

Central Cities' Loss of Power in State Politics

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Abstract

The article argues that big cities in the United States have lost power in State politics. This development is partly due to declining city populations, but it is also a product of changes in the organization of State politics. Foremost among these changes are the decline of political parties, the rise of interest-based politics in State legislatures, and the growing power of legislatures over Governors. These changes in State politics have made it harder to build policy coalitions that address urban problems, and they have limited the scope of the State's metropolitan agenda at a time when the Federal Government has sharply reduced assistance to big cities.

Suburbanites “want independence from government . . . and they pretty much want to be left alone. . . . They’ve always been paying for Chicago, they’ve been doing it forever. . . . The day of the free ride is over.” (Halperin, March 1993.) This was the answer that Pate Philip, Republican leader of the Illinois senate, provided to a question that has preoccupied politicians and political analysts since the 1950s: What does the growth of suburbs mean for American politics, and what does it mean for cities in particular? But Philip’s response also raises new and politically pertinent questions about whether and how States address the fiscal and social problems of big cities.

In this article I examine the way big cities have fared in recent State politics, asserting that State politics are increasingly driven by a suburban-based politics of “defensive localism” that seeks to limit State action in addressing urban economic and social problems. This kind of politics stands in contrast to the innovative image of States that became popular in the 1980s: Rather than coping with State problems creatively, the politics of defensive localism seek to push costs and responsibilities down to local governments.²

Population shifts away from cities are part of the explanation for the emergence of such politics, but the politics of defensive localism must also be understood in the context of several related changes in State and local political organization during the past 20 years. One of the most important changes is the decline of political parties and the rise of interest-based politics in State legislatures. A second, often unappreciated, development is the growing power of legislatures vis-à-vis Governors. Both developments signal an underlying shift: the pulling apart of State and local politics. Increasingly, State politics are driven by political considerations that have little connection with the problems of local

governance. This shift is particularly detrimental to cities, as they have become less able to fend for themselves and more dependent on outside assistance. These changes have made it more difficult to build policy coalitions that address urban problems, and have limited the scope of the State's metropolitan agenda at a time when the Federal Government has sharply reduced assistance to big cities.

This article examines the changes in State politics and explores their implications for cities, focusing on New York City and Chicago. These cities and their States are not meant to be typical, but many of the new elements organizing politics in these cases are also operating in other States with distressed big cities. Both cases illustrate the problems of big cities whose suburbs have outgrown them and now dominate them in State legislatures. The two States have quite different political and policy traditions but in both instances the rise of suburban power, party decline, and growing legislative independence have undermined the established channels of power on which their big cities once relied.

Declining Urban Influence in State Legislatures

In 1992 Republican suburban representatives in the Illinois State legislature blocked an agreement by Republican Governor Jim Edgar and Democratic mayor of Chicago Richard M. Daley to proceed with a proposed third airport for Chicago. Approval of the airport was the center of the mayor's economic plan for the city and his number one priority in the State legislature. Two years later in New York, suburban voters returned a majority of their votes for a Republican Governor, identified by his ties to "upstate" interests and his promise to reduce State taxes (Purdum, 1994). The vote reversed a brief shift that took place in the 1980s when New York's suburban voters backed a Democratic Governor. It also ended a much longer trend in which Governors of both parties identified with New York City and supported higher taxes and generous government services. These developments in New York and Illinois signaled a suburban rejection of State "politics as usual" and, as such, they posed a challenge to established modes of policymaking in which cities had benefitted from State politics.

During the 1970s and 1980s, changes in the organization of legislatures coincided with the weakening power of cities and increased suburban representation. These developments combined to disrupt older patterns of "logrolling," in which legislators from various regions struck mutually beneficial legislative bargains that were more difficult and expensive. As a consequence, the possibilities for building legislative alliances to address urban problems—whether through established or new approaches—diminished.

Power in the Professionalized Legislature

Traditionally, State governments have been unsympathetic arenas for cities. Rural interests, vastly overrepresented in State legislatures, have usually dominated the political process. In 1962, however, the U.S. Supreme Court upset the rural lock on State power by ruling that States must reapportion their legislatures to grant "one person, one vote." The reapportionments that followed, together with the 1965 Voting Rights Act that in effect guaranteed African Americans the right to vote by outlawing racially discriminatory voting requirements in all States, opened new possibilities in State politics. It was thought that these changes would benefit cities, but they did not have the expected results. Not only had reform come too late for cities, it also changed policymaking in ways that hurt them.

In many States, suburbs had grown larger than, or nearly as large as, cities by the time reforms established equal representation. In New York State, legislative apportionment greatly favoring upstate Republicans was not remedied until 1966. By that time, New York City's population had begun to shrink, and the city never gained a numerical majority in the State assembly (Benjamin, 1988; Macchiarola, 1974). Similarly, Chicago did not win representation proportional to its population in both houses of the Illinois legislature until the mid-1960s. By 1970, however, the city's population had fallen below that of its suburban collar counties (Frank et al., 1989) (see tables 1, 2, and 3).

