

"HAVING GIVEN THEM BAYONETS, WE WILL NOT WITHHOLD THE BALLOT"-
REPUBLICANS AND BLACK SUFFRAGE IN RECONSTRUCTION OHIO, 1865-1867

Jacob T. Mach

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Committee:

Scott Martin, Advisor

Michael Brooks

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ABSTRACT

Scott Martin, Advisor

Ohio politics during the Reconstruction era has received sparse treatment by historians. Not until 1970 with Felice Bonadio's *North of Reconstruction* was there a monograph solely dedicated to Ohio politics during the era. Robert Sawrey wrote his *Dubious Victory* in 1992, but still the historiography on Reconstruction Ohio remains dramatically underdeveloped. In Ohio, the question of African American suffrage was the single most divisive issue facing politicians during the era. Radical Republicans brought a referendum before the people of Ohio in 1867 to change the state constitution to protect the suffrage rights of both white and black males above the age of 21. The measure failed 216,987 votes (45.9 percent) to 255,340 (54.1 percent) votes. The failure of the suffrage amendment disheartened many Radical Republicans across Ohio and the rest of the North, yet Ohio Republicans managed to elicit more support for suffrage than most states in the North. Such support did not arise randomly; it intentionally developed over a three-year period beginning after the Civil War. Two primary research questions drive this project: 1) Did suffrage become a crucial issue in the state of Ohio earlier than the existing historiography suggests, 2) why were Ohio radicals able to generate more support for black suffrage within the Republican party than in other states in the North? By showing that Republican support (through Congressional voting records, public support via speeches and letters, and by Republican-sympathetic papers throughout the state) for black suffrage existed in significant numbers in 1865 (prior to 1866-1867, as Bonadio, Sawrey and others suggest) in both the Western Reserve *and* in other parts of the state and only continued to grow until the

referendum in the fall of 1867, this project will argue that black suffrage was not only being pursued by radicals, but ultimately by the vast majority of the Republican party. Ohio's inability to secure black suffrage with overwhelming Republican support will in turn help to explain why other northern states achieved even less success in their pursuit of black suffrage.

For My Father

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This project's impetus came from a historiographic essay written at BGSU in a Reconstruction seminar taught by Dr. Nicole Jackson. For the final paper of the class, I wrote a historiographic about the state of Ohio during the Reconstruction period, and, realizing the dearth of literature on Northern Reconstruction in general and Ohio more specifically, began to seriously consider pursuing some aspect of the subject as a potential thesis topic. I hope, in some small way, that this work adds to the underdeveloped yet infinitely complex field of Northern Reconstruction, overshadowed, for right and wrong reasons, by the equally complex and important study of Southern Reconstruction.

I am indebted to several groups for the compilation of sources for this project. First, the fine people at the Oberlin College Library and Archives for allowing me usage of the Jacob D. Cox Collections. This collection was the bedrock from which this project was built. Cox's correspondence to and with a variety of influential and important members of the Ohio Republican Party allowed me to ascertain essential information. Second, Julie Mayle and the staff at the Rutherford B. Hayes Library and Museum. Third, the staff working on the "Chronicling America" project for the Library of Congress. Their digitization efforts allowed me to quickly read and analyze hundreds of newspapers and articles which would have been inaccessible to me otherwise.

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INTRODUCTION

The process of Reconstruction, commencing even before the guns stopped at Appomattox, and concluding, in theory, with the disputed Presidential election of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, remains one of the most transformative, contentious, and important periods in American history. While the bulk of Reconstruction historiography focuses on the South, where, as Douglas Egerton wrote, the major “wars of Reconstruction” were waged, the North was also forced to deal with the political and social fallout of the conflict.¹ Reconstruction brought issues of race, civil rights, citizenship, and suffrage to the forefront of Northern politics and changed the balance of power between the states and the federal government. Each state was forced to deal with a variety of these issues, their efforts complicated by the unique socio-political contexts of each state.

The state of Ohio joined the Union in 1803 and emerged as a political powerhouse before the advent of the Civil War. Congressmen from both parties, including Republicans such as James Ashley and Benjamin Wade, and Democrats such as George Pendleton and Clement Vallandigham, maintained state and national influence throughout the era. Ulysses S. Grant served as President and Rutherford B. Hayes served as governor of Ohio and later President of the United States. Nationally, Ohio boasted political influence equal to New York and Pennsylvania, making Ohio worthy of greater historical treatment than it has received, particularly in the early Reconstruction period. Leading congressional moderates (John Sherman and John Bingham) and leading radicals (Benjamin Wade, James Ashley, Robert Schenck) hailed from the Buckeye State and greatly affected the trajectory of post-war Congressional politics, wielding power particularly in the area of Reconstruction legislation. Additionally,

¹ Douglas Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013.

while Ohio maintained pockets of strong abolitionism particularly in the northern portion of the state, it also maintained sections of intense animosity toward blacks, particularly in the southern portion of the state, whose inhabitants were sympathetic to the South and slavery. This sharp sectional distinction created a unique political and social atmosphere for Reconstruction politics, yet Reconstruction era Ohio remains tremendously understudied.

Not until 1970 with Felice Bonadio's *North of Reconstruction* did historians turn its attention to Ohio Reconstruction politics. Robert Sawrey wrote his *Dubious Victory* in 1992, but still the historiography on Ohio is considerably underdeveloped. In Ohio, the question of black suffrage was the single most contentious issue facing politicians during the era. While Ohio Democrats universally opposed any political or social rights for African Americans, the Republican Party was torn by the issue. Radical Republicans championed black suffrage, while conservatives attempted to stay away from such discussions or remained unconvinced. While other issues such as national fiscal policy and the Reconstruction of the South complicated political discourse, black suffrage remained paramount. Republicans finally succeeded in uniting the party behind black suffrage and brought a referendum before the people of Ohio in 1867 to change the state constitution to protect the voting rights of both white and black males above the age of 21. The measure failed 216,987 votes (46.07 percent) to 253,340 (53.92 percent) votes.² The failure of the suffrage amendment disheartened many Radical Republicans across Ohio and the rest of the North, yet Ohio Republicans managed to elicit support from more than 80 percent of the states' Republican electorate, a number surpassed only by the ardently Republican, and recently admitted, states of Minnesota and Iowa.

² *The Morning Journal* (Columbus), October 31, 1867. The paper originally stated that 255,340 votes were counted against the amendment; upon calculation of the county totals, the total amounted to only 253,940.

Two important questions arise: 1) Did suffrage become a critical, even fundamental issue for Republicans in the state of Ohio earlier than the existing historiography suggests; and 2) why were Ohio radicals able to generate more support for black suffrage within the Republican Party than in other states in the North? These two interrelated issues are the driving forces behind this thesis. By showing that Republican support for black suffrage existed in significant numbers in 1865 earlier than Bonadio, Sawrey and others suggest (in both the Western Reserve *and* in other parts of the state and only continued to grow until the referendum in the fall of 1867), this thesis argues that black suffrage was not only being pursued by radicals, but ultimately by the vast majority of the Republican Party. The political and social complexities of Ohio, particularly the intense anti-black sentiments of the Southern portion of the state where “Copperheads” cultivated a large following and the battle between Radical Republicans and racially antagonistic Democrats, help make sense of 1) Ohio’s failure to adopt black suffrage, and 2) why Ohio’s complexities necessitate further study into its Reconstruction history. One need look no further than the ideological and sectional divides between the southern section of the state, with its Copperheads leaders, and the northern section of the state, with its numerous radical leaders.

“Copperheads,” defined by Frank Klement, “were conservatives who opposed the change which the war was bringing to America.”³ Also known as anti-war Democrats or Peace Democrats, the Copperheads continually opposed Lincoln throughout the Civil War, leaving many Republicans to brand them as traitors and Southern sympathizers. Popular support for the movement was made up largely of Southerners who moved to northern states such as Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio.⁴ The southern portion of Ohio, closest both to the Ohio River and the slaveholding states of the South, exhibited intense anti-black and pro-South/slavery sentiments

³ Frank Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1972), vii.

⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

throughout the Civil War and into Reconstruction. Several well-known Copperheads, such as Clement Vallandigham and George Pendleton, operated in the southern half of the state, establishing a strong political base in this area. Vallandigham is arguably the most famous (or infamous) Copperhead figure in the entire North. He was arrested by the Union General Burnside for speaking out against “General Orders, No. 38,” which prohibited speeches and actions that were deemed sympathetic to the enemy.⁵ Vallandigham would eventually be exiled during the war, and actually ran for the Ohio governorship while in exile, which he lost in a landslide.

Vallandigham’s anti-Lincoln rhetoric, deplored by Republicans both in Ohio and in the rest of the country, were fairly well received by southern Ohioans. George Pendleton, another Copperhead that garnered a large amount of support in southern Ohio and the lead behind the “Ohio Plan,” also remained a state and national leader of the Copperheads during the war and in the Reconstruction years. In contrast, some of the most Radical Republicans in Congress also called Ohio home. Senator Benjamin Wade and Representatives James Ashley and Robert Schenck remained influential radicals throughout the early Reconstruction period (1865-1870), constantly agitating for more constricting legislation for the Confederate South, and more progressive legislation for the newly freed slaves. This intrastate tension undergirded both state and national discussions, putting Ohio squarely at the center of Reconstruction on both sides of the aisle.

It does not suffice, however, to say that the state was split between the Western Reserve, the northeastern section of the state with a strong history of anti-slavery sentiments, and the southern half of Ohio, with its pro-slavery, anti-black attitudes. This is far too simplistic of an

⁵ Ibid, 89-91.

explanation that does not fully appreciate the complexities of the Ohio socio-political landscape, both before and after the war. For example, observe the county breakdown of the 1867 suffrage amendment, a topic that will be discussed more fully in chapter two. One would expect to see the southern half of the state unilaterally rejecting black suffrage. But pockets of support for the black suffrage amendment survive, specifically in the southeast, the southwest, and the northwestern counties of Ohio. What explains these outliers? Wilbur H. Seibert's work on the Underground Railroad in Ohio sheds valuable light on these outlier counties in the southern portion of Ohio.

In his work, *The Underground Railroad in Ohio*, Seibert painstakingly parsed out the stops of the Underground Railroad throughout the state, breaking down the hubs in each county. Remarkably, the counties outside the Western Reserve (specifically in the southeast, southwest, and northwest) that voted in favor of the black suffrage amendment, providing important hubs for the Underground Railroad.⁶ These counties can be used to trace the various routes of the Railroad while simultaneously helping to explain why seemingly random counties voted in favor of the suffrage amendment. For example, on the eastern side of the state, the counties of Athens, Morgan, Guernsey, Harrison, Jefferson, Carrol and Columbiana served as important links from southern Ohio to the Western Reserve. Only one county (Meigs) separated Athens from the direct link to the pro-black Western Reserve. They are surrounded on the east and west by counties voting against the amendment. On the western side of the state, running south to north, the counties of Warren, Clinton, Preble, Greene, Miami, Clarke, Logan, Union and Morrow provided links to the north-central hubs of the Railroad.⁷ This displays the distinctiveness and complexity of Ohio's sectional divide, highlighting unique landscape upon which Ohio

⁶ Wilbur H. Seibert, *The Underground Railroad in Ohio* (Ohio: Arthur W. McGraw, 1993).

⁷ Ibid.

Reconstruction politics unfolded. Historians writing about Ohio during this period tended to oversimplify these complexities, including the sectional and ideological splits that fractured the state. Though the literature on the topic is limited and unspecific in some instances, it is nevertheless necessary to briefly discuss the relevant works.

For nearly half a century, William Archibald Dunning (1857-1922) and his disciples dominated the historiography of the American Civil War and Reconstruction. The “Dunning School,” as it was called, taught that the South, unfairly dominated by Northern radicals, carpetbaggers, and inexperienced, corrupt, and vengeful African American politicians, suffered greatly during the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877). The Dunning School reigned as the “official” interpretation of Reconstruction for decades, while dissenters like Ida B. Wells and W.E.B. Du Bois were largely ignored.⁸ It was not until the advent of the modern Civil Rights Movement after the Second World War that the traditional interpretation of Reconstruction faced intense criticism. Building on the work of Du Bois and Wells, historians such as John Hope Franklin, Kenneth Stampp, and others showed in systematic detail the methodological errors behind the Dunning School, exposing its history of racism and skewed research practices.⁹ While the historiography of Reconstruction is considerably more robust than it was sixty or even thirty years ago, the bulk of those works focus on the politics in Washington and Congressional efforts to Reconstruct the South. Historians dedicated much less work to studying Northern Reconstruction politics, particularly in those states important on the national political stage such as Ohio.

⁸ See W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

⁹ See John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), and Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877: A Revisionist View of one of the Most Controversial Periods in American History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 1966).

There are precious few works specifically addressing Reconstruction Ohio. Until the 1970s, only a handful of monographs addressed the topic, and those that did committed only portions or chapters to the topic. For instance, the first notable works specifically discussing the politics of Reconstruction in Ohio are George H. Porter's *Ohio Politics During the Civil War Period*, first published in 1911 and Thomas Powell's *The Democratic Party in the State of Ohio*, published in 1913. Both works dedicated only small portions of the overall work to discussing the Reconstruction period. Porter contended that "the most immediate concern" for both political parties in Ohio was the issue of African-American suffrage.¹⁰ Powell, while agreeing with Porter's analysis of the importance of the suffrage issue, criticized Ohio Republicans, arguing that they wanted to "make capital (sic)" out of the African Americans, solely using them political expediency.¹¹ The Republicans did not need to push for universal suffrage, he argued, because the Fourteenth Amendment already guaranteed African Americans the right to vote. This was categorically untrue, however, as will be shown in chapter two of this thesis. Although the Fourteenth Amendment made rejecting African Americans from the polls more onerous, it did not mandate African American suffrage in the South by any means. Regardless, both Porter and Powell either worked with Dunning or studied under him and their work is fraught with racist overtones and Southern apologetics, which left much to be analyzed by future historians.

Few historians took up the task between the early twentieth century and the 1970s.¹² The first work entirely dedicated to Ohio during Reconstruction finally emerged in 1970. Felice A.

¹⁰ George H. Porter, *Ohio Politics During the Civil War Period* (New York: AMS. Press, 1911, 1968), 200.

¹¹ Thomas Edward Powell, *The Democratic Party of the State of Ohio: A Comprehensive History of Democracy in Ohio from 1803 to 1912* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio publishing company, 1913), 178.

¹² Eugene Roseboom's *The History of the State of Ohio* touched on the era, but offered little in the way of substantial analysis, though it offered less of a Southern perspective on the topic; Eugene Roseboom, *The Civil War Era, 1850-1873*, vol. 4. Of *The History of the State of Ohio*, ed. Carl Wittke (Columbus, OH: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944).

Bonadio, in *North of Reconstruction: Ohio Politics 1865-1870*, argued that his study of Ohio was important because of the intense competition between the two parties in the state, as well as the influence of Ohio in national politics.¹³ He recognized that Reconstruction dominated the political atmosphere in both North and South, yet he contended that Ohio politicians were not genuinely concerned with a “serious discussion” of these issues; according to Bonadio ideology had “little place” in Ohio Reconstruction politics.¹⁴ Bonadio largely reinforced previous ideas concerning the role of African American suffrage in Ohio politics, with a slight deviation. He questioned, however, the sincerity of those agitating for black suffrage within the Republican Party. Bonadio suggested that the Republican push for African-American suffrage in the South, for a time, allowed them to not face the suffrage issue in the North, though in the end it would come back to haunt the Ohio Republicans.¹⁵ In the end, he suggested that by the 1867 election, as a result of a true attempt for political equality or for political expediency, black suffrage became *the* key issue for his Ohio Republicans and the biggest factor in their downfall in Ohio from the 1867 election forward.¹⁶

Robert Sawrey, in *Dubious Victory: The Reconstruction Debate in Ohio*, took a more nuanced approach to the topic, disputing facets of Bonadio’s work, though it is a not a full-length rebuke of *North of Reconstruction*. Sawrey argued that the suffrage issue was more complex than Bonadio allowed. He showed that even as early as the 1866 elections, race and suffrage were important issues, though they did not fully develop until the gubernatorial election of 1867. Democrats continually hounded the Republicans for their devotion to African-Americans, in

¹³ Felice A. Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction: Ohio Politics, 1865-1870* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), vii.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, viii.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 56.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

hopes of driving support away from Republicans.¹⁷ The Republicans were split; some did not want any African-Americans voting, others advocated limited suffrage, while others like James Ashley and Benjamin Wade advocated universal suffrage. Racism clearly existed, Sawrey says, in both parties, though the Republicans largely recognized the humanity of African Americans while Democrats denied it.¹⁸ As Reconstruction continued, Republicans rallied around the suffrage issue.

Sawrey's most important addition to the historiography came in his epilogue. While other historians, such as Roseboom and Bonadio, suggested that Republicans abandoned or at least shifted their focus away from Reconstruction, Sawrey identifies a motive. He argues that by 1870, many Ohio Republicans believed that the Republican success in the 1868 elections proved that northerners accepted the framework of Reconstruction proscribed by Congress, and they could now move past the issue and focus on more pressing concerns such as economics.¹⁹ Additionally, in 1870 the Ohio state legislature ratified the 15th amendment, another indication that Republicans now thought the "task" of Reconstruction finished.²⁰ Sadly, this was not the case, as the word "white" was still not removed from the state suffrage laws until the 20th century. Regardless, it seems that, to some degree, many Ohio Republicans (except some radicals) no longer saw Reconstruction as a pressing issue by 1870. While Sawrey's work is more detailed than Bonadio's, much remains to be studied in Reconstruction Ohio.

While Ohio Republicans did not ultimately succeed in the attempt at suffrage reform, the proposed change received much support from the Republican Party and demonstrated a near

¹⁷ Robert D. Sawrey, *Dubious Victory: The Reconstruction Debate in Ohio* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 84-88.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 142.

²⁰ Ibid, 144-145.

about-face on suffrage/race issues from the 1863 state election; the Democratic Party won those elections on a platform based on white supremacy and “negrophobia.”²¹ Additionally, while most states in the North refused to grant African-Americans the right to vote in state elections, Ohio produced the greatest amount of Republican support for black suffrage (in terms of number of votes and percentage of the Republican Party that supported it) even though it ultimately failed to grant it. In light of this fact, this thesis will analyze two separate yet related issues: 1) the importance and centrality of black suffrage in the gubernatorial campaigns of 1865 and 1867 in the state of Ohio, as well as the related congressional campaign in 1866 and 2) the amount of Republican support in Ohio for black suffrage compared to other politically important states in the North (such as New York and Pennsylvania), to other states in the Midwest (such as Indiana and Illinois), and eight other northern states where suffrage movements existed. This will be done by showing that Ohio’s significant number of Radical Republicans, as well as radical newspapers, were able to force black suffrage to become an issue in 1865, even though the party opted to leave any discussion of black suffrage off the party platform given the conservative bent of the convention. Regardless, the state assembly, overwhelmingly Republican, adopted the Thirteenth Amendment in both houses of the legislature; the Republican dominant delegation to Congress also showed considerable support for Radical Republican legislation. Secondly, this project will show in the 1867 referendum the vast majority (up to $\frac{3}{4}$) of Republicans were in support of the proposed amendment, and that such support was unprecedented in northern states in 1867.

²¹ Thomas Mach, *“Gentleman George” Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth Century America*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007), 75-77.

Why did Ohio elicit so much relative support for black suffrage compared to other politically powerful states such as New York and Pennsylvania, or other “Old Northwest” states such as Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan? Primarily, this thesis analyzes evolution of the Republican Party’s pursuit of black suffrage in Ohio. Only months after the guns fell silent in the South, Ohio Republicans began earnestly discussing black suffrage, amongst the various Reconstruction topics of the day. While the Republican Party convention eventually decided to leave suffrage out of the platform, this did not temper the discussions of black suffrage; if anything, it fueled them. Additionally, this thesis compares the relative success of proposed black suffrage in Ohio to other states in the North in order to show that is deserving of more enthusiastic treatment by Reconstruction historians because of its strong Republican support for black suffrage. Ultimately, this project, by showing that even radical Ohio, with its historical support for abolitionism/black civil rights and its multitude of black suffrage supporters, could not successfully change its constitution to allow blacks to vote, will help make better sense of the failed black suffrage movements in other key northern states.

This thesis focuses on members of the Republican Party, as it was the party advocating for black suffrage, with a special focus on the “radical” Republicans in Ohio. It will be necessary, however, to include certain important Democratic figures and Democratic papers for context. While the Reconstruction era “officially” spans over a decade (1865-1877), this study will focus on the key events and people between 1865-1867, including a detailed look into the 1865 gubernatorial campaign of Jacob S. Cox, the 1866 congressional elections, the 1867 gubernatorial election, and key political discussions in Ohio politics between these periods. While historians agree that suffrage gradually became a major issue in Ohio, this thesis argues that by the fall of 1865, the suffrage issue was the principal issue for Ohio Republicans, by

analyzing the Radical leanings of its Republican Congressmen, as well as the various radical papers across the state. This foreshadowed the Republican platform of 1867. Additionally, while most Reconstruction histories focus on the South, those studies that do consider the North typically discuss them in relation to the politics of Reconstruction in the South. This this seeks to limit discussion on national politics, except where applicable to radical Republicans in Ohio, in favor of focusing on state issues. Ultimately, through an analysis of the development of the suffrage issue in Ohio politics, and Ohio's dealing with the issue compared to other states in the North, this thesis demonstrates that Ohio Republicans were committed to African American suffrage regardless of the political risks involved, using this fact as a background to determine why the African American suffrage cause progressed in Ohio as far as it did compared to other northern states.²²

Chapter one analyzes the 1865 gubernatorial election in the state of Ohio, the first state election following the Civil War. Additionally, it was the first election where black suffrage played a vital role, even though Republicans decided not to make it a platform issue, much to the dismay of the radical faction. The chapter focuses specifically on Jacob Dolson Cox, the Republican candidate for governor, and his controversial "Oberlin Letter," which, combined with pressure from both Radical Republicans and Republican newspapers in both the Western Reserve and other portions of the state, succeeded in making black suffrage a critical issue in the 1865 election. Thus, this chapter situates Ohio's discussion of black suffrage around the 1865 elections, not in 1866 or 1867 as previous scholarship suggests. Finally, this chapter argues that the "Oberlin Letter" served as a lightning rod for not only the conservative and radical factions

²² LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, in their article "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography," argue that Radical Republicans in northern states were motivated by multiple factors other than political expediency to support African American suffrage.

of the Republican Party, but also the Democratic Party. The letter and the response it elicited deserves to be recognized as the most pivotal event in the state of Ohio concerning suffrage.

Chapter two analyzes both the 1866 congressional elections and the 1867 gubernatorial election. It argues that while suffrage remained off the Republican Party platform in 1866, several influential members of the Republican Party broke ranks to announce their support of black suffrage, keeping the topic in the public eye during an election that had no bearing on the topic. The analysis of 1867 focuses primarily on the rhetoric surrounding Hayes' campaign, both from his own speeches and the various Republican-leaning newspapers across the state to determine the extent that black suffrage was used as a platform issue. Ultimately, this chapter will show that by the 1867 gubernatorial election 1) the Republican Party at large had embraced black suffrage, and 2) black suffrage had wider support than just a few radicals in the Western Reserve. The chapter concludes with a lengthy discussion of the suffrage referendum, including a quantitative analysis of the referendum, which has yet to be discussed in-depth by the previous literature.

Chapter three assesses the relative success of the proposed suffrage amendment in Ohio compared to states in the North. The first portion of the chapter analyzes twelve states in the North (ranging from New York to California) including each state's Republican Party and the pursuit, or lack of pursuit, for black suffrage. After the political conditions and results of each state are discussed, the last portion of the chapters analyzes the differences between the suffrage referendum in Ohio, and how Republicans chose to support black suffrage more strongly in Ohio than other politically relevant states. It will also seek to explain why Minnesota and Iowa succeeded in securing black suffrage while Ohio and the rest of the northern states failed to do so before the Fifteenth Amendment. The chapter concludes by arguing that Ohio cannot be viewed

as just another northern state who failed to enact racial change, as previous Reconstruction literature suggests, but must be viewed as more complex and nuanced.

Finally, the conclusion reinforces the intricacies and distinctions of the state of Ohio during the early Reconstruction period while simultaneously challenging past portrayals of Reconstruction Ohio. It suggests nearly every state in the North grappled with black suffrage and argues that more study needs to be devoted to the topic. If Ohio Republicans began discussing suffrage in 1865, is it necessary to reorient discussions of suffrage in other states as well? The conclusion ends with a call to the historical community to further the studying of Northern Reconstruction, suggesting that Ohio is only one of the many states that needs to be explored with more nuance and complexity.

CHAPTER ONE. THE “OBERLIN LETTER,” JACOB COX, AND THE ELECTION OF 1865

The 1865 Ohio gubernatorial election was the first state election following the Civil War and served as an important election for Republicans planning to capitalize on the Union victory by establishing a stranglehold on postwar state politics. Running war-veteran and conservative Jacob Dolson Cox as their candidate for governor, Republicans expected a large margin of victory, touting the successful end of the war brought about by the Republican party and denouncing the Democrats as Southern sympathizers. The campaign took a sharp turn, however, as the election loomed. In late July, only months before the election, Cox wrote a letter addressed to several men in the city of Oberlin concerning his position on race and the political future of African Americans in both Ohio and the South. The “Oberlin Letter,” as it would be called, served as a lightning rod for the Ohio Republican party, highlighting discussions about African American suffrage that many Republicans wanted to avoid. The persistence of the Radical Republicans in Ohio, the inflammatory Oberlin Letter, and the race-baiting attacks of the Democratic party all contributed to black suffrage becoming a key and decisive issue in Ohio during the 1865 gubernatorial campaign.

