The president most strongly associated with conservation is Theodore Roosevelt. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Roosevelt established the US Forest Service, created several national parks, and signed the Antiquities Act, which he and his successors used to protect many remarkable natural settings. In the later part of the twentieth century, as new challenges emerged, Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency and signed the Endangered Species Act. Both Roosevelt and Nixon were Republicans, and the environment was not a partisan issue in their time. Yet today Republicans are associated with hostility to environmental regulation, and the issue is prominent in party competition. How did this change occur?

In this Element, I explore the growing party divide on environmental issues in the United States. Understanding the roots of this division is interesting in its own right, but it may also reveal how environmental politics might change again. This is a key question since even in this polarized era few major laws are enacted entirely by one party (Curry and Lee, 2019). A crack in the wall of partisanship on the environment may be needed to address climate change in a serious way.

Exploration of this case also contributes to broader understanding of party interest-group relations and party policies. This Element makes both theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on issue evolution and party position change. Environmental politics have been largely unexplored by party scholars, although the partisan divide has received some attention from environmental specialists.

This brief Element is not a history of American environmentalism or environmental policy, although it touches on those topics. Rather it is an exploration and analysis of the partisan divide on the environment that has arisen in the United States. This study is distinctive in multiple ways. The examination of state-level as well as national developments is unusual in this literature. I show how environmental groups have become more sensitive to the concerns of racial minorities as they have been incorporated in the Democratic Party and how they in turn have influenced other party-aligned interest groups such as labor unions. Finally, this Element highlights the importance of legislators' personal characteristics for their position-taking on new issues not yet assimilated to party conflict, and their declining significance as the evolution of party coalitions changes politicians' incentives. These dynamics are not explored in most studies of party position change.

1 Plan of the Element

The Element is organized as follows. First I discuss the rise of environmentalism, putting the growing partisan divisions into theoretical perspective, offering

comparisons with other issue divides in the United States and with environmental politics in other countries. I then trace the growth of the partisan divide on the environment in platforms, presidential nominees' acceptance speeches, and Congressional voting patterns. I examine the changes in parties' geographical bases and constituency factors in Congress and the importance of conversion and turnover among legislators. I reveal the declining importance of personal characteristics of members of Congress other than party affiliation, even those such as age and education, which remain key predictors of voters' views on the environment. I reveal increasingly partisan patterns of campaign contributions by both environmentalists and industries with which they are in conflict. I chart public opinion, revealing a growing partisan divide on the environment among voters. Turning to the state level, I reveal much variation in the strength of partisan divisions on the environment in statehouses. Not only has the parties' relationship with environmentalism changed; the movement itself has evolved. I cover the transition from "conservationists" to "environmentalists" and the latter's turn against nuclear power. I highlight the growing links between environmentalists and other groups in the Democrats' coalition, which have affected the positions taken by all participants. These lobbies now work together on judicial nominations, which historically did not interest environmentalists. I also discuss developments in the Republican Party, including the mobilization of interests opposed to regulation, and the rejection of environmentalism by religious-right leaders.

Having described the growth in partisan divisions on the environment, I explore possible sources of change, noting the Republicans' dependence on constituencies in demographic decline including older whites, evangelicals, and the fossil fuel sector. I consider GOP elected officials' incentives to revisit policy stands and focus on the recently founded bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus.

2 The Rise of Environmentalism in the United States

Environmentalism is a relatively new political issue, historically speaking. In the 1910s the question of "conservation" was briefly prominent in the fight between progressive Republicans led by Theodore Roosevelt and the GOP "Old Guard" allied with William Howard Taft (Richardson 1958). Yet the conservation controversy did not endure. Some of conservationists' goals, including expert management of public lands and preservation of scenic locales, became widely accepted. In subsequent decades, environmental issues as we now understand them were largely absent from national debates and party competition.

