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Beyond Coattails: Explaining John Paul Hammerschmidt's Victory in 1966

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Beyond Coattails: Explaining John Paul Hammerschmidt's Victory in 1966

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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by

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Abstract

This study examines the campaign issues, demographic factors, and voting trends that helped Republican John Paul Hammerschmidt defeat incumbent Democratic congressman James W. Trimble in Arkansas's third congressional district in 1966. Much of the historiography addressing this election largely neglects the historic significance of Hammerschmidt's successful campaign and the factors contributing to his victory. Instead, historians primarily write about the election of Republican Winthrop Rockefeller to the governor's office that year.

This thesis pieces together several theories on how Hammerschmidt defeated Trimble, including the effect of Winthrop Rockefeller's coattails, the demographic changes taking place in the Ozarks beginning in the 1960's, the region's traditional and increasing Republicanism, and the growth of industrialization and urbanization in parts of the district. Meanwhile, this study incorporates the unpopularity of Lyndon B. Johnson's expensive Great Society programs in the district and the impact mid-decade redistricting in 1965 had on the political and geographic makeup of the district. Overall, this study suggests that Hammerschmidt's victory cannot be traced to one particular issue or factor; instead, several factors helped him win. That said, the study also suggests that Hammerschmidt's focusing on national issues and campaigning against Johnson's Great Society programs likely benefitted his campaign the most, along with the high-energy campaigning tactics he implemented. Meanwhile, this thesis acknowledges Trimble's vulnerabilities in elections prior to 1966, and that northern and western sections of Arkansas had been gradually trending toward Republicans at the federal level since 1952. Finally, this study suggests that it is difficult to gauge how much demographic changes (primarily retirees moving to northern Arkansas) and the controversy surrounding the Buffalo River impacted the race due to a lack of comprehensive data.

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Introduction

In 1966, Arkansas Republicans accomplished a goal that had once seemed unachievable in a state that was arguably the most Democratic in the country: they elected a Republican governor. Winthrop Rockefeller's victory over Democrat "Justice Jim" Johnson, an avowed segregationist and former justice on the state's Supreme Court, is often identified as a defining moment in Arkansas political history in that it forced the Democratic Party of Arkansas to reevaluate its conservative positions on social issues as the country realigned politically. In 1970, Dale Bumpers, an obscure attorney from Charleston who had urged his local school district to be the first in the South to desegregate following the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954, won the Democratic nomination and trounced Rockefeller in general election. Aside from a two-year interregnum from 1981 to 1983, Democrats who were moderate to conservative fiscally yet centrists on social issues would reside in the governor's mansion until 1996.¹

If one were to judge the Republicans' success in 1966 based on Rockefeller's tenure in office alone, it would appear that the party ultimately failed to establish a strong and lasting presence until the late 1990s and 2000s. However, 1966 did establish an enduring Republican presence in northwestern Arkansas and in the state's congressional delegation. In the third congressional district, John Paul Hammerschmidt defeated twenty-two-year incumbent James "Jim" Trimble, shocking politicians in Arkansas and Washington D.C. In contrast to Rockefeller, Hammerschmidt would remain in office until he retired in 1993. Republicans have retained the third congressional district ever since.

¹ Jeannie Whayne et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History, Second Edition* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 437.

Yet Hammerschmidt's victory in 1966 is often overshadowed by Rockefeller's, with the latter's victory usually attracting the lion's share of the attention from Arkansas political historians. In fact, some of the most best known scholarly pieces on this election cycle either focus entirely on Rockefeller's victory and mention Hammerschmidt's victory in passing, or ignore the race altogether. In *Agenda for Reform*, Cathy Kunzinger Urwin delves into Winthrop Rockefeller's ascendancy to the governorship, but mentions Hammerschmidt's victory in passing along with the results of other elections that year.² Ben Johnson's comprehensive history *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999*, mentions Hammerschmidt solely in connection with the issue of damming the Buffalo River.³ In his acclaimed biography of Orval Faubus, Roy Reed often mentions that Jim Trimble was a close friend of the governor and helped him launch his career, but does not mention Trimble's loss in 1966 and ignores Hammerschmidt completely.⁴ Most significantly, while Diane Blair and Jay Barth discuss Hammerschmidt and other Republican victors in *Arkansas Politics and Government*, they dismiss the result in the third congressional district as Hammerschmidt merely "riding Winthrop Rockefeller's... coattails to victory."⁵

Two other studies of particular regions within Arkansas's third congressional district examine the results of this congressional race in more detail, but still do not offer a comprehensive overview of the factors helping Hammerschmidt. In his notes to *Hill Folks*,

² Cathy Urwin Kunzinger. *Agenda for Reform: Winthrop Rockefeller as Governor of Arkansas, 1967-1971* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991), 56.

³ Ben F. Johnson. *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 178.

⁴ Roy Reed. *Faubus: The Life and Times of an American Prodigal* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 357.

⁵ Diane Blair and Jay Barth. *Arkansas Politics and Government*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 62.

Brooks Blevins attributes Hammerschmidt's victory to an influx of new Republican-leaning voters moving into retirement and recreation communities during the 1960's,⁶ while Adam Carson's 2013 University of Arkansas master's thesis titled "Feet in the South, Eyes to the West: Fort Smith Enters the Sunbelt" delves deeper into how Hammerschmidt's economic (instead of racial) message resonated with fiscal conservatives in the most urbanized and industrial city in the district during the 1960's.⁷ While these scholars provide solid and valuable observations, they do not piece together the election results of the third congressional district as a whole, nor do they address other factors that assisted Hammerschmidt's candidacy. Seen as a whole, it is clear that while Hammerschmidt definitely benefited from Rockefeller's successful campaign and the pro-Republican political environment in 1966, broader demographic and political changes taking place in western Arkansas were crucial to John Paul Hammerschmidt defeating Congressman James W. Trimble in 1966.

From 1940 to 1960, statewide population loss reduced Arkansas's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives from seven in 1940 to four by 1960. Trimble's third congressional district was traditionally based in Northwest Arkansas, but by 1966, it included southwestern sections of the state that had been added during a special legislative session in 1965. Thus, in 1966, Trimble had to cover more territory than usual, but the areas being incorporated into his existing district generally reflected a more general pattern in which faster growing and more

⁶ Brooks Blevins. *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 297.

⁷ Adam Carson. "Feet in the South, Eyes to the West: Fort Smith Enters the Sunbelt" (Master's thesis, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, 2013), 59-62.

urbanized areas were increasing Republican, while predominantly rural Democratic-leaning areas saw population losses.⁸

Adding to Trimble's woes, the third congressional district as a whole was becoming more Republican in the 1950's and 1960's, while the rest of Arkansas remained in the Democratic fold. Republicans had traditionally performed better in northwestern Arkansas during the post-Reconstruction era and in the 1920's, though the region went heavily for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and remained strong for him until his final campaign in 1944. Congressman Trimble, first elected to the House of Representatives in 1944, fashioned himself as a New Deal Democrat, and supported government investments in massive infrastructure projects and other programs that benefited his congressional district. Trimble's legislative agenda kept him in good standing with many of his constituents, even while his district voted for Dwight D. Eisenhower for president in 1952 and 1956 and Richard Nixon in 1960, with the most populous counties in the district, in particular, favoring these Republican presidential nominees.⁹ By 1964, Trimble faced his toughest reelection bid to date, winning by less than ten percentage points. Meanwhile, Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for president, claimed 45% of the vote in the third

⁸ Richard L. Forstall, "Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990," *U.S. Bureau of the Census*, Washington, D.C., (1996): 16, accessed March 30, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/PopulationofStatesandCountiesoftheUnitedStates1790-1990.pdf>; Kenneth C. Martins, Clifford Lee Lord, and Ruth Anderson Rowles, *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional District, 1789-1983* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 200.

⁹ Jim Trimble Campaign, "1952 and 1956 Presidential and Congressional District Election Returns". Trimble Family Papers, series2, subseries 1, box 8, folder 4. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

district, which was slightly better than his statewide performance and much better than his national vote total.¹⁰

Clearly, then, more than Win Rockefeller's coattails were at work in 1966; the anti-Lyndon Johnson platform that Hammerschmidt ran on reflected larger changes both in the district and in American politics. The gradually increasing population growth and Republicanism in urban areas in the third district coincided with the demise of the New Deal coalition nationally. Hammerschmidt's victory, in short, had been a work in process that finally paid off for the Republican party 1966 under perfect political conditions.

¹⁰ John Paul Hammerschmidt Campaign, "1964 Presidential and Congressional District Election Returns." John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 18, folder 2. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Chapter 1

Demographics and Voting Trends

From statehood in 1836 to 1940, Arkansas's population increased uninterrupted, despite tumultuous events like the Civil War, World War I, and the beginning of the Great Migration. By 1940, nearly two million people called Arkansas home. However, U.S. Census data from 1950 and 1960 show that Arkansas's population declined during the middle of the twentieth century, with the state's population dropping to 1.786 million people in 1960 before rebounding to 1.923 million in 1970. Since 1970, Arkansas's population as a whole has steadily increased, though depopulation has continued in many eastern, southern, and southwestern counties.¹¹ Meanwhile, northwestern Arkansas has boomed, with some counties – particularly Benton and Washington Counties (which largely escaped population loss in the mid-twentieth century) – growing rapidly during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Overall, while urban areas would grow by leaps and bounds, rural areas would continue to lose population or struggle to make meaningful gains.¹²

While Arkansas eventually recouped its losses from 1940 to 1960, the decrease in population had a lasting impact on the state's politics. A decline in population led to the loss of congressional districts for the state, while the declining power of predominantly rural Democratic-leaning counties and the growth of Republican-leaning urban counties would change the partisan voting trends of particular regions. Meanwhile, rulings by the United States Supreme Court would change the way states drew their congressional districts, which rearranged districts that incumbent congressmen had adjusted to over time. Finally, the repopulation of Arkansas

¹¹ Donald Holley, "Leaving the Land of Opportunity: Arkansas and the Great Migration," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (Autumn, 2005), 245-261.

¹² Forstall, "Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990," 16.

beginning in the 1960's would introduce new out-of-state residents with different political values. All of these factors would contribute to the defeat of Jim Trimble in various ways.

Before 1952, Arkansas had strongly supported the Democratic nominee for President of the United States in most elections since Reconstruction. Even with the Dixiecrat revolt of 1948 and the strength of Republican nominee Thomas Dewey, Harry Truman carried Arkansas with 62% of the vote, and won all but two counties in the state – Madison and Newton (both voted for Dewey), located in the heart of the Ozarks and Jim Trimble's third congressional district.¹³

While 1948 was a good year for the Democratic Party, it would be the last time a Democratic candidate won Arkansas's votes by such a commanding majority until 1976, with the extraordinary election of 1964 being an exception. While the Democratic candidate for president's share of the vote in Arkansas decreased during the 1952, 1956, and 1960 presidential cycles, the dip in enthusiasm for the Democratic presidential nominee – and in some instances, the party as a whole - was most pronounced in Northwest Arkansas.¹⁴ It was not uncommon for Republicans at all levels to do well in some rural areas of the Ozarks, with Newton, Searcy, Van Buren, Carroll, and Madison Counties all electing at least one Republican to the Arkansas General Assembly from 1919 to 1960.¹⁵ Even Orval Faubus, a Democrat from Madison County, lost his bid for county judge to a Republican in 1946. Fortunately for Faubus, his friend Jim Trimble had him appointed to a postmastership position in Madison County.¹⁶

¹³ John Woolley and Gerhard Peters. *Presidential Election of 1948 Results*, The American Presidency Project, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1948> (Accessed April 17, 2017).