Reform not only increased suburban representation, it also "professionalized" many State legislatures, changing the careers of State legislators and the operation of legislatures.³ In the 1960s and 1970s, higher salaries began to transform the job of legislator from an avocation to a career. Legislatures, most of which had been in session only part time, now met virtually year round. A large increase in the number of legislative staff enhanced the members' possibilities for informed policymaking.

These developments introduced two changes in legislatures that would alter the terms of coalition building. The first was the decline of political party power and the growing importance of special interests in the electoral fortunes of State legislators. The second, related development was the rise of the legislative caucus and the increasing power of legislative leaders. Both developments would handicap urban efforts to win benefits from State legislatures and hinder attempts to find common ground between urban and suburban interests.

Larger staffs and higher salaries have increased the importance of money and interest groups in State politics, hastening the decline of local political parties. One indicator of the new importance of special interests in politics is the rise in the number of registered lobbying organizations and the amount of money they spend. In Illinois the number of lobbying organizations grew from 390 in 1982 to 998 in 1992 (Roberts and Kleppner, 1994). In New York, where the number of registered lobbyists in the early 1980s was already high, they increased only from 1,659 to 1,699 between 1982 and 1992. Their spending, however, nearly tripled, rising from \$9.6 million to \$26 million in those 10 years (Cingranelli, 1994). Increasingly, interest groups began driving the legislative

Table 1

| Central City Population as a Percentage of Metropolitan Area Population* | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
| Chicago | 69.51 | 56.71 | 47.94 | 41.90 | 31.96 |
| New York | 81.12 | 71.33 | 66.61 | 63.48 | 63.88 |

* The metro area was defined using the 1990 census definition of the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), excluding out-of-State counties.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1956, 1962, 1977; Courtenay M. Slater and George E. Hall (eds.), 1993 County and City Extra: Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book (Lanham, MD: Bernan Press, 1993); and U.S. Bureau of the Census, State and Metropolitan Area Data Book 1991.

Table 2

Geographic and Party Divisions in the Illinois Legislature, 1973, 1983, and 1993

| Senate | 1973 | | Dem | | Rep | | 1983 | | Dem | | Rep | | 1993 | | Dem | | Rep | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------------|------|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------------|------|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------------|
| | Percent of Senate | N* | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate | N | Percent of Senate |
| Chicago CMSA** | 62.7 | 19 | 18 | 62.7 | 24 | 64.4 | 13 | 62.7 | 24 | 64.4 | 13 | 62.7 | 18 | 64.4 | 13 | 62.7 | 18 | 64.4 |
| Chicago city | 22.0 | 13 | 0 | 17.0 | 10 | 15.3 | 0 | 17.0 | 10 | 15.3 | 0 | 17.0 | 9 | 15.3 | 0 | 17.0 | 9 | 15.3 |
| Mixed city/suburb | 11.9 | 6 | 1 | 15.3 | 9 | 11.9 | 0 | 15.3 | 9 | 11.9 | 0 | 15.3 | 6 | 11.9 | 0 | 15.3 | 6 | 11.9 |
| Suburbs | 28.8 | 0 | 17 | 30.5 | 5 | 37.3 | 13 | 30.5 | 5 | 37.3 | 13 | 30.5 | 3 | 37.3 | 13 | 30.5 | 3 | 37.3 |
| Other statewide | 7.3 | 10 | 12 | 37.3 | 9 | 35.6 | 13 | 37.3 | 9 | 35.6 | 13 | 37.3 | 9 | 35.6 | 13 | 37.3 | 9 | 35.6 |

| House | 1973 | | Dem | | Rep | | 1983 | | Dem | | Rep | | 1993 | | Dem | | Rep | |
|-------------------|------------------|----|-----|------------------|-----|------------------|------|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|------------------|------|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|------------------|
| | Percent of House | N | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House | N | Percent of House |
| Chicago CMSA | 62.7 | 58 | 53 | 63.6 | 47 | 65.3 | 28 | 63.6 | 47 | 65.3 | 28 | 63.6 | 41 | 65.3 | 28 | 63.6 | 41 | 65.3 |
| Chicago city | 22.0 | 26 | 13 | 17.8 | 21 | 18.6 | 0 | 17.8 | 21 | 18.6 | 0 | 17.8 | 22 | 18.6 | 0 | 17.8 | 22 | 18.6 |
| Mixed city/suburb | 11.9 | 14 | 7 | 14.4 | 15 | 9.3 | 2 | 14.4 | 15 | 9.3 | 2 | 14.4 | 10 | 9.3 | 1 | 14.4 | 10 | 9.3 |
| Suburbs | 28.8 | 18 | 33 | 31.4 | 11 | 37.3 | 26 | 31.4 | 11 | 37.3 | 26 | 31.4 | 9 | 37.3 | 35 | 31.4 | 9 | 37.3 |
| Other statewide | 37.3 | 29 | 37 | 36.4 | 23 | 34.7 | 20 | 36.4 | 23 | 34.7 | 20 | 36.4 | 26 | 34.7 | 15 | 36.4 | 26 | 34.7 |

* N = number

** The metro area was defined using the 1990 census definition of the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), excluding out-of-State counties.

