

# **The Decline of Competition in U.S. Primary Elections, 1908-2004<sup>1</sup>**

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June, 2005

## **Abstract**

Primary elections have been a prominent feature of U.S. politics for the past century. However, surprisingly little is known about how primaries have operated over time. Except for the most recent decades, we do not even know simple facts such as how many primaries were contested, how competitive the contested races were, and how these patterns varied across states, offices, and time. This is mainly because of data availability. To gain greater insight into the functioning of primaries, we have constructed a comprehensive data set of primary election returns. The data set covers all statewide executive and federal offices for all states and almost all years that primaries have been in operation. We find that primaries were an important source of electoral competition during the first 30-40 years following their introduction, both in open-seat contests and in incumbent-challenger races. This is no longer the case, however, except in open-seat contests, where competition remains robust.

# 1. Introduction

A hallmark of elections in the United States is a two-stage electoral process. Candidates running under the standard of one of the major political parties must first win the party's endorsement in a primary election. Very few other countries use party plebiscites to nominate their candidates, but the United States has employed primary elections widely for nearly 100 years.<sup>1</sup> The primary system is relatively new in U.S. presidential elections, in which a majority of delegates were chosen by state conventions and caucuses until the 1970s. For other state and federal offices, however, almost all states have used primary elections to nominate candidates for the general election since the early decades of the twentieth century.

From their inception, primary elections have been seen as an important vehicle for political competition in the United States. Progressive reformers at the turn of the last century pushed the primary election as a way to undercut the power of local and state political machines and as a way to bring into the parties fresh candidates, new ideas, and organized constituencies, such as unions. Competition in primaries is potentially much more fluid, volatile, and intense than competition in general elections. Unlike in general elections, the main political parties do not exert oligopolistic control over access to the ballot and do not structure the choices of voters through well established brand names. Rather, any candidate who can secure sufficient numbers of signatures or pay the appropriate filing fee can get on the ballot.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, current thinking among political scientists supports the reformers' conjectures that primary elections offer an effective second electoral screen. King (1997) argues that primary elections make all candidates in the United States excessively concerned with winning elections. They are, he contends, always at risk either from a challenger from the opposing party or from a challenger from within their own party. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2004) argue that primary elections are an important force in polarizing elite discourse in the United States. In order to get through the primary round, Democratic candidates must

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<sup>1</sup>See Carey and Polga-Hecimovich (2004) for a discussion of primary elections in Latin America.

<sup>2</sup>These requirements have only lessened since the 1970s, after the Supreme Court held high fees unconstitutional in two cases, *Williams v. Rhodes* and *Jenness v. Fortson*.

first run to the left and Republicans to the right.<sup>3</sup> And Zaller (1998), likening politicians to pugilists, suggests that the two-round electoral system in the U.S. naturally selects a certain type of politician. Like boxers who must win successive fights to move up in their rankings, he argues, politicians must win successive elections to gain seniority and political power. Primary elections have doubled the electoral scrutiny a typical American politician must endure, with the result that American politicians face many more electoral battles than any other politicians in the world.

These accounts imagine robust primary election competition in the United States. Surprisingly, however, not much is known about primary election competition in the United States. Most research has focused on the dynamics of presidential primaries.<sup>4</sup> A handful of papers have considered the levels of primary election competition in recent U.S. House and gubernatorial elections (Berry and Cannon 1993, Schantz 1980). As a general account of primary election competition, though, these studies are limited by the offices examined and by the period studied. How has competition in primary elections varied across offices, and how has competition varied over time?

In addition to opening up the party process, a second important rationale for introducing direct primary elections was to inject political contestation into areas that lacked competition in general elections. Reformers expected primary competition to be most salient in the many states and locales dominated by one political party. As a result, the use of primary elections would increase the overall amount of competition for any given office.

The claim that primaries may be an alternative to party competition has traditionally been supported by evidence from the Democratic-dominated South (Key, 1954; Jewell, 1967; Ewing, 1953). Several studies provide evidence that primaries are more likely to be contested in electorally “safe” rather than competitive areas (e.g. Key, 1956; Grau, 1981; Jewell and Olson, 1982). In this view, competition in primaries and competition in general elections substitute for each other—the one increases as the other declines.

The view that primaries offer an alternative to party competition does not seem to

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<sup>3</sup>There is some debate in literature concerning the differences between primary and general election electorates in the U.S. and how this affects candidate selection (Ranney (1968), Polsby (1983), Crotty and Jackson (1985), Geer (1988), Kaufmann, Gimpel and Hoffman (2003), and Abramowitz (1989).

<sup>4</sup>See for example Bartels (1988).

travel well outside the South. Primaries are most competitive in open seat elections and least competitive when incumbents are present (Schantz, 1980; Grau, 1981; Hogan, 2003). Turner (1953, p. 210) writes, “The comparative usefulness of the primary as a method for selecting successors for retiring incumbents does not offset the fact that the primary is not a successful alternative to two-party competition in most parts of the United States.”<sup>5</sup> This suggests that primaries have a limited role in holding representatives accountable for their behavior in office.<sup>6</sup>

A separate literature argues the exact contrary, that primary and general election competition should be positively correlated. Candidates who face primary competition are likely also to face more stringent competition in the general election. At the level of individual races, some contend, contested primaries wound nominees and make closely fought November elections more likely.<sup>7</sup> At the level of the political system, moreover, primary competition and general election competition are two parts of the same phenomenon. Elazar (1966), for example, argues that state political cultures create conditions that either facilitate or retard competition in all elections. Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) classic study on social diversity and political competition also suggests a positive correlation. Politics with more diversity, they argue, are bound to have more competition throughout the political system. The evidence for a positive correlation between primary and general election competition, like the evidence for a negative correlation, is mixed (Born, 1981; Bernstein, 1977; Hacker, 1965; Herrnson and Gimpel, 1995; Jewell and Olson, 1978; Johnson and Gibson, 1974; Kenney and Rice, 1984; Lengle, 1980; Piereson and Smith, 1975).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Jewell and Breaux (1991, p. 142) write, “Students of primary competition have often argued that it is likely to be more intense where the party’s chances of winning the general election are greatest... The fact that we have found such a high proportion of incumbents having no opposition in either election suggests that this theory does not work perfectly.”

<sup>6</sup>The threat of primary competition might be enough to improve representation by incumbents, and open seat races might be sufficient to select “good types.” But few democratic theorists argue that latent or infrequent competition is enough for a healthy democracy. See, for example, Ware (1987). Sartori (1976) is an exception. Recent work by Besley, Persson and Sturm (2005) suggests that actual political competition is good for economic growth and certain economic policies.

<sup>7</sup>Born (1981) and others argue the general election competition can affect the degree to which primaries will be competitive.