¹⁴ 1952, 1956, 1960, and 1964 Presidential Election Results. Trimble Family Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 8, folder 4.

¹⁵ Blevins, *Hill Folks*, 206.

¹⁶ Reed, *Faubus*, 80.

In 1952, Jim Trimble faced his first serious challenge from a Republican. In that election, Trimble won with relative ease by a margin of 56% to 44%. However, the Republican nominee for president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, slightly outpaced Trimble in the district by defeating Adlai Stevenson 57% to 43%. Eisenhower and Trimble's opponent both won a handful of counties, including Benton, Madison, Newton, and Washington Counties. Meanwhile, Trimble and Stevenson won Franklin, Johnson, Logan, Marion, Scott, and Van Buren Counties. While managing to win the sparsely populated (and traditionally Republican) counties of Madison and Newton, the Republican candidates, more significantly, carried the second and third largest counties in the district (Washington and Benton), while the Trimble-Stevenson victories were in predominantly small, rural counties that featured some mid-sized towns. Trimble did win one large county (Sebastian), but Eisenhower took it in presidential balloting. Eisenhower and Trimble also shared four smaller counties. Of the counties they both carried, Eisenhower only outpaced Trimble in Carroll, Searcy, and Sebastian, where "Ike" won the latter with over 56% and Trimble won 53%. While only two sparsely populated counties in the third congressional district – Madison and Newton – had gone for Thomas Dewey in 1948, the long-term trend of larger counties in northwest Arkansas voting for Republicans at the federal level (save Washington County in 1964) would begin in 1952.¹⁷

Much like 1952, Eisenhower and Trimble would easily cruise to reelection in 1956, with both of their margins of victory increasing. This time, Trimble would rout his Republican opponent 61% to 39%, and only lose the sparsely populated counties of Newton and Searcy by relatively small margins. Trimble won Sebastian County with 53% of the vote, and carried Benton and Washington Counties with roughly 60% of the vote. In the remaining counties, he

¹⁷ 1952 Election Results, Trimble Family Papers.

won 60% or more of the vote. But, again, the Republican candidate for president carried the districts largest and growing counties.¹⁸

While Trimble did not face Republican opposition in 1958 or 1960, the presidential election of 1960 continued the Republican Party's winning streak in the third congressional district, where Republican Vice President Richard Nixon trounced Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy 58% to 41%. Like Eisenhower, Nixon won the biggest counties in the district by large margins, while Kennedy won traditionally Democratic areas along the Arkansas River. Nixon's margin of victory in Benton County was slightly smaller than Eisenhower's in 1952, but he won more votes in Washington County, and also improved on Eisenhower's 1952 percentages in Baxter and Carroll Counties, where he carried 55% and 67% of the vote, respectively.¹⁹

The presidential election of 1964 interrupted northern and western Arkansas's drift toward the Republican Party at the presidential level. While Republican Barry Goldwater swept the Deep South states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, he did not do as well in Upper South states like Arkansas. That said, Goldwater won 45% of the vote in the third congressional district, compared to roughly 43% statewide and 39% of the national popular vote. Republican gubernatorial nominee Winthrop Rockefeller lost the district 46% to Orval Faubus' 54%. The Republican Party's nominee for Congress, Jimmy Hinshaw, would also carry 45% of the vote, making 1964 Jim Trimble's closest election yet (Trimble had won 69% of the vote in 1962). This election marked the first time that the Republican nominee for president and

¹⁸ 1956 Election results, *ibid*.

¹⁹ Arkansas Office of Secretary of State 1960 General Election Results, film 1408 ER-20, University of Arkansas microfilm collection.

the party's nominee for a major state-based office would win roughly the same amount of support in the third congressional district.²⁰

If Goldwater, Rockefeller, and Hinshaw all pulled similar margins in 1964, their votes came from different places. Win Rockefeller defeated Orval Faubus by ten percentage points in Washington County, but Lyndon Johnson defeated Goldwater there by twenty points. Meanwhile, Trimble bested Henshaw in Washington County 54% to 46%. Benton County was also divided, with the Republican nominees for governor and president winning the county with 55% and 51% of the vote, while Trimble won the county by 74 votes. The one large county that delivered victories for all three Republicans was Sebastian, though the totals here were a reversal of Washington and Benton Counties in that Goldwater outperformed the local Republican candidates. Sebastian County had the highest percentage of African American voters in the district (roughly six percent), yet Goldwater won the support of 56% of the county's voters, while Rockefeller and Henshaw claimed 51% and 52%. The results in Sebastian County indicate that white voters in that county were more conservative – possibly both on economics and race - than Republican voters in northwest Arkansas. Most of Goldwater's support came from wealthy white areas of Sebastian County. Lyndon Johnson performed better in rural parts of the county and did well in inner-city neighborhoods where most working class whites and black residents lived.²¹ Overall, Sebastian County had established itself as a Republican stronghold, reaffirming the Republican Party's strength in the district's largest and most urbanized county.

In most modern elections, people typically vote in greater number in presidential general elections than in primary, midterm, runoff, and special elections. However, in 1964, voters in the

²⁰ 1964 Election Results, Hammerschmidt Papers series 2, subseries 1, box 18, folder 2.

²¹ Carson, "Feet in the South, Eyes to the West," 68-69.

third congressional district were more likely to cast a ballot for governor than president. In the third congressional district (using 1965 district boundaries), the race between Governor Orval Faubus and Winthrop Rockefeller attracted 175,427 voters (66% turnout), while President Lyndon Johnson and Senator Barry Goldwater (the only candidates on the ballot) garnered 164,924 votes (62% turnout). While the percentage-based differences for turnout between these two races is relatively small, it does indicate that there was an enthusiasm gap for both presidential candidates and also suggests it should not be surprising that Johnson's approval rating was so low in the district two years later. In the higher turnout gubernatorial election, Democrat Orval Faubus won the district with 95,088 votes, while Johnson only polled 90,270. Meanwhile, Rockefeller carried 80,341 votes to Goldwater's 72,818. While Johnson and Faubus carried the district as a whole, there is a noticeable difference in the returns of the district's geographic regions. In the counties added by redistricting in 1965, Goldwater outperformed Rockefeller 20,579 to 19,374, while Faubus led Johnson 29,900 to 25,893. Still, the turnout gap persisted, with the gubernatorial race attracting over 2,700 more voters. Overall, these election results indicate that Johnson was only nominally popular in 1964, and that southern Arkansas was fonder of Goldwater than northwest Arkansas, save Benton and Sebastian Counties and a few traditionally GOP-leaning areas.²²

Clearly, then, political developments were embedded in demographic changes in the counties that would constitute the third district in 1966. Northern and western Arkansas were not immune to the decline in population from 1940 to 1960; by the 1960 U.S. Census, only the counties of Washington and Sebastian had gained residents during the previous decade. While

²² 1964 Presidential and Gubernatorial election results, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, box 18, folder 2.

population losses in some counties were somewhat small (Benton County lost fewer than 2,000 people and Garland remained mostly stagnant), a few counties faced drastic decreases. In 1950, over 25,000 people called Hempstead County home. By 1960, the county was home to fewer than 20,000 people. Logan County faced a similar decline, with that county's population decreasing from 20,000 to 16,000 in ten years. It was not unusual for some counties to lose up to a quarter (or more) of their population. It is estimated that statewide, rural Arkansas lost upwards to 27% of its population between 1950 and 1960.²³ Rural areas of the third congressional district were not exempt from this trend.²⁴

While population decreased during the 1950s, the 1960s saw population gains for the third congressional district, particularly in the most Republican counties. Both Benton and Washington Counties increased their population by 39%, while Garland and Sebastian Counties also increased in size, though at a slower pace. Only three counties in the third congressional district – Hempstead, Newton, and Searcy – experienced slight decreases in population, while most counties experienced slight to moderate increases. Overall, the population of the third congressional district increased from 444,719 in 1960 to an estimated 500,766 in 1966.²⁵ The increase in population during this decade coincided with the explosion of manufacturing jobs moving to Arkansas due to its low wages and right-to-work law. While the United States as a whole experienced a 50% increase in manufacturing production, Arkansas's manufacturing base increased by a whopping 300%, primarily in urban (and increasingly Republican) areas throughout the state, including Fort Smith and Fayetteville.²⁶ Tyson Foods, headquartered in

²³ Holley, "Leaving the Land of Opportunity," 248.

²⁴ Forstall, "Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990," 16.

²⁵ 1966 Third Congressional District Population Estimates, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries I, box 20, folder 20.

²⁶ Whayne, et. al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 421.

Springdale, and other poultry processors would also see their production increase during the 1960s, with most of the growing and processing of chickens and turkey taking place in western and northern sections of the state. By 1970, poultry raising produced more revenue for farmers than any other agricultural activity in the state.²⁷ Another company – Wal-Mart, based in Republican-leaning Benton County – would begin its initial growth in the 1960’s and into the 1970’s.

As manufacturing centers moved or expanded in Arkansas, individuals from the Midwest moved to Arkansas for retirement and to escape cold weather, high taxes, and ‘dangerous’ big cities. Beginning in the 1950s and accelerating in the 1960s, thousands of retirees moved to planned retirement communities near lakes in northern Arkansas. The largest would eventually be Bella Vista in Benton County, with residents first moving in by January 1966.²⁸ Brooks Blevins argues in *Hill Folk* (without providing data) that most of these retirees identified as Republicans, and likely voted for Hammerschmidt in 1966.²⁹ But, it is difficult to determine whether these individuals swayed the election in a substantial way. Since Bella Vista had just opened earlier that year and other retirement havens were small or just opening around 1966, it is likely that these people were not a huge part of the electorate for the 1966 congressional election. Nevertheless, their presence almost certainly contributed to Republican success in the region in succeeding decades.

Population trends undermined Trimble not only by adding to the strength of Republican counties but by reshaping his district. Following the 1900 U.S. Census, Arkansas reached its

²⁷ Blevins, *Hill Folk*, 166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 206. Blevins provides little evidence (precinct election results, media pieces, etcetera) to support his claim that the thousands of Midwesterners who moved to northern Arkansas during the 1960’s were the “deciding factor” in Hammerschmidt’s victory.

peak representation with seven seats in the United States House of Representatives, and retained those seven seats for the next fifty years. Thus, when Jim Trimble first ran for his seat in the House of Representatives in 1944, his district was rather small in size, consisting of ten counties in north-central and northwestern sections of Arkansas. The district spread from Benton County on the Oklahoma border to Searcy County, and then toward the middle of the state, and finally southward to the northern borders of counties along the Arkansas River. With this map in place, Trimble represented a district that covered most of Arkansas's share of the Ozarks. Counties that would join the third congressional district in the 1950's and 1960's were located in what had been parts of the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh congressional districts in the 1940's.³⁰

Following the 1950 U.S. Census, Arkansas lost one seat in the House of Representatives, which increased the size of the third congressional district. Instead of being based solely in the Ozarks, the third was expanded to counties along the Arkansas River Valley, including Sebastian County and its largest city, Fort Smith. With this shift, Sebastian County became the district's largest county and eventually its most Republican, beginning in the 1950's. When the Arkansas General Assembly drew new congressional boundaries in 1961, legislators only had four districts to work with due to the state losing two more seats in the House of Representatives following reapportionment in 1960. This expanded the third congressional district again with the addition of three counties farther down the Arkansas River Valley, including the medium-sized river town of Russellville in Pope County. By the 1962 general election, the third congressional district covered one-fourth of the state.³¹

³⁰ Martins, et. al., *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts*, 200.

