

The Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2003: Leadership Control, Continuity, and Partisanship

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Abstract

From 1992 to 2003, 21 states adopted term limits for their legislators. These limits were predicted by proponents and detractors alike to have a variety of impacts on legislators and legislatures. Illinois does not have state legislative term limits. By describing the Illinois General Assembly (along with other control state legislatures) from 1992 to 2003, we can begin to assess which changes in term-limited state legislatures were due to term limits and which were merely secular trends in these institutions across the country.

Through dozens of interviews with long-time observers of the body and documentary data, we found that the Illinois General Assembly has been fairly stable in many ways since 1992, being especially characterized by a strong and centralized party leadership structure, gradual change where change has occurred, and strong party competition. The basic contours of the General Assembly during the study period were defined in large part by Illinois's individualistic political culture, the 1981 Cutback Amendment, partisan decennial legislative redistricting, and the idiosyncrasies and lengthy tenure of certain key officials.

How has the Illinois General Assembly changed since 1992? In a period when 21 states adopted legislative term limits, with all the potential impacts that that reform may have had on legislators and legislatures, what has changed in and around the non-term-limited Illinois body? We describe the Illinois General Assembly since 1992 as a control-state case study to help highlight the changes in term-limited state legislatures that were due to term limits and those that were due merely to secular trends in these institutions across the country.

We identify three overarching characteristics of the Illinois General Assembly since 1992: centralized leadership control, strong partisanship, and gradual or little overall change. We find that these basic characteristics of the General Assembly were instigated by a series of events in the early 1980s and that, by 1992, the patterns were strong and predictable. Because of this stability, Illinois makes a good control-state case study against which to evaluate the effects of term limits on other state legislatures.

Research Methodology

In 2003, we conducted a series of in-person interviews with informed observers of the Illinois General Assembly, typically with both authors present. Most of these interviews were conducted in two waves. In July and August, we interviewed 15 legislative staff, journalists, lobbyists, and former legislators, and during the legislature's November session, we interviewed 15 state legislators. Each interviewee was identified by our informal advisory committee as an observer of the legislature since at least 1992. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. The Appendix A lists the interviews. These interviewees were assured that they would

not be quoted directly in any written report, so our descriptions of their comments are unattributed paraphrases of their sentiments. We were struck by the consistency of the reports we received on a range of questions from a wide variety of interviewees. When there was a difference of opinion among the interviewees, we note it.

While the design of this project requires us to rely on these interview data for a substantial portion of our report, it is important to note the inherent bias in them. First, there is a sample selection bias, in that another type of people will remain in and around the state legislature for over 15 years, and a certain type will come and go in that period. To the extent that the experiences and impressions of these types of people differ, the information we rely on from the former type of person for this report will be biased. Second, even assuming that longevity does not bias the sample of our respondents, the reliance on the memories of these people of events sometimes years distant raises questions of bias due to selective memory and changes in impressions and opinions over time. These potential biases need to be considered in assessing our conclusions. For example, the comments we often heard that lobbyists, staffers, and legislators are “getting younger every year” may be due to this bias rather than an actual change in the age of these people. To supplement our interview data and help guard against potential bias in them, we gathered documentary data on various features of the General Assembly from a variety of sources. Much of this data gathering was conducted by Brad Bonnette, a research assistant at the University of Illinois at Springfield and former intern at the General Assembly’s Legislative Research Unit.

Basic Characteristics of the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2003

The Illinois General Assembly has been fairly stable in many ways since 1992, being especially characterized by three features: a strong and centralized party leadership structure, gradual change where change has occurred, and strong party competition. We return to these characteristics throughout this report.

To understand the Illinois General Assembly in 1992-2003, we must understand the genesis of these three overarching characteristics. The four sources of these characteristics are: Illinois's individualistic political culture, the 1980 Cutback Amendment, partisan decennial redistricting since 1980, and the idiosyncrasies and lengthy tenure of key officials.

Individualistic Political Culture

While Elazar's (1984, chap. 5) characterization of the American states' political cultures has been criticized on a variety of grounds (e.g., Nardulli 1990; Wirt 1991; Hero and Tolbert 1996), it remains one of the most used and cited characterizations of state politics in the political science literature, largely because of its face validity for observers of many states' politics. Nowhere is this face validity stronger than in Illinois, the state where Elazar began his study of political culture (Redfield 2001; Gove and Nowlan 1996). Elazar characterized Illinois as an individualistic political culture, where, among other things, politics is primarily about who gets what and who wins elections so that they can reward their supporters once in office. Those interested in ideological and technical debate about policy and the value of fighting (and perhaps losing) the good

fight would best be advised to head north to pursue their political career in the moralistic political culture of Wisconsin.

Working in tandem with this emphasis on winning elections and the spoils system is a high level of partisan conflict that has characterized the state at least since the beginning of the 20th century (Gove and Nowlan 1996). In the late 20th century, this partisan conflict rooted in spoils politics was intensified by the close division between the Republican and Democratic parties statewide. While only Republicans served as governor from 1977 to 2003, the electoral margin in several of these gubernatorial elections was very small, and the state legislative chambers during that time were typically had both close partisan splits and different majority party control. Indeed, from 1977-2003, in only two years (1995-97) were both chambers of the legislature and the governor's office controlled by the same party. Thus, Illinois state politics has long been characterized by an emphasis on winning elections and close partisan competition.

The 1980 Cutback Amendment

In 1980, Illinois voters approved the only major statewide initiative ever adopted under the 1970 Constitution- the Cutback Amendment (Everson et al. 1982; Wheeler 2000; Van der Slik and Redfield 1989, 37-40). Prior to this amendment, the 177 members of the Illinois House of Representatives were each elected from a three-member district under a cumulative voting scheme that allowed a voter to vote for up to three of the four candidates on the ballot (one state senator was also elected from each of these districts). Each party could put only two of these four House candidates on the ballot.

Thus, in almost every House district, at least one Republican and one Democrat were elected.

The “minority” member from each district (that is, the person whose party lost the other two seats in that district) oftentimes provided a perspective different than that of those elected from districts where his or her party was in the majority. These minority members could also be harder for their own legislative party leadership to control because they had developed an idiosyncratic, small, but loyal, voter base in their districts. These minority members were often the most colorful characters in the House, the mavericks whose passing from the scene in the 1980s and 1990s long-time observers sometimes lament.

Advocated by reformers who capitalized on voter anger at legislators’ increasing their pay dramatically in a lame duck session the late 1970s (Telcser 1976), the Cutback Amendment did three things to the Illinois House of Representatives: its size was reduced by one-third to 118 members, its members were to be elected from single-member districts (two in each senate district), and cumulative voting was eliminated in favor of the traditional system of single-candidate choice. There were at least three important impacts of these changes. First, partisanship increased because the new single-member House districts were more homogenous, polarizing the parties in the legislature. Second, the end of cumulative voting and multi-member districts meant the end of a minority member in each House district and, thus, the loss of their unique perspective. Third, the party leadership in the House could control their members better both because these members were naturally more homogenous, given the smaller, more similar districts they represented, and because each member now had to win a majority in his or her district to

be elected, making campaigns more expensive and a primary election threat (perhaps instigated by the legislative leadership) more real.

Decennial Legislative Redistricting since 1980

The 1970 Illinois state constitution established a decennial redistricting procedure designed to force the political parties to compromise in the likely event of divided control of government (Gove 2001). If a redistricting bill could not pass the General Assembly and be signed by the governor, a bipartisan commission would be set up to draw a redistricting plan. If that commission could not agree on a plan by a given date, a tie-breaking member of the commission would be chosen by lot by the Secretary of State from two names presented by the parties. In effect, this would give the party who won the lottery complete control over drawing the legislative map. Behind this gun-behind-the-door procedure was the hope that the prospect of living for 10 years with legislative districts drawn solely by the opposition would force the parties to compromise on a redistricting plan (Edgar 2001). While this scheme worked as planned for the 1972 redistricting, in 1982, in a game of political chicken, the parties preferred to take their chances in the all-or-nothing lottery than to compromise on a map. The result was that the Democrats won the lottery and were able to draw a map that was advantageous for their interests. The same stalemate-and-lottery outcome occurred in 1992, with the Republicans winning the lottery and drawing the map, and in 2002, when the Democrats won again.

These partisan redistrictings affected the General Assembly in a variety of ways relevant to the three major characteristics of the General Assembly since 1992. Since the

legislative maps were drawn for partisan advantage, the process inflamed partisan conflict and helped polarize the parties. The majority of districts were drawn to be safe for one party or the other, which increased partisanship in the legislature since same-party members were elected from increasingly similar districts while other-party members were elected from increasingly dissimilar districts. Legislative party leadership power was increased because they controlled the redistricting, giving them immense leverage with sitting members seeking favorable districts. Furthermore, since most districts were drawn to be safe for one party, there were only a handful of swing districts. Leaders have targeted these swing districts as battlegrounds for proxy fights between the state parties, funneling huge amounts of campaign money and staff into them. On such a stage, individual candidates typically become mere pawns of their leadership, and as a result, these members are beholden to their leaders' wishes in the legislature. Finally, since most legislative districts are drawn to give the parties safe wins, and since the goal of the party drawing the map is to give itself a majority in each chamber throughout the decade, once the map is drawn, very little changes in the partisan composition of the legislature throughout the decade it is in force.

Continuity of Key People in the Process

Finally, the basic characteristics of the Illinois General Assembly in the study period were also established in the 1980s with the ascension to top party legislative leadership posts of men who would hold these positions through at least 2002. While the leadership in all four legislative caucuses was remarkably stable from 1992-2003 (indeed, the top party legislative leaders were the same throughout this period), in the early 1980s,

the two most important leaders of this period came to power- Michael Madigan, Democratic Speaker of the House, and James “Pate” Philip, Republican President of the Senate. These strong and talented leaders dominated their caucuses and chambers during most of the study period.¹ By rising to power in the early 1980s after a lengthy legislative apprenticeship, they were able to learn their positions and consolidate power so that by the beginning of our study period, they each had developed a powerful role in their respective chambers and Illinois policymaking that was relatively consistent from 1992 to 2003.

Other Factors That Might Cause Change in the Legislature

Our interviewees identified several other events that caused change in the Illinois General Assembly in the past few decades: change of the governor and the party of the governor, change of the majority party of a chamber, change of a legislative party leader, and major legislative turnover caused by the decennial redistricting. But very few of these events took place during the study period until its very end. A new governor was elected in 1998, but he was a Republican like his predecessor. There were two changes in party control of a chamber, when the Republicans briefly wrested control of the House from the Democrats in 1994 and lost it again in 1996. But during this entire period until 2003, each of the top party caucus leaders remained the same. The first election based on the 1990 census districting took place in 1992, and so there was no re-districting until the very end of the study period. In short, these potential change-agent events were largely non-issues in the bulk of the study period.

¹ Representative Madigan was the minority leader when the Republicans held a majority in the House in 1995 and 1996.

Partisanship, Leadership Power, and Gradual Change

Thus, these four developments shaped the Illinois General Assembly in our study period, 1992-2003. A political culture that emphasized winning elections above all else, the shift to single-member districts, and successive partisan redistricting led to a high, but stable, level of partisan conflict in the General Assembly. Legislative party leadership was a steady, dominant force because of its control of redistricting, personnel stability at the top, the skill of the people in leadership positions, and the partisan nature of the political culture and the General Assembly. And given that these events and conditions were well established by 1992, and were only reinforced by the major political events of 1992-2003, the key characteristics of the General Assembly were relatively stable during the study period.

Given this background, in the next sections, we go into more detail about the specific aspects of the General Assembly that are directly relevant to hypotheses about the potential impacts of terms limits: legislative leadership; elections, campaigns, and representation; the composition of the legislature; legislative committees; staff and staff agencies; norms and internal relations; lobbyists and lobbying; policy and budget; balance of power; and adaptation and institutional maintenance. We describe the general patterns of these aspects of the Illinois legislative process in the study period, emphasizing whether or not and how they changed during this period.

Legislative Leadership

The single most important feature of the Illinois General Assembly in 1992-2003 is the dominance of the legislative party leadership, especially the majority party leadership. Indeed, in every interview, no matter what question we asked first, the interviewee invariably answered it in terms of party leadership. The entire legislature and legislative process is oriented to this leadership control, as are all the actors involved, including rank-and-file legislators, lobbyists, the media, and executive branch officials. It was believed by all our interviewees that a majority party leader could get virtually anything he wanted out of his chamber in the study period and that anything of importance in a chamber was controlled by that leader. For example, more than one respondent cited the same bill of two years prior as an example of where the Speaker of the House wanted a bill to fail, but it actually passed. So rare was this event that it was remembered clearly by all observers of the General Assembly. As we describe the various aspects of the General Assembly below, we will continually come back to the impact and dominance of the legislative leadership on most of them.

One important reason for this leadership dominance in the study period is the fact that the same person served as the top leader in each of the caucuses from 1992-2002. Furthermore, all but one of these leaders held his position from the early 1980s. This longevity allowed these leaders to retire any political debts that they incurred in gaining their positions initially, to accumulate obligations from others, to learn the process and the position, and to adjust the system to benefit them (Jewell and Whicker 1994). Throughout the study period, these leaders were especially effective in co-opting potential rivals for power (whether from individual rank-and-file members or groups of

them) by judicious appointments to their leadership teams of six to seven (Senate) or nine to ten (House) members. Leadership team appointments were used in part to show that the leader cared about the important regional, racial, and economic interests in a caucus. Some of these positions offered real power and input into the process, and all of them offered prestige and a significant salary increase.

