950s created a set of circumstances that enabled congressional parties to remain relatively un-polarized throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Although the national parties became more ideologically distinct in the mid-1960s, congressional parties lagged behind. As a result, a group of moderate legislators emerged who were cross-pressured between their national parties and their constituencies. Only when natural patterns of electoral loss and retirement replaced these legislators did congressional party polarization re-emerge.

## **Introduction**

The question of why congressional parties in the U.S. have polarized so much since the late 1970s has been a topic of rich scholarly debate in recent years. Existing explanations range from endogenous institutional changes that increased partisanship in Congress, to exogenous political changes that altered the configuration of congressional parties. Research focusing on endogenous institutional change argues that reforms in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1970s strengthened the power of party leaders, making it easier and more profitable for parties to act as cohesive voting blocs, and that changes in voting procedures on the House floor contributed to more partisan voting behavior.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the research focusing on exogenous political change examines changing characteristics of congressional districts, including redistricting,<sup>2</sup> the increase in income inequality across districts,<sup>3</sup> demographic change in the population,<sup>4</sup> and the decline of the one-party South.<sup>5</sup>

With a few exceptions, this body of research has focused primarily on House party polarization in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Although this work has generated a rich set of findings, its conclusions are mostly limited to one institution and one time period. This paper offers an alternative perspective that examines both the House and the Senate, and examines present-day polarization in a broader historical context. Our argument is rooted in an examination of long-term historical trends in congressional party polarization, which reveals two important features. First, since the mid-nineteenth century, trends in polarization have moved together in both the House and the Senate. As levels of polarization declined in the House, so did the Senate (and vice versa). Second, the recent period of polarization mirrors patterns of polarization that have prevailed throughout most of congressional history. In fact, the truly unusual historical period is the bi-partisan era immediately following World War II (WWII). Taking these two points into account, our argument examines the return to polarization in the House and Senate during the 1970s and 1980s in light of the unusual decline in polarization in the 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

The story unfolds in three major stages. First, we argue that partisanship in congressional elections begins to diverge from presidential elections in the mid-1960s. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, liberal voters often vote for Republican presidential and congressional candidates and a number of

conservative voters choose Democratic candidates. The blurring of partisan lines on key national issues (like race and the role of government in society) enables this cross-party voting. Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, liberals vote more consistently for Democratic presidential candidates and conservatives vote more consistently for Republicans. At the congressional level, however, we do not observe the same sorting. Instead, congressional voters continue to exhibit high levels of cross-party voting, whereby liberals often vote for Republican congressional candidates, and conservatives often select Democrats. Thus, even as partisan distinctions at the presidential level become clearer throughout the late 1960s, partisan distinctions in Congress lag behind.

The second stage of the story focuses on this lag in congressional party polarization and the subsequent rise of cross-pressured legislators. As the national parties and presidential candidates adopt distinct ideological stances on a range of different issues, a set of legislators emerge who are caught in the middle. These legislators face pressure from the national party to take relatively extreme ideological stances and countervailing pressures from their constituents. Cross-pressured Republicans are pulled in a more conservative direction by their national party and in a more moderate direction by their constituents—many of whom are ideologically liberal. Similarly, cross-pressured Democrats face an increasingly liberal national party and more moderate constituencies. These cross-pressured members develop multiple strategies to stay in office (such as the personal vote) even as they are out-of-step with their national party, constituency, or both. Many of these members vote more moderately than their non-cross-pressured counterparts, thus contributing to sustained levels of bi-partisanship in Congress in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The third—and final—stage of the argument examines the return to polarization in the late 1970s and 1980s in its historical context. We argue that Congress does not return to historic norms of polarization until these cross-pressured legislators are replaced by members who better align party and constituency preferences. The new members tend to be closer to the preferences of their constituency and, lacking cross-pressures, are more ideologically extreme than their predecessors. As cross-pressured

members retire or lose bids for re-election, the distinctions between partisan coalitions re-emerge in Congress. It is only through this process of electoral replacement that parties in Congress re-polarize.

The paper examines each of the three stages in turn—the divergence of presidential and congressional elections, the persistence of cross-pressured legislators, and processes of delayed electoral replacement. In doing so, this paper diverges from previous work on polarization in important ways. First, it examines both the House and the Senate. Second, although some previous scholars have examined long-term historical trends in polarization,<sup>7</sup> none have examined how the unusual period of bipartisanship in the 1950s affected the return to polarization in the 1970s and 1980s. Third, although some previous work has linked demographic and electoral changes to polarization,<sup>8</sup> this paper establishes an important mechanism through which changes in congressional polarization are linked to changes in elections—cross-pressuring. Changing electoral patterns lead to the rise of cross-pressured legislators in Congress, which eventually gives way to patterns of electoral replacement. In building this argument, we begin with an empirical examination of long-term historical trends in House and Senate party polarization. We demonstrate the uniqueness of the immediate post-WWII era in both chambers and discuss the implications this has for existing approaches to understanding congressional party polarization.

### **Identifying Historical Patterns of Polarization**

Throughout most of United States congressional history, parties in the House and Senate have been relatively polarized. Figure 1 plots Republican and Democratic party medians as measured by first-dimension DW-Nominate scores.<sup>9</sup> In both chambers, the difference between party medians peaks in 1895 and plummets to its lowest level in 1947 and the early 1950s. Aside from the relative convergence of party medians in the 1940s and 1950s, however, congressional parties have been consistently polarized. Placed in this historical context, the rise of polarization in the final decades of the twentieth century does not look as unusual. The median differences in this era are similar to previous periods. Instead, the unusual historical period to be explained is the immediate post-WWII era.

## FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

An alternative measure of polarization that examines the degree of overlap between the two parties highlights the unique features of the immediate post-WWII era. Parties can be polarized, with high levels of internal cohesion and low levels of intra-party overlap, or they can be convergent, with low levels of internal cohesion and high levels of intra-party overlap. In the latter case, although the most liberal Democrats and the most conservative Republicans remain distinct from each other, legislators in the middle of the two-party distribution overlap across parties. The more conservative Democrats are hard to distinguish from the more liberal Republicans.

We thus explore the degree of congressional party overlap over time using two different measures of ideology: first-dimension DW-Nominate scores (1867-2003), and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) scores (1947-2003). Both measures rate the liberalism (or conservatism) of elected officials based on their roll call voting records. We use these scores to identify how liberal or conservative members were relative to other members of their party. We identify the cutpoints for the 10 per cent, 25 per cent, and 50 per cent (the median value) most conservative Democrats, and count the number of Republicans who are more liberal than each of these cutpoints. Likewise, we identify the 10 per cent, 25 per cent, and 50 per cent most liberal Republicans and count the number of Democrats who are more conservative than each of these cutpoints. As an example, in 1947, the most conservative 10 per cent of Democrats had DW-Nominate scores higher than 0.10. To identify the degree of overlap with Republicans, we count the number of Republicans who had DW-Nominate scores lower than 0.10. Figures 2a (House) and 2b (Senate) show the number of overlapping members in each Congress from 1867-2003. For the purposes of brevity, we only show the distribution using DW-Nominate scores (The results are consistent using ADA scores. The only difference is that ADA scores do not begin until 1947 and they show a greater degree of non-south overlap among Democrats in the 1950s and 1960s.).

## FIGURE 2a AND 2b ABOUT HERE PLEASE

These graphs demonstrate an unprecedented level of overlapping voting in both the House and the Senate in the immediate post-WWII era. The DW-Nominate distributions illustrate that there was almost no House party overlap prior to the 1940s. In the Senate, there was some overlap in the 1920s and the 1930s, but it was mild compared to the immediate post WWII era. By the 1940s and 1950s in both the House and the Senate, the degree of partisan overlap spiked upwards. By 1947, almost 45 per cent of House Democrats were more conservative than the 10 per cent most liberal Republicans. The numbers peaked around 1963, when over 55 per cent of House Democrats were more conservative than the 10 per cent most liberal House Republicans, and almost a third of Democrats were more conservative than the 25 per cent most liberal Republicans. Even 10 per cent of House Democrats were more conservative than the median Republican member of the House. Among Republicans, levels of overlap grew sharply between 1947 and 1955, and persisted at high levels until the early 1970s when the number of members in the overlap region began to decline. In the Senate, the numbers were highest in the late 1960s. In 1969, 19 per cent of Democrats were more conservative than the 10 per cent most liberal Republicans, and 19 per cent of Republicans were more liberal than the 10 per cent most conservative Democrats. This level of overlap persisted through the late 1970s, when it began to decline in both chambers, and lasted in weaker form through the 1980s. Like Roberts and Smith, we find that for both parties in the House, polarization (or low levels of partisan overlap) re-emerges in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> We perform the same analysis looking only at non-Southern states to see if the partisan overlap was merely an artifact of one-party politics dominant in the South prior to the 1970s. We find that although the degree of overlap decreases among Democrats, the mid-twentieth century still emerges as a unique period of high partisan overlap. Among Republicans, we find that high levels of partisan overlap persist because there were few Republicans in the South.

Two important points emerge from this examination of historical patterns of polarization in Congress. First, patterns of polarization in the House and the Senate have been markedly similar throughout most of history. This finding is robust to several other measures of partisanship, including party voting scores and party unity scores.<sup>11</sup> These parallel trends in the House and the Senate have

important implications for our understanding of the sources of congressional party polarization. Any explanation for polarization should take both chambers into account. Endogenous institutional changes—like the 1970s reforms strengthening the power of parties, the Subcommittee Bill of Rights (1973), and the Committee Reform Amendments (1974)—are often cited as sources of polarization in the House, but they did not happen simultaneously in the Senate.<sup>12</sup> This implies that some exogenous political changes impacted levels of voting in Congress, influencing both chambers simultaneously. In addition, focusing on explanations like redistricting that only affect the House is not adequate to explain polarization in the Senate. To capture the full story we must look at both chambers.

Second, this examination of historical patterns in Congress reveals the importance of understanding the immediate post-WWII era to better understand polarization in the latter decades of the twentieth century. By understanding the unusual decline in partisanship after WWII, we can better understand the sources of a return to polarization in the 1970s and 1980s. Previous scholars have recognized the unique levels of bi-partisanship in the immediate post-WWII era, but none have linked the decline in the immediate post-WWII era to the subsequent rise of polarization in the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>13</sup> Instead, most research has sought to explain the final decades of the twentieth century as the unique period. Because the 1950s were an unusual period in congressional history, however, present-day polarization should be understood in light of this broader historical context.

