Preemptive Fund-Raising and Challenger Profile in Senate Elections

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Since 1980 the amount of money raised by incumbent senators during the first four years of their terms has increased dramatically. A widely held belief is that having a large campaign account well before the election scares the strongest potential challengers from making the race. Findings presented here show that almost every senator now engages in extensive early money raising, but that those senators who have the biggest number of potentially strong opponents back home are the most active in this regard. Large sums of early money do not, however, produce weaker challengers. Instead, the strength of the challenger is usually dictated by the size of the pool of strong candidates; where the number is large, one of the better candidates will make the race. Early money raising does not threaten the competitiveness of Senate elections.

In recent years spending in Senate elections has increased dramatically (Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1990, 76–77). The effect of this spending on election outcomes is well established: challengers get more return for their dollars than do incumbents, but the latter's expenditures still have a significant impact (Abramowitz 1988; Squire 1989a; Jacobson 1980, 44–45). Senate incumbents and their advisors, however, see more value in a large war chest than simply what it can buy during the campaign. They think that raising a great deal of money early in the election cycle intimidates the best potential challengers from making the race, leaving the well-funded incumbent an easier opponent to run against (Fenno 1982,31–32). Hedrick Smith (1988, 157) refers to this as the "money scare-off tactic."

Such a strategy strikes at the heart of electoral competition. It creates a disheartening scenario for democracy. Senators seeking reelection would have strong motivation to raise large sums of early money to dissuade better challengers from making the race. This would leave voters an unappealing choice between a seemingly avaricious incumbent and an inexperienced and likely overmatched opponent. Moreover, although every senator would be capable of raising the needed campaign funds, it would come at great cost in

I thank Gregory Caldeira, Michael Lewis-Beck, and James Stimson for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Any errors are, of course, my own.

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the time and effort he or she would have devoted to hustling contributions—energy taken away from representational duties (e.g., Smith 1988, 157; Baker 1989a, 191–92).

In this paper I examine preemptive fundraising in Senate elections to assess whether early money scares off high-quality opponents. Looking at the 1979–1980 to 1987–1988 election cycles, I first establish the strong trend in raising large sums of campaign money. I then demonstrate that senators across the board have increased the amount of early money raised, with those who face a large number of potential high caliber challengers back home particularly active in this regard. But, more importantly, I show that early money has no influence on the quality level of the challenger who makes the race or on the amount of campaign money he or she can raise. Challenger quality is tied to the number of potential strong challengers in a state; where more such candidates are found, one is likely to run. From the incumbent’s perspective, then, collecting large sums of early money is good preparation for a tough battle, but it does not head off one. This bodes well for the continued competitiveness of Senate elections.

THE MONEY “SCARE-OFF” TACTIC

The reasoning behind raising large sums of early money is seemingly compelling. Fenno (1982, 31) observes,

> It may be necessary, of course, for the incumbent to raise money in the sixth year to combat a strong challenger. But it can be even more important for an incumbent to use his or her fund-raising ability earlier, so as to keep a strong challenger from emerging. The appearance of electoral vulnerability can be disastrous for an incumbent, since potential challengers and the elites who fund them base their decisions partly on the perceived vulnerability of an incumbent. Moreover, they will be making their calculations in the fifth year. One way to appear invulnerable is to raise a lot of money early.

Smith (1988, 157) claims Senator D’Amato, for example, “built a massive war chest long before his 1986 reelection contest . . . [which] scared off potential Democratic opponents such as Geraldine Ferraro.”

Evidence on the success of scare-off tactics in House races is mixed. Representatives worry about potential opponents and pursue activities to discourage the strongest challengers from making the race (Fenno 1978; Loomis 1988). Goldenberg, Traugott, and Baumgartner’s (1986) analysis of the 1978 House elections suggests that early money dissuades strong challengers. A subsequent study by Krasno and Green (1988), however, did not uncover any relationship between early money and challenger quality. Their finding is consistent with the determination that uncontested House seats do not

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1Baker (1989a, 191–92) finds evidence of this thinking on the part of senators he interviewed. According to Fenno (1989,153), in 1985 Dan Quayle used the threat of a large war chest to intimidate better potential opponents in the 1986 election.
result from incumbents' intimidating war chests (Squire 1989b). Thus, in House races it is not clear if raising big money early produces the intended effects. But, what of Senate contests?

