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What didn’t happen in 1968? The Tet offensive occurred in January, turning Walter Cronkite and ultimately the American people against the war in Vietnam. In April, Martin Luther King was felled by an assassin’s bullet in Memphis, robbing the civil rights movement of its most effective leader. Two months later, Robert F. Kennedy was murdered after having won the California primary, eliminating the best chance that either party would nominate an antiwar presidential candidate. In September, the Democratic National Convention went off the rails in Chicago, ensuring the party’s eventual nominee, Hubert H. Humphrey, an uphill climb in his quest for the presidency. Throughout the year, urban race riots in several cities rocked the country, causing scores of deaths and millions of dollars in damage. Among the few bright spots, I was born in June, making 1968 a subject of particular interest to me.

What makes understanding the election of 1968 so important is the political aftershocks that continued to rock the nation for decades. Most notably, the Republicans, often the losing party since 1932, became regular winners in presidential elections. Of the six elections starting in 1968, the Democrats won only one, and that was mostly the result of the fallout from Richard Nixon’s Watergate scandal. Moreover, three of these victories were landslides, two of historic proportions. In 1972 and 1984, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, respectively, won 49 of 50 states. And, in 1980, Reagan won 45 of 50 states from an incumbent, Jimmy Carter, an unprecedented feat. These victories owe, in part, to the new issue agenda set in motion by the politics of 1968.

Throughout the 1960s, and climaxing in 1968, race became the central issue dividing both the parties and ordinary Americans. When the “race issue” meant integrating public facilities, especially in the South, it benefited Democrats. Witness Lyndon B. Johnson’s landslide victory in 1964 over Barry M. Goldwater. The events of the mid- to late 1960s, combined with the skill of Richard Nixon’s political operatives, transformed race into a Republican issue that would last decades. No longer was the “race issue” about odious things such as turning fire hoses on peaceful protesters and standing in the schoolhouse door to bar African American students from attending all-white schools. As Edward Carmines and James Stimson skill-
fully argue in their 1989 book *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton University Press), it came to be about the degree to which the federal government should be involved in the struggle for civil rights. Later the issue evolved again to be about violence in inner cities. Racial conservatism, then, no longer required one to be a racist as was the case in preintegration days. The evolution of the race issue turned out to be bad news for liberals.

The politics spawned by 1968 reordered party coalitions. Conservative southern whites, once the Democratic Party’s most stalwart supporters, have only cast a majority of their presidential votes for a Democrat once since 1968, and that was for native son Jimmy Carter of Georgia in 1976. Working-class whites, another bulwark of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition and a socially and racially conservative group, began to vote for Republicans on a regular basis as well. Less dramatically, but no less importantly, racially liberal northern and western cities began to pull these regions toward the Democratic Party over time.

This reordering of groups and regions is the basis for the partisan polarization that grips the country in the 2000s. Ideological diversity within the parties became a thing of the past. Before 1968, the Republican Party did well in some liberal parts of the country, such as the Northeast and Pacific West, and the Democratic Party did well in conservative parts of the country, such as the South. As a result, both parties had to balance liberal and conservative wings within them. The 1968 election set in motion a process in which that would no longer be the case. The GOP, the conservative party, came to dominate the conservative parts of the country where Democrats once thrived while its liberal wing shriveled. Democrats, the liberal party, came to dominate liberal parts of the country where the GOP once thrived while its conservative wing all but disappeared. The absence of intraparty differences allowed the parties to pursue much more ideological politics, creating the situation that weighs on the nation today. The election of 1968 is the root of all this change.

For all the divisiveness that ultimately followed and the lasting imprint it has left, 1968 goes down in history as a watershed election. Michael Nelson’s book is extraordinary in capturing the relevant twists and turns. More than that, it also provides a fresh perspective on this tumultuous time. Given all that happened that year and in the decades that followed, most scholars tend to frame their focus on the period’s coming apart. But, as Nelson demonstrates, that story is too simple and ultimately incorrect. The country did not, in fact, come apart as it might have given all the political stress that...
foreign and domestic events produced. In fact, leaders through this fraught time produced unity as well. The executive and legislative branches worked together to solve problems, despite the presence of divided government. Whereas divided government has caused a governing crisis in the present day, political leaders regularly came together to overcome it in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nelson’s concluding argument is compelling and well made, which is not surprising given his status as one of the political science profession’s most esteemed scholars of the American presidency.

*Marc J. Hetherington*
America coming apart has been the theme, both at the time and in the
nearly half century since, of most commentary on politics in 1968. Three
of the leading books about the period in which that year’s election occurred
convey this theme in their titles: America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s,
by Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin; The Unraveling of America, by
Allen J. Matusow; and Todd Gitlin’s The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage,
with “hope” morphing into “rage” as the decade unfolded.

Certainly there was no shortage of unusual, even alarming events in
1968: in January, the Tet offensive in Vietnam, which severely undermined
public confidence in President Lyndon B. Johnson’s conduct of the war; in
March, the challenges to Johnson’s renomination by antiwar senators Eu-
gene McCarthy of Minnesota and Robert F. Kennedy of New York, which
triggered the president’s withdrawal from the election; in April, the assassi-
nation of civil rights leader Martin Luther King and the scores of race riots
that erupted in its wake; in June, the assassination of Senator Kennedy on
the night of his victory in the California primary; in August, the violence
surrounding the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; and, all year
long, the simmering anger that attended the third-party candidacy of for-
mer Alabama governor George C. Wallace. Nineteen sixty-eight was, by any
reckoning, a turbulent year.

Yet the year culminated in a peaceful election between the candidate
most favored by Republican voters, former vice president Richard Nixon,
and the candidate most favored by Democratic voters, incumbent vice presi-
dent Hubert H. Humphrey. Both nominees worked hard to placate the loud-
est dissident elements of their parties. Humphrey moved far enough left to
win back many antiwar Democrats. Nixon moved far enough right to keep
on board conservatives whose loyalties lay with the GOP’s 1964 nominee,
Senator Barry M. Goldwater of Arizona, and the recently elected governor of
California, Ronald Reagan. The largest dissident element in the electorate
was even further to the right, at least on racial and cultural issues, and nei-
ther Nixon nor Humphrey was willing to move sufficiently in that direction
to capture the 14 percent who constituted the core of Wallace’s support.

Just as significant as the events of 1968 was the aftermath of the elec-
tion. President Nixon, the Democratic Congress, and both major parties
worked actively and, for the most part, successfully to woo still-alienated sectors of the electorate into the normal channels of constitutional politics and government. Nixon was rightly driven from office partway through his second term for the crimes and other abuses of power he committed as president. But during his first years in the White House he surprised the left with his diplomatic openings to the country’s leading enemies, China and the Soviet Union, as well as with his acquiescence to a wide range of environmental, feminist, civil rights, and other domestic reforms. By reducing draft calls and then eliminating the draft, he took much of the wind out of the campus-based antiwar movement. At the same time Nixon courted Wallace’s supporters by alternately honoring and pandering to their cultural fears and concerns.

On Capitol Hill, congressional Democrats pushed Nixon leftward on domestic policy and became a vehicle through which opponents of the war in Vietnam could advance their cause. The Democratic and later the Republican parties opened up the presidential nominating process so that most of those who felt shut out in 1968 were emboldened to pursue their goals through the two-party system.

America holding together, not America coming part, is my theme in this book—the resilience of a political system that, after enduring great strains, largely recovered from them. Conventional political processes—peaceful demonstrations, congressional legislation, executive initiatives, Supreme Court decisions, party reforms, and presidential politics—were flexible enough to absorb most of the dissent that tore America deeply in 1968 and may otherwise have torn it apart. The system also proved able to endure—and at least in the short term benefit from—a lasting problem of governance to which the 1968 election gave birth: a federal government chronically divided between a president of one party and a Congress wholly or partially controlled by the other party—with serious long-term consequences for, among other things, the third branch of government, the judiciary.

Although the resilience of the political system is my theme, the 1968 election was too rich in event and character to be shoehorned into a single argument. Among the other claims I make in this book are these:

- Like Nixon in 1952 and 1956, Johnson was in serious danger of being dropped from the Democratic ticket in 1964 if President John F. Kennedy had lived.
- As president, Johnson faithfully pursued his predecessor’s policy in Vietnam and had reason to worry that he would be attacked
as a weak leader by Robert Kennedy if South Vietnam fell to the communists.

- Among the dissident candidates in 1968, Wallace and McCarthy regarded getting their widely diverging points of view taken seriously as reason enough to enter the race. Kennedy had no interest in running unless he thought he could win.
- McCarthy’s surprise showing in the New Hampshire Democratic primary was facilitated by Republican contender George Romney’s withdrawal from the GOP contest, which freed up considerable media time and attention for the McCarthy campaign.
- Nixon, a risk-taker throughout his political career, ran a superb campaign for the 1968 Republican nomination. His main appeals to the voters—foreign policy statesmanship and cultural populism—reflected authentic aspects of who he was. But Nixon nearly lost the general election by running a cautious campaign for which he was temperamentally unsuited.
- In choosing a running mate, Nixon sought someone in his own vice presidential image: loyal, hardworking, and willing to attack the opposition relentlessly so that he could take the high road. He decidedly did not want someone like the languid, independent-minded running mate he chose in 1960, the Massachusetts patrician Henry Cabot Lodge.
- Of all the candidates who ran in 1968, only Nixon had a campaign organization that was talented and integrated from top to bottom. In the fall campaign, his was the only organization that had been battle-tested in the primaries.
- Humphrey would have been nominated for president by his party even if Robert Kennedy had lived, and the contest came down to him, Kennedy, and McCarthy.
- RFK’s death, the stalled peace talks with North Vietnam, and the president’s belief that he had a better chance to defeat Nixon in November than Humphrey did led Johnson to seriously reconsider reentering the race on the eve of the Democratic convention.
- Humphrey severely underestimated how much the power balance between him and Johnson shifted away from the lame-duck
president when Humphrey became the nominee of the Democratic Party. As a result, he refused to make even a modest break with Johnson until just five weeks before the election.

- The Wallace campaign was crippled by his offhand selection of former air force general Curtis LeMay as his vice presidential running mate. Wallace was too easily dissuaded by right-wing backers of his campaign from picking his first choice, former Kentucky governor A. B. “Happy” Chandler, an experienced campaigner.

- Wallace’s supporters, so different in most ways from those attracted to the extreme left wing of the antiwar movement, resembled them in their certainty that the political system was controlled by a small elite that scorned their values and neglected their concerns.

- The judiciary’s recent transformation into a political football kicked back and forth by the political parties was foreshadowed by the Senate’s reaction to Johnson’s nomination of Justice Abraham Fortas to be chief justice in June 1968.

- As a way of channeling dissent into mainstream politics, the much-criticized reforms of the presidential nominating process that followed the 1968 election were of tremendous value.

- McGovern’s landslide defeat in 1972, like Goldwater’s in 1964, helped lay the foundation for the future success of their parties.

These arguments emerge from rather than organize Resilient America. The book is built on a triad of character, narrative, and analysis from which my arguments emerge. I take my cue from Robert A. Caro, who once wrote that because Johnson’s narrow election to the Senate in 1948 “was thrilling,” then “if your account of that campaign isn’t thrilling, it’s false, even if it’s factually accurate.” At the risk of inviting invidious comparison with a superb practitioner of the art of political journalism, I can only say that 1968 also was a thrilling election, and I have tried to write about it in a way that at least doesn’t drain it of its dramatic power.

In terms of how the book is organized, to appreciate the stresses that the American political system endured in 1968 and how it bounced back from them means seeing events as they unfolded in time. It also means understanding the individuals who dealt with those events as candidates for the presidency. The 1968 election was not sui generis; it arose from circumstances previously in the making and played out through the nominating process, the general election campaign, the voting, and the events that
followed. Narrative and character therefore govern the organization of this book.

Chapter 1 takes the view from 1964, an election that seemed to place the continued existence of the Republican Party in jeopardy; it also introduces the nine political leaders who later played the leading roles in 1968: Johnson, Humphrey, McCarthy, Kennedy, Wallace, Nixon, Rockefeller, Reagan, and Romney. Chapter 2 describes the events of 1965 and 1966: Johnson’s simultaneous pursuit of the Great Society and a satisfactory outcome in Vietnam, as well as the GOP’s steady recovery from recent defeat, culminating in a major rebound for the party in the 1966 midterm elections.

