

Elections 101

Part IV



To be robbed and betrayed by a fiendish underground conspiracy or by the earthly agents of Satan is at least a romantic sort of plight.

It suggests at least a grand Hollywood-ready confrontation between good and evil.

But to be coldly ripped off over and over again by a bunch of bloodless, second-rate schmoes, schmoes you *chose*, you *elected*, is not something anyone will take much pleasure in bragging about.

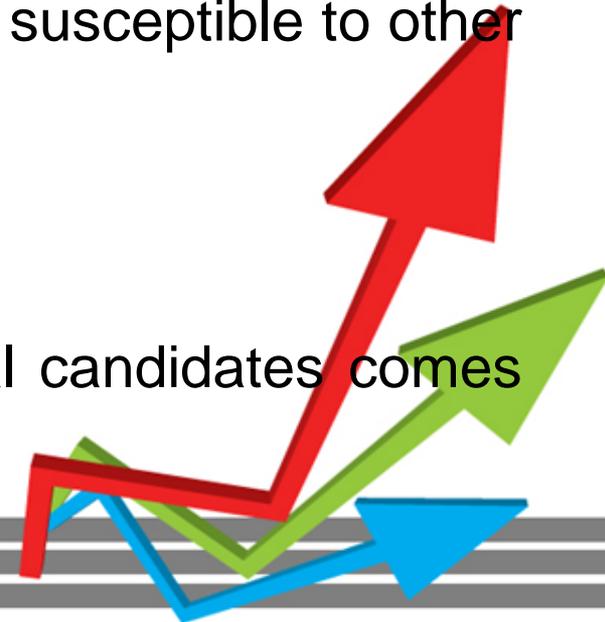
Matt Taibbi



The Electoral Evolution of the Congress



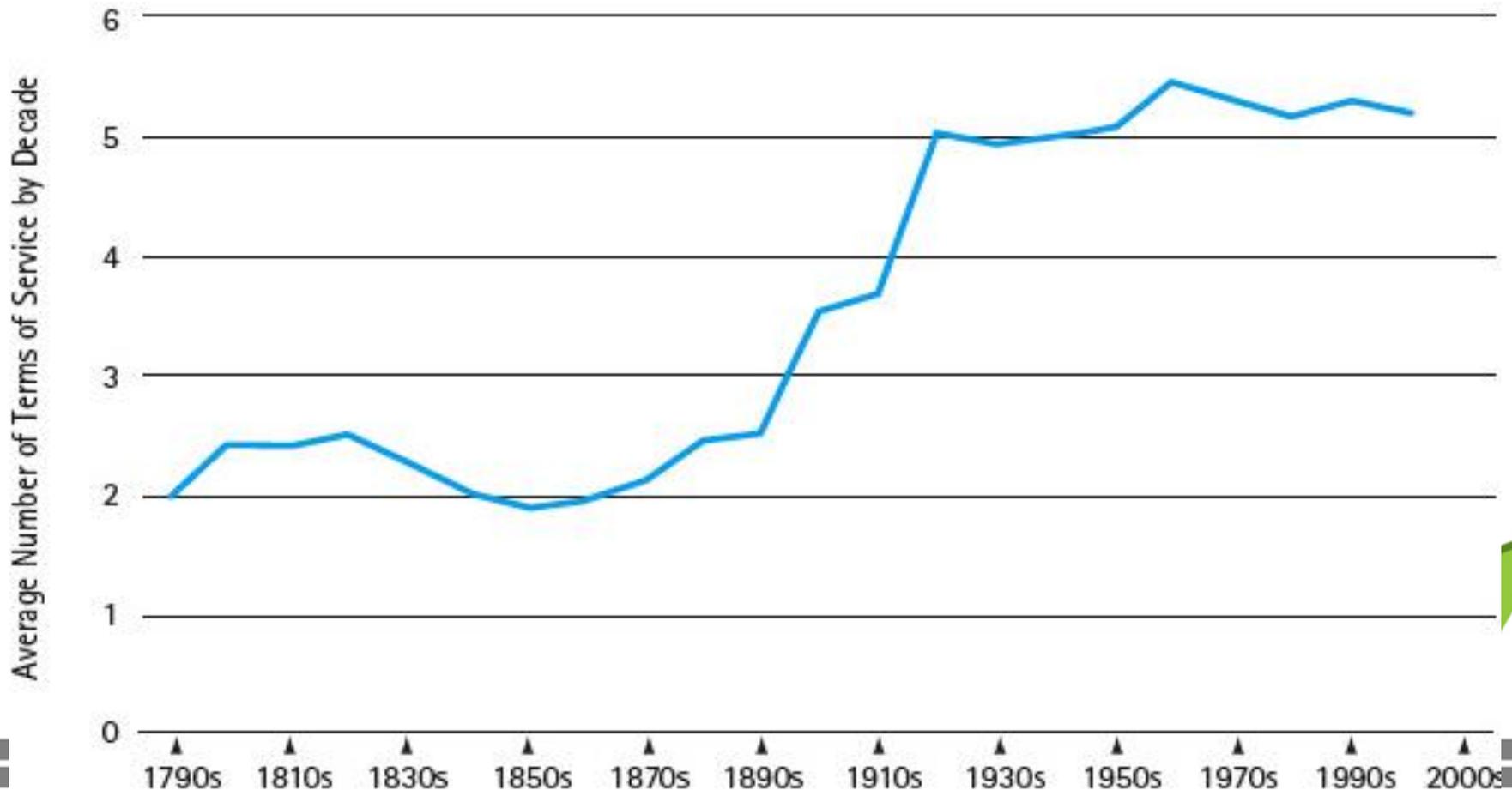
- Congress has changed significantly since the Founder's conception of it.
- Three-fourths of all party identifiers vote for the candidate of their party. **Loyalty voting** dropped somewhat in the 1960s and 1970s. As it dropped, party affiliations weakened and voters became more "**available**" and thus susceptible to other sorts of appeals.
- Today things are different:
 - **professional / career legislature**
 - most of the money for Congressional candidates comes from **PACs**



The Electoral Evolution of the Congress



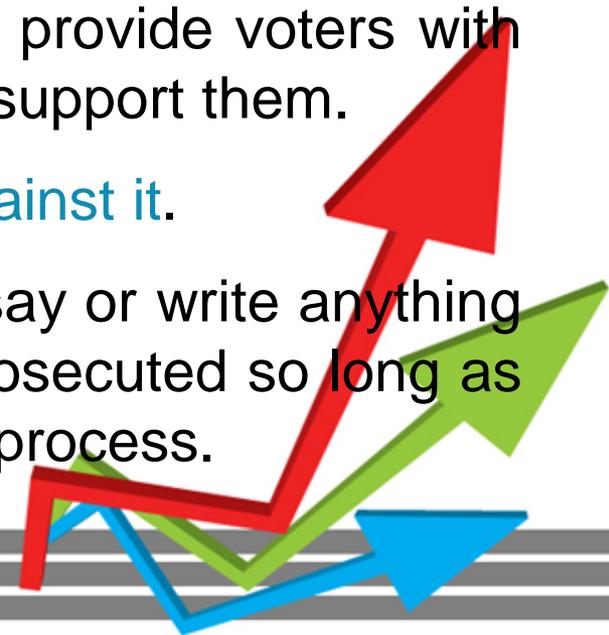
Congress became a career in the 20th century.



The Electoral Evolution of the Congress



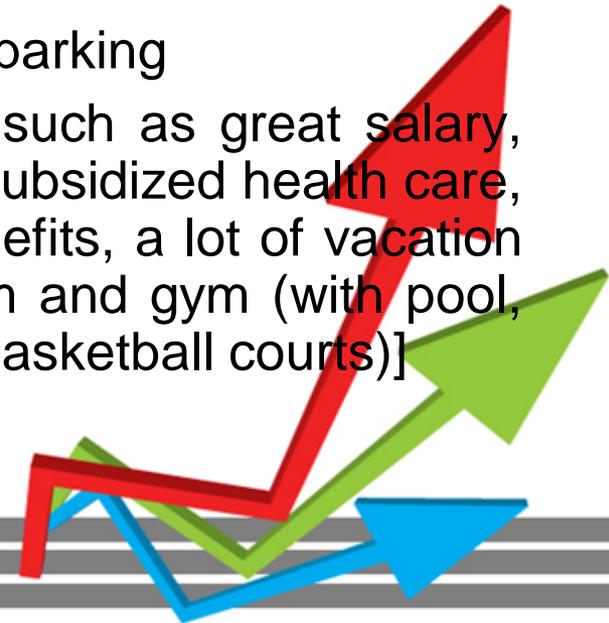
- Today's legislators are very **electorally aware**.
 - Anticipate shifts in constituents' ideological preferences and **adjust their views** to avoid electoral punishment at the polls.
 - Often use **governmental programs** to provide voters with additional, more personal reasons to support them.
 - Often run for Congress by **running against it**.
- Members of the House and Senate can say or write anything they like without fear of being sued or prosecuted so long as what they say is related to the legislative process.



The Electoral Evolution of the Congress



- Each member of Congress has:
 - a Washington **office** with parking and one or more district offices, including furnishing allowance
 - a large **staff** ... A typical House member employs 18 personal staff assistants (more than 40% in district). This has risen significantly over time.
 - use of the **frank** (free use of the US mail)
 - **travel subsidies**, free air fare, free airport parking
 - [above is in addition to personal things such as great salary, allowance, relaxed insider trading rules, subsidized health care, retirement and social security, death benefits, a lot of vacation days, salon and barbershop, dining room and gym (with pool, sauna, steam room, and paddleball and basketball courts)]

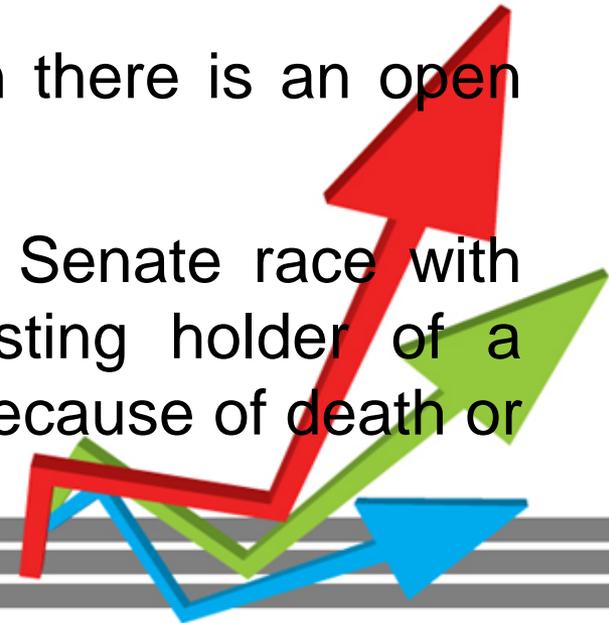


The Congressional Nomination Process



- Congressional nomination process is much simpler than Presidential process.
- Most states choose their candidates in one **primary** prior to the general election.
 - Filing dates may vary.
- Hardest fought primaries occur when there is an open seat.

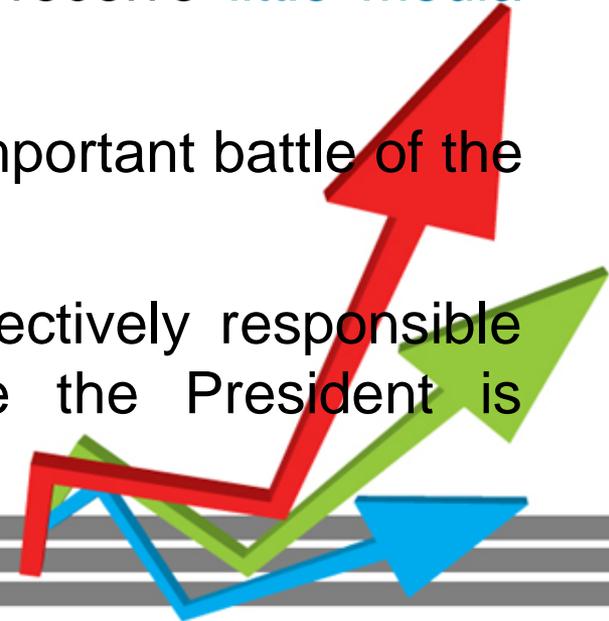
open seat: a House or Senate race with no **incumbent** (the existing holder of a political office) usually because of death or retirement





Contemporary Congressional Elections

- Differ from presidential elections.
 - Congressional candidates tend to labor in **obscurity**.
 - Vast majority of candidates are **little-known state legislators**.
 - Generally, lesser known candidates receive **little media attention**.
 - **Name recognition** is often the most important battle of the campaign.
 - Members of Congress are only collectively responsible for the state of the nation, while the President is considered individually responsible.

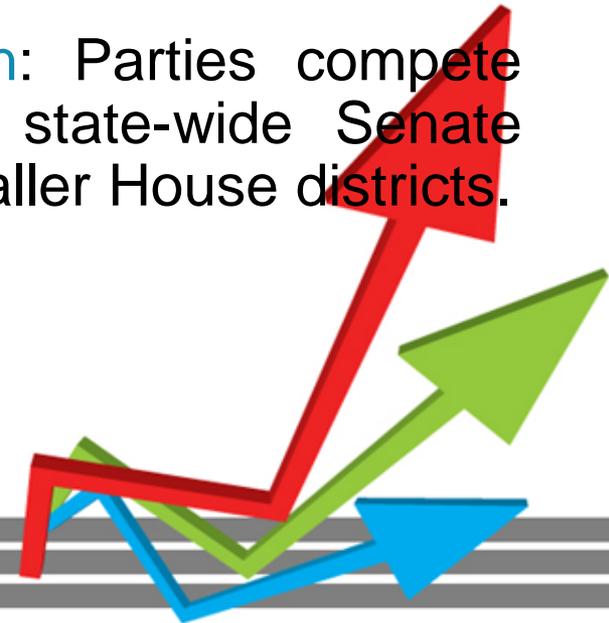




Contemporary Congressional Elections

- Because a **Senate seat** is so coveted, competition is fierce and a race costs millions of dollars.
- Senate incumbents usually win but they do lose more frequently than House incumbents.
- Senate elections differ from House elections in

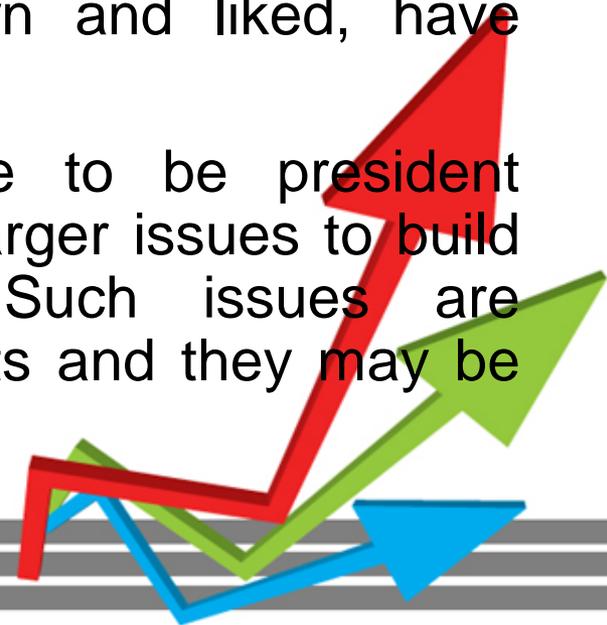
- **party competition**: Parties compete more evenly in state-wide Senate races than in smaller House districts.





