

PARTY POLARIZATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Toward Prospects for Change

David Karol

Associate Professor

Department of Government and Politics

University of Maryland

May 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In American politics, a growing partisan divide on the environment is making environmental reforms seem further out of reach. In this research paper, scorecards from the League of Conservation Voters are used to examine the growth of this divide between the 91st and 114th Congresses, revealing a sorting of Members of Congress into strong anti- and pro-environment positioning along party lines. The paper examines how shifting constituencies, party geography, and personal characteristics have affected the positions taken by members of Congress, finding that the role of party affiliation in determining environmental scores has grown continuously since the late 1970s.

In the second part, the paper examines how this partisan gap may be eroded by changing demographics, industry influence, and shifts in coalitional dynamics affecting Republican Members of Congress' stances on climate change. The role of present-day coalitions in determining politicians' preferences will only hold as long as political costs remain small. If political costs were to rise, then coalitional allies would likely follow Members of Congress to more pro-environmental positions. Anticipating such a shift, some Republicans may take forward positions on environmental issues to gather a reputation for issue leadership and distinguishing media attention. The growth in the number of Republican members of the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in the House of Representatives may indicate that Members of Congress are taking such enterprising actions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Rise of Environmentalism..... | 1 |
| PART I: THE GROWING PARTY DIVIDE ON ENVIRONMENTALISM..... | 1 |
| Measuring the Divide | 2 |
| MCs and the Environment: A Multivariate Analysis..... | 6 |
| Changing Preferences: Modeling LCV Scores from the 92 nd Congress (1971-1972) to the 114 th Congress (2015-2016)..... | 8 |
| Party Coalitions, Interest Groups, and Campaign Finance..... | 9 |
| Polarization in Public Opinion on Environmental Issues | 11 |
| PART II: PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE | 15 |
| Peak Polarization?..... | 15 |
| A Republican Coalition in Demographic Decline | 17 |
| Young GOP Voters are More Pro-Environment | 17 |
| The Declining Fossil Fuel Sector | 18 |
| Renewable Energy as Counterbalance? | 19 |
| Building Credibility and Winning Attention..... | 19 |
| Cracks in the Wall? The Climate Solutions Caucus..... | 20 |
| REFERENCES | 23 |
| APPENDIX - REGRESSION TABLES | 25 |
| A.1 - Multiple regression coefficients for LCV Scores in the U.S. House of Representatives..... | 25 |
| A.2 - Multiple regression coefficients for LCV Scores in the U.S. Senate | 26 |

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I explore the growing party divide on environmental issues. Understanding the roots of this division is interesting in its own right, but may also reveal how it might change. This is a key question since even in this polarized era few major laws are enacted entirely by one party (Curry and Lee 2017). A crack in the wall of partisanship on the environment may be needed to address climate change in a serious way.

I chart the rise of the partisan divide on the environment and put it in context among other cases of party position change. I then consider prospects for change, focusing on reasons why some Republicans, who are an outlier among conservative parties worldwide, may revisit their policy positions, especially on the subject of climate change.

The Rise of Environmentalism

Environmentalism is a relatively new issue, historically speaking. At the beginning of the 20th century, the question of “conservation” was briefly prominent in the fight between progressive Republicans led by Theodore Roosevelt and the GOP “Old Guard” allied with William Howard Taft (Richardson 1958). Yet the conservation controversy did not endure. In subsequent decades, environmental issues as we now understand them were largely absent from national debates and party competition.

Environmental consciousness grew in the 1960s and early 1970s. Key milestones in this trend included the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962 and the first Earth Day in 1970. Environmental organizations expanded and multiplied during this period. New groups including the League of Conservation Voters, Friends of the Earth, and the Natural Resources Defense Council arose while the membership of older organizations like the Sierra Club expanded. The Washington presence of environmental organizations and their role in elections correspondingly increased (Mitchell, Mertig and Dunlap 1991).

A thorough explanation for the rise of environmentalism is beyond the scope of this paper, but a few points may be noted. This development was not unique to the United States, but rather occurred throughout the industrialized world. Visible pollution (e.g., the mid-twentieth century smog in Los Angeles and the fire at the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland) was a factor. A leading account stresses the rise of “postmaterialist” values in societies that have experienced peace and prosperity for decades (Inglehart 1995). Once basic needs are met, quality of life become more salient, and environmentalism is an expression of this.

PART I: THE GROWING PARTY DIVIDE ON ENVIRONMENTALISM

The relatively recent emergence of the environmental issue contrasts with questions like trade policy or race, which have been contested since before the American Revolution. Other issues, such as the regulation of labor unions, have been debated for over a century. In this sense, the politics of the environment resembles debates over “social issues” like gun control, abortion and LGBT rights. Like environmentalism, these issues arose in the 1960s, when polarization was at its nadir. Initially, these new issues divided elected officials and voters along regional and religious lines, at least as much as party ones. While Democrats and Republicans continue to disagree on topics that emerged during the New Deal era, like labor regulation and the welfare state, these newer issues, including environmental policy, have supplemented rather than replaced the older controversies in a process Layman et al (2010) call “conflict extension.”

When a movement brings an issue to the fore, however, a partisan divide is not the only possibility. Reformers may win over elected officials in both parties and achieve victory for their cause, eventually removing it from public debate.

Alternatively, an issue may remain on the political agenda for an extended period, but cut across party lines. A prominent example is “the liquor question.” Supporters of Prohibition (or “drys”) and opponents (or “wets”) were numerous in both parties. Republicans were more supportive of Prohibition on average, but the issue split both parties until it disappeared from the national debate with the ratification of the 22nd Amendment in 1933 (Poole and Rosenthal 2007, McGirr 2015).

In many countries, the growth of environmental consciousness produced important Green parties that won seats in legislatures and cabinets. American electoral institutions, however, discourage the formation of new parties. Significant third parties have been short-lived in the United States. As Richard Hofstadter (1955, 97) wrote, in America “third parties are like bees. Once they have stung they die.” Although there is a Green Party in the United States, it is less focused on environmental concerns than its name suggests, and it was only relevant in the flukish presidential election in Florida in 2000.

In the early 1970s, party elites gave mixed signals on the environment. Richard Nixon was not a hero of environmentalists, but he signed major legislation including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, and proposed the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Nixon’s advocacy for these reforms—which won massive support in Congress—has been seen as opportunistic, and he later criticized environmentalists (Flippen 2000). Nonetheless, Nixon’s support for these new laws and agencies showed that both parties initially sought to address public concerns about the environment.

Nixon’s positioning differed from that of later Republican presidents. In this, as on many issues,

Ronald Reagan was the key figure in defining party differences.ⁱ Reagan allied with the pro-development “Sagebrush Rebellion,” telling a crowd, “count me in as a rebel.”ⁱⁱⁱ Party platforms also showed a growing divide on the issue after Reagan (Kamienicki 1995).

Measuring the Divide

In order to show the trend in party positioning on the environment, I turn to Congress, where—unlike the White House—both parties are always represented. Figure 1 shows the distribution of League of Conservation Voters (LCV) ratings among Senators and Representatives. The League has rated Members of Congress (MCs) from 0 to 100 since 1972. The ratings are based chiefly on floor votes.ⁱⁱⁱ On occasion, the League double-weighted important votes and counted co-sponsorship of bills, and signing discharge petitions and letters. The charts reveal that when Congress first faced the modern controversy over environmental regulation, legislators responded in a wide variety of ways. Most MCs in both the House and Senate during the 91st Congress (1969–1970), the first rated by the LCV, were not consistent friends or foes of environmentalists. Instead, the majority compiled mixed records, sometimes siding with the LCV on legislation, and sometimes opposing it.

By the 114th Congress (2015–2016), the picture was very different. Most MCs clustered at the extremes, receiving a high or low rating from the LCV. This is not merely a story of the “sorting” of environmentalists and their critics within the two parties. Rather, MCs polarized on environmental issues along partisan lines. Figure 2 depicts the changing association between party affiliation and LCV scores in Congress since the scorecard’s inception. I report the difference between the Democratic and Republican mean LCV rating, so positive numbers indicate greater Democratic support for environmentalism.

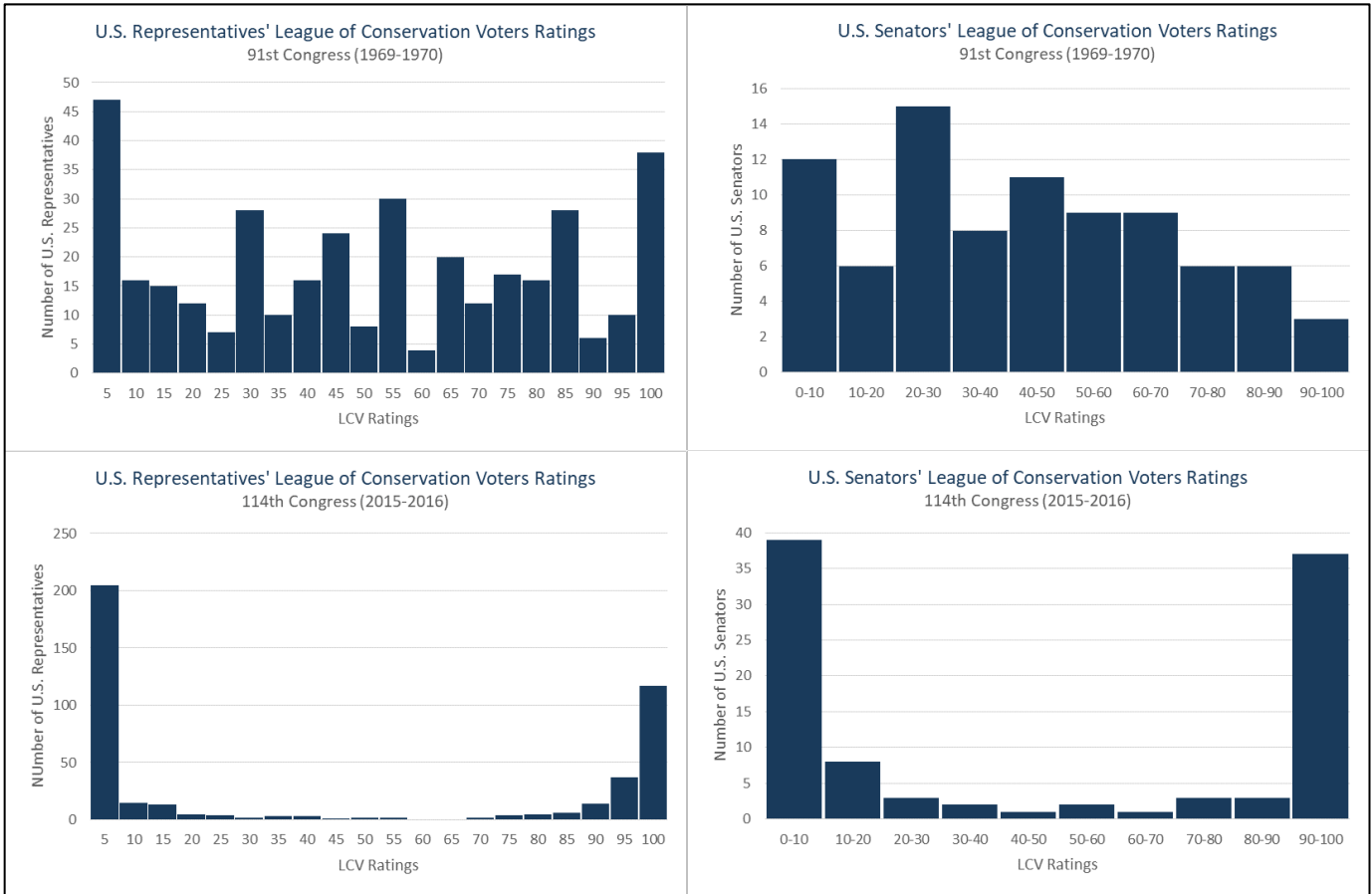


Figure 1: Showing the LCV Ratings for the 91st and 114th Congress.

