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Party Competition in Illinois:

Republican Prospects in a Blue State

Introduction

Campaigns and elections in Illinois are always interesting and exciting spectacles. They are full of colorful characters, great plots, and unexpected twists to the story line. Each election brings new characters and different stories, but each builds on the rich tradition and culture of a big and diverse state which takes its politics and politicians quite seriously. A state which over the last half century has produced such notables as Everett Dirksen, Paul Douglas, Adlai Stevenson, Jr., Charles Percy, Paul Simon, Alan Dixon, Richard Ogilvie, Dan Walker, Dan Rostenkowski, Richard J. Daley, Harold Washington, Richard M. Daley, Russell Arrington, Phil Rock, Michael Madigan, Pate Phillip, Roland Burris, George Ryan, Jim Edgar, Jim Thompson, Richard Durbin, Barack Obama, Emil Jones, Judy Barr Topinka, and Rod Blagojevich clearly has a great political culture and a compelling political history. We have had our scoundrels and some have ended up in federal prison. We have had our statesmen of the past and some of our present leaders hold national office with great prominence and prospects for national leadership.

One of the reasons Illinois politics and government is always so interesting is the fact that the two parties, at least over the long term, have faced each other from a fairly even statewide base. Each party has experienced the ups and downs that go with the electoral tides of the moment, and each has been dominant and each disadvantaged for some period of time. Illinois has been a competitive state for decades; however, from the 1940s through the 1980s the Republicans held a consistent advantage if one judges by control of the majority in the General Assembly. Also, from 1976 through 2002 the Republicans won every race for Governor and controlled the executive mansion for 26 consecutive years. After the 2002 state elections the Democrats took control of the entire government, riding a tide of electoral success which swept the governor's race and all the constitutional offices, except for the State Treasurer. Just as importantly, the

Democrats for the first time since 1992 took control of the majority in both the Illinois House and the Illinois Senate. This was the first time since the brief two year interval of 1975-1976, when Dan Walker was governor, that the Democrats had control of both the executive and the legislative branches or had a unified government under their control. Before that brief interlude, one had to go back to the New Deal Era of 1933 through 1940, when Henry Horner was Governor for almost two terms, to find another comparable lengthy era of unified

government under the Democrats (Howard, 1999, 239-246). After the 2002 Democratic sweep, there was much political commentary about how the Republicans were facing hard times in Illinois and entering a rebuilding era. Then in 2006 the plight of the Republicans got even worse. That year, Governor Rod Blagojevich was handily re-elected over the Republican State Treasurer, Judy Barr Topinka. The Democrats held onto their majority in the Illinois House and increased their majority in the Illinois State Senate. The Democrats also swept all the state constitutional office races, including the State Treasurer, which prior to 2006 had been the only statewide office still held by the Republicans. The Democrats had owned both U. S. Senate seats since 2004 when Democrat Barack Obama replaced former Senator Peter Fitzgerald. In fact, Obama won that race in a landslide against the hapless Alan Keyes who the Republicans had imported from Maryland to run against Obama at the last minute (Jackson, 2006). It was only at the level of the U. S. House results for 2006 that the Republicans could take any real solace. There their former 10 to 9 advantage in House seats had been reversed in 2004 when veteran Republican Phil Crane had been upset by Melissa Bean. The Democrats maintained that 10 to 9 advantage after the 2006 elections. This very closely divided and narrow majority enjoyed by the Democrats statewide in the U. S. House distribution contains an important lesson. The overall competitiveness of the two parties statewide is indicated by these geographically based results and it extends beyond the usual redistricting truth that the map is often drawn to protect incumbents first and the party in power second. Republicans have been competitive, and at times even dominant statewide in the past, and there are some indicators in this paper as to how and where they can regain their competitiveness in the future.

Lessons from Voting Behavior Research

Most of the empirical evidence provided in this paper will focus on aggregate data assembled at the county and statewide level. It is useful to start this analysis with explicit recognition that all aggregate voting returns are made up of individual voters and the discipline of Political Science has developed an extensive base of knowledge about how those individuals behave politically. One of the cardinal rules of voting behavior is that partisanship counts for a lot and is very important in explaining why elections turn out as they do. Voters come in a variety of partisan forms ranging from strong partisans to weak partisans to independents. The strong partisans vote routinely and very heavily for their own party's nominees up and down the ticket. The only question about them is whether they will be motivated by the candidates, the issues, and the campaigns to turn out to vote in a particular election, and usually they do so at rates much higher than the weak partisans and the independents. Very few strong partisans defect to the other party in any one election although they may stay home if there is something particularly egregious about the party's ticket or its recent record. The weak partisans are not nearly as loyal and they have a much greater propensity to split their tickets and to defect to the other party. They are also harder to motivate and to persuade to turn out on election day.

The weak partisans must be motivated and mobilized in order to help contribute to building the party's electoral coalition into a winning majority. The strong and weak partisans together can drive the building toward an electoral majority; however, neither major party is strong enough in Illinois, or nationally, to depend entirely on their own partisans to win a majority in most elections. Only at the local level, in some one party dominant geographic jurisdictions can one build an electoral majority out of only the party's own strong partisans.

It is clear that on the crucial variable of party identification the Democrats have enjoyed an advantage statewide recently. Public opinion polls have consistently showed that the Democrats lead the Republicans by a comfortable margin in Illinois. For example, a Survey U S A poll conducted in July of 2006 showed the Democrats at 43 percent, the Republicans at 32 percent, and the Independents at 23 percent in Illinois (Reported in Miller, Capital Fax, July 28, 2006). Two months later, in September, a Chicago Tribune poll found the Democrats at 43 percent; the Republicans at 25 percent, and the Independents at 22 percent (Chicago Tribune, September 12, 2006). These results indicate that from two-thirds to three fourths of Illinois voters identify with one of the two major parties which is a rate of partisanship somewhat higher than the national averages and which is another indicator of a very partisan and a very competitive state although it is one with a Democratic advantage at this point. For comparison a Gallup poll taken in late January of 2007 showed that the national distribution of partisans was 34 percent Democrats, 30 percent Republicans, and 34 percent Independents (Gallup, 2007).

This analysis also identifies a third and sizable group of voters who are not strong or weak party supporters and who can be appealed to on the basis of the issues and the candidates presented in a particular race. These are the Independents who reject party labels and party loyalty for whatever combination of reasons. They tend to split their tickets more and they are up for grabs as they swing back and forth in the party and candidates they support from election to election. Actually the empirical research shows that there are two basic types of Independents. One group is the true Independents, i.e. those who have absolutely no allegiance to either major party and no sense of attachment to either and who actively reject such attachments. They may truly "vote the person and not the party" as the popular phrase goes. Other independents may overtly reject taking the party label for themselves and may not psychologically identify with either party; however, in a behavioral sense they predominantly support one party over the other. These are what the scholars call "independent-leaners" who rather consistently support one party over the other while rejecting the party label (Keith, et al., 1992) As Keith and his associates showed in their research, this variant of the Independents acts in the voting booth much like the weak partisans of the party they lean toward. They are harder to turn out at the polls and they are more disengaged in politics than the strong partisans; however, when they vote, they are likely to be pretty consistent supporters of one

party. This leaves a much smaller group of "true Independents" as the most likely to split their tickets and to change their partisan vote from election to election, or to not vote at all, or to be attracted to third party candidates.

