

# Baker v. Carr

## Bell-Ringer



# ***Baker v. Carr***

## Two Senators Find Common Ground



### **Background Information**

In 1962, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruled 6-2 that American citizens had the right to challenge congressional apportionment statutes in the landmark decision, *Baker v. Carr*. In several subsequent decisions, including most prominently *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964), the Supreme Court also extended this ruling to state legislatures. Many rural voters felt that these rulings would give more power to voters living in American cities, which had been growing much faster in the first half of the twentieth century than rural areas. In the 1966 midterm elections, Howard Baker, Jr. was running for the U.S. Senate as a Republican from Tennessee, the rural-dominated state where *Baker v. Carr* originated. After winning his election, Baker would clash with the Senate Minority Leader, Everett Dirksen, a Republican from Illinois and Baker's Father-in-Law.

### **Bell-Ringer**

***Did you know*** although this court case originated in Tennessee, there is no relation between Howard Baker, Jr., and the appellant in *Baker v. Carr*?

### **Standards**

***GC.11***  
***TN.61***  
***APGov Con 3.C.1***

### **Objective**

*Students will be able to* define the “one man, one vote principle” as determined in *Baker v. Carr* (1962) and subsequent rulings and identify the major positions for and against it.

### **Key Terms and People**

Minority Leader,  
Reapportionment,  
Republicanism, Checks and  
Balances, Senator Everett  
Dirksen, Senator Howard H.  
Baker, Jr., *Reynolds v. Sims*

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**Skill Sheet** | Thinking Critically & Engaging with Civic Knowledge

**Directions:** Read the context, background information, and primary sources below and answer each part of the question.

“This was the question, if indeed there was a federal question, to be determined in the earlier *Baker v. Carr* and the reapportionment cases. To rely on the fourteenth amendment for authority to establish by judicial decree a new system of government for each of the fifty states is, first, to misread the history of that amendment and, second, to substitute political theory for constitutional law. In fact, to proceed on the theory of the Court is to ignore completely section 5 of that fourteenth article of amendment . . . This constitutes, I submit, an assumption of power by one branch of our government that is unequaled in our nation's history.”

- Senator Everett Dirksen (R-Illinois), “The Supreme Court and the People”  
*Michigan Law Review*, 1968

“. . . [one man, one vote] is the principle tenet of Tennessee Republicanism.”

- Howard Baker, Jr. (R-Tennessee), Campaign Speech, 1966

**Using the excerpts, answer (a), (b), and (c).**

a) Considering the primary resource quotation, briefly explain Senator Dirksen’s view of the *Baker v. Carr* decision (1962).

b) Briefly explain Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr’s view of the *Baker v. Carr* decision (1962).

c) Provide ONE example as to why the two might have disagreed on the issue despite being in the same party.



### KEY TERMS & PEOPLE\*

**Minority Leader** - The “point person” who leads the minority party in opposition to the majority party.

**Reapportionment** - The process by which legislative boundaries are redrawn to reflect changes in population.

**Republic(anism)** - A form of government in which power is exercised by representative institutions that are limited by the rule of law.

**Checks and balances** - Fundamental principle underlying the American constitutional system whereby institutions of government can check one another in order to prevent one branch from becoming too powerful.

**Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr.** - U.S. Senator (R-Tennessee) 1967-1985.

**Senator Everett Dirksen** - U.S. Senator (R-Illinois) 1951-1969, Senate Minority Leader 1959-1969.

**Reynolds v. Sims (1964)** – United States Supreme Court case in which the court ruled that state legislature districts must be proportional to population.

### CITATIONS

*Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (Mar. 26, 1962).

Dirksen, Everett McKinley. "The Supreme Court and the People." *Michigan Law Review* 66, no. 5 (1968): 837-74.

Geer, Charles. Headshot of Howard Baker. 1980. Photograph. Mpabaker\_824. Photographs from the Life and Career of Howard Baker. University of Tennessee, Knoxville Special Collections.

Haltom, William H., Jr. "One-Man, One-Vote, Two Senators," in *The Other Fellow May Be Right: The Civility of Howard Baker*, 47-52. Nashville, TN: Tennessee Bar Association Press, 2017.

\*Lyons, William, and John M. Scheb, II. *American Government: Politics and Political Culture*. 3rd ed. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing, 2003.

*Reynolds, Judge, et al. v. Sims et al.*, 377 U.S. 533 (June 15, 1964).

Unknown. Howard Baker and Everett Dirksen. 1967. Photograph. Mpabaker\_769. Photographs from the Life and Career of Howard Baker. University of Tennessee, Knoxville Special Collections.

**Teacher Notes** | Thinking Critically & Engaging with Civic Knowledge

**Directions:** Read the context, background information, and primary sources below and answer each part of the question.

“This was the question, if indeed there was a federal question, to be determined in the earlier Baker v. Carr and the reapportionment cases. To rely on the Fourteenth Amendment for authority to establish by judicial decree a new system of government for each of the fifty states is, first, to misread the history of that amendment and, second, to substitute political theory for constitutional law. In fact, to proceed on the theory of the Court is to ignore completely section 5 of that fourteenth article of amendment. . . . This constitutes, I submit, an assumption of power by one branch of our government that is unequaled in our nation's history.”

- Senator Everett Dirksen (R-Illinois), “The Supreme Court and the People”  
*Michigan Law Review*, 1968

“. . . [one man, one vote] is the principle tenet of Tennessee Republicanism.”

- Howard Baker, Jr. (R-Tennessee), Campaign Speech, 1966

**Using the excerpts, answer (a), (b), and (c).**

a) Considering the primary resource quotation, briefly explain Senator Dirksen’s view of the Baker v. Carr decision (1962).

**Answers should identify Dirksen as being OPPOSED to the Baker v. Carr decision. Answers may identify his reason as being that it gave SCOTUS legislative powers that should be reserved for Congress.**

b) Briefly explain Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr’s view of the Baker v. Carr decision (1962).

**Answers should identify Baker as being FOR the Baker v. Carr decision. Answers may identify the reason as being related to the one man, one vote principle and tied to true democracy and republicanism.**

c) Provide ONE example as to why the two might have disagreed on the issue.

**Answers should identify that “one man, one vote” balances political power towards cities (higher populations). Being from Illinois, Dirksen relied on rural voters, while Baker relied more on city voters.**

Standards and Guidelines Alignment		
Tennessee State Standards		
<b>U.S. Government and Civics</b>	<b>GC.11</b>	Describe the census and its role in redistricting and reapportionment, including the role of <i>Baker v. Carr</i> .
<b>Tennessee History</b>	<b>TN.61</b>	Identify the contributions of influential Tennesseans of the era, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lamar Alexander</li> <li>• Alex Haley</li> <li>• Pat Summitt</li> <li>• <b>Howard Baker</b></li> <li>• Dolly Parton</li> <li>• Fred Thompson</li> <li>• Al Gore, Jr.</li> <li>• Wilma Rudolph</li> <li>• Oprah Winfrey</li> </ul>
AP Course Alignment		
<b>AP United States Government and Politics</b>	<b>CON-3.C.1</b>	Explain how congressional behavior is influenced by election processes, partisanship, and divided government.
IAC Guidelines		
<b>Topic 3:</b> The Institutions of the United States Government	<b>IAC.T3.2</b>	Identifying how the three branches work together to form a system of checks and balances.
	<b>IAC.T3.3</b>	Distinguishing between elected and appointed positions while identifying and evaluating the processes of each.
<b>Topic 5:</b> The Changing Constitution	<b>IAC.T5.6</b>	Evaluating the impact of court decisions on citizen’s lives.

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