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# Toward a One-Party South?

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Most observers now consider the American South a two-party region, with Democrats and Republicans competing vigorously for political office. In this article, we raise the possibility that the South has begun a transformation into a one-party region dominated by the GOP. Three factors tip the scales in the party's favor: the ideological congruence between the Republican Party and the region's electorate, the Republican trend among the region's younger voters, and the incumbency advantage accrued by current Republican officeholders. Using a vast array of longitudinal data from the South, we provide evidence that speaks to the daunting challenges facing the Democratic Party in the South. We also address the results in the South's 2006 midterm elections. The findings suggest that as the United States' most reliably Republican region continues to change, Democrats may have an exceedingly difficult time winning statewide races.

**Keywords:** *southern politics; partisan change; party realignment; two-party competition; voting trends; southern exceptionalism; Republican Party growth*

The political history of the American South is well known. For the 80 years following Reconstruction, the Democratic Party dominated regional politics, producing famous accounts of the one-party South (Key, 1996). In the past half century, however, the Democratic hammerlock has loosened. The Republican Party, helped along by the civil rights movement (Carmines & Stimson, 1989), economic growth in the South's burgeoning metropolitan areas (Bartley & Graham, 1975; Shafer & Johnston, 2006), and the Reagan realignment of White conservatives (E. Black & M. Black, 2002), has grown increasingly strong, turning the once solid Democratic South into the country's most reliably Republican region.

Even after the Republican Party's "thumping" in the 2006 elections,<sup>1</sup> the GOP in the South holds 7 of 13 governorships, 21 of 26 U.S. Senate seats,

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**Authors' Note:** The authors' names are in alphabetical order. A previous version of this article was presented at the 2006 Citadel Symposium on Southern Politics. Brian Arbour, Neal Allen, Charles Prysby, Rick Valeyly, Jeremy Teigen, Mathieu Turgeon, and three anonymous reviewers offered valuable comments. All errors remain ours.

and 85 of 142 U.S. House seats.<sup>2</sup> In the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, Republican George W. Bush won every southern state. Democratic presidential candidates since 1964 have won a plurality of the southern vote only twice, in 1976 and 1996 (Lamis, 1999). Still, political observers have not been prepared to suggest that the pendulum of southern party competition has swung to the opposite end of its arc—toward one-party dominance again, this time under the thumb of the GOP. “[I]f the old solid Democratic South has vanished, a comparably solid Republican South has not developed” write E. Black and M. Black (2002, p. 3). “Nor is one likely to emerge.”

Although we are not prepared to predict a return to the days of one-party dominance reminiscent of the post-Reconstruction South, recent developments spell major trouble for the Democratic Party. The political landscape, we argue, is shifting in ways that make it worthwhile to ask whether Democrats will, in the foreseeable future, be able to compete effectively in southern statewide elections.<sup>3</sup>

Three factors tip the scales heavily in favor of the GOP. First, and most important, the party’s ideological orientation lines up much more closely with the region’s electorate than does the Democratic Party’s. This is especially critical in an era in which ideology appears to play a major role in the formation of individual party identification (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Schreckhise & Shields, 2003). Second, the Democratic Party’s most loyal age cohort is the pre-civil rights generation: those over the age of 65. At the same time, young voters are the most reliably Republican group, a discrepancy that will produce a GOP skew in the distribution of party identification in the southern electorate as time wears on. Third, because the majority White electorate continues to shift Republican, the incumbency advantage accrued and cultivated by Republican candidates may cement and reinforce Republican electoral gains. It also appears that other factors will break in the GOP’s favor. For instance, many of the offices held by White Democrats who are reaching the end of their political careers will likely be won by Republican candidates.

In this article, we present evidence that speaks to the mounting strength of the GOP in the South and the daunting challenges facing the Democratic Party. To be sure, the overwhelming Democratic support from African Americans places an upper limit on Republican hegemony, which prevents the sort of one-party dominance exhibited by southern Democrats from 1880 through the 1950s (Lublin, 2004). But what makes the current state of southern politics all the more remarkable is the ascendancy of the GOP despite the presence of an electorate that is only limited by citizenship—an impediment to the number of Hispanic voters, but certainly not a barrier to African American participation. Because the current electorate is more racially

diverse than its pre-civil rights predecessor, there is an obvious limitation to Republican advancement in district-based contests. The jury, however, is still out with respect to statewide elections, and this is admittedly what makes our question provocative. Because of increasing partisan polarization in the political preferences of Whites as compared to minorities, a one-party Republican South in statewide elections is a possibility that merits consideration.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the recent partisan change that has taken place in the South, present new data on statewide elections from 1990 through 2006, and lay out a sketch of our argument. We then use a variety of individual- and aggregate-level data to document the increasing ideological distance between the Democratic Party and southern voters, the dramatic generational divide in partisan support that presages a growth in GOP strength, and the mounting Republican incumbency advantage. We also use the results of the 2006 midterm elections to underscore the solidity of the Republican Party's support in the South. In the discussion, we consider several possibilities for the revival of the Democratic Party's success. Our research points to the conclusion that the South remains exceptional—historically, because of Democratic dominance, and currently, because southern Republican growth persists even while it declines in the rest of the nation.

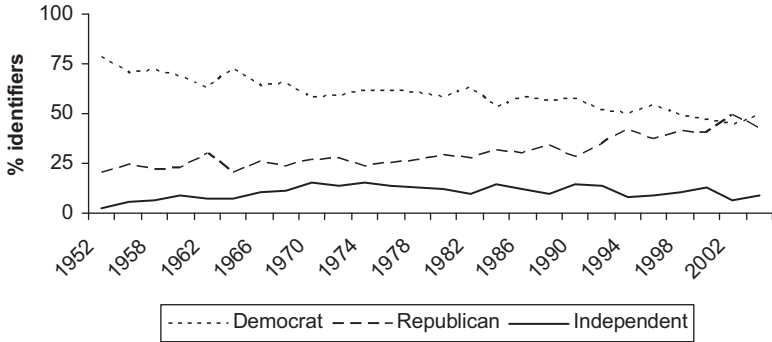
## Partisan Change in the South

Since the 1950s, the South has seen massive changes, both societal and political (E. Black & M. Black, 1987). As the architecture of racial segregation has been dismantled by the civil rights movement, the region has undergone a political transformation that has had a profound effect not only on the South itself but also on national politics (E. Black & M. Black, 2002). At the heart of the transformation are changes at both the mass and elite levels.

At the mass level, the most obvious is the shift in partisan allegiance. As African Americans have become a solidly Democratic constituency, White southerners have in increasing numbers moved into the GOP. This has dramatically reshaped the distribution of party identification in the South.

In 1952, just 20% of southerners identified as Republicans, underscoring the regional dominance of the Democratic Party, which claimed the support of more than three out of every four voters. But over the next half century, as shown in Figure 1, support for the GOP continued to grow, so that by 2002, nearly half of the southern electorate identified as Republican.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the Democratic Party watched its ranks dwindle as the region's White electorate moved in large numbers to the GOP. In 1952, 78% of southerners

**Figure 1**  
**Party Identification Among Southerners, 1952-2004**



Source: National Election Studies Cumulative Data File

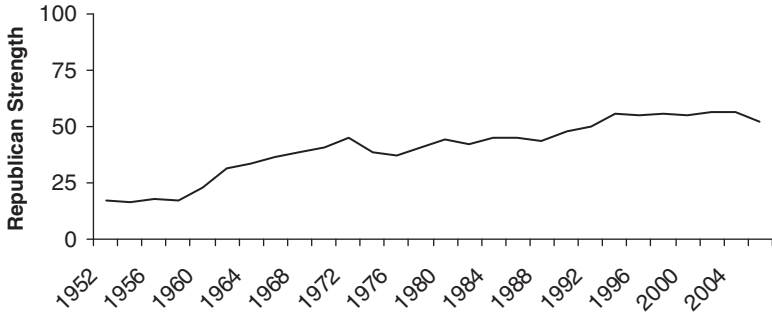
identified as Democrats. By 2004, that number had dropped by 30 percentage points. More than any other change, it is the growth in White support that has given the Republican Party a firm toehold in the region (E. Black & M. Black, 2002).