It is the thesis of this paper that the two parties have a very strong foundation in different geographical sections of Illinois and in the very different social strata, individuals and interest groups which make up the polity and society of this diverse state. The parties represent different people, different classes, different groups and interests, and they articulate different stands on the major issues of the day. The Democrats and the Republicans have many long time loyal supporters and well defined geographical bases in Illinois, and they fall back to those foundations to regroup and rebuild in times of hardship and challenge. That is essentially what is happening to the Republicans in the first decade of the 21st Century. The ability to rebuild, expand and prosper is contingent on reaching new audiences, new voters, and mobilizing them, and in some limited instances, the conversion of other voters and groups traditionally identified with the other party. The new voters and the Independents, however, are the major source of new blood and new support. Each party knows that this strategic challenge faces them and what they must do to adapt and survive in an ever-changing environment. Each tries to make the adaptations necessary to adjust to an ever changing environment; however, they use their base, their foundation from the past, which is anchored in many years of electoral history to provide them the foundation and the stability to build on for the future.

Blue States and Red States

There is a great deal of discussion in American politics today about the blue states and the red states (White, 2003; Williams, 1997, Fiorina, 2005). These designations were originally made by the television networks as they reported the presidential election returns and filled in their massive maps of the United States with the assigned color as each state's probable electoral college vote winners were announced. This graphic was initially designed to add color and visual excitement to the reporting of the election returns, but it has become a universal shorthand for summarizing the politics of a divided and polarized nation. That polarization is almost always depicted at the state level with each state now given an automatic color coded category, red for the Republicans and blue for the Democrats. This convenient shorthand has become a powerful way to summarize a number of important trends in American politics.

Illinois is a large and diverse state and a prize well worth winning in national politics. It has long been regarded as one of the "bellwether" states, or a state with a very diverse population and economy and one which indicated quite accurately which way the political winds were blowing. Recently the Associated Press used U. S. Census Bureau data to rank all fifty states. Illinois was ranked the most representative, or "most average" state in the union

on a wide variety of demographic indicators (Ohlemacher, The Southern Illinoisan, May 17, 2007, 1). On that count then, the prospects for the Democrats look promising nationally to the extent that Illinois is a representative state politically. Illinois has been designated a blue state consistently for well over a decade. Russell Working of the Chicago Tribune looking at the national electoral map in November of 2004 called Illinois "a blue island in a red sea" (Working, Chicago Tribune, November 8, 2004, 1). Veteran Illinois politics observer, Paul Green has termed Illinois, "…a solid deep blue Democratic Party bastion" (Green, February 12, 2007). This Democratic trend probably began with Bill Clinton's electoral victories in Illinois in both 1992 and 1996, and it has become an accurate presidential election characterization. The Democrats have won four consecutive presidential elections in Illinois since 1992. However, at the state level in the 1990s Illinois was a closely divided state where the Democrats and the Republicans both had significant strength and did very well in other statewide election results. As we saw earlier the Republicans won every governor's election between 1976 and 2002, and they often won by comfortable statewide margins. By virtue of having won the right to draw the redistricting map in 1991, the Republicans captured the majority in the senate for each election between 1992 and 2002. The Illinois congressional delegation was about as equally divided as one could get with a 10 to 10 tie in the delegation between 1992 and 2002. In 2002 the Illinois delegation became 10 Republicans and 9 Democrats, and it became 10 Democrats and 9 Republicans in 2004. The U. S. Senate count was 2 Democrats and 0 Republicans during most of the 1990s; with Paul Simon and Alan Dixon, and then Paul Simon and Carol Moseley Braun holding those seats; however, it became a 1 to 1 tie after Peter Fitzgerald defeated Carol Moseley Braun in 1998. In short the decade of the 1990s was marked by a very competitive and very divided government era in Illinois history. Outside the presidential election returns, Illinois was best described as a checkered or striped state with streaks and spots of blue intermittently interrupting the red. Indeed, for generations Illinois consistently had been ranked by political scientists as one of the most competitive states (Ranney, 1965, 87; Bibby and Holbrook, 2003, 88). This change represents movement from a slightly pro-Republican tilt to the very competitive range The question this paper explores is one of just how competitive Illinois will be in the future in the perennial competition between Democrats and Republicans and where do the Republicans have realistic prospects for winning locally and building on local strength to make a comeback statewide.

The Historic Context: The Elections of 1998, 2002, and 2006

The empirical data which undergird this paper are aggregate voting statistics presented at the statewide and at the county level of analysis. The county voting returns are the primary unit of analysis. The data for the 102 counties in Illinois were gathered initially by the Illinois State Board of Elections, and this paper makes use of their voting returns for the elections of 1998, 2002, and 2006. The major focus is on the Governor's race for those years with an

additional look at the race for Attorney General. We are grateful to the Illinois State Board of Elections for the provision of these data. A brief review of each of those races is provided for the political context of the race and the time.

The year 1998 presented a rare open seat contest for Governor since Governor Jim Edgar was retiring after eight years in office. The 1998 race for Governor featured then Secretary of State and veteran office holder, George Ryan, the Republican candidate, versus Glenn Poshard who was a five-term Democratic Congressman from Marion in deep southern Illinois. Ryan was from Kankakee in northeastern Illinois, and he had been Lieutenant Governor under Governor Jim Thompson, and then more recently had been elected twice to be Secretary of State. In Illinois the Office of Secretary of State is a powerful one because among other things it controls thousands of jobs in driver's license facilities and other state agencies. Those jobs often go to the party faithful and are highly coveted jobs. Over many years in the Illinois General Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor's Office, and in the Secretary of State's Office, George Ryan had built a reputation as a capable and ambitious politician. He was particularly liked and respected by the professionals in Springfield because he enjoyed the give and take of the political process and was an effective builder of legislative coalitions and log-roller for the causes and bills he supported.

Congressman Glenn Poshard was a former State Senator and educator who was highly popular in his district and throughout the southern Illinois region. Poshard was particularly well regarded in labor union circles because of his voting record in the Congress. Poshard was a strong and energetic campaigner and an eloquent speaker on the stump and he had a proven track record as a vote-getter in his region; however, candidates from southern Illinois have a difficult time winning state-wide office since it is a rural region and the population base is much smaller than that in central and northeastern Illinois. Poshard had also survived a hard-fought and spirited Democratic primary against three other strong candidates and two minor challengers while Ryan had only one minor challenger in the primary. Poshard had been an outspoken critic of the prevailing campaign finance system in Illinois. Poshard promised to continue his self-imposed ban on taking campaign money from political action committees although he did take money from labor unions and other Democratic Party sources. This made it difficult for Poshard to compete in the money game, and Poshard was outspent by Ryan by a margin of $14.5 million to $4.5 million (Howard, 1999, 352).