### **Part I: The Divergence of Presidential and Congressional Elections**

An examination of historical trends in party polarization reveals a striking divergence between presidential and congressional elections around the mid-1960s. Between the end of World War II and the 1964 Goldwater-Johnson presidential election, a large number of voters with liberal views voted for Republican presidential and congressional candidates while many voters with conservative views voted for Democratic candidates. This cross-party voting diminishes in presidential elections beginning with 1964, but persists in congressional elections long after that.

To study the relationship between voter ideology and vote choice, we rely on American National Election Studies (ANES) cross-sectional studies from 1948 to 2000. Within each cross-sectional study, we create an opinion index using methodology established in Stimson<sup>14</sup> for each respondent on two key issues. We examine two issues prevalent in post-WWII politics that help distinguish individuals with a more liberal political philosophy from those with a more conservative view, and are evaluated in ANES studies over time. The issues are: (1) the role of government in society and (2) issues related to race and civil rights. We identify any ANES question having to do with either issue and re-code the respondent's answers as one, zero, or negative-one. One indicates support for greater government intervention on issues having to do with race or the role of government. Negative-one indicates support for less government intervention on issues related to race or the role of government. Zero implies neutrality. We then create a composite score for each individual that represents the mean of her answers on the negative-one to one scale. Each individual has two scores—one for her views on race and another for her views on the role of government in society.<sup>15</sup> Using these opinion indices, we identify the percentage of respondents in each year who support greater government intervention on race or the role of government yet still vote for Republican presidential, House, or Senate candidates. Similarly, we identify the percentage of respondents who support less government intervention on these two issues and still vote for Democratic candidates. It is important to note that our primary interest here is in comparing the level of cross-party voting within each year. How does the level of cross-party voting for Congress compare to the level of cross-party voting for the President in each year? Figure 3 shows the total percentage of voters in each year who voted for a candidate from the party opposite their views on race and the role of government.

### FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

For both issues, the divergence between presidential and congressional elections becomes apparent beginning around 1964. Prior to 1964, levels of cross-party voting are relatively similar for presidential and congressional elections. With respect to race issues, approximately 32 per cent of voters

vote with the opposite party in presidential elections in 1956. The percentage is relatively similar in congressional elections—33 per cent in House elections and 33 per cent in Senate elections. Likewise, 26 per cent of voters vote with the opposite presidential party with respect to role of government issues in 1956, and 22 per cent in House elections and 20 per cent in Senate elections. Patterns of cross-party voting in congressional elections, in other words, mirror presidential elections more closely in the 1950s and early 1960s than in the latter decades. Beginning in 1964, however, the level of cross-party voting in presidential elections begins to decline. Fewer and fewer voters who hold liberal views on race and the role of government vote for Republican presidential candidates. Despite these changes in presidential elections, however, cross-party voting in congressional elections persists. From 1964 to the late 1980s, the level of cross-party voting in congressional elections is, on average, six percentage points higher than cross-party voting in presidential elections. Voters with liberal views on race and the role of government continue to choose Republican congressional candidates and vice versa.<sup>16</sup>

Although voters in presidential elections sorted themselves into the appropriate party based on their views on race and the role of government beginning around 1964, the same pattern did not emerge in congressional elections. In congressional elections, voters with liberal views on these issues continued to vote for Republicans (and vice versa) even beyond the 1960s.<sup>17</sup> This divergence between presidential and congressional elections emerges from the bi-partisanship of the 1950s. During the 1950s, the distinctions between parties on key national issues like race and the role of government were not so clear. Although the New Deal parties were clearly distinguished by socio-economic class, a wealth of research has characterized the decline of class-based voting after WWII.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, until the early 1960s, it was not clear if Republicans or Democrats would be more supportive of civil rights.<sup>19</sup> Without clear distinctions between the parties on key issues like race and the role of government, people with liberal views on the issues voted for either party and vice versa. Thus, it is with some retrospective hindsight that we can characterize voters in the 1950s with liberal views on race and the role of government as holding positions consistent with the Democratic party. Beginning in 1964, however, as presidential politics begins to diverge around issues like civil rights, cross-party voting at the presidential level declines.

At the congressional level, however, factors like the personal vote keep congressional candidates relatively immune from the rise of polarizing issues in national politics even after the 1960s. The rise of the ‘personal vote’ is well-documented in political science scholarship through studies of the incumbency advantage.<sup>20</sup> Beginning in the 1950s, the incumbency advantage increases more or less consistently until its peak in 1988, when incumbents have a 12 per cent electoral advantage over non-incumbents. One commonly used method of measuring the incumbency advantage is the *surge*, or the mean value of the sophomore surge and the retirement slump.<sup>21</sup> Measures of surge over time show that the sharpest rise in the incumbency advantage is in the late 1950s and 1960s, just before congressional elections begin to diverge from presidential elections. Simultaneously, the percentage of districts with split partisan results at the presidential and congressional levels moves from zero at the start of the twentieth century, to a dramatic rise between 1948 and 1972.<sup>22</sup> Even in the 1960s, as issues like civil rights, the Vietnam War, and the environment emerged as dividing issues, voters continue to exhibit high levels of cross-party voting in congressional elections, but split their ticket at the presidential level. Both of these patterns—the rise in the incumbency advantage and the rise in split districts—demonstrate the increasing tendency of congressional elections to diverge from presidential elections in their level of partisanship. As the personal vote and the incumbency advantage increases, the impact of partisanship in determining electoral outcomes declines.<sup>23</sup> Even after the mid-1960s, congressional elections remained relatively insulated from national electoral forces. Thus, the re-polarization of congressional elections lags behind the polarization of national presidential politics.

## **Part II: The Persistence of Cross-Pressured Legislators**

The divergence of presidential and congressional politics in the mid-1960s and the subsequent lag in congressional re-polarization leads us to re-frame the usual question about congressional party polarization. Instead of focusing solely on the recent period of polarization and asking why congressional parties have polarized so much since the 1970s, we ask why congressional polarization lagged behind presidential polarization. Our approach to understanding this question focuses on the rise of members of

Congress who were cross-pressured between their constituencies and their national party. Unlike presidential politics, this cross-pressuring helps sustain levels of bi-partisanship in Congress beyond the 1950s and 1960s.

As the national parties grow increasingly distinct around presidential elections throughout the 1960s, a group of cross-pressured legislators emerges.<sup>24</sup> These legislators are pulled in one direction by their constituents and in another direction by their national party.<sup>25</sup> For example, a Border State Democrat like Jim Jones of Oklahoma is pulled in a more conservative direction by his district, but in a more liberal direction by the Democratic party. Likewise, Northeastern Republicans during the 1960s are pulled in a more conservative direction by their national party, but in more liberal directions by their constituencies. Pulled in two opposite directions by their party and their constituency, these members have a strategic dilemma: how can they balance the countervailing pressures while still winning re-election?<sup>26</sup>

Caught between their parties and their constituencies, we argue that these cross-pressured members have several options that range from being very partisan to non-partisan (in how their responses affect their parties). First, the most partisan response that members can have is to simply switch parties. We count this as a partisan response because members who are cross-pressured and switch parties subsequently reduce the dissonance between their parties and their constituencies, thus enabling them to vote more comfortably with the national party.<sup>27</sup> A second option is for members to try to balance the cross-pressures between their party and their district. This can lead to cross-pressured members being slightly out of step with both their parties and their constituencies. For example, cross-pressured Republicans who are trying to balance the cross-pressures will likely be too conservative for their constituencies, but too liberal for their parties (and vice versa for Democrats). This balancing can encompass a range of behaviors, and includes members like Gillis Long (D-LA) who votes sometimes with his own party in the House, and other times with the Republicans. Other members like Phil Gramm (D-TX), who votes consistently with Reagan Republicans in the House, represent the third option. The third option is the least partisan response that members can have: they can simply vote with the opposite

party. We count this as the least partisan response because these members buck the pressures of their national party to vote more consistently with the preferences of their constituents. Finally, there is a fourth option that does not lie on the continuum of most partisan to least partisan. This fourth option is simply for members to leave office through strategic retirement, or be forced to leave by electoral loss.<sup>28</sup>

The middle option—balancing—is particularly interesting because these members have to find ways to compensate for being slightly out-of-step with either their parties or their constituencies, or both. We hypothesize that the growing levels of the personal vote during the 1960s play a critical role in helping these members stay in office.<sup>29</sup> A disproportionately high number of cross-pressured legislators stay in office despite being somewhat out of step with either their party or their constituencies by developing strategies that increase their personal vote and insulate them from rising tides of ideological voting.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that one strategy legislators can use is to vote with the opposite party—in other words, the source of their personal vote can be their issue-based alignment with their constituency. In all cases, however, the personal vote plays an important role in shielding cross-pressured members from the polarizing trends of the 1960s. By protecting such members, the personal vote and cross-pressuring thus help delay the re-emergence of polarization in Congress.

Based on our argument, then, we expect that members who are cross-pressured will have higher personal vote scores than members who are not cross-pressured, since they have to rely more on the personal vote to help them win re-election. Similarly, we expect that rates of switching parties and voting with the other party will be higher for cross-pressured members. To examine this, we identify the members who are cross-pressured. We identify Democrats who have conservative constituencies and Republicans who have liberal constituencies. Consistent with previous work, we measure constituency liberalism using three-election moving averages of presidential vote in the district or state.<sup>31</sup> Cross-pressured Democrats are Democrats who come from districts or states voting more than 55 per cent Republican at the presidential level. Conversely, cross-pressured Republicans are Republicans who come from districts or states voting more than 55 per cent Democratic at the presidential level (based on work

in Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002, we also develop alternate measures of constituency liberalism that hold a variety of economic and demographic variables constant and find the results to be the same).<sup>32</sup>

First, looking at party-switchers, we find that there are sixteen cases of members who switch parties in the House from the 1950s to the 1990s, and three cases of members who switch parties in the Senate (see Nokken 2000 for more discussion of these cases). Among the nineteen House and Senate members who switch parties, twelve (or 63 per cent) are cross-pressured. However, changing parties is not a frequent occurrence. Instead, most cross-pressured members try to balance. To look more closely at members who try to balance the cross-pressures between their constituencies and their parties, and members who opt to vote with the opposite party, we examine the relationship between cross-pressuring and electoral results, the personal vote, and roll-call voting behavior. Table 1 shows the results for Republicans, Southern Democrats, and non-Southern Democrats.

