

# THE DECLINE OF THIRD PARTY VOTING IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

This paper documents and investigates a prominent but little discussed pattern in U.S. politics, which is the decline of third party electoral support over the past century. We find evidence consistent with the claim that electoral support for third parties – mainly left-wing third parties – declined because the Democratic Party co-opted the left-wing policy position beginning with the passage of the New Deal agenda. We note first that most of the third party voting in the pre-New-Deal era was for left-wing third parties, and that this declined sharply during the 1930s and 1940s. We then show that after the New Deal the Democratic Party's electoral support was higher in areas that had traditionally supported left-wing third parties. Contrary to some claims in the literature, we find little support for the hypothesis that the decline of third-party voting was immediately due to electoral reforms such as the introduction of direct primaries and the Australian ballot, except possibly in the south.

In the literature comparing political party competition across recent democratic elections, the United States stands out for the stability of its two party electoral competition.<sup>1</sup> The inability of third parties to attract more than a tiny fraction of the votes cast across offices is noticeable even compared to other democracies with two dominant parties, such as the U.K.. In recent U.S. history only rarely have third-party candidates broken the norm of stable two party electoral competition.

Electoral support for third parties in the U.S. has not always been so small. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the vote shares of third parties – such as Greenbacks, Populists, Progressives, and Prohibitionists – were more than twice as large as in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Over the period 1890 to 1920, third party candidates for the U.S. House, Governor, and U.S. Senator won more than 10% of the total vote in 16 states.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, over the period 1940 to 1970, third party candidates for these three offices never won 10% of the total vote in any state. More than five times as many third party congressmen were elected to the U.S. House in the period 1890 to 1920 as compared to the period 1940 to 1970.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in state legislatures third parties won a plurality of seats in either the upper or lower chamber of nine state legislatures during the first period (1890-1920), compared with none during the second period (1940-1970).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 shows the decline in third party electoral competition clearly. This figure plots the vote shares for third party candidates for the U.S. House and Senate, and all state-wide offices over the period 1876-2004, aggregated by decade.<sup>6</sup> The pattern in the figure shows

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<sup>1</sup>Sartori (1997, 38) writes, “Among [countries classified as two party countries] only the United States does not consistently display a sizeable electoral ‘third parties’.”

<sup>2</sup>For a review of the various third parties that emerged during this period see Haynes (1916), Hicks (1933), Nash (1959), and Voss-Hubbard (1999).

<sup>3</sup>We exclude the presidency since we want to focus on electoral support for third party movements and not individual personalities.

<sup>4</sup>The data on third party congressmen is from Gillespie (1993).

<sup>5</sup>These numbers are calculated from the data in ICPSR Study 16, *Partisan Division of American State Governments, 1834-1985*. Plurality of seats in one of the state legislative chambers under counts the number of states where third parties were in a position to influence state policies during this early period (1890 to 1920). Third parties were “pivotal” (the third parties received at least 20% of the seats in a state legislative chamber and more than the seat difference between the major parties) in three additional states. Three more states can be added to this list if we include states where third parties that were the “second” party and controlled at least 20% of the seats in the state legislature. Finally, in addition to the state legislatures, third parties controlled the governorship in five states.

<sup>6</sup>The vote shares are calculated by the total vote cast for third party candidates across all offices divided

a clear decline in third party electoral support starting around 1930. The third party vote share dropped from an average of about 6% to an average of around 3%.

In this paper we seek to identify the main factors that account for this pattern of decline. The existing literature on third parties focuses mainly on the question of why U.S. third parties have consistently attracted only a small share of the vote. It pays relatively little attention to the question of why third party electoral support fell.<sup>7</sup> There are few systematic analyses of mass third party movements in the U.S. over time, and even fewer analyses that attempt to link the claims about voter and party behavior to understand the pattern illustrated in Figure 1. Three notable exceptions are Epstein (1986), Gillespie (1993), and Chhibber and Kollman (1998).

Figure 1 also shows clear differences in the pattern of electoral support for left-oriented and other third parties. Based on the historical literature and sources such as the *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left*, we classified each party as Left or Other (non-Left). We then constructed the average vote shares of the groups of Left and Other parties. Almost all of the decline in third party voting illustrated in Figure 1 can be attributed to the disappearance of electoral support for Left parties. Thus, the question of why third party electoral support declined over the twentieth century is primarily a question of why the vote share for left-oriented third parties declined. This pattern has been largely overlooked in the literature.<sup>8</sup>

One prominent hypothesis offered to explain the decline in third party voting is changes in electoral laws – especially the Australian ballot and the direct primary elections laws.<sup>9</sup>

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by the total votes cast for all candidates in a given election. See Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002) for more details about the data and sources. In Figure 1 we again exclude the presidency since we want to focus on third party movements. Figures for the electoral support of third party presidential candidates and for all the offices combined are available in the JOP on-line appendix. A figure with third party vote aggregated by four year intervals is also available in the JOP on-line appendix.

<sup>7</sup>See Mazmanian (1974), Rosenstone et al. (1984), Gillespie (1993), Herrnson and Green (2000), and Bibby and Maisel (2003). Recent studies have provided survey evidence for why voters support particular third party candidates in presidential elections – see Rosenstone et al. (1984), Alveraz and Nagler (1995), Beck (1997), Burden (2005), Hillygus (2004).

<sup>8</sup>Our focus on left third parties is related to question of why is there no socialist party in the U.S. politics (Lipset and Marks 2000; Lipset 1977; Sombart 1976). While this literature notes Roosevelt’s ability to adopt the socialist positions as a factor weakening the socialist party movement, this literature tends to emphasize other factors such as “American exceptionalism” as the root of the problem. Furthermore this literature does not seem to be as focused on the change in Left party vote as our analysis.

<sup>9</sup>See Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1984), Epstein (1986), Galderisi and Ginsberg (1986), Bibby and

Although these institutional changes occurred roughly at the time that electoral support for third parties began to decline, the literature provides little evidence that a connection exists between these two phenomena.<sup>10</sup> Thus, one goal of this paper is to provide quantitative evidence regarding the strength of the link between third party electoral support and these institutional changes.

Another hypothesis – which has primarily been applied to specific cases – is that third parties sometimes collapse after one of the major parties co-opts their key policy positions.<sup>11</sup> For example, numerous scholars argue that this was the fate of the Populist Party after Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan in 1896 and co-opted the silver issue.

Scholars have also pointed to other factors that could explain the decline in third party votes including: the prominence of single member districts; the electoral college and presidential system; the state of the economy; the high cost of political campaigns; the rise of candidate-centered politics; and the centralization of economic and political power at the national level (Chhibber and Kollman, 1998).

This paper focuses on the first two hypotheses – electoral laws and cooptation. We conduct a series of statistical analyses using aggregate and disaggregated voting data, data on candidates’ partisan affiliations, and measures of states’ electoral laws. We also discuss the additional competing hypotheses (section 4) and provide some justification for focusing on the electoral law and cooptation hypotheses.

We find considerable evidence consistent with the cooption argument. More specifically, we find that the large and seemingly-permanent decline in left-oriented third party voting was linked to the large and sustained leftward shift of the Democratic Party during and following the New Deal.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, we find only mixed evidence for the electoral law argument. Outside the south, we find no evidence that the introduction of the direct primary or Australian ballot led to an immediate drop in third party electoral support. We do find some evidence that these laws may have had an effect in the south.

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Maisel (1999), and Crespín (2004).

<sup>10</sup>One notable exception is Crespín (2004), which we discuss below.

<sup>11</sup>See for example Haynes (1916), Rosenstone et. al. (1984) and Gillespie (1993). Also, see Valelly (1989) for a detailed analysis of the collapse of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party.

<sup>12</sup>In discussing why the Socialist Party failed in the U.S., Norman Thomas once gave the following explanation: “It was Roosevelt in a word.” (Shannon 1955, 248)

To our knowledge, this is the first study to argue and provide systematic evidence that cooptation contributed to the broad and sustained decline in left-wing third party electoral support – and consequently the general decline in third party voting – over the course of the twentieth century.

## The Effects of Electoral Laws

The introduction of the direct primaries and the adoption of the Australian ballot are commonly cited in the literature as explanations for why third parties have difficulty attracting electoral support. These institutional changes reduce third party electoral support by reducing the incentives for candidates to affiliate with third parties.

Direct primaries were originally supported by the progressive leaders as a means to reduce the power of party machines by taking away their control over party nominations.<sup>13</sup> Although primaries may have weakened party machines, it is commonly argued that the weakened parties would be able to absorb many third-party voters and politicians. Prior to the introduction of direct primaries, candidates who appealed to voters who were dissatisfied with the major parties' policies were likely to be shunned by the major parties' leaders. They would therefore be forced to seek third party nominations. With direct primaries these candidates could potentially win nomination in one of the major parties.<sup>14</sup> Although this claim is often made, there is little empirical evidence that primaries in fact had this influence.<sup>15</sup>

An alternative mechanism by which direct primaries may have influenced third parties is by allowing major-party politicians to be more responsive to their constituencies' interests. Major-party politicians who win in direct primaries might be more responsive to the demands of constituents who would potentially support a third party, since these politicians are not

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<sup>13</sup>See Ware (2002) and Ansolabehere et al. (forthcoming) for reviews of this literature.

<sup>14</sup>See Rosenstone et al. (1984), Epstein (1986), and Bibby and Maisel (2000). Epstein (1986, 131) writes: "It is arguable, therefore, that the also distinctively American institution, the direct primary, is a cause of the distinctively American weakness of third parties. The reasoning is that third party efforts are discouraged by the opportunity to capture the label of one or the other major party in the primary."

<sup>15</sup>One exception is Crespin (2004), who finds evidence that the introduction of the direct primaries reduced the number of candidates competing in Congressional elections. While the number of candidates and the level of third party electoral support are correlated, the correlation is not large; and we are more concerned with the influence of institutional changes on the overall electoral support for third parties. We were also unable to locate some of the institutional data that are used in the Crespin (2004). In particular, we were not able to find the exact years when states first adopted "sore loser" laws, which prohibit candidates who lose in one party's primary from running in the general election as independents or nominees of other parties.

beholden to party leaders for their nomination.<sup>16</sup> In the future we will test this claim by examining whether candidates in districts with strong left-third party electoral support adopted left-wing policy positions in their roll call votes following the introduction of the direct primary. For now we leave it as an open question.

