CHAPTER 1

The Modern Political Party

For decades after its 1974 publication, David Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection* was considered the premier text for anyone wishing to understand how members of Congress behaved. The description was not a pretty one for anyone who believed in the value of party government. According to Mayhew, it was easiest to think of members of Congress as "single-minded seekers of reelection." Candidates, he found, didn't have much use for parties other than to help mobilize voters. Attention to party agendas didn't change much once politicians got into Congress, either. "To a remarkable degree," Mayhew noted, "members can successfully engage in electorally useful activities without denying other members the opportunity to successfully engage in them" (82). Why didn't members of Congress press a party agenda? Apparently, it was a matter of choice, and they chose not to. "American congressmen," Mayhew wrote, "could immediately and permanently array themselves in disciplined legions for the purpose of programmatic combat. They do not" (98). Any party battles that occurred were, for the most part, theater; members of Congress maintained strong friendships across party lines and hewed closely to the median voters in their districts. Reelection was far more important than the advancement of any ideological agenda.

Mayhew's descriptions were merely the most eloquent of an era of scholarship extending from the early 1950s to the early 1990s that depicted American politicians as nonideological poll-watchers, sticking closely to the median voter in their districts and avoiding any stances that would offend the general electorate. The beginnings of this period are marked by the American Political Science Association's report "Toward a

More Responsible Two-Party System," which decried the lack of responsibility in the weak party system. "Alternatives between the parties are defined so badly," the authors claimed, "that it is often difficult to determine what the election has decided even in the broadest terms" (APSA 1950: 3–4). One of the last gasps of such depictions was *Hill Rat,* an entertaining tell-all from a former Capitol Hill staffer. As the author described congressional committee work, "You sit around a table and divide up the money. Anything that gets in the way of that process—philosophy, conscience, and so on—gets checked at the door" (Jackley 1992: 103).

The literature of this period generally describes a Congress full of ambitious, nonideological politicians. Interestingly, it closely charts an unusual period in congressional elections during which candidates actually tended, on average, to represent the median voter. An innovative study by Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) demonstrated that, at least since the mid–nineteenth century, candidates for Congress have deviated strongly from their districts' median voters, stubbornly defying Downs's (1957) prediction of convergence. The exception seems to be a period from the late 1940s to the early 1980s.

Despite the relative oddity of this weak party period, its view of nonideological politicians is the one that is most ingrained in American popular culture. Notably, one of the most common epithets in modern political discourse is "flip-flopper," directed at those who appear to have no core beliefs. The essential plotline of 1990s political movies like *Bullworth, Dave,* and *The American President* is that a politician has lost his way, abandoning the issues and agenda that drove him to run for office in the first place, and is now "so busy keeping my job I forgot to do my job." Only when the politician has some sort of catharsis (a near-death experience, falling in love, etc.) does he remember to "fight the fights that need fighting," rather than the fights he can win (Reiner 1995).

This view of politics is hardly confined to Washington. Many state governments went through a similar period of weak partisanship, avoiding the most controversial issues in order to protect their political class. "I've been on a tour of state legislatures," humorist Mark Russell joked in 1991. "Mostly they are a bunch of fat white guys pretending to hurt each other" (Richardson 1996: 360).

The pretense, for the most part, is gone. The literature from that weak party era is difficult to reconcile with the modern Congress and state legislatures. Today, by virtual consensus, the parties in Congress and in many state legislatures have diverged (Poole and Rosenthal 1997).

Candidates no longer converge on the median voter. They have returned to their old historical pattern of representing the ideologically extreme elements within their parties, despite the electoral risk that this strategy carries (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002; Wright and Berkman 1986). While it was once common for members of different parties to call each other friends, today that almost never happens, and insults and even physical threats across party lines are becoming more common in Congress (Jamieson and Falk 2000).

The new version of *Homo politicus* is the eager party warrior; legislators recognize the advantages of partisan action and willingly engage in it. As with any other form of legislative organization, this one exacts a price: sometimes legislators must take stances that differ from their personal opinions or those of their constituents. A moderate Republican may feel that his party's deficit spending is endangering the country's fiscal standing and wish to oppose a tax cut, but he knows that he must stand with his colleagues. Similarly, a moderate Democrat may stand with his copartisans in opposing Social Security reforms even if he believes they are important for the program's long-term stability. Both these politicians recognize that they will, in the long run, do better, both in terms of their policy goals and their reelection efforts, if they stick with their party coalition. Even if they are derided for hackery, this is a decision that rational politicians will make.

Indeed, in recent years, an entire literature has evolved to explain why rational legislators would participate in strong parties rather than eschew them (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Aldrich 1995; Cox 1987; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Schwartz 1989; Volden and Bergman 2006). Parties, in this view, are "institutional solutions to the instability of majority rule" (Aldrich 1995: 72). Deliberative chambers are inherently chaotic—to get a bill passed, one must cobble together a majority and hold it together over numerous votes, any one of which could doom the bill. The easiest outcome in such a chamber is for nothing to get done. Parties, however, provide a solution. As standing coalitions that don't have to be constantly reassembled, parties make it possible for individual legislators to pass bills while providing a path for career advancement. Incumbents submit to parties because they make it easier to get legislative work done.

But why is it important to get work done? Cox and McCubbins elaborate on this with their theory of parties as legislative cartels (1993, 2005). According to cartel theory, politicians recognize that their reelec-

tion prospects rise and fall with those of their fellow partisans, so they seek to create and enhance their party's brand name, "the commonly accepted summary of the past actions, beliefs, and outcomes with which it is associated" (1993: 110). They do so by ceding power to a party leadership that can manipulate the legislative agenda, which it does in a way that helps their collective party reputation. Thus members can run in the next general election on a collective party label that resonates with a sizable chunk—ideally a majority—of the voters.

A key question, however, remains: Why has the behavior of politicians changed? Why are legislators who, by their nature, prefer to avoid real partisanship increasingly behaving as partisan warriors? This question is all the more puzzling since, as surveys show, voters increasingly claim to dislike parties and partisanship. If neither legislators nor voters like strong parties, who does?

As suggested in the introduction, these questions proceed from the wrong assumption: that parties are a function of politicians' preferences. When Aldrich (1995: 4) says that "the major political party is the creature of the politicians, the ambitious office seeker and officeholder," he is saying something of a piece with Mayhew's (1974: 98) claim that members of Congress "could immediately and permanently array themselves in disciplined legions for the purpose of programmatic combat" but "do not." Both, that is, are saying that we should look at politicians if we want to understand parties.

An alternative to this approach comes from the traditional party organization literature, which tends to see parties as hierarchical, patronage-based groups whose power lies in the control of nominations (Mayhew 1986; Dahl 1961; Kent 1924; Wolfinger 1972). The key to Mayor Richard J. Daley's power in Cook County, Illinois, for example, was his control over party nominations. Daley routinely slated candidates for every office from the board of aldermen to county judgeships to the congressional seats within the county limits, and these candidates just as routinely won nomination in direct primary elections. According to one ward boss, "He moves us around like a bunch of chess pieces. He knows why he's doing it because he's like a Russian with a ten-year plan, but we never know" (Royko 1971: 82). Daley also exerted considerable control over the Democratic Party's choices for governor and senate during his tenure, and his reputation as a kingmaker in Democratic presidential nominations during the 1960s is legendary (Mayhew 1986: 74–75).

