

# **JFK, LBJ,**

☆ **and the** ☆

## **DEMOCRATIC PARTY**



☆ **Sean J. Savage** ☆

JFK, LBJ,

*and the*

Democratic Party

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SUNY series on the Presidency:

Contemporary Issues

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*John Kenneth White, editor*

**JFK, LBJ,**

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**Democratic Party**

Sean J. Savage

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*This book is dedicated to my father,*

*John J. Savage (1910–1968),*

*my grandfather, John Savage (1880–1973),*

*and my nieces, Olivia and Victoria Vendola.*

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## Preface

Much has been written about the lives, presidencies, and policies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Surprisingly little has been written about JFK's and LBJ's individual and collective influence on the Democratic Party as presidential party leaders. No previous study of these two presidents as party leaders has thoroughly explored the relationships between their experiences in and behavior toward their home states' political cultures and party systems and their later behavior toward and influence on the national Democratic Party. This book is an effort to fill that gap in the scholarly literature on Kennedy and Johnson. Its contribution is especially needed since the Democratic Party undertook the most extensive organizational, procedural, and participatory reforms in its history immediately after LBJ's presidency.

In addition to its use and analysis of the ideas and research of prominent political scientists, historians, and journalists, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* extensively utilizes archival sources ranging from those of presidential libraries and the Library of Congress to rarely used special collections, such as those of Boston College, Bowdoin College, Bates College, the University of New Hampshire, the Rockefeller Archive Center, Providence College, and the University of Connecticut. The primary sources also include the author's telephone and personal interviews with former Democratic National Committee officials and state and local Democratic Party chairmen and recently released telephone recordings from the JFK and LBJ presidential libraries.

Many people and institutions have enabled me to research, write, and prepare *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* for publication. I am grateful to several sources of research grants, including Saint Mary's College, especially its SISTAR program, the American Political Science Association (APSA), the Earhart Foundation, the Rockefeller Archive Center, and the foundations of the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson presidential libraries. Professor John K. White of the Catholic University of America graciously and generously provided his time, expertise, and advice in reviewing this manuscript. Jessica White and Ann Hoover, two of my students, provided diligent assistance in preparing this manuscript for submission.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# JFK and His Party

According to political scientist and Kennedy biographer James MacGregor Burns, JFK's first electoral success "left him with a disdain for routine politics and 'party hacks' that he would not lose for many years, if ever. He had found that the Democratic Party hardly existed as an organization in the Eleventh District; after he won office and consolidated his position, he would say, 'I am the Democratic Party in my district.' Thus he learned the key to winning politics . . . was a personal organization, not the party committees."<sup>1</sup> Burns wrote these words in 1959 concerning John F. Kennedy's 1946 congressional campaign. As Kennedy's pre-presidential political career revealed, his highly personalized and occasionally suprapartisan approach to campaign organization, tactics, and intraparty decisions both reflected and contributed to his meteoric rise in statewide, regional, and then national party politics.

The well-known story of Kennedy's entry into Democratic politics as a congressional candidate in 1946 includes paternal pressure, a young veteran's decision to begin a career path, and the various campaign advantages that Kennedy enjoyed due to his family's wealth, politically famous middle and last names, and John Hersey's previously published account of Kennedy's war record in *Reader's Digest*.<sup>2</sup> The various accounts of Kennedy's 1946 congressional campaign, however, have not adequately analyzed the extent to which Kennedy's assets as a candidate and the nature of his Democratic Party affiliation were well served by the organizational conditions of the Massachusetts Democratic Party and, more broadly, by the characteristics of his state's political culture in the immediate post-World War II era.<sup>3</sup> The significance of the nature of Kennedy's political environment in Massachusetts became more evident in his upset victory in the 1952 Senate campaign.

In 1949, journalist William Shannon calculated that only about ten of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts had functioning Democratic local committees and dismissed them as "the private preserves of dead beats and stuffed shirts."<sup>4</sup> Despite this organizational fragmentation, the New Deal realignment, the steady numerical and proportional growth of this state's Catholic population, and the greater attraction of Democratic candidates to non-Irish Catholic voters

made the Democratic Party of Massachusetts this state's majority party by 1946 in terms of voter registration and at least potential dominance in statewide elections.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the better-organized, more cohesive Republican Party of Massachusetts continued to demonstrate its ability to frequently control both houses of the state legislature and equally compete with the Democrats for major statewide offices. It partially accomplished this by nominating multi-ethnic Republican slates and adopting moderately liberal "good government" positions on certain issues.<sup>6</sup>

Also, Massachusetts, like other nonsouthern states, experienced what political scientist David G. Lawrence described as a "mini-realignment" in voting behavior and party identification from 1946 to 1950.<sup>7</sup> During this period, a significant increase in split-ticket voting and weaker party identification occurred among normally Democratic voters primarily because of postwar affluence and an "increasingly Republican coloration to American foreign policy regarding Communism."<sup>8</sup> This first mini-realignment was especially evident in the federal election results of 1952 when the Republicans won the presidency and control of both houses of Congress, despite the fact that 51 percent of Americans polled in 1952 identified themselves as Democrats and 29 percent as Republicans.<sup>9</sup> These percentages were virtually the same in 1948 when the Republicans lost the presidential election and control of Congress.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the impact of this mini-realignment on Massachusetts's politics, the political culture of this state was becoming more varied and complex. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Massachusetts' political culture developed two distinct value systems. According to political scientist Daniel Elazar, moralism, the first subculture, originated in the WASP, or Yankee, Puritan reformist values. By the late 1940s, this ethos was most clearly represented by the two liberal, patrician Republican senators from Massachusetts, Leverett Saltonstall and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.<sup>11</sup> Political scientists James Q. Wilson and Edward Banfield more specifically identified moralism as the ethos of "good government," which contributed to anti-machine, party-weakening reforms in Massachusetts during the Progressive era, such as nonpartisan local elections and office-column ballots.<sup>12</sup>

Political scientist Edgar Litt formulated a typology of this state's political culture. He identified four types of political cultures in Massachusetts based more on socioeconomic differences than ethnic and religious ones. They are: patricians, managers, workers, and yeomen. Even though he found that in the immediate postwar era, there were more Catholic managers and fewer Yankee yeomen, the Democratic Party still generally expressed Elazar's immigrant-based individualism while the Republican Party still embodied the good government ethos, or Yankee moralism.<sup>13</sup> Duane Lockard and Neal Peirce likewise noted that despite the fact that more Catholics in this state became college-educated, suburban, middle-class, and white collar in the postwar era, many of them remained Democrats.<sup>14</sup>

These various characteristics of the immediate postwar political climate of Massachusetts provided the ideal environment for a political entrepreneur with John F. Kennedy's qualities. In particular, JFK's ideology, rhetoric, socioeconomic and educational background, and campaign tactics ideally positioned him to become the first Irish or "Green" Brahmin, that is, a Harvard-educated Catholic Democrat of inherited wealth who could personify and express the Yankee, patrician, good government ethos.<sup>15</sup> More broadly and theoretically, Banfield and Wilson noted that "the nationality-minded voter prefers candidates who represent the ethnic groups but at the same time display the attributes of the generally admired Anglo-Saxon model."<sup>16</sup>

This was a contrast to the image of David Walsh. Walsh was a conservative, isolationist Democrat who was the first Irish Catholic to be elected to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts. Walsh was defeated for reelection in 1946 by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., a liberal, Brahmin Republican, partially because many younger, suburban Catholics voted for Lodge.<sup>17</sup>

Kennedy's voter appeal as an Irish Brahmin was not limited to younger, upwardly mobile, less partisan middle-class Catholics. It was, to the surprise and dismay of his Democratic opponents in his 1946 primary campaign, equally powerful among older, lower-income, urban "turf-bound" Catholics. The Democrats held a special primary in the Eleventh Congressional District because its most recent congressman, James M. Curley, was elected mayor of Boston in 1945. In sharp contrast to JFK, Curley was the prototype of the provincial Irish machine politician who clearly personified the immigrant ethos of individualism and blatantly appealed to ethnic, religious, class, and partisan differences throughout his colorful, controversial political career.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, Mike Neville, former mayor of Cambridge, and John Cotter, an administrative assistant to Curley and his predecessor, challenged JFK in the primary by stressing their homegrown roots in and long service to the various working-class neighborhoods of the district. Neville and Cotter, JFK's most formidable opponents, and the other candidates portrayed Kennedy as a callow, silver-spooned carpetbagger with no demonstrated ability to represent and serve the district effectively.<sup>19</sup>

Although JFK's official residence in the district was a recently acquired, usually vacant apartment, his family had already established a well-known, lasting presence in the district. John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, Kennedy's maternal grandfather, was a former mayor of Boston and had previously held this congressional seat. Fitzgerald and Curley had engaged in a bitter political rivalry. Less significantly, Patrick J. Kennedy, the future president's paternal grandfather, had been a state senator and ward boss whose constituency included several neighborhoods in the Eleventh District.<sup>20</sup>

Kennedy also benefited from the advice and campaign management of aides and allies who understood this district and its unusually parochial, often family-centered ward politics well. Joe Kane, a Kennedy cousin and professional political

consultant familiar with this district's politics, Mark Dalton, a speechwriter for JFK, and David F. Powers, a young veteran experienced in the politics of Charlestown, a major, rather xenophobic community in the Eleventh District, were Kennedy's three top campaign aides. They were careful to ensure that Kennedy quickly familiarized himself with the leading religious, ethnic, labor, and veterans' organizations of the district and with its numerous economic problems and needs, especially those pertaining to public housing and its large number of longshoremen.

In a 1964 interview, however, Mark Dalton claimed that the real campaign manager was Joseph P. Kennedy.<sup>21</sup> The candidate's father was both famous and infamous among Massachusetts' Democrats for his abrasive personality and efforts to buy political influence through his fortune.<sup>22</sup> Richard J. Whalen, a biographer of Joseph P. Kennedy, noted that by promoting his son as a war hero, the elder Kennedy used free newspaper and magazine publicity to supplement "the most elaborate professional advertising effort ever seen in a Massachusetts Congressional election."<sup>23</sup> Joe Kennedy was aware, though, that he still attracted controversy due to allegations that as ambassador to Great Britain he was an isolationist and an appeaser. He was careful to avoid attracting publicity to himself.

Thus, there were actually two dimensions in JFK's 1946 primary campaign. The first was the lavishly financed, behind-the-scenes campaign supervised by Joe Kennedy. He fully exploited his political, Hollywood, business, and media connections to promote his son's candidacy through newspaper and magazine articles, billboards, radio commercials, and motion picture ads at movie theaters. Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr., then a state representative who succeeded Kennedy as the congressman in this district in 1952, estimated "that Joe Kennedy spent \$300,000 on that race, which was six times what I spent in a very tough congressional campaign in the same district six years later."<sup>24</sup> The former ambassador even contacted the publisher of the *New York Daily News* to have public opinion polls conducted, a campaign tool previously unheard of in this district's political campaigns.<sup>25</sup>

The second dimension was the exhaustive, door-to-door campaign conducted by JFK and his army of volunteers, many of them young veterans, friends from Harvard, and young women. Combined with a well-organized schedule of coffee and tea parties where voters could meet the candidate, this dimension gave the Kennedy campaign an image of youthful, idealistic amateurism. But, in organizing the coffee and tea parties, the two dimensions of the campaign converged. Women in the district were provided with the refreshments, china, and other necessary items for hosting parties for Kennedy. They were also paid \$100 each for "cleaning" expenses.