The second institutional change of interest in this paper is the adoption of the Australian ballot, which is also referred to as the secret ballot.<sup>17</sup> The adoption of the Australian ballot created regulations and restrictions for which parties and candidates would be included on the official state ballot. A common claim in the literature is that these restrictions on ballot access create costly barriers for third party entry. Prior to the Australian ballot, parties would print their own ballots so the only cost for third party entry was the cost of printing ballots.<sup>18</sup> Holt (1999) argues that the lack of the Australian ballot allowed third parties to print their own ballots and draw support away from the Whigs in the pre-Civil War period.<sup>19</sup>

We might expect the effect of electoral laws on third party voting to be larger in the south (Key, 1949; Kousser, 1974). In many southern states third parties, such as the Populists, may have posed an even larger threat to Democratic Party hegemony than the Republicans. Thus, southern state legislatures, dominated by Democrats, may have been more concerned with third parties when enacting electoral laws.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ansolahehere et al (forthcoming) find evidence that party loyalty declined after the introduction of direct primaries.

<sup>17</sup>See Evan (1917) for a review of the history of the Australian ballot in the U.S..

<sup>18</sup>Bibby and Maisel (2003, 70) write: “Even the states’ much-heralded 1890s reform measure – the Australian ballot... – had adverse consequences for minor parties seeking to challenge the major parties. As along as the parties provided ballots, it was possible for new parties to gain access to polling places and voters and thereby challenge the major parties.”

<sup>19</sup>On the other hand, the Australian ballot may have aided third parties by reducing the punishment voters would face for voting for a third party. Prior to the Australian ballot, the major parties could monitor how voters were casting their ballots. Furthermore, the party ballots made it difficult for voters to deviate from voting for a straight party ticket. This was a potential issue for voters who many not have wanted to support the entire third party ticket. With the Australian ballot voters could vote for third party candidates for some offices but not all offices. A number of studies find that split ticket voting increased after the introduction of the Australian ballot (Rusk, 1970; Ansolahehere et al., forthcoming; Harvey, n.d.). We included a measure for whether the ballot contained a straight ticket option and found the coefficient on this variable to be insignificant.

<sup>20</sup>In describing how the Australian ballot was used by the Democratic Party in the South, Kousser (1974, 38-9) writes, “Conservatives appropriated the Populists’ call for fair elections under the Australian ballot system and employed that system to disfranchise many potential converts to the People’s Party....If fraud, racism, and co-optation failed to quash the opposition, there was always disfranchisement. In the eighties and early nineties, Democrats developed a panoply of restrictive measures - registration and multiple-box laws, the poll tax, the Australian ballot, and the educational qualification”

This section provides two sets of analyses. The first analysis examines the correlation between the changes in electoral laws and third party electoral support. The second analysis focuses on whether former third party candidates were more likely to compete in the general elections with major party affiliations after the introduction of the direct primaries.

*Direct Primary, Australian Ballot, and Third Party Votes*

In this first analysis we examine whether changes in third party electoral support is correlated with the introduction of the direct primaries and/or the Australian ballot. The dependent variable of interest is third party votes and the independent variables of interest are whether the election was held under direct primaries and/or the Australian ballot. If the above claims are correct, then we would expect to see states with direct primaries and states with the Australian ballot to have lower third party vote shares. Although the analysis is relatively straightforward, there are several measurement issues to consider.

Since the enactment of mandatory direct primary legislation occurred at the state level, there is variation in when states adopted such legislation. Unfortunately there is also variation across sources as to the exact date that each particular state passed direct primary legislation. The dates for the Congressional direct primaries legislation enactment outside the south are taken from Ansolabehere et al. (forthcoming). This information was cross-checked with multiple sources to account for discrepancies between the date the direct primaries legislation passed and the date direct primaries were implemented. The information on direct primary introduction in the southern and border states is from Link (1946).<sup>21</sup>

The dependent variable is the average third party vote share in the U.S. House and state gubernatorial elections by state.<sup>22</sup> In a few cases the mandatory direct primary legislation did not apply to both offices. In the cases where only one of the two offices had direct primary elections, the direct primary indicator variable is coded as one-half.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The difficulty with determining the date for primaries in the south is that a parties began having primary elections a number of years prior to the actual mandatory direct primary legislation being enacted.

<sup>22</sup>We do not include Presidential and U.S. Senate elections since the dates for when the direct primary was introduced for these offices is not readily available. We include them in a separate analysis and the results do not differ significantly from those we report with only U.S. House and state gubernatorial elections.

<sup>23</sup>In Illinois, U.S. House nominations were made by primary elections from 1910-present; gubernatorial nominations were made by primary elections from 1908-present. In Indiana, U.S. House nominations were made by primary elections from 1915-present; gubernatorial nominations were made by primary elections

As with the direct primary legislation the adoption of the Australian ballot occurred at the state level. Thus, there is cross state variation in the year in which the Australian ballot was adopted. Fortunately, there is more agreement across sources for the date in which states adopted the Australian ballot. Nonetheless there are still two issues concerning our indicator variable for the Australian ballot. First, some states adopted the Australian ballot in certain parts of a state but not the entire state. We coded these states as not having an Australian ballot. Second, the ballot access restrictions associated with the Australian ballot varied across states over time. The information on specific ballot access restrictions is not readily available and consequently is not used in our analysis. We briefly discuss this second point in section 2.3.

Figure 2 plots the average third party vote shares in the House and gubernatorial elections across states twenty years just before and just after the introduction of the direct primary and Australian ballot.<sup>24</sup> This figure illustrates how the average of the third party vote shares actually peaked in the years just following the introduction of both electoral laws. The rise in third party electoral support immediately following the introduction of the direct primaries can be attributed to the success of the Progressive movement in the 1910s, while the third party electoral support following the Australian ballot introduction is due largely to the Populist movement in the 1890s. The pattern in Figure 2 suggests that if the direct primary did have an effect, it was delayed by a number of years.

To control for differences in state preferences and idiosyncratic variations in third party support across years, we exploit the panel structure of the data. We regress the average of third party House and gubernatorial vote in each state on indicators for whether the state enacted a mandatory direct primary law and/or the Australian ballot. We also include state and year fixed effects.<sup>25</sup> The state fixed effects capture the average level of third party

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from 1915-1928 and 1976-present, but were made by conventions from 1929-1975. In Minnesota, U.S. House nominations were made by primary elections from 1902-present; gubernatorial nominations were made by primary elections from 1914-present. In New York, U.S. House nominations were made by primary elections from 1913-present; gubernatorial nominations were made by primary elections from 1913-1920 and 1970-present, but were made by conventions from 1921-1969.

<sup>24</sup>Figures for the change in third party vote shares in southern and non-southern states can be found in the JOP on-line appendix.

<sup>25</sup>We also analyzed the congressional data aggregating the electoral data by district and using district level fixed effects. The substantive results were the same as those aggregating by state and using the state fixed.

support in a given state.<sup>26</sup>

The top of Table 1 presents the least squares regression results for the third party vote shares on the direct primary and the Australian ballot indicator variables. Table 1 presents results for a thirty year window and a fifty year window. The results provide no statistically significant evidence of a correlation between the introduction of direct primaries and the decline in third party electoral support.<sup>27</sup> The coefficients on the Australian ballot indicator variable is also not statistically significant in the regressions separating the southern and non-southern states.

The results for the southern states are sensitive to the specification. The coefficient on the Australian ballot indicator variable is negative and statistically significant in specifications where state specific time trends or decade varying state fixed effects are included. The coefficient is also negative and statistically significant when the regressions are weighted by the number of votes. A drop in third party votes following the introduction of the Australian ballot in the south would be consistent with claims about the motivation for changing electoral institutions in the south.

#### *Direct Primaries and Partisan Affiliations*

To further test the claim that direct primaries allowed the major parties to absorb the candidates who would have competed as third party candidates, we examine changes in partisan affiliations before and after the introduction of the direct primary legislation. If the claims are correct, then we would expect to see a large number of candidates who previously ran with a third party label compete as one of the major party candidates after the enactment of mandatory direct primaries.

For our dependent variable we counted all the candidates who ran in a general election with a third party label but then appeared as a major party candidate. We created an indicator for the first year these candidates appeared with a major party label in a general election. We then aggregated this indicator by state and year and divided by the number of

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<sup>26</sup>We also examined specifications where we included state fixed effect that vary by decade and where we included state specific time trends. The results are substantively similar as those in Table 1 excepted where noted in the main text.

<sup>27</sup>The results are not sensitive to dropping the year in which the laws were enacted.

general election races.

We use a simple linear specification to test whether there was a systematic increase in the number of former third party candidates running as major party candidates after the introduction of direct primaries.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the proportion of races in a particular state with a major party candidate who had previously competed as a third party candidate is regressed on indicator variables for whether the state passed a direct primary law and/or whether the state adopted the Australian Ballot, as measured above. We include state and year fixed effects.<sup>29</sup>

The results presented on the bottom of Table 1 indicate no statistically significant increase in the number of former third party candidates who appear as a major party candidate after the move to direct primaries in the regressions including non-southern states. There is some evidence that former third party candidates were more likely to appear as a major party candidate following the introduction of direct primaries in the south.

#### *Anti-Fusion Laws and Other Ballot Restrictions*

In the above analysis, the indicator variable for whether a state introduced the Australian ballot does not account for potential variation in the stringency of various ballot access laws. The introduction of anti-fusion laws is of special concern in this regard (Disch, 2002).

The introduction of anti-fusion laws is argued to reduce the incentive for mass third party movements (Scarrow, 1986; Disch, 2002). Fusion offers a policy incentive for third parties to form even if there was no possibility for the third party to be elected to office. By offering major party candidates an additional third party nomination, third parties could potentially influence the major parties' policy positions.

We cannot incorporate anti-fusion laws directly into the analysis in Table 1, because the specific date that anti-fusion laws were enacted and enforced is difficult to determine. In particular the anti-fusion laws were often linked to the cross-filing regulations in the direct

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<sup>28</sup>The results are robust to whether the regressions are weighted by the number of races, the addition of decade varying fixed effects, the addition of state specific time trends, and the dropping of the year in which the electoral institutions were introduced.