<sup>8</sup>Further complications arise with the form of the primary election. Whether there exists such a positive correlation may depend on the use of run-off elections (Canon, 1978; Berry and Canon, 1993) or multi-member districts (Jewell and Breaux, 1991), or the use of pre-primary endorsing conventions.

All told, then, most research holds that primary and general election competition should be correlated. There is, however, considerable disagreement about whether the correlation should be negative or positive, and the evidence is at best conflicting, or limited to a particular time or region.

In this paper we examine the effectiveness of primaries as instruments for electoral competition. First, we ask, how much competition exists in primaries, and how has that changed over time? Second, how much do primary elections contribute to the overall quantity of electoral competition, and specifically are primaries a substitute or a complement for general election competition? To examine these questions, we document the changes in primary and general election competitiveness in all U.S. states throughout the twentieth century. To our knowledge, there are no previous studies that examine primary competition in all states over so many offices and over such a long period of U.S. history. We are able to do this using a new dataset of statewide and federal primary election returns that extends back to the initial primary elections in each state.

## 2. Data and Measures

American state and federal primary elections have been rarely studied owing to the elusiveness of the data. Most of the data available in state reports have not been compiled. In some states, especially before the 1950s, primary election returns are available only from newspaper reports, as the primaries in those states were treated as activities of private clubs and, thus, not part of the official state election process.

Several projects over the years have assembled parts of the overall picture. Scammon and Wattenberg's *America Votes* provides primary election returns for governor, U.S. House, U.S. Senate and President from 1956 to the present. Several studies have examined trends in primary election competition for just one of these offices. On the U.S. House see Alford and Arceneaux (2000) and Gerber and Morton (1998); on the U.S. Senate see Westlye (1991); on governors see Berry and Canon (1993); on state representatives see Grau (1981).

We have compiled the primary and general election returns for all statewide offices and for the U.S. House and Senate from 1900 to 2004 using official state election reports, state manuals, newspapers, and almanacs. The sources for individual states are listed in Table

A1 in the appendix. Data on general election competition in statewide elections come from the MIT State Elections Database. For further information on and discussion of the general election data see Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002).

We measure electoral competition in three ways: the fraction of contested races, the defeat rate of incumbents, and the division of the vote. In general elections, the division of the vote is the share of the two party vote won by the Democrats. This quantity itself consists of the underlying partisan division of the state, or normal vote; the personal votes of candidates, including incumbency advantages and challenger quality; national party tides, which take the form of year effects; and idiosyncratic variation. See Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002) for a decomposition along these lines.

General election competition may be considered broadly or considered strictly in partisan terms. The absolute value of the Democratic share of the two party vote deviated from 0.5 captures the broadest sense of competitiveness. When considering the competitiveness of states we classify elections as being either competitive or firmly aligned with one party. We classify states in a given year as competitive if the average Democratic share of the two party vote across all statewide offices is between 60 and 40 percent for the 10 year period including and prior to the year of interest.<sup>9</sup>

Measuring primary election competition raises several additional issues. As with general elections, turnover occurs primarily when incumbents lose. One complication emerges when considering the number of contestants. As in general elections, incumbents can stand for renomination in their party primaries without facing opposition. It is also possible that no one runs in the primary for the nomination of the opposing party; that is, many primaries have zero candidates. We classify primaries in which one candidate runs or in which no candidate runs as uncontested. The modal primary is uncontested.<sup>10</sup>

Other primaries involve more than two candidates. In Oklahoma, for example, the average number of candidates running in the Democratic gubernatorial primary over the past

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<sup>9</sup>Rising incumbency advantages might make party competition seem less intense. A more precise estimate of partisan competition, then, subtracts out the estimated incumbency effect, which equals the expected share of the two party vote in the absence of an incumbent. The results below are qualitatively similar using the definition of competition that does not include incumbency effects.

<sup>10</sup>The inclusion of “empty” primaries uncontested by any candidate has no substantive effect on our analysis. The same conclusions hold for primaries entered by only one candidate.

100 years is just over seven. The varying numbers of primary election candidates mean that the “two-candidate” vote share is not a natural measure of closeness of the election. Orienting the data to measure the “normal vote” proves particularly difficult in primary elections, even if all races involved just two candidates. Researchers cannot identify the ideological positioning or factional identification of each candidate using aggregate election data alone.

We have experimented with various measures of electoral competitiveness, such as the winning candidates’ share of all votes, the difference between the top two candidates’ vote shares, the winner’s share of the top two candidates’ votes, and the incumbents’ share of the vote. All track each other closely, as we discuss in Section 3 below. In analyzing the relationship between general and primary election competition we classify as competitive those races where the winner received less than 60 percent of the total votes cast.

### 3. Trends in Primary Election Competition

Primary elections in the United States rose out of two distinct historical conditions.

In the U.S. South, primaries were integral to the constellation of electoral rules and institutions designed to disfranchise African Americans and to sustain the solid Democratic party hold on the states of the Confederacy. Most Southern states prohibited African Americans, often explicitly, from voting in primaries. And given the Democrats’ advantage in the general election, the Democratic nomination was tantamount to election. Within the Democratic primaries, though, historians and political scientists describe robust competition, with shifting factions, coalitions of convenience, and political machines built around personalities, families, and friends and neighbors (see Key, 1949).

Outside the South, primary elections were the cornerstone of progressive reforms. States that adopted the direct primary early, such as Wisconsin, California, and North Dakota, were strongholds of the Progressive movement within the Republican Party.<sup>11</sup> (The package of political reforms called the “Wisconsin idea,” including the direct primary, was the handiwork of progressive Republican senator Robert M. LaFollette.) The direct primary, its advocates

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<sup>11</sup>Primary elections of other kinds antedate the progressive reforms. In the nineteenth century, some states allowed and a few required parties to conduct “indirect primaries” to elect delegates to party caucuses or conventions. The hallmark of the progressive program was direct primaries to decide nominations by a plebiscite of party voters. For a history, see Merriam and Overacker (1928).

argued, promised to turn out of office politicians long out of touch with the typical voter and to renew the Republican Party with a healthy dose of competition. In the South too, progressives called for direct primaries as a means of weakening the hold of particular factions or organizations over state politics. Where the target of reform in the North was the business plutocracy and immigrant machines, in the South the target was courthouse cliques and plantation bosses.