Following the conclusion of the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Americans had little time to contemplate what was won and lost by the war. As the country mourned the loss of its leader, politicians throughout the North turned to the pressing task of reintegrating the former Confederate states into the Union. The lengthy and controversial process known as Reconstruction continued under the leadership of the new commander-in-chief, Andrew Johnson. Additionally, in the fall of 1865, gubernatorial state elections would be held throughout the North, and both parties began preparing with great alacrity. In the state of Ohio, as in much of the postbellum North, the Republican Party enjoyed a comfortable and decisive

advantage over the Democrats.²³ The Republicans branded themselves as the party that “saved the Union and freed the slaves,” while denigrating Democrats as treasonous for advocating “peace-at-all-costs” and obstructing the goals set out by the slain President.²⁴ In Ohio, however, the makeup of the Republican Party and the differences between the various factions of the party created a tenuous atmosphere for the 1865 elections.

The Republican Party in the 1860s included ex-Whigs, War Democrats, and anti-slavery Democrats. In Ohio, Republicans grew concerned about the state of the party and potential issues of unity entering the Reconstruction years. Felice Bonadio argued that the various groups making up the Republican party maintained such serious disagreements, both personal and political, that “only the war unified the party to survive.”²⁵ However, Robert Sawrey suggested that following the war, many Ohio Republicans in fact agreed on more specific points of Reconstruction than Bonadio allowed in his work.²⁶ While the definitive ideological direction of the Republican Party remains debated, it is clear that Republicans certainly gained and maintained supremacy over the Democrats in the latter half of the war. In the Congressional elections of 1864, the Republicans nearly swept the Democrats completely out of the delegation. This signified a reversal of fortunes for both parties. In the 1862 Congressional elections, the Democrats won a resounding victory, led by George Pendleton and the Peace Democrats. They amassed a majority of nearly 80,000 votes across the state, running on “negrophobia” and berating Republicans for allowing blacks to settle in Ohio during the early war years.²⁷ Fourteen of the nineteen districts elected

²³ Throughout much of the war, the Republican Party was known as the “Union Party,” and many referred to it as such in the years immediately following the war. The two terms will be used interchangeably throughout.

²⁴ Avery Craven, *Reconstruction: The Ending the Civil War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969), 34-35. This type of campaigning was known as “waving the bloody shirt” and was quite effective in the first years after the war’s end.

²⁵ Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 5.

²⁶ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 28.

²⁷ Mach, “Gentleman George”, 75-77.

Democratic representatives; only five Republicans managed to win election (in 1860, thirteen of the twenty-one districts were held by Republicans).²⁸ Following Union army victories in the summer of 1863 into 1864, and the continued obstruction politics of Ohio Peace Democrats, Republicans represented 17 of the 19 delegates to the 39th Congress beginning in March of 1865.²⁹ Only Francis LeBlond and William Finck retained their seats for the Democrats.

Thus, Democrats faced a precarious position in the wake of the Civil War. George Pendleton and Clement Vallandigham, two of the most outspoken opponents of Lincoln and his administration, hailed from Ohio and dominated party politics.³⁰ While they stood little chance of winning the 1865 elections, they hoped to capitalize on 1) the Republican dispute over endorsing President Johnson's policies in the South; 2) garnering the veteran vote; and 3) Republican uncertainty on securing civil and political rights for African Americans. They ran an outspoken anti-black, white supremacist general named George W. Morgan in the gubernatorial contest after William Tecumseh Sherman declined the nomination.³¹

In this context, Ohio Republicans decided upon Civil War veteran Jacob Dolson Cox as their gubernatorial nominee, who previously served in the Ohio Senate from 1860-1862 before joining the army. A native of Oberlin with a strong war record, many were hopeful that Major General Cox would be able to continue the Republican dominance in Ohio.³² The party considered Civil War veterans James Garfield and Rutherford B. Hayes but opted for a more conservative and experienced candidate in Cox. Republican politicians and papers generally

²⁸ "Voting Records: 1865-1866 (39th Congress)," accessed on November 4, 2019, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes#session=107>.

²⁹ Ibid.; William A. Taylor, *Ohio Statesman and the Annals of Progress from the Year 1788 to the Year 1900*, Vol. II (Columbus, OH: Press of the Westbote Co., State Printers), 62.

³⁰ Ibid, 111-112; Warren Van Tine and Michael Pierce, eds, *Builders of Ohio: A Biographical History* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 127-128; 137; 134.

³¹ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 41.

³² Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 444-445.

spoke highly of Cox, highlighting his strong character, war record, and abilities as a politician.³³ Both conservatives and radicals hoped Cox would represent their interests in the coming election. Even before the state convention in June, however, Cox had to deal with a growing issue that would plague him for the rest of the campaign, and ultimately, the rest of his political career: African American suffrage.

How did Ohio come to the point of earnestly discussing the extension of suffrage to African Americans? It was by no means a straightforward journey. After joining the Union in 1803, Ohio quickly enacted its first “Black Laws” in the same year, with a fairly obvious purpose: to ensure that blacks, especially Southern blacks attempting to escape slavery, would not use Ohio as a state to relocate.³⁴ These laws prohibited black children from attending public school, black adults from serving on juries, and required all blacks in the state to register with their county clerk, among other humiliating and degrading requirements. While cruel and by present day standards morally reprehensible (though there were some who thought such laws wrong from the onset), all the states in the “Old Northwest,” which included Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, maintained “Black Laws” from the time of their entrance into the Union until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Dana Elizabeth Weiner, in her study of the Old Northwest, suggested that the area “was a particularly unfriendly place to be African American.”³⁵

The state of Ohio, however, was unique in both the Midwest and the North in its demographic makeup and the prejudice that resulted. It contained a large number of immigrants,

³³ *The Wyandot Pioneer*, June 28, 1865; *Jeffersonian Democrat*, June 30, 1865; *The Wyandot Pioneer*, July 12, 1865.

³⁴ Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 3-4.

³⁵ Dana Elizabeth Weiner, *Race and Rights: Fighting Slavery and Prejudice in the Old Northwest, 1830-1870* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 36.

creating a unique diversity that has led some historians, like Stephen Maizlish, to suggest that “Ohio was in many ways a microcosm of all the free states.”³⁶ Interestingly, as the 19th century progressed, the “Black Laws” did not enjoy unanimous support in Ohio. A section of the state known as the Western Reserve, which was made up of ten counties and portions of four other counties in the northeast section of the state stretching from the border with Pennsylvania to Lake Erie, harbored many advocates of abolitionism and black civil rights.³⁷ Originally part of the Connecticut western land grant in 1786, the Western Reserve attracted New England migrants, and their hostility to slavery, into Ohio.³⁸ The southern portion of the state, on the other hand, generally supported both slavery and Southern interests in general. Southern Ohio’s antagonism to abolitionism reflected the fear that free blacks would compete with poor whites for unskilled jobs, a common sentiment in Cincinnati.³⁹ Additionally, southern Ohio politicians had been influential in crafting the state’s black laws and opposed the Western Reserve-supported attempts to eliminate black laws and pursue civil rights reform in the 1840s. Thus, the African American experience in Ohio differed greatly depending upon where they settled. Those who were able to settle in the Western Reserve enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom, including the ability to find work and live relatively unmolested lives. Some even pursued profitable careers such as lawyers, teachers, and businessmen.⁴⁰

While the abolition/civil rights movement in the 1840s did help abolish some of the most restrictive black laws, others would be reinstated during the Civil War due to a large influx of blacks in the southern portion of the state, with some estimates as high as 25,000 coming to Ohio

³⁶ Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983), xi-xii.

³⁷ George W. Knepper, *The Official Ohio Lands Book* (Columbus, Ohio: The Auditor of State, 2002), 23.

³⁸ George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 50-51.

³⁹ Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, xi-xii; Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 205; Mach, “Gentleman George”, 75.

⁴⁰ Middleton, *The Black Laws*, 134; Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 206.

during the war years.⁴¹ Regrettably, black suffrage gained no traction even in the reformist 1840s. In the 1850s, Ohio, along with the other states in the Old Northwest, officially reinforced white-only voting rights. Ohio's 1851 constitution restricted suffrage to white, adult males. At the constitutional convention, the vote to extend suffrage to blacks failed sixty-six to twelve. As abolitionist and civil rights proponents continued to proliferate during the war, radical Republicans in favor of black suffrage hoped to amend the 1851 state constitution at the war's end, removing the word "white," which would extend constitutional protection for black voting in Ohio. Thus, divisions between northern and southern Ohio developed prior to the war influenced significantly the various political and social differences highlighted by the suffrage discussions in 1865.

Jack Devon Morton, in his dissertation on the Reconstruction era in Ohio, suggested that only the Western Reserve and its politicians supported black suffrage in 1865. Its delegates to the state convention in the summer of 1865 pushed for its inclusion to the Republican platform, but the conservative majority blocked it.⁴² Other historians agreed. Both Felice Bonadio and Robert Sawrey argued that support for black suffrage centered in a small section of the state in 1865, and this reform failed to become the major issue in Ohio until the 1867 state elections.⁴³ This timeline, however, fails to recognize legitimate black suffrage support from Republicans outside of the Reserve, and, more fundamentally, ignores the wider influence of radicalism in the state as a whole. For example, Michael Les Benedict's groundbreaking study of Radical Republicans defined what "Radical Republicanism" meant, an essential prerequisite to understanding the

⁴¹ Ibid, 248.

⁴² Jack Devon Morton, "Ohio's Gallant Fight: Northern State Politics during the Reconstruction Era, 1865-1878" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2005), 32-34, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

⁴³ Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 79; Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 84-88 and 101-102. Sawrey does suggest that race became a larger issue during 1866, however, it did not become the major and driving issue until 1867.

political landscape in Reconstruction Ohio. First, Benedict establishes a distinction between what he calls “conservative radicalism” and “radical radicalism.”⁴⁴ He argues that a clear divide existed within the Radical Republican ranks (in Congress specifically, but the same distinction can be made in Ohio). “Radical radicals” believed that any Reconstruction plan needed to include black suffrage, while “conservative radicals” opposed such a requirement.⁴⁵ This helpful distinction allows one to situate Ohio’s Representatives in 1865 according to their level of radicalness.

Of the nineteen Republicans from Ohio in the first session of the 39th Congress (this number includes the two Republican Senators, Benjamin Wade and John Sherman), Benedict designated James Ashley, James Garfield, Robert Schenck, Samuel Shellabarger, Martin Welker, and Benjamin Wade as “Radical Republicans.”⁴⁶ Only half of these men, Garfield, Welker, and Wade, were elected from districts inside the oft-cited Western Reserve.⁴⁷ This demonstrates that, to a noteworthy degree, support for black suffrage, at least in the Republican Congressional delegation, existed *outside* of the Western Reserve by 1865. Additionally, Rutherford B. Hayes and Columbus Delano, while designated by Benedict as “Centrist Republicans” between the “Conservative Radicals” and the “Radical Radicals,” also supported black suffrage. Hayes emerged as a zealous supporter of black suffrage during his 1867 campaign for governor, and

⁴⁴ Michael Les Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction, 1863-1869* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 14 and 22. Les Benedict wrote this to refute historians who lumped Radical Republicans into one category. He persuasively argues that this is not the case.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 23. While Les Benedict’s use of black suffrage referred specifically to suffrage in the Reconstruction South, most Republicans who belonged to “radical radicalism” were also strong proponents of black suffrage in the Northern states. See LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, “Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography.” *Journal of Southern History* 33 (1967): 303-330.

⁴⁶ Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle*, 348-353. In the 38th Congress, Rufus Spalding also was ranked as an “extreme radical” who was opposed to white-only suffrage in the South.

⁴⁷ James Ashley was elected from the 5th and 10th districts, in northwest and southwest Ohio respectively; Robert Schenck was elected from the 3rd district in central Ohio (Columbus); Shellabarger was elected from the 7th district, in northeastern Ohio (a portion of this district did include Reserve counties).

Delano argued that blacks had earned suffrage as “their reward” for fighting in the war during the 1865 campaign.⁴⁸ Of the two, only Hayes was elected outside of the Reserve, from the 2nd district in the southwest of the state. Even John Sherman, whom Benedict deemed a strong centrist who leaned conservative on many issues, vacillated about the course the South and Ohio should take concerning black suffrage, though he eventually supported Ohio’s attempt to broaden its suffrage laws in 1867.⁴⁹

Finally, black suffrage, while not a platform issue for Republicans in 1865, became an important proxy issue that dominated headlines in the latter half of the campaign. Morton argued that the discussion of black suffrage during the 1865 Republican campaign remained limited, as Republican editors were not willing to “disagree with the Democrats over new policy issues” for fear of upsetting the status-quo and losing votes, specifically from Union army veterans. He later claimed that Ohio Democrats “misrepresented the state Union party as committed to the enfranchisement of African Americans in Ohio.”⁵⁰ While the Republican (Union) party did not commit unanimously or entirely to black suffrage, support from a vocal minority in 1865 allowed Democrats to make such accusations, and worried conservative Republicans unwilling to lose votes. A clear example of how black suffrage dominated the political scene can be seen in Jacob Cox’s gubernatorial campaign in the summer of 1865 during which his position on black voting polarized the entire state.

Throughout Ohio, discussions about black suffrage morphed into a full-fledged movement, spearheaded by Radical Republicans, to include it in the party’s platform for the upcoming election. Ohio Republicans wrestled with the idea during the summer of 1865. Cox, as

⁴⁸ *The Weekly Bryan Democrat*, July 27, 1865.

⁴⁹ While this does not mean that Sherman was supportive of black suffrage in 1865, the evidence provided later in the chapter suggests that he was not as closed to the idea as Cox or other conservatives were at that time.

⁵⁰ Morton, “Ohio’s Gallant Fight,” 40 and 44.

early as May 1865, indicated that he was not committed to pursuing black suffrage in Ohio, nor did he believe it necessary in the South. “I am thoroughly convinced,” he wrote to his campaign adviser A.F. Perry, “that negro suffrage is not a necessary means of making permanent the conquest of the rebellion.” Perry wrote Cox the following week expressing his support of Cox, even though Perry supported black suffrage.⁵¹ Other leading Ohio Republicans equivocated on black suffrage during the summer of 1865. John Sherman, a leading conservative Republican, expressed a quandary that puzzled several conservatives: if the freedmen in the South were free as a result of the war but unable to vote, 1) what would prevent the South, in essence, from creating an atmosphere that mimics slavery, and 2) how should the government recognize representation after the end of slavery? Relating his concerns to his brother, the famed Union general William Tecumseh Sherman, John wrote, “I admit the negroes are not intelligent enough to vote, but somebody (sic) must vote their political representation in the States where they live... Shall the rebels do so? If yes, will they now in effect restore slavery?”⁵² Sherman, as well as other conservative Republicans, remained unsure what to do about black suffrage, in both the South and North.

While conservative Republicans (non-radicals) like Cox completely adamantly opposed black suffrage and moderate Republicans like Sherman refused to commit either way, radicals militated for reform. James Garfield, a close personal friend of Cox, along with other radicals such as James Ashley and Benjamin Wade, from the Northern and Eastern sections of the state, continued to push the party to articulate definitively the party’s position on suffrage. Regardless, at the state convention, the Republican Party demurred, refusing to mention black suffrage in any

⁵¹ Jacob Cox to A.F. Perry, May 25, 1865, Series 1, Box 1, Correspondence (Incoming), Jacob Dolson Cox Papers, Oberlin College Archives; A.F. Perry to Jacob Cox, June 4, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁵² John Sherman to W. T. (William Tecumseh) Sherman, May 16, 1865, John Sherman Papers, Box 1, Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

of its platforms.⁵³ John Sherman, speaking in Columbus in June, congratulated the convention for sidestepping the divisive issue while crafting an “equally acceptable” ticket.⁵⁴ Radicals such as Garfield, as well as a fair number of Republican papers, questioned the convention’s equivocation, believing the party should stake its future on black suffrage.⁵⁵ In a letter to Cox, Garfield questioned whether it was wise to leave suffrage alone and pressed Cox on his position, “It may have been wise for the state convention to leave that issue out of their platform, but I think we could have carried the state...How do you feel on the question and what place, if any, shall you give it in the campaign?”⁵⁶

Many radicals questioned Cox about his position on black suffrage. As pressure grew, particularly from the Western Reserve, where advocates for black suffrage significantly outnumbered opponents, Cox finally understood that he needed to address the suffrage issue. Even his brother, Charles, pressed him to clarify his stance. Charles evidently sent multiple letters to Cox, without reply. In a July 22 letter to his brother, Charles discussed the consequences and benefits of black suffrage. He worried that the “enfranchisement of the ignorant blacks of the South” would be a “step back” for the country, but, like Sherman, he worried about their representation. Ultimately, Charles favored black suffrage in the North but hesitated on its practicality in the South.⁵⁷ Cox finally responded to his brother nearly a week later, claiming that he was “unwilling to express any opinions” on the subject until he had ample time to mull over the options. He argued that the question of suffrage needed to be addressed “with regard to the race as a unit... they must be dealt with as a people.”⁵⁸ Thus, he was

⁵³ *Jeffersonian Democrat*, June 30, 1865.

⁵⁴ Speech by John Sherman in Columbus, OH on June 21, 1865, John Sherman Papers, Box 2 (Speeches), Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

⁵⁵ *Jeffersonian Democrat*, July 14, 1865; *The Cleveland Leader*, June 23, 1865.

⁵⁶ James A. Garfield to Jacob Cox, July 14, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁵⁷ Charles Cox to Jacob Cox, July 22, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁵⁸ Jacob Cox to Charles Cox, July 26, 1865, Cox Papers.

unwilling to address the blacks in the North and South separately, a point that he would reiterate in the coming months. Additionally, a group of Union army veterans wrote Cox during the summer asking him to clarify his stance on suffrage; they warned that if he stood by blacks, they would not vote for him in October.⁵⁹ The pressure was mounting for Cox to define clearly his position on black suffrage.

Knowing the prevalence of the suffrage debate throughout the state, Cox wanted to address the issue sometime in August of 1865. He planned to reach out to Radicals in the Western Reserve, hoping to temper their enthusiasm for black suffrage in the name of party unity.⁶⁰ An unexpected development forced his hand. In late July, two men from Oberlin, Oberlin College President James Fairchild and Mayor Samuel Plumb wrote Cox and asked for a response on two questions: 1) did Cox favor a modification of the state constitution to allow black men to vote, and 2) in regards to the Reconstruction of the South, should voting rights be given to the black population?⁶¹ Until this time, Cox had been asked in private correspondence on multiple occasions and petitioned by soldiers to give his answer to these questions. When two prominent members of the Oberlin community, well respected and widely understood to be supportive of the black suffrage movement, he decided to respond publicly to the matter. His long, controversial response brought the suffrage debate to the fore, eliciting divergent opinions on both sides of the political aisle concerning the letter's ultimate intent and meaning. By attempting to keep the suffrage debate from entering the 1865 election, Cox unwittingly contributed to its domination of the campaign, while sowing seeds of discord among the Republican Party in Ohio.

⁵⁹ *Daily Ohio Statesman*, July 28, 1865.

⁶⁰ Jacob Cox to William Dennison, July 9th, 1865, Jacob Dolson Cox Papers, Series 2, Microfilm roll 3, Correspondence (outgoing), Oberlin College Archives.

⁶¹ *The Cleveland Leader*, August 2, 1865.

Cox crafted a lengthy, twenty-page response to the questions posed by Plumb and Fairchild (they quickly became known in the papers as the “Oberlin Committee”).⁶² Cox understood the Oberlin Committee’s concern that the Republican Party platform for the upcoming election remained too conservative, and clearly recognized their belief that blacks should have the right to vote. In page eight of his letter, Cox responded: “You assume that the extension of the right of suffrage to the blacks having them intermixed with the whites, will cure all the trouble. I believe... of which Milton speaks: ‘Chaos umpire sits, and by decision more embroils the prey.’”⁶³ Cox earnestly believed that granting blacks to right to vote would only increase the tension between whites and blacks, resulting in further violence that would only end in the destruction of the black race. He felt obligated to help the freedmen across the nation, preventing them from being ruled by whites once again. Thus, he says, “I am (bound to do both things), and the only real solution which I can see is the *peaceable separation of the races*... a peaceable separation of the races on the soil where they are now” (emphasis added).⁶⁴ Internal colonization, Cox concluded, gave both races the best chance to survive without conflict.

It is worth pausing to ask why Cox responded in such a way to the Oberlin Committee and what he hoped to accomplish through it. In two separate letters dated July 30, 1865, Cox communicated to his friends that the Radicals and their incessant push for black suffrage for the election in 1865 concerned him. “On the other hand some of our radical friends are determined to play into the enemy’s hands,” he wrote Garfield, “They [Radical Republicans] are crazy to make it [black suffrage] an issue.”⁶⁵ Cox worried that if the radicals continued to push for black

⁶² Wilbert H. Ahern, “The Cox Plan of Reconstruction: A Case Study in Ideology and Race Relations” *Civil War History* 16 (1970): 293-308; Ahern discusses in some detail the impetus for this letter; the treatment of the “Oberlin Letter” in this project will focus on the reactions it elicited from the politicians of Ohio.

⁶³ Jacob Cox to Samuel Plumb and James Fairchild, July 25, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Jacob Cox to James Garfield, July 30, 1865, Cox Papers.

suffrage and forced the party to make embrace it, they would lose returning soldiers (mainly from the southern part of the state) and potentially other conservative members to the Democrats. He personally requested that Garfield use his influence “to prevent a split in our party on this issue till the time comes for (unknown) any actions.”⁶⁶ Garfield wrote him the next week after the Oberlin Letter had been published throughout the state. “I greatly regret that the correspondence occurred,” Garfield mused, “yet I can hardly see how you could have avoided (unknown).” Cox’s internal colonization plan, however appeared to Garfield to be “hopelessly impracticable.”⁶⁷ Garfield, a radical Republican, declined to endorse Cox’s plans for the African American population. He would continue to push Cox to soften his colonization stance, but little came of it, at least in 1865.⁶⁸

While Cox’s ideas disappointed Garfield, Cox’s letter to William Dennison gives valuable insight into his desire to avoid the suffrage issue in 1865. He called for a halt on Republican discussions of black suffrage until “the different phases of it have been more fully examined in the light of the conduct of the Southern States.”⁶⁹ Cox firmly believed that the African American population needed to be dealt with *as a whole*, not as Southern blacks and Northern blacks. Additionally, Cox strongly advocated for the new President, Andrew Johnson, and agreed with many of his policy plans for Reconstruction. Johnson emerged as ambivalent at best, and antagonistic at worst, on black civil rights and black suffrage.⁷⁰ Eric Foner suggests that Cox’s zealous support of the Johnson Administration stemmed from his desire to stave off

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ James A. Garfield to Jacob Cox, August 5, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁶⁸ Allen Peskin, *Garfield* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978), 254.

⁶⁹ Jacob Cox to William Dennison, July 30, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁷⁰ Some radicals had already come to suspect that Johnson was not nearly as radical, or Republican, as he once made himself seem even before Johnson’s vetoes of specific legislation such as the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Civil Rights Bill; see H.L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln’s Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 309-314.

claims by the Democrats that Ohio Republicans favored race equality. Eugene Roseboom argued that Cox advocated for unity in support of the Johnson Administration in order to quell the radical murmurings of Republicans unhappy with Johnson, many of whom hailed from Ohio.⁷¹

This seems to suggest that Cox opposed black suffrage in the name of party unity, and for political expediency to ensure a Republican victory in 1865. He clearly lacked the inclinations of his Oberlin constituents, yet he did not extol the typical racial reasoning for barring blacks from voting, at least in his correspondence. “The common argument of color as the basis of political rights is baseless,” he wrote his brother Charles shortly before the Oberlin Letter was penned. Still, Cox clearly viewed blacks as the “weaker race,” and seemed genuinely concerned that white Southerners would dominate them politically should they be given the vote. Though John Sherman felt, like Cox, that blacks were “not intelligent enough to vote,” he proposed the opposite appraisal of the situation in the South, by suggesting that not granting southern blacks the vote would be condemning them to reenslavement.⁷² Whatever the case, Cox was clear that the state of Ohio should not grant suffrage to blacks, nor did he seem to believe they deserved it.

While seemingly archaic and bewildering, colonization as a potential solution to the race issue was nothing new nor was it out of fashion; in fact, many abolitionists and Republicans in the proceeding years had suggested colonization at one point or another, including Abraham Lincoln. Even James Garfield, a zealous and outspoken public advocate for black suffrage, privately expressed his “repugnance” to the ideas of black men being made political equals, favored colonization as well, while recognizing that it was an impractical and unworkable

⁷¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 222-223; Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 449 and 456; the Ohio Republicans who became increasingly frustrated with Johnson's conservative approach to Reconstruction include Benjamin Wade, Salmon Chase, and others.

⁷² Jacob Cox to Charles Cox, July 26, 1865, Cox Papers; John Sherman to William Tecumseh Sherman, May 16, 1865, Sherman Papers.

alternative.⁷³ Privately, Cox had been an advocate of colonization for some time, yet his idea of colonization differed from others when it came to the mechanism of resettlement. He wrote to William Dennison, former governor of Ohio, early in July and expressed his desire to see blacks colonized in separate areas *of the United States*, where he hoped that blacks could have “the opportunity of free political activity and of all the progress of civilization...”⁷⁴ While Cox’s colonization scheme may have come as no surprise to his close associates, it sent shockwaves through Ohio’s political community. Republicans, Democrats, and the various partisan newspapers throughout the state all had an opinion of the “Oberlin Letter” and what it meant for the black suffrage movement moving forward. These opinions ranged from support, to respect, to disbelief, to disappointment, to outright disdain. Cox himself received several letters from supporters, including at least one Southern gentleman (of unknown political persuasion) and members of the Republican Party who indicated that their constituents supported Cox.⁷⁵ These letters suggested that while Cox might lose votes over the opinions he posited in the letter, he charted a wise path, and ultimately the right strategy, for the party on the issue of suffrage.