The shift in partisan loyalty has had consequences at the elite level. As the numbers cited in the introduction attest, Democratic presidential candidates have for the most part found the South to be fallow ground, with the region typically going for Republican candidates (E. Black & M. Black, 1992). In Congress, Republicans now hold 81% of the southern Senate seats and 60% of House seats. Whereas in 1960, Republicans held less than 5% of the seats in the region's state legislatures, they now have nearly reached a majority, with 49%.<sup>5</sup> The GOP's state parties have grown in strength (Ceaser & Saldin, 2005), which has produced benefits for its candidates throughout the region.

The growth in Republican strength at the elite level is striking, as shown in Figure 2, which documents the GOP's rise in the South from 1952 to 2006. The line displays David's Index of party strength (David, 1972), a composite of U.S. House, U.S. Senate, and gubernatorial election data.<sup>6</sup> In the earliest years of the time series, prior to the civil rights movement, the GOP's strength was decidedly anemic, but its movement has been healthily upward since the 1980s, though with a small dip in 2006.

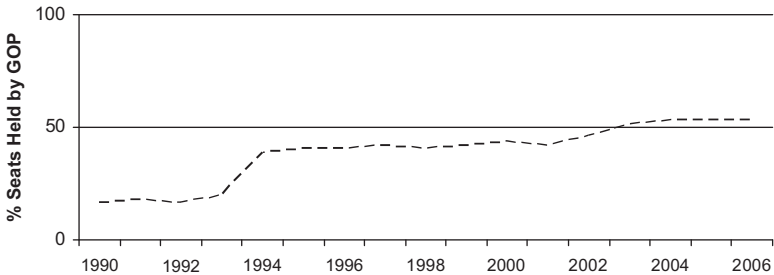
The growth in Republican statewide office-holding is also notable, and as far as we know, previously undocumented. Figure 3 displays the percentage

**Figure 2**  
**Republican Strength in the South, 1952-2006**



Source: David's Index for Republican Strength, provided by Alexander Lamis and Andrew Lucker (1952-1998). Data for 2000-2006 were compiled by the authors. The South is defined as the 11 former Confederate states plus Kentucky and Oklahoma.

**Figure 3**  
**Percentage of Republicans in Southern Statewide Elective Offices, 1990-2006**



Source: Data compiled by the authors.

of statewide offices in the South held by the GOP over the past decade and a half.<sup>7</sup> As recently as 1990, Republicans held just 17% of statewide offices, illustrating the persistence of the Democrats' grip on the region. But the jump-shift in the early 1990s is remarkable, suggesting the existence of a new competitive equilibrium. As of 2006, Republicans held a majority (53%) of southern statewide offices.

It is on these statewide contests that we train our focus, suggesting that the growing ideological alienation of voters from the Democratic Party, the Republican trend in the youngest voting cohorts, and the benefits of incumbency predict a continued upward slope of the line in Figure 3.

## **Toward A One-Party South?**

We take a Downsian (Downs, 1957) approach in considering the current—and future—status of the Republican and Democratic parties in the South. Over the long-term, it is the positioning of the parties and their candidates that determines the size of each party's base of voters (see McDonald, Mendes, & Budge, 2004; Stimson, 2004; Sundquist, 1983). We argue that the Republican Party is better positioned spatially because, with regard to ideology, it is closer to the median southern voter—and particularly White voters, who constitute a decided voting majority.<sup>8</sup>

We acknowledge that many voters—probably most—do not engage in thoughtful consideration of why they happen to identify with a political party (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Converse, 1964; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). It is well known that partisanship is mainly acquired through socialization, specifically the transfer of party identification from parent to child (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). Nonetheless, on those rare occasions when the parties are represented by candidates who take opposing positions on a highly salient issue, voting behavior is immediately affected (Carmines & Stimson, 1989). And if the parties and their candidates persist in taking opposing positions, partisanship will eventually be altered.

Partisanship lags considerably behind vote choice, but vote choice becomes a leading indicator of partisan change. If voters become habitual in their defection toward the opposite party, eventually we expect these voters to at least dealign, if not realign. In the long term, as Fiorina (1981) would argue, if voters' running tally of party evaluations disproportionately favors the party they do not identify with, then they may finally switch in favor of that party.

The gradual increase in the number of Republican identifiers and the gradual decline in the number of Democratic identifiers are a consequence of the political parties running candidates who are generally differentiable and consistent in their position-taking—with Republican candidates spatially closer to the median southerner. There is a strong element of path dependency: As Democratic and Republican candidates consistently stake out

opposing positions on salient issues, voters eventually associate the parties with anchoring different ideological positions. And over time, it is the consistency of the ideological distinctiveness of the candidates who run under the Democratic and Republican banners that makes short-term partisan tides—like the one in 2006—little more than a deviation from the long-term pattern of partisan change.

We trace the Republican spatial advantage back to the civil rights movement, and in particular, the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. As discussed at length by Carmines and Stimson (1989), the opposing positions taken by the national parties and their presidential nominees on civil rights set in motion an issue evolution that triggered an almost instantaneous switch in the voting behavior of southern Whites. In presidential contests since 1964, southern Whites have always cast a majority Republican (two-party) vote (E. Black & M. Black, 2002).<sup>9</sup> With the franchise for African Americans secured by the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Democratic Party has reaped the benefits of a bloc vote. But African Americans' overwhelming support of the Democratic Party has also had the effect of placing the party at a spatial disadvantage. Because of the substantial ideological distance between southern Whites and southern Blacks, coupled with the fact that the White population constitutes a much greater share of the electorate, the Democratic Party is noticeably further away from the median southern voter than is the Republican Party, as we show below.

The spatial advantage of southern Republicans was certainly not inevitable. It materialized steadily over decades as a result of the increasing polarization of Democratic and Republican candidates. The partisan sorting of elites (see Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2006) exhibits a strong generational component. As older Democratic candidates and officeholders are replaced by the next generation of Democrats, the latter are more liberal and thus moving away from the median southern voter. In addition, as conservative Democrats retire, they are usually replaced by Republicans, which further polarizes the parties (E. Black & M. Black, 2002).

Similarly, at the mass level, generational change has led to an increase in the number of southern White Republicans (Green et al., 2002). The process is slow, with older generations of southern Democrats dealigning and then younger generations finally realigning in favor of the Republican Party. If, however, we focus on ideology as the grounds for partisan change, then partisan realignment has been fairly rapid among certain subgroups. For example, during the Reagan presidency, conservative southern Whites realigned in favor of the GOP (E. Black & M. Black, 2002). It is now the case that an historic event has occurred: For the first time in southern politics, a generation

of Republican parents is now transferring their Republican identification to the next generation of southern voters.

