

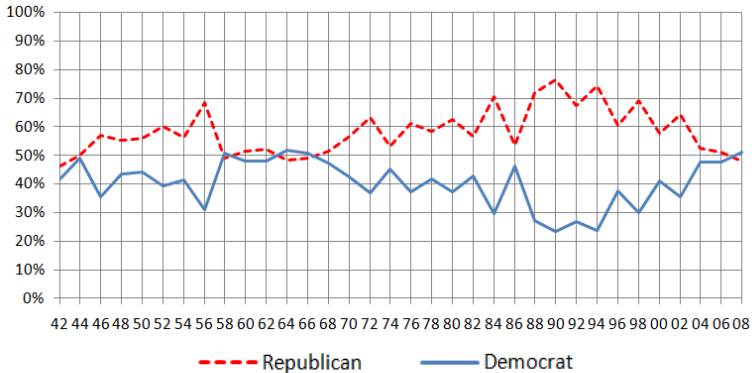
## CHAPTER TWO

### *A Congressional District in Transition*

From World War II to the present, Connecticut's fourth congressional district has been dominated by the Republican Party. From 1942 to 2008, which involves 34 congressional elections, Republican candidates were victorious a total of 30 times. In other words, since the start of America's involvement in World War II, Republicans have won Connecticut's fourth congressional district 88 percent of the time. It should be noted that of the four contests in which the Democrats won during this time period, it was the same Democrat, Donald J. Irwin, who won the seat in three of these contests. Irwin won the seat in 1958 but lost his bid for reelection in 1960. He then reclaimed his seat in 1964, due to President Lyndon Johnson's long coattails in the fourth district, and was reelected in 1966. In 2008, Democratic challenger Jim Himes defeated Republican Congressman Christopher Shays's bid for reelection, thus ending a long reign of Republican rule over the district. But other than these four contests during this span of time, Republicans have been elected and reelected, and often by large margins.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of votes received by Republican and Democratic congressional candidates within the fourth congressional district during congressional mid-term and presidential contests from 1942 to 2008. Republican dominance is apparent.

Figure 8  
 Percentage of Votes Received by Fourth District  
 Congressional Candidates in Mid-term and  
 Presidential Election Years, 1942-2008



### Straight or Split-Ticket Voting?

Straight-ticket voting was characteristic of the fourth district during presidential contests from 1960 to 1996. The party lever, which was eliminated by a state constitutional amendment in 1986, contributed to this pattern, although straight-ticket voting by no means disappeared once the lever was removed from voting machines. Fourth district voters routinely supported congressional and presidential candidates of the same political party. Split-ticket voting did appear, however, in 1996, 2000, and 2004, with fourth district voters supporting Republican incumbent Congressman Christopher Shays, while at the same time voting for Democratic presidential candidates Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and John Kerry. Shays, however, ran well ahead of the Democratic presidential candidates who won the district. Straight-ticket voting returned to the fourth congressional district in 2008. Fourth congressional district voters supported Democratic challenger Jim Himes and Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.

Table 7 presents the pattern of straight and split-ticket voting behavior in presidential election years in Connecticut's fourth congressional district over the course of fifty years.

Table 7  
Congressional and Presidential Voting Behavior in  
Connecticut's Fourth Congressional District, 1960-2008  
(in percent)

	Congressional		Presidential	
	R	D	R	D
1960	51.30	48.00	53.40	43.60
1964	48.20	51.80	38.20	61.80
1968	51.40	47.30	51.00	43.10
1972	63.10	36.90	61.90	36.60
1976	61.00	37.10	56.20	43.10
1980	62.60	37.40	52.60	36.50
1984	70.40	29.60	63.20	36.40
1988	71.80	27.10	56.60	42.30
1992	67.30	26.70	42.10	41.80
1996	60.50	37.60	39.80	51.10
2000	57.60	40.90	41.00	54.80
2004	52.40	47.60	46.30	52.40
2008	48.00	51.00	39.60	59.70

*Source:* Statement of Vote, 1960-2008. Office of Secretary of State, Hartford, Connecticut.

### Voting Behavior in the Seventeen Communities: Evidence of Transition

Congressional voting behavior in the seventeen communities of the fourth district appears to be shifting. The change in voting behavior has not by any means been dramatic or earth shaking, but there has nevertheless been noticeable change in several communities. For the purpose of this particular analysis, those communities in which Republican or Democratic congressional

candidates are elected by a 10 or more point margin are classified as strong Republican or strong Democratic communities. Those communities in which Republican or Democratic candidates normally win by a 5-9 percent margin are classified as moderately Republican or moderately Democratic. Communities in which Republican or Democratic candidates win by less than 5 percent of the vote will be classified as two-party competitive. The following coded maps of the fourth district, Figures 9-12, present the pattern of voting behavior in four recent congressional elections, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008.<sup>1</sup> Two of the elections are congressional mid-term elections (2002 and 2006) while two of the congressional elections occurred during presidential election years (2004 and 2008). As the maps show, the voting behavior within several fourth district communities indicate a noticeable move away from Republican dominance. In the 2002 congressional mid-term election, sixteen of the seventeen communities could be classified as strong Republican communities with respect to congressional voting behavior. In 2004, eleven communities were classified as strong Republican. In 2006, nine communities were in the strong Republican category, while in 2008 seven communities could be classified as such. In short, fewer and fewer communities within the fourth congressional district can now be regarded as Republican strongholds. The individual communities within the fourth district are becoming more competitive within the context of congressional elections.

