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A Study of the Personnel of the Senate in the Eighty-Fourth Congress, 1955-1956 *

by

E. K. Williams

The purpose of this study was to analyze the factors of age, party distribution, education, legislative experience, length of service and occupations of senators in the Eighty-fourth Congress of the United States. Several related studies have been made of the personnel of the Senate. Some of the most significant ones include those of the personnel from the Fifty-fourth to the Fifty-eighth Congresses¹, the Sixty-first Congress², the Sixty-third Congress³, the Sixty-eighth Congress⁴, the Seventy-third Congress⁵ and the Seventy-seventh Congress.⁶

The main sources of data used in this presentation were collected from the **Congressional Directory**⁷ and the **Congressional Quarterly**.⁸ The paucity of data on the lives of several senators included in the **Congressional Directory** imposes some limitation on this analysis.

Age of Senators

The change in the average age of senators has almost been indiscernible within the past fifty years. The increase in the span of life has had no significant impact on the age of senators in Congress. The average age of the senators of the First Congress was forty-eight years⁹ In 1913, the

*The senators used in this analysis include only those who were members of the first session of the Eighty-fourth Congress. William Laird, III, of West Virginia, appointed March 3, 1956, Thomas A. Wofford of South Carolina, appointed April 5, 1956, and Robert Humphreys of Kentucky, appointed June 21, 1956, are not included in this study. They served temporarily until the general election of 1956. See: *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, XII, 1956, p. 17.

¹The *Election of Senators* (Henry Holt and Company), 1906, pp. 71-99.

²"Congress and the Senate," in *Cyclopedia of American Government*, 1911.

³"The Changing Senate," *North American Review* (August, 1914), 222-34.

⁴"Senate New Style," *Atlantic Monthly* (August, 1924), 252-63.

⁵George H. Haynes, *The Senate of the United States*, II, (Houghton-Mifflin Co.), 1938. This volume also accounts for the previous studies.

⁶Madge M. McKinney, "The Personnel of the Seventy-seventh Congress," *American Political Science Review*, XXXVI (1942), 67-75.

⁷84th Congress, 1st Session, *Congressional Directory* (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 3-157.

⁸*Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, XI, 1955.

⁹Haynes, *op. cit.*, I, p. 43.

average age was 57, and in 1933, 58.¹⁰ In 1942, McKinney concluded that the average age of the senators in the Seventy-seventh Congress was 58.¹¹ In this study (1955-56), the median age of the members of the upper chamber is 57.25.

Haynes contends¹² that the distribution of senators in age-decades is more significant than the average age of senators. In this respect, Table I gives an analysis of the distribution of senators by age-decades. Column seven indicates that more than forty per cent of the senators fall in the age-group from fifty to fifty-nine.

TABLE I
AGE OF SENATORS IN THE EIGHTY-FOURTH CONGRESS*

Age-Decade	Democrats		Republicans		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
80 - 89.....	2	04.08	---	-----	2	02.08
70 - 79.....	6	12.24	5	10.63	11	11.45
60 - 69.....	10	20.40	14	29.78	24	25.00
50 - 59.....	20	40.81	20	42.55	40	41.66
40 - 49.....	9	18.36	7	14.89	16	16.66
30 - 39.....	2	04.08	1	02.12	3	03.12
Total.....	49	99.97	47	99.97	96	99.97

*The median age for Democrats is 56.75; Republicans 57.75; and for both 57.25. Senator T. F. Green, at the age of 89, became on November 30, 1956, the oldest person ever to serve in Congress. See: *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* XII, p. 16.

This study reveals that more than half of the personnel are fifty-nine years old or older. Of this number, twenty-five Democrats are fifty-eight years or older; and twenty-five Republicans are fifty-nine years or older. A study of the personnel of the Seventy-seventh Congress revealed that half of the senators were fifty-seven or older.¹³ In the present study, approximately eighty per cent of the senators are past fifty. Haynes remarked: ". . . In 1883, 73 per cent of the senators were past fifty years of age. By 1913, that percentage had risen to 79, and by 1933 to 85. . . ." ¹⁴

¹⁰*Ibid.*, II, p. 1044.

¹¹McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹²Haynes, *op. cit.*, p. 1044.

