

There is little doubt that the ERA vote in Vermont, perhaps more than any other statewide vote in modern history, was decided on the basis of class status.

Strengthening Democratic Control: Vermont's 1986 Election in Historical Perspective

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Elections vary in the change they engender. In Vermont, the election of 1952 stands out as a "watershed election."¹ The Democrats achieved a level of electoral success that they have not lost since. Although Vermont elected its first Democratic governor in 1962 and the first woman to the governorship in 1984, since 1952 there have been no great breakthroughs in electoral percentages. The Democrats simply chipped away at Republican control: a congressional seat in 1958, a senatorial seat in 1974, control of both houses of the legislature in 1986. Yogi Berra once said "the ball game ain't over till it's over." For the GOP in Vermont, however, the game of one-partyism is indeed over. The electoral playing field in Vermont is even.

This article continues our historical treatment of political change in Vermont² and explores the political map of 1986 as part of an unfolding picture that has been with us through the postwar period. We seek conclusions linked to empirical data. In this we join the growing number of historians using computer technology to provide a comparative base for historical analysis. Our goal is to complement more traditional techniques.³ We are also interested in continuity of approach so that historians of the future will be able to compare and contrast our analysis of the 1986 election with those of years past. Thus this analysis continues not only in the methodological tradition of the groundbreaking article by Daniels, Daniels, and Daniels in 1969 (the first to use advanced statistical methods in *Vermont History*) but also further develops the findings of that earlier article.⁴

The 1986 election in Vermont was the type political scientists call "reinforcing." The Democratic Party strengthened its position at nearly every level. Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy delivered a devastating blow to the GOP by soundly defeating the party's most stalwart vote-getter in

the postwar era, Richard Snelling. Madeleine Kunin did very well. She defeated a strong Republican candidate, Lt. Gov. Peter Smith. She also held a tough campaigner from the left, Burlington mayor Bernard Sanders, at bay. The Democrats strengthened their hold on both houses of the legislature and captured the lieutenant governorship. Although the Democrats failed to put forward candidates for four statewide offices and the Republicans still hold six of the nine, the GOP reached a low point in the history of the state with regard to the percentage of offices in its control.

One way to put this in perspective is to compare degrees of partisanship among states and over the years within Vermont. This can be done by calculating the percentage of seats that are held by members of one of the parties. One such measure uses an average of the percentage of all seats controlled by one party for the following offices: U.S. senators, U.S. house delegation, governor, state senate seats, and state house seats.

This party control average (PCA) focuses on how a political observer would classify the control of the party after any given election. By giving the same weight to the governorship as it does to congressional seats, it emphasizes that control of this office is an important element of the political landscape. By ignoring lower statewide offices it allows for an easy comparison among states since not all of them have the same statewide elective offices. By considering both the federal delegation and the state legislative chambers, it stresses the fact that the party needs to succeed at all levels to be competitive.

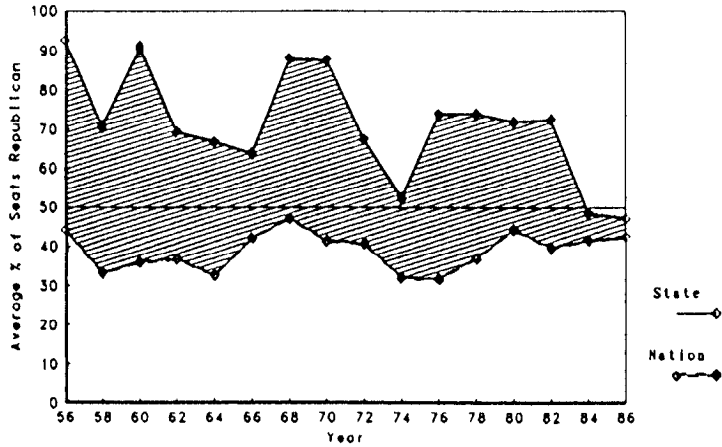
For years many observers saw Vermont as the most Republican state in the nation. From 1952 to 1980, this was the case; Vermont's Republican PCA was 77.3 (the index ranges from 0, or no Republican control, to 100, or total control; 50 would mean perfect party competition between Democrats and Republicans). Although there were substantial variations in the PCA, it never dropped below 50 (see Figure 1). But, for the past two elections, the party control average for the GOP reached historical lows of 48.4 in 1984, and 47.2 in 1986.⁵

Comparing Vermont's Republican PCA indicator of 47.2 with other states, the Green Mountain state now registers about as Republican as the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Colorado. In years past Vermont's partisan compatriots were states such as Utah and New Hampshire, both current bastions of Republicanism. Vermont has become less Republican over the past few years, and it has done so as the nation has become more Republican. Since 1976, the national Republican PCA has risen from 31.8 to 42.3, an increase of 33 percent, while Vermont's Republican PCA has dropped from 74.0 to 47.2, a decrease of 36 percent.