Policies affecting human exploitation of the natural world have always existed. Yet decisions that many would now view through the prism of environmental concerns, such as whether the government should build dams or nuclear power plants, were instead seen in the mid-twentieth century as questions about the role of the state versus the private sector (Wildavsky 1962). The value of the underlying projects was seldom disputed in the era of "high modernism" (Scott 1999), when many agreed that bigger was better, differing only over whether planning by "big government" or "big business" was best. Republicans took some positions that conservationists approved (sometimes in retrospect), as when they blocked a Bureau of Reclamation plan supported by Democrats in the 1950s to build the Hells Canyon High Dam. This project would have been the world's largest dam on the Snake River in Idaho, flooding a vast area. Private utilities eventually built smaller dams (Brooks 2009).

Similarly, the dispute over "tidelands oil" was a major issue in the 1952 US presidential election. Yet the question was not – as it might be today – whether offshore drilling should be permitted, but rather whether the states or federal government should collect the revenue from oil leases. Most Democrats – especially those from outside the tidelands states like Texas and Louisiana – favored federal control. Republicans advocated states' rights, the position favored by oil interests (Harris 1953).

Environmental consciousness grew in the 1960s and early 1970s. Key milestones included the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962 and celebration of the first Earth Day in 1970. Environmental organizations expanded and multiplied during this period. New groups, including the League of Conservation Voters, Friends of the Earth, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, arose while the membership of older organizations like the Sierra Club greatly expanded. The Club, which had no chapters outside California until the 1950s, had only 10,000 members in 1956, but reached 200,000 by 1981.[1] The Washington presence of environmental organizations and their role in elections correspondingly increased (Mitchell, Mertig, and Dunlap 1991.)

A thorough account of the rise of environmentalism is beyond the scope of this Element, but a few points may be noted. This development was not unique to the United States, but rather occurred throughout the industrialized world. Visible pollution (e.g., the mid-twentieth-century smog in Los Angeles and the fire at the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland) was a factor. A leading account stresses the rise of "postmaterialist" values in societies that have experienced peace and prosperity for generations (Inglehart 1995). Once basic needs are

[1] "History: Sierra Club Timeline" http://vault.sierraclub.org/history/timeline.aspx

met, quality of life becomes more salient, and environmentalism is one expression of this.

3 The Growing Party Divide on Environmentalism in Theoretical Context

Environmentalism became a political cause and has increasingly become a partisan one. It is not unique in this respect. Parties have taken up new positions on many issues. This phenomenon and its relationship to changes in party coalitions have long interested scholars. At one time students of parties spoke of "realignments" (Burnham 1970, Sundquist 1983). More recently, as the realignment paradigm has been challenged (Mayhew 2004), scholars have discussed "issue evolution" and "party position change" (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Adams 1997, Wolbrecht 2000, Karol 2009,Wolbrecht and Hartney 2014, Schlozman 2015, Baylor 2018).

The relatively recent emergence of the environmental issue contrasts with questions like trade policy or race, which have been contested since colonial days. Other issues, such as the regulation of labor unions, have been debated for over a century. In this sense, the politics of the environment resembles debates over "social issues" like gun control, abortion, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights. Like environmentalism, these issues arose in the 1960s, when polarization was at its nadir. Initially, these new issues divided elected officials and voters along regional or religious lines at least as much as party ones.

From the 1970s onward, the parties have gradually absorbed these new issues and the constituencies focused on them. These conflicts have not replaced controversies that arose during the New Deal era. Democrats and Republicans still disagree on topics like labor regulation, taxation, and the welfare state. These newer debates, including environmental policy, have supplemented rather than replaced the older controversies in a process Layman et al. (2010) call "conflict extension."

When a new issue arises, a partisan divide is not the only possibility. Reformers may win over elected officials in both parties and achieve victory for their cause, eventually removing it from public debate. Women's suffrage is an example. After decades of struggle, suffragists won a decisive victory and their cause is no longer controversial. An issue may also remain on the political agenda for an extended period before being settled, but cut across party lines the entire time. A prominent example is "the liquor question." Supporters of Prohibition (or "drys") and opponents (or "wets") were numerous in both parties. Republicans were more supportive of Prohibition on average, but the

issue split both parties until it disappeared from the national debate with the ratification of the Twenty-second Amendment in 1933 (Poole and Rosenthal 2007, McGirr 2015).

Yet since environmentalism encompasses many policies, it seems unlikely that it could ever be "settled" the way women's suffrage or Prohibition were. At most we might see certain policies, e.g., the existence of some national parks, become uncontroversial.