Note: Districts were considered part of the metro area if at least 50 percent of the district was in a CMSA county.

Table 3

Geographic and Party Divisions in the New York Legislature, 1973, 1983, and 1993

| Senate | 1973 | | 1983 | | 1993 | | 1973 | | 1983 | | 1993 | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| | Percent of Senate | Dem N* | Rep N | Percent of Senate | Dem N | Rep N | Percent of Senate | Dem N | Rep N | Percent of Senate | Dem N | Rep N |
| New York CMSA** | 65.0 | 20 | 19 | 63.9 | 22 | 17 | 64.0 | 20 | 19 | 36.0 | 6 | 16 |
| New York City | 43.3 | 20 | 6 | 41.0 | 20 | 5 | 37.7 | 18 | 5 | | | |
| Mixed city/suburb | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** | 3.3 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Suburbs | 21.7 | 0 | 13 | 23.0 | 2 | 12 | 23.0 | 1 | 13 | | | |
| Other statewide | 35.0 | 3 | 18 | 36.1 | 4 | 18 | 36.0 | 6 | 16 | | | |

| House | 1973 | | 1983 | | 1993 | | 1973 | | 1983 | | 1993 | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|
| | Percent of House | Dem N | Rep N | Percent of House | Dem N | Rep N | Percent of House | Dem N | Rep N | Percent of House | Dem N | Rep N |
| New York CMSA | 64.7 | 57 | 40 | 62.7 | 73 | 21 | 63.3 | 74 | 21 | 36.7 | 26 | 29 |
| New York City | 43.3 | 53 | 12 | 40.0 | 59 | 1 | 40.7 | 58 | 3 | | | |
| Mixed city/suburb | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| Suburbs | 21.3 | 4 | 28 | 22.7 | 14 | 20 | 22.7 | 16 | 18 | | | |
| Other statewide | 35.3 | 9 | 44 | 37.3 | 25 | 31 | 36.7 | 26 | 29 | | | |

* N = number

** The metro area was defined using the 1990 census definition of the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA), excluding out-of-State counties.

*** Mixed districts could not be determined for these years.

Note: Districts were considered part of the metro area if at least 50 percent of the district was in a CMSA county.

agenda. An Illinois lawmaker who took office in 1992 recalled being warned during his freshman orientation that “out of all the time I am in the legislature, I would probably think of only four bills on my own. The rest would be handed to me by special interests.” (Halperin, 1994.)

Another innovation was the legislative caucus, organized by legislative leaders to provide funds and campaign assistance to legislative candidates.⁴ In Illinois during the 1990 elections, legislative party caucuses spent \$4.9 million on State legislative elections, nearly 39 percent of the total (Redfield, 1992; Fitzgerald, 1992). The New York Assembly Democratic Caucus Committee was formed in 1975 in order to free the legislative leadership from the county party chairman. It now has a year-round staff to raise funds; during election years it provides a range of direct assistance to candidates (Rosenthal, 1994). Their control over vital electoral and legislative resources gives the caucuses considerable leverage over individual legislators.

Because they control committee assignments and access to campaign money, the legislative leaders in both States have become the new power brokers. In Illinois last-minute agreements among “the Four Tops,”—as the legislative leaders of each party in each chamber have come to be known—have become the common mode of decisionmaking (Halperin, 1994). Similarly, in New York the leader of the Republican-controlled senate and the Democrat-controlled assembly routinely establish policy with the Governor behind closed doors.⁵

The power of legislative leaders has reduced the opportunities for cross-party and cross-region political compromise. For instance, legislative leaders are not independent of the special interest groups. They must remain attentive to the wishes of important interest groups, because their power depends on funds supplied by the groups. Moreover in some States, including New York, votes in the party caucus are binding. A measure must win majority support in both the Republican and the Democratic party caucuses, greatly limiting the opportunity for cross-party cooperation and hampering efforts to build a majority drawn from the political center of both parties (Cingranelli, 1994). The power of legislative leaders makes it harder to explore possibilities for common ground within the legislature, because it bars individual legislators from making deals with members of opposing parties. According to a Democratic State senator from Chicago, “lockstep voting” by Republicans made it more difficult to build on areas of common concern that she shares with some suburban Republicans. Similarly, a Republican suburban representative claimed that efforts by Republican women to work in a bipartisan women’s caucus on such issues as welfare reform have been stymied by their leadership. Perceiving bipartisan groups as a threat, Republican legislative leaders have disciplined women legislators by refusing to support specific legislation they need for their districts.⁶

New Obstacles to Logrolling

Regionally based logrolls have long been the bread and butter of State legislative politics. Since the 1960s, New York and Illinois politics have been divided into three camps: the major city, its suburbs, and the rest of the State, known respectively as upstate and downstate. The prevalence of interest groups has made simple logrolling across regions more difficult than in the past. More independent legislators can block agreements or they can make logrolling more expensive by demanding a price for their allegiance.⁷ These barriers to logrolling place special burdens on cities, which are more reliant on assistance from higher levels of government.

