

# Changing the Politicians Themselves

by Robert P. Jr Dugan

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*We can change the politicians themselves through elections, but it requires significant personal campaign involvement and a well-organized campaign strategy.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 14:34, Proverbs 21:1, Proverbs 29:2, Romans 13:1, 1 Timothy 2:1, 1 Peter 2:13

**Topics:** "Christian Citizenship", "Political Involvement"

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## Description

Robert P. Jr Dugan preaches about the importance of political involvement and the impact of volunteers in shaping history through elections. He emphasizes the power of citizens to influence politicians through grassroots efforts and elections, highlighting the significance of being actively engaged in the political process to bring about change. Dugan uses examples from past presidential, senate, and house elections to illustrate how narrow victories and close margins can determine the course of history, stressing the need for citizens, including evangelicals, to participate in campaigns and support candidates aligned with their values.

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## Transcript

Despite constant grassroots efforts, some politicians will prove impossibly stubborn when it comes to certain issues. Their minds simply will not be changed.

Fortunately, we need not be perpetually frustrated when, for example, a senator's voting record shows that he inevitably prefers a woman's "right" to an abortion over protecting the unborn. Nor are we limited to gnashing our teeth when a congresswoman's vote reveals that she prefers gay rights over a religious institution's right to practice its faith.

Under the Constitution, when we are unable to change our office-holders' minds, we can change the politicians themselves. Doing that, through elections, is not as difficult as most people think it is, and it would be a whole lot easier if more citizens were willing to get involved.

It comes as a great surprise to most Americans that our nation's political course has so often swung on narrowly decided elections. Did you know that Richard Nixon came very close to defeating John F. Kennedy for the presidency in 1960? Or that Jimmy Carter just barely turned Gerald Ford out of the White House in 1976?

Since we can never know for certain when our state or congressional district vote may be very close, our interests can be defeated by the narrowest of margins. The way to prevent that is by significant, personal campaign involvement.

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"Significant" campaigning could be something as simple as putting a bumper sticker on your car. It could also be much more than that -- and easy to do, fun, and of great consequence.

Who wins elections? The most attractive candidates? The candidates whose political views make the most sense? The candidates with the largest campaign treasuries? The answer is: None of the above.

Appealing and articulate candidates with engaging personalities have no automatic lock on election victories. If you haven't sat recently in the gallery with the full House of Representatives in session, look through the Almanac of American Politics at the pictures of the members of Congress. It is not being unkind to suggest that few of the men would be matinee idols and few of the women beauty queens. But then, few of the general population would be, either. Those ordinary people who win elections are a cross-section of the rest of us. You might wonder how some of them could win with strange-sounding names, names practically impossible to spell. No, the victors are not all a public relations firm's packaging dream.

Intelligent candidates, with a solid grasp of the issues and a political approach with common sense, do not necessarily emerge victorious either. Some incumbents get away with voting one way in Washington and talking another way at home. Most citizens haven't the foggiest notion of the true voting record of their representative or senators, and thus can easily have the wool pulled over their eyes. The picture of a voting public eagerly standing by to throw bodily into office the candidate with genuine wisdom is too ludicrous to discuss.

Nor are affluent candidates, whether personally wealthy or successful in fund raising, necessarily guaranteed victory. In Wisconsin in 1980, former congressman Robert Kasten found himself in a three-way primary battle for the Republican nomination for the United States Senate. One of his opponents raised and spent \$700,000. Another amassed an incredible \$1.3 million. Kasten,

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however, won the nomination with campaign expenditures of only \$70,000, and went on to win the Senate seat in November.

One rare exception to the minimizing of money should be noted. On occasion, a party cannot find a viable, willing challenger, yet wishes to field a candidate. That happened in 1990 when New York Governor Mario Cuomo seemed invincible. Republican leaders then "gave" the nomination to a politically unknown Pierre Rinfret, largely because he was willing to pour large amounts of his personal wealth into what others saw as a kamikaze run against Cuomo.

Don't misunderstand. Being attractive, astute, and affluent are not disadvantages for a political candidate. Certainly, being lackluster, stupid, or impoverished is nothing to brag about. It's just that good qualities are not the key to success. Organization is.