Contemporary Congressional Elections

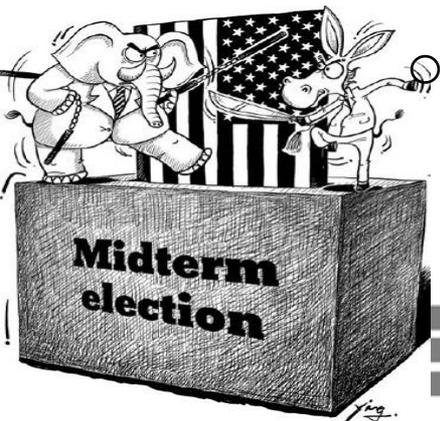
- Senate elections differ from House elections in
 - **uncontrolled information:** Receive far more positive and negative media coverage than House members.
 - **better challengers:** Higher status than House and fewer seats so have more higher-quality challengers (more politically experienced, better known and liked, have more money).
 - **the ambitions of Senators:** Desire to be president requires them to take positions on larger issues to build their credibility as contenders. Such issues are controversial, may offend constituents and they may be accused of neglecting their state.



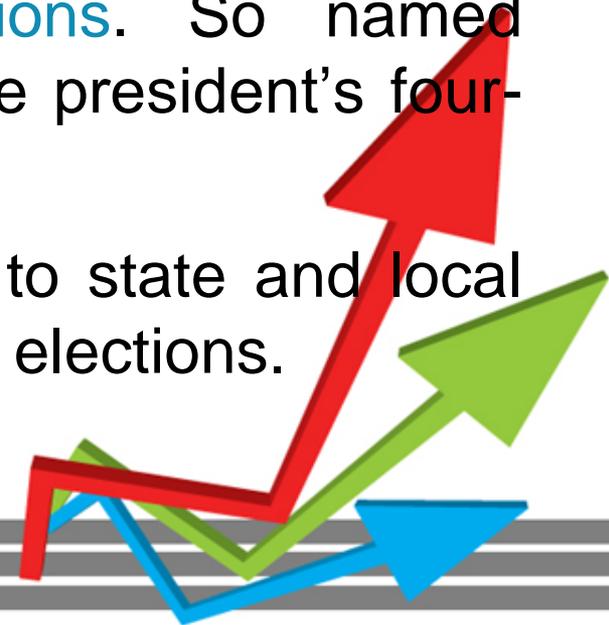


Contemporary Congressional Elections

- Every two years, Americans elect all members of the US House of Representatives to two-year terms and about one-third of their US senators, who serve six-year staggered terms.
- Those elections in which the president is not also elected are called **midterm elections**. So named because they are midway through the president's four-year term.



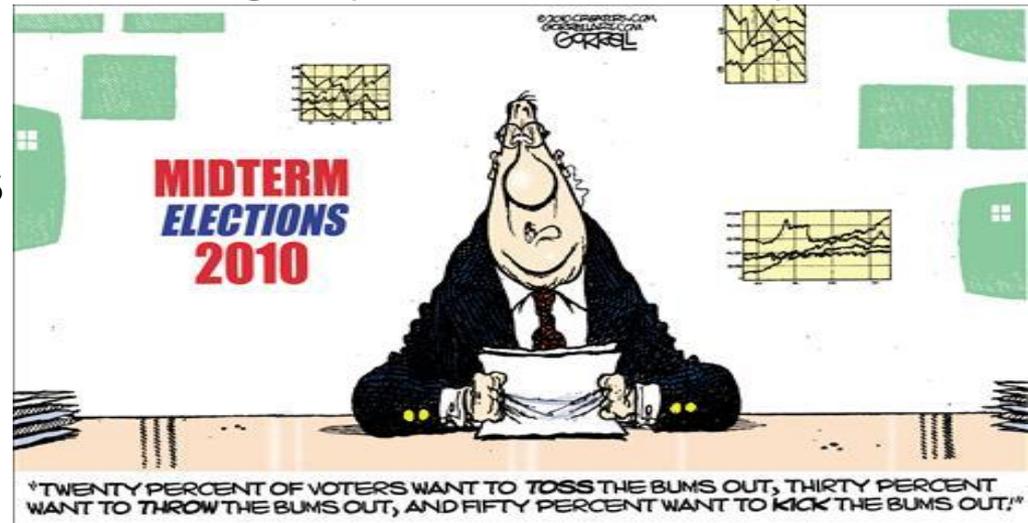
Voters also select officials to state and local government offices in those elections.





Midterm Congressional Elections

- President's party usually loses seats in midterm elections.
- Tendency for voters to punish the president's party more severely in the **sixth year** of an eight-year presidency.
 - **retrospective voting**
 - Senate elections less vulnerable to the six-year itch.
- There are **exceptions**.
 - GW Bush picked up seats in the House and Senate in 2002, his first midterm election.





Midterm Congressional Elections

Year	President	Party	House Seats	Senate Seats
1934	Franklin D. Roosevelt	D	+9	+9
1938	Franklin D. Roosevelt	D	-71	-6
1942	Franklin D. Roosevelt	D	-55	-9
1946	Harry S. Truman	D	-45	-12
1950	Harry S. Truman	D	-29	-6
1954	Dwight D. Eisenhower	R	-18	-1
1958	Dwight D. Eisenhower	R	-48	-13
1962	John F. Kennedy	D	-4	+3
1966	Lyndon B. Johnson	D	-47	-4
1970	Richard Nixon	R	-12	+2
1974	Gerald R. Ford (<i>Nixon</i>)	R	-48	-5
1978	Jimmy Carter	D	-15	-3
1982	Ronald Reagan	R	-26	+1
1986	Ronald Reagan	R	-5	-8
1990	George Bush	R	-8	-1
1994	William J. Clinton	D	-52	-8
1998	William J. Clinton	D	+5	0
2002	George W. Bush	R	+8	+2
2006	George W. Bush	R	-30	-6
2010	Barack Obama	D	-63	-6
2014	Barack Obama	D	-13	-9

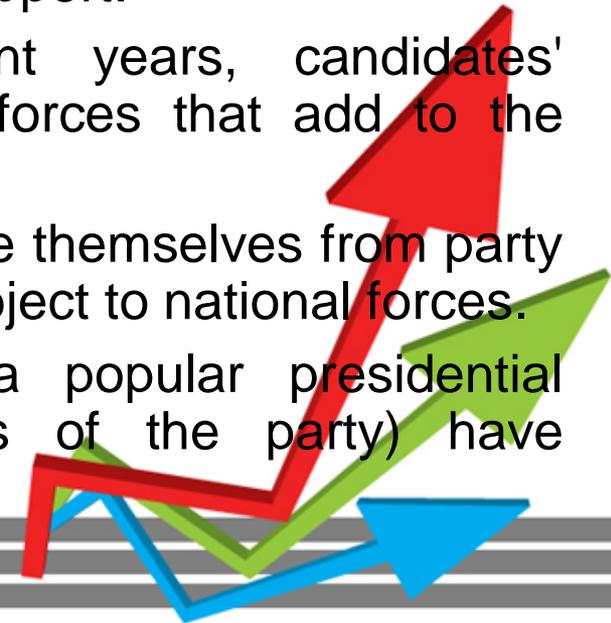
seats lost by the President's party in midterm elections





Contemporary Congressional Elections

- Throughout most of US history, congressional elections were **party-centered**. Because most voters had long-term loyalties toward one political party or the other, they tended to cast their votes along party lines.
- **regular party voting**: Members of Congress were often reelected, sometimes for decades, because a majority of their constituents supported their party. Their efforts as individual incumbents often only marginally added to or subtracted from their support.
- **candidate-centered voting**: In more recent years, candidates' personalities and issues have emerged as forces that add to the impact of party loyalties.
- The ability of members of Congress to distance themselves from party and presidential positions makes them less subject to national forces.
 - **Coattails** (positive electoral effect of a popular presidential candidate on Congressional candidates of the party) have declined.



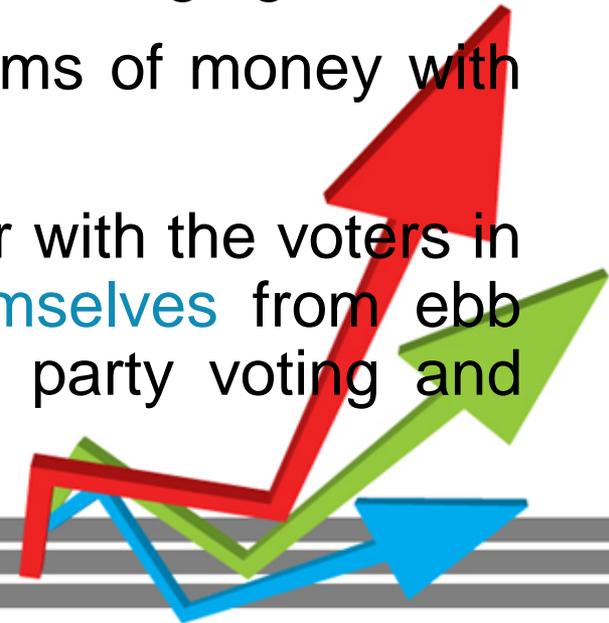


Incumbency Advantage

- Candidate-centered voting is a major advantage to incumbent members of Congress. Congressional elections are not just candidate-centered but **incumbent-centered** as well.



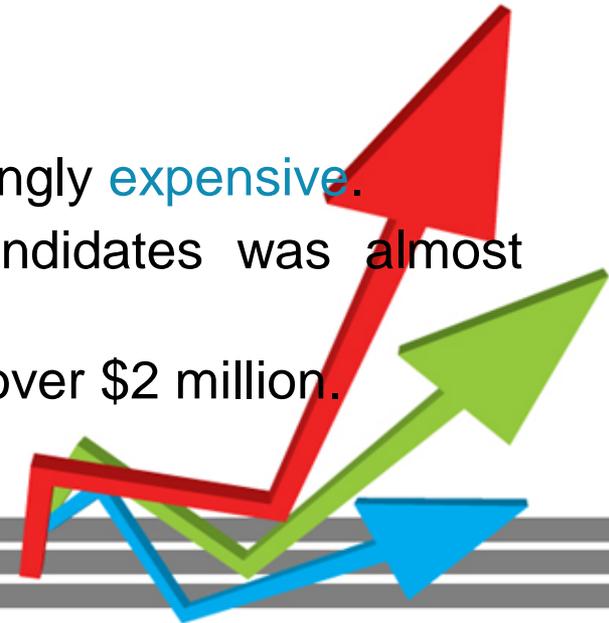
- receive far more exposure on television and in newspapers than those challenging them
- able to raise far greater sums of money with which to campaign
- ability to make themselves popular with the voters in their district and so **insulate themselves** from ebb and flow of popularity of regular party voting and from challengers





Incumbency Advantage

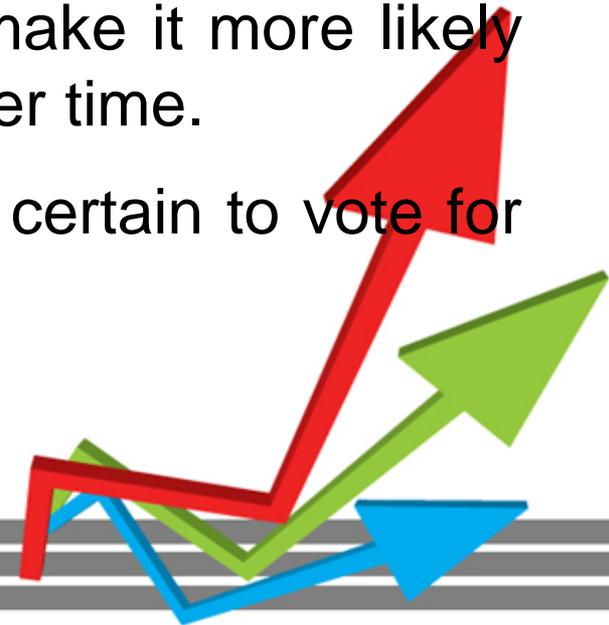
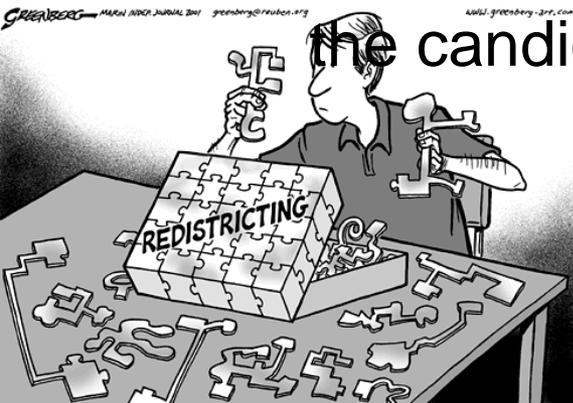
- **sophomore surge**: increase in voter support that a member of the House receives in his or her first bid for reelection
- **incumbency advantage**: electoral advantage a candidate enjoys by virtue of being an incumbent, over and above his or her personal and political characteristics
 - name recognition
 - committee assignments
 - campaign contributions
 - resources of office
- Elections for Congress have become increasingly **expensive**.
 - The average total spent by House candidates was almost \$518,000 in 2016.
 - The average Senatorial candidate spent over \$2 million.





Incumbency Advantage

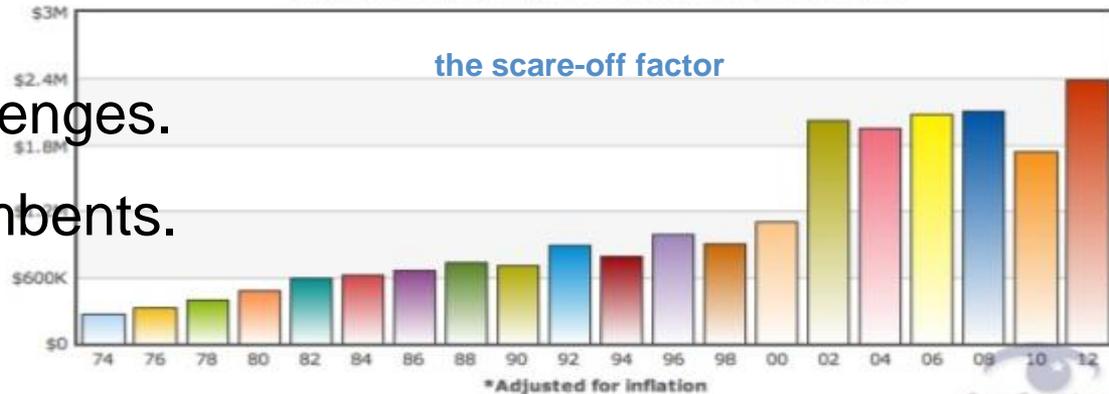
- The percentage of incumbents who win reelection after seeking it in the US House of Representatives has been over 80% for more than 50 years, and is often over 90%.
- Shifts in Congressional districts due to **reapportionment** or other longer term factors usually make it more likely for an incumbent to win re-election over time.
- **safe seat**: a congressional district certain to vote for the candidate of one party





