

Bringing Politics Back In

Suffrage Supply and Demand

In the chapters that follow, I turn to state politics to explain how and why American women won the right to vote. Women, however, were not the only group for whom the enfranchisement story began at the state level. In fact, most of the voting rights protections that have become canonized in the U.S. Constitution followed behind state action. Defining the American electorate is thus a deceptively difficult task; at no point in the history of the nation has there been a single answer to the question of who can vote. Despite a founding based on the republican principle of the “consent of the governed,” neither the Articles of Confederation nor the subsequent U. S. Constitution offered protection of the people’s right of consent – their right to choose the officers of their government. Protection and definition of that right was left to the states, to do with as they might. Therefore, there have always been at least as many answers to the question of who may vote as there have been states.

It is true that the national government has at some points adopted measures through both constitutional amendments and legislative acts to constrain the states’ ability to delineate the eligibility of citizens for the elective franchise. Yet all of these actions – the bans on discrimination by race, sex, ability to pay a poll tax, or age – followed in the footsteps of similar policies already adopted by a significant number of states. Furthermore, beyond these specific categories of discrimination, states have made and continue to make distinctions between categories of their residents who may vote and who may not, and who the process of voting is designed to include and exclude. What, then, have state governments done with their power to define the American electorate? How have they chosen whom to include and exclude? What has prompted states to change the composition of their electorates over time? What has stalled that change?

This chapter develops a general framework for answering these fundamental questions about the development of voting rights in the United States, which

will be applied in the remaining chapters to women's voting rights in particular. My account of suffrage extension is informed by two literatures that have been oddly disconnected in their approaches to issues of voting rights. Previous scholarship has tended to focus either on the role of political elites or on the role of social movements in bringing about changes in electoral qualifications. One might label these two lines of investigation "supply-side" and "demand-side" accounts of the politics of voting rights. Yet it is obvious that we need to understand the interaction of supply and demand politics to account for suffrage outcomes. Social movements demanding changes in voting rights have numerous strategies and resources they could pursue; seeing when each is likely to facilitate the desired policy change (if ever), and under what conditions we would expect failure in spite of resources and political savvy, involves detailing politicians' motivations for response. In so doing, we need to understand these supply-side actors as both partisans and lawmakers, elucidating the incentives and constraints engendered by electoral considerations *and* political institutions.

To give an overview of the landscape of changes, I begin in this chapter with a very brief history of suffrage qualifications in the United States. Next, I offer a concise review of the approaches of others to explain what has brought about changes in the legal composition of the American electorate, highlighting what pieces are missing from the politics in these accounts. Delving into the incentives for suffrage extension that are produced and constrained by politicians' locations in political parties and legislative bodies, I then detail my general framework for understanding decisions to expand voting rights. Finally, I explain the utility of using woman suffrage as a case to test the theoretical expectations implied by that framework.

The Journey from Propertied White Males – A Brief Overview of U.S. Suffrage History

The U.S. Constitution as drafted in 1787 offered only two comments on the subject of voting rights: one direct statement about voters in the first article and one indirect remark in the second. In Article I, Section 2, the Constitution proscribed that members of the House of Representatives would be "chosen every second year by the people of the several states, and the electors in each state shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the state legislature." This clause meant that states were entrusted with the exclusive power of defining the electorate not only for the purposes of state elections, but also, by extension of that same process, for elections of the people's representatives in the national lawmaking body. It was a truly federalist institutional design, both reserving power to the state governments and tying decisions about state politics to the fundamental workings of the national government. Election of Senators was the jurisdiction of state legislatures (until the ratification of Amendment XVII in 1913). Article II,

Section 1 offered the process by which the President should be chosen, allowing each state “to appoint, in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct, a number of electors,” which would cast the state’s votes for the national executive. Although there is no explicit mention of a public vote, the power of the state legislatures to control the appointment of presidential Electors allowed state legislatures to define the qualifications of voters for the offices of President and Vice President.

At the time when the colonies became states, most states decided to tie voting rights to property rights, in much the same way the colonies had under British rule. Ten of the original thirteen states required voters to be freeholders of some set amount of property and/or of a set level of personal wealth. Pennsylvania and Georgia required voters to be taxpayers; Georgia also required certain personal worth or that the voter be a mechanic by trade. New Hampshire required only the payment of a poll tax. Voting was restricted to men in all the states save New Jersey, where widows of sufficient property were for a short time qualified to vote. Property qualifications waned in the early nineteenth century as new states entered the Union without such requirements for their electorates and existing states wrote them out. Tax-paying requirements, however, remained commonplace.¹

Questions of race and the non-citizen vote were the next contentions in the history of American voting rights. Whereas only three of the thirteen states had constitutional bans on voting for persons of color in 1790, by 1840, twenty of twenty-six state constitutions included such clauses. In the 1840s and 1850s, state constitutions began to address the question of the vote for resident aliens. Three states – Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana – adopted provisions for suffrage rights for immigrants who declared an intention to become citizens in this time. More Midwestern, Southern, and Western states would follow suit in the 1860s and 1870s. Northeastern states, however, typically adopted citizen-only clauses. The political welcoming of alien voters where it existed was short-lived; by the 1920s, the “alien declarant” provisions were largely repealed. Exclusion of non-whites from electorates in the North, South, and West, persisted until the ratification of Amendment XV to the U.S. Constitution in 1870.² Redemption of the South in the last decades of the nineteenth century pushed black men back out of the electorate through various means, both constitutional and extra-legal. To pull out black voters without direct appeals to race, Southern state constitutions gained literacy and competency tests for the franchise, alongside grandfather clauses exempting those whose immediate ancestors were previously qualified to vote.

¹ Keyssar, Alexander, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), Appendix; Williamson, Chilton, *American Suffrage from Property to Democracy, 1760–1860* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

² Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, Appendix, Tables A.5, A.12; Kleppner, Paul, *Continuity and Change in Electoral Politics, 1893–1928* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 165–66.

Between the end of the Civil War and 1920, there were several other major adjustments made to electoral composition across the states. Voter registration and complex residency requirements began to emerge immediately following the war. Literacy and competency tests – those common elements of Redemption constitutions in the Southern states – made their way into Northern and Western states by the early twentieth century. These non-Southern versions focused on required competence in the English language, holding new immigrant influxes out of the electorate. Women's voting rights first appeared in limited form in the mid-nineteenth century as states east and west of the Mississippi, and north and south of the Mason-Dixon Line, adopted provisions for women's participation in school or municipal elections. Full voting rights for women first took hold in the 1890s in the states of Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. By the time of ratification of Amendment XIX in 1920, which prohibited the denial of voting rights on the basis of sex, thirty states had granted women significant access to the polls. In this time period, disfranchisement of convicted criminals of various sorts also began to appear in state constitutions.³

The mid-twentieth century witnessed two major adjustments to voting rights. Although the practice of "military suffrage" had given a number of eighteen- to twenty-year-old males the right to vote in at least some elections since colonial times, extension of full voting rights to this age cohort did not occur until after World War II. Georgia became the first state to amend its constitution to include suffrage rights for this group in 1943. Before passage and ratification of Amendment XXVI to the U.S. Constitution in 1971, which provided for the right of eighteen- to twenty-year-olds to vote in all elections, seven other states acted to lower the legal voting age. In the same period, black Americans were re-enfranchised in states that had employed various legal and quasi-legal provisions to subvert their voting rights since the turn of the twentieth century through the ratification of Amendment XXIV in 1963, which outlawed poll taxes, and passage by Congress of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.⁴

There remains, of course, additional room for expansion of voting rights in the United States. Voting rights for non-citizens, now a reality in only a handful of local jurisdictions, have emerged on the political agenda in recent years in a number of states, including New York, California, and Massachusetts. Felon disenfranchisement provisions continue to be adjusted by the states. Debates

³ Kleppner, *Continuity and Change*; Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, Appendix, Table A.13; Scott, Anne Firor and Andrew MacKay Scott, *One Half the People: the Fight for Woman Suffrage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

⁴ Cultice, Wendell W., *Youth's Battle for the Ballot: A History of Voting Age in America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992). The Voting Rights Act has, of course, been renewed multiple times to preserve the federal oversight of voting and registration rights practices in places with conspicuously low registration and turnout. All of this federal legislation produced a long history of court challenges to state voting rights practices; the politics of such decisions, although certainly meriting their own systematic examination, are beyond the scope of this discussion, which seeks to explain initial state action to extend voting rights.

also endure about the voting rights of U.S. citizens residing in its territories; only residents of the District of Columbia cast votes for the offices of President and Vice President, and no territory claims a voting representative in the U.S. Congress. Recent decades have also borne renewed interest in regulation of voter registration and other procedural technicalities of the voting process that might be seen as effectively shaping the size and scope of the electorate. The U.S. Supreme Court's June 2013 ruling in *Shelby v. Holder* undid the federal government's legal formula under the Voting Rights Act for subjecting states and local jurisdictions to preclearance of any changes of their electoral laws and procedures. This decision reopens questions of the protection of racial and ethnic minorities' voting rights, and has already prompted new legislative proposals in a number of the previously covered states. And so the process of defining the American electorate is ongoing.

