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# Republican Realignment: Building a Majority Coalition for Future Electoral Success

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# Republican Realignment

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Building a Majority Coalition for Future Electoral  
Success

**Anthony J. Del Signore**

**12/17/2014**

**Under the advisement of:  
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*Abstract:* Since the election of President George H. W. Bush, Republican presidential candidates have had difficulty winning popular elections. Republican candidates lost five of the next six popular elections to their Democratic opponents. This paper investigates why. It outlines the growing demographic shift in electoral politics which is detrimental for future Republican success. The growing dissonance between non-white, non-male voters and the Republican Party hinders the Party's success when its message does not resonate with a majority of voters.

Utilizing realignment theory as first espoused by political scientist V. O. Key, this paper analyzes nine essential battleground states and the growing demographic shifts within them to show that Republican policies, as enumerated in *The Growth and Opportunity Project*, do not resonate to a larger audience. Using a 15% increase in Republican votes from the 2012 election as a baseline, this paper provides suggestions for Republican strategists to allocate funds to certain get-out-the-vote campaigns in certain states.

The results of this study confirm the hypothesis set forth. Latino voters are an essential demographic which can help win Florida with a “compassionate conservative” Republican candidate. African-American voters are much more difficult to court for the Republican Party; however, a sound strategy in two adjacent states with low socio-economic upward mobility – North Carolina and Virginia – can motivate African-Americans to the polls to help win those states. Independent voters can help win small swing states with relatively little ethnic diversity. Finally, single female voters will be crucial in states in which conservative governors have had success such as Ohio and North Carolina.

## **Introduction**

From the New Deal Coalition to the Reagan Democrats and George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatives," electoral realignments have changed the landscape of politics in the United States. However, in the late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, a majority coalition for either party is increasingly difficult to come by. The era in which Democrats held the Senate unobstructed between 1955 and 1981 is over as majority changes are happening at a much quicker pace. Despite a lack of continuity in Congress, presidential elections since 1988 have shifted towards the Democratic Party as Democratic candidates have won all but one popular election since President George H. W. Bush took office. During this time, presidents such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have formed voting coalitions of various demographics through populist and inclusive campaign messages. President Clinton was able to reach out to conservatives across the aisle with conservative economic principles while keeping his Democratic base in check with a moderate social message. President Obama was able to foster a populist message of change which spoke to a large audience disillusioned with the preceding President George W. Bush administration.

Meanwhile, Republicans have struggled mightily in presidential elections. While losing in 2008 and 2012 and with a savvy political veteran in Hillary Clinton poised to run in 2016, the Republican Party cannot seem to find a strong candidate who can speak for the Party writ large. Republicans are as fractured as ever, going so far as to offer multiple States of the Union responses every year. Furthermore, historical battleground states are increasingly voting Democrat as President Obama won eight of the nine battleground states in the 2012 election.<sup>1</sup>

The future of the Republican Party at the national level looks bleak. It is fascinating to note its rise in the 1980s to near regional status today as the party has become disillusioned with

itself. Nonetheless, I will attempt to answer the following question: can the Republican Party form a new presidential realignment around different demographic groups it has historically done poorly with? I hypothesize the answer is the following: the Republican Party no longer speaks to a majority of the electorate and the policies put forth by Republican leaders alienate demographic groups which are increasing in size and political power. Only the Latino vote is a voter demographic in which the Republican Party can gain a significant minority of voters – around 40% or more – and include in a new Republican coalition. Table 1 shows the hypotheses for the various demographics under analysis. Nevertheless, there are states in which Republicans should focus on to increase voting percentages for demographic groups such as independent voters, single female voters, and African-American voters.

For each demographic I have included the Republican Party's performance in the general election for the presidency in 2012, the hypothetical likelihood that a 15% increase in vote total from 2012 to 2016 is to occur, and the prospect that a demographic can be included in a Republican realignment. A 15% increase is chosen as a benchmark for various reasons. First, it happens so rarely in electoral politics that a demographic will behave as such that its appearance cannot be easily explained away as insignificant. However, it happens frequently enough that a clear and long-term shift in the electorate is noticeable. For example, President George H. W. Bush went from 63% of the vote total for youths under the age of thirty in 1988 to 37% in 1992. Republican Party candidates have yet to break 50% since. Another example is the percentage of college educated voters who voted for President Bush dropped 18% from 1988 to 1992. Republican candidates have had a difficult time getting back to the 15-20 percentage point dominance of this demographic they once held. While these are extreme examples, these

examples are indicative of state-by-state realignment in which most of the battleground states witnessed a 15% increase in Republican vote totals from the previous presidential election.

### General Hypotheses

| Demographics                   | % Voted for Mitt Romney (2012) | Prospect for 15% increase in GOP vote totals for 2016 | Prospect for inclusion in a Republican Realignment |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Latino                         | 27%                            | Possible  | Possible   |
| Independent                    | 50%                            | Unlikely  | Possible*  |
| African-American               | 6%                             | Possible  | Unlikely   |
| Unmarried (Single Female Vote) | 31% (Single Female Vote)       | Possible  | Unlikely   |

Table 1: General Hypotheses for *Republican Realignment*. Data retrieved from: CNN Election Center. 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president>.

\* Independent voters are difficult to categorize as they span the political spectrum from socialists on the left to libertarians on the right. For purposes of my research, I will focus on moderate and conservative independents as they are a more pronounced swing voter bloc.

To conduct this research, I analyzed election data with various demographic features from multiple presidential elections spanning from the immediate post-WWII era until today. A significant portion of this paper will utilize election data obtained from Gallup exit polls, CNN Election Center, and *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*. I will analyze results from nine recent historical battleground states: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, and Wisconsin. I will diverge to cover other states, such as New Jersey, at certain points as is necessary to underscore an argument. Also, I will analyze which issues are the core issues of various demographic groups within those nine states: the Latino vote, the African-American vote, the independent vote, and the unmarried vote. Furthermore, I will analyze the current message of the Republican Party, analyze its split among various moderate to conservative sub-groups, and project what a winning formula would be for a Republican presidential candidate looking to win these battleground states.

### **The Twentieth Century Republican Realignment**

Before I can predict where the party is going, I must first understand where the party came from and what made it a force to be reckoned with, particularly during the 1980s. Before Richard Nixon, the Republican Party suffered through relative anonymity as the New Deal coalition kept churning out Democratic president after Democratic president, only relinquishing for President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 and 1957. Nonetheless, the New Deal coalition brought together special interests including urbanite liberals, ethnic minorities (including religious minorities), labor unions, and remnants of the “Solid South” – southern Democrats motivated by issues of race and states’ rights.

The coalition, which dominated the South and much of the West, began to change during the 1960s when a rise of conservative activism threatened its future. A backlash to the beginning of what some saw as the moral decay of American values was beginning and Arizona Republican Senator Barry Goldwater became the face of traditional values. A voice for limited government and a return to moral decency, many moderate and liberal voters gave Goldwater their attention, at the very least, during his 1964 presidential run. Goldwater ran on a plethora of social and economic issues taking decidedly anti-New Deal stances. For example, he was fully against perceived preferential treatment through affirmative action. He was against the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, a major social policy misstep if one were trying to court the minority vote.

Despite Goldwater’s rise to conservative fame, Democrats still won decidedly as Goldwater made but a whimper on the electoral map. Figure 1 shows the vote totals for the nine battleground states for the 1964 Presidential election. The Republican Party’s first foray into modern conservatism ended in crushing defeat with vote total differentials surpassing 100,000



votes in some states. A look at two states in particular – Colorado and Florida – details the split between conservatives and centrist Republicans and the beginning of the regionalization of Republican voters to sparsely populated and ethnically homogenous counties.

In Colorado, the conservative candidate did not resonate with the voting population – a population which was voting Republican at the state and congressional levels in the few years prior to 1964. What happened in 1964 to change a state which voted for Richard Nixon in 1960 to pull the lever for Lyndon Johnson in overwhelming fashion? A lack of unity among Republican Party ranks is to blame and will be an essential feature in later sections detailing successes of Republican governors at the expense of their national counterparts.

The Republican Party, though gaining tremendous power and clout in the years up to 1958, was in a serious crisis in Colorado by 1964. A tax cut mandate, supported by newly elected Republican Governor John Love, left taxpayers footing the bill for the state's then two most popular universities with high out-of-state residency. These fiscal measures left conservatives disillusioned with the Republican Party as party leaders battled each other over which Republican presidential hopeful to support; Goldwater, conservative-lite governor of New York Nelson Rockefeller, or borderline liberal Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.<sup>2</sup> The Democrats, in contrast, were united behind the image of President Kennedy embodied in the very large figure of Lyndon Johnson. This coupled with the rapidly growing urban center of Denver's minority population led to an overwhelming victory for President Johnson in 1964. Figure 2 shows vote totals for a few Colorado counties.

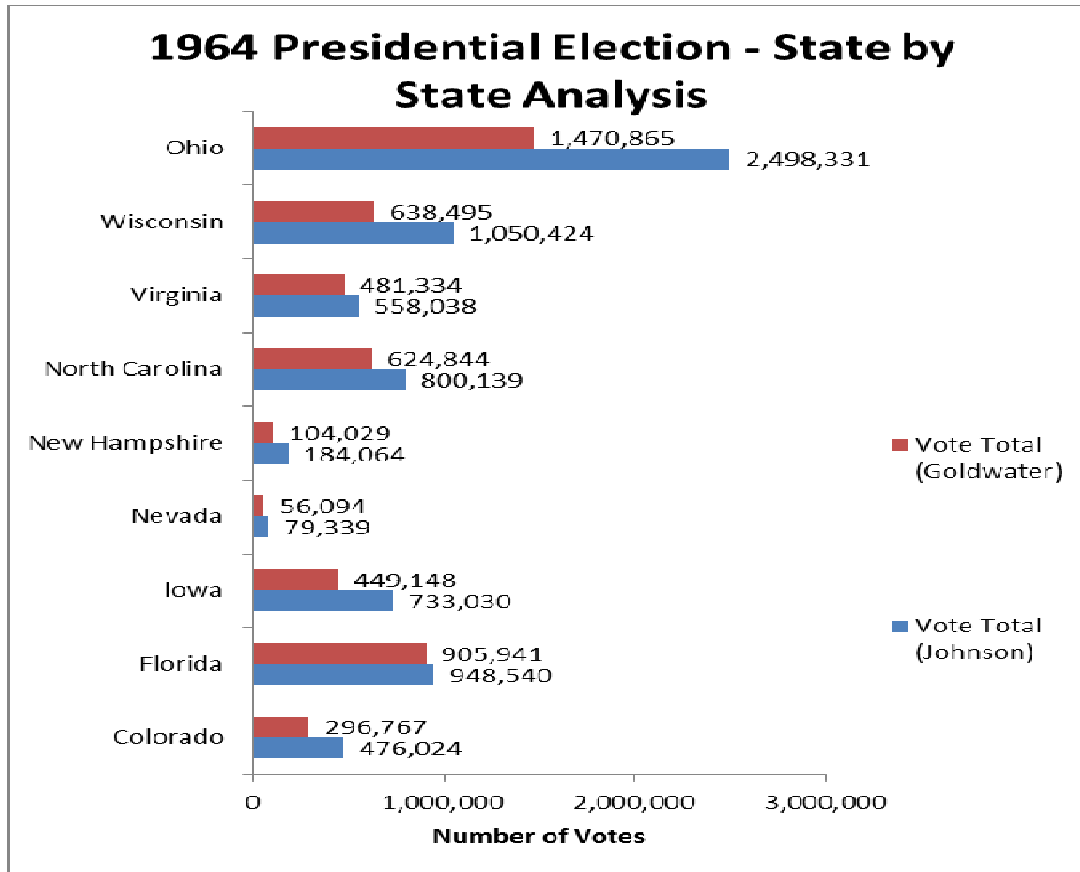


Figure 1: Vote totals for the 1964 Presidential election. Data found at: <http://uselectionsatlas.org>

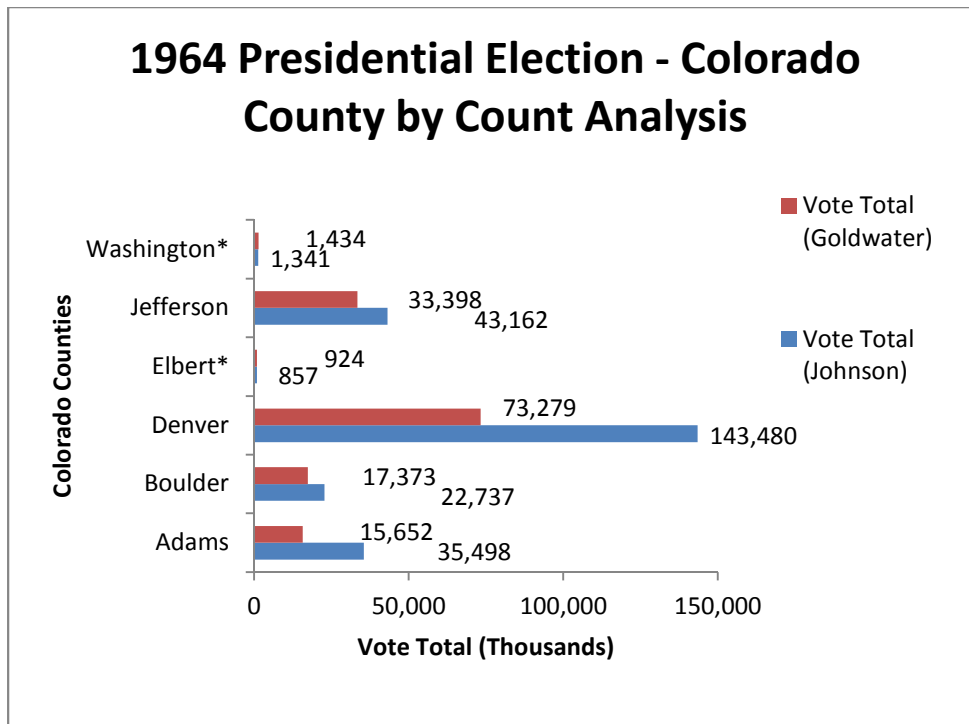


Figure 2: Analysis of Colorado's most populous counties' vote totals (1964 presidential election). Data retrieved from: [uselectionatlas.org](http://uselectionatlas.org)

\* Washington and Elbert counties were the only two counties in which Barry Goldwater won in 1964 and do not represent the most populous counties in Colorado. They are included to show the contrast between counties who elected Lyndon Johnson and those who elected Barry Goldwater. The white populations of both Elbert County and Washington County in 1960 were 99%. Data retrieved from: Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Another example of Republican difficulties in the 1964 election is in Florida. Florida, unlike other southern states, had begun to vote Republican in the few years prior to 1964. The conservative realignment which saw Deep South states – Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina to name a few – latch on to Senator Goldwater's anti-civil rights message was much more complicated in Florida. In the urban centers, Goldwater underwhelmed, garnishing only 46% of the vote in areas in which Nixon won handily four years prior.<sup>3</sup> Table 2 details the counties with the highest vote total difference between Richard Nixon in 1960 and Barry Goldwater in 1964. What is striking to note is that Goldwater was extremely popular in the Florida panhandle, a section Nixon underwhelmed four years prior. Nevertheless, many of the

counties Republicans were able to hold onto showed a significant increase of support for the Democratic challenger from the 1960 election.

| <b>Richard Nixon vs. Barry Goldwater – Florida Election Results (1960 &amp; 1964)</b> |                           |                               |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| County  | Vote Total (Nixon – 1960) | Vote Total (Goldwater – 1964) |
| Pinellas  | 101,759 (63.7%)           | 80,414 (45.0%)                |
| Volusia   | 28,367 (54.8%)            | 24,988 (41.7%)                |
| Brevard   | 17,585 (61.4%)            | 24,551 (49.7%)                |
| Miami-Dade  | 134,506 (42.3%)           | 117,480 (36.0%)               |
| Orange  | 48,244 (71.0%)            | 48,884 (56.1%)                |
| Palm Beach  | 45,337 (60.3%)            | 49,614 (53.1%)                |

Table 2: Richard Nixon vs. Barry Goldwater – Florida Election Results (1960 & 1964). Data retrieved from: uselectionatlas.org. Take note not of the total number of votes, but of the percentage of vote total which is a greater indicator of the rise of the Democratic Party in Florida.