Each candidate was an experienced and capable politician who had enjoyed success in prior races and it shaped up as a very competitive general election race. After a hard-fought contest, Ryan ultimately prevailed; however, it was not by a wide margin. Ryan received 51 percent of the statewide vote and Poshard received 48 percent, which was much closer than many of the public opinion polls had predicted. Poshard ran as close as he did because of his

extraordinary level of support in southern and central Illinois and in the Metro-East area around St. Louis. Ryan did better than Republicans usually do in Cook County and in Chicago, and the organization Democrats in Chicago never did entirely embrace the Poshard campaign. Ryan also ran extremely well in the five suburban Collar Counties.

The 1998 Illinois Attorney General race was between Jim Ryan who was the State's Attorney in DuPage County, the state's largest Republican stronghold, and Miram Santos, who was the Circuit Clerk in Cook County, the state's largest Democratic stronghold. Santos had strong support in the state's growing Hispanic community. Initially, this contest might have seemed like an even match; however, the Santos campaign never seemed to get on track, and she proved to be a less than effective campaigner while Jim Ryan was a very effective candidate. Ultimately Ryan won a landslide over Santos with a 61 percent to 38 percent margin. Santos won Cook County by a margin of 55,513 votes which is not enough for a Democrat to win statewide. Jim Ryan, as expected ran extremely well in the five suburban Collar Counties of DuPage, Will, Kane, Mchenry, and Lake Counties where Republicans had traditionally won large majorities in statewide races. Santos lost all the Downstate counties except for three traditionally Democratic counties (Gallatin, Franklin, and Alexander) in deep southern Illinois. Ryan won the other 98 counties, and his victory showed what a Republican landslide would look like. Santos' meager results showed where the absolute Democratic bedrock was fixed in Illinois at that time (Jackson, 2003).

The 2002 elections brought an almost entirely new cast of characters and quite different results for both parties. George Ryan's Administration had been a controversial and troubled one, and his prospects for re-election were so bad that he dropped out of running for a second term fairly early in the year before the election was held. Ryan was subjected to a storm of criticism from Democrats and the mass media because of a hiring scandal and other patronage abuses which had actually started when he was Secretary of State and which Glenn Poshard had firmly criticized during his run for the Governorship in 1998. Poshard had tried to make those abuses an issue during his 1998 run for Governor; however, the media were not particularly interested at that time, and Ryan was able to divert attention to other subjects during that race. Investigation of those abuses was taken over by a new United States Attorney for the northern District of Illinois, Patrick Fitzgerald, and his investigations plus stories of the scandal were a constant backdrop to the 2002 governor's race. Other prominent Republicans in the Illinois General Assembly were caught up in one facet or another of the Ryan scandals. Ryan also angered many of his Republican peers by commuting the sentences of all the inmates on death row in Illinois, and he was far too much of a tax and spend politician to suit the conservative wing of the Republican Party. Thus, the 2002 prospects for the Republicans statewide did not look nearly as promising as they had in 1998. However, in the 2002 Illinois Republican Primary the party nominated their incumbent Attorney General, Jim Ryan, after a

spirited contest with two major challengers, the incumbent Lieutenant Governor, Corinne Wood, and a very outspoken State Senator, Patrick O'Malley, who had the support of the Republican Party's very conservative wing. Ryan had a good record as Attorney General, and he appeared to be the most competitive candidate the Republicans could have run that year. Ryan was faced by a Democrat from Chicago, Rod Blagojevich, who had been a three term Congressman from the north side, and Blagojevich had been a state representative before then. Blagojevich was also supported by one of the Chicago powerbrokers, Richard Mell, who was his father-in-law, and the assumption was that Mell could produce strong Chicago organization support for Blagojevich. Blagojevich won a competitive primary against Paul Vallas, who had been the Chicago Public Schools Superintendent under Major Richard M. Daley, and Roland Burris, who had earlier served two terms as Comptroller and then one term as Illinois Attorney General. Blagojevich's competitive primary seemed not to leave lasting intra-party scars since the Democrats were intent on taking back the Governor's office after twenty six consecutive years of being shut out of it. Ryan had more trouble unifying the Republican Party after their own divisive primary. Blagojevich ultimately beat Jim Ryan by a healthy margin, 52 percent to 45 percent. The Republican candidate never seemed to get his campaign on track. Many attributed his problems to the fact that his last name was the same as George Ryan although the two were not related; however, the problems probably ran much deeper than that with the George Ryan scandals beginning to take hold in the public's consciousness and the internal divisions of the Republican Party never healed after the divisive primary that spring (Green, 2003). Blagojevich proved to be a strong campaigner, and his campaign became a textbook example of how a Democrat can win in Illinois. He ran extremely well in Chicago where he piled up a margin of more than 400,000 vote plurality and in Cook County, where he won by a 50,000 plus margin. Blagojevich did well enough in the suburbs and downstate especially in the Democratic strongholds in the Metro-East area of suburban St. Louis and in the traditional deep south Democratic counties of Randolph, Jackson, Franklin, Saline, Gallatin, and Alexander counties. Blagojevich also did well in the northwest in Rock Island County and in LaSalle County and in several western Illinois counties (Jackson, 2003; Green, 2003).

Blagojevich's 2002 victory set the standard for modern Democratic candidates and showed clearly what the components of a Democratic majority statewide would look like. His success was almost matched by another Democratic newcomer to the statewide scene, Lisa Madigan, who won the race for Attorney General. Madigan was a young State Senator who had previously worked on the staff of the late United States Senator, Paul Simon. Madigan was also well connected politically by virtue of being the daughter of the current Speaker of the House, Mike Madigan, who was also the State Chair of the Democratic Party and a major player in Illinois politics for three decades. In fact, the only real rap on Madigan was that she was young and inexperienced in the practice of law and she appeared to have fewer legal credentials than those ordinarily judged to be viable candidates for Attorney General. Madigan

was faced by Joe Birkett who at that time was the State's Attorney in DuPage County. Note that this is the same office to which Jim Ryan had been elected previously in 1994 and 1998 in the Republican suburban fortress of DuPage County. Birkett ran an intelligent and competitive race where he concentrated fire on Madigan's inexperience and lack of traditional legal credentials. Birkett was also helped by a Republican Party which though divided on other matters seemed to be united in their desire to elect Birkett and defeat Madigan. Madigan made up in good judgment, campaign enthusiasm, and basic political acumen what she may have lacked in experience and legal qualifications. Madigan ultimately defeated Birkett in a very hard fought and close election by the statewide margin of 50.39 percent to 47.10 percent. (A third party candidate, Gary Shilts the Libertarian, got 2.51 percent). (Illinois State Board of Elections, November, 2002). The Madigan versus Birkett race for Attorney General in 2002 shows the contours of what a very competitive race in Illinois is likely to look like in the first decade of the 21st century. Madigan beat Birkett by a wide margin of 182,554 votes, or by 76 percent to 21 percent in Chicago. She also beat Birkett by 40,000 votes, or a narrow 50 percent to 47 percent in suburban Cook County (Jackson, 2004; Green, 2003). Madigan did better than Blagojevich did in Chicago and she almost equaled him in suburban Cook County. Birkett won his home county of DuPage by a margin of almost 95,000 votes and he took the other four suburban Collar Counties narrowly. Madigan won almost the same counties downstate as Blagojevich did- except for twelve counties where the two Democrats had split results. This was a very competitive race statewide which the Democrats ultimately won, by a fairly narrow margin, and it illustrates very succinctly where the two parties have been strong traditionally in Illinois, and where the toss-up counties, or the counties where either party can prevail, are located.

