

Introduction: About This Special Issue

Robert P. Steed and Laurence W. Moreland, Editors

This special issue of *The American Review of Politics* consists of five papers presented at the 2002 Citadel Symposium on Southern Politics, the thirteenth such conference held in Charleston since 1978. The Symposium, codirected by Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and John C. Kuzenski (all of the political science faculty of The Citadel), has become a vital part of the network of scholars who research, write, and publish in the area of southern politics. Over forty papers were presented and discussed at the 2002 Symposium, and they represented a broad range of topics. Special features of the Symposium included a retrospective look at *The Transformation of Southern Politics* (published a little more than a quarter century ago), conducted by that important volume's authors, Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, as well as a luncheon address by Merle Black (Asa G. Candler Professor of Politics at Emory University), who discussed "The Rise of Southern Republicans," drawing on the recently published volume of the same title coauthored by Merle and his brother Earl Black.

The quality of papers presented at the Symposium typically is such that publishing even a random selection would likely result in a series of interesting, useful studies. However, for this special edition, the editors seek to bring to the larger audience of this journal a selection of papers with a South-wide focus, although the more discrete studies presented at the Symposium are also enormously important in understanding the puzzle of southern politics.

The five papers included in this special issue were selected and lightly edited by Robert P. Steed and Laurence W. Moreland. While John Kuzenski participated in the early stages of winnowing the papers, other responsibilities and obligations prevented him from participating in their final selection and preparation.

The first four of the five articles which follow address changes in southern politics. The fifth article reminds us that, at least in some respects, the South still retains elements of being politically a distinctive region. All five articles draw on South-wide data, and, collectively, they address many

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of the major themes which have characterized the study of southern politics since the publication of V.O. Key's *Southern Politics* over fifty years ago.

In the first article, "Growth in Party Competition and the Transformation of Southern Politics," Robert T. Carey, Bruce Ransom, and David Woodard review the character and significance of party change in the South, focusing on the decline of the one-party Democratic South and the rise of two-party competition. The article gathers and reviews a broad range of data on economic, social, and political change in the South. While much of this is familiar to those who study the region, it serves as a nice, concise summary of the factors related to southern political transformation and offers a revised application of Austin Ranney's party competition index to examine recent party change in the region. Overall, these authors provide an excellent introduction to this special issue.

The second article focuses specifically on the events of the 1990s which resulted in a major national shift in political power by giving Republicans control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since 1955-1956. In "Black Majority Congressional Districts and Party Competition in the South, 1988-1998," Seth McKee examines the impact of majority-minority districting and its significance for the Republican surge in House seats in the South, focusing not only on the targeted districts but also on those districts adjacent to them.

In "Turnout and Voting in Southern State House Races in the 1990s," Joseph A. Aistrup studies somewhat similar developments in relation to state legislatures. Aistrup is particularly interested in examining the relationship between turnout levels and partisan voting patterns in elections for state legislatures in the South as the regions party system has become more competitive. Additionally, he assesses the influence of state legislative district diversity on voting outcomes, beyond the usual analyses of majority-minority districts.

In the fourth article, "Gay Rights Comes to Dixie—Slowly," Hastings Wyman, editor, writer, and publisher of the indispensable *Southern Political Report*, reviews an aspect of southern political change never before addressed at the Symposium (and hardly anywhere else, for that matter). His political history of gay rights in the South together with his meticulous analysis of the recent electoral successes of gay office holders and his review of pro-gay policies of southern governments, colleges and universities, and businesses helps substantially in filling this gap.

In the final article, "The Convergence of Issue Opinions Among Southern and Non-Southern Partisans," Tom W. Rice, William P. McLean, and Amy J. Larsen examine data from the 1972-2000 cumulative General Social Survey to address the issue of continued southern distinctiveness during this

period of rapid change. Their analysis is a welcome addition to the ongoing debate over whether the South is still the South, and it carries that discussion into some new areas of inquiry.

Collectively, these five articles present interesting and valuable insights on the current state of southern politics, a politics which has come to have—and will continue to have—a powerful impact on our national politics.