An interesting correlation forms between the influx of Cuban immigrants in the beginning of the 1960s and the rise of the Democratic Party in Florida. In 1960, the overwhelming majority of Florida's population was white – 82%. A small Latino population of mostly Cuban Americans whose families arrived in the nineteenth century formed the basis of Miami-Dade County. However, outside of this county the number of Latino Americans was sparse and politically insignificant. By 1970, Latino Americans were nearly 7% of Florida's voting population, up from 1% twenty years prior.<sup>4</sup> Many Latino Americans concentrated in

select counties such as Miami-Dade in the southern portion of the state where they remain to this day.

Why bring up the 1964 presidential election? The 1964 presidential election was the beginning of a Republican Party which split along ideological and religious lines. It was the beginning of a time in which the nine battleground states in this study dabbled with the Democratic Party, switched back to voting Republican during the 1980s, and have steadily begun to vote Democratic once again. It was also the beginning of a Republican Party which could not gain enough support among minority communities to consistently win counties after the 1960s.

### **The Reagan Years**

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 was monumental for the Republican Party. Gone were the days of the New Deal and Great Society; conservatism was the new mode of operation for America. In 1980 Ronald Reagan carried 44 states – including the nine battleground states – and did so quite decidedly. While economics tends to be the main focus of Reagan’s campaign success, some scholars point towards the growing crime rate – a page out of Richard Nixon’s playbook – as a more useful policy in garnering support from the working class, independent voters, African-American voters, and women voters.

The decade of the 1970s saw the steepest increase in violent crime than at any other point in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> By 1970, the homicide rate had risen to 7.9 homicides per 100,000 people. Ten years later in 1980, the homicide rate was at 10.2 homicides per 100,000 people. This is in stark contrast to the 1940s and 1950s which saw homicide rates of around 4.5 per 100,000 people.<sup>6</sup> Reasons for this increase are numerous; the coming of age of the baby boom generation and the drug culture – directly influenced by the War on Drugs – are two examples.

According to Douthat and Salam, authors of *Grand New Party*, the root cause was that crime simply was not being punished by liberal lawmakers.<sup>7</sup> Democrats and progressives began to link crime to class status proclaiming those who did not generate enough income committed crimes out of desperation, or even perceived institutional injustices. The Democratic Party platform for the 1980s made no references to imprisoning drug offenders. All references to drugs were related to a continued desire to use rehabilitation techniques.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, minorities and working class people bore the brunt of this new wave of violent criminality. Because the working class was generally wealthier than their African-American counterparts, the average working class voter moved out of the urban cities to the suburbs. However, the high crime rates they were trying to escape from were beginning to be seen in the suburbs. All the while, Democrats began campaign vigorously in urban centers and African-American voters, a much less significant voting bloc than it is today. Increasingly, Republicans began campaigning on “law and order” issues. The question becomes, did this strategy pay off in many of the battleground states as Republicans began a steady surge in vote total from 1964 to 1980? If the correlation is strong enough, can this be a strategy Republican candidates use in the future to combat their Democratic rivals? Table 3 displays the correlation between the surge in crime and the propensity for a state to elect a Republican presidential candidate.

| State          | 1964 Election Results                  | 1964 Crime Rate* | 1980 Election Results              | 1980 Crime Rate* |
|----------------|--|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Ohio           | Johnson – 62.94%<br>Goldwater – 37.06% | 114.7            | Carter – 40.91%<br>Reagan – 51.51% | 498.3            |
| Wisconsin      | Johnson – 62.09%<br>Goldwater – 37.74% | 42.9             | Carter – 43.18%<br>Reagan – 47.90% | 182.6            |
| Virginia       | Johnson – 53.54%<br>Goldwater – 46.18% | 241.1            | Carter – 40.31%<br>Reagan – 53.03% | 307.2            |
| North Carolina | Johnson – 56.16%<br>Goldwater – 43.85% | 254.4            | Carter – 47.18%<br>Reagan – 49.30% | 455.0            |
| New Hampshire  | Johnson – 63.89%<br>Goldwater – 36.11% | 22.8             | Carter – 28.35%<br>Reagan – 57.74% | 179.8            |
| Nevada         | Johnson – 58.58%<br>Goldwater – 41.42% | 240.9            | Carter – 26.89%<br>Reagan – 62.54% | 912.6            |
| Iowa           | Johnson – 61.88%<br>Goldwater – 37.92% | 36.5             | Carter – 38.60%<br>Reagan – 51.31% | 200.4            |
| Florida        | Johnson – 51.15%<br>Goldwater – 48.85% | 289.9            | Carter – 38.50%<br>Reagan – 55.52% | 983.5            |
| Colorado       | Johnson – 61.27%<br>Goldwater – 38.19% | 158.6            | Carter – 31.07%<br>Reagan – 55.07% | 528.6            |

Table 3: Correlation between increased crime rate and increased propensity to elect a Republican president. Election data retrieved from: [uselectionatlas.org](http://uselectionatlas.org).

\* For purposes of this study, “crime rate” denotes the number of violent crimes occurring in a sample of 100,000 residents. Data retrieved from: “Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics.” US Department of Justice. <http://ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm>.

The data in Table 3 tentatively supports the thesis presented by Douthat and Salam that an increased crime rate helped Republicans win the 1980 election. However, it is not a direct correlation as states where violent crime did not increase significantly relative to other states elected President Reagan by a wider margin than some states with greater violent crime increase.

To provide greater clarity of this correlation, I conducted a linear regression analysis with the following X, Y data:

$X = (\text{Crime rate per 100,000 residents for 1980 for each state}) / (\text{Crime rate per 100,000 residents for 1964 for each state})$

$Y = (\text{Percent of popular vote for Reagan for each state}) - (\text{Percent of popular vote for Goldwater for each state}) / (\text{Percent of popular vote for Goldwater for each state}) \times 100\%$

In the standard  $y = mx + b$  formula, “m” was determined with the following formula:

$$m = (\sum Y \cdot \sum X^2 - \sum X \cdot \sum XY) / (n \cdot \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)$$

“b” was determined utilizing the following formula:

$$b = (n \cdot \sum XY - \sum X \cdot \sum Y) / (n \cdot \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)$$

After importing the appropriate data, the equation for the regression line was determined to be:

$y = 6.649x + 6.758$  with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.7554$  showing a general upward trend.

The data show that while there is a loose correlation between the rate of increase of violent crime and the propensity to vote Republican in the 1980 presidential election, it fails to be a strong enough correlation to be the most significant factor in the victory of President Reagan in 1980. Other variables need to be considered including: the unpopularity of President Jimmy Carter leading up to the 1980 elections, the economic malaise of the late 1970s, and the growing population shift towards urban centers. Therefore, it would not be beneficial to future Republican candidates to run on a “law and order” strategy for two reasons: 1) it was not significant enough to overwhelming sway voter sentiment one way or another and 2) crime has decreased since the 1990s.



### **The Republican Party Split – The 1992 Election**

By the 1992 presidential election, the Democratic Leadership Council, in conjunction with anti-Bush New Democrats, began to unite behind a strong message of centrism and governmental reform which attempted to dramatically change the path of the Democratic Party. With the DLC's quick success, the Republican Party found itself in a desperate situation as third party candidate Ross Perot syphoned working class and middle class voters from President George H. W. Bush. The Republican Party began to show signs of fracturing among its three core voting demographics: neoconservative moderates, evangelical Christians, and far-right conservatives (who would eventually become pivotal for the Tea Party Movement). For neoconservatives, a movement which grew in conjunction with far-right conservatism, their defining features are found in foreign policy and protecting America's interests overseas. Evangelicals find their niche in the ideas of moral decency and a return to fundamental Christian doctrine. Their political views are primarily steeped in social conservatism, such as anti-gay rights and pro-life stances. With this in mind, the conservative backlash and the beginning signs of grassroots conservatism removed President George H. W. Bush from office as he capitulated against a central tenet of far-right conservatism: low taxes.

A telling sign of the Republican split was that self-describing conservative voters voted for the Republican presidential candidate at a much lower rate than self-describing liberals did for the Democratic candidate. Leading up to the 1992 presidential election, nine southern states had more white Republican voters than white Democratic voters. President George H. W. Bush was able to garner 70% of the white southern vote in 1988. This number dropped to 52% just four years later. In contrast, for Bill Clinton's 1996 reelection, nearly 90% of liberals voted for the Democratic candidate.<sup>9</sup> Southern conservatives were upset over President Bush's capitulation

on taxes and they responded by placing their votes in the hands of Ross Perot. No state reflects this more than Florida and its vote totals in the 1992 election.

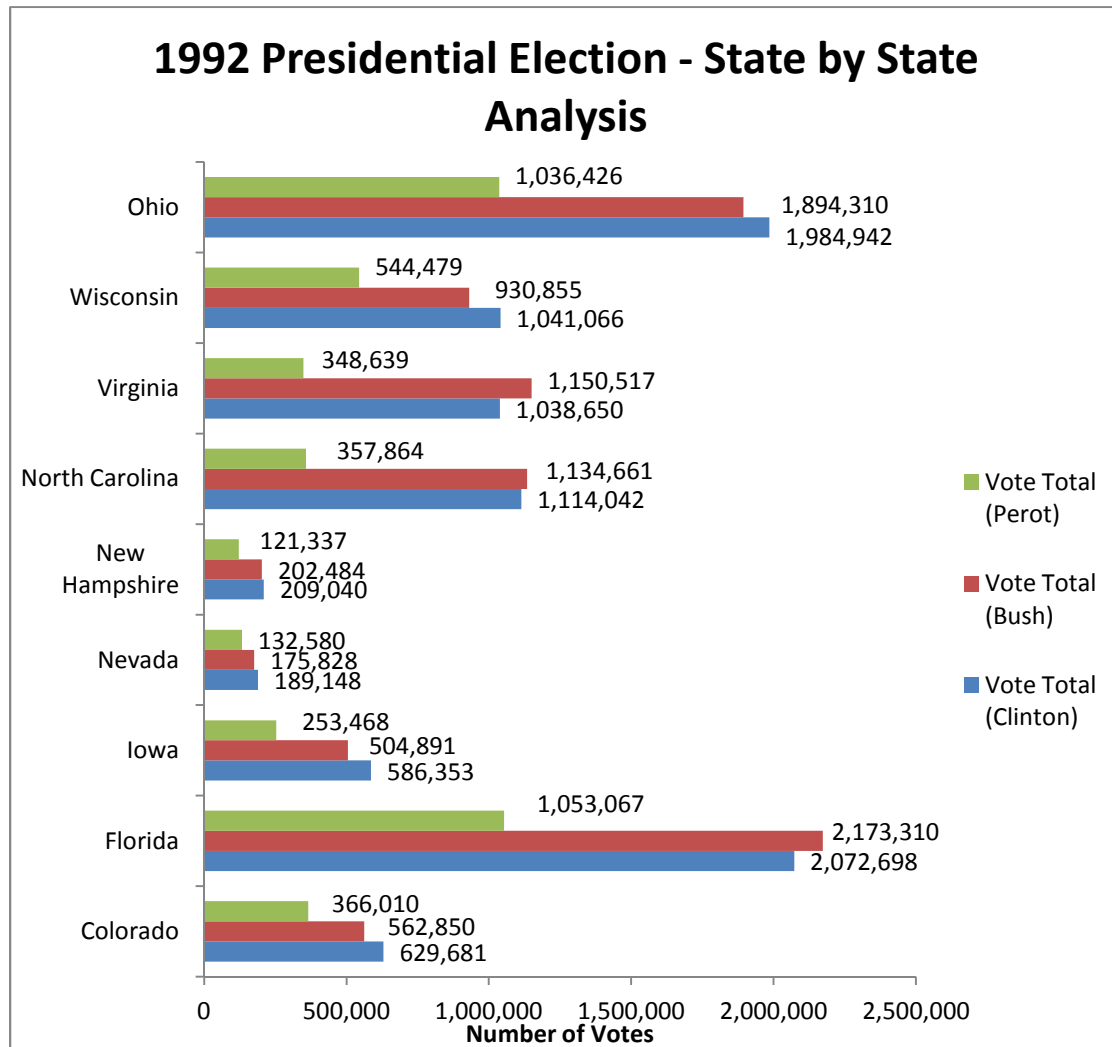


Figure 3: A state by state analysis of the 1992 presidential election. Data retrieved from: <http://uselectionatlas.org/>

Prior to the 1992 presidential election, Republicans had won the state of Florida in four out of five consecutive presidential elections.<sup>10</sup> Heading into the 1992 elections, Democratic strategists had all but given up on the state, allocating minimal resources to the historically conservative state. One demographic trend coupled with the economic downturn in the late 1980s to early 1990s redefined the political landscape in Florida: immigration. From 1990 to

2000, a 23% increase in the state's population due to an increase in immigration severely stunted the Republican Party's growth in the state.<sup>11</sup> As President George H. W. Bush's lead in Florida dwindled, Cuban-Americans, a former stable force within Republican Party ranks and a demographic covered more in depth in subsequent sections, began to support candidate Bill Clinton. During this time, the city of Miami was losing jobs at a rapid rate. Major employers were going bankrupt and the large Hispanic population suffered because of it. Another sign of Cuban-American discontent was the strong backlash against perceived lax relations with Cuba. Anti-Communist Cuban-Americans were not happy with the Bush administration cooperating with Cuban officials to quell "exile attacks."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the Bush administration would not support a bill toughening sanctions against Cuba while simultaneously relieving stringent communication laws barring loved ones with family members in Cuba from communicating with each other. This left the door open for candidate Bill Clinton. As a result, he became the first Democratic presidential candidate to court Cuban voters in Florida's history.

Another example of Republican disenchantment with President George H. W. Bush is in the state of Ohio. Ohio has always been a political bellwether of sorts. How it votes typically shows which candidate is favored to win the presidency. In Ohio, a select few counties decided the electoral fate of the state as six prominent counties on the eastern side of the state switched from Republican in 1988 to Democrat in 1992.<sup>13</sup> Guernsey County, Coshocton County, Carroll County, Tuscarawas County, Portage County, and Stark County displayed the splintering of Republican hopes as Republican faithful abandoned President George H. W. Bush in favor of a Democratic candidate "with Republican ideals."<sup>14</sup> Table 4 shows the vote totals of the six counties from 1988 to 1992. No other county displays this division better than Stark County.

| County     | 1988 Election Results<br>(Percent of total vote/number of votes) | 1992 Election Results<br>(Percent of total vote/number of votes)      |
|------------|--|---|
| Guernsey   | Dukakis - 40.7%/5,926<br>Bush - 58.4%/8,507                      | Clinton - 39.3%/6,428<br>Bush - 35.2%/5,749<br>Perot - 25.1%/4,103    |
| Coshocton  | Dukakis - 41.5%/6,020<br>Bush - 57.1%/8,282                      | Clinton - 38.4%/6,212<br>Bush - 35.3%/5,705<br>Perot - 25.2%/4,081    |
| Carroll    | Dukakis - 42.5%/4,667<br>Bush - 56.2%/6,179                      | Clinton - 38.0%/4,731<br>Bush - 33.9%/4,224<br>Perot - 27.6%/3,434    |
| Tuscarawas | Dukakis - 44.9%/14,185<br>Bush - 54.3%/17,145                    | Clinton - 40.1%/14,787<br>Bush - 35.7%/13,179<br>Perot - 23.8%/8,785  |
| Portage    | Dukakis - 48.8%/25,607<br>Bush - 50.2%/26,334                    | Clinton - 42.4%/26,325<br>Bush - 29.7%/18,447<br>Perot - 27.5%/17,065 |
| Stark      | Dukakis - 44.0%/69,639<br>Bush - 55.1%/87,087                    | Clinton - 40.0%/70,064<br>Bush - 35.3%/61,863<br>Perot - 24.2%/42,413 |

Table 4: Electoral differences between six swing counties in Ohio (1988-1992). Data retrieved at: [uselectionatlas.org](http://uselectionatlas.org).

Prior to the 1992 presidential election, Stark County, Ohio had voted for the Republican presidential candidate in each election dating back to 1968.<sup>15</sup> A county at the crossroads of conservatism to the west and liberalism to the north, Stark County has a true variety of political affiliations. Many voters within Stark County consider themselves independent voters.

