

Polarization & Incivility in American Politics: Is Congressional Gridlock Affecting U.S. State Legislatures?

4-H Teen Know Your Government Conference
Olympia WA February 15th, 2020

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

SAM REED

14TH SECRETARY OF STATE (3-TERM)

ORGANIZER OF MAINSTREAM REPUBLICANS OF WASHINGTON

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DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE

**"I wish there was a way I
could wave a magic
wand and put back when
people were respectful
of each other and the
Congress was
working for the
good of the
country and
not just along
party lines."**



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

NOLABELS.PK



American Politics

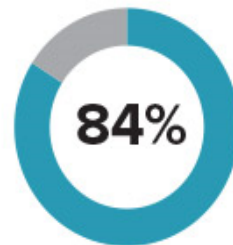


Image source: Atlantic

Bipartisan Agreement that Incivility in Politics is Problematic (2019)

Of Americans Surveyed...

INCIVILITY EXPERIENCES



Experienced incivility



Quit paying attention to politics because of incivility



Stopped buying from a company because of uncivil representatives



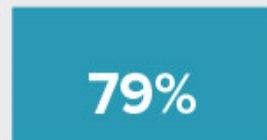
Experienced cyberbullying

Nearly
3X
increase
since 2011

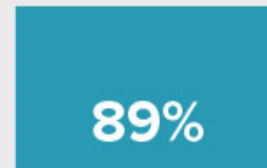
INCIVILITY PERCEPTIONS



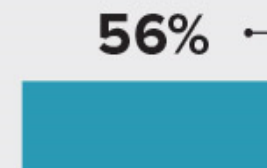
Think incivility has risen to crisis levels



Describe the 2016 presidential election as uncivil



Thinks incivility leads to intimidation and threats



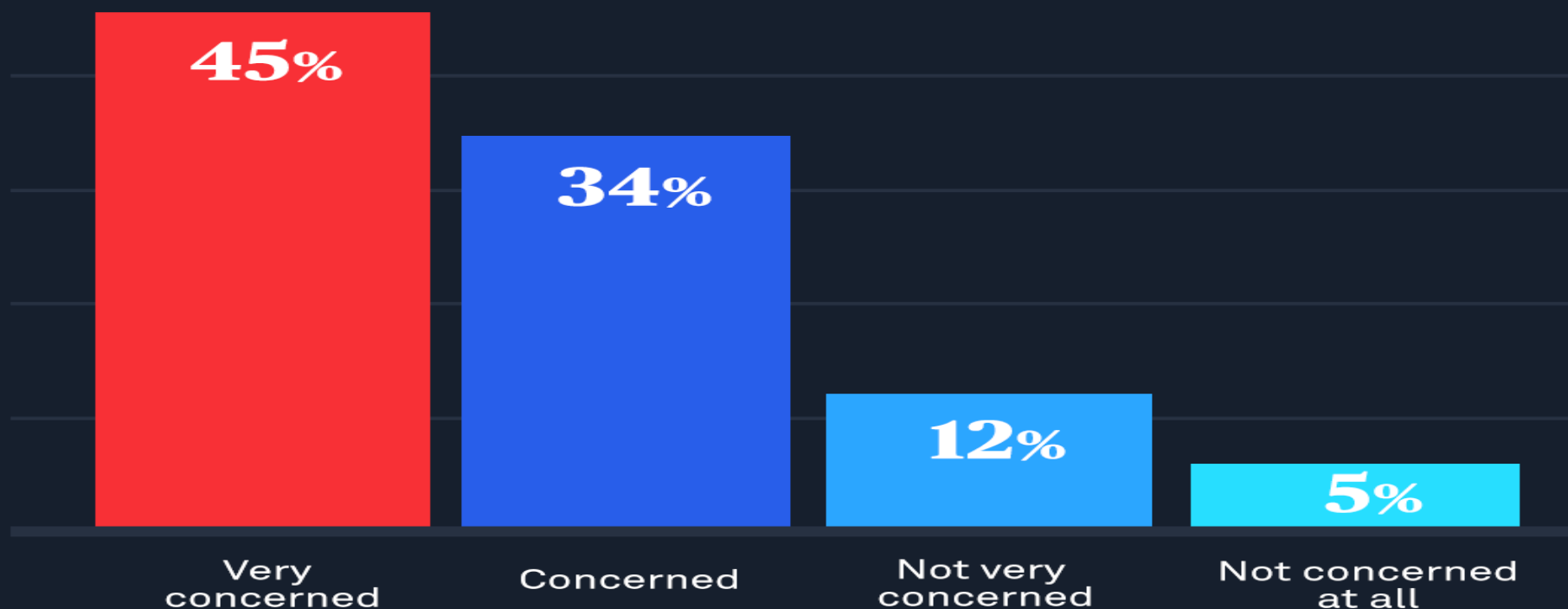
Expect incivility to get worse

Why?
Politicians 75%
Internet and social media 69%
News media 59%

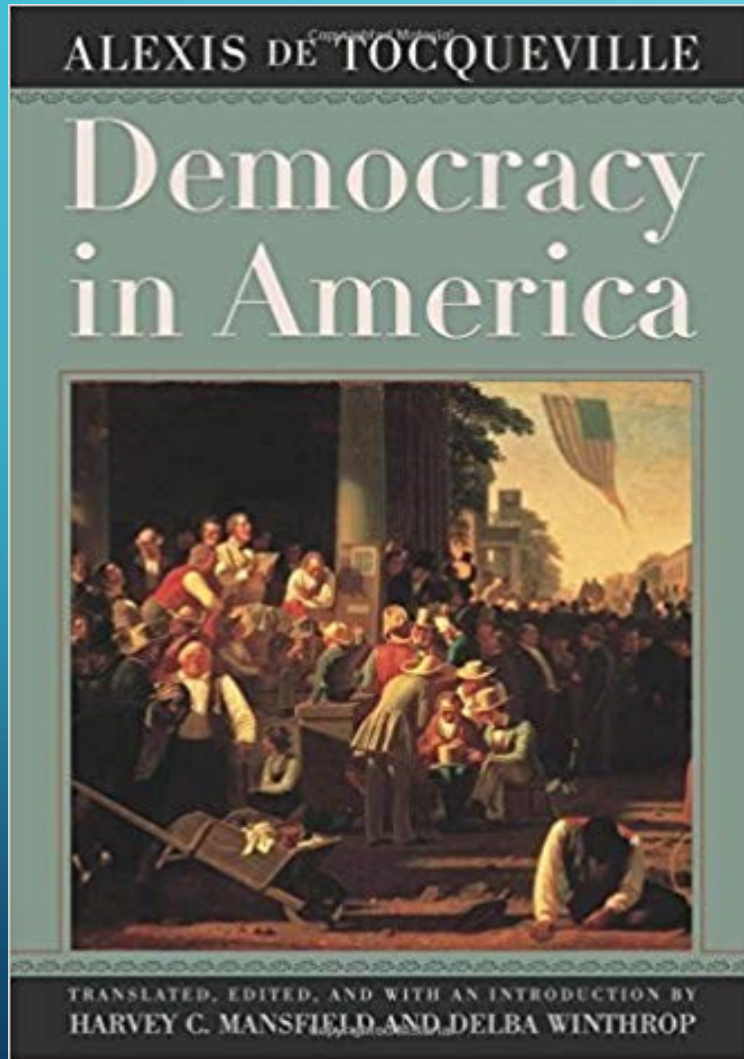
Source: National Institute for Civil Discourse, ICMA, Weber Shandwick, Powell Tate.

Poll: How concerned are you that the negative tone and lack of civility in Washington will lead to violence or acts of terror:

Source: PBS NewsHour/NPR/Marist Survey of 924 national adults, Oct. 28-29, 2018



Has Politics Ever Been Civil in the United States?
Recurring Cycles of Civility and Incivility a Part of U.S. History



“There is still some memory of the strict code of politeness, but no one knows quite what it said or where to find it.”

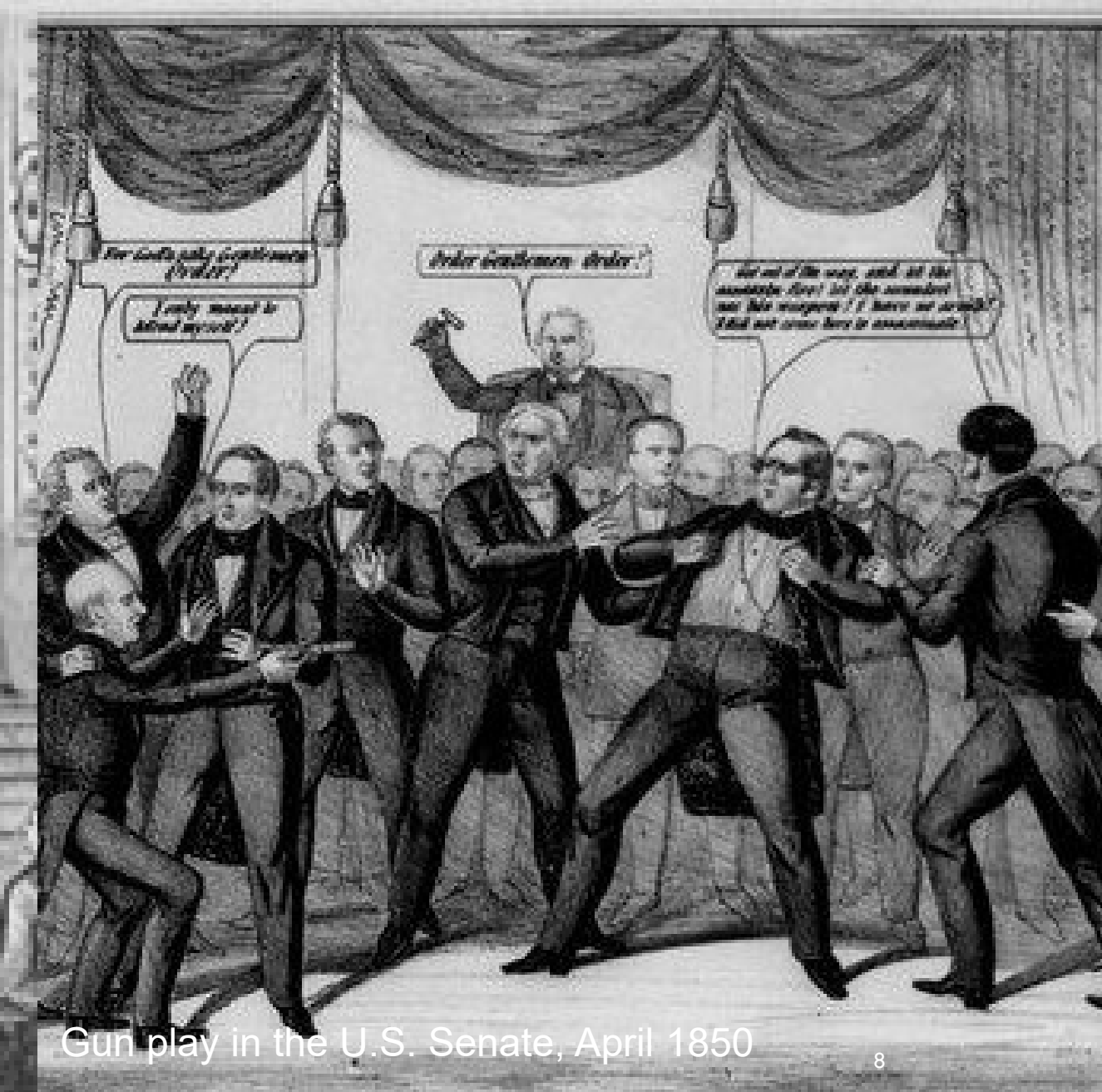
Legacy derives from courtroom decorum and the one-time high percent of legislators who were “lawyers” who crafted legislative rules, norms and traditions of respect, comity & civility