Figures 1 and 2 display the history of primary electoral competition in the North and South, respectively. Throughout this article, we refer to the Northeast, Midwest, and West as the “North.” To be sure, there are interesting differences among these regions, such as the strength of Progressivism in the Midwest and West, but not the Northeast. But these differences pale in comparison to the distinctiveness of the South from the rest of American political culture. Each figure contains four panels, corresponding to four different measures of competition: the fraction of races with no competition, one minus the winner’s vote share, the fraction of races in which the winner received less than 60 percent of the vote, and the fraction of incumbents who won.<sup>12</sup> The figures also distinguish between races including incumbents and races for open seats.<sup>13</sup>

The Northern, Midwestern, and Western states showed a modest amount of electoral competition in primaries in the 1910s and 1920s, and a steady decline in primary election competition over the succeeding decades. Given the rapid adoption of this reform and the expectations of the early advocates, we expected more competition in the early primaries. But, in fact, between 40 to 50 percent of all primary elections in the northern states were *uncontested* during the early decades of the twentieth century. Competition spiked briefly during the decade of the New Deal, as both parties repositioned themselves, but then the chronic lack of contestation returned. Over the entire course of their history the northern states have sustained rates of uncontested primaries of around 60 percent.

Among the contested primaries, the winners’ vote share further illustrates the decline in

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<sup>12</sup>The winner’s vote share is the vote share of the total vote but excludes those winners who are not contested. The fraction of races where the winner received less than 60 percent of the total vote includes the uncontested races.

<sup>13</sup>We classify both parties’ primaries as incumbent-challenger races if there is an incumbent running in either party’s primary.

primary competition. In the 1910s through the 1930s, the primary election winner received less than 60 percent of the vote in 35 percent of the elections. The typical winner in this early period captured around 55 percent of the vote. After 1940, though, competition steadily eroded. By the 1990s, primary winners won less than 60 percent of the vote only 20 percent of the time, and average winner's vote share rose to over 60 percent of the vote.

Incumbents rarely lost a primary election, even in the early period. During the Progressive era, incumbents lost less than 3.5 percent of their primary elections. This fraction dropped to about 1 percent in the 1950s and has stayed at about 1 percent ever since.

Figure 2 illustrates the pattern of primary competition in southern states. During the first decades of the twentieth century, primary elections were more competitive in the South than in the North. Candidates ran without primary opposition in around 35 percent of the primary races, much less often than incumbents ran unopposed in the North, Midwest, and West.

Winner's vote shares and incumbent re-election rates provide further evidence that primary elections were more competitive in the South than the North during the first decades of the twentieth century. In this period, the winners in roughly half of the primary elections received less than 60 percent of the vote. The winning candidate's vote share on average was less than 55 percent. Incumbents had less security in primaries in the South, with more than 5 percent of incumbents turned out of office during the early period.

The Supreme Court cracked open this closed world of southern politics in a series of cases from the 1920s into the 1940s, especially *Nixon v. Herndon*, *United States v. Classic*, and *Smith v. Allright*. In the final chapter of *Southern Politics*, V. O. Key wondered aloud what the South would look like after the 1944 decision in *Smith v. Allright* effectively ended the white primary.

Now we know. After 1940, southern primaries rapidly became less competitive, to the point that competition in southern primaries strongly resembled competition—or lack of it—in northern primaries. The number of uncontested primaries rose dramatically, so that by the 1990s, less than 60 percent of Southern primaries were contested. The average vote share of winners topped 55 percent, and the winner received more than 60 percent of the vote

in more than 80 percent of the elections. Furthermore, less than 1 percent of incumbents failed to win renomination in a primary election.

Over the course of a century, then, the competitiveness of primary elections across the regions of the country has converged. The North showed modest levels of primary competition in the 1910s and 1920s, and very little incumbent turnover. The South, by contrast, began the twentieth century with relatively high levels of primary election competition. Today, however, the North and the South hardly differ. This pattern, interestingly, mirrors the trends in general election competition. The South began the twentieth century under the domination of a single party, the Democrats. The other regions had more inter-party competition, but some of them, especially in New England, were also dominated by a single party, the Republicans. Over the course of the twentieth century, all states have become increasingly competitive in their general elections. Just as the regions have converged in their levels of general election competition, so have they converged in their levels of primary election competition.

#### **4. Primary and General Election Competition**

How has the decline of primary election competition affected the overall level of electoral competition in the United States? The answer in part depends upon the relationship between primary and general election competition.

To illustrate how the impact of declining primary competition on overall competition may depend upon the distribution of primary and general election competition, we can consider a highly stylized situation with three types of general elections. Suppose in a given election one-third of the seats are safe Democratic, one-third are safe Republican, and one-third are competitive. In a competitive race, the candidates from both parties have an equal chance of winning the general election.

One possible distribution of primary election competition is that the seats that are competitive in the primaries are also competitive in the general elections. In this case, declining primary election competition by itself would not alter the overall competitiveness of the system. The competitive seats would remain highly competitive in both the primary election

and the general election, and the safe seats would remain uncompetitive in both the primary and general elections.

A second possibility is that primary election competition substitutes for general election competition: the safe Democratic and Republican seats have stiff primary election competition, while the candidates in the seats with intense general election competition face no challenges in the primary elections. In this scenario, if primary election competition declines without a compensating increase in general election competition, then roughly two thirds of the elections (primary plus general) that were competitive become uncompetitive. This, of course, is an extreme version of the argument put forward by V. O. Key (1949) and tested by Julius Turner (1953) using U.S. House data from the 1940s.

These hypothetical cases highlight the possibility that declining primary election competition has either substantially reduced the competitiveness of the electoral system in the United States (the second case) or has had little practical consequence (the first case). Of course, the real world does not look like either of these circumstances. It is a mix of these idealized cases. But, these hypotheticals do depict a version of the world that has considerable currency (Key's hypothesis), and they do help to focus the empirical question of interest. What is the empirical relationship between primary and general election competition?

To address this question we classified primary elections as competitive or not and general elections as competitive or not. We use whether a candidate wins less than 60% of the vote in a given race as our measure of competitive elections.<sup>14</sup> The classification of primary and general elections as competitive, in turn, yields four different cases: (1) competitive primary election and competitive general election, (2) competitive primary election but uncompetitive general election, (3) uncompetitive primary election but competitive general election, and (4) uncompetitive primary election and uncompetitive general election. We then computed the fraction of *office holders* whose races fell into each of these categories. This procedure, of course, omits the amount of competition in the party of the general election loser. We follow the literature in examining the electoral test that the office holders faced. Including

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<sup>14</sup>We have examined other thresholds for competitiveness (e.g. 55% and 65%) and the patterns are similar. We have also considered raw correlations in vote shares. However, owing to the very large number of uncontested races, these correlations are sensitive to missing data.

the primary election competition of the party that did not win the seat inflates the number of elections in which there is no primary election competition, by introducing a large number of cases in which no primary was held (e.g. the southern Republican Party did not regularly hold primaries during the first half of the century).<sup>15</sup>

Table 1 presents the proportion of elections in each of the four categories listed above. We present the statewide elections (including U.S. Senate) and U.S. House races separately, as these offices show different levels of competition but similar trends. To simplify the presentation of time trends we divided the twentieth century into three periods: (1) 1910-1938, (2) 1940-1958, and (3) 1960-2000. These correspond roughly to the Progressive era and the years of the Solid South, the years of transition in the South, and the current era of high incumbency advantages and established voting rights (see Aldrich and Niemi (1996) on the last era).