Chicago. For much of the postwar era, Chicago was able to exercise power in the State legislature by striking bargains with downstate rural Republicans and Democrats, and the suburbs were generally left out of such deals. The difficulties that suburban Republicans had in influencing legislative dealmaking stemmed in part from their more ideological orientation toward politics. In any event, making deals with Chicago Democrats was not good politics for suburban representatives, because these politicians had long made Chicago corruption a key rallying point. Overt anti-Chicago sentiment served Republican suburban representatives well during their campaigns and later, when building legislative coalitions (Fossett and Giertz, 1989).

Logrolling allowed the city to acquire the two things it wanted most from State politics: support for local development projects and a broader base for financing many city costs, including social spending. A number of the city's social costs were assumed by the county and the State, and other responsibilities were given to special districts. As Ester Fuchs has shown, Chicago's remarkable success at shedding responsibility for social programs was partly a product of the State's propensity for creating special districts and partly a product of the political power and acumen of its longtime mayor, Richard J. Daley (father of current mayor Richard M. Daley) (Fuchs, 1992).

This long-established pattern began to unravel after Daley's death in 1976, but the final blow was the 1991 redistricting that eliminated the city's advantage in the legislature. For the first time in Illinois history, the Republican-drawn map of 1991 gave more legislative seats to the suburbs than to Chicago or the downstate areas. The suburbs won 37 percent of the seats in the house to Chicago's 19 percent, and 37 percent in the senate to Chicago's 15 percent⁸ (see table 2). The new map also raised the possibility that Republicans would control both houses of the State legislature for the first time in 18 years. Although Republicans won only the senate in 1992, they also took control of the house 2 years later.

Suburban legislators have used their power to block city/downstate deals.⁹ They have frustrated the city's efforts to win State support for economic development projects, formerly a cornerstone of the city/State relationship. This new challenge to the city was most evident in 1992 when the State legislature rejected Chicago's proposed third airport, which was to be located in the Lake Calumet area in the southern section of the city. Mayor Daley had made approval for this mega-project, estimated to cost \$10.8 billion, his primary legislative goal that year. The airport required little State money, but legislative approval was needed to begin site development. Key suburban Republicans, most notably senate leader Pate Philip, blocked the project.

The legislative dynamics of the proposed airport revealed the new obstacles to logrolling. The classic Illinois agreement between a downstate Republican Governor and a Democratic mayor of Chicago could not be ratified in the legislature. Even the mayor's agreement to establish a regional airport authority, long sought by suburban interests, was not a sufficient trade-off for suburban support, and the Governor's attempt to play the middleman was unsuccessful (Washburn and Pearson, 1992; Klemens and Scobell, 1992). When deals were struck, the terms were often less favorable to the city than they had been in the past. For example, when the legislature agreed to an expansion of McCormick Place, the city's major convention center, it financed the project with a tax that applied only to the city. Despite Chicago's argument that McCormick Place benefitted the entire region, the legislature rejected the city's attempt to pass a regional tax to finance the expansion (Green, 1991).

In the absence of stable coalitions such as those once put together by the Democratic mayor and the Republican Governor, assembling legislative majorities required more payoffs to more legislators. Since the growing independence of individual State legislators has made it harder to put together political deals that target particular resources to specific places, there has been a tendency to spread funds to all places in all areas of legislation. Not surprisingly, “Build Illinois,” touted as a major State economic development program when it was launched in 1985, degenerated into “a slush fund for random projects identified through legislative trading.” (Orlebecke, 1989.) As Fossett and Giertz (1989) note, “*ad hoc* interest brokering’ has become the dominant style of legislative bargaining.”

New York. In New York, legislative logrolling has not been so directly challenged, but legislative bargaining has become very expensive. The different pattern in New York rests in part on a distinctive political geography. Since the mid-1970s, Democrats have relied on some suburban votes to dominate the assembly, and Republicans have required city votes to retain their control of the State senate. Thus suburbs were not excluded from power as they were in Illinois. Moreover, because localities in New York State are heavily dependent on State aid to implement the many functions assigned them under State law, suburbs as well as cities looked to the State for financial assistance.