A new issue can also give rise to new parties. In many countries, the growth of environmental consciousness produced important Green parties that won seats in legislatures and cabinets. There have been new issue-based parties in the United States going back to the nineteenth century when antislavery, populism, and Prohibition all gave rise to parties. Yet significant third parties have been short-lived. As Richard Hofstadter (1955, 97) wrote, in America "third parties are like bees. Once they have stung they die." American electoral institutions discourage the formation of new parties. Although there is a Green Party in the United States, it is less focused on environmental concerns than its name suggests, and it has never won a Congressional seat or electoral vote.

In the early 1970s, party elites gave mixed signals on the environment. Richard Nixon was not a hero of environmentalists, but he signed major legislation including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, and oversaw the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. Nixon's advocacy for these reforms – which won massive support in Congress – has been seen as opportunistic, and he later criticized environmentalists (Flippen 2000). Nonetheless, his actions showed that both parties initially sought to address public concerns about the environment.

Nixon's positioning differed from that of later Republican presidents. On this issue, as on many others, Ronald Reagan was the key figure in defining party differences.[2] Reagan allied with the pro-development western "Sagebrush Rebellion," telling a crowd, "Count me in as a rebel."[3] Platforms also showed a growing partisan divide on the issue (Kamienicki 1995). Since then the party division on the environment in the United States has continued to grow.

Why has this happened? I argue that the nature of pre-existing party coalitions made it likely that, once the modern environmental movement arose, it would be drawn into the party system. My coauthors and I (Cohen et al. 2008, Bawn et al. 2012) have argued that parties are best understood as coalitions of "intense

[2] Reagan was also the first GOP presidential candidate to win the NRA's endorsement, the first to oppose the ERA, and is credited with identifying Republicans decisively with the pro-life cause (Adams 1997, Karol 2009).

[3] "Reagan Joins Rebels Against Government Ownership of Land," *Miami News* July 5, 1980, p. 28.

policy demanders." The composition of those coalitions evolves, and so do the parties' policy stands. In Karol (2009) I developed three models of change: coalition maintenance, in which politicians modify their positions on issues to appease existing elements of their party's base; coalition group incorporation, in which they take new stands in hopes of bringing targeted constituencies into their party; and coalition expansion, in which elected officials try to win over the public more broadly on issues that lack organized, focused groups.

The different models of change are associated with different rates of reorientation on the part of politicians and different extents to which turnover or conversion by incumbents is the mechanism altering party elites' stands. Group incorporation requires politicians to build new relationships. Typically, some entrenched incumbents do not embrace newcomers to their party. Thus the full transformation of the party requires turnover among party officialdom and is more gradual than coalition maintenance.

The process of environmental group's movement into the Democratic Party is a case of group incorporation, while the Republican rejection of environmentalism is primarily coalition maintenance, although elements of the GOP base have been organized and newly mobilized in ways that make the group incorporation model partially applicable as well.

Environmentalists are mostly in conflict with business interests. Depending on the issue in question they may face off against loggers, agribusiness, utilities, automakers, or other manufacturers. By far their most important conflict in the era of climate change is with fossil fuel producers. All of these economic interests are broadly aligned with the Republican Party. Importantly, that alignment predates the rise of environmentalism. The business community has been Republican-leaning since the days of Abraham Lincoln, when GOP support for the tariff brought manufacturers into the fold. Democrats, once a primarily agrarian party, were eventually more receptive to labor unions when they arose as a political force long before environmentalism became an important movement. While Republicans tried to unite business interests and workers behind their protectionist tariff policies, they could not go beyond that, and unions instead became the core constituency of the New Deal–era Democratic Party, a development that itself reinforced business loyalty to Republicans. This alignment meant that it would always be easier for Democratic politicians to adopt policies sought by environmentalists, despite some conflict between the latter and labor unions. This coalitional argument does not explain the exact policy positions taken by the parties; it only suggests that the issue was likely to become partisan and Democrats were apt to emerge as the party more favorable to environmentalists' concerns.

