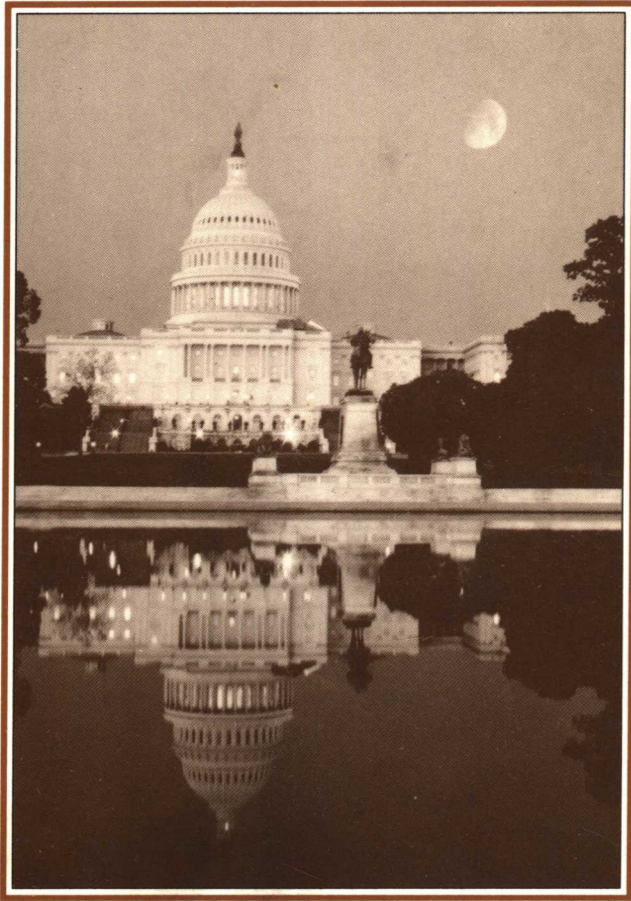


CONGRESS RECONSIDERED



Fifth Edition



LAWRENCE C. DODD
BRUCE I. OPPENHEIMER

CONGRESS RECONSIDERED

Fifth Edition

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Edited by

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CQ
PRESS

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Preface



As we bring together the collection of essays that constitute the fifth edition of *Congress Reconsidered*, we are more convinced than ever of the correctness of the basic rationale that guided our work on the first and subsequent editions. Put simply, it is that the institution of Congress is ever changing. Although the shifts have rarely been abrupt—and one is well advised not to lose sight of the continuities—Congress does not remain the same. Like other political institutions, it responds to the broader social and political environment in which it exists as well as to internal forces. Congress today is in many ways very different from the way it was when the first edition of *Congress Reconsidered* was published. It is important that we, as students and scholars of Congress, remain current in our understanding of its workings and be able to comprehend recent alterations in the larger context of the historical development of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Conveying these ideas was our primary purpose when we edited the first edition, and our purpose remains the same with the fifth edition.

Most of the nineteen essays in this edition are new. They are not reprinted from other sources but have been written specifically for this collection. Five essays have been substantially revised from versions that appeared in the fourth edition. It may, in fact, be more appropriate to consider this the fifth volume of *Congress Reconsidered* rather than the fifth edition.

A number of themes run through the essays. The most striking, however, addresses how the changes that have occurred in Congress will affect and be affected by the movement from divided party government to unified party control. Clearly, it is too soon to provide any certain answers. But more than in any previous edition, the essays in this edition focus on the capacity of our political parties to function effectively in Congress and consider the general capacity of Congress itself to govern.

Again, we have attempted to make the materials here accessible to a broad readership of students and scholars and to ensure that the essays are of the highest quality of scholarship. In addition, we wanted the work to be as current as possible. Accordingly, the collection begins with a prologue that analyzes the 1992 congressional elections and their implications for governing in the 103d Congress.

Following the prologue, the book is divided into six parts. The first, "Patterns and Dynamics of Congressional Change," contains an overview of the Senate, a new essay on the House of Representatives, and an extensive essay on

career patterns in Congress. Part II, "Elections and Constituencies," includes a major update of an essay on voters and elections, an analysis of resource allocation in House campaigns, and an extensive, historical analysis of congressional incumbency. The third section, "Committee and Subcommittee Politics," covers representation and participation in congressional committees, the power of committee leadership on the House Ways and Means Committee, and the growing strategic implications in the use of multiple referrals.

The essays in Part IV, "Congressional Leadership and Party Politics," include an examination of House and Senate leadership, both developmentally and in their present state; an extended essay on the Republican party in the House and Senate; and a historical study of how changes in workload and time constraints affect House deliberation. Part V, "Congress, the Executive, and Public Policy," contains three essays analyzing congressional activity in foreign, domestic, and budgetary policy. The two contributions in the final section of the book, "Congress and Political Change," consider respectively the prospects for citizen control of Congress and the possibility for the renewal of Congress as a democratic policymaking institution.

There are many individuals to whom we are indebted in the preparation of this edition. Our contributors, as in the previous editions, are the ones who make this book possible. Any value this collection has to its readers rests in the fine research of these scholars. In addition, we would like to thank our colleagues at our respective institutions who are a regular source of ideas and encouragement.