This more pro-spending suburban orientation was reinforced by distinctive features of the New York Republican Party. One is the existence of suburban Republican patronage organizations. In contrast to the Chicago suburbs, where a reformist orientation predominated, the Republican patronage organizations on Long Island, in particular, have thrived on State spending. Moreover, Republicans inherited a legacy of high spending, established under Nelson Rockefeller that lasted well after he left the statehouse in 1974.¹⁰ The result of these political and policy arrangements has been a high-spending State whose main function is to distribute money across all three regions—the city, its suburbs, and “upstate” New York.

But terms of legislative agreements in New York have not been altered to address the growing needs of New York City. Logrolling mainly concerns allocating regional shares in the funding formulas through which the State provides aid to localities. Major reallocations of State/local responsibility have not been achieved since the years immediately following the city’s 1975 fiscal crisis. For example, longstanding efforts to increase the State’s responsibility for welfare and Medicaid expenditures, a significant portion of which are now borne by counties, have foundered on regionally based political divisions.¹¹ Republican suburban senate leaders have repeatedly opposed State takeover of these expenditures, because the city would benefit disproportionately. Although suburban Republican county executives joined New York City’s Republican mayor to lobby for a State takeover of Medicaid in 1994, Republican senate leaders failed to back the measure, supporting instead a proposal to cut taxes on business.¹²

The election of Republican Governor George Pataki in 1994 signalled an end to the high-spending/high-tax equilibrium in New York State. Governor Pataki reversed previous trends, pushing for tax cuts and spending cuts, but his room to maneuver is limited: Election rules that protected incumbents produced a State legislature that had changed very little. Republicans continued to control the State senate and Democrats, aligned with New York City, dominated the assembly (Fisher, November 1994). Governor Pataki’s first budget did not meet his targets for tax cutting and reduced spending, but even his limited achievements signalled a new political game, in which the city would be even more disadvantaged. This trend was confirmed in Pataki’s 1996 budget proposals, which, if enacted, would impose significant new costs on the city.

Governors and the Politics of Regional Alliances

Because Governors must win statewide elections, they have stronger incentives than State legislators to build links among diverging State interests. Over the past two decades, Governors have gained authority and respect as their formal powers have increased and the analytic and administrative capacities of their office have grown.¹³ But newfound powers and competence have not equipped Governors adequately to counter the increasingly entrenched and narrow interests in the legislature. And the new political geography of growing suburban political strength and declining urban power has made even sympathetic Governors ambivalent about championing city interests in ways that are costly to the suburbs or to the State itself. Under these circumstances, Governors may simply seek to reduce expectations about State government.

By any reckoning, the formal powers of the Governors of New York and Illinois place them in the category of strong Governor. But in both States, Governors have been confronted with legislatures increasingly able to block and resist gubernatorial initiatives. The power struggles between Governors and legislators, even those of the same party, have made it more difficult for Governors to act as regional power brokers. At the same time, Governors faced with fiscal problems have found it difficult to use their office to promote policies that go beyond allocating regional shares of the budget.

Governors and Legislative Coalition-Building

Although many States achieved more power over their localities in the 1980s, State political centralization declined as traditional party organizations declined. Parties grew less able to link the legislature and the executive and, as a consequence, legislatures grew more independent. These changes have made it harder for Governors to initiate bargains across regions or to take other policy actions that would make local boundaries less important. Instead, the Governor has acted increasingly as a referee in legislative contests over relative shares of power due to various locales.

Illinois. The formal powers of the Illinois Governor are ample but recently have been of limited help in bridging regional political divisions in the legislature. This is a sharp change from the past, when the Governor played a key role in facilitating the city/downstate deals that characterized Illinois politics. These deals often worked best with a Republican as Governor; Chicago's Democratic mayor and the Governor agreed to measures of benefit to each, generally leaving the suburbs out of the bargain (Gove, 1982). The deals followed a common pattern: The Governor offered to support major economic development projects that boosted the city's role in the region and, in exchange, the city agreed to support the Governor's budget. This was the formula under which the State bought the bonds that financed McCormick Place in 1956. In the early 1970s, Democratic Governor Dan Walker initiated a task force whose recommendations resulted in the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) joining the city of Chicago and its suburbs. Despite the opposition of suburban representatives, who feared that suburbs would become responsible for the costs of the insolvent Chicago Transit Authority, the Chicago/downstate alliance succeeded in creating the RTA (Schwartz, 1990; Fiske, 1989).

These two examples highlight some of the factors that encouraged Governors to facilitate legislative alliances that benefitted the city. The first factor was the importance and cohesion of the Chicago delegation in the State legislature. Mayor Daley could be counted on to control the Democratic vote, making him a reliable coalition partner. The second factor was the role of key Chicago business leaders, who were often crucial backers of the projects in question, and whose influence with the Governor was considerable because

they tended to be Republican.¹⁴ The third factor was the relative underrepresentation of suburban interests, which were the most opposed to taxation and the most wary of projects that strengthened the city.