Several facts are apparent from the figure. First, from the beginning, Democrats were more supportive of the environmentalists' agenda on average than Republicans. This contrasted with other new issues such as abortion and gun control,

on which the party divide was initially minimal. However, the difference between the party means on environmental issues was initially modest. Many Democratic MCs, especially those from the South and West voted against the wishes of the LCV, while more than a few Republicans, chiefly northeastern moderates, took LCV-approved positions. Second, the parties are now polarized on the environment, much as they are on other issues. This shift was quite gradual. Finally, the same pattern is evident in both the House and the Senate.

Changing Partisan Geography

The growth of the partisan divide on the environment coincided with a great demographic and geographic

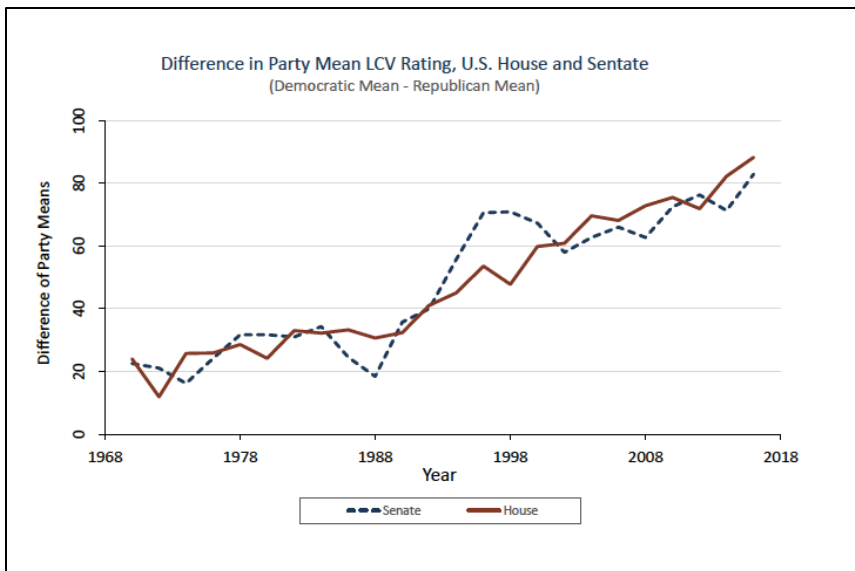


Figure 2: Showing the difference in the mean party LCV Ratings for the U.S. House and Senate from 1969-2016.

| Table 1: Evolution of Republican and Democratic Constituencies | | 92nd Congress | 114th Congress |
|---|---|---------------|----------------|
| Republicans | Southern Share of Party Caucus (%) | 16.20 | 44.60 |
| | District Democratic Presidential Vote (%) | 38.70 | 40.70 |
| | District Energy and Mining Employment (%) | 0.27 | 0.74 |
| | District Farming Employment (%) | 1.80 | 1.50 |
| Democrats | Southern Share of Party Caucus (%) | 35.20 | 17.40 |
| | District Democratic Presidential Vote (%) | 44.8 | 63.3 |
| | District Energy and Mining Employment (%) | 0.40 | 0.24 |
| | District Farming Employment (%) | 1.80 | 0.40 |

Data are from Census of Agriculture and Prof. Scott Adler's Congressional District Dataset.^{iv}

realignment of the two parties. Many factors beyond environmental debates contributed to this change. In Table 1, I compare the Democratic and Republican constituencies in the 92nd Congress (1971-1972), the first one for which LCV scores are available for all legislators, and the recent 114th Congress (2015-2016).

In the first Congress, the vote share of the recent Democratic presidential candidate (Hubert Humphrey) was only slightly higher in Democratic representatives and senators' states and districts than in those of their GOP colleagues. By the last Congress, the gap was enormous. Democrats mostly represented districts and states in which President Obama had won easily in 2012, while most Republicans came from constituencies where he lost badly.

Other variables also reveal sharp reversals. In the earlier Congress, most Southerners were Democrats. Yet Southerners made up a larger share of the Congressional GOP in 2015-2016 than

they had of the Senate and House Democratic caucuses in 1971-1972. Large-scale change is also evident in the economic bases of the Democrats and Republicans' constituencies. In the 92nd Congress, those working in the energy and mining sector made up a slightly larger share of the constituency of Congressional Democrats. By the 114th Congress, however, the same sector was three times as large a share of Republicans' constituencies compared to Democratic constituencies. Farmers, who made up an equal share of both parties' constituencies in 1971-1972, were nearly four times as great a component of GOP MCs' constituencies compared to those of Democrats by 2015-2016.

These shifts are not unrelated. The South was the most rural section of the country, and long the most Democratic. Yet by 1970, ticket-splitting was common in the South. Southern voters frequently rejected Democratic presidential candidates, but usually still voted for the Democrats further down the ballot. Moreover,

much energy production is located in the “oil patch” in the historically Democratic states of Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma.

The political realignment of white Southerners over the last five decades has reshaped both parties. It was not driven primarily by the politics of environmental regulation. Yet by reshaping party constituencies, this realignment had consequences for the positioning of Democrats and Republicans on environmental issues, helping to polarize the two parties. There are far fewer Democrats and Republicans in Congress today who are cross-pressured on environmental questions than there once were.

The “sorting” of groups of constituents into party coalitions and the changes in partisan geography has been widely noted (Bishop 2008, Hopkins 2017). Yet a closer look at the evidence reveals that these shifts do not fully account for the parties’ polarization on environmental issues. To see this, we can look at cases in which Democratic and Republican elected officials face the same constituency. This of course is true of both parties’ presidential candidates, who compete for

electoral votes, but have increasingly disagreed on environmental issues. Yet we only observe one President at a time, so we cannot know how different the environmental policies pursued by the losing nominee would have been from those the victor implemented.

A better source of evidence on this point is found in the Senate. At any given time, several states are represented by one senator from each party in mixed delegations. These states constitute a natural experiment, allowing us to see how Democratic and Republican senators have represented the same constituents over time. If the growing partisan divide on the environment stems chiefly from the fact that Democrats and Republicans increasingly represent states and districts with different preferences, we would not expect to see an increasing divide on these issues between Democratic and GOP senators from the same states.

Figure 3 charts the difference of party average scores among all senators and among the subset from states electing one senator from each party during that Congress.

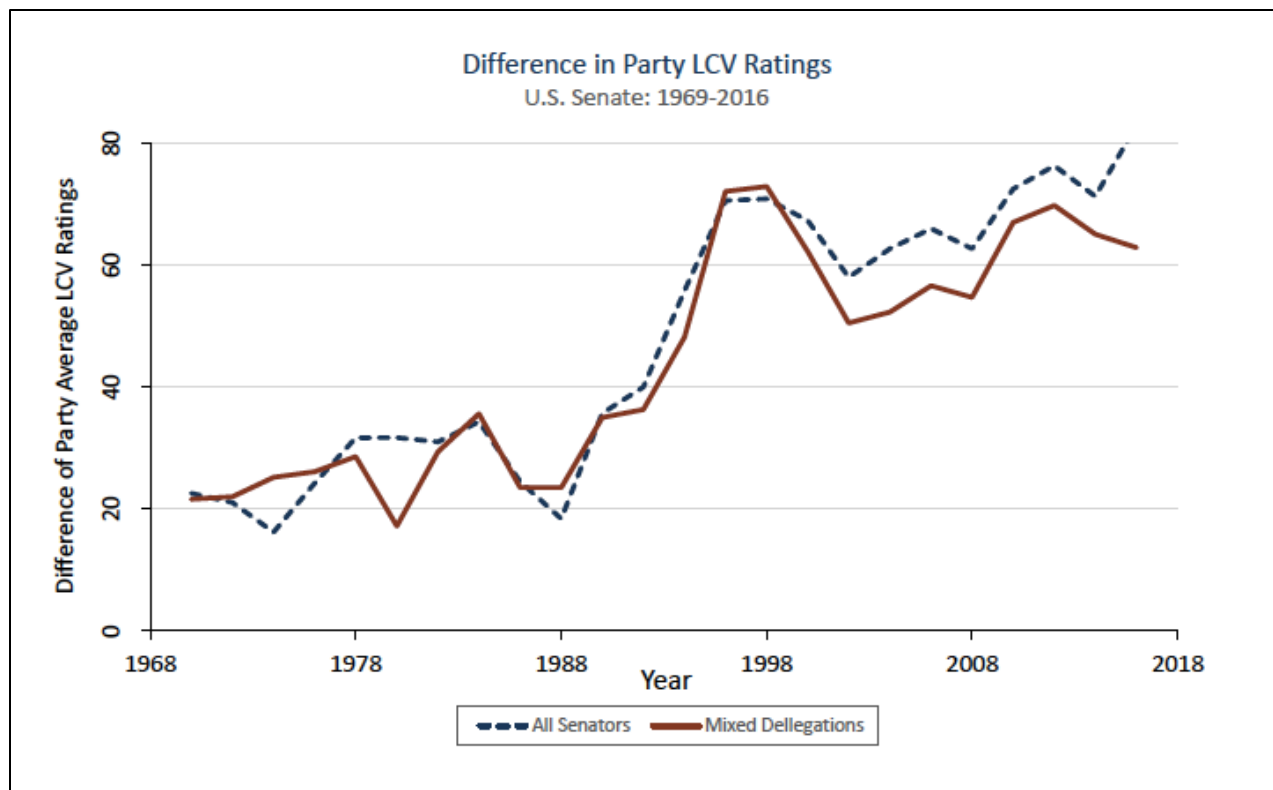


Figure 3: Showing the difference in LCV Ratings for the U.S. Senate from 1969-2016.

