During the 1920s partisan politics remained an important arena of the African American struggle against the color line in Ohio. Politics and elections still determined whether office holders were more or less sympathetic to the principle of equality before the law regardless of color. Political actions still shaped legislative measures and other governmental actions that were either contrary to that equality principle or in accord with it. In Ohio the Republican party remained more supportive of African American political interests than the Democratic party. The decade, however, saw an acceleration of the Republican party's long retreat from its position in the Reconstruction Period as vigorous champion of equal rights for African Americans. The Ohio Republican party, for example, was much less inclined in the 1920s to choose African Americans for significant political patronage jobs and as the party's nominees for public offices. Also, reflecting the GOP's changing stance on civil rights, the Ku Klux Klan was more likely to back Republican candidates than Democratic ones in Ohio and surrounding states. This Republican trend also was evident in national politics. For instance, Republicans, who held majorities in Congress, declined to enact federal anti-lynching legislation demanded by the NAACP. Undoubtedly, the flood of white intolerance in the twenties influenced these Republican developments in the state and nation.1

The vast majority of Ohio's rank and file black electorate voted for Republican candidates from the Reconstruction Period through the 1920s. However, there were more independent black Republicans in Ohio during the twenties than in earlier decades. The Republican party alienated unprecedented numbers of black Republican political leaders.
Old as well as young black Republican politicos criticized their party for failure to provide blacks with adequate shares of patronage employment and nominations. In protests against these failures, black Republicans increasingly entered primary and general elections without Republican party endorsements. Also, independent black Republicans opposed Republican candidates who were regarded as unsympathetic to the rights of African Americans, notably those identified with the Ku Klux Klan. Often these black independents were veterans of Ohio Republican party politics. While calling attention to Republican shortcomings towards African Americans, they acted individually and in traditional political factions. In addition, nonpartisan organizations representing African American viewpoints, especially the NAACP, sometimes voiced opinions that were at least implicitly critical of Republican candidates or issue positions in Ohio elections. This developing black protest in the political venue, as in others, was imbued with the spirit of “the New Negro” that grew out of the black military experience in World War I. Furthermore, black political protest in Ohio was emboldened by the growing electoral clout of African Americans. The number of black voters in Ohio increased, particularly in urban centers, as accelerated black in-migration enlarged Ohio’s African American population. Disaffection with the Republican party was expressed in national, state, and local elections conducted in Ohio. While most independent black Republican leaders protested from within the Republican party, some eventually affiliated with the Democratic party or a third party.

Early in this period, dissident black Republicans in Ohio criticized Republican party patronage policies as unfair to African Americans. Black politicians in Ohio were involved in the patron-client relationships typical of “the spoils system” in United States politics since the age of Andrew Jackson. In patronage politics, the political party rewarded partisan voters and party workers who contributed to its electoral success. Party workers were arrayed at various hierarchical levels depending on whether they were engaged in precinct, ward, municipal, county, state, or presidential politics. When political rewards were given, each politico in the structure, whether black or white, was at the same time both a client receiving favors and a patron dispensing them. Among the patrons’ favors were public jobs, nominations for appointive and elective public offices, and political party positions.

Black as well as white bosses figured in old urban political machines that still were significant aspects of Ohio’s municipal politics and government after 1914. Precedents establishing African American roles in Ohio patronage politics were set in the nineteenth century. Perhaps, William Thompson was the original black municipal ward boss in Ohio.
“Bill” Thompson formed an early friendship and political association with George B. Cox, who ultimately became the Republican party “boss” in Cincinnati. During the 1880s, according to black newspaperman Wendell P. Dabney, Thompson was “a colored man who had a big saloon and a tremendous following at the polls” in Cincinnati’s West End African American precincts. Cox’s early success in the West End owed much to Thompson’s support and to his role as an organizer of the interracial pro-Republican Blaine Club. In reward, Thompson was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives and appointed as a member of the Republican state executive committee.

Early in the twentieth century, Alexander “Smoky” Hobbs was a black Republican ward boss in Columbus. Evidently, Hobbs’ campaign efforts for the party were rewarded by lax law enforcement against his notorious saloon that doubled as an opium den. In Cleveland black saloonkeeper Albert D. “Starlight” Boyd was a cog in the political machine of Maurice Maschke, who was the Cuyahoga County Republican party chairman. Boyd’s saloon received little police interference, although illicit incidents were frequent at his public house.

As in decades past, black politicos and voters in the 1920s often were assigned menial political patronage jobs in municipal government. In each major Ohio city African Americans constituted a disproportionate number of those in public service occupations who were employed as laborers, doorkeepers, and watchmen. Relatively few blacks were employed in other public service positions in Ohio, for example, in police and fire departments. In most major Ohio cities, the number of black police officers declined during the twenties because black policemen were not replaced when they left their departments. In 1920 no fire department employed an African American in a large Ohio city. In 1930, 9 blacks were employed in Ohio fire departments: 4 in Cleveland, 4 in Columbus, and 1 in Cincinnati. Each of these departments employed hundreds of whites.