All three factors have become less significant, making it more difficult and less attractive for Governors to play their former role of brokering regional deals. The rise of suburban power following the reapportionment of 1991 has been the most striking and significant change. The suburban Republican leader of the Illinois senate since 1992, Pate Philip, has directly challenged downstate Republican Governor Jim Edgar's efforts to shape legislative compromises, underscoring the geographical divisions in the State Republican party and highlighting the willingness of suburban Republicans to stall the legislative agenda. The most startling example was Philip's decision to block the third airport, to which the Governor and the mayor had already agreed. But suburban blockage was not the only factor at work. The city had lost some of its ability to control Democrats in the legislature, for whom the airport was not a top priority. In effect, the city had become a less reliable coalition partner. Finally, fewer business interests have a stake in Chicago than was true in the past. State efforts to accommodate business are now as likely to hurt the city as they are to help it.

New York. New York's Governors have had less ability than Governors of Illinois to maneuver among regional blocs and win benefits for the city. Because State politics have long revolved around conflicts over funding formulas, Governors have not been able to strike the cleaner kinds of regional deals that Illinois Governors could make. Moreover, the earlier weakening of political parties in New York State meant that New York Governors had to cope with legislative fragmentation and resistance to gubernatorial initiatives as early as the mid-1960s. Thus assembling regional blocs that included some interests and left others out was not really a possibility for the Governor of New York (Benjamin and Lawton, 1994).

Until recently, the weight of the New York City electorate in the State gave the Governors a strong incentive to offer assistance (Macchiarola, 1974). Confronted with a strong and politically independent legislature, New York Governors have had to perform a delicate balancing act when trying to help the city. The task has become even harder as the city's electorate has become smaller and less well organized. Mario Cuomo's tenure as Governor reflected this dilemma. He spoke out in favor of the city's interests and occasionally proposed such policies as State takeover of Medicaid and more aid for urban school districts, but he was often criticized for not following through in the legislature. Benjamin and Lawton (1994) charge, for example, that "Governor Cuomo's tenure . . . has borne the mark of stewardship, rather than innovation. Critics have charged that his distributive approach reflects a lack of priorities. They suggest that he has concentrated on the preservation of his political capital, at the expense of creative policymaking."

After Governor Pataki's election, the city's power in State government grew more precarious. The new Governor came to power on a wave of support from upstate voters. These voters were deeply antagonistic to State spending, which they believed favored the city at their expense. Governor Pataki's willingness to propose spending cuts that would especially harm New York City revealed a serious decline in the city's power to influence State politics.

Governing Strategies

Although State legislatures have reduced the power of Governors, the Governors can devise strategies that increase their room to maneuver and can at the same time encourage legislatures to move beyond policies that simply allot shares of the budget to various regions. Governors can promote broader thinking by facilitating bipartisan consideration of problems outside the immediate legislative setting. Comparing the governing styles of two Republican Illinois Governors, Jim Thompson (1976–90) and his successor Jim Edgar, a Democratic State senator from Chicago praised Thompson's propensity to create bipartisan councils that considered a range of State policy problems. These forums created, in the words of the senator, "an overlay that forced things upward rather than being mired downward," thus encouraging legislators to look for broader solutions rather than forcing them into the most narrow interpretations of their interests.¹⁵

Although Thompson was not known for innovative legislative achievements, Governors of other States did use executive initiative in the 1980s to launch innovative policies in the areas of economic development, job training, education, and housing. In his 1990 book, *Laboratories of Democracy*, David Osborne celebrated the accomplishments of Governors from both parties who, during the 1980s, forged an activist role for State government when the Federal Government was reducing assistance to local governments. Osborne's work reflected a new wave of enthusiasm for the enhanced capabilities of State government.

In the wake of the 1994 election, however, the political viability of these strategies is in doubt. None of the Governors that Osborne praised continues to hold office. In many States they have been replaced by Governors whose main appeal has been a promise to reduce State taxes. While many of these Governors have also introduced innovative programs in such areas as welfare reform, their efforts to cut social welfare spending have often increased the burden on localities, especially central cities.

Weakening Ties Between States and Local Governments

Political parties were once the big city's lifeline to State politics. State political power flowed from the bottom up. Urban political machines linked politics across levels of government and power. The stronger organizational power of cities allowed them to win benefits in State politics. Today, however, the power of political parties has waned dramatically, that of special interests has grown, and State politics are increasingly driven by considerations removed from localities. The city is but one supplicant competing with many others to influence policy.

Central Cities' Loss of Power in State Politics

In a recent survey, for example, New York State legislators ranked interest groups in two tiers of influence. In the top tier were municipal employee unions and business interests. Local governments, including that of New York City, ranked fourth in the second tier behind the Teamsters Union, public utility companies, and the New York State Catholic Conference (Cingranelli, 1994).