Other things being equal, the candidate backed by the best organization of volunteers is far more often than not going to win. Bob Kasten should take a bow, because his organizational strategy for victory has become legendary. Professional campaign training seminars teach "The Kasten Plan."

For his congressional races, Kasten built a campaign organization with a traditional chairman and manager at the top. Dividing his district into regions, the campaign produced a staff of volunteers with a Kasten chairperson in every precinct -- the basic, vital unit of politics. Every precinct has a polling place for elections and serves as a clearly defined area for political operations.

After careful analysis of the voting records in the various precincts, Kasten's campaign set a challenging but realistic vote total goal for each precinct, and it was the job of his volunteer to meet or exceed that goal. Thus, hundreds of men and women accepted the responsibility to put Kasten into office, did what was necessary to "sell" voters on their man, identified Kasten supporters, and one way or another

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got them to the polls on election day. Their combined efforts put him over the top.

No wonder, then, that in 1980 Kasten took his party's Senate nomination when one of his opponents spent nineteen times the money he did, and the other ten times. Ironically, in the years between his service in the House and his entry into the Senate, Kasten ran for governor of Wisconsin and was defeated. In that one gubernatorial primary, the decision was made to short-cut his own strategy. Only that once did Kasten not use "The Kasten Plan," and only that once did he lose.

When it comes to elections, two kinds of organizations combine to assist candidates: political parties and campaign organizations.

Always in place are the two national parties, with state, county, and local organizational structures.<sup>1</sup> Each has a logical assignment: The national party to elect a president every four years; the state organization to elect those who run statewide, such as governor, attorney general, and U.S. senators; the county party to elect county commissioners; and so on. Parties are comprised of an organization of officers and leaders, their elected officials, grassroots activists who give time and money, and voters who identify with that party and generally support its candidates.

The other organization is the one developed by the candidate. It is always wise to build one's own organization, rather than to rely solely on the party. Party workers may put more effort into another race. They may go all out for a gubernatorial nominee, but give only half-hearted effort to their steady congressional nominee. On the other hand, it would be a foolish candidate who did not cultivate party leaders warmly, letting it be known that party support is crucial for his campaign. His volunteers, he will assure them, always stand ready to help the party.

One congressman told me that just three hundred

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people, deeply committed to a campaign, would be enough to put a candidate in Congress.<sup>2</sup> I built such a committee for my campaign in 1976 -- or I thought I had. We recruited many friends who had never before participated in a campaign, always outlining the sort of work that would be required in the final weeks, and the kind of commitment we were counting on. Slowly we built the list, never adding names just to reach the

magic number.

Our campaign manager was thrilled to see a list like that. He promptly mailed a letter to our committee, describing ways they could help and asking that a questionnaire be returned. When the response was disappointingly slim, Lynne volunteered to call everyone on the committee who had not yet responded. Before the campaign was over, she called through that list four times. Not even the candidate's wife could prod those friends into action.

For whatever reasons, our committee of three hundred on paper turned out to be about one-third that size in active campaigning. The majority of our "committed" friends found no convenient time to give us a hand, or no suitable assignment. If any one factor was responsible for my loss, it was the failure of my campaign organization to live up to its potential. Other evangelical candidates have reported similar problems.

By contrast, the most common route to office is reflected in the following story. In 1964, a young Denver area businessman's presidential preference was strong enough that he placed a political poster in a window. As he was cutting his grass one Saturday morning, a passing driver saw the sign, hit his brakes, rolled down his window and commented about the Goldwater poster. In the ensuing conversation, he ruefully reported that Republicans hadn't been able to staff that precinct, and wondered if this new acquaintance might be willing to help. Never involved in politics before, Ted agreed to help, provided that he could have some guidance. He soon learned the ropes.

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A couple of years later, Ted walked into his legislative district assembly a few minutes late. Suddenly there was silence and everyone looked at him. The chairman cleared his throat and took the plunge: "Ted, we've just been talking about you. As you know, nobody's come forward to run for the state legislature in this district. You've done a good job for a party in your precinct, we think you'd be a good candidate, and we frankly want you to run. How about it?"