The figure reveals that the gap between the parties evident on environmental issues among senators from states with mixed delegations is similar to that evident in the Senate over the five decades charted. In a few Congresses, the partisan divide on environmental issues in the mixed delegation states even exceeded that among all senators. This is evidence that the growing divide between the parties on environmental issues cannot be explained only or even mostly as a product of their geographic realignment.

MCs and the Environment: A Multivariate Analysis

A more precise understanding of the changing relationship between constituency, party, and MCs' positioning on issues requires a multivariate analysis. In the following analysis, the dependent variable is MC's LCV ratings. Key independent variables assess the role of party affiliation, constituency and personal characteristics.

While constituency factors are important, elected officials' personal background and beliefs may matter as well. Politicians are people, too, and have personal beliefs, just like voters. However, the importance of legislators' convictions and background may change as party coalitions evolve and they perceive more or less leeway on an issue.

MCs' beliefs are not directly observable, but if we find the same associations between their personal characteristics and their stands on issues that are evident among survey respondents, we may infer that the politicians are acting on their own beliefs. Many studies show associations between legislators' personal characteristics and their votes.^v Yet it is often unclear whether the association between an aspect of the MC's personal background reflects her own views or her ties to a subconstituency (Bishin 2009) whose preferences she gives extra weight in determining how to vote.

However, in the case of the environment, this is less of a problem. Characteristics associated with environmentalist views—education and age—have not typically delineated party constituencies or

voting blocs. People are less geographically clustered on the basis of these characteristics than they are along racial, ethnic, or religious lines. There is also less interest group organization based on these characteristics than there is for many others.^{vi} Nor are party caucuses far apart in age — in the 114th Congress, the median Democrat was born in 1954, while the median Republican was born in 1958.

For these reasons, an association between age, level of education, or sex and MCs' positions on the environment is more likely to reflect the connection between these characteristics and legislators' views rather than any subconstituency. Surveys have long shown that younger and better-educated respondents are most supportive of environmental regulation. Dunlap and Allen found this to be true among MCs as well in the 92nd Congress (1971-1972), but this relationship has not been investigated in more recent years.

When issues are new, MCs may be more apt to vote based on their own views, which reflect their backgrounds. MCs then may mistakenly project their own beliefs onto their constituents (Miller and Stokes 1963, Miler 2010). Alternatively, MCs may also take their cues on new issues from the constituents with whom they share traits and interact most often.

MCs may also favor a “re-election constituency” (Fenno 1978) of voters they see as existing supporters, or a “prospective constituency” of potential backers (Bishin 2009). In practice, a Democratic MC and a Republican MC will cater to different constituencies when representing the same state or district. The divergence between Democratic and Republican senators from the state on the environment (and other issues) is illustrative of this point.

These patterns may not be stable, however. MCs may perceive less discretion to vote on the basis of their views as the cues sent from party-aligned interest groups and previously overlooked constituents become clear (Karol and Thurston 2014). As interest groups and activists focus on an issue, or “intense policy demanders” (Bawn et al

2012) are drawn into party coalitions, elected officials' incentives change (Karol 2009). Politicians seeking to win nominations and mobilize their base in general elections will take these groups' preferences into account, reducing the importance of factors underlying officials' positions earlier in the history of an issue—be it the constituents they previously consulted or aspects of MCs' personal backgrounds.

To determine how the roles of these factors have changed over time, I turn to a multivariate analysis of congressional voting patterns. This analysis includes several variables. The birth year variable is straightforward and it is coded inversely with age, as I anticipated that youth correlates with support for environmental regulation among both MCs and voters.

MCs are older than the public. While the median age in the U.S. is 37^{vii}, the average age of Representatives[is now 58, and that of senators is 62.^{viii} Yet comparing MCs to the voting-age population and—even more so— actual voters reveals a smaller gap. In the 2016 election, exit polls revealed that the median voter was in her late 40s.^{ix} The age range in Congress is great, as it is among voters, so the same measure is appropriate for both groups.

Following Dunlap and Allen (1976, 393), I code educational attainment among MCs along a continuum, with zero representing no college, one representing matriculation or a community college degree, two representing a bachelor's degree, three a master's degree, four a professional degree, and five a doctorate. The gap in educational attainment between MCs and the public is more striking than the age gap. Already in the 91st Congress (1969-1970), the first one for which the LCV released ratings of legislators, 61% of representatives and 66% of Senators had some graduate degree. Only 6.2% of Representatives and 4.9% of Senators had not attended college. The Census Bureau reported that in 1970, only 21.6% of Americans twenty-five or older had spent any time in college and almost 45% had not graduated high school.^x Today's public is better educated than the one that existed in 1970 at time of the

first Earth Day. By 2015, only 12.6% of the population twenty-five and over had not graduated high school, and 32.5% had at least a college degree.^{xi} Yet a gap between the public and its representatives persists, since educational attainment has also increased among MCs. By the 114th Congress, 65% of Representatives and 76% of Senators had advanced degrees, while just over 5% of Representatives and, remarkably, none of them lacked a bachelor's degree.

For this reason, I add another education-related variable to analyses besides one measuring educational attainment. This is an indicator variable coded as one if an MC attended an elite college or university at the undergraduate or graduate level (whether or not they received a degree there), and zero otherwise. I coded as elite all Ivy League universities, MIT, Duke, The University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley, Stanford, CalTech and several liberal arts colleges. I also count the University of Virginia and New York University law schools as elite, but not their undergraduate or graduate programs.

In the 91st Congress, 33% of representatives and 46% of senators had attended one of these institutions. By the 114th Congress, the share of MCs having attended these schools had declined to 21% in the House and 36% in the Senate. I do not have an analogous percentage for the adult population, but clearly it is far lower than the figures for Congress.

I also include an indicator variable that takes a 1 if an MC is female and a zero otherwise.

In Appendix A, I present models of MCs' LCV ratings for the 92nd and 114th Congresses.^{xii} I report two models, one including variables capturing MCs' personal characteristics, and one in which constituency variables and party affiliation are added. Since there were never more than two women senators until the 103rd Congress (1993-1994), I only include an indicator variable for sex in the House models for the 92nd Congress.

Changing Preferences: Modeling LCV Scores from the 92nd Congress (1971-1972) to the 114th Congress (2015-2016)

Much change is evident over time. In the 92nd Congress, younger MCs, women, those who were better-educated, and those who had attended an elite college were more supportive of the LCV's positions on the environment. These relationships generally persist in the second model, which includes variables capturing party, the weight of energy and mining in the district economy, the vote share received by the Democratic presidential nominee, and an indicator variable coded as one if the MC is from the South.

Comparing the recent Congress to the early one reveals important changes. The coefficients for the constituency variables decline, while the party coefficient grows. MCs are voting more along party lines and the political and economic character of their constituencies is less predictive of their stands on environmental issues than it once was.

We would like to know how and when the changes shown in the table occurred. In Figure 4, I present figures charting the beta coefficients for the variables included in the models presented for House and Senate for each successive Congress from 1969 through 2016.

The figures reveal substantial if gradual change in both Houses of Congress. Initially, many factors predict MCs' LCV scores, with no one variable predominating. MCs' party affiliation, age, and level of education as well as sex—all are predictive initially. Democrats, younger and female legislators, the more highly educated, and those who attended elite universities were more supportive of the environmentalist policy agenda. The demographic variables of age, sex and educational attainment initially worked the same way among MCs as they did among the public.

Constituency characteristics were also predictive of MCs' votes. Those from constituencies where Democratic presidential nominees fared well, those from northern states, and those representing areas in which energy, mining and farming were not strong presences in the economy were more supportive of the LCV's positions.

In both chambers, the party coefficient grew substantially over time, indicating a growing partisan divide. By contrast, variables reflecting the personal characteristics of MCs and their constituencies declined in importance. Most were no longer significant predictors of MCs' votes on environmental issues by the end of the era depicted.

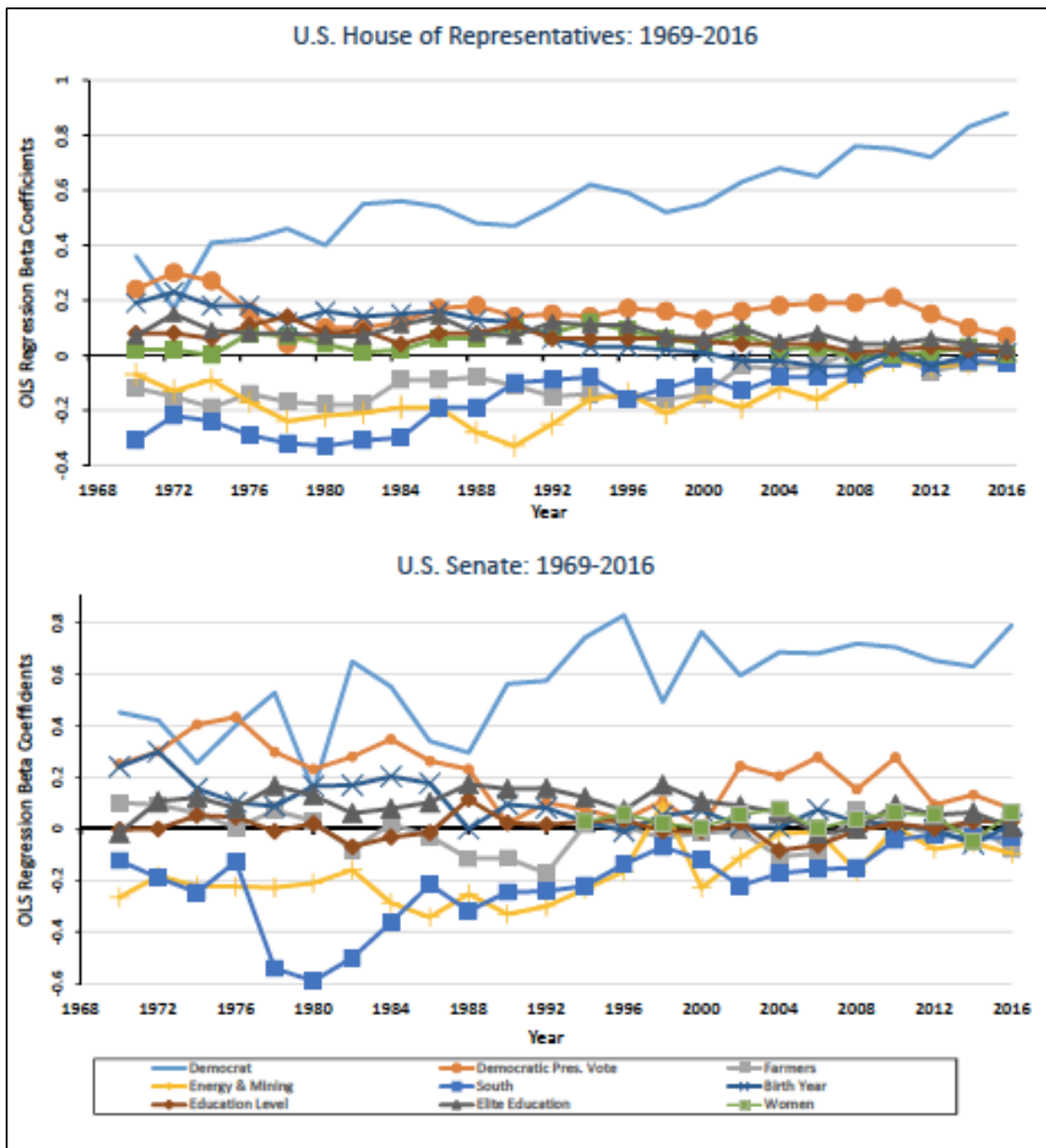


Figure 4: Showing the beta coefficients for the variables included in the models presented for House and Senate for each successive Congress from 1969-2016.