There are two quantities of particular interest in Table 1. The first is an indicator of the overall (un)competitiveness of the system, which can be measured by the fraction of races in which the winner received in excess of 60 percent of the vote in the primary and the general election (case 4 above). The second is an indicator of the importance of primary elections per se, which can be measured by the fraction of cases in which the winner received less than 60 percent of the vote in the primary but more than 60 percent of the vote in the general election (case 2 above). This is the case where the primaries were competitive even though the general elections were not.

Table 1 illustrates a familiar story of steady decline in the overall levels of competition in U.S. elections. In statewide elections the fraction of races in which the winner captured better than 60 percent of the vote in both stages of the election rose from 26 percent of all cases to 33 percent – a 7 percentage point drop in this measure of the overall level of competitiveness. In U.S. House elections competition plummeted over the course of the twentieth century. From 1900 to 1938, 39 percent of House candidates won their seats with more than 60 percent of the vote in both the primary and general election. From 1960 to 2000, 64 percent of House candidates cleared the 60 percent mark in both elections.

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<sup>15</sup>The patterns of electoral competition do not change significantly when the primaries of those who did not win the primary election are included.

Is declining primary election competition per se to blame? The fraction of cases in which the primary election was competitive but the general election was not suggests that the primaries contributed to the overall decline. However, the differing patterns in primary competition for statewide and U.S. House offices also suggests that the overall decline in electoral competition cannot simply be determined by the decline in primary election competition.

Primary competition did contribute to the overall level of competition in the early period from 1910 to 1938. In the primary elections for statewide offices, 25 percent of the winners faced competition in the primaries but not the general elections in the early period. Similarly in the primary elections for the House, 12 percent of winners faced competition only in the primaries during this period.

The drop in primary competition in statewide elections far exceeds the drop in overall competition. The fraction of races without serious competition rose 7 percentage points, from 26 percent to 33 percent, as noted above. However, the change in the fraction of races in which there was a competitive primary but an uncompetitive general election far exceeds the decline in the overall level. The fraction of statewide office holders who only faced primary competition dropped from 25 percent in the first period, to 17 percentage points in the 1940s to 1950s, to just 8 percent in final decades of the century.

In contrast, for U.S. House elections the drop in primary competition can account for only a small fraction of the drop in overall competition. Over the course of the twentieth century, the fraction of U.S. House candidates facing competition in at least one stage of the process dropped from 61 percent to 36 percent. During this period, the fraction of cases in which House members faced a serious primary challenge but no general election challenge dropped from 13 percent to 5 percent. The fraction of House members who faced significant competition fell by 25 percentage points, but the drop in competitive House primaries can account for, at most, only an 8 percentage point decline.

The difference between statewide and House elections suggests that changes in the overall level of competition cannot simply be explained by the decline in primary competition. In the statewide elections, decreasing primary competition was offset by increasing general election competition. In the House elections, decreasing general election competition far exceeded

the decline in primary election competition.

The declines in competitiveness in both primary and general elections for the House and the fall in competitiveness in primaries coupled with the rise in competitiveness in general elections for statewide offices suggests a possible connection between primary and general election competition. Is there any evidence that primary and general election competition are correlated? Is there any evidence that general election competition increases when primary election declines? Or, do these factors operate independently?

The data suggest that primary and general election competition are at largely independent, at least within periods. The change in overall competition appears to stem from changes in the marginal distributions of primary and general election competition, rather than a substitution between primary and general election competition.

Consider, again, the statewide races. In the first period, roughly half of all primary elections are classified as competitive and 51 percent of all general elections are classified as competitive. The hypothesis that primary and general election competition are substitutes predicts that the joint distribution of these two variables deviates from what is predicted under independence. Under independence we would expect roughly one-quarter of all cases in the first period to fall into each category of competition. The fraction of observed cases differed from levels predicted under independence by only about 1 percentage point in each category of competition. Although the chi-squared test rejects the statistical independence of the two variables, which is not surprising given the large number of cases, the observed distribution is substantively very close to what we would expect if primary and general election competition were independent.

A similar pattern of independence between statewide primary and general election competition appears in the 1940 to 1958 period and the 1960 to 2000 period. The observed levels of competition differ from those predicted under independence by less than 3 percentage points in each of the four categories in both periods. In the second period the chi-squared test even fails to reject the null hypothesis of independence despite the large number of cases.

The rise in the number of elections in which there was only a competitive general election and the fall in the number of elections in which there was only a competitive primary

is consistent with what we would expect if the changes in primary and general election competition were independent. This finding matches prior studies, such as Turner (1953), which have found little relationship between primary and general election competition. We find that in statewide elections the two do not appear to act as substitutes over the very long run of the twentieth century.

What did change was the incidence of general and primary election competition. In statewide elections, primary election competition fell over the course of the past century, while general election competition rose. In the first decades of the century, half of all general and primary elections for statewide office were competitive. By the end of the century, the fraction of competitive general elections for statewide office rose to 59 percent while the fraction of competitive primary elections dropped to just 25 percent. These appear to operate independently (at least in the aggregate), and the separate changes in the marginal distributions of primary and general election competition for statewide office are sufficient to explain the change observed in the patterns of competition. Because primary election competition declined and general election competition rose, the fraction of cases in which primary elections were the only screen plummeted, the fraction of cases in which general elections were the only electoral screen surged, and the overall level of competition dropped somewhat. Declining primary election competition in statewide elections, thus, did not alter the overall level of competition much, but it did sharply reduce the role of primaries in generating that competition.

In U.S. House elections, we appear to confront a different puzzle. At first glance it appears that declining primary competition contributed little to the overall decline of competition in U.S. House elections.

But in fact, competition in elections to the House tracks the same pattern as competition in elections to statewide offices, albeit with a much more lower starting level of primary competition and a decrease in general election competition. As in the statewide offices, primary and general election competition for the House are not highly correlated. Consider the first period in Table 1. Roughly half of all House members won their seats in competitive general elections from 1900 to 1938, but just under 30 percent faced a serious primary

election challenge. If primaries and general elections operate independently then we would expect 14 percent of all House members to have won less than 60 percent of the primary and general election vote; 15 percent to have won less than 60 percent in the primary but more than 60 percent in the general; 35 percent to have won less than 60 percent in the general but more than 60 percent in the primary; and 37 percent to have won more than 60 percent in both rounds. As in the statewide offices, the observed fraction of cases for each category of competition deviate from the fraction predicted under independence by less than 3 percentage points. Similar calculations for the 1940 to 1958 and the 1960 to 2004 periods yield similar conclusion. Although the marginal distributions had changed, the joint distribution of primary and general election competition appears consistent with the notion that the two variables operate independently.

