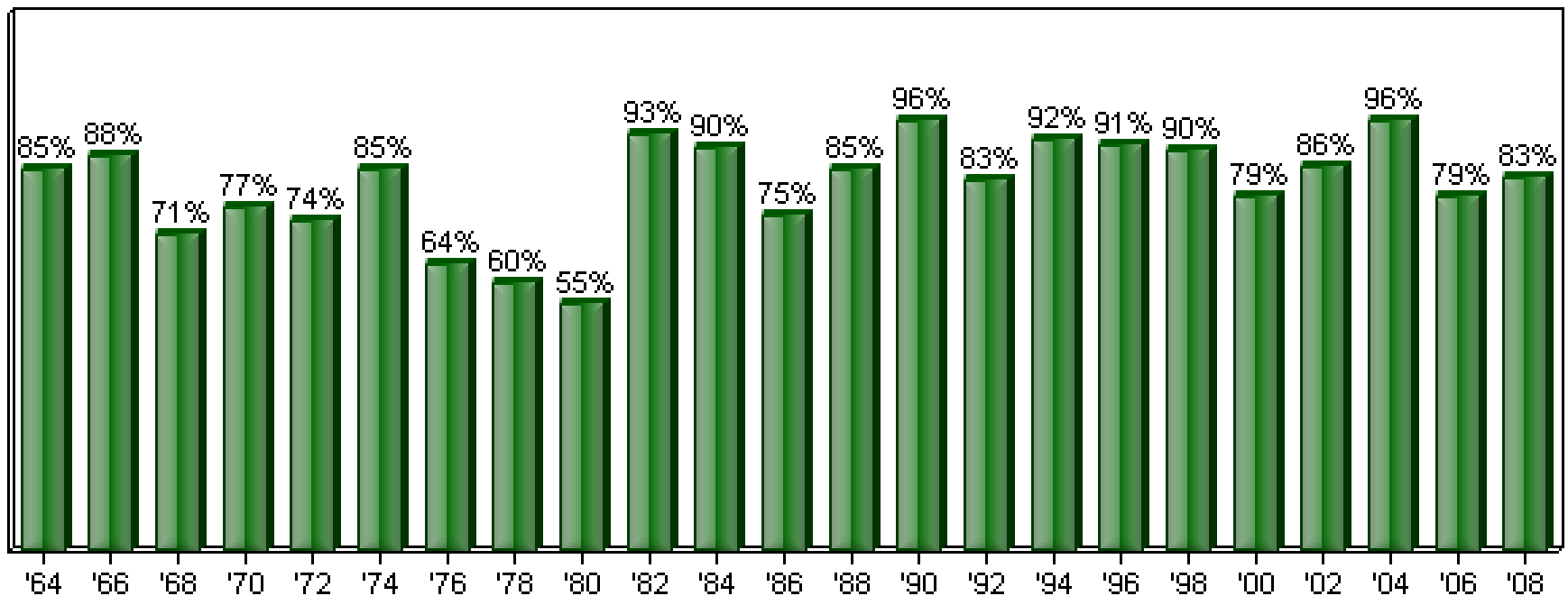


# Incumbents and Elections

*Free speech and Campaign  
Finance Reform*

# The Incumbent Advantage

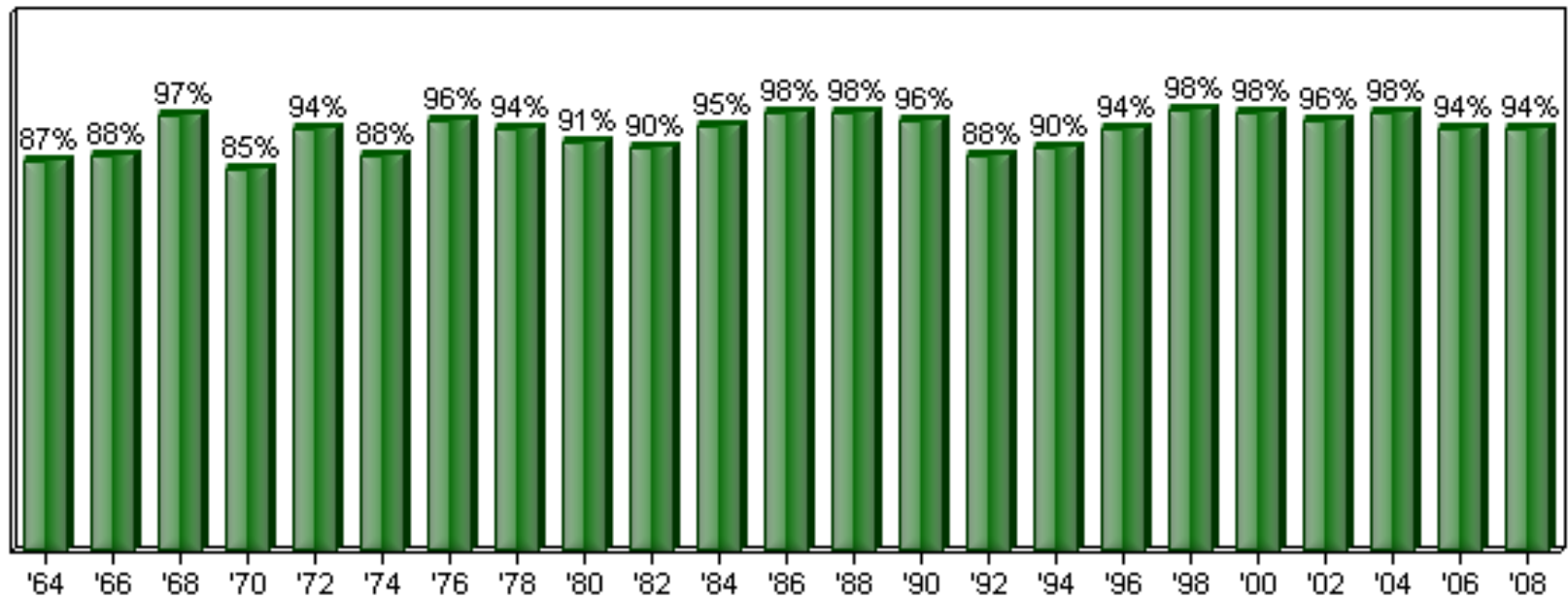
US Senate Reelection Rates, 1964-2008



From Center for Responsive Politics

# The Incumbent Advantage

US House Reelection Rates, 1964-2008



From the Center for Responsive Politics

# Advantages of Incumbents



- The “perks” of the office
  - Office staff
  - Travel allowance
  - Postage allowance (Franking privileges)
- Time
  - Meet with constituents
  - Give interviews to the media
  - Attend special events

# Why?

- Pork Barrel Spending: getting Legislation passed that funds special projects in the district
- Visibility
  - Name recognition
  - Access to media
- Campaign Organization
  - Experience and staff to run a campaign
  - Money in the “war chest”
- Money
  - In 2008, House incumbents spent an average of \$1,356,510. Their challengers spent \$335,101
  - In 2008, Senate incumbents spent an average of \$8,741,224 . Their challengers spent \$1,152,146



What are we talking  
about...word sort

Match the terms in the envelope  
with their significance

# What do you mean by “money”?

- **Hard Money:** political donations that are regulated by law. Money is used to specifically advocate for one candidate over another.
- Individual contributions to a candidate
- Candidate X runs an ad that says, "I am a good person. Candidate Y is a bad person. Vote for me on election day." Because of the "Vote for me..." portion, this is a political ad, which must be paid for with "hard money."
- **Soft Money:** political donations that are not regulated by law. Money can be used for “party building” or issue advocacy.
- Individual contributions to a party or interest group
- Candidate Y runs an ad that says, "Candidate X has a record that includes awful things. If these awful things continue, people will come to your house, steal your money and shoot your dog. Be sure to vote on election day." Because the ad "educates" people on an issue and doesn't tell them to vote for a particular candidate, it's party building, and can be paid for by soft money.

# Where does the money come from?

- 527 Groups: political organizations that try to influence elections; usually through “soft money” used for voter mobilization or issue advocacy. Specific candidates are not targeted.
- Political Action Committees: organized for the purpose of raising and spending “hard money” to elect and defeat candidates. Most PACs represent business, labor or ideological interests.
- These groups “invest” in candidates who are more likely to win and advance their causes...incumbents



# Limits on the \$\$\$

- Federal Election Commission (FEC):  
created by Congress to enforce spending limits and contributions.
- Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA):  
Placed limits on campaign contributions and required disclosure of contributions

# Limits on \$\$\$

- Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act: The purpose of the act was to ban "soft money" from being contributed to candidates and political parties. It also prohibited the airing of "non-partisan" issue ads funded by soft money in days leading up to elections, among other things. Also known as the McCain Feingold Bill.

