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Paper #62


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Authors’ Note

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Abstract

This paper provides a summary of the 2020 presidential race, both nationally and in Illinois. It also analyzes the U.S. Senate race in Illinois and the referendum on the graduated income tax proposal, which was Governor JB Pritzker’s highest policy priority for that year. The results are placed in the larger context of the deep polarization of America and Illinois. The analysis uses the results of the 1996 presidential election (Clinton vs. Dole) and senatorial election (Durbin vs. Salvi) and the 1998 gubernatorial election (Ryan vs. Poshard) as a baseline to demonstrate the profound geographical realignment of the two parties since that time. The paper also provides a detailed analysis of county-level economic data to plumb the larger meaning of these political shifts for the question of where state revenues are raised and spent.

Introduction: Context of the Campaign and Elections

The Chicago Tribune on the Sunday before the November 3rd national election featured the following front-page headline: “Campaign season unlike any other nears finish.” This headline succinctly captures the essence of the 2020 campaign and election, although it was a striking understatement. “Unlike any other?” Indeed!

The headline and the article were, of course, referring first to the omnipresent COVID-19 virus and its devastating impact on the country and the sagging economy. The virus and its destruction were growing rapidly when the November 3rd vote was held, and it continued to grow in the late fall and early winter as the number of cases and the number of deaths continued their inexorable increase, just as the public health officials had predicted. The counting of the votes, the dramatic conflict over who had won – led
by President Donald Trump – the chaotic invasion of the U.S. Capitol building on January 6th during Congress’ receiving the official vote of the Electoral College from the states, and the Biden inauguration ceremony held on January 20th were all conducted against the backdrop of the pandemic, just as the campaign and election had been seriously shaped by COVID-19.

In addition, the campaign and election were also impacted by the serious civil unrest that spread throughout the nation starting with Memorial Day on May 25th. That was the day George Floyd, an African American, had his breath and life slowly extinguished by the knee of a white police officer on a street in Minneapolis in a confrontation that started over an allegation about Floyd’s attempt to pass a counterfeit 20-dollar bill in a nearby convenience store. Three other Minneapolis police officers looked on and held the small crowd back, but one horrified young spectator took out her cellphone and recorded the scene. The entire nation soon had the opportunity to view the grim scene for themselves. Those images almost instantly became national icons, graphically summarizing the endemic discrimination that Black people have suffered throughout America’s long and fraught history of racial strife.

George Floyd’s death set off a season of tremendous civil unrest, particularly in the summer and extending through much of the fall, right up through Election Day. Each time the demonstrations would die down, there would be another incident, often involving death or serious injury to an African American in encounters with police officers. At first, there were widespread and initially peaceful demonstrations. Then some of those turned into riots, with both demonstrators and police officers being injured, fires set, and looting and violence. An already hard and contentious campaign season got a lot
harder with the addition of racial strife to the already deeply divided partisan struggle over how to handle the pandemic.

The 2020 election was destined from the outset to be fought in an already deeply polarized nation. The campaign was carried out in some of the most conflicted – and at times chaotic and violent – conditions in American history. Donald Trump took office on January 20, 2017 in a nation that was already profoundly divided by race, region, religion, gender, class, ideology, and especially partisanship. The electoral consequence of that division was underscored by Trump’s 2016 victory being dependent on the Electoral College, although Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by almost 3 million. That was the second time the presidential election had produced this split decision in the first five elections held in the 21st century.

These profound American divisions did not originate with Donald Trump, but they grew steadily wider and deeper under him, and he used them for his own political gain. He exacerbated the divisions with his rhetoric, style, actions, policies, and especially the constant barrage of messages emanating daily from his Twitter account. Trump reveled in the fight and constantly attacked and belittled his critics and those who opposed or displeased him. His opponents often fired back in equal measure. The mainstream media dutifully covered the most colorful and inflammatory of the president’s Twitter-based stories. Conflict is one of the most used definitions of what is newsworthy, and if the president is one of the major protagonists, it will be covered. Trump understood instinctively this axiom of the American news media, and their rules of engagement, and he took maximum advantage of it.
It already looked like an unusual and potentially chaotic year when 2020 dawned with the president’s first impeachment in the House in January over his dealings with the president of Ukraine. Trump was just the third U.S. president to be impeached by a formal vote, and he was the first to be impeached while running for a second term. He was then acquitted by an almost straight party-line vote in early February. We the voters were still naive back then, 11 months before the November 3rd vote. No one could have known then just how much more complicated and difficult the conditions for holding a national campaign and vote in the shadow of COVID-19 and massive civil unrest would become. Who could have possibly predicted a historic second impeachment vote in the House, exactly one week before inauguration on January 20, 2021?

The Election Results

November 3rd, 2020 initiated a whole new and volatile phase of the campaign. Trump had stated in multiple large campaign rallies that the only way that he could lose the election is if it were stolen by the Democrats. Just as he had promised multiple times during his rallies on the campaign trail, Trump then refused to accept the results that indicated clearly that he had lost the election. Trump claimed that he had really won and that the voting returns in the states that showed he had lost were based on fraud. Millions of his supporters apparently believed him, although there was no evidence of voter fraud on anywhere near a scale that would have changed the results. Trump’s own attorney general, Bill Barr, stated for the record that no evidence of widespread voter fraud had been presented, and he refused to let the Department of Justice get involved.
As the vote count became official in more and more states, it became certain that former Vice President Joe Biden had won both the popular and the electoral vote by a comfortable margin.

On election night, it first appeared that the presidential election would be very close and that it could look like 2016, when the popular vote was won by the Democratic candidate and the Electoral College vote was won by the Republican. This confusion was created by the sequencing of the vote counts in the various states and when the votes could be counted quickly and announced. Most states made it easier to vote by mail in 2020 because of the pandemic. The rules set by state law on when the votes could be counted and announced varied considerably.

The in-person votes that were cast on the day of the election tended to be more Republican. As the polls had consistently indicated, Republicans were consistently much less concerned about the virus and were disproportionately planning to vote in person on Election Day. But more than 101 million votes had been cast early. This constituted 64.1% of all votes cast (Lindsay, 2020). Polls had consistently shown that those who were voting early favored the Democrats by a two-to-one margin. Many of the heavy early-vote states also had provisions in their state laws that required that their election authorities could not start counting those ballots until the day of the election. This meant that the early votes were not reported until later, sometimes days later. In addition, it is always the rural and small county votes that come in earliest on election night, and the big city votes that are reported later, simply because they have so many more votes to count.
As the time from the early vote returns wore on, the results steadily turned more and more in Biden’s favor. Some pollsters predicted that early election returns would create a Republican bias (or “Red Mirage” as it was called), which is exactly what happened as election week played out. It was not until Thursday that the Associated Press, which had a network of personnel in the field systematically monitoring the vote, announced that Biden had won, and other major news organizations like CNN and Fox News quickly made the same call. This is the way such election results have been called for 170 years (Associated Press, 2020).

However, the battle over the results, and the essential question of who had won, did not end there as it typically does. President Trump and his allies simply refused to accept the results. The president consistently railed against the idea that he had lost the popular vote and the Electoral College vote. He started making his postelection claim in the East Room of the White House at 2:30 a.m. the night of the election at a party originally called to celebrate his reelection. He forcefully advanced the narrative that the “vote was rigged,” and that the Democrats, aided and abetted by the mass media, were trying to steal the election. The Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee sent a cadre of lawyers, led by Rudolph Giuliani, into the field to file lawsuits to try to overturn the election results in states that had shown a close Biden victory, including Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Nevada.

Georgia, the state most in the bull’s-eye, went through two subsequent recounts demanded by Trump in spite of the fact that the governor, the secretary of state – who supervised the elections statewide – and the attorney general were all Republicans who had publicly endorsed Trump. In all, more than 60 lawsuits were filed nationwide, and
none of them changed the results. Despite Trump’s public demand that the U.S. Supreme Court intervene, the court consistently refused to do so and officially turned down the requests that they hear the cases in individual states where suits had been filed.

None of these judicial decisions stopped the president and his allies in their quest to get the election results overturned. The Republican attorney general of Texas, Ken Paxton, filed suit with the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to have the results in the key states of Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin invalidated because of the rules those states had used in counting absentee or early votes. Seventeen other Republican attorneys general then joined the suit. In addition, 126 Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives, including the minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, signed an amicus brief in support of the actions taken by the Texas attorney general. On December 10th, President Trump hosted several of the state attorneys general in the White House for a strategy session and pep rally. On December 12th, a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court rejected the Texas case, saying that Texas did not have standing to sue the other states over the way they had handled their own elections and the process they used in counting their votes. This was the last judicial straw for Trump’s efforts to overturn the election results. It was all politics after that decision.

This Supreme Court defeat did not deter President Trump, who insisted throughout the transition period that he had won the election and that the election was fatally flawed. He also refused to refer to Joe Biden as the “president-elect” and at first refused to allow the U.S. General Services Administration to start the official transition process and release the funds necessary for carrying it out as required by federal law. Even after he made that official determination and released the funds for the transition,
Trump and many of his Republican allies in Congress continued to refuse to confirm that Biden had won the presidency and would take office at noon on January 20th, 2021.

So, what was going on here? There apparently were two major objectives to this post-election campaign by Trump and the Republicans in Congress who supported him. For Trump, it was all about his future as the leader of the Republican Party and a force in American politics. He talked frequently about the real possibility that he would run again in 2024. More importantly, he opened a leadership political action committee, or PAC, first ostensibly to fund the demands for recounts and for continuing the fight over the 2020 outcome, and then to fund Trump’s expenses for travel and to support future campaign rallies. The PAC was designed to ensure that Trump’s control of the money was so flexible he could use the funds for practically any expenses he might encounter in the continuation of his 2020 campaign as it glided seamlessly into his projected 2024 campaign. The faithful sent in well over $200 million in the first weeks after the PAC had been announced, thus generously funding much of Trump’s continuing political involvement.