In short, the changing patterns of competition in House elections are likely to be attributed to independent changes in the rates of general and primary election competition. The aggregate rate of competitive primaries fell from 29 percent to 11 percent of all House races. General election competition declined as well. These two forces yielded a dramatic decline in overall competition in U.S. House elections. competition for statewide offices had a different trajectory than competition for the U.S. House because of the increase in general election competition for senator, governor, and other state executive offices. Had House elections witnessed a rise in general election competition comparable to the rise in statewide elections, a very different pattern would have emerged. Suppose the fraction of U.S. House seats won by less than 60 percent in the general election equalled the statewide figure of 59 percent, instead of 32 percent. In that case, the changes in patterns of competition for the House would have resembled the pattern in competition for statewide offices. Fifty-three percent of House candidates would have won in competitive general elections and uncompetitive primary elections. The different patterns of changes in primary and general election competition in elections for the House and for statewide offices can be attributed entirely to different trajectories in *general* election competition.

Three conclusions are abundantly clear from this analysis. First, primaries once often served an important screening role, but now they very rarely do. From 1900 to 1938, one

quarter of all statewide officers and one eighth of all House members faced only primary competition. By the last part of the century, from 1960 to 2000, primary competition affected just one in twelve in the statewide offices and only one in twenty in the House. Second, the overall competitiveness of the electoral system has fallen. Only one third of all statewide officers win with at least 60 percent of the vote in both the general and primary elections, while just under two-thirds of all House candidates face no serious general or primary competition. Third, primary and general election competition appear to make relatively independent contributions to the total level of competition in U.S. elections. Primary and general election competition do not act as substitutes. The declining rate of primary election competition meant that primaries served much less as a screen. Whether they also contributed to declining rates of overall competition depended on changes in general election competition. Where general election competition increased, as in contests for statewide offices, overall competition changed only modestly. Where general election competition also fell, as in elections for the House, the drop in primary election competition contributed to a dramatic drop in the total amount of electoral competition.

## 5. Incumbents and Parties

So a puzzle emerges from Table 1. Why did general election competition strengthen in statewide elections but weaken in House elections? Primaries show less competition across the board, but the differential trends in general election competition suggest two very different electoral systems at work—one at the level of U.S. House districts and the other at the level of the state. In addition, these distinct trends raise the possibility that there may be a strong connection between primary and general election competition that is masked by some other important factor—whatever explains the differential trends in general election competition over the 100 year span.

Two obvious suspects, given the literature on political competition in the United States, are incumbency and party. Gelman and King (1990), Levitt and Wolfram (1997), and others document a large increase in the incumbency advantage in U.S. House elections beginning in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002) document a substantial rise in the incumbency advantages in all statewide offices, as well as a clear narrowing of the

party divisions within states. In the analysis in Table 1, we combined open and incumbent-contested seats, and we did not control for the underlying party division within the states.

Table 2 isolates the effects of incumbency. For statewide and U.S. House races, we present the competitiveness of primary and general elections over time in incumbent-contested and open seats. We use the same measure of competitiveness as in Table 1.

The data summarized in Table 2 reveal that incumbency was not likely to have masked an underlying correlation between primary and general election competition. For each period and for each type of election (e.g., open-statewide), we computed the expected results under the hypothesis that the variables are independent. As in the forgoing analysis, in no category of competition in Table 2 did the fraction of cases we would expect under independence differ from the fraction of cases observed by more than 3 percentage points. More than half of the chi-squared tests cannot reject the null of independence at the 1 percent significance level.

The evidence in Table 2 also suggests that the differential trends in competition in statewide and House elections are attributable to incumbency. In both sorts of elections, incumbents enjoyed rising electoral security in the general elections, but the fraction of all races contested by incumbents was much lower in statewide elections than in House elections.

Consider, first, the open seat races. These serve as a baseline against which to contrast the races contested by incumbents. Open seat races show relatively little change or even growing competitiveness. In open seat races for the House, the subtables for the period 1910 to 1938 and for 1960 to 2000 are nearly indistinguishable. In both eras, 12 percent of the winners faced no serious primary or general election competition. There was a slight drop in the fraction of cases in which the winners received less than 60 percent of the vote in both the general and primary elections, but it was substantively unimportant. Statewide races show more change, and in the direction of increased competition. Overall general election competition rose considerably. Half of all open seat winners received less than 60 percent of the vote in the general election in the first period; 71 percent of all open seat winners faced serious general election competition in the third period. Primary election competition fell slightly in these seats, and overall competition rose.

Races contested by incumbents show a drop in competition in both statewide and House

elections. In statewide elections, the fraction of incumbents who won reelection with at least 60 percent in the primary and general elections rose from 32 percent in the first period to 42 percent in the third period. House elections show a somewhat larger gain. The fraction of incumbents who won reelection with at least 60 percent in the primary and general elections rose from 42 percent in the first period to 69 percent in the third period. Primary election competition fell substantially in both the House and the statewide offices. Competition in statewide general elections did not change appreciably between these periods. House general election competition dropped dramatically. Forty-seven percent of House incumbents won by less than 60 percent of the general election vote through the first half of the twentieth century; just twenty-eight percent did in the second half of the century.

Trends in overall competitiveness mask contrary trends in open seats and incumbent-contested seats. The open seats show little trend, or, in the case of statewide elections, some increase in competition. Incumbent-contested seats, especially in the primary elections, show significant weakening in competitiveness. Statewide elections show a slight increase in competition because half of all statewide offices are selected in open seats, and that fraction has risen somewhat over the twentieth century. The higher frequency of open seats in statewide elections traces to one feature of state electoral laws – term limits on most statewide office holders (see Ansolabehere and Snyder 2004). U.S. House elections show a significant weakening in competitiveness because 90 percent of all House races are contested by incumbents. That trend dominates in the House series.

Incumbency explains much of the difference in overall competition between House and statewide offices. It does not, however, affect the underlying relationship between primary and general elections. Competition in these two stages appears to operate independently.

These facts suggest that many of the fundamentals in the election system changed little. Open seats are as competitive as ever. Thus, the decline in overall competitiveness appears to be a consequence of rising incumbency advantages and increasingly large numbers of incumbents running for reelection. Owing to complicated measurement issues, we consider the growth of the incumbency effect in primary elections in a separate paper.

Partisan divisions of the states have also changed dramatically over the course of the

twentieth century. Southern states shifted from Democratic dominance to strong two-party competition today. Likewise, many northern states that were once dominated by the Republican Party have today also become very competitive. As a final slice at the connection between primary and general election competition, we consider whether the rise of party competition within states correlated with less primary election competition.