<sup>29</sup>The results are substantively same if we weight the regression by the number of electoral races. Also the results are robust to whether we include a state specific time trend or allow the state fixed effects to vary by decade.

primary laws which are not readily documented.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars such as Scarrow (1986) note that evidence that the anti-fusion laws had an affect on third party voting is mixed. Scarrow (1986, 644) writes: “First, laws relating to fusion candidacies provide neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a particular type of party system to emerge or to be maintained. A minor party may thrive despite an anti-fusion law (e.g. Minnesota’s Farmer-Labor party); and the absence of such a law, even when combined with a party-column type ballot, does not necessarily result in minor parties taking root (e.g., Connecticut and Vermont today).” Further work needs to be done on anti-fusion and other ballot access restrictions.<sup>31</sup>

## Democratic Party Co-optation of the Left

In this section we provide evidence that the Democratic Party moved and stayed to the left during the New Deal and that this affected the movement of third party electoral support. We first discuss three pieces of evidence that illustrate the magnitude of the Democratic Party’s shift to the left during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration. We then provide evidence using electoral data that the areas that supported left third parties in the pre-New Deal period are also the areas that supported the Democrats after the New Deal.<sup>32</sup>

### *Evidence the Democratic Party Moved to the Left*

Prior to the New Deal, neither the Democratic nor the Republican Parties were perceived as having fully endorsed the left-wing and/or progressive agendas.<sup>33</sup> During this period, both

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<sup>30</sup>See Harris and Uhr (1941) for a discussion of how primary laws were used to limit fusion.

<sup>31</sup>We conducted an analysis analogous to that in Table 1 for a shorter period – 1880 to 1910 – using information from Ludington (1916) and Argersinger (1980) to construct a dummy variable measuring the presence of state anti-fusion laws. We found no statistically significant correlation between anti-fusion laws and third party vote-shares.

<sup>32</sup>Ideally we would like to provide a formal model accounting for the Democratic Party’s strategy. Such a model would need to yield an initial equilibrium with the following features: (i) two major parties compete and are fairly evenly matched; (ii) at least one minor party exists to the left of the major parties, winning some votes but few offices in a first-past-the-post system; and (iii) a large number of voters “waste” their votes on the minor party or parties. In addition, the model would have to yield a comparative statics prediction that one of the major parties’ platforms shifts to the left. To our knowledge, no existing model does all of these things. Rather, the existing models demonstrate how difficult it is to even do some of them. See, for example, Palfrey (1984), Cox (1990), Feddersen et. al. (1990), Osborne (1990), Shepsle (1991), Weber (1992), Myerson and Weber (1993), Besley and Coate (1997).

<sup>33</sup>Hicks (1933, p. 25) writes, “The La Follette candidacy of 1924 thus rested upon a solid foundation of labor and farmer preparation that had been in process for several years. It received the enthusiastic support

major parties had intra-party conflict between their progressive and conservative factions. For the Republicans this division was most evident in the revolt against Speaker of the House of Representatives, Joe Cannon (Holt, 1967). For the Democrats the intra-party division was evident in the battle over William Jennings Bryan’s presidential nomination in 1896 (Hicks, 1961) and continued for the entire pre-New Deal period.<sup>34</sup>

The first piece of evidence that the Democratic Party moved to the left during the New Deal is the adoption of progressive and left-wing legislation. A common claim in the American history literature is that the New Deal legislation is directly related to the legislation sought by the left-wing third parties.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which the New Deal agenda contained legislation favored by the left can be seen in Table 2, which lists the major reforms passed during the first few years of the Roosevelt administration.<sup>36</sup> The Democratic Party platform remained to the left through the end of the 20th century.

The second piece of evidence that the Democratic Party moved to the left during the New Deal is the dramatic increase in labor union contributions to the Democratic Party following FDR’s election.<sup>37</sup> Prior to the New Deal both parties received most of their finan-

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of a group of liberal intellectuals, led by the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, who saw no hope for reform through either the Democratic or the Republican party.”

<sup>34</sup>See Burner (1968). Sarasohn (1989) notes that by 1904 the Democrats dropped Bryan for Alton Parker, a conservative presidential candidate. Kolko (1963, 277) writes, “The Democratic platform in 1916 was eminently conservative on the issue of ‘economic freedom.’ The reforms required to eliminate economic discrimination had been effected, and, for the future, the party pledged itself to ‘remove, as far as possible, every remaining element of unrest and uncertainty from the path of the businessmen of America, and secure for them a continued period of quiet, assured and confident prosperity.’”

<sup>35</sup>Although there is some debate over the degree to which the New Deal reflected specific policies espoused by the Progressive Party, the conventional wisdom is that the Democrat’s New Deal agenda was closely linked to the progressive movement – see, e.g., the review essay in Graham (1967). Commager (1950, 337), as quoted in Graham (1967, 220), writes, “After the lapse of a decade and a half, Franklin D. Roosevelt took up once more the program of the Populists and Progressives and carried it to its logical conclusion.” The New Deal Democrats not only co-opted the progressive agenda, but the party is also perceived to have co-opted the Socialist and Communist party programs as well. Nash (1959, 288) writes, “There is no need to emphasize how many of these [the Socialist Party’s] demands were implemented by the victorious Democratic Party.” Hofstadter (1955, 300) writes, “In the years 1933-8 the New Deal sponsored a series of legislative changes that made the enactments of the Progressive era seem timid by comparison, changes that, in their totality, carried the politics and administration of the United States farther from the conditions of 1914 than those had been from the conditions of 1880.”

<sup>36</sup>Specific New Deal legislation is closely related to demands in Left party platforms. For example the Socialist Party in 1916 included sections on the minimum wage, demand for public goods, rights for unions, and pensions. Similarly the Progressive Party platform in 1924 included sections on rights of unions and child labor regulation.

<sup>37</sup>It is possible that the increase in labor union contributions reflects a rightward shift of the Republican Party rather than a leftward shift in the Democratic Party. However, there is little additional evidence of

cial support from the banking and manufacturing industries.<sup>38</sup> During this pre-New Deal period, the largest unions had a non-partisan policy that rewarded politicians who supported labor regardless of partisan affiliation. Much of the money from this early period went to left-oriented third party organizations, such as the Socialists, Farmer-Labor Party and La Follette's National Progressive Committee (Overacker 1939, 139). Although the Democratic National Committee did receive some money in 1928 from unions, such as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the amounts did not approach the level of contributions the party received after 1932. By 1936 the Democratic Party was receiving the bulk of labor's contributions. Of the three quarters of a million dollars spent by organized labor (not including money spent at the local level) "all of the funds aided the candidate of the Democratic party and that a substantial part of them went to the national committee of that party" (Overacker 1939, p59). In the election years following 1936 the labor campaign contributions to the Democratic Party continued to grow which provides further evidence that the Democratic Party remained the party of the left.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time the Democrats were gaining campaign contributions from labor organizations they were also losing contributions from the business sector. According to Overacker (1939) the share of the Democratic Party's donations over \$1,000 that came from bankers and brokers dropped from 24% in 1932 to 4% in 1936.

The third piece of evidence that the Democratic Party moved to the left is the relative increase in the proportion of left third party candidates changing their partisan affiliations to the Democratic Party after the New Deal. If the Democratic Party moved to the left we would expect to observe an increase in the proportion of left third party party candidates who switch to Democratic Party in the period after the FDR was elected. To test this claim we collected data on the names and partisan affiliations of candidates in general elections

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such a significant change in the Republican Party platform.

<sup>38</sup>Overacker (1937, 473) writes, "In 1928, both major parties depended largely upon bankers and manufacturers for their contributions, although the Republicans received a larger proportion of their funds from manufacturers than did their rivals."

<sup>39</sup>Labor campaign contributions from the American Federation of Labor were \$8,057 in 1906, \$3,488 in 1910, \$53,934 in 1920, \$4,928 in 1922, and \$24,013 in 1924 (Overacker 1939). Labor campaign contributions were \$770,218 in 1936, \$206,132 in 1940, \$1,510,768 in 1944, \$1,291,343 in 1948, \$2,070,350 in 1952, \$1,805,482 in 1956, and \$2,450,944 in 1960 (Overacker 1939; 1941; 1945), *Congressional Quarterly* (1949, 1961)). In the period after 1932 almost all of this money was being directed to the Democratic Party.

to Congress and statewide offices between 1880 and 1960. We also used information about candidate participation in partisan primaries during this same period. We checked the full names of candidates using various almanacs, blue books and newspapers, to be sure that we accurately track the partisan affiliations of the same candidates over time.

The pattern of candidate affiliation follows our prediction that left third party candidates would move to the Democratic Party if the Party did in fact move to the left. Table 3 presents all the movements in partisan affiliations that took place between 1890 and 1962. Of candidates who had a left third party affiliation and switched to a major party, more of these candidates appeared as Republicans than as Democrats between 1890 to 1928 (55 appeared as a Democrat while 97 appeared as a Republican). In contrast, of candidates who had a left third party affiliation and switched to a major party, more re-appeared as Democrats than as Republicans between 1934 to 1962 (41 appeared as Democrats while only 19 appeared as Republicans).

A similar pattern of movement to the major parties does not appear with the non-left or independent third party candidates. The candidates from these other parties do not appear to start affiliating with the Democratic Party in significantly greater proportions in the 1934 to 1962 period as compared to the 1890 to 1928 period. The non-left third party candidates affiliated more with the Democratic Party than the Republican Party in the pre New Deal period and then more with the Republican Party than the Democratic Party in post New Deal period.

#### *Democratic and Left Third Party Vote Pre and Post-New Deal*

Although this clear shift to the left in the Democratic Party has been noted in the literature, to our knowledge there are no studies that systematically examined the connection between the Democratic Party's move to the left and the decline in support for left-wing third parties. Previous research on the increase in Democratic Party support following the New Deal focus on whether the change in voting patterns was a result of partisan conversion or voter mobilization.<sup>40</sup> A few authors do make the claim that the Democratic Party absorbed the supporters of the Progressive Party (Sundquist 1983; Reynolds 1997). For example

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<sup>40</sup>See Gamm (1996), Andersen (1979), Burnham (1970), Key (1959) for reviews of this debate.

Sundquist (1983, 225-226) writes:

...it is clear that the reborn Democratic Party could not have grown as it did in the post-war years if the rank and file Progressive voters had not shifted their allegiance predominantly to that party ... If the new Democratic party did not pick up all the Progressive strength in the rural areas, it surely absorbed almost the whole body of Progressives (and the new voters who were their philosophical descendents) in the metropolitan areas.