Incumbency Advantage

Cost of Beating a House Incumbent, Over Time



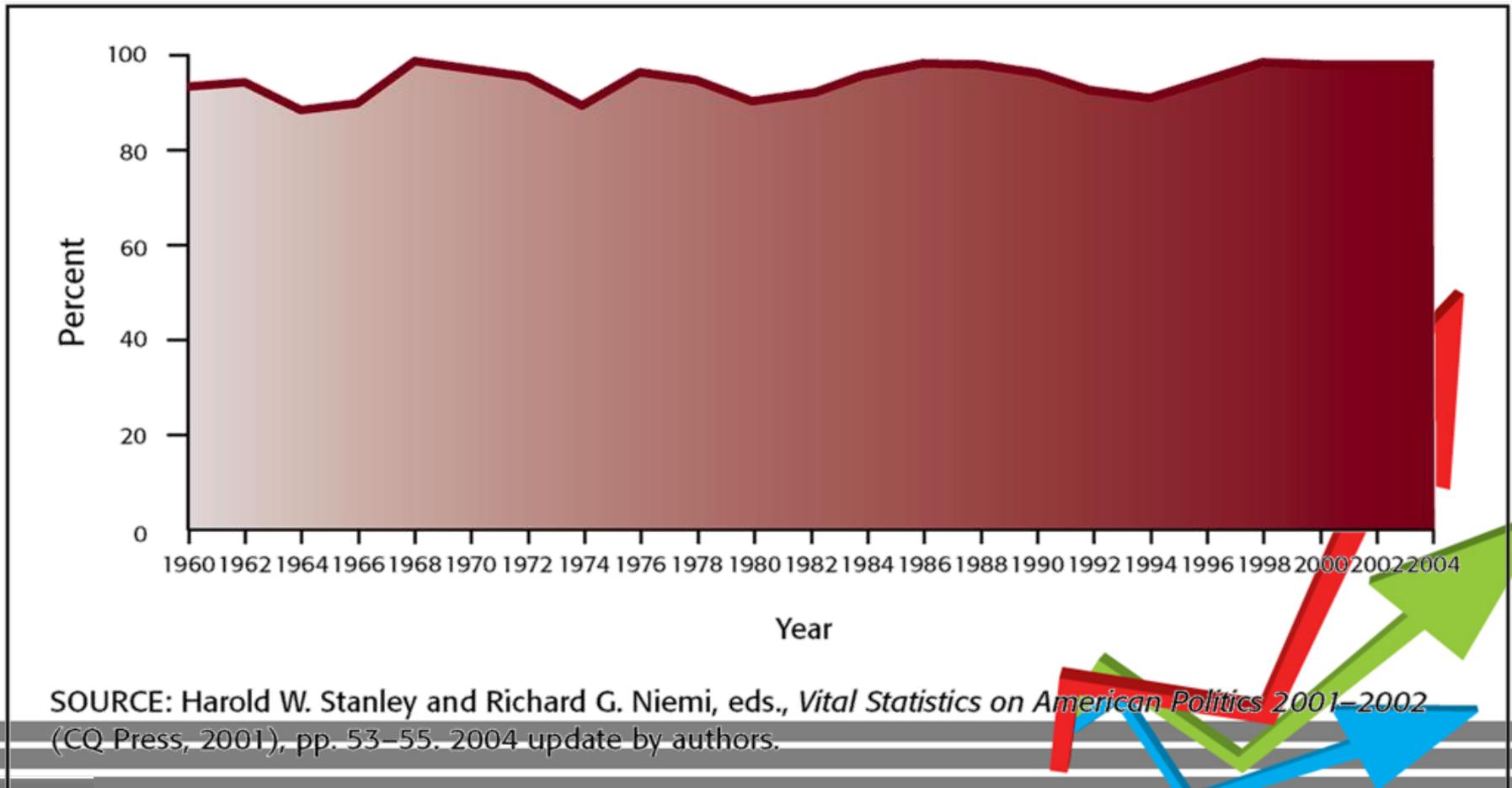
- Challengers face challenges.
 - They are not incumbents.
 - low visibility
 - The gap between incumbent and challenger spending has widened but even if spending disparities were wiped out overnight, incumbents would still do very well.
- When **incumbents lose** it is generally due to:
 - **redistricting / gerrymandering**
 - **scandals**
 - **coattails**





Incumbency Advantage

US House incumbents re-elected, 1960-2004

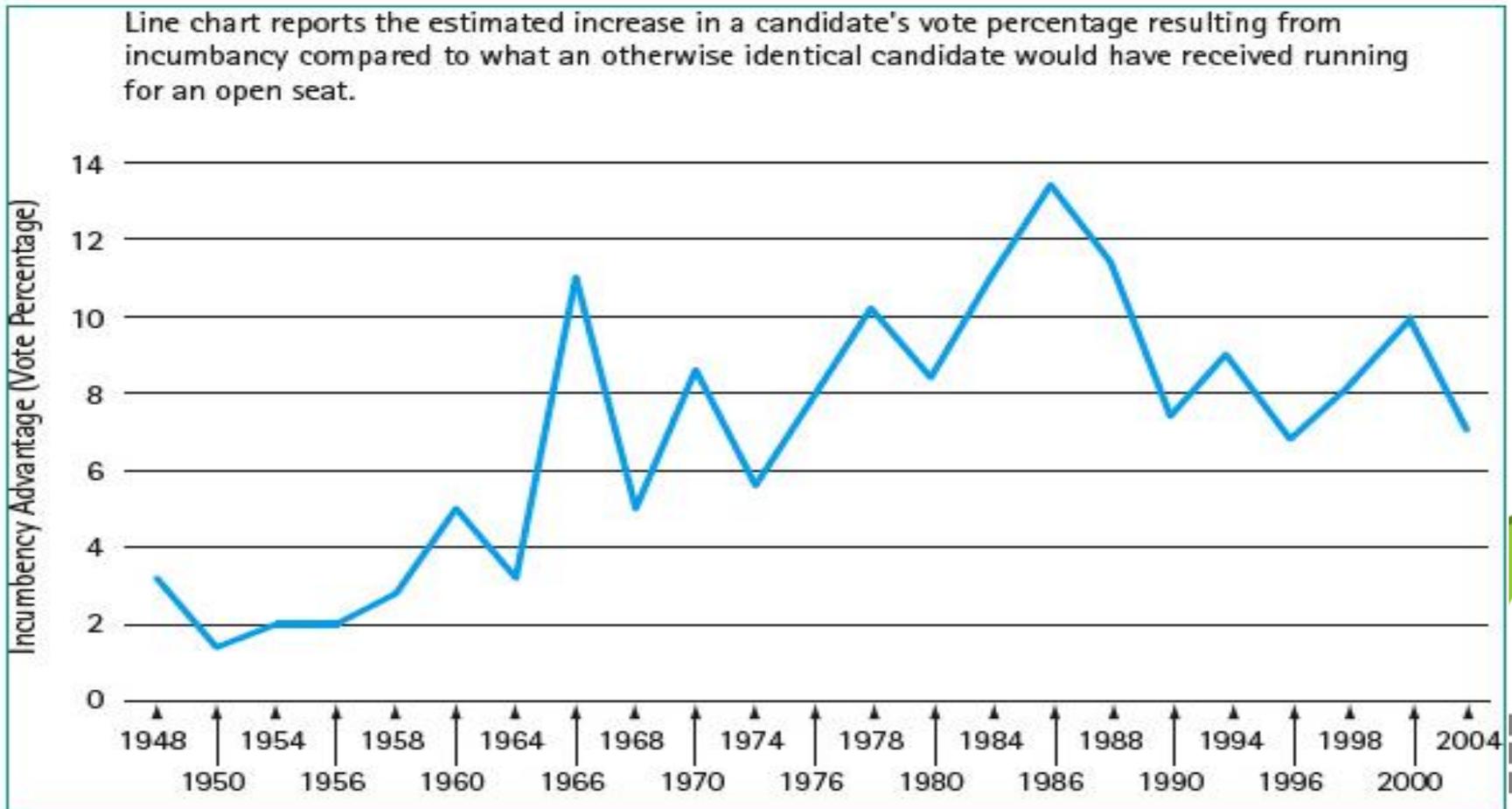


SOURCE: Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, eds., *Vital Statistics on American Politics 2001–2002* (CQ Press, 2001), pp. 53–55. 2004 update by authors.



Incumbency Advantage

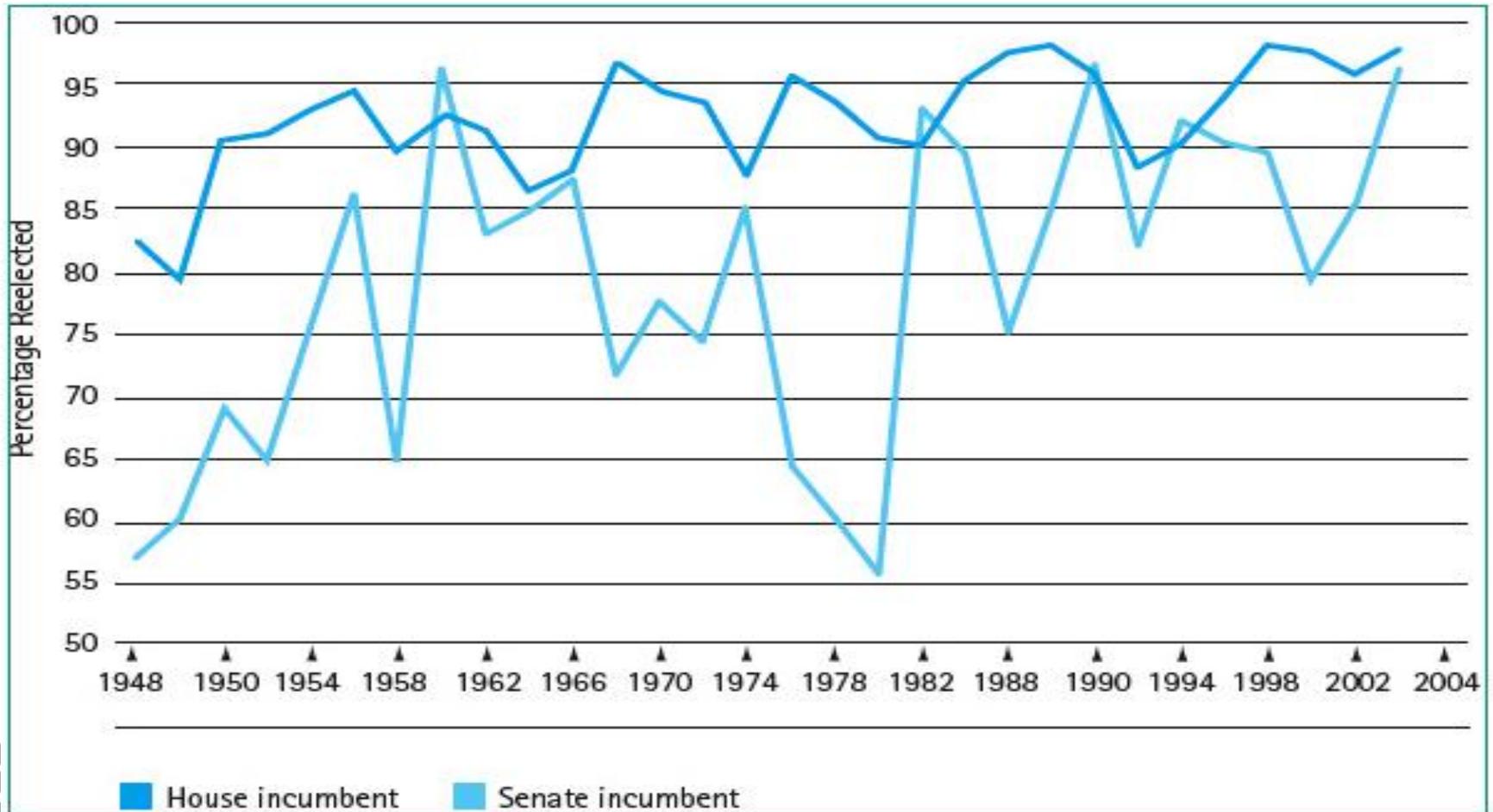
The advantage of incumbency surged in the mid-1960s and peaked in the mid-1980s.





Incumbency Advantage

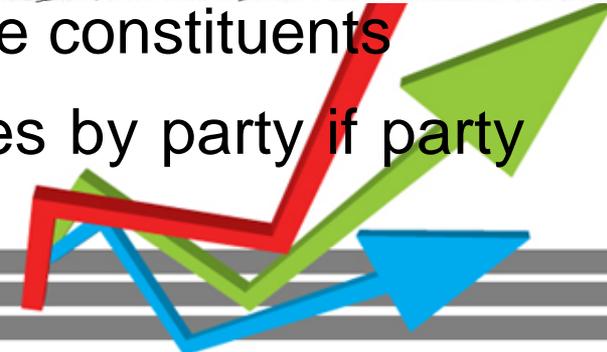
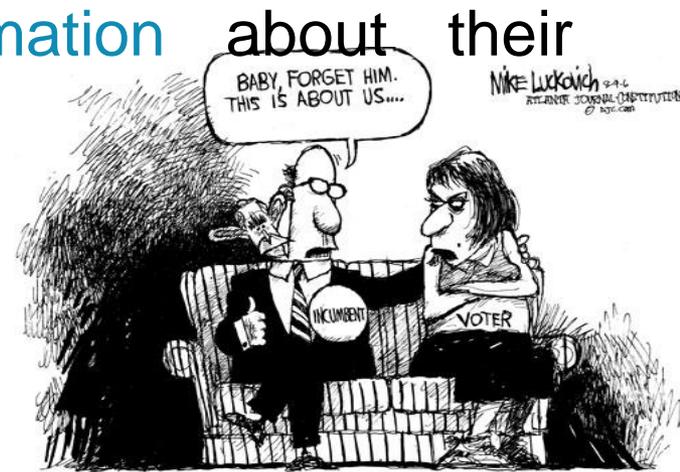
Representatives are re-elected more often than Senators.





Incumbent Responsiveness

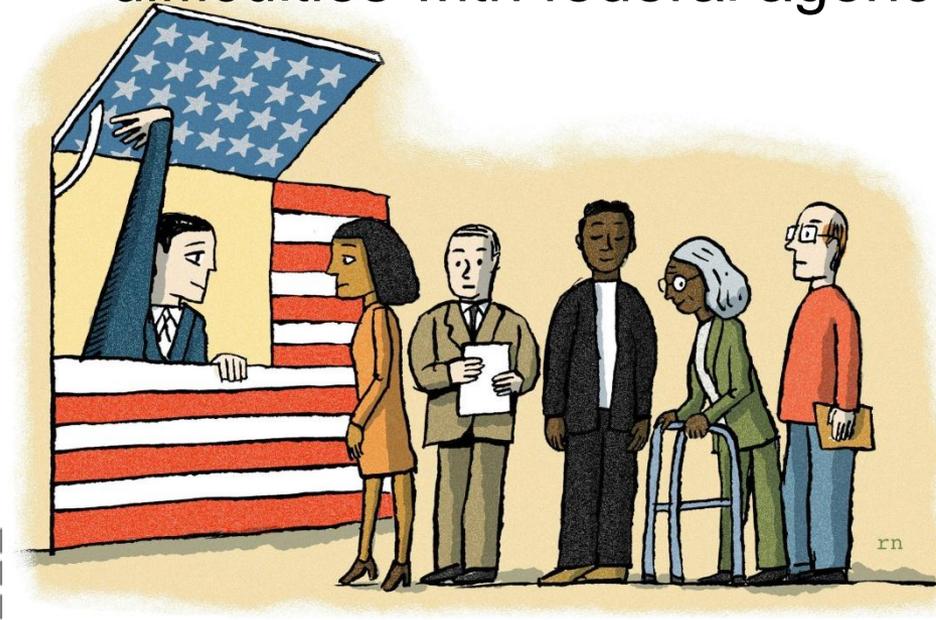
- One reason for incumbents' re-election success is that they are extremely **sensitive to the wishes of their constituents**.
- have access to more **information** about their constituents than previously
 - spend time in home districts
 - have access to survey data
 - work hard to **help** constituents
 - **fewer constraints** on acting to serve constituents
 - generally not punished for votes by party if party and constituency conflict





Incumbent Responsiveness

- Representatives engage in constituency service.
 - **district service**: effort by members of Congress to secure federal funding for their districts
 - **casework**: help constituents when they have difficulties with federal agencies



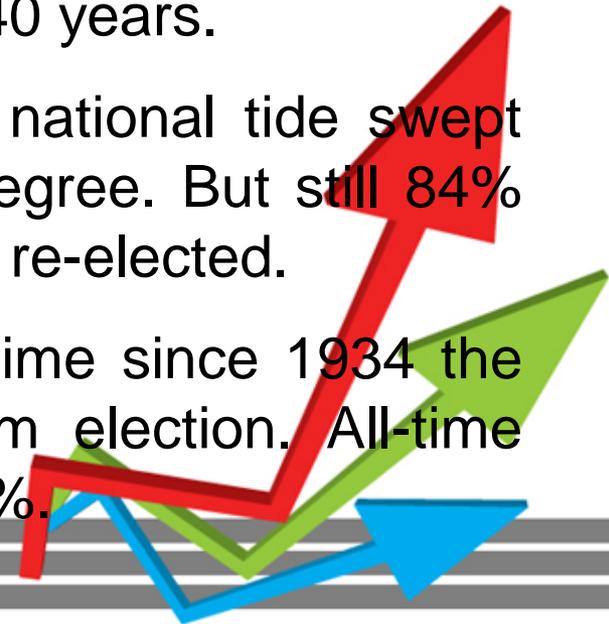
Contemporary Congressional Elections, the 1990s



- **Congressional stagnation**: theory that Congress has become stagnant through the continuous re-election of the majority of incumbents, preserving the status quo
- **1994 elections challenged the insulation theory**: Three dozen incumbents fell and Republicans gained 52 seats in the House, taking control for the first time in 40 years.



