

## *South Carolina: Party Development in the Palmetto State*

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Paralleling developments in other southern states over the past three to four decades, South Carolina's political system has undergone dramatic change. One of the more significant components of this change has been the partisan realignment from a one-party system dominated by the Democrats to a competitive two-party system in which Republicans have come to hold the upper hand. This increased electoral competitiveness has been accompanied by an increased organizational effort by both parties in the state. An examination of local party activists in 2001 points to a continuation of this pattern over the past ten years. In comparison with data from the 1991 Southern Grassroots Party Activists Survey, the 2001 data show the following: (1) the Republican Party has sustained its electoral and organizational gains of recent years; (2) the parties continue to attract activists who differ across party lines on a number of important demographic and socioeconomic variables; (3) there has been a continued sorting of political orientations and cues marked by sharply different inter-party ideological and issue positions; (4) the Democratic Party has become more ideologically homogeneous and more in line with the national party than previously; and (5) since 1991 perceptions of factionalism have declined in both parties, but still remain higher among Democrats than among Republicans.

### **Introduction**

South Carolina paralleled the larger South in its post-World War II partisan change. A solidly one-party Democratic state prior to World War II, and on into the early 1960s, it began to become more competitive with the slow growth of the Republican Party in the mid 1960s. The key factor in this increasingly competitive partisan battleground was the growth of Republican electoral strength, first at the presidential level and later at the congressional and state/local levels. Closely connected to these electoral developments, both parties developed organizational structures which were sufficiently institutionalized by the 1990s to perform a variety of functions within the state's political system.

### **Development of Political Parties in South Carolina<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Party and Electoral Patterns, 1980-2000**

The crack in Democratic solidarity began at the presidential level in 1948 when South Carolina cast its electoral votes for favorite son Strom Thurmond, running as the candidate of the States' Rights Party. The state

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returned to the Democratic fold in the next three presidential elections, but by razor-thin margins—51 percent of the vote for Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy in 1952 and 1960 respectively, and only a plurality of 45 percent for Stevenson in 1956.

In 1964, Senator Thurmond made a dramatic switch from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. Two months later Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater won 59 percent of the vote in the state. In a related development, Democratic congressman Albert Watson, who supported Goldwater, was stripped of his seniority by House Democrats, resigned, switched parties and regained his vacant seat in a special election in 1965, thus becoming the first Republican elected to Congress in the state since Reconstruction. The following year both Watson and Thurmond won reelection to their respective seats. Also, in 1966 the Republican Party nominated Joseph Rogers as their first gubernatorial candidate in decades. Rogers won 42 percent of the vote and carried three counties, an unexpectedly strong showing, accompanied by Republican victories in contests for 16 state legislative seats (see Table 1 for election results).

Over the next 15 years, the Republican Party established itself as a viable electoral party by consistently winning one, and sometimes two, of South Carolina's six seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and Thurmond's seat in the U.S. Senate. Additionally, Republicans constituted a persistent minority in the state legislature, and the party broke through with a close gubernatorial victory in 1974 (although this was largely attributable to a series of internal problems in the Democratic Party relating to the legal disqualification of the primary-winning candidate and the subsequent bitter feelings related thereto). At the presidential level, where the Republicans were most impressive, the only Democratic winner between 1964 and 1980 was fellow southerner Jimmy Carter in 1976.

The last two decades of the twentieth century saw a continued slow, but steady, movement toward a competitive two-party system in South Carolina. During this period, the Republican Party won every presidential election in the state, won three of five gubernatorial elections (with the 1990 win being a true landslide), continued to split the state's two U.S. Senate seats, and won half or more of the state's seats in the U.S. House of Representatives in eight of eleven elections. As in many other southern states, the 1994 congressional elections marked an important breakthrough for Republicans in South Carolina, as they established control of two-thirds of U.S. House seats, control they have maintained in every election since.