³¹ 1961 Arkansas Congressional District Maps, Trimble Family Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 8, folder 5.

As the third congressional district expanded in size, other districts were also affected by the decline in congressional seats. The second congressional district, which had mostly been made up of counties bordering the lower White River Valley in eastern Arkansas, now included Pulaski County in central Arkansas and even southeastern sections of the state. Meanwhile, the fourth congressional district, which had been based in western and southwest Arkansas in the 1940's, lost its northernmost counties to the third district following redistricting in 1951 and covered all of southern Arkansas after 1961.³²

While Arkansas's congressional district map was constantly changing, the populations of each district were not required to be equal. Following redistricting in 1961, the populations of Arkansas's districts varied wildly, with the third having the least number of people (332,000) while 575,000 Arkansans lived in the fourth congressional district, making it the largest in the state. The first district was slightly larger than the third, and 58,000 thousand fewer people lived in the second congressional district than in the fourth.³³ Arkansas's malapportioned districts were not uncommon; according to the *Congressional Quarterly*, "Arkansas rank[ed] 23rd among the states in the maximum variation among its districts."³⁴ Among federal legislative districts, Texas had the highest deviation in the country (+118.5%), while Tennessee's state legislative districts had not been redrawn in over six decades. Retaining or only slightly altering legislative boundaries could give rural, depopulated rural areas in several states more clout than rapidly expanding urban and suburban areas. Tennessee's extreme redistricting situation provided the

³² 1951 and 1961 Congressional District Maps, *ibid.*

³³ 1961 Congressional District Map, *ibid.*

³⁴ *Congressional Quarterly*, "State's Districts Vary in Excess of 20 Per Cent," *Arkansas Gazette*, February 23, 1964, E3.

material needed to form the lawsuit that resulted in *Baker v. Carr* being heard before the United States Supreme Court.³⁵

In a six to two decision in 1962 that took the court an agonizing year to reach, the Supreme Court used *Baker v. Carr* to establish the principle of “one man, one vote.” While some feared this move would do harm to the court by politicizing the bench, this decision ended rural America’s dominance in state legislatures, which made the electoral process in each state more democratic. While *Baker v. Carr* was landmark ruling on redistricting, it only affected state legislative districts. *Carr* did, however, set a precedent for the courts intervening in the redistricting process as a whole, and in February 1964, the Supreme Court ruled in *Wesberry v. Sanders* that congressional districts must be relatively equal in population. The court came to this decision based on Article One, Section Two of the United States Constitution, which states that members of the House of Representatives shall be selected “by the People of the several States.” This phrase, coupled with “according to their respective numbers,” led the court to determine that “as nearly as is practicable[,] one man’s vote in a congressional election [must] be worth as much as another’s.”³⁶

While *Wesberry v. Sanders* was brought before the Supreme Court to settle a dispute over Georgia’s unequal congressional districts, the ruling forced many states to participate in mid-decade redistricting. Due to its grossly unequal districts, Arkansas was required to comply with the court’s ruling during a special legislative session in 1965. Governor Orval Faubus indicated from the very beginning that he would request new boundaries if a lower court required the state to draw new lines. However, Faubus told reporters that Arkansans were satisfied with the

³⁵ Richard L. Hasen, *The Supreme Court and Election Law* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

existing congressional boundaries, and that his biggest concern – and also a concern of the state’s congressmen – was “the possibility of having to make a statewide race” if the maps were not redrawn to comply with the new ruling (some legal challenges created the possibility of forcing House members to run at-large if the state failed to implement a fair map by a designated deadline).³⁷ Jim Trimble said he would support the redrawing of Arkansas’s map if it became a “definite requirement.”³⁸

With Arkansas being forced by the Supreme Court to redraw its congressional districts, Governor Faubus called a special legislative session on May 24, 1965. Faubus’s proclamation contained a list of priorities for the session, with re-dividing the state’s four congressional districts being second only to approving the per diem for legislators during the special session.³⁹ However, redistricting would be overshadowed by other pressing issues. The governor had added forty-six other items to his list of priorities, with the formula for funding highway construction drawing the most attention.⁴⁰

Though highway funding and other topics received more attention from the press, lobbyists, and business leaders, Speaker of the House J.H. Cottrell, Jr. announced on the first day of the session that the House of Representatives would dedicate that day solely to the redrawing of congressional districts. The process was expected to be rather quick since legislators had already been drawing their own maps and negotiating in the days leading up to the special

³⁷ Associated Press, “Faubus Says Redistricting No Issue Now,” *Arkansas Gazette*, February 22, 1964, A8.

³⁸ Associated Press, “Governor Says He’d Consider Districting Bill; Four Congressmen Give No Indication of Being Worried,” *ibid.*, February 28, 1964, A1.

³⁹ Proclamation for Special Legislative Session, May 24, 1965. Orval Eugene Faubus Papers, series 11, subseries 1, box 433, folder 7. Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

⁴⁰ “The Special Session,” *Arkansas Gazette*, May 23, 1965, 2E.

session, with three proposals leading the way. Despite a warning from Faubus not to do so, legislators indicated that they would pass the leading proposals and let the governor decide which one he liked the best. One plan by two legislators from eastern Arkansas, Representative Doris McCastlin and Senator Dorathy Allen, already claimed 69 cosponsors in the House and 24 in the Senate, while plans by Senator Thomas Penn and Representatives Bernice Kizer and Clark Kinney also had wide support in both chambers. The McCastlin-Dorathy and Kizer-Kinney plans created a third district that resembled what would eventually become law, while Penn's map created a congressional map that focused on "regional loyalties" in that it made the third congressional district end at the Ouachita Mountains at Garland and Saline Counties rather than extend the district farther south.⁴¹

Heated debates on the floor of both legislative chambers exposed legislators' concerns about Republican voters in northern sections of the state influencing the outcomes of congressional elections. One legislator from the Delta argued that it would be a mistake to "blend in those Sharp County rocks with East Arkansas Delta land... they just aren't compatible."⁴² Another legislator from that part of the state bluntly stated that "we don't want them [Republicans] in our district [based in eastern Arkansas]!" Despite opposition to this plan, Senator Dorathy's legislation that moved Republican voters out of the third and second congressional districts (primarily Baxter County) to the first district passed in the Senate and was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.⁴³ It is unclear if she wanted to move these counties out of the third district in order to help Jim Trimble.

⁴¹ "House Plans to Get Rid of Redistricting Issue Today; Three Bills Filed," *ibid.*, May 25, 1965, 3A.

⁴² "Kizer-Kinney Bill for Redistricting Passes House, continued." *ibid.*, 2A.

⁴³ Dumas, Ernie. "Senate Clears Bill for Redistricting; 2d Slated to Pass," *ibid.*, May 27, 1965, 1A.

Following days of maneuvering by legislators who spent more time than expected on redistricting, Governor Faubus finally threatened to sign every proposal that came to his office, and informed legislators the last proposal he signed would be the state's new boundary map. Finally, on June 2, Representative McCastlin and Senator Allen announced they would remove their bill from contention, which allowed the Kizer-Kinney plan to go to the governor's office and receive his signature without much fanfare.⁴⁴

Under the new map, the first congressional district gained five counties, while the second district lost five counties to the east and gained one county – Baxter – from the third district. Meanwhile, the massive fourth congressional district shed eight counties in southwest Arkansas, which were moved to the third congressional district. But the district most affected by these changes was Jim Trimble's district, which gained a net total of seven counties, making it the largest congressional district in the state. Congressman Trimble now represented one-quarter of Arkansas's seventy-five counties, and he now represented every county along the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. The new third congressional district stretched from Marion County in north-central Arkansas to Little River County, which borders Texas at the Red River. Arkansas finally had four districts with mostly equal population; the first, second, and third districts each had a population of roughly 444,000 thousand, while 453,000 people lived in the fourth congressional district.⁴⁵

The newly added counties varied in size and were less Democratic than they had been in previous presidential elections. This would be extremely problematic for Trimble since the most Democratic of the new counties, as measured by the 1964 presidential election (Little River,

⁴⁴ "Kizer-Kinney Redistricting Becomes Law," *Ibid.*, June 2, 1965, 11A.

⁴⁵ 1965 Arkansas Congressional Districts, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 20, folder 19.

Hempstead, Montgomery, Pike, Polk, and Sevier), were small and were continuing to lose population in the 1960s *or* at most growing at a slower rate than larger counties in northern Arkansas (of the five counties that continued to lose population in the 1960's, four of them were in the southern part of the district). In fact, some of these predominantly rural southern counties (along with a few in northern sections of the district) lost up to 40% of their population from 1940 to 1960. In contrast, the largest county that was added in 1965 – Garland – had seen its population remain relatively stagnant in the 1950's, but grew at a faster rate in the 1960's than rural southern counties.⁴⁶ Garland was also the most pro-Goldwater county added to the third district, where the Republican nominee won 46% of the vote. This would place Garland County's results between the traditionally Republican-leaning counties of Benton, where Goldwater won by two percent, and Washington, where some Republican voters apparently turned their backs on Goldwater and helped Johnson crush the senator by a 60% to 40% margin.⁴⁷

Had the counties added to the third congressional district in 1965 comprised their own congressional district in 1964, Orval Faubus would have defeated Win Rockefeller 61% to 39%, while Lyndon Johnson's 56% to 44% victory was a slight improvement on his numbers in the actual third congressional district. Rockefeller won none of these counties, while Goldwater carried tiny Howard County with 54% of the vote. It is difficult to explain how Goldwater carried Howard County, but this area did have a much higher percentage of African American residents than most counties in the third congressional district, which might have made white voters there more responsive to Goldwater's opposition to federal civil rights legislation. In these

⁴⁶ 1966 United States Census Population Estimates, *ibid.*, series 2, subseries 1, box 20, folder 20.

⁴⁷ 1964 Election Results and Voting Age Population Tables, *ibid.*, series 2, subseries 1, box 20, folder 19.

southernmost counties, the black voting age population stood at 45% in Hempstead County, 36% in Little River County, 21% Howard County, 11% in Garland County, and 8% in Sevier County. Overall, 71% - or 9,993 people – of the black voting age population lived in the southern parts of the district (the remaining 29% would primarily live in Fort Smith and smaller towns along the Arkansas River). Besides Howard County, Johnson won the rest of the counties with large African American populations by hefty margins (his smallest victory was an eight point spread in Garland County). That said, Johnson did run well behind Orval Faubus in all of these counties, which suggests that white voters there were willing to vote Republican.⁴⁸

With Johnson's margin of victory in southwest Arkansas largely mirroring his performance in northern sections of the third congressional district, Jim Trimble should have been concerned about his chances in a potential reelection bid in 1966 since the addition of more counties to his district did not make it more Democratic. Even though Johnson won by a healthy margin in the third district, the 1964 presidential election was unusual, with the Republican nominee underperforming Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon in large northwestern counties. Furthermore, Trimble's margin of victory in a district he had represented for well over a decade was not as overwhelming as it had been in previous elections, and he would have only one year to connect with newly added voters in southwest Arkansas before the 1966 primaries and general election. While the addition of several counties to the third congressional district in 1965 would not drastically change the overall partisan makeup of the district (the Republican candidates for president and governor won roughly 45% of the vote districtwide), the voting trends of both regions – paired with the national political environment of the mid-1960's and the tradition of the incumbent president's party losing seats in Congress during midterm elections –

⁴⁸ 1964 Election Results and Voting Age Population Tables, *ibid.*

indicate that Trimble would experience a difficult reelection bid in 1966 against a generic Republican nominee.

