

Don't Be a Stranger

November 4, 2014, was a very good night to be a Republican. When the votes were tallied, Republicans had picked up 9 seats in the United States Senate and won control of that body for the first time in a decade. Incumbent Democrats lost in Arkansas, Alaska, Colorado, North Carolina, and, after a December runoff, Louisiana, while Republicans swept the seats opened up by the retirements of longtime incumbent Democrats in Iowa, Montana, West Virginia, and South Dakota. In the House of Representatives, Republicans expanded their majority to 247 seats, the party's largest since just after World War II. Controversial Republican governors in Florida, Kansas, Maine, and Wisconsin won second terms in the face of fierce opposition, and, in state after state, Republicans won or tightened their control of state legislatures. Republicans even won governor's races in Democratic-leaning states like Illinois, Massachusetts, and Maryland. It was the sort of triumphant night that a political party is lucky to enjoy once every decade so, when the political stars align just right, and every close race breaks in the same direction. While many Democrats had hoped that they could use sophisticated voter mobilization and targeting techniques to win enough close races to hold onto a bare Senate majority, those hopes were dashed. Election night 2014 was a night when Republicans simply could not lose—except in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire turned out to be one of the Democrats' few bright spots that night. While Republicans did win control of the state legislature, that control proved precarious; in December, Democrats joined a group of breakaway Republicans to elect a more traditional, mainstream Republican as Speaker of the House, rather than allow conservative firebrand Bill O'Brien to return to that position. While incumbent Carol Shea-Porter lost in the state's

First Congressional District, Ann McLane Kuster easily held onto her seat in the Second. New Hampshire's governor, Maggie Hassan, won a second term and instantly found herself being courted by national Democrats as a prospect for the state's 2016 Senate race. But the real focus on election night in New Hampshire, as it had been for over a year, was on the state's epic Senate race between Jeanne Shaheen and Scott Brown. Early on, many had expected the race to be a sleepy one in which Shaheen, a fixture of state politics for decades, would be easily re-elected. But Brown's candidacy, combined with the Republican wave that rose throughout 2014, had upended the race. By the end of the campaign, Brown had transformed the contest into one of the marquee races of the year. Each candidate spent millions of dollars, a half-dozen or more would-be presidents visited the state to campaign on behalf of each candidate, and the televised debates between the candidates were moderated not just by local reporters but also by national network news figures such as Chuck Todd and George Stephanopoulos.

It was late on election night when Brown took to the podium in a ballroom at Manchester's Radisson Hotel to concede the race. While television networks had called the election for Shaheen hours earlier, an apparent, and brief, tightening of the vote count delayed Brown's concession. Much of Brown's speech sounded familiar to anyone who has ever observed the ritual of the concession speech: the congratulations to the winner; the thanking of family, staff, and supporters; and the promise to fight again another day. One passage, however, stands out: "I was born here, and as a new candidate for office here I'm so very thankful for the people who are willing to come out and help give me a shot and give us an opportunity to try to make a better state."¹

It is, of course, not unusual for candidates to mention their state in an election night speech. But in Brown's case, the question of where he was born and where he lived was inextricably bound up in questions about why he was running. While Brown was indeed a New Hampshire resident at the time of the 2014 election, that residency was of recent vintage; it was not until December of 2013—less than a year before the election—that Brown sold his home in Massachusetts and officially switched his full-time residency to what had formerly been his family's vacation home in Rye, New Hampshire.² Prior to that well-publicized move, Brown had been a resident of Massachusetts, the state immediately south of New Hampshire. The two states have many ties; thousands of people commute into Massachusetts from New Hampshire every day, and thousands more visit New Hampshire from Massachusetts to camp, go to the beach, hike, and engage in other tourist activities. Even Maggie Hassan, re-elected as governor that same night, had been a lifelong

resident of Massachusetts until she moved to New Hampshire in the 1990s. But Brown was no mere transplant to the state. He had not simply lived in Massachusetts before he moved to New Hampshire; he had represented Massachusetts in the United States Senate from 2010 to 2013.

