

## Economic Pressures and the Metropolitan Structure of National Election Politics: Realignment, or More Gridlock in the Present Period.

With the development of the authors' Detroit Election Study and a few related efforts, our understanding of the geographic structures of national election politics has increased substantially over the last decade or so. Most critically, scholars, including the author, have established powerful relationships between the development of national electoral instability and polarization since the collapse of the New Deal coalition in 1968, and the increasingly intense patterns of the segregation of urban residents by various measures of their respective income, wealth, age, family structure, education and profession, and even by their cultural and political proclivities and preferences, which have so much come to define the nation's urban regions in the post-war era. That is, whereas many in the popular media continue to talk about national election politics in terms of red states and blue states, increasing numbers of scholars have come to understand that it is in fact the complex physical, social, economic, and cultural structures of the nation's metropolitan regions that are most essentially and meaningfully connected to the shape and course of the nation's election politics.

But these urban structures, and the people who live within them, have been effected by intense levels of economic distress in recent years, as "The Great Recession," more than any other economic contraction in American history is, indeed, a metropolitan recession. This is certainly the case, since the roots of the nation's economic distress are so deeply buried within the increasingly unsustainable housing market that came so much to drive and to define the end-stage of the sprawl that has characterized so much of the nation's suburban development in recent decades..

Since the author noted some evidence for a possible realignment of the political structure of metropolitan Detroit towards an effective Democratic majority in the series of elections leading to Mr. Obama's victory in 2008, the region has only continued to be affected by intense economic pressures. In this paper, the author will explore the potential electoral effects of these stresses, as he seeks to find evidence for the continuation of a strengthening of the metropolitan structure of a Democratic majority within the region, or, perhaps, for its disintegration. In this analysis of the Detroit Election Study data, the author will, for the first time, include an aggregate analysis of national election returns comprehensive of all elections for Representative to Congress and for Senator, as well as for President, for all significant localities in the Detroit region, from 1960 to 2010. With this newly complete data, the author will be especially interested to clarify further the evolving electoral position of the region's white working-class suburbs, which have been so critical to the evolving electoral fortunes of the Democratic and Republican parties in the region.