We classified all states according to their degree of general election competition. To do this, we used the measure of the normal vote produced by the analysis of state election returns, as discussed above. The normal vote for a given state in a given election year is the average general election vote share across all statewide offices for the ten year period prior to and including the election year of interest. We call states competitive if the normal division of the two party vote calculated for that year was less than 60 percent or more than 40 percent Democratic. Strongly Democratic states are those where the normal two-party vote exceeds 60 percent, and strongly Republican states are those where the normal two-party vote falls below 40 percent. We coded each party primary election as competitive if the winner received less than 60 percent of the total vote.

Over time American state elections have become much more competitive. From 1900 to 1938, 49 percent of all statewide officers were elected in states where the normal division of the two party vote was closer than 60 to 40. From 1962 to 2004, 64 percent of all statewide elections occurred in competitive states.

The change in the competitiveness of states, however, is unlikely to explain the decline in competitiveness of primary elections. Even within the competitive states the fraction of both Republican and Democratic primaries in which the winner's vote share exceeded 60 percent dropped by more than 15 percentage points.

The difference between the primary competition for a dominant party in its "safe" state and for that same party in a competitive state is less than 10 percentage points for the Democrats and less than 7 percentage points for the Republicans. From 1900 to 1938, 52 percent of Republican party primaries were competitive in Republican-dominated states; by contrast 46 percent of Republican primaries were competitive in competitive states. Fifty-one percent of Democratic primaries were competitive in Democratic-dominated states; by

comparison, 45 percent of Democratic primaries were competitive in two-party competitive states. From 1940 to 1960, 31 percent of Republican primaries were competitive in Republican-dominated states, in comparison to 32 percent in the competitive states. In this same period, 39 percent of Democratic primaries were competitive in Democratic-dominated states, as compared to 33 percent in the competitive states. From 1962 to 2004, 37 percent of Democratic primaries were competitive in the handful of Democratic-dominated states, in comparison with 28 percent in the competitive states, and the proportion of competitive GOP primaries were virtually the same, at 24 percent in Republican states and 27 percent in closely-contested states. While the differences between the proportion of competitive elections in the one- versus two-party states are found to be statistically significant using a simple t-test, these differences are substantively small.

The partisan balance does have a large and negative effect on the degree of competition in the primaries of the disadvantaged party. In a state dominated by one party, there is much less competition in the “out party’s” primaries than in the “in party’s,” and also much less competition than in two-party competitive states. This surely reflects the disincentive to run in a competitive primary when there is little hope of winning in the general election. Thus, moving from a one-party to a two-party state is likely to increase the competitiveness of the formerly subordinate party’s primary. Thus, as states become more competitive, the increase in the competitiveness of the out party’s primaries may potentially offset the decline in competitiveness of the in party’s primaries.

To account for potential differences between states with dominant Democratic parties in the South and states with dominant parties states in the North, we also compared electoral competition in one-party and two-party states in the South and the North.<sup>16</sup> Differences in the patterns between the South and North appear to depend upon whether Oklahoma is coded as southern or northern. When Oklahoma, which is known to have very competitive primaries, is excluded from the analysis, any substantive difference between the southern and northern states in the trends in one-party and two-party primary competition disappears.

## 6. Conclusions

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<sup>16</sup>These results are available from the authors upon request.

Primary elections in the United States today fall far short of the ideal for which they were introduced. Primaries were conceived as a way to open up the parties and increase electoral competition in the United States, and they served as an alternative to general election competition in states that were dominated by one party. Using the simplest indicator, they certainly seemed to have met this function at the beginning of the twentieth century. Approximately one in four statewide elections would not have had significant electoral competition during the first four decades of the twentieth century were there no primary elections. However, over the course of the past century, the screening function of primary elections appears to have weakened dramatically. Today, only about 25 percent of statewide candidates face serious primary opposition, and less than 8 percent win after competitive primaries but uncompetitive general elections.

The historical record also suggests that primary elections are not a substitute for general election competition, nor do they reflect different cultures of competition within states. Our strong expectation at the beginning of this inquiry was that we would find a strong correlation between primary and general election competition, and, following Key's seminal work, that this correlation would be negative. However, we have discovered that primary election competition is not associated with general election competition. Rather these appear to operate independently of one another. The weakening primary election screen is not balanced out by more general election competition. The result of declining primary election competition, then, is less competition overall in the U.S. electoral system.

We have, of course, compared primaries today with primaries 100 years ago. We have not compared primaries with caucus and convention nomination systems, or the system of rotation. Nineteenth century nomination politics is almost completely undocumented. It may be the case that the very institution of primaries profoundly alters the politics of nominations. We have focused on the politics within one sort of institution—primary elections—which their advocates sought in order to produce a very competitive electoral system in the U.S. We have documented the long-term decline in competition in primaries.

It is ultimately a normative matter whether the decline of primary election competition, and the corresponding decline in overall electoral competition, is good or bad. However, the

atrophy of primary election competition raises doubts about many theoretical arguments about American politics today. We are skeptical that primary elections can be a major source of polarization in elite discourse in the United States. With so few competitive and contested primaries it is unclear to us why politicians would not be more attentive to the median voter and less attentive to the primary electorates. Also, these findings raise doubts about arguments, such as those of Zaller and King, that primary elections contribute to incumbent vulnerability and incumbency advantages. If elections are like single-elimination tournaments, then almost all incumbents draw a bye in the first round. Given the utter lack of competition in primary elections it seems unlikely that incumbents are “running scared” that they might lose the next primary. That being said, the overall decline in competition is tied to incumbency, as there is less competition when incumbents run.

Finally, we are concerned by the very fact that electoral competition in the United States is waning. Political science takes virtually as given that electoral competition is good. It improves accountability of government and representation; it is the venue for deliberative democracy. It may be that we, as a discipline, are wrong about this conjecture. Careful consideration of why electoral competition has declined and how might help in understanding the conditions under which competition matters. However, it seems more plausible that the conjecture is right—that more competition is generally better. With the decline of primary election competition Americans have lost an important instrument of electoral accountability.