The state legislative elections in 1994 were also important for Republican growth. After steadily pushing their share of state house seats up during the 1980s and early 1990s, a combination of additional victories and party switches in and around the 1994 elections gave Republicans a majority in

**Table 1. Republican Strength in South Carolina, 1960-2000**

Year	Percent of Presidential Vote	Percent of Gubernatorial Vote	Percent of U.S. Senate Vote	Percent of U.S. House Delegation	Percent of State House Delegation	Percent of State Senate Delegation
1960	48.8		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1962		0.0	42.8	0.0	0.0	
1964	58.9			0.0	0.0	0.0
1966		41.8	62.2/48.7*	16.6	13.7	
1968	38.1**		38.1	16.6	4.0	16.0
1970		45.6		16.6	8.9	
1972	70.8		63.3	33.3	16.9	6.5
1974		50.9	28.6	16.6	13.7	
1976	43.1			16.6	9.7	6.5
1978		37.8	55.6	33.3	12.9	
1980	49.4**		29.6	66.6	13.7	10.9
1982		30.2		50.0	16.1	
1984	63.6		66.8	50.0	21.8	21.8
1986		51.1	35.6	33.3	25.8	
1988	61.5			33.3	29.8	23.9
1990		69.5	64.2	33.3	33.3	
1992	48.0**		46.9	50.0	40.3	34.8
1994		50.4		66.6	48.3***	
1996	49.8**		53.4	66.6	56.5	43.5
1998		45.2	45.7	66.6	53.2	
2000	56.8			66.6	56.4	50.0***

\*Special election to fill unexpired term of office.

\*\*Three way contests: Republican Richard M. Nixon won with 38.1 percent to American Independent Party candidate George C. Wallace's 32.3 percent and Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey's 29.6 percent in 1968; Republican Ronald Reagan won with 49.8 percent to Democrat Jimmy Carter's 48.1 percent and Independent John Anderson's 1.6 percent in 1980; Republican George H.W. Bush won with 48.0 percent to Democrat Bill Clinton's 40.5 percent and Independent H. Ross Perot's 10.1 percent in 1992; Republican Bob Dole won the state with 49.8 percent to Democratic incumbent Bill Clinton's 44.0 percent and Reform Party candidate's H. Ross Perot's 5.6 percent in 1996.

\*\*\*Party switching by Democrats after the election resulted in increases in the Republican percentage; after the 1994 election the Republican Party held 52 percent of the state House seats and 43.4 percent of the state Senate seats; after the 2000 elections such a switch gave Republicans 52.2 percent of the state Senate seats.

Sources: South Carolina State Elections Commission Reports for the listed elections.

the lower chamber for the first time in this century (the 1994 elections also saw Republicans winning seven of the state's nine constitutional offices, including the governorship). In the state senate their share of seats rose above 40 percent between 1992 and 1996, as well. In the years since the pivotal 1994 election, Republicans maintained their majority in the state house and finally achieved a majority in the state senate in 2000.

The South Carolina Democratic Party has fought with some success to remain competitive with a Republican Party which has approached dominant status. Democrats are still present in the state legislature in significant numbers, and in 1998 Democrats won the governorship (James Hodges) and retained a U.S. Senate seat (Ernest F. Hollings). Still, they find themselves in a competitive struggle unimagined less than a half century ago.<sup>2</sup>

### **Party Organizational Development<sup>3</sup>**

Prior to the 1960s party organization in South Carolina was virtually non-existent: there were so few Republicans that there was nothing to organize and, consequently, there was no need for Democratic organization either (See Moore 1983; Jordan 1962; Key 1949.). With increased electoral competition in the early 1960s, both parties began to give increased attention to their respective organizations. Between 1962 and 1965 J. Drake Edens, Jr., served as state chair of the Republican Party and built the state's first genuine party organization (Moore 1983; Bass and DeVries 1976:24). This, combined with the modest electoral gains of the mid-1960s and the significant financial support of Roger Milliken, president of the third largest textile corporation in the world, gave the Republican Party a small but active nucleus interested in organizational development. By 1966, the Republicans had established a well-structured, multi-divisional headquarters with a cadre of full-time salaried administrators (Steed 1997).

The Democrats' response was slow, in large part because they were still clearly dominant. The focus of the State Executive Committee was less on inter-party combat than on administering the electoral system, especially the party's primaries. While the Democrats began to take some notice of the emerging Republican threat and moved to improve fundraising and other candidate support activities, their main concerns related to changes occurring within the Democratic Party itself.

Specifically, the South Carolina Democratic Party found itself wrestling with a tangle of changes in election law (for example, the 1965 Voting Rights Act) and party rules related to the Civil Rights Movement's attack on laws denying African Americans the right to vote and on party rules excluding them from participating in party activities (see, for example, Crotty 1983; Polsby 1983; and Steed 1990). At the same time, and in a related matter, South Carolina Democrats struggled to deal with what many considered to be unwelcome changes in the national party. Thus, these Democrats sought ways to remain part of the national organization while distancing themselves from the increasingly liberal image of the national party and such locally unpopular presidential candidates as George McGovern.