Chapters 3 (the Democrats) and 4 (the Republicans and Wallace) chronicle the parties’ parallel presidential nomination campaigns from 1967 until the end of the primaries in early June 1968. Chapter 5 is about the lead-up to the conventions and the conventions themselves.

The general election campaign between Nixon, Humphrey, and Wallace is the subject of chapters 6 (September) and 7 (October and early November, including an analysis of the congressional, gubernatorial, and, especially, presidential results). Chapter 8 returns to the theme of resilience by describing the efforts of both the parties and the government to bring back dissenting elements of the electorate on both the left and right into the institutions and processes of the American political system.

In the course of researching and writing this book, I incurred debts too great to pay with words of thanks—but here goes anyway. Bruce Miroff read the manuscript carefully and provided exactly the sort of pointed but helpful criticism that an author needs. Bruce’s entire motivation was to help me construct the best version of my argument that I could. Marc J. Hetherington’s comments on draft chapters were very helpful, as were those of Andrew E. Busch, Richard J. Ellis, and my fellow series editor, John M. McCardell. In addition, Marc wrote a foreword that is not only gracious but also deeply insightful in its own right.

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This book is dedicated to my family with love and gratitude: my sons Michael and Sam, my grandson McClain, and above all the woman who completes me, my wife Linda.
On election night in 1964 it was clear that the times were changing, but it was less clear how.

The results presented one of the strangest maps in the history of presidential elections. As in 1932, the election that ushered in the generation-old New Deal Democratic majority, the Democratic nominee lost only six states to his Republican opponent. In 1932 the six states that Republican president Herbert Hoover carried against Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York were all in the Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Thirty-two years later, the Northeast was Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater’s worst region. Aside from his home state of Arizona, Senator Goldwater carried only the five states that constituted the Deep South, the region with the nation’s largest African American population but also, because blacks were still substantially disfranchised, an almost monochromatically white electorate. Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina, states in which Hoover had averaged 7 percent of the vote in 1932, voted overwhelmingly for Goldwater. As recently as 1960, except for South Carolina, all of the Deep South states that Goldwater carried were among Republican nominee Richard Nixon’s least successful states, and the vice president lost all five of them to his Democratic rival, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, or to independent conservative Democratic electors.

The Republicans’ success in 1964 was regional, but that of the Democrats was national. The ticket of incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson for president and Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota for vice president prevailed in forty-five
states with 486 electoral votes, including nine states that no Democrat since FDR had carried and one, Vermont, that no Democrat had ever carried. Johnson won 61.1 percent of the national popular vote, exceeding FDR’s previous record of 60.8 percent in 1936. His party’s national sweep extended to a thirty-seven-seat gain in the House of Representatives, increasing the Democrats’ 82-seat majority to 155. Even their one-seat increase in the Senate was a triumph. Because the party had done so well in the 1958 Senate elections, twenty-six Democratic seats were on the 1964 ballot compared with only nine seats occupied by Republicans. With much more to lose, the Democrats actually won, leaving the Senate, like the House, more than two-thirds Democratic. Nearly all of the new Democrats in both chambers were northern and western liberals, tilting leftward a congressional party that had been dominated by conservative southerners. Meanwhile, the loss of dozens of moderate-to-liberal Republican members and the gain of seven new conservatives in the Deep South—the Republicans’ first representatives from that region since Reconstruction—tilted the congressional GOP rightward.

In an equal and opposite reaction to their gains among Deep South whites in 1964, the Republicans lost the African American vote almost entirely. Just four years before, Nixon had earned the support of 32 percent of black voters. Dwight D. Eisenhower had done even better, earning 39 percent in 1956.1 Although Kennedy introduced what became the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Johnson shepherded it to passage after succeeding to the presidency when Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, only about three-fifths of House and Senate Democrats voted for the bill, compared with more than four-fifths of congressional Republicans.2 Among the GOP senators opposed to the act, however, was the party’s candidate for president, whose share of the black vote on Election Day dropped to 6 percent. In fact, while doing well in the Deep South, Goldwater lost the four Outer South states carried by Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, Nixon in 1960, or by both Republican nominees: Florida, Texas, Virginia, and Tennessee. As for Hoover’s six northeastern states in 1932, they were among Johnson’s best in 1964, auguring the Northeast’s eventual transformation from the GOP’s strongest region to the Democrats’ main stronghold.

Goldwater ran an ardently ideological campaign, arguably the most conservative of any major party nominee in history. Long a big-tent Republican, who as chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee in the mid-1950s and early 1960s worked as hard to elect liberal Republicans as
conservatives, Goldwater nevertheless made no serious effort to unite all the wings of the party behind him in his presidential campaign. At the GOP nominating convention he insisted on a strongly conservative platform and chose a conservative vice presidential running mate, Rep. William Miller of New York. Defending “extremism” and attacking “moderation” in his acceptance speech, Goldwater told convention and country: “Those who do not care for our cause, we don’t expect to join our ranks in any case.” 3 Apart from his strong ideological views, Goldwater also frightened many voters with off-the-cuff comments about wanting to “lob” a nuclear weapon “into the men’s room of the Kremlin” and “drop a low-yield atomic bomb on Chinese supply lines into North Vietnam.” 4 Along with William Jennings Bryan in 1896, Tom Wicker observed, Goldwater “was only the second presidential challenger in history who became the issue.” 5

In contrast, Johnson ran a serenely nonideological campaign whose main theme was that he was the safe alternative to a dangerous extremist. “Vote to save your Social Security from going down the drain,” Johnson told voters. “Vote to keep a prudent hand which will not mash the nuclear button.” 6 He used this theme to good effect in uniting labor with management, blacks with whites, women with men, Protestants with Catholics and Jews, young with old, and moderates with liberals. Except for self-identified Republicans, Johnson carried every demographic and political group polled by Gallup. 7 Members of the Business Council, who had donated to Republicans over Democrats by 73 to 7 in 1960, broke only 36 to 33 for the GOP in 1964. 8 “We’re in favor of a lot of things and we’re against mighty few,” Johnson said in campaign speeches. 9 The New York Herald Tribune was one of many old and staunchly Republican newspapers to endorse a Democratic presidential candidate for the first time. Yet neither Johnson nor the Democratic platform had much to say about what he intended to do if he was elected to a full term. By David Broder’s count, “The Democratic Platform devoted three times as much space to reciting the accomplishments of the previous four years as to listing the promises of the next four.” 10 As a rule, the recitations were specific and the promises general. The result of “failing to make explicit where he intended to take the country in the next four years,” Robert Dallek has argued, is that “Johnson won less than a solid consensus for bold change in either domestic or foreign affairs.” 11

The Democratic sweep was massive: in addition to winning the White House and 363 of 535 seats in Congress, the party gained 540 new state legislative seats and an additional governorship, reducing the number of
Republican state chief executives to sixteen. Postelection handwringing immediately ensued among established Republican leaders and political pundits about what the GOP needed to do to survive. “He has wrecked his party for a long time to come,” wrote *New York Times* columnist James Reston about Goldwater.\(^{12}\) Another leading political journalist, Robert J. Donovan, foresaw a quarter century of Democratic control of the White House, with Johnson reelected in 1968, Vice President Humphrey succeeding him in 1972 and 1976, and either Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of New York or Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts winning the elections of 1980 and 1984.\(^{13}\) Prominent liberal Republicans, including Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York and Gov. George Romney of Michigan, felt vindicated by their decision not to endorse Goldwater against Johnson. Rep. John V. Lindsay of New York, speaking for the small group of surviving liberal House Republicans, said they would “have to rebuild the Republican party out of the ashes . . . to return the party to the tradition of Lincoln.”\(^{14}\)

Leading scholars of American politics buttressed the establishment consensus. James MacGregor Burns predicted that, having ceded the nomination once to its rural, retrograde “congressional party,” the more “urban, liberally oriented presidential Republicans” would “not display the fumbling grasp of convention politics in 1968 or 1972 that they had in 1964,” thereby regaining control of the GOP.\(^{15}\) Gerald Pomper even suggested that 1964 was a critical election on the scale of 1896, “the classical critical contest” in all of American history and one in which the majority party secured its supremacy for another generation.\(^{16}\)

In contrast, conservatives were cheered by Goldwater’s success at energizing a broad network of grassroots supporters. Nearly four million people worked to elect him in some capacity, and more than a million donated money to his campaign (compared with just 22,000 who donated to Kennedy in 1960). They also were heartened by Goldwater’s sweep of the Deep South. Except for Louisiana, which voted for Eisenhower in 1956, no Deep South state had gone Republican since Reconstruction—indeed, to the extent that Goldwater’s electoral map resembled anyone’s, it was that of the States’ Rights Party nominee, Gov. J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, in 1948. Goldwater carried all four of Thurmond’s states by margins ranging from 13.6 to 74.2 percentage points, meaning that except for Arkansas and North Carolina, every state in the heretofore solidly Democratic South had gone Republican in at least one recent presidential election. The GOP could now compete in every region, conservative Republicans claimed,
which meant they no longer would have to win about 70 percent of the rest of the country to elect a president or control the House. And, devoted though they were to Goldwater, conservatives also argued that their political philosophy did not receive a fair test in 1964 because most voters perceived their candidate not as a conservative but as an unstable extremist who was “trigger-happy,” “radical,” and “impulsive—shoots from the hip.”17 The messenger may have been flawed, they conceded, but not the message. Goldwater, who had been a reluctant candidate, happily abandoned presidential politics after the election.

Other political figures emerged from the 1964 election with their gaze fixed on 1968 and beyond. Among Democrats these included Johnson and Humphrey, who looked forward to being reelected as a ticket in four years; Robert Kennedy, the slain president’s oldest living brother, who was elected to the Senate from New York in 1964; Sen. Eugene McCarthy, Humphrey’s fellow Minnesotan and finalist for the vice presidential nomination; and Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama, who had run a socially conservative protest campaign against Johnson in three northern primaries and won surprisingly strong support from white working-class Democrats.

Four Republicans rose from the wreckage of their party’s 1964 defeat in varying states of ambition. Nixon, defeated narrowly for president in 1960 and handily for governor of California in 1962, campaigned ardently for Goldwater against Johnson with an eye toward a possible political comeback. Ronald Reagan, best known as a screen actor, gave a brilliantly effective nationally televised speech for Goldwater a week before the election that raised conservatives’ hopes that he might become the appealing advocate of conservatism that the candidate himself was not. In contrast, Governors Rockefeller and Romney were determined to take back the GOP from the conservatives who had—temporarily, they hoped—seized it.

THE DEMOCRATS

In the view from 1964, no Democrat foresaw anything other than a reelection campaign for Johnson and Humphrey in 1968. Kennedy, like Humphrey, had his eye on 1972, when Johnson would be barred by the Twenty-second Amendment from seeking another term. McCarthy, who believed that he, not John Kennedy, should have been the nation’s first Roman Catholic president, reluctantly returned to the Senate, where he was bored and restless. Meanwhile, Wallace resolved to find a way to translate his vote-getting ability as a critic of Democratic liberalism into something bigger.
Lyndon B. Johnson was a product of the Texas Hill Country west of Austin, where he grew up and spent his first twenty-three years. But he was a creature of Washington and, in particular, of Congress. Johnson had more congressional experience than any other president before or since. Starting in 1931, he spent three years as a House staffer, two years as the Texas director of the New Deal’s job-giving National Youth Administration, eleven years as a House member, and twelve years as a senator. In 1955, after two years as Senate minority leader, he became the youngest and, soon, the most influential majority leader in history.

Being from Texas was a burden when Johnson sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960. No southerners had been elected president since before the Civil War, largely because their constituents expected them to oppose legislation advancing national causes such as civil rights, labor unions, and business regulation. Johnson did so during his nearly thirty years in and around Congress, especially after making the move from the moderately liberal Tenth District to a Senate seat representing a conservative state.

