In Federalist Papers No. 10, James Madison, writing under the pseudonym Publius, lamented the dangers of what he called "faction." Factions—which we might today call political parties—held corruptive influence over the political process because such entities develop independent, institutional instincts toward self-preservation that may eventually become antagonistic to the interests of the broader people. Republicanism, managed through the reasonable faculties of men, would be to the cure to faction, Madison envisioned. Nevertheless, just over two decades from Federalist 10's publication in 1787, Madison ran for president of the United States at the head of the 1808 Democratic-Republican ticket, and thus became the leader of the largest faction hitherto known in American politics. But Madison was far from the only Founding Father to change his position on political parties. "If I could not go to heaven but with a party," Thomas Jefferson shared privately with a friend, "I would not go there at all."[1] Nevertheless, when time came for Jefferson to express his presidential ambitions at the turn of the 19th century, he stood as the Democratic-Republican candidate. In Jefferson's estimation, he later wrote, when the chasm that separates the parties is cavernous, it is "honorable to take a firm and decided part and […] immoral to pursue a middle line, as between the parties of honest men and rogues, into which every country is divided."[2] Thus, in the republic's infancy, parties were cemented as the primary means of political organization in the American system of governance.

I.   Toward a Theory of Party

The near-omnipresence of political parties in free, democratic societies has risen to the status of inevitability. E. E. Schattschneider asserted that "political parties created democracy," and therefore, "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties."[3] But what is a political party? Why do they form so consistently across democratic nations? Is the policy and administrative direction a political party more

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[1] Marty Cohen et al., *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 19.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Rinehart, 1942), 1. Quoted in Aldrich 1995, 3.

directed by candidates, officeholders, or party leaders? Political scientists have negotiated with these questions over almost the past century and produced a number of distinct answers.

Joseph Schumpeter, the Austrian-born Harvard political economist, offered the first traces of a modern theory of party in his 1942 work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. Schumpeter offered a competitive model of party, in which politicians compete with each other for the support of the public. Then, in Anthony Down's 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, the focus on competition among politician in the Schumpeter conception is displaced with an emphasis on competition between parties. Thus, shifts in the interior configurations of organized political parties were largely attributed to exogenous shocks from the moves of rival parties. Political parties, in the Schumpeter-Downs framework, become reactionary rivals vying for popular attention. Critics point to the numerous political actors— organizers, grassroots activists, and perhaps even actual voters—whom this model silences amid the raucous scuffles of inter-party conflict. Even so, this Schumpeter-Downs model of party gained prominence in the 1960s as the study of political organization expanded. Meanwhile, the actual effect that parties were demonstrated to have in the operation of the political system seemed to weaken. At the state and federal level, it seemed that as the party nomination process was reformed, with the McGovern-Fraser reforms particularly notable, the power that party leaders had to affect political outcomes seemed infirm and insignificant.

The apparent weakening of party power also weakened the saliency of studying political organization and political parties. The field branched off into various directions, with different sets of scholars developing a theory of party to explain parochial aspects of overall party functions. This was until John Aldrich wrote perhaps the most important work in the field of party theory in the recent history of political science. Aldrich's 1995 book *Why Parties?* compiled and synthesized the research literature

on political parties into a sort of grand unifying theory of why and how political parties assert their positions in the American political system.

In *Why Parties?* Aldrich built upon an unpublished paper by UCLA theorist Thomas Schwartz, in which Schwartz imagined a hypothetical legislature of three. Schwartz thought that in such a circumstance, two of the three legislators would cooperate to secure the greatest gains for their constituents while shifting the losses onto the constituents of the third legislator. He called such cooperation a "long coalition".[4] These long coalitions create a set of permanent winners who have great incentive to cooperate with each other on a wide range of issues to ensure that the agenda most favorable to their collective and individual interests is enacted. Schwartz contended that political parties form on the basis of a straightforward, rational calculation: separate, the lawmakers are ineffective in a body that governs by majority rule; together, the can secure significant gains for themselves and their stakeholders, even if those gains are not entirely what the sought. In such a Hobson's choice, achieving some legislative victories is a better condition than endless bickering that achieves nothing at all.

