

**The Progressive Paradox: How the Democratic Party Won Rural Western Washington,
1976 - 2024**

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“Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator. And change has its enemies.”

- *Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, August 1963, Speech in Chicago*

“The urgent question of our time is whether we can make change our friend and not our enemy.”

- *President William J. Clinton, January 1993, Inaugural Address*

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Introduction: Preserving the Blue-Collar Blue Wall

As the ballot drop boxes closed on the evening of November 5, 2024, in Washington State, Democrats and Republicans across Clallam County alike flocked to their respective party offices in downtown Port Angeles, eagerly tracking the unfolding 2024 election results. For both Democrats and Republicans alike in Clallam County, in addition to the presidential election, another race was at the top of people's minds. Following Democratic Congressman Derek Kilmer's surprise announcement in 2023 that he planned to retire from Congress, on the left, Democrats in the rural white working-class region were excited by the prospect of continuing their long-standing tradition of Democratic congressional representation by sending hometown hopeful Emily Randall to Congress as the country's first LGBTQ+ Latina Congressmember.¹ On the right, Republicans were eager for the opportunity to upend rural Western Washington politics by sending Drew MacEwen to the other Washington as the region's first Republican Congressmember in nearly 60 years.

As night turned to day and the results became clear that Donald Trump won the 2024 election, the national news media, exhausted from covering the previous night's election results, spared a moment for Washington State, thrusting the state into the national spotlight for appearing to buck the national trend of rightward shift during the 2024 election.² For disappointed Democrats in Clallam County, such results provided a welcome consolation prize, heartened by Democratic success in their home state. For dejected Democrats nationwide, Washington State's performance proved surprising but also offered hope for future revival.

Yet, as the smoke settled from the 2024 election in the following weeks, it became clear that earlier reporting of Washington State bucking national rightward shifts proved premature. Still, the state remained notable nationally for experiencing the smallest rightward shift.³ In

understanding this Democratic Party overperformance, reporters noted one region – the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas of white working-class rural Western Washington – had actually swung left.⁴ A notable finding, such results brought further interest to this region that had already caught the national news media’s attention for a different reason: along with reporting on Washington State following the 2024 election, the national news media also spared a moment for rural Western Washington, thrusting its newly elected Congressmember Emily Randall into the national spotlight for her historic election to Congress.⁵

While her election proved historic for national reporters, her victory was hardly a surprise for local observers; upon securing the Democratic Party nomination in August 2024, local newspapers considered Randall’s primary victory tantamount to election – the real political fight being in the primary election.⁶ In line with the region’s safely Democratic voting pattern (see *Figures 1 and 2*), Randall was not alone in her victory, instead accompanied by Democrats up and down the ballot winning elections, providing even more consolation prizes to disappointed Democrats in places like Clallam County.⁷

The realignment of rural white working-class voters has been a well-documented political development, making these victories in rural Western Washington, while not surprising to local voters, all the more perplexing when considered in a national context. How is it that a rural white working-class region has preserved such strong Democratic loyalties that, as expressed in my conversations with community members across the region, its residents are not surprised by locally strong Democratic performance despite national trends of realignment in similar regions across the country?

Figure 1: Presidential Voting Patterns in Rural Western Washington, 1976 - 2024

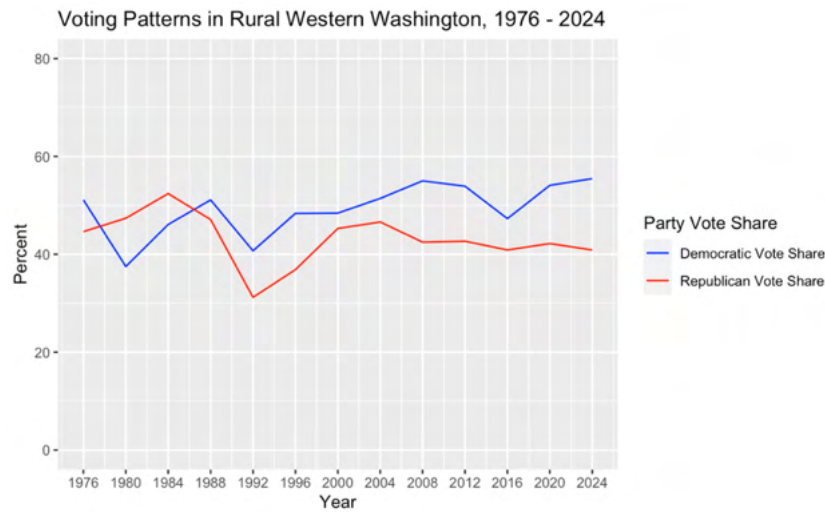
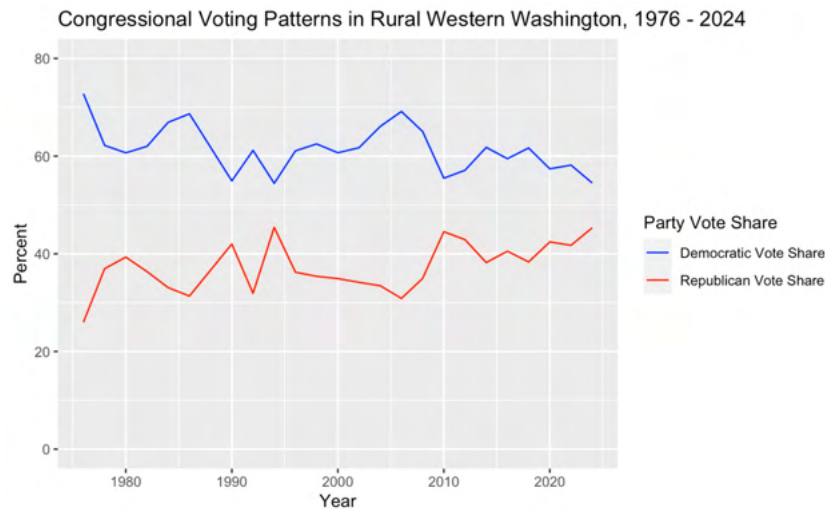


Figure 2: Congressional Voting Patterns in Rural Western Washington, 1976 - 2024



The Puzzle

The Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas of rural Western Washington present a progressive paradox. The region contains many attributes that would suggest its population would support the Republican Party, comprising a predominately white working-class population that has faced substantial union decline since the collapse of the unionized timber industry on the Olympic Peninsula in the 1980s and 1990s, and reflecting a strong military presence on the Kitsap

Peninsula with the military as the region's largest employer. Additionally, the region played a leading role in empowering a statewide Christian right leader during the 1980s and 1990s. Despite these attributes, the region has consistently supported the Democratic Party for decades, even during moments of poor performance for the Democratic Party nationally, such as the 1994 election, where the region comprised one of only two Congressional Districts to reject Newt Gingrich's Contract with America. In 2024, voters throughout the region comfortably voted for Kamala Harris over Donald Trump with over 55 percent of the vote.

The puzzling nature of the rural white working-class region of the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas consistently supporting the Democratic Party over time despite trends of political realignment important questions - what explains the resilience of the Democratic Party in the predominately white working-class rural Western Washington, and what can the political development of rural Western Washington explain about the broader landscape of political realignment over the past half-century?

To grasp the value of a case study of rural Western Washington for studies in American political development, it is worth first considering briefly the existing positions on the political development and political realignment of rural white working-class voters.

The Urban-Rural Divide and Political Realignment

In understanding the growing realignment of rural white working-class voters from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, the emergence of an urban-rural divide in American politics, or between "Whole Foods" and "Cracker Barrel" counties as political pundit David Wasserman put it, has become one of the most prominent fault lines in American politics.⁸ To explain the emergence of this "major fault line in American politics," Brown and Mettler found that this urban-rural divide emerged in two phases with varying explanations: while in the 1970s,

urban and rural voters supported Democrats and Republicans to similar extents, a first wave of sequential polarization in 1990s and early 2000s developed from rural voters feeling “left behind” in the aftermath of rural population decline and economic stagnation.⁹ Subsequently, from 2008 to 2020, areas with a large presence of evangelical protestant Christian congregations or higher proportions of their population being less educated, which are more common in rural areas than urban areas, have shifted to the Republicans.¹⁰

Contributing to these trends of sequential polarization have been structural changes such as union decline in line with broader trends of social capital decline as first articulated by Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*.¹¹ While organized labor historically served as an important component of the Democratic Party coalition, without the union to shape the social fabrics and identities of white working-class communities, scholars such as Eleanor Newman and Theda Skocpol in *Rust Belt Union Blues* have argued that other conservative community institutions, such as National Rifle Association (NRA)-affiliated gun clubs, have filled the gap left by unions to reconstruct the social and political identities of white working-class voters to be aligned with the Republican Party.¹²

However, other scholars have placed greater emphasis on the role that politicians and organizations play in their interactions with voters as the driving mechanisms behind political realignment, albeit with a lack of consensus on how they interact with voters. In this vein, some such, as Thomas Frank, have argued that the story of political realignment is one driven by the Democratic Party’s abandonment of white working-class voters, prioritizing social “wedge” issues and economic policies meant to appeal to “affluent, white-collar professionals” at the expense of white working-class voters.¹³ Deviating slightly from Frank’s thesis, Lily Geismer argued that while the Democratic Party and its politicians, such as Bill Clinton, emphasized

economic policies that appealed to middle-class voters over white working-class voters, which resulted in the latter shifting their support to the Republican Party, this did not mean that Democrats prioritized liberal cultural issues over material concerns.¹⁴ Yet, other scholars such as Hacker et al. have argued that not only has the Democratic Party avoided a shift from emphasizing first-dimension economic issues to second-dimension cultural issues that alienate white working-class voters, but that Democrats have also embraced an increasingly economically progressive agenda that would be favorable to white working-class voters.¹⁵

Although these studies examining structural conditions and politicians provide valuable insights into understanding the roots of rural white working-class political realignment, the separate treatment of these topics by scholars – politicians, community institutions as socializing forces, and political organizations as mobilizing forces – possesses shortcomings that fail to illustrate the entire landscape of political realignment in the United States. While scholars correctly identify evolving structural conditions, such as union decline, as contributing to the political realignment of the white working class through socializing mechanisms, this realignment did not form in a vacuum lacking the contributions of politicians and organizational networks in mobilizing voters and shaping structural conditions. Likewise, while politicians and organizations shape political support by mobilizing voters, these forces also interact with social fabrics shaped by community institutions that influence political alignment. Furthermore, while geographic and demographic dimensions have certainly helped shape political realignment, these factors alone fail to explain negative edge cases such as rural Western Washington.

In these respects, works such as *Stayin' Alive* by Jefferson Cowie and *Don't Blame Us* by Lily Geismer, which examine the realignment of white working-class voters, correctly incorporate in their analytical frameworks the interplay between individual politicians and

structural conditions in shaping political realignment. As outlined by both scholars, in addition to directly appealing to voters, politicians shape the structural conditions, particularly organizational networks, that influence political realignment.¹⁶ Therefore, the question is not which explanations between politicians and structural conditions best explain political realignment, but rather how do these forces interact with each other to shape political realignment (or lack thereof). With this interplay between politicians and structural conditions being important for understanding the political development of rural Western Washington, we now turn our attention toward candidate quality and organizational theories as frameworks for understanding the region's lack of political realignment.

Candidate Quality

Indeed, given Americans often pride themselves on voting for candidates over parties, “supply-side” candidate quality theories examining how candidates’ personal attributes and characteristics shape their electability are important in understanding political alignment. While early scholarship in the study of campaigns and candidates, such as Lazarsfeld et al.’s seminal work, has advanced a minimal effects theory arguing that campaigns and candidates have limited effectiveness in persuading voters, more recent studies have defended the importance of these factors in shaping election outcomes.¹⁷ Contrasting with minimal effect arguments, scholars such as Iyengar and Kinder have contended that campaigns influence voter behavior through “priming effects” in which by “calling attention to some matters while ignoring others,” candidates strategically strengthen support among loyal and swing voters.¹⁸ Likewise, candidates themselves have influence, with Carson, Engstrom, and Roberts finding in their study of Congressional races from 1872 to 1900 that the presence of a high-quality candidate over a

lower-quality challenger increased the former's vote share by approximately three to seven percent.¹⁹

Additionally, campaigns influence election outcomes by promoting voter turnout. Detailing the importance of Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts for campaigns, Donald Green and Alan Gerber note that the more personalized a campaign's outreach tactics are, the more likely a person is to vote, with strategies such as in-person canvassing being more effective at promoting turnout compared to impersonal recorded calls.²⁰ As the Democratic and Republican Parties recognize the importance of investing in robust "ground game" operations, both parties have come to invest millions of dollars to increase their capacity for strong GOTV efforts.²¹

Of course, money is not everything, and in regions such as rural Western Washington with long party dominance, incumbency advantage also shapes continued political success. However, the mechanisms behind this advantage have been a subject of debate.²² Some, such as Gary Cox and Jonathan Katz, have argued that an increase in gerrymandering can explain this incumbency advantage, which has led districts to become predominately uncompetitive.²³ Yet, with Washington State's independent redistricting commission and that my research examines political support by county lines, not district boundaries, such an explanation holds limited weight in the context of rural Western Washington. By contrast, other major factors that scholars argue contribute to incumbency advantage include the ability for an incumbent to provide constituent services or earmarks for district projects, with studies particularly identifying a positive relationship between the latter and an incumbent's reelection odds.²⁴

Organizational Networks and Community Institutions

However, while strong politicians are necessary for a party's electoral prospects, this factor alone does not sufficiently explain the long-term success of the Democrats in rural

Western Washington. Candidates do not work alone. Encompassing parties, and community and state organizations, organizational networks underpin candidate success by providing them with the manpower, money, and, oftentimes, policy necessary to run successful campaigns, as well as shape the social fabric of a community that influences voters' political identities.

The role of organizational networks in shaping political outcomes by influencing and mobilizing voters has been well-documented in political science.²⁵ As noted in previous scholarship by those such as Theda Skocpol in *Diminished Democracy*, elite influences have a greater ability to influence politics than everyday Americans, but when grassroots and elite political forces collaborate, the former are better equipped to engage in political organizing effectively.²⁶ On both the left and the right, such collaborations between grassroots organizers and elite political forces through coordinated organizational networks have bolstered mobilization efforts, such as in Colorado during the early 2000s among liberals or in other states in recent decades among conservatives through organizational networks orchestrated by the Koch Brothers.²⁷ This relationship has also worked in reverse. As Skocpol and Tervo found, where organizational networks cannot achieve this cohesion, an organizational network's ability to influence and mobilize voters is diminished.²⁸

Beyond mobilizing voters, organizations through community institutions influence political development by shaping community social fabrics that inform voters' social and political identities.²⁹ Similar to Newman and Skocpol's work, in her study of three historically Democratic white working-class communities that have experienced divergent political trajectories, Stephanie Ternullo found that varying local structural conditions have shaped how communities conceptualize their shared identity and, thus, how they fit into party politics. Robust churches have shaped "Lutherton" into a resilient Republican community, robust unions have

preserved “Motorville’s” Democratic Party leanings, and a lack of social capital in “Gravesend” has amplified community resentment that made it easily influenced by Trump’s populist message in 2016.³⁰

As insightful as previous scholarship has been in understanding the political realignment of rural white working-class voters, aside from Ternullo’s examination of Motorville, scholarship has largely provided insufficient attention to negative cases of political affiliation continuity in which realignment has failed to occur, resulting in scholarly gaps in understanding the entire landscape of political realignment. My research will seek to fill this gap, as in addition to understanding why some white working-class voters are *leaving* the Democratic Party, it is equally as important to know why others are *staying*. In doing so, we can better understand the mechanisms contributing to the political realignment of rural white working-class voters.

The Case of Rural Western Washington

Rural Western Washington serves as an effective case study for clarifying these theories of political realignment among rural white working-class voters for multiple reasons. First, the region has a long history of organized labor centered around dominant industries, evident through the timber industry and the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) on the Olympic Peninsula, and the Navy and its associated unions on the Kitsap Peninsula.³¹ Additionally, with this shared history of economic reliance on dominant industries and social fabrics defined by organized labor, the divergent trajectories of organized labor between these two peninsulas provide an opportunity to examine path dependence in understanding how organizational networks and union survival shape political loyalties. Although the nature of the region’s timber and military dominant economies make it unique in a national context, a case study of rural Western Washington remains valuable for understanding the political realignment

of other similarly rural white working-class regions of the United States that have likewise experienced economic turmoil such as the Rust Belt.

I define rural Western Washington as the counties comprising the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas: Kitsap, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, and Mason (see *Figure 3*).³² Although differing definitions of rural Western Washington exist, the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas have been grouped culturally and politically, with the federal government grouping these counties into the same congressional district through Washington’s 6th Congressional District.

Figure 3: Counties of Rural Western Washington



Sources of Evidence and Methods

Considering the variety of factors that have shaped rural Western Washington’s political development from 1976 to 2024, I employ a historical institutionalist approach that considers “several dynamics and how they interact rather than focusing only on one.”³³ Under this approach, I begin my analysis in the year 1976 for multiple reasons. First, Brown and Mettler, in their article “Sequential Polarization,” note that this period spans from a “baseline” before the urban-rural divide to its current presence in politics.³⁴ Narratively, the starting year of 1976 coincides with the elections of two prominent politicians in rural Western Washington who have

played important roles in shaping the region's political alliances and networks – Democratic Congressman Norman Dicks and Republican state senator Ellen Craswell.

Under this historical institutionalist framework, I utilize a mixed methods approach, relying on qualitative and quantitative data to examine multiple dimensions of political development in the region. The sources of evidence I utilize include: archival research from the collections of the State and Southwest Regional Branches of the Washington State Archives, the Washington State Library, the University of Washington Special Collections, the Princeton University Special Collections, the Kitsap History Museum, the North Olympic History Center, the Jefferson County Historical Society, the Mason County Historical Society Museum, and the Polson Museum; interviews with current and former union workers and leaders, community members, elected officials, county and state Democratic and Republican Party leaders, local and statewide organizational leaders, and journalists; ethnographic research involving comparisons between old and contemporary photos of rural Western Washington; and data visualizations of electoral outcomes, campaign finances, candidates, and organizational activities.

To collect historical information on political and organizational life in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024, I utilized archival material collected from nine different archives across Western Washington. At the Washington State Archives, I reviewed municipal and county government correspondence from Grays Harbor and Mason Counties, and the personal papers of 12 rural Western Washington state legislators.³⁵ At the University of Washington Special Collections, I reviewed the “Norman D. Dicks Papers” collection. At each county historical society, I reviewed collections of oral histories of union workers, newspaper articles, historic photographs of communities, newsletters, and city directories and phone books to construct datasets for the quantitative component of my thesis. Additionally, I am grateful to a Kitsap

County Democratic Party leader for providing me a collection of Kitsap County Democratic Party documents spanning the 1990s to 2012, and Lynn Kessler for providing a copy of her autobiography.

Given this thesis's historical institutionalist approach, online archival tools that have been of assistance include the Internet Archive's WayBack Machine, which archives information from websites across time, and Newspapers.com, an online archive of newspapers across time and place. Both have allowed me to acquire evidence over time about candidates, campaigns, organizational networks, and political life in rural Western Washington spanning 1976 to 2024.

To supplement this data, I conducted 82 interviews with individuals spanning political and organizational life in rural Western Washington and Washington State.³⁶ I utilized a purposive sampling method to interview liberal and conservative organizational leaders, elected officials, and activists as well as impartial journalists, although some counties in rural Western Washington may have had greater representation in interviews than others given people often declined invitations to interview. To gain more interview subjects from organized labor and veterans, I invoked a snowball sampling method. While these sampling methods may lead to a biased sampling of subjects, this is mitigated by the fact that "non-random samples of interview subjects can [still] generate causal process observations" in mixed-methods historical institutionalist scholarship.³⁷ My interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, with the majority of interviews spanning an hour and a half, although my shortest interview was 30 minutes, and my longest interview was four hours. These interviews were conducted in-person, over the phone, and via Zoom. I only recorded interviews with permission in compliance with Washington State recording laws and to allow interview subjects to feel most comfortable.

In addition to archival and interview research, I conducted ethnographic research by visiting timber towns across rural Western Washington as well as the Navy town of Bremerton, speaking with local residents and comparing contemporary photographs with older photographs to examine change or continuity over time.

Where relevant, I quantified evidence pertaining to the candidate quality and organizational network theories that I explore in this thesis. For the quantitative component of my thesis, I utilized Census data and created multiple datasets detailing the 577 state legislative races and 307 candidates who ran for state legislative office in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024, county party leadership and 57 county party platforms, and NRA-affiliated gun clubs. For my discussion of the Tea Party in rural Western Washington, I built upon a dataset initially developed by Theda Skocpol. Additionally, using R to conduct descriptive statistics, I conducted data visualizations of region- and county-level presidential and congressional electoral results, as well as descriptive statistics of campaign donations and mentions of local issues in county party platforms.

At each turn of my thesis, I have sought to utilize the best methodological technique to examine rural Western Washington's political development, ranging from comparative historical analysis to descriptive statistics.³⁸ⁱ In this respect, I follow a piece of advice provided by historian John Lewis Gaddis. Although his advice is primarily aimed at historians, his remarks still hold weight for effective historical institutionalist research: "Historians are – or ought to be

ⁱ Given the historical institutionalist nature of this research incorporating comparative historical analysis and a case study of a specific region, I will at times invoke cases of political realignment in other similarly rural white working-class regions where relevant to clarify the mechanisms behind political development in rural Western Washington. This practice takes influence from other comparative historical institutionalist works such as Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* where Skocpol occasionally invokes negative cases in which social revolution did not occur in Britain, Japan, and Germany to clarify the mechanisms that have led social revolution to occur in France, Russia, and Germany. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, First edition. (Cambridge: University Press, 1979). 37

– open to diverse ways of organizing knowledge. Whatever works, in short, we should use.”³⁹

Likewise, as Galvin and Thurston write for scholars of American Political Development: “APD scholarship has always been methodologically pluralistic: the question chooses the method.”⁴⁰ I have yet to find better methodological guides for “doubly engaged” political science scholarship.⁴¹

The Argument

With geographic and demographic explanations being insufficient to explain the lack of political realignment of rural Western Washington, voluntarist and structural factors through candidate quality and organizational networks have played a larger role in shaping the political development of the region from 1976 to 2024. The efforts of shrewd Democratic candidates and highly collaborative state-level liberal organizational networks have outperformed less collaborative and robust conservative counterparts in mobilizing voters, supplementing or replacing the socializing role of unions to preserve Democratic Party loyalties despite increasingly unfavorable geographic and demographic trends.

While political science research has often provided separate attention to candidates and organizational networks in studies of American political development, my research treats these areas of study as being connected. Indeed, to fully understand the political development of the region, these explanations cannot be considered in isolation, as political leadership has helped to shape the structural conditions of the region, and the structural conditions of organizational networks have helped to supplement or challenge candidate organizing efforts. Examining the combination and interplay of these factors across time will play a central role in understanding the political development of rural Western Washington, forming the heart of this thesis.

Road Map of the Chapters Ahead

By examining the political development of rural Western Washington, this thesis seeks to clarify the mechanisms of political realignment by understanding the region's candidate and organizational dimensions across time rather than demographic and geographic explanations. I present my findings across four chapters. In Chapter one, I will contextualize the region by providing an overview of the demographic and geographic dimensions of the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas and how they largely fail to align with national trends of political realignment among rural white working-class regions, thereby necessitating examinations of candidate quality and organizational networks.

Given that demographic and geographic trends are insufficient to understand the political development of the region, Chapter two will explore candidate quality theories. Examining the quality and voter outreach strategies of Democratic and Republican Congressional and state legislative candidates, I contrast the Democrats' broader-reaching locally- and economically-focused efforts, and their practice of big tent politics with Republicans' focus on nationalized partisan social issues.

Flowing from this examination, I discuss in Chapter three the roles that community institutions play in shaping the social and political identities of communities in rural Western Washington. In this chapter, I discuss the divergent paths of organized labor and community social fabrics between the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas, contrasting organized labor's collapse on the Olympic Peninsula with its survival on the Kitsap Peninsula after local economies of both were threatened in the 1980s and 1990s. While this has contributed to more tenuous Democratic Party support on the Olympic Peninsula than the Kitsap Peninsula, conservative organizational infrastructure that would normally supplant organized labor in the social fabric of communities

as seen in other states, particularly NRA-affiliated gun clubs, have not established a strong presence in rural Western Washington, thereby helping to preserve Democratic Party loyalties.

In addition to playing socializing roles, organizational networks fill important mobilizing roles in influencing voters. To this end, I begin Chapter four by discussing the traditional pillars of the region's left and right organizational networks, the Democratic and Republican Parties, and the Christian right, contrasting the Democrats' strong locally focused outreach efforts with the Republicans' comparatively weaker focus and greater intra-party conflict driven greatly by an adversarial relationship with the Christian right. I then contrast the emergence of a highly collaborative liberal state organizational network with the less coordinated and robust conservative counterpart which have sought to mobilize and influence voters since the 1990s. However, in the absence of being able to elect conservative candidates, I discuss how conservative organizational networks have applied their infrastructure to pass ballot initiatives. Additionally, recognizing their organizational limitations, Washington State conservative activists have recently begun building a coordinated conservative movement that replicates the success of the liberal organizational network. I conclude by briefly discussing this effort.

Chapter One: Rural Western Washington in National Trends of Political Realignment

Throughout rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024, Democrats up and down the ballot have consistently been successful in winning elected office, overcoming increasingly unfavorable conditions as seen from national trends of sequential polarization to win the support of the predominately white working-class region.⁴² These victories were not the result of chance, but rather a combination of strong Democratic candidates and the deliberate development of favorable structural conditions over time in response to unfavorable structural developments that otherwise would have led the region to grow increasingly unfavorable to the Democratic Party.

To this end, this chapter contextualizes the counties of Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason Counties in the broader landscape of national political realignment, discussing how these counties have occasionally aligned and, more frequently, failed to align with national trends of political development. To achieve this, I discuss the geographic landscape of these counties as well as the demographic characteristics of these counties, particularly educational attainment and racial composition. Despite its rural geography, low educational attainment, and majority-white composition, rural Western Washington has consistently supported Democrats from 1976 to 2024, suggesting that other factors beyond geography and demography must be examined to understand the region's sustained Democratic loyalties.

Dirt Road Democrats

Despite trends of political realignment in national politics, Democratic successes have not been limited to urban populations, with Democrats being able to achieve electoral victories both before and after the emergence of the rural-urban divide in American politics in the 1990s, a development that is particularly evident in rural Western Washington. In securing electoral victories up and down the ballot in rural Western Washington, Democrats have not only won

elections by winning voters in the region’s few urban population centers, but also by winning voters in rural communities throughout the region, thereby weakening geographically pessimistic arguments that Democrats cannot expect to win the support of rural voters.

To classify rural and urban counties, the Office of Management and Budget in 1973 grouped counties in the US into metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties, with the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service developing this system further by establishing a system of rural-urban continuum codes in 1975 in which each county is assigned a score from a range of one to nine. Counties designated as one through three are classified as urban counties while counties designated four through nine are classified as rural counties.⁴³ When classified under this system by the USDA, four out of the five counties of interest - Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, and Mason Counties - have consistently been designated as rural counties from 1973 to 2023, thereby demonstrating the long-standing and continued rural composition of the Olympic Peninsula of rural Western Washington.

Table 1: Rural-Urban Classifications of Rural Western Washington by USDA, 1974 - 2023⁴⁴

	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013	2023
Clallam	7 (Rural)	5 (Rural)	5 (Rural)	5 (Rural)	5 (Rural)	5 (Rural)
Grays Harbor	5 (Rural)	5 (Rural)	4 (Rural)	4 (Rural)	4 (Rural)	4 (Rural)
Jefferson	7 (Rural)	7 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)
Kitsap	4 (Rural)	3 (Urban)	3 (Urban)	3 (Urban)	2 (Urban)	2 (Urban)
Mason	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	6 (Rural)	4 (Rural)	4 (Rural)

When utilizing these designations from the USDA, at first glance, Kitsap County does not initially appear to fit cleanly into conceptions of rural Western Washington, with Kitsap County notably being classified by the USDA as an urban county since 1983. However, a closer examination reveals that the county has been and continues to be more rural than a broad overview may suggest. Culturally, residents of Kitsap County have identified themselves as rural, with a history of Kitsap County published in 2012 by Kitsap County residents contending “the county is still of a rural flavor.”⁴⁵ Indeed, reliance on strictly population numbers without consideration to the local landscape can produce incomplete understandings of a county’s composition and culture.⁴⁶ To this end, the USDA has acknowledged that their rural-urban continuum scale possesses limitations in being fully able “to adequately capture the complexity of settlement patterns and labor market areas.”⁴⁷ Indicative of this shortcoming, counties in Eastern Washington that would typically culturally be considered as rural - such as Asotin, Chelan, or Walla Walla Counties – have all been classified as urban counties in 2023.⁴⁸

These shortcomings in a county-level classification mean that a more granular scope of focus is necessary, with a census tract-level examination of Kitsap County revealing that the district is much less urban than the USDA classification may suggest. To measure Congressional District density, CityLab’s Congressional District Index examined households per square mile to classify neighborhoods as “very low density,” “low density,” “medium density,” or “high density,” with “very low” and “low” density neighborhoods broadly aligning with rural communities.⁴⁹ In 2023, 57.62 percent of Kitsap County’s census tracts were classified as “very low” or “low” density, and a majority of Kitsap County’s land area was classified as rural land at 61.58 percent, further speaking to the rural nature of Kitsap County and sustaining the puzzle of examining why rural Western Washington continues to support the Democratic Party.⁵⁰

Consequently, including Kitsap County in our examination of the political development of rural Western Washington remains valuable to us for understanding the resilience of the Democratic Party in the region.

Aside from voting for Republican presidential candidates from 1980 to 1988, Kitsap County has consistently supported Democratic candidates at all government levels, with the county's non-urban precincts increasingly voting for Democrats in recent years. Since 1992, Kitsap County has maintained its support for Democratic presidential candidates by gradually increasing its vote share for the Democratic Party from 38.89 percent (Republicans this year only received 33.13 percent) to 58.48 percent in 2024. This increase in vote share has not only been the result of increased support by voters in the county's municipal population centers, but also the product of steady Democratic gains in more rural parts of the district. Most recently, in 2020, Democrats won 112 precincts outside of Kitsap County's cities' boundaries, which encompasses 46.09 percent of Kitsap County's total number of precincts, while in 2024, Democrats won 119 precincts outside of Kitsap County's cities' boundaries, or 48.97 percent of Kitsap County's total number of precincts.⁵¹ At the Congressional level, Democratic Party popularity also has remained consistently strong, even during nationally difficult years for Democrats such as 1994, which saw all but two Democratic US Representatives from Washington State being voted out of office, and 2010 following backlash from the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Democratic Congressman Norm Dicks was one of these survivors, and in both elections, a majority of Kitsap County voters supported his candidacies. Democratic Congressional vote counts have generally fluctuated around 60 percent of the vote and most recently, 2024 Democratic Congressional candidate Emily Randall won Kitsap County with 57.39 percent of the vote.

Across the rest of rural Western Washington, other counties have similarly demonstrated Democratic Party resilience that challenges national political developments. Jefferson County most notably defies the national trend of rural counties predominately supporting the Republican Party. Aside from the 1980 election in which a plurality of Jefferson County voted Ronald Reagan for President over Jimmy Carter, Jefferson County has maintained firm support for the Democratic Party at all levels of government from 1976 to 2024.⁵² Most recently during the 2024 election, Jefferson County resoundingly supported for Democratic nominee for President Kamala Harris with 70.69 percent of the vote - the most recent victory in a series of elections in which Democrats have been increasing their vote share in the county. At the congressional level, Democratic successes in Jefferson County have been similarly impressive, with the Democratic candidate receiving vote shares hovering around 70 percent for the past decade and receiving less than 60 percent of the vote only twice from 1976 to 2024.⁵³

To explain these victories, political observers in the region have emphasized the role of voters in Jefferson County's population centers of Port Townsend and Port Ludlow. While the importance of these population centers cannot be overstated in contributing to Democratic Party strength in Jefferson County, Democratic Party performance in rural parts of Jefferson County also cannot be understated. Of the 17,459 votes cast for Democratic Presidential candidate Kamala Harris in 2024, 8,357 votes (approximately 47.87 percent of Democratic Party votes) came from rural parts of the county outside of the urban centers of Port Townsend and Port Ludlow, and 19 out of the 21 precincts outside of these cities voted for Harris.⁵⁴ These results serve as an increase from the Democratic Party's 2020 performance in Jefferson County, as out of the 17,204 votes cast for Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden, 8,068 votes (approximately 46.90 percent) came from rural Jefferson County.⁵⁵ This strong rural

performance is shared across down-ballot Democrats as well. Of the 17,214 votes cast for Democratic Congressional candidate Emily Randall in 2024, 8,214 votes (approximately 47.72 percent of Democratic Party votes) came from rural Jefferson County, and 17 out of the 21 precincts outside of Jefferson County's cities voted for Randall.⁵⁶

In other parts of rural Western Washington, Democratic Party strength has been less dramatic in percentage of the vote than in Jefferson County, but their shared resilience still proves equally noteworthy. Historically a presidential bellwether county, Clallam County fluctuated in its support for the Democratic Party during presidential elections, regularly alternating between Democratic and Republican candidates, although Democratic Party performance rarely reached below 40 percent.⁵⁷ However, at other levels of government, Democrats in Clallam County have achieved greater success, with Democrats regularly being elected as County Commissioners and as state legislators. At the Congressional level, Democratic candidates have also achieved much more pronounced success. From 1976 to 2024, Democratic candidates for Congress generally won an outright majority of the vote in Clallam County with vote shares generally in the mid-to-upper 50s, most recently winning 51.78 percent of the vote in the 2024 election.⁵⁸

Like in Kitsap and Jefferson Counties, these recent victories have not been limited to increased support from Clallam County's major cities; instead, Democrats have been winning across the county, including rural communities outside of the major population centers of Port Angeles and Sequim. In 2024, Democratic candidates won 26 precincts in Clallam County outside the city limits of Port Angeles and Sequim (29 precincts for President), while Republican candidates won only 22 precincts in Clallam County outside of these city limits.⁵⁹ Further demonstrating that recent Democratic gains have not been solely driven by increased support

from the county's urban centers, but rather also by gains in rural areas, in 2020, Democratic candidates only won 19 precincts in Clallam County outside Port Angeles and Sequim (21 precincts for President), while Republican candidates won 29 precincts in Clallam County outside of these city limits.⁶⁰ Likewise, in 2016, Democratic candidates only won 17 precincts in Clallam County outside of these cities (10 precincts for President), while Republican candidates won 31 precincts in Clallam County outside of these city limits (38 precincts for President).⁶¹ With the Democratic Party progressively making gains into rural counties of Clallam County in recent elections, election results in Clallam County have run counter to national trends depicting increasing rural support for Republicans.

While Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam appear to complicate national narratives of rural white working-class realignment, at first glance, Grays Harbor and Mason Counties appear to corroborate such trends, although a closer examination reveals that these counties also have seen Democratic Party resilience that complicates national narratives. Traditionally white working-class counties with economies heavily defined by the unionized timber industry, Grays Harbor and Mason Counties historically supported the Democratic Party across all levels of government.⁶² Until 2016, voters in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties consistently voted for the Democratic Party candidate for President, and until 2020 and 2022 in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties respectively, voters in these counties voted for the Democratic candidate for Congress. Until the 2010 election, support for Democratic Congressional candidates rarely dipped below 60 percent in Mason County and never fell below 60 percent in Grays Harbor County, and even since the 2020 and 2022 elections, Republicans have only won extremely slim majorities in these races.⁶³ Similarly with local races, Mason County, centered around Washington's 35th legislative district, almost exclusively elected Democratic County Commissioners and state legislators until

2014. That year, however, Mason County voters elected two Republican state representatives, followed by a Republican state senator in 2022, completing an entirely Republican state legislative delegation. In Grays Harbor County, centered around Washington's 19th legislative district, almost exclusively elected Democratic County Commissioners and state legislators until voters elected two Republican state legislators in 2016 before electing an entirely Republican state legislative delegation in 2020, a delegation that has remained the same since then.

However, despite these trends in recent years in which Republicans in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties have made electoral gains, Democratic Party strength remains strong, partly evidenced by the fact that Democratic Party electoral performance has remained consistent over the past couple of election cycles. From 2020 to 2024, voters in Mason County slightly increased their support for the Democratic Party presidential candidate from 46.29 percent in 2020 to 46.92 percent in 2024, and voters in Grays Harbor County slightly increased their support for the Democratic Party presidential candidate from 45.14 percent in 2020 to 45.41 percent in 2024. By contrast, Republicans have won only slim majorities in these counties, with only 50.16 percent of voters in Mason County voting for Trump in 2020 before declining to a plurality of 49.41 percent of voters supporting him in 2024, and only 51.71 percent of voters in Grays Harbor County supported Trump in 2020 before decreasing to 51.42 percent of the vote.⁶⁴ By contrast, Democrats in Grays Harbor County only won 15 rural precincts outside of Grays Harbor County's largest city, Aberdeen, in 2020 before increasing the number of rural precincts they won to 23 in 2024.⁶⁵ Likewise, in 2020, Democrats in Mason County only won 14 rural precincts outside of Mason County's largest city, Shelton, before increasing the number of rural precincts they won to 20 in 2024.⁶⁶ Such results have stood in stark contrast to rural white working-class regions of the country that have experienced political realignment, such as Western Pennsylvania

which saw nearly 70 percent of voters supporting Trump during the 2020 election.⁶⁷

Consequently, all counties of rural Western Washington have failed to align perfectly with national trends of white working-class realignment in rural communities, especially considering the improved performance of the Democratic Party in these counties from 2020 to 2024.

Educational Attainment

Before the 2016 election, conventional political wisdom, polling, and scholarship maintained that within the "diploma divide" between college-educated and non-college-educated voters in American politics, the former tended to support the Republican Party while the latter tended to support the Democratic Party.⁶⁸ However, following Donald Trump's election in 2016, political analysts have taken increasing notice of the growing political realignment of college-educated voters to the Democratic Party and non-college educated voters to the Republican Party, with educational attainment now becoming "the new fault line in American politics."⁶⁹ With Adam Harris noting in *The Atlantic* that this "political realignment doesn't happen overnight," an examination of educational attainment in rural Western Washington and its relationship to the region's political affiliation over time provides us with further evidence demonstrating the insufficient nature of demographic factors in explaining political development.⁷⁰

While Kitsap County today has a proportionally larger "highly educated" population than the national rate, this has not always been the case from 1976 to 2024. Historically, Kitsap County possessed college education rates lower than the national rate, only recently overtaking the national rate as reported in the 2023 American Community Survey with 36.5 percent of its population being "highly educated" compared to the national rate of 35.0 percent.⁷¹ At first glance, such a development appears to suggest that Kitsap County's voting patterns have aligned

with national trends: the less-educated Kitsap County of the 1970s to 2010 naturally aligned with the Democratic Party before “highly educated” voters realigned with the Democratic Party in the 2010s, with Kitsap voters continuing to align with the Democratic Party following this realignment as the county grew its college-educated population.⁷² Indeed, from 2016 to 2023, Kitsap County gained 16,833 “highly educated” residents.⁷³

However, while the Democratic Party in Kitsap County likely benefited from this substantial increase in college-educated voters, an increasingly educated electorate alone is insufficient to explain the Democratic Party’s resilience in the county, particularly given that from 2016 to 2024, Democrats increased the number of votes they received for President by 28,575 votes.⁷⁴ Likewise, at the Congressional level, while Democratic Party performance remained strong in 2024, the number of votes cast for the Democratic Congressional candidate decreased by 4,246 votes despite increased educational attainment.⁷⁵ Consequently, such presidential and congressional election performances suggest that demographic factors like educational attainment alone cannot explain the county’s strong Democratic Party performance, implying that other factors are likely be involved in sustaining Democratic support beyond education.

Similar to Kitsap County, while Jefferson County at first glance aligns with recent national trends regarding the relationship between educational attainment and political affiliation, its historical voting patterns and educational attainment rates complicate this relationship. In Jefferson County, where Democrats in rural Western Washington have seen their greatest support, 43.5 percent of its population over the age of 25 were classified “highly educated” in 2023, a much greater proportion compared to the national rate of 35 percent, likely contributing to the county supporting the Democratic presidential and congressional candidate

with over 70 percent of the vote in 2024.⁷⁶ However, Jefferson County’s historical voting patterns have not aligned perfectly with national trends. While Jefferson County has possessed a larger proportion of its population classified as “highly educated” compared to the national rate since 1980, voters have regularly voted for Democratic candidates at all levels of government even though “highly educated” voters tended to support Republican candidates before the realignment of “highly educated” voters in the late 2000s.⁷⁷ Consequently, this has left a multi-decade span in which the demographic factor of educational attainment alone has been insufficient in explaining political alignment in Jefferson County.

Like Kitsap and Mason Counties, Clallam County tells a different story than national narratives regarding the relationship between educational attainment and political affiliation. From 1976 to 2024, Clallam County’s “highly educated” population has been consistently below the national college education rate for adults aged 25 or older. Before the realignment of voters by educational attainment in the late 2000s, educational attainment may have helped to explain political outcomes at the congressional and local levels in Clallam County from 1976 to the late 2000s, with Democrats regularly winning these elections. However, like in Kitsap and Mason County, educational attainment’s role in shaping political outcomes has been similarly complex in Clallam County. Prior to the 2024 election, Clallam County was a bellwether county for presidential elections, weakening arguments emphasizing the role of demographic factors such as educational attainment in shaping political outcomes. Furthermore, while non-college-educated voters nationally have recently realigned their support towards the Republican Party, Clallam County has continued to support Democrats across all levels of government despite its proportionally smaller college-educated population than the national rate, electing Biden and

Harris in 2020 and 2024, and Democratic Congressmembers with a majority of the vote since 2012.⁷⁸

Lastly, while Grays Harbor and Mason Counties at a macro-level have experienced political trajectories that would suggest alignment with national trends pertaining to educational attainment and political outcomes, like the rest of rural Western Washington, this relationship proves more complex. From 1976 to 2024, residents of Grays Harbor and Mason Counties have consistently achieved lower college education rates than national educational attainment rates. In 1980, 9.8 and 11.6 percent of adults 25 or older in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties were classified as “highly educated” respectively, far lower than the national rate of 17 percent of adults nationally.⁷⁹ Since then, Grays Harbor and Mason Counties have continued to achieve less educational attainment compared to national trends, with only 17.6 and 22.0 percent of adults aged 25 or older being “highly educated” in 2023 respectively compared to the national rate of 35 percent.⁸⁰ Further exemplifying their poor educational outcomes, both counties have ranked among the lowest in Washington State for educational attainment.⁸¹ With non-college-educated Americans historically being strong Democrats before realigning with the Republican Party beginning in the late 2000s, Grays Harbor and Mason Counties’ increasing support of the Republican Party in recent years initially appears to align with national trends of realignment. However, a closer examination of recent election results reveals that Republicans have underperformed compared to national trends. In 2024, exit polling from the presidential election found that 56 percent of non-college-educated voters supported Trump, but only 51.42 percent and 49.41 percent of voters in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties respectively supported Trump in 2024, despite these counties’ large proportions of non-college-educated voters.⁸²

Education has played a complicated role in shaping political alignment on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. From 1976 to 2024, the counties of the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas have directly challenged national trends of the relationship between educational attainment and political affiliation in differing ways and across this time period, including in the present day. As such, the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas demonstrate that while educational attainment has certainly played a role in shaping political outcomes in the region, historically and in present times, education as a demographic factor alone is insufficient to explain the resilience of the Democratic Party in the region.

Table 2: Percentage of People Aged 25 or Older Who Received a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Rural Western Washington, 1970 - 2023⁸³

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2023
National Rate	11%	17%	21.3%	25.6%	29.9%	35.0%
Clallam	8.8%	13.8%	16.1%	20.8%	23.3%	30.7%
Grays Harbor	6.9%	9.8%	11%	12.7%	14.5%	17.6%
Jefferson	9.9%	17.6%	21.8%	28.4%	34.8%	43.3%
Kitsap	10.2%	16.4%	19.8%	25.3%	28.0%	36.5%
Mason	8.6%	11.6%	13.6%	15.6%	17.9%	23.3%

Racial Composition⁸⁴

In addition to geography and education, race plays an important role in shaping political affiliation, with the five counties of rural Western Washington possessing a predominantly white

population, both historically and in present times. Shaped by Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and Lyndon Johnson’s support of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the Republican Party’s concurrent Southern Strategy, racial minorities became an important segment of the Democratic Party coalition while white Americans sorted themselves into the Republican Party coalition.⁸⁵ However, despite white Americans forming an essential segment of the Republican Party coalition, the heavily white region of rural Western Washington has maintained strong Democratic Party loyalties from 1976 to 2024. To provide a sense of scale for the extent to which rural Western Washington has been and continues to be a predominately white region, in 1980, Jefferson County’s white population was proportionally the largest out of all the counties in rural Western Washington at 95.73 percent white. Following closely behind was Grays Harbor County, with a 95.17 percent white population; Mason County, which was 94.75 percent white; Clallam County, which was 94.24 percent white; and Kitsap County, which was 92.38 percent white.⁸⁶ For comparison, in 1980, white Americans only comprised approximately 79.9 percent of the population nationally.⁸⁷ While the region has increasingly diversified since 1976, today, rural Western Washington continues to be a predominately white region (see table below), with white residents as a proportion of the region’s population still outpacing white Americans comprising 63.4 percent of the national population in 2023.⁸⁸

Table 3: White Residents as a Proportion of Rural Western Washington Population, 1976 - 2024

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2023
National Rate	83.1%	80.3%	77.1%	72.4%	63.4%
Clallam	94.2%	93.0%	89.1%	88.0%	82.8%
Grays Harbor	95.2%	93.9%	88.3%	86.2%	80.9%
Jefferson	95.7%	95.6%	92.2%	91.3%	86.7%

Kitsap	92.4%	90.2%	84.3%	83.1%	76.5%
Mason	94.8%	93.3%	88.5%	88.0%	78.3%

Despite national trends of growing Republican support among white Americans, rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 has largely failed to align with these national trends in race and politics. For instance, while Jefferson County has consistently possessed the largest proportion of white residents in rural Western Washington, its voters have consistently provided the region's largest electoral support for the Democrats. Likewise, while Grays Harbor and Mason Counties are the second and third most diverse counties in rural Western Washington today, their support for the Democratic Party is lower than that of comparatively whiter Clallam County. In the context of Kitsap County as well, political outcomes have not perfectly aligned with national trends in race and politics: while Latino voters nationally swung towards the Republican Party during the 2024 election and Hispanics as a proportion of Kitsap County's population has increased substantially in recent years from 5.9 percent in 2010 to 9.0 percent in 2023, Democratic Party presidential electoral performance was at its highest in Kitsap County in 2024. Consequently, race, like geography and education, while commonly invoked arguments to explain political realignment in the United States, fails to explain the political development of rural Western Washington and thus further demonstrates the need to examine other factors contributing to the region's political development.

Conclusion: Local Forces Matter

Given these five counties have largely failed to align with nationalized demographic and geographic trends in political development, the puzzling nature of rural Western Washington's continued Democratic loyalties becomes further amplified while highlighting the shortcomings

of demographic explanations in understanding the region's political development. Consequently, other demographic arguments that have not yet been discussed in depth but local observers of politics in rural Western Washington have invoked, such as liberal migration from California and King County into rural Western Washington, particularly Jefferson County and Clallam County, in recent years likely fail to hold weight. In the case of Jefferson County, Census records indicate that only 2,589 people from California and King County migrated to Jefferson County from 2010 to 2024, hardly a sufficient number to swing electoral tides to the Democrats when they have already been winning by approximately 7,000 to 11,000 votes during this period.⁸⁹ Likewise, migration to Clallam Counties from locations such as California or King County is hardly a new phenomenon; even though, at least 2001, reports from the Washington State Employee Security Division have noted that Clallam County has had a reputation as a "retirement center of note," Clallam County has regularly voted for Democratic down-ballot candidates.⁹⁰

Yet, this reliance on demographic and geographic arguments to explain trends in political development is understandable. With an increasing nationalization of politics in the United States, scholars and pundits have provided increasing attention to understanding national political development at the expense of understanding how political development has played out in local communities. Consequently, the story of rural white working-class political realignment often told in contemporary American politics is national in its scope and relies heavily on geographic and demographic factors as explanatory variables. While recent election outcomes have provided this argument some merit at a macro-level, this grand national narrative obscures critical local factors that may shape why realignment may occur or fail to occur.

The fact that the political trajectories of the five counties of rural Western Washington do not perfectly substantiate nationalized narratives of rural white working-class political

realignment means that other factors must be examined to understand the region's continued support of the Democratic Party. Geography is not a guarantee, and demographics are not destiny. By evaluating local forces such as candidate quality and organizational life on the left and right in rural Western Washington over time, we can understand the locally influenced mechanisms behind why white working-class voters in rural Western Washington continue to support the Democratic Party and, in doing so, clarify in reverse the mechanisms behind why white working-class voters elsewhere have shifted their support to the Republican Party.

Chapter Two: Winning Hearts and Minds: Candidate Quality and Campaigns

The odds were stacked against him. On July 19, 1994, long-standing Democratic US Representative Norm Dicks declared his intention of running for re-election. Representing a rural white working-class district with a heavy military presence, Dicks had a difficult political fight ahead, compounded by high anti-Democratic Party sentiment during the 1994 midterm election amplified by the Republican Party's nationally popular Contract with America.⁹¹ Nationwide, Americans bought into the Contract as Republicans captured unified control of the House and Senate for the first time since 1952. In Washington State, the Contract with America's effects were especially pronounced as Republicans won seven out of nine Congressional elections in Washington State, defeating long-standing Democratic incumbents, including Speaker of the House Tom Foley, who had served in the US House of Representatives since 1965.

But not Dicks, who defied the odds by being re-elected to his 10th consecutive term with 58.3 percent of the vote – a resounding victory in a district with demographics that had been becoming increasingly unsupportive of Democrats and in an overall year of poor performance by the Democratic Party. Beyond the 1994 election, from 1976 to 2024, Democratic candidates across all levels of government in rural Western Washington have found substantial success in being elected to office, suggesting that factors beyond demographics, particularly candidates and their campaigns, have helped to construct Democratic Party resilience in the region.

To this end, I begin by discussing how the personal and professional backgrounds and fundraising efforts of Democratic candidates have helped them garner broader support among voters than Republicans. Then, I discuss how Democratic candidates in rural Western Washington have further developed support by maintaining a robust local presence in their districts, including practicing big tent politics focusing on locally relevant material issues,

contrasting with Republicans' greater emphasis on nationalized social issues. In this examination, I concentrate on Congressmembers and state legislators. I focused my analysis on state legislators rather than other local races, such as municipal offices, because state legislators are the lowest level of government in which races are consistently held in a partisan manner.

High-Quality Candidates: Personal Background and Home Field Advantage

In his lecture examining politics as a vocation, German sociologist Max Weber asserted that certain backgrounds made for stronger or weaker politicians. According to Weber, those with military experience would likely be poorly suited to politics given military's rigid nature preparing them poorly for the fluidity of political life, while those such as lawyers would be well-suited to survive the often ruthless and adaptive nature of politics.⁹² As we shall see briefly, Weber's assessment of the backgrounds that make for an effective politician bears some weakness when considered in the context of rural Western Washington: military veterans have been well-represented as elected officials while lawyers have been less represented. However, his arguments provide a useful starting point in that he correctly identifies the importance of personal and professional background and other characteristics relating to candidate quality as critical to shaping successful candidacies.