How did a former Massachusetts senator find himself running for office in New Hampshire? Brown's road to election night 2014 began on another election night, January 19, 2010. Scott Brown's victory in the 2010 special election to the United States Senate seat vacated by the death of Edward Kennedy, who had held the seat for nearly a half-century, sent shockwaves through American politics. Brown became the first Republican to win a Senate seat in Massachusetts since Edward Brooke's election to a second term in 1972. That alone made Brown's election surprising. But what made his election even more important was that it increased the size of the Republicans' caucus from forty votes to forty-one, giving the GOP the votes needed to filibuster any Democratic nomination or proposal; this, in turn, gave the Senate minority, which had spent the first year of Barack Obama's presidency able to do little more than withhold their votes from, but not stop, the Democrats' policy proposals, a newfound power to kill or extract policy concessions on any bill before the Senate. Sober analysts declared Brown's victory the end of President Obama's health care reform overhaul; more triumphant or hysterical commentators announced that Brown's win had essentially ended Obama's presidency just one year after it had begun. Despite his junior status, Brown quickly became something of a national figure, in demand on national and cable news and on the campaign trail with other Republican candidates; his election drew so much attention that Jon Hamm played Brown in a *Saturday Night Live* sketch that aired just after the special election.

Once he was sworn in, Brown became the most junior member of an institution where seniority equals power. But Brown gained influence as one of the handful of Republicans whose votes were in play on such Democratic initiatives as Wall Street reform and the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding gays in the military. As a member of the Republicans' Capitol Hill softball team, Brown wore a jersey emblazoned with the number "41," and more than one commentator suggested that Brown could someday appear on a national Republican ticket as a candidate for president or vice president.

But any national dreams would have to wait until after Brown won re-election to a full term. And those dreams appeared to end in 2012 when Brown lost his bid for a full term to Elizabeth Warren. Brown's celebrity and influence within the Senate (influence which declined after the election of a

Republican House in 2010 effectively ended the prospects of major legislation for the remainder of Barack Obama's presidency) were simply not enough to withstand the overwhelmingly Democratic tilt of the Massachusetts electorate in a presidential election year. In the aftermath of his loss, speculation turned to Brown's next act: Would he run in the special election in 2013 for Massachusetts's other Senate seat, vacated by John Kerry's appointment as Secretary of State? Would he forgo the 2013 special election but run for a full term in 2014? Would he run for governor, an office to which the citizens of Massachusetts have repeatedly elected more-or-less moderate Republicans like Brown? Would he stand down from the pursuit of elected office and seek to influence public affairs in other ways as a private citizen?

The answer, it turned out, was none of the above. Instead, Brown began a months-long flirtation with the idea of seeking another term in the Senate in the neighboring state of New Hampshire—a campaign which, had it succeeded, would have made him the first person to represent two different states in the Senate since the direct election of senators began in the early twentieth century. By the spring of 2014, that flirtation had turned into a full-blown candidacy. Brown's opponent, incumbent Democrat Jeanne Shaheen, was quick to mock Brown's candidacy. At a Jefferson-Jackson dinner in November 2013, Shaheen joked that immigration reform was necessary because of people crossing the border to take jobs that belong to New Hampshireites.³ After Brown officially started running, she and her supporters remarked on the campaign trail that the Constitution says there should be two senators for each state, not two states for each senator.⁴ At a St. Patrick's Day lunch in Salem, Governor Maggie Hassan joined in when she told an audience, "It's great to be here in Salem, straddling the border of New Hampshire and Massachusetts—but enough about Scott Brown."⁵

Brown and his supporters countered these criticisms by pointing to other politicians who had moved to a new state to find greener political pastures than they might have found elsewhere—Hillary Clinton, for example, who had sought and won a Senate seat in New York in 2000, despite having no ties to the state when she moved to New York to begin her candidacy in 1999. Jim Merrill, a prominent figure in New Hampshire Republican politics, argued that "Scott Brown has more connections to New Hampshire than Hillary Clinton had to New York when she first ran for Senate."⁶ If Clinton could do it, Republicans argued, why couldn't Brown? What's the difference between Hillary Clinton and Scott Brown?