Overall, the victories of Rod Blagojevich for Governor and Lisa Madigan as Attorney General in 2002, along with the victory of the Democrats in the other constitutional offices (Secretary of State and Comptroller), coupled with the victory of the Democrats in a majority of the House and Senate races that year, helped to propel the recent successes the Democrats have enjoyed in the first decade of the 21st Century. After the 2002 campaign, the Republicans were reduced to holding only one statewide office, Treasurer, and they held one federal office, the Junior Senator, Peter Fitzgerald, which they then lost in 2004 when Barack Obama beat the Republican candidate, Alan Keyes (Jackson, 2006). Coupled with a Democratic majority of 10 to 9 of the U. S. House seats after 2004, and holding both U. S. Senate seats after 2004, was the fact that the Democrats had won the presidential contest in Illinois in every national election since 1992. This string of victories for the Democrats in both federal and state elections was extended in 2006 by even wider margins. The results of the 2006 elections in Illinois solidified and confirmed what has been a rapidly developing trend for at least a decade. Illinois became one of the bluest of the blue states in that election cycle. Illinois Democrats won all the statewide races, taking control or retaining control of all the constitutional offices, including

State Treasurer, which the Republicans had held with Judy Barr Topinka since 1995, taking an even larger majority in the Illinois Senate, and holding onto their majority in the Illinois House. Dick Durbin held the Senior Senator from Illinois seat, and he became the Assistant Minority leader in the U. S. Senate in 2005 and the Assistant Majority Leader in 2007. Senator Barack Obama became a rising star in national politics, and he became a leading presidential candidate soon after the 2006 national elections. 2006 firmly solidified the lead the Democrats enjoyed in the state , and it seemed to indicate that the tide was running in their favor in Illinois.

The general election in November of 2006 confirmed all the trends toward the Democratic Party which had been running since 2002 and even before in Illinois as was noted above. We are focusing in this paper on the two high profile races for Governor and Attorney General. The Democrats won both handily. Rod Blagojevich won the Governorship by a very comfortable margin. He took 49.9 percent of the vote to 39.7 percent for his Republican opponent, State Treasurer Judy Barr Topinka a spread of more than 10 percent (Illinois State Board of Elections, November, 2006). Blagojevich was prevented from obtaining an outright majority by the unusually strong results for the Green Party candidate, Richard Whitney of Carbondale, who obtained 10.4 percent which was an historic level for a third party in Illinois. The Whitney vote was partially a protest vote or "none of the above" verdict on both candidates. Blagojevich carried his hometown of Chicago with an overwhelming margin of 77 percent of the vote. He carried suburban Cook County with a 100,000 vote margin (Illinois State Board of Elections, November, 2006; Green, February, 2007). Blagojevich also carried 29 downstate counties. More importantly, he did better than Democrats usually do with an outright victory in two suburban Collar Counties, Will and Lake, and he ran better than Democrats usually run in the other three Collar Counties. It is also clear that the Democrats did extremely well in all the other constitutional officer races and in the marginal districts contested for the General Assembly.

Overall 2006 was a very good year for the Democrats in Illinois. Nowhere is the current dominance of the Democratic Party more evident than in the Attorney General's race. In 2006 Lisa Madigan was running for her second term. She was overwhelmingly re-elected with a margin of 72.45 percent to 24.45 percent over her Republican opponent, Stewart Umholtz. It is worth emphasizing that this Democratic landslide for Lisa Madigan for Attorney General was attained only four years after her very close and competitive race in 2002 and only eight years after the Democratic candidate, Marie Santos had lost all but four counties in her race for Attorney General in 1998. In fact Madigan's Republican opponent, Stewart Umholtz, was largely unknown before the 2006 general election, and he remained that way after the election. He raised and spent very little money for a statewide race, and he had virtually no television, and very little presence in any of the counties other than the advantages provided by being a part of the Republican state ticket. The fact that he carried only two counties (Edwards and

Tazewell) is indicative of just how overwhelming Madigan's landslide was and how much this race resembled the 1996 Ryan vs. Santos result in reverse. We will now examine the historic areas of strength and weakness for both parties across all of these races.

The County Level Data Analysis

In this segment of the paper we turn to the analysis of the results of the 1998, 2002, and 2006 races. We will examine these results to demonstrate the geographical base of the two major parties and to show where they have done well, and not so well, over the last three election cycles. These three cycles include the time period from George Ryan's victory over Glenn Poshard in the 1998 Governor's race to Rod Blagojevich's re-election over Judy Barr Topinka in 2006. At the Attorney General's level it included the period from the landslide victory of Republican Jim Ryan over Democrat Miram Santos in 1998 to the landslide victory of Democrat Lisa Madigan over Republican Stewart Umholtz in 2006. In between there was a close and competitive race for Attorney General which featured Lisa Madigan and Joe Birkett in 2002. Thus, we have covered an electoral period in Illinois politics where the Republicans went from winning both the Governor's race and the Attorney General's race to just the opposite just eight years later. 2002 was a very competitive election and the Republicans were competitive for both the Governor and the Attorney General's offices that year; however, they ultimately lost both races. One might well term 2002 the "tipping point" in Illinois politics when Illinois went from being a highly competitive two party state to one when Illinois is commonly regarded as one of the most dependable blue states and where many observers are now wondering aloud about the ability of the Illinois Republicans to continue to compete in statewide races (Green, 2007). It is the study of that potential for continued competitiveness of the two parties, and especially the future of the Republicans, which is the central research question of this paper.

It matters significantly where people live and where they work in the analysis of partisan politics in the United States. People tend to live, work, and recreate in largely homogeneous places. They tend to join compatible voluntary organizations such as civic groups, fraternal organizations, churches and synagogues and neighborhood groups and associate mostly with like-minded people. They tend especially to live in homogeneous places surrounded by people that are much like themselves whose lifestyles and views reinforce their own values and prejudices (Brooks, 2004). This homogeneous clustering tendency is particularly driven by economics and the market place, especially the cost of housing. Market forces are reinforced by considerations of race and ethnicity and the quality of schools in many areas. Thus Republicans wind up congregating with other Republicans and Democrats with other

Democrats. An analysis of the election returns based on a study of the maps at the county level can reveal much about the current status and the future prospects of the two parties.