DUEL BETWEEN
AARON BURR AND
ALEXANDER
HAMILTON, JULY 11,
1804



Brawl on the Floor of
House of Representative,
February 6, 1858

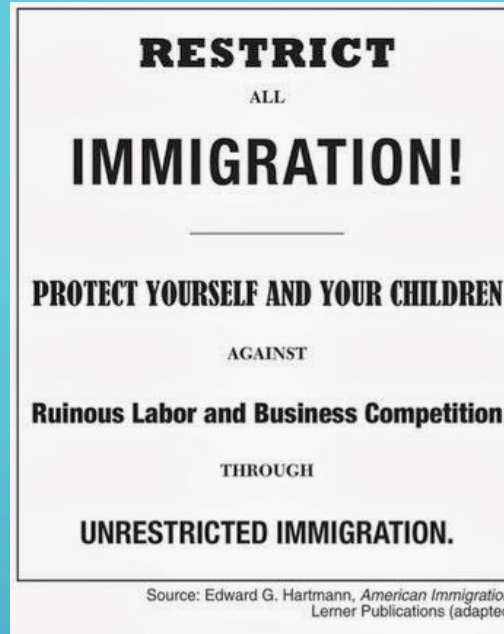
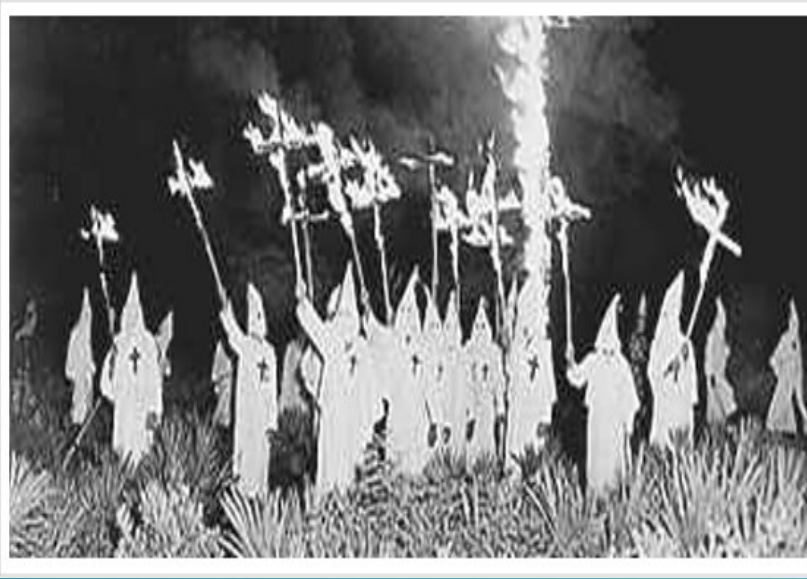


Gun play in the U.S. Senate, April 1850

SCENE IN UNCLE SAM'S SENATE.

27th APRIL 1850.

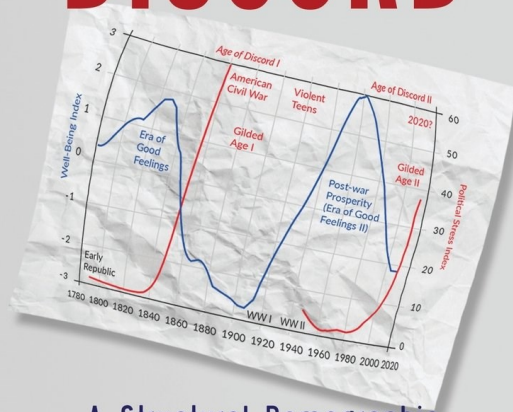
Polarized Politics in the 1920s in America



Remember the 1960s?

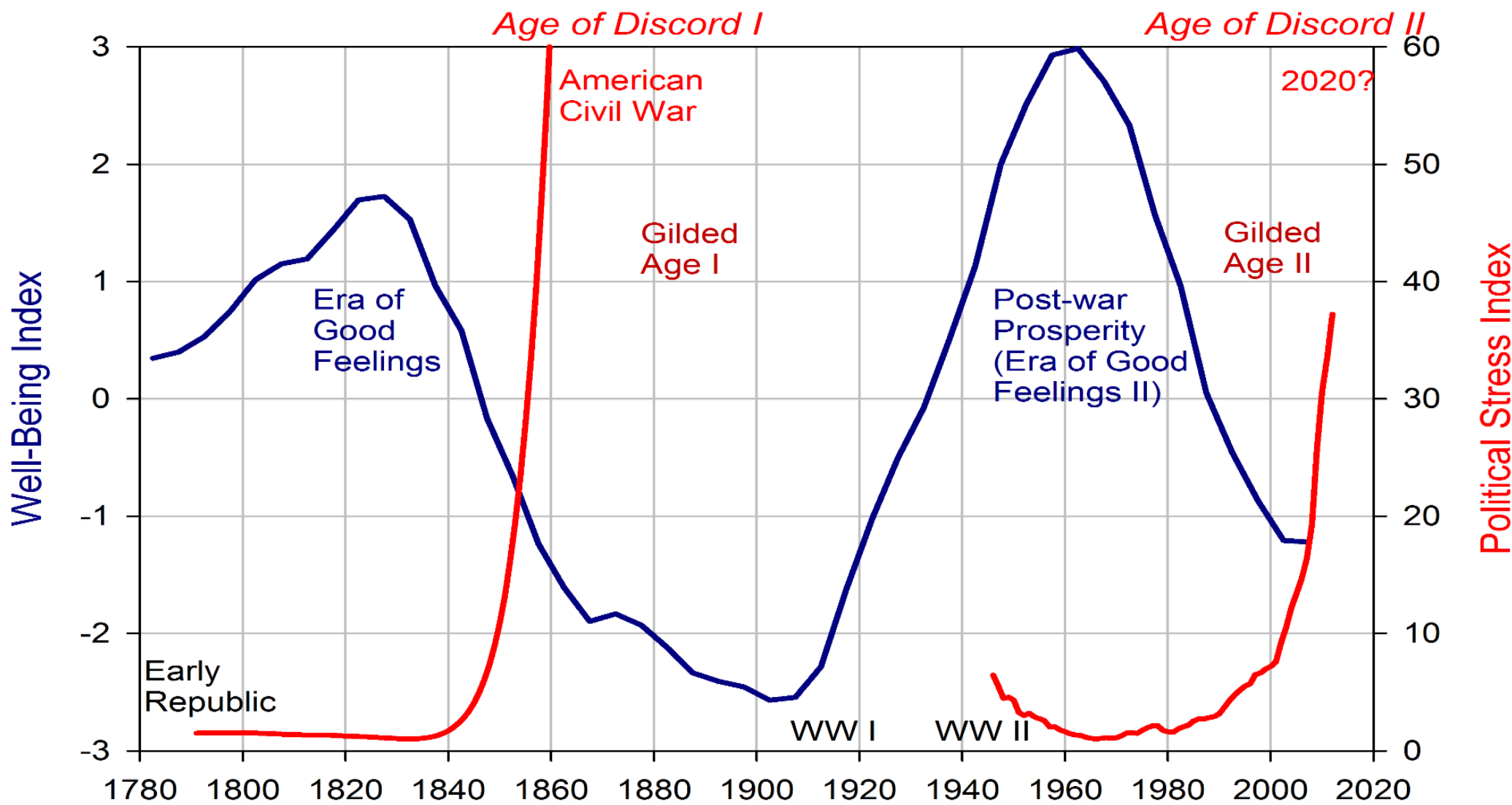


AGES OF DISCORD



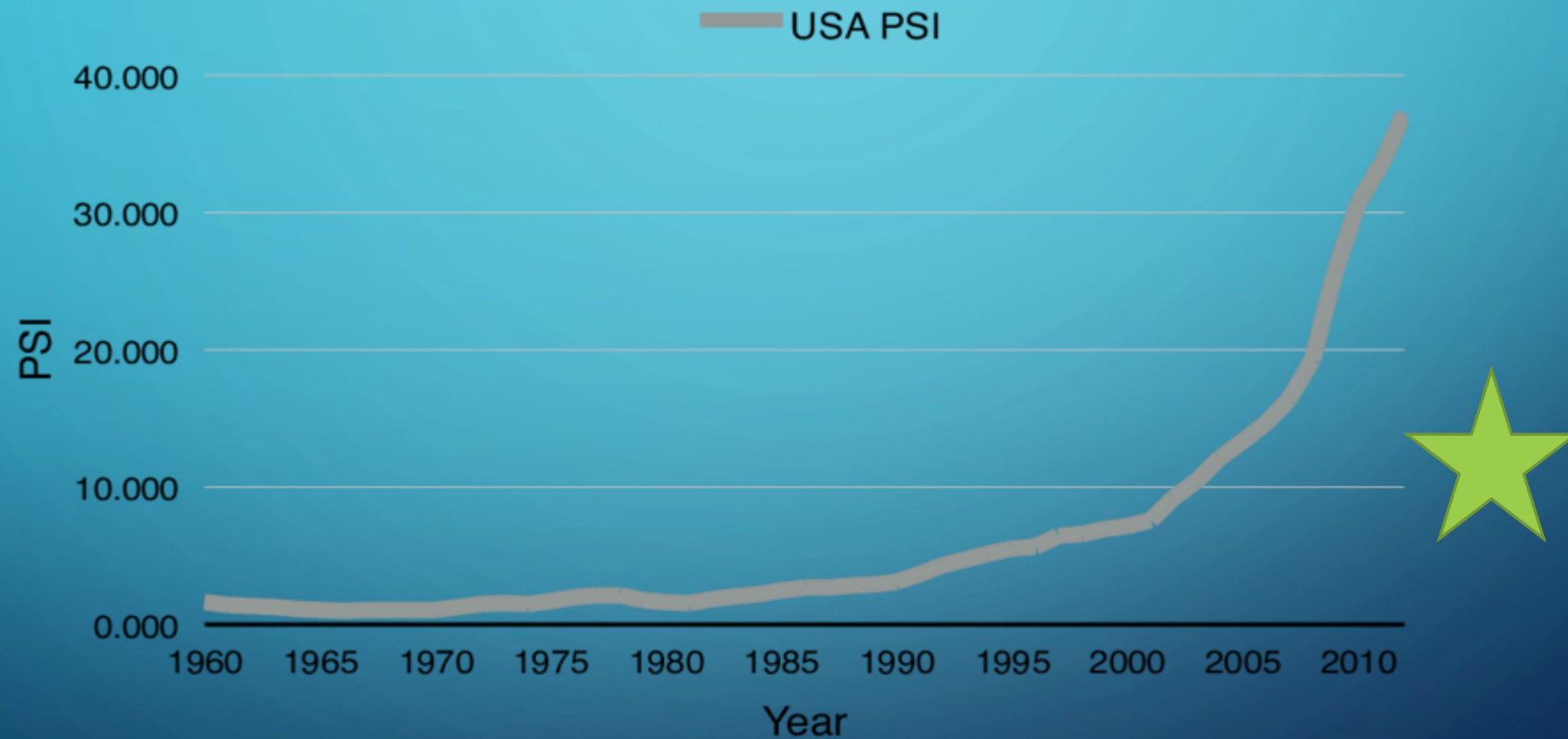
A Structural-Demographic
Analysis of American History
PETER TURCHIN

*THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF
POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN
THE U.S.: A VERY WELL
DOCUMENTED
PHENOMENON*



Source: Turchin, 2016

Political Stress Index in the U.S., 1960-2010: Current Condition of High Stress Reflective of a New Cycle of Discord



Source: Ortmans, et al., 2017 (data from Turchin)



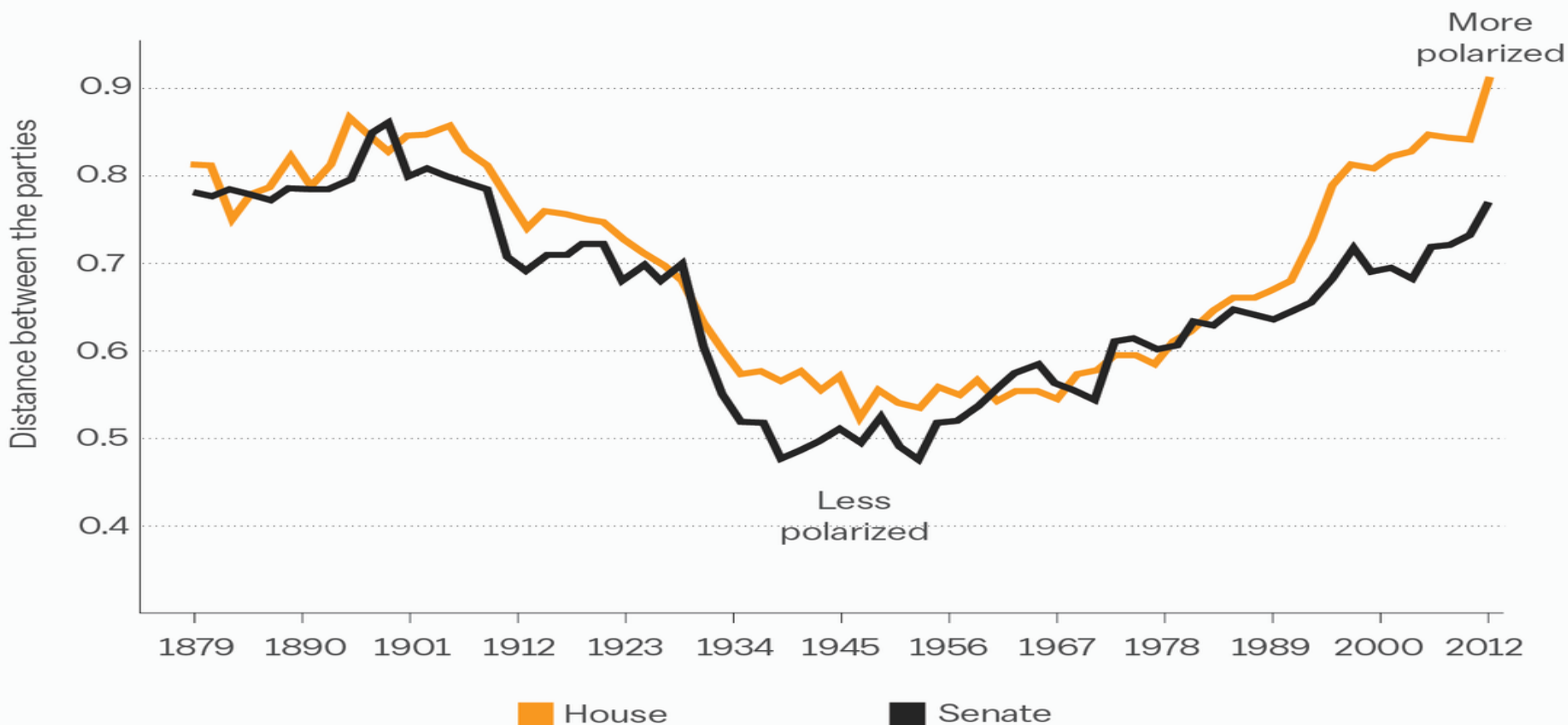
Central Stress-Inducing Factors in Contemporary U.S. Politics

**Political Polarization, Declining Trust in Public
Institutions, and Declining Economic Well-being –
all likely Contributing to an Increase in
Contemporary Public Incivility**

Increasing Polarization Among the Political Elites

Party polarization, 1879 - 2012

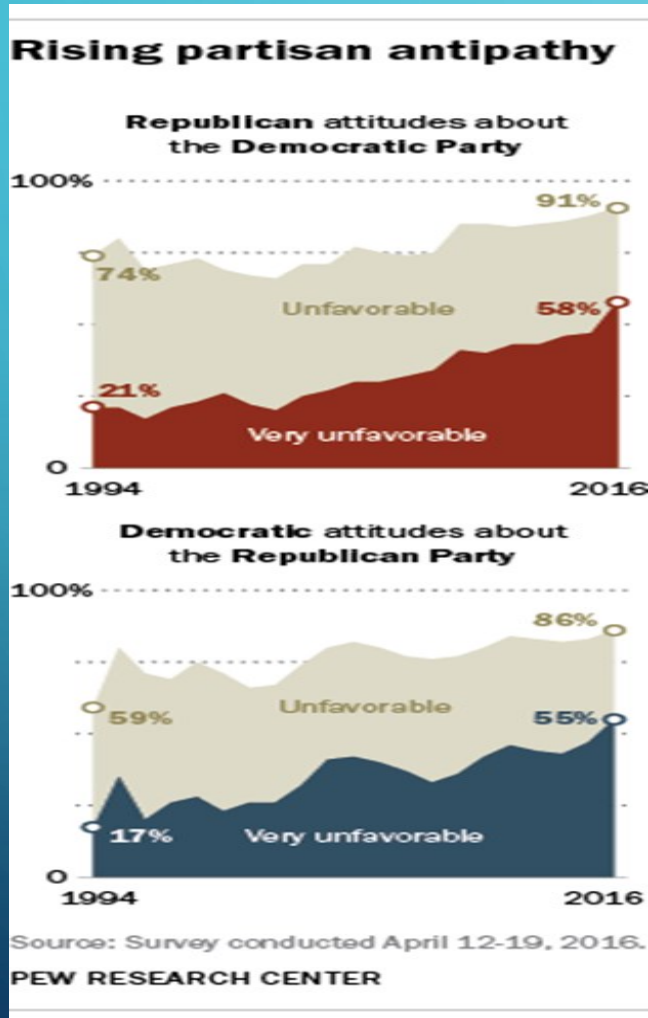
The ideological gap between the Democratic and Republican caucuses



SOURCE: Voteview.com and DW-NOMINATE scores

Vox

Increasing Political Polarization Among the Mass Publics



What Republicans and Democrats say about each other

% of Republicans who say Democrats are more ___ than other Americans

		About the same
Closed-minded	52%	35%
Open-minded	11%	
Immoral	47%	49%
Moral	3%	
Lazy	46%	50%
Hard-working	3%	
Dishonest	45%	52%
Honest	2%	
Unintelligent	32%	64%
Intelligent	3%	

% of Democrats who say Republicans are more ___ than other Americans

		About the same
Closed-minded	70%	23%
Open-minded	5%	
Dishonest	42%	51%
Honest	5%	
Immoral	35%	54%
Moral	9%	
Unintelligent	33%	58%
Intelligent	7%	
Lazy	18%	71%
Hard-working	9%	

Note: Don't know/No answer not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 2-28 and April 5-May 2, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Thursday, April 11, 2019

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NorthwestMilitary.com

The RANGER



STARS  STRIPES. JOINT FORCE-BRAVO IN HONDURAS | NEW AIM FOR AF FITNESS TEST **FREE**

No more FOX, CNN and MSNBC

MILITARY EXCHANGES TUNE OUT TV NEWS DUE TO 'DIVISIVE POLITICAL NATURE,' AAFES SAYS

By Kim Gamel, Stars and Stripes (Copyright 2019)

**INCIVIL DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION:
AN ISSUE FOR THE U.S. MILITARY**

Penetration of Incivility into US Churches

– NICD Initiative: Definition of Civility



The institute is primarily working with Christian denominations in implementing its program from its Washington office.

Among those that developed **Golden Rule 2020** are the National Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, American Baptist Churches USA, Mormon Women for Ethical Government, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Cheryl Graeve, national organizer for the institute, observes that the campaign's title is rooted in the widely held value among religious and non-religious people and Christians and non-Christians of "treating another person as you expect to be treated." She notes that our democracy thrives on the diversity of ideas, but that "We've got to have the will to engage in those different ideas... from a place of common respect and common listening to each other."

SERIOUS LIMITS TO THE GOLDEN RULE DEFINITION OF CIVILITY ARE EVER-PRESENT

Martin Luther King's Warning in
Letter From Birmingham Jail is
illustrative:

“The Pitfalls of Decorum”

...the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice;
who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a
positive peace which is the presence of justice.

REACTION TO “CAVOURTING WITH THE ENEMY”