A.F. Perry, one of Cox’s most frequent correspondents, reflected the mixed reception of other Republicans across the state. Personally, Perry was outraged by the forthrightness of the Oberlin Committee, whom he felt were putting Cox in a vulnerable position. Knowing Cox’s position and understanding its controversial nature, he warned Cox that he had “no doubt that you must lose their (those who disagreed, particularly those in Oberlin) votes.”⁷⁶ As stated earlier, Perry had no qualms about telling Cox his disagreement upon the subject. But, like many

⁷³ James Garfield to Jacob Cox, July 26, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁷⁴ Jacob Cox to William Dennison, July 9, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁷⁵ For example, Colonel Dwight Bannister to Jacob Cox, August 1, 1865; Stephen Johnson to Jacob Cox, August 2, 1865; A.J. Ricks to Jacob Cox, August 5, 1865; Wylly Woodbridge to Jacob Cox, August 12, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁷⁶ A.F. Perry to Jacob Cox July 28, 1865, Cox Papers.

Republicans, Perry declared his support, regardless of the fallout, which he predicted would be short-term, and would not ultimately affect his chances for election in October. “I do not come yet to the point of adopting it (the colonization idea),” Perry told Cox, “It is in every way admirable(?) not only for what it says, but for what it omits to say. It is scholarly and statesmanlike.”⁷⁷

The newspaper coverage of the letter from both parties was remarkable. For a full month, both major party papers and many local papers covered the Oberlin Letter and reacted to it. The robust coverage, and the commentary, speculation, and predictions it produced, indicates that black suffrage really emerged as a key and divisive issue in 1865.⁷⁸ Dozens of papers carried the entire letter with added commentary alongside, while even more included portions of it.⁷⁹

Republican papers located in the Western Reserve were largely disappointed with the letter for a variety of reasons. First, many felt that the letter did not align with their previous understanding of Cox’s position. Some felt misled by his response and his prior support for political rights for African Americans while in the Ohio State Assembly.⁸⁰ Secondly, editors of many Reserve papers were appalled by the colonization scheme that he proposed, and his view of the relationship between blacks and whites in America. The *Cleveland Leader*, one of the most influential Republican papers in the state, suggested that that “large majority of the Union party of Ohio who favor negro suffrage” would have been more impressed had Cox not published the letter at all. Additionally, the paper took issue with several facets of Cox’s letter, including his

⁷⁷ A.F. Perry to Jacob Cox, August 1, 1865, Cox Papers.

⁷⁸ Just a few examples of papers that included the letter in part or in full: *Delaware Gazette*, August 4, 1865; *The Cleveland Leader*, August 2, 1865; *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, August 12, 1865; *Lancaster Gazette*, August 10, 1865; *Jeffersonian Democrat*, August 11, 1865; *The Wyandot Pioneer*, August 9, 1865; *Highland Weekly News*, August 10, 1865.

⁷⁹ There was some debate as to how it became public at all. *The Cleveland Leader* wrote on August 10 that Cox himself was the one who made his response public, in response to the *Daily Cleveland Herald’s* criticism of Plumb and Fairchild.

⁸⁰ *Ashland Union*, August 9, 1865; *Daily Ohio Statesmen*, August 1, 1865.

lack of compassion for blacks in the South, and his general evasiveness in answering the Committee's questions. "General Cox makes no direct answer to either of the questions," the paper remarked, while disagreeing with Cox's assertion that his opinion on the subject should not be weighted more heavily than others. "General Cox's views," the paper concluded, "if he is elected Governor, are of much more importance than those of any single citizen."⁸¹

The *Jeffersonian Democrat*, a pro-Union paper, decried not only the "Oberlin Letter," but the actions that led to its publication, specifically the Union Party's decision to leave out black suffrage from its platform. This left room for Cox to fill the void with his own ideas about suffrage that did not necessarily speak for the rest of the party. The *Democrat*, along with other radical papers, criticized his basic assumption of the antipathy between blacks and whites, suggesting that Cox's witnessing of "intense hatred manifested between the Freedmen and their late masters" led to his idea that hostility naturally exists between both races in every context.⁸² Therefore, if convincing him that the races could coexist (which some radicals believed could happen if blacks were given the vote), might change his mind. "The hands that have so nobly and faithfully wielded the bayonet," one article stated, "are, by every rule of honor, justice and right equally entitled to wield the power of the ballot." The *Steubenville Herald*, another non-Reserve paper critical of Cox's letter, argued that while Ohio may not be ready for black suffrage, it is necessary to ensure the success of the war and break the "oligarchy" of the South. "The country will be compelled for its own peace and prosperity," wrote the newspaper's editor, "to grant the

⁸¹ *The Cleveland Leader*, August 2, 1865.

⁸² *Jeffersonian Democrat*, August 11, 1865; *Painesville Telegraph*, August 17, 1865; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, August 16, 1865 (article from the *Mahoning Register*).

black man these rights (personal and political), if not from *choice*, from *necessity*, because God has so declared.”⁸³

Other papers conveyed that, in the aftermath of the Oberlin Letter, “the common feeling (was) regret and dissent” amongst Republicans in the Reserve. The *Weekly Perrysburg Journal*, another non-Reserve paper to express its dismay with Cox, even suggested the Republican candidate would not enjoy as large of a majority in the upcoming election as he could have if the letter had not been written. Others questioned the practicality of the colonization scheme. While most editors of radical papers were disheartened by the letter, at least one still expressed hope that the discussion would continue, and a more practicable solution would be agreed upon.⁸⁴ Ultimately, however, the editors of these radical papers were disappointed and frustrated.

While a portion of Republican newspapers disagreed strongly with the “Oberlin Letter,” moderate and conservative papers stood squarely behind the Republican candidate; some papers applauded his letter while others merely respected his right to hold a different opinion on the matter. Many articles expressed appreciation for Cox’s openness and honesty, commending the “temperate language” with which he wrote.⁸⁵ The *Wyandot Pioneer* praised the letter for “bearing the stamp of being the production of a thoroughly earnest and philosophic mind... savoring much more of the patriot and statesman than of the wily politician.” Such a politically neutral approach, however, the *Pioneer* noted, understandably would appease very few people. The *Pioneer* and the *Urbana Citizen* fully anticipated the “ultra Republicans” as well as the “peace-at-all-hazard Democrats” to be equally dissatisfied by Cox’s approach to black

⁸³ *Daily Ohio State Journal*, August 5, 1865 (reprint of the *Steubenville Herald*); *Weekly Perrysburg Journal*, August 8, 1865.

⁸⁴ *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, August 19, 1865; *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, August 12, 1865; *Weekly Perrysburg Journal*, August 8, 1865; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, August 5, 1865 (reprint of the *Springfield News and Republic*).

⁸⁵ *Delaware Gazette*, August 4, 1865; *Mt. Vernon Republican*, August 8, 1865; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, August 1, 1865.

suffrage.⁸⁶ While Radicals were incensed with the timidity and perceived treachery of the Oberlin-educated Cox, conservative papers applauded his course, touting “the absolute necessity for some measure of that kind,” regardless of its impracticability. Another paper called Cox’s letter “ably written... straightforward and manly, and [it] will meet the views of every true, loyal man.”⁸⁷ Others criticized Fairchild and Plumb for pressing Cox to make a definitive statement on the suffrage issue, in an election cycle where the issue would not be a focal point.⁸⁸ Clearly, the editors failed to comprehend the explosive effect of Cox’s letter; attempting to shunt black suffrage, Cox made the issue the focal point of the 1865 election.

The theme for many of the conservative Republican papers centered around party unity and defeating the Democrats in the upcoming election, which mirrored the sentiments of Cox. Non-radical papers emphasized Cox’s commitment to the state convention to ward off any claims from Democrats that Cox was being untruthful and to assure conservative Republicans that he was not a foolhardy radical.⁸⁹ The *Fremont Journal* explicitly expressed its desire to “not set forth our private views,” as an admonition to other papers to remember that Cox was unanimously selected by the state convention and should not be held in contempt because of his comments. Such comments would only hurt his chance of being elected. Another paper tried to defuse tension with Republicans who supported the President by asserting that Cox agreed with Johnson’s stance on impartial or universal suffrage.⁹⁰ Even though the “Oberlin Letter” affirmed

⁸⁶ *The Wyandot Pioneer*, August 9, 1865; *Daily Ohio State Journal*, August 5, 1865 (reprint from the *Urbana Citizen*).

⁸⁷ *Gallipolis Journal*, August 24, 1865; *The Hancock Jeffersonian*, August 11, 1865; *Pomeroy Weekly Telegraph*, August 31, 1865.

⁸⁸ *Fremont Journal*, August 11, 1865; *Delaware Gazette*, August 4, 1865.

⁸⁹ *The Guernsey Times*, August 3, 1865.

⁹⁰ *Fremont Journal*, August 11, 1865; *The Hancock Jeffersonian*, August 4, 1865. “Impartial” or “universal” here denotes voting rights would be extended to all adult males who were citizens, irrespective of color (white or black). This did not mean women or Native Americans were allowed to vote.

a conservative approach toward civil rights, damage control and calming fears of conservative Republicans remained a key focus for many Republican papers in the wake of the Oberlin Letter.

Democratic papers were generally distrustful and disdainful toward Cox's letter and its message. Aside from the occasional article, such as the August 2 edition in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, which gleefully celebrated Cox's letter as a repudiation of radical Republicanism, there was much criticism for what many Democrats considered to be a false representation of Cox's real views.⁹¹ Even before the Oberlin Letter, some Democratic papers derogatively referred to Cox as the "Oberlin Candidate" because of his personal ties to the city, and his supposed views on civil rights for African Americans. Other papers referred to Cox as the "negro-equality" candidate, the "negro suffrage" candidate, or merely pointed out that Cox was unmistakably supportive of black suffrage, given his history and voting record in the state Senate.⁹²

Thus, Democratic papers were unimpressed with the "Oberlin Letter," and generally viewed it as cowardly and dismissive of the issue. "*It is no answer,*" the *Daily Ohio Statesman* said of Cox's letter, "It is an evasion, and a cowardly one at that." Furthermore, the paper was critical of Cox and the entire Republican platform, arguing that it was "without meaning, sense or principle, to an exactitude."⁹³ Several papers further criticized Cox for answering the letter of two Oberlin elites, but remained "too cowardly to answer the soldiers' (sic) letter and acknowledge it." Additionally, the *Cadiz Sentinel* included a message from one Capt. Van Valkenburg, who allegedly served under Cox, criticizing Cox for not taking a strong position on

⁹¹ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 2, 1865.

⁹² *Daily Ohio Statesman*, July 28, 1865; *The Spirit of Democracy*, July 12, 1865; *The Spirit of Democracy*, August 16, 1865.

⁹³ *Daily Ohio Statesman*, August 2, 1865; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, August 8, 1865; *Mt. Vernon Democratic Banner*, August 5, 1865.

the suffrage issue, while many people, particularly those in the army, knew he was in support of black suffrage.⁹⁴ *The Weekly Bryan Democrat* contended that the “Abolition party” was more focused on black suffrage than about addressing the real issues facing the state, which the Democrats were prepared to address.⁹⁵

Herein lay the crux of the debate in the various newspapers on both sides of the aisle following the “Oberlin Letter.” Interestingly, some Republicans and most Democrats publicly attempted to make the Cox letter appear less important, but for much different reasons. Democratic newspaper downplayed the significance of the letter because many of them reported that Cox, as well as many powerful Republicans such as Wade, Dennison, Chase, and others, all supported black suffrage.⁹⁶ The *M’arthur Democrat* called the letter a “pettifogging harangue,” while the *Mt. Vernon Democratic Banner* argued that Cox failed to answer the question “now before the people.” The *M’arthur* editors accused Cox of trying to accommodate both sides in the debate on suffrage.⁹⁷ This accusation seems to misunderstand Cox’s audience. His letter was intended more for Republicans uneasy about suffrage than it was for Democrats who would already be ardently against any provisions for black rights, political or otherwise.

Regardless, Democrats still pushed the connection between Cox and black suffrage. In return, Republican papers made light of the Democrats repeated attempts to link Cox with the issue. The *Tiffin Weekly Tribune* argued that the Democrats continued to harangue Cox because they were worried that some Democrats would vote for Cox. “We heard a prominent Democrat say the other day,” the paper reported, “that he was pleased with the letter and would vote for the

⁹⁴ *Urbana Union*, August 16, 1865; *The Cadiz Sentinel*, August 16, 1865.

⁹⁵ *The Weekly Bryan Democrat*, August 10, 1865.

⁹⁶ *The Spirit of Democracy*, August 2, 1865.

⁹⁷ *M’arthur Democrat*, August 10, 1865; *Mt. Vernon Democratic Banner*, August 5, 1865.

General.”⁹⁸ Others attempted to counter the claims of Democrats (and some radical Republicans) that Cox’s political record favored black suffrage. The Democrats were determined to make suffrage an issue, Republicans cried, because they were “avoiding the real issues now before the people of the State.”⁹⁹ The Democrats were unable to point to the war as a vehicle for voter mobilization, so they needed to find another issue to mobilize their voter base. Raising fears of black domination and exploiting racial prejudice, they reasoned, would do just that. All sides pointed to different pieces of evidence to support their claims about Cox and his views on black suffrage. Cox, however, did little to set the record straight, and the black suffrage debate continued to follow him throughout the 1865 campaign.

In the wake of the Oberlin Letter, Cox was forced to address the suffrage issue on multiple occasions. At the inaugural meeting for this campaign, Cox reiterated that the state convention had “wisely” avoided any statement on suffrage; he then refused to make any mention of African Americans or suffrage in the North or Ohio, focusing the discussion exclusively on the South. Garfield, also speaking at the meeting, directly disagreed with Cox’s ideas concerning suffrage and African Americans in general, as stated in the Oberlin Letter, a theme repeated in this letters to Cox earlier in August.¹⁰⁰ In September, Cox again addressed the issue of black suffrage, this time at a Republican meeting in Oberlin. He reinforced the message of his letter, arguing that the separation of races would be the best course of action for the country. However, at the end of the speech, he was asked by an African American man in the crowd if he would support black suffrage in the state of Ohio, if it was an election issue. Cox

⁹⁸ *The Tiffin Weekly Tribune*, August 31, 1865.

⁹⁹ *Belmont Chronicle*, August 10, 1865; *The Tiffin Weekly Tribune*, September 14, 1865; *Lancaster Gazette*, July 20, 1865.

¹⁰⁰ *The Cleveland Leader*, August 16, 1865; James A. Garfield to Jacob Cox, August 5, 1865, Cox Papers; *Western Reserve Chronicle*, August 30, 1865.

replied that he wanted all blacks in the country to follow the same course; but, if the state so decided, “his determination would be here for the full application of the rights of man, which he had described.”¹⁰¹ The crowd, in thunderous applause, no doubt interpreted his response as support for the suffrage issue. Cox seemed to equivocate on his position on black suffrage depending on the audience, leading Democratic papers to again portray him as supportive of black suffrage. “General Cox ‘means Negro Suffrage and Negro Suffrage means General Cox,’” one paper put it concisely.¹⁰²

Republicans tried to move past the near crisis caused by Cox’s letter, and by September poured all their efforts into defeating the Democrats in the coming election. The newspaper critiques of Cox, even in the Western Reserve, began to diminish, as the party focused its attention exclusively on the upcoming election. This did not mean, however, that everyone was pleased with deemphasizing suffrage. The *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph* wrote that it would leave the issue alone for the time being, and would vote for Cox, but only “for the sake of party under protest.”¹⁰³ Even so, Cox’s fellow Republicans still felt comfortable criticizing his plan for Reconstruction and for the freedmen. John Sherman, ever the middling voice of Ohio Republicans, renewed his plea for a moratorium on suffrage discussions until after Reconstruction officially began in the South. In a September 1 speech in Ravenna, he criticized Cox’s colonization plan, arguing that the “process will not meet the pressing nature of the questions we are called upon to solve.” He tempered his critique, however, by calling for unity, and full and unmitigated support for the full Union ticket (which obviously included Cox), cautioning that “the election will be an indication of our party strength.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Lancaster Gazette*, September 7, 1865; *The Cadiz Sentinel*, August 30, 1865.

¹⁰² *Urbana Union*, September 13, 1865.

¹⁰³ *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, September 16, 1865.

¹⁰⁴ Speech given by John Sherman at Ravenna, Ohio on September 1, 1865, Sherman Papers.

Election day, October 10, finally arrived, and the Union Party was assured of a resounding victory. Multiple Union papers initially reported Cox winning by nearly forty thousand votes, which, while a resounding Union victory, was decidedly less than the majority for Lincoln in 1864, which stood at just over sixty thousand.¹⁰⁵ Final voting statistics showed that Cox won by just under thirty thousand votes, well under the projected margin of victory.¹⁰⁶ The Democratic Party cited gains in several counties, particularly in the Southern portion of the state. Still, the entire Union ticket was elected, and the party enjoyed two-to-one majorities in both the state House (70-35) and in the state Senate (25-12).¹⁰⁷ While the Republican majorities were reduced marginally across the state, when compared to the pre-war elections, Cox fared much better than the previous Republican candidates.¹⁰⁸ What startled some Republicans, however, was the drop in voter turnout. The number of votes cast for the Republican candidate, when compared to the last two major elections (the Presidential election in 1864 and the gubernatorial election in 1863) had dropped by an average of 19 percent, while the total number of votes cast also dropped over 12 percent compared to the last two wartime elections.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of the State of Ohio, 1869* (Columbus, OH: Columbus Printing Company, State Printers, 1870), 102-106. The official statistics were Cox- 223,633 and Morgan- 193,797, with 417,480 votes cast. The total number of votes was down nearly 50,000 from both the previous Presidential election (1864) and the previous governor election (1863).

¹⁰⁶ The voting statistics for this chapter come from the 1869 edition of the *Annual Report of the Secretary of State of Ohio*. A statistical error appeared in later editions of the *Annual Report*. From 1869-1873, 223,633 votes were reported for Cox, and 417,430 votes were reported total. In reports between 1874-1882, 233,633 votes were counted for Cox, exactly 10,000 more votes than was reported from 1865-1873. However, the total number of votes stayed the same in the report, holding steady at 417,430. This number did not change until the 1883 report, where 233,633 votes were reported for Cox, and 427,430 votes were reported total. Thus, it seems that the editors made a clerical error in 1874 by adding 10,000 votes to Cox's vote total that went unnoticed until 1883. The editor then compounded the error by changing the total number of votes to match the 10,000 votes added in 1874.

¹⁰⁷ *Cleveland Daily Leader*, October 11, 1865; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, October 11, 1865; *Jeffersonian Democrat*, October 20, 1865.

¹⁰⁸ From the *Annual Report of the Secretary of State of Ohio, 1869*, 102-103; Salmon Chase won by a mere 1,500 votes in 1857, while William Dennison won by 13,000 in 1859. The two wartime governors, David Todd and John Brough, won by over 55,000 and 100,000 votes respectively.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 288,374 votes for John Brough out of 475,866 cast, 265,654 votes for Lincoln out of 471,253 cast, and 223,633 votes for Cox out of 417,430.

Additionally, some Republicans expressed concern about the low voter turnout in the Western Reserve, related to the failure of the party to support black suffrage. The *Cleveland Daily Leader* reported that the Reserve men had “not done their duty,” yet the Union still emerged victorious. While Sawrey suggests that voters from the Reserve voted for Cox at a higher percentage than the rest of the state, a look at *number* of votes cast in these counties seems to suggest voter apathy.¹¹⁰ Chapter 2 will analyze the 1866 and 1867 elections in-depth, but a cursory look at Western Reserve voting will reinforce the claim of voter apathy in the WR during 1865. Cox received just under 42,500 votes in 1865, while the two Republican candidates in 1866 and 1867 both received over 50,300 from the Western Reserve, an increase of over 15 percent compared to the 1865 vote.¹¹¹ Additionally, of the twenty-four counties that reported Union losses compared to the returns of the 1864 Presidential election, at least eight of these were counties within the Western Reserve, according to the *Ohio State Journal*.¹¹² This suggests that the Reserve reported disproportionately high Republican losses in 1865 compared to the rest of the state, lending credence to the idea that Reserve voters did have a noticeable impact. While it is difficult to say with certainty whether Reserve voters necessarily stayed away from the polls because of the suffrage issue, at least one Republican-oriented newspaper felt that it influenced the lower margin of Republican victory in the WR, and the data does support that conclusion.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 44-45.

¹¹¹ *Annual Report of the State of Ohio*, 1869; Total number of WR votes for Cox in 1865: 42,478 (18.99% of the total Republican vote); Total number of WR votes for Smith in 1866: 50,399 (19.66% of the total Republican vote); Total number of WR votes for Hayes in 1867: 50,340 (20.66% of the total Republican vote).

¹¹² The article failed to include 3 counties from the Western Reserve in their data: Ashtabula, Geauga, and Huron. Even so, the Reserve makes up only 15% of the total counties of Ohio, and 8 of the 24 counties that reported Union losses compared to 1864 election were from Reserve. Thus, while consisting of only 15% of the total counties in Ohio, the Reserve represented *at least* 33% of the counties that reported Union losses.

¹¹³ *Cleveland Daily Leader*, October 11, 1865; *Ohio State Journal*, October 12, 1865; *Ohio State Journal*, October 13, 1865.

While Republicans maintained their supremacy with a resounding victory in the 1865 gubernational elections, Union majorities were not as strong as expected, particularly in the Reserve. Even after Cox's victory, it was clear that the suffrage issue, and the Oberlin Letter, had a profound effect on his thinking as the governor elect. A.F. Perry cautioned Cox to leave "the topic of your Oberlin letter" out of the inaugural address, as "there can be no doubt that your views of the topic differ (unknown) from those who look or hope of the bestowment of political rights upon the negroes."¹¹⁴ Clearly, the issue still permeated Republican circles, enough to cause Cox to leave the issue out of his address entirely. Even Charles Sumner, the embattled radical Senator from Massachusetts, ventured to criticize Cox's colonization scheme, arguing that it would not only deprive the Union of much needed labor, but that "it is vain to say that this is the country of the white man. It is the country of man."¹¹⁵ Cox was aware of the ridicule his views received, and its potential to continue to divide party. "I should decide at once that you are right," Cox wrote to Perry, "and that I should do best to keep quiet on the subject till I should at least have some pretty direct provocation to reopen it."¹¹⁶

This was reiterated in a December 13 letter to James Garfield in which Cox remarked that he intended to avoid any "details of national policy," which would include black suffrage," and that he planned to make the speech "exceedingly brief."¹¹⁷ Cox wanted to avoid discussion of topics that could cause controversy and dissent within the Republican Party, largely as a result of the atmosphere created by his letter earlier that year. He believed that avoiding the divisive issues would be the best *modus operandi* for the party and would ensure Republican success and unity moving forward. This fact can also be seen by Cox's desire to see Republican

¹¹⁴ A.F. Perry to Jacob Cox, November 13, 1865, Cox Papers.

¹¹⁵ *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, September 23, 1865.

¹¹⁶ Jacob Cox to A.F. Perry, November 17, 1865, Cox Papers.

¹¹⁷ Jacob Cox to James Garfield, December 13, 1865, Cox Papers.

Congressmen support President Johnson. He suggested that Congress should agree with the President and focus on what one “can do” regarding the South.¹¹⁸ Thus, the practical method of solving the race issue, and the one that would maintain party unity, seemed to Cox to be the most appropriate.

As 1865 ended and the new year began, Cox feared the future impact of the suffrage debate. The national policy concerning blacks, he wrote to John Sherman, “will be the bone of contention which will inevitably shape all parties and political issues.”¹¹⁹ Cox still tended to side with Johnson, which put him at odds with most of his colleagues and the ever-growing radical faction of the party. “I hold that the permanent policy of the government should look toward the ultimate separation of the races... Sumner and Stevens go to the opposite extrema and no steps should be taken in the direction of separation.”¹²⁰ Clearly, the divide between Cox and the radicals was growing. Sherman confirmed Cox’s fears about the situation in Washington. He wrote to Warner M. Bateman, Ohio Republican and future Attorney General for Southern Ohio, that there existed an “imminent danger of an open break between the President and 9/10 of the Union members of Congress.” While Sherman was more conservative than most radicals, he recognized the need to extend civil rights for the freedmen, to some degree, though the President was unwilling to acquiesce.¹²¹ Sherman expressed his fears throughout February, relaying both to his brother and to Cox the seemingly desperate circumstances in Congress, and the “widening breach” in the Union Party.¹²² While he remained steadfast that he would “not revolutionize our

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Jacob Cox to John Sherman, January 27, 1866, Cox Papers.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ John Sherman to Warner M. Bateman, February 16, 1866, Sherman Papers.

¹²² John Sherman to W.T. Sherman, February 15, 1866, Sherman Papers.

plan of Government by prescribing universal suffrage to the States,” he still hoped that Johnson would “approve certain measures that we deem necessary for the protection of the freedmen.”¹²³

The gulf between the Republicans and Johnson, however, would only continue to widen in 1866. The Ohio delegation in Congress, previously described as more radical on suffrage than previously suggested, also contributed to this gulf by voting overwhelmingly with the radical faction in Congress. The voting records of the Republicans in the 39th Congress seem to indicate the radical sympathy, if not persuasion, of most Republican Congressmen from Ohio. Of seven “radical” legislative votes between March 4, 1865 and March 4, 1867, on issues such as the Civil Rights Bill, the Freedman’s Bureau Bill, and others, at least twelve of the seventeen Ohio Republican delegates voted for the proposed legislation; in five of the seven votes, 15 of the 17 Republicans voted in favor.¹²⁴ Significantly, all seven votes were conducted well before the Johnson impeachment trial, lending credence to the idea that Ohio congressmen were partial to radical ideas earlier than originally thought. Cox tried desperately to bring the Republican party back to the conservative side of issues, both in the Reconstruction South and in the North with black suffrage. Ultimately, however, his avoidance of black suffrage and his inability to address difficult subjects in a manner that placated the radicals would eventually see him overlooked as the 1867 Republican candidate for governor. Garfield had warned Cox that the radical vote was essential in August of 1865 after the controversial Oberlin Letter; Cox failed to heed his

¹²³ John Sherman to Jacob D. Cox, February 10, 1866; John Sherman to Jacob D. Cox, February 18, 1866, Sherman Papers.