The second objective for some of the congressional Republicans seemingly was to cast enough doubt on the 2020 results and the legitimacy of the Biden victory to make it as difficult as possible for Biden to govern and get his programs enacted into law. The Trump base had to be maintained and encouraged, as they were the audience for much of his subsequent political mobilization. Trump’s efforts worked and his narrative about fraud in voting convinced much of the Republican base.

A Monmouth poll published on November 18th showed that 77% of Trump’s supporters said they believed that Biden’s victory was based on fraud. Other polls
showed similar responses by Trump voters. A Quinnipiac poll published December 13th showed that only 23% of registered Republican voters said they believed that Biden’s election victory was legitimate (Rutenberg and Corasaniti, 2020). There would be no “honeymoon” for Joe Biden if it required support and compromise from the Republicans in Congress. The fight for the 2022 midterm elections had started before the new Congress and the new president were sworn in.

In the end, despite Trump’s energetic efforts to get the results overturned and the avid support of many of his allies in Congress and across the nation, the rule of law held. The Constitution was supported by the courts and by the dedication to duty of tens of thousands of election workers and state and local authorities who administer America’s very decentralized election system. The vote was certified on December 14th by the Electoral College vote in each of the state capitals. Those results were then formally transmitted to Congress on January 6th as Congress prepared to do its constitutional duty and accept the totals that the 50 states and the District of Columbia had relayed to them.

**The Insurrection**

Trump’s continued insistence that he had won and his behind-the-scenes attempts to pressure Republican officials in several key states led thousands of his most ardent followers to descend on Washington on January 6 at his invitation. They attended an outdoor speech on the south side of the White House where Trump vigorously repeated his claims that the election was being stolen. Trump told them they “had to fight like hell” to stop the theft of the election from him and urged them to “be strong” and at least strongly suggested that he would go with them to the Capitol (Leonnig and Rucker, 2021). Trump then urged the crowd to march on the Capitol building where Congress
was meeting to receive the Electoral College vote from each state in order to certify the final results.

The crowd enthusiastically took his directions and within an hour they were at the Capitol. They quickly broke through the thin line of the Capitol Police and invaded the building itself. Trump loyalists streamed into the Capitol, almost unchecked, breaking windows and doors, invading several personal offices – including that of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi – and breaking into the Senate chamber, where one invader in a bizarre costume of a “shaman” took over the presiding officer’s podium, which Vice President Mike Pence had only abandoned minutes earlier. That chaotic scene became one of the most iconic pictures of the whole invasion. There were hundreds of pictures of Trump supporters removing or breaking furniture and attacking the Capitol Police with fists, pepper spray, shields, or wooden poles, some of which had the American flag still attached to them. A police officer died of natural causes a day after he was assaulted at the Capitol. Four of the rioters also died, one of whom was shot by Capitol Police at the door to the House chamber; the other three fatalities were attributed to personal medical emergencies or being crushed in the crowd.

The nation and the world looked on in shocked horror as the country that always held itself to be the model for electoral democracy, where power had been peacefully transferred from one party to the other since the election of 1800, suddenly looked like a nation under siege by its own internal dissidents. The irony and incongruity of a mob supporting the president of the United States and the head of the executive branch attacking a co-equal branch of government – and including the Vice President in that attack – would have been entirely lost on those who participated. Less than a week later,
on January 11th, House Democrats introduced an impeachment resolution against President Trump charging him with inciting an insurrection against the government. On January 13th, the resolution passed in the House with the votes of 222 Democrats and 10 Republicans. Trump became the first president in American history to have been impeached in the House twice. It was only seven days until the inauguration of Joseph R. Biden Jr., who would become the 46th president of the United States on January 20, 2021. It was almost one year exactly since the House had voted to impeach Trump the first time. At that point, it was unclear when the Senate would hold the impeachment trial. The scheduling of the trial in the Senate became something of a deterrence to Trump taking any further precipitous actions in the short time he had left in office, and it was apparently wielded by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and perhaps with some informal cooperation from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to ensure that deterrence. Their objective seemed to be to get Biden sworn into office and Trump out of town without encouraging any more violence. They ultimately succeeded in this.

The Final Vote Count

Joe Biden was elected president in the Electoral College by a margin of 306 to 232. Ironically, this was the exact vote count for Trump’s victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016 (Associated Press, 2020). Over 81 million Americans (51.4%) voted for Joe Biden, while over 74 million (46.9%) voted for Donald Trump. This was a record number of votes for both the winner and the loser of a presidential election. Turnout was pegged at 66.1%, or two thirds, of the eligible voters. This was the highest aggregate level of turnout since 1992, and was up five points from 2016. In addition, it was the highest
percentage level since 1960 (Frey, 2021; Schaul, Rabinowitz, and Mellnik, 2020). This increase over recent turnout levels reflected the success that both sides had in mobilizing their party’s base. It also reflected the continuing deep polarization of the nation, and the energy that both sides brought to the contest to elect their man, or defeat the other candidate, or both.

**Joe Biden and The Transition**

During all the twists and turns taken by President Trump and his supporters to overturn the election results, Joe Biden steadily took on the mantle and duties of president-elect. Biden started the transition quickly and began to form his government. After some very public vetting of leading contenders, he began announcing the names of the top-level appointees, starting with his chief of staff, Ron Klain, and the national security team led by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defense General Lloyd Austin III, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. All these positions were to be filled by veteran Washington figures, most of whom had known and worked with Biden for years, usually during the two Obama administrations, as well as during Biden’s long service in the Senate.

In late November and early December, Biden became increasingly visible on the national stage as he made news by making these appointments. He also included in many of his brief public remarks the overarching narrative that he was working daily for the nation and for all Americans, whether they voted for him or not. At the outset, Biden refrained from attacking President Trump by name and mostly ignored, at least publicly, whatever Trump was doing or saying.
This strategic approach changed on December 14th, the day the electors met in each state capital to cast their state’s ballot for president and vice president. There was violence on the streets of Washington, D.C. on Sunday, the day before the Electoral College vote on Monday, as a large crowd of pro-Trump demonstrators clashed with a smaller group of anti-Trump activists. There were online threats of violence against the electors and some public calls for demonstrators to show up in state capitals and try to disrupt the electoral process on Monday. For these reasons, several states – most notably Michigan, where the governor had been threatened with kidnapping previously – held their Electoral College votes under heavy guard in state Capitol buildings cordoned off by state police. Electors in some states met in secret locations.

When the day ended, the Electoral College count was 306 for Biden and 232 for Trump, just as expected. Nothing had changed despite the intimidation and threats of violence. These were quite extraordinary developments centered around what in past elections had been a very routine ministerial duty of the state legislatures, one that ordinarily went unnoticed by the general public.

That evening, Biden addressed the nation, and for the first time in the transition period he called out Trump personally for what he charged was the abuse of power in Trump’s attempts to undermine and overturn the election results. Biden acknowledged the Electoral College vote of that day and praised the tens of thousands of state and local officials who had conducted the election under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. He quoted Christopher Krebs, the Trump administration’s head of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, who had declared the 2020 election to have been free of any significant problems with no signs of any widespread fraud or tampering with the
ballots and the vote count. Krebs had called the elections “the most secure in American history” (Woodward and Costa, 2021; Leonnig and Rucker, 2021). Biden also recounted a summary of the more than 60 legal actions that Trump and his supporters had undertaken, with only one minor decision in Trump’s favor. Biden asserted that the electoral system worked, and that democracy had prevailed. He closed with these words:

We the people voted…Faith in our institutions held. The integrity of our elections remains intact. And so, it is time to turn the page, as we’ve done through our history. To unite. To heal. (Shear, 2020)

**Polarization Continued and Exacerbated**

Joe Biden and his fledging administration were ready to move on, but Trump and a large percentage of his followers were not. A CBS poll released the day before the Electoral College vote found that only 18% of Trump voters said they considered Biden to be the legitimate winner of the presidency (Huhmann, 2020). At that point, Trump’s campaign to delegitimize the Biden victory in 2020 threatened to be equal to or probably more successful than his much earlier campaign as the leading “birther” in the systematic campaign to undermine Barack Obama’s presidential victory in 2008 based on the demand that Obama prove that he had been born in Hawaii rather than Kenya, as the birthers charged.

Trump’s consistent and long-term effort to delegitimize both Obama’s and Biden’s elections mined a deep well of mistrust, cynicism, and paranoia toward the government and electoral politics. That mistrust has deep roots in American history but had more recently been fed by a wide assortment of fringe groups and conspiracy theorists, which effectively purveyed resentment toward political and cultural elites on
This was a nationalized and polarized election in every respect that could have been anticipated going into the 2020 campaign. The lead-up to the voting, the dominating influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the civil unrest centered on the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement exposed and exacerbated that polarization. Trump’s refusal to accept that he had lost the election, along with the deadly invasion of the Capitol by his supporters, added a new and especially dangerous element to the already deep national fault lines. The national results faithfully followed and reflected the divisions that had been growing in the nation throughout the 21st century. The Illinois results reflected the national results, as is expected given the state’s position as one of the most typical states in the union (Ohlemacher, 2007).

In the 21st century, the nation has been deeply divided over region, race, gender, urban or rural place of residence, class, ideology, and most especially partisanship. These divisions only grew in America’s reactions to the COVID pandemic and in the heat of the campaign and its violent aftermath. The national results reflected that polarization, and the Illinois results also reflected those typical national divisions.

**The Aggregate Data and the Exit Polls**

Based on both the aggregate data and the poll results, we can see the contours of these divides. Put in gross anatomy terms, the Republicans and conservatives voted for Trump and the Democrats and liberals voted for Biden, overwhelmingly. For partisanship, this was true with an identical 94% rate for both sides. The Independents
split their vote as is typical, but they went disproportionately for Biden by 54% to 41% (CNN, 2020). That result helped Biden a lot, since Trump had won a majority of Independents in 2016.