Although *Look* magazine referred to John F. Kennedy as a "fighting conservative," he did not elaborate on his ideology during his primary and general election campaigns in 1946.<sup>26</sup> Like his opponents in the Democratic primary, he

emphasized bread-and-butter liberalism, especially support for public housing, a higher minimum wage, and improved veterans' benefits.<sup>27</sup> Kennedy, however, was careful not to identify himself as a liberal. This lack of a clear, self-defined ideology characterized Kennedy during his congressional and Senate career. His campaign image was that of an ideologically undefined war hero and celebrity from a family widely perceived as the "aristocracy" of the Irish in Massachusetts. This served Kennedy well in an economically liberal yet socially conservative and militantly anti-Communist district.<sup>28</sup>

Kennedy's intellectual interest in politics was much greater in foreign policy than in domestic policy.<sup>29</sup> Thus, his few profound campaign speeches focused on foreign policy, especially the rebuilding of Western Europe and the containment of Communism. But except for the specific issue of loan legislation to aid Great Britain, Kennedy still spoke in terms of generalities on foreign policy. In an interview with the Harvard *Crimson*, Kennedy stated that the major issue facing the United States was "the struggle between capitalism and collectivism, internally and externally."<sup>30</sup> The ominous, martial tone of this excerpt echoed a concluding statement in Kennedy's first book, *Why England Slept*. "We can't escape the fact that democracy in America, like democracy in England, has been asleep at the switch. If we had not been surrounded by oceans three and five thousand miles wide, we ourselves might be caving in at some Munich of the Western World."<sup>31</sup> As a congressman, JFK would occasionally express strident criticism of the Truman administration's foreign policy in his roll-call votes and Churchillian "Munich lesson" rhetoric.

But the real "issue" in this 1946 primary campaign was John F. Kennedy. His opponents repeatedly, and sometimes imaginatively, portrayed him as an inexperienced, spoiled playboy whose actual residence was in Florida or Manhattan, not the Eleventh District. Mike Neville, one of JFK's most prominent opponents, wore a ten-dollar bill attached to his shirt pocket and referred to it as a Kennedy campaign button.<sup>32</sup> Joseph Russo, a Boston city councilor and another congressional candidate, bought newspaper advertising accusing Kennedy of carpetbagging.<sup>33</sup>

The focus, though, of Kennedy's opponents on his privileged background and family fortune seemed to enhance, rather than diminish, his celebrity appeal to many voters, especially women. Often accompanied by his sisters and mother in a reception line, Kennedy greeted thousands of well-dressed women eager to meet him and his family. Patsy Mulkern, a precinct worker for Joe Kane, noted that the sharp increase in business for hair stylists and dressmakers in the Eleventh District indicated how heavily attended Kennedy's coffee and tea parties were.<sup>34</sup> Journalist Francis Russell later wrote, "After a half a century of oafishness . . . this attractive, well-spoken, graceful, witty, Celtic, Harvard-bred and very rich young man was what every suburban matron would like her son to be. In fact, many of them came to see Jack as their son."<sup>35</sup>



Primary day, June 18, 1946, was rainy. The Kennedy campaign was careful to provide enough cabs and other hired automobiles to drive many of its targeted voters to the polls. Nonetheless, turnout was light. About 30 percent of the registered voters cast ballots.<sup>36</sup> In a ten-candidate field, Kennedy won the Democratic nomination with 40.5 percent of the votes. He received nearly twice as many votes as his closest rival, Michael Neville.<sup>37</sup>

Since victory in the Democratic primary was tantamount to election in this district, Kennedy's general election campaign was more relaxed and subdued, despite the anticipated Republican sweep of the 1946 midterm elections. The most common Republican campaign slogan, "Had Enough? Vote Republican," originated in Massachusetts. Confident of victory by a wide margin in November, Kennedy devoted several speeches to the nature of his party affiliation. In an August 21, 1946, address to the Young Democrats of Pennsylvania, he stated, "The philosophies of political parties are hammered out over long periods—in good times and in war and in peace. . . . From the days of Andrew Jackson the Democratic Party has always fought the people's fight, (sic) has always been the party that supported progressive legislation."<sup>38</sup>

Two months later, Kennedy gave a similar speech to the Junior League in Boston. He began his speech by blandly stating that, for him, as for "some 95 percent of this group here tonight," party affiliation was simply a matter of family inheritance.<sup>39</sup> JFK proceeded to speak in historical generalities about the policy and doctrinal contributions of such prominent Democratic presidents as Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. He concluded his speech by quoting John W. Davis, the conservative Democratic presidential nominee of 1924. "And do not expect to find a party that has always been right, or wise or even consistent; that would be scarcer still. Independent judgment and opinion is a glodious (sic) thing on no account to be surrendered by any man; but when one seeks companionship on a large scale, he must be content to join with those who agree with him in most things and not hope to find a company that will agree with him in all things."<sup>40</sup>

While this speech and his other previous and future speeches on party affiliation disclosed little or nothing about JFK's ideological identity, it is rather revealing that Kennedy included this particular quote from Davis. Kennedy implied a certain independence from the Democratic "party line" in Congress, which became especially pronounced during his early Senate years. The Democratic congressional nominee told an interviewer, "If you must tag me, let's make it 'Massachusetts Democrat.' I'm not doctrinaire. I'll vote 'em the way I see 'em."<sup>41</sup>

JFK's doctrinal vacuum and issue eclecticism worked well in 1946. He received 72 percent of the votes in the November election. Meanwhile, the Republicans of Massachusetts won nine of that state's fourteen U.S. House seats. They also now controlled both U.S. Senate seats since Republican Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., defeated veteran Democratic Senator David I. Walsh by a margin of

20 percent. Likewise, incumbent Democratic Governor Maurice Tobin was defeated for reelection.<sup>42</sup> Throughout all of JFK's campaigns for the House and Senate, he performed distinctly better as a vote getter than most other Democratic nominees for major offices in Massachusetts. Kennedy's successful electoral performance was especially accentuated by the fact that he entered the House of Representatives in 1947 and the Senate in 1953 as a member of the minority party in each chamber.

JFK's six-year tenure in the House of Representatives was characterized by an often lackluster, unreliable attention to his legislative duties, especially his committee service. Kennedy's lackadaisical job performance especially irked John W. McCormack, the leading Democratic congressman from Massachusetts who served as House majority leader after the Democrats regained control of Congress in 1948. McCormack later clashed with Kennedy in 1956 over control of their state's Democratic committee and delegation to the 1956 Democratic national convention.<sup>43</sup>

JFK was careful to develop and maintain a high-quality staff in Massachusetts and Washington, DC, in order to provide responsive, effective constituency service during his House and Senate years. He was also careful to support most social welfare measures needed by his mostly working-class constituents, such as public housing and the Truman administration's proposal for national health insurance.<sup>44</sup> Kennedy's safe seat provided him with the political security to distinguish himself as the only Democratic congressman from Massachusetts to refuse to sign a petition written by John W. McCormack urging President Harry Truman to pardon James M. Curley, the former congressman and mayor of Boston imprisoned for federal crimes.<sup>45</sup> JFK supported the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950, which required the registration of Communist groups and increased the power of the federal government to deport subversives. It became law over Truman's veto.<sup>46</sup> Kennedy also opposed direct, comprehensive federal financial aid to parochial schools.<sup>47</sup>

Kennedy's independence from the typical voting patterns of other northern, urban Democratic congressmen was also evident in the reluctance and ambivalence of his opposition to the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, JFK believed that some union leaders had used their power to call strikes excessively and irresponsibly in the immediate postwar years and was concerned about the infiltration of Communists in some unions. Kennedy submitted a one-man report to this committee accusing both management and labor of selfishness. Ultimately, though, he opposed the Taft-Hartley Act for being too restrictive toward labor unions.<sup>48</sup>

JFK's seat on this committee was an asset for developing and publicizing his most prominent and consistent intellectual and programmatic interest as a congressman—the development of staunch yet sophisticated policies to effectively oppose the spread of both domestic and foreign Communism. On this issue,

JFK formed a cordial, constructive relationship with a fellow committee member, Republican Congressman Richard M. Nixon. While Nixon rose to national fame during his investigation of Alger Hiss, JFK had a similar yet more obscure experience investigating Harold Christoffel. Christoffel was a United Auto Workers (UAW) official suspected of instigating labor strife in 1941 as part of a plot by American Communists.

Although Christoffel was later tried, convicted, and imprisoned, civil libertarians were disturbed by Kennedy's aggressive questioning of the labor official and his hasty call for Christoffel's indictment.<sup>49</sup> Regarding the Christoffel case, a journalist referred to Kennedy as "an effective anti-Communist liberal" who "is more hated by Commies than if he were a reactionary."<sup>50</sup> During JFK's 1952 Senate campaign, the candidate issued a press release praising a Supreme Court decision upholding Christoffel's conviction for perjury. JFK concluded this press release by stating, "The Communists, when I demanded that Christoffel be indicted, called (sic) 'Witch Hunter' but I knew I was right. Now everybody should know."<sup>51</sup>

With his hawkish anti-Communism and occasional efforts to reduce federal spending as the basis for his identification in his 1946 campaign as a "fighting conservative," Kennedy elaborated on his occasionally conservative rhetoric and policy behavior as he prepared for his Senate campaign.<sup>52</sup> He was especially outspoken in his criticism of Truman's foreign policy toward the anti-Communist Chinese nationalists. In a January 30, 1949, speech in Salem, Massachusetts, Kennedy denounced Truman and the State Department for contributing to the "tragic story of China whose freedom we once fought to preserve. What our young men had saved, our diplomats and our President have frittered away."<sup>53</sup>

JFK's eclectic conservatism on foreign policy and some economic issues, ambivalent liberalism on most social welfare and labor issues, and aloofness toward Democratic leaders in Congress and in Massachusetts, the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and Harry Truman's presidential party leadership were especially evident shortly before and during his 1952 Senate campaign.<sup>54</sup> Democratic Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine stated in 1966 that liberals and veterans' rights activists in Massachusetts "were disturbed" by Kennedy's "apparent determination to be independent of the 'regular' party organization."<sup>55</sup> But, as political scientist James MacGregor Burns indicated, there was no meaningful "regular" Democratic party in Massachusetts. "The Democratic Party had become, more than ever before, less a unified organization than a holding company for personal organizations that often warred with one another more fiercely than with the Republicans."<sup>56</sup>

JFK recognized the need to develop a suprapartisan, personal organization on a statewide basis in order to successfully run for a statewide office. He began to speak regularly throughout Massachusetts in 1948 and more frequently after his 1950 reelection. The opportunistic nature of Kennedy's ideological, partisan,

and policy identity during this period was most succinctly yet clearly revealed in an address given at Harvard University on November 10, 1950. Among other opinions that he expressed, the congressman criticized the Truman administration's conduct of the Korean War and spoke favorably about Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade and Republican Congressman Richard M. Nixon's defeat of Democratic Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas.<sup>57</sup> According to several sources, including the memoirs of Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr., and Nixon, JFK personally delivered a \$1,000 contribution to Nixon, and his father gave a total of \$150,000 to Nixon's Senate campaign.<sup>58</sup>

In another appearance at Harvard in late 1951, Kennedy disclosed that he definitely intended to run for the Senate in 1952 against the Republican incumbent, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.<sup>59</sup> The titular leader of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, Governor Paul Dever, posed a possible obstacle to JFK's ambition to become a senator. It was widely assumed among Massachusetts Democrats and in the media that Dever would run for the Senate in 1952 instead of reelection as governor.<sup>60</sup> Congressman Kennedy maintained the façade of being equally available for either of the two statewide offices. He confided, though, to historian and later White House aide Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., his preference for the Senate. "I hate to think of myself up in that corner office deciding on sewer contracts."<sup>61</sup> Likewise, in 1946, Kennedy was relieved that he could begin his political career by running for a congressional seat instead of for lieutenant governor.<sup>62</sup> Developing his political career in Washington, DC, instead of in state government enabled JFK to separate himself from the intraparty conflicts and spoils of state government and exercise his intellectual interest in foreign policy.<sup>63</sup>

Shortly after a meeting between JFK and Dever, a Kennedy-Dever campaign organization was established in Boston.<sup>64</sup> This committee was chaired by John E. Powers, a well-known state senator from South Boston popular among party regulars, and its expenses were mostly covered by the Kennedy campaign. JFK avoided campaigning much with Dever. From JFK's perspective, the purpose of this committee was to nominally identify him with Dever's supporters, especially among party regulars who had long resented the fact that the Kennedys had rarely contributed much to the Democratic state and local committees.<sup>65</sup> The Kennedy campaign became aware that, except for Dever's most loyal allies in Boston, the governor was increasingly unpopular throughout Massachusetts. JFK was also aware of how popular Republican presidential nominee Dwight Eisenhower and, to a lesser extent, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin were among Massachusetts voters later in his campaign. Kennedy was careful to limit rhetorically and visually identifying himself with President Truman, Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, and Dever.<sup>66</sup>

The Kennedy-Dever campaign committee was one of the least important of the many committees that constituted JFK's campaign organization. The Kennedy campaign exploited state and federal campaign finance laws so that Joseph

Kennedy could spend heavily on it. Also, in order to conduct a truly independent, suprapartisan Senate campaign, a large, diverse network of Kennedy campaign organizations was created throughout Massachusetts.

