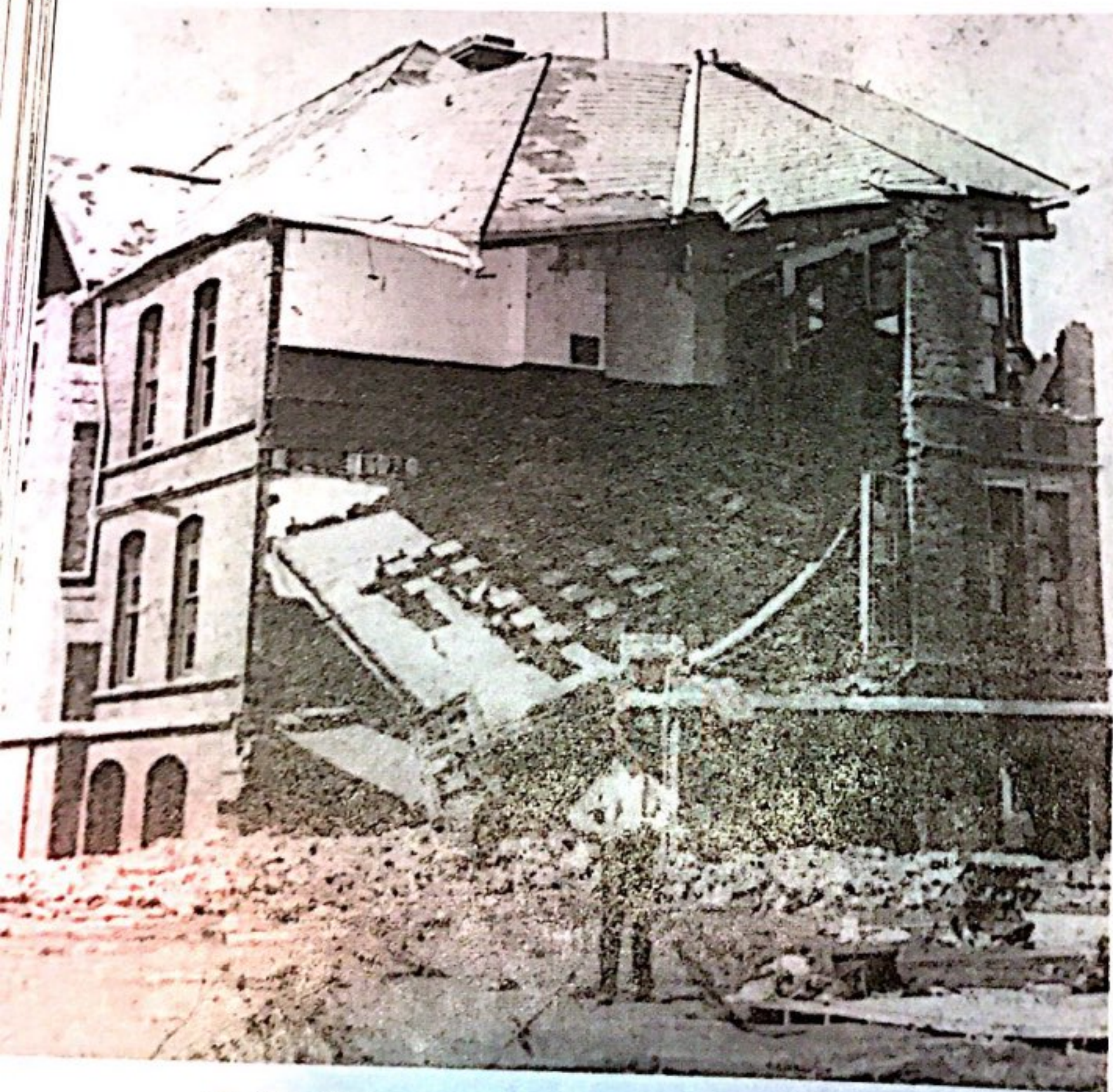


Progressive Reform Impact Government

Progressive reformers sought to reform the political process in order to reform society. They wanted to free government from the control of political bosses and powerful business interests. They wanted to give people more control over their government and make government more effective and efficient in serving the public.

