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978-1-107-11589-7 - Crossing the Aisle: Party Switching by U.S. Legislators in the Postwar Era

Antoine Yoshinaka

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Crossing the Aisle

Switching parties is arguably the most important decision a politician will ever make. This book is the first-ever systematic study of the causes and consequences of legislative party switching in the United States. The author argues that reelection alone does not explain party switching. He proposes an ambition-based theory that accounts for multiple goals (including higher office aspirations and the desire for influence in the legislature) with a focus on the electoral costs and the institutional benefits of the decision. The book combines the statistical analysis of electoral data and legislative careers in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures with elite interviews of party switchers, nonswitchers, and a party leader. The case study of a party switcher's decision in "real time" documents the complexity of the decision in a politician's own words prior to and following the switch. The book raises important questions regarding the meaning of a party label.

Antoine Yoshinaka is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is the author of several scholarly articles on elections, legislatures, and parties in the U.S. context and around the world. He co-published *Establishing the Rules of the Game: Election Laws in Democracies* (2004), a thorough treatment of six critical dimensions of election laws in over sixty democracies. He was the recipient of the 2007–8 Congressional Research Award from the Dirksen Center and of the 2001 Malcolm Jewell Award from the Southern Political Science Association.

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ANTOINE YOSHINAKA

The State University of New York at Buffalo



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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107536067

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First published 2016

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Yoshinaka, Antoine.

Crossing the aisle : party switching by U.S. legislators in the postwar era /
Antoine Yoshinaka.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-107-11589-7 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-107-53606-7 (paperback)

1. Party affiliation – United States. 2. United States. Congress – History – 20th century.

3. United States. Congress – History – 21st century. I. Title.

JK227.Y67 2015

328.73'0769–dc23 2015026801

ISBN 978-1-107-11589-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-53606-7 Paperback

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To my parents

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Acknowledgments

This book was a long time coming and I am indebted to a number of people who helped it see the light of day. My first foray into the world of party switching took place in graduate school at the University of Rochester. The Department of Political Science at the U of R provided a vibrant intellectual community where ideas and people come together to produce rigorous social scientific research. In that vein, special thanks to my dissertation committee chair, Dick Niemi, as well as committee members Harold Stanley and Lynda Powell. Harold may not remember this, but the genesis for this book goes back to his first-semester seminar on political parties. Other Rochester faculty members who gave helpful feedback include Curt Signorino, Dick Fenno, Dave Weimer, Kevin Clarke, Mitch Sanders, Gerald Gamm, and David Primo.

My fellow Ph.D. students were also instrumental in shaping this book, first by tearing down the various ideas I had, before helping me solve the issues that they identified. For that and for their friendship, I thank Gail McElroy, Stephen Gent, Robert Walker, Vincent Fitts, and Christian Grose. Christian certainly deserves a lot of credit: He was (and still is) at once friend, coauthor, debater, critic, cheerleader, and roadie. I also thank the members of the “Dissertation Support Group,” for, well, their support, which was typically needed following a brutal takedown of the work.

I continued working on the book as an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Riverside, which provided me with resources and colleagues that made the work stronger. I want to thank Shaun Bowler, Ben Bishin, Martin Johnson, Kevin Esterling, Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Feryal Cherif for their support and friendship. Shaun and Ben were especially helpful to me at various points in my career as well as during the writing stage of the book. They truly are what senior colleagues are meant to be to junior faculty. At Riverside, I had the good fortune to become friends with Derek Burrill, Stella Nair, and Rebekah Richert, who gave me

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an escape from my work and many late nights in great company. Derek also taught me how to play golf, which offered a nice respite from all the stress, and for that I am eternally grateful.

I completed the manuscript at American University, where I developed some strong bonds with colleagues who were also very helpful as I finished the book. I want to thank Adrienne LeBas, Jim Thurber, Matt Wright, Jan Leighley, and especially Jennifer Lawless for their support and friendship. Jen is a superb mentor and colleague, and above all else a loyal friend to whom I owe so much more than what mere words can convey. And I am fortunate to have had Adrienne as a colleague, and I feel even luckier to have her as a friend. I also want to thank Pam Lopez, David Schmitt, and Dominique Green for their research assistance.

I owe many debts of gratitude to the scholars who over the years have commented on my work on party switching and offered valuable feedback on papers, chapters, and ideas. While this is surely an incomplete list, I want to thank Bruce Oppenheimer, Bill Bianco, Tim Nokken, Jim Garand, John Aldrich, Russ Renka, Neil Nevitte, David Karol, and participants at the National Capital Area Political Science Workshop. I also want to thank scholars who have made their data available to me, including Tom Carsey, Jim Glaser, Christian Grose, Gary Jacobson, Gary King, Keith Poole, and Russell Renka.

Though I cannot thank them by name, I am grateful to the politicians and staffers who agreed to be interviewed. Their willingness to talk to me was invaluable, and I hope that in giving them a voice, I was true to their words. Not only were they generous with their time, they gave me an excuse to get out of my office and spend some exciting time on Capitol Hill. Special thanks to the state legislator (whose story is at the center of Chapter 8) who gave me unprecedented access at various points in his decision process.

At Cambridge University Press I was fortunate to have as my editor Lew Bateman, who helped turn the initial manuscript into a much better final product. I also want to extend my gratitude to the editorial and production staff, particularly Emma Collison, Elda Granata, and Shaun Vigil. I also give credit to Andy and Kani for their work during the production process. The book has also benefited from the feedback of anonymous reviewers at Cambridge and elsewhere.

I also want to thank My-Lien Le for preparing the index and Aaminah Cole for helping me translate a vague idea about a donkey and an elephant into the beautiful image on the cover.

On a more personal note, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my parents, Louise and Tsukasa, who have always supported my academic endeavors. They are a paragon of stability. They have been very generous throughout my studies and my time as a professor. My brother Akio Cyrille also deserves a special mention for being a great example for his younger brother to try to follow.

Finally, I cannot begin to explain how fortunate I am to be married to Daniela. She deserves as much credit as anyone for this book, and then some.

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But most important, she has always been there for me even when I couldn't be there for her. More than anyone else, she knows how bumpy the road that led to the publication of this book has been. She is my inspiration, and I hope I can repay her for everything she has done for me. This book – and my life – has turned out to be so much better because of her. And while she still cannot read this, our daughter Clara will, hopefully, one day realize what her dad was up to while he was away from her and during those late nights he spent working on his laptop. She has changed my life for the better and helped put everything in perspective. I know that it hasn't always been easy for her to deal with two academic parents, but she takes it in stride. Daniela and Clara prove to me, on a daily basis, that relationships need not be quantifiable to be significant.