

Patchwork Nation

PATCHWORK NATION

Sectionalism and Political Change
in American Politics

James G. Gimpel & Jason E. Schuknecht

The University of Michigan Press
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To Graciela,
and Dad, Mom,
and Sarah

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Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction: Federalism, Political Identity, and American State Politics	i
I. Going Inside States: The Geography of Local Political Behavior	15
II. State Politics and Presidential Voting, 1988–2000	33
III. California	60
IV. Florida	86
V. Texas	109
VI. Colorado	134
VII. Minnesota	162
VIII. Georgia	189
IX. Connecticut	215
X. Maryland	238
XI. Oregon	265
XII. Michigan	292
XIII. New York	320
XIV. Illinois	343
XV. Sectionalism and Political Change in the States	368
A. The Challenge of Ecological Inference	393
B. Complete Ecological Inference Estimates, by State	400
C. Complete Voter Transition Results, by State	422
Bibliography	429
Name Index	457
Subject Index	461

Preface and Acknowledgments

American politics is not just national politics. State and local governments offer us the opportunity to study political variations that cannot be understood by focusing on national political institutions. To the extent that national politics is an aggregation of interests that are locally defined, states and localities add to what we must study in order to understand Congress, the presidency, the national parties, national elections, and the courts. Of course, states and localities are also worth studying in their own right. As the eminent political scientist V. O. Key Jr. once put it, “The size of their populations and the magnitude of their operations make many of our states quite as important political units as many of the independent nations of the world” (1956, v).

The study of state and local political institutions and behavior has sometimes been hampered by the absence of relevant information and the difficulties of comparing diverse political systems. Frequently these challenges have resulted in the production of volumes in which the chapters written on individual jurisdictions do not permit comparison. In *Patchwork Nation* we try to meet that challenge by using a common outline for each of our chapters along with an analytic framework that will enhance comparability. We show that states are unique electoral battlegrounds, but we need to develop systematic methods for coping on a comparative basis with the political characteristics that make states both distinct from and similar to other states. This was the approach developed by Key, from whom we take our inspiration.

We want to thank our colleagues at the University of Maryland who discussed the ideas we present and read pieces of the work, including Irwin Morris, Karen Kaufmann, Paul Herrnson, Peter Burns, and Eric Uslander. Colleagues at other institutions were also helpful

at various stages, including Luc Anselin, Barry Burden, Tom Carsey, Wendy Tam Cho, Todd Donovan, Robert Eisinger, Robert Huckfeldt, Aubrey Jewett, Gary King, John Sprague, Christopher Stream, and Steve Voss. Our editor at the University of Michigan Press, Jeremy Shine, was efficient and professional in shepherding the manuscript through multiple reviews.

We consulted with several others about politics, history, and elections in their individual states, including Richard Juliano, Brad Stark, John Bullock, Chris Bullock, Sue Piatt, Dawn Wirth, C. J. Mucklow, Rob Bovett, and Jennifer Shank.

This book presents original data analysis and makes creative use of techniques not yet widely used in political science. But we work to keep our treatment nontechnical, and we confine finer details to appendixes. If by taking some risks with the data analysis, we have planted some seeds that will lead to more and better work in this area, we will have accomplished our main goal.

We thank our families for their support and endurance through the regular frustrations that arose during the undertaking. On balance, however, this book was a great pleasure to write, and we look forward to the next opportunity to collaborate. Finally, we want to give credit to God for granting us the opportunity to pursue our research interests in this manner. There are many talented people who never get the chance to realize such goals, and we feel blessed and fortunate to number among those who have achieved something so substantial.