The Competitive Effects of Redistricting Approaches: Legislatures, Courts, and Commissions over Time

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Abstract

As a result of a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s, states have been required by law to redraw legislative and congressional district boundaries to ensure equal representation for each constituent. During the past 40 years, a variety of methods have been adopted for redistributing internal population shifts and accounting for the addition or elimination of existing seats, many of which have contributed to the decline in the overall level of competition in congressional races. In this paper, we examine how differences in various redistricting plans affect the competitiveness of U.S. House elections. Specifically, we focus on three methods for redrawing districts—legislative, commission, and judicial plans. We find that, in general, electoral competition increases when commissions or courts are responsible for drawing new legislative districts compared to bipartisan plans. However, the results vary by type of commission. Additionally, our findings raise important normative implications for redistricting practices in this country.

Following the 2002 round of congressional redistricting, politicians and pundits alike bemoaned the lack of competitive elections that followed. Hirsch (2003:179) called the 2002 election the "most incumbent friendly in modern American history." In response to a general election where only eight incumbents were defeated, a call went out to change the redistricting process. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Jim Leach (R-IA) wrote an article that appeared in the *New York Times* appealing for a shift from the current practice of allowing elected officials to draw new district boundaries toward a system where independent commissions are tasked with changing congressional districts.[1] They argue that, "commissions offer the best hope for taking partisanship out of the redistricting process." As social scientists, it is our job to test if districts drawn by commissions, or courts for that matter, are any different than the familiar legislative drawn plans. This is the question we seek to address in this paper.

The 2002 redistricting cycle illustrates how contentious the redrawing of congressional district boundaries has become in the United States. Following the Supreme Court rulings in *Baker* v. *Carr* (1962), *Reynolds* v. *Sims* (1964) and *Wesberry* v. *Sanders* (1964), the redistricting process for congressional seats changed dramatically.[2] These decisions, drawing on the fourteenth amendment's equal protection clause, stated that the redistricting plans must make districts, "as nearly equal in population as practicable," (*Wesberry V. Sanders*). For the first time in as many as thirty or forty years, and then following each decennial census, states had to change district boundaries in order to comply with the new court rulings.[3] However, it was left up to the states to decide how to implement this process and not all states go about drawing new districts lines in the same way. Frequently, new boundaries are drawn by legislatures, but some

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[1] Earl Blumenauer and Jim Leach. "Redistricting, a Bipartisan Sport," *New York Times,* 8 July 2003, sec. A.
[2] These rulings also altered redistricting at the state level by enforcing the "one person, one vote" doctrine.
[3] Prior to *Wesberry*, many states did not regularly change their districts as a result of reapportionment. However, this is not to say there was *no* congressional redistricting prior to the 1960s. On this point, see Engstrom (2006) and Carson, Engstrom, and Roberts (2006).

state constitutions delegate the power to a commission in an attempt to make the congressional redistricting process less overtly political. Alternatively, courts or a panel of judges may be appointed to draw the district lines if the legislature cannot agree on a plan, or produce one that is consistent with previous legal rulings.

In this paper, we examine whether differences in redistricting plans at the state-level affect the overall competitiveness of congressional elections. Drawing on data from the 1972-2002 redistricting cycles, we explore the extent to which different approaches to redistricting actually matter. We move beyond the distinction in previous literature by investigating the extent to which *all* types of districting plans (legislative, judicial, and commission) affect the degree of competition in House races.[4]

The organization of this paper is as follows. In the next section, we discuss the literature relevant to the partisan implications of redistricting. We then outline the theoretical expectations of the effects of redistricting on competitiveness in congressional contests. Next, we discuss the research design, test hypotheses, and present our central findings. The final section concludes by discussing the implications of our results.

Partisan Implications of Redistricting

The literature on congressional redistricting is quite voluminous. One strand of research has sought to more systematically link redistricting to congressional stability (see, e.g., Bullock 1975; Gelman and King 1994a). Other students of congressional politics have investigated the effects of legislative redistricting on minority representation (see, e.g., Lublin 1997; Lublin and Voss 1997; Canon 1999; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Shotts 2001). Still others have addressed

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[4] For an exception see Carson and Crespin (2004).

the issue of representative responsiveness in light of congressional redistricting (Tufte 1973; Ferejohn 1977; Gelman and King 1994b; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2000).[5]