This finding, along with the differentiation between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates on the environment, reveals that the polarization in this policy area is not due only to changes in the geographical constituencies of the parties. Instead, Democratic and Republican presidents and senators have represented the same country and the same states in increasingly different ways. Simplistic notions of elected officials reflecting the preferences of the median voter in their state or district do not explain these dynamics. To better understand why this is so, I

turn to a focus on interest groups, campaign finance and public opinion.

Party Coalitions, Interest Groups, and Campaign Finance

If Democrats and Republicans are representing states and districts in a different way than they used to, changes in their coalitions can help explain this shift. Leading environmental organizations have long been formally non-partisan. In practice, however, environmentalists

have gradually been incorporated into the Democratic coalition. The conflict between environmentalists' policy preferences and those of various elements of the corporate and farm lobbies long linked to the GOP has made it easier for Democrats than business-oriented Republicans to adopt green policies.

In 1976, the League of Conservation Voters, which had previously focused on congressional races, described Jimmy Carter, then the Democratic presidential nominee, as “outstanding,” and President Gerald Ford as “hopeless.” Yet the group stopped short of a formal endorsement that year.^{xiii} In 1980, however, threatened by the candidacy of Ronald Reagan, the League endorsed Carter for re-election.^{xiv} The LCV has endorsed all subsequent Democratic presidential nominees, while supporting fewer and fewer GOP candidates for Congress and state office. In 1984, the Sierra Club joined the LCV in endorsing Walter Mondale, and it too has backed subsequent national Democratic tickets.^{xv}

In recent years, newer environmental groups have become prominent. Environment America was founded in 2007. In 2016, the group endorsed Hillary Clinton for president. All eleven of the Senate candidates whom Environment America supported were Democrats, as were 41 of their 45 endorsed candidates for U.S. representative. The group endorsed four incumbent Republican representatives, none of whom faced strong opposition in 2016.^{xvi}

NextGen America (formerly NextGen Climate Action), a political action committee, is an even newer environmental organization. Founded and largely funded by hedge fund billionaire Tom Steyer, the group was very active in the 2014 and 2016 cycles. Eschewing direct contributions to candidates, this organization funded massive independent expenditures favoring Democratic candidates and opposing Republican ones.^{xvii}

Why has this happened? The conflict between environmentalists' policy preferences and those of various elements of the business and farm lobbies has made it easier for Democrats than business-oriented Republicans to take the green side of issues.^{xviii} In an earlier era, Democrats, then a chiefly agrarian party, were likewise in a better position to incorporate labor unions than a Republican Party already close to business interests.

One way to assess the changing alignment of interest groups and parties is to explore campaign finance data. The Center for Responsive Politics has coded federal campaign contributions since 1990. Using their data, I report contribution trends not only for environmentalists, but also for economic sectors at odds with them: oil & gas producers, coal companies, livestock and poultry producers, and forestry-related firms.

Unfortunately, industry-level statistics for campaign contributions are not available for campaign cycles prior to 1990, when the polarization of Democrats and Republicans on environmental issues was already well underway. Still, important change is visible over the two and a half decades of available data. By the early 1990s, environmental groups' campaign contributions overwhelmingly went to Democratic candidates.

The data for contributions by business lobbies, however, reveal important shifts. In general, the trend has been strongly toward the Republicans since 1990. With the exception of poultry producers, who only gave 39% of their donations to Republicans in 1990, the sectors charted actually already favored GOP candidates in the earliest cycles examined. Livestock producers gave 81% to Republicans in 1990 while the forestry industry gave 75% to Republicans. A smaller imbalance was evident in energy sector contributions, with oil & gas giving 62% of its donations to Republicans and coal giving GOP candidates 59%.

Since Democrats had spent decades in the majority in both Houses of Congress through the early 1990s, and many business lobbies had pursued an incumbent-friendly “access” strategy,

agribusiness did not revert to the levels of support they had given Democrats during the earlier period of Democratic control that ended in 1994.

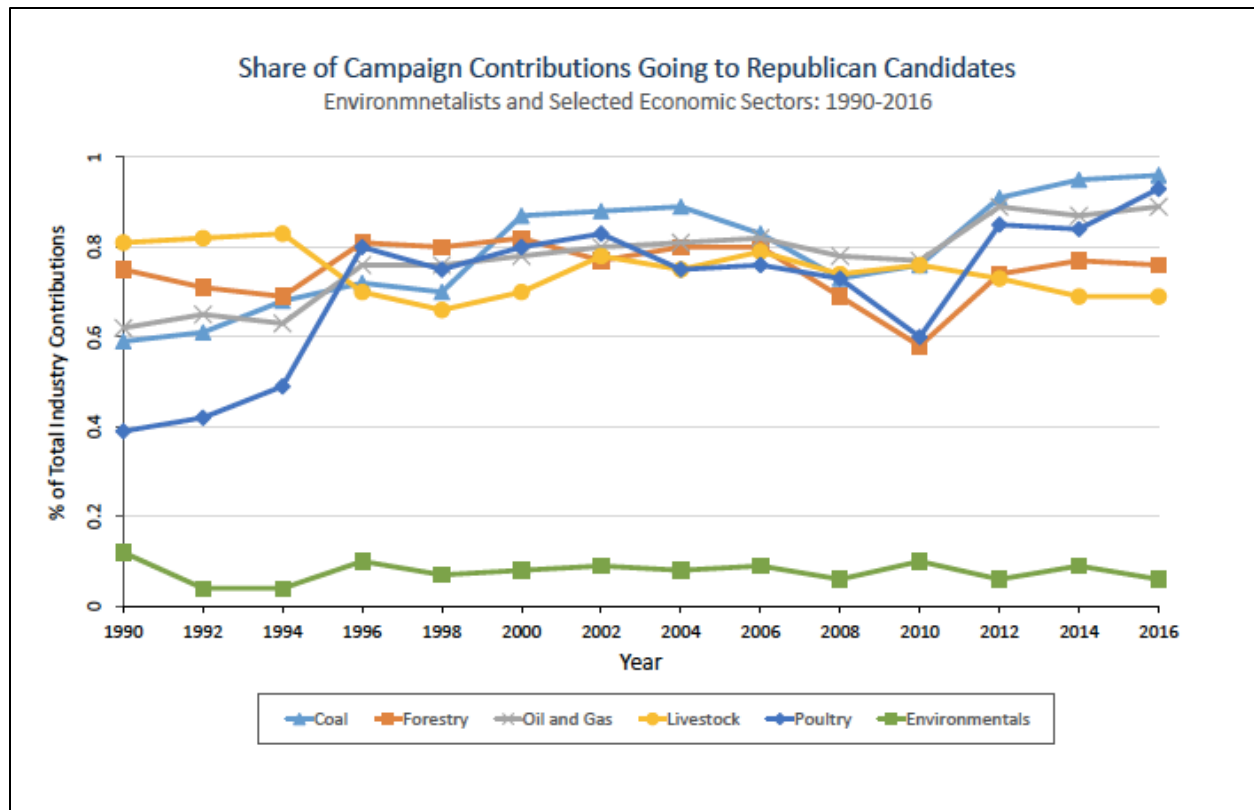


Figure 5: Showing the share of various industry contributions going to Republican candidates from 1990-2016.

this Republican leaning is notable. For context, data from the Center for Responsive Politics reveal that commercial banks gave 51% of their contributions to Democratic candidates in 1990, 50% in 1992 and 49% in 1994. Defense contractors, a sector especially dependent on government, directed 53% of their contributions to Democrats in 1990, 54% in 1992, and 59% in 1994. This was the case despite the fact that Democrats had on average been less supportive of military spending than Republicans.

Energy and agribusiness donors already leaned Republican in the early 1990s, but they have moved overwhelmingly into the GOP camp since then (Karol 2015). Even when Democrats regained control of Congress in 2006, poultry and forestry producers increased contributions to Democrats, but still favored GOP candidates. Energy and

Interest groups concerned with environmental regulation reflect clear partisan alignments in their pattern of campaign contributions. As in the case of voters, it is not so easy to disentangle causality. Many scholars see contributions as buying access or attention from officials already supportive of a group’s concerns rather than determining MCs’ policy positions. Yet to the extent that we accept that donors are a factor in MCs’ decisions, these findings can help explain why Democrats and Republicans represent the same districts and states in different ways when it comes to environmental issues.

Polarization in Public Opinion on Environmental Issues

I now turn to consider the extent to which partisan divisions on environmental regulation

are evident in the public. The relationship between voters' policy preferences and the stands taken by elected officials is not straightforward. Much commentary takes voters' views as given and assumes that politicians adapt to please them. When Democratic and Republican voters disagree, attitudes in MCs' districts will differ by party, with stronger divergences in primary electorates. Hence, a growing partisan divide on an issue among voters could explain a growing divide among elected officials.

Yet elected officials often take positions that are only reflected in public opinion years later, if ever (Zaller 1992). For example, Republican voters were slightly more likely than Democrats to be pro-choice until the mid-1980s (Adams 1997, Karol 2009). They lagged GOP officialdom from Reagan on down in embracing pro-life views, so voters cannot have driven this change. Lenz (2012) finds much cue-taking by voters. Party identification is more deeply rooted than most issue preferences for most voters. This dynamic appears to be at work in the case of climate change, where mass attitudes have polarized in recent years (McCright and Dunlap 2011).

