

## 22.9 – Incumbency advantage #2

- Pick up where we left off...
  - Review of first two theories of incumbency advantage
  - Then on to next three
    - Districting
    - Campaign spending
    - Challenger quality
- Senate elections
  - Are they different in degree or type from House contests?

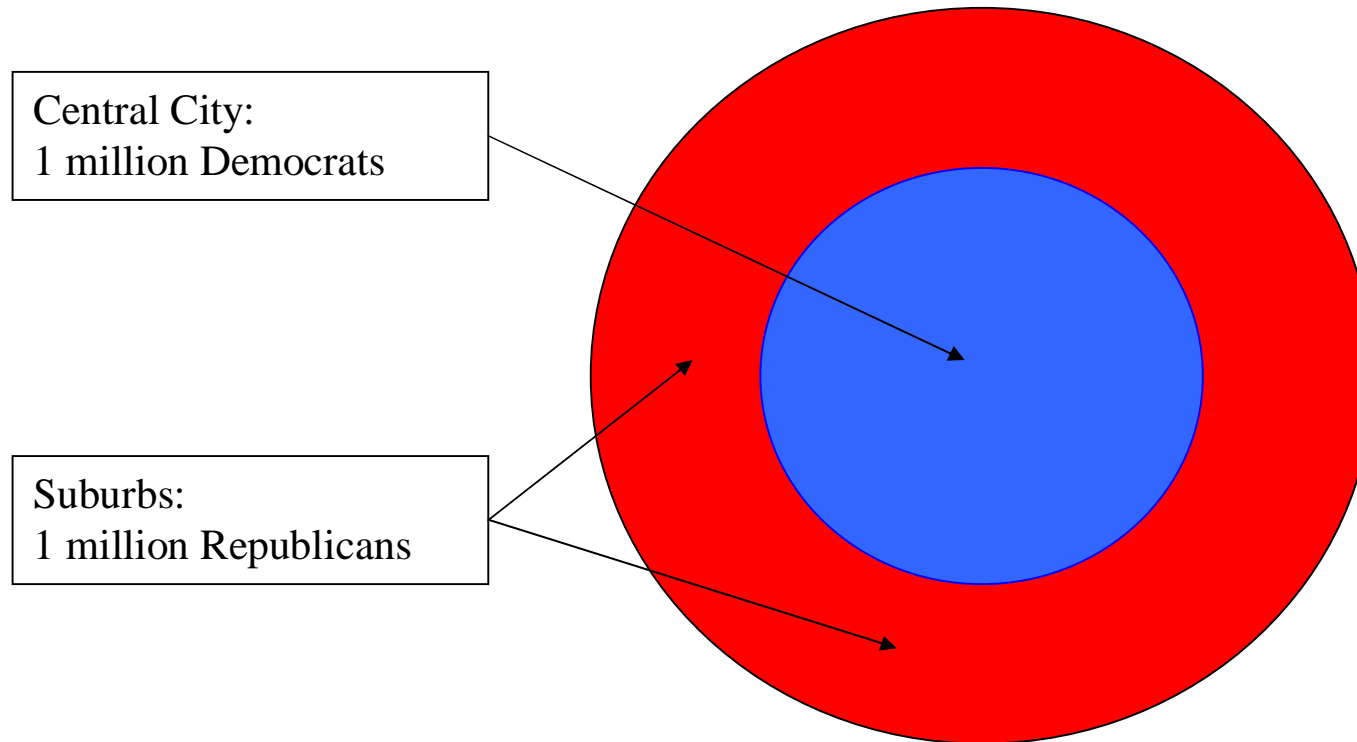
# From last week to this week

- *Explanation #1: The bureaucracy did it!*
- *Explanation #2: “Perks” of office*
  
