

Electoral Dynamics: The Role of Campaign Context in Voting Choice

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Agenda

- 1 Incumbency
- 2 Partisanship
- 3 Campaign Resources
- 4 Collective Responsibility

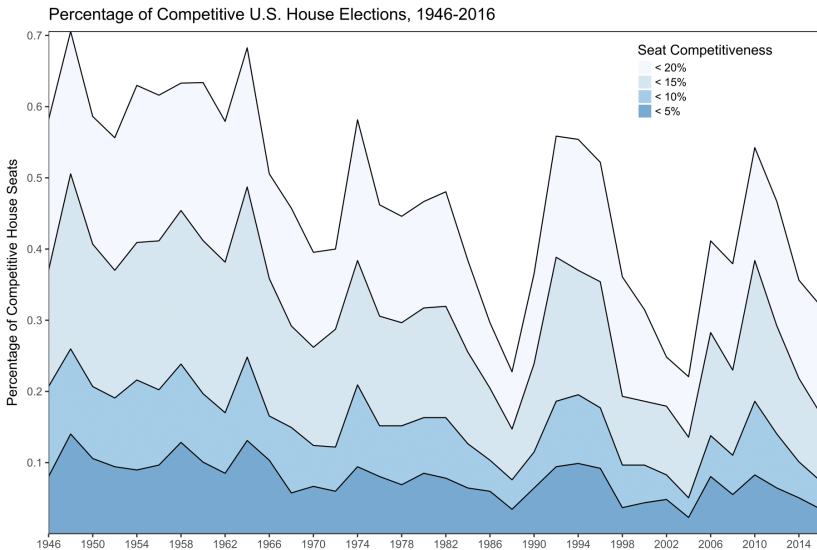
Models of Electoral Control

<i>Heuristic</i>	Vote-Choice Model	Implications for Representatives	Analytical Purposes
Ideology	Spatial/Proximity Voting	Responsive to Median Voter	Representation & Candidate Positioning
Partisanship	Michigan Model	Responsive to Partisan Base	Explaining vote choice/partisan bias
Valence	Retrospective Model/Valence Rule	Develop reputation, (honesty/integrity), monitor economy	Explaining electoral outcomes, pres. forecasting

Note: Partisanship & ideology are generally prospective models.

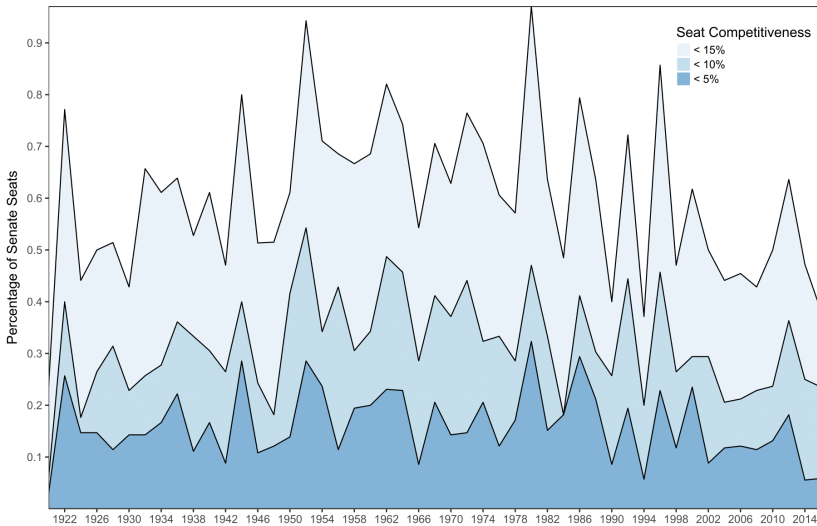
- ▶ Opening Question: Which model of electoral choice do you think reduces the information cost of voting the *most*? What is one potential pitfall for the model of your choice?