Among the attributes of a candidate's personal background that are often highly weighted among voters is their local ties to the district they seek to represent. In his examination of southern US politics in 1949, Valdimer Key found that political candidates tend to receive increased support from their childhood and adjacent communities, with this localism effect, or the "friends and neighbors effect," being further substantiated in subsequent studies in contexts beyond the southern US.⁹³ Clarifying the mechanisms behind this "friends and neighbors effect," future studies found that voters often receive more information about local candidates because of

information diffusion through local social networks and local media, as well as information about a candidate's local roots often serve as a proxy for a candidate's "behavioral localism," or "the extent to which the politician acts in line with the interests and wishes of the voters themselves and others in their locality."⁹⁴ This hometown edge improves support for native-son candidates by mobilizing new voters and converting even "regular voters traditionally loyal to candidates from another party."⁹⁵

Within rural Western Washington, political leaders have similarly substantiated the importance of candidates possessing local ties, ranging from being a helpful attribute to an informal requirement.⁹⁶ Describing long-standing community ties as an informal requirement for being elected to office, a leader in the Mason County Democrats shared "They used to say one had to be born in Mason County and have family background... in order to be elected."⁹⁷ Echoing these sentiments, a former Chair of the Kitsap County Republican Party expressed "Being local is always a big ticker... if you have a long-term presence here that helps."⁹⁸

To understand the extent to which deep-rooted community ties influence candidate outcomes, I created a dataset detailing all 307 elections for the state legislature in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 utilizing data from the Washington State Secretary of State's Office. Then, I acquired biographical information on the winners' professional and personal backgrounds using tools such as the Wayback Machine, Newspapers.com, and publications from the Washington State government. This dataset includes 577 entries detailing the candidates who ran for state legislative office in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 and in-depth biographical information on the 81 individuals who held office during this period.

While being a native of their community has not been necessary to be elected to office, politicians who were local to their district have been well represented in legislative delegations

from rural Western Washington, with the winner in 97 out of the 307 state legislative races in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 being natives of the district they sought to represent. Additionally, among the 81 individuals who were elected to state legislative office during this period, 30 were district natives, with 23 being Democrats and only 7 being Republicans. Across the same period, the winner in 188 out of 307 races for state legislature were natives of Washington State, of which 156 were Democrats.⁹⁹ That Democrats have benefited strongly from this “friends and neighbors effect” in rural Western Washington is understandable in light of literature which has found that Democrats benefit more strongly from this effect compared to Republican candidates.¹⁰⁰

The premium political observers and activists have placed on being a native-born son of rural Western Washington is understandable given that all three Congressmembers from the region were natives of the district: Dicks from Bremerton, Kilmer from Port Angeles, and Randall from Port Orchard. For Dicks, his connections to the district through his upbringing and years of experience working for the region strengthened his candidacy by providing him with a strong familiarity with its main local issues and powerful political connections such as the backing of the Democratic establishment during his first race for Congress.¹⁰¹ A gregarious native son of Bremerton whose father was a union worker for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS), Dicks previously gained local fame for being “a star linebacker” for the University of Washington football team before serving for eight years as a legislative aide for Democratic US Senator from Washington Warren Magnuson.¹⁰²

Similarly, Kilmer’s personal and professional backgrounds made him a compelling candidate. A Port Angeles native and child of union schoolteachers during the collapse of the timber industry on the Olympic Peninsula, Kilmer strengthened his understanding of the region

by studying the Olympic Peninsula's economic collapse at Princeton and Oxford as a Marshall Scholar.¹⁰³ Focusing his career on local economic development, Kilmer worked at McKinsey and as Vice President for the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County.¹⁰⁴ Across both sides of the aisle, political leaders have noted how Kilmer's ties to the region benefitted his candidacy, recounting stories of how voters in the region knew his family and their eagerness to support a hometown hopeful for elected office.¹⁰⁵

On both sides of the aisle, party officials have credited Kilmer's personal background, ties to the region, and ability to balance diverse views as contributing to his success. A former Kitsap County Democratic Party chair and local political consultant observed "Derek has a very calming presence. He's hard-working. It's hard to be mad at him," recalling that if constituents called to vent their frustration, Kilmer "would call you back and invite you to lunch."¹⁰⁶ Even Republicans have conceded Kilmer's likability: a former Clallam County Republican Party Chair shared "He has fairly consistently responded to emails that I have sent him, so I think he is a nice person... he does respond, I'll credit him that. That's more than a lot do and [he responds] thoughtfully." Echoing these sentiments, a former Kitsap County Republican Party Chair conceded the Democratic Party "did a good job of picking Derek. Derek is charismatic. He's friendly. He's a family guy. He has a good background. He's just all-around a nice guy... He wants to make Kitsap a better place... And that's why he kept winning."¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Jane Bedinger from Kitsap County, a self-described "moderate independent" voter supported Kilmer even though she supported Republican gubernatorial nominee Rob McKenna, writing in a letter to the editor that Kilmer had "a deep understanding of our region and our voters... Derek is always available to his constituents, always present at community events and meetings,

responding quickly and thoughtfully to emails... His solid business background has brought hundreds of jobs to our region.”¹⁰⁸

Likewise, Randall’s experience being born and raised on the Kitsap Peninsula served as a powerful credential.¹⁰⁹ During a competitive race for State Senator of Washington’s 26th legislative district in 2018, Randall’s strong community ties bolstered her campaign by providing her with a broad volunteer base, comprising of friends, neighbors, and old elementary school teachers.¹¹⁰ Additionally, during her 2024 campaign for Congress, Randall’s campaign literature highlighted the fact that she was “born and raised in a hard-working union household in the Kitsap Peninsula,” with political observers and community members noting that her local credentials garnered her popularity among voters.¹¹¹ As a former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair and political consultant put it, “Randall is a homegrown girl.”¹¹²

Of course, being a district native has not necessarily served as the silver bullet for winning elections, with multiple high-profile district native incumbent defeats speaking to the importance of personal characteristics shaping electoral outcomes. In 1980, then-State Representative Ellen Craswell, defeated State Senate Majority Leader and district native Gordon Walgren for 23rd legislative district state senator in part due to controversy stemming from a federal racketeering conviction which reduced Walgren’s once powerful community stature to community distrust.¹¹³ Likewise, short of native ties, connecting authentically with a local community’s interests remains vital in strengthening a candidate’s viability. Describing Adam Bernbaum’s election to serve as a state representative for the 24th legislative district, a Jefferson County Democratic Party leader noted that “Adam wasn’t from the district, but that wasn’t a feature in the campaign” before expressing that “Adam drives a beat-up pick-up truck.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Bernbaum downplayed having previously earned a PhD in political science in his

campaign material, noting that “I was running in a pretty rural district... from a mass communication perspective, there can be a perceived stereotype about ‘ivory towers’ or being cloistered and out of touch,” instead emphasizing his rural upbringing in a union family.¹¹⁵

Beyond Congress, other down-ballot Democratic candidates, such as state legislative candidates in rural Western Washington, have often possessed professional backgrounds that have helped them to attract a politically diverse range of voters. Out of the 81 individuals who served as a state legislator, 21 out of 81 had a military background, 21 out of 81 had a small business background, and 15 out of 81 had blue-collar professional backgrounds. By comparison, only 11 out of 81 had professional experience as a lawyer.¹¹⁶ While the most common professions for politicians in rural Western Washington, the military and small businesses, tend to be associated with Republican candidates as established in political science literature, in rural Western Washington, Democrats are well represented with 14 out of 21 state legislators with military backgrounds and 12 out of 21 state legislators possessing business backgrounds being Democrats.¹¹⁷

As noted in multiple interviews and substantiated by studies in political science, Democrats possessing such military and business backgrounds have enabled them to capture strong bipartisan appeal.¹¹⁸ Similarly, interviews with political observers and political science literature have substantiated that working-class candidates are largely viewed as “more relatable,” a finding that has aided Democrats in rural Western Washington, especially given that 10 out of the 15 elected state legislators with blue-collar professional backgrounds from 1976 to 2024 were Democrats.¹¹⁹ For instance, executive director for the Institute for a Democratic Future Nicole Gomez noted that Van De Wege’s blue-collar background endeared him to Olympic Peninsula voters, stating “Kevin’s a firefighter. People like firefighters, especially in

[the Olympic Peninsula]. It's super important to them. Natural resources... Kevin understands the industry too that is associated with the area, he gets the whole idea behind forestry. He's from there too which is super helpful.”¹²⁰

Campaign Finances

Yet, beyond personal characteristics, other factors remain important for candidate electability, particularly raising sufficient capital to mobilize voters. Of course, money alone is insufficient to win an election: multiple studies have separately identified that in down-ballot general elections, money is often not the deciding factor in shaping electoral outcomes.¹²¹ That is not to say that money has no impact on elections, with Gary Jacobson finding that increased spending by challengers in Congressional races increases the amount of votes they receive in part due to increased name recognition.¹²² Indeed, in local races where name recognition is often low, raising capital is necessary to facilitate effective voter contact and message mobilization efforts, with voter recognition rates rising for high spending challengers.¹²³ Furthermore, the act of fundraising requires effort, and the amount of capital raised by candidates can serve as a metric by which we can understand high quality candidates in the amount of effort they put into their campaigns through their willingness to be active in fundraising.¹²⁴ As such, while money alone does not win campaigns, in local races, they can play an important role in facilitating message mobilization efforts that increases voter recognition.

To understand the extent to which campaign finances have played a role in shaping political outcomes in rural Western Washington, within the dataset I created of the region's state legislative races, I included data sourced from the Washington Public Disclosure Commission on the amount of money each candidate in each election raised.¹²⁵ In total, from 1976 to 2024, Democratic state legislative candidates raised \$32,709,602 while Republicans by comparison

only raised \$18,512,808. Likewise at the congressional level, utilizing a dataset of all 43 congressional races from 1976 to 2024 I created by collecting campaign finance data from the Federal Election Commission, Democratic congressional candidates raised \$35,990,598.90 while Republican congressional candidates raised \$9,253,988.01 during the same period.¹²⁶ Additionally, of the 307 state legislative elections that occurred from 1976 to 2024, 261 were contested races by both Democratic and Republican candidates (the other 46 saw Democratic Party candidates running unopposed), with 217 of these races being won by the candidate who raised more money. Of these 217 races in which the winning candidate raised more money, 162 were won by Democrats, with this increased funding helping Democrats to mobilize their campaign messaging in low-name-recognition local races.

Fundraising requires effort, and in a state such as Washington with robust campaign finance laws that require candidates to rely heavily on many small donors, the amount of money fundraised by candidates can serve as a proxy for understanding their willingness and effectiveness in campaigning.¹²⁷ Under this conception of fundraising as a metric for candidate quality, Democratic candidates were consistently of higher quality compared to Republican candidates evidenced through their greater willingness to fundraise. In addition to raising less than Democrats, in seven state legislative races from 1976 to 2024, the Republican Party candidate failed to raise any money at all, demonstrating a lack of effort in sustaining their campaigns.¹²⁸ By contrast, none of the Democrats running for state legislative office from 1976 to 2024 raised nothing during their campaigns.

However, although fundraising ability helps boost name recognition in local races and can indicate candidate quality, money is not a guarantee of electoral performance. Of the 307 state legislative elections from 1976 to 2024, 44 races were won by the candidate who raised less

money, 22 of which were won by Democrats and 22 by Republicans, suggesting that factors beyond finances, particularly a candidate's voter outreach efforts and tactics, remain important.¹²⁹ *How* a candidate utilizes their funds in conjunction with *how much* funds they raise is vital to understanding Democratic Party resilience in rural Western Washington.

Maintaining a Robust Local Presence

In line with Tip O'Neil's mantra that "all politics is local" and scholarship reflecting the importance of descriptive and behavioral localism in shaping support for political candidates, former Democratic Mayor of Bremerton Cary Bozeman from 2002 to 2009 noted his belief in the importance for politicians to maintain a robust local presence in the communities they serve, expressing his belief that "local politics will save democracy."¹³⁰ Like Bozeman, Democrats throughout rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 have similarly maintained active outreach to voters to build and preserve Democratic Party loyalties.

Throughout his Congressional career, Dicks actively engaged with communities throughout rural Western Washington during campaign season, taking advantage of his position as the incumbent by "mixing campaigning with congressional business" while making efforts "to campaign throughout... Kitsap, Mason, Clallam, Jefferson, and Grays Harbor counties."¹³¹ Reflective of his active campaign efforts throughout rural Western Washington, Dicks stated, "'I've always operated in the Scoop Jackson tradition that an election gives you an opportunity to get around the district and listen directly to the people... We have not taken this campaign for granted,'" with the last sentence being repeated in interviews with Dicks and a former campaign manager.¹³²

In addition to his campaign efforts, Dicks extended his behavioral localism in his Congressional capacity through his outreach to communities across rural Western Washington,

even if they did not form a major proportion of the voting population, with his support of Native American Tribes throughout the region exemplifying this outreach. While the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas contain 11 federally recognized Native American Tribes, each with unique interests and only comprising approximately 2.5 percent of the population in 1980 before rising to 4.6 percent of the population in 2010 near the end of his career, Dicks consistently made a concerted effort to support these Tribes.¹³³ For the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, for instance, in a time span from 2001 to 2005, Dicks delivered cumulatively \$102.8 million in federal funding for Elwha River recovery, and mediated a 2005 land dispute between the Washington State government and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.¹³⁴ For his consistent support, Native American Tribes have praised Dicks, with current Tribal Chair for the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe noted historically strong working relationship between the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribal government and Dicks.¹³⁵ Likewise, the Quinault Indian Nation thanked Dicks in a 2004 letter for “the cooperation and assistance provided by [him] and [his] staff on securing construction funding” for local projects.¹³⁶

Beyond Native American Tribes, Dicks’s strong local engagement earned him bipartisan praise throughout his career. For instance, a 1979 report commissioned for Dicks found that “In terms of being responsive to local people, the responsibility for which Congressman Dicks receives his highest marks, both Democrats and Republicans/Independents rate Mr. Dicks’ performance as very good (56% and 53% respectively),” findings that were substantiated in subsequent campaign surveys throughout his career.¹³⁷ Even during nationally difficult election years for Democrats such as 1994, Dicks’s strong locally focused track record allowed him to continue receiving broad support, with the *Peninsula Daily News* editorial board praising “Dicks’ strength is the work he does to help the Peninsula directly” during the 1994 election.¹³⁸

Continuing Dicks's efforts, Kilmer similarly maintained a robust local presence through his campaign organizational infrastructure. During his initial 2012 campaign for Congress, Kilmer expanded his campaign's physical presence by building field offices in locations such as Port Angeles on the Olympic Peninsula to contact geographically, demographically, and politically diverse voters even as a plurality of voters lived in Kitsap County.¹³⁹ As part of these efforts, Kilmer also hired local community members to run these offices and spearhead local organizing given their familiarity with the communities in their areas.¹⁴⁰ Political observers on both sides of the aisle and press outlets have acknowledged Kilmer as a tenacious campaigner, canvassing in the early hours of the morning and mobilizing large teams of volunteers to support voter outreach.¹⁴¹ Even as a state legislator prior, Kilmer maintained an aggressive field program, including knocking on approximately 15,000 doors during his first campaign in 2004.¹⁴²

Extending beyond their campaigns, Dicks and Kilmer solidified their strong local presences through their frequent trips back home to meet with constituents when Congress concluded their weekly business.¹⁴³ Previous senior staffers for Dicks and Kilmer have shared that both have made concerted efforts to return home from Washington DC frequently to have a physical presence in rural Western Washington as frequently as possible, with Kilmer especially placing a premium on being in district every weekend.¹⁴⁴ As a former Deputy District Director for Dicks and District Director for Kilmer observed, "Derek was home every weekend. It was rare that Congress was out of session and he was somewhere else."¹⁴⁵

Further bolstering their locally focused reputations has been an emphasis on providing high-quality constituent services. In interviews with former congressional staffers for Dicks and Kilmer, multiple have noted that Dicks and Kilmer prioritized providing quality constituent services, an emphasis that Dicks and Kilmer confirmed in separate interviews and garnered them

bipartisan local praise.¹⁴⁶ As former executive director for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS), the largest employer in Kitsap County, Rick Tift praised Kilmer: “I felt he always put his constituents first. I can't tell you how many people in the shipyard he helped out for services. I really felt that set him apart. And it was an indication of how he really cared about people in his district.”¹⁴⁷

Like their Democratic Congressmembers, down-ballot Democratic candidates from 1976 to 2024 ran aggressive campaigns to maintain a robust local presence. In the 19th legislative district, longtime state legislator Robert Bailey noted “I went everywhere... Name familiarity is something you have to build and cannot ignore,” leveraging local Democratic Party organizational apparatuses by “always visit[ing] every Democratic precinct committee person in the area. Many times they had been taken for granted and just not been consulted by any candidate.”¹⁴⁸ In the swing district of the 26th legislative district in 1982, Democratic State Representative candidate Bill Smitherman notably hosted regular “Breakfast with Bill” events “to explain to constituents what he was thinking and get feedback in a casual setting.”¹⁴⁹ Likewise, following his 2006 election as State Representative for the 26th legislative district Larry Seaquist expressed his gratitude for his army of volunteers for “making well over 1,000 calls a day for weeks and knocking on thousands of doors.”¹⁵⁰ In more recent years, the current executive director of the Washington State House Democratic Campaign Committee (HDCC) acknowledged that Democratic state legislators from rural Western Washington have operated among the strongest mobilization efforts among Democrats in the state.¹⁵¹

By contrast, Republican candidates in rural Western Washington have largely failed to field similarly locally focused campaigns. In a review of newspaper articles and campaign websites of Republican Congressional candidates since 1976, Republican candidates generally

emphasized nationalized cultural issues such as immigration, abortion, or gun rights while limiting their outreach to sympathetic audiences and the region's few population centers.¹⁵² In a few emblematic instances, from 2004 to 2010, Doug Cloud hosted few campaign events and only concentrated them in the final weeks of his campaigns.¹⁵³ For the few events that Republican candidates hosted, they were predominately conducted with sympathetic audiences in attendance such as during Bob Lawrence's candidacies from 1998 to 2002.¹⁵⁴ Focusing on nationalized issues or taking economic positions that countered the local interests of the region, candidates like Bill Tinsley centered his 1996 candidacy on his support of the Christian right and criticism of the North American Free Trade Agreement, while Bert Mueller controversially proposed replacing the Puget Sound Naval Station in 1990.¹⁵⁵ Most recently in the 2024 election, Republican Congressional candidate Drew MacEwen emphasized the nationally contentious issue of immigration as one of three top policy priorities, with language on his campaign website on the issue bearing limited relevance to rural Western Washington.¹⁵⁶

However, not all Republican Congressional candidates bore these weaknesses, enabling some to achieve comparatively greater political success. In 2012, Republican Congressional candidate Bill Driscoll presented himself as a moderate pro-choice Republican who emphasized revitalizing the Olympic Peninsula's timber industry; coincidentally, 2012 was Kilmer's worst Congressional electoral performance.¹⁵⁷ Similarly in 1980, Republican Congressional candidate Jim Beaver sought audiences with diverse voters, focused on locally relevant economic issues, and mobilized "2,000 volunteers;" 1980 was ultimately Dicks's worst electoral performance.¹⁵⁸ Later, during the 1994 election, Republican challenger Benjamin Gregg largely avoided nationalizing his campaign in line with the Contract with America, capitalizing on national frustration while also retaining a locally focused outreach strategy and policy priorities,

contributing to the 1994 election being one of Dicks's worst electoral performances.¹⁵⁹ Still, even when Republican candidates could implement some attributes of competitive campaigns, they still fell short. Kevin Cook in 1988 was a moderate Republican and a veteran who conducted an active locally focused campaign, but lacked a large volunteer base; Mike Lonergan in 1984 personally fielded a strong local presence but lacked money or volunteers to mobilize his message; and Lauri Phillips in 1992 provided a strong locally focused platform, but admitted publicly her lack of experience, resulting in local press describing her campaign as "Quixotic."¹⁶⁰

Coordinated Campaigns

To further strengthen their physical presence and build shared name recognition across all corners of their districts, Democratic candidates in rural Western Washington have often coordinated their campaign efforts. As Van De Wege reflected: "if one or two of us weren't able to make it to an event, at least one of us would be able to have representation there."¹⁶¹ In the 19th legislative district, Hatfield observed a similar working relationship among Democratic legislators: "we had that advantage too of being able to have each other's backs. If you knew you couldn't make it [to an event]... it might be one could be able to attend to speak for that person."¹⁶² Former 19th legislative district state representative Brian Blake noted that historically the three Democratic state legislators for the district would even share a single campaign manager and office.¹⁶³ Beyond the Olympic Peninsula, in Kitsap County, 23rd legislative district state senator Drew Hansen similarly affirmed the collaborative relationship between the Democratic state legislative delegation through shared campaign events.¹⁶⁴ These strong working relationships among Democratic candidates have often been built upon friendships, with Van De Wege, Hatfield, and the HDCC executive director confirming the uniquely collegial working

relationship of rural Western Washington legislators compared to other all-Democratic legislative delegations.¹⁶⁵

By contrast, a lack of mutual support among candidates has weakened their collective effectiveness during elections, a challenge faced predominately by Republicans from 1976 to 2024 but also recently among Democrats. Republican county party officials and former state legislators have noted that Republican candidates fail to coordinate their campaign efforts, and during the 2016 election, Blake noted how a new Democratic 19th legislative district state representative nominee refused to coordinate campaigns with the rest of the Democratic delegation, weakening the Democratic candidates' collective power and paving the way for Republican victories beginning with Jim Walsh's election in 2016.¹⁶⁶

However, the ability to coordinate campaigns has not been limited to Democrats, and Republicans who have leveraged this tactic have similarly bolstered conservatives' collective power and presence. Describing the collaborative working relationship among the Republican legislators of the 19th Legislative District, State Senator Jeff Wilson shared "It's just all in all working well together. We talk a lot. We visit a lot on the telephone and in person. And quite frankly, we also help each other out. If we're double booked, somebody's available, we cover each other to some extent to cover the district."¹⁶⁷

In addition to down-ballot Democratic candidates working in concert to support each other in their campaigns, Dicks and Kilmer leveraged their strong regional stature and resources to support down-ballot Democrats. Following a 1982 strategy memorandum advising Dicks "to work closely with as many other Democrats – especially legislators – as [he] can" through "joint strategy sessions, joint operations," and "A return to the grassroots," Dicks, his campaign staff, and state legislators throughout rural Western Washington have noted his robust support for local

down-ballot Democrats.¹⁶⁸ Likewise, Kilmer similarly supplied money and manpower to assist with down-ballot Democratic candidates' voter outreach efforts, and served as a member of the Federal Advisory Council of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee - the Democratic Party's organization responsible for supporting Democratic state legislative candidates - from the council's inception in 2021.¹⁶⁹

In campaigns and in governance, Democrats throughout rural Western Washington maintained a robust local presence in their communities by being accessible, responsive, and supportive of their communities, contrasting greatly with Republicans. Further bolstering their robust local presence, Democrats made a concerted effort to reflect the big tent views and material concerns of their communities, while Republicans largely focused on partisan social issues that alienated support.

Big Tent and Material Politics

As first articulated by Harold Hotelling and further developed by Anthony Downs, the medium voter theorem suggests that to make themselves electorally appealing to the greatest amount of voters, candidates will converge towards the political center.¹⁷⁰ While the acceleration of asymmetric polarization since the 1970s in which Republicans have shifted further away from the ideological center than Democrats has challenged the applicability of this theorem, that politics in rural Western Washington has mirrored these national trends of asymmetric polarization through Democrats remaining closer to the ideological center than Republicans through the sustained practice of big tent politics has enabled the former to appeal to a broader array of voters.¹⁷¹

During my visit to Kilmer's DC office in August 2023, both Democratic and Republican Congressmembers adorned the entrance to their offices with flags representing various elements

of their constituencies. On Kilmer's hall, Democratic Congressmembers former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Pennsylvania's Mary Gay Scanlon included among their state flags and American flags in front of their office an LGBTQ+ pride flag. By comparison, the décor outside Kilmer's DC office was comparatively conservative, boasting only two flags – the American flag and the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action flag. While Kilmer and members of his staff denied political motivations for posting only these two flags, maintaining that these flags were simply the ones that Dicks used during his congressional tenure, the flags that Dicks and Kilmer chose to place in front of their office to welcome guests serves as an important signal for the big tent style of politics that they practiced.

A self-described “moderate,” Dicks advanced a centrist platform prioritizing local economic concerns, leveraging his powerful US House Appropriations Committee appointment since his freshman term to keep Kitsap's Naval bases intact during a period of economic uncertainty (see Chapter three for a longer discussion of this effort).¹⁷² Counting his wins in the amount of federal funding he could secure for projects back home through “pork barrel” spending, Dicks regularly repeated in campaign materials throughout his tenure in Congress that “he works for jobs.”¹⁷³ Gaining a reputation for being a moderate pro-military Democrat in Congress, local newspapers noted that Dicks “votes conservatively compared with many Democrats,” reflecting the political composition of his district in which a 1982 survey found that 79 percent of voters reported themselves as being either conservative or moderate, political alignments that have been echoed in future surveys.¹⁷⁴ Described as “the third senator from the state of Washington” or the “Prince of Pork,” Dicks has regularly been praised for boosting rural Western Washington's economy by securing federal funds, with the *Peninsula Daily News* putting it: “He has helped get grants for Port Angeles... He has fought to lift the federal logging

injunction, has been a strong advocate for the Peninsula's experimental forest and other local bread and butter issues.”¹⁷⁵

Similarly, Kilmer staked out a reputation as a moderate Democrat throughout his career. As a State Representative for Washington's 26th Legislative District, one of Washington State's most competitive legislative districts, Kilmer was described as “one of the most pro-business Democrats” in the Washington State Legislature.¹⁷⁶ On social issues, Kilmer's record similarly proved moderate to appeal to a broad array of voters. When asked by the *Key Peninsula News* about his stance on gay marriage, Kilmer provided a non-committal answer tailored to appeal to voters of both parties, reaching out to Democratic voters by stating “I don't think we should discriminate against anyone” while signaling to Republican voters in the same answer that “we can address rights issues without redefining marriage.”¹⁷⁷

In Congress, Kilmer has similarly touted his strong bipartisan and moderate politics that have enabled him to capture diverse support.¹⁷⁸ As measured by the Lugar Center and Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy's Bipartisan Index, Kilmer has been consistently ranked in the top 20 to 40 most bipartisan Congressmembers throughout his tenure.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, in the Bipartisan Index's ranking of bipartisan Members of Congress in strongly partisan districts, Kilmer ranked as the seventh most bipartisan Congressman, speaking to both Kilmer's strong bipartisanship and the continued strong Democratic alignment of the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas.¹⁸⁰ Further speaking to his bipartisan credentials, Kilmer served as a senior leader of the Third Way New Democrat Coalition, serving as co-chair of its National Security Task Force, and as Chair of the Coalition.¹⁸¹

Like his predecessor, Kilmer served as a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, positioning him to address rural Western Washington's material concerns.¹⁸² Most

recently, the *Kitsap Daily News* reported that from 2021 to 2023, Kilmer secured “more than \$5.5 million in federal money to Kitsap” as well as “an additional \$57.9 million for other parts of his district, including Clallam, Mason, Jefferson, Grays Harbor” Counties.¹⁸³ Reflecting this material emphasis, Kilmer remarked:

A lot of the issues my district faces are related to where the money goes. Funding for the shipyard and for the people who work there... If you think about the things I want to work on, particularly related to jobs, so many jobs depend on the shipyard, on healthy salmon, and on the national park and national forest... I’m in a position where I can advocate for jobs for our region.¹⁸⁴

For his bipartisanship and efforts, Kilmer received substantial praise from voters and local political leaders on both sides of the aisle, with J. Chris Hardin writing in a letter to the editor in support of Kilmer’s 2012 candidacy that “Derek will bring his balance, stability, bipartisanship and, most importantly, his pragmatism to the ‘other’ Washington... He realizes the importance of securing our social safety net... the need for career ladder to livable wages.”¹⁸⁵

Like their Congressional counterparts, down-ballot Democrats have similarly practiced big-tent politics in line with the views of their moderate-to-conservative local communities from 1976 to 2024.¹⁸⁶ In my dataset of rural Western Washington’s state legislative candidates from 1976 to 2024, I identified 41 out of the 57 Democrats elected to the state legislature during this period were considered moderates or conservatives, allowing them to appeal to a broader array of perspectives within their district.¹⁸⁷ Describing this predominately moderate-to-conservative orientation of Democratic legislators from the Olympic Peninsula, former 19th legislative district state legislator Brian Hatfield reflected “we were kind of the conservative Democrats or the moderates... So, it was it was usually not going 100 percent with the party.”¹⁸⁸ Additionally, Van

De Wege similarly described the moderate orientation of Democratic politicians in the region, before expressing himself “I’m a pretty moderate Democrat. [The] 24th was a pretty moderate district.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, speaking to the moderate nature of Democratic politicians in this region, during the 2010 election, the Koch Brothers endorsed 19th legislative district Democratic legislators Brian Blake and Dean Takko.¹⁹⁰

Substantiating these self-identified descriptions, local newspaper articles from 1976 to 2024 frequently described the Democratic state legislators representing rural Western Washington as moderate or conservative.¹⁹¹ To review multiple emblematic examples, for instance, state legislator Paul Conner - who represented Washington’s 24th legislative district from 1957 to 1993 – being described as “a moderate” while Clifford Beck, state legislator for the 23rd and 26th legislative districts at varying points from 1961 to 1979, was described as belonging to “the conservative wing of [his] party.”¹⁹² Jim Hargrove, who represented the 24th legislative district from 1985 to 2017, was noted as “conservative Democrat and a strong Christian” who could “broker agreements between his party” and Republicans throughout his career.¹⁹³ During the 1996 and 1998, “longtime Republican[s]” Ron Jones and Bob Thorpe supported 26th legislative district state representative candidate Patricia Lantz because of her “inclusive approach to consensus-building.”¹⁹⁴ Likewise, in the *Longview Daily News*, Democratic 19th legislative district legislators Mark Doumit and Brian Hatfield received praise for their moderate politics and “know[ing] the issues that matter to their neighbors in the district,” with the editorial board writing that “Doumit positioned himself well to attend to the needs of his largely rural constituents” while Hatfield, “a conservative Democrat” was “very much in tune with the majority of his constituents.”¹⁹⁵ In the neighboring 35th legislative district, Democratic legislators

Brad Owen and Tim Sheldon proved so moderate that they regularly drew ire from fellow Democrats, with Sheldon even electing to caucus with the Republicans beginning in 2012.¹⁹⁶

In addition to their moderate politics that reflected the political composition of their districts, Democratic state legislators focused on local material issues relevant to their communities. During the collapse of the timber industry on the Olympic Peninsula beginning in the late 1980s, State Representative Evan Jones received praise for having “supported growth legislation that will help fund both Clallam and Jefferson Counties’ long-term growth planning.”¹⁹⁷ For Van De Wege and Hatfield, revitalizing the Olympic Peninsula’s economy after its collapse in the 1990s remained their priority, with both chairing the Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks.¹⁹⁸ Yet, even mainstream Democratic legislators who were not moderate-to-conservative also found political success by focusing on locally relevant material issues, such as Hansen who has adopted a campaign slogan of “helping people get good jobs to support their families” in each of his campaigns.¹⁹⁹

However, moderate Republican candidates focused on material concerns have also found political success in the region, with Ellen Craswell’s political trajectory from being a moderate Republican to a Christian right leader demonstrating rural Western Washington’s prioritization of economic over social issues. First elected as a state representative in 1976, Craswell initially received resounding support for focusing on material and military issues for Kitsap County’s Navy-dominant community, writing “I have a high regard for our veterans and their families and know that there is no way that we can truly compensate them for the service they have given,” and working to increase funding for veterans programs.²⁰⁰ Initially avoiding debates over cultural and social issues, Craswell responded reticently to a letter signed by 38 constituents requesting her “help and leadership” in supporting legislation to prevent “homosexuals [from] teach[ing]

our children in public schools.”²⁰¹ Constituents appreciated Craswell’s strong focus on material issues, rewarding her electorally by increasing her vote share from 54.63 percent in 1976 to 73.52 percent in 1980.²⁰²

However, as Craswell’s legislative tenure progressed, her initial focus on protecting sailors and mothers became replaced with growing alignment with the Christian right following her conversion to Christianity in 1980 which frustrated voters.²⁰³ Among these frustrations included disappointment with her positions on welfare, where in a letter urging Craswell to protect welfare for working mothers, John Rosendahl wrote “I have tried but find it impossible to understand the position that you have taken on the recent cuts in welfare programs in this state,” to which Craswell provided a highly detailed two-page reply defending her support of welfare cuts.²⁰⁴ Instead of focusing on economic issues, in 1986, Craswell began publishing a Christian Right legislative newsletter called “Family in Touch” “in which she urge[d] Christians to pray and lobby for and against bills before the legislature.”²⁰⁵ In a December 1987 iteration of her newsletter illustrative of her embrace of the Christian right, Craswell wrote to her subscribers:

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior... We are growing! God accomplished so much through your prayers, your calls, your stand for righteousness during the 1987 legislative session that now, with even more prayer warriors, I approach the coming session with Psalm 125 in my heart.²⁰⁶

Cracks emerged in Craswell’s support as her Christian right alignment alienated voters. In *The Sun*, Adele Ferguson reported how Craswell’s “Christian Right activities had ticked off so many people in her own party that they” sought to replace her with moderate state representative Karen Schmidt.²⁰⁷ In letters to the editor, those such as Gary Hunt complained “Ellen Craswell...

has shown that she only wants to hear from the Christian Right.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, many voters felt betrayed by Craswell’s political shift towards the Christian right, with W. E. Hoke writing in a letter to the editor:

We’re being diabolically distracted from the real issues and concerns... When Ellen Craswell ran for office in the late 1970s, she didn’t espouse this religious fanaticism... I am absolutely opposed to her bringing her personal beliefs, religious beliefs, views on morality, interpretations of ‘God’s Plan’ into our lives... I think she betrayed the trust we gave her when we voted for her. The accounting will come when she and her followers seek re-election.²⁰⁹

This accounting did not transpire immediately, but even as Craswell’s margin of victory shrunk to only winning by 911 votes by the 1988 election, she pushed further with her divisive cultural agenda.²¹⁰ The next topic on her agenda following the 1988 election? Reversing the moral decay of Washington State by targeting sex offenders. Her proposed solution to reducing sexual offenses? Physical castration for sex offenders. When first floated to the Senate Republican Caucus in February 1989, the proposal was not taken seriously, with “a few jokes made” about the proposal at her expense.²¹¹

The proposal was not a joke. On January 10, 1990, Craswell introduced Senate Bill 6332 to incentivize physical castration for sex offenders.²¹² The bill quickly drew widespread, even international, condemnation.²¹³ More importantly, Craswell’s constituents opposed her proposed castration bill. Among the most politely worded letters in opposition, Pam Hamon wrote to Craswell, “I am concerned that you feel castration means protection of the public against sexual predators. I feel a tad more study must be done before this simple solution becomes accepted.”²¹⁴ Others were much less restrained in criticizing Craswell’s bill: in a letter to the editor, Stu White

decried, “castration is a giant step backward into the Dark Ages. I thought we had left lobotomy behind. What will she propose next? Public torture? Burning witches at the stake?”²¹⁵

While the bill ultimately failed, Craswell continued invoking religion to justify her various political positions, including on economic issues. In response to a letter from Sheryl Campbell requesting Craswell to support legislation to increase funding for welfare programs, Craswell responded negatively in a two-page letter that drew heavily from the Bible: “Paul clearly tells us of a man’s obligation to provide for his own family (I Tim. 5:8)... Help for the poor is to be done through the church tithe (Deut. 14:28-29) and on a personal basis (Lev. 19:9-10; Luke 3:11)... welfare is not a scriptural function of government.”²¹⁶

Years of such cultural and religious emphases frustrated Kitsap voters, resulting in her losing re-election in 1992 to Democrat Betti Sheldon.²¹⁷ Voicing her displeasure with Craswell’s candidacy in a lengthy letter to the editor, Kim Koenig argued, “This impulse – to impose a narrow cultural and religious standard on others by law... threatens the separation of church and state in the 23rd district. To protect our basic freedoms we have an obligation to oust Craswell on Nov. 3.”²¹⁸ Esther Monroe’s criticism, shorter but no less emphatic, expressed similar frustrations: “My religion never asked me to believe that I am superior to anyone because I am a white protestant American... No, Mrs. Craswell. No. No. No.”²¹⁹

However, given Craswell’s status as a prominent Republican leader, voters’ frustration with Craswell also extended to the Republican Party, contributing to its lasting unpopularity in rural Western Washington. In a letter to the editor tying Craswell’s views to the Republican Party, Kitsap resident V.B. McKinney wrote, “Who do you want to represent you? Someone who reflects your values? Please reflect on the facts: A Republican platform that puts the majority of people out of the process... Do these people represent you in Kitsap County?”²²⁰ Importantly,

McKinney's criticism of Craswell and, by extension, the Republican Party, did not provide an entirely fair characterization of the Republican Party in rural Western Washington, with other Republican candidates espousing more moderate political views. For instance, during the 1988 and 1992 elections, then-Republican Sherry Appleton challenged Craswell for the Republican State Senate nomination, promising to protect "a woman and her family's reproductive rights" in a moderate alternative candidacy.²²¹ Nonetheless, McKinney's criticism of the entire Republican Party, as well as fellow Kitsap resident Ken Littrell's letter to the editor equating Appleton with Craswell to urge voters to support Democrats, suggested that after years of being observers to Craswell's emphasis on cultural and religious issues, Kitsap voters considered Craswell's and the Republican Party's views to be synonymous, weakening the Republican Party's electability beyond Craswell's candidacy.²²²

Even after losing her seat, Craswell's divisiveness further weakened support for other Republican candidates and deepened fault lines in the Republican Party. Securing the 1996 Republican gubernatorial nomination, Craswell fully embraced her self-description as a "Christian radical" leader committed to enacting "God's wonderful plan for government."²²³ While her Christian right supporters, dubbed "Ellen's Army," agreed with her plan, many other Republicans did not.²²⁴ In fact, Craswell proved so polarizing that the campaign manager for the 1992 Washington Republican gubernatorial candidate voted for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Gary Locke in the 1996 election, stating "'What this party needs are some moderates,'" while former Washington State Republican Party Communications Director Todd Myers noted that the primary objective of the state party was to conduct "damage control" for down-ballot Republicans during the election.²²⁵

Like Craswell, other down-ballot Republicans from 1976 to 2024 have been much more conservative than their Democratic opponents liberal and focused on divisive social issues that alienated voters throughout rural Western Washington. For instance, Republican 19th legislative district State Senator J.T. Jr Quigg only served for one term, being viewed as ineffective and “ultra-conservative.”²²⁶ In reviews of voter pamphlets for state legislative candidates in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024, Republican candidates have similarly maintained their right-wing focus in contrast to Democrats’ comparatively moderate views, preventing Republicans from capturing more votes.²²⁷

By emphasizing a moderate, bipartisan focus on the material issues facing their communities rather than partisan social issues like the Republicans, Democratic candidates in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 have maintained a broad appeal to voters.²²⁸ While Republicans’ efforts to focus on these national issues may have gained some traction in recent years as evident in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties in line with the Trump effect on politics appealing to white working-class voters who may feel “left behind,” Democrats’ continued practice of big tent politics have enabled them to mitigate the effects of this partisan discourse.²²⁹

Conclusion: Local Candidates and Strategies Matter

The consistently strong backgrounds, fundraising efforts, and locally focused organizing strategies of Democratic candidates in rural Western Washington from 1976 to 2024 enabled them to appeal to a broad array of voters in their normally moderate-to-conservative region. Aligned with this practice of maintaining a robust local presence, Democratic candidates’ practice of big tent politics and focus on local material issues in line with the views of their districts, in contrast with Republicans’ focus on nationalized partisan social issues, enabled the former to appeal to a broader range of voters while the latter alienated potential supporters.

Yet, while candidates and their campaign strategies have played a role in shaping long-term Democratic success in rural Western Washington, these factors alone cannot sufficiently explain the resilience of the Democratic Party. As Robert Bailey from the 19th legislative district alluded, candidates and their campaigns benefit from the direct and indirect support of broader organizational networks that support message mobilization to voters and preserve Democratic Party loyalties among members through socialization mechanisms. Consequently, understanding the political development of rural Western Washington also requires examining its structural conditions through the organizational networks of the left and right.

To this end, Chapter three will explore the role of organizational networks and civil society in shaping community and political identities through socialization mechanisms. Organized labor historically underpinned the social fabric of the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas and experienced threats during the 1980s and 1990s, but organized labor and the social fabric of the Kitsap Peninsula ultimately survived while collapsing on the Olympic Peninsula. While voters still support Democrats in both peninsulas, this path divergence has contributed to varying degrees of Democratic Party strength, although a lack of conservative organizational infrastructure, such as NRA-affiliated gun clubs, has prevented diminished Democratic Party support on the Olympic Peninsula from shifting towards outright abandonment.

Additionally, organizational networks serve as mobilizing forces that influence voters to support candidates and causes. Consequently, Chapter four will begin by examining the traditional pillars of the left and right organizational networks – the Democratic and Republican Parties – as well as the Christian right before discussing the emergence of competing state-level elite organizational infrastructure on the left and right in recent decades. While liberal organizational networks benefit from a high degree of collaboration, conservative organizational

networks struggle with a high degree of intra-network conflict and failure to collaborate, especially between the Christian right and the rest of the conservative organizational network.

Collectively, these two chapters illuminate how human agency, as expressed through candidate quality, interacts with and shapes structural conditions to influence political outcomes.

Chapter Three: A Tale of Two Peninsulas: Community Institutions and Social Capital

“It was a gentle lifestyle. Every dad had a job and they were good jobs... Everybody had good jobs. The schools were good schools.”²³⁰ That is how a former unionized logger happily recalled life on the Olympic Peninsula before its timber industry collapsed. Making further conversation, I asked him about his old union, the IWA, and the political loyalties of its members, to which he responded, “I was proud to be a union member... The majority of the households had a Democratic presidential sticker on the bumper... I voted whatever the union said to vote for... I was convinced the union representatives were going to protect us. The people that the unions supported would be good for us.”²³¹ When I then asked him to reflect on the timber industry's collapse, the previously cheery interview turned somber. Expressing that the layoffs caused by the collapse of the timber industry were “a low blow to the community,” the former logger reflected with a sense of loss that “We tried, the unions, everyone tried to protest it, [but] the timber industry let the unions die... Union jobs are basically gone.”²³²

For loggers like the one I interviewed and communities across the Olympic Peninsula, the collapse of its timber industry produced dramatic changes that have shaped the socio-political dynamics of the region. Given the critical role that community institutions and civil society play in shaping communities' social and political identities, understanding the political development of rural Western Washington requires an examination of the trajectory of organized labor in the region. This prompts the following questions: How did the economic turmoil affect the identities of unionized workers and communities in rural Western Washington, and what can the path divergence between the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsula's trajectory of organized labor reveal the mechanisms behind political realignment?

Both the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas were union-heavy white working-class regions that experienced economic turmoil during the 1980s and 1990s, but these peninsulas experienced path divergence: while Kitsap County preserved its military-dominant economic base and its public sector unions, the Olympic Peninsula's timber industry and its associated timber unions collapsed. The survival of organized labor in Kitsap County allowed unions to continue to play important social and political roles during the economic revitalization of Kitsap County, thereby preserving Democratic Party loyalties. By contrast, the collapse of organized labor in the social fabric on the Olympic Peninsula contributed to formerly unionized loggers feeling "left behind," thereby weakening support for the Democratic Party in parts of the Olympic Peninsula. However, despite the Olympic Peninsula's shifting social fabric and economy, conservative organizations that have replaced organized labor in the social fabrics of communities in other states, particularly NRA-affiliated gun clubs, have not established a strong presence in rural Western Washington, helping prevent feelings of being "left behind" on the Olympic Peninsula from becoming full-fledged support for the Republican Party.

Organized Labor and Path Divergence: The Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas

Beginning with Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, unions have formed a traditional power base of the Democratic Party coalition in rural Western Washington and across the United States.²³³ However, in recent decades, union membership has declined in the United States along with their historic alignment with the Democratic Party, presenting challenges for the Democratic Party's electoral chances.²³⁴ To explain this decline, Newman and Skocpol in their case study of rural Western Pennsylvania found that with economic collapse of the Rust Belt's dominant steel industry during the late 20th century, the once important role that organized labor played in shaping the social fabric of their communities and political views of unionized workers

has subsided, leaving a vacuum that has come to be filled by conservative organizations such as NRA-affiliated gun clubs.²³⁵

Consistent with trends in national union membership decline over the past half-century, union membership has similarly declined in Washington State, with the Olympic Peninsula of rural Western Washington particularly being affected due to the collapse of the timber industry in the 1990s, leading to once-prominent logging unions in the region such as the IWA fielding a substantially weakened presence in 2024. Through the collapse of the timber industry on the Olympic Peninsula of rural Western Washington, formerly unionized loggers, a once fiercely loyal bloc for the Democratic Party in rural Western Washington, have come to feel increasingly “left behind,” making Democratic Party successes on the Olympic Peninsula more difficult to achieve in recent years.

Yet, even within rural Western Washington and Washington State, divergent trends in union resilience have emerged, with the preservation of public unions such as those represented by PSNS in Kitsap County helping to preserve long-standing union and Democratic Party loyalties in Kitsap County and in Washington State. Today, Washington State remains highly unionized compared to the rest of the country, serving as the third most unionized state in the country at 16.5 percent of the workforce being unionized, behind only New York (20.6 percent) and Hawaii (24.1 percent).²³⁶ While private sector union membership, such as those representing timber workers on the Olympic Peninsula, has declined in the past four decades, public sector membership, such as those represented by the PSNS, in Washington State has slightly from 47.9 percent in 1983 to 49.9 percent in 2023.²³⁷

Figure 4: Union Membership in Washington State, 1983 - 2023²³⁸



That public sector unions have remained strong in Washington State and maintain a robust presence in Kitsap County while private sector unions have declined on the Olympic Peninsula may help to explain the slight divergence in political development pathways between the much more safely Democratic-leaning Kitsap County and increasingly competitive Olympic Peninsula in various counties. Consequently, understanding rural Western Washington's political development requires examining unions and their evolution as a socializing force in the region. To focus this examination, I will examine unions representing the two dominant industries of the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas – the timber industry and the military.

Toppling the Timber Industry: Economic and Social Collapse on the Olympic Peninsula

In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam invoked the example of declining participation in community bowling leagues as an example of this declining social capital in the United States since the 1950s.²³⁹ On the Olympic Peninsula, timber communities such as Shelton operated a Timber Bowling Alley which was frequented by unionized loggers, their families and

community members, speaking to the dominance of the timber industry and timber unions like the IWA in shaping the social fabric of the Olympic Peninsula.²⁴⁰ In Shelton, for instance, IWA members employed by the locally prominent Simpson Logging Company regularly participated in county fairs as “Simpson Clowns” (see *Figure 5*) and the local IWA representation on planning committees for the Mason County Fair.²⁴¹ With these timber unions having such strong socializing effects as prominent fixtures of timber communities, along with loggers possessing robust identities tied to their occupation, unionized loggers and their families prior to the 1990s were reliable Democratic Party supporters, a remnant of a long tradition of timber unions embrace of left-wing politics since the turn of the 20th century.²⁴²

Figure 5: Simpson Clown Participating in Shelton, WA Parade, Circa 1960s²⁴³



However, in the 1980s, politicians and timber companies in the region recognized that the timber industry, as it existed for most of the 20th century, was rapidly becoming untenable and attempted to find solutions to diversify the economy to avoid the risk of facing economic collapse. In 1982, the Shelton Mayor Joyce Jaros wrote in a letter to the Chair of the Mason County Jobs and Training Council “The diversification of the economy of Mason County is essential. The current dependency upon the volatile forest products industry has brought the

economy of Shelton and Mason County to all time lows,” while the Simpson Timber Company, the main employer of Mason County, wrote about their need to lay off 129 employees in 1984 because “In less than 10 years we will be living on a diet of 100 percent second growth” timber as opposed to old growth timber as the industry traditionally practiced.²⁴⁴

Despite these efforts, beginning in the late 1980s, the Olympic Peninsula had become engulfed in an economic crisis as the collapse of the timber industry unfolded, with a 1990 *Time* magazine article providing national attention to a major flashpoint of the debates surrounding the collapse of the timber industry during the late 1980s and early 1990s – the northern spotted owl.²⁴⁵ In their efforts to save the timber industry during these years, union workers and the timber industry united against the spotted owl and environmentalists who they considered to be the enemies of their livelihood. Yet, as noted in the *Time* magazine article, the causes of the timber industry’s decline were more complex than simply the spotted owl, which had become a scapegoat for economic trends that had been developing in the region for years.²⁴⁶ Likewise, in the following years, scholars have debated the extent of the effects of the federal government’s protection of the spotted owl on the Olympic Peninsula’s economy.²⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding the spotted owl and the timber crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s speaks importantly to the anxiety that unionized timber workers felt during the timber industry’s collapse and their efforts to make sense of their rapidly changing circumstances during a period of social and economic turmoil. For unionized loggers, their livelihoods were under attack by the spotted owl and environmentalists, with Patty Vaughan of Forks publishing in a letter to the editor that the spotted owl and environmentalists had “declared ‘war’ on the timber industry.”²⁴⁸ Emblematic of how entire communities engaged with the timber crisis facing the Olympic Peninsula of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and how these

communities assigned blame to the spotted owl and environmental groups, elementary school Caroline Sudderth for a class assignment elected to collect all the newspaper articles she could find on the spotted owl, writing in a reflection on the assignment:

We live in a ‘Timber Community.’ Everything in Hoquiam and other towns in Grays Harbor are affected, somehow, by ‘the spotted owl controversy.’ When a bird comes and takes away our jobs, we get mad and start to fight back... My father has worked in the timber industry for the past 31 years... His viewpoints are: ‘This big ‘Earth Grabbing’ deal that the environmentalists have going on is just a bunch of bull.’²⁴⁹

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, logging communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, particularly rural Western Washington, organized to save logging jobs in the region in a variety of ways, battling in the streets and in the courts to preserve logging jobs in the region, demonstrating the historic community interconnectedness of logging communities throughout rural Western Washington and the importance of logging in the region.²⁵⁰ On April 29, 1990, approximately 1,500 community members organized a rally in Hoquiam in Grays Harbor County to protest conservation efforts, shutting down Highway 101 for 90 minutes, with “women and children [being] there in numbers nearly equal to the loggers and mill workers in their suspenders and baseball-style caps.”²⁵¹ In more violent instances, dead spotted owls were found nailed to signs in the Olympic National Park with threatening notes, and loggers burned effigies of government officials unsympathetic to logging interests.²⁵² Through legal measures, logging communities fought environmental groups through court cases and the Washington Contract Loggers’ Association even petitioned the White House and the US Fish and Wildlife Service for loggers to “be protected as a threatened species – just like the spotted owl.”²⁵³ In their efforts to save logging jobs, entire logging communities participated, with unionized loggers tying

themselves closer to their union and fellow workers in line with a long tradition of solidarity among unionized timber workers that temporarily sustained strong support for the Democratic Party in the region.²⁵⁴

Despite the best efforts of logging communities across the Olympic Peninsula, the collapse of the timber industry still unfolded, producing devastating economic and social effects on communities “far beyond the layed [*sic*] off individual” in which the Olympic Peninsula was disproportionately affected compared to other logging regions in the Pacific Northwest.²⁵⁵ Between 1988 and 1992, the Olympic Peninsula lost approximately 21.9 percent of timber industry related jobs.²⁵⁶ Concurrently, in Clallam County, the unemployment rate rose from 7 percent in 1990 to a peak of 11 percent in 1994; in Grays Harbor County, from 9.5 percent in 1990 to 13.3 percent in 1994; in Jefferson County, from 5.1 percent in 1990 to 9.3 percent in 1994; and in Mason County, from 5.8 percent in 1990 to 9.1 percent in 1994.²⁵⁷ Since 2005, these counties have regularly appeared on the Washington State Employment Security Department’s Distressed Areas List, a list of counties in which the three-year unemployment rate is at least 20% higher than the statewide average.²⁵⁸

Flowing from the economic effects of the timber industry’s collapse on the Olympic Peninsula, social capital and community interconnectedness decreased in rural Western Washington. As noted by longtime reporter for the Aberdeen-based Daily World and current Chief Historian for Washington State John Hughes, as money left the timber communities of the Olympic Peninsula, so too did their residents and local community institutions.²⁵⁹ Likewise, interviews have noted that while communities such as Aberdeen, Shelton, or Port Angeles were historically vibrant communities with substantial community engagement, this civic interconnectedness has diminished in the following decades since the 1990s, with these findings

generally substantiated by reviews of fraternal and community organizations in city directories and phone books across rural Western Washington.²⁶⁰

Table 4: Number of Fraternal/Social Organizations in Rural Western Washington, 1976 - 2024²⁶¹

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2024
Clallam	23	28	24	15	22	8
Grays Harbor	77	52	44	23	9	8
Jefferson	None Listed	None Listed	3	1	None Listed	2
Kitsap	72	53	66	21	4	21
Mason	7	21	4	5	1	9

As their industry and social capital collapsed, residents of the Olympic Peninsula felt increasingly abandoned and betrayed by the government. Indicative of the angst felt by the timber-dependent communities of the Olympic Peninsula during this period, the editorial board of the Peninsula Daily News criticized Speaker of the House Tom Foley’s response to the timber crisis, pointedly asking, “Does the speaker want to see long lines in Peninsula cities and other towns across three states as out-of-work people wait for help at their local food banks?... Throwing 25,000 people out of work is as unacceptable as wiping out all the spotted owls.”²⁶² In the years shortly following the timber industry’s collapse on the Olympic Peninsula, Professor Emeritus of the University of Washington School of Environmental and Forest Sciences Robert Lee found that “Local businesses who depended on federal timber sales to support jobs,

businesses, and incomes felt betrayed and abandoned by their government when timber sales were so suddenly halted.”²⁶³ State and federal governments made attempts at providing relief to timber communities on the Olympic Peninsula. In October 1990, Governor Booth Gardner announced the allocation of \$9.4 million to assist timber communities, while the Department of Labor in December 1990 allocated \$4 million to retrain “More than 2,000 displaced workers” impacted by the timber industry’s collapse.²⁶⁴ In 1994, the Clinton Administration continued these attempts to address the economic and social crises facing the Olympic Peninsula through the Northwest Forest Plan.²⁶⁵ However, many in logging communities felt such responses were too little too late.