The rural areas went overwhelmingly for Trump. Of the 19% of total voters who lived in a rural or small city area, 57% voted for Trump and only 42% voted for Biden. What was a surprise was how heavily they turned out to vote. The Trump campaign mobilized and energized the rural areas. They recruited a surprisingly large number of first-time voters and turned them out for Trump. This increase in rural turnout helped Trump a lot, but there is a limit on the total number that can be turned out in the more sparsely populated rural areas of the United States.

The urban areas voted heavily for Biden. Of the 29% of total voters who lived in the big cities (population 500,000 or more), 60% voted for Biden. This helped swell the size of Biden’s ultimate victory. Biden’s campaign was successful in increasing turnout in the urban areas just as Trump’s campaign had success in mobilizing the rural areas, although they used different strategies to do so. That is the reason overall turnout increased substantially over 2016 (Schaul, Rainowitz, and Melnik, 2020).

The suburbs went for Biden by a 50% to 48% margin. Since 51% of the voters were classified as living in the suburbs, this constituted a major victory for Biden in the places where the Republicans used to dominate.

Ultimately, Trump’s scare tactics of using the mostly city-based civil unrest – especially that which turned violent – against Biden did not work for the majority of suburbanites. The suburbs now hold the balance of power in the United States (and in Illinois), and that balance shifted decisively toward Biden in 2020. This was one of the
most important keys to Biden’s victory. William Frey, the Brookings Institution’s resident expert on demographics, documented that Biden-won counties are home to 67 million more people than Trump-won counties. Frey succinctly summarized the 2020 election results with the following data:

Large suburban areas registered a net Democratic advantage for the first time since Barack Obama’s victory in 2008. This is significant because more voters reside there than in the other three categories. In terms of aggregate votes in these large suburban counties, there was a shift from a 1.2 million vote advantage for Trump in 2016… to a 613,000 vote advantage for Biden – a nearly 2 million vote flip. In addition, Biden benefitted from more modest Republican margins in small metropolitan areas. These advantages for the president-elect were even greater in key battleground states (Frey, 2020).

Region of residence also continues to be an important variable in explaining American voting behavior. The nation and the Constitution were founded on and carefully structured around the differences between the component regions of Colonial America. Although the different regions have shifted and changed sides in recent partisan realignments, they are still extremely relevant to explaining our presidential election results.

The 2020 exit polls showed that relevance clearly. The 20% of the voters who lived in the East went for Biden by 58% over 41% for Trump. The 23% in the Midwest, which of course includes Illinois, voted narrowly for Trump by 51% to 47%. Trump’s victories in the Midwestern states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and the western part of
Pennsylvania were the keys to his victory in 2016. All of those except Ohio shifted toward Biden in 2020 (CNN, 2020).

The South has become the most important building block for the new Republican coalition by virtue of the wholesale shift of white voters from the Democrats to the Republicans over the past five decades. The South accounted for 35% of the 2020 electorate. Although Democrats lost the South by 53% for Trump to 46% for Biden, this was closer than is usual for recent presidential elections. Biden’s victories in Georgia and Virginia were particularly important in building his Electoral College victory. The 22% of the electorate who live in the West went for Biden by 57% to 41%. The massive advantage the Democrats now enjoy in the West, led by California, is a major key to their recent presidential victories and was crucial for Biden.

**The Issues and the Party Factions**

The polls also showed that the top two issues in this election helped the two candidates very differently. Sixty-two percent of those who rated the pandemic as the most important issue in their voting choice picked Biden, while only 15% voted for Trump. Of those who said that the economy was the most important issue, 83% voted for Trump and only 17% voted for Biden (CNN, 2020).

The arguments over whether to focus on containing the virus before the economy as opposed to protecting the economy first had dominated the national and state-level discourse in the crucial months of April and May. By Memorial Day, those advocating for opening the economy and accepting the risks had largely won the argument in many states, especially those controlled by the Republicans. Trump was the chief national advocate for that view, and many Republican governors followed his lead. Trump
focused much of the case for his reelection on the economy above everything else, and
the damage done to it by the virus clearly threatened his reelection. His assessment of that
potential danger to his future proved to be accurate.

Biden and the Democrats in the statehouses advocated for addressing the virus
first, then opening the economy back up more slowly after “bending of the curve”
downward on both the infection rates and deaths caused by the virus. They prevailed
initially in many of the large urban states like New York, California, Pennsylvania, New
Jersey, and Illinois controlled by Democratic governors. They were joined by some
Republican governors in such states as Ohio, Maryland, and Massachusetts. But they
later lost the war as most states acceded to the demand for reopening most private and
public facilities in the summer of 2020.

By the fall, the resurgence of the pandemic was painfully evident in the much
larger and accelerating numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths. By December 2020, the
nation had tallied over 15 million cases and more than 300,000 deaths attributed to the
spread of the virus to almost every corner of the nation. By the end of January 2021,
those numbers had exploded to over 20 million cases total and more than 400,000 deaths.
This grim total then expanded to more than 550,000 deaths by the end of March. Only the
approval and mass shipping of vaccines in the second and third weeks of December
offered real hope for the first time that the pandemic could be finally brought under
control if enough Americans would agree to take the shot and follow the mask-wearing
and social-distancing rules.

Never had a public health crisis so dominated an American presidential campaign
the way COVID-19 did in 2020. President Trump’s uneven direction of the national
response, the federal government’s halting and sporadic handling of the threat, the plainly evident lack of a coherent national strategy and message, and the voters’ very different evaluations of that national response ultimately contributed to Trump’s defeat.

This campaign turned on the mobilization of the party bases, which both sides worked hard to do. Both sides urgently appealed to their bases with a variety of mobilization strategies. And the appeal worked for both sides. Trump focused almost his entire campaign – and personal time and energy – on his Republican base. His major campaign strategy was concentrated on the large public rallies, his constant stream of tweets, and his brief encounters with the press in photo opportunities at staged White House events or on the fly as Trump jousted with reporters on the south lawn before he boarded the helicopter for the flight to Joint Base Andrews on his way to another campaign event.

Biden also made the traditional Democratic Party appeals to the base. This was especially clear in Biden’s advocacy first for a laser-like focus on the pandemic as the immediate challenge and more generally on better health care and/or the protection of the Affordable Care Act, which were the central policy messages of his campaign. His other major message was that the election was a referendum on Trump and his conduct of the presidency. It turned out that these were winning narratives, especially for the Democratic base. It was also the winning narrative that attracted a disproportionate percentage of Independents and those not strongly identified with either major party, and it even attracted some disaffected Republicans to cross over.

However, Biden also had to address issues important to Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and the very influential faction of progressives on the left of the
Democratic Party. They were more vocal, more prominent in the public eye, and perhaps their numbers bigger than the more moderate and more pragmatic establishment side of the party. That has been the major fault line in the Democratic Party going all the way back to George McGovern vs. Edmund Muskie in 1972, but it has been especially notable since the 1990s.

The Biden campaign understood quite clearly that the only Democratic presidents to serve two full terms since Roosevelt were Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Both Clinton and Obama had straddled that intraparty division quite successfully, and they were the models for the Biden strategy. The large popular vote and the Electoral College vote margin that Biden enjoyed both indicate that such broad-based appeals have to be the key part of any campaign that wants to win the votes of a large enough coalition to win the presidency with both popular and Electoral College victories.

We turn next to the way both national campaigns played out in Illinois. Not surprisingly, the issues were the same, and the outcome, in broad strokes, was the same as the national results, which is appropriate for a state that is demographically and economically one of the most representative of the nation as a whole (Ohlemacher, 2007).

The Federal Races in Illinois

Trump vs. Biden

There were two federal races in Illinois in 2020: the presidential race, of course, and the state’s senior senator, Richard Durbin, was on the ballot trying for his fifth term. Durbin was a formidable incumbent and highly visible in Washington as the Number 2 Democrat in the Senate, the assistant majority leader under Chuck Schumer of New
York. We will cover the Trump vs. Biden results in Illinois, and then present the results of the Durbin vs. Curran race for the Senate. Curran was a virtual unknown statewide and ran a low-key campaign. He essentially counted on the Republican base and Trump voters for his support. This shows how partisan and how nationalized the race was.

Illinois is generally recognized as being a predominantly blue state, and nationally it was widely expected that Illinois would not be competitive. Since 2000, while the other big urban-industrial states were often battle grounds, Illinois was not. In fact, Illinois has not voted for a Republican candidate for president since George H.W. Bush beat Michael Dukakis in 1988.

That does not mean that a Republican cannot win statewide races in Illinois. We had a Republican governor, Bruce Rauner, and lieutenant governor, Evelyn Sanguinetti, from 2015 through 2019, and Republican U.S. senators, Mark Kirk from 2011 to 2017 and Peter Fitzgerald from 1999 to 2005. Races for specific constitutional offices, like comptroller or treasurer, can be competitive. For example, the late Judy Baar Topinka and other strong candidates can win statewide races as Republicans based on their name identification and respect for their individual records.

More importantly, there are vast swaths of Illinois where the Democrats never win – or narrowly win – scattered races at the county level. There are counties in northern and central Illinois that have been voting for Republicans faithfully since Abraham Lincoln was on the ballot. In addition, southern Illinois was dependably Democratic up until recently. Before the party realignment era nationally and in Illinois, one of the leading books on public opinion at that time by political scientist Alan Monroe provided an excellent summary of that era in Illinois:
There is a definite pattern in the distribution of party strength throughout the state. Basically, the further south one goes in Illinois, the greater the tendency to vote for Democratic candidates. Most of the counties south of the center of the state (i.e., south of Springfield) are Democratic… Conversely, most of the counties in the northern half of the state were Republican, and all of the most heavily Republican counties were there (Monroe, 1976).