- Districting
- Campaign spending
- Challenger quality

# #3: Districting (background)

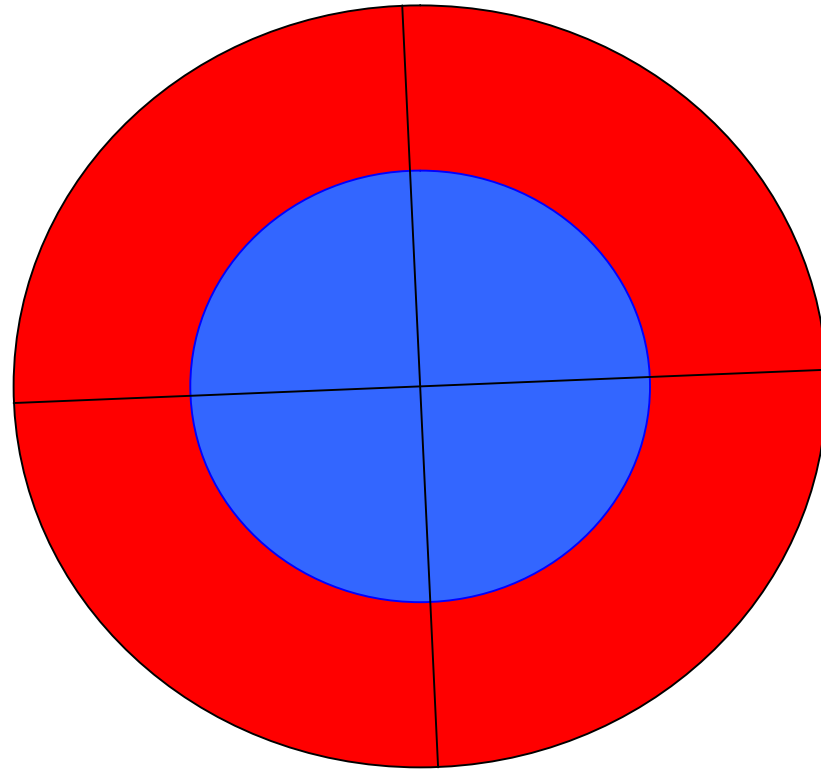
- Apportionment v. districting
  - *Baker v. Carr*
- Motivations
  - Partisan: Elbridge Gerry & Tom DeLay
  - Racial: Voting Rights Act
  - Other?
- Some illustrations

# Creating districts from a metro area



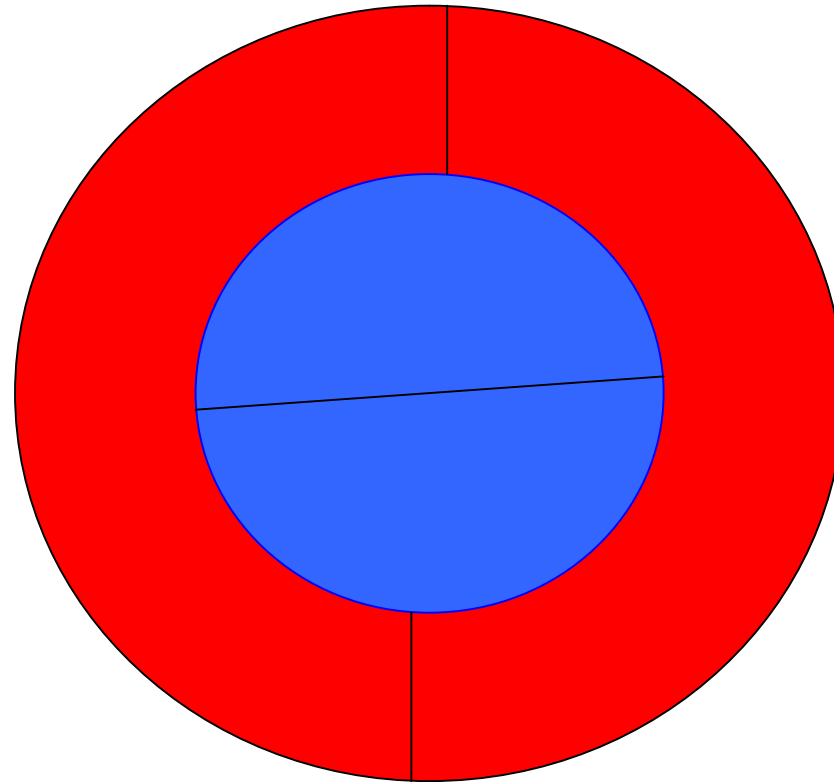
# Scenario 1: the fair fight

Four districts with equal proportions of city dwellers and suburbanites – thus equal numbers of Dems and Reps – in each. Either side could win each CD.