Startled, Ted said precisely what most of us would have said: "Who, me?" That was the beginning. As an evangelical Christian, Ted prayed for God's leading in his decision -- and it put him in the state legislature that year, even though his district's party registration was two-to-one against him. From there, he would shortly move up to the state senate where he serves today as senate president, one of the most important positions in Colorado politics. Moreover, in 1978 and 1986 he won the Republican nomination for governor.

If Ted Strickland had refused to do basic precinct work in 1964, today only his family might know him in Colorado. Ted's willingness to invest a few hours in politics when he was young opened the door for him to run twice for governor, and to be one of Colorado's prominent political leaders.

It isn't surprising that both Democrats and Republicans find their candidates within their own ranks. Friendships, IOU's and a certain logical progression make it possible for party insiders to predict who will come along as nominees for the next decade. You can almost see the line forming. It is so unusual for a party to look beyond its own ranks to find a candidate that very few examples come to mind. Here's one. After World War II, both parties sought to cultivate war hero General Dwight Eisenhower as a presidential candidate. The Republicans snared him and thus controlled the White House for eight years.

The exception proves the rule. If evangelicals are frustrated that comparatively few fellow-believers are in

office, they should ask how many of their people are sufficiently involved in party politics that they, like Ted Strickland, may one day be running for governor. How many serve in the state legislature, or as party county chairman, from which they are well positioned to run for Congress? Evangelicals, like anybody else, need to earn the right to ask their party to entrust them with a nomination for high office.

There's a lot to be learned from a quick look at some fascinating presidential and congressional election statistics. These are not boring numbers. For those who care about change, they make a very encouraging case for political involvement.

### Presidential Elections

Because the three presidential elections of the '80s have been about as one-sided as an earthquake, most Americans do not realize that in several prior elections this century, the winner came close to being defeated.

1976 provides a sterling example. Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford by an electoral vote of 297-240, but if Ford had carried Ohio with its 25 votes (in the '70s), and Hawaii with its four, he would have won by a hair's breadth -- 269-268. Such figures would be statistically meaningless except for the close margins in both those states. It would have required less than 5,600 switched votes in Ohio and 3,700 in Hawaii to reverse the national outcome, allowing Ford to remain as president.

Richard Nixon became president in 1968 with a popular vote edge of only 510,000 out of 72 million votes cast, although his electoral college margin was substantial. Of course, it is theoretically possible to win the presidency in the electoral college while losing the popular vote. The more interesting Nixon election, statistically, was his loss eight years earlier to John F. Kennedy. The 1960 electoral vote was 303-219.

If, however, Illinois and Missouri had gone Nixon's way, plus any one of the following three -- Nevada, New

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Mexico, or South Carolina -- Kennedy would have lost by at least 260-262. Again, such speculation would mean little, except for the close votes in all those states. Less than six thousand needed to be switched in Illinois -- but many historians now believe that the election was stolen from Nixon in Illinois, where Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's famed Democratic machine saw to it that the tombstones voted, early and often. In Missouri, less than five thousand needed to shift. With under thirteen hundred shifting in Nevada, less than twelve hundred shifting in New Mexico, or less than five thousand shifting in South Carolina, Nixon would have picked up the added three, four, or eight electoral votes necessary to put him over the top.

In 1916, before the days of computer projections, the nation waited much, much longer for ballots to be tabulated. Finally, it came down to California. If that West Coast state had gone Republican, Charles Evans Hughes would have become president (instead of later returning to the Supreme Court in 1930 as chief justice). As it was, by that one state margin, Woodrow Wilson became president during World War I, and assumed the weighty responsibilities of both conducting the war and developing post-war policies.

In any or all of those elections, if the losing party had a gifted forecaster, it would have been no trick at all to rush reinforcements into the key states, pick up a few thousand votes, and turn the election around.

Since only God has foreknowledge and omniscience, however, the parties must be guided by polling data, applying extra pressure in close states in hopes that the organizations will do their absolute best. That best is dependent on the hard work of volunteers.

Now for a candid question. Have evangelicals historically been much of a factor in the presidential campaign process?