A related indicator, the party control index (PCI), measures the degree

FIGURE 1

The Republican Party Control Average:
Vermont and the Nation 1956-1986



Source: SRC Almanac Database
Republican National Committee, Washington

Computer Services, Political Justice
Chart FT-8, Republican Almanac, 1987

to which the state's party control average is greater than, or less than, the national average. For the period 1952 to 1980, the overall Vermont Republican PCA was 77.3, while the Republican PCI was 92.2, meaning that Vermont was, on average, about 92 percent more Republican than the nation as a whole. The PCI for the years 1984 and 1986 is 14.1, indicating that Vermont is now only about 14 percent more Republican than the nation.

Comparing Vermont with other areas of the country, it is still more Republican than the average northeastern state, which has a PCA of 42.2, and much more Republican than the average southern state, which has a GOP PCA of 30.7. Yet Vermont now lags behind typical midwestern or-western states (which have average Republican PCAs of 51.0). In New England, Vermont's PCA of 47.2 pales by comparison to neighboring New Hampshire's 86.7. Nationally, Vermont, which was consistently among the top ten of all states in the Republican PCA indicator, now ranks twenty-third. As recently as 1982, Vermont ranked third.

Little change in party balance took place in the legislature after the 1986 elections. Yet, for the first time, the Democrats claimed a numerical majority in both houses. In the past they relied on a working majority to elect Speakers Timothy O'Connor (1975-76 through 1979-80) and Ralph Wright (1985-86). In both cases a small number of Independents and

Republicans supported Democratic speakers.⁶ Even in 1986 the Democrats did not *elect* a majority and their numerical majority rested on a party switch after the election.⁷

Competition for senate seats, once again, outpaced the competition for house seats. There were 1.93 candidates for each senate seat, lower than in 1984. There were 1.73 candidates for each house seat, higher than in 1984 or in 1982. In the senate, the decline in candidates was chiefly due to the loss of four Republican and six Independent candidates. The Democrats actually increased their number of candidates by two. In the house, an increase of twenty candidates was about evenly divided between the parties, with an additional nine Republicans and eleven Democrats (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Candidate Statistics, 1986 Legislative Elections

Factor	Senate				House				
	Rep	Dem	Other	Tot	Rep	Dem	Other	Tot	Net
Seats up for election	12	18	0	30	78	72	0	150	
Candidates seeking election	26	29	3	58	- 8	117	120	22	259 + 20
Candidates per seat	.87	.97		1.93		.78	.80		1.73
Incumbents seeking reelection	10	17		27	+ 2	66	62		128 - 5
as % of seats up for election	83	94		90	+ 7	85	86		85 - 4
Incumbents defeated in general election	1	0		1	- 2	9	5		14 - 5
Incumbents denied reelection	1	0		1	- 2	9	5		14 - 5
Uncontested candidates	1	2		3	+ 2	21	15		36 - 25
as % of seats up for election	3	7		10	+ 7	14	10		24 - 17
Uncontested incumbents	1	2		3	+ 2	20	14		34 - 23
Uncontested non-incumbents	0	0		0	+ 0	1	1		2 - 2
Winners	11	19		30		74	75	1	150
as % of candidates	42	66		52	+ 7	63	63	5	58 - 5
Incumbents returned	9	17		26	+ 4	57	57		114 + 0
as % of incumbents running	90	100		96	+ 8	86	92		89 + 3

Incumbency advantage**	2.14	1.52	1.85	1.36	1.46	1.53	
Returning members as % of chamber membership	9	17	26 + 4	57	57	114 + 0	
Freshman members as % of chamber membership	30	57	87 + 14	38	38	76 + 0	
	2	2	4 - 4	17	18	1 36 + 0	
	7	7	13 - 14	11	12	24 + 0	
Former members who ran	5	2	7 - 4	9	1	1 11 - 1	
Former members who won as % of former members running	2	1	3 - 2	2	0	2 - 4	
	40	50	43 - 2	22	0	18 - 32	
Pre-election partisan split	12	18		78	72		
Post-election partisan split	11	19		74	75	1	
Adjusted partisan split***	11	19		74	76		
Partisan gain/loss	- 1	+ 1		- 4	+ 4		

* Net indicates the change in the "Tot" column from the 1984 election.

** The incumbency advantage is calculated by dividing the incumbents returned as a percentage of incumbents running by the winners as a percentage of candidates.

*** The adjusted split reflects one independent who affiliated with the Republicans and one member who switched to the Democrats.

Thus fewer seats in the chamber were won without a contest. In 1984, sixty-two candidates were elected without opposition; in 1986, only thirty-nine candidates got a free ride to Montpelier. This is less than in 1982, the first year of the new districts, in which forty-five members were elected without opposition.

Even so, fewer incumbents were defeated than in previous years. In 1984, twenty-three house seats changed party, and five senate seats. In 1986, only sixteen house seats changed party, and only one senate seat. Thus, while the attack on incumbents intensified sharply, their capacity to preserve their seats increased even more.