That all changed in the 1980s and 1990s nationally, but Illinois lagged behind that national realignment during those decades. Starting in the 2000 election, but picking up steam in 2010 and 2014, the southern area of the state followed the pattern already set much earlier in the American South as it shifted fairly quickly from being a Democratic stronghold to an equally dependable Republican base over the past decade. Subsequent analysis will provide further details on the timing of that marked shift and its larger party realignment implications.

From a perspective of geography only, much of Illinois is a red state and well worth analyzing from that perspective despite its overall blue state identity. Internally, the state has gone through a geographical realignment in the 21st century that was somewhat later than what happened in the southern states starting with Lyndon Johnson’s civil rights leadership in the 1960s. Illinois is an analog for the profound party alignments and realignments that have changed American politics into a pitched battle of the party bases in the 21st century. That is one of the salient features that makes Trump vs. Biden so interesting in Illinois. The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute has published a long list of papers over the past two decades documenting and analyzing the election results at the
county and state level over the past two decades (see the relevant list of *Simon Review* papers provided in the references).

From the popular vote perspective, Joe Biden scored a convincing victory in Illinois. He won 57.54% of the popular vote, compared to 40.55% for Trump (Illinois State Board of Elections, 2020). This was very similar to the Trump loss to Clinton in 2016, which was 55.83% for Clinton and 38.7% for Trump, which indicates just how stable the Illinois vote has become in presidential elections, like most other states, in this deeply polarized party era (Jackson, 2017).

On the other hand, Trump won 88 counties, compared to only 14 for Biden. If one looks at the state returns by county, with the counties not drawn to population scale, the blue counties appear as relatively small islands in a red sea (see Appendix A and Map 1). This is the same perspective the national maps give when the red vs. blue counties are displayed. This geographic advantage is a favorite narrative for Republicans, especially when they talk about the role of the Electoral College and the importance of maintaining it.

On geography, the red areas clearly outnumber the blue areas in Illinois and nationally in 2020. This pattern was similar to the 2016 results when Trump won 90 counties to 12 for Clinton. By that metric, Biden was a somewhat stronger candidate in 2020 than native daughter Hillary Clinton was in 2016. It is worth noting that the two counties that Biden carried in 2020 and that Clinton lost in 2016 are Kendall and McLean. The biggest prizes are suburban Cook and the five collar counties around Chicago. With a population of more than 900,000, DuPage County is the second largest county in Illinois, Lake County and Will County have almost 700,000, and at more than
500,000 Kane is the fifth-largest county in the state. Biden thus won four of the five vote-rich collar counties in 2020, losing only the exurban county of McHenry (population more than 260,000) by a narrow margin.

In addition, Biden also won McLean County, the home of Illinois State University and Number 13 in population at more than 170,000 people. The Biden counties included those with population growth or minimum losses in the 2020 Census. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning did a study of the population losses and gains in the 2015-2019 period, which includes the period used by the Illinois General Assembly to do their first redistricting calculations, and they wrote the following about the patterns for Northeast Illinois:

The vast majority of Illinois population losses have occurred outside of the seven-county CMAP region. The region is also home to four of the nine Illinois counties that saw population growth over this time period, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and Will. While Cook, Lake and McHenry counties saw small declines, they lost a significantly smaller share of their population compared to nearly all the other counties in the state (Chicago Metropolitan Planning Agency, 2020).

**By this metric, it is clear that the trend toward the Democrats becoming the dominant party in the urban and suburban areas was strengthened by the 2020 presidential campaign in Illinois, just as it was nationally.** And while Trump won 88 counties, and a vast geographic sweep of the state, his losses in the population centers doomed him to the loss of Illinois by 14 percentage points.

This trend cannot be good news for the long-term future of the Republican Party in Illinois or the nation, although in 2022 they can still win more than their share of U.S.
House of Representatives seats in the states where the party is in total control of the
government and can draw partisan gerrymanders where they are advantaged. Since the
current Democratic margin in the House is 222 to 210, this means that the Republicans
will only need to pick up a net of six seats to take over the House in 2022. Because of a
combination of where the population growth over the past decade has been and the fact
that Republicans have total control over the congressional redistricting process in 20
states – the Democrats have control over only 8 – redistricting will give the GOP an
initial advantage in trying to regain the House in 2022 (Li, 2021; Epstein and Corasaniti,
2021; Kamarck, 2021).

The opposite of this was the case with the Democrats in control in Illinois after
the 2010 Census, so Illinois is currently gerrymandered to give the Democrats an
advantage, which they parlayed into a 13-to-5 seat advantage in the U.S. House
delegation after 2018, a majority that stayed the same after the 2020 results were counted.
Preliminary expectations are that the Republicans will benefit nationally from both their
partisan gerrymanders and from the population movements of the American people to the
Sun Belt states, which will give them a marked advantage in the rapidly approaching
2022 midterm elections.

**Durbin vs. Curran**

Senator Richard Durbin’s campaign was unavoidably centered around national
issues and his national profile. He has been a widely known figure in Illinois politics for
over 40 years, and he was the most prominent Illinois Democrat in Washington. Thus, his
campaign and race were clearly and inevitably “nationalized.” As a leading Democrat in
a predominantly blue state, Durbin won the state handily. However, what Durbin’s
victory also represents is the geographic difference in the vote throughout the state, and how that has changed over time.

Durbin won 54.93% of the popular vote to his opponent, Mark Curran’s, 39.87% (Illinois State Board of Elections, 2020). There was a small fall-off in vote between the presidential race and the senate race. Biden got a slightly larger percentage (2.6%) and total number of popular votes than Durbin did. Trump also got a slightly larger percentage of popular votes (.7%) and total votes than Curran did. Nevertheless, it is more notable just how much correlation there is between the winners and losers in the presidential and senatorial races. The same 14 counties carried by Biden were also carried in lockstep by Durbin.

Curran won most of the sheer geography in Illinois by winning 88 counties compared to only 14 for Durbin (Appendix A and Map 1). When one compares the results of Durbin’s two most recent races, 2014 vs. 2020, there is much similarity in the aggregate results. Durbin won 54.9% of the popular vote in 2020 and 53.55% in 2014. He won 14 counties in 2020 and 14 counties in 2014. From that perspective, the Durbin results appear to be unchanged over those six years (Appendix C and Map 3). However, a closer look at the county-level data is revealing. It shows that there were eight counties that changed parties in terms of their votes in Durbin’s two most recent campaigns. These were Alexander, Pulaski, and Gallatin in deep southern Illinois; Calhoun, Henderson, Knox, and Fulton in western Illinois; and Whiteside in northwestern Illinois, which Durban lost. He more than compensated for those losses, however, with the addition of Winnebago on the Wisconsin line in northern Illinois; Peoria and McLean in north central Illinois; and Dekalb, Kane, Kendall, DuPage, and Will in northeastern Illinois. In
sum, he traded some small to middle-sized counties downstate for much larger populations in the urban and suburban parts of the state. **This is a graphic demonstration of party realignment on the march in the period of just one six-year term in the U.S. Senate for Durbin. The political circumstances changed, and he adapted accordingly, as all incumbents who serve multiple terms must do.**

There is now much less ticket splitting and variance between the presidential and congressional results than was the case in earlier decades. In the era prior to the realignment of the party system, and the nationalization of our elections, a veteran and respected U.S. Senator like Dick Durbin might have been expected to run ahead of his party’s presidential candidate, in a year when the out party was challenging a presidential incumbent. However, with the lower level of divided results at all levels, the split decisions in federal races have been much reduced. Thus, from the senate vote perspective geographically, Illinois looks like a very red state as it does from the presidential vote perspective. We can learn a lot about the relative current strength of both parties in Illinois by a careful examination of those results from the county level and how this distribution has changed over time, which this paper provides.

As noted above, the 14 counties carried by Joe Biden were the same 14 counties carried by Dick Durbin. In addition, Hillary Clinton carried 12 of those 14 counties in her 2016 race against Trump (Appendix D and Map 4). The only differences are that Biden won both Kendall County in northeastern Illinois and McLean County in central Illinois, which Clinton lost by narrow margins in 2016. **This means that 100 out of the 102 counties in Illinois voted for the same party for president in 2016 and 2020.** On the Republican side, this candidate was Donald Trump. The county-level consistency of
these geographic results is impressive. It provides a graphic demonstration of the significant **continuity** in our national and state elections. If one looks at the state-level vote in the Electoral College, the results are similar. Joe Biden carried all the states that Hillary Clinton did in 2016 and added Arizona, Georgia, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania to his total.

It is clear, then, that at the state level, those 14 counties carried by both Joe Biden and Dick Durbin for the Democrats and many of the 88 counties carried by Donald Trump and Mark Curran for the Republicans make up the geographic base of the two parties in Illinois. Not surprisingly, the Democratic base is in Northeast Illinois, especially Cook and the collar counties. Biden and Durbin carried those except for a narrow loss in exurban McHenry. In addition, they both carried the other urban-suburban counties such as Winnebago, Rock Island, Peoria, Champaign, McLean, and St. Clair. Jackson County, the home of Southern Illinois University, was the only southern Illinois county the Democrats carried, and it was also the smallest county they carried. As noted earlier, the Democrats carried the top five most populated counties in Illinois, as well as eight of the top 10 largest counties and 12 out of the top 15 (losing only McHenry, Number 6; Madison, Number 8; and Sangamon, Number 11).

In addition, these Democratic base counties are far more diverse than the Republican base counties are. “Friendly Bob Adams,” an anonymous contributor to Rich Miller’s popular *Capitol Fax* blog, noted this interesting fact soon after the election with this analysis: “In the 88 counties won by Trump the population is 84.4% Non-Hispanic white. In the 14 counties won by Biden the population is 52.2% Non-Hispanic white” (Miller, 2020).
The Economic Data

We will now look at the economic characteristics of these Democratic vs. Republican base counties using reconfigured county-level data published in a recent paper on public budgeting in the *Simon Review* series (Foster and Jackson, 2021). We do not have survey data on individual voters at the county level, hence we cannot draw generalizations at that level. But the county-level data does allow generalizations about the base areas of the two parties.