Depopulation, repopulation, demographic changes, and a changing economy would improve electoral conditions for Republicans in western Arkansas, with the election of 1966 being the first byproduct of these changes. However, these factors did not determine the outcome on their own. Instead, issues during the campaign and the campaign styles of both candidates should also be viewed as equal contributors to the final result of the 1966 race for third district congressperson.

Chapter Two

The Election of 1966

On October 3, 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited Heber Springs, Arkansas, to dedicate the new Greers Ferry dam along the Little Red River. A large crowd gathered to listen to the president's speech, in which he lauded the progress made on hydroelectric projects since the New Deal and the promise of dams. The president also took a moment to address the power of Arkansas's congressional delegation. Kennedy informed the spectators that "pound for pound, the Arkansas delegation in the Congress of the United States wields more influence than any other delegation of the other 49 States"⁴⁹ The president was not exaggerating: Arkansas's six Democratic members of the United States Congress chaired several powerful committees in both legislative chambers and had served a combined 112 years in the Congress. In the Senate, John McClellan was known for his ability to fund large projects, while Senator J. William Fulbright chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In the House of Representatives, Wilbur Mills of the second congressional district headed the powerful House Ways and Means Committee.

While he did not chair a committee, Congressman Jim Trimble of the third congressional district ranked fifth on the House Rules Committee. Trimble, a Democrat from Berryville in eastern Carroll County, had represented his district since 1945, after Fulbright left the seat open after one term and successfully unseated incumbent Democratic senator Hattie Caraway. Like McClellan, Trimble was able to secure funding for many programs in his district, ranging from the establishment of new post offices to rural electrification projects. Through his legislative

⁴⁹ John F. Kennedy: "Remarks in Heber Springs, Arkansas, at the Dedication of Greers Ferry Dam.," October 3, 1963, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9455>.

abilities, folksy personality, and political connections, Trimble became a well-known figure in Washington, D.C.⁵⁰

James William “Jim” Trimble had been born and raised in Carroll County. He graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1917 with a degree in history, and served as a field clerk during World War One just before the war ended. While he had no intention of getting into politics as a young man, friends in Carroll County urged him to run for county clerk, and he won the job in 1920. After four years in that office, he was elected county tax collector and began to study law under a local attorney. After passing the Arkansas bar exam and marrying Ruth Maples, he became a deputy prosecuting attorney in 1929, and began an eight-year stint as prosecuting attorney from 1931 to 1938. In 1938, he became a circuit judge, and held this position until he was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1944.⁵¹

Trimble initially served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and then on the Public Works Committee. He was eventually promoted to the House Rules Committee by his close friend, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn (D-Texas), and served on that committee until he left Congress in 1967. Aside from his committee duties, Trimble’s top priority was to complete water projects along the White River Valley in order to produce cheap hydroelectricity and to prevent flooding. Trimble was successful in working with other members of the Arkansas and Missouri delegations in seeing that the Table Rock and Beaver Dams were completed during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Trimble would also play a role in supporting the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, which resulted in the construction of locks and dams along that river in

⁵⁰ Editorial, “Election Windup – the Trimble Upset,” *The Press Argus* (Van Buren, AR), November 17, 1966.

⁵¹ Thomas Rothrock, “Congressman James W. Trimble,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 28, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 76-80.

Arkansas and Oklahoma. Finally, Trimble succeeded in his efforts to create the Pea Ridge National Military Park in Benton County.⁵²

Throughout his long tenure in Washington, Trimble was arguably the most liberal member of Congress from Arkansas. In 1965, the left-leaning Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) published their yearly scorecard, in which Trimble earned a rating of 63% (Fulbright earned a rating of 41%, while Wilbur Mills stood at 37%, and the rest of the delegation ranged from the lower single digits to 16%). This scorecard indicated that Trimble joined the rest of the Arkansas delegation in voting against some liberal proposals, including the repeal of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. However, Trimble stood strong for public power providers and supported rent subsidies, standing alone in Arkansas's delegation in his support for the latter issue. In fact, Trimble's rating with this organization placed him more in line with Representatives Carl Albert and Ed Edmondson (both of whom shared his zeal for water projects),⁵³ both Democrats from eastern Oklahoma, than the rest of Arkansas's delegation and most southern Democrats.⁵⁴ In contrast to the ADA scorecard, Trimble earned a low rating of 8% from a conservative group called the Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), while Representative 'Took' Gathings of the first congressional district earned a rating of 78%.⁵⁵ In 1961, a Harding College vice president used National Education Program (HEP) propaganda to argue that Trimble had "voted eighty-nine percent of the time to aid and abet the Communist Party."⁵⁶ The liberal reputation that Trimble had created over a span of two decades would come

⁵² Ibid., 84-85.

⁵³ Lucas, Bob. "Arkansan Analyzes Defeat," *Tulsa Tribune* (Tulsa, OK), November 22, 1966.

⁵⁴ Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) World Scorecard, November 1965, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 15, folder 15.

⁵⁵ Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA) Index 1966, *ibid.*, series 2, subseries 1, box 15, folder 34.

⁵⁶ Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America: 1930-199*, 173-174.

back to haunt him during the 1966 contest with John Paul Hammerschmidt, even though election results from 1944-1964 show that Trimble was popular with his constituents, who reelected him ten times. Despite his popularity, some of his political positions faced strong challenges by the 1960's, particularly from fiscal conservatives and environmental organizations.

John Paul Hammerschmidt's entrance into the congressional election of 1966 was not expected. However, Hammerschmidt was no stranger to Arkansas political circles. A lumberman from Harrison in Boone County, he had served in the U.S. Army during World War Two and had previously sat on the Harrison City Council. He had become an influential figure within the Republican Party's state apparatus, and was serving as party chairman when he decided to run against Trimble in 1966. Hammerschmidt did not originally intend to seek the position himself; he had actually been searching for a candidate for quite some time when Republican officials began to urge him to run. Hammerschmidt relented and filed for the position just before the deadline, and won the Republican nomination with no opposition.⁵⁷ Things looked bleak for Hammerschmidt initially; a poll showed voters indicating that they would select Trimble over Hammerschmidt in November by a 63% to 21% margin. While these numbers looked bad, Hammerschmidt and his pollster saw some positive signs, such as his name recognition standing at 16%.⁵⁸ Even though Hammerschmidt's name recognition was much lower than Trimble's, it was decent for a first-time candidate.

During his campaign, Hammerschmidt would diverge from some of the unsuccessful campaign tactics used unsuccessfully against Trimble in 1964. In 1964, Jimmy Hinshaw, a

⁵⁷ Lunsford, Scott and John Paul Hammerschmidt. "Arkansas Memories: Interviews from the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History: John Paul Hammerschmidt," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 70, no. 4 (Winter 2011), 464.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 465.

businessman from Springdale, was Trimble's Republican challenger and primarily attacked the incumbent for his age and President Johnson's stance on civil rights. Ironically, Trimble, while never enthusiastic about 'massive resistance' to *Brown v. Board*, had signed the Southern Manifesto (which had been partially rewritten by J. William Fulbright to appease 'moderate' southern Democrats⁵⁹) and did not vote for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁶⁰ While Henshaw earned 45% of the vote in 1964, it was obvious that the issue of civil rights alone would not defeat Trimble.⁶¹ Still, Hammerschmidt was urged by Haskell Jones, a Republican from Hope, to campaign on repealing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and to pass laws prohibiting massive demonstrations and to "use force to halt riots." Jones believed this would help Hammerschmidt with white conservatives and simultaneously hurt Jim Johnson's campaign since he wanted Arkansas to break the law by simply disregarding the Civil Rights Act. Jones made the unlikely claim that taking this position on civil rights would win 80% of the white vote and "about 50% of Negroes." Hammerschmidt's response to the suggestions has not been preserved in his papers, but clearly he did not take them, generally leaving civil rights alone in his 1966 campaign.⁶²

Unlike Hinshaw, Hammerschmidt would also generally refrain from making Trimble's age a cornerstone of his campaign strategy. But, he apparently stated at one campaign rally that he thought the 72-year-old Trimble was too old to represent such a large congressional district.⁶³ Polling from September 1966 showed that 43% of voters believed Hammerschmidt would be

⁵⁹ Randall Woods. *Fulbright: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 209-210.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America: 1930-1999*, 137.

⁶¹ Carson, "Feet in the South, Eyes to the West," 54.

⁶² H. Jones to J.P. Hammerschmidt, August 30, 1966, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 1, folder 1.

⁶³ "Republicans Import Big Guns in Effort to Unseat Trimble," *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), November 6, 1966, 20A.

more active as a congressman, compared to 46% who believed he would not. Yet, voters agreed by a 71% to 19% that Trimble's seniority in Washington was a *good* thing, so Hammerschmidt had to tread carefully with this issue.⁶⁴

Hammerschmidt's internal polling showed that Trimble was personally popular, but the leader of his political party, Lyndon Johnson, was not. 24% of voters in the third district approved of the president's record, while 57% disapproved and 19% had no opinion.⁶⁵ These poll results should not be surprising given the political tumult surrounding civil rights, the war in Vietnam, and the expense of the president's Great Society programs. With these numbers in mind, it became apparent that the best way to defeat Trimble would be to attach him to Johnson. However, this appeared to be a daunting task; in the same poll in which Johnson barely received a 25% approval rating, only 19% of voters identified Trimble as a "rubber stamp" for Johnson's agenda, and only 29% said Trimble was a congressman "for the administration."⁶⁶

Hammerschmidt launched his campaign in September in front of friends in Harrison, but did not sound like a candidate running against Jim Trimble. Instead, he criticized the spending practices of the White House by asking the crowd how the country could afford billions more in new spending when "we collect an already heavy tax burden," and then claimed that inflation was rising "because the president failed to act in time because of political expediency." While Hammerschmidt did say that he was not "naïve enough" to fight federal funding for projects in the third congressional district, he did advocate curbing the growth of the Great Society.

Hammerschmidt, a World War II veteran, also focused some of his attention on international

⁶⁴ Mid-South Polling, Sept. 28, 1966 – p. 8, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 15, folder 34.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 4

⁶⁶ Ibid.; pp. 2, 9, 10.

affairs by campaigning to curb foreign aid and to support shifting the burden in Vietnam to the South Vietnamese and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) as the war in that country became a quagmire for the United States and the Johnson Administration.⁶⁷ With regards to Vietnam, Hammerschmidt would later clarify his stance on ARVN by stating if they were willing to “put their men into uniform to protect their freedom in proportion to what [the United States] did in World War II, they would have 1,250,000 fighting men” to relieve some of the responsibility of the United States.⁶⁸

Hammerschmidt continued his criticisms of the president on the campaign trail. At the Benton County Fair, his campaign booth attracted attention for its “LBJ Supermarket” that featured thirty grocery items with price tags attached to them illustrating the increase in food prices under Johnson. Hammerschmidt’s message was obviously aimed at working-class consumers, as was his campaign talking point that the administration had left Americans to deal with high interest rates.⁶⁹ While Hammerschmidt attacked Johnson for his spending programs, he took a more moderate tone when it came to spending federal dollars in the third district. In late September, Hammerschmidt sent a telegram to the chairman of the Reopening Fort Chaffee Committee, in which he assured the group that he shared their “doubts concerning the wisdom of high current expenditures on other military installations with lesser reputation and excellence,” and believed that the advocates for reopening the fort should “insist upon permanent status as a

⁶⁷ “Hammerschmidt Opens Campaign,” *Boone County Headlight* (Harrison, Ark.), September 15, 1966, 1A.