Suffrage Supply and Demand – Existing Accounts of Suffrage Changes

Even a cursory glance at the history of the franchise in the United States suggests that those with institutionalized political power – political elites – routinely make decisions that enable a broader electorate. It also illustrates, however, important patterns of diversity: that many states never relented on specific forms of electoral expansion, that no state or region can claim a consistent pattern of suffrage qualification liberalization, and that each change has come at different moments for different states. Such diversity would seem to challenge narratives of a steady march toward universal suffrage, including that offered by perhaps the most famous observer of American democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville. Writing in the 1830s, the French thinker believed he saw confirmation of the inevitability of consistent suffrage extension:

There is no more invariable rule in the history of society: the further electoral rights are extended, the greater is the need of extending them; for after each concession the strength of the democracy increases, and its demands increase with its strength. The ambition of those who are below the appointed rate is irritated in exact proportion to the great number of those who are above it. The exception at last becomes the rule, concession follows concession, and no stop can be made short of universal suffrage.⁵

Despite evidence of retrenchment and resistance in the history of voting rights in the United States, as well as other nations, de Tocqueville is not alone in his belief in the surety of universal suffrage. A number of scholars confronting the question of suffrage extension since de Tocqueville, however, have underscored the idea that political elites should not be willing to extend suffrage rights. Those with power should have an interest in maintaining it for the benefits that accrue to them; control of government institutions, of course, yields

⁵ Vol. I, Ch. IV.

control over social and economic policy, as well as government coffers. Expanding access to the elective franchise to new groups would seem to threaten the benefits political elites reap by increasing the constituent demands that they must meet to maintain their control of the government. Indeed, elite interest in maintaining suffrage exclusion is emphasized by work in political economy that demonstrates a – perhaps unsurprising – pattern of increased public expenditures following suffrage extensions, generally attributed to greater demand for redistributive policies among the new electorate. As economists Humberto Llavador and Robert Oxoby have stated the question, “If greater democracy (extension of the franchise) implies a poorer median voter, and hence higher levels of redistribution, why would elites choose to extend voting rights?”⁶

Social scientists thus have searched for explanations of what might provoke elites to act against their seemingly simple self interest in maintaining the status quo in electoral qualifications. The answers they have provided can be grouped into two main veins: suffrage extension is seen either as a consequence of the politics of competing or divided elites, or as the acquiescence to pressure from the disenfranchised.

Accounts that center on elite division, quite simply, paint suffrage extension as a strategy by one set of elites to increase their leverage over another. A number of versions of this story have been offered. Economists have tended to focus on elite division over economic policies, and the idea that the franchise might be extended to create increased demand for some elites’ preferences. Llavador and Oxoby, for example, point to asymmetrical economic sector benefits for government policies ranging from reduction in tariffs to increased spending on education and health care infrastructure, and see extension of the franchise as an attempt by particular elites to increase electoral support for the policies that produce increased returns in their own economic domains. Other economists have seen the ways in which certain elites might benefit from greater provision of public goods or a stronger national government as incentives for some to look to the disenfranchised for new electoral support. Political scientists have used the same divided elite logic, but indicted partisan politics more broadly, arguing that competition between political parties can push political elites to look for new bases of support among the disenfranchised. In the words of V. O. Key, the logic is that “if competition for power prevails,

⁶ Llavador, Humberto and Robert Oxoby, “Partisan Competition, Growth, and the Franchise.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120 (2005): 1158. On the trend of increased public spending following enfranchisement see, for example, Cnudde, Charles F. and Donald J. McCrone, “Party Competition and Welfare Policies in the American States.” *The American Political Science Review* 63 (1969): 858–66; Fry, Brian R. and Richard F. Winters, “The Politics of Redistribution.” *The American Political Science Review* 64 (1970): 508–22; Abrams, Burton A. and Russell F. Settle, “Women’s Suffrage and the Growth of the Welfare State.” *Public Choice* 100(1999): 289–300; “Why Did the Elites Extend the Suffrage? Democracy and the Scope of Government with an Application to Britain’s Age of Reform.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 119 (2004): 707–65.

invariably some of those within the privileged circle will hope for allies by the admission of their friends from without.”⁷

Building partisan politics into theories of suffrage extension is certainly an important move toward placing elite decisions within the institutional arrangements that shape their incentives and capacity for effecting the policy changes they might desire. Although political parties are not political institutions established through either constitutional or statutory law in the United States, they are fundamental organizations in the American political process. Parties structure the electoral choices of citizens, mobilize citizens for participation, and generally facilitate the process of distilling public policy from the preferences of the electorate.⁸ What parties do, and how they do it, follows from the political party’s main objective: an organized endeavor to control the government through running candidates for elective office.⁹ Thus, the most basic interest of the political party is to establish and maintain a winning coalition, one that puts their candidates in the offices of government. The composition of the electorate, and the needs and preferences found therein, must therefore figure centrally into the strategy of the political party – meaning that an account of suffrage extension needs to contend with partisan interests.

Political parties, however, are not the only political institutions that wield significant influence over elite action in the process of enfranchisement. Changes in suffrage qualifications are changes in law – meaning, quite obviously, that they must pass through legislative institutions. Yet, the legislative process is absent from existing accounts of suffrage extension offered across the social sciences. This omission has masked important pieces of the politics of voting rights, notably the significant constraints legislative institutions place on elites’ ability to enact their desired suffrage policy. It has also limited our understanding of how demand from the disenfranchised influences elites’ preferences and decisions, a point to which I return momentarily.

⁷ Key, V. O., *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958), 671. On elite competition and suffrage extension see also Collier, Ruth Berins, *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Lizzeri, Alessandro and Nicola Persico, “Why Did the Elites Extend the Suffrage? Democracy and the Scope of Government with an Application to Britain’s Age of Reform.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119 (2004): 707–65; Llavador and Oxoby, “Partisan Competition”; Conley, John P. and Akram Temimi, “Endogenous Enfranchisement When Groups’ Preferences Conflict.” *The Journal of Political Economy* 109 (2001): 79–102; Rokkan, Stein, *Citizen, Elections and Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1970); and Schattschneider, E. E., *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1942).

⁸ Rosenstone, Steven J. and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993); Key, V. O., *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958).

⁹ Ranney, Austin and Willmore Kendall, *Democracy and the American Party System* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc 1956), 126; Schattschneider, *Party Government*, ix.

A number of scholars have argued that suffrage extension is, at least at times, less an elite-initiated political strategy, and more an elite response to demand “from below.” Much of this work focuses quite specifically on enfranchisement as acquiescence to the use or threat of violent coercion on the part of the disenfranchised. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, for instance, have argued that expansion of the franchise across many Western nations in the nineteenth century should be understood as attempts by elites to avoid escalation of civil unrest into outright revolution. Ruth Berins Collier, who treats expansion of the franchise within an investigation of patterns of democratization, argues that elites are often motivated to expand the democratic circle when faced with “the emergence of dissident allies within the army, coup rumors or attempts, and successful coups and citizen rebellions.” Effective demand in these accounts, then, comes in the form of insurgency, a common function of social movements. And insurgency is deemed effective because it imposes certain costs on political elites for continuing to exclude particular disenfranchised groups: resources must be marshaled to deal with insurgents, and the attention of politics diverted from other policy matters. Voting rights are extended to invest insurgents in the existing government, to thereby quell costly rebellious behavior and perhaps avoid a greater loss of power through revolution.¹⁰

Scholars of social movements, however, might caution that successful movements for voting rights are not necessarily violent, nor particularly rebellious. Certainly the American experience of franchise expansion has not been regularly marked by violent insurgency, nor the threat thereof. Social movement-centered treatments of the extension of voting rights, therefore, point to such insurgency as only one of a number of versions of demand that might leverage success. These accounts of voting rights movement success borrow from frameworks originally developed to explain the rise of social movement activity, notably the ideas of resource mobilization and political opportunities. Resource mobilization accounts focus on the organizational capacity and tactical effectiveness of the group demanding new voting rights as explanations for successfully leveraging acquiescence from the state. Political opportunity explanations for successful demands for suffrage extension, in contrast, point to changes in the political environment (such as the constellation of elite alignments and the openness of political institutions) that facilitate the effectiveness of demand. Indeed, several scholars have used these concepts of resource mobilization and political opportunity structures – at times in tandem – to think about conditions that might generally make the adoption of woman suffrage more likely. Lee Anne Banaszak argues, for example, that in both the United States and Switzerland, woman suffragists’ chances for success were shaped by the resources they could mobilize, their abilities to perfect political lobbying tactics,

¹⁰ Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson, “Why Did the West Extend the Franchise? Democracy, Inequality, and Growth in Historical Perspective.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (November 2000): 1167–99; Collier, *Paths toward Democracy*.