**WHO RAISES EARLY MONEY?**

The mean amount of cash-on-hand senators have 22 months before the election has been increasing (Sorauf 1988, 157; Smith 1988), as the bars labeled overall in figure 1 show. Moreover, the standard deviations around these means (not presented) have declined progressively, meaning that it is not just the activities of a few members which are skewing the numbers. According to 1990 campaign figures the trend has hit a lull. The mean January 1989 dollar totals held by incumbents who ran for reelection was more than $402,000, down slightly from two years earlier but still an amazing increase over a decade before.

Democratic and Republican incumbents up for reelection in 1980 had relatively small sums in the bank as of January 1, 1979. That same class of seats had raised nearly 12 times as much money by the beginning of 1985.

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2This information is compiled and reported by the FEC.

In the early part of the decade, Democratic incumbents raised more early money than their Republican counterparts. GOP senators up for reelection in 1986 reversed this trend. Perhaps this is evidence of a strong effort on the part of Republican senators carried in by small margins on Reagan’s 1980 coattails to prepare themselves for difficult reelection efforts. The 1988 election saw incumbents of both parties raising large sums of early money.

Figure 1 shows that the amount of early money being raised is increasing over time, but we can not determine from it which senators are more vigorous in raising these funds. Is early money being collected by all senators, or a new breed of junior senators, or those in seemingly precarious electoral situations?

It is not obvious how incumbent seniority might influence the level of early money raised. There is evidence that the probability of losing increases with seniority (Tuckel 1983), suggesting that veteran senators become too secure and out-of-touch with their constituents. This problem may manifest itself by senior senators not raising enough money to protect themselves. Seniority is not linked, however, to the relative quality of a challenger, or to the vote the incumbent receives (Squire 1989a).

Over the last few decades the Senate and the people who serve in it have changed (e.g., Polsby 1986; Foley 1980), but it seems clear that most of this occurred before the beginning of the 1980s. There are very few holdovers from the “inner club” days. Therefore, there is little reason to believe that there is a group of senators that predate the modern campaigns of television and PACs. Such senators were extinct before the period covered by this study (see Tuckel 1983). It is possible, however, that House members who move to the Senate bring with them a perpetual campaign mentality—particularly those first elected to Congress after 1970 (Loomis 1988)—which leads them to begin fund-raising right after their election.

Perceived electoral vulnerability may induce greater effort to raise early money, and, thereby, intimidate the best potential challengers. Vulnerability is measured here by the interaction of the incumbent’s previous vote percentage and his or her ideological distance from the state electorate. The notion behind this interaction term is that senators who won the last election by a small margin and who are out-of-step with their state have the greatest political worries, and that senators who won big last time and who more closely reflect their mean constituent have the least to fear. The biggest money raisers should be those who are running scared.

Along these same lines, what worries incumbent senators the most may not be what happened in the last election—six years is a long span in politics (Fenno 1982, 28)—but who might be waiting for them this time. Challenger quality in Senate elections is linked to the number of high-caliber elective

*This interaction term performs better statistically than its constituent parts.*
officers in the party not holding the seat (Squire 1989a). The high-profile pool as measured here is the number of challenging party members holding the governorship, U.S House seats, and statewide offices in a state. The larger the pool of potential high-profile challengers, the higher the caliber of the challenger who makes the race. Incumbents who face a large pool of potentially tough challengers may counter by raising large sums of early campaign funds.

Several other variables need to be considered as controls. Obviously, senators from larger states need more money to finance their campaigns. In addition, Republican incumbents raise and spend more money than Democratic incumbents (Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin 1990, 76). A strong primary challenge should also encourage the raising of more early money. Finally, those senators who intend to seek their party's leadership position may collect money with the intention of redistributing it to colleagues to generate good will (Wilcox 1988; Baker 1989b; Loomis 1988, 193).

The results of two OLS regressions, with early money in constant 1986 dollars as the dependent variable in each, are reported in table 1. (The coding and source for each of the variables is given in the appendix.) The first equation includes the eight independent variables discussed earlier, the second adds a dummy variable for each individual campaign cycle. The results of the two equations are essentially the same, although the inclusion of the dummy variables clearly improves the statistical performance. As we would expect, state size and amount of early money raised are positively related in each equation. In both equations the amount of early money incumbents raise increases with the size of the potential high-profile challenger pool they face. Because the other political variables are statistically insignificant, particularly electoral vulnerability, the high-profile challenger pool coefficients indicate that senators are primarily concerned with number of strong opponents that might run, rather than their own past electoral history.