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

The top line in Table 1 shows the mean DW-Nominate scores for members who are cross-pressured and members who are not cross-pressured. If our argument that these members contribute to cross-party voting in Congress is correct, then we expect that cross-pressured members are ideologically more moderate than their non-cross-pressured counterparts. The results show that for both the House and the Senate, across both parties and Southern and non-Southern Democrats, our expectations are correct. Among Democrats, the cross-pressured members are less liberal, and among Republicans, the cross-pressured members are less conservative. In addition, t-tests demonstrate that these are statistically significant differences.

The second part of Table 1 looks specifically at members who seek to ‘balance’ the cross-pressures between their constituency and their party. We look here at the cross-pressured members who stay in office and compare them to non-cross-pressured members who stay in office. We expect that these cross-pressured members have a harder time securing re-election because they are less in line with their national parties and their constituencies. Thus, we expect that they will have lower winning vote

margins. In addition, to maintain office, we expect that cross-pressured members will build up a larger personal vote (measured by slurge scores) than members who are not cross-pressured. The results show that cross-pressured members win with lower vote margins, even though they have higher slurge scores than their non-cross-pressured counterparts. The only exception to this is non-Southern Democratic Senators, whose average winning vote margin for cross-pressured members is equal to that of non-cross-pressured members. Even for these Senators, however, the slurge score for cross-pressured members is higher than the slurge score for non-cross-pressured members. The differences are also statistically different in all cases except when the N is very small for certain groups of cross-pressured Senators.

The third section of Table 1 looks at the probability that members will vote with the opposite party. We measure voting with the opposite party using our measure of partisan overlap outlined earlier. Here, we expect that cross-pressured members will fall into the overlap region far more often than non-cross-pressured members. Again, looking at the results in Tables 1a and 1b, it is clear that cross-pressured members are in the overlap region at statistically higher rates than non-cross-pressured members.

In sum, cross-pressured members are more ideologically moderate than their non-cross-pressured counterparts, and have a larger personal vote than non-cross-pressured members. Because the personal vote insulates them, the electoral sorting that occurs in presidential elections does not in congressional elections. Cross-pressured members of Congress stay in office with the personal vote, but they often vote less partisan than non-cross-pressured members, thus sustaining low levels of polarization in Congress through the 1960s and 1970s. As long as these members stay in office, congressional party polarization takes longer to re-emerge.

### **Part III: Delayed Electoral Replacement and the Return to Polarization**

Given the lag in congressional party polarization and the persistence of cross-pressured legislators in Congress, the third and final part of our story asks how congressional parties re-polarized in the late 1970s and 1980s. We develop the electoral replacement hypothesis, or the idea that eventually, through

natural processes of electoral replacement, cross-pressured members retire or lose re-election, and new members who bring district and party preferences into better alignment replace them. Democrats who are too liberal for their constituencies are replaced by Republicans who are more conservative, and Republicans who are too conservative for their districts are replaced by more liberal Democrats. As patterns of electoral loss and strategic retirement replace cross-pressured members in the late 1970s and 1980s, parties in Congress become better sorted and more tightly defined, and partisan voting scores in Congress consequently rise.

There are three key observable implications of this electoral replacement hypothesis. First, there is the question of what kinds of members are losing office. We expect that seats that shift from Democrat to Republican should be losses among Democrats who are too liberal for their constituencies. Similarly, seats that shift from Republican to Democrat should be losses among Republicans who are too conservative for their constituency. These are the members cross-pressured between their parties and their constituents. Second, who replaces these members? According to our hypothesis, members who are closer to district preferences should replace them. In other words, the Republican replacements should be more conservative than their Democratic predecessors and Democratic replacements should be more liberal than their Republican predecessors—and, importantly, both should be closer to district preferences, thus bringing party and constituency back into alignment. Third, these seat changes should contribute to the overall redefinition of partisan lines. Polarization of congressional parties emerges as the ideological distribution of congressional seats changes. We expect that the electoral replacement of cross-pressured members brings constituency and party preferences into better alignment, thus impacting the overall ideological distribution of congressional seats.

To examine these hypotheses, we use DW-Nominate residuals to measure a member's ideological distance from the district, a method used in previous research.<sup>33</sup> First, we regress the member's DW-Nominate score on a three-term moving average of constituency presidential vote. The resulting residual score acts as a measure of the member's ideological distance from the constituency. We should note that we also calculated the residuals using alternate specifications of the relationship between presidential vote

and member ideology, including a cubic specification. In addition, consistent with some previous research,<sup>34</sup> we include controls for other electoral factors in determining the size of the residual. We find the results to be the same across these different specifications and thus report the results using the basic specification here.

To look first at the question of who loses and who replaces them, Figure 4 shows the relationship between the members who leave office and the members who replace them. On the x-axis, we plot the residual score of the member who leaves office. The y-axis represents the corresponding residual score of the replacement member. By our hypothesis, Democrats who are too liberal for their constituency are replaced by Republicans who are more conservative (and close to constituency preferences), and Republicans who are too conservative for their constituency are replaced by Democrats who are more liberal (and still close to constituency preferences). Thus, we expect that the Democrat-to-Republican replacements will lie in the upper left hand corner, and Republican-to-Democrat replacements will lie in the bottom right hand corner. An important point to note is that the replacements are still relatively close to constituency preferences.

#### FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

Relative to constituency preferences, Democrats who are too liberal (residual scores less than zero) are replaced by Republicans who are more conservative. Similarly, relative to constituency preferences, Republicans who are too conservative (residual scores greater than zero) are replaced by Democrats who are more liberal. Importantly, we find that in the 1950s, the effects are the weakest. In terms of Democrat to Republican replacements, we see multiple cases in which the Republican replacements remain too liberal for the constituencies. In terms of Republican to Democratic replacements, we see the most cases where the Democratic replacement is relatively far from constituency preferences. This is consistent with our contention that the relationship between ideology and partisanship is considerably weakened in the 1950s. It is only in the 1960s that we begin to observe the stronger relationships predicted by the replacement hypothesis. In addition, the number of Democrat-

Republican and Republican-Democrat switches increases in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, consistent with our expectation that this pattern of electoral replacement contributed to increasing polarization. In the House, four to five per cent of all seats are Democrat-Republican and Republican-Democrat seat changes in the 1970s and 1990s, as compared to two and three per cent in the 1950s and 1960s (note that 85-90 per cent of seats do not change hands). In the Senate, the majority of seat changes occur in the 1970s and 1980s, when four to five per cent of seats are cross-party seat changes (compared to one to three per cent in the 1950s and 1960s). In other words, the members sort themselves out (or are sorted out) more clearly in the latter decades.

A key part of the electoral replacement hypothesis is the idea that the newly elected members are closer to constituency preferences than their predecessors. As Democrats and Republicans caught in the cross-pressures between their parties and constituencies are replaced, we expect that their replacements bring constituency and party preferences into better alignment; thus, without cross-pressures from the party, the new members are better able to vote more consistently with constituency preferences. This implies that the residual scores of the replacement should be smaller in absolute value than the residual scores of the members out-of-office. Figure 5 examines these residuals for the House and the Senate.

#### FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

In both chambers, we see that the mean residual score of the replacement is, as expected, smaller than the mean residual score of the member out-of-office. This is true even if we break the data down by decade and examine it separately for each party in each chamber. The only exception is among Democratic replacements in the Senate in the 1950s, when the replacement member is slightly further away from the constituency than the member-out-of-office. This is, however, consistent with the idea that the 1950s were a period of unusual bi-partisanship and it is not until the latter decades of the twentieth century that patterns of partisan redefinition begin to take effect. The pattern emerges most strongly in the 1970s and 1980s, when partisan voting in congressional elections begins to re-emerge. Members who

bring constituency and party preferences into better alignment thus replace cross-pressured Democrats and Republicans. What impact, then, does this have on polarization in Congress?

We argue that polarization re-emerges as patterns of electoral replacement alter the ideological distribution of seats in Congress. Congressional seats which had previously been misaligned are sorted into the proper parties through this process of electoral replacement. Seats that are too conservative for the national Democratic party become Republican and seats that are too liberal for the national Republican party become Democrat. Thus, electoral replacement can help explain changes in the ideological distribution of congressional seats. We run a regression that tests the impact of electoral replacement on the changing ideology of congressional seats against alternate explanations for polarization, including change in the South, income inequality, and member conversion. Specifically, the variables are measured as follows:

- **Change in Ideology of the Congressional Seat:** This is the dependent variable and is measured by the change in the congressional seat's DW-nominate score. It is calculated as the difference between the DW-nominate score of the current member and the DW-Nominate score of the member in the previous Congress. These changing ideology scores reflect the changing patterns of partisanship in Congress.<sup>35</sup>
- **Change in Constituency Preference:** This controls for the fact that member ideologies may change because members strategically position themselves to be consistent with changing ideologies within their constituency. It is measured as the changing Republican presidential vote in the geographic constituency (district for House, and state for Senate);
- **The number of terms the member has served:** We include this as a proxy measure for member conversion. In response to changes in the political environment, members may adapt by altering their voting patterns. Previous research shows that this can contribute to the polarization of parties in the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> We thus include a variable for the number of terms the member has served, because previous research on member conversion shows that Democrats move further left with each passing Congress, and Republicans move further right.<sup>37</sup>

- Per cent black of the constituency: This controls for the possibility that a social sorting process happens, as certain demographic groups tend to vote for one party over another.<sup>38</sup> It is measured as the percentage of the voting-age population in the member's geographic constituency that is black, according to Census measures.
- Income Inequality: This is measured using the GINI coefficient, a commonly used measure of income inequality.<sup>39</sup> In the House, because district-by-district measures of income inequality are not available, we use state-by-state measures over time. The same measures are used in the Senate.
- Dichotomous variables for region and redistricting: These test the impact of the disappearance of the one-party South<sup>40</sup> and, in the House, the impact of reapportionment.<sup>41</sup> In the House analysis, because the exact amount of reapportionment in each district cannot precisely be known, we ascertain whether each district has been reapportioned and gave it a value of 1 if it has and 0 if it has not. Although Carson, et al. (2003) argue that looking at the extent of redistricting is a better measure of whether or not redistricting has an effect, we contend that looking at districts that have 50 per cent or more population change biases the measure to find redistricting effects. This is a more conservative test of the redistricting hypothesis.
- Finally, we also include two dichotomous variables for each of the two possible types of electoral replacement that can occur: (1) party switches (Republican-Democrat or Democrat-Republican), or (2) same party changes (Democrat- Democrat or Republican- Republican). The variable for party-switches is the key variable in our hypothesis. Our expectation is that the seats which switch parties will show the greatest change in ideology and, hence, re-definition of partisan lines. Specifically, Democrats who are too liberal for their constituencies are replaced by Republicans (Democrat-Republican is positive); Republicans who are too conservative for their constituencies are replaced by Democrats (Republican-Democrat is negative).