The staff of CQ Press once again was invaluable in preparing this book. Dave Tarr provides these editions with important continuity. Brenda Carter maintains the fine relationship that we previously enjoyed with Joanne Daniels and Jean Woy. CQ has a knack for attracting the finest of professionals. Working with Shana Waggoner and Ann Davies has eased considerably the demanding tasks of editing and producing this book. The process has been smooth and even enjoyable. In addition, Nola Healy Lynch was most helpful in editing a number of the manuscripts. We are also appreciative of Kathryn Suarez and Kate Quinlin in marketing *Congress Reconsidered*.

More important than the professional support have been the personal relationships that sustain us. Leslie, Susan, Meredith, and Cris have tolerated our moods and enlivened our spirits. Unlike Congress and the president, Dodd and Oppenheimer rarely struggle over issues of responsibility. This undertaking remains a joint effort for which we are both willing to assume blame and willingly credit each other for any success. Although we are sometimes surprised that *Congress Reconsidered* has lasted through five editions, we never have had any doubts about our friendship.

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Perspectives on the 1992 Congressional Elections

Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer

The anti-incumbency mood of 1992, like the fabled month of March, came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. In the spring and summer of 1992, in the wake of scandals, frustration, disaffection, and House redistricting, the number of legislators leaving Congress through retirement or defeat in primaries set post-World War II records. These early departures fostered the belief that turnover in the House and Senate would reach proportions not witnessed since the 1930s. In the general election the voters surprised everyone, perhaps including themselves, by reelecting 93 percent (325) of the 349 House incumbents and more than 84 percent (22) of the 26 Senate incumbents. They reelected Democratic majorities in both chambers and again deflected Republican hopes for sizable gains in congressional representation.

The dramatic incumbency turnover of 1992 comes not in the Congress but in the presidency. In the general election 62 percent of the voters cast ballots against President George Bush, one of the most stunning rebukes to a sitting president in modern history, while a plurality of 43 percent voted to elect Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas, making him president by one of the smallest vote percentages of the century. In a warning to both major parties, 19 percent of the voters cast ballots for independent candidate Ross Perot.

Clinton's election ends, at least for the time being, divided party control in Washington and creates the possibility of a reinvigorated national government. Unlike Jimmy Carter, the last president to have his party in the majority in both the House and the Senate, Clinton has the advantage of a Democratic party in Congress that during the Reagan and Bush presidencies developed the highest level of cohesiveness since the early 1930s. The election, however, left Clinton with fewer Democrats in Congress than was the case for any Democratic president at the beginning of his term since FDR's reelection in 1944. The 103d Congress, as a combined result of retirements, deaths, primary losses, and general election defeats, will have one of the largest groups of new members in the past fifty years. It remains to be seen whether President Clinton can overcome his status as a plurality president and persuade members of Congress—Democratic and Republican, new and old—to join with him in breaking the gridlock of national government. His success undoubtedly will be shaped by the outcomes of the 1992 congressional elections.

Senate Elections

The story of the 1992 Senate elections is one of lost opportunity for the Republican party. Of the thirty-five seats contested in the November election, Democrats had held twenty in the 102d Congress and Republicans had held only fifteen. Had there been an anti-incumbency vote in the general election, the Democrats were situated to suffer the greater consequence because of the disproportionate number of Democratic seats subject to contest. In addition, this class of senators had been elected in 1986, a year in which the partisan forces favored the Democrats. Republicans who survived the 1986 election thus could be considered strong incumbents who would be particularly difficult to defeat in 1992, whereas some of the Democrats could be considered weak incumbents who survived in 1986 because of national partisan forces rather than their own political savvy. Finally, with President Bush's extraordinary popularity in 1991 after the Persian Gulf war, the 1992 elections had seemed to favor Republican challengers, particularly in light of the vote of most congressional Democrats against the war. For all of these reasons, the 1992 election was an opportunity for the Republicans to position their party to retake control of the Senate in 1994.

In the end, however, the Republican party was fortunate to break even. Of eight Senate contests decided by a margin of 5 percent or less of the vote, Republicans won six and Democrats won two. Perhaps because of the nation's growing economic troubles, the Republicans failed to attract the strongest challengers in some races and were shortsighted in their failure to select women candidates who could have taken advantage of the widespread national desire to diversify gender representation in the Senate. Most critically, the Republican senatorial candidates suffered from a weak presidential campaign and from the public's unhappiness with the economy. As a result, Senate Republicans will still have only forty-three seats in the 103d Congress. Republicans would need a sizable victory in the 1994 Senate contests to achieve a majority. Because the class up for election in 1994 is overwhelmingly Democratic, the Republicans do have opportunities to make inroads. Since the early to mid-1980s Democrats have been able to increase their Senate numbers in the East, Midwest, and West. Only in the South do Republicans maintain Senate strength comparable to the level they enjoyed during the early Reagan years. (See Table 1.) One problem the Republicans face in 1994 is that a third of the Senate seats to be contested are in the East, the region of the country in which the Democrats are the strongest.

Despite the Democratic success in retaining control of the Senate, and the 80 percent reelection rate of incumbents running in the general election, it would be misleading to overemphasize the safety of Senate incumbents. Of the eight open-seat contests, one was created when an incumbent, Alan Dixon, D-Ill., was defeated in a primary. Two others involved retirements of scandal-plagued incumbents, Alan Cranston, D-Calif., and Brock Adams, D-Wash., who likely would have been defeated had they run for reelection. In addition, of the twenty-six incumbents who were reelected, ten received less than 60 percent of