

**A New Democratic Era?  
Presidential Politics in Pennsylvania, 1984-1996**

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*This article examines changes in general elections in Pennsylvania from 1984 to 1996. The county level vote of New Democrat Bill Clinton is compared with that of traditional Democrats, Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis. Clinton won Pennsylvania by gaining votes in the traditionally Republican suburban counties around Philadelphia. Compared to that of previous Democratic presidential candidates, Clinton's percentage of the vote actually declined in the Democratic counties of western Pennsylvania.*

**Introduction**

The Republican party won five of six presidential elections between 1968 and 1988. Some commentators believed that the Republicans had a significant advantage in the electoral college that made it difficult for Democrats to win the presidency (Wayne, 1992). The Republican advantage in presidential elections was widely held to be rooted in the party's seeming strangle-hold on the electoral votes of the South (Black and Black, 1992).

Democratic presidential candidates rarely carried large northern states in this period. Democratic nominees McGovern in 1972, Carter, seeking reelection in 1980, and Mondale in 1984 did not win a single large northern state. Michael Dukakis carried New York in 1988, but like his unsuccessful Democratic predecessors, lost Pennsylvania. New Jersey, Michigan, Illinois and Ohio. (Michigan, Illinois, and new Jersey voted Republican in every presidential election from 1968 through 1988).

The Republican advantage in the South was attributed to the Democratic party's racial and social liberalism (Black and Black, 1987; Rae, 1991). Racial and social liberalism certainly hurt the Democratic party in many non-southern regions of the country (Edsall and Edsall, 1992). However, in the North, the weakness of the Democrats was also attributed to the declining share of states' votes cast by the heavily Democratic major cities and to the increasing share of states' votes cast by fast growing, predominantly Republican suburban counties (Schneider, 1992).

Democratic leaning cities in the North have been declining in population for decades. Because many suburban counties experienced continual population growth, Republican presidential candidates were thought to have favorable prospects in large northern states.

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In 1992, William Schneider raised doubt about future Republican dominance of northern suburbs in presidential elections. Schneider predicted that the Republicans' conservative positions on social issues and the environment might cause them problems among many moderate suburban voters who had supported Republican presidential candidates in the 1970s and 1980s. Citing California as an example, Schneider noted that while the California electorate was opposed to tax increases, California was among the most environmentally aware and strongly pro-choice states on the abortion question.<sup>1</sup> Schneider concluded that the Republican dominance of suburbs outside of the South might be threatened by the very social conservatism that contributed to the party's electoral success in the South(Schneider, 1992).

After the 1996 election at least one commentator believed that Republican conservatism and Democratic moderation had combined to give the Democrats an advantage in Presidential elections(Cook, 1997). Rhodes Cook argued that Clinton's strength in suburbs outside the South helped him win nearly 200 electoral votes in 1996.

Bill Clinton, desiring to avoid the liberal image that was widely have thought to have contributed to Democratic failures in recent presidential elections, presented himself as a new Democrat who was fiscally prudent, tough on crime, protective of the environment and socially moderate (Dionne, 1995). Clinton did, in both his campaigns and in his first administration, take liberal positions on social issues like gun control and abortion that were viewed as likely to appeal to suburban voters. Combining liberal views on certain social issues with strong doses of moderation and conservatism on many issues, Clinton was appropriately positioned to do well in the crucial northern suburbs.

Exit poll results from the presidential elections of 1972 through 1996 indicate that Clinton was the only Democratic nominee to carry suburban voters(*New York Times*, 1996). Clinton's narrow 41-39 percent edge over George Bush in 1992 was expanded into a slightly larger 47-42 lead among suburbanites in 1996. (George Bush defeated Michael Dukakis by a 15 percent margin in the suburbs in 1988).

As Clinton sought to reposition the Democratic party in Presidential politics, it would be expected that the change in appeal would strengthen the party in some regions and with some voters, while weakening it in other regions and among other groups of voters. James Sundquist, in his study of realignment in American politics, has noted that even the creation of the New Deal coalition in the 1930's, which greatly increased Democratic support in many regions of the country, caused a reaction against the Democrats in other parts of the United States(Sundquist, 1983). A uniform surge or decline in partisan support should not be expected across even a single large state with a diverse electorate.

Other research indicates that since the 1960s, much of the North experienced a gradual Democratic trend. However, some regions within states have become more Republican, while others have become more Democratic (Speel, 1994). For example, while Vermont has seen a strong Democratic trend

over the past few decades, this trend has been much stronger in some regions of the state than others.