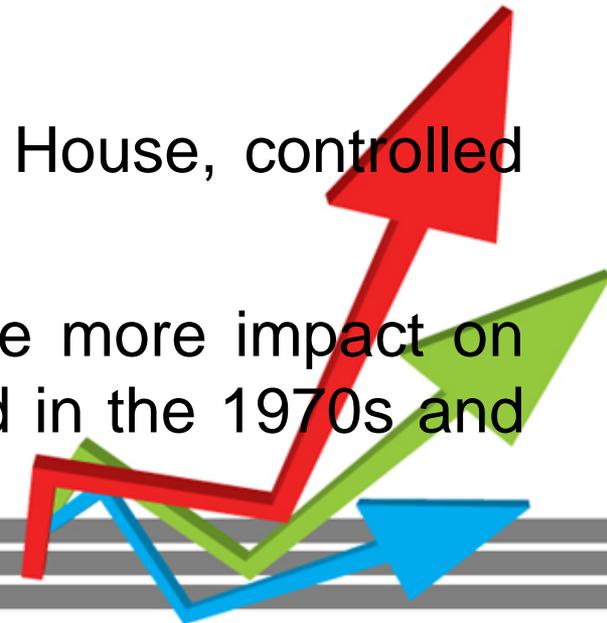
- Election results suggested a national tide swept aside incumbency to some degree. But still 84% of incumbent Democrats were re-elected.
- 1998: Democrats gained 5 seats. First time since 1934 the president's party gained in the mid-term election. All-time record incumbent re-election rate of 98.5%.



Contemporary Congressional Elections, the 2000s



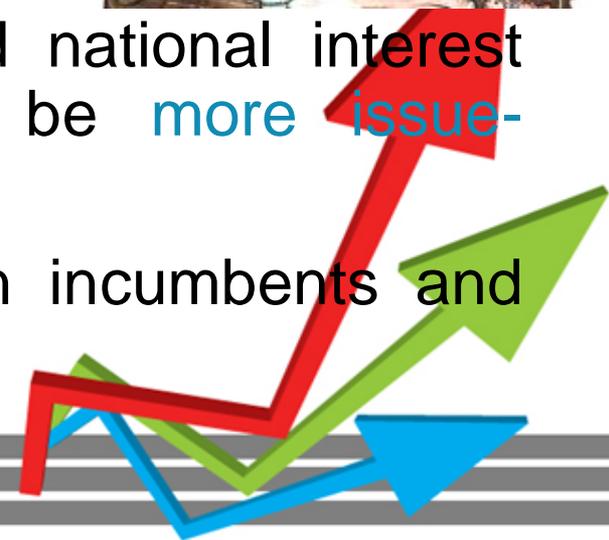
- The Republicans retained their Congressional majorities in the 2000 elections, but barely. Republican House majority by 5 seats, Senate an exact tie.
- 2002 and 2004: Voters had national issues in mind. Republicans gained seats in the House and Senate despite holding the White House.
- 2006 midterms: Democrats regained House, controlled Senate by a slim margin.
- Overall, **national forces** seem to have more impact on Congressional elections than they did in the 1970s and 1980s.





Contemporary Congressional Elections

- Evidence suggests that Congressional elections are **more nationalized today** possibly due to more unified, and more distinct, political parties.
- Increase in **issue advocacy** in national elections due to independent spending, especially by 527s.
- Positive effect
 - Campaigns in which parties and national interest groups actively participate will be **more issue-oriented**.
 - May help **balance odds** between incumbents and challengers.



Do Congressional elections produce a representative body?



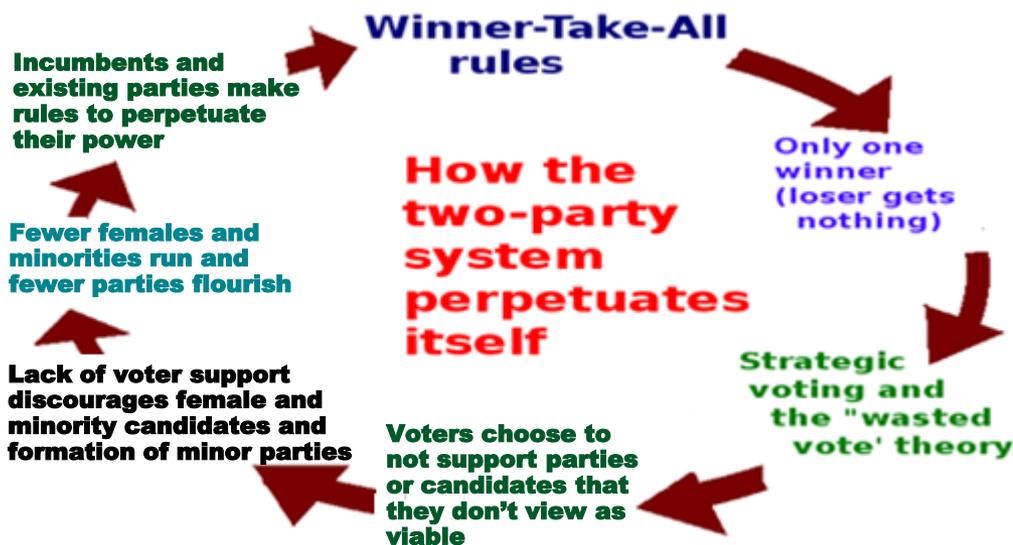
- Members are **highly qualified**: Most are hard-working, well educated, bright and interested in public policy.
 - **less corrupt** than in the past
- Congress is often thought of as a representative body that does not mirror the diversity found in the country.
 - overwhelmingly made up of **white, male professionals**
 - Can these individuals be responsive to the needs and aspirations of women and minorities?





Do Congressional elections produce a representative body?

- Single-member, simple plurality (SMSP) and winner-take-all electoral systems are not designed to produce a descriptively representative legislative body.
- SMSP and winner-take-all electoral systems put all minorities, racial or otherwise, at a disadvantage. Even if you win 49% of the vote you win nothing.



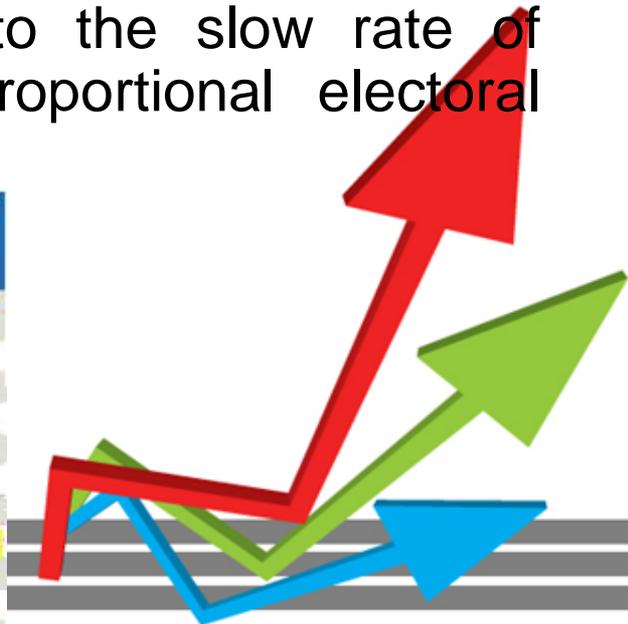


Women

- US ranks near the bottom among world democracies in the proportion of women in the lower chamber of the national legislature. Reasons?
 - The legacy of gender discrimination is not a major reason. Societal prejudice against women serving in public office is low and has been diminishing, but there is still gender discrimination.
 - The electoral system contributes to the slow rate of progress. Women do better in proportional electoral systems.

WORLD RANKINGS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

1 RWANDA	63.8%		32 ITALY	31.4%	
2 ANDORRA	50%		46 SOUTH SUDAN	26.5%	
3 CUBA	48.9%		49 AUSTRALIA	26%	
4 SWEDEN	45%		54 IRAQ	25.2%	
5 SOUTH AFRICA	44.8%		65 UK	22.6%	
6 SEYCHELLES	43.8%		73 PAKISTAN	20.7%	
7 SENEGAL	43.3%		76 SAUDI ARABIA	19.9%	
8 FINLAND	42.5%		84 USA	18.3%	
9 ECUADOR	41.6%		87 MOROCCO	17%	
10 BELGIUM	41.3%		92 IRELAND	15.7%	

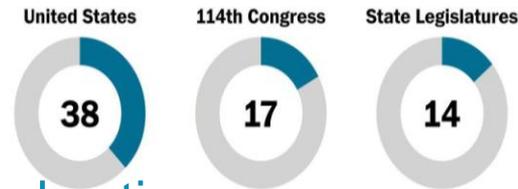




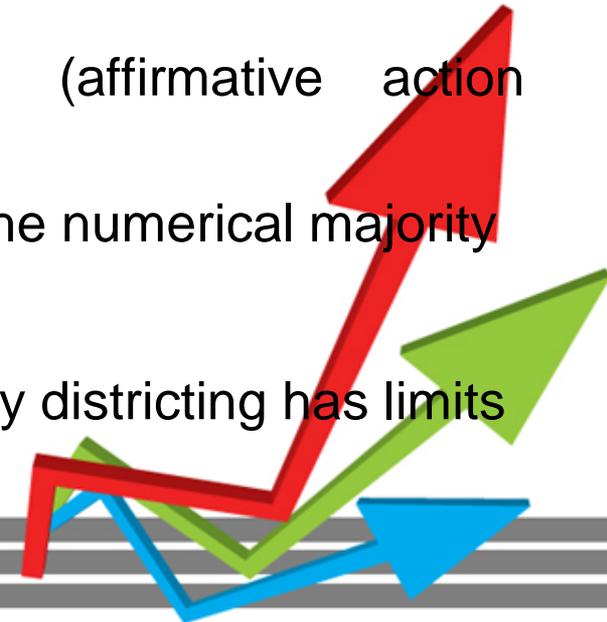
Minorities

- **bloc voting**: voting in which nearly all members of an ethnic or racial group vote for the same candidate or party

Percent of population that is a minority in:



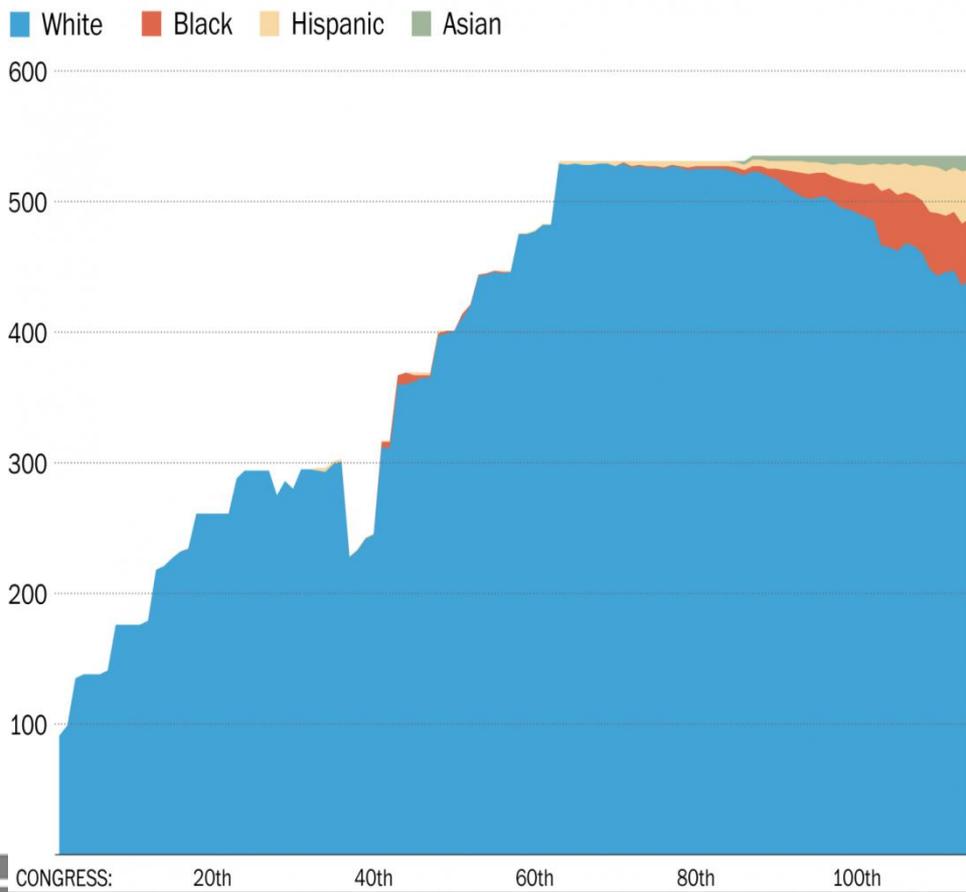
- The **political pipeline** for minorities is slim.
- Historical tendency in US is toward **racially polarized voting**.
- **Redistricting** is one method used to increase the representation of minorities in Congress.
- creation of majority-minority districts (affirmative action redistricting):
 - districts in which a minority group is the numerical majority
 - very controversial
 - *Shaw v. Reno* (1993) majority-minority districting has limits
 - pushed by Republicans in the 1990s