More particular to the question at hand is how redistricting can influence competitiveness of individual House races over time. Prior scholars examining this issue have linked the decline in competitiveness to the growth in the incumbency advantage while others have focused on the partisan balance of seats in the House. One of the first scholars to identify redistricting as a possible cause for the increase in the incumbency advantage was Mayhew (1971). Soon after, Tufte (1973) reported a decline in competition in the first election after redistricting. He argued that "…a major element in the job security of incumbents is their ability to exert significant control over the drawing of district boundaries" (551). Tufte also posited that it is rational for members of Congress to work together to try to eliminate the competition by drawing themselves (or influencing others to draw) safe seats.[6]

Beyond the incumbency advantage, scholars have also focused on the *aggregate* effects of redistricting in terms of the partisan balance of seats in the House. Abramowitz (1983), for instance, examines the partisan effects of redistricting in the 1982 elections to investigate the gains that Democratic candidates received in those states where the Democrats had complete control over the districting process. In a follow-up analysis, Niemi and Winsky (1992) extend this research design to the 1970s and find that in both decades, there is an initial partisan advantage for the political party that wielded control over the redistricting process in terms of House elections (see also Born 1985). In contrast, Niemi and Abramowitz (1994) found that party control of state governments in the redistricting process yielded little partisan advantage in the context of the 1992 elections.

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[5] See also Cox and Katz (2002) for a recent discussion of the impact of congressional redistricting on incumbents' entry and exit decisions.
[6] For a response and critique of the Tufte argument, see Burnham (1974), Ferejohn (1977) and Cox and Katz (2002).

Cain (1985) and Butler and Cain (1992) also examine the partisan impact of redistricting plans on electoral outcomes.[7] They argue that redistricting plans can be either *partisan* or *bipartisan*. Partisan political gerrymandering, which may have the goal of attempting to remove as many minority party incumbents as possible, actually strengthens the *average* electoral security of most minority party incumbents while causing only a few to lose their seats entirely. Bipartisan plans, alternatively, just strive to make incumbents of both parties as safe as possible. This occurs with regularity under divided government where it is easier to maintain the status quo than instigate changes that benefit one party over the other (see also Lyons 2003).

In subsequent work, Butler and Cain (1992) consider alternatives to legislative districting plans such as those drawn by independent commissions or courts.[8] They argue that commissions are created for the main purpose of focusing on factors such as compactness and equality when drawing district boundaries, rather than partisan politics. Butler and Cain explain that in Iowa, for instance, commissions responsible for new districts do not factor registration statistics into their decision when redistricting. This suggests that although increasing competitiveness may not be the overriding goal of the commission, it may turn out to be a by-product of their efforts. While Butler and Cain (1992: 112) argue that it is more difficult to infer consequences of court-drawn plans, they do insinuate that if courts focus on any one factor, it may involve protecting the status quo. Nevertheless, they do not empirically test these particular claims.

To date, Cox and Katz (2002) offer the most comprehensive account of reapportionment in the post-*Wesberry* era in terms of demonstrating that redistricting has yielded a variety of partisan consequences for both Republican and Democratic incumbents. Although their central focus is not on evaluating the effects of the mapmakers' plans on electoral competition, they do

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[7] On this topic see also Squire (1985), Cain and Campagna (1987), Basehart and Comer (1991), Lyons and Galderisi (1995) and Swain, Borrelli and Reed (1998).
[8] For an early analysis of redistricting commissions see Balitzer (1980).

show how reversionary outcomes changed the districting process after the 1960s. Indeed, they demonstrate that after the Supreme Court directly intervened in the redistricting process, state legislators are now fully aware that the courts could intercede in the event that a new districting plan is not completed by the appropriate deadline. In building upon their research in this paper (see also Carson and Crespin 2004), we examine how court, commission, and legislative drawn plans differ in their outcomes. More specifically, we seek to better understand whether extra-legislative districting plans lead to a greater degree of electoral competitiveness than plans drawn by more partisan actors.