In this analysis, then, the null hypothesis is that controlling for all the alternative hypotheses about the sources of polarization, the effect of electoral replacement will disappear. The alternative hypothesis is that even when accounting for these alternative hypotheses, the effect of the electoral replacement hypotheses will remain, and the coefficient on the replacement variables will not be zero.

Table 2a shows the results for the House and Table 2b shows the results for the Senate. Even when we control for demographic shifts and social sorting processes (such as the changes in income and race examined thoroughly in Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2002), the importance of electoral replacement is clear. Looking at the Democrats in the House first, we see that across all decades, the effect of Republican-to-Democratic seat changes have the most consistently significant effect. In all decades, the magnitude of the coefficient is larger than any other coefficient, and it moves in the expected direction (negative). In other words, seats that change from Republican to Democrat become significantly more liberal, thus sorting the parties better and contributing to aggregate levels of polarization in the House. The same-party seat changes do not have a significant effect in any decade, intimating that it is the cross-party sorting that has more of an impact among Democrats. We also find that after the 1960s, redistricting does have a significant effect on ideological change. Members who get redistricted are significantly more liberal than members from districts that do not get redistricted. In the 1980s, Democrats in the South are significantly more conservative, and Democrats from states with a higher GINI coefficient also become more liberal.

TABLES 2a and 2b ABOUT HERE PLEASE

Among House Republicans, we also see that cross-party seat changes are significant. Across all decades, seats that move from being Democrat to Republican are significantly more conservative as a result. Thus, even among Republicans, the cross-party switching helps sort members appropriately by party and thus helps clarify partisan lines in the House. The within-party changes among Republicans are less clear. In the 1950s and 1960s, seats that switch hands but stay in the Republican party actually become more liberal, since partisan lines are blurred around mid-century. Beyond electoral replacement,

we find that redistricting also has an effect in the 1970s and beyond. In these decades, Republicans from districts that have been redistricted are significantly more conservative than Republicans from districts that have not been redistricted. Similarly, Republicans from states with a higher GINI coefficient are more conservative. Among Republicans in the South, we see an interesting result. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s, Republicans in the South have a negative coefficient. This is true even though the mean DW-Nominate score for Southern Republicans in the South is consistently more conservative than Republicans from other regions throughout this time period. How can we interpret this coefficient? We look more closely at the data and find that although Republicans in the South are, on balance, replaced by more liberal members (holding all else equal), the new members are still more conservative than other members of the party. Although their raw DW-Nominate scores are more conservative than members from other regions, their ideological movement is smaller, thus leading to the negative coefficient.

In the Senate, the results are largely the same as the House. Like the House, the effect of electoral replacement is greater than the effect of other variables. Seats that go from Republican to Democrat become significantly more liberal, while seats that go from Democrat to Republican become significantly more conservative. In addition, in the 1960s, the key decade of change, Democrats replacing other Democrats are significantly more liberal. Among Republicans, the seats that switch hands within the Republican party are more liberal in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. This is likely due to the influx of northern Republicans that are pulling the party in a more moderate direction. The magnitude of that coefficient, however, is much smaller than the magnitude of change among seats that went Democrat-Republican. Among Democrats, the number of terms served is significant in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, but the magnitude of the effect is marginal.

As cross-pressured members leave office through electoral replacement, the number of cross-pressured members in Congress should decline. The disappearance of these members brings party and constituency preferences into better alignment, thus allowing for the re-polarization of congressional parties. Figure 6 shows the number of cross-pressured members in the House and the Senate over time. In both chambers, cross-pressuring rises in the 1960s as congressional elections begin to diverge from

presidential elections. These cross-pressured legislators manage to stay in office for some time through the personal vote, but by the early to mid 1970s, they begin to retire or get defeated. Through a pattern of natural electoral replacement, the number of cross-pressured legislators declines, and parties are brought back into alignment. Thus, the rise and fall in the number of cross-pressured legislators is the inverse of the pattern of polarization we observe in Figures 1 and 2.

#### FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE PLEASE

The importance of electoral replacement thus becomes clear only in light of the historic decline in congressional polarization after WWII, and the subsequent delay in re-polarization in Congress. Since most scholars have begun with the question of why the House polarized in the 1970s and 1980s, they have been searching for sources of change in the 1970s. In truth, however, a substantial portion of change in member ideology is explained by simple patterns of electoral replacement. By understanding the divergence of congressional and presidential elections in the 1960s, however, it becomes clear that much of the re-polarization of the House and the Senate in the 1970s and 1980s was a result of a re-sorting of parties through electoral change. Other explanations, including redistricting, the changing South, income inequality, and endogenous institutional change, are clearly also part of the story, but the entire historical story only becomes clear by understanding the role of cross-pressuring and delayed electoral replacement.

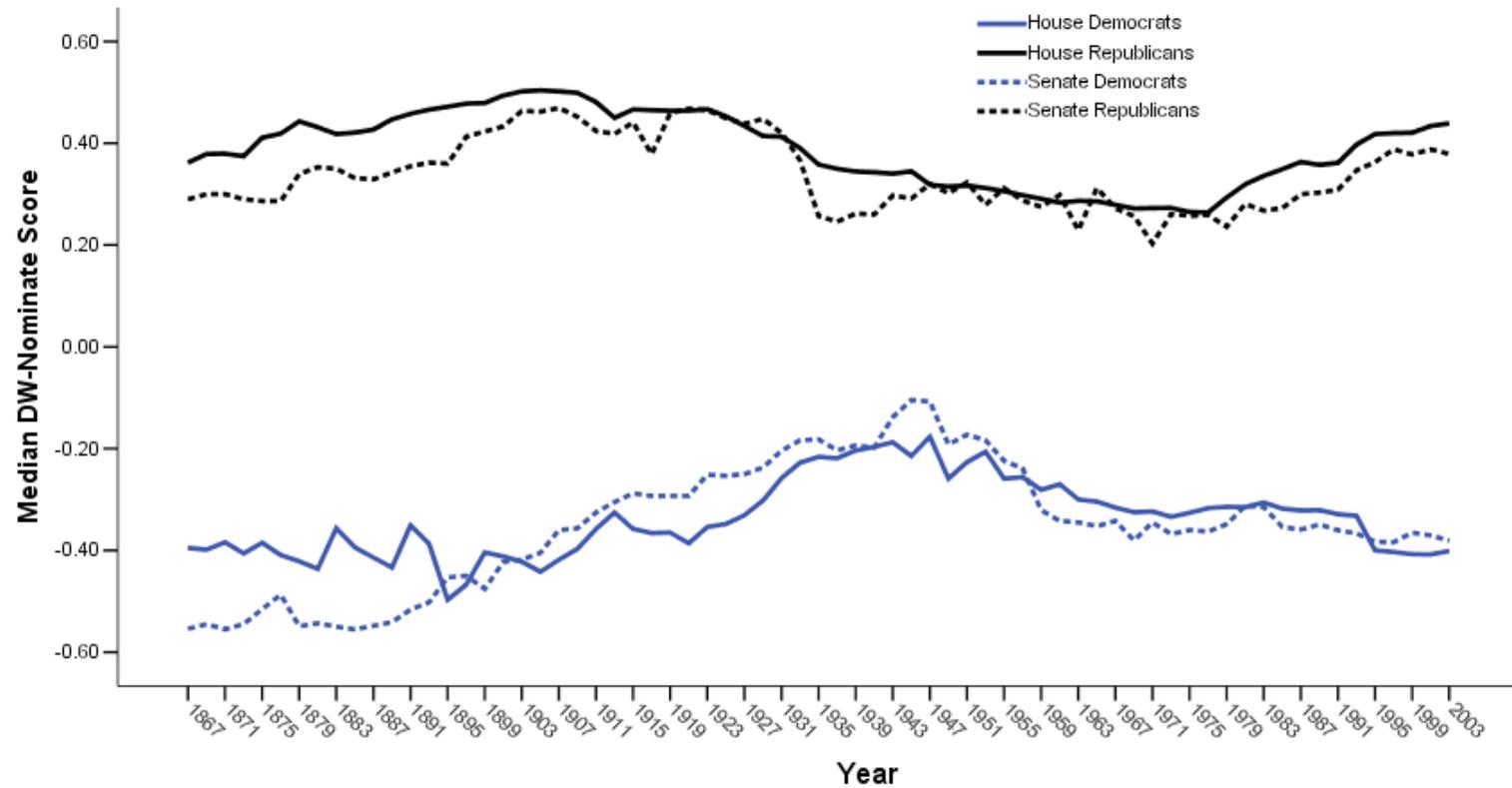
#### **Conclusion**

Our examination of long-term trends in the U.S. House and Senate demonstrates that the truly unusual historical period in U.S. congressional polarization is the period of bi-partisanship immediately following WWII. This bi-partisan era ended in the mid-1960s as the national parties began to take distinct positions on issues like race and the role of government. Although voting in presidential elections became more partisan relative to congressional elections, cross-party voting in congressional elections persisted. Thus, as the national Democratic party became more liberal and the national Republican party

