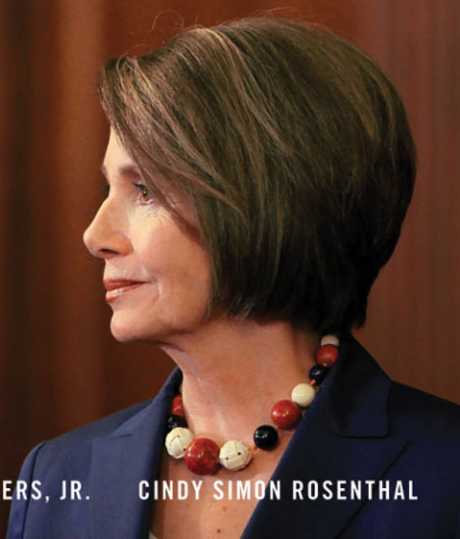


SPEAKER
NANCY PELOSI
AND THE
NEW AMERICAN
POLITICS



RONALD M. PETERS, JR.

CINDY SIMON ROSENTHAL

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TO GLENDA

THE SPEAKER OF
OUR HOUSE

RP

TO JIM, CATIE AND
AARON

"WHAT TOGETHER
WE CAN DO"

CSR

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nancy Pelosi's election in January 2007 as the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives was a milestone in U.S. history. In addition to its obvious historical importance, it also raised new questions for scholars to address. On the one hand, those questions focused on the return of the Democrats to power after 12 years in the minority. Would the Democrats proceed as had the Republican majority they replaced? Or would they return to the familiar patterns of a previous incarnation? On the other hand, would the fact of Pelosi being a woman make any difference in her conduct of the speakership or the reaction of the political system to her? Scholars have developed sophisticated theories of congressional leadership, but none of them account gender, a significant variable. Should they?

As the 2006 election and Pelosi's elevation to the speakership unfolded, the authors of this book, situated just across the hall from each other, began a dialogue that has resulted in this book. Peters has spent the last 30 years studying the speakership and the Speakers of the modern era. He has had the privilege of interviewing every Speaker from John McCormack forward, and has written one book and edited another on the speakership. Rosenthal is a student of women's political leadership (and, as mayor of Norman, Oklahoma, a practitioner herself). She has written a definitive study of women in leadership roles in American state legislatures and has edited a book on the impact of women on the U.S. Congress. Our collaboration on this book appears (to us at least) inevitable.

Our most immediate aim in this book is to analyze and assess Nancy Pelosi's service as Speaker. We tell her story as we have come to understand it: not simply as an exercise in narrative history but as offering a window on the American political system today. As our conversations about Pelosi began in earnest in December 2006, Pelosi was drenched in the deluge of publicity that attended the Democratic takeover of the House and her enhanced stature as the first woman ever to be in line to become Speaker. We were reminded, of course, of the attention Speaker Newt Gingrich had gathered after the 1994 election, when he was hailed as a sort of messiah who had led his party into power after 40 years in the wilderness. The election of the

Democratic majority in 2006 had perhaps less historical significance than the Republican revolution of 1994, but the fact that it was a woman who had led the Democrats stimulated public interest.

We also recalled that Speaker Gingrich's tenure had been brief and had fallen well short of the expectations that surrounded his electoral triumph. In fact, since the late 1980s, the House had experienced a series of speaker-ships that did not end well. Jim Wright had been forced to resign in 1989 under a cloud of ethics charges. Tom Foley had lost his seat in the 1994 upheaval that ejected the Democrats from power. Gingrich was pushed out by the Republicans when they lost seats in the 1998 election. And Dennis Hastert, while surviving to become the longest serving Republican Speaker, had presided over his party's reversal in 2006.

These considerations led us to reflect on the condition of the speaker-ship during the current politically charged era in American politics. What changes have occurred in the American political system that put House Speakers so consistently at risk? What is known about the experience of these previous Speakers that might inform our understanding of the challenges Pelosi faced? What skills do Speakers need to succeed in this environment? How would Speaker Pelosi respond to challenges that had brought her predecessors low?

We concluded that our study of Speaker Pelosi also needed to describe how American politics has changed over the past 30 years. The fact that a woman could be elected Speaker was itself an indication of one important change, the greater diversity in representation. But other changes seemed equally important. We have arrayed them under the rubric of the "New American Politics," in which we include, along with diversity, partisanship, organization, technology, and fund-raising. As we thought through the implications of these changes, which we describe in more detail in chapter 1, and learned more about the evolution of Nancy Pelosi's political career, we realized that in many respects her career paralleled and reflected the changes that have occurred. The story we needed to tell would describe and explain how Pelosi's rise to power and her exercise of it has intertwined with the rendition of the American political system in which history has called on her to serve.

This book is the result of these deliberations. We hope it will provide the reader with information and insight about Pelosi herself, but also an enhanced understanding of American politics today and the ways and means of the contemporary House of Representatives. By bringing together theoretical constructs from congressional leadership theory and gender theory, we hope to offer a unique perspective on these broad topics that will be of interest to scholars, students, and lay readers alike.

We owe many debts to those who have helped us in writing this book. These include a team of able research assistants: Deidre Neal, Simon Haeder, Jessica Winski, Stephanie Holliman, Barri Bulla, and Caitlin O'Grady. Laurie McReynolds assisted with document production. Steve Gillon provided an introduction to Oxford University Press. Research information and advice were provided by J. R. Reskovac, Don Wolfensberger, and Valerie Heitshusen. In addition to cited sources, we have drawn on several dozen confidential interviews with members and former members of Congress, present and former congressional staff, and other observers. While we do not list them due to the confidentiality they were assured, we thank each of them for sharing their time and insight with us. We were assisted in arranging some of these interviews by Congressman Dan Boren, his communications director Cole Perryman, Clyde Henderson, and Jonathan Rucks. Joel Jankowsky, a generous supporter of the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center at the University of Oklahoma, also facilitated several interviews. We would like to thank Speaker Pelosi who granted us an interview and was generous in sharing the time of her staff. We want to especially thank her communications director, Brendan Daley, for his assistance and insight. At Oxford University Press, we thank our editor, Dave McBride; editorial assistant, Alexandra Dauler; senior production editor, Jessica Ryan; and copy editor, Martha Ramsey. Alexa Selph provided careful indexing of the manuscript.