A Democratic upsurge in the North might be expected after the Southern-dominated Republican congressional party gained majority status. Gary Jacobson has argued that the hard edged conservatism of the congressional GOP gives Democrats an advantage in presidential elections(Jacobson, 1997).

The primary purpose of this article is to investigate whether Clinton's appeal as a New Democrat changed the geographic basis of Democratic support in presidential elections in Pennsylvania. Clinton's percentage of the vote in Pennsylvania counties will be compared with that of Democratic nominees Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, who lost Pennsylvania in their unsuccessful campaigns for the presidency.

### **Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania is a particularly interesting state to examine when investigating changes in presidential election returns from 1984 through 1996. Within the state are areas that have large numbers of socially conservative, blue collar Democrats who might be not be attracted to a pro-choice, pro gun control, free trade Democrat like Bill Clinton. At the same time the populous Philadelphia suburbs have often elected relatively moderate Republicans to Congress. Voters in the suburban counties might well be attracted to a fiscal moderate with some liberal positions on social issues.

Gun control and abortion are issues that have had considerable salience in Pennsylvania politics. In 1968, liberal Democratic Senator Joseph Clark's defeat by Republican Richard Schweiker was attributed in part to Clark's support for gun control(Barone, Ujifusa, Mathews, 1973). In the 1990s, most Democratic members of Congress from outside the Philadelphia region opposed efforts to limit legal access to firearms.

Even before the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* that women had a constitutional right to abortion, Pennsylvania had been in the forefront of the effort to curtail access to abortion (Nossiff, 1994) Robert Casey, the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania from 1987 to 1995, was an outspoken champion of the pro-life cause, who refused to endorse Clinton in 1992 because of differences on the abortion issue(Barone and Ujifusa, 1995). In 1997 only two of the eleven Democrats in the Pennsylvania U.S. House delegation voted against the proposed ban on late term or partial birth abortion(*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 1997).

This article investigates change in presidential election voting patterns in the 1980s and 1990s. County level presidential election returns from Pennsylvania are examined to evaluate the evolution of the state's presidential voting from 1984 to 1996.

It should be noted that Bill Clinton won Pennsylvania in 1992 and 1996. However, as Table 1 indicates Pennsylvania's relative position as a Democratic state has weakened over the four elections examined in this article.

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**Table 1**  
**Pennsylvania and the Nation in Presidential Elections 1984-1996**

	% Democratic National Vote	% Democratic PA Vote	PA Rank as Democratic State
1984	40.8	46.3	5
1988	46.1	48.8	12
1992	45.1	43.0	13
1996	49.0	49.0	21

### Presidential Politics in Pennsylvania 1984-1996

To examine the extent to which the trend toward the Democrats in 1992 and 1996 was greater in the Philadelphia metropolitan area than in rest of the state, the popular vote for four presidential elections 1984-1996 was calculated into three different categories. Philadelphia county, which is the city of Philadelphia, was treated separately. The four suburban counties around Philadelphia (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery) were combined into a single total. The vote for the rest of the state was combined into a third category. Finally the swing in the percentage of the vote won by the Democratic candidate from 1984 to 1996 is calculated. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**The Philadelphia Region and the**  
**Pennsylvania Presidential Vote 1984-1996**

	1984	1988	1992	1996	Swing 1984-1996
Philadelphia	65.2	67.2	68.7	78.1	12.9
Suburban Counties	35.4	38.2	40.7	47.7	12.3
Rest of PA	44.7	47.8	42.4	45.5	.8

Note: The number in each cell is the percentage of the popular vote received by the Democratic presidential candidate.

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An examination of Table 2 indicates that the shift to Clinton was greater in Philadelphia and the four suburban counties than in the rest of the state. (It should be noted that the shift from Walter Mondale's 1984 showing in 1984 to Michael Dukakis's performance in 1988, which is not formally calculated in Table 2, was nearly uniform, ranging from two percent in Philadelphia to 3.1 percent in the non-Philadelphia region.) Compared to 1984, the 1996 Democratic percentage of the vote increased by 12.9 percent in Philadelphia and 13.7 percent in the Philadelphia suburbs. The Democratic vote in the rest of the state increased by only 1.1 percent from 1984 to 1996. A similar pattern exists in the trend from 1988 to 1996. The Philadelphia Democratic vote increased by 10.9 percent, while the suburban Democratic vote increased by 9.9 percent. The Democratic vote in the rest of the state actually declined by two percent from 1988 to 1996.