Black Ohioans who were prominent in statewide and presidential politics typically were businessmen and professionals. They were esteemed in African American society and respected by politically powerful whites. Hollendon Hotel barbershop proprietor George A. Myers of Cleveland was the most influential African American political figure in Ohio as the nineteenth century closed. Into the 1920s, the Republican party’s appointments and endorsements of African Americans in Ohio were often made upon Myers’ recommendations. Myers’ influence initially derived from the fact that he was a close friend and political confidant of Clevelander Mark Hanna, the Ohio Republican boss whose machinations were instrumental to President William McKinley’s rise in
national politics. Content to exercise power off stage, Myers never used his connections to obtain office for himself; however, he often was an Ohio delegate to Republican national conventions before World War I. Myers died in 1930, and he was survived by few high-ranking black Republicans of his generation in Ohio. Ralph W. Tyler of Columbus, Charles Cottrill of Toledo, William S. Scarborough of Wilberforce University, and others died in the twenties and earlier.

During 1915–1930, African Americans in Ohio experienced a relative dearth of Republican patronage appointments in state and federal government. Ohio’s black Republicans had received a number of notable appointments during 1880–1914. Examples include membership on The Ohio State University Board of Trustees (Peter H. Clark), collector of the customs at Honolulu (Charles Cottrill), and auditor in the United States Navy Department (Ralph W. Tyler). A black Democrat, Dr. Joseph L. Johnson of Columbus, served as minister to Liberia during Democrat Woodrow Wilson’s terms as President. Such remarkable appointments, which were declining in the teens, were awarded to very few black Republicans in Ohio after 1922. During 1915–1930, as earlier, African American Republicans appointed to state and federal posts typically were highly educated and well trained professionals. Attorney Robert Barcus of Columbus was appointed special counselor in the office of the Ohio attorney general in 1919. Barcus, a Howard University alumnus, had been admitted to practice in the United States District Court, Southern District in 1913. Wilberforce University President Emeritus William S. Scarborough was a United States Department of Agriculture research assistant, and attorney A. Lee Beaty of Cincinnati was an assistant in the office of the United States District Attorney for Southern Ohio. Dr. Aubrey Lane of Cincinnati, who possessed an Ohio State University degree in veterinary medicine, became Ohio’s state veterinarian. Each received his appointment in 1921–1922. Baptist pastor E. W. Curry of Springfield was appointed in 1929 to head a special Negro section of the Parole and Probation Division of the State Welfare Department. Meantime, lesser state government patronage traditionally assigned to African Americans included several clerkships, such as enrolling clerk of the state senate, and numerous menial jobs such as porter in the Statehouse.

In view of the fact that the black electorate loyally backed the Republican party, African Americans expected Republican leaders in government to appoint a fair number of well-qualified African Americans to substantial public jobs. African Americans criticized Republican officials when they failed to give blacks full recognition in this way. In 1916, for example, independent black Republicans across
the state called public attention to the small number of appointments given to African Americans by Republican Governor Frank B. Willis. A. D. Male, a successful black dairy farmer of central Ohio, publicly complained that under Willis African Americans received only "a few minor appointments that no well-posted, energetic Colored man could afford to accept. . . ." Alluding to the Republican debt owed to black voters, The Reverend Carl W. Haskell of Columbus asserted that it was time for the party "to be paying something far more than it has in late years on that debt."

In Ohio the most sustained manifestation of independent black Republican activity in the 1920s occurred in statewide politics. Black Clevelander Harry C. Smith filed as a candidate in each statewide Republican primary election during the decade. He was a veteran journalist, and his newspaper had regularly supported Republican candidates for public office. Over the decades Smith had been active in Republican patronage politics. He had served three terms in the Ohio legislature in the 1890s and sponsored a public accommodations law and an antilynching act. Smith was a staunch and consistent advocate of equal rights for African Americans; he often used acerbic language when criticizing persons accused of limiting those rights. Smith ran energetic campaigns seeking the Republican nomination for secretary of state in 1920 and for governor in 1922, raising considerable interest among black voters. Smith again was a candidate for the gubernatorial nomination in the 1924, 1926, and 1928 primary elections. All of his candidacies created forums to criticize the party. They were devices to make the state's Republican leaders conscious of the growing black vote and pressure them to equitably distribute patronage favors to African Americans.

Growing independence of black Republicans also was seen in general elections conducted in Ohio during the 1920s. Black Republicans criticized both state and national Republican leaders for their Party's regressive treatment of African American interests. However, this criticism still was limited because few African American voters saw the national Democratic party as a safe option. Democrats in the White House and in Congress tended to be much influenced by Negrophobes in their party's southern wing.

African American distrust of the national Democratic party was reinforced early in the decade when Ohio Democratic leaders exploited racial fears. During the 1920 campaign the Ohio Democratic state committee issued two lengthy circulars that expressed anxiety about the growing migration of southern Negroes into Ohio, warned that Negroes were seeking social equality, and implied that a vote for the Republican state ticket was a vote for "Negro domination." The "A Timely
Warning” circular concluded: “Men and women of Ohio, rally to the ballot box and give such a verdict as forever will rid Ohio of this menace to yourselves and your children.”22 Also in 1920, some Ohio opponents of Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding played a race card undoubtedly intended to undermine his support from white voters. It was rumored that Harding had Negro forebears.23 The possibility that Harding had African ancestors certainly did not damage his popularity with black voters.