Emblematic of the anxiety, frustration, and sense of abandonment timber communities felt during the timber crisis, in 1997, a resident of the Olympic Peninsula, Chiggers Stokes, published a novel titled *Between Forks and Alpha Centauri* shaped by and responding to the Olympic Peninsula’s timber crisis. Its premise: “the ‘environmentalists’ get their way and the timber industry is no more on the Olympic Peninsula.”²⁶⁶ With the novel’s fictional characters and plotline functioning as a proxy for the real-world timber crisis, a key scene of the novel featured a climactic debate between a pro-logging speaker and an environmentalist, the event being described as “Forks’s biggest cultural gathering since... a decade previous,” a line which evokes the collapse of social gatherings and social capital in the region.²⁶⁷ Addressing a crowd of viewers prior to this debate, fictional Forks Mayor Phil Arbatrator remarked:

We in Forks have come to depend on the timber industry for employment and support of our lifestyles... The Federal listing of the Northern Spotted Owl as an endangered species, in 1992, has had a big impact on our fair, little city. Many of our townspeople have had to leave in search of work in the woods elsewhere. Of the fifty lumber and cedar

mills that operated before the listing, less than five are currently in operation. The ripple effect across our economy has underfunded schools, stressed the county tax base, and depleted every kind of service from structural fire protection from our fire hall, to forestry management from the D.N.R. Olympic Region here in Forks... What were we doing before 1992 that was so all-fire wrong?... where are we going in the twenty first century?²⁶⁸

As previously discussed, state and federal government officials attempted to answer the latter question by providing workforce retraining programs and proposing economic diversification of the Olympic Peninsula through a shift to eco-tourism by leveraging the newly protected forest reserves.²⁶⁹ However, loggers on the Olympic Peninsula did not appreciate these proposals, feeling further abandoned by the government. In response to these proposals, a former unionized logger Larry Mason remarked “All I want to do is continue my goddamn job and keep people working... What you see there is just ludicrous... It’s a let-them-eat-cake psychology back there [in DC],” while executive director of the Washington Commercial Forest Action Committee Ann Goos scoffed ““They lecture us about economic diversification... When you ask them just what they’ve got in mind, it’s ecotourism.”²⁷⁰ For the recently unemployed loggers on the Olympic Peninsula, this perceived imposition of tourism was emasculating servitude; logging, by contrast, was free-spirited, dangerous, and provided glory.²⁷¹ As *The Seattle Times* environmental reporter William Dietrich further summarized Goos’s thoughts on the shift to tourism in his book *The Final Forest* which detailed the collapse of the Olympic Peninsula’s timber industry:

She shook her head in contempt. Make all the Peninsula a playground. Cater to the urban tourist on the intermittent weekends when the sun shines. Make their beds, cook their

food, carry their high-tech yuppie outdoor gear into the forest for them, dawdle along behind their motor homes. Yes, Bwana. It turns her stomach.²⁷²

This disdain towards proposals to shift the Olympic Peninsula's economy to tourism echoed the sentiments many loggers felt: while government and environmental elites wanted to transform the Olympic Peninsula into a scenic nature reserve, loggers wished to preserve the independence, dignity, and lifestyle of their old profession.

During the period following the timber industry's collapse, communities have struggled in the economic and social transition away from logging. As the major logging companies of the Olympic Peninsula such as Simpson Lumber Company in Mason County or Rayonier in Grays Harbor County laid off workers, formerly unionized loggers eschewed labor solidarity in favor of gaining employment, joining one of many logging companies that emerged in Simpson's and Rayonier's place.²⁷³ To provide a sense of scale for the extent of competition for jobs and among companies following the collapse of the timber industry, in reviews of city directories and phone books, in 1980, there were at least five logging companies in Grays Harbor County, increasing to 13 in 1990 and 62 in 2000; today in 2024, there are 25 logging companies in Grays Harbor County.²⁷⁴ Despite this increase in logging companies, tourism has come to supplant logging as the dominant economy of the Olympic Peninsula.²⁷⁵ For the community of Forks on the Olympic Peninsula, the economic and social shift towards a tourist-based economy has been especially apparent. Once known as the "Logging Capital of the World," Forks has come to be primarily known as the setting of the romance fantasy *Twilight Saga*, a transition that has led to substantial economic stimulus through tourism in recent years.²⁷⁶

However, this stimulus came at a heavy price of contributing to former unionized loggers feeling emasculated by this shift to tourism and left behind by urban populations. Introducing the

setting of Forks in *Twilight*, Stephanie Meyer wrote that “It rains on this inconsequential town more than any other place in the United States of America,” one of multiple descriptions of Forks throughout her novel that omitted its proud tradition of logging.²⁷⁷ With their community’s real-life battles between loggers and environmentalists being obscured in favor of fictional romance conflicts between vampires and werewolves, Forks residents have grown increasingly frustrated with urban visitors who they believe fail to understand their struggles.²⁷⁸ As Mason politely expressed later in 2010, “it’s just indicative of what a silly world we live in.”²⁷⁹

While unionized loggers were formerly strong supporters of the Democratic Party, today, after decades of rising resentment and feelings of abandonment, their party loyalties have shifted to become less stalwart in their support. In 2024, many formerly unionized loggers living on the Olympic Peninsula have adopted what Kathy Cramer described as rural consciousness, “a sense” held among rural residents “that decision makers routinely ignore rural places and fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources, as well as a sense that rural folks are fundamentally different from urbanities in terms of lifestyles, values, and work ethic.”²⁸⁰ To this end, loggers, union leaders, and political observers throughout the Olympic Peninsula have noted the realignment of loggers and timber communities in recent years, with one former union representative for the IWA Local 3-2 in Aberdeen remarking: “the Democrats turned its back on the working stiffs who have made the backbone of the Democratic Party... In Washington State, four counties call the shots and have forgotten about everybody else.”²⁸¹

However, while feelings of class solidarity have declined and sentiments of rural solidarity have increased associated with resentment and abandonment among logging communities on the Olympic Peninsula, Democratic Party support remains relatively strong in these communities. As a union leader for the Olympic Central Labor Council who was born and

raised in Clallam County, noted, while union members on the Olympic Peninsula have shifted away from being strong supporters of the Democratic Party, the shift has not represented a large-scale abandonment as seen in other similarly white working-class regions of the country such as the Rust Belt.²⁸² When asked about his political views, one former unionized logger quickly replied, “I still vote all Democrat to be clear.”²⁸³ Organizationally, this Democratic Party resilience may be explainable through the strengths of liberal organizational networks and shortcomings in conservative ones in recent decades. While the social fabric of the Olympic Peninsula has changed through a decline in social capital following the collapse of the timber industry, as we will see later in this chapter, elements of conservative organizational networks found in other states such as gun clubs or the Christian Right have not filled the vacuum left by union decline to reshape the social fabric of the Olympic Peninsula for formerly unionized loggers. By contrast, as we will see in Chapter four, a highly collaborative liberal organizational infrastructure at the state level has emerged in recent decades to mobilize and persuade formerly unionized loggers on the Olympic Peninsula to support liberal causes, while conservative equivalents have failed to replicate this same degree of collaboration, efforts that have mitigated further rightward shift among these populations.

Before examining the emergence of state-level liberal organizational infrastructure that has come to supplant unions as possessing an organizational presence on the Olympic Peninsula, we must also examine the development of unions and communities in neighboring Kitsap County, and how their maintenance has contributed to a path divergence in which the Democratic Party has been able to consolidate gains in recent years.

Pushing Back Against BRAC: Saving Shipyard Unions in Kitsap County

Just as the timber towns of the Olympic Peninsula had their own bowling leagues that logging union members frequented, PSNS fielded its own basketball team, bringing together the Kitsap military community centered around Bremerton in matches against other labor union teams across Washington State.²⁸⁴ For the residents of Kitsap County, Bremerton and, by extension, the county, was a company town defined by the Department of the Navy as its largest employer. With union sports leagues established and community organizations such as the Puget Sound Naval Base Association (PSNBA) being founded in 1963, community life and the identity of Kitsap County centered around its relationship with the Navy.²⁸⁵

Like the Olympic Peninsula's relationship with the timber industry, Kitsap County experienced threats to its local economy spanning a similar time period from the 1970s to the 1990s, with community members and unionized Naval base workers experiencing shared anxiety over their material security given the backdrop of a multi-decade threat to close the Naval bases in Kitsap County – the largest employers in the region.²⁸⁶ However, beginning in the 1990s, the political development paths of the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsula diverged as while the Olympic Peninsula's traditional economic engine of the timber industry and its organized labor collapsed, helping to create ripe conditions for growing sympathies to the Republican Party, Kitsap County's traditional economic base through the Department of the Navy remained intact through the intervention of Democratic leadership such as Congressman Norm Dicks despite multiple attempts to shutter local bases through the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). This preserved Democratic Party loyalties in the county by maintaining traditional bases of community interconnectedness that socialized community members into being loyal Democrats and tying Democratic Party leadership with saving the community.

The dominant nature of the Department of the Navy in shaping the local economy meant that any disruption to this traditional economic engine could threaten the material security and social fabric of Kitsap County, threats that became readily apparent beginning in the 1970s. Foreshadowing the future BRAC debates of the 1980s and 1990s, the Department of the Navy in the early 1970s debated reducing funding for PSNS with Assistant Secretary of the Navy Charles Ill writing to US Senator Warren Magnuson that “The Navy can no longer afford to maintain a large-scale stocking function at the Naval Supply Center, Puget Sound” and therefore necessitated reducing funding for the Naval base, a decision, Ill remarked, was made more difficult given that Kitsap County was “an area that is in a depressed economic position.”²⁸⁷ Gaining familiarity with these economic challenges facing Kitsap County through his work on Magnuson’s staff, Dicks secured an appointment to the powerful House Appropriations Committee as a freshman Congressman.²⁸⁸ In doing so, Dicks became well positioned to leverage his previous experience working on appropriations issues to deliver federal funds to a county that stood to benefit strongly from this stimulus. To this end, Dicks actively requested federal funds for defense-related projects that would boost the local economy and provide jobs, including, but not limited to, “\$11.5 million in Trident impact funds” in 1977 and \$96.1 million in assorted projects for the PSNS in 1980.²⁸⁹

For Dicks’s and other Democratic politicians’ efforts to preserve Kitsap’s Naval bases and conduct outreach to unions, allowing Kitsap County to avoid the worst of the early 1980s recession under Ronald Reagan’s presidency, organized labor rewarded Democratic candidates in Kitsap County politically through endorsements and their votes.²⁹⁰ During the 1984 election, the international president of the International Association of Machinists William Winpisinger visited PSNS to convince union workers at the Naval Shipyard to vote for the Democratic

Mondale-Ferraro presidential ticket. Lending his support to the effort, Dicks joined Winpisinger in conducting outreach to union voters in Kitsap County.²⁹¹ In exchange for Dicks's support, Winpisinger "called for Washington residents to return... Rep. Norm Dicks to Congress," and helped Dicks gain further support with leaders in organized labor.²⁹² For state legislative candidates, in 1983, the Washington State Labor Council rated Democratic legislators in rural Western Washington highly for their strong pro-labor voting record, while Republican candidates such as Ellen Craswell received criticism for their anti-union stances.²⁹³ In addition to voting against organized labor's interests, Republican candidates in rural Western Washington failed to acquire labor's support in part by refusing to conduct outreach to labor constituencies. In 1984, while Democratic legislative candidates Anne Mitchell and Sherril Huff were endorsed by the Bremerton-based International Association of Aerospace Workers Local 282, Republican state legislators Karen Schmidt and Ellen Craswell "did not seek an audience with the union."²⁹⁴ This organizational support from unions translated continued downwards into its membership: 1979 and 1982 campaign surveys found that 76 percent and 82 percent of union households respectively supported his candidacy, providing "Dicks very good marks in the areas of being accessible, providing honest representation, and getting federal funds for the district."²⁹⁵

Despite these successes early in Dicks's tenure in Congress, economic challenges continued to threaten the social fabric and economy of Kitsap County as the first of five BRAC rounds loomed in 1988.²⁹⁶ Indicative of this continued community anxiety over base closures, in 1985, PSNBA president Henry Milander expressed "'The general tenor with regard to the area's naval installations... is not very bright.'"²⁹⁷ While union workers at Naval bases throughout Kitsap County did not mobilize to the same extent as loggers on the Olympic Peninsula, PSNS workers remained deeply concerned with the economic challenges facing the Kitsap Peninsula

on their livelihoods and those of their fellow workers, with Kitsap County union workers identifying in solidarity with each other and Kitsap County community members being actively engaged with BRAC's developments. Recognizing the region's concern "about possible personnel cuts at PSNS between 1987 and 1989," Dicks continued his work to get "more repair work assigned to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard," describing the task as "'his highest priority.'"²⁹⁸ Pushing back against BRAC and the threatened loss of federal funding for Kitsap County successfully, Dicks brokered a funding compromise in Congress to extend the supercarrier USS Nimitz's stationing in Bremerton from 1989 to at least 1990. In doing so, the Naval bases in Kitsap County automatically survived the first BRAC round in 1988 which brought "economic development... continuing jobs... [and] a steady payroll" for working-class Kitsap County residents.²⁹⁹

While Kitsap County survived in the 1988 BRAC round and later the 1991 BRAC round in part through Dicks's efforts, union workers' and Kitsap community members' fears did not subside.³⁰⁰ Relaying these concerns to Dicks, a 1992 survey commissioned as part of a strategy memorandum for the Dicks campaign reported that "voters... are concerned about the economy" before advising Dicks "since you have done a lot for economic development in the district, this is another issue that will be important to focus on."³⁰¹ Echoing this survey, Kitsap County residents similarly expressed their concerns with BRAC publicly through letters to the editor. As PSNS union worker Keith Phillips put it: "We have dedicated our lives to the defense of our nation, whether it be in uniform or behind a welder... Please go to battle for us. Federal workers in Kitsap County are the finest in the country. Please answer Kitsap pleas."³⁰²

In line with the strategy memorandum's recommendations and the concerns of his constituents, Dicks continued his emphasis on securing federal funds for Kitsap County.

Negotiating with fellow Congressmembers and in debates on the floor of the House of Representatives, Dicks expressed that he was “concerned about the sharp decline in defense spending... concerned about the loss of jobs all over this country... where we have had thousands and thousands of people lose their jobs in the defense industry.”³⁰³ Ultimately, Dicks’s advocacy efforts for Kitsap County’s Naval base proved successful, securing \$39 million in funding for 400 housing units and \$26.6 million for Bachelor Enlisted Quarters even though he only initially requested “\$19.5 million for 200 family housing units in Kitsap County as well as \$13.3 million for Bachelor Enlisted Quarters at PSNS,” and more importantly helping PSNS to survive the 1993 round of BRAC.³⁰⁴

While other military communities across the country found their local economies damaged by the closure of bases in their communities, Kitsap County profited substantially from the following rounds of BRAC. Following the 1995 round of BRAC, “the base closure process ha[d] fueled a growth boom” for Kitsap County’s Naval installations, gaining 126 new jobs on top of PSNS’s current workforce of approximately 10,500 employees – making Bremerton’s PSNS the Navy’s largest public shipyard at the time.³⁰⁵ In a similar logic to the timber industry’s collapse on the Olympic Peninsula having effects on local economies that reverberated beyond loggers themselves, the preservation of Kitsap County union jobs maintained the economic health of the community. To this end, an article in *The Sun* reported that “Economists say that for every three Navy jobs introduced to the area, roughly two additional jobs are generated – in construction, retail, sales and service industries - through a phenomenon known as the ‘multiplier effect.’”³⁰⁶ Later in 2005, Kitsap County survived its fifth and final round of BRAC, securing 1,401 new jobs and \$116.7 million in military construction contracts.³⁰⁷

With the preservation of the traditional economic engine of the military in Kitsap County, economic and civic life has been able to expand throughout Kitsap County - such as through suburbanization into previously sparsely populated communities like Silverdale accompanied by the establishment of the Kitsap Mall and influx of small businesses.³⁰⁸

Figure 6: Site of Kitsap Mall in Silverdale, Washington in 1977³⁰⁹



Figure 7: Site of Kitsap Mall and Surrounding Areas in Silverdale, Washington in 2024³¹⁰



Likewise, in Bremerton, the preservation of the military-dominant economy and local unions contributed to the structural conditions necessary for unions to play an active role in Bremerton's economic and community revitalization. Beginning in the 1990s under the leadership of mayors Louis Mentor and Lynn Horton and accelerated in the 2000s under mayor Cary Bozeman, efforts were made to invest in community economic and civic life, leading to projects such as building the Kitsap Community Center or renovating the Bremerton Ferry Terminal. Given the preservation of unions and its social fabric as well as the traditional economic engine of the Navy, union members avoided becoming "left behind" by a changing community, instead playing an active role in its revitalization, a different trajectory compared to the Olympic Peninsula or other regions of the country such as the Rust Belt.³¹¹ Indicative of the contributions that unions played in contributing to the revitalization of Kitsap County and Bremerton, plaques of local Kitsap County unions can be seen in downtown Bremerton's ferry terminal in recognition for their financial contributions to its renovation, demonstrating the longevity of union as part of the social and political fabric of Kitsap County.

Figure 8: Examples of Local Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Unions Contributing to Bremerton Ferry Terminal Revitalization Efforts³¹²



Today, in Kitsap County, Democratic Party loyalties among unionized workers and their families have remained stronger than those of loggers on the Olympic Peninsula, largely due to preserving union strength. This resilience of union strength in filling an important social role for workers in Kitsap County has become especially important in recent years, given the decline of social capital in Kitsap County, similar to the Olympic Peninsula. In reviews of phone books and city directories, while in 1970, Kitsap County boasted at least 72 fraternal or community organizations, in 2024, this number has decreased to 21.³¹³ Indeed, for workers and political observers in Kitsap County, the union as a social and political force has remained active in promoting solidarity among members and the maintenance of long-standing Democratic Party ties held among union members, even increasing in recent years.³¹⁴ As one union leader of the Bremerton Metal Trades Council described, “We’ve gotten more traction than we used to.”³¹⁵ Given the preservation of the traditional economic engine of the Navy and Kitsap County, other industries through the multiplier effect have remained intact, allowing other unions in Kitsap County to remain active, with a longtime member and a current leader of Teamsters Local 589 describing “The union communities are getting stronger... Even though we have the divisiveness in our area, they know deep down inside, they know we need to work together.”³¹⁶ Through this sustained organizational power, public sector unions in Kitsap County continue to regularly participate in politics, providing monetary and endorsement support for Democratic candidates as well as voting support from their rank-and-file membership in line with national trends of public sector unions maintaining especially strong Democratic loyalties.³¹⁷

Amplifying these sustained Democratic Party loyalties among unions in Kitsap County has been continued local outreach and focus on their material concerns by other Democratic politicians. For instance, US Representative Derek Kilmer has been praised for continuing

Dicks's strong track record of securing federal funding for PSNS and his robust constituent services support for shipyard workers, and Kitsap County state senator Drew Hansen has worked to advance pro-labor legislation such as Washington State's Worker Protection Act.³¹⁸ This has contrasted with Republican candidates who have largely continued to provide a lack of attention towards unions and demonstrate a tendency to emphasize more polarized stances on social issues. Influenced by the non-partisan working culture of the Department of the Navy and the Hatch Act, most union workers, as a leader in the Bremerton Metal Trades Council observed, hold "center to center-left views" before reflecting that "Republicans moved further right than the area was willing to follow."³¹⁹

Unions and Social Capital Today

Although today, Washington State remains one of the most heavily unionized states in the country, this has not translated across all industries in all parts of the state. Instead, the path divergence between organized labor on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas through the survival of public sector unions in Kitsap County has helped to maintain strong Democratic Party loyalties in the county, while the decline of private sector logging unions on the Olympic Peninsula has contributed to more difficult victories for Democrats. While this variation between Kitsap and Olympic Peninsula union presence provides some explanations for Kitsap County's stronger Democratic Party performance compared to counties on the Olympic Peninsula such as Clallam, Mason, and Grays Harbor Counties, unions alone are not the silver bullet for explaining Democratic Party resilience. Even Kitsap County, despite the survival of its public sector unions, has faced elements of union decline since the 1970s. To partially illustrate this decline in organized labor across rural Western Washington by county, I constructed a dataset containing information on the number of unions in rural Western Washington from 1970 to 2024, sourcing

information from city directories and phonebooks.³²⁰ As seen in the table below, compared to 1970, national trends of union decline have still affected rural Western Washington:

Table 5: Number of Unions by County, 1970 to 2024

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2024
Clallam County	10	10	8	8	7	4
Grays Harbor County	27	19	27	10	6	8
Jefferson County	1	2	3	2	1	1
Kitsap County	40	30	31	25	7	23
Mason County	2	2	2	2	No Data	2

Additionally, while labor leaders today share that organized labor in rural Western Washington continues to support the Democratic Party through money and manpower, linkages between the Democratic Party as an organization and unions have weakened.³²¹ Accelerating this decay in linkages has been broader declines of community interconnectedness in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which many liberal activists from both the Democratic Party and unions have noted disengagement. Such decline in organizational linkages have developed a situation in which one leader of the Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council expressed “It

used to be that labor used to say yes to every Democrat and any Republican who was pro-labor and everyone would get money... It's not good enough anymore to say you're a Democrat, what do you actually do?"³²²

Perhaps most importantly notably to why unions alone are not the silver bullet for Democratic Party resilience is the fact that political outcomes on the Olympic Peninsula continue to run counter to expectations. For instance, despite a low union presence in Jefferson County, Democratic Party performance in this county has consistently been the strongest in the region, surpassing even Kitsap County. Additionally, despite experiencing union decline, Clallam, Mason, and Grays Harbor Counties see Democrats remaining competitive.³²³ Consequently, while sustained public sector union presence in Kitsap County has helped preserve Democratic Party strength, this presence is insufficient to explain the Democratic Party's resilience.

Despite this decline in the social interconnectedness of the Olympic Peninsula stemming from the decline of organized labor, fixtures of conservative community institutions in other rural white working-class regions, such as NRA-affiliated gun clubs, have failed to provide a compelling alternative to traditionally liberal organizations in the social fabric of rural Western Washington. In other states where NRA-affiliated gun clubs are well established in community social fabrics, these gun clubs have played an important role in providing social opportunities for community members and have contributed to socializing their members into adopting more conservative sympathies.³²⁴ However, based off a review of the NRA's "Find Your Club" tool and a review of phone books and city directories from 1970 to 2024, the amount of gun clubs in rural Western Washington has remained consistently small. Today, only 12 NRA-affiliated gun clubs existing in the region, with multiple gun owners in rural Western Washington that I interviewed noting that community members often prefer to shoot informally with friends rather

than in a formal club environment.³²⁵ By contrast, in more conservative regions such as Western Pennsylvania, Newman and Skocpol found that over 250 NRA-affiliated gun clubs existed in the region.³²⁶ With their limited physical presence over time, NRA-affiliated gun clubs have failed to assert themselves as strong components of the social fabric of communities throughout rural Western Washington, thereby missing an opportunity to fill the gap left by the collapse of the timber industry on the Olympic Peninsula.

Table 6: NRA-Affiliated Gun Clubs in Rural Western Washington, 1970 - 2024³²⁷

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2024
Clallam	4	4	4	4	4	4
Grays Harbor	1	1	1	1	1	1
Jefferson	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kitsap	1	1	3	3	3	4
Mason	1	1	1	1	1	2

In addition to conservative organizations failing to establish a strong presence in rural Western Washington, the survival of local newspapers as community fixtures in the region despite their disappearance in other parts of the country has contributed to the preservation of community interconnectedness in the region necessary for continued Democratic Party loyalties.³²⁸ In each county of rural Western Washington, at least one local newspaper continues to exist, with their existence enabling residents of the region to continue receiving information about their community and their neighbors, as well as engage in community debates through avenues such as letters to the editor.³²⁹ Recognizing the value of this robust local media

environment, residents of rural Western Washington have advocated for its preservation given its continued important role in providing much of the region with their news. As Erik Nelson of Port Townsend wrote in a letter to the editor, “The public interest is served... by maintaining news diversity through competition... [I] advocate instead moderate regulation to protect diversity, local news, and competition.”³³⁰

However, while the lack of NRA-affiliated gun clubs and preservation of local newspapers have helped preserved rural Western Washington’s social fabric today, the role of right-wing churches and the Christian right in shaping the social capital of the region has proven more complex. In addition to NRA-affiliated gun clubs, churches and the Christian right have similarly helped shape the social fabric of other rural white working-class regions across the country, with megachurches and nondenominational churches largely serving as social spaces in addition to places of worship that help to socialize adherents into adopting conservative viewpoints.³³¹ This growing importance of the Christian right constituency in conservative networks has increased since the 1960s in response to social changes such as the Sexual Revolution and the growing representation of women in higher education and the workforce, leading to Americans increasingly turning towards the Christian right to provide a sense of order amid upheaval.³³² With a 2024 report by Pew Research finding that 85 percent of white evangelical Christians who are registered voters expressed support for the Republican Party and Trump winning approximately 80 percent of white evangelical Christians during the 2024 election, white evangelical Christians have comprised an important constituency and base of support for the Republican Party.³³³

While comparable rural white working-class regions, such as Western Pennsylvania, possess six megachurches within a 100-mile radius of Pittsburgh, within rural Western

Washington, there only exists one megachurch in Kitsap County, a finding which at first glance suggests the limited presence of the Christian right in promoting community interconnectedness in the region.³³⁴ However, despite the limited presence of megachurches in rural Western Washington, evangelical Protestant Christian churches have been growing while Catholic and mainline Protestant Christian churches have been stagnating. From 1980 to 2020, the number of evangelical Protestant churches across rural Western Washington has more than doubled from 135 congregations to 274 congregations. By contrast, during the same period, the number of Catholic and mainline Protestant Christian churches in the region has only increased from 109 congregations to 111 congregations, with the number of Catholic and mainline Protestant churches even declining in Clallam and Grays Harbor Counties.

Table 7: Number of Evangelical Protestant Churches in Rural Western Washington, 1980 to 2020³³⁵

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Clallam	26	39	37	59	52
Grays Harbor	38	40	43	59	55
Jefferson	9	10	14	19	18
Kitsap	49	70	81	119	119
Mason	13	19	18	26	30

Table 8: Number of Catholic and Mainline Protestant Churches in Rural Western Washington, 1980 to 2020³³⁶

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Clallam	18	19	20	17	17

Grays Harbor	35	36	33	33	27
Jefferson	8	9	10	10	10
Kitsap	40	44	52	44	44
Mason	8	9	10	14	13

However, while the number of evangelical Protestant churches has increased while the number of Protestant and Catholic churches have remained relatively stagnant since 1980 in rural Western Washington, this increase's impact on shaping the social fabric of the region has been mitigated by broader trends of declining religiosity in the region. Indeed, according to aggregated county-level data from 2014 to 2023, rural Western Washington's lack of religiosity has weakened the ability for the Christian right to secure influence within conservative politics in the region. In rural Western Washington, the percentage of the population that is religiously unaffiliated ranges from a low of 34 percent being religiously unaffiliated (Grays Harbor County) to a high of 51.4 percent (Jefferson County).³³⁷ By comparison, the percentage of the national population that is religiously unaffiliated has ranged from 21 percent to 27 percent from 2013 to 2023.³³⁸ The number of evangelical Protestant churches may be increasing, but the proportion of the population actually attending them has declined, a finding sustained through interviews with community members in rural Western Washington who have overwhelmingly noted the limited role that church community factors into their lives.

Conclusion: Beyond Community Institutions

The collapse of the timber industry and organized labor on the Olympic Peninsula and the preservation of the Navy-based economy and organized labor on the Kitsap Peninsula had profound impacts on the social and political identities of community members throughout the

region. While the maintenance of its economy and social fabric through the preservation of organized labor enabled Kitsap County to possess the structural conditions necessary to foster social and political identities that remained sympathetic to the Democratic Party, the vacuum in the social fabric of the Olympic Peninsula left communities feeling “left behind,” contributing to a growing sense of rural consciousness which has made Democratic Party support on the Olympic Peninsula more tenuous.

However, where conservatives have had the greatest opportunity to make gains, particularly on the Olympic Peninsula after the collapse of the timber industry, conservatives have been unable to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of organized labor and social capital in former timber communities, with features of other conservative organizational networks in other states such as NRA-affiliated gun clubs lacking a robust presence in rural Western Washington, thereby preventing conservatives from asserting themselves as important components of the social fabric of the region. Yet, while this path divergence between the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas may help to explain why voters in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties today support the Democratic Party to a lesser extent compared to voters in Kitsap County, support for the Democratic Party on the Olympic Peninsula remains higher than expected when compared to regions which have similarly experienced organized labor and economic collapse, such as the Rust Belt.

Consequently, while structural explanations examining the role of organizations in shaping the social and political identities of communities may partially explain the political development of rural Western Washington, the resilience of the Democratic Party on the Olympic Peninsula despite the absence of organized labor sets the stage for us to examine the role of organizational networks as mobilizing forces to understand the resilience of the

Democratic Party in rural Western Washington, especially on the Olympic Peninsula. As we will see in Chapter four, to fill the gap left by organized labor on the Olympic Peninsula and bolster liberal organizing in Kitsap County, a highly collaborative liberal organizational network built upon the Democratic Party and statewide liberal organizational infrastructure has emerged since the late 1990s to mobilize voters in support of liberal candidates effectively. By contrast, the conservative equivalent of this organizational network built upon the Republican Party and statewide conservative organizational infrastructure has been less effective in mobilizing voters, plagued by intra-network in-fighting and a lack of collaboration.

Chapter Four: Liberals in Lockstep and Conservative Cacophony

On a cold December night in 2014, a political storm brewed during the Kitsap County Republican Party reorganizing meeting. What was supposed to be a routine election of the party's new leadership for the upcoming biennium turned into a dramatic scene in which Chris Tibbs, the moderate county chair, denied Tea-Party aligned vice chair Linda Simpson from the meeting.³³⁹ Disenchanted, Simpson left Republican activism entirely, yet another casualty in the battles within the conservative organizational network from 1976 to 2024. The night was emblematic of a broader development: while liberals in rural Western Washington have built a highly collaborative organizational network, conservatives struggled with fragmentation, weakening their mobilization efforts.

In addition to shaping community and political identity, organizational networks shape political development as mobilizing forces that persuade or dissuade voters. With community institutions such as organized labor alone being unable to explain the resilience of the Democratic Party in rural Western Washington, this prompts the question – what organizational infrastructure has emerged on the left and right in recent decades to fill the organizational

vacuum left by organized labor's collapse on the Olympic Peninsula or supplement liberal activism on the Kitsap Peninsula? Furthermore, what are the organizational features that shape how they influence voters?

To this end, I begin by examining the traditional organizational pillars of the left and right, the Democratic and Republican Parties, and the Christian right, contrasting the Democrats' stronger local focus with the Republicans' weaker local presence and substantial intra-party conflict influenced by an adversarial Christian right. However, given that parties alone do not mobilize voters, I also examine the emergence of competing state-level organizational networks on the left and right in recent decades that have shaped voter mobilization by examining their organizational capacities and political tactics. On the left, a highly collaborative gang of four organizations – the Progress Alliance of Washington, the Washington Budget and Policy Center, Fuse Washington, and the Institute for a Democratic Future – have emerged in recent decades to mobilize support for Democratic candidates and progressive causes. By contrast, equivalent organizations on the right – the Washington Policy Center, Americans for Prosperity, and the Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute – which have been funded or linked together by the Koch Network have been less closely coordinated and widespread in rural Western Washington, with lack of collaboration and disinvestment of resources for key organizational capacities in recent years weakening the effectiveness of conservative networks to mobilize voters. Yet, success in influencing voters can be examined beyond political office, and conservative success in passing ballot initiatives suggests that conservatives may have more success in rural Western Washington than may be intuitive.

The Parties

For much of the 20th century, local Democratic parties in rural Western Washington were social hubs as much as mobilizing organizations. Newspaper archives and interviews with longtime party members paint a picture of lively gatherings - picnics, dinners, and holiday parties - designed to foster social bonds and keep supporters engaged year-round.³⁴⁰ Similar to their Democratic candidates' concerted outreach to local communities, county Democratic Parties cemented their community presence by participating in planning commissions for local county fairs, and making social events available to the public and, on occasion, even Republicans.³⁴¹ When conflicts arose, they were typically resolved internally, preventing the factional fragmentation that frequently derailed Republican efforts.³⁴²

While economic turmoil in the 1980s and 1990s disrupted local Democratic Parties' places in the social fabric of their communities, they remained influential mobilizing forces in the region's liberal organizational network. From 1976 to 2024, local Democratic Parties in rural Western Washington have maintained active and fully staffed party leadership boards, enabling Democrats to engage in innovative outreach tactics such as developing their own voter databases in the 1990s to conduct targeted voter outreach prior to the emergence of modern tools such as NGP.³⁴³

By contrast, local Republican Parties throughout rural Western Washington have possessed more variable and weaker leadership capacities from 1976 to 2024. While all five county Republican Parties possessed elected party leadership during this period, these parties at times struggled to fill all positions and field committees beyond their executive boards.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, local Republican Parties have struggled with high leadership turnover, further weakening local Republican Parties' abilities to engage in long-term capacity building.³⁴⁵

Precinct Committee Officers

Like their candidate counterparts, county Democratic Parties in rural Western Washington have maintained a strong year-round local presence in the region, evidenced in part by robust Precinct Committee Officer (PCO) operations from 1976 to 2024 as noted in newspaper articles and with party leaders.³⁴⁶ As trained party volunteers elected by party members in their neighborhoods, PCOs serve as neighborhood captains who mobilize party members during and outside of election years, enabling local parties, especially the Democratic Party, to have a sustained local presence year-round.³⁴⁷ By contrast, weakening the Republican Party's influence has been its limited physical presence within the region.³⁴⁸ As noted by longtime Republican Party leaders such as the current Kitsap County Republican Party Chair, local Republican Parties have not historically engaged in year-round organizing through a robust PCO program, only becoming active during the months leading up to elections.³⁴⁹

To quantify the extent of local party presence in communities through PCOs in recent decades, I constructed a dataset detailing the percentages of precincts filled by each party's PCOs in each county from 2000 to 2024 utilizing PCO lists from archived party websites.³⁵⁰ While it is difficult to provide direct comparisons between parties over time given unavailability of data, some trends emerge within parties across time. For instance, from 2000 to 2024, Democrats in rural Western Washington have generally achieved PCO coverage in at least half of all precincts in most counties, facilitating an active local presence, and the Jefferson County Democrats have consistently boasted the region's highest PCO coverage with 83.78 percent coverage in 2024. Coincidentally, voters in Jefferson County routinely provide the highest vote share to Democratic candidates out of all counties in rural Western Washington. Similarly, where local Republican Parties have improved PCO coverage, Republican electoral performance has

improved. From 2000 to 2024, Mason County Republicans have steadily increased their local PCO presence, overtaking the Mason County Democrats in 2018. Today in 2024, a Republican PCO is present in 87.5 percent of precincts in Mason County, contributing to the comparatively greater performance of the Mason County Republicans over other counties in the region.³⁵¹

Figure 9: Voting Patterns in Jefferson County, 2000 – 2024 with Democratic PCOs Overlaid

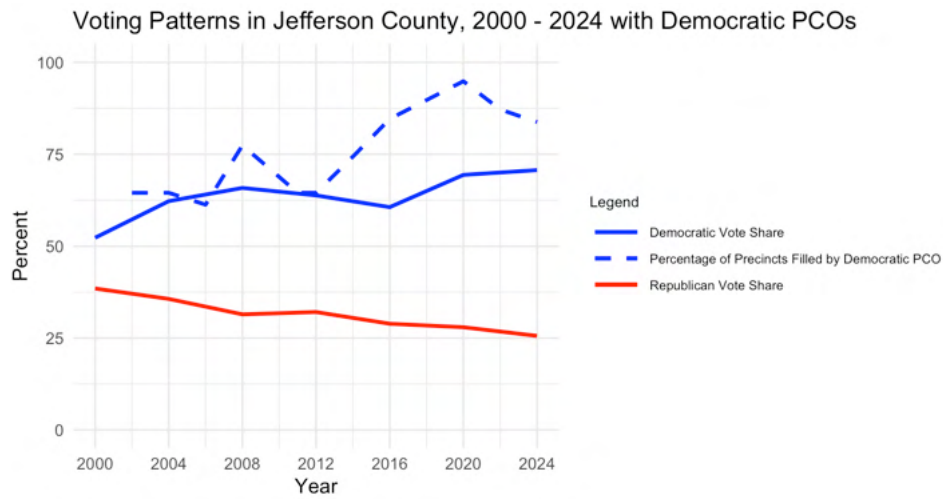
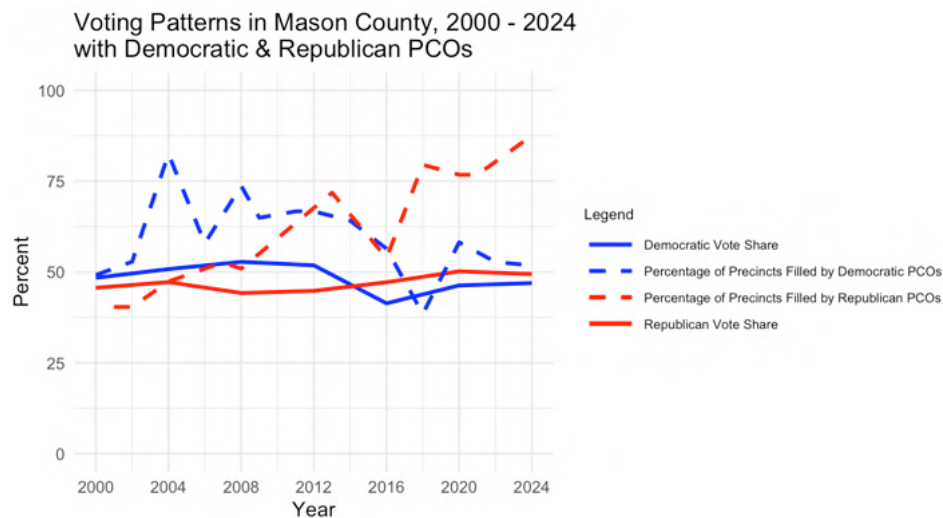


Figure 10: Voting Patterns in Mason County, 2000 – 2024 with Democratic and Republican PCOs Overlaid

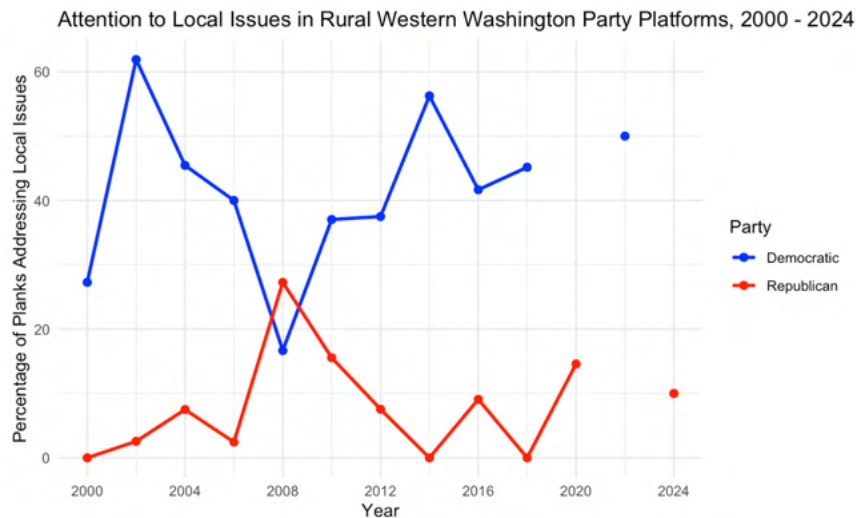


Party Platforms

Local Democratic Parties have also maintained a robust local material focus through their greater emphasis on local and economic issues compared to local Republican Parties. With party platforms becoming an increasingly useful tool for political scientists to examine changes in party agendas at the national and state levels, scholars such as Kirsten Walters and Theda Skocpol have noted the increasing polarization and nationalization of state party platforms, evident through issues such as immigration.³⁵²

To track the amount of attention provided to local issues in county party platforms in rural Western Washington, I created a dataset of 57 county party platforms, sourcing these platforms from archived county party websites utilizing the WayBack Machine as well as contacting old party chairs. The 57 platforms include 28 Democratic Party platforms and 29 Republican Party platforms. Influenced by Walters's and Skocpol's method of tracking attention to mentions of immigration in state party platforms, I measure attention to local issues as the percentage of platform planks that reference local issues or governments, given that raw counts would be inappropriate due to varying lengths of party platforms. While this collection of party platforms has limitations in tracking the extent of attention county parties in rural Western Washington provided to local issues, given that not all counties in all years are represented in the dataset, the data provides a useful starting point for understanding political parties' varying local presence.

11: Percentage of Rural Western Washington Party Platform Planks That Mention Local Issues, 2000 - 2024³⁵³



Save for 2008, local Democratic Parties in rural Western Washington have generally paid greater attention to local issues than their Republican Party counterparts, signaling a greater emphasis on maintaining a strong local presence. With Democrats avoiding discussion of nationalized and social issues to a greater extent than Republicans, 13 out of 28 Democratic platforms discussed the issue of immigration compared to 19 out of 29 Republican platforms discussing this issue. Likewise, while only 18 out of 28 Democratic Party platforms discussed abortion, 28 out of 29 Republican Party platforms discussed this issue. Furthermore, while 24 out of 28 Democratic platforms (85.71 percent) addressed job creation and labor issues, a comparatively smaller proportion of Republican platforms, 21 out of 29 (72.41 percent), focused on these topics.

However, while local Democratic Parties in rural Western Washington have been strong mobilizing forces in the region, this strength has largely developed without robust state party support.³⁵⁴ With the state party historically lacking a robust apparatus to provide substantial support to local parties, one Democratic Party leader described the environment as one in which

“if you wanted to get something done, you had to do it yourself.”³⁵⁵ Of course, local Democratic Parties could not do it all. From 1976 to 2024, local Democratic Parties have struggled to maintain permanent office spaces, generally only establishing headquarters during presidential election years, although as of 2024, three out of five counties in rural Western Washington now maintain office spaces – Clallam, Kitsap, and Mason Counties.³⁵⁶

In recent decades, the state Democratic Party has provided increased support for local Democratic Parties, including establishing a Party Affairs Coordinator position in 2008 to provide logistical and operations support for local parties, but support has not been evenly distributed statewide.³⁵⁷ Additionally, since at least 2004, Democratic coordinated campaigns for presidential elections have ceased establishing local headquarters on the Olympic Peninsula, with any headquarters in rural Western Washington being based in Kitsap County.³⁵⁸ Likewise, while the House Democratic Campaign Committee has regularly provided support for targeted state legislative races in districts like the 26th legislative district in Kitsap County and, until 2020, in the 19th legislative district in Grays Harbor County, the HDCC executive director confirmed that during the 2024, races on the Olympic Peninsula were not targeted for intensive state support.³⁵⁹ With this lack of support from the state party, Democratic Party leaders in counties like Grays Harbor or Mason Counties have felt abandoned, with 19th legislative district former state legislator and Grays Harbor Democratic Party leader Brian Blake expressing his frustration that state support in the 2024 election “was just almost nonexistent... So it was really brutal for local candidates who were pretty much on their own.”³⁶⁰

Local Republican Parties in rural Western Washington have also been weakened by limited state support, amplified by a high degree of party infighting which has weakened their outreach capacities.³⁶¹ Describing these intra-party tensions since 1980 and how in-fighting in

rural Western Washington has been among the worst statewide, former chair of the Washington State Republican Party Kirby Wilbur expressed “these divisions get so personal... they would rather see a Democrat win.”³⁶² Elaborating on the negative impact of “these big ugly party fights,” Wilbur noted “that [it] hurts the Republican Party's ability on the local level because you have first time people come into the caucus say... I don't want any part of this...’ And it's really hard to recruit new people to chaos. And I think that's hurt the party across the state.”³⁶³

The Christian Right

Contributing to this conservative cacophony has been the Christian right, a distinct and often adversarial traditional pillar of Washington State’s conservative organizational network. While the Christian right has largely failed to shape the social fabric of rural Western Washington, it remained a notable mobilizing force, beginning with Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority movement. Indicative of its influence nationally, the Moral Majority registered “at least 2 million” new conservative voters and built local Republican Party organizations in localities lacking pre-existing infrastructure.³⁶⁴ At 12,000 members, Washington State’s Moral Majority chapter was the movement’s largest and one of its most active state chapters, and one of the few nationwide to build active county chapters.³⁶⁵ Leveraging this local infrastructure, the Moral Majority lobbied for legislation and canvassed actively for aligned candidates, helping to elect at least 31 candidates to the State Legislature statewide in 1980 such as Ellen Craswell.³⁶⁶

In line with a broader national decline of the Moral Majority, the Moral Majority’s prominence in Washington State became superseded in the late 1980s by Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition, which organized conferences, rallies, and candidate trainings as well as distributed political pamphlets in churches.³⁶⁷ Unlike the Moral Majority, which built its organization around preachers and evangelical Christians as frontline activists, the Christian

Coalition's local leadership centered around small business leaders and pre-existing political activists of broad faith traditions.³⁶⁸

Seeking greater influence within the Republican Party, the Christian Coalition notably contributed to "divisive" intra-party fighting which weakened the capacity for the state party to support its county parties. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the Christian Coalition regularly contested but failed to secure the Washington State Republican Party Chairmanship.³⁶⁹ Likewise, the Christian Coalition fought to assert its policy priorities on the party platform, such as in 1992 when they "took control of the state convention... and crafted a platform that denounced yoga and witchcraft," leading to "some bitter feelings" among Republicans and provided Democrats with fodder for criticism which contributed to Republican defeats such as Ellen Craswell.³⁷⁰

Speaking to this conservative cacophony, many conservatives and religious communities in rural Western Washington expressed their disdain for the Christian right.³⁷¹ In a letter to the editor, former Republican congressional candidate for Washington's 6th Congressional District Ken Lund wrote that "I was dismayed to realize how badly divided the Republican Party is. I found a large number of people who think of themselves as conservative Republicans and resent having the Christian Coalition's socio-political agenda crammed down their throats... Their divisive tactics have hurt the Republican Party."³⁷² Likewise, during the 1996 election, the Mainstream Republicans faction of the Kitsap Republican Party joined Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Rights Action League to protest the state Republican Party's pro-life platform, diminishing conservative cohesion in rural Western Washington.³⁷³

By the late 1990s, the Christian Coalition's position as a leading force in the Washington State Christian right movement collapsed.³⁷⁴ In its place, elite policy advocacy Christian right organizations have emerged, with the Family Policy Institute of Washington (FPIW) and the

Discovery Institute being among the among consequential. Founded in the early 2000s, the FPIW is a coordinated apparatus of organizations consisting of a policy-oriented 501(c)3 nonprofit, a 501(c)4, and a political action committee that aims to mobilize Christian conservatives to political action by publishing voter and policy lobbying guides, and interfacing with conservative churches throughout the year.³⁷⁵ Likewise, the Discovery Institute, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1991, similarly publishes policy briefs, albeit on national issues, and organizes events that bring together Christian conservatives.³⁷⁶ Although Christian right think tanks, both organizations have extensively published policy briefs to advance a wide range of conservative objectives, including lowering taxes and election integrity.³⁷⁷

Despite both organizations' broad focus on public policy issues important to conservatives beyond culturally conservative issues, and the FPIW's connections to the Koch Network, limited evidence exists suggesting that they have partnered extensively with other conservative organizations such as those discussed later in this chapter, especially in rural Western Washington.³⁷⁸ The FPIW's 32 local conservative organizational partners are mostly siloed on the Christian right and none are focused directly on rural Western Washington.³⁷⁹ Within Washington State's conservative organizational network, the Christian right has largely operated independently.³⁸⁰

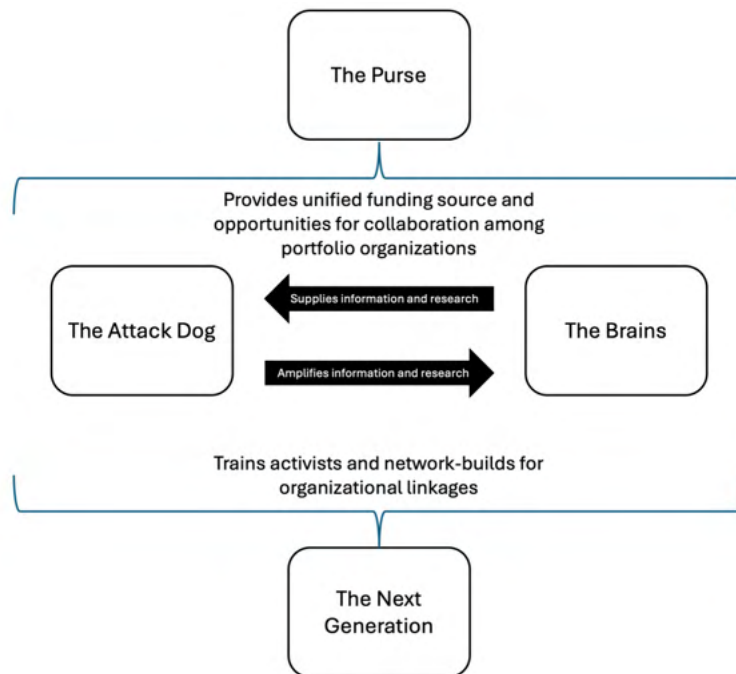
The effects of this intra-party fighting, limited support from the state party for local parties, and lack of robust physical presence in conjunction with an uncooperative Christian right have manifested in a largely weak and ineffective Republican Party, contrasting with the comparatively better organized and locally focused Democrats. However, these traditional left and right organizational lynchpins have not mobilized voters alone without support from other organizational partners. As one leader from the Olympic Central Labor Council put it, organizing

“requires a lot of outside help.”³⁸¹ Indeed, new liberal and conservative organizational infrastructures have emerged beginning in the 1990s and 2000s to bolster local activism and fill the organizational vacuum left by organized labor on the Olympic Peninsula. Consequently, to understand liberal resilience in rural Western Washington, we must examine these organizations' presence, functions, and relationships in their efforts to influence voters.