and the coalitions of political actors drawn into the cause. Holly McCammon and her coauthors, in contrast, argue that success for American suffragists was facilitated by instability or conflict in partisan politics, which made the political system more vulnerable to their demands, as well as the changing economic and political standing of women, which made the idea of women voters less controversial.¹¹

Whereas social movement-centered accounts of voting rights extension have thus raised the idea of interplay between activists demanding inclusion and the political actors that must act to supply changes in suffrage laws, just as in the elite-centered accounts of suffrage extension, the incentives for those supply-side actors are not fully developed. The result is that these existing accounts still do not explain *how* activism influences voting rights policy outcomes. Importantly, there are no clear theoretical expectations about which activist tactics or resources should be most influential on those in the institutional positions to change voter qualifications, nor which changes in the political context should offer real political opportunities. This problem is not unfamiliar in the social movement literature, where, in the words of William Gamson and David Meyer, the term political opportunity “threatens to become an all-encompassing fudge factor for all conditions and circumstances that form the context for collective action.”¹² By beginning with partisan politicians’ motivations to expand the electorate and adding in the institutional constraints on their actions, I specify what should constitute a political opportunity for voting rights movements, and also what demand resources and tactics can be used effectively to take advantage of those opportunities. Starting with supply-side incentives, in other words, actually offers new leverage on the question of how both the supply and demand sides of the enfranchisement equation shape the development of voting rights.

The Supply-Side Politics of Extending the Franchise – Incentives and Constraints

Again, to develop a coherent model of suffrage extension, I allow supply and demand actors to interact, but begin by specifying the incentives and constraints of the supply side. Simply put, I consider the cost and benefit calculations of the political elites involved in supplying new voting rights provisions, including the limits placed on those elites’ actions on the issue of suffrage by the arrangement of political institutions. Unlike previous elite-centered accounts, I specify two

¹¹ Banaszak, Lee Ann, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); McCammon, Holly J., Karen E. Campbell, Ellen M. Granberg, and Christine Mowery, “How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S. Women’s Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919.” *American Sociological Review* 66 (February 2001): 49–70.

¹² Gamson, William A. and David S. Meyer, “Framing Political Opportunity” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 275.

sets of interrelated actors as the relevant elites in the enfranchisement equation – both political parties and legislators. I offer here first an outline of the incentives and constraints of these elites. In the next section, I detail the two models of suffrage extension these considerations imply, and then turn in the following section to more detail about how those interests play out in suffrage politics, where they interact with demand-side actors.

By invoking political parties as supply-side elites, I am referencing what are termed in the American context *major parties*. Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus offer a clear definition of a major party as a political organization which “runs candidates for local, state, and federal offices in a majority of the states” and which “prior to the contest . . . holds one of the two largest blocs of seats in the House of Representatives.”¹³ The major-party status, therefore, is conferred only on those political parties that can maintain electoral success for more than one election and who do so at all levels of American government. All other organizations offering candidates in American elections are bearers of the title *third* or *minor party*.¹⁴ I ultimately offer an argument about the important and unique role that third parties can play in leveraging the major parties to deliver new voting rights provisions. The major parties, however, *must* be central actors in the political story of suffrage rights extensions because of both their vested stake in the composition of the electorate and their unique degree of influence over the institutional hurdles that suffrage changes must cross – legislatures and, often, elections.

The parties’ central purpose of influencing the outcomes delivered by the electorate necessarily implies a partisan interest in the constellation of that electorate. Because the distribution of preferences in the electorate is, of course, key to the process of assembling a winning coalition, considering the possibility that parties may see groups of potential new voters as likely benefits or likely costs to their electoral endeavors is important. Yet parties are also beholden to existing voters’ preferences – although certainly, and importantly, under some conditions more than others – and thus it is also important to note that party organizations may also make calculations about extending the franchise that derive from the demands of their current electorates. This consideration of pressure from existing voters has been scarce in existing work on suffrage extension, despite being easily recognized as generally important to party position-taking, the policy process, and legislative outcomes. And it

¹³ Rosenstone, Steven J., Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 9.

¹⁴ Note that this definition deviates from those that would allow the titles of major and minor parties to differ at various levels of government. For instance, Ranney and Kendall, *Democracy and the American Party System*, 422–23, confer the title of “third party” on “any party which seldom finishes better than third [in a two party system].” They regard parties’ status in national, state, and local party systems as separable, stating that although the Democrats and Republicans have clearly been the major parties in the national party system since 1868, in some state and local party systems Democrats have been relegated to third party status by Socialists and Progressives.

is my argument that suffrage extension in acquiescence to existing voters is a far more likely model of enfranchisement than the broadening of the electorate simply for the sake of the new voters' future electoral support.

Pushing for new voters either for their own sake or in acquiescence to existing voters, I argue, is a strategy that parties pursue only under some duress. That is, I agree with Key's assertion that partisan competition should be the common driving force behind suffrage extension, although it is not a sufficient condition. Competitiveness signals vulnerability for the party in power; only in response to the threat of losing an election does a party need to change its strategy.¹⁵ Close margins of victory in the last election signal little certainty about winning in the next round. In such circumstances, a new bloc of support from a previously disfranchised group could resolve a party's electoral difficulties. At these moments, also, demands from current voters threaten to be particularly costly to ignore. But competition is particularly important as a necessary incentive for the provision of new voting rights because parties *always* face additional costs with the addition of new voters. A larger electorate means more work to congeal and mobilize winning coalitions – whether that cost is the additional payoffs to partisan supporters in the time of political machines or more dollars for media buys and advertising in modern campaigns. This inherent disincentive for extending the franchise helps explain why parties do not pursue suffrage extensions often. It also implies that the potential voter-preference-based payoffs need to be perceptible; the certain costs of suffrage extension must be outweighed by a real possibility of benefits.

The political tools wielded by parties give them ample opportunity to influence the outcome of any consideration of new voting rights in the direction they desire. Partisan leadership and organizational structures in legislatures can impede or facilitate the flow of suffrage-extending legislation. Previous research suggests that on issues that carry partisan implications – as I have argued suffrage extension inherently does – parties play a unique role in structuring legislative outcomes. In particular, several studies have shown an increased influence of party discipline on voting – an induced similarity in voting behavior by members of the same party, above and beyond the preference similarities shared by members of the same party – the more the party as an organization has at stake.¹⁶ Of course, parties also have the means to influence the electoral

¹⁵ This argument is similar to one on party position taking made by Edward Carmines and James Stimson in *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). See also Wolbrecht, Christina, *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr., and Charles Stewart III "The Effects of Party and Preferences on Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (November 2001), 533–72. Aldrich, John H. and James S. Coleman Battista, "Conditional Party Government in the States." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2002): 164–72. Bianco, William and Itai Sened, "Uncovering Evidence of Conditional Party Government: Reassessing Majority Party Influence in Congress and State Legislatures." *The American Political Science Review* 99 (2005): 361–71.

process. Their specific tools of influence have certainly changed over time – in the time of woman suffrage politics, for example, the major political parties directly controlled decisions such as ballot wording and distribution and the location of polling places. Although some of their previous specific powers have been transferred to the state, to this day no other political organizations stand ready to mobilize electorates in favor or against a cause as readily as parties. This electoral influence is of particular importance because voting rights changes at the state level so often require a constitutional amendment that must be ratified by the existing electorate. The costs of educating and mobilizing the public to actually vote in support of the proposed change are formidable, and difficult for the disfranchised to bear. In contrast, the party apparatus, designed to influence elections, could be a most effective ally or formidable obstacle in achieving the necessary public vote.

No matter the influence of parties, however, it is still through legislatures that suffrage provisions must generally pass. What is most important to note about the legislative process, itself, is how difficult it makes the provision of new voting rights. In other words, placing suffrage politics inside legislative institutions imposes some important constraints. In the United States, at both the state and federal levels, legislative institutions in general make status quo protection easier than change, but particularly so in the case of voting rights. Because voter qualifications are generally defined by states' constitutions, changes most often require the clearing of extra policy-making hurdles, including legislative super-majorities, passage in multiple consecutive legislative sessions, and final approval through public referenda. Thus, the process involves many opportunities to stall a new voting rights proposal, institutional rules that empower opponents to be effective veto players, even if they are in the minority, and significantly higher costs for lawmakers in terms of the time and effort that must be spent to push the issue to fruition than the average piece of legislation.

In order to even reach a vote in the legislature, of course, a change in voting rights must have had initial endorsement from a legislator who found it worth introducing and must be delivered to the floor by its assigned committee. Bill introduction is rather simple. Any member of the legislature may introduce a bill, and doing so can be an entirely symbolic gesture. Overcoming the introduction hurdle, therefore, may not be a particularly difficult task for advocates of new voting rights. Committee work, however, is more complicated, and it offers the first significant legislative hurdle. Lawmakers facing heavy legislative workloads turn to the committee system to deal with the formidable task of evaluating every proposal brought to the body. The committee may choose not to report a legislative proposal to the rest of the legislature for consideration, to report a version it knows will be difficult to pass, or to report a version designed to have a good chance at success on the floor of the legislature. Not only can committees thus block or diminish the chances of the passage of legislation, but they can provide ample opportunity for defeat even by an opponent who is in the minority.