(Map 1 here)

Map 1 provides the graphic demonstration of where Governor Blagojevich did well in his re-election race with Judy Barr Topinka, and where she was able to win county level victories in 2006. Overall, of course, Blagojevich did extremely well statewide with a 49.8 percent to 39.3 percent victory over Topinka. Richard Whitney, the Green Party candidate, received 10.4 percent of the votes which is unusually high for a third party candidate in Illinois. Whitney's strong showing undoubtedly prevented the incumbent governor from receiving a clear majority, and Whitney's total vote also probably indicated some significant dissatisfaction with both candidates of the major parties. Nevertheless, the Governor and his allies could clearly take comfort in his 10.5 percent margin over his Republican opponent, and many Republicans expressed considerable alarm over the future of their party in light of the fact that their candidate for Governor received less than 40 percent of the statewide vote. As was noted earlier, the Republicans lost all of the statewide constitutional officer races in 2006, and they also lost ground in the Illinois Senate where the Democrats elected a veto proof majority.

All in all, 2006 was a very bad year for Republicans in Illinois and a very good year for the Democrats; however, it is worthwhile to get beyond the state-wide totals and to examine in some detail where both parties prospered and where they may have cause for concern for the future. Map 1 provides the visual results making it very easy to see the answers to that question. First it is notable that Blagojevich won a total of 32 counties and Topinka won the remainder, or 70 counties. If geography won elections, and at the presidential level, to a considerable extent it does because of design of the electoral college, then Topinka would have been Governor (Jacobson, 2005). However, of course, it is ultimately total votes and people, not land which counts the most in the races below the presidency. Blagojevich won big in the big counties. That is, he won handily in Cook County which is the biggest and most important of all. He won Cook County by over half a million votes. He even won two of the five suburban Collar Counties, i.e. Will and Lake County. These are not counties that Democratic candidates for Governor traditionally win. Their loss by Topinka may well signal some very significant long term problems for the viability of the Republican Party (Green, 2007). The Governor also won Winnebago, Rock Island, LaSalle, St. Clair, and Madison Counties. With the possible exception of Winnebago, the Democrats usually do well in those counties; however, these results spell continuing trouble for the Republicans in some of the bigger and more urban counties. In deep southern Illinois, Blagojevich won the traditional Democratic Counties of Franklin, Gallatin, Randolph, Union and Alexander, which an incumbent Democrat should expect to win; however, he also picked up Williamson County, which is not a traditionally Democratic stronghold in

Governor's races. On the other hand, all was not completely lost for Topinka and the Republicans. She won a wide swath of counties across central Illinois stretching from the Mississippi River on the west to Indiana on the east. She also won a significant number of northern Illinois counties, and three of the five Collar Counties where Republicans traditionally dominate. In deep southern Illinois, Topinka took the usual Republican strongholds of Clinton, Washington, and Johnson Counties. She added Jackson County which is not typically a Republican County. The Topinka victory in Jackson County undoubtedly resulted from the unusually large total obtained by Carbondale attorney Rich Whitney, and it was indicative of some dissatisfaction with Blagojevich in a traditionally Democratic county. The day after the November, 2006 elections the Democrats had much to celebrate and the Republicans much to despair over looking at only this one set of returns. (See also Appendix A for the population data on each of the counties in each camp).

(Map 2 here)

Map 2 helps to put these results into a more long-term perspective. It includes the results from the 2002 governor's race for a longitudinal perspective. Blagojevich won his first term in 2002 by beating Jim Ryan in a race which was much closer than the 2006 race. Map 2 provides data addressing the question of where the Democrats have done well consistently and where the Republicans have consistently won recently. This map also provides the evidence necessary to make some calculations as to where the "toss up" or swing counties are located. In other words, which are the counties where the candidates for each party can have a reasonable expectation of winning. Such winning candidates can be expected to appeal to the issues, ideologies, and candidate images of the day, and on basis of what the voting behavior literature calls the "short term" factors, can have a chance of overcoming the built in influence of the long term commitment many people have to party identification and to voting for the party they are loyal to and typically support (Niemi and Wiesberg, 1993). While aggregate data cannot settle these questions definitively, voting returns at the county level can be very useful in showing the geographic areas where each party can expect to do well, to lose, and to have a chance to win with the right candidate, appealing issues, and an effective campaign. Map 2 provides a slice of recent Illinois electoral history.

Map 2 gives a perspective which could provide some comfort for Republicans. There is a total of 24 counties which Blagojevich won in both 2002 and 2004. Of course, the fact that Cook County is one of those is by far the most important longitudinal trend in the mix. In addition, the Democrats picked up 8 counties in 2006 which they had not won in 2002. Included here are Will, Lake, and Boone counties in northern Illinois, and Monroe County in the St. Louis Metro-East area, plus Williamson County in southern Illinois- all bad news for the Republicans. On the more positive side of the ledger for the Republicans is the fact that there

are 60 counties, mostly in central and northern Illinois which voted for Ryan in 2002 and for Topinka in 2006. This is the bedrock of the Republican Party in Illinois. The consistency of these results indicates that the candidates can come and go, the issues change, the party can even be shaken by scandal, all of which happened between 2002 and 2006, and these areas will be loyal to the Republican tradition of their ancestors. These 60 counties are the very red counties in a state that is deeply blue if you only look at the statewide returns. In addition, although little noticed at the time, Topinka also picked up an additional 10 counties, mostly in central Illinois, but including Jackson County and Marion County in southern Illinois, and Lawrence County in eastern Illinois, which Ryan lost in 2002. Most notable here is a cluster of "capital collar counties" just south of Springfield, (Sangamon County) including Macon, Christian, Montgomery, Macoupin, and Green Counties, and including Mason and Cass Counties northwest of Sangamon County. Obviously these are places where Republicans can win given the right combination of candidates and circumstances. If added to the 60 counties where the Republicans won in both 2002 and 2006, this totals 70 counties, out of 102, where Judy Barr Topinka beat Rod Blagojevich in 2006 although she did not run a particularly effective campaign, was outspent by a very large ratio, and had a national climate and a statewide political environment which was toxic for Republican candidates in 2006.

Of course the county by county analysis, while useful, begs the question of the relative size of the two parties' foundations based on the size of the counties involved on both sides of the ledger. Extending the analysis to the population size accomplishes that task. That analysis reveals that the 32 counties carried by Blagojevich in 2006 comprised a total of 8,158,589 people. The 70 counties carried by Topinka in 2006 comprised a total of 4,260,704 people (U. S. Census Data). So, the Blagojevich counties had almost twice as many people in them as the Topika counties reflecting an urban versus rural split and a dichotomy which did not auger well for the Republicans. Of course, of the 8.1 million in the Blagojevich column, Cook County and Chicago accounted for over half, or 5.3 million of that total. Central city Chicago, alone had 23 percent of the state's total population according to the 2000 census (U. S. Census Data). By 2004, Chicago had 19.7 percent of the total votes cast statewide, and this total had declined from the 22.0 percent of the total in 1990 (Almanac of Illinois Politics, 2006). Suburban Cook County outside Chicago had 20 percent of the state's total population in 2000 and by 2004, it had 19.2 percent of the total votes cast statewide. This contribution to the state's total vote in 2004 was exactly the same as it had been in 1990 (Almanac of Illinois Politics, 2006). So, the fact that the Democrats were actually doing better in both Chicago and suburban Cook County in 2004 as compared to 1990 was clearly a positive indicator for them and a big problem for the Republicans.