New Elite State Organizational Infrastructure

On the left and right, elite state organizational infrastructure has emerged to influence and mobilize voters throughout rural Western Washington. Through a coalition of organizations connected through funding or staffing overlap, the Progress Alliance of Washington (“the purse”), the Washington Budget and Policy Center (“the brains”), Fuse Washington (“the attack dog”), and the Institute for a Democratic Future (“the next generation”) have emerged as the highly collaborative four horsemen of Washington State’s liberal organizational network that have bolstered liberal organizing statewide, including in rural Western Washington. By contrast, while equivalent pillars of Washington State’s conservative organizational infrastructure - the Washington Policy Center, Americans for Prosperity, and the Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute - have been financially and organizationally linked through varying degrees of connection to the Koch Network, disinvestment in key components of this infrastructure, coupled with a lack of collaboration with the Christian right, has weakened conservative mobilization efforts.³⁸²

Figure 12: Concept Map of Organizational Relationships Between Elite Organizational Infrastructure



Progress Alliance of Washington and the Koch Brothers: The Purse

Founded in 2006 by a group of wealthy progressive donors, the Progress Alliance of Washington State has been a core player in building progressive organizational infrastructure in Washington State. Focused on the long-term mission of strengthening the “progressive movement in Washington state,” the Progress Alliance of Washington has adopted “an infrastructure approach — investing in leadership development, community-based organizations, and tools and capacities” rather than “focusing on single campaigns or individual issues.”³⁸³ Since its founding, the Progress Alliance of Washington granted over \$15 million and stewarded over \$6 million for over a dozen organizations in their portfolio, and helped “launch more than 10 new programs and organizations” covering a broad range of capacities ranging from communications development to policy research.³⁸⁴ Along with funding organizations, the Progress Alliance of Washington promotes collaborative working relationships among

organizations within Washington State's liberal organizational network such as through the overlap of senior leadership and board members across organizations within the Progress Alliance of Washington's portfolio.³⁸⁵

For its long-term infrastructure-building work, the Progress Alliance of Washington has gained a strong reputation among liberal activists and organizational leaders who have cited this consortium of donors' importance in empowering the progressive movement statewide. Because of its ties to organizations with organizing presence in rural Western Washington, the Progress Alliance of Washington's efforts have trickled down to benefit organizing efforts in the region, supporting groups like Washington State's elite liberal think tanks and rural-focused organizing groups such as Rural People's Voice.³⁸⁶

By contrast, conservative funding streams in Washington State have been much more variable. Aside from the Koch brothers, who have provided the most sustained presence in supporting coordinated conservative organizational infrastructure in Washington State similar to their efforts in other states, multiple Washington State Republican Party Chairs have noted a lack of consistent funding from donors to sustain long-term infrastructure building for conservative advocacy and mobilization efforts, instead cycling every few years.³⁸⁷ However, even the Koch brothers have not fully supported all organizational capacities necessary for successful mobilization, and have failed to bridge fiscally conservative organizations with the socially conservative Christian right which has weakened conservative cohesion in Washington State.³⁸⁸

Yet, while funding will always be an important component of strengthening organizational capacity for political action, with the Progress Alliance of Washington building this capacity for progressives in Washington State in recent decades, examining finances and money flow alone will be insufficient to fully understand the expansion of the liberal

organizational network of Washington State and how this infrastructure helps preserve liberal loyalties in rural Western Washington. Indeed, by examining organizational activity within left and right networks, we can understand more substantively how these organizations collaborate, or fail to collaborate, to influence voters and policy in rural Western Washington.

Washington Budget and Policy Center & The Washington Policy Center: The Brains

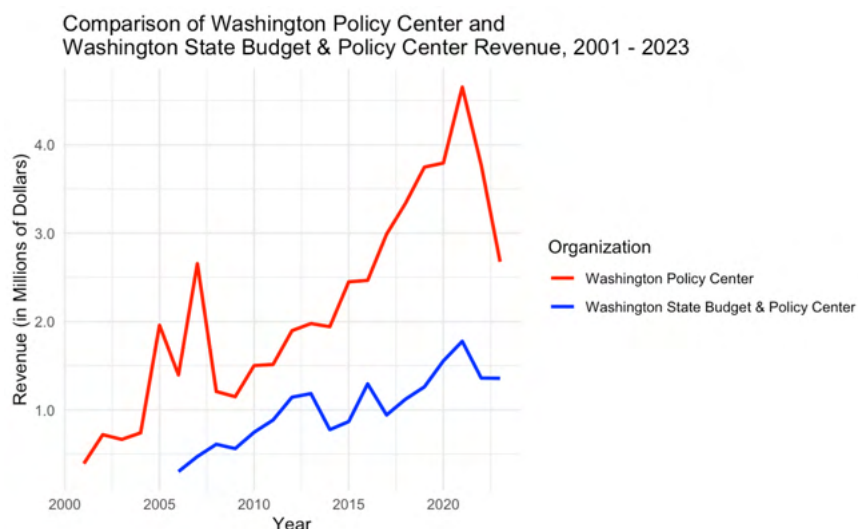
Providing Democratic candidates and activists throughout rural Western Washington with the policy information necessary to mobilize successful grassroots organization efforts, elite think tanks in Washington State have emerged in recent decades and have gained a prominent reputation among liberal activists in Washington State. Founded in 2006 (notably the same year the Progress Alliance of Washington was founded), the Washington State Budget and Policy Center (WSBPC) works to shape budget and tax policy to achieve progressive economic and social objectives.³⁸⁹ A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the WSBPC helps to bolster progressive organizing throughout Washington State, including rural Western Washington, by supplying activists at the grassroots level and political candidates with policy information talking points through published research reports or short-form blog posts.

In its efforts to make its research accessible to activists and policymakers alike, the WSBPC since its founding has regularly published its research through policy reports accessible on its website and sent its reports to organizational partners statewide.³⁹⁰ Additionally, the WSBPC has strengthened its influence among the public by maintaining a blog called the “Schmudget Blog” since 2009 to communicate their research findings as well as general talking points for progressive policy in an easily comprehensible manner.³⁹¹ These publications have become powerful resources for liberal activists and politicians, with multiple affirming the importance of the WSBPC’s communications platforms in supplying them with accessible

information to support their organizing efforts. As one local Democratic Party leader put it, “It provides you with useful ammunition when you’re challenging conservatives.”³⁹² Likewise, for Democratic candidates running for political office in rural Western Washington, the policy and polling information provided by the WSBPC have allowed candidates to be more strategic and informed in their outreach to voters.³⁹³

While the WSBPC and similar liberal think tanks have provided liberal activists and candidates with the policy information necessary to engage in effective organizing efforts, these think tanks are not fully immune to the challenges facing liberal organizational networks in other states, particularly with maintaining steady funding. Compared to conservative equivalents such as the Washington Policy Center, the WSBPC, despite being funded by the Progress Alliance of Washington, has consistently operated on smaller budgets and staff sizes (*see Figure 13*).³⁹⁴ With fundraising being a perennial point of concern for the liberal think tanks of Washington State, the attention needed to address the short-term challenge of remaining solvent has partially limited the ability to engage in more robust organizing efforts.³⁹⁵

*Figure 13: Comparison of Washington Policy Center and Washington State Budget & Policy Center Revenue, 2001 - 2023*³⁹⁶



Despite this challenge, the influence of Washington State's elite liberal think tanks in shaping the politics of rural Western Washington cannot be understated, achieved in part through their marriage of social and economic issues as inseparable. For the WSBPC and other liberal organizations, their work has operated under the framework that social justice cannot be achieved without economic justice, and the synthesis of these issues has enabled these think tanks to frame policies through an economic lens rather than a social lens. With loggers and shipyard workers noting their dislike of politicians exclusively focusing on social issues, this packaging of social and economic issues has strengthened liberal organizing in rural Western Washington by enabling liberal organizations, activists, and policymakers utilizing their research to mitigate accusations of liberals engaging in "culture wars" by conservatives.³⁹⁷

As the WSBPC's conservative equivalent, the Washington Policy Center (WPC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1997 that focuses on developing economic "Policy research that fosters freedom, drives government accountability, and creates opportunities."³⁹⁸ In its early years, the Washington Policy Center maintained a small operation with a budget of only \$400,000 and a staff of four workers in 2001; today, the WPC administers a budget of over \$4 million and a staff of 25 workers.³⁹⁹ In the years following its founding, the WPC gained a prominent reputation among conservatives, described as "The Heritage Foundation of the Northwest" by Jack Kemp.⁴⁰⁰ In recent decades, the WPC has maintained ties to the Koch Network through its membership in the State Policy Network and American Legislative Exchange Council, as well as much of its funding coming from Koch-connected donors and ventures.⁴⁰¹

The WPC utilizes multiple mechanisms to advance its policy objectives: aggressive campaigns to make research publicly available to voters and activists, and year-round outreach to

elected officials throughout the state. To disseminate their research publicly, multiple WPC leaders noted the WPC's media engagement efforts through newspaper editorials and television interviews, and attendance at community meetings statewide through their Speaker's Bureau to present research to local activists and community leaders.⁴⁰² Furthermore, the WPC publishes *Citizens' Guides* and *Policy Guides for Washington State* on their website "for citizens and the legislators who serve them."⁴⁰³ Building upon these publicly available guides, the WPC regularly meets with conservative lawmakers to share research and discuss policy areas of interest.⁴⁰⁴ Similar to their liberal rivals' praise of the WSBPC, Republican Party leaders and politicians in rural Western Washington have similarly praised the WPC for providing conservatives with the information necessary to engage in effective mobilization efforts.⁴⁰⁵

While both the WSBPC and the WPC have filled important roles within their respective organizational networks by supplying activists and candidates with the research necessary to conduct informed mobilization efforts, the extent of their influence is shaped by the existence or non-existence of amplifying elite policy advocacy organizations. While liberals have established Fuse Washington to fill this organizational capacity and boost liberal mobilization efforts, the conservative equivalent through the Washington State chapter of Americans for Prosperity (AFP) has proved ephemeral, contributing to conservative ineffectiveness in Washington State.

Fuse Washington and Americans for Prosperity: The Attack Dog

Affectionally self-described as "the most powerful organization in Washington State politics that you've never heard of" or Washington "state's largest progressive organization," Fuse Washington was founded in 2007 to function as the communications arm of Washington State's liberal organizational network to enable liberal activists and organizations to "go on the offensive."⁴⁰⁶ In line with this purposely broad mission, Fuse Washington advances liberal

causes through a core set of strategies and projects, including administering a “Communications Hub” to provide liberals, including the organizations detailed in this thesis, with communications training and on-going communications staffing.⁴⁰⁷ Through this portfolio, Fuse Washington primarily functions as an attack dog for Washington State liberals, promising to “hold decision-makers' feet to the fire.”⁴⁰⁸

Since its founding, Fuse Washington has become well-regarded by numerous progressive activists.⁴⁰⁹ Cited among the most consequential of Fuse Washington’s communications projects is its Progressive Voters Guide, which provides research, endorsements, and information on down-ballot liberal candidates and ballot measures who would otherwise not “receive as much attention.”⁴¹⁰ Created in 2008, the Progressive Voters Guide has achieved a broad viewership, with more than 2.5 million Washington voters having used the guide since its establishment, and local Democratic Parties have made extensive use of the guide in their organizing and endorsement efforts.⁴¹¹

Also as part of its broad-ranging organizational portfolio, Fuse Washington organizes coalitions of grassroots activists to advocate for candidates and issues of interest, such as the Defend Washington coalition during the 2024 election to mobilize opposition to conservative ballot initiatives.⁴¹² Like the Progress Alliance of Washington, enhancing Fuse Washington’s ability to maintain this broad range of activities is its incorporation as both a 501(c)3 and 501(c)4. While the liberal policy think tanks of Washington State, such as the WSBPC, have noted their inability to engage directly in partisan politics due to its 501(c)3 nonprofit status, Fuse Washington’s dual incorporation as a 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 provides the organization with flexibility in its choice of tactics, enabling Washington State’s liberal organizational network to engage voters year-round effectively.⁴¹³

By contrast, equivalent elite strategic political advocacy organizations on the right, particularly the Koch-backed AFP, have played a limited role in shaping conservative organizing efforts in Washington State.⁴¹⁴ In other states with more successful conservative organizational networks, a core component of their success has involved collaborations between elite policy advocacy organizations and grassroots conservative activists, among the most influential organizations of the former being the AFP. Founded nationally in 2004, the AFP served as a continuation of the Koch brothers' economically conservative organizing efforts beginning with their previous Citizens for a Sound Economy (CSE) founded in 1984.

The Koch brothers have been involved in influencing Washington State politics since at least 1991 through the CSE.⁴¹⁵ While the CSE ceased operations nationally in 2004, the Koch Brothers resumed activity in Washington State in 2010 through the establishment of a state AFP chapter. However, an examination of the Washington State AFP's activities reveals a short-lived organization that proved largely ineffective in mobilizing conservatives. To understand its activities, I developed a dataset utilizing the Wayback Machine to gather organizational information from archived AFP's web pages, in total logging 83 posts between March of 2010 to December of 2013, as well as interviewed the two chairs of the Washington State AFP chapter.

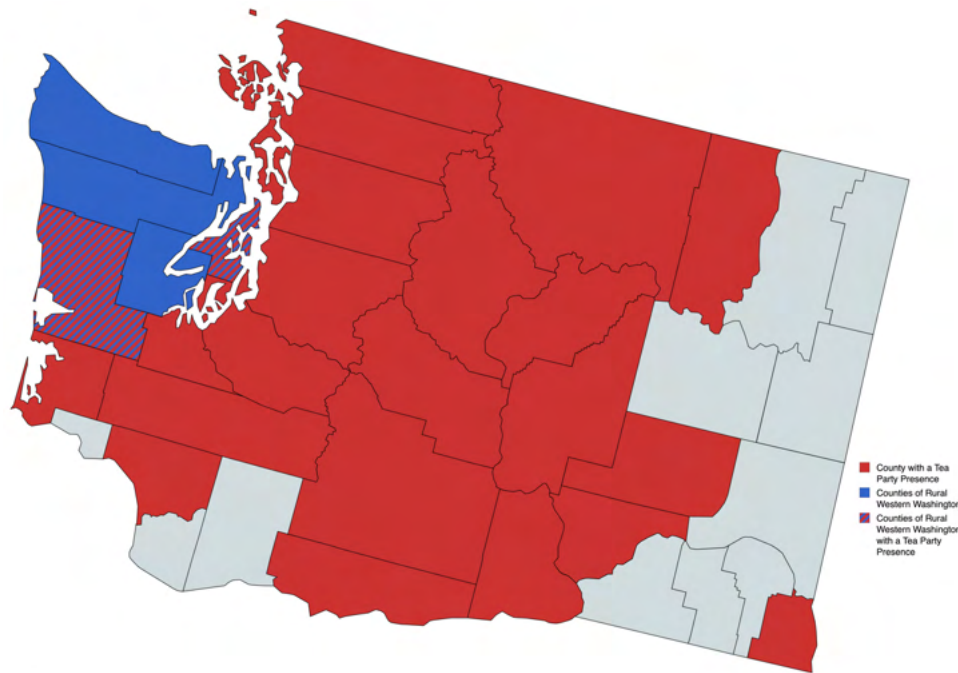
Limiting its ability to mobilize support for conservative causes, the AFP demonstrated limited physical presence throughout Washington State and especially in rural Western Washington. During its years of operation, the Washington State AFP chapter did not establish any field offices beyond its headquarters, which were the homes of the Washington State AFP state chapter chairs in King County and later Longview.⁴¹⁶ Additionally, the state chapter fielded limited numbers of personnel, at its peak only possessing two staffers during its first couple years of existence, influenced by a lack of financial support from the national AFP.⁴¹⁷

In place of paid staffers and field offices to advance their objectives, the Washington State AFP relied on an apparatus of volunteers sourced heavily from the Tea Party movement in line with national trends of the AFP amplifying the grassroots efforts of Tea Party activists.⁴¹⁸ To this end, 19 out of 83 Washington State-related posts from the AFP's website indicated Tea Party involvement in AFP events such as a "Take Back Washington" rally and four Tea Party Tax Day rallies.⁴¹⁹ However, none of these events occurred in rural Western Washington, and interviews with Washington State AFP leaders have indicated that organizational activity occurred in more frequently in other parts of the state. Beyond rallies, the Washington State AFP's activities in its early years involved limited election engagement, with Washington State AFP Chair Kirby Wilbur citing an example in which the Washington State AFP during the 2010 midterms published informational pamphlets for seven competitive state legislative races, although none of these efforts were directed towards rural Western Washington.⁴²⁰

The limited lack of presence of the Washington State AFP in rural Western Washington may be partially explainable by the Tea Party movement's absence in the same region despite having a sizable statewide presence.⁴²¹ In their research of the national Tea Party movement, Skocpol and Williamson identified 32 local Tea Parties across Washington State at the movement's peak in approximately 2011, making the Tea Party movement in Washington State one of only 15 states to possess more than 30 local Tea Parties and one of only 12 states to possess approximately four to six local Tea Parties per million people.⁴²² Likewise, a 2014 report found that Washington State's Tea Party movement ranked 14 out of 50 in total membership and 18 out of 50 in total number of local Tea Party organizations.⁴²³ Expanding on Skocpol and Williamson's initial list of Tea Party organizations, I conducted an additional online search,

identifying at least 52 local Tea Party organizations statewide from 2010 to 2015.⁴²⁴ In the map below, counties shaded red are counties that have had Tea Party presence from 2010 to 2015.⁴²⁵

Figure 14: Counties in Washington State with a Tea Party Presence, 2010 to 2015



Despite the prominence of the Tea Party movement in Washington State, its influence was limited in rural Western Washington, as only four Tea Party groups existed in rural Western Washington. Three were concentrated in Kitsap County while only one was in Grays Harbor County; none existed in Clallam, Jefferson, or Mason Counties. By contrast, local Tea Parties in Washington State were heavily concentrated in other parts of the state, such as the densely populated Pierce and King Counties. Coincidentally, Pierce and King Counties experienced the heaviest AFP activity. Today, evidence suggests that only one local Tea Party in rural Western Washington, specifically in Kitsap County, remains active.⁴²⁶

In the following years, the limited activity of the AFP scaled back even further as the Washington State AFP discontinued its pamphlet distribution efforts in 2011.⁴²⁷ Despite this narrowing of activities, the Washington State AFP importantly continued bridging grassroots

conservative activists through the Tea Party with elite conservative think tanks like the WPC, which shared ideological alignment and organizational affiliation through their participation in the Koch-backed State Policy Network. Describing the nature of the relationship between the Washington State AFP and the WPC, Wilbur shared “The Washington Policy Center, we have connections with them, and they were a good source for information and for facts... the WPC belonged to the State Policy Network... if they had conferences, we would participate.”⁴²⁸ Through the Washington State AFP’s linkages between the WPC and local Tea Parties, a symbiotic relationship emerged in which whenever the WPC published research findings on an issue of interest, the Washington State AFP could host rallies or events that would mobilize grassroots conservative activists, particularly Tea Party activists, thereby helping to deliver a unified conservative message to win the support of voters.⁴²⁹

Nonetheless, in 2014, the Koch Brothers elected to shutter the Washington State AFP chapter along with other state chapters in liberal states, severing support for grassroots Tea Party activists.⁴³⁰ Without the Washington State AFP chapter to bridge grassroots Tea Party activism and elite WPC research, conservative organizational networks possessed diminished capacity to build and deliver a unified message to voters.

The Institute for a Democratic Future and the Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute: The Next Generation

With networks of organizations and trained activists playing a major role in building capacity for long-term political success, the Institute for a Democratic Future’s (IDF) role as the liberal organizational network’s most consequential network builder has served as an important contributor to sustained liberal strength in rural Western Washington. Established in 1997 as a 527 organization in response to limited bench-building efforts across Washington State’s liberal

organizational network, the IDF aims to cultivate a statewide network of trained liberal activists with experience in progressive policymaking, organizing, and campaigns.⁴³¹ While many of its alumni have proceeded to hold elected office throughout all levels of Washington State politics, including in rural Western Washington, the program aims to provide broader professional development that introduces participants to different strands of progressive policymaking beyond just candidate development.⁴³² Lasting 11 weeks, the IDF's programming focuses on a different topic and geographic area each week corresponding to the 10 congressional districts of Washington State, culminating with a week in Washington DC.

Through networking events, weekend retreats, and guest speaker events, the IDF's social components have built linkages across participant cohorts and statewide liberal organizations. This social component does not conclude upon graduation, with both formal staff-driven and informal alumni-driven alumni engagement maintaining linkages between current and past participants. As Gomez noted, "They get together on holidays... There are a few folks who got married who met in the program, so we see a couple of babies... They doorbell for each other, they help each other when somebody decides they're going to run [for office]."⁴³³ Benefiting from these relationships in his career, Van De Wege reflected "There were people from my class I worked with during my time in the legislature and I still work with people to this day."⁴³⁴

While the IDF introduces participants to the various issues and regions of Washington State, its curriculum is not pre-determined, instead relying on a decentralized model involving IDF alumni, their networks, and local political leaders to deliver purposefully fluid programming each year, reflecting the changing nature of politics.⁴³⁵ Sharing how this programming strengthened his skills as a candidate, Van De Wege remarked "it opened me up to other issues and ways that local governments are strained, ways the state is strained, and how they go about

solving those problems.”⁴³⁶ The benefits of IDF participation have also worked in reverse, with liberal leaders statewide benefiting from exposure to rural Western Washington-specific issues, enabling them to shape progressive policy priorities that resonate with these voters.⁴³⁷

From its founding, the IDF has maintained a quota that at least one-third of its participants must come from parts of Washington State other than King County, allowing liberal leaders from *all* regions, including rural Western Washington, to benefit from a statewide liberal organizational network.⁴³⁸ As Gomez described, building liberal organizational strength requires “a network of people outside the I-5 corridor.”⁴³⁹ Beyond elected office, the broad-reaching network of the IDF has ensured that liberals can project influence at all levels of Washington State politics, encompassing state legislative assistants, lobbyists, the Political and Strategic Campaigns Director of the Washington State Labor Council, or on the leadership of Fuse Washington.⁴⁴⁰

In building a network of liberal activists, the IDF has contributed substantially to political organizing efforts for candidates in rural Western Washington. In one instance, during Van De Wege’s first race for state representative in 2004 against Republican incumbent Jim Buck, voters noted the IDF’s prominent influence in this race. In a letter to the editor, local voter Estelita Walker praised Van De Wege for turning out a large number of volunteers to canvass, with a third coming from the IDF, before describing how the IDF became a focal point the election as Republicans posted signs saying “IDF Go Home.”⁴⁴¹ While Van De Wege lost in 2004, the IDF returned in 2006 to organize a robust canvassing and voter registration effort that helped to elect Van De Wege as state representative.⁴⁴²

Conservatives have recognized the influence of the IDF, especially in rural Western Washington; in a state senate race, Republican candidate Lois McMahan attacked opponent

Derek Kilmer for being an alumnus of the IDF.⁴⁴³ Aiming to replicate the success of the IDF, conservatives in 2009 established their own program called the Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute (JDLI) which aims to “identify, recruit, and develop future leaders from throughout Washington” by providing training on policymaking, media relations, and campaign operations.⁴⁴⁴ Beyond candidate development training, the JDLI has similarly sought to replicate the IDF’s network building efforts by establishing alumni mentorship offerings to build linkages across JDLI cohorts, as well as linking applicants to a scholarship administered by the WPC.⁴⁴⁵

However, the JDLI possesses multiple features that limits its effectiveness in developing a trained conservative network to the same extent as the IDF for liberals. While the IDF has consistently operated a six-month program that directly puts participants in conversation with communities throughout Washington State, strengthening community relations and their understanding of issues statewide, the JDLI’s programming has been much less intensive: its first few cohorts participated in only a weekend-long training before expanding to two weekends-long in 2013, while its program appears to be conducted with limited engagement with real-world communities.⁴⁴⁶ Furthermore, while social media posts suggest the program was active in 2024, this recent activity suggests that the JDLI has focused more on candidate training than network building, and the JDLI has not maintained a functional website since February 25, 2024, weakening its presence and outreach to conservatives.⁴⁴⁷

This is not to say that the JDLI has been entirely unsuccessful in empowering conservatives in rural Western Washington: since its founding, at least two alumni, Dan Griffey and Drew MacEwan from the 35th legislative district, have won state legislative office.⁴⁴⁸ Nonetheless, aside from its limited connections to the WPC, the JDLI has proven to be less consequential in shaping conservative organizational networks than the IDF for liberal networks

through the former's less intensive program and emphasis on candidate development rather than network building.

Organizational Features of Left and Right Networks

Through the emergence of a highly collaborative state liberal organizational infrastructure supportive of grassroots local organizing efforts, the “four horsemen” of Washington State’s liberal organizational network has sustained Democratic resilience in rural Western Washington by filling the vacuum left by organized labor’s collapse on the Olympic Peninsula and reinforcing local organizing in Kitsap County. Operating on a temporal horizon beyond election cycles and investing in movement building beyond supporting individual candidates, this infrastructure has worked year-round to educate voters of liberal priorities and equip liberal activists and candidates with the support necessary to mobilize successful organizing efforts. In addition to helping liberals get elected, this highly collaborative organizational network has contributed to the passage of major liberal policy priorities such as the Working Family Tax Credit and Paid Family & Medical Leave policies.⁴⁴⁹

By contrast, conservative organizational networks in rural Western Washington have been much less collaborative. The traditional power base of the region’s conservative organizational network, the Republican Party, often experiencing intra-party fighting as well as lacking the same degree of local focus as the Democratic Party, thereby weakening conservative mobilization efforts throughout 1976 to 2024. Likewise, conservative state-level organizational infrastructure has been much less coordinated and supportive of local organizing efforts, and disinvestment of resources from key organizational capacities has further limited conservative organizing. Compounding this ineffectiveness, this organizational infrastructure has failed to

collaborate with the Christian right, even with Koch Network funding overlap through the FPIW, further weakening the ability for conservatives to influence voters.

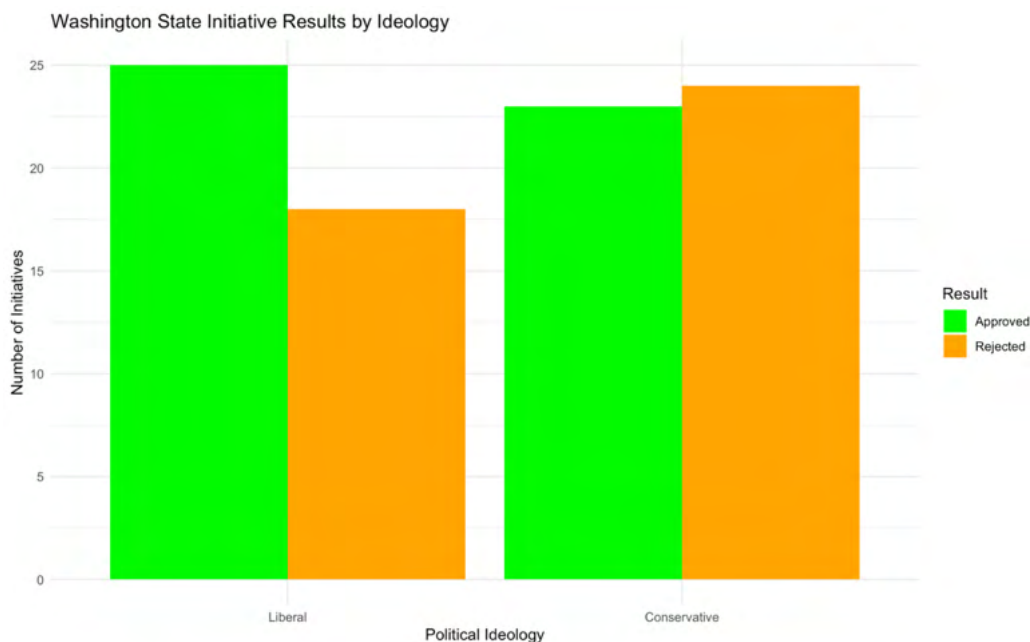
Ballot Initiatives

Thus far, our examination of organizational network effectiveness has focused on the ability to elect candidates. However, another mechanism by which organizational networks can mobilize voters to affect public policy – the ballot initiative process – reveals an instance where conservative networks may possess more influence than previously considered. Since the initiative's and referenda's establishment in 1912, Washingtonians have possessed the ability to influence policy directly, proposing at least 2,124 initiatives to the people.⁴⁵⁰ Understandably, the barrier to entry to passing initiatives is high, requiring a well-organized effort.⁴⁵¹ In the absence of being able to gain control of statewide elected offices and both legislative chambers to pass policy, the initiative process has provided a different mechanism for conservatives to influence policy.

To analyze the extent to which conservative and liberal networks have made use of Washington's initiative process, I created a dataset of 1,768 initiatives to the people that were filed with the Washington State Secretary of State's Office from 1976 to 2024, compiling information on initiative topics, the political affiliations of each initiative's sponsors, and outcomes of each initiative.⁴⁵² Of these 1,768 initiatives to the people, only 90 of them presented a sufficient number of signatures to be placed on the general election ballot. Of these 90 initiatives, 47 of them (approximately 52.22 percent) were sponsored or supported by conservatives, while 43 of them (approximately 47.78 percent) were by liberals.⁴⁵³ Experiencing similar difficulties in electing politicians, conservatives have achieved comparatively less

success to liberals in passing ballot initiatives, passing only 23 out of the 47 initiatives they have brought onto the ballot since 1976 compared to liberals passing 25 out of their 43 initiatives.

Figure 15: Washington State Ballot Initiative Results by Ideology, 1976 - 2024



Despite their comparatively diminished success in passing initiatives, conservatives have been able to influence public policy where they otherwise would not have been able to. For instance, Initiative 350 in 1978 passed with 66.29 percent of the vote, temporarily ending the practice of busing to desegregate public schools before a US Supreme Court decision declared the initiative unconstitutional.⁴⁵⁴ Furthermore, within rural Western Washington, conservative ballot initiatives have received substantial support: in 2019, conservative Initiative 976 passed with four out of five counties in rural Western Washington supporting the initiative to limit taxes on automobiles under the popular slogan “\$30 car tabs” – a major success for conservatives following a multi-decade effort to mobilize voters in support of this issue orchestrated by a leading conservative activist: Tim Eyman.⁴⁵⁵

An examination of Washington State's initiative mechanism would be incomplete without a discussion of Eyman's role as one of the state's most prolific initiative sponsors. Since the passage of his first initiative in 1998, Eyman has sponsored 486 of the 1768 initiatives to the people, of which 17 made it onto the general election ballot.⁴⁵⁶ Although voters only passed 11 out of 17 of his initiatives with nine being found mostly unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court, Eyman's efforts have been credited for energizing down-ballot conservatives by organizational leaders.⁴⁵⁷ Contributing to this mobilization, Eyman has traveled actively statewide to meet with conservative activists, including throughout rural Western Washington.⁴⁵⁸

While conservative leaders have downplayed the extent of collaboration between themselves and Eyman's efforts, their shared conservative economic focus has led to mutually reinforcing actions that collectively advance conservatives aims. To advance conservative ballot initiatives, the Washington Policy Center regularly published voter guides on ballot initiatives, which Eyman has utilized in his advocacy efforts to mobilize grassroots activists such as Republican Party and Tea Party members in support of conservative ballot initiatives.⁴⁵⁹

Conclusion: Conservatives Catching On

Recognizing their organizational shortcomings, conservative activists, including a former President of the Washington Policy Center, launched Project 42 to build a more cohesive organizational network. Modeled after successful conservative and liberal efforts in other states, including Washington State, Project 42 is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization that serves as an organizing body for statewide conservative activism, coordinating strategy and funding distribution for subordinate organizations that are either existing conservative organizations or newly created organizations by Project 42 to fill gaps in the state conservative network.⁴⁶⁰

To illustrate Project 42’s organizational network, I included below an organizational chart I secured from leaders within Project 42 (see *Figure 16*), revealing an ambitious apparatus comprised of eight strategic capacities.⁴⁶¹ These include policy development and grassroots mobilization, as well as organizing ballot initiative campaigns through Let’s Go Washington.⁴⁶² In coordinating a unified conservative movement in Washington State, Project 42 has connected previously disparate elements of the conservative organizational network, bringing together economically-focused groups and the socially-focused Christian right think tank of the Discovery Institute. Project 42 has also sought to integrate the Republican Party more in the broader state conservative organizational network, with the six ballot initiatives supported by Let’s Go Washington in 2024 being “filed and officially sponsored” by Chair of the Washington State Republican Party Jim Walsh, as well as both Heywood and Walsh having supported each other at their respective events.⁴⁶³ Given the nascent nature of Project 42, time will tell the long-term effectiveness of this newly coordinated network in building conservative success.

Figure 16: Project 42 Network



Conclusion: What it Takes to Win

While Democratic and Republican Clallam County voters all could claim some victory on election night 2024, with strong Democratic performances in congressional and local races and Republicans taking control of the White House, an unexpected loss was shared by all voters: the loss of Clallam County's as the last bellwether county in the country, having voted for Harris for the presidency instead of eventual winner Trump.⁴⁶⁴ Despite the loss of this status, local Democrats were not disappointed by such a development, instead feeling satisfied with the results that rural Western Washington bucked national trends of rightward shift and had continued a tradition of Democratic Party resilience at the congressional and local levels.⁴⁶⁵

Since the 2024 election, Democratic and Republican Party leaders in Washington State have conducted postmortems to pinpoint why Democrats have proved resilient, especially in rural Western Washington, in the face of nationwide shifts toward the Republican Party. Weighing in these debates, state Democratic Party Chair Shasti Conrad credited the Democratic Party's commitment to "progressive policies and strong campaigns," while Congressman Adam Smith instead cited "a weak GOP" that has been "captive to the extreme agenda of President Donald Trump and his MAGA movement."⁴⁶⁶ In Clallam County, postmortems by local party leaders have followed similar lines. Clallam County Democratic Party Communications Chair Denise Mackenstadt pointed to "high caliber candidates" and active local organizing while Republican Party Chair Pamela Blakeman simply waved at demography, declaring "'The reality is there are more people living in the county who are Democrat.'"⁴⁶⁷

All of these points are pieces of the puzzle, but this thesis has laid out a longer and more complex story of political realignment in the region, one in which the results of the 2024 election did not occur in a vacuum or due to last-minute factors. Rather, the story of Democratic Party

resilience in rural Western Washington is one where, over many years, candidates, unions, local parties, and groups on the left and right have constructed and deconstructed party loyalties in a region whose demographics would, in the abstract, much sharper voter shifts towards the Republican Party and away from the Democratic Party.

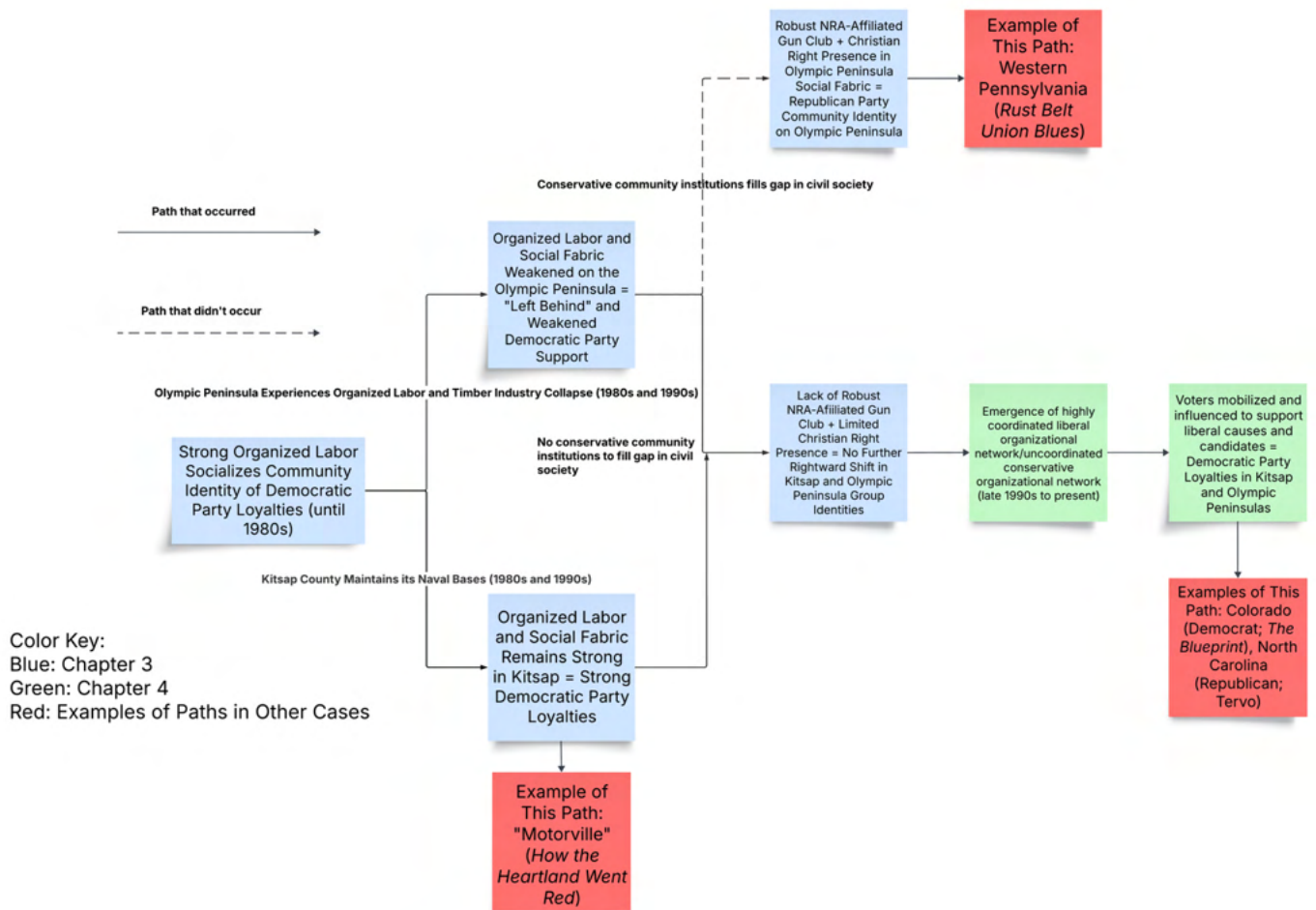
In this story of political development in rural Western Washington, the interplay between candidate quality and organizational network dynamics has shaped the long-term success of the Democratic Party in the region. Despite being a rural white working-class region with unfavorable demography, rural Western Washington has consistently supported Democratic Party candidates even after waves of sequential polarization, meaning that demographic and geographic factors alone cannot fully explain political development. To overcome these unfavorable demographic and geographic conditions, Democratic candidates in the region have been consistently strong candidates from 1976 to 2024, boasting appealing personal and professional backgrounds, maintaining robust local presences, and practicing big-tent material politics in line with their moderate-to-conservative electorate. By contrast, Republican candidates throughout this period have maintained less energetic campaigns and campaigned closer to the ideological right with greater emphases on social issues, alienating the electorate of rural Western Washington who prioritized materialist concerns over social concerns.

However, candidates have not existed in a vacuum in which they have won on their merits alone, instead belonging to and shaping broader organizational networks that influence politics in their communities. While both the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas experienced economic turmoil during the 1980s and 1990s, organized labor survived in Kitsap largely due to successful Democratic Party intervention, helping preserve the county's social fabric and Democratic identities. By contrast, the decline of organized labor on the Olympic Peninsula

following the timber industry's collapse has left a vacuum in social capital, thereby weakening the Olympic Peninsula's historically strong Democratic loyalties. However, in the absence of conservative institutions, such as NRA-affiliated gun clubs, the Olympic Peninsula's social fabric has not been entirely transformed, thus preserving Democrats' ability to contest elections.

As mobilizing forces, organizational networks on the left and right have also worked to shape the political development of rural Western Washington. On the left, local Democratic Parties have maintained an active local presence within their communities from 1976 to 2024. Additionally, in the absence of organized labor on the Olympic Peninsula and to complement liberal organizing in Kitsap County, a highly collaborative body of statewide liberal organizational infrastructure has emerged since the early 2000s to support grassroots liberal organizing, including in rural Western Washington. By contrast, conservative organizational networks have been consistently less robust in rural Western Washington. While the Republican Party and the Christian right were traditional power bases of the region's conservative organizational network, intra-network conflict has weakened their capacity to mobilize voters for conservative causes. Additionally, while favorable structural conditions for conservative takeover emerged following the timber industry's collapse on the Olympic Peninsula, and state-level conservative organizational infrastructure has emerged in recent decades, this infrastructure has struggled in mobilizing voters towards conservative causes. Instead, hindering this infrastructure has been disinvestment in key organizational capacities and a lack of collaboration between the Christian right and other segments of the conservative organizational network.

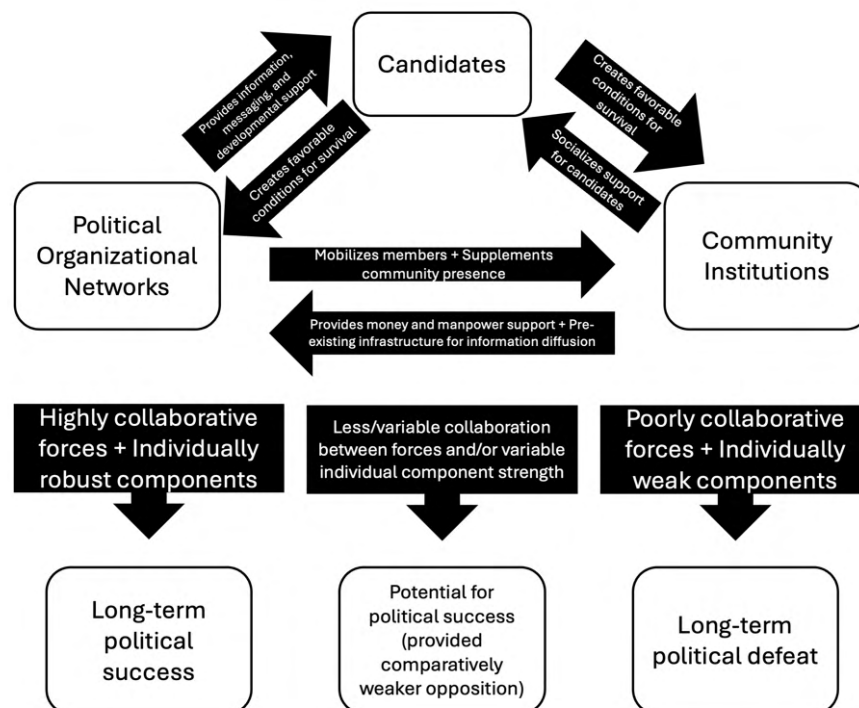
Figure 17: Flowchart of Structuralist Contributors to Political Realignment⁴⁶⁸



To be sure, I do not argue that Democratic resilience in rural Western Washington can be solely attributed to candidate quality and organizational networks. Demography certainly plays a role in shaping political development, and direct causal mechanisms are often difficult to prove in historical institutionalist studies which aim to understand how multiple forces interact to shape politics over time. For instance, low levels of religious adherence, a demographic factor, in rural Western Washington admittedly may influence why evangelical Protestant churches have failed to reshape the region's social fabric, although I have sought to account for this by demonstrating the Christian right's weaknesses over time.

What I do argue, however, is that voluntarist and structural explanations as exemplified through candidates and organizational networks, and particularly how they interact, matter in shaping political development and cannot be divorced from each other. In detailing candidates, community institutions, and political organizations as mobilizing forces, I have aimed to demonstrate how these forces have influenced each other to shape political development over time. For instance, Norm Dicks's efforts to secure federal funding for Kitsap's Naval bases preserved its traditional economic engine and social fabric which helped sustain Democratic Party loyalties, and elite state-level organizational infrastructure on the left have filled different organizational capacities that have supported candidates and grassroots liberal organizing.

Figure 18: Concept Map of Interplay Between Candidates, Community Institutions, and Political Organizational Networks



Marrying the study of candidates and organizational networks provides a framework that promises to help provide more comprehensive answers to future questions in American Political Development. For instance, until the early 2000s, Washington State possessed a reputation of being a swing state; applying this framework of understanding candidates and organizational networks over time may help to clarify why Washington State's party loyalties have shifted to being firmly supportive of the Democratic Party. Additionally, this analytical framework can help orient us to understanding where competing political forces in Washington State are attempting to steer politics in the future. As previously discussed, conservative organizational leaders have taken notice of liberal organizational success in Washington State and have attempted to replicate their own network in recent years through Project 42. A sign of this growing influence in Washington State politics, ballot initiatives backed by Project 42 have gained prominent attention during the 2024 election. While most of these conservative ballot initiatives came up short during the 2024 election, conservative leaders of Project 42 have noted that they are not deterred by such outcomes, meaning that Project 42 as a force in Washington State politics will not disappear anytime soon, thus demanding continued scholarly and political attention.

In other parts of the country where local political parties have not been as strong as rural Western Washington, grassroots activists belonging to other formal and informal networks play a larger role in mobilizing voters and activists, with their efforts often similarly being sustained by elite organizational infrastructure. Admittedly, my thesis has not focused as extensively on grassroots activists beyond local Democratic Party activists, largely due to the uniquely outsized impact of the organizational infrastructure I discussed throughout this thesis and that of local parties, which demanded intensive attention. These forces also matter, and in other parts of the

country, these collaborations between formal and informal grassroots activists and elite organizational infrastructure play a large role in shaping political outcomes. Thus, future research into the dynamics of these collaborations, such as through ethnographic research of local grassroots meetings of organizations such as Indivisible, would be beneficial in further understanding how organizational networks shape politics.⁴⁶⁹

In addition to exploring organizational networks as mobilizing forces, this thesis has aimed to build upon previous research efforts examining the role of community institutions in shaping the social fabrics and political identities of communities. Given the complex dynamics of how these community institutions shape the social and political identities of community members, additional ethnographic research would be beneficial in clarifying the mechanisms behind how these institutions socialize political identities beyond what was currently explored in this thesis.

For political activists on the left and the right, this thesis provides insight into how liberal forces have constructed Democratic Party loyalties over time, allowing them to overcome increasingly unfavorable demographic, geographic, and often structural conditions that has seen rural white working-class voters shift to the Republican Party in recent years. Contrary to popular belief, demographics, geography, and money alone do not definitively determine success in politics. As seen in rural Western Washington, Democratic candidates have won in large part due to locally focused strategies that aligned closely with the interests of their constituencies, and some liberal organizations such as the Washington Budget and Policy Center possess fewer financial resources compared to conservative counterparts like the Washington Policy Center. Where liberals have made up for this comparative lack of financial resources has been much greater intra-network collaboration and support for grassroots activists by elite organizations in

contrast with conservative organizational network disinvestment in key capacities and lack of cooperation. Consequently, Democrats who are interested in expanding their victories would be wise to maintain this high degree of intra-network collaboration and support for grassroots activism by elite organizations while also making a concerted effort to support liberals in every race in every place, even in areas which would otherwise appear unfavorable.

Embedded in this effort of electing Democrats in every race in every place requires a recognition that candidates and their campaigns will always play a role in shaping party loyalties, and the politicians of rural Western Washington help to provide insights into how future candidates can replicate electoral success. Even when facing intuitively unfavorable geographic and demographic conditions, Democratic candidates with robust connections to, presence within, and understanding of the communities they seek to represent can achieve electoral success. Consequently, Democratic Party leaders who are interested in improving their party's electoral prospects should great care to cultivate the right candidates who can build broad coalitions of voters within their districts. To be clear, while my thesis has focused on moderate-to-conservative Democrats building broad coalitions of support, I do not necessarily say that Democrats should unilaterally run exclusively moderate candidates; a moderate Democrat that is highly electable in rural Western Washington would face substantial difficulty getting elected in downtown Seattle. What I do argue is that Democrats should make concerted efforts to run candidates that most align with the interests of their communities: in moderate-to-conservative areas seen across the country, this means that Democrats would be wise to run candidates who can appeal to those communities. Moreover, to ensure long-term success, the Democratic Party must continue to invest in local parties and candidates as the frontline political players and future

leaders of the party. To this end, bolstering the efforts of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee would be a good start.

To further build capacity for political success, investing in community institutions is especially vital when considering the importance of social capital and community social fabrics in shaping long-term social and political identities. From the 1990s to now, robust state liberal organizational infrastructure has helped Democrats maintain party loyalties in areas such as the Olympic Peninsula, which has experienced social capital and economic collapse. Yet, relying on such a strategy, in the long run, would be a dangerous gambit, especially considering the increasing sentiments of white working-class voters in these areas feeling “left behind” due to sustained economic and social capital downturn.

Consequently, Democrats who are committed to winning back rural white working-class voters would do well to offer economically and socially struggling communities greater resources, not rhetoric, to revitalize local community institutions like unions as important fixtures of community social fabrics. Indeed, there was a time when local Democratic Parties played a more active role in shaping the social fabric of their communities. However, time is running out for Democrats to make these investments as Republicans have become increasingly aggressive in their economic outreach to these same communities, especially in rural Western Washington: on March 8, 2025, Trump directed federal agencies to explore ways to reduce barriers to logging – a move which would have dramatic economic and social effects for communities on the Olympic Peninsula.⁴⁷⁰ In these revitalization efforts, protecting local media as a community institution must also play an important role in community revitalization efforts given its important role in preserving community interconnectedness.

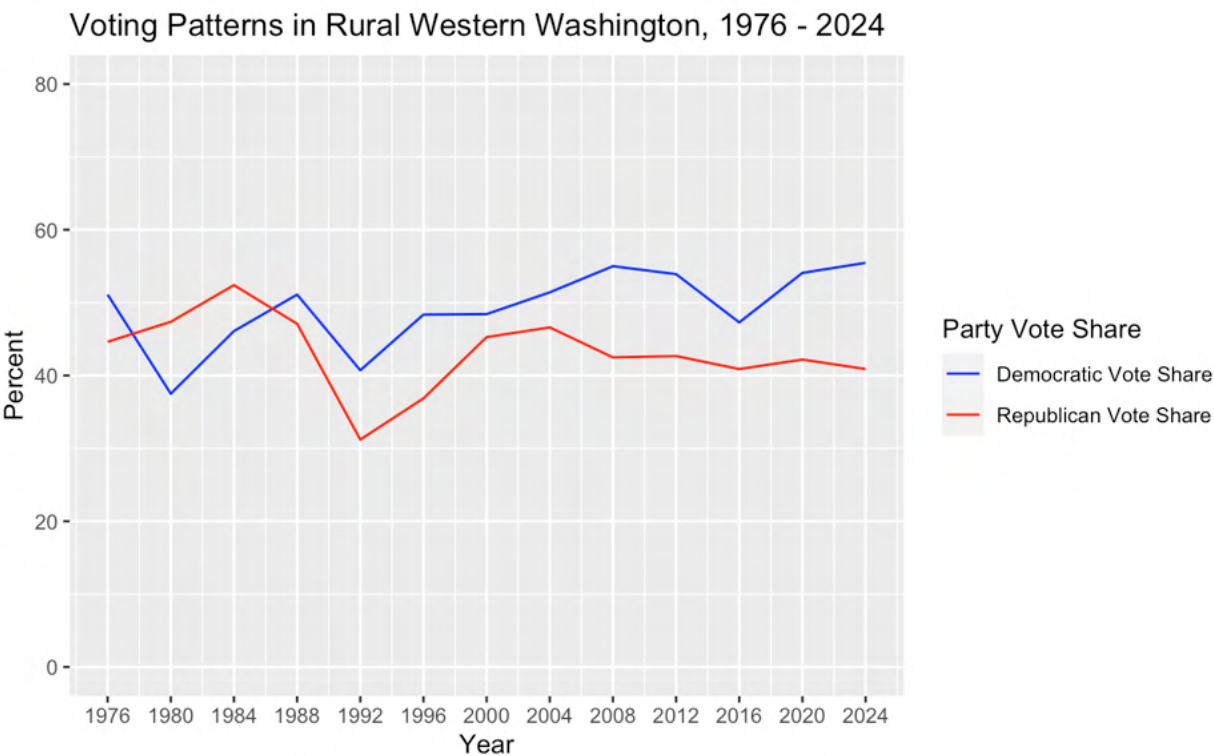
Reflecting on the rapid ascendancy of democratic backsliding in recent years, the former Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada Michael Ignatieff recently argued that the politics of resentment among white working-class voters has accelerated because liberals have failed to take the concerns of these voters sufficiently seriously.⁴⁷¹ While recent scholarship has challenged the notion that the Democratic Party has abandoned the interests of white working-class voters, the perception, as I have found through interviewing white working-class voters, that this is the case requires honest consideration by the Democratic Party.⁴⁷² At each turn throughout this thesis, I have sought to take the concerns of rural white working-class voters seriously, because at a time of growing threats to liberal democracy, the Democratic Party cannot afford perceptions of arrogance in sidelining the needs of white working-class voters - a once integral and still important bloc of the Democratic Party coalition - if it wishes to remain in power and preserve liberal democracy.

