

# **A Polarized Congress**



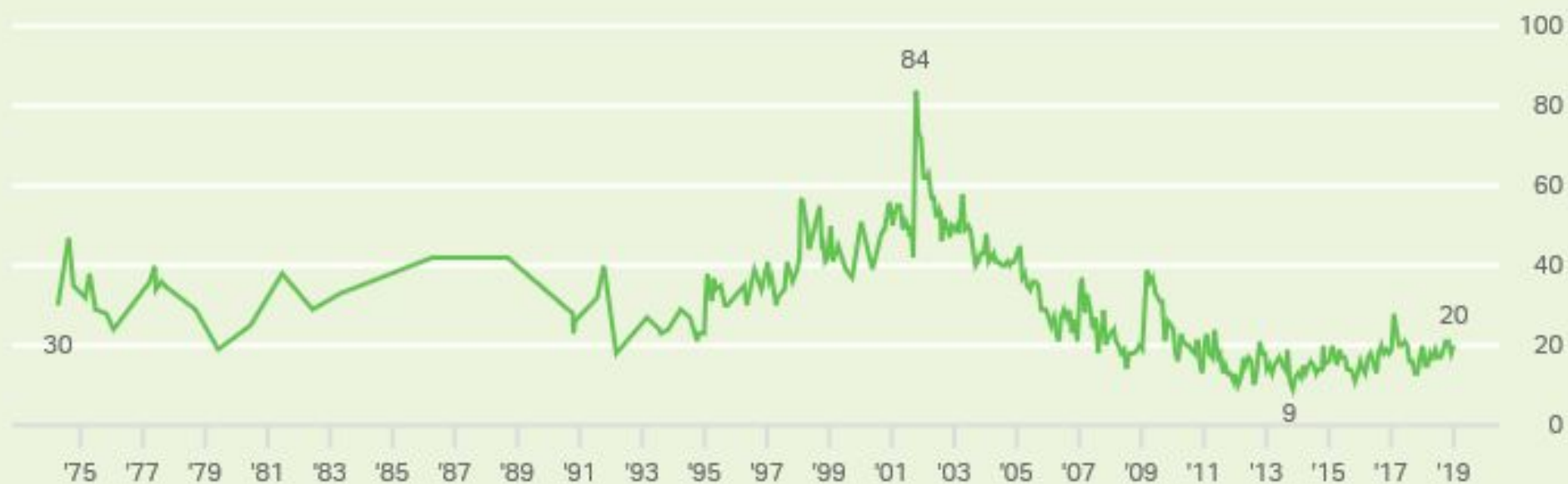


**But first...**

## Congressional Job Approval

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?

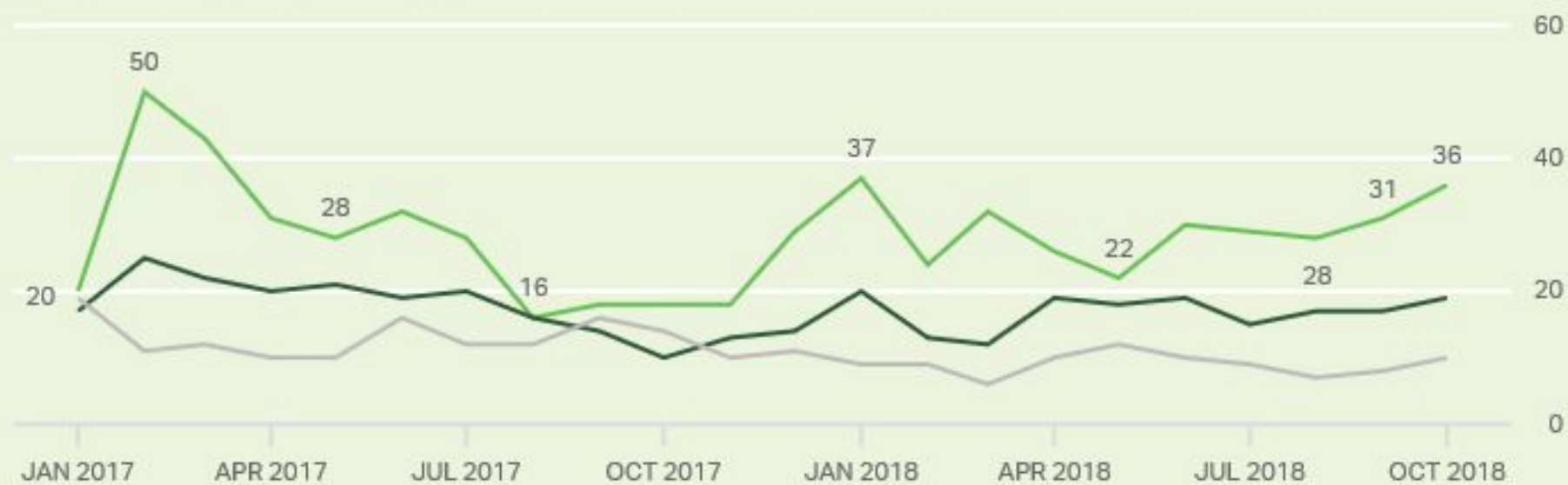
■ % Approve



GALLUP

## Congressional Job Approval, by Party ID

■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Democrats



Values shown are for Republicans

GALLUP

# Features of the 114th & 115th Congress

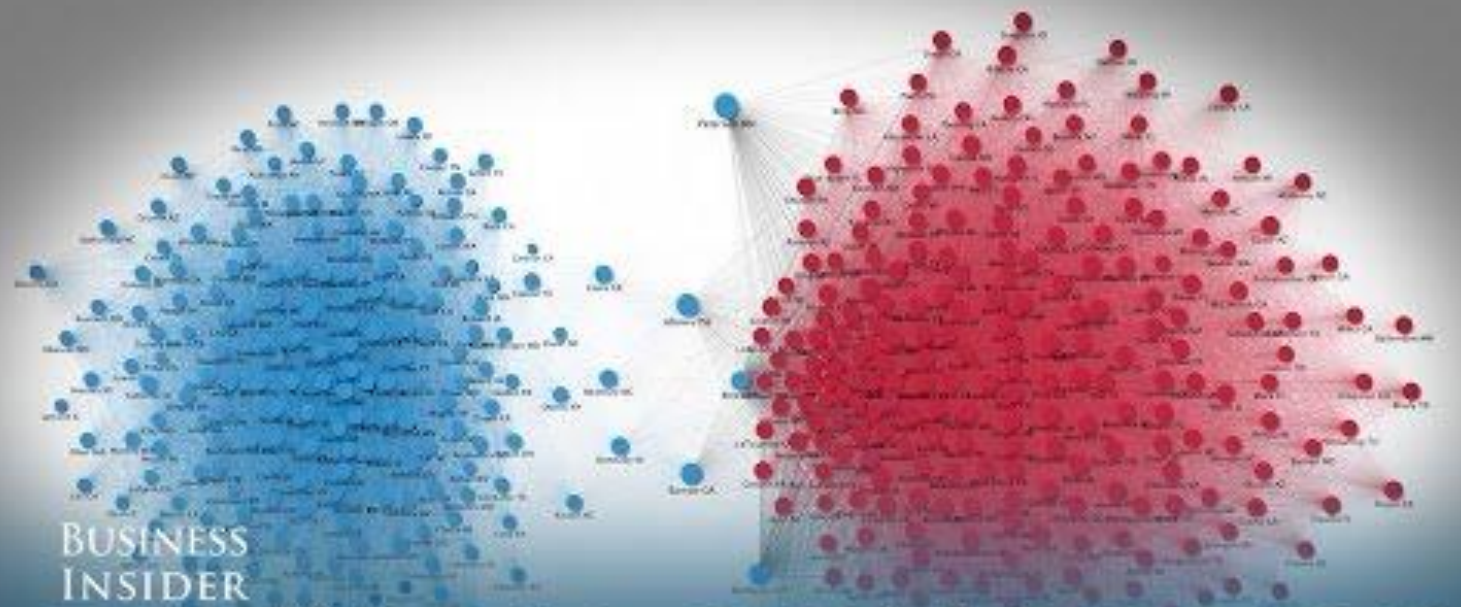
- Continued votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act
  - Taking votes on politically-charged topics
- Fewer Public Laws passed
- Slow in dealing with budget and appropriations
  - ~~Threats~~ Actual government shutdowns
- Fear of losing in the primary election
- What's to blame?