The challenge of the committee stage of the legislative process begins with initial bill referral. Whether the assignment of committee membership is purely at the will of the partisan legislative leadership or tempered by norms such as seniority, committee assignments are not random; and, thus, committees can be quite different from the body in important ways. This means, of course, that there is the possibility that legislation for voting rights changes could be stymied by an unfriendly committee, even if it might pass on the chamber's floor. Moreover, when partisan legislative leadership is charged with bill referral, it can exercise that choice in a way intended to shape the legislation's fate.

What happens inside the committee, however, is not simply a function of the positions each member holds on the issue. As Richard Hall has detailed, those with particularly keen interests in the outcome for a proposed piece of legislation, whether they desire any form of the proposed new policy or not, have at this stage in the legislative process ample opportunity to exert influence on both whether a measure will be reported and in what form. The key is the deliberative work in committee that shapes what appears to the body of legislature for approval, the work that can facilitate or forestall the deliverance of an agreeable proposal. Hall and others have argued that how strongly legislators feel about the issue – the intensity of their preferences for or against the proposed policy – shapes their willingness to expend their time and effort on drafting and promoting proposed legislation. Thus, even if nominally agreeable to most members of the legislature, proposals without interested advocates in committee are likely to slip off the agenda. Or proposals that draw little attention from most members can be shaped for failure or success by just the interested few. In sum, even if some version of a voting rights extension indeed exists that would pass the floor, if those with intense preferences are against it and on the appropriate committee, or if no member of the committee has an intense interest in the policy one way or the other, the agreeable version of the enabling bill may never materialize.¹⁷

Once past the committee stage, legislation faces the further hurdle of actually gaining consideration on the floor. Legislative processes require multiple readings of bills before a vote on the floor of the chamber can occur, and the scheduling of all of this floor activity is typically controlled by the chamber's partisan leadership. These details leave ample room for defeat either by simple neglect – when no member advocates for the legislation to appear on the calendar – or through purposive delay by the party leadership in scheduling. From committee to calendar, then, legislation needs advocates to move forward and is vulnerable to the exercise of partisan control. With political parties inherently

¹⁷ Hall, Richard L., *Participation in Congress* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). On committees see also Shepsle, Kenneth A., *The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle: Democratic Committee Assignments in the Modern House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Hall, Richard L. and Bernard Grofman, "The Committee Assignment Process and the Conditional Nature of Committee Bias." *The American Political Science Review* 84 (1990): 1149–66.

interested in the definition of the electorate, the most promising trip through the legislative process before the vote would seem to be when the party in control of the legislature sees partisan benefit in the proposed change in electoral qualifications.

If finally brought to a vote in the legislature, a change in voter qualifications obviously must satisfy the constitutionally required number of legislators. In many instances of voting rights changes, that number is a two-thirds supermajority of each chamber; many alterations to suffrage qualifications can only be made through amendment to the state constitution, and many amendment processes place the threshold of support higher than for statutory changes. One set of models of the legislative decision making (and perhaps common understanding) would propose that the outcome should at this point be a rather straightforward aggregation of legislators' individual preferences on the issue, with the voting rights change being adopted as long as it satisfies the preferences of the requisite majority. Some nuance, however, is necessary in understanding the origins of legislators' preferred positions and the role such preferences may play in the determining legislative votes on the voting rights issue.

As elected partisan politicians, legislators' voting behavior needs to satisfy their constituencies – either because they desire reelection or at least because their party seeks to retain that seat in the government. The resultant connection between the policy positions of legislators and their constituencies' has been explained by John Kingdon with the concept of the “explainable vote.” In Kingdon's telling, legislators take account of salient issue preferences in their districts, weighing the likelihood that they can justify their votes to those who care enough to notice (or have group-elites to notice for them) their behavior on each specific issue. Legislators' positions, then, are a balancing of the opinions or preferences of salient members of their constituencies and their own preferences; the election process induces a fair level of agreement between the two, calculations about the ability to explain the vote to those who care accounts for the choice when preferences diverge. And studies of interest group influence would suggest that it is interest groups that effectively communicate the salience of constituents' preferences to lawmakers; “lobbying friends,” or appealing to legislators who can be convinced that the interest group's goal is consistent with representation of their constituencies' preferences, is common practice.¹⁸ The implication for voting rights politics of this model is simple – as long as legislators sense little interest in the issue among their voting constituents in extension of the franchise, they should be free to rely on their own preferences on the issue – either personal or partisan. The inherent interest of parties in voting rights legislation and their likely influence on members has already been stated. Personal preferences on voting rights could be driven by

¹⁸ Kingdon, John, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Second ed. NY: Addison-Wesley, 2003). Hansen, John Mark, *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919–1981* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). Kollman, Ken, *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

any number of attitudinal factors, although likely culprits would seem to be their attitudes about the group seeking voting rights or their general disposition on the idea of republican government.

There are other implications of the legislative process for voting rights policy changes. Not only is change difficult, the appearance of supporting change can be rather easy. The legislative process can enable legislators to undertake actions that seem to signal support for a change in suffrage policy, such as sponsoring a bill, voting it out of committee, and even voting in favor of the bill on the chamber's floor, yet remain confident that the new suffrage provisions will not actually become law. Moreover, because the inherent electoral costs of implementing a new suffrage policy are necessarily broadly shared, suffrage changes need true widespread support – new voting rights are not an issue that a small but committed minority can pass without arousing the interest of others. And, of course, at the end of the day, the path of electoral accountability from the policy beneficiary – would-be voters – to deciding legislators is indirect at best. Would-be voters need a way to create electoral consequence for their inclusion or exclusion. In sum, changing voter qualifications is particularly costly legislative work, the support needed is broad, and the most direct tool of influence on the outcome is missing.

Finally, there is often the additional layer of constraint on voting rights policy of the need to pass the policy change at the polls through a referendum that endorses a suffrage extension approved by legislators. Although it is not uncommon to conceive of a public vote on a policy as an expression of the public's preferences, elite influences on electoral outcomes are difficult to understate – particularly when those elites are partisan actors who control the timing of the election, the wording of the policy choices that appear on the ballot, and the partisan apparatus regularly used to persuade and mobilize voters. Certainly, this does not mean that partisan elites can push policies through at the polls despite widespread and deep-seated opposition among voters. Thus, the referendum process is, in fact, a constraint on the elite politics of suffrage extension. Yet, when the parties have a vested interest in the outcome of a ballot measure, as they inherently do in voting rights measures, they have unmatched means of influencing the outcome. Therefore, what may be far more important to understand about the referendum requirement for voting rights changes is the constraint it enables partisan elites to exert on the supply of new suffrage provisions.

The constraints partisan elites could and, as I show in later chapters, have introduced to the referendum process on voting rights issues include a variety of important strategic choices about the appearance of the suffrage issue on the ballot. Those wanting the suffrage issue to fail, for example, could push for the placement of the issue in a low-turnout special election or in a fast-approaching election that would leave little time for mobilization work. They could choose to place it on the ballot next to another issue, such as a prohibition measure, they know to be especially likely to turnout voters with less sympathetic views on the suffrage measure. Partisan actors also control ballot language – whether

directly in the days preceding the Australian ballot or through the legislative process in contemporary times – and thus could also ensure that the ballot wording was sufficiently confusing to cloud voters' comprehension of their choices. Thus, although pro-suffrage activists and other political actors face the same task in a referendum – getting enough voters on their side on Election Day, party leaders in particular have far more tools at hand to accomplish that task. Not only do partisan influences over the referendum process grant them unique leverage on the outcome of a public vote, but politicians can use the referendum process in particular as a way to vote in favor of new voting rights and yet remain confident that the electorate will remain constrained. The referendum process, in other words, is an excellent opportunity for partisan politicians to have their voting rights cake and eat it, too.

Models of Suffrage Extension – Strategic and Programmatic Enfranchisement

Summing up the incentives and constraints of supply-side actors, I argue, leads to two possible models of enfranchisement. Both models are differentiated from other models of policy outcomes by the particular features of voting rights politics: that the institutional path to change is particularly difficult, that the costs of implementing the new policy are necessarily broadly shared, and that the most direct tool of the policy beneficiaries' influence on the outcome is missing. Across both models, I delineate three necessary political conditions for suffrage extension: information, incentive, and capacity. What varies across the models are the specific ways in which the three conditions can be satisfied. The sharpest distinction across the models is in the information condition, in how the political meaning that incentivizes the supply-side actors to act – the information about potential payoffs – is established. Differences in the particular incentive structures of the two models, however, also lead to important differences in the activism strategies that are likely to increase suffrage proponents' chances of success. I layout the general framework and basic implications of both models here and delve into more detailed implications of demand-side politics in the section that follows.