For the most recent four elections, the answer is yes, but it is no for most preceding elections. While no political

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or church leader can create or control an evangelical voting bloc, nevertheless millions of evangelical Christians have collectively produced such a bloc by tracking certain issues, studying the parties, looking over the candidates, and voting accordingly. It began back in 1976, when evangelicals played the major part in putting Jimmy Carter into the Oval Office. They most certainly accounted for Carter's margins of victory in closely contested states, when great numbers departed from habitual Republican presidential voting patterns to cast a vote for a fellow-believer, a Democrat.

The Reagan-Bush team did not forget their 1980 evangelical supporters as they looked toward '84. When 52.6 percent of Americans of voting age cast their ballots -- reversing a declining presidential turnout of twenty years -- Ronald Reagan ran up 525 electoral votes, the highest total ever.<sup>3</sup> CBS exit polls indicated that 78 percent of the white evangelical vote had helped Reagan build the fifth largest popular vote margin in history.

This second consecutive Republican victory prompted Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO) to suggest in a speech, "There are three things we Democrats need to do to recapture the White House." Pausing for effect, she finished, "Unfortunately, nobody knows what they are." The party's new national chairman had an idea for one smart step. He yanked official standing from the Gay and Lesbian Caucus -- one among several evidences that the Democrats had not attempted to attract the evangelical vote in 1984.

Evangelical religious broadcaster Pat Robertson sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1988. While his showing was significant, and while he helped to focus the debate, he was never able to capture the evangelical community as his base, let alone find substantial support elsewhere among the electorate. The media generally expressed surprise on learning that, in soundings of evangelical leadership, NAE several times found Robertson only the fourth choice among Republican contenders.

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Many felt that his campaign was just not feasible -- that America would not put an ordained minister in the Oval Office, even if he had turned back his ordination credentials. Others were uncomfortable with some of Robertson's theology or public utterances.

Before and after winning the Republican nomination, George Bush cultivated evangelical leaders in a number of small meetings in the nation's capital, some in his White House office and others at his vice presidential residence. He listened to their counsel, echoed many of their convictions in his convention acceptance speech in New Orleans, and pulled 82 percent of the white evangelical vote in his near-landslide electoral college victory of 426-112. As a voting bloc, evangelicals gave Bush his largest identifiable margin of support.

In a White House meeting a month later, I told the president-elect why I thought he had won such a victory. While his campaign train ran on the track of peace and prosperity, there was a third rail that delivered the power, as in Washington's Metro subway system. That rail was traditional values. Not only evangelicals, but millions of others found those values appealing.

Earlier, evangelical leaders recommended to Bush three possible vice presidential choices that would send the right signal to their constituents: Senator Bill Armstrong of Colorado, Congressman Jack Kemp of New York, or Governor John Ashcroft of Missouri. The choice of Indiana Senator Dan Quayle took everyone by surprise, but the evangelicals' first reaction was positive. Quayle held their value system and shared their faith. As the media pummeled Dan Quayle unmercifully, the Christian news magazine World ran this little piece in an article about him:

He struggled with his grades from the day he entered school. He carried the rap of a pampered child past the time he was no longer one. Even in his majority his mother did everything she could to see her son avoid exposure to military action; when it

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was unavoidable, she made certain he went in style. He rode off to war as a correspondent in as much splendor as a troopship could afford . . . His valet even packed a high powered spyglass for viewing the battles from a safe distance.

His heroics on the battlefield were unofficial, tinted with a shade of circumstance and his own embellishments. Returning from the battlefield, he enjoyed only fleeting glory and popularity, and was treated mercilessly by his peers in the House of Commons.

But privilege, where it has touched on military experience, existed long before Winston Churchill headed off to cover the Boer War.<sup>4</sup>

I do not assume that Dan Quayle will develop into a Winston Churchill; nor should the media and others assume, based on his early life, that he may not. In any case, by their overwhelming vote, evangelicals put him into office along with the 41st president of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush.

#### Senate Elections

It is tempting to write concerning a number of classic close Senate contests, like New Hampshire's in 1974 with its two-vote margin. Let me instead mention just one. It was the 1984 Republican senate primary in Texas, and the actual vote totals of the three candidates were 455,768; 454,807; and 454,497. Former Democratic Rep. Kent Hance topped the Republican list with his 33.4 percent plurality.<sup>5</sup> A few more friends helping, a few more contributions, and either of the finishers with 33.3 percent each could have grabbed the top spot.