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To our families is owed immense gratitude for their patience and support. To Glenda Peters, we credit the initial inspiration for this partnership. To Jim Rosenthal, thanks for steady encouragement both on and off the golf course.

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SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI
AND THE
NEW AMERICAN POLITICS

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Chapter 1

Madam Speaker

I'll tell you what I think. I think that someday a man will be elected who'll bring the speakership into real respectability again. He'll be the real leader of the House. He'll be master around here, and everyone will know it.

—Sam Rayburn (1923)

The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation.

—Susan B. Anthony (1899)

On January 4, 2007, Nancy D'Alesandro Pelosi, a Democrat from San Francisco, was sworn in as the fifty-second Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the first woman to serve in that high office. Accepting the gavel from Republican Leader John Boehner, Pelosi wielded it like a hammer, and then gathered around her the children and grandchildren attending the ceremony to join in the celebration.¹ The dual themes of political power and motherhood framed succinctly the image she aimed to project. Her formal election as Speaker culminated four days of celebration and ceremony during which she claimed the historic moment as an occasion to define herself and the Democratic Party she would now lead.

The opportunities were evident. In November 2006, Pelosi had led the House Democrats to their first majority in 12 years. Congressional Republicans were in disarray. Republican president George W. Bush had reached new lows in job approval ratings. In Congress and around the

country, Democrats basked in the glow of their return to power. As the first woman to serve as Speaker, Pelosi became the focal point of public attention in the United States and around the world. She had been a notable but not widely known leader of the minority party in the House of Representatives; she was now one of the most powerful political figures in American politics, certainly the most powerful woman.

In framing her inauguration, Pelosi stressed her eastern roots as the daughter of longtime Baltimore mayor Thomas D'Alesandro and her Roman Catholic upbringing and education. Even though Tony Bennett regaled celebrants at one dinner with his classic rendition of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," much of the celebration's emphasis was on her Maryland background, and not on her rise to power in California. The "eastern" focus was all the more interesting in its contrast to the very "western" themes around which her political career had been built. Pelosi had always stressed the "entrepreneurial spirit" of the West in explaining her approach to politics and party leadership. She had always run as the western insurgent against more established eastern politicians. Now, having risen to the pinnacle of power, she sought to present herself as both the political daughter of the East and the housewife turned politician from the West.² This positioning aimed to take the edge off of her image as a "San Francisco liberal," a recurrent claim of her political opponents.

In this book we seek to understand Nancy Pelosi, not just as a Speaker of the House, or even as its first female Speaker, but also as a reflection of a new era in American politics. In her career, one can see how the House of Representatives and the American political system more generally have changed in the last thirty years. We will describe and explain both the forces that shaped Pelosi's speakership and her approach to harnessing them in order to fully lay hold of the office's potential. Our account traces her rise to the speakership (chapter 2), her use of institutional power (chapter 3), her approach to politics and image-making and her communications strategy (chapter 4), the challenges that faced a unified Democratic government (chapter 5), and the gender dimensions of her leadership (chapter 6). We conclude (chapter 7) with an analysis and assessment of her approach to the speakership in the context of the institutional life of the House of Representatives and the current state of play in the American political system.

In this chapter, we map the terrain and introduce the themes that guide our narrative. Pelosi's story opens a window on social, political, and institutional forces that have framed her career, shaped her leadership, and transformed the context within which the speakership has evolved. We label these trends the "New American Politics." Since Pelosi is the first woman to serve as Speaker, we specifically explore the gender dimensions of this new incarnation of the political system. Finally, we turn to the implications of these trends for the speakership itself.

THE NEW AMERICAN POLITICS

Historical Backdrop

After President Lyndon Johnson trounced Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election, a period of Democratic liberalism took shape in Johnson's Great Society legislative program. But the political geography was shifting. The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Johnson predicted, led to the realignment of the "Solid South" from Democratic to Republican control. Led by Ronald Reagan, a reconstituted Republican Party emerged from the ashes of Goldwater's candidacy. The GOP would no longer be the bastion of blue-stockings Yankees from the East or small-town bankers and merchants from the Midwest; it would come to be dominated by antigovernment ideologues from the West and social and religious conservatives from the South. In gendered terms, the Republican Party would evolve into the "daddy" party representing muscular foreign policy and stern traditional authority, while the Democrats would become caricatured as the "mommy" party, soft on military matters and permissive in the realm of national security and on some aspects of family values.³ The excesses of the Great Society and the tragedy of the Vietnam War fed these stereotypes and opened political space for Republican presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. And in 1980, Ronald Reagan's sweeping victory over Jimmy Carter carried the Senate into Republican hands for the first time in almost thirty years. Republicans were on a roll.

The only elected branch of the federal government that resisted this Republican trend was the House of Representatives. Led by the iconic Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill (D-MA, 1977–1987), the House remained under Democratic control until 1994, even as its membership became more polarized along partisan lines. Gradually, conservative southern Democrats were replaced by even more conservative Republicans, while in the North and the West, moderate Republicans gave way to more liberal Democrats. The House congressional parties became more ideologically homogenous, the Democrats more liberal, the Republicans more conservative. The center shrank.