However, these claims are not substantiated with solid empirical evidence.

One exception is Epstein's (1958) study of Wisconsin politics. Using county-level data he finds a moderate correlation between the Progressive Party's vote share during the period 1934-1946 and the Democratic Party's vote share during 1948-1956. The fact that this correlation in Wisconsin is not very strong may not be too surprising since the Wisconsin Republican Party had a strong progressive faction. Epstein also finds some evidence that the younger progressives politicians in the urban areas were likely to join the Democrats while the older progressives politicians in the rural areas were likely to join the Republican Party. The period examined in this study is slightly after the period we are interested in and does not address the issue of whether the co-optation of progressive policies during the New Deal facilitated the correlation between the left-third party and the Democratic Party electoral support.

To test whether the Democratic Party did in fact attract electoral support in areas that traditionally favored left-wing third parties, we conduct an analysis similar to Epstein's. We study the entire United States, however, rather than just one state. We also study a much longer time period – 1888 to 1960 – which allows us to test a variety of alternative hypotheses. We examine whether there is a correlation in the county level electoral support for left third parties in the pre-New Deal period (pre-1930) with the electoral support for the Democratic Party in the New Deal and post-New Deal period (post-1933). If the decline in third party support is due to the Democratic Party's co-optation of the left then we would expect this correlation to be both substantively and statistically significant.

The first analysis tests the claim that Democratic Party’s move to the left absorbed the electoral support of the left third parties. We classified all the third parties in this period as having either left or non-left orientation. The left third party electoral support is then measured by aggregating the votes for these left third parties across three offices, President, Governor, and Senator, and then dividing this by the total vote for all candidates across the three offices.<sup>41</sup>

To estimate the correlation between the left and non-left third party vote shares prior to the New Deal and the major parties’ vote shares during and after the New Deal, we estimate the following linear model:

$$V_{ijkt} = \alpha_{ik} + \alpha_{i1}D_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i2}R_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i3}L_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i4}NL_{jk,t-1} + \epsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where  $j$  indexes counties,  $k$  indexes states, and  $t$  indexes periods. The term  $V_{it}$  stands for the average vote share for party  $i$  in the period following the start of the New Deal.  $D_{t-1}$ ,  $R_{t-1}$ ,  $L_{t-1}$ , and  $NL_{t-1}$  are the average Democratic, Republican, Left Third Party, and Non-Left Third Party vote shares in the pre-New Deal period, respectively. If the claim is true then we would expect  $\alpha_{i3}$  to be positive and significant when  $V_{it}$  is the post-New Deal average Democratic vote share.

We run this regression for a short period 1910 to 1949 and a longer period from 1900 to 1960. Table 4 presents the results – we only present the estimates for the coefficients on previous Left and Non-Left Party average votes, since these are the coefficients of interest.<sup>42</sup> We also only report the differences between  $\alpha_{D1}$  and  $\alpha_{D3}$ ,  $\alpha_{D1}$  and  $\alpha_{D4}$ ,  $\alpha_{D3}$  and  $\alpha_{R,3}$ , and  $\alpha_{D,4}$  and  $\alpha_{R,4}$ .<sup>43</sup> If the Democratic Party attracted left third party votes we would expect the difference between  $\alpha_{D1}$  and  $\alpha_{D3}$  to be small. We would also expect the remaining three differences we report in Table 4 to be large since the Democratic Party would not necessarily

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<sup>41</sup>We also did an analysis with votes for Governor, Senator, and U.S. House. The results are substantively the same for the non-south and south. However the difference between these two regions is even more pronounced which is what we would expect if the electoral laws in the south were effective in excluding third parties candidates and voters from the general election. We only include races where there is a Democrat, Republican and Left Party candidate.

<sup>42</sup>The full results are available in the JOP on-line appendix.

<sup>43</sup>Since we include state fixed effect and all the vote shares of all four types of parties, the actual magnitudes of  $\alpha_{i1}$  to  $\alpha_{i4}$  will depend upon which state fixed effect is excluded. In the on-line appendix we report  $\alpha_{i1}$  to  $\alpha_{i4}$  dropping particular state fixed effects.

attract votes from the areas that support non-left third parties and the Republican Party should not attract votes from areas that support left third parties but may attract votes from areas that support non-left third parties.

In both the long and short periods the difference between the coefficients on previous Democratic and left third party average vote shares in the pre-New Deal period is relatively small and statistically insignificant. In contrast the difference between the coefficients on previous non-left third party and Democratic vote shares is negative and statistically significant. Furthermore, the coefficient on previous left third party vote share is significantly smaller when Republican vote, as opposed to Democratic vote, is the dependent variable. Similarly the coefficient on previous non-left third party vote share is significantly larger when Republican vote, as opposed to Democratic vote, is the dependent variable. These results are all consistent with the claim that the Democratic Party's move to the left during the New Deal attracted voters who traditionally supported Left third parties.

#### *Democratic and Left Third Party Vote in the Non-South vs. the South*

We suspect that the south was different for at least two reasons. First, the analysis above and historical literature suggests that electoral laws likely had more influence on third party voting in southern versus non-southern states. Second, as scholars have noted, the Democratic Party in the south did not support all of the New Deal policies. In particular, southern democrats remained relatively hostile to labor unions (Katznelson, Geiger and Kryder 1993). Thus, we expect a lower correlation between pre-New Deal Left third party voting and post-New Deal Democratic Party voting in the south as compared to the non-south.

The results in Table 4 are consistent with the claim that Democratic Party was not perceived as moving as far to the left in the south as compared to the non-south. In the non-south the difference between the coefficient on pre-New Deal left third party vote is small and statistically insignificant when post-New Deal Democratic vote is the dependent variable. However, in the south this difference is large and statistically significant. Only the results for the non-south are consistent with what we would expect if the Democratic Party was perceived to have moved to the left during the New Deal.

### *Democratic and Left Third Party Vote Pre-New Deal*

In order to further identify whether above results can be attributed to the leftward movement of the Democratic Party during New Deal or some other factor, we examined whether the left and/or the non-left third party vote in the period 1910 to 1929 is correlated with the average major parties vote shares during the 1932 election. Focusing on the 1932 election allows us to separate the effect of the Democratic Party's leftward shift from the general rise in support for the Democratic Party and Roosevelt's personality. Although Roosevelt was viewed as a left leaning candidate in the 1932 election, it was not until the 1936 election that he and the Democratic Party were viewed as clear advocates of left-wing economic policies (Kennedy 1999).

If the claim that the Democratic Party co-opted the left third parties' policy position during the New Deal is true then we would expect the coefficient on pre-New Deal left third party vote,  $\alpha_{D3}$  to be substantially smaller than the coefficient on pre-New Deal Democratic Party vote,  $\alpha_{D1}$ . As the results in Table 4 indicates,  $\alpha_{D3}$  is substantially smaller than  $\alpha_{D1}$  when the Democratic vote in 1932 is the dependent variable, which differs from the results when the average Democratic vote in the post-New Deal period is the dependent variable.

### *Comparing Roosevelt to Wilson and Bryan*

Prior to the New Deal, the Democratic Party was commonly perceived to be divided between its stalwart and progressive factions. However, the Party made some visible overtures to the left third parties demands even before FDR. In particular, the Democratic Party attempted to co-opt the Populist position in 1896 with the nomination of the populist presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. The Democratic Party also made a move to the left in 1912 with the nomination of Woodrow Wilson, who was also perceived to be a progressive candidate. The question we address in this section is how unique was FDR relative to Bryan and Wilson in attracting voters in areas that traditionally supported left third parties.

The results in Tables 4 illustrate that the relationship between the Democratic vote and the left third party vote differed between Bryan, Wilson and FDR. For each Democratic candidate we examined the correlation between the average left third party vote in elections

eight years prior to the candidate’s presidential nomination and the average Democratic vote in the elections eight years following the nomination. The results in Table 4 for the regressions with the Democratic vote as the dependent variable show that the coefficient on the previous left third party vote in the Pre-Post New Deal regression is substantially larger relative to the coefficient on previous Democratic vote than the coefficient on the previous left third party vote in the Pre-Post Bryan or Pre-Post Wilson regressions.

These results are consistent with the claim that the New Deal was perceived to be a significant departure from previous attempts by the Democratic Party to adopt left-wing party platforms.

### Alternative Claims

The literature on U.S. third parties is filled with various arguments for why the U.S. has a stable two party system. This section briefly reviews some of the most common alternative claims about why U.S. voters may or may not support third parties. The review provides some justification for why we focus on electoral law and co-optation explanations of the decline in third party electoral support.

The most common claim for why the U.S. does not have a viable third party is that institutional arrangements, such as the single member district, the electoral college, and the presidential system, do not provide incentives for voters to support third parties or for high quality candidates to join third parties. Rosenstone et al. (1984, 18) write, “The single-member-district plurality system not only explains two-party dominance, it also ensures short lives for third parties that do appear.” Both game theoretic models and cross-national empirical evidence support the claim that simple plurality rule reduces the number of competing political parties.<sup>44</sup> The logic is that a strategic voter will not want to waste her vote on a third party candidate who will not win. Voting for a third party candidate who is sure to lose increases the risk that a voter’s least preferred major party candidate may be elected.

While these institutions are likely to contribute to the failure of third parties to consistently attract votes, they are unlikely to explain the variation in third party electoral support across time since they have remained stable throughout the period illustrated in Figure 1.

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<sup>44</sup>See, e.g., Duverger (1954), Riker (1982), Feddersen (1992), and Cox (1997).

Another claim in the literature is that third party electoral success is linked to the state of the economy (Stedman and Stedman, 1950).<sup>45</sup> However, the evidence for a connection between short-term economic fluctuations and third party electoral support is mixed at best. Although many third party movements have been most successful during periods of economic depression, the lack of a significant third party vote during the Great Depression and the success of third party candidates during periods of economic prosperity (e.g. the Progressives during the period 1900 to 1916) raises doubts about the connection between the economy and third party electoral support.<sup>46</sup> The evidence seems more consistent with the conclusion in Herring (1965) that “third parties are bred in prosperity as well as depression.”<sup>47</sup>

A third claim in the literature is that the lack of resources and media exposure available to a third party relative the major parties limits the ability of third party candidates to compete effectively. If this were true then we would expect to observe a rise in campaign expenditures around 1930. Ansolabehere, et al. (2003) illustrates that the trend in campaign spending relative to national income is moving in the opposite direction than we would expect if the campaign resources were in fact causing the pattern of third party decline.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, some historians have noted that the resource difference between the third party candidates and the two major parties was a significant problem even in the nineteenth century when third parties were relatively more successful at attracting electoral support than in recent years.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore during the height of declining third party electoral support, 1934 to 1959, third party candidates’ media exposure was protected by government under the Communication Act of 1934 which made it mandatory for the media to provide equal access to third party candidates. Thus, it seems unlikely that the resource and media explanation alone can explain the decline in the third party electoral support.

