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A Spatial Analysis of Southern Gubernatorial  
Elections: 1965-1997

by

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**Abstract:** For nearly a century the Democratic Party exerted an unmatched influence at all levels of government in the southern United States. This is particularly true in the eleven former Confederate states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In turn, the policies and personalities of politicians and voters in the South played immense roles in shaping the national Democratic Party and national policies. This paper illustrates the dynamics of political change in the South at the gubernatorial level, and quantifies the magnitude of change over time with statistical analysis.

For nearly a century the Democratic Party exerted an unmatched influence at all levels of government in the southern United States. This is particularly true in the eleven former Confederate states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.<sup>1</sup> In turn, the policies and personalities of politicians and voters in the South played immense roles in shaping the national Democratic party and national politics. This paper illustrates the dynamics of political change in the South at the gubernatorial level, and quantifies the magnitude of change over time with statistical analysis.

## **Background**

Reflection on politics at the national and congressional levels is necessary to appreciate the dominance of Democrats in the South from the post-Reconstruction period to the 1960s, as well as their continuing influence. Throughout United States history, most presidential elections had extremely sectional electoral voting patterns. One of the most notable examples of regional voting patterns occurred in the 1896 presidential election. In this election, the West united with the Democratic South over the silver issue. However, their electoral votes amounted to far less than the more populous Northeast.<sup>2</sup> For the first two-thirds of the Twentieth Century, the South was labeled a “one-party region” because of its consistent support of the Democratic party.<sup>3</sup>

Sectional voting patterns have been similar in congressional elections. In the post-Reconstruction period, the Democrats had a solid southern base with some support in the swing border states and central northern cities. The Republicans had a solid northern base. Even roll-call voting in Congress often exhibited regional patterns. Indeed, regional or sectional interests swayed this voting when party and ideological influences broke down. As time passed, political leaders perpetually found ways to maintain their party’s local control.

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<sup>1</sup> For this paper, these states will define the South region of the United States

<sup>2</sup> Martis, Kenneth C. *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress: 1789 - 1989* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Billington, Monroe. *Southern Politics Since the Civil War* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984), 17.

The Civil War and period of Reconstruction were central in the formation of contemporary southern political patterns. After the Civil War, military governments were established, followed in many cases by radical Republican governors motivated by self-interests and vengeance. Eventually, political power was placed back in the hands of white male southerners. By the late 1870s, most southern states had Democrats in the Governor's Mansion. Most would not see another party represented in that office until the latter half of the twentieth century.

It is also important to note that individuals have always played a particularly large role in southern politics. People such as Strom Thurmond, Huey Long, Harry Byrd, George Wallace, and Edwin Edwards dominated their states and established personas for contenders to deal with. Republicans had to deal with remnants of post-Civil War sentiments as well as these awesome figures. Gradually the Democrats lost their monopoly and the procession of political change commenced first at the presidential, then at the gubernatorial level. In each state, Republicans finally managed to legitimize their stake in the two-party system.

**Table 1: Republican Droughts in Southern Governorships**

	Last Republican after the Civil War	Next Republican	Years
Tennessee	1882	1911	28
North Carolina	1900	1973	73
Florida	1877	1967	90
Arkansas	1874	1967	93
South Carolina	1876	1975	99
Virginia	None *	1970	100
Louisiana	1877	1980	103
Texas	1874	1979	105
Alabama	1874	1987	113
Mississippi	1876	1992	116
Georgia	1872	None	125

\* Readmitted to the Union in 1870

As can be seen in Table 1, many southern states went long periods without successful Republican challenges to Democratic governors. Indeed, more than half of the states of the South elected Democrats to office for 100 or more years. Democrats held

gubernatorial positions for decades at a time throughout the region. While this occurred in each state across the South, the reasons for the phenomenon varied significantly.

### **Arkansas**

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Arkansas politics revolved around Governor Orval Faubus. The segregationist politician from the predominantly white northern mountains held office from 1955 - 1967, an unprecedented number of years as the state's chief executive. However, the reluctance of Governor Faubus to integrate blacks with whites was not totally representative of Arkansas political feeling at the time. Unlike Deep South states such as Alabama and Mississippi, large regions were primarily Republican and not overly concerned with racial issues that have so greatly affected southern politics.<sup>4</sup> Black voter registration was permitted in Arkansas cities even before the Voting Rights Act of 1965. While Democrats remained powerful, potential for Republican power increase was definitely evident, especially when Faubus voluntarily retired in 1966.

The 1966 elections resulted in the first southern Republican triumphs at the gubernatorial level since the party's limited victories in Tennessee in the early 1900s. Winthrop Rockefeller, one of the first two southern Republican governors of this era, was elected on November 8, 1966. Rockefeller achieved victory by promoting racially moderate policies, using his financial advantages fully, and drawing on strong support from the Ozarks.<sup>5</sup>

In 1970, Dale Bumpers defeated Faubus in the primaries and crushed Rockefeller, returning the governorship to the Democratic party. The trend of Democratic governors seemingly reestablished itself. Many of these, like their predecessors, were characterized by liberal social and economic policies balanced by moderate racial policies. When incumbent governor Bill Clinton was surprised by Frank White in 1980, Arkansas

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972), 30.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972), 30.

politics was once again shaken. Republicans had proved themselves as a contender once again.