Those pursuing leadership positions are not more likely to accumulate lots of early cash-on-hand. The leadership contender coefficient is sizable and in the expected direction in each equation. But each falls far short of reaching statistical significance. This does not mean those senators wanting to move up the leadership ladder do not make contributions to their colleagues, but only that they use money from other sources—mainly their own PACs—and not from their own campaign funds (Wilcox 1988, 26; Baker 1989b).

In the second equation the coefficients for the years 1986 and 1988 are large and statistically significant—as figure 1 suggested. These two coefficients can be interpreted to mean that, over time, almost every senator is

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5This is tested using an after-the-fact measure—the incumbent's margin of victory over the second-place finisher. This should not be a problem because it seems likely that a tough primary battle would be anticipated long before election day.
increasingly likely to raise lots of early money. In addition, the insignificant coefficients for seniority and recent House membership indicate that there is no generational effect. A quick look at those up for reelection in 1986 substantiates these points. Alan Cranston (D-CA), who had no cash in the bank at the beginning of 1979, had $202,704 in January 1985. Similarly, Daniel Inouye (D-HI) had just over $14,000 22 months before the 1980 election but raised $464,085 in early money six years later. Bob Dole (R-KS) went from nothing in 1979 to $1,044,269 in 1985. Those approaching their first reelection also raised considerable sums: Dodd (D-CT) $147,747, Hawkins (R-FL) $187,149, Mattingly (R-GA) $316,713, and Grassley (R-IA)
$251,101. In terms of electoral concerns, certainly Cranston and some of the first-term senators might have felt vulnerable, but Dole and Inouye had no reason to believe they might be threatened. Perhaps the findings for 1986 and 1988 indicate that there is some sense of "keeping up with the D'Amatos," which is consistent with Hershey's (1984) idea that candidates learn from one another. In addition, the early money craze could be driven by the "the financial advice of campaign advisors, who have a professional stake in future cash flows" (Glen 1987, 1590). Senator Bumpers (D-AR) reports (Glen 1987, 1591), "You go to these forums about how to get reelected and they say 'Start raising money early.'"

**Preemptive Fund-Raising and Challenger Profile**

Have increasingly large cash-on-hand figures at the beginning of the fifth year brought incumbent senators any sixth-year relief? In order to address this question, we must first establish what is meant by challenger quality and how it can be measured. Higher quality challengers are those individuals who possess campaign skills and personal characteristics which enable them to, among other things, raise the money necessary to make a strong race against an incumbent. Thus, two aspects of challenger quality can be measured (Squire 1989c). The first is a measure of office profile or candidate experience. Most measures of challenger quality focus on this aspect of the concept, usually employing only a dichotomy (e.g., Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Bianco 1984; Born 1986; Ragsdale and Cook 1987; Abramowitz 1988; Jacobson 1989a). Some (e.g., Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Green and Krasno 1988; Stewart 1989) make a small distinction among officeholders based on the perceived size of the electoral constituency. I employ a more full-blown ranking of elective offices, based on established political career ladders, because not all positions are of equal electoral value. Thus, a governor is coded 6, U.S. representative 5, statewide officeholder 4, state legislator 3, local elected official 2, other political office 1, and no office 0. ¹ Multiplying the ranking of elective office experience by the percentage of state's electorate covered by that office fine tunes this measure of challenger profile (Squire, 1989a). The assumption underlying this is that a U.S. representative from California, who represents only 2% of the state, is not as strong as a Senate challenger as his or her colleague from Vermont whose constituency is the entire state. ² Similarly, the mayor of a large city is a more attractive

¹Over the five elections examined here, 43% of governors beat incumbent senators, 41% of U.S. representatives, 36% of statewide officeholders, 17% of local elected officials, and 11% of those with no current political office. No state legislators were able to defeat an incumbent.