Yet even if visible party leaders, above all the president, can sometimes reshape voters' views, that does not make the resulting attitudes irrelevant for individual MCs. Most must accept the distribution of attitudes as given. Voters may use these attitudes to evaluate congressional candidates. If so, the gap between Democratic and Republican voters is another reason besides

campaign contributions why Democratic and Republican MCs represent the same state or district in different ways on environmental issues.

To assess the relationship between party identification and views on environmental regulation in the public, I turn to the General Social Survey (GSS). Since 1973, it has queried respondents about whether federal spending on environmental protection is "too little", "too much" or "just right". While this wording does not capture all environmental policy concerns, there is value in a question that has been asked over many years.

The statistic I report is the difference in "net support" for environmental spending among Democratic and Republican partisans. This is the percentage in each party saying there was "too little" spending minus the share saying there was "too much." I then subtract the Republican net support percentage from the Democratic one. Positive values for the interparty difference in net support indicate that Democratic respondents were more supportive of governmental action to protect the environment. (See Figure 6)

I present the trend among two groups of respondents: all partisans, including those who initially define themselves as "independent" but then concede that they lean toward a party, and the subset that self-identify as "strong" Democrats or Republicans. While there are clear differences between these two groups, the same trend is evident among both sets of voters.

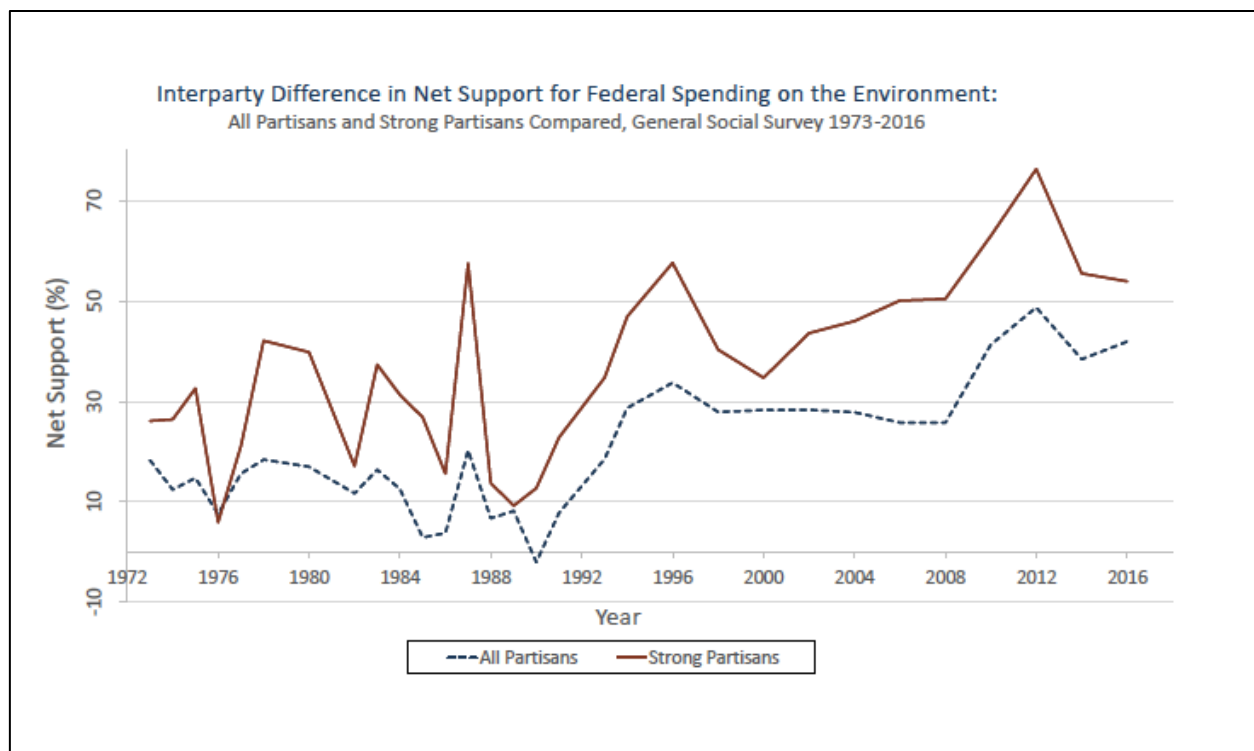


Figure 6: Showing the difference in “net support” for government spending on environmental protection, broken down by partisan strength, from 1973-2016.

Starting in 1973, the first year the question was asked, Democratic respondents were more supportive of environmental spending than Republicans. There is fluctuation from year to year, but the clear trend is toward a growing divide between Democratic and Republican respondents on the issue. In all but a few years, this gap is notably larger among strong partisans than among all partisan respondents. This is important because the views reported by strong partisans are more likely to be similar to those of the party activists who are disproportionately visible to MCs.

This trend is broadly similar to the one evident among Members of Congress. In both cases we see an increase in partisan divisions. In both we also observe an early growth followed by a period of oscillation. The polarization trend in Congress is somewhat smoother, with less short-term fluctuation evident than among the public. This may be a function of both the finer grained measure (a rating based on dozens of votes in a

single Congress) and the fact that there is limited turnover in Congress in the short term.

Surveys reveal that the importance of party identification for views on the environment has grown vis-à-vis other respondent characteristics. In Table 2, I show this with results from a multivariate analysis. The dependent variable is American National Election Study respondents’ self-placement on a seven-point scale, with higher values indicating a greater priority on environmental protection as opposed to jobs. This is a finer grained measure than the GSS spending item, and arguably offers a better comparison with the LCV scores, which range from zero to 100. I report results from 1996, when the ANES first included this question, and from the most recent study in 2016. I report the results of Ordinary Least Squares regression assessing the relationship between respondents’ views on the environment and key characteristics shown to be predictors of MCs’ positions on the environment: partisanship, age, level of education and sex.

The doubling of the Democrat coefficient indicates that the association between party and environmental policy views has grown, controlling for several demographic variables. Even when party identification is included in the model, respondents' age and level of education are also significant predictors of their self-placement on the scale in the expected ways; younger and more highly educated respondents are more supportive of environmental regulations. This is also true of female respondents in the second survey.

Table 2 - Surveyed Support for Environmental Regulation

OLS Regression Models

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Democrat | .39(0.5)** | .83(.03)* |
| Age | -.01(.002)** | -.013(.002)* |
| Education | .16(.03)** | .07(.01)* |
| Woman | -.08(.08) | .17(.06)* |
| Constant | 4.37(.22)* | 4.40(.19)* |
| Adj R-Sq. | .08 | .17 |
| N | 1345 | 3265 |

* indicates p-value < 0.01, Data from the 1996 and 2014 American National Election Studies.

There are some difficulties in comparing these findings with the voting behavior of MCs. The ANES sample is much larger than the House, let alone the Senate, and statistical significance is in part a function of the number of cases examined. A seven-point scale is also not easy to compare to a rating based on several and sometimes dozens of votes in a legislative body. Still, the results show both that the partisan divide on the environment among voters has grown and that the

demographics scholars identified as supporting environmental regulation in the 1970s still do so, even controlling for party identification.

Yet while age and educational attainment remain important predictors of voters' views on the environment, they matter far less now in Congress. The declining predictive power of personal characteristics on MCs' votes on the environment reflects the changing composition of the party coalitions which politicians must represent.

This is a more speculative inference, but it also suggests that MCs may not always be voting their convictions on environmental issues. The true beliefs of politicians are never fully knowable, but our best estimate of what an individual believes is what those most similar to him in sociological terms believe. If characteristics like age and education that remain associated with voters' environmental views now have far less correlation with MCs' votes, perhaps it is simply because ideological purists are more likely to seek office than their co-partisans (Thomsen 2017). But ordinary voters are not subject to the same political pressures as MCs. Accordingly, the gap between voters and MCs may also reflect the latter trimming their sails for political reasons. This is significant because it suggests some would be open to changing their positions were they to perceive more political leeway.

Both the GSS and ANES findings reveal that party identification and environmental attitudes have become more closely associated over time. While this trend may stem in part from voters taking cues from their party's leading officials, it may also have an effect on less prominent politicians. Most MCs cannot expect to individually reshape their constituents' views and must take them into account. Thus, growing party division at the mass level on the environment helps explain polarization in Congress on the issue.

PART II: PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

Environmental issues have been a controversial part of the political agenda in Washington since the 1970s. Divisions in this policy area, as on most others, have increasingly run along party lines. Democrats have generally been more supportive of an active governmental role in addressing environmental concerns. Yet for many years, party affiliation was not the only important predictor of MCs' votes. Many MCs broke from their parties on environmental issues. These deviations were not random. Both constituency measures and personal characteristics of legislators were strongly associated with their votes on environmental questions, even controlling for party affiliation.

Organized interests have become polarized as well. Endorsements and campaign contributions from environmental groups now overwhelmingly go to Democratic candidates, while economic sectors frequently at odds with environmentalists, including fossil fuel producers and much of agribusiness, increasingly support Republicans. Divisions between Republican and Democratic voters on the environment, while not as great as among political elites, have grown as well.

In 2017, the Trump administration reversed existing policies designed to safeguard the environment. The United States withdrew from the Paris Accord on climate change. For the first time a president tried to substantially undo a proclamation of his predecessor, which had created a national monument shielding large areas in Utah from development.^{xix}

Finally, in 2017, Republicans opened the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for oil drilling, a goal they had failed to achieve in the previous period of unified Republican government during the Bush years. In 2005, an attempt to include a provision opening up this protected area in a budget measure immune from filibuster failed, due to combined opposition from the Democratic minority and twenty-five

environmentally-minded GOP representatives who withheld their support until provisions opening ANWR were eliminated.^{xx} In 2017, however, only twelve House Republicans objected to the same proposal in the tax bill while the GOP had a majority of twenty-four.^{xxi}

Peak Polarization?

Given that all of these trends have been underway for decades, it is worth asking if they could be stopped or reversed. There are two scenarios to consider.

One theoretical possibility is that societal divisions on environmental regulation will persist, but the trend towards increasing partisanship in this area will reverse. For disruption to occur, an issue of great salience that divided current party coalitions would need to emerge. It would have to be so important that many resource use advocates and environmentalists would abandon their current allegiances.

This seems like a remote prospect at best. The position-taking and policy-making of elected officials attracts interest groups and activists to party coalitions. Once these groups are inside the tent, their presence increases the incentive for parties' officeholders to pursue the policies that attracted the groups in the first place. This is a reinforcing cycle that is not easily disrupted (Karol 2009).