Republican candidates for office, however, have relied upon contributions from local steel corporations to fund get-out-the-vote projects for decades, including during the 1992 election. The Center for Responsive Politics shows that many Canton residents who identified as employees of Timken Steel, one of the largest employers in the county, donated to President Bush and Vice-President Dole (in 1996) at a rate far above the average citizen.<sup>16</sup>

Democrats in Stark County, on the other hand, relied heavily upon donations from labor and labor unions. *The New York Times* released analysis of Democratic donations in the state of Ohio for elections in the early 1990s: “[i]n Ohio, the four biggest organizational contributors to state races in 1994 were all unions, representing teachers, automobile workers, government workers, as well as the A.F.L.-C.I.O.”<sup>17</sup> However, fears of a Perot candidacy loomed large and would prove to be important as Perot syphoned 26% of union voters in the county, while Clinton hovered around 50%.<sup>18</sup>

Perot’s entrance into the race did not seem to hurt Clinton all that much in Stark County, however. The influence of Bush policies prior to 1992 helped to stifle the influence of money from companies such as Timken steel. Economically many counties were suffering under unemployment, including Stark County. During the 1992 campaign season, unemployment in Stark County hovered around 7.9%.<sup>19</sup> Manufacturing companies were suffering from high taxation and competition from overseas, particularly in automobile manufacturing. As a result many companies began to endorse Bill Clinton as economic conservatism trumped the social conservatism and broken tax promises offered by President Bush.

Disillusionment extended far beyond the reaches of Stark County, Ohio as the rust belt of America felt the pressure of recession and the failed taxation policies of President Bush.

Neoconservative war-hawks, in favor of increased pressure on the Saddam Hussein regime and social conservatives still riding the high of President Ronald Reagan's terms, still supported Bush in large numbers. However, the divide was beginning to show and the Republican Party needed to rebrand at the state level to have any chance of influencing state policies in the post-1992 era.

This introduces another split within the Republican Party; that is, the split between the national Republican Party and the Republican Governor's Association – a split which has ramifications felt to this day. Demographic trends in voting in the state of Ohio between 1990 and 1994 display how successful the state Republican Party was at the expense of the national party. The youth vote was very important in the reelection of Ohio Republican Governor George Voinovich in 1994 – in which he garnered over 70% of the total vote. Potential voters between the ages of 18 and 44 comprised approximately 4.5 million individuals. Those above the age of 45 were fewer, at approximately 3 million.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic demographics favored Republicanism, however, as white individuals made up 87.1% of the population of Ohio in 1998.<sup>21</sup> A core group of young, white voters is not a stable base for either party to hang its hat on. Typically this demographic is comprised of liberal, college-educated elites, conservative small-business owners, and union workers. Each of these groups pulls a young, white electorate in different directions. The question becomes, how did a Republican gain favor with a vast array of ideologies and no stable ethnic base? Furthermore, why did Ohio vote overwhelmingly Democratic in the 1992 presidential election while a Republican Governor expanded business ventures and reduced poverty to historic lows?

By the 1992 presidential election, the state of Ohio was on track to decrease poverty levels in urban centers as Governor Voinovich reformed welfare (a Bill Clinton tactic) and

brought Ohio out of a stifling deficit. Voinovich also tackled unemployment which hit a twenty-five year low during his governorship.<sup>22</sup> What propelled Voinovich to getting 72% of the vote in the general election in his 1994 governorship reelection bid was the same tactic used by moderate Republicans to this day; instead of slashing government, the governor slashed taxes while allocating funds to programs the public demanded, such as Head Start.<sup>23</sup>

Republican governorships during the 1990s did tremendously well when compared with their national counterparts. Besides the aforementioned Ohio governor, the Iowa governor during the 1990s, Governor Terry E. Branstad, was a Republican Governor also able to run liberal programs in a conservative fashion by cutting taxes and allocating money to the programs which needed it the most. By doing so Governor Branstad was able to create a budget surplus of nearly \$900 million when he left office in 1999.<sup>24</sup> Resolution of the “farm crisis” of the 1980s was one issue in which Governor Branstad earned such praise.

During the 1980s, the agriculture speculative bubble which expanded under President Carter through Soviet purchases of grain began to show signs of stress. The Federal Reserve stopped easy lending policies which raised interest rates to 21.5% from historic lows of nearly 0%. This put a strain on farmers already tremendously in debt. As a result, farmland values dropped nearly 60%, further exasperated by President Carter’s decision to embargo the Soviet Union from grain purchases.<sup>25</sup> Middle-income farmers racked with debt were dealt a tremendous blow. Large farmers received the bulk of farm subsidies and the subsequent government buyout of farmland through the Farm Credit System. In Iowa alone the FCS sold 100,000 acres at a price of \$74 million during the first few months of 1987.<sup>26</sup> Unions, however, came to the rescue in several states, including Iowa. In Iowa, the Farm Unity Coalition urged the state legislature to retain a 1976 law forbidding corporate ownership of farmland.<sup>27</sup> All the while, Governor

Branstad fought for the farmers in Iowa despite resistance from the Reagan Administration, much to the enragement of Branstad. The administration, according to Branstad and Neil Harl, professor of economics at Iowa State University, wanted to blame the farmers themselves for the mess that loose monetary policies put them in. Taking a staunchly fiscal conservative stance, David Stockman, then director of the Office of Management and Banking during the Reagan Administration told Governor Branstad that the best course of action was for all of the struggling farms to file for bankruptcy. An enraged Branstad slammed a chair on the floor and demanded to be treated with more respect since he vigorously campaigned for President Reagan during both of his campaigns.<sup>28</sup> Utterly dejected by the seemingly unappreciative Republican administration, Governor Branstad employed his own solutions to the farm subsidies issue.

Governor Branstad was able to administer his own remedies in the forms of mediation and state-wide hotline services which offered financial and legal advice.<sup>29</sup> With the ability to restructure their crushing debt, farmers were able to find respite during the trying times of this crisis. By 1988, crop prices began to rise and the crisis was eventually over. What the 1980s farm crisis showed was a Republican presidential administration adherent to core conservative principles, which ultimately alienated farmers, and a Republican governorship in tune with the needs of its constituency.

The 1988 and 1992 election cycles left the Midwest open for Democratic challengers to the Republican presidential hegemony that was developing. In the 1988 presidential election, Democratic challenger Michael Dukakis won three Midwestern states out of the ten total states he won.<sup>30</sup> In 1992 this trend continued as Bill Clinton won the vast majority of the Midwestern states.<sup>31</sup> All this occurred despite Republican gains in state elections. Despite a few of the western-most states – Kansas and Nebraska elected Democratic governors – the majority of



Midwestern states either elected or reelected Republican governors between 1984 and 1990.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the split between Republican presidential policies and their governorship counterparts is an issue that has roots stemming back to the 1980s.

The trends enumerated in this section have continued into the twenty-first century. According to Gallup's exit poll data, between the elections of 1996 and 2012, on average 74% of conservatives voted for the Republican presidential candidate. In contrast, 88.2% of liberals voted for Democrat candidates on average.<sup>33</sup> Why is there a large discrepancy? We are always told to vote for the lesser of two evils to make our votes worthwhile. Also, we are told that even if a candidate does not personify our ideal candidate, the closest fit is good enough. However, if 20%-25% of self-describing conservatives are either voting for the Democratic candidate or a third party candidate, how can the Republican Party close the gap? Despite the problems the Republican Party has nationally, prior to the 2014 midterm elections there were thirty Republican governors and twenty-seven state legislatures with Republican majorities. This was opposed to nineteen governorships and eighteen state legislatures for the Democratic Party.

It is seemingly not an issue of party preference or an irreversible shift in the ideology of a majority of Americans. What this suggests is that there is a disconnection between the rhetoric and policies of the national Republican Party as opposed to the Republican Party at the state level. The questions brought forth from this are as follows: is the Republican Party split between neoconservatives, Evangelicals, and Tea Party members more pronounced at the national level as opposed to the state level? Also, is the risk for presidential candidates to have a moderate background connected to successful governorships a detriment which would either leave conservatives at home on Election Day or allow for a third party candidate to gain traction? National figures such as President George H. W. Bush backed themselves into corners

advocating for adherently conservative policies while ultimately reneging on such policies.

Republican governors and state legislators who won reelection ran moderate policies – such as expanding welfare – with a conservative voice. An attempt was made during the presidency of George W. Bush to bring compassion to the Republican Party and bring moderate Republicans back to the fold. Unfortunately, he exasperated an already growing fissure as detailed in the section below.

### **George W. Bush – The “Compassionate Conservative”**

President George W. Bush failed to produce a long-lasting Republican realignment because of ideological inconsistencies, according to major political players on the right. This led to the failure of many domestic policy initiatives as President Bush could not secure solid Republican support for such issues as the privatization of social security due to its attachment to moderate fiscal bills. Furthermore, President Bush relied upon a coalition of big money donors, evangelicals, and interests from the financial sphere which is an unsustainable coalition for the future of the Republican Party as the total voting power of these groups is less significant with a growing minority population. Though it is out of the realm of this paper to analyze President Bush’s policies, they are worth noting with regards to his close victory in the 2004 Presidential election. This election turned on a scarce number of votes in Ohio.

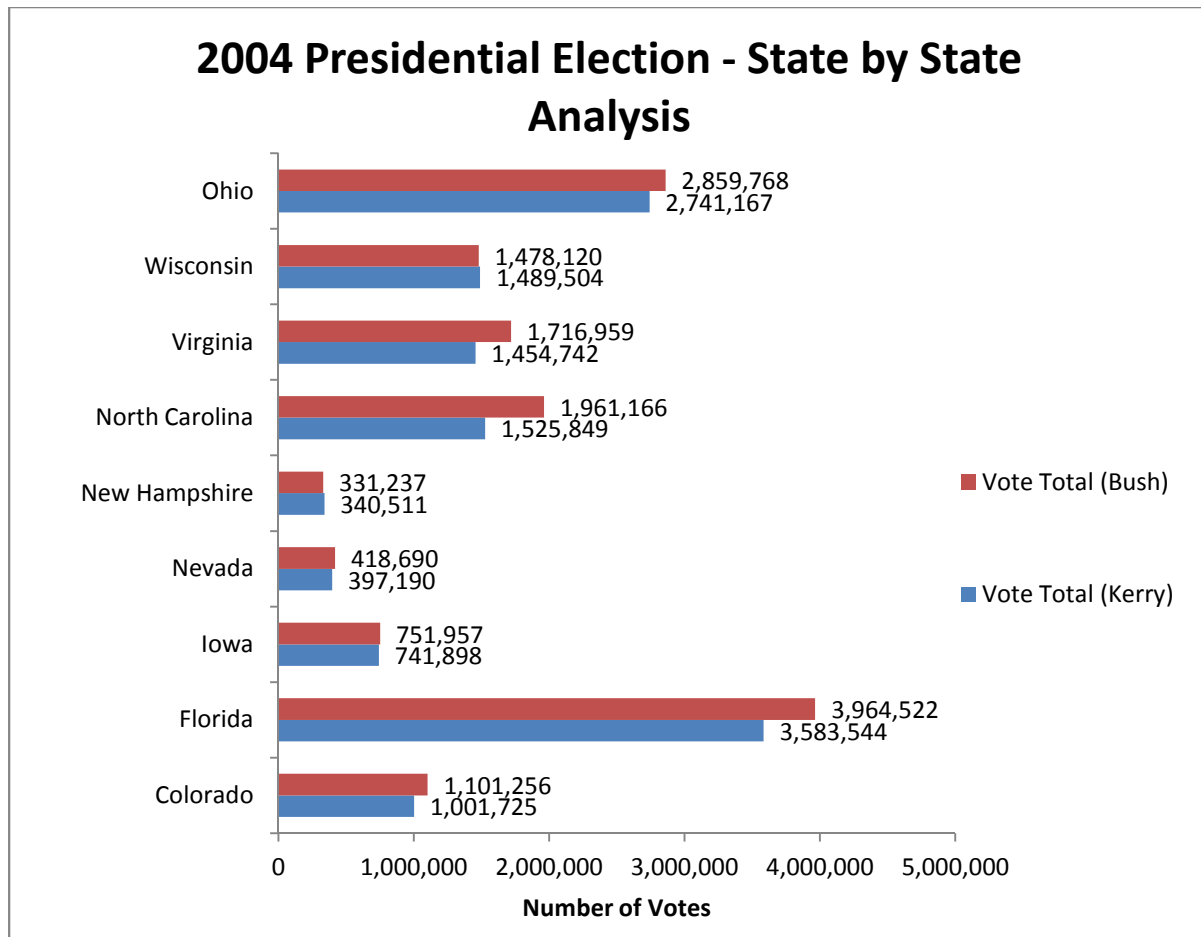


Figure 4: A state by state analysis of the 2004 Presidential election. Data found at: <http://uselectionatlas.org/>

Bush strategists understood the seriousness of opposition to the President's administration heading into the 2004 election. With a weakening economy, two unpopular wars, and a weakening social safety net, President Bush had to run a negative campaign attacking his challenger at every chance. Furthermore, he had to rely on his core base of social conservatives to come out in droves to support him – similar to President Obama's strategy with regards to liberals in 2012. By pushing get-out-the-vote efforts in Ohio – namely asking for church registries of friendly conservative congregations – President Bush was able to solidify Ohio with a strong social conservative, anti-abortion stance. These "value voters" were turned away by the

Democratic Party's turn towards socially liberal policies in the years after President Clinton's conservative-lite administration. As a result, President Bush was able to increase his support in Ohio from 2000 by as much as tens of thousands of votes in some counties. Though the overall number of counties supporting President Bush did not change from 2000 to 2004 (he lost one county and gained another) the sheer volume of voters made Ohio unwinnable for then Senator John Kerry.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to President Bush's strong showing among social conservatives, he was able to garner support from some unlikely demographics in the state of Ohio. Figure 5 shows the vote totals of the 2004 election in Ohio with regards to the female vote. The Institute for Women's Policy Research studied the fascinating trend that women voters in key battleground states were lessening the gender gap between the parties, despite the gap still being prominent in heavily partisan states such as New York and California. Between 2000 and 2004, the ratio of men to women voting Republican on the presidential ballot shrunk from a 10 point difference (53% to 43% respectively) to a 7 point difference (55% to 48% respectively).<sup>35</sup> The IWPR credits this decrease in the gender gap to several of Bush's policies; "[b]y focusing on the liberation of women in Afghanistan and Iraq, stressing education, and targeting married suburban voters and women business owners, the Bush campaign increased its appeal to women compared with [2000]."<sup>36</sup> Despite this new found opportunity, President Bush advocated pro-life and anti-abortion policies; policies that do not resonate well with female voters. Despite the fact that Ohio voters are more likely to consider themselves conservative, and current Republican governor John Kasich is pro-life, more analysis of female voters and the pro-life stance is needed. This will be provided in the section on women voters.

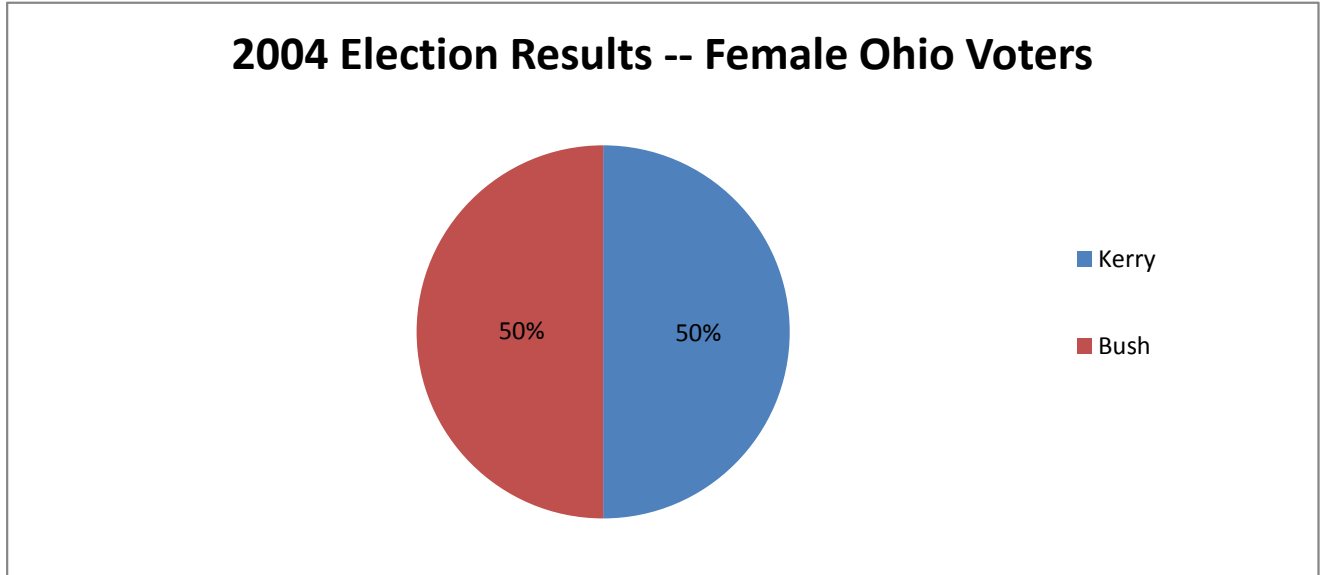


Figure 5: 2004 Election Results – Female Ohio Voters. Data retrieved at: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/OH/P/0>

This strategy is an illustration of the often-used term “compassionate conservatism,” a term coined by former politician Doug Wead and often associated with the political philosophy of President George W. Bush. Compassionate conservatism is, as former Bush chief speechwriter Michael Gerson describes, “[T]he theory that the government should encourage the effective provision of social services without providing the service itself.”<sup>37</sup> For example, a compassionate conservative may advocate for the expansion of the food stamp program to a threshold of a higher income. Once elected, the compassionate conservative may not necessarily fight hard to keep that promise; however, he or she would encourage state legislatures to pass such legislation. For President Bush, compassionate conservatism was a difficult philosophy to administer in practice as it merely encouraged private entities to provide for services the federal government had taken care of for generations. In numerous cases, this pitted Republicans against each other as President Bush had difficulty passing much of his domestic agenda. For example, throughout much of the president’s administration, Social Security reform was a top priority.