Studying parties as organizations or machines that try to elect people

helps us understand why the same politicians that are soulless poll-watchers in one era can be fierce party warriors in another. But it doesn't explain the dilemma at hand. That is, by virtual consensus, the party machines in the model of Daley's Chicago or Tammany Hall's New York don't exist anymore. Why would partisanship among elected officials increase as the machines go extinct?

We gain some purchase on this question from a strain of literature known as conditional party government (CPG) theory, which has the virtue of focusing both on events within the legislature as well as on forces outside it. As this theory describes, legislative party leaders have an array of tools available to foster party discipline. They can enforce unit rule voting in the party caucus, they can employ party whips to cajole members, they can award office space, staff, or popular committee assignments to loyal party members, and they can deny such perks to mavericks. However, the theory continues, the leaders' ability to use such methods is conditional on electoral forces outside the legislature (Rohde 1991; Aldrich and Battista 2002; Aldrich and Rohde 2001; Rohde and Shepsle 1987). Specifically, if the electorate sends an ideologically coherent party contingent to Congress, that party can build on its coherence by enforcing discipline on roll call voting. An ideologically incoherent party, such as the post–World War II Democratic Party with its Northern liberals and Southern segregationists, will have little success in whipping its members into line.

It would seem that understanding these forces outside the chamber is at least as important as understanding partisan tools within the chamber if we truly want to comprehend what parties are and how they function. It is surprising, then, that more attention is not devoted to such extralegislative forces, and all the more important that we try to understand them. So what are these forces that determine the partisan nature of our elected governments? From the literature, it would seem that there are two of them, voters and elites.

It was voters that Rohde was speaking of when he described "the exogenous influence of electoral change" (1991: 162) as a cause of polarization or depolarization in a legislature. That is, voters shift their preferences from time to time and vote accordingly. If a party's voters are relatively unified on a set of issues, they will tend to elect a coherent party contingent to the Congress, which will vote consistently as a bloc. If a party's voters can't agree on much, they will elect leaders who can't agree on much, either. As Rohde notes, a good deal of the variation in unity

among the congressional Democratic caucus on civil rights votes can be explained by voters' shifting preferences on racial issues. Jacobson (2004) and Aldrich et al. (2007) also find that much (though not all) of the recent polarization of the congressional parties can be explained by the increasing homogeneity of congressional districts. Indeed, the whole literature on party realignments is predicated on the notion that voters' preferences will occasionally shift in a dramatic, often unanticipated way, forcing elected partisans to change their behavior or risk electoral defeat (Burnham 1965; Schattschneider 1942; Sundquist 1983; Rogin and Shover 1970). Thanks to shifting voter preferences, for example, officeholders in the mid-1850s could no longer equivocate on slavery, as the Whig Party had essentially done for decades. You were either with the slaveholders or you were against them. An officeholder who preferred Whig economic policies but supported the institution of slavery suddenly had to make a choice, and had to make it quickly.

This view that voters determine changes in party coherence and agendas has a hard time surviving Bartels's (2000) observation that shifts in voter partisanship tend to follow, rather than precede, shifts in congressional partisanship. It seems, that is, that voters follow the cues of party leaders rather than the other way around (Hetherington 2001). These objections strongly suggest the importance of the second category of extralegislative forces: outside elites. This term refers to activists, party bosses, interest groups, and other key political actors outside the government with a strong interest in affecting government behavior. These outsiders wield power over legislators through their control over party nominations and the resources needed to win them. If such outsiders serve as gatekeepers to holding public office, we would expect that shifts in external party coalitions will lead to important changes in legislative voting behavior, even if there has been no concomitant shift in mass voting behavior.

Historically, these outside actors have been able to alter politicians' behavior without changes in the preferences of the mass public. For example, some Democratic officeholders' embrace of civil rights in the late 1940s was not an adjustment to voter demands. Rather, the interest group Americans for Democratic Action essentially forced the issue of racial equality on President Harry Truman, whose nomination in 1948 was far from assured. Truman sided with the ADA and won the nomination, but this led to the Dixiecrats bolting the Democratic Convention in 1948 (Bawn et al. 2006). Similarly, recent literature has cast doubt on the des-

ignation of the 1896 election as a critical realignment of the electorate (Mayhew 2004; Bartels 1998; Stonecash and Silina 2005). There were few changes in electoral behavior around that period. Instead, it was a matter of political activists seizing power: Western silver-coinage advocates took control of Democratic nominations from eastern gold-standard supporters. Other examples of outsider-led (rather than electorate-induced) changes in party priorities include the creation of the Republican Party in the 1850s and the takeover of that party in 1964 by the conservative Goldwater wing. What is left of realignment theory is pretty well decimated by Mayhew's (2000) analysis, in which he concludes, "The claims of the realignments genre do not hold up well, and the genre's illuminative power has not proven to be great" (471). Specifically, valence issues (Stokes 1966) or even random coin-tosses will explain more of presidential election history than realignment theory will.

Note, then, where this leaves us. Party leaders in a legislature may desire strong party behavior, but ultimately they are at the mercy of forces outside the legislature. And while voters may wish to control their elected officials, only a few key elites outside the legislature have the power over party nominations to determine just what the legislative parties will look like and fight for. But in order for these key elites to actually exert such control, they need to coordinate their activities. They need to be organized. So what does such an organization look like? What follows are two examples of modern party organizations in California.

MAXINE WATERS AND THE TOM BRADLEY ORGANIZATION

Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters is a well-established political powerhouse in Southern California. Although her reputation for adhering to somewhat extreme viewpoints (such as the CIA–crack cocaine connection) has limited her power in Washington, her status as a kingmaker within California is not disputed. As described briefly in the introduction, Waters regularly selects candidates to run in primaries for local, state, and federal office in her area of Los Angeles and provides those candidates with valuable endorsements, funds, and a spot on her sample ballot, which is mailed to voters throughout the city and has been shown to be highly influential in local elections (Lewis 2003). Her alliances with local unions and churches can help produce substantial Election Day get-out-the-vote efforts on behalf of her favored candidates.

A notable feature of Waters's organization is that it was not originally hers. Indeed, she is more properly thought of as the heiress to an organization that her mentor, former Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley, helped to build along with Democratic activists and donors in the 1960s and 1970s. As effectively described by Sonenshein (1984), Bradley's organization was, at its peak, something of a citywide machine that not only aided the mayor's reelection efforts but also supported campaigns for his allies on the city council and in the state assembly, groomed activists for eventual runs for office, forged links with state and federal officials to ensure a steady flow of patronage funds, and rewarded campaign supporters and activists from competitive precincts with prestigious city commissionerships and staff jobs.

Moreover, this organization didn't begin with Bradley. As a young activist in the 1950s, the future mayor had to work his way up within a loose political network in order to get a seat on the city council in the first place. Many of the people who would make up Bradley's inner circle when he became mayor (people like Maurice Weiner, a staffer for Democratic congressman Ed Roybal) were already important players in Los Angeles politics in the late 1950s when Bradley first became interested in running for office. Most were involved in Democratic club politics under the auspices of the California Democratic Council (CDC). Indeed, although Los Angeles was considered a nonpartisan city at that time (Banfield and Wilson 1965), CDC clubs were beginning to play an important role in local politics, slating and backing at least half a dozen city council candidates between 1953 and 1964 (Carney 1964).