²Of the 22 representatives who ran for the Senate from 1980 to 1988, seven were from large states and represented districts comprising less than 9% of the population. The mean vote received by these challengers was 44.6% and they won two contests (29%). Those from districts
candidate than a small town school-board member. The resulting variable runs from 0 (no current political office) to 600 (incumbent governor).\textsuperscript{8} The higher the profile of the challenger the more voters know, like, and are apt to cast a ballot for him or her (Squire 1989a; 1989c).

A potential drawback to this measure is its harshness toward representatives from larger states, many of whom are given scores under 50. A second measure which constrains the score for representatives to between 300 and 500 (the highest possible score under the unconstrained measure) is also analyzed.\textsuperscript{9} A representative from California, for example, is scored 10 on the first measure and 304 on the second.

A second side of challenger quality is campaign skill. Although skill matters to voters (Squire 1989c), it is not of importance in this study. As noted earlier, incumbents are concerned with preempting a high-profile challenger from making the race. They are less worried about an unknown who might turn out to be a good campaigner.

Challenger profile has been shown to be influenced by size of the high-profile challenger pool and state population size (Squire 1989a). The relationship between these three variables is not intuitively obvious. As we might expect the high-profile pool and the log of state population are highly, but far from perfectly, correlated (approximately .65).\textsuperscript{10} Although all office holders included in the pool are of high profile, their scores are not necessarily equal. Governors and statewide officials are credited with the same profile score in large and small states, but the number of statewide offices is not related to population, meaning some small states have more such positions than large states. In addition, the score for members of the U.S. House, as suggested earlier, varies with population size. The larger the state population the smaller percentage of the electorate any member of Congress represents, and thus, the lower the member's profile. For this reason, representatives in larger states find a Senate race a less attractive option, and they are less likely to run (Rohde 1979). Even if a member of the U.S. House does

\begin{footnote}
 representing 11% to 25% of the state got 45.4% of the vote and won four of ten contests. Small state representatives (representing 50% or 100% of the state) enjoyed the most success. They won three of their five races and garnered an average 48% of the vote.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{8}Certainly an office held within the last two years could be substituted for the more rigid current office requirement, although the latter standard is not a problem with the five elections covered in this study. The two most troubling cases, Robert Kerrey of Nebraska and Charles Robb of Virginia—both former governors who had left office within two years before their 1988 races—are not included in the following analysis. Robb ran for an open seat. Kerrey ran against an incumbent who had been appointed to the Senate, and his race is treated as an open seat.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{9}This number is calculated by taking the quality score from the unconstrained measure, dividing it by 2.5 and adding 300.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{10}Collinearity, however, does not appear to present any major estimation problems (Squire 1989a, 546).
\end{footnote}
run in a large state, he or she is a less promising candidate than a small state colleague. The bottom line is that larger states under this measure of challenger profile tend to have bigger pools from which to draw, but many of those candidates are of relatively lower caliber. Not surprisingly, then with size of the high-profile challenger pool controlled, state population size and challenger profile have a negative relationship (Squire 1989a).

Other variables might influence the caliber of challenger who runs. More electorally vulnerable senators and those who have been made weaker by a stiff primary contest may face better challengers. Democrats, because they hold more elective offices around the country, may have a larger pool of high-profile Senate challengers to tap, as they do in House races (Jacobson and Kernell 1981). More senior incumbents might invite stronger challenges. Better challengers may run against incumbents of the president’s party in midterm elections because the White House party tends to lose seats (Abramowitz 1988; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1985).11

Does early money have the purported deterrent effect? The results of OLS equations with the two measures of challenger profile as dependent variables, presented in table 2, show that the size of the high-profile candidate pool and state population size are the most important variables influencing the caliber of a Senate challenger. There also is evidence that Democrats field better candidates than the Republicans. But the president’s party does not suffer poorer candidates in the midterm election.

The coefficients for cash-on-hand are in the expected direction, but far from achieving statistical significance. Even if they were statistically significant, the substantive impact on challenger profile is not very impressive. For every $100,000 raised early, challenger profile is decreased by 3 to 10 points on a variable with a range of 600 points.12 By contrast, a one-person increase in the high-profile challenger pool increases challenger profile from 13 to 16 points. Incumbents, then, appear to be prospective in their thinking. The senators most ambitious in raising early money are those who face the greatest number of potentially strong challengers. Large sums of early funds do not, however, deter better challengers from running.