Strategic Enfranchisement

The first model, which I label *strategic enfranchisement*, is essentially the dominant framework of existing elite-centered accounts of suffrage expansion. This is where a single party acts to enfranchise a new group of voters expecting to reap electoral rewards from that group. Paying careful attention to the incentives and constraints of supply-side elites, I argue, implies three necessary political conditions for suffrage extension under this model: information, incentive, and capacity. What I point out about the strategic model is just how difficult it is to jointly satisfy these three conditions, and thus the questionable utility of the model as our dominant framework for understanding the

development of voting rights in the United States, where the suffrage has, in fact, been regularly extended.

The information condition of the strategic enfranchisement model is that a political party needs to have information that a group indeed exists that would, if enfranchised, actually deliver its votes reliably to that party. That is, given the assumption that a political party's primary objective is winning elections in the interest of controlling government, and given the costs of legislative and electoral time and effort involved in and resulting from expanding the electorate, strategic enfranchisement should only be undertaken when a party has reason to believe the inclusion of the new group would surely shift the balance of power further in its favor. This is what I term the *expectation of a voting bloc*. By voting bloc, I mean a well-defined political group that is understood to be fairly coherent in its political priorities and allegiances. There is, of course, inherent uncertainty involved in predicting the voting behavior of the disfranchised (I discuss how both identity politics and specific demand-side actions can help provide relevant signals in the next section). Potential blocs, however, are likely to share a common socioeconomic status, which signals shared interests in the resource allocations made by government, and to have an identifiable set of leaders that help interpret politics for the group, who are thus likely to be able to keep the group loyal to a particular political party. Irish Catholics in the United States in the nineteenth century might be a prime example of such a group; the new immigrants lacked voting rights, but were tied together and to recently naturalized Irish Catholics not only by socioeconomic status and cultural ties, but also institutionally through the Catholic Church.¹⁹

Even in the presence of a potential voting bloc, however, a party lacks incentive to seek new voters – to pay the costs of changing the law and then the costs of influencing the voting behavior of a larger electorate – in the absence of competition. The partisan environment must be sufficiently competitive such that the party has an electoral interest in working to create new voters, rather than simply attending to its current electorate. Electoral vulnerability may come in several forms, from narrow victories for many offices to the overturn of a key office, such as the chief executive. Dominant parties, those that have already established a strategy that keeps their members in control of the state apparatus, however, clearly lack incentive to pay the costs associated with broadening the electorate; the potential gain in support is not worth the risk to a winning status quo.

Most overlooked in existing accounts of elite incentives for suffrage extension, including other versions of the strategic enfranchisement model, is the issue of institutional capacity. Simply put, satisfaction of the first two

¹⁹ Scholars have made similar arguments about African Americans. See, for example, Michael Dawson's argument about the reasons for expecting a large degree of African-American political unity even in the face of increasing socioeconomic diversity of the group in *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

conditions is irrelevant if the relevant party does not already hold sufficient legislative seats to pass the necessary legislation. If the change in suffrage laws is meant to increase the strength of one party over another, as is assumed in the strategic enfranchisement model, such action surely should not receive support from the partisan opposition. In the American context, again, this often means the party seeking suffrage extension must hold a supermajority of the seats in two separate legislative houses – perhaps, at the state level, across two successive sessions of the legislature – or be able to call and control a constitutional convention.

The enfranchisement of blacks by Northern Republicans in the wake of the Civil War would seem to provide a prime example of this strategic enfranchisement model. The Republicans were still a new party, having just swept into national ascendancy in the previous decade, and continued to face tough competition at the polls – in Northern and Southern states – in the wake of the war. Grant, war hero and Republican candidate for president in 1868, polled popular margins of victory of less than 3 percent in California, Connecticut, and Indiana, and lost the popular vote in New Jersey, New York, and Oregon. Despite the tough competition, Republicans held three-fourths of the seats in the House of Representatives and nearly four-fifths of the seats in the Senate. Republicans had already become associated with rights for blacks through the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and had won endorsement from black organizations and leaders. Thus, Republicans had electoral incentive to seek new voters, promise from an out-group of loyal support, and the institutional capacity through their representation in Congress to pass the necessary constitutional amendment.

As well as the story about strategic elites responding to partisan competition may work for the case of the Fifteenth Amendment, the chronicle of the Fifteenth Amendment reveals the fortune of political circumstances necessary for the joint fulfillment of all three conditions – incentive, information, and capacity. Such coincidence is a rare experience in the American context; legislative supermajorities for electorally threatened political parties are infrequent, and their overlap with strong information about the electoral reliability of a legally definable group is especially scarce. Consideration of the enfranchisement of freed blacks does suggest, however, that where enfranchisers can be removed, as the Northern Republicans were, from real accountability to the new group of voters, the possible rewards of the strategy may be particularly appealing despite the risk inherent because of uncertainty about the groups' future electoral behavior. Enfranchising blacks served Northern Republicans because it spelled defeat for Southern Democrats through the votes of numerous newly enfranchised Southern blacks; population numbers of blacks in the North were too few to concern Northern states' politics. Looking to the states, similar conditions might be created by the geographic partition of partisans into urban and rural constituencies. If a party with a rural base, for example, saw new bloc potential in an immigrant group concentrated within city boundaries, the strategic enfranchisement model might be more viable.

Programmatic Enfranchisement

Although voting rights extensions are infrequent, they have been a far more regular part of the American political experience than the strategic enfranchisement model would predict. To resolve this discrepancy, I offer an alternative model of the politics of suffrage extension, which I term *programmatic enfranchisement*. In this model, suffrage extension occurs not as a consequence of a search for new supporters from the ranks of the disfranchised, but in accommodation to the demands of existing voters. That is, suffrage extension occurs as part of a program of policies known to appeal to existing necessary electoral coalition members. This difference in the source of the electoral incentive driving the enfranchisement politics implies differences in the information, incentive, and capacity conditions for the model. Unlike the strategic model, the programmatic enfranchisement model can explain suffrage extension in the face of unclear or diffuse expectations of the voting behavior of the would-be new voters. The information that is required is a clear and credible signal about organized demand for suffrage extension among existing voters. Although partisan competition also plays a role in this model, the key incentive is in the form of electoral vulnerability that is specifically linked to those making the demand. In other words, the disfranchised need coalitions with groups that carry real weight in electoral politics, and politicians need to see in those coalitions a real possibility of an exit option for their failure to respond to the articulated demand. Finally, because incentive derives from accommodation of constituent preferences that may cross party lines, the capacity condition within the programmatic enfranchisement model does not require a single political party to hold the necessary majorities to change suffrage laws.

Given the inherent disincentive on the part of partisan politicians to expand the electorate, the information required within the programmatic enfranchisement model is more than information about the direction of constituent sentiment on the issue of new voting rights. Legislators, and ultimately the major political parties, must perceive a real threat of possible electoral defection among existing voters for failure to deliver new voting rights.²⁰ Fulfilling this information condition requires the disfranchised to establish coalitions with groups able to convey demand with electoral consequence – groups that partisan politicians perceive as able to funnel constituent opinion into voting action. Two kinds of political organizations have this distinct capacity: interest groups and third, or minor, political parties. Interest groups are organizations that seek to influence the policy-making process on a particular set of issues on behalf of some constituency, in part by actively lobbying legislators to communicate the electoral benefit of adopting the group's issue positions. In the American context, third, or minor, parties are essentially defined as those political parties that fail to achieve the level of electoral success that would grant them the

²⁰ This argument draws on the logic of Albert Hirschman in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

status of major parties. That is, they are organizations that run candidates for office, but whose candidates do not win over multiple elections and/or across both state and federal levels of government. The real political purpose of the third party in American politics, however, is often said to be the championing of an issue or set of issues ignored by the major parties. Thus, third parties are also organizations that seek to influence policy on a particular set of issues, but ones that use organized electoral defection rather than lobbying tactics as their primary means of influence.

Although both interest groups and third parties have the potential capacity to convey that their interest in new voting rights provisions is organized, realizing that potential turns, in part, on the credibility of the coalitional partnership. Politicians, that is, need to know that the exit option is not only possible, but also has some real probability of being exercised over the issue of suffrage. Token endorsements, in other words, should carry little weight with partisans whose primary incentives are to retain or expand their voting bases. It is important to note, however, that coalition credibility – unlike a strategic partisan interest in new voters – does *not* require the group to be enfranchised to seem likely to coalesce politically with those demanding their inclusion. Although credibility surely entails the perception of some benefit for the advocating interest group(s) or third party, a number of structural differences between the major political parties and interest groups and third parties imply that the latter may reap meaningful benefits from demands for the extension of voting rights that are less important to the major political parties.