The Republican failure to capture the House in the 1980s was not for lack of effort. Beginning in the late 1970s, House Republicans assumed a more confrontational style in challenging the majority Democrats. Led by firebrand Newt Gingrich of Georgia and his Conservative Opportunity Society rebels, House Republicans sought to put the Democratic majority on the defensive. By 1987, relationships between House Democrats and Republicans had become rancorous and polarized. Party leaders developed strategies that aimed at fostering unity within their caucuses.⁴

Political scientists have stressed party polarization in explaining the changes in the American political system that began in the 1980s. However, polarization is not the only significant change that occurred. Nancy Pelosi was first elected to Congress in 1987 and became Speaker in 2007. During those two decades, American society and politics underwent a number of dramatic changes. Consider, for example, the transformation of information technology. In 1987, a simpler media environment prevailed. Personal computers were only beginning to take hold, and the internet had yet to come “online.” E-mail was nascent and the blogosphere unimagined. Cellphones were executive luxuries. Most Americans got their news from the three broadcast networks’ evening news programs, presided over by telegenic white men possessed of fatherly seriousness and authority. The fledgling cable news network CNN had yet to establish itself with its coverage of the first Persian Gulf War (1990). Fox News did not exist. The twenty-four-hour news cycle had yet to develop. Americans still read newspapers they held in their hands. Politics in 1987 was played according to the rules put in place in the 1970s. Money flowed through PACs to political campaigns. Grassroots organization meant developing voter lists, which were beginning to be computerized. Campaigns and congresspersons reached voters and constituents through direct mail. Baby boomers were on the leading edge of their political power. As Bill Clinton, the first baby boomer president, has noted, the political alignments of the 1990s were basically defined by where one stood during the 1960s.⁵ During a period of relative prosperity, cultural issues came to dominate political discourse. The “Reagan Revolution” had put liberal Democrats on the defensive on the matters of war and peace, the role of government in society, and social issues such as abortion.

Consider, too, the transformation of women’s roles in the workforce and politics during the 1980s and beyond. On June 30, 1982, the deadline for ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution came and went, just three states short of the needed 38 required. In its wake, the activists who had pursued the amendment turned to the electoral process and achieved steady, if incremental, increases in the number of women representatives. The term “gender gap” was coined by leaders of the National Organization for Women to keep attention focused on women voters and their importance.⁶ Feminists used the evidence of a “gender gap” to pressure Walter Mondale to choose Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate in 1984. The 1992 elections gave rise to the moniker “Year of the Woman” after law professor Anita Hill galvanized the country with her 1991 testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in which she described sexual harassment she said she had experienced while working for him. Talk of women in politics that year was dominated by the question whether or not Hillary Clinton

would “stand by her man” and live up to expectations to bake cookies and serve tea in the White House as first lady.⁷ As election experts contemplated how carpool moms, soccer moms, national security moms, and most recently hockey moms would vote, the numbers of Democratic women were slowly but steadily increasing in state legislatures, within the U.S. House, and as a political bloc to be reckoned with in the House Democratic Caucus.

Thus, the two decades of Nancy Pelosi’s House career preceding her election as Speaker witnessed dramatic changes. Partisan polarization, to be sure, remains a defining feature of the political landscape. But partisanship now plays itself out in a transformed social and political environment. Information and communications technology has changed the way Americans live and interact. While the face of the traditional news media has been transformed—Katie Couric, Diane Sawyer, and Gwen Ifill head a list of prominent female journalists who now visit our living rooms to report the news—many Americans obtain their information from the internet. In a survey the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press released in August 2008, respondents reported on the sources of information they frequently accessed (“got news there yesterday”) as follows: local television news 52%, cable television 39%, internet 37%, radio 35%, newspapers 35%, and nightly network news 29%.⁸ Pew also notes two clear patterns emerging that differentiate younger and older citizens. Older Americans are much more likely to get their information from traditional television and newspaper sources; younger Americans rely on the internet and social networking sites. An emerging group—“integrators”—draw on multiple sources of news.

This rise in integrators is no doubt connected to the transformation of telecommunications. Cellphones are now ubiquitous. The BlackBerry generation has, to some extent, been set free of institutional filters to the world such as the traditional media had provided. The development of the internet, the blogosphere, social networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook, and information search engines have decentralized information dissemination and collection while eliminating the quality-control filters that the old institutional gatekeepers tried to provide. The audience for broadcast news has shriveled, and cable networks seek audience share by infusing news programming with entertainment values involving a minimum of social and political nuance. Talk radio fans the passions of its fervid audience; misogynist and racist rants are not off limits. This balkanization of information dissemination and opinion formation has led to a self-reinforcement of attitudes that has exacerbated the underlying partisan trend.

While the political landscape has developed a familiar red state/blue state divide, the international map has undergone its most radical redrawing since the ending of the colonial era during the two decades after World

War II. The breakup of the Soviet Union has altered the context of American foreign policy and brought forth new challenges, such as the civil wars in the Balkans and the eruption of Islamic fundamentalism and geopolitical terrorism. China has emerged as the major strategic competitor to the United States. At the same time, the American economy seems even more fragile now than it did two decades ago.

The American political system and its government face enormous challenges today: a mountain of public and private debt, huge unfunded liabilities in social insurance programs, crumbling infrastructure, a dysfunctional health-care system, the threat of global climate change, and regular doses of corporate malfeasance causing economic losses in the billions. Estimates of the financial policy deficit (the amount of money required to pay all of the government's future obligations under current policy) exceed \$50 trillion over the next generation. And in 2008, things got considerably worse, with the onset of the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression.

This transformation in the terrain of American politics has produced a new political and policy dynamic. Ronald Reagan anchored the Republican Party in a triumvirate of policy positions: strong national defense, tax cuts, and conservative social values. These positions united the national security, economic, and cultural conservatives. Republicans were free traders as well. The Democrats were, as usual, divided. Liberals on the party's traditional ideological left have adhered to New Deal and Great Society application of government power to address social and economic problems. They have been suspicious of globalization and free trade. Centrist and conservative Democrats have concluded that the party can win elections only by moderating its positions. These "Third Way" Democrats have sought to "reinvent government," favored reliance on private sector solutions where possible (privatization), and supported former heresies such as welfare reform and free trade.