As early as 1947, Congressman Kennedy had considered running for either governor or senator in 1948. JFK regularly spoke throughout Massachusetts during his House career in order to develop statewide name recognition, but he lacked a statewide organization.<sup>67</sup> While Joseph Kennedy privately developed the overall campaign strategy and provided seemingly unlimited funding, Robert F. Kennedy directly implemented this strategy and micromanaged its details. RFK created a statewide organization headed by 286 local campaign chairs known as “Kennedy secretaries.”<sup>68</sup>

“Secretaries” signified that these local Kennedy campaign leaders were not necessarily part of regular Democratic committees. This distinction was especially important for local Kennedy committees in heavily Republican rural and suburban communities. Also, some of Kennedy’s “secretaries” were independents and Republicans.

This terminology seemed to be more likely to attract a large number of previously apolitical women and less likely to antagonize local Democratic chairmen.<sup>69</sup> This connotation was compatible with the Kennedy campaign’s effort to sharply increase voter registration in small and medium-sized cities outside the Boston area, especially among women and young adults. On election day, the percentages of registered voters casting ballots in these cities averaged 91 percent.<sup>70</sup>

The most dramatic, suprapartisan, and possibly bipartisan element of Kennedy’s campaign organization was a committee entitled Independents for Kennedy. It was chaired by T. Walter Taylor. Taylor was a Republican businessman who helped to lead the effort of conservative Republicans in Massachusetts to nominate Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio for president in 1952. In a letter to other pro-Taft Republicans, Taylor explicitly linked Taft to Joseph Kennedy. He also stated that he and other “Independents and Taft people” were “very happy at the privilege of bringing the Kennedy message to the people.”<sup>71</sup> Ironically, Joseph Kennedy had financially contributed to Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.’s 1942 reelection campaign in order to spite Franklin D. Roosevelt by implicitly opposing Lodge’s opponent, Democratic Congressman Joseph Casey. Casey was previously opposed in a Democratic senatorial primary by John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to Taylor’s committee, the Kennedys also generated the support—or at least the nonvoting neutrality—of more anti-Lodge, pro-Taft Republicans in Massachusetts through the editorial endorsements of two pro-McCarthy, anti-Lodge publishers. Basil Brewer, a staunch Republican, was outraged by Lodge’s aggressive support for Eisenhower against Taft at the 1952 Republican national convention. Moreover, in June 1951, General Douglas MacArthur told Joseph Kennedy that Lodge “was strictly a pro-Trumanite on foreign policy” and was increasingly alienating conservative Republicans.<sup>73</sup>

Brewer owned newspapers on Cape Cod and in New Bedford in southeastern Massachusetts. Like the rural areas of western Massachusetts, this region's mostly WASP small towns usually provided huge margins of electoral support for Lodge or any Republican nominee. Brewer praised JFK as a more effective anti-Communist than Lodge. Endorsed by Brewer, JFK carried New Bedford by approximately 21,000 votes and greatly reduced Lodge's support in heavily Republican small towns.<sup>74</sup>

As Congressman Kennedy attacked Lodge for being too soft and ineffective against Communism, his campaign still feared the prospect of Senator McCarthy suddenly traveling to Massachusetts to personally endorse Lodge.<sup>75</sup> Such an appearance might generate the winning margin of votes for Lodge from previously undecided, pro-McCarthy Democrats and Republicans. While a joint McCarthy-Lodge appearance was never held in Massachusetts, Kennedy received the endorsement of the *Boston Post*.<sup>76</sup> John Fox, its publisher, was not a Republican activist like Brewer. But he was even more stridently pro-McCarthy than Brewer. He purchased this newspaper in 1952 primarily to advocate his militant anti-Communism and criticism of Truman's foreign policy.

Fox had intended to endorse Lodge, but Brewer's intervention, and, possibly, the loan that he later received from Joseph Kennedy, persuaded Fox to endorse JFK.<sup>77</sup> With the *Boston Post's* readership concentrated among pro-McCarthy, split-ticket Catholic Democrats, Fox's endorsement helped to further solidify and unite Catholic electoral support for Kennedy. Unfortunately for Lodge, the more cerebral, influential, widely circulated, Brahmin-owned *Boston Globe* remained neutral in the Senate race.

While Kennedy and his media backers relentlessly attacked Lodge from the right, JFK also lambasted Lodge from the left on domestic policy, especially the Taft-Hartley Act.<sup>78</sup> On such social welfare issues as public housing, minimum wages, Social Security coverage, and federal aid to education, JFK's and Lodge's legislative records were similarly liberal. But Lodge had voted for the Taft-Hartley Act. JFK, however grudgingly, had voted against it and had cordially yet eloquently debated it with Congressman Richard M. Nixon in Pennsylvania in 1947.<sup>79</sup>

Before labor audiences throughout Massachusetts, JFK repeatedly used the Taft-Hartley Act to exaggerate and dramatize his policy differences with Lodge and to excoriate Lodge for not doing enough to prevent the increasing migration of manufacturing jobs, especially in the textile and shoe industries, from Massachusetts to the South.<sup>80</sup> In particular, JFK blamed the right-to-work provision of this law for giving the South an unfair advantage over Massachusetts in labor costs. Kennedy then used this as the basis for other votes on economic issues in which Lodge allegedly failed to serve his constituents.<sup>81</sup> Despite JFK's chronic absenteeism from his own congressional district and poor attendance record in Washington, his most widely used campaign slogan was that he would more faithfully and diligently serve the policy interests of Massachusetts in the Senate than Lodge had.<sup>82</sup>

Another dimension of the Kennedy campaign was social, virtually apolitical, and issueless. Rose Kennedy, Joseph Kennedy's wife, her daughters, and daughter-in-law Ethel, RFK's wife, conducted heavily attended, well-advertised coffee and tea parties for women throughout the state. In particular, the Kennedys concentrated these parties in small to medium-sized cities outside the immediate Boston area where their campaign targeted voter registration and turnout drives. These parties highlighted the celebrity and aristocratic status of the Kennedy family, especially among Catholic women of all age cohorts and socioeconomic strata.<sup>83</sup> But the formality and dignity of the invitations and reception lines were especially attractive to working-class Catholic women. These often issueless, seemingly nonpartisan parties developed a large receptive audience of viewers for "Coffee with the Kennedys."<sup>84</sup>

"Coffee with the Kennedys" was one of several paid television programs financed by the Kennedy campaign. Consultants had previously coached JFK on the use of television, both in the use of free media, such as interviews on news programs, like *Meet the Press*, and paid media, such as call-in question-and-answer programs. Lodge, by contrast, spent far less on television advertising and often appeared stiff and uncomfortable when televised.<sup>85</sup> Two television stations in Boston reported that Kennedy spent about \$15,000 and Lodge about \$5,000 on television advertising.<sup>86</sup> Instead, Lodge emphasized the use of newspaper advertising which compared his voting and absentee records to JFK's.<sup>87</sup>

This advertisement, printed in every daily newspaper in Massachusetts, and Lodge's oratory criticizing the details of Kennedy's legislative record seemed to have little impact on the voters. In general, Lodge conducted a belated, hastily organized, lackluster reelection campaign with no clear, consistent strategy for counterattacks against Kennedy. He refused to indulge in the type of jeering accusations and ridicule about Joseph Kennedy's wealth and power used by Congressman Kennedy's Democratic primary opponents in 1946. The gentlemanly, dignified Republican tried to unite his Republican base, retain the support of Democrats and independents who had previously voted for him, and benefit from the coattails of Dwight Eisenhower. Eisenhower enjoyed a widening lead over Adlai Stevenson in the polls of likely voters in Massachusetts.<sup>88</sup> Lodge's rhetorical emphasis on the liberal, bipartisan nature of his foreign and domestic policy positions attracted few Democratic voters and further angered and alienated pro-Taft Republicans.<sup>89</sup>

Lodge refused to publicly request a campaign visit by Senator Joseph McCarthy, who had required that Lodge make such a request public. Lodge hoped that a televised, election rally with Dwight Eisenhower in Boston Garden would enable him to prevail. The enthusiasm of the crowds and strict television scheduling, however, prevented Lodge from introducing Eisenhower.

The 1952 election results in Massachusetts yielded a Republican sweep of the governorship, most of the state's U.S. House seats, most seats in both houses

of the state legislature, and the popular and electoral votes for president for the first time since 1924.

They also included a 91 percent voter turnout and an upset victory for John F. Kennedy. JFK received 51.4 percent of the votes in the Senate race and a winning margin of 70,737 votes.<sup>90</sup> Analysts of and participants in JFK's first Senate campaign have not agreed on one common factor for his victory. Was it the popularity of the tea parties with female voters, sophisticated use of free television coverage and television advertising, the opposition to Lodge from pro-Taft Republicans, possibly influenced by Brewer's and Fox's newspapers, JFK's issue portrayal of Lodge as both anti-labor and soft on Communism, or the absence of a personal endorsement of Lodge by Joe McCarthy?<sup>91</sup> What is more evident and less disputable is that JFK's family-based, suprapartisan network of campaign committees enabled him to attract votes through all of these factors. The Kennedy campaign located offices in remote, staunchly Republican small towns that had rarely, if ever, experienced the presence of active Democratic campaign offices. The Independents for Kennedy committee cultivated the electoral support, or at least the neutrality, of anti-Lodge, pro-Taft Republicans in the Senate race.

The sharing and financing of one committee in Boston with Governor Paul Dever appeased party regulars suspicious of the Kennedys, but this committee had no significant influence on Kennedy's campaign strategy. JFK carefully distanced himself from Dever's floundering campaign. Lawrence F. O'Brien, a Kennedy campaign aide from western Massachusetts, commented that "we would let the regulars do or die for Dever; our only hope was to build our own independent Kennedy organization, city by city, town by town, and, if possible, to build it without offending the party regulars."<sup>92</sup> Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers, two other Kennedy campaign aides, stated, "This was the first campaign for the U.S. Senate, incidentally, in which the candidate had a statewide organization with headquarters of his own in the various cities and towns."<sup>93</sup>

While this sprawling, decentralized network of campaign committees helped the Kennedy organization to actively campaign throughout the state, the actual strategy and tactics were privately orchestrated by Joseph P. Kennedy as *de facto* campaign chairman and publicly implemented by RFK as the official campaign manager.<sup>94</sup> In a 1967 interview, RFK bluntly stated, "We couldn't win relying on the Democratic political machine, so we had to build up our own machine."<sup>95</sup> The large number and diversity of campaign committees with such innocuous, misleading, apolitical names as "Improvement of the Textile Industry Committee" and "Build Massachusetts Committee," were also used to receive and expend vast sums of money from the Kennedy fortune and from Joseph P. Kennedy's political allies and business connections. All of these Kennedy committees officially reported \$349,646 in expenditures to the Lodge campaign's official report of \$58,266.<sup>96</sup>



But estimates of the actual amount spent by the Kennedy campaigns range from a half-million to several million dollars.<sup>97</sup> The officially reported figure does not include the funds spent on the extensive “pre-campaign” from 1947 until April 1952.<sup>98</sup> During this period, money was spent on polling and campaign operatives as Congressman Kennedy traveled and spoke throughout Massachusetts in order to strengthen his name recognition and help decide whether he would run for governor or senator in 1952 or further delay a statewide race. It also does not include the well-publicized contributions that the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation made to various religious and charitable institutions in Massachusetts.<sup>99</sup> Finally, it is impossible to accurately calculate the invaluable labor and expertise for the Senate campaign provided by employees and associates of the nationwide Kennedy business interests.