# Features of the 114th & 115th Congress

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  - Taking votes on politically-charged topics
- Fewer Public Laws passed
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- Fear of losing in the primary election
- What's to blame? **Polarization**

# What is Polarization?

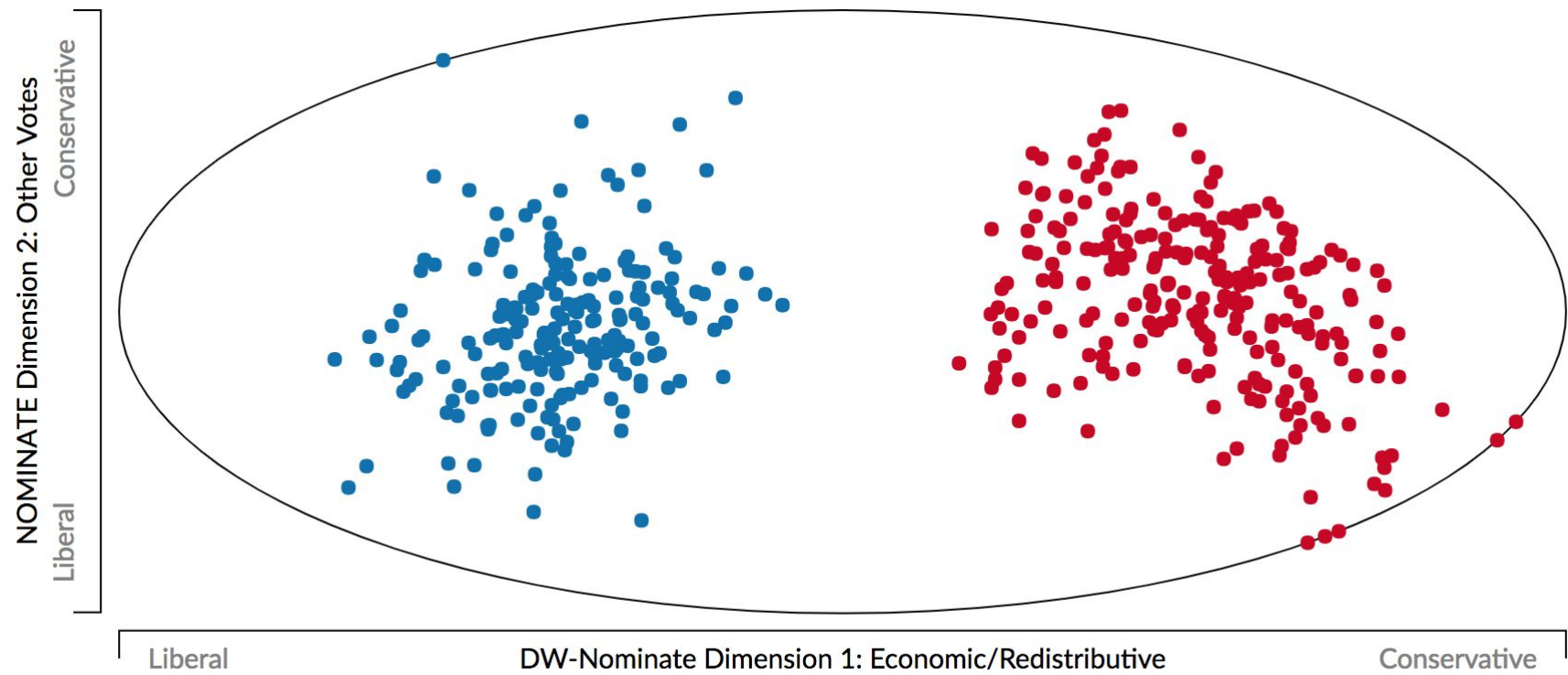
- Measures overlap between the two parties
- Similarity / difference between views of the two parties
- Polarization is higher in today's Congress than at any time since the late 1800s
- Different than political incivility, political extremism, partisanship, etc.
  - **Political incivility** --- lacking behavior or good manner, disrupting rules of institutions
  - **Political extremism** --- having “extreme” political views
  - **Partisanship** --- commitment to a political party; party unity