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<sup>45</sup>Mazmanian (1974, 137) writes, “A single factor, the depression stage of the economic cycle, has often been described as the crucial cause of third parties, with the groups affected first and most acutely - the less prosperous yet politically sensitive farmers and industrial workers - flocking to the protest banner.”

<sup>46</sup>Nash (1958, 288) writes, “Contrary to what many left wingers expected the Great Depression following the stock market crash of 1929 did not strengthen the radical parties.”

<sup>47</sup>Herring (1965, 182), as cited in Rosenstone et al. (1984, 138).

<sup>48</sup>Even if we examine campaign spending in real dollars and not relative to national income – Figure 1A in Ansolabehere et al. (2003) – we see that the major growth in campaign spending occurred some years after the decline in third party electoral support.

<sup>49</sup>See Morgan(1971, p. 1728) and Sewell (1976, 75,167) as cited in Rosenstone et al. (1984, 27).

A more recent claim in the literature is that the pattern of declining third party electoral support has occurred because elections have become more candidate-focused. Gillespie (1993) and Rosenstone et al. (1984), which focus on third party presidential candidates, argue that these mass third party movements were supplanted by individual third party campaigns. In addition, we know that the ratio of independents to third party candidates has increased during the 20th century. If the rise of candidate centered politics contributed to the decline of third party support then we would expect to see an increase in non-left third party support as the left third party support declined. However, as Figure 1 illustrates, the electoral support for non-left third party candidates did not replace the loss of electoral support by the left-wing third parties.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, Chhibber and Kollman (1998) argue that the true effect of the New Deal on third parties was through centralization and not co-optation. While the patterns we identify are consistent with their argument and centralization clearly had significant influence on the political landscape, we are skeptical that centralization alone could explain the disappearance of third parties. Chhibber and Kollman claim that the centralization of economic and political power at the national level reduced the incentives for candidates and voters to affiliate with third parties since these parties tended to focus on local issues with little power to influence national policy.<sup>51</sup> The idea that third parties voters did not have “national policy preferences” prior to the New Deal is sharply at odds with the historical literature. The left third parties prior to 1930, which account for most of the electoral support for third parties during the early period, had platforms that focused on national policies, such as expansionary monetary policy and government ownership of various industries.

## Conclusion

Figure 1 above shows a clear decline in third party voting over the second half of the twentieth century. The first contribution of this paper has been to provide empirical evidence to show that most of this decline is due to changes in electoral support for third parties on the left.

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<sup>50</sup>Excluding the presidential electoral results from Figure 1 makes the decline in third party electoral support in the second half of the twentieth century even more pronounced.

<sup>51</sup>Chhibber and Kollman 1998, 336) write, “We would expect to see two parties at the national level only when voters have national policy preferences and when candidates who represent voters with similar preferences across districts see the obvious advantages of affiliating with other candidates.”

The second and main contribution of this paper is to provide evidence that much of the decline in third party voting in the United States was due to leftward shift in Democratic Party following the New Deal. Previous scholars have discussed the ability of major parties to attract third party support by co-opting particular third party policy positions. However, this is the first paper to argue and provide quantitative evidence that the overall decline in third party electoral support in late twentieth century was facilitated by the Democratic Party's adoption of a left-wing position during and following the New Deal.

One potential extension of this paper is to take advantage of the variation in when state Democratic parties adopted left-wing agendas in their state party platforms. If this variation exists and voters weighted their state party platforms in their decisions then this would allow us to further identify the effect of Democratic co-optation of the left. The disappearance of third parties should be correlated with the leftward movement of state Democratic platforms.

Although we highlight the role of the Democratic Party's adoption of the New Deal agenda for explaining the decline in third party electoral support, other factors most likely also had an impact and there is still much work to be done to understand the pattern in Figure 1.

As noted above, although we find no evidence that changes in electoral laws had an immediate affect on third party electoral support outside the south, the affect of these changes may have manifested several years later. For example, the introduction of the direct primary may have helped the Democratic Party move to the left by electing candidates not connected to the Democratic Party machine. The adoption of the Australian ballot made it possible for states to impose tougher restrictions on ballot access later on. Thus, the institutional changes may have had a lagged effect not necessarily captured in the estimation technique used in this paper.

The results also suggest that the changes in electoral laws may have had a more significant effect in the south. This result matches the historical accounts regarding the concern in the south that a third party would split the white vote. This concern was heightened following the success of the Populist Party, which occurred around the same time the southern states adopted the Australian ballot. We are currently doing further research on this topic.

There is also the question of why one of the major parties never fully co-opted the left-wing position prior to the New Deal. This is another open research question beyond the scope of this paper.

Nonetheless, the adoption of a number of left-wing policies by Democratic Party during the New Deal appears to have contributed to the decline in third party electoral support. In the absence of other factors that may continue to depress third party electoral support today, we might expect that third party electoral support could once again rise in prominence should the Democratic and Republican Parties once again fail to meet the policy demands of the political extremes.

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<b>Table 1: Electoral Laws and Third Party Activity</b>						
Third Party Electoral Support Dep. Var. = Third Party House and Gubernatorial Votes						
	1880 to 1930			1890 to 1920		
	All	Non South	South	All	Non South	South
Direct Primary	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)
Australian Ballot	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)
Third Party Affiliation with Major Parties Dep. Var. = Former Left Candidate Affiliating w/ Major Party						
	1880 to 1930			1890 to 1920		
	All	Non South	South	All	Non South	South
Direct Primary	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Australian Ballot	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)
Obs	1294	1009	285	815	641	174

Standard errors clustering by state are in presented in the parentheses. \* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level.

**Table 2: Legislation Passed During New Deal**

Legislation	Created	Brief Description
Agricultural Adjustment Act	1933	Paid farmers for not planting crops to reduce agricultural surplus.
Civilian Conservation Corps Act	1933	Employed 2.5 million young men to work on federal lands.
Civil Works Administration	1933	Employed 4 million people in construction related jobs
Fair Labor Standards Act	1938	Set minimum wage and maximum hours standard and child labor regulations.
Farm Security Administration	1937	Set up temporary housing for those migrating to California
Farm Deposit Insurance Corp	1933	Insured depositors against bank failure
Federal Emergency Relief Admin	1933	Employed workers to provide vaccinations and literacy classes
Federal Housing Administration	1934	Provided small loans for home construction
Indian Reorganization Act	1934	Prevent loss of Indian land and promote Native American culture
National Labor Relations Act	1933	Protected the rights of organized labor
National Recovery Administration	1933	Promoted economic recovery by ending wage and price discrimination
National Youth Administration	1935	Created jobs for young people
Public Works Administration	1933	Money for construction projects
Rural Electrification Administration	1935	Gave low-cost loans to farm cooperatives to bring power to their communities
Securities and Exchange Commission	1934	“Watchdog” to protect investors from fraud
Social Security Administration	1935	National pension fund, unemployment insurance aid to mothers, children and disabled
Tennessee Valley Authority	1933	Developed the Tennessee River watershed
Works Progress Administration	1935	Employed people to build public construction projects and hired various artists

source: <http://www.vw.cc.va.us/vwhansd/HIS122/NewDeal.html>

**Table 3: Major Party Affiliation as Function of  
Prior Third Party Affiliation, for Party Switchers**

	Period	Third Party Affiliation	Democrat Affiliation	Republican Affiliation	Number of Candidates
Pre New Deal	1890-1928	Left	55	97	2956
Post New Deal	1934-1962	Left	41	19	1258
Pre New Deal	1890-1928	Non-Left	17	14	1200
Post New Deal	1934-1962	Non-Left	3	8	476
Pre New Deal	1890-1928	Independent	10	15	64
Post New Deal	1934-1962	Independent	31	27	128

We count as a party switch cases where a candidate ran as a minor party candidate in year  $s$ , and then ran again as a major party candidate in some year  $t$  (and did not run for any federal or statewide office between  $s$  and  $t$ ), where  $t \leq s + 10$ . For the 1890-1928 period,  $t$  must be between 1890 and 1928. For the 1934-1962 period,  $t$  must be between 1934 and 1962.

We do not count as a party-switch the following cases of one-time, temporary, change: (i) a candidate ran at least twice in a row as a Democrat (Republican) or for the Democratic (Republican) nomination, then ran once as an independent or under a minor party label, then ran immediately again at least two times in row as a Democrat (Republican) or for the Democratic (Republican) nomination; (ii) a candidate ran as a Democrat (Republican) or for the Democratic (Republican) nomination, then lost the Democratic (Republican) primary and ran instead as an independent or under a minor party label in the same year, then ran again immediately as as a Democrat (Republican) or for the Democratic (Republican) nomination.

**Table 4: Major Party Vote-Share as Function of  
Prior Third Party Vote-Share, County-Level Analysis**

	Pre Period	Post Period	Third Party	Democrat	Republican	Obs
All States						
Pre-Post New Deal	1900-1929	1934-1960	Left	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.90*(0.25)	3023
			Other	-0.90*(0.31)	0.64 (0.63)	
	1910-1929	1934-1949	Left	-0.22 (0.13)	-0.73*(0.24)	3023
			Other	-0.92*(0.14)	0.64*(0.27)	
Pre-New Deal	1910-1929	1932	Left	-0.44*(0.19)	-0.52 (0.34)	2615
			Other	0.38 (0.59)	-2.01 (1.05)	
Pre-Post Bryan	1888-1895	1898-1905	Left	-0.48*(0.05)	0.05 (0.09)	2427
			Other	-0.38*(0.11)	-0.00 (0.11)	
Pre-Post Wilson	1904-1911	1914-1921	Left	-0.44*(0.05)	-0.33*(0.11)	2825
			Other	-0.57*(0.09)	-0.04 (0.12)	
Pre-Post FDR	1924-1931	1934-1941	Left	-0.18 (0.09)	-1.16*(0.18)	2728
			Other	-1.24*(0.48)	1.14 (0.83)	
Non-Southern vs. Southern States						
Pre-Post New Deal Non-South	1900-1929	1934-1949	Left	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.94*(0.16)	1988
			Other	-1.13*(0.29)	1.34*(0.58)	
Pre-Post New Deal South	1910-1929	1934-1949	Left	-0.39*(0.19)	-0.23 (0.32)	1035
			Other	-0.70*(0.05)	0.28*(0.11)	

The coefficients presented in the Democrat column are the differences between the coefficient on previous third party vote minus the coefficient previous Democratic Vote. The coefficients in the Republican column are the differences between the coefficient on previous third party vote when Republican is the dependent variable minus the coefficient on previous third party vote when Democrat is the dependent variable. Standard errors clustering by state are in presented in the parentheses. \* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level.