Bradley distinguished himself among the members of his local Democratic club through his activism, through recruiting other members, and by building a following among local African American and Jewish voters. When he got involved in a high-profile city council recall campaign in 1961, and when he ran for a council seat in 1963, he won substantial backing from members of the CDC and even from Mayor Sam Yorty, with whom Bradley would have several bitter fights later in his career. This support allowed Bradley to stand out amid a slate of a few dozen local black candidates in his district. As Weiner described it, "People regarded Bradley as someone who had paid his dues. And they were glad, it seemed, to repay him" (Sonenshein 1984: 51). And in his 1969 mayoral race, many of Bradley's campaign staff slots were filled by people on loan from other elected officials. In other words, Bradley rose

to power abetted by a network of activists and officeholders, and he built his organization on top of the existing partisan structure.

As the Bradley organization matured in the 1970s and 1980s, it took on the flavor of a political machine, dispensing patronage and influencing elections throughout the city. Through his appointment powers and his network of allies on the council, Bradley was able to reward donors and loyal campaign workers with prestigious city commissionerships and steady public jobs. Furthermore, Bradley regularly dispatched teams of advisers to run the campaigns of candidates he supported for city council and state legislative seats. One of these advisers was Maxine Waters, who, after working on several Bradley-backed campaigns, won her own assembly seat in 1976 through the assistance of Bradley and his allies. As one of Bradley's most effective protégés, Waters has built on the organization and perpetuated its influence over politics in Los Angeles.

BILL THOMAS AND THE CENTRAL VALLEY REPUBLICAN MACHINE

Republican Bill Thomas, who served in the U.S. Congress from 1979 to 2007, is in many ways a polar opposite to Maxine Waters. For one thing, when he was chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, he obviously exerted a great deal more power in Washington than Waters ever has. And the conservative, largely rural constituency in California's San Joaquin Valley that reelected him for more than two decades bears little similarity to Waters's liberal inner-city district.

Yet, in terms of their style of organizing local politics, both Thomas and Waters appear to be cut from similar cloth. Thomas is widely feared and revered as a kingmaker in Republican politics in Bakersfield and the surrounding valley communities. "In Kern County," one reporter notes, "most political figures are gauged by their relationship to the county's powerful but controversial congressman, Republican Bill Thomas" (Pollard 1999). He rose to power, interestingly enough, as a moderate Republican professor of political science at Bakersfield Community College, offering local Republican operatives suggestions for revitalizing their party organization and making their candidates more competitive (Bardella 2004). Thomas routinely selects and endorses candidates in primaries for state, local, and federal offices throughout the southern San

Joaquin Valley. His backing is widely sought by Republican office seekers as a symbol of political viability, often leading to donations and endorsements from other officeholders, as well as from local conservative groups and business leaders. Such assistance is widely credited with getting the little-known twenty-eight-year-old Devin Nunes, who had worked on one of Thomas's campaigns, elected to Congress in 2002 (Werner 2004). Those who have served on Thomas's staff, including U.S. representative Kevin McCarthy and state senator Roy Ashburn, have found paths cleared for them in their own quests for office.

Although Thomas's influence is considered strongest within his own community, it is felt throughout the conservative San Joaquin Valley. In a tightly contested primary race for an open congressional district in suburban Sacramento in 2004, for example, Thomas provided candidate Dan Lungren with copious funds and access to his own fund-raiser. This assistance helped Lungren edge out state senator Rico Oller by less than 3,000 votes (Werner 2004).

What do we make of the Waters and Thomas organizations as parties? They are, notably, not legislative coalitions. Thomas was capable as a legislative mechanic—Waters is somewhat less so—but their power in California does not stem from their ability to craft or pass federal legislation. The collective action dilemmas they are trying to resolve do not originate in the House of Representatives. These organizations are also not traditional party groups in the model of Tammany Hall. Waters and Thomas are not bosses, in the traditional sense of the word, in that they do not spend much of their days meting out patronage in exchange for favors. Finally, there is little evidence that these two are or ever have been single-minded seekers of reelection. Both Waters and Thomas are fierce partisan fighters, and they regularly slate candidates on the basis of their loyalty to a coherent ideology.

The sort of party politics in which Waters and Thomas are engaged is different from how we typically think of parties. They seem to derive some authority from their status as veteran members of Congress, yet their political power with California seems to stem mostly from their skill in picking candidates for primary elections and getting them elected. This skill involves building and utilizing alliances with donors, activists, and other prominent partisan figures throughout their respective communities.

Importantly, both Waters and Thomas are playing key roles in the continued polarization of American politics. Although moderate on such

key social issues as abortion and gun control, Thomas doesn't shy away from bombastic rhetoric or tactics in supporting his party over the Democrats, and he was singularly partisan in his administration of his duties on Capitol Hill. Indeed, while chairing a raucous Ways and Means Committee session on a pension bill, Thomas famously called in the Capitol police to remove the committee's Democrats from a library where they were attempting to caucus (Eilperin and Crenshaw 2003). Maxine Waters, meanwhile, has championed numerous far-left causes throughout her career. Long before the public soured on the Iraq War, for example, she accused President Bush of sending "American military men and women to be killed and maimed in a war based on a web of lies and deceit" (Waters 2004). Her voting record has placed her among the six most liberal members of the House in the past eight consecutive congresses. Both Waters and Thomas have also made a point of working for the nomination of like-minded candidates in their home communities.

The Waters and Thomas organizations, as I will show in subsequent chapters, are far from unique. They are examples of what I call informal party organizations, or IPOs: loose coalitions of activists, donors, and key officeholders who exert control over party nominations. This seems to be the dominant form of party activity in California and, I believe, elsewhere. If this is what's going on, then we need to upgrade our understanding of party dynamics. This is what I seek to do in the remainder of this chapter. Before doing that, though, it is helpful to think carefully about why party organizations form in the first place.

SERIOUSLY, WHY PARTIES?

In his famous book *Why Parties?* John Aldrich (1995) builds an account of party origin that is based on the goals that politicians are trying to accomplish. I do much the same in this section, reaching many parallel conclusions—but with one major difference. I pose the *Why Parties?* question for the whole panoply of players involved in party politics, not simply for candidates and officeholders.

Supply and Demand

Party organizations can be viewed from both a supply and a demand side. From the supply side, a few key officeholders offer the promise of deliv-

ering what constituents want from government—everything from lost Social Security checks to special provisions in the law to fat contracts to new highways. They offer this help for the same reason that business entrepreneurs offer products to customers: because they expect to profit from meeting a market need. And, as in other market situations, the political entrepreneurs attempt to grow their market share, for the simple reason that greater market share generates greater returns to the entrepreneur. These returns may be material or ideological, or they may simply consist of the personal enjoyment of power. The last is not to be neglected. To no small degree, power is its own reward for many officeholders, and building up an organization allows one to obtain more of it.