Reformers Change City Government Just as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire spurred reformers to action, so did another disaster. In 1900, a massive hurricane left the city of Galveston, Texas, in ruins. One of the greatest national calamities in American history, the hurricane killed more than 8,000 people. As an emergency measure, Galveston replaced its mayor and board of aldermen with a five-person commission. Each commissioner was an expert in a different area of city affairs, such as public safety or streets and sewers, and headed the departments responsible for that area.

The commission form of government proved very efficient as the city carried out a tremendous rebuilding effort. The following year, Galveston decided to permanently adopt the commission form of government.



>> The Galveston Hurricane of 1900 destroyed countless structures, such as this public school.

By 1918, nearly 300 cities had adopted some form of the Galveston plan. Dayton, Ohio, and other cities modified the plan by empowering the city council or commission to hire a professional city manager to oversee all of city government. The new city governments cut down the power of bosses and their political machines. The reform governments purchased public utilities so that electric, gas, and water companies could not charge city residents unfairly high rates.

Progressive Reforms Impact Political Process Progressives also pushed for election reforms, taking up some Populist ideas. Traditionally, party leaders picked candidates for state and local offices.

But in Wisconsin, reform governor Robert M. La Follette established a **direct primary**, an election in which citizens themselves vote to select nominees for upcoming elections. By 1916, all but four states had direct primaries.

Progressives also wanted to make sure that elected officials would follow citizens' wishes. To achieve this goal, they worked for three other political reforms: the initiative, the referendum, and the recall. The **initiative** gave people the power to put a proposed new law directly on the ballot in the next election by collecting citizens' signatures on a petition. This meant that voters themselves could suggest laws instead of waiting for elected officials to act. The **referendum** allowed citizens to approve or reject laws passed by a legislature. The **recall** gave voters the power to remove public servants from office before their terms ended.

Progressives won yet another political reform: They adopted the Populist call for the direct election of senators by voters, not state legislators.

Progressives believed that Americans should choose their own senators rather than allowing state legislatures to do so. Several states already held elections in which voters advised their legislature about which person to name, although states formally retained this decision under the U.S. Constitution. However, the proposed reform was not universally popular. Some members of Congress argued that direct election would weaken the states' power to block actions of the federal government, an important constitutional check. With the support of 31 state legislatures, however, Congress passed a constitutional amendment to enact this change in 1911. The states ratified the **Seventeenth Amendment** two years later.

States Lead the Progressive Movement Dynamic Progressives became the leaders of several states, and chief among them was Robert La Follette of Wisconsin.

PROGRESSIVES AND ELECTION REFORMS

THE SEVENTEENTH AMENDMENT **BEFORE** U.S. senators were elected by state legislatures. **AFTER** Senators were chosen by the voters in the states by direct election.

STATE ELECTION REFORMS STARTED IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

- Initiative** Voters can petition to place constitutional amendments on the ballot.
- Referendum** Voters can petition to repeal an existing law.
- Recall** Voters can remove elected representatives without waiting for the next election.