Aldrich advances Schwartz framework by expanding it beyond the theoretical legislature and into legislatures that govern. *Why Parties?* introduces the archetype of the ambitious politician. Political parties, Aldrich thought, were the progeny of ambitious officeholders, office seekers, and politicians. They do not form these parties to direct the benefits of the coalition to their constituents, although they do care that their constituents are content and that the foundations of public policy are sound. What drives these political actors, in Aldrich's estimation, is the next election. Securing the right to govern depends of winning popular support in polling booths. This is what ultimately matters to the ambitious officeholder and thus forms the basis of here drive to ensconce herself in the ranks of a political party. Aldrich further argued that, though his argument advanced a candidate-centered theory of party, the precise nature of the

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[4] Cohen et al., *The Party Decides*, 26.

support that political parties offered to candidates had changed over time. Previously, parties focused on what Aldrich called "mass mobilization"—featuring patronage, spoil systems, and political machines—that moved voters toward candidates. Today, parties are "in-service" actors. They move candidates closer to voters through training, consultants, polling, and fundraising. While candidates form their own campaigns, build their own message, and run on their own merit under the in-service party model, the ends of both the mass mobilization party and in-service party are traced back a single center of gravity: getting ambitious office seekers into office and keeping ambitious officeholders in their positions.[5]

The Schwartz-Aldrich theory of party offers answers two three substantial questions that are fundamental to this project's research: what are political parties? Why do they form? How do they operate? A political party is a stable coalition of officeholders and office seekers who agree to cooperate on a wide range of issues in order to build a winning coalition that secures political advantage in elections and lawmaking. The political party forms a brand of sorts that becomes a shorthand for the beliefs, interests, and values of the politicians, officeholders, and office seekers who walk under that party's banner. In turn, this brand reduces the transaction costs associated with seeking and maintaining office. Office seekers and officeholders need not reintroduce themselves to the public each election because the party brand does this on their behalf. Further, through services like electoral training and polling, the party helps office seekers win elections.

II. Long Coalitions in Virginia's Chambers

a. Research Design

This project seeks to build upon the body of research literature that the Schwartz-Aldrich theory has already generated by exploring the strength of party coalitions in Virginia's General Assembly. Specifically, the theory's emphasis on the pursuit of electoral majorities as the central motive force for

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[5] Cohen et al., *The Party Decides*, 26–28.

ambitious officeholders and office seekers seems to imply that, upon achieving such an electoral majority, the long coalition grows stronger and more cohesive. This strengthening in the ties that bind lawmakers in the governing party is vital in ensuring that they may execute on their legislative capacity with greatest profit.

This research seeks to answer the question: do members of the majority caucus show greater loyalty to their caucus' interests than members of the minority caucus by voting with the caucus at a greater frequency? This question is rooted in the premises of the Schwartz-Aldrich theory of party. Long coalitions emerge from the ambitions of a community of officeholders and office seekers. Its aims are focused on heightening the electoral and legislative advantage of being in the majority by cooperating across a wide range of issues. Taking this as an axiom, it ought to follow that the voting patterns of those who are members of the majority, governing caucus would be more closely aligned with each other than those members of the minority, non-governing caucus. Further, we might also assume, on the basis of the aforementioned axiom, that the relationship between caucus unity among the members of the majority caucus and the partisan lean of the majority members' districts would be weak. Conversely, the association between caucus unity in the minority caucus and the partisan leans of minority member districts would share a stronger relationship than that of the majority caucus. We might further postulate, based on the long coalition axiom, that caucus unity, once quantified, would be skewed toward the upper strata of a caucus unity distribution.

    b. <u>Methodology</u>

In statistical terms, supporting the long coalitions thesis in state legislatures requires testing several aspects of the thesis. First, we must prove that the voting patterns of majority members are more unified than the voting patterns of minority members. In order to prove this, this research will use caucus unity percentages, denoted as C, which is the proportion of votes in which a member voted with their caucus on

the floor in circumstances where two thirds of the caucus voted in the same way. Mathematically, C is expressed as:

$$\frac{number\ of\ votes\ in\ sync\ with\ two\ thirds\ of\ caucus}{total\ number\ of\ floor\ votes\ where\ two\ thirds\ of\ caucus\ voted\ in\ the\ same\ way} * 100$$

This project will compare the caucus unity in the majority and minority caucuses taking the average caucus unity percentage and comparing these sample statistics directly. We expect the mean caucus unity percentage to be higher in the majority caucus than in the minority caucus, which would demonstrate higher levels of cohesion in voting patterns among members of the majority caucus. This project would seek to further examine caucus unity by calculating the average distance around the mean caucus unity percentage, which is the standard deviation, denoted here as σ, where,