11Of the five elections examined here, there is not much evidence of strategic behavior driven by the performance of the national economy, which Jacobson and Kernell (1981) find in House campaigns. The average quality of Senate challengers fielded by the Democrats was lowest in 1980, as we might expect, but much higher in 1984 and 1988 than in 1982, counter to what we would anticipate. On the GOP side the strongest slates of challengers were posted in 1980 and 1986, and the weakest in 1984 and 1988. Thus, potential challengers in Senate campaigns may base their entry calculations on different factors than their counterparts in House races, a notion explored later.

12A variety of different terms were entered into the basic equation to determine if the effect of early money on challenger quality had increased over time. No such effect was uncovered. Logged versions of both challenger quality variables were used in identical regression equations, producing results like those presented in table 2.
Preemptive Fund-raising and Challenger Profile

### Table 2

**OLS Regression of Preemptive Fund-raising on Challenger Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Equation 1 (Unconstrained)</th>
<th>Equation 2 (Constrained)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash-on-Hand</td>
<td>-0.00003*</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00005)</td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Seniority</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.108)</td>
<td>(2.383)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent's Last Vote × Ideological Distance</td>
<td>1.333</td>
<td>2.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.322)</td>
<td>(2.626)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Incumbent's Primary Challenge</td>
<td>0.350</td>
<td>0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.611)</td>
<td>(0.691)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>80.016*</td>
<td>63.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36.505)</td>
<td>(41.276)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of High-Profile Pool</td>
<td>13.283***</td>
<td>16.443***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.990)</td>
<td>(4.502)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of State Population</td>
<td>-59.965**</td>
<td>-40.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20.314)</td>
<td>(22.969)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Election</td>
<td>-52.077</td>
<td>-13.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(40.736)</td>
<td>(46.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>826.947**</td>
<td>555.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(303.803)</td>
<td>(343.507)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number is the unstandardized coefficient. The number in parentheses is the standard error.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

But, it could be the case that huge war chests inhibit those who contribute from giving even to credible challengers. Large sums of cash-on-hand could dry up sources of money for the challenger because contributors might think the cause is lost. Regression equations presented in table 3 show that this does not happen. Higher profile challengers raise much more money than those with lower profiles. The coefficients for cash-on-hand are very small and in the wrong direction—suggesting, if anything, that large sums of early money are a sign of weakness, not strength.

### Discussion

Why is the result of early money so unimpressive? It is likely that many incumbents raise lots of early cash because they expect a high-quality opponent and are preparing for a stiff challenge, as was the case with Senator Metzenbaum (D-OH) in 1988 (Glen 1987, 1590). It might even be the case...
TABLE 3
THE EFFECT OF PREEMPTIVE FUND-RAISING BY THE INCUMBENT ON CHALLENGER FUND-RAISING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Equation 1</th>
<th>Equation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Cash-On-Hand</td>
<td>0.428*</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.514)</td>
<td>(0.498)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger Profile (Unconstrained)</td>
<td>4,337.9***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(876.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger Profile (Constrained)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,337.4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(750.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent’s Last Vote ×</td>
<td>48,165.3*</td>
<td>41,376.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Distance</td>
<td>(23,088.4)</td>
<td>(22,562.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Incumbent’s Primary Challenge</td>
<td>-13,617.6*</td>
<td>-12,689.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6,253.6)</td>
<td>(6,070.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger’s Sex</td>
<td>-897,448.0*</td>
<td>-693,083.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(442,603.2)</td>
<td>(429,803.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of State Population</td>
<td>698,018.0***</td>
<td>572,846.0***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(161,190.9)</td>
<td>(154,672.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-8,686,848.0***</td>
<td>-7,052,064.0***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2,460,181.2)</td>
<td>(2,361,547.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number is the unstandardized coefficient. The number in parentheses is the standard error.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

that some are laying the groundwork for a presidential bid, as was suspected of Senator Bill Bradley’s (D-NJ) energetic fund-raising prior to his 1990 race. Moreover, why should potential high-profile Senate challengers be intimidated by large war chests? By all appearances such candidates have little trouble raising the sums necessary to run a competitive race (Jacobson 1987, 93–95; 1989b, 139) and do not base their decisions on whether to run on what the incumbent may spend (Stewart 1989, 591), notions substantiated by table 3. Higher profile challengers, of course, are not going to be satisfied with doing well; they want to win. Because they usually are risking their current political position, their calculations on whether to enter the contest are based not on getting enough money to run, but if they think the incumbent can be defeated.