That is the question that this book addresses. Why was Hillary Clinton, who had been first lady of Arkansas for years and had never lived in New York

before she became a candidate for the United States Senate in that state, able to succeed in her campaign, while Brown, who had owned a vacation home in New Hampshire long before he became a candidate there, failed? Both met any reasonable definition of the term “carpetbagger,” so it is not simply that carpetbaggers are inevitably rejected by the voters of their new states. Nor are Clinton and Brown the only examples of candidates with strong ties to one state who moved to a second in order to run for the Senate. Comparing the campaigns of recent history’s most prominent instances of carpetbaggers and examining the reasons each succeeded or failed will explain whether success or failure is simply a matter of candidate quality and skill—which would mean that Clinton, for example, won because she was a good candidate and Brown a poor one—or whether other contextual factors explain these outcomes—which would mean that Clinton’s win and Brown’s loss had as much to do with economic and political conditions in the country and in their new states, the candidates they ran against, and other factors above and beyond their individual skills as candidates. This examination will also shed light on the reasons carpetbaggers undertake their uphill battles in unfamiliar states in the first place. What would lead an experienced, talented politician to pursue such an unorthodox route to elective office?

What is it about carpetbaggers and carpetbagging that provokes such instant suspicion at best and hostility at worst? Few other professions are tied to geography in the way politics is: A physician who completes a residency in Boston and then practices medicine in Portsmouth raises no eyebrows; nor does an attorney who goes to law school in Minneapolis and then joins a firm in Fargo. But a politician who changes states is immediately and roundly criticized. Are these simply convenient attacks for their opponents to make, attacks that would be replaced with attacks on the carpetbagger’s record or character or appearance in the absence of the fact of their carpetbagging? Or do these attacks tell us something about how Americans think about representation?

This book undertakes the first extensive examination of carpetbagging as a political phenomenon. It examines nine cases in which a candidate moved to a new state for the express purpose of running for office or ran in one state after first holding office in another. Some of these candidates had represented another state in the past and sought to return to the Washington stage. Others were already national figures in need of a new platform to continue their political careers. Some were heavily recruited or eagerly received by their new state’s branch of their chosen political party. Others blunderbussed into a new state and expected others to duck and cover and get out of their way. And,

of course, some succeeded in their campaigns, while others—most others, in point of fact—failed.

But this is not simply a book about these candidates and their campaigns or about the oddity of candidates who run for office in one state despite strong ties to another. Instead, this is a book about what these candidates and campaigns tell us about larger issues and concerns in American politics. Most campaigns, of course, do not include a carpetbagger, and so these issues remain unexamined in those campaigns. But when there is a carpetbagger in the race—when one of the candidates has come to a state expressly in order to run there—these issues come to the surface in ways that they otherwise would not. Carpetbagger races thus provide an unusual opportunity to study and consider some of the central issues of American democracy.

One such issue is representation. What do citizens actually want and expect from their representatives? Is a representative to be someone who goes to Washington and reflects the will of the voters? Someone who exercises independent judgment? Someone who falls somewhere in between? And on the other side of the equation, how do candidates seeking to become representatives of the people talk not just about representation but also about representing? How does a candidate convince citizens that he or she will be a good, faithful, and effective representative? Every candidate for office must do this to some extent. But this concern uniquely comes to the fore when a carpetbagger runs for office, since the carpetbagger must convince voters of his or her capacity to represent a state without the benefit of years of experience living there.

This leads to another issue—localism, or the politics of presence—that is tightly tied to representation. In American politics, representation is almost always linked to a particular location. Elected representatives are chosen by the people, but those people are generally the residents of a specific state, or electoral district, who choose representatives to speak for their particular interests in Congress, state legislatures, or other local governments. In many of these legislative bodies, the interests of a representative's constituents will compete or come into conflict with the interests of other representatives' constituents. In a political system where representation is not just something a representative does, but something a representative does for people united by—possibly united only by—the fact of where they live, then the geographic ties of a representative or would-be representative are more than a matter of state pride or that slippery and elusive type of “authenticity” so often discussed by political pundits. In a normal campaign, those ties remind voters that candidates should be acting in the interests of their state's citizens. When a

carpetbagger runs for office, however, the issue looms larger and becomes more complex. A carpetbagger cannot address the question of state ties by reminding voters of his or her history in a state or with testimonials from local officials and residents about his or her role in getting things done for the state. Instead, a carpetbagger must convince voters that he or she does, in fact, have voters' best interests at heart through the campaign he or she runs.