Being from Washington, on the other hand, offered certain advantages. The federal government enjoyed the trust of the American people during the 1950s, and the Cold War rivalry with Soviet communism placed a political premium on service in the Senate because of that chamber’s distinctive constitutional responsibilities in foreign affairs. From 1952 to 1972 seventeen of twenty major party nominees for president and vice president were experienced federal office holders, most of them senators. As one of the two or three most powerful leaders in Washington, Johnson was a *prima facie* serious presidential contender.

But Johnson’s experience in the capital blinded him to some inconvenient political realities. It convinced him that support from his fellow Democratic senators could secure the votes of their state delegations at the 1960 convention. In truth, governors and other state and local party leaders, who were on the scene in their communities and had jobs and contracts to dispense, typically led their delegations. “It was not easy to find men and women who knew Johnson outside the District of Columbia and Texas,” said LBJ supporter India Edwards. The Senate lens through which Johnson looked at presidential politics also veiled the public appeal and political shrewdness of John Kennedy, who as a Senate colleague Johnson had found to be “a weak and indecisive politician, a nice man, a gentle man, but not a man’s man.” As a Catholic, Kennedy saw clearly that he needed
to enter and win primaries to convince state party leaders that his religion would be no barrier to election in November. (No Catholic had ever been elected president, and the only one whom the Democrats nominated, Gov. Al Smith of New York, lost by a landslide in 1928.) As a southerner, Johnson faced similar skepticism about his electability from party professionals. But he refused to enter primaries even in politically congenial states such as conservative Indiana and Protestant West Virginia. Kennedy competed for votes successfully, Johnson did not compete at all, and Kennedy won the nomination on the first ballot.

Kennedy’s decision to invite Johnson onto the ticket as his vice presidential running mate was an easy one, despite the opposition of his brother and campaign manager, Robert Kennedy, who was channeling liberal and labor leaders’ concern that Johnson was too conservative as well as his own personal animus toward the Texan. For a generation, nearly every Democratic vice presidential nominee had been from a southern or border state, in recognition that the Democrats needed the South in order to win competitive elections even if they were unwilling to choose a southerner for the top of the ticket.21 “He’s the natural,” Kennedy told Rep. Tip O’Neill of Massachusetts, speaking of Johnson. “If I can ever get him on the ticket, no way we can lose.”22 Kennedy also dreaded the prospect of having to deal with an independently powerful Johnson as Senate majority leader if he won the election. “Did it occur to you that if Lyndon becomes the vice president, I’ll have Mike Mansfield [of Montana] as the leader, . . . somebody I can trust and depend on?” he asked political aide Kenneth O’Donnell.23

Johnson no more wanted to be Senate leader under a Democratic president than Kennedy wanted him in that role. Johnson did want to be president and, as Vice President Nixon demonstrated in the 1960 Republican contest, the vice presidency had become a solid stepping stone to securing a future presidential nomination.24 Winning and holding a national office would enable Johnson to emerge as a national leader, liberated to some extent from the Texas brand. And, perhaps influenced by Kennedy’s troubled medical history—one source of the evolving hatred between Johnson and Robert Kennedy was the accurate charge made by Johnson surrogates that JFK had Addison’s disease—Johnson told Republican writer Clare Booth Luce: “I looked it up: one out of every four presidents has died in office. I’m a gambling man, darling, and this is the only chance I got.”25

Johnson also thought he could turn the vice presidency into a powerful office—after all, Senate party leader had been a weak position until he transformed it. Specifically, Johnson thought that after the election he could
persuade Senate Democrats to let him continue functioning as their leader and get Kennedy to sign an executive order granting him a large staff, a West Wing office, and authority as a de facto national security adviser. The election results, he believed, strengthened his hand. More than any other vice presidential candidate in history, Johnson had been instrumental in securing the president’s victory. Without his effective campaigning in the South, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas (where the mayor of Blanco declared that Kennedy-Johnson was a “kangaroo ticket, one with all its strength in the hind legs”), and perhaps Georgia would have gone Republican, handing Nixon the election. But even before inauguration day, both Johnson’s Senate colleagues and the president-elect rebuffed his power grabs. “Power is where power goes,” Johnson had boasted when accepting the vice presidential nomination. Not this time. “Being vice president is like being a cut dog,” he reflected after being consigned to the sidelines in the White House and on Capitol Hill. After the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, in which Johnson’s advice was consistently—and, in the president’s view, unhelpfully—bellicose, Kennedy “was prodding Johnson less now, sending him fewer memos and giving him fewer assignments and, as a result, Johnson was fading into the background,” wrote Kennedy’s secretary, Evelyn Lincoln. She calculated from her appointments calendar that in 1963 the president spent only about ten minutes per month with Johnson, about one-sixth as much as in 1961.

Unwilling to blame the president for his diminished status, Johnson focused his resentment on Robert Kennedy, who was both attorney general and his brother’s closest adviser. “Jack Kennedy’s as thoughtful and considerate of me . . . as he can be,” Johnson told a close associate. “But I know his snot-nosed brother’s after my ass.” The lowest point of Johnson’s vice presidency came when he was chairing a 1963 meeting of the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, a toothless entity whose purpose was to increase minority hiring in the federal government. Partway into the meeting Robert Kennedy charged in flanked by aides, interrupted the discussion by firing brutally disdainful questions at Johnson protégés Hobart Taylor and James Webb, and then stormed out. RFK loyalists spread word of the incident around Washington. It was the latest example, they suggested, of how hopelessly inadequate the vice president was. As for Johnson, “I was humiliated.” Seeing him in late summer, a close former aide observed, “It was a time of deprivation. He grew very fat and drank a lot.”
Johnson was convinced that Robert Kennedy wanted him off the ticket in 1964 and feared that this time the president would take his brother’s advice. He may have been right. The cool rationality about politics and governance that led JFK to choose Johnson in 1960 pointed to a different choice in 1964. Politically, Kennedy calculated, his administration’s first-term support for a strong civil rights bill meant that winning the South again would be impossible. The eighty-one southern electoral votes Kennedy received in 1960 would have to be replaced by carrying the large northern and western states he had lost to Nixon: Ohio (twenty-six electoral votes), Wisconsin (twelve), and California (forty). Johnson could not help him there; indeed, as a weak vice president in a liberal administration, he had even lost popularity and influence in Texas. Nor was there any need for Kennedy to worry, as in 1960, about the problems that Johnson could cause if he was not in the administration. As a possible obstacle to governing, Johnson had been neutered, a condition that would not change if he became a former vice president. Compounding Johnson’s political woes, in November 1963 *Life* magazine was deep into its reporting of an investigative story about his dramatic increase in wealth from various Texas properties during his Senate years, when his annual salary ranged from $12,500 to $22,500.

The president’s trip to Texas on November 21–22 underscored Johnson’s status as a declining political asset. Kennedy was mad that he had to make the trip at all—why hadn’t Johnson been able to unite the Texas Democratic Party by muting the hatred between the conservative faction led by Gov. John Connally and the liberal faction led by Sen. Ralph Yarborough? The trip itself, marked by petty spats over protocol among Connally, Yarborough, and Johnson, underscored the vice president’s diminished standing even in his own state.

“I am nothing,” said John Adams, the first vice president, “but I may be everything.”* Johnson went from nothing to everything at 1:00 p.m. CST on November 22, when Kennedy was officially pronounced dead after being shot in the head by Lee Harvey Oswald, an erratic supporter of communist causes, during his motorcade through Dallas. But Johnson’s succession to the presidency was complicated in ways that were wholly without precedent. Not only had Kennedy been killed in Johnson’s home state, but he now succeeded to the presidency closer to the end of the term than any vice president in history. The election was less than twelve months away, and the Democratic convention just nine months. Beyond that, Robert A. Caro has written: “The President, the King, was dead, murdered, but the
King had a brother, a brother who hated the new King. The dead King’s men—the Kennedy men, the Camelot men—made up in Shakespearean terms, a faction.”

The day after the assassination White House aide Arthur M. Schlesinger gathered a group of fellow Kennedy loyalists to discuss replacing Johnson with Robert Kennedy at the head of the Democratic ticket in 1964.

With flattery and feigned humility (“I need you more than President Kennedy needed you . . . the knowledge, the skills, the understanding”), Johnson persuaded most members of the Kennedy administration to stay on, especially those in the national security arena and the cabinet. He was so solicitous of the slain president’s widow, Jacqueline Kennedy, remarked Johnson aide Harry McPherson, that he probably would have re-named the country the United States of Kennedy if she had asked. (He did rename Cape Canaveral as Cape Kennedy at her request.) No longer the cut dog of his miserable thousand days as vice president, Johnson took to the presidency “like Popeye after a can of spinach,” in David Greenberg’s apt phrase. Striking exactly the right chords of resolve and reassurance in a televised speech to Congress and the nation five days after the assassination, Johnson declared that his mission was to continue what Kennedy had begun—specifically, to enact into law his major civil rights and tax cut bills, which had been mired for months in the legislative process. “I had to take the dead man’s program and turn it into a martyr’s cause,” he said years later.

Johnson persuaded a Senate that was ill disposed to approve anything more than a diluted version of the civil rights bill to pass the full-strength version: the Civil Rights Act of 1964. “As a southerner,” Johnson knew, “I had to produce a civil rights bill that was even stronger than the one they’d have gotten if Kennedy had lived.” He also persuaded the fiscally conservative southern Democrats who controlled tax policy in the House and Senate to mute their resistance to Kennedy’s proposed income tax cut in return for keeping the fiscal year 1964 federal budget under $100 billion. And then, with RFK convinced that his brother had been on the verge of trying to end poverty at the moment of his death, Johnson took on that issue as well. He used his January 8, 1964, state of the union address to “declare unconditional war on poverty in America, . . . not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and above all, prevent it.” Urged on by Johnson, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act in August.

Johnson’s domestic policy triumphs removed any effective grounds for resistance by Kennedy loyalists to his nomination for a full term as presi-
dent. But these triumphs also entailed political costs. Johnson was aware that by championing civil rights he was alienating southern whites. “I think we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come,” he told press secretary Bill Moyers the night the bill passed. In contrast, he was unaware of the problems latent in the War on Poverty. Johnson took for granted that ending poverty meant giving government jobs to poor people, preferably by hiring unemployed young men to build big things in the fresh air, as he had when serving FDR as National Youth Administration director in Texas. “He had this sort of concrete idea,” recalled Council of Economic Advisers chair Walter Heller. “Bulldozers. Tractors. People operating heavy machinery.” But in order to attract Robert Kennedy’s support for his program, Johnson accepted without fully understanding “community action,” a nascent idea percolating in the Kennedy Justice Department’s juvenile delinquency commission. Community action was grounded in the assumption that the poor themselves, not local government and party officials, were the best judges of what they needed and that they would become more self-sufficient if they were allowed to decide how antipoverty programs were run in their neighborhoods. In the jargon of the day, the Kennedyites’ theory was that “maximum feasible participation” would overcome the “culture of poverty.” In practice, the only clear consequence of community action was heightened political discord between local activists and local elected officials—most of them Democrats.

In a speech delivered on May 7, 1964, four months after declaring war on poverty, Johnson embedded that effort in a larger vision of the “Great Society.” FDR’s New Deal, Harry S. Truman’s Fair Deal, and Kennedy’s New Frontier had already made the United States “the rich society and the powerful society,” Johnson said. The new challenge was to stretch the helping hand of government both downward (by bringing “an end to poverty and racial injustice”) and “upward” (to “advance the quality of our American civilization”). The Great Society, he pledged, “is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce, but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.”

Johnson inherited more on taking office than Kennedy’s domestic agenda, which the new president readily embraced and was able to pass through a legislative process that he understood completely. It also included the 16,300 military advisers whom Kennedy had dispatched to South Vietnam to prevent that nation’s pro-American regime from being toppled by the combined communist forces of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, or Vietcong, the insurgent group waging civil war within South
Vietnam. Kennedy, whose “main issue [in 1960] was the Cold War and how to stop losing it,” had begun escalating American involvement in 1961, shortly after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of communist Cuba in April and the verbal drubbing he took from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev when they met two months later in Vienna. Those setbacks meant “we have a problem in making our power credible,” Kennedy told the Times’s Reston, “and Vietnam is the place.” The state and defense departments and the CIA buttressed the president’s judgment that the Chinese and Soviets, despite their differences, were united in their commitment to foment revolutions in the developing world. If South Vietnam fell, nearly everyone in the government agreed, the neighboring nations of Southeast Asia would also fall, like a row of dominos.