The 1920 Republican presidential campaign in the Ohio general election was notable for the absence of black insurgency. Black Republicans very largely rallied around Warren G. Harding, an Ohio native. The Harding campaign made extraordinarily strong appeals to black voters, stressing “Equal Opportunity” for instance.24 A black veteran of the women’s suffrage movement in Cleveland, Lethia Fleming, was appointed to membership on the national women’s advisory board of the Republican party.25 The women’s suffrage amendment to the United States Constitution became effective in this election.26 Harding received virtually uniform support from the state’s black Republican leaders.27 They included the dissident black weekly editor Harry C. Smith, who wrote a widely circulated pro-Harding pamphlet addressed to African Americans.28

Black Republican leaders in Ohio and in other states asserted greater independence in statewide general elections following President Warren G. Harding’s death in office. Independent black Republicans criticized some Republican nominees for president and governor and campaigned against them, sometimes in cooperation with their Democratic party opponents. The most cogent criticism concerned Ku Klux Kan issues and questions about the racial fairness of Republican candidates. This trend developed through 1928, and a few black Republican leaders switched allegiance to the Democratic party at decade’s end.

In Ohio the level of black Republican political protest rose in 1924. Leading black Republicans from across the state, meeting in Columbus, petitioned Ohio party officials to return to past practice and include a black delegate in the Ohio delegation to the 1924 Republican National Convention to be held in Cleveland. When this request was denied, a number of those advocating a black delegate started a movement to organize Ohio’s independent black Republicans. Convention officials did appoint prominent black Clevelanders to a committee in charge of local arrangements for black delegates from other states. Eventually, editor Harry C. Smith and other African Americans in Cleveland formed a long list of demands and urged the out-of-state black delegates to present them to the convention’s platform committee. This group, for
instance, wanted the Republican platform to advocate enactment of federal anti-lynching legislation and repudiation of the Ku Klux Klan. The black delegates' actual platform proposals were almost completely rejected. The Ku Klux Klan issue was ignored at this Republican National Convention that nominated Calvin Coolidge for President.

Many prominent black Republicans across the state were alienated by the failure of Coolidge Republicans to act on matters of concern to African Americans. Some opposed the Republican nominee and occasionally supported his rivals. In northern Ohio, for example, Clevelander Harry C. Smith's black weekly repeatedly criticized President Coolidge and published information favorable to Democratic presidential candidate John W. Davis and to the Progressive party candidate Robert M. LaFollette. Davis made statements sympathetic to racial fairness, while LaFollette made a clear-cut condemnation of the Ku Klux Klan. Some black Clevelanders organized the Independent Colored Voters League of Cuyahoga County, which vigorously campaigned for LaFollette in northeastern Ohio cities. In central Ohio, an Emancipation Day ceremony speaker urged African Americans in Springfield to vote independently. At Ohio University in the state's southern hills, a small group of politically independent black students formed a John W. Davis Club and campaigned for the Democratic candidate. Despite defections, other prominent black Republicans in Ohio remained regular and actively campaigned for Coolidge, who carried Ohio in a national election landslide for the Republican presidential candidate.

During the 1920s Republican candidates for governor in Ohio and in Indiana drew criticism from black Republican insurgents. In 1924 the Cleveland Gazette stated that the Ku Klux Klan endorsed Ohio Republican candidate Harry L. Davis and that Davis did not deny it. Gazette editor Harry C. Smith aided the Democratic candidate for Ohio governor, A. Victor Donahey, for instance, by reporting Donahey's statement that he would give Ohioans an honest government "without prejudice as to race, color or creed." In neighboring Indiana the black elector of Marion County voted Democratic for the first time after independent black Republicans in Indianapolis mounted a highly organized protest against the Klan-endorsed Republican state ticket in 1924.

The Klan remained an issue in Ohio's 1926 election campaigns. Black independents from thirty-four Ohio counties attending a meeting in Columbus formed a nonpartisan league of African American voters, headed by Clevelander Dr. E. J. Gregg. Many African Americans opposed Republican nominee for governor Myers Y. Cooper, believing he was antiblack. Black weekly editor Harry C. Smith refused to give Cooper his editorial endorsement. In a letter of explanation to a Republican campaign
official, Smith charged that the Klan backed Cooper and that he drew the color line in his real estate business transactions. According to a black Democrat in Columbus, the state Democratic campaign committee circulated one hundred thousand copies of this letter in Ohio prior to the election. Smith concluded that black voters gave Donahey “the balance of votes” which ensured his re-election. A Columbus observer reported that members of Ohio’s “Colored Democratic Clubs” voted for the Democratic candidates out of party preference.

Myers Y. Cooper again was the Republican candidate for Ohio governor in 1928. Editor Smith reiterated his accusation that Cooper discriminated against blacks. He published an open letter written by a black teacher at Cincinnati’s Douglass School, who charged Cooper with using pressure tactics and harassment to drive her and her sister out of a house that they had purchased in an area in which Cooper’s real estate firm owned much property. Editor Smith advised his readers to vote for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Martin L. Davey. However, many African American voters stayed with the Republican candidate. Republican Cooper was elected governor of Ohio, undoubtedly benefiting from Republican Herbert Hoover’s landslide election as president.