These policy cleavages have run side by side with considerations of political expedience. Republicans have settled on a strategy of uniting their party's base voters around the three pillars of Reaganism. This approach produced huge federal deficits under presidents Reagan and George W. Bush. The Democrats were internally divided over political strategy as they were on public policy. Moderate Democrats concluded that the party needed to reposition itself to recapture the center ground of American politics, in effect asking liberals to sacrifice their policy preferences in order to gain political control. Liberal Democrats took their playbook from the Republicans, arguing that what was needed was more effective political organization; they derided the centrists' approach as "Republican Lite." As we shall see, this strategic controversy had powerful implications for the Democrats' choice of legislative leaders.

Elements of the New American Politics

The changes we have described have contributed to the emergence of what we call the “New American Politics,” a phenomenon we think rests on five interrelated elements: partisanship, money, organization, technology, and representation. The partisan divisions in the government, reflecting those in the country at large, are evident in the results of the recent presidential and congressional elections. We will have more to say about the partisanship in Congress in this book. Here, we wish to stress that both the major parties have focused on cultivating and motivating their base—that is, their most loyal—voters. While both political parties have been complicit in this race to the base, scholars have credited the Republican Party with the first and, over time, most effective deployment of this strategy.⁹ It was the essence of Bush political advisor Karl Rove’s approach to winning the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 and the key to the Republican capture of Congress in the low-turnout election of 1994.

This base-voter strategy has fundamentally altered American politics. Historically, the two major parties sought to win elections by capturing the center of the electorate, where the majority of voters are presumed to reside.¹⁰ The fight to win over the median voter had the effect of moderating the nation’s politics. Presidential candidates ran to the base in the primary election and then scrambled to the center in the general election. Rove concluded that this approach was not necessary if your side could turn out more base voters than the other side. Kindred to the base voter strategy is the “culture wars” approach. Scholars have questioned the existence of a “culture war” in the United States, citing data suggesting that most voters are middle-of-the-road when it comes to public policy.¹¹ These scholars assume that a culture war would center on policy issues, about which Americans disagree, and argue that those disagreements are less substantial than the culture wars approach suggests.¹²

But the culture war may be less about policy than about people. The oldest divisions in political life are between *us* and *them*, whether these be southerners and northerners, Catholics and Protestants, blacks and whites, Yankee fans and Red Sox fans, immigrants and natives, Republicans and Democrats. Each party aspires to be the party of *us* and to make the opponents the party of *them*. Then, the strategy is to turn out more of *us* to vote than the opposition can of *them*. As Rick Perlstein has recently argued, this kind of cultural alienation, which goes deeper than values, has been a staple of Republican politics since it was debuted by Richard Nixon.¹³ We see it manifested when Gingrich calls Democrats the “enemies of normal people,” Sarah Palin evokes “hockey moms” against the Washington establishment, and conservative commentators characterize the Republican Party as comprising “typical Americans” and the Democratic Party otherwise.¹⁴

One particular fault line in this culture war runs through the playground, dividing stay-at-home mothers and working mothers in heated debates about women's choices for their families and careers. When the General Social Survey of 1986 asked "Do you agree or disagree: Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men?" more than 39% of housewives concurred, in contrast with 14% of working women. The divide between housewives and working women narrowed to its lowest level (15%) in 1993 and then rose again through 1998, when the question was last asked. By 1998, the divide had grown to 24%, with almost one in three housewives (31%) embracing the "run the home" view, compared with only one in ten (8%) women in the workforce.¹⁵ There is, of course, a partisan twist on these numbers: in most of the survey years, more women claimed a preference for the Democratic Party; and among working women, Democrat outnumbered Republican working women by almost two to one.

For the past fifty years, starting with Nixon, the Republican Party has sought to identify itself with a core of white, conservative, religiously oriented (at first mostly Protestant, then increasingly Catholic), middle-class voters. The Republicans have portrayed the Democrats as the party of minorities, intellectuals, media, and entertainment elites—in short, an odd combination of people too poor and alien to be one of "us" with the "effete corps of impudent snobs" who look down their noses at regular, hardworking Americans.¹⁶ Democratic presidential candidates have been portrayed as arugula-loving and somehow foreign. This portrayal has also had gendered dimensions—"traditional" families of happy stay-at-home moms and angry white working men are allegedly under siege from prochoice feminists, homosexuals, and illegal immigrants who threaten the essential fabric of society and traditional family values. If one city more than any other represents this caricature of the Democratic Party it is San Francisco, California. Democrats have sometimes responded with exaggerated representations of Republican constituencies, describing them as parochial, prejudiced, gun-toting rednecks. The cultural divide runs in both directions.

This cultivation of cultural and gendered partisan divisions is reflected in two other aspects of the New American Politics: money and organization. The 1974 Campaign Finance Reform Act set up the political action committee (PAC) system, which was designed to put constraints on the flow of money into politics. In order to enhance the role of the political parties in the process, the law allowed unlimited contributions (sometimes called "soft" money) to political parties. This arrangement put a premium on organized fund-raising through PACs to fuel individual campaigns; but it also opened the spigot for big-money givers to write large checks to the political parties. This largess is ostensibly for "party building" activities such as get-out-the-vote drives, but

in practice has also been used for sham “issue” advertising plainly directed at individual races. The premium now is on party operatives and supporters who could reach out to large numbers of “limit” donors, that is, those who could afford to give the maximum contribution the law allows. Lobbyists with access to PAC funds have become more influential. Forced to devote considerable time to fund-raising, members of Congress have come to rely on those who could most easily help them.