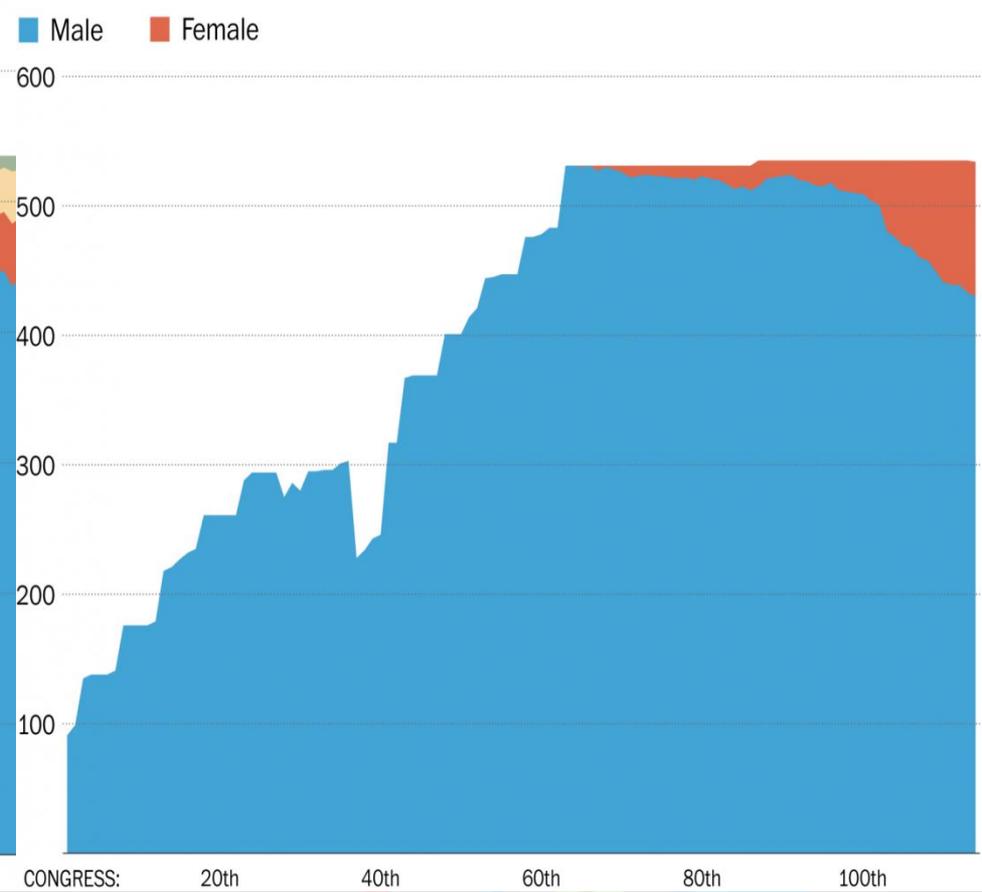
Female and Minority Members of Congress



Racial composition of Congress over time



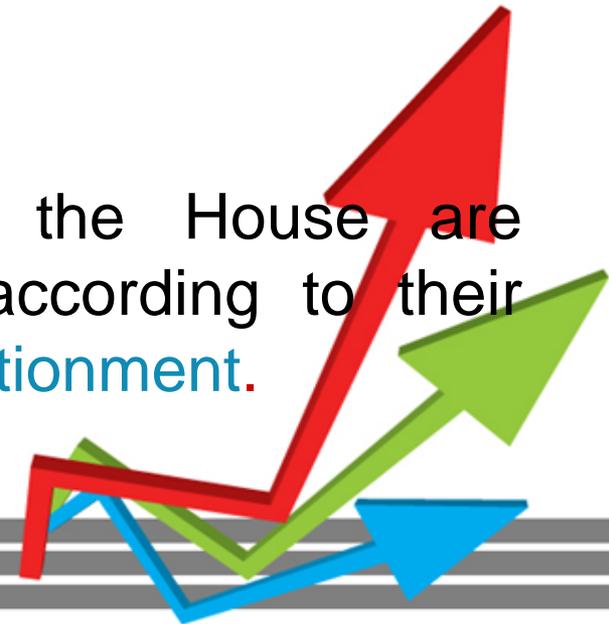
Gender composition of Congress over time



Reapportionment and Redistricting



- How are the constituencies that are represented in Congress determined?
- Senate: representation simple and never changes
 - Constitution gives every state two senators.
- House: more complex
 - Census is taken every 10 years.
 - Afterwards, the 435 seats in the House are apportioned among the states according to their populations. This is called **reapportionment**.

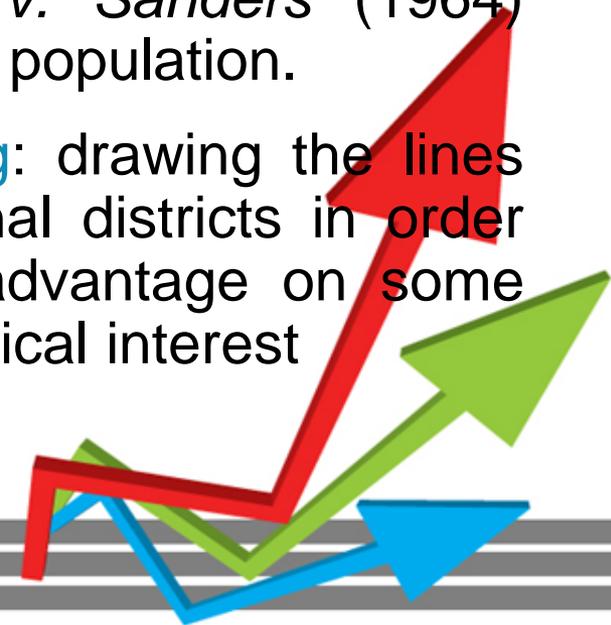




Reapportionment and Redistricting

- **redistricting**: drawing new boundaries of Congressional districts, usually after the decennial census
- When the number of seats a state has changes or when a state's population redistributes, it must redraw the boundaries for those seats' districts.
- **one person, one vote principle**: Districts were once varied in population size, but *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964) required they must be of nearly equal population.

gerrymandering: drawing the lines of Congressional districts in order to confer an advantage on some partisan or political interest

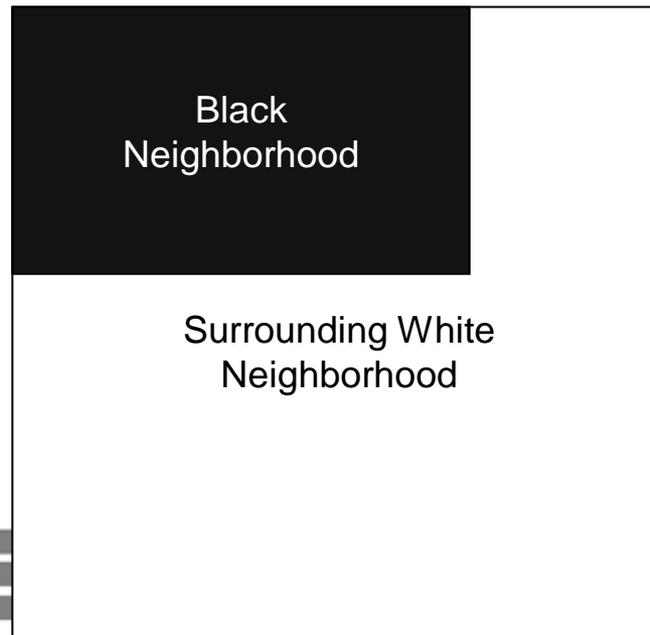




Gerrymandering

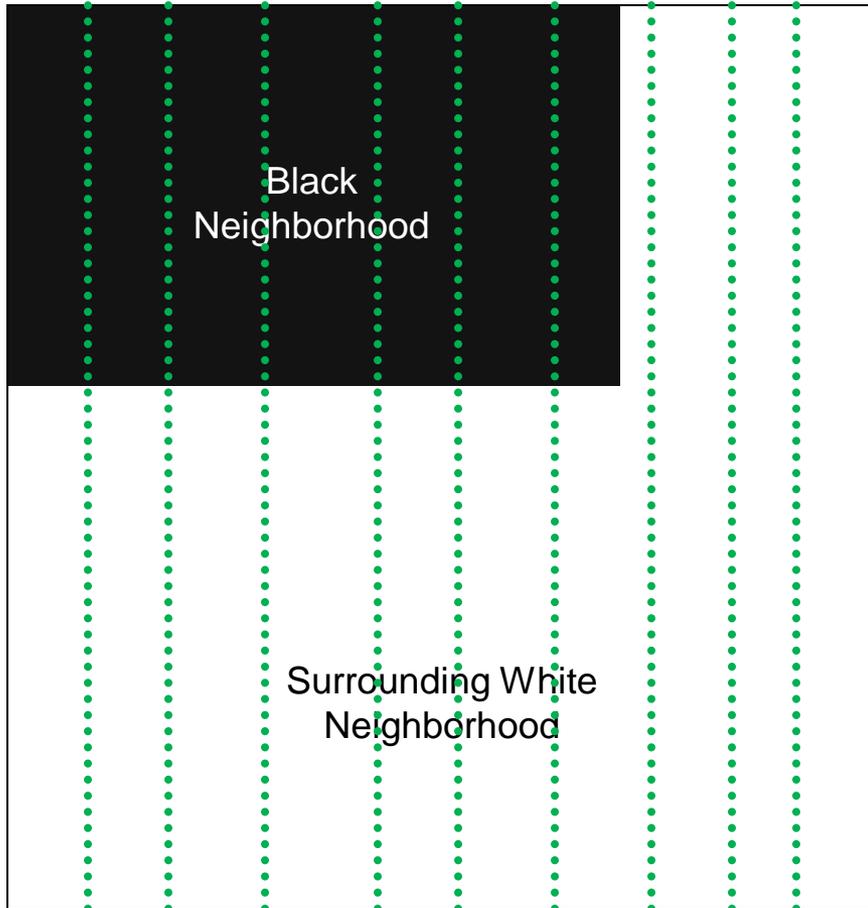
Let's look at the process of gerrymandering when redistricting at the city council level. It's exactly the same at the Congressional district level (or anywhere in between) but it's a little easier to understand at a smaller level.

We have an imaginary city, with a black neighborhood at its center. Assume a high degree of residential segregation.





Gerrymandering



Scenario 1: Old-Fashioned gerrymandering was meant to insure that minority groups were underrepresented among elected officials. Dotted lines represent council district boundaries.

The city is 30% black. All 10 electoral districts have a majority of whites. Seven of the districts have a substantial black electorate, 3 districts are all white.

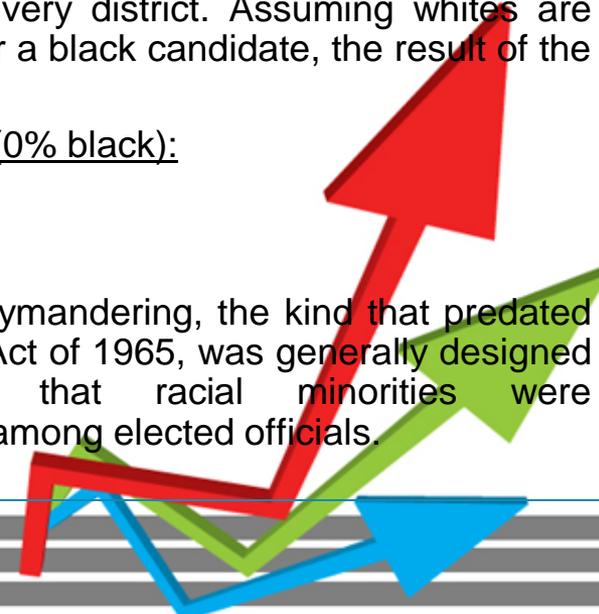
The purpose of old-fashioned gerrymandering was to divide the minority neighborhood into several districts so that the minority group (in this case blacks) would be a minority in every district. Assuming whites are unwilling to vote for a black candidate, the result of the election is:

City Council (0% black):

10 whites

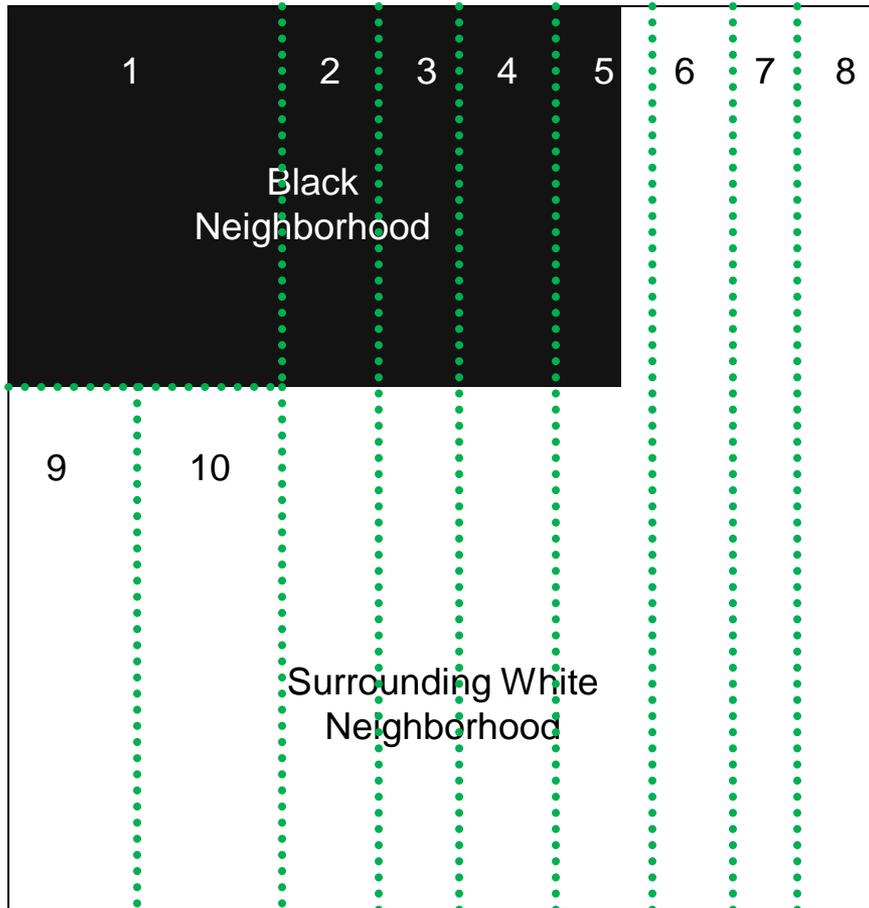
0 blacks

Old-fashioned gerrymandering, the kind that predated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, was generally designed to make sure that racial minorities were underrepresented among elected officials.





Gerrymandering



Scenario 2: Old-Fashioned gerrymandering, modified. Dotted lines represent council district boundaries.

The city is 30% black. The first electoral district is all black, electoral districts 2-5 have a substantial minority of black voters, districts 6-10 are all white. Assuming whites are unwilling to vote for a black candidate, the result of the election is:

City Council (10% black):

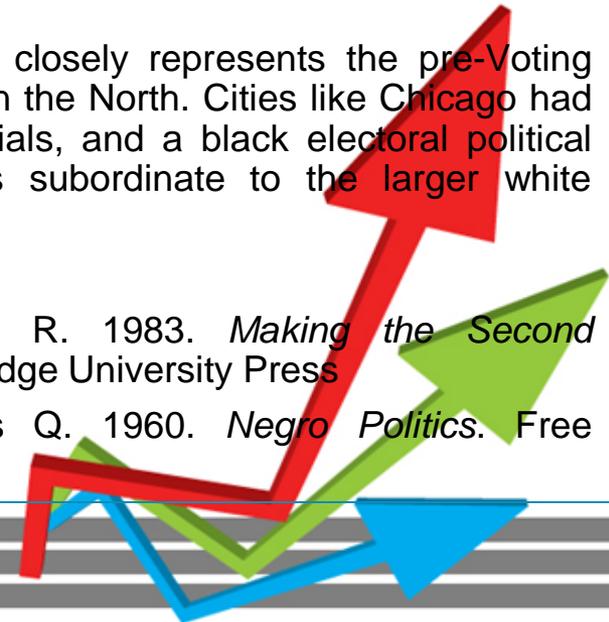
9 whites

1 black

This picture more closely represents the pre-Voting Rights Act reality in the North. Cities like Chicago had black elected officials, and a black electoral political machine that was subordinate to the larger white political machine.