The Collar Counties around Chicago have long been the source of most of the total population growth in the state of Illinois. This vast area includes the suburban counties of

DuPage, Lake, Will, Kane, and McHenry, listed in descending order of their size. In the Census of 2000 the Collar Counties had a total of 21 percent of the state's population, and they had all grown very significantly since the 1990 Census. In 1990 the five Collar Counties had 16.8 percent of the total votes cast statewide . This expanded rapidly to 23.2 percent of the statewide total by 2004 thus indicating their rapid growth over that decade and a half period (Almanac of Illinois Politics, 2006). The Collar Counties, especially DuPage County, became the major foundation of the Republican Party's statewide strength during the 1980s and 1990s. Ordinarily growth in the Collar Counties could be taken as a sign of strength and vitality for the Republicans and would be the harbinger of a bright future for the GOP. However, as we have noted above, Blagojevich actually carried two of the collar counties, Lake and Will, in 2006, and Democratic strength had been growing in some of the suburban areas for at least a decade (Green, 2007). Even though Topinka herself was from suburban Chicago, she just did not run nearly as well as a Republican has to run in the suburbs, in Cook and the five Collar Counties, to be competitive in a statewide race. This leaves "Downstate" the other 96 counties for analysis. Those 96 counties outside the metropolitan Chicago region once held the "balance of power" in statewide races in Illinois (Colby and Green, 1986). In the U. S. Census of 2000 the 96 Downstate counties taken together had 36 percent of the state's population (U. S. Census). Their population had remained almost stable with only a 3.3 percent growth rate since 1990. In 1990 the Downstate counties held 42.0 percent of the state's total vote. By 2004, this total had declined to 37.9 percent of the total vote (Almanac of Illinois Politics, 2006). The 11 largest Downstate counties had 17.5 percent of the state's total vote in 1990, and an identical 17.5 percent of the total in 2004 thus indicating their stability in a dynamic population picture overall. The other 85 counties Downstate had 24.5 percent of the state total in 1990 and only 20.4 percent of the total in 2004 (Almanac of Illinois Politics, 2006). This decline of over 4 percent, of course, indicates that Illinois like most Midwestern states is losing population in the small towns and rural areas. If one focuses on the 11 largest counties outside metropolitan Chicago, Topinka won 6 counties (Champaign, Macon, McClean, Peoria, Sangamon, and Tazewell), and Blagojevich won 5 counties (LaSalle, Madison, Rock Island, St. Clair, and Winnebago) in 2006. These results indicate a very competitive environment in those medium sized and small cities outside the major urban and suburban areas of Chicagoland.

1998, 2002, and 2006 Results Compared

Map 3 provides the ultimate comparisons for the three elections and the eight years between the 1998 and 2006 elections. This map contrasts those counties which were Republican in all three governor's races versus those which were Democratic in all three races. This, of course, identifies those counties which form the core of the Republican coalition and the core of the Democratic coalition, or the very red and the very blue counties. Then the map identifies those counties which voted for the Democratic candidate for Governor in two of the

Governor's races, and thus might be termed the competitive, but "leans Democratic" counties. Those counties can be contrasted with the other counties which voted for the Republican candidate for Governor in two of the three races. These counties can be termed the competitive, but "leans Republican" counties. In other words, both sets of these intermediate counties can be regarded as the toss up counties where either side can win depending on the appeal of an attractive candidate and the issues of that particular campaign. Perhaps we should characterize these as the "purple counties" since they can go either way depending on the short term factors of the race. (The information in the Figures in Appendix B provide a similar assessment using only 1998 data compared to 2002 data for both the Governor's race and the Attorney General's race).

(Map 3 here)

As we have come to expect, the reliably Democratic counties include Cook County plus an additional group of other counties which cluster in the Metro-East area around St. Louis and in southern Illinois. These counties have historically been Democratic counties for many generations and their history, culture, economic and demographic characteristics all help keep them in the Democratic column. For example, the counties of deep southern Illinois have been Democratic since the Civil War, and they were originally settled by people coming from the South predominantly (Kenney and Brown, 1993). The counties on the east side of the Mississippi River across from St. Louis, known as the "Metro-East" region all partake of the urban life and economy of St. Louis. In addition, several of them have had a tradition of strong Democratic Party organizational strength, and the St. Clair County Democratic "machine" was long a power house in that region. Cook County, is of course, the home of Chicago, and it shares many of the characteristics of the great urban centers where the Democrats have traditionally thrived. So, Democrats win in Illinois where Democrats usually win nationally in the cities, and now increasingly in the close in suburban regions around the big cities. The Republicans tend to win now in the suburbs which are farther out from the central cities and which are now called "the exurbs". Illinois Democrats have the added advantage of Illinois including two large metropolitan regions in and around two large cities. They also have the advantage of a large mostly rural and small town base in southern Illinois which has historically been a Democratic Party strong hold. This history was reinforced by the economy of the region where coal mining was once the backbone of the economy and where the labor union movement was strong. That economic base has changed in southern Illinois. Coal no longer provides a substantial number of jobs, and the United Mine Workers in this region has lost many of its members. Some of the remaining mines and the newer mines are not even union mines. Thus, the southern Illinois economy is being transformed into a largely service and knowledge based economy just as is true in the rest of the nation. In this atmosphere the Republicans have been doing better recently in southern Illinois, particularly in the legislative

races. They usually base their appeals on being culturally conservative, and this strain of campaign rhetoric is resonant with many voters in southern and some parts of central Illinois. Such appeals have resulted in some notable Republican successes in southern and central Illinois over the past decade; however, the Democratic Party still has the overall advantage especially in statewide races. Coal used to be king in southern Illinois, and the labor unions were one of the most important influences in the region and provided much of the muscle of the Democratic party. With decline of coal, the United Mine Workers union has lost membership and clout steadily and that has contributed to the problems of the Democratic Party in the southern and central parts of the state. However, economic populism also still plays well in southern Illinois, and when a candidate can make the case convincingly for jobs and for social justice, they can usually win. This ordinarily means the Democrats win when the major issues revolve around questions of job development and security and the economy.