The leaders also accumulated power in other ways. First, they directly controlled all of the professional staff in each chamber. Individual legislators did not hire any professional staff, nor were any staff assigned permanently to a committee. Members were assigned staff at their leader's discretion, but it was always clear to the staff, rank-and-file legislators, and leaders for whom staff worked—their leader. Second, the leaders dominated the electoral process, especially in terms of campaign finance. While many states' legislative leaders developed their own campaign finance funds in the 1980s and 1990s (Loftus 1994), those in Illinois did so to an extreme, for several reasons (Redfield 2001). Their long tenure in these positions allowed them to develop effective fundraising operations. The lack of limits on the amount or source of campaign contributions in Illinois allowed these leaders to solicit very large sums from interest groups, unions, and corporations. The fact that these leaders dominated the legislative process gave those interested in having an impact on policy great incentive to contribute to the leaders' funds. Leaders were also deeply involved in targeting races for the heavy mobilization of campaign funds and staff and in recruiting candidates for legislative races (see the next section for more details).

A third way these leaders accumulated power was through their influence in the state budget process. Throughout the study period, the four leaders (or at least the two

majority leaders) controlled the legislative side of the final budget negotiations with the governor at the end of the legislative session. This meant that any legislator or other interested party needed the ear of at least one of the leaders to have his or her interests represented in these all-important budget negotiations. In addition, the leaders controlled the distribution of the district-specific project funds (i.e., pork barrel spending) throughout this period.

Finally, the majority leaders dominated the formal legislative process by controlling the assignment of bills to committees and the consideration of amendments on 2nd Reading (through the Rules Committees, which the majority leaders controlled) and by serving as the presiding floor officers, a role that has traditionally been used effectively by both Speakers and Presidents in the Illinois General Assembly. Both the majority and minority party leaders also controlled the assignment of their respective legislators to committee seats, a power that was used both to reward and punish members (thereby enhancing leadership power) and to set committee agendas and balances of power.

Changes in leadership power during the study period were subtle, gradual, and, for the most part, unidirectional toward more concentrated leadership power. Leadership controlled staff increasingly directly throughout this period, consolidating decisionmaking and control in the leader and his top aides at the expense of the leadership team, committee chairs, and rank-and-file legislators. The leaders increased their candidate recruitment and targeting activity. They became bolder in encouraging and supporting candidates running in primaries, not only for open seats, but even against sitting members who had somehow displeased them. At the extreme, the leader of the

House Democrats actually became the State Democratic Party chairman in 1998, a move that not only signaled his special interest in elections but that also gave him extra wherewithal with which to control House elections.² Throughout the study period, the legislative leaders, especially in the House, became increasingly focused on campaigns and less interested in the legislative process. In particular, several interviewees felt that after regaining the majority in the 1996 election, House Speaker Madigan began to pay attention to the legislative process only when it mattered for maintaining his majority or raising campaign contributions. This is not to say that the leaders did not care about lawmaking, but rather that, in the individualistic political culture of Illinois, the priority was always to win a majority and that lawmaking came to be seen as perhaps somewhat less important in attaining that goal.

The leaders consolidated their control over the budget process by becoming more directly involved in final negotiations toward the end of the study period. In the early 1990s, the leaders tended to rely on their top legislative budget experts (usually a close ally who was a chair of an appropriations committee) in most of the negotiations, but as the decade ended, the leaders got into the process earlier and more intensely. Furthermore, beginning in 2000, the legislature passed budgets that included “member initiatives,” a lump sum for each caucus whose distribution was to be determined by the respective leaders (with the governor’s approval) during the fiscal year. This gave the leaders very direct control over this pork barrel spending targeted at individual districts.

Finally, the majority party leadership seemed to exert even greater control over the lawmaking process as the study period progressed, in such ways as the majority

² In 2002, House Republican leader Lee Daniels also became the chair of his state party, but he stepped down from that position within a year due to a federal prosecutor’s investigation into the campaign activities of his staff.

leader's office sometimes posting committee hearing notices (something typically and formerly done by committee chairs) and dictating the number of bills a legislator could call to the floor for 3rd Reading. Majority party leaders also gained significant control of the legislative process when, in 1997, the chambers each began requiring that their Rules Committee (controlled by the majority party leader) approve of each amendment offered on the floor in 2nd Reading before it could be considered there.

Composition of the Legislature

Our interviewees noted some significant changes in the characteristics of the members of the Illinois General Assembly in recent decades, but these changes occurred largely in the 1970s and 1980s. Legislators in the study period were a more diverse group demographically than they had been in previous decades, especially in terms of Hispanic representation (tracking the growth of the Hispanic population in Illinois) and gender (tracking the increase in female state legislators nationally). Our interviewees believed that there were fewer farmers and lawyers in the State House during the study period and more fulltime legislators and life insurance and real estate salespersons than prior to 1992.

Between 1992 and 2003, there was little systematic demographic change among members of the General Assembly. There was a slight increase in women and non-white state legislators during this period, with the only significant change being a 7.9 percentage point increase in non-white representation following the redistricting of 2002 (Figures 1 and 2). The average age of legislators fluctuated within a five-point range (47-52 years of age) with no obvious pattern (Figure 3). The two best-represented

occupations of members of the General Assembly were lawyer and fulltime legislator. The percentage of the membership that reported these occupations did not change greatly or systematically during the study period (Figure 4). On the other hand, Illinois state legislators were increasingly likely to have a post-graduate degree as the study period progressed (Figure 5), supporting the impression of our interviewees that legislators have become more educated in recent years.

FIGURES 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ABOUT HERE

Reflecting the rise in the number of women and non-white state legislators in Illinois, many of our interviewees believed that two non-party legislative caucuses had developed influence in the legislative process during the study period: the Conference of Women Legislators and the Black Legislative Caucus. Unlike in Congress, caucuses of this sort are few in the Illinois General Assembly, and their development is recent. But when these two bi-partisan, bi-chamber groups defined a common interest and held together, they could have an impact on the process. The existence and tentative clout of these groups was also seen by our interviewees as giving more clout to their individual members. At the end of the study period, the Hispanic Caucus was organized formally, suggesting that this group of legislators saw such organizations as an effective way to pursue their common interests.

Changes in the partisan and electoral composition of the Illinois General Assembly in the study period were largely driven by redistricting. Changing district boundaries disrupts the connection between incumbent and constituent, making those usually formidable incumbents more vulnerable to electoral challenges and, thereby, giving more opportunity for membership change (Mooney 2004). Legislative turnover

(that is, the percentage of members in their first term) was high following post-redistricting elections (1992 and 2002) but generally lower after other elections (Figure 6).³ Partisan turnover (that is, change in the party of the candidate winning in a district from one election to the next) also followed a clear pattern related to redistricting, with high partisan turnover in 1992 and 2002 and decreasing turnover as the legislative map aged throughout the 1990s (Figure 7).⁴ The House and Senate had strikingly similar rates of partisan turnover in each election. On the other hand, the partisan mix of Illinois state legislators did not change as systematically during the study period (Figure 8). Democrats gained seats after the 2002 redistricting (which that party dominated) and Republicans gained in the House (but not the Senate) in 1994, following the national trend that year. Neither is there is clear redistricting-related pattern in the average number of years of in-chamber legislative experience (Figure 9), although the Senate has a mild trend of increasing experience with the age of a legislative map.

FIGURES 6, 7, 8, 9 ABOUT HERE

Elections, Campaigns, and Representation

In broad terms, election and campaign activity for the Illinois General Assembly was consistent throughout 1992-2003. These elections were run in single-member districts drawn so that the great majority of them were homogeneous and safe for one party, but with perhaps half a dozen (Senate) or a dozen (House) swing districts in each chamber in any given election. The legislative party leaders acted as campaign generals,

³ There was more turnover in the House than the Senate between redistricting elections, likely because during these elections, only about two-thirds of Senate seats were up for election, whereas every Senate seat was up for election directly after redistricting (as was every House seat in every election).

⁴ Note that partisan turnover is also increased in post-redistricting elections by the fact that the numbering of these districts can change somewhat as districts are changed.

and their top staff as colonels, in identifying which districts to target for contestation and providing the campaign financing and personnel for these targeted races. The leaders and their top staff were also very active in recruiting and training potential candidates, especially in these swing districts. The legislative leaders even occasionally recruited candidates for primaries to oppose sitting members of their own party who either displeased the leader in some significant way or, more important, whom the leader thought was vulnerable in the general election.

Campaign spending on Illinois General Assembly races increased throughout the study period, just as it did in races in the rest of the country (Figure 10). But more telling than just average spending is the comparison between two categorically different types of state legislative races in Illinois—targeted and non-targeted. Targeted races are those few in each chamber in a given election that the party leaders felt were potentially competitive.⁵ Since either party could win such a seat, the parties poured money and staff resources from around the state into these districts. Most legislative districts were drawn to be safe for one party, so there were plenty of resources that could be funneled by the legislative party leaders into those few whose outcome was in doubt. Thus, targeted races were much more expensive (Figure 11), with the top contributors being the legislative party leadership.

FIGURES 10, 11 ABOUT HERE

Those drawing the legislative maps for the elections held during the study period were successful in making most districts safe for one party. The percentage of legislative

⁵ The identification of which races were targeted in a given election is somewhat subjective, and it may even change during the course of a campaign as polling shows a race is becoming more or less competitive. We identified targeted races through contemporary news reports, informed observers, and an empirical evaluation of campaign finance data.

races that were uncontested by one of the major parties started the study period fairly high (House- 15 percent, Senate- 31 percent) and increased throughout the decade (Figure 12). Since 1998, with the exception of the House in post-redistricting 2002, over 45 percent state legislative races were uncontested. And even in those races with at least nominal two-party competition, the average vote margin was never less than 25 percent for either chamber in any election in the study period (Figure 13). On the other hand, paralleling their contrast in campaign spending, targeted races had significantly more competition than non-targeted races (Figure 14). Still, the average two-party vote margin in these targeted races ranged from 8 to 25 percent, with no systematic change during the study period. Thus, even while two-party competition in Illinois was very strong at the statewide level and in the seat margins in the General Assembly during the study period, it was weak to nonexistent at the legislative district level.

FIGURES 12, 13, 14 ABOUT HERE

The cause-and-effect relationships between campaign expenditures, vote margins, redistricting, and legislative party leadership influence cannot be sorted out simply by looking at these data. For example, were targeted races are more competitive because lots of money was spent on them or did lots of money get spent on them because they were more competitive? However, our interviews indicate that the causal chain goes as follows. At the beginning of a decade, the leaders of the party controlling redistricting designed only a few districts to be competitive between the parties. Party leaders then conducted polls in potential swing districts before each election to assess the potential closeness of these races. If a leader and his top staff identified a close race through these polls, they decided whether to target that district for a fight. If they chose to contest it,

they tried to recruit a quality candidate and train him or her to run (assuming that party had no incumbent in the seat). First and foremost, the leader and his staff looked for a candidate that could win in the general election. Such a candidate would be well known in the district, perhaps already serving in a local elected office whose constituency overlapped a good deal with that of the legislative district. An ideal candidate would speak well in public, be energetic, and have a good reputation that could withstand negative campaigning from the other side. Such a candidate would also have plenty of time for campaigning. And the candidate would be representative of the district in ideology, race, occupation, and background.

Once such a quality candidate was identified by the leader and his staff (often, this was the incumbent), the leader assigned campaign staff to the district, typically including the operational campaign manager. Significant campaign funds would be shifted from the leader's political committee(s) to that of the candidate. In fact, some legislators who have been involved in a targeted race complained that they felt like mere pawns in the process, having no input in their own campaign. But few, if any, candidates in a close race refused their leader's help, especially because their opponent was likely getting help from his or her leader.

These campaign funds and staff were not given in a single large exchange at the beginning of the campaign for the candidate to do with as he or she saw fit. Rather, the leader would keep a close eye on the race through tracking polls and their staff to assess the need for ongoing help. If polling showed that the candidate was either a sure winner or a sure loser, or if the candidate appeared to be handling him or herself badly in the campaign, the leader's help would dry up. Alternatively, if the race continued to be close

and the other party poured money and resources into the opponent's campaign, the race could become an electoral Battle of Verdun, with hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent in an effort to win a small piece of the legislative puzzle. But since so few districts were in play in any given election, and since the partisan balance in each chamber throughout the study period was so close, the outcome of these few targeted races could have decided the balance of political power in the legislature. There is no evidence of a systematic change in this pattern of electoral behavior during the study period.

Legislative Committees

In the American legislative process, the two main loci of power are legislative party leadership and standing legislative committees. If power in this process is a zero-sum game, then the influence of these two ought to be inversely related. Committees in state legislatures are typically far less influential in lawmaking than they are in Congress, and the legislative leadership is more so (Jewell and Whicker 1994; Francis 1989). This was certainly the case in Illinois throughout the study period and, indeed, at least back to the mid-20th century (Steiner and Gove 1960, chap. 3). If anything, the average substantive legislative committee in the General Assembly became even less important in the process the study period, as leaders' power grew.

Committees gain influence and respect in the legislative process through the stability of their membership, leadership, and jurisdiction, serving as a way for legislatures to gather and interpret information and develop expertise among their members (Krehbiel 1991). The committees of the Illinois General Assembly were not stable in any of these ways during the study period. First, the names, jurisdictions, and

even existence of committees in the General Assembly were far more fluid than they typically are in Congress. In the House, the organization of a new General Assembly after an election in the study period typically brought a change of 20-40 percent to the committee system, whether through old committees being abolished, new ones being established, or retained ones having their names and jurisdictions changed significantly (Figure 15). The level of committee change in the Senate was more variable, being between 0 and 80 percent after each election. The leadership of these committees was even more unstable, with between 50 and 100 percent of committees in each General Assembly being chaired by a legislator who had not chaired that committee in the previous General Assembly (Figure 16). Committee chair turnover followed a pattern that parallels redistricting, with virtually complete turnover in each chamber after post-redistricting elections, followed by a decline in this turnover (even if still at a high level) through the life of the legislative map. Regardless of the patterns and variation in this turnover and legislative change, these consistently high levels of instability are both a symptom and cause of these committees' having nowhere near the importance in the legislative process in Illinois that committees do in Congress.