The 1974 law did democratize political fund-raising to some degree. The days of Nixon’s Committee to Reelect the President stuffing its safe with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cold cash were over. But the continuous need to raise money created a dependency on those best able to raise it. For women candidates who were struggling to compete on the national scene, EMILY’s List began to level the playing field. First created in 1985, this grass-roots organization perfected the bundling of donations to benefit prochoice women running for Congress or state legislatures. Claiming more than 100,000 members, EMILY’s List received and disbursed some \$35 million in the 2008 election cycle.¹⁷

The new fund-raising regime created a role for those who were well connected, could hold fund-raisers, and could close the deal. This required not only personal connections but also organizational skill, the third element of the new politics. Here once again the Republicans were well out in front of the Democrats. Historically, the Democrats relied on labor unions to turn out the vote in states they needed to win, but over the past generation, the unions have atrophied, their membership in decline. Shrinking trade unionism was caused primarily by an underlying transition from an industrial to a service economy, but it was assisted by Republican efforts to undermine union power itself. Even as the Democrats’ organizational infrastructure was breaking down, the Republicans’ was developing. Republican operatives such as Richard Viguerie and Karl Rove were experts in direct-mail fund-raising with its typical stress on negative politics. Relying on microtargeting as well as church- and neighborhood-based networks, the GOP brought political organizing to new levels. They drew districts favorable to their candidates, identified their contributors, and turned out their voters. Both parties drew on new redistricting computer software to secure safe seats for their incumbents.¹⁸

The Democrats lagged in organizational capacity from the outset. The California Democratic Party, for example, did not have computerized voter lists until the early 1980s, when its young state chair, Nancy Pelosi, implemented a new system. Not until after the shock of the 2000 election did the Democratic National Committee (DNC) seek to upgrade its capacity to identify and target voters. In the 1994, 2000, and 2004 elections, turnout was key and turnout strategies carried the day. One reason the Republicans prevailed was that they had the organizational advantage. In response to it

the DNC, under the leadership of Terry McAuliffe, sought parity through an intensive effort to develop computerized donor lists, marketing databases, voter registration, and other data. The result was a massive voter database that rivaled that of the Republicans.¹⁹

Political parties identifying and communicating with voters by means of databases and microtargeting is one dimension of the new political technology. Another is voters gathering information and communicating with one another. At the time of the founding of the United States, James Madison posited that the size and diversity of the country would inhibit the development of majority factions. He regarded factions as a necessary byproduct of republican government but feared that majorities would use the democratic process to tyrannize minorities. In *Federalist No. 10* he argued that in a large country like the United States, majority factions were less likely to emerge and, if they did, less able to communicate and coordinate their activities. He offered his theory of the “extended sphere” to explain how the size and diversity of the country would impede majority tyranny. Of course, the size of the country, by impeding communication and coordination, makes it difficult to organize for political action of any type. America’s political parties developed in response to the need to coordinate political action. Technology now abets the work of both political parties and interest groups. In the twentieth century, radio and television supplanted newspapers as the primary avenues of political communication, through which citizens shared common sources of information. Toward the end of the twentieth century, economic trends, an altered regulatory structure, and the technological development of cable television led to a fragmentation of the media market. In the twenty-first century, the development of the internet has dramatically accentuated this trend. The result is a fragmentation of society and culture in which the cleavages produced by residential housing patterns have been reinforced by group polarization and what scholar Cass Sunstein calls “enclave deliberations.”²⁰ Essentially, citizens tend to gather information from sympathetic sources and converse with like-minded persons.

Even as the internet breeds further political division and partisan polarization, however, it creates opportunities for coordinated political action. Independent organizations such as MoveOn.org and Tea Party Patriots would have had little prospect without it. Influential blogs like the Daily Kos manifest the role of the internet.²¹ Conservative pundits like Michelle Malkin and Glenn Beck extend their reach through the internet. The internet effectively shrinks James Madison’s extended sphere (narrowing political space) while at the same time it empowers the organization of an even larger number of groups (proliferating factions within it).

The technology that enables MoveOn to raise money, and left-wing organizations like the Daily Kos and right-wing organizations like Focus on the

Family and Americans for Tax Reform to reach millions of voters is also available to the parties themselves, both boosting and weakening them. The internet has strengthened parties by creating new pathways for raising money, coordinating and disseminating their messages, and running campaigns. This development has also, however, accentuated conflict within the parties. The congressional parties are now tugged in one direction by their activist bases in the ideological blogosphere and in another direction by the more moderate members on whose election a congressional majority usually rests. This tension has been more evident within the Democratic Party because it is more ideologically diverse.²²

These technological and organizational features of the New American Politics have contributed to the development of the “permanent campaign.”²³ The two political parties, their candidates, incumbent members of Congress, and party leaders now incessantly compete over money and message. The permanent campaign infuses politicking into every aspect of policy-making as well. Party leaders, including the Speaker of the House, are responsible for fund-raising and are also expected to control the policy-making agenda for political advantage. With an attentive eye toward campaign advantage, the leaders forego the middle ground on which political compromise might be forged. We believe that the permanent campaign is an important dimension of the New American Politics but not its primary cause, which we situate in underlying cleavages in the electorate.

Finally, the New American Politics has put a different face on political representation. While the U.S. population remains majority white and non-Hispanic, minority populations overall are growing much faster than the white population, and America faces dramatic changes in its ethnic, linguistic, and racial composition in the future. According to the census, 88% of the U.S. population was white and non-Hispanic in 1970; that figure dropped to 76% in 1990 and 69% in 2000. According to 2008 census projections, only 60% of the population is estimated to be white and non-Hispanic by the year 2010 and only 46% by 2050.²⁴ As the country has become increasingly diverse over the past 40 years, so have elected representatives. Figure 1.1 charts the incremental transformation of the representation of women, African Americans, and Hispanics in Congress and in state legislatures.