During the 1970s the Republican Party continued its organizational development at the local level, especially in the state's urban centers, even

though its main campaign involvement was still at the presidential level. The election of Republican James B. Edwards to the governorship in 1974 helped to spur further organizational development over the next two decades. Through the 1970s and on into the 1980s the Republican Party continued to operate a permanent, well-staffed headquarters in Columbia, succeeded in getting a county chair in almost every county, worked to expand local organizations, and regularly organized well-attended, efficient state conventions.

As the turmoil of adjusting to new national party rules and to the entry of African-Americans into the party organization diminished, the Democrats began to concentrate more of their organizational effort on meeting the growing Republican threat, particularly as Republican success in presidential elections began to trickle down to state and local elections as well. It was especially important the Democrats find a way to hold together a fragile biracial coalition. Black voters were important to the party's electoral chances, and black party activists were becoming more and more important to the party's organizational operations. By the late 1980s, African-Americans were well represented in state conventions, even constituting a majority of delegates in 1988 (when Jesse Jackson was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination), and they were a growing presence in precinct organizations (though still a relatively small minority at this level as late as 1992). Unfortunately for the party, many white Democratic activists were still having problems accepting blacks who did not share their ideological and issue orientations, and the party, therefore, faced a significant threat to internal cohesion on platforms, candidates, and election campaign strategy (see Steed and McGlennon 1990; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995). To their credit, state Democratic leaders steered the organization through these shoals into the 1990s intact.

At the beginning of the Twenty-First Century, both parties in South Carolina had established well-organized party operations. Both maintain and operate permanent headquarters in Columbia, and both have a full slate of administrators and staff. Both state parties see their primary purposes as generally advancing party interests in the state, providing campaign assistance to the party's candidates for state and national office, and serving as a liaison between the national and local parties. A related activity concerns the development and maintenance of local organizations throughout the state. In this regard, the state party acts as a general service agency assisting local parties in fundraising, candidate recruitment, general communications, and the like. For both parties, the heavy reliance on volunteers and interns and the frequent turnover of key staff personnel often pose problems related to continuity and organizational memory, both of which hinder organizational efficiency. However, in both parties this has begun to be addressed with more careful attention to recordkeeping and staff retention.

In sum, the increased electoral competitiveness in South Carolina politics has been reflected in increased organizational development on the part of both parties at the beginning of the new century. The real test of organization, of course, is in its use, and it is here that party activists are crucial. As Samuel Eldersveld noted almost half a century ago, the party “relies on its leaders after all, in whose perceptions and beliefs, actions and interactions, and continuous contact with the public rests the fate of the party” (Eldersveld 1964:544). Our focus here, then, is on local party activists as mirrors of the party’s soul. We examine the data generated by the Southern Grassroots Party Activists Survey in the spring and summer of 2001 in order to develop a better understanding of the nature of the South Carolina party system after a prolonged period of political change in the state and in the South. We are especially interested in comparing the local party activists surveyed in 2001 with those surveyed a decade earlier in the first *Southern Grassroots Party Activists Project* (Hadley and Bowman 1995).

### **Grassroots Party Activists, 2001 and 1991**

#### **Selected Background Characteristics**

When surveyed in 1991, South Carolina Democratic and Republican party activists were similar to each other with regard to age, education, gender, and frequency of church attendance. The key inter-party differences were on race (very few African Americans among the Republicans), education (more Democrats had graduate degrees), religion (more Republicans were fundamentalists), family income (Republicans were somewhat more affluent), and state of childhood (considerably more Democrats were native South Carolinians).

Ten years later, the inter-party differences are sharper and more widespread. With the exception of family income, where the parties are much more similar than in 1991, there are clear differences between the parties on practically every other background variable listed in Table 2. With regard to age, Democrats tend to be older in the aggregate than the Republicans; over four-fifths of the Democrats are over 50 years of age as compared with slightly over two-thirds of the Republicans. While the Republicans are distributed across the age categories in about the same proportions as in 1991, the Democrats tend to be older. This suggests that the Republicans have been more successful in bringing new blood into the party organization, and this bodes ill for the Democrats in the near future.