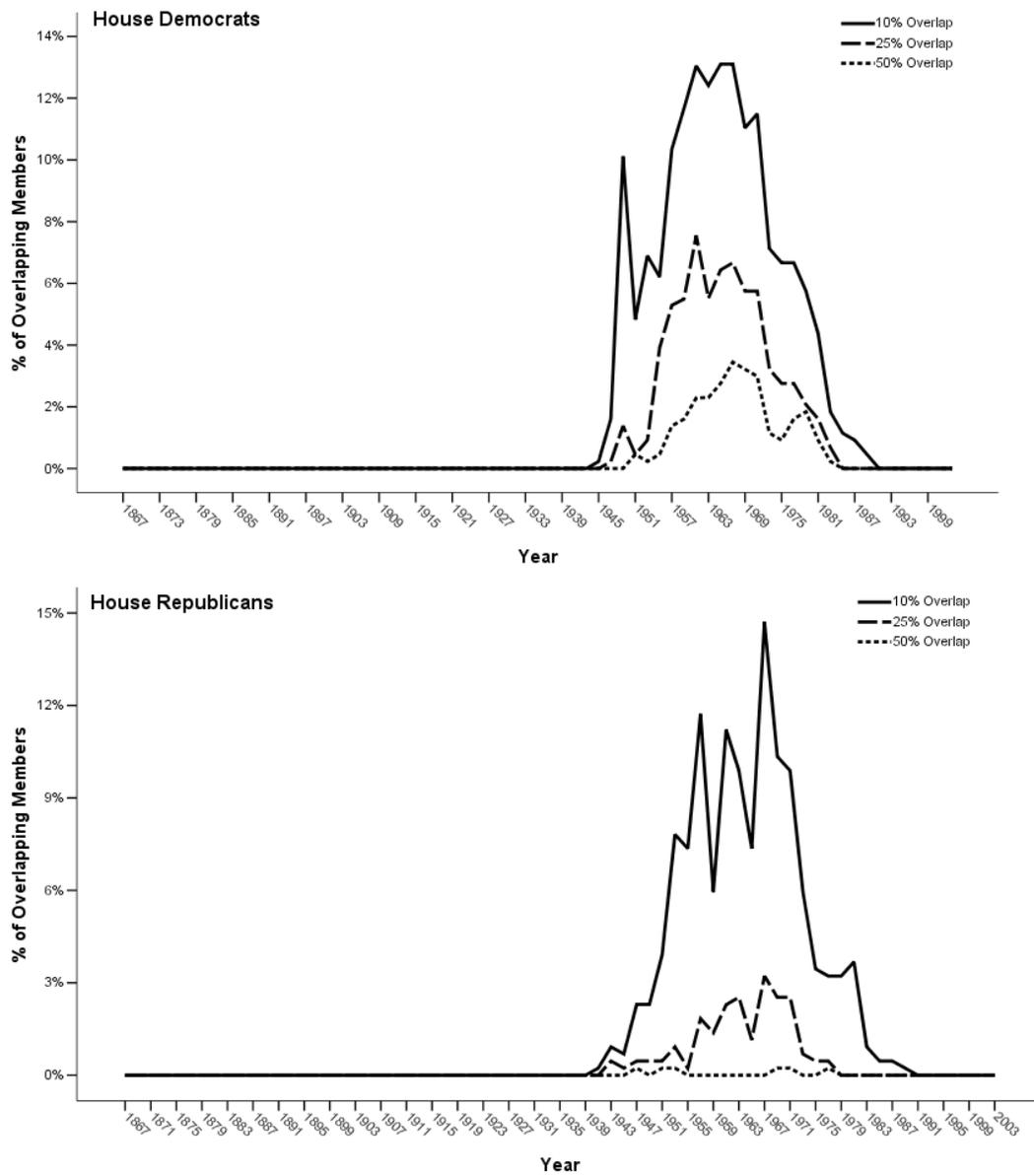
became more conservative, a set of legislators cross-pressured between the ideologies of their national parties and their constituencies emerged. When these cross-pressured legislators strategically retired or suffered electoral defeat, members of the opposite party who voted more consistently with constituent preferences replaced them, thus allowing for the re-definition of congressional parties.

This paper refines existing approaches to understanding congressional party polarization in two important ways. First, it demonstrates that any explanation of congressional party polarization should take into account both chambers of Congress. Because of the remarkable similarity in the patterns of polarization in both chambers, it is essential to seek explanations that can account for both the House and the Senate. Explanations that focus on endogenous institutional change in the House or features like redistricting that only happen in one chamber are not adequate to explain polarization across both chambers. Second, it puts the rising polarization of the late 1970s and 1980s into its proper historical context, demonstrating that an understanding of the immediate post-WWII period is crucial to understanding the readjustment to polarization in later decades. Our argument focuses on the way that the unusually bi-partisan era of the 1950s created a set of circumstances that enabled congressional parties to remain relatively un-polarized throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Only by understanding the historical context can we begin to understand the polarization of the late 1970s and 1980s as a return to traditional patterns of polarization and observe the role that delayed electoral replacement played in the re-polarization of congressional parties.

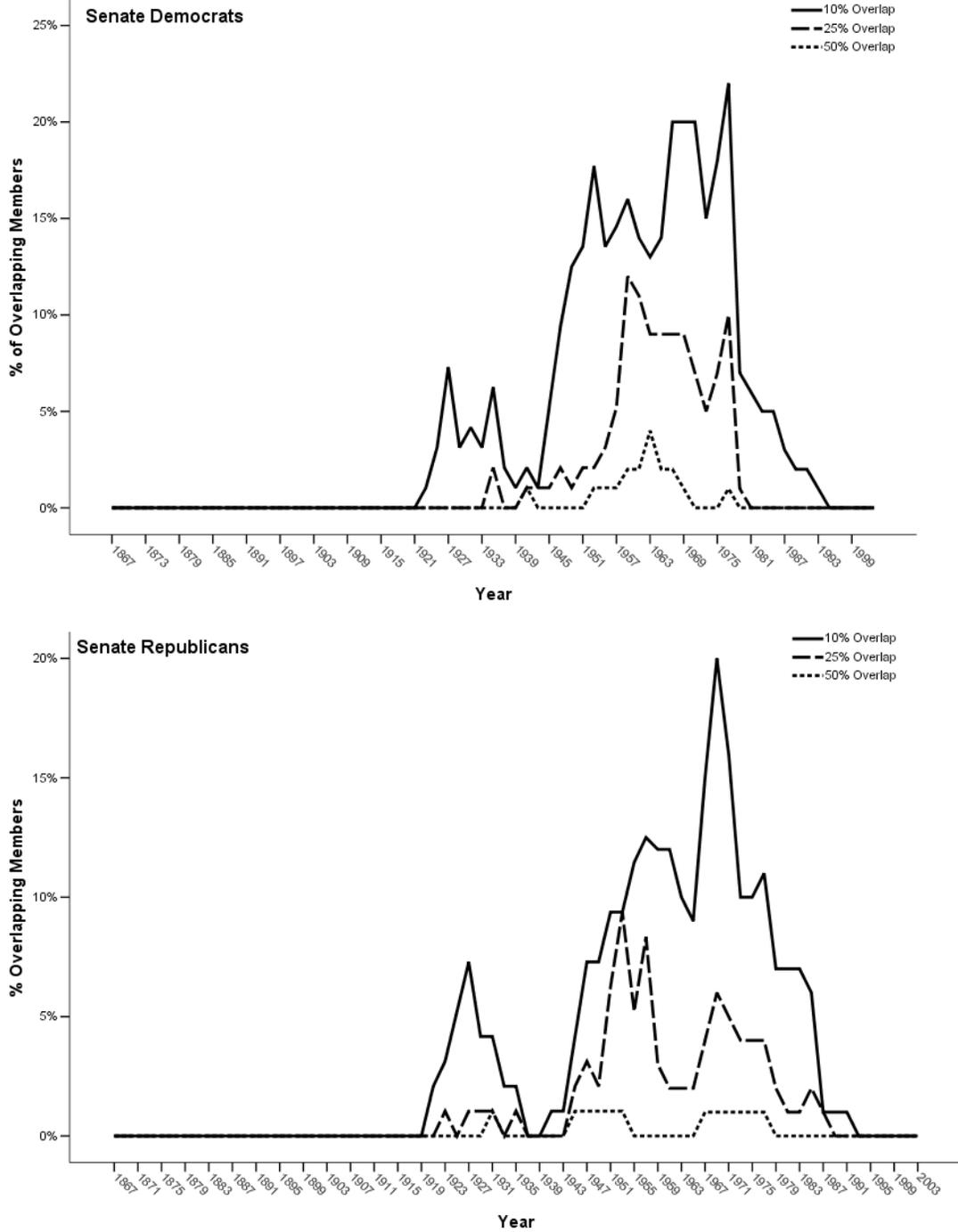
Figure 1: Difference in Party Medians, House and Senate, 1867-2003 (1st Dimension DW-Nominate Scores)