The Kennedy campaign organization was so impressive and successful in 1952 that it was the basis for JFK’s reelection campaign in 1958, in which he received a record-breaking 73 percent of the votes and, to a lesser extent, his 1960 presidential campaign.<sup>100</sup> Within the politics of Massachusetts, JFK’s victory in his 1952 Senate created, in effect, a new, enduring state party—the Kennedy party. Tip O’Neill, who was elected to JFK’s congressional seat in 1952, later ruefully observed that the Kennedy organization “quickly developed into an entire political party, with its own people, its own approach, and its own strategies.”<sup>101</sup> Almost fifty years after JFK’s 1952 Senate campaign, political scientist Lawrence Becker concluded that, in Massachusetts, “the state’s royal family, the Kennedys, essentially constitute a separate political party of their own.”<sup>102</sup>

The Kennedy party developed into more than a personal following during the 1950s and 1960s. It became a highly effective, suprapartisan political entity that included a polyglot of voting blocs ranging from socially conservative, lower-income, Catholic, straight-ticket Democrats to socially liberal, “good government,” ticket-splitting, upper-income WASP Republicans.<sup>103</sup> Its seemingly unlimited finances, prestige, and “winner” status enabled it to attract the best pollsters, media experts, and other campaign professionals and academic advisors, as well as thousands of enthusiastic volunteers. The Kennedy party often either co-opted rival Democratic politicians through campaign contributions, endorsements, or patronage, or decisively defeated opponents in bitter intraparty conflicts. These tactics made even the most determined anti-Kennedy Democrats reluctant to challenge the Kennedy party.

With the Republican-owned *Chicago Tribune* proudly echoing *Look’s* 1946 labeling of JFK as a “fighting conservative,” one of the first phone calls of congratulations that the Massachusetts Democrat received on the election night of 1952 was from Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas.<sup>104</sup> LBJ was currently serving as the Democratic majority whip of the Senate and soon became Senate minority leader because of the GOP’s capture of the Senate. The thirty-five-year-old Democrat’s unexpected triumph over a presumably secure liberal Republican

incumbent closely associated with Eisenhower's candidacy was one of the few electoral successes for the Democratic Party in 1952.<sup>105</sup>

JFK's status as a freshman member of the minority party and one of a reduced number of nonsouthern Democrats actually benefited his already budding national ambitions. It made his frequent absences from the Senate floor and committee meetings seem less egregious, and his family's connection to Senator Joseph McCarthy less onerous as the increasingly controversial, beleaguered Wisconsin senator became primarily a burden and an embarrassment for the Republican majority of the Senate and the Eisenhower White House.<sup>106</sup> In his role as Senate minority leader, LBJ's style and strategy sought to position himself as a pragmatic, nonideological, less partisan, national (rather than regional) legislative leader who compromised and cooperated with Eisenhower and the Republicans to develop and pass moderate, consensual legislation in both foreign and domestic policy.<sup>107</sup>

LBJ's legislative behavior increased JFK's freedom to stake out independent positions on certain policy issues. For example, Kennedy initially compiled a Senate record as a fiscal conservative who supported Eisenhower's budget cuts, especially for agricultural subsidies and federal water and power programs, favored by most Republicans and opposed by most Democrats in Congress.<sup>108</sup> Johnson's policy of increasing the number of less senior, nonsouthern Democrats assigned to major committees also helped JFK. Kennedy now attracted favorable national publicity, especially for his image as an enlightened centrist regarding the threat of Communist expansion in the Third World and labor relations reform later in the 1950s.<sup>109</sup>

Besides benefiting JFK's status in the Senate, LBJ's friendly, often preferential treatment of JFK until the late 1950s freed the Massachusetts Democrat to devote more time and effort to solidifying his domination of the Democratic Party of Massachusetts and developing a national reputation as a popular speaker at party functions and guest in televised news programs.<sup>110</sup> These intraparty activities further enhanced JFK's position and reputation at the national level. Kennedy was determined to lead and deliver a united Massachusetts delegation to Adlai Stevenson at the 1956 Democratic national convention in Chicago.

JFK waged a successful yet contentious effort to oust the current Democratic state chairman, William "Onions" Burke, and replace him with John M. "Pat" Lynch. Burke was a party regular from western Massachusetts and a close ally of John W. McCormack, a Democratic congressman from Boston and House majority leader.<sup>111</sup> Earlier in 1956, Lawrence F. O'Brien provided JFK with a memo analyzing the importance of controlling the Democratic state committee "for the far more practical reason of self-preservation."<sup>112</sup> In addition to McCormack, JFK had also developed a mutually suspicious rivalry for control of the state party apparatus with Democratic Governor Foster Furcolo.<sup>113</sup>

Before JFK could effectively project a televised appeal to fellow Democrats at the 1956 convention in Chicago and campaign throughout the nation for

Stevenson, he needed to ensure that his own state's delegates were united under his party leadership. In his conclusion, O'Brien ominously warned the Democratic senator, "It is not necessary to cite other examples of specific adverse affect (sic) of failure to accept leadership. . . . Certainly this alone could be disastrous to any person seeking national recognition within the Party."<sup>114</sup> As the new Democratic state committee chairman, Pat Lynch was JFK's rubber stamp at the national convention. Lynch was also grudgingly acceptable to McCormack and Furcolo.<sup>115</sup>

From JFK's perspective, Chicago was an excellent site for the 1956 Democratic national convention. Joseph P. Kennedy owned the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. It was managed by one of his sons-in-law, R. Sargent Shriver, and they had cultivated a friendly political and business relationship with Mayor Richard J. Daley.<sup>116</sup> With Daley's control of the largest bloc of Democratic delegates from Illinois and his machine's ability to "pack the galleries" and deter demonstrations by an opponent's delegates, JFK was later disappointed to learn that the Democratic National Committee chose Los Angeles, not Chicago, to host the 1960 Democratic national convention. Also, Chicago's location and time zone were conducive to coast-to-coast television broadcasts of the proceedings.

Having so far remained aloof from the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), whose liberal activism was unpopular with party regulars and southern conservatives, JFK had been chosen by the DNC to narrate its campaign film, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, and by Stevenson supporters to nominate Adlai Stevenson for president. Kennedy was selected for both speaking roles partially because of his popular reputation as a guest speaker at party functions and his acceptability to a broad spectrum and variety of often conflicting Democrats.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the fame of JFK's best-selling book, *Profiles in Courage*, and Joseph P. Kennedy's influence with the film's producer, Hollywood mogul Dore Schary, also helped to secure the selection of JFK as its narrator.<sup>118</sup>

In dictating notes for his memoirs in 1963, JFK stated that in every political contest it was essential for him to begin campaigning earlier than his opponents.<sup>119</sup> It was uncharacteristic, then, for JFK to reject his father's advice and suddenly compete for the Democratic vice-presidential nomination after Adlai Stevenson announced that he would let the convention select his running mate.<sup>120</sup> Stevenson had been previously warned by party leaders that his most likely running mate, Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, was unpopular with southern conservatives for his moderate position on civil rights. Kefauver was also opposed by urban machine bosses for his televised committee investigation of organized crime that had revealed collusion between gangsters and local Democratic politicians during the Truman administration.<sup>121</sup> Stevenson disliked his former competitor for the presidential nomination. Some advisors believed that the convention needed to seriously and publicly consider the selection of a Catholic vice-presidential nominee in order to improve Stevenson's image with Catholic voters.<sup>122</sup>

With this unexpected opportunity, JFK, his staff, and family began to actively lobby delegates for the vice-presidential nomination. The results of the first ballot for vice-presidential nominee indicated that, except for JFK, the delegate support for the twelve candidates competing against Kefauver was mostly scattered among favorite-son candidates. What embarrassed Kefauver and further weakened his delegate strength was the fact that all thirty-two of his home state's delegates voted for his junior colleague from Tennessee, Senator Albert Gore, Sr.<sup>123</sup> With 687 votes needed for the Democratic vice-presidential nomination, Kefauver received 483½ votes to JFK's 304 on the first ballot.<sup>124</sup>

On the second ballot, Senator Estes Kefauver was nominated for vice president by a close margin of 755½ votes to JFK's 589.<sup>125</sup> At one point in this process, Kennedy came within thirty-eight votes of being nominated for vice president. The greater significance of the second ballot's results was the broad, diverse regional, factional, and ideological distribution of delegate support for JFK.<sup>126</sup> The Massachusetts Democrat received votes from almost all of the northeastern and Illinois delegates, all of the delegates from Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, and most of the delegates from Alabama and North Carolina.<sup>127</sup>

Impressed by the solid backing that he received from conservative, segregationist southern delegates, the New England Catholic senator told journalist Arthur Krock, "I'll be singing 'Dixie' the rest of my life."<sup>128</sup> Determined to leave the delegates at the convention and the television audience a gracious impression, JFK told his fellow conventioners that the spirited contest for the vice-presidential nomination "proves as nothing else can prove how strong and united the Democratic Party is."<sup>129</sup> After JFK asked that the convention make Kefauver's nomination unanimous by acclamation, the convention responded with thunderous applause.

While JFK conducted a national speaking tour promoting the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket, RFK traveled with the Stevenson campaign as an observer in order to learn how to manage a presidential campaign.<sup>130</sup> RFK later admitted that he voted for Eisenhower in 1956 because of his disgust with the inefficiency and disorganization of Stevenson's campaign.<sup>131</sup> With polls confirming the conventional wisdom that Dwight Eisenhower would be easily reelected, the actual, self-serving purpose of JFK's speaking tour was to convince the major Democratic power brokers that he was loyal and diligent to their party's presidential ticket. He also wanted to solidify his proven bases of delegate strength in the Northeast and South while cultivating Democratic activists elsewhere in the nation.<sup>132</sup>

Kennedy delivered a speech to the Young Democrats of North Carolina at the Robert E. Lee Hotel in Winston-Salem on October 5, 1956. The senator from Massachusetts dismissed Eisenhower's contention that the Republican Party was "the party of the future" oriented toward young Americans.<sup>133</sup> Criticizing the dearth of young men in the Eisenhower administration and its policies, JFK

asserted that "it is the Democratic Party that is the party of change, the party of tomorrow as well as today."<sup>134</sup> Praising his party's domestic and foreign policy ideas as more progressive and appealing to youth and the prominent number of younger Democrats who held high elective offices, JFK concluded, "Adlai Stevenson, and the young men and women who are supporting him and running for office with him, truly represent a new America."<sup>135</sup>

From the time of his speaking tour for Stevenson in 1956 until he officially announced his presidential candidacy on January 2, 1960, JFK's speeches throughout the nation sought to transform one of his liabilities as a prospective presidential candidate, his youth, into an asset. He accepted a disproportionate number of speaking invitations from organizations of Young Democrats, civic associations oriented toward young businessmen and professionals, and colleges and universities. These speeches often combined an idealistic tone, especially concerning a new direction for American foreign policy in the Third World, with a pragmatic, centrist content, especially regarding the reform of labor-management relations.<sup>136</sup> JFK's rhetoric associated youth with a receptivity to new, bold ideas in contrast with the presumably backward looking stagnation of the Republican Party.