As in 1991, a majority of the activists in both parties are male, but at least within the Democratic party, the intra-party gender differences are not nearly so dramatic as ten years earlier. Perhaps reflecting the party’s long term affirmative action efforts (see Polsby 1983; Crotty 1983; Steed 1990),

**Table 2. Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of South Carolina Local Party Activists, 2001**

Characteristic		Democrats	Republicans
Age	Under 40	6	11
	40-49	12	19
	50-59	24	22
	60 or above	58	47
Gender	Male	58	74
	Female	42	26
Race	White	66	96
	African American	33	**
	Other	1	4
Education	High school or less	14	9
	Some college	29	30
	College graduate	18	35
	Graduate work/degree	38	26
Family Income	< \$25,000	16	5
	\$25,000-\$49,999	30	33
	\$50,000-\$74,999	24	26
	\$75,000-\$99,999	14	18
	\$100,000-\$150,000	10	11
	>\$150,000	6	7
Childhood State	South Carolina	63	51
	Other southern state	14	17
	Non-southern state	23	32

Note: Entries are in percentages, totaled by column (e.g., 6 percent of Democratic activists are less than 40 years old.)

\*\* Less than 1 percent.

women are now much more involved in the Democratic Party than in 1991, and they are considerably more active than in the Republican Party. Similarly, blacks are virtually unrepresented in the Republican Party, a long-standing pattern in South Carolina (and southern) politics which remains largely unchanged in recent years. (See Bain 1972; Graham 1988; Moreland, Steed, and Baker 1991; Steed and McGlennon 1990.)

The Democrats continue to evince higher percentages of activists with graduate degrees than the Republicans, likely attributable to the higher level of political activity of public school teachers in the Democratic Party. Democrats also are more likely to have grown up in the state than the Republican activists (63 percent to 51 percent), but the difference has shrunk

sharply since 1991 (from a 26 percentage point margin to a 12 percentage point margin). The major factor in this change is the declining percentage of native South Carolinians among the Democrats (falling from 79 percent in 1991 to 63 percent in 2001) inasmuch as the Republican percentages are virtually identical in both surveys. In-migration, which has been a significant element of southern Republican growth (Black and Black 1987; Moreland 1990b; Bowman, Hulbary and Kelly 1990; and Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995a) has evidently begun to have a greater impact on the Democratic Party in South Carolina as well.

South Carolina Republicans have generally been more closely connected than the Democrats with conservative Christian religious activity. In the 1991 local activist survey, this was indicated by the considerably greater identification by Republicans with fundamentalism (3:1 over the Democrats). This pattern is continued in the 2001 data (see Table 3). Although the Democrats and Republicans differ relatively little with regard to religious preference (the vast majority of each are Protestants), frequency of religious attendance, and the importance of religion as a guide in their daily lives (roughly two-thirds of each say a “great deal”), Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say they are born-again Christians. Not surprisingly, they are also much more likely to say they feel close or very close to the Christian Right; conversely, Democrats are much more likely to say they feel far from the Christian Right. During the last two decades of the Twentieth Century, conservative religious activists have become highly active in the state’s Republican Party, first with the Moral Majority in the early 1980s and later with Pat Robertson’s presidential candidacy and the Christian Coalition (see Moreland, Steed, and Baker 1991; Baker 1990; Steed and McGlennon 1990; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995a). Our data suggest strongly that this connection continues into the new century.

In 1991 the local activists also differed sharply across party lines in their patterns of political activity. Democrats tended to have been politically active longer than the Republicans, they were slightly more likely to have held other political positions, larger percentages came from politically active families affiliated with their present political party, they were less likely to have switched parties, and they deserted their presidential candidate in 1988 in larger proportions than the Republicans. These patterns are most evident in the 2001 survey data with regard to length of political activity, parental party identification, and party switching (see Table 4). Democrats still demonstrate longer involvement in politics with 59 percent saying they have been active over 20 years as compared with 44 percent of the Republicans; in fact, this difference is larger than in 1991, as the Democratic percentage active over 20 years has risen by 19 points over the past decade, reinforcing the earlier point that Democratic precinct activists tend to be much older than Republican activists. In spite of Republican growth and increased



**Table 3. Religious Characteristics  
of South Carolina Local Party Activists, 2001**

Characteristic	Democrats	Republicans
Religious preference		
Protestant	83	91
Catholic	6	7
Jewish	3	**
Other	3	1
Nonbeliever	4	**
Frequency of attendance		
More than once a week	34	41
Once a week	27	28
Almost every week	13	10
Once or twice a month	9	8
Few times a year	11	9
Never	5	4
Religious guidance in daily life		
Great deal	62	67
Fair amount	19	24
Some	9	6
Very little	5	2
None	5	1
Born-again Christian?		
Yes	52	70
No	48	30
Feelings toward the Christian Right		
Very close	12	20
Close	8	30
Neutral	20	32
Far	15	10
Very far	45	8

Notes: Entries are in percentages, totaled by column (e.g., 6 percent of Democratic activists are Catholics).  
\*\*Less than 1 percent.