Demand for party organization comes from two main groups of people: resource donors and candidates. Resource donors—and here I include not just financial supporters of candidates, but unions, clubs, and other groups that donate the time, labor, and expertise that can be crucial in an electoral campaign—want to be able to control some aspect of government behavior. In essence, they wish to "buy" a piece of the government. Doing so without organization, however, is virtually impossible. As Schattschneider (1942) notes, there are hundreds of thousands of interests in the United States, each with the desire to affect public policy in some way. But even the wealthiest government must eventually discriminate among solicitors, and members of an interest invariably have differing levels of commitment to their cause. Given the multitude of demands on government and the challenges of keeping an interest united and committed, it is nearly impossible for an individual or an interest to affect government behavior. This feat is only possible through organization.

This argument applies as strongly to issue activists seeking their ideal of "good public policy" from government as it does to businesspeople seeking material favors. That is, activists want to be in close contact with the people who make the decisions, to be able to aggregate their individually small contributions into something to which a politician must pay attention, and to avoid making wasteful contributions to losers. Parties have often disliked "doing business" with activists because activists care about issues that are divisive to machine organizations. But if the concerns of the issue activists are organized by ideology, which they nowadays are, the potential for internal division is lessened. And if the activists are willing to put their money or their labor on the line for the party, officeholders may be quite pleased to respond to their demands upon the political system.

Besides benefit seekers, a second source of demand for the creation of party organizations is staff members and aspiring candidates. Staffers, for their part, desire some stability and predictability in their careers. Given levels of turnover in government, many staff jobs only last two or four years, and campaign jobs just a few months. If the officeholder is not well tied to an established organization, it may be difficult to find a job with her in the first place. And if the staffer works for a losing campaign, it will be all the harder for her to find a new job if the candidate was unaffiliated. Informal party organizations can lend some order to this chaos. The loose affiliation among various officeholders, and the fact that members of legislative chambers often know one another quite well, means that individual workers can hope to move up a reasonably stable and meritocratic career ladder. Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley, for example, did not have ample staff positions to hire all his loyal activists, but he was able to find jobs for supporters in the offices of some of his close city council allies (Sonenshein 1984: 146). By working for an affiliated politician, staffers can be sure that they will quickly be able to find a new job when their boss leaves office or when the campaign ends, even if it is an unsuccessful one.

The other source of demand for party organizations comes from people who aspire to run for office. More than anything, these people want a defined career path to office. One way to achieve that is to align oneself with a prominent officeholder by serving as a staffer, or as a trustworthy lobbyist, adviser, or fund-raiser. Such a relationship offers ready access to donors, activists, brokers, reporters, and other contacts necessary for a serious run for office. But there are drawbacks. The aspiring politician may have to wait until the officeholder retires or dies to get a shot at running for office, and there may be other apparatchiks with similar intentions. Similarly, if the officeholder commits some apostasy or crime or leaves office in disgrace, the aspirant's ambitions are thwarted.

Party organizations offer a solution to these problems. The aspiring politician can move from office to office, building contacts and experience along the way, without incurring the risks of being closely tied to just one officeholder. Plus, there are always openings for new candidates within an organization and a defined pecking order determining whose turn it is to run. Only established party organizations can credibly promise such a career path in politics.

Party organizations thus arise both because elected officials have an interest in supplying benefits from the government and because donors,

workers, and candidates demand them. At the nexus of this supply and demand lies an organizational arrangement that meets the needs of all participants: long, profitable, and influential careers for officeholders; influence and efficiency for donors; and a career ladder for aspiring politicians.

A Digression on Patronage and Honest Graft in Their Modern Forms

The preceding discussion assumes that public officials still perform favors and provide preferential services to individual constituents. It assumes, that is, that patronage and graft still exist on a significant scale. One may legitimately object, then, if there is so much favoritism and graft occurring, why do we not hear of more arrests?

The answer is that favoritism and graft can occur without running technically afoul of the law. To understand this, one merely need to reflect on the lessons of George Washington Plunkitt, a New York state legislator of the late 1800s and ranking member of the Tammany organization. Plunkitt's greatest contribution to our political lexicon was the term *honest graft,* by which he meant the legal (if ethically questionable) means for politicians to enrich themselves personally through their connections. For example, when, through his political contacts, Plunkitt learned a public park was to be built in a certain area of New York, he rushed out and bought up the land for a song. The taxpayers then needed to buy the land from him. "Ain't it perfectly honest to charge a good price and make a profit on my investment and foresight?" asked Plunkitt. "Of course, it is. Well, that's honest graft" (Riordan 1963). Plunkitt's motto (which he encouraged others to adopt) was simply "I seen my opportunities and I took 'em."

Is there any reason to believe that modern politicians are constitutionally different from Plunkitt and his peers? Outright favoritism, theft of public treasuries, or giving out public jobs for political favors are certainly illegal in their most blatant forms. But it is reasonable to assume that public officials will engage in similar activities that fall just short of criminality, particularly when such activities ensure political success. "Every good man looks after his friends," Plunkitt reminds us, "and any man who doesn't isn't likely to be popular" (Riordan 1963).

Patronage, defined broadly, is nothing more than "the manipulation of public authority for the special benefit of officeholders, their sponsors, business associates, and friends" (Mansfield 1965: 118). Mansfield notes

that the modern spoils system may come in a variety of shapes and sizes, including

> unduly restrictive specifications for contract bidding, favoritism in contract awards, and preference or discrimination in the inspection of contract performance; special treatment for inmates of institutions; discriminatory enforcement of the criminal law and of building, health, zoning, and other codes; differential tax assessments; tariff, franchise, and license privileges; "honest graft" in the acquisition of real estate; and the like. (118)

This definition echoes Wilson's (1973: 97) description of patronage as jobs, contracts, professional opportunities, and legal exemptions resulting from one's contact with and loyalty to a local regime. So defined, patronage is alive and well, as are the organizations that specialize in dealing in these forms of patronage.

Consider, for example, a land developer who wants to encourage businesses and homeowners to relocate to an uninhabited area that she happens to own. The presence of roads and running water would certainly relieve potential investors' anxieties about the project. Securing roads and plumbing, however, requires approval and funding from either city or county government (or both). If the land development is near a coastline or some other protected land, the project may require approval from the state or federal government (or both). And depending on local spending rules, a bond or tax measure may need to be passed by the electorate to help fund the venture. The developer is probably wealthy and may gain some access to officeholders through generous campaign donations, but how can she win support from all the key people at the right time to make the development a worthwhile venture? How does she know how to allocate her money and lobbying efforts, or does she just contribute equally (and no doubt wastefully) to all the officeholders in her area? And how does she make her voice heard among the din of other developers, environmental protection organizations, suburban sprawl opponents, and the myriad other groups demanding attention and funds from their governments? She might have potential allies in the form of other land developers, but they may be more committed to other projects and not be willing to back her at key junctures. What is an influence seeker to do?

This problem, and one possible solution, was outlined by Tammany Hall boss Richard Croker, who was asked by reform-minded journalist Lincoln Steffens, "Why should there be bosses when cities had mayors,

council, and judges?" Croker replied, "It's because there's a mayor *and* a council *and* judges *and*—a hundred other men to deal with. . . . A business man wants to do business with one man, and one who is always there to remember and carry out the—business." As Walsh (1972: 4) explains, "The boss, while normally holding no public office, served as an unofficial nervous system for a decapitated monster whose ever extending extremities might otherwise flay unknowing bystanders with total unpredictability. The boss, at least, was predictable."