JFK and his chief speechwriter, Theodore C. Sorensen, cultivated an image of the Massachusetts Democrat as a reform-minded intellectual through his speeches and magazine articles.<sup>137</sup> They were careful to avoid having the public perceive JFK as a liberal ideologue. During his first year as a senator, JFK firmly stated to the *Saturday Evening Post* that he was not a liberal and did not belong to the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the most prominent group of liberal activists. Nevertheless, DNC chairman Paul M. Butler did invite JFK to join the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC) that the DNC established shortly after the 1956 election.<sup>138</sup> Since the DAC sought to formulate and advocate more distinctly and consistently liberal policies for future national platforms, including civil rights, JFK declined this invitation.<sup>139</sup> He formally justified this decision by citing the need to base his legislative behavior on the needs and interests of his constituents, rather than on partisan or ideological lines, as he prepared for his 1958 reelection campaign.<sup>140</sup>

Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the ADA and DAC, emerged as a harsh, outspoken critic of JFK, partially because of her conviction that JFK lacked sincere liberal principles. But JFK did not want to antagonize Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson. Rayburn and LBJ criticized the DNC for interfering with their congressional party leadership.<sup>141</sup> JFK waited until November 1959 to join the DAC. He did this a few weeks after a memo from an aide warned JFK that in order to secure the Democratic presidential nomination he needed to be identified "as a 1960 liberal in clear and unmistakable terms."<sup>142</sup>

Kennedy's voting record on legislation and, to a lesser extent, his campaign rhetoric became more consistently and emphatically liberal after the 1958 Senate election results. With a sharp increase in the number of nonsouthern, liberal

Democrats elected to the Senate, LBJ's position and effectiveness as a power broker for bipartisan, multiregional, nonideological centrism and compromise were greatly diminished.<sup>143</sup> Liberal activists and voting blocs, like organized labor and civil rights advocates, were now more confident that they could insist on a liberal platform and a liberal presidential ticket in 1960.<sup>144</sup>

On the issue of civil rights, however, JFK was still questioned and challenged about his commitment to stronger civil rights laws and their effective enforcement. White liberals and NAACP leaders were especially chagrined at JFK's distinction as one of the few nonsouthern Democrats to join southern Democrats and conservative Republicans in voting to refer the civil rights bill of 1957 to the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by James O. Eastland of Mississippi, an unyielding segregationist. JFK also voted to adopt a jury trial amendment for this bill, in effect a guarantee of usually all-white juries in the South for persons prosecuted for violating this statute.<sup>145</sup> Originally enlisted to maximize black electoral support in Massachusetts for JFK's 1958 reelection campaign, Marjorie Lawson, a black civil rights leader and attorney, served as JFK's spokeswoman and liaison with NAACP members and other civil rights activists to assure them of JFK's mostly liberal views on civil rights issues.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, Kennedy found it necessary to periodically defend his two controversial votes on the 1957 civil rights bill as matters of procedures and principles, namely, respect for typical committee procedures on any bill and for the Common Law tradition of trial by jury. He also distributed a memo to northern liberal Democrats outlining his entire record on civil rights issues.<sup>147</sup>

But Kennedy's speeches on civil rights, especially before southern audiences, were balanced and courteous enough in tone and substance to minimally satisfy the more moderate southern opponents of the federal integration of public education and other civil rights objectives. Angry with Eisenhower for appointing Earl Warren to the Supreme Court and sending the U.S. Army to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, southern whites were less inclined to vote Republican for president in 1960, especially if the Republican and Democratic national platforms of 1960 were similarly liberal on civil rights.<sup>148</sup> In the late 1950s, JFK usually stated that all Americans should respect and obey the authority of the Supreme Court but were also free to disagree with its decisions.<sup>149</sup>

When JFK criticized how Eisenhower enforced school integration in Little Rock, some southern politicians had the impression that a Kennedy administration would be more accommodating and "reasonable" in implementing federal court orders and civil rights laws than another Republican administration.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, the earliest southern supporters of JFK's still unannounced presidential candidacy were the segregationist governors of Mississippi and Alabama. John Patterson, then the Democratic governor of Alabama, later stated that he and other pro-JFK southern Democratic politicians hoped that if they contributed to JFK's election to the presidency then "we would have a place where we could get an audience for the problems that we had and could be heard."<sup>151</sup>

In short, JFK, as an unannounced presidential candidate from 1956 to 1959, succeeded in solidifying the base of support that he received for his impressive yet unsuccessful vice-presidential candidacy at the 1956 Democratic national convention and extending his appeal to party leaders and factions that were previously neutral or hostile toward his presidential ambition. JFK's sophisticated media skills, eclectic, centrist policy record, and idealistic, cerebral speaking style enabled him to attract the pre-convention support of a variety of often conflicting factions and interests within the national Democratic Party. In his biography of JFK, first published in 1959, James MacGregor Burns observed that the weak, decentralized nature and structure of the national Democratic Party were well suited to JFK's political assets and pursuit of intraparty support prior to 1960. "He is no more willing to be thrust into the role of organizational 'Democrat' than into any other. Kennedy is independent not only of party, but of factions within the party."<sup>152</sup>

JFK's prior experiences, struggles, and victories in his home state's steadily growing yet bitterly factionalized Democratic Party and his family's development of a superimposed Kennedy party in Massachusetts as the vehicle for his ambitions prepared him well for seeking the Democratic presidential nomination within such a byzantine, fragmented organizational environment.<sup>153</sup> Before JFK formally announced his presidential candidacy in 1960, he was able to campaign unofficially for the presidency through public speaking and private negotiations and generate favorable publicity because of his Senate activities and reelection campaign in Massachusetts. Fortunately for JFK, few journalists critically emphasized his frequent absences from the Senate while he campaigned to cultivate a broad, consensual bandwagon effect behind him among Democratic power brokers and grassroots activists before 1960.

Ironically, the Democrat who was instrumental in enabling JFK to use his Senate seat as the foundation for developing his presidential campaign was the same Democrat who eventually posed the greatest threat to JFK's nomination at the 1960 convention—Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. First as minority leader and then as majority leader, LBJ led the Senate Democrats throughout JFK's Senate career. Despite Kennedy's lack of seniority and his reputation for inattentive behavior toward the drudgery of committee duties, LBJ ensured that JFK was appointed to the highly coveted Foreign Relations and Labor Committees in the Senate.<sup>154</sup> LBJ's indulgence toward JFK made it easier for the Massachusetts Democrat to use these two committee positions, especially the latter, to attract favorable publicity.

Meanwhile, JFK was often absent from committee meetings and Senate roll-call votes as he campaigned frequently during the late 1950s.<sup>155</sup> The most significant event during the second balloting for the vice-presidential nomination at the 1956 Democratic national convention was LBJ's decision to switch all fifty-six of Texas's delegate votes from Al Gore, Sr., to JFK.<sup>156</sup> At the time, JFK may not have realized that Johnson was boosting Kennedy's political career in order to eventually help the Texan fulfill his own presidential ambition.<sup>157</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

# LBJ and His Party

When JFK first ran for a congressional seat in 1946, he already enjoyed celebrity status among his future constituents because of the well-entrenched political fame of his middle and last names and his own highly publicized combat heroism in World War II. By contrast, LBJ's gradual evolution from being a congressional secretary in 1931 to a controversially nominated Democratic senatorial candidate in 1948 was heavily based on his skills as an ombudsman with the growing federal government for his constituents, regardless of whether they were poverty-stricken hill country farmers or wealthy contractors. But, like JFK, Johnson was careful not to clearly and consistently identify himself with an ideology or party faction that might currently or eventually threaten his progressive ambition. Biographer Robert Caro noted, "Johnson's entire career, not just as a Congressman's secretary, would be characterized by an aversion to ideology or to issue, by an utter refusal to be backed into firm defense of any position or any principle."<sup>1</sup>

LBJ, though, did have some ideological underpinnings in his family's history with the Democratic Party. As a state representative, Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., LBJ's father, was a populist Democrat from the chronically poor hill country of west Texas. He crusaded against conservative Democrats serving business interests in the Texas state legislature and throughout the state government. LBJ's father also took courageous positions against the Ku Klux Klan and against legislation that discriminated against his German-speaking constituents. Refusing to accept bribes or even modest favors, like restaurant meals from lobbyists, Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., could not afford to continue his legislative career. Debt-ridden, he subsisted on minor patronage jobs during his last years.<sup>2</sup>

LBJ absorbed his father's desire to use the powers and resources of government to benefit the poor, but he avoided the anti-business, class conflict rhetoric of pre-New Deal populists like his father and many New Deal liberals.<sup>3</sup> For LBJ to ascend in state and then national Democratic politics, he needed to succeed in the mercurial environment of Texas's one-party politics. He served as the secretary and de facto chief of staff for Richard Kleberg, a wealthy, reactionary, yet lackadaisical Texas congressman. With this position, LBJ tried to develop a



base of political support both in Washington, DC, among other Texas congressmen and congressional aides and in Kleberg's district through assiduous constituency service. He also identified himself with New Deal programs that benefited Kleberg's district through frequent press releases. Realizing that it was unlikely that Kleberg would voluntarily retire from Congress soon, LBJ agreed to serve as the director of the National Youth Administration (NYA) in Texas in 1935. This position provided Johnson with an office in Austin, the state capital, a staff, the authority to distribute NYA funds, jobs, and public works contracts. Unofficially, the NYA provided LBJ with a statewide political organization and the opportunity to distinguish himself to Franklin D. Roosevelt as the most diligent and effective NYA director in the nation.<sup>4</sup>

LBJ most intensely identified himself with FDR as a congressional candidate in a special election in 1937 held to replace a deceased Democratic congressman, James P. Buchanan. Buchanan's district included Austin and Johnson City. Competing against seven other candidates, LBJ decided to campaign as the most pro-FDR candidate. Besides reminding the voters how much the New Deal had helped to combat the Depression and his role in implementing the NYA in Texas, Johnson dramatized his unequivocally pro-FDR platform by being the only candidate to clearly and emphatically express support for the president's court-reform or "court-packing" bill.

After FDR's landslide reelection in 1936, the Democratic president submitted a court-reform bill to Congress. Its provisions included the authority to add new seats to the Supreme Court. Republicans and conservative Democrats denounced this bill as an unscrupulous effort by FDR to pack the Supreme Court with liberal, pro-New Deal justices. The growing public controversy around this bill also attracted the opposition of some New Deal liberals in Congress, especially those from the South.

With such slogans as "Franklin D. and Lyndon B.," and "Roosevelt and Progress," LBJ's campaign effectively used the "court-packing" bill to dramatize and simplify the issues of the whirlwind campaign, especially among poor whites in the hill country who were grateful for the New Deal and still held anti-business, populist opinions.<sup>5</sup> LBJ's campaign was also well financed and used radio more than all of the other candidates combined. He obtained substantial campaign contributions from the Brown and Root construction firm. Alvin Wirtz, an Austin attorney and state senator acquainted with LBJ, informed Johnson that Herman Brown was his client and needed a congressman who could secure authorization and funding for the Marshall Ford Dam project that was in jeopardy.<sup>6</sup> Governor James Allred, who eagerly supported the flow of New Deal funds into Texas, privately backed LBJ's candidacy by directing Ed Clark, his top fundraiser, to help LBJ.<sup>7</sup>

After winning this special election to a congressional seat, LBJ focused on obtaining the necessary Public Works Administration (PWA) funds for comple-

tion of the Marshall Ford Dam and bringing electricity to his rural constituents through the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). In accomplishing these two initial objectives, LBJ cultivated political relationships with key White House aides, namely Thomas Corcoran and James H. Rowe, Jr. Rowe later stated that FDR was impressed with LBJ's electoral victory in light of LBJ's support for the controversial court-reform bill.<sup>8</sup> The president directed his staff and other administrative officials to give LBJ favorable treatment in the implementation of federal programs in his district.<sup>9</sup>

Upon the advice of FDR, Johnson sought and received a seat on the House naval affairs committee.<sup>10</sup> Although LBJ's congressional district was landlocked, he was able to use this committee seat to steer defense contracts to his campaign contributors, especially the Brown and Root firm. Unlike his mentor-protégé relationships with FDR and Sam Rayburn, a fellow Texan who became Speaker of the House in 1940, LBJ was unable to develop such a relationship with Carl Vinson, a Georgia Democrat who chaired the naval affairs committee. Nevertheless, after World War II began in Europe in 1939, the steady increases in defense spending further enhanced LBJ's political influence among his House colleagues.