In central and northern Illinois we find the bedrock of the Republican Party across these three recent elections. That history of fidelity to the Republican Party goes all the way back in Illinois history to the Civil War, and to the founding of the Republican Party nationally. This is, after all, the Party of Lincoln, and Mr. Lincoln's hometown of Springfield is one anchor of that long time fidelity to the Republican Party (Kenney and Brown, 1993). Lincoln practiced law all over central Illinois, and from there north the loyalties of the Civil War conflict were predominantly with the union and with Lincoln. That Republican loyalty has remained intact virtually every election since the Civil War. History and culture are reinforced by economics and demographics. Much of the central and northern Illinois region is rich farmland, now predominantly owned by large family farms, or increasingly by corporate farming. The land is black and the people are predominantly white. There is not a great deal of diversity in many of these counties. They are the typical places where the Republicans have done well for generations nationally, and rural and small town Illinois is no exception to the national pattern. The most important feature of the Illinois landscape outside Chicago is, however, the shape of the suburban five counties around Cook County. That has been the region of the fastest growth and the most economic dynamism in the state in all the years since World War II. Initially that suburban growth fueled the growth and prosperity of the Republican Party statewide. In the 1980s and 1990s the suburban ring of counties around Chicago was the bedrock of the Republican Party and they provided the margins necessary for Republican candidates to be competitive in statewide elections (Colby and Green, 1986). Indeed, DuPage County was the home of both Republican legislative leaders, Pate Phillip in the Senate and Lee Daniels in the House, for much of the decade of the 1990s. However, by the 2002 election, this Republican dominance was beginning to show some signs of strain (Neal, 2003; Green, 2007). At minimum they were buffeted by the fall-out from George Ryan's term as Governor. That individual specific problem can account for some of the immediate results in 2002; however, it is not the major long term trend that will determine the fate of the two parties into the rest of the first

decade of the 21st Century. Those trends seemed to favor the Democrats in some important parts of the suburban Collar Counties. The Democrats were winning local races in places, especially suburban Cook and Will and Lake Counties, where Democrats had not been accustomed to winning. The close in suburbs were particularly increasing in diversity and in attracting the demographic groups which traditionally vote Democratic. Others were attracting the kinds of voters who are Independent but who are socially liberal, or libertarian, while being more conservative on the fiscal issues. Democratic candidates could appeal to such voters, and they did so with increasing success in 2002 and 2006. Table 1 provides U. S. Census Bureau data on the racial and ethnic diversity of Cook and the Collar Counties. The data in this table indicate quite clearly how large the Hispanic, Black and other ethnic minorities have grown to be in the state's major city and in the suburban areas which surround it. It particularly highlights the growing Hispanic population.

(Table 1)

By 2006 the Democrats owned all the statewide offices and they also controlled a majority in both houses of the General Assembly. As we noted earlier, many experts were calling Illinois a "dark blue" state and were speculating about the very negative prospects faced by the Republicans in Illinois (Green, 2007). This paper is an attempt to bring some empirical data to some of those long term trend observations.

There is a related national dialogue regarding the future of both parties. If Illinois is indeed the most representative, or the "most average" of American states, then a close analysis of Illinois voting patterns may help bring empirical data to that debate (Ohlemacher, 2007). One school of thought, initially authored by Kevin Phillips, predicted that the long term forces in the nation favored the Republican Party (Phillips, 1969). Phillips predicted a conservative-Republican realignment based on the realignment of the white south into the Republican column, and of course, much of that came true in the subsequent three decades. It is also clear that President George W. Bush, and his major political strategist, Karl Rove, wanted to stimulate a national realignment and a permanent Republican and conservative majority based on the president's policies, especially his advantages in the war on terror. The opposite trend was enunciated by political scientists, Judis and Teixeria in a 2002 book which predicted a realignment which would favor the Democrats in the long run (2002). Their predictions were based on the idea that the demographic trends and the economic trends, especially in a knowledge and service based economy, would favor the Democrats. They maintained that the "ideopolis", i.e. the urban and suburban areas were increasingly filled by people who were well educated, who were working in a global economy, and who were increasingly liberal and libertarian in social values. Such people, according to Judis and Teixeria, were very unlikely to be attracted to the religious fundamentalism that was the dominant wing of the Republican

Party. Thus, the Democrats had a golden opportunity to ensure their long-term dominance as the majority party if they could appeal to these voters. Some of that Judis and Teixeria argument is the more theoretical impetus for this paper which provides an empirical test of their propositions for the state of Illinois.

In order to test more directly some of the implications of the realignment thesis and the arguments about whether long-term trends favor the Republican Party or the Democratic Party, we examined some of the demographic data underlying our county based analysis. First, we looked at the population base of the reliably Democratic counties, the reliably Republican counties, and the toss up counties. The data comparing the population of the counties in 1990 to 2000, and presenting the rate of growth of each of the counties are presented in Table 2.

(Table 2)

Illinois grew from approximately 11.4 million to just over 12.4 million in the ten years between 1990 and 2000 (U. S. Census, City County Data Book: 2000, 27). This was a growth rate of 8.6 per cent overall. While this was a respectable rate, it fell just short of the threshold necessary for Illinois to keep all its representation in the U. S. House so the total delegation was reduced from 20 to 19 after the census. To illustrate how competitive Illinois has been, the 20 representatives had been divided evenly at 10 to 10 during the decade of the 1990s. After the reapportionment, the Democrats lost one seat in southern Illinois, and the overall state delegation changed to 10 Republicans versus 9 Democrats after the 2002 elections. Then in 2004 the Democrats defeated one incumbent in northeastern Illinois, and the delegation balance shifted to 10 Democrats and 9 Republicans. This is where it has remained since 2004. That indicates a statewide distribution that is competitive but leaning toward the Democrats by a slight margin.

Table 2 provides some encouragement for those interested in the Republican Party in Illinois and their potential for regaining competitiveness. Table 2 shows that those 43 solidly Republican counties had a total population of 3, 544, 148 in 2000, and that combination of counties grew from 28 percent of the state's total population in 1990 to 29 percent in 2000. It also shows that in those 43 counties where the Republicans won the Governor's race all three years, i.e. 1998, 2002, and 2006, the population growth rate constituted 37 percent of the state's total increase of 988, 691 over the past decade. In other words, a Republican in a statewide race can start the race with a solid and fairly dependable population base that included almost one-third of the state's total population. In addition, some of the fastest growing counties in terms of percentage growth were also the loyal Republican counties. This does not mean that all the new residents in these counties will be or will become Republicans. Some will, while others will be Independents or from groups, e.g. African-Americans, some Hispanics, union members and blue collar workers who are usually associated with the

Democratic Party. It does mean, however, that the political culture, the power arrangements, and the peer group climate are more likely to favor the Republicans in these counties where their core strength is located, and those are important long-term considerations. In addition, Table 2 also shows that in the next category, i.e. those 26 counties where the Republicans won two and the Democrats won only one Governor's race out of the three accounted for 13 percent of the state's total population in 2000. In addition, this group increased from 12 percent of the state's total population or accounted for 31 percent of the total growth in the state in the previous decade. These would have to be classified as the "leaning Republican Counties" where a Democrat can only win under the right circumstances or where only a particularly attractive Democratic candidate can win. When the "solidly Republican Counties" are combined with the "leans Republican", a statewide Republican candidate then starts with a clear partisan advantage in counties accounting for a total of 42 percent of the state's total population. That total will not guarantee a victory by any stretch; however, it is a very firm foundation on which to build toward a majority, and it is a foundation which most Republican candidates can depend on.