4 US Environmental Politics in Comparative Perspective

Before delving deeper into American environmental politics, it is worth looking at the larger context. Environmentalism is a global phenomenon (Fisher 2004, Hadden 2015). A comparative perspective is useful for both students of American politics and those concerned with environmentalism. It can reveal what is distinctive about environmental politics in the United States and what requires special explanations.

In any comparative analysis, the selection of cases is key. I present comparisons of the United States and its fellow members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an organization of prosperous democratic countries.

Table 1 summarizes the representation of environmentally minded parties in the thirty-five OECD member states. It reveals several facts and places American environmentalists in comparative perspective. Firstly, in most of these countries "Green" parties have won representation in the lower house of parliament. This is true of thirty-one of thirty-six OECD members, the United States not among them. OECD countries in which environmentalists have never been elected to parliament are a small minority: Japan, South Korea, Poland, Turkey, and the United States. Notably, only one of these countries besides the United States – Japan – has been both prosperous and democratic for more than thirty years. In most countries the peak Green representation in parliament has also occurred within the last decade, indicating growing public concern about the environment.

More stringent tests of the political power of Green parties would note not merely their presence in national parliaments but also the share of seats they won, and whether they were represented in the executive branch of government. In fourteen OECD countries Green parties have won more than five percent of seats in at least one parliamentary election. In eleven, they have held executive branch positions. There is overlap between these two groups. The countries falling into both categories can be seen as those where political environmentalism has made greatest headway. They are Belgium, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, and Sweden. These are all Northern European counties, and with the exception of Latvia, all states that have been wealthy democracies for many decades.

While America's outlier status among these "peer" countries is notable, it must be qualified in some ways. The absence of a significant Green party in the United States is one result of a two-party duopoly that has no true parallel in other OECD countries. In many of these countries, half a dozen or more parties

Table 1 US environmental politics in comparative perspective: OECD countries

Country	Peak Green Strength in Parliament	Greens Ever in Cabinet?	2018 Environmental Protection Index Rank	EPA Equivalent Created
Australia	1/150 in 2010/2013/2016	NO	21	1971
Austria	24/183 in 2013	NO	8	1972
Belgium	19/150 in 1999	YES	15	1975
Canada	1/338 in 2011/2015	NO	25	1971
Chile	1/155 in 2017	NO	84	2010
Czech Rep.	6/200 in 2006	YES	33	1993
Denmark	9/175 in 2015	NO	3	1971
Estonia	6/101 in 2007	NO	48	1989
Finland	15/200 in 2007/2015	YES	10	1983
France	18/577 in 2012	YES	2	1971
Germany	68/622 in 2009	YES	13	1986
Greece	2/300 in 2015	YES	22	1980
Hungary	16/386 in 2010	NO	43	1988
Iceland	14/63 in 2009	YES	11	1990
Ireland	6/166 in 2007	YES	9	1977
Israel	1/120 in 2015	NO	19	1988
Italy	16/630 in 1992	YES	16	1986
Japan	NONE	NO	20	2001
Korea	NONE	NO	60	1994
Latvia	6/100 in 2014	YES	37	1993
Lithuania	4/135 in 1990	NO	29	1994
Luxembourg	7/100 in 2004/2009	NO	7	1974
Mexico	47/500 in 2015	NO	72	1994
Netherlands	14/150 in 2017	NO	18	1971
New Zealand	14/121 in 2011/2017	NO	17	1986
Norway	1/169 in 2013/2017	NO	14	1972
Poland	NONE	NO	50	1972
Portugal	4/230 in 2005	NO	26	1999
Slovakia	4/150 in 1998	NO	28	Unknown
Slovenia	8/80 in 1990	YES	34	1990
Spain	3/350 in 2015/2016	NO	12	1993
Sweden	25/310 in 2010/2014	YES	5	1987
Switzerland	20/200 in 2007	NO	1	1998
Turkey	NONE	NO	109	2011
UK	1/650 in 2015	NO	6	1970
USA	NONE	NONE	27	1970

regularly win seats in the national legislature. Political scientists agree that the number of parties in a country is largely a function of electoral laws. The first-past-the-post single member district (FPP-SMD) system used in the United States along with a president elected without a runoff strongly encourage interest groups and activists to join one of the two major parties. As the table reveals, Canada and the UK, which share the FPP-SMD system (and much else) with the United States, have only minimal representation of Green parties; there is only one Green legislator in each country's House of Commons.