¹²⁴ These legislations include 1) the “Civil Rights Bill,” March 13, 1866, 2) the Vote to Override the Presidential Veto on the Civil Rights Bill, April 9, 1866; 3) the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill, May 29, 1866; 4) the 14th Amendment, June 13, 1866; 5) to Override the Presidential Veto on the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill, July 16, 1866; 6) to Override the Veto on the First Reconstruction Act, March 2, 1867; and 7) to Override the Presidential Veto on the Tenure of Civil Offices Bill, March 2, 1867.

warning.¹²⁵ The Republican Party would instead run a younger, more outspoken proponent of black suffrage for the 1867 gubernational election: Rutherford B. Hayes.

¹²⁵ James A. Garfield to Jacob Cox, August 5, 1865, Cox Papers.

CHAPTER TWO. FROM RESOUNDING VICTORY TO BITTER DEFEAT: THE 1866 AND 1867 OHIO ELECTIONS

The 1867 gubernatorial election brought a swift end to the Republican Party's dominance in post-war Ohio. This chapter traces the continued development of black suffrage as a major issue in Ohio politics, culminating in the 1867 elections in which the Republican Party both ran with black suffrage as a part of their platform and supported statewide referendum to allow African Americans in the state to vote. Bonadio and Sawrey both argue that suffrage became the chief aim of Republicans in 1867; this chapter suggests that even during the 1866 congressional elections, when the party decided against pursuing suffrage as a means of rebuilding their relationship with Johnson, some Radical Republicans broke ranks to announce their continued support of black suffrage, allowing the party to fully endorse suffrage in 1867. While radicals were not as vocal in 1866 as they were in 1865, they succeeded in keeping black suffrage in the public eye until 1867.

The concluding section of this chapter analyzes the suffrage referendum and its results, bringing greater clarity to the sectional and political divisions across the state. While previous scholarship generally includes the quantitative statistics of the vote, little commentary is added to explain why such a vote occurred. This chapter breaks down the vote at the county level, using multiple sources to corroborate numbers and present a fuller picture of who in Ohio voted for and against black suffrage in 1867. This analysis challenges careless figures utilized by some historians, and challenges previous conceptions of sectional differences as markers for racial antagonism. Even though Ohio failed to pass the referendum, Ohio Republicans managed to prompt over 80 percent of the Ohio's Republican electorate to vote for black suffrage, a feat only

two other northern states were able to accomplish. The 1867 elections did not occur in a vacuum, however, and it necessary to trace the events leading to that important election.

Governor Cox's election in the fall of 1865, though celebrated by many Ohioans, created a tenuous situation for Ohio's Republican congressmen. Cox's conservatism on race issues and his support of President Johnson directly contradicted with the developing positions of many Ohio congressmen. In a February letter to A.F. Perry, Cox denounced Radical attempts to reconstruct the South by elevating the freedmen. He scoffed at Radical proposals "to secure the blacks by the permanent establishment of martial law in the South. If they [Radicals] are determined to destroy the negroes their policy would be wisely adapted to their purpose."¹²⁶ Mirroring themes in his Oberlin Letter and correspondence with his brother, Cox genuinely believed that African Americans would hasten their demise by political participation, inciting whites to inflict violence on them for upsetting the social order in the South. Instead, Cox offered four proposals as alternatives to the Radical plan in the South: 1) be content with the rights already given to the freedmen and wait for "greater advancement either in our midst or by separation from us;" 2) concerning personal rights for the freedmen, oppose martial law and secure rights only by civil law; 3) declare the Southern states readmitted; and 4) disenfranchise a "small list of leaders" in the South and "declare amnesty for all the rest on swearing allegiance and future fidelity to the government."¹²⁷ While Cox did not send this letter to Ohio Congressmen, they did not share his views on the subject and most likely would have rejected his proposals outright. A brief look at the Congressional voting from the 39th Congress shows the gulf between Governor Cox, a leading conservative Republican, and the Republican

¹²⁶ Jacob Cox to A.F. Perry, February 22, 1866. Cox Papers.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Congressional delegation from Ohio, which leaned toward the radical persuasion, continued to grow.

As noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the seven votes on “radical” legislation during the 39th Congress received overwhelming support from Ohio Republicans. Of the seven bills identified, three bills concerned civil rights or increased protections for African Americans; the other four bills all overrode Presidential vetoes issued by Johnson specifically on Radical-sponsored bills.¹²⁸ The “Civil Rights Bill” and the “Freedman’s Bureau Bill” both received twelve votes out of seventeen from Ohio Republicans; the vote on the Fourteenth Amendment received seventeen out of seventeen. Three of the four votes overriding Johnson’s veto received seventeen votes out of seventeen; the vote to override the veto on the “Civil Rights Bill” received sixteen out of seventeen votes. Thus, in terms of Congressional policy toward the South, there was a clear divide between the leaders of the Ohio Republican party and Governor Cox. Cox realized this and attempted to decrease tensions by appealing directly to President Johnson in March 1866. In his letter to the President, Cox reiterated his belief “that the separation of the races will become a necessity,” but offered a patronizing observation that “the necessity and propriety in the meantime of giving the freedmen a large measure of kindness and protection, rather than in any way to stint the justice they have a right to expect.”¹²⁹ In so doing, Cox gently suggested that Johnson should relent on the Civil Rights Bill in an effort to avoid a potential split within the Republican Party.

Johnson, however, would not be moved by Cox or any other mediator. He continued to antagonize the Republicans in Congress and openly opposed proposed suffrage legislation at

¹²⁸ Voting information obtained from GovTrack.org, which tracks Congressional voting. Voting information from GovTrack for the 39th Congress obtained from Howard L. Rosenthal and Keith T. Poole, “United States Congressional Roll Call Voting Records, 1789-1990.”

¹²⁹ Jacob Cox to Andrew Johnson, March 22, 1866. Cox Papers.

every turn.¹³⁰ Cox's friends continued to update him on the deteriorating relationship between Johnson and Congress. Lewis Campbell, the United States Minister to Mexico and an Ohio Republican, wrote to Cox in early March that he had heard much talk from politicians in New York, New Jersey, and other states that "the gulf between the President and the radicals of Congress is too wide to be bridged."¹³¹ James Garfield wrote Cox later that month, corroborating Campbell's earlier assessment. "It is now... certain that he [Johnson] will veto the Civil Rights Bill... I fear that we should be soon compelled to fight or surrender."¹³² As the 1866 campaign and elections drew near, Cox became more disillusioned with the situation in Congress and his position within the party. "I find myself agreeing with almost nobody," he wrote Garfield, "and feeling that I am in complete accord with no system of measure before the country, by whatever party advocated."¹³³ Cox hoped that the 1866 elections would allow the relationship between Congress and Johnson to be mended; however, he would be sorely disappointed.

In April 1866, Cox, John Sherman, and other Ohioans still believed the situation with the President could be remedied, though their attempts to rationalize the situation appear more hopeful than anything else. The House voted overwhelmingly (111-38) on March 13 to send the Civil Rights Bill to the President's desk; twelve of the seventeen Ohio Republicans voted for it, with 4 abstaining and only John Bingham voting against it.¹³⁴ Johnson vetoed the bill, much to the dismay of Cox and Sherman. Yet, Sherman still held out hope that unity could be restored. In April he wrote to his brother that passing the bill over the President's veto could still "be made the basis of a Compromise" between the increasingly radical Congress and the stubborn

¹³⁰ Porter, *Ohio Politics*, 221-222; Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 456; Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 63-66.

¹³¹ Lewis Campbell to Jacob Cox, March 6, 1866. Cox Papers.

¹³² James Garfield to Jacob Cox, March 25, 1866. Cox Papers.

¹³³ Jacob Cox to Garfield April 10, 1866. Jacob Dolson Cox Papers, Series 2, Microfilm roll 3, Correspondence (outgoing), Oberlin College Archives.

¹³⁴ "TO PASS S. 61.- March 13, 1866," GovTrack.us, accessed November, 2019, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes#session=107>.

President.¹³⁵ Sherman worried, however, that if the President maintained this course, the freedmen would be subjected once again to slave-like conditions. Johnson believed that only state laws should govern what treatment the freedmen received, and Sherman knew that South would not enact or uphold laws that would protect the freedmen. “Then Suffrage would seem to be his [the freedmen] only rescue,” Sherman wrote to Warner Bateman, “If that is denied him he will become a Slave again by the stern logic of necessity.”¹³⁶ The House voted on April 9 by a count of 122 to 41 to override the President’s veto and pass the Civil Rights Bill. All Ohio Republicans, except Bingham who abstained, voted for the measure. The vote did little, however, to mend the relationship with Johnson.

After ratifying the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill and learning of Johnson’s veto, Congressional Radicals hardened their resolve against the President. Led by Thaddeus Stevens, they worked to craft a constitutional amendment that would make all African Americans federal citizens of the United States and thus legally entitled to the same rights as white Americans. Additionally, the amendment would refuse representation to those Southern states that barred African Americans from voting. For many Republicans the Fourteenth Amendment, and Johnson’s response to it, would represent a complete break from the President. The June 13 vote passed 137-37, with all seventeen Ohio Republicans voting in favor. Its passage on the cusp of the Ohio state and congressional campaigns made it a key election issue.¹³⁷ The amendment would subsequently be sent to the Southern states, with readmission to the Union based on their acceptance of the amendment.

¹³⁵ John Sherman to W.T. Sherman, April 13, 1866. Sherman Papers.

¹³⁶ John Sherman to Warner M. Bateman, April 6, 1866. Sherman Papers.

¹³⁷ Robert D. Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 78-79.

Though the amendment marked a historic moment in American history, many observers have critiqued the conservative nature of the amendment and the role of certain Ohio Republicans in making it conservative. Michael Les Benedict showed that Ohio Republicans voted *against* including black suffrage as a necessary condition for readmission to the Union.¹³⁸ John Bingham, an Ohio Congressman from the sixteenth district (eastern Ohio), served as a key framer of the amendment and championed many of the conservative modifications. His Ohio counterparts supported him, leaving Benedict to suggest that Ohio Congressmen, as a unit, “replaced ideology in favor of practicability.”¹³⁹ However, this analysis overlooks what the amendment *does* attempt to accomplish.

While the amendment can be seen as a failed opportunity to potentially secure black suffrage in the South, the conservative language of the final bill did not necessarily indicate hostility to suffrage. This sympathy toward black suffrage manifested itself in three ways. First, Ohio Republicans genuinely, and perhaps naively, hoped that the amendment would be the end to reconstruction, bringing the Union back together while also providing security and protection for the freedmen.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, the text of the amendment, though more conservative than Radicals desired, not only rewarded Southern states for allowing their black population to vote, but also *punished* those states that did not allow their black population to vote. Technically, the amendment allowed the Southern states to choose whether to allow black suffrage or not; their refusal to exercise that right, however, limited their own representation in Congress. Finally, Benedict repeatedly showed that throughout early Reconstruction, Radical leaders such

¹³⁸ Benedict, *Compromise of Principle*, 168-169.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 182-184.

¹⁴⁰ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 78-79.

Thaddeus Stevens were repeatedly rebuffed when pushing for radical legislation.¹⁴¹ Because the Radicals lacked a majority in both the House and Senate, any legislation, including the Fourteenth Amendment, would need to placate at least a portion of centrists/conservatives in the Republican Party. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that some Ohio Radicals, like Ashley and others, were willing to compromise on the enforcement of black suffrage to obtain *some* sort of protection for Southern blacks. Thus, while Benedict correctly recognizes the compromise to the text of the bill, black suffrage clearly was meant as a byproduct of the Fourteenth Amendment, though not by proactive measures. Even as some Ohio Republicans attempted to separate suffrage from the Amendment, both Democrats and Radicals recognized the relationship between them.

As the summer of 1866 approached, Ohioans of all stripes prepared for the upcoming elections. Ohio Republicans, expecting a raucous debate concerning black suffrage and support for the President, instead quickly crafted a compromise platform that placated both radicals and conservatives. Radicals agreed to put aside suffrage (for the 1866 election), while conservatives would throw their support behind the Fourteenth Amendment.¹⁴² Howard Beale suggested that this “compromise” exhibited the unity that Cox brought to the party; others, like Eugene Roseboom and Felice Bonadio, argued that this coming together was a facade. The compromise, then, did not indicate the true unity of the party, but the willingness of the Radicals to put their issues aside for a time.¹⁴³ Ohio Radicals who only a year before spoke boldly for black suffrage, such as Ashley, Garfield, and others, seemingly turned their backs on the issue in hopes of

¹⁴¹ Benedict, *Compromise of Principle*, 225-227; in this section of the book, Benedict shows how Stevens plans for the Military Government Bill were undone by a coalition of non-radicals in the House.

¹⁴² Eric McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 445-446.

¹⁴³ Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 457; Felice A. Bonadio, “A ‘Perfect Contempt of All Unity,’” in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics during Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 86-87.

bringing Reconstruction to an end, maintaining some type of party unity, and possibly repairing the relationship with the President.¹⁴⁴ They would not long stay silent, however, as discussions of suffrage persisted. As this chapter will suggest, the compromise only served as a stopgap for considerations about suffrage, and though it succeeded in tempering Republican debates of black suffrage for a time, it did not even last through the 1866 campaign.

Radical newspapers, like the *Cleveland Leader*, did not like the compromise decision. “But equal suffrage is not now an issue,” the June 10 addition reported, “and it is the fault of the Union party that it is not.” These newspapers begrudgingly agreed, however, not to make suffrage an issue during the election, “As a question of State politics it [suffrage] cannot be put in issue before the people until the election of 1867.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, the Ohio Republican state platform once again ignored suffrage. Instead, the platform 1) demanded that “Peace shall be established upon such stable foundations that rebellion and Secession will never again endanger our National Existence,” and 2) proclaimed a full endorsement of the Fourteenth Amendment, the latter constituting the main impetus of the platform.¹⁴⁶

Ohio Democrats, on the other hand, developed a platform explicitly against the Fourteenth Amendment, recommending immediate readmission for the Southern states, and touting their unabashed support for the President.¹⁴⁷ The Democratic Party claimed the Fourteenth Amendment was nothing but an underhanded attempt to establish black suffrage in the South, which would inevitably come North.¹⁴⁸ Democratic papers across the state ripped into the Republican platform and the perceived cowardice of their policies which many Democrats

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 80; Benedict, *Compromise of Principle*, 183-185.

¹⁴⁵ *Cleveland Daily Leader*, June 19, 1866.

¹⁴⁶ *Fremont Journal*, June 29, 1866.

¹⁴⁷ *The Ashland Union*, June 20, 1866.

¹⁴⁸ *The Vinton Record*, July 12, 1866; *The Daily Empire*, June 15, 1866.

believed hid their true goal. “Oh, no! the Republican party is not in favor of Negro Suffrage,” the *Daily Ohio Statesman* reported, “Only to secure it, it will sell out the best interests of the country.”¹⁴⁹ Another paper referenced the Fourteenth Amendment, calling it “Negro Suffrage sugarcoated... The whole object of the amendment [sic] is to force Negro Suffrage upon the people, especially the people of the South.”¹⁵⁰ Other papers reinforced this claim, insisting that “the [Reconstruction] amendments have two central and controlling objects: The indirect enfranchisement of negroes and the direct disfranchisement of Southern white men.”¹⁵¹ *The Spirit of Democracy* attempted to expose the hypocrisy of the Republican Party, arguing that Congress would punish Southern representation if the freedmen were not allowed to vote, but white women cannot vote and are still counted toward representation. “It is not representation of suffrage they are after,” the paper claimed, “but only negro suffrage”¹⁵²

Republican papers across the state took up the charge against Democratic claims of support for suffrage. The *Gallipolis Journal* claimed that only “a few extreme men, who act with the Union party, who are honestly in favor of universal suffrage.” These men, however, did not represent “the true exponents of the principles of that party.” Later in the campaign, the *Journal* suggested that, if Ohio voted on black suffrage in 1866, “it could not command a thousand votes.” The *Journal* overstated its case, as many in the Western Reserve advocated for such a vote the year before. *The Highland Weekly News* reminded its readers that although the Republican Party did not make suffrage an issue in the platform or include suffrage as a necessary component of Southern Reconstruction, the Democrats still used the topic as

¹⁴⁹ *Daily Ohio Statesman*, July 3, 1866.

¹⁵⁰ *The Cadiz Sentinel*, June 20, 1866.

¹⁵¹ *The Daily Empire*, June 25, 1866.

¹⁵² *The Spirit of Democracy*, July 3, 1866.

ammunition against them.¹⁵³ This theme dominated other Republican papers up through the last days before the election.¹⁵⁴ The defense was undermined, however, by articles from papers like the *Cleveland Daily Leader*. After the New Orleans riots in late July, the paper responded, claiming that “in spite of Andrew Johnson, in spite of armed and murderous rebel mobs, the cause of *impartial suffrage* will triumph in the end. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small” (emphasis added).¹⁵⁵ Thus, while many Republican papers attempted to maintain the party line, a select few, like the *Cleveland Daily Leader*, broke ranks to express their support for suffrage, giving fodder to Democrats’ claims of their support for the issue.

It appeared that, as Benedict suggested, the Ohio Republicans compromised their principles and punted the black suffrage issue. The reality, however, is much less straightforward. Although the party agreed in theory to leave suffrage alone, several Republican Congressional candidates continued to speak on the issue and Democratic papers continued to harangue Republicans as supporters of black suffrage. While Republican papers called into question the substantiality of Democratic claims, factions of both parties succeeded in keeping black suffrage in the public eye during a campaign that could not affect the issue one way or another. This paved the way for black suffrage to dominate the 1867 election.

The state of Ohio faced a double election in 1866: 1) a state election, the Secretary of State being the highest position at stake, and 2) a Congressional election that would determine the Ohio delegation to the 40th Congress. While both elections commanded attention and succeeded in appealing to a greater portion of the state than did the 1865 election, this section will focus on the congressional campaign, giving close attention to campaign speeches and

¹⁵³ *Gallipolis Journal*, August 2, 1866; *Gallipolis Journal*, August 30, 1866; *The Highland Weekly News*, July 19, 1866.

¹⁵⁴ *The Wyandot Pioneer*, September 20, 1866; *Fremont Journal*, October 5, 1866.

¹⁵⁵ *Cleveland Daily Leader*, August 4, 1866.

newspaper coverage from both political parties.¹⁵⁶ The campaign would solidify the schism between Congress and Johnson, as well as harden Ohio Republicans' radicalism and their resolve to pursue African American suffrage moving forward.

Governor Cox hoped in early 1866 that the election would present an opportunity for Ohio Republicans to rebuild their relationship with the President, or, at the very least, suspend hostility toward him. "Its [Republican party] danger can not [sic] come from its old adversary," Cox declared in August during a speech in Columbus, "but from dissensions in its own ranks." Though he downplayed the disagreements between the President and the Union Party, he remained steadfast that the Union Party offered "the speediest, the surest and the best solution" to solving the issues of Reconstruction.¹⁵⁷ A.F. Perry, Cox's close confidant, communicated the importance of the election and reiterated the essential role that Congress played in reconstructing the South. He would only criticize the President for his support of the Philadelphia Convention after the completion of the campaign.¹⁵⁸

Other candidates, on the other hand, expressed their frustration with the President or, in some cases, their outright contempt for him. Samuel Shellabarger argued that Johnson overstepped his position by trying to set up governments in the South without the consent of Congress; James Ashley spoke antagonistically about Johnson and his policies toward the South, arguing that one does not "put the ship in command of a crew who have mutinied."¹⁵⁹ Columbus Delano, in what stood as arguably the most forceful critique of the Johnson Presidency,

¹⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the Secretary of State, 1869*, 103. Voter turnout in the 1866 election rose by 12 percent compared to the 1865 governor election; 417,430 votes cast in 1865; 469,908 votes cast in 1866.

¹⁵⁷ "Speech by Jacob Cox at Columbus, Ohio on August 21, 1866," in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866- In the States of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky* (Cincinnati Commercial, 1866), 17.

¹⁵⁸ "Speech by A.F. Perry at Columbus on September 14, 1866" in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 30; "Speech by A.F. Perry at Columbia on October 13, 1866," in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ "Speech by Samuel Shellabarger at Springfield, Ohio on August 16, 1866," in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 11; "Speech by James Ashley in Toledo, Ohio on August 21, 1866," in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 18.

suggested that Johnson was “in this place by the hand of an assassin and murder,” and was “seeking to assassinate and murder the party that brought him into power by destroying it.” James Garfield branded both Johnson and the Democrats as hypocrites for calling for the inclusion of Southern states in Congressional representation but at the same time refusing the representation of the four million freedmen living in the South.¹⁶⁰

Benjamin Wade, Ohio’s radical Senator, stated that he took “no pleasure, God knows in feeling compelled to arraign the Chief Magistrate of the nation,” but greatly regretted previously supporting Johnson, “because I never was so grossly and so fatally deceived.” Even John Sherman, who wrote earlier in 1866 about his desire to see the Republican Party reconciled with Johnson, was at the end of his rope. Sherman took issue with Johnson’s claim that the present Congress was a “rump Congress,” and stated that nine-tenths of Congress believed that Johnson had “basely betrayed that party and seeks to betray his country.” After Congress’ repeated attempts to appease the President, such as the conservative direction taken in crafting the proposed amendment, Johnson still refused to acknowledge their compromise.¹⁶¹

Regardless of their opinion of the President, most Republican Congressmen pledged their support for the state platform and, more importantly, the proposed amendment. John Bingham, one of the primary framers of the bill, trying to relieve any lingering fears that the amendment secured suffrage for blacks in the South, broke down each section carefully: Section 1) “no state shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,” Section 2) representation in Congress will be “based exclusively upon representative population,” Section 3) repudiation of rebellion war debt, and Section 4) those who willingly participated in the

¹⁶⁰ “Speech by Columbus Delano at Coshocton, Ohio on August 28, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 23; “Speech by James Garfield in Toledo, Ohio on August 22, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 18.

¹⁶¹ “Speech by Benjamin Wade at Ottawa on September 11, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 31; “Speech by John Sherman at Cincinnati on September 28, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 39.

rebellion will not be allowed to hold office.¹⁶² Bingham specifically avoided any discussion of suffrage or the fact that the amendment punished the South for not instituting and protecting black suffrage. Robert Schenck also explicitly supported the amendment, saying that “the Union Party in Ohio, narrowing the issue own to what it really and only is, have adopted the Constitution Amendment as their platform.” He insisted, however, that the amendment “simply puts all men throughout the land upon the same footing of equality before the law,” indicating that the amendment did not guarantee black suffrage.¹⁶³

Both James Ashley and James Garfield, however, broke ranks and spoke boldly and plainly in support of black suffrage. “I say to you, that the liberty-loving men of this nation will camp,” Ashley said to a crowd in Toledo, “with the banner of ‘impartial suffrage to loyal men’ flying over their heads.” Garfield spoke of his full support not only for the legal rights of African Americans, but for political rights as well. “I believe,” he said in August 22 speech, “that we shall never be right in this country until we declare that every son of man of proper age, and not convicted of a crime, shall have an equal voice in saying who shall rule him.”¹⁶⁴ Additionally, Rutherford B. Hayes, running for re-election in district two, expressed his personal feelings as to the suffrage question early in 1866. In January, he wrote, “Universal suffrage is sound in principle, the radical element is right...” and in May, he suggested that his preference was “Suffrage for *all* in the South, colored and white, to depend on education; sooner or later in the North also.”¹⁶⁵ While fewer Congressmen spoke up in support of suffrage in 1866, it was clear that the issue was not dead. Thus, despite repeated attempts by Republicans to keep black

¹⁶² “Speech by John Bingham at Bowerston, Ohio on August 24, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 19;

¹⁶³ “Speech by Robert Schenck, at Dayton, Ohio August 18, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ “Speech by James Ashley in Toledo, Ohio on August 21, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 18; “Speech by James Garfield in Toledo, Ohio on August 22, 1866,” in *Speeches of the Campaign of 1866*, 18.

¹⁶⁵ “Diary Entry from January 10, 1866,” *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, V. III*, ed. Charles Richard Williams (Columbus: The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1924), 13-14; *Ibid*, 25.

suffrage out of the 1866 elections, the issue remained, though certainly not to the degree it did in 1865.

Though only a few members of the Republican caucus publicly expressed their support for black suffrage, Democrats pounced upon the issue and claimed that many of the Congressional candidates shared such sentiments. A variety of Democratic papers accused Robert Schenck, Martin Welker, Tobias Plants, Samuel Shellabarger, among others, as ardent supporters of black suffrage.¹⁶⁶ Democratic editors argued that these Republican publicly supported black suffrage during the previous election and consistently voted for the extension of suffrage in Washington D.C. and the territories. Sixteen of the seventeen Ohio Republicans voted in favor of the three bills.¹⁶⁷ This typified the Democrats approach to the 1866 election; they attempted, as they did in 1865, to prey upon white fears of “black domination,” knowing they could not defeat the Republicans on other issues because of their war record.¹⁶⁸ While these methods did not affect the overall outcome of the 1866 election, they did create significant issues for Republicans claiming to not support black suffrage.

