

Partisan Voters, Partisan States: How the Rising Strength of Party and Ideology  
in the American Public Affects Aggregate Electoral Results

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**Abstract**

There is a great deal of scholarly and popular attention to trends of growing party-line and ideological voting among individual voters, as well as a widely perceived increase in the depth and stability of partisan alignments among states. We aim to bridge the gap between individual and aggregate change by investigating the relationship between these trends over the period 1988-2008, analyzing data from exit polls and the ANES. Among other results, we find (1) that partisan and ideological voting is indeed on the rise, (2) that moderate and independent voters are increasingly likely to support candidates of the dominant party within their state, (3) that states are becoming more dissimilar over time in their partisan but not ideological balance, (4) that election results at the state level are becoming more stable between consecutive elections and that presidential and Senate elections are converging over time within states, (5) that the state-level correlations among partisan balance, ideological balance, and electoral outcomes have strengthened dramatically over this period, and (7) that voters within states that differ in their partisan, ideological, or electoral alignments disagree more over cultural issues than economic issues. We argue that these trends work together to shape the now-familiar “red versus blue” electoral map.

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## Introduction

The dominant role of party identification in shaping the candidate choice of voters in federal elections is one of the most distinctive attributes of contemporary American politics. Although the claim that parties in the electorate were becoming substantially weaker over time achieved fairly broad acceptance a generation ago (Burnham 1989; Wattenberg 1984), partisanship has undergone a widely acknowledged resurgence in the mind of the American voter since the 1970s and 1980s (Bartels 2000). While 23 percent of self-identified Democrats defected from their party's candidates to support Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan in 1980 (according to the National Election Studies) and over 40 percent crossed party lines to support Richard Nixon in 1972, recent elections have featured high levels of party loyalty on both sides. In the 2008 presidential election, for example, 89 percent of self-identified Democrats supported their party's candidate, Barack Obama, for president, while 90 percent of Republicans reported voting for Republican nominee John McCain, according to national exit polls (CNN 2008); these figures were slightly higher according to the NES. Political campaigns now appear to prioritize maximizing turnout among their own partisan supporters over courting members of the opposition, concluding, perhaps correctly, that the potential for large-scale partisan defection has eroded dramatically since the days of "Reagan Democrats" or "Johnson Republicans."

Although the resurgent power of partisanship in shaping vote choice is widely acknowledged by political scientists and popular commentators alike, these two groups of observers tend to view the phenomenon from distinct perspectives. Much of the scholarly analysis exploring the role of parties in the electorate employs data from national surveys to identify and account for changes in voters' behavior at the individual level. For example, a lively debate has emerged over the extent to which the American mass public has become more ideologically polarized over the past several decades, mirroring the increasingly bimodal distribution of ideology among political elites such as members of Congress. Some scholars (e.g. Abramowitz 2010) argue that ideological polarization has indeed occurred in the mass electorate, especially among the most politically active and attentive citizens, while skeptics (e.g. Fiorina 2005, Levendusky 2009) contend that Americans are not collectively becoming more ideologically

extreme but are instead responding to increasingly distinct cues from party elites by more reliably sorting themselves into the “correct” party given their own political views. Either of these trends, however, would work to increase the ideological distance between the two partisan blocs in the electorate, and would produce a stronger association between citizens’ political ideology and their party identification.

For many political journalists, strategists, and pundits, in contrast, the growth of partisan strength in recent elections is best symbolized by the modern electoral map. The widespread perception that the United States is now deeply divided into “red” and “blue” geographic regions emerged in the wake of the unusually close and controversial 2000 presidential election and has persisted ever since (aided by the fact that the same party carried 40 states and the District of Columbia in each of the last three presidential elections). Residents of “red” and “blue” America are widely presumed not only to differ over their preferred candidates for president, but also to align themselves with opposite parties and to hold very different ideological views. The electoral college’s allocation of electors by state, and the practice of awarding these electors in a winner-take-all fashion to the candidate placing first in the state’s popular vote, encourages popular observers of American elections to place particular importance on state-level outcomes, as does the popular election of senators by state. Commentators sometimes make unwarranted inferences about the behavior of individual voters based on these aggregate outcomes (see Gelman 200x), but the central role played by states in the American electoral system encourages—and, in fact requires—political actors and analysts to pay attention to the partisan alignments of collective electorates defined by geographic units.

Our analysis aims to reconcile these contrasting approaches by examining the links between individual-level and aggregate change in the associations among party identification, ideology, and vote choice. Has the increasing propensity of individual voters since the 1980s to support the candidate of their party, and to identify with the party espousing their preferred ideology, produced a corresponding rise in the strength of the correspondence between aggregate partisanship, or aggregate ideology, and electoral outcomes at the state level? Are states now predictably “loyal” to the nominees of the majority party

within their electorates because individual voters now routinely support the candidate who shares their party identification?

In addition, we note that while state-level partisan alignments appear relatively stable over the three most recent presidential elections (with a few exceptions, such as the Democratic Party's much-noted electoral vote victory in Virginia in 2008, its first since 1964), the American electoral map has evolved significantly since the 1980s. What factors appear to be the most important in producing this visible aggregate change? Our analysis aims to address this question as well.

### **Linking Individual and Aggregate Effects**

In order to investigate the attributes of voters nested within states, we draw upon data from national exit polls conducted on behalf of news organizations in each presidential election from 1988 (the first election for which surveys are available for all 50 states) to 2008.<sup>1</sup> Exit polls offer the benefit of large samples in every state, and they include measures of candidate choice as well as other political and demographic variables. Individual cases are weighted in order to match the official vote returns within each state.

We begin by testing the assumption that the relationship between party identification and vote choice increased over time at the state level before considering how the state-level patterns relate to changes among individual voters. Figure 1 plots the two-party presidential vote in each state against the state's aggregate party balance, or the percentage of self-identified Republicans minus the percentage of Democrats in the state, for each of the six elections between 1988 and 2008. We also represent the relationship between these variables over time by displaying the unstandardized regression coefficient (corresponding to the slope of the estimated bivariate regression line) and Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient below the series of scatterplots.

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<sup>1</sup> For the 1988 election, our analysis is based on merged data from two independent surveys conducted by ABC and CBS. For all other elections, we use the single national exit poll conducted by the Voter News Service (VNS) on behalf of the major broadcast networks. The data from these surveys have been deposited in the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) archive and are made available to affiliates of member institutions at <http://icpsr.umich.edu>.

[Figure 1 about here]

The pattern is quite clear: since the 1980s, the aggregate balance of party identification within a state's electorate has become a more powerful predictor of the two-party presidential vote in the state. The growth in the strength of this relationship was particularly concentrated in the period between 1992 and 2000, the election that first inspired the "red states against blue states" characterization of contemporary electoral politics. But the close correspondence between aggregate party balance and the presidential vote that had emerged by 2000 was replicated in the two subsequent elections as well. Although Barack Obama surprised some political observers in 2008 by achieving narrow popular victories in Indiana, North Carolina, and Virginia, three states that have traditionally supported Republican candidates for president, the shift in these states' alignments did not exemplify an overall decline in the importance of aggregate party identification in predicting the presidential vote; the latter two states, in fact, both contained a plurality of Democratic identifiers in 2008.

We might expect that the growth in the state-level association between party balance and the vote since 1980s simply reflects party realignment in the South, where the traditional Democratic allegiance among white voters has given way to Republican dominance in recent years. As late as the 1990s, Democratic identifiers outnumbered Republicans in the electorate of most southern states, but for the previous generation many of these nominal Democrats had defected to Republican candidates in presidential elections, reflecting the region's prevailing conservative ideology. If the relationship between aggregate ideological balance and vote choice remained constant over time, it would suggest that the increasing alignment of state-level party identification with electoral outcomes was merely an artifact of the rise of partisan sorting in the South. However, the trend evident in Figure 1 remains even if southern states are excluded from the analysis; the correlation coefficient between state party balance and the presidential vote increased from .80 in the 1988–1996 period to .93 in the three subsequent elections.

Moreover, the association between states' ideological leanings and presidential vote has in fact also risen markedly since the 1980s, as demonstrated in Figure 2. (The 1992 election is omitted because

the national VNS exit poll did not include a measure of ideology on most of its state voter questionnaires that year.) Exit polls measure ideology on a three-point scale, which routinely produces significantly more self-identified conservatives than liberals; only one state in 1988 and seven in 2008 contained electorates in which liberals outnumbered conservatives. Even so, the relationship between the size of the ideological gap in a state and its presidential vote also increased dramatically over time, especially between 1988 and 1996.

[Figure 2 about here]

Based on these findings, we might well expect party identification and ideology to have themselves become more closely associated over the 1988-2008 period, as is confirmed by Figure 3. Relatively liberal or conservative states are now, almost without exception, relatively Democratic or Republican states, respectively, and vice versa.

[Figure 3 about here]

Figures 4 and 5 repeat the analyses summarized in Figures 1 and 2, with vote choice for the U.S. Senate replacing the vote for president. We would expect the Senate vote to be less strongly associated with both party identification and ideology than the presidential vote for several important reasons. Popular incumbents might draw substantial support across party lines; parties might nominate weak candidates in some states who fail to consolidate support even among their own partisan or ideological base (especially in races not deemed potentially competitive); and candidates of the same party might adopt differing issue positions across states in order to best match the ideological leanings of their potential constituents.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, both aggregate party balance and aggregate ideology are consistently

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<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the set of states in which Senate elections were held itself changes over time. The N ranges from 30 to 34 for the Senate elections from 1988 to 2008.

weaker predictors of the Senate vote than presidential vote across states. The trend over time, however, mirrors that of the previous analysis, with both the estimated correlation coefficient and the correlation coefficient rising significantly between 1988 and 2000.

[Figures 4 and 5 about here]

As might be expected from these findings, state-level election outcomes for president and Senate have increasingly converged since the 1980s, as depicted in Figure 6. Electoral alignments for the two offices were only weakly related in 1988, but aggregate ticket-splitting began to decline shortly thereafter, leading to a closer correspondence by the mid-1990s. The growth of this association gives further validity to the view that the contemporary United States is divided into durably Democratic and Republican regions in federal elections.

[Figure 6 about here]

To what extent are these aggregate trends simply a predictable consequence of the widely-noted rise since the 1980s in both the proportion of voters who join the party best suited to their ideology and the proportion of voters who support their own party's nominees for federal office? Table 1 displays the change in these individual-level relationships over time, again based on national exit poll data. We note that although each of these bivariate associations strengthened between 1988 and 2008, in most cases the increases were fairly modest. In addition, the share of the electorate that was cross-pressured (with inconsistent ideological and partisan self-identification) declined minimally between 1988 and 2008 (by four percent), on average across states, while the share of correctly "sorted" partisans (those whose party identification matched their ideological self-designation) actually declined slightly between 1988 and 2004, before reversing itself in 2008.

[Table 1 about here]

While we might expect these trends among individual voters to be amplified by aggregation (Yule and Kendall 1950, 313-15), the relatively modest increases in the strength of the relationships summarized in Table 1 appear insufficient to account for the fairly significant state-level changes visible in Figures 1–6. What other changes might be occurring in the behavior of citizens to produce the close correlation between aggregate partisan (and ideological) balance and electoral outcomes that emerged by the 2000 election? It is possible that the rate of party loyalty itself is not constant across Democratic- and Republican-leaning states, or that moderate and independent voters are increasingly supporting different candidates in different geographic locations.

Figure 7 displays the average proportion of self-identified ideological moderates (upper graph) and political independents (lower graph) voting for Republican presidential candidates in each election from 1988 to 2008, separated into two groups based on whether their state of residence included more Republican identifiers than Democrats (red line) or vice versa (blue line). In 1988 and 1992, independents were no more likely to support the Republican nominee for president if they resided in a Republican-dominated state than if they lived in a Democratic state, and moderates in 1988 were only very slightly more likely to do so (measures of voter ideology are absent in 1992). Over time, however, independents and moderates became much more likely to support the presidential candidate of their state's prevailing party; by the 2008 election, gaps had emerged of roughly 10 percentage points among both groups of voters. Figure 8 repeats this analysis for the Senate vote, revealing an even larger gap emerging over time between the voting preferences of both moderates and independents in Republican and Democratic states.

[Figures 7 and 8 about here]

Figure 9 expands this analysis by including self-identified partisans and ideologues as well. The figures suggest that the voting behavior even of these groups has become somewhat sensitive to the



overall distribution of party identification within the state, at least in some cases; in other words, Republicans and conservatives are somewhat more likely to vote for Republican presidential and Senate candidates in Republican-leaning states, and vice versa for Democrats and liberals.

Importantly, however, the effects generally remain smaller than those among moderates and independents. Those claiming no partisan or ideological affinity are especially coming to act in a fashion that reflects the partisan composition of their state. Collectively, these trends would be expected to reinforce the relationship between party balance and electoral outcomes at the state level, even without a significant increase in individual party loyalty over time. We view this phenomenon as an important, if not the most important, individual-level change driving the aggregate convergence of partisanship and vote choice among American states since the 1980s.