President Bush's plan involved creating a personal savings account for Social Security recipients in which reliance upon the federal government to disburse funds would be minimized. Despite numerous statements and calls to action from the president, many Republicans in Congress were not up to the task. Many Republicans believed that separating Social Security reform from a broader bill on tax and/or spending legislation would not give the president enough votes to pass Social Security reform. By separating the two, the president angered many of his staunch allies.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the beginnings of the image of the modern Republican Party in disarray was displayed in action.

Some argue the modern iteration of this disarray began because of the lack of a strong unifying message for "compassionate conservatives," social conservatives, and fiscal conservatives to latch onto. George W. Bush's coalition of voters for his two election victories is argued by some to be unsustainable for the long-term future of the Republican Party. Kevin Phillips argues the coalition is an amalgamation of three divergent interests coming together out of necessity to keep the Democratic Party from forming a dynastic lineage of successive presidents. These three groups are oil barons, Evangelicals (the Christian Right), and easy-credit financiers.<sup>39</sup> All three emphasize deregulation for various reasons. Phillips argues that oil barons want to dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to allow for offshore drilling, the Keystone XL Pipeline, and a whole host of other shale and coal projects which disregard environmental impact.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Phillips suggests that theological conservatives are actively preparing for "end times" scenarios and the return of Jesus Christ by purposely disregarding environmental degradation and staunchly supporting Israel no matter the issue.<sup>41</sup> The financial service industry is an increasing force in the economic world. It has overtaken manufacturing as the biggest contributor to GDP. Furthermore, many former manufacturing corporations, such as

General Motors, have turned to finance to attain higher profits. Phillips blames the Bush Administration for cozying up to the financial hegemons. Thus, debt and finance became means of political power funding the war effort against the ideology of terrorism. “Never before have political leaders urged such large-scale indebtedness on American consumers to rally the economy.”<sup>42</sup>

To test this hypothesis, I have provided data of the voting patterns of social conservatives, an essential member of what Kevin Phillips argues is President Bush’s unsustainable coalition, spanning all the way to the 1976 election. I will not provide data on bankers and oil barons because it is out of the realm of this study to discuss the influence money has on politics. For social conservatives, I will compare the propensity to vote Republican in presidential elections for those identifying as “born-again Christians.” A study conducted by Doug Wead for NEWSMAX provides this data.<sup>43</sup>

| Republican Candidates    | “Born-again Christian” vote (% of total) |
|--------------------------|--|
| George Bush (2004)       | 62%                                      |
| George Bush (2000)       | 57%                                      |
| Bob Dole (1996)          | 49%                                      |
| George H. W. Bush (1992) | 59%                                      |
| George H. W. Bush (1988) | 81%                                      |
| Ronald Reagan (1984)     | 78%                                      |
| Ronald Reagan (1980)     | 61%                                      |
| Ford (1976)              | 50%                                      |

Table 5: “Born- again Christians” voting patterns 1976-2004. Data retrieved from: Wead, Doug. 2008. “The history of the Evangelical vote in presidential elections.” *Doug Wead the Blog*. <http://dougwead.wordpress.com/2008/09/11/the-history-of-the-evangelical-vote-in-presidential-elections/>.

The propensity for “born-again Christians” to vote Republican has increased slightly since President Carter won in 1976. However, utilizing the baseline of a 15% increase as being indicative of a new realignment, the data show that the relationship between Evangelical Christians and Republicans peaked during the election of President George H. W. Bush. Between 1988 and 2004, the noticeable twenty point drop in Republican voting is not indicative of a demographic fully part of a new realignment. Rather, it is indicative of a demographic begrudgingly voting for the Republican candidate with a small majority because it does not tend to subscribe to Democratic liberal policies. Kevin Phillips’ argument would be accurate if he was speaking on the elections of President Reagan and the elder President Bush. It would also explain the precipitous decline in Evangelical votes for President George H. W. Bush in his second election as Ross Perot syphoned nearly 20% of this vote, according to Doug Wead. Thus, the coalition between Evangelical voters and Republicans is supremely tenuous and is indicative of displeasure with President Bush’s performance and policies.

### **The Modern Republican Party – Its Policies**

Throughout much of American political history, the narrative has almost always been that of a majority party which dominates for a relatively long period of time and a minority party relegated to regions of the United States. This “sun and moon” model, popularized by Samuel Lubell, is characterized by a “majority party [in which] the issues of any particular period are fought out; while the minority party shines in reflected radiance of the heat thus generated.”<sup>44</sup> Once a “sun” sets and a new one emerges, the face of American politics is transformed. This model describes much of twentieth century American politics with the rise and fall of the New Deal Coalition, the conservative backlash, and Bill Clinton’s Democratic Leadership Council. However, heading into the twenty-first century, realignments have been tenuous at best. What is



a political realignment? According to often cited political scientist V. O. Key, the most basic definition for political realignment is “... a major shift in party preference within the general public.”<sup>45</sup>

This theory is a central component of American electoral thought. Furthermore, it helps to explain the dominance of one party over another in elections prior to the 1960s. Recently, the theory has had its detractors. Criticisms are centered on the weak definition of realignment theory. It does not provide specifics as to when one can gauge when realignment has occurred. For purposes of this study, realignment will be gauged almost exclusively on potential Republican presidential elections with a tentative eye towards House and Senate counterparts. How this will be gauged will be through analysis of how Republican national policies resonate with voters in key demographics. For realignment, I will rely heavily upon voter responses to contemporary Republican stances. How will we know if realignment occurs in the future? Which party will emerge in the first half of the twenty-first century with a majority coalition? The purpose of the remainder of this paper is to prove if the Republican Party continues along the path that it has blazed for itself since the final days of the Reagan Administration, the Democratic Party will gain control of the most vital voting demographics relegating the Republican Party strength to a select few demographics for the foreseeable future.

Analysis of the recent Republican Party platforms can shine some light as to why the various demographics in this study do not respond positively to them. The biggest narrative spoken of in American politics is that of big government versus small government. Since the Nixon Administration, voters, particularly independent voters, have become more vehement proponents of smaller government. Two surveys, one conducted in 1941 and the other in 1996, show this trend towards smaller government policies. In 1941, the Gallup Organization asked a

group of respondents “do you think there is too much power in the hands of the government in Washington?” 56% responded in the negative.<sup>46</sup> In 1996, a survey conducted by CBS News and *The New York Times* asked a similar question; “which comes closer to your view: government should do more to solve national problems, or government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?” A full 62% of respondents believed government was doing too much to solve national problems.<sup>47</sup> If this is the case, how did the political party of twentieth century big government – the Democratic Party – win with President Clinton and President Obama? The answer lies in the fact that while a majority of Americans favor smaller government, the big government versus small government narrative is not a salient issue with most voting demographics. Furthermore, the only demographics in which big government versus small government is a salient issue is among demographics which vote overwhelmingly Republican anyway. Thus, the current Republican Party’s mantra of small government may not resonate so well with a majority of voters in the coming presidential elections.

Governmental issues, such as big government versus small government and partisan politics, are not issues which tend to be vitally important to a majority of Americans. Typically Americans rank jobs, the economy, and healthcare (particularly since the passage of the Affordable Care Act) as the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century.<sup>48</sup> A Gallup poll conducted in June of 2013 asked over 2,000 adults nationwide, “...what is your greatest worry or concern about the future of the United States?” Only 3% cited government overreach/power as their greatest concern.<sup>49</sup> A CBS poll conducted in May of 2013 found that only 3% of Americans feel that big government is the biggest problem facing America.<sup>50</sup>

While the majority of Americans feel that the economy, jobs, and healthcare are the biggest issues facing America, the modern Republican Party does not offer clear solutions to

these issues, instead spending a tremendous amount of time on non-salient issues. Furthermore, the modern Republican Party does not advocate policies which non-male and non-white voters would wholeheartedly support. This will be expanded upon in the sections dealing with the individual voting demographics. With the white male vote proportionately shrinking, the Republican Party must change both policies and message. For now, an examination of the policies themselves is in order. For this I turn to the Republican National Committee's own website to further explore 1) what the policies are and 2) if the policies described on the website match both the policies enacted and the rhetoric used to describe various issues at the state and national level. Doing so will provide better understanding of the state and national party split as well as the influence neoconservatives, evangelicals, and Tea Party members have on Republican national policy.

The economy is an issue Republicans have used repeatedly since the financial crisis and the subsequent stimulus packages as a rallying cry for government to step out of the way of the free market. On the RNC's website, Republicans believe in "sensible business regulations" which promote competition and confidence. Republicans vehemently oppose interventionist policies in which the government chooses the "winners and losers."<sup>51</sup> Thus, it is safe to say the overwhelming majority of Republican lawmakers advocate for "sensible" deregulation – though the definition of "sensible" can be argued – and a lower tax rate for a majority of Americans.

Republican lawmakers' rhetoric and actions accurately follow the policy outlined by the RNC. In April, 2014, the Republican Party lashed out against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for acting on proposals to regulate streams and wetlands before a government peer-reviewed assessment on the situation was released.<sup>52</sup> A letter sent by fifteen Republican senators admonished the EPA for "...negatively impact[ing] economic growth by adding an

additional layer of red tape to countless activities that are already sufficiently regulated by state and local governments.”<sup>53</sup> The most contentious economic regulation for which the Republican Party is continually battling is the regulation of the healthcare industry under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The battle has been so contentious that Republican lawmakers have begun to draft legislation setting new rules on how federal agencies impose regulations.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Republican Party has spent a great deal of its energy since 2009 combating perceived overreaches of government’s economic regulation policies.

Expanding on the economic aspect of the ACA, healthcare is a topic of much debate going into the next presidential election cycle. On the RNC’s website Republicans promote “common-sense reforms that will lower costs, ensure quality health care that Americans deserve, and end lawsuit abuse.”<sup>55</sup> In essence, Republicans argue the ACA enacts a government-run operation which does not provide for the best service at the best cost and puts undue pressure on insurance companies and healthcare physicians. Despite the numerous and vociferous attacks on the Affordable Care Act, the Republican Party offers vague remedies. For example, the Republican Party offers a free-market solution which would reduce costs and encourage individual choice for the rising cost of healthcare.<sup>56</sup> However, many of the RNC’s proposals on healthcare, are centered on abortion and women’s healthcare choices, issues evangelicals are heavily concerned with. For example, the Republican Party calls for the cessation of all federal funding of abortions as per the Hyde Amendment and healthcare coverages which allow for abortion.<sup>57</sup> This will play a much larger role in further discussions on female voters. The Republican Party platform on healthcare, unlike on the economy, is a vague policy whose main tenant is the failure of the Affordable Care Act. Despite flaws in the healthcare marketplace, until Republicans come forth with a viable solution, voters will not be swayed on this issue.

With the implementation of Common Core standards, the continual fight between large and small government continues, this time with education. Normally when Republicans speak on education it is manifested in one of two forms. Either they are discussing reinstating local and state control on education standards or advocating charter schools which allow parents to choose the best schools for their sons and daughters. The former is of most relevance to this discussion as it points to a more inclusive debate on federal spending. The RNC's website rightly points out the staggering amount of money funneled towards education which has fostered lack-luster results as African-American and Hispanic youths are not graduating high school at a noticeably higher level than prior to 1965. The federal government currently spends on average \$10,000 per student in America.<sup>58</sup>

The Republican Party offers a list of solutions which, according to the RNC, would increase overall student achievement and reinstate American preeminence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). These remedies include vouchers and tax credits which allow for individual families to “shop around” for the best schools available. Post-secondary education in vocational and trade schools are pushed as an alternative to traditional colleges and universities. At the secondary level of education, the Republican Party highlights the dissolution of “family planning” programs in sex education in favor of abstinence education.<sup>59</sup> While the Republican Party platform brings up valid arguments in terms of federal spending, mediocre results, and the crushing student debt many students are facing today, much of the platform still focuses tremendously on social conservative values. As will be shown later on in this study, social conservative values are not resonating with key voting demographics.

Regardless if a Republican lawmaker is an isolationist Tea Party member or a hawkish neoconservative, the prevailing Republican policy on national defense is maintaining a strong

defense budget. In the wake of Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea and the now reinvigorated Islamic militants in Iraq, Republican lawmakers are as united as ever in the fight to secure America's interests overseas. This presents a problem for the Republican Party, however. With fiscal austerity and a balanced budget being the goals for the Republican-led House of Representatives, the Republican Party may have to choose between three options: 1) bolster defense spending at the expense of social services, 2) bolster social service spending at the expense of defense spending, or 3) renege on the balanced budget approach. History suggests the third option as default. Their choice on this matter could have tremendous repercussions going into the 2016 presidential election and beyond.

Energy independence is a Republican Party policy which does not generate as much attention in the news as other policies. Nevertheless, an "all of the above" strategy on energy – solar, wind, nuclear, fossil fuels, etc. – is a tenet that under the Bush administration proved difficult to implement. Similar to other policy platforms, the Republican Party flatly denounces taxation methods such as cap and trade and a "national energy tax."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the Republican Party claims the Obama Administration is engaging in a "war on coal" which threatens the livelihoods of thousands employed in the coal and natural gas industries. Republicans have been staunch supports of the Keystone XL Pipeline in the idea that it will foster tremendous job growth and lessen America's dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

"Big Oil" is a force in national politics dating back to the New Deal Coalition. Since the southern realignment of the 1960s, "Big Oil" has increasingly supported Republican presidential candidates. Richard Nixon was the first such candidate to seek support from "Big Oil" donors. According to Kevin Phillips, author of *American Theocracy*, Nixon tried to lead a "Big Oil" coalition of former Lyndon Johnson supporters into a new era of conservatism. Though

Watergate hampered the Party's efforts for the time being, the oil crisis under President Jimmy Carter a scant few years later would prove to push "Big Oil" into the corner of the Republicans for years to come. By 2000, Texas oil entrepreneurs had ran for president and vice-president in virtually every election dating back to 1980. The Bush family was the biggest group of entrepreneurs of them all. The administrations under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush cut spending on alternative fuel sources by upwards of two-thirds.<sup>61</sup> The link between George W. Bush and "Big Oil" was explored earlier and warrants no further discussion.

The major tenants of the Republican Party have been laid out in the preceding sections. Many seemingly important issues and reasonable policy stances are inundated with social conservative tenants leading to the belief that Evangelicals are still largely influential in Republican policy at the expense of neoconservatives and Tea Party members. However, after Governor Mitt Romney's loss to President Obama in 2012, the Republican Party started a rebranding campaign, looking to become more inclusive and provide a message that all demographics can appreciate. While it provides an excellent outline of strategies, there is nothing in the document which provides for an overall strategy to create a new conservative realignment of voters.

In December 2012, the Republican National Committee released a study entitled *The Growth and Opportunity Project (GOP)*. This report analyzed various aspects of the campaign process – data collection, demographic variances, get out the vote tactics, etc. – and recommendations were put forth to help Republican campaigns compete with their Democratic opponents in future elections. This was done through a laborious process of surveys, interviews, and focus groups which collected responses from 52,000 individuals.<sup>62</sup> A major focus of the project was the further marginalization of the Republican Party among three demographics:

African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Pacific Americans. According to the report, the marginalization comes from a lack of “voter engagement” with an antiquated system of voter data collection.