Felice Bonadio suggested that the Democratic opposition included more than just hostility to black suffrage, and these subsidiary issues significantly contributed to Democratic electoral gains during 1866.¹⁶⁹ While clearly the suffrage issue did not constitute the entirety of the Democratic platform, it disproportionately dominated headlines, which is especially telling as suffrage was supposedly a non-issue during the election. A brief look at three popular

¹⁶⁶ *The Daily Empire*, September 05, 1866; *The Ashland Union*, September 05, 1866; *The Conservative*, September 14, 1866; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, September 19, 1866.

¹⁶⁷ “39th Congress,” GovTrack, accessed November, 2019, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes#session=107>. Samuel Shellabarger was the only Ohio Republican to not vote for the Western Territory bill (January 10, 1867) and the vote to override the President’s veto on the DC voting bill (January 8, 1867); Tobias Plants did not vote on DC suffrage bill initially (December 14, 1866), but did vote to override the veto. All other Ohio Republicans voted in favor of each bill.

¹⁶⁸ Mach, “*Gentlemen George*”, 113.

¹⁶⁹ Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 70.

Democratic papers illustrates this point. In the month of September, the month leading up to the October vote, black suffrage featured heavily in three of the five weekly publications of the *Spirit of Democracy*, as well as receiving attention in *The Daily Empire* (at least eleven of its twenty September issues), and in nearly half of the twenty-five issues of the *Ohio Statesman*, the Columbus based Democratic paper.¹⁷⁰ Thus, while black suffrage may not have been the sole issue for Ohio Democrats, it certainly dominated news coverage across the state by whipping up anti-black and anti-Republican sentiments in hopes of exploiting hostilities toward blacks. These attempts largely failed, however, as Democratic gains were less significant than Bonadio suggested.

Even with fervent fearmongering from Democrats, Ohio Republicans once again dominated the state and Congressional elections. William Henry Smith, the Republican candidate for Secretary of State, defeated the Democratic candidate, Benjamin Lefever, by a vote of 256,302 to 213,606. The election results show that the 1866 election not only received a greater total turnout than the 1865 election, but a greater percentage of the vote went to the Republican candidate.¹⁷¹ The Republicans also captured seventeen of the nineteen congressional districts for the second straight election.¹⁷² Still, historians disagree as to the nature of the Republican victory. Eric McKittrick and Robert Sawrey both interpret the *state* election results as Republican gains, while Felice Bonadio suggests that the Congressional elections shows that Republican experienced a “severe reduction” in their power across the state.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ *Spirit of Democracy*, September, 1866; *The Daily Empire*, September, 1866; *Ohio Statesman*, September, 1866.

¹⁷¹ *Annual Report of the Secretary of State, 1869*; Cox received 53.5 percent of 417,430 votes cast in 1865; Smith received 54.5 percent of 469,908 votes cast in 1866.

¹⁷² This was originally sixteen; Democrat George Morgan reportedly won Ohio’s Thirteenth district, but the election results were overturned, and Republican Columbus Delano took his place during the second session of the 40th Congress.

¹⁷³ McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, 447; Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 84-88; Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 62-65.

Clearly, the Republicans built upon the success of 1865 and increased their lead in the state election, helped in large part to voter turnout in the Western Reserve. After lackluster voting in 1865, the Western Reserve contributed in much greater numbers, increasing their votes for the Republican candidate from 42,478 in 1865 to 50,399 in 1866, an increase of just under sixteen percent. This is interesting given their lower turnout in 1865 because of Cox's unwillingness to support black suffrage. This suggests that members of the Western Reserve felt confident that the suffrage issue would return in force during the 1867 election and may suggest an acceptance of the Fourteenth Amendment as a step toward suffrage in the South. The Congressional elections, at first glance, look to have gone the same way as they did in 1864. After Columbus Delano replaced George Morgan in the thirteenth district, Republicans still held seventeen of the nineteen seats in the Ohio delegation.

The Congressional voting statistics do, however, give some indication of Democratic gains. Of the seventeen districts that would eventually be filled by Republicans, only three experienced gains from the Congressional vote in 1864 (Ashley- 10th district, Eckley- 17th district, and Bingham-16th district).¹⁷⁴ The other fourteen all saw reductions to their majorities from 1864. Bonadios' claims of a "severe reduction" to Republican power are questionable, however, as only two Republicans (Eggleston and Schenck) experienced a 50 percent or more drop in their majority.¹⁷⁵ While several Republicans did see drops of 25 percent to 35 percent from their previous victory (Clarke, Shellabarger, Buckland, Wilson, Welker, Plants), the remainder experienced between 20 percent and 3 percent reductions (Hayes, Lawrence,

¹⁷⁴ Congressional voting statistics from 1864 from *Columbus Morning Journal*, October 9, 1866; Congressional voting statistics for 1866 from the *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of the State of Ohio, 1866* (Columbus, L.D. Myers & Bros., State Printers, 1867), 34-38.

¹⁷⁵ Eggleston (1st district) saw his majority drop from 2,429 in 1864 to 926 in 1866; Schenck (3rd district) went from 2,716 in 1864 to 1,067 in 1866. These two were the only Republicans to experience the "severe reduction" that Bonadio claimed. From *Annual Report of the Secretary of State, 1866*.

Hamilton, Spalding, Garfield).¹⁷⁶ Additionally, seventeen of the nineteen Republicans actually received more *total* votes than in 1864, but the Democratic candidates did cut into the deficits, winning votes at a higher rate than their Republican counterparts. Thus, while Bonadio is correct in saying that that Democrats did make gains in some districts, his suggestion of a “severe reduction” across the board is misleading. Such “losses” could have been predicted, especially when compared to the 1864 elections. That election, held in wartime and after significant Union military victories, indicated both an approval of President Lincoln’s war effort and the Republicans as well as disapproval of the obstructionist positions the Democratic Party maintained, particularly of prominent Ohio Democrats such as Pendleton and Vallandigham. The context of the election may well have impacted the vote; thus, a regress from the 1864 numbers would be expected in 1866. Regardless, the Republicans celebrated while hoping that the South would soon rejoin the Union, pending their acceptance of the amendment.

1867 marked a swift and decisive shift in the both the direction of Congress and Republican politics in Ohio, one that drove the party, its candidate for governor, and its party platform sharply to the radical faction of the party. After the successful 1866 elections and the approval of the proposed amendment in Congress, many Republicans hoped the Southern states would accept the amendment and rejoin the Union, marking a swift end to Reconstruction. Such hope quickly faded into outrage. Every Southern State except Tennessee overwhelmingly

¹⁷⁶ **25%-35% reductions-** Clarke (6th): 2,440 majority in 1864, 1,579 in 1866; Shellabarger (7th): 3,169 majority in 1864, 2,171 in 1866; Buckland (9th): 1,794 majority in 1864, 1,287 in 1866; Bundy/Wilson (11th): Hezekiah Bundy had a majority of 3,788, Wilson had a majority of 2,838 in 1866; Welker (14th): 2,532 majority in 1864, 1,707 in 1866; Plants (15th): 3,283 majority in 1864, 2,064 in 1866. From *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of the State of Ohio, 1866* (Columbus, L.D. Myers & Bros., State Printers, 1867).

5%-20% reductions- Hayes (2nd): 3,098 majority in 1864, 2,558 in 1866; Lawrence (4th): 2,664 majority in 1864, 2,254 in 1866; Hubbell/Hamilton (8th): Hubbell had a majority of 1,920 in 1864, Hamilton had a majority of 1,852 in 1866; Spalding (18th): 7,711 majority in 1864, 6,505 in 1866; Garfield (19th): 11,771 majority in 1864, 10,986 in 1866. From *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of the State of Ohio, 1866* (Columbus, L.D. Myers & Bros., State Printers, 1867).

rejected the amendment, a result aided by the prompting of President Johnson.¹⁷⁷ Radical Republicans reacted strongly, calling for harsher measures against the South, stronger legislation from Congress, and, finally, the pursuit of black suffrage in the South and possibly in the North. Interpreting the election as an endorsement of Radical Republicanism and a denunciation of Johnson, Congressional Radicals looked to capitalize on their electoral success (Republicans won enough Congressional seats to override any Presidential veto) and implement their own brand of Reconstruction, uninhibited by Johnson.¹⁷⁸

Ohio Republicans unanimously supported the First Reconstruction Act, as well as unanimously overriding the President's veto of the Tenure of Civil Office act, cementing the Republicans break from Johnson and setting the stage for Ohio Republicans to reject moderate policies for the upcoming state election.¹⁷⁹ This is further evidenced by James Ashley's repeated attempts to bring up charges of impeachment in Congress, first in January 1867, finally succeeding in early 1868.¹⁸⁰ Ashley's impeachment pursuit aside, by Spring 1867, both Congressional and Ohio Republicans began to accept the endorsement of black suffrage in both the South *and* the North, agreeing that the time had finally come to address the issue head-on. A variety of factors contributed to Ohio Republicans' decision to pursue black suffrage and present a suffrage referendum to Ohio voters: 1) political expediency, 2) a desire to avoid claims of hypocrisy by requiring black suffrage in the South but not the North, 3) a true commitment to impartial suffrage, and 4) a desire to see the issue decided at the state level instead of the federal

¹⁷⁷ Eric McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, 449.

¹⁷⁸ Peskin, *Garfield*, 278; Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 90-95; Craven, *Reconstruction*, 197-199;

¹⁷⁹ Voting information from GovTrack.us, accessed November 2019, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes#session=108>.

¹⁸⁰ Rebecca E. Zietlow, *The Forgotten Emancipator: James Mitchell Ashley and the Ideological Origins of Reconstruction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 153. Ashley was not the only Ohioan with interest in impeachment; see William M. Dickson to Rutherford B. Hayes, February 25, 1867, Rutherford B. Hayes Correspondence, Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

level.¹⁸¹ Each factor has been debated and supported by various historians, but the conclusion is the same: the 1867 Ohio election would hinge on the suffrage issue.

In April 1867, the Ohio legislature considered an amendment to the state constitution which would strike the word “white” from the suffrage clause, officially sanctioning both white and black men to vote in the state. It would also disenfranchise a certain amount of white men, including those who deserted during the war or were deemed to have assisted the Confederacy. The measure was introduced by moderates eager to prove their worth to the suddenly powerful radicals.¹⁸² The *Western Reserve Chronicle* reported that the amendment came as a result of the “urgent and almost unanimous demand of the Republican press of the State.”¹⁸³ A wide array of Republican papers immediately announced their support of the amendment and the referendum, predicting rousing victories for both Republicans and the referendum. An article from *The Fremont Weekly Journal* suggested that “a large majority of Ohio will vote for this Amendment, and therefore regard its adoption as a thing accomplished,” though the *Journal* would still advocate “zealously” for the amendment. The *Delaware Gazette* proudly announced their support for the amendment, citing justice for the approximately 8,500 African Americans barred from voting under the current state laws. *The Wyandot Pioneer*, among others, cited the developments in South Carolina, where freedmen held the right to vote, and questioned why the comparatively small number of African Americans in Ohio should be barred from voting.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Historians suggested various explanations for such a move in Ohio: 1) political expediency- Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 84-87; 2) desire to avoid hypocrisy- Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 101; 3) true commitment to impartial suffrage- Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans*, 362; 4) state vs. federal level- Martin E. Mantell, *Johnson, Grant, and the Politics of Reconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 53.

¹⁸² Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 101.

¹⁸³ *Western Reserve Chronicle*, April 10, 1867.

¹⁸⁴ *The Fremont Weekly Journal*, April 12, 1867; *Delaware Gazette*, May 10, 1867; *The Wyandot Pioneer*, April 18, 1867; *The Lancaster Gazette*, April 11, 1867; *The Hancock Jeffersonian*, April 12, 1867; *The Jackson Standard*, April 18, 1867.

Other papers expressed some hesitance with the amendment though they did not oppose it outright. The *Fayette County Herald* seemed content to leave the issue in the hands of the people of Ohio, a decision that Ohio Democrats did not seem to favor. “After all the loud professions of unbounded confidence in the sovereign people... [Democrats] gave lie to their profession of confidence in the people by voting against trusting them to decide on the suffrage question.” *The Highland Weekly News* supported the amendment but feared that it came too quickly for some Republicans. Some Union men, the paper claimed, “who had not yet got the better of their prejudices against the colored men, needed a little more time to prepare them to act calmly and dispassionately on the question.”¹⁸⁵ This fear came from a concern with timing; it did not mean that the paper quibbled with the amendment itself.

Some Republican papers feared that the double purpose of the amendment, mainly the disenfranchisement of Union deserters and anyone who in any way aided the rebellion, would contribute its downfall. “It will be impossible,” the *Gallipolis Journal* claimed, “by the vote upon it [the suffrage amendment] to get at the sentiments of the citizens of the State upon the question of negro suffrage.”¹⁸⁶ Democratic papers hounded Republicans on the disenfranchisement of deserting soldiers. The *Daily Ohio Statesman* suggested that the Republicans feared for the success of the amendment and tacked the disenfranchisement section on to ensure its success. *The Cadiz Sentinel* claimed that the clause unfairly targeted Ohioans in the southern portion of the state, citing the disenfranchisement of “citizens of the South, who might choose to emigrate to Ohio.” The *Democratic Enquirer* called the disenfranchisement of soldiers a “blunder” and suggested that “the blunder could be partially retrieved by the

¹⁸⁵ *Fayette County Herald*, April 18, 1867; *The Highland Weekly News*, April 18, 1867.

¹⁸⁶ *Gallipolis Journal*, May 2, 1867.

Republican State Convention pronouncing against the Amendment as it stands.”¹⁸⁷ Other Democratic presses smugly suggested that the Republicans had finally “taken off the mask and come out boldly for negro suffrage,” even if it risked disenfranchising considerably more whites than it enfranchised blacks.¹⁸⁸

Republican papers countered these claims by criticizing Democrats nearsighted overreactions. The *Delaware Gazette* attempted to calm fears by telling its readers that adequate provisions would be made to determine which soldiers deserted during war time. The editor also argued that Democrats were not truly concerned with disenfranchisement, only selectively when it affected their party. For instance, the Democrat Party favored not allowing crippled inmates of the Soldiers Home to vote.¹⁸⁹ *The Wyandot Pioneer* challenged the statistics of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, as that paper’s editor claimed that only 4,000 blacks would get the vote and 24,000 whites would be disenfranchised. Such numbers, the paper claimed, were incredibly inflated.¹⁹⁰ Regardless, some historians suggested that the decision to add the disenfranchisement clause did nothing but hurt the Republicans in the election.¹⁹¹

As the Union State Convention approached, it became clear that Jacob Cox could not lead the Republican ticket for the upcoming gubernatorial election. The *Cleveland Leader* communicated the importance of having a “a candidate for Governor who is radically right on the great issues of the campaign- Equal Suffrage in the South, provided by the Reconstruction Act, and Equal Suffrage in Ohio, proposed by the Constitutional Amendment.”¹⁹² While the paper meekly suggested that Cox could still fit the bill, it was clear that the party must choose

¹⁸⁷ *Daily Ohio Statesman*, April 8, 1867; *The Cadiz Sentinel*, April 24, 1867; *Democratic Enquirer*, May 2, 1867.

¹⁸⁸ *Urbana Union*, April 17, 1867; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, June 19, 1867.

¹⁸⁹ *Delaware Gazette*, April 12, 1867; *Delaware Gazette*, May 24, 1867.

¹⁹⁰ *The Wyandot Pioneer*, May 9, 1867.

¹⁹¹ Porter, *Ohio Politics*, 238; Mohr, *Radical Republicans in the North*, 90.

¹⁹² *The Wyandot Pioneer*, June 20, 1867 (article from the *Cleveland Leader*).

someone more radical. His support of President Johnson, conservatism on race issues, and poor standing with the radical faction presented too many detractors and his support waned; even Garfield, his trusted friend, resigned to support Cox “without enthusiasm.”¹⁹³ Both James Garfield and Rutherford B. Hayes emerged as likely candidates, both well-respected, younger Congressmen with more acceptable records on race and radicalism. Garfield’s health and financial situation precluded him from running, however, and Hayes would ultimately be tapped as the Republican candidate, behind strong support from the Western Reserve.¹⁹⁴ Hayes won the candidacy over Samuel Galloway at the Union Party convention in June. The Republican platform under which he ran 1) endorsed the constitutional amendments at the federal level, as well as the 39th and 40th Congress’ and their policies of Reconstruction; and 2) supported the state constitutional amendment, placing the party “on the simple and broad platform of impartial manhood suffrage.” The convention *unanimously* adopted the candidate and the platform, signaling a complete reversal of 1866, where the convention avoided any mention of suffrage altogether.¹⁹⁵

The 1867 Republican campaign focused heavily on the proposed suffrage amendment. Hayes traveled extensively across the state, extolling the merits, morally and politically, of the suffrage amendment. His speeches usually began with a repudiation of the Democratic Party and its leaders and finished with a rousing endorsement of the suffrage amendment, explaining the essential nature of necessary change. Two of his more impassioned and focused speeches were given in Lebanon and Dayton. In Lebanon, Hayes attacked the “leaders of the Peace Democracy intent to carry on one more campaign on the old and rotten platform of prejudice against colored

¹⁹³ Rutherford B. Hayes to S. Birchard, June 12, 1867, RBH Papers; Peskin, *Garfield*, 278-279.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.; William Henry Smith to Rutherford B. Hayes, May 25, 1867, RBH Papers.

¹⁹⁵ *Delaware Gazette*, June 21, 1867; *The Highland Weekly News*, August 8, 1867.

people.” He then encouraged Ohioans to expel the “plain and monstrous inconsistency” that existed, the “injustice of excluding one-seventh of our population from all participation” in their own government. He closed by assuaging fears driven by Democratic fear-mongers. “We need indulge in no fears that the white people will be left behind,” Hayes said. “Impartial suffrage, then, means popular intelligence; it means progress; it means loyalty; it means harmony between the North and the South, and between the whites and the colored people.”¹⁹⁶

In Dayton, Hayes claimed that the Democrats would clamor for black votes if the Republicans had not already established themselves as their friends. He suggested that “some say that voting is the highest duty of citizenship,” but “the highest duty is that which impels a man to take his hand and go forth to fight for the life and integrity of his imperiled country.” The freedmen had fought for a country that did not even recognize their rights, political or otherwise, as citizens of that country. “Having given that privilege, I say with General Sherman at Atlanta, that having given them bayonets, we will not withhold the ballot.”¹⁹⁷ Hayes argued that the white people of the North owed suffrage to the black population, not only for the centuries of injustice, but also their brave resolve to pursue the maintenance of the Union.

John Sherman served as a prime example of how far some Ohio Republicans had come on suffrage.¹⁹⁸ He took a variety of different avenues to elicit support for the amendment. He spoke persuasively during the campaign, telling audiences that “no more important one [issue] can be submitted to you” than the suffrage amendment. He argued that the exclusion of the black population from voting was a “remnant of the barbaric influence of slavery and should fall with

¹⁹⁶ Rutherford B. Hayes Campaign Speech, August 5 in Lebanon, Ohio, “Speeches and Messages of Rutherford B. Hayes,” accessed October 2019, <https://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/speeches-messages-of-rutherford-b.-hayes/>.

¹⁹⁷ Rutherford B. Hayes Campaign Speech, August 15 in Dayton, Ohio, “Speeches and Messages of Rutherford B. Hayes,” accessed October 2019, <https://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/speeches-messages-of-rutherford-b.-hayes/>.

¹⁹⁸ Mantell, *Johnson, Grant, and the Politics of Reconstruction*, 53.

the rest of the infernal system.”¹⁹⁹ Sherman also suggested that, if only for consistency’s sake, Ohioans consider this amendment. He estimated that there were 7,000 black men able to vote in Ohio. The people of Ohio elected politicians who voted to force the South to allow 700,000 blacks vote; they could not force such actions upon the South, Sherman argued, while barring the 7,000 in Ohio from voting, at least without legitimate claims of hypocrisy. In the end, he encouraged unconvinced citizens that the “question will never rest until we do equal and exact justice to all men,” and promised that the amendment would mean hearing no more about black suffrage.²⁰⁰

Other Republicans also took to the stump, advocating for the suffrage amendment. General John C. Lee, Republican candidate for Lt. Governor, attacked the Democratic opposition to the suffrage amendment and the opposition party’s claims that Republicans preached total equality with African Americans. Lee denied that the ballot alone gave blacks social equality with whites, but defended their right to vote, their patriotism, and demonstrably asserted that “this opposition to negro suffrage in Ohio is indefensible.”²⁰¹ Richard Smith, editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*, one of the major Union publications in the southern portion of the state, also strongly endorsed the amendment. His endorsement was important, given the animosity that many in Southern Ohio held for the African American community. “Having adopted the principle of manhood suffrage at the South, the Republican party could not consistently adopt or favor a different policy in Ohio. I favor it [the amendment] on that ground. I favor it upon the still higher ground that it is right!”²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Speech given by John Sherman at Canton, Ohio on August 20, 1867, Gilded Age Collection, John Sherman, Box 2 (Correspondence and Speeches), Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

²⁰⁰ Speech by John Sherman at Carson’s Grove, Ohio on September 21, 1867, John Sherman Papers.

²⁰¹ *The Tiffin Weekly Tribune*, September 5, 1867.

²⁰² *The Wyandot Pioneer* (from the *Cincinnati Commercial*), September 9, 1867.

While several Ohio Congressmen maintained support for black suffrage that traced back several years (Ashley, Schenck, Garfield), others did not hold such radical persuasions. The 1867 election, however, brought suffrage endorsements from moderates as well as radicals. John Bingham, one of the key framers of the 14th Amendment who worked hard to exclude black suffrage from the final version, spoke in favor of the suffrage amendment in late September. During a speech, he suggested that “not a man within the hearing of my voice, but will admit, that if the negro’s complexion was white, he should be allowed to vote,” arguing that those who “stood shoulder to shoulder with you in all the struggle that had made and saved the Republic” deserved the right to vote.²⁰³

Even Jacob Cox reluctantly supported the amendment, if only to be consistent with Republican demands in the South. In a speech in early September, he spoke briefly on suffrage and the amendment, expressing himself “decidedly in favor of it, having been forced by the inexorable logic of events to demand the right to voting for the blacks of the South, we could not consistently refuse it to the few in our own State,” the *Western Reserve Chronicle* reported.²⁰⁴ Thus, the suffrage amendment received endorsement from Ohio Republicans of all stripes, and many Republicans hoped that the elections would reflect such unity. They would be horribly disappointed.

The election results shocked Republicans and elated Democrats who had suffered embarrassing and lopsided losses in the last four state elections. Hayes received only 50.3 percent of the vote, defeating Allen Thurman, the Democrat candidate, by just under three thousand votes. While this election more accurately reflected the parity in Ohio politics that existed in the decade before the Civil War, it marked a stark shift from Republican war-time

²⁰³ *The Weekly Perrysburg Journal*, September 20, 1867.

²⁰⁴ Jacob Cox to Charles Cox September 13, 1867, Cox Papers; *Western Reserve Chronicle*, September 11, 1867.

dominance.²⁰⁵ Thurman, running with the full support of two of the most influential Ohio Democrats, George Pendleton and Clement Vallandigham, conducted a campaign strongly against Congressional/Radical Reconstruction and vehemently against black suffrage and the constitutional amendment. The Democrat promised to rescue Ohio from “the thralldom of niggerism,” and shamelessly touted blatant racism and prejudice throughout his campaign, arguing that the Republican Party wanted to bring black domination upon Ohio.²⁰⁶ Clearly, the party capitalized on the persistent racial antagonism. Ohio Democrats took control of the state legislature and successfully defeated the suffrage amendment by a significant margin, 253,940 (53.9 percent) to 216,987 (46 percent).

Senator Sherman offered an honest assessment of the defeat, arguing that the suffrage amendment, financial issues, and the “violent declarations of some of our [Republican] leaders” led to the defeat. Still, he maintained that black suffrage “is clearly the right... It is easy to convince people so, but harder to make them feel it, and vote it. We will carry this because it is right, but it will be a burden in every election and if unwisely put and pressed will be the cause of temporary defeats.”²⁰⁷ *The Vinton Record* mirrored such sentiments, suggesting that the black suffrage “has occupied the political arena for years... and will until we dare to do him justice. The very foundation of democratic government rests upon the issue, and in time it is bound to win.”²⁰⁸ A number of Republicans still held onto the faint hope that equal suffrage could be won in Ohio, including Hayes, who spoke boldly in favor of equal suffrage during his inaugural

²⁰⁵ *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of Ohio, 1869*, 102-103; it was the closest state election since the 1857 governor election where Salmon P. Chase won election by only 1,503 votes over H.B. Payne.

²⁰⁶ Edward L. Gambill, *Conservative Ordeal, Northern Democrats and Reconstruction, 1865-1868* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), 102; Foner, *America's Unfinished Revolution*, 313; Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 460.

²⁰⁷ John Sherman to Schulyer Colfax, October 20, 1867, Sherman Papers.