FIGURES 15, 16 ABOUT HERE

Aside from this instability, the committee system in the General Assembly during the study period was further reduced in influence because it was closely controlled by the legislative party leadership. Committees were established at the beginning of a General Assembly by rule, and the majority party leader in each chamber (especially the House) had great informal control over their number, names, and jurisdictions. Several of our interviewees believed that these majority party leaders expanded the number of

committees and manipulated their names to provide whatever chairpersonships these leaders needed to satisfy their members and whatever issue domains they needed to satisfy important groups, public opinion, and their own legislative agendas. According to our interviewees, the majority party leader might establish a committee for a member to chair for the sole purpose of helping that chair's re-election bid. One such case showed unusual cross-party magnanimity, when a committee was established in the House for the former minority leader to chair in an area of personal interest to him. This demonstrates the fluidity of the committee system and the control that legislative leaders have over it.

The legislative leaders also dominated the committee system by controlling committee appointments. The membership of each committee was established at the beginning of each General Assembly by the legislative leaders, with the minority leader typically being allowed to appoint minority party members (with some exceptions at the pleasure of the majority leader). Seniority mattered little in committee assignments or the designation of chairs. A leader typically tried to give his members the assignments they requested, as long as the leader thought the assignment was good for that member's re-election. And in extreme cases, where the majority party leader desired an outcome for a committee's vote but feared that its current membership would not do as he wished, the leader simply changed the membership of that committee temporarily, bringing in "designated hitters" with explicit voting instructions from the leader. Such substitutions might last for as little as a single day, and while there were not many of them in a given session and their numbers are hard to document, on important legislation, they were not unusual. Most of these substitutions were made by a leader to protect a member from having to make a politically dangerous vote.

An important source of power for congressional committees is their designated policy jurisdictions (King 1997). Committees in the Illinois General Assembly in the study period had no such permanent or clearly defined jurisdictions, but rather dealt with whichever bills the Rules Committees (one in each chamber) assigned to them. These Rules Committees were small and dominated by the legislative leaders, with a majority of each being from the majority party. In this way, the majority party leader could easily assign a bill to whichever committee he wished, giving him enormous control over the outcome.

Our interviewees agreed that committees typically did very little screening of bills during the study period, with few bills dying in committee that their sponsors wanted to move forward and with most committee votes being unanimous. Lack of consistent records makes this claim difficult to verify, but we heard no contradiction of it in our interviews. While more than one interviewee indicated that “committee hearings never change anything,” several did suggest that hearings sometimes played an informational and educational role for the committee members and the public, particularly on new or minor issues. Committee hearings were also held on issues made salient by the media or a crisis (e.g., airport congestion around Chicago and governmental ethics) to gather information and demonstrate to the public that the legislature was dealing with the problem. But most committees had little or no decisionmaking impact on legislation, especially important legislation. On the other hand, once bills were reported to the floor of a chamber and called for a vote there, the recommendation of the committee and committee members were typically deferred to. This likely says more about leadership

control of floor action and the overall legislative process than it does about the esteem in which the legislative committees were held, according to our interviewees.

One interviewee related an anecdote that demonstrates the extent to which the majority party leadership (and by proxy through their staff) dominated the substantive committees in the study period. When a lobbyist once asked a committee chair to schedule a bill for a hearing, the chair said he had already done so, for a session two days hence. The lobbyist told the chair that there were no bills officially posted for a hearing for that day. After calling the Clerk of the House for verification, the chair became upset because he had arranged for several constituents to come to Springfield for that hearing. As it turned out, the majority party staff had held up these postings for technical reasons. While unhappy, the chair was chagrined and could do nothing about it. This shows both the domination of the committees, and even their chairs, by the majority party leadership and the significant power the majority party staff derived through their association with the majority leader.

This preceding characterization of committees in the Illinois General Assembly during the study period as weak holds for the substantive committees, which were the great majority of committees. On the other hand, the control committees—the Rules Committees and the Executive Committees—were very strong. These control committees were dominated by the legislative party leadership, especially the majority party leadership, and were used to control the flow of legislation, whether for political or policy reasons. For example, the Rules Committees not only assigned bills to substantive committees for review, they also reviewed each amendment offered at 2nd Reading,

deciding either to allow it to be voted on on the floor, to refer it back to the bill's original substantive committee, or not to be considered at all.

Staff and Staff Agencies

The characteristics of the Illinois General Assembly's staff were established in the 1970s and 1980s and were largely constant throughout the study period. Two types of staff organizations exist in the General Assembly— non-partisan units with specific mandates that are overseen by bi-partisan legislative commissions and four partisan staff units, one each controlled by the top party leaders in each chamber. In the study period, the partisan units did the primary staff work on bill analysis, appropriations analysis, committee work, and constituent relations. The non-partisan staff units specialized in such things as spot research (Legislative Research Unit), bill drafting (Legislative Reference Bureau), and fiscal forecasting (Economic and Fiscal Commission). While data on staffing levels (and on staff salaries, backgrounds, and much else) are not kept systematically, our interviewees believed that the partisan staffs grew more rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s than did the non-partisan staffs and that their influence increased markedly. In the study period, the influence of the partisan staff was strong and consistent.

There were more partisan than non-partisan staff during the study period, and the former were controlled directly by their respective legislative leaders. No other legislator, not even committee chairs, hired any professional staff to work in the legislature. No committee had permanent staff assigned to it. Members had a modest annual budget to establish a district office (around \$50,000 for most of the study period),

but this was typically spent on rent, office supplies, and secretarial support, not professional staff. All staff that worked with committees or members were hired, assigned, and supervised by the respective leader.

In answer to our questions about “the legislative staff,” our interviewees commented on these partisan staff almost exclusively, demonstrating their prominence in the process. These staff members were thought to be younger and more interested in politics, as opposed to policy, than had their predecessors in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, upon becoming Speaker of the House in 1983, Madigan established an “Issues” staff unit in his office. Belying its name, the main job of the Issues unit was to help Democratic representatives work with their districts. While this was not directly campaign work (which would have been illegal for these state employees to perform during working hours), it likely helped these representatives get re-elected. The other legislative caucuses developed similar work units in the 1980s. The balance between staff providing policy and legislative assistance versus constituent service assistance differed among the four caucuses, but the latter got at least as much emphasis as the former in terms of staff resources in each caucus, and in some, it got much more. In fact, late in the study period, three of the four caucus partisan staffs came under federal investigation for using staff to work directly on campaigns during office hours. Legislative staff commonly worked on campaigns legally in the study period by switching from the state payroll to the campaign payroll during election time.

Thus, the staffing patterns of the General Assembly in the study period both reflected the legislative party leaders’ interest in campaigns and enhanced the centralization of power around them. Any changes in this that our interviewees observed

during the study period were slow reinforcements of these patterns—the de-emphasis and compartmentalization of the non-partisan staff units, the enhancement of the power and breadth of control of the partisan staff (especially the top level of partisan staff), and the recruitment of staff who were younger and more interested in politics, rather than policy.

Norms and Internal Relationships

How did legislative norms and internal relationships in the Illinois General Assembly change during the study period? First, consider data on legislative processing and session length.⁶ The length of the regular session declined through most of the study period, but saw an increase in the last General Assembly for which we have full information (Figure 17). On the other hand, the level of bill introductions increased in the same period (Figure 18). And while one might expect the bill passage rate to drop as the introduction rate increased, that was not the case until the final session in our data, when the passage rate dropped precipitously (Figure 19). In other words, as the study period progressed, the legislature met less often, but introduced and passed more bills. This could mean that the legislature was getting more efficient, that there was less thorough screening of bills, or that bills were getting less consequential and, therefore, needed less evaluation, among other interpretations. We do not have sufficient quantitative or qualitative information to know which interpretation is correct.

FIGURE 17, 18, 19 ABOUT HERE

Beyond these legislative processing data, we must rely on the impressions of our interviewees for an assessment of the legislative norms in the Illinois General Assembly.

⁶ As of this writing, the 93rd Illinois General Assembly (2003-04) has not yet completed its work. Therefore, we do not report data on this session in this section.

These impressions typically were manifested in discussions of how members had changed over the years, especially in the ways new and current members were different than former members. Just as with our interviewees' impressions of demographic changes, the changes seen in the more informal characteristics and behavior of legislators occurred mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, most of these norms are not as easily documented as demographic changes, so conclusions about their timing and extent are less reliable. That said, we derived several generalizations about how members during the study period were different than members prior to the study period. For the most part, these changes were also thought to be occurring at an evolutionary pace during the study period.

The general consensus among our interviewees was that legislators in our study period were more likely to have been recruited to run for office by the legislative leaders than had been their predecessors. Thus, it is not surprising that new legislators' characteristics increasingly reflected those that leaders sought in their ideal candidates. Legislators were described as being younger, better educated, more aggressive in their careers and in the legislature, and more representative of their districts in the most obvious ways, such as ideology and race. On the other hand, they were thought to be more cautious politically and socially, so that fewer long-serving, colorful characters roamed the State House in the study period than had done so earlier. No longer was there a cadre of young Turks challenging their leaders, such as those that had served at various times in the past. This new breed of legislator tended to use staff for constituent service and working in the district rather than for policy research. Legislators in the study period were generally seen as more partisan, both inside and outside the legislature. They were

also seen as being less open to policy argument and less willing to change their minds. This attitude, along with the wiring of each member's floor desk to the computerized legislative information system in the mid-1990s, giving them instant access to the partisan staff summaries of each bill, made floor debate less important than it had been previously. Note that these trends may well stem from the impacts of the 1980 Cutback Amendment, the development of single-member districts in the House, and partisan redistricting.

Our interviewees identified a few other, perhaps less fundamental, trends in the norms and behavior of Illinois state legislators in the study period. First, members became much more "tech savvy," as several interviewees put it, as did the entire U.S. population. Even most of the older members aggressively sought out instruction in the use of their floor desktop computers and email. The newest, youngest members were often quite comfortable with the new technology and used it especially in campaigning for direct mail lists, voter information, reporting contributions and expenditures, and tracking campaign contributors. One veteran member was said to search his campaign contribution spreadsheet when answering the telephone to see how much the caller had contributed to his campaign. Second, our interviewees felt that there was less socialization among legislators outside of the capitol building as the study period progressed. This was attributed to interest groups putting on fewer receptions and parties during the session, concern about the impact of ethics legislation passed in the late 1990s, more media scrutiny, and the general societal trend toward more health consciousness that has affected legislative bodies in this way across the country (Rosenthal 1998).

A third trend in the study period that our interviewees noted was the reduction in party leadership requiring, or even instructing, members how to vote in committee and on the floor, especially in the House. Fewer “up or down arrows” were given, especially toward the end of the study period. While this may seem to run counter to our overarching theme of strong leadership control, it is a matter of emphasis and technique rather than an indication of weaker leadership. Legislative party leaders’ main goal is to gain or retain a majority in their chamber. During the study period, either through learning or the replacement of a leader, at least some of the caucus leaders came to believe that winning legislative elections was influenced less by votes in the legislature and more by legislative work in the district. Leaders often had narrow and short policy agendas during the study period, so they increasingly allowed members to vote their own minds (or helped them understand which vote was the best for their districts). By giving members this leeway to vote on the majority of bills, the leaders actually increased their ability to control the major legislation (such as the state budget) that they cared the most about.

Another important aspect of legislative norms and culture is the relationship officials have with the media. As in many states where the capital is not a major city, news coverage of Illinois state government, and especially the state legislature, is weaker than its importance would warrant (Layton and Dorroh 2002). Our interviewees saw the State House beat as a place where reporters would “punch their ticket” for a few years and then move on to other assignments. But throughout the study period, there was a core of veteran reporters serving along with the young ones on their way through. For example, according to the *Illinois Blue Book*, there were 44 reporters registered with the

State House press corps in both 1990 and 2000, but only six of those registered in 1990 were still registered in 2000. This lack of continuity in the press corps led to a perhaps less critical and informed set of reporters, thus allowing those who have been in state government a long time (like the legislative leaders) to have a freer hand in controlling the news coming out of the State House. While the number of reporters registered in the State House press corps has been stable since at least 1990, the amount of time that these reporters spent covering the legislature is thought to have decreased, with some Chicago reporters and broadcast media focusing on the State House only in the final days of the legislative session.

Several of our interviewees mentioned the increase during the study period of “gotcha journalism,” with reporters looking for sensational scandals and officials making mistakes, rather than writing state government stories with a good deal of detail and background. This emphasis may have been prompted by a string of state government scandals and the ethics legislation it instigated late in the study period, the lack of experience and understanding of state government in the press corps, and the changing economics and focus of the media industry.

Lobbyists and Lobbying

While hard data about the influence and activities of interest groups and lobbyists in the Illinois state legislative process are hard to come by, our interviewees identified some patterns during the study period. These patterns highlight the increased concentration of power in the legislative party leadership. While specific groups and interests gained and lost legislative influence throughout the study period, especially with

changes in the party majority in a chamber and the governor's party, interest groups in general were seen as being rather weak, largely due to leadership dominance. With weak committees and rank-and-file members, lobbyists had fewer significant points of access to the process than they might have in Congress or some other states.

