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978-0-521-03002-1 - Presidents, Parties, and the State: A Party System Perspective on Democratic Regulatory Choice, 1884-1936

Scott C. James

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## PRESIDENTS, PARTIES, AND THE STATE

Dominant theories of regulatory choice privilege the goals and actions of district-oriented legislators and organized groups. *Presidents, Parties, and the State* challenges this conventional frame, placing presidential elections and national party leaders at the center of American regulatory state development. Long the “out-party” in national politics, the Democratic party of Grover Cleveland, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt confronted a severe political quandary, one that pitted long-term ideological commitments against short-term electoral opportunities. In short, Democrats were forced to choose between enacting the regulatory agenda of their traditional party base or legislating the programs of voting blocs deemed pivotal to the consolidation of national party power. Coalition-building imperatives drove Democratic leaders to embrace the latter alternative, prompting legislative intervention to secure outcomes consistent with national party needs. In the end, the electoral logic that fueled Democratic choice proved consequential for the trajectory of American state development. For, under the pressure to build a new majority party, an agrarian party with long-standing antistatist and anti-monopoly commitments turned its governing power to the buildup of national administrative power and the consolidation of corporate capitalism.

Scott C. James is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. His doctoral dissertation received the 1994 E. E. Schattschneider Award, presented annually by the American Political Science Association for the best dissertation in the field of American politics. James has published articles in the *American Political Science Review* and *Studies in American Political Development*.

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*University of California, Los Angeles*



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TO MY PARENTS,  
CHARLES HAROLD AND  
TEREZINHA DE LOURDES SANTOS JAMES

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 Introduction: Parties, Presidential Elections, and Regulatory Choice – A Party System Perspective	1
2 Swing States, Business Mugwumps, and the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887	36
3 The Progressive Party Vote and the Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914	123
4 Progressive Republicans and the “Death Sentence” for Public Utility Holding Companies During America’s Second New Deal	200
5 Conclusion: Parties and the American Regulatory State	267
<i>Bibliography</i>	283
<i>Index</i>	303

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[More information](#)

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It goes without saying that any remaining errors of fact and interpretation contained in this book are my responsibility, and mine alone.

Scott C. James