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(x_i - C)^2}$$

In order to offer statistical evidence of the long coalitions thesis, we expect that the standard deviation in the majority caucus will be similar to or smaller than the standard deviation in caucus unity percentages of the minority caucus's members. Finally, we expect that the median caucus unity percentage in the majority caucus will be higher than the median caucus unity in the minority caucus. Further, to test the relationship between caucus unity percentages and partisan lean, we must calculate a Pearson's correlation coefficient or Pearson's r to determine the size and magnitude of the association. Prior to this, however, we must offer some methodology to calculate partisan lean, or p. First, we calculate the presidential district spread by subtracting the percentage of votes obtained by the last Republican presidential candidate in the district from the percentage of votes obtained by the Democratic presidential candidate:

$$x_d = Republican\ presidential\ vote\ in\ district - Democratic\ presidential\ vote\ in\ district$$

We do a similar calculation for the previous gubernatorial election:

$$y_d = Republican\ gubernatorial\ vote\ in\ district - Democratic\ gubernatorial\ vote\ in\ district$$

Finally, we average these two values and produce the average district spread d.

$$d = \frac{x_d \cdot y_d}{2}$$

We repeat these calculations for the two parties' candidates across the state in the last presidential and gubernatorial elections, to calculate average statewide spread s:

$$x_s = Republican\ presidential\ vote\ statewide - Democratic\ presidential\ vote\ statewide$$

$$y_s = Republican\ gubernatorial\ vote\ statewide - Democratic\ gubernatorial\ vote\ statewide$$

$$s = \frac{x_s \cdot y_s}{2}$$

Then, we average d and s to get partisan lean p. If p has a negative value, this indicates a Democratic partisan lean. Having calculated the partisan leans of each district, we compute a Pearson's r between the absolute values of partisan leans and the caucus unity percentages for the members of the majority and minority caucuses, as well as those in strong ($p \geq 20$), leaning ($p < 20; \geq 10$) or competitive ($p < 10$) districts. We will further compute correlations for Democratic and Republican incumbents. Finally, we describe that coefficient in terms of a weak, moderate, or strong positive or negative relationship. In order to determine the skew in the caucus unity distribution, we will build a density function and plot that function in a visualization.[6]

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[6] The data used in this research, as well as the methodology to calculate partisan lean, is adapted from the Virginia Public Access Project.

c. Results

2020 House Caucus Unity Percentages

	Mean	Median	σ
Democratic caucus (majority)	93.6%	95.0%	6.1%
Republican caucus (minority)	87.3%	88.0%	5.9%

The results of the methodology above tended to support my assertion that the majority caucus shows greater cohesion than minority caucuses. The average caucus unity percentage in the House Democratic caucus during the 2020 regular session, in which Democrats held the majority, was 93.6 percent. In other words, if
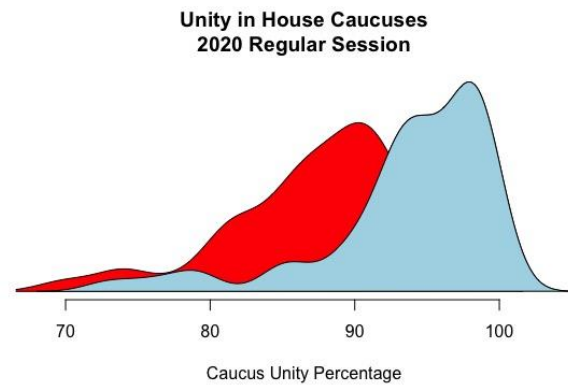

one were to postulate a theoretical Caucus Democrat, an individual who voted perfectly in line with the mean of the caucus, that individual would vote with their caucus on about 94 out of every 100 floor votes.

Meanwhile, House Republicans had an average caucus unity percentage of 87.3 percent. Thus, a similarly situated, theoretical Caucus Republican would vote with their caucus on 87 out of every 100 floor votes. The Caucus Democrat would show greater loyalty to the interests of the Democratic caucus than would the Caucus Republican to the Republican caucus. The median caucus unity percentage in the Democratic caucus was 95 percent, substantially higher than the 88 percent median caucus unity percentage among House Republicans. Further, the interquartile range for the median Democratic

