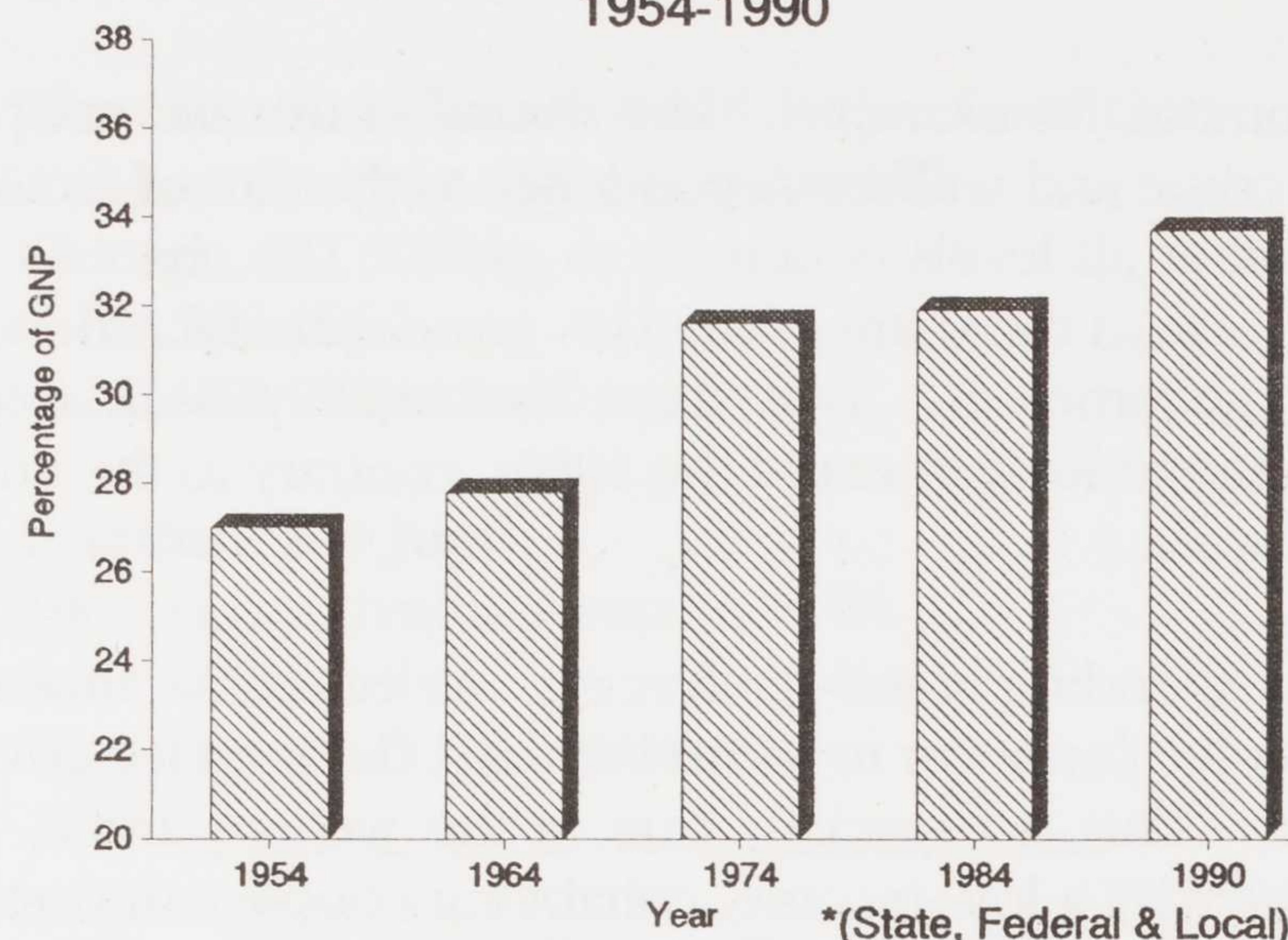


* Government Revenue as a % of GNP

1954-1990



9. GET A GRIP ON THE FACTS.

The major media have a depressing habit of reporting only one side of a story — or omitting the key facts citizens need to make their own judgments about the issues.

Take the recent pro-homosexual March on Washington, for example. On the Tuesday after the March, both major Washington, D.C. papers ran editorials on the event. The liberal Washington Post concluded its comment with the statement, “The peaceful power of the demonstration and the truly unexceptional demands of the participants for fair and equal treatment should be the enduring message of the weekend.” What were those “unexceptional demands”? The Post didn’t dare say. The Post’s crosstown competitor, the Washington Times, did, however: the marchers were calling for a radical platform “which included federal funding for artificial insemination of lesbian couples, the abolition of the age of consent and homosexuality taught in the nation’s schools.”

Readers of the Post editorial weren’t entrusted with these details of the marchers’ demands.

Three weeks later, the press was at it again, this time on the issue of President Clinton’s plan to lift the ban on open homosexuality in the military. The Senate Armed Services Committee, chaired by Sen. Sam Nunn, traveled to the huge U.S. Navy base at Norfolk, Virginia on May 10

to hear directly from service members and to get a closer look at the cramped quarters aboard ship where the homosexual issue would play itself out. Here is how four major newspapers, two liberal and two conservative, led off their front-page descriptions of the Committee visit:

- “What the senators heard from the dozens of sailors they questioned during the day may have been as important as what they saw on board ship. A clear majority of the sailors said they would not want to serve with openly homosexual shipmates. But a sizable minority said it made no difference to them.”

- *The Washington Post*

- “Petty Officer 3d Class Paul Gilberry . . . said that as long as his shipmates did their jobs well, he didn’t care if they were homosexual or heterosexual . . . the lawmakers were surprised by the number who thought as he did . . .”

- *The New York Times*

- “Men and women of the world’s largest naval base sent a message loud and clear to the Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday: Lifting the ban on homosexuals would damage morale and fighting effectiveness.”

- *The Washington Times*

- “An overwhelming majority of sailors told senators visiting Norfolk, Va., that they oppose Clinton’s plan to remove the prohibition on homosexuals in the military, and many said they would quit the Navy if the ban is lifted.”

- *The Wall Street Journal*

Clearly, readers of these publications did not get the same picture of the same events. Despite the proliferation of media, the need for citizens to maintain multiple sources of information has never been greater. Several trends make this need even more intense. First, in many cities where two or more newspapers once vied for subscribers, only one — usually the morning paper — now exists. In addition, the same realities of the marketplace have increased the number of U.S. papers owned by newspaper chains. While having national news sources and reports may strengthen one dimension of newspaper coverage, major urban dailies have become more rather than less alike in editorial outlook and news sources.