[Figure 9 about here]

Why are voters, especially moderates and independents, becoming more likely to support the presidential and Senate nominees of their state's prevailing party? While a concrete answer to this question is beyond the bounds of this paper, we offer a few speculative responses. One possibility is that voters outside the minority of states that are hotly-contested "battlegrounds" are less exposed to messages from the candidates and parties, and instead are more influenced by the dominant partisan or ideological culture within their communities or media markets. Alternatively, self-described "independents" or "moderates" who live in more liberal or Democratic states could in fact hold collectively more liberal views on policy issues, or be more favorably disposed to Democratic Party candidates, than identically-identified voters living in more conservative territory. Finally, the pattern could reflect increased efforts on the parties to mobilize their bases. Such efforts would likely increase the likelihood that voters in predominantly Democratic or Republican states would receive one-sided partisan messages. This mystery deserves further investigation.

### **Stability and Change in State-Level Alignments: Which States Are Changing and Why?**

Another possible explanation for the growing stability of state party alignments is an underlying shift in the distribution of partisans and ideologues across states. Margins of party balance within states could be increasing over time, with modest aggregate gaps between the relative shares of Democratic and Republican identifiers in the 1980s evolving into more decisive advantages for one party or the other by the 2000s. Such changes would produce the observed red-blue divide in state-level voting. They would also prompt the higher state-level associations among party ID, ideology, and voting behavior visible in Figures 1–6. This would be so even if party ID and ideology were not both becoming more decisive predictors of the vote at the individual level and were not becoming more likely to correspond with each other—though the results presented in the previous section confirmed that both of these trends did occur over the past six elections. While these findings confirm those of existing research by others, to our knowledge the questions of how and why distributions of party ID and ideology are changing at the state level have remained largely unexplored.

We begin by examining the overall distributional changes in presidential vote as well as party ID and ideology. Figure 10 shows that the growing dispersion of the presidential vote across states is as evident in these exit poll data as it is the official vote tallies. In Figure 10, the election mean was subtracted from each state's two-party vote distribution to yield a mean-deviated variable, which allows us to factor out national tides when graphing how the distribution is changing. As is evident, the spread across states has been growing quite steadily over the past six presidential elections, with the range and standard deviation each growing by about 70% from 1988 to 2008; the range from 23.7 to 40.0, and the SD from 5.6 to 9.5.

[Figure 10 about here]

The balance of party identification has also grown more dispersed across states over the period, but to nothing like the same extent, as Figure 11 shows. The range fluctuates but the standard deviation

shows a more consistent, albeit modest, upward trend, ranging from 11.5 in 1988 to 13.1 in 2008—an increase of 14%. Even less change is evident in the dispersion of ideological leanings across states (Figure 12). While shifts in the mean are clear—with a diminishment of the preponderance of conservatives relative to liberals—the spread of the distribution is similar in 2008 ( $SD=11.8$ ) to what it was in 1988 ( $SD=10.8$ ).

[Figure 11 about here]

These overall portraits do not speak directly to how red states and blue states are changing over time. Are Democratic states becoming more Democratic, and Republican states becoming more Republican, producing a bigger gap between them over time? While there are different ways to parse this question, we again proceeded by categorizing a state as "Democratic" in any given year if the preponderance of party identifiers identified as Democrats, and as "Republican" if the preponderance of party identifiers identified as Republican. Figure 13 shows how the gap between these states changed over time on the three measures just discussed—in terms of the mean-deviated presidential vote, partisan balance (%R-%D), and ideological balance (%C-%L).

In all three cases, there is a monotonic or nearly monotonic increase in the gap between the red and blue states over time. The average presidential vote gap more than doubles, from about 6 to 13.5. The growing divergence in partisan balance is again more modest, but still climbs by about 4 percentage points between 1988 and 2008. And while the overall distribution of ideology across the states shows little growth in dispersion, as noted above, the gap between red and blue states is noticeably on the rise. In 1988, Democratic and Republican states differed in their ideological profiles by only 7 points on average, but this gap more than doubled, to 16 points, by 2008. Over-time trends in the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC)—which indicates how much of the variation is between the two groups of states instead of within—are comparable. Comparing just 1988 and 2008, the ICCs are .42 vs. .64 for the presidential vote, .74 vs. .78 for party ID, and .15 vs. .58 for ideology.

Closer inspection of the data shows that trend for ideology is entirely driven by over-time shifts in the ideological profile of states in the Democratic column. Conservatives outnumber liberals in Republican states by 24 percentage points in both 1988 and 2008, whereas that gap diminishes from 17% to 8% among Democratic states. For presidential vote and party identification, by contrast, the trends for each state are comparable. The partisan character of Democratic states grew more Democratic over time, while the partisan character of Republican states grew more Republican—modestly in terms of party identification distributions, more so in terms of votes cast. Although the Ns are smaller, the same pattern is found for Senate vote distributions. The divergence between Democratic and Republican states grew from 8% in 1988 to 18% in 2008, fueled about equally by pro-Democratic shifts in the former group and pro-Republican shifts in the latter. The ICC grew from .12 to .59.

From this, it is fair to say that distributional changes in the states' proportions of party identifiers figure to some extent into the story of the solidifying red-blue divide across states. States leaning toward one or the other party in 2008 leaned more toward that party than was true in 1988. But the bigger change across this period was in the growth in the consistency of states' partisan and ideological leanings. The blue states of 2008 were much less likely than those of 1988 to be drawn to the other side by ideology.

Of course, the mix of states that lean Democratic or Republican is also shifting across time, an issue that the analysis above does not speak to. Table 2 provides an overview of stability and change in the partisan balance of the U.S. states, looking only at the beginning (1988) and end (2008) of the period we are analyzing. The bottom portion of the table shows the comparable patterns for ideology. In each case, we classified states based on whether they fell in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> quartile of the state-level distribution for the dataset as a whole. Thus, for example, states in the "Clear Dem" category were in the first quartile of the party ID distribution while those in the "Lean Dem" were in the second quartile. A total of 22 states were in the same quartile and 34 states were in the same party column at both points in time. Of those 34, 25 were in the same party column in each of the six years in our study (on the Republican side: AK, AZ, CO, ID, IN, KS, NE, SC, SD, UT, WY; on the Democratic side: AR, CT, HI, IL, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, NM, NY, RI, WV).

[Table 2 about here]

We replicated the analysis of the over-time gaps between Democratic and Republican states distinguishing the 25 states that were always in the same partisan camp across the 1988-2008 period from where the balance of identifiers crossed party lines at least once during this time. Although the latter group is heterogeneous and, thus, the breakdown is rather crude, a clear pattern emerged. While the red-state—blue-state divide grew modestly among both groups on party identification, the growing vote and ideological gaps were mainly fueled by the states whose party balance had also been changing. Just comparing 1988 and 2008, the red-blue gap in party identification grew from 26 to 29 among the former and from 9 to 13 among the latter. On presidential vote the figures are 9→13 vs. 3→14, and on ideology the figures are 13→15 vs. 0→18. Shifts in the ICC are comparable. Thus, while some of the growth in the red-blue divide is fueled by polarization among the traditional Democratic and Republican strongholds, more is being driven by states whose partisan character has been in flux and that appear to be increasingly coming into alignment in terms of party and ideology.

Direct evidence on this last point comes from looking at the correlations between the states' partisan and ideological distributions over time. These correlations, as well as those relating these variables to presidential vote, are given in Table 3. First, notice that the correlation between a state's ideological balance and its partisan balance has been growing for both sets of states, but most dramatically so for the "unstable" set. The correlation between the two variables ranged from .50 to .60 in 1988 and 1992 for the states solidly in one partisan camp or the other, and grew to .70-.80 by the later elections. By contrast, the correlations for the remaining states ranged from near zero in 1988 and 1992 to .70-.80 by the end. Clearly, these states have gone from being unsorted to being sorted on party and ideology.

[Table 3 about here]

A similar pattern characterizes trends in the correlations between party ID and the vote, with a slight uptick in the correlation evident for stable states and a more dramatic climb evident for the unstable. For the latter, there is a noticeable difference between the elections prior to 2000, where the correlations between party ID and presidential vote are .30, -.07, and .20, and the later elections, where the correlations are .75, .80, and .84.

By contrast, the ideology-vote correlations are highly comparable across the two groups of states—trending upward but starting from an even higher base in 1988 and 1992 among the unstable states (.69 and .89, respectively) than among the stable states (.49 and .79, respectively). This is indirect evidence that the sorting of party and ideology occurring in these states, which is driving up the state-level correlation between party ID and the vote and the predictability of the red-blue divide, is occurring as states' distributions of partisans come to better match their distributions on ideology.

Further evidence on the evolution of these states' partisan, ideological, and vote tendencies is given in Table 4, which shows election-to-election continuity correlations (upper panel) and standard deviations (lower panel) for the stable and unstable states. While the election-to-election continuity in voting and party ID is trending upward for the states whose partisan balance was in flux across the period, it is high and stable among the more solidly partisan states. Figures 14a and 14b illustrate the change in these patterns for presidential vote by depicting scatterplots of the 1988 vs. 1992 vote and the 2004 vs. 2008 vote. As the scatterplots help one visualize, the states whose partisan balance was evolving across the period were also becoming decidedly more stable across elections and more dispersed at any one election in terms of the party that earned the majority of their citizens' loyalties and votes.

[Table 4 and Figures 14a and 14b about here]

At the same time, there is no difference across the two groups of states in the continuity of their ideological profile. The continuity correlations between 1988 and 1996 (calculated because of missing

data in 1992) are .72 and .71 for the stable and unstable states, respectively, and climb similarly to the .90 range by 2006-2008. By implication, these results suggest that the growing correlation of party and ideology in the states has occurred as states mismatched on party and ideology have brought party into alignment with ideology rather than vice versa. A simple lagged-dependence panel model confirms that this is the case. For the three most recent pairs of elections, we regressed both the state's partisan balance and the state's ideological balance on its lagged (T-1) partisan balance and ideology balance. The results are given in Table 5. In each case, lagged ideological balance predicts subsequent partisan balance, but lagged partisan balance does not predict lagged ideological balance. In short, states whose ideological balance was especially out of line with its partisan balance ended up, four years later, with a partisan profile that better matched its erstwhile ideological profile. The reverse did not happen.

[Table 5 about here]

If states are drifting into (or more assuredly into) the Democratic or Republican camp in part because that party better reflects their citizens' ideology, one obvious question that follows is how these developments relate to the issue conflicts that divide liberals and conservatives. Much of the popular conception of the red-blue divide focuses on an oft-claimed “culture war” between coastal social liberals and heartland social conservatives (e.g. Frank 2004). Political scientists have tended to be somewhat skeptical of this view, due to evidence at the individual level that economic preferences remain more important than social views in influencing party identification and vote choice (Fiorina 2005, Bartels 2006). However, it appears that social issues are becoming more salient over time (Layman and Carsey 2002; Stoker and Jennings 2008), and it remains possible that the differing geographic distribution of voter preferences along these two ideological dimensions could result in growing aggregate divergence in party affiliation, ideology, and vote choice.

We test this proposition by calculating voters' mean scores on two indices representing economic and cultural ideology that were constructed from multiple survey items in the 1988 and 2008 National

Election Studies. We divide voters by their state of residence and measure the difference in means between the residents of the two categories of states. The findings are summarized in Table 6.

[Table 6 about here]

We begin with state differences in party identification. In 1988, residents of the 15 most Democratic states (in other words, the 15 states with the largest pro-Democratic net margin in party balance) and residents of the 15 most Republican states hardly differed on either economic or social ideology. But by 2008, residents of the 15 most Democratic states in that election (note that the specific states in this category changed between 1988 and 2008 as margins of party balance shifted over time) were, as a group, more economically liberal than residents of the 15 most Republican states by .06 on a 0-to-1 scale, or about 1/3 of the standard deviation of the economic ideology index. But the gap between the two categories of states was larger on the cultural ideology index, with a difference in means of .14, or 2/3 of a standard deviation.

Similar patterns are evident when states are categorized by differences in ideological balance or by electoral outcomes in presidential and Senate elections. In each case, it appears that Democratic-voting or liberal states and Republican-voting or conservative states were, in the aggregate, more dissimilar on economic preferences in 2008 than they were in 1988, but that the gap is even higher on social issues. These findings suggest that a relative increase in the salience of either dimension, but especially the cultural dimension, of political ideology within the electorate, can account for the nature of contemporary state-level alignments. More than in the recent past, states that vote differently also disagree over issues—in particular, social issues.

The role of issues in influencing change over time in the alignments of particular states is briefly suggested by Table 7, which uses the classifications of states in Table 2 to categorize states as moving towards the Democrats or Republicans over time (with stable states omitted from the analysis) and repeats the calculations from Table 6. States moving in a Democratic direction between 1988 and 2008 were at



both time points more economically and culturally liberal, in the aggregate, than Republican-trending states, and the difference in means is once again particularly large on the cultural dimension of ideology. With the exception of residents of Democratic-trending states becoming somewhat more culturally liberal between 1988 and 2008, the views of voters within these states is not changing over time, but the party alignment of their states is more closely matching these views as relatively liberal states move toward the Democrats and conservative states move toward the Republicans.