LEARNING FROM THE AUTO EMISSIONS TEST GUY

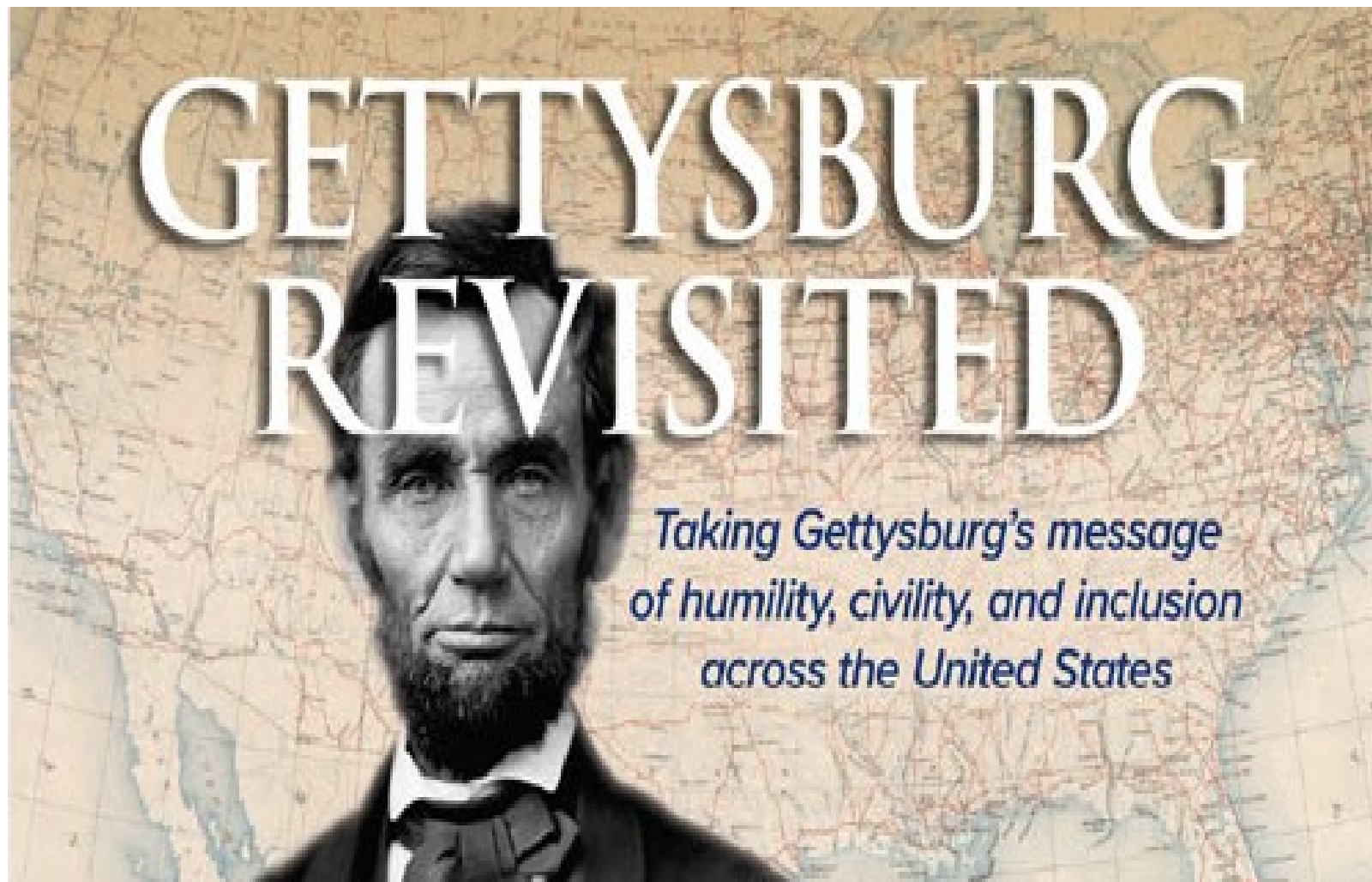
MIKE'S EMISSIONS TEST SHACK
STATE STREET, BOISE, IDAHO, MAY 2018

COMPLIMENTS OF GARY MONCRIEF, EMERITUS PROFESSOR, BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY



GETTYSBURG FOUNDATION RECONCILIATION SITE PROGRAM: WORKING IN BADLY DIVIDED COMMUNITIES

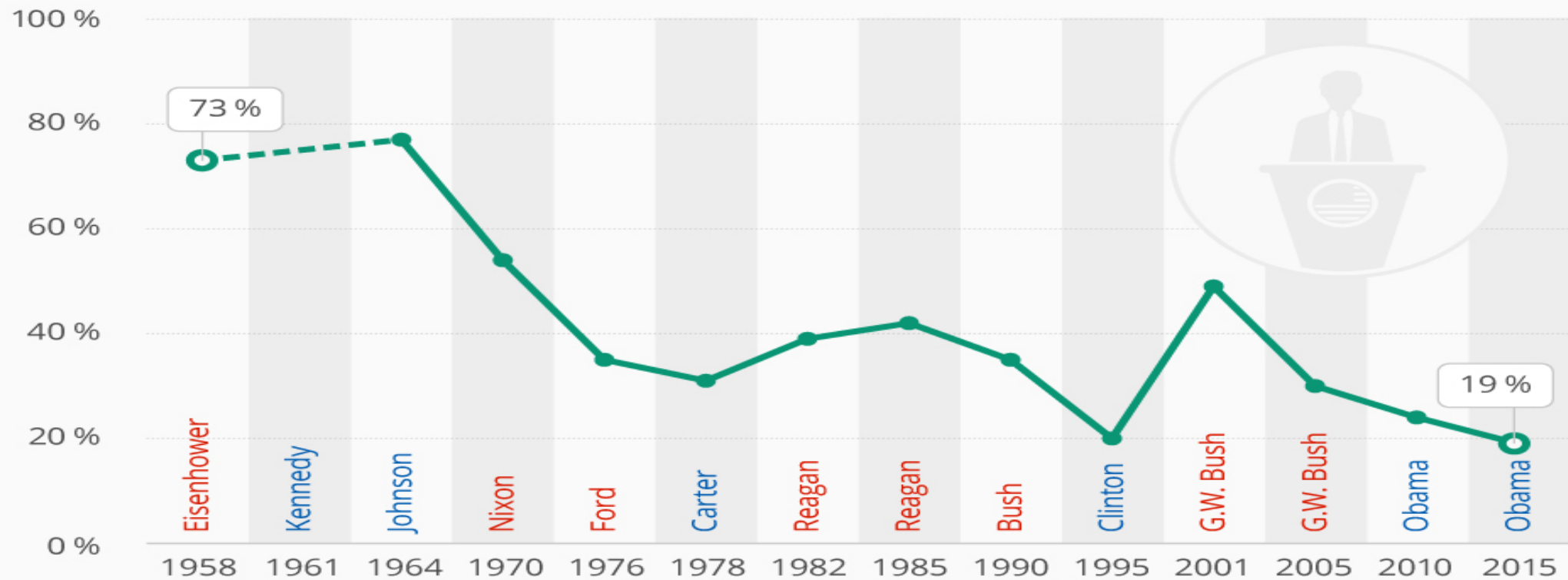
- Renewed Relevance of Healing Messages and Civil Discourse