The African American taboo against supporting Democratic candidates had weakened somewhat by 1928. Respected black personalities advocated black political independence and criticized the Republican party during the twenties, making opposition to it more acceptable. This evidently emboldened African Americans in Ohio who favored Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith over his Republican opponent Herbert Hoover in 1928. Some prominent black Republicans, including editor Harry C. Smith of Cleveland, continued to urge African Americans to be independent voters in the presidential election. Meantime, some African Americans in each Ohio region supported the Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith. He was popular with minority groups around the country, who identified with him as a victim of intolerance. Al Smith’s political enemies stirred Protestant fears of his Roman Catholic faith. Black political leaders from Springfield, Rendville, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus, and Dayton formed the Al Smith League of Colored Voters of Ohio, purportedly to promote independent voting. The league’s president, Dr. Joseph L. Johnson of Columbus, was a veteran Democratic politician. Some other black Ohioans supporting Al Smith were avowedly partisan Democrats. The drift towards the Democratic party by some black politicians in Ohio also was seen in other states. In July 1928 the National Colored Democratic Association staged its national convention in Cleveland and nominated Al Smith for president. Black Clevelanders
Walter L. Brown and Peter Boult held posts in the association’s national committee structure. Such expressions of black political independence from the Republican party did not basically change the African American voting pattern in the presidential election. Republican Herbert Hoover was elected with the assistance of most black voters, but Al Smith received more African American support at the polls than was usual for a Democratic candidate.

Demonstrations of African American independence from the Republican party were made in Ohio’s municipal elections in large and small urban centers during the 1920s. Black Republicans ran for election to local offices in each region of the state. Usually, the black candidates campaigned as independents after having failed to obtain Republican endorsements in the primaries. These independent candidacies increased in number as the decade passed.

The few African Americans in smaller Ohio urban centers who ran for local offices rarely won in this period, especially after 1920. William Goode was elected in 1915 to the city council of Bridgeport, located on the Ohio River in eastern Ohio’s Belmont County, where blacks were about 5 percent of the approximately 4,000 population. In 1919 Washington Courthouse resident John T. Oatmeal was elected justice of the peace of Fayette County, located in southwestern Ohio. Arthur Johnston was elected to the town council of Miles Heights, a small community near Cleveland, where he was a foreman in the Cuyahoga County highway department. Johnston became council president because he received more votes than any other council member. This put him in line to succeed the incumbent mayor in the event of the latter’s incapacity. Upon the incumbent’s death in 1929, Arthur Johnston became mayor of Miles Heights. African Americans constituted about one-third of the population there. Black candidates in the twenties unsuccessfully ran for public offices in smaller Ohio cities including Elyria, Springfield, and Zanesville. Robert W. Pulley of Elyria, for one, was a candidate for sheriff in northern Ohio’s Lorain County in 1922.

Prior to 1910 African Americans were not elected to city councils in Ohio’s large urban centers with one exception. In Columbus, during the period 1881–1912, several African Americans were elected to the city council and the board of education from a predominantly black ward. But in 1912 the Columbus city charter was revised to provide for the election of councilmen and school board members at large rather than by wards. No African American was elected to municipal office in Columbus during the remainder of the decade. About a half dozen black candidates campaigned unsuccessfully for public office in Columbus and Franklin County during the twenties.
The most sustained and effective black Republican insurgent movements in municipal politics were carried out in Cincinnati and Cleveland, which contained the largest black populations in the state. Both used municipal election forms giving the black vote visibility. In Cincinnati black Republicans expressed growing dissatisfaction with the Hamilton County Republican organization because it did not embrace African American candidates for election to county offices as it had in the past. The Republican party did not support a black candidate for the Cincinnati City Council in 1921. Some black Republican leaders consequently threatened to back a white independent mayoralty candidate while charging that the Republican party was ungrateful for the consistently Republican black vote. Many black voters evidently supported the independent white candidate for mayor in 1921. In 1922 the county Republican organization broke a long tradition by failing to nominate a black candidate for any county office. Local black leaders vociferously objected, for example, during an African American political meeting held at Cincinnati’s Metropolitan Baptist Church. Subsequently, the local Republican organization apparently attempted to mollify alienated black Republicans. Black weekly editor Wendell P. Dabney was promoted to paymaster of Cincinnati after having served as assistant paymaster since 1907. Dabney shortly resigned his post in protest against the fact that his salary had not been increased to correspond with his higher rank. During the 1924 election Dabney advised others to join him in declaring independence of the Republican party.

In 1925 Cincinnati began to conduct municipal elections on the basis of proportional representation, making it theoretically possible for African Americans to be represented in the city council in proportion to the number of black voters in Cincinnati. The local Republican organization, however, did not endorse black candidates for council seats. In response, Dr. E. Duval Colley, a black physician, launched a highly visible protest candidacy for a Hamilton County congressional seat in 1926. Likewise, in 1927 Cincinnati police department detective Frank A. B. Hall ran as an independent Republican candidate for city council after being denied a regular Republican nomination. A local newspaper observed, “for the first time the colored voters partly concentrated on a member of their own race.” Two African Americans, George W. B. Conrad and Hall, contested for council seats as independent Republicans in 1929. At a campaign meeting, black attorney A. Lee Beaty condemned local Republicans for denying African Americans fair recognition and asserted: “Either George Conrad or Frank Hall must teach them to respect us.” Hall received more votes in 1929 than he had in 1927. The Republican party in Cincinnati apparently learned the
lesson of Hall’s candidacies; it backed Hall for a city council seat in 1931, and he was elected.65

Black independence in Ohio’s local politics was most evident in Cleveland, where African American grievances against the Republican party were different from those in other Ohio cities. Black Clevelanders obtained some Republican nominations and were elected to some public offices though the twenties, in contrast to events elsewhere in Ohio. African Americans in Cleveland were aggrieved that blacks did not receive a more significant share of Republican endorsements for public offices and political patronage jobs. Also, many blacks in Cleveland were disaffected from the Republican party by the belief that local Republican authorities were responsible for the neglect of municipal services in black residential areas.