We turn now to the same consideration of the prospective Democratic candidate's statewide base. Those 15 counties where the Democrats won the Governor's race two out of three times, the "leans Democratic" counties accounted for only 8 percent of the state's total population in 2000 and this was down from 9 percent in 1990. This very slow growth rate amounted to 4 percent of the state's total growth in the 1990s. Finally, the 18 counties where the Democrats won all three races for Governor during this period accounted for a total of 50 percent of the state's total population in the year 2000. This is the core of the Democratic Party's strength in Illinois and is a dramatic indication of why and how the Democrats start with such an initial advantage in statewide races and why the state as a whole has been called recently a "deep blue" state (Green, 2007). When put together with the "leans Democratic" counties, one has a total of 58 percent of the state's total population, certainly giving the Democratic candidates an overall strategic advantage in many state races. In addition, women voters are becoming increasingly important to both parties and the gender gap, especially among urban and suburban women has favored the Democrats recently.

In spite of these very positive indicators for the Democrats, there are also some signs of problems and potential trouble for the Democrats. Table 2 shows that the solid Democratic counties dropped from 52 percent of the state's total population in 1990 to 50 percent of the state's total in 2000. In addition, the solid Democratic counties represented only 29 percent of the state's total growth and the "leans Democratic" counties only 3.8 percent of the state's growth over the decade between 1990 and 2000. In short, two-thirds (or 68 percent total) of the growth in Illinois in that decade was in the traditionally Republican counties, or in the counties which lean consistently toward the Republicans. This left less than one-third of the

growth in the counties that form the Democratic Party's base, or that leaned Democratic during this era.

Conclusion

The line-up of offices currently held provides a comforting picture for Democratic strategists and should raise alarms for Republican strategists. However, any Democratic official inclined to bask in past glory and to take their current success as a guarantee of what the future may bring would do well to study these demographic results carefully. The Democrats must continue to try to win in the dynamic and fast growth counties where the Republicans have traditionally had an advantage. Relying on their base alone is a ticket to stagnation and decline. Of course, this also means that the Republicans must fight for Independents and cross-over voters in the same diverse, fast-growing and dynamic counties. This has traditionally meant appealing to the suburbs first and foremost for the Republicans in Illinois. As Paul Green of Roosevelt University has consistently shown in recent elections, the Republicans have failed significantly in their quest to hold onto what had been their traditional advantages in the suburbs (Green, February 2007; Green, 2003). As the suburbs have become more diverse, the Democrats have gained and the Republicans have lost strength where the GOP used to be dominant. Indeed, Republican losses in suburban Cook and in the Collar Counties recently have been keys to the Republican decline. Demographics may not be destiny, but demographic trends certainly create the important parameters within which parties and candidates must shape their destinies. Governor Blagojevich's victory in Will and Lake Counties, and the size of his margin in Cook were important elements of his rather convincing ten point victory statewide over Topinka in 2006. Also, Lisa Madigan's overwhelming statewide victory in the Attorney General's race in 2006 was fashioned in part by an unusually strong showing in the Collar Counties for a Democrat. All these are very positive signs for the Democrats in the short-term; however, the data on long term population growth trends in the loyal base of the two parties are much more positive for the Republicans. Neither party, of course, can afford to take much for granted in a highly competitive and fluid environment like Illinois. The point is that Illinois is still a highly competitive state where either party can win depending on the short term factors of candidate image, the compelling issues at the time, and the quality of the campaign mounted by the candidates of both parties. Candidates and campaigns, the issues they raise, the records they present, and their fit with the larger forces and narratives dominant in public opinion at the time still count for much that is dynamic and always changing in American politics. Illinois is no exception to the rule despite its recent designation as one of the bluest of the blue states.

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Table 1

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Cook and Collar Counties

County	Black/ Af. Am.	Asian	Other Races	2+ Races	Hispanic	% Hispanic
Cook	1,405,361	260,170	531,170	136,223	1,071,740	19.9%
DuPage	27,600	71,252	28,166	15,482	81,366	9.0
Kane	23,279	7,296	42,870	8,935	95,924	23.7
Lake	44,741	25,105	43,283	12,929	92,716	14.4
McHenry	1,523	3,782	7,211	2,821	19,602	7.5
Will	52,509	11,125	18,219	8,186	43,768	8.7

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, County and City Data Book: 2000. pp. 27-28; 75-76.

Map 1

2006 Illinois Governor Election

	% of Vote
Blagojevich	49.8
Topinka	39.3
Whitney	10.4

Source: Illinois State Board of Elections

Map 2

2002 and 2006 Illinois Governor Election

Blagojevich wins in both 2002 and 2006

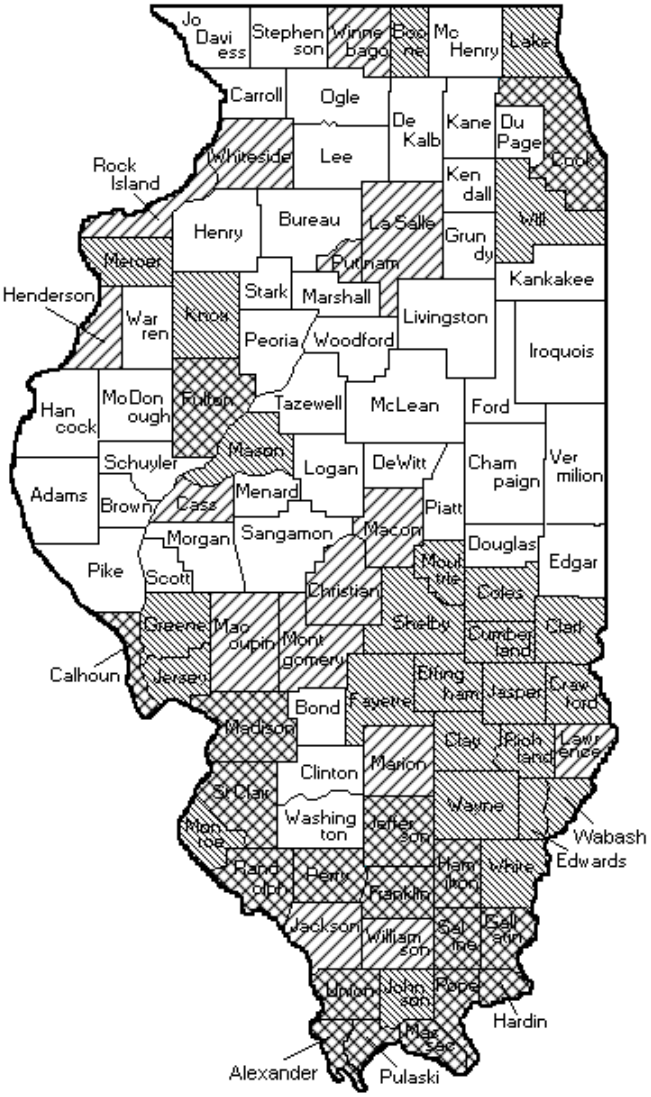
Blagojevich gains in 2006

Blagojevich loses in 2006

Republican wins in both 2002 and 2006

Map 3

Illinois Governor Elections 1998 through 2006



Republican in all three elections

Democrat in all three elections

Democrat in 2 elections

Democrat in 1 election