Figure 1. Third Party Vote Shares for Governor, Senator, House, and Statewide Offices Between 1870 and 2000 Aggregated by Decade

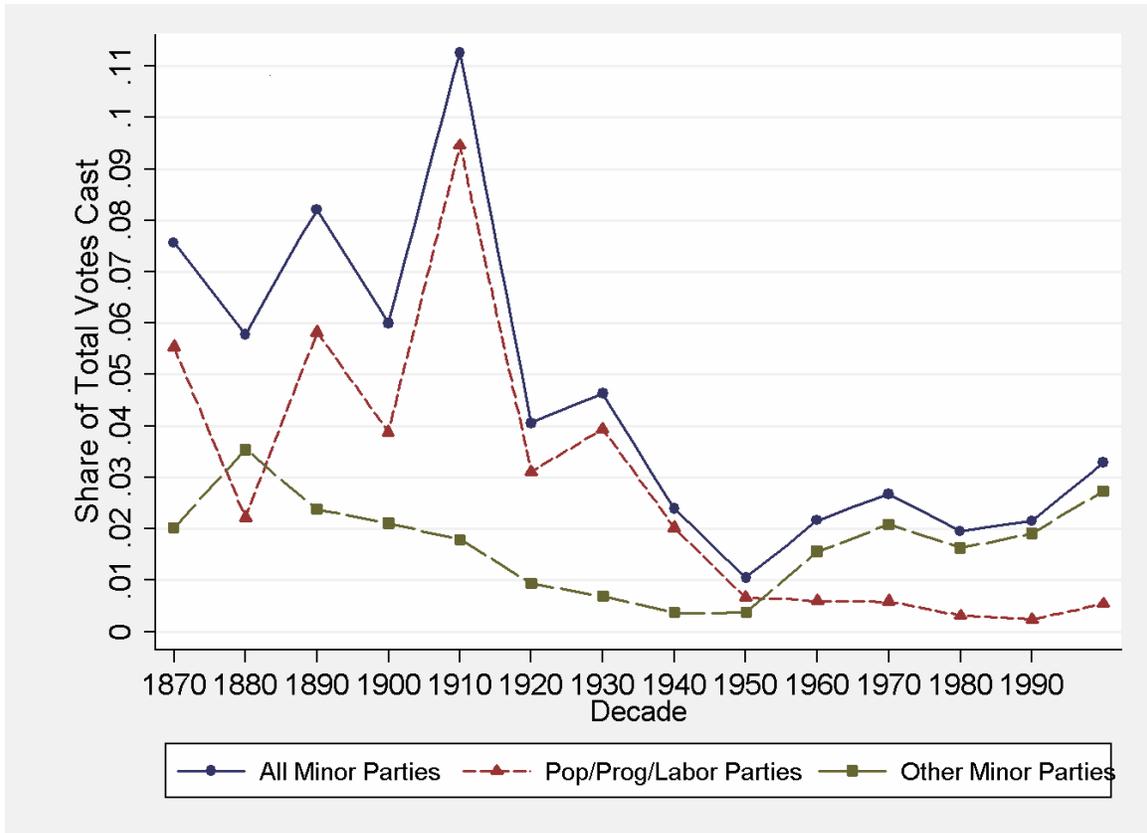
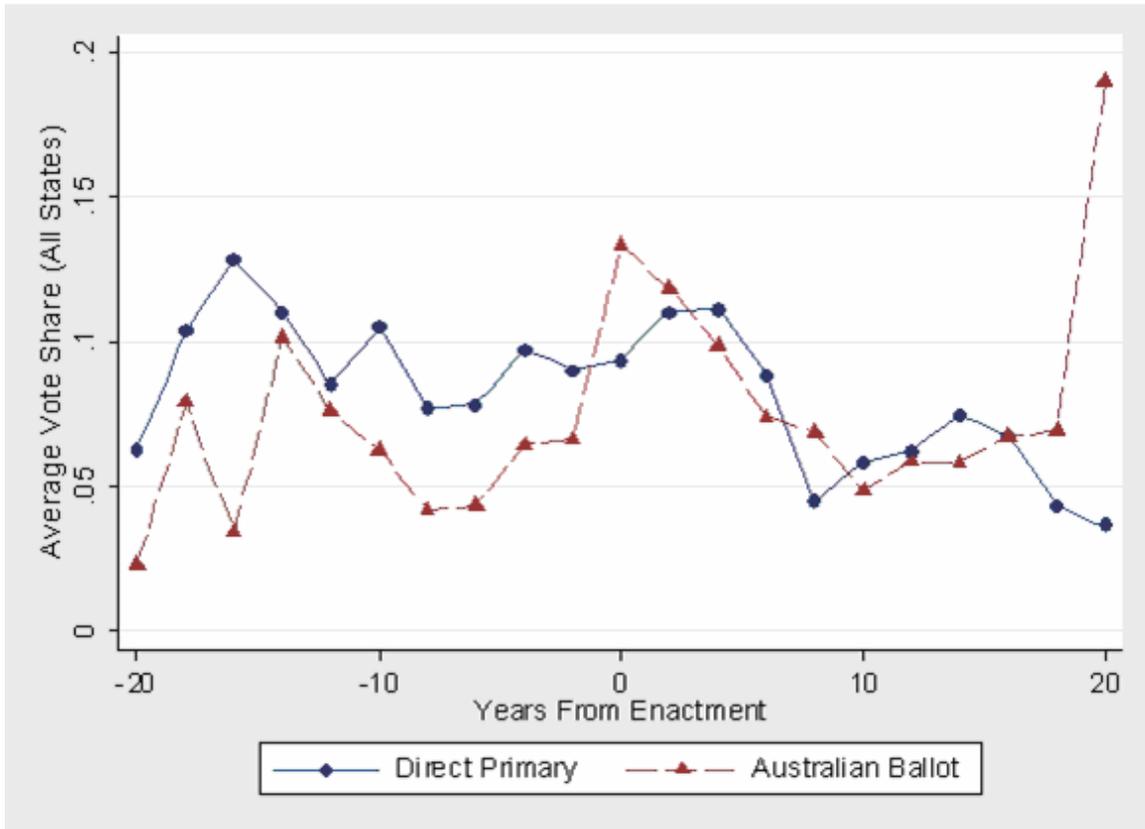


Figure 2. Third Party Vote Shares in House and Gubernatorial Elections 20 Years Pre- and 20 Years Post- the Introduction of the Direct Primary and the Australian Ballot



This figure shows the average states' third party vote shares in the years prior and post the introduction of direct primaries and the Australian ballot. The odd year election vote shares were aggregated with the on-election year vote shares.

ON-LINE APPENDIX

Table 1A.1: FULL ESTIMATES FOR TABLE 4				
	Democratic Party Vote	Republican Party Vote	Left Third Party Vote	Other Third Party Vote
Pre-Post New Deal (Dep Var = Votes 1934 to 1960)				
	non-weighted		vote weighted	
	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
Democratic Party Vote (1900-29)	1.04** (0.02)	-0.06** (0.02)	0.96** (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)
Republican Party Vote (1900-29)	0.32** (0.05)	0.72** (0.05)	0.49** (0.08)	0.61** (0.10)
Liberal Third Party Vote (1900-29)	0.90** (0.05)	0.00 (0.13)	1.24** (0.11)	-0.50* (0.25)
Other Third Party Vote (1900-29)	0.15 (0.31)	0.79 (0.33)	-1.27 (0.69)	2.87** (0.65)
Obs	3023			
	non-south		south	
	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
Democratic Party Vote (1900-29)	0.88** (0.05)	0.10 (0.06)	1.02** (0.03)	-0.05 (0.02)
Republican Party Vote (1900-29)	0.10** (0.04)	0.91** (0.04)	0.42** (0.06)	0.64** (0.05)
Liberal Third Party Vote (1900-29)	0.98** (0.08)	-0.17 (0.09)	0.61** (0.17)	0.33 (0.18)
Other Third Party Vote (1900-29)	-0.28 (0.30)	1.25** (0.32)	0.61* (0.23)	0.31 (0.27)
Obs	1988		1035	

This table presents the coefficients  $\alpha_{i1}$ ,  $\alpha_{i2}$ ,  $\alpha_{i3}$ , and  $\alpha_{i4}$  from the regression  $V_{ijkt} = \alpha_{ik} + \alpha_{i1}D_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i2}R_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i3}L_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i4}NL_{jk,t-1} + \epsilon_{ijk}$  which is described in the main text. Since state fixed effects are also included in the regression, the magnitude of the coefficients depend upon which state fixed effect is excluded for identification purposes. Standard errors are in parentheses. \* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level. \*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level.