Only fifteen incumbents were defeated in the 1986 general election, compared with twenty-two in 1984 and twenty in 1982. In these three elections taken as a whole, however, forty-two Republican incumbents met defeat and only fifteen Democrats. Clearly the rise in power of the Democrats is not due to capturing open seats as much as it is due to the outright defeat of Republican incumbents.

There has been a near total turnover of the legislature in the last four elections. Almost 80 percent of the membership of both chambers was first elected in 1980 or later: in the senate, twenty-three of the thirty members (77 percent), and in the house, 121 of the 150 members (81 percent). The average length of seniority in the senate is 5.5 years, slightly higher than the 4.5 years of the house. These data, when compared with the results of the 1976 elections ten years earlier, show a longer career for the average member. Following the 1976 elections, the average seniority in the senate was 4.0 years, and only slightly less (3.7 years) in the house. The career of Vermont state legislators seems to be lengthening in the 1980s.

Comparing the turnover effect with the 1976 election, which, like 1986, was the third election under new house districts, the change was almost identical. In the senate, 80 percent of those elected in 1976 had been elected since 1970; in the house, 81 percent. There was, however, a difference between the most senior members in the two elections of 1976 and 1986. After the 1976 elections, there were only three senators who had been elected before the 1966 elections, but there were still twenty-one house members who were holdovers from elections held before 1966. Following the 1986 elections, there were still five senators who were first elected ten years ago or earlier, yet only thirteen house members. In both years there were more Democrats than Republicans among the most senior members.

The most senior senators are now Tom Crowley (D-Chittenden), first elected in 1966, and Bill Doyle (R-Washington), first elected in 1968. The most senior house members are Tony Buraczynski (D-Windham-2-1), first elected in 1962, and Henry Carse (R-Chittenden-5-2), first elected in 1965 in the special election for the first meeting of the newly apportioned house. Buraczynski is currently the only legislator in either house whose legislative career began in the pre-reapportionment days of one-town, one-vote.⁸

The increase in competition for house seats, evidenced by a larger number of candidates, resulted in many close elections. Using a one thousand-vote margin as the threshold in the senate and a one hundred-vote gap in the house, there were close elections in six senate districts and twenty house districts in 1986, for a total of twenty-six. In 1984, there were only seventeen close elections, while in 1982, the first year for the new districts, there were again twenty-six close elections. Republicans have, in the last three elections, managed to win nearly twice as many close elections as the Democrats. As we have seen in other years, a small number of additional votes in certain districts would have changed the party control of a chamber.⁹

Of the six close senate elections in 1986, only two resulted in a Republican losing to a Democrat. To pick up the additional five seats

needed for the Republicans to control the senate, therefore, the number of additional votes needed would be quite large. In the house, on the other hand, the Republicans would have needed only two more seats to retain numerical control. A mere one hundred additional votes in two districts would have accomplished this easily.¹⁰ However, only eighty-five additional Democrat votes in four districts would have gained the Democrats four more seats, swinging the balance of party control to seventy-eight Democrats and only seventy Republicans.¹¹ Active two-party competition in the legislative races and the small votes that are required to change elections make each vote more important than ever. Winning is no longer just a question of candidate recruitment but more a matter of organization and mobilization of voters.

Despite the growing importance of each vote in a legislative race, the turnout in legislative elections still lags behind the votes cast for statewide offices. Due to the multi-member aspect of Vermont's redistricting scheme, it is difficult to know how many votes were cast in the legislative elections. A formula, known as the "partisan average,"¹² is used to estimate the number of votes by means of a model that assumes all elections were held in single-member districts.

Using this method, we can estimate that turnout in the state senate elections was 92 percent of the turnout for governor in 1986 and that the turnout in the state house elections was 90 percent. An estimated 15,000 voters (500 per senator) did not participate in senate elections (even though they went to the polls on Election Day), and about 19,000 voters (125 per house member) did not participate in house elections.

Another way of looking at this is to calculate the percentage of registered voters who participate in the legislative elections. While 59.9 percent of those registered voted for a statewide office in 1986, only 55.3 percent voted in the state senate races and 54.1 percent in the state house races. This is up remarkably from the 1982 off-year elections where only 49.4 percent and 50.1 percent participated in the senate and house elections.

A review of the percentage of the vote garnered statewide for legislative races is an indicator of overall acceptance or rejection of a party. The Republicans received 45.5 percent of the statewide total for senate races and 49.2 percent for the house races. This was about the same as 1984 for the house races but represents a large decline in the overall Republican support in the senate races. By way of example, in the six-member Chittenden district, while the average Democratic vote in 1984 was only 9 percent greater than the average Republican vote, in 1986 it was 30 percent greater than the average Republican vote.

These statewide vote totals also reveal the degree to which the legislative redistricting scheme impacts the ability of a party to win elections in certain areas. The Democrats received 53.0 percent of the statewide vote for

senate races, yet won 63.3 percent of the thirty senate seats. A comparison of these two percentages yields a seats / votes ratio that indicates the degree to which the districting scheme translates each vote for a party into a seat in the chamber.