Early in the twenties, progressive African Americans in Cleveland criticized the record of black city councilman Thomas W. Fleming, who represented Cleveland’s Ward Eleven. Fleming had served several terms on the Cleveland City Council, 1910–1920.66 He was a politico of the old-style patronage politics at the municipal level. Fleming repeatedly ran for council with the endorsement of Maurice Maschke, boss of the Cuyahoga County Republican organization. Black saloonkeeper A. D. Boyd headed the Republican machine in Ward Eleven and effectively delivered its votes to Fleming and Maschke, election after election. Councilman Fleming’s black critics in the twenties asserted that he voted according to the wishes of Maschke and gave little attention to conditions in his ward or to the concerns of African Americans in Cleveland. At the urging of progressive African Americans in Ward Eleven, black weekly editor Harry C. Smith ran as an independent opposing Fleming in the city council elections of 1921. Smith received endorsements from several black churches and many black organizations in Ward Eleven, including the Baptist Ministers’ Conference and the Council of Colored Women. Following Fleming’s election victory, his progressive black critics acted to provide alternative representation; they formed a group called the Central Body to pressure the city administration for such things as better streetcar service and street repairs in Ward Eleven.67

During the 1920s, especially in the latter half of the decade, black candidates for elective and appointive offices were more successful in Cleveland than in Ohio’s other major urban centers. This success reflected the extraordinary concentration and growth of the black voting population in certain wards on Cleveland’s East Side. The increasing black voter strength in these wards was effective in elections because Cleveland’s election procedures were not designed to exclude African Americans from local offices. During the decade, Cleveland adopted a
complicated system of election districts containing wards and a version of proportional representation that encouraged independent black candidates to seek municipal offices. Initiatives taken by independent black candidates also contributed to the political success of African Americans in Cleveland. Generally these independent candidates represented a new-style politics tied to special interest organizations, particularly the NAACP, rather than to networks of friends associated with established party patronage politics. After witnessing exhibitions of political insurgency by black Republicans, the Cuyahoga County Democratic organization apparently saw its chance to win the black vote or some larger fraction of it. As the decade closed, the Republican and Democratic political machines in Cleveland were competing for the black vote. Each party nominated black candidates for public offices and sometimes favored African Americans for political appointments.

In 1925 and 1927 several African Americans ran for public offices in Cleveland's municipal elections. In the 1925 city council elections, two black independent candidates opposed Councilman Thomas W. Fleming in Cleveland's Third District, and black attorney Clayborne George ran in the Fourth District. Only Councilman Fleming, whom the Republican Party backed, was elected. By 1927 Cleveland's growing black constituency was able to elect three African American City Council members. Attorney George and Dr. E. J. Gregg, a physician, were elected to the council in 1927 as independent Republicans, and once more Councilman Fleming was reelected with a Republican endorsement. Although they identified themselves as independent Republicans, Councilmen George and Gregg entered the city council's Democratic caucus. They were expected to receive the support of the Democratic minority in council on measures which they sponsored.

Prior to the election, Cuyahoga County Democratic Executive Committee Chairman W. B. Gongwer had approved Gregg's candidacy. This was the first time in history that the Democratic party endorsed an African American for the Cleveland City Council. Gongwer and the Democrats also endorsed the candidacy of African American attorney William R. Green, who campaigned unsuccessfully in 1927 as an independent candidate for Cleveland municipal court judge.

In 1928 the three African Americans on the Cleveland City Council were in a position to affect the outcomes of close votes on council issues, and this, undoubtedly, gave local Democratic leaders further incentive to win black political support. For example, the council was evenly divided about which candidate would receive an appointment to the Cleveland Civil Service Commission. The Republicans wanted black attorney Harry E. Davis, who was a member of the Ohio House of
Representatives and a legal adviser to the local NAACP. Councilman E. J. Gregg spoke and voted against Davis' appointment on grounds that Davis could be of greater service in the state legislature than on the commission. Councilmen Thomas W. Fleming and Claybourne George voted for Davis, who was appointed with the votes of thirteen of the twenty-five council members. In January 1928 Harry E. Davis became the first black member of the Cleveland Civil Service Commission. 72 Thereafter, county political boss Gongwer intensified the local Democratic organization's appeal to Cleveland's black voters. In the summer of 1928 Gongwer appointed forty-two African Americans as precinct committeemen in Cleveland's Eleventh, Twelfth, and Eighteenth Wards. Consequently, all the Democratic precinct committeemen in Wards Eleven and Twelve were blacks, although some of their Republican counterparts in the same Wards were whites. 73

In 1929 the Cuyahoga County Republican organization headed by Maurice Maschke was embarrassed when City Councilman Thomas W. Fleming was indicted and convicted for soliciting and accepting a bribe to use his influence on the council toward the passage of special legislation. 74 Some local daily newspapers sharply criticized boss Maschke and his Republican associates. One editorialized: "... Maschke stands responsible for the conditions which have made Tom Fleming what he is." 75 The Republican organization subsequently backed for the vacancy an African American candidate of unquestioned character. Dr. Russell S. Brown, pastor of the Mt. Zion Congregational Church, was experienced in welfare work, scholarship, and teaching. Although he was not identified with any political faction, Brown was a local NAACP activist. He was elected by the votes of the fourteen white Republicans and two black members on the city council. 76 The Cleveland Plain Dealer's editor described the choice of Dr. Brown as "a good selection." 77 Thereafter, African American Councilmen Gregg and George attended the city council's Republican caucus. 78