Biracial coalitions are the winning formula for Democrats who are able to secure an overwhelming Black vote with enough of the White vote to comprise a voting majority (E. Black & M. Black, 1987, 1992, 2002). By the 1990s, however, biracial coalitions have increasingly failed to garner voting majorities for Democrats, because the increase in Republican identifiers has made it more difficult for Democrats to meet their White vote share targets (Hayes & McKee, 2004). By comparison, the Republican strategy of securing White supermajorities has met with increasing success because of the rise in the number of Republican identifiers.

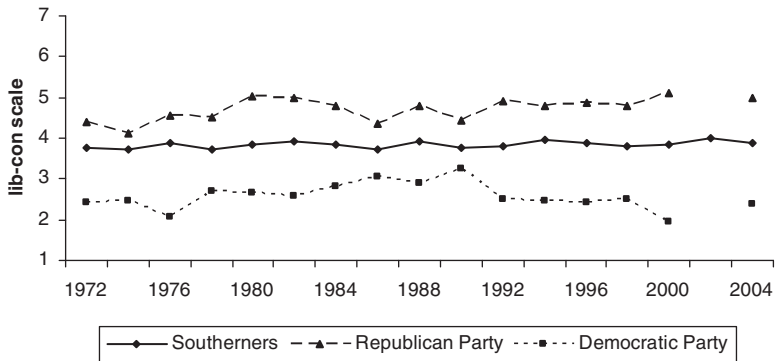
We posit that for the foreseeable future, the electoral predicament of the southern Democratic Party will only worsen, because the racial composition of rank-and-file Democrats can no longer deliver voting majorities. In short, throughout the South, Democrats have lost, or are on the brink of losing the necessary White share of the vote to win elections. Candidate-positioning reinforces the Democratic Party's dilemma: Democratic candidates take positions that win a majority of Democratic votes, but what the party needs are candidates who can win the votes of independents and even some Republicans—yet this most likely is not possible without alienating Black voters.<sup>10</sup>

In short, the Democratic Party is in a spatial bind. Moving closer to the median southern voter is likely to come at the cost of losing Black electoral support. Put plainly, Democrats are damned if they move to the right because they risk upsetting their African American base, and damned if they stay put because their White constituency is shrinking. In the next section, we present empirical support for our argument that the Republican Party is better positioned than the Democratic Party.

## Party Positioning in Ideological Space

To estimate the longitudinal trend in ideology among southerners and their perceptions of the political parties, we take advantage of the National Election Studies Cumulative Data File. Every 2 years since 1972,<sup>11</sup> the National Election Studies has asked survey respondents to place themselves on a 7-point ideology scale, ranging from (1) *extremely liberal* to (7) *extremely conservative*, and to identify the ideological positions of the Republican and Democratic parties. The survey is national in scope but typically includes 300 to 500 southern respondents, enough to generate fairly reliable estimates.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 4**  
**Mean Ideological Placements: Southerners, the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party**



Source: National Election Studies Cumulative Data File

Figure 4 presents the median self-placement scores for southerners and the median ideological perceptions of the political parties for each year since 1972. Consider first the middle (solid) line, which represents the median southern voter. Of note is the considerable stability in ideological self-placement. Since 1972, the typical southerner has been moderate, hovering slightly to the left of the midpoint of the ideology scale.<sup>13</sup>

But the perceptions of the parties tell a story of change, not stability. There has been a notable growth in the distance of the Democratic Party from the region's electorate. Although the GOP has typically been perceived as closer to the median voter, the gap between southerners and the Democratic Party has widened remarkably since 1990. That year, the distance between the median southerner and the Democratic Party was 0.49 on the 7-point scale. By 2004, however, that gap had tripled to 1.48. At the same time, the distance between southerners and the Republican Party stands at 1.09. In other words, the typical southern voter now perceives the Democratic Party to be about 40% further from him or her than does the GOP.<sup>14</sup>

The polarization in the figure deserves attention. Perceptions of the parties have become more extreme since the start of the time series. The Republican Party was seen as more conservative in 2000 (with a rating of 5.09) than at any other time in the series. The story for the Democrats is similar but more pronounced. The perception of the party in 2004 (2.39) is only slightly less

liberal than it was in 2000, and those years represent the most extreme perceptions of the party since the 1970s. Not only are southern voters becoming more likely to identify with the GOP but they are also seeing the Democratic Party as increasingly moving away from the electorate's generally moderate policy positions.<sup>15</sup>

Voters' perceptions of where the parties stand ideologically are powerful indicators of future electoral competition. As we show in the next section, younger cohorts of southern Whites are more likely to identify with the GOP, supporting our contention that voters will reward candidates affiliated with the party that is ideologically closer.

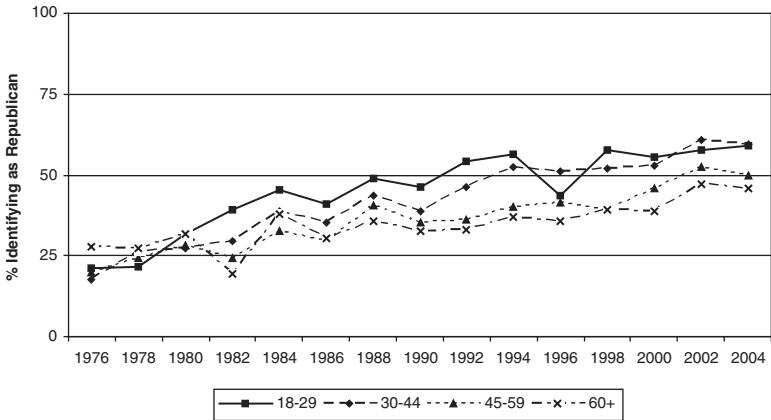
## Generational Change and Republican Growth

In this section, we narrow our focus to White southerners, the segment of the electorate that is driving partisan change in favor of the Republican Party. Since the 1960s, there has been relatively little movement in the partisan allegiance of African Americans in the South.<sup>16</sup> Beginning with the 1964 presidential election, African Americans have overwhelmingly identified with, and supported, Democratic candidates. It has even become a rule of thumb that the Democratic Party in general elections typically receives 90% or more of the Black vote (E. Black, 1998; E. Black & M. Black, 1987, 1992, 2002; Petrocik & Desposato, 1998). Given the stability of African American loyalty to the Democratic Party, we focus here on the dynamic growth of Republican identification among White southerners.

Generational changes in the southern White electorate do not augur well for the Democratic Party's electoral prospects. One of the brakes on Republican growth is the well-known fact that older voters comprise a disproportionately large share of the active electorate, and in the South, older voters are the most Democratic. But as time marches on, generational replacement favors the Republican Party, because younger cohorts are more likely to identify with the GOP. Also, we show that although younger cohorts of southern Whites are more Republican, the Republican trend has affected every cohort of White southerners.