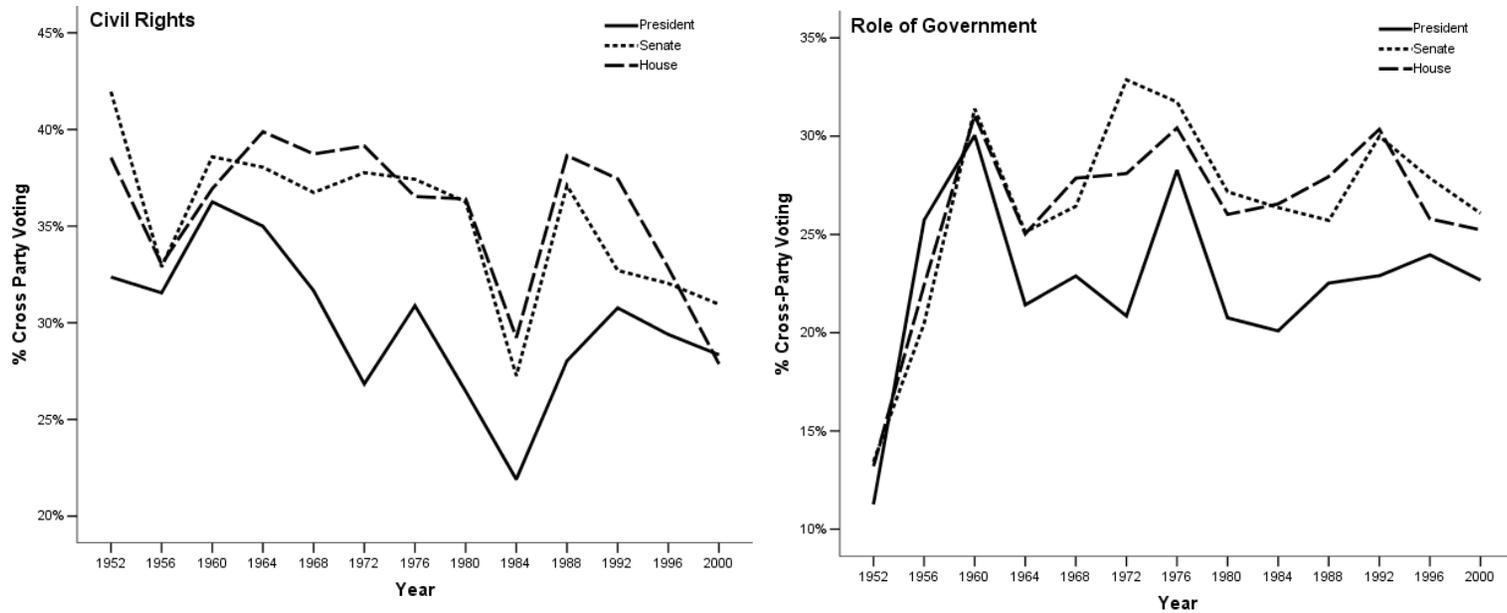
**Figure 2a: Partisan Convergence in the House, DW-Nominate Scores, 1867-2003**



**Figure 2b: Partisan Convergence in the Senate, DW-Nominate Scores, 1867-2003**



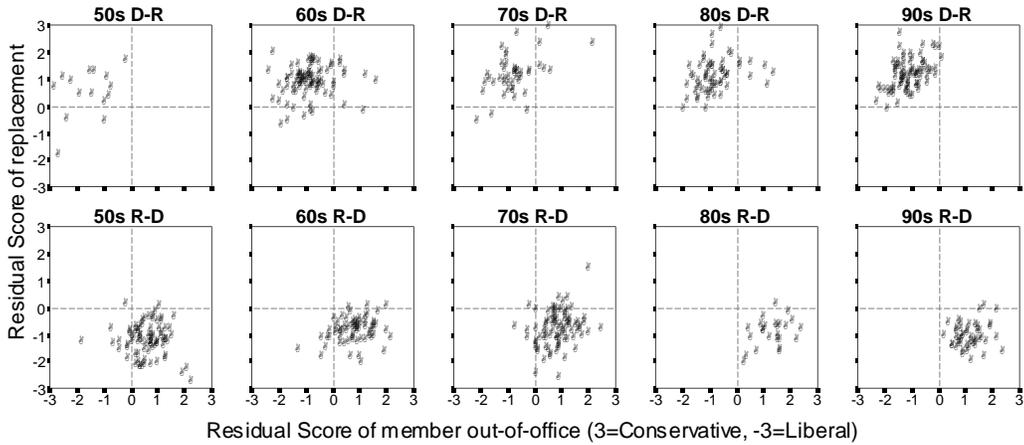
**Figure 3: Divergence of Presidential and Congressional Elections, based on voters' preferences on issues related to race and the role of government in society, 1952-2000**



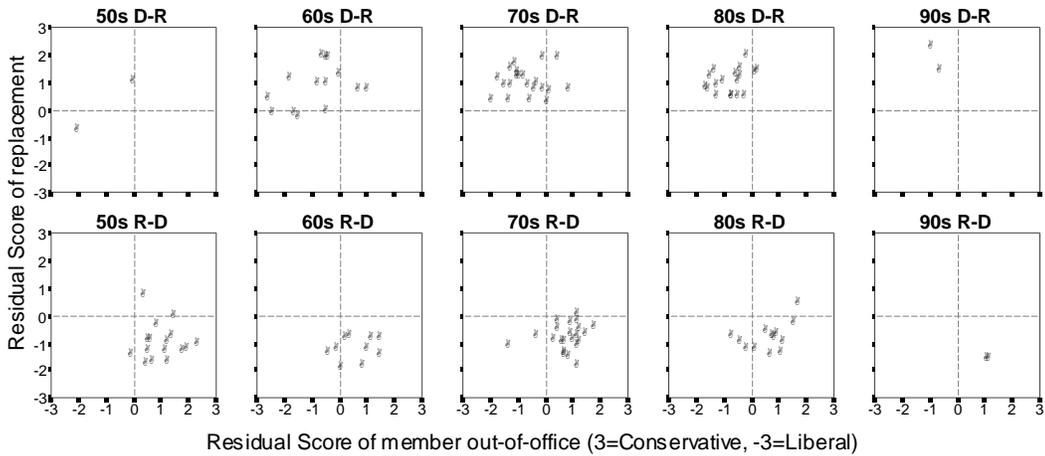
\* The per cent cross-party voting is calculated as the sum of respondents with liberal views on issues of race and the role of government who vote for Republican candidates and the respondents with conservative views on issues of race and the role of government who vote for Democratic candidates. Consistent with Stimson (1991), liberal views are coded as those favoring more government intervention and conservative views are coded as those favoring less government intervention. Beginning in 1964, the per cent of cross-party voting in presidential elections declines, while it persists in congressional elections. Source: American National Election Studies cross-sectional data, 1952-2000

**Figure 4: Ideological Placement of Members Out-of-Office and their Replacements: House and Senate**

**House of Representatives**



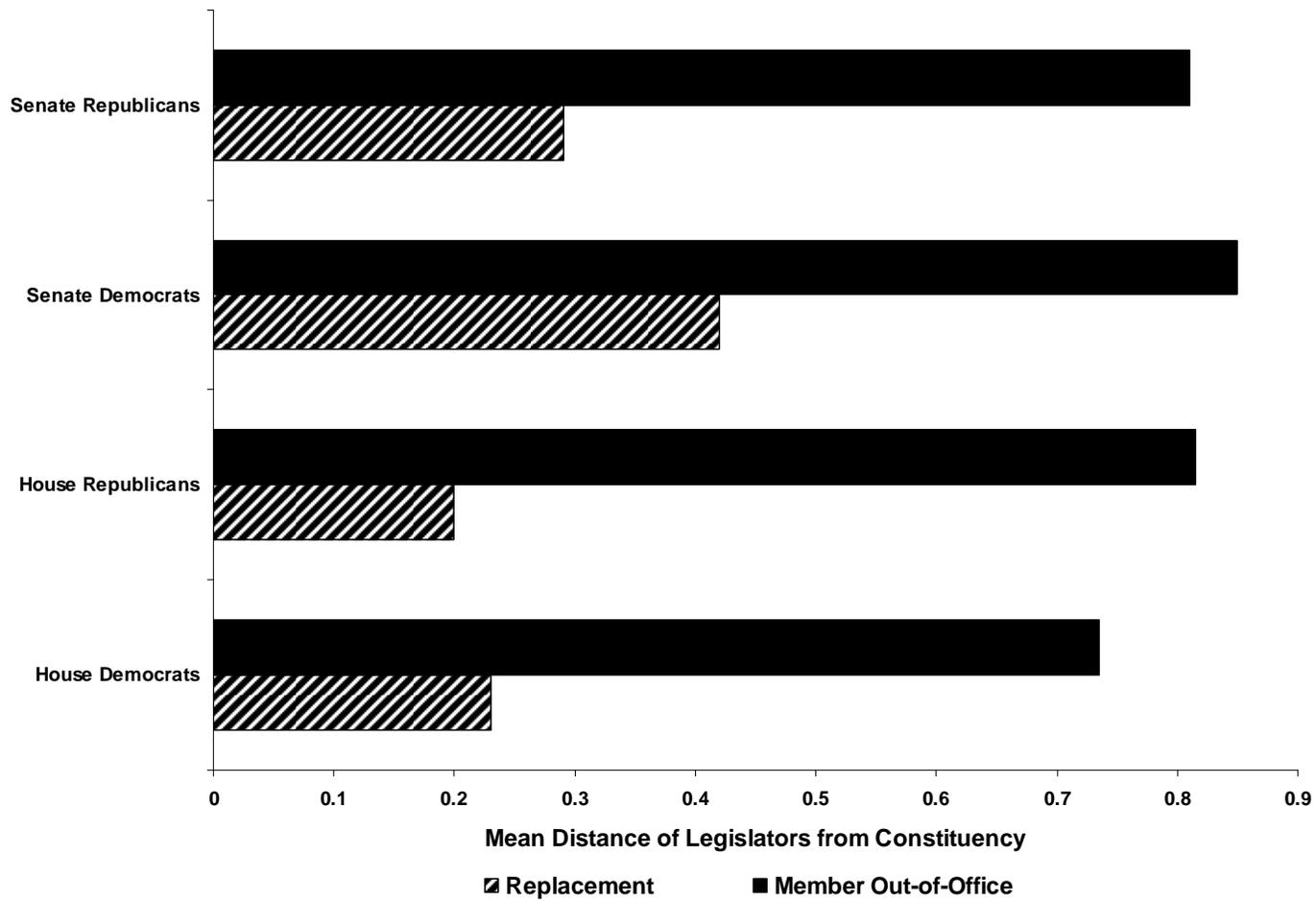
**Senate**



*Residuals are calculated by regressing DW-Nominate scores on 3-term moving averages of constituency presidential vote. D-R indicates Democrat to Republican seat changes and R-D denotes Republican to Democrat seat changes. The decades are denoted as 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s.*

**Figure 5: Mean Distance of Legislator from Constituency, Members Out-of-Office vs. Replacements, 1954-2000**

*Distance from the constituency is measured as the standardized residual from regressing DW-Nominate scores on 3-term moving averages of constituency presidential vote.*