A country may adopt strong environmental protections without the presence of a significant Green party, as the United States has. As environmentalism has been incorporated in left–right divisions (Dalton 2009), left-wing parties in many countries have become more sensitive to environmental concerns. Conversely, a Green party might also enter parliament and still find its concerns marginalized. So how does the United States compare with other countries in terms of policy outcomes? There is no simple answer to this question, but one widely used measure reported in the table is the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), developed by scholars in association with the World Economic Forum.[4] This group ranks the United States 27th out of 180 countries examined in 2018. Thus, in a global perspective the United States ranks relatively high.

Yet the most appropriate comparison group for the United States is not countries mired in poverty and war, or states with poorly educated populations living under dictatorships. Of the twenty-six countries with higher EPI rankings than the United States, twenty-three are OECD members. So, by this measure the United States scores well below average among peer countries, although it is still highly rated in some categories and subcategories.[5] The relative position of the United States has changed little in recent years. Notably it was in 26th place in the rankings released in January 2016, before Donald Trump became President.[6]

The United States stands out the most on the question of climate change. It is the only country to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and the only OECD country not to have ratified the agreement other than Turkey, which – unlike the United States – remains a signatory.

Yet if the United States now lags its peers on key environmental concerns, this was not always true. Indeed, the United States was long an environmental

[4] https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-topline?country=&order=field_epi_score_new&sort=desc

[5] The country EPI scores were based on ratings of several policy categories. The United States received its best scores for Sustainable Agriculture (2nd place) and Air Quality (10th place). Conversely, the United States got low ratings for Climate and Energy (114th place) and Biodiversity and Habitat (103rd place).

[6] http://epi2016.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2016EPI_Full_Report_opt.pdf

leader. There is some debate over what constitutes the first "national park," but it is widely accepted that with the creation of Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks in the nineteenth century and the protection of many other areas under the 1906 Antiquities Act, the United States was a pioneer in wilderness protection. This remained true for much of the twentieth century. In establishing the Environmental Protection Administration in 1970, the United States was among the first countries to create a national agency or department focused on pollution.

While the United States is an outlier in rejecting the Paris Agreement, there is resistance to efforts to address climate change among conservative parties in some other OECD countries. Two countries that often seem to have the most in common with the United States are interesting cases in point. Both Canada and Australia are more economically dependent on natural resources than most advanced industrialized countries. In both nations the leading conservative parties are wobbly on the question of climate change, if not to the extent of the Republican Party. The Canadian Conservative Party, currently in the opposition, supported the Liberal government's entry into the Paris Agreement in 2017, but it insists that Canada can meet its emission reduction targets without imposing a carbon tax.[7] In Australia the governing Liberal Party was hostile to policies geared toward addressing climate change until Malcolm Turnbull became party leader and Prime Minister. Turnbull led Australia into the Paris Agreement. Yet faced with a serious challenge to his leadership from within his parliamentary caucus in August 2018, Turnbull agreed that Australia would not meet its emission targets. He was still deposed only days later.[8]

In other OECD members, leading conservative parties accept the reality of climate change and the need to address it. However, in these countries the same electoral rules that made it possible for Green parties to arise have also allowed for the emergence of right-wing populist parties. While these new groupings tend to focus on immigration, they are often also protectionist, antiestablishment, and hostile to global governance regimes. One manifestation of this is denialist or "skeptical" views on climate change. Prominent examples include the Alternative for Germany and the UK Independence Party, but resistance to policies addressing climate change is common among right-wing populist parties (Lockwood 2018). In the American two-party system, those hostile toward efforts to address climate change are drawn into the Republican Party.

[7] "Trudeau's Tough Climate Policies Face a Mounting Backlash," *Bloomberg.com,* July 20, 2018.
[8] "Malcolm Turnbull Removes all Climate Change Targets from Energy Policy in Fresh Bid to Save Leadership," *Sydney Morning Herald,* August 20, 2018; "Australian Prime Minister Ousted in Dispute over Greenhouse Gas Emissions," *Washington Post,* August 24, 2018.