²⁰⁸ *The Vinton Record*, October 17, 1867.

address as Governor, expressing his desire to see the state vote in favor of equal suffrage during the state Constitutional Convention in 1871.²⁰⁹

Republican papers criticized those party members who did not vote for the amendment, as full Republican support was counted upon to secure the referendum and the governorship. The *Delaware Gazette* worried that the failed suffrage pursuit in Ohio could have negative consequences across the nation, suggesting that military reconstruction might be the only option in the South if impartial suffrage did not become the law of the land. ““If we are forced into such despotism it will be simply because loyal suffrage has been blindly and foolishly voted down.” The *Western Reserve Chronicle*, on the other hand, criticized Republicans who did not vote for the amendment, suggesting that it “makes them narrow, bigoted and selfish, and fit subjects for the use of such demagogues as Vallandigham and Thurman.”²¹⁰ Other papers recognized the possibility of this outcome before the election. “The cause of so marked a revolution in this county,” wrote the editor of the *Gallipolis Journal*, “is apparent to every one... the attempt to carry as a part of the Republican platform, the question of negro suffrage did the business.” The article did not disparage the pursuit of equal suffrage, however, saying that “it takes much time and discussion to work so important and radical a chance as this question of manhood suffrage presented.”²¹¹

Democrat-run papers, though surprised by their success, nonetheless celebrated the amendment’s defeat, taunted Republicans, and warned against pursuing suffrage in subsequent elections. “Democrats, as well as Republicans are astounded at the result in Ohio,” *The*

²⁰⁹ Rutherford B. Hayes to S. Birchard Hayes, January 11, 1868, *Diary and Letters*, 50; in this letter Hayes discussed his inauguration address and his plan to support black suffrage even amidst its defeat; “Inaugural Address, January 13, 1868,” Rutherford B. Hayes, *Speeches*, Rutherford B. Hayes Collection, Rutherford B. Hayes Library.

²¹⁰ *Delaware Gazette*, October 11, 1867; *Western Reserve Chronicle*, October 16, 1867.

²¹¹ *Gallipolis Journal*, October 17, 1867; *Morning Journal* (Columbus), October 15, 1867.

Conservative wrote, “The revolution has moved with the force of whirlwind, sweeping away Black Republican Radicalism as cobwebs are swept by the storm.” *The Cadiz Sentinel* celebrated by claiming that “the Caucasian is still the governing element in Ohio,” while the *Daily Ohio Statesman* triumphantly proclaimed “the idol of the [Republican] party is now cast down and broke.”²¹² The *Statesmen* editor issued a warning to the Republicans, arguing that “If they [Republicans], having due notice, continue to misrepresent the wishes of their constituents, the majority next fall... will be still stronger in condemnation.” Democrats believed Ohioans denied the vote to African Americans for the better and interpreted the overwhelming majority against the amendment as proof that the issue was dead. “They who periled their political salvation in the attempt to give him the right to vote and hold office, can now thank their stars,” one paper proclaimed, “that the Democracy have saved them and the country from their folly.”²¹³

The overwhelming defeat of the suffrage amendment and the repudiation of Radical Republicanism did not stop with Ohio. Democrats won or gained considerable ground across the North as Republicans stumbled in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Maryland; subsequent suffrage referendums also failed in Minnesota and Kansas. While Ohio’s election can be viewed as a general repudiation of Radical Republicanism seen throughout the North, the complexities of internal state politics, exhibited in the analysis of the election and suffrage referendum below, complicate matters. These complexities created fundamental differences between Ohio and the rest of the North, a topic that will be discussed more precisely in chapter three of this thesis. Regardless, the widespread hostility to Radical platforms and candidates

²¹² *The Conservative*, October 17, 1867; *The Cadiz Sentinel*, October 16, 1867; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, October 11, 1867.

²¹³ *Daily Ohio Statesman*, October 19, 1867; *Urbana Union*, October 09, 1867 (from the *Columbus Statesman*).

across the North suggests that Northerners had grown tired of Reconstruction issues.²¹⁴ While some historians indicate that financial matters played an important part in the 1867 Ohio elections, such a sizeable turnaround from the previous two state elections suggest the decision to stake the Republican platform on black suffrage and the success of the amendment had an overwhelmingly effect on vote.²¹⁵

The 1867 elections marked a turning point in the politics of the post-bellum era. Republicans across the North suffered shocking losses. The failed Ohio suffrage referendum represented the most promising opportunity for equal suffrage in a key northern state. Some predicted that the amendment would pass by 5,000 to 10,000 votes and that Hayes would win by 40,000; Hayes won by less than 3,000 and the amendment failed by nearly 37,000 votes.²¹⁶ These statistics, however, leave much untold. The majority of the scholarly discussion surrounding the referendum results focuses on the numbers at the *state* level.²¹⁷ Even with this brief treatment, some historians have misattributed votes against the amendment without clarification. Howard K. Beale, often associated with famed historian Charles Beard, argued in his *Critical Year* that the Ohio amendment failed by 50,629 votes; Felice Bonadio appeared to use this number in his *North of Reconstruction*, attributing the amendment defeat to 50,000 votes.²¹⁸ These statistics are misleading, as they included the number of “blank” ballots in the

²¹⁴ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 119; Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans*, 364, 373; Michael Les Benedict, “The Rout of Radicalism: Republicans and the Elections of 1867,” *Civil War History* 18, No. 4 (December, 1972), 341-344; Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 90-91.

²¹⁵ Gambill, *Conservative Ordeal*, 102; Foner, *America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 315. This is not to say that economic or other issues did not have an effect, only that the suffrage issue was the dominant one facing Ohio in 1867. For information on the Ohio Plan (Pendleton Plan), see Mach, “Gentlemen George” Hunt Pendleton.

²¹⁶ Benedict, “The Rout of Radicalism,” 342.

²¹⁷ For example, the statistics are briefly discussed in Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 115-116; Morton, “Ohio’s Gallant Fight, 87-88; Foner, *America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 315; Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 462.

²¹⁸ Howard K. Beale, *The Critical Year, A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1930, 1958), 390; Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction*, 103. Beale also argued that the Republican failure in the 1867 election was evidence of Ohio’s support for Johnson and his Reconstruction plan. This interpretation of 1867 Ohio is challenged by the assertion that the suffrage amendment was the main reason for their defeat.

overall vote without any explanation (the *Morning Journal* in Columbus recorded 12,276 blank referendum ballots in Ohio).²¹⁹ While these blank ballots can easily be counted with the “no” votes, it is important that they be designated as such. Clearly, it can be reasoned that most of these blank votes came from those who voted for Hayes in the election. Thus, while one can *assume* such blank ballots denote hostility to the amendment, determining the level of hostility toward the suffrage amendment within the Republican Party remains difficult.

A deeper analysis of the amendment referendum at the county level, as well as a comparison to the vote for governor, brings results into clearer focus. The vote stood at 216,987 votes for the amendment, and 253,940 votes against the amendment.²²⁰ The vote for governor stood at 243,605 votes for Hayes, and 240,623 votes for Thurman.²²¹ Thus, 26,618 more people voted for the Republican candidate for governor (Hayes) than for the Republican-sponsored referendum, a decrease of just over eleven percent. Using these numbers, it appears that 89 percent of Republicans voting for Hayes also voted for the suffrage amendment. Such a percentage is a little misleading, however, as there are several additions that are necessary to create a more accurate picture of Republican (and statewide) support of the amendment.

Hayes received 243,605 votes, Thurman received 240,623, and the amendment received 253,940 votes against. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that at least 10,000 and at most 13,317 Republicans who voted for Hayes voted *against* the suffrage amendment.²²² Also, it is reasonable to suggest that the majority (if not all) of those who left the amendment vote blank

²¹⁹ *The Morning Journal* (Columbus), October 31, 1867.

²²⁰ Voting statistics for the amendment gathered from *The Morning Journal* (Columbus), October 31, 1867. The paper originally stated that 255,340 votes were counted against the amendment; upon calculation of the county totals, the total amounted to only 253,940. Thus, the correct calculated number will be used throughout this chapter.

²²¹ Again, the official reports in the *Annual Report to the Governor of Ohio* report 240,622; after careful calculations and cross-checking with the *Morning Journal*, the official record should be 240,623.

²²² 253,940 people voted against the amendment and 243,605 voted for Hayes, leaving 10,335 votes. Also, Hayes won by 2,982; this number added to 10,335 comes to 13,317.

also identified as Republican. So, to determine the estimated Republican support for the amendment from those who participated in the election, it is necessary to add the 12,276 blank referendum ballots to the 243,605 votes for Hayes. Additionally, Hayes received 12,697 fewer votes than the Republican candidate in the 1866 election, William Henry Smith. These voters, however, could have potentially voted for the Democratic candidate in 1867, thus removing them from the Republican electorate. To estimate Republican support for the amendment, it is necessary to add the twelve thousand blank votes and the approximately twelve thousand voters who did not vote for the Democratic candidate but did vote against the referendum. That leaves 216,987 Republican votes “For” out of 267,605 estimated *potential* Republican voters in the 1867 election. These numbers suggest that *at least* 81 percent of the Republicans who *could* have participated in the 1867 election voted “For” the suffrage amendment.²²³ Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that somewhere between 81 percent and 89 percent of participating Republicans voted in favor of the suffrage amendment. This is a fairly remarkable statistic given the checkered history of Ohio with racial equality and the proximity to major racial-reform legislation such as the Thirteenth Amendment.²²⁴ The Ohio Republican Party truly did see black suffrage as an important issue during early Reconstruction.

But what percentage of Ohio supported the black suffrage referendum? Over 253,940 Ohioans voted against the referendum, 13,317 votes more than the Democratic candidate received in the election, an *increase* of just over five percent. If it can be assumed that all 216,987 people who voted for the amendment identified as Republicans and voted for Hayes, the

²²³ 216,987 “For” votes vs. 267,605 total estimated Republican voters; 243,605 total votes for Hayes, plus 12,276 blank amendment votes, plus 12,000 voters who did not vote Democrat but voted against the referendum.

²²⁴ Even if another 30,000 Republicans (about twelve percent of the total Republican voters in the 1867 election) decided to forgo the election because of their hesitance to support equal suffrage, nearly three-fourths of Ohio Republicans still supported the amendment (72.8 percent). Robert Sawrey suggests that this is a more realistic figure, but such a number relies on too much speculation.

number of participants in the 1867 election (Republicans and Democrats) who either voted against the amendment or cast a vote for governor but did not vote for or against the amendment, at the least, stands at 267,616. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that only 216,987 voters out of 484,603 total voters expressed support for the suffrage amendment, or 44.7 percent of Ohioans who participated in the 1867 election.²²⁵ Breaking down the vote geographically will show the degree each section of the state expressed support for the amendment.

As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, Ohio's geographic division between the Western Reserve and the Southern portion of the state, which predominantly influenced arguments of social reform throughout Ohio's history, contributed heavily to the results in the referendum vote. In the fourteen counties of the Western Reserve, Republicans cast 50,340 votes for Hayes, and 47,046 votes for the suffrage amendment, a reduction only 6.5 percent as compared to the average statewide drop of eleven percent. Additionally, the region counted 31,134 votes for Thurman, and 32,390 votes against the suffrage amendment, an increase of only 3.88 percent as opposed to the statewide increase of five percent. Only two of the fourteen counties in the Western Reserve recorded more "Against" votes than "For" votes on the amendment, compared to the rest of the state, where fifty-four of the remaining seventy-four counties recorded majorities against the amendment.²²⁶ The suffrage amendment received nearly 60 percent of the WR vote, over 15 percent higher than the statewide vote, and Hayes received 61.8 percent of the WR vote, as opposed to the statewide average of 50.3 percent.²²⁷ Thus, the

²²⁵ Robert Sawrey suggests that less than 40 percent of Ohioans supported the amendment; to arrive at this number, he suggests that a large number of Republicans stayed away from the polls because they didn't want to vote against the amendment; also, he claims that a large number did not genuinely support the amendment, but voted for it anyways to maintain party unity.

²²⁶ County voting data from *The Morning Journal* (Columbus), October 31, 1867 compared to the county voting data in the *Annual Report of the State of Ohio, 1869*.

²²⁷ WR voting for Governor: 50,340 Hayes, 31,134 Thurman; WR voting on the amendment: 47,046 "For," 32,390 "Against."

Western Reserve not only showed disproportionate support for Hayes, but also for the suffrage amendment. In all, thirty-two counties voted “For” the suffrage amendment, twelve of which came from the Western Reserve, and all voted for Hayes in the gubernatorial election. Fifty-six counties voted against the suffrage amendment, including eleven which voted for Hayes in the gubernatorial contest. The remaining forty-four counties, forty-two of which voted for Thurman and two that ended in a tie, voted against the amendment.

The Southern border counties displayed hostility to the suffrage amendment, even while the vote for governor remained relatively even.²²⁸ In the twenty counties that cover the Southern border of Ohio, Hayes received 49 percent of the vote and Thurman received 51 percent, a variance of only 1 percent from the statewide average. The referendum vote did not reflect such parity; only 43.5 percent of voters supported the amendment, and 56.5 percent voted against it.²²⁹ Sixteen of the twenty counties voted down the amendment, while the Democratic candidate won only eleven of the twenty counties. Thus, Hayes won the combined vote in the WR and the South by 54 percent; he lost the vote in the rest of the state (fifty-four counties), receiving only 47 percent of the vote. Interestingly, the Southern portion of Ohio, with its recorded history of antagonism toward the African American community, did not show increased hostility toward the amendment compared to the rest of the state (minus the Western Reserve). Only 43.3 percent of voters in the remaining fifty-four counties voted for the amendment, slightly less than the 43.5 percent of people in the Southern counties who voted for the amendment. Thus, it can be reasonably suggested that the Southern counties were not overwhelmingly responsible for the

²²⁸ The twenty counties included in “Southern Ohio” for this chapter are Adams, Athens, Butler, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Gallia, Hamilton, Highland, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Morgan, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, Warren, and Washington.

²²⁹ Southern Ohio voting: Hayes- 64,290 votes Thurman- 66,488 votes. Amendment voting: “For”- 55,583 votes “Against”- 72,192 votes.

defeat of the amendment, as they were nearly cancelled out by the WR vote.²³⁰ The remaining counties' voting pattern suggests equal antagonism to the suffrage amendment when compared to the Southern counties. The Radicals seem to have overestimated the amount of support for black suffrage in central and northern sections of the state, which, as the analysis shows, chiefly contributed to the referendum's defeat.

Ohio Republicans hoped to improve upon their 1865 victory in the subsequent state elections. A resounding victory in the 1866 state election, as well as a strong Congressional election, encouraged some party members, but the relationship of Congressional Republicans with President Johnson continued to deteriorate, as did the relationship of Ohio Republicans with Governor Cox. In early 1867, the Southern states all but unanimously voted down the proposed Fourteenth Amendment, the gateway to admission back into the Union, prompting Radical Republicans to abandon the conservative approach to Reconstruction, throwing "Radical Reconstruction" into full gear. The Radical surge in Congress emboldened Radical Republicans in Ohio; the state legislature approved a suffrage referendum for the 1867 gubernatorial election that would legally allow African Americans to vote. This, in turn, forced black suffrage into the forefront as the major issue of the 1867 campaign.

The Ohio Republican party, much to the joy of Radicals and nearly all the Republican media in the state, unanimously endorsed an impartial suffrage platform that supported the suffrage referendum. Jacob Cox decided not to pursue re-election, and Republicans looked toward Congressman Rutherford B. Hayes to champion the Radical Republican cause of impartial suffrage. Though many Republican leaders predicted a successful campaign and

²³⁰ In the thirty-four counties of the South and WR, the vote for amendment stood at 102,584 "For" and 104,582 "Against" (49.5 percent to 50.5 percent). Voting in the rest of Ohio: 114,403 "For" (43.3 percent) and 149,358 "Against" (56.6 percent).

election, their joy would be short lived as the anticipated victory turned to disillusioning defeat. The referendum failed, the Republicans lost the state legislature, and voters only narrowly elected Hayes by less than 3,000 votes. Ohio Republicans, after pushing black suffrage away from their platform in 1865 and attempting to deny their pursuit of the issue during the 1866 election, fully embraced the concept of African American suffrage in 1867, marking the apex of Radical Republicanism in the state and signaling a stark shift in post-bellum Ohio politics. Ohio Radicals saw their continued support of equal suffrage finally rewarded, as the Republican party proper stood behind their pursuit of suffrage, even though it did not result in the rousing victory they desired.

The year 1867 marked the ebb of Radicalism not only in Ohio, but also in many of the Northern states. Republicans experienced diminished majorities, political defeats, and failed suffrage amendments throughout the North, which “set limits on reform in reconstruction” and confirmed for many in Republican leadership that “the conservatism of the northern electorate set limits which the party dared not transgress,” no matter their commitment to social or political reform.²³¹ Though the suffrage amendment failed, much can be learned from the failed amendment in Ohio that will shed light on the subsequent failures in other Northern states.

²³¹ Benedict, “The Rout of Radicalism,” 344.

CHAPTER THREE. A COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF NORTHERN REPUBLICAN ATTEMPTS AT SUFFRAGE REFORM

The previous chapters of this thesis focused on Ohio Republican efforts to pursue black suffrage between the years 1865 and 1867, ultimately ending in the demoralizing defeat of a proposed black suffrage referendum in 1867. The election flipped the State legislature in favor of the Democrats and nearly ended with the defeat of Republican gubernatorial candidate Rutherford B. Hayes. While the failed 1867 election conclusively defeated Republican attempts to bring suffrage reform to Ohio and tipped the balance of power in favor of the Democratic Party, the political context, as well as the outcome, differed considerably from other northern attempts to secure black suffrage. The relative power and influence of Radical Republicans in Ohio enabled them to produce broader Republican support for black suffrage, in higher percentages than every other northern state except for Minnesota and Iowa. Between 1865 and 1867, nearly every northern state legislature confronted the same question: would African Americans be allowed to vote? This chapter analyzes the Republican Party's attempts to secure black suffrage during the early years of Reconstruction, utilizing existing literature to provide both an historiographic overview of suffrage reform during Northern Reconstruction as well as a comparison between the attempts at suffrage reform in Ohio and the rest of the North.

The first section of this chapter examines three groups of northern states, focusing specifically on the Republican Party and its treatment of black suffrage: the Northeast (Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut), the Great Lakes (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), and the Midwest/West (Iowa, Kansas, and California). The Republican Party in each of these states pursued, attempted to pursue, or was forced to confront black suffrage in some way. Northern Reconstruction remains an understudied portion

of nineteenth-century American history; thus, to create an adequate representation of each state and its approach to suffrage reform, a wide variety of literature will be assessed, including journal articles and dissertations, alongside monographs. Voting statistics will also be utilized to insight, though imperfect, into the power of the Republican party in each state.

It is necessary, however, to briefly comment on the importance of the Fifteenth Amendment and the timing of its ratification in Congress in relation to northern discussions of black suffrage. The proposed amendment passed through Congress on February 26, 1869 and was ratified by the states by February 3, 1870.²³² Thus, the majority of the states included in this analysis attempted to address black suffrage before the Fifteenth Amendment. States such as Indiana and Illinois, however, did very little to procure black suffrage before the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, yet after ratification, succeeded in altering their state constitutions to include black suffrage as well. It should be noted that alterations to state suffrage laws *after* ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment held considerably less political risk than states who attempted to change state laws by referendum *before* the Fifteenth Amendment.²³³ For the majority of the states discussed in this chapter, the Fifteenth Amendment had very little bearing on the results of state referendum; those states who were affected will be addressed specifically with the Fifteenth Amendment in mind.

The second section of this chapter compares the results of the various attempts to secure black suffrage (in the form of referendums, election results, et cetera) while showing that Ohio's efforts and its results were distinct from political and legislative efforts in other Northern states. Existing Reconstruction historiography overgeneralizes Northern Republican inability to effect

²³² Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle*, 335.

²³³ Benedict suggests that, even by late 1868, there was considerable doubt of the Fifteenth Amendment being passed in Congress.

suffrage reform, suggesting the attempts to secure black suffrage were equal in their failure. This chapter argues that Ohio had the strongest impulse for black suffrage and managed to build Republican support for black suffrage to a higher degree than the majority of northern states, even in failure. Iowa and Minnesota aside, the Republican pursuit of black suffrage in Ohio differed in substance and in relative success from the remainder of suffrage pursuits. This analysis challenges previous understandings of Northern Reconstruction historiography, suggesting that while Republican electoral losses and failed suffrage referenda in 1867 were in part due to a general repudiation of Radical Reconstruction (and by proxy, black suffrage), the various intricacies of the individual states had great influence on the election/referendum results. Northern Reconstruction, particularly in relation to black suffrage, cannot be looked at unilaterally; Ohio is a clear example of how such analysis brings greater clarity to its unique situation. Thus, the analysis will focus on each state's Republican Party, the extent of their efforts to secure black suffrage, and the outcome of these campaigns. With this historiographic framework, the final section of this chapter will compare other states' endeavors to the failed suffrage campaign in Ohio. Before comparing Ohio to the rest of the North, the various states must first be discussed, starting with the Northeastern states.

The New England/Northeastern states offered African Americans the best chance for the expansion of enfranchisement following the Civil War. Prior to the outbreak of war, only five states in the Union allowed their black population to vote: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Rhode Island.²³⁴ Political rights in these states went largely unchallenged during Reconstruction, but the same cannot be said for the remainder of the Northeastern states. In New York, equal suffrage seemed likeliest; the state constitution allowed black men to vote

²³⁴ Kirk H. Porter, *A History of Suffrage in the United States* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1918), 90; all five were located in New England.

but forced them to comply with property holding requirements that white New Yorkers did not need to meet.²³⁵ A number of Republicans in New York wanted to undo such regulations but faced an uphill battle. Radical Republicans constituted a minority of New York Republicans, unlike other states in the Northeast, where Radicals held firm control. This is evidenced by Republican voting on two important Reconstruction bills. NY Republicans nearly doubled their Democratic counterparts in the Congressional delegation to the 39th Congress, but on the two black suffrage expansion bills during 1867, only half of the twenty Republicans voted in favor of the bills; the other half did not vote at all.²³⁶ Radicalism did not pervade the New York Republican Party, making the expansion of suffrage a difficult endeavor.

Every other state in the Northeast except for New Jersey maintained Republican-dominated delegations, and voted overwhelmingly in favor of bills to expand black suffrage.²³⁷ Despite the ambivalence of many Republicans, NY Radicals worked hard to effect change throughout the state, focusing on issues other than suffrage such as healthcare and schooling. After the conservative faction of the Republican Party split and joined the newly formed National Union Party in the summer of 1866, the Radicals made their move.²³⁸ Under the leadership of Horace Greeley, the Republican state convention proposed an article to the state constitution that would eliminate the property requirement for blacks and allow all males over twenty-one to vote.²³⁹ The majority of the party initially agreed to pursue the amendment but

²³⁵ David Quigley, *Second Founding: New York City, Reconstruction, and the Making of American Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 54.

²³⁶ "Voting Records- 39th Congress," GovTrack.us.

²³⁷ From GovTrack.us; NY 39th Congress- 20 Republicans, 11 Democrats; MA 39th Congress- 10 Republicans; CT 39th Congress- 4 Republicans; PA 39th Congress- 17 Republicans, 7 Democrats; ME 39th Congress- 5 Republicans; VT 39th Congress- 3 Republicans; NH 39th Congress- 3 Republicans.

²³⁸ Leslie H. Fishel Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage 1865-1870," *The Journal of Negro History* 39, No. 1 (Jan., 1954): 13; James C. Mohr, "New York: The De-Politization of Reform," in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics During Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 67-68.

²³⁹ Quigley, *Second Founding*, 55.

could not maintain unity on the issue. Republican losses in key Northern states during 1867, aggressive, racist campaigning from NY Democrats, and consecutive Democratic victories in 1867 and 1868 pushed Republicans away from black suffrage until 1869.²⁴⁰

The Republican-controlled New York legislature ratified the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869 and authorized a suffrage referendum for the coming fall as well as a new constitution that included equal suffrage. Republicans decided to finish what they had started in 1867, declaring black suffrage as a campaign goal and embracing it as a key platform issue.²⁴¹ This most certainly contributed to electoral defeat in 1869. New Yorkers overwhelmingly voted against the proposed Constitution by more than 60,000 votes; subsequently, the suffrage referendum failed by just over 32,000 votes. The Republican candidate for Secretary of State also lost by over 20,000 votes.²⁴² Thus, while NY Republicans ratified the Fifteenth Amendment prior to the suffrage vote, they were only able to rally 80 percent of the 1869 Republican electorate to vote “For” black suffrage, without taking into account the nearly one hundred thousand fewer voters participating in the suffrage referendum. Lower voter participation in suffrage referendum is not unique to New York and existed throughout the North. Whether this is a result of Republicans not wanting to vote against their party’s stance on black suffrage (but not agreeing with it enough to support it), or simply reflecting Democrats desire to delegitimize such a referendum by not voting at all, is unknown. Nevertheless, New York Republicans unequivocally failed to mobilize support for black suffrage, largely as a result of their trepidation in pursuing the issue.

Connecticut Republicans managed to bring a suffrage referendum to the people but faced similar results as New York. The Republican Party entered 1865 with full control of the

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 59-61; Mohr, “New York,” 69-70.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 72; *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1869* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1870), 498.

²⁴² *Annual Cyclopaedia 1869*, 490.

Congressional delegation and looked poised to increase its control of the state legislature in the upcoming election. The Republican-dominated General Assembly unanimously ratified the Thirteenth Amendment in May, and the state Supreme Court ruled that African Americans were, by state law, citizens of Connecticut.²⁴³ The Assembly then voted to include a referendum for the 1865 election that would allow Connecticut's two thousand blacks to vote in the state, which would nullify the suffrage restriction of the 1811 state constitution. The Republicans routed the Democrats, winning the governorship, sweeping the state Senate, and winning a two to one advantage in the House.²⁴⁴ Even with the enormous victory for the Republicans, voters turned down the suffrage amendment, 27,217 to 33,489 (44.8% to 55.1%). Seven of the eight counties rejected the amendment, in an election where the Republican candidate for governor won by over eleven thousand votes.²⁴⁵ At most, only 64 percent of voting Republicans supported the suffrage amendment in 1865 when Republicans only needed 79 percent of participating Republicans to support the referendum, a decided failure for the Republican Party and a decisive statement against equal suffrage in a state with few eligible black voters.²⁴⁶

The party shied away from suffrage until 1867, when Radical Republicans, emboldened by victories in 1866 across the North, purged conservatism from the CT Republican Party and ran with universal manhood suffrage as one of its platforms. This time, the people elected a

²⁴³ John Niven, "Connecticut," in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics During Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 28.