¹³McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁴Haynes, *op. cit.*, p. 1044.

Evidence seems to point to the conclusion that the Senate is not growing younger. Conversely, this century has witnessed an imperceptible trend toward an older Senate. This perhaps assures a predominance of conservative ideology in the upper chamber.

Party Distribution

Patterns of party distribution and control are obvious determinants of the type, nature, and quality of legislations that may be enacted by Congress. The integrity of the government at home and its leadership abroad may well be stifled in the geography of politics.

TABLE II
PARTY DISTRIBUTION OF SENATORS BY REGIONS
AND BY STATES

<i>Region</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Total</i>
New England.....	3	9	12
Connecticut.....	0	2	2
Maine.....	0	2	2
Massachusetts.....	1	1	2
New Hampshire.....	0	2	2
Rhode Island.....	2	0	2
Vermont.....	0	2	2
Middle Atlantic.....	1	5	6
New Jersey.....	0	2	2
New York.....	1	1	2
Pennsylvania.....	0	2	2
East North Central.....	2	8	10
Illinois.....	1	1	2
Indiana.....	0	2	2
Michigan.....	1	1	2
Ohio.....	0	2	2
Wisconsin.....	0	2	2
West North Central.....	3	11	14
Iowa.....	0	2	2
Kansas.....	0	2	2
Minnesota.....	1	1	2
Missouri.....	2	0	2
Nebraska.....	0	2	2
North Dakota.....	0	2	2
South Dakota.....	0	2	2
South Atlantic.....	13	3	16
Delaware.....	1	1	2
Florida.....	2	0	2
Georgia.....	2	0	2
Maryland.....	0	2	2
North Carolina.....	2	0	2
South Carolina.....	2	0	2
Virginia.....	2	0	2
West Virginia.....	2	0	2

TABLE II—cont'd.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Total</i>
East South Central	8	0	8
Alabama	2	0	2
Kentucky	2	0	2
Mississippi	2	0	2
Tennessee	2	0	2
West South Central	8	0	8
Arkansas	2	0	2
Louisiana	2	0	2
Oklahoma	2	0	2
Texas	2	0	2
Mountain	7	9	16
Arizona	1	1	2
Colorado	0	2	2
Idaho	0	2	2
Montana	2	0	2
New Mexico	2	0	2
Nevada	1	1	2
Utah	0	2	2
Wyoming	1	1	2
Pacific	4	2	6
California	0	2	2
Oregon*	2	0	2
Washington	2	0	2
Total (U. S.)	49	47	96

Of the nine regions of the United States, Table II indicates that the Democratic party asserts political hegemony over four of these, and the Republican party over five. In two regions, East South Central and West South Central, the Democrats have complete control. The Republicans do not exercise complete control over any of the regions. Only the border states of Delaware and Maryland, of the South Atlantic region, elected Republican senators to the Eighty-fourth Congress, while the state of New York elected one Democratic senator from the Middle Atlantic region. If the assumption that the two-party system promotes democracy is valid, then there is an indispensable obligation for Americans to make the two-party system theory a genuine instrument for the furthering of democracy in those states where virtually one party exists.

Education

With respect to the education of the personnel of the Senate, evidence clearly indicates that the formal education of senators substantially surpasses that of the general public. Current data indicate that ninety per cent of the

*Senator Morse of Oregon officially became a Democrat, February 17, 1955.

members of the upper chamber of the Eighty-fourth Congress have graduated or have attended a college, university, or a professional school. Approximately sixty per cent have graduated or attended law school, and forty-two per cent have received a degree in law. The education of senators in this investigation compares favorably with that indicated in previous studies. McKinney found that eighty-eight per cent of the senators of the Seventy-seventh Congress had attended college, professional school, or both.¹⁵ Haynes contends that four-fifths of the senators in 1933 were college trained.¹⁶

The mere fact that the members of the upper house are college trained or legally trained does not guarantee that they are educationally prepared for the complicated task of legislating. A college education does not necessarily prepare one for a specific task. Law-making is a profession which requires special skills and vast knowledge of the many facets of the domestic and international scene. Lawyers may have an excellent background for the profession of law, and still lack the prerequisite for law-making. Robert Bruce comments: "Lawyers are liable to be poor law makers because their mental habit is backward looking. Their whole training has taught them ever to rely on precedents. They worship the past. This has its advantages, but among them is not the facility for meeting needs and anticipating the tomorrow."¹⁷ Perhaps legislators for today need to be more directly prepared for the job that they are expected to do.