With this greater political influence among his fellow House Democrats, LBJ was better able to log roll (i.e., exchange votes in the legislative process), in order to gain greater favorable treatment for federal programs benefiting a variety of his constituents, such as agricultural subsidies for farmers and public housing for blacks and Hispanics in Austin.<sup>11</sup> With his proven success as a fundraiser in his own campaigns, LBJ raised campaign funds for nonsouthern House Democrats, especially those facing tough reelection campaigns, in 1938 and 1940. Although the Democrats lost seventy House seats in 1938 and gained only seven seats in 1940, FDR, Rayburn, and John W. McCormack, who became House majority leader in 1940, valued LBJ's diligence and dedication to fundraising.<sup>12</sup>

In order to formalize and publicize his fundraising role for Democratic congressional campaigns, LBJ wanted to elevate his role to the chairmanship of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). The DCCC's chairman, Patrick Drewry, had proven to be chronically lethargic and ineffective in this role, but Rayburn refused to replace him. Later, LBJ sought to be appointed as "liaison officer" between the DCCC and the DNC or as secretary of the DNC. Edward J. Flynn, the DNC chairman, rejected LBJ's request for both of these positions. Finally, under pressure from Sam Rayburn, FDR directed Flynn and Drewry in October 1940 to formally announce that LBJ would "assist the Congressional Committee."<sup>13</sup>

Even though Johnson felt slighted and unappreciated by the chairmen of the DCCC and DNC, he continued to raise funds for House Democrats throughout the 1940s. He often gained favorable name recognition and gratitude from nonsouthern Democrats in competitive districts. In particular, LBJ served as a conduit for campaign funds from oil and gas interests and defense contractors

in Texas to Democratic candidates nationally.<sup>14</sup> Frustrated with the bureaucratic inertia and lack of innovation in fundraising by the DCCC and DNC, Johnson developed an enduring, negative perception of national party committees that influenced his presidential party leadership.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, LBJ, as a young congressman, already demonstrated an ambition and an ability to perform a national role in the Democratic Party. Already, his congressional district in Texas was the foundation, rather than the extent, of his political power. He was determined to become more than just another Texas or southern Democratic congressman.<sup>16</sup> After his first few years in the House, it was evident to LBJ that his impatient desire for a quick ascent to national power would not be satisfied by patiently waiting for a committee chairmanship or obtaining a leadership position in a DNC apparatus dominated by northern urban Democrats.<sup>17</sup>

The death of Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas in 1941 created an opportunity for LBJ's political advancement. LBJ entered the special election competing against Governor W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel, Attorney General Gerald Mann, and Congressman Martin Dies. The special election soon developed into a close race between O'Daniel and LBJ.

As he did in his competition with JFK for their party's presidential nomination in 1960, Johnson underestimated his major opponent for the Senate seat. Prior to being elected governor in 1938, O'Daniel had become popular throughout Texas, but especially among low-income rural whites, for his radio program. Sponsored by a flour company, O'Daniel's broadcasts combined religious fundamentalism, economic populism, and country-western music.<sup>18</sup> Although O'Daniel failed to fulfill his promise of state old-age pensions for all elderly Texans and was actually an economic conservative in his policy behavior, he remained popular and was easily renominated and reelected governor in 1940.

Gerald Mann was a loyal New Dealer who worked in LBJ's 1937 congressional campaign. Unlike LBJ, though, Mann used "good government," idealistic rhetoric that appealed to reform-minded middle-class voters. Martin Dies was an isolationist who chaired the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and opposed FDR's internationalistic, pro-British foreign and defense policies.

Dies was a protégé of John Nance Garner. As vice president, Garner opposed FDR for the presidential nomination at the 1940 Democratic national convention. Opposing Dies, Rayburn, and most other Texas Democratic congressmen, LBJ, serving as vice chairman of the Texas delegation, openly supported FDR for a third term.<sup>19</sup> LBJ's pro-FDR position in this situation earned him the growing hostility of conservative Democrats to his ambition for higher office.

Meanwhile, the White House was determined to do whatever it could to surreptitiously and unofficially help LBJ to win this special election. Besides FDR's fatherly, personal fondness for LBJ, the president wanted to ensure that an isolationist like Dies or O'Daniel would not be elected to this Senate seat. In a memo to the president, White House aide James H. Rowe, Jr., told FDR

that the “alternatives” to LBJ’s becoming a senator “are too frightful for contemplation.”<sup>20</sup> Rowe also reminded FDR that the election of either Dies or O’Daniel would further strengthen the anti-administration obstructionism of Senator Tom Connally and Jesse Jones, Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) administrator and later Secretary of Commerce, both Texas Democrats.<sup>21</sup>

Unable to pressure or persuade Jones to endorse LBJ, the White House failed to effectively assist LBJ’s campaign, other than through the provision of additional pork barrel projects. Nonetheless, LBJ, as he did in his first congressional campaign, closely identified himself with FDR and emphasized his record as an ombudsman for federal domestic programs benefiting Texas as well as his unqualified support for FDR’s defense policies. Using the slogan “Roosevelt and Unity,” LBJ’s campaign rallies were often jingoistic, patriotic rituals. Well funded by the Brown and Root firm, LBJ’s campaign heavily invested in radio broadcasts, mailings, and newspaper publicity.<sup>22</sup>

One day after the June 28 election, Johnson led O’Daniel by more than 5,000 votes, and a Dallas newspaper’s headline anticipated LBJ’s victory as “FDR’S ANOINTED.”<sup>23</sup> Liquor interests led by former governor Jim Ferguson were determined to remove O’Daniel, who was fanatically anti-alcohol, as governor. They wanted Coke Stevenson, the lieutenant governor, to succeed O’Daniel. These and other forces in O’Daniel’s coalition of supporters were more effective than LBJ’s allies in buying blocs of mostly Hispanic votes from machine-controlled counties, especially those along the Mexican border.<sup>24</sup> O’Daniel also received a surprisingly large and suspiciously belated number of votes in rural east Texas, the region most favorable to Dies.<sup>25</sup> The state canvassing board eventually declared O’Daniel the winner by a margin of 1,311 votes.<sup>26</sup>

LBJ declined to risk his congressional seat and challenge O’Daniel in 1942 in the Democratic senatorial primary. After a brief, failed effort to compile a heroic combat record as a naval officer, LBJ continued to ingratiate himself with the White House, financial contributors, and fellow House Democrats. He continued his fundraising efforts for the 1942 and 1944 congressional elections. Despite his diligence, most intraparty recognition and gratitude for obtaining campaign funds from oil and gas interests were directed at Edwin Pauley, a California oil executive who had become DNC treasurer in 1942.<sup>27</sup>

Still seeking a national leadership position, LBJ briefly considered trying to get an appointment in Roosevelt’s cabinet as Secretary of the Navy or Postmaster General. He also considered running for governor in 1944 if Coke Stevenson chose not to run for another term.<sup>28</sup> But LBJ’s progressive ambition could not be satisfied with an appointed national position or elective state office. Like Kennedy, Johnson perceived state government to be a dead end for upward political mobility and a chaotic environment of factional conflict.

Political scientists James R. Soukup, Clifton McCleskey, and Henry Holloway noted that by the early 1940s “ordered political competition along liberal-

conservative lines developed in Texas.”<sup>29</sup> World War II stimulated greater industrialization and urbanization, the decline of the cotton economy, hostility toward labor unions, and formidable economic and political power for oil and gas interests.<sup>30</sup> The rising domination of Texas Democratic politics by anti-Roosevelt, oil-financed conservatives was illustrated in two dramatic events in 1944. First, Sam Rayburn was almost defeated for renomination by a well-funded conservative opponent.<sup>31</sup> Second, the Democratic state convention bitterly divided the Texas delegation to the 1944 Democratic national convention between pro-FDR and unpledged, anti-FDR delegates, the latter referring to themselves as Texas Regulars.<sup>32</sup>

Unable to unite his own state’s delegates behind FDR’s renomination, Rayburn realized that he would not fulfill his ambition to become FDR’s running mate in 1944.<sup>33</sup> Running for the Democratic presidential nomination as an anti-FDR conservative, Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia received eighty-nine votes on the first ballot, twelve of them from Texas.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the Texas Regulars derided LBJ as FDR’s “yes man” and “pin up boy.” In its decision in *Smith v. Allwright* in April 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the all-white Democratic primary of Texas. This decision inflamed the use of race baiting by conservative Democrats against Rayburn, LBJ, and other beleaguered pro-FDR Democrats in Texas.

LBJ once told James H. Rowe, Jr., “There’s nothing more useless than a dead liberal.”<sup>35</sup> LBJ noticed how Maury Maverick, once the most liberal congressman from Texas, was defeated by a conservative primary opponent in 1938 during his second term.<sup>36</sup> Despite his moderate legislative record and status as Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn struggled to retain his congressional seat as conservatives perceived him to be a servant and captive of liberal White House policies hostile to Texas.

LBJ spent his remaining years as a congressman developing a more conservative legislative record, especially regarding civil rights, labor unions, and oil and gas interests. Although LBJ had generally benefited the oil and gas industries in his previous record, he had distinguished himself as one of the two Texas congressmen to oppose the oil industry and support the Roosevelt administration’s price control policy on crude oil in a 1943 floor vote.<sup>37</sup> In the name of states’ rights and free enterprise, LBJ opposed federal anti-lynching legislation and the creation of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to prohibit racial discrimination in hiring.

Johnson was careful to rhetorically differentiate between his support for the economic interests of the “working man” and his opposition to the “labor bosses.”<sup>38</sup> He often portrayed the latter as corrupt, dictatorial, and collaborating with Communists and gangsters. In a Republican-controlled Congress in 1947, LBJ voted for the Taft-Hartley Act limiting the powers of labor unions. With a coalition of Republicans and most southern Democrats behind it, Congress overrode Harry Truman’s veto, thereby enacting this legislation.<sup>39</sup>

After Senator W. Lee O'Daniel announced that he would not run for reelection in 1948, LBJ delayed a decision and belatedly and ambivalently entered the primary for the vacant Senate seat. He waited to learn if Congressman Wright Patman would enter this Senate campaign. Patman and Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr., had served together in the state legislature, and both Sam and LBJ respected and admired Patman.<sup>40</sup> With Patman declining to run for the Senate, LBJ had to decide whether he wanted to run against his most formidable opponent, former governor Coke Stevenson. The Democratic state organization, "court-house gangs," and most conservative Democrats alienated from the Truman administration favored Stevenson. George Peddy, an obscure yet well-financed corporate attorney for oil and gas interests and endorsed by the *Houston Post*, was expected to attract votes away from any candidate who seriously challenged Stevenson.<sup>41</sup> Finally, unlike in the special Senate election of 1941, LBJ would have to vacate his safe congressional seat and risk a permanent end to his political career.<sup>42</sup>

LBJ announced his Senate candidacy less than one month before the filing deadline of June 11, 1948. He quickly developed an effective campaign strategy employing the most modern methods ever used in a statewide Texas campaign.<sup>43</sup> At a time when very few Americans had seen a helicopter, LBJ regularly flew from one campaign stop to another in order to attract attention with his helicopter and its loudspeakers. Flying throughout Texas also helped LBJ to save time and address more crowds. LBJ's campaign effectively utilized modern polling techniques, frequent radio advertising, monitoring of newspaper coverage, and public relations specialists.<sup>44</sup> Unlike his first congressional campaign and, to a lesser extent, his 1941 Senate race, LBJ informed his campaign staff not to associate him with FDR in his speeches and advertising because of the former president's decline in popularity among the more prosperous, conservative Texans.

Although LBJ distanced himself from the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, he frequently emphasized his proven ability to deliver federal largesse to his constituents. During and after World War II, Johnson had enthusiastically promoted federal spending and programs that benefited the growing aerospace industries and facilities of Texas, both civilian and military. Unlike Coke Stevenson, LBJ understood that even ideologically conservative, affluent Texans often favored federal programs and spending that promoted prosperity and modern economic development in their state, such as highways, hospital and school construction, water and power projects, and government contracts for defense and public infrastructure.<sup>45</sup> In short, LBJ ran for the Senate in 1948 as a big government conservative. He contended that his congressional experience, platform, and vision would enable him, as a senator, to establish a symbiotic relationship between Texas and the federal government. Texas would use federal resources to expand and modernize its economy, thereby enabling it to contribute more effectively to an aggressively anti-Communist, internationalist foreign and defense policy.