Table 1 expands on the “Friendly Bob Adams” analysis from the Rich Miller blog by looking at per capita income, population over 65, and total population change by the two categories of counties (Miller, 2020).

Not surprisingly, the 14 urban-suburban Biden-Durbin counties accounted for a bit more than three quarters (75.4%) of Illinois’ total population in the 2020 census. In addition, the residents of these counties had a 22% higher per capita income than the residents of the Trump-Curran counties. The percentage of elderly residents (older than 65) was significantly lower (14.6% to 18.8%) in the Democratic counties.

Illinois’ population loss has been a frequent talking point for Republican candidates for at least the past decade. Table 1 shows a drop in total state population of 19,064 or -0.1% over this period. It also shows this loss occurring across the 88 counties carried by Republicans in the last election. The 14 Democratic counties actually gained slightly more than 108,000 people, or 1.18%. The 88 Republican counties, in contrast, lost over 127,000 people, or -3.9% of their 2010 population. In fact, 82 of the 88 counties carried by Trump and Curran (the exceptions are Carroll, Effingham, Grundy, McHenry, Monroe, and Williamson) suffered population loss over the most recent decade.
Table 1

Demographic Traits of Biden-Durbin vs. Trump-Curran Counties

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biden-Durbin Counties</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$36,064</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>9,558,329</td>
<td>9,666,971</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump-Curran Counties</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>$29,670</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>3,273,243</td>
<td>3,145,537</td>
<td>-3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>$34,477</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>12,831,572</td>
<td>12,812,508</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 expands the economic analysis of the two categories of counties by looking at county GDP from 2015 to 2018 in constant 2012 dollars. The 14 Biden-Durbin counties accounted for somewhat more than 80% of the state’s total economic activity over this period. Some difference, of course, is to be expected given the greater population of the blue counties. But the blue counties’ share of state GDP is even greater than their share of population as the result of greater wealth in these regions.

It is also worth noting that economic growth rates differed between the two groups of counties. The 14 Biden-Durbin counties’ economies grew by 3.82% (from $609.32 billion to $632.61 billion) over these three years. The Trump-Curran county economies, in contrast, grew only 1.45% (from $135.20 billion to $137.6 billion) over the same time. The 88 Republican counties as a group actually had negative GDP growth, or experienced a recession, from 2015 to 2017. In fact, twelve counties of this group showed a two-year GDP loss greater than 5%. This, probably not coincidentally, coincided with a drop in state government expenditures during the two-year state budget stalemate period. As we will see, this reduction disproportionately affected the red counties. Finally, the differing growth rates led the Democratic counties to account for a slightly larger share of total state GDP in 2018 than 2015 (82.2% to 81.8%).
Table 2

GDP by Biden-Durbin vs. Trump-Curran Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Billions of constant (2012) dollars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biden-Durbin Counties</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump-Curran Counties</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Total</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 examines Illinois’ general funds revenue and expenditures across the two categories of counties. The data for this table was originally presented in our earlier paper (Foster and Jackson, 2021), which contains an extended discussion of the data limitations. In brief, there is not a single original source of state revenue and expenditure data broken down by county or region. The Illinois Department of Revenue publishes income tax data on its website by county through 2017. Sales tax revenues can be traced through the return of the local portion to counties and municipalities. But this is a significant data management task given that the state has 1,298 municipalities receiving funds spread across 102 counties. Lottery sales are recorded by ZIP code. Federal Medicaid reimbursement, which accounts for over 10% of state revenue, must be traced by the home county of recipients.

On the disbursement side, records are kept by different agencies using their organizational units. For example, general formula and mandated categorical aid to K-12 education is recorded by the 921 districts or separate units across the state rather than by the 102 counties. Similarly, the state aid to community colleges data available on the Illinois Community College Board website is categorized by 39 separate districts. State
higher education aid expenditures are available in the Illinois Board of Higher Education records and distributed to the 12 universities. This is attributed to the counties in which they are located, although their effects obviously spill over county lines.

A series of reports by the Illinois Commission on Governmental Forecasting and Accountability, or CoGFA, is by far the most extensive effort to resolve these data problems. Using 2013-2016 tax and budget records, CoGFA undertook a massive data management task and was able to trace from 69% to 81% of the tax revenue and from 65% to 76% of expenditures from the general funds to each of the 102 Illinois counties. Our first paper on this topic was based on 2013 data released in October 2015 (Legislative Research Unit, 2017; Legislative Research Unit, 1989). Updates for FY 2014, 2015 and 2016 were released February 2020 and appeared in our second paper and below.

The major portion of the tax revenues to the general funds traceable to counties consisted of the individual income tax, the state share of sales tax and the federal match for Medicaid. Much smaller revenue sources included lottery profits, insurance taxes and the estate tax. The traceable disbursements in order of size included Medicaid, K-12 education aid (including the mandated categorical programs), state operations, state payroll, Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF), and state aid to public universities and community colleges.

The “untraceable to county” data primarily falls into two major categories. On the revenue side are corporate income taxes. The CoGFA staff noted that while these taxes are filed in the home county of the corporation, actually the business generating the tax usually is done across a number of counties, in other states, or even other countries.
Multistate corporations are taxed on sales in Illinois without a record of county. On the disbursement side, the largest items not traceable to counties are contributions to the various public pension systems, which have grown to over 20% of the general funds. Pension contributions from the state are recorded in the counties housing the system headquarters. Later, these funds plus employee contributions and investment returns are disbursed as payments to pension recipients, again across the state, nation, and sometimes other countries.

Table 3 shows traceable revenue and disbursements in the first row for each category of county and an “adjusted” figure in the second row. The adjusted figure is the traceable amount divided by the traceable percentage for that year. For example, in 2014, 79.1% of total revenue was traceable. Thus, we divided the $22.28 billion traceable to Biden counties by .791 to reach an estimated $28.17 billion total revenue. This assumes that the nontraceable revenue and expenditures are divided across the red and blue counties in the same proportions as the known data.

The second bit of calculated data in Table 3 is the ratio for the two years of 2014 and 2016. This was calculated by dividing the disbursement for that year by revenue. Hence, it measures the percentage of state expenditures received by state taxes paid. A ratio of 1.0 would mean tax revenue going to the state equals state expenditures in that category of counties. Values above 1.0 indicate more state spending than taxing.
### Table 3

State Revenues and Disbursements by Biden vs. Trump Counties

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biden Counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>$22,285,529,404</td>
<td>$17,407,703,422</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>$18,952,106,520</td>
<td>$15,424,387,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>$28,173,867,767</td>
<td>$22,965,307,945</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>$23,311,324,133</td>
<td>$20,456,747,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trump Counties</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>$5,806,714,932</td>
<td>$10,439,951,669</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>$4,815,330,624</td>
<td>$8,147,251,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>$7,340,979,686</td>
<td>$13,773,023,310</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>$5,922,915,897</td>
<td>$10,805,373,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illinois Total</strong></td>
<td>$35,514,847,454</td>
<td>$36,738,331,255</td>
<td>$29,234,240,030</td>
<td>$31,262,121,328</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ratio equals disbursements divided by revenue for that year.

Several generalizations can be drawn from Table 3. First, the Democratic counties pay a significantly larger share of the state’s tax revenue than the Republican counties. This is to be expected given the greater economic activity in these counties shown in Table 2. But it is worth noting that the share of tax load paid by these counties (79.3% in 2014 and 79.7% in 2016) is slightly below their share of state GDP (82.1% in 2016). Presumably, this is the result of a slightly regressive state tax system, which uses a flat-rate income tax as its largest single source of revenue and a sales tax that tends to affect poorer relatively more than wealthier people.

Second, the 88 Republican counties, as a group, receive significantly more in state expenditures than they pay in state taxes regardless of whether one looks at the traceable or adjusted figures. The ratio figures in Table 3 for the red counties range from 1.69 to 1.88 depending upon year and adjustment. The same figures for the blue counties are .78 to .88. **In summary, this means that the red counties in the aggregate are getting**
back between $1.69 and $1.88 for each $1 sent to Springfield in taxes, while the blue counties are getting back well under $1.

Third, this discrepancy in disbursement/revenue ratios narrowed slightly during the budget stalemate of 2016. The red counties’ ratio declined from 1.88 to 1.82 as adjusted total expenditures in their area dropped from almost $13.8 billion to $10.8 billion. In the blue counties over this same period, the ratio rose from .82 to .88. These counties did lose about $2.5 billion in expenditures, but also had their tax bill reduced by $5.2 billion as the state individual income tax rate dropped from 5% to 3.75% (a 25% drop) during the budget stalemate period.

Table 4 below continues the economic analysis by combining the GDP data in Table 2 with the expenditure data in Table 3. We divided the 2016 adjusted revenue and expenditure figures by 2016 GDP totals for the red and blue counties. As expected, the 14 Democratic counties again show less coming back from the state in expenditures than paid in tax revenue that year, while the 88 Republican counties show the opposite pattern.

But what is perhaps more interesting is the relative dependence of the two categories upon state government. Across the 14 reliably blue counties, state expenditures equal a modest 3.3% of total economic activity. In the Republican base counties, that number is almost 2.5 times as large at 8.1%.

Table 4

2016 Adjusted State Revenues and Disbursements as Percentage of GDP by Biden vs. Trump Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016 Revenue as Percent of GDP</th>
<th>2016 Expenditures as Percent of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biden Counties (N=14)</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Counties (N=88)</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To summarize this section, there are some clear differences between the counties that make up the respective bases of the two parties. **The 88 red counties cover much more of the surface area of Illinois (see Map 1), but the blue counties have about three quarters of the state’s population.** The Republican base counties, in addition to having a smaller population, have a lower per capita income, larger percentage of elderly residents, and accounted for all the state’s population loss from the 2010 to 2020 censuses.