⁶⁸ Maurice Moore. “Hammerschmidt: 3rd Needs a Conservative,” *Sentinel Record* (Hot Springs, AR), October 26, 1966.

⁶⁹ “Hammerschmidt Has Novel Idea for Fair Booth,” *Daily Times* (Harrison, Ark.), September 20, 1966.

condition of its reopening.”⁷⁰ Hammerschmidt also supported the Ozarka Dam project to ensure Fort Smith and other towns had access to cheap electricity, and stated that he only supported wage-price freezes “in the case of a real national emergency.”⁷¹ In responding to a questionnaire from the Southwestern Operating Company in Fort Smith, Hammerschmidt highlighted another one of his pragmatic stances by stating he would support increasing Social Security payments and that if the Republican Party’s increase “proposal had been adopted two (2) years ago, the older citizens would already have the raise in effect.”⁷² In an effort to attract support from older voters (possibly including some of the retirees moving to northern sections of the third congressional district), Hammerschmidt aired a 20-second radio advertisement claiming that “the constantly rising price of everything has thrown social security payments out of kilter. Our older citizens... could and should be receiving larger Social Security checks.”⁷³

As his campaign continued, Hammerschmidt continuously hammered the national Democratic Party on economic anxieties, but finally started to mention Trimble in negative ads. Hammerschmidt crafted a media strategy that first focused on Johnson’s programs and then attached Trimble to those programs. In one ad, Hammerschmidt tied Jim Trimble to the president by proclaiming that he “is a part of the problem.” Using another of the Republican Party’s weapons against Great Society liberalism, Hammerschmidt argued for “law and order” to address violence in cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. Hammerschmidt did not

⁷⁰ “GOP Candidate Backs Reopening of Fort Chaffee,” *Southwest Times Record* (Fort Smith, Ark.), Sept 20, 1966.

⁷¹ Carson, “Feet in the South, Eyes to the West,” 58.

⁷² Hammerschmidt Responses to Southwest Operating Company Candidate Questionnaire, October 24, 1966, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 1, folder 3.

⁷³ Faulkner and Associates, Inc. Radio Advertisements, October 11, 1966, *ibid.*, series 2, box 12, folder 31.

speak of race and civil rights directly, but this might be viewed as a veiled attempt to address white voters' concerns with race relations.⁷⁴

One issue that created negative press for Trimble was the Buffalo River. He faced fierce resistance from various quarters when he pushed for the construction of two dams along the Buffalo in Newton, Searcy, and Marion Counties. Opposition to this proposal first came from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who vetoed the project in 1956 and 1958 in accordance with his promise to prevent new federally funded water projects from being initiated. Environmental groups and sportsmen who enjoyed the wild and scenic river would also criticize Trimble and pushed to maintain the river's natural beauty. Opposition also emerged from landowners along the river, while supporters of the dam could be found in the small towns near the river whose residents believed they would benefit from the jobs created during and after construction of the dams and the minimization of flooding.⁷⁵

Like Lyndon Johnson and other New Dealers, Jim Trimble hoped to reduce poverty in his district by attracting new industrial jobs to the region. In *This Land, This Nation*, Sarah Phillips summarizes how many southern congressmen from high-poverty areas “foresaw a future with fewer farmers but with more factories, more wage workers, and more city dwellers.” To achieve this goal, hydroelectric and flood control dams needed to be constructed to supply cities with water and power, and, especially to provide cheap electricity for rural areas.⁷⁶ Trimble effectively sold this message to voters in his district, and the sentiment was loudly echoed by residents in the small town of Marshall, the seat of Searcy County a few miles south of the Buffalo River.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ray Heady. “A Young Speaker, No. 41, Cuts Through The Buffalo River ‘Smoke Screen,’ *The Kansas City Star*, Sunday, December 13, 1964, p. 56.

⁷⁶ Sarah Phillips. *This Land, This Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

In December 1964, a town hall meeting was held in Marshall for citizens to express their support or opposition to the new dams. The *Kansas City Star* reporter covering the event seemed to be dumbfounded by the rabid support for the damming of the Buffalo. The reporter wrote that “Marshall has assumed the posture that to oppose the dam is to take bread from the mouths of its citizens,” and that the town had claimed the river as its own. The event lasted all day, with eighteen speakers – none from Marshall – speaking against the project and basing their arguments on the fact that several reservoirs already existed in the area, while the wild Buffalo could be a unique tourist destination. Meanwhile, landowners along the river expressed their opposition to both the inundation of their property and the alternative proposal from environmental groups, which was the founding of a national park along the river. Meanwhile, a local preacher and the editor of the town’s newspaper led the pro-dam forces in Marshall, with the latter completely dismissing an economic study by the University of Arkansas that showed the economic possibilities along the Buffalo if it became a national park.⁷⁷ Obviously, the Buffalo River mattered a great deal to many outspoken voters in Marshall, and Jim Trimble was presumably their man.

In the mid-1960’s, Trimble’s advocacy for damming the river attracted more national attention, including a negative article in the Summer 1966 edition of *The Living Wilderness*, a quarterly magazine published by the Wilderness Society. Like many critics, this publication touted the beauty of the area and its current recreational opportunities as a economic boon for the region, but also approached the issue from an environmental standpoint by highlighting the flora and fauna along the river and the fact that it was one of the few relatively long wild rivers

⁷⁷ Ray, “A Young Speaker, No. 41, Cuts Through the Buffalo River ‘Smoke Screen,’ 56.

remaining in the United States.⁷⁸ Anti-dam arguments also emerged in Arkansas during this time, particularly in papers such as the Fort Smith *Southwest American* and the statewide *Arkansas Gazette*. These pieces tended to follow the same arguments presented by the Wilderness Society, with the merging of environmental concerns, preserving natural beauty, and promoting economic development in the form of recreation. In February 1965, the *Southwest American* ran an op-ed from United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, where he endorsed designating the Buffalo River as a National River. Douglas had canoed the river several years prior, and described the river as “heaven on earth.”⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the *Gazette* used a line from a speech delivered by President Johnson on Conservation and Natural Beauty, in which he stated

“We will continue to conserve the water and power for tomorrow’s needs with well-planned reservoirs and power dams. But the time has also come to identify and preserve free-flowing stretches of our great scenic rivers before growth and development make the beauty of the unspoiled water a memory.”⁸⁰

The pleas from these urban newspapers to preserve the Buffalo highlight the differing viewpoints of rural Arkansans and urbanites (who were increasing in number) who sought recreation in scenic rural areas. Throughout the debates over the future of the river, Trimble would continuously argue that the lower sections of the river were un-floatable during dry months and that a “37-mile blue lake will add beauty to the area.”⁸¹

Toward the end of 1965, Governor Orval Faubus would effectively kill the prospect of dam construction along the Buffalo. The governor, a close friend of Trimble, wrote a long and

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Helfman. “Our Wild Rivers,” *The Living Wilderness*, published by the Wilderness Society (Washington, D.C.), Summer 1966, 24-26.

⁷⁹ Editorial, “Douglas Urges: Let’s Keep the Buffalo!” *Southwest American* (Fort Smith, Ark.), February 25, 1965, 4-A.

⁸⁰ Editorial, “Saving the Buffalo,” *Arkansas Gazette*, February 21, 1965.

⁸¹ J. Trimble to M. Nadel, Editor of the *Living Wilderness*. October 12, 1966. Trimble Family Papers, series 1, box 2, folder 8.

passionate letter to the Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, Lt. Gen. William F. Cassidy, listing several reasons why he opposed damming the Buffalo. Faubus had spent many hours at the river to relax, and argued that the river should be left untamed and made into a national park to preserve the natural beauty of the region and promote economic development. And, more importantly, Faubus argued that “90 per cent of the thousands of visitors to the Buffalo River State Park favor the National River over the dam.”⁸² Faubus’ long and lofty letter is somewhat surprising since he had written to Neil Compton, leader of the anti-dam Ozark Society, in July 1965 that “the decision [to dam the river or create a national park] must be made by federal authorities” since his speaking out on the topic would alienate legislators from the area.⁸³ Despite Faubus’ letter to the Army Corps of Engineers, Congressman Trimble continued to support the project; in April 1966, he told a reporter “I still think it is a good project and I will do all I can to get it authorized.”⁸⁴

According to Compton, a doctor and Republican from increasingly urbanizing Benton County, the Ozark Society was hoping to attract a pro-park candidate to challenge Trimble in 1968 since few thought Hammerschmidt stood a chance of defeating Trimble in 1966. Compton went as far as to recall that the thought people rejecting Trimble in 1966 “was unthinkable, and we were prepared to hold the line for another two or four years.”⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Compton discussed the Buffalo River with Hammerschmidt at a reception in Springdale, where he urged

⁸² “Faubus Reveals Reasons for Stand Against Proposed Gilbert Dam,” *Rogers Daily News* (Rogers, Ark.), Dec. 15, 1965, 1A.

⁸³ Faubus to Compton, July 14, 1965. Neil Compton Papers, series 1, box 7, folder 4. University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville.

⁸⁴ “Trimble Says He’ll Fight for River Flood Control Despite Army Back down,” *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), April 16, 1966, 2A.

⁸⁵ Neil Compton. *The Battle for the Buffalo River: A Twentieth-Century Conservation Crisis in the Ozarks* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 273.

Hammerschmidt to support a national park but to not publicly support this proposal during the campaign since it could distract from other pressing issues.⁸⁶ Hammerschmidt stuck with his noncommittal position and refused to discuss the issue on the campaign trail, but did support the creation of a national park once he went to Congress. It would later be reported that Hammerschmidt viewed the creation of the Buffalo National River was one of his proudest accomplishments while serving in Congress.⁸⁷

The influence of the Buffalo River controversy on people's decision at the ballot box is possibly the toughest factor of the election to weigh. While there are plenty of newspaper articles and editorials condemning the project and Jim Trimble's support for it, it is difficult to come to any conclusion on this issue since neither candidate received an overwhelming amount of mail asking them to support or oppose the dam. To make this analysis more difficult, election return data from 1966 in areas along the Buffalo River show that the noncommittal stance of Hammerschmidt might have been helpful. While some precincts from 1966 have changed over the years, the ones that have remained the same show that Hammerschmidt defeated Trimble 977 to 861. Meanwhile, the city of Marshall voted for Hammerschmidt over Trimble, giving the challenger 609 votes to the incumbent's 469. Nearby Yellville, the county seat of Marion County and home to many dam supporters, delivered 200 votes to Hammerschmidt's campaign and 153 to Trimble.⁸⁸ The votes against Trimble along the Buffalo are not surprising since many landowners did not want to lose their property to a lake or a national park. However, the votes from Marshall are surprising since the town was portrayed as a hotbed of support for the Gilbert

⁸⁶ Ibid., 279.