Median House Republican Caucus Unity Percentages 2020 Regular Session

Caucus Unity Percentages

Median House Democratic Caucus Unity Percentages 2020 Regular Session

Caucus Unity Percentages

caucus unity percentages is 3 percent. For the Republican caucus, the interquartile range is 6 percent. Finally, the average distance σ around the mean caucus unity percentage is 6.1 percent in the Democratic caucus. This is nearly equal to σ computed for the Republican caucus, which was 5.9 percent.
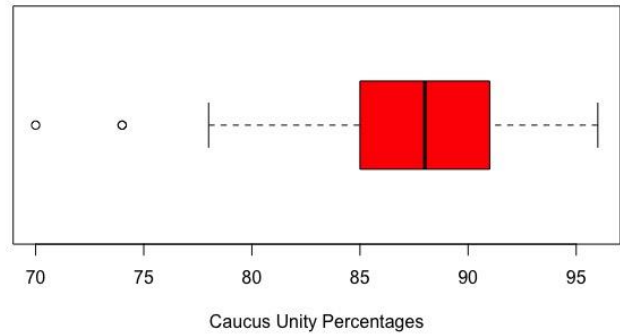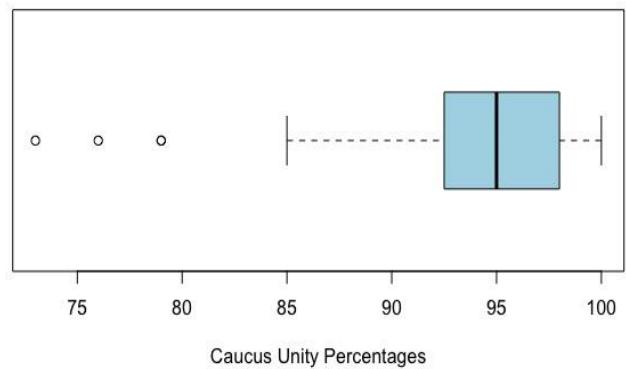
2019 House Caucus Unity Percentages

|	Mean	Median	σ
Democratic caucus (minority)	89.6%	90.0%	6.2%
Republican caucus (majority)	88.6%	89.5%	7.9%

[1]Values rounded to the nearest tenth.

This result contrasts with the patterns of caucus unity seen in the 2019 regular session. During that session, House Republicans were in the majority. The mean caucus unity percentage in the Democratic caucus was 89.6 percent with σ of 6.2 percent. In the Republican caucus, mean

**Unity in House Caucuses
2019 Regular Session**

Caucus Unity Percentage

caucus unity was 88.6 percent with σ of 7.9 percent. Meanwhile, the median caucus unity percentage in the Democratic caucus was 90 percent with an interquartile range of 6.5 percent. The Republican caucus has a median caucus unity percentage of 89.5 percent with an interquartile range of 10.75 percent.
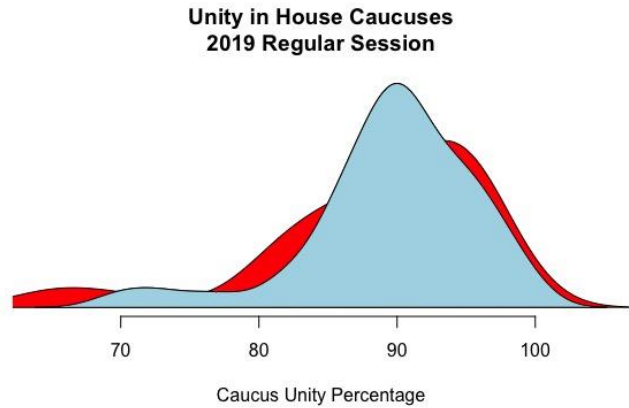
**Median House Democratic Caucus Unity Percentages
2019 Regular Session**
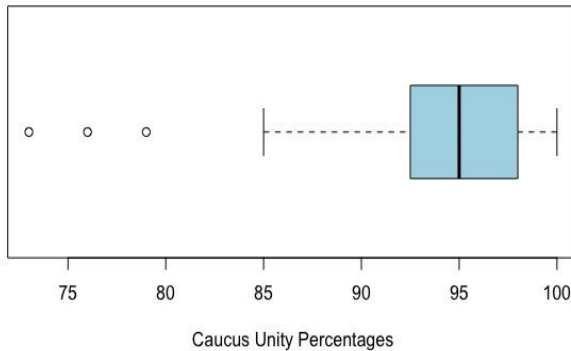
Caucus Unity Percentages