Since the 1960s municipal employee unions have won in Albany what they could not win in New York City. Although New York City mayors from Robert Wagner to the present have complained about being forced to pay for policies they oppose, the money

and potential votes controlled by municipal employee unions have made them hard to beat in Albany.¹⁶ These unions did not restrict their largesse to urban Democrats: In the late 1970s, they also began to contribute to upstate Republicans in order to win more influence in the Republican-dominated senate (Ware, 1985).

In Illinois, where State government intervenes less in the affairs of localities than is the case in New York, increased presence of interest groups has harmed the city less, but it has diverted the State's agenda from issues of concern to Chicago. Once, big city mayors could heavily influence, if not dominate, the city delegation in the State legislature. As legislative leaders have developed independent resource bases, they have become more independent of mayors. They have also developed separate institutional interests that do not always coincide with those of the city.

The loss of mayoral power has been especially striking in the case of Chicago. In 1991 open conflict between Mayor Richard M. Daley and then Democratic House Speaker Michael J. Madigan erupted when Madigan publicly accused Daley of intervening during a legislative impasse by making "secret deals" with Republicans (Fitzgerald, 1992). Of course, such deals were at the heart of legislative politics before the 1980s. In the 1992 airport debacle, Madigan also demonstrated his independence, promising to deliver only a limited number of Democratic votes. The speaker viewed other priorities, including the State budget, as more important for the reelection prospects of house Democrats (Pearson, 1992). But perhaps the strongest departure from the past is the relative disengagement of the second Mayor Daley from State Democratic politics and from the legislature. The mayor has rarely visited Springfield, and Democratic legislators complain that Chicago does not lobby strongly for its interests in the legislature.¹⁷

These developments have been particularly detrimental to the urban poor. Although a mayor's incentives to secure resources for the poor may depend on his or her electoral coalition, mayors do have an inherent interest in reducing the cost of the poor to the city. Thus, although the first Mayor Daley was never a strong proponent of the poor, he repeatedly sought a broader financial base for the costs of public assistance and sought to avoid being saddled with Aid to Families with Dependent Children expenses when the State funds ran out in the early 1960s.¹⁸ By contrast, Democrats in the legislature, anxious to win suburban votes, now agree to route such costs back to the city. In 1992, when Democratic House Speaker Madigan faced the 1991 redistricting that gave the advantage to Republicans, his appeal to suburban voters embraced fiscal austerity and distanced the party from programs for the poor (Dellios, 1992; Wheeler, 1992). This was the context in which Illinois eliminated its general assistance program and replaced it with the much smaller, poorly funded Earnfare program.¹⁹ Only strong pressure from the Black Caucus and public welfare organizations saved the program from complete elimination and enacted the much smaller Earnfare program. The deep cutback was particularly hard on Chicago, where nearly 80 percent of Illinois' recipients of general assistance funds lived in 1992.²⁰

Suburbs Feel the Burden, Too

As State politics have become more disconnected from local government, the impact has been felt not only by cities but by suburbs as well. The problems are particularly acute in poorer suburbs, which have much smaller tax bases than the city but a higher proportion of needy residents.²¹ Wealthier suburbs are less dependent on State aid, but even in these areas there is a split between local officials, who must provide services, and State legislators, who have made their opposition to taxes a central political tenet.

These tensions among State and local politicians are evident in the suburban collar counties surrounding Chicago. Suburban legislative leaders have opposed efforts to increase the State income tax in order to reduce the heavy reliance on property taxes. Instead, they have limited the local property tax by imposing tax caps on the collar counties and have sought to extend them to the rest of the State. The caps limit the increase in property tax to 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less.²²

The caps have strained the counties' ability to deliver services and have particularly hurt fast-growing suburbs with rising school-age populations.²³ The sense that State legislators have represented only a narrow part of suburban interests has caused a stir among suburban officials and prompted the creation of the Suburban Mayors Action Coalition, a group that includes 110 suburban Cook County mayors. Opposition to tax caps has been one of the group's central issues. More generally, the coalition seeks to present a more liberal view of suburban interests than do most suburban State legislators (Halperin, November 1993).

In New York, suburban governments have felt similar burdens even without tax caps because of their partial responsibility for Medicaid and welfare expenditures. Recently the stage has been set for conflict between local Republican executives and the State legislature. New York City Republican Mayor Rudolph W. Guiliani's endorsement of Democrat Mario Cuomo over Republican George Pataki in the 1994 gubernatorial race reflected the mayor's assessment that the needs of his city would not be addressed by a Governor whose central pledge was to cut taxes. With the ascension of an even more fiscally conservative Republican leader in the State senate, conflicts between city and suburban executives and the legislative leaders escalated (Sack, 1994).