For the African-American vote, the project outlines a misconception that Republican Party values cannot be accepted within the African-American community. Furthermore, the reason over 90% of African-Americans do not vote for Republican presidential candidates is merely an issue of outreach, according to the project. To gain a significant minority of African-American voters, the project advocates for a grassroots outreach program in African-American communities and a conscious desire to hire black representatives at the local, state, and federal levels of governance.<sup>63</sup> In the African-American demographic section, I will show how this policy will not produce desirable results.

For Asian-Americans, the *GOP* proposes working on the Republican Party message at the local and state level. Republicans should promote Asian-Americans to positions of power to begin the process of grassroots organizing within the Asian-American community.<sup>64</sup> Despite Asian-Americans only being 4% of the electorate – in 2012 – their representation in the electorate will continue to grow to as high as 9% by 2050.<sup>65</sup> Though I do not examine the Asian-American vote within the scope of this study, it is important to note how the Republican Party is not doing any self-reflection with its policies in the first two demographics *The Growth and Opportunity Project* examines.

The *GOP* spends a significant amount of space detailing the Hispanic vote and how the Republican Party can gain favor with this demographic. For the RNC, immigration is the issue the Republican Party should focus on. “If Hispanic Americans hear that the GOP doesn’t want



them in the United States, they won't pay attention to our next sentence. It doesn't matter what we say about education, jobs, or the economy..."<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to note that many Hispanics surveyed by the RNC detailed how the Republican Party is favored when economic issues are talked about, however, social issues and immigration "unnecessarily offends" Hispanics.<sup>67</sup> Thus the RNC feels that message and building relationships are two areas in which improvement can be had. While these are two vital aspects to forming a Republican realignment, a reevaluation of core Republican principles on social issues may be needed to foster a long-standing realignment.

*The Growth and Opportunity Project* fails in one essential aspect to address one of the most pressing issues within the Republican Party, the Tea Party split. The phrase "Tea Party" is only mentioned once within the whole document as a term characterizing former House Majority leader, Dick Armey. Nevertheless, the project does not treat this issue with as much importance as technological deficiencies and minority representation within county chairs. Regardless, the Tea Party continues to play a major role in advocating against not only Democrats but establishment Republicans. During Senator Rand Paul's CPAC 2014 speech, he continually referenced the need for conservatives to vote for the candidate that will stand up for civil liberties issues regardless of the Democrat or Republican distinction.<sup>68</sup>

Much of contemporary Republican ideology centers on the continuing battle between big government versus small government. This issue does not resonate well with many voting demographics, as stated previously. The economy, job creation, and healthcare are all much more salient issues going into 2016. Nevertheless, *The Growth and Opportunity Project* offers remedies in the form of a more inclusive message and a dedication to diversity within Party ranks. While these are admirable and worthwhile strategies, these are not enough and do not resolve the essential issues facing the Republican Party since the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

### **Introduction to the Demographics**

The Republican Party is losing the minority vote overwhelmingly and this will become a major issue heading into 2016 and beyond. In the 2008 and 2012 election, President Obama won an unprecedented 80% of all minority voters. These voters made up a combined 28% of the total voting population in 2012 – while whites comprised roughly 72%.<sup>69</sup> Despite the seemingly small size of the minority voting population, by 2050 their combined vote totals will supersede the white voting population. Furthermore, in the last few election cycles, white voting share of the total voting population has steadily decreased.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the Republican Party lost vote totals from women, independent voters, and the youth vote since the presidency of George W. Bush, all of whom are increasing in number and political strength and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

This section will focus tremendously on the essential demographics in the nine battleground states under examination. Analysis will be given in the form of most salient issues to each demographic and the potential for a Republican realignment which includes that demographic. Thus, for this section “the personal is political” – a theory utilized by student activists and second wave feminists in the 1960s and 1970s – will be the appropriate method for which to describe the voting trends of the various demographics. What this entails is a qualitative analysis of recent issues which have come to fruition in local, state, and federal elections in the nine battleground states. This will be coupled with quantitative analyses which establish correlation between voting trends and the individual policies. For example, recent legislation either helping or hindering the fight for immigration reform will be analyzed with regards to the Latino-American demographic and the stance the Republican Party took in the fight. By doing so I will prove that two solutions provided in *The Growth and Opportunity Project* – the inclusion

of minority candidates and a reemphasis on minority outreach – are not enough to gain favor among these demographics.

### **The Independent Vote**

“Independent voters are the ones who matter most in American politics.”<sup>71</sup> This quote, by pollster Charlie Cook, underscores the most significant electoral trend of the last few election cycles, the rise of the independent voter. Once relegated to obscurity during the Gilded Age of the late 1800s, the “unaffiliated” voter is the new face of American political society reaching upwards of 42% of national voter identification. To analyze the impact of independent voters, first, recent historic trends of independent voting must be analyzed to contemplate future trends. Second, what are the key issues independent voters care most about? Third, how can the Republican Party bring independent voters into a new Republican coalition?

Independent voting is not a new phenomenon; however, its recent popularity among the politically disgruntled and college students is an anomaly. While independent voting has had a huge uptick in recent years, the relative distribution of Democrat voters and Republican voters has not changed all that much. It is interesting to note there has been no significant party identification redistribution since 1984. In fact, the difference between the two major parties has held steady at a 2-5 percent lead for Democrats. However, a significant change has occurred for those who register independent, or “unaffiliated.” Figure 5 shows the distribution of party identification from 1988 through 2014. According to the data collected from the Times Mirror/Pew Research Center aggregate files on party identification, the percentage of voters who identify as independent has steadily increased since 2006, from a low of 30% of the voting population to 42% in 2014.<sup>72</sup>

The first major push towards independent voting stems from the Ross Perot campaigns of 1992 and 1996. Running initially as an independent, later as a member of the now defunct Reform Party, Perot was able to channel a populist message which appealed to disgruntled conservatives longing for the glory days of Ronald Reagan – much to the chagrin of President George H. W. Bush and Vice President Bob Dole. However, independent voters not attached to the Ross Perot campaign sided with Bill Clinton in large numbers. In the 1996 election, 48% of independent voters voted for President Clinton, with just 33% voting for Bob Dole, and 19% for Ross Perot.<sup>73</sup> Did Ross Perot, who is ideologically conservative, steal some independent voters from the Dole camp? It is highly probable.

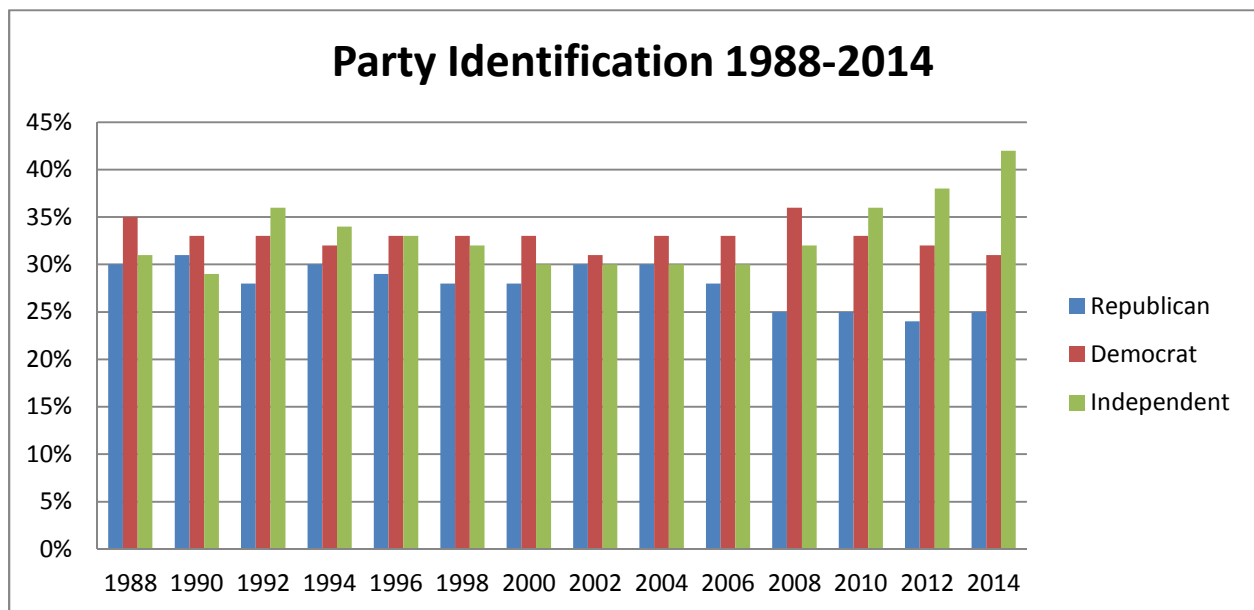


Figure 5: Party identification from 1988-2014. Retrieved from Times Mirror/Pew Research Center aggregate files on party identification: <http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/01/trend-in-party-identification-1939-2012/>. Data for 2014 was retrieved from a survey conducted by Gallup: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166763/record-high-americans-identify-independents.aspx>.

Throughout much of the 1990s until 2000, the independent movement was centered on third party reform. The rise and fall of the Reform Party, the Patriot Party, the newly invigorated Independence Party, and the Libertarian Party all had and have a message for a specific core group of independent voters. Regardless of ideological message, many sought political reform as an attempt to coalesce divergent trains of thought. For example, to have a progressive populist such as Dr. Lenora Fulani campaigning for a social conservative such as Pat Buchanan would be unheard of in partisan political circles. However, this tenuous partnership happened in the waning months of 2000 presidential election.

After the dissolution of the Reform Party and third party politics, the independent movement became a large swing voter electorate. Chunks of the independent voting electorate were absorbed into the two parties. For example, after Ron Paul's failed attempt in 1988 to form a strong libertarian third party, he began to get more involved with the Republican Party, entering the 2008 and 2012 Republican presidential primaries. He was able to attract large numbers of voters in states where "open primaries" – primaries in which party members and non-party members have equal access to vote in all stages of the election, which, as of 2014, occur on the national level in thirty-three states – are allowed. On the other side of the aisle, the introduction of independent voters to the Democratic electorate allowed for the political up-and-comer Barack Obama to beat Hillary Clinton. At the congressional level, the introduction of independent voters allowed for a tremendous swing in House and Senate makeup as Democrats won the House in 2006 thanks to disenchantment with President Bush's foreign policy. A mere four years later would bear witness to a groundswell of Republican populism as Tea Party candidates won an overwhelming 59% of independent voters and retook the House in stunning fashion.<sup>74</sup>

A common misconception of independent voters is that they are generally politically inactive and are only nominal independents – meaning they vote party line anyway. On the contrary, in recent years independent voters have begun to form grassroots organizations, such as [IndependentVoting.org](http://IndependentVoting.org), [EndPartisanship.org](http://EndPartisanship.org), and a whole host of independent organizations. These grassroots organizations and minor third parties – in states where fusion voting occurs – are vital to the elections and reelections of many political hopefuls, such as former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. Scholars of electoral politics tend to believe that independent voters are a misrepresentation of the electorate and still display partisan tendencies in large numbers. These scholars believe that if one were to account for the number of independent voters who still vote party lines, the number of “true” independents would be around 10%. It is true independent voters lean ideologically one way or another and a majority of independent voters are not centrists. The reason why a majority of independents still vote party lines relates to the phenomenon of closed primary voting, in which an independent voter can only vote in the general election when his or her options are already down to two candidates. At this point, a Republican conservative faces off against a Democratic liberal and most non-centrist independents will vote for the candidate most ideologically representative of him or her. If open primaries become a nationwide norm in which the top two candidates in the primaries go to the general election regardless of party affiliation, independent voters would be more willing to vote for candidates from other parties.

Independents in swing states are becoming a greater majority and a strong political force to be dealt with. Since it is difficult to characterize a prototypical independent voter, – as he or she spans the political spectrum, all ages, and all genders and races – trying to find commonality will be vital for the Republican Party to gain as much support as possible from this large

demographic. It will be impossible for the Republican Party to try to gain the favor of independent progressives or members of such minor third parties as the Working Families Party for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, a more inclusive strategy, touching upon commonalities of moderate to conservative independent voters can sustain a lasting coalition of voters for years to come. Furthermore, invigorating unaffiliated conservatives and libertarian voters to come to the polls in the general election is vital as well. For purposes of this study, I will categorize moderate and conservative independents as those whom the Republican Party is hoping to court in the coming elections. According to a 2012 Pew Research study, this number is 29% of the total voting population and 78% of independent voters, generally.<sup>75</sup>

A study conducted by Third Way, an independent think-tank organization, detailed how vital the independent vote was in the battleground states of the 2012 presidential election. Table 6 shows the increase in the number of registered independent voters from 1996-2011. In half of the battleground states which allow partisan registration, unaffiliated voter registration has more than doubled in fifteen years. Utilizing the Pew Research study which placed moderate and conservative independent voters at 78% of all independent voters, a fourth column is added which projects how many moderate and conservative voters make up the additional independent voters.

Even more striking is their increased lack of predictability. In 2009, shortly after President Obama took office, his approval rating among independent voters was at 62%. As of March of 2014, the number hovered at 31%, according to Gallup.<sup>76</sup> Taking two extremes, Obama's high water mark of 51% of independent voters in the 2008 election and the Democratic Party's low water mark of 37% of independent voters in the 2010 midterm elections, the

President’s chances of winning the independent vote in 2012 were tenuous. Nevertheless, the President won a small majority of the independent vote in 2012.

| States*        | % increase in<br>“unaffiliated”<br>registered | Total increase in<br>“unaffiliated” voters | Projected increase in<br>moderate and<br>conservative<br>“unaffiliated” voters |
|----------------|---|--|--|
| Colorado       | 57.5%   | 425,099                                    | 331,577  |
| Florida        | 147.9%  | 1,553,712                                  | 1,211,895  |
| Iowa           | 35.2%   | 202,414                                    | 157,883  |
| Nevada         | 107.0%  | 113,853                                    | 88,805   |
| New Hampshire  | 62.4%   | 118,733                                    | 92,612   |
| North Carolina | 193.8%  | 991,311                                    | 773,223  |

Table 6: Change in independent voter registration 1996-2011. Retrieved from: [http://issuu.com/thirdway/docs/third\\_way\\_report\\_-\\_independents\\_day\\_2012\\_/1](http://issuu.com/thirdway/docs/third_way_report_-_independents_day_2012_/1).

\* Ohio, Wisconsin, and Virginia do not have partisan registration.

What commonalities do independent voters share in the key battleground states? The state of Colorado is one such state in which independent voters span the political spectrum from the Libertarian Party to the Green Party. However, many political strategists describe the state as a “purple” state due to its relatively equal proportions of Republican and Democratic voters. This is simply not the case as more Coloradans have chosen to identify with neither party as opposed to one of the two major parties. The state of Colorado is split among urbanite liberals and conservatives in the suburbs and rural parts of the state, as is true for many states with major metropolitan cities. Nonetheless, the 2014 makeup of the Colorado State Senate and State General Assembly is completely Democratic as the Party holds a majority in both houses and is the party of the current governor, John Hickenlooper.



Governor Hickenlooper holds a tenuous coalition which includes independent voters. However, independents are beginning to become disenchanted with many of Hickenlooper's policies. For example, independent voters overwhelmingly disapprove of Hickenlooper's policies towards gun control and the death penalty – Hickenlooper passed gun control legislation and has advocated for the abolishment of the death penalty, both prototypical liberal policies.<sup>77</sup> Though on the economy Hickenlooper's numbers fare much better in which 49% of independent voters approve of the job he is doing, compared with 42% who disapprove. Overall, independent voters commend Hickenlooper for the job he is doing, though not at the same level as Democrats, but certainly higher than Republicans.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that Coloradan independent voters typically care more about the economy than issues such as gun control since they are still favorable towards Hickenlooper. Is the economy a more salient issue than non-economic issues for independent voters?