The most important pattern of interest group behavior and influence in the study period has to do with leadership power short-circuiting the influence groups might have attained through campaign contributions. Groups contributed vast sums to campaigns, attempting to gain access to policymakers. But with Illinois's lack of campaign contribution limits and the centralization of power in the leaders, the bulk of this money typically passed through the few top leaders in each party and chamber (Redfield 2001, chap. 3). In this way, campaign contributions were "laundered" through the leaders, who distributed funds to the candidates in the few competitive, expensive races (and who were in the leaders' favor). Thus, the leaders were the only legislators accountable to these contributors. But since the leaders controlled the legislative process and had many sources of campaign funds, contributors had less leverage with them than they would have had with a rank-and-file member to whom they might have given even a small percentage of what they gave to leaders.

Against this backdrop of leadership domination, our interviewees identified three trends in group and lobbyist activities over the course of the study period. First, they believed that a handful of top contract lobbyists (such as former Governor Jim Thompson) had increasing influence on the most important issues, and that they worked through the legislator party leaders to get this influence. Other groups and lobbyists were seen as being increasingly marginalized. Second, groups held fewer receptions and

lobbyists did less socializing with legislators and their staff as the study period progressed. This was attributed to concerns over changing ethics legislation and increased media scrutiny, the shortening of the legislative session by a month in 1995, and the feeling that such activities were no longer an effective way to pursue a policy agenda (if they ever were). Third, lobbyists were characterized as becoming increasingly active in election campaigns beyond traditional campaign contributions, seeing this as a way of gaining favor with legislators. Our interviewees suggested that this may be indicative of a different type of person being attracted to the lobbying profession in recent years, one for whom politics holds as much interest as policy. This parallels the trends in the interests they identified in partisan legislative staff, legislative leaders, and rank-and-file legislators.

Policy and Budget

While the governor has had a strong hand in the Illinois state budget process since at least the adoption of the 1970 state constitution, the fiscal crisis faced by the state in the early 1990s led Governor Jim Edgar to interject himself into the legislative phase of the budget process in a direct way that set the pattern for the study period. The key characteristic of this phase of the budget process was that after the governor proposed the budget to the legislature in February, the legislative party leadership worked behind the scenes with the governor's office to modify the proposal so that it would be acceptable to the General Assembly.

This concentration of power into the hands of the governor and legislative leaders increased throughout the study period. First, the Appropriations Committees were

largely eliminated as an effective part of the process in favor of their chairs and minority spokespersons (the “budgeteers”) negotiating in private with officials from the governor’s Bureau of the Budget. Second, as the study period progressed, the budgeteers themselves became less important, with the leaders and their top staff doing more of their own negotiating even earlier in the process. This group made many of the final budget deals in private discussions toward the end of the legislative session. District-specific, pork-barrel spending had long been used to get the final votes of the rank-and-file to pass the final budget, and this process was formalized (and legislative leadership power further enhanced) later in the study period with the inclusion in the budget of money for “member initiatives,” a lump sum appropriation to each caucus (with the majority party getting more in each chamber) largely for capital projects. The allocation of each of these funds was controlled by the respective party leader (with the approval of the governor) with no specification in the budget. This not only increased the power of the leaders, it also degraded what was left of the Appropriations Committees’ role in the process, since these funds were distributed outside of the appropriations process. Finally, the study period saw further concentration of leadership (and gubernatorial) power in the budget process in 1995 when the effective deadline for passing a budget was changed from June 30 to May 31. By shortening the deliberation process, those legislators and groups outside the leaders’ inner circles had less time to gather independent information and develop alternative budget proposals.

Even with the centralization of legislative budget power in the party leaders, the governor dominated the Illinois state budget process throughout the study period. Our

interviewees uniformly stated that the governor got what he⁷ wanted out of the budget. This stems from, among other things, the governor's strong control of budgetary information from the executive branch, his constitutional mandate to propose the budget, and his strong veto power (see the next section). The governor's dominance of the budget process can be seen by looking at the overall changes made by the legislature in the governors' budget proposals during the study period. Figure 20 gives a rough estimate of the legislature's impact on the budget by showing that since 1992, the legislature has passed budgets that were within 3 percent of those the governor proposed.⁸

FIGURE 20 ABOUT HERE

Balance of Power with the Executive Branch

The 1970 Illinois State Constitution gives the governor strong formal powers, and there has been a tradition of informal deference to the governor by the legislature since at least the time of that constitution (Van der Slik and Redfield 1989, chap. 8). The governor is only one of six elected statewide executives, but he is definitely the primary statewide official, formally and informally. The governor can dominate the legislative process, especially through one of the strongest veto powers in the country and his great influence on the budget. Aside from formal powers, in an individualistic political culture where elections and the spoils of government are crucial, during the study period, governors garnered support for their legislative agendas through their control over

⁷ As of this writing, all Illinois governors have been male.

⁸ This is the net change made by the legislature in the total amount of the budget each General Assembly. This likely underestimates the gross legislative changes in the budget, as cuts and additions would cancel one another out. Data on the gross changes are not available.

district-specific capital projects and the use of public appearances and fundraising to help legislators in re-election. The lack of strong legislative committees and legislative policy experts enhanced the governor's ability to impose his will on the General Assembly. This relationship in part both arose from and enhanced the centralization of legislative power in the party leaders. The only counterweight to gubernatorial power during the study period was the consolidated power of the legislative leaders, especially the majority leaders. This power was most potent when the leaders had the strong backing of their members. Our interviewees noted that the personalities and styles of the governors and legislative leaders had an important impact on legislative-executive relations, but that the broad outlines of this relationship held constant despite some changes in personnel. And given that the study period saw only one change of governor (following the 1998 election), only Republican governors, and no changes in the top legislative leaders until 2003, this relationship was very steady.

One place we can see this strong gubernatorial influence in the legislative process is in the governors' veto activity. An Illinois governor has one of the most powerful vetoes in the country; he or she can veto a bill in total, eliminate or reduce a line-item in an appropriations bill, or amendatorily veto a bill. Our interviewees felt that the amendatory veto was an especially powerful tool. While the most potent power of the veto may be in its threat rather than its use (Rosenthal 1990), veto usage and success in the study period is telling. Figure 21 shows the percentage of bills passed by each General Assembly that were vetoed in some way by the governor and the percentage of those vetoes that were subsequently overridden. Note two things about this figure. First, during the study period, Illinois governors were not reluctant to use their veto pen. While

the two General Assembly's directly prior to the study period saw almost 20 percent of their passed bills vetoed (not shown), even during the relatively less confrontational sessions of the study period, the governor vetoed from 7 to 14 percent of passed bills. Second, the override of a gubernatorial veto was usually a rare event in the study period. In four of these five General Assemblies, no more than five vetoes were overridden (Appendix B, Table 9). Indeed, in the first General Assembly of George Ryan's governorship (1999-2000), only two vetoes were overridden.⁹ Thus, Illinois governors used the veto and made it stick during the study period.

FIGURE 21 ABOUT HERE

The general legislative attitude toward the executive agencies throughout the study period was one of disinterest and deferral to the governor's wishes, an attitude that strengthened moderately as time went on, according to our interviewees. One interviewee said that legislators care only about district projects and constituent service, and since the executive agencies rarely have an impact on these, they are ignored. The weak and shifting committee system reduces the ability of and incentive for legislators to oversee agencies. The Appropriations Committees were seen as conducting some oversight in the 1980s, but the reduction of their importance in the budget process in the study period reduced their role in executive oversight. Paralleling the other impacts of an increasing focus on elections and constituent work that we have discussed, Democratic House leader Michael Madigan shifted his interest away from battling executive agencies after regaining the majority in his chamber in the 1996 elections. Our interviewees noted a few high profile scandals that focused legislators' attention on certain executive

⁹ The legislature overrode 18 vetoes in Governor Jim Edgar's lame duck General Assembly, when vetoes by the governor also spiked.

agencies, prompting hearings and speeches at various points in the study period, but the norm was legislative disinterest.

This lack of legislative oversight is exemplified by the powers and activities of the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR), the bi-partisan panel of legislators charged with reviewing executive agency rulemaking. Formally, JCAR is among the most powerful legislative oversight committees in the country (Gerber, Maestas, and Dometrius 2005), with two dozen staff members and the mandate to review all agency rulemaking. But JCAR was generally believed by our interviewees to have little control over agencies.¹⁰ Of the four actions JCAR could take on a proposed administrative rule, only one even forced a slowing of its implementation, should an agency have chosen to oppose the action (Mooney and Van Dyke-Brown 2003, chap. 6). And that action—a filing prohibition—required a three-fifths vote of the committee, and even then, it could only delay the rule’s implementation for 180 days while JCAR introduced a joint resolution to the General Assembly that, if passed by both chambers, would permanently prohibit the rule from being implemented. But even these relatively weak sanctions were rarely imposed. Figure 22 shows that throughout the study period, JCAR objected to a rule only rarely, issuing a filing prohibition less than 1 percent of the time. In no single General Assembly in the study period did JCAR vote to prohibit as many as 10 rules. Another way to view these figures is that on no more than 7 percent of the rules it reviewed did JCAR voice any official concern whatsoever. Note that there was no discernible trend in these JCAR actions, supporting our interviewees’ claims that

¹⁰ In 2004, legislation was passed that significantly strengthened the formal powers of JCAR to block administrative rules. As of this writing, this legislation had not been acted upon by the governor.

legislative interest in overseeing the executive branch was weak throughout the study period.

FIGURE 22 ABOUT HERE

Adaptation and Institutional Maintenance

The moderate legislative turnover and stable cadre of long-serving legislators in Illinois General Assembly during the study period (especially among the legislative party leadership) has reduced the need for a concerted effort for formal institutional maintenance mechanisms and training for new members. After each election in the study period, legislator-elects were invited to participate in a three-day new members' conference presented by the Legislative Research Unit (LRU). Most new members attended at least some of these sessions. During the study period, the University of Illinois's Institute of Government and Public Affairs began to assist the LRU with this conference, and the emphasis of many of the sessions shifted toward a discussion of policy issues. Previously, the new members' conference had been focused primarily on procedural issues, such as how to introduce a bill, what were legitimate expenditures for their district office allowances, how to file for travel reimbursement, and so forth. Our interviewees who were familiar with the new members' conference believed that new members were still primarily concerned with these procedural issues. In the middle of the study period, the bi-partisan Conference of Women Legislators also began holding a brief retreat for new women members after each election.

In general, institutional memory is maintained in the Illinois General Assembly by senior and influential members informally mentoring promising new and journeymen members.

Conclusion

Returning to the themes we identified at the outset, the Illinois General Assembly from 1992 to 2003 was characterized by strong and centralized party leadership, gradual change where change occurred, and strong party competition. The four sources of these characteristics are Illinois's individualistic political culture, the 1980 Cutback Amendment, decennial redistricting since 1980, and the idiosyncrasies and lengthy tenure of key officials in the process. In each of the aspects of the General Assembly we have discussed in this report, these broad characteristics and their impacts are evident.

This report on Illinois offers two contributions to the Joint Project on Term Limits. First, the Illinois General Assembly makes a good control case study because its stability during the study period will make any changes found in the term-limits states stand out in stark relief. There were few major events in Illinois politics and government that could confound our conclusions about the impacts of term limits elsewhere. Second, the fact that the 1980 Cutback Amendment and decennial legislative redistricting had such a broad and deep impact on Illinois legislative politics indicates that institutional reform can have significant effects even in old and established political institutions. This suggests that term limits, an institutional reform on the same order of magnitude as these changes in Illinois, likely has had and will continue to have a wide range of effects on politics and government in term-limits states.

APPENDIX B ABOUT HERE

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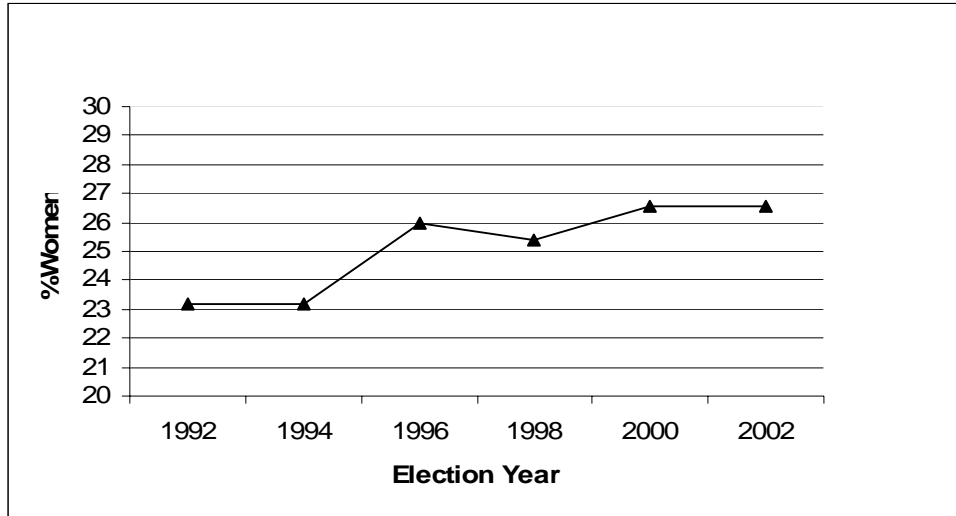
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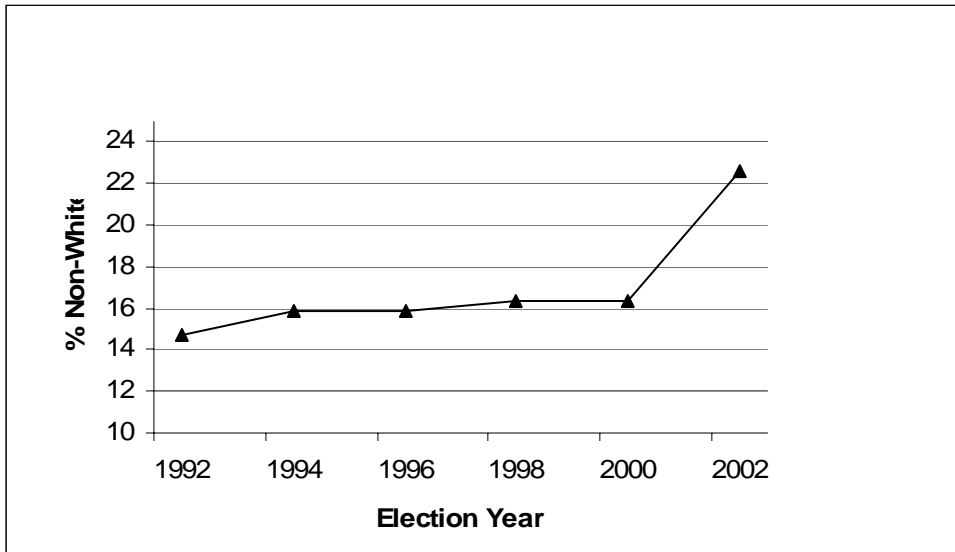
Appendix B: Figures and Data Tables