In his early-twentieth-century treatise on machine politics, Kent (1924) finds similar value in the party boss:

> What, for instance, would these business interests do without the machine boss? Where, when legislative action of a disastrous kind threatens, would they go, if there were no boss? How would they stop a bill that affected them adversely, or pass one that they wanted passed? They could do it, of course, but not easily. It would mean going to the seat of the legislative body themselves, or employing expensive lawyers and lobbyists, making a hard, costly, and disagreeable fight, getting down into the mess of politics personally and fighting their way out. They would have to deal with all sorts of sub-bosses, ward executives, district leaders, and county overlords. They would have to count noses, pore over roll calls, locate the controlling influence over delegations. (90–91)

Of course, bossism isn't necessarily the solution to this problem. The solution is *organization,* and bossism is but one of its forms.

As these authors suggest, one vital function that party organizations perform is the coordination of activities across multiple levels of government. Without such coordination, it is nearly impossible to get most projects done. As Schattschneider (1942) argued, the thousands of interest groups peppering the national landscape also desire party organizations because parties give them an edge when competing for the government's attention and resources. Although Schattschneider didn't say it specifically, it follows that if a group is going to get what it wants out of the public sector, it will need compliance among several different levels of government. Thus the members of an informal party organization will try to support candidates at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels of government.

For ideologically motivated members, the commitment to various issues does not end at the state or city border—all levels of government are important to the organization. For those with more material motivations,

access to many levels of government is important because their support-ers regularly have needs from those various levels. Transportation policy is just one example of the need for intergovernmental cooperation. Local officeholders may be the first to recognize the need for a bridge, train, or freeway in an area, but they need the support of state and federal office-holders to get ample funding and land use privileges. The funds will change governmental hands multiple times over the course of the proj-ect. A special purpose government, such as a local transit authority or port authority, may even be created in the process to build and maintain the project. If a business group wants to ensure that the new construction project serves the right communities, hires the right companies who em-ploy the right unions, and wins plaudits for the right officeholders, coor-dination across many levels of government is essential.

This need for coordination among multiple governments leads to an emphasis on local control. An informal party organization exerts the most leverage over those officeholders who rely upon it for election or reelec-tion (or, more specifically, nomination and renomination), and it exerts the most influence over those voters who are familiar with its public lead-ers. If an IPO wants to control nominations at the federal, state, and mu-nicipal levels and extract benefits from the incumbents it supports, it will really only be able to do so by operating locally.

At this point, the reader may object to my claim that patronage—even if legal—exists on a widespread basis today. Some authors claim that the conditions that allowed patronage to prosper no longer exist. As Sorauf (1960: 31) has argued, "Rising levels of prosperity, higher educational levels, declining numbers of unassimilated groups, and greater concern by government for the unfortunate all point to a decline of the boss and machine and of the patronage they relied on." Residents of East Los An-geles, Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, and Chicago's South Side would no doubt take issue with this report. If machines de-pend on the presence of urban poverty and poorly assimilated immigrant groups, then there is plenty to sustain them in essentially all major Amer-ican cities and many minor ones.

Nontraditional forms of patronage may also provide a basis for politi-cal organizations. Although the typical view of patronage is one of low-paying spoils jobs and charity payments that can be handed out to regime supporters, officeholders can reward adherents in many other ways. Staff positions in the offices of city, county, state, and federal elected officials, while not as numerous as the old bureaucratic positions now in the hands

of civil service employees, have grown substantially in number in recent decades and provide livelihoods to dozens or even hundreds of an urban machine's key supporters. These staffers supply vital campaign assistance to their bosses and sometimes—but not always—go off the clock to aid friendly candidates for other offices. As Macartney (1975: 194) found in his survey of Los Angeles area elected officials, "Staff campaigning on government time is both widespread and illegal." Guerra (2002) adds, "In some respects [staff campaigning is] much more effective [than the Chicago machines], politically speaking, not in terms of political patronage, but in terms of delivering the vote. . . . These are professional, political, and public servants, who, on a moment's notice, can shift gears from politics to policy, back and forth."

The increasing size of public staffs in recent decades makes for more effective casework. For constituents in need of assistance with Social Security benefits, Medicaid coverage, law enforcement, or land use disputes, their local public officials have staff members who are at the ready (Fiorina 1977). As Wolfinger (1972: 385) notes, the growth of the welfare state has not lessened the responsibilities of the old political machines. Rather, "continuing growth in the scope, complexity, and impersonality of institutional life [may] produce greater need for politicians to mediate between individuals and their government."

"For holders of local office," says Macartney (1975: 202), "and increasingly for congressmen and state legislators, the district office is becoming a patronage-dispensing-station, not unlike the clubhouses of the old machines." Macartney (228) sums up the influence of staffers by noting, "Staffing can and does fulfill . . . traditional party 'functions,' such as political recruitment, tending to the public's political education and socialization (through the efforts of public relations aides), acting as a linkage between governors and governed, and even dispensing welfare (casework) as the party's machines used to."

In short, the decline of traditional forms of patronage, material benefits, and what Plunkitt called "honest graft" since the golden age of the TPO does not mean that most patronage has disappeared. Nor does it signify a more general decline in the incentives of individuals to be active in political parties. Purposive incentives, while carrying their own sets of challenges, can and have been used to sustain political organizations. And other, less traditional forms of patronage—including public staff positions, casework, and public works projects—can substitute for the traditional ones.

WHO PARTIES?

This discussion suggests the need for a theory of parties that accounts for the coordination of various actors both inside and outside the government. Before describing how this coordination occurs, it would be helpful for me to be more concrete about the individuals who inhabit modern political parties. In my taxonomy, there are four basic types:

1. *Officeholders and candidates.* Informal party organizations are usually identified with the one or two prominent officeholders who lead them. These officeholders leverage their relationships with other incumbents, their control over government machinery, and their name recognition among voters to influence elections and procure benefits for the IPO's supporters. Candidates often emerge from the activist community or the officeholder's staff. They are selected for their loyalty to an IPO and for various candidate qualities (name recognition, access to campaign money, etc.). They receive assistance from the IPO, including additional campaign funds and endorsements, that all but assures them the nomination. In return, they are expected to remain loyal to the IPO's backers once in office—they may be de-nominated if they stray too far from a particular agenda.

2. *Benefit seekers.* These actors include businesses, unions, civic organizations, and ordinary voters who wish to control government output. They may have ideological concerns of their own, but those concerns usually come second to more pragmatic issues of how to secure material government benefits for themselves or their membership. Benefit seekers often have considerable sums of money to contribute directly to candidates or to IPO leaders, although sometimes they will donate labor or advice. Through such donations, benefit seekers hope to curry favor with the IPO leaders and their anointed candidates, giving them influence over or at least access to the political process and an edge over rival organizations that do not make such contributions.

3. *Political activists.* These individuals, who can usually be found in volunteer associations or in local formal party organizations, are usually driven by ideological motivations to try to influence government to move in some direction or to address some pressing public issue. Activists may also enjoy solidary (social) benefits from simply associating with their like-minded peers (Wilson 1973). Others may hope to rise in politics, perhaps to the status of officeholder. Activists are usually less pragmatic and more purposive than benefit seekers; they do not tolerate compro-

mise among the elected officials they support, and they usually support the more ideologically extreme candidates. Activists usually contribute to candidates and IPOs through their labor, serving as campaign staffers and Election Day canvassers.