In the state of Iowa, independent voters are the essential demographic in an electorate which is split evenly among Republican and Democratic registered voters. Historically, midterm elections have been difficult for Democrats in Iowa as far fewer Democratic and left-leaning independent voters turnout for the election. Thus, Republicans in the state have pushed harder for voter identification laws, according to Drake University Political Scientist Dennis Goldford. When the electorate is smaller, Iowan Republicans have a better chance of winning. Nevertheless, the current governor Terry Branstad is favored by over 50% of independent voters, according to a 2013 Quinnipiac study.<sup>79</sup> The reason for this is the economy as 70% of likely Iowan voters rate the governor's job with the economy as "excellent" or "good," including 56% of independent voters.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, a full 57% of Iowan independent voters view the job Governor Terry Branstad has done as favorable.<sup>81</sup> This shows that a majority of Iowan

independent voters are willing to overlook socially conservative policies on issues such as abortion, which Governor Branstad has come out against, and same-sex marriage, which he is also not supportive of. An analysis of prospective voters' "top priority" issue heading into the 2014 midterm elections shows that abortion ranks as the most important issue for 1% of respondents.<sup>82</sup> Rather, the economy is the most vital issue on the minds of most independent voters and the candidate who can bring fiscal responsibility to the governorship will win this crucial demographic.

For a Republican presidential candidate, a focus on the economy is a top priority if he or she wants to win the independent vote. Democratic challengers will play to the strengths of the Democratic Party using social issues – such as immigration and same-sex marriage – against the Republican candidate. Nevertheless, the economy tends to be the most salient issue on the minds of independent voters and the party which handles the economy well usually wins a majority of the independent vote, as has been shown at the state level. A majority of the independent vote is winnable, as it is fallacious to characterize independent voters as partisan. The 2006 and 2010 midterm elections display this. It would be beneficial for a Republican presidential candidate to gain favor among veteran Republican governors with proven track records of favorability among independent voters.

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|---|
| <b>Independent Voters – 2012 Election (Battleground States)</b> |
|---|

| State          | Independent Vote – Mitt Romney (%) | Total Number of Independent Votes for Mitt Romney (Approx.) | Additional Votes Needed for Romney to Win State (All Else Being Equal) | % Increase in Ind. Vote to Win State (All Else Being Equal) |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Colorado       | 49%                                | 454,709   | 137,948  | 30.3%   |
| Florida        | 47%                                | 1,303,027   | 74,309   | 5.7%  |
| Iowa           | 41%                                | 256,511   | 91,927   | 35.8%   |
| Nevada         | 50%                                | 169,140   | 67,806   | 40.1%   |
| New Hampshire  | 45%                                | 135,349   | 39,643   | 29.3%   |
| North Carolina | 57%                                | 735,384   | --*  | --*   |
| Ohio           | 53%                                | 901,847   | 166,214  | 18.4%   |
| Virginia       | 54%                                | 594,194   | 149,298  | 25.1%   |
| Wisconsin      | 47%                                | 441,755   | 210,019  | 47.5%   |

Table 7: Independent Voters 2012 Election (Battleground States). Data retrieved from: CNN Election Center. 2012.

<http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president>.

\* Governor Romney won the state of North Carolina.

Table 7 is an analysis of the independent vote in the nine battleground states under examination for the 2012 election. The total number of independent votes and the respective percentage independents voted for Governor Romney is provided. The final two columns are projections made as to the raw number of independent votes needed to win a state by one vote and the percent increase this would entail. To accurately portray the voting patterns of independent voters, all other variables remain constant to isolate how important this demographic could be in a potential Republican realignment.

According to the data, a Republican could win Florida with a mere 6% increase in the GOP's independent vote total from 2012 – assuming all else is equal. However, Florida is an outlier. Most of the other battleground states would need a tremendous groundswell of support from independent voters which would entail between a 30% and 40% increase in turnout. Thus, independent voters on their own cannot make up the difference for the Republican Party heading into the 2016 elections and beyond. However, Republicans should attempt to make up the difference in states where the percentage of independent voters voting Republican are under 50% and the total amount of votes needed to win in 2016 are the highest. Wisconsin and Iowa are two states, according to the data, which fit this description. Both states have Republican governors and a strong conservative base which vote for them year after year. Therefore, a Republican presidential candidate should attempt to gain favor with Governors Walker and Branstad to mobilize the conservative independent base.

### **The African-American Vote**

Since the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the African-American vote has been one that is analyzed and hotly contested for amongst Democratic presidential candidates. This is not so for Republican candidates, however. African-Americans vote Democratic in such overwhelming numbers that Republicans do not even try to compete in most cases. However, the modern tendency to lump African-Americans into the Democratic Party is a misrepresentation of trends according to Katherine Tate, author of *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections*. Most African-American voters are further left on the political spectrum than either party currently is. Thus, African-American voters are left with no choice than to pick the more left of the two parties.<sup>83</sup> When Democratic presidential candidates take a rightward shift before a general election, African-American voters tend to stay home, as was the case with

Michael Dukakis's failed 1988 presidential campaign. This shows that African-American voters generally take one of two strategies: vote Democrat or stay home. The Republican Party cannot hope for African-American voters to stay home, as was their strategy for the 2012 election which backfired tremendously. The question is, how can the Republican Party gain favor among African-American voters in key battleground states?

First, the theory that more African-American Republican candidates will lead to more African-American Republican voters, as is espoused by *GOP*, needs to be analyzed. Coming out of the 1960s, the Democratic Party did just this. By 1972, the prevailing strategy used by African-American political elites was to create a separate, purely African-American political party. Though this strategy was pursued by the likes of Rev. Jesse Jackson, African-Americans needed a coalition with suitable partners. Dr. Lenora Fulani, an African-American community activist and distinctly known as the first African-American woman to be on the presidential ballot in all fifty states, brought issues of independent and Democratic voters to the African-American community in the city of New York. She summarized the strategy as such: "In the end, [African-American political elites] settled on the strategy of electing blacks, as Democrats, to public office..."<sup>84</sup> This strategy worked. By 1997, 8,936 African-Americans held political office throughout the United States – an overwhelming majority were Democrats. This expansion was coupled with the proliferation of single-member legislative districts of predominantly African-American constituencies. The Republican Party cannot replicate predominantly African-American single-member districts adherent to conservative ideals. Yet, should the Republican Party highlight and promote African-American elected officials?

The first prominent African-American Republican presidential candidate was political activist Alan Keyes in 1996. Keyes was known as a neoconservative and a perennial dark horse,

nipping at the heels of Pat Buchanan and other establishment elites. He spoke to the African-American community about social conservatism and his pro-life, anti-gay marriage stances through biblical dogma. Where Keyes found most contention in the African-American community was in his anti-affirmative action stance. The idea that preferential affirmative action patronizes African-Americans is one that does not resonate well among a community of beneficiaries of such policies. Furthermore, his idea of replacing the federal income tax with a national sales tax disproportionately affects urban poor, mostly minority, communities rather than the wealthy. Despite these ideas, Keyes always reverted back to what he termed the “moral deficit” in the country of single, unwed mothers and the “gay agenda” being the most prominent issues facing America. As a result, Alan Keyes did not fare well among African-American voters in either of his senatorial bids. Keyes had a 65% unfavorability rating among African-Americans with a meager 7% favorability rating heading into the 2004 Illinois senatorial race against Barack Obama.<sup>85</sup>

The most recent African-American politician to gain prominence in the Republican Party primaries is Herman Cain in 2012. Cain implored a strategy similar to other presidential conservatives of the previous fifty years – ignore the black vote. He decided to align himself with the Republican Party base – evangelicals and fiscal conservatives. Many Republican strategists believed African-Americans would simply stay home, disenchanted with high unemployment and the logistical problems surrounding the Obamacare rollout. They were wrong. County-by-county exit polls shows in 2012 African-American turnout surpassed every other minority vote and in some cases exceeded white voter turnout. Some analysts suggest if African-American voter turnout was at 2004 levels, Mitt Romney would have won the election.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, many projections show that the African-American vote will only increase in size from 2012.

It is not enough to merely bolster African-American Republicans on the national stage, as recent history has shown. The Republican Party must make a concerted effort to change their policies which invariably hurt African-Americans, particularly in urban centers where a vast majority reside, and to change their overall campaign message. The latter is of most interest with regards to *Growth and Opportunity*. University of Michigan political science professor Vincent Hutchings states succinctly, “[i]n a general election, black voters are still going to be voting for Democrats because of the economic gap, between blacks and whites and the belief that Democrats are committed to social programs and protecting minority constituencies.”<sup>87</sup> He goes on to describe “racial divergence” between the two parties. Looking at the rising income gap, the political makeup, and the state of social welfare programs in the nine battleground states should give a clear distinction where African-American sentiments are going forward.

Nowhere is the income split more prominent than in Florida. According to the Economic Policy Institute, between 1979 and 2007, the state's wealthiest residents saw their real incomes rise by almost 219%.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, the bottom 99% of residents saw their real income increase by only 14%.<sup>89</sup> To put that in monetary terms, say a worker in Florida in 1979 was making the average salary of a person in the United States at that time, roughly \$42,000 a year. By 2007, that same worker was making approximately \$47,800 per year.<sup>90</sup> Liberal advocacy groups are beginning the fight to raise the minimum wage in the state to \$10.10 an hour. With a Republican governorship at the helm of the state, however, the immediate prospects of an increase, shy of national legislation, is slim.

The effect this has on the African-American community is startling. According to a study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research, an African-American child born in Florida has roughly a 6% chance of financial upward mobility in his or her lifetime.<sup>91</sup> Two factors contributing heavily to this are the poor quality of K-12 education and the lack of a stable family structure which disproportionately affects minority communities. The debate over if increased spending on education will help the growing education gap is still fiercely contested across the country. In the state of Florida, education spending has been cut by nearly 4% since 2008.<sup>92</sup> While this may seem miniscule, Florida Governor Rick Scott has proposed very steep cuts and with a Republican state legislature, even more cuts could be in the future for Florida. The first budget proposed by Governor Scott included provisions which would have cut education spending by \$1.35 billion.<sup>93</sup> However, some caveats are needed with this number. A sizable portion of the spending cuts have come about due to a decrease in federal stimulus spending. However, once the state received the federal funds, between 2009 and 2011, state contributions to the education fund were severely lowered. Once the federal spending stopped, state contributions did not increase to meet pre-stimulus spending levels. Therefore, it is safe to assume that inequality will grow, particularly between the rich and the minority poor. Table 8 shows upward mobility, African-American population numbers, and states with Republican governors to display a correlation between states with high African-American populations and low upward mobility. It is interesting to note that despite a significantly higher African-American population, Virginia, with a Democratic governor, has the same upward mobility factor as Ohio, with a Republican governor.



|   |
|---|
| <b>Social Mobility, African-Americans, and Republican Governors</b> |
|---|

| State          | Republican Governor? | Absolute Upward Mobility* | African-American Population (%)** |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Colorado       | No                   | 44.7-46.3                 | 4.4%                              |
| Florida        | Yes                  | 37.4-39.2                 | 16.7%                             |
| Iowa           | Yes                  | 48.9-52.4                 | 3.3%                              |
| Nevada         | Yes                  | 40.8-42.2                 | 9.0%                              |
| New Hampshire  | No                   | 44.7-46.3                 | 1.5%                              |
| North Carolina | Yes                  | 26.0-37.4                 | 22.0%                             |
| Ohio           | Yes                  | 39.2-40.8                 | 12.5%                             |
| Virginia       | No                   | 39.2-40.8                 | 19.7%                             |
| Wisconsin      | Yes                  | 44.7-46.3                 | 6.5%                              |

Table 8: Social Mobility, African-Americans, and Republican Governors.

\* Absolute Upward Mobility measures the mean income rank of families with children with income in the bottom-half of income distribution as per a study conducted by: Raj Chetty et al. 2014. Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States. Retrieved from: [http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/mobility\\_geo.pdf](http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/mobility_geo.pdf).

\*\* Data retrieved from: U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>.

There are conservative policies, however, which seem to resonate with the African-American community. For example, a 2008 exit poll conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International found that 70% of black voters in California voted for Proposition 8, which eliminated same-sex marriage in the state.<sup>94</sup> However, while African-Americans may be more socially conservative in some respects, these issues do not resonate in the African-American community as much as economic policies. Thus, the Republican Party would have a very difficult time courting this demographic into its ranks if it were to rely solely on social

conservative issues. If the Republican Party is to hope to gain a significant portion of the African-American vote, it would invariably alienate its conservative base. For the foreseeable future the Democratic Party and African-American voters are tied together with no reason yet for either to part ways. The only recourse the Republican Party has is to engage in outreach for the young African-American voter, promoting the entrepreneurial spirit of this young demographic and hope this message will resonate even slightly. Table 9 details African-American voters in the 2012 election and the additional number of votes needed to increase vote totals by 15% for the nine battleground states

|  |
|--|
| <b>African-American Voters – 2012 Election (Battleground States)</b> |
|--|

| State          | African-American<br>Vote – Mitt Romney<br>(%) | Total Number of<br>African-American<br>Votes for Mitt<br>Romney | Additional Number of<br>Votes needed to<br>increase vote totals by<br>15% (All Else Being<br>Equal) |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| Colorado*      | --  | --  | --  |
| Florida        | 4%  | 43,686  | 6,553   |
| Iowa*          | --  | --  | --  |
| Nevada         | 6%  | 5,373   | 806   |
| New Hampshire* | --  | --  | --  |
| North Carolina | 4%  | 40,929  | 6,139   |
| Ohio           | 3%  | 24,701  | 3,705   |
| Virginia       | 6%  | 45,532  | 6,830   |
| Wisconsin      | 6%  | 12,734  | 1,910   |

Table 9: African-American Voters – 2012 Election (Battleground States). Data retrieved from: CNN Election Center. 2012.

<http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/main>.

\* African-American share of the electoral is not large enough to be tallied within the margins of error.

A Republican realignment including African-American voters would be difficult and unnecessary for many of the nine battleground states. However, two states in particular – North Carolina and Virginia – should see an increase in resources allocated to courting the African-American vote. The African-American vote in these two states is a significant percentage of the voting population and their support, in the case of North Carolina, can help to solidify a Republican majority.

### **The Hispanic Vote: Immigration or the Economy?**

The Hispanic population is growing and doing so at a tremendous rate. In 1990, the number of Hispanics in the United States was 22 million, or around 9% of the population. By 2014, the total Hispanic population is 14% of the national population. By 2030, the Hispanic population is projected to be around 78 million, nearly 22% of the population.<sup>95</sup> Increasingly, the majority of Hispanics in the United States are native born, thus automatically eligible to vote when they turn 18 years of age. With the median age of Hispanics in the United States at around 28 years of age, this is a demographic that will be around for a long time in electoral politics. Recent history suggests the Republican Party can gain a significant minority of Latino voters which can be vital to a new Republican realignment.

The 2004 presidential election was the high water mark for the relationship between Hispanic voters and the Republican Party as national exit polling data shows President George W. Bush received nearly 44% of the Hispanic vote.<sup>96</sup> Arizona State University professor Rodolfo Espino credits Bush's ability for friendly relations towards the Latino community and his ability

to converse with Latinos about the issues they cared the most about.<sup>97</sup> A *Washington Post* quote from President Bush sums up his ability to reach Latino voters and include such voters into a potential Republican coalition; “[i]mmigrants come with new skills and new ideas. They fill a critical gap in our labor market. They work hard for a chance for a better life...[n]ot only do immigrants help build our economy, they invigorate our soul.”<sup>98</sup> Juxtapose this with a quote by Speaker of the House John Boehner and it is clear the current Republican strategy is to enforce immigration laws without creating an easier path to citizenship; “House Republicans want to pass a strong border security, illegal immigration bill. We want a bill. There [are] no ifs, ands or buts about it.”<sup>99</sup>

Many credit Bush’s ability to acknowledge the hard-working spirit of the Latino population through small business ownership as essential to his electoral success. Former representative Allen West has a different take, however, citing a desire to stop the flow of criminality and adding additional welfare recipients to an already overtaxed system as to why the Republican Party should forget about comprehensive immigration reform. “One of the critical issues that we have to confront is illegal immigration, because this is a multi-headed Hydra that affects our economy, our health care, our education systems, our national security, and also our local criminality.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, the Republican Party over the last decade has changed its overall message to the Latino population, much to its downfall.