Figure 1. Percentage of Women in the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2002



Source: Appendix B, Table 1

Figure 2. Percentage of Non-Whites in the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2002



Source: Appendix B, Table 1

Figure 3. Average Age at Election of Illinois State Legislators, 1992-2002

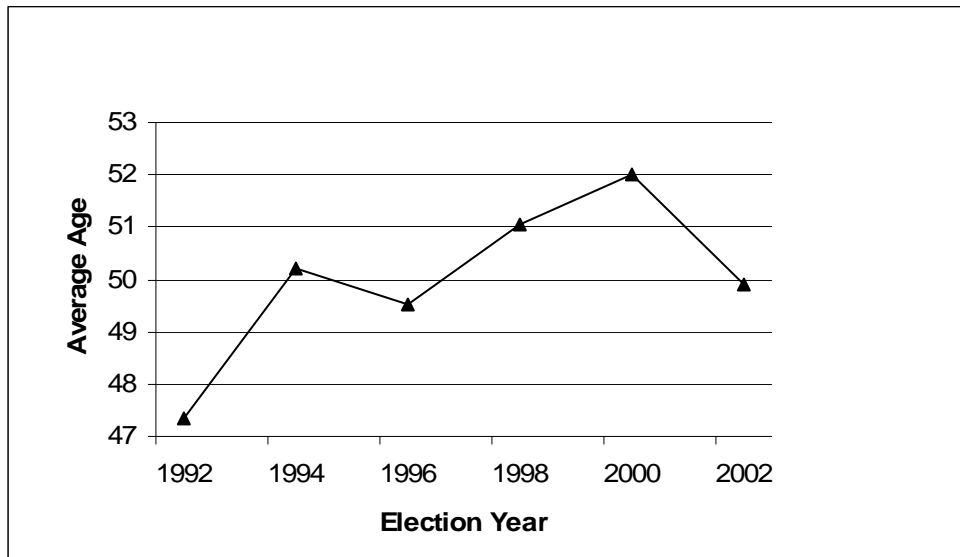
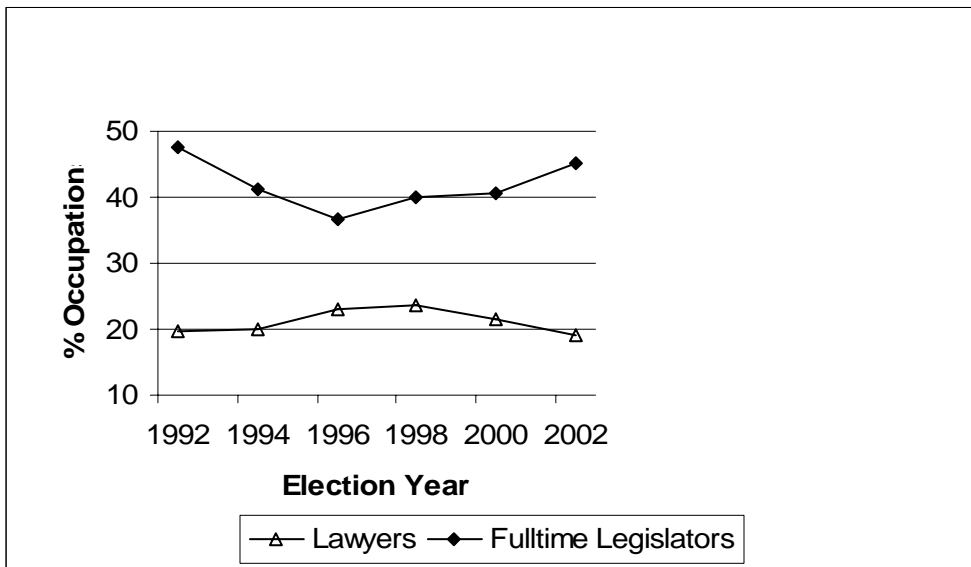
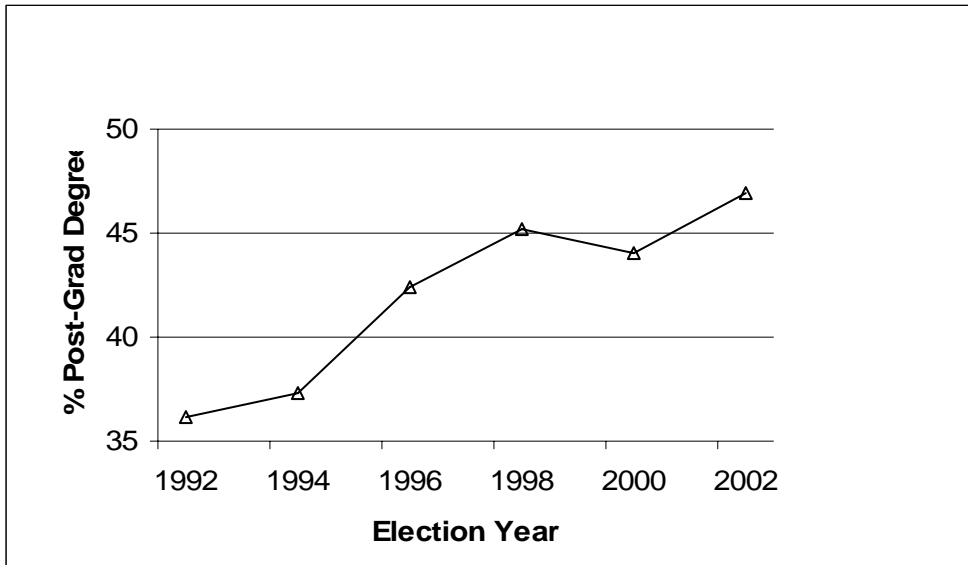


Figure 4. Lawyers and Fulltime Legislators as a Percentage of the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2002



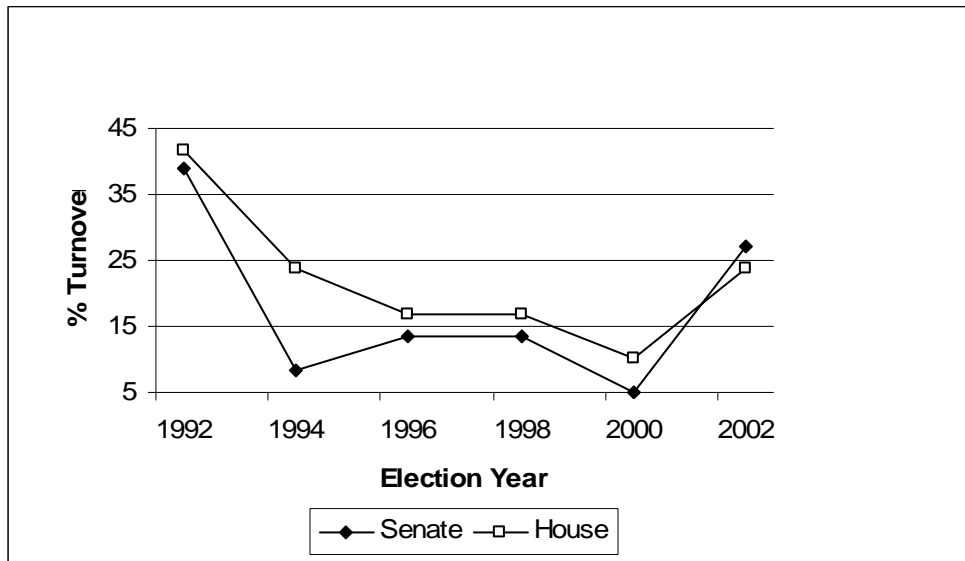
Source: Appendix B, Table 1

Figure 5. Percentage of Illinois State Legislators with a Post-Graduate Degree, 1992-2002



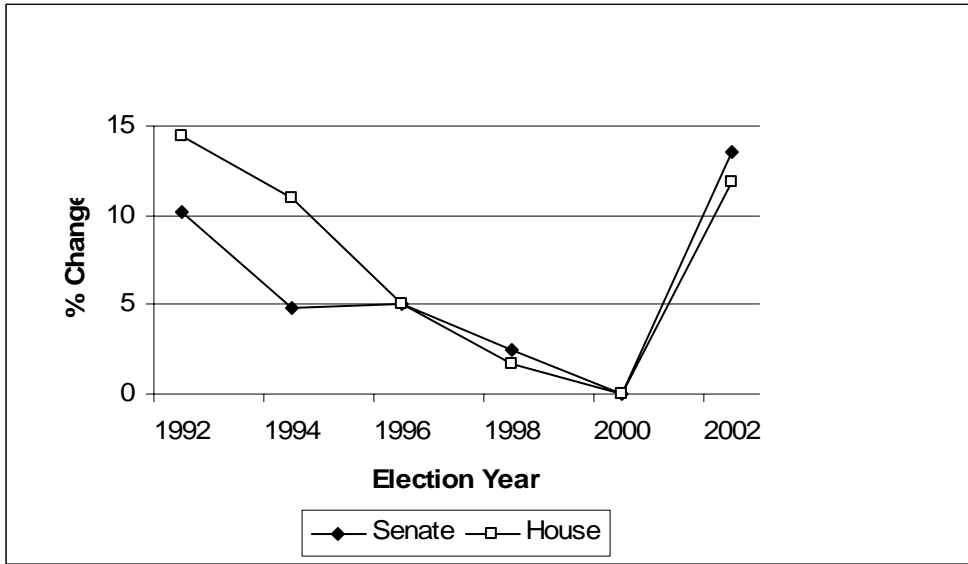
Source: Appendix B, Table 1

Figure 6. Turnover in Illinois State Legislative Seats, 1992-2002



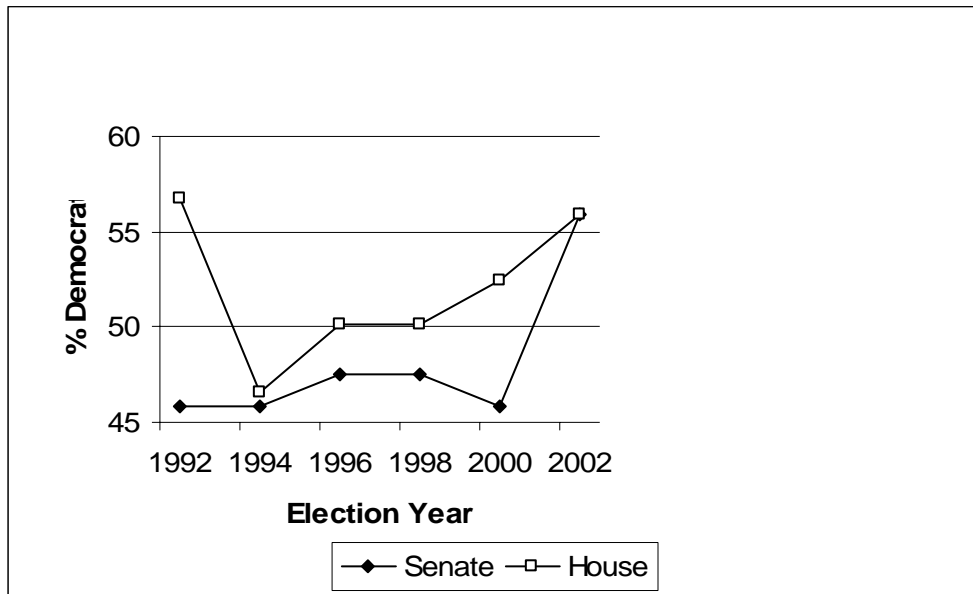
Source: Appendix B, Table 2

Figure 7. Percentage of Illinois State Legislative Districts with Partisan Change, 1992-2002