Weeks before he died Kennedy doubled down on the American commitment by authorizing South Vietnamese generals to launch a coup against the country’s strong but unpopular leader, Ngo Dinh Diem, a coup that Vice President Johnson “was against—strongly against.” To the president’s dismay, the coup resulted not just in Diem’s overthrow but also his assassination. “Without the United States,” Kennedy told a gathering of Dallas business leaders on the morning of November 22, 1963, “South Vietnam would collapse overnight.” To the president, said his brother Robert Kennedy, “the strong, overwhelming reason for being in Vietnam was that we should win the war in Vietnam or face the loss of all of Southeast Asia.”

As president, Johnson felt bound to continue Kennedy’s course in Vietnam just as he had continued his domestic policies. (In his memoirs, Johnson titled the first chapter on Vietnam “Steady on Course.”) Less confident about Vietnam than he was about domestic matters, however, Johnson regularly asked the foreign policy advisers he inherited from Kennedy—chiefly Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and national security adviser McGeorge Bundy—what Kennedy would have done, and then he did it. Their judgment, based on claims of expertise, was that the American commitment must be maintained, which was consistent with Johnson’s own judgment. Vietnam was a “little piss-ant country,” in Johnson’s view, and had become “just the biggest damn mess.” But he “knew that Harry Truman and [Secretary of State] Dean Acheson had lost their effectiveness from the day that the Communists took over in China” and that a communist victory in Vietnam would be even worse for him. “This time there would be Robert Kennedy out there in front leading the fight against me, telling everyone that I had betrayed John Kennedy’s commitment to South Vietnam. That I had let a democracy fall into the hands
of the Communists. That I was a coward, an unmanly man. A man without a spine.”

Politically, Johnson walked the tightrope of Vietnam in 1964 with perfect balance. In early August, when North Vietnamese gun boats reportedly fired on American naval destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin, he harnessed the public’s traditional “rally round the flag” response to military action and secured the sweeping and nearly unanimous Gulf of Tonkin Resolution from Congress. The open-ended resolution authorized the president “to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” In the short term, Johnson ordered a small retaliatory air strike on North Vietnam but sent no additional troops. Having established his firmness, he went back to portraying himself as the peace candidate in the election against the supposedly trigger-happy Goldwater. “We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves,” he told a cheering audience at the University of Akron on October 21. More than anything else, however, Johnson did everything he could to tamp down public interest in the war—and succeeded. In five press
conferences held between mid-August and mid-October, the president was not asked once about Vietnam.

Johnson was nominated by acclamation at the Democratic convention in Atlantic City, as was his popular choice for vice president, Hubert Humphrey. Polls throughout the year attested that his election was never in doubt.

KENNEDY

President Kennedy’s assassination meant that Robert Kennedy, the second youngest of the four Kennedy brothers, was now, after his two elder brothers’ deaths, the oldest and, by implication, the legatee of his family and its retinue’s ambitions for national leadership. Nothing about this role was temperamentally appealing to Kennedy, who was much more comfortable behind the scenes than in the political limelight. He spent much of the 1950s assisting Senate subcommittee chairs of both parties—initially Republican senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin and later Democratic senator John McClellan of Arkansas—to investigate alleged communist infiltration of the federal government (McCarthy) and the nexus between organized crime and organized labor (McClellan). Kennedy was a fierce (critics said ruthless) investigator with what two supporters called “a Puritan’s sense of right and wrong, good and evil”—a quality that in later years would be redirected into crusades against poverty, racism, and the war in Vietnam. He was also intensely loyal. When McCarthy, a friend of his wealthy and politically well-connected father, Joseph P. Kennedy, and consequently his first employer on Capitol Hill, died in 1957 after being censured by his colleagues for reckless allegations of communist influence in the army, Robert Kennedy went not just to the memorial service in Washington but also to the funeral in Wisconsin.

Kennedy’s talent for behind-the-scenes organization shaped his involvement in presidential politics during the 1950s in ways that furthered his older brother’s ambitions. When Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson surprised the 1956 national convention by asking the delegates to choose the party’s candidate for vice president, Robert Kennedy organized an overnight campaign for John Kennedy, who finished a surprisingly strong second to the much better known Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee. According to Schlesinger, the lessons Robert Kennedy learned from that convention stood his brother in good stead as he began preparing to run in 1960: “the importance of communications at a convention; the importance of an accurate delegate count; the importance of the rules . . . ; the
importance of friendship . . . ; the unimportance of celebrated senators; the importance of uncelebrated party professionals.”

The 1950s planted seeds of hatred between Robert Kennedy and Johnson that would sprout during the 1960 campaign and beyond. In fall 1955 Kennedy was angered when Johnson refused Joseph Kennedy’s offer to finance a bid for the 1956 presidential nomination if LBJ would agree to place Senator Kennedy on the ticket as his running mate. Johnson knew he could not beat President Eisenhower and that Joseph Kennedy’s real goal was to launch his son’s candidacy for president in 1960. In spring 1960, when John Kennedy sent his brother to the LBJ ranch to discover the Texan’s political intentions, Johnson outfitted Robert Kennedy with a ten-gauge shotgun for a deer hunt instead of the customary rifle. As intended, the recoil from the massive weapon knocked Kennedy to the ground, and Johnson sneered, “Son, you’ve got to learn to handle a gun like a man.”

At the convention that summer, Robert Kennedy was furious at Johnson for telling the Washington state delegation that unlike Joseph Kennedy, “I never thought Hitler was right” and for standing by when India Edwards charged that John Kennedy was terminally ill and “would not be alive today if it were not for cortisone.” After Senator Kennedy’s victory in the presidential balloting was secured, Robert Kennedy was contemptuous of Johnson’s insistence on staying on the ticket after liberals expressed opposition to his selection, claiming that LBJ “burst into tears” and “just shook” when asked to consider declining the offer.

At his father’s insistence, the newly elected president appointed his thirty-five-year-old brother as attorney general. Robert Kennedy did not want the job. He was tired of “chasing bad men” and “thought nepotism was a problem” with his brother’s choice. But JFK, Joseph Kennedy argued to both of his sons, needed someone who was politically “savvy” and whom he could trust completely in a cabinet of “nine strangers and a brother.”

Father also decreed that a placeholder would occupy Kennedy’s vacated Senate seat until his youngest son, Edward Kennedy, became constitutionally eligible to run when he turned thirty in 1962. As Johnson’s star descended in the administration, Robert Kennedy’s ascended, extending into civil rights and, increasingly, foreign affairs. The attorney general steered the president’s much more experienced national security team during the Cuban missile crisis on to the military and diplomatic course that resolved the crisis peacefully.

Robert Kennedy was also a strong supporter of the president’s inaugural pledge to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any
friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.” Specifically, he encouraged the enhancement of Special Forces counterinsurgency units in the armed services and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to combat Khrushchev’s “wars of national liberation” against Western-backed governments in third-world countries. He even kept a green beret behind his desk in the Justice Department and, later, the Senate.

Ever since FDR led the United States onto the world stage as a promoter of liberal values, most Democrats had been comfortable with this role. But they had disliked Eisenhower’s reliance on nuclear weapons as the chief means of performing it. Ground-level counterinsurgency warfare seemed much less dangerous and much better suited to winning third-world hearts and minds. On a visit to South Vietnam in February 1962, the attorney general declared: “We are going to win in Vietnam. We will remain here until we do win.” Slow to embrace the civil rights movement’s demands for protection against violence and for strong antidiscrimination legislation, RFK eventually did so, partly out of genuine conviction and partly because he was convinced that internationally broadcast images of southern police and mobs brutally beating peaceful demonstrators were undermining American efforts to compete with the Soviet Union for the loyalty of the newly independent nonwhite nations of Africa and Asia.

Despair at his brother’s death and deep resentment of the new president governed Kennedy’s emotions after the assassination. For a time he was beyond rationality. “He’s mean, bitter, vicious—an animal in many ways,” Kennedy said of Johnson. “What does he know about people who’ve got no jobs, or are undereducated?” the son of wealth asked, implausibly, about the son of poverty. After it became clear that Johnson had the 1964 presidential nomination wrapped up, Kennedy loyalists began urging him to name Robert Kennedy as his running mate. When thinking clearly, Kennedy knew that this was a terrible idea: “It would be an unpleasant relationship, number one. Number two, I would lose all ability to ever take any independent positions on matters.” But for motives of spite and entitlement, he did not discourage the efforts to pressure the president to place him in the very spot on the ticket he had tried to drive Johnson from at the 1960 convention. “The one thing Lyndon Johnson doesn’t want is me as vice president,” Kennedy confided in a May 1964 oral history interview. “I think he’s hysterical about how he’s going to try to avoid having to ask me.”

On July 29, 1964, Johnson met with Kennedy to tell him that he needed help in the South and border states to defeat Goldwater in the coming election, which Kennedy could not provide. He asked Kennedy to publicly state
that he was not interested in being vice president. Kennedy refused, and the next day Johnson announced that he was ruling out “any member of the Cabinet” from consideration, including the attorney general. “Sorry I took so many of you nice fellows over the side with me,” Kennedy wryly telegraphed his cabinet colleagues. Johnson then moved Kennedy’s slot on the Democratic convention calendar to the final session, after the balloting for president and vice president. Both decisions were politically astute, judging by the ecstatic twenty-two-minute ovation that greeted Kennedy at the convention, as well as by the bitterness of the line in his speech that, quoting Shakespeare, urged listeners to “pay no worship to the garish sun.”

On the eve of the August convention, Kennedy reluctantly declared that he was running for U.S. senator from New York, his first venture as a candidate and the least bad alternative he had for staying in public office. The obstacles were great: the incumbent Republican Kenneth Keating was popular; New York Democrats were chronically divided and had lost every post-war senatorial election but one; and Kennedy was neither an experienced campaigner, an enthusiastic candidate, nor a New Yorker. Instead, he was a shy, backstage political operator who as recently as early August was registered to vote in Massachusetts.

Still the savvy political strategist, however, when polls showed him losing and Johnson winning in New York, Kennedy changed his campaign theme from “Let’s put Robert Kennedy to work for New York” to “Get with the Johnson-Humphrey-Kennedy team.” He invited the president to campaign with him, which he did. On Election Day Johnson carried New York by 2.5 million votes, the largest margin in history for any presidential candidate in any state at the time. Kennedy rode Johnson’s coattails to a victory margin of 720,000, about one-fourth that size. Wasting no time on gratitude, however, Kennedy barely mentioned Johnson in his victory speech, infuriating the president and sealing the fate of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which McNamara placed on a list of bases to be closed shortly after the election.

Nonetheless, having improved as a campaigner and demonstrated his ability to persuade people to vote for him, Kennedy could now easily imagine running for president, albeit in 1972, not 1968 when Johnson presumably would be seeking a final term.

HUMPHREY

Kennedy’s assassination created not just the vacancy in the presidency that was filled by Johnson’s succession, but also a vacancy in the vice presidency, which under the existing Constitution would remain unfilled until
the 1964 election. As soon as it became apparent that Johnson was not going to choose Robert Kennedy as his running mate, Hubert Humphrey became the widely acknowledged front-runner.

Humphrey grew up the son of a struggling druggist in small towns in Minnesota and South Dakota. The demands of his father’s store kept him from attending college until 1937, when he was twenty-six. After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Humphrey enrolled in a master’s degree program in political science at Louisiana State University, en route to returning to the “U” to earn a doctorate. His master’s thesis, “The Political Philosophy of the New Deal,” ended with a statement of his own philosophy that prefigured the Great Society while endorsing the New Deal. Humphrey proposed six “new rights,” including “the right to an adequate standard of living,” “the right to the maintenance of health,” and “the right to leisure and its effective use.” In addition, the “shock and outrage” Humphrey felt about the racial discrimination he witnessed while living in Baton Rouge gave “flesh and blood,” he later wrote, “to my abstract commitment to civil rights.”

Humphrey returned to Minneapolis in 1940 but for financial reasons abandoned his planned doctoral studies and took a job directing the Works Progress Administration’s Twin Cities Workers Education Service. Service in government was a natural bridge into electoral politics for someone with Humphrey’s exuberant personality and crusading liberalism. He ran for mayor and lost in 1943, ran and won in 1945, and ran and was reelected by the largest majority in Minneapolis history in 1947.