In the South, the ideological positioning of the parties and their candidates has been remarkably consistent. As we have shown, southerners rate the Republican Party as more conservative than the Democratic Party—and furthermore, southerners now consistently place themselves ideologically closer to the GOP. The relative stability of the ideological placement of the parties ensures that as younger cohorts of southerners enter the electorate,

**Figure 5**  
**Southern White Voters: Republicans, by Age Cohort, 1976-2004**



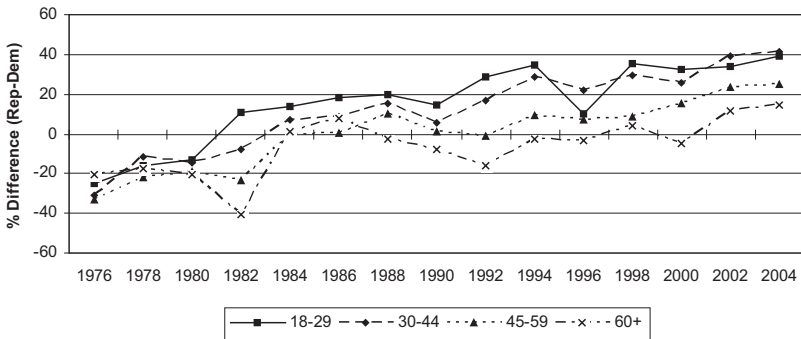
Source: Data are from national exit polls. The South consists of the 11 ex-Confederate states plus Kentucky and Oklahoma. Individual states are not identified until the 1984 exit poll. From 1976-1982, the South is coded according to its region label in these polls and the region label consists of exactly those states we define as the South. Also, with respect to race, "White" is combined with "Other" in the 1976 and 1980 exit polls. 1976-1978 = CBS; 1980-1988 = CBS/New York Times; 1990 = Voter Research and Surveys/CBS/ New York Times; 1992 = Voter Research and Surveys; 1994-2002 = Voter News Service; 2004 = National Election Pool. All data are weighted.

the decision of which party to identify with and vote for is made long before entering the voting booth.

Over the past 30 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of southern White voters who identify with the Republican Party. And this growth in Republican identification is disproportionately fueled by younger citizens. Figure 5 plots the percentage of southern White voters affiliated with the GOP, broken down into four age groups: (1) 18 to 29, (2) 30 to 44, (3) 45 to 59, and (4) 60 and older. Because these are not panel data, the lines do not represent the same voters over time. Instead, we illustrate that each age category is becoming more Republican, especially the two youngest cohorts. In other words, it is apparent that as older, more Democratic Whites exit the southern electorate, they are replaced by younger, more Republican Whites.

It is worth pointing out that before 1982, there is no clear generational distinction with respect to Republican identification. In fact, in 1976, the highest percentage of Republican identifiers (27.6%) comes from the oldest

**Figure 6**  
**Percentage Difference in Southern White Republican and Democratic Identifiers, by Age Cohort, 1976-2004**



Source: Data are from the same sources identified in Figure 5.

voter cohort. But from 1982 forward, the two youngest age groups are always the most Republican. By 2004, the percentage of Republican identifiers for each age group is as follows: 59% for 18- to 29-year-olds, 60% for 30- to 44-year-olds, 50% for 45- to 59-year-olds, and 46% for southern White voters age 60 and older.

Another useful way to document the trend in Republican identification among age groups is to display the difference in the percentage of Republicans compared to the percentage of Democrats. Figure 6 shows the percentage difference in Republican versus Democratic voters by age group for southern White voters from 1976 to 2004. A positive (negative) value means there is a higher percentage of Republicans (Democrats) than Democrats (Republicans) in a given age group. From 1976 to 1980, Democrats outnumber Republicans in every age group. In 1982, the only Republican plurality is registered among 18- to 29-year-olds. Since 1984, the two youngest voter cohorts are always more Republican.

In 2002, it is finally the case that within all four age groups, more voters identify with the Republican Party. The large Republican surplus of southern White voters in 2002 and 2004 speaks to the growing and overwhelming electoral advantage redounding to Republican candidates. As time passes, because younger southern Whites are more Republican than their predecessors, generational replacement equals an increasingly Republican electorate.

## The Incumbency Advantage

The ideological and generational advantage of the GOP is likely to manifest itself in a growing incumbency advantage. Much of the incumbency advantage that accrues to representatives of either party is earned, not guaranteed (Desposato & Petrocik, 2003; Erikson & Wright, 2005; Petrocik & Desposato, 2004). Stated another way, the incumbency advantage is variable, dependent on constituent service and the possible effect of short-term political conditions to the prospects of the incumbent's party (Desposato & Petrocik, 2003; Petrocik & Desposato, 2004). To the dismay of southern Democrats (see Fenno, 2000) since at least the 1980s—and especially the 1990s—cultivating the personal vote has become more difficult because of the revival of partisan voting (Bartels, 2000) and a greater emphasis on national politics (Fiorina, 2005).

Although the incumbency literature is almost completely based on U.S. House elections, many of the findings are portable to any electoral contest. Most incumbents, irrespective of the political office, garner a share of the vote that they otherwise would not capture except for the fact that they are the incumbent. To be sure, apart from greater name recognition, simply being an incumbent should not translate into a higher vote. But it is the activities incumbents pursue that serve to increase their electoral support. Incumbents, in their capacity as representatives, engage in constituency service, and this behavior attracts the votes of many constituents who reward their incumbent for being responsive (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; Fenno, 1978; Fiorina, 1977; Mayhew, 1974).

Conceptually, the incumbency advantage is the share of the vote that an officeholder receives that is separable from partisan support. Thought of in this way, incumbents receive a higher share of the vote than open-seat candidates, because only the former secure some votes on the basis of performance in office.<sup>17</sup> Candidates who win elective office thus have the opportunity to use their office to secure additional votes that could mean the difference between winning and losing during a tough reelection. As Petrocik and Desposato (2004) put it, “[i]ncumbency anchors voters by limiting their reaction to the party bias of the election environment” (p. 371). The incumbency advantage is an electoral insurance policy paid for by cultivating the personal vote.

For decades after it was evident that southern Democrats were politically vulnerable to the challenges of Republican candidates—because the latter are spatially closer to southern voters—the incumbency advantage served to maintain Democratic majorities (E. Black & M. Black, 2002). The incumbency

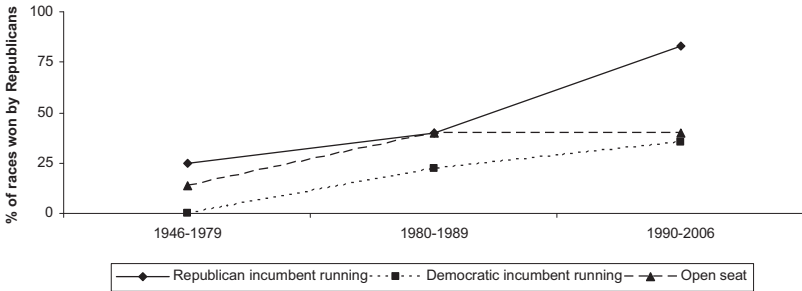
advantage does not simply protect officeholders from strong challengers. Perhaps more important, it also deters the emergence of strong challengers (Cox & Katz, 1996), because the most viable candidates know that the likelihood of winning is much greater in an open-seat contest (Jacobson & Kernell, 1983). Thus, the long-standing incumbency advantage enjoyed by southern Democrats retarded the growth of southern Republicanism.