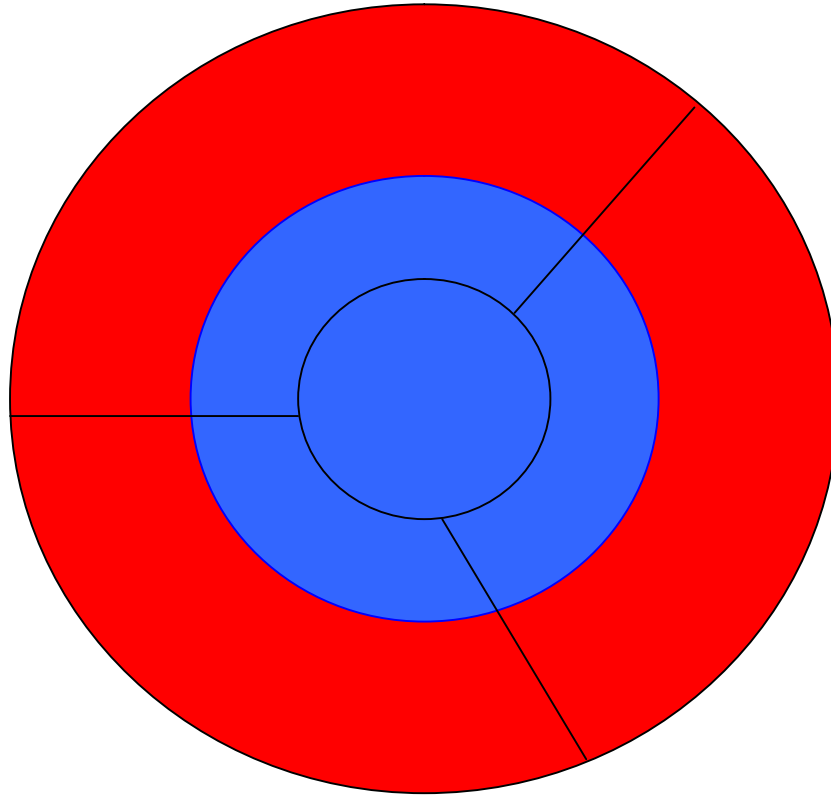
# Scenario 2: Partisan protection

Four districts  
comprised of all city  
dwellers or  
suburbanites. Each  
side wins in their 2  
strongholds.



# Scenario 3: partisan gerrymander

One district from city, plus three comprised of 1/3 city dwellers & 2/3 suburbanites. Rep advantage in 3 seats.



