

Today, with a more fractured group of governors, it's difficult for NGA to present a united front. Instead, the separate Democratic and Republican governors associations have become increasingly influential. The Republican Governors Association raised \$117 million for the 2014 campaign cycle, the most recent big year for gubernatorial elections, while the Democratic Governors Association raised \$55 million, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. "The transition moved quickly when the Democratic and Republican governor groups started taking positions on controversial issues, and then sought to have the NGA reflect their views," says Dave Freudenthal, a former Democratic governor of Wyoming, citing matters such as climate change and the Affordable Care Act, President Obama's health care law.

Meanwhile, the internal politics of many states have grown more partisan, with one party or the other coming to completely dominate the legislature. "It used to be, you'd run from one side or the other, but you were forced to govern more from the middle," said Ray Scheppach, a former NGA executive director. "Now, they do worry about primary challenges more, so it keeps them aligned in that partisan approach."

There was a time when it was common for governors to please just about everyone, earning approval ratings in the 70s or 80s. Scott Matheson, for instance, was one of the most popular governors in the country in the 1980s, even as a Democrat in Utah, in part because he worked well with Republicans such as Norman Bangerter, who served under him as state House Speaker and succeeded him as governor.

That sort of model still exists, but it's become more rare and doesn't bring with it national prominence. Instead, stars are born by taking ownership of some issue that excites the national party base—such as Republican governors who have taken on public employees' unions or talked about abolishing state income taxes, or Democrats' banning so-called assault weapons and signing gay-marriage laws. "Certainly those that want a national profile, they may well need to be partisan, just because of the way the nominating process works," said Bill Pound, executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures. "They've got to get out and appeal to whatever base it is, on either side."

What would once have been seen as a no-brainer for governors—taking money from Washington—has become a bright dividing line. Many Republicans have objected on principle to accepting federal funds from the 2009 stimulus law or the Medicaid expansion at the heart of the Affordable Care Act.

"Being attractive to people in both parties used to be considered unambiguously a strength," says Weingart, the Rutgers professor. "Now, being seen as a moderate or someone who works well with the other party has not been a benefit in the last few cycles."

Bobby Jindal, the Republican governor of Louisiana, addressed members of his own party in a column in *Politico*, but he seemed to be channeling the attitude of many contemporary governors of both stripes: "Let's . . . get on offense," Jindal wrote, "and go kick the other guys around."