Republican competitiveness, a majority of these local Republican officials have been active less than 20 years, and almost one-third have been active less than 10 years.

As in 1991, the vast majority of Democrats' parents are also Democrats, while the Republicans are almost evenly split between Democratic and Republican parents. The main change in this over the past decade has been

**Table 4. Political Background  
of South Carolina Local Party Activists, 2001**

Background Item	Democrats	Republicans
Years active in politics		
10 years or less	24	30
11-20 years	17	26
21-30 years	24	16
Over 30 years	35	28
Other political positions held		
Party	35	42
Elective	18	14
Appointed	20	20
Politically active parent or relative?		
Yes	46	44
No	54	56
Father's party identification		
Democrat	78	42
Republican	12	42
Independent	4	8
Other/DK	6	6
Mother's party identification		
Democrat	79	38
Republican	10	42
Independent	5	9
Other/DK	6	10
2000 presidential vote		
George W. Bush (R)	7	96
Albert Gore, Jr. (D)	90	1
Other	3	3
Switched parties?		
Yes	10	18
No	90	82

Note: Entries are in percentages.

an understandable increase in the percentages of Republican activists with Republican parents; identical percentages (42 percent) have Republican fathers and Republican mothers, up slightly in both cases from 35 percent in 1991. As in 1991, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to have voted for the opposition party's candidate in the preceding presidential election, but the differences are not nearly so sharp as ten years earlier. In 1991,

25 percent of the Democratic activists said they voted for George H.W. Bush in the 1988 election (almost none of the Republicans supported Michael Dukakis in that election); only 7 percent of the Democrats deserted the party ticket in 2000. Finally, more Republicans report having changed party affiliation (18 percent to 10 percent), and, while this remains a substantial difference, it is a bit narrower than in 1991.

The other items listed in Table 4 show very little inter-party difference, unlike 1991. After an additional decade of electoral competitiveness, Republicans are about as likely as Democrats to hold, or to have held, other political offices, and they are as likely to have politically active parents. In short, as the Republicans have gained electorally, most of the political background differences between the parties' local activists have diminished or virtually disappeared.

### **Ideology and Issues**

One of the most constant findings in studies of southern party activists over the past 20 years has been the sharp ideological and issue difference between the two parties, generally interpreted as one of the clearest indicators of increased two-party competition (see, among others, Moreland 1990a; Bowman, Hulbary, and Kelly 1990; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1990; McGlennon 1998; Brodsky and Cotter 1998; Steed 1998). This has certainly been the pattern among state and local party activists in South Carolina during this period (see Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1992; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995a; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995b).

In the 1991 survey, Democratic activists in South Carolina were much less conservative than Republican activists (and, conversely, much more liberal), and they tended to be spread more widely across the ideological scale than Republicans, who tended to be clustered much more tightly around the conservative end of the scale. These patterns changed little by 2001. Democrats still are much less conservative than Republicans (17 percent to 95 percent categorizing themselves as "somewhat" or "very" conservative) and more liberal (58 percent to less than 1 percent saying they are "somewhat" or "very" liberal). Also, as in 1991, Democrats tend to be less concentrated at the liberal end of the scale than Republicans are at the conservative end of the scale, a point which is further illustrated by the greater percentage of Democrats classifying themselves as ideologically moderate (25 percent to 5 percent).

These activists' positions on a series of specific issues give further support to this picture of inter-party ideological differentiation. On 17 of the 19 issues listed in Table 5, Democrats tend to be more liberal than Republicans, and on just over half of these issues the inter-party differences exceed

50 percentage points. On all but five of the issues a majority of the Democratic activists are liberal, and on every issue except women's equality a substantial majority of the Republicans do not take the liberal position. In short, the South Carolina party system continues to be characterized by local leaders reflecting vastly different party ideological and issue orientations.