### **Party Registration in the Fourth District**

#### *Emerging Trends*

The pattern of voting behavior examined above generally corresponds to party registration trends within the seventeen towns of the fourth district. The Republican Party still enjoys an advantage within the district's suburban communities, while the Democratic Party is dominant within the district's urban communities. At the same time, however, a careful inspection of voter registration trends reveals a gradual weakening of the Republican Party's base

Figure 9  
Fourth District Voting Behavior in the 2002 Congressional Election

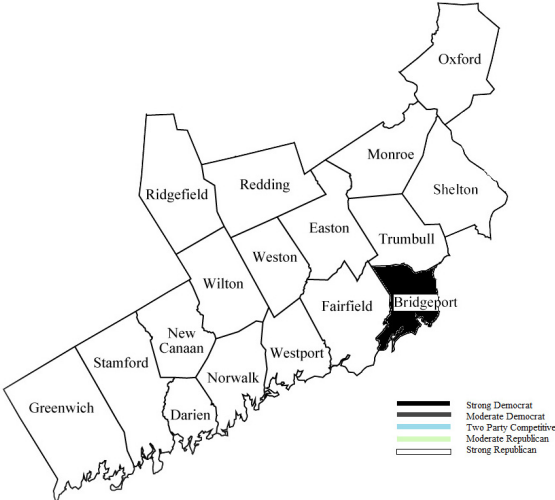


Figure 10  
Fourth District Voting Behavior in the 2004 Congressional Election

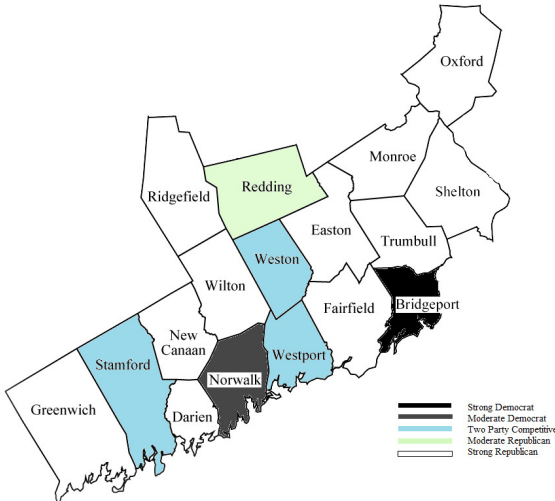


Figure 11  
Fourth District Voting Behavior in the 2006 Congressional Election

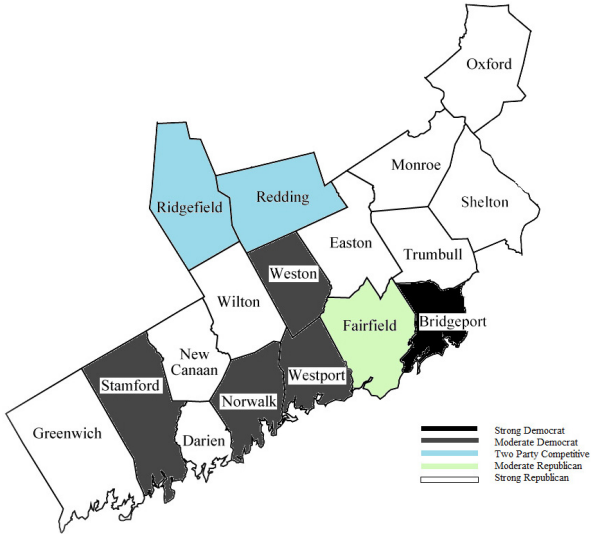
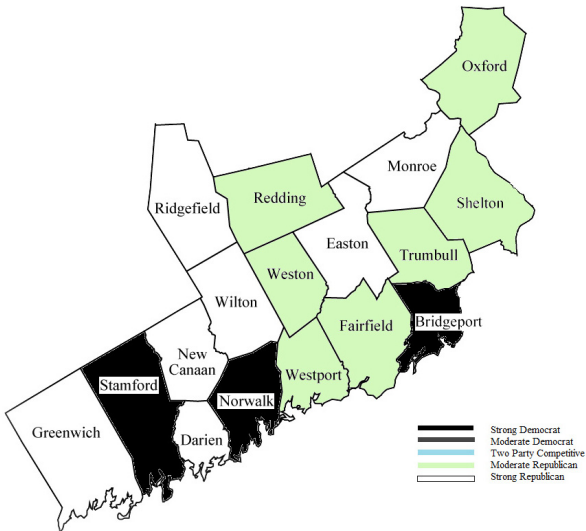


Figure 12  
Fourth District Voting Behavior in the 2008 Congressional District



in very traditional Republican communities. In such communities, the percentage of registered unaffiliated voters and the percentage of registered Democrats is growing (see table 8, at the end of this chapter). Whether a long-term partisan realignment within the fourth district is in progress can only be determined from future election results and party registration trends. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that a slow moving yet discernible realignment appears to be underway.