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**Table 1: Primary Versus General Election Competition  
Statewide and U.S. House Elections, 1910 to 2000**

			STATEWIDE OFFICES					
			1910-1938		1940-1958		1960-2000	
			Competitive Primary Elections					
			no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
All Seats	Competitive General Election	no	26.8 (794)	24.5 (728)	33.2 (795)	16.6 (397)	33.1 (1252)	7.7 (292)
		yes	22.9 (679)	25.8 (765)	32.2 (770)	18.0 (431)	42.1 (1590)	17.1 (644)
$\chi^2$			7.85 (0.01)		1.76 (0.18)		48.16 (0.00)	
			U.S. HOUSE ELECTIONS					
			1910-1938		1940-1958		1960-2000	
			Competitive Primary Elections					
			no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
All Seats	Competitive General Election	no	39.3 (1005)	12.2 (313)	49.7 (1302)	8.6 (225)	63.7 (6233)	4.7 (460)
		yes	31.9 (816)	16.6 (425)	33.9 (888)	7.8 (204)	25.3 (2476)	6.3 (613)
$\chi^2$			34.33 (0.00)		7.24 (0.01)		364.16 (0.00)	

The numbers not in parentheses are the percentage of all cases in each category within each time period. In parentheses are the number of cases in each category.

<b>Table 2: Primary vs General Election Competition Controlling for Incumbency Competition Statewide and House Elections, 1910 to 2000</b>										
			1910-1938		1940-1958		1960-2000			
<b>Statewide Offices</b>			Competitive Primary Elections							
			no	yes	no	yes	no	yes		
Open Seats	Competitive Statewide	no	17.7 (201)	32.9 (373)	18.3 (135)	26.0 (192)	13.0 (155)	15.5 (184)		
	General Elections	yes	16.7 (189)	32.8 (372)	24.9 (184)	30.9 (228)	37.9 (450)	33.6 (400)		
$\chi^2$			0.22 (0.64)		0.85 (0.36)		5.05 (0.03)			
Incumbent- Challenger	Competitive General Election	no	32.4 (593)	19.4 (355)	39.9 (660)	12.4 (205)	42.4 (1097)	4.2 (108)		
		yes	26.8 (490)	21.5 (393)	35.4 (586)	12.3 (203)	44.0 (1140)	9.4 (244)		
$\chi^2$			9.43 (0.00)		0.91 (0.34)		41.19 (0.00)			
<b>U.S. House Elections</b>			Competitive Primary Elections							
			no	yes	no	yes	no	yes		
Open Seats	Competitive House	no	12.1 (31)	26.9 (69)	10.3 (22)	29.9 (64)	12.2 (111)	24.0 (219)		
	General Elections	yes	19.1 (49)	42.0 (108)	25.7 (55)	34.1 (73)	26.5 (242)	37.4 (341)		
$\chi^2$			0.00 (0.97)		6.75 (0.01)		5.51 (0.02)			
Incumbent- Challenger	Competitive General Election	no	42.3 (974)	10.6 (244)	53.2 (1280)	6.7 (161)	69.0 (6122)	2.7 (241)		
		yes	33.3 (767)	13.8 (317)	34.6 (833)	5.5 (131)	25.2 (2234)	3.1 (272)		
$\chi^2$			26.40 (0.00)		3.16 (0.08)		164.74 (0.00)			

The numbers not in parentheses are the proportions of all cases within each time period. In parentheses are the numbers of representatives in each category.

<b>Table 3: Primary Competition by Party in U.S. Senate and Statewide Races, 1908-2004, One-Party versus Two-Party States</b>					
		Democratic Primary		Republican Primary	
		Uncomp	Compet	Uncomp	Compet
1908-1938	Democratic states	48.6 (444)	51.4 (469)	80.9 (89)	19.1 (21)
	Competitive states	55.5 (748)	44.5 (599)	54.3 (695)	45.8 (586)
	Republican states	81.4 (674)	18.6 (154)	48.0 (417)	52.0 (451)
1940-1960	Democratic states	60.6 (579)	39.4 (377)	88.6 (364)	11.4 (47)
	Competitive states	67.3 (755)	32.7 (367)	69.0 (778)	31.0 (350)
	Republican states	80.2 (276)	19.8 (68)	67.6 (240)	32.4 (115)
1962-2004	Democratic states	62.9 (748)	37.1 (442)	88.2 (1093)	11.9 (147)
	Competitive states	71.9 (1853)	28.1 (724)	75.9 (1976)	24.1 (626)
	Republican states	85.2 (213)	14.8 (37)	73.2 (180)	26.8 (66)

The numbers not in parentheses are the proportions of primary elections within each type of state that are competitive or not competitive. In parentheses are the number of elections in each category for each state.

**Table A1: Elected Offices and Data Sources for Each State**

	Offices Elected in One or More Years	Sources
AL AK AZ	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, Gm, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Co, M, Tx, J	<i>Official and Statistical Register</i> <i>Official Returns</i> <i>Year Book; Official Canvass; Bill Turnbow's</i> <i>AZ Political Almanac</i>
AR CA	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Ld, PU, J LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, I, Ld, Pr, Ck, J	<i>Official Register; AR Elections</i> <i>Statement of Vote; CA Blue Book</i>
CO CT DE	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Rg, PU, J LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au LG, AG, Tr, Au, I	<i>Abstract of Votes Cast</i> <i>Statement of Vote; Register and Manual</i> <i>State Manual; Official Results of Primary</i> <i>Elections</i>
FL GA	SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, J LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, Lb, I, Pu, J	<i>Report of Sec. of State</i> <i>Official and Statistical Register</i>
HI ID	LG LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, M, J	<i>Result of Votes Cast</i> <i>Abstract of Votes; Biennial Report of Sec. of</i> <i>State</i>
IL IN	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ck, Rg LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ld, Ck, St, J	<i>Official Vote; Blue Book of State of IL</i> <i>Report of Sec. of State; Yearbook of State of</i> <i>IN</i>
IA KS	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Cm, Ck, J LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, I, PU, Pr, J	<i>Official Register; Canvass of the Vote</i> <i>Official Statement of Vote Cast; Biennial</i> <i>Report of Sec. of State</i>
KY LA	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Ld, Ck LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, I, Ag, Ld, El	<i>Statement of Official Vote; KY Votes; Offi-</i> <i>cial Primary and General Election Returns</i> <i>Biennial Report of Sec. of State; Compila-</i> <i>tion of Primary Election Returns</i>
MD ME MA	LG, AG, Au, Ck Au LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au	<i>Compilation of Election Returns; MD Man-</i> <i>ual</i> <i>Official Vote; Statement of Vote</i> <i>Election Statistics; Number of Assessed</i> <i>Polls</i>
MI MN	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Ld, Rg, Hy, J LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, PU, Ck, J	<i>MI Manual; Official Directory and Leg.</i> <i>Manual</i> <i>MN Legislative Manual</i>