Unfortunately for the Democratic Party, incumbents eventually retire. In open-seat contests, southern Republicans clearly have an advantage, because they are ideologically closer to the views of the electorate. Not only is it the case that southern Republicans are better positioned to win statewide elections but also because the incumbency advantage is by definition nonpartisan, Republican officeholders can reap the rewards of a personal vote—a portion of the vote that is not as important for the GOP, because the party is already better positioned to win voting majorities. The electoral bonus earned through the incumbency advantage makes it that much harder for southern Democrats to win back Republican seats, because Republican voters now outnumber Democrats.<sup>18</sup> So just as southern Democrats used the incumbency advantage to insulate themselves from Republican competition, as Republicans make further electoral gains, these gains will be protected by the GOP incumbency advantage.<sup>19</sup>

Consider Figures 7 and 8, which display the percentage of elections in three time periods won by Republicans in gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races, respectively. The upward slope of the six lines in both figures demonstrates yet again the rising tide of Republican strength. It is not surprising that as the South has trended Republican, the GOP has been increasingly successful in running candidates for open seats and against Democratic incumbents. For example, before the 1980s, Republicans won just 14% of open-seat contests for governor, and not once did they defeat a sitting Democrat. The story is the same for the Senate, as GOP candidates from 1946 to 1979 won just 21% of open seats and succeeded in knocking off Democratic incumbents a mere 4% of the time. Since 1990, however, Republicans have won roughly 40% of the gubernatorial elections as both open-seat candidates and challengers to Democratic incumbents. In the Senate contests, the GOP has won three-quarters of open-seat races since 1990 and defeated Democratic senators 30% of the time.

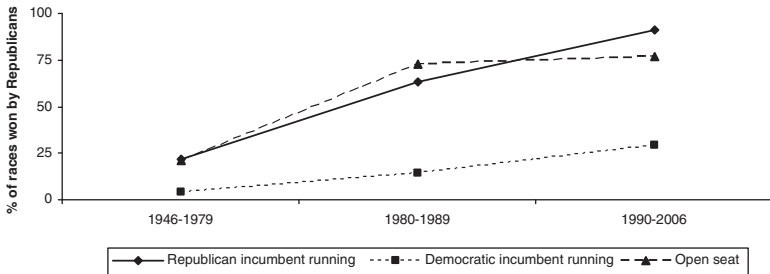
But it is the lines that represent the reelection rates of Republican incumbents that are of greatest interest. Before 1980, Republican governors won reelection in one of four tries, a figure that increased to 40% during the 1980s. With the onset of the 1990s, however, and continuing into the first years of the 21st century, the success rates of GOP governors more than

**Figure 7**  
**GOP Success Rates in Southern Gubernatorial Elections, 1946-2006**



Source: Data compiled by the authors.

**Figure 8**  
**GOP Success Rates in Southern U.S. Senate Elections, 1946-2006**



Source: Data compiled by the authors.

doubled, climbing to 83%. In Senate elections, the change is even more dramatic. GOP senators won 22% of their reelection bids between 1946 and 1979, 63% in the 1980s, and a remarkable 91% from 1990 on. In both gubernatorial and Senate contests, the slope is steepest for the races involving Republican officeholders, indicating that the growth in the incumbency advantage was outpacing GOP success in the other two types of elections. In other words, although the GOP was winning more southern elections than it had in decades, its success rates were highest when a Republican officeholder was running for reelection. Once in office, Republican incumbents since

1990 have been exceedingly difficult for Democrats to dislodge, a trend that is likely to continue.

We can also conceptualize electoral success not only in terms of victories but also as the share of the vote received. For example, in the earliest era (1946-1979), Republican Senate candidates won an average of 32.5% of the two-party vote in open-seat races. By the 1990s and 2000s, however, that figure had risen more than 20 points, to 52.8%. Meanwhile, GOP incumbents increased their average vote share from 54.5% to a robust 62.9%. The same pattern appears in gubernatorial contests, though the absolute numbers are smaller. The average Republican vote share in open-seat races increased from 29% to 47.6% from the 1940s to the early 2000s, and the incumbent vote share grew from 44% to 54.1%. Conceptualized as either electoral victories or vote share, the performance of GOP candidates—especially incumbents—has continued to improve.

Republican growth in gubernatorial contests is particularly striking, given that such contests are fairly insulated from national party images and issues. Historically, Republican top-down advancement in the South has been more promising in federal elections (Aistrup, 1996), where the images of the parties are more distinct than their state counterparts. Nonetheless, the identities of the national and state parties have tightened with the passage of time, because the polarization of political elites has permeated the ranks of national, state, and local party leaders (Clark & Prysby, 2004).

Among statewide contests, we would expect gubernatorial elections to constitute the GOP's greatest challenge, because candidates for both parties are afforded more ideological leeway. Outside the South, no one better displays the political independence of California Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. In the South, Florida Republican Governor Charlie Crist and Virginia's Democratic Governor Tim Kaine are prime examples of post-partisan politicians. But these examples are likely exceptions to the general trend in favor of increased partisan polarization, which will make it more difficult for gubernatorial candidates to obfuscate their ties to parties that have become more distinct, salient, and relevant to an increasingly partisan (Bartels, 2000) and ideological (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998) southern electorate.

## The 2006 Midterm Elections

Although the evidence presented thus far documents the growing Republican strength in the South, the results of the 2006 elections may seem to suggest a reversal of fortune. Even in the South, the GOP lost a U.S. Senate seat

(Virginia), a governorship (Arkansas), and several U.S. House seats. But although the Republican Party indeed took its lumps, a closer look suggests that the Democratic tide that swept the country did not swell to full crest in the South.

Table 1 presents data on Republican seat losses in 2006 in the non-South and South for federal contests (U.S. Senate and U.S. House) and state-level elections (Governor, State Senate, and State House). For every type of election, Republican losses were substantially greater outside the South. Contests for the U.S. House warrant specific mention, because half of the six southern seats Republicans lost resulted from “very unusual circumstances” (Klinkner & Schaller, 2006, p. 4). The resignation of scandal-plagued Republicans Tom DeLay (TX 22nd) and Mark Foley (FL 16th) led to Democratic pickups in what are two otherwise reliably Republican districts.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Republican Henry Bonilla (TX 23rd) lost his bid for reelection as a direct consequence of a redistricting that increased the Hispanic population in his district, thus tipping the runoff in favor of his seasoned challenger, former Democratic Congressman Ciro Rodriguez.

It is also worth noting that the GOP in the South claimed the same number of state Senate seats before and after the elections, and lost only a tiny fraction of state House seats. Overall in 2006, the decline in Republican seats outside the South was six times greater than in the South, and only in the South did a majority of voters cast Republican ballots in U.S. House contests (Klinkner & Schaller, 2006).<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, our interpretation is that the 2006 midterm elections delivered a wake-up call to the Bush administration and the Republican Party but does not represent a reversal in the growth of the GOP in the South. As we read the political tea leaves, it appears that a jump in support for Democratic candidates was more evidence of frustration with the political status quo than a clear endorsement of the Democratic Party’s ideas or ideology. In the South, in particular, the small Democratic gains speak loudly to a deviating election and certainly not a lasting departure from the erstwhile Republican trend. Indeed, the underlying electoral structure in the South, as we have documented in this article, bolsters our contention that the region will continue to shift toward the GOP despite a short-term setback in 2006.