**Table 3**  
**Pattern of Democratic Presidential Vote**  
**in Selected Elections in Pennsylvania**

	1960	1968	1976	1996
Philadelphia	68.1	61.8	66.3	78.1
Philadelphia Suburban Counties	42.5	39.0	42.7	47.7
Rest of PA	48.4	46.0	50.0	45.5

The number in each cell is the percentage of the popular vote received by the Democratic presidential candidate.

Clinton's performance in the Philadelphia region and the rest of Pennsylvania is also interesting when compared to some Democratic presidential candidates who won Pennsylvania in closely contested elections in the 1960s and 1970s. Table 4 indicates that, in 1996, Clinton did better in both Philadelphia and in the Philadelphia suburban counties than did John F. Kennedy in 1960, Hubert Humphrey in 1968, and Jimmy Carter in 1976. Clinton also received a lower percentage of the vote in the non-Philadelphia region of the state than did Kennedy, Carter, or Humphrey.

Table 4 demonstrates that there was a real increase in Democratic support in the Philadelphia suburbs. The fact that Clinton received 126,000 more popular votes than Walter Mondale did in the four suburban counties indicates that his increased percentage of the popular votes was not caused entirely by the abstentions of Republicans disillusioned with their presidential nominees in 1992 and 1996.

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**Table 4**  
**Presidential Election Popular Vote**  
**in the Philadelphia Suburbs 1984-1996**

	Democratic	Republican	Independent
1984	311,386	565,520	
1988	333,043	539,035	
1992	405,327	402,877	185,923
1996	427,501	383,742	84,652

The results in Tables 2 and 4 do indicate that there was a much stronger Democratic trend in the Philadelphia metropolitan region in 1992 and 1996 than in the rest of the state. However, the analysis does not permit investigation of trends in other regions of Pennsylvania.

To examine change in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties the partisan swings were calculated for each election from 1984 through 1996. In each election the variable chosen as the measure of partisan support was the Democratic percentage of the total vote cast for president in each county.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the individual vote swing in each county, a mean swing vote for each pair of elections compared was calculated. A standard deviation from the mean was also computed. To illustrate where the Democratic trend was strongest and where it was weakest, the counties where the vote swing to the Democrats was at least one standard deviation below the mean and the counties where the vote swing to the Democrats was at least one standard deviation above the mean are presented in individual tables.

Each individual election is compared to the one that preceded it. For a longer perspective the elections of 1984 and 1988 are also contrasted with 1996.

Table 5 indicates that the pattern of Democratic voting between 1984 and 1988 was basically stable. (Table 2 indicates that Michael Dukakis exceeded Walter Mondale's Vote by two percent in Philadelphia, 2.8 percent in the Philadelphia suburbs and 3.1 percent in the rest of the state combined.) At 1.7 percent, the standard deviation was the smallest of any of the elections compared in this article. Michael Dukakis did better than Walter Mondale in every county in Pennsylvania. There was no particular pattern to the counties where Dukakis's showing improved the least, as these eight counties were spread around the state. All of the eleven counties where Dukakis's percentage of the vote increased most from that of Walter Mondale were rural counties in the north central and northwest regions of Pennsylvania.

**Table 5**  
**Partisan Change in Pennsylvania Counties 1984-1988**

Counties with Smallest Democratic Swing		Counties With Largest Democratic Swing	
Mifflin	.7	Clarion	5.7
Butler	.8	McKean	5.7
Cambria	1.4	Bradford	5.8
Delaware	1.6	Tioga	5.9
Franklin	1.7	Warren	6.4
Perry	1.7	Potter	6.4
Carbon	1.9	Columbia	6.7
N'hampton	1.9	Indiana (w)	6.8
Philadelphia	2.0	Clearfield	7.0
		Forest	7.2
		Elk (w)	7.3
		Clinton	9.7

(w) = Western PA County

Mean Change in Democratic Vote: 3.9

Standard deviation From the Mean: 1.7

Change in Median Democratic Vote: 3.6

Note: the figure in each column is the change in the Democratic presidential vote from 1984 to 1988. Counties whose partisan swing is at least one standard deviation from the mean are included.