Buoyed by recent successes, numerous black candidates entered the Cleveland municipal elections in 1929. Public school teacher Mary B. Martin was a Cleveland school board incumbent who had been appointed to fill a vacated seat. In 1929 she ran and was elected to serve a term of her own on the Cleveland Board of Education. 79 Several black candidates for the Cleveland City Council displayed considerable independence from the Republican party. Some campaigned as independents, while others were identified with major and minor parties. Again, three African Americans were elected to a city council balanced along party lines, giving the black members significant political clout. County Democratic boss W. B. Gongwer endorsed Dr. James A. Owen for city
council in the 1929 election, marking only the second time the Democrats backed a black council candidate. Councilman Claybourne George evidently ran as a regular Republican. Councilman E. J. Gregg and attorney Chester K. Gillespie associated their candidacies with the Progressive Government Committee (for the city manager plan). Lawrence O. Payne and Dr. Leroy Bundy were independent candidates. Bundy and Payne were elected to the Cleveland City Council and Councilman George was reelected. Attorney Payne was an assistant prosecutor in the Cleveland municipal courts, 1924–1929, and an associate of Thomas W. Fleming when the latter was a city councilman. Dr. Bundy was reared and professionally trained in Cleveland. Later, when practicing dentistry in Illinois, he was charged and ultimately acquitted of criminal offenses allegedly committed during the East St. Louis race riot in the summer of 1917. After returning to Cleveland, he possessed the political advantage of very high name recognition because his litigation was much publicized.

When the newly elected Cleveland City Council met in January 1930, its three black members were in a position to decide important issues facing that body because its white members were evenly divided by their party affiliations. Eleven were Democrats and eleven were Republicans. Councilmen Bundy, George, and Payne used their political clout effectively. The replacement of William R. Hopkins as city manager was the council’s prime concern early in the year. The black councilmen met and negotiated with the council’s white Republicans and with Republican Daniel E. Morgan, who wished to succeed Hopkins. After obtaining political commitments from him, Bundy, George, and Payne cast deciding votes in Council that elected Morgan. True to his commitments, City Manager Morgan took steps to racially integrate Cleveland City Hospital and to increase the number of African Americans with appointments to municipal offices, including the city clerk’s office.

In the 1920s the Republican party was less inclined to nominate and elect black candidates for the Ohio General Assembly than it was prior to World War I, when there were sometimes three black Republican members of the Ohio House of Representatives per term. No more than one African American sat in the Ohio legislature during 1915–1930. Cincinnatian A. Lee Beaty was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives from Hamilton County in 1916 and reelected in 1918. The Hamilton County Republican ticket included black nominees for state legislature in elections during 1916–1920. Franklin County (Columbus) Republicans nominated, but failed to elect, black candidates for the legislature in 1918, 1920, and 1922. Thereafter, only in
Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) were black Republicans nominated and elected to the Ohio legislature in the twenties. A black Republican from Cleveland served in the Ohio House of Representatives in every term of the legislature during the decade. Attorney Harry E. Davis won a state representative nomination in the Cuyahoga County Republican primary election, and he was elected to the state House of Representatives in 1920, 1922, 1924, and 1926. Davis faced African American competitors in some of those primaries. His African American successor was another loyal Republican party member, attorney Perry B. Jackson, who ran and was elected as a Cuyahoga County Republican nominee for the state legislature in 1928. Meantime, black Democrat Peter Boult failed to win endorsement as a Cuyahoga County Democratic candidate for the general assembly in 1928.

During 1915–1930, Ohio’s African American state representatives, all accomplished attorneys, acted to advance the principle of equal rights regardless of color; this followed precedents set by Ohio’s nineteenth century black state legislators. Hamilton County (Cincinnati) State Representative A. Lee Beaty (1917–1920) sponsored a measure strengthening the nineteenth century Ohio law that provided penalties for racial discrimination in public accommodations. Ohio NAACP branches and black organizations and individuals across the state lobbied for the passage of Beaty’s bill. When it died in committee, members of the Colored Women’s Republican Club in Columbus and many African Americans blamed the Ohio legislature’s Republican majority.

Cuyahoga County State Representatives Harry E. Davis (1921–1928) and Perry B. Jackson (1929–1930) vigilantly watched for anti-black measures and fought such bills. In 1923, for instance, Davis succeeded in challenging a proposal to amend and weaken Ohio’s nineteenth century anti–mob violence act. In 1925 Davis cooperated with others in preventing the passage of a bill against racial intermarriage that the Ku Klux Klan wanted. He sponsored legislative measures intended to advance the cause of equal rights for African Americans. In 1921, for example, Davis introduced a resolution that would have put the Ohio legislature on record as favoring a federal “investigation of peonage conditions in the South” that exploited the black workers. Representative Perry B. Jackson also guarded the interests of the state’s black constituency; for instance, he successfully opposed a racial identification requirement in a 1929 state senate bill on Ohio election code revision.