The Democrat ratio of 1.19 in the senate indicates that every vote for a Democrat had the power of 1.19 votes. This situation is caused in part by the large multi-member districts in Chittenden, Rutland, Washington, and Windsor counties. In the house there is a mix of single and two-member districts and this yields a much closer ratio. There the Democrats received only 9 percent more seats than a direct translation of their votes would indicate.

The 1986 election for statewide offices in Vermont promised to be exciting and controversial. Two giants of the major parties, Richard Snelling and Patrick Leahy, squared off for the open senate seat. The lieutenant governor (a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant), the mayor of the state's largest city (a socialist from New York City and Jewish), and the governor (a woman born in Switzerland and also Jewish) battled it out for the governorship. In fact, when one considers that Patrick Leahy was one of only two native Vermonters among the five candidates and that he is also a Catholic, the social heterogeneity of Vermont's candidate pool is remarkable indeed. In fact, it would be difficult to find a state that can boast a wider array of social backgrounds in its candidates for statewide election in 1986—and that includes the large urban states with their many minority and ethnic groups.

At the same time the state struggled over the question of amending its constitution to include an equal rights amendment. The eyes of the nation were turned to Vermont where it was felt, as pro-life activist Phyllis Schlafly said (in what—in the authors' view—was an historic backhanded compliment), "if the ERA can't win in Vermont, it can't win anywhere."

But the election did not deliver the excitement it promised. First, the Snelling candidacy withered and in the end produced only 34.5 percent of the vote. Secondly, Madeleine Kunin won quite easily. She beat her nearest competitor, Peter Smith, by nine percentage points (47 percent to 38 percent). This was a substantial victory. Meanwhile, Bernard Sanders did not make an impressive breakthrough. His 14 percent of the vote was good if defined in terms of what third party candidates of the left generally produce in Vermont, but it was hardly large enough to stake a claim for statewide competitiveness. Finally the ERA went down to defeat, 52 percent to 48 percent. While the vote was close, it confounded the expectations of most political observers, including the authors.

How does all this fit into the basic political culture of Vermont as it has developed in the two-party period since World War II?

As in other articles in this series, we use the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient as a device with which to summarize the relationships between elections past and present. Although those trained in the more traditional approaches to historical analysis often have little sympathy with the precise format of quantitative presentations, the power of using such statistical tools cannot be ignored. It may be more fun and esthetically pleasing, for example, to go out at night to look at the stars with the naked eye, but astronomy would have made precious little progress over the centuries if it had ignored the telescope.

As we use the correlation coefficient here, it summarizes the pattern evident if one were to scan two side-by-side maps, one that shaded in, for instance, the Kunin vote in 1986 by town and one that shaded in the Kunin vote in 1984 by town. To continue our analogy with star watching, the coefficient would with absolute precision tell us if the stars (the towns) were arranged in the same way (according to their vote for Kunin) in the heavens of the electoral map of 1984 as they were in 1986.

The beauty of the correlation coefficient is that it makes comparisons of large numbers of sets of maps possible over time at the highest level of accuracy. For instance, in comparing the 1982 Kunin map (the year she lost to Snelling) with the 1984 Kunin map one might conclude that those towns that delivered a strong Kunin vote in 1982 were, indeed, those towns that delivered the same in 1984. Looking then at the 1984 and 1986 maps with "the naked eye," we might say that the relationship between 1984 and 1986 was about the same as between 1984 and 1982. But what does "about the same" mean? Its interpretation will vary in the eye of the beholder. What the correlation coefficient does is give us a precise and (most importantly) a *universal* language that will be understood perfectly by historians in Vermont or Texas and by historians in 1988 and 2088. It also allows us to summarize dozens of maps that would require an unacceptable number of pages to publish.

Simply stated, Pearson's "r" (the correlation coefficient) varies from -1.0 to $+1.0$. By example, an "r" that registered close to 1.0 indicates that those towns most strongly for Kunin in one election were also those towns most strongly for Kunin in the next election; that is, the two maps would look almost exactly the same. If "r" proved to be close to -1.0 , say $-.82$, it would indicate that those towns most strongly for Kunin in the first year were most strongly *against* Kunin in the second. (There would be a pattern, but it would be a reverse pattern.) If the coefficient was close to 0 , say in the $.20$ to $-.20$ range, it would mean there was no relationship between the two maps at all—the Kunin vote in any given town in one year would give no hint as to what the Kunin vote was in the next.