Another possibility is that the current party cleavage is maintained, but that the policy debate moves substantially in one direction. There is more precedent for this scenario and, while not imminent, it is easier to imagine than the previous one. The mutual dependence between a party's politicians and its allied interest groups gives elected officials leverage. A lobby often has the choice between unhappily supporting "their" party, and abstaining or supporting a minor candidate—risking the election of those less favorable to their views. This defection may still make strategic sense if the group determines that it is being taken for granted and that its party allies could do much more for them. In such cases,

a temporary defection could make sense so as to punish the politicians in the short term, in hopes of gaining more reliable support in the future.

There are examples of lobbies using this strategy. Labor unions reduced their financial support for Democratic MCs who supported NAFTA and Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China. The National Rifle Association also refused to endorse George H.W. Bush for re-election in 1992 or Bob Dole for president in 1996.

This is an extreme step, however, in that a group runs a great short-term risk for uncertain long-term reward. Usually, relations between politicians and their interest group allies do not deteriorate to such an extent. It is notable that unions angry about NAFTA and Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China still supported Bill Clinton for re-election in 1996 and Al Gore for President in 2000. Punishing some MCs to make a point and deter others was one thing; alienating the president and risking GOP control of the White House was another. The NRA endorsed George W. Bush in 2000 when it was not clear that his stands on gun issues, which included nominal support for an assault weapons ban, were significantly different from those of his father or Bob Dole.

Interest groups' reluctance to defect from their party and risk policy setbacks and access to elected officials gives the politicians with whom they are allied leverage. Provided they keep some distance between the other party and themselves on an issue, elected officials can move significantly in substantive policy terms while retaining their allies' support. Some scholars even talk about the groups being "captured" by the parties, although there are disagreements about which groups are in this condition.^{xxii}

An example illustrates this point. In the postwar years, labor unions reached the peak of their power. After a struggle to rein them in, culminating in the 1947 passage of the Taft-Hartley law, conflict on labor issues diminished for many years. Democrats failed to repeal Taft-Hartley, and leading Republicans came to accept

unions as a permanent presence. In answering his brother Edgar, who complained in 1954 that Eisenhower had not reversed New Deal policies, the president famously argued,

"Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things. Their number is negligible and they are stupid."^{xxiii}

Eisenhower and Nixon appointed union leaders as secretary of labor—something it is hard to imagine a Republican president doing today. The National Labor Relations Board—paralyzed by partisan divisions and Senate deadlock over nominees in recent years—worked fairly smoothly for three decades (Moe 1987). During this era, unions remained aligned with Democrats (Greenstone 1969), while business lobbies remained close to the GOP. Yet both parties agreed that, while unions must be regulated, they were here to stay, and conflict over labor issues waned.

Even in the period during which the parties have been polarized on the environment, we have seen change, albeit of a regressive sort. In 2008, John McCain endorsed a "cap and trade" policy to address climate change. Yet in the next Congress he and other Republicans MCs abandoned that policy (Skocpol 2013) and his successors as GOP presidential nominees, Mitt Romney and Donald Trump, rejected it as well. So even in a context of a partisan divide, the actual positions parties endorse can change. If public concern about the environment were sufficient, Republican politicians could tell corporate donors that concessions to the public mood are necessary.

Most Republicans are evidently not interested in that exercise at present. However, there are some reasons why it is possible to imagine significant change in the Republican position—or at least

that of a significant number of GOP politicians—in years to come.

A Republican Coalition in Demographic Decline

Republicans now control the entire federal government. But they have achieved this because their vote was very well-distributed across states and districts. The GOP has won the popular vote in a presidential election only once since the end of the Cold War. They have also won control of Congress while receiving fewer votes than their opponents collectively, as was the case for the House of Representatives in 2012.

Republican support is heavily concentrated in shrinking demographics: older and evangelical whites. Whites were 81 percent of the voters in 2000, but only 70% in 2016. Trump won a higher share of the white vote than George W. Bush (58% vs. 55%) but lost the popular vote by a wider margin and only won the Electoral College because his votes were distributed so efficiently. If racial polarization results in the GOP finding increased support among the shrinking white majority, favorable electoral geography and vote suppression tactics might allow Republicans to able to remain competitive in the medium term.

But, while the horrible potential of racial division is never to be underestimated, it is not clear this is a winning strategy in the long term given the age gaps in the electorate. Until recently, age was not an important predictor of vote choice. In 2000, Al Gore did slightly better with voters over 50, according to an exit poll.^{xxiv} But in the 2004 election, George W. Bush won 52% among voters over 65, but only 43% among those 25 and under.^{xxv} Donald Trump also won 52% among the 65 and older cohort, but only 36% among voters 25 and under.^{xxvi}

In part, the age gap is a product of race, in that younger cohorts are more racially diverse than older ones. Yet even among whites, the young are less supportive of Republicans than their elders. Trump won whites over 65 by nineteen points and those under 30 by only four.^{xxvii} The younger

whites among whom the Republicans are performing the worst are greater believers in the reality of climate change than their elders.

Looking at the core GOP constituency of white evangelicals also reveals an aging base. From 2007 to 2014, the share of white evangelicals over 50 increased from 48 to 54%. White evangelicals went from 21% of the public in 2006 to only 17% in 2016.^{xxviii}

In short, Republicans rely on a voter coalition in demographic decline. This coalition has won them very narrow victories based on favorable political geography in presidential and congressional elections. Eventually, this will no longer be possible. While Donald Trump has been unpopular, these demographic trends predate his election.

Parties tend to adapt only after repeated defeat. Even if, following some losses, Republicans do eventually look to make changes, there is no guarantee that the environment or climate change are where they would start. This is only one possibility.

Yet if they are to remain electorally competitive over the long run, they will eventually have to make some changes. There is precedent. As Manik Roy notes, even as the parties have polarized in recent decades, leading Republicans in political trouble have periodically taken some actions showing concern for the environment. These steps did not alter the party alignment but they were consequential in policy terms.^{xxix} Changes on the environment might actually prove easier for Republicans than modifying stands on issues like immigration, which connects directly to identity politics.

Young GOP Voters are More Pro-Environment

While a base in demographic decline can be addressed in multiple ways, there is logic to adopting a more progressive position on climate change in response. Studies have long shown that younger voters are more supportive of

environmental regulations than their elders. This relationship can be explained in multiple ways.

Some element of this gap may be a life-cycle effect; younger people's longer time horizon gives them more reason to worry about the future. If this is the whole story, the GOP could count on younger voters to care less about the environment as they age. Yet there is reason to believe a cohort effect is at work as well. Millennials were raised in an era in which the problem of climate change was widely discussed. This is not true of baby boomers and previous generations. But now, each rising cohort of voters grows up in a world in which environmental concerns are important and is likely to retain this perspective.

Differences among age cohorts are evident even among Republicans. Multiple surveys reveal a generation gap in the GOP on environmental issues, especially on the subject of climate change.^{xxx} A recent survey of College Republican clubs found widespread recognition that climate change was real and in part a result of human activity, along with openness to solutions.^{xxxi} While the public has increasingly divided along party lines about climate change, this is less true of younger cohorts. According to a recent Pew study, 57% of Republican and Republican-leaning Millennials believe that there is "solid evidence" of climate change. While 94% of Millennial Democrats believe this, it's notable that majorities on both sides share this understanding. By contrast, a majority of GOP baby boomers and members of the pre-boomer "Silent Generation" do not accept that there is solid evidence, putting them at odds with overwhelming majorities of Democrats within their age groups.^{xxxii}

The Declining Fossil Fuel Sector

The Republican coalition is based on aging demographics. When we turn to the GOP's alignment with fossil fuel interests, we see that Republicans are once more wedded to a shrinking constituency. Given the centrality of fossil fuel interests in resisting action on climate change, a decline in the power of this industry could lead to a depolarization of the issue or possibly a

continuing dispute, albeit shifted toward a debate over the degree of mechanisms of action.

Employment in coal mining has dropped by roughly two-thirds in the last thirty years, from 150,000 to 50,000.^{xxxiii} Employment in oil and gas production, however, has dropped only from 199,000 to 178,000, buoyed in recent years by the rise of natural gas fracking. The oil and gas sector bottomed-out around 120,000 jobs in 2003, and has since rebounded. Still, given the growth in the overall workforce (a 35% increase since 1987, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics), fossil fuel accounts for a declining share of U.S. employment.

In both cases, these figures may be too low because they do not include those employed in support of energy production, such as coal truck drivers.^{xxxiv} Moreover, many people not directly employed in fossil fuel production may sense a stake in these industries, including those in the service sector in areas dependent on oil, gas or coal production, and even homeowners in those communities whose property values depend on the fortunes of local firms. Yet even if the BLS data understate the weight of the sector in an absolute sense, there is no reason to doubt that it captures the trend, revealing an industry that is important to the livelihood of a declining share of Americans.

However, while it makes up a declining share of the economy, the fossil fuel sector remains a major player in campaign finance. Campaign contributions from oil and gas producers grew from \$12.3 million to \$104.8 million from 1990 to 2016, while coal interests' campaign spending increased from less than \$900,000 to \$13.5 million in the same period.^{xxxv} This represents more than a quadrupling of oil and gas contributions in real terms, while campaign funds from the coal sector have grown more than eight-fold.

Further context is gained by comparing the growth in contributions by fossil fuel producers to growth in donations from all sources. In 1990, \$408.5 million was spent on congressional races.^{xxxvi} By 2016, spending had grown nearly

tenfold, to \$4.05 billion. Much of this increase was in Super PAC and independent expenditures. All in all, fossil fuel producers spent 5.4 times as much in 2016 as they had in 1990, correcting for inflation.

So while the fossil fuel industry employs a shrinking proportion of the electorate, this sector has more than kept up with the great increase in campaign contributions in recent decades. In the short term, money may compensate for declining numbers, but that is not a tactic that can be employed indefinitely in the face of organized opposition.

For example, the tobacco industry has long had a well-funded lobby. Yet from the 1964 Surgeon-General's warning onward, cigarette producers suffered defeat after defeat at the federal, state and local levels. Firms were required to print health warnings on every cigarette box, and later to strengthen the warnings. Cigarette ads were banned from television. Smoking was banned on airlines. The Food and Drug Administration was given authority to regulate tobacco (Derthick 2012). Local ordinances banned smoking in public places. Cigarette taxes were adopted and increased (Marshall 2016).

The anti-smoking struggle was protracted and tobacco producers' wealth no doubt enabled them to delay some measures or to limit their scope. Yet while they fought a long holding action and won some battles, "Big Tobacco" lost the war. From 1965 to 2014, the share of smokers in the population shrank from 42.4% to 16.8%.^{xxxvii} Tobacco producers split politically, with the largest firm, Phillip Morris, viewing FDA regulation as the lesser evil (Derthick 2012). This example is relevant for those interested in climate change, since the tobacco industry was also pushing back against scientific findings and public opinion.