The burdens that State governments place on local governments, both through their attentiveness to special interests and through their efforts to cut taxes, will likely stimulate political divisions among suburbs and raise possibilities for occasional coalitions between some suburbs and cities on State legislation. But the strength of the antitax sentiment in suburbs and an often well-founded mistrust between city and suburban leaders make the task very difficult.

Conclusion

The trends that have harmed cities in State politics are both demographic and political. The decline of urban population, the rise of the suburbs, and the increasing power and fragmentation of State legislatures have all disrupted an older pattern of policymaking based on logrolling across regions. In addition, the growing disconnection between State and local politics has encouraged State politicians to enact policies with little regard for their effect on localities. Although this article has focused on only two States, similar trends can be seen in other States with big cities. In Texas, for example, the rise of suburban power in the State legislature has made city annexation of suburban land increasingly difficult. Much of the fiscal success of large Sunbelt cities such as Houston has stemmed from their ability to annex.²⁴ But a higher level of poverty, the flight of whites to the suburbs, and strained city resources now characterize this enormous city. In California these trends have become even more extreme through the use of the initiative process. Since 1978 State and local expenditures have been limited in ways that pass costs along to cities and counties while restricting their capacity to raise revenue.

Political changes that have taken place in States during the past three decades suggest that cities, in their capacity as governmental entities, are unlikely to win substantial new

benefits from the levels of government above them. Politically, three strategies offer the best hope for cities in the future. First, mayors must initiate administrative reforms that help their cities make the case that spending there is not wasted. This process of “re-inventing” urban government is well under way in most major cities, and many mayors are committed to the strategy.

Second, mayors must seek to engage surrounding communities in alliances through which they can share costs or pass them to a higher level of government wherever possible. As we have seen, it is unlikely that these will be broad-based alliances, but there are possibilities for cooperation across political boundaries on some issues, which may differ from State to State. Mayors must also be willing to engage in trade-offs that benefit the urban poor, even if they do not benefit the city per se. Thus city support for economic development projects outside the city might be traded for a guarantee of jobs for city residents on those projects. In many cases, mayors have not taken this broader view of their role, preferring to spend political capital only for projects within the boundaries of their city. With the burden of nonworking residents weighing so heavily on cities, however, mayors have much to gain by engaging in political compromises that help their low-income residents.

Third, although assisting cities as governmental entities has become politically difficult, assisting community groups may be politically feasible. The new conservative emphasis on empowerment is not often accompanied by an increase in resources, but the logic of the strategy may create some opportunities to assist community organizations, especially through indirect mechanisms such as tax breaks for businesses. The ability of community organizations to tap into resources outside the city may become an increasingly important way to circumvent the zero-sum logic of urban budgets.

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Notes

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2. On the innovative model, see Osborne, 1990.
3. On professionalization, see the essays in *Changing Patterns in State Legislative Careers*. 1992. Gary F. Moncrief and Joel A. Thompson, eds.
4. On legislative caucuses see Salmore and Salmore, 1993, pp. 66–71; and Rosenthal, 1994, pp. 31–37.

5. See for example, "After the Election, Fix Albany," *New York Times*, November 7, 1994, p. A18.
6. Author's interviews, June 9, June 13, 1994, Chicago, IL.
7. See Rosenthal, 1990, pp. 158–160.
8. Even counting mixed districts, which the city often controlled, the city was at a distinct disadvantage compared with the suburbs. For an analysis of the politics of the remapping, see Wheeler, 1992, pp. 10–15.
9. On the limits of pushing their own agenda, see Halperin, May 1993, pp. 29–31.
10. See Herman, 1993, pp. 125–127.
11. Counties were responsible for 25 percent of welfare expenditures and 19 percent of Medicaid in 1992.
12. See Fisher, November 1994, p. B6; and Dao, March 1994, p. B1.
13. See Sabato, 1983.
14. For a discussion of business' role in influencing the Governor to support McCormick Place in the 1950s, see, for example, Banfield, 1961, ch. 7.
15. Author's interview, June 9, 1994.
16. See Macchiarola, pp. 109–110; and Fuchs, pp. 248–250.
17. Author's interviews, June 9–10, 1994.
18. See Steiner, 1966, pp. 206–222.
19. General assistance provided benefits to single adults not covered by Federal public assistance programs. See Steinbacher-Kemp, August/September 1992, pp. 37–38.
20. According to figures provided by the Bureau of Research and Analysis of the Illinois Department of Public Aid, 80 percent of general assistance cases in Illinois resided in Cook County. According to the Bureau, all Cook County recipients lived in the city of Chicago.
21. See Caine, September 1993, pp. 1–9.
22. On the tax caps, see Halperin, March 1992, pp. 10–11.
23. See, for example, Haynes, December 1993, p. 1; Lev and McRoberts, April 1993, p. 1; and Haynes, April 1993, p. 1.
24. On the questionable future of annexation, see Thomas and Murray, 1991, ch. 5.

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