

Opting Out of Congress

This book provides a candidate entry explanation for partisan polarization in the U.S. Congress. Danielle M. Thomsen draws on a wide array of data to show that ideological moderates are less likely to run for and remain in Congress than those at the extremes. The book introduces a party fit argument for why moderates have opted out of congressional politics. It suggests that the personal and career benefits of congressional service have diminished for liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats as the parties have drifted apart. Although the political center has long been deemed a coveted position in the legislature, it is now a lonely and lowly place to be. *Opting Out of Congress* argues that partisan polarization is unlikely to diminish if ideological moderates do not run for office. Reformers who seek to restore bipartisanship in Congress must consider how to encourage moderates to launch congressional candidacies.

Danielle M. Thomsen is an assistant professor of political science at Syracuse University. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Politics*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *Political Research Quarterly*, and it has been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other media outlets. In 2015, she received the E.E. Schattschneider Award for the best dissertation in American politics. She has received financial support from the National Science Foundation, the American Association of University Women, and the Dirksen Congressional Center.

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Partisan Polarization and the Decline of Moderate Candidates

DANIELLE M. THOMSEN

Syracuse University



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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Introduction	i
1 The Choices Have Changed	5
2 Party Fit and the Calculus of Candidacy	27
3 Ideology, Attitude, and Political Ambition	65
4 Ideological Moderates Won’t Run for Congress	81
5 Where the Action Is: Asymmetric Polarization and Open Seats	98
6 Ideological Moderates Won’t Stay in Congress	119
7 The Growing Partisan Gap in Women’s Representation	137
8 Toward a Less Polarized Congress?	156
<i>Appendix A</i>	171
<i>Appendix B</i>	173
<i>Appendix C</i>	174
<i>References</i>	176
<i>Index</i>	192

Figures

1.1	Mean ideology of U.S. House candidates, 1980–2012	<i>page</i> 8
1.2	Ideological distributions of U.S. House candidates, 1980 vs. 2012	9
1.3	Ideological moderates as a proportion of U.S. House candidates, 1980–2012	10
2.1	Republican candidates across congressional districts, 2000–2012	60
2.2	Democratic candidates across congressional districts, 2000–2012	61
3.1	Attraction to a career in the U.S. House	70
3.2	Perceived chance of victory and effectiveness of the U.S. House	76
4.1	Ideological distribution of state legislators, 2000–2010	84
4.2	Ideological distribution of state legislators who ran for the U.S. House, 2000–2010	85
4.3	Proportion of moderates and ideologues who ran for the U.S. House, 2000–2010	86
4.4	Predicted probability of running for the U.S. House among Republican state legislators, 2000–2010	91
4.5	Predicted probability of running for the U.S. House among Democratic state legislators, 2000–2010	93
4.6	Predicted probability of running for the U.S. House among conservative Republican and liberal Democratic state legislators, 2000–2010	94
5.1	Incoming members by seat type, 1980–2010	101

viii	<i>List of Figures</i>	
5.2	Predicted probability of running in an open seat among Republican state legislators, 2000–2010	103
5.3	Predicted probability of running in an open seat among Democratic state legislators, 2000–2010	104
5.4	Predicted probability of running in an open seat among conservative Republican and liberal Democratic state legislators, 2000–2010	105
5.5	Marginal effect of being a Republican on the probability of running for the U.S. House, 2000–2010	109
5.6	Marginal effect of being a Republican on the probability of running in an open seat, 2000–2010	111
5.7	Ideological distributions of open seat candidates with state legislative and non-state legislative backgrounds, 2000–2010	112
5.8	Ideological distributions of open seat candidates across congressional districts, 2000–2010	114
5.9	State legislators elected in open seats and continuing House members, 2000–2010	116
5.10	State legislators and non-state legislators elected in open seats, 2000–2010	117
6.1	Ideology of retiring and continuing U.S. House members, 1982–2010	121
6.2	Proportion of moderates and ideologues who retired from the U.S. House, 1982–2010	122
6.3	Predicted probability of retiring from the U.S. House among Republican and Democratic members, 1982–2010	128
6.4	Predicted probability of retiring from the U.S. House among conservative Republican and liberal Democratic members, 1982–2010	129
6.5	Effect of moderate ideology on member retirement over time: Logistic regression coefficients and confidence intervals	131
7.1	Women in the U.S. House by party, 1980–2014	138
7.2	Ideology of male and female U.S. House members by party, 1982–2010	143
7.3	Predicted probability of running for the U.S. House among male and female Republican state legislators, 2000–2010	146
7.4	Predicted probability of running for the U.S. House among male and female Democratic state legislators, 2000–2010	148

List of Figures ix

7.5	Number of male and female ideologues in the pipeline by party, 2000–2010	150
7.6	Number of Republican and Democratic women with four or more terms in office, 1982–2010	152
8.1	Number of incoming moderates, conformists, and ideologues over time	162
8.2	Ideology of incoming House members and continuing members, 1980–2010	164

Tables

1.1	Details of data sources	<i>page</i> 23
3.1	Attraction to a career in the U.S. House	73
3.2	Probability of winning and benefits of the office	78
4.1	Determinants of running for the U.S. House, 2000–2010	90
5.1	Asymmetric determinants of running for the U.S. House, 2000–2010	108
6.1	Determinants of retiring from the U.S. House, 1982–2010	126
7.1	Predicted probability of retiring from the U.S. House by gender and party, 1982–2010	153

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xv

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