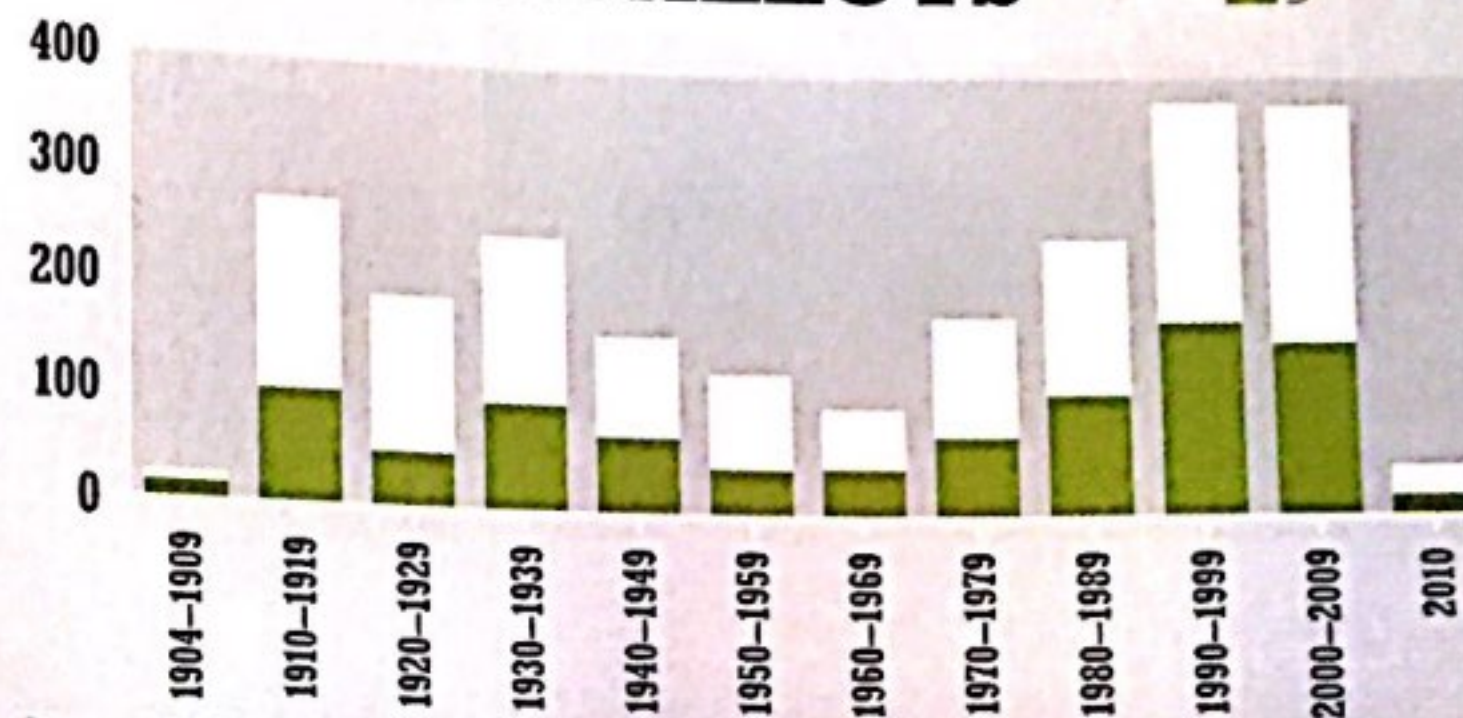
ATTEMPTED RECALLS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Source: Eagleton Institute of Politics



25% Other Levels of State Government
75% City Council & School Board Level

USE OF INITIATIVES ON STATE BALLOTS



Source: Initiative and Referendum Institute

Analyze Information What was the most significant Progressive election reform? Cite two pieces of information to support your answer.

Elected governor in 1900, "Fighting Bob" won the passage of many reform laws. Under his leadership, the Wisconsin state government forced railroads to charge lower fees and pay higher taxes. La Follette helped his state to improve education, make factories safer, and adopt the direct primary. Progressives called Wisconsin the "laboratory of democracy."

Hiram Johnson, governor of California, shattered the Southern Pacific Railroad's stranglehold on state government. He put in place the direct primary, initiative, referendum, and recall. He also pushed for another goal of some Progressives—planning for the careful use of natural resources such as water, forests, and wildlife.

Other Progressive governors included Theodore Roosevelt of New York and Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. Roosevelt worked to develop a fair system for hiring state workers and made some corporations pay taxes. Wilson reduced the railroads' power and pushed for a direct primary law. Both Roosevelt and Wilson

later became President and brought reforms to the White House.

? **CHECK UNDERSTANDING** How did Progressive reformers change local and state governments?

ASSESSMENT

- Compare and Contrast** the Populist and Progressive movements.
- Summarize** the ways in which Progressives tried to help children.
- Generate Explanations** How did the development of settlement houses affect urban American society?
- Identify Cause and Effect** Explain how the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire affected workers' rights.
- Draw Conclusions** How did muckrakers influence efforts to enact social reform?