Table 2 summarizes what happened when we compared the Democratic

vote for governor in each of Vermont's 246 cities and towns in the eleven elections extending back through 1966. In other words, it summarizes the results as if we had compared ten pairs of maps (twenty maps in all). The table indicates that it is becoming more difficult to predict the vote for the Democratic candidate for governor in one election by knowing what the Democratic vote for governor was in the previous election. The pairs of maps are becoming less related over time. The Vermont electorate, therefore, can be said to be less predictable and no longer so clearly rooted. A similar phenomenon was underway in 1984. For that election we explained as follows:

For instance, the association between Hoff's vote in 1966 and Daley's vote in 1968 ($r = .84$) and Daley's vote in 1968 and O'Brien's vote in 1970 ($r = .83$) are very high, despite the fact that Daley, the candidate common to both comparisons, came from Rutland County and both Hoff and O'Brien lived in Chittenden County. The Kunin vote of 1984, on the other hand, compared to the Kunin vote of 1982 shows an association of only $r = .70$, meaning it was easier to predict Daley's vote in 1968 from Hoff's in 1966 or O'Brien's in 1970 from Daley's in 1968 than it was Kunin's in 1984 from Kunin's in 1982.¹³

TABLE 2
Electoral Linkages among Democratic Candidates for Governor
1966-1986

<i>Candidates</i>				<i>Pearson</i>
<i>First:</i>		<i>Followed by:</i>		<i>Coefficient</i>
Hoff	1966	Daley	1968	.84
Daley	1968	O'Brien	1970	.83
O'Brien	1970	Salmon	1972	.69
Salmon	1972	Salmon	1974	.64
Salmon	1974	Hackel	1976	.31
Hackel	1976	Granai	1978	.54
Granai	1978	Diamond	1980	.75
Diamond	1980	Kunin	1982	.74
Kunin	1982	Kunin	1984	.70
Kunin	1984	Kunin	1986	.41

The correlation coefficient produced by comparing 1986 Kunin percentages by town with the 1984 Kunin percentages dropped to only .41, the lowest of any pair of elections since 1966 except for the comparison between 1974 (when Tom Salmon won) with the election of 1976 (when Stella Hackel lost). One of the reasons why Kunin's votes of 1984 and 1986 were so disparate may be that there was a strong challenge from the left in 1986 (Mayor Bernard Sanders), which affected the vote.¹⁴

Focusing on the last election, Table 3 shows the relationship between the votes of all the candidates running in 1986. What it shows is that Kunin's

vote in 1986 was negatively – but not strongly negatively – associated with Mayor Sanders’s vote (“r” = $-.37$). This means that those towns voting more strongly for Mayor Sanders voted less strongly for Kunin. Interestingly Sanders’s vote was associated with Smith’s vote at exactly the same intensity, $-.37$. But Sanders’s vote was *positively* associated with Senator Leahy’s at $+.34$. Although it would seem obvious that Sanders’s vote would hurt Kunin, these data indicate that it may have hurt Smith equally.

TABLE 3
Matrix of Associations (Pearson’s “r”) among Statewide Vote Totals in 1986

		<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>
I	Leahy	X	–	–	–	–
II	Kunin	.51	X	–	–	–
III	Smith	–.76	–.72	X	–	–
IV	Sanders	.34	–.37	–.37	X	–
V	ERA “yes”	.07	.33	–.12	–.28	X

Table 3 also shows how towns voting more strongly for the ERA voted in elections for the major statewide candidates. Overall the associations are quite weak. In other words, if shown a map with ERA strength shaded in, one would be hard put to predict from that map the location of any of the candidate’s strength. Although towns voting for the ERA were somewhat more apt to vote for Kunin and against Sanders (the coefficients were $+.33$ and $-.28$ respectively), the ERA was almost completely unassociated with either the votes of Leahy ($.07$) or Smith ($-.12$). Thus, the defeat of the ERA in Vermont cannot be seen as strongly influenced by the candidates running for statewide offices.

Perhaps no other variable in Vermont’s political history is as interesting as that of region. The “mountain rule,” which mandated that governors be elected from towns located on alternating sides of the Green Mountain chain, had the strongest magnetism of any geographical pattern in the history of American state politics.¹⁵ As this pattern died out (it was pretty much gone by mid-century),¹⁶ it was replaced by a much weaker north-south division. This split has been evident, especially in the results of voting for constitutional referenda, with the north generally voting “no” and the south “yes.”¹⁷

Another geographical pattern that concerned the two-party vote, especially in the middle decades of this century, was a strong tendency for Democrats to do better in the northwest counties of Vermont than elsewhere in the state, beginning with the Hoff victory in 1962.¹⁸ This pattern, however, has begun to weaken as the increases in the Democratic

vote have expanded to include towns and cities throughout the state.¹⁹ What about 1986? Was there anything left of these historical patterns?

TABLE 4
The Regional Distribution of the
Democratic Vote in the 1986 Election

Candidates	Northwest vs. Rest of Vermont		West to East			South to North			Statewide N = 246
	Northwest N = 37*	Rest of Vermont N = 209	Champlain Valley N = 63	Mountains N = 131	Connecticut Valley N = 52	South N = 74	Middle N = 79	North N = 93	
Leahy	64	60	61	61	59	59	61	61	60
Kunin	47	44	46	42	49	47	44	43	45
Smith	36	42	40	42	40	45	40	40	41
Sanders	16	14	14	16	10	9	16	16	14
ERA "yes"	44	49	48	48	49	54	51	42	48

*The percentages equal the average town and city vote for the region. In other words, in the northwestern region of Vermont (Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties), there are thirty-seven towns and cities. The average town or city in the region cast 64% of its votes in 1986 for Senator Patrick Leahy.