As previously indicated, the character of black politics in Ohio changed substantially in the 1920s. Nonpartisan organizations became more prominent in the political sphere than individual black politicians who were tied to partisan networks. Civil rights and race organizations
often used political devices to influence public opinion and affect governmental decision-making in favor of their causes. Such associations sponsored political meetings, circulated petitions and issued press statements on political issues, and endorsed partisan candidates. In one notable instance such groups opposed the appointment of a United States Supreme Court nominee. During the twenties, the most visible organizations in Ohio's black politics were the NAACP and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. The black leadership trend toward political independence was advanced by both of these organizations.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was a black separatist body founded in the previous decade by Marcus Garvey, a West Indian immigrant. Garvey advocated black economic self-sufficiency, unity, and pride. In the postwar period, his message gained extensive support among African American masses nationwide. Divisions of Garvey's organization were founded in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Akron, and other Ohio cities. Garvey addressed Ohio audiences several times during the early twenties. He appeared in Akron and in larger cities. His Cleveland addresses in December 1922 were described as "well attended." When he gave a speech in September 1923, members of the Cleveland UNIA Division "and its many friends packed the church to the doors." Early in the decade Cleveland Division Number Fifty Nine of the UNIA held its meetings in Haltworth's Hall and Liberty Hall. In 1923 the Cleveland UNIA began a campaign to raise thirty-five thousand dollars to purchase a headquarters building. Likewise, the UNIA made an impact in Cincinnati, especially after Marcus Garvey spoke there in February 1921. The Cincinnati membership of Garvey's organization was eventually 8,000 according to William Ware, a social worker who formed the Cincinnati UNIA chapter late in 1920. Black weekly editor Wendell P. Dabney noted that the Garvey movement "had a large following" in Cincinnati and that its George Street headquarters were "always thronged with its adherents."

Political action was required to achieve some UNIA goals. For example, the association wished to shape United States foreign policy respecting Africa. The Cleveland unit's political programs undoubtedly exemplified like activities in Ohio's other UNIA divisions. Early in 1924 the Cleveland UNIA circulated petitions requesting the President and Congress to support "the creation of an independent Negro Republic in Africa." This effort in Cleveland was a part of a national campaign of the UNIA to secure six million signatures on such petitions. In March 1924 the Cleveland organization held a meeting celebrating the return
of UNIA delegates who had toured Europe and Africa "in the interest of the repatriation of Africa." In the spring of the same year, the Cleveland Division heard an address by a national UNIA official on the topic "Reclamation of Africa by Negroes of Western Civilization."

UNIA divisions in Ohio emphatically advocated black political independence in the 1920s. Across the decade, UNIA leaders criticized the Republican party and approved black independent candidates. Eventually the Ohio UNIA backed a Democratic ticket. Cincinnati Division President William Ware expressed the Ohio Garveyites' viewpoint at a 1927 UNIA political meeting. He asserted: "The Negroes' lamentable condition here [Cincinnati] is largely caused by sticking to preachers and the Republican Party. Many of them go to the Republican campaign managers, get about fifty dollars . . . and say, solemnly, my church is with you." Ohio UNIA bodies took independent stands in elections. For example, the Cleveland UNIA endorsed Harry C. Smith as an independent black candidate for Cleveland city council in 1921. The Cincinnati UNIA cosponsored a political meeting addressed by Harry C. Smith when he was a gubernatorial candidate in the 1922 Republican primary election. In 1927 Garvey's Cincinnati organization supported the ticket of the Charter party, a local third party. In 1928 delegates attending the UNIA's state convention in Ohio backed the Democratic presidential candidate, Al Smith.

The achievement of NAACP goals in the 1920s often required that civil rights organization to engage in politics, broadly conceived. A large part of the NAACP's agenda was composed of activities meant to influence public opinion and governmental action in support of racial equality in law. The NAACP also was involved in politics narrowly defined as party rivalry. It took positions in popular elections and sometimes in political patronage disputes. The NAACP avoided formal identification with a specific party and thereby incidentally advanced the independent voting trend then developing among African Americans. For example, in 1924 the NAACP's central office encouraged NAACP members across the country to vote for candidates on the basis of their merits rather than on their party affiliation. This was in reaction against Republican President Calvin Coolidge's negative record on racial issues. The NAACP's Crisis took an independent stance by publishing a symposium on the relative merits of the presidential candidates in 1924. Speakers representing the NAACP were sent to various parts of the nation to promote this independent view. NAACP Secretary James Weldon Johnson, for instance, urged blacks in Springfield, Ohio, to vote independently and vote against any candidate who was a member of or was supported by the Ku Klux Klan.
Increasing NAACP political activity in Ohio during the twenties peaked in the 1930 general elections. The NAACP led a highly publicized and thorough campaign against a Republican nominee for the United States Senate. The campaign focused on Roscoe C. McCulloch, an incumbent United States senator from Ohio. He had voted for confirmation of the appointment of Judge John J. Parker of North Carolina as an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. The NAACP and others charged that Judge Parker had exhibited anti-black behavior earlier in his career and thus opposed his appointment to the court by President Herbert Hoover. Senator McCulloch received “an avalanche of pleas from his Negro and white constituents” asking that he vote against Judge Parker's confirmation, but he voted for confirmation anyway. Parker lost the Senate vote, giving the NAACP a remarkable victory.