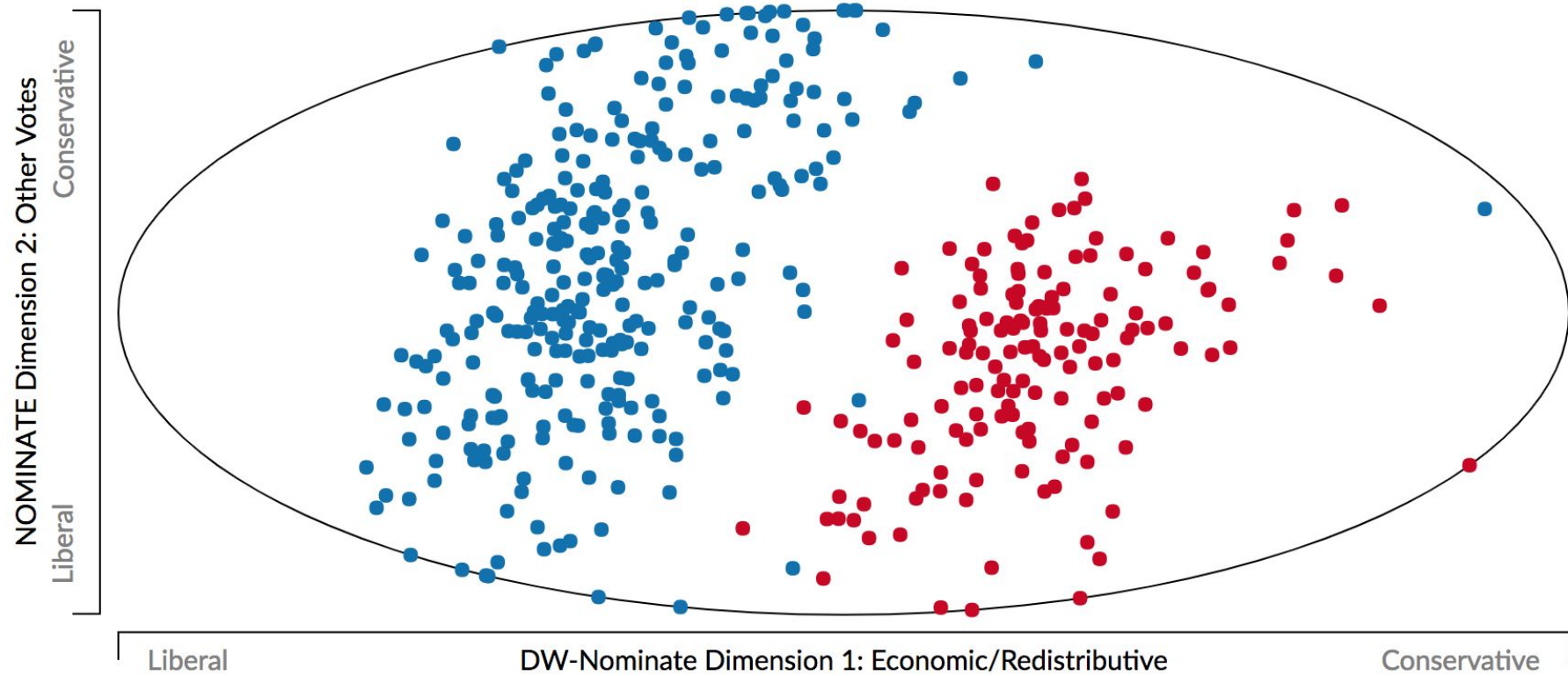


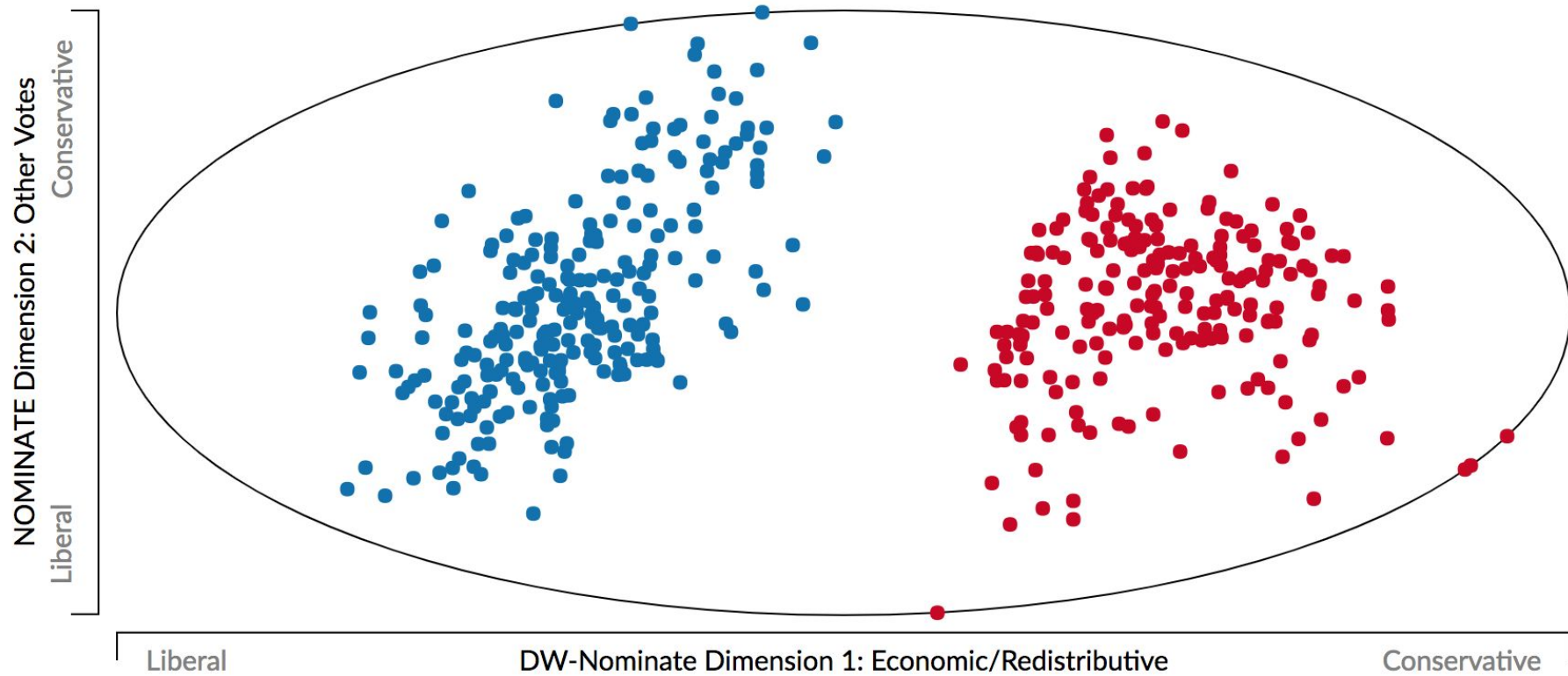
BUSINESS  
INSIDER

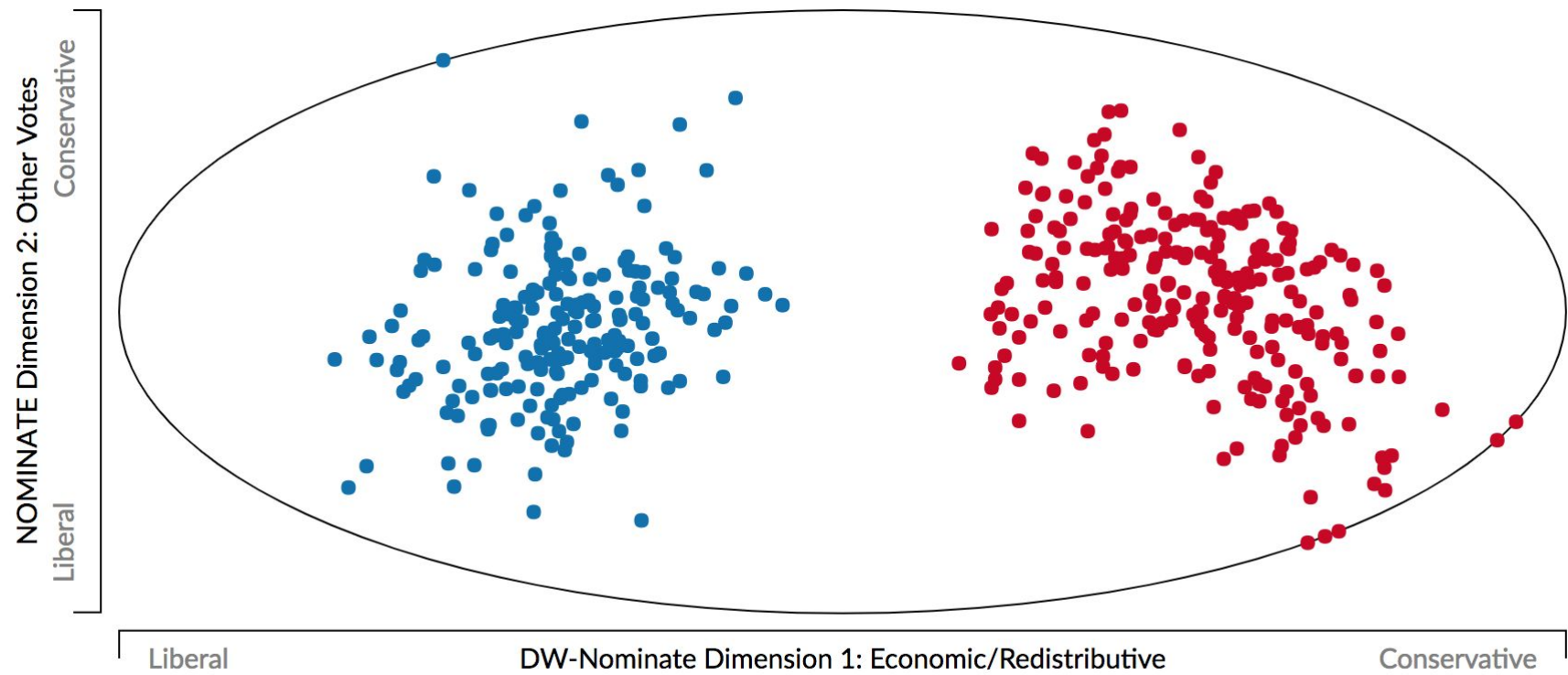
# DIVIDED CONGRESS







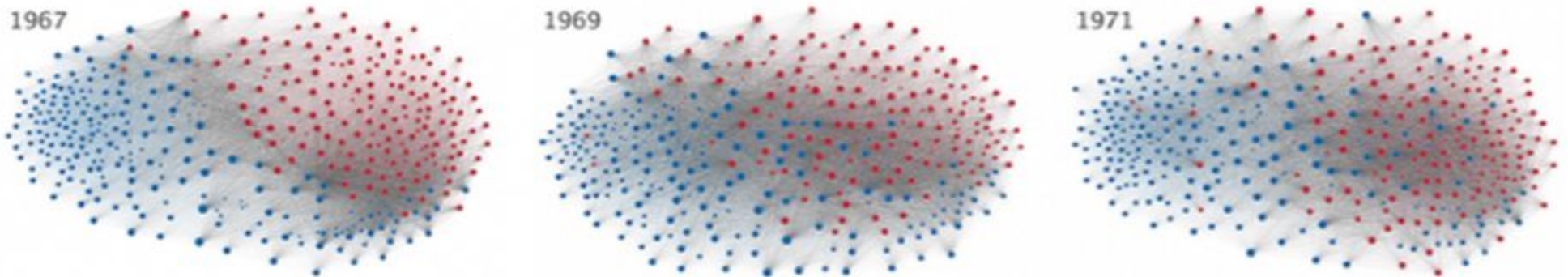




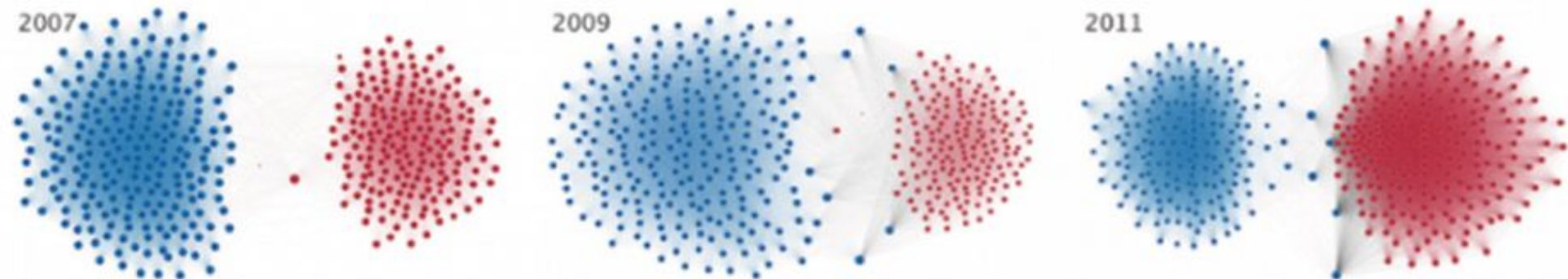
# **What's the Problem with Polarization?**