ON-LINE APPENDIX

Table 1A.2: FULL ESTIMATES FOR TABLE 4				
	Democratic Party Vote	Republican Party Vote	Left Third Party Vote	Other Third Party Vote
Pre-Post New Deal (Dep Var = Votes 1934 to 1949)				
	non-weighted		vote weighted	
	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
Democratic Party Vote (1910-29)	1.05** (0.01)	-0.07** (0.01)	1.00** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Republican Party Vote (1910-29)	0.28** (0.04)	0.76** (0.04)	0.41** (0.06)	0.71** (0.08)
Liberal Third Party Vote (1910-29)	0.83** (0.12)	0.11 (0.13)	1.00** (0.09)	-0.33 (0.21)
Other Third Party Vote (1910-29)	0.13 (0.14)	0.78** (0.14)	-0.54 (0.67)	2.30** (0.58)
Obs	3023			
	non-south		south	
	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep
Democratic Party Vote (1910-29)	0.95** (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	1.03** (0.02)	-0.05** (0.02)
Republican Party Vote (1910-29)	0.11** (0.03)	0.89** (0.03)	0.38** (0.05)	0.67** (0.04)
Liberal Third Party Vote (1910-29)	0.87** (0.08)	-0.16* (0.08)	0.64** (0.17)	0.41* (0.15)
Other Third Party Vote (1910-29)	-0.18 (0.30)	1.07** (0.32)	0.33** (0.05)	0.61** (0.06)
Obs	1988		1035	

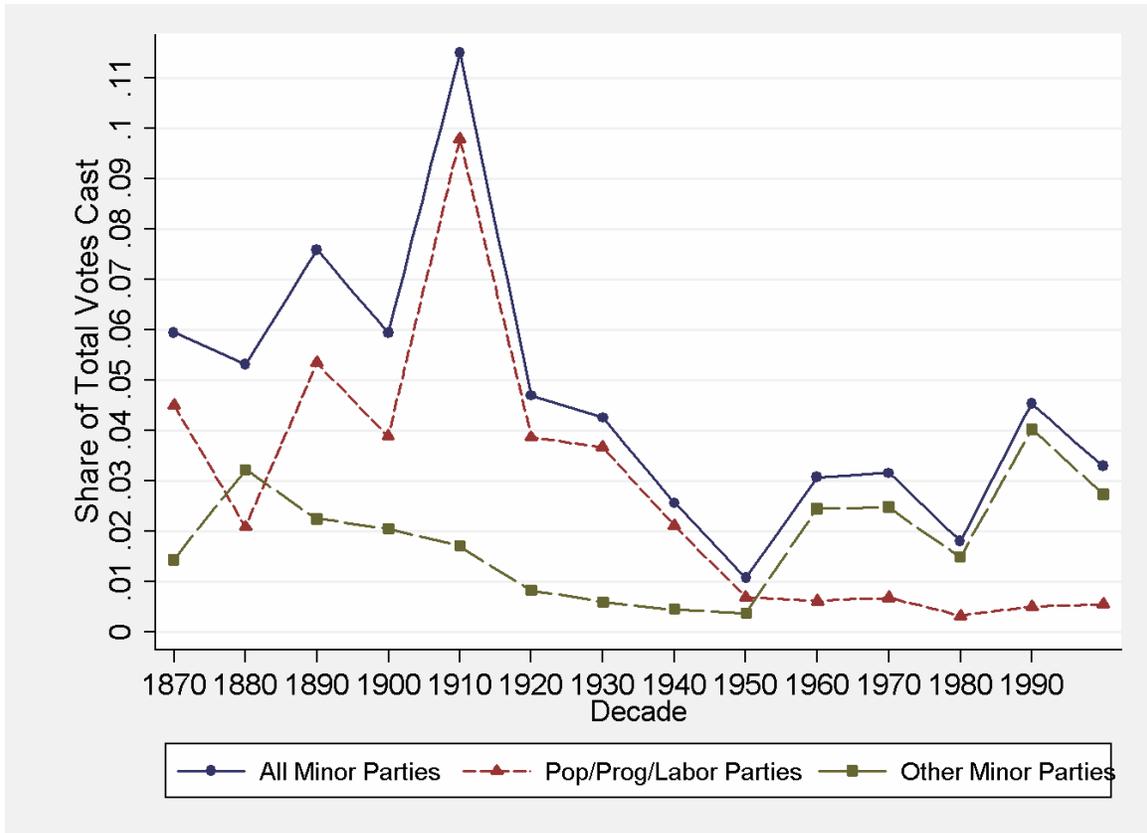
This table presents the coefficients  $\alpha_{i1}$ ,  $\alpha_{i2}$ ,  $\alpha_{i3}$ , and  $\alpha_{i4}$  from the regression  $V_{ijkt} = \alpha_{ik} + \alpha_{i1}D_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i2}R_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i3}L_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i4}NL_{jk,t-1} + \epsilon_{ijk}$  which is described in the main text. Since state fixed effects are also included in the regression, the magnitude of the coefficients depend upon which state fixed effect is excluded for identification purposes. Standard errors are in parentheses. \* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level. \*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level.

**ON-LINE APPENDIX**

<b>Table 1A.3: FULL ESTIMATES FOR TABLE 4</b>					
	Democratic	Republican		Democratic	Republican
	Votes 1932			Votes 1898-1905	
Democratic Vote (1910-29)	1.07** (0.02)	−0.08** (0.02)	Democratic Vote (1888-95)	0.81** (0.06)	0.15** (0.06)
Republican Vote (1910-29)	0.22** (0.04)	0.79** (0.04)	Republican Vote (1888-95)	0.05 (0.04)	0.90** (0.04)
Liberal Vote (1910-29)	0.63** (0.18)	0.11 (0.18)	Liberal Vote (1888-95)	0.33** (0.06)	0.38** (0.04)
Other Vote (1910-29)	1.45* (0.59)	−0.56 (0.46)	Other Vote (1888-95)	0.43** (0.08)	0.43** (0.05)
Obs	2615			2427	
	Votes 1914-21			Votes 1934-41	
Democratic Vote (1904-11)	0.93** (0.01)	0.07** (0.01)	Democratic Vote (1924-31)	0.040** (0.008)	−0.005* (0.002)
Republican Vote (1904-11)	0.09* (0.04)	0.86** (0.05)	Republican Vote (1924-31)	0.084** (0.009)	0.009** (0.003)
Liberal Vote (1904-11)	0.49** (0.04)	0.16 (0.11)	Liberal Vote (1924-31)	0.357** (0.020)	0.054** (0.006)
Other Vote (1904-11)	0.36** (0.09)	0.32* (0.12)	Other Vote (1924-31)	−0.189** (0.051)	0.457** (0.015)
Obs	2825			2728	

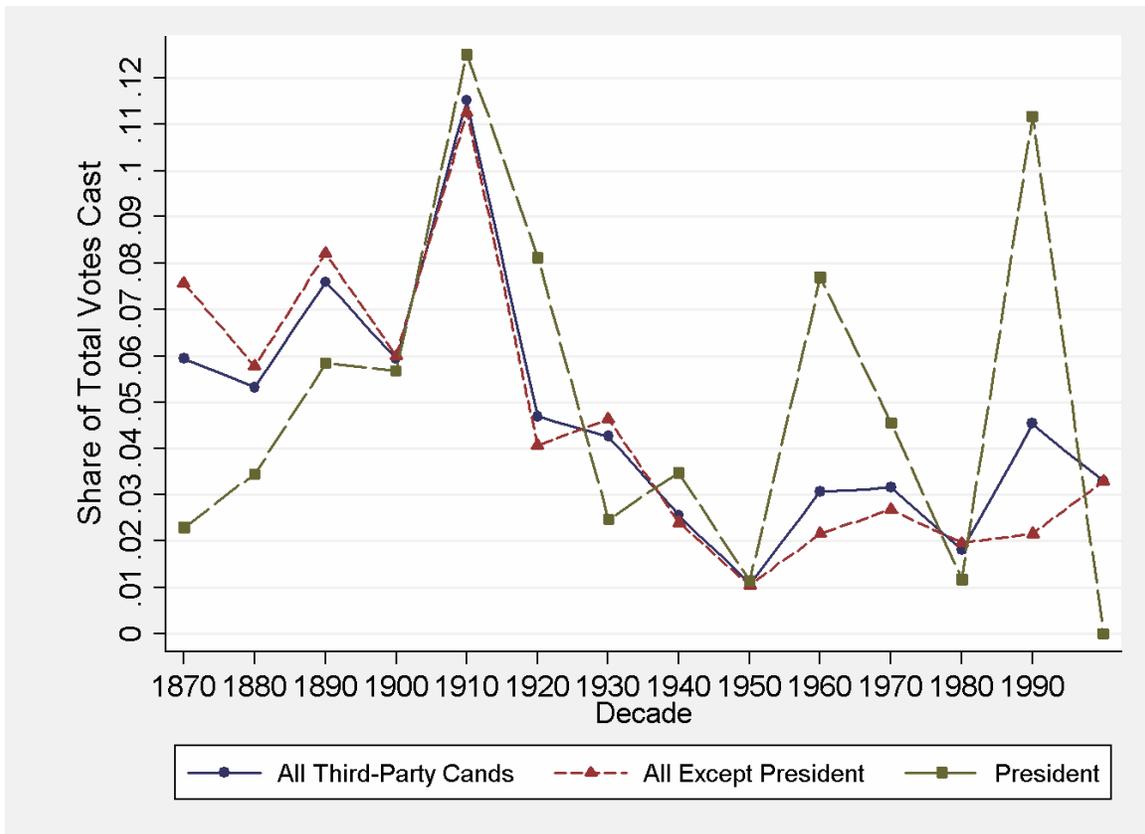
This table presents the coefficients  $\alpha_{i1}$ ,  $\alpha_{i2}$ ,  $\alpha_{i3}$ , and  $\alpha_{i4}$  from the regression  $V_{ijkt} = \alpha_{ik} + \alpha_{i1}D_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i2}R_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i3}L_{jk,t-1} + \alpha_{i4}NL_{jk,t-1} + \epsilon_{ijk}$  which is described in the main text. Since state fixed effects are also included in the regression, the magnitude of the coefficients depend upon which state fixed effect is excluded for identification purposes. Standard errors are in presented in the parentheses. \* indicates statistical significance at the 5% level. \*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level.