Table 6 compares county level presidential voting in the 1988 and 1992 elections. Although Clinton was the first Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976 to win Pennsylvania, because of the presence of a strong third party candidate, Clinton won with a lower percentage of the popular vote than Mondale and Dukakis received in their losing efforts. The average county Democratic vote declined by four percent. The variation in change in Democratic support was regional. Clinton's vote declined most substantially in the western part of the state. The Democratic vote improved slightly in Philadelphia and in the four suburban counties around the state's largest city. Clinton also did relatively well in certain counties in the northeastern corner of the state (Monroe, Wyoming, Pike) and in some counties in the center of the state (Perry, Union, York).

Table 7 compares the elections of 1992 and 1996. As was true when 1988 and 1992 were compared, the greater Pittsburgh area was the region of the state with smallest Democratic trend. All of the counties in which the trend in support for Clinton was at least one standard deviation below the mean were in western Pennsylvania. Of the six counties where the trend towards the Democratic candidate was most substantial, two were in the northeastern portion of the state

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**Table 6**  
**Partisan Change in Pennsylvania Counties 1988-1992**

Counties With Most Negative Democratic Swing		Counties With Least Negative or Positive Democratic Swing	
Allegheny (w)	-7.3	Franklin	-.6
Lawrence (w)	-7.4	Monroe	-.6
Washington (w)	-7.7	Wyoming	-.6
Butler (w)	-8.1	York	.1
Cambria (w)	-8.3	Pike	.5
Fayette (w)	-9.4	Union	.6
Greene (w)	-9.4	Perry	.7
Westmoreland (w)	-10.3	Bucks (ps)	.9
Elk (w)	-10.4	Philadelphia	1.0
Beaver (w)	-11.6	Delaware(ps)	2.4
		Chester (ps)	2.8
		Montgomery (ps)	3.7

(w)= Western PA County

(ps)= Philadelphia Suburban County

Mean Change in Democratic Vote: -4.0

Change in Median Democratic Vote: -4.5

Standard Deviation From the Mean: 3.3

Note: The number in each cell is the change in the Democratic percentage of the popular vote from 1988-1992. Counties whose partisan swing is at least one standard deviation from the mean are included.

(Wayne and Wyoming). Lackawanna county also showed significant Democratic gains as did Elk county in the northwestern part of the state.

Table 8 examines the trend towards the Democrats from 1984 to 1996. There were nine counties in Pennsylvania in which the Democratic vote was at least ten percent higher in 1996 than in 1984. All were located in the eastern portion of the state. Philadelphia and its four suburban counties all had strong Democratic trends between 1984 and 1996. Also showing a Democratic surge were four northeastern counties (Bradford, Pike, Wayne, Wyoming).

All of the counties that gave Clinton a lower percentage of the vote than Mondale were in western Pennsylvania. The Democratic percentage of the vote was lower in 1996 than in 1984 in every county in the Pittsburgh region.

Table 9 shows the county trends between the 1988 and the 1996 elections. The patterns detected in previous tables is evident, as Philadelphia, some of its suburban counties, and the fast growing counties in the Pocono region registered the greatest trend towards the Democrats. (Perry County, in central Pennsylvania, also had a significant trend toward the Democrats, though it should be noted that

**Table 7**  
**Partisan Change in Presidential Counties 1992-1996**

Counties with Least Positive or Negative Democratic Swing		Counties With Most Positive Democratic Swing	
Allegheny (w)	.75	Wayne	8.1
Fayette (w)	.49	Elk	8.2
Greene (w)	.19	Delaware (ps)	8.9
Cambria (w)	.11	Lackawanna	8.9
Butler (w)	.04	Wyoming	9.2
Indiana (w)	.01	Philadelphia	9.8
Westmoreland (w)	-.30		
Beaver (w)	-.86		
Washington (w)	1.7		
Armstrong (w)	-2.5		

(w)= Western PA County

(ps)= Philadelphia Suburban County

Mean Change in Democratic Vote: 4.6

Median Change in Democratic Vote: 5.2

Standard Deviation from the Mean: 2.71

Note: The number in each cell is the change in the Democratic percentage of the popular vote from 1992 to 1996. Counties whose partisan swing is at least one standard deviation from the mean are included.

Clinton received a meager percentage of the vote in the county). The 1984-1988 Democratic trend in the northern tier and north central counties did not continue in the Clinton years. Once again the western counties showed a decline in support for Democratic candidates.