With a focus on forwarding sets of policy provisions, rather than a primary focus on control of the government, interest groups have the incentive to take actions that bolster their ability to advocate for their cause in both the public sphere and legislative chambers – that is, to engage in both outside and inside lobbying. As John Mark Hansen has argued, interest groups derive their political strength from the judgments of lawmakers about their representation of constituents. Such judgments derive not simply from lawmakers' assessments of the official memberships of interest group organizations, but also from their evaluations of how broad the constituency is that has similar interests as the group and is attending to and swayed by the interpretations of politics and political choices (including electoral ones) that the group offers. In other words, the potential reach of the electoral leverage of interest groups through persuasion and mobilization may be perceived as extending well beyond their membership rolls. Farmers' organizations might be seen, for example, as conduits for the general interests of farmers, not just those enrolled in the organizations. It is this leverage that gives interest groups power to influence policymaking.²¹ This

²¹ Hansen, John Mark. *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919–1981* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.) Note that I am not referencing lobby groups that focus on inside strategies only, relying primarily on the provision of monetary subsidies and narrow expertise to influence policy outcomes. Again, I am taking the issue of suffrage as one that cannot be accommodated by a purely inside politics strategy because of the broad costs

leverage, however, can be bolstered by a stronger public presence and increased organizational capacity.

The determinants of interest groups' leverage imply a number of incentives for groups to partner with the cause of expanded voting rights. First, there may be real value in activities that simply serve to sharpen attention to the particular policy domains they champion. Interest group support for suffrage extension, therefore, may rest credibly on a rhetorical refrain of common principles, such as on a common theme of government reform or fairness and equality, that helps to increase popular attention to and support for their main causes. Similarly, a confluence of interests with even just part of the disfranchised group could allow interest groups to use the issue of enfranchisement as one that might help advance their primary cause by building or maintaining their organizational capacity. That is, enfranchisement may be endorsed as a benefit for the specific set of disfranchised persons who offer some institutional support for the interest group's main cause, even if the new suffrage law would encompass others. Such a confluence may, in fact, derive from the origins of the interest group organization; interest groups are often simply the political arms of organizations built on a variety of common interests and may thus be populated from the start by both voters and the disfranchised. Organized labor, for example, developed first as a means to negotiate better working terms and conditions with firms and industry, but eventually became enmeshed in advocacy for pro-worker policies from government. As such, labor organizations have perennially counted disfranchised workers in their ranks, and there is non-electoral value in keeping them loyal to the organization. Of course, pushing for new suffrage provisions could serve not only as a strategy to retain disfranchised members, but also to swell the electoral strength of the group. Again, unlike the major parties whose primary leverage over policy is dependent on winning sufficient seats in government, interest groups serve their primary purpose of increased leverage for their cause simply by increasing the size of the electorate they are perceived to represent.

Although third parties, like major parties, are seekers of control over elected offices, significant differences in their capacities and the unique reason for their existence may engender markedly different interests in endorsing and advocating for new voting rights. In the American context, third parties that take more than trivial vote shares tend to emerge in response to extreme voter discontent. That is, the appearance of third parties is instigated by a fundamental failure of either major party to address the salient policy interests of some constituent group. Thus, in contrast to major parties whose interests lie in maintenance of the status quo political process, third parties are necessarily seekers of drastic change. To effect such change, however, emerging third parties must face the

to partisan politicians that come with an expanded electorate. For discussion of the range of interest group types and strategies, see, for example, Walker, Jack L., Jr., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

reality of their resource deficits in comparison to their major party rivals. Less money, fewer qualified and experienced candidates, and inferior organizational capacity for mobilization are all common characteristics of third parties. It is exactly in the third party's origins and deficits that would-be voters can find their political opportunity. These coalitions that would be parties need things that a well-organized suffrage movement can offer: funds, political skills, and members to carry out campaign tasks. Thus, resource sharing may be the benefit key to engaging third party support of new voting rights. Because third parties often emerge from issue-based movements, it is also possible that support for suffrage extension could be a way for third parties to draw disfranchised members of the social movement from which the party emerged into the efforts to build an explicitly partisan organization. Moreover, the deep ideological convictions that lead some citizens and candidates into third party politics could make coalitions bound in part by principles of change, reform, and justice less politically dubious. Indeed, seekers of fundamental change may find that a new voting rights plank fits well as an addition to their new party's platform as it diversifies in attempts to gain and maintain political momentum.

Incentive within the programmatic enfranchisement model, as in the strategic enfranchisement model, derives from electoral vulnerability of the major parties. In the programmatic enfranchisement model, however, such vulnerability derives from the specific threat of electoral consequence for failure to respond to existing voters' demands for new voting rights policies. The threat of electoral consequence necessarily depends on the demanding groups' abilities to mobilize or stifle voters' support of particular candidates or political parties. Track records of mobilizing voters are certainly powerful signals about the groups' capacities. Also informative are the groups' current political resources – organizational membership numbers, financial coffers, and leadership capacity are all indicators to partisan politicians about the influence these groups may wield in future elections. Also important, however, is the degree to which candidates and parties are dependent on voters from those groups for their particular electoral fortunes. That is, political competition is also integral to encouraging the expansion of the electorate in the programmatic model, but that competition needs to be linked to the group of existing voters making the suffrage demand.

Again, the incentive for responsiveness to demand is the understanding that electoral fortunes are tied to responsiveness to the constituency demanding new voting rights – the importance of satisfying that constituency to electoral outcomes. The relative size of the constituent group, its previous partisan commitments, and the competitiveness of electoral politics all help shape this understanding. The size and partisan leanings of the constituent group help convey which politicians – individual lawmakers and political parties – are reliant on the group to construct a winning coalition. For example, legislators with significant numbers of union members in their home districts would generally stand more vulnerable to the demands of organized labor, as would a

political party that organized labor had actively supported. Electoral competitiveness, however, helps convey to those in office a particular need to expend some effort to maintain their winning coalitions. Such competition may be localized to only some lawmakers who represent uniquely contested districts. Or it may be broader, as in moments generally marked by close elections. Localized competition in the face of an organized constituency demanding suffrage extension serves to make individual lawmakers more responsive on the issue. Moments of broader competitiveness, however, are times when partisan politicians need to be most responsive to the demands of the electorate, when the loss of support of any members of partisan politicians' electoral coalitions can readily turn over both individual legislative seats and partisan control of government. In these moments, when support of the groups demanding suffrage extension is fundamental to a political party's success, the party organization itself ought to become involved in pushing for, or at least enabling, enfranchisement, despite the costs for the inclusion of those new voters in future elections. These, then, are the greatest political opportunities within the programmatic enfranchisement model.

The electoral costs and payoffs, and thus the incentives for politicians to respond, can be made especially clear in the attachment of constituent demand for electoral expansion to third parties. What third parties uniquely offer is an unmatched degree of certainty about their electoral influence reflected in the vote shares they accumulate. The unique influence of third parties, however, derives not simply from the number of voters they attract in any one election, but also from the extremity of voter discontent reflected in the attraction of any significant number of voters from the major parties to a new or minor one. To (re)capture the votes given to third parties, the major parties must address the discontent. Where third parties seize considerable portions of the popular vote, would-be majority party coalitions must be rebuilt. Thus, the common political outcome for successful third parties is to have their issue(s) included, ultimately, in the design of one – or both – of the major parties, thus doing away with their original purpose of existence. As political scientist Fred Haynes, writing in 1916 in the wake of the Progressive Party's ascendancy into American politics, aptly stated:

Looked at from the social point of view the chief function of third parties has been to bring new issues before the people: they force new policies upon the older parties, and after accomplishing their work they pass away.²²

Third parties, if successful, change the political debate. And perhaps, by so doing, they rearrange the coalitions that previously formed the basis of the

²² Haynes, Fred E., *Third Party Movements since the Civil War* (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1916), 3.

two major parties.²³ Given these strong electoral incentives for major parties to respond, third parties can be tremendous allies for would-be voters.²⁴

Lastly, the capacity condition for the programmatic enfranchisement model is importantly different from that of the strategic enfranchisement model. Given that incentive may derive from constituent demand that crosses party lines, the programmatic enfranchisement model does not require single party control of government. Instead, the issue of capacity is simply of there being a sufficient number of lawmakers electorally vulnerable to the demands of the pro-suffrage coalition. Of course, if the suffrage coalition is one that strongly favors a particular party, then only members of that party may, indeed, be vulnerable to the demand for new voting rights. This point is important, as it indicates that a single-party push for suffrage extension does not necessarily distinguish strategic from programmatic enfranchisement.

There is also a rather unique way in which the capacity condition may be fulfilled in the presence of a successful third party. Of course, although third party electoral success is not an American experience, third parties can face better odds at the state level and thus could also deliver suffrage rights as a fulfillment of their own platforms once in government. Yet, third parties need not actually take majority control of government to leverage suffrage extension. Even just a few third party legislators could exert significant pressure on state lawmaking bodies to pass voting rights measures when those bodies are otherwise evenly split between the major parties. That is, in legislative institutions set up with majority voting rules and partisan organizational and leadership structures, the third party politicians can become uniquely pivotal voters.²⁵ A chamber's business may be completely forestalled, for example,

²³ Burnham, W. Dean, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970); Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus, *Third Parties in America*.