The biggest Senate election story in a quarter century developed in 1980. The combined election of Ronald Reagan and the unexpected turnover in the U.S. Senate recorded 7.8 on the Richter Scale of Washington's political seismograph. Going into election day, the Senate remained controlled by the Democrats, as it had been for twenty-six consecutive years. They had fifty-nine seats to

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the Republicans' forty-one.<sup>6</sup> As the votes were tallied that night, twelve seats shifted, every one from the Democratic into the Republican column.

Republicans were ecstatic. By 53-47, they would now be the committee chairs and appoint two-thirds of the committee staffs. They would be able to assist President Reagan to jam on government's brakes and make a hard right turn, if not a U-turn, and start cutting back on both government spending and federal taxation. Remember, it was evangelicals who provided the final increment of votes that made the historic turn possible -- an unforgettable manifestation of political power. A remarkable new day had dawned in U.S. politics.

Equally remarkable were the margins that made possible this major upset. Eleven Senate elections were won with 51 percent or less of the vote, and only two of those were Democrat wins, Hart (CO) and Leahy (VT) with 51 percent each. Nine of the closest elections went to Republicans. Winning 45-44 percent in a three-way race was D'Amato (NY). Barely squeaking through with 50 percent were Goldwater (AZ), Symms (ID), and East (NC). At 51 percent were Denton (AL), Hawkins (FL), Mattingly (GA), Specter (PA), and Kasten (WI). Two more Republican victories were achieved with 52 percent of the vote.

The moral of this story? If they had only known, volunteers being the key to victory, the Democrats would surely have put enough troops into several of those very close contests to foil the Republican takeover. But they didn't. On such margins history hangs.

Republicans kept control of the Senate in 1982, but barely. Of thirty-four Senate races, fourteen saw winners with 52 percent or less of the vote. A shift of less than thirty-five thousand votes in Vermont, Rhode Island, Missouri, Wyoming, and Nevada would have given Democrats those five seats, allowing them to wrest control from the GOP. But it didn't happen.

The tables were turned in 1986, when Democrats

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regained control of the Senate in the middle of Ronald Reagan's second term. That marked the death-knell of his effectiveness with Congress. This time the seven closest elections were all won by Democrats. Senator Conrad won with 50 percent. Senators Shelby (AL), Cranston (CA), Wirth (CO), Fowler (GA), Reid (NV), and Adams (WA) all topped out with 51 percent. Now Republicans had the unpleasant task of second-guessing themselves and asking, "What if? . . ."

This might be a good time to answer a question thoughtful evangelicals often ask: Is it possible for a genuinely Christian candidate to win in the political major leagues? Without question, the answer is yes. There are many examples in Congress, but consider Senator William L. Armstrong's 1984 campaign in Colorado. The senator had sponsored the congressional resolution making 1983 The Year of the Bible, and television spots were then being shown in his state which asked, "Is being a U.S. Senator the most important thing in Bill Armstrong's life? No. His relationship to God is." Viewers were invited to send for a book about their relationship to God.

Political advisors urged Armstrong to pull the spots from the air, but this NAE "Layman of the Year" said no. He insisted on doing what he believed God wanted, and letting the chips fall where they might. His opponent, Lieutenant Governor Nancy Dick, charged that "This man wants to force his beliefs down your throat," and those beliefs, she hastened to add, included a pro-life position as well as his personal faith.

Despite that, Armstrong did better even than President Reagan in Colorado and was reelected with 64 percent of the vote. Accuser Nancy Dick's 36 percent was the lowest percentage ever for a Democrat in a Colorado Senate race.

## House Elections

Wisecracks about Congress are common. What is uncommon is a willingness to work to alter the 435 member House of Representatives. Change must come

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one congressional district at a time. Evangelicals must take responsibility for the district in which they live.

Since 1966, except for the Watergate year of '74, House elections have seen over 90 percent of members seeking reelection. Political recidivism has been on the increase. In '86, 383 of 395 representatives running for another term were successful -- an impressive 97 percent rate of return. On the other hand, forty seats were being vacated and almost 10 percent of House elections were targeting open seats. In '88, the House success rate for incumbents fighting to keep their seats was over 98 percent.