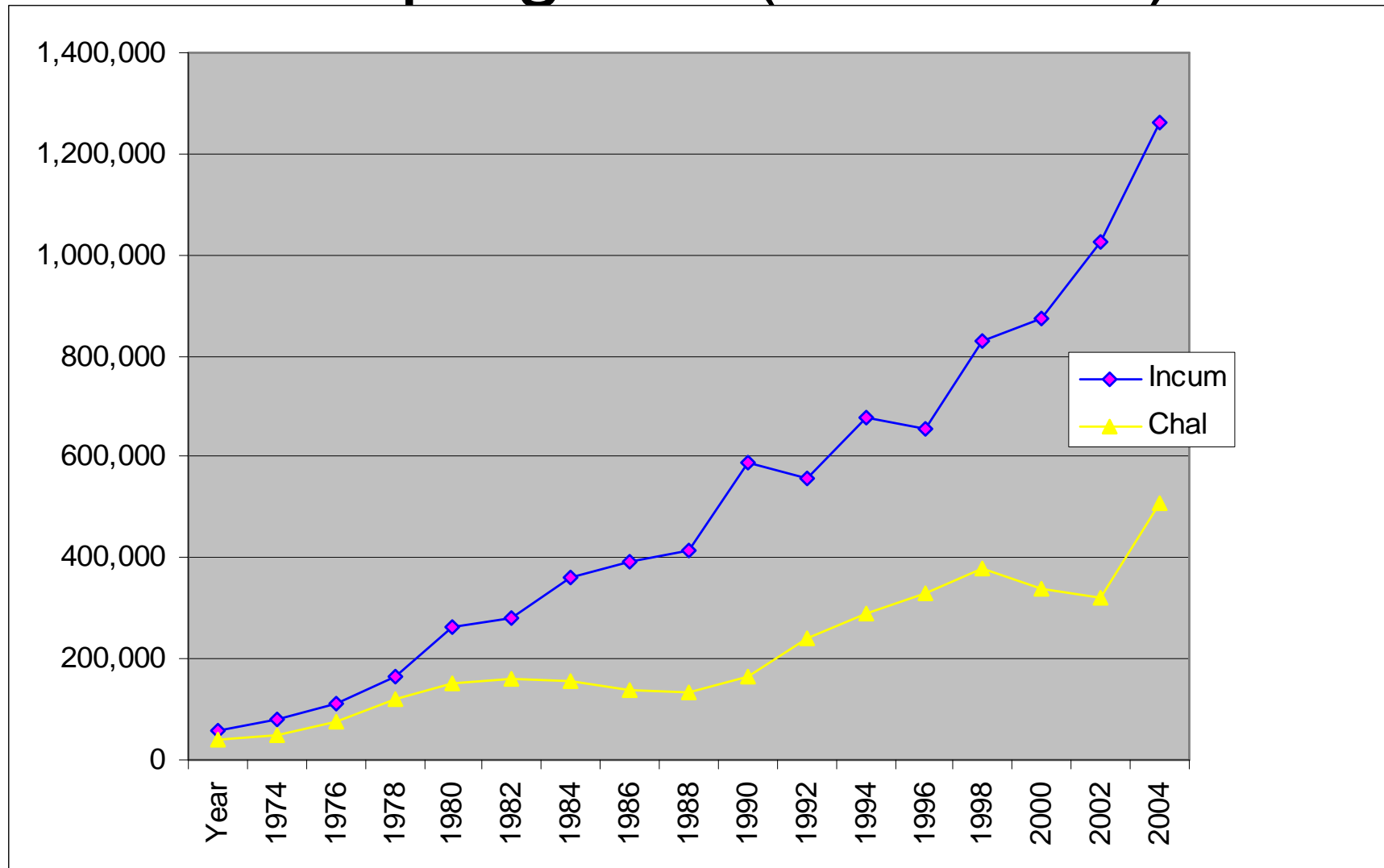
# Districting wrap up

- Clear that how district is drawn affects who wins...
- But we only care if it helps incumbents win
  - Scenario 1 vs 2 vs 3
- Final evidence: states where no redistricting occurred also experienced same surge in margins of victory in 1960s onward
- Two additional notes
  - How districting is done varies from state to state
  - Rise of computer mapping

# Explanation 4: campaign spending

- Average spending in 1974...
  - Incum = \$56,539; chal = \$40,015
- ...versus 2006
  - Incum = \$1,261,559; chal = \$510,195
    - Slightly misleading because 1974 & 2006 such competitive years (2004: \$1,026,589 v. \$322,061)
- Huge growth in incumbent advantage
  - Must help incumbents!
  - Right?

# Incumbent's growing advantage in campaign \$s (from FEC)



# The rising cost of campaigns: winners' spending

From Malbin, Mann & Ornstein's *Vital Statistics on Congress*

Table 3-1 The Cost of Winning an Election, 1986-2004 (in nominal and 2004 dollars)

	<i>House Winners</i>		<i>Senate Winners</i>	
	<i>Nominal Dollars</i>	<i>2004 Dollars</i>	<i>Nominal Dollars</i>	<i>2004 Dollars</i>
2004	1,038,391	1,038,391	7,183,825	7,183,825
2002	911,644	955,079	3,728,644	3,906,293
2000	845,907	920,691	7,198,423	7,834,811
1998	677,807	770,741	4,655,806	5,294,162
1996	686,198	802,441	3,921,653	4,585,988
1994	541,121	657,710	4,488,195	5,455,212
1992	556,475	699,644	3,353,115	4,215,801
1990	423,245	553,647	3,298,324	4,314,536
1988	400,386	550,027	3,746,225	5,146,349
1986	359,577	510,527	3,067,559	4,355,317

a. Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) spent \$63,209,506. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) spent \$29,941,194. The remaining Senate winners in 2000 spent an average of \$4,737,365.