Clinton regained his position in the next election and continued to hold it until his ascendancy to the Oval Office. In 1996, the Republican party placed another member in the governor's chair when Mike Huckabee was elected. With valuable experience working in media operations, this governor's youth and home-grown qualities should present a challenge for Arkansas Democrats in the next gubernatorial election.<sup>6</sup>

### **Florida**

Until 1966, Florida Democrats managed to overcome internal disorder, keeping a grip on the governorship. This was partially due to the fact that the situation in the Republican state party was as chaotic as among Democratic ranks. Despite this, Claude Kirk won the office convincingly to accompany Rockefeller of Arkansas as the first southern Republican governors since Reconstruction. It appeared that the Republican party had finally united by attaining the highest office in the state.<sup>7</sup>

Increased Republican unity in Florida was not the only cause for retrenchment in state Democratic ranks. A new influx of people streamed into the state. The demographics of Florida changed rapidly as retired northerners, Cuban refugees, and various opportunity seekers flocked to the sunny shores and rich groves. This population change was exemplary of the changes taking place throughout the South in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

As population composition and attitudes changed, so did some of the strategies of the state Democratic party. In the subsequent election for governor in 1970, Democrat Reubin Askew prevailed over Kirk. Emphasis on fiscal reform and vigorously youthful leadership enabled the Democrats to reclaim position in the governorship. An embattled

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<sup>6</sup> *Governor Mike Huckabee* [Online]. June 1997. Available: WWW URL: <http://www.state.ar.us/governor/governor.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972), 138.

Kirk fought bitter opposition from his own party this time, eventually losing the election by a greater margin than he had won four years earlier.<sup>8</sup>

The stability of the state Democratic party was restored after Democrats ousted the incumbent governor. Throughout the 1970s, Askew promoted reform and planning with determination and conviction. He eventually gained appreciation as one of the most effective governors ever to serve Florida. He and his successor, Bob Graham headed the state for the Democratic party through turbulent political times and rapid social and economic changes.

Although Republicans rallied behind Bob Martinez to snare the governorship in 1986, the Democrats once again quickly rebounded. Democrats benefited from poor Republican performances in the 1990 elections. The Republicans suffered losses throughout state government when Lawton Chiles defeated Martinez. With these sweeping victories, Florida Democrats appeared more entrenched than they had been for the previous twenty years.

## **Virginia**

The Old Dominion's politics have always been dominated by the impressive figures of the distant past. However, it is often noted that the state's leadership has since been lacking in quality.<sup>9</sup> A unique situation evolved in twentieth century Virginia politics, where controllers of state level politics were not only Democrats, but almost undoubtedly in alliance with "The Byrd Machine." In 1925, Harry Flood Byrd was elected governor. In 1933, he was elected to the Senate where he gained reputation for being in conservative opposition to government deficit spending as he refused to support the New Deal. His resolution and popularity enabled him to remain a Senator until 1965. Over this period of time, The Byrd Machine, consisted of men who dominated their

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<sup>8</sup> *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 496 - 497.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972), 833 - 835.

localities and took advantage of limited activity in the voting community to remain in office.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1960s, the state was changing rapidly. Most southern politicians with old-fashioned racial policies met with the difficulty of residing within a party embracing the black voter. Many other policies of the liberal national Democratic party conflicted with conservative views at more local levels. Another transformation taking place, unique to Virginia, was the expanding suburbanization of Washington, DC. The northeastern portion of the state became increasingly isolated from the rest of Virginia with population density rising and with more varied cultures.

With the death of Byrd in 1965, it was clear that the Machine would not outlive its namesake. The victory of Republican Linwood Holton in 1969 testified to the decline of the Machine. Holton triumphed as a result of aligning blacks, labor, and suburbanites. Republicans statewide, many having held similar views to Byrd's in the past, were given hope by this victory. Unlike most other southern states, Virginian Republicans sustained a long hold on the governors chair, not losing an election until 1981.

Holton, Mills Godwin, and John Dalton served successively as Republican governors in a state which had never seen one. The 1973 election served as a testimony to the demise of the Byrd Machine and the gains of Republicans in recent years. Winning against an Independent candidate, Godwin served in the middle years of the Republican streak. The Democrats actually had no candidate that year!<sup>11</sup>

In 1981, Democrats began a streak of their own when Charles Robb, the son-in-law of former President Lyndon B. Johnson, defeated J. Marshall Coleman. This victory was the first by a Democrat in 16 years and the first for a non-Byrd Democrat in 56 years. Robb was succeeded by fellow Democrat Gerald Baliles, who was followed by another Democrat, Douglas Wilder. In 1993, George Allen earned victory for the Republicans. One of the most dramatic party shifts among southern governors occurred during his

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1972), 833-835.

<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 532.



tenure, along with the demographic changes that were rapidly taking place in particular areas. Republican-headed states in the South increased in number from three to eight.

## Tennessee

The distinctly sectional nature of voting patterns within Tennessee has caused the state to differ significantly in politics from its neighbors.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the rest of the South, which did not see a non-Democrat governor from the turn of the century until 1967, Republicans managed to elect governors for the years 1911-14 and 1921-22. Traditionally, eastern Tennessee has voted Republican almost without fail.<sup>13</sup> This solidarity is matched almost to the same proportions in western and middle Tennessee, where Democrats have dominated.

Democratic hold on the governor's office was approaching a half century when Winfield Dunn defeated John Hooker in 1970. Republicans enjoyed many victories in 1970, but their triumph was short-lived, due to Watergate. Following President Nixon's resignation, like many parts of the nation,<sup>14</sup> Tennessee shied away from electing a Republican to the governorship. In this case, the 1974 Republican candidate, Lamar Alexander, had especially strong ties to the disgraced administration.

Fortunately for Republicans, the Democrats managed to hold on to the office for only one term. Ray Blanton, Alexander's 1974 opponent, suffered a somewhat unfavorable period in office. Alexander won the 1978 election over Democrat Jake Butcher. Combining political savvy and devotion to public interest, the Republican governor served with popular approval through two terms.<sup>15</sup> The significance of his

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<sup>12</sup> Billington, Monroe. *Southern Politics Since the Civil War* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984), 146.