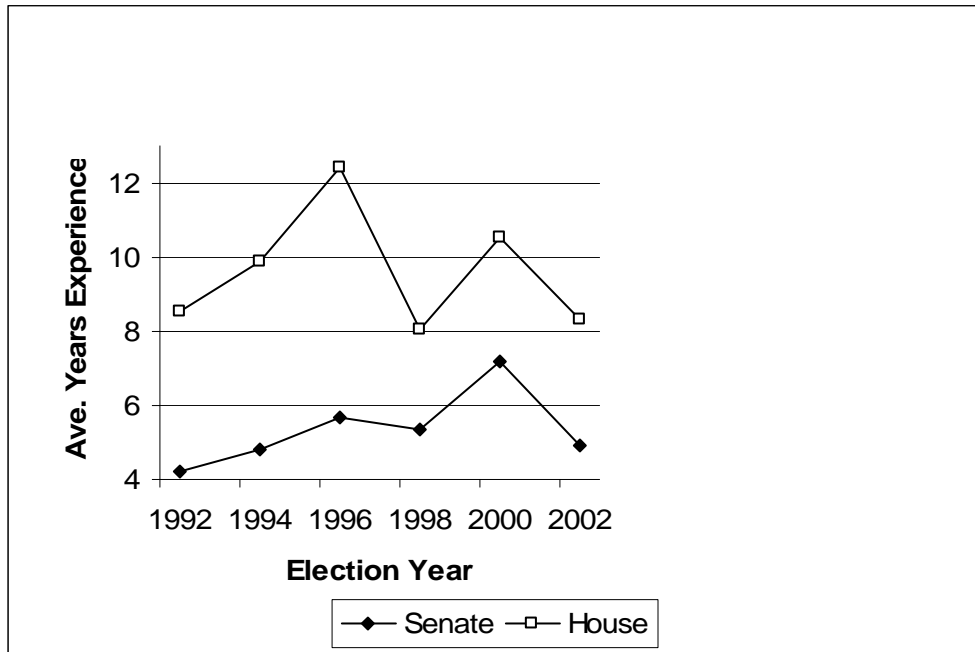
Source: Appendix B, Table 2

Figure 8. Percentage of Illinois State Legislators Who Were Democrats, 1992-2002



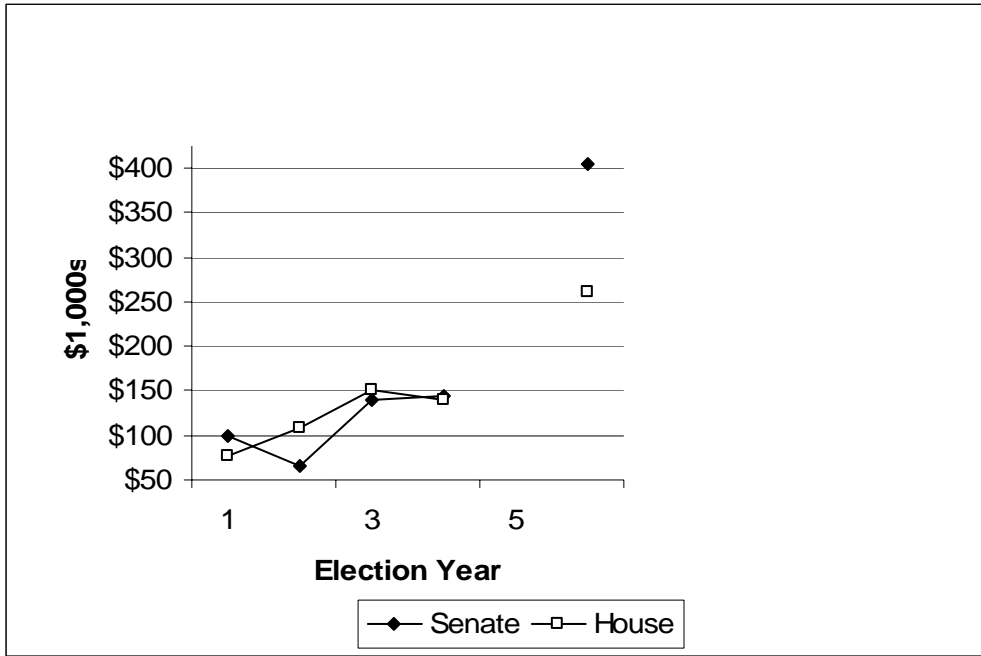
Source: Appendix B, Table 2

Figure 9. Average Years of In-Chamber Legislative Experience at Time of Election, 1992-2002



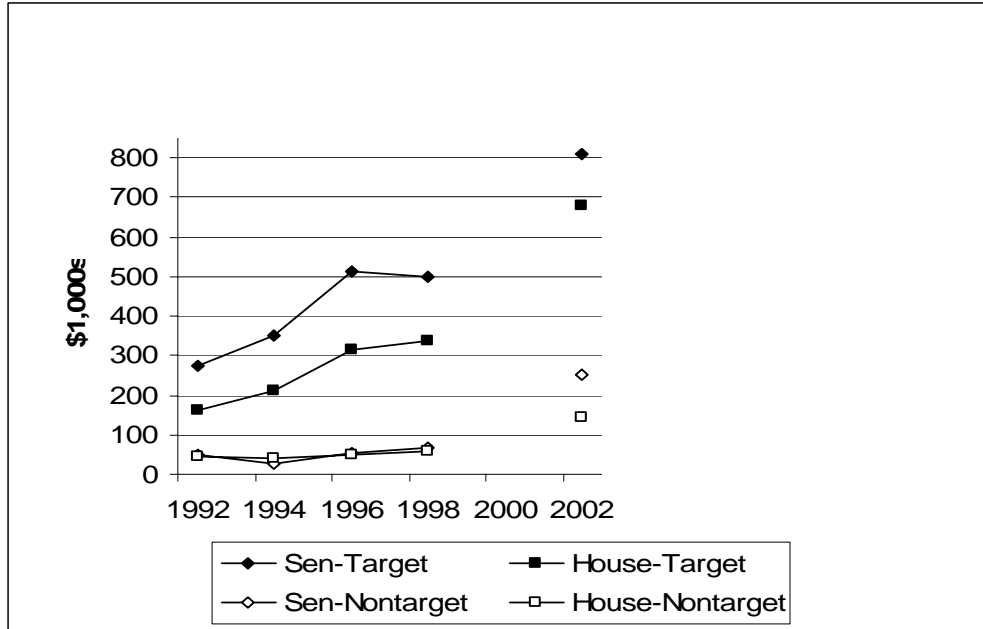
Source: Appendix B, Table 2

Figure 10. Mean Campaign Expenditures of Successful Candidates for the Illinois General Assembly (Full Election Cycle), 1992-2002



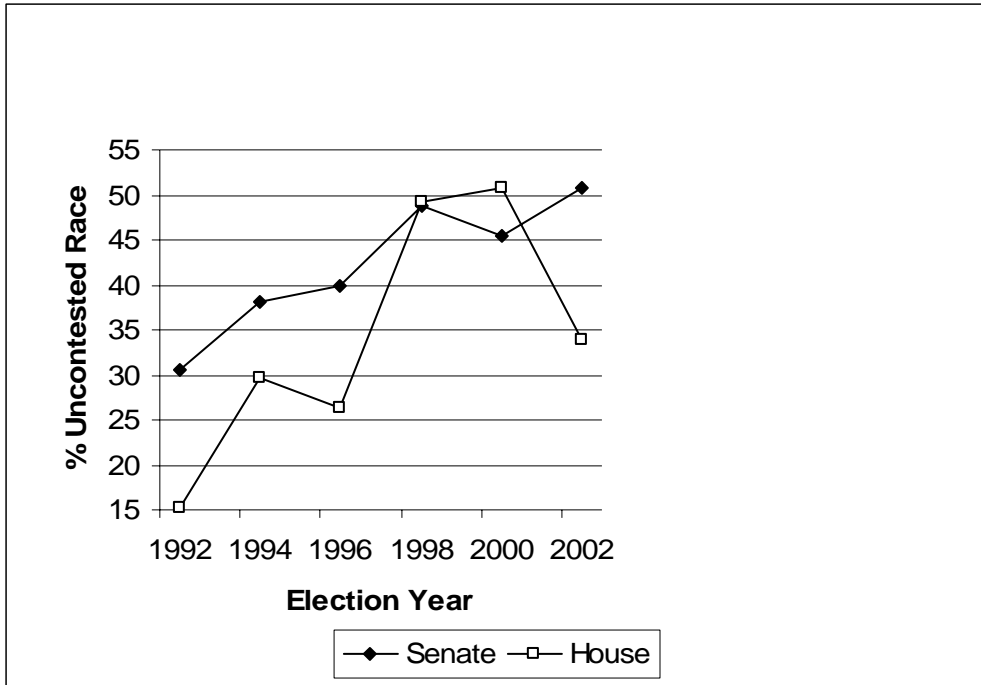
Source: Appendix B, Table 3

Figure 11. Mean Campaign Expenditure of Successful Candidates for the Illinois General Assembly, by Targeted and Non-Targeted Races (Full Election Cycle), 1992-2002



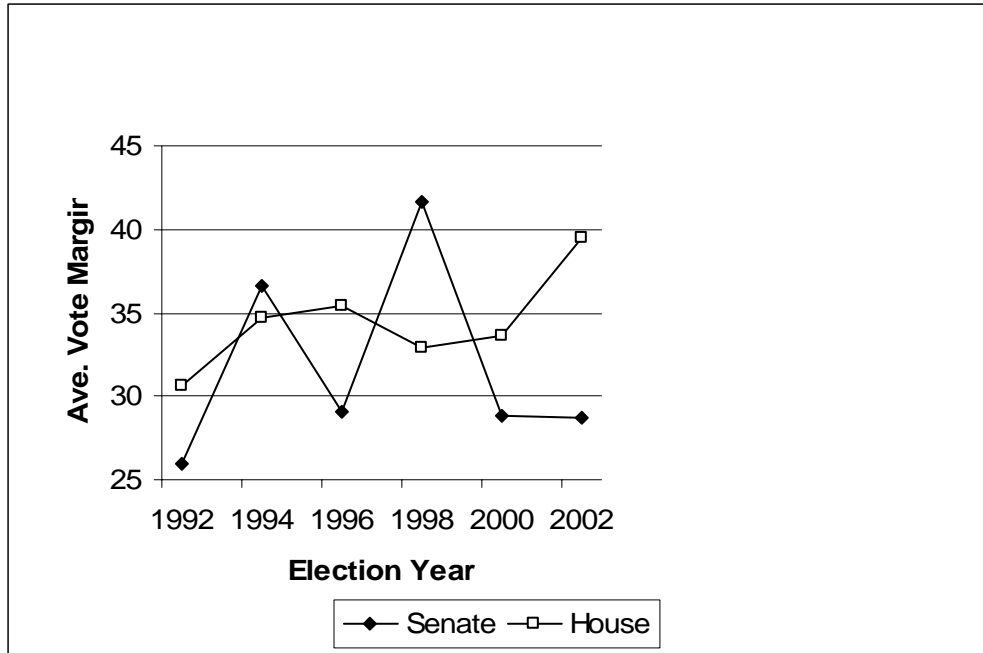
Source: Appendix B, Table 4

Figure 12. Percentage of General Election Races for the Illinois General Assembly Not Contested by Both Major Parties, 1992-2002



Source: Appendix B, Table 5

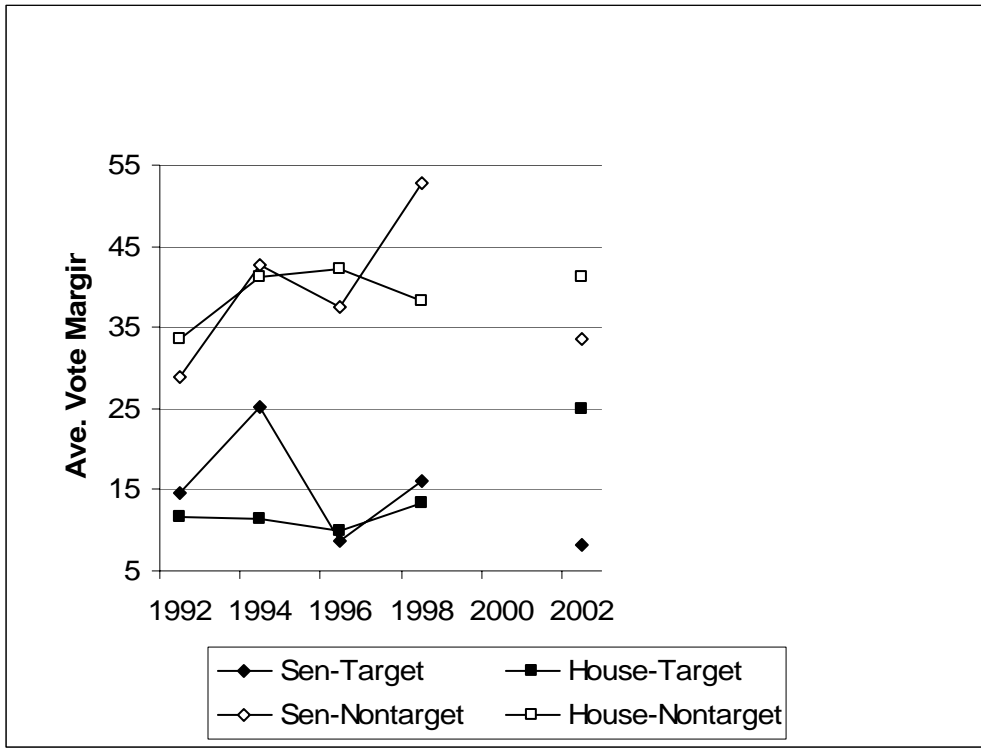
Figure 13. Average Electoral Competition in General Election Races for the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2002



Note: Mean vote margin of races in which both a Democratic and Republican candidate were on the general election ballot.