Statewide, Minnesota had labored for decades under a three-party system. The urban Catholic Democratic Party, the weakest of the three, split the liberal vote with the state’s distinctive, largely Protestant and rural Farmer Labor Party, leaving the Republicans the largest of the three minority parties and the winner of most elections. In 1944 Humphrey worked to effect the merger that created the Democratic Farmer Labor Party, even though that meant accommodating Farmer Labor’s radical Popular Front elements. Four years later, as part of his campaign to win the new party’s Senate nomination, Humphrey fought hard to marginalize its left wing. With help from, among others, the young College of St. Thomas sociology and economics professor Eugene McCarthy, he prevailed in that bitter fight. Humphrey defeated the Republican incumbent, Joseph Ball, by 243,700 votes in November 1948—the first Democrat to win a popular election for senator in the history of Minnesota.
Nationally, President Truman and other liberal Democrats were waging a similar battle for control of the party against a left-wing Democratic faction led by former vice president Henry A. Wallace. Truman had fired Wallace as secretary of commerce in 1946 for publicly defending the postwar Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe. Now Wallace was running against the president as a third-party candidate. A founding member and vice chairman of the liberal, strongly anticommunist Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in 1947, Humphrey carried the scars and the savvy gained in Minnesota’s intraparty wars into the national fight against the borderline pro-Soviet Wallaceites. The best way to beat them, Humphrey believed (somewhat ruefully, because he had been a Wallace admirer before Wallace broke with Truman), was for the Democratic Party to raise high the banner of civil rights by pledging support in its 1948 platform for the recent antidiscrimination recommendations of the President’s Commission on Civil Rights. “Just as American liberalism took on the double task of using government to keep the country prosperous and the rest of the world anticommunist,” Walter LaFeber has written, Humphrey “insisted on adding another dimension”—namely, civil rights. The problem was that the president himself, wary of provoking an additional third-party challenge from segregationist southern Democrats, wanted the platform to mute the issue.

Humphrey persuaded 30 of the 108 platform committee members to endorse a minority plank supporting the civil rights commission report, enough to bring the issue to the full convention. Not just liberals but also, with an eye on the many black voters in their cities, northern bosses such as Chicago’s Jake Arvey and the Bronx’s Ed Flynn supported the plank. In the floor debate, heard by an estimated 60 million radio listeners and 10 million television viewers, Humphrey’s eight-minute speech was electrifying—arguably the most effective convention speech since William Jennings Bryan’s much longer “Cross of Gold” oration at the 1896 Democratic convention. A 651.5 to 582.5 majority of delegates responded to Humphrey’s plea to “get out of the shadow of states’ rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights” by approving the minority plank. Humphrey’s speech made him a national figure, and ADA’s leaders promoted him as Truman’s running mate. Truman chose Kentucky senator Alben Barkley instead, and Humphrey won his Senate election. At the start of the 81st Congress, Time pictured the newly elected senator on its January 17, 1949, cover with a whirlwind at his back, describing him as “a hardworking, fast-talking . . . glib, jaunty spellbinder.”
The conservative southern committee chairs who quietly dominated the Senate expected not to like Humphrey when he arrived in 1949: he was a liberal, a civil rights enthusiast, and, in their view, a showboater. He confirmed their apprehensions by introducing fifty-seven bills and resolutions on a wide variety of topics as a newly minted senator. Coming from a freshman ranging outside his committee specialization, none were treated seriously. He then began his second year by proposing to abolish Virginia senator Harry F. Byrd’s fiscally conservative Joint Committee on Reduction of Non-Essential Federal Expenditures. The attack itself was indecorous. Compounding the offense was that Humphrey delivered it when Byrd was absent—visiting his sick mother, it turned out. Six days later, over a four-hour period, leading senators rose to attack Humphrey and then, when he attempted to defend himself, walked out of the chamber.

Humphrey realized that he had become a Senate pariah. Even strongly anticommmunist speeches defending the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and the war in Korea did him little good, although he did manage to insert a severe provision into the Communist Control Act of 1954 that provided criminal penalties for membership in the Communist Party. When Senate Democratic leader Lyndon Johnson threw him a lifeline, Humphrey grabbed it. He later recalled that LBJ invited him to become “the bridge from Johnson to my liberal colleagues,” a role that would benefit Johnson by enabling him to deal more effectively with the small but growing cohort of liberal Democrats and benefit Humphrey by knitting him into the fabric of the Senate leadership.\textsuperscript{75} During the 1950s Humphrey’s stature grew both within the chamber (where he became—Johnson’s term—a “whale,” no longer a “minnow”)\textsuperscript{76} and among liberals, who appreciated his championing the ideas that later became the basis for the Peace Corps, the Food for Peace program, Medicare, federal aid to education, and a nuclear test-ban treaty. Nevertheless, then and throughout their association, “LBJ treated him like a staff sergeant might treat a private,” said one close observer.\textsuperscript{77}

Setting his sights on national office, Humphrey was bitterly disappointed in 1956 and 1960. He convinced himself that he was Stevenson’s first choice for a running mate in 1956, an unlikely prospect considering that both of them were midwestern liberals. Caught flatfooted when Stevenson threw open the nomination, Humphrey was devastated when the delegation from Minnesota, whose primary Kefauver had won that spring, refused to support his own candidacy. “That was the worst, that was the bitterest defeat,” said his wife, Muriel Humphrey. “He felt he had been made a fool of.”\textsuperscript{78}
Four years later, when Humphrey challenged John Kennedy for the Democratic presidential nomination, his woefully underfinanced campaign was unable to compete effectively. Even the money that Johnson persuaded his own supporters to channel to Humphrey, the only nonmillionaire in the Democratic field, in hopes of snuffing out Kennedy’s candidacy was nothing compared with the Kennedy family’s bottomless treasury. In the West Virginia primary, the Kennedys paid Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., the bearer of an iconic name in the state, to cruelly attack Humphrey as a draft dodger: “He’s a good Democrat, but I don’t know where he was in World War II.” Humphrey had tried to enlist multiple times but was classified 4-F.) Facing what turned out to be a two-to-one defeat in the primary, Humphrey bitterly complained of Kennedy: “He’s the spoiled candidate and he and young, emotional, juvenile Bobby are spending with wild abandon.”

Humphrey endorsed Stevenson at the convention, and McCarthy, now a congressman from St. Paul who had campaigned for his fellow Minnesotan in the Wisconsin primary, gave an eloquent speech nominating the former Illinois governor.

Humphrey was elected Senate majority whip after the 1960 election, a mark of acceptance by his southern colleagues, as well as an indicator of how much more liberal the Democratic caucus was as a result of the 1958 midterm contests. As one who by temperament strongly preferred friendship to resentment, Humphrey worked faithfully to promote Kennedy’s legislative program and continued to treat Vice President Johnson warmly and respectfully even as others dismissed him. When Johnson unexpectedly became president, Humphrey began maneuvering for the vice presidential nomination. “I want to become president,” he told friends, inadvertently echoing Johnson’s comment four years earlier, “and the only way I can is to become vice president.”

In truth, as a nationally prominent, northern, liberal Johnson loyalist, Humphrey was the logical choice to balance the ticket in 1964. But that did not stop the president from prolonging the agony. One motive was to create suspense at a convention that lacked it. Johnson publicly strung along two of Humphrey’s fellow Democratic senators, Eugene McCarthy (elected from Minnesota in 1962) and Thomas Dodd of Connecticut. Beyond that, the president said privately, whoever his vice president was, “I want his pecker . . . in my pocket.” He knew that keeping the eager Humphrey waiting would increase his craving to secure the nomination on any terms. When he finally made the offer, Johnson said, “I need complete and unswerving loyalty,” and, Humphrey recalled, “I accepted under the conditions he had...
This came as no surprise to the president. A few days before the meeting Humphrey had said on television that he believed the vice president must have “a willingness literally to give himself, to be what the president wants him to be, to be a loyal, faithful friend and servant.”

As a final test, Johnson required that Humphrey defuse the convention eve crisis created when both the regular, segregationist Mississippi delegation and a delegation sent by the pro–civil rights Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) demanded to be seated. “Put a stop to this hell-raising so we don’t throw out fifteen states,” Johnson demanded of Humphrey. Ironically, Humphrey’s job was to head off exactly the kind of nationally broadcast convention battle about civil rights that had catapulted him to national fame in 1948. With help from another young Minnesota political protégé, state attorney general Walter F. Mondale, Humphrey arrived at a solution that pleased neither Mississippi faction but removed the dispute from the media spotlight, thereby accomplishing Johnson’s main purpose. One enduring consequence of the settlement was that the party’s rules were amended to ban racially discriminatory delegations from future conventions, starting in 1968. Another, according to William Chafe, was to “convince SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] members that they could not trust ‘white liberals,’” laying the predicate for SNCC’s turn to “black power” and even separatism two years later. SNCC volunteers had provided much of the MFDP’s grassroots energy, and three of them—two whites and one black—were murdered by white racists in June.

Humphrey was a popular choice when Johnson announced his selection at the convention, and he gave a rousing acceptance speech. His theme was that Goldwater was too extreme for even his Republican colleagues, much less for the nation as a whole. Eight times Humphrey declared, “Most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate voted for” the civil rights act, the tax cut, and so on—and then rang out the refrain, loudly joined by the delegates: “But not Senator Goldwater!” Humphrey continued his joyful, tireless campaigning into the fall and, as the certainty of victory in November became apparent, looked forward to serving eight years as vice president and then, at age sixty-one, to running a well-financed campaign for president in 1972.

MCCARTHY

For much of his political career Eugene McCarthy was the other Democratic leader in Minnesota and the other Catholic politician in the country. The difference was that McCarthy liked and respected Hubert Humphrey
despite their temperamental differences (Humphrey boosterish and talkative, McCarthy critical and laconic) but disliked and envied John and later Robert Kennedy.

McCarthy had an intensely Catholic upbringing in rural Watkins, Minnesota, and was educated at nearby St. John’s Preparatory School and then at adjacent St. John’s University, both of them connected to the Benedictine St. John’s Abbey from which their faculties were drawn. He was influenced by various Catholic social justice movements, whose commitment to a non-communist, Christian version of economic reform prevailed at St. John’s when he was a student in the 1930s. After teaching public school for several years, entering a monastery en route to becoming a priest or monk (he was released for excessive intellectual pride), earning a master’s degree at the University of Minnesota, receiving an instructorship at St. John’s, and serving as a civilian code breaker in the War Department’s Military Intelligence Division during World War II, McCarthy accepted a faculty appointment to teach economics and sociology at the College of St. Thomas in 1946. He joined Humphrey’s campaign to create the Democratic Farmer Labor
Party, and in 1948, at age thirty-two, he ran for and won a seat in the House of Representatives against a one-term Republican incumbent, entering the House the same year Humphrey entered the Senate. “There are altogether too many technicians in Washington now,” said McCarthy, smiling. “I guess I agree with Plato that it’s the philosopher who should rule.”

McCarthy was an active and influential House member. In 1957 he headed a group of Democratic liberals, informally known as “McCarthy’s Mavericks,” that developed its own policy positions and whip system to counter the influence of the conservative southern Democrats who occupied the important committee chairmanships. (It evolved into the Democratic Study Group two years later.) In 1958, realizing that the voices of senators but not representatives were heard in the national media, McCarthy sought and, as part of that year’s Democratic sweep, won a seat in the upper chamber, unseating Republican incumbent Edward Thye by 73,000 votes. But McCarthy was bored in the Senate, alienated from both its conservative inner circle and his fellow liberals, who came to regard him as aloof, arrogant, and lazy. “Stubbornness and penicillin / hold the aged above me,” wrote McCarthy, an amateur poet.