Such statistics seem terribly discouraging to challengers and to those thinking of joining their campaigns. On the other hand, after the '88 elections a full 63 percent of all current representatives had entered Congress in the '80s. There is a significant turnover during every election cycle, whether of members leaving to run for other office (usually the Senate or governor), retiring, or dying.

Never is there a shortage of close House elections. Take 1984. In Idaho, a Democratic challenger unseated incumbent George Hausen by 67 votes out of 202,000. A Republican captured an open seat in Utah by just 143 of 209,000 votes. In Pennsylvania, incumbent Bob Edgar successfully defended his seat by a razor-thin 481 of 248,000 votes, but the defeated Curt Weldon captured that seat in '86 when Edgar ran unsuccessfully for the Senate. It took until April to determine that Rep. Frank McCloskey had held onto his Indiana seat by just 4 votes out of 234,000.

Look at 1986. Three Republican incumbents narrowly won their battle to stay in Congress: Howard Coble by 81 out of 145,000 in North Carolina; John Hiler by 166 out of 152,000 in Indiana; and Arlan Stangeland by 211 out of 188,000 in Minnesota. Former professional basketball player Tom McMillen (D) won an open seat by 510 out of 129,000, incidentally becoming the tallest member of Congress. The significantly lower district vote totals in '86 compared to '84 are not difficult to explain. Voters show

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more interest in a presidential election year, and 1984 was such a year.

Finally, look at 1988. Incumbent Denny Smith (R) barely survived by a 707 vote margin, with 222,000 cast, in Oregon. Challenger Craig James unseated a senior Democrat incumbent by 732 out of 250,000 votes in Florida. Jolene Unsoeld (D) captured an open seat by 618 out of 218,000 in Washington.

Since it is impossible to foresee when an election may be close, wise evangelicals will become part of campaigns either for an appreciated incumbent or for an admirable challenger. The conventional wisdom is that challengers should always be willing to run at least twice. Gains in experience, name recognition, and organizational effectiveness could put your candidate in Congress the second time around, if not the

first.7

Amateur political strategists need to be reminded of another critical feature on the political landscape. After each decade's official U.S. census, congressional districts around the nation are reapportioned, so that the various states get their share according to population. The idea is that congressional districts be as nearly equal in population as possible. Once it is known, for example, that California's House delegation will increase from forty-five to fifty-two in 1992, political leaders will draw new congressional district boundaries.

State government controls that process. Where one party has the governor and a majority in both houses of the legislature, the likelihood that these lines will be gerrymandered to that party's advantage are approximately 100 percent. The time-honored practice of gerrymandering, which ignores natural geographical boundaries in favor of political considerations, comes from Elbridge Gerry, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and governor of Massachusetts. When a district drawn to his instructions looked like a salamander, some wit combined Gerry's name with the salamander's -- which makes for an interesting trivia question in the late twentieth century.

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The redistricting process in fifty states explains why, after the '84 election,<sup>8</sup> the percentage of Democrats and Republicans in the House did not match the national vote. Nationwide, Democrats won 43 million congressional votes while Republicans took 39 million. That's 52.4 percent to 47.6 percent. Yet the Democrats, with 260 members to the Republicans' 175, held 58 percent of all the House seats.

California shows what flagrant gerrymandering can do. In 1984, 4,228,000 congressional ballots were cast for Republicans across the state, to 4,210,000 for Democrats. Nevertheless, Democrats sent twenty-seven Representatives to the House while the GOP sent a meager eighteen. With only 49.9 percent of the popular vote, Democrats controlled 60 percent of the House seats. Their 27-18 edge had not changed by the end of the decade.

Now you know why the national party committees invest as heavily as they do in their state organizations. The party that loses the bulk of the redistricting struggles will be behind the eight-ball in Congress for a decade to come. Astute evangelicals will see the folly of ignoring state level politics to focus only on national.

The all-time close election among state legislatures cam in 1978, when the Pennsylvania House of Representatives found each party controlling 101 seats, with the remaining seat deadlocked at 8551 votes. It took a recount to break the tie and award the seat - by fourteen votes. You never know.