- Exacerbates partisanship partisan warfare

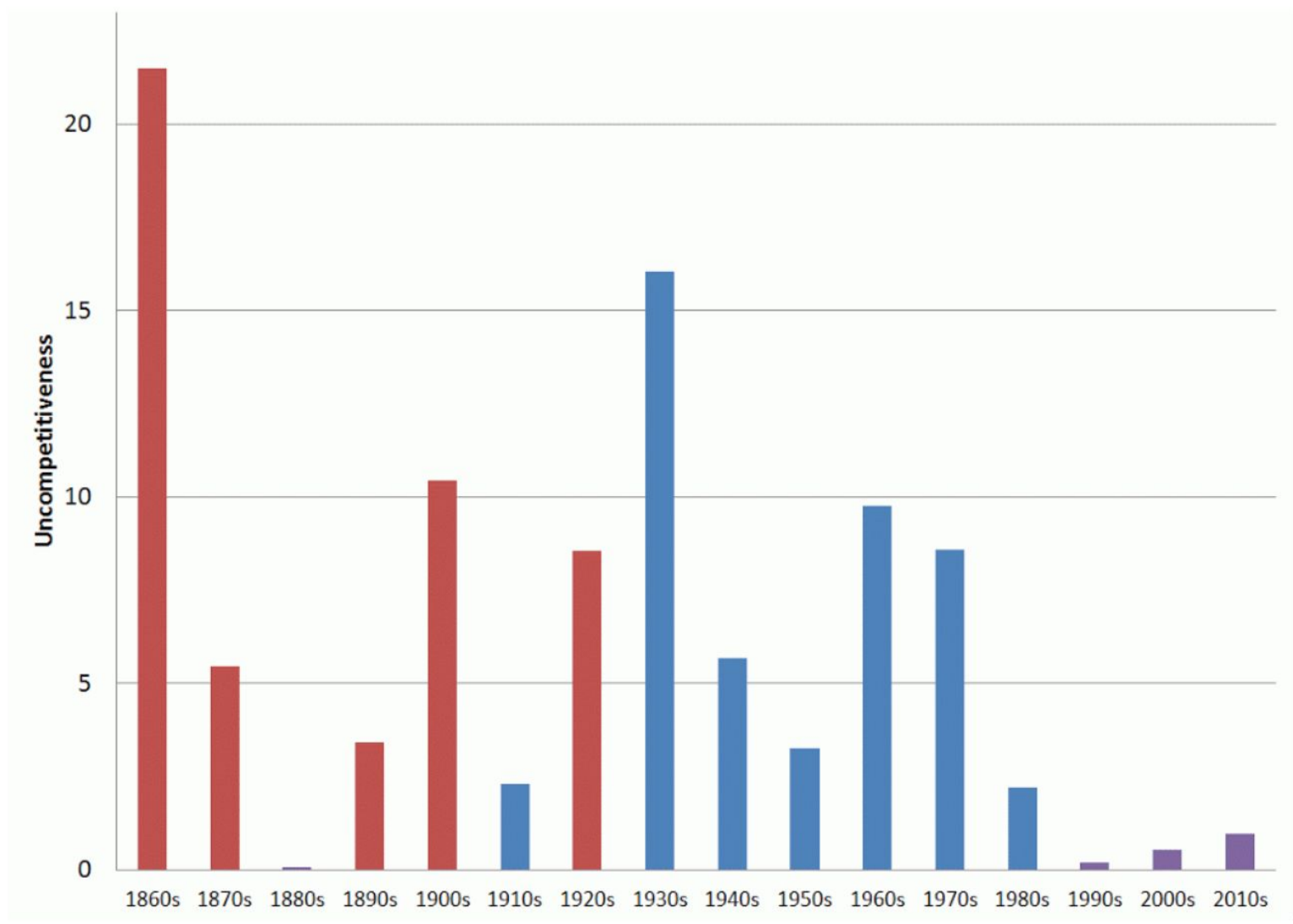
The House of Representatives, when it used to compromise.



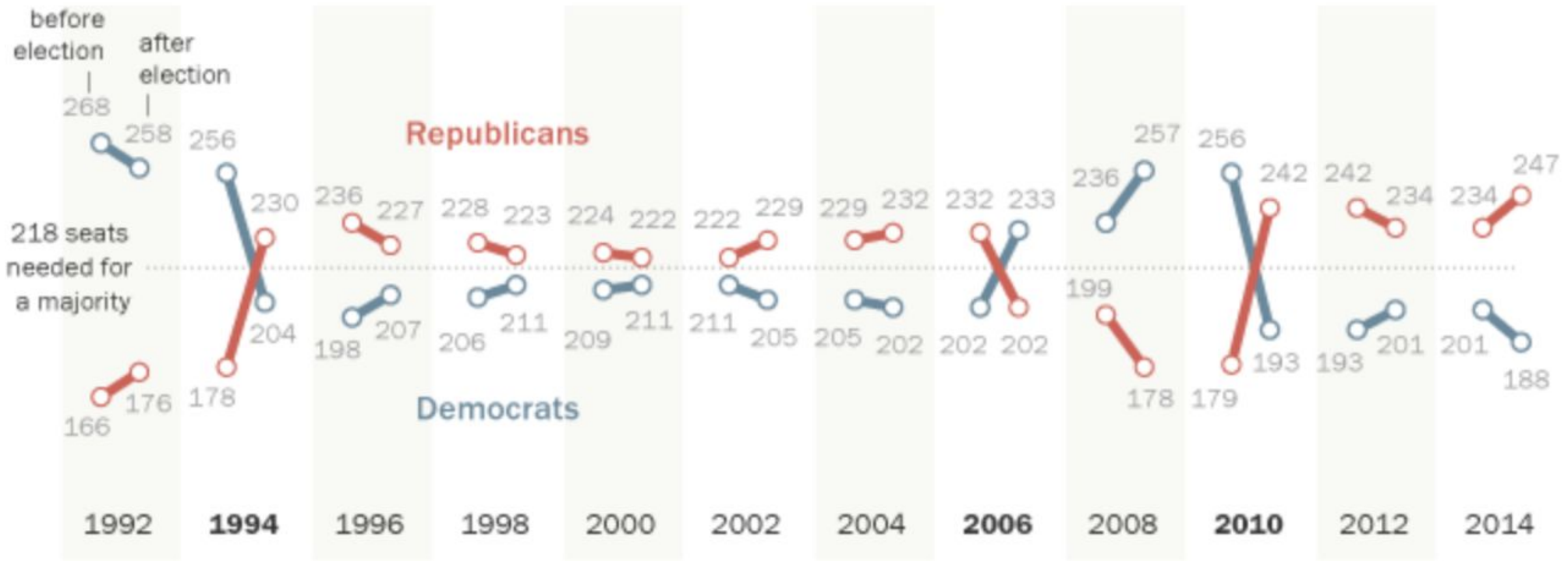
The House of Representatives today.







Number of House seats held by Republicans and Democrats before and after each general election



Note: Independents not shown.  
Source: Pew Research Center analysis



# **What's the Problem with Polarization?**

- Exacerbates partisanship partisan warfare
- Partisan Issue Ownership

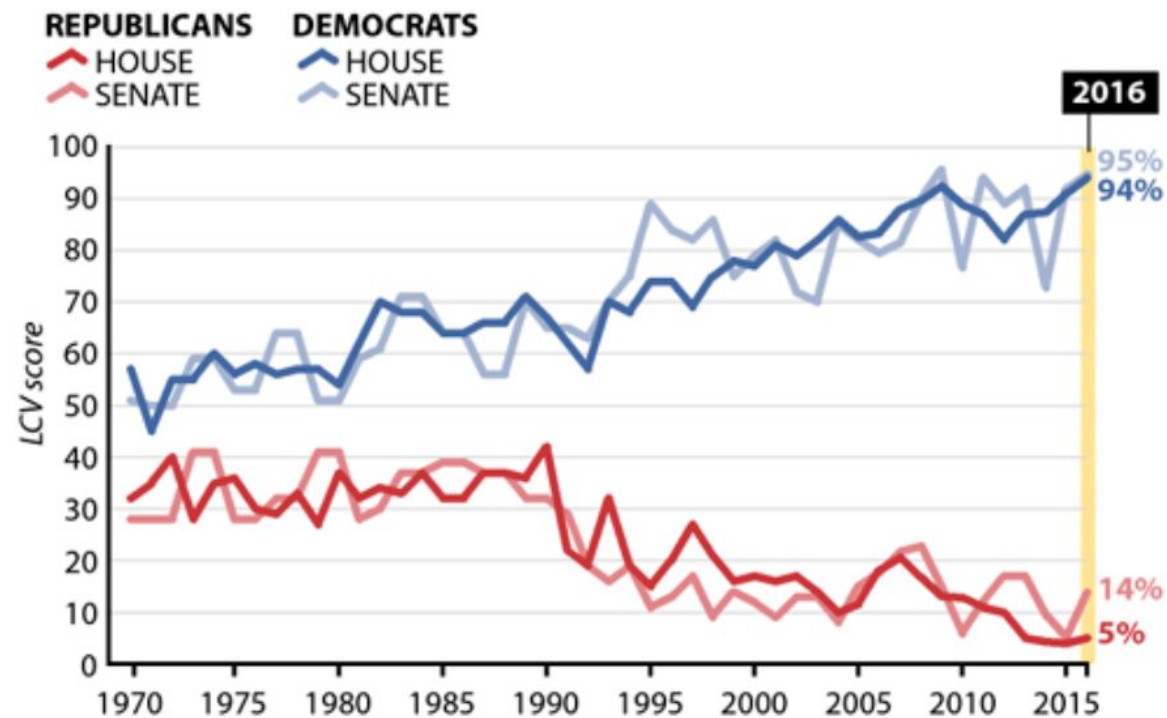
# The Great Divide

With an average 85 percent voting gap between Republicans and Democrats in 2016, Congress has never been so polarized over environmental issues.



## LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS' ENVIRONMENTAL VOTING SCORES

U.S. Congress, by chamber and party, 1970-2016

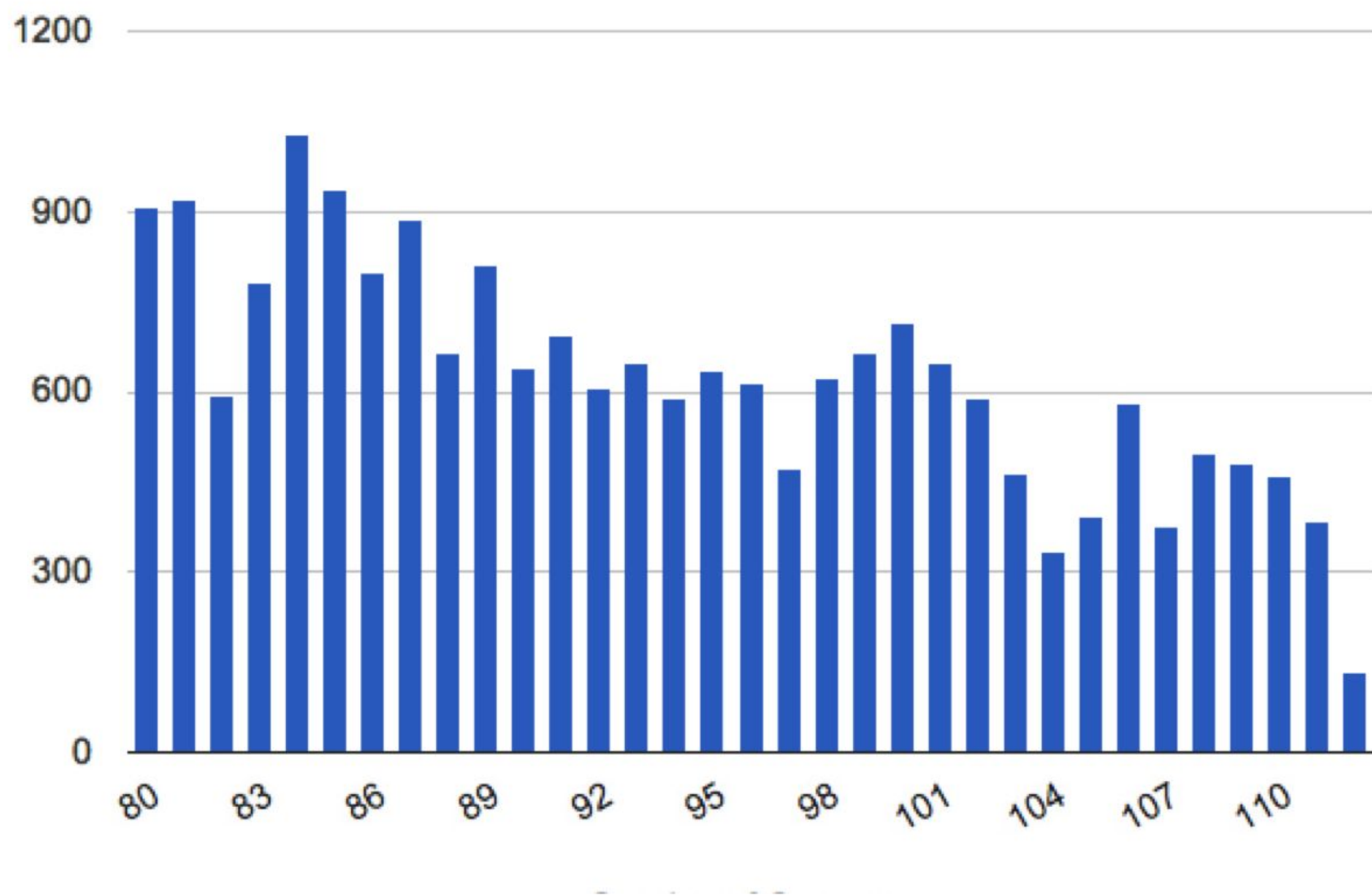


SOURCE: League of Conservation Voters

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

# **What's the Problem with Polarization?**

- Exacerbates partisanship partisan warfare
- Partisan Issue Ownership
- Bipartisan coalitions get things done



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- Exacerbates partisanship partisan warfare
- Partisan Issue Ownership
- Bipartisan coalitions get things done
- Moderates disappear from Congress

# Blue Dogs & RINOs



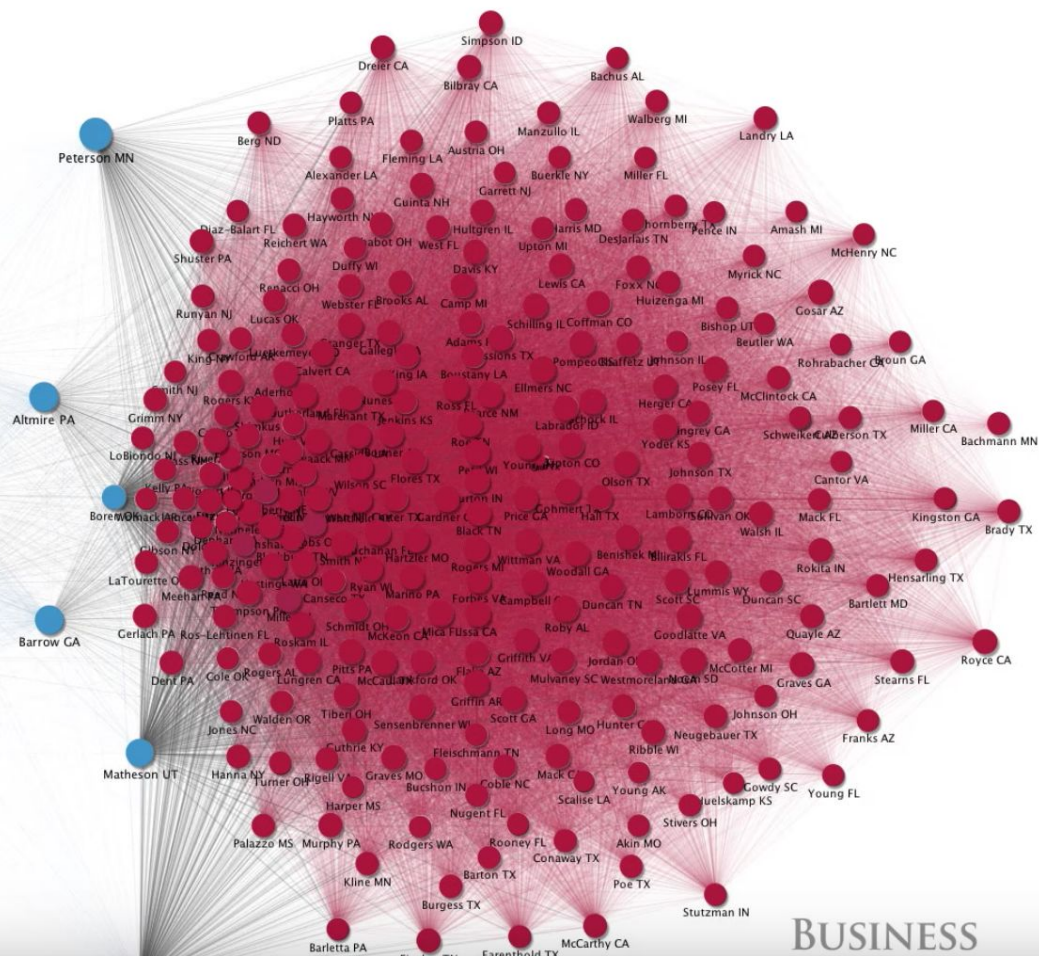
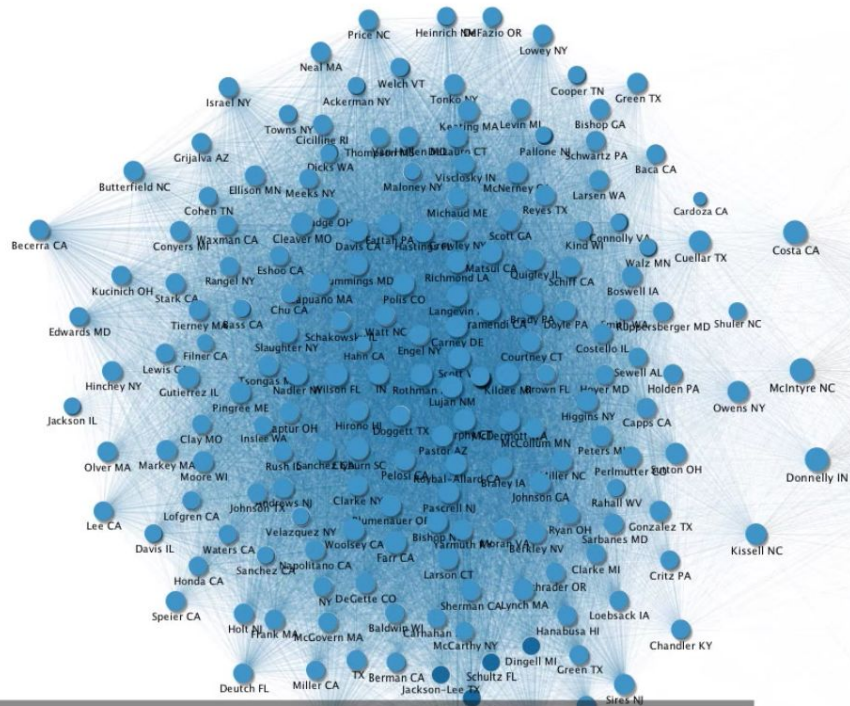