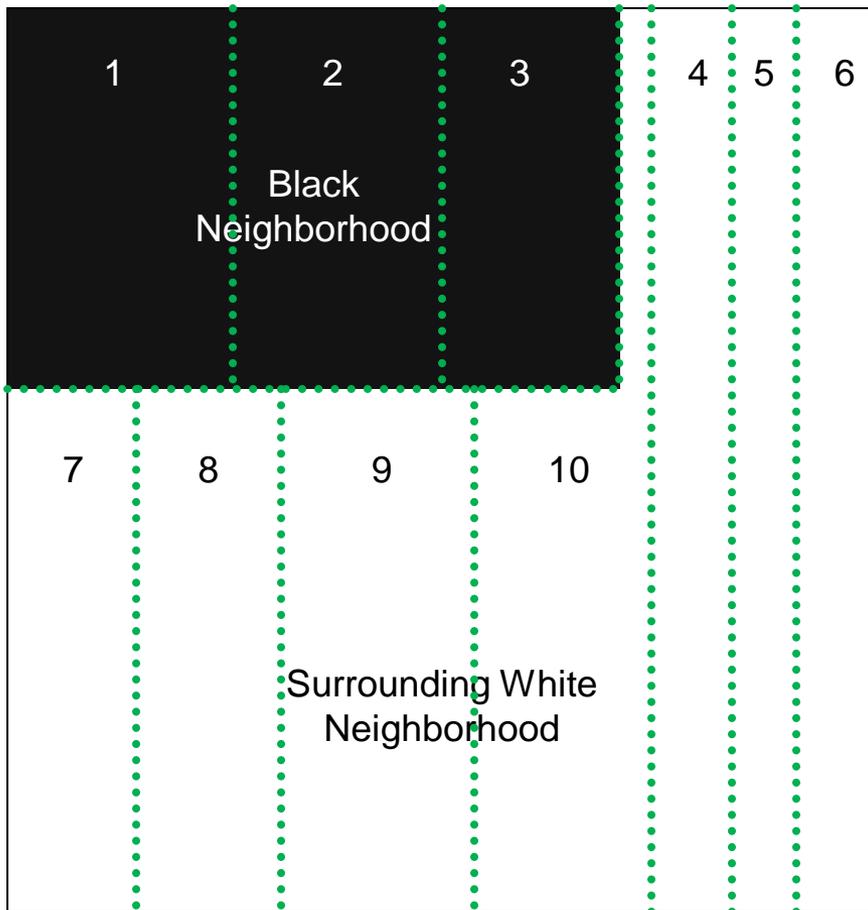
See :

- Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the Second Ghetto*. Cambridge University Press
- Wilson, James Q. 1960. *Negro Politics*. Free Press.





Gerrymandering



Scenario 3: Post Voting Rights Act Reverse Gerrymandering. Dotted lines represent council district boundaries.

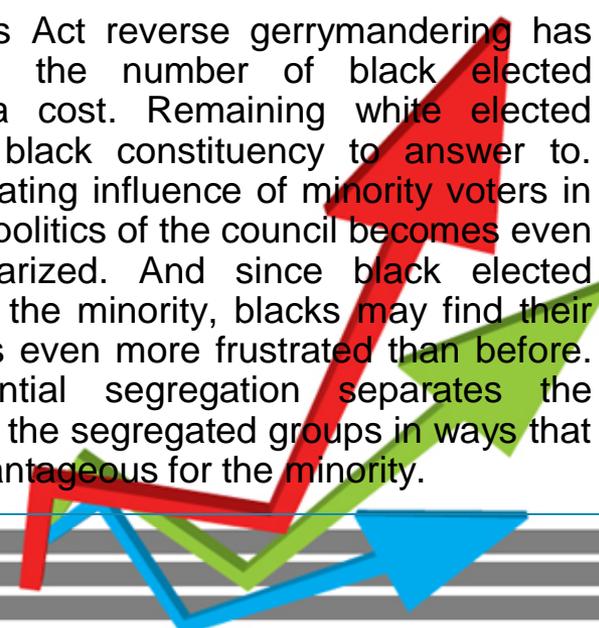
The city is 30% black. Electoral districts 1-3 are 100% black. Districts 4-10 are 100% white. The result of the election is:

City Council (30% black):

7 whites

3 blacks

Post Voting Rights Act reverse gerrymandering has sharply increased the number of black elected officials, but at a cost. Remaining white elected officials have no black constituency to answer to. Without the moderating influence of minority voters in white districts, the politics of the council becomes even more racially polarized. And since black elected officials are still in the minority, blacks may find their political aspirations even more frustrated than before. Ultimately, residential segregation separates the political fortunes of the segregated groups in ways that are usually disadvantageous for the minority.

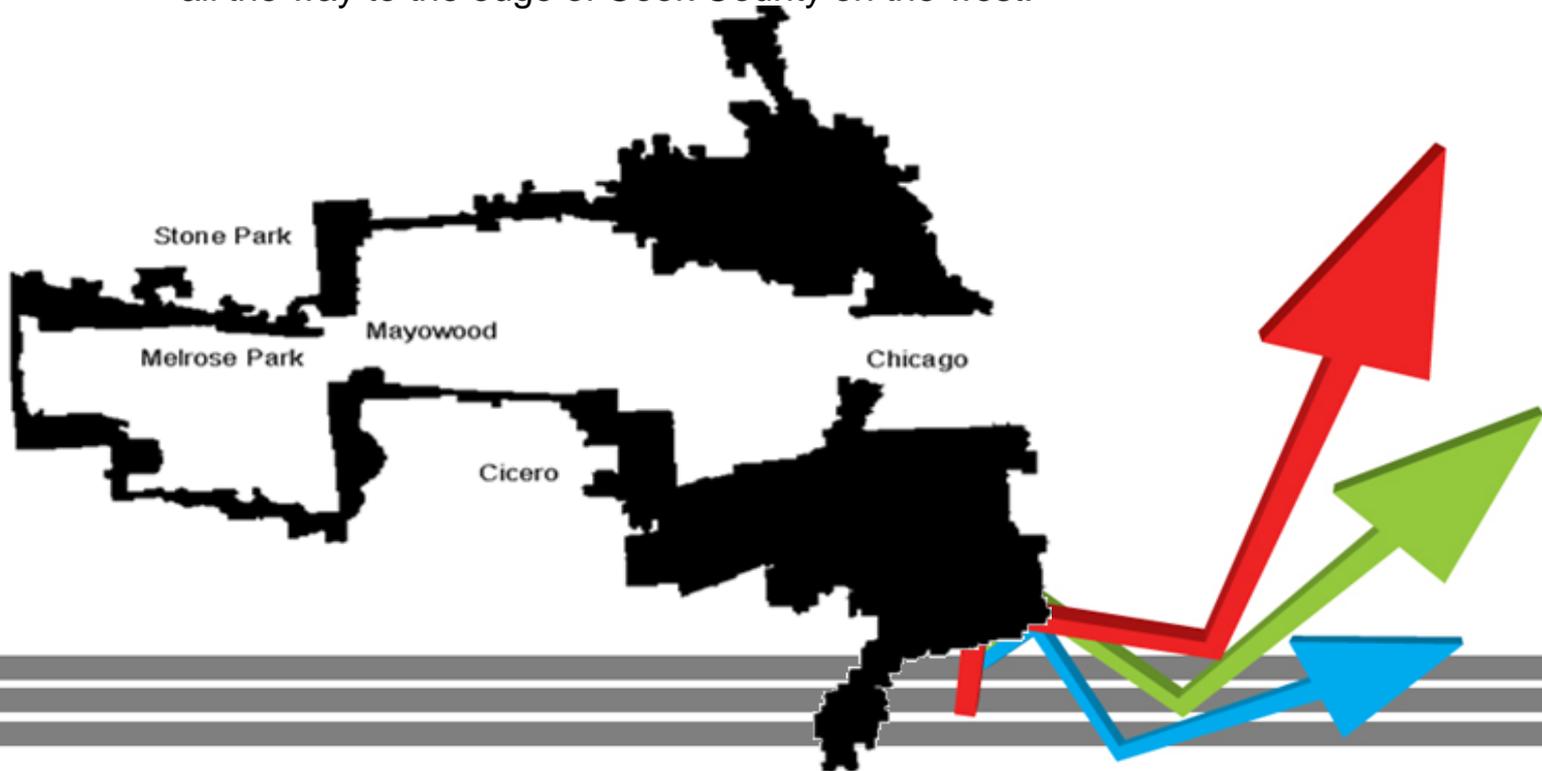




Gerrymandering

An Example of post Voting Rights Act reverse gerrymandering: Illinois' 4th Congressional district, which includes the historically Puerto Rican Logan Square, and the historically Mexican South Side neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village (the 'Lower West Side' on the Chicago neighborhood map).

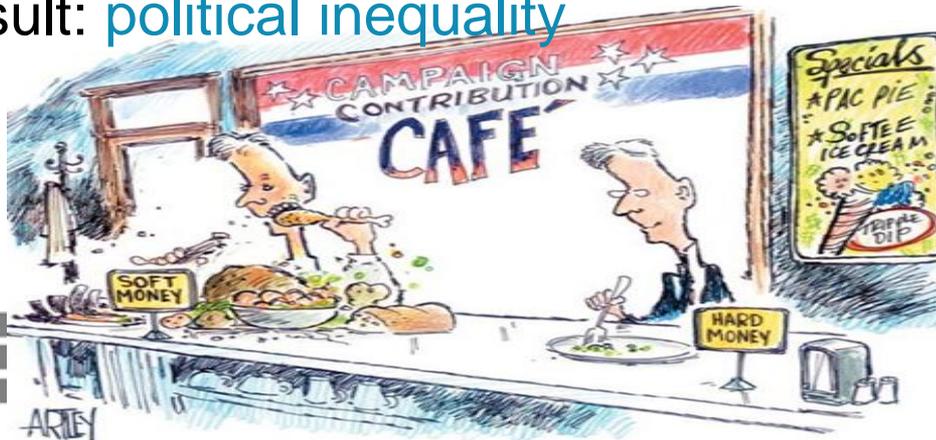
In order to connect these two Latino neighborhoods and create a single congressional district without disturbing the contiguity of mostly black congressional districts in between, the north and south neighborhoods had to be connected with a miles long corridor that runs through parks and cemeteries, all the way to the edge of Cook County on the west.





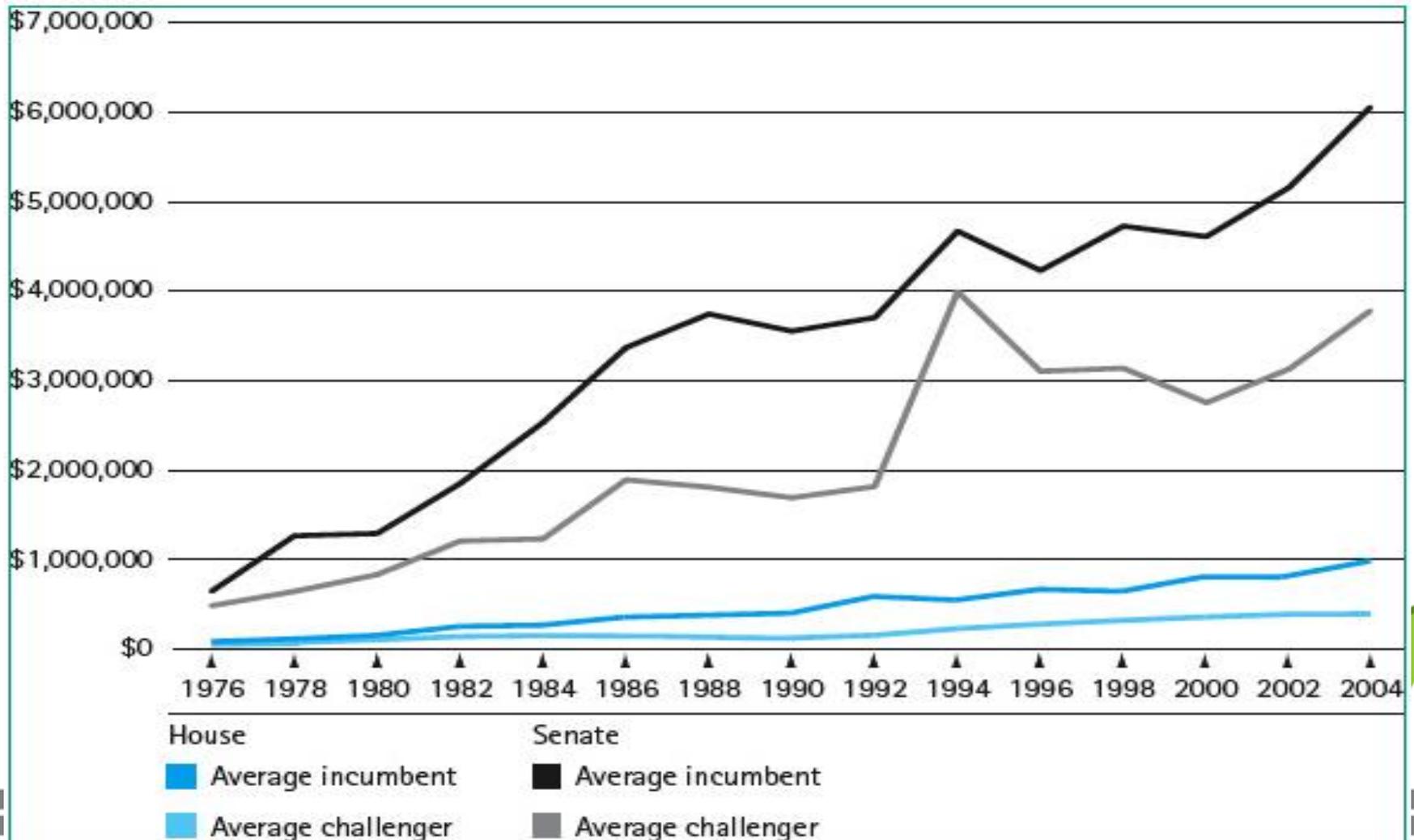
Money and Elections

- US political campaigns cost enormous amounts of money.
- The **source of campaign funds** is far more problematic for democracy than the cost of elections.
- Does money talk?
 - role in **nomination** process
 - role in **policy** formation
 - **special interests of donors**
- result: **political inequality**