4. *Brokers.* These actors help coordinate actions among the other three types. Brokers are seasoned political players, usually experienced officeholders, lobbyists, or campaign consultants, who help maintain the organization's connections. They perform the essential function of centralizing and dispensing money and other resources necessary to campaign for office. For example, money brokers arrange small fund-raisers that put many individual donors in touch with credible candidates. Although the money they give to any particular candidate may be too small to gain much influence, regular giving through a broker assures that, when donors need help, the broker will remember them. The broker, who knows several officeholders well, may then have the pull to obtain the desired benefit on behalf of the donor. Candidates like brokers because they are a centralized source of campaign resources. Individual donors like brokers because they are a way of leveraging their donations.

One particular type of broker is the archetypal political "boss." Even if this person is not a prominent officeholder, he or she may be in a position to decide which candidates to recruit or support and to deploy other people's time, labor, and money accordingly. Brokers of all types are highly attuned to the political environment and follow the cues of local leaders to know which candidates have the support to run credible races. Brokers may be motivated by a combination of ideological and material goals; they can't operate if they can't turn a profit, but politics is often not their main source of income. Rather, they become so involved because they desire to achieve some goal in politics.

Individual actors may and occasionally do occupy more than one role (Clark and Wilson 1961). For example, an officeholder may, by involving herself in multiple campaigns, also be an activist. A businessperson may, as a benefit seeker, donate cash or other resources to a campaign, and may also work for that campaign for ideological reasons. The organization that these different actors form may be large and somewhat loosely defined, but it can usually be identified by the one or two high-profile personalities who lead it.

These informal organizations exist for the sole purpose of controlling

government—or at least a piece of it. The distinction between holding an office, as an individual politician might want to do, and controlling a part of the government is critical. Controlling part of the government allows a group to actually deliver goods: ideological goods to activists, special benefits to donors, jobs to party workers. Because many goods require action across levels of government, and also because party supporters may want discrete goods out of multiple levels of government, control of government must span levels. Control need not be total. It merely needs to be sufficient to supply party supporters with the particular goods they require to remain part of the IPO.

Parties and Nominations

Following Schattschneider (1942), I offer a model of parties that sees control of nominations as the key to control of the government. My contribution is to adapt this idea to contemporary conditions. If *formal* party organizations are not capable of controlling the nominations process (as appears increasingly to be the case), others will do the job. I propose that the job will be filled by informal party organizations (IPOs): loose affiliations among political actors, including candidates, officeholders, benefit seekers, activists, and brokers who facilitate relationships among the others.

My approach resonates with other important strands in the parties literature. Schlesinger (1985) and Aldrich (1983, 1995), for example, have suggested that the definition of party organization should include both ambitious office seekers and benefit seekers who "hold, or have access to, critical resources that office seekers need" (Aldrich 1995: 20). Aldrich's activists or "policy demanders" tend to be ideologically extreme and demand no small degree of extremity from prospective nominees. Candidates recognize that moving away from the median voter may be costly in terms of votes, but that cost may be outweighed by the resources they receive from pleased activists. Similarly, Miller and Schofield (2003) see activists, rather than voters, as the main cause of party realignments. Schwartz's (1990) study of Illinois Republicans and Monroe's (2001) analysis of Los Angeles politicians, meanwhile, suggest that the network concept of party captures more truth than the older hierarchical model. Bernstein (1999) and Doherty (2006) find that political consultants form part of an "expanded party." Cohen et al. (2008) provide a powerful cri-

tique of the candidate-centered school of American politics, demonstrating that an alliance of donors and elite endorsers in each party have controlled presidential nominations since 1980. Recently, Dominguez (2005) has found evidence of a network of donors and endorsers who coordinate to promote some candidates in congressional primaries and prevent others from winning, and Koger, Masket, and Noel (2008) have used the direct mail address market to chart out the contours of extended party networks.

I draw from many of these works in my research. However, most of these studies focus on national politics, and Schwartz's (1990) otherwise compelling study of a state party does not delve much into a generalizable theory of local party organization. Indeed, there have been relatively few studies of parties that have actually gotten inside a local party organization to understand how it is run. This is understandable—the research is difficult and time-consuming, and the resulting scholarship is often descriptive rather than theoretical. Ehrenhalt's (1991) sketches of power in communities from Concord, California, to Sioux City, South Dakota, for example, give us some idea of the range of organizational structures that can govern a local community, although they don't give us much of a framework for understanding why a type of structure would emerge in one place and not another.

Epstein's (1958) rich descriptions of politics in Wisconsin, while admittedly atheoretical, provide some interesting points of comparison for California. After all, the Badger State was also home to a particularly strong variant of Progressivism in the first half of the twentieth century, producing an antiparty ideology similar to that found on the West Coast: "Wisconsin law treats parties as though they might pervert the real will of the voters," notes Epstein (31). Epstein's study demonstrates how party elites will often work outside of the formal party organizations to get what they need out of politics:

> For over twenty years, the regular or conservative Republicans had found it convenient to focus their activities, not in the statutory party, but the Republican Voluntary Committee (later called the Republican Party of Wisconsin). In the 1920s, the Voluntary Committee was necessary because the La Follettes controlled the statutory organization, but later (and to some extent always) the unofficial vehicle was useful as a means of avoiding the financial limitations imposed by law on the official party. Similarly the Democrats, when they wanted in 1948 to build a liberal-oriented organization, chose the unofficial form in order to have a less closely regulated kind of party. (51)

Clarence Stone offers something of a theory of local political organization in his analysis of Atlanta (1989), helping us understand why informal organizations emerge and how they are sustained. Stone's postwar Atlanta is a city run by an informal, biracial coalition of government officials and downtown business elites. Its leadership has helped avoid the racial strife encountered by many other Southern cities, but at a cost: poverty and other social maladies have gone largely unaddressed and have festered. Stone's study is specific to Atlanta, but his regime theory is certainly generalizable. Urban areas around the globe, after all, are marked by institutional sectors (government, business, entertainment, civic associations, etc.) that have no official unifying command structure. In such places, often an informal "regime" will emerge, proving itself very useful to members of different sectors who want to get things done. As Stone (1989) explains,

> The regime is purposive, created and maintained as a way of facilitating action. In a very important sense, *a regime is empowering.* Its supporters see it as a means for achieving coordinated efforts that might not otherwise be realized. (4–5; emphasis in original)

This certainly helps us understand why people get involved in politics and how important informal associations can be. However, there is little examination of parties per se, and neither Stone, Epstein, nor Ehrenhalt pays much attention to the dynamics of party nominations (although Epstein does note intraparty factionalism among Republicans). Here I must improvise.

Controlling Nominations

Given the interests of IPOs in controlling government, they fall within the classic definitions of parties provided by Schattschneider and Wilson. The former refers to a party as an organized attempt to seize power (Schattschneider 1942), the latter calls it "a group of persons who consciously coordinate their activities so as to influence the choice of candidates for elective office" (Wilson 1973: 95). These esteemed authors notably do not demand that this group of persons belong to some official party organization. So long as they are coordinating to influence the choice of candidates and thereby control government, they *are* the party organization.

Controlling government, of course, is no small task. To achieve that, the group must agree on good candidates for office. Members of IPOs attempt to find candidates who will work with them rather than competing organizations, and will try to create a united front to support these candidates (Schattschneider 1942).