# Blue Dogs & RINOs







# Blue Dogs & RINOs



**Didn't the Founding  
Fathers want gridlock?**

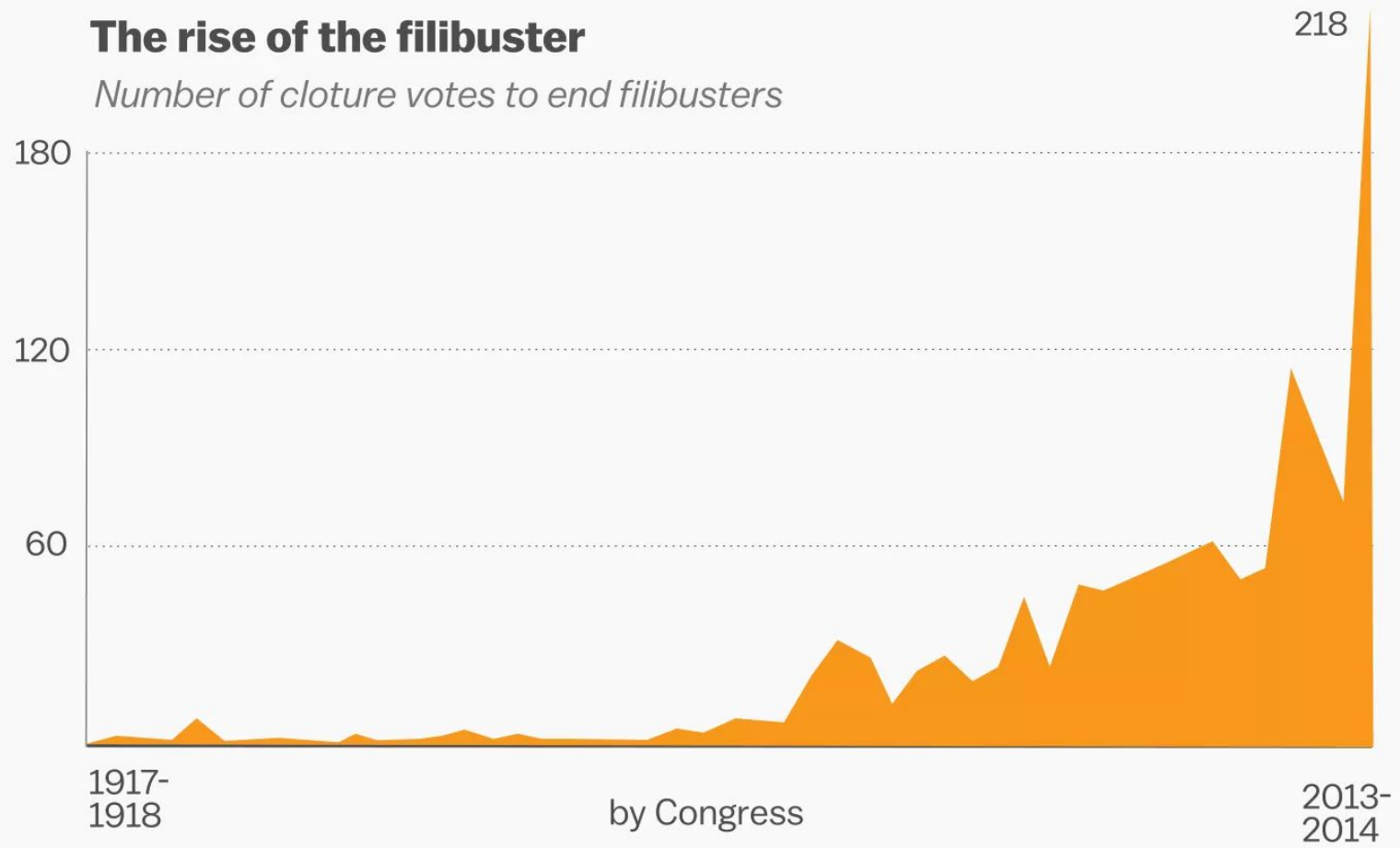
**What's a bigger  
problem: polarization or  
partisanship?**