But that effort is complicated by another crucial aspect of American elections that carpetbaggers bring to the surface: ambition. All politicians, of course, are ambitious. But someone who packs up a carpetbag and moves to a new state for the sole purpose of running for office is displaying ambition on a scale that is impossible for voters to ignore or for candidates to obscure with happy rhetoric about public service. This is not to say that all carpetbaggers are drunk with ambition; rather, it is to say that the nature of their candidacies puts their ambition at the front and center of their campaigns in a way that few other candidates do. A carpetbagger must be able to address questions of ambition and, by extension, the purity of his or her motives in a convincing way in order to have even a chance of winning the support of voters. One way a carpetbagger might be able to address this issue is by securing the support of established figures in the carpetbagger's party. The support of party actors is often an important factor in the campaigns of any candidate for any office. But the need to temper an appearance of unchecked ambition makes this support even more necessary for a carpetbagger than it is for other types of candidates.

Crossing state boundaries was not always an all-but-insurmountable barrier in American politics. Early in American history, it was more common for individuals to serve in Congress as representatives of more than one state over the course of a career. Daniel Webster, for example, first represented New Hampshire in the House of Representatives before being elected to represent neighboring Massachusetts in the Senate. The high-water mark for multistate representation was set by James Shields, who over the course of his long political career was elected to represent not two but three different states—Illinois, Minnesota, and finally Missouri—in the United States Senate. And throughout Scott Brown's 2014 campaign, more than one journalist mentioned Shields as a precedent. A closer look at Shields's elections, however, helps explain why more recent examples are so much harder to come by.

First, each of Shields's elections took place during the era in which state legislatures, rather than voters, elected members of the Senate. As a result, in his second and third elections in Minnesota and Missouri, Shields did not have to worry about convincing millions of voters that he would be

a good representative. Instead, the decision was made by a small number of legislators, all of whom were themselves elected officials with their own particular electoral and policy interests. It is important to put his elections in historical context as well. Shields was first elected by the Illinois legislature and served from 1849 to 1855; he sought but did not win a second term, and he subsequently moved to the Minnesota territory. When Minnesota was granted statehood in 1858, the new state had to send its first two senators to Washington. Because Shields was a former senator, there was a certain logic to his selection by Minnesota's legislature; Shields's experience in the Senate would enable him to navigate it more readily than someone without that experience might. Shields might have gone on to spend a long career in the Senate from Minnesota, but he and his fellow appointee Henry Mower Rice drew lots to see who would sit in which seat—the one with a shorter term, which would expire in just under a year, or the one with a longer term. Shields had the bad luck to receive the shorter-term seat and lost his bid for a full term the following year.⁷

Shields's third and final term came in 1879, toward the very end of his life. Following the Civil War, Shields spent several years in Wisconsin before moving to Missouri. He had become a figure of some renown among Irish Americans by this time. When Missouri's Senator Lewis Bogy died with just a few weeks left in his term, the Missouri legislature needed to appoint a replacement, and many in the state suggested that Shields be elected to this brief term as the capstone of a long career in public service that had included not just his two previous terms in the Senate but also military service during the war with Mexico and the Civil War, as well as appointed and elective offices in Oregon territory, Wisconsin, and Missouri.⁸ On January 22, 1879, the Missouri legislature elected Shields to the remainder of Bogy's term; he died in June, just a few months after leaving office.⁹

Shields's obituaries noted correctly that he had represented three states in the United States Senate among his other prodigious political accomplishments. But Shields would almost certainly have preferred to serve one state for three terms than three states for one full term and two abbreviated terms. He remains the only person ever to have represented three states, and it is unlikely that anyone will ever do so again; his page on the Senate's web site hails him as the "Senator for Three States."¹⁰ Shields's name resurfaces whenever someone who has represented one state in the Senate seeks election from a second state.

It is important to note that his feat was only possible thanks to the nature of Senate elections and American politics in the nineteenth century. Each of his elections was the decision of a small group of state legislators,