Normatively, I have sought throughout this thesis to argue in defense of the notion that local forces continue to matter in politics, and that they are worthy of support and attention by political leaders and scholars alike. Although the emergence of elite organizational infrastructure in recent decades has supplanted much of the political activity on the left and right, politics have been and continue to be shaped by the efforts of grassroots activists on the ground. Without such investment into local organizing, political activists on the right in rural Western Washington have found it difficult to achieve desired political objectives. Indeed, it is the local institutions such as school boards, city councils, and state legislatures where often the most impactful political decisions are made for the day-to-day lives of citizens. It is the churches, community organizations, and town halls where citizens can engage most deeply with civic life alongside fellow citizens. It is no secret that democratic health nationally has come under threat in recent

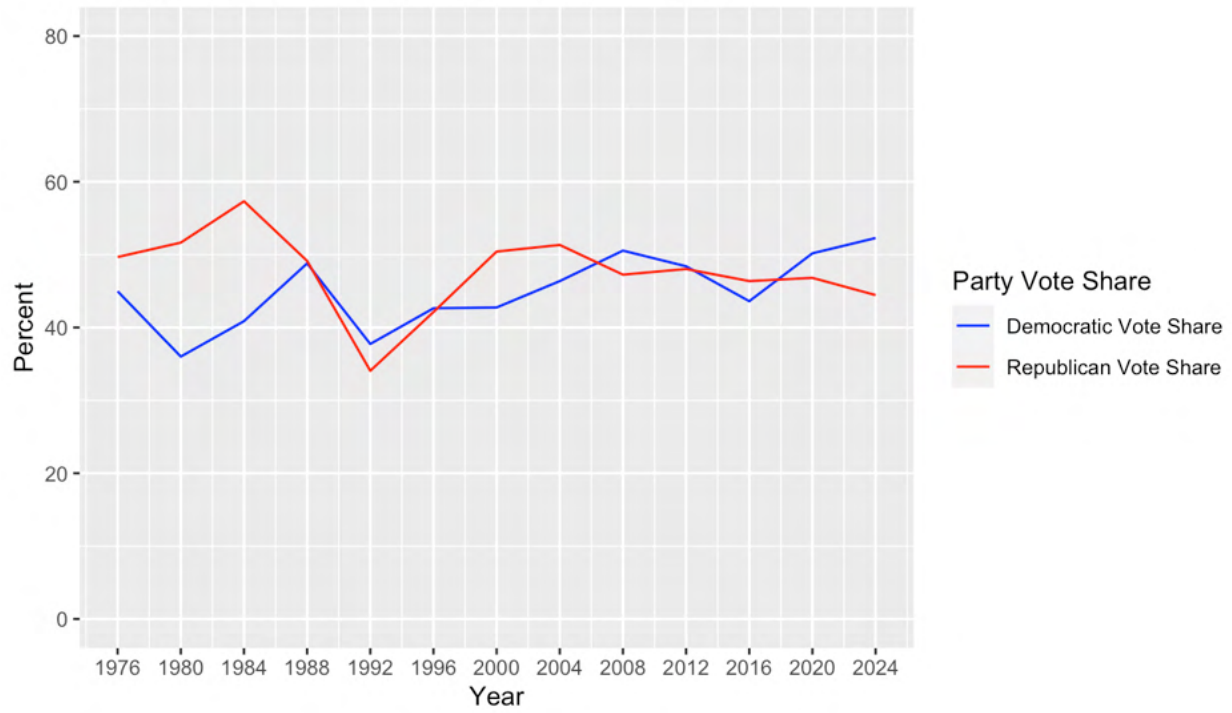
years, and scholars and political leaders who are interested in renovating democracy should look locally towards communities nationwide to see where citizens and local organizations are innovating, and where they need the most help. Most importantly, citizens themselves must also be willing to pick up the mantle of defending democracy by participating actively in democratic life. As Cary Bozeman put it: “local government will save democracy.”⁴⁷³

Appendices

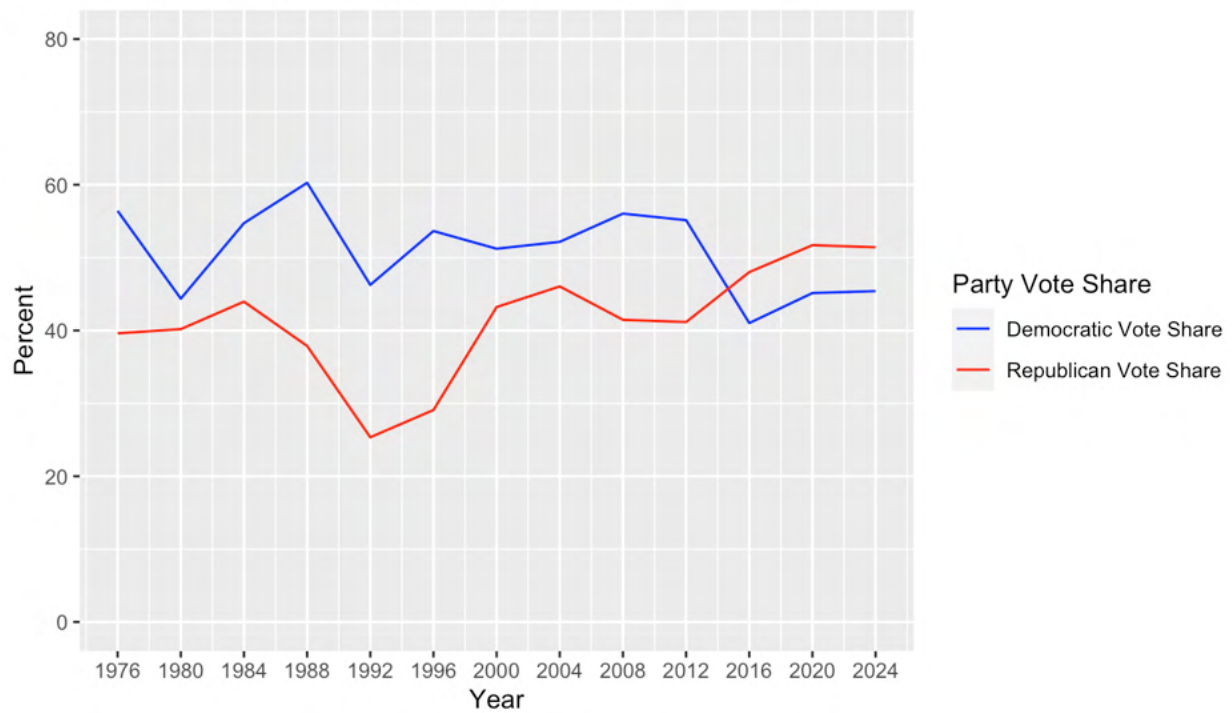
Appendix A: Data Visualizations of Election Results in Rural Western Washington



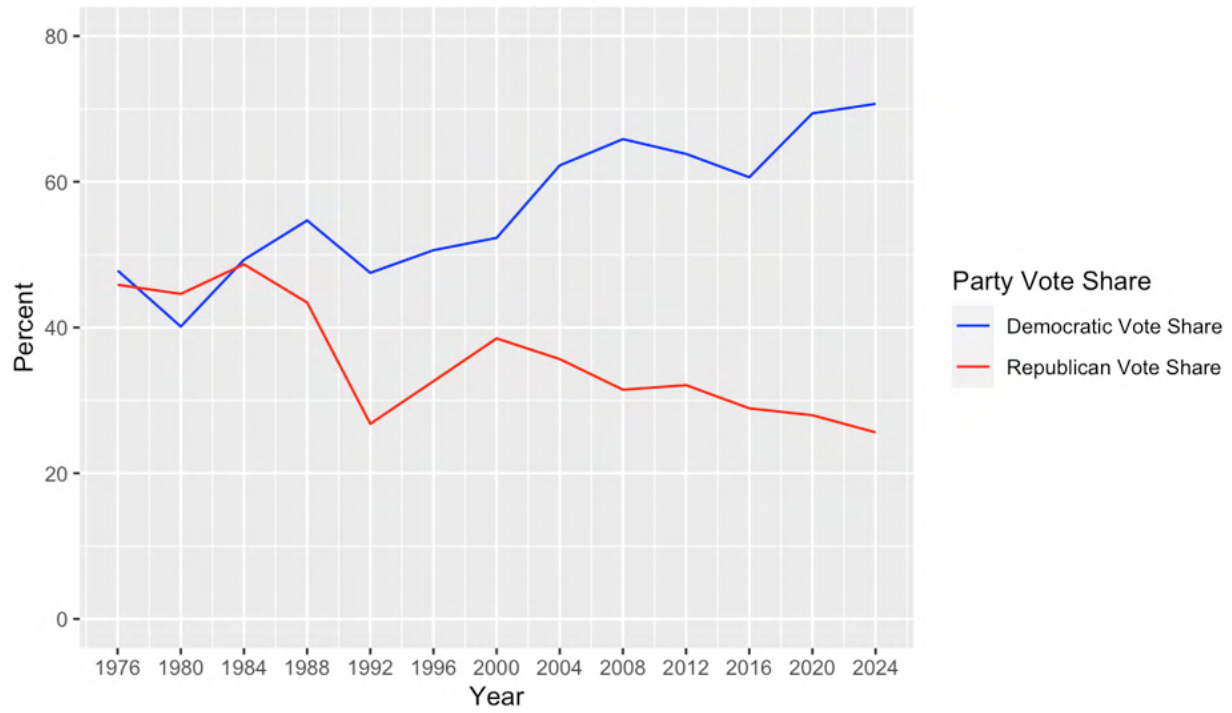
Voting Patterns in Clallam County, 1976 - 2024



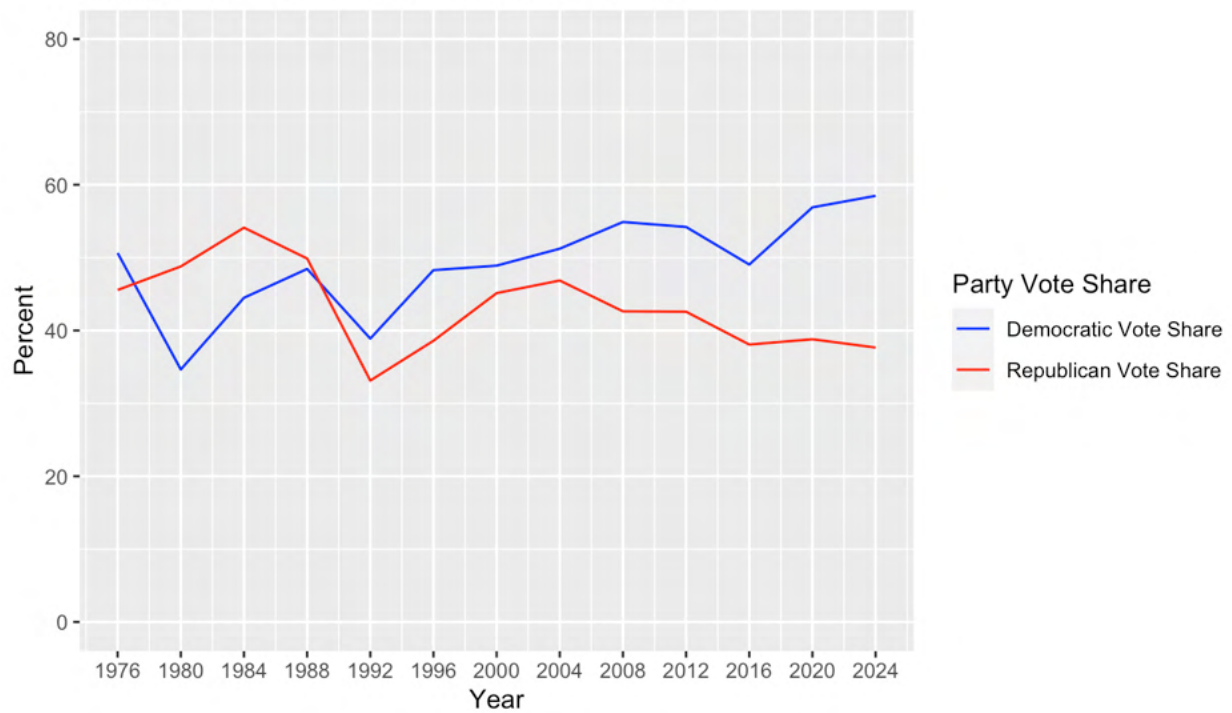
Voting Patterns in Grays Harbor County, 1976 - 2024

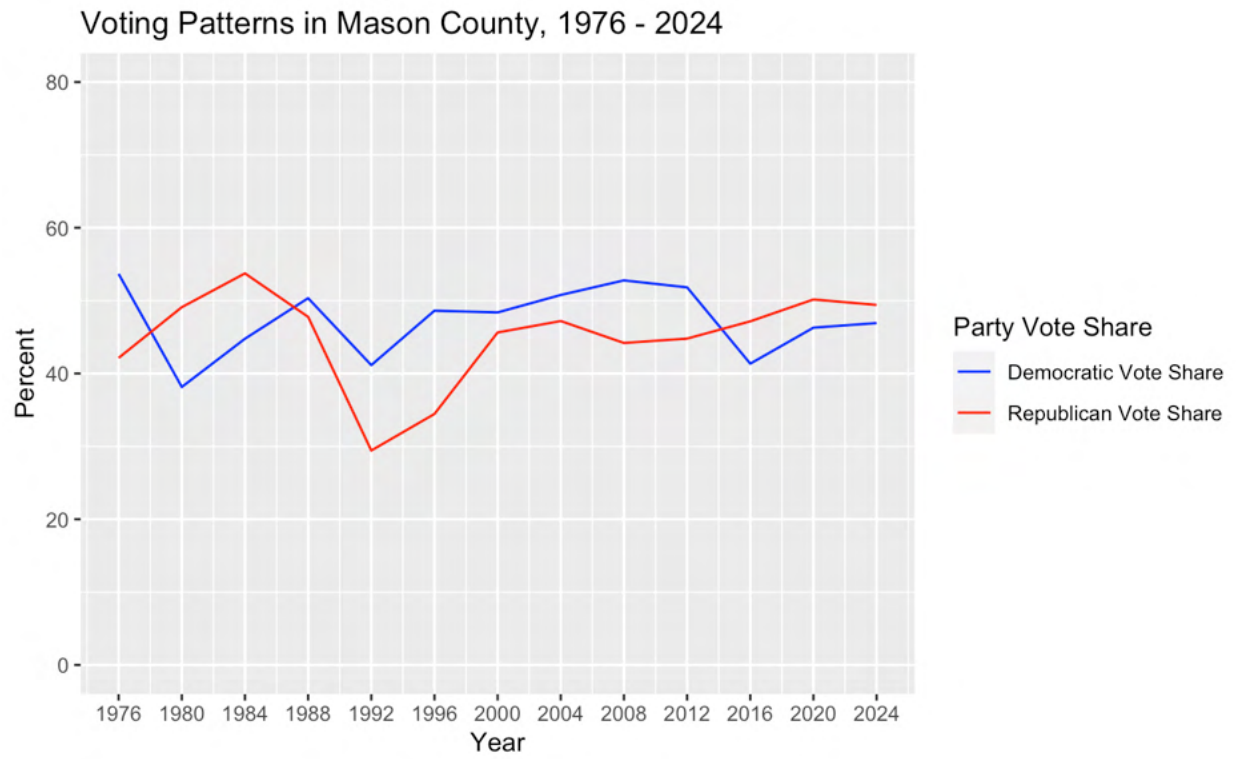


Voting Patterns in Jefferson County, 1976 - 2024

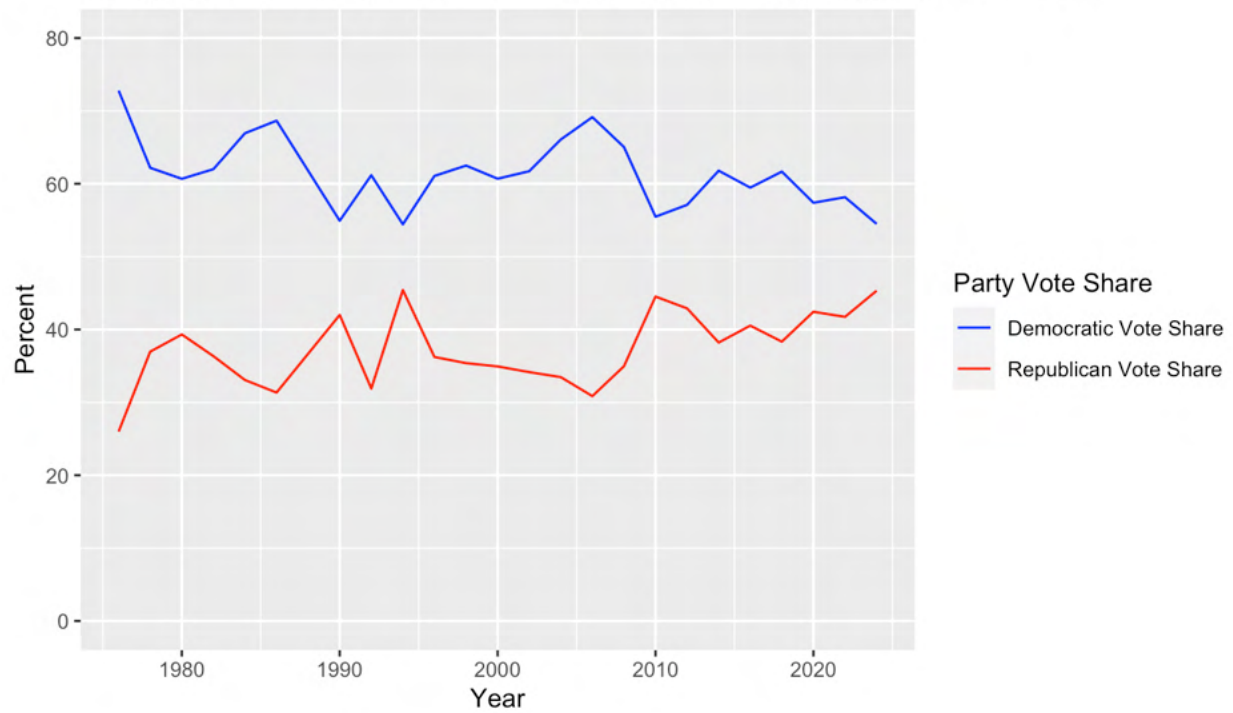


Voting Patterns in Kitsap County, 1976 - 2024

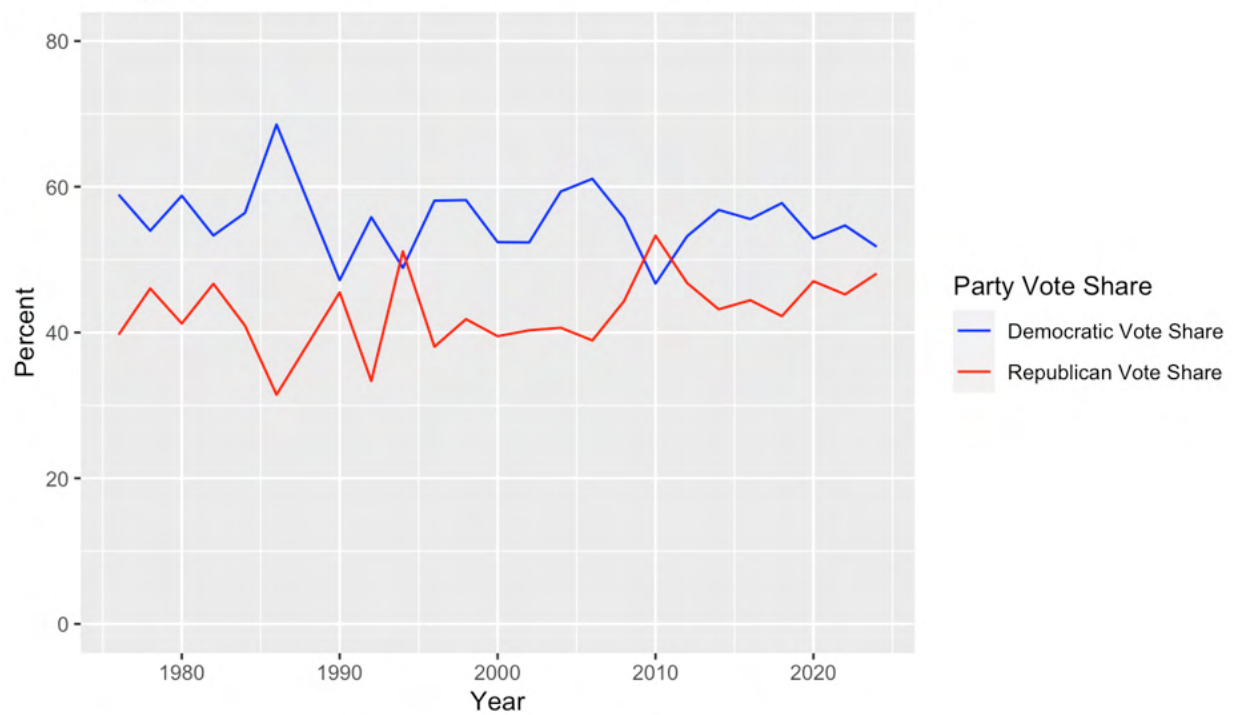




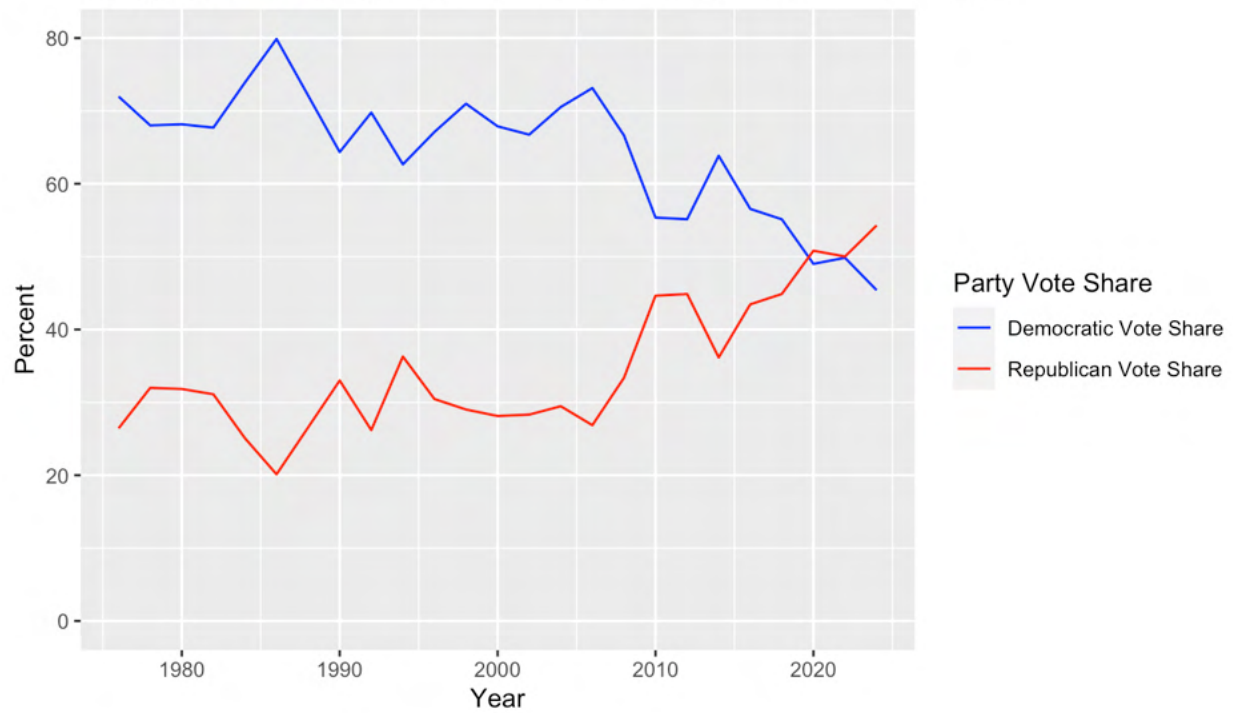
Congressional Voting Patterns in Rural Western Washington, 1976 - 2024



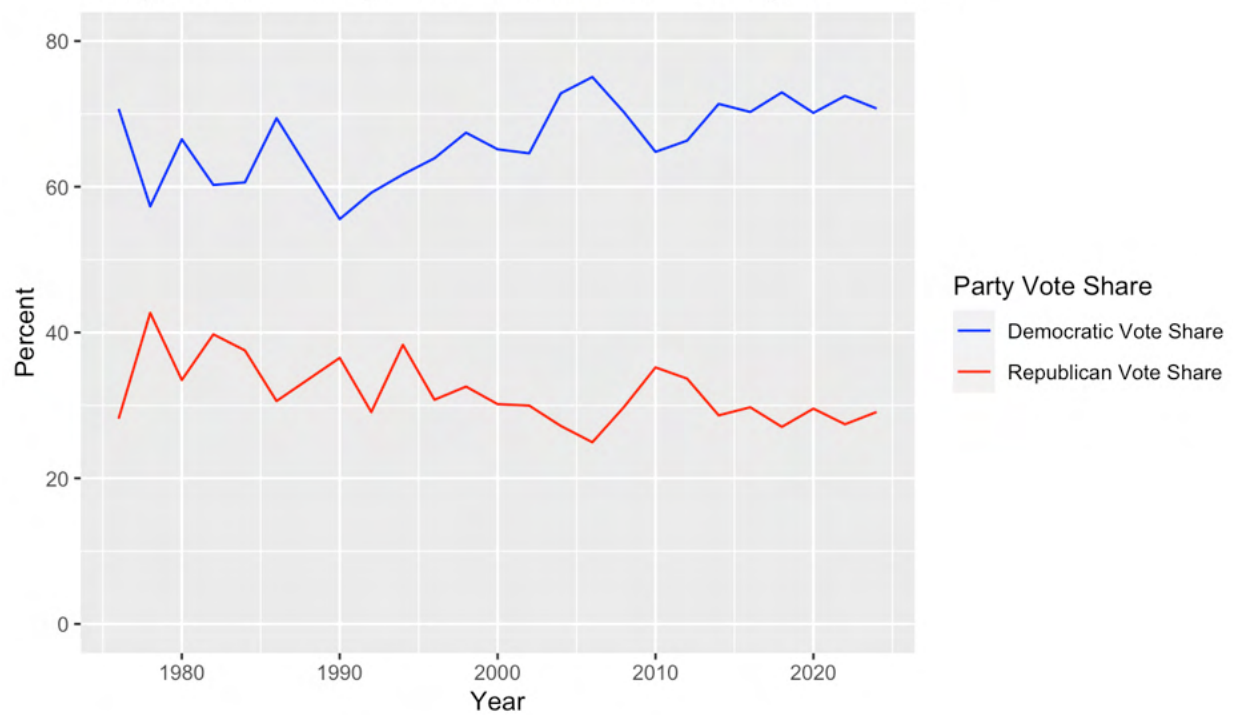
Congressional Voting Patterns in Clallam County, 1976 - 2024



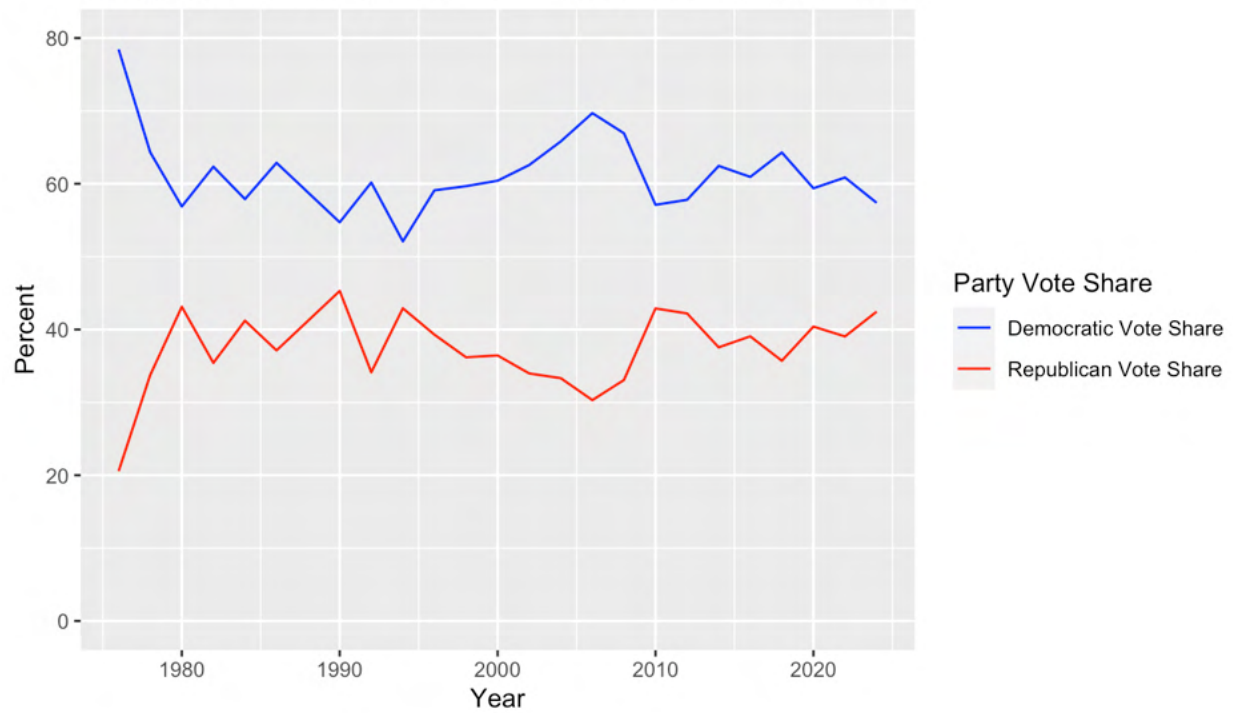
Congressional Voting Patterns in Grays Harbor County, 1976 - 2024



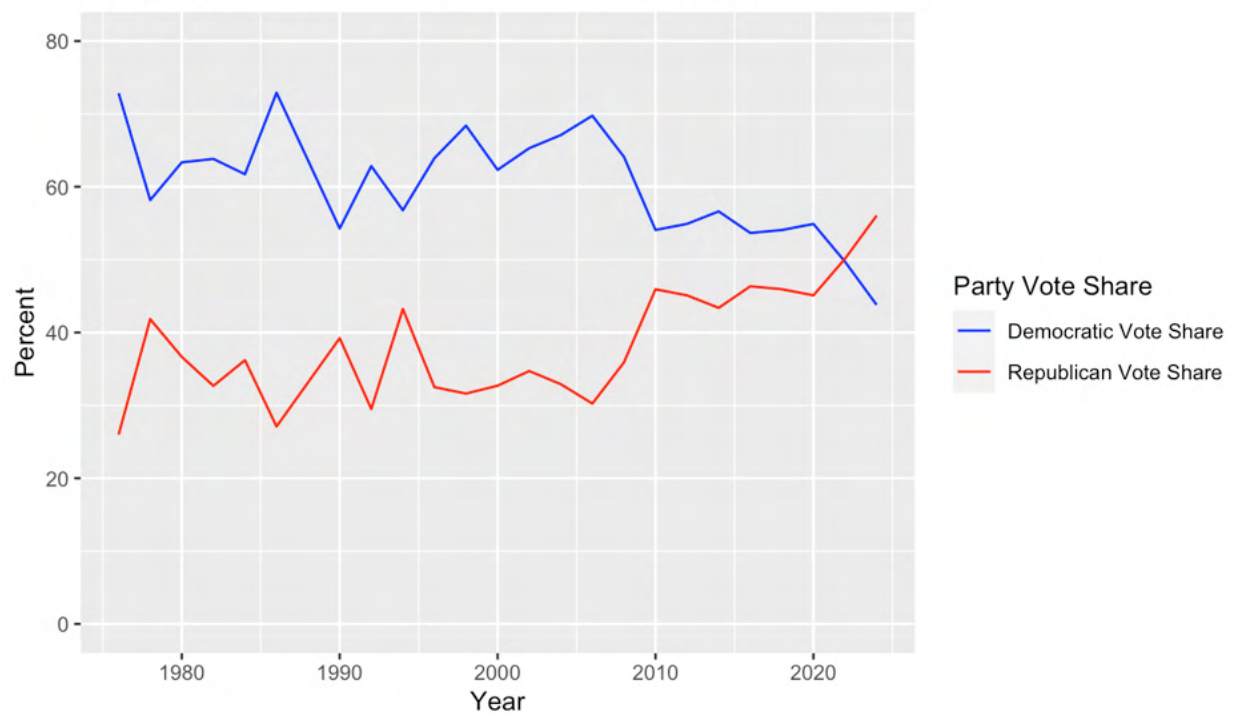
Congressional Voting Patterns in Jefferson County, 1976 - 2024



Congressional Voting Patterns in Kitsap County, 1976 - 2024



Congressional Voting Patterns in Mason County, 1976 - 2024



Appendix B: Interview Listⁱⁱ

Community Members

- Amber Caldera, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe Chairwoman
- Josh Farley, Reporter for the *Kitsap Sun*, 2005 – 2022
- John Hughes, Former Reporter for the *Daily World* (1966 – 2008) and Chief Historian at Washington Secretary of State’s Office (2008 – Present)
- Emily Robertson, Southwest Region Labor Economist for Washington State Employment Security Division
- Rick Tift, Former Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Executive Director, Career Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker, and Lifelong Kitsap County Resident
- Bremerton Metal Trades Council President, Former Boilermakers Local 290 President, and Lifelong Kitsap County Resident
- Olympic Central Labor Council Leader, IBEW Local 46 Member, and Lifelong Clallam County Resident
- Former Logger #1 and International Woodworkers of America Local 338 Member
- Former Union Representative for International Woodworkers of America Local 3-2 and Former Cosmopolis Mayor
- Former Logger #2
- Kitsap County Teamsters Local 589 Leader

ⁱⁱ In providing this list of interview subjects, out of respect for the individuals who have taken time to speak with me, I have done my best to anonymize my subjects, even though nearly all interview subjects gave me permission to attribute them by name. I only attribute interview subjects by name if they are or previously were public figures and they provided me permission to name them publicly. In promoting anonymity, while I chose to omit information on the years that these interview subjects have been active in their work, these subjects temporally reflect all perspectives ranging from 1976 to 2024. While listing all the relevant organizational affiliations each interview subject may possess may make it easier to narrow down a subject, I provide these affiliations to illustrate the breadth and connections of the political organizational networks that I have researched.

- Kitsap County Veteran/Veterans of Foreign Wars Member #1
- Kitsap County Veteran/Veterans of Foreign Wars Member #2
- Kitsap County Veteran/Veterans of Foreign Wars Member #3
- Kitsap County Veteran/Veterans of Foreign Wars Member #4
- Kitsap County Veteran/Veterans of Foreign Wars Member #5
- Kitsap County Veteran/American Legion Member #1
- Kitsap County Veteran/American Legion Member #2
- Kitsap County Veteran/American Legion Post Commander #3
- Kitsap County United States Submarine Veterans President
- Kitsap County United States Submarine Veterans Member
- Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council President
- Former Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council President

Party Leaders

- Former Washington State Republican Party Chair #1
- Former Clallam County Republican Party Chair #1
- Former Clallam County Republican Party Chair #2
- Current 24th Legislative District Republican Party Vice Chair
- Current 24th Legislative District Democratic Party Chair
- Former Jefferson County Democratic Chair #1 and Current Party Leader
- Former Jefferson County Democrats Chair #2 and Former 24th Legislative District Democrats Chair
- Former Chair for Jefferson County Democrats #3
- Jefferson County Democratic Party Leader #2

- Jefferson County Democratic Party Leader #3
- Former 23rd Legislative District (Kitsap County) Democratic Party Chair #1 and State Committeewoman
- Former 23rd Legislative District (Kitsap County) Democratic Party Chair #2 and State Committeewoman
- Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant
- Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #2
- Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Leader #3
- Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #4
- Kitsap County Republican Party Chair; Executive Director to State Policy Network Vice President of Strategy
- Former Kitsap County Republican Party Vice Chair, Tea Party Activist
- Mason County Democratic Party Chair #1
- Former Mason County Democratic Party Chair #2
- Mason County Democratic Women Club Chair
- Mason County Democratic Party Vice Chair
- Mason County Democratic Party Leader #1 and Lifelong Mason County Resident
- Mason County Democratic Party Leader #2

Elected Officials

- Adam Bernbaum, Democratic 24th Legislative District State Representative, 2025 - Present

- Brian Blake, Logger, Democratic 19th Legislative District State Representative (2002 – 2021), Grays Harbor County and 19th Legislative District Democratic Parties Leader (1990s – 2020)
- Cary Bozeman, Democratic Mayor of Bremerton, 2002 - 2009
- Jim Buck, Republican 24th Legislative District State Representative, 1995 – 2007
- Norman Dicks, Democratic US Representative for Washington’s 6th Congressional District, 1977 - 2013
- Drew Hansen, Democratic 23rd Legislative District State Legislator, 2011 – Present; Former 23rd Legislative District Democratic Party Executive Board
- Brian Hatfield, Democratic 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 1994 – 2004 and 2006 – 2015; Former Chair of 19th Legislative District Democratic Party
- Lynn Kessler, Democratic 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 1993 – 2011
- Derek Kilmer, Democratic US Representative for Washington’s 6th Congressional District, 2013 – 2025; Former Democratic State Legislator for Washington’s 26th Legislative District, 2005 – 2012
- Patricia Lent, Former Republican Mayor of Bremerton (2010 – 2018) and Kitsap County Commissioner (2003 – 2007)
- Wes Pruitt, Democratic 26th Legislative District State Representative, 1987 - 1995
- Tim Sheldon, Democratic 35th Legislative District State Legislator, 1991 – 2023; Mason County Commissioner, 2005 – 2017
- Dean Takko, Democratic 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 2004 - 2021
- Steve Tharinger, Democratic 24th Legislative District State Representative (2011 – Present), Clallam County Commissioner (2000 – 2012)

- Kevin Van De Wege, Democratic 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 – 2024;
Institute for a Democratic Future Alumnus
- Jeff Wilson, Republican 19th Legislative District State Senator, 2021 - Present

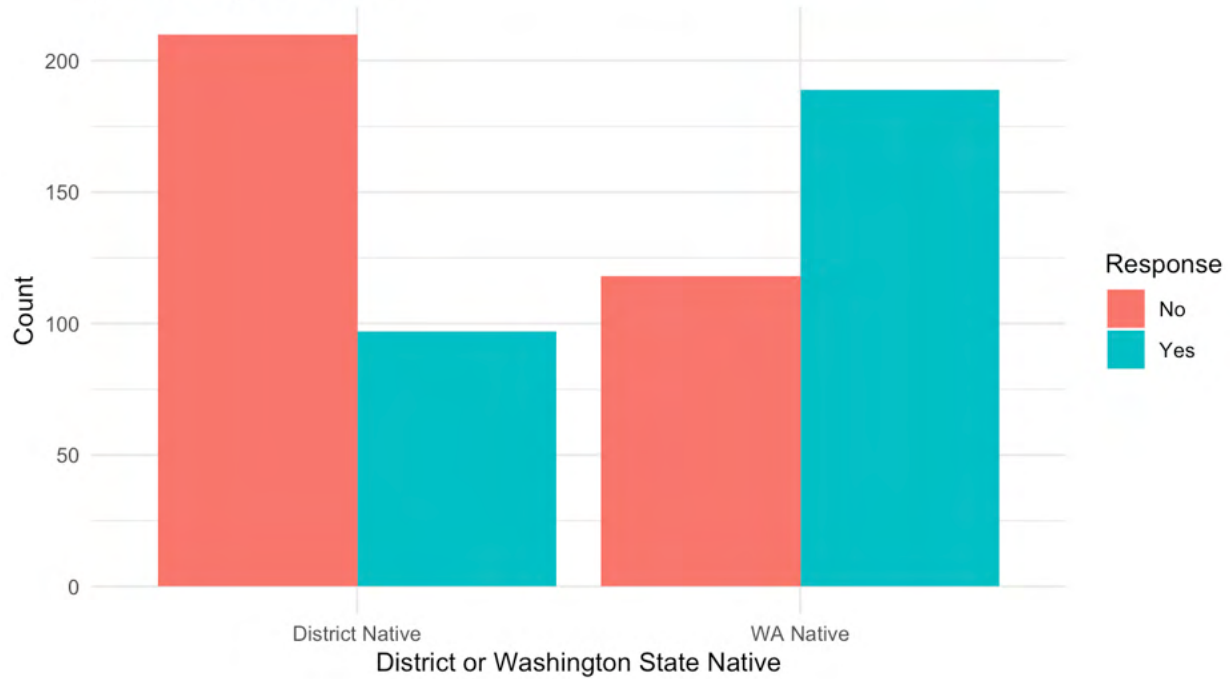
Political Advocacy and Staffers

- Nicole Gomez, Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director
- Nansen Malin, Washington State Chapter Americans for Prosperity Chair, 2011 – 2014;
Tea Party Activist
- Dean Nielsen, Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder, Longtime Democratic Party
Leader and Political Consultant
- Kirby Wilbur, Former Washington State Republican Party Chair; Former Washington
State Chapter Americans for Prosperity Chair (2010 – 2011)
- House Democratic Campaign Committee Executive Director; Former Fuse Washington
Deputy Executive Director and Development Director; Institute for a Democratic Future
Alumnus
- Former Campaign Manager for Norm Dicks Congressional Campaign and Political
Consultant
- Former Deputy District Director for US Representative Norm Dicks; Former District
Deputy District Director and District Director for US Representative Derek Kilmer
- Former District Director for US Representative Norm Dicks
- Political and Strategic Campaigns Director for the Washington State Labor Council;
Institute for a Democratic Future Alumnus
- Current Fuse Washington Deputy Director
- Current Washington Budget and Policy Center Executive Director

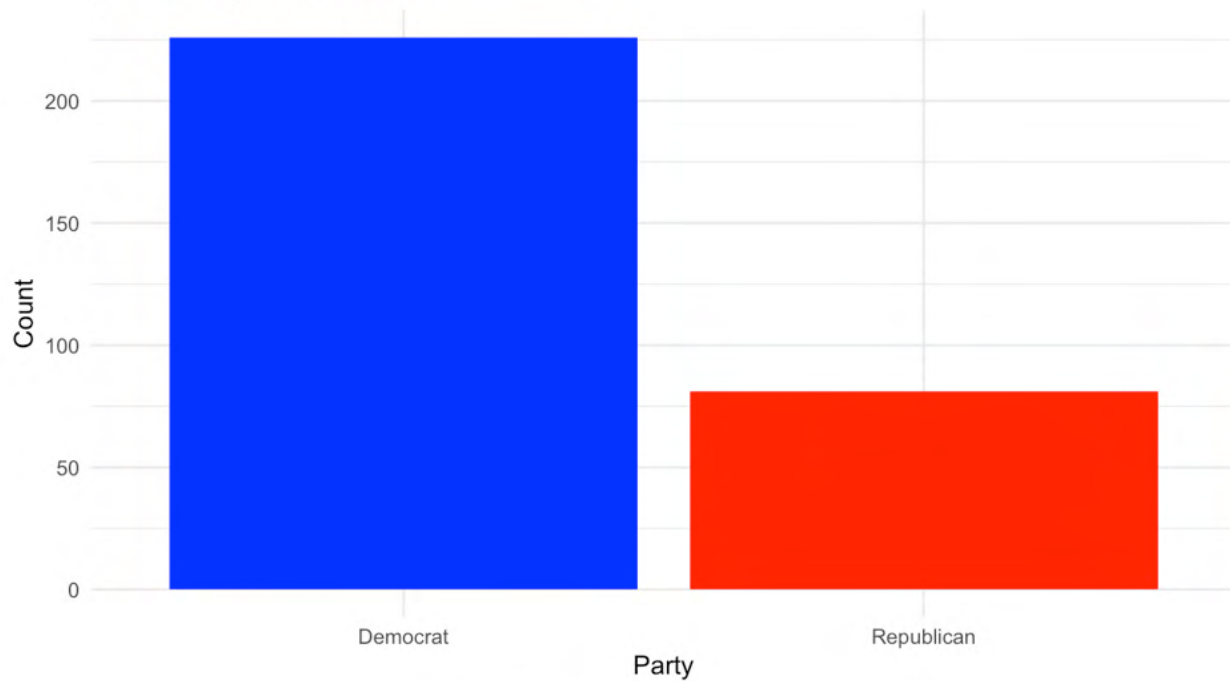
- Former Washington Budget and Policy Center Executive Director
- Current Economic Opportunity Institute Executive Director
- Founder and Former CEO of ProgressNow
- Former Executive Director of ProgressNow
- Former Washington Policy Center President; Project 42 Co-Founder
- Vice President for Research at Washington Policy Center #1; Former Washington State Republican Party Communications Director
- Senior Researcher/Formal Vice President for Research at Washington Policy Center #2
- Kitsap County Tea Party Activist (Puget Sound Patriots President, 2022 – Present);
Kitsap Rifle & Revolver Club Executive Officer, 1990 - Present

Appendix C: Candidate District and State Nativity

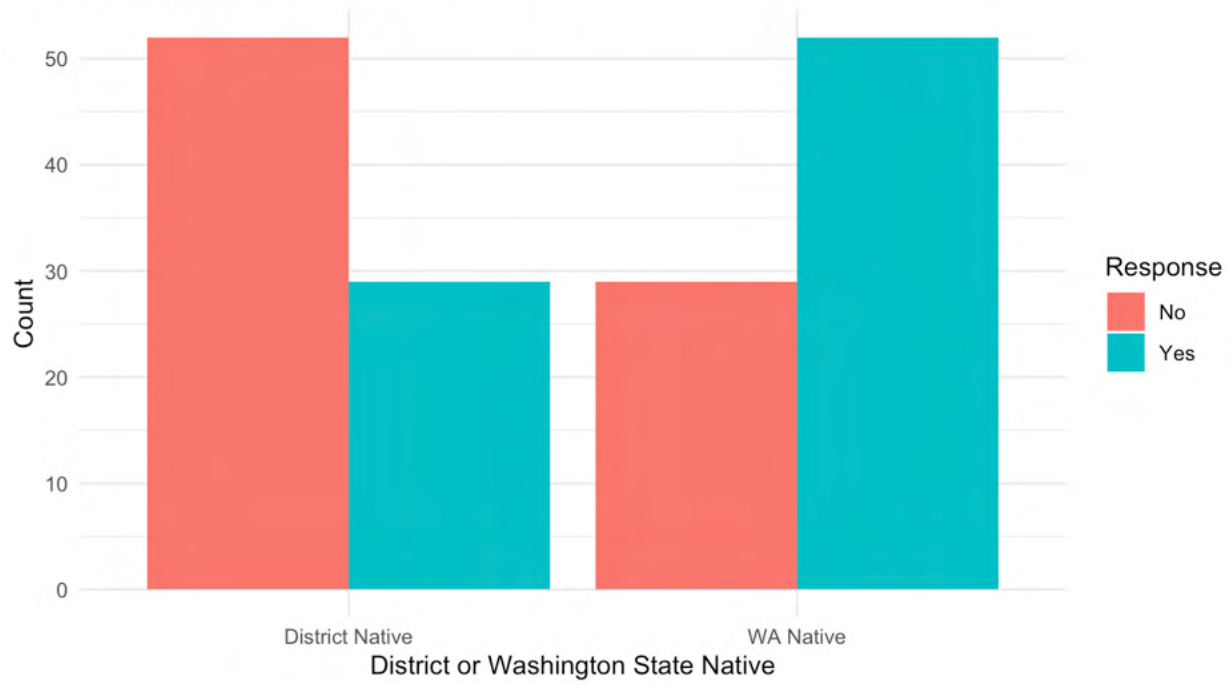
Winners of Rural Western Washington Legislative Races by Nativity,
(All Races) 1976 - 2024



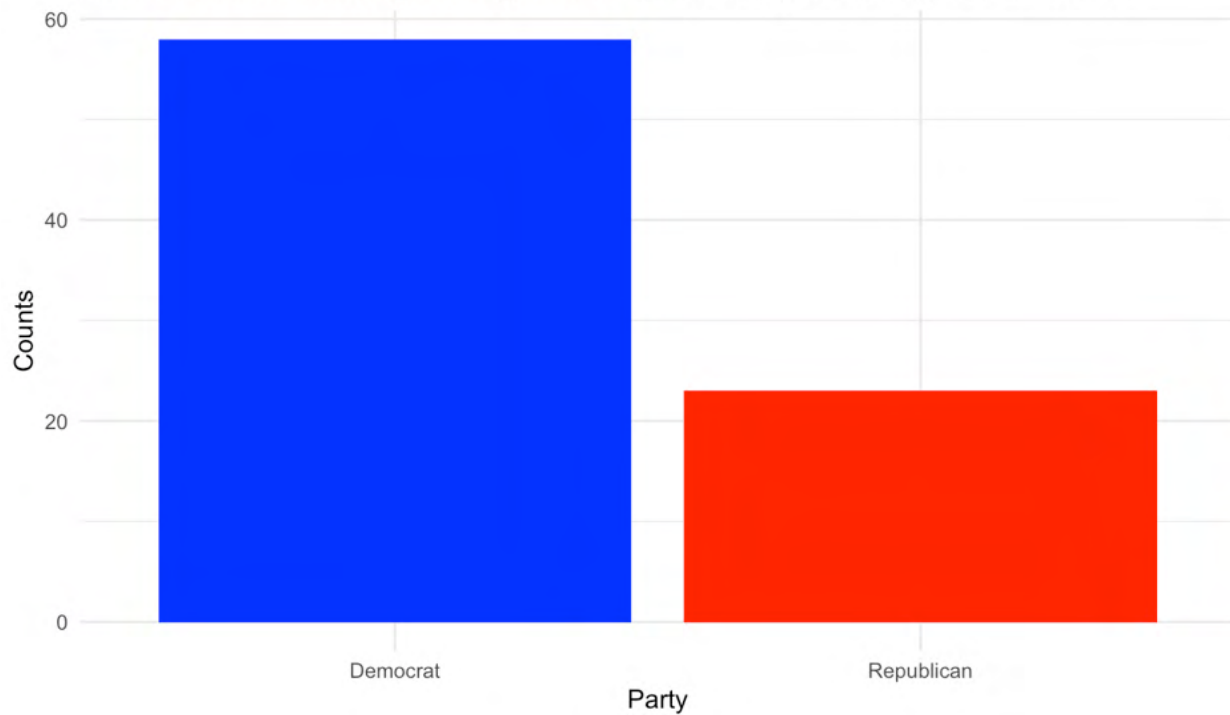
Winners of Rural Western Washington Legislative Elections
(All Races), 1976 - 2024