Declining Trust in American Political Institutions

Public Trust In The U.S. Government Has Plummeted

% of the U.S. public who trust the government always / most of the time

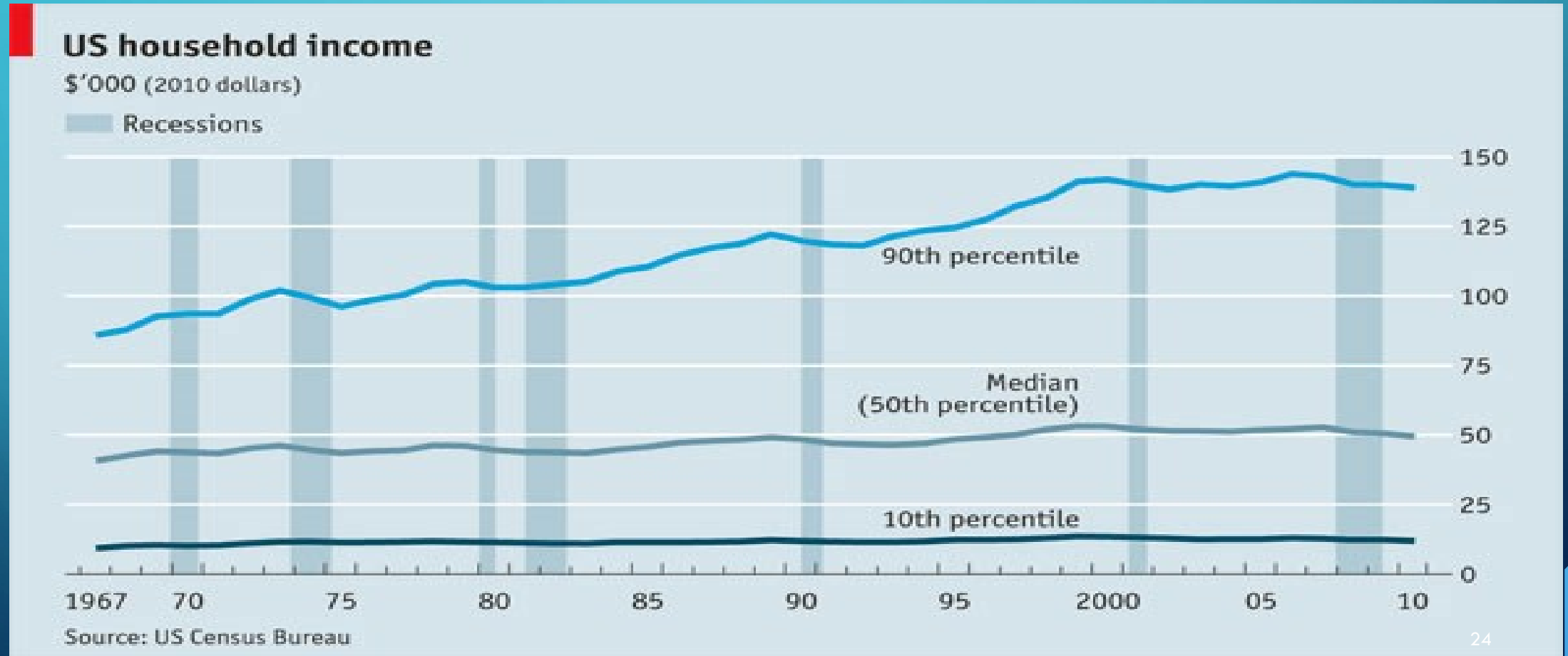


@StatistaCharts

Source: Pew Research Center

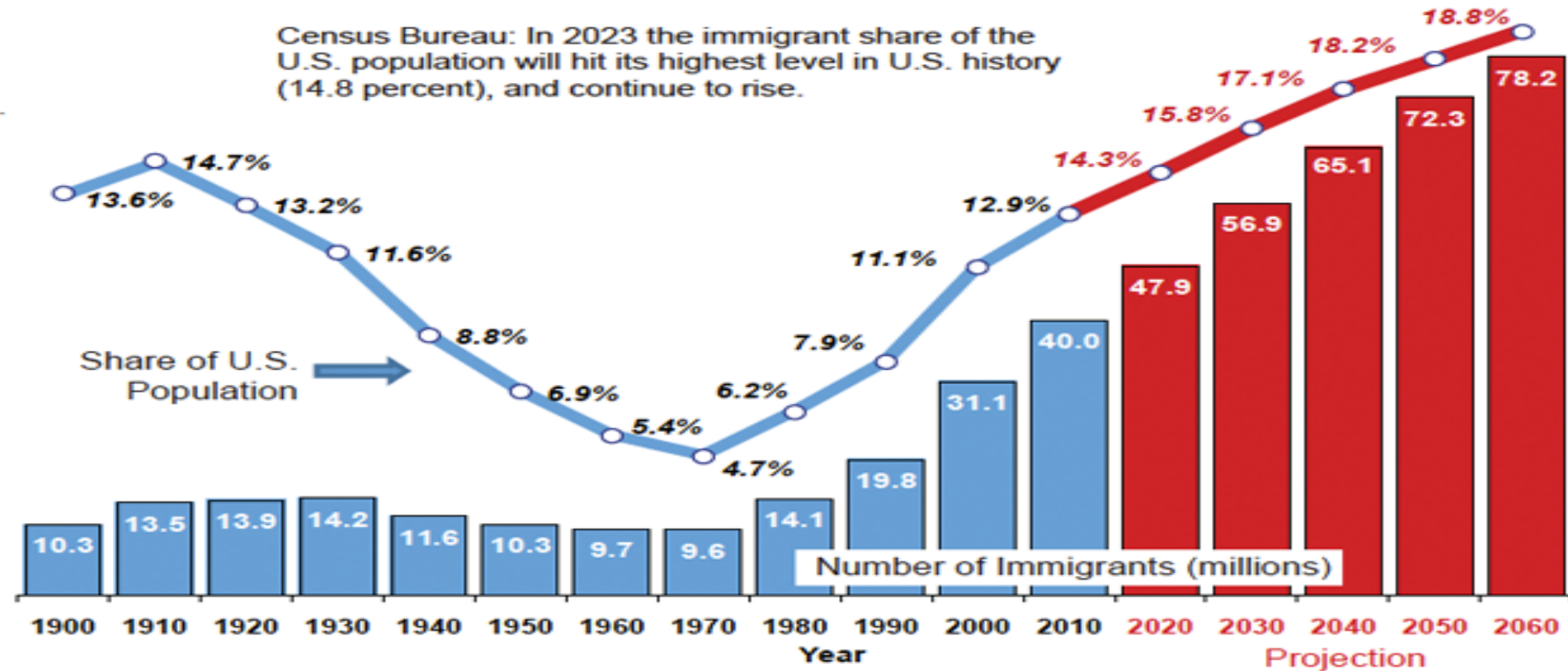
statista²³

Household Income Nearly Flat for Most American Families



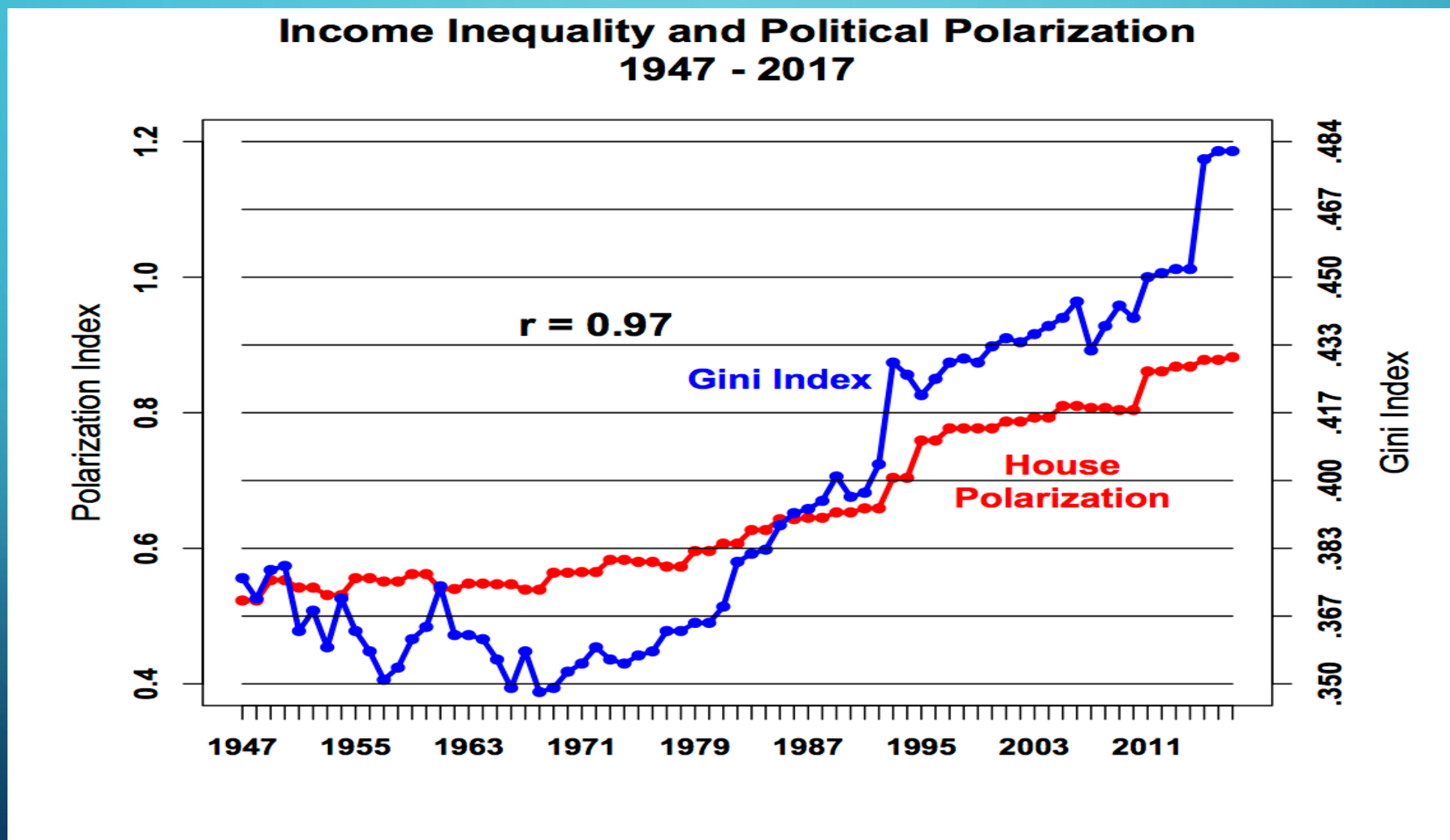
Fear of Increasing Immigration

Figure 1. Number and Percent of Immigrants in the U.S., 1900-2010; Plus Census Bureau Projections to 2060

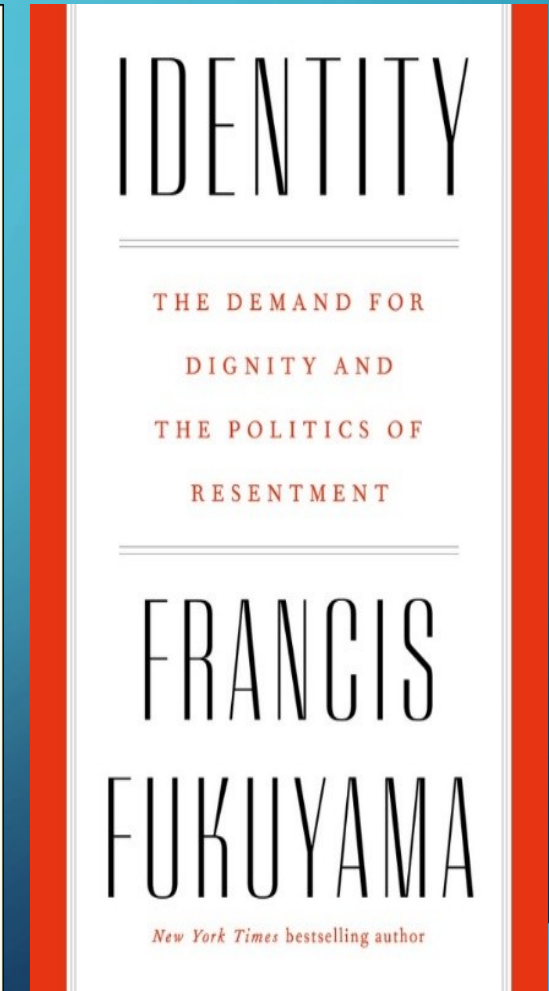
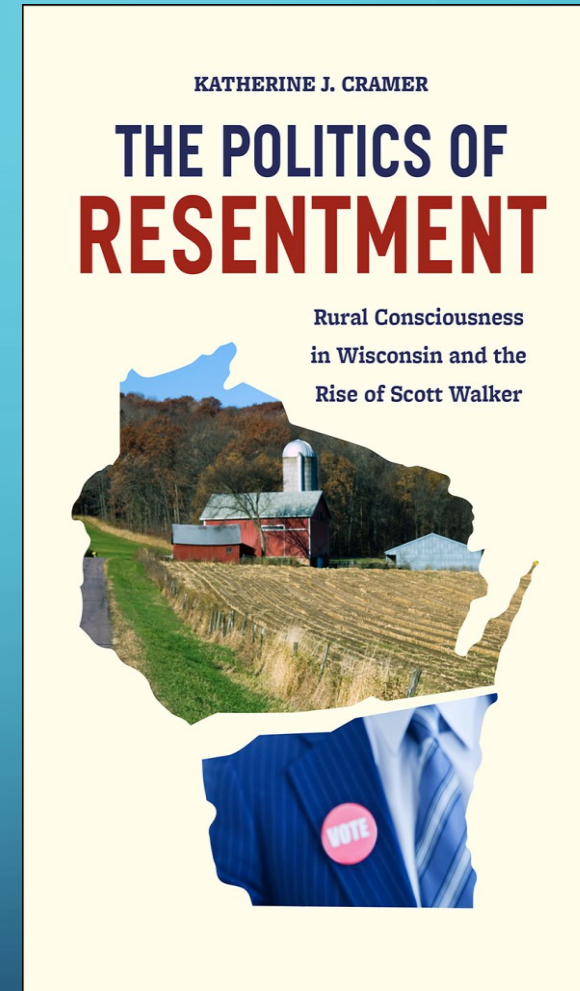
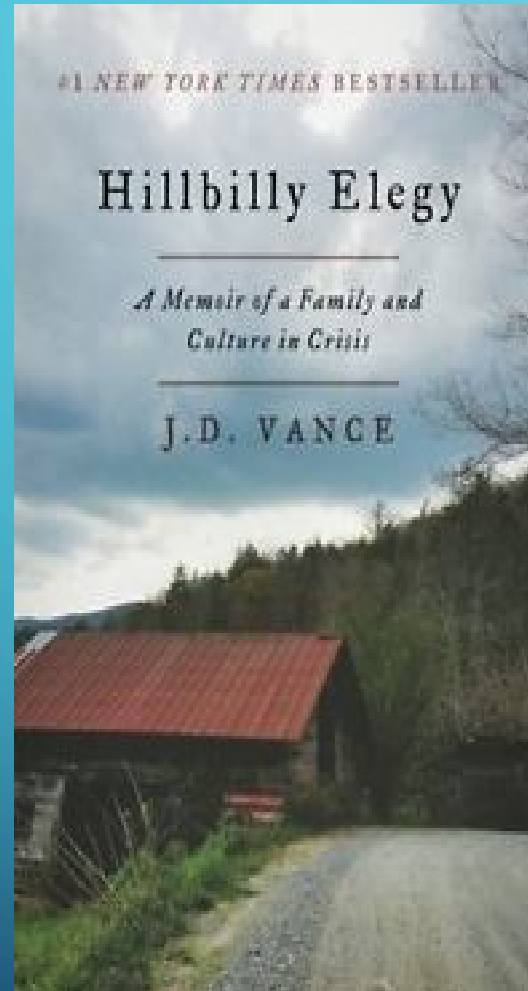
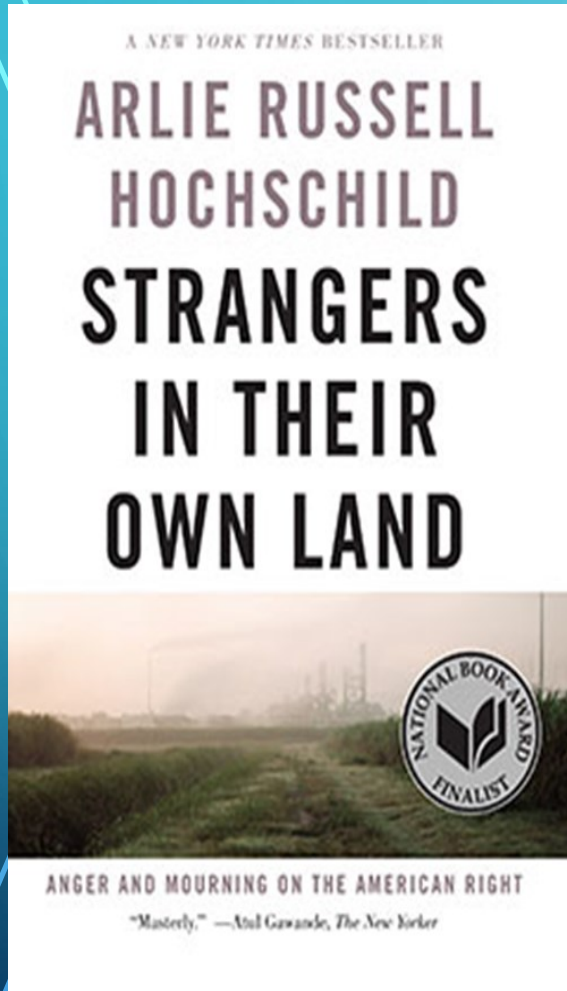


Source: Decennial censuses for 1900 to 2000, American Community Survey for 2010. [Census Bureau population projections](#) released March 2015.