⁸⁷ James Hohmann, "Arkansas Remembers GOP Founding Father," *Politico*, May 04, 2015, accessed April 3, 2017. <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/05/arkansas-remembers-gop-founding-father-117626>

⁸⁸ 1966 Election Results, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 17, folder 3.

Dam. Granted, the town's citizens might have lost faith in Trimble's political abilities after Orval Faubus effectively killed the proposal in 1965. Furthermore, this area was traditionally the most Republican part of the state, and some of the vocal supporters of the dam may have been some of the few staunch Democrats in the region or pro-dam Republicans (Rockefeller carried Searcy County 66% to 44% and Hammerschmidt won 58% to 42%).

While Arkansans were entertained (and likely alarmed) by the hotly contested race for governor between segregationist Democratic nominee and Supreme Court Justice Jim Johnson and Winthrop Rockefeller, the race for Congress in the third district largely stayed under the radar of most voters until the final weeks of the campaign.⁸⁹ For those paying attention to the race, the contest resembled the presidential election of 1896, when Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan barnstormed the country delivering speeches at campaign rallies and attracting large crowds, while Republican William McKinley ran a 'front porch' campaign that brought men to his home in Ohio to meet the candidate face-to-face. Essentially, Hammerschmidt ran a Bryan-styled campaign (although Hammerschmidt did incorporate McKinley's method of strong fundraising and an organized centralized party), while Trimble's campaign style was more McKinley-styled: small meetings and face-to-face interactions. The biggest difference, of course, was that Bryan's campaign for the presidency was unsuccessful. Hammerschmidt won during his first attempt.

For the most part, Jim Trimble ignored Hammerschmidt and remained in Washington, D.C. until a few weeks before election day. Trimble had done this during his primary election earlier in the year and previous election cycles.⁹⁰ Trimble's campaign style was described as a

⁸⁹ Mid-South Polling, Sept. 28, 1966, *ibid.*, series 2, subseries 1, box 15, folder 34.

⁹⁰ Jim Starr. "Jim Trimble Ignores Opponents," *Northwest Arkansas Times* (Fayetteville, Arkansas), October 29, 1966, 3A.

“soft sell and pitched at an easy, asking pace.” When he did return from Washington, Trimble used his life story as the son of sharecroppers to highlight the advancements that had been made for rural Arkansans during his time in office, and relied heavily on personal one-on-one contact with individuals rather than giving stump speeches or holding rallies. Essentially, Trimble (commonly called “Judge” by his friends and constituents, referring to his years as a circuit judge in Carroll County) enjoyed “wandering around trying to find a few votes” and meeting with voters – many of whom he identified by name.⁹¹

Unfortunately for Trimble, the increasing size of the third district made retail politicking harder to do. Earlier in his career, Trimble could afford to meet most voters face-to-face since only 44,240 people in his district were eligible to vote after paying their poll taxes in 1943.⁹² However, with the expansion of his district and the repeal of Arkansas’s poll tax in 1965, 278,296 people were of voting age in the third congressional district following the 1960 Census. Granted, every eligible voter did not cast a ballot during these election cycles, but overall turnout was much higher in 1966 than 1944 – 31,666 people voted in Trimble’s first race,⁹³ while 158,267 people voted in the 1966 congressional election.⁹⁴

In contrast to Trimble, Hammerschmidt not only traveled extensively through the district, but aggressively blanketed all media platforms and large gatherings with advertisements. Trimble’s newspaper advertisements usually highlighted his political résumé and legislative accomplishments, but Hammerschmidt’s had a different tone. With the third congressional

⁹¹ Floyd Carl. “Jim Trimble Sees Bright Future for Area – Could be most Progressive in U.S.,” *Northwest Arkansas Times* (Fayetteville, Ark.), November 2, 1966, A14.

⁹² Alexander Heard and Donald S. Strong. *Southern Primaries and Elections, 1920-1949* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1950), 35.

⁹³ 1944 Election Results, Trimble Papers.

⁹⁴ 1966 Election Results, Hammerschmidt Papers.

district having expanded in 1965, Hammerschmidt ran newspaper ads asking voters “Have you seen your present congressman yet?,” an attack against Trimble for rarely coming back to Arkansas to visit constituents. Hammerschmidt promised voters in southwest Arkansas that he would open an office (likely in Hot Springs) to address their concerns, while Trimble would cater to the seventeen counties that made-up the old third congressional district.⁹⁵

Hammerschmidt later took credit for creating his own advertisements and hiring volunteers instead of advertising professionals in order to give his campaign more of a ‘common man’ feel. Hammerschmidt also used his volunteers to reach out to voters at non-political events, such as Arkansas Razorback football games in Fayetteville.⁹⁶

Hammerschmidt was critical of Trimble for not coming home enough, but Trimble did attempt to reach every part of the district in 1966, including the vast new areas that had been incorporated into the district in 1965. During the Democratic primary, where Trimble faced spirited challenges from state legislators David Burleson of Fayetteville (who had received the endorsement of the Ozark Society) and Jim Evans of Hot Springs, Trimble toured the district at least once. Despite being challenged by two younger men and visiting areas unfamiliar with his work, Trimble retained his easy-going campaign style. In the small town of Nashville in southwest Arkansas, Trimble chose to “visit informally with voters new to his political area” and delivered no formal remarks.⁹⁷ In Paris, Arkansas, Trimble reportedly “stopped only long enough to wipe the sweat from his brow,” and apparently spent most of his time in that town answering

⁹⁵ Hammerschmidt Newspaper Advertisement, *De Queen Bee* (De Queen, Ark.), October 27, 1966, 5A.

⁹⁶ Lunsford and Hammerschmidt, “Arkansas Memories,” 464.

⁹⁷ “Trimble Visits New Area,” *Nashville News* (Nashville, Ark.), July 14, 1966.

questions from a newspaper reporter and shaking hands.⁹⁸ Despite visiting these new areas, Trimble did not earn the endorsement of some newspapers in southwest Arkansas, including the *Hope Star* and the *Nashville News*, with the former being upset with the leftward tilt of the national Democratic Party⁹⁹ and the latter appearing to endorse Hammerschmidt only in order to say that they endorsed two Democrats and two Republicans for federal and statewide office¹⁰⁰

Hammerschmidt also used his connections with the Republican National Committee to bring in major out-of-state speakers to campaign for him. On October 27, House Minority Leader Gerald Ford, a Republican from Michigan and future President of the United States, traveled to Springdale and Huntsville to stump for Hammerschmidt and the Republican ticket. While Ford echoed Republican talking points regarding Great Society spending and the creation of a two-party system in Arkansas, he referred to Trimble as a “grand old man” who unfortunately “went all the way with LBJ, and that’s why we are in trouble today.” Ford also complained that President Johnson referred to Capitol Hill as “his Congress,” and that Hammerschmidt would was “young, prepared, and concerned and will work for you and not for the White House.”¹⁰¹

In Fort Smith, former Vice President Richard Nixon also campaigned for Hammerschmidt and the Republican ticket. The Nixon rally attracted 3,000 spectators as the future president criticized the national Democratic Party for forty-five minutes. Nixon urged the partisan crowd to help create a two-party system in Arkansas, and to end one-party government in Washington. When Hammerschmidt addressed the crowd, he echoed Nixon’s talking points

⁹⁸ Maurice Moore, “A Man is Just as Old as He Feels”: Rep. Trimble,” *Texarkana Gazette* (Texarkana, Ark.), July 17, 1966.

⁹⁹ Washburn, Alex. “Our Daily Bread: Editor No Pollster – Just Voiced His Convictions,” *Hope Star* (Hope, Arkansas), November 9, 1966.

¹⁰⁰ Editorial. “As We See It,” *Nashville News* (Nashville, Ark.), November 3, 1966.

¹⁰¹ Associated Press, “National GOP Throws its Weight Behind Hammerschmidt,” *Northwest Arkansas Times*, October 28, 1966, 1A.

on the ills of the Great Society and Democratic rule, and stated that he believed the Republican platform could effectively counter the changes taking place via Johnson's legislative agenda. Hammerschmidt told the crowd that he did not believe that Arkansas wanted "anyone who follows party lines, Democratic or Republican," and that Trimble had gone "all the way with LBJ" on an "unbelievable, irresponsible spending program."¹⁰²

Hammerschmidt's advocacy for a two-party system was a common Republican talking point in 1966, but his criticisms of Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society indicate that he was doing more than riding Rockefeller's coattails. In fact, he tried to distance himself from Rockefeller's campaign as much as possible, both physically and in his campaign messaging. Years after his 1966 campaign, Hammerschmidt explained that he separated his campaign from Win Rockefeller's well-tuned and funded gubernatorial bid by hiring his own staff, writing his own advertisements, and holding his own events. He also said that while he and Rockefeller were political allies, he feared that some of Rockefeller's moderate viewpoints would not help him in the third district.¹⁰³ However, Hammerschmidt did appear with Rockefeller at a well-publicized campaign events in August of 1966. When Winthrop Rockefeller officially launched his 1964 and 1966 gubernatorial runs, he began his campaigns in the small town of Winthrop in Little River County, which happened to be one of the southernmost counties in the third congressional district. Hammerschmidt and the rest of the Republican Party's down-ballot ticket traveled to Winthrop with Rockefeller, and then accompanied the gubernatorial candidate to a dinner later that day in De Queen.¹⁰⁴ Other gatherings that featured Hammerschmidt and Rockefeller appear

¹⁰² Associated Press, "Nixon Plugs for 2-Party System," *Baxter Bulletin* (Mountain Home, AR), November 11, 1966.

¹⁰³ Lunsford and Hammerschmidt, "Arkansas Memories," 464.

¹⁰⁴ "Win" Packs Them in at a Local Barbecue; Crowd sets Record," *De Queen Daily Citizen*, August 17, 1966.

to be party events that Hammerschmidt primarily attended as the chairman of the Republican Party of Arkansas, such as the party's state convention in September, or other major Republican gatherings like the aforementioned rally with Richard Nixon at Fort Smith.¹⁰⁵

Hammerschmidt and Rockefeller were seen together on some occasions, but their campaign messages had different emphases and targeted distinct sets of voters. While both candidates argued that Arkansas needed a two-party system, Hammerschmidt's criticisms of Lyndon Johnson were obviously not aimed at the white moderate and left-of-center Democrats or African Americans that Rockefeller needed to attract at the statewide level to win. Rockefeller argued for improved public education, increased industrialization, and better roads.¹⁰⁶ When Rockefeller did attack Democrats, he did not publicly mention Lyndon Johnson. Instead, he criticized Orval Faubus, who he claimed had wasted state and federal dollars that were intended for welfare programs.¹⁰⁷ While he spent a considerable amount of time and effort appealing to moderate voters, Rockefeller also developed a message to maintain support from the conservative branch of the Republican Party. This is what likely led him to inform the partisan crowd at the Nixon rally in Fort Smith that he had voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964 despite his disdain for the senator (Rockefeller's brother, Nelson, had lost the Republican nomination for president to Goldwater in 1964, and Winthrop did not publicly endorse Goldwater during the general election.¹⁰⁸).¹⁰⁹ By contrast with these gestures (and aside from a few of his pragmatic stances on some public spending), Hammerschmidt consistently emphasized his fiscal

¹⁰⁵ "WR Labels Demo One-Man Party Charge 'Poppycock'" *Sentinel Record* (Hot Springs, AR), September 4, 1966.