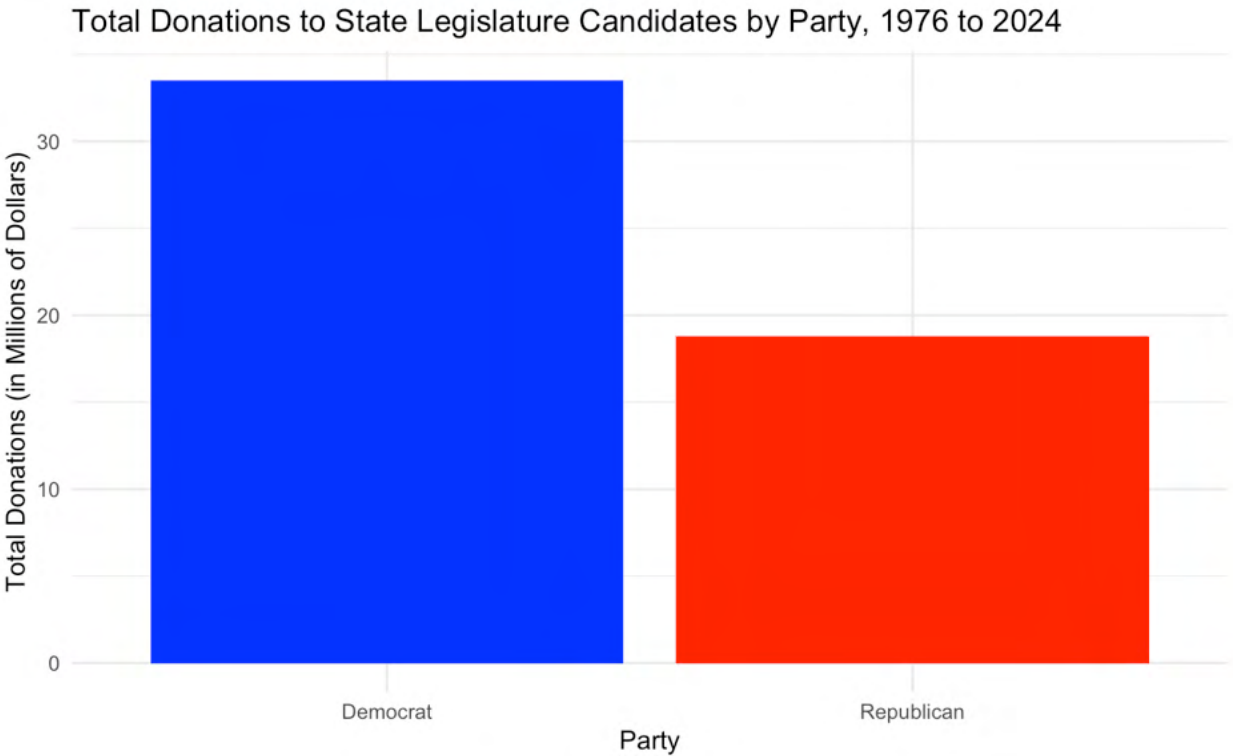
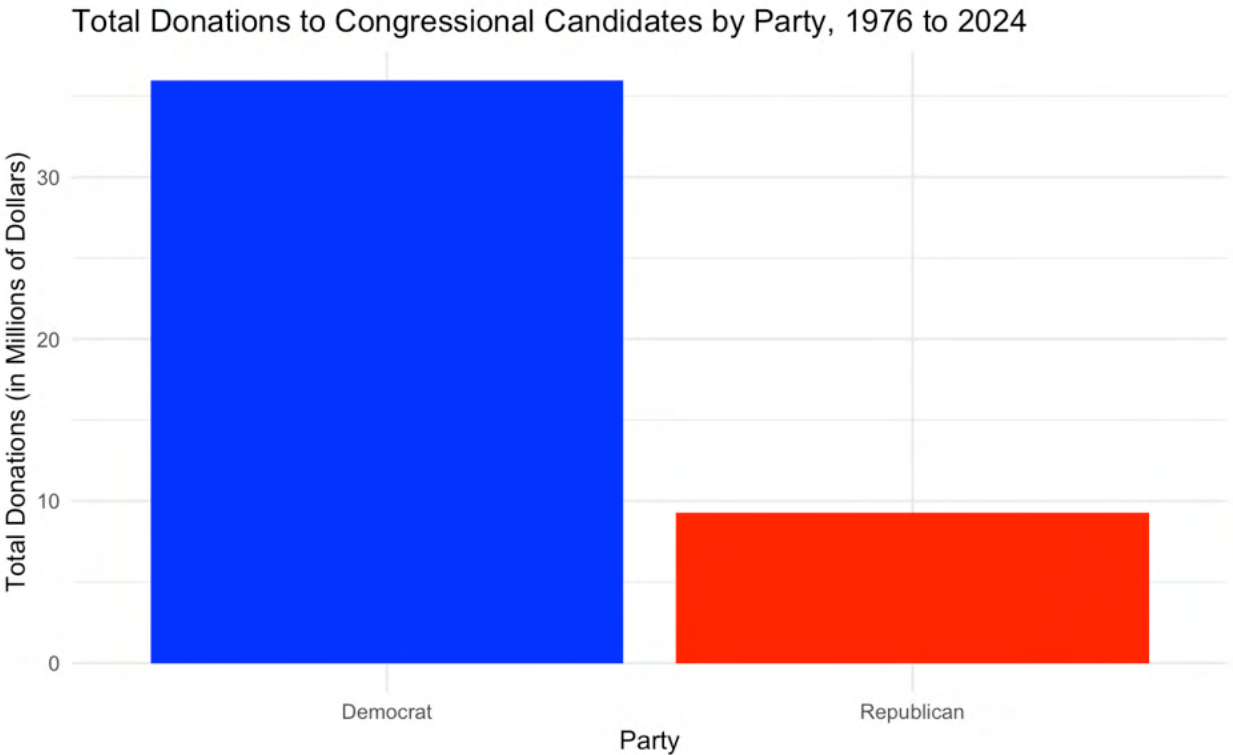
Winners of Rural Western Washington Legislative Races by Nativity (Individual), 1976 - 2024



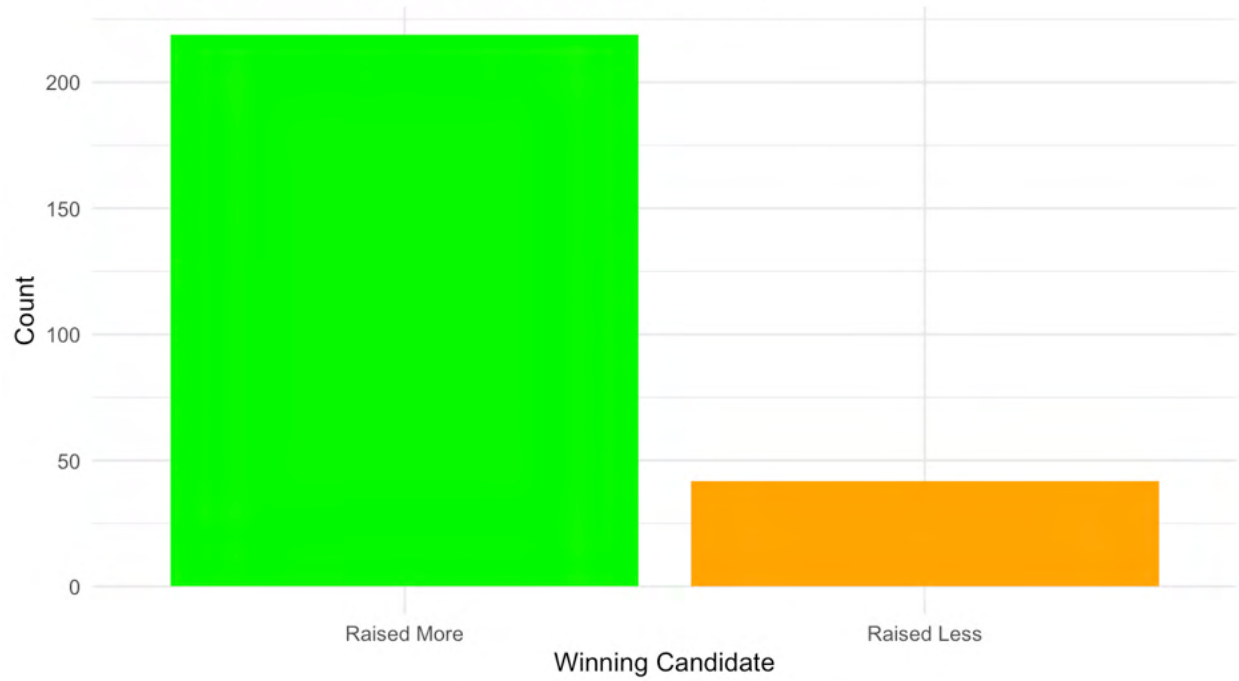
Rural Western Washington Legislators by Nativity (Individual), 1976 - 2024



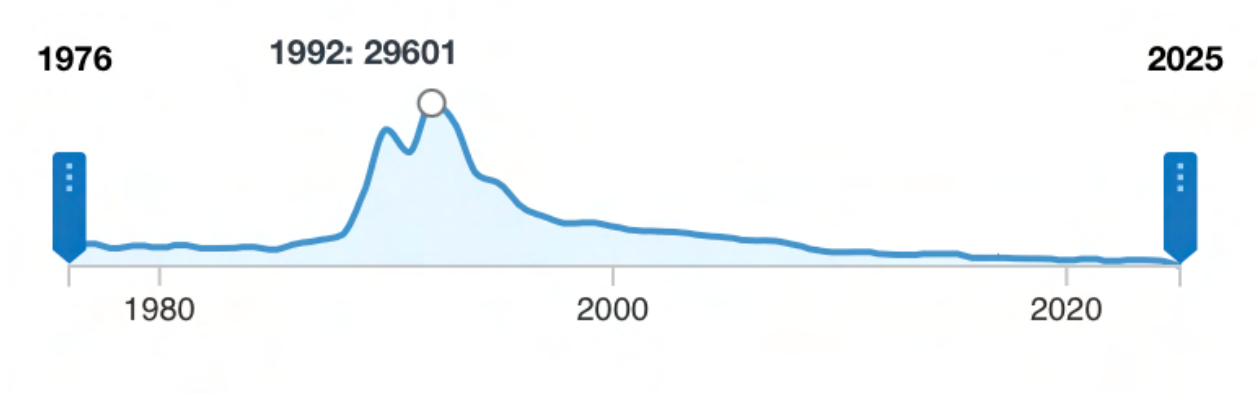
Appendix D: Campaign Finance



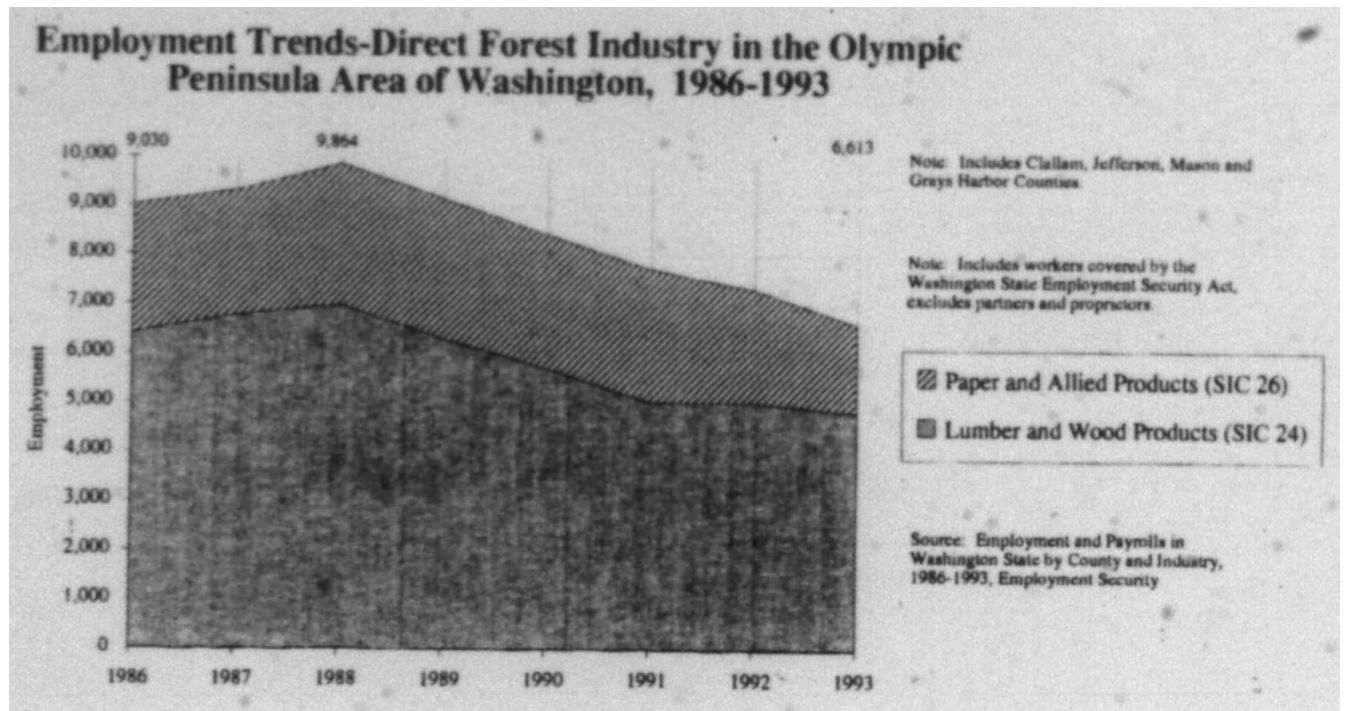
Number of Times Winning State Legislature Candidate
Raised More Money than Opponent, 1976 to 2024



Appendix E: Frequency of the Term “Spotted Owl” Mentioned in Newspapers



Appendix F: Employment Trends-Direct Forest Industry in the Olympic Peninsula Area of Washington, 1986 - 1993



Appendix G: List of Local Newspapers in Rural Western Washington in 2024⁴⁷⁴

Clallam County

- *Peninsula Daily News*
- *Forks Forum*
- *Sequim Gazette*

Grays Harbor County

- *The Daily World*
- *The Vidette*

Jefferson County

- *Peninsula Daily News*
- *The Leader*
- *The Jefferson County Beacon*

Kitsap County

- *Kitsap Sun*
- *Kitsap Daily News*
- *Central Kitsap Reporter*
- *North Kitsap Herald*
- *Port Orchard Independent*
- *Bainbridge Island Review*
- *Kingston Community News*

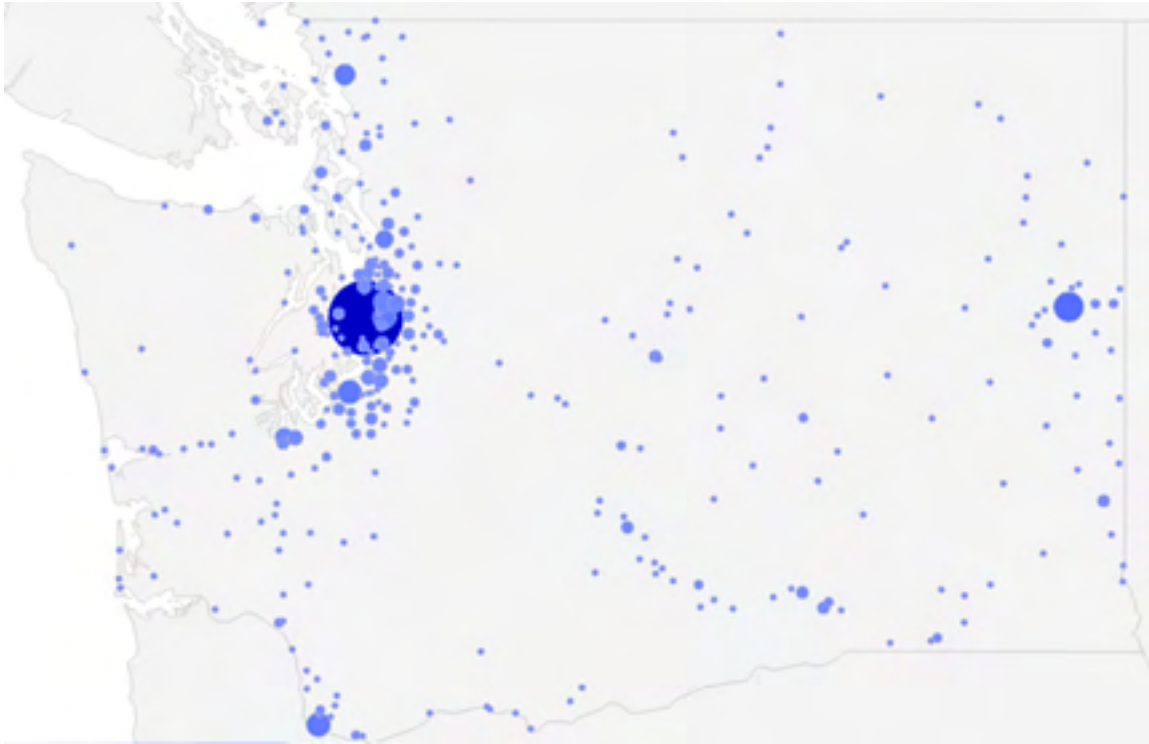
Mason County

- *Shelton-Mason County Journal*

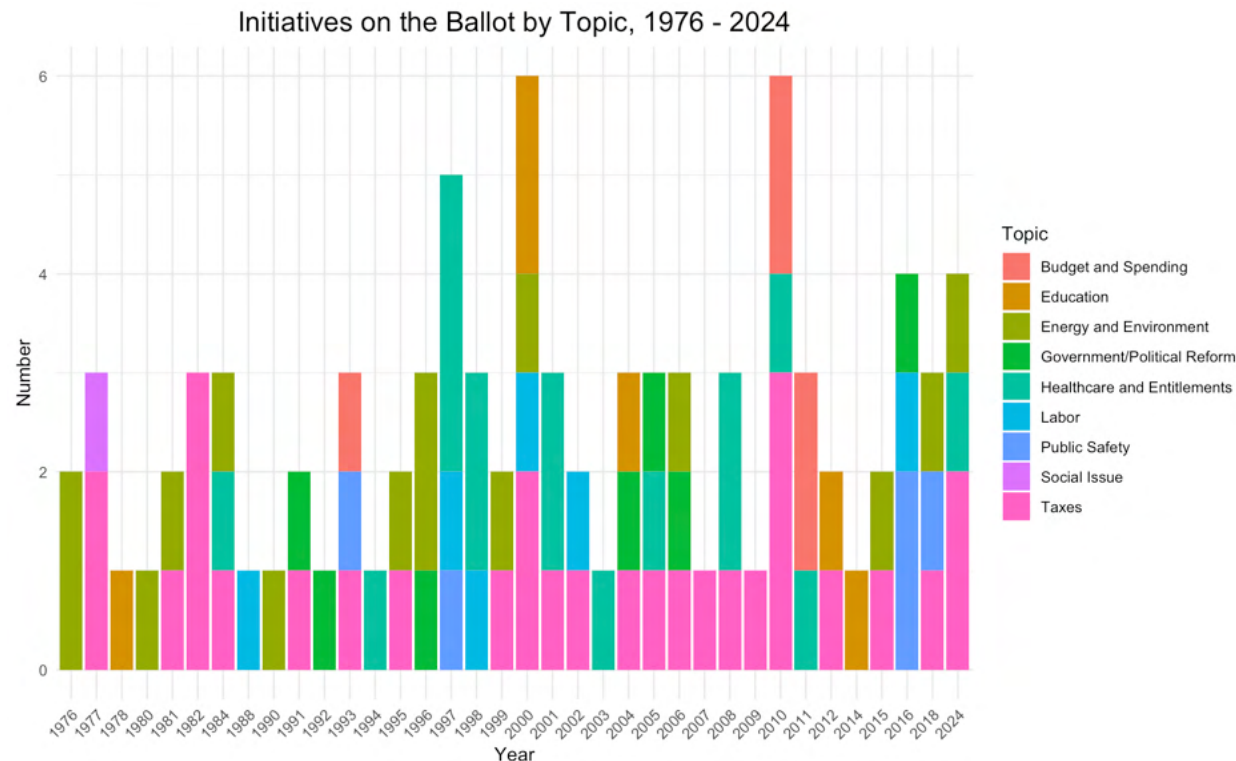
Appendix H: Comparison of Elite State Organizational Capacities on the Left and Right

	Left Organizational Network	Right Organizational Network
Financing	Progress Alliance of Washington	Various Conservative Donors over Time Koch Brothers
The “Brains”	Washington State Budget and Policy Center	Washington Policy Center Family Policy Institute of Washington Discovery Institute
The Attack Dog	Fuse Washington	Americans for Prosperity (Withdrawn) Moral Majority (Historical) Christian Coalition (Historical)
The “Future”	Institute for a Democratic Future	Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute

Appendix I: Map of Progressive Voter Guide Viewership During 2016 Election⁴⁷⁵



Appendix J: Initiatives to the People on the Ballot by Topic, 1976 to 2024



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- ²⁸ Hertel-Fernandez, Skocpol, and Sclar, “When Political Mega-Donors Join Forces.” 134 – 148. Theda Skocpol and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, “How the Right Trounced Liberals in the States,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, no. 39 (Winter 2016). Caroline Tervo, “Why Republicans Went Hard Right in North Carolina,” in *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo (Oxford University Press, 2020). 70.
- ²⁹ For literature on the connections between political and social identities, see Leonie Huddy and Alexa Bankert, “Political Partisanship as a Social Identity,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 2017.
- ³⁰ Stephanie Ternullo, *How the Heartland Went Red: Why Local Forces Matter in an Age of Nationalized Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2024). 59.
- ³¹ Further speaking to this timber industry dominance, communities such as Forks and Aberdeen have been described separately as “the logging capital(s) of the world.”
- ³² Figure 3 source: created by author utilizing mapchart.net.
- ³³ Brown and Mettler, “Sequential Polarization.” 4. For a justification of this historical institutionalist approach, see also Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 2004). 1 – 2. Pierson similarly argues that fully understanding politics requires “shifting from snapshots to moving pictures.”
- ³⁴ Ibid. 12.
- ³⁵ These correspondence collections include the “Correspondence Shelton Municipal Government” collection, the “Grays Harbor Millworkers Oral History Project” collection, the “Correspondence Mason County Commissioners” collection, the “Mason County Fair” collection, and “Subject Files Grays Harbor County Government.” These state legislators are Ellen Craswell, Sid Snyder, Gordon Walgren, John Erak, Richard Fisch, Bob Williams, Arlie DeJarnatt, Evan Jones, Brad Owen, Karen Schmidt, Lynn Kessler, and Jim Buck.
- ³⁶ See Appendix B for a complete list of interview subjects.
- ³⁷ Layna Mosley, ed., “Aligning Sampling Strategies with Analytic Goals,” in *Interview Research in Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 2019). 40.
- ³⁸ Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 174–97.
- ³⁹ John Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). 108. Seawright, “Integrative Multi-Method Research.” 9.
- ⁴⁰ Daniel J. Galvin and Chloe N. Thurston, “American Political Development as a Problem-Driven Enterprise,” *Studies in American Political Development* 36, no. 2 (October 2022). 157.
- ⁴¹ Theda Skocpol, “Doubly Engaged Social Science,” in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 407–28.
- ⁴² Brown and Mettler, “Sequential Polarization.”
- ⁴³ Fred K. Hines, David L. Brown, and John M. Zimmer, eds., *Social and Economic Characteristics of the Population in Metro and Nonmetro Counties, 1970*, Agricultural Economic Report No. 272, 1975. 4. The precise terms that were utilized when the continuum scores were first established and continue to be utilized are “metropolitan” and “nonmetropolitan” counties. However, based the publication’s description of “metropolitan” and “nonmetropolitan” counties, describing these counties as “urban” and “rural” respectively remains appropriate.
- ⁴⁴ Rural-Urban continuum codes available for each decade from Austin Sanders and John Cromartie, “Rural-Urban Continuum Codes,” Economic Research Service, January 7, 2025, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes>.
- ⁴⁵ Kitsap County Historical Society Book Committee, *Kitsap County: A History*, Third Edition (Bremerton, WA: Kitsap County Historical Society, 2012). 1.
- ⁴⁶ When applied to policymaking, such treatment of communities without an understanding of their local dynamics has contributed to the development of rural consciousness as detailed by scholars such as Kathy Cramer. See generally Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- ⁴⁷ Austin Sanders and John Cromartie, “Rural-Urban Continuum Codes - Documentation,” Economic Research Service, January 7, 2025, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/documentation>.
- ⁴⁸ 2023 Rural-Urban continuum codes accessed from Sanders and Cromartie, “Rural-Urban Continuum Codes.” All three counties were designated with a score of 3.
- ⁴⁹ David Montgomery, “Methodology,” GitHub, November 13, 2018, <https://github.com/theatlantic/citylab-data/blob/master/citylab-congress/methodology.md>.
- ⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, “ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates,” 2023. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05*, 2023, accessed on December 18,

2024, [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2023.DP05?q=kitsap+county&g=050XX00US53035\\$1400000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2023.DP05?q=kitsap+county&g=050XX00US53035$1400000). U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, “County-Level 2020 Census Urban and Rural Information for the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Island Areas Sorted by State and County FIPS Codes” (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2023), https://www2.census.gov/geo/docs/reference/ua/2020_UA_COUNTY.xlsx.

⁵¹ “Kitsap County November 5, 2024 General Election,” Kitsap County Auditor, November 26, 2024, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/kitsap/precincts-162430.html>. “Kitsap County November 3, 2020 General Election,” Kitsap County Auditor, November 24, 2020, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20201103/kitsap/precincts-60513.html>.

⁵² For election results from Jefferson County and other counties across rural Western Washington, see “Election Results and Voters’ Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State,” Washington Secretary of State, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/data-research/election-data-and-maps/election-results-and-voters-pamphlets>. See Appendix A for a visualization of election results from Jefferson County and other counties in rural Western Washington.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Jefferson County November 5, 2024 General Election - President/Vice President,” Jefferson County Auditor, November 26, 2024, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/jefferson/precincts-162430.html>.

⁵⁵ “Jefferson County November 3, 2020 General Election,” November 24, 2020, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20201103/jefferson/precincts-60513.html>.

⁵⁶ “Jefferson County November 5, 2024 General Election - Congressional District 6 U.S. Representative,” Jefferson County Auditor, November 26, 2024, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/jefferson/precincts-162237.html>.

⁵⁷ “Election Results and Voters’ Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State.”

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Clallam County November 5, 2024 General Election - President/Vice President,” Clallam County Auditor, accessed February 7, 2025, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/clallam/precincts-162430.html>. How it was determined which party won a precinct is if a majority of the partisan elected offices were won by a particular party. The Democratic precincts are Neah Bay 252; Quileute 262; Freshwater Bay 233; Dry Creek 224; Black Diamond 208; Mount Angeles 250; Monterra 249; Coyote 218; Macleay 247; Dungeness West 223; Carlsborg 214; Cline 217; Riverside 265; Dungeness East 222; Eagle 226; Elk 229; Prairie South 260; Jamestown 240; Sunland North 270; Olympic 254; Bell Hill 207; Port Williams 258; Blyn 211; Miller Peninsula 246; Diamond Point 221; and Sunland South 271. The Republican precincts are Clallam Bay 215; Beaver 204; Sun 269; Bogachiel 212; Joyce 241; Elwha 230; Madison Creek 248; Clark 216; Bellevue 205; Fairview 232; Mount Pleasant 251; Deer Park 220; Bluffs 210; O’Brien 253; Agnew 201; Blue Mountain 209; Robin Hill 266; Prairie North 259; Happy Valley 237; Lost Mountain 245; Forks 301; and Forks 302. Of these precincts, notably Mount Pleasant 251, Prairie North 259, and Happy Valley 237 voted for Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris, but voted Republican for down-ballot candidates.

⁶⁰ “Precinct Report Clallam General Nov 03, 2020” (Port Angeles, WA: Clallam County Auditor, November 24, 2020), <https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/16475/Precinct-2020-general>. In 2020, the Democratic precincts were Neah Bay 252; Quileute 262; Dry Creek 224; Mount Angeles 250; Coyote 218; Macleay 247; Dungeness West 223; Cline 217; Riverside 265; Dungeness East 222; Prairie South 260; Jamestown 240; Sunland North 270; Olympic 254; Port Williams 258; Blyn 211; Miller Peninsula 246; Diamond Point 221; Sunland South 271. Notably, Dry Creek 224 had an even split of Democrats and Republicans that won elected office with 7 Democrats and 7 Republicans; I classify Dry Creek 224 as a Democratic victory because Democrats received the majority of votes for President, Congress, and multiple local races, while Republicans won mostly state-level races. The Republican precincts were Freshwater Bay 233; Black Diamond 208; Monterra 249; Carlsborg 214; Eagle 226; Elk 229; Bell Hill 207; Clallam Bay 215; Beaver 204; Sun 269; Bogachiel 212; Joyce 241; Elwha 230; Madison Creek 248; Clark 216; Bellevue 205; Fairview 232; Mount Pleasant 251; Deer Park 220; Bluffs 210; O’Brien 253; Agnew 201; Blue Mountain 209; Robin Hill 266; Prairie North 259; Happy Valley 237; Lost Mountain 245; Forks 301; and Forks 302. Of these precincts, notably Black Diamond 208, Monterra 249, and Carlsborg 214, the precincts voted for Democratic Congressional candidate Derek Kilmer, while Bell Hill 207 voted for Biden and tied the Congressional vote.

⁶¹ “Precinct Report Official Clallam County 2016 Election” (Port Angeles, WA: Clallam County Auditor, November 29, 2016), <https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4212/Precinct-2016-General-PD>. In 2016, the Democratic precincts were Neah Bay 252; Quileute 262; Dry Creek 224; Coyote 218; Dungeness West 223; Cline 217; Riverside 265; Dungeness East 222; Eagle 226; Elk 229; Jamestown 240; Olympic 254; Port Williams 258; Miller Peninsula 246; Diamond Point 221; Madison Creek 248; Clark 216. The Republican precincts were Freshwater Bay 233; Black Diamond 208; Mount Angeles 250; Monterra 249; Macleay 247; Carlsborg 214; Prairie

South 260; Sunland North 270; Bell Hill 207; Blyn 211; Sunland South 271; Clallam Bay 215; Beaver 204; Sun 269; Bogachiel 212; Joyce 241; Elwha 230; Bellevue 205; Fairview 232; Mount Pleasant 251; Deer Park 220; Bluffs 210; O'Brien 253; Agnew 201; Blue Mountain 209; Robin Hill 266; Prairie North 259; Happy Valley 237; Lost Mountain 245; Forks 301; and Forks 302. However, in 14 of these precincts that Republicans won a majority of partisan offices, Democrats won majorities in Congressional and state legislative races.

⁶² Jim Vleming, "Mason County Profile," County Profile (Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, May 2022). Jim Vleming, "Grays Harbor County Profile," County Profile (Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, May 2022).

⁶³ "Election Results and Voters' Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Grays Harbor County November 3, 2020 General Election - President/Vice President," Grays Harbor Auditor, November 24, 2020, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20201103/graysharbor/precincts-60513.html>. "Grays Harbor County November 5, 2024 General Election - President/Vice President," Grays Harbor Auditor, November 26, 2024, <https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/graysharbor/precincts-162430.html>.

⁶⁶ The precincts that were defined as being non-rural were Olympic View 301 and Shelton Springs 305, both of which were in the suburban city of Shelton. "Mason County November 3, 2020 General Election - President/Vice President," Mason County Auditor, November 24, 2020,

<https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20201103/mason/precincts-60513.html>. "Mason County November 5, 2024

General Election - President/Vice President," Mason County Auditor, November 26, 2024,

<https://results.vote.wa.gov/results/20241105/mason/precincts-162430.html>.

⁶⁷ Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*. 245.

⁶⁸ Joshua N Zingher, "TRENDS: Diploma Divide: Educational Attainment and the Realignment of the American Electorate," *Political Research Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (June 1, 2022). 263. Bradley Jones, "Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups" (Pew Research Center, March 20, 2018),

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>.

⁶⁹ Andrew McGill, "America's Educational Divide Put Trump in the White House," *The Atlantic*, November 27, 2016. AJ Willingham, "25 Years Ago, Republicans Were More Educated than Democrats. Now It's the Opposite, Study Says," *CNN*, March 22, 2018, sec. Politics. Jones, "Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups." Adam Harris, "America Is Divided by Education," *The Atlantic*, November 7, 2018. Nate Cohn, "How Educational Differences Are Widening America's Political Rift," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2021. Doug Sosnik, "The 'Diploma Divide' Is the New Fault Line in American Politics," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2023, sec. Opinion. Rogé Karma, "America's Class Politics Have Turned Upside Down," *The Atlantic*, October 31, 2024. Spencer Goidel, Thiago MQ Moreira, and Brenna Armstrong, "Party Realignment, Education, and the Turnout Advantage: Revisiting the Partisan Effect of Turnout," *American Politics Research* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 23–29.

⁷⁰ Zingher, "TRENDS." Harris, "America Is Divided by Education." Jones, "Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups."

⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment," 2023. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501*, 2023, accessed on December 18, 2024,

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1501?q=Kitsap+County,+Washington+education>.

⁷² Harris, "America Is Divided by Education." Sosnik, "The 'Diploma Divide' Is the New Fault Line in American Politics." Jason Willick, "How the Diploma Divide Came to Dominate American Politics," *The Washington Post*, October 1, 2023.

⁷³ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment," 2023. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501*, 2023, accessed on December 18, 2024,

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S1501?q=Kitsap+County,+Washington+education>. U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment," 2016. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501*, 2016, accessed on December 18, 2024,

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2016.S1501?q=Kitsap+County,+Washington+education>.

⁷⁴ "Election Results and Voters' Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State."

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Jones, "Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups." Willick, "How the Diploma Divide Came to Dominate American Politics."

⁷⁸ "Election Results and Voters' Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State."

⁷⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 from "County-Level Data Sets - Education," Economic Research Service, January 31, 2025, <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=4026>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 Decennial Censuses, and the 2008-2012 and 2019-2023 American Community Survey from “County-Level Data Sets - Education.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. I, Part 1; J.K. Folger and C.B. Nam, *Education of the American Population* (1960 Census Monograph); Current Population Reports, Series P-20, various years; and Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1970 through 2015 from “Rates of High School Completion and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Among Persons Age 25 and Over, by Race/Ethnicity and Sex: Selected Years, 1910 through 2015,” National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.10.asp.

⁸² “Election 2024: Exit Polls,” *CNN*, sec. Politics, accessed January 18, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/election/2024/exit-polls>.

⁸³ U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 Decennial Censuses, and the 2008-2012 and 2019-2023 American Community Survey from “County-Level Data Sets - Education.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. I, Part 1; J.K. Folger and C.B. Nam, *Education of the American Population* (1960 Census Monograph); Current Population Reports, Series P-20, various years; and Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1970 through 2015 from “Rates of High School Completion and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Among Persons Age 25 and Over, by Race/Ethnicity and Sex: Selected Years, 1910 through 2015.” U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, “ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates,” 2023. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05*, 2023, accessed on December 18, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2023.DP05?q=washington+state&g=050XX00US53009,53027,53031,53035,53045>.

⁸⁴ For the purposes of understanding racial composition in rural Western Washington utilizing census data, I define “white” as those in the Census or American Community Survey who are classified as white alone, while for racial minorities, I classify people as racial minorities if they are listed under “two or more races” in the Census or American Community Survey, given that mixed-race people tend to be considered racial minorities. If I were to include those who were listed as white and another race under the category of “two or more races,” the proportion of white residents of rural Western Washington would be much higher.

⁸⁵ Katznelson, *Fear Itself*. Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields, “Introduction: The Long Southern Strategy Explained,” in *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics*, ed. Angie Maxwell and Todd Shields (Oxford University Press, 2019). Boris Heersink and Jeffery A. Jenkins, eds., “Toward a Modern Southern Strategy, 1933–1968,” in *Republican Party Politics and the American South, 1865–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 163–92. Reem Nadeem, “Partisanship by Race, Ethnicity and Education,” *Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, April 9, 2024).

⁸⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, “1980 General Population Characteristics Washington,” *Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, August 1982). 16.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2000 and 2004, Population Estimates Program, 1980–2000; Table 4: Estimates of the Population by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States and States: July 1, 2008 (SC-EST2008-04), released May 14, 2009, retrieved May 15, 2009; and Projected Population by Single Year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2050 (NP2008-T4), released August 14, 2008 from “Resident Population and Percentage Distribution, by Race/Ethnicity: Selected Years, 1980–2008, and Projections, Selected Years, 2010–2025,” Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups (National Center for Education Statistics, July 2010), https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015/tables/table_1a.asp.

⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, “ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates,” 2023. *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05*, 2023, accessed on December 18, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2023.DP05?q=population>.

⁸⁹ For state-to-county or county-to-county migration records, see these datasets from the Census and the Internal Revenue Service. US Census Bureau, “County-to-County Migration Flows,” Census.gov, accessed January 10, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration/guidance/county-to-county-migration-flows.html>. US Census Bureau, “State-to-County Migration Flows,” Census.gov, accessed January 10, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/geographic-mobility/state-to-county-migration.html>. “SOI Tax Stats - Migration Data | Internal Revenue Service,” Internal Revenue Service, accessed January 10, 2025, <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-migration-data>. Additionally, local political leaders have conceded that not all migrants into Clallam County are liberal. Interview with 24th Legislative District Democratic Party Chair,

interview by Conner Huey, January 2, 2025. A veteran from California that moved to the region that I interviewed is one such example. Anonymous #1, Interview with Veterans of Foreign Wars Member, interview by Conner Huey, January 8, 2025.

⁹⁰ Greg Weeks, “Clallam County Profile,” County Profile (Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, December 2001). 4.

⁹¹ John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). 114 – 123. Richard Armey, “Speech on the Contract with America,” September 27, 1994.

⁹² Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” (1919), in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1946). 77 – 128.

⁹³ Valdimer Orlando Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, [1st ed.] (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949). 37 – 41, 110. Charles R. Hunt and David Fontana, “Is Some Politics Still Local? Voter Preferences for Local Candidates,” *Political Behavior*, June 21, 2024. Julia Schulte-Cloos and Paul C. Bauer, “Local Candidates, Place-Based Identities, and Electoral Success,” *Political Behavior* 45, no. 2 (June 1, 2023): 679–98. Marc Meredith, “Exploiting Friends-and-Neighbors to Estimate Coattail Effects,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 4 (November 2013): 742–65. Tom W. Rice and Alisa A. Macht, “Friends and Neighbors Voting in Statewide General Elections,” *American Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 2 (1987): 448–52. Raymond Tatalovich, “‘Friends and Neighbors’ Voting: Mississippi, 1943-73,” *The Journal of Politics* 37, no. 3 (August 1975): 807–14.

⁹⁴ Rosie Campbell et al., “Why Friends and Neighbors? Explaining the Electoral Appeal of Local Roots,” *The Journal of Politics* 81, no. 3 (July 2019): 937–51. 938.

⁹⁵ Tom W. Rice and Alisa A. Macht, “The Hometown Advantage: Mobilization or Conversion?,” *Political Behavior* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 1987). 257. Hunt and Fontana, “Is Some Politics Still Local?” 3.

⁹⁶ Interview with Mason County Democratic Women Club Chair, interview by Conner Huey, December 18, 2024. Interview with Former Jefferson County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Longtime Party Leader, interview by Conner Huey, December 21, 2024. Speaking to the perceived importance of background and the moderate-to-conservative leanings of the region, local Democratic Party leaders have frequently expressed a willingness, albeit reluctant, to run candidates with backgrounds that demographically appeal to voters at the expense of cultivating a diverse bench. Describing this concern of identity politics potentially alienating voters in rural Western Washington, one leader in the Mason County Democrats expressed “I believe we have to run men. I’m sorry. I’m a feminist... but I think that we have to run men in this county. I don’t think women can make it. I don’t think gay men can make it in this county.”⁹⁶ Likewise, a former Chair of the Jefferson County Democratic Party expressed her reluctant preference for nominating a white man as the Democratic nominee for a future vacancy in the 24th legislative district, expressing her concern that other backgrounds could alienate moderate or conservative voters in the district.

⁹⁷ Interview with Mason County Democratic Women Club Chair.

⁹⁸ Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair, interview by Conner Huey, December 13, 2024.

⁹⁹ For visualizations of these candidate nativity trends, see Appendix C.

¹⁰⁰ Rice and Macht, “Friends and Neighbors Voting in Statewide General Elections.” 448.

¹⁰¹ Adele Ferguson, “Dicks Zeroes On Committee Seat,” *Bremerton Sun*, November 5, 1976. 1. Ferguson, “Step-Down Paved Way for Would-Be Successors.” 2. Adele Ferguson, “Dicks Gets 6th District Nod; Aardal Unseats Rep. Randall,” *Bremerton Sun*, September 27, 1976. 1. Norm Dicks for Congress Committee, “Norm Dicks Political Advertisement,” *Bremerton Sun*, October 30, 1976. 3. During his first campaign to become the U.S. Representative for the district representing Kitsap County, Dicks received strong backing from prominent Democratic politicians such as US Senators Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson as well as retiring Congressman for Washington’s 6th Congressional District Floyd Hicks, with Jackson praising Dicks as being “tough, smart, honest and concerned... he would be a first-rate representative in Congress.”

¹⁰² John Hughes, “Norm Dicks,” *Legacy Washington* (Olympia, WA: Washington Secretary of State, 2018). Wes Pruitt, Interview with Washington State Representative for the 26th Legislative District, 1987 - 1995, interview by Conner Huey, January 2, 2025. Adele Ferguson, “Step-Down Paved Way for Would-Be Successors,” *Bremerton Sun*, September 13, 1976. 2.

¹⁰³ “About Derek | Derek Kilmer for Congress,” Derek Kilmer for Congress, November 9, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221109184731/https://derekkilmer.com/about/>. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant, interview by Conner Huey, December 20, 2024. Pruitt, Interview with Washington State Representative for the 26th Legislative District, 1987 - 1995. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #2, interview by Conner Huey, January 2, 2025.

¹⁰⁴ “About Derek | Derek Kilmer for Congress - 6th Congressional District.”

- ¹⁰⁵ Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair. Interview with Former Clallam County Republican Party Chair #2, interview by Conner Huey, January 9, 2025. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #2.
- ¹⁰⁶ Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant.
- ¹⁰⁷ Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair.
- ¹⁰⁸ Jane Bedinger, "Kilmer, McKenna Represent the Best," *Kitsap Sun*, August 1, 2012. 6.
- ¹⁰⁹ During the 2024 Democratic primary to serve as US Representative for Washington's 6th Congressional District, when contrasted with her Democratic primary opponent Hilary Franz, Randall's strong local ties, political observers argued, proved decisive: Franz received scrutiny among voters for what was perceived to have been limited connections to the district, having a farm in Grays Harbor only a year prior in 2023 while maintaining a primary residence in Seattle. Shauna Sowersby, "Must Congressional Candidates Live in Their Districts? Answer May Affect WA Race," *The Olympian*, April 14, 2024, <https://www.theolympian.com/news/politics-government/election/article287008415.html>.
- ¹¹⁰ Emily Randall, "Facebook Post: Our Volunteers Are AWESOME!!," Video, *Facebook*, July 29, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1735924266457258&rdid=PVOCxNsEBR2wx8W1>. In one weekend during the 2018 campaign, Randall's campaign mobilized over 50 volunteers to canvass over 3,000 households.
- ¹¹¹ "Meet Emily," Emily Randall for Congress, accessed February 19, 2025, <https://electemilyrandall.com/about/>.
- ¹¹² Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant.
- ¹¹³ Gene Yoachum, "Local Reactions Mixed on WashScam," *Bremerton Sun*, October 6, 1980. 2. Gene Gisley, "Is It New Conservatism Or Rhetoric?," *Bremerton Sun*, October 13, 1980. 28. Upon learning about Walgren's conviction, one Kitsap County resident remarked "His public career is gone," while *Bremerton Sun* editor Gene Gisley confidently asserted a month in advance of the election that "Another freshman will replace Gordon Walgren." Admittedly, Craswell's personal characteristics were not much better; in speeches during her first campaign for state representative in 1976, Craswell candidly "confessed to being 'scared to death' of public speaking," described as a "shy little rabbit" by political observers such as *Bremerton Sun* reporter Adele Ferguson. Adele Ferguson, "Lady in the House?," *Bremerton Sun*, August 17, 1976. 24. Adele Ferguson, "Craswell Vs. Walgreen?," March 15, 1979. 44.
- ¹¹⁴ Interview with Jefferson County Democratic Party Leader #2, interview by Conner Huey, December 21, 2024.
- ¹¹⁵ Buzz McClain, "Rural Values, Big Plans: PhD Grad Adam Bernbaum Takes Seat in Washington Legislature," George Mason University, January 9, 2025, <https://schar.gmu.edu/news/2025-01/rural-values-big-plans-phd-grad-adam-bernbaum-takes-seat-washington-legislature>. "About Adam," Elect Adam Bernbaum, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://www.electadambernbaum.com/about>.
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¹²³ Brian E. Adams, *Campaign Finance in Local Elections: Buying the Grassroots* (FirstForumPress, 2010). 62. Alan I. Abramowitz, “Name Familiarity, Reputation, and the Incumbency Effect in a Congressional Election,” *Western Political Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (December 1, 1975): 668–84. Jacobson, “The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections.” Gary C. Jacobson and Jamie L. Carson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019). 209. Adam Bonica, “Professional Networks, Early Fundraising, and Electoral Success,” *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 16, no. 1 (March 2017): 153–71. In the context of primary elections, Bonica similarly finds that greater spending is associated with increased vote share due to increased name recognition, a finding that holds applicability given that primary elections, like local elections, often feature candidates with low name recognition.

¹²⁴ Maggie Koerth, “How Money Affects Elections,” *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), September 10, 2018.

¹²⁵ Jolene Unsoeld, “Who Gave? Who Got? How Much?,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1977). “1978 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1979). “1980 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 1981). “1982 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1983). “1984 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1986). “1986 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, February 1987). “1988 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1989). “1990 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, February 1991). “1992 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 1993). “1994 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, April 9, 1996). “1996 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 1997). “1998 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 1999). “2000 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2001). “2002 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2003). “2004 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2005). “2006 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, September 9, 2008). “2008 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2009). “2010 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2011). “2012 Election Financing Fact Book,” Election Financing Factbook (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, 2013). For candidate donations from 2012 onwards see “Candidates | Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC),” Public Disclosure Commission, accessed February 17, 2025, <https://www.pdc.wa.gov/political-disclosure-reporting-data/browse-search-data/candidates>.

¹²⁶ “1976 House of Representatives Campaigns Receipts and Expenditures,” FEC Disclosure Series (Washington, DC: Federal Election Commission, September 1977). “FEC Reports on Financial Activity: 1977 - 1978,” FEC Disclosure Series (Washington, DC: Federal Election Commission, June 1979). For Congressional campaign finance data from 1980 onwards see “Campaign Finance Data,” Federal Election Commission, accessed February 14, 2025, <https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/>. For visualizations of campaign finance data in R, see Appendix D.

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¹²⁸ Unsoeld, “Who Gave? Who Got? How Much?”; “1978 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1980 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1982 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1984 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1986 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1988 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1990 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1992 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1994 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1996 Election Financing Fact Book”; “1998 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2000 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2002 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2004 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2006 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2008 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2010 Election Financing Fact Book”; “2012 Election Financing Fact Book”; “Candidates | Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC).”

¹²⁹ “Election Results and Voters’ Pamphlets | WA Secretary of State.” It is important to note that counted among these 22 Republicans is Paul Zellinsky, who used to be a Democratic state legislator prior to the 1996 election when he switched over to the Republican Party. In the 1996 election, Zellinsky raised less than his Democratic challenger but still won the election.

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¹³⁶ Pearl Capoeman-Baller, “Taholah Community Education Campus,” Letter, May 24, 2004, Norman D. Dicks Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

¹³⁷ “A Survey of Voter Attitudes in the Sixth Congressional District of Washington” (Washington DC: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc, November 1979), Accession No. 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. Section 2 page 3. “1982 Dicks Campaign Survey” (Washington DC: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc, 1982), Accession No. 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. T10. Elden Rodgers, “An Analysis of the 6th Congressional District in Preparation for the 1998 Election,” 1998, University of Washington Special Collections. “Norm Dicks WA CD 6 Survey” (EMC Research, July 2008), University of Washington Special Collections.

¹³⁸ Peninsula Daily News Editorial Board, “Dicks for Representative,” *Peninsula Daily News*, October 28, 1994, sec. Editorials. A10.

¹³⁹ Derek Kilmer, Interview with Former U.S. Representative (WA-06), interview by Conner Huey, February 22, 2024. “Kilmer to Open Office in PA in Bid for District Seat,” *Peninsula Daily News*, April 29, 2012. A7.

¹⁴⁰ “Kilmer to Open Office in PA in Bid for District Seat.” A7.

¹⁴¹ Friends of Derek Kilmer, “Had a Great Time Greeting Workers at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Early This Morning!,” *Facebook*, October 24, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/photos/a.618538594851326/778083785563472/?type=3&rdid=hA9Y7idBiQzCfhiy&share_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fshare%2F1BBC7jrnax%2F#. Friends of Derek Kilmer, “Good Morning!,” *Facebook*, November 1, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/posts/pfbid02BHThjnPApzYKhQzTcngMfapTei9cjwFvXw1RtNmzmhEPTuTvJRQHTM6wTogSFihGI?rdid=iUutuZNa5PBS4tJ2#>. Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant. In one weekday in October during his first Congressional race in 2012, Kilmer mobilized “over 130 people” in Port Angeles to canvass “over 1000 doors” in Clallam County. Friends of Derek Kilmer, “Every Time Derek Visits His Hometown of Port Angeles Is Special, but Today He Had the Honor of Visiting Port Angeles as the Guest of Senator Maria Cantwell, Who Took Team Kilmer with Her on Her Jobs for WA Bus Tour.,” *Facebook*, October 30, 2012,

https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/photos/a.146645682040622/460976223940898/?type=3&rdid=m2toPFI5oh1J0Okk&share_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fshare%2F18C69Y3wzH%2F#.

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¹⁴⁵ Interview with Former Norm Dicks Deputy District Director and Derek Kilmer District Director.

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- ¹⁶⁷ Jeff Wilson, Interview with 19th Legislative District State Senator, interview by Conner Huey, January 3, 2025.
- ¹⁶⁸ "1982 Norm Dicks Strategy Memorandum" (Seattle, WA: John Brown & Partners Inc, May 18, 1982), University of Washington Special Collections. 11 – 13. Dicks, Interview with Former U.S. Representative (WA-06). Pruitt, Interview with Washington State Representative for the 26th Legislative District, 1987 - 1995. Interview with Former Norm Dicks Campaign Manager. Emblematic of this frequent support for down-ballot Democratic candidates in rural Western Washington, during Cary Bozeman's ultimately successful re-election campaign for Mayor of Bremerton in 2005, Dicks (following 23rd legislative district State Senator Betti Sheldon's supportive remarks) offered high praise for Bozeman at a campaign rally: "He has single-handedly... put new energy and passion in Bremerton, and it's paying off. Quite simply, Cary Bozeman is the best mayor in this state." Norman Dicks, "NDD Remarks," May 6, 2005, University of Washington Special Collections. 7 – 8.
- ¹⁶⁹ Friends of Derek Kilmer, "A Big Shout out to Mike Chapman, Kate Dean, and the Jefferson County Democrats for Helping Get out the Vote Today in Port Townsend!," *Facebook*, November 4, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/photos/a.146645682040622/1193266554045191/?type=3&rdid=Sd85obFyAR3rKu5h&share_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fshare%2F18F7iJepUs%2F#. Friends of Derek Kilmer, "Back in the City of Destiny Today Knocking Doors for Victoria Woodards, the next Mayor of Tacoma!," *Facebook*, September 30, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/posts/pfbid02gXbx5RAuLJe5j7VCE43cBMDmnseiGwu3U5Zbjf6DMd48PK4nYCe9xi6P79a7sVcil?rdid=1tceiySw2HC2jPDx#>. Friends of Derek Kilmer, "I'm Spending My Saturday

Knocking Doors for Manka Dhingra for State Senate in the 45th.,” *Facebook*, July 22, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Elect.Derek.Kilmer/posts/pfbid02B8PzQCNYcRnXRT6KMqvdx5ecDP84sFBxbVhKnbxK5sF9KsYqSpK2yqRd2169rXgw1?rdid=GSAHK5SSdbsxWOKJ#>. Abhi Rahman, “DLCC Announces Federal Advisory Council,” Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, November 17, 2021, <https://dlcc.org/press/dlcc-announces-federal-advisory-council/>.

¹⁷⁰ Harold Hotelling, “Stability in Competition,” *The Economic Journal* 39, no. 153 (1929): 41–57. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957).

¹⁷¹ Drew DeSilver, “The Polarization in Today’s Congress Has Roots That Go Back Decades,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), March 10, 2022. Daniel J. Moskowitz, Jon C. Rogowski, and James M. Snyder Jr., “Parsing Party Polarization in Congress,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 4 (2024): 357–85. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, “Confronting Asymmetric Polarization,” in *Solutions to Political Polarization in America*, ed. Nathaniel Persily (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁷² Ferguson, “Dicks Zeroes On Committee Seat.” 1. Dicks, Interview with Former U.S. Representative (WA-06). If Dicks failed to receive an appointment to the House Appropriations Committee, Dicks also made plans to serve on the House Armed Services Committee where he could also work on military-related issues for rural Western Washington.

