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Under the auspices of the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, Nevada marked its early years as a stronghold for the "Grand Old Party." In the 19th Century, a majority of the state's governors, United States senators and representatives in Congress were Republicans.

However, the period from 1892 through 1902 was dominated by a new political force: the Silver Party. The Silver Party of Nevada was a product of depressed economic conditions that adversely affected farmers throughout the nation and the metal mining industry of the western states. During the period prior to and for a number of years after the American Civil War, silver mines in Nevada, Idaho, Colorado, Utah and other western states produced tremendous quantities of "white" metal. So much so that banking interests in Europe and the eastern United States became alarmed that silver would undermine the gold markets of the world. Their alarm, many people believed, resulted in the so called "Crime of 73," the demonitization of silver.

Even though the price of silver did not fall to any great degree, it was clear that many ore bodies were playing out. Silver and its support was an obvious political issue in the western mining states. Not unexpectedly therefore, as early as 1890, there was serious discussion in Nevada of organizing a national Silver Party.

The National Silver Party had much of its origin in Nevada where depressed mining conditions caused by lower grade ore and increased operating conditions were aggravated by federal policy curtailing silver coinage in 1873. Although this policy was modified in 1878 (Bland-Allison Act) and 1890 (Sherman Silver Act), economic conditions in Nevada continued to suffer since the government purchase of silver was still far from adequate to continue the operation of most Nevada silver mines.

A local "Silver Party" of Nevada swept the 1892 elections. In later elections the Silver Party captured state offices from the governorship on down. This local state "Silver Party" resulted from splits in the major parties, particularly the Republican Party, and was in effect a coalition of those who backed the silver plank in both local and national platforms.

The feeling was so strong in Nevada over the silver issue that the state gave its electoral votes to the People's Party (Populist Party or National People's Party), since that party had a plank in its platform on the silver issue. In the national election of 1892, Colorado and Idaho likewise gave their electoral votes to the People's Party with a silver plank. This undoubtedly gave impetus to the later formation of a Silver Party at the national level. Silver Party organizations were formed in many states of the west, midwest, and south. In 1896 the National Silver Party held a convention at St. Louis with Nevada's Francis G. Newlands as chairman. This was the Silver Party's only national gathering for the nomination of a president of the United States. In 1900 a Silver Republican Party Convention was held in Kansas City with state representatives mostly from the west and midwest. The election of Republican William McKinley and the passage of the Gold Standard Act in 1900 struck fatal blows to the silver issue and the continuation of "silver parties";

The silver parties continued to dominate the local level in Nevada for some time after the turn of the century. The party in later years, known locally in Nevada as the Silver-Democrat Party, did not attain national characteristics and held no national convention. The party name resulted from a fusion between the Democratic Party and the silver faction of the Republican Party in 1902.

The ultimate demise of the Silver Party, and its "fusion" with other political interests, led to a period from 1906 through 1930 during which Republicans and Democrats fairly evenly divided the spoils of victory, although the Socialist Party was able to elect a number of candidates to the state legislature and local offices prior to World War I.

The Great Depression and the shattered presidency of Herbert Hoover ultimately led to Democratic hegemony. By the early 1930s, Las Vegas newspapers carried the last will and testament of Republican voter registration. From 1932 through 1995, Nevada Democrats held the edge in voter registration and, indeed, held sway over more political offices. In 1962, for example, there were twice the number of Democrats as Republicans registered to vote. In 1990 and 1994, four of the six constitutional offices went to Republicans. Legislative leadership tipped more and more toward Republicans during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Late in 1995, Republicans finally outstripped the Democrats, putting their party ahead by at first a few hundred and, at this writing, some 5,000 voters.

In all, 16 organizations representing various philosophies and principles are, or have been, active on the political scene in Nevada since statehood. The names and abbreviations for

reference keys elsewhere in this book are as follows:

C	Citizens
Dem	Democrat
D-S	Democrat Silver
F	Fusion
IA	Independent American
Ind	Independent
Lib	Libertarian
NA	New Alliance
NL	Natural Law
P	Peoples
Pop	Populist
Pr	Progressive
Rep	Republican
S	Silver
S-D	Silver Democrat
Soc	Socialist
U	Union