Redistricting and Competitiveness in Congressional Races

In order to examine the effects of redistricting plans on electoral competitiveness, it is necessary to understand the line drawers' strategies. In this analysis, we consider the expected political effects of plans drawn by state legislatures, commissions and the courts. Table 1 shows the distribution of congressional districts for what we call extra-legislative plans during the past four districting cycles.[9] This category includes redistricting maps drawn by either commissions or the courts. Within the commission category, we further break down the typology into three categories – commission only, commissions with legislative approval and legislative appointed commissions. Plans drawn under the "commissions only" category have no legislative involvement in the redistricting process. For the other two commission types, the legislature either has final approval (legislative approval) or appoints members from the respective chambers to a special commission to draw the new maps (legislative appointed commission). These types of districting plans are sometimes referred to under the commissions label, but one

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[9] We coded the type of plans from the appropriate issue of Congressional Quarterly's *Redistricting in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s* or *2000s*.

could argue that they should not necessarily be treated the same as commissions without any legislative intervention. As such, we first test our hypotheses by comparing all extra-legislative plans with plans drawn that went through the normal legislative process and then break down the plans by the respective categories.

During this forty year period, we see that extra-legislative agents are becoming more active in drawing district boundaries. Indeed, the number of districts redrawn by commissions has steadily increased over time. Commissions drew only eight districts in 1972 but by 2002 over 54 were of this type. In 1992, we see the introduction of legislative appointed commissions, most likely as a result of the inability of legislatures to come up with redistricting plans that were satisfactory to all the actors involved in the districting process. Moreover, we observe that court-drawn plans became more prominent prior to the 2002 redistricting cycle, where their role in the redistricting process declined significantly.

We believe it is important to focus on the outcome of each type of districting plan since the goals of the mapmakers in terms of increasing electoral competitiveness may be distinct from one another. For each type of plan, we assume mapmakers are rational actors who try to achieve their party's overriding objectives. However, we do not expect the goals to be the same across parties or elections. In certain circumstances, those responsible for drawing district boundaries may strive to increase the degree of electoral competitiveness in House races; at other times, they may simply want to maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, certain institutional constraints may exist making it difficult for parties to gerrymander seats to their candidates' advantage. These constraints may differ depending on the types of plans that are ultimately enacted by individual states.

Partisan and Bipartisan Plans in the Legislature

Legislative plans can be either partisan or bipartisan (Cain 1985, Butler and Cain 1992). Generally, partisan plans favor the majority party in Congress while bipartisan plans do not show a significant preference for either party in terms of the overall competitiveness of House seats. In addition, the map-makers are part of a continuously functioning legislative body complete with formal rules and institutions where a majority party is pitted against the minority and the majority party may be able to gain leverage over the minority as a result of parliamentary rules and procedures.[10]

Partisan plans, enacted under unified partisan government, should have the primary goal of reelecting all their party's incumbents and the secondary goal of trying to win a few additional seats from the minority party (if possible). One way to accomplish this goal is by "packing" voters from the minority party into safe districts or pitting two minority party incumbents against each other in a primary election. The result may be one or two members of the minority party losing their seats; on average, however, the remaining members of the minority party have actually become safer. Alternatively, the party can attempt to make gains by "splintering" a safe minority party seat into several majority party seats by diluting the voting blocs (Ostdiek 1995: 534). The recent efforts in Texas for the 2004 election attempted to employ both techniques by increasing the number of Hispanic districts, while at the same time, reducing the total number of districts held by white Democrats. Thus, while these strategies create the appearance of increasing competition in House races, there are actually important intra-party differences that tend to negate this effect.

Bipartisan plans, which are more common under instances of divided government at the state level, simply seek to protect incumbents in both parties since it is unlikely that a plan which

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[10] Nebraska is the only state with nonpartisan state legislative elections and a unicameral legislature.

advantages one party over the other will pass all the relevant veto points. The only changes in districts may be at the margins to make members safer. It is much easier for legislatures to come to agreement on these types of plans since the status quo is maintained. These types of plans generally lead to a loss of competitive seats altogether (Butler and Cain 1992). In bipartisan legislative redistricting plans then, the overall outcome equates to an "incumbency protection act" (Tufte 1973) and we expect members in these types of seats will not experience an increase in competitiveness in elections to the House of Representatives. However, for partisan plans our predictions are not as clear.

Commission and Court Drawn Districting Plans

Commission and court drawn plans, which take the task of redistricting away from the state legislatures, can vary for states that employ these mechanisms in redrawing district lines. Among the states that employ commissions, for instance, variations persist in terms of the selection requirements, overriding objectives, and deadlines for submitting completed plans. Some states commissioners are elected officials, while others are appointed by judges, party leaders or constitutional authority. In some cases, commission members *cannot* hold elected office for a specified number of years before or after their term on the commission. While members of Congress may try to influence commission members, when the commissioners are not elected officials they may not feel obligated to listen to their input.