¹⁷³ Jerry Pugnetti, “Dicks Joke Gets Big Play in Haley Campaign Brochure,” *The News Tribune*, October 16, 1982. 3. Callaghan, “Underdog Kevin Cook Nipping at Dicks’ Heels.” B3. Susan Miller, “Power Play Shaping Over Ship Outfitting,” *Bremerton Sun*, February 25, 1977. 2. “Norm Dicks for Congress,” Campaign Website, Norm Dicks, September 1, 2002. Dicks, Interview with Former U.S. Representative (WA-06). Norm Dicks for Congress Committee, “Norm Dicks Campaign Mailer,” Circa 1988, University of Washington Special Collections.

¹⁷⁴ Peninsula Daily News Editorial Board, “Dicks for Representative.” A10. “1982 Dicks Campaign Survey” (Washington DC: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc, 1982), Accession No. 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. A5. Brad Bannon and Anne Peverada Danehy, “Survey of Voters in Sixth Congressional District” (Bannon Research, January 8, 1992), 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. “Norm Dicks WA CD 6 Survey.”

¹⁷⁵ Peninsula Daily News Editorial Board, “Dicks for Representative.” A10. Mark Houser, “Invoke ‘Growth’ Act,” *The Herald*, December 4, 1990, sec. Letters to the Editor. A7. Peter Callaghan, “Dicks Is on the Defense as He Changes Image,” *The News Tribune*, July 29, 1990. A12. David Ammons, “Stormin’ Norman: Super-Congressman Hitting His Stride,” *Kitsap Sun*, May 27, 2007, sec. Opinion. A13.

¹⁷⁶ Rachel La Corte, “Unions Get OK for Political Spending,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 13, 2007, sec. Local. “About Derek | Derek Kilmer for Congress - 6th Congressional District,” Derek Kilmer for Congress, May 22, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130522183625/http://www.derekkilmer.com/about-derek/>. Nelson, “Shipyards, People and Economics Made a Mark, But a Better Congress May Be Kilmer’s Legacy.” For instance, in 2007, Kilmer was one of only three Senate Democrats to vote against a bill that would enable labor unions to spend non-member dues on political causes without getting permission – a bill that ultimately passed 29-20.

¹⁷⁷ William Dietz, “Sen. Derek Kilmer Goes to Olympia,” *Key Peninsula News*, February 1, 2007.

¹⁷⁸ “About Derek | Derek Kilmer for Congress.” During his campaigns, Kilmer regularly touted his bipartisan credentials, highlighting that he “serve[d] as co-chair of the Bipartisan Working Group” in Congress and “received the Bipartisan Policy Center’s Legislative Action Award.”

¹⁷⁹ “The Lugar Center - McCourt School of Bipartisan Index: House Scores 118th Congress (2022-2023),” Bipartisan Index (Washington, DC: The Lugar Center, 2024), https://www.thelugarcenter.org/assets/htmldocuments/2023_BPI_House_FULL.pdf. “The Lugar Center - McCourt School Bipartisan Index: House Scores 117th Congress (2021 - 2022),” Bipartisan Index (Washington, DC: The Lugar Center, 2023), https://www.thelugarcenter.org/assets/htmldocuments/117_BPI_House_FULL.pdf. “The Lugar Center - McCourt School Bipartisan Index: House Scores 116th Congress (2019 - 2020),” Bipartisan Index (Washington, DC: The Lugar Center, 2021), <https://www.thelugarcenter.org/assets/htmldocuments/116%20BPI%20House.pdf>. “The Lugar Center - McCourt School Bipartisan Index: House Scores 115th Congress (2017 - 2018),” Bipartisan Index (Washington, DC: The Lugar Center, 2019), <https://www.thelugarcenter.org/assets/htmldocuments/House%20Scores%20115th%20Congress%20Full.pdf>. “The Lugar Center - McCourt School Bipartisan Index: 114th Congress,” Bipartisan Index (Washington, DC: The Lugar Center, 2018), <https://www.thelugarcenter.org/assets/htmldocuments/Bipartisan%20Index%20114th%20Congress%20House%20Scores.pdf>. Most recently in 2023, Kilmer was classified as the 31st most bipartisan member of Congress in 2023 during the 118th Congress’s First Session.

¹⁸⁰ “The Lugar Center - McCourt School Bipartisan Index: House Scores 116th Congress (2019 - 2020).”

¹⁸¹ “Press Release: New Democrat Coalition Announces Rep. Derek Kilmer as New Co-Chair of National Security Task Force” (New Democrat Coalition, July 9, 2014). “Press Release: New Democrat Coalition Announces New Coalition Leadership” (New Democrat Coalition, December 1, 2016). Additionally, Kilmer served for multiple terms as Vice Chair of the New Democrat Coalition.

¹⁸² “Committees and Caucuses | Congressman Derek Kilmer,” Congressman Derek Kilmer, September 27, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130927045344/http://kilmer.house.gov/legislation/committees-and-caucuses>. “Kilmer Selected to Fill Seat on House Appropriations Committee,” Congressman Derek Kilmer, January 13, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240606085218/https://kilmer.house.gov/news/press-releases/kilmer-selected-to-fill-seat-on-house-appropriations-committee>. Prior to serving on the House Appropriations Committee, Kilmer also served on the House Armed Services Committee as a freshman Congressman, allowing him to work on military-related issues facing rural Western Washington. On the Appropriations Committee, Kilmer also had the ability to work directly on relevant issues for rural Western Washington by serving on the Subcommittee on Defense, the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, and the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.

¹⁸³ Mike De Felice, “On Appropriations, Kilmer Brings Home the Bacon,” *Kitsap Daily News*, June 8, 2023.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ J. Chris Hardin, “Kilmer Would Serve Well in Congress,” *Kitsap Sun*, August 17, 2012, sec. Letters to the Editor. A7. Likewise, the editorial board of the *Kitsap Sun* offered Kilmer similar praise, writing that Kilmer “has consistently impressed our board both with his viewpoint – a moderate Democrat focused on supporting local military options, the environment, and job creation – and his actions – he’s joined with newer members from the Republican caucus to find common ground and get Congress working rather than grandstanding.” *Kitsap Sun* Editorial Board, “Confidence in Kilmer as U.S. Rep,” *Kitsap Sun*, October 23, 2014. A6.

¹⁸⁶ “Where the Voters Are in the 24th Legislative District and the Counties,” *Peninsula Daily News*, September 18, 1990. 1.

¹⁸⁷ To source information on whether a state legislator was “moderate” or “conservative,” I collected information from newspapers to determine if the general public considered a state legislator “moderate” or “conservative” and, to the best of my ability, corroborated this information through interviews with contemporaries. Scott Wilson, “Williams Lures Conservative Democrats,” *The News Tribune*, July 2, 1988. 20. Mike Phillips, “Land Use Laws Need Work,” *The Sun*, November 12, 1995. 24. “Rockefeller, Sheldon, Harrison,” *Bainbridge Island Review*, October 18, 2000. Bob Burkholder, “Rolfes Will Make a Great Representative,” *Kitsap Sun*, March 24, 2006. 10. Adele Ferguson, “Republicans Try to Recruit Democrats,” *The Sun*, April 7, 1986. 1. Derek Sheppard, “Are Locals Hungry for GOP Leadership?,” *Kitsap Sun*, October 21, 2010. 9. Christopher Dunagan, “No Accounting for Taste,” *Bremerton Sun*, September 11, 1981. 13. “Ray Gets Mediocre Grade,” *The Daily News*, October 25, 1977. 6. “Owen to Run in New District,” *The Daily News*, May 3, 1981. 19. Adele Ferguson, “Riensch Running Again Against Fisch in 24th,” *The Sun*, September 9, 1986. 34. Kirby Neumann-Rea, “Thurston Voters Remain Mystery,” *Peninsula Daily News*, November 8, 1992. 1. Walter Hatch and Rick Seifert, “Rating Lawmakers: How Do They Do?,” *The Daily News*, June 3, 1984. 19. Adele Ferguson, “Kitsap Delegation Not Big, Happy Family,” *Bremerton Sun*, March 22, 1984. 44. Mark Carlson, “Two Tacoma-Area Democrats Enter 26th District Race,” *Bremerton Sun*, July 7, 1982. 2. Al Gibbs, “Hawkins Loses 2 Battles But Claims Moral Victory,” *The News Tribune*, November 18, 1974. 3. Adele Ferguson, “26th District (Position No. 1),” *Bremerton Sun*, September 7, 1982. 55. Scott Wilson, “‘Bloody Tuesday’ Weakens King’s Reign,” *The News Tribune*, March 4, 1988. 11. Tim Christie, “Lantz Turns Away McMahan’s Conservative Challenge,” *The Sun*, November 4, 1998. 7. Dice, “Two Familiar Faces and a Political Newcomer Seek State House Seat.” The News Tribune Editorial Board, “TNT’s Choices for Legislature,” *The News Tribune*, October 31, 1994. 6. Pruitt, Interview with Washington State Representative for the 26th Legislative District, 1987 – 1995. Williams, “Jackley VS. McMahan Could Swing Voting Power in House.” A3. The News Tribune Editorial Board, “Kilmer, Seaquist and Angel for the 26th District,” *The News Tribune*, October 5, 2010. A12. David Gutman, “Sen. Tim Sheldon Picked as President Pro-Tem of GOP-Controlled State Senate,” *The Seattle Times*, January 6, 2017, sec. Local Politics. Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “19th District Voters Should Return Doumit,” *Longview Daily News*, October 16, 2002, sec. Editorials. 7. Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “Hatfield Merits Fifth Term for 19th District,” *Longview Daily News*, October 16, 2002, sec. Editorials. 7. Tim Sheldon, Interview with Tim Sheldon, Washington State Legislator from the 35th Legislative District, 1991 – 2023. Peter Callaghan, “Conservatives Cast Their Votes for Poor,” *The News Tribune*, February 11, 1990. 85. “Barbara Holm.” E18. Horne, “Max Vekich Doesn’t Fit Stereotype.” B1. Brad Shannon, “Budget Crisis Act II,” *The Olympian*, January 10, 2010. A12. David Groves, “Nobody’s ‘Crying Out’ for This Self-Serving Senate Tom-Foolery,” *The Stand*, December 13, 2012. “Demos Seek Firmer Ties on Partisan,” *The Columbian*, February 20,

1963. David Ammons, “Lawmakers Learn to Operate Despite the Powers of Tims,” *The Columbian*, January 19, 2002, sec. Washington & The Region. 18. Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “Doumit, Hatfield Quite an Effective Team in Olympia,” *Longview Daily News*, October 6, 2000, sec. Viewpoint. 17. “Ex-Legislative Leader Robert Charette Dies.” 20. Adele Ferguson, “Late Switch?,” *Bremerton Sun*, December 26, 1978. 28. Laurie Smith, “County GOP Kills Abortion Stance, Tries to Woo Democrat,” *Longview Daily News*, May 14, 1990. 1. Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “Daily News’ House Picks: Blake, Takko and Rivers,” *Longview Daily News*, September 29, 2010, sec. Viewpoint. 4. Interview with Mason County Democratic Party Leader #1, interview by Conner Huey, December 18, 2024.

¹⁸⁸ Hatfield, Interview with Former 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 1994 - 2004; 2006 - 2015. Clint Woods, “States and Nation Policy Summit Memorandum,” Memorandum (Washington, DC: American Legislative Exchange Council, October 27, 2010). 14. Further indicative of his centrist politics, Hatfield served as a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council’s, a Koch Network-supported organization that supplies predominately conservative state legislators with model bills, Energy, Environment, & Agriculture Task Force.

¹⁸⁹ Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024. Describing how Democrats holding elected office at the municipal and county levels of government were similarly moderate or conservative, Van De Wege further shared the example that “Rod Fleck has been the [Forks] city attorney slash city manager. He would label himself as a conservative democrat.”

¹⁹⁰ “Discovery Newsletter” (Koch Industries, October 4, 2010),

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150820223421/http://www.thenation.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Koch-Vote-Record-2-WM4.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ During the 2010s, many of these moderate-to-conservative legislators in rural Western Washington along with others in Washington State formed the “Roadkill Caucus,” a group of “Centrist Democrats” that co-founder then-State Senator Steve Hobbs got its name because “As moderates, we constantly get run over by the far right and the far left, and we end up being roadkill.” Among its members have included multiple state legislators from rural Western Washington, including Hatfield, Van De Wege, Blake, Takko, and Kessler. Jerry Cornfield, “Moderate Democrats Create ‘Roadkill Caucus,’” *The Columbian*, February 10, 2010. C2. “Sens. Kilmer, Pridemore: We’re Not ‘Roadkillers,’” *The Stand*, August 2011, sec. State Government. Ellie Probus, “Who’s Holding Progress Back? AKA WCA’s Bum List,” *WA Community Alliance* (blog), July 1, 2021, <https://wacommunityalliance.org/whos-holding-progress-back-aka-wcas-bum-list/>. Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “Daily News’ House Picks: Blake, Takko and Rivers.” A4.

¹⁹² “Dixy Gets Only Fair Grading,” *Longview Daily News*, October 25, 1977. 1.

¹⁹³ Scott Wilson, “End of the Hargrove Era,” *The Leader*, March 15, 2016.

¹⁹⁴ Committee to Re-Elect Patricia Lantz, “Making Democracy Work... For All of Us!,” *The Sun*, November 3, 1996. 42. Committee to Re-Elect Patricia Lantz, “Making Democracy Work... For All of Us!,” *The Sun*, November 1, 1998. 14.

¹⁹⁵ Longview Daily News Editorial Board, “Doumit, Hatfield Quite an Effective Team in Olympia.” 17.

¹⁹⁶ “Voters Back Most Incumbents,” *Longview Daily News*, September 19, 1990. Josh Farley, “State Sen. Tim Sheldon, Longest-Serving Lawmaker, Retiring from Legislature,” *Kitsap Sun*, March 10, 2022, sec. News.

¹⁹⁷ Bert Paul, “Where Was Jones During the Timber Crisis?,” *Peninsula Daily News*, October 23, 1990, sec. Letters to the Editor. A9.

¹⁹⁸ Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024. Hatfield, Interview with Former 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 1994 - 2004; 2006 - 2015. “Sen. Kevin Van De Wege,” *Kevin Van De Wege Archive* (blog), accessed February 19, 2025,

https://senatedemocrats.wa.gov/vandewegearchive/team_members/sen-kevin-van-de-wege/. “County’s Brian Hatfield Elected Agriculture Committee Chairman,” *Chinook Observer*, December 15, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Hansen, Interview with 23rd Legislative District State Legislator. “Voters’ Pamphlet: Washington State Election” (Washington Secretary of State, October 2024). 67.

²⁰⁰ Ellen Craswell, “Letter to Mrs. Michael Catellano,” Constituent Correspondence, February 8, 1977, 91-A-122 Box 3, Washington State Archives. Ellen Craswell, “Letter to Carl Kirkland,” Constituent Correspondence, May 10, 1977, 91-A-122 Box 3, Washington State Archives.

²⁰¹ Stanford Bean, “Letter from Constituents to Ellen Craswell,” Constituent Correspondence, March 28, 1977, 91-A-122 Box 3, Washington State Archives. Ellen Craswell, “Letter from Ellen Craswell to Constituents,” Constituent Correspondence, April 7, 1977, 91-A-122 Box 3, Washington State Archives.

²⁰² “Elections Search Results: State Representative District #23 Position #1” (Washington Secretary of State, n.d.). “Elections Search Results: State Senator District #23” (Washington Secretary of State, n.d.)

- ²⁰³ Adele Ferguson, "Voting on Side of 'Righteous Right,'" *The Sun*, April 7, 1992. 9. Jim Baumgaertel, "Bruce & Ellen Craswell – Christianity & Politics," Blog, *Proclamation, Invitation, & Warning* (blog), April 18, 2006. This 2006 blog post from a friend of Craswell substantiates Craswell's conversion on April 15, 1980 as being a major turning point in her personal politics, writing "politics got easier for Craswell when she became a Christian. She could look to the Bible for guidance, and she felt God supporting her efforts, no matter what the earthly outcome."
- ²⁰⁴ John Rosendahl, "Letter from John Rosendahl to Ellen Craswell," March 2, 1981, 91-A-122 Box 1, Washington State Archives. 1 – 2. Ellen Craswell, "Letter from Ellen Craswell to John Rosendahl," Constituent Correspondence, July 1, 1981, 91-A-122 Box 1, Washington State Archives. 1 – 2.
- ²⁰⁵ Lynda Mapes, "Craswell Has Higher Calling For Government Gop Governor Candidate Puts God In Her Campaign," *The Spokesman-Review*, September 3, 1996. Ferguson, "Voting on Side of 'Righteous Right.'" 9.
- ²⁰⁶ Ellen Craswell, "Family in Touch," December 1987, 91-A-122 Box 11, Washington State Archives.
- ²⁰⁷ Adele Ferguson, "'Goodbye, Ellen Craswell' Was Premature," *The Sun*, November 19, 1987. 6.
- ²⁰⁸ Gary Hunt, "Offers a Change," *The Sun*, September 16, 1988. 7.
- ²⁰⁹ W. E. Hoke, "Craswell Defying Constitution," *The Sun*, September 23, 1986. 15.
- ²¹⁰ "Elections Search Results: State Senator District #23."
- ²¹¹ Adele Ferguson, "Nobody's Laughing at Idea for Sex-Offender Castration," *The Sun*, January 15, 1990. 1.
- ²¹² Gordon Golob, "Senate Journal: 1990, Regular Session, Fifty-First Legislature," *Senate Journal* 1 (1990). 68.
- ²¹³ Suzanne Zwarun, "Calls for Castration Grow Louder," *Calgary Herald*, January 28, 1990. 21. In this opinion piece by Suzanne Zwarun of Calgary, Alberta, Zwarun castigated Craswell for her proposal, arguing "castration is as Medieval a punishment as the Islamic practice of cutting off the head of a murderer and the hand of a thief" before facetiously asking "Can't we try a little harder before we try castration?" to express her disdain.
- ²¹⁴ Pam Hamon, "Letter from Pam Hamon to Ellen Craswell," Constituent Correspondence, February 1, 1990, 92-A-190 Box 1, Washington State Archives.
- ²¹⁵ Stu White, "Sex-Related Bills Are Ridiculous," *The News Tribune*, January 31, 1990, sec. Letter to the Editor. 33.
- ²¹⁶ Ellen Craswell, "Letter to Sheryl Campbell," Constituent Correspondence, January 22, 1990, 92-A-190 Box 1, Washington State Archives. 1. Instances of Craswell invoking religion to justify her stances on economic issues appeared frequently in her correspondence with constituents, even prior to her incentivized castration campaign. In one instance in 1988, a constituent named Ruth Hahn expressed her desire for Craswell to support legislation that would increase the state minimum wage. In response, Craswell invoked multiple passages from the Bible to justify why she "did not support minimum wage laws," including Ephesians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and the First Epistle to Timothy. In one illustrative passage, Craswell wrote "The Bible says that any one who does not work and support his own family is worse than an infidel (unbeliever), I Tim. 5:8... Clearly, the Biblical mandate is to work with no reference made to the amount of wages one should receive." Ellen Craswell, "Letter to Ruth Hahn," Constituent Correspondence, February 10, 1988, 91-A-122 Box 11, Washington State Archives.
- ²¹⁷ "Elections Search Results: State Senator District #23."
- ²¹⁸ Kim Koenig, "Craswell's Agenda," *The Sun*, October 23, 1992. 10.
- ²¹⁹ Esther Monroe, "No to Craswell," *The Sun*, October 26, 1992. 7.
- ²²⁰ V.B. McKinney, "Who Represents You?," *The Sun*, August 17, 1992.
- ²²¹ Adele Ferguson, "Can't Pick the Winner in State Senate Race," *The Sun*, August 27, 1992. 16. Friends for Sherry Appleton, "It's Time to Say 'No,'" *The Sun*, September 12, 1992. 4. Along with Craswell, Appleton would go on to lose the 1992 election. Later, however, in the 21st century, Appleton would change her political affiliation to the Democratic Party, serving as a State Representative from 2005 to 2021.
- ²²² Ken Littrell, "Cleaning Out Craswell," *The Sun*, October 23, 1992. 9.
- ²²³ Timothy Egan, "Battle in Washington Brings Soul-Searching," *The New York Times*, October 22, 1996, sec. U.S.
- ²²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²²⁵ Egan, "Battle in Washington Brings Soul-Searching." Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1, interview by Conner Huey, October 18, 2024.
- ²²⁶ Walter Hatch and Rick Seifert, "Just How Good Are Our Lawmakers?," *Longview Daily News*, May 23, 1984. 1. Fran Kaiser and Lee Siegel, "Redistricting Plan Likely to Split Longview, Kelso," *Longview Daily News*, April 21, 1981. 1.
- ²²⁷ Voter pamphlets can be accessed from the Washington Secretary of State's website and the Clallam County Auditor's website. "Archived Voters' Pamphlets since 1914 | WA Secretary of State," Washington Secretary of State, accessed November 20, 2024, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/data-research/election-results-and-voters-pamphlets/archived-voters-pamphlets-1914>. "Older Voter Pamphlets | Clallam County, WA," Clallam County Auditor, accessed November 20, 2024, <https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/1813/Older-Voter-Pamphlets>.

- ²²⁸ Of course, this emphasis on moderate politics has not been met completely with unanimous approval from Democrats throughout rural Western Washington, with multiple Democratic state legislators and activists in the region noting the occasional tensions between the moderate-to-conservative legislators of the region and progressive party activists. Hatfield, Interview with Former 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 1994 - 2004; 2006 - 2015. Blake, Interview with Brian Blake, Former Unionized Logger and Washington State Representative from the 19th Legislative District, 2002 - 2021. Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024. Additionally, as one Jefferson County Democratic Party leader said of Norm Dicks: “He was not loved up here by the peaceniks. We actually didn’t think he would have the nerve to come when we invited him to be questioned by the peace movement.” Anonymous #1, Interview with Jefferson County Democratic Party Leader.
- ²²⁹ Jonathan Weisman, “How the Democrats Lost the Working Class,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 2025, sec. U.S. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*.
- ²³⁰ Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1, interview by Conner Huey, January 18, 2025.
- ²³¹ Ibid.
- ²³² Ibid.
- ²³³ Katznelson, *Fear Itself*.
- ²³⁴ Rosenfeld, *What Unions No Longer Do*.
- ²³⁵ Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*.
- ²³⁶ “Union Members - 2024” (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 28, 2025). 12.
- ²³⁷ Hirsch, Barry T., David A. Macpherson, and William E. Even (2024). Union Membership, Coverage, and Earnings from the CPS. <https://unionstats.com>
- ²³⁸ Ibid.
- ²³⁹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*. 120 – 124.
- ²⁴⁰ Shelton Police Department, “Police Assist Timber Bowl,” Letter, December 9, 1984, 03-SW-154, Washington State Archives. 1. Stewart H. Holbrook, *Green Commonwealth: A Narrative of the Past and a Look at the Future of One Forest Products Community* (Dogwood Press, 1945). Robert Spector, *Family Trees: Simpson’s Centennial Story* (Bellevue, WA: Documentary Book Publishers Corporation, 1990). Berwyn Thomas, *Shelton Washington: The First Century, 1885 - 1985*, Second (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1987).
- ²⁴¹ Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1. “Mason County Fair Premium List: ‘The Fair for Fun in ‘81!’ August 21-23, 1981” (Mason County Fair Association, August 1981), 04-SW-013, Washington State Archives. “Mason County Fair Board By Laws - 1984” (Mason County Fair Association, 1984), 04-SW-013, Washington State Archives. 1.
- ²⁴² Roger Snider, Brian Barnes, and Aaron Goings, *The Red Coast: Radicalism and Anti-Radicalism in Southwest Washington* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2019). Geraldine Carroll and Michael Moe, “Timber Worker: Aberdeen and Seattle, 1935-1942,” Labor Press Project: Pacific Northwest Labor and Radical Newspapers (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2001), <https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/laborpress/TimberWorker.htm>. Matthew S. Carroll and Robert G. Lee, “Occupational Community and Identity Among Pacific Northwestern Loggers: Implications for Adapting to Economic Changes,” in *Community And Forestry* (Routledge, 1990). 150 – 151. Emblematic of this fierce loyalty to the Democratic Party on the Olympic Peninsula, liberal activists and unionized timber workers who were actively employed in the 1970s and 1980s explained that it was not an uncommon sight to see images of President Franklin Roosevelt hung in the living rooms of union households. Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1. Blake, Interview with Brian Blake, Former Unionized Logger and Washington State Representative from the 19th Legislative District, 2002 - 2021.
- ²⁴³ Source: author photograph of image from the Mason County Historical Society Museum. “Photograph: Simpson Clown Participating in Shelton, WA Parade” (Mason County Historical Society Museum, Circa 1960s), Mason County Historical Society Museum.
- ²⁴⁴ Joyce Jaros, “Letter to Reid Mitchell,” Letter, December 10, 1982, 03-SW-154, Washington State Archives. Simpson Logging Company, “Letter to Simpson Logging Company Employees,” March 1, 1984, 03-SW-154, Washington State Archives. 1 – 2.
- ²⁴⁵ Indicative of the prominence that the spotted owl played in public debates between environmentalists, loggers, and policymakers regarding environmental stewardship efforts, as well as the timing of the Olympic Peninsula’s timber crisis peaking in the late 1980s to early 1990s, the frequency of the term “spotted owl” as measured by newspapers.com peaked during this period. See Appendix E for a visualization of the frequency in which “spotted owl” was mentioned in newspapers over time.
- ²⁴⁶ Ted Gup, “Owl vs. Man: Who Gives A Hoot?,” *Time Magazine*, June 25, 1990.
- ²⁴⁷ For examples of this scholarly debate, articles advancing the argument that the protection of the spotted owl had limited effects on timber employment include Annabel R. Kirschner, “Understanding Poverty and Unemployment

on the Olympic Peninsula after the Spotted Owl,” *The Social Science Journal* 47, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 344–58. William R. Freudenburg, Lisa J. Wilson, and Daniel J. O’Leary, “Forty Years of Spotted Owls? A Longitudinal Analysis of Logging Industry Job Losses,” *Sociological Perspectives* 41, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 1–26. For contrasting perspectives, see Ann E. Ferris and Eyal G. Frank, “Labor Market Impacts of Land Protection: The Northern Spotted Owl,” *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 109 (September 1, 2021). Luke Petach, “The Timber Wars: The Endangered Species Act, the Northwest Forest Plan, and the Political Economy of Timber Management in the Pacific Northwest,” *Public Choice* 198, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 209–26.

²⁴⁸ Patty Vaughn, “We Must Fight Attack on Timber Industry,” *Peninsula Daily News*, November 14, 1988, sec. Letters to the Editor. A7.

²⁴⁹ Caroline Sudderth, “Class Assignment Reflection,” 1991, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. Further indicative of how the timber crisis engaged entire communities, emblazoned on the front of Sudderth’s binder containing these newspaper articles is cloth artwork of a tree, an owl, and a sign carried by many loggers in protests on the Olympic Peninsula during the late 1980s and early 1990s: “This Family Supported By Timber Dollars.” For other examples of loggers on the Olympic Peninsula assigning blame to the spotted owl and environmentalists, see *Edward Leroy “Bud” Bishop: Logger and Custom Farmer of Chimacum Valley*, vol. 42, Jefferson County Historical Society Oral History Project (Port Townsend, Washington: Jefferson County Historical Society, 1992). 165 – 168. *Horace John “Jack” Carroll: Can-Do Man of Ferries and Real Estate*, vol. 47, Jefferson County Historical Society Oral History Project (Port Townsend, Washington: Jefferson County Historical Society, 1995). 249 – 250, 267.

²⁵⁰ Doug Barker, “Protest Blocks Highway for 90 Minutes,” *The Daily World*, April 29, 1990, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. *Seattle Audubon Soc’y v. Robertson*, 914 F.2d 1311 (9th Cir. 1990)

²⁵¹ Barker, “Protest Blocks Highway for 90 Minutes.” The Daily World Staff, “Timber Troubles Top Grays Harbor Story,” *The Daily World*, January 1, 1991, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. The rally on Highway 101 was such a notable event that it became the *Daily World’s* 1990 story of the year.

²⁵² “Dead Spotted Owl Is Found Nailed to Threatening Note,” *The Associated Press*, 1990, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. “Second Spotted Owl Found Nailed to a Sign,” *Longview Daily News*, February 8, 1991. 27. Barker, “Protest Blocks Highway for 90 Minutes.”

²⁵³ “Law Barring Timber Suits Struck Down but Issue Now Appears Mostly Moot,” *The Olympian*, September 19, 1990, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. “Loggers Press Their Case as Endangered,” *The Associated Press*, November 2, 1990, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum. Leila Kysar, “A Logger’s Lament,” *Newsweek*, October 22, 1990, 2023.054.0001, Polson Museum.

²⁵⁴ For an example of this long tradition of class solidarity among unionized loggers, one former logger reflected “that’s the point of a union. You... you must stick together. If you don’t you’re going to hang separately you know... I think the unions have done more good for America than any... than any other thing.” Verne Montoure and Terri Nelson, Grays Harbor Millworkers Oral History Project - “I’m Only a Worker,” June 1, 1987, SW282-10-0-18, Washington State Archives. 166, 172.

²⁵⁵ Bob Baugh, “Shutdown: Mill Closures & Woodworkers” (International Woodworkers of America, Circa Late 1980s), 82-12-1188, Washington State Archives. 42. Dr. Robert G. Lee, Testimony in U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Resources, Task Force on Endangered Species, *Monitoring the Effects of Federal Timber Harvest Reductions on Individuals, Families, and Communities in the Spotted Owl Region*, Hearing, 103rd Congress., 1st sess., April 24, 1995 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995). 135 - 141.

²⁵⁶ Conway, *The Forest Products Economic Impact Survey: Current Conditions and Issues*. 6. Quoted in Derek Kilmer, “Recovering from the Addiction: The Social and Economic Impacts of the Pacific Northwest Timber Crisis” (Senior Thesis, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University, 1996), Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library. 44.

²⁵⁷ “Labor Force (LAUS) | Employment Security Department,” accessed November 9, 2024, <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/labor-force-and-unemployment/labor-force-laus>. For a visualization of the employment trends in these counties, see in Appendix F “Employment and Payrolls in Washington State by County and Industry, 1986 – 1993” (Employment Security, Circa 1994). Quoted in Kilmer, “Recovering from the Addiction: The Social and Economic Impacts of the Pacific Northwest Timber Crisis.” 158.

²⁵⁸ “Distressed Areas List | Employment Security Department,” accessed November 9, 2024, <https://esd.wa.gov/jobs-and-training/labor-market-information/labor-force-and-unemployment/distressed-areas-list>. 2005 was the first year the Distressed Areas List was established. Additionally, according to the 2023 American Community Survey, while in 2023, the national median personal income was \$77,719, across rural Western Washington, residents have largely been earning less than this national median: In 2023, median personal income in Mason County was \$74,508; \$71,143 in Jefferson County; \$67,221 in Grays Harbor County; and \$65,990 in Clallam County.

²⁵⁹ Hughes, Interview with Longtime *The Daily World* Reporter (1966 - 2008) and Chief Historian for Washington's Secretary of State. Kilmer, "Recovering from the Addiction: The Social and Economic Impacts of the Pacific Northwest Timber Crisis." 53 – 54. Likewise, as Kilmer found in his examination of the timber crisis on the Olympic Peninsula, "In Clallam County, there was minimum population growth within the younger age brackets" while in Grays Harbor County, "the four year period between 1989 and 1993 saw an increase of only 4 teen-agers and a 300 person decline in the 20- to 24-years-old age bracket. Similar declines were seen in older twentysomethings and thirtysomethings."

²⁶⁰ Anonymous, Interview with Former IWA Union Representative, interview by Conner Huey, January 19, 2025. Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1.

²⁶¹ 2020 *Union, Belfair, Hoodspart & Shelton* (Union, WA: Hood Canal Communications, 2020); *Bainbridge Island, April 1989/1990*, The White and Yellow Pages (Aurora, CO: US West Direct, 1989); *Bainbridge Island, June 2011*, Official Directory (Dex One, 2010); *Bremerton, 1970-71* (Olympia, WA: Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, 1970); *Bremerton, 1980-81* (Olympia, WA: Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, 1980); *Central and North Kitsap, August 1991* (United Telephone Company of the Northwest, 1991); *Central and North Kitsap, August 2000*, The Best Red Yellow Pages (Sprint, 2000); *Central and North Kitsap, August 2010*, Official Directory (Dex One, 2010); *Grays Harbor Area "The Red Book," 2022 - 2023 Telephone Directory* (Woodinville, WA: Vernon Publications, LLC, 2022); *Grays Harbor County, May 1990/1991*, The White and Yellow Pages (Aurora, CO: US West Direct, 1990); *Johnson's September 1981 City Directory for Shelton Washington*, Johnson's City Directory Yellow Pages (Johnson Publishing Company Inc, 1981); *Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 1990/1991*, The White and Yellow Pages (Aurora, CO: US West Direct, 1990); *Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 2000/2001*, The White and Yellow Pages (Englewood, CO: US West Dex, Inc, 2000); *Kitsap Peninsula*, Official Directory (Englewood, CO: Dex One, 2010); *Montesano* (CenturyTel, Inc, 2011); *Montesano: The Directory* (Telephone Utilities of Washington, 1990); *Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1970*, Polk's City Directory (Monterey Park, California: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1970); *Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1981*, Polk's City Directory (Kansas City, Missouri: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1981); *Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1990*, Polk's City Directory (Kansas City, Missouri: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1990); *Polk's Aberdeen City Directory 2000*, Polk's City Directory (RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1990); *Polk's Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1970*, Polk's City Directory (Monterey Park, California: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1970); *Polk's Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1980*, Polk's City Directory (Kansas City, Missouri: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1980); *Polk's Bremerton City Directory 1990*, Polk's City Directory (RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1990); *Polk's Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1970*, Polk's City Directory (Monterey Park, California: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1970); *Polk's Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1980*, Polk's City Directory (Kansas City, Missouri: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1980); *Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 1990*, Polk's City Directory (Kansas City, Missouri: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1990); *Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 1999*, Polk's City Directory (RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1999); *Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 2010*, Polk's City Directories (RL Polk & Co Publishers, 2010); *Polk's Shelton (Mason County, Washington) City Directory 1969*, Polk's City Directory (Monterey Park, California: RL Polk & Co Publishers, 1969); *Port Townsend Port Ludlow*, Official Directory (Englewood, CO: Dex One, 2010); *Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory* (Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, 1970); *Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory* (Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, 1982); *Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 1989/1990*, The White and Yellow Pages (Aurora, CO: US West Direct, 1989); *Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 2000*, The White and Yellow Pages (Englewood, CO: US West Dex, Inc, 1999); *Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity* (Poulsbo Rural Telephone Association, 1971); *Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity* (United Telephone Company of the Northwest, 1982); *Quilcene The Phone Book* (United Telephone Company of the Northwest, 1978); *Quilcene, January 1991* (United Telephone Company of the Northwest, 1991); *Quilcene, January 2000* (Sprint Publishing, 2000); *Quilcene, January 2010* (Dex One, 2010); *Shelton, 1970 - 1971* (Olympia, WA: Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company, 1970); *Shelton, September 2000*, The White and Yellow Pages (Englewood, CO: US West Dex, Inc, 1999); *Shelton, Washington City Directory, June 1990*, Johnson Directories (Loveland, CO: Johnson Publishing Company Inc, 1990); *Union, 1992* (Everett, WA: Hood Canal Telephone Company, Inc, 1992); *Union, July 2010* (Union, WA: Hood Canal Communications, 2010).

²⁶² Editorial Board, "Foley Misses the Point on Owl Cutbacks," *Peninsula Daily News*, May 8, 1990. 7.

²⁶³ Robert G. Lee, *Broken Trust, Broken Land: Freeing Ourselves from the War Over the Environment* (BookPartners, 1994). 155. William Dietrich, *The Final Forest: Big Trees, Forks, and the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011). 66.

²⁶⁴ “Gardner Frees \$9.4 Million for Hard-Hit Timber Towns,” *The News Tribune*, October 11, 1990. 19. “Program to Help Displaced Loggers,” *Longview Daily News*, December 21, 1990. 11.

²⁶⁵ Hughes, Interview with Longtime *The Daily World* Reporter (1966 - 2008) and Chief Historian for Washington’s Secretary of State. Kilmer, “Recovering from the Addiction: The Social and Economic Impacts of the Pacific Northwest Timber Crisis.” 59 – 128. William Clinton, “Remarks at the Conclusion of the Forest Conference in Portland” (Government Publishing Office, April 2, 1993). 387 – 389. E. Thomas Tuchmann et al., *The Northwest Forest Plan: A Report to the President and Congress*, ed. Martha H. Brookes (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Forestry and Economic Assistance, 1996).

²⁶⁶ Chiggers Stokes, *Between Forks and Alpha Centauri* (Flying S Press, 2006).

²⁶⁷ Ibid. 169.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 170.

²⁶⁹ Jim Vleming, “Clallam County Profile,” County Profile (Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, May 2022). Vleming, “Grays Harbor County Profile.” “Northwest Forest Plan Amendment - Economic Opportunities and Sustainable Communities” (Circa 2007: United States Forest Service, n.d.), “Northwest Forest Plan Amendment - Economic Opportunities and Sustainable Communities” (United States Forest Service, Circa 2007). Thomas A Spies et al., “Twenty-Five Years of the Northwest Forest Plan: What Have We Learned?,” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 17, no. 9 (2019): 511–20.

²⁷⁰ Dietrich, *The Final Forest*. 258. For an example of another logger echoing these sentiments, see Horace John “Jack” Carroll: *Can-Do Man of Ferries and Real Estate*. 250. For research speaking to how the dangerous and free-spirited nature of logging contributed to traditional cultural sentiments of masculinity among loggers, see Erik Loomis, “Masculinity, Work, and the Industrial Forest in the US Pacific Northwest,” *RCC Perspectives*, no. 4 (2017): 37–44. Erik Loomis, *Empire of Timber: Labor Unions and the Pacific Northwest Forests* (Cambridge University Press, 2016). 78 – 79.

²⁷¹ Ibid. Describing why he enjoyed the profession of being a logger, Larry Mason shared “‘I liked the independence of it.’” For other loggers attesting to the free-spirited nature of logging, see William Broderson, William Broderson Oral History, interview by Anne Murphy, May 20, 1997, Jefferson County Historical Society. 65 – 66. Walter Fuhrman, Walter Fuhrman Oral History, November 15, 2014, Jefferson County Historical Society. 6, 13 – 14. Indicative of the dangerous nature of logging and how community life revolved around the timber industry, a memorial book has been published and regularly updated honoring loggers who have lost their lives during logging accidents. Forks Loggers Memorial Committee, *2015 Loggers Memorial: A Continued Tribute to Timber Industry Workers* (Forks, WA: Olympic Graphic Arts, Inc, 2015).

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ This abandonment of union solidarity occurred in other parts of the Pacific Northwest that were affected by the collapse of the timber industry during the 1980s and 1990s. For an examination of this phenomenon taking place in Oregon, see Steven C. Beda, “‘Tie a Yellow Ribbon for the Working Man’: Environmental Conflict and Working-Class Politics in Oregon Timber Country, 1970–Present,” *Labor* 20, no. 1 (February 1, 2023): 85–111. Likewise, in Western Pennsylvania, following closures of steel mills, former unionized steelworkers similarly eschewed labor solidarity in favor of finding employment. Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*. 111 – 116.

²⁷⁴ 2020 Union, Belfair, Hoodport & Shelton; Bainbridge Island, April 1989/1990; Bainbridge Island, June 2011; Bremerton, 1970-71; Bremerton, 1980-81; Central and North Kitsap, August 1991; Central and North Kitsap, August 2000; Central and North Kitsap, August 2010; Grays Harbor Area “The Red Book,” 2022 - 2023 Telephone Directory; Grays Harbor County, May 1990/1991; Johnson’s September 1981 City Directory for Shelton Washington; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 1990/1991; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 2000/2001; Kitsap Peninsula; Montesano; Montesano: The Directory; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1981; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1990; Polk’s Aberdeen City Directory 2000; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Bremerton City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1999; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 2010; Polk’s Shelton (Mason County, Washington) City Directory 1969; Port Townsend Port Ludlow; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1970; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1982; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 1989/1990; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 2000; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1971; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1982; Quilcene The Phone Book; Quilcene, January 1991; Quilcene, January 2000; Quilcene, January 2010;

Shelton, 1970 - 1971; Shelton, September 2000; Shelton, Washington City Directory, June 1990; Union, 1992; Union, July 2010.

²⁷⁵ Vleming, "Clallam County Profile." Vleming, "Mason County Profile." Jim Vleming, "Jefferson County Profile," County Profile (Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, May 2022).

²⁷⁶ Jessica Crowe, "The Twilight of Forks?: The Effect of Social Infrastructure on Film Tourism and Community Development in Forks, WA," *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 28, no. 1 (April 30, 2013). Dietrich, *The Final Forest*. 314 – 315, 318.

²⁷⁷ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2007). 1. Indeed, the terms "logger," "logging," or "timber" do not appear at all throughout the first *Twilight* novel.

²⁷⁸ Harriet Alexander, "Twilight Town Pleads for End to Decades of 'Vampire Tourism,'" *The Times*, July 15, 2024. Kate Yoder, "The 'Twilight' Romance No One Talks About," *Grist*, August 25, 2021. For discussions of this frustration, see interviews of Sean Norbistrath, Marin Gaydeski, Charlene Leppell, and Marcia Bingham in *Twilight in Forks: The Saga of the Real Town*, Documentary (Heckelsville Media, 2009).

²⁷⁹ Dietrich, *The Final Forest*. 320.

²⁸⁰ Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*. 5 – 6.

²⁸¹ Anonymous, Interview with Former IWA Union Representative.

²⁸² Anonymous, Interview with Olympic Central Labor Council Leader, interview by Conner Huey, January 21, 2025. Further speaking to the fact that white working-class voters on the Olympic Peninsula have not fully abandoned the Democratic Party, election outcomes have increased in recent years in Grays Harbor, Mason, Clallam, and Jefferson Counties.

²⁸³ Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1.

²⁸⁴ "Official Souvenir Program: 24th Annual Mare Island - Puget Sound Basketball Series," March 1956, Kitsap History Museum.

²⁸⁵ Kitsap County Historical Society Book Committee, *Kitsap County: A History*. 3.

²⁸⁶ B Quinlan, "Navy Is Needed," *Bremerton Sun*, November 1, 1979. 44. Lloyd Pritchett, "Cantwell Sees Puget Sound Bases Safe from Closure," *The Sun*, September 9, 1994. 12.

²⁸⁷ Charles III, "Letter to Senator Warren Magnuson from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Charles III," Letter, November 24, 1971, 262/164, University of Washington Special Collections.

²⁸⁸ Ferguson, "Dicks Zeroes On Committee Seat." 1. Dicks, Interview with Former U.S. Representative (WA-06).

²⁸⁹ Susan Miller, "Dicks Has 'Cautious Optimism' on Funding," *Bremerton Sun*, March 25, 1977. 2. Steve Landau, "Subcommittee Hears Dicks Support PSNS Water Pit," *Bremerton Sun*, February 28, 1980. 5.

²⁹⁰ Michael Urquhart and Marillyn Hewson, "Unemployment Continued to Rise in 1982 as Recession Deepened," Monthly Labor Review (Washington DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 1983). Sylvia Nogaki, "Unemployment: Stiff Competition Over Every Job," *Bremerton Sun*, November 4, 1982. 25. Although identified as an economically depressed region only a decade prior, Kitsap County largely avoided the worst of the nationwide recession that occurred during the first term of Ronald Reagan's presidency, with community members attributing this prosperity "due to the military installations [in Kitsap County], which [were] catching a windfall from the Reagan administration's defense spending."

²⁹¹ Adele Ferguson, "IAM President Says Labor Can Beat Reagan," *Bremerton Sun*, October 22, 1984, 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. 2.

²⁹² Jeff Weathersby, "Labor Leader Lashes Reagan," *Bremerton Sun*, October 21, 1982. 3. Adele Ferguson, "'Stormin' Norman's a Marathon Talker," *Bremerton Sun*, October 30, 1984. 32. A week after Winpisinger's visit to Bremerton, Dicks was invited to attend a "big labor dinner for 'Wimpy' Winpisinger" in which he was described as being "in his element there, surrounded by a lot of friends in labor."

²⁹³ Adele Ferguson, "Craswell Scores Zero in Labor's Evaluation," *Bremerton Sun*, August 9, 1983. 4.

²⁹⁴ "Mitchell, Huff Are Endorsed," *Bremerton Sun*, August 16, 1984, sec. Political Briefs. 6. It is important to note that not all Democrats conducted outreach to unions such as Local 282. In particular, Democratic legislative candidate Tom Triggs in the same 1984 race did not seek an audience with Local 282; Triggs did not receive an endorsement, speaking to the importance of outreach by candidates in building relationships with local organizations in rural Western Washington such as unions.

²⁹⁵ "A Survey of Voter Attitudes in the Sixth Congressional District of Washington" (Washington DC: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc, November 1979), Accession No. 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. 14. "1982 Dicks Campaign Survey." T8.

²⁹⁶ The five BRAC rounds occurred during these years: 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005.

²⁹⁷ Lloyd Pritchett, "Naval Base Group Told Lean Years Ahead for PSNS," *The Sun*, May 8, 1985. 1.

²⁹⁸ Lloyd Pritchett, "Dicks Promises to Fight Future Cuts at Shipyard," *The Sun*, May 25, 1985. 1.

- ²⁹⁹ Lloyd Pritchett, "Delays in Everett Will Force Nimitz to Stay Here Longer," *The Sun*, October 3, 1986. 1.
- ³⁰⁰ Mann, "Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC): Background and Issues for Congress." 40. Kitsap County's communal fears about the closure of Naval Base Kitsap was a realistic prospect given the closure of the nearby Puget Sound Naval Station in Seattle, WA in 1991.
- ³⁰¹ Brad Bannon and Anne Peverada Danehy, "Survey of Voters in Sixth Congressional District" (Bannon Research, January 8, 1992), 5823-001 Box 82, University of Washington Special Collections. 11.
- ³⁰² Keith Phillips, "Look Out for Us, Rep. Dicks," *The Sun*, March 7, 1993, Defense Budget edition. 27.
- ³⁰³ Representative Dicks, speaking on H.R. 2401, on August 4, 1993, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 139, pt. 13: 18779.
- ³⁰⁴ Norman Dicks, "Letter to Chairwoman Patricia Schroeder from U.S. Representative Norm Dicks," Letter, April 15, 1992, 5823-001 Box 27, University of Washington Special Collections. Further demonstrating his commitment to the material concerns of white working-class constituents of rural Western Washington, in a letter to Patricia Schroeder, Chair of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, Dicks wrote that "Quality of life for Naval personnel stationed at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard is my top priority concern, especially housing deficiencies for single personnel and Navy families." Mann, "Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC): Background and Issues for Congress." 40. During the 1993 round of BRAC, no bases in Washington State were closed or merged.
- ³⁰⁵ Lloyd Pritchett, "Cuts Benefit Puget Sound," *The Sun*, March 1, 1995, sec. Base Closings. 1. Lloyd Pritchett, "Jobs Lost, Some Gained at Keyport," *The Sun*, February 28, 1995, sec. Base Closings. 1.
- ³⁰⁶ Lloyd Pritchett, "Impact of Navy Hard to Miss," *The Sun*, March 28, 1995. 1.
- ³⁰⁷ Eric Williams, "Shipyard Jobs Mean Improved Kitsap Outlook," *The Sun*, May 14, 2005. 1. Eric Williams, "Area Naval Installations Fare Well in the List of Recommended Cuts," *The Sun*, May 14, 2005. 1. Chris Barron, "Kitsap Bases Get Big Money," *Kitsap Sun*, May 27, 2005. 1.
- ³⁰⁸ Rachel Pritchett, "Remembering When Kitsap Mall Was the Region's Retail Crown Jewel," *Kitsap Sun*, August 27, 2021.
- ³⁰⁹ Max Kvidera, "Silverdale Mall Project Faces Hurdles," *Bremerton Sun*, December 17, 1977. 1.
- ³¹⁰ Figure 5 source: photo sourced from "Silverdale, WA - Kitsap Mall," Rhino Investments Group, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://rhinoinvestmentsgroup.com/kitsapmall>.
- ³¹¹ See generally Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*.
- ³¹² Figure 6 source: photograph taken by author.
- ³¹³ 2020 Union, Belfair, Hoodspout & Shelton; Bainbridge Island, April 1989/1990; Bainbridge Island, June 2011; Bremerton, 1970-71; Bremerton, 1980-81; Central and North Kitsap, August 1991; Central and North Kitsap, August 2000; Central and North Kitsap, August 2010; Grays Harbor Area "The Red Book," 2022 - 2023 Telephone Directory; Grays Harbor County, May 1990/1991; Johnson's September 1981 City Directory for Shelton Washington; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 1990/1991; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 2000/2001; Kitsap Peninsula; Montesano; Montesano: The Directory; Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1981; Polk's Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1990; Polk's Aberdeen City Directory 2000; Polk's Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk's Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk's Bremerton City Directory 1990; Polk's Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk's Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 1990; Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 1999; Polk's Port Angeles City Directory 2010; Polk's Shelton (Mason County, Washington) City Directory 1969; Port Townsend Port Ludlow; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1970; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1982; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 1989/1990; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 2000; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1971; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1982; Quilcene The Phone Book; Quilcene, January 1991; Quilcene, January 2000; Quilcene, January 2010; Shelton, 1970 - 1971; Shelton, September 2000; Shelton, Washington City Directory, June 1990; Union, 1992; Union, July 2010.
- ³¹⁴ Interview with President of Bremerton Metal Trades Council and Unionized Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker, interview by Conner Huey, January 8, 2025. Interview with Teamsters Local Union No. 589 Leader, interview by Conner Huey, January 9, 2025.
- ³¹⁵ Interview with President of Bremerton Metal Trades Council and Unionized Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker.
- ³¹⁶ Interview with Teamsters Local Union No. 589 Leader.

³¹⁷ Interview with President of Bremerton Metal Trades Council and Unionized Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker. Interview with Teamsters Local Union No. 589 Leader. John F. Camobreco and Michelle A. Barnello, “The Changing Face of Unions and White Labor Support for the Democratic Party,” *The Forum* 13, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 209–22.

³¹⁸ “State House Passes Worker Protection Act – Washington State House Democrats,” *Washington State House Democrats* (blog), March 5, 2021.

³¹⁹ Interview with President of Bremerton Metal Trades Council and Unionized Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker.

³²⁰ *2020 Union, Belfair, Hoodspoint & Shelton; Bainbridge Island, April 1989/1990; Bainbridge Island, June 2011; Bremerton, 1970-71; Bremerton, 1980-81; Central and North Kitsap, August 1991; Central and North Kitsap, August 2000; Central and North Kitsap, August 2010; Grays Harbor Area “The Red Book,” 2022 - 2023 Telephone Directory; Grays Harbor County, May 1990/1991; Johnson’s September 1981 City Directory for Shelton Washington; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 1990/1991; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 2000/2001; Kitsap Peninsula; Montesano; Montesano: The Directory; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1981; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1990; Polk’s Aberdeen City Directory 2000; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Bremerton City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1999; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 2010; Polk’s Shelton (Mason County, Washington) City Directory 1969; Port Townsend Port Ludlow; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1970; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1982; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 1989/1990; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 2000; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1971; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1982; Quilcene The Phone Book; Quilcene, January 1991; Quilcene, January 2000; Quilcene, January 2010; Shelton, 1970 - 1971; Shelton, September 2000; Shelton, Washington City Directory, June 1990; Union, 1992; Union, July 2010.*

³²¹ Today, majority of interviews with Democratic Party leaders in rural Western Washington have substantiated that outreach and collaboration with unions on advocacy for shared issues of interests have declined in recent years

³²² Interview with President of Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council, interview by Conner Huey, January 6, 2025.

³²³ Speaking to these counties’ competitiveness for the Democratic Party, Democrats consistently winning down-ballot races and recently won the 2024 presidential election in Clallam County, and Democrats have been overperforming electorally in Mason and Grays Harbor Counties

³²⁴ Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*. 141 – 145. Matthew J. Lacombe, *Firepower: How the NRA Turned Gun Owners into a Political Force* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

³²⁵ “Affiliated Clubs, Ranges and Businesses,” National Rifle Association, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://explore.nra.org/programs/clubs/find-clubs/>.

³²⁶ Ibid. 141.