[Table 7 about here]

## Conclusion

The relationship between individual and aggregate political change is a complicated and challenging one. We found that trends at the state level in partisan, ideological, and electoral alignments in presidential and Senate elections since the 1980s are a function not only of changing relationships among these variables at the level of individual voters, but also of changes in aggregate distributions of voter characteristics. While the growing tendency of partisans and ideologues to support candidates of their party or favored ideology can partially account for state-level trends toward greater party differentiation and stable party alignments, other, more surprising factors—such as the increasing electoral support among independents and moderates for the dominant party within a state—also play a key role in shaping electoral outcomes. Changes in the distribution of party identification and ideology across states are also consequential, with states increasingly developing a preponderance of party identifiers in one camp or the other and an ideological profile that is consistent with its partisan slant.

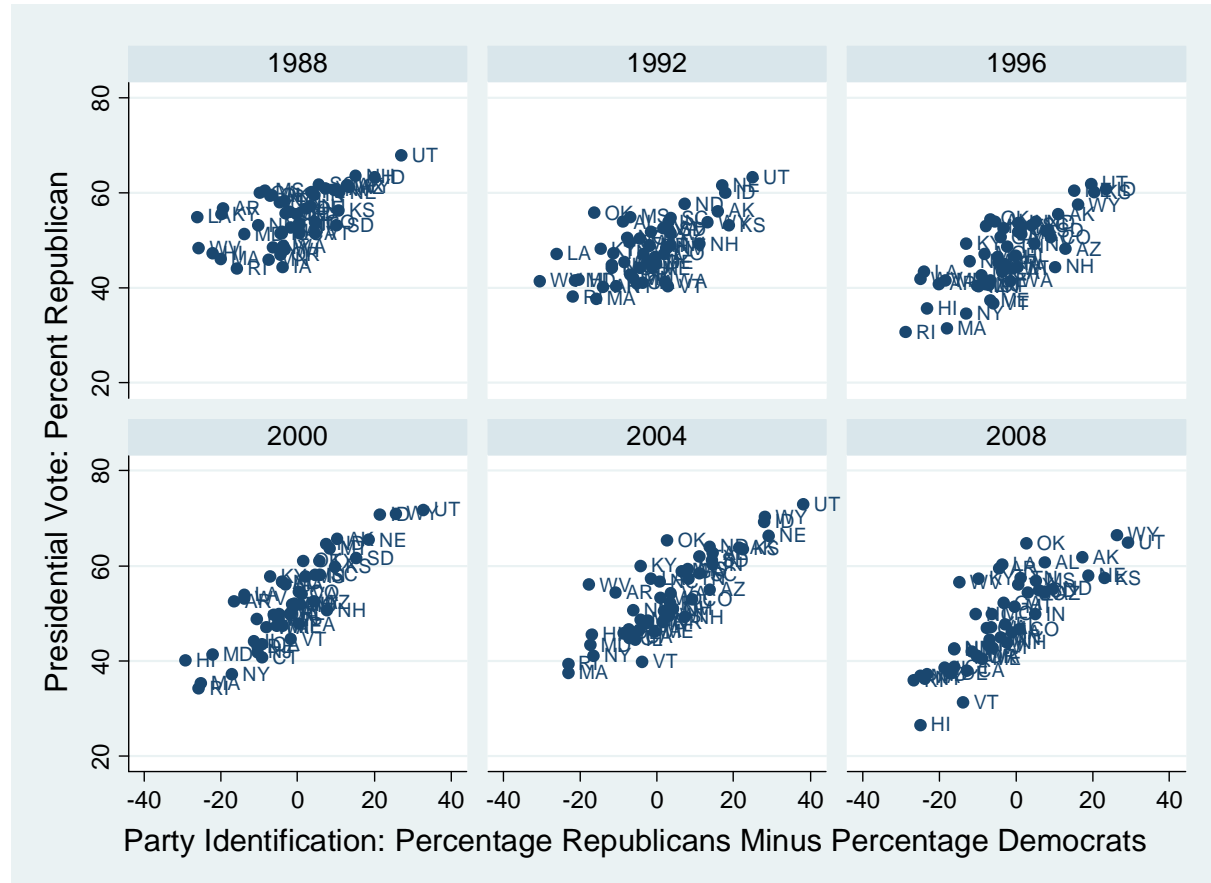
Although there is, as we write this paper, a great deal of uncertainty over the winner of the 2012 presidential campaign, polling data indicate that the state-level alignments that have emerged over the past 12 years will likely to remain almost entirely intact in the upcoming election as well. The popular forecasting website [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com) (now hosted by the *New York Times*) predicts, as of late August, that Democratic nominee Barack Obama will almost certainly carry all 18 states that voted Democratic in

each of the past three presidential elections (most with an estimated probability of 100 percent; the least secure of these states, Wisconsin, has a 72 percent chance of voting Democratic again, according to the site), while Republican challenger Mitt Romney is heavily favored in all 22 states that voted Republican in each of the three previous elections (Missouri, with an 88 percent chance of voting Republican again in 2012, is likewise estimated to be the least secure). With each succeeding election in which these state alignments endure, it becomes more critical to explore the reasons for their emergence.

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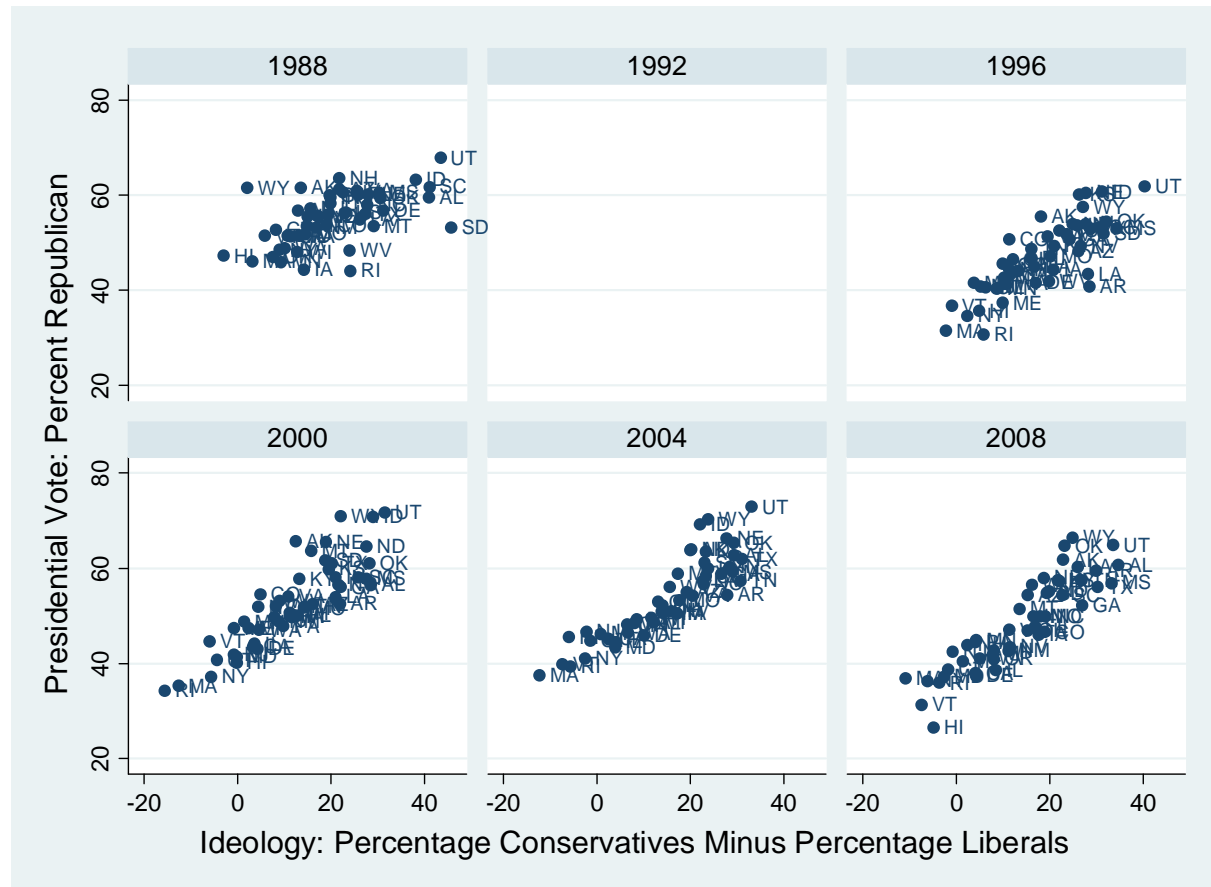
Figure 1  
State-level Relationship between Party Identification and Presidential Election Vote, over Time



|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .30         | .35         | .49         | .62         | .54         | .59         |
| Pearson r        | .62         | .66         | .77         | .87         | .85         | .81         |

Note: N=49 in 2008; missing Idaho.

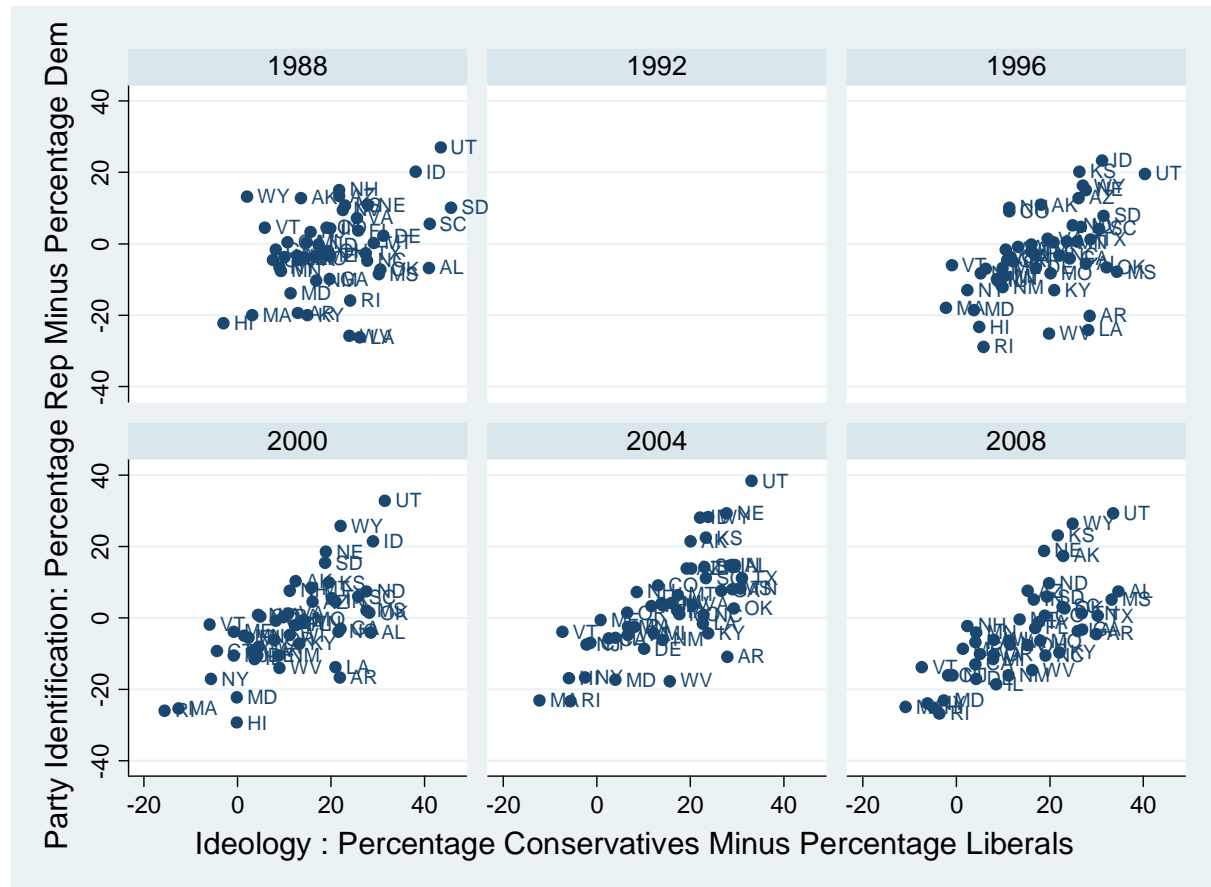
Figure 2  
State-level Relationship between Ideology and Presidential Election Vote, over Time



|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .29         | NA          | .69         | .62         | .64         | .72         |
| Pearson r        | .56         | NA          | .82         | .86         | .89         | .90         |

Note: N=49 in 2008; missing Idaho.