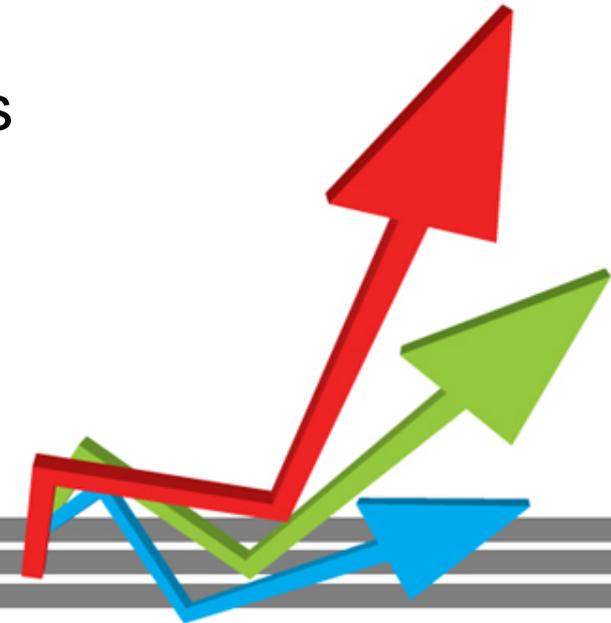
Money and Elections





Money and Elections

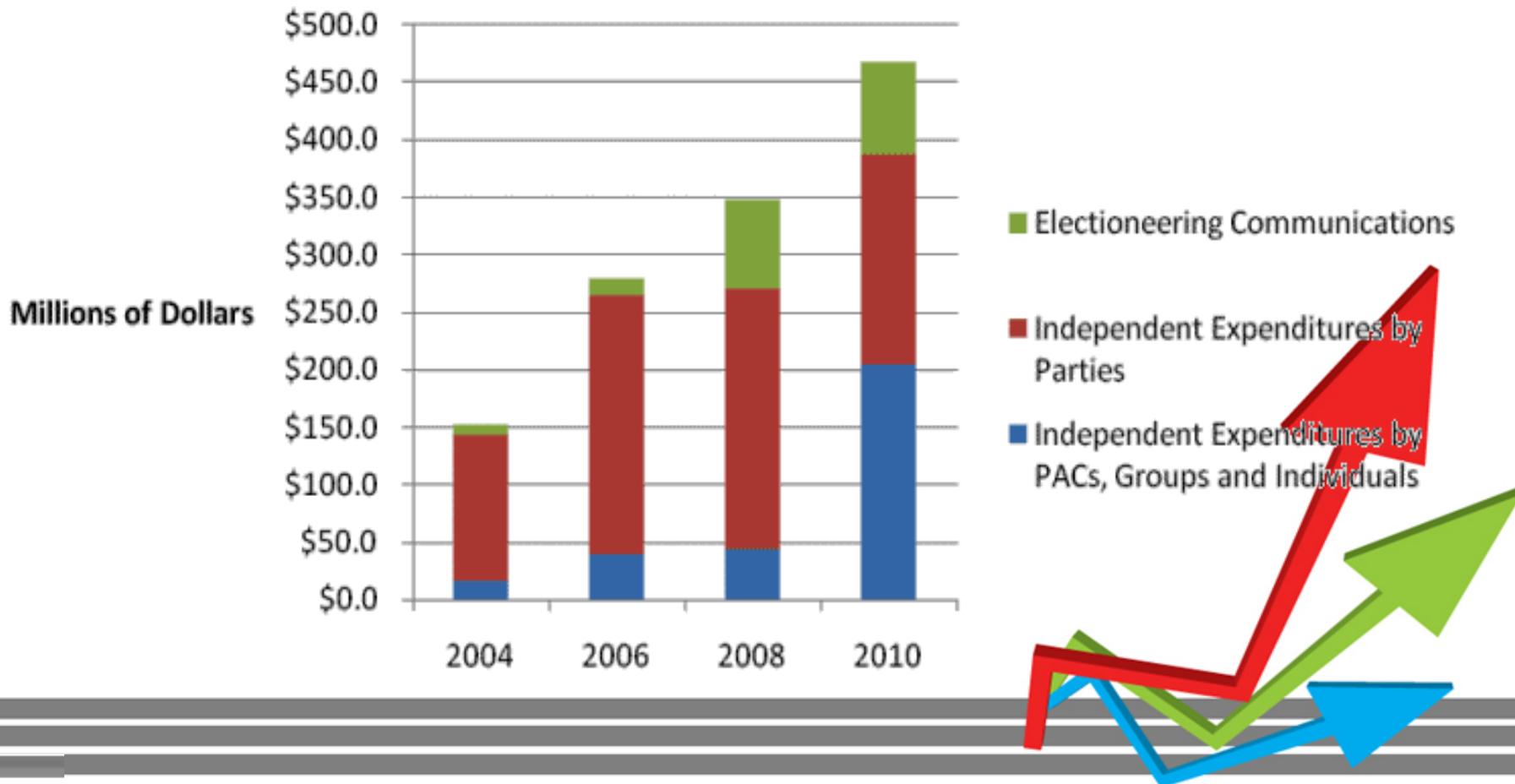
- Political money is regulated by the federal government (FECA 1971). This money can come from:
 - individuals
 - political action committees
 - political parties
 - member-to-candidate contributions
 - candidates' personal funds
 - public funds
 - independent expenditures





Money and Elections

Outside Spending in Congressional Races



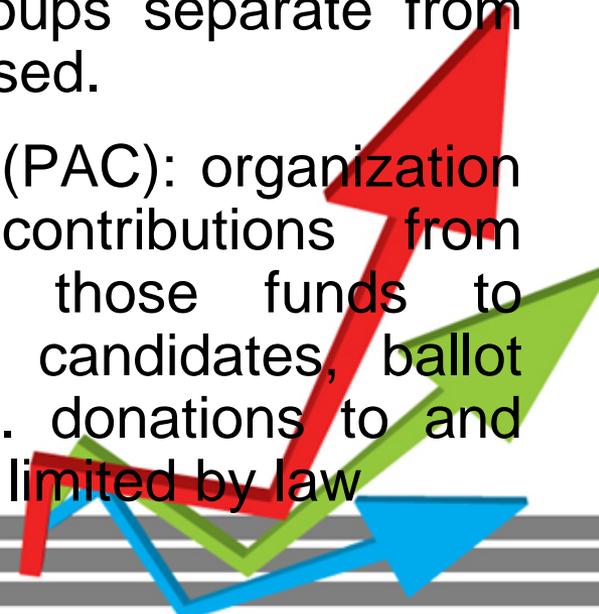


Money and Elections

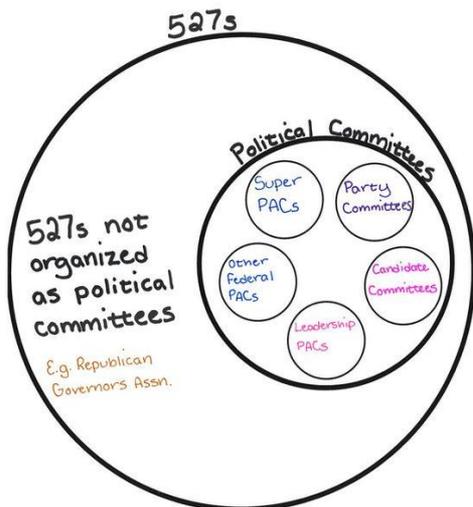
- 1990s: rise of **soft money** (money contributed by interest groups, labor unions and donors that was not subject to federal regulation because it was given to party committees, not to the candidates)
- 2004: soft money given to *national* party committees banned but could still be given to local or state committees

- **Independent spending** by groups separate from but aligned with parties increased.

- **political action committee (PAC)**: organization that pools campaign contributions from members and donates those funds to campaign for or against candidates, ballot initiatives or legislation ... donations to and expenditures by PACs are limited by law



All political committees are 527s, but not all 527s are registered as political committees.





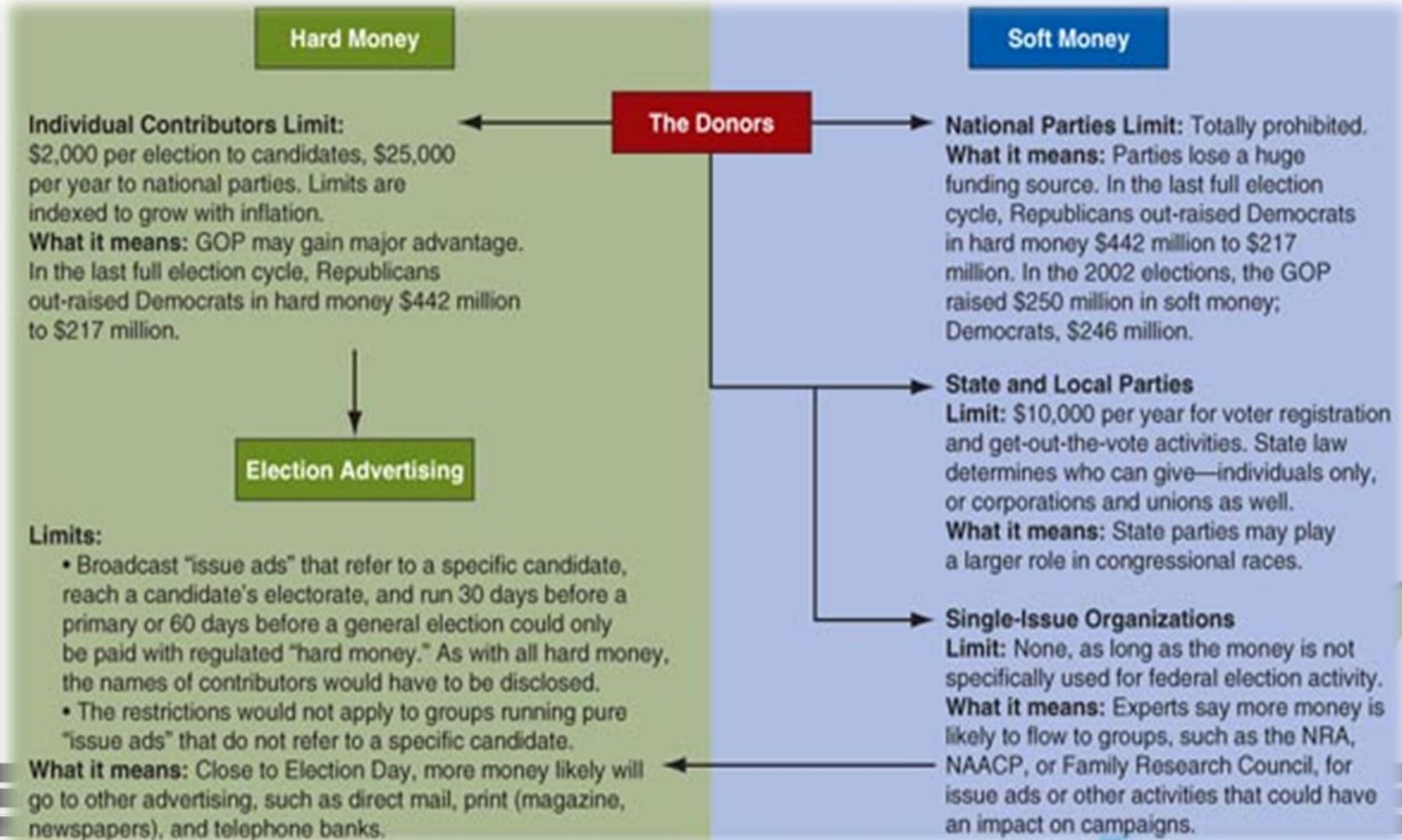
Money and Elections

- **Super PAC**: may engage in unlimited political spending *independently* of the campaigns ... Unlike traditional PACs, can raise funds from individuals, corporations, unions and other groups without any legal limit on donation size.
- **527**: tax-exempt organization created primarily to influence the selection, nomination, election, appointment or defeat of candidates to federal, state or local public office
 - **527 loophole**: There are no contribution or spending limits imposed on 527s. They must register with the IRS, publicly disclose their donors and file periodic reports of contributions and expenditures.
 - used to raise money to spend on **issue advocacy and voter mobilization** ... may not *expressly advocate* for specific candidates or coordinate with any candidate's campaign and so are not regulated under state or federal campaign finance laws





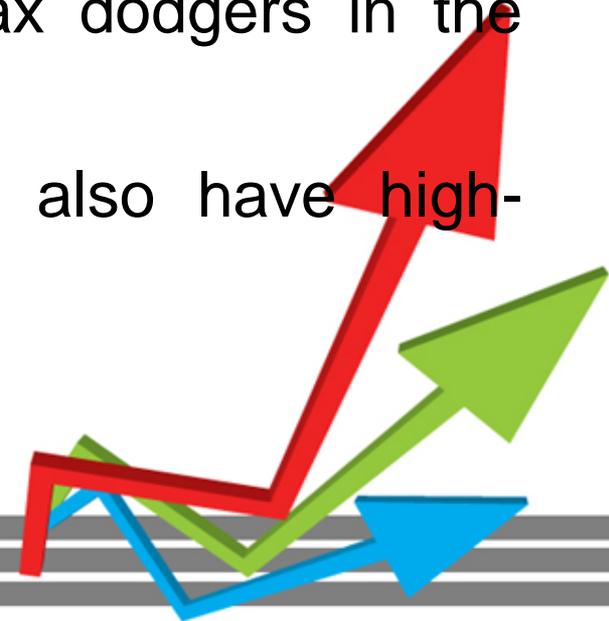
Money and Elections





Money and Elections

- In 2014, three corporate PACs donated a whopping \$7.5 million directly to congressional candidates, dropping checks in virtually every race for the House of Representatives.
- Businesses with the largest corporate PACs also happen to be some of the worst tax dodgers in the United States.
- Corporations with high-dollar PACs also have high-dollar defense contracts.





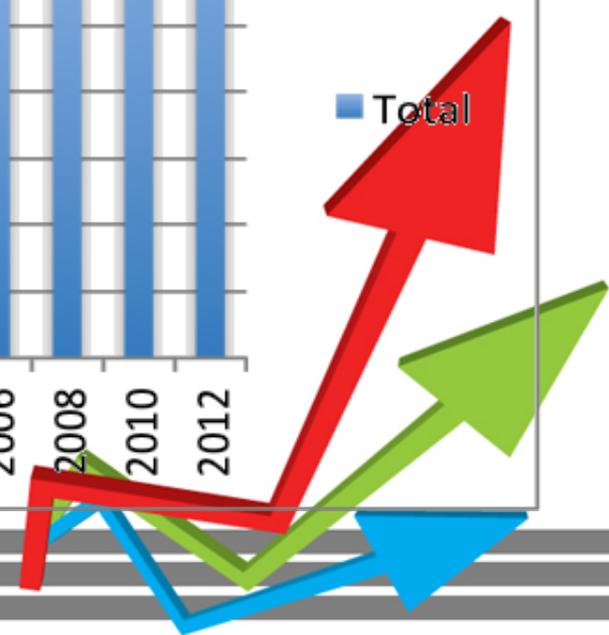
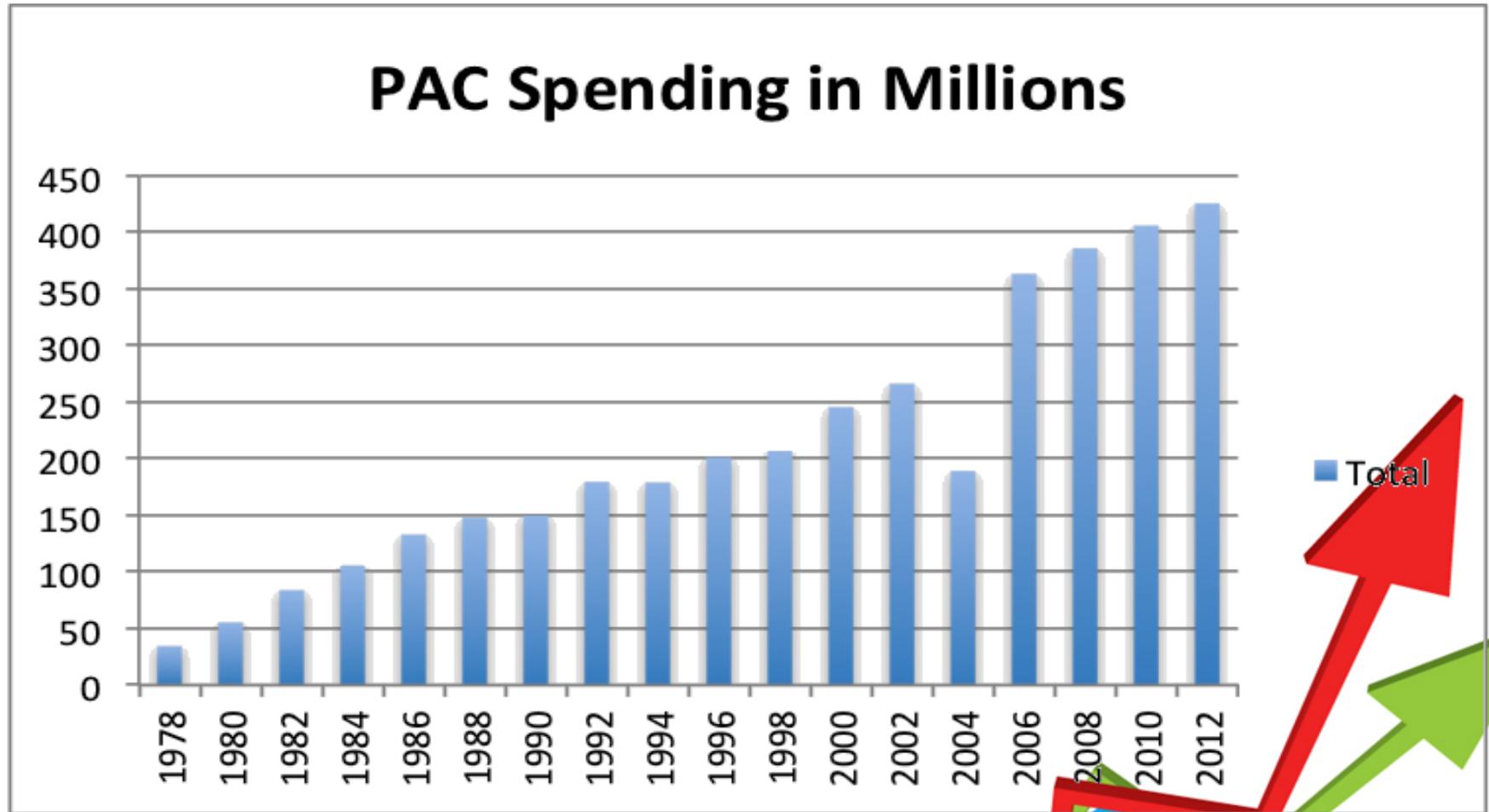
Money and Elections