Renewable Energy as Counterbalance?

Another part of the story is the growing role of the renewable energy sector. In percentage terms,

the growth in campaign contributions by renewable producers is enormous. The Center for Responsive Politics found that this sector gave a negligible \$87,189 to federal campaigns in 1990. By 2016, however, the renewable sector contributed almost \$4 million. Even accounting for inflation, this sector is giving nearly twenty-five times more at present than it did in 1990. Yet while this trend is impressive, the renewable sector is still a minor player in campaign finance compared to fossil fuel producers.

However, not only is the renewable sector a growing source of campaign funds, but, unlike environmentalists, it directs a significant share of its support to Republicans. In 2016, 36% of contributions from renewable producers went to GOP candidates. In the 2014, cycle, 42% did.^{xxxviii} The analogous figures for environment-minded donors were 3% for 2016 and 7% for 2014.^{xxxix} If the renewable sector continues to grow, it could counterbalance fossil fuels producers and bolster Republicans who diverge from the party line on climate.

Building Credibility and Winning Attention

Republican officials who believe in the seriousness of climate change and that human activity contributes to it, should also believe that this fact will become increasingly evident. If so, far-sighted Republicans might see an advantage in building credibility on the issue. Some candidates have benefitted by getting ahead of the curve. Barack Obama's opposition to the Iraq War in 2002 gave him an advantage over Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Democratic primaries, even though their voting records on Iraq were identical once Obama reached the U.S. Senate. GOP politicians taking strong stands on climate change are also more newsworthy than Democrats doing the same. So Republicans who differentiate themselves from their party on this issue could reap rewards in terms of media coverage.

Of course, politicians must worry about the short-term or they will not reach the long-term. There are reasons why Republican MCs who understand

climate change still hesitate before breaking ranks on this issue. For many in both parties, the primary, not the general election, is their greatest point of vulnerability. GOP moderates and even conservatives have lost primaries since the rise of the Tea Party nearly a decade ago.

Yet an incumbent seldom loses a primary based on a single vote or position. One case sometimes cited is former Rep. Bob Inglis of South Carolina. Inglis had been an advocate of addressing climate change in his second stint in Congress—albeit via a carbon tax rather than the “cap and trade” plan that passed the House. He was subsequently badly defeated in the 2010 primary. Yet Inglis had given his GOP opponents much more ammunition, voting for the 2008 “bailout” of the financial sector and opposing the surge of troops in Iraq in 2007.^{xi}

Cracks in the Wall? The Climate Solutions Caucus

There are signs of change among Republicans. In the 114th Congress, a bipartisan caucus was founded in the House of Representatives to address climate change. As of February 2018, the Climate Solutions Caucus had 36 Democratic and 36 Republican members.^{xii} These MCs support—at least in theory—some action to address climate change. This is at odds with the current policies favored by most Republicans, although it once was a more mainstream view in the GOP. Climate Solutions Caucus members make up about one-seventh of the House Republican Conference and it is worth focusing on them to see whether they may be the beginnings of something more.

Twelve of the 36 Republican representatives in this caucus represent districts Hillary Clinton won in 2016.^{xiii} Given that she only won 23 districts now represented by GOP MCs, cross-pressured Republicans are greatly over-represented in the Caucus. It is also notable that of the 22 other GOP Caucus members, nine are freshmen (None of those from districts Clinton won are freshmen). In short, most GOP Climate Solutions Caucus members are drawn from two small subsets of the Republican Conference.

The GOP caucus members have a distinctive geographical profile as well. 24 of 36 representatives are from East or West Coast states.^{xiiii} Only seven are from the South, and all but one of these are from Florida and Virginia. Three are from South Florida (Curbelo, Ros Lehtinen, and Mast), which is geographically, but not politically, Southern. One (Comstock) is from a Virginia district that includes Washington, D.C., suburbs. The remaining two, Gaetz of Florida and Taylor of Virginia, are from districts with long coastlines. Mark Sanford of South Carolina represents a coastal district in the Charleston area.

Finally, interest in climate change does not reflect a larger environmental consciousness on the part of most Republican Caucus members. Brian Fitzpatrick, a Republican freshman from suburban Philadelphia, had by far the highest rating at 71. Fitzpatrick is the only GOP Caucus member to vote with the LCV even half of the time. The median LCV rating for the first session of the 115th Congress is 9. Caucus members took varied positions on President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. A letter from the co-chairs urging Trump to remain in the accord was signed by only three GOP Caucus members.^{xlv}

28 of 34 GOP Caucus representatives voted for the 2017 tax bill^l which opened up ANWR to drilling, a long-time goal of oil producers. Initially, ten Caucus members and two other GOP MCs had sent a letter to leaders urging them not to include the opening of ANWR in the tax bill.^{xlvi} Given the lack of Democratic support for the bill, GOP Caucus Members working as a bloc might have gotten the ANWR provision removed. The importance of Senator Murkowski of Alaska’s vote would have made this a tough fight, but most Caucus members did not even try. Five of the ten letter signatories voted for the tax bill. The seven GOP no votes from the Caucus were all from New York, New Jersey and California—states in which the bill’s provisions regarding state and local tax deductibility were unpopular.^{xlvii}

For those hoping for a shift in GOP positioning on climate change, these MCs present a mixed picture. The fact that their districts are so atypical for Republicans means it is unclear that they will be joined by many others soon. Their mixed response to Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Accord and the opening of ANWR, along with their low LCV ratings, also call into question their own seriousness on the issue. A Sierra Club spokeswoman asserted that GOP Climate Solutions Caucus members "are finding an easy action to get a green badge or a line on their resumes."^{xlvi}

On the other hand, the overrepresentation of freshmen among the GOP Caucus members suggests that growing numbers of Republican MCs will think that at least showing concern about this issue is advisable. Historic changes have also occurred when leaders whose records were far from pure adapted to new political conditions. Lyndon Johnson's leading role in the enactment of civil rights laws is the most dramatic example, given his long support for Jim Crow. More recently, same-sex marriage went from being a fringe position to a mainstream one via the adaptation of many leading politicians including Barack Obama, Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton, none of whom supported it a decade ago.

While advocates of action on climate change hope for broad-based support among officials of both parties, even a small number of GOP MCs could make a large difference. In 2005-2006, two dozen House Republicans kept provisions opening ANWR out of a budget measure, a step that preserved that refuge for more than a decade. Similarly, the eight Republican MCs who voted for cap and trade in 2009 were pivotal in that bill's passage in the House, given opposition from energy-state Democrats.

If there is to be a real response to climate change, it will stem in part from actions by elected officials whose records have not always pleased environmentalists. The answers to the questions of how serious the small minority of Congressional Republicans who have spoken up on climate change really are, and whether they

will be joined by others, may depend on how much pressure is brought to bear.

REFERENCES

- Adams, Greg D. 1997. "Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 41, No.3: 718-737.
- Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masker, Hans Noel and John Zaller. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 571-597.
- Bishin, Benjamin G. 2009. *Tyranny of the Minority: The Subconstituency Theory of Representation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bishop, Bill G. with Robert Cushing. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing us Apart*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Carnes, Nicholas. 2013. *White-Collar Government: The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Curry, James and Frances Lee. 2017. "Non-Party Government: Bipartisan Lawmaking and Theories of Party Power in Congress." Prepared for presentation at the 2017 Congress and History Conference, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, June 15-16, 2017.
- Derthick, Martha. 2012. "From Litigation to Legislation: The Surrender of Phillip Morris." *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol. 127, No.3: 401-415.
- Dunlap, Riley E. and Michael Patrick Allen. 1976. "Partisan Differences on Environmental Issues: A Congressional Roll-Call Analysis." *Western Political Quarterly*. Vol. 29, No.3: 384-397.
- Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Flippen, J. Brooks. 2000. *Nixon and the Environment*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Gelpi, Christopher and Peter Feaver. 2002. "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 96, No. 4: 779-793.
- Greenstone, J. David. 1969. *Labor in American Politics*. New York: Knopf.
- Grose, Christian, R. 2011. *Congress in Black and White: Race and Representation in Washington and at Home*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1955. *The Age of Reform*. New York: Vintage.
- Hopkins, David A. 2017. *Red Fighting Blue: How Geography and Electoral Rules Polarize American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald 1995. "Public Support for Environmental Protection: Objective Problems and Subjective Values in 43 Societies" *PS - Political Science & Politics*. Vol. 28, No.1: 57-72.
- Kamienicki, Sheldon. 1995. "Political Parties and Environmental Policy" in James P. Lester ed. *Environmental Politics and Policy: Theories and Evidence*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Karol, David. 2009. *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Karol, David and Chloe Thurston. 2014. "From Personal to Partisan: Abortion, Party and Religion in the California State Assembly, 1967-2000." Paper presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the European Political Science Association. June 19-21, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Karol, David. 2015. "Party Activists, Interest Groups and Polarization in American Politics" in *American Gridlock: The Sources, Character and Impact of Political Polarization*. James A. Thurber and Antoine Yoshinaka, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Layman, Geoffrey C., Thomas M. Carsey, John C. Green, Richard Herrera, Rosalyn Cooperman. 2010. "Activists and Conflict Extension in American Politics" *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 104, No.2: 324-347.
- Lenz, Gabriel. 2012. *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marshall, Thomas 4. 2016. *Public Opinion, Public Policy, and Smoking: The Transformation of American Attitudes and Cigarette Use, 1890-2016*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.
- McCright, Aaron M. and Riley. E. Dunlap. 2011. "The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization of the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010" *Sociological Quarterly*. Vol. 52, No. 2: 155-194.
- McGirr, Lisa. 2015. *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- McTague, John and Shana Pearson-Merkowitz. 2013. "Voting from the Pew: The Effect of Senators' Religious Identities on Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Senate." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 38, No. 3: 405-430.
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald W. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 57, No. 1: 45-46.
- Mitchell, Robert Cameron, Angela G. Mertig and Riley E. Dunlap. 1991. "Twenty Years of Environmental Mobilization: Trends among National Environmental Organizations" *Society and Natural Resources*. Vol 4: 219-234.
- Moe, Terry. 1987. "Interests, Institutions and Positive Theory: The Politics of the NLRB" *Studies in American Political Development*. Vol 2., Spring: 236-299.
- Poole, Keith and Howard Rosenthal. 2007. *Ideology and Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*. Transaction Publishers: Piscataway, N.J.
- Richardson, Elmo R. 1958. "Conservation as a Political Issue: The Western Progressives' Political Dilemma, 1909-1912." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*. Vol. 49, No.2: 49-54.
- Skocpol, Theda. 2013. "Naming The Problem: What It Will Take to Counter Extremism and Engage Americans in the Fight against Global Warming," Prepared for the Symposium on The Politics of America's Fight Against Global Warming, co-sponsored by the Columbia School of Journalism and the Scholars Strategy Network, February 14, 2013, Harvard University.