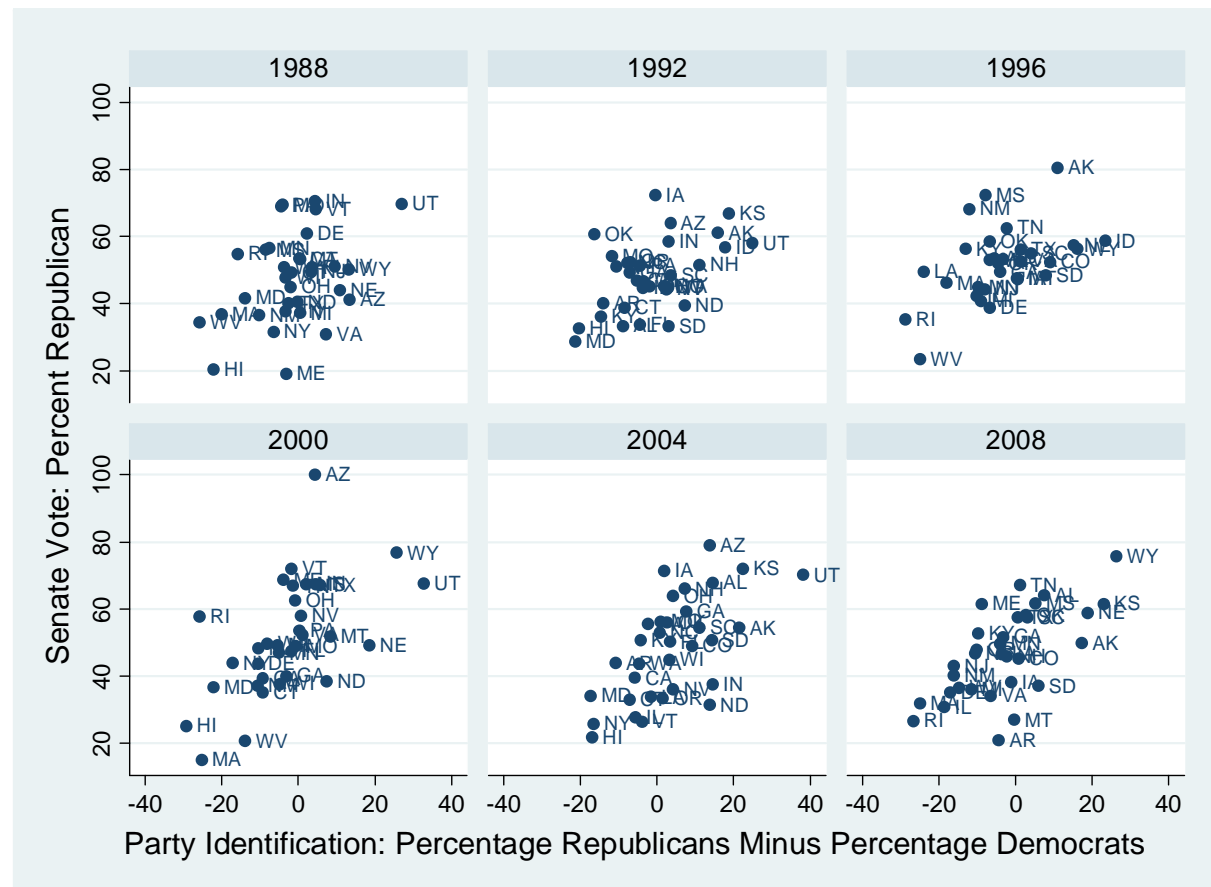
Figure 3  
State-level Relationship between Ideology and Party Identification, over Time



|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .39         | NA          | .58         | .74         | .82         | .82         |
| Pearson r        | .36         | NA          | .49         | .67         | .71         | .74         |

Note: N=49 in 2008; missing Idaho. Absolute differences between the Party ID and Ideology variables are -21.5, -21.3, 13.6, -12.0, and -17.8 for the five available years, respectively, while the SDs of that difference are 12.6, 11.2, 9.7, 9.8, and 9.1, respectively.

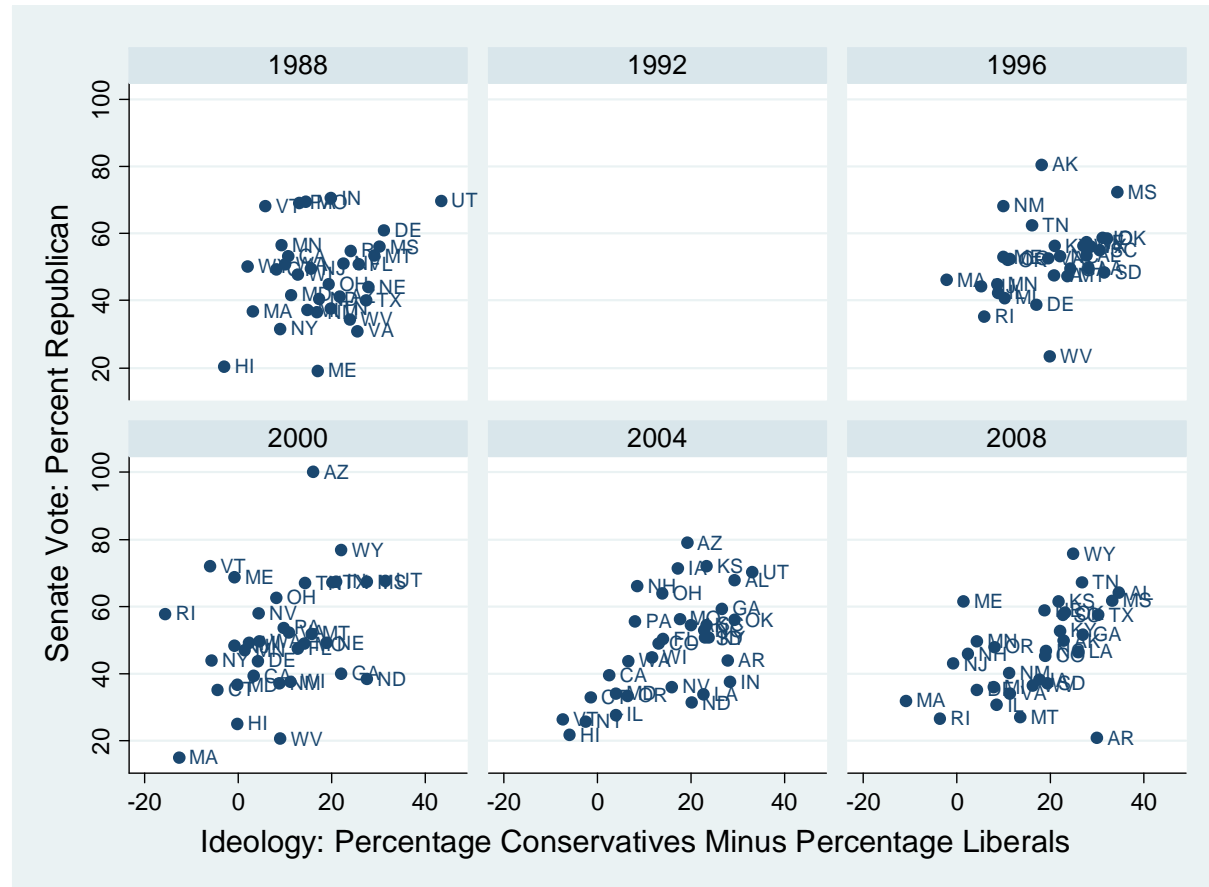
Figure 4  
State-level Relationship between Party Identification and Senate Election Vote, over Time



|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .49         | .48         | .45         | .77         | .81         | .69         |
| Pearson r        | .39         | .50         | .49         | .59         | .63         | .66         |

Note: States vary, with Ns ranging from 30-34.

Figure 5  
State-level Relationship between Ideology and Senate Election Vote, over Time

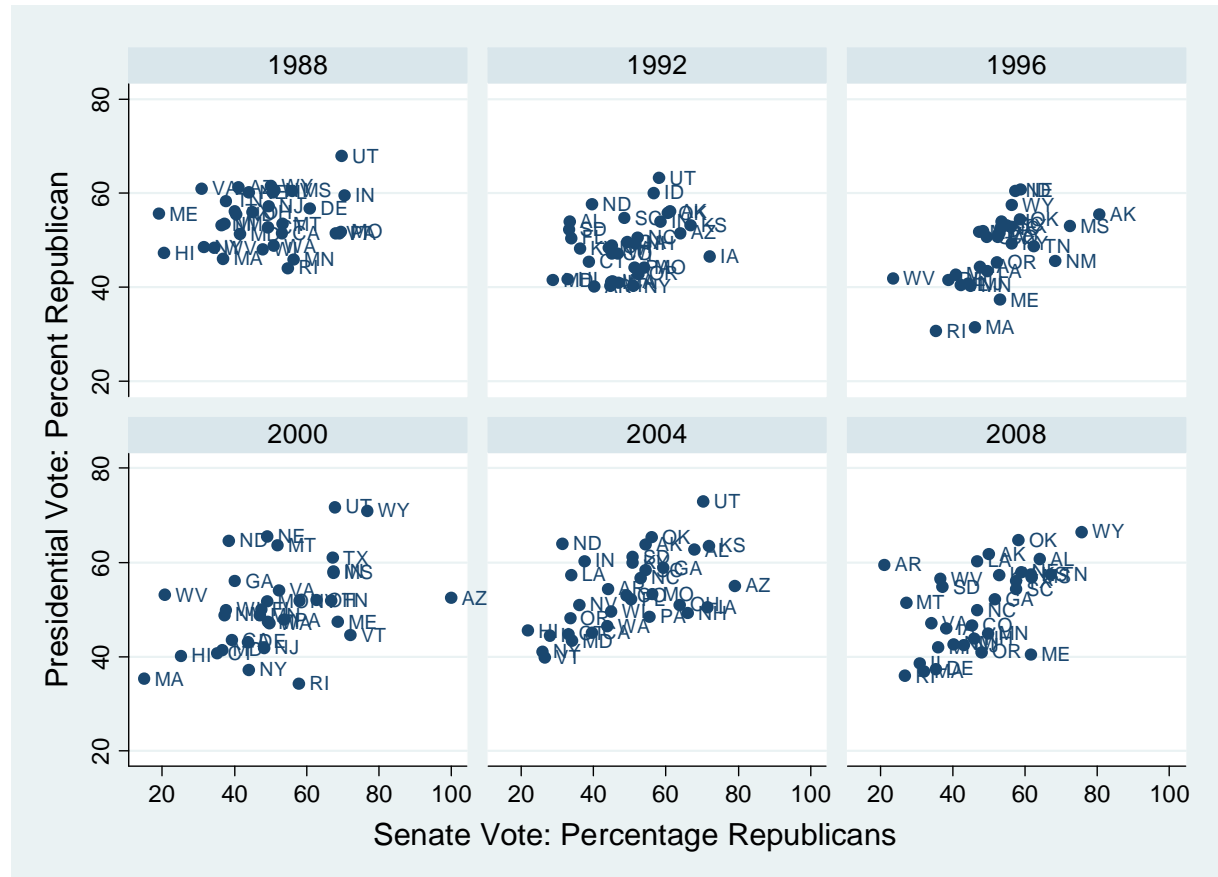


|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .34         | NA          | .39         | .54         | .57         | .57         |
| Pearson r        | .25         | NA          | .34         | .36         | .48         | .48         |

Note: States vary, with Ns ranging from 30-34. Results for 2008 if AR dropped are  $b=.69$  and  $r=.62$ .



Figure 6  
State-level Relationship between Senate Election Vote and Presidential Election Vote, over Time



|                  | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unstandardized b | .07         | .19         | .41         | .23         | .28         | .36         |
| Pearson r        | .17         | .33         | .59         | .41         | .54         | .54         |

Note: States vary, with Ns ranging from 30-34.