## Discussion

One potential objection to our approach is that the analyses to this point have considered the South as a region and not as a collection of heterogeneous

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Republican Seats Before and After the 2006 Elections, Non-South and South**

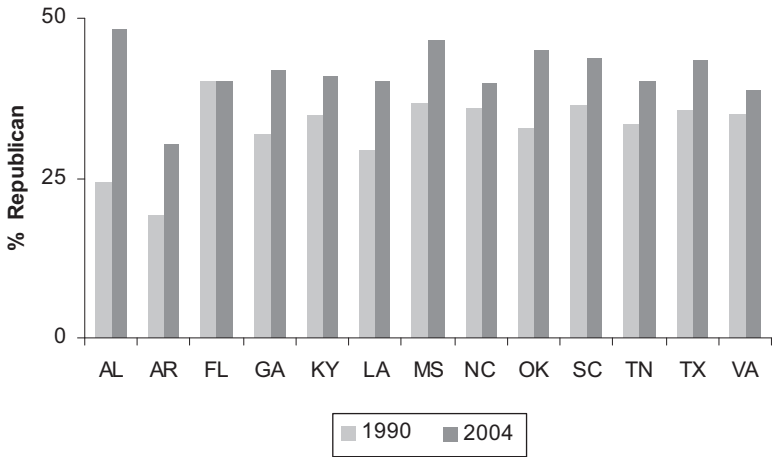
	Non-South			South		
	Before 2006	After 2006	Difference	Before 2006	After 2006	Difference
U.S. Senate	44.6 (33)	37.8 (28)	-6.8	84.6 (22)	80.8 (21)	-3.8
U.S. House	48.1 (141)	39.9 (117)	-8.2	64.1 (91)	59.9 (85)	-4.2
Governors	54.1 (20)	40.5 (15)	-13.6	61.5 (8)	53.8 (7)	-7.7
State Senate <sup>a</sup>	48.7 (696)	44.7 (638)	-4.0	49.4 (268)	49.4 (268)	0.0
State House <sup>a</sup>	49.6 (1,928)	43.0 (1,669)	-6.6	49.7 (759)	48.8 (745)	-0.9
Total	49.3 (2,818)	43.2 (2,467)	-6.1	51.0 (1,148)	50.0 (1,126)	-1.0

Note: The N of Republican seats appears in parentheses.

Source: Data were compiled by the authors from news sources and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

a. Excludes Nebraska, which has a unicameral legislature with nonpartisan elections.

**Figure 9**  
**Republican Party Identification of Southern**  
**Voters, by State, 1990 and 2004**



Note: Data points for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia are from 1992 rather than 1990.  
 Source: See Appendix Table.

states. Indeed, the 13 southern states do differ in terms of partisanship, demographics, and other salient characteristics. But despite this diversity, the growing Republican trend is evident across the region. Figure 9 presents exit polling data on the percentage of voters in each southern state identifying as Republican in 1990 and 2004. Over that 14-year period, the percentage of Republican identifiers in every state has grown.

Whether it is Arkansas, where the GOP has admittedly struggled in no small measure because of Bill Clinton's large political shadow,<sup>22</sup> or Mississippi, where the specter of race has resulted in the most extreme partisan polarization, the GOP has increased its share of the southern electorate. Overall, the Republican portion of the southern electorate has grown from one third in 1990 to 44% in 2004. The base of Republican strength in the South is quite variable depending on the state, but the upward trend is universal.<sup>23</sup> The appendix shows the growth in Republican identification for each of the eight elections between 1990 and 2004.

Although Republican growth is occurring across the South, it is important to note two possible paths to a revival of Democratic success. The first is rooted in demographic change. The Hispanic population is expanding at a striking rate, particularly in Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia. To the extent that Democrats can tap into and mobilize votes among Latinos in the South, the party may enable itself to put together coalitions that challenge the growing Republican dominance in statewide elections.

This endeavor, however, is not without formidable challenges. For one, a large segment of the Hispanic population is composed of noncitizens who cannot vote, and this situation is likely to persist for several decades (see Bullock & Hood, 2006).<sup>24</sup> Second, unlike African Americans, Hispanics are not unified in their partisanship or voting behavior (Leal, Barreto, Lee, & de la Garza, 2005). Cuban Americans in Florida, for example, continue to lean Republican, and estimates from the 2004 presidential election show Bush polling between 32% and 44% among Latinos (Leal et al., 2005).<sup>25</sup> In addition, upwardly mobile Hispanics in the South are attracted to the Republican Party (E. Black & M. Black, 2002). Finally, the increasing diversity of the southern electorate is counteracted by the increasing partisan polarization of White and minority voters (Bullock, Hoffman, & Gaddie, 2005; Valentino & Sears, 2005). In several Deep South states where recent Republican growth is most pronounced—in particular, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi—the Black populations are among the largest in the region, but Democratic strength is more than offset by the highest degrees of racial polarization in party identification and vote choice.

The second and perhaps more likely route to Democratic revival passes through the GOP itself. Although data on southern political activists<sup>26</sup> in 1991 and 2001 show a marked increase in ideological cohesion and a concomitant reduction in intraparty factionalism (see McGlennon, 2004), the Republican Party is susceptible to division along a religious and secular cleavage. To the extent that Republican primaries become divisive along this fault line, in those instances where religious right candidates have prevailed, the party has often succumbed to defeat in subsequent general elections (Glaser, 2005, 2006; Lamis, 1999). This fits with our Downsian explanation of party positioning: Candidates of the religious right are further from the median southerner than is the typical White Democratic candidate.

The bad news for the Democrats is that, more often than not, Republican fringe candidates do not win primaries.<sup>27</sup> And to the extent that the Democratic Party takes positions that are ideologically incongruent with the preferences of most southern Whites to satisfy the party's proportionally smaller and

more racially diverse core of supporters (M. Black, 2004), we expect that the GOP will continue to gain in strength by positioning itself to meet the demands of its overwhelmingly White constituents.

## Conclusion

With the passage of time, it appears increasingly evident that the two-party South will soon be eclipsed by a majority- and minority-party South. E. Black and M. Black (2002), at the time of their writing, convincingly demonstrate that the South consists of two minority parties reliant on swing voters to secure majorities in statewide elections. But the current structure of competition is moving in favor of the GOP, irrespective of the level of elections one chooses to investigate.

Although the thrust of our argument focuses on statewide elections, the pattern of contemporary congressional politics provides a window to the future of southern politics in general (see Shafer & Johnston, 2001). As discussed by E. Black (1998), there are generally three kinds of districts in southern U.S. House contests: (a) majority–minority districts where minority representatives can win election based solely on the votes of racial and ethnic minorities, (b) districts represented by Republicans who rely on the votes of Whites, and (c) districts represented by White Democrats who depend on a coalition of White and minority voters. Racial redistricting has disproportionately harmed the electoral prospects of White Democrats (Lublin & Voss, 2000, 2003) who must appeal to a segment of White and Black voters who often have different concerns and disagree on many issues (Lamis, 1988). Furthermore, in many cases, these White Democrats find themselves barely surviving reelection and others losing to strong GOP challengers who recognize that the partisan balance of these districts (based on presidential returns) favors the Republican Party (see Abramowitz, 1995; E. Black & M. Black, 2002; Jacobson, 1996, 2000).

In the case of district-level contests, such as U.S. House, State House, and State Senate races, there is clearly a floor of Democratic viability that places a limit on GOP advancement so long as a substantial portion of districts are configured to secure minority representation (Shotts, 2001). For Democrats, this reality is certainly not cause for celebration, because the GOP already controls a majority of U.S. House seats and is on the cusp of attaining majority status in the number of state legislative seats, without even coming close to exhausting the possible number of winnable districts. The uniform trend

of Republican advancement in office-holding in the South, regardless of the level of contest and whether it is statewide or district-based, speaks loudly to our contention that the near future of southern politics entails a majority Republican Party and a minority Democratic Party.

If we conceptualize each southern state as a single district for the sake of considering Republican prospects in statewide elections, then, to the extent that these contests reflect the dynamics in district-level contests, the GOP is greatly advantaged. Given the fact that Whites comprise a clear majority in every southern state but Texas, further movement of Whites in favor of the GOP necessarily dims the prospects for Democrats in statewide elections.