### Analysis

The results presented in the preceding tables clearly indicate that there was a strong Democratic surge in eastern Pennsylvania in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections. The Democratic gains were concentrated in three portions of the East. The city of Philadelphia, a Democratic stronghold since the realignment of the 1930s, saw the largest movement to the Democrats of any county in Pennsylvania between 1984 and 1996. The 78 percent of the vote that Clinton received in Philadelphia in 1996 was the best showing by a Democratic presidential candidate since the two parties began competing.<sup>3</sup>

Clinton also greatly improved on the showings of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis in the Philadelphia suburbs. Indeed Clinton carried three of the four counties (Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery) in 1996 and his combined

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**Table 8**  
**Partisan Change in Pennsylvania Counties 1984-1996**

Counties With Most Negative Democratic Swing		Counties With Most Positive Democratic Swing	
Somerset (w)	-1.1	Bucks (ps)	10.0
Lawrence (w)	-2.7	Bradford	10.1
Allegheny (w)	-3.1	Pike	10.8
Greene (w)	-3.5	Chester (ps)	11.9
Fayette (w)	-4.9	Philadelphia	12.8
Washington (w)	-6.4	Wayne	12.8
Butler (w)	-7.2	Delaware (ps)	12.9
Armstrong (w)	-7.7	Wyoming	13.1
Westmoreland (w)	-7.9	Montgomery(ps)	14.2
Beaver (w)	-9.2		

(w)= Western PA County

(ps)= Philadelphia Suburban County

Mean Change in Democratic Vote: 4.43

Change in Median Democratic Vote: 4.96

Standard Deviation From the Mean 5.40

Note: the number in each cell is the change in Democratic percentage of the popular vote between the elections of 1984 and 1996. Counties whose partisan swing between the two elections is at least one standard deviation from the mean are included.

percentage of the vote in the suburbs exceeded his total in the non-Philadelphia region of the state by 3.3 percent, a dramatic change in the relative pattern of support from that of Mondale and Dukakis who, in the suburban counties, ran nine to ten percent behind their outstate showing.

Clinton's brand of Democratic moderation with its emphasis on fiscal restraint combined with socially moderate views that included liberal views on abortion and gun control may have been ideally pitched to increase the Democrat's support in the Philadelphia suburbs whose Republicans have often been moderate on social issues. In the last decade Republican Representatives from the Philadelphia suburbs have often been the only Republican members of the state's US House delegation to vote for gun control measures and, on occasion, to oppose restrictions on abortion. Clinton's generally moderate appeal, derided as a weak version of Republicanism by liberal Democratic opponents, is not inconsistent with the views espoused by Republican representatives from the Philadelphia suburbs (Balz, 1997).

The other counties trending strongly to Clinton were in the northeastern region of the state. Pike, Wayne, and Wyoming show a strong movement to the

**Table 9**  
**Partisan Change in Pennsylvania Counties 1988-1996**

Counties with Most Negative Democratic Swing		Counties with Most Positive Democratic Swing	
Allegheny (w)	-6.5	Monroe	6.5
Indiana (w)	-6.8	Perry	6.6
Butler (w)	-8.1	Bucks (ps)	7.0
Cambria (w)	-8.2	Pike	7.4
Fayette (w)	-8.9	Chester (ps)	9.2
Greene (w)	-9.2	Wyoming	9.2
Washington (w)	-9.4	Montgomery (ps)	10.5
Westmoreland (w)	-10.4	Philadelphia	10.8
Armstrong (w)	-11.2	Delaware (ps)	11.3
Beaver (w)	-12.4		

(w)= Western PA County

(ps)= Philadelphia Suburban County

Mean Change in Democratic Vote: .53

Median Change in Democratic Vote: 1.02

Standard Deviation From the Mean: 5.43

Note: the number in each cell is the change in the Democratic percentage of the popular vote between the elections of 1988 and 1996. Counties with a swing of at least one standard deviation from the mean are included.

Democrats in 1996 when compared with the 1984 or 1988 election. Monroe County is included in this group of counties when the 1988 and 1996 Democratic votes are compared. The northeastern counties are in the greater Pocono region of Pennsylvania and have experienced extensive population growth in the past twenty years. The northeastern counties had the greatest population increase of any counties in the state. Many of the new migrants to the northeastern counties are commuters to the New York City metropolitan area. They are likely to resemble the moderates of the Philadelphia suburbs, and many also come from New Jersey and New York, states that showed strong movement away from the Republican party in 1996.<sup>4</sup>

While counties in the Philadelphia and Pocono regions of the state were moving toward Clinton, Clinton did worse than Walter Mondale in virtually all the counties in the greater Pittsburgh region. (It is important to reiterate that Clinton did not actually lose most of the western counties, but his relative performance there was poor.)