Figure 7

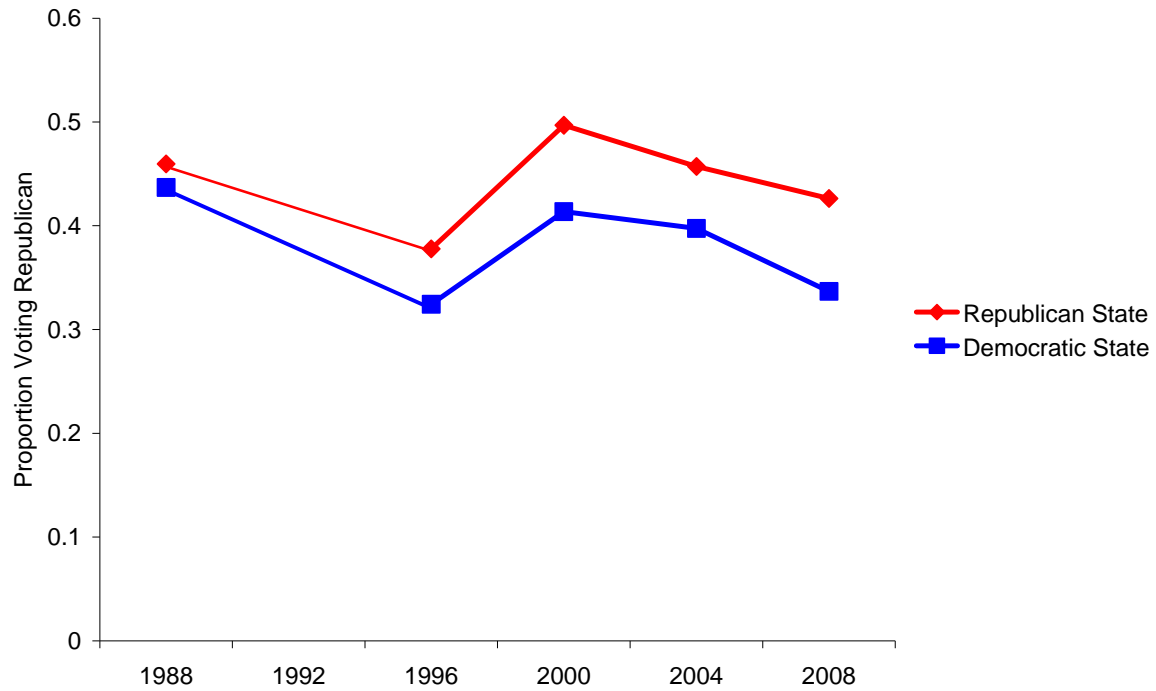
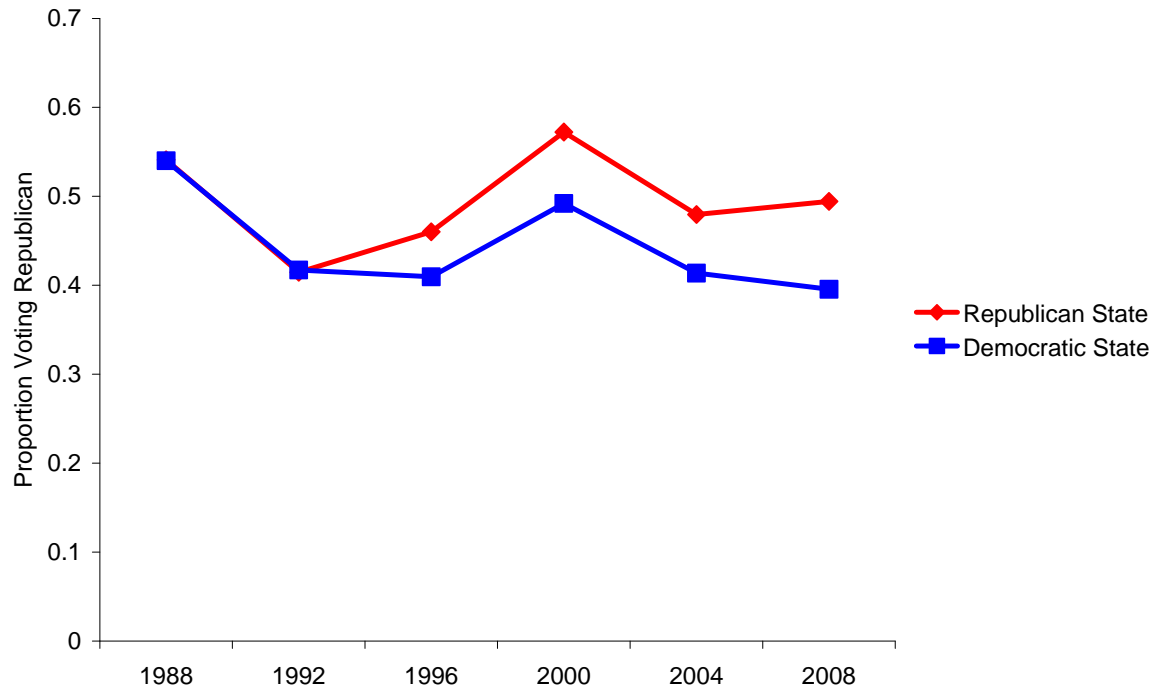
**Presidential Vote of Moderates by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time****Presidential Vote of Independents by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time**

Figure 8

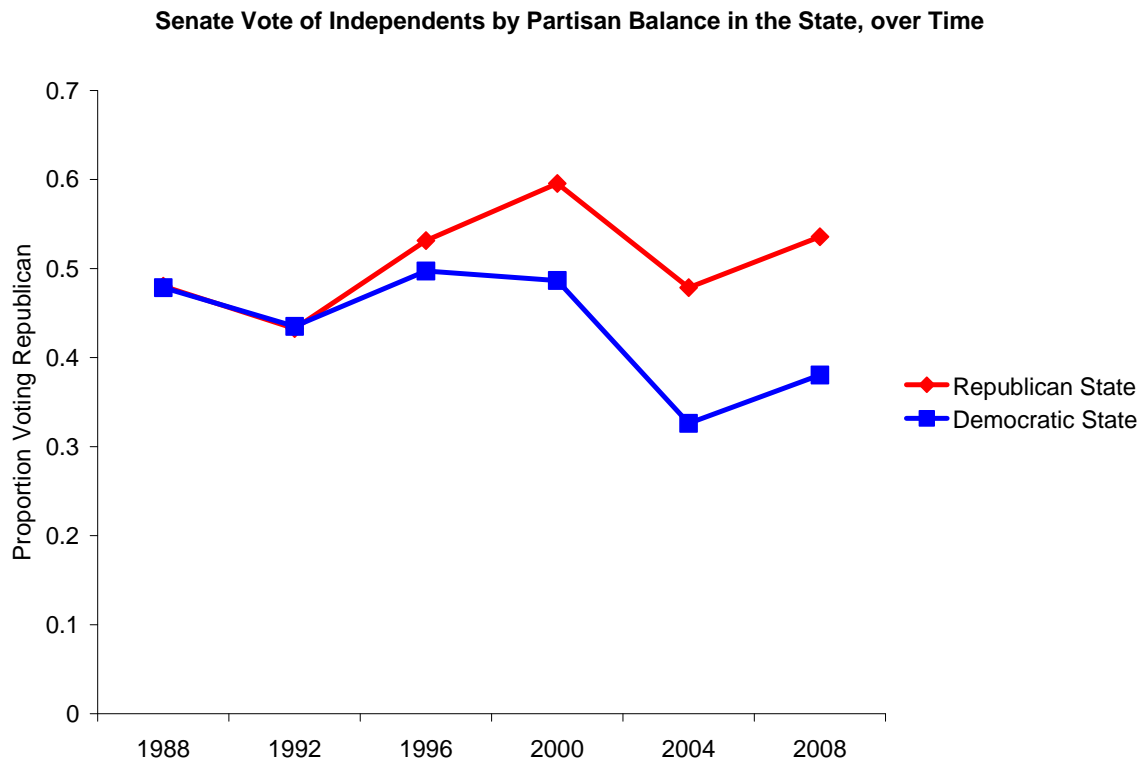
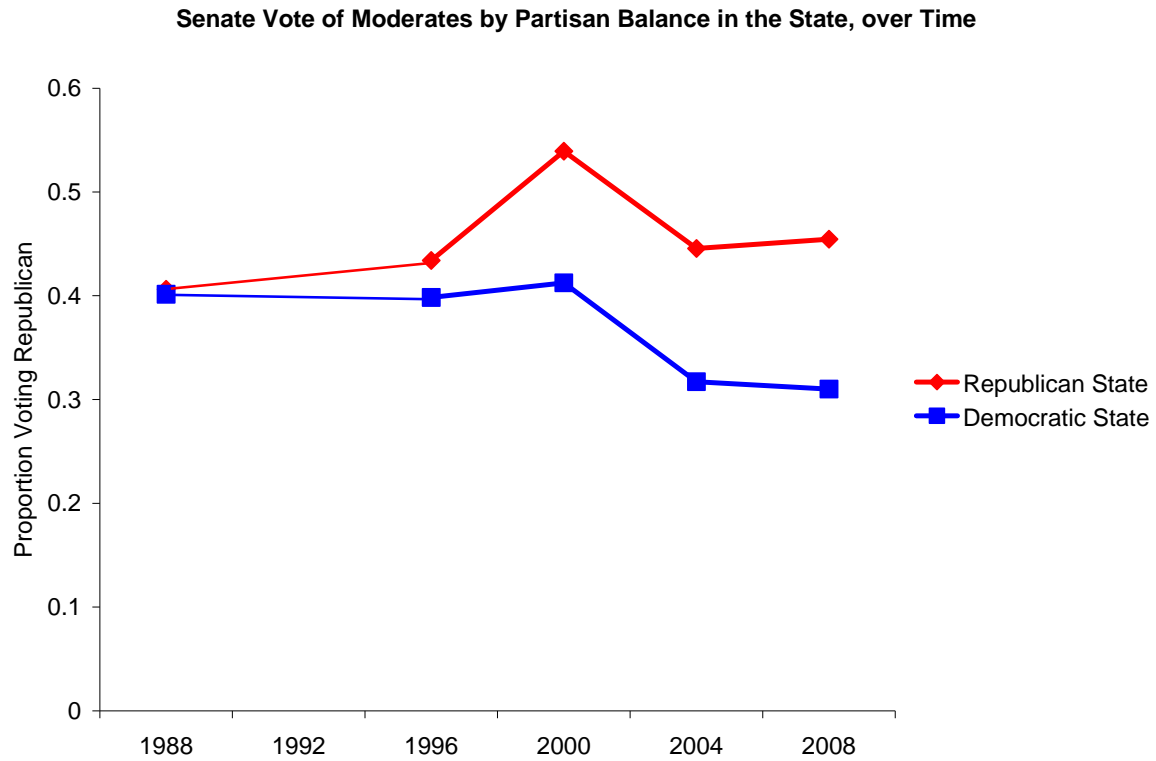
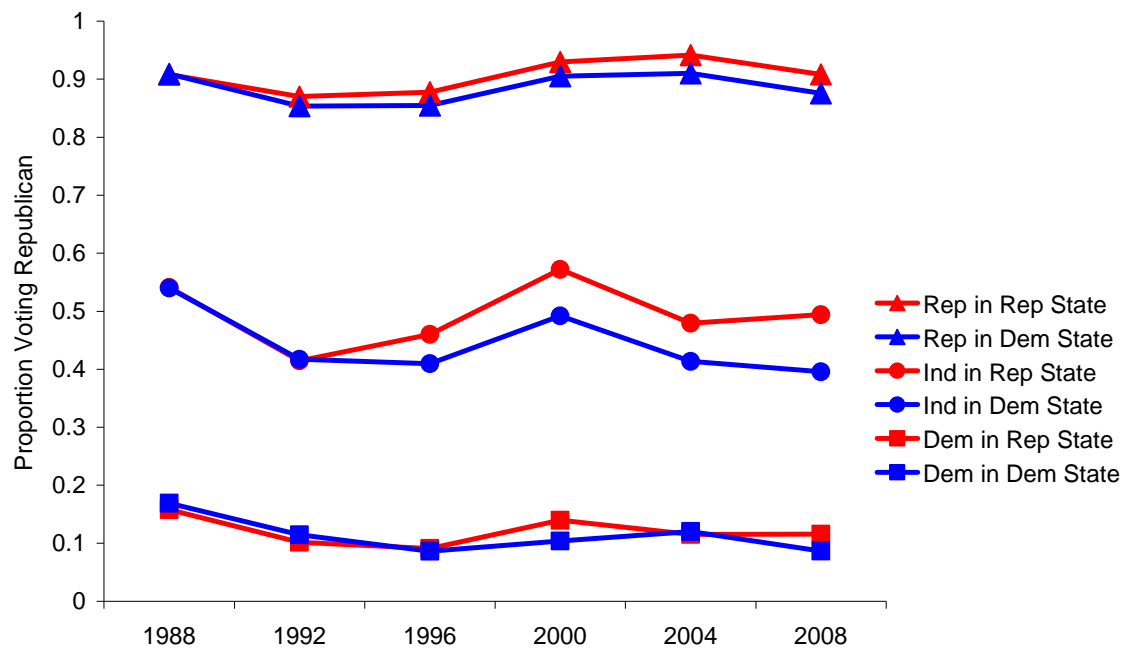


Figure 9

**Presidential Vote of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans,  
by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time**



**Senate Vote of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans,  
by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time**