First, the northwest region of Vermont continues to be more Democratic than the rest of the state but, in the tradition of recent elections, the difference is small. Patrick Leahy did four percentage points more in the average town and city in Chittenden, Grand Isle, and Franklin counties, and Peter Smith did six percentage points less. It may be significant that Mayor Sanders's vote was less than three percentage points higher in the northwest than in the rest of the state even though his home base is Chittenden County. This may mean his strength, while not great anywhere, is at least evenly distributed. Even the ERA, which was expected to do much better outside the more Catholic northwest, received less than six percentage points more support in the towns and cities outside the northwest region. Put another way, even if the ERA had the support in the northwest that it did elsewhere in the state, it still would have been defeated (see Table 4).

The east-west division of the votes of 1986 was even weaker. Kunin was stronger in the Connecticut River Valley towns (the fifty-two towns that either border the Connecticut River or touch a town that does) and Sanders did best in the mountain towns (the 131 towns and cities that do not border one of the two valleys or touch a town that does). Neither of these difference, however, is great.

Nor were there important north-south regional differences in candidate totals for 1986, although Kunin did marginally better in the south and Sanders was somewhat stronger in the north. In the seventy-four towns and cities south of Route #4, Sanders got only 9 percent of the vote (on average) while in the ninety-three municipalities north of a line formed by the Winooski River and Route 302, he got 16 percent of the vote.

There was, however, a stronger relationship between region, defined

along north-south lines, and the ERA vote. In the northern towns the ERA vote was only 42 percent. But in the seventy-nine "middle" towns and cities, it was 51 percent and in the south it received 54 percent of the vote in the average locality. This is another indicator that there is a north/south regional dichotomy forming in Vermont along conservative and liberal lines. But certainly as far as the partisan division of the vote is concerned, the 1986 election continues in the tradition of deregionalization that has typified elections in recent Vermont history.

In terms of town size, there is only the faintest shadow of the old "large town = Democratic vote" formula that once was visible in Vermont. Nor was the partisan vote defined by the extent to which municipalities had gained in population between 1960 and 1980. This is further evidence we need to challenge the easy assumption that the rise in Democratic fortunes in Vermont is tied to the influx of new people. In terms of education and income, Senator Leahy's vote remained remarkably stable across the categories. Madeleine Kunin, however, continued to do better in higher education and higher income communities—a pattern that contrasts with traditional perceptions of Democratic strength. The following summarizes this aspect of the Kunin vote, which began after she ran against Richard Snelling in 1982.

TABLE 5

	<i>Kunin Percentages</i>		
	<i>1982</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1986</i>
Town Education Level			
high	41%	50%	47%
low	45%	47%	44%
Town Income Level			
high	41%	49%	47%
low	44%	46%	42%

Part (but not all) of this relationship in 1986 may be explained by the appeal of Bernard Sanders. Burlington's mayor received his strongest percentages in municipalities where incomes averaged less than \$14,600 (1980 census data)—there he got 15 percent of the vote. In places where incomes averaged over \$17,600 he got only 12 percent of the vote. Although this difference is not great, it does indicate that the mayor may have been successful in his appeal to lower income groups.

By far the strongest relationship in all the data used in this research on the 1986 election is related to the socio-economic distribution of the ERA vote. The ERA did significantly better in high growth, high income, and high education towns than in places of slow growth and lower levels of income and education. In fact, the education variable shows the strongest statistical linkage with any vote we have seen in any election

in Vermont since 1980. In places where the percentage of college graduates in the population over twenty-five years of age was less than 14.2, the ERA got only 40 percent of the vote. But in towns and cities where over 22.6 percent of adults had college degrees the ERA received 60 percent of the vote. There was also a strong relationship between higher income and a "yes" vote on the ERA. There is little doubt that the ERA vote in Vermont, perhaps more than any other statewide vote in modern history, was decided on the basis of class status (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
Electoral Results by
Socio-Economic Characteristics of Vermont
Towns and Cities 1986

<i>Variables*</i>	<i>Leahy's Percentages</i>	<i>Kunin's Percentages</i>	<i>Smith's Percentages</i>	<i>Sanders's Percentages</i>	<i>ERA "yes" Percentages</i>
Average Town / City Percentage (N = 246)	60	45	41	14	48
Town / City Size					
≤ 750 (N = 86)	59	44	42	14	50
> 750-1,500 (N = 73)	60	43	42	15	48
> 1,500 (N = 87)	62	47	39	14	47
Town / City Population Growth (1960-1980)					
≤ 25% (N = 74)	61	45	40	14	44
> 25%-60% (N = 93)	60	44	42	14	49
> 60% (N = 79)	60	45	41	14	52
Town / City Education Level (Percent College Graduates)					
≤ 14.2% (N = 85)	61	44	41	15	40
> 14.2-22.6% (N = 97)	60	44	42	14	48
> 22.6% (N = 64)	61	47	40	13	60
Town / City Income Level (Median Family Income)					
≤ \$14,600 (N = 75)	59	42	42	15	45
\$14,601-17,631 (N = 116)	61	45	41	14	48
> \$17,631 (N = 55)	62	47	40	12	53

* Town / City Size and Town / City Population Growth were arranged by categories that would provide three groups of near equal size. Education and Income Levels were arranged by putting all towns that were more than one-half of one standard deviation below the mean in one group, all towns more than one-half of one standard deviation above the mean in a second group, and all the rest in a "middle" group.