<sup>13</sup> Billington, Monroe. *Southern Politics Since the Civil War* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984), 146.

<sup>14</sup> See 1975 map

<sup>15</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 1092.

tenure for southern Republicans was evident when Alexander was the only Republican governor in the South in 1984; the only year since 1922 that this was the case in Tennessee.

Democrat Ned McWherter was elected governor in 1986. An effective, old-fashioned politician, McWherter continued many of the reforms of his predecessor, despite their different party affiliations. Promotion of education improvement and tax reforms kept him popular; he was elected by large margins twice.<sup>16</sup> He was ineligible to run for re-election, and Republican Don Sundquist became the next governor. Subscribing to current political trends, Governor Sundquist appointed the most diverse cabinet in Tennessee history to provide a strong foundation for his administration.

### **North Carolina**

Regional differences have historically played a large part in the politics of North Carolina in patterns similar to those in Tennessee. While significant Republican sentiment was always present throughout the state's Western Appalachian region, North Carolina had elected Democrats to serve as governors in 18 consecutive elections, from 1900 to 1968. Although Democrats dominated the entire gubernatorial South over this period, Nixon and other national Republican influences were initiating rapid changes in the region's politics.

North Carolina completed the Republican sweep of the northern tier of the gubernatorial South in 1972. When James Holshouser, Jr. defeated Hargrove Bowles, North Carolina became the fourth southern state to elect a Republican governor in the twentieth century. As in many previous elections the Republican candidate won the state's West and Piedmont regions while Bowles prevailed on the traditionally Democratic eastern coastal plain.

Democrats rebounded in 1976, when James B. Hunt vanquished his Republican opponent. Already working with a liberal reputation, the governor managed to take

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1988), 1103.

popular stances for education and against criminals, while diversifying his appointees.<sup>17</sup> The first black statewide election winners in the South took office during Hunt's first administration. He was instrumental in advocating an amendment allowing governors to seek a second consecutive term, enabling him to roll to victory in 1980.

After Hunt rallied the state Democrats to many victories during his stay in office, Republican Jim Martin won the governorship in 1984. After reelection in 1988, Martin continued to supplement Hunt's work. His predecessor became his successor as well when Hunt was again victorious in 1992. Continuing to amplify education improvement and emphasizing economic development, Hunt remains today as one of only three Democrat governors in the South!

### **South Carolina**

Extremely Democratic throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, South Carolina, like its neighboring states, became increasingly Republican as the civil rights movement altered the face of politics. The power shift between the parties is embodied in one of the most powerful and long-lived politicians in state history, Strom Thurmond. He was first elected governor as a Democrat in 1947. Thurmond eventually switched parties in rejection of Lyndon Johnson and in support of Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon.

The party change by such a prominent politician appeared to portend a less prosperous future for the Democratic party in the state. In 1974, James Edwards took advantage of Democrat disarray to defeat William Dorn. The nature of the Republican victory was questionable; technicalities prevented the original Democratic primary winner from claiming his nomination.<sup>18</sup> When Democrats reestablished their hold on the governorship four years later with the victory of Richard Riley, it seemed that the procession of Democratic governors would resume barely interrupted.

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1980), 646.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1976), 771 - 772.

Riley benefited from a new amendment which allowed for a governor to serve succeeding terms. He continued in office until 1987. In the 1986 election, Carroll Campbell won the governorship as a Republican. Campbell placed emphasis on issues similar to ones addressed in other southern states, such as education. He also took stands furthering work initiated by his Democratic predecessor. Campbell remained in office until 1996, when he was succeeded by another Republican, David Beasley. Continuing into 1997, South Carolina governors have been Republican for 15 out of 23 years after Democrats had not relinquished the office for nearly a century.

## **Texas**

Despite its vast size and cultural diversity, Texas has always displayed many distinctly southern characteristics. Among these are large cotton-producing regions, a significant black population, states' rights interests, and one-party politics. Through the first half of the twentieth century, participants in competitive Texas politics at the state level differed only in Democrat leanings. Leading individuals such as Price Daniel, Ralph Yarborough, and Allan Shivers held political ideals which ranged from liberal to moderate and conservative.<sup>19</sup>

Changes in Texas politics resembled those taking place in southern states throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Segregation and racial discrimination were no longer sanctioned by government. The oil-driven economy boomed along with other parts of the Sun Belt. Enormous campaign spending and acknowledgment of conservative ideals were new Republican strategies to gain leverage in Texas. In addition, legal and illegal Mexican immigrants were important components of the significant population increase that occurred during this time period.

Eventually, the differences between liberal and conservative Democrats split the party wide enough to discourage many conservatives. Respectable showings in gubernatorial elections by Paul Eggers and Hank Grover marked vast improvements for Republicans. Election results in former decades often resulted in Democrat victories with

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<sup>19</sup> Billington, Monroe. *Southern Politics Since the Civil War* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984), 149.

over 80 percent of the vote. Amid social changes and economic prosperity, Democrats managed to retain their hold on the governorship.

Following victories by Democrats such as John Connally and Dolph Briscoe, Texas was ripe for political change in 1978. By very narrowly defeating Democrat candidate John Hill, William P. Clements became the first Republican governor of Texas in 105 years.<sup>20</sup> In a race marked by mudslinging and outrageous campaign spending, Clements accomplished his feat against a formidable opponent who had already made history by soundly defeating the incumbent governor to earn the Democratic nomination.<sup>21</sup> While the victory did not completely reverse Texas gubernatorial politics, things did change drastically. Since this first Democratic defeat, three of five terms have been served by Republicans.

Democrats Mark White and Ann Richards sandwiched Clements' second term, a period fraught with political blunders and scandalous implications. Then in 1994, George W. Bush, son of the former President was elected Governor. This is exemplary of the recent success of Republicans achieved by vigorous media campaigning and drawing on the support of conservatives and big money interests. Democrats look to rebound in a state which has not reelected a governor to consecutive terms since 1974.