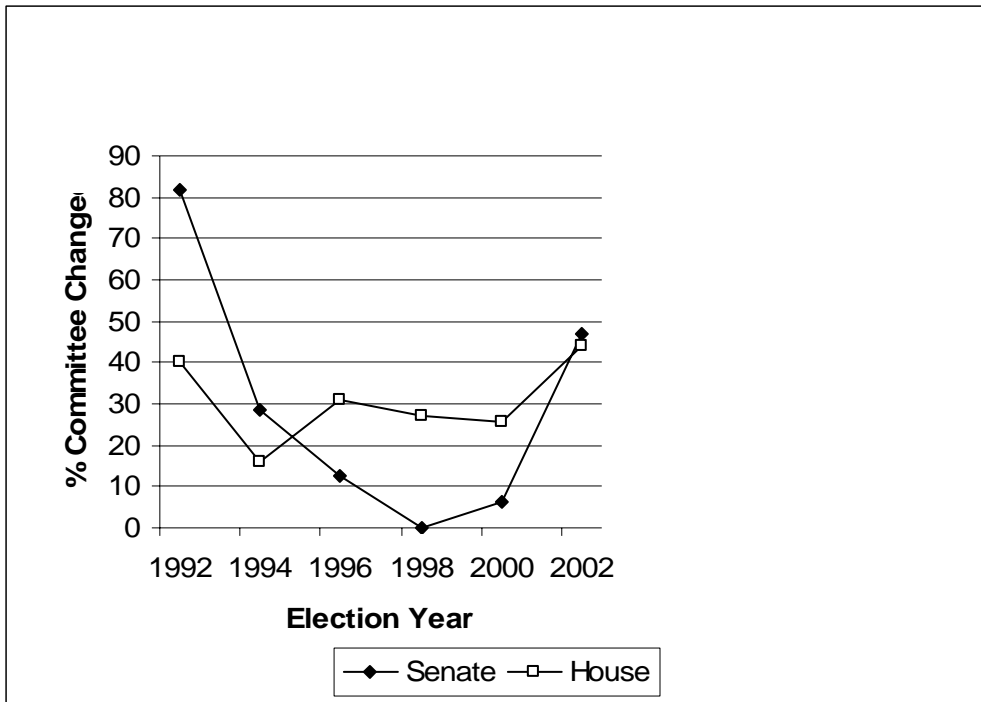
Source: Appendix B, Table 5

Figure 14. Average Electoral Competition in General Election Races for the Illinois General Assembly, by Targeted and Non-Targeted Races, 1992-2002



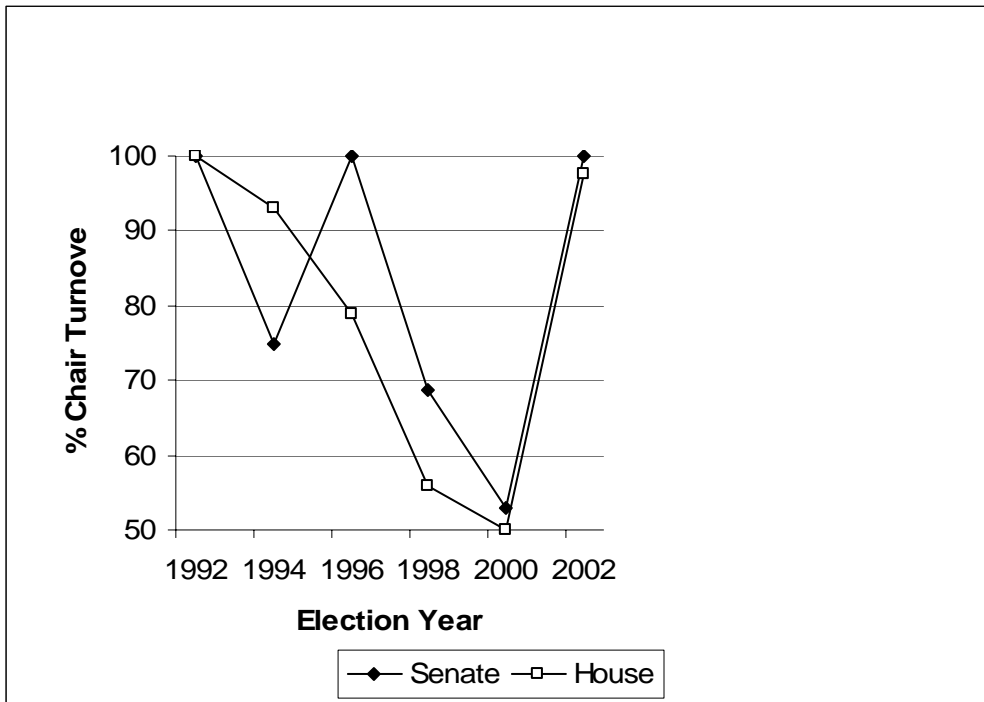
Source: Appendix B, Table 6

Figure 15: Percentage of Committees Eliminated, Added, or Name Changed from Previous General Assembly, 1992-2002



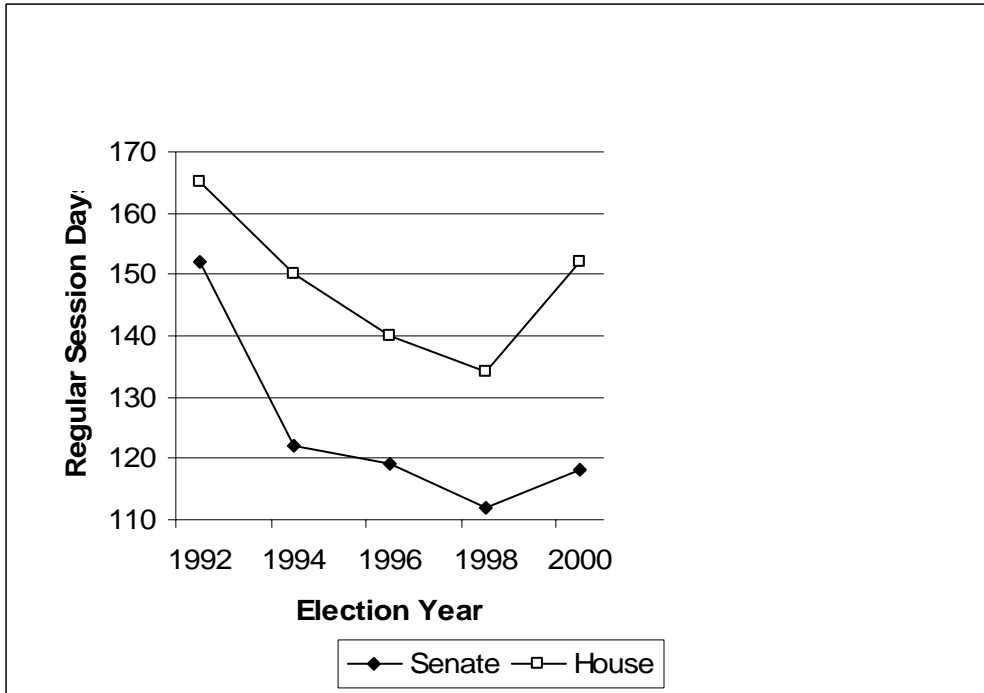
Source: Appendix B, Table 7

Figure 16: General Assembly Committee Chair Turnover, 1992-2002



Source: Appendix B, Table 8

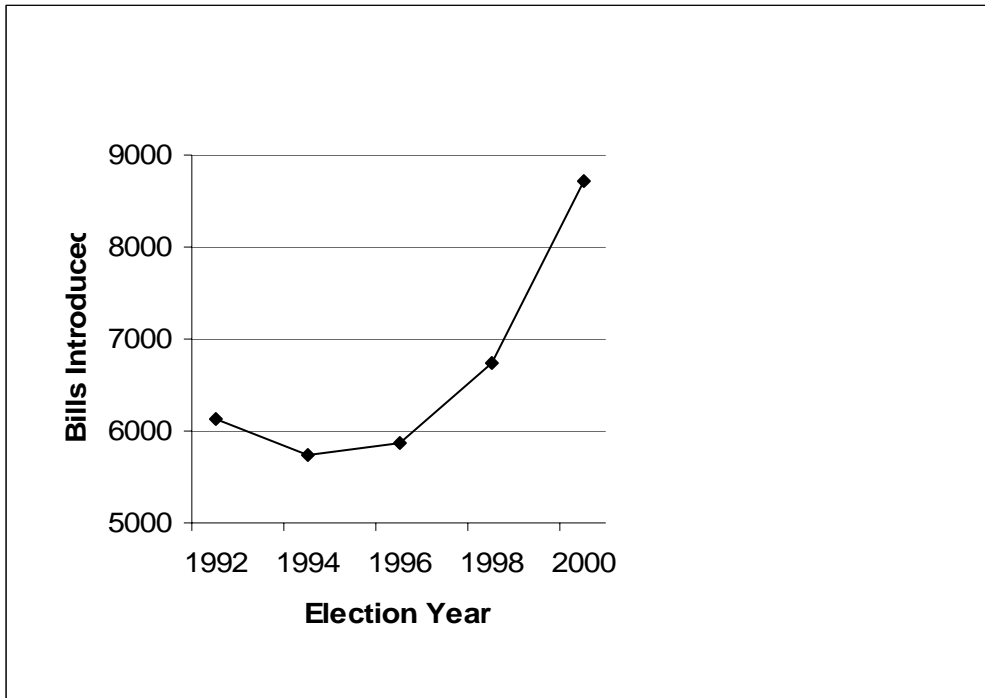
Figure 17: Regular Legislative Session Days for the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2000



Note: Regular legislative session days are counted for the General Assembly whose members were elected in the election on the X-axis.

Source: Appendix B, Table 9

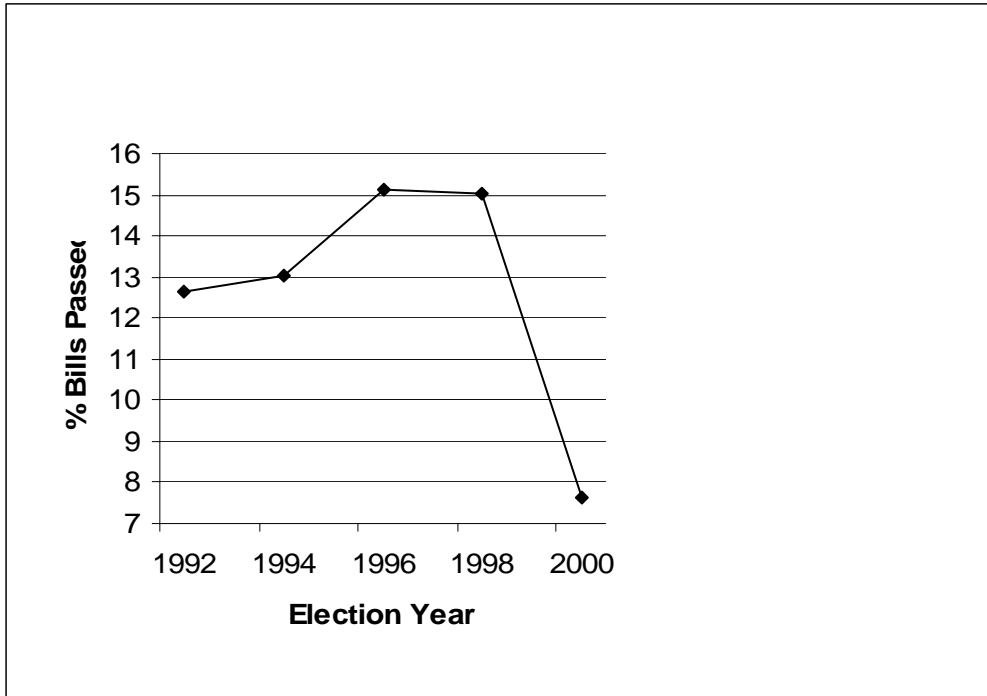
Figure 18: Bills Introduced in the Illinois General Assembly (Both Chambers), 1992-2000



Note: Bill introductions are counted for the General Assembly whose members were elected in the election on the X-axis.

Source: Appendix B, Table 9

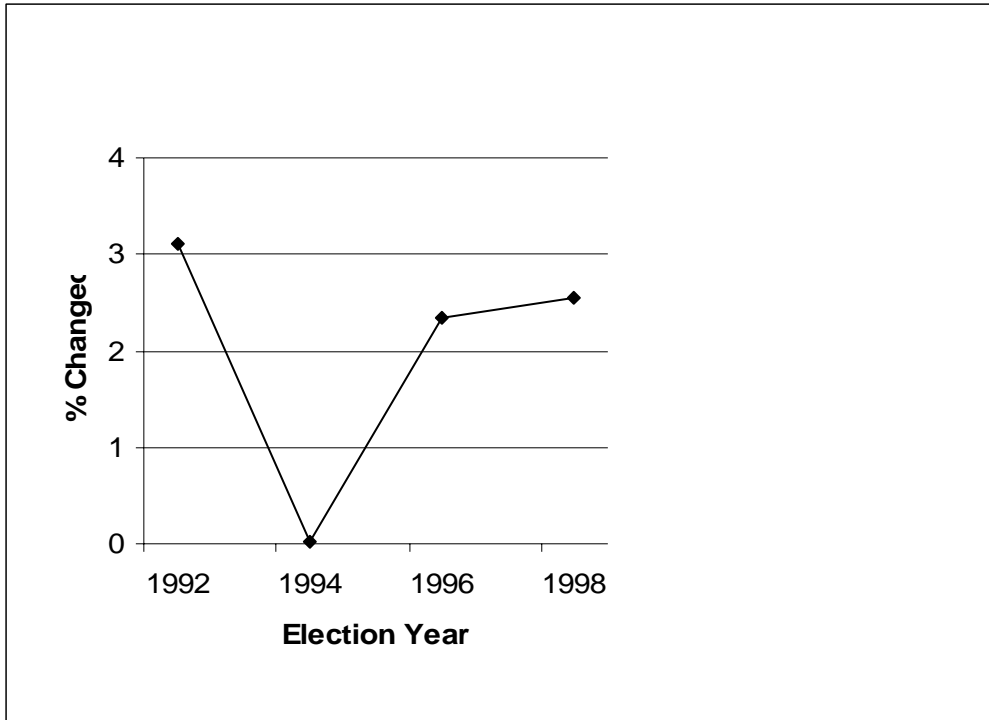
Figure 19: Passage Rate of Bills Introduced in the Illinois General Assembly (Both Chambers), 1992-2000



Note: Bill passage rate for the General Assembly whose members were elected in the election on the X-axis.