¹⁰⁶ Urwin, *Agenda for Reform*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Jerol Garrison. "He Can Do the Most for State, WR Says as Campaign Begins," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 17, 1966, 1A.

¹⁰⁸ Urwin, *Agenda for Reform*, 206.

¹⁰⁹ "Nixon Plugs for 2-Party System."

conservatism. Hammerschmidt stated on the campaign trail that he believed that “people want a more conservative representative... especially in the field of fiscal responsibility,” and that the president made “grievous error” when he expanded spending for the Great Society while expanding U.S. involvement in Vietnam.¹¹⁰

Hammerschmidt and Rockefeller both needed Lyndon Johnson voters to support their campaigns, but Rockefeller needed more of them than Hammerschmidt. Hammerschmidt’s district had shown in previous elections that it was willing to go along with national political trends by delivering its votes to the Republican nominee for president. The rest of Arkansas had not done this. Therefore, Hammerschmidt had to run as a fiscal conservative to appeal to the Goldwater Republicans of his district in the largest and most rapidly growing counties. Rockefeller, on the other hand, had to remain publicly quiet about Lyndon Johnson’s liberal policies since he was courting voters who had helped Lyndon Johnson defeat Barry Goldwater in 1964 but could not abide Jim Johnson in 1966.

While Hammerschmidt distanced himself from some of Rockefeller’s stances, he and other Republicans nevertheless benefitted from Win Rockefeller’s personal wealth and his investments in the party, which combined with enthusiasm from the party’s base, enabled Republicans to organize at the county level. In response to a sympathetic letter from Hubert Humphrey following the election, Trimble informed the Vice President that the state party needed more help from the Democratic National Committee since “one problem [Arkansas Democrats had was] that the opposition was organized precinct by precinct, and we were not.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Maurice Moore, “Hammerschmidt: 3rd Needs a Conservative,” *The Sentinel Record*, October 26, 1966.

¹¹¹ J. Trimble to H. Humphrey. November 25, 1966, Trimble Family Papers, series 3, box 3, folder 1.

Granted, the disorganization of the Democratic Party should not come as a surprise given the party's stranglehold on the state, Jim Johnson's divisive campaign that pushed many left-leaning Democrats into the Rockefeller camp, and the expectation that Trimble's personal popularity would easily push him over the finish line.

On Election Day 1966, Winthrop Rockefeller defeated Jim Johnson by a respectable margin of 54% to 46% (94,845 to 68,596). While the news of Arkansans electing their first Republican governor (and lieutenant governor) since Reconstruction was exciting for Republicans, Hammerschmidt's victory over Trimble was met with a different response: astonishment. While Rockefeller carried the third congressional district with 58%, Hammerschmidt's margin of victory resembled Rockefeller's statewide total, with the challenger defeating the incumbent 53% to 47% (83,966 to 74,301). Hammerschmidt did well in northwest Arkansas, particularly in Benton (Rogers; Bentonville) and Washington (Fayetteville; Springdale) Counties. Hammerschmidt also carried the district's other large counties, Sebastian (Fort Smith) and Garland (Hot Springs) by large margins, and even defeated Trimble in his home county of Carroll by a small margin. Meanwhile, Trimble won majorities in predominantly rural counties along the Arkansas River and in southern Arkansas. For the most part, Rockefeller and Hammerschmidt won the same counties, with both winning commanding majorities in the large counties of Benton, Garland, Sebastian, and Washington, with Rockefeller's margins being much larger than Hammerschmidt's. In smaller counties, the results were mixed. Hammerschmidt and Rockefeller both won historically rural Republican counties in northern Arkansas, while counties along the Arkansas River Valley and in southern Arkansas were more likely to vote for Rockefeller and Trimble by margins of ten percentage points or less. Only Crawford County

would be carried by Jim Johnson and John Paul Hammerschmidt, with both candidates winning by fewer than 300 votes.¹¹²

The issues and final results of the 1966 election aside, the electoral changes at the county level alone were drastic. In Benton County, Trimble's vote total fell from 50.1% to 39%, while his winning margin in Washington County of 54% in 1964 collapsed by roughly ten points. In Sebastian County, Hammerschmidt won 61% of the vote. The biggest surprise in this congressional election was that some of the smaller counties that had traditionally voted for Trimble went for Hammerschmidt. In 1964, Trimble narrowly carried his home county of Carroll by four percentage points, and won by comfortable margins in Boone and Marion Counties. In 1966, Trimble would lose Carroll County by four points, Boone County (Hammerschmidt's home) by eighteen points, and Marion County by sixteen points. Other relatively partisan counties (except for Newton, where Henshaw and Trimble tied in 1964) did not change their party leanings from 1964, but Trimble's vote totals in 1966 were smaller.¹¹³

In the counties that had been added to the third district in 1965, it was another mixed bag. The southernmost counties all voted for Trimble, while the highland county of Polk delivered a small victory of Hammerschmidt. While Trimble maintained his party's advantage in these smaller counties, he was pummeled in Garland County, another urbanizing county. Garland County's voting totals resembled those of Benton County, where Win Rockefeller's winning percentages were in the mid to upper sixties while Hammerschmidt won 60%. Overall, while Trimble managed to win eleven counties to Hammerschmidt's fourteen, the counties that

¹¹² Third Congressional District 1966 Congressional and Gubernatorial Elections Results, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 17, folder 3.

¹¹³ Ibid. and 1964 Third Congressional District General Election Results, Trimble Family Papers, series 2, box 2, folder 1.

Trimble won were much smaller than Sebastian, Washington, Garland, and Benton Counties. Still, Trimble only lost the election by ~10,000 votes, which showed that he was a formidable foe even during a bad election cycle for his political party.¹¹⁴

The role race played in the results of the election is difficult to determine. John Paul Hammerschmidt did not speak directly to the issue and the third was trending Republican before Barry Goldwater took an anti-civil rights stance. It is well documented that African Americans overwhelmingly voted for Winthrop Rockefeller for governor in 1966. Rockefeller reportedly claimed 95 percent of the seventy-five thousand registered black voters in the state, which helped propel him to victory in a race that was relatively close.¹¹⁵ That said, support for Rockefeller in the black community did not completely filter down to Hammerschmidt. When the Republican Party contacted some black voters in the Arkansas River Valley before the election, nearly all were supporting Rockefeller, but several indicated that they would not support the Republican ticket in its entirety.¹¹⁶ Results from election day show that not only did black voters not support the entire ticket, but that there was a drop-off in voting between the gubernatorial and congressional races. In Fort Smith's ward 2B, where the Republican Party heavily courted black voters during the campaign, 507 people voted in the gubernatorial race, while only 467 participated in the congressional race. In this city, Rockefeller won this ward with nearly 78% of the vote, while Hammerschmidt won it by two percentage points.¹¹⁷ It is difficult to tell if the lack of turnout for Hammerschmidt existed in other areas with large African American

¹¹⁴ 1966 Election Results, Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 17, folder 3.

¹¹⁵ Urwin, *Agenda for Reform*, 56.

¹¹⁶ Survey of Registered African American Voters, Hammerschmidt Papers, section 2, subsection 1, box 19, folder 6.

¹¹⁷ Arkansas Office of Secretary of State 1966 General Election Results, film 1408 ER-29. University of Arkansas microfilm collection.

populations (particularly Hope, Hot Springs, and Nashville) since precinct demographics are hard to come by and neither party left a paper trail of its efforts to attract voters in those towns.

Hammerschmidt's underperforming Rockefeller in predominantly black areas can either be attributed to his lack of direct campaigning there or his anti-Lyndon Johnson message not resonating with this bloc of voters. In contrast to Rockefeller, Hammerschmidt directly attacked a president that had a large number of black voters on his side. Another factor could be Jim Trimble's economic liberalism and his unwillingness to blatantly race bait on the campaign trail. In the 1950s, Orval Faubus purportedly visited Trimble – a quiet racial 'moderate' - in a hospital room and advised him to sign the Southern Manifesto in order to help him politically.¹¹⁸ Of course, turnout for down-ballot races is traditionally lower than well-known races at the top of the ballot. Regardless how African Americans voted in this election, they were not going to be much a factor either way. According to the 1960 U.S. Census, just over 26,000 African Americans lived in the third congressional district, and only 14,033 were of voting age. Even if 60% of eligible black voters (roughly 8,500 people) had all voted for Trimble, the result of the election would not have changed.¹¹⁹

While Hammerschmidt had been critical of Trimble during the campaign, he was gracious when declaring victory. Hammerschmidt told reporters that Trimble was a "longtime friend" and despite their political disagreements, he believed that Trimble was a "wonderful gentleman" who dedicated himself to his constituents for over two decades.¹²⁰ Trimble was also gracious in defeat, even though he waited a few days to concede as the election results continued

¹¹⁸ Reed, *Faubus*, 357.

¹¹⁹ "Negro Population and Voting Age Population," Hammerschmidt Papers. Series 2, subseries 1 box 18, folder 1.

¹²⁰ "Winner Praises Loser," *Arkansas Gazette*, November 9, 1966, 1A.

to trickle in. Trimble had led Hammerschmidt in the initial results, but Hammerschmidt took the lead by the time fifty percent of the precincts had reported and held it.¹²¹ Trimble told an Associated Press reporter that he was “disappointed” by the outcome, but wished Hammerschmidt the best moving forward.¹²²

Looking back on the campaign, Trimble told the *Tulsa Tribune* that “I knew I would lose two weeks ahead of the election. I blame nobody but myself. I didn’t get home enough.” Trimble blamed his poor scheduling on his strenuous workload in Washington and the fact that his 25-county district was large and was “a lot of ground to cover.” Despite laughing off accusations that he was too old to hold office during the campaign, Trimble did concede that he was not “intimately acquainted with” young people, and that Hammerschmidt “was young and good looking. He appealed to them.” Finally, he partially attributed his loss to the venomous campaign for governor since it energized the Republican base, which only helped Hammerschmidt.¹²³ Meanwhile, Hammerschmidt later confirmed that his campaign was confident he would be victorious a few days before the election since pollsters were informing him that he was peaking “exactly at the right time.”¹²⁴ Governor Orval Faibus told reporters after the campaign that he believed a successful Rockefeller campaign could hurt Trimble, but “every time I checked, I was told Jim wouldn’t be affected by the Rockefeller trend.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Gazette State News Service, “Trimble Trailing Hammerschmidt; Pryor Wins Big,” *Arkansas Gazette*, November 9, 1966, 1A.

¹²² Associated Press, “Trimble Made Many Friends During 22-Years of Service,” *Rogers Daily News*, November 30, 1966. 1B.

¹²³ Bob Lucas. “Arkansan Analyzes Defeat,” *Tulsa Tribune* (Tulsa, OK), November 22, 1966.

¹²⁴ Lunsford and Hammerschmidt, “Arkansas Memories,” 465.

¹²⁵ Associated Press. “Faibus Sensed Trimble’s Defeat,” *The Boone County Headlight* (Harrison, AR), Nov. 17, 1966.