²⁴ Although scholars typically argue that major parties are induced to co-opt the issues of third parties to address the discontent of voters who have bolted, major parties do have another alternative, which is to adopt and promote an entirely separate issue that they believe will divide the issue base of the third party. One such issue may well be the expansion of the electorate to include new voters they believe can be herded into their electoral bases – a strategic enfranchisement response. It could also be the strategic disenfranchisement of some element of the third party coalition. Scholars including J. Morgan Kousser, John Hope Franklin, and Doug McAdam have characterized the Southern Democratic response to the Populist movement in the South in this way. White supremacy was promoted to split the budding coalition of white and black farmers that threatened the Democratic planter class's control of the postwar South; in the name of white supremacy blacks were disenfranchised and white farmers herded back into the Democratic Party, without any significant acquiescence to their Populist demands. Kousser, J. Morgan, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880–1910* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974). McAdam, Doug, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Franklin, John Hope *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1980).

²⁵ That is, where the third party politicians are pivotal voters in the legislature. Both majority and supermajority pivots can wield significant influence, especially under some state legislative rules that required quite a lot of business to be carried out by two-thirds of the members.

if third party members refuse to agree to one of the major party's choices for state house speaker or, in the days before the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, U.S. Senator. This ability to thwart the progress of policymaking of any sort can be a powerful tool for leveraging concessions from the major parties. Thus the capacity condition may actually be fulfilled through vulnerability of lawmakers to the leverage of third party members in government. I detail politics of exactly this sort on the issue of woman suffrage in Illinois in Chapter 4.

Seeing the Role of Demand Inside the Partisan Story – Identities and Activism

Although the central imperative for those demanding new voting rights is attaching a clear electoral consequence to politicians' actions on their enfranchisement, each of the two partisan paths to enfranchisement I have detailed implies a different key role for demand-side actors. The politics of strategic enfranchisement turn on expectations of solid electoral support from the new voters, meaning that demand activities that convey the political cohesion of the group should be most effective. Programmatic enfranchisement, in contrast, requires a coalitional strategy from demand-side actors, rather than one that maximizes the internal cohesion of the group. Demand-side implications of both models are elaborated in the following sections. Yet, before discussing the development of effective demand strategies for the disfranchised within each of these enfranchisement models, a crucial variable that shapes the possible path to enfranchisement for previously excluded groups, one over which they may not have tremendous control, must be introduced: political identity.

Political Identities as Information and Constraints

By political identity, I mean comprehensions of group differences and belonging that are brought to bear in politics. We commonly refer to race, class, and gender as markers of such identities. Political identities are defined by both in-group attitudes that ascribe importance of that identity to those who belong in the group category, and out-group attitudes that link traits and behaviors to the category. Nominal members of some group category may feel more or less of a sense of common interest with others in the same grouping; they may perceive that they share experiences that should commonly define their political behavior, or they may not. Likewise, a group may be defined by nonmembers with stereotypes that assign notions of common political behavior, or they may not. These identities, then, can play key roles in the politics of voting rights by shaping the incentives of both supply- and demand-side actors, shaping the possibilities for strategic or programmatic enfranchisement.

Introducing political identity into our explanations of voting rights politics illuminates an initial role of the demand side of the equation, one that, in part, precedes any political action. In the absence of revealed information about groups' behavior as voters, common understandings of these identity

categorizations, I argue, shape partisans' expectations of likely voter behavior, thereby defining groups' potential for strategic enfranchisement. This important role of political identity is one that is driven by out-group attitudes – those in power are obviously of a group somehow distinct from the disfranchised – wherein stereotypes about the attitudes and behavior of disfranchised groups are infused with likely political consequence. Partisans, for example, may see political homogeneity in groups defined by their socioeconomic location, expecting the demands that the group will bring to electoral politics will be shaped by their common economic needs. Certainly, this is the implied assumption that a number of previous models of suffrage extension have made. Yet, the categorizations used to define new groups of voters do not necessarily map neatly onto a politically cohesive group identity. Removing sex, age, or citizenship criteria from voter qualifications, for example, are changes that would seem more likely to bring groups perceived as politically diverse into the electorate. The group “women,” after all, would not only include people of different classes, but also of significantly differing levels of integration into the labor market. Only groups perceived as politically cohesive, through the lenses of those holding political power, should be targets for strategic enfranchisement.

Although notions of political identity can convey likely electoral cohesion, they also can provide strong predispositions against a disfranchised group's potential as a well-defined or politically promising “group” in electoral politics. That is, the repertoires of attitudes about and common understandings of some groups may contain information that works decidedly against the possibility of a group being considered for strategic enfranchisement. Notions of gender, for example, have historically included ideas about women's subservience to and dependence on men and their attachment to the home instead of the public sphere. As Aileen Kraditor has observed, these ideas about women were used in the time of the woman suffrage movement to undergird a gendered belief in women's representation via the “family vote” of her husband or father. Not only did such ideas form a strong argument against women's need for the franchise, as Kraditor and others have argued, but they also implied that there was no expectation of a women's voting bloc. These ideas actually suggested that women were politically heterogeneous – just as their husbands, fathers, and brothers were – and yet also unlikely to be mobilized reliably as voters. That is, they were expected to toe the party line dictated by the men in their households – but only in the unlikely event that they were permitted and motivated to engage in the masculine realm of electoral politics.²⁶

Finally, as I discuss in more detail later in this chapter, political identities can constrain the politics of demand actors in important ways. In making this argument, it is important to note that “demand” is necessarily articulated within the public sphere by a subset of the disfranchised – and perhaps other

²⁶ Kraditor, Aileen S., *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981).

strong sympathizers. This set of actors – those who are publicly engaged in forwarding suffrage as their primary political cause – are what I term *suffrage activists*. Activists are not necessarily a representative subset of the disfranchised group in question, and thus their own ideas about themselves and their fellow members of the disfranchised group can powerfully shape which strategies they choose to pursue and their effectiveness in executing those strategies. These politics of identity can cut both ways for activists. Cross-cutting political identities within the disfranchised group may cause activists to miss opportunities to mobilize members of the disfranchised group that are unlike themselves. Political identities may also hinder activists' ability to see or capitalize on possible coalitional partnerships; to see and advocate for the political common ground they may have with other groups that could wield electoral leverage on their behalf. Strong sentiments of shared identity and linked fortunes, however, can be particularly effective tools for mobilization and can encourage and facilitate coalitional partnerships.

Strategic Enfranchisement – Signaling Voting Bloc Potential

Given that extension of the franchise in the strategic enfranchisement model depends on perceptions of a likely voting bloc from the ranks of the previously disfranchised, conveying political cohesion of the disfranchised group through activism is key for those seeking new voting rights. Political mobilization, of course, may serve to alter perceptions of disfranchised groups as politically cohesive. In particular, extensive mass mobilization can be a powerful signal that conveys not only episodic unity of the group but also reveals the mechanisms for perpetuating and channeling the group's political engagement. Successful mass mobilizations, of course, demonstrate that members of the group are motivated to participate and make political demands on account of their identification with that group, perhaps despite interests deriving from some other group membership. They also offer opportunities to observe relevant political capacities of the group's internal structure – its institutions of interconnection, such as churches or civic associations – and its leadership. Because a promising voting bloc is one that will reliably turn out in favor of the party, the group's own key mobilization resources are of central interest to potential enfranchisers.

Cohesion, however, is not sufficient information for the disfranchised group to be attractive candidates for strategic enfranchisement. Partisans, again, are looking for signals that the group will not only cohere, but also reliably deliver their votes to a particular party. Political identity may certainly do some of this work for the disfranchised; party politicians' predispositions, or existing attitudes, about the group may make a partisan advantage seem readily apparent. Such was the case, it seems, with black Americans in the wake of the Civil War. Notions of race combined with the association of Republicans with the emancipation of slaves conjured powerful sentiments about blacks' likely partisan loyalties. If notions of political identity, however, do not suggest a clear

partisan advantage, activism will also need to be overtly partisan to encourage strategic enfranchisement.

Programmatic Enfranchisement – Recognizing, Attracting, Maintaining, and Leveraging Coalitional Partnerships

Shared primary political identities are not required for groups to attain voting rights under the programmatic enfranchisement model, which requires instead of those seeking voting rights an effective strategy to establish coalitions with groups able and willing to exercise electoral influence on their behalf. As discussed in the previous section, the effectiveness of such coalitions depends in part on their credibility, which in turn involves some benefit for the coalitional partners. One of the chief mechanisms for disfranchised demand actors to increase their potential for success under the programmatic enfranchisement model is therefore the amassing and mobilization of resources to make themselves attractive coalition partners. Smaller but well-resourced and organized movements, therefore, can actually be highly effective. Sufficiently large coffers and politically skilled memberships may be ample incentive for partnering interest groups. Activism on the part of the disfranchised, then, need not be mass grassroots mobilization, nor include sufficient representation of the group to be enfranchised to demonstrate any sort of promised political cohesion. What is required of those demanding voting rights in this model is a willingness to expend their resources for causes other than their own enfranchisement.