²⁴⁴ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1869), 302-304.

²⁴⁵ Fishel Jr., "Northern Prejudice," 12; XI Wang, *Black suffrage and Northern Republicans, 1865—1891* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993), 61, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Niven, "Connecticut," 28; *Annual Cyclopaedia, 1865*, 302-304. The Republican candidate for governor, William Buckingham, received 42,374 votes, 15,157 more than the suffrage amendment received.

²⁴⁶ 27,217 (votes "For" the suffrage amendment) and 42,374 votes for Buckingham (from *Annual Cyclopaedia, 1865*).

Democratic governor and diminished the Republican majorities in the General Assembly.²⁴⁷ In fact, the defeat managed to alter the landscape of Connecticut politics. In 1865, the state Republican Party boasted majorities of twenty-one to zero in the state Senate and 161-76 in the state House. As result of the disastrous 1867 elections, the Republicans held a razor-thin eleven to ten majority in the Senate, and only a 124-114 majority in the House.²⁴⁸ The Republicans also lost three of the four Congressional districts, signaling a complete reversal of fortunes from 1865, and cementing the Republicans failure to adequately mobilize support for black suffrage, the issue which chiefly contributed to the Democratic resurgence in Connecticut.²⁴⁹

New Jersey and Pennsylvania Republicans never gave their respective constituents an opportunity to vote on black suffrage, but for very different reasons. Pennsylvania retained some of the most vocal supporters of black rights, including Thaddeus Stevens, one of the most radical member of Congress throughout Reconstruction, alongside Charles Sumner. Historian David Montgomery, however, suggested that the divide between Radical and Conservative Republicans in Pennsylvania, particularly on black civil rights, “went deep.” Despite Stevens’ influence and the two-to-one majority that PA Republicans enjoyed in both the 39th and 40th Congress, the party chose not to pursue a suffrage amendment at the state level; in addition to the aforementioned divide within the party, many Republicans and even some Radicals believed it should be handled at the federal level.²⁵⁰ They instead pursued successful legislation that helped to end discrimination in transportation, specifically in the streetcar industry. In 1866, the Republican Party supported the “natural rights” of blacks without standing behind suffrage; they

²⁴⁷ *The American Annual Cyclopeda and Register of Important Events of the Year 1867* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1869), 256; Niven, “Connecticut,” 30-31; Fishel Jr., “Northern Prejudice,” 19.

²⁴⁸ *Annual Cyclopeda 1865*, 302; *Annual Cyclopeda 1867*, 256.

²⁴⁹ Harold J. Bingham, *History of Connecticut*, v.2 (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1962), 617-618.

²⁵⁰ David Montgomery, “Radical Republicanism in Pennsylvania, 1866-1873,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 85, No. 4 (Oct., 1961): 450.

would lose the governorship and many seats in the state legislature in the 1867 election, despite their ambivalence to suffrage, largely because of anti-black and anti-suffrage sympathies aroused by the Democratic Party during the election.²⁵¹

The closest Pennsylvania Republicans came to pursuing suffrage at the state level came in 1868. John Hickman, speaking on behalf of Quakers and Pennsylvania Germans from Lancaster and York counties, introduced a resolution in the State Legislature to amend the state constitution to allow African Americans to vote. Republicans joined with Democrats in the State legislature, however, and soundly rejected the proposal sixty-eight to fourteen, though Republicans controlled the legislature by a slim margin.²⁵² Additionally, Montgomery suggests that had a suffrage referendum been submitted to the people, it would have been handily defeated. Thus, it is extremely difficult to determine the level of Republican support for black suffrage, though it could be argued that Republicans did not pursue suffrage for mere political expediency. Regardless, Republican victories in 1868 allowed the Republican legislature to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869, the first state to do so in the North.²⁵³ PA Republicans preferred to let Congress take handle the political fallout for blacks suffrage, as Congress was more solidly Republican than the PA state legislature.

New Jersey represented the most devastating defeat for both the Republican Party and the black suffrage platform. In 1865, NJ Republicans managed to secure both the governorship and the state legislature, though by slim majorities. The Republican candidate won by less than three thousand votes with over 132,000 cast. Additionally, the party voted down an attempt to bring

²⁵¹ Ira V. Brown, "Pennsylvania and the Rights of the Negro, 1865-1887," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 28, No. 1 (January, 1961), 51.

²⁵² Montgomery, "Radical Republicanism in Pennsylvania," 451; Brown, "Pennsylvania," 52; *Annual Cyclopedia 1867*, 618. The Republicans held a slim 54-56 advantage in the state House; the *Annual Cyclopedia 1868* suggests that the vote against the black suffrage amendment actually stood at 73-13.

²⁵³ Montgomery, "Radical Republicanism in Pennsylvania," 451.

forward a resolution in support of black suffrage.²⁵⁴ In 1866, the party again decided to avoid the suffrage issue, fearing that it would alienate its white electorate. As a percentage of overall population, more African Americans lived in New Jersey (3.4%) than any other Northern state except for Kansas, and maintained only a slightly higher percentage than Ohio.²⁵⁵ Thus, anti-black sentiment pervaded New Jersey society and Republicans did not want to risk their slim advantage on black suffrage if they could not ensure its success. After the moderately successful 1866 campaign, which saw three of five Congressional seats go to the Republicans, four more Senate seats go to Republicans, but three House seats flip Democratic, some Republicans began to consider pursuing black suffrage.²⁵⁶

Throughout 1866, more Republicans became interested in black suffrage as a means to 1) expand the Republican electorate, and 2) fight Democrat claims of Republican hypocrisy by supporting black suffrage in the South and in New Jersey.²⁵⁷ The party was by no means united in its views on suffrage, however, as the course of events in 1867 showed. In February, a man named Edward A. Stansbury submitted to the state legislature, without party approval, a resolution to change the state constitution to allow blacks to vote. Though Republicans maintained a majority, thirteen Republicans chose to vote against the resolution, resulting in a 35-20 defeat.²⁵⁸ In a confusing political move, Republicans officially *endorsed* impartial suffrage

²⁵⁴ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 611- the Republicans held an 11-10 majority in the state Senate and a 36-24 majority in the House; the Republican candidate for governor, Marcus Ward, received 67,522 votes while the Democratic candidate, Theodore Runyon, received 64,731.

²⁵⁵ William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 82; Louis Butler Moore, "Response to Reconstruction: Change and Continuity in New Jersey Politics, 1866-1874." (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University - New Brunswick, 1999), 56-58, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

²⁵⁶ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1866* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1869), 540.

²⁵⁷ Moore, "Response to Reconstruction," 60-61.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 62-63; *Annual Cyclopaedia 1867*, 539.

in their state platform only two months after voting down a potential suffrage resolution. Quite understandably, the decision backfired and resulted in a disastrous election.

Democrats hammered the Republican platform with a mix of white supremacist arguments and a strong appeal to the states' large immigrant population to oppose black suffrage, which Republicans failed to counter.²⁵⁹ Additionally, the 1867 election in New Jersey occurred in November, later than the majority of other Northern elections. As news of Republican defeats in Ohio and elsewhere reached New Jersey, the state party faltered. By the end of the 1867 campaign, Republicans began to separate themselves from their own platform, foreseeing their impending defeat.²⁶⁰ They could not foresee, however, the extent of their losses. The Democrats claimed an 11-10 majority in the state Senate as well as a remarkable 46-14 majority in the House.²⁶¹ Republican losses were so severe that the Democrat legislature rescinded the states' ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Democrats would win even more seats in the following state legislature, setting the Republican Party into disarray.²⁶² New Jersey's failure is largely emblematic of the Northeast's failure to overcome racial antagonism and secure black suffrage.

This section will be split into two segments, first addressing the states of the "Old Northwest" (Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan) before moving to Minnesota and Wisconsin. Dana Elizabeth Weiner, in her *Race and Rights*, argued persuasively that the Old Northwest "was a particularly unfriendly place to be African American" for the entirety of the nineteenth century.²⁶³ Weiner limits her focus to four of Northwest states (MI, OH, IL, and IN) which all

²⁵⁹ Moore, "Response to Reconstruction," 75.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 86.

²⁶¹ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1867*, 540.

²⁶² Charles Merriam Knapp, *New Jersey Politics During the Period of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Geneva, NY: W. F. Humphrey, 1924), 171; Moore, "Response to Reconstruction," 88-89.

²⁶³ Weiner, *Race and Rights*, 36.

maintained “Black Laws” from their acceptance to the Union until at least the Civil War (some maintained restrictions for decades longer). Indiana and Illinois both did very little to pursue black suffrage during the early Reconstruction period. In 1866, the Indiana Supreme Court “invalidated but did not remove the exclusion clause of the 1851 Indiana constitution.”²⁶⁴ With a Republican Governor, Oliver P. Morton, and with nine of the twelve Congressional seats filled with Republicans and Republican control of the state legislature, Indiana looked a likely candidate for pursuing black suffrage.²⁶⁵ It was not to be. Morton publicly proclaimed the position of Indiana Republicans: African Americans should wait “fifteen or twenty years” before being granted voting rights.²⁶⁶ This effectively ended discussions of black suffrage in Indiana until the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which, according to William C. Gerichs, required intense finagling, many rounds of voting, and borderline unconstitutional methods by the Indiana Congress.²⁶⁷

Illinois fared little better than its neighbor to the east. Even with a miniscule black population that stood at four-tenths of one percent in 1860, Illinois was one of the most “Negrophobic” states in the North, consistently passing strict “Black Laws” and limiting political and social freedoms for blacks until 1865.²⁶⁸ After a successful 1864 campaign, and a strong Republican majority in the Congressional delegation, Illinois Republicans voted to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment and worked to undo many of the “Black Laws” still on the books. Some

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 226.

²⁶⁵ GovTrack.us; Six of the nine Republicans voted both for black suffrage in DC and in the territories. *Annual Cyclopedia 1867*, 403. Indiana Republicans held a 30-20 majority in the Senate, and a 61-39 majority in the House.

²⁶⁶ Fishel Jr., “Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage,” 13.

²⁶⁷ William Christian Gerichs, “The Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 9, No. 3 (September, 1913): 131-166.

²⁶⁸ Philip Swanson, “Illinois: Disillusionment with State Activism,” in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics during Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 107; Weiner, *Race and Rights*, 237. Indiana African American Population in 1860- 11,428 out of 1,350,428 (0.4%); in 1870- 24,560 out of 1,680,637 (1.1%).

Republicans began agitating for black suffrage in 1866, but the party remained too divided on the issue to pursue equal suffrage in any considerable manner. Attempts by the state General Assembly in 1867 and 1869 to strike the word “white” from the voting requirements in the state constitution were blocked.²⁶⁹ Instead, the party waited until the 1870 constitutional convention, and voted to include equal suffrage within the proposed constitution. The people of Illinois voted to accept the new constitution by a vote of 134,237 to 35,443.²⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that this new constitution came after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, making the change to the suffrage clause much less controversial and politically dangerous for Republicans. Again, this makes it difficult to assess the Republican willingness to support suffrage or the overall acceptance of equal suffrage in the state, though Philip Swanson argued that if the Republican Party had pursued suffrage in a statewide referendum, they would have lost.²⁷¹

Michigan Republicans faced resistance to equal suffrage much like in the other Old Northwest states yet maintained their dominance over state politics. Republicans held all six Congressional seats and voted unanimously to expand black suffrage in DC and in the territories.²⁷² After ratifying both the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, and with the support of the Republican governor Henry Crapo, Radical Republicans in Michigan began constructing a state constitution that provided for black suffrage. Interestingly, George Blackburn suggests that racism pervaded postwar Michigan, and Republicans did not pursue suffrage on “moral or humanistic grounds” as was the case in Ohio.²⁷³ Instead, the party

²⁶⁹ Swanson, “Illinois,” 108 and 110.

²⁷⁰ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1870* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1871), 396.

²⁷¹ Swanson, “Illinois,” 111.

²⁷² From GovTrack.us.

²⁷³ George M. Blackburn, “Michigan: Quickening Government in a Developing State,” in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics during Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 125-126.

attempted to elicit support by appealing to “national necessity,” arguing that black suffrage ensured a strong Republican Party in the South.²⁷⁴ Even so, Republicans themselves remained undecided as to their commitment to black suffrage. An attempt to include black suffrage during the 1867 Constitutional Convention failed; the state legislature rejected its inclusion in spite of Republican dominance.²⁷⁵

In Spring 1868, Republicans succeeded in crafting a new constitution that omitted the word “white” from the suffrage clause, and finally supported “impartial suffrage” in their state platform for that year.²⁷⁶ It was too little, too late. With massive voter turnout (over 18,000 more votes than the 1866 vote for governor), the people crushed the proposed constitution, 110,582 to 71,733.²⁷⁷ The result showed a decisive defeat for black suffrage, as the people rejected the entire constitution, largely because of the suffrage clause. For Republicans, the vote was most disappointing. The vote for governor in 1866 saw the Republican candidate win 96,746 votes to 67,708 votes; the suffrage constitution only received 74 percent of the vote the Republican candidate (Crapo) received in 1866.²⁷⁸ Additionally, the vote against the constitution equaled almost twice the number of votes the Democratic candidate received in 1866. This means that 1) more Democrats went to the polls in 1868 because of their dislike of the new constitution, and 2) it is probable that many Republicans broke ranks and voted against the constitution. Even though Michigan’s black population only represented 1 percent of the state’s population by 1870, the state refused to support black suffrage.²⁷⁹ Even after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment,

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Weiner, *Race and Rights*, 227.

²⁷⁶ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1868* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1869), 493.

²⁷⁷ Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Period of Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: Philp and Solomons, 1871), 353; *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1868, 494.

²⁷⁸ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1866*, 508.

²⁷⁹ Weiner, *Race and Rights*, 237. Blacks numbered 11,949 out of 1,184,059 in 1870.

the people barely voted to change the state constitution, by a vote of 54,105 to 50,598, with over 80,000 fewer voters than in 1868.²⁸⁰

Minnesota and Wisconsin represented two of the successful attempts to secure black suffrage prior to the Fifteenth Amendment, yet even these did not come easily. Wisconsin's complicated history with black suffrage worked in favor of the miniscule number of blacks living in the state during Reconstruction (at most, there were just over 2,100 blacks in Wisconsin by 1870).²⁸¹ The state voted three times on black suffrage between 1847 and 1865; it failed in 1847 by just under 7,000 votes and failed once again in 1857 by over 17,000 votes.²⁸² It succeeded, however, in 1848, a year after Wisconsin joined the Union. The vote, however, caused many to criticize and question the legitimacy of the referendum. Black suffrage passed by a vote of 5,265 to 4,075; but over 31,759 people voted in the gubernatorial election that same year. Thus, it did not constitute the majority of voters during that election.²⁸³ As the Civil War entered its final months, Radical Republicans looked to secure black voting rights. At the request of one hundred and two African American men, both the State House and Senate passed legislation authorizing a referendum on black suffrage for the coming spring.²⁸⁴ Even with the party's unmatched strength, the Republican candidate for the governorship, Lucius Fairchild, remained wary of tethering himself or his party to black suffrage during the 1865 campaign.

What followed was one of the odder campaigns of Reconstruction. The Radical faction of the Republican Party favored supporting the suffrage referendum, but Fairchild and most of the

²⁸⁰ Blackburn, "Michigan," 130-131. Blackburn argues that the Republican party achieved success in spite of the people, not because of them.

²⁸¹ Richard N. Current, "The Politics of Reconstruction in Wisconsin, 1865-1873," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 60, No. 2 (Winter, 1976-1977), 85.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 85-86; Leslie H. Fishel Jr., "Wisconsin and Negro Suffrage," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring, 1963), 183.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 185.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 189.

party did not. They worried that pronouncing in favor of black suffrage would doom any chance of election. Thus, Fairchild made no statement for or against the referendum throughout the entire campaign, allowing him to have the backing of both the Radical and the Conservative factions.²⁸⁵ Unsurprisingly, the suffrage referendum lost by 9,000 votes, 55,591 against (54.4 percent) to 46,588 for (45.4 percent). Fairchild and the Republicans, however, tallied commanding victories; Fairchild defeated the Democratic candidate by over ten thousand votes, while the Republicans maintained large majorities in both houses of the state legislature.²⁸⁶ Thus, the Wisconsin Republican Party, handed a suffrage referendum by the Republican-dominated state legislature, not only voted to ignore the referendum in its platform, but also its gubernatorial candidate refused to make a statement on the issue.

Regardless of the ambivalence of the state Republican Party, black suffrage still came to Wisconsin. The Republican-controlled state Supreme Court ruled in 1866 that the successful suffrage referendum in 1848 remained legally binding. Wisconsin's few hundred eligible black males exercised their right to vote that year for the first time, despite the failed referendum and the waning support of one faction of the Republican Party.²⁸⁷ African Americans in Wisconsin gained the vote in spite of the Republican Party and its indecision on the issue, not because of Republican support. Instead, three judges of the Wisconsin Supreme Court did what the Republican Party at large would not.

Minnesota voters, unlike in Wisconsin, succeeded in approving a black suffrage referendum after several attempts. Prior to statehood, Minnesota Republicans earnestly discussed the idea of including black suffrage in the state constitution, but knowing that including such a

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 191; Current, "The Politics of Reconstruction in Wisconsin," 87.

²⁸⁶ *Annual Cyclopedia 1865*, 823.

²⁸⁷ Current, "The Politics of Reconstruction in Wisconsin," 88-89; Fishel Jr., "Wisconsin and Negro Suffrage," 196; *Annual Cyclopedia 1865*, 823.

clause would endanger the constitution's success, decided to sacrifice the issue in favor of immediate statehood.²⁸⁸ Republicans tried again in 1865 to pursue equal suffrage, running on an impartial suffrage platform that supported an approved suffrage referendum, unlike the Republican Party in Wisconsin. The party also enjoyed support from the Republican press, combatting the racial fearmongering of Democrats and their party papers.²⁸⁹ In November 1865, Minnesota voters rejected black suffrage by a vote of 14,651 (54.7 percent) to 12,138 (45.3 percent), but elected the Republican candidate for governor by over three thousand votes, and elected Republican majorities in both houses of the state legislature.²⁹⁰ Undeterred, Republicans brought black suffrage to the people a second time in 1867, following strong campaigns resulting in Radical victories in 1866. Again, the people voted against the referendum, this time defeating it by only 1,298 votes.²⁹¹

Minnesota Republicans benefitted from voters consistently voting for Republican candidates while simultaneously voting against the suffrage amendment supported by those same candidates. Still holding the balance of power in the state, Republicans once again put the suffrage referendum to the people in 1868, this time achieving the desired result. The people approved the black suffrage amendment, hidden as a "revision of Section 1, Article 7" of the state constitution, by nine thousand votes.²⁹² After three separate votes in four years, Republicans finally succeeded in mobilizing voters to enfranchise less than one thousand blacks living in Minnesota at the time.²⁹³ Regardless, Minnesota became the first of two states (Iowa) in

²⁸⁸ William D. Green, "Minnesota's Long Road to Black Suffrage, 1849-1868," *Minnesota History* 56 No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 73-75.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

²⁹⁰ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 577.

²⁹¹ McPherson, *The Political History of the United States*, 354. The vote stood 28,759 "Against" and 27,461 "For."

²⁹² Green, "Minnesota's Long Road to Black Suffrage," 83; Fishel Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage," 24.

²⁹³ Green, "Minnesota's Long Road to Black Suffrage," 79. In 1865, there were around 411 blacks living in Minnesota out of a population of 250,000 (.01% of the total population).

the North to vote unilaterally to enfranchise blacks living in their state prior to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Republicans benefitted from not only the enduring electoral success of the party despite the opposition to suffrage reform, but also from the unwavering persistence of its politicians who continually pushed for black suffrage after multiple defeats. Minnesota stands as one of the successes of suffrage reform in the Reconstruction North.

While Kansas and California are not traditional Northern states, the fact that both faced discusses about black suffrage during Reconstruction merits its inclusion in this study. While African Americans made up nearly 10 percent of Kansas' population in 1865, substantially more than any other state in the North, by 1870 that number dropped to just under five percent. The large percentage of African Americans in Kansas has been attributed to its proximity to South, which made it a likely place for fugitive slaves.²⁹⁴ Kansas voted in 1859 to restrict suffrage to white males, a restriction written into the text of the state constitution like many northern states. A divided Republican Party in 1867, however, moved to eliminate such restrictions. The state legislature voted to allow a black suffrage referendum that fall.²⁹⁵ What followed was a grisly display of violent hostility toward blacks and black suffrage, resulting in a disheartening rejection that would keep black suffrage out of the Kansas state constitution until 1918.²⁹⁶

Unlike most Northern campaigns for black enfranchisement, where outbursts of violence against blacks remained limited, Kansas experienced a rash of violent attacks on African Americans, often following speeches or rallies held in support of the proposed suffrage referendum. Wyandotte County experienced the brunt of this violence, as white supremacists

²⁹⁴ Brent M. S. Campney, "'Light is bursting upon the world!': White Supremacy and Racist Violence against Blacks in Reconstruction Kansas," *Western Historical Quarterly* 41, No. 2 (Summer, 2010), 176 and 178.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 180.

²⁹⁶ Brent MacDonald Stevenson Campney, "'And this in Free Kansas': Racist violence, Black and White Resistance, Geographical Particularity, and the 'Free State' Narrative in Kansas, 1865 to 1914" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2007), 98, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

lynched several black men and injured many more in separate attacks.²⁹⁷ Racially motivated political violence in Kansas would continue even after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Politically, suffrage supporters faced backlash from Democrats and anti-suffrage Republicans. One Republican state senator even attempted to attach female suffrage to the suffrage referendum to ward off voters; instead, the women's suffrage referendum was added onto the ballot as a separate referendum entirely.²⁹⁸ Despite Republican dominance and Radical support for black suffrage, the situation appeared bleak as the election approached.

The Kansas electorate crushed the black suffrage amendment by a vote of 19,421 (65 percent) to 10,483 (35 percent); in fact, black suffrage only garnered 1,400 more votes than the considerably more controversial female suffrage referendum.²⁹⁹ The previous year, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, S.J. Crawford, beat a coalition candidate from the National Union and Democrat parties by over eleven thousand votes, garnering over 70 percent of the vote statewide vote.³⁰⁰ Only half of that Republican electorate voted in favor of black suffrage the following year. In fact, only seven of the forty-four counties in Kansas voted in favor of black suffrage, displaying the aggressive white supremacy that permeated Kansas society during Reconstruction.³⁰¹ Kansas represented the single greatest defeat for black enfranchisement in any state that held a suffrage referendum.

California is another example of a non-traditional northern state that clashed over black suffrage. CA Republicans faced their own battle over black enfranchisement during the early years of Reconstruction. Abolitionism did not become a major plank in the Republican platform

²⁹⁷ Campney, "Reconstruction Kansas," 181.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ McPherson, *The Political History of the United States*, 354.

³⁰⁰ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1866*, 422-423.

³⁰¹ Campney, "'Free State' narrative in Kansas," 97.

until 1864, when, for the first time, Republicans staked their claim to fighting for the eradication of slavery. They argued that slavery was indeed a sin, despite the real threat of Democratic victory in the coming election.³⁰² California Democrats used “unvarnished racism” to turn people away from the Republican platform, hoping to use the opposition to the proposed Thirteenth Amendment as a means of victory. Thus, there existed, for the first time in California, a clear distinction between the two parties on African American rights.³⁰³ California voted in 1864 for the President and for the three Congressional seats available. The Republican Party, with its message of abolitionism, triumphed, electing all three of its candidates to Congress, and succeeding in helping Abraham Lincoln win reelection. Nearly 60 percent of voters chose the Republican Party, which carried thirty-five of the forty-five counties.³⁰⁴

After a heartening victory in 1864, Republicans chose to distance themselves from discussions of black enfranchisement, as few Republicans advocated for black suffrage in 1865; those that did limited their support to the South.³⁰⁵ Until 1866, it remained unclear what direction CA Republicans would take on Reconstruction. But after Johnson’s repeated vetoing of Congressional Reconstruction legislation, such as the Civil Rights Bill, sympathy toward radicalism within the Republican ranks grew.³⁰⁶ As the 1867 elections approached, California Congressmen unanimously voted to expand black voting rights in DC and the territories. The Republican candidate for governor, George C. Gorham, favored political equality for blacks.³⁰⁷ Thus, the 1867 gubernatorial election would hinge on the question of black enfranchisement,

³⁰² Gerald Stanley, “The Republican Party in California, 1856-1868” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1974), 150-152, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

³⁰³ Ibid, 155-164.

³⁰⁴ From the *Annual Cyclopedia 1864*, 173: California voting in the 1864 Presidential Election- 58,698 votes for Lincoln, 42,255 votes for McClellan; Stanley, “The Republican Party in California,” 164.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 173.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 184.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 200.

though there was no official referendum on the issue. The Democrats nearly flipped the electoral results from 1864, winning thirty-two of the forty-seven counties in the state. The Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Henry H. Haight, won by a vote of 49,905 to 40,859.³⁰⁸ This equaled a 20 percent decline in the vote for the Republican candidate from the 1864 election. Even though the black population in California equaled less than 1 percent of the total population, the Republican Party could not win an election where they supported the issue, even without a referendum on the ballot.³⁰⁹ The Democrats took control of the state legislature and refused to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment a year later. Only the nationwide ratification of the Amendment allowed African Americans in California the opportunity to vote.³¹⁰

Iowa stands as the Republican Party's most successful pursuit of black enfranchisement in the Reconstruction North. The state previously held a referendum on black enfranchisement in 1857 which elicited less than fifteen percent of the total vote.³¹¹ In the following decade, Republicans worked hard to bring political equality to the state. After electing a fully Republican Congressional delegation to the 39th Congress and overwhelmingly reelecting Lincoln in the 1864 Presidential election, Iowa Republicans became one of the first state caucuses to publicly support impartial suffrage in their state platform.³¹² As the Radical faction grew in power, they prepared to offer an amendment to the state constitution that would strike the word "white" from the voting requirements, thus allowing black suffrage in the state. With nearly unanimous

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 207-210; *Annual Cyclopedia 1867*, 96.