Decline in Competition in House Elections

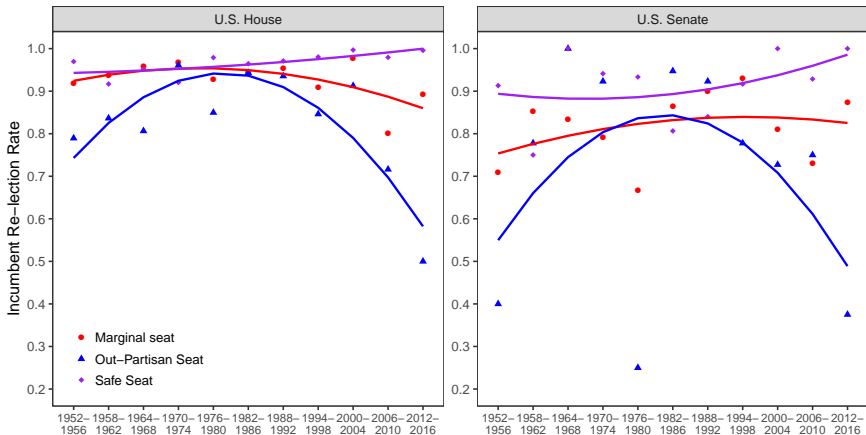


Decline in Competition in Senate Elections

Percentage of Competitive U.S. Senate Elections, 1920-2016



High Re-election Rates by Seat-Type



Smoothed lowest regression curve illustrated to show trend in incumbent re-election by seat-type over cycle.

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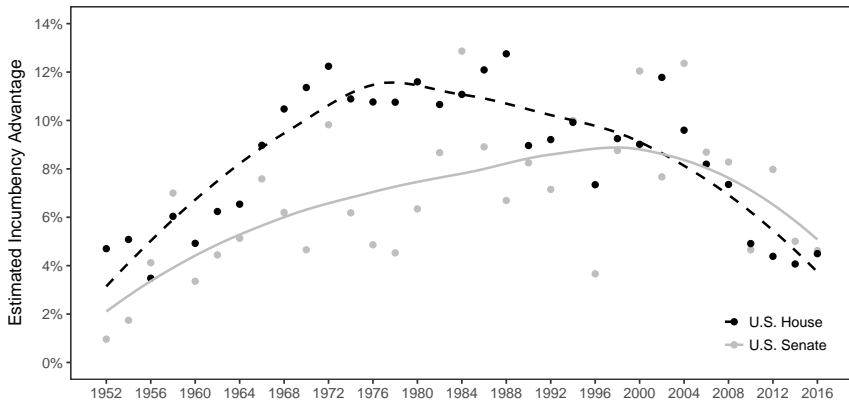
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 - ▶ Ability to scare potential quality challengers

Declining Worth of Incumbency in Congressional Elections



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Open Seats & Variation in Campaign Spending

TABLE 2 Competition in Marginal House Districts by Type of Contest, 2002–2004

Winner's % of House Vote	Type of Contest	
	Open Seat	Running Incumbent
Uncontested		
or 70+	3%	20%
60–70	29	55
55–60	23	19
50–55	45	5
Total	100%	100%
(n)	(31)	(197)

Note: Marginal districts are those in which Democratic presidential candidate's percentage of major party vote is within 5 points of national percentage.

Source: Data compiled by authors.

TABLE 3 Competition in High-Risk Incumbent Districts by Challenger Spending, 1998–2002

Challenger's % of Vote	Challenger Spending		
	\$0–499,999	\$500,000–999,999	\$1,000,000+
LT 30	16%	0%	0%
30–40	48	25	3
40–45	29	29	21
45+	7	46	76
Winners	0%	14%	27%
(n)	(132)	(28)	(33)

Note: Risky districts are those in which percentage of major party vote for presidential candidate of incumbent's party is less than national percentage.

Source: Data compiled by authors.

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- ▶ Why are experience candidates desirable for parties & why are they strategic?

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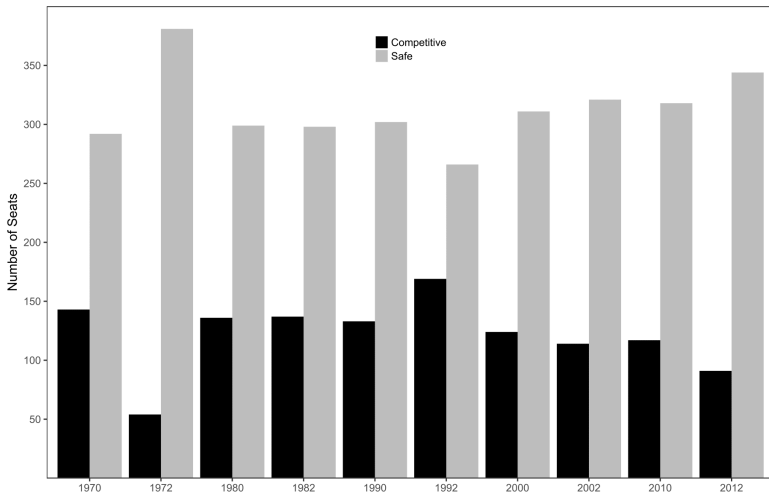
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Lack of support for the *Redistricting* Hypothesis