The emergence of women as political leaders is a central concern of this book. In the long view of American history, women constitute a small sliver of the individuals who have served in the U.S. Congress—only 2% of the total since 1789. But significantly, the 88 women who served in the 110th Congress made up over one-third (36%) of that sliver. The story of the last 20 years for women in politics has been steadily incremental increases, first in state legislatures and more recently in Congress. Similarly, more than a third (41 of the 119) African-American members who have served in Congress

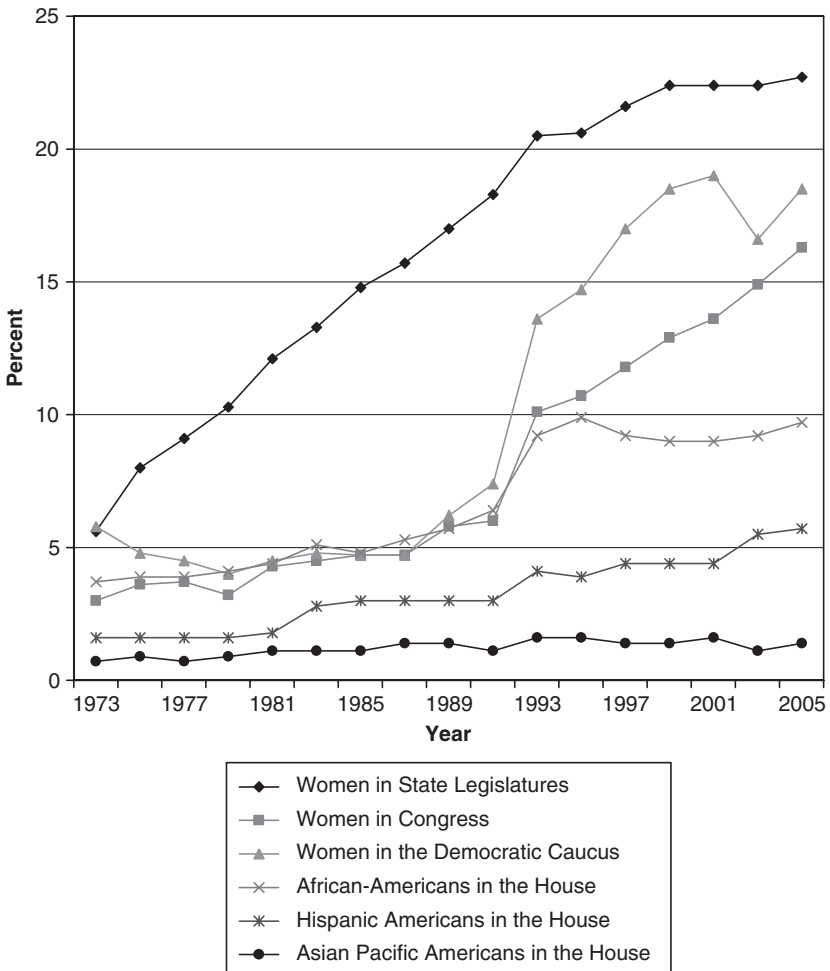


Figure 1.1 Diversity of Representation in Government

Sources: Center for American Woman and Politics, www.cawp.rutgers.edu; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, www.jointcenter.org; U.S. House, Black Americans in Congress, "Historical Data," <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-congress.html?congress=110>; U.S. House, Women in Congress, "Historical Data," <http://women.incongress.house.gov/>; Library of Congress, "Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822-1995," www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/congress/chron.html#1993.

since 1868 are current members. In actual numbers, women representatives outnumber racial and ethnic minorities, and the trend lines for women in figure 1.1 show larger percentage increases in recent years. Together, women and minorities contribute to congressional diversity. This diversity is most

evident in the Democratic Caucus: Democratic congresswomen outnumber their GOP counterparts by more than two to one, and all of the African-American representatives are Democrats. A significant percentage of Asian and Hispanic members of Congress are also Democrats. This partisan twist on the changing demography of representation has implications for policy, politics, and political participation in the twenty-first century.

Gender is, of course, an important aspect of this diversity and is central to our narrative about Speaker Pelosi. We turn now to a more detailed discussion of how gender and the New American Politics interface with each other, shaping trends and opportunities. We focus on gender not only because of our interest in Speaker Pelosi but also because each element of the New American Politics has a gendered dimension that we believe warrants investigation.

THE NEW AMERICAN POLITICS AND GENDER

In 2008, the presidential campaign produced a new political drama in which gender played a central role. The stage of presidential politics featured a cast of women players never before seen: a woman U.S. senator was considered the front-runner for much of the Democratic primary campaign, only to be edged out in the final tally of delegates; a woman governor winked her way into the hearts of GOP partisans as the darling vice presidential candidate of the Republican ticket; and a woman Speaker presided over the national convention for the Democrats. On the basis of data about new registered voters and historical patterns, women were estimated to outnumber male voters in the 2008 by more than 9 million.²⁵ The women in the spotlight of the 2008 presidential election marked a high point for women in the era of the New American Politics.

The two parties took different and defining paths on women's issues in the 1970s and 1980s, contributing a key dynamic to today's partisanship. Before then, women's issues and women's place in politics were not priorities for either party. After women won the right to vote, both parties created auxiliaries for women, which often had the effect of marginalizing their participation in party politics.²⁶ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, neither party adopted gender equity issues with much enthusiasm; women were generally relegated to second-class status. When the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced into Congress in 1923, bipartisan opposition arose from organized labor and Progressive organizations. Between 1925 and 1970, women were unable to transform the vote into policy benefits; then the emergence of independent women's organizations like the National Organization for Women brought increasing clout for women in the political arena.²⁷

The emergence of the modern feminist movement in the 1960s coincided with a number of other trends: more women entered the workforce, birth rates were declining, and divorce was on the rise. Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* spurred a generation of middle-class, educated women to aspire to something beyond traditional domestic roles and to demand better job opportunities, equal pay, and greater personal liberty.²⁸ Both parties responded and adopted extensive women's rights planks in their party platforms while avoiding the abortion issue. Both parties increased the number of women delegates to party conventions, though the Democrats went the furthest and mandated equal representation for women among the national convention delegates in 1972.

The political focal point of the modern women's movement was the Equal Rights Amendment, which Congress sent to the states for ratification in 1972 on a bipartisan vote. That bipartisanship, however, soon dissipated. The feminist movement inspired an antifeminist backlash led by Phyllis Schlafly of Eagle Forum and Beverly LaHaye of Concerned Women of America, who became a force to transform the Republican Party. That party, beginning with Ronald Reagan, increasingly aligned itself with antifeminist organizations and courted Democrats disaffected by their party's stand on abortion. On many other gender-related issues, the parties did not take different issue stances, but the abortion conflict became the realigning topic for the electorate.²⁹ While both parties continued to send roughly equivalent numbers of women to Congress through 1990, the "Year of the Woman" election in 1992 dramatically altered that trend, and today Democratic women outnumber Republican women two to one.