Although much research on parties focuses on their performance in general elections, it is the primary election—or caucus, convention, or whatever means by which candidates are nominated—that determines who and what the party is. General elections obviously matter, but, as we saw in the introductory chapter, their outcomes are usually assured well in advance. In both the U.S. Congress and the California assembly, usually far fewer than 10 percent of legislative seats are considered "in play" in a given election.

Primary elections, by contrast, are far less predictable and far more open to manipulation. Voters choosing among candidates in a primary lack the party cue to guide them, relying on what information they can cheaply find to help them distinguish between candidates. Advertisements, yard signs, endorsements, slate mailers—all things that informal party organizations can produce—thus become much more powerful electoral tools, and the organization that can dominate those forms of communication holds an enormous advantage.

In addition, there are fewer voters to influence in a primary. In the 2002 primary election, for example, only 25 percent of California's eligible voters made it to the polls, as compared with 36 percent in the general election that year. In a hotly contested Democratic primary in the state's Forty-eighth Assembly District that year, only 26,108 of the district's 104,046 registered Democrats bothered to vote. A few thousand or even a few hundred votes in one direction or another can often change the outcome of a primary, and indeed in the Forty-eighth District, Mark Ridley Thomas beat Mike Davis by a mere 1,452 votes. As Kent (1924) argues, low turnout in primaries

> plays directly into the hands of the machine. This is what makes it possible for the machine to limit our choice in the general election to its choice in the primaries. This is the reason machines are powerful and a sufficient explanation of why so many unfit men are in public office. It can all be summed up in the single statement: The voters will not take part in the primaries. (4–5)

It is no accident that during the 2003 California budget crisis, Senator Jim Brulte (R-Rancho Cucamonga) threatened wavering Republicans

in primaries. The primary election, with its low turnout and low information environment, is much easier for a party organization to manipulate than the general election. Moreover, the primary is usually the only election that matters, since the general election for both state and federal legislatures is often a fait accompli. And even if general elections were more dynamic, the primary would still be the place to study party politics. A political organization, notes Kent (1924: 11), "can lose its candidate time after time in the general election without greatly diminishing its strength or loosing the grip of its leaders. . . . But if it loses in the primaries, it is out of business. Any organization that cannot carry the primary election is a defunct organization." Kent (1924) persuasively argues for the importance of primaries when he states,

> Primaries are really the key to politics. There is no way for party candidates to get on the general election ballot except through the primaries. Primaries are the exclusive gate through which all party candidates must pass. Control of that gate in any community means control of the political situation in that community. It makes no difference whether the candidates who pass through the gate are knocked down in the general election or not, the next set of candidates must pass through the primary gate just the same. It ought to be plain, then, that so long as the machine controls the primaries, it is in a position to limit the choice of the voters in the general election to its choice in the primaries. That is the real secret of its power, and, so long as it holds that power, it cannot be put out of business. (7)

Although Kent was describing the machines of his day, his description could well be applied to any organization seeking to influence public affairs. If an organization wants to control a part of government, it must ensure that its candidate can win the primary. The nomination fight is therefore the appropriate place to study local party strength and character.

IPOs thus control government by controlling the nomination process. But how do they do that? Quite simply, they follow the same logic that Aldrich (1995) and Schwartz (1989) outlined for members of legislatures: they form minimal winning coalitions. That is, they work with just enough people—but no more—to control the outcome of a primary. An ideological activist will form an alliance with enough major donors so that the candidates she backs will receive sufficient funds to prevail in a contested primary. A business leader will find enough prominent local citizens who can make the endorsements that will tip an election. Having too few people in an IPO is futile since they won't be able to control a pri-

mary. Too many means that the individual members have to compromise more than necessary to achieve what they want. Trial and error will tell the members of these groups just how many people they need to involve.

Assembling these coalitions and figuring out just how many people to involve are, of course, costly exercises. The leaders of these groups would rather not have to do these tasks every election cycle. It makes far more sense for these organizations to be relatively permanent. Thus will they continue over the years from election to election, holding the same leaders and slating roughly the same group of candidates, albeit for different positions.

The payoff for installing a slate of candidates—the control of a portion of government and the attendant subsidies, ideological benefits, and preferential treatment—is potentially very large. It is therefore reasonable to expect that those community actors not included in the IPO will form their own alliance. And since primaries are, for the most part, winner-take-all events, and since most legislative districts in the United States are single-member districts, Duverger's Law would lead us to expect just two factions to emerge. And because these factions share a party identification, there will not be an enormous ideological difference between the two. As Key (1949: 304) described factional disputes in the one-party South, "campaigns often are the emptiest sorts of debates over personalities, over means for the achievement of what everybody agrees on." We can expect such trivial distinctions between intraparty groups in any functionally one-party region. But the distinction between the two groups is real: if you are with Group A, you will suffer when Group B wins, and vice versa.

The degree to which these factions can work together depends largely on how competitive a given district is. If a district is winnable by either political party, then the two factions within a party may attempt to bridge differences for that race, rather than have a costly primary that ends up handing the seat to the other party. However, if the area strongly leans toward one party, there is no particular need for factions within that party to work past their differences. The latter appears to be the typical situation in the vast majority of congressional and state legislative districts across the country.

Because these alliances are located in the communities where voting occurs, they are better able to control politics than alliances located within a legislature. That is, within a legislature, leaders hold coalitional lines together through the use of whips and caucuses, by rewarding or

denying members privileges, chairmanships, and office resources, and by directly persuading members. Even the most obstinate legislative coalition member must be tolerated, though; a legislative leader cannot fire another legislator.

Conversely, an IPO maintains its grip on politics by serving as the gatekeeper to office. If an officeholder is acting in a manner that the IPO leaders find unacceptable, that officeholder will not be cajoled or denied resources; she will be fired. IPO leaders can find a more suitable candidate and provide her with the funds, endorsements, and Election Day labor she needs to defeat the incumbent.

By serving as the gatekeeper to party nominations, IPOs ensure that only the sorts of people they like—people who will vote in a certain ideological fashion or will provide particular benefits to their backers—will be able to serve in government. And once the IPO has filled the local, state, and federal offices in its region with supportive politicians, it can fulfill the desires of its participating members: patronage jobs, construction projects, preferential regulatory or tax policies, and so forth.

Two recent trends have made primary elections even more important to the political process. The first is the increasing polarization of legislative districts, whether due to partisan redistricting (Eilperin 2006) or self-sorting by voters (Abramowitz and Alexander 2004; Oppenheimer 2005). A few decades ago, when districts contained more equal proportions of Republicans and Democrats, it was a challenge for officeholders to please both the median voter in the primary and the median voter in the general election. The former was likely a strong partisan of her own party and the latter was often an independent or weakly attached partisan. It was this tension that prompted Richard Nixon's advice to anyone interested in winning a Republican nomination: "You have to run as far as you can to the right. But to get elected, you have to run as fast as you can back towards the middle" (Cornwell 1995). In a "safe" district, however, the median general election voter is a partisan rather than an unattached independent; the tension between pleasing both the primary and general median voters is largely alleviated. Thus there is even less incentive to deviate from the wishes of the ideological extremists who run IPOs—the reward for centrist behavior is reduced.