³⁰⁹ James Adolphus Fisher, "A History of the Political and Social Development of the Black Community in California, 1850-1950" (PhD diss., State University of New York, 1971), 105, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. The estimates suggest that by 1870 only 4,200 African Americans lived in the state, making up 0.8% of the over 500,000 people living in California.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 110.

³¹¹ Robert R. Dykstra and Harlan Hahn, "Northern Voters and Negro Suffrage: The Case of Iowa, 1868," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 32, No. 2 (Summer, 1968), 207.

³¹² *Annual Cyclopedia 1864*, 439; *Annual Cyclopedia 1866*, 408; Dykstra and Hahn, "Northern Voters and Negro Suffrage," 208.

support from Iowa Congressmen for the extension of the black suffrage in DC and the territories, many Republicans hoped that they could achieve their goal.

Unlike many of the other Northern states, Iowa's predominantly Republican electorate responded to the leading of the Republican Party and supported the black suffrage efforts of the party. The Republicans crafted a platform built around impartial suffrage for 1868, which did not deter voters. In the presidential election of 1868, both the national Republican candidate, Ulysses S. Grant, and the suffrage amendment, triumphed. The margin of victory, however, remains the most surprising element of the equation. Grant received over forty-six thousand more votes than the Democratic candidate, and the suffrage amendment passed by nearly twenty-five thousand votes.³¹³ The Radical Republicans in Iowa succeeded in appealing to its voter base, securing almost 60 percent of the state in favor of the impartial suffrage amendment to the constitution, while only experiencing a 5 percent decrease in voter participation in the amendment vote compared to the Presidential vote.³¹⁴ William Gillette suggests the success of black suffrage in Iowa was "a fairer reflection of the voter choices" as opposed to Minnesota, where the suffrage amendment was cleverly disguised in a confusing portion of the ballot.³¹⁵ The Republicans in Iowa staked their future to black suffrage, secured the monumental achievement, and retained control of state politics, an unprecedented success unmatched throughout the Reconstruction North.

Black enfranchisement represented the single most dominant issue in politics between 1865 and 1870 that affected nearly every state. While only a few states held a statewide

³¹³ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1868*, 386.

³¹⁴ Dykstra and Hahn, "Northern Voters and Negro Suffrage," 209- the total number of votes of the Presidential election stood at 194,439, while the number of votes in the Amendment referendum stood at 186,503, a difference of just 8,000 votes; Gillette, *The Right to Vote*, 26.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 27.

referendum on the issue, each state and its respective Republican Party addressed or ignored the issue in significant ways. Generally, historiographic discussions about black suffrage in the North emphasize the widespread failure of black suffrage movements, highlighting the failed referendums and those states whose Republicans campaigned on black suffrage but lost heavily in the following election. This results in a generalization of those states who failed to enact suffrage reform with little appreciation for State legislatures, Congressional delegations, demographic makeup, ideological and geographical distinctions, and Republican support for black suffrage.³¹⁶ The majority of the works cited are pivotal to Reconstruction historiography; this is not to say that they were wrong, only that their goal was not to parse out the difference between each states' pursuit of black suffrage. Thus, Ohio falls into the group of states that failed to pass a suffrage referendum with little distinction from the other states who also failed. Based on the Ohio Republicans' unique path to supporting black suffrage discussed in chapters one and two of this thesis, it is important, then, to compare Ohio to those states previously discussed in this chapter to establish a greater distinction between them.

Ohio, New York, Connecticut, Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa held referendums on black suffrage between 1865 and 1869. The successful referendums in Iowa and Minnesota will be discussed last. New York represents the most politically significant state other than Ohio to hold a suffrage referendum. New Yorkers voted in 1869 on black suffrage, with

³¹⁶ For such treatments in Reconstruction historiography, see H. L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln's Vanguard for Racial Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 364-373; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 222-224 and 314-316; James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 333-334 and 382-383; Gillette, *The Right to Vote*. For more specific treatments of Republicans and black suffrage, see LaWanda and John H. Cox, "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography," *The Journal of Southern History* 33, No. 3 (Aug., 1967): 303-330; Dykstra and Hahn, "Northern Voters and Negro Suffrage," 202-215; Fishel Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage," 8-26.

282,403 opposed (53.1%) and 249,802 in favor (46.9%).³¹⁷ While this is a higher percentage of the vote and more total votes than in Ohio, these statistics overstate New York's support for black suffrage. Much like Ohio's 1867 election, the 1869 New York suffrage referendum received fewer votes than the statewide contest. The margins in New York, however, were much larger. The suffrage amendment received over one hundred thousand fewer total votes, and the Republican candidate, General Franz Sigel, received sixty thousand more votes than the suffrage referendum.³¹⁸ Additionally, at least forty thousand Democratic voters did not vote in the suffrage election; if they had, statewide support for the referendum would have dropped well below the 46 percent received in Ohio. In Ohio, the referendum received only twelve thousand less total votes, while Hayes, the Republican candidate, received less than twenty-seven thousand more votes than the suffrage amendment. Chapter two of this thesis showed that Ohio Republicans, two years earlier than New York Republicans and without the aid of an impending Fifteenth Amendment (which would federally secure suffrage for African Americans) were able to rally *at least* 80 percent of the participating Republican electorate even while every participating Democrat voted against the amendment.³¹⁹ Thus, even with the benefit of the Fifteenth Amendment and considerable voter apathy from the Democratic Party, New York Republicans failed to mobilize enough support for impartial suffrage to equal Ohio's efforts.

In Connecticut, the Republican Party managed a stranglehold on state politics from 1865 to 1867. The Republican dominated state legislature approved a suffrage referendum in 1865, but it was rejected handily, with less than 45 percent of the state voting in favor of black suffrage in

³¹⁷ *Annual Cyclopedia 1869*, 490.

³¹⁸ Statistics from the *Annual Cyclopedia 1869*; Suffrage Referendum- 249,802 votes "For" vs. 282,403 votes "Against" (total votes: 532,205 or 46.9%); Voting for secretary of State- 310,733 votes for Sigel (R) vs. 330,974 votes for Nelson (D) (total votes: 641,707).

³¹⁹ In contrast, 48,571 more people voted for the Democratic candidate for Secretary of State in New York the previous year than voted against the suffrage referendum; still, the referendum failed by over 32,000 votes.

the same election the Republican candidate won nearly 57 percent of the statewide vote.³²⁰ Additionally, voter participation dropped more than 17 percent for the suffrage referendum compared to the vote for Governor, suggesting that at least a few thousand Republicans voted against the suffrage amendment.³²¹ Comparing these results to Ohio, one thing is clear: even though the Republican Party won in a landslide, less than 65 percent of Republican voters voted “For” the Republican sponsored referendum whereas in highly contested Ohio, where the Republican Party did not dominate the election (Hayes won by less than three thousand votes), over 80 percent of participating Republicans voted “For” the suffrage referendum. The drop off in voting from the gubernatorial election to the suffrage amendment stood at less than 3 percent in Ohio.³²² Even in victory, Connecticut Republicans proved unable to mobilize similar support for black suffrage as found in Ohio.

Unlike in New York and Connecticut, close in proximity with the only states who mandated black enfranchisement, Kansas Republicans fought on two separate fronts. Not only did Kansas have the largest population of African Americans of any other state that pursued black suffrage (4.7% or 17,108 people), but the state also dealt with more racially motivated political violence than any northern state, a topic addressed earlier in this chapter.³²³ This fact was clearly reflected in the suffrage referendum, as 65 percent of the electorate voted *against* black suffrage, even though 70 percent of the electorate the year before voted for the Republican candidate, a drop of 35 percent.³²⁴ The political and social context surrounding Kansas, however,

³²⁰ The Republican candidate for governor, William Buckingham, received 42,371 votes out of 73,713.

³²¹ From the *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 302 and 304; only 60,706 votes were cast in the suffrage amendment contest, thirteen thousand (17.7%) less than the governor vote.

³²² *Annual Report of the Secretary of State to the Governor of the State of Ohio, for the Year 1887* (Columbus, OH: The Westbote Co., State Printers, 1887), 151-152. Total votes cast in the Governor election: 484,227; Total votes cast in the suffrage referendum: 472,327.

³²³ Gillette, *The Right to Vote*, 82.

³²⁴ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 423.

makes it difficult to accurately compare the states' attempt to secure black enfranchisement to that of Ohio. Regardless, the Republican electorate in Ohio the year before the suffrage referendum made up only 54 percent of the total vote, dropping 10 percent in the referendum vote in 1867.³²⁵ The Kansas defeat was the single greatest defeat for black suffrage between 1865 and 1870.

The Wisconsin state legislature approved a suffrage referendum for the 1865 election, but the Republican candidate for governor, Lucius Fairchild, refused to support the referendum, likely affecting the outcome. The Wisconsin Republican Party, unable or unwilling to unify around black suffrage, managed to win by large margins throughout the state. Fairchild won election, garnering nearly 55 percent of the statewide vote; Republicans also earned a sizable majority in both the state Senate and House.³²⁶ The referendum, however, only managed 45 percent of the statewide vote. While nearly 80 percent of voting Republicans voted for the referendum, the party also carried both the legislature and the governorship by substantial margins, unlike in Ohio.³²⁷ Wisconsin Republicans refused to endorse equal suffrage; such an endorsement negatively affected Republican majorities in nearly every northern state. It remains likely that such an endorsement would have affected the outcome of every contest in Wisconsin. Regardless, Wisconsin Republicans did not support the suffrage referendum, either from lack of conviction for the issue or fear that such support would threaten Republican majorities across the state.

³²⁵ *Annual Report of the State of Ohio 1887*, 151-152. Total Republican vote in the 1866 Secretary of State election- 256,302; Total votes in favor of the 1867 suffrage referendum- 216,987.

³²⁶ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 823. Fairchild won 58,332 votes out of 106,662 total votes. Republicans held majorities of 23-10 in the Senate and 67-33 in the House.

³²⁷ *Ibid.* 46,588 people voted for the referendum; 58,332 people who voted for Fairchild.

Minnesota, while clearly more successful than Ohio in procuring black suffrage, enjoyed several advantages over Ohio Republicans. Primarily, the black population of Minnesota was smaller than in any other state in the North. Estimates suggest that just over four hundred African Americans lived in Minnesota, only *one-tenth of one percent* of the total state population totaling over 250,000. In contrast, Ohio had one of the largest African American populations in the North with over 63,000 living in the state, nearly two and half percent of the total population.³²⁸ Additionally, Republicans maintained control over the governorship and the legislature through two failed suffrage referendums, a luxury that Ohio could not afford. In fact, Republican governor W. R. Marshall actually *gained* votes between the 1865 and 1867 gubernatorial elections, a feat accomplished by Republicans in no other Northern state while simultaneously gaining seats in the state legislature.³²⁹ Even with an infinitesimally small black population, and clear Republican dominance of state politics, Minnesota required three separate suffrage referendums before finally succeeding.

Additionally, Minnesota Republicans likely benefitted from its late entrance to the Union (1858), utilizing the inherent distrust of slavery and the South maintained by many Minnesotans. This made sympathy to the suffrage amendment and black suffrage in general more likely. Finally, Republicans hid the suffrage amendment using “arcane parliamentary language” as well as placing it on the general Republican ballot, not as a separate referendum, both of which should have been unnecessary, given Republican dominance in Minnesota.³³⁰ Democrats went so far as to claim that Republicans “blindly” voted in favor of black suffrage without even knowing.³³¹

³²⁸ Green, “Minnesota’s Long Road to Black Suffrage,” 79; Gillette, *The Right to Vote*, 82.

³²⁹ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 577; *Annual Cyclopaedia 1867*, 513. In 1865, Marshall received 17,335 votes out of 31,199 total votes (55.5%), and the Republicans held a legislative majority of 23; in 1867, Marshall received 37,810 votes out of 64,876 (58.7%), while Republicans enjoyed a legislative majority of 28.

³³⁰ Green, “Minnesota’s Long Road to Black Suffrage,” 83.

³³¹ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1868*, 505.

Regardless, Minnesota Republicans could afford to pursue black suffrage with little consequence; Ohio Republicans took the one chance they had at great risk, even though they eventually lost.

Iowa, unlike Minnesota or any other state in the north, succeeded in garnering enough support to pass a suffrage referendum on its first attempt and without including the amendment within a whole new constitution. Historian Robert Dykstra argued compellingly that Iowa managed to build grass-roots support for black suffrage throughout the state, allowing the referendum to pass easily.³³² Even so, very few blacks lived in Iowa. Estimates suggest that 5,762 blacks resided in Iowa in 1870, compared to the total population of 1,194,020. Thus, while they boasted a greater population of blacks than Minnesota (.4 percent black population compared to .01 percent black population), Iowa still retained one of the smallest African American populations in the North.³³³ This fact, at least to some degree, aided the state in pursuing black suffrage.

Republicans in Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, and New Jersey failed to bring an equal suffrage referendum to the people, for a variety of reasons. Republicans in both Indiana and Illinois both enjoyed sizable advantages in the state legislature but failed to approve resolutions to sanction a suffrage referendum.³³⁴ Intense divisions within the Republican party precluded any real attempts to rally around black suffrage. In contrast, Ohio Republicans held similar majorities in the state legislature prior to the approval of their suffrage referendum.³³⁵

³³² Robert R. Dykstra, "Iowa: 'Bright Radical Star,'" in *Radical Republicans in the North: State Politics During Reconstruction*, ed. James C. Mohr (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 167-193. Dykstra breaks down the campaign for black suffrage using a variety of statistical analyses.

³³³ Gillette, *The Right to Vote*, 27.

³³⁴ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1865*, 433; *Annual Cyclopaedia 1867*, 396 and 403; Indiana Republican majorities in the State legislature: 1867- 30-20 in the Senate, 61-39 in the House (32 total); Illinois Republican majorities; 1867- 16-9 in the Senate, 62-23 in the House (46 total)

³³⁵ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1866*, 604. Republican majorities in State legislature- Senate: 25-12, House: 69-33 (49 total).

Pennsylvania Republicans enjoyed even larger majorities in the Legislature, yet overwhelmingly chose to vote down a proposed suffrage referendum before it could be placed on the ballot. In contrast, Ohio Republicans approved the same referendum, with only one Republican defection.³³⁶ In California, though no referendum was on the ballot, the Republicans supported, to some degree, black voting rights. The party suffered a bitter defeat, losing nearly 20 percent of the electorate from the previous election; in contrast, Ohio Republicans in 1867 lost only 4 percent of the electorate from the previous election, with the addition of a suffrage referendum.³³⁷ New Jersey Republicans, after a Republican controlled legislature rejected a resolution to place a suffrage referendum on the ballot, proceeded to endorse black suffrage, and lost a higher percentage of state legislature seats (30 percent reduction in Republican seats from 1866 to 1867) than Ohio (20 percent reduction from 1866-1867) despite Ohio Republicans support of the unsuccessful suffrage referendum.³³⁸

Ohio Republicans, though they failed to secure black suffrage during 1867, outperformed other Republican attempts to secure black suffrage while taking a greater political risk. While holding lower percentages of the state electorate than most other Northern states pursuing black enfranchisement, they succeeded in gaining nearly 46 percent of the statewide vote. How did this happen? The long and difficult battle Radicals fought to convince the greater Republican Party to embrace black enfranchisement likely worked in their favor in 1867. While Radicals in all the Northern states advocated for black suffrage as early as 1865, Ohio Radical politicians, Republican media, and grassroots voters pursued the issue throughout the 1865 campaign, in an election where nothing could be done toward black suffrage. Their persistence, as well as their

³³⁶ Sawrey, *Dubious Victory*, 103-104. In the Senate, only one Republican voted against the suffrage amendment and one abstained, making the vote 32-11; in the House, it passed with no defections and six abstentions, 63-29.

³³⁷ *Annual Report of the State of Ohio 1887*, 151-152.

³³⁸ *Annual Cyclopaedia 1866*, 604; *Annual Cyclopaedia 1867*, 540 and 605.

ability to run the 1867 campaign in which every Republican paper in the state supported their cause, allowed them to nearly overcome the racial animosity that had divided Ohio for decades.

This is not to say, however, that Ohio Republicans were a special breed of racial equalists. Racism, even with the Radical faction of the party, still permeated deeply. But those same Radicals, such as James Garfield and James Ashley, succeeded in turning moderate Republicans like John Sherman and John Bingham, into vocal supporters of the suffrage referendum. Additionally, Ohio Republicans benefitted from the influence of the Western Reserve, the northeastern section of Ohio who overwhelmingly favored equal suffrage and voted such in the referendum.³³⁹ Even Connecticut Republicans, in counties where equal suffrage sympathizers significantly outnumbered the opposition, could not drum up such rigorous support for black suffrage.

Ohio Republicans pursued black suffrage regardless of the potential political fallout that followed. In Minnesota and Iowa, Republicans risked little by throwing their support behind suffrage, as their support of the issue had little adverse effect in the outcome of the other statewide elections. In Pennsylvania, the state legislature voted down a proposed suffrage referendum, even with a strong Republican majority. The Republicans refused to risk their strength on the issue, yet they would lose the 1867 gubernatorial election. New Jersey Republicans initially supported black suffrage during the 1867 elections (though no referendum was on the ballot) but fell away from the issue after losses in other Northern States. They remained unable to rally support from their electorate and sustained devastating losses. The Republican parties in the remaining states either failed to unite behind suffrage and thus the Republican electorate supported black suffrage in lower percentages than Ohio (New York,

³³⁹ Nearly 60% of voters in the Western Reserve voted in favor of the amendment, 15 percent higher than the statewide average (47,046 out of 79,436 WR votes on the referendum).

Connecticut, Kansas), or they only proceeded with black suffrage when the Fifteenth Amendment and federally protected black enfranchisement was at hand (Michigan, Illinois, Indiana). While Ohio failed to bring black suffrage to the state prior to the Fifteenth Amendment, the efforts of the Republican Party should be recognized as one of the strongest attempts of bringing about social change through political means during the Reconstruction period.

CONCLUSION

Ohio Republicans decision to risk their political future on securing black suffrage was not easy or straightforward. A myriad of events in Congress, the South, and Ohio came together to push the party to accept the Radicals pleas to support African American suffrage. The Radicals persistence was rewarded as the 1867 gubernatorial election hinged on Republican support for the suffrage referendum. Even more noteworthy, men who opposed or were ambivalent about suffrage only two years earlier (such as John Sherman) openly endorsed black suffrage and attempted to persuade Ohioans to vote for the referendum. Ultimately, Ohio failed to pass the black suffrage amendment, even with the ardent support of Radical Republicans and over eighty percent of the Republican electorate willing to support such a controversial and important amendment. In light of this failure, is Ohio truly unique, or does its failure to enact racial change condemn it?

One cannot ignore the racism present in Ohio during the Reconstruction era. The Democratic Party utilized a variety of heinous racial attacks, particularly in newspapers and speeches, which effected portions of the population. They condemned the prospect of black suffrage as an affront to white supremacy. Republicans, on the other hand, though more progressive than the Democrats, were not absolved of racism, as has been exhibited by the rhetoric of leading Republicans throughout this thesis. Critics may suggest that if the party truly embraced racial equality, or at least political equality, Republicans would have succeeded in passing the suffrage referendum even with the Democratic resurgence during the 1867 elections.³⁴⁰ While the Democratic/Republican difference on race issues is not unique to Ohio, the sectional differences between the North (the Western Reserve), and the South had a profound

³⁴⁰ If every Hayes voter supported the referendum it would have passed by just under 3,000 votes, 50.3 percent of the total vote.

effect on state politics unlike any other state in the North. The resulting political atmosphere created a unique situation that pitted the Radical Republicans against some of the most ardent “Copperheads” in the Union. As discussed in the introduction and throughout this thesis, this sectional divide is outwardly imposed, and while it is broadly accurate, those living within the North and South did not always adhere to the views of their section. The complex makeup of Ohio offers insight into the resulting political complexity between 1865-1867.

It is difficult to argue that the traditional “Western Reserve vs. South” interpretation of Ohio most accurately describes the socio-political moment between 1865 and 1867. More nuanced explanations must be developed. Pockets of pro-black and pro-suffrage sympathy in areas typically designated as areas unfriendly toward African Americans contradicts the simplistic racial analysis of Ohio approved by many historians. As Siebert’s Underground Railroad map and the suffrage referendum analysis in chapter two of this thesis showed, select counties in the southern half of the state overwhelmingly supported black suffrage. In the same way, counties in the northern half of state opposed the measure. While the widespread existence of Underground Railroad hubs in certain counties does not necessarily predict a favorability to black suffrage, based on voting data and the Underground Railroad map, the link between the two is clear. At the very least, this example exhibits the complexity of racial/social developments in post-war Ohio, which created a unique socio-political atmosphere unmatched in other states in the North. Regardless, even though these sectional divides do not tell the whole story, it is impossible to deny the fantastic weight of the pro-black Western Reserve and the pro-South, anti-black stances of the southern counties, discussed in chapter one of this thesis. The influence of these opposing forces, though less unilateral and more complex than typically portrayed, cannot be ignored. Even in Ohio, a seemingly ideal setting with substantial radical sympathy,

black suffrage was still a non-starter. Thus, it is even more understandable that suffrage did not succeed in states like New York, where radical and suffrage sympathy did not match the levels of Ohio. While it is unlikely that these sectional divides exist to the same degree in other northern states during Reconstruction, such findings would bring better understanding to the socio-political makeup of other states, helping historians make better sense of the rapid rise and fall of Radical Republicans across the North.

Ultimately, this paper has argued that the Radical Republicans in Ohio succeeded in convincing the broader Ohio Republican Party, and nearly the entire Republican electorate in the state, that black suffrage was a necessary change to be made as a result of the Civil War. Chapter one of this thesis reorients the focus on black suffrage in Ohio to the election of 1865 instead of the election of 1867 which previous scholarship accepted. It suggests that the Republican support for black suffrage did not just come as a result of Congressional sympathy toward black suffrage or the rise of Radical Republicans in the wake of the 1866 elections, but instead was part of a larger movement within the Ohio Republican Party that has its impetus in the election of 1865, if not earlier. Radical Republicans, spurred on by the “Oberlin Letter” and the ambivalence of Governor Cox, persisted in their call for black suffrage. While the Radicals benefitted from their national success during the 1866 elections and Congressional repudiation of President Johnson, the groundwork for the black suffrage referendum was laid during 1865. If this is true, does this suggest that Republicans in other states began considering the idea of black suffrage years before the Fifteenth Amendment and federal protection for suffrage was secured?

This has large implications for the greater framework of state politics during northern Reconstruction. Michael Les Benedict adroitly argued that Radical Republican in Congress were considered “radical” because of their push for black suffrage. In Ohio, radicals at both the

Congressional *and* the state level agitated for black suffrage not only in the South, but in their own state as well. They successfully managed to convince the rest of the party to support black suffrage, completely altering the landscape of post-war politics in Ohio. If this remains true in Ohio, what about the rest of the Northern states? Chapter three analyzed the various suffrage movements in twelve Northern states; while these movements did not all take the same shape, in every single state the politics of black suffrage effected the platforms of both parties and in many cases had profound effects on the outcome of elections. Thus, state politics during the Reconstruction period were intimately linked with the issues about Reconstruction being debated in Congress, particularly the issue of black suffrage. The interplay between state and national politics, specifically in the North, remains key to accurately representing Northern Reconstruction and understanding its importance.

The socio-political atmosphere of Ohio during the Civil War and the early years of Reconstruction was infinitely complex, and past monolithic portrayals of the sectional divide do not sufficiently address the intricacies of Ohio. These intricacies, combined with a Republican Party with radical sympathies, nearly brought about radical, racial change in a state notorious for its antipathy toward African Americans. While the suffrage referendum did not succeed, the question remains: if a new analysis of Reconstruction Ohio is needed, one that is more sensitive to the contextual and atmospheric intricacies of the state and its political and racial beliefs, is it time for a reevaluation of other northern states as well? Additionally, chapter three of this thesis places discussions of black suffrage in Ohio in the greater context of Northern Reconstruction. This analysis made it clear that the issue of black suffrage permeated politics in nearly every Northern state, making it a contentious issue that decided elections throughout the 1860s. Thus, just as the 1867 Ohio elections hinged on the suffrage issue, other state elections were drastically

affected by it as well. Further study of the politics of black suffrage, including its supporters and detractors, will help bring greater clarity to the political circumstances and various societal factors faced by both Republicans and Democrats in the North.

There is a shocking lack of studies evaluating state-level politics in the North during the Reconstruction era, particularly in the last twenty years. With massive archival developments, specifically in the Reconstruction era, there are a variety of sources available to historians that were not easily accessible even a decade ago. It is time for historians to once again turn to Reconstruction, this time to the North. While this thesis helps bring some measure of much needed clarity to the complexities of Reconstruction Ohio, there is still much to be unearthed. Historians have long linked the successes and failures of Southern Reconstruction to the events that brought about the modern Civil Rights Era and even to prejudices and mindsets of the twenty-first century. Subsequent studies of politics in Northern states during Reconstruction will undoubtedly allow for such connections to be made to Northern society as well.

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