not the voting population of an entire state. In Minnesota, he benefitted from the fact that the new state would profit from having an experienced legislator represent it in the Senate and that in a new state there were perhaps fewer ambitious politicians than there might have been in a more established state. It was just bad luck that Shields wound up with Minnesota's short-term seat. In Missouri, on the other hand, the brevity of the term remaining to be filled helped Shields' prospects. While other ambitious Missouri politicians would have jockeyed for consideration for a longer term, the fact that the term's length was best measured in weeks made the appointment of a popular figure as a placeholder appealing. Had a full term been at stake in 1879, the elderly Shields, in declining health at the time of his election, would likely have been passed over in favor of another option. Shields led a life characterized by a tireless dedication to public service, even aside from his Senate record, but would have had a much more difficult time getting elected from three different states outside the political context of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Two more examples of candidates who managed to represent two different states in Congress are similarly instructive. J. Hamilton Lewis was elected to Washington's at-large House seat just a few years after that territory became a state in 1896 but lost his campaign for re-election in 1898 and a bid for one of Washington's seats in the Senate in 1899. Lewis then moved east to Illinois, where he practiced law and was elected to the Senate by the state legislature in 1912. He was defeated in 1918, but in 1930—after the switch to direct, popular election of senators—Lewis returned to the Senate with the backing of Chicago mayor Anton Cermak's political machine and served there until his death in 1939. In Lewis's elections, as with those of Shields, the nature of American politics and Senate elections at the time help explain his ability to win in two different states. Lewis's initial service in Washington state consisted of a single, two-year House term, and, more importantly, his initial Senate election in Illinois took place at the end of the era during which state legislatures still chose US senators. As a result, Lewis did not have to persuade a statewide electorate that his past service in Washington would not be a bar to his representing the interests of Illinois when he sought election in 1912; instead, the decision was made by a much smaller group of legislators. By the time Lewis sought to return to the Senate in 1930, the Seventeenth Amendment required him to appeal directly to voters, not just legislators. But he could then point to his past service in Illinois as proof that he would be a good representative of these voters' interests. That he was backed by a powerful urban political machine in an era when such organizations wielded considerable influence did not hurt him, either.¹¹

But since the popular election of senators became the norm, there are no cases in which someone managed to get elected to the Senate from two different states. The nearest equivalent would be the oddball case of Ed Foreman, who represented both New Mexico and Texas in the House of Representatives, each for a single term, in the 1960s, before moving on to a postpolitical career as a motivational speaker. Others who have tried to get elected in a second state after first holding office in another have been unsuccessful. Some of these carpetbagger candidacies will be examined in depth later in this book.

Looking only at the failures of carpetbaggers tells us only part of the story. Attention must also be paid to those carpetbaggers who, despite the formidable obstacles they faced, succeeded in their bids for office in a new state. Comparing and contrasting the successes and failures will help illuminate the circumstances in which carpetbagger candidates do and do not manage to succeed despite that label. Put another way, this will help answer the question implicit in Jim Merrill's comment about Scott Brown's New Hampshire race in 2014: What is the real difference between Hillary Clinton and Scott Brown?

This book examines the campaigns of nine carpetbagger candidates who ran for the US Senate in a new state despite a lack of ties to that state, or who returned to a state after a long absence for the sole purpose of seeking a Senate seat from that state. Three of these cases involve former senators who, having lost re-election bids in one state, sought to return to the Senate from a second state. The first is James Buckley, the conservative Republican who represented New York for one term from 1971 to 1977, lost his re-election bid, and then ran as a candidate in Connecticut in 1980. The second is Bill Brock, a Republican who, like Buckley, spent a single term in the Senate from 1971 to 1977 and lost his race for a second term. In 1994, Brock, after serving in a variety of positions in the Reagan administration and the Republican Party, ran for the Senate in Maryland. And the third, of course, is Scott Brown. Neither Buckley nor Brock, like Brown after them, succeeded.

Other carpetbaggers successfully overcame the label. In 1964, Robert F. Kennedy resigned from his position as attorney general and ran for the Senate in New York, despite his lack of immediate ties to that state. In 2000, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who like Kennedy lacked any strong ties to the state, ran for and won the same seat.

Several less famous examples will also be discussed. Scott Brown was not the first Massachusetts politician to move to New Hampshire and run for the Senate; in 1986, former Massachusetts governor Endicott Peabody lost a race against incumbent Warren Rudman. In 2004, Alan Keyes, who had

twice run unsuccessfully for the Senate in Maryland, moved to Illinois to oppose a then-obscure state legislator named Barack Obama after the Illinois Republicans' initial nominee dropped out of the race. In 2010, Harold Ford Jr., who lost a 2006 Senate race in Tennessee, considered a primary challenge to newly appointed senator Kirsten Gillibrand in his new state of New York, and in 2014, Elizabeth Cheney launched and then abandoned a challenge to incumbent Mike Enzi in Wyoming.

These analyses will be informed by an exploration of existing research on the various factors that may help explain why some carpetbaggers succeed while most fail. The next chapter brings together these disparate threads—representation, the politics of localism, candidate ambition, and the role of state party actors—to develop a theoretical framework for examining carpetbaggers and their campaigns.