**Figure 6: Number of Cross-Pressured Legislators in the House and Senate, 1954-2000**



*Cross-pressured members are defined as Democrats who are from conservative districts/states (constituencies that vote less than 45% Democratic in a 3-term moving average of presidential vote) and Republicans who are from liberal districts/states (constituencies that vote more than 55% Democratic in a 3-term moving average of presidential vote).*

**Table 1: The Implications of being Cross-Pressured**

	<b>House: Cross-Pressured Reps. (N in parentheses)</b>					
	Democrats				Republicans	
	Non-South		South		All States	
	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>
<i>Ideology</i>						
Mean DW-Nom. Score	-0.42 (3250)	-0.30* (1675)	-0.1 (1417)	-0.03* (973)	0.34 (4650)	0.26* (891)
<i>'Balancing'</i>						
Mean House Vote Margin	71% (2920)	64%* (1488)	88% (1278)	79%* (861)	65% (4042)	62%* (806)
Mean Slurge	6.6% (2920)	7.4%* (1488)	5.2% (1278)	7.3%* (861)	6.4% (4042)	6.8%* (806)
<i>Voting with Opposite Party</i>						
% in 10% Overlap Region	0% (16)	2%* (38)	23% (332)	31%* (298)	8% (357)	20%* (175)

	<b>Senate: Cross-Pressured Senators (N in parentheses)</b>					
	Democrats				Republicans	
	Non-South		South		All States	
	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>	Not C-P <sup>^</sup>	C-P <sup>^</sup>
<i>Ideology</i>						
Mean DW-Nom. Score	-0.34 (861)	-0.20* (79)	-0.07 (212)	-0.04 (11)	0.29 (712)	0.05* (164)
<i>'Balancing'</i>						
Mean House Vote Margin	60% (742)	60% (71)	65% (186)	64% (11)	58% (618)	56% (139)
Mean Slurge	5.7% (742)	6.8%* (71)	3.1% (186)	9.2%* (11)	4.9% (618)	6.1%* (139)
<i>Voting with Opposite Party</i>						
% in 10% Overlap Region	14% (118)	24%* (19)	48% (101)	73%* (8)	15% (110)	50%* (82)

<sup>^</sup> Cross-pressured members are defined as Democrats who are from conservative districts/states (constituencies that vote less than 45% Democratic at the presidential level) and Republicans who are from liberal districts/states (constituencies that vote more than 55% Democratic at the presidential level).

\* Differences between cross-pressured and non-cross-pressured members are statistically significant at .05 in a one-tailed test.

**Table 2a: Regression of Change in Member Ideology on Electoral Replacement Variables, House**  
*Dependent Variable: Change in 1st Dimension DW-Nominate Score*

	50s		60s		70s		80s		90s	
	B	Std. Error								
<b>DEMOCRATS</b>										
(Constant)	0.16	(0.35)	0.09	(0.07)	0.09	(0.09)	0.19	(0.06) **	0.05	(0.08)
Change in Constituency Preference <sup>^</sup>	0.16	(0.07) *	0.05	(0.02) *	0.01	(0.02)	-0.07	(0.04) +	0.59	(0.05) ***
# of Congresses Served	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Per cent Black in District	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Income Inequality (state GINI coefficient)	-0.02	(0.03)	-0.25	(0.19)	-0.27	(0.26)	-0.50	(0.15) ***	-0.07	(0.19)
South	0.00	(0.02)	0.02	(0.01) +	0.01	(0.01)	0.02	(0.01) *	0.00	(0.01)
Redistricting (1=Yes)	0.00	(0.02)	-0.03	(0.01) ***	-0.04	(0.01) ***	-0.03	(0.01) ***	-0.04	(0.01) ***
R-D Seat Changes	-0.62	(0.01) ***	-0.62	(0.01) ***	-0.51	(0.01) ***	-0.56	(0.01) ***	-0.66	(0.02) ***
D-D Seat Changes	-0.04	(0.02) +	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.03	(0.02)
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.81		0.66		0.54		0.59		0.60	
<i>N</i>	524		1247		1334		1225		910	
<b>REPUBLICANS</b>										
(Constant)	0.16	(0.46)	-0.13	(0.10)	-0.33	(0.13) *	-0.08	(0.08)	-0.18	(0.09) *
Change in Constituency Preference <sup>^</sup>	-0.05	(0.08)	0.03	(0.03)	0.00	(0.04)	0.02	(0.05)	0.59	(0.09) ***
# of Congresses Served	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00) *	0.00	(0.00) **	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00) **
Per cent Black in District	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00) *	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Income Inequality (state GINI coefficient)	-0.02	(0.05)	0.47	(0.29)	1.04	(0.36) **	0.21	(0.21)	0.50	(0.22) *
South	-0.01	(0.02)	-0.04	(0.02) *	-0.05	(0.02) **	0.00	(0.01)	-0.03	(0.01) *
Redistricting (1=Yes)	0.00	(0.04)	0.02	(0.01) +	0.05	(0.01) ***	0.03	(0.01) *	0.07	(0.01) ***
D-R Seat Changes	0.61	(0.03) ***	0.56	(0.01) ***	0.49	(0.02) ***	0.58	(0.02) ***	0.71	(0.02) ***
R-R Seat Changes	-0.11	(0.01) ***	-0.06	(0.02) **	-0.02	(0.02)	0.06	(0.02) ***	0.05	(0.02) *
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.66		0.68		0.49		0.63		0.71	
<i>N</i>	358		841		801		862		779	

<sup>^</sup> Change in constituency preference measured as the change in the 3 term moving average of presidential vote in the district.  
Significance denoted as + p < .1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

**Table 2b: Regression of Change in Member Ideology on Electoral Replacement Variables, Senate**  
*Dependent Variable: Change in 1st Dimension DW-Nominate Score*

	50s		60s		70s		80s		90s	
	B	Std. Error								
<b>DEMOCRATS</b>										
(Constant)	-0.09	(0.15)	-0.01	(0.07)	-0.16	(0.21)	-0.17	(0.13)	0.24	(0.17)
Change in Constituency Preference <sup>^</sup>	-0.31	(0.77)	-0.11	(0.09)	-0.13	(0.16)	-0.16	(0.23)	-0.30	(0.28)
# of Congresses Served	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00) *	0.00	(0.00) *	0.00	(0.00) +
Per cent Black in State	0.20	(0.27)	0.07	(0.07)	-0.18	(0.15)	0.13	(0.11)	-0.04	(0.16)
Income Inequality (state GINI coefficient)	0.00	(0.00)	0.03	(0.21)	0.36	(0.59)	0.34	(0.34)	-0.68	(0.41) +
South	-0.02	(0.08)	-0.03	(0.02)	0.01	(0.04)	-0.04	(0.02) +	0.02	(0.03)
R-D Seat Changes	-0.33	(0.02) ***	-0.33	(0.01) ***	-0.25	(0.01) ***	-0.25	(0.01) ***	-0.48	(0.03) ***
D-D Seat Changes	0.11	(0.11)	-0.06	(0.02) **	0.02	(0.04)	0.04	(0.03)	0.02	(0.04)
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.72		0.76		0.56		0.65		0.72	
<i>N</i>	111		310		289		248		108	
<b>REPUBLICANS</b>										
(Constant)	0.01	(0.05)	-0.16	(0.17)	0.30	(0.19)	-0.01	(0.11)	-0.01	(0.20)
Change in Constituency Preference <sup>^</sup>	-0.31	(0.33)	-0.25	(0.21)	0.72	(0.20) ***	0.20	(0.25)	0.15	(0.35)
# of Congresses Served	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Per cent Black in State	-0.01	(0.18)	-0.52	(0.17) **	-0.16	(0.13)	0.07	(0.11)	-0.31	(0.19)
Income Inequality (state GINI coefficient)	0.00	(0.00)	0.49	(0.47)	-0.83	(0.54)	0.09	(0.29)	0.13	(0.48)
South			0.04	(0.05)	0.00	(0.03)	-0.04	(0.03) +	0.10	(0.04) *
D-R Seat Changes	0.52	(0.03) ***	0.59	(0.03) ***	0.59	(0.02) ***	0.60	(0.02) ***	0.85	(0.06) ***
R-R Seat Changes	-0.12	(0.02) ***	-0.11	(0.02) ***	-0.09	(0.02) ***	0.01	(0.01)	-0.02	(0.02)
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0.82		0.71		0.79		0.78		0.75	
<i>N</i>	80		181		201		248		85	

<sup>^</sup> Change in constituency preference measured as the change in the 3 term moving average of presidential vote in the state.  
Significance denoted as + p < .1, \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## Endnotes

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\* Department of Political Science, Wellesley College and Stanford University, respectively. We are grateful to Scott Adler, Larry Bartels, Charles Cameron, Mo Fiorina, Doug McAdam, Nolan McCarty, Rebecca Morton, Nelson Polsby, Eric Schickler, Sean Theriault, Alan Ware, and two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments on the paper.

<sup>1</sup> David Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Robert Van Houweling, *Legislators' Personal Policy Preferences and Partisan Legislative Organization* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2003); Gary C. Jacobson, 'Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties since the 1970s,' in *Process, Party, and Policy Making: Further New Perspectives on the History of Congress*, ed. David W Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, Forthcoming); Jason Roberts and Steven Smith, 'Procedural Contexts, Party Strategy, and Conditional Party Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1971-2000,' *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (2003): 305-317.

<sup>2</sup> Jamie L. Carson, Michael H. Crespin, Charles J. Finocchiaro, and David Rohde, *Linking Congressional Districts across Time: Redistricting and Party Polarization in Congress*, Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, IL: 2003); Gary W. Cox and Jonathan N. Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Political Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer, and Mack D. Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Realignment, Social Change, and Political Polarization* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*; Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Sean Theriault, *The Case of the Vanishing Moderates: Party Polarization in the Modern Congress*, Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, IL: 2003).

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that this paper focuses on explaining the rise in polarization in the latter decades of the twentieth century. We argue that this rise in polarization can only be understood in its historical context and thus reference the decline in polarization in the 1950s. This paper does not, however, explain the decline in polarization in the 1950s—a separate project focuses on that.