The growing role of money in campaigns vaulted a number of women to the political forefront. Not only did the potent grassroots fund-raising of EMILY's List and other women's PACs create conditions of success for women candidates but also women who had previously labored in obscurity in party organizations rode to greater political recognition on the strength of their fund-raising skills. Nonetheless, conventional wisdom held that women candidates had less success than their male counterparts in the money game. Dispelling this myth, Barbara Burrell analyzed campaign giving from 1972 to 1992 and found parity in fund-raising on a variety of measures. Burrell concluded that conventional wisdom persists in part because women generally earn less than men and hold a smaller share of top positions in the private sector.³⁰

Conventional wisdom dies slowly; but recognition of women's talents in fund-raising has grown apace. Among the best is Nancy Pelosi, but she is not alone. Among Democrats, Roz Wyman of California and the late Pamela Harriman were leading fund-raisers for many years. Chicago's Penny Pritzker chaired Barack Obama's campaign fund-raising committee in 2008. On the

Republican side, Doro Bush played a major role in raising money for her brother's presidential campaigns. According to a *USA Today* report, "women account for 59 out of more than 500 top fundraisers in Republican John McCain's campaign. Democrat Barack Obama has 148 female fundraisers out of more than 500."³¹ In Congress, women also have come to play a more central role as party fund-raisers. In 2001, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) became the first woman to serve as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY) became the first woman to chair the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). If money is the currency of the New American Politics, then women are beginning to move to the fore in securing the power it purchases.

The gender lens also suggests a different understanding of the organizational skills required in the new politics. The parallels between household organization and political life have deep roots in American history. Historian Glenna Matthews traces how an ideology of domestic feminism flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and linked the womanly arts to public housekeeping.³² As leader of the settlement house movement, Jane Addams in 1910 urged city governments to use the talents of women who were "accustomed to detail and variety of work, to a sense of obligation for the health and welfare of young children, and to a responsibility for the cleanliness and comfort of other people."³³ At midcentury, women sustained the war effort at home and in the factory, transforming forever the role of women in the paid workforce, and double-duty obligations (and expectations) were imposed on women. The organizational demands of the New American Politics seem well suited to the skills many women perfect as they balance paid work, family, second-shift housework, and community service in their busy lives. Pelosi has given voice to the linkage between household management and political organization. She often attributes her political organizing skills to her mother's example and to her own experience keeping track of the many functions of a busy household of five children. Other women in politics for whom life is continuous multitasking and balancing of public and personal obligations also see the linkage.³⁴ The modern household also demands the blending of the "high-tech and high-touch" characteristics required in modern organizations.³⁵

Finally, we consider the gendered implications of technology in the New American Politics. Technology, like science and math, has long been identified as an arena where men dominate.³⁶ That may be changing in the new media of the blogosphere and social networking. Nielsen Online reports that women between the ages of 25 and 54 are nearly twice as likely to use online services like e-mail, online forums, and social networking websites to seek information and build relationships.³⁷ BlogsbyMoms lists 13,040 blogs that appeal principally to women, on topics ranging from politics to parenting, with lots of

issues in between. Momsrising.org advocates for paternity and maternity leave, child-care and health-care issues, flexible work accommodations, and a host of local, state, and national initiatives. In the information-rich world of blogging and social networking, analysts are taking note of some interesting gender differences. In 2005, the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that women were catching up with men in all areas of internet use.³⁸ Just three years later, Rapleaf, an online search and social networking company that tracks consumer demographics and social media, reported a study of more than 13.2 million people showing women as dominant users of social media and on some social networking sites constituting two-thirds of the users:

Traditionally, men are the early adopters of new technologies. But when it comes to social media, women are at the forefront. . . . While the trends indicate both sexes are using social media in huge numbers, our findings show that women far outpace the men. As a result, with the next wave of innovation likely to target women more than men, this gender gap on social networks (and increasingly in all of social media) will only widen.³⁹

The Rapleaf study also suggested important stylistic differences in the way men and women use the internet. Men are engaged in competitive games, fantasy role playing, and transactional connections, while women are into social networking, information sharing, and building relationships. Given the fact that women outnumber men as U.S. voters by almost 9 million, the role of new media is likely to have important implications for their ongoing political role.⁴⁰

Thus, we see that each element of the New American Politics is affected by gender and contributes to an understanding of the environment in which Nancy Pelosi rose to become the first woman Speaker of the House. In a broader sense, we suggest that the New American Politics is the product of a variety of trends in the American culture, demographics, economy, and structure of politics and the technologies that shape them all. It is certainly more partisan, considerably more fluid, and arguably more challenging than American politics has been at any time in history. It sets the context of American political institutions and the officials who lead them, including, of course, the office of the Speaker of the House.

THE SPEAKERSHIP TODAY

The office is a complex one, a hybrid of constitutional, institutional, and partisan obligations.⁴¹ The Speaker is one of the only four officers specified in the Constitution (the others are the president, vice president, and

chief justice of the Supreme Court). The office stands second in the line of succession to the presidency. The Speaker has an obligation to sustain the constitutional prerogatives of the House of Representatives in the constitutional system of separated powers. Institutionally, the Speaker serves as the presiding officer. As such, she has an obligation to enforce the rules of the House impartially and to offer fair treatment under those rules to all members. Enforcement of the rules and normal adherence to “regular order” (the process of developing legislation in committee) are related to the Speaker’s broader obligation to ensure deliberative government in the House. The rights of the minority party under the rules must be respected as well. This responsibility occasions regular tension with the Speaker’s third role as leader of the majority party in the House. In that capacity, she must seek to hold and enhance her party’s majority, develop cohesion in her caucus, and pass her party’s legislative program.