On the economic side, the Democratic base counties account for more of the state GDP than would be expected based on population and pay a large percentage of the state’s tax revenue, although not quite as much as would be predicted by their greater wealth. At the same time, state expenditures favor the Republican base counties who received as much as $1.88 in state expenditures for every tax dollar paid in 2014, the last year before the two-year state budget stalemate. Consequently, when state expenditures were sharply cut during FY 2015-2016, the red counties received a disproportionately large share of the reduction, or about $3 billion of a total $5.6 billion cut. This no doubt created more economic pain in these counties as they are about 2.5 times more dependent upon state government than their blue counterparts.

**Changes Over Time in the Popular Vote and Geographic Base of the Two Parties in Illinois**

The next section will present the state’s voting statistics for selected recent races using two units of analysis, that is, the statewide individual vote totals and then the votes of the counties. In the basic American system of government, under a robust form of federalism, both perspectives are important, and the results at both levels are crucial for
who wins and who will get to take power and have the most control over the policy-making functions of state and federal government. At times, because of federalism and the crucial role of the Electoral College, the results are not congruent at the presidential election level. This conflict is not possible in state or congressional elections. This anomaly, of course, refers to the times when the Electoral College and the popular vote produce two different winners, and the geographically based winner gets to take control of the White House. There have been five such conflicted outcomes, with two of these, 2000 and 2016, occurring in the elections held in the 21st century. Early in the race there was much speculation and some fear of 2020 being a repeat performance of 2016; however, the size of Joe Biden’s ultimate victory precluded that outcome.

There is no such conflict possible in the other federal elections held for the U.S. House and Senate since those races are determined by winner-take-all rules. For historical purposes it should also be noted that before the landmark reapportionment decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court in the 1960s, *Baker vs. Carr, Reynolds vs. Sims,* and *Wesberry vs. Sanders,* the geographically based outcomes rather than popular vote-based outcomes often determined representation in the state legislative bodies and the malapportioned states’ representation in the U. S. House.

The county is the geography-based unit of analysis adopted here because it is almost universally the important jurisdiction for conducting voting and reporting the results. Counties are also key organizational units for the political parties and have histories and political cultures of their own. Fortunately, they are almost ubiquitous in all the states, except they are called parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska, and they are geographic units but not government units in Rhode Island and Connecticut.
We will present first an analysis of the current geographical base of the two major parties as depicted in the 2020 election results for president and senator as compared to the end of the 20th century. For the original party baseline comparison, the presidential and senatorial race results for 1996 and the gubernatorial race results for 1998 will be used. This is an extension of the 2016 and 2020 analyses presented above expanded from a four-year perspective to a 25-year perspective. The Illinois experience is an analogue for what has happened nationally, especially in the Midwest and South, over this crucial quarter-century period that has dramatically transformed the American party system.

Appendix A and Map 1 establish the 2020 base for both the Democratic and Republican parties as reflected in the current presidential and senate results two decades into the 21st century. Appendices F, G, and H show what the base of the two parties looked like in 1996 and 1998. It is clear from these comparative graphics that the two parties originally had a much more heterogeneous and broader base from a geographic viewpoint than they currently have.

Put most directly and specifically, Bill Clinton won 64 counties in Illinois in his re-election bid in 1996 (Appendix F and Map 6). Hillary Clinton won only 12 counties in 2016 and Joe Biden won 14 in 2020. On the Senate side, in 1996 Dick Durbin won 51 counties compared to his opponent, Republican Al Salvi, who matched him at 51 counties (Appendix G and Map 7). This point was originally made by J. Miles Coleman, a researcher at the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia (Coleman, 2020). It was also published by Rich Miller’s Capitol Fax and we are indebted to both sources for that work (Miller, 2020).
1996 and 1998 were high water marks for the Democrats in terms of numbers of counties won. From there, they have dropped 50 counties compared to the Bill Clinton results in 1996; however, their statewide vote percentage has increased slightly from 54.3% for Bill Clinton in 1996 to 55.8% for Hillary Clinton in 2016 and to 57.5% for Biden in 2020. The 2020 Republican presidential total also increased incrementally, from 36.8% for Robert Dole in 1996 to 38.8% for Trump in 2016 and 40.5% for Trump in 2020. The 2020 presidential vote percentage was up marginally for both sides compared to 2016 because of the increased mobilization of the base for both parties in 2020.

This change also reflects the fact that third parties have declined significantly in importance since the election of 2000 when it can be argued that Ralph Nader running on the Green Party label played a key role in George W. Bush’s razor-thin victory that year. No other third party has made an important impact on the presidential race in this increased age of polarization in the rest of the 21st century. It is notable that in 1996 the two major parties got 91.1% of the vote in Illinois. In 2020 they got 98% total. One could argue that 2020 was more of a high stimulus election than 1996, but all of the elections since 2000 have become elections in which the stakes – the importance of winning and the threats from losing – seem to have increased for the partisans.

On the Senate side, Dick Durbin’s vote has been remarkably consistent, but its geographical source has changed significantly, starting with 56.1% for Durbin in 1996 compared to 54.9% for Durbin in 2020 (Appendix A and Map 1 vs. Appendix G and Map 7). But the geographical base has shifted remarkably. In his first race for the U.S. Senate in 1996, Durbin won 51 counties – the same number won by his opponent, Al Salvi. As a down-stater, born and raised in East St. Louis, and formerly a seven-term congressman.
representing a district stretching from Springfield to Madison and St. Clair counties, Durbin was advantaged by the fact that at that time, the Democratic Party’s strong base in Chicago was augmented by a substantial second base in the Metro East St. Louis area and southern Illinois. Now, almost all of that downstate base has been eroded, as illustrated by the fact that Durbin only won St. Clair, his original home county, and Jackson County in southern Illinois in 2020. Yet his percentage of the total vote only declined marginally because he almost compensated for those losses by his victories in the collar counties of DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and Lake, and by taking the urban and university-influenced counties of Champaign, Dekalb, McLean, Peoria, Jackson, and St. Clair.

This dramatic shift in the electoral map shows the overall pattern of giving up land for gaining population for the Democrats and giving up population for land for the Republicans. The notable characterization is that the Republicans have gained a whole lot of territory in the rural areas – for example in southern Illinois and the Metro East on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River – only to see those gains more than wiped out by their substantial losses in the collar counties around Chicago and in some of the other cities like Rockford, Bloomington-Normal, Peoria, and Champaign (See Appendices A through E compared to Appendices F through H).

Appendices F and G and Maps 6 and 7 provide the 1996 baseline for the comparisons that are crucial to one of the major arguments of this paper. That was the year when Bill Clinton was seeking a second term and was challenged by Senator Robert Dole of Kansas. It turned out to be a very convincing victory for Clinton, who had built a strong record on the economic front in spite of several missteps and defeats, especially in the first two years of his term. Democrats’ overwhelming loss of both the House and
Senate majorities in the midterm elections of 1994 provided Republicans with full control of Congress for the first time since the Eisenhower years. After that, Clinton’s plan for governing by necessity turned to incrementalism, taking legislative victories where he could find them and focusing on modest and moderate policies where he could occasionally prevail. All of this came before the revelation of the Lewinski scandal and the impeachment trials of 1997. The Clinton vs. Dole results are available in Appendix F and Map 6.

Dick Durbin ran his first campaign for U.S. Senate in the context of the major backdrop of the first Clinton administration and his own record of 14 years spent in the U.S. House accumulating a record of sensible policymaking and looking out for the interests of his central Illinois congressional district. His record of being a friend and protégé of Paul Simon, who was retiring after two terms, was also a factor in Durbin’s campaign. In addition, the Democratic Party in those days was diverse geographically, with a strong presence in downstate Illinois particularly in the Metro East and southern Illinois. Since Durbin grew up in East St. Louis and had a long record of service in the Springfield area, he was an ideal candidate to lead the state ticket in this Clinton re-election year. The results are quite evident in Appendix G and Map 7, with Durbin’s strong showing in downstate especially marked.

Appendix H and Map 8 summarizing the governor’s race of 1998 between the winner, Republican George Ryan, and the Democrat, Glenn Poshard, reinforce this basic finding. Ryan was from Kankakee and Poshard was from Williamson County in deep southern Illinois. However, Poshard had represented a vast congressional district that stretched from the tip of the state at Cairo up through Decatur and other central Illinois
counties. Ryan was not from Chicago per se, but he was from next door Kankakee County south of Cook County. And during his long tenure in the Illinois House, as lieutenant governor under Jim Thompson, and then as secretary of state, Ryan was a familiar fixture in Illinois. He had lots of connections and friends, particularly in the collar counties, and even in the city of Chicago. Ryan was an old-fashioned dealmaker much more than an ideologue, a type of professional politician long familiar in Illinois’ strong party state politics that had prevailed for a century. Glenn Poshard was a strong candidate for southern Illinois, the Metro East and in his former congressional district stretching into central Illinois, while Ryan was a strong candidate for northern, northeastern, and much of the rest of central Illinois.

The result was a victory for George Ryan, who did somewhat better than expected by the usual norms in Chicago and who did very well in the collar counties, meeting or exceeding Republican expectations for suburban Chicago, which at that time was the vote-rich base of the Republican Party. Ryan won in what was a closer-than-expected outcome with 51.03% to 47.60% for Poshard. Ryan won 59 counties while Poshard took 43. Poshard won almost all of southern Illinois and the Metro East and most of his congressional district in central Illinois, as well as Cook County, although he fell considerably short of what Democrats ordinarily had to do in Chicago in order to win statewide (Appendix H and Map 8).

The comparison of Poshard’s 1998 vote returns to JB Pritzker’s returns in his race for governor in 2018 is instructive (Appendix B and Map 2). Pritzker won only 15 counties compared to 43 for Poshard; however, Pritzker took 54.5% of the vote compared to only 38.8% for his opponent, incumbent Republican Bruce Rauner. Compared to
George Ryan’s victory in 1998, the Republican vote declined by 12.2% statewide over a span of 20 years. Again, the overall perspective offered is that of the Democrats giving up land for people while the Republicans gave up people for land.