# Not so fast...

- Objection 1: timing
  - Big growth occurs *after* “marginals” vanish
- Objection 2: Jacobson’s paradox
  - More incumbents spend worse they do
    - Endogeneity
- Alternative views of effect of campaign spending
  - Diminishing marginal returns

# Explanation 5: candidate quality

- What is it?
- How we measure it
- The effect
  - Direct
  - Indirect
- Why don't good candidates run?
  - It's hard (esp. fundraising)
  - Chances of winning
  - The “psych out” factor

# House election wrap-up

- Three sets of explanations for incumbency advantage
  - Districts
  - Opportunities in Washington
  - Campaign (\$ & candidate quality)
    - Perceptions v. reality
- Or two sets?
  - Things incumbents do
  - Things challengers don't do

# How about voters?

What happens when partisanship & incumbency conflict?

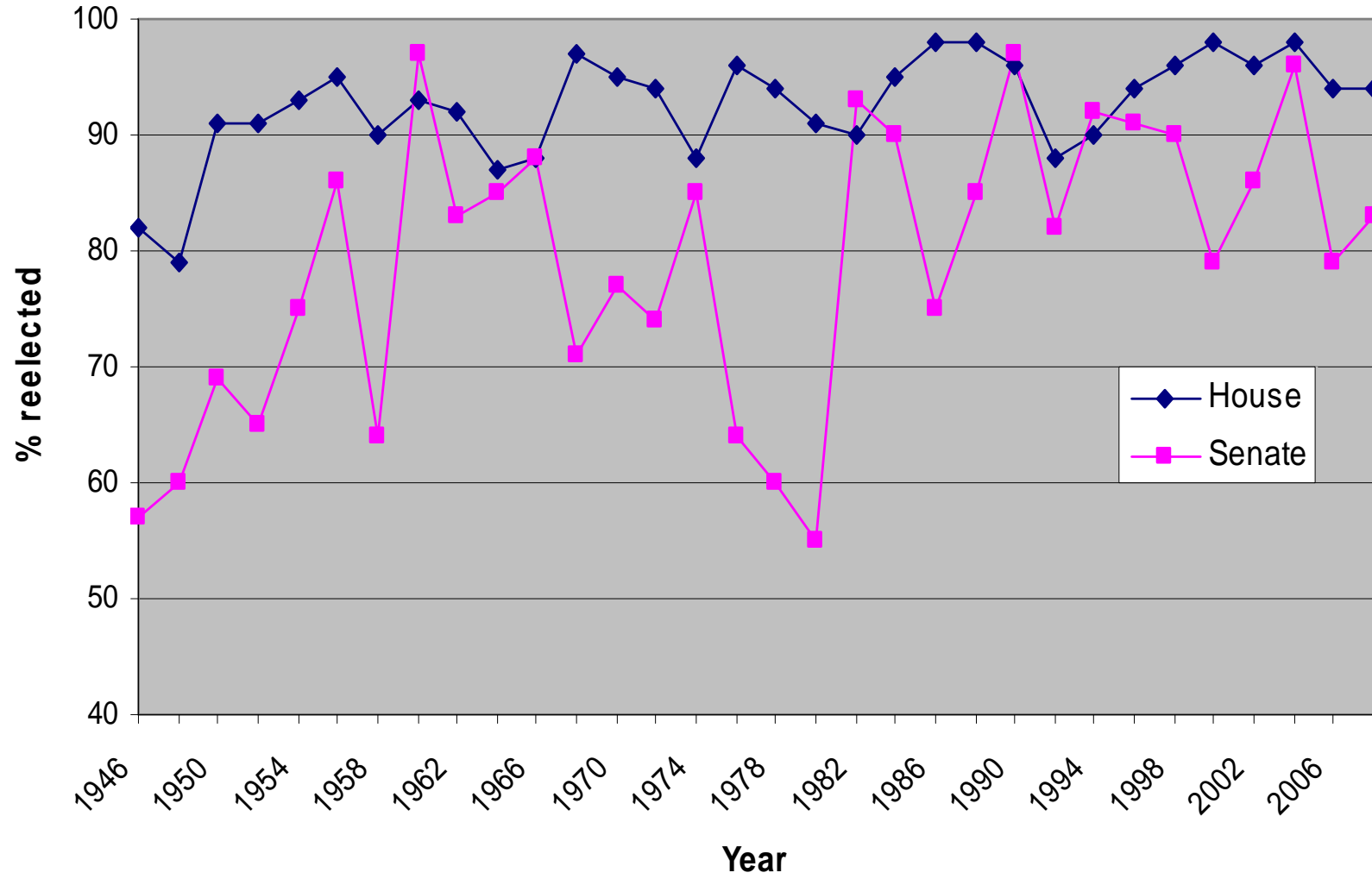
When is defection (from partisanship) more likely?