## **Louisiana**

Contemporary political trends in the state of Louisiana are typical of southern states. Until 1979, no Republican had been elected governor since Reconstruction. The politics of Huey Long during the Depression era earned long-lasting praise and established an enduring effect on state politics.<sup>22</sup> Besides leaving a politically productive son, the "Kingfish" created a legacy in state government through a powerful personality and shrewd political maneuvering. His protégés and family members gained high government positions, even long after his assassination in 1935.

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<sup>20</sup> See Table 1

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, Randolph B. *Texas History Documents* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Billington, Monroe. *Southern Politics Since the Civil War* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1984), 62.

The sweeping changes taking place in the times of the civil rights movement inevitably affected Louisiana. Racial and religious politics continued to play a part in elections throughout this time period, with somewhat less emphasis than in neighboring states. Tolerance of color and religion was generally greater than that of neighboring states; political platforms swayed preferences or opinions without causing incredible uproar. Democrats sustained a tight grip on the governorship through the sixties and seventies.

In 1979, David Treen broke the streak of Democrat victories abruptly amidst a tumultuous election which saw numerous candidates and monstrous campaign expenditures.<sup>23</sup> Six serious candidates ran in the non-partisan primary election before Treen was chosen the victor in the recently established, decisive runoff election.<sup>24</sup> This narrow victory, achieved by a difference of less than 10,000 votes, was mainly a result of the inability of popular Democrat Edwin Edwards to seek a third consecutive term as governor. Republican leaders lacked the charisma to overcome the Democratic appeal once again.

Charles Roemer and the perennial powerhouse Edwin Edwards reclaimed control of the governorship for the Democrats. Then in 1995, Mike Foster prevailed for the Republicans over black Democratic Representative Cleo Fields. The victory reflected renewed Republican enthusiasm and political fortitude, although the fact that Edwards did not seek reelection once again diminished the luster of the GOP victory. The Pelican State became one of an unprecedented eight southern states to have a Republican governor simultaneously.

## **Alabama**

Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, the three central Deep South states, continued to elect Democrat governors the longest. Alabama was the first of these states to finally grant a Republican gubernatorial victory. Repeatedly squashed in gubernatorial races

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<sup>23</sup> See 1980 map

<sup>24</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 473.

before the 1980s, Republicans eventually rode the waves of political and social change to elect a governor. Most obvious of these changes was racist policy alteration, in Alabama it was always a political issue. Its delay to become a significantly two-sided issue came to an end as the Civil Rights movement gained momentum. The shifting views of the electorate were reflected by the political maneuvering of one of the state's most influential leaders, George Wallace.

Wallace was elected governor four times, eventually serving 12 years and indirectly through his wife Lurleen for 4 years between his first and second terms. Wallace embodied the idea of racial politics in the South. His statement that he would stand in the schoolhouse door to preserve "segregation forever," and his act of resisting integration to the bitter end at the University of Alabama in 1963, did not tarnish his image among many in America. He even established himself as a legitimate presidential candidate with these blatantly racist views. However, his fourth victory was the result of an apparent adaptation to the new South's integrated politics.<sup>25</sup>

Racial politics began to take a back seat to economic issues and in 1986, Guy Hunt became the first Republican governor in Alabama since 1874.<sup>26</sup> Confusion in the Democratic ranks contributed to his victory when it was discovered that the Democratic primary runoff winner tampered with ballots. Hunt took advantage of his victory and performed well during his term, earning reelection in 1990. His second term was cut short when he was removed from office after it was determined he had manipulated state funds for his personal gain.<sup>27</sup>

Democrat Jim Folsom took over and instituted many changes rapidly, but the Republican absence from the governor's office was only temporary. Fob James, former Democrat and governor from 1978 - 1982 changed parties and prevailed over his Democratic opponent in 1994. The victories of Republicans in three consecutive

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC; Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 489 - 490.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews. *The Almanac of American Politics: 1972 - 1994* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1994), 4.

elections despite scandal at the highest office in the state indicates that the Democratic monopoly on the governorship is over.

## Mississippi

Mississippi was the last state to elect a Republican governor in the South. After 116 years of Democrat control of the governor's chair, victory finally belonged to the Republicans in 1991. Previous to this victory, Mississippi Democrats enjoyed 17 uncontested gubernatorial elections! As in most other southern states, the Democratic primary practically served as the deciding election for almost a century.

Like the South as a whole, Mississippi experienced massive changes. Perennially the southern state with the highest percentage of blacks and most severe economic hardships, Republicans here slowly managed to win influence through blacks and timid Republicans, those whose voices had not yet been fully heard. Republicans finally started to make showings in the 1960s. Rubel Phillips garnered 38 percent of the votes for governors in 1963 and almost 30 percent four years later.<sup>28</sup> While in many other states these showings would be signs of party distress, they were the best election results for Republicans since the 1870s.

Gil Carmichael improved on these numbers in the 1970s, helping the state Republican party's maturation. At other levels of government in the state, the GOP was beginning to make headway as well. The 1980s passed and still the voters did not elect a Republican governor, although two Senators and a few Representatives from the Republican party celebrated victories. In fact, Mississippi ushered in the 1990s with two Republican Senators.