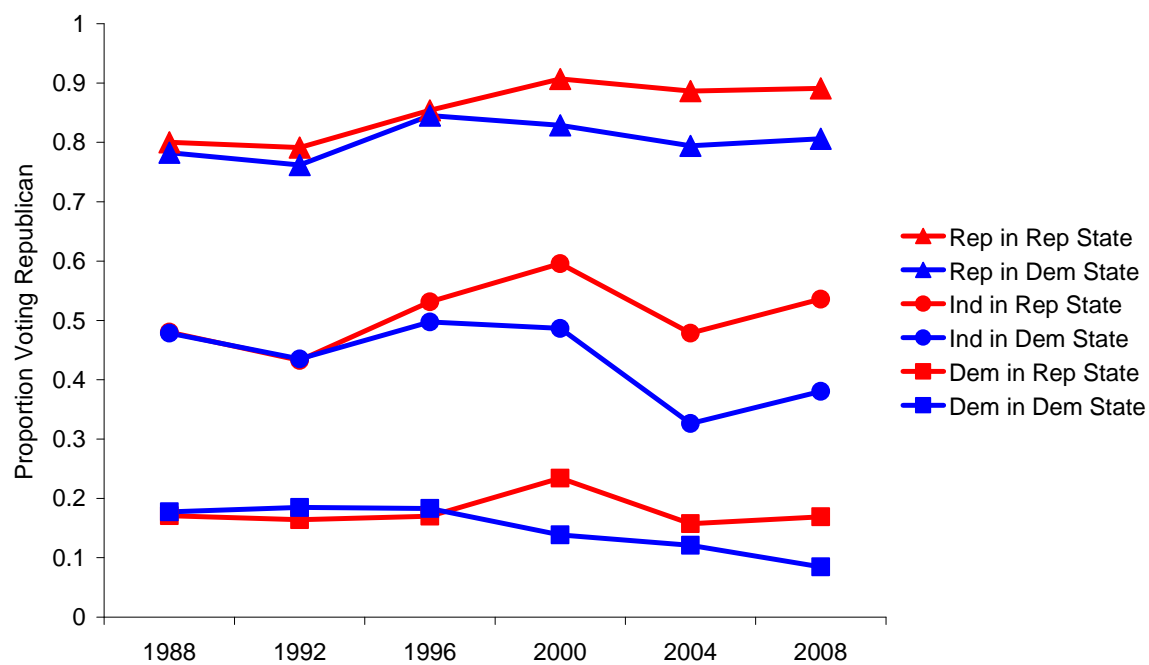
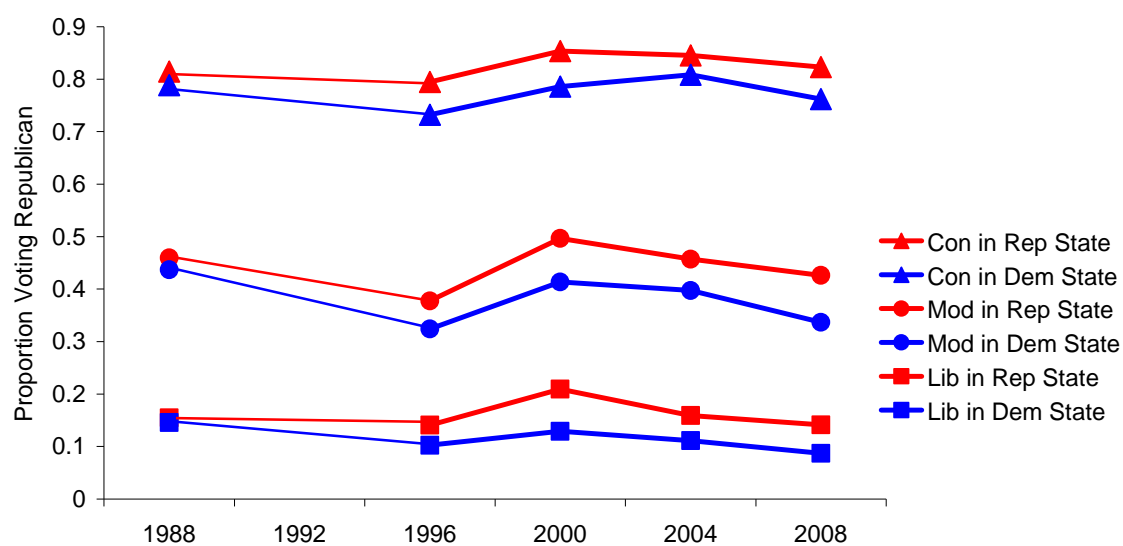


Figure 9—Continued

**Presidential Vote of Liberals, Moderates, and Conservatives,  
by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time**



**Senate Vote of Liberals, Moderates, and Conservatives,  
by Partisan Balance in the State, over Time**

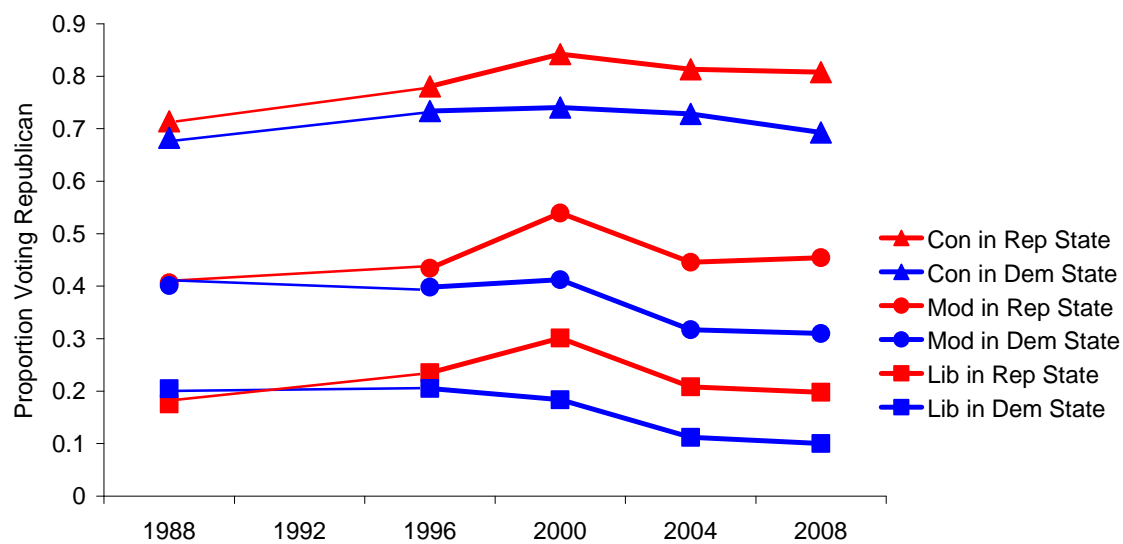
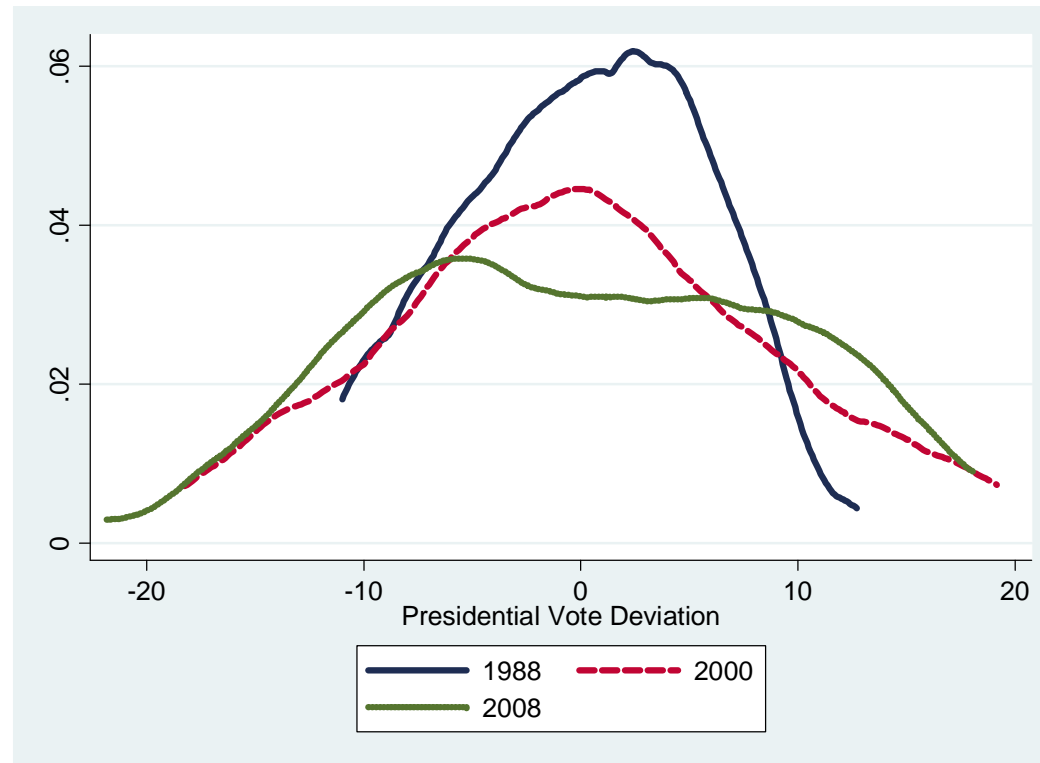


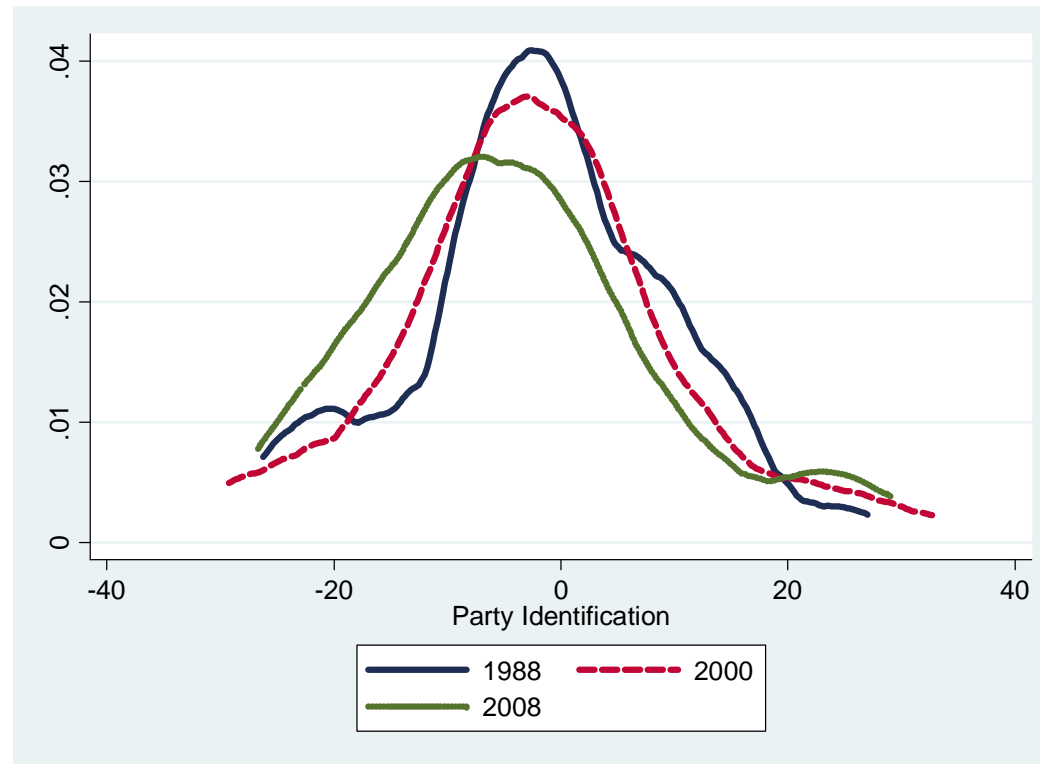
Figure 10  
State-level Distribution of Presidential Vote over Time



|      | <u>Minimum</u> | <u>Maximum</u> | <u>Range</u> | <u>Standard Deviation</u> |
|------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1988 | -11.00         | 12.73          | 23.73        | 5.58                      |
| 1992 | -10.42         | 15.05          | 25.47        | 6.18                      |
| 1996 | -16.29         | 14.88          | 31.17        | 7.53                      |
| 2000 | -18.27         | 19.16          | 37.43        | 9.00                      |
| 2004 | -16.23         | 19.17          | 35.40        | 8.52                      |
| 2008 | -21.84         | 19.17          | 41.01        | 9.50                      |

Note: Presidential vote is mean deviated. Higher scores indicate Republican support. N=50 except for 2008 (n=49, missing Idaho).

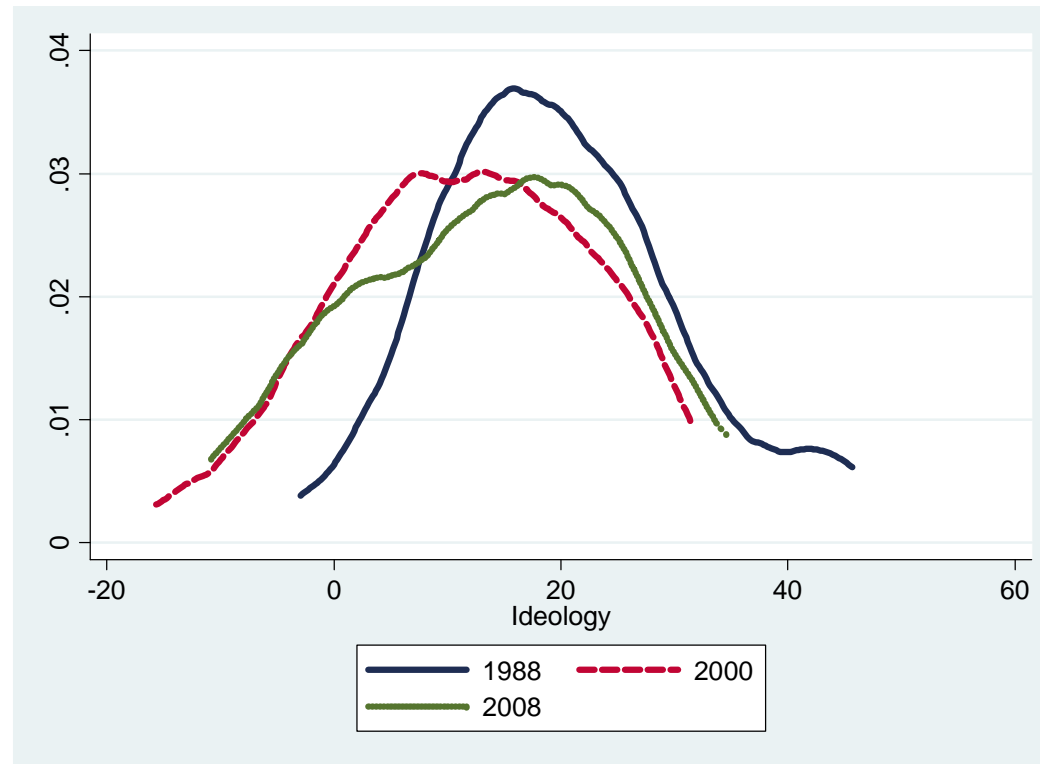
Figure 11  
State-Level Distribution of Party Identification over Time



|      | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Minimum</u> | <u>Maximum</u> | <u>Range</u> | <u>Standard Deviation</u> |
|------|-------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1988 | -1.73       | -26.22         | 27.02          | 53.24        | 11.45                     |
| 1992 | -3.14       | -30.50         | 24.92          | 55.42        | 11.69                     |
| 1996 | -3.06       | -28.77         | 23.33          | 52.10        | 11.88                     |
| 2000 | -2.06       | -29.26         | 32.72          | 61.98        | 12.46                     |
| 2004 | 2.85        | -23.18         | 38.22          | 61.40        | 13.46                     |
| 2008 | -4.28       | -26.69         | 29.25          | 55.94        | 13.06                     |

Note: The party identification measure is the percentage of Republican identifiers in the state minus the percentage of Democratic identifiers in the state. N=50 except for 2008 (n=49, missing Idaho).