Overall, 198,616 voters went to the polls in 1986, 61 percent of those registered. This was down nine points from 1984, a presidential year, but up seven percentage points from 1982, the previous "off-year election." As in 1982 (but not 1984), turnout was a bit higher in the north than in the south (64.3 percent to 59.7 percent), but that was the largest variation in the data. Small towns and villages continue to have slightly higher turnout than larger places. As in 1982 and 1984 municipalities with populations with higher income and higher educational levels had higher voter turnout. As in 1982 and 1984, there was no relationship between higher turnout and the percentage for any candidate, although Kunin was slightly

disadvantaged by higher turnout ("r" = - .20) and Sanders was slightly advantaged ("r" = + .21). The ERA vote was not affected either way ("r" = .08).

The 1986 election reinforces the theory that the rise in Democratic fortunes in Vermont was incremental following the great breakthrough in 1952. In recent years this step-by-step process has won the Democrats more and more positions of power as their climb has taken them above the 50 percent mark. In politics, if not in mountaineering, achieving a position one step past halfway means victory. Thus, while the Democrats won more in recent years (and thus are increasingly visible to the media and the public eye), these victories are a result of a long historical process, not a sudden breakthrough.

It is now clear, however, that to say "Vermont is a Democratic state" is no less accurate than to say "Vermont is a Republican state." Democrats in Vermont should also take pride in our finding that their success has occurred at the same time the nation as a whole is becoming more Republican. One does not know if these two trends will continue. But, if they do, they might produce a fundamental historical irony: by changing partisan alignment Vermont might insure that it will remain in a minority vis-à-vis the national pattern. Might the future produce an election like that of 1936 if Vermont, by voting Democratic, becomes one of only two states to buck a national landslide? Such an event would be further proof of the old saying: "When you throw Vermonters into a river, they'll float upstream."

In the Vermont legislative elections of 1986 we find an interesting contradiction. Challenges to incumbents are on the increase — fewer races are going uncontested. Yet incumbents are being reelected in ever greater numbers. The "power of incumbency," long known to be the single most important variable in legislative politics at the congressional level and in the legislatures of the larger states, is becoming more striking in Vermont. It is also significant to note, however, that when incumbents lose, they are almost three times as likely to be Republicans as Democrats. Democratic control of the legislature has not occurred simply because Republicans retired and Democrats won open seats. It happened because the Democrats took on Republican incumbents and beat them.

Finally, elections for the legislature are becoming tighter. There are more close elections than before. Yet, in part because incumbents tend to win, the average seniority of Vermont's legislators is increasing, too. In all this it is disquieting to observe that turnout for state legislative elections still lags behind turnout for statewide elections, even though they take place at the same time and each vote in Vermont has a much greater chance of "making the difference" than ever before.

In terms of statewide elections, 1986 did not produce the excitement it was supposed to. Governor Kunin won with relative ease, Senator Leahy blew Richard Snelling out of the water, and Mayor Bernard Sanders remained a rumble on the horizon rather than a full-fledged storm in the Democratic center. The ERA was the only close vote, although its defeat surprised many observers.

Vermont's electorate demonstrates a continued "rootlessness" in the era of increased two-party competition. It continues to be more difficult to predict where the strength of candidates of either party will lie. Regional differences in the partisan split are on the wane. Socio-economic predictors are equally weak, although it is noteworthy (especially as observations of Madeleine Kunin's essential conservatism are more often heard) that she does better in towns with higher socio-economic status characteristics. In this she now occupies turf on which former Gov. Richard Snelling was recently encamped.

Perhaps the most significant finding about the 1986 election in Vermont is the degree to which the ERA vote was linked to the class status variables of the towns and cities. There is little statistical doubt that if all the towns and cities of Vermont had had electorates with more formal education the ERA would have passed.

NOTES

¹ Many point to 1962 as the critical year in Vermont principally because of the election of Philip Hoff. However, the real breakthrough of the Democratic Party in Vermont occurred a decade earlier in 1952. Two Ph.D. theses and one master's thesis support this view. See: Douglas I. Hodgkin, "Breakthrough Elections: Elements of Large and Durable Minority Gains in Selected States Since 1944," (diss. Duke University, 1966); Frederick J. Maher, Jr., "Vermont Elections," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1969) and Samuel Miller, "The Vermont Democratic Party and the Development of Intra-Party Responsibility," (Master's thesis, University of Vermont, 1960). See also: Frank M. Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1974).