Commissions have become more popular when redrawing legislative or congressional districts due to the inability of partisan legislatures to get the job done on time. According to one Colorado commissioner who described the ability of commissions to meet state constitutional deadlines:

The commission is the sole entity responsible for drawing legislative plans – there is no gubernatorial veto. It has a[n] odd number of members so there won't be tie votes. On the other hand, in the legislative process the senate, the house, and the governor must all agree to a plan, and each has the power to block action by the other two. The legislature is actually structured <u>not</u> to get the job done.[11]

Furthermore, the overriding goals of the commissions and their relative independence from the legislature should produce more "fair" and hence more competitive districts at either the state or congressional level (Kubin 1996-1997).[12]

Courts and commissions are more likely to ignore traditional partisan variables when they draw district boundaries when compared with plans drawn by more overtly political actors. For example, these actors may draw the lines without regard to where incumbents reside or the past voting tendencies of geographic units such as precincts or census blocks. Further, these types of plans traditionally favor compactness and previous geographic boundaries like county lines. Therefore, we expect congressional districts drawn by either courts or commissions to increase the degree of competition between the two major party candidates, relative to bipartisan plans. This expectation stems from the goal of removing partisanship from the districting process and no longer promoting incumbency protection. Of course, these types of plans are not entirely non-partisan, only less so when compared to plans drawn and approved by elected officials in a legislative body.

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[11] Report from the National Conference of State Legislatures annual meeting, July 24, 2002. "Should Legislatures Even be in the Redistricting Business?" http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/redistrict/casecmsn.htm. Emphasis in original. While this quote is in reference to a commission for drawing state legislative districts, the logic still applies to congressional districts.

[12] According to Kubin (1996-1997:851) the "most common redistricting criteria are (1) contiguous and compact districts, (2) respect for political subdivisions (especially counties), (3) respect for geographic or natural boundaries, and (4) coterminality between state house and state senate districts." These goals then shape the redistricting process.

Data and Methods

The data used to test our expectations cover states that changed district boundaries during the redistricting cycles from 1972-2002. The dependent variable we utilize is the degree of competition in individual House races, measured as 100 minus the absolute difference between the Republican and Democratic share of the two-party vote in each election in states where redistricting occurred.[13] This implies that larger numbers correspond to more competitive House races. Since our dependent variable is continuous from zero to one hundred, we employ regression with Huber/White/Sandwich robust standard errors to test our hypotheses about the effects of each of these variables (Rogers 1993).[14]

To control for who was responsible for drawing congressional districts, we created a series of dichotomous variables that captures these distinctions. For instance, if the districting plan was drawn by a unified government at the state level, we code the variable *unified* 1, 0 otherwise. Initially, we include all districts drawn outside of the legislature (including judicial plans) in one extra-legislative category coded with a dichotomous variable to indicate if the district fell into this type. In a secondary analysis, we utilize three dichotomous variables for those districts drawn by *commissions* to account for the different types of commissions (those that are independent, those requiring legislative approval, and those appointed by the legislature) where such plans are coded 1, and all others coded as 0. We also include a dummy variable for *court*-drawn plans to capture instances where district boundaries are drawn by panels of judges. This leaves bipartisan plans as our comparison category. We used Congressional Quarterly's

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[13] Following the lead of Niemi and Abramowitz (1994), we also include and control for uncontested races in our analysis. Failing to include these cases would tend to bias the estimates by artificially inflating the size of the coefficients.

[14] Given that an argument can be made that districts within a state are not independent, we also ran our models with robust standard errors that are adjusted for clustering on the states as a unit. These standard errors are based on the assumption that units (districts) are independent between groups (states), but not necessarily within (Wooldridge 2002). Our results were similar either way.

Congressional District in the *1970s, 1980s, 1990s* and *2000s* respectively to determine who the

mapmakers were in terms of drawing congressional districts. By running the two analyses, we

can demonstrate the effect of commissions generally, and then the independent effects of each

type of extra legislative plan.