McCarthy especially disliked John Kennedy, a fellow Catholic and, born one year after McCarthy, his contemporary. Four years after refusing to support Kennedy for vice president at the 1956 Democratic convention, McCarthy acidly told Tip O’Neill: “Actually I’m the one who should be nominated [for president]. Any way you measure it, I’m a better man than John Kennedy. I’m smarter, I’m a better orator, and if they’re looking for a Catholic, I’m a better Catholic. Of course, I don’t have a rich father.” This was in keeping with another of McCarthy’s remarks in 1960: “Why don’t they just nominate me? I’m twice as liberal as Humphrey, twice as Catholic as Kennedy, and twice as smart as [Missouri senator Stuart] Symington.” McCarthy supported Johnson for the nomination, thinking he could balance the ticket as Johnson’s northern and Catholic running mate. With Johnson’s permission he gave the nominating speech for Stevenson in hopes of stopping Kennedy.

Although McCarthy was as inactive on his own behalf in 1964 as he had been in 1960, he became southern Democrats’ favorite candidate for vice president on the Johnson ticket. This was partly because he somewhat idiosyncratically favored the oil depletion allowance, a liberal anathema and a southern sacred cow, but mostly because they rightly feared that the strongly and, in the South, notoriously pro–civil rights Humphrey would get the nod unless they could come up with a different, less effective north-
ern liberal whom Johnson liked. Opposition to McCarthy by Robert Kennedy, who in addition to personal dislike did not want to lose his new status as the nation's foremost Catholic politician, cut both ways with the president. Johnson toyed with the idea of naming McCarthy, who would balance the ticket both regionally and religiously. He told him that he was one of two finalists, and asked him to be available at a moment's notice during convention week—all the while knowing that Humphrey would be the more loyal vice president and thinking him more able as well. McCarthy, who along with his wife Abigail McCarthy badly wanted the nomination, figured this out during the convention and sent a telegram to the president withdrawing his candidacy. Johnson was livid. What he really wanted was to appear before the delegates with both McCarthy and Humphrey in tow and then, after milking the moment for all its drama, send McCarthy forward to nominate Humphrey. “What a sadistic son of a bitch,” McCarthy said to Johnson aide Walter Jenkins when Jenkins told him why the president was upset. Whatever respect, or even affection, McCarthy may have had for Johnson vanished at that moment.

WALLACE

Johnson's fear that Robert Kennedy would oppose him in one or more of the fifteen Democratic presidential primaries in 1964 did not materialize. Instead, much to his surprise, the president was challenged by an unlikely opponent who was seeking to capitalize on the national notoriety he recently had gained by resisting racial integration: Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama.

Wallace honed his political skills and fixed his ambitions early in life in southeastern Alabama's Barbour County, where he was born and grew up. In 1935, at age sixteen, he was elected as a page by the Alabama state senate and told friends that he wanted to be governor. Although Wallace was not from a planter family in the state's black belt or a “Big Mule” industrial family in Birmingham, in 1937 he won the election for freshman class president at the University of Alabama—a traditional stepping stone to a career in state politics that almost always went to a son of the elite. He further developed his persuasive abilities the following summer by selling magazine subscriptions door to door in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and then heading north to Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan—hoaxing country people into believing that a new government agency, the Bureau of Recapitulation and Matriculation, was now requiring everyone to read something besides the Bible.
Soon after graduating from Alabama with a law degree in 1942, Wallace enlisted in the army air force. He declined Officer Candidate School because he “sensed that if I got back to Alabama and into politics, there would be far more GIs among the electorate than officers.” Using his serviceman’s right to mail letters without postage, Wallace sent thousands of notes and Christmas cards to nearly every registered voter in Barbour County, where Clio and Clayton, the towns he was raised in, were located. After the war Wallace was elected to the legislature as its youngest member in 1946. Although the voters knew he had flown numerous and hazardous B-29 missions bombing the coast of Japan under the command of Gen. Curtis LeMay, Wallace was able to keep secret the “severe anxiety state (chronic)” he suffered when assigned to a high-risk training mission in California after V-J Day. From the time of his discharge in December 1945, Wallace collected a 10 percent Veterans Administration disability pension for “psychoneurosis” induced by combat.

As a legislator Wallace hitched his wagon to the star of the state’s non-racist, populist governor, Jim Folsom. Wallace passed a 2 percent tax on liquor to fund eight new technical and vocational schools, filibustered a bill to raise the sales tax because it penalized “the lathe operators, the brick masons, the welders, the tool and die workers,” and served as a board member of historically black Tuskegee University. A statehouse reporter labeled him “the Number-One Do-Gooder in the Legislature,” and the Chamber of Commerce gave him one of its lowest grades. At the 1948 Democratic National Convention, Wallace was one of the few Alabama delegates not to walk out after Humphrey’s strong civil rights plank was added to the platform. Two years later he was elected circuit court judge in Barbour County over state senator Preston Clayton, a lieutenant colonel during the war and bearer of the ancestral name of one of the county’s main towns. “Now, all you officers vote for Clayton, and all you privates vote for me,” Wallace told voters. At the 1956 Democratic convention, he supported John Kennedy for vice president. This was not an unusual act for an Alabama politician of that era. Next to African Americans and Jews, poor southern whites in the 1950s “were among the nation’s most liberal constituencies on nonracial economic issues” such as “full employment, improved education, and low-cost medical care.”

Wallace ran for governor in 1958 as Folsom’s political heir, promising better roads and schools and opposing the Ku Klux Klan. He was endorsed by the state chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). But in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s 1954
Brown v. Board of Education decision and the 1955–1956 Montgomery bus boycott, Wallace lost to John Patterson, who as state attorney general had so tied up the NAACP in expensive litigation as to drive the chapter virtually out of existence. “Well, boys,” Wallace said after losing the election, “no other son-of-a-bitch will ever out-nigger me again.” He returned to his judgeship and, seizing an opportunity to defy the federal government on a civil rights issue, refused an order from racially moderate federal district court judge Frank M. Johnson, once a close friend, to turn over Barbour County’s voter registration records to the new U.S. Civil Rights Commission. “This 1959 attempt to have a second Sherman’s March to the Sea has been stopped in the Cradle of the Confederacy,” Wallace declared, while quietly satisfying Judge Johnson by giving the records to a grand jury, which gave them to the judge. Wallace tried to achieve martyrdom by pleading guilty to contempt of court, but Judge Johnson acquitted him, “refus[ing] to allow [this court’s] authority to be bent and swayed by such politically generated whirlwinds.” In 1962 Wallace ran again for governor and was elected by a landslide on the slogan: “Vote right—vote white—vote for the Fighting Judge.”

One of Wallace’s pledges in the 1962 campaign was to “stand in the schoolhouse door” to block any federal effort to integrate Alabama’s schools. A few months after declaring “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” in his inaugural address, he got an opportunity to do just that. When a federal court ordered that two African American students be enrolled at the University of Alabama on June 11, 1963, Wallace implored white Alabamans to stay home and let him act on their behalf—he didn’t want a repeat of the white riot that accompanied James Meredith’s integration of the University of Mississippi in 1962. Wallace then stood in the doorway of the campus’s Foster Auditorium, raised his hand, and said “Stop!” to the approaching deputy attorney general, Nicholas Katzenbach. He made a statement denouncing the Kennedy administration’s “force-induced intrusion” on the university to the four hundred national and international reporters and camera operators covering the event. Wallace continued blocking the door while Katzenbach and aides escorted the students to their new dormitories. His attention-getting act of mock defiance, the only one of its kind that any southern governor was able to choreograph, was a dark pastiche of Rev. Martin Luther King’s recent actions during that spring’s Birmingham civil rights campaign: defy the law,
act out a symbolic, nonviolent drama in which a brave victim stands up for principle against overwhelming force, and in doing so “turn an apparent legal and practical defeat into a political victory.”

When more than forty thousand telegrams of support flooded into the governor’s office, more than half from outside the South, Wallace began thinking about running for president. He had already shown the ability on national television programs such as Meet the Press to adopt a disarmingly reasonable and good-humored persona. Wallace dropped his racial talk in such settings and instead defended himself and his region in terms of constitutional principles such as states’ rights, property rights, and judicial restraint. He also pointed to his record in Alabama of providing free textbooks to public school students and constructing new junior colleges, trade schools, and mental health facilities. Venturing north that fall to speak at Harvard University, Brown University, and Dartmouth College, Wallace had the Confederate flag and “Stand Up for Alabama” logo on his state airplane painted over and replaced with the American flag and “Stand Up for America.”

Wallace’s public stance of embattled intransigence in the face of certain defeat resonated not just with white southerners but also with some northerners participating in centennial observations of the Civil War, which tended to cast the South as valiant and honorable in defeat. In spring 1964, in faint imitation of Robert E. Lee’s decision to take the fight to the North by invading Maryland and Pennsylvania, Wallace entered three northern presidential primaries against local Johnson surrogates who were standing in for the president: Gov. John W. Reynolds in Wisconsin (April 7), Gov. Matthew Welsh in Indiana (May 5), and Sen. Daniel Brewster in Maryland (May 19). “In each campaign,” Marshall Frady wrote, “Wallace met with total rejection from the state’s establishment—political, religious, and journalistic.” But Wallace calculated that the massive northward migration of poor whites and poor blacks seeking industrial employment in recent decades had made the North more like the South.

In particular, Wallace thought, northern whites were becoming more resentful of African Americans. Campaigning in Wisconsin, Wallace discovered a new, superficially race-neutral issue—crime—that struck a chord with big-city white ethnics, especially those living near expanding black neighborhoods. “If you are knocked in the head on a street in a city today,” he told rallies, to massive cheers, “the man who knocked you in the head is out of jail before you get to the hospital.” Wallace received a surprising 33.8 percent of the Democratic vote in Wisconsin, and he followed that with
29.8 percent in Indiana. In Maryland, Wallace won 42.7 percent, including a majority of the state’s white vote. Ethnic neighborhoods in Baltimore that had voted two to one for Kennedy in 1960 went strongly for Wallace.\(^\text{111}\)

None of these showings threatened Johnson’s lock on the Democratic nomination. Wallace was awarded not a single delegate and was denied a place on the convention program. On June 5 he said that he would run as an independent candidate in the general election and even got on the ballot in sixteen states. When it became clear that Goldwater would be the Republican nominee, Wallace’s funding from conservative southerners dried up. An independent campaign would serve only to divide the anti-Johnson vote in the South. On the eve of the Republican convention, Goldwater, who regarded Wallace as a racist bully, spurned a private entreaty from the governor to be his vice presidential running mate, an offer conveyed by prominent Alabama Republican Jim Martin. Wallace couldn’t understand why. “It must be apparent to a one-eyed nigger who can’t see good out of his other eye that me and Goldwater would be a winning ticket,” he said. But on July 19 Wallace ended his campaign.\(^\text{112}\) “My mission has been accomplished,” he declared, and immediately began planning for 1968.\(^\text{113}\)

**THE REPUBLICANS**

The Democrats emerged from the 1964 election confident about who their candidate would be in 1968: Lyndon Johnson. The Republicans lacked not just a presumptive nominee but also, it seemed, an adequate talent pool from which to draw one. Goldwater, whose Senate term expired at the end of 1964, had no interest in serving even as the party’s titular leader. When conservatives thought about who might carry his torch in 1968, no names came to mind—except, for a few, that of the actor Ronald Reagan, who unlike all previous presidents and major party nominees, had spent his entire career in show business.

The party’s other recent presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, renounced politics after losing the 1962 election for governor of California—and then left his native state to practice law in New York City. Yet Nixon won points from conservatives by ardently campaigning for Goldwater, who was so grateful that at the January 1965 meeting of the Republican National Committee he pledged to support Nixon if he ever ran again. Nelson Rockefeller, as governor of New York, remained the leading figure in the party’s eastern liberal wing, which expected to take back control of the GOP now that southern and western conservatives had had their electorally futile chance. But Rockefeller had been bloodied in two consecutive bids for
the nomination and had little appetite for another. If not Rockefeller, then perhaps Gov. George Romney, the winner of a landslide reelection in Michigan (even as Goldwater was losing the state by two to one) but also disliked by conservatives for sitting out the campaign against Johnson. And as imperfect a talent pool as Nixon, Rockefeller, Reagan, and Romney seemed to constitute, the ranks of other well-positioned potential nominees—senators (just thirty-five Republicans, none of apparent presidential ambition and caliber), governors (sixteen, also a thin roster apart from Rockefeller and Romney), and former vice presidents (none other than Nixon)—were weaker still.