Some have argued that the effect of district polarization is a reduction in political accountability (see, e.g., Eilperin 2006; *Los Angeles Times* Staff 2005). However, in my model, the locus of accountability has merely been shifted from the general to the primary election, making

officeholders more responsive to primary electorates and the IPOs that influence them.

The second trend that has increased the importance of primaries is term limits, which were enacted in California and twenty other states starting in the early 1990s. Term limits further increase the importance of primaries by forcing career politicians out of their current office at regular intervals. To maintain their careers, these politicians must frequently run in contested primaries as nonincumbents. With their incumbency advantage gone, these candidates become more dependent upon and subservient to IPOs for assistance in winning office.

Candidate Selection

The method by which IPOs select candidates to back for nomination is complicated and not normally directly observable by outsiders. Their aim, however, is always to find candidates who can win and who will cooperate with them while in office. The old conception of a strong party machine picking candidates from obscurity and getting them elected is, for the most part, an unrealistic one. Selecting a candidate with no public reputation, no money, and few personal contacts requires the organization to do all the political work of electing her. It is far more efficient for the organization to coordinate on someone with access to campaign funds and who carries some standing with at least a small section of the electorate.

Members of officeholders' staffs generally make very good candidates. Because they have worked closely with IPO leaders or their close affiliates, staffers are usually a known quantity; strengths and potential embarrassments can be assessed prior to running. Staffers, particularly district representatives, are usually on cordial terms with the key local figures—including donors, activists, and reporters—who can make a nomination campaign go smoothly. Elected officials from small towns may also make promising candidates, since they are familiar with the habits of running and have probably forged ties to voters, local activist groups, and wealthy contributors. Business leaders and otherwise wealthy individuals may be chosen, but only if they have ties to some established donors or activists within an IPO. The wealthy didn't become wealthy by throwing away their money, and such candidates cannot always be relied upon to spend what is necessary to win a nomination; an ability to get other people to spend their money is a far more desirable trait in politics.

Just because candidates nominated by IPOs are willing to work within organizations does not mean that they are pragmatic or centrist. Indeed, the candidate-selection process works systematically to produce polarized partisan officeholders. Organizations, as I have suggested, choose among the serious activists, public staff members, and local officeholders steeped in the political community. These potential recruits, having learned about and debated political issues for some time through their activities in politics, tend to be relatively extreme in their outlook. Two separate processes may account for this extremism, either jointly or independently. The first is best described by Zaller's (1992) work on political polarization. As people are exposed to greater levels of political information, they tend to seek messages that reinforce their predispositions while filtering out countervailing information. Because candidate recruits have been immersed in politics for some time, they have been exposed to large doses of political information, becoming ideologically polarized through the learning process.

Another reason that candidates are extreme is that so many of them got involved in politics as activists or with their help. As has been widely reported (Carsey and Layman 2005; Abramowitz, McGlennon, and Rapoport 1983; Miller and Schofield 2003; Layman and Carsey 2002), activists are far more partisan and ideologically polarized than the general population. This is because, as Aldrich (1983) suggests, only those who perceive serious differences between the two parties will take on the costly task of becoming activists, a considerably costlier task than simply voting. If the policy outcomes appear the same regardless of which party wins, there is little advantage to helping one of them. Similarly, if the parties are ideologically equidistant from the prospective activist, that individual becomes indifferent as to which one wins. Therefore, ideologically centrist individuals, who see the two parties as equally extreme, have little incentive to become activists. Only those already close to one party see any value to getting involved. Thus activists—a major source of political candidates and party elites—tend to be relatively extreme.

The result of these two mechanisms is that political organizations select from a highly skewed sample of public political sentiments. The organization will have its own set of policy goals. If it is dominated by business leaders, it may recruit the most centrist candidates it can find among the ideologically polarized candidate pool. If it is dominated by programmatic partisans, the candidates recruited may tend to be more extreme. Yet these partisans will not be foolish enough to slate candidates too extreme

to win. Even the most ardent of the parties' activists tend to look toward electability when recruiting (Stone and Abramowitz 1983). Indeed, organizations face a trade-off between pleasing themselves and winning elections. As Kent (1924: 105) described it, "What [the boss] does is to try so to load the ticket in the primary with the precise proportion of 'Muldoons' [loyal organization people] that can get by in the general election—but no more." How the organization's leaders manage this trade-off is unclear, but a good assumption is that they will nominate as ideologically extreme a candidate as they feel they can get away with. As King (2003) suggests, even ideologically moderate districts often end up with extremist elected officials because of the influence of activist organizations. Regardless of the goals of the organization, because it selects from a pool of people with political experience, it will tend to produce candidates whose preferences diverge from those of the constituency at large.

Disciplining Slackards and Apostates

In theory, if candidate selection is done properly, no behavioral reinforcement is necessary. That is, informal party organizations generally want to slate a candidate who will work to enact a certain ideological agenda. If they're good enough at finding such a person, they should be able to trust that candidate to work for their agenda throughout her career. However, one can never be sure. Most of these candidates have never held high office before, and the temptation to drift toward the ideological center to protect one's career may surpass the desire to stay faithful to one's early backers.

Knowing this, IPO leaders will complement the carrots of funding and endorsements with the stick of de-nomination. If an elected official strays too far from the agenda of her original backers, they can respond by "primarying" her, backing a more dependable rival for the party nomination in the next election. An incumbent may develop some resistance to these threats by cultivating a personal following and a war chest, but it can be difficult to beat a high-quality, well-financed challenger in a primary if word has gotten out that the incumbent has betrayed the party's principles. Most incumbents would rather avoid the challenge. If an incumbent's transgression occurs early in a term, a more immediate and effective remedy to de-nomination may be the recall, at least in those states where it is available. Although the recall has recently become famous thanks to California's 2003 example, nearly half of the United States have

some recall provision, although few have as easy ballot qualification requirements as California does.

De-nomination and recall are powerful weapons in an IPO's arsenal and are not taken lightly by those who wield them or by their possible targets. Like any powerful weapon, they are not employed often. They do not have to be. Even one or two examples per decade may be enough for incumbents to realize that the threat is credible and that they deviate from their backers' wishes at their own peril.

CONCLUSION

This chapter proposed a new way of thinking about political parties. I suggested that the best way to understand a party was not as a legislative coalition or a hierarchical organization or a group of like-minded voters, although these features are typically important components of parties. Rather, my model sees parties as loose alliances of policy demanders (activists, officeholders, donors) often operating at the local level, outside the legislature, who manipulate party nominations to control the government. They do so by coordinating on a preferred set of candidates and channeling vital resources—money, endorsements, expertise—to those candidates to help them prevail in primaries. They maintain leverage over officeholders by threatening to withhold those resources or to channel them toward a more faithful candidate. It is these outside actors, I posited, that are responsible for the party polarization we have seen in recent years.

How can we determine that it is these outside actors, and not the legislators themselves, inducing legislative partisanship? In the next chapter, I take advantage of a unique natural experiment offered by California's political history to address this question. Conveniently for the purposes of this study, outside party actors were functionally removed from the electoral process through Progressive Era institutional reforms. The consequences of those reforms, as we will see, were profound: elected officials moderated, and legislative party discipline collapsed. A review of legislative roll call voting history shows that political activity at the local level is the key to party discipline in the capitol. Real legislative partisanship only exists when actors outside the chamber can enforce it.