# \$\$\$\$\$=Free Speech

- ***Buckley v. Valeo***, (1976), was a case in which the Supreme Court of the United States upheld a federal law which set limits on campaign contributions, but ruled that spending money to influence elections is a form of constitutionally protected free speech, and struck down portions of the law. The court also stated candidates can give unlimited amounts of money to their own campaigns.
- ***Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc*** (2007) was a case in which the Supreme Court of the United States held that issue ads may not be banned from the months preceding a primary or general election.
- ***Citizens United v Federal Election Commission***, (2010), was a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court holding that corporate funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited under the First Amendment

# Disadvantage of Incumbency

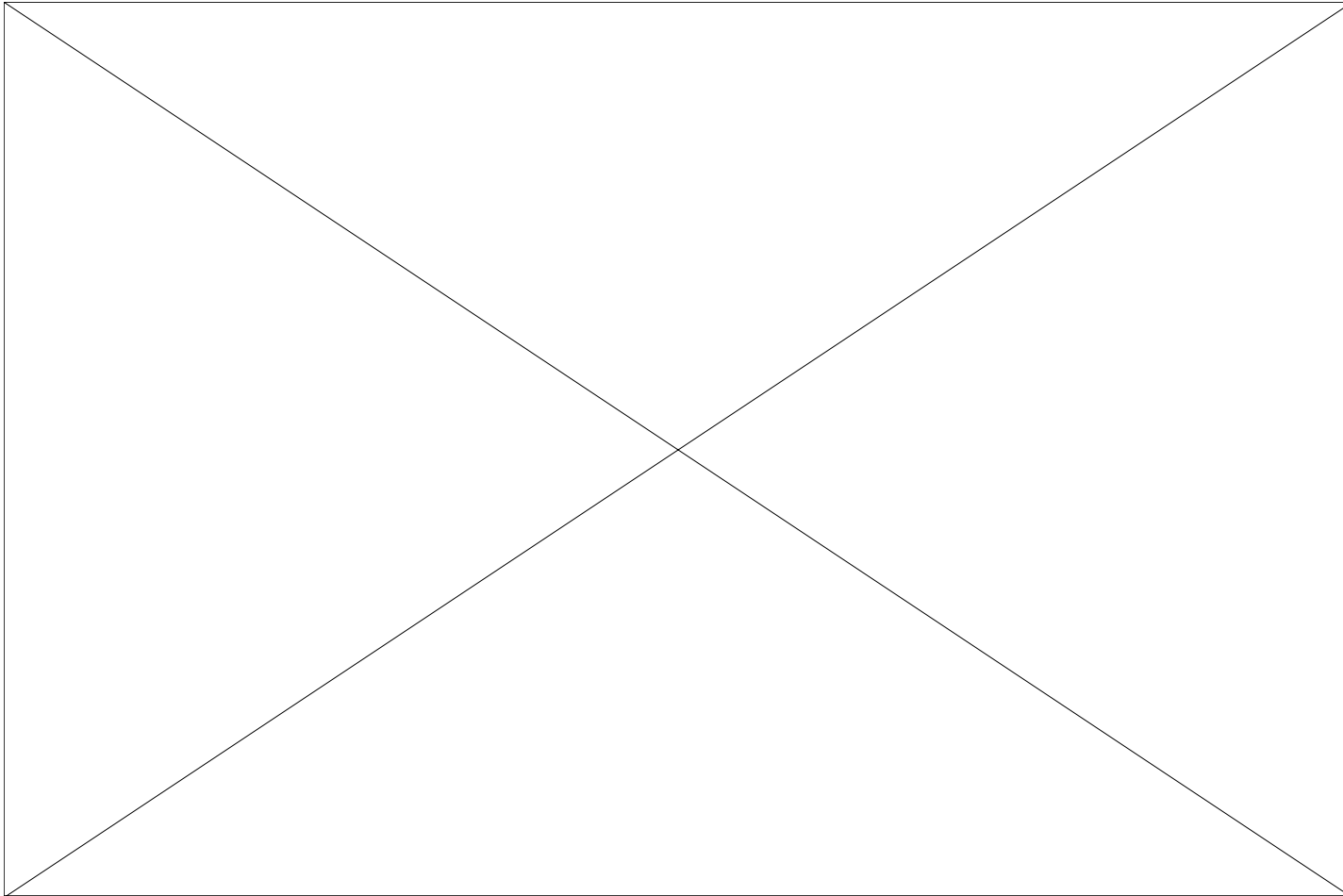
- “Throw the bums out”: if things are going badly; people blame those in power
- Voting Records: incumbents have records that make “mudslinging” (negative campaigning) easier

OpenSecrets.org

Follow the Money

# Concluding Questions

Discuss Briefly as a Group



# Other Web Sites....

- Ourcourts.org → on-line games to review important court cases and the amendments
- redistrictinggame.org → makes gerrymandering come alive and students understand the need for reform
- eLECTIONS  
(<http://broadband.ciconline.org/elections/Default.aspx>) → presidential election simulation
- Polleverywhere.com → have your students respond to polls via cellphone