NAACP leaders at the local, state, and national levels subsequently conducted a campaign in Ohio to prevent Senator McCulloch's reelection in 1930. In May the Cleveland NAACP branch president wrote that he was using every opportunity to have black organizations in Cleveland go on record in opposition to McCulloch. In Columbus, NAACP membership leaped with the occurrence of “rally after rally” opposing McCulloch's reelection. The NAACP's national leaders, apparently sensing an African American revolt in Ohio, decided to make the defeat of Senator McCulloch a test of black voting potential. In the run-up to the election, the NAACP established a state conference of local NAACP branches in Ohio to coordinate the future general activities of the local branches. In the short term, this state conference was used to coordinate a statewide NAACP campaign seeking McCulloch's defeat. Branch delegates meeting in Columbus voted unanimously to oppose his election. Headed by C. E. Dickinson, the state conference mailed thousands of anti-McCulloch materials, including postcards and sample ballots. The black political revolt in Ohio was described and promoted in a Crisis article by Walter White, acting secretary of the NAACP, who observed: “The revolt is especially to be seen among the younger and more progressive Negroes of Ohio.” White and W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of the Crisis, addressed Ohio audiences just prior to the election.

The 1930 election results were gratifying to Roscoe McCulloch's opponents. Ohio Democrat Robert J. Bulkley was elected to the United States Senate. The factors causing McCulloch's defeat included the prohibition issue and the poor economic conditions, but the black vote was influential. One scholar reported: “The colored districts of Cleveland, Toledo, Akron, Columbus, and Canton went to McCulloch's
Democratic opponent by margins of from 50 to 86 percent, while many voters in these districts refrained from voting for United States Senator. The anti-McCulloch campaign evidenced several notable developments in Ohio's black politics during the twenties. Its leadership practiced a new politics tied to associations representing group interests rather than to the old politics that was derived from patronage networks. The campaign's magnitude reflected demographic changes that enlarged and concentrated the body of black voters in numbers sufficient to constitute the balance of power in a close election race. Finally, the anti-McCulloch campaign was a remarkable climax of insurgent activity ensuing from the expansion of black political independence during the twenties.

Knowledge of politics is required for a full understanding of the struggle against the Ohio color line in the 1920s because much of it occurred in political and governmental arenas. The voting places in Ohio and other northern states were untouched by the color line, in contrast to the polls in many southern states where racially biased enforcement of voting laws practically disenfranchised African Americans. Arguably, the possession of the franchise by African Americans in states like Ohio was the most important difference between the racial system of the North and that of the South in the 1920s. Different means were used to draw the color line in the North and South, but both regions countenanced extensive racial segregation and discrimination in practically every category of social and economic life. African Americans in Ohio held the ballot, however, which was a tangible symbol of citizenship rights desired by black migrants who departed from southern states with hopes of finding greater possibilities and better lives in the North. African Americans in locales across Ohio voted and participated in politics, acknowledging the value of this right. In short, access to political and governmental processes was available and essential to African Americans who challenged the Ohio color line in the twenties.

The color line existed in the North's political realm, nevertheless, and its effects became more exclusive in Ohio's politics in the 1920s. The Republican party failed to roundly condemn the Ku Klux Klan and generally tended to ignore equal rights issues in the twenties, although it was once the political champion of that cause. The Republican party in Ohio was less inclined than in the past to include African Americans when it chose candidates for appointive and elective offices. Instead of accepting this quiescently, black political leaders in Ohio protested Republican racial policies throughout the decade. A growing body of independent black Republican politicians challenged their party in local, state, congressional, and presidential elections throughout the decade. The party's
leadership was regularly criticized for failure to reciprocate the loyalty that black voters gave to the Republican party. Black Republicans often expressed dissatisfaction by running for public offices without the backing of the Republican party.

The historical literature on early twentieth century African American politics often underplays evidence revealing such disaffection of black Republicans in the twenties and focuses on events in the thirties that contributed to the shift of the African American bloc vote from the Republican party to the Democratic party. The traditional literature suggests that black voter solidarity with the Republican party suddenly cracked and crumbled in the 1936 presidential election. African Americans benefited from the newly established policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. Undoubtedly, this was the immediate cause of the split; however, studies of black politics in Ohio and Indiana indicate that the break with the Republicans in the thirties occurred along fault lines that appeared earlier. Many black Ohioans in the twenties were at the same time alienated from the Republican party and unable to switch allegiance by voting for Democrats because they were seen as representing the party of the Jim Crow South. President Roosevelt altered that image of the Democratic party, creating a viable alternative for black Ohioans who had been alienated by the Republican party in the twenties.\textsuperscript{120}

Political scientist Martin Kilson argues that the style of African American politics changed in the early twentieth century. Clearly, the twenties was the end of an era in Ohio for a style of black political leadership that grew out of the patron-client political system that was basic to state and national politics in the United States during the nineteenth century. In this old American system, political influence was traded like a commodity in exchanges among political leaders stationed at various ranks in a hierarchical network of individual political relationships. The individual at each level gained a measure of power and influence in the public sphere. This national political system was reshaped during the era of Progressive reform prior to World War I. Political factions composed of influential individuals were overshadowed in politics by a broad assortment of “special interest groups” that used organizations to influence party policy and public action. African American political leadership in Ohio and elsewhere changed with the times.\textsuperscript{121} In the twenties, organizations of special interest to African Americans in Ohio, especially NAACP branches, were more effective in mustering political influence than were the few remaining elderly black political leaders who had been schooled in nineteenth century politics.