Table 5 succinctly summarizes these comparisons of the two-party base in Illinois in selected state and federal races in 1996 and 1998 as contrasted with 2016, 2018, and 2020. It is relatively easy to see the evolution and trend lines, which document the rather dramatic realignment of the two parties at both the popular vote and geographic vote levels spanning the intersection of these two volatile centuries.

The overall point of Table 5 is that the two-party base has shifted dramatically in Illinois in the 21st century, just as it has in the nation as a whole. The only salient difference between Illinois and much of the rest of the nation is that our party realignment lagged somewhat the realignment that was taking place in the rest of the nation, and especially in the South. The Democrats now have a firm foothold in the large cities, and they have gained a major foothold in most of the suburbs. They have given up, however, almost all the rural ground and much of small-city America. This geographical party realignment is one of the key causal factors that explains the deep-seated overall polarization the nation had experienced over the past three decades.
Table 5


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>% of Popular Vote</th>
<th>Counties Won</th>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Clinton (D)</td>
<td>54.31</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dole (R)</td>
<td>36.80</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Durbin (D)</td>
<td>56.08</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salvi (R)</td>
<td>40.67</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Poshard (D)</td>
<td>47.30</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ryan (R)</td>
<td>51.03</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Gore (D)</td>
<td>54.60</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush (R)</td>
<td>42.58</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Kerry (D)</td>
<td>54.80</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bush (R)</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obama (D)</td>
<td>69.97</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keyes (R)</td>
<td>27.05</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Obama (D)</td>
<td>61.92</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McCain (R)</td>
<td>38.78</td>
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<td>Sauerberg (R)</td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>57.60</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Romney (R)</td>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rauner (R)</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>H. Clinton (D)</td>
<td>55.83</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trump (R)</td>
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<td>Duckworth (D)</td>
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<td>Kirk (R)</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Pritzker (D)</td>
<td>54.54</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rauner (R)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>38.37</td>
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The Republicans have a stranglehold on rural America and have gained in some traditionally small and medium-sized cities if they are fairly far away from large metropolitan areas. The net result can work for the Republicans nationally, as it did with Trump vs. Clinton in 2016 because of the Electoral College. However, it doesn’t work to their advantage in Illinois where Republican gains in what had traditionally been a Democratic stronghold in southern Illinois and the Metro East are not nearly compensated for by their losses in the growing and vote-rich collar counties. Joe Biden’s victory in 2020 makes it appear that as goes Illinois; so goes the nation. However, the looming 2022 midterm congressional elections could show that the Republicans can make a comeback, especially in low turnout nonpresidential election years.

**The State Campaigns and Elections in Illinois**

Pervasive conflict, chaos, and violence in the nation’s capital, the streets of many large cities, and multiple state capitals provided the backdrop and organizing narrative for federal, state, and county-level races across Illinois in 2020, just as it did in the other 49 states. Partisan polarization and the profound realignment of the two-party system along deep ideological, geographical, racial, religious, and class cleavage lines have transformed how modern campaigns are run and the appeals they make to the voters. Polarization and realignment also strongly influence how the voters react to the candidates and campaigns from the White House to the courthouses.

This change was especially marked by the realignment of the party bases into liberal vs. conservative warring camps in which moderates had been almost entirely eliminated from the Republican/Trump base and in which the moderate faction of the Democratic Party’s base was significantly reduced. The reduction of the middle, and the
push of the center of gravity in the two parties toward the right and the left, had a profound impact on presidential campaigns and on their prospects for governing when the election ends. These tectonic forces also power their way downhill and have profoundly changed state and local parties and campaigns, as well.

Fifty years ago, then-Speaker of the House Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neil said, “All politics is ultimately local.” It became an often-cited mantra (Winter, 2019). O’Neil’s claim may have been very true for that pre-realignment party era, but it is decidedly outdated in the second decade of the 21st century. In fact, the reverse axiom, “all politics is now nationalized” is much nearer the case today. Its corollary that “all campaigns are now nationalized” is largely true, as well.

In Illinois, the statewide and local races in 2020 routinely featured the additional overlay of negative ads from Republican candidates including unflattering pictures of Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Donald Trump if they came from the Democrats. For some of the Democratic candidates, Donald Trump was the bad guy their television ads and mailers most prominently displayed.

At the state level, the two most prominent Democratic leaders, Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan and Governor JB Pritzker, were routinely targeted. Although Madigan officially was only on the ballot in his own southwest side of Chicago legislative district, he was the target of millions of dollars of negative ads run against him throughout the state in the 2020 campaign, as had been the standard practice in Illinois for decades. Throughout the first two decades of the 21st century, Speaker Madigan was the most enduring single figure in Illinois politics. He was also a favorite target in most
Republican fundraising appeals. Negative campaigns featuring Madigan included not only state House and Senate seats, but also a wide variety of other races.

Governor Pritzker by comparison is a relative newcomer, having been elected to his first public office when he won the governor’s race in 2018. He was an important behind-the-scenes influence in Chicago previously; however, he was not widely known statewide before that race. Pritzker will be on the statewide ballot again in 2022. However, as one of the two most important Democrats statewide, Pritzker was a major factor in both statewide and local races in 2020, and he was also featured in the graduated income tax referendum he initiated.

In 2020, Pritzker was one of the most active and outspoken governors in the nation in leading the state’s response to COVID-19. His daily briefings on the state’s plans for managing the pandemic were staples of the news cycle across the state throughout the entire year. His division of the state into regions and the monitoring and firm treatments of those regions based on their public health indicators – the number of cases, the number of deaths, infection rates, hospital capacities, and the amount of ICU space and personal protective equipment (PPE) available – were among the most aggressive in the nation. His critics, especially Republican legislators, were quick to charge that the governor was too inflexible in the application of the rules, especially compared to neighboring states, and that the division of the state into a few regions did not allow for sufficient local variations. Later, the governor did break the state into 11 regions, which depended on the location of major hospitals; however, that did not satisfy the critics. The charge that Pritzker’s plan was massive “government overreach” provided a succinct summary of the critics’ narrative.
Through the governor’s measures to constrict or open the economy – especially local services such as restaurants, bars, health clubs, and barber and beauty shops – the people felt the state’s impact very directly in their daily lives. Large numbers of service jobs in those sectors were lost or reduced and the economy slowed down and shed jobs rapidly. Illinois took some of the most stringent economic containment measures, and Pritzker got most of the blame from the critics for the economic losses and restrictions felt keenly in the daily lives of the people of Illinois. The Republicans amplified this message as often as possible.

Pritzker may not have been on the ballot himself in 2020, but his most important public policy issue definitely was. Pritzker made his constitutional amendment to shift the state’s major revenue producer, the income tax, from a flat rate to a graduated rate his signature solution for the state’s perennial structural deficit. That was Plan A, and he had no Plan B at that time. With a 60% vote threshold, passing a constitutional amendment is very difficult in Illinois, as is evidenced by the fact that there have been only 14 passed since the new constitution was promulgated in 1970. For Pritzker, passing this one proved to be impossible despite the very considerable resources he sank into the campaign.

This was a case study of how campaigns can make a difference, change minds, and mobilize public opinion in a fairly short time despite all the stability that party polarization builds into our system now. In February 2020, at the start of the campaign season, the Simon Poll found that 65% of Illinois voters favored the idea of a graduated income tax rather than the current flat tax, with only 32% opposed. This was the sixth consecutive year that our poll had found this two-to-one margin in a range of 66% to 72%
in favor of changing the constitution to adopt this significantly different tax approach (Jackson, Leonard, Deitz, Christie, and Thomas, 2020). Governor Pritzker and his supporters started with a sizable two-to-one initial advantage on this issue, as well as the Democratic Party’s larger base compared to the Republicans in Illinois; however, the threshold for victory in a constitutional amendment is 60%, so their margin for error was much less than the polls might indicate.

In addition, the governor spent over 50 million of his own dollars in an aggressive campaign in support of what he called “the Fair Tax” (Ballotpedia, 2020). It may have been a fair tax as the governor claimed, and it may have been a proposal to join the 32 other states who have graduated income taxes plus the federal government, but it was still a tax. One of the Republican Party’s most generous donors, mega-billionaire Ken Griffin, matched the governor’s bid with an expenditure of over $50 million dollars of his own money attacking the governor’s proposal. **This turned out to be a campaign where the message, supported by the money necessary to disseminate it, made the crucial difference.**

The opponents mounted a very effective campaign to convince the voters that they would get a tax increase even though the proposal provided that all those taxpayers making $250,000 or less annually would get a tax reduction, or have their rate stay the same. The critics asserted that once the legislators and the governor got the graduated income tax, they would then increase taxes on the middle class. There was also fear among some retirees that this change would lead to taxing retirement income. That message, which effectively tapped all the long-standing mistrust, skepticism, and downright cynicism routinely directed toward Illinois state government, was mobilized
and reinforced by this anti-tax campaign, which fell on fertile ground in the 2020 campaign.