As discussed previously, not all coalitions are equal under the programmatic enfranchisement model; some partnerships offer more electoral influence than others. Thus, activists demanding new voting rights must learn not only to forge coalitions, but to foster coalitional relationships that engender political clout. This can be a daunting task for the electorally excluded, and may also be conditioned by identity politics. Activists' own perceptions of group differences may preclude some potentially beneficial partnerships, even when some objective interests are shared. Moreover, how activists choose to organize themselves can shape their coalitional strategy possibilities. On one hand, a narrower base for the active movement membership – the more it is drawn from a limited set of social networks within the disfranchised group – is likely to engender fewer possible overlapping interests. Yet, such a narrow base may also make for stronger coalitional politics if the appropriate partner can be found, as the willingness to resource exchange and the external credibility of the coalition should be strengthened by a greater degree of interest similarities among activists.

Lingering Alternative Accounts

I have outlined two models of voting rights extension, drawing together theories of the incentives of political elites and of the effects of social movement activism. Still, I have not touched on some ideas about why voting rights are expanded. Notably, I have endeavored to offer a theoretical framework for understanding

expanding definitions of the electorate absent the threat of violent rebellion, for elaboration of the democratic project within the confines of existing political institutions. As mentioned earlier, so much of the American experience calls for a model that does not invoke the threat of insurrection as the main incentive for a broadening electorate. Explanation of the role of insurgency that threatens existing political institutions, therefore, has intentionally been left to others.

Also largely absent from this discussion of both the strategic and programmatic paths to enfranchisement has been the demand tactic of direct appeal to legislators' personal preferences for a policy. Certainly, we would expect that some legislators would have their own salient preferences about the inclusion of a new group into the electorate. In particular, strong egalitarian or liberal convictions, we might presume, would make the issue of salient personal interest, as might strong personal sentiments against the group in question, such as racist or sexist beliefs. Personal connections to the causes of the disfranchised may even include kinship ties to active members of the group, as was the case with a number of politicians and woman suffragists. Appealing to both these personal beliefs and associations surely could win the support of a legislator, even without the support of his voting constituency, if the legislator felt he could offer a workable "explanation." This approach may indeed be part of getting the issue on the agenda, perhaps attracting bill sponsors, for instance. Yet, for establishing winning coalitions in favor of new voters, this approach is far less than expedient.

The greatest complication of the direct, personal appeal for the enfranchisement of new voters derives from the fact that the policy in question by definition carries consequences for parties and legislators, and its corollary that voting rights changes cannot be forwarded by a small, intense minority without arousing the interests of others. The resultant complication is that a successful direct appeal strategy would have to indoctrinate, one by one, a majority (likely supermajority) of legislators with a personal preference for new voting rights, and would have to engage any salient personal preferences against voting rights to stave off opposition. Winning wars based on principles, when those principles have political costs and consequences, is tough work. Additionally, building a winning coalition based on personal preferences is extremely sensitive to legislative turnover; if convinced members leave office, there is no mechanism to increase the chance that their replacements will be friendly to the cause as well. In contrast, garnering support within key constituencies provides incentives for politicians to act independent of their personal preferences, meaning that activists' work is not necessarily undone by a change in the legislature's membership. This distinction is particularly crucial for state-level voting rights struggles given that state legislatures are typically populated by members who serve only a term or two.²⁷ Hence, direct appeal to legislators'

²⁷ Burns, Nancy, Laura Evans, Gerald Gamm, and Corrine McConaughy. "Pockets of Expertise: Careers and Professionalism in 20th-Century State Legislatures." *Studies in American Political Development* 22 (September 2008): 229–48.

personal preference may work as *part* of either the strategic or programmatic enfranchisement process, but partisan electoral incentives offer far more promise.

Finally, I have also laid aside accounts of voting rights extension that imply, in one way or another, that voting rights are extended simply because they are an idea whose time has come. This would include accounts that paint changing attitudes about the disfranchised as the primary impetus for changes in suffrage qualifications, as well as those that ascribe legal changes in voting qualifications to moments of heightened attention to democratic governance – the most cited of the latter being times of war. I have done so not because ideas play no role in voting rights politics, but because, given the incentives of political elites, attitude changes are insufficient as an explanation unto themselves. As I have outlined, and illustrate in later chapters, attitudinal shifts may help form new ideas about what groups could be promising targets of strategic enfranchisement, or to influence the coalitional possibilities available to the disfranchised, thus affecting their chances for inclusion under the programmatic enfranchisement model. Without partisan political incentives attached to them, however, ideas lack the leverage to change policy.

Assessing the Theory – The Case of Woman Suffrage

To evaluate the theoretical framework for understanding the development of voting rights offered earlier, I turn to the struggle for adoption of woman suffrage in the American states. Although Amendment XIX of the U.S. Constitution, barring discrimination in state voter qualifications based on sex, was not ratified until 1920, woman suffrage measures were considered and adopted by states as early as 1838. Some of these measures provided for purely local electoral rights, enabling women to vote on local tax issues, school matters, and/or for municipal officers. Other measures provided women with limited suffrage rights in statewide elections, such as allowing them only presidential suffrage. And some states endowed women with truly full voting rights – as early as 1890. There were thirty years between the earliest and latest adoptions of state-level woman suffrage, and nearly eighty years between the earliest and latest adoptions of local-level woman suffrage (see Figure 1.1). This variation, itself, begs explanation, which the literature on the woman suffrage movement has yet to fully provide. Moreover, it is through investigation of this variance that we can empirically demonstrate the institutional and sociopolitical factors that make attainment of the right of electoral participation more or less possible for previously excluded groups.

Some might argue that the politics of women's voting rights were unique and therefore not instructive as we seek to understand the expansion of the franchise generally. Yet there are a number of reasons why the case is particularly informative. To begin, because the American story of woman suffrage unfolded across a span of nearly eighty years, it overlapped with a number of

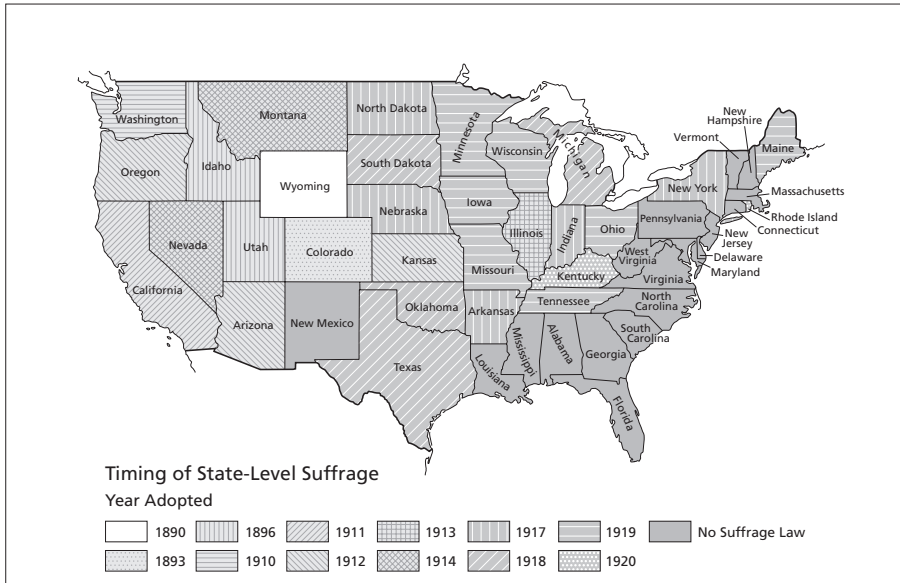


FIGURE 1.1. Timing of State-Level Woman Suffrage.

other developments in voting rights. This fact enables direct and contemporaneous comparison of woman suffrage politics to consideration of the enfranchisement of other groups, notably black men, illuminating how differences in the groups being considered for enfranchisement engendered distinct reactions from partisan politicians. Moreover, although many treatments of voting rights politics in the United States have focused on the rights of African Americans, it would seem that politicians often lack the level of clarity about partisan expectations of new voters that characterized that case. Consider, for example, the layers of uncertainty involved in the question of enfranchising non-citizens. There are the questions of which immigrant groups are likely to support which party and which groups are likely to turnout to vote, and the issue is further complicated by ambiguity about what incoming immigrant streams will look like in both the short and long term. Turning to woman suffrage sheds light on this sort of politics of voting rights, where the promise of a new voting bloc does not seem likely to be the incentive for partisan politicians. In addition, following both failed and successful endeavors to enfranchise women across a variety of political contexts does unearth attempts at a strategic enfranchisement approach. The circumstances surrounding and results of these attempts further underscore the host of difficulties in satisfying the conditions of the strategic enfranchisement account, undermining its feasibility as the dominant model of voting rights politics.