Numbers of Safe & Competitive Districts Before & After Redistricting, 1970–2012



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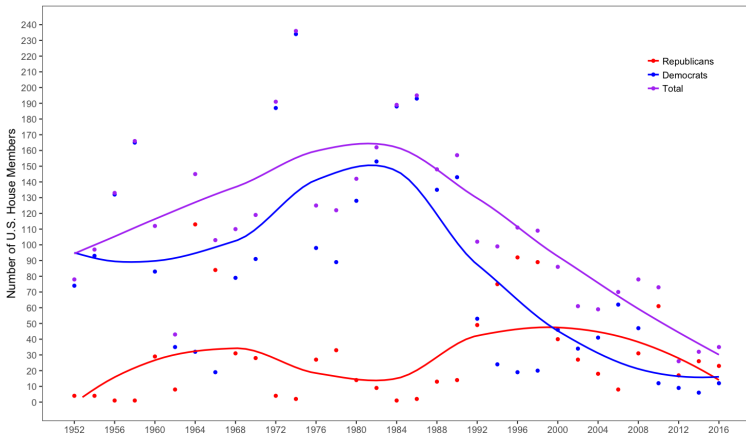
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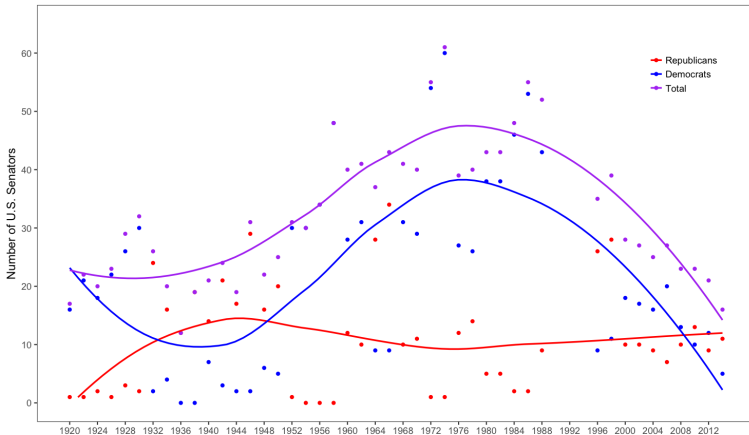
Decline of Split-Ticket Voting in Congressional Elections

Number of House Members Representing Districts Won by Opposing Party's Presidential Nominee, 1952-2016



Decline of Split-Ticket Voting in Congressional Elections

Number of Senators Representing States
Won by Opposing Party's Presidential Nominee, 1920-2014



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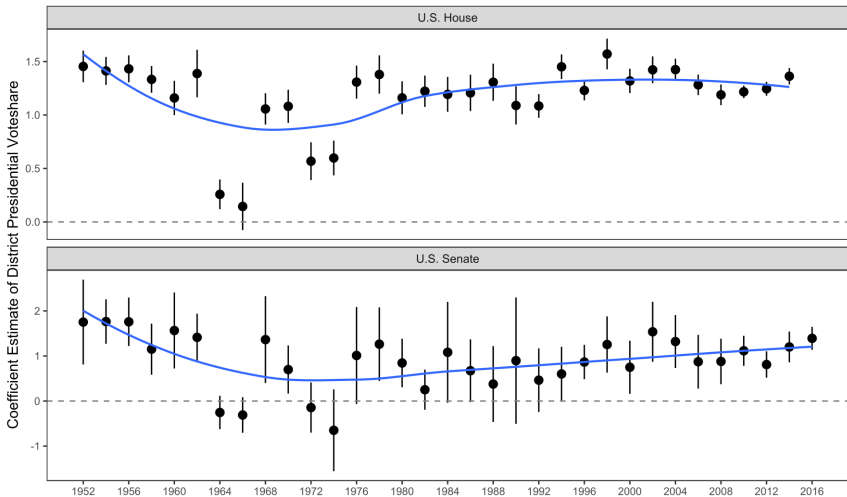
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- ▶ Potential implications of ↑ partisanship effect in election outcomes on valence model of vote choice?