In Downsian (Downs, 1957) spatial parlance, the GOP occupies the ideological real estate where most southerners reside. The ideological constraint that African American voters place on Democratic candidates forecloses the likelihood of the Democratic Party positioning itself to not only win back, let alone maintain, the political allegiance of enough White southerners to sustain a political system characterized by two competitive minority parties. And as we have stated previously, the factors that we claim are most influential in shaping future partisan competition all tend to advantage the GOP. In addition to ideological proximity, younger White voters are decidedly more Republican, and satisfactory performance in governance and constituency service reinforces support for Republican candidates. In addition, success in office undoubtedly affects the political calculations of the next generation of strategic politicians who see a greater probability of making a career in elective politics by running under the Republican label (Aldrich, 1995).

One major difficulty for Democrats is that the party appears positioned to lose more and more White votes. The evidence presented by M. Black (2004) suggests the southern Democratic Party is in a state of disequilibrium and its current transformation may render it an uncompetitive minority party. The problem rests with the incongruence between the Democratic Party in office vis-à-vis the Democratic Party in the electorate. As M. Black (2004) points out, 70% of "Democratic statewide officeholders in 2003 were White men, even though they comprised only 21 percent of the party in the electorate."<sup>28</sup> Given the fact that the contemporary southern Democratic Party is majority female, approximately 52% White, 38% African American, and 10% Hispanic (M. Black, 2004), there will be increasing pressure for the recruitment and support of candidates who not only advocate Democratic positions but also share the gender, race, and ethnicity of most Democratic voters. We expect the Democratic Party will be further disadvantaged by

running candidates for statewide office who are not White, because White swing voters are less likely to vote for minority candidates.

In the 1960s, George Wallace made the famous remark that “there wasn’t ‘a dime’s worth of difference’ between the Democratic and Republican parties” (Watson, 1996, p. 152). At the time, Wallace was at least partially correct, because so many un-Reconstructed Democrats held power in the Deep South by “out-segging” Republican challengers. In the newest southern politics, however, the Republican and Democratic parties differ sharply on most political issues, and the electorate continues to realign according to the positions the parties stake out. For example, although it still may be possible for a conservative Democrat to win the election in a Republican-leaning district, time is not on the Democratic Party’s side; eventually, voters are likely to support a candidate who shares their partisan affiliation (Cottrill, 2004; Erikson & Wright, 2005).

The current positioning of southern Democrats prevents them from recapturing the long-term political support of the median southern voter. According to David Rohde (1996), “the likelihood and stability of future Republican gains rests in large measure on the choices of candidates and office-holders of both parties. Which party prospers, and how much, depends on the platforms candidates adopt and the policy agendas presidents and Members of Congress pursue” (p. 30). We think Rohde is correct and thus agree that there is nothing inevitable about GOP ascendancy. But as the world of southern politics stands now, the Democrats find themselves in a difficult fight against a rising Republican tide.

It is nothing short of fascinating to reflect on the copious southern politics literature that for several decades has pointed to the end of southern exceptionalism (see Shafer & Johnston, 2006). Most political observers considered the advent of a two-party South to hasten the death knell of southern distinctiveness. The rise of the southern Republican Party meant that the region’s politics would now reflect the rest of the nation’s more competitive partisan balance. The evidence presented here offers an alternative interpretation: The South remains exceptional, because Republican growth persists, even as it has declined in the rest of the country. We doubt that the GOP will ever attain the one-party dominance once exhibited by the Democratic Party, but the current structure of southern politics remains promising for further Republican growth.

## Appendix

### Republican Party Identification of Southern Voters, By State, 1990-2004

State	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002*	2004	Change (1990-2004)
Alabama	24.4	33.5	29.1	35.8	29.6	36.6	42.7	48.3	+23.9
Arkansas	19.3	28.4	22.5	24.8	22.4	25.2	—	30.3	+11.0
Florida	40.1	36.6	40.2	38.4	39.5	37.9	43.0	40.2	+0.1
Georgia	31.8	34.0	35.4	34.1	36.9	37.7	44.0	41.8	+10.0
Kentucky	34.7	35.5	—	35.4	34.8	39.4	42.3	40.9	+6.2
Louisiana	—	29.3	—	28.8	27.2	34.0	36.2	40.2	+10.9
Mississippi	—	36.8	—	37.1	—	41.6	51.5	46.5	+9.7
North Carolina	35.9	37.0	—	39.1	38.8	37.6	53.1	39.7	+3.8
Oklahoma	32.9	37.2	41.3	39.7	42.0	45.3	—	44.8	+11.9
South Carolina	36.5	39.5	42.3	39.3	36.0	39.0	—	43.8	+7.3
Tennessee	33.4	30.7	37.8	36.8	41.0	37.4	65.2	40.0	+6.6
Texas	35.5	35.8	38.9	37.5	38.1	41.2	43.6	43.4	+7.9
Virginia	—	35.1	37.8	36.3	—	36.5	51.6	38.7	+3.6
South	33.4	36.8	37.6	37.0	37.9	39.7	45.9	44.0	+10.6

Source: Data are from exit polls. The South consists of the 11 ex-Confederate states plus Kentucky and Oklahoma. With the exception of 2002 and the South (both calculated with national exit poll data), these data are compiled from polls conducted in each state for the given election year. Blank entries indicate the absence of a state poll for that election. In 2002, the data for each state were drawn from the national exit poll, because there were no individual state polls; the number of observations range from  $N = 182$  in Mississippi to  $N = 1,402$  in Texas. There were no observations for Arkansas in 2002, and the number of cases were too small in Oklahoma ( $N = 85$ ) and South Carolina ( $N = 12$ ). The percentage of Republican voters is calculated by dividing the total number of Republicans by the sum of the total number of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. In the last column, “difference” equals the percentage of Republican voters in 2004 subtracted by the percentage of Republican voters in the earliest election (either 1990 or 1992). The exit polls are as follows: 1990 = Voter Research and Surveys/CBS/*New York Times*; 1992 = Voter Research and Surveys; 1994-2002 = Voter News Service; 2004 = National Election Pool. All data are weighted.

## Notes

1. This was the language George W. Bush used to describe the result in a postelection press conference.

2. Unless stated otherwise, the South in this article is defined as the 11 former Confederate states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—plus Kentucky and Oklahoma.

3. Let us be clear—the solid Democratic South, which still flourished when V. O. Key published *Southern Politics in State and Nation* in 1949, is gone with the wind. Never again do we anticipate a scenario in which one party can essentially sweep the region’s elections aside from

a handful of contests confined to isolated pockets of minority-party strongholds (i.e., the mountain Republican sections of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina preceding and following the Civil War). The expansion of the franchise and the diversity of interests in the contemporary South (racial and ethnic, economic, religious, in-migration patterns, etc.) are such that one-party control will never be as solid and unifying as it once was when Democratic unity rested on blocking federal intrusion of the South's artificially White electorate. But though we acknowledge the unlikelihood of a solid Republican South that mirrors the erstwhile one-party Democratic South, we raise the possibility of a growth in Republican strength to the point that the GOP is the dominant partner in most elections, and especially in statewide contests.

4. The lines for Republican and Democratic identifiers include those who say they lean toward one party. We consider these individuals partisans because of the evidence that such citizens tend to behave more like partisans than independents (e.g., Keith et al., 1992).

