

Chapter 166 - Whigs Suffer Losses In Mid-Term Elections

Time: Spring 1851

Whigs Continue To Fade As A Political Force

Millard Fillmore's optimistic prediction about domestic tranquility comes up against contrary public opinions in the mid-term elections for the 32nd Congress.

The results in the House show accelerating slippage for the Whigs, who give up a total of twenty-two seats – mostly to the Democrats.

Gerrit Smith's abolitionist Liberty Party vanishes for good, and the Free Soilers surrender five seat.

Election Trends In The U.S. House

Party	1844	1846	1848	1850
Democrats	142	112	113	130
Whigs	79	116	108	86
American	6	1	1	0
Free Soil			9	4
Unionist				10
States' Rights				3
Upcoming Congress	29 th	30 th	31 st	32 nd
President	Tyler	Polk	Polk	Fillmore

The most noteworthy shift occurs in the South where a new Unionist Party wins ten seats. It is formed to defend slaver-holder rights without abandoning the Union. Six of the ten seats are won in Georgia, along with three in Mississippi and one in Alabama.

House Trends In Georgia

Party	31 st	32 nd	Change
Democrats	5	0	(5)
Whigs	3	0	(3)
Unionist	0	6	+6
States' Rights	0	2	+2

A second southern initiative, the more strident States Rights Party, captures two seats in Georgia and one in Mississippi, the latter going to its leader, Albert Brown, who calls for the unfettered expansion of slavery, not only into the Mexican Cession lands, but also into Cuba and Central America.

In the House, the margin enjoyed by the Free States of the North continued to edge upward.

Division Of Seats In The House

Years	Free States	Slave States
1800	77	65
1810	105	81
1820	123	90
1830	142	100
1840	141	91
1850	143	90

As usual, the Senate races exhibit much less volatility – with the Whigs losing two seats and the Democrats and Free Soilers adding one apiece.

Election Trends In The U.S. Senate

Party	1844	1846	1848	1850
Democrats	34	38	35	36
Whigs	22	21	25	23
Free Soil			2	3
Other		1		
Vacant	2			
Upcoming Congress	29 th	30 th	31 st	32 nd
President	Tyler	Polk	Polk	Fillmore

Time: April 1851

Abolitionists Sumner And Wade Enter Congress

The tenor of the chamber, however, is about to change with two new additions who will have a profound effect on the sectional frictions related to slavery in the years to follow.

The first is the Free Soiler, Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, whose cutting tirades on behalf of abolition will shake the future decorum in the upper chamber and lead to physical violence on the floor.

He is joined by Ben Wade, an Ohio Whig and former law partner of Joshua Giddings, who, along with Thad Stevens, have led the abolition forces in the House.

With Sumner and Wade onboard, the Senate now includes a threshold of six prominent politicians ready to assert their moral opposition to slavery.

Key Senators Opposing Slavery On Moral Grounds (1850-51)

Dates	Name	State	Party
1847-53	John P. Hale	NH	Free Soil
1848-61	Hannibal Hamlin	Maine	Democrat
1849-55	Salmon Chase	Ohio	Free Soil
1849-61	Henry Seward	NY	Whig/Rep
1851-69	Ben Wade	Ohio	Whig/Rep
1851-74	Charles Sumner	Mass	Dem/Rep



John P. Hale

Hannibal Hamlin

Salmon Chase



Henry Seward

Ben Wade

Charles Sumner