Nixon

By 1960 Richard Nixon had been on the national ballot as often as any American politician in history besides FDR (whose record he would eventually tie) and had done so at a younger age than anyone besides William Jennings Bryan. Nixon was thirty-nine in 1952, forty-three in 1956, and forty-seven in 1960. The son of a hard-luck grocer in Whittier, California, Nixon had worked his way through Whittier College. After naval service in World War II, during which he gained renown among his fellow junior officers as a talented poker player, Nixon returned to Los Angeles County as a Duke-educated lawyer and launched a career marked by political risk-taking. In 1946, at age thirty-three, he cashed in half his savings (much of it from wartime poker), challenged five-term Democratic congressman Jerry Voorhis, and was elected to the House of Representatives from California’s Twelfth District with 56 percent of the vote as part of the nationwide Republican sweep. Two years later, as a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, Nixon staked his political reputation on the veracity of Whittaker Chambers, a brilliant but eccentric Time editor who accused the widely respected state department official Alger Hiss of being a Soviet agent.114 In 1950, when that gamble paid off with Hiss’s conviction for perjury, Nixon sought and won a Democratic-held open seat in the Senate against a fellow representative, Helen Gahagan Douglas, the wife of film actor Melvyn Douglas and until recently a mistress of Lyndon Johnson’s.115 Nixon’s 59 percent vote led California’s GOP ticket by 7 percentage points; he won by 681,000 votes in a state where registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans by 1 million.

Nixon described himself as a “practical liberal.”116 But the thread that ran through all his successful early political gambles was fierce opposition to communism and a willingness to characterize his Democratic op-
ponents as insufficiently anticommunist. This raised his national profile among Republicans, who blamed the Roosevelt and Truman administrations for multiple postwar failings: allowing the Soviet Union to take over Eastern Europe, standing by as communist revolutionaries overthrew the pro-American government of China, and showing insufficient concern about the presence of communists in the federal government. (Nixon, unlike Joseph McCarthy, actually helped send a communist to jail.) Wanting to tap into this sentiment in 1952, former Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey and other advisers to current nominee Dwight Eisenhower, a sixty-two-year-old man who as supreme allied commander during the war had led an alliance that included the Soviets, persuaded Ike to add the young, famously anticommunist Nixon to the ticket. Nixon passed Eisenhower’s one litmus test: he shared Ike’s “Modern Republicanism,” especially its emphasis on international engagement rather than a retreat to the isolationism of Robert Taft, the Senate Republican leader and Ike’s defeated rival for the nomination. “Don’t get fat, don’t lose your zeal, and you can be president some day,” Dewey told Nixon.

Nixon’s candidacy was nearly derailed when the New York Post, a liberal paper at the time, ran a story on September 18 headlined: “Secret Rich Men’s Trust Fund Keeps Nixon in Style Far beyond His Salary.” The charge was baseless: the Nixons lived modestly and the fund was public, independently audited, raised through small donations, and used only for political expenses. But the Eisenhower campaign regarded the controversy as a damaging distraction from the presidential contest. Eisenhower’s aides, and soon Ike himself, wanted Nixon to resign from the ticket. “I do not see how we can win unless Nixon is persuaded to withdraw,” Eisenhower told Gov. Sherman Adams of New Hampshire. But on September 23 Nixon went all in with a nationally televised speech. Declaring that “every dime we’ve got is honestly ours,” including his wife Pat Nixon’s “respectable Republican cloth coat,” he added that there was one personal gift he would never give back: their daughters’ “little cocker spaniel dog,” Checkers. Nixon concluded the thirty-minute program by urging viewers to wire the Republican National Committee about whether he should step down or not. His television audience of sixty million, about 40 percent of the entire population, was the largest in history at the time. Television was still a new mass medium, no national candidate had ever made such a dramatic and personal speech, and the program aired on NBC right after the popular Texaco Star Theatre starring Milton Berle. Four million Americans weighed in with telegrams, letters, or phone calls, running seventy-five to one in
Nixon’s favor. “Laying bare his most private hopes, fears, and liabilities,” wrote conservative columnist Robert Ruark, “this time the common man was a Republican, for a change,” one who “suddenly placed the burden of old-style Republican aloofness on the Democrats.”

“You’re my boy,” Eisenhower publicly greeted Nixon after summoning him to the Wheeling, West Virginia, airport. But little love was lost between the two men from that point on. Ike was especially annoyed that in his speech Nixon said that for any candidates not to “make a complete statement as to their financial history . . . will be an admission that they have something to hide.” Eisenhower, who four years earlier had gotten a special tax break that saved him $476,000 on royalties from his postwar memoir *Crusade in Europe*, had no interest in opening his records for inspection.

Nor had the five-star general appreciated the lieutenant commander telling him in a phone call to “shit or get off the pot” when he delayed making a decision.

In 1948, GOP operatives were convinced, they had “snatched defeat from the jaws of victory” by running too high-minded a campaign against Truman. They would not make that mistake again. Nixon’s main assignment, both as a candidate and, after winning the election, as the first vice president of the television age, was to campaign for Republicans and attack the Democrats so that Eisenhower could remain above the partisan fray. Perversely, however, Nixon’s enthusiastic performance as attack dog, a new role for a vice president, earned not Ike’s appreciation but his faint disdain. In eight years in office Eisenhower never invited Nixon into the White House residence. But when he tried to ease Nixon off the ticket in 1956, the president discovered that the popularity among rank-and-file Republicans that the vice president had acquired while cultivating the party’s grass roots made such a move politically impossible. In the fall campaign Stevenson, once again the Democratic nominee, went after Nixon, knowing that to attack the popular Ike would get him nowhere. “The president’s age, his health . . . make it inevitable that the dominant figure in the Republican party under a second Eisenhower term would be Richard Nixon,” Stevenson said, alluding to Ike’s heart attack in 1955 and bowel surgery in 1956. “Nixonland” would be “a land of slander and scare; the land of sly innuendo, the poison pen, the anonymous phone call.”

Eisenhower was the first president to bump against the two-term limit imposed by the Twenty-second Amendment in 1951. A wholly unanticipated consequence of that amendment was to free second-term vice presidents to spend four years seeking the presidency without overtly offending
the incumbent.\textsuperscript{127} Nixon, who had already compiled a long list of political debts by endlessly campaigning for local candidates and raising money for local party organizations, took advantage of this opportunity. It was his best chance to buck the historical odds—in the century prior to 1960 thirteen current or former governors of New York had been nominated for president, but not a single incumbent vice president. Rockefeller, who was elected governor in 1958 and already had a national reputation, certainly wanted the nomination, but he decided not to run after discovering that Nixon had quietly locked it up. Rockefeller then exacted a price for his support at the 1960 Republican convention. At the governor’s insistence Nixon came to his New York apartment and accepted fourteen Rockefeller-dictated changes in the party platform. Goldwater branded the so-called Compact of Fifth Avenue as the “Munich of the Republican Party.”\textsuperscript{128} The 1960 Republican convention was the last at which a candidate would feel the need to appease the party’s left. From then on it would be their right flank that nominees would have to guard.

Nixon’s risk-taking continued in the general election campaign against Kennedy. Confident from the Checkers speech that he had mastered television (and convinced in any event that “television is not as effective as it was in 1952” because “the novelty has worn off”), he agreed to four debates, the first in history between presidential candidates.\textsuperscript{129} Just by debating, Nixon yielded whatever advantage of stature he had accrued over his less experienced rival from official trips to fifty nations and from filling in capably when Eisenhower was temporarily disabled by health crises, which continued into his second term. On top of that, Nixon refused to rehearse, rejected wearing professionally applied makeup suitable to hot, harsh studio lights, and generally ignored the camera—and with it the television audience of eighty million. As William Rorabaugh has observed, “Nixon was both cocky and naïve about television, a lethal combination.”\textsuperscript{130}

Nixon also adopted a high-risk strategy for the overall campaign. Surprised by the large and enthusiastic crowds at late August campaign appearances in Atlanta and Birmingham, he muted his longstanding support for civil rights in an impulsive effort to carry the still solidly Democratic Deep South—completely undoing whatever he had hoped to accomplish by choosing the liberal Massachusetts United Nations ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, as his running mate. (He later said he wished he had chosen Sen. Thruston Morton of Kentucky.)\textsuperscript{131} Nixon’s uneasy relationship with Eisenhower, recently aggravated when the president publicly told \textit{Time} reporter Charles Mohr on August 24 that he would need a week to think of a
specific idea he had gotten from his vice president, caused him to not ask Ike to join the campaign until just before the election. Nothing relieved Kennedy more than Eisenhower's long absence from the hustings, especially when he saw the massive and jubilant crowds that cheered the president, belatedly, during the final rallies of the campaign.

Nixon's gambles did not pay off in 1960, and he lost to Kennedy by the narrowest of margins: two-tenths of a percentage point in the national popular vote. Still relatively young and politically viable, Nixon was a gracious loser, refusing to contest the election and calling off a planned postelection series of articles by Herald Tribune reporter Earl Mazo on fraudulent Democratic voting in Texas, Illinois, and elsewhere. He decided to run for governor of California in 1962, vowing to serve at least one full term, which would spare him from challenging Kennedy in 1964 but position him perfectly to run in 1968.

Although early polls showed Nixon with a substantial lead over incumbent Democratic governor Pat Brown, everything went wrong from that point on. A wealthy conservative rival for the Republican nomination, state assembly minority leader Joe Shell, refused to drop out, meaning that Nixon had to wage a hard-fought and expensive primary campaign just to be nominated. Brown effectively (and accurately) argued that Nixon was using California as a launching pad for his national ambitions. Nixon’s memoir Six Crises was published in March, a best seller but, with its focus on national and international events, one that suggested to Californians that he cared little about their state. On Election Day Nixon, who had lost to Kennedy by 119,000 votes nationally while carrying California in 1960, lost to Brown by 297,000 votes. The following morning, angry and exhausted, he told a press conference, “You don’t have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference.”

Five days later ABC aired a program called The Political Obituary of Richard Nixon, and six months after that, in May 1963, Nixon moved to New York and joined a law firm. “He was broke,” said his friend and Eisenhower administration colleague William Rogers. “He had no future in the field he knew best. He was in Rockefeller’s state and cut off.”

The Kennedy assassination caused Nixon to reassess. The case for Goldwater in 1964 was now weaker, he thought, because Johnson would undermine Goldwater’s southern and western appeal in a way that Kennedy could not have. The first post-assassination Gallup Poll of Republican vot-
ers showed Nixon in the lead for the 1964 nomination. He canceled plans to sign a contract for a book chronicling the election, thinking now that he might be the subject rather than the author of such a work.\(^{135}\) “I believe that any man who has become a public figure belongs to the public,” Nixon said on January 9, signaling his availability, “and as long as they want him to lead, to lead.”\(^{136}\) But he remained on the sideline and, when write-in campaigns on his behalf in New Hampshire and elsewhere led to disappointing primary results, he decided to stay out. Knowing that many of Goldwater’s delegates would be back in 1968, Nixon warmly introduced the nominee on the night of his acceptance speech at the convention as “Mr. Conservative,” now “Mr. Republican,” and soon “Mr. President.” During the fall, Nixon made 150 campaign appearances in thirty-six states, arguably working harder for Goldwater than the unenthusiastic candidate worked for himself.

ROCKEFELLER

Nelson A. Rockefeller was the most politically ambitious member of the most famously wealthy family in the country. His birth in Bar Harbor, Maine, on July 8, 1908, shared the front page of the New York Times with news of William Jennings Bryan’s nomination for president by the Democratic convention.\(^{137}\) Displaying acute self-knowledge, Rockefeller later reflected that he had wanted to be president “ever since I was a kid. After all, when you think of what I had, what else was there to aspire to?”\(^{138}\)

Most of Rockefeller’s career as a young man was in the executive branch of the federal government rather than in electoral politics. As a heavy investor in Creole Petroleum, the Venezuelan arm of his family’s gigantic main company, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Rockefeller saw firsthand that Nazi Germany was forging diplomatic and commercial alliances with the nations of South America in the late 1930s. Concerned, in 1940 he secured an appointment from President Roosevelt to a new, unsalaried position as coordinator of inter-American affairs, and four years later he became assistant secretary of state for American republic affairs. After Eisenhower took office in 1953, Rockefeller returned to government in the new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, whose creation he had recommended as chair of Ike’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization. In 1954 he joined the White House staff to work on a variety of foreign policy issues.