Figure 12  
State-Level Distribution of Ideological Identification over Time

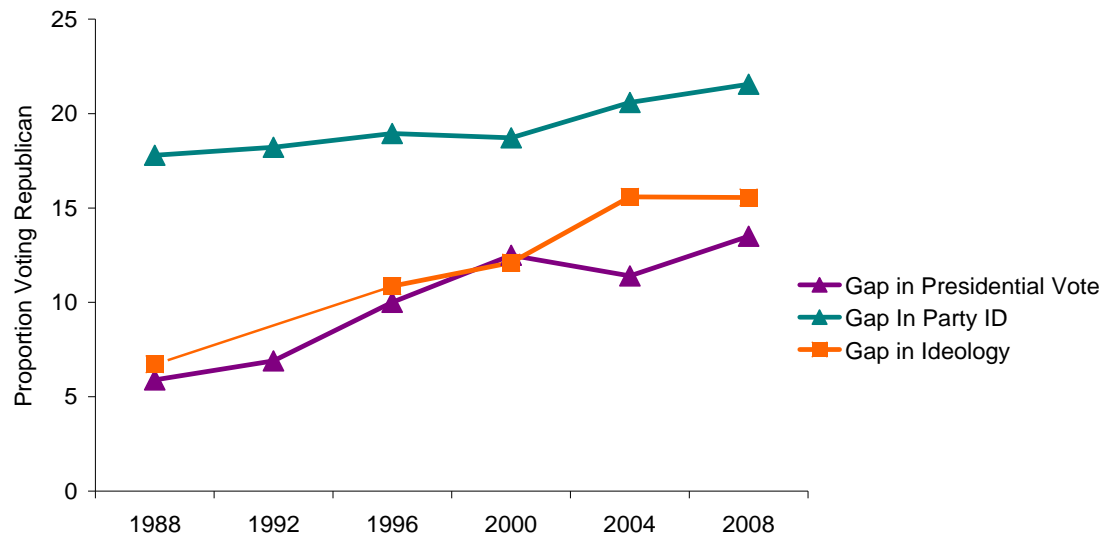


|      | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Minimum</u> | <u>Maximum</u> | <u>Range</u> | <u>Standard Deviation</u> |
|------|-------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1988 | 19.80       | -2.94          | 45.65          | 48.59        | 10.78                     |
| 1992 | na          | Na             | Na             | na           | na                        |
| 1996 | 12.43       | -2.09          | 40.37          | 42.46        | 10.10                     |
| 2000 | 18.19       | -15.66         | 31.46          | 47.12        | 11.27                     |
| 2004 | 11.51       | -12.21         | 33.18          | 45.39        | 11.66                     |
| 2008 | 14.83       | -10.83         | 34.66          | 45.49        | 11.75                     |

Note: The ideological identification measure is the percentage of Conservative identifiers in the state minus the percentage of Liberal identifiers in the state. N=50 except for 2008 (n=49, missing Idaho).

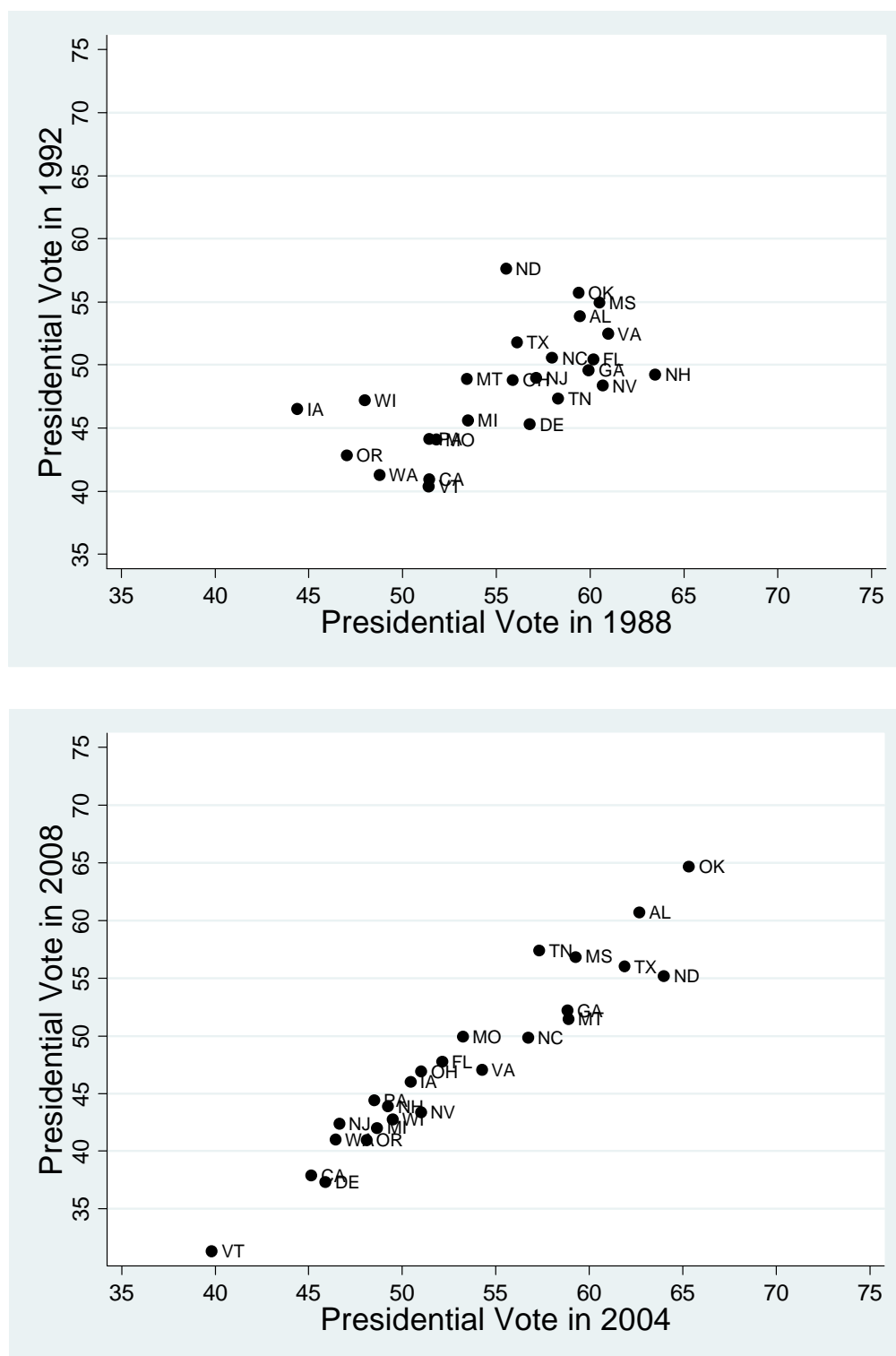


Figure 13

**Difference between Democratic and Republican States over Time**

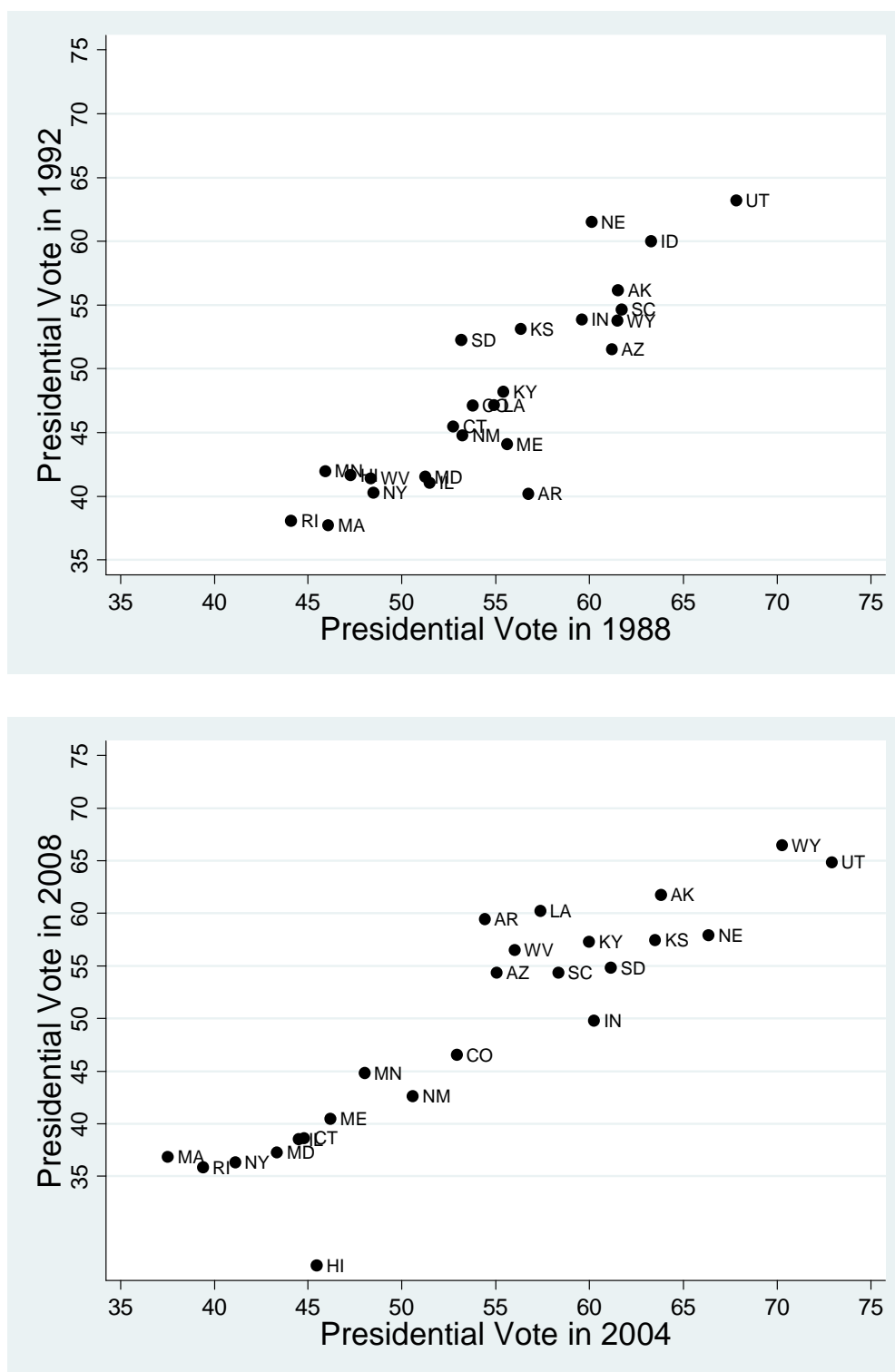
Note: Each year states were categorized as Democratic or Republican based on whether Democratic identifiers outnumbered Republicans or vice versa. Shown are the gaps in three variables for states so classified in each year: in the mean-deviated presidential vote, party identification, and ideology.

Figure 14a  
Continuity in Presidential Vote 1988-1992 and 2004-2008  
Unstable States



Note: Pearson Rs of .64 and .96, respectively.

Figure 14b  
Continuity in Presidential Vote 1988-1992 and 2004-2008  
Stable States



Note: Pearson Rs of .88 and .90, respectively.