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<sup>7</sup> e.g. Gary C. Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection,' in *Polarized Politics: The President and Congress in a Partisan Era*, ed. Jon Bond and Richard Fleischer (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2000); Gary C. Jacobson, *Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties*, Conference on the History of Congress (San Diego: 2003); Eric Schickler, 'Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models,' *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 269-288; David W Brady, Joseph Cooper, and Patricia Hurley, 'The Decline of Party in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1887-1968,' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1979): 381-407; Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, 'The Polarization of American Politics,' *Journal of Politics* (1984): 1061-1079; Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Jr. Snyder, and Charles Stewart III, 'Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections,' *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2001): 136-159; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Political Ideology and Unequal Riches*.

<sup>8</sup> Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Realignment, Social Change, and Political Polarization*.

<sup>9</sup> This graph mirrors a graph found in Schickler, 'Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models.'. Schickler focuses only on the House, however, and this graph also examines the Senate.

<sup>10</sup> Roberts and Smith, 'Procedural Contexts, Party Strategy, and Conditional Party Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1971-2000.'

<sup>11</sup> e.g. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*; Patricia Hurley and Rick K. Wilson, 'Partisan Voting Patterns in the U.S. Senate, 1877-1986,' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1989): 225-250; Brady, Cooper, and Hurley, 'The Decline of Party in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1887-1968.'

<sup>12</sup> Although the Senate experienced some rules changes in the early 1970s, they did not have nearly the same effect as changes in the House (Barbara Sinclair, 'The Distribution of Committee Positions in the U.S. Senate: Explaining Institutional Change,' *American Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 2 (1988): 276-301; Barbara Sinclair, *The Transformation of the U.S. Senate* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*; Kenneth A. Shepsle, 'The Changing Textbook Congress,' in *Can the Government Govern?* ed. Chubb and Peterson (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1989).). In her analysis of committee assignments in the Senate, Sinclair (1988) notes that, 'The [redistributive provisions of the 1970 Reorganization

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Act] were modest in design and even more modest in impact' (293). In other words, the impact of the 1970 Reorganization Act in the Senate was more limited than the House.

<sup>13</sup> e.g. Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics: The Electoral Connection.'; Jacobson, 'Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties since the 1970s.'; Schickler, 'Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models.'; Brady, Cooper, and Hurley, 'The Decline of Party in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1887-1968.'; Poole and Rosenthal, 'The Polarization of American Politics.'

<sup>14</sup> James A. Stimson, *Public Opinion in America* (Boulder: Westview, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> To corroborate these indices, we checked them against Stimson's (1991) findings. We aggregated the individual scores to create mean scores for Republicans versus Democrats in each presidential election year. Looking at the mean differences between parties over time on issues related to race and the role of government, we see a basic historical pattern: the voters converged on key issues in the 1950s, but patterns of polarization began to reemerge in the 1960s. These results are largely consistent with Stimson's results (Stimson figures 4.4 and 4.5).

<sup>16</sup> See Matthew S. Levendusky, *Sorting in the U.S. Mass Electorate*, Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, IL.: 2005). for more details on historical sorting processes in the electorate. This pattern of divergence between presidential and congressional elections is also clear using three alternative approaches. If we measure respondent ideology using either (1) the 7-point ANES party identification or (2) the 7-point liberal-conservative scale (scale begins in 1972), we see convergence before the mid-1960s and divergence thereafter. In other words, regardless of how we measure respondent ideology, voters exhibit similar levels of cross-party voting in congressional and presidential elections prior to the mid-1960s. After 1964, the level of cross-party voting in presidential elections declines while cross-party voting in congressional elections stays relatively constant. A third approach regresses the probability of voting Democratic in presidential and congressional elections on respondent opinions on race and the role of government. The same pattern emerges. Predicted probabilities from presidential and congressional vote choice regressions parallel each other until the early 1960s. In 1964, 1972 and from 1980 onward, the number of conservatives voting Democratic for President averages less than 5%. In contrast, conservative votes for House candidates average over 27% from 1964 onward and over 20% in the Senate.

<sup>17</sup> This explains why we still see an increase in partisan overlap in Congress even after 1964. Figure 2 shows that overlap among House Republicans and both parties in the Senate increased in the late 1960s, as almost a third of

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voters continued to choose congressional candidates who did not necessarily support their views on issues like race and the role of government in society through the early 1970s. Thus, in many states, the Senate constituencies continued to pull legislators in more moderate directions than their national parties. For instance, six Senate Republicans were in the overlap region in 1967 who were not there in 1965. Of these six members, three members, first elected to the Senate prior to 1964, moved into the overlap region as the national parties polarized and they felt contrarian pulls from their constituents. The three newly elected members were all Rockefeller Republicans, carried into office with the unique political circumstances of the 1966 elections (similar patterns hold true for the 1968 elections, and then we begin to see the decline in numbers thereafter). In addition, there are several reasons why we would expect the Senate to be slower to react to changes in national party politics than the House. First, the size of Senate constituencies creates more heterogeneous bases of support, making it harder for sweeping change to occur (Frances E. Lee and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Sizing up the Senate: The Unequal Consequences of Equal Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). In addition, because only a third of the Senate is up for re-election every two years, we do not see the same wholesale change in the Senate as we do in the House. Finally, the special circumstances of the 1968 election, in which anti-Johnson sentiment propelled a number of liberal Republicans into office, also contributed to this pattern. Thus, we begin to see the decline in overlap in the mid-1970s, which is the same time we witness a decline in cross-party voting in Congress among voters. This comports with our subsequent analyses of electoral replacement, where the patterns begin to emerge in the 1960s but become really clear in the 1970s and 1980s, as congressional polarization begins to re-emerge. We are indebted to Alan Ware on this point.

<sup>18</sup> Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960); V.O. Key, Jr., 'Secular Realignment and the Party System,' *Journal of Politics* 17 (1959): 198-210; V. O. Key, *A Theory of Critical Elections* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1958); Robert R. Alford, *Party and Society: The Anglo-American Democracies* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> Black and Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans*; Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, 'Issue Evolution, Population Replacement, and Normal Partisan Change,' *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 1 (1981): 107-118.

<sup>20</sup> Robert S. Erikson, 'Malapportionment, Gerrymandering, and Party Fortunes in Congressional Elections,' *American Political Science Review* 66 (1972): 1234-1245; Andrew Gelman and Gary King, 'Estimating Incumbency

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Advantage without Bias,' *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 4 (1990): 1142-1164; Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Jr. Snyder, and Charles Stewart III, 'Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Measure the Incumbency Advantage,' *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 1 (2000): 17-34; John R. Alford and David W. Brady, 'Personal and Partisan Advantage in U.S. Congressional Elections, 1846-1990,' in *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993); Gary C. Jacobson, 'The Marginals Never Vanished: Incumbency and Competition in Elections to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1952-82,' *American Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 1 (1987): 126-141; Bruce E. Cain, John Ferejohn, and Morris P. Fiorina, *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> The sophomore surge is calculated as the difference between the winning vote shares of candidates running as incumbents for the first time, versus their winning vote share in the previous election. The retirement slump is the mean decrease in the party's vote from an election in which an incumbent was running, to an election in which the incumbent retires and the seat is open. Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2001); Alford and Brady, 'Personal and Partisan Advantage in U.S. Congressional Elections, 1846-1990.'

<sup>22</sup> Barry C. Burden and David C. Kimball, *Why Americans Split Their Tickets* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Ansolabehere and James M. Jr. Snyder, 'The Incumbency Advantage in U.S. Elections: An Analysis of State and Federal Offices, 1942-2000,' (2002), Boston.

<sup>24</sup> Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, eds., *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2000); Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'The President in a More Partisan Legislative Arena,' *Political Research Quarterly* 49 (1996): 729-48.

<sup>25</sup> Note that cross-pressuring can arise from the districts moving or the parties moving. For example, a Democrat from a relatively conservative district could become cross-pressured if the Democratic Party in Congress becomes more liberal and the constituency stays the same. Alternately, demographic changes could lead the constituency to become more conservative and the national party could stay the same. In either case (or the case in which both the party and the constituency moves), cross-pressuring, or a mismatch between constituency and party preferences, emerges.

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Fleischer and Jon R. Bond, 'The Shrinking Middle in the Us Congress,' *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (2004): 429-451.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Nokken, 'Dynamics of Congressional Loyalty: Party Defection and Roll-Call Behavior, 1947-97,' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2000): 417-444.

<sup>28</sup> Gary C. Jacobson and Sam Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> By 'personal vote,' we are referring to the portion of the candidate's vote margin that is attributed to factors personal to the candidate, not the candidate's party. Thus, a candidate can generate a personal vote from a variety of sources—including constituency services, pork barrel politics, or issue-based alignment with the constituency—but the sources of the candidate's personal vote are always located in the candidate's geographic constituency.

<sup>30</sup> A rich body of research has explored the strategies legislators can use to increase the personal vote. See, for example, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*; Morris P. Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>31</sup> Brandice Canes-Wrone, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan, 'Out of Step, out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting,' *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002): 127-140; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart III, 'Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections. '; Robert S. Erikson and Gerald C. Wright, 'Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections,' in *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997), 132-161.

<sup>32</sup> It is possible that there are members who are cross-pressured because their constituencies consistently vote with the opposite party at the presidential level, but do not meet our 45-55 criteria. We use this standard of measuring cross-pressuring, however, because it is a more conservative test.

<sup>33</sup> Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 'Out of Step, out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting. '; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart III, 'Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections. '; Erikson and Wright, 'Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections.'

<sup>34</sup> Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 'Out of Step, out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting.'

<sup>35</sup> We also ran the analysis using ADA scores, and found the results to be the same.

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<sup>36</sup> Jacobson, 'Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties since the 1970s.'; Theriault, *The Case of the Vanishing Moderates: Party Polarization in the Modern Congress*, (

<sup>37</sup> Jacobson, 'Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties since the 1970s.'

<sup>38</sup> Robert Axelrod, 'Where the Vote Comes From: An Analysis of Electoral Coalitions, 1952-1968,' *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 11-20; Robert Axelrod, 'Presidential Election Coalitions in 1984,' *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 1 (1986): 281-284.

<sup>39</sup> Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, 'Political Polarization and Income Inequality,' (2002), Princeton.

<sup>40</sup> Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*; Black and Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans*.

<sup>41</sup> Cox and Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution*.