Modest movement in the direction of unaffiliated voters and Democrats can also be observed when registration figures for the seventeen fourth district communities are examined collectively. As evident in table 9, at the end of this chapter, movement away from the Republican Party is occurring. Although the realignment is taking place at a snail's pace, the trend is nevertheless evident.

Regardless of how one interprets the data presented in this chapter, the conclusion that must necessarily emerge is that the fourth congressional district is in a state of political transformation. And there can be no denying that recent changes in the political behavior of the district are somewhat portentous for the Republican Party. Partisan and political trends within the fourth congressional district are simply not in favor of the GOP. Congressional elections have become more competitive within the fourth district, fewer local communities are political bastions of the Republican Party, and party affiliation trends within the district further suggest a diminished Republican presence.

Although party affiliation figures within a congressional district provide insight into the political character of a district, such figures alone cannot capture the nuances of a congressional district and what makes the district a truly special and unique political enclave. The following chapter takes one deeper into the political complexion of the fourth congressional district by exploring the personalities who have represented the district from the end of World War II to the present. As one will quickly learn, there has been something quite different, and perhaps even unpredictable, among those who have been elected to the United States Congress from Connecticut's fourth congressional district.

Table 8  
Registered Party Affiliation Trends in Fourth  
Congressional District Communities, 2001-08  
(in percent)

R = Republican; D = Democrat; U - Unaffiliated

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bridgeport								
R	11	10	10	9	9	8	8	7
D	56	58	60	57	58	90	61	63
U	33	32	30	32	33	32	31	30
Darien								
R	57	56	56	53	53	51	39	49
D	16	15	16	16	16	17	13	19
U	27	28	28	30	31	31	47	31
Easton								
R	38	38	37	36	35	34	34	33
D	19	18	19	20	20	21	21	23
U	44	44	45	45	45	45	45	44
Fairfield								
R	33	33	34	32	32	31	30	29
D	24	24	24	25	25	26	26	28
U	42	42	42	43	43	43	43	42
Greenwich								
R	43	44	44	42	41	41	40	38
D	20	20	20	21	21	22	23	25
U	36	36	36	38	38	37	37	36
Monroe								
R	29	28	28	27	27	26	26	26
D	17	17	17	17	17	18	18	20
U	54	55	55	55	56	56	56	54
New Canaan								
R	54	53	54	51	52	51	51	49
D	17	17	17	18	18	19	19	21
U	29	30	28	31	31	30	30	30
Norwalk								
R	23	24	23	22	22	22	21	20
D	30	30	30	30	30	31	31	34
U	44	44	45	46	47	48	47	44



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Oxford								
R	31	28	29	28	29	30	30	30
D	16	16	16	16	15	16	16	18
U	53	55	55	56	56	55	53	52
Redding								
R	40	40	38	36	35	34	34	32
D	23	23	23	24	24	26	26	29
U	37	38	39	40	40	39	40	38
Ridgefield								
R	43	42	41	39	39	38	38	36
D	23	23	23	24	24	25	25	28
U	34	35	35	36	37	37	36	35
Shelton								
R	26	26	26	26	26	25	25	24
D	19	19	19	19	19	20	20	22
U	54	55	55	55	56	55	56	54
Stamford								
R	28	27	27	25	25	24	24	22
D	40	39	39	39	38	37	40	41
U	35	33	33	36	36	39	36	35
Trumbull								
R	28	27	27	26	26	25	25	24
D	23	23	23	23	23	24	24	26
U	50	50	50	51	51	51	51	49
Weston								
R	37	36	35	33	33	32	31	30
D	30	27	27	28	28	30	30	34
U	35	37	38	38	39	38	38	36
Westport								
R	36	35	34	32	31	30	29	28
D	30	30	27	31	31	33	33	36
U	34	35	38	37	38	38	37	36
Wilton								
R	44	43	42	40	39	38	38	37
D	21	21	21	22	22	23	24	27
U	34	36	36	38	38	38	38	37

*Source:* Office of Secretary of State, Hartford, Connecticut. Based on reports provided by the Registrar of Voters.

Table 9  
Registered Party Affiliation Trends in Fourth  
Congressional District, 2001-08  
(in percent)

	Republican	Democratic	Unaffiliated
2001	29	33	38
2002	30	31	39
2003	30	31	39
2004	28	31	40
2005	28	31	41
2006	27	32	41
2007	27	32	41
2008	25	35	39

*Source:* Office of Secretary of State, Hartford, Connecticut. Based on reports provided by the Registrars of Voters.