Since President Bush’s reelection in 2004, the Republican Party has failed to muster even one-third of the Latino vote in either presidential election. In 2008, John McCain won 31% of the Latino vote. In 2012, Mitt Romney won even fewer votes, totaling around 27%.<sup>100</sup> For Senator McCain, the pressure from conservatives was too much as he capitulated on comprehensive immigration reform, a reform he backed with Senator Ted Kennedy a mere few years prior. Also,

he became an advocate for a border fence, something he was wholeheartedly against in 2004. All this was done as a move for self-preservation as his support of comprehensive immigration reform shackled his fundraising efforts heading into 2008. For former governor Mitt Romney, advocating for self-deportation, whether or not it was taken out of context, severely hurt his chances with Latino voters. Even after his less than stellar performance, Romney went back to an overarching idea that Latino voters – many of whom would be a part of his 47% who take from the government – voted for Obama because he promised “gifts” which included healthcare and the DREAM Act. One Twitter user noted, “This so-called "gift" of Obama's is common sense, plain & simple. Mitt Romney should've ran [sic] for president before the Civil Rights Movement.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, the Republican Party rhetoric in the last two presidential elections has failed in terms of reaching out to Latino voters.

The Hispanic vote is one of increasing relevancy in recent presidential elections and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Particularly in the southeastern United States, the population of Latinos is growing at an exponential rate. Table 10 shows the growth in the Hispanic population among southeastern states. To understand how the Republican Party can regain traction with Hispanic voters, one has to first understand the salient issues in the minds of average Hispanic voters.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Change in Hispanic Population in Southern States – 2000-2011</b> |
|---|

| State | Population in<br>2000 | Population in<br>2011 | Percent Change<br>– 2000:2011 |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|

|                |         |         |      |
|----------------|---------|---------|------|
| Alabama        | 72,152  | 186,209 | 158% |
| South Carolina | 94,652  | 240,884 | 154% |
| Tennessee      | 116,692 | 296,266 | 154% |
| Kentucky       | 56,922  | 132,267 | 132% |
| South Dakota   | 10,101  | 23,158  | 129% |
| Arkansas       | 85,303  | 190,192 | 123% |
| North Carolina | 377,084 | 828,210 | 120% |
| Mississippi    | 37,301  | 81,088  | 117% |
| Maryland       | 230,992 | 488,943 | 112% |
| Georgia        | 434,375 | 879,858 | 103% |

Table 10: Change in Hispanic Population in Southern States – 2000-2011. Data Retrieved from the Pew Research Center’s study on census data from 2000 and 2011: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/ii-ranking-latino-populations-in-the-states/>.

From politicians to conservative demagogues, the overwhelming consensus is that while immigration reform may be imminent, illegal immigrants should face consequences for breaking the law. Republicans tend to lump Latino voters into a category of voters whose concerns are mainly social and immigration issues. While these issues are salient and have cost Republicans votes in 2008 and 2012, the majority of Hispanic voters care the most about pocketbook issues – the economy and jobs. This realization has split the Republican Party into two camps. On one side are northern, business-minded conservatives who see Latinos as what Charles Krauthammer terms “natural” Republicans due to their hard-working nature, an idea which George Bush used

to his advantage. This group of Republicans finds the immigration debate many southern Republicans speak about silly and ultimately detrimental to the Party as a whole. Therefore they overwhelmingly favor a path to citizenship and variations of the DREAM Act. The second group is composed of evangelicals and Tea Partiers from the south who tout illegal immigration as one of the most important issues facing America. Furthermore, they view Latino voters as part of President Obama's coalition of voters who feel the economic situation is deplorable and government assistance is necessary. For purposes of this study, which kind of Republican resonates most with Latino voters is important to see if there is a chance for Republicans to win a significant minority of Latino voters.

Republicans at the state level are having mixed results with the Hispanic demographic. Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey and former Governor Jeb Bush of Florida are bright spots for the Republican Party. Despite one being from the north and the other from the south, their messages to Latino voters are similar and seem to resonate very well with their respective constituencies. In the 2013 governor race in New Jersey, Governor Christie was able to win 51% of the Hispanic vote (a 19% increase from his 2009 totals), while his opponent, Barbara Buono, garnered only 45% of the Hispanic vote.<sup>102</sup> It would be foolish merely to translate this 51% to a national election; nevertheless, it is important to note how Christie was able to garner this much support and how this can translate to a presidential election.

Before analysis of the 2013 New Jersey gubernatorial election can begin, a look at some caveats which make Governor Christie's reelection unique are worth noting. First, the state of New Jersey is well-known for its phenomenon of cross-party voting in which one party will concede to the other to allow for more room at the negotiating table in terms of legislation or committee chair appointments. This practice allowed for Governor Christie to poll 32% among

Democratic voters in the election as many Democratic Party bosses conceded support to Christie.<sup>103</sup> Thus, a significant number of Hispanics who would have voted Democrat had there been a strong candidate did not do so. Secondly, the 2013 gubernatorial election was the lowest in terms of voter turnout the state had ever seen as only 38% of eligible voters went to the polls.<sup>104</sup> More importantly, the Democratic turnout was six percentage points lower than in any 2012 New Jersey contest. Thus, it is likely that many Democratic Hispanic voters stayed home. Nevertheless, it is clear a substantial number of Hispanic voters voted for Governor Christie's reelection.

For Governor Christie and the national Republican Party, the immigration question is one in which the Governor will have to account for. In 2011 Governor Christie rejected a New Jersey version of the DREAM Act, which would have allowed undocumented Latinos who came with their parents as children to have the ability to receive state tuition financial aid. Governor Christie justified his position as such, "I want every child who comes to New Jersey to be educated, but I don't believe that for those people who came here illegally, we should be subsidizing with taxpayer money, through in-state tuition, their education."<sup>105</sup> He has capitulated in recent months and signed a version of the bill early in 2014. Christie has never come out in wholehearted support of comprehensive immigration reform. Rather he has spent much of his governorship calling upon the federal government to "fix a broken system." When asked in 2013 if he supported an immigration bill which stalled in Congress, Christie declined to take a stance. Rather, he decided to call upon Republicans to treat immigrants "with fairness."<sup>106</sup> "[W]ith fairness" does not provide much in terms of actual policy or even enough to gauge where Christie stands on immigration. With Republican strategists calling upon national Republican



figures to stand with immigration reform in the hopes of breaking through the Hispanic demographic, Christie may not be the one to call upon to get the job done.

Christie's capitulation on immigration leaves him out of the Tea Party sphere of the Republican Party, for purposes of this section. Christie's strength with the Latino community in the state of New Jersey is in the small business arena. Leading up to his 2013 reelection bid for governor of New Jersey, Christie was able to secure the endorsement of over one-hundred Latino small business owners and the head of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. "He's always been very popular with the Hispanic community" said Carlos Medina, head of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Latino ownership of businesses is quite prevalent in the state as a 2008 survey showed the number of Hispanic-owned small businesses to number close to 70,000, an increase of nearly 38% from 2002.<sup>107</sup> At the national level, Latino business owners number around 3.1 million, according to a 2013 study by Geoscape, and generate around \$468 billion towards the United States economy.<sup>108</sup> This is a vital demographic to a 2016 Chris Christie presidential run. For him to be successful he must reach out to the middle class and small business owners who are Hispanic to gain a significant minority of the vote. Thus, Christie can be characterized as a business-minded conservative on the issue of immigration. His only faults can be found in recent instances of capitulation and "flip-flopping." Nevertheless, his ability to reach the Hispanic voter could prove vital in a national election.

For Jeb Bush, his success with the Hispanic community is well documented. Election data from the 1998 race for the governorship of Florida shows Governor Bush winning the state with a comfortable margin against Democratic challenger Buddy Mackay. Vital to Governor Bush's success was the influx of Latino voters, particularly those in Miami-Dade County. Miami-Dade County is currently the only county in Florida with a majority Latino population –

around 64% of the total residents in the county.<sup>109</sup> In 1998, the population of Hispanics in the county was around 55% of the total county population. Governor Bush's success in the county can be viewed as a product of his ability to reach out to the Miami-Dade community. As Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Excellence in Education leading up to his 1998 run, he helped establish the first charter school in an underserved portion of Miami.<sup>110</sup> His work in the county led to many voters coming out to support him. In his 1998 election, he received 20,000 more votes in Miami-Dade County than his opponent.<sup>111</sup> Election results show that Governor Bush won 61%<sup>112</sup> of the total Latino vote in 1998 and 57% in his reelection bid in 2002.<sup>113</sup>

Governor Bush made tremendous strides in reaching the Latino voter with get out the vote techniques in various counties with significant numbers of Latino voters. He employed techniques under the direction of "compassionate conservatism," which, as mentioned previously, rebrands a conservative message under friendlier, more "compassionate" rhetoric. This offers an intriguing comparison between Governor Bush and Governor Christie. Christie is characterized as a brash individual. Bush is characterized as compassionate and willing to listen. Bush has made headlines recently with comments on immigration which detail how important of an issue it is for the Republican Party. He described the motivation of those who crossed the Mexican-United States border illegally into the United States as an "act of love,"<sup>114</sup> much different than the images of terrorists, criminals, and welfare recipients which the Republican Party has recently envisioned. This underscores the need for the Republican Party to change its message on immigration. However, the establishment is not listening. After Bush's "act of love" comments, many conservatives have distanced themselves from Bush reasoning that he is "pandering" for votes. Therefore, Bush does not fit with the northern business-minded

conservative mold as he never reached out to Latino small-businesses; nor does he fit with the Tea Party conservative mold of a small government ideologue. A third Republican construction can be added to this study: a compassionate, southern, conservative Republican. This mold fits Governor Jeb Bush along with President George W. Bush precisely and seems to be the perfect mold for a Republican candidate to win a significant minority of the Latino vote.

This section looked to examine the overall outlook of Latino voting tendencies. Deviating slightly from the rest of the study in terms of which states to examine, a look at recent New Jersey gubernatorial elections in addition to Florida's gubernatorial races illustrates two different, yet effective ways to win a significant portion of the Latino voting bloc. The Governor Christie strategy of a tough, brash attitude while supplying results on an economic level has brought hard-working middle class and business-owning Latinos to the polls in droves. On the other hand, the Governor Jeb Bush strategy of get out the vote techniques and reaching out to the Latino community, selling the product of conservative to Latino voters in terms of his healthcare and education policy allowed for him to win more than half of the Latino vote in both of his elections.

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|--|
| <b>Latino Voters – 2012 Election (Battleground States)</b> |
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| State    | Latino Vote – Mitt Romney (%) | Total Number of Latino Votes for Mitt Romney | Additional Number of Votes needed to increase vote totals by 15% (All Else Being Equal) |
|----------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Colorado | 23%                           | 80,759                                       | 12,114  |
| Florida  | 39%                           | 557,000                                      | 83,550  |

|                |     |        |        |
|----------------|-----|--------|--------|
| Iowa*          | --  | --     | --     |
| Nevada         | 24% | 45,369 | 6,805  |
| New Hampshire* | --  | --     | --     |
| North Carolina | 31% | 55,165 | 8,275  |
| Ohio           | 42% | 69,162 | 10,374 |
| Virginia       | 33% | 62,607 | 9,391  |
| Wisconsin      | 31% | 37,596 | 5,639  |

Table 11: Latino Voters – 2012 Election. Data retrieved from: CNN Election Center. 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/main>.

\* Latino share of the electoral is not large enough to be tallied within the margins of error.

The Republican Party's chance of gaining a significant minority of Latino voters in the coming elections is possible and crucial to future success. According to the data provided in Table 11, Florida is the most crucial battleground state for securing the Latino vote. In the next section, a thorough discussion on the different nationalities of Latino voters in Florida is provided. Another state Republicans should allocate more money towards is Colorado. Colorado is not typically known as having a large Latino-American population. However, of the nine battleground states, it is the only state where 10,000 votes are needed to increase vote totals by 15% in which over 70,000 voted for Mitt Romney in 2012. It is unique in its surprisingly large turnout and relatively low support for Republican presidential candidates.

Building on the success of President George W. Bush and recent success by Governors Chris Christie and Jeb Bush at the state and national level, the Latino vote is becoming the most crucial in fostering a new Republican realignment. Future research needs to look at the various nationalities of the Latino population and ascertain differences and similarities between the

major groups. For purposes of this research, a look at the Cuban-American voter in the state of Florida will shed some light on the recent voting patterns of a usually conservative demographic.

### **Reliance on the Cuban Vote: The Shrinking Republican Florida**

Between 1968 and 1992 Democrats lost five of six presidential elections in the state of Florida. A Republican hegemony, focused primarily on taxes, crime, and a rising baby boomer generation, relegated the Democratic Party to a scant few counties. Between 1996 and 2012, Democrats won every presidential election in the state of Florida except the 2000 and 2004 elections – 2000 being disputable for obvious reasons. Now the Republican Party has been relegated to a sparse few counties, similar to the state of the Democratic Party twenty to forty-five years prior. What makes Florida a hotly contested swing state can arguably boil down to one demographic: Cuban-American voters. Historically Catholic and socially conservative, Cuban-Americans have been an essential demographic to Florida Republican success. However, with many Cuban-Americans shifting to the left on social issues, coupled with the Republican Party's stance on immigration issues, can this demographic be relied upon to carry a new coalition of Floridian voters?

Why choose Cuban-American voters for specific analysis? The reason is threefold: 1) the Cuban-American vote is the most significant minority vote which has traditionally supported Republican candidates; 2) the Cuban-American vote is heavily concentrated in Florida, an essential swing state; 3) the 2012 presidential election brought forth a trend with Cuban-American voters which is detrimental to the Republican Party; they started voting Democratic. Perhaps the most intriguing reason is the third. Leading up to the 2012 election, cracks in the Republican Party – Cuban-American coalition were evident. In 2008, 84% of Miami-Dade

Cuban-American voters over the age of 65 voted for Senator McCain, and 55% of those 29 years of age or younger voted for President Obama.<sup>115</sup> Figure 6 shows the recent historical trends of the overall Cuban-American presidential vote since 2000.

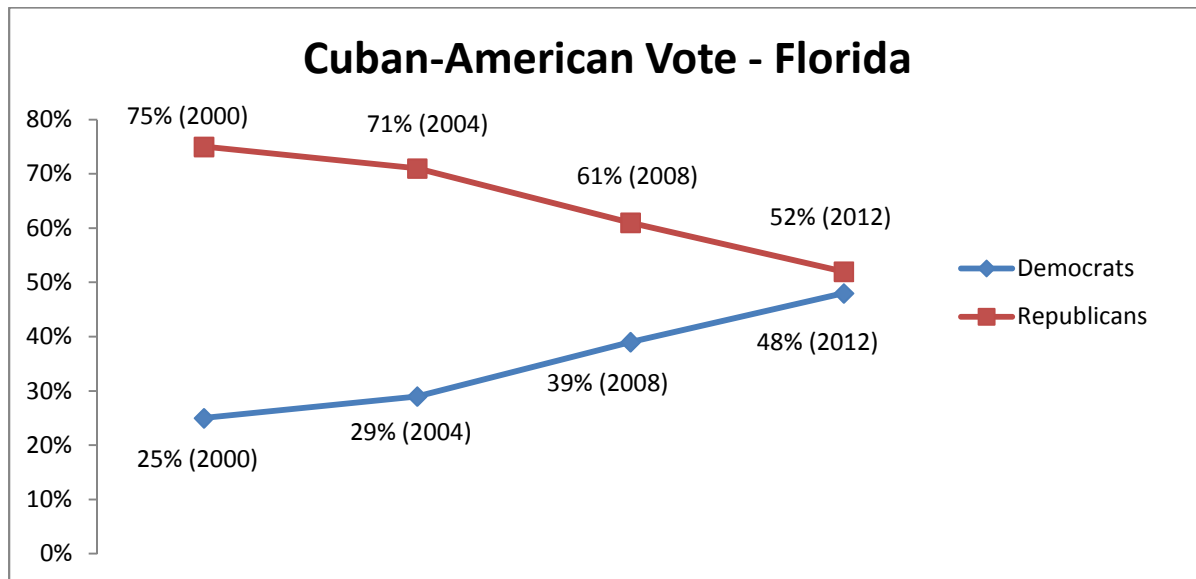


Figure 6: Cuban-American Vote since 2000. Data retrieved from: <http://www.policymic.com/articles/18966/florida-election-results-obama-won-by-closing-the-gap-among-cuban-american-voters>.