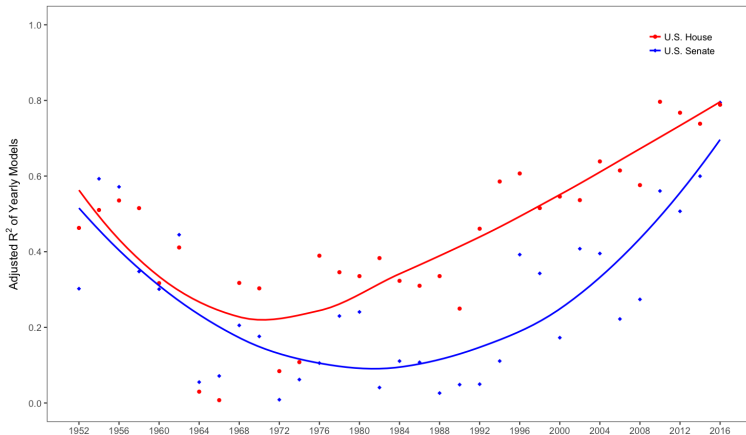
Relationship between District Election Outcomes & District Presidential Results, 1952-2016



Smoothed lowess regression curve fitted to illustrate trend in coefficient estimate across yearly models. Bivariate district-level OLS model specified: $DemVote \sim DemPresVote$

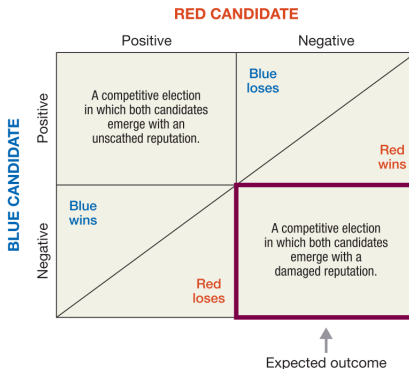
Growing Strength of Partisan Explanation

Variance in Congressional Election Outcomes accounted for by District Presidential Outcomes, 1952-2016



Campaign Spending

- ▶ Consider the following Prisoner's Dilemma
Choosing Negative Advertisements:
A Prisoner's Dilemma



- ▶ What's the logic behind the game? Can you apply this to campaign spending generally?

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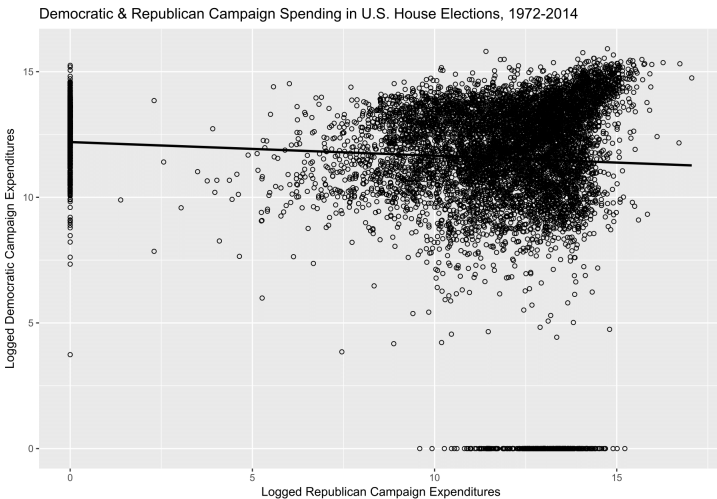
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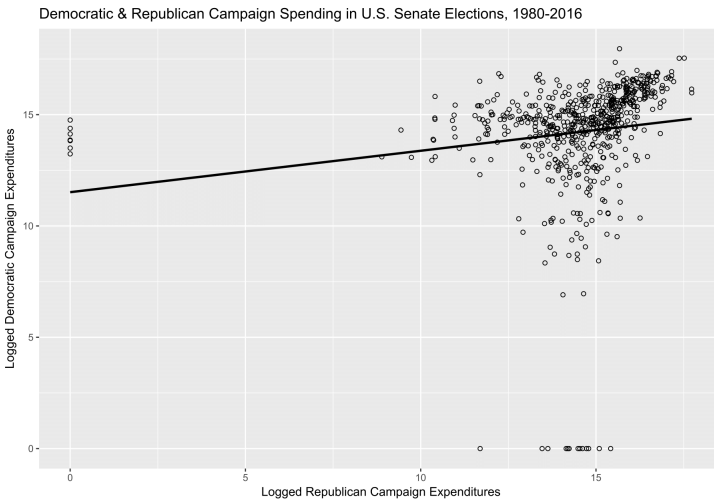
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- ▶ Campaign resources used primarily for *mobilization* rather than *conversion* given precancel of partisan & spatial models in explaining vote-choice