Three factors may explain the relative weakness of Clinton's performance in western Pennsylvania. The western region of the state was greatly affected by the deindustrialization that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. All but one of the

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counties in the greater Pittsburgh region experienced population decline from 1980 to 1995.<sup>5</sup>

In 1993 all five of the representatives from western Pennsylvania voted against the NAFTA accord.<sup>6</sup> Clinton's support of free trade policies, as evidenced by his support of the NAFTA and Gatt accords, has probably not endeared him to many working class voters in a region where economic change has led to the loss of thousands of well paid union industrial jobs.

Clinton's embrace of abortion rights, even to the point of vetoing the ban on late term or partial birth abortions in 1996, may have hurt him in a region of the state where all the Democratic members of the House, except one have compiled solidly anti-abortion records.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Clinton's support for gun control probably cost him votes in socially conservative western Pennsylvania, where again the Democratic members of the House, with one exception voted against gun control measures.<sup>8</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Bill Clinton sought to rectify the political problems faced by Democratic presidential candidates in the 1970s and 1980s by presenting a much more moderate Democratic image. Clinton had served as president of the Democratic Leadership Council which sought to move the Democratic party to the middle of the political spectrum. (Germond and Witcover, 1993.) On economic policy, Clinton supported the free trade regime promoted by business elites in both political parties and quickly moved to embrace the deficit reduction policies favored by the financial markets (Woodward, 1994). With the advent of a Republican Congress after the 1994 elections, Clinton endorsed the concept of enacting a balanced federal budget by the year 2002. While embracing fiscal restraint, Clinton campaigned for reelection as a moderate, who would protect the public from allegedly radical Republican cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment.

On social issues Clinton moved the Democratic party to the right on some issues, most notably crime. However, Clinton also held liberal social positions that, by design or accident, were likely to appeal to moderate suburban voters. At great cost to his fellow Democrats in the 1994 elections, Clinton secured the passage of two gun control measures during his first two years. He also maintained a strong pro-choice record on abortion.

Bill Clinton sought reelection as a generally pro-business social moderate concerned about crime. Clinton improved most on previous Democratic performances in precisely those areas of Pennsylvania where moderate Republicanism had been most entrenched and in the northeast counties where New York and New Jersey migrants and commuters resided. Clinton managed to improve the Democratic vote in the Philadelphia suburbs while also increasing the Democratic vote in the city itself.

An anomalous region is the socially conservative Scranton and Wilkes-Barre area of Northeastern Pennsylvania where Clinton improved his vote substantially from 1992 to 1996.<sup>9</sup> No definitive answer to this conundrum is

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presented here. It is worth noting that Scranton and Wilkes-Barre are in the Democratic trending northeast region of the state. Also, it is possible, given the high percentage of senior citizens in Lackawanna (Scranton) and Luzerne (Wilkes-Barre) counties, that the Republican plans to impose cuts on Medicare and President Clinton's oft repeated pledge to protect Medicare had a significant impact on presidential voting in the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre region in 1996.<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1970s Pennsylvania's Democratic base was the city of Philadelphia, some industrial areas like Bethlehem, Allentown, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and the coal and industrial regions of the western portions of the state. Republicans dominated the Philadelphia suburbs, the Pennsylvania Dutch region in the south central portion of the state and virtually all the rural counties in the northern tier(Pierce and Barone, 1977). By the 1990s the basic regional/partisan patterns still held for much of the state.

Despite his reduced vote margins, Bill Clinton carried the coal and steel counties of western Pennsylvania. However in the six county Pittsburgh region, Clinton received 51.3 percent of the popular vote in 1996 compared to Walter Mondale's 57 percent of the vote in 1984.<sup>11</sup>

The major exceptions to the continuation of the pattern observed in the 1970s were that in 1992 and 1996 the Philadelphia suburbs voted Democratic by small margins, the Republican vote share had decreased significantly in Philadelphia, and the Pocono region was more Democratic. Clinton's strong performance in the traditionally Republican suburbs, made it virtually impossible for George Bush and Bob Dole to win Pennsylvania.