In 1991, Kirk Fordice defeated incumbent governor Ray Mabus by a slim margin. Fordice established economic policies with good business sense and the state experienced impressive improvement. These successes, along with other policies earned him enough

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<sup>28</sup> *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2nd ed.* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 511.



popularity to win reelection in 1995, thus becoming the first repeating Republican governor in the state as well.<sup>29</sup>

## Georgia

In 1872, Liberal Republican James Milton Smith defeated a Republican opponent in the Georgia gubernatorial election. Since that election, the Peach State has never elected a Republican governor. For most of the twentieth century, Democrats won gubernatorial elections uncontested. The few challenges received in the early 1900s were from Populists or Independent-Democrats. No Republican made a showing for governor from 1880 to 1966.<sup>30</sup>

In 1966, Republican Howard H. Calloway actually received a higher percentage of the popular vote (47.8 %) than his Democratic opponent, Lester Maddox (47.4 %).<sup>31</sup> However, since neither candidate managed to gain a majority, Georgia law required the state legislature to choose the victor. Rather than becoming the first southern state to elect a Republican governor in this era, Maddox received the appointment. Since then, Georgia's Republican party has never been as close to electing a governor.<sup>32</sup>

Georgia Democrats have continued to hold their lock on the governorship. Jimmy Carter and George Busbee crushed Republican opponents through the 1970s. The threats to Democrat gubernatorial dominance in the 1960s, such as racial politics and economic stagnation, subsided and the state prospered under Democrat governors. The growth of the region as a whole reflected well on the incumbent party and Democrats remained firmly entrenched in the highest state office through the 1980s.

Following the tenures of Busbee and Joe Harris, Zell Miller won election in 1990. So far, the new methods of mastering Republican gubernatorial candidates have had the same effects as those in the past. Welfare reform, economic stimulation, education

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<sup>29</sup> *Fordice.htm* [Online]. June 1997. Available: WWW URL: <http://www.govoff.state.ms.us/fordice.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Glashan, Roy R. *American Governors and Gubernatorial Elections, 1775 - 1978* (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1979), 48.

<sup>31</sup> *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2nd ed.* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 497.

<sup>32</sup> See **Maps** section

improvements, and attractive candidates have made strides to keep Democrats popular in all the highest state positions.

## Research Methods

The research to produce this paper involved four steps:

- Creation of a political party affiliation database for governors of the eleven southern states for the years 1965 - 1997 (for statistical analysis and map production)
- Production of maps (1965 - 1997)
- Compilation of information regarding details about the governors and significant election years
- Production of spatial database and application of the *SpaceStat* join count statistical method to governor party information converted to binary (0 = non-Democrat, 1 = Democrat) terms

The database and maps were created with *Maptitude*, a geographic information system for windows.<sup>33</sup> A simple table was constructed where governor party affiliation for each year (1965 - 1997) was catalogued.<sup>34</sup> By using a *Maptitude* function to apply the data to the provided United States geographic files, maps were created for presentation in layouts. Party data was applied to the geographic file for each year of the study.<sup>35</sup>

The party affiliations and detailed information concerning the governors in the study were gathered from various published historical and political sources, as well as from current research being conducted by Dr. Kenneth C. Martis at West Virginia University. Information related was intended to give a general idea of political conditions in each state. Additional information was gathered from the Worldwide Web.

## Spatial Statistic Implementation

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<sup>33</sup> *Caliper Maptitude User's Guide* (Newton, MA: Caliper Corporation, 1994 - 1995).

<sup>34</sup> A sample section of the table can be seen in Appendix C

<sup>35</sup> See **Maps** section

Statistical measures of the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables involve *correlation*. The statistical value for such operations is called the *correlation coefficient*. The coefficient is used to indicate direction and magnitude of value relationships. An extreme negative value (-1.0 on scale of -1.0 to 1.0) indicates a strong (or in this case, perfect) inverse relationship. A low value (around 0 on the same scale) shows lack or absence of relationship. A high positive value (1.0) occurs in the presence of high level of direct relationship.

*Autocorrelation* is concerned with the relationship between successive values of residuals along a regression line. Strong autocorrelation means that successive values are strongly related; they vary in a systematic way. *Spatial autocorrelation* is a fairly simple extension of this concept into two dimensions. Strong spatial autocorrelation means that adjacent values, or ones which are relatively close to each other, are strongly related. If values are arranged at random over the surface there should be no apparent spatial autocorrelation. Strong negative autocorrelation indicates the presence of an unusually regular dispersed pattern of phenomena across the study area.

The *join count* statistical method is the simplest form of spatial autocorrelation. This deals with the spatial arrangement of areas with two different types of nominal data. There are three main processes involved when performing a join count. First, the number of instances where each area borders another is counted. Occurrences of joins (borders, or intersections) of areas with opposite values are also totaled. Secondly, the probability of pattern randomness is calculated. Finally, deviation from this expected value is measured for subject data values.

Two methods of join count analysis are free and non-free sampling. The free sampling method requires the detection of influence on calculated values generated outside the study areas. Non-free sampling assumes no influence on the study area by surrounding areas. This is often employed when there is any doubt whether probabilities calculated by reference to a larger area can be expected to apply within the study region.

The join count analysis for this paper was generated using *SpaceStat*,<sup>36</sup> a computer program designed to perform statistical analysis of spatial data. The processes involved in deriving a statistic for analysis of change in southern political patterns included:

- Forming data sets for each of the selected seven years of measurement,
- Employing a spatial weights matrix which defines the contiguities of joins for the contiguous 48 states,
- Combining these matrices in an operation to produce descriptive statistics,<sup>37</sup> and
- Interpreting the meanings of these statistical values.

For the years 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1997, data was listed in separate tables. Each table consisted of binary data representing political parties of governors, forming data sets for each of the seven sample years.<sup>38</sup> These tables needed to be converted into formats readable by *SpaceStat*. This was accomplished by using the *SpaceStat* mechanism for this purpose, and files were created for each year. A spatial weights matrix was then constructed to prepare for join count computations.