Reactions from Arkansas newspapers were mixed. The *Nashville News*, which had endorsed Hammerschmidt with little to no explanation, revisited the race following the election. The editor was disappointed that Howard County had been lumped into the third district instead of remaining in the fourth district, and criticized Governor Orval Faubus for signing the plan to place southwest Arkansas in the third district in what the paper characterized as an effort by the governor to try and increase his chances of being elected to Congress following Trimble's eventual retirement (There is no evidence that Faubus advocated for moving southwest Arkansas into the third district, and Roy Reed suggests Faubus was preoccupied with the construction of his new home in Huntsville and exploring the possibility of a campaign against Senator J. William Fulbright in 1968¹²⁶). Thus, the newspaper was glad that a "promising young man" would be seeking a second term instead of a "feeble" old man like Trimble or a crafty politician like Faubus.¹²⁷ The editorial board at the *North Little Rock Times* wrote that even though they admired Trimble's integrity, he had not realized that his district was changing demographically and politically. The *Times* also agreed with Richard Nixon that Trimble had lost touch with his district during his time in Washington since the incumbent supported Johnson's unpopular programs "99 times out of 100." The paper was "pleased that Arkansas will now have one Republican representing [Arkansas] in Congress" because the state needed a true two-party system and that Arkansas was one of the few southern states that had not elected a Republican to Congress.¹²⁸

Other newspapers, along with Trimble confidants, expressed disbelief and anguish over the results. The *White County Citizen*, a Democratic-leaning paper, worried that third district

¹²⁶ Reed, *Faubus*, 322-323.

¹²⁷ Editorial. "Closer to the Source," *Nashville News*, November 17, 1966.

¹²⁸ Editorial. "The Hammerschmidt Prophecy," *North Little Rock Times*, November 17, 1966.

voters had “cut off their own collective nose to spite their face” by removing Trimble from his position in the name of “change, age, and give somebody else a chance.” The paper argued that losing Trimble’s seniority was unfortunate for a small state like Arkansas.¹²⁹ The *Arkansas Gazette* presented a more balanced view of the race by noting that Trimble and former representative Brooks Hays, a Democrat from central Arkansas who lost his seat to a segregationist write-in candidate following the crisis at Little Rock Central High, were “the very best sort of Southern Democrats” in that they measured off against the “[Theodore] Bilbos and [John] Rankins in periods when Southern Democracy was in a particularly bad repute nationally.”¹³⁰

In his race to defeat Jim Trimble, John Paul Hammerschmidt realized that he would have to campaign against the popular incumbent congressman in an effective yet respectful way in order to attract voters who liked Trimble but mostly indicated a sort of “vague, sentimental attachment” to him in polling data.¹³¹ Yet he also recognized his district had a growing Republican constituency that needed to be mobilized. This led Hammerschmidt to use the unpopularity of President Lyndon Johnson to attract voters. Then, Hammerschmidt used Trimble’s relatively liberal voting record to attach him to the president. This strategy, coupled with his abilities as a campaigner and the enthusiasm of Republicans in 1966, helped propel Hammerschmidt to office.

¹²⁹ Editorial. “To Spite the Face...,” *White County Citizen* (Searcy, AR, November 17, 1966).

¹³⁰ Editorial. “Accounting Time in the Third District,” *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), November 19, 1966.

¹³¹ September Polling Data, John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers.

Conclusion

Scholars have glossed over the 1966 race for U.S. Representative in the third congressional district, with Diane Blair and Jay Barth depicting John Paul Hammerschmidt as a little-known candidate riding the coattails of a wealthy gubernatorial candidate facing a segregationist demagogue. Other historians have attributed Hammerschmidt's victory to the increasing economic conservatism of voters in industrializing urban areas or in-migration of Northern Republicans. None of these theories is entirely incorrect, but it appears that Lyndon Johnson's unpopularity, particularly backlash against the Great Society, and an increasing Republican strength in the district deeply rooted in demographic and economic change, more than Rockefeller coattails, pushed Hammerschmidt over the finish line. Meanwhile, the well-documented controversy surrounding the damming of the Buffalo River is harder to gauge since there is not much evidence that shows how most voters felt about the issue. Yet it can be hypothesized that the issue did not determine how most voters cast their ballots since it was not an issue Hammerschmidt discussed and the dam proposal had been essentially blocked by Governor Faubus in 1965.

Brooks Blevins appears to overstate the influence of northern immigrant voters on Hammerschmidt's victory. An uptick in population beginning in the 1960's was, indeed, changing some counties in northern Arkansas at mid-decade. In 1966, the United States Census issued its yearly estimated population for each county, and some of the growth was staggering in northwest Arkansas. Washington County went from having 55,797 residents in 1960 to 73,585 by 1966, while Benton County grew from 36,272 to 43,268. In the Arkansas River Valley, an estimated 73,800 people called Sebastian County home, which was up from 66,685 in 1960.¹³²

¹³² 1966 United States Census Population Estimates. John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers.

But while Benton, Washington, and Sebastian Counties all gained considerable numbers of people by 1966 and voted strongly for Rockefeller and Hammerschmidt in 1966, it is difficult to ascertain how many migrants were from outside Arkansas's borders or instead were internal rural-to-urban migrants (or whether they were as overwhelmingly Republican as Blevins suggests). Furthermore, while Blevins provides plenty of evidence in his book to show how the migration of northerners into the Arkansas highlands would change the political culture of the region going into the 1970's, 1980's, and beyond, he also notes that the largest retirement communities in the region (Bella Vista in Benton County, Holiday Island in Carroll County, etc.) were only beginning to see their first residents around 1966. While these counties did make dramatic swings toward the Republican Party in 1966, available data cannot confirm that the migration shift was *the* determining factor of the election.

In 1966, the Republican Party of Arkansas ran several statewide candidates, and Rockefeller won more votes than the rest of the slate (the Republican nominee for Lieutenant Governor, "Footsie" Britt, won a close contest). In the third congressional district, Rockefeller ran ahead of Hammerschmidt by almost 11,000 votes, which can possibly be attributed to greater interest and higher turnout in the gubernatorial race but also to moderate white Democrats and African Americans having positive reasons to vote for Rockefeller but little reason to prefer Hammerschmidt to Trimble.

While Rockefeller's candidacy obviously did not hurt Hammerschmidt, attributing his victory to Rockefeller's coattails alone not only ignores the issues of the campaign and the changing voting trends of the era, but it also overlooks Hammerschmidt's abilities as a campaigner. Unlike Rockefeller, who was not known for being an engaging speaker or for having a 'folksy' personality, Hammerschmidt apparently knew how to connect with everyday

voters in western and Northwest Arkansas. While Trimble relied on the ‘good ‘ol boy’ system and his one-on-one method of campaigning, Hammerschmidt attracted attention from the press and his party’s base by bringing Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon to speak on his behalf at large rallies. Hammerschmidt’s campaign also matched Trimble’s methods on his own turf, with the challenger going to “the back of every kitchen” and “under every grease rack” to shake hands and talk to voters.¹³³ Even though the race for governor continuously attracted more attention than any other race due to Jim Johnson’s extremist rhetoric, Hammerschmidt was able to distance himself from the gubernatorial election and adopted a more fiscally conservative platform than Rockefeller.

Since 1966, only three Democrats have come remotely close to removing the Republican Party from power in the third congressional district. In 1974, University of Arkansas School of Law professor Bill Clinton launched his first political race (with the help of his work colleague and girlfriend, Hillary Rodham), and nearly upset Hammerschmidt in what was a terrible year for Republicans nationwide due to the Watergate scandal. Ironically, Hammerschmidt initially treated this election like Trimble had treated him in 1966: he largely ignored the 20-something-year-old former George McGovern campaign staffer and returned to the state only a few weeks before the election.¹³⁴ On election day, Clinton won more counties than the incumbent (thirteen to eight), but Hammerschmidt again carried every urban county. Benton and Sebastian Counties gave Hammerschmidt decisive victories, while two larger counties that knew Clinton well – Garland and Washington – gave Hammerschmidt narrow victories and saved him from Trimble’s

¹³³ Lunsford and Hammerschmidt, “Arkansas Memories,” 466.

¹³⁴ Bill Clinton. *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 2004), 226.

fate eight years earlier. Hammerschmidt defeated Clinton by just over 6,000 votes (52% of the vote), making this race the closest of Hammerschmidt's long political career.¹³⁵

When John Paul Hammerschmidt announced he would not be a candidate for reelection in 1992, Tim Hutchinson won the Republican nomination and faced Democrat John VanWinkle in the general election. Much like 1974, Hutchinson won urban counties while VanWinkle carried rural areas. However, this race was closer than 1974, with Hutchinson winning with 50% compared to VanWinkle's 47%.¹³⁶ In 2001, Senator Tim Hutchinson's brother, Asa, left his congressional seat to take a job with the George W. Bush administration. John Boozman, an optometrist from Benton County, won a closely contested Republican primary for a special election in 2001, and defeated Democratic nominee Mike Hathorn, a Democratic state legislator who had also survived a close primary. Boozman's first victory was more comfortable than Tim Hutchinson's first race, with Boozman defeating Hathorn 57% to 42%. Boozman's large winning margin can be attributed to his overwhelming victories in Benton and Sebastian Counties, while Hathorn performed well elsewhere.¹³⁷ Since 2001, Democrats have periodically contested the third congressional district, but have failed to win 40% even once. As with the victories of Republican nominees in 1974, 1992, and 2001, urban counties continued to vote Republican, but rural areas also started to lean toward Republicans in the twenty-first century.

¹³⁵ 1974 Third Congressional District General Election Results. John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, series 2, subseries 1, box 17, folder 10. University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville.

¹³⁶ Arkansas Secretary of State, 1992 election results. Retrieved March 30, 2017.
<http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/historicalElectionResults/Documents/92generalelectionresults.xls>

¹³⁷ Arkansas Secretary of State, 2001 third congressional district special election results. Retrieved March 30, 2017.

<http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/historicalElectionResults/Documents/general25.zip>

While Arkansas's congressional delegation and state government was strongly Democratic throughout Hammerschmidt's political career and a majority of his life, he did live to see Republicans make Arkansas a two-party state. Just a few months before his death in 2015, Hammerschmidt would get to see his party win large majorities in the General Assembly, all seven statewide constitutional offices, every congressional seat, and several county-level positions in the 2014 midterm elections. The beginning of one-party Republican rule in Arkansas in 2015 marked the completion of the difficult and grueling work Hammerschmidt began half a century earlier -- and likely exceeded his expectations.

Hammerschmidt did not win by one campaign issue or event alone. Instead, he won the 1966 election thanks to several factors that were changing Arkansas and the country during the mid-twentieth century. The growing unpopularity of President Lyndon Baines Johnson and Great Society liberalism appears to be the primary reason he was successful, with Hammerschmidt running as much against Johnson, or more so, as against Trimble. Secondly, Hammerschmidt's campaign style -- with the help of Winthrop Rockefeller's organizing and enthusiasm for his gubernatorial candidacy -- benefitted him as he courted Goldwater voters and faced a reputable yet unexciting 'southern gentleman' in Trimble. Hammerschmidt also benefitted from demographic changes, particularly the depopulation of traditionally Democratic-leaning areas and the growth of areas becoming more Republican. Depopulation and Supreme Court rulings would also benefit Hammerschmidt in that mid-decade redistricting had to take place one year before his election, adding a large swath of new territory that was unfamiliar to Trimble and was becoming increasingly Republican. None of these issues stand alone as *the* reason for Hammerschmidt's victory since they are all interconnected in some way. Nevertheless,

Hammerschmidt made history in 1966, and helped guide the Republican Party – slowly but surely – into power in Arkansas.

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