**Median House Republican Caucus Unity Percentages
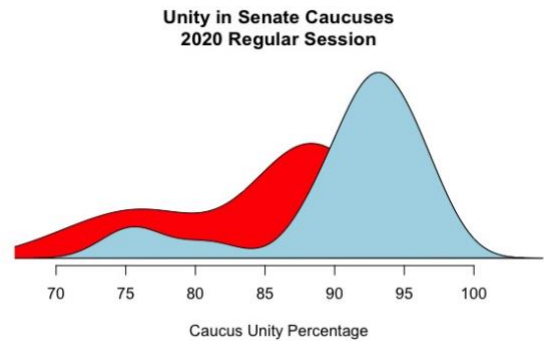2019 Regular Session**

Caucus Unity Percentages
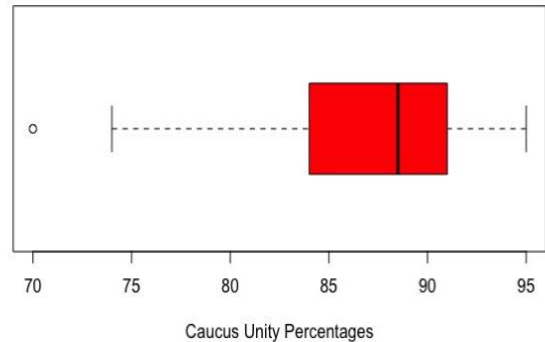
In the Senate, a similar trend emerges upon examining the data on caucus unity. The mean caucus unity percentage in the Senate Democratic caucus, which was in the majority during the 2020 regular session, was 90.8 percent with $\s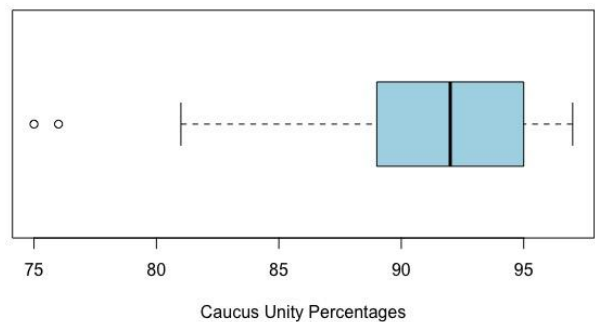igma$ of 6.2 percent. This means that a theoretical Caucus Democrat in the Senate would vote with their party on about 91 out of every 100 floor votes. In the Senate Republican caucus, the mean caucus unity percentage was 84.5 percent with σ of 7.1 percent. Thus, a postulated Caucus Republican would vote with their caucus on 85 out

2020 Senate Caucus Unity Percentages

	Mean	Median	σ
Democratic Caucus (majority)	90.8%	92.0%	6.2%
Republican Caucus (minority)	84.5%	87.0%	7.1%

Unity in Senate Caucuses
2020 Regular Session

of every 100 floor votes. The median caucus unity percentage in the Republican caucus was 87 percent with an interquartile range of 10.5 percent. In the Democratic caucus, the median caucus unity percentage was 92 percent with an interquartile range of 6 percent.

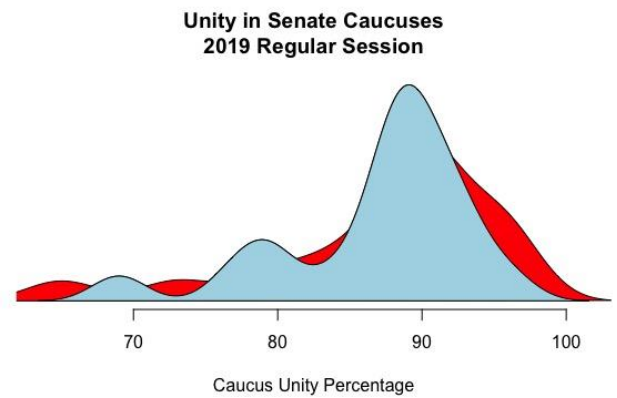Median Senate Republican Caucus Unity Percentages
2020 Regular Session
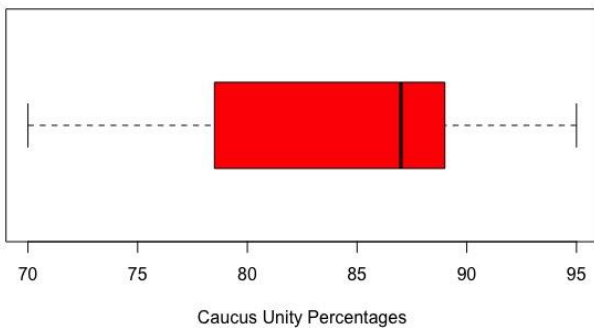
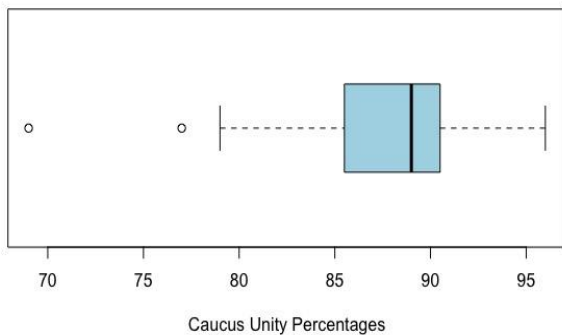Median Senate Democratic Caucus Unity Percentages
2020 Regular Session