At age fifty, Rockefeller abandoned his status as a political independent holding appointive offices and in 1958 ran as a Republican for governor
of New York. Implausibly dubbed “Rocky,” an average-Joe nickname for a scion of wealth, he was a natural campaigner. The sight of a Rockefeller eating blintzes on city street corners and shouting, “Hiya, fella” to everyone he saw was captivating. In an otherwise terrible year for Republicans, Rockefeller won by 573,000 votes against the Democratic incumbent, Averell Harriman. A dedicated, big-spending governor of his state even as his gaze was fixed on the presidency, Rockefeller toured the country in the fall of 1959, asking local Republicans for their support on the grounds that “Nixon can’t win.” The Kennedys and election chronicler Theodore H. White were among the many who thought Rockefeller would have been unbeatable in 1960. But the governor discovered on his political travels that Nixon already had the nomination sewn up. He announced that he would not run, then threatened to enter the race six weeks before the convention unless the Republican platform included provisions critical of the Eisenhower administration’s civil rights and national defense policies. Ike was furious at Rockefeller for making these demands, especially concerning the defense plank, and irritated with Nixon for accommodating them.

Nixon’s defeats in 1960 and, especially, in 1962 when Rockefeller was cruising to a 539,000-vote reelection landslide in New York positioned the governor as the front-runner for the 1964 Republican nomination. But in 1961 he divorced his wife of thirty-one years and two years later married Margaretta “Happy” Murphy, who had divorced her husband, a friend of the governor’s, and left her four children so she could marry him. Conservatives already disliked Rockefeller—his takeover of the state GOP had led to the formation of the Conservative Party in New York in 1961, and he was the main obstacle to Goldwater’s nomination in 1964. Now many previous Rockefeller supporters turned against him, too, less because of the divorce than the remarriage. Sen. Prescott Bush of Connecticut lamented: “Have we come to the point in our life as a nation where the governor of a great state can desert a good wife, mother of his grown children, divorce her, then persuade a young mother of youngsters to abandon her husband and their four children and marry the governor?” Rockefeller’s seventeen-point lead over Goldwater among Republican voters in the Gallup Poll taken one week before he announced his engagement turned into a five-point deficit right afterward.

Rockefeller entered the race for the 1964 presidential nomination anyway. He won two of fifteen primaries and lost narrowly to Goldwater in California, the final contest, after Happy bore his child, Nelson Jr., the weekend before the voting. Realizing that he could not win the nomina-

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tion, Rockefeller withdrew in favor of a late entry, Gov. William Scranton of Pennsylvania. At the convention he concentrated on adding five planks to the Republican platform, especially one denouncing political extremism, which he later described as “certainly one that nobody could question.”

Goldwater’s delegates, rightly interpreting this as a veiled attack on them, drowned out Rockefeller with boos and chants of “We want Barry!” when he tried to speak. “Some of you don’t like to hear it, ladies and gentlemen, but it’s the truth,” he bitterly told the Republican delegates. “There is no place in this Republican party for such hawkers of hate, purveyors of prejudice, such fabricators of fear.” Rockefeller refused to campaign for Goldwater and after the election resolved that he and other eastern liberal Republicans would regain control of the party in 1968.

ROMNEY

George Romney was arguably the most successful Republican candidate in the country in 1964. Two years earlier, in his first campaign for political office, Romney had been elected governor of Michigan, defeating the incumbent Democrat John B. Swainson by 81,000 votes and ending fourteen years of Democratic rule in the state. In 1964 he was reelected by 383,000 votes even as Goldwater was losing Michigan by 1,076,000 votes. A strong supporter of civil rights, Romney earned 25 percent of the African American vote, up from 18 percent in 1962 and twelve times what Goldwater received in Michigan.

Romney was born in Mexico of Mormon parents in 1907, an unusual beginning for a political figure. His mother and father were American citizens who, along with many other dissident Mormon families, migrated to Mexico because polygamy had been outlawed in the United States in 1862 and forbidden by the church in 1890. Romney’s parents were not polygamists, but his grandparents, who led the migration to Mexico, were. In 1912, when George was five, the Mexican revolution drove the Romneys back to the United States, where his father moved the family from one poorly paid job to another in California, Idaho, and Utah. Romney, like his parents, rejected polygamy and, as an adult, strenuously opposed his church’s ban on blacks serving as priests. But he was an active lifelong Mormon who served as a missionary and church leader, proudly stating during his gubernatorial years that “I am completely the product of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.”

Although he later became famous as a successful Detroit automobile executive, Romney spent the 1930s in Washington, initially to pursue his
future wife Lenore, whose father was serving on the Federal Radio Commission. He found employment as a staff member with Sen. David Walsh, a Massachusetts Democrat, and then as a lobbyist for the large aluminum corporation Alcoa. During World War II Romney worked as general manager of the Automobile Manufacturers Association, based in Detroit but traveling frequently to Washington as the industry’s chief liaison to the federal government and most prominent spokesman to Congress. Afterward Romney entered the manufacturing side as part of what became American Motors. He took over the struggling company in 1954 and decided that the only way to compete with the Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler) was to develop a different kind of automobile. The result was the country’s first mass-produced compact car, the Rambler, with Romney himself as chief salesman for the vehicle in newspaper and magazine advertisements and television commercials. The Rambler’s success drove the share price of American Motors stock from seven to ninety dollars and made Romney a household name.

Romney also became an active participant in his state’s civic affairs. In 1959 he spearheaded a successful campaign to write a new constitution for Michigan. He decided to run for governor in 1962 and, as had been the case with Rockefeller in New York four years earlier, the state’s moribund Republican Party was happy to have a candidate whose personal popularity and wealth gave it a chance to be competitive. Narrowly elected (with active help in the campaign from his fifteen-year-old son Willard, better known as Mitt), during his first year in office Romney pushed unsuccessfully for a new state income tax. When Martin Luther King announced that he would lead a march in Detroit in June 1963, the governor declared the occasion Freedom March Day in Michigan. President Kennedy told a friend, “The one fellow I don’t want to run against is Romney. . . . No vice whatsoever.”

In 1964 Romney toyed with the idea of entering the race for the Republican presidential nomination after Rockefeller dropped out, but he decided instead to defer to Governor Scranton and concentrate on his own reelection. His actions from that point on irritated many and confused nearly everyone. Romney opposed Goldwater at the convention, then moved that the nomination be made unanimous, and then refused to support him against Johnson. Afterward, he wrote to Goldwater, complaining: “Dogmatic ideological parties tend to splinter the political and social fabric of a nation, lead to government crises and deadlocks, and stymie the compromises so often necessary to preserve freedom and achieve progress.” But Romney’s re-
election, in which he ran nearly 1.5 million votes ahead of Goldwater in Michigan, instantly made him a leading candidate for president in 1968.

REAGAN

Unlike all of the other national leaders who emerged from 1964, Ronald Reagan had neither held nor run for public office. But no single event that year did more for any political figure than Reagan’s nationally televised speech for Goldwater on October 27 did for Reagan himself. “A Time for Choosing”—later known among Reagan admirers as simply “The Speech”—raised more than $1 million in small donations, shattering all previous records for such an appeal. It also moved a small circle of wealthy California conservatives to urge and finance Reagan’s candidacy for governor in 1966 as a way station on the road to the presidency.

Unlike the locally born Nixon, Reagan was a prototypical southern Californian, raised in the Midwest but determined to seek his fortune in the sunny climes of the fastest-growing state in the union. Born in Illinois in 1911, Reagan first achieved success by imaginatively recreating Chicago Cubs baseball games for a Des Moines, Iowa, radio station based on bare-bones wire reports of the play-by-play. On a spring training trip to California with the Cubs in 1937 he did a screen test that led to a successful career as a film actor. In 1941 movie exhibitors voted Reagan the fifth most popular young star in Hollywood. “He has a cheerful way of looking at dames,” wrote film critic Bosley Crowther in the New York Times. Reagan became a board member of the Screen Actors Guild in 1941 and, after working as an army air force officer making training and propaganda films during World War II, was elected to the first of six consecutive one-year terms as SAG president in 1947.

Reagan’s Hollywood career failed to regain traction after the war. But he became intensely involved in union and partisan politics, so much so that his wife, actress Jane Wyman, divorced him (the headline in the June 29, 1948, Los Angeles Times read: “Jane Wyman Divorced; Blames Rift on Politics”). Reagan was a strong New Deal Democrat who campaigned both for Truman and, in Minnesota, for Humphrey in 1948. He also cut a radio spot for the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union lambasting “the 80th Congress and the National Association of Manufacturers” for “set[ting] back the cause of liberal government in the United States.” As president of the fifteen-thousand-member actors guild, which was investigated in 1947 by the House Un-American Activities Committee for...
subversive influence, Reagan defended his union’s vigilance in weeding communists from its ranks without satisfying the committee’s desire that he label any individual as a communist. “I detest, I abhor their philosophy,” he told the committee, including Representative Nixon, “but at the same time I never want to see our country become urged, by either fear or resentment of this group, that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles.”

Ronald Reagan campaigns for Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater in 1964. Reagan’s efforts on behalf of his fellow conservative launched his political career. (Credit: Courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library)
Reagan’s acting talents found a new home on television, where in 1954 he became host and occasional star of the weekly drama series General Electric Theatre. As part of the job, Reagan was expected to spend twelve weeks per year visiting some of GE’s 139 plants, which were spread over 38 states and employed about 250,000 people. GE thought he would be telling inside Hollywood stories. Instead, absorbing the ethos of his new corporate employer and influenced by the strongly conservative views of his new wife, Nancy Reagan, and her stepfather, neurosurgeon Loyal Davis, Reagan developed and over the years perfected his probusiness speech about the dangers of big government, a version of which he eventually delivered on television for Goldwater.150 “I suggest to you there is no left or right,” Reagan said, “only an up or down. Up to the maximum of individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism.”151

Reagan campaigned for Nixon as a Democrat in 1960, warning about Kennedy that “underneath the tousled boyish hair is still old Karl Marx.”152 He switched parties to campaign for Nixon again in 1962, then worked even harder for Goldwater in 1964, emceeing rallies so skillfully that veteran ABC newsman Howard K. Smith told Theodore White that Reagan had missed his calling—he should have been a politician. After watching “A Time for Choosing,” a group of self-made California multimillionaires led by car dealer Holmes Tuttle, oilman Henry Salvatori, and Walter Knott of Knott’s Berry Farm decided that in Reagan they had found the right messenger for their conservative philosophy. In early 1965 they formed “The Friends of Ronald Reagan” and began grooming him to run for governor the following year.

CONCLUSION

The nation’s resilience was tested in the year preceding the 1964 election by the assassination of a president. The challenge facing his successor—a Texan whose home state had been the scene of the crime, a southerner at a time when the civil rights movement was peaking in prominence and influence, and a scorned outsider in the administration of the slain president—was enormous. But the test of the political system posed by Kennedy’s assassination was a test it had passed before. Six of Kennedy’s predecessors had died in office, three of them shot to death as he had been. In every instance the vice president took over and served at least for the remaining balance of the term. As for Johnson himself, no one could have been more surefooted in dealing with the particular challenges he faced on taking office.
The resilience of the two-party system, especially in its prevailing form, also was tested in 1964. The Republicans’ recent record of futility matched that of the Whig Party, whose death had been the occasion of the GOP’s birth more than a century before. Like the Whigs from 1828 to 1852, the Republicans from 1932 to 1964 lost all but two presidential elections. As with the Whigs, the Republicans’ only victories came when the party nominated a victorious, largely nonpartisan general—William Henry Harrison in 1840 and Zachary Taylor in 1848, Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956—whose personal popularity far exceeded that of his party. The Whigs had controlled one or both houses of Congress for just four years during its lifetime, the same as the GOP from FDR to LBJ. The Whigs became extinct. Could the Republicans, who after the 1964 election made up only about one-third of the House, the Senate, the governorships, and the electorate, avoid that fate? Much would depend on what happened between January 1965 and November 1966, when voters once again would go to the polls in the 1966 midterm elections.