		<u>Incumbent</u>	
		Low info	High info
<u>Challenger</u>	No info	Some defection (sometimes)	Much defection (common)
	High info	Defection to challenger (rare to never)	Little defection (relatively rare)

# On to Senate elections

- Why?
- Ans: different experience of House & Senate elections
  - House reelection rates @ 90%; Senate @ 80%
    - è swings in partisan control of Senate
- Question: how are House and Senate elections different?

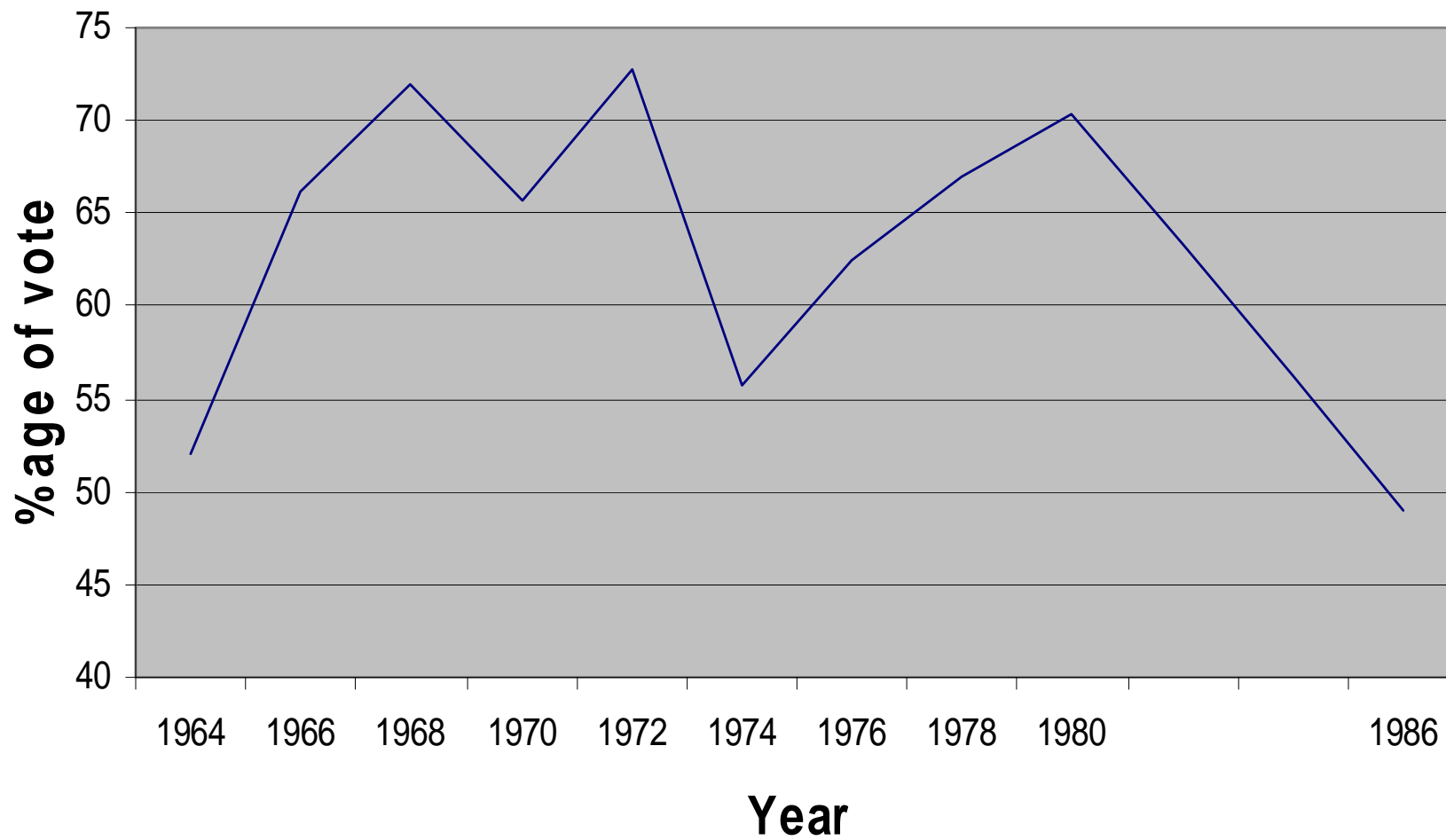
# House & Senate reelection rates



# Mark Andrews (R-SD)



# Mark Andrews' curious history



# Explanation #1: states v. district

- Version 1: size
  - States are larger than districts, thus harder to represent
    - But, virtually no incumbents defeated in largest states...
    - ...except Al D'Amato...
- Version 2: diversity
  - States comprise more interests, thus harder to represent
    - But, evidence mixed
    - What about Mark Andrews?

## è Explanation #2: institutional differences

- Uslaner: “House members devote disproportionately more time than senators to constituent service; senators are more inclined towards 'position-taking' through national forums such as the press and television. This behaviour by representatives creates a set of like expectations for senators which, if not followed, lead to greater electoral insecurity.”

# And more...

- Jones: “The end result is if the voters are in the mood to “throw the rascals out,” then it appears that senators are right out front as visible targets for the expression of voter dissatisfaction... Apparently, they don't connect House members with the ‘mess in Washington.’”
- So, senators are...
  - Less devoted to constituency service