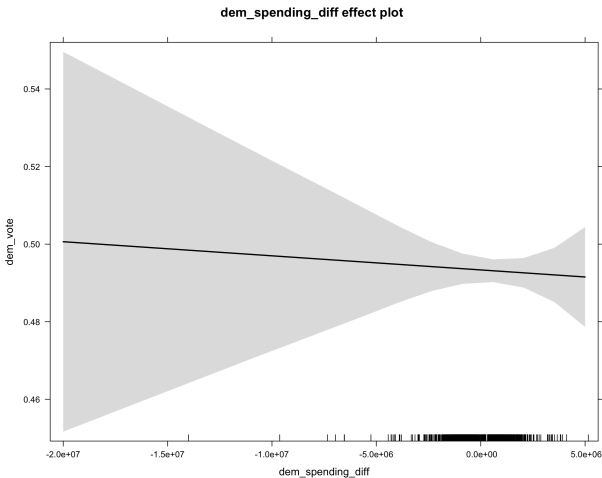
Distribution of Campaign Spending, U.S. House



Distribution of Campaign Spending, U.S. Senate



Independent Effect of Campaign Spending on Elections



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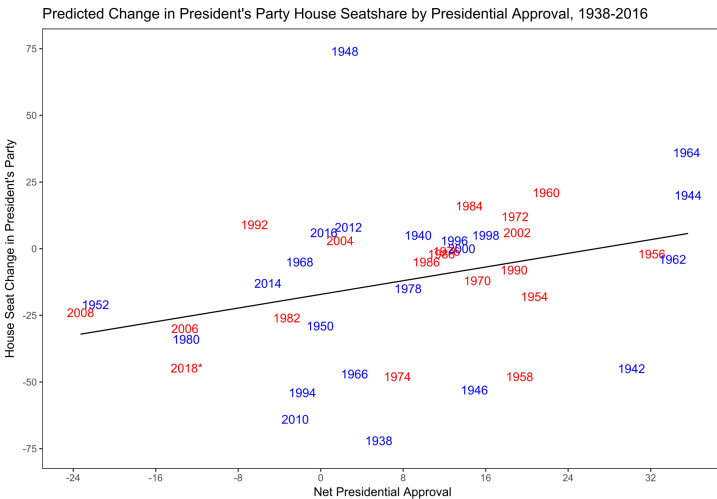
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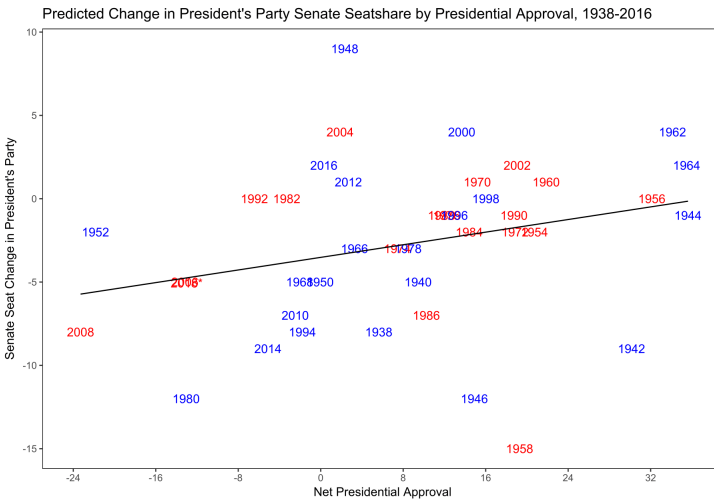
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- ▶ If correlated, evidence for *collective accountability* & increased 'presidentialization' of congressional elections

Punishing the President's Party in Congress



Punishing the President's Party in the Senate



Key Points:

- ▶ Congressional elections becoming *less* competitive
- ▶ Safe & marginal seats are becoming safer for parties while seats that favor other party are becoming more precarious
- ▶ Incumbents still hold an advantage, but shrinking as elections become more partisan
- ▶ Redistricting plays *very* marginal role in shaping campaign context
- ▶ Partisanship effect on electoral outcomes increasing in congressional elections
- ▶ Campaign spending *dynamic* in nature, thus canceling out as effect on election outcomes
- ▶ President's party generally fares poorly in midterm elections, function of approval.
- ▶ Consider if Madison would have a problem with role of campaign context in vote-choice