In order to control for other factors that may influence candidate competition, we include

several additional covariates in our regression model that others have shown are theoretically

important in terms of affecting election results (see, e.g., Jacobson 2004). First, we include a

measure for whether or not a *quality challenger* emerged in a given House race since we should

expect to see "stronger" candidates emerge in more competitive races.[15] We also include a

variable measuring whether an incumbent was not seeking reelection (*open seat*) since these

races are typically more competitive than those contested by an incumbent (Gaddie and Bullock

2000; Jacobson 2004). To control for *uncontested* races that may potentially bias the results, we

include a dummy variable tapping this measure. Since candidate *spending* is also an important

predictor of the degree of competitiveness in House races (Jacobson 1980; 2004), we control for

this factor.[16] In particular, we operationalize this as the natural log of the total amount of money

spent by both the Republican and Democratic candidates.[17]

Given that competitiveness may be a function of the constituency represented by each

legislator, it is necessary to include a measure tapping underlying constituent preferences. As a

proxy for this, we elected to employ the presidential vote for the Republican candidate in each

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[15] Following the work of Jacobson (1980), we utilize previous electoral experience as a proxy for candidate quality.
[16] In the congressional elections literature, several studies have examined the potential for endogeneity when
including challenger quality and campaign spending on the right-hand side of the equation (see, e.g., Jacobson 1990;
Green and Krasno 1988, 1990; Erikson and Palfrey 1998). Nevertheless, we do not believe that endogeneity
presents a problem in this analysis since our variables of interest are not highly correlated with the potentially
endogenous variables. Additionally, we have tested a simultaneous equations model on a subset of our dataset (we
could not utilize the full time series since we do not have lagged spending data prior to 1972) and did not find any
evidence of simultaneity bias in comparison to the estimates reported in this paper.
[17] We employ the convention adopted by Jacobson (1980) in assuming a minimum of $5000 spent by each candidate
(of which we employ the natural logarithm).

congressional district. More specifically, we subtract the Republican presidential candidate's vote margin in the entire nation from his margin in each district for the 1972 and 1992 presidential elections. For 1982 and 2002, we use the same measure but utilize the 1980 and 2000 vote in the *new* districts as reported by the respective edition of Congressional Quarterly's *Politics in America*. By doing this, we can compare the strength of the Republican Party in each district with its average strength in the nation across all the elections included in our analysis.[18] Given the need for pre-clearance under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the one-party dominance in the South throughout most of this time period, we also include a *south* dummy variable to control for any differences in the degree of competition that may be observed from this region of the country.[19] We also include election-specific fixed effects to control for any year-to-year differences that might otherwise bias the results.

Results

In Table 2, we present the estimates from our regression model where we examine the differences between partisan and non-partisan redistricting plans on electoral competition. We initially present the results of a pooled model, and then show the effects for each of the four redistricting cycles. Recall that in each case, the effects are compared to our baseline category, bipartisan plans. For the pooled model, we find that *unified* plans are not significantly more competitive compared to bipartisan plans. The difficulty of parsing out the effects of unified and bipartisan plans may have led to this null result. While bipartisan plans strive to make all

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[18] The advantage of employing district presidential vote is that it provides a more direct measure of the partisan or general ideological predisposition of each congressional district separate from the popularity of the incumbent representing the district (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2000; Jacobson 2004).

[19] See Hill (1995) for a more detailed analysis of the effects of the Voting Rights Act on the increase in the number of Republican representatives from the South.

members safe, unified plans may make some members safer and others not so. The result, then, appears to be no difference between these two types of plans.

Next, as we anticipated, the results indicate that districting plans drawn by actors outside the normal legislative process are significantly more competitive compared to bipartisan plans. Although the effect is not large—1.87 percentage points—one should not underestimate the magnitude of this effect. Indeed, 169 races have been decided by margins of two percent or less in House elections following redistricting since 1972. As such, this result gives some indication that plans not drawn by the state legislature are more competitive compared to plans drawn by these elected officials.

In terms of the control variables in this model, we see that factors such as the presence of a quality challenger and spending both increase the degree of competition in House elections as we would expect. In contrast, factors such as an increase in the presidential vote in the district, whether or not the race was held in the south, and uncontested races all contribute to a decline in competition across House races, as expected. The statistical significance of the election-specific fixed effects suggests both that there are differences across each of the four elections and that the negative coefficients indicate a trending decline in the overall degree of competitiveness since 1972 that has been documented by others (see Jacobson 2004). Finally, the R^2 of .78 indicates we are doing a decent job of explaining competition in congressional elections.