Link Between Rising Income Inequality and Polarization

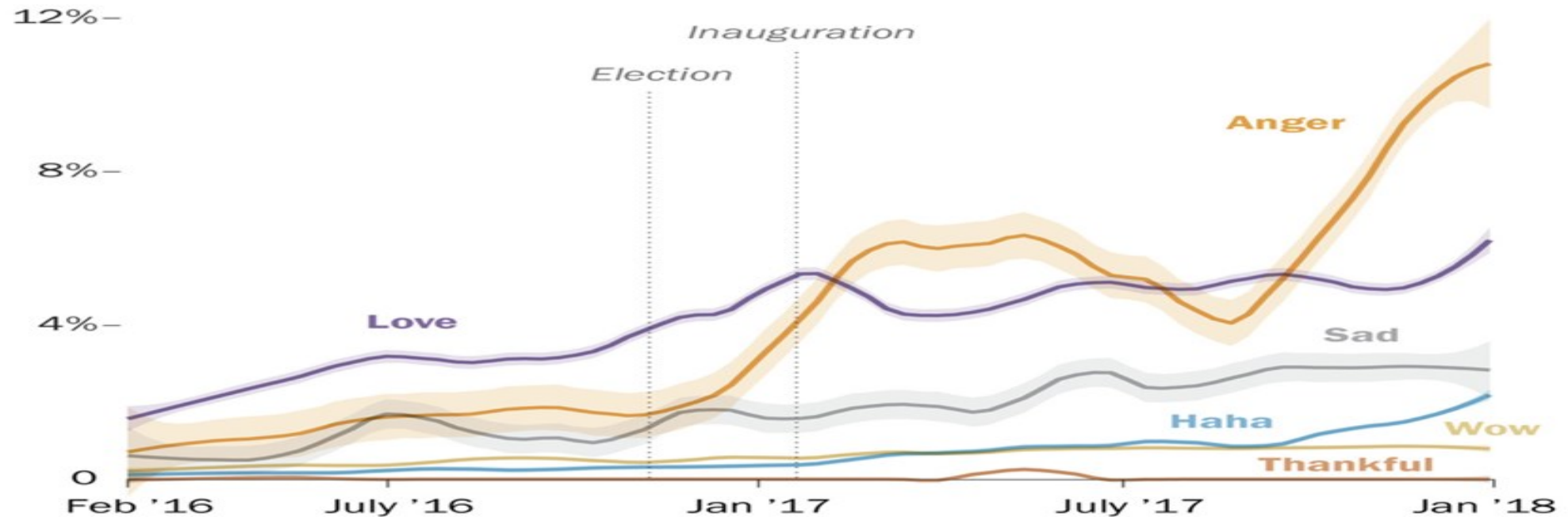


The Politics of Anger, Fear, and Resentment



After 2016 election, angry reactions overtook love reactions from the Facebook audience

% of reactions to posts that were ...



Note: The chart shows the composition of reactions to the average member's post over time, as a proportion of the total, including likes. Likes, the most common reaction, are excluded from the graph, but included in the calculation of each reaction's share of the total. The shaded regions are the 95% confidence band for the estimated trends.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Facebook posts created by members of Congress between Feb. 23, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2017.

"Taking Sides on Facebook: How Congressional Outreach Changed Under President Trump"

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“GRIDLOCK”

***PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON
IMPORTANT PUBLIC POLICIES
NOT TRANSLATED INTO PUBLIC
POLICY IN CONGRESS***



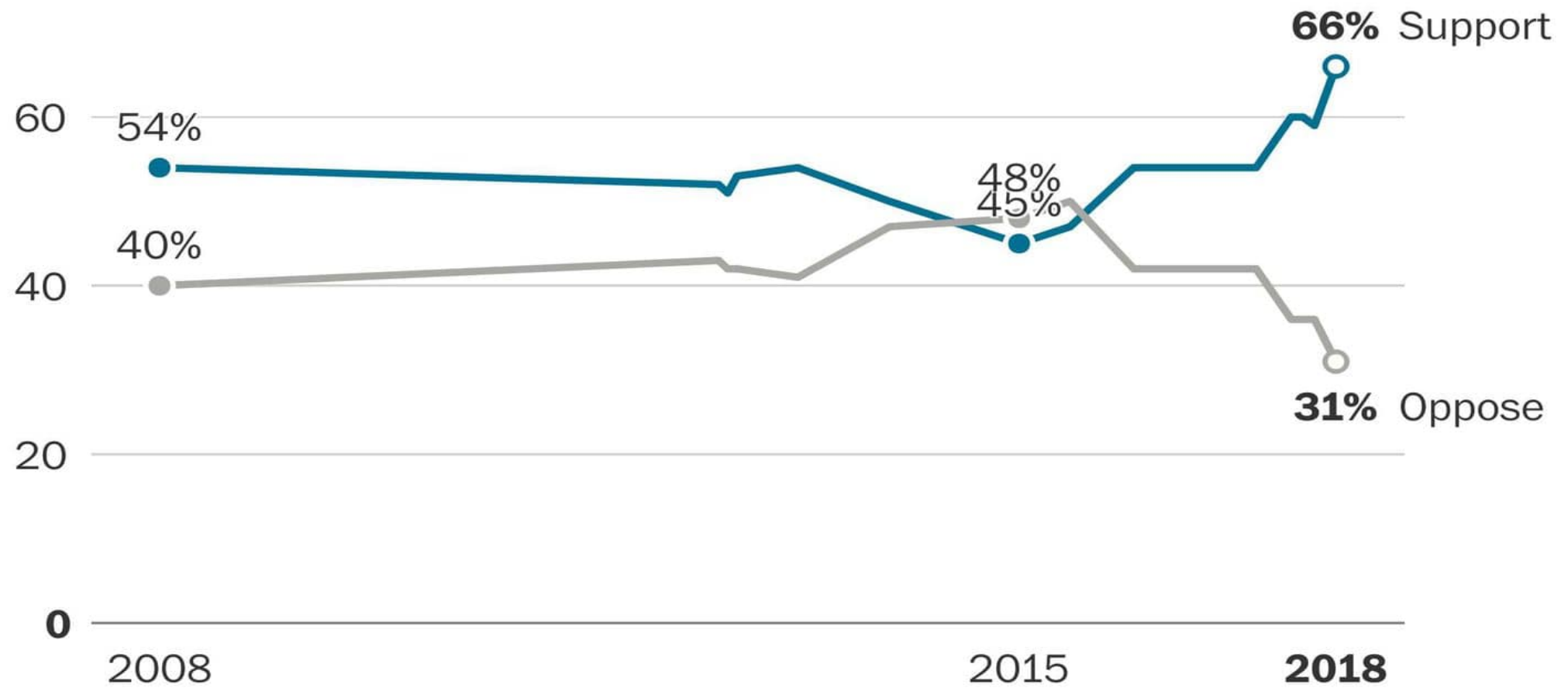
AMONG AMERICANS...

CBS NEWS
NATION TRACKER
YouGov

70%
support allowing
DREAMers to stay in U.S.

MARGIN OF ERROR: +/- 2.6%

Support for stricter gun laws hits 10-year high



Source: Quinnipiac University

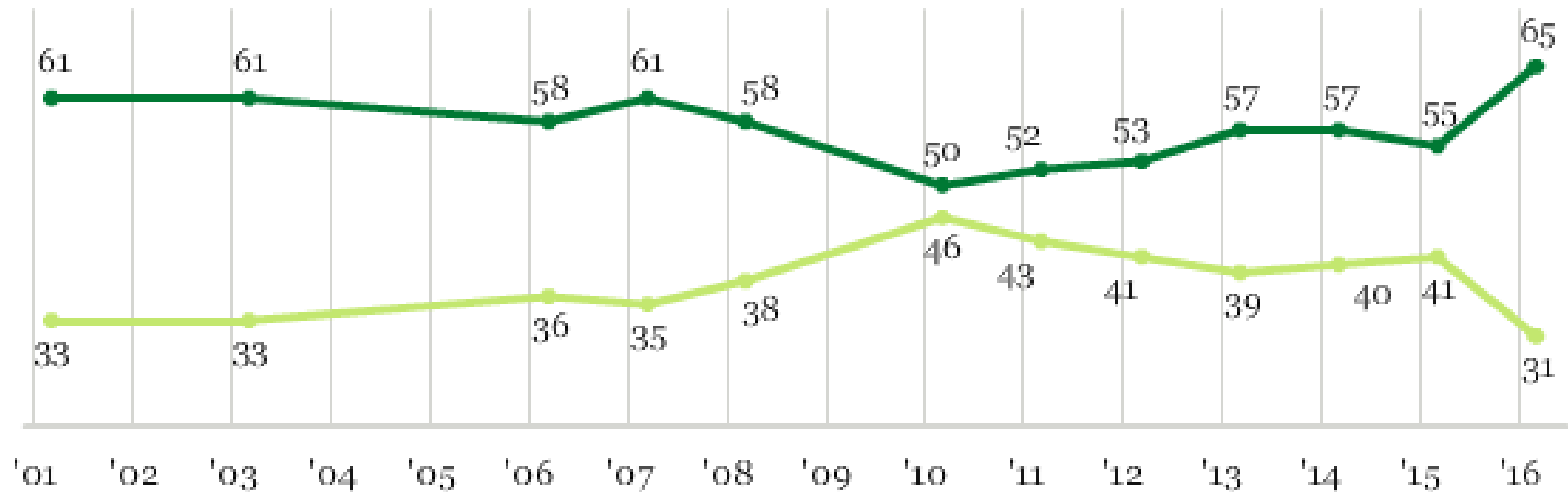
WASHINGTON POST

Perceived Cause of Global Warming

And from what you have heard or read, do you believe increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due more to -- [the effects of pollution from human activities (or) natural changes in the environment that are not due to human activities]?