Here's a nearly incredible key legislative victory. State Rep. Penny Pullen of Illinois apparently lost by thirty-one votes in her 1990 primary battle against a one-issue, pro-abortion challenger, funded by the National Abortion Rights Action League.

An evangelical, Penny was an acknowledged leader of the pro-life forces in Illinois. When a recount produced an exact tie, a state-sponsored coin flip awarded the seat to her opponent, but Pullen took the matter to the Illinois

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Supreme Court, arguing that the intent of some of the previously rejected ballots could be determined. Discovering that eight of the thirty ballots had partial holes in the punch card ballots, the court gave her opponent just one of those and Penny seven -- and the nomination.

To wrap up this chapter, I point to a president and a would-be president to demonstrate how a comparatively unimportant election here or there can trigger events that channel the flow of history.

Lyndon Johnson "won" his first primary election for the U.S. Senate in 1948, by 87 votes out of more than 988,000 cast. In Texas in those days, the Democratic primary victory guaranteed a Senate victory in November. It now seems clear that Johnson raised the art of campaign fraud to new heights that year, as he demonstrably stole the election.<sup>9</sup> By a mere eighty-seven vote margin, LBJ put himself into position one day to be president. Never a senator, never a president. Once in the Oval office, Johnson would fail to conclude the war in Vietnam but succeed in passing the massive spending programs of his "Great Society" -- programs creating entitlements that have much to do with today's budget deficits and huge national debt.

In 1962, George S. McGovern was elected to the U.S. Senate from South Dakota, by a margin of less than one vote per precinct. Like Johnson, never a senator, never a presidential nominee. In 1972, the liberal McGovern became the Democrats' choice to run against Richard Nixon. As it turned out, McGovern was far too liberal for the American people and Nixon trounced him. But suppose that the Democrats had nominated a more moderate candidate that year and that Nixon had been defeated. Then the nation would not have been dragged through the anguish of Watergate nor forced to witness the resignation of her president. But history worked out another way -- hinging on a narrow Senate victory ten years before in the relatively obscure state of South Dakota.<sup>10</sup>

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Voters determined the political fortunes of Johnson, McGovern, and all the others in this chapter. But it was the campaign volunteers who persuaded them how to vote and who, through such narrow victories, literally shaped history.

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Notes

1. See Appendix II for a list of national and state party offices. [BACK]
2. A strange "coincidence" occurred in church the following Sunday. The pastor preached from the Old Testament account of a judge named Gideon (Judges 7). Because God did not want Israel to boast that her superior military forces had beaten Midian, he instructed Gideon to send home any who were fearful. A force of thirty-two thousand was thus reduced to ten thousand. There were still too many, so, on instruction, Gideon retained only those who drank from a brook by cupping their hands to their mouths, reducing his force to three hundred. Using God's strategy, those three hundred routed the superior forces of Midian. I slipped a note to Lynne during the service: "We're going to build a committee of three hundred." [BACK]
3. Franklin Roosevelt deserves an asterisk for his 523 votes in 1936. There were only forty-eight states in those days, and he carried all but the eight electoral votes from Maine and Vermont. [BACK]

4. "With Polish, Maybe -- J. Winston Quayle?" World, 26 September 1989, 9. [BACK]
5. Unfortunately for Hance, he lost a two-man runoff a few weeks later. That race was particularly interesting to me because Hance and I were members of the same church in suburban Virginia. [BACK]
6. Technically, the Democrats had fifty-eight seats and Virginia's Harry Byrd was an Independent. Byrd always voted with the Democrats to organize the Senate, however, so I include him in their number here. [BACK]
7. I followed that conventional wisdom when I geared up to run again in 1978, but before the campaign really got rolling we pulled back with an eye on '80 instead. Long before that date arrived, however, NAE called me to Washington. [BACK]
8. Congressional Quarterly's research service could not provide comparable statistics for 1988. [BACK]
9. Robert A. Caro, The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent. (New York: Knopf, 1990). [BACK]
10. Except for those who live there -- from whom I expect to get some choice letters. [BACK]

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