2019 Senate Caucus Unity Percentages

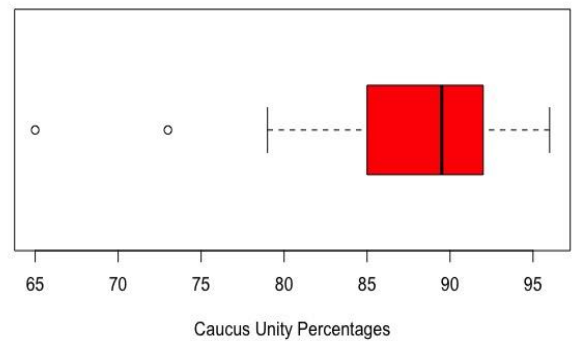|	Mean	Median	σ
Democratic Caucus (minority)	86.9%	89.0%	6.5%
Republican Caucus (majority)	87.4%	89.5%	8.2%

In comparison to the 2020 regular session, Senate Democrats in the 2019 regular session had a mean caucus unity percentage of 86.9 percent with σ of 6.5 percent. Senate Republicans, meanwhile, had a mean caucus unity percentage of 87.4 percent with σ of 8.2 percent. The median

caucus unity percentage was 89 percent for Senate Democrats, with an interquartile range of 5 percent. Senate Republicans had a median caucus unity percentage of 89.5 percent and an interquartile range of 6.5 percent.

Finally, the relationship between partisan lean and caucus unity in the House Democratic caucus during the 2020 regular session has a Pearson's r of 0.093; the relationship for House Republicans is 0.269. For comparison, the magnitude trend in the Pearson's r for the two

Correlation with partisan lean p^1 *House of Delegates*

	2020 Session	2019 Session
Democratic Caucus	0.093	0.268
Republican Caucus	0.269	0.011

caucuses was reversed in the 2019 regular session, with the smaller correlation coefficient (0.011) seen among House Republicans and the larger correlation coefficient (0.268) among Senate Democrats. The association between mean caucus unity and partisan lean among Senate Republicans in the 2020 regular session had a Pearson's r of 0.176, compared with 0.066 for Senate Democrats. Similar to the House of Delegates, the trend in magnitude was in reverse in the 2019 regular session—Senate Republicans had a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.069 and Senate Democrats had a correlation coefficient of 0.250.

Correlation with partisan lean p^1 *Senate*

	2020 Session	2019 Session
Democratic Caucus	0.066	0.250
Republican Caucus	0.176	0.069

III.   Conclusion

On the basis of this research, the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that there is a substantial increase in cohesion that results from the minority party becoming the governing party—as was the case with Democrats from 2019 to 2020. The mean caucus unity percentage for House Democrats increased by about 4.5 percent between 2019 and 2020. House Republicans, meanwhile, saw their unity

decline by about 1.5 percent. In the Senate, Democrats saw a similar upward trend in cohesion, with their mean caucus unity percentage increased by about 4.3 percent, while Republicans saw their cohesion decrease, with their mean caucus unity percentage decreasing by about 3.3 percent. Further, the median caucus unity increased in Senate Democrats by about 3.4 percent, while the median for Senate Republicans decreased by around 2.8 percent. The Pearson's r between caucus unity percentages in the House and Senate Democratic caucuses declined substantially between 2019 and 2020. This is consistent with our expectations, because the greater the unity within the governing caucus, the less of a determinant partisan lean becomes in voting patterns. The opposite trend was seen among House and Senate Republicans.

IV.   Bibliography

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Data and some methodology from the Virginia Public Access Project.