Coke Stevenson, by contrast, failed to understand and counteract LBJ's themes of modernity and progress. Instead, the taciturn former governor campaigned for senator emphasizing the same ideology and rhetoric that he had used in his gubernatorial campaigns. Identifying himself as a "Jeffersonian Democrat," Stevenson usually made brief, bland, vague statements about the need to apply his philosophy and gubernatorial record of states' rights, low taxes, less spending, and fewer regulations on business to the federal government.<sup>46</sup> It was difficult and awkward for him to explain why the American Federation of Labor endorsed him. Usually reticent about his foreign and defense policy views, Stevenson conveyed the impression that he was an isolationist.

LBJ was careful not to underestimate Stevenson, as he had O'Daniel in 1941. During the final weeks of the July campaign, most polls showed that Stevenson was ahead of LBJ. Although Stevenson received almost 72,000 more votes than LBJ in the July 28 primary, Stevenson's percentage of the total votes was small enough so that a runoff primary between the two top candidates was scheduled for August 28.<sup>47</sup> LBJ realized that the results of the runoff primary, like those of the 1941 Senate election, would probably be decided by machine-controlled ballot boxes. LBJ and his allies intensified their lobbying of machine bosses who were undecided or wavering in their support for Coke Stevenson.<sup>48</sup>

In particular, a friendly reporter informed LBJ that George Parr, the machine boss of Duval County with some political influence in nearby Jim Wells County, was disgruntled with Stevenson. Parr had backed Stevenson for governor, but he might be willing to endorse LBJ. Johnson asked Parr for his support, and Parr reputedly promised it to LBJ without asking for any favors.<sup>49</sup> Parr wanted to spite Stevenson for appointing a district attorney that he had opposed in 1943.<sup>50</sup>

On August 31, three days after the runoff primary was held, the Texas election bureau announced that Stevenson was ahead by 349 votes with forty votes left to count.<sup>51</sup> But the Johnson campaign contended that various ballots throughout Texas had still not been counted. In particular, the highly questionable, belated votes for LBJ from Duval and Jim Wells counties provided him with an eighty-seven-vote margin of victory against Stevenson.<sup>52</sup>

LBJ received vital assistance from Washington when he defeated Stevenson's legal challenges to his still disputed eighty-seven-vote victory. James H. Rowe, Jr., Abe Fortas, a former government attorney in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, Thomas Corcoran, a former New Deal lawyer now associated with a lobbying and law firm in Washington, and Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., a lawyer and ADA leader, were among the thirty-five Washington lawyers who provided LBJ with legal advice and representation.<sup>53</sup> Supreme Court justice Hugo Black, who was the presiding judge of the federal circuit that included Texas, ruled in favor of LBJ on September 28, 1948.

Upon taking office as a senator in 1949, LBJ entered a now Democratic-controlled Senate. Since the Republicans had lost control of the Senate in the

1948 elections, Democrat Les Biffle became secretary to the Senate majority. Biffle's "chief telephone page" and de facto chief of staff was Bobby Baker, a South Carolinian.<sup>54</sup> Shortly before being sworn in as a senator, LBJ asked Baker to provide him with all the inside information about the Senate so that he could increase his power, status, and effectiveness as quickly as possible. Due to his razor-thin, controversial election, he bluntly told Baker that he needed to be independent of the liberal policy goals of the Truman administration and the national Democratic Party in order to strengthen his political base in Texas. "Frankly, Mr. Baker, I'm for nearly anything the big oil boys want because they hold the whip hand and I represent 'em."<sup>55</sup>

LBJ then devoted his first two years as a senator to this task. He allied himself with another freshman Democratic senator, Robert Kerr of Oklahoma, in protecting and promoting the policy interests of the oil and gas industries. They led the successful opposition to Leland Olds, Truman's nominee for another term on the Federal Power Commission (FPC) in 1949.<sup>56</sup> Olds was a New Deal liberal who favored stricter federal regulations on public utilities.

Six days before the Senate voted to reject Olds, Truman stated at a press conference that a Democratic senator's loyalty to the Democratic national platform and the president's party leadership required him to vote for Olds. Truman also directed William Boyle, the DNC chairman, to lobby Senate Democrats on behalf of Olds's renomination.<sup>57</sup> LBJ proudly stated on the Senate floor that he was willing to suffer the "lash of a party line" from the president in order to vote his conscience.<sup>58</sup>

As he had done in the House, LBJ quickly cultivated friendships and mentor-protégé relationships with the most powerful, veteran southern Democrats in the Senate.<sup>59</sup> LBJ especially gained the friendship and counsel of Richard Russell, a Georgia Democrat who later chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee and pursued the Democratic presidential nomination of 1952. With Russell's sponsorship, LBJ gained access to the "inner club" of southerners who dominated the Senate.

But LBJ realized, as he had in the House, that it would take him many years to accumulate enough seniority to chair a major committee in a Democratic-controlled Senate. He also did not want to isolate himself and limit his progressive ambition by being perceived and treated as just "another southern Democrat" by nonsouthern Democrats in the Senate. LBJ found his opportunity for rapid advancement in a seemingly unlikely place—party leadership.

Political scientist James Sundquist stated that party leaders "are, by definition, the beneficiaries of the party system as it is."<sup>60</sup> During the last two years of the Truman presidency, the national Democratic Party in general and the Senate Democrats in particular were experiencing an intensified degree of dissensus. Dissensus is a condition of intraparty political behavior in which party members increasingly lack a shared ideology and policy agenda and become alienated from



each other multilaterally, rather than just bilaterally, as they are confronted by new types of issues.<sup>61</sup>

The Democrats were not simply divided between pro-civil rights, urban, northern, pro-union liberals and anti-civil rights, rural, southern, antiunion conservatives. The civil rights' positions of southern Democratic senators ranged from that of Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, who supported a federal repeal of poll taxes, to that of James Eastland of Mississippi, who stridently opposed any federal intervention on any race-related issue like voting rights for blacks. While supportive of civil rights and labor unions, western Democratic senators like Warren Magnuson of Washington and Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming often voted with southern conservatives and against northeastern liberals on expanding federal water and electrification projects. When the issue and political movement of McCarthyism emerged in 1950, Democrats in Congress, regardless of ideological and regional differences, disagreed over whether to emphasize the protection of civil liberties for suspected Communists or to demonstrate equally militant anti-Communism through new legislation and red-baiting rhetoric, and over how to facilitate Senator Joseph McCarthy's political demise. Finally, Harry Truman's declining public approval ratings and the growing public frustration with his conduct of the Korean War motivated most Senate Democrats to distance themselves from Truman's party leadership.<sup>62</sup>

Scott Lucas, a moderate Democrat from Illinois, served as Senate majority leader during the 1949–1950 session of Congress and unsuccessfully tried to be a liaison between the president and Senate Democrats, especially the conservative southern bloc. Lucas and five other nonsouthern Democratic senators were defeated for reelection in 1950. This made the southern bloc even more cohesive and powerful within the reduced Democratic majority. The Democrats elected Ernest McFarland, an aging moderate from Arizona, as their new majority leader.

LBJ's opportunity to enter the party leadership appeared when Lister Hill of Alabama resigned as Senate majority whip in protest of Truman's FEPC proposal and foreign policy in Korea. Although McFarland passively opposed LBJ's candidacy for whip, he had to accept the Texan as his assistant because of LBJ's staunch support from the southern bloc.<sup>63</sup> While the listless McFarland minimized his role and responsibilities as majority leader, the dynamic LBJ maximized his. The Texas Democrat especially used the whip's position to expand and strengthen his contacts and quid pro quo legislative relationships with nonsouthern Democrats, especially Hubert Humphrey, during the 1951–1952 session. In the 1952 elections, the Republicans won the presidency and majorities in both houses of Congress. McFarland was defeated for reelection by Barry Goldwater, a Republican city councilman from Phoenix.<sup>64</sup>

The Senate Republicans, however, only had a one-seat majority, 48–47. Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio was elected majority leader, but he died of cancer on July 31, 1953.<sup>65</sup> The Republicans then elected Senator William F. Knowland

of California as Taft's successor. Lacking Taft's intellectual and rhetorical skills and less willing than Taft to compromise with Democrats on major policy issues, Knowland was a staunch ally of Joseph McCarthy and openly criticized Eisenhower's foreign policy toward China and the United Nations. The California Republican threatened to resign his leadership position in 1954 if Communist China was admitted to the United Nations.

Knowland retained his title as Senate majority leader for the remainder of the eighty-third Congress. The Republicans actually lost their numerical majority in the Senate when Taft died because the Ohio Republican was replaced by a Democrat, Thomas Burke. Wayne Morse, an independent and former Republican from Oregon, mostly voted with the Democrats until he became one in 1955.<sup>66</sup> Following the Democratic gain of one Senate seat in the 1954 midterm elections, LBJ formally became Senate majority leader. Regardless of whether or not his party had a numerical majority in the Senate, LBJ had instructed Bobby Baker to have the title Senate Democratic Leader printed on his stationery.<sup>67</sup> At LBJ's request, Senator Earle Clements of Kentucky was elected majority whip. This was a shrewd, consensus-building decision by LBJ since Clements was a moderately liberal, culturally southern border state senator. Clements was generally acceptable to both northern Democrats and southern, conservative "inner club" senators led by Richard Russell of Georgia. The Texan privately assured Hubert H. Humphrey that the Minnesota Democrat would be his unofficial "ambassador" to northern liberals.<sup>68</sup>

Besides seeking cooperation on an incremental, issue-by-issue basis from a variety of Democrats, LBJ also developed constructive relationships with some moderate and liberal Republicans, such as Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and Irving Ives of New York, who were alienated by Knowland's party leadership and McCarthyism. Although the 1954 elections had yielded a twenty-nine-seat majority for the House Democrats, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn still had to deal with major committees controlled by the bipartisan conservative coalition, especially the House Rules Committee.<sup>69</sup> Like LBJ, Rayburn wanted the Democratic policy agenda in Congress to consist of bipartisan cooperation on more consensual domestic programs, like the construction of the interstate highway system and the St. Lawrence Seaway and expansion of Social Security, deference to Eisenhower on major foreign policy issues, and the offer of centrist alternatives to the president's more conservative, partisan proposals, such as tax cuts.<sup>70</sup>

Even more important to LBJ's leadership style than Rayburn, though, was Dwight Eisenhower. The Republican president disliked partisan conflict and reluctantly agreed to run for president in order to preserve and continue a bipartisan foreign policy and prevent anti-UN isolationist Republicans from nominating and electing their own presidential candidate. Eisenhower demonstrated little interest or initiative in trying to transform the Republican Party into the new, enduring majority party with an ideology and policy agenda clearly

distinguishing it from the Democratic Party.<sup>71</sup> Eisenhower's bipartisan centrism and, apparently, that of most American voters during the mid-1950s were revealed in the 1956 election results. The Republican president was reelected with 57 percent of the popular votes while the Democrats increased their congressional majorities by one seat in the Senate and two seats in the House. Also, the percentage of voters identifying themselves as Republicans steadily declined from 1956 to 1960.<sup>72</sup>

With this modest yet steady electoral progress by the Democrats during the mid-1950s, LBJ was careful to remain publicly respectful of Eisenhower and even deferential on most foreign policy issues, such as his support of the president against the anti-UN Bricker amendment sponsored by conservative Republicans in the Senate. Meanwhile, LBJ directed more partisan, aggressive rhetoric at the most controversial members of the Eisenhower administration, especially Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, and the most obstructionist, conservative Republican senators.<sup>73</sup> George Reedy, who served on LBJ's Senate staff during the 1950s and briefly as his White House press secretary, observed, "There were practically no circumstances under which Johnson would countenance a 'Democratic' bill. He insisted that the changes be made by striking the language of key portions of an *Eisenhower* bill and inserting Democratic language in its place."<sup>74</sup>