  - More likely to pay the price for voter unease

# Does this make sense?

- Yes, states are too big for senators to do much casework, to forge personal relationships with voters
  - But...no connection between state size & reelection rates
  - But...are relationships so personal?
  - But...Al D'Amato
- Yes, as celebrities, senators are more easily identifiable as responsible for good times or bad
  - But...celebrity is bad!?

# Evidence from surveys

- Respondents no more likely to contact Reps with problems than Sens
  - tombstone story (again)
- Respondents rank Reps and Sens equally in their anticipated helpfulness
- Respondents tend to see both Reps and Sens as moderates
- Respondents express equal approval of Reps' and Sens' voting records

# Explanation 3: challenger quality

- Sound familiar?
- Evidence:
  - Highest quality challengers @ 5x more likely in Sen than in House contests
  - Respondents report greater knowledge of Sen challengers than of House challengers
- Knowledge related to quality: respondents know most about the “best” challengers
  - Westlye’s point

# Some bottom lines

- 3 types of explanations
  - Structural: districts, state size
  - Institutional: what Reps & Sens do as part of their jobs
  - Campaign: who runs & how much they spend
- My preference for third
- But!
  - Clear that structure matters
  - Possible that institutional does, too
    - Few incumbents do really crazy things
    - Low costs make it easy to court public

# A closing question

- Could Jacobson's "strategic politicians" theory be used to explain the fluctuating reelection rate in Senate elections? How? (You might consider picking an election year or two to illustrate your answer.)