# Causes of Polarization?

- Filibuster --- from individual power to partisan tactic

## The rise of the filibuster

*Number of cloture votes to end filibusters*



SOURCE: US Senate

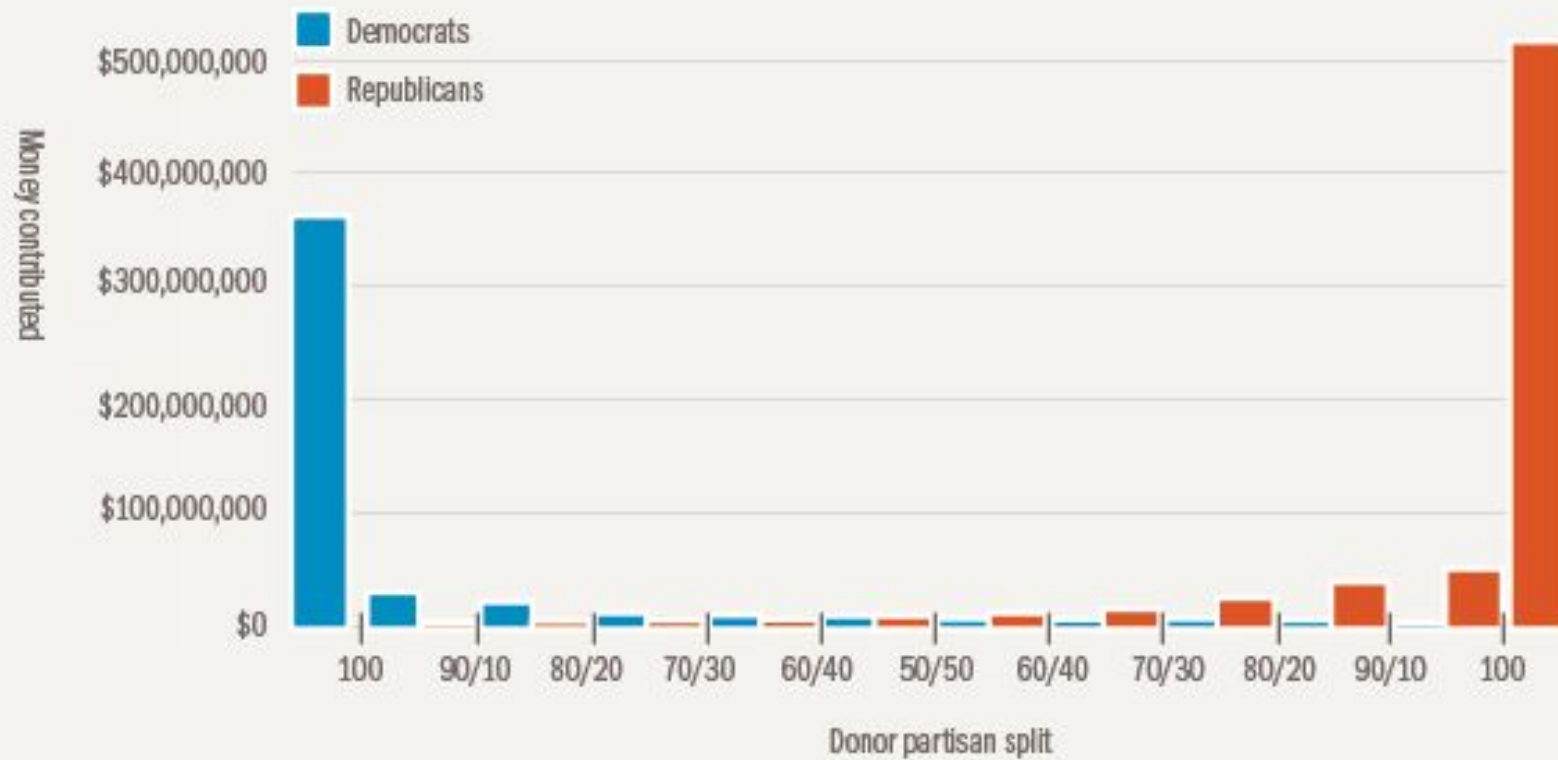
**Vox**

# Causes of Polarization?

- Filibuster?
- Campaign Finance --- too much money from one party

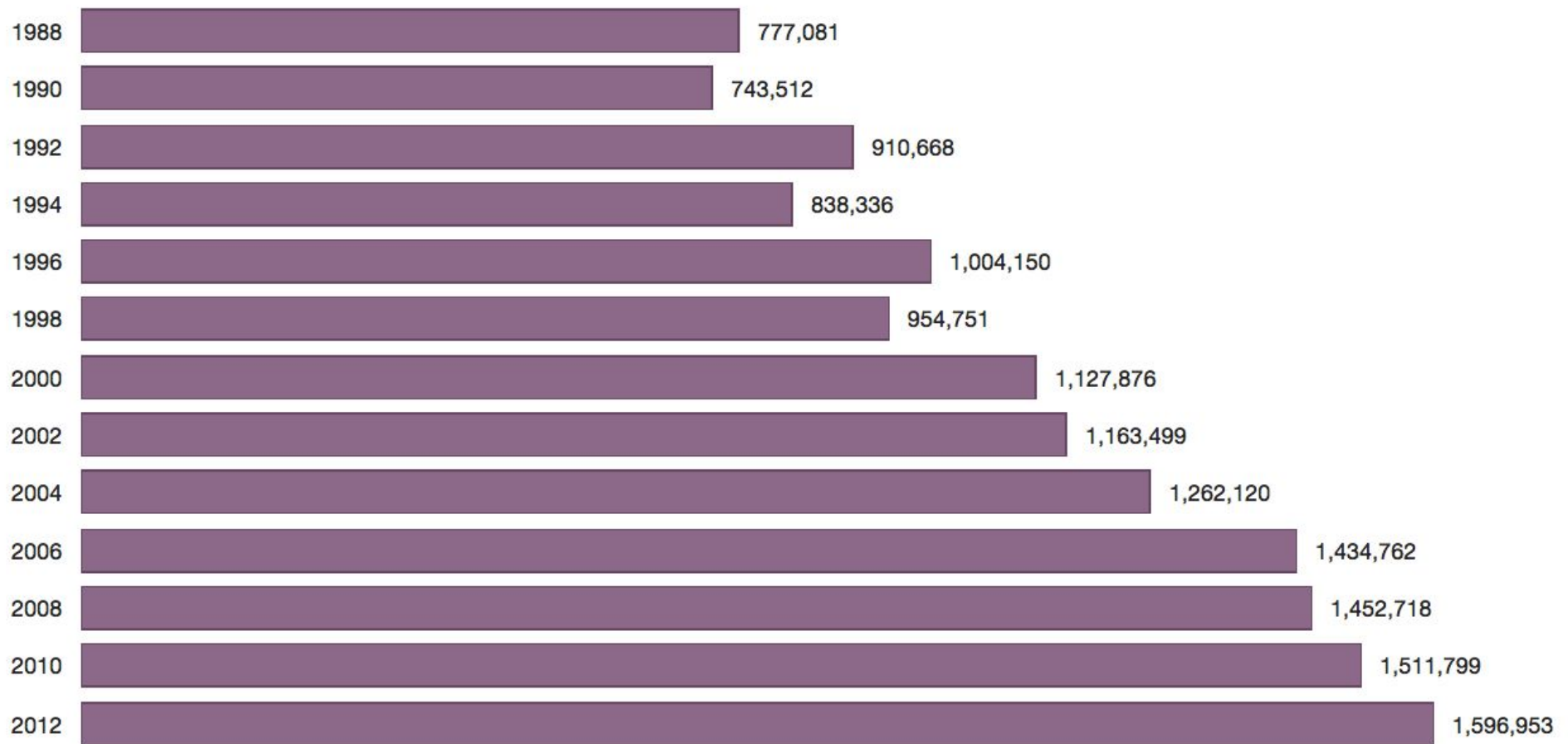


## 1% of the 1% total contributions, by donor partisanship



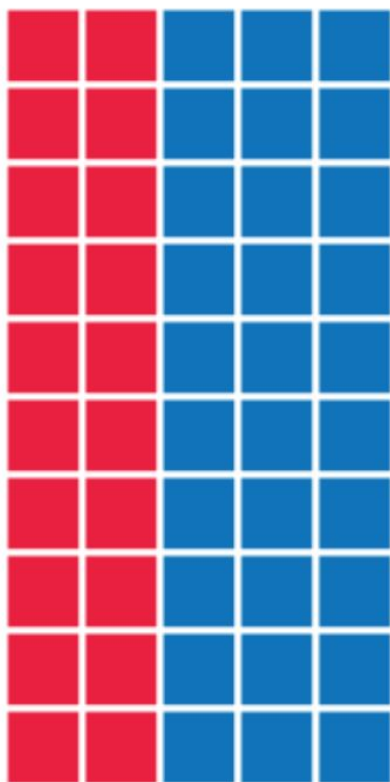


## The cost of winning a House seat is rising (2012 dollars)

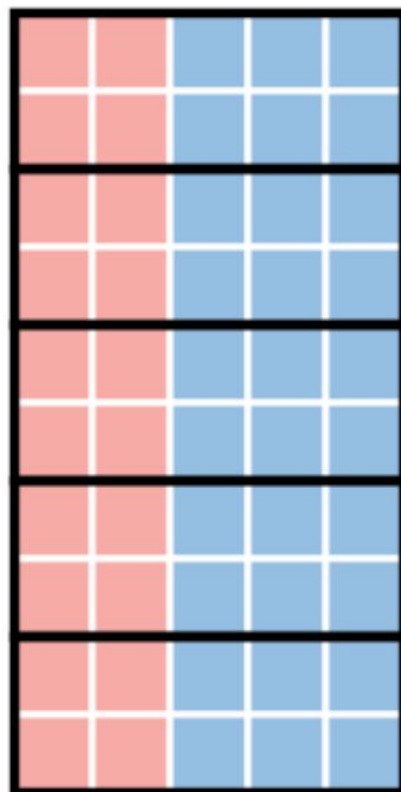


# Causes of Polarization?

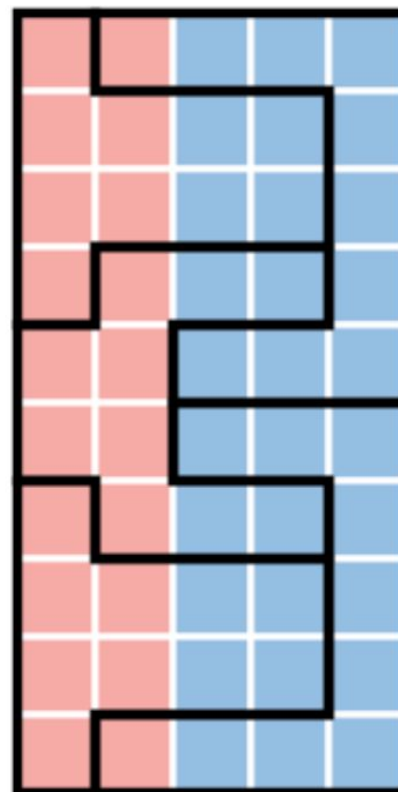
- Filibuster?
- Campaign Finance?
- Redistricting --- more homogenous, ideological districts



