



# Running Against the Grain: How Opposition Presidents Win the White House

*David A. Crockett*

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Some presidents enter office with an uphill climb in front of them: their political party represents a different governing philosophy than the dominant strain of the day. These, David A. Crockett says, are “opposition presidents.” If they are, in a sense, out of step with their times, how do they ever get elected in the first place?

In *Running against the Grain: How Opposition Presidents Win the White House*, Crockett employs historical comparisons to draw conclusions about what it takes for these candidates to win the office. He focuses on seven presidents in twelve elections: William Henry Harrison (1840) and Zachary Taylor (1848), Grover Cleveland (1884 and 1892) and Woodrow Wilson (1912 and 1916), Dwight Eisenhower (1952 and 1956) and Richard Nixon (1968 and 1972), and Bill Clinton (1992 and 1996). Crockett draws on the work of Stephen Skowronek and others in the

tradition of American political development to establish the periodization for his study.

Through a comparative analysis of victorious opposition candidates, Crockett finds explanations that transcend specific campaigns or even specific eras. He contends that, because the way one acquires the office may have an effect on the practice of leadership in the office, “running against the grain” has implications far beyond Election Day.

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