As Eisenhower began his second term, other Democrats increasingly and openly criticized and opposed what Texas newspapers had praised as LBJ's "constructive conservatism" and "cooperative and conciliatory attitude toward the President."<sup>75</sup> Liberal activists, especially the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and "amateur Democrats" inspired by Adlai Stevenson, were frustrated by and impatient with Johnson and Rayburn's party leadership in Congress.<sup>76</sup> They were especially insistent that LBJ and Rayburn articulate liberal policy positions, such as on civil rights and federal aid to elementary and secondary education. Liberals wanted to distinguish the two major parties ideologically and programmatically, thereby mobilizing Democratic majorities for winning presidential elections and making the Democratic congressional record more reflective of the Democratic national platform.<sup>77</sup>

Richard Bolling, a Missouri Democratic congressman and protégé of Rayburn, dismissively referred to these liberal critics as "the irresponsible liberals who didn't care about the deeds and only cared about words."<sup>78</sup> Shortly after the 1956 elections, the DNC created the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC) for formulating and announcing Democratic policy positions. DNC chairman Paul M. Butler invited Rayburn and Johnson to join the DAC, but both refused and asserted that they represented the national Democratic policy agenda.<sup>79</sup>

James H. Rowe, Jr., one of LBJ's closest, most respected political confidantes, warned the Senate majority leader that he must address this criticism. The liberals regarded LBJ as "a turncoat New Dealer" and will intensify their oppo-

sition to his party leadership “until Lyndon Johnson can find an issue on which he can lead his party.”<sup>80</sup> During the 1957–1958 session, LBJ pursued the issue that he had avoided the most—civil rights.<sup>81</sup>

LBJ realized that he could attract the reluctant support of the most liberal southern Democrats, like Tennesseans Gore and Kefauver, and only passive opposition from the more conservative southerners if he limited the definition and policy focus of civil rights to a modest increase in the federal protection of voting rights. Black voter registration and turnout had gradually increased without acts of Congress in the peripheral South (e.g., Texas, Tennessee, and Florida), since the 1940s. Senators from these states were less likely to feel politically threatened by such legislation.<sup>82</sup> LBJ also understood that it would be difficult for the most doctrinaire liberal critics of his party leadership, such as Paul Douglas of Illinois and the recently elected William Proxmire of Wisconsin, to vote against such a bill for being too weak and limited.

Johnson had been careful not to antagonize southern conservatives by diluting the obstructionistic power of the filibuster through reform of the cloture rules. But he had gradually and subtly reduced the power of the southern bloc in the Senate. LBJ increased and diversified the membership of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee to include more nonsouthern Democrats. Greater regional and ideological diversity in the Senate Democratic power structure was also achieved through the Johnson Rule.<sup>83</sup> This procedural reform reduced the significance of seniority in committee assignments so that senators with less seniority, usually liberal and moderate nonsouthern Democrats, were more likely to receive assignments to more desirable, prestigious committees. Freshman Democrats John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, John Pastore of Rhode Island, Mike Mansfield of Montana, and Henry M. “Scoop” Jackson of Washington especially benefited from the Johnson Rule. LBJ calculated that most nonsouthern Democrats who had benefited from his party leadership would be willing to amend a civil rights bill in order to assure its passage, despite lobbying pressure for a tougher bill from the NAACP, ADA, and their more liberal, anti-LBJ colleagues.

Using the influence of his mentor-protégé relationship with Richard Russell, LBJ persuaded the Georgia Democrat to abstain from organizing a filibuster if a jury trial amendment was added to the civil rights bill.<sup>84</sup> Russell and most other southern conservatives actually resented the solitary, marathon floor speech of J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina against the compromised civil rights bill of 1957. Following Thurmond’s twenty-four-hour speech, the Senate passed the civil rights bill by a margin of 60 to 15.<sup>85</sup>

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 was, according to Johnson aide George Reedy, “the production of a master legislative mind at the height of his powers” and that the “civil rights battle could now be fought out legislatively in an arena that previously had provided nothing but a sounding board for speeches.”<sup>86</sup> Leading the Senate Democrats since 1953, LBJ had assumed that

his emphasis on bipartisan, multiregional compromises, centrism, public respect for Eisenhower, and shrewd distribution of prestigious committee assignments and other favors to grateful nonsouthern Democrats would gradually improve his national status within the Democratic Party. LBJ's zealous determination to pass virtually any civil rights bill that would not arouse the implacable opposition of Richard Russell made him focus on the legislative tactics and policy compromises necessary to pass a bill rather than on the substantive value and impact of such legislation on the actual voting rights of southern blacks.<sup>87</sup> Eisenhower publicly criticized the shortcomings of the bill and only reluctantly signed it into law. Black civil rights and labor leader A. Philip Randolph and maverick liberal senator Wayne Morse denounced it as a sham.<sup>88</sup> Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. of the ADA actually asserted that LBJ's leadership in passing this bill "proved his unfitness for national leadership."<sup>89</sup>

Eisenhower's use of the U.S. Army to implement the court-ordered desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, shortly after the enactment of the 1957 civil rights bill further exacerbated divisions among Democrats.<sup>90</sup> Liberals demanded tougher, additional civil rights legislation to compensate for the shortcomings of the 1957 law and prepare for the 1960 presidential election.<sup>91</sup> Feeling betrayed by Eisenhower, LBJ, and their nonsouthern Democratic colleagues, southern senators became more hostile to future civil rights legislation.<sup>92</sup>

Another event of 1957 that complicated Johnson's effort to develop a consensual national status as a Democrat was the special election of Ralph Yarborough to the Senate from Texas. Yarborough's predecessor, Price Daniel, was more conservative than LBJ, especially on racial and economic issues, and had openly endorsed Eisenhower's presidential candidacy in 1952. In 1952, Daniel was the senatorial nominee of both the Democratic and Republican parties of Texas. Daniel also served as a liaison for LBJ with an even more conservative, pro-Eisenhower Democrat, Governor Allen Shivers. Although LBJ wanted Daniel to run for reelection to the Senate in 1958, Daniel was elected governor in 1956. Reflecting on his usually friendly, cooperative relationship with LBJ, Daniel stated that LBJ wanted to "work as a team . . . on Democratic Party machinery, such as the State Democratic Executive Committee . . . and that I would work with him in seeing his enemies didn't get on that Committee and take over the party in Texas."<sup>93</sup>

Daniel, Rayburn, and LBJ formed a triumvirate in 1956 to control the state Democratic apparatus, especially its Democratic delegates to the party's 1956 national convention and the pledging of the state's Democratic electors to Adlai Stevenson. Ideologically, with Daniel to his right and Rayburn to his left, LBJ, according to political scientist O. Douglas Weeks, was "more in the exact center because he had not deserted the party or truckled too openly with either the right or the left."<sup>94</sup>

The shaky coalition that LBJ and Rayburn had cobbled together with conservatives and liberals was short-lived. Inspired by Adlai Stevenson and identifying themselves with the ADA and DAC, the small but vocal cadre of liberal Democrats in Texas distrusted LBJ. Encouraged by the special election of Ralph Yarborough to the Senate in 1957, Texas liberal Democrats established the Democrats of Texas (DOT), similar to the pro-Stevenson, "amateur" Democratic clubs that were being formed throughout the nation, and a Texas chapter of the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC).<sup>95</sup> Margaret Carter, a member of the Texas DAC, commented in 1969 that LBJ, like Rayburn, "simply did not want any organized activity to be going on, because if you sponsor an organization, then you do have to keep in touch with it."<sup>96</sup>

Yarborough's presence as the junior senator from Texas made LBJ appear to be even more conservative than he was. Unlike LBJ, Yarborough used anti-big business populist rhetoric and openly cultivated the support of blacks, Hispanics, the more liberal labor leaders, and liberal activists like ADA and DOT members. Frankie Randolph, a pro-Yarborough, anti-LBJ liberal, was elected Democratic national committeewoman from Texas. She defeated LBJ's candidate, Beryl Bentsen, the wife of former congressman and future senator Lloyd Bentsen.<sup>97</sup> With Yarborough and Randolph as their power base in the party apparatus of Texas, the most liberal Democratic activists were determined that Texas would not provide united delegate support for a possible LBJ presidential candidacy at the 1960 Democratic national convention.<sup>98</sup>

Unable to gain the trust of liberal activists in his home state, LBJ had a shaky political base that was also threatened by the growing number of Texas Republicans, who often allied themselves with the most conservative Democrats on an issue-by-issue, candidate-by-candidate basis. For example, although Ralph Yarborough won the 1957 Senate election in Texas, he received 38 percent of the votes while his two leading opponents, Martin Dies, a conservative Democrat, and Thad Hutcheson, a Republican, respectively received 30.4 percent and 22.9 percent.<sup>99</sup> As he faced renomination and reelection to the Senate in 1960, it was unlikely that LBJ would attract the overwhelming primary support and the token Republican opposition of his 1954 campaign. Johnson's pragmatic centrism was becoming a liability, rather than an asset, in his home state's politics.

While LBJ pondered a presidential candidacy as an escape from the internecine politics of Texas, he continued to try to further develop a national reputation as a consensus-building power broker who could lead the formulation and passage of legislation that benefited the nation as a whole. During the 1957–1958 legislative session, LBJ focused on bipartisan efforts to initiate a space program, increase federal aid for school construction, provide college loans and graduate fellowships, especially in science and mathematics, admit Alaska as a state, and end the unpopular farm policies of Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft

Benson.<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately for LBJ, the Senate was not a microcosm of national Democratic politics in the late 1950s.

In disseminating analyses of the election results of 1956, DNC chairman Paul M. Butler focused on the fact that Eisenhower had received a near landslide 57 percent of the popular vote and had performed unusually well among such typically Democratic voting blocs as blacks, Catholics, and union members. Even black Democratic representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of New York endorsed Eisenhower's reelection.<sup>101</sup> In a 1957 speech at Howard University, political analyst Samuel Lubell stated, "One of the striking paradoxes of the whole election was that the Negro and the white Southerner could cast a protest vote against one another by voting for the same man, Dwight D. Eisenhower."<sup>102</sup>

Even before the 1957–1958 recession began and the 1958 midterm elections were held, the growing consensus of the DNC headquarters, the DAC, ADA, Democratic big city mayors, civil rights leaders, union leaders, and other major influences on the presidential nominating and platform drafting processes of the national Democratic party was that the Democratic presidential ticket and platform in 1960 needed to be distinctly more liberal in order to attract maximum electoral support from the major nonsouthern voting blocs of the New Deal coalition and win the election.<sup>103</sup> During the 1956 Democratic national convention, John M. Bailey, the Democratic state chairman of Connecticut, distributed a statistical analysis of the growing, decisive influence of Catholic voting power in presidential elections.<sup>104</sup> Later attributed to JFK's speechwriter Theodore C. Sorensen, the Bailey Memorandum suggested that the future nomination of a Catholic to a Democratic presidential ticket would be not only helpful but even necessary for Democratic victory. As early as the fall of 1955, LBJ had reportedly rejected Joseph P. Kennedy's offer to finance his presidential campaign if the Texan became the Democratic presidential nominee in 1956 and chose JFK as his running mate.<sup>105</sup>

Compared to Johnson, JFK better understood and could master the political forces that influenced the 1960 Democratic presidential nomination. Unlike Johnson, JFK realized that the power to influence the decision of the 1960 Democratic national convention resided primarily with Democratic state chairmen, governors, big city mayors, union leaders, and party activists rather than with Democratic senators. In a 1957 *Life* magazine article, JFK warned that if he and his fellow Democrats "simply stay in the middle with a policy of 'moderation,' we will not . . . distinguish our position sufficiently to arouse the much-needed enthusiasm of our more progressive supporters, particularly in the West, and the presidential race will be reduced to largely a personality contest."<sup>106</sup>

The midterm election results of 1958, especially those for the Senate races, accelerated and intensified these more partisan, ideologically divisive political forces that benefited JFK's presidential ambition and hampered LBJ's. With a secure political base in Massachusetts, ample campaign funds, high-profile com-