■ % Human activities

■ % Natural causes

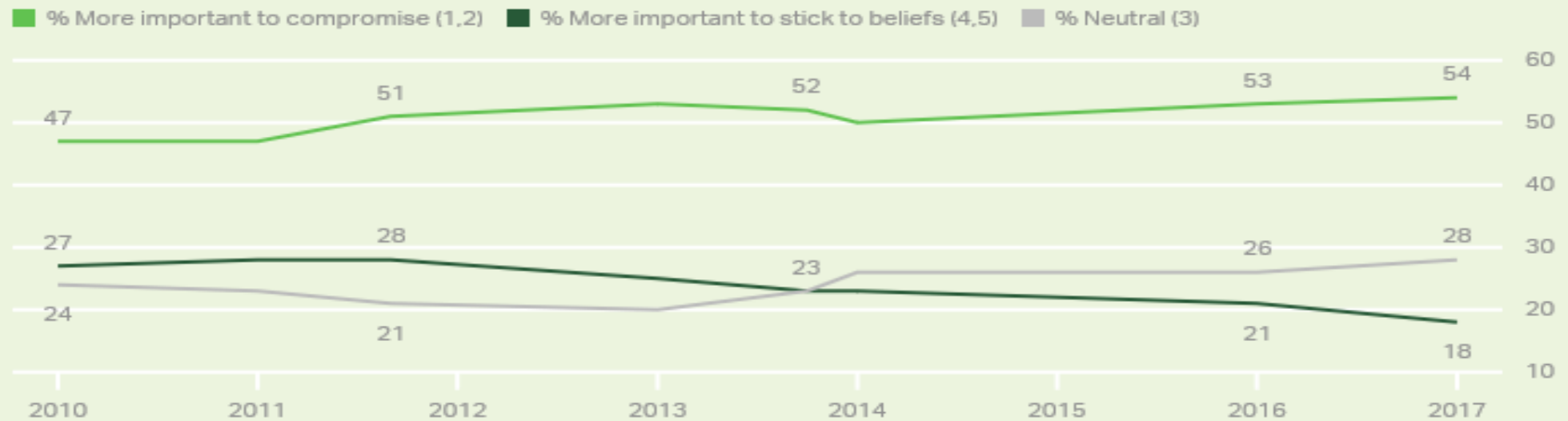


GALLUP®

Majority of Americans Favor Political Leaders who Compromise

More Important for Leaders in Washington to Stick to Their Beliefs or Compromise?

Next, we have a question about the best approach for political leaders to follow in Washington. Where would you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means it is more important for political leaders to compromise in order to get things done and 5 means it is more important for political leaders to stick to their beliefs even if little gets done?




GALLUP



HAS GRIDLOCK & HYPER-POLARIZATION TAKEN PLACE AT THE STATE LEVEL?

- **ALAN GREENBLATT'S
JUNE, 2017 ARTICLE IN
GOVERNING POSES
CORE CONCERN**

**“CHECKS AND
IMBALANCES: WITH A
CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS
CONSUMING WASHINGTON,
STATE LAWMAKERS ARE
UPENDING THEIR OWN
NORMS AS WELL.”**



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR 50 STATE LEGISLATURES?

TWO NOTEWORTHY STUDIES:

- **NCSL 2015-2016 STUDY —**
SURVEY OF STATE
LEGISLATORS (N=1,620);
10 STATE CASE STUDIES
- **WSU FOLEY INSTITUTE
STUDY OF 2018-19 —**
SURVEY OF STATE
LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS
(N=1,300+) ; 12 STATE
“OVER-SAMPLE” CASES
WITH 30+ RESPONDENTS

THE NCSL STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

SETTING: 2015-16 LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS IN STATE LEGISLATURES

STUDY CONDUCTED PRIOR TO THE 2016 NATIONAL ELECTION

ELECTION ADDED TO THE ONGOING POLARIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES
AND HEIGHTENED PUBLIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE INCIVILITY

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. DISTINCTION BETWEEN **POLARIZATION**, **INCIVILITY** AND **RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING** IN STATE LEGISLATURES; PUBLIC INTEREST IS BEING SERVED
2. STATES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED, SOME MORE THAN OTHERS, BUT HAVE FOR THE MOST PART BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR TRADITION OF RESPONSIBLE COMPROMISE IN THE INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST (hopefulness)
3. NOTE: GARY MONCRIEF AT BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY INVOLVED IN BOTH STUDIES



THE WSU FOLEY INSTITUTE-SUPPORTED STUDY: 2018-19 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS

Multiple-institution effort by a team of 22 scholars located at 11 universities supported with funding from the ***National Institute for Civil Discourse*** at the Univ. of Arizona and ongoing support from the ***Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy & Public Service***, the ***William D. Ruckelshaus Center***, and the ***Division of Governmental Studies & Services*** at Washington State University.



RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS & THEIR UNIVERSITY AFFILIATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS (AR) – William Schreckhise

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS (KS) – John Pierce & Burdett Loomis

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY (ID) – Gary Moncrief, Stephanie Witt, Luke Fowler & Jaclyn Kettler

BRADLEY UNIVERSITY (IL) – Megan Remmel, R. Craig Curtis

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY (OR) – Brent Steel & Claire McMorris

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH (UT) – Christopher Simon


KENT STATE UNIVERSITY (OH) – Daniel Chand

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS and RENO (NV) – John Tennert and Robert Morin

SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY (PA) – Michael Moltz

DUKE UNIVERSITY (NC) – Leslie Winner and John Hood

**WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY (WA) – Francis Benjamin, Steven Stehr, Christina Sanders,
& Nicholas Lovrich**



NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS, 2018-19

HIGHLIGHT: MORE PESSIMISTIC VIEW THAN LEGISLATORS REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR GRIDLOCK AT THE LEVEL OF STATE LEGISLATURES IN EVIDENCE AMONG THOSE WHOSE JOB IT IS TO MOVE LEGISLATION THROUGH STATE LEGISLATURES

SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- COMPLETED SURVEYS = 1,200+ (on-line Qualtrics + mail follow-up)
- RETURNS FROM ALL 50 STATES
- AVE. RESPONSES PER STATE = 25+
- OVERSAMPLES (30+) for AR, KS, ID, WA, UT, CA, NV, IL, IA, OH, PA, OR & NC
- MANY FORMER STATE LEGISLATORS; DIVERSE GROUP, INCLUDING AGENCY LIAISON PERSONNEL, NON-PROFITS, PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, ETC.
- RICH COLLECTION OF COMMENTS AND COMMENTARIES

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LOBBYISTS' SURVEY

QUESTION: HOW IMPORTANT ARE CIVILITY AND THE MAINTENANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE NORMS IN LEGISLATIVE DEBATE TO PRODUCING GOOD PUBLIC POLICY? [Mean Response]

NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT (1) UNCERTAIN (5-6) ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL (10)

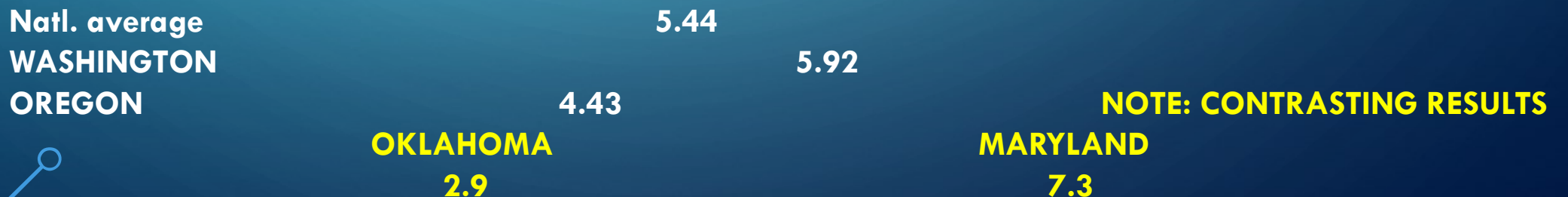


NOTE: EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH RESPONSE RATES IN WASHINGTON AND OREGON

VERY STRONG AGREEMENT THAT CIVIL DISCOURSE IS IMPORTANT FOR LEGISLATIVE EFFICACY

QUESTION: OVERALL, HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE GENERAL LEVEL OF CIVILITY AMONG MEMBERS OF YOUR STATE'S LEGISLATURE DURING THE TWO MOST RECENT LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS?

VERY UNCIVIL (1) UNCERTAIN (5-6) VERY CIVIL (10)



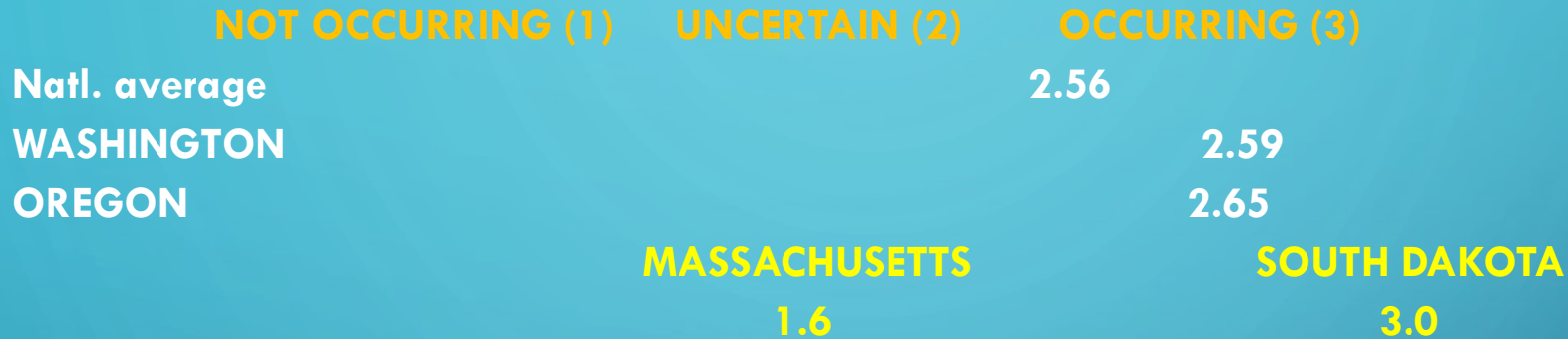
NOTE: CONTRASTING RESULTS

MARYLAND

7.3

HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

QUESTION: DO YOU THINK THAT NORMS OF FAIR PLAY ARE BREAKING DOWN IN THE STATE IN WHICH YOU LOBBY OR ADVOCATE FOR CLIENTS?



QUESTION: IN YOUR STATE, ARE THERE FEWER, THE SAME, OR MORE NON-PARTISAN AREAS TODAY THAN IN THE PAST?



HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

QUESTION: COMPARED TO WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME INVOLVED IN LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY, HAVE LEGISLATORS WITH WHOM YOU WORK BECOME MORE PARTISAN OR MORE BIPARTISAN (i.e., WORK WITH LEGISLATORS IN THE OPPOSING PARTY ON SOME LEGISLATION OF COMMON INTEREST)?



QUESTION: COMPARED TO TEN YEARS AGO, ARE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS MORE OF LESS CIVIL TODAY?