Figure 1A.1. Third Party Vote Shares for President, Governor, Senator, House, and Statewide Offices Between 1870 and 2000 Aggregated by Decade



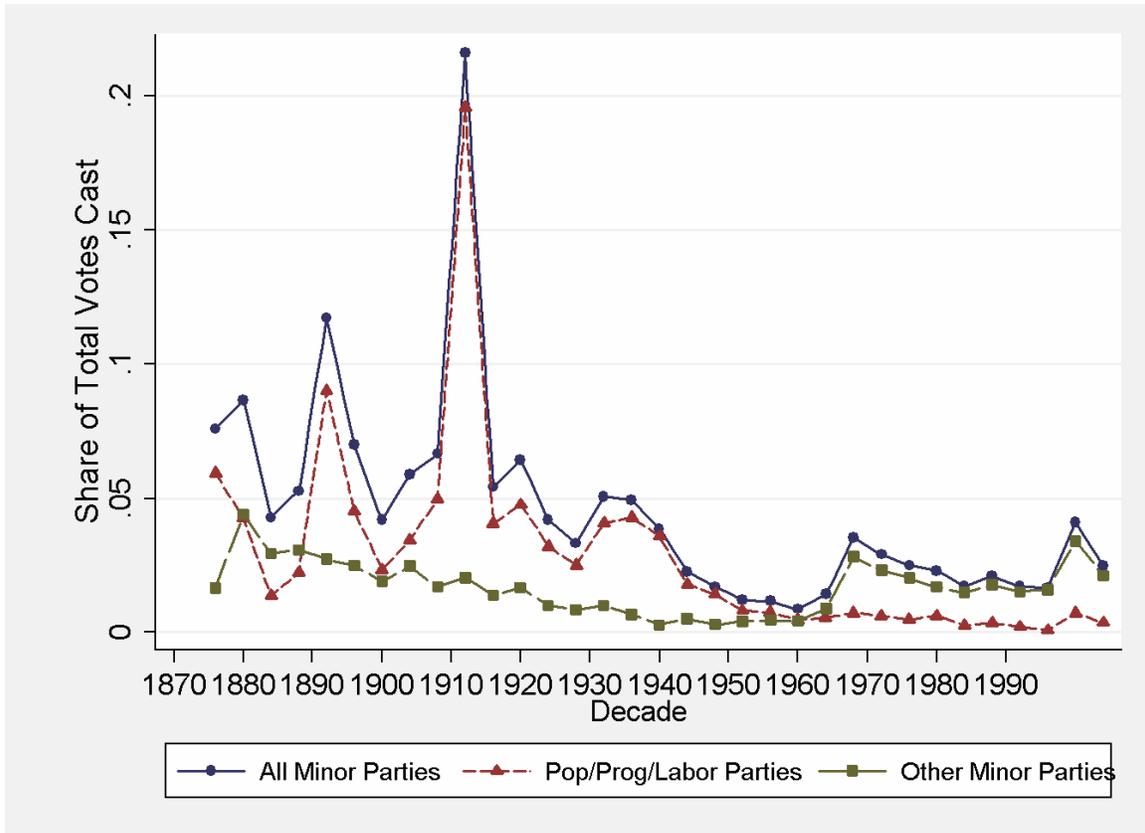
Unlike Figure 1 in the main text, Figure 1A.1 includes the vote for third party presidential candidates. There is little difference in the patterns illustrated in Figures 1 and 1A.1.

Figure 1A.2. Vote Shares for Third Party Presidential Candidates, Third Party Gubernatorial, Senator, House, and Statewide Office Candidates, and Third Party Candidates for All Five Types of Offices Between 1870 and 2000 Aggregated by Decade



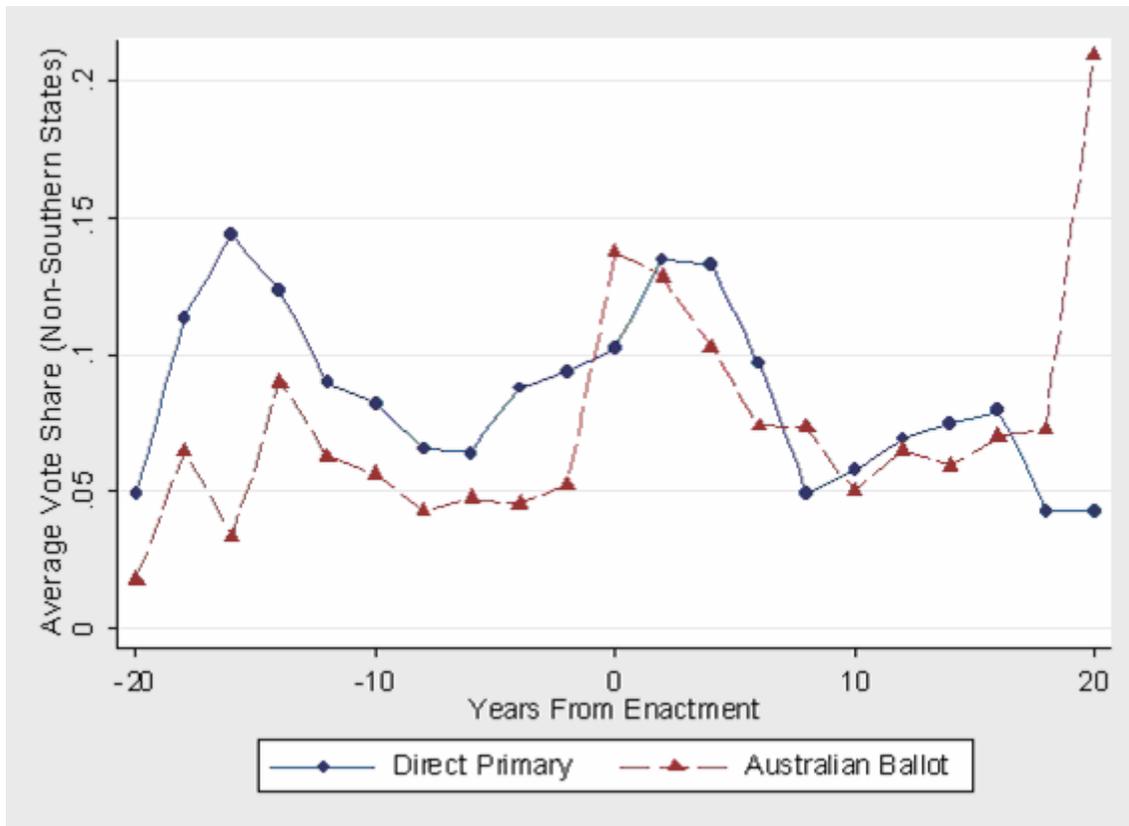
This figure shows that the third party presidential candidates followed a slightly different pattern than the pattern for other offices in this study. This reflects the popularity of particular personalities that ran as third party presidential candidates.

Figure 1A.3. Third Party Vote Shares for Governor, Senator, House, and Statewide Offices Between 1870 and 2000 Aggregated by Four Year Intervals



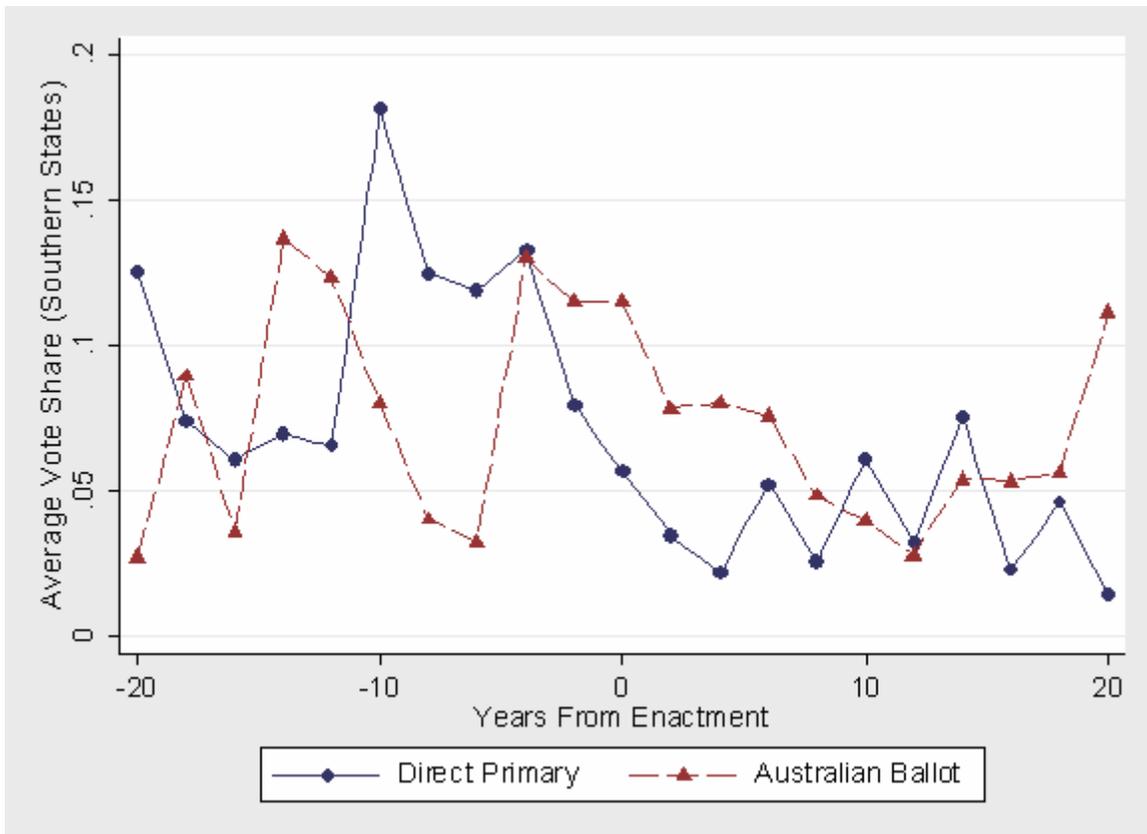
In Figure 1 we aggregated third party votes by decade. In this figure we aggregate by four year intervals. The pattern in this figure is essentially the same as in Figure 1 but illustrates the variance in the third party vote within decades.

Figure 2A.1. Third Party Vote Shares in House and Gubernatorial Elections 20 Years Pre- and 20 Years Post- the Introduction of the Direct Primary and the Australian Ballot in the Non-South



This figure shows the average third party vote share for non-southern states in the years prior and post the introduction of direct primaries and the Australian ballot. The odd year election vote shares were aggregated with the on-election year vote shares.

Figure 2A.2. Third Party Vote Shares in House and Gubernatorial Elections 20 Years Pre- and 20 Years Post- the Introduction of the Direct Primary and the Australian Ballot in the South



This figure shows the average third party vote share for southern states in the years prior and post the introduction of direct primaries and the Australian ballot. The odd election year vote shares were aggregated with the on-election year vote shares. There is more of a downward pattern in third party vote shares around the introduction of the direct primary in the south as compared to the non-south. However, the pattern of decline starts a few years earlier which may reflect the existence of informal direct primaries or the influence of other factors used to prevent third party success in the south.