The join count operation in *SpaceStat* calculated numerous variables from these data sets. The most important for this study was the pseudo-significance, a measure of the abnormality of clustering that occurs in a given situation. In this case, the smaller the value for the PROB pseudo-significance variable ( $0 < \text{PROB} < 1$ ), the stronger the indication of spatial clustering or dispersion.<sup>39</sup>

The results were based on forty-eight states since it was decided that using only the eleven southern states would not provide a valid data set for statistical analysis. This consequently produced statistics for all continental US states, and does not specifically identify southern patterns. However, we can clearly see the breakdown of clustering nationwide, which also applies to the states in the South, previously the most consistently clustered region in the nation.

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<sup>36</sup> Anselin, Luc. *SpaceStat Tutorial: A Workbook for Using SpaceStat in the Analysis of Spatial Data* (Morgantown, WV: Regional Research Institute, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix B

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix B

When examining the eleven states of the South using the maps, it is simple for the human eye to distinguish the transition from a solidly Democratic gubernatorial pattern to divided, dispersed, or random patterns. Statistical calculations were performed in an attempt to quantify this pattern alteration. After reviewing the results after using *SpaceStat* and the join count spatial autocorrelation method, this experiment appeared to be moderately successful. To an extent, the descriptive statistics reinforced the assertions one could make analyzing the maps.

Deciding the subject areas was somewhat of a problem in this experiment. Ideally, the party affiliation of governors, state level data, would be analyzed by calculating statistics for the eleven focus states. However, a valid sample required more objects for analysis. It was decided that a sampling among all contiguous 48 states would be in agreement with study goals. An alternative study group considered for statistical analysis was a breakdown of election data in counties or voting districts. This did not reflect the hierarchical (state) level of data as well as focusing on undivided states.

Statistical alternatives included hand or computer-aided calculation using Geary's C, Moran's I, or similar methods of calculating spatial autocorrelation. For the purposes of this study, it was determined that use of *SpaceStat* is adequate. The results are somewhat effective descriptive statistics describing the spatial variation of governors' parties across the nation and, relatively, for the South.<sup>40</sup>

## **Conclusions**

As can be seen through the spatial statistic implementation, there once existed a regionally clustered pattern of Democrat / Republican gubernatorial representation which has been deteriorating in recent decades. This pattern decay has occurred for several reasons.

- Southern states in general, especially Florida, Texas, and North Carolina, have experienced significant economic growth and change in population as a result of migration to the Sun Belt. As in the Southwestern United States, there has been an influx of immigrants from Latin America along with a relocation of U.S. citizens from other

parts of the country. The climate and economic outlook for the states has attracted many people who have diverse ideals, desires, and political loyalties.

- The maturation of civil rights and the long overdue disintegration of segregation in the beginning of the 1960s accelerated changes. Even thirty years after accomplishing legislative alterations, social and political ideals are still changing. Minority voters are exercising a louder voice in government at all levels throughout the South and the U.S. in general. This diversifies the voting community and forces politicians to seek support from many different cultural backgrounds when running for office.

- Growth of urban and suburban cultures in the South have also contributed to the changes in the political state of the region. In and around areas such as Washington, DC, Miami, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia, population has boomed and spread rapidly. As the physical landscape has been altered, so has the political interests of the inhabitants: inner-city problems and middle class suburbanite concerns have been chief issues in a region that has traditionally been dominated by rural politics.

While each state has exhibited some peculiar identity changes to different extents, all eleven southern states share the fact that they have become arenas for political contention. Increased competition for Democrats from Republicans and other parties has strengthened parties in general and inspired a more politically active voting community. Elections continue to be more hotly contested than ever at the gubernatorial level in these states; contrasting the dominance that Democrats had held in the region for almost a century.

Beginning around 1950, the tradition of the solid South as a Democratic voting block started to collapse. The differences between local and regional Democrats and the national party began to open doors of opportunity for Republican interests. The 1965 federal Voting Rights Act and more active Republican campaigning also provided reasons for southern Democrats to become disillusioned with their party. The growth of

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix B

Republican popularity began at the national level and spread quickly to the state and local levels.<sup>41</sup>

The traditionally conservative Democratic party has slowly transformed and embraced more liberal viewpoints. Urbanization, achievement of greater racial equality, and injection of numerous lifestyles and cultures have greatly influenced the changes in the face of the South. Economic prosperity has brought new business enterprises, opportunities, and attitudes which have placed new demands on the region's leadership. All of this has resulted in the establishment of a more competitive political arena in the South where battles will continue to capture interest for years to come.

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<sup>41</sup> Truman A. Hartshorn, "The Changed South, 1947 - 1997," *Southeastern Geographer* Vol. XXXVII, no. 2 (November 1997): 136 - 138.

# Appendix A

48 2	ID	OBS	(This line refers to Number of States / Total Number of Information Fields) (ID = State Identification Number (Alphabetical Order) OBS = Political Party value: 1=Democrat, 0=Non-Democrat)
	1	1	
	2	1	
	3	1	
	4	1	
	5	0	
	6	1	
	7	1	
	8	1	
	9	1	
	10	0	
	11	1	
	12	1	
	13	1	
	14	0	
	15	1	
	16	1	
	17	0	
	18	1	
	19	0	
	20	0	
	21	1	
	22	1	
	23	1	
	24	0	
	25	1	
	26	1	
	27	1	
	28	1	
	29	1	
	30	0	
	31	1	
	32	1	
	33	0	
	34	0	
	35	0	
	36	0	
	37	0	
	38	1	
	39	0	
	40	1	
	41	1	
	42	1	
	43	1	
	44	1	
	45	0	
	46	1	
	47	0	
	48	0	



## Appendix B

### Join Count Results

Join Count BB Test for Spatial Autocorrelation  
(empirical pseudo-significance based on 99 random permutations)