This ideological and issue division is shown further in an examination of these activists' group and organizational activities. Consistent with the inter-party ideological and issue differences, these local officials have different patterns of organizational involvement (see Table 6). The Democrats are much more likely than the Republicans to be active in environmental groups, civil rights groups, and women's rights groups while the Republicans are more active than Democrats in business organizations and anti-abortion groups. The two groups of activists are virtually equally active in civic

**Table 5. Positions on Selected Issues  
for South Carolina Local Party Activists, 2001**

Issue Position	Democrats	Republicans
<b>Social Issues</b>		
Equal role for women	96	83
Abortion as personal choice	83	22
School prayer	43	7
Government aid to minorities	86	27
Death penalty	64	16
Government regulation of managed health care	2	12
Stricter handgun control	87	13
Affirmative action (for blacks)	42	3
Government assistance to women	88	28
Job protection for gays	88	18
<b>Economic and Spending Issues</b>		
Government services and spending	90	16
Government job provision	52	4
Flat tax	59	15
School vouchers	90	20
Defense spending	15	2
Environmental spending	66	9
Public education spending	84	13
Crime prevention spending	4	11
Social Security spending	68	17

Note: Entries are the percent holding a liberal position on the specified issue (e.g., 90 percent of Democratic activists hold a liberal position on the question of government services and spending, whereas only 16 percent of Republican activists hold a liberal position on the issue).

**Table 6. Organizational Activities  
of Local Party Officials in South Carolina, 2001**

Organizations	Democrats	Republicans
Teachers organizations	54	40
Business organizations	66	75
Civic organizations	79	79
Labor unions	30	7
Church groups	85	88
Environmental groups	67	32
Civil Rights groups	64	15
Women's Rights groups	55	14
Anti-abortion groups	26	48

Notes: Entries are the percentage who say that they are active to some degree in the listed organization.

organizations and church groups (the latter reflecting the continuing importance of religion in the South generally). The only other difference of note is with regard to teachers' organizations where Democrats are more involved. Once again, as with other data on these activists' backgrounds, the two parties show evidence of having established clearly different coalitional bases.

**Factionalism**

Given the coalitional nature of American parties, intraparty conflict over policy positions, candidates, campaign strategy, and the like is fairly common. Certainly during the period of one-partyism in the South this was the case. One of Key's central themes in *Southern Politics* was how the virtually all-inclusive Democratic Party was generally little more than a holding company of competing factions. While the nature of factionalism varied from state to state, it was almost always one of the defining characteristics of the southern party system which, in Key's view, had a pervasive negative effect on the region's politics (Key 1949, esp. chap. 14).

Not surprisingly, South Carolina fits easily into this partisan context. Key described the state's politics in terms of a combination of personalism and localism which, in a state as small as South Carolina, often evolved into an on-going sectionalism featuring factional fights between the up-country (piedmont) and the low-country (Key 1949, chap. 7). Even after the erosion of the one-party system in South Carolina, this sectionalism persisted in modified form (see, for example, Moreland, Baker, and Steed 1983).

Of more direct relevance to the current analysis is evidence of intra-party factionalism in the South Carolina parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For example, a survey of state-level party activists in 1988 revealed rather clear groupings of Democrats around the competing presidential candidacies of Al Gore, Michael Dukakis, and Jesse Jackson. Interestingly, these were not just personality-based groups; they each demonstrated a web of differentiating background characteristics and issue orientations. Gore's supporters tended to be older, highly religious whites who were long term residents of the state and who were conservative across most issues. Dukakis's supporters tended to be younger, less religious whites who were more likely to be relative newcomers to the state and who were moderate to liberal on most issues. Jackson's supporters tended to be blacks who were liberal on economic issues and more conservative on various social issues. Similarly, within the Republican Party in 1988 there was a noticeable cleavage between those who supported George Bush for the presidency (whites who tended to see economic conservatism as the proper direction for the party) and those who supported the candidacy of Pat Robertson (whites who placed more emphasis on a conservative social agenda) (see Steed and McGlennon 1990; Baker, Steed, and Moreland 1991).

The 1991 grassroots party activists survey approached the issue from a different angle by asking local party officials about their views on factionalism within the parties. Almost three-fourths of the Democrats and just over three-fifths of the Republicans responded that there was moderate to high factionalism in their respective parties. Among Democrats, 71 percent said this factionalism was based on personal followings, followed by 64 percent who saw party factionalism connected to ideological differences. Substantial percentages—over 50 percent—of Democrats also felt that factionalism was related to geographical differences, issue differences, and old versus new residents, in that order. The local Republican officials were not only less likely than the Democrats to see factionalism in their party, they generally tended to see the roots of factionalism in different terms as well. For example, while the Republicans were similar to the Democrats in seeing personal followings as the major factor in factionalism (67 percent), they placed political issues second, followed by ideological-based factionalism, factionalism between old and new residents, and geographical factionalism respectively.

