

Party Unity History

The table below on the left shows how frequently during roll call votes a majority of Democrats aligned against a majority of Republicans. The tables in the center and at right show the average party unity support score for each party in each chamber.

YEAR	Frequency of Unity Votes		House Average Scores		Senate Average Scores	
	HOUSE	SENATE	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS
2010	40.0%	78.6%	89%	88%	91%	89%
2009	50.9	72.0	91	87	91	85
2008	53.3	51.6	92	87	87	83
2007	62.0	60.2	92	85	87	81
2006	54.5	57.3	86	88	86	86
2005	49.0	62.6	88	90	88	88
2004	47.0	52.3	86	88	83	90
2003	51.7	66.7	87	91	85	94
2002	43.3	45.5	86	90	83	84
2001	40.2	55.3	83	91	89	88
2000	43.2	48.7	82	88	88	89
1999	47.3	62.8	83	86	89	88
1998	55.5	55.7	82	86	87	86
1997	50.4	50.3	82	88	85	87
1996	56.4	62.4	80	87	84	89
1995	73.2	68.8	80	91	81	89
1994	61.8	51.7	83	84	84	79
1993	65.5	67.1	85	84	85	84
1992	64.5	53.0	79	79	77	79
1991	55.1	49.3	81	77	80	81
1990	49.1	54.3	81	74	80	75
1989	56.3	35.3	81	72	78	78
1988	47.0	42.5	80	74	78	68
1987	63.7	40.7	81	74	81	75
1986	56.5	52.3	79	70	72	76
1985	61.0	49.6	80	75	75	76
1984	47.1	40.0	74	71	68	78
1983	55.6	43.7	76	74	71	74
1982	36.4	43.4	72	69	72	76
1981	37.4	47.8	69	74	71	81
1980	37.6	45.8	69	71	64	65
1979	47.3	46.7	69	73	68	66
1978	33.2	45.2	63	69	66	59
1977	42.2	42.4	68	71	63	66
1976	35.9	37.2	66	67	62	61
1975	48.4	47.8	69	72	68	64
1974	29.4	44.3	62	63	63	59
1973	41.8	39.9	68	68	69	64
1972	27.1	36.5	58	66	57	61
1971	37.8	41.6	61	67	64	63
1970	27.1	35.2	58	60	55	56
1969	31.1	36.3	61	62	63	63
1968	35.2	32.0	59	64	51	60
1967	36.3	34.6	67	74	61	60
1966	41.5	50.2	62	68	57	63
1965	52.2	41.9	70	71	63	68
1964	54.9	35.7	69	71	61	65
1963	48.7	47.2	73	74	66	67
1962	46.0	41.1	70	70	65	64
1961	50.0	62.3	72	73	69	68
1960	52.7	36.7	65	70	60	64
1959	55.2	47.9	79	77	67	72
1958	39.8	43.5	66	65	71	64
1957	59.0	35.5	70	67	66	69
1956	43.8	53.1	70	70	71	72
1955	40.8	29.9				
1954	38.2	48.0				
1953	52.1	51.7				

Tallying Party Unity Votes

In the House in 2010, the two parties aligned against each other on just 264 of 660 roll call votes, or 40 percent of the time — the lowest frequency of unity votes since 1982. In the Senate, the parties opposed each other on 235 of 299 roll calls, or 78.6 percent of the time — the highest ever. A list of roll call votes that pitted majorities of the two parties against each other is available upon request from Congressional Quarterly.

Calculations of average scores by chamber and party are based on all eligible “yea” or “nay” votes, whether or not all members participated. Under this methodology, average support and opposition scores are reduced when members choose not to vote. Because individual member scores are based on the number of votes cast, party and chamber averages are not strictly comparable to individual member scores. (*Complete member scores, pp. 38, 40*)

Also, in the member score tables, Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman, I-Conn., and Bernard Sanders, I-Vt., are treated as if they are Democrats when calculating their support and opposition scores. However, Lieberman's and Sanders' votes were not used to determine which roll calls were party unity votes, and they are not included in the Democratic Party averages for the Senate.