**DATA SET:** Subject year

**VARIABLE:** Spatial weights matrix

**WEIGHT:** Specifies state party data as object of analysis

**BB:** The number of join counts, or neighboring states with Democrat governors

**BW:** The number of dissimilar joins, or neighboring states with different party governors

**MEAN:** The expected number of join counts under spatial randomness

**ST. DEV.:** The expected standard deviation under spatial randomness

**PROB:** The pseudo-significance, or the number of instances where a BB count larger than the value for BB was observed in the permutations

DATA SET	VARIABLE	WEIGHT	BB	MEAN	ST. DEV.	PROB	BW	MEAN	ST. DEV.	PROB
1965	WEIGHTS	OBS	6	3.277778	1.597546	0.100000	3	3.373737	1.914424	0.680000
1970	WEIGHTS	OBS	2	1.212121	1.042688	0.410000	1	3.606061	2.617906	0.790000
1975	WEIGHTS	OBS	6	4.262626	1.671098	0.210000	3	2.494949	1.473395	0.450000
1980	WEIGHTS	OBS	8	3.313131	1.521254	0.010000	0	3.313131	1.941210	1.000000
1985	WEIGHTS	OBS	6	3.434343	1.512948	0.060000	3	3.272727	1.683159	0.640000
1990	WEIGHTS	OBS	3	2.469697	1.625401	0.420000	5	3.434343	2.085722	0.300000
1997	WEIGHTS	OBS	1	0.914141	0.897958	0.740000	5	3.313131	2.485248	0.290000

## Appendix B

YEAR	Interpretations of Spatial Autocorrelation (In terms of indication of correlation types)		
	Positive (Clustering)	Random	Negative (Dispersion)
1965	Somewhat present	Weak	Little or None
1970	Somewhat present	Weak	Little or None
1975	Weak	Strong	Weak
1980	Strong	Very Weak	None
1985	Strong	Very Weak	Little or None
1990	Little or None	Weak	Somewhat present
1997	Little or None	Weak	Somewhat present

This illustrates the conclusions one can make when looking at the maps. Clustering in early sample years is limited, becomes more noticeable, then is all but gone. Apparent chance of dispersion is not observed until the last sample years, while randomness of spatial patterns is "somewhat present" to at least a small degree. This shows, albeit somewhat roughly, that there is an increasingly dispersed election pattern rather than the regional one previously witnessed.

Appendix C

STATENAME	F1986	F1987	F1988	F1989	F1990	F1991	F1992	F1993	F1994	F1995	F1996	F1997	KEY
Alabama	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	R	R	R	51501
Alaska	D	D	D	D	I	I	I	I	I	D	D	D	79500
Arizona	D	R	D	D	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	51207
Arkansas	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	51400
California	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	51152
Colorado	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51264
Connecticut	D	D	D	D	D	I	I	I	I	R	R	R	79408
Delaware	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	79322
Florida	D	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51519
Georgia	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51537
Hawaii	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51127
Idaho	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	79576
Illinois	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	51481
Indiana	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51621
Iowa	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	51461
Kansas	D	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	R	R	R	51344
Kentucky	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	51640
Louisiana	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	R	R	51382
Maine	D	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	I	I	I	79714

**Table 2b**

Interpretations of Spatial Autocorrelation  
(In terms of indication of correlation types)

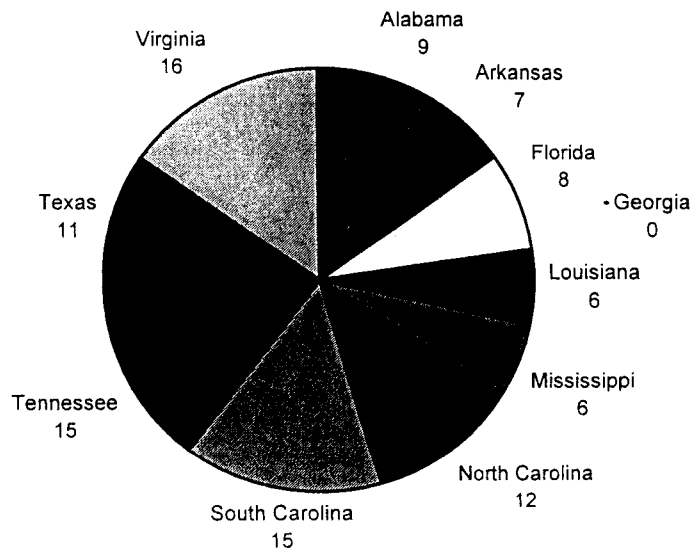
YEAR	Positive (Clustering)	Random	Negative (Dispersion)
1965	Somewhat present	Weak	Little or None
1970	Somewhat present	Weak	Little or None
1975	Weak	Strong	Weak
1980	Strong	Very Weak	None
1985	Strong	Very Weak	Little or None
1990	Little or None	Weak	Somewhat present
1997	Little or None	Weak	Somewhat present

This illustrates the conclusions one can make when looking at the maps. Clustering in early sample years is limited, becomes more noticeable, then is all but gone. Apparent chance of dispersion is not observed until the last sample years, while randomness of spatial patterns is "somewhat present" to at least a small degree. This shows, albeit somewhat roughly, that there is an increasingly dispersed election pattern rather than the regional one previously witnessed.