When we explore the effects of redistricting plans over each of the four redistricting cycles, the results are not consistent across time. In 1972, both unified and extra legislative plans are more competitive than bipartisan plans. In 1982 and 1992 the level of competitiveness was the same no matter which actors were responsible for drawing the districts. Finally, in 2002 we see that plans drawn outside the normal legislative process are 5.29 percent more competitive

compared to bipartisan plans. The effects of the control variables are largely consistent for these four elections. One noticeable difference is that elections in the South are no less competitive than the rest of the country by 1992, which is consistent with what others have documented with respect to the decline of the Democratic Party in this region. Because treating each of the extra legislative plans the same is theoretically questionable, we next turn to a model that separates the plans into the four categories discussed above. Table 3 displays these results.

In the pooled model, both commission-only plans and maps drawn by the courts are more competitive than bipartisan plans. For these redistricting plans the increase in competitiveness is 5.07 and 2.26 percent respectively. However, for "commissions" where the legislature still maintains some semblance of control, there is no difference in the level of competition in the subsequent House races. This indicates that although some states are calling their redistricting method a commission system, the redistricting plans they enact are not necessarily different than plans drawn by the state legislatures.

Similar to the previous sets of models reported in Table 2, the results are not consistent across all years. Commission only plans were nearly 10 percent more competitive in 1982 and 2002 but 15 percent *less* competitive in 1992. In the years where the effect of commission-drawn plans was positive, it was statistically indistinguishable from the effect of facing a quality challenger. However, we should be cautious in interpreting these yearly results because the number of districts in any particular category for each year can be rather small. For example, in 1992, only the two districts in Hawaii had this type of system. In terms of commissions where the legislature had some control in either appointed members, they were *never* more competitive than bipartisan plans and in 1972 they were 11.85 percent less competitive. Finally, we see that in 1972 and in 2002 the courts were able draw more competitive districts.

In sum, then, our results appear to be somewhat mixed. While, on average, independent commissions draw districts that are more competitive, we do not find consistent evidence of this effect in individual redistricting cycles. This is also the case for legislative maps that are drawn or approved by judges. However, based on the above results, it would appear that commission plans where the legislature has either appointment or approval powers do not result in districts that are more competitive when compared to bipartisan redistricting plans. This is a noteworthy finding as it suggests that it may be extremely difficult to remove all aspects of partisanship from the districting process whenever state legislators have input in redistricting plans, especially in an era of highly polarized parties.

Conclusion

In this paper, we examine a question that has often been overlooked in past studies that have sought to evaluate the electoral effects of various redistricting plans at the state level. Not only did we consider the effects of legislative districting plans, we also examined the effects of commission and court-drawn plans that have become increasingly popular since the 1970s. We find that while bipartisan legislative-drawn plans tend to result in incumbency protection, plans that are designed by either commissions or courts lead to a greater amount of competition in House races. Nevertheless, the effects are not always as pronounced in individual election years. While our overall findings may not be entirely counterintuitive, they are encouraging in that they suggest that commission and court-drawn plans can lead to more competitive elections, as they were designed to do. In the words of one election scholar:

> Elections are supposed to be the means by which the public exercises control over
> its government. If elections are competitive this system works well. People are
> faced with viable options and make their choices. But if the deck is somehow

stacked so that one candidate is virtually guaranteed victory, then public accountability is undermined (Krasno 1994: 5).[20]

Further, by testing our theory of electoral competitiveness over four redistricting cycles, including a change in majority status in the U.S. House of Representatives, we gain empirical leverage over the question of interest. At the same time, our analysis has implications beyond the simple degree of the underlying competitiveness of House races. If states are able to alter the balance of power in the House through their redistricting plans, then how they draw the seats can have far reaching policy consequences well into the future.[21] Our findings also have notable implications for scholars studying the incidence of careerism in the House as well as the strategic nature of candidate entry and exit decisions.

While this paper has addressed one question of interest in the larger redistricting process, many more issues remain to be explored in future work. For instance, we focus exclusively on the question of competition at the congressional level based on state-level redistricting. It would be advantageous to extend our analysis to the state-level to determine if related factors affect the redistricting process throughout each of the 50 states. Moreover, there may be reason to suspect that political parties at the state-level coordinate their redistricting efforts with national parties in an attempt to promote partisan goals in congressional districting plans. Furthermore, studying changes in competitiveness before and after redistricting can lead to other insights about the intended (and unintended) consequences of the decennial redistricting process. By exploring these and related questions more systematically in future work, we can continue to enrich our knowledge and understanding of the redistricting process in American politics.