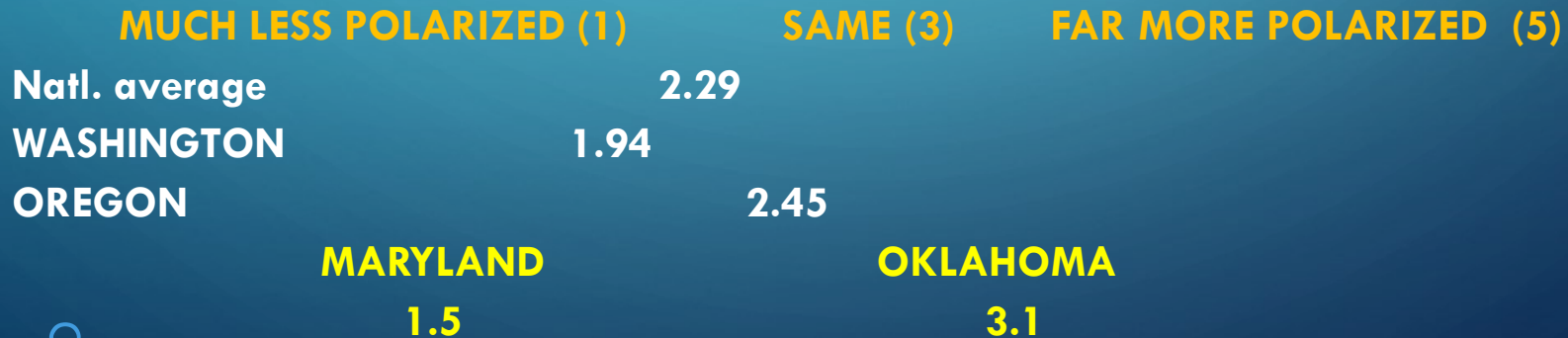


HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

QUESTION: HOW DOES THE FOLLOWING TEND TO PLAY OUT IN YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE?
“LEGISLATORS REFLECTING THE POLARIZED ENVIRONMENT OF THE U.S. CONGRESS”

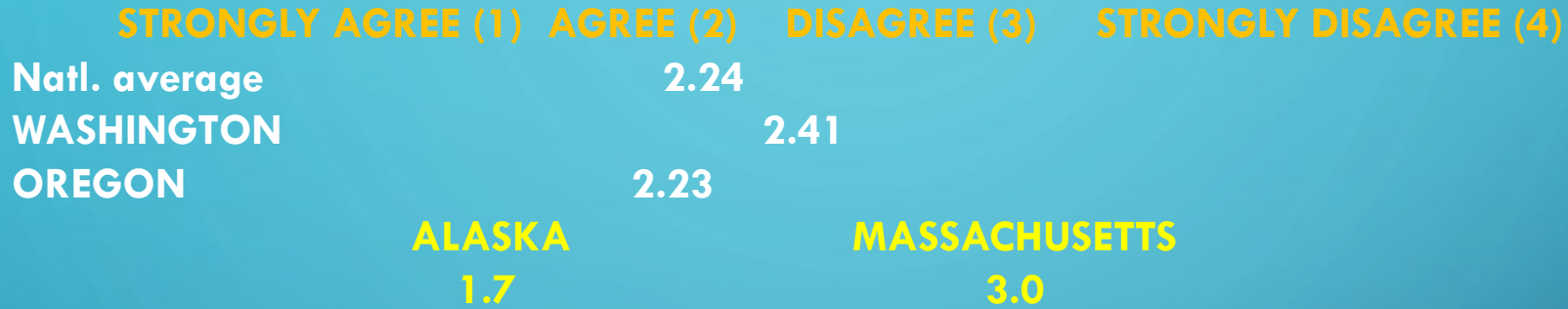


QUESTION: COMPARED TO THE U.S. CONGRESS, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL PARTISAN
POLARIZATION IS TAKING PLACE IN YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE?

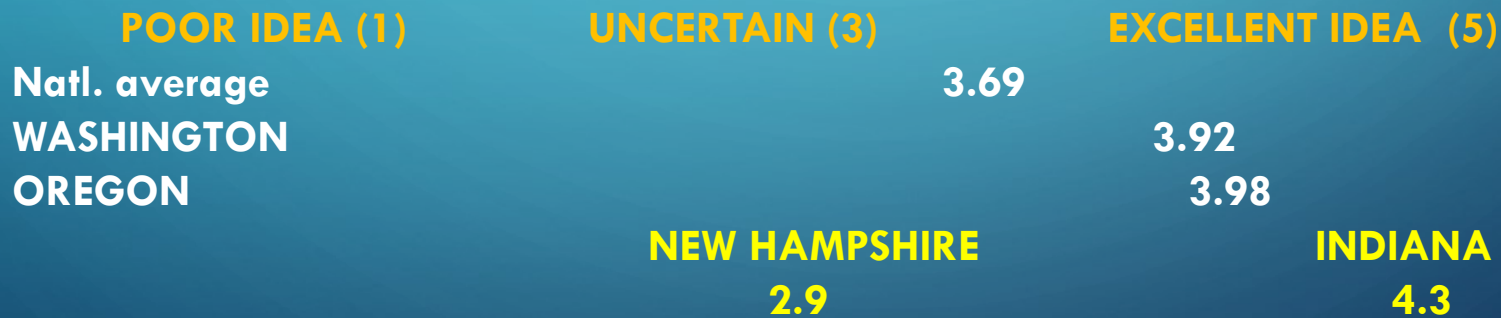


HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

QUESTION: HOW DOES THE FOLLOWING HYPOTHESIZED CAUSE OF INCIVILITY TEND TO PLAY OUT IN YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE? *“LEGISLATORS’ RESPECT FOR LEGISLATIVE TRADITIONS AND NORMS AND CUSTOMS IS LOW”*



QUESTION: *“REACHING ACROSS THE AISLE (trust-building)”*: FAVOR VISITING OTHER LEGISLATORS FROM THE OPPOSING PARTY IN THEIR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



NOTE: PACIFIC NORTHWEST LEGISLATORS VIEWED AS OPEN TO ACROSS-THE-AISLE TRUSTING BUILDING

HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

ILLUSTRATIVE INSIGHTFUL COMMENTS REGISTERED BY WASHINGTON LOBBYISTS

I feel that legislators from "safe" districts occasionally behave too forcefully; however, I feel this is much less of a problem in WA than at the Federal level.

Legislative testimony seems to be much more subjective and less based on fact now than was the case in the not so distant past. There is a considerable amount of "performing for the camera" because TVW video-taping is taking place at all major hearings.

In the same way that the political parties have moved to the Left and to the Right nationally, that is happening in Washington too. There is less middle ground visible to both sides today than was the case in the past.

The "Statesman" is all but extinct; contemporary legislators seem much more concerned with pending elections and mere appearances than in crafting good public policy than was once the case.

45

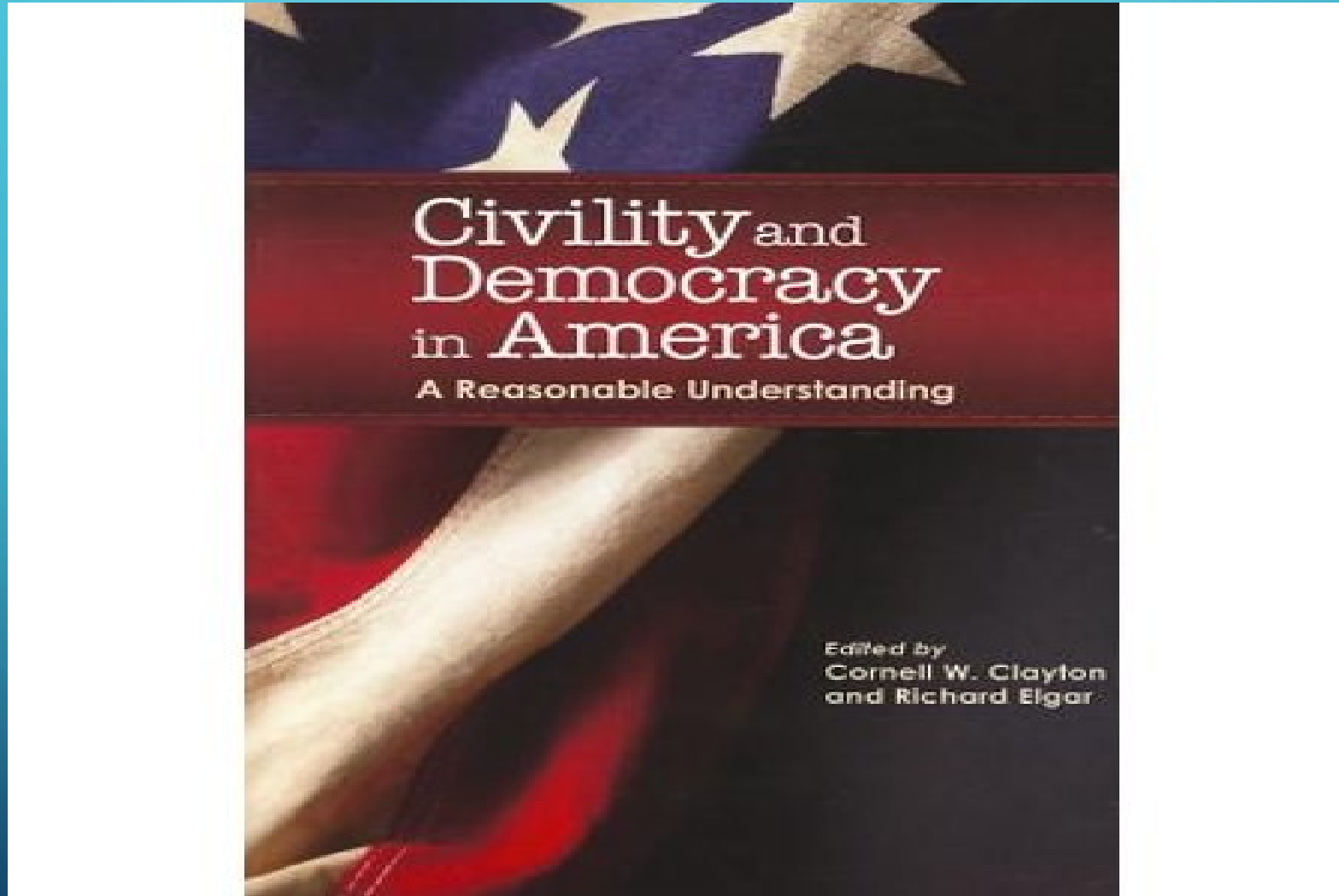
It seems as though younger lobbyists, legislators and staff do not fully respect the "institution" of the legislature.

ONE MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN NOT FEATURED IN THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Insight from sharing survey results with group of experienced Washington state legislative lobbyists; concern have been raised, genuine efforts underway to sustain the tradition of collaborative public policy making being made in Washington

- Negative effects reported on collaborative public policy processes
 - ☐ Good faith bargaining actors more difficult to engage
 - ☐ Less inclination of legislative committees to accept negotiated legislation
 - ☐ Less deference to the process, and more “grand-standing” by legislators
 - ☐ Less reliance on legislative staff “institutional memory” for guidance

FURTHER READING: WSU PRESS



THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION
QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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