50 PRECINCTS  
**60% BLUE**  
**40% RED**

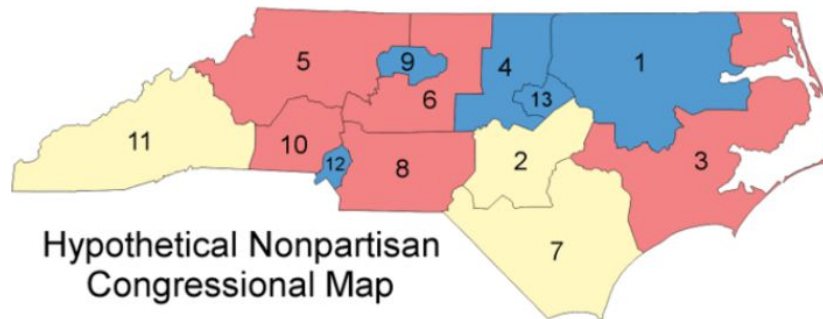
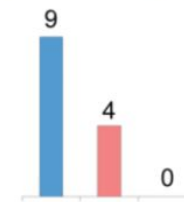
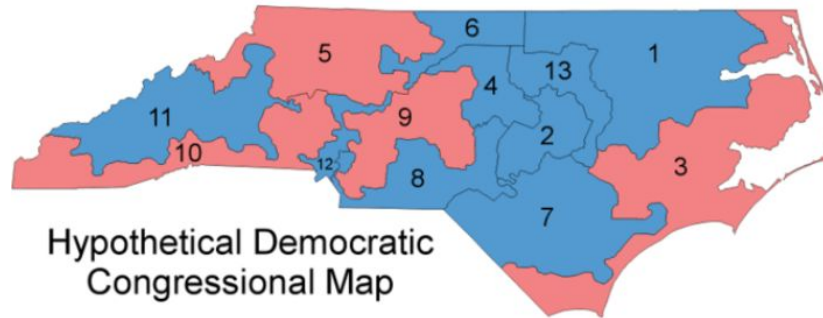
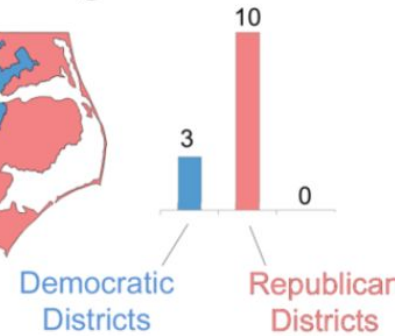
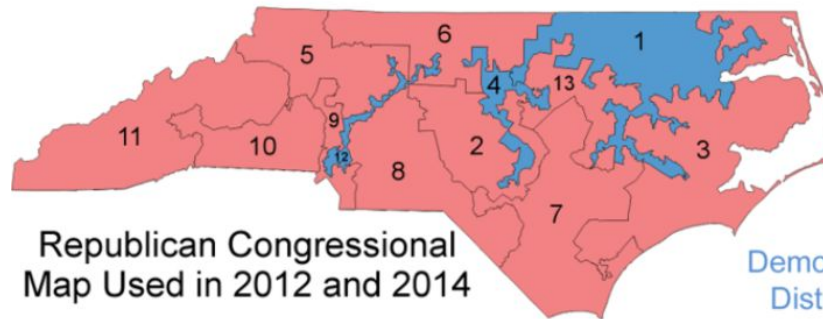


5 DISTRICTS  
5 BLUE  
0 RED  
**BLUE WINS**



5 DISTRICTS  
3 RED  
2 BLUE  
**RED WINS**

# How Gerrymandering Can Swing Elections

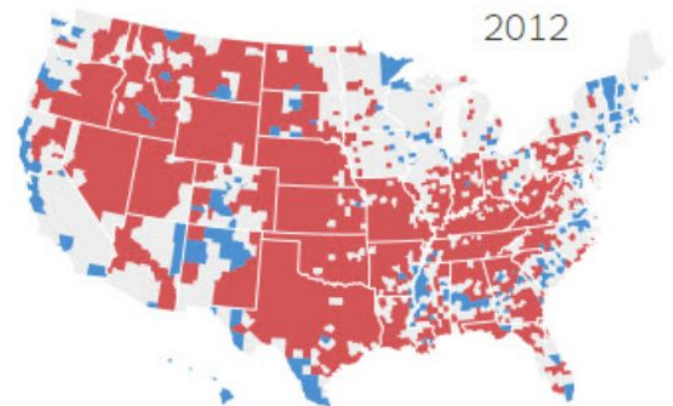
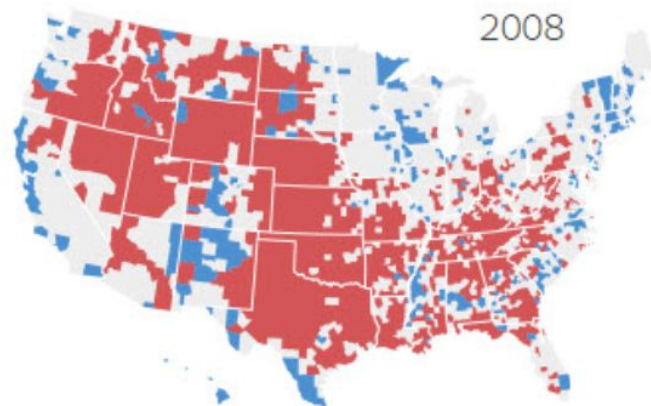
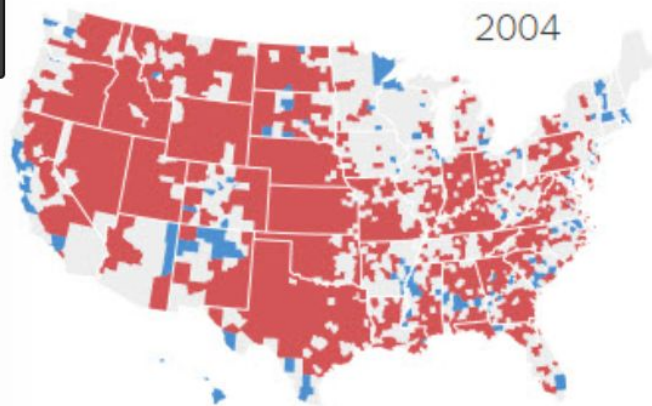
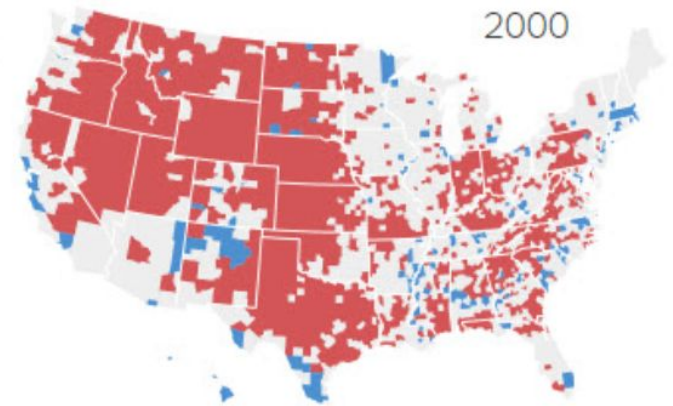
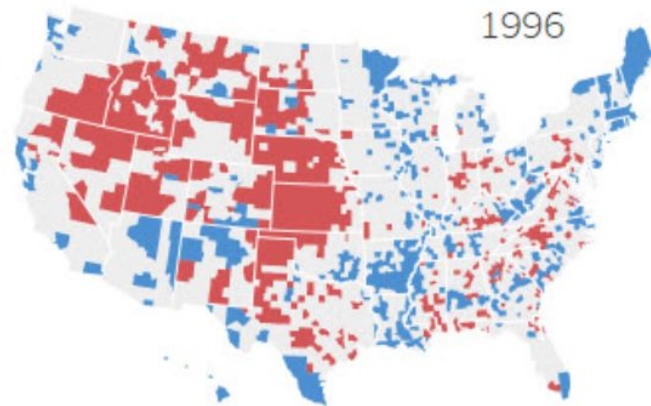
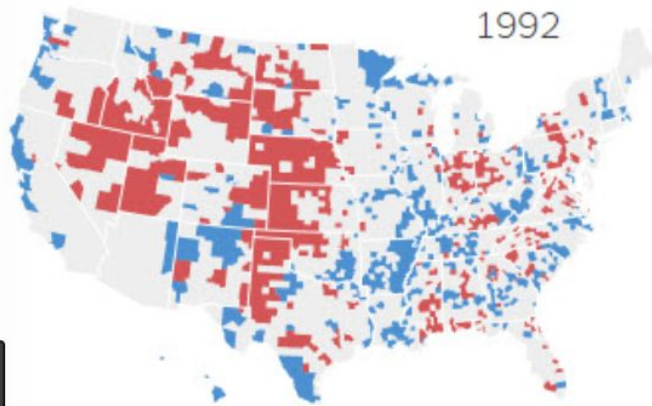


# Causes of Polarization?

- Filibuster?
- Campaign Finance?
- Redistricting?
- Geographic Sorting --- living with those like you

**Counties that voted for the Republican or Democratic presidential candidate by 20 percentage points or more**

In 1992, 38% of voters lived in landslide counties.



In 2012, 50% of voters lived in landslide counties.

**Why can't the president  
do more?**