The response from Governor Pritzker and the graduated tax proponents was that the General Assembly already had the authority to set tax rates, and nothing about this plan changed that power. In addition, they stressed that there was nothing radical about the plan since it has undergirded the federal tax system since the 16th Amendment was passed in 1913. The graduated tax plan is also used in 32 states, including Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin, which are states bordering Illinois (Ballotpedia, 2020). Governor Pritzker’s forces tried to combat the idea that it would be a tax increase since this charge was true for only the top 3% of taxpayers, or those making more than $250,000 per year in net income. In many Illinois counties, this would include only a handful of taxpayers. It turned out that in many of the more rural or poor counties, the negative vote was above 70%, and in some counties the vote against the change was above 80%. **The response from Pritzker and other proponents simply did not gain the needed traction for such a heavy lift despite the initial advantage with which they had started.**

The voters in 100 out of the 102 counties in Illinois, often by wide majorities in many of the counties, believed the critics, and the graduated income tax proposal only passed in Cook and Champaign counties. In the popular vote count, it lost by 3,059,411 No votes compared to 2,683,490 Yes votes statewide, or 54.27% No to 46.73 % Yes (Illinois State Board of Elections, 2020). **For a proposal that started out with a two-thirds positive lead that had been consistent for years, this turned out to be a 20-percentage-point swing in the favorability rating based on the narrative successfully purveyed by the opponents.**
The argument the critics made against the graduated tax was that the leadership of the state government, whether in the General Assembly or the governor’s office, simply could not be trusted. Not only would they raise your taxes, they would also create new programs to waste the new tax dollars rather than balancing the budget and paying off the state’s accumulated debts. This successful framing of the tax issue was both implicitly and explicitly an attack on Speaker Madigan and all of the Democrats in the current and past General Assemblies who along with governors from both parties had created the budget and structural deficit problems in the past. Some variation of “You simply cannot trust the politicians not to waste your money” became the rallying cry of the opponents. Led by the Illinois Republican Party and every Republican in the legislature at that time, as well as much of the state’s business community, especially the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, this became a powerful narrative that was very successfully mobilized by the graduated tax opponents. What this defeat will do to Governor Pritzker’s reelection prospects in 2022, as well as the Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The period since the turn of the 21st century has hardened and coarsened American politics to the point we reached in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election: On January 6, 2021, under the urging of President Trump, his supporters carried their fight to the nation’s Capitol. A crowd of Trump supporters first assembled just off the south lawn of the White House to hear an impassioned message from President Trump to “stop the steal.” He further urged them to leave there and go to the U.S. Capitol, which is about 2 miles to the east, in an attempt to stop Congress from receiving
and certifying the official Electoral College vote. The crowd stormed the building and trashed it while hunting for and attempting to intimidate members of Congress and even Vice President Mike Pence. In so doing, the dissidents turned from peaceful protesters into a mob that broke multiple laws and may have fostered an insurrection. It took six hours for the police to clear the building. At that point, the House and Senate emerged from their hiding places and took up the previous business of debating the challenges to the votes of two of the contested states, Arizona and Pennsylvania. After debating those challenges for two hours in each chamber, both bodies voted to accept the Electoral College vote as certified and submitted by the states. The electoral system was deeply challenged in 2020 and January of 2021. Our institutions were placed under deep stress and dangerously bent. But our institutions did not break. Joe Biden won both the Electoral College and the popular votes handily. He was inaugurated to be the 46th president on January 20, 2021.

In 2020 and January 2021, the nation was critically challenged as never before to accomplish another peaceful transfer of power. We had prided ourselves on doing this successfully since the election of 1800, but the nation’s more responsible leaders had to strive mightily to accomplish this signature goal of mass democracy this time. Ominously, a very large proportion of the 74 million people who voted for Donald Trump still have not accepted that they lost the election fairly and squarely. More troubling still is the fact that many of Trump’s supporters in Congress – and especially in the state parties outside Washington – not only did not accept the results, but also attacked those in their own party who did. That widespread level of alienation, distrust, and cynicism toward our basic institutions, will continue to stress the basic institutions
and the electoral rules of the game in our representative democracy for years to come. Partisan polarization continues well into 2022 and has constantly provided a serious barrier to Biden’s ability to govern if it involves Congress passing basic legislation.

Biden has responded with a major effort to pursue more bipartisanship and to include the Republicans in at least some of the legislation he has proposed, most notably on the early COVID-19 relief package – the American Rescue Plan Act – the infrastructure bill, and the police reform package. So far, this approach has failed entirely on the voting rights and police reform bills. Whether Biden’s studied attempt at bipartisanship will break up much of the deeply entrenched legislative gridlock in Congress remains to be seen, but the record of the first year of the Biden Administration has produced only mixed results at best.

The midterm elections of 2022 will provide the initial verdict of the American people on the performance of both parties in Congress so far and will do much to define how the next two years of the Biden administration play out. The midterm results will also set the context for the run-up to the 2024 presidential election, the selection of the Republican presidential candidates, and Biden’s prospects for reelection.

At the state level, the voters’ verdict on the Pritzker administration and the Democrat-controlled General Assembly will be rendered in November of 2022. Campaigns began in the winter of 2021 and will accelerate into the June 2022 state primaries. Whatever campaigns the Democrats and Republicans decide to run, however, will be conditioned by and played out in the context of the national and state realignments that have taken place in the two parties since the turn of this century.
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https://ballotpedia.org/Illinois_Allow_for_Graduated_Income_Tax_Amendment_(2020)


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Map 1
2020 Election Results: Joe Biden vs. Donald Trump and Richard Durbin vs. Mark Curran
Map 2
2018 Election Results: JB Pritzker vs. Bruce Rauner
Map 3
2014 Election Results: Richard Durbin vs. Jim Oberweis

- **Durbin = 14**
- **Oberweis = 88**
Map 4
2016 Election Results: Hillary Clinton vs. Donald Trump
Map 5
2016 Election Results: Tammy Duckworth vs. Mark Kirk

Duckworth = 17
Kirk = 85
Map 6
1996 Election Results: Bill Clinton vs. Bob Dole
Map 7
1996 Election Results: Richard Durbin vs. Al Salvi

Legend:
- Durbin = 51
- Salvi = 51
Map 8
1998 Election Results: Glenn Poshard vs. George Ryan
Appendix A

The 2020 Presidential and Senatorial Race in Illinois

The Biden and Durbin Counties

1. Champaign
2. Cook
3. DeKalb
4. DuPage
5. Jackson
6. Kane
7. Kendall
8. Lake
9. McLean
10. Peoria
11. Rock Island
12. St. Clair
13. Will
14. Winnebago

N = 14 for Biden and Durbin; 88 for Trump and Curran

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<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Biden</td>
<td>3,471,915</td>
<td>57.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>2,446,869</td>
<td>40.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Durbin</td>
<td>3,278,930</td>
<td>54.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Curran</td>
<td>2,319,370</td>
<td>38.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
The 2018 Gubernatorial Race in Illinois

The Pritzker Counties

1. Alexander
2. Champaign
3. Cook
4. DeKalb
5. DuPage
6. Fulton
7. Jackson
8. Kane
9. Kendall
10. Lake
11. Knox
12. Peoria
13. Rock Island
14. St. Clair
15. Will
16. Winnebago

N = 16 for Pritzker; 86 for Rauner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JB Pritzker</td>
<td>2,479,746</td>
<td>54.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Rauner</td>
<td>7,765,751</td>
<td>38.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

The 2014 Senatorial Race in Illinois

The Durbin Counties

1. Alexander
2. Calhoun
3. Champaign
4. Cook
5. Fulton
6. Gallatin
7. Henderson
8. Jackson
9. Knox
10. Lake
11. Pulaski
12. Rock Island
13. St. Clair
14. Whiteside

N = 14 for Durbin; 88 for Oberweis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Durbin</td>
<td>1,929,637</td>
<td>53.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Oberweis</td>
<td>1,538,522</td>
<td>42.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

The 2016 Presidential Race in Illinois

The Clinton Counties

1. Champaign
2. Cook
3. DeKalb
4. DuPage
5. Jackson
6. Kane
7. Lake
8. Peoria
9. Rock Island
10. St. Clair
11. Will
12. Winnebago

\[ N = 12 \text{ for Clinton; 90 for Trump} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>3,090,729</td>
<td>55.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>2,146,015</td>
<td>38.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix E

The 2016 Senatorial Race in Illinois

## The Duckworth Counties

- 1. Alexander
- 2. Calhoun
- 3. Champaign
- 4. Cook
- 5. DeKalb
- 6. DuPage
- 7. Gallatin
- 8. Jackson
- 9. Kane
- 10. Knox
- 11. Lake
- 12. Madison
- 13. McDonough
- 14. Pulaski
- 15. Rock Island
- 16. St. Clair
- 17. Will

N = 17 for Duckworth; 85 for Kirk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tammy Duckworth</td>
<td>3,012,940</td>
<td>54.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Kirk</td>
<td>2,150,099</td>
<td>39.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

The 1996 Presidential Race in Illinois

The Clinton Counties

8. Clay  30. Lake  52. Rock Island
9. Clinton  31. LaSalle  53. Saline
10. Coles  32. Lawrence  54. Schuyler
11. Cook  33. Macon  55. Shelby
12. DeKalb  34. Macoupin  56. St. Clair
13. Fayette  35. Madison  57. Union
16. Gallatin  38. Mason  60. White
19. Hamilton  41. Mercer  63. Williamson
20. Hancock  42. Montgomery  64. Winnebago
21. Hardin  43. Moultrie
22. Henderson  44. Peoria

N = 64 for Clinton; 38 for Dole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill Clinton</td>
<td>2,341,474</td>
<td>54.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Dole</td>
<td>1,587,021</td>
<td>36.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

The 1996 Senatorial Race in Illinois

The Durbin Counties

7. Champaign 24. Knox 41. Pulaski
9. Clinton 26. LaSalle 43. Randolph
10. Coles 27. Macon 44. Rock Island
13. Fulton 30. Marion 47. Union
15. Greene 32. Massac 49. White
17. Hancock 34. Mercer 51. Williamson

N = 51 for Durbin; 51 for Salvi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Durbin</td>
<td>2384028</td>
<td>56.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvi</td>
<td>1728824</td>
<td>40.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

The 1998 Gubernatorial Race in Illinois

The Poshard Counties

2. Calhoun 17. Hamilton 32. Pope
7. Coles 22. Johnson 37. Shelby
12. Effingham 27. Marion 42. White
14. Franklin 29. Montgomery
15. Fulton 30. Moultrie

N = 43 for Poshard; 59 for Ryan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>Vote Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Poshard</td>
<td>1,594,191</td>
<td>47.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Ryan</td>
<td>1,714,094</td>
<td>51.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>