The perception of wide-ranging factionalism continued a decade later, but at a lesser level in both parties. Still, Democrats continued to see greater factionalism in their party than the Republicans. In 2001, 53 percent of the Democrats and 33 percent of the Republicans see moderate to high factionalism in their state party, and 42 percent of the Democrats and 31 percent of the Republicans see moderate to high factionalism in their county party. If

these perceptions are correct, the Democrats are improved over their situation in 1991, but they are still operating at a relative partisan disadvantage to the extent that factionalism has a negative impact on the party's ability to function effectively.

This general picture is reflected in the data in Table 7 which offer some details on how the local activists see the roots of their parties' factionalism. With regard to each of the variables listed, larger percentages of Democrats than Republicans respond that this is a basis of moderate to high factionalism in their party, and in a number of instances—disagreements over tax issues, racial issues, and government spending—the differences are rather striking. In short, while neither party is immune, the potential effects of factionalism seem to pose a greater problem for the Democrats in South Carolina, even after a decade of improvement.

**Table 7. Factionalism in South Carolina's Parties, 2001**

Factionalism based on	Democrats	Republicans
Disagreements over ideology	59	52
Disagreements between party leaders	56	53
Disagreements between old and new residents	54	44
Disagreements between regions in S.C.	57	50
Disagreements between urban and rural areas	58	48
Disagreements over tax issues	54	30
Disagreements over abortion policy	58	47
Disagreements over racial issues	55	35
Disagreements over government spending policy	57	37

Notes: Entries are the percentage in each party saying there is a "great deal" or "fair amount" of this type of factionalism within the state party.

### Conclusion

Taken together, the data from the 1991 and the 2001 surveys of local party officials in South Carolina support a number of conclusions. First, there is clear evidence that the state has developed a party system marked by clear inter-party competition. The electoral data reviewed in the first section of this paper show the parties battling on relatively even terms over the past 10 to 15 years, and especially since about 1994. Unlike earlier periods where the Republican Party made gains which were relatively short-lived, its recent gains have been well sustained. In both surveys, the party activists' sharply different ideological and issue positions again show a continuing sorting of political orientations and cues indicative of competitive parties.

In light of these data it is not surprising that by the early 1990s the South Carolina Republican Party demonstrated a degree of electoral and organizational strength characteristic of a competitive party. The Democratic Party in the state has been pressed to maintain its influence in recent years in the face of a stronger, dominant Republican Party. Indeed, in the early 1990s it seemed on the verge of (even in the midst of) a precipitous decline which threatened to push the party into normal minority status. In 1998 the Democrats temporarily arrested that slide and will likely continue to be able to win statewide elections, but only when short-term forces run strongly in their favor. The latest survey also suggests that the Democrats are somewhat more homogeneous with respect to ideology and issues than in the past. The positive element of this is that the party may be able to present a more united front in the political arena; the negative side is that this shift toward being a more liberal party (coupled with its more comfortable association with the national Democratic Party) may be to its disadvantage in a generally conservative state.

Also on the negative side of the equation for the Democrats are the data showing a continuing perception of fairly widespread factionalism rooted in a variety of cleavages, perceptions that are less likely to be held among Republicans concerning their party. While the Democrats again can take some comfort in data which suggest such perceptions are lower now than in 1991, they still find themselves in a genuine struggle to maintain their position in the state's political system. Such is life in the new world of two-party competition.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This brief summary of early party and electoral history in South Carolina is drawn from the following more extensive discussions: Frank 1962; Fowler 1966; Bain 1972; Bass and DeVries 1976, chap. 11; Moore 1983; Moreland, Steed, and Baker 1986; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1992; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1995b; Steed, Moreland, and Baker 1996; and Steed 1997. A good summary is also presented in Lamis 1999, 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Republicans regained the governorship, retained control of Strom Thurmond's vacated U.S. Senate seat, swept all but one of the state's constitutional offices, and strengthened their control of both chambers of the state legislature in the 2002 elections.

<sup>3</sup>For a more extensive discussion of party development in South Carolina, see Steed 1997.

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