Swers, Michele. 2005. "Connecting Descriptive and Substantive Representation: An Analysis of Sex Differences in Cosponsorship Activity." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 30, No. 3 407-433.

Thomsen, Danielle M. 2017. *Opting Out of Congress: Partisan Polarization and the Decline of Moderate Candidates*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX – REGRESSION TABLES

A.1 - Multiple regression coefficients for LCV Scores in the U.S. House of Representatives

| | 92nd Congress | | 114 Congress | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | <u>Model 1</u> | <u>Model 2</u> | <u>Model 1</u> | <u>Model 2</u> |
| Birth Year | .73(.13)* | .67(.10)* | -.91(.18)* | .04 (.04) |
| Education | 2.33(.96)* | 1.81(.72)* | 2.07(1.85) | .28(.41) |
| Elite Education | 13.33(2.85)* | 8.90(2.20)* | 29.27(4.89)* | 3.36(1.11)* |
| Woman | 24.83(8.22)* | 4.21(6.22) | 28.06(4.99)* | .96(1.13) |
| Energy/Mining | | -3.84(.89)* | | -.48(.27) |
| Farming | | -12.5(2.7)* | | -.39(.28) |
| South | | -12.5(2.7)* | | -2.66(.95)* |
| Dem. Presidential Vote (District %) | | 83.4(9.2)* | | 19.7(5.6)* |
| Democrat | | 9.56(2.16)* | | 79.8(1.50)* |
| Constant | -1366(242.7)* | -1304.5(181.3)* | 1811.6(360.5)* | -72.52(82.6) |
| Adj R-squared | .17 | .54 | .18 | .96 |
| N | 428 | 428 | 440 | 440 |

Note: * indicates p-value <.05

A.2 - Multiple regression coefficients for LCV Scores in the U.S. Senate

| | 92 Congress | | 114 Congress | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | <u>Model 1</u> | <u>Model 2</u> | <u>Model 1</u> | <u>Model 2</u> |
| Birth Year | .83(.27)* | .82(.22)* | -.59(.39) | .04(.13) |
| Education | 3.67(2.27) | -.05(1.86) | 4.82(4.76) | 1.92(1.59) |
| Elite Education | 13.5(5.5)* | 10.5(4.5)* | 29.2(8.8)* | 1.16(3.07) |
| Woman | | | 37.94(10.1)* | 6.77(3.57) |
| Energy/Mining | | -3.16(1.4)* | | -2.44(1.04)* |
| Farming | | -13.3(6.4)* | | -3.97(3.43) |
| South | | 75.9(28.9)* | | 49.18(22.27) |
| Dem. Presidential Vote (District %) | | 18.45(5.33)* | | 70(3.89)* |
| Democrat | -1559(521.9)* | -1564.7(507.1)* | 1168.2(761.9) | -126.6 |
| Constant | .20 | .175 | .175 | .91 |
| Adj R-squared | .99 | .99 | .100 | .100 |
| N | .83(.27)* | .82(.22)* | -.59(.39) | .04(.13) |

Note: * indicates p-value <.05

ⁱ Reagan was also the first GOP presidential candidate to win the NRA's endorsement, the first to oppose the ERA, and is credited with identifying the Republican party decisively with the pro-life cause (Adams 1997, Karol 2009).

ⁱⁱ "Reagan Joins Rebels Against Government Ownership of Land," Miami News, July 5, 1980, p. 28.

ⁱⁱⁱ Scorecards are available at <http://scorecard.lcv.org/scorecard/archive>.

^{iv} Adler, E. Scott. "Congressional District Data File, 92nd and 114th Congress." University of Colorado, Boulder, CO.

^v This claim is investigated in "descriptive representation" studies focused on race (Grose 2011), gender (Swers 2005), religion (Fastnow, Grant and Rudolph 1999, McTague and Pearson-Merkowitz 2013), military service (Gelpi and Feaver 2002), and class (Carnes 2013).

-
- ^{vi} To be sure, the AARP is prominent, but other age cohorts are not so organized.
- ^{vii} Cook, Lindsey. "[America: Land of the Olds, Home of the Gray.](#)" U.S. News & World Report. December 4, 2015.
- ^{viii} "[The 115th Congress By the Numbers.](#)" Legistorm.
- ^{ix} "[Exit Polls 2016: National President.](#)" CNN. November 23, 2016.
- ^x "[Years of School Completed by Persons 14 Years Old and Over, by Age, Race, and Sex, for the United States.](#)" US Census Bureau, March 1970, 11-15. May 19, 2016.
- ^{xi} Ryan, Camille L., and Kurt Bauman. "[Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015.](#)" US Census 2016 P20-578 (March 29, 2016).
- ^{xii} I use the 92nd Congress instead of the 91st because the League only reported scores for those Members of the 91st Congress who were still serving in the 92nd.
- ^{xiii} Hill, Gladwin, "[Conservationists Give Carter High Marks and Ford Low Ones](#)" *New York Times*, August 22, 1976.
- ^{xiv} "Major Environmental Leaders Back Carter Re-election Bid." *New York Times*, September 28, 1980.
- ^{xv} Joyce, Fay S., "Sierra Club Breaks its Tradition and Backs a Candidate: Mondale" *New York Times*, September 19, 1984.
- ^{xvi} The endorsees were Frank LoBiondo and Chris Smith of New Jersey, Patrick Meehan of Pennsylvania and Dave Reichert of Washington.
- ^{xvii} Confessore, Nicholas. "[Financier Plans Big Ad Campaign on Climate Change.](#)" *The New York Times*. February 18, 2014.
- ^{xviii} Democratic politicians have also faced conflicts in their coalition between environmentalists and labor unions. Divisions have flared up on issues such as pipeline construction and auto mileage requirements, but these have been episodic in nature and usually focusing on secondary concerns of a minority of declining private-sector unions.
- ^{xix} Turkewitz, Julie. "[Trump Slashes Size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Monuments.](#)" *The New York Times*. December 04, 2017.
- ^{xx} Taylor, Andrew. "[House Drops Arctic Drilling From Bill.](#)" *The Washington Post*. November 10, 2005.
- ^{xxi} "[Reichert, Fitzpatrick, and Costello Lead Letter to Leadership on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.](#)" Reichert.house.gov. November 30, 2017.
- ^{xxii} Frymer (1999) saw African-Americans and LGBT rights groups as captured by the Democratic Party, but thought other groups had avoided this status.
- ^{xxiii} Eisenhower, Dwight D. [Personal and confidential To Edgar Newton Eisenhower](#), 8 November 1954. In *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. L. Galambos and D. van Ee, doc. 1147. World Wide Web facsimile by The Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission of the print edition; Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- ^{xxiv} "[How Groups Voted in 2000.](#)" Roper Center. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- ^{xxv} "[How Groups Voted in 2004.](#)" Roper Center. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- ^{xxvi} "[How Groups Voted in 2016.](#)" Roper Center. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- ^{xxvii} "[Exit Polls 2016: National President.](#)" CNN. November 23, 2016. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- ^{xxviii} "[Whites Who Are Evangelical Protestant.](#)" Pew Research Center. 2014. Accessed April 2, 2018.
- ^{xxix} Roy, Manik. "[It's Not Too Late to 'go Green' in Changing Climate of Washington.](#)" *TheHill*. May 31, 2017.
- ^{xxx} Mooney, Chris, Scott Clement, and Steven Mufson. "[There's a Global Warming Generation Gap in the GOP, like on the Issue of Gay Marriage.](#)" *The Washington Post*. November 19, 2014.
- ^{xxxi} Capelouto, J.D. "[In Generational Shift, College Republicans Poised to Reform Party on Climate Change.](#)" Reuters. April 12, 2017.
- ^{xxxii} "[Race, Immigration, Same-sex Marriage, Abortion, Global Warming, Gun Policy, Marijuana Legalization.](#)" Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. March 01, 2018.
- ^{xxxiii} "[Consumer Price Index - Average Price Data](#)", Bureau of Labor Statistics, Accessed April 02, 2018.
- ^{xxxiv} Jacobson, Louis. "[Are Coal Mining Jobs up by 50,000 since Last Year? Not Exactly.](#)" Politifact. June 05, 2017.
- ^{xxxv} "[Coal Mining: Long-Term Contribution Trends.](#)" Center for Responsive Politics, Opensecrets.org, March 26, 2018.
- ^{xxxvi} Mann, Thomas E., Norman J. Ornstein, Michael Malbin, and Andrew Rugg. "[Chapter 3: Campaign Finance in Congressional Elections.](#)" *Vital Statistics on Congress*, March 12, 2013.
- ^{xxxvii} Dennis, Brady. "[Who Still Smokes in the United States - in Seven Simple Charts.](#)" *The Washington Post*. November 12, 2015.
- ^{xxxviii} "[Alternative Energy Production & Services: Long-Term Contribution Trends.](#)" Center for Responsive Politics, Opensecrets.org March 26, 2018.

^{xxxix} ["Environment: Long-Term Contribution Trends."](#) Center for Responsive Politics, Opensecrets.org March 26, 2018.

^{xl} Corn, David. ["Confessions of a Tea Party Casualty."](#) Mother Jones. August 3, 2010.

^{xli} ["The Climate Solutions Caucus."](#) Citizens' Climate Lobby. Accessed April 02, 2018.

^{xlii} ["Daily Kos Elections' 2016 Presidential Results for Congressional and Legislative Districts."](#) Daily Kos. February 06, 2017.

^{xliii} GOP caucus members also include the non-voting delegates from American Samoa and Puerto Rico. These delegates are not rated by the LCV.

^{xliv} Bartel, Bill. ["6 Months In, Rep. Scott Taylor Is Trying to Elevate His Status in Congress However Possible."](#) Virginian-Pilot. July 08, 2017.

^{xlv} Rodriguez, Joanna. ["Curbelo, Deutch Lead Climate Solutions Caucus in Urging Trump to Maintain U.S. Commitment to Paris Agreement."](#) Curbelo.house.gov. April 26, 2017.

^{xlvi} Shankman, Sabrina. ["12 House Republicans Urge Congress to Cut ANWR Oil Drilling from Tax Bill"](#) InsideClimate News. December 2, 2007.

^{xlvii} Hand, Mark. ["Activists Are Coming for the 24 Members of House Climate Caucus Who Voted for the Tax Bill."](#) ThinkProgress. December 20, 2017.

^{xlviii} Leber, Rebecca, and Megan Julia. ["A Climate Caucus Has Turned Into a Magnet for House Republicans. Wait, What?"](#) Mother Jones. February 15, 2018.