³²⁷ “Affiliated Clubs, Ranges and Businesses,” National Rifle Association, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://explore.nra.org/programs/clubs/find-clubs/>. *2020 Union, Belfair, Hoodspoint & Shelton; Bainbridge Island, April 1989/1990; Bainbridge Island, June 2011; Bremerton, 1970-71; Bremerton, 1980-81; Central and North Kitsap, August 1991; Central and North Kitsap, August 2000; Central and North Kitsap, August 2010; Grays Harbor Area “The Red Book,” 2022 - 2023 Telephone Directory; Grays Harbor County, May 1990/1991; Johnson’s September 1981 City Directory for Shelton Washington; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 1990/1991; Kitsap County Including Northern Mason County, July 2000/2001; Kitsap Peninsula; Montesano; Montesano: The Directory; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1981; Polk’s Aberdeen and Hoquiam (Grays Harbor County, Washington) City Directory 1990; Polk’s Aberdeen City Directory 2000; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Bremerton (Kitsap County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Bremerton City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1970; Polk’s Port Angeles (Clallam County, Washington) City Directory 1980; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1990; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 1999; Polk’s Port Angeles City Directory 2010; Polk’s Shelton (Mason County, Washington) City Directory 1969; Port Townsend Port Ludlow; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1970; Port Townsend Port Ludlow Telephone Directory, 1982; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 1989/1990; Port Townsend Port Ludlow, December 2000; Poulsbo Suquamish*

and Vicinity, 1971; Poulsbo Suquamish and Vicinity, 1982; *Quilcene The Phone Book*; *Quilcene, January 1991*; *Quilcene, January 2000*; *Quilcene, January 2010*; *Shelton, 1970 - 1971*; *Shelton, September 2000*; *Shelton, Washington City Directory, June 1990*; *Union, 1992*; *Union, July 2010*.

³²⁸ Penelope Muse Abernathy, “News Deserts and Ghost Newspapers: Will Local News Survive?” (North Carolina: UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media, 2020). Such mechanisms behind the role of local newspapers preserving community interconnectedness have been clarified in scholarship of journalism in other regions. See Kristy Hess, “Making Connections: ‘Mediated’ Social Capital and the Small-Town Press,” *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 4 (July 4, 2015): 482–96. Ian Richards, “Beyond City Limits: Regional Journalism and Social Capital,” *Journalism* 14, no. 5 (July 1, 2013): 627–42.

³²⁹ See Appendix G for a list of local newspapers in rural Western Washington that exist in 2024.

³³⁰ Erik Nelson, “Media Rules,” *Peninsula Daily News*, May 30, 2003, sec. Peninsula Voices. A7.

³³¹ Michael Zoorob and Theda Skocpol, “The Overlooked Organizational Basis of Trump’s 2016 Victory,” in *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). 80 – 85. Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*. 147.

³³² Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, “Order,” in *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2020). 124 – 126.

³³³ Reem Nadeem, “Party Identification Among Religious Groups and Religiously Unaffiliated Voters,” Changing Partisan Coalitions in a Politically Divided Nation (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, April 9, 2024). Peter Smith, “White Evangelical Voters Show Steadfast Support for Donald Trump’s Presidency,” *The Associated Press*, November 7, 2024.

³³⁴ “Megachurches by State - Hartford Institute,” *Hartford Institute for Religion Research* (blog), April 6, 2023, <https://hirr.hartfordinternational.edu/research/megachurch-database/megachurches-by-state/>. Newman and Skocpol, *Rust Belt Union Blues*. 146.

³³⁵ “County Maps,” The Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed February 9, 2025, <https://www.thearda.com/us-religion/maps/us-county-maps?st=WA>.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ “2023 PRRI Census of American Religion: County-Level Data on Religious Identity and Diversity | PRRI,” *PRRI | At the Intersection of Religion, Values, and Public Life*. (blog), August 29, 2024. Additionally, a 2013 Gallup survey results found that Kitsap County was the seventh least religious area in the country. Steve Gardner, “Survey Finds Kitsap the Seventh Least Religious Area in the Nation,” *Kitsap Sun*, April 13, 2013. While this data may appear to lend credibility to arguments asserting the importance of demographics in shaping political outcomes, it is important to note that other rural white working-class counties in Washington State have demonstrated similar trends of limited religiosity while remaining decidedly conservative. For instance, only 19.7 percent of Kittitas County and 21.1 percent of Asotin County’s populations are white evangelical Christians, while 35.1 percent of Kittitas County and 30.7 percent of Asotin County’s populations possess no religious affiliation.

³³⁸ “2023 PRRI Census of American Religion: County-Level Data on Religious Identity and Diversity | PRRI,” *PRRI | At the Intersection of Religion, Values, and Public Life*. (blog), August 29, 2024.

³³⁹ Steve Gardner, “Tibbs to Continue County GOP Leadership,” *Kitsap Daily News*, December 2, 2014. Christina Henry, “Tibbs Sets Sights on Gorst Solutions,” *Kitsap Sun*, October 15, 2016, sec. Elections.

³⁴⁰ “Demos Set Picnic on August 28,” *Bremerton Sun*, July 9, 1977. 4. “Democratic Club Meets,” *Forks Forum-Peninsula Herald*, December 23, 1976. 8. “Democrat Club,” *The Daily News*, December 19, 1976. 27.

³⁴¹ “Mason County Fair Premium List: ‘The Fair for Fun in ‘81!’ August 21-23, 1981.” “50 Demos at Dinner - And 2 Republicans,” *The Daily News*, September 7, 1986. A8. “GOP Asked to Demo Dinner,” *The Daily News*, September 5, 1986. A1.

³⁴² “Demos Move to Heal Split,” *The Daily News*, February 13, 1978. 1. Interview with Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #3 (1981 - 1984) and Party Leader (Early 1970s to Present), interview by Conner Huey, January 3, 2025.

³⁴³ “Democrat Club,” *The Daily News*, November 23, 1976. 8. “Democrats Elect New Officers,” January 16, 1991. A11. “Democrats Pass Resolutions, Elect Officers,” *Forks Forum-Peninsula Herald*, January 16, 1991. 10. “Kitsap’s Demos Keep All Officers,” *Bremerton Sun*, January 4, 1977. 2. To view old Democratic Party boards utilizing archived versions of local party websites, see “Kitsap Democratic Party Websites,” Kitsap Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000/http://kitsapdemocrats.com/>. “Clallam County Democratic Party,” Clallam County Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000/http://clallamdemocrats.org/>. “Jefferson County Democratic Party,” Jefferson County Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025,

https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://jeffcodems.org/. “Mason County Democratic Party,” Mason County Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://masoncountydemocrats.com/. “Mason County Democrats,” Mason County Democratic Central Committee, accessed February 15, 2025, <http://masoncountywademocrats.org/>. “Grays Harbor Democratic Party,” Grays Harbor Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://graysharbordemocrats.org/. “Grays Harbor Democratic Party,” Grays Harbor Democratic Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://ghdemocrats.org/. Interview with Former Jefferson County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Longtime Party Leader. Interview with Former 23rd Legislative Democratic Party Chair #2 and State Committeewoman, interview by Conner Huey, January 10, 2025. While these tools have now been superseded by more robust databases provided by the national Democratic Party, such as VoteBuilder or NGP, such efforts by local Democratic Party activists on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas provided local Democratic Parties an advantage over Republican Party counterparts in organizing, given the ability for the former to strategically target voters for outreach while the latter had not yet developed their own databases for targeted voter outreach.

³⁴⁴ I collected this information party leadership by examining the websites of each county Republican Party. For instance, while the Kitsap County Republicans have multiple committees and have generally been successful in filling all positions of their party leadership, other county Republican Parties throughout rural Western Washington besides Kitsap have possessed fewer committees and have often been unable to fill all positions in their county party leadership.

³⁴⁵ To view old Republican Party boards utilizing archived versions of local party websites, see “Kitsap County Republican Party,” Kitsap County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://kitsaprepublicans.com/. “Kitsap County Republican Party,” Kitsap County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://kitsaprepublicans.org/. “Mason County Republican Party,” Mason County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://masoncountyrepublicans.org/. “Mason County Republican Party,” Mason County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://masoncountyrepublicans.com/. “Grays Harbor County Republican Party,” Grays Harbor County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://graysharborgop.org/. “Grays Harbor County Republican Party,” Grays Harbor County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://ghgop.net/. “Grays Harbor County Republican Party,” Grays Harbor County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://ghgop.org/. “Clallam County Republican Party,” Clallam County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://clallamrepublicans.org/. “Jefferson County Republican Party,” Jefferson County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://jeffgop.org/. “Jefferson County Republican Party,” Jefferson County Republican Party, accessed February 15, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20250000000000*/http://jeffco-gop.org/. Interview with Clallam County Republican Party Chair #1. Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair.

³⁴⁶ “Fisch Tactic Loses Support,” *The Daily News*, December 5, 1977. 1. “Caucus Locations,” *The Daily News*, March 11, 1984. C4. “Locations for West Sound Caucuses,” *The Sun*, February 27, 1992. A3. Indicative of the Democratic Party’s strong PCO program, external political observers have praised Washington State Democrats as a whole for their strong PCO program: comparing the Washington State Democratic Party’s precinct organizing efforts compared to other states he observed during his work, a former CEO of ProgressNow and former executive director for Howard Dean’s Democracy for America, noted that Washington State Democrats have maintained one of the strongest neighborhood organizing operations due to direction and support from state party leadership who prioritized these grassroots efforts. Interview with Former ProgressNow CEO #2, interview by Conner Huey, January 8, 2025.

³⁴⁷ “Become a Precinct Committee Officer (PCO),” *Washington State Democratic Party* (blog), accessed February 22, 2025, <https://wadems.org/pco/>.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Tea Party activist #1 and Former Kitsap GOP Leader.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair. I collected this information on office spaces by examining the websites of each county Republican Party. For the Clallam County Republicans, I traced their ownership of an

office space to at least 2003 utilizing the Wayback Machine. Interview with Clallam County Republican Party Chair #1.

³⁵⁰ While the percentage of precincts filled by PCOs does not perfectly encompass the strength of grassroots organizing by local parties, given that PCOs can and often do spearhead organizing efforts in multiple precincts, a higher percentage of precincts represented by PCOs allows parties to have more direct engagement with neighborhoods in their communities, helping to promote grassroots engagement.

³⁵¹ It is important to acknowledge the possibility of reverse causality existing here, specifically that perhaps that because there are more Republicans in Mason County, there are now more PCOs given a potentially larger pool of volunteers. Ultimately, this situation appears to bear resemblance to a chicken and egg situation, and the mechanism outlining that increased PCOs have led to increased Republican performance appears more plausible than vice versa given that it is difficult to find plausible that increased Republican strength developed on its own.

³⁵² John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). Kenneth Janda, *The Republican Evolution: From Governing Party to Antigovernment Party, 1860-2020* (Columbia University Press, 2022). Daniel J. Hopkins, Eric Schickler, and David L. Azizi, "From Many Divides, One? The Polarization and Nationalization of American State Party Platforms, 1918-2017," *Studies in American Political Development* 36, no. 1 (April 2022): 1-20. Kirsten Walters and Theda Skocpol, "Immigration Clashes, Party Polarization, and Republican Radicalization: Tracking Shifts in State and National Party Platforms since 1980," *Studies in American Political Development* 38, no. 1 (April 2024): 1-15. At the national level as seen through works of John Gerring and Kenneth Janda, and more recently at the state level, with Daniel Hopkins, Eric Schickler, and David Azizi developing a publicly available database of state-level party platforms, party platforms have become an increasingly important toolkit for political scientists.

³⁵³ To access county party platforms from archived websites, see "Clallam County Democratic Party"; "Clallam County Republican Party"; "Grays Harbor County Republican Party"; "Grays Harbor County Republican Party"; "Grays Harbor County Republican Party"; "Grays Harbor Democratic Party"; "Grays Harbor Democratic Party"; "Jefferson County Democratic Party"; "Jefferson County Republican Party"; "Jefferson County Republican Party"; "Kitsap County Republican Party"; "Kitsap County Republican Party"; "Kitsap Democratic Party Websites"; "Mason County Democratic Party"; "Mason County Republican Party"; "Mason County Republican Party" using the WayBack Machine.

³⁵⁴ With this situation continuing into the 1990s, Dean Nielsen, a co-founder of the Institute for a Democratic Future and Young Democrats of Washington President, noted that this general lack of support existed "because there was less money there was less people working in politics," resulting in "The state democratic party at the time [being] only four people... It just wasn't the level of money and staff and involvement and so everyone was just trying to do more with less." Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder. While the number of staff members working at the Washington State Democratic Party was six according to an archived page from its website, Nielsen's remarks speak to the perceived limited capacity the state party could provide for county Democratic Parties. "The Washington State Democratic Party," Washington State Democratic Party, November 19, 1996, https://web.archive.org/web/19961119023307/http://wa-democrats.org/who/who.html#staff_addresses.

³⁵⁵ Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder.

³⁵⁶ "County Democrats Open Headquarters," *The Sequim Gazette*, March 29, 2000. B-14. "Democrats Open House," *The Sun*, September 10, 1992, sec. Local Briefs. B3. "Democrats Open Office," *The Sun*, July 15, 2004. 3. Searches of terms for "headquarters" or "office" in newspapers.com reveals limited evidence of sustained party office space for county Democratic Parties in rural Western Washington, with articles more frequently noting openings of headquarters during presidential election years.

³⁵⁷ "Washington State Democrats - About the Staff," Washington State Democratic Party, October 29, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081029230716/http://www.wa-democrats.org/index.php?page=display&id=321>.

³⁵⁸ "Campaign," *Peninsula Daily News*, October 8, 1996, sec. Briefly From the Peninsula. A2. "Coordinated Campaign Field Office Locations," Washington State Democratic Party, September 2, 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20040902233101/http://www.wa-democrats.org/site/COORD2.htm>. "Washington State Democrats - Join the Campaign," Washington State Democratic Party, November 12, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081112235413/http://www.wa-democrats.org/index.php?page=display&id=352>. "Office Locations," Washington State Democratic Party, September 21, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120921220654/http://www.wa-democrats.org/victory2012>.

³⁵⁹ Interview with House Democratic Campaign Committee Executive Director.

³⁶⁰ Blake, Interview with Brian Blake, Former Unionized Logger and Washington State Representative from the 19th Legislative District, 2002 - 2021.

³⁶¹ Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair. Interview with Clallam County Republican Party Chair #1. Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1. Kirby Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair. The extent of support party officials have generally noted was financial support and only distributed to counties with competitive elections. Like the Democratic Party, while the Kitsap and Clallam Republican Parties maintain physical offices, the Jefferson, Grays Harbor, and Mason Republican Parties have not maintained offices, instead relying on P.O. box addresses to receive physical correspondence and local churches to provide meeting space for members. Even among these county Republican Parties that maintain an office space, the Kitsap County Republicans have frequently shifted their office location, and for multiple decades did not possess a permanent office, instead only renting out a trailer or a small space within Kitsap County a few months before general elections to serve as an office space before closing the space after the election. Only the Clallam County Republican Party has maintained a consistent office space, which has been in use since at least 2003 according to their web page, a resource which has been helpful to Clallam County Republicans in organizing efforts by providing a space for centralized voter outreach operations and social gatherings.

³⁶² Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Mary Bendyna and Clyde Wilcox, "The Christian Right Old and New: A Comparison of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition," in *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). 42 – 43. Daniel K. Williams, "Moral Majority," in *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford University Press, 2010). 178 – 179.

³⁶⁵ Jeffrey Hadden et al., "Why Jerry Falwell Killed the Moral Majority," in *The God Pumpers: Religion in the Electronic Age*, ed. Marshall William Fishwick and Ray Broadus Browne (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987). 106, 110. Bendyna and Wilcox, "The Christian Right Old and New: A Comparison of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition." 43. Further contributing to the Washington State Moral Majority's status as the nation's most active chapter, the chapter's executive director, Mike Farris, a future CEO and General Counsel to the Alliance Defending Freedom, proved to be an energetic organizer for Washington's Moral Majority. Jim Camden, "Michael Farris Fought His Early Legal Battles in Spokane," *The Spokesman-Review*, August 31, 2023.

³⁶⁶ "Moral Majority Claims Its Share Of The Victory," *Bremerton Sun*, November 6, 1980. 11. For an example of this activism at a county level, see David Kern, "Clark County Chapter's Survey Upsets a Few People," *The Columbian*, September 12, 1980. 23. Granted, the Moral Majority's legislative successes were sparse, passing only a few minor bills out of the multiple they supported, such as those to ban drug paraphernalia. "Moral Majority Vows to Return with Legislation," *The Columbian*, April 30, 1981. 20.

³⁶⁷ "Moral Majority Here Changes Its Stripes," *The Olympian*, September 7, 1982. 1. The Moral Majority/Bill of Rights Legal Foundation disbanded in 1990. Its tax-exempt status was revoked by the IRS for excessive political activity and was banned from refiling under a different tax status. An organization known as the Council for Responsible Government was founded to succeed the Bill of Rights Legal Foundation, but limited evidence exists suggesting that the organization superseded others, such as the Christian Coalition, in their prominence in Washington's Christian right network. Matt Nagle, "IRS Shuts Down 'Moral Majority,'" *Seattle Gay News*, March 2, 1990. Prior to the Moral Majority in Washington State's collapse, the movement saw a period of expansion following the Washington State Moral Majority's rebranding as the Bill of Rights Legal Foundation to broaden its political agenda. Bendyna and Wilcox, "The Christian Right Old and New: A Comparison of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition." 47, 49. Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, "The Christian Right in the 1990s," *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research* 4, no. 3 (April 1993). 2. Interestingly, the leader of the Washington State Christian Coalition, David Welch, originated from Grays Harbor County. Jerry Large, "Christian Coalition Leader On A Roll -- David Welch Made His Group A Player In Gop Resurgence," *The Seattle Times*, November 22, 1994.

³⁶⁸ Bendyna and Wilcox, "The Christian Right Old and New: A Comparison of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition." 48 – 52. Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). Xv. Although they shared a similar objective of providing Christian conservatives with a collective body to advance their political interests, Falwell and Robertson were notable rivals within the Christian right given their theological disagreements within evangelical Christianity between fundamentalist and charismatic Christians.

³⁶⁹ Large, "Christian Coalition Leader On A Roll -- David Welch Made His Group A Player In Gop Resurgence." Bob Partlow, "Welch Holds Back on Chairman Race," *The Olympian*, December 12, 1996. 24.

³⁷⁰ However, when the Christian right and the Republican Party were able to find cohesion, conservatives gained substantial ground in electing conservative. Coinciding with the large degree of conservative unity that emerged as a result of Newt Gingrich's successful Contract with America, conservative success in 1994 in Washington State

developed in part due to the Christian Coalition and the Republican Party developing a unified moderate party platform, enabling conservatives to appeal more effectively to a broader array of Washington voters. In rural Western Washington, the effect of this unity was especially pronounced; while Norm Dicks was not defeated during the 1994 election, becoming one of only two Democrats to win a congressional election in Washington State, he received his lowest vote share out of all of his campaigns. “GOP Unified in Mild Platform,” *The Sun*, June 26, 1994. 10. Susan Gilmore, “Pat Robertson’s 1988 ‘Army’: From Rebels To GOP Mainstream,” *The Seattle Times*, April 13, 1992. The costly effects that this intra-network conflict had on conservatives in their ability to present a unified message to voters and elect their own to office is especially evident in the case of Ellen Craswell, with her divisiveness within conservative organizational networks weakening support for conservatives as previously established. Timothy Egan, “Battle in Washington Brings Soul-Searching,” *The New York Times*, October 22, 1996, sec. U.S.

³⁷¹ Barbara Miller, “Moral Majority Gets Mixed Reviews Locally,” *Bremerton Sun*, October 25, 1980. 6.

³⁷² Ken Lund, “No Monopoly on Morality,” *The Sun*, November 19, 1996. 11.

³⁷³ Gina Binole, “Forum Makes Some Candidates Uneasy,” *The Sun*, June 1, 1996. 7.

³⁷⁴ “Christian Coalition Loses Fight for Tax-Exempt Status,” *The Olympian*, June 11, 1999. 3.

³⁷⁵ “PUBLIC SQUARE MINISTRY - Family Policy Institute of Washington,” November 18, 2023. Notably weakening the FPIW’s influence in Washington State politics, this policy lobbying guide initiative only began recently for the 2024 election. The 501(c)4 counterpart of the FPIW is the Family Policy Institute of Washington Action, and the political action committee counterpart is the Family Policy Institute of Washington PAC.

³⁷⁶ “Family Policy Institute of Washington,” August 6, 2022. David Neiwert, “Washington Anti-LGBT Seminars Begin Organizing For Another ‘Bathroom Bill’ Initiative,” *Southern Poverty Law Center* (blog), April 25, 2017. In its early years, the Discovery Institute was a moderate think tank that focused on Washington State-specific issues, but became much more explicitly oriented to the Christian right following Chapman’s adoption of the concept of intelligent design in 1994, as well as becoming more nationally oriented beginning in the 1990s following a commitment to a “Wedge Strategy” that sought “the overthrow of materialism and its damning cultural legacies.” Roger Downey, “Discovery’s Creation,” *Seattle Weekly*, February 1, 2006. Phillip Johnson, “The Wedge,” Discovery Institute, January 24, 1999. “What Is the Center for Renewal of Science & Culture?,” May 14, 1997.

³⁷⁷ It is important to note that the Discovery Institute has and continues to maintain a broad policy focus, with topics ranging from national defense to free market economics by operating multiple subsidiary research centers focusing on these topics. An example of the Discovery Institute’s long-standing broad focus on a variety of public policy topics includes former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney’s visit to Washington State in 1992, in which the Discovery Institute hosted a luncheon for Cheney to discuss contemporary topics in defense policy. Mark Sauter, “It Would Be ‘a Big Mistake’ to Send U.S. Troops to Bosnia,” *The News Tribune*, August 15, 1992. 12. The Discovery Institute’s current programmatic focuses are: Science and Culture; Wealth and Poverty; Technology; Artificial Intelligence; Citizen Leadership; Transforming Education; and Human Exceptionalism.

³⁷⁸ Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2.

Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1, October 18, 2024. Of course, it is fair to note that the Koch brothers have focused primarily on advancing fiscally conservative policies rather than engaging in controversial social issue debates, making this lack of collaboration with the Christian right understandable. Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez, “The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism.” 689. However, in other states where the Koch Networks have helped conservatives to achieve greater power, such as North Carolina, economic and social conservatives have collaborated in much greater frequency. 57 – 58. However, in recent years, the Discovery Institute has sought greater collaboration with other conservative organizations in Washington State. For more information, see relevant sections in Chapter four to see how Discovery Institute has become increasingly connected with a more coordinated conservative organizational network of Washington State through Project 42.

³⁷⁹ “Family Policy Institute of Washington.” “Issues - Family Policy Institute of Washington,” August 6, 2022.

Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2, October 22, 2024.

³⁸⁰ It is important to note that the Family Policy Institute of Washington has been connected to the Koch network through funding. However, as we will see briefly, this shared funding stream with other conservative organizations in Washington State has not necessarily translated into a collaborative working relationship. Sheldon Whitehouse, “A Flood of Judicial Lobbying: Amicus Influence and Funding Transparency,” *The Yale Law Journal Forum* 131 (October 24, 2021). 148.

³⁸¹ Interview with Olympic Central Labor Council Leader.

³⁸² For a comparison of elite state organizational capacities on the left and right, see Appendix H.

³⁸³ “About,” Progress Alliance of Washington, accessed February 24, 2025, <https://washingtonprogress.org/about>.

³⁸⁴ “About.” Current grantmaking list provided over email by staffers. For an earlier list of investments, see “Investments,” Progress Alliance of Washington, October 4, 2011,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20111004091100/http://washingtonprogress.org/investments.htm>.

³⁸⁵ Interview with Deputy Director of Fuse Washington, interview by Conner Huey, January 9, 2025. Interview with Founding Washington State Budget and Policy Center Executive Director #1, interview by Conner Huey, January 9, 2025. Interview with Executive Director of the Washington State Budget and Policy Center #2, interview by Conner Huey, January 17, 2025. While a systematic list of organizational overlap is unavailable, a quick review of professional online platforms such as LinkedIn reveals substantial overlap between senior leadership and boards of directors across Progress Alliance of Washington-supported organizations.

³⁸⁶ “Grantmaking,” Progress Alliance of Washington, accessed January 9, 2025,

<https://washingtonprogress.org/grantmaking>. Interview with Executive Director of the Washington State Budget and Policy Center #2.

³⁸⁷ Interview with Former Chair of the Washington State Republican Party, interview by Conner Huey, January 3, 2025. Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair.

³⁸⁸ Walter Hatch, “Why Conservative Think Tanks Thrive in Liberal WA,” *Crosscut*, December 20, 2018.

³⁸⁹ “About Us,” Washington State Budget and Policy Center, accessed December 24, 2024,

<https://budgetandpolicy.org/about-us/>.

³⁹⁰ “Resources & Tools - Page 27 of 31,” Washington State Budget and Policy Center, accessed December 24, 2024,

<https://budgetandpolicy.org/resources-tools/>.

³⁹¹ “Schmudget Blog,” Washington State Budget and Policy Center, accessed December 24, 2024,

<https://budgetandpolicy.org/schmudget/>. These blog posts have also filled an important role in setting the cadence of political discussions in Washington State. As described by the executive director of the WSPBC, a substantial portion of the Schmudget Blog’s influences stems from its short-form content which enables rapid publication of multiple posts per month compared to less frequently published research reports, and the fact that these blog posts have been strategically timed to coincide with breaking political developments to generate discussion on these topics among the public while also helping readers to gain familiarity with progressive positions on these subjects.

Interview with Executive Director of the Washington State Budget and Policy Center #2.

³⁹² Former Chair of the 23rd Legislative District Democratic Party #1, interview by Conner Huey, January 10, 2025.

³⁹³ Steve Tharinger, Interview with 24th Legislative District State Representative, interview by Conner Huey, December 30, 2024. Dean Takko, Interview with Former 19th Legislative District State Legislator, 2004 - 2021, interview by Conner Huey, January 3, 2025. Conversations with state legislators for the region such as Tharinger and Dean Takko have affirmed the usefulness of these think tanks’ work in policymaking and campaigning, while leaders from the Democratic Party noted that briefings have been passed around members to provide greater familiarity with policy developments to assist with canvassing. Complementing these policy research reports and blog posts, other communication activities the WSBPC leverages to communicate their research to the general public and activists include outreach to media outlets to disseminate their research through efforts such as publishing op-eds and editorials in media outlets, as well as publishing a policy podcast in the case of the WSBPC. However, while these practices have played important roles in these organizations’ communications portfolios, especially with shaping politics in other parts of the state due to frequent publication in local newspapers statewide, these practices have remained less consequential for shaping politics in rural Western Washington, given that a review of the EOI and WSBPC’s websites indicate that both organizations have not received press coverage or op-ed publications in rural Western Washington news outlets in recent years. Furthermore, WSBPC’s the podcast produced was only active from January to April of 2023. With a lack of locally focused communications efforts in rural Western Washington, these organizations’ research reports and blog posts hosted on their websites remain the primary means by which activists in the region benefit from their research. “WA Possible | Washington State Budget and Policy Center,” PodBean, accessed December 9, 2024, <https://wapossible.podbean.com/>. “In the Media,” Budget and Policy Center, accessed December 24, 2024, <https://budgetandpolicy.org/in-the-media/>.

³⁹⁴ To find IRS 990 forms detailing financial information on these organizations, see “Washington Policy Center - Nonprofit Explorer,” ProPublica, accessed February 9, 2025,

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/911752769>.

“Washington State Budget And Policy Center - Nonprofit Explorer,” ProPublica, accessed February 9, 2025,

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/721612982>. Hatch, “Why Conservative Think Tanks Thrive in Liberal WA.” This financial strain at times has generated turmoil for these organizations. While the WSBPC has never been in danger of becoming insolvent, other liberal think tanks (albeit not within the Progress Alliance of Washington network) have experienced this threat. For instance, following an expensive campaign in 2003 in which the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) supported an unpopular “latte tax” on espressos sold in Washington State

to fund childcare, the EOI nearly went bankrupt and ultimately laid off most of its staff, leaving only three remaining staffers from a then-peak of 17 employees. Kathy Mulady, “Institute That Backed Latte Tax Is Struggling,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 17, 2003, sec. News.

³⁹⁵ Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez, “How the Right Trounced Liberals in the States.” Hertel-Fernandez, Skocpol, and Sclar, “When Political Mega-Donors Join Forces.”

³⁹⁶ Financial data sourced from IRS 990 forms available through “Washington Policy Center - Nonprofit Explorer”; “Washington State Budget And Policy Center - Nonprofit Explorer.”

³⁹⁷ Anonymous, Interview with Former Unionized Logger #1. Interview with President of Bremerton Metal Trades Council and Unionized Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Worker.

³⁹⁸ “Washington Policy Center,” Washington Policy Center, accessed January 13, 2025,

<https://www.washingtonpolicy.org>. The organizational history of the Washington Policy Center has been complex. Initially, an organization called the “Washington Institute for Policy Studies” (WIPS) was established in the mid-1980s. WIPS established a new organization called the “Washington Institute Foundation” (WIF) in 1997 before the WIF replaced WIPS in 1998. In 2001, WIF was renamed as the Washington Policy Center. Given that the Washington Policy Center in its current form was established in 1997, with the shift from the WIF to the WPC only being a name change, I use 1997 as the establishment year. “Washington Policy Center,” *DeSmog* (blog), accessed February 9, 2025, <https://www.desmog.com/washington-policy-center-background-and-history/>.

³⁹⁹ Interview with Former Washington Policy Center President, interview by Conner Huey, November 8, 2024.

“2001 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Washington Policy Center,” Form 990 (Washington Policy Center, 2001). “2023 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Washington Policy Center,” Form 990 (Washington Policy Center, 2023).

⁴⁰⁰ “About Us,” Washington Policy Center, October 17, 2001.

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1. Further indicative of the WPC’s connections to the SPN and ALEC, the WPC jointly hosted a technology policy event with the SPN and ALEC in 2021. “WPC/SPN/ALEC Tech Policy Event,” Washington Policy Center, n.d. “BACKGROUND: The Washington Policy Center’s Extreme Right-Wing Agenda” (Accountable NW, April 2019). “Washington Policy Center.”

⁴⁰² Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1. Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2, October 22, 2024. Interview with Former Washington Policy Center President. “Have a WPC Expert Speak at Your Event!,” Washington Policy Center, accessed February 9, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/about/mission>.

⁴⁰³ Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2. “Policy Guide for Washington State 7th Edition,” Policy Guide for Washington State (Seattle, WA: Washington Policy Center, January 24, 2024).

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Former Washington Policy Center President. Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2. Interview with Washington Policy Center Vice President for Research #1.

⁴⁰⁵ Wilson, Interview with 19th Legislative District State Senator. Interview with Kitsap County Republican Party Chair. Interview with Clallam County Republican Party Chair #1. Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Deputy Director of Fuse Washington. Interview with Founder of ProgressNow, interview by Conner Huey, December 20, 2024. Interview with Former ProgressNow CEO. Interview with House Democratic Campaign Committee Executive Director. Fuse Washington was founded as an early affiliate of ProgressNow, a national network of progressive communications organizations initially founded in Colorado in 2003 with the purposely broad mission of “moving progressive issues and agendas forward.” In Colorado and other states in which ProgressNow affiliates have been established, including Washington State, ProgressNow affiliates were initially established to address a lack of communications infrastructure state progressive organizational networks to enable them to, as Michael Huttner put it, “go on the offensive.” “About ProgressNow – ProgressNow,” ProgressNow, accessed January 9, 2025, <https://progressnow.org/about/>. Schrager and Witwer, *The Blueprint*.

⁴⁰⁷ “Our Services – The Communications Hub,” The Communications Hub, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://www.communicationshub.org/our-services/>. Interview with Founder of ProgressNow.

⁴⁰⁸ “About Us | Fuse Washington,” Fuse Washington, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://fusewashington.org/about-fuse>.

⁴⁰⁹ Additionally, Fuse Washington has been noted in multiple interviews with national ProgressNow leaders of the most prominent affiliates of the national ProgressNow network. Interview with Founder of ProgressNow. Interview with Former ProgressNow CEO.

⁴¹⁰ “Behind the Scenes of the Progressive Voters Guide | Fuse Washington,” *Fuse Washington* (blog), August 2, 2018, <https://www.fusewashington.org/news/blog/behind-scenes-progressive-voters-guide>. “About the Progressive Voters Guide,” Progressive Voters Guide, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://www.progressivevotersguide.com/washington/about>.

⁴¹¹ “Behind the Scenes of the Progressive Voters Guide | Fuse Washington.” Former Chair of the 23rd Legislative District Democratic Party #1. Interview with Former Kitsap County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Local Political Consultant. Interview with Former Jefferson County Democratic Party Chair #1 and Longtime Party Leader. Indicative of its success, since 2008, Fuse Washington’s Progressive Voters Guide has expanded beyond Washington State, with Fuse Washington first helping to establish a Progressive Voters Guide with Progress Virginia, the Virginia affiliate of the ProgressNow network, in 2019. Currently, Progressive Voters Guides have been established for thirteen states, providing voters from across the country with information on candidates across all levels of government. “Comeback Victories Across Washington,” *Fuse Washington* (blog), November 12, 2019, <https://fusewashington.org/news/blog/comeback-victories-across-washington>. “Progressive Voters Guide,” Progressive Voters Guide, accessed February 21, 2025, <https://progressivevotersguide.com/>. Additionally, a map of the Progressive Voters Guide’s users during the 2016 election shows that voters from across rural Western Washington utilized the guide. See Appendix I for this map.

⁴¹² Interview with Deputy Director of Fuse Washington. “Get Involved,” Defend Washington, accessed January 16, 2025, <https://defend-washington.com/get-involved>. It is important to note that while Fuse Washington will often convene liberal coalitions for policy issues of interest, Fuse Washington infrequently organizes in-person events as part of its organizational activities, particularly in rural Western Washington. In a review of all 284 events hosted by the organization since 2013 that were posted on its Facebook page, only two events were directly hosted in rural Western Washington, both in Kitsap County: a public hearing on clean transportation in Bremerton and a state budget workshop in Port Orchard. “State Budget Workshop | Facebook,” Event, *Facebook*, April 8, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/events/405719809820869/>. “Public Hearing for Clean Transportation | Facebook,” Event, *Facebook*, February 4, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/events/1243285432726163/>. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Fuse Washington has largely shifted towards online events such as remote phone banking in lieu of in-person events. It is important to note that while Fuse Washington has not hosted an event in the form of a rally or canvassing effort in rural Western Washington, interviews with Democratic Party leaders in the region have indicated that staffers from the organization have visited local liberal organizations to provide them with information and research. Interview with Political and Strategic Campaigns Director for the Washington State Labor Council, interview by Conner Huey, January 16, 2025.

⁴¹³ A review of the Fuse Washington and the Fuse Innovation Fund’s IRS 990 documents available on ProPublica reveals both organizations being incorporated the same year. “Fuse Washington - Nonprofit Explorer,” ProPublica, accessed November 9, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/260573960>. “Fuse Innovation Fund - Nonprofit Explorer,” ProPublica, accessed November 9, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/870800705>. “Fuse Innovation,” Fuse Innovation, accessed February 13, 2025, <https://www.fuseinnovation.org/>. Certainly, the 501(c)4 arm of the organization has gained more prominence in Washington State progressive politics, but the Fuse Innovation Fund, Fuse Washington’s 501(c)3 arm, also supports important behind-the-scenes communications support and training for the liberal think tanks of Washington State and local grassroots activists.

⁴¹⁴ Indicative of this limited role that the Washington State AFP played in conservative politics in Washington State, when asked about any connections between their organizations and the Washington State AFP chapter, many of the leaders within the conservative organizational networks that I interviewed expressed doubt that an AFP chapter for Washington State even existed. Their confusion was not a result of a lack of knowledge of the organization itself; universally, they indicated a familiarity with the organization at a national level, but most shared that they did not believe a chapter for Washington State ever existed.

⁴¹⁵ In one example of the Koch brothers’ involvement in Washington State politics, the CSE mobilized support for Initiative 553 to establish term limits on elected officials in Washington State. Les Blumenthal, “3 Executives Quit Panel Over Ties to Term-Limit Drive,” *The News Tribune*, October 25, 1991. 15.

⁴¹⁶ Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair. Nansen Malin, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. Both Wilbur and Malin noted that while the national AFP would pay their salaries, they were expected to fundraise on their own to sustain the operations and activities of the Washington State AFP. Steven Mairella, “Employer’s Lobbying Expenses - Americans for Prosperity” (Public Disclosure Commission, January 6, 2024), <https://web.pdc.wa.gov/rptimg/default.aspx?docid=3685644>. In 2013, AFP only paid Malin \$12,501.

⁴¹⁸ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). “Discovery Newsletter.” In this Koch Industries letter to employees living in Washington State, the newsletter noted that AFP collaborated with local Tea Parties in Washington State.

⁴¹⁹ “AFP Launches Washington State Chapter,” Americans for Prosperity, March 5, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100308070727/http://www.americansforprosperity.org/030510-afp-launches-washington-state-chapter>.

⁴²⁰ Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair. The pamphlet efforts themselves also proved largely unsuccessful as only three out of the seven candidates the AFP supported during the 2010 elections won.

⁴²¹ For a more in-depth examination of this relationship between the AFP and Tea Party movement nationally, see Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. See also Leah E. Gose, Theda Skocpol, and Vanessa Williamson, “Saving America Once Again, from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance,” in *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo (Oxford University Press, 2020). 193 – 197.

⁴²² Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, “Mobilized Grassroots and Roving Billionaires: The Panoply of Tea Party Organizations,” in *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2012). 90. Theda Skocpol, “Late 2010s Tea Parties by Washington State 112th Congress Districts,” n.d.

⁴²³ Devin Burghart, “The Status of the Tea Party Movement: State Rankings ★ IREHR,” *IREHR* (blog), January 25, 2014. Burghart found that the Washington State Tea Party movement possessed a statewide membership of at least 11,728 and 21 local chapters.

⁴²⁴ I sourced these additional 20 local tea parties in Washington State by utilizing archived versions of the “Tea Party 911” website and the teapartypatriots.ning.com website. “Tea Party 911,” n.d., <https://teaparty911.com/lander>. “Tea Party Patriots | Official Home of the American Tea Party Movement.” <https://teapartypatriots.ning.com/>. Of course, simply counting local Tea Party organizations does not perfectly measure Tea Party activity, given that it does not take into account if organizations regularly hosted meetings or the number of members that participated in these local organizations. Additionally, this additional search for Tea Parties may underestimate the number of local Tea Party organizations given that not all organizations may have online presences. Nonetheless, identifying where local Tea Parties existed helps to understand the geographic spread of the Tea Party movement in local communities throughout Washington State.

⁴²⁵ *Figure 12* source: created by author using mapchart.net

⁴²⁶ “Puget Sound Patriots,” Puget Sound Patriots, accessed November 12, 2024, <https://kitsap-patriots.com/>.

⁴²⁷ Tony Perkins, “PDC Case No: 12-149,” PDC Case (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, March 14, 2012). Andrea McNamara Doyle, “PDC Case: 11-019,” PDC Case (Olympia, WA: Public Disclosure Commission of the State of Washington, February 8, 2012). Malin, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair. Contributing to this pamphleting effort being discontinued was multiple complaints to the Public Disclosure Commission alleging that the AFP violated campaign finance laws. Explaining this decision to cease pamphleting operations, Malin cited a desire to avoid embroiling the organization in future legal troubles.

⁴²⁸ Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair.

⁴²⁹ For an example of this symbiotic relationship occurring in other states to facilitate increased political power, see Tervo, “Why Republicans Went Hard Right in North Carolina.”

⁴³⁰ Malin, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair.

⁴³¹ “Institute for a Democratic Future,” Institute for a Democratic Future, accessed January 13, 2025, <https://democraticfuture.org/>. Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director. Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder.

⁴³² Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder. As IDF co-founder Dean Nielsen put it: “We were not trying to be a candidate school in a way, but let people find their own path.”

⁴³³ Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director. Likewise, Nielsen shared “There’s a whole network of folks, labor leaders, that went through IDF at one point and another; and became connected to each other; and found jobs; and made relationships with each other; and dated people with each other; and married each other.” Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder.

⁴³⁴ Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024.

⁴³⁵ Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director.

⁴³⁶ Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024.

⁴³⁷ Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director.

⁴³⁸ “The Institute for a Democratic Future,” The Institute for a Democratic Future, November 27, 1999, <https://web.archive.org/web/19991127105200/https://democraticfuture.org/>.

⁴³⁹ Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director. This I-5 corridor refers to the progressive King County and its surrounding areas.

⁴⁴⁰ Gomez, Interview with Institute for a Democratic Future Executive Director. Van De Wege, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Legislator, 2007 - 2024. Nielsen, Interview with Political Consultant and Institute for a Democratic Future Co-Founder. The roster of IDF alumni is kept closely guarded by staff, but multiple names consistently emerge as notable participants in the program who have proceeded to hold elected office: U.S. Representative for rural Western Washington, Derek Kilmer, was identified multiple times as an alumnus of the program; former State Senator for the 24th Legislative District, Kevin Van De Wege, was in the same IDF class as Kilmer; current State Representative for the 24th Legislative District, Adam Bernbaum; and current State Representative for the 26th Legislative District are among this sampling of IDF alumni from rural Western Washington. Prior to being elected to serve as State Representative, Bernbaum worked as a legislative aide to Van De Wege, a position that he was introduced to, in part, through his time participating in the IDF. Beyond rural Western Washington, other leaders such as former Lieutenant Governor of Washington, Cyrus Habib, were named as participants in the IDF. Additionally, interviews with senior IDF leadership have indicated that multiple candidates and current office holders within the state legislature, city councils, and county councils throughout rural Western Washington have been alumni of the IDF since its inception.

⁴⁴¹ Estelita Walker, “Buck vs Van De Wege,” *Peninsula Daily News*, September 3, 2004. 8.

⁴⁴² Buck, Interview with Former 24th Legislative District State Representative.

⁴⁴³ Jacob Metcalf, “A Right-Wing Surreal Attack,” *Kitsap Sun*, April 12, 2006, sec. Letters to the Editor. A10.

⁴⁴⁴ Jordan Schrader, “Summer School for Conservative Candidates,” *The Olympian*, June 22, 2010, sec. Local.

⁴⁴⁵ “The JDLI Mission,” Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute, July 17, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140717141523/http://jdli.org/mission.php>.

⁴⁴⁶ “Programs,” Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute, September 23, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130923200721/http://jdli.org/programs.php>.

⁴⁴⁷ House Republican Organizational Committee, “We Had a Great Group of Candidates Participating in the Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute This Past Week!,” *Facebook*, May 14, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/hrocdotus/posts/pfbid02LnSWnEmazmpJ6KRKU4ReV4fYEvq7ATiZVbqM3TZDjdepkJWrfFedRFmCHkL5M293l?rldid=IXnx0BTjdpTqU7JQ>. “Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute,” Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute, February 25, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240225022016/https://jdli.org/>.

⁴⁴⁸ “News,” Jennifer Dunn Leadership Institute, July 1, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140701070457/http://jdli.org/news.php>.

⁴⁴⁹ For examples of the victories Washington State’s liberal organizational network has achieved and the organizations that have been involved in these coalitions, see Marilyn Watkins, “The Road to Winning Paid Family and Medical Leave in Washington,” *Economic Opportunity Institute* (blog), November 11, 2017, <https://www.opportunityinstitute.org/research/post/the-road-to-winning-paid-family-and-medical-leave-in-washington/>. Gabriela Quintana and Tracy Yeung, “Washington Future Fund Gains Grassroots Momentum,” *Economic Opportunity Institute* (blog), February 7, 2024, <https://www.opportunityinstitute.org/blog/post/washington-future-fund-baby-bonds-support/>. “Our Successes,” Economic Opportunity Institute, accessed February 11, 2025, <https://www.opportunityinstitute.org/about-us/our-successes/>.

⁴⁵⁰ “Initiative & Referenda Handbook - 2024” (Olympia, WA: Washington State Secretary of State, 2024). 3 – 4. For initiatives, the Washington electorate can “initiate” legislation by placing a proposition directly on a ballot to be voted on by members of the electorate, and for referenda, the electorate can bring acts of the Legislature to the ballot for voters to express their support or disapproval of legislation before a legislative vote occurs. With the initiative process being more powerful than the referenda process, given that successful initiative votes directly become state law, Washington State has experienced more petitions for initiatives to the people in contrast to a comparatively smaller number of referenda. It is important to note that this 2,124 figure comes from the fact that during the 2024 election, the highest number initiative presented on the ballot was number 2,124. It is possible that there have been more than 2,124 petitions have been filed with the Washington State Secretary of State; however, the Secretary of State’s website has not been updated with the filings of all initiative petitions filed in 2024.

⁴⁵¹ “Initiative & Referenda Handbook - 2024.” 10. To provide a sense of scale for understanding the difficulty of getting an initiative or referendum petition on the ballot, initiative petitions require a number of signatures that equal to at least 8 percent of all the votes cast for the office of Governor in the previous gubernatorial election, and referenda petitions require the equivalent of 4 percent. For initiatives and referenda on the ballot in 2024, this would

mean that initiatives would require at least 324,516 signatures to make it onto the ballot and referenda would require at least 162,258 signatures, although the Washington Secretary of State's office suggests that those attempting the process should secure an additional 15 to 20 percent of signatures given the likelihood that signatures will be found invalid. "Frequently Asked Questions about Circulating Initiative and Referendum Petitions - Elections & Voting - WA Secretary of State."

⁴⁵² The Washington State Secretary of State's Office administers a website which contains information on nearly every initiative that has been filed throughout Washington State history, save for approximately a hundred in 2024 due to the website not being updated.

⁴⁵³ To source the vote counts for each ballot initiative to the people, I utilized a list compiled by the Washington Secretary of State's office detailing almost all filed initiatives (save for 2024) since 1914. "Initiatives to the People," Washington Secretary of State, n.d., https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/initiatives/statistics_initiatives.aspx. For a breakdown of the ballot initiatives by topic, see Appendix J.

⁴⁵⁴ *Washington v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1*, 458 U.S. 457, 102 S.Ct. 3187, 73 L.Ed.2d 896 (1982); Dean Katz and Constantine Angelos, "State Anti-busing Initiative 350 Ruled Unconstitutional," *The Seattle Times*, June 30, 1982, p. A-1.

⁴⁵⁵ The sole county that opposed the initiative was Jefferson County.

⁴⁵⁶ Tomas Alex Tizon, "Taking the Initiative Too Far?," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 2003, sec. Politics. Scott Smith and Tim Eyman, "Initiative 200," March 26, 1997. His first initiative was Initiative 200, which banned affirmative action in Washington State.

⁴⁵⁷ Taylor Larson, "Batting Two-for-Eleven: Tim Eyman's Initiatives and the Washington Supreme Court," *University of Washington Law Digital Commons*, Washington State Constitution History, December 2022. 6. From these nine initiatives, only a few provisions from each remain intact. Among these initiatives include Eyman's efforts to reduce motor vehicle excise taxes, leading to a "20 year tug-of-war" over the issue of "\$30 car tabs" which had become a perennial issue during this period as voters and the Washington State Supreme Court engaged in a cycle of voters approving Eyman's car tab initiatives and the Washington State Supreme Court ruling them unconstitutional in response. Austin Jenkins, "Is the Seventh Time the Charm? Tim Eyman's Back with Another Proposed \$30 Car Tabs Initiative," *Northwest News Network*, November 15, 2018, sec. Government and Politics.

⁴⁵⁸ Taylor Larson, "Batting Two-for-Eleven: Tim Eyman's Initiatives and the Washington Supreme Court," *University of Washington Law Digital Commons*, Washington State Constitution History, December 2022. 6. From these nine initiatives, only a few provisions from each remain intact. Among these initiatives include Eyman's efforts to reduce motor vehicle excise taxes, leading to a "20 year tug-of-war" over the issue of "\$30 car tabs" which had become a perennial issue during this period as voters and the Washington State Supreme Court engaged in a cycle of voters approving Eyman's car tab initiatives and the Washington State Supreme Court ruling them unconstitutional in response. Austin Jenkins, "Is the Seventh Time the Charm? Tim Eyman's Back with Another Proposed \$30 Car Tabs Initiative," *Northwest News Network*, November 15, 2018, sec. Government and Politics. Interview with Former Washington Policy Center President. Interview with Washington Policy Center Senior Researcher and Former Vice President for Research #2. Wilbur, Interview with Former WA AFP Chair and WA GOP Chair. Anonymous, Interview with Tea Party activist #1 and Former Kitsap GOP Leader. Tim Eyman, "Permanent Offense," Permanent Offense, n.d., <https://permanentoffense.com/>.

⁴⁵⁹ For an example of Eyman utilizing WPC research in his advocacy efforts, see Tim Eyman, "Why Raising Taxes Isn't Necessary - WA Policy Center Tells It Like It Is," *Permanent Offense* (blog), May 4, 2017, <https://permanentoffense.com/why-raising-taxes-isnt-necessary-wa-policy-center-tells-it-like-it-is/>. In this post, he writes that the WPC's research is "is really well done and very informative." Further indicative of the linkage between Tim Eyman and the various elements of the Washington State conservative organizational network, particularly those affiliated with the Koch Network, Eyman was awarded the "Modern-Day Sam Adams Award" in 2011 by the Sam Adams Alliance, a Koch-backed organization created "to direct grassroots efforts" in support of conservative policy.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Former Washington Policy Center President. John Stang, "WA Conservative Groups Are Banding Together to Dump Carbon Pricing," *Crosscut*, May 30, 2024.

⁴⁶¹ Project 42 organizational network chart provided to author by Project 42 leader.

⁴⁶² Stang, "WA Conservative Groups Are Banding Together to Dump Carbon Pricing." Let's Go Washington serves to replace Eyman's efforts following a 2021 ruling prohibiting him from managing future political action committees

⁴⁶³ Jim Brunner, "Meet the Hedge Fund Manager Upending WA Politics with 6 Voter Initiatives," *The Seattle Times*, January 28, 2024.

⁴⁶⁴ Khaleda Rahman, “America’s Last True Bellwether County Got Election Result Wrong,” *Newsweek*, November 8, 2024. Mark Z. Barabak, “America’s Last Presidential Bellwether Ends Its Winning Streak,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 2024, sec. Voices.

⁴⁶⁵ Matthew Nash, “Let Bellwether Be Bygones: Reps Weigh in on Election, Clallam Losing National Status,” *Sequim Gazette*, December 18, 2024, sec. News.

⁴⁶⁶ Jerry Cornfield, “Democrats Keep Winning in Washington but There’s Division Over the Reasons Why,” *Washington State Standard*, January 29, 2025.

⁴⁶⁷ Nash, “Let Bellwether Be Bygones: Reps Weigh in on Election, Clallam Losing National Status.”

⁴⁶⁸ *Figure 15* source: created by author using lucid.app. In this flowchart, the red squares are examples of paths that have been taken in other regions of the country and have been discussed in previous political science literature. “Motorville” was discussed in Stephanie Ternullo’s *How the Heartland Went Red*; Western Pennsylvania was discussed in Eleanor Newman’s and Theda Skocpol’s *Rust Belt Union Blues*; Colorado was discussed in Adam Schrager’s and Rob Witwer’s *The Blueprint*; and North Carolina was discussed in Caroline Tervo’s “Why Republicans Went Hard Right in North Carolina.”

⁴⁶⁹ For existing research on these dynamics, see Gose, Skocpol, and Williamson, “Saving America Once Again, from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance.” Lara Putnam, “Middle America Reboots Democracy: The Emergence and Rapid Electoral Turn of the New Grassroots,” in *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo (Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁴⁷⁰ Lisa Friedman, “Trump Moves to Increase Logging in National Forests,” *The Daily World*, March 8, 2025, sec. News.

⁴⁷¹ Michael Ignatieff, “I Was Born Liberal. The ‘Adults in the Room’ Still Have a Lot to Learn,” *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2025. See also Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment*.

⁴⁷² Hacker et al., “Bridging the Blue Divide.”

⁴⁷³ Bozeman, Interview with Bremerton Mayor, 2002 - 2009.

⁴⁷⁴ “Sound Publishing Inc” (Sound Publishing Inc, April 2023), https://www.soundpublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Sound_Media_Kit.pdf.

⁴⁷⁵ “Behind the Scenes of the Progressive Voters Guide | Fuse Washington.”