The Corporate PAC Map shows which corporate PAC makes the most direct contributions to Congressional candidates state-by-state. The Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* made it legal for corporations to take unlimited funds directly from their treasury for political spending. Channeled through outside groups, those contributions often go undisclosed and are not represented here.





Money and Elections

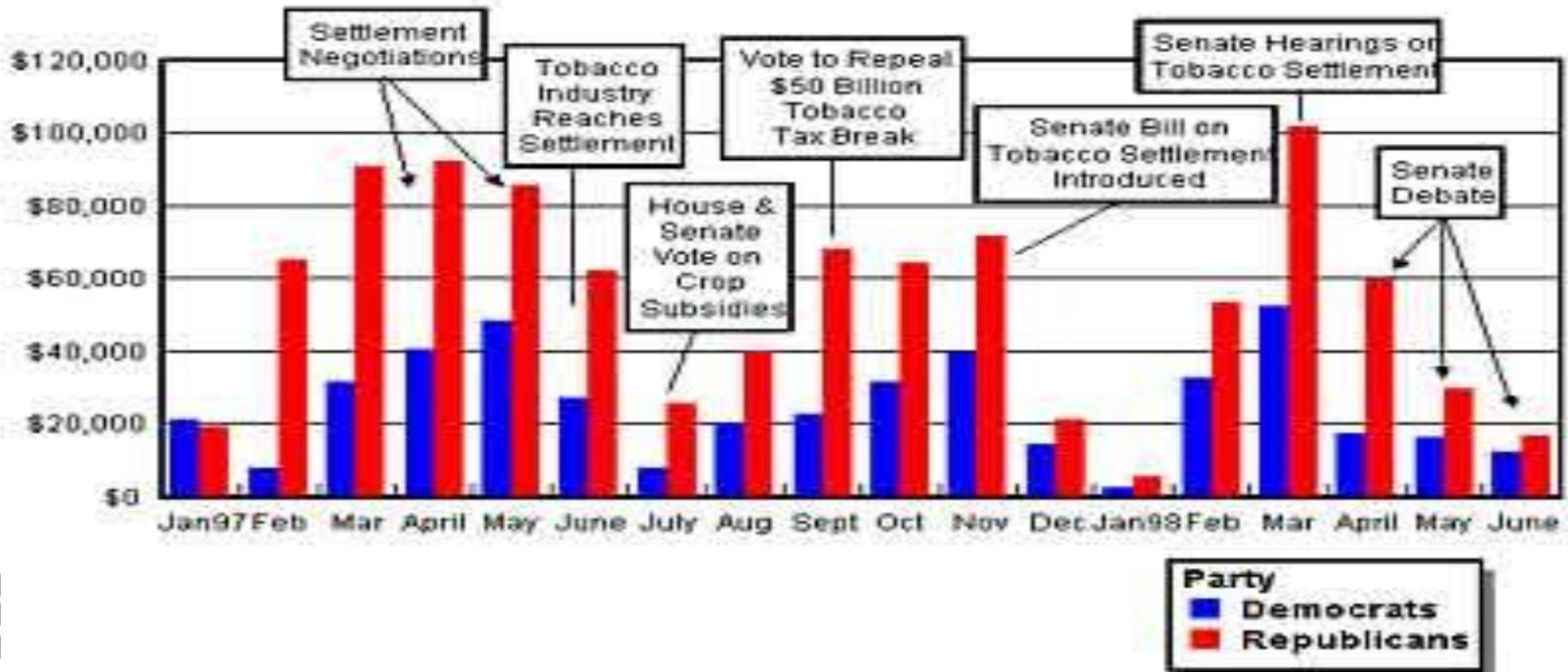




Money and Elections

an example of Congressional PAC spending paired with Congressional activity on issues of interest

Tobacco PAC Contributions Month by Month 1997-98 Election Cycle

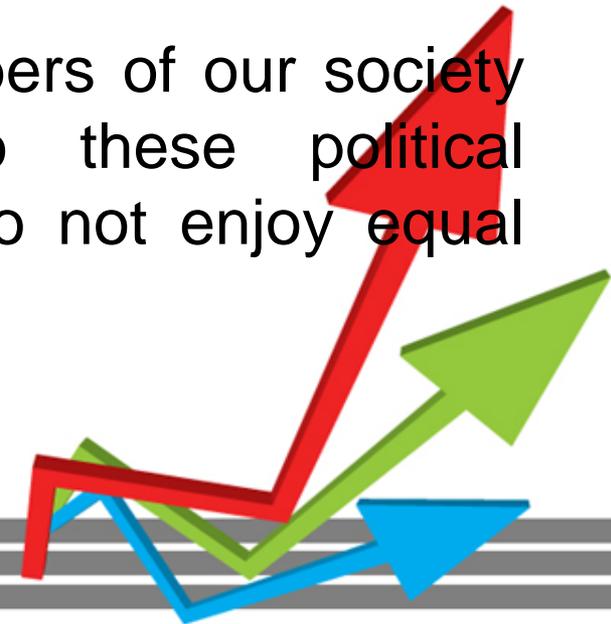




Money and Elections

- Are PACs good or bad for the process?
- PACs are the embodiment of special interests that use their contributions to buy the votes of legislators.
- But the evidence is mixed.
- The less affluent and minority members of our society do not enjoy equal access to these political organizations. Consequently, they do not enjoy equal **access** to their representatives.

- [A Guide to Political Money](#)





Money and Elections

- The internet has the potential to alter the way money is raised for campaigns.
- Promises headaches for FEC
 - Business links with campaign link? Are these **in-kind contributions**?
 - Yes
 - Can you **match internet funds** with public funds during the presidential nomination campaign?

No



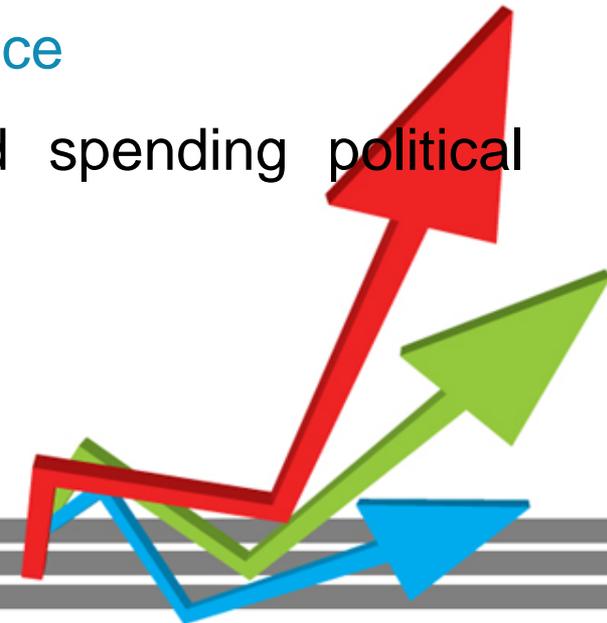
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THE EFFICIAL COVERING





Money and Elections

- *McConnell v FEC* (2003): concluded that the government's interest in preventing political party corruption overrides the free speech rights to which the parties would otherwise be entitled ... Since that time, however, SCOTUS has ruled in favor of the free speech rights of PACs, Super PACs and 527s in case after case.
- Strategies used to reform campaign finance
 - limitations on giving, receiving and spending political money
 - disclosure laws
 - governmental subsidies





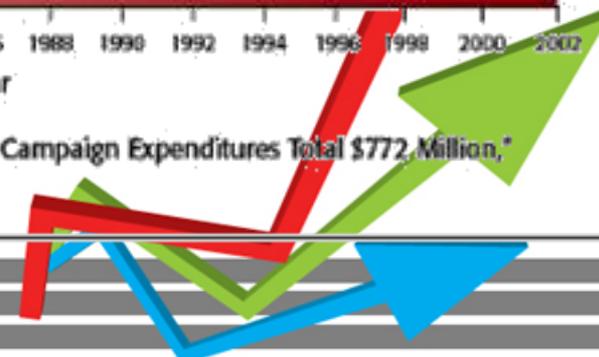
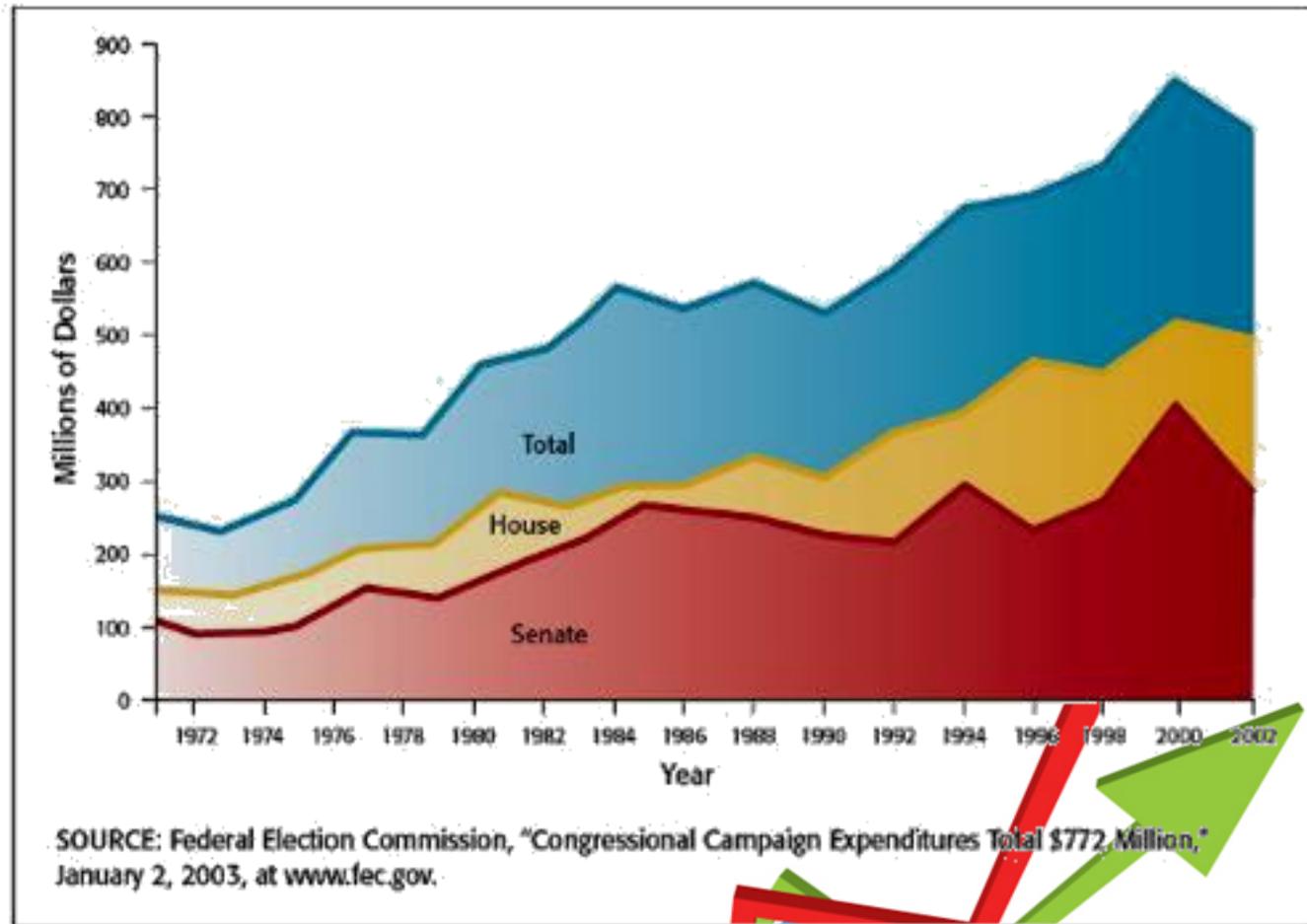
Money and Elections

Continuing Problems
with Campaign
Finance:

rising costs of
campaigns

declining competition

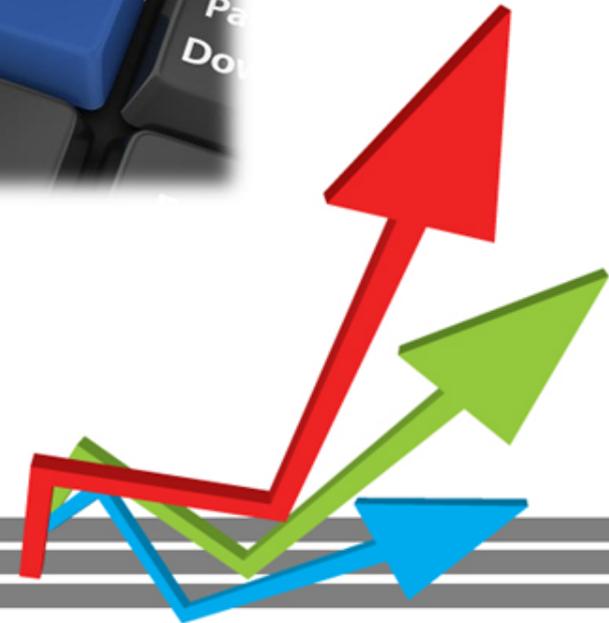
increasing
dependence on PACs
and wealthy donors





Reforming the Electoral Process

- focus on the Electoral College
- focus on campaign finance
- other areas
 - nominations
 - regional primaries
 - internet voting
 - standardizing recounts
 - ballot reform





The End