Because they are few in number, presidential elections are difficult events from which to draw conclusions and generate predictions. It is easy to find particular causes for the outcome of any election. It is obvious that in 1996, Bill Clinton benefited from the ineptness of the Dole campaign and from the strong state of the economy (Burnham, 1997). However, the very different changes in the pattern of support for Clinton in Pennsylvania indicate that there may be trends with longer term implications at work as well. It is clear that if the Republican party continues to nominate presidential candidates who are positioned well to the right on social issues and the Democratic party nominates Clintonian moderates, the Democratic gains in the Philadelphia suburbs may make Pennsylvania a very difficult state for Republican presidential nominees.

Nationally, in 1996 Bill Clinton defeated Bob Dole in nearly two thirds of the congressional districts classified as suburban by *Congressional Quarterly*.<sup>12</sup> Control of the suburbs may enable future Democratic presidential candidates to win other major states.

It is also important to note the dramatic decline in Pennsylvania's rank as a Democratic state from 1984 to 1996. While Clinton won Pennsylvania's 23 electoral votes in 1992 and 1996, his percentage of the popular vote in each election was not as great as would be expected based on the showings of Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis. (Clinton's 1996 popular vote percentage was slightly higher in traditionally Republican New Hampshire than in Pennsylvania.) Clinton's substantial gains in the Philadelphia region were partly offset by his relative weakness in the western industrial regions of Pennsylvania.

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### **Notes**

1. Schneider notes that southern suburban voters were strongly conservative on both economic and social issues.
2. The Democratic percentage of the total vote was chosen because using the Democratic percentage of the two party vote might lead to an inflated Democratic total simply because of the presence of Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996. For example, if a Democratic candidate lost a hypothetical county by a margin of 40 to 60 percent in 1988 and won 40 percent in 1992, with the Republican candidate winning 40 percent and Perot 20 percent, the Democratic percent of the two party vote would have increased ten percent though there was no actual increase in support for the Democratic candidate.
3. By contrast, Franklin Roosevelt received 60.9 percent of the vote in Philadelphia in his landslide reelection victory in 1936.
4. Between the 1980 census and the Census Bureau's 1995 estimate of population Pennsylvania's population increased just 1.8 percent. Pike County's population increased 102 percent, Monroe County's by 68 percent, Wayne County by 25 percent, Wyoming county by 12 percent.
5. Only Butler county gained population from 1980 to 1995. Allegheny county, which includes the city of Pittsburgh, lost over nine percent of its population over the fifteen year period. Other counties suffering population decline were Cambria (-11%), Fayette (-9%), Beaver(-7%), Westmoreland (-5%), and Washington (-5%).
6. The representatives were Democrats Ron Klink (D-4th), John Murtha (D-12), William Coyne (D-14th), Austin Murphy (D-20th) and Republican Rick Santorum from the 18th district.
7. Western Pennsylvania Democratic Representatives Ron Klink, John Murtha, and Austin Murphy, who retired in 1994, all compiled uniformly anti-abortion records in the House. Representatives Frank Mascara, who replaced Murphy in 1995, and Mike Doyle, who replaced Republican Rick Santorum in a suburban Pittsburgh district, after Santorum's election to the senate in 1994, compiled anti-abortion records in the House. Only Democratic William Coyne, whose district is based in the city of Pittsburgh and some of its surrounding Allegheny county suburbs, has voted the pro-choice position on abortion.
8. William Coyne of Pittsburgh was the only Democrat from Western Pennsylvania to vote in favor of the major gun control measures of the Clinton administration. Coyne supported the 1993 Brady Bill imposing a five day waiting limit on handgun purchases and the 1994 assault weapons ban.

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9. Prominent anti-abortion Democrat former Governor Casey was from Scranton. Both U.S. representatives from this region, Republican Joseph McDade of Scranton and Democrat Paul Kanjorski from the Wilkes-Barre area compiled anti-abortion voting records in the House.

10. According to the 1990 census, Pennsylvania with 15.4 percent of its population over 65 years of age, had the second largest percentage of senior citizens in the nation. (Florida was first).

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, with 19.8 and 19.7 percent of their populations over age 65 in 1990 were well above the state average.

11. The six counties in the Pittsburgh area are Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland.

12. Clinton won 105 of the 160 House districts that CQ classified as suburban. This information is presented in a table in the September 20, 1997 issue of Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report.

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