Scholars debate the extent to which legislative party leaders are hostage to the preferences of members. Political scientist Barbara Sinclair has characterized party leaders, including the Speaker, as agents acting at the behest of their principals, the members who elect them. Other scholars have argued that Speakers are capable of acting autonomously of (and in some cases contrary to) member preferences, depending on the context in which they govern. Surely, there is truth on both sides of this argument. No Speaker will last long by ignoring the preferences of her members; but a Speaker can and should act according to her best judgment about party and public interest. In assessing any Speaker, the question to ask is whether the Speaker commands sufficient support within her party caucus to enable her to challenge it on those occasions when the public interest requires it.⁴²

Concurrent with the rise of the New American Politics, the office of Speaker has undergone significant changes since the reform movement of the early 1970s.⁴³ During the 60 years between the revolt against Speaker Joseph G. (“Uncle Joe”) Cannon (R-IL, 1903–1911) in 1910 and the passage of the Legislative Reform Act of 1970, the House developed into a “feudal” institution in which power was largely centered in the committee system and the powerful chairs who ran its fiefdoms. A liberal tide that swept through Congress in the 1960s produced pressure for institutional reform. These reforms aimed at diminishing the power of the committee chairs by both decentralizing power to the subcommittee level and enhancing the power of the Speaker. The “Subcommittee Bill of Rights” ensured that committee chairs could no longer dominate the legislative process. The Speaker was given more control over bill referral, effective control of the Rules Committee, and for the Democrats, a stronger hand in making committee assignments. In the wake of these institutional reforms, in 1975 the House Democrats replaced three senior committee chairs, a harbinger of

what was to come. Power gravitated away from the committee chairs down to the subcommittees and up to the leadership. While Carl Albert (D-OK, 1971–1976) and Tip O'Neill had more institutional power as Speakers than John McCormack (D-MA, 1962–1970) and Sam Rayburn (D-TX 1942–1946; 1949–1952; 1955–1961) had before them, they availed themselves of it infrequently. The Democratic Caucus remained divided between southern conservatives and northern liberals, and it ill behooved the Speaker to get caught between them.

Reforms transformed the Speaker's power in controlling the process by which legislation is brought to the House floor. The House Rules Committee acts as the gatekeeper to the floor, establishing the time limits for floor debate and the number and nature of amendments that can be considered on each bill. The House stripped the Speaker of control over the Rules Committee in 1910, but this power was restored in 1975 by granting the Speaker the power to appoint its Democratic members. Traditionally, the House had considered legislation under open rules, allowing substantively relevant (germane) floor amendments to committee bills.⁴⁴ Since bipartisan accommodation within the committees was more likely to produce committee consensus, the minority had less need to offer floor amendments. There was a strong institutional norm that committee bills would be backed on the floor. And there were few recorded votes, with most amendments considered in the Committee of the Whole House by unrecorded teller votes.⁴⁵

In the 1970s all three factors changed. First, the transition of the South to the Republican Party diminished the conservative coalition and increased partisan tensions in the committees. Republicans were no longer satisfied with the committee product and wanted to offer floor amendments. Second, the House implemented an electronic voting system that made it practical to conduct recorded votes on any question. The rules required a recorded vote at the request of 20% of the members present and voting, a threshold that both parties routinely met. Third, the Republican minority began to offer amendments that often had little prospect of passing but were designed to put Democrats representing more conservative districts on the spot. Interest groups began compiling voting indexes, which provided a vehicle to realize the Republican goal of defining Democrats negatively on the ratings. These developments played into the widening partisan divide.

In response, the majority Democrats moved from the traditional practice of open rules to a hybrid system in which they often limited the number and nature of the amendments the Republicans could offer. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, House Republicans assailed the Democratic majority for its overbearing tactics and unfair floor practices. In the 103rd Congress, the Republicans made alleged abuse of power by the Democratic leadership a major focus of their successful 1994 campaign. Once in the majority,

the Republicans ended up being every bit as controlling as the Democrats about whom they had previously complained. The Republicans knew that the Democrats would offer floor amendments that would substantively alter Republican bills or else force Republicans in marginal districts to cast tough votes. The Republican leaders were every bit as anxious as their Democratic predecessors had been to protect their members. And the minority Democrats complained just as loudly as the Republicans had.⁴⁶

The trend toward use of special rules to control the floor agenda was but one of the strategies employed by Speakers in the postreform House. The leadership also used the Suspension Calendar to deny minority amendments.⁴⁷ On some occasions, the minority was even denied an opportunity to send legislation back to committee via a motion to recommit (MTR).⁴⁸ The Speaker was also given greater latitude in referring bills to committee, including the power to refer complex legislation to more than one committee. Within the Democratic Caucus, the Speaker was given greater influence over committee assignments through control over the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee (SPC), which made the appointments. Still, Democratic Speakers adhered consistently to seniority in nominating committee chairs, and the selection of subcommittee chairs was made by and within each committee.⁴⁹ These concessions to the autonomy of the committee process set constraints on the power of Democratic Speakers due to the influence of senior committee chairs.

Democratic Speakers O'Neill, Jim Wright (D-TX, 1987–1989) and Tom Foley (D-WA, 1989–1994) developed new strategies and techniques to build winning floor coalitions.⁵⁰ These strategies included a larger whip organization (whose task was to count votes and rally support), the use of task forces to build support for important bills, referring all or parts of bills to more than one committee to build coalitions across committee jurisdictions, and the use of special rules to orchestrate policy choices on the House floor. These strategies stressed intraparty communication aimed at unifying the often fractious Democratic Caucus. While retaining a good deal of autonomy in managing their fiefdoms, the committee chairs cooperated with the leadership more often than not. These strategies created substantial pressure for conformity within the caucus. The members most resistant to this pressure were the southerners representing more conservative districts. These “Blue Dog” Democrats sought to moderate party policy, especially on fiscal issues, but their arguments were usually unavailing against their more liberal colleagues.⁵¹ Reconciling the divergent policy preferences and political interests of the liberal and conservative wings of the caucus was the central challenge of these Speakers.

By the election of 1994, when the Democrats lost their congressional majority, the speakership had become much more powerful than at any