Source: Appendix B, Table 9

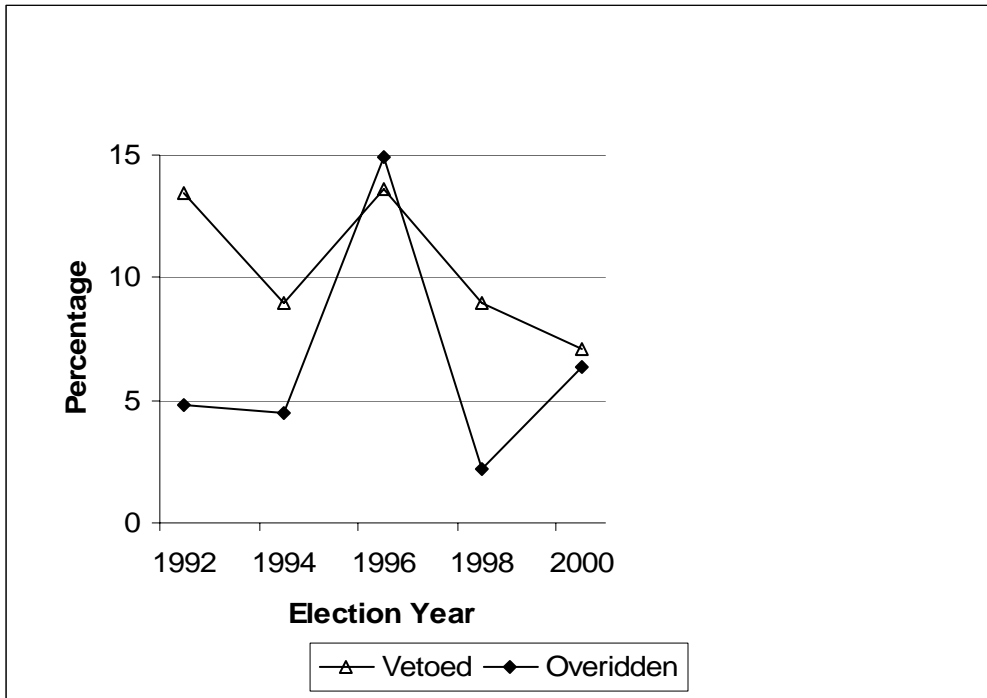
Figure 20: Net Legislative Changes in the Gubernatorially Proposed Budget, 1993-1999



Note: Net legislative changes in the proposed budget are combined for each General Assembly for the election indicated on the X-axis.

Source: Appendix B, Table 10

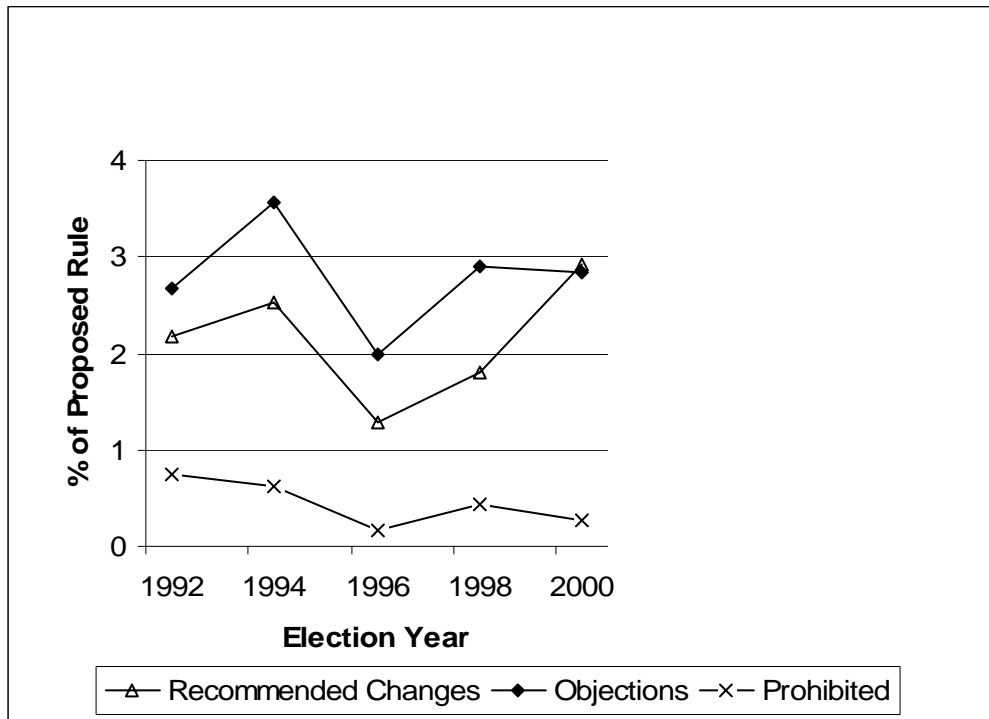
Figure 21: Veto and Override Rates of Bills Passed by the Illinois General Assembly, 1992-2000



Note: Bill veto and override rates for the General Assembly for which those at each election on the X-axis were elected.

Source: Appendix B, Table 9

Figure 22: Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) Actions, 1993-2002



Note: JACR actions for the General Assembly after the election on the X-axis.
Source: Appendix B, Table 11

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Members of the General Assembly*

Election Year	Female	Hispanic	Black	Lawyers	Fulltime Legislators	Post-Graduate Degree
1992	23.16	3.39	11.30	19.77	47.46	36.16
1994	23.16	3.39	12.43	20.03	41.24	37.29
1996	25.99	3.39	12.43	23.16	36.72	42.37
1998	25.42	3.39	12.99	23.73	40.11	45.20
2000	26.55	3.39	12.99	21.47	40.68	44.07
2002	26.55	7.90	14.69	19.21	45.20	46.89

*At start of session

Note: Values are percentages of the entire General Assembly.

Source: *Almanac of Illinois Politics*, various years

Table 2. Results of Legislative Elections*

Election Year	Democratic Seats		Partisan Change		Turnover		In-Chamber Legislative Experience	
	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate
1992	56.80	45.80	14.40	10.17	41.53	38.98	8.53	4.22
1994	46.60	45.80	11.01	4.76	23.70	8.47	9.88	4.83
1996	50.10	47.50	5.08	5.00	16.95	13.56	12.42	5.69
1998	50.10	47.50	1.69	2.44	16.95	13.56	8.03	5.37
2000	52.50	45.80	0.00	0.00	10.17	5.08	10.53	7.17
2002	55.90	55.90	11.86	13.56	23.73	27.12	8.32	4.93

*At start of session

Note: Values are percentages.

Source: *Almanac of Illinois Politics*, various years

Table 3. Average Campaign Expenditures of Successful Legislative Candidates in Illinois (Full Election Cycle), 1992-2002

Election cycle	Mean expenditure		Median expenditure	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
1992	\$ 77,308	\$100,086	\$45,659	\$52,438
1994	\$109,349	\$ 65,671	\$34,773	\$26,021
1996	\$151,051	\$138,863	\$44,132	\$51,681
1998	\$138,742	\$145,387	\$53,135	\$54,483
2000				
2002	\$260,564	\$404,610	\$152,914	\$258,282

Note: Top leaders in each party in each chamber are not included, since their campaign finance activities and data are not comparable to those of the rank and file.

Source: Illinois State Board of Elections candidate campaign finance records

Table 4. Average Campaign Expenditure of Successful Legislative Candidates in Illinois, by Targeted/Non-Targeted Races (Full Election Cycle), 1992-2002

Election cycle	Targets' Mean Expenditures (number of targets)		Non-Targets' Mean Expenditures	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
1992	\$162,893 (14)	\$274,499 (11)	\$45,743	\$48,379
1994	\$212,238 (19)	\$351,891 (5)	\$41,940	\$26,163
1996	\$315,267 (19)	\$511,424 (7)	\$50,183	\$52,450
1998	\$337,788 (15)	\$497,052 (7)	\$57,714	\$68,593
2000				
2002	\$680,417 (11)	\$808,793 (9)	\$152,473	\$251,847

Note: Top leaders in each party in each chamber are not included, since their campaign finance activities and data are not comparable to those of the rank and file. Targeted races were identified through contemporary news reports, informed observers, and empirical evaluation of the campaign finance data to find those races that were qualitatively different than the average.

Source: Illinois State Board of Elections candidate campaign finance records

Table 5. Electoral Competition in General Election State Legislative Races, 1992-2002

Election	Mean electoral margin*		Median electoral margin*		Number of Uncontested Races (percentage)**	
	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate
1992	30.6	25.9	25.8	25.9	18 (15.3%)	18 (30.5%)
1994	34.7	36.6	34.5	45.6	35 (29.7%)	8 (38.1%)
1996	35.4	29.1	30.4	23.9	31 (26.3%)	16 (40.0%)
1998	32.9	41.6	29.6	36.7	58 (49.2%)	20 (48.8%)
2000	33.6	28.8	32.4	24.4	60 (50.8%)	10 (45.5%)
2002	39.5	28.7	36.9	27.1	40 (33.9%)	30 (50.8%)

*Electoral margin is measured as the absolute difference between the Democratic party candidate's percentage of the vote in the general election and that of the Republican candidate, in races where both a Republican and Democratic candidate were on the ballot.

**Uncontested races are those general election races where either the Democratic or Republican party was not on ballot.

Source: *Almanac of Illinois Politics*, various years.

Table 6. Electoral Competition in Targeted vs. Non-Targeted Districts General Election State Legislative Races, 1992-2002

Election cycle	Targets' Mean Electoral Margin (number of targets)		Non-Targets' Mean Electoral Margin (number of non-targets)	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
1992	11.6 (14)	14.6 (11)	33.5	29.0
1994	11.5 (19)	25.1 (5)	41.2	42.8
1996	9.9 (19)	8.8 (7)	42.3	37.5
1998	13.4 (15)	16.2 (7)	38.3	52.8
2000				
2002	24.9 (11)	8.1 (9)	41.2	33.6

Note: Only districts with contested races are included in these data. Targeted races were identified through contemporary news reports, informed observers, and empirical evaluation of the campaign finance data to find those races that were qualitatively different than the average. Electoral margin is measured as the absolute difference between the Democratic party candidate's percentage of the vote in the general election and that of the Republican candidate, in races where both a Republican and Democratic candidate were on the ballot.

Source: *Almanac of Illinois Politics*, various years.

Table 7: Changes in the General Assembly’s Committee System, 1993-2003

Start of GA	House				Senate			
	# of Committees*	Lost from Previous GA	New or Name Changed	% Changes Total**	# of Committees*	Lost from Previous GA	New or Name Changed	% Changes Total**
1993	31	9	7	40.0	14	8	10	81.8
1995	29	1	4	16.1	16	1	3	28.6
1997	33	3	6	31.0	16	1	1	12.5
1999	43	0	9	27.3	16	0	0	0.0
2001	34	11	0	25.6	17	0	1	6.3
2003	33	8	7	44.1	21	2	6	47.1

*Includes regular and special committees

**Indicates percentage of the previous General Assembly’s committees that were changed, new, or deleted in the current General Assembly.

Source: *Handbook of the Illinois Legislature*, various years

Table 8: General Assembly Committee Chair Turnover, 1993-2003

Start of GA	House*	Senate
1993	100.00	100.00
1995	93.10	75.00
1997	78.79	100.00
1999	55.81	68.75
2001	50.00	52.94
2003	97.56	100.00

*Percentage of committees of a General Assembly with chairs who had not chaired that committee in the previous General Assembly.

Note: Change of party majority (House- 1995, Senate- 2003) may have inflated committee chair turnover.

Source: *Handbook of the Illinois Legislature*, various years

Table 9: Legislative Processing in the Illinois General Assembly, 1993-2001

General Assembly	House Session Days*	Senate Session Days*	#Intro'ed	#Passed (%)	#Vetoed (%)	#Overridden (%)
1993-94	165	152	6128	775 (12.65)	104 (13.42)	5 (4.81)
1995-96	150	122	5734	746 (13.01)	67 (8.98)	3 (4.48)
1997-98	140	119	5863	887 (15.13)	121 (13.64)	18 (14.88)
1999-2000	134	112	6748	1015 (15.04)	91 (8.97)	2 (2.20)
2001-02	152	118	8717	664 (7.62)	47 (7.08)	3 (6.38)

*Regular session days

Note: As of this writing, the 2003-04 General Assembly had not completed its legislative work.

Source: Legislative Research Unit 2003

Table 10: Legislative Influence on the State Budget, 1993-2000

General Assembly*	Percentage Difference between Gubernatorial Proposal and the Budget Passed by the GA (% of Proposed Budget)
1993-94	3.11%
1995-96	0.02%
1997-98	2.35%
1999-2000	2.55%

*Due to data sources, the information on the budgets for the two fiscal years that each General Assembly passed are combined here.

Source: Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission

Table 11: Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) Actions, 1993-2002

General Assembly	Rules reviewed	JCAR Actions		
		Recommended Changes	Objections	Prohibited
1993-94	1194	26 (2.18)	32 (2.68)	9 (0.75)
1995-96	1263	32 (2.53)	45 (3.56)	8 (0.63)
1997-98	1250	16 (1.28)	25 (2.00)	2 (0.16)
1999-2000	1168	21 (1.80)	34 (2.91)	5 (0.43)
2001-02	1128	33 (2.93)	32 (2.84)	3 (0.27)

Note: Severity of JCAR actions in increasing order of severity is “recommended changes”- “objections”- “prohibited.”

Source: Illinois Joint Commission on Administrative Rules