The finding that preemptive fund-raising does not dissuade higher profile challengers from making Senate races is consistent with Krasno and Green’s (1988) conclusion regarding House contests. The quality level of challengers

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in House races, however, is strongly related to the perceived electoral weakness of the incumbent (Krasno and Green 1988; Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985). This contrasts with Senate campaigns, where potential challengers are less concerned with how vulnerable the incumbent is than with their own prospects for gaining the nomination. This is likely true for several reasons. First, senators usually win with lower vote percentages than do their House counterparts and lose more often. Even if they did win big in the last election, that was six years ago and much may have changed. This tends to make most senators look potentially beatable. Second, for those who desire to run for the Senate, opportunities are far fewer than for making House races. If the opposition holds both Senate seats, then there are two chances in six years, and, of course, if one or both seats are controlled by a Senate hopeful’s party, opportunities will be even more limited. In addition, it is quite likely that a Senate nomination campaign will be much more heavily contested than one for a House seat because one is held less frequently and almost always draws from a larger pool of potential entrants. Under these circumstances Senate aspirants cannot afford to wait for signs of incumbent weakness the way that those who desire a House seat can. The wait may be too long and the competition for the nomination too stiff.

For the incumbent senator raising large sums of early money may not deter a strong opponent, but it does leave him or her well prepared to meet a challenge. As Sorauf (1988, 161) notes, it is rational for incumbents to seek as much funding as possible, if only to deal with the unexpected or even highly unlikely. More importantly, from the perspective of the electorate, the competitiveness of Senate elections is not endangered by the adoption of the money scare-off tactic. Higher quality challengers are not intimidated and have no problem raising money. Thus, the two main ingredients for competitive races are not affected.

Whether the citizenry is well served by senators spending large amounts of time and energy soliciting contributions during the early and middle parts of their terms is less clear. Without worrying about the appearance or reality of conflict of interest in taking contributions, under these circumstances questions can be raised about whether the attention of senators is being diverted from more important representational pursuits. This is a problem of apparent concern to at least some incumbent senators (Glen 1987; Baker 1989a, 192). A few, such as Sam Nunn (D-GA), have confined their money raising efforts to the fifth and sixth years of their terms. The fear of the perpetual campaign in the Senate is real. One survey shows that more than 50% of senators believe fund-raising diverts their attention from legislative business, something close to 90% of their staff think is true (Magleby and Nelson 1990, 44). Senator Bumpers commented during a campaign financing

debate (Glen 1987, 1591), "There are Senators who come in bleary-eyed after a fund-raising trip to California. . . . Our primary responsibility is to be here, on the floor of the Senate, debating . . . issues. I have been here 12 years . . . and [the time spent fund-raising] has tripled in that time." The findings presented here demonstrate that such efforts are wasted if they are expected to dissuade strong challengers from making senate races.

Manuscript submitted 5 January 1990
Final manuscript received 4 January 1991

APPENDIX

MEASURES OF THE VARIABLES


Primary election results for incumbents were taken from the America Votes series. Candidates nominated by convention and who faced no challenge primary, or who were unopposed in a primary were scored 100 on the primary margin variable.

Party is a dichotomous variable, with Democrats scored 0 and Republicans 1. Leadership contestants were considered to be those senators whose names were put to a vote by their caucus for the position of majority or minority leader within four years after their election. These data were gathered from Congressional Quarterly.

The size of the high-profile pool is the number of "out" party members holding the governorship, U.S. House seats, and statewide offices in a state. The last of these were counted if they held a partisan office. The data were gathered from various editions of the State Elective Officials and the Legislatures supplement to The Book of the States.

I calculated the incumbent-state ideological distance variable in much the same manner as Abramowitz (1988). State ideology scores used were those produced by Wright, Erickson, and McIver (1985). The measure of incumbent ideology is the simple, if crude, measure: ACA (ACU) score/(ACA(ACU) + ADA). The measure calculated then used the distance from the state and Senate means to establish the senator-state distance.
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The population figure used was the most current number available before the election, thus it varies slightly each state across elections. The population figure was logged, for theoretical and statistical reasons, but the equations run using the unlogged figure produce virtually the same results.


REFERENCES


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