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[20] Earl Blumenauer and Jim Leach (2003) echoed Krasno's sentiments stating, "If competitive elections matter – and to much of the world they are what America stands for – then redistricting also matters."
[21] See Aldrich and Rohde (1997-98) for a discussion of partisan implications of the most recent shift in majority control of the House of Representatives after the Republicans assumed control in 1995.

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Table 1 – Distribution of Congressional Districts by Redistricting Approach

Year	Commission Only	Legislative Approval	Legislative Appointed	Total Commission	Judicial	Total
		Commissions				
1972	0	8	0	8	81	89
1982	6	10	0	16	112	128
1992	2	27	10	39	195	234
2002	17	15	22	54	77	131

Table 2 - Effects of Redistricting Plans on Electoral Competition, 1972-2002

Variable	Coefficient (Standard Error)				
	All Years	**1972**	**1982**	**1992**	**2002**
Unified	1.26 (.867)	3.22* (1.41)	.779 (1.47)	-.397 (2.06)	3.23 (1.80)
Extra-Legislative	1.87* (.880)	3.67* (1.63)	-.309 (1.67)	1.62 (1.59)	5.29* (1.82)
Quality Challenger	9.34* (.808)	4.77* (1.49)	9.86* (1.52)	7.04* (1.56)	6.35* (1.80)
Presidential Vote	-.309* (.037)	-.364* (.071)	-.359* (.081)	-.598* (.084)	-.059 (.062)
Open Seat	-.841 (1.10)	-2.41 (2.08)	-2.90 (2.28)	1.37 (1.70)	1.24 (2.56)
Total Spending	8.63* (.453)	11.37* (.777)	12.82* (.956)	10.84* (1.66)	10.85* (1.04)
South	-3.62* (.867)	-6.95* (1.73)	-3.66* (1.46)	-1.87 (1.67)	-2.21 (1.67)
Uncontested	-27.03* (2.09)	-36.93* (2.33)	-11.13* (3.86)	-18.44* (8.20)	-1.54 (5.57)
2002	-19.09* (1.47)	---	---	---	---
1992	-11.22* (1.36)	---	---	---	---
1982	-9.55* (1.12)	---	---	---	---
Constant	-31.67* (5.04)	-58.72* (8.54)	-92.64* (11.90)	-69.13* (22.22)	-86.29* (14.16)
N	1705	422	429	428	426
R²	.78	.84	.83	.76	.79

Table 3 – Effects of Court, Commission, and Legislative Redistricting Plans on Electoral Competition, 1972-2002

Variable	Coefficient (Standard Error)				
	All Years	**1972**	**1982**	**1992**	**2002**
Unified	1.30 (.868)	3.27* (1.41)	.773 (1.47)	-.322 (2.07)	3.27 (1.80)
Commission Only	5.07* (2.53)	---	9.81* (3.91)	-15.21* (2.13)	9.90* (2.80)
Legislative Approval	-2.05 (1.82)	-11.85* (2.54)	-5.23 (5.63)	-.637 (2.76)	4.53 (3.28)
Legislative Appointed Commission	.641 (2.62)	---	---	5.76 (4.54)	1.65 (3.13)
Judicial	2.26* (.924)	5.26* (1.63)	-.414 (1.69)	1.89 (1.63)	5.50* (2.08)
Quality Challenger	9.46* (.805)	4.98* (1.45)	10.14* (1.53)	7.21* (1.57)	6.47* (1.80)
Presidential Vote	-.308* (.037)	-.366* (.070)	-.356* (.081)	-.595* (.083)	-.056 (.062)
Open Seat	-.943 (1.10)	-2.91 (2.03)	-3.04 (2.28)	1.29 (1.70)	.932 (2.52)
Total Spending	8.68* (.455)	11.76* (.782)	12.62* (.957)	10.81* (1.68)	11.00* (1.05)
South	-3.77* (.869)	-6.95* (1.73)	-3.55* (1.45)	-1.98 (1.68)	-2.26 (1.74)
Uncontested	-26.82* (2.08)	-35.98* (2.34)	-11.88* (3.87)	-18.62* (8.27)	-.702* (5.58)
2002	-19.17* (1.47)	---	---	---	---
1992	-11.23* (1.37)	---	---	---	---
1982	-9.68* (1.12)	---	---	---	---
Constant	-32.22* (5.08)	-63.05* (8.59)	-90.23* (11.92)	-68.77* (22.40)	-88.43* (14.24)
N	1705	422	429	428	426
R²	.78	.84	.83	.76	.79