5. The 1960 figure was computed by Alexander Lamis and Andrew Lucker, who graciously shared their data with us. We compiled the contemporary data from Congressional Quarterly's *Politics in America* biennial volume. In raw numbers, the GOP now holds 1,013 of the 13 states' 2,069 state legislative seats.

6. Figure 2 displays David's Index for Republican strength in Composite B form (combined returns for the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, and gubernatorial elections). We thank Alexander Lamis and Andrew Lucker for providing these data for 1952-1998. We have updated the data for 2000-2006. For a detailed explanation of how the index is constructed, see David (1972) and Lamis (1999, p. 407).

7. Statewide offices include governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, adjutant general, treasurer, auditor, comptroller, agriculture commissioner, election commissioner, state land commissioner, chief financial officer, education superintendent, education commissioner, labor commissioner, insurance commissioner, corporation commissioner, general land office commissioner, and railroad commissioner. A complete list of offices in each state used in these calculations is available from the authors.

8. Among southern voters, based on the 2004 National Election Pool exit poll data, the racial and ethnic breakdown was the following: 70.7% White, 18.3% Black, 8.7% Hispanic, 0.7% Asian, and 1.5% Other.

9. Often overlooked, southern Republicanism received its initial (although much smaller) boost following World War II, as economic conservatism proved a compelling motive for voters located in the rapidly urbanizing "New South" to cast Republican presidential ballots (see Bartley & Graham, 1975; Lublin, 2004; Phillips, 1969; Shafer & Johnston, 2006). We contend, however, like other scholars (e.g., E. Black & M. Black, 2002; Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Valentino & Sears, 2005), that race was paramount in setting in motion southern partisan change. Furthermore, economics and race are complementary, because the GOP has staked out the conservative ground on both issues.

10. E. Black and M. Black (1992, 2002) emphasize that successful southern Democratic candidates are adept at mixing liberal/progressive and conservative themes to secure a biracial voting majority. This is indeed the appropriate strategy for Democrats. But with the increasing polarization of partisan elites, it is harder for Democrats to win White votes, because the Republican Party has more credibility when its candidates take conservative positions.

11. The lone exception is that the Cumulative Data File does not include responses to the questions about the political parties' ideological positions in 2002, which necessitated its omission from Figure 4.

12. The number of southerners who respond to the ideology measures ranges from a low of 217 (2000) to a high of 512 (1978).

13. The precise medians represented in Figure 4 are available from the authors on request.

14. Although our focus here is on the political parties and statewide elections, further evidence of the ideological alienation of the Democratic Party appears in southern perceptions of its presidential candidates. It is not surprising that the widest gulf between the typical southerner and a Democratic presidential candidate came in 1972, when George McGovern's antiwar campaign alienated many of the region's more conservative voters. But more troubling for the Democrats, and speaking loudly to the growing ideological divide, is that the distance between the typical southerner and John Kerry was nearly as large as that between McGovern and the region's electorate. Whereas in 2000, George W. Bush was perceived as about one point more conservative than the typical southerner, Kerry in 2004 was perceived as more than two times as liberal. Although perceptions of both parties have polarized, views of the Democrats have become much more extreme.

15. A comparison with the non-South is instructive. According to National Election Studies data, the median voter outside the South is more liberal and sees the Democratic Party as ideologically closer. For example, in 2004, the distance between the median non-southerner and the Republican Party was 1.66 on the 7-point scale, but just 1.34 for the Democratic Party. In stark contrast to the state of affairs in the South, the Democratic Party holds an ideological advantage in the non-South.

16. According to E. Black and M. Black (2002), "[s]ince the mid-1960s the partisan division of the Black vote has been the principal constant in southern politics" (p. 29).

17. This, of course, also means that incumbency can be a disadvantage when representatives are punished by voters for performing poorly.

18. According to data from the 2004 National Election Pool General Election exit poll, the partisan breakdown for southern voters was the following: 37% Democrats, 44% Republicans, and 19% Independents.

19. Consider another gain made by the GOP as the next decennial redistricting approaches. Heading into the 1992 elections, Republicans did not control redistricting ("control" means having a majority Republican State House and State Senate and a Republican governor) in any southern state, whereas the Democratic Party was in control in Arkansas (an independent commission has the task of congressional redistricting), Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. There was divided control in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina (Niemi & Abramowitz, 1994). Currently, the GOP is in control in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas, whereas the Democratic Party has control in Arkansas, Louisiana, and North Carolina. Divided control prevails in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia (data are from the National Conference of State Legislatures: <http://www.ncsl.org/>).

20. Despite the fact that the Republican option was for a write-in candidate in Texas's 22nd and Mark Foley's name remained on the ballot in Florida's 16th, both these contests remained competitive. In District 22 in Texas, former Democratic Congressman Nick Lampson beat his nearest write-in opponent (there were two other write-in candidates) with 55% of the vote, and in District 16 in Florida, Democrat Tim Mahoney beat Republican Joe Negron (who was the choice a voter selected by choosing Mark Foley on the ballot) with 51% of the vote. Data are from the Texas and Florida Secretary of State Web sites, respectively.

21. In election cycles that clearly favor one party, we should expect that the disadvantaged party has a much smaller number of "free rides" or uncontested seats. In the 2006 U.S. House elections, Democrats had 46 (46 out of 435 = 10.57%) uncontested seats, whereas Republicans had free rides in just 10 districts (10 out of 435 = 2.3%). Seven out of the 10 uncontested Republican districts were in the South.

22. The political acumen of Bill Clinton is legendary, and his skill at staking out the majority position as a southern governor illustrates the difficulties the GOP has encountered in winning these statewide contests. In the words of E. Black and M. Black (2002), "Like most southern Democrats holding statewide office, Clinton had spent his entire political career learning how to bob and weave liberal and conservative themes in order to create and maintain a successful biracial coalition" (p. 27).

23. Although it is difficult to tell in the figure, Florida's Republican share of the electorate increased from 40.1% to 40.2%. In 2002, the number was 43%.

24. The most striking growth among Hispanics in the South is occurring in states such as Georgia and North Carolina, where the vast majority of Hispanic residents are noncitizens.

25. Not surprisingly Hispanics did increase their Democratic support considerably in 2006. Exit poll data show the small population of Hispanic voters (8% of the electorate) casting 69% of their U.S. House votes in favor of Democratic candidates (<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/US/H/00/epolls.0.html>).

26. These data consist of surveys of county party chairs and county executive committee members in the 11 ex-Confederate states (see Clark & Prysby, 2004).

27. As Glaser (2005, 2006) points out, the runoff primary in most southern states has come to serve the purpose of blocking the nomination of fringe candidates who are often capable of winning the most votes in the initial round of primary voting but then end up losing the runoff to the more centrist candidate who rallies greater support from voters backing the candidate(s) failing to make the runoff. The runoff primary is indeed an opportunity for voters to reevaluate candidates. And at this stage, it is likely that one of the factors accounting for vote choice is general election viability. Regarding the religious versus secular factions in the southern GOP, Glaser (2006) writes, "[t]his cleavage runs through the Republican electorate in many southern districts now and it is a cleavage that the party will have to bridge, though the primary runoff offers a means by which a majority can at least counter a 'mischievous' faction—as it long has done. This has been overlooked in discussions of how the Christian Right might threaten the growth and dominance of the party as a whole by turning off more centrist general election voters" (p. 784).

28. M. Black's (2004) data are limited to the 11 former Confederate states.

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