**Table 4**

### Republican Governors in Southern States (1965 - 1997)

	<b>Total Years with Republican Governor</b>	<b>Percent of Total Years (out of 33)</b>
Alabama	9	27 %
Arkansas	7	21 %
Florida	8	24 %
Georgia	0	0 %
Louisiana	6	18 %
Mississippi	6	18 %
North Carolina	12	36 %
South Carolina	15	45 %
Tennessee	15	45 %
Texas	11	33 %
Virginia	16	48 %



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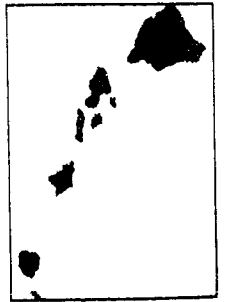
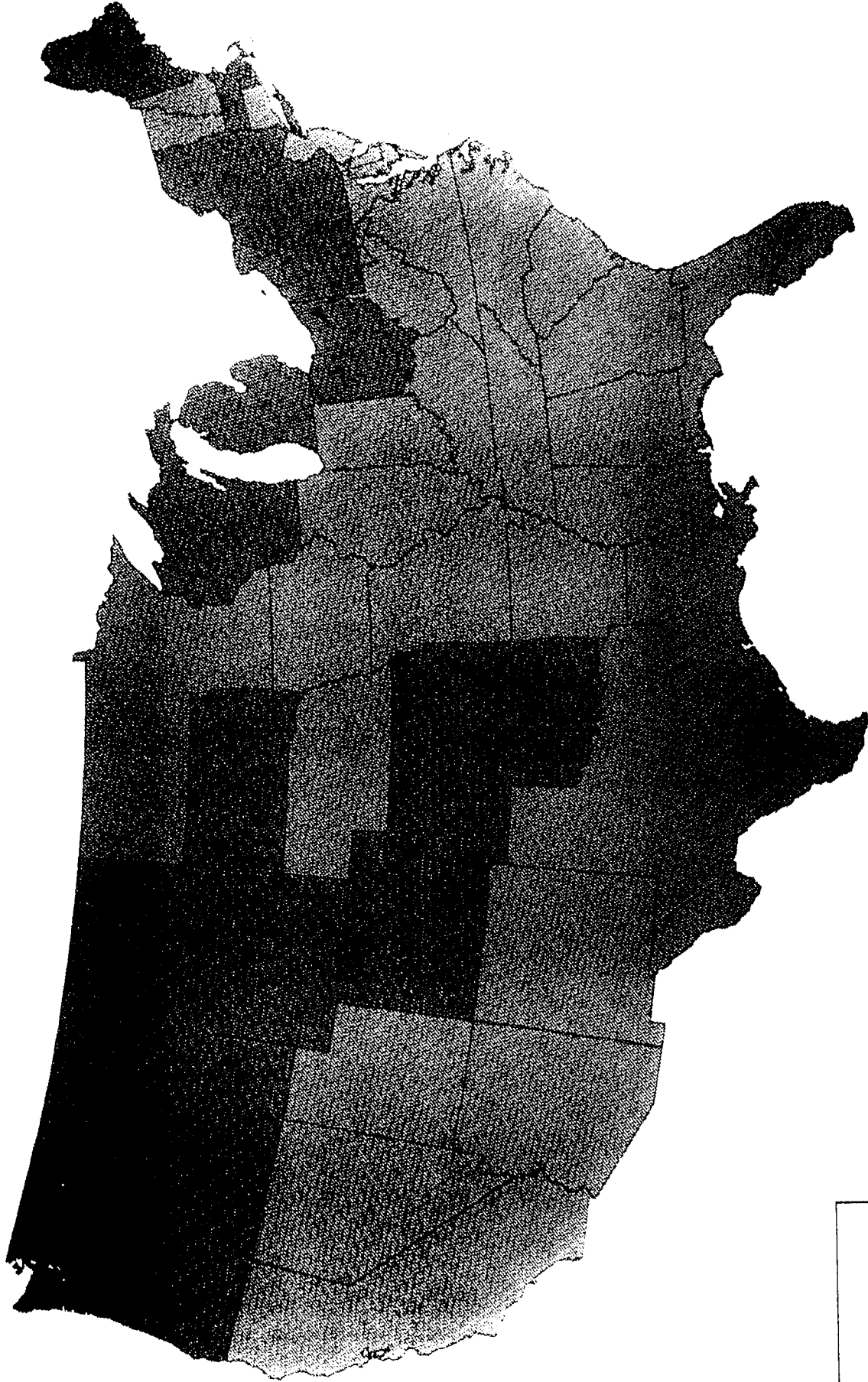
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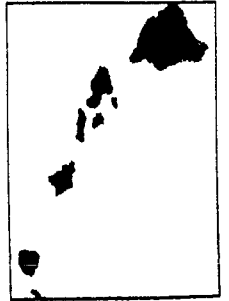
# United States Governors - 1965



**Political Parties**  
■ Democrat - 33  
■ Republican - 17

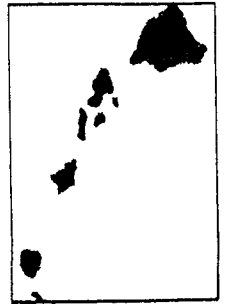


# United States Governors - 1970



**Political Parties**  
Democrat - 19  
Republican - 31

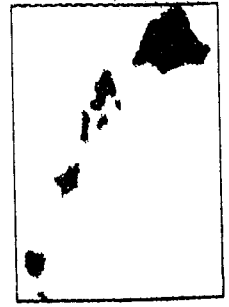
# United States Governors - 1975



**Political Parties**

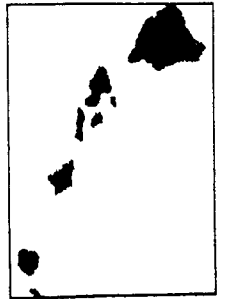
■	Democrat - 37
■	Republican - 12
□	Independent - 1

# United States Governors - 1980



**Political Parties**  
Democrat - 31  
Republican - 19

# United States Governors - 1985



**Political Parties**  
Democrat - 34  
Republican - 16



# United States Governors - 1997



**Political Parties**

Dark Gray	Democrat - 18
Light Gray	Republican - 31
White	Independent - 1