² This analysis of the 1986 election is designed after our treatment of the 1982 election in order to provide the methodological continuity and similarity of data base necessary to allow students of Vermont to make comparative judgments over time. (See Clark H. Bensen and Frank M. Bryan, "The 1982 Election in Vermont," *Vermont History* 51 (Fall, 1983): pp. 221-237 and Clark H. Bensen and Frank M. Bryan, "The 1984 Election in Vermont," *Vermont History* 53 (Fall, 1985): pp. 231-249.

³ For an example of a more interpretive approach to the 1986 election, see: Greg Guma and Philip Hoff, "A Clash of Giants," *Vermont Affairs* (Winter, 1987): pp. 46-49.

⁴ Robert V. Daniels, Robert H. Daniels, and Helen L. Daniels, "The Vermont Constitution Referendum of 1969: An Analysis," *Vermont History* 38 (Spring, 1970): pp. 152-156.

⁵ The sources of the national data used in this article are: (1) *Republican Almanac 1987*, Republican National Committee, Washington, DC, 1987, Editors, Clark H. Bensen and Lee Vance. All Vermont political data originate in the Vermont Secretary of State's archives in Montpelier. Data are compiled through the facilities of the Republican National Committee, Washington, DC, Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr., Chairman and Thomas B. Hofeller, Director, Computer Services. (2) Socio-economic data and historical data have been compiled by the authors over the years and have been analyzed on the computer facilities at UVM. (3) Other data are from the files of Vermont Polidata, the private consulting firm of author Clark Bensen.

⁶ Following the 1976 house elections, there was a question as to whether the Democrats had a numerical majority, despite the working majority afforded by Democrat Speaker O'Connor. According to a tally made by Vermont Polidata, the house was evenly split at 75-75 when all members were assigned to one of the major parties.

⁷ After the election, the breakdown was seventy-four Republican, seventy-five Democrat, and one Independent. Charles Palmer, elected as an Independent, announced, a few days after the election, his intention to affiliate with the Republicans. This left the partisan breakdown as a tie at seventy-five members for each party. About the same time, incumbent Rep. Robert Stannard, elected as a Republican / Democrat, switched to Democrat. This left the partisan split at seventy-four Republican and seventy-six Democrat.

⁸ The last election held for the 246-member house was in 1964. A special election was held in November 1965 to seat a new 150-member house. This was the result of the 1960's redistricting lawsuits, notably *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962).

⁹ Clark H. Bensen and Frank M. Bryan, "The 1984 Election in Vermont," *Vermont History* 53 (Fall, 1985): p. 236.

¹⁰ The two districts are: Franklin-4 and Washington-2.

¹¹ The four districts are: Orleans-3, Franklin-6-2, Washington-1 and Rutland-6-1.

¹² The "partisan average" is calculated for each district using the number of votes cast for candidates for each party and the number of candidates for those parties. The total of partisan votes is divided by the number of partisan candidates to derive the partisan average.

¹³ Clark H. Bensen and Frank M. Bryan, "The 1984 Election in Vermont," p. 241.

¹⁴ For other correlational work that seeks to explain the increasing unpredictability of partisan voting in Vermont see: Frank M. Bryan, *Politics in the Rural States* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 125-136 and Frank M. Bryan, "The Decline of the Party System: The Case of Vermont," a paper delivered at the 1981 annual meeting of the New England Political Science Association, Durham, New Hampshire, April 11, 1981.

¹⁵ Samuel B. Hand and Lyman Jay Gould have provided the best treatment of the mountain rule. Their work stimulated a new body of much needed scholarship in this area. See "The Geography of Political Recruitment in Vermont: A View from the Mountains," in Reginald L. Cook, ed., *Growth and Development of Government in Vermont*, Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, Occasional Paper No. 5 (Waitsfield, Vermont, 1970).

¹⁶ Ann Hallowell, in an article on women in Vermont politics, has found that even though women's issues were often divided by the mountain rule in the nineteenth century the election of women to town offices between the years 1920 and 1940 was unaffected by location of the town. See Ann Hallowell, "Women on the Threshold: An Analysis of Rural Women in Local Politics (1921-1941)," *Rural Sociology* 52 (Winter, 1988): pp. 510-521.

¹⁷ In 1976 we said: "In the years ahead it will be important to monitor the political hardening of this alternative regional dichotomy based on the sections of the state separated, north and south, by the Winooski River - Route 302 axis." See Frank M. Bryan, "Reducing the Time-Lock in the Vermont Constitution: An Analysis of the 1974 Referendum," *Vermont History* 44 (Winter, 1976): p. 47. These findings confirmed the earlier work on constitutional revision done by the Danielses. They said, for instance, that "small towns in the South tended to vote yes to a greater extent than even the cities in the extreme North." Daniels, Daniels and Daniels, p. 154.

¹⁸ Hoff's contribution to the Democratic vote in his victory in 1962 is defined in terms of his gains in the non-traditionally Democratic counties of Vermont, especially in the Northeast Kingdom. See: Frank M. Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1974), pp. 108-109.

¹⁹ We found this pattern continuing, for instance, in the election of 1982. See: Clark H. Bensen and Frank M. Bryan, "The 1982 Election in Vermont," pp. 221-237.