**Table A1, continued**

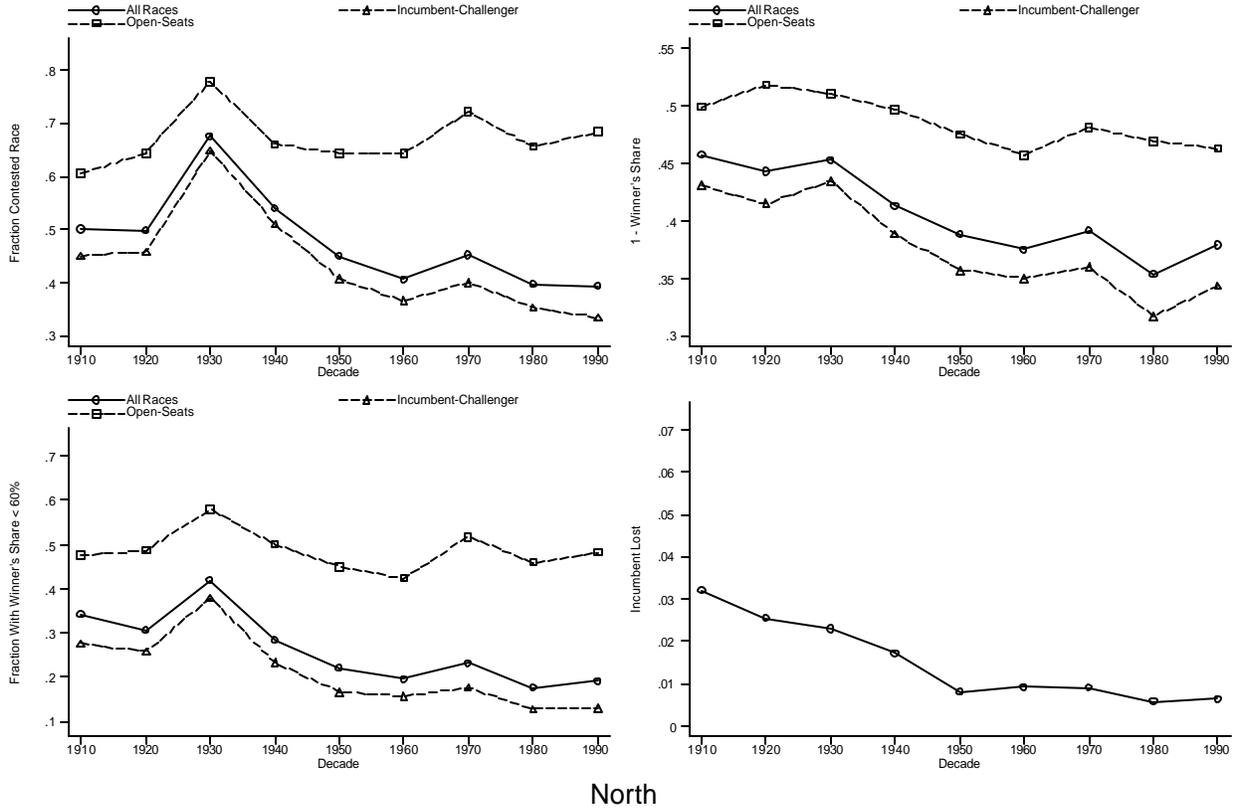
	Offices Elected in One or More Years	Sources
MS	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Ld, I, Ck, Tx, J	<i>Official and Statistical Register; MS Blue Book</i>
MO	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, PU, J	<i>Official Vote of the State of MO; Roster of State and District Officers; Official Manual</i>
MT	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, PU, Ck, J	<i>Official Primary Election Returns; MT Politics Since 1864</i>
NE	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, PU, Ld, J	<i>Official Report of the State Canvassing Board</i>
NV	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, M, Ld, Ck, Pr, Rg, J	<i>Political History of Nevada; Official Returns</i>
NH		<i>Manual for the General Court</i>
NJ		<i>NJ Election Returns; NJ Manual</i>
NM	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ld, Co, J	<i>Blue Book; Official Returns</i>
NY	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, Ld, J	<i>NY Red Book; Primary Election Vote</i>
NC	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Co, Ag, Lb, I, J	<i>NC Manual</i>
ND	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, Lb, I, Tx, J	<i>Official Abstract of Vote Cast; Compilation of Election Returns; ND Election Statistics</i>
OH	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, Ck, PW, J	<i>OH Election Statistics</i>
OK	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Co, Ag, Lb, Ld, I, M, CC, Ck, J	<i>Directory of the State of Oklahoma; Officially Verified Returns</i>
OR	SS, AG, Tr, E, Ag, PU, Lb, Pr, J	<i>Blue Book; Official Abstract of Votes</i>
PA	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, J	<i>State Manual (Smulls Handbook); Official Results</i>
RI	LG, SS, AG, Tr	<i>Official Count of the Ballots Cast</i>
SC	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, Aj	<i>Supplem. Report of Sec. of State; SC Leg. Manual</i>
SD	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, PU, Ld, Lb, J	<i>Official Election Returns; SD Leg. Manual</i>
TN	PU, J	<i>Directory and Official Vote; TN Blue Book</i>
TX	LG, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, PU, Ld, J	<i>Returns of an Election Held; TX Almanac</i>
UT	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, J	<i>Abstract of Vote</i>

**Table A1, continued**

	Offices Elected in One or More Years	Sources
VT	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au	<i>Legislative Directory and State Manual</i>
VA	LG, SS, AG, Tr, E, Ag	<i>Report of Sec. of Commonwealth; Statement of Vote</i>
WA	LG, SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ld, I, Pr, J	<i>Abstract of Votes; Biennial Report of Sec. of State</i>
WV	SS, AG, Tr, Au, E, Ag, J	<i>Official Returns; WV Leg. Handbook and Manual</i>
WI	LG, SS, AG, Tr, E, PU, I, J	<i>WI Blue Book</i>
WY	SS, Tr, Au, E, J	<i>Official Directory; WY Blue Book, Vol II</i>

LG = Lieutenant Governor; SS = Secretary of State; AG = Attorney General; Tr = Treasurer; Au = Auditor, Controller, Comptroller; E = Commissioner of Education, Superintendent of Schools, etc.; Ag = Commissioner of Agriculture, Agriculture & Industry, Dairy, etc.; Rg = University Regent, Trustee; PU = Public Utility Commissioner, Public Service Commissioner, Railroad Commissioner, Railroad & Public Utility Commissioner, etc.; Co = Corporation Commissioner; Cm = Commerce Commissioner; I = Insurance Commissioner; Lb = Commissioner of Labor; Ld = Land Commissioner, Surveyor, Inspector, Geologist; M = Commissioner of Mines, Mine Inspector; Gm = Game Commissioner; Pn = Prison Commissioner; Tx = Tax Commissioner, Tax Collector; CC = Charities & Corrections Commissioner; Pr = Printer; St = Statistician; El = Elections; Hy = Highway Commissioner; PW = Board of Public Works; Ck = Court Clerk, Court Reporter; Aj = Adjutant General; J = Supreme Court Justice, Appeals Court Judge.

Figure 1



North

Figure 2