The Cuban-American Republican stronghold is fading because of two reasons: 1) a younger generation of Cuban-American voters concerned more with social policy than economic conservatism and 2) a shrinking proportion of Cuban-American voters in the state of Florida. With regards to the younger generation of Cuban-American voters, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly why they have become disenchanted with the Republican Party. Some political commentators argue it is disenchantment with US foreign policy towards Cuba stemming from the continual embargo placed upon Cuban goods.<sup>116</sup> Others point to Cuban-Americans becoming disinterested in American policy towards Cuba, making the conservative Cold War stance not applicable to second and third generation Cuban-American voters. Instead, American-born Cuban-American voters tend to care more about issues of healthcare, education, and gay rights –

two of which Governor Jeb Bush championed during his time in office.<sup>117</sup> *Cuban Affairs* conducted a study in 2008 asking if Cuban-American voters in Miami-Dade County would support a constitutional amendment defining marriage as that between a man and a woman. Only 30% of the respondents would support such an amendment.<sup>118</sup> This leftward swing of Cuban-American voters is even more disastrous for the Republican Party as other, more Democratic-leaning, Latino demographics are becoming the majority in Florida. In 1990 Cuban-American voters were 46% of the population. Puerto Rican voters were around 24% and all others completed the last 30%. By 2007, Cuban-American voters were 34% of the population; Puerto Rican voters were at 29% and all others were at 37%.<sup>119</sup>

The question becomes one of saliency for the Cuban-American voter. For purposes of this section I have separated two possible reasons why Cuban-American voters have switched to the Democratic Party in large numbers. As enumerated previously, they are: 1) a strong repugnancy towards US-Cuban relations, and 2) a general trend towards liberal social policies. A poll released in February 2014 by the Atlantic Council asked Floridians if they favored normalizing relations with Cuba. A full 63% supported such measures.<sup>120</sup> A follow-up question was asked in the survey, however, as pollsters relayed Cuba's abysmal human rights record and style of government. When this was relayed, the number of supporters shrank as only 51% supported normalizing relations.<sup>121</sup> It is a polarizing issue within the Cuban-American community as many have changed their minds over the issue multiple times during their lifetimes. Many would like to see the communist regime toppled; however, many want to see their families in Cuba prosper as well. *USA Today* interviewed a number of Cuban exiles in Miami, all of whom over the age of 65, and asked questions of how the United States and Cuban should mend relations. All of the respondents detailed the struggle between wanting to topple the

regime and helping their families. Where sentiment changed was in interviews with the younger generation, mostly Millennials, who have never been to Cuba. "Cubans my age don't really care anymore. They're here, and what matters to them is this country. They don't care so much about what's going on in the motherland" relayed a 21-year old Cuban-American living in Miami.<sup>122</sup>

To summarize, relations between Cuba and America does not seem to be the overwhelming issue guiding Cuban-American voters away from the Republican Party.

This leaves the idea of social liberalism becoming a part of Cuban-American politics for the foreseeable future. A study conducted by Florida International University showed that nearly one out of three Cuban-American voters supported the Affordable Care Act heading into the 2012 presidential election.<sup>123</sup> This is in contrast to mainstream Republican voters whose support for the Affordable Care Act has sustained between 14% - 22%.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the immigration issue has shifted the Cuban-American allegiance to the Democratic Party. A 2012 study conducted by UnivisionNoticias.com asked what were the most salient issues among various Latino-American demographics. Results showed that 34% of Cuban-American voters believed that immigration was a very important issue, as opposed to 36% and 38% who described unemployment and fixing the economy, respectively, as salient issues. This is similar to Puerto Rican voters; 33% ranked immigration as a salient issue.<sup>125</sup> What is even more striking is the amount of Latino Republican voters who ranked immigration as a salient issue – 41%.<sup>126</sup> Regardless of age, this pattern repeats itself. In the 18-35 year old category, immigration was a salient issue with 44% of respondents. At the other extreme, for those 70 years of age and older, immigration was a salient issue with 39% of the respondents.<sup>127</sup> The number of Latino voters who ranked immigration as a salient issue is similar to national trends as 42% of Americans believe immigration is an important issue. What is important to note is how immigration ranks in



the top three most important issues for Latino voters. Immigration ranks thirteenth among the general population according to a January 2014 Rasmussen poll.<sup>128</sup>

These studies highlight an interesting trend among Cuban-American voters which diverges slightly from trends of other demographics under analysis in this study. Cuban-Americans typically do not care about the economy any more than they do immigration. While the economy is still very much a salient issue, its prominence is challenged in the case of Cuban-American voters. Thus, winning Miami-Dade County, the state of Florida, and possibly a presidential election could come down to how Republicans handle immigration going forward.

While it is true Cuban-Americans are leaving the Republican Party, there are signs that the demographic is disillusioned with the current Democratic administration. The study conducted by Florida International University also shows that Cuban-American voters were the only Latino voters who overwhelmingly said they were not better off than they were prior to the election of President Obama in 2008. 62.6% of Cuban-American respondents said they were not better off.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, 63.6% of Cuban-American voters said that President Obama has not “fulfilled campaign promises.”<sup>130</sup> The precarious position of political limbo in which Cuban-Americans find themselves shows that this demographic may be the most important for securing Florida heading into 2016.

### **The Unmarried Vote – Bringing Single Women to the Republican Party**

Unmarried individuals make up a significant portion of the electorate, significantly increasing in numbers since the 1970s. While their share of the electorate has increased, their tendency to vote Democratic has increased as well. Since 1996 – when unmarried individuals became a demographic that was charted – their percentage of voting Democratic has increased

from 57% to 65%.<sup>131</sup> This trend is seen in both unmarried women and men as their married counterparts on average still vote majority Republican.

*Grand New Party* authors Douthat and Salam talk about the marriage gap as being one of supreme importance when discussing familial relations and economic and social stratification. Unmarried couples, particularly those with children, are at an increased risk of poverty and are much more likely to rely on socioeconomic safety net programs than their married counterparts. One of the biggest social safety nets, and one which is hotly debated, is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Since the 1960s and the great southern Republican realignment, Republicans have been staunchly against safety net programs – at least according to their rhetoric. One of the first attempts at a federal food stamp program came in 1964 with the passage of The Food Stamp Act. The program allocated food stamps to individuals based upon income and how much the individual normally spent at the grocery store. The program had a difficult time reaching those who needed it most, however. If one was a member of a large family and had an income above the poverty line, that individual would be privy to a higher allotment of food stamps. If one was not a member of a large family and made very little income, the amount of food stamps given was much less. This hurt the population of unmarried individuals, who made up 17% of the population during the 1970s.<sup>132</sup> The efforts of Republican President Richard Nixon allowed the Food Stamp Program to be widely available to those in need. His reforms, offered in the late 1960s, allowed for the lowest income group to receive food stamps for free. By 1974, the program reached 15 million people.<sup>133</sup> By 1977, both the outgoing Republican administration and the incoming Democratic one offered more reforms to the program:

The Republican bill stressed targeting benefits to the neediest, simplifying administration, and tightening controls on the program; the Democratic bill focused on increasing access to those most in need and simplifying and streamlining a complicated and cumbersome process that delayed benefit delivery as well as reducing errors, and curbing abuse.<sup>134</sup>

Though the Democratic reforms passed in 1977, by the 1980s attempts to severely cut the program by the Reagan Administration furthered alienated the unmarried vote from the Republican Party. Many of those cuts did not make it through Congress, however, and their potential effects on Reagan's future presidential run were minimized. However, those who fell below the poverty line increased by 35% between 1979 and 1983.<sup>135</sup> As a result, the Reagan Administration liberalized eligibility requirements for the Food Stamp Program.

Two of the most prominent Republican presidents of the twentieth century – Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan – increased eligibility and spending on the Food Stamp Program. The only Republican president of the twenty-first century, so far, George W. Bush, did the same. From 2000 to 2008, federal spending on food stamps increased from \$17 billion to \$38 billion.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, George Bush received an increase of 4% of the vote among unmarried individuals from the 2000 to 2004 presidential elections. His biggest increase was among unmarried women voters, which increased 5% from 2000 to 2004.<sup>137</sup>

Since President Bush left office in 2009, Republican rhetoric on social safety net issues has taken a turn towards austerity. The overwhelming political buzzword for Republicans has become “dependency.” As former Senator from South Carolina Jim DeMint once wrote in his book *Now or Never: Saving America from Economic Collapse*, “[a]nd many Americans are dependent on the government for their income, health care, education of their children, [and]

food stamps.”<sup>138</sup> Even Mitt Romney promised in 2012 to end the “culture of dependency” which, according to him, keeps poor people impoverished. The Republican rebranding operation, which started with the release of *The Growth and Opportunity Project*, still fails to properly identify ways to reform welfare to offer the neediest a hand-up. Instead the report decides to only use the word “welfare” with regard to corporate welfare, while the phrase “safety net” is only used once in the whole report. Meanwhile, Republicans continue to brand welfare recipients as lazy and unemployed. For example, Congressman Kevin Cramer (R-ND) responded to complains that cutting food stamps for the young, sick, and elderly would drastically hurt those groups by citing a biblical passage which stated that if a person is not willing to work, he or she should not eat.<sup>139</sup>

Due to the recent austerity measures by House Republicans, the average unmarried household is slipping further and further behind economically. Rising inequality, the education gap, and a lack of economic redistributive policies all have an effect as well. This does not bode well for the Republican Party, which prides itself as being at one extreme anti-welfare and at the other desiring to give a hand-up, not a hand-out. Meanwhile the overall public is becoming more and more willing to accept redistributive policies. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center between the years of 1994 and 2007 Americans’ support for government “taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves” rose from 57% to 69%.<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile, the true influence of unmarried voters and the issues which resonate with them cannot be overstated. Its effects are already being felt in state elections. For example, in the 2013 election for Virginia’s governorship, 62% of the unmarried voting population – which made up approximately 33% of the electorate – voted for Democratic challenger (and eventual winner) Terry McAuliffe.<sup>141</sup> At the national level over 100 million American adults will be eligible to vote. In the 2012 Presidential election, unmarried voters in Virginia overwhelmingly

voted for President Obama.<sup>142</sup> For the Republican Party to gain favor among unmarried voters, it must divide the voting bloc into its component parts and target each part accordingly. Doing so will cover a wide swath of eligible voters who are more numerous than the Evangelical Christian base.

The most numerous and potentially most powerful unmarried base is the single female vote. Recent history suggests their share of the electorate will continue to grow as Democrats push abortion rights, health care, and education. Page Gardner, a Democratic political strategist, saw the importance of the single female vote when she started Women's Voices, Women's Vote after she learned of the untapped potential of the single female vote.<sup>143</sup> In the 2000 election, 20 million single female voters did not participate due to their disinterest in either candidate. With get-out-the-vote and voter registration techniques, WWVWV was able to increase single female voter participation by nearly 3 million votes.<sup>144</sup> More impressively – for the Democrats – was the increase in vote totals for Barack Obama in 2008 as opposed to John Kerry's run in 2004. John Kerry was able to get 62% of the vote while Barack Obama was able to gain eight more percentage points and retained 70% of the single female vote total.

Though recent numbers seem bleak, it is not a foregone conclusion that single female voters will vote Democrat for the foreseeable future. The single female vote is a new and fresh voting block with not enough history as a demographic to give precise predictions. Republicans need to re-develop a strategy that helped them tremendously in 1984. In a series of campaign ads entitled *America is Back* Reagan's campaign used simplified language to provide a stark contrast between himself and the Carter-esque Walter Mondale. For example, in one ad the viewer is looking at the inside of a supermarket as the narrator rattles off the prices of everyday items under Carter's inflation. This is a smart tactic, particularly for single voters as pocketbook issues

prevail over all. Reagan's campaign strategists understood the rising rate of single motherhood as well. Between 1980 and 1992 the rate of single motherhood increased 54%.<sup>145</sup> Thus, core economic issues resonated most during this time.

Today the tribulations of single motherhood are exacerbated by stringent safety net regulations which do not treat cohabitating families as married couples. The Republican Party should champion this group of lesser-known voters. By offering policies which relax stringent rules, such as the difficulty in obtaining Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for cohabitating families, has the potential to increase the unmarried vote. The Republican Party can do this without alienating a base of conservative, family-oriented individuals. If the Republican Party can frame the argument as one in which cohabitating families who are provided greater benefits will stabilize families for their children as well as promote the opportunity of marriage is an argument that can keep two different demographics on the Republican Party side.

Republicans have reason to be optimistic. During the 2010 midterms, single female voters overall pulled the lever for Republicans at a 50% rate.<sup>146</sup> Despite Mitt Romney's poor performance among unmarried voters in 2012, Republicans have to seize this opportunity by targeting one of the biggest vulnerabilities of being a single voter – the economy. The Republican Party has begun to capitalize on this by beginning the process of advocating for the single female vote with initiatives such as Women on the Right UNITE. Initiatives such as this attempt to network campaign resources across a myriad of campaigns to support female Republican Party candidates.

Table 12 displays the propensity of unmarried woman to vote Republican in the 2012 election and what a 15% increase in vote totals in the nine battleground states would look like. It

is important to note how consistently unmarried women vote for Republicans as most states hovered around one-third of total votes going to Mitt Romney. As a result, for Republicans to increase their vote totals by 15% from 2012, many of the nine battleground states require between 30,000 and 60,000 votes. These are tremendously large increases and would require significant get-out-the-vote procedures in many counties within the respective states. For this reason, it would make most sense to concentrate on states in which Republican senators and governors were successful in gaining a significant portion of unmarried women voters. These states include: North Carolina – where Governor Pat McCrory was able to secure 42% of the single female vote<sup>147</sup> – and Ohio – where Governor John Kasich secured 45% of the single female vote in the 2014 midterm elections.<sup>148</sup> With help from these respective governors and an inclusive Republican message that is not hostile to pro-choice voters, a Republican presidential candidate in Ohio and North Carolina can gain a significant minority of these voters.

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| <b>Unmarried Female Vote – 2012 Election (Battleground States)</b> |
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| State          | Unmarried Female Vote – Mitt Romney (%) | Total Number of Unmarried Female Votes for Mitt Romney | Additional Number of Votes needed to increase vote totals by 15% (All Else Being Equal) |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| Colorado       | 36%                                     | 135,435  | 20,315  |
| Florida        | 36%                                     | 786,353  | 117,953   |
| Iowa           | 27%                                     | 310,632  | 46,595  |
| Nevada         | 28%                                     | 238,786  | 35,818  |
| New Hampshire  | 35%                                     | 48,963   | 7,344   |
| North Carolina | 36%                                     | 368,359  | 55,254  |

|           |     |         |        |
|-----------|-----|---------|--------|
| Ohio      | 33% | 416,617 | 62,493 |
| Virginia  | 35% | 292,164 | 43,825 |
| Wisconsin | 32% | 203,747 | 30,562 |

Table 12: Unmarried Female Vote – 2012 Elections. Data retrieved from: CNN Election Center. 2012.

<http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/main>.

## Conclusions

Forming a new realignment inclusive of voters Republicans typically do not poll well with is an arduous task for any academic, political pollster, or campaign strategist. What this study displays is threefold: 1) systemic and long-term divisions within the Republican Party between a) governors and presidential candidates and b) various powerful demographics such as neoconservatives, Tea Party members, and Evangelicals. 2) *The Growth and Opportunity* project looks at one facet for which improvement is needed for future success. However, numerous examples show candidates whose policy stances were not accepted by various communities for lacking substance surrounding issues they care most about. 3) Demographical shifts in the nine battleground states necessitate strategic action targeting specific demographics in specific states for which a 15% increase in total votes can occur.

Here, the study finds that outreach as described in *GOP* is vital in states with a high concentration of the respective demographics. For African-American voters, Republicans should focus on efforts in North Carolina and Virginia. A high concentration of African-American voters exists there and deplorable socio-economic conditions exist which Republican candidates can capitalize on and use to motivate this demographic to vote in 2016.

Independent voters are much more difficult to tract due to their propensity to span the political spectrum, ages and races. A Republican presidential nominee needs to court voters from



states that Mitt Romney polled under 50% and have proven to vote conservatively with Republican governors. With these conditions, Iowa and Wisconsin are important for independent voter realignment.

Latino voters are split between immigration and the economy as the most salient issue they care about. Unfortunately for Republicans, Cuban-American voters, particularly those under the age of 35, tend to care more about immigration as opposed to the economy. Therefore, Florida is an essential state for Latino voter realignment. A surprising state in this study is Colorado. Mitt Romney was unable to court even one-fourth of all Latino voters in the state. Nevertheless, he was able to secure over 80,000 votes which is a strikingly large amount.

Finally, single female voters are important as they constitute a large percentage of the demographics in most states. The study finds that Ohio and North Carolina are important states for single female voter realignment. Similar to independent voters, Governors Kasich and McCrory have been able to secure a significant minority of single female voters. Their tactics must be replicated at the national level to secure a 15% increase in vote totals in 2016.

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