Legislative Experience*

Legislative experience of senators prior to their present position has been indicated in an appreciable number of senators. Table III indicates the previous service of

TABLE III
LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Number of Senators</i>
One	4
Two	4
Three	5
Four	2
Five	10
Six	4
Seven	5
Eight	6
Total	40

¹⁵McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁶Haynes, *op. cit.*, p. 1045.

¹⁷McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

*Experience in the legislatures of state, city or county is not included.

senators in the House of Representatives. The data indicate that forty-one per cent of the senators in the Eighty-fourth Congress have formerly served in the House of Representatives as compared with twenty-nine per cent of the senators in the Seventy-seventh Congress.¹⁸ In addition to the legislative experience in the House of Representatives: seventeen senators have served as governors; six as former senators; one as Senate clerk; one as secretary to a senator, and one as Secretary of the Air Force.

Length of Service

Table IV shows that approximately forty-two per cent of the senators have served less than two terms; forty per cent have served only one term; and seventeen per cent have served two or more terms.

TABLE IV
LENGTH OF SERVICE

Terms* and Years	Democrats		Republicans		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Freshmen	4	8.16	5	10.63	9	9.37
Less than one term	15	30.61	16	34.04	31	32.29
0-1 yr. "	4		2		6	
1 yr. "	---		---		---	
2 yr. "	6		8		14	
3 yr. "	---		---		---	
4 yr. "	5		6		11	
5 yr. "	---		---		---	
One Term	18	36.73	21	44.68	39	40.62
6 yr. "	10		2		12	
7 yr. "	2		1		3	
8 yr. "	3		13		16	
9 yr. "	---		2		2	
10 yr. "	3		3		6	
Two Terms	4	8.16	5	10.63	9	9.37
12 yr. "	3		---		3	
13 yr. "	---		1		1	
14 yr. "	---		2		2	
16 yr. "	---		1		1	
17 yr. "	1		1		2	
Three Terms	6	12.24	---	-----	6	6.25
18 yr. "	2		---		2	
20 yr. "	2		---		2	
22 yr. "	2		---		2	
Four Terms	2	4.07	---	-----	2	2.08
28 yr. "	1		---		1	
32 yr. "	1		---		1	
Total	49	99.97	47	99.98	96	99.98

¹⁸McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

*A term is equivalent to six years.

Occupations

In 1776, John Adams stated: "The representative assembly should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large. . . . Equal interests among the people should have equal interests in the representative body."¹⁹ The previous occupations of senators in the Eighty-fourth Congress do not approximate the ideal pattern envisioned by Adams.

TABLE V*
PROFESSION OF SENATORS

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Agriculture	7	14	21
Business/Banking	10	18	28
Civic Service and Politics	48	46	94
Journalism	6	4	10
Law	27	33	60
Teaching	11	6	17
D(ent.), E(ng), M(ed.)	2**	2**	4
Veteran	30	32	62

**Includes 2 E(ngineers)

Column four points out that sixty senators were formerly associated with the profession of law. This compares favorably with fifty-nine senators in the Seventy-seventh Congress²⁰ and sixty-four in the Seventy-fourth Congress.²¹ Unquestionably, the profession of law is predominant in the upper chamber. McKinney comments on this issue: ". . . If their [senators] background goes far toward predetermining their votes, the American traditional form of government will be safeguarded, religious freedom will be maintained, business will be protected, and financial interest will not suffer. Labor, particularly unskilled labor, however, may lack champions on Capitol Hill."²² The writer feels that a more equitable election of senators from the major economic and social interests of the United States would be more in line with goals of democracy.

¹⁹Writings, IV, 205, as quoted by Haynes, *op. cit.*, 11, p. 1062.

²⁰McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²¹Haynes, *op. cit.*, p. 1064.

²²McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

*See Table, *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* XI, 1955, p. 26.