Table 1  
Individual-level Relationships between Party ID, Ideology, and Vote

|                             |   | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Party ID→Presidential Vote  | b | .737 | .741 | .774 | .785 | .810 | .799 |
|                             | r | .651 | .649 | .677 | .677 | .694 | .677 |
| Ideology→Presidential Vote  | b | .656 | NA   | .666 | .666 | .702 | .698 |
|                             | r | .500 | NA   | .486 | .477 | .512 | .518 |
| Party ID→Senate Vote        | b | .613 | .594 | .666 | .682 | .723 | .736 |
|                             | r | .536 | .511 | .573 | .586 | .621 | .624 |
| Ideology→Senate Vote        | b | .513 | NA   | .565 | .570 | .630 | .627 |
|                             | r | .393 | NA   | .403 | .407 | .459 | .467 |
| Ideology→Party ID           | b | .503 | NA   | .503 | .519 | .562 | .562 |
|                             | r | .436 | NA   | .418 | .437 | .476 | .487 |
| Percent Cons/Dem or Lib/Rep |   | 10.1 | NA   | 8.2  | 6.7  | 6.2  | 6.4  |
| Percent Lib/Dem or Cons/Rep |   | 49.2 | NA   | 47.2 | 47.5 | 43.2 | 50.9 |

Note: For the analyses predicting presidential or Senate vote, the "b" is the predicted probability of a Republican vote comparing Democrats and Republicans, from Logit. When ideology is used to predict party ID, the "b" is the coefficient from OLS, again representing the predicted PID (0-1) for liberals compared to conservatives. Correlations are Pearson Rs. If I use both party ID and ideology to predict the presidential vote, in a trivariate Logit, the PID coefficients are, in turn .696, .726, .742, .764, and .738. The ideology coefficients are .542, .523, .517, .549, and .534. As before, these are predicted changes in the probability of a Republican vote as one moves from the minimum to the maximum of X, holding the other variable at its mean. The pseudo-R-squared figures are .419, .434, .430, .461, and .438. The patterns are stronger predicting Senate vote from party identification and ideology. The results are: Party ID .558, .609, .625, .656, and .663; Ideology .326, .395, .368, .419, and .421; Pseudo R-squared .260, .294, .302, .346, .355.

Table 2  
Continuity in Partisan and Ideological Balance across the States, 1988-2008

| <i>PARTY ID</i> | Clear Dem 2008 | Lean Dem 2008 | Lean Rep 2008 | Clear Rep 08 |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
|                 | <b>HI</b>      |               |               |              |
|                 | KY             |               |               |              |
|                 | MD             | AR            |               |              |
| Clear Dem 1988  | <b>MA</b>      | GA            |               |              |
|                 | NM             | LA            |               |              |
|                 | RI             |               |               |              |
|                 | WV             |               |               |              |
|                 | IL             | ME            |               |              |
| Lean Dem 1988   | <b>NY</b>      | MN            | IA            | AL           |
|                 | NC             | MO            | OK            | MS           |
|                 | OR             | PA            | TN            |              |
|                 | WA             | <b>WI</b>     |               |              |
|                 | CA             |               |               |              |
|                 | CT             |               |               |              |
| Lean Rep 1988   | DE             | FL            | <b>CO</b>     | IN           |
|                 | MI             | <b>OH</b>     | MT            | ND           |
|                 | NJ             |               | TX            |              |
|                 | VT             |               |               |              |
|                 |                |               |               | <b>AK</b>    |
|                 |                |               |               | AZ           |
| Clear Rep 1988  |                | NV            | NH            | KS           |
|                 |                | <b>VA</b>     | <b>SC</b>     | NE           |
|                 |                |               |               | SD           |
|                 |                |               |               | <b>UT</b>    |
|                 |                |               |               | WY           |
| <i>IDEOLOGY</i> | < 8% C>L 08    | 8-16% C>L 08  | 16-24% C>L 08 | >24% C>L 08  |
|                 | CT             |               |               |              |
| < 8% C>L 88     | <b>HI</b>      | OR            |               | WY           |
|                 | <b>MA</b>      |               |               |              |
|                 | VT             |               |               |              |
|                 | CA             |               |               |              |
|                 | MD             |               |               |              |
|                 | MI             |               | AK            |              |
| 8-16% C>L 88    | MN             | IL            | IA            | AR           |
|                 | NJ             | <b>WI</b>     | KY            |              |
|                 | <b>NY</b>      |               | MO            |              |
|                 | PA             |               |               |              |
|                 | WA             |               |               |              |
|                 |                | AZ            | <b>CO</b>     |              |
| 16-24% C>L 88   | ME             | NV            | IN            | GA           |
|                 | NH             | NM            | KS            | TN           |
|                 |                | <b>OH</b>     | ND            |              |
|                 |                |               | FL            |              |
|                 |                |               | NE            | <b>AK</b>    |
| >24% C>L 88     | DE             | MT            | NC            | LA           |
|                 | RI             | <b>VA</b>     | OK            | MS           |
|                 |                |               | <b>SC</b>     | TX           |
|                 |                |               | SD            | <b>UT</b>    |
|                 |                |               | WV            |              |

Note: States are in bold if they were in the comparable cell in both tables.

Table 3  
State-Level Correlations between Party ID, Ideology, and Vote  
By Stability of Partisan Alignment

|                 | <u>1988</u> | <u>1992</u> | <u>1996</u> | <u>2000</u> | <u>2004</u> | <u>2008</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ideology & PID  |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Stable States   | .49         | NA          | .61         | .76         | .76         | .79         |
| Unstable States | -.08        | NA          | .12         | .49         | .73         | .78         |
| PID & Vote      |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Stable States   | .75         | .85         | .88         | .91         | .90         | .83         |
| Unstable States | .30         | -.07        | .20         | .75         | .80         | .84         |
| Ideology & Vote |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Stable States   | .45         | NA          | .79         | .89         | .91         | .92         |
| Unstable States | .69         | NA          | .89         | .85         | .90         | .89         |

Note: "Stable States" are the 25 states where the partisan balance (%R-%D) was either Democratic (n=14) or Republican (n=11) in each of the six election years. "Unstable States" are the remaining 25 states where the partisan balance crossed party lines at least once during the period. Shown are Pearson continuity correlations between the Variables named.

Table 4  
Over-time Changes in States that are Stable or Unstable in their Partisan Alignment

| <i>Continuity Correlations</i> |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
|                                | <u>1988-1992</u> | <u>1992-1996</u> | <u>1996-2000</u> | <u>2000-2004</u> | <u>2004-2008</u> |             |
| Presidential Vote              |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | .88              | .94              | .94              | .99              | .90              |             |
| Unstable States                | .64              | .82              | .91              | .92              | .96              |             |
| Party ID                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | .95              | .96              | .92              | .97              | .97              |             |
| Unstable States                | .73              | .60              | .60              | .70              | .90              |             |
| Ideology                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | NA               | .71♣             | .85              | .86              | .94              |             |
| Unstable States                | NA               | .72♣             | .95              | .94              | .95              |             |
| <i>Standard Deviations</i>     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
|                                | <u>1988</u>      | <u>1992</u>      | <u>1996</u>      | <u>2000</u>      | <u>2004</u>      | <u>2008</u> |
| Presidential Vote              |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | 6.19             | 7.53             | 9.56             | 11.20            | 10.15            | 11.04       |
| Unstable States                | 5.02             | 4.62             | 4.92             | 6.27             | 6.65             | 7.90        |
| Party ID                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | 15.25            | 15.51            | 16.29            | 16.98            | 18.19            | 17.38       |
| Unstable States                | 5.80             | 6.19             | 4.71             | 5.31             | 6.27             | 7.11        |
| Ideology                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |             |
| Stable States                  | 12.70            | NA               | 11.66            | 12.90            | 12.94            | 12.73       |
| Unstable States                | 8.68             | NA               | 8.51             | 9.50             | 10.42            | 10.95       |

Note: "Stable States" are the 25 states where the partisan balance (%R-%D) was either Democratic (n=14) or Republican (n=11) in each of the six election years. "Unstable States" are the remaining 25 states where the partisan balance crossed party lines at least once during the period. Shown are Pearson continuity correlations (upper panel) and standard deviations (lower panel) for the variables shown. The symbol ♣ designates correlations between 1988 and 1996 (for ideology, since data in 1992 were not available).

Table 5  
Lagged-Dependence Panel Analysis of State-level Change in Party ID and Ideology

Dependent Variable:

|                          | <u>Partisan Balance 2008</u> | <u>Ideological Balance 2008</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Independent Variable:    |                              |                                 |
| Partisan Balance 2004    | .84<br>(.06)<br>P=.000       | .01<br>(.06)<br>P=.894          |
| Ideological Balance 2004 | .16<br>(.07)<br>P=.018       | .94<br>(.07)<br>P=.001          |
| R-squared                | .92                          | .90                             |
|                          | <u>Partisan Balance 2004</u> | <u>Ideological Balance 2004</u> |
| Independent Variable:    |                              |                                 |
| Partisan Balance 2000    | .87<br>(.06)<br>P=.000       | .03<br>(.08)<br>P=.671          |
| Ideological Balance 2000 | .24<br>(.07)<br>P=.001       | .92<br>(.08)<br>P=.001          |
| R-squared                | .91                          | .83                             |
|                          | <u>Partisan Balance 2000</u> | <u>Ideological Balance 2000</u> |
| Independent Variable:    |                              |                                 |
| Partisan Balance 1996    | .78<br>(.06)<br>P=.000       | .08<br>(.06)<br>P=.240          |
| Ideological Balance 1996 | .38<br>(.07)<br>P=.000       | .97<br>(.08)<br>P=.000          |
| R-squared                | .88                          | .84                             |

Note: We evaluated the leverage exerted by individual states in producing the significant coefficient on lagged ideology. In the 2004-2008 analysis, the main culprit is AR, followed by WV and OK. The coefficient goes to zero if these three are dropped. In the 2000-2004 analysis, the three most high-leverage observations (spurring a positive coefficient) are AL, LA and VT. However, dropping these three cases only reduced the coefficient by about half. In the 1996-2000 analysis, no one state had excessive leverage. The top was UT followed by CO, MA and WV. Dropping these four cases only reduced the coefficient to .30 and it remains highly statistically significant. We cannot analyze 92-96 or 88-92 analyses because of missing data on ideology in 1992. If we use 1988 variables to predict 1996 variables, then lagged ideology does not predict lagged PID (nor does lagged PID predict ideology). All the ideology-driven change is happening between 1996 and 2008.



Table 6  
Does the Rising Salience of Social Issues Account for State-Level Polarization?

|                              | 1988       | 2008       |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Party Identification         |            |            |
| Mean Economic Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Democratic States    | .53        | .47        |
| 15 Most Republican States    | .54        | .53        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.01</b> | <b>.06</b> |
| Mean Cultural Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Democratic States    | .52        | .38        |
| 15 Most Republican States    | .54        | .52        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.01</b> | <b>.14</b> |
| Ideology                     |            |            |
| Mean Economic Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Liberal States       | .52        | .46        |
| 15 Most Conservative States  | .56        | .55        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.04</b> | <b>.09</b> |
| Mean Cultural Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Liberal States       | .47        | .36        |
| 15 Most Conservative States  | .56        | .51        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.09</b> | <b>.15</b> |
| Presidential Vote Choice     |            |            |
| Mean Economic Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Democratic States    | .52        | .47        |
| 15 Most Republican States    | .56        | .56        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.04</b> | <b>.09</b> |
| Mean Cultural Ideology Index |            |            |
| 15 Most Democratic States    | .47        | .36        |
| 15 Most Republican States    | .54        | .52        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.07</b> | <b>.16</b> |
| Senate Vote Choice           |            |            |
| Mean Economic Ideology Index |            |            |
| 10 Most Democratic States    | .52        | .48        |
| 10 Most Republican States    | .54        | .51        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.02</b> | <b>.03</b> |
| Mean Cultural Ideology Index |            |            |
| 10 Most Democratic States    | .48        | .44        |
| 10 Most Republican States    | .49        | .54        |
| <b>Difference</b>            | <b>.01</b> | <b>.10</b> |

Source: National Election Studies data, 1988 and 2008. Two-party presidential voters only.

Note: The economic and cultural indices range from 0 (most liberal) to 1 (most conservative). The composition of the economic index is based on the following NES items: (1) services-spending tradeoff; (2) government guarantee of jobs; (3) size of government; (4) feeling thermometer difference between big business and labor unions; (5) government role in providing health care; (6) government aid to minorities. The cultural index is based on the following NES items: (1) legalized abortion; (2) gay rights in employment; (3) support for traditional morality; (4) role of women in society; (5) feeling thermometer for Christian fundamentalists; (6) frequency of church attendance. The standard deviation of the economic ideology index is .18. The standard deviation of the cultural ideology index is .21.

Table 7  
Trending States Differ More on Cultural Ideology Than Economic Ideology

|                                      | <b>1988</b> | <b>2008</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Change in Party Identification       |             |             |
| Mean Economic Ideology Index         |             |             |
| States Moving Toward the Democrats   | .52         | .51         |
| States Moving Toward the Republicans | .58         | .56         |
| <b>Difference</b>                    | <b>.06</b>  | <b>.05</b>  |
| Mean Cultural Ideology Index         |             |             |
| States Moving Toward the Democrats   | .48         | .42         |
| States Moving Toward the Republicans | .56         | .57         |
| <b>Difference</b>                    | <b>.08</b>  | <b>.15</b>  |

Source: National Election Studies.