

Political Science 171: State Politics

Loren Collingwood

University of California

loren.collingwood@ucr.edu

April 20, 2015

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI
- An incumbent with high levels of approval less likely to be challenged by a serious contender: Jerry Brown 2012

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI
- An incumbent with high levels of approval less likely to be challenged by a serious contender: Jerry Brown 2012
- That incumbent also is unlikely to experience intra-party challenges

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI
- An incumbent with high levels of approval less likely to be challenged by a serious contender: Jerry Brown 2012
- That incumbent also is unlikely to experience intra-party challenges
- Good challengers have: significant political experience, considered to be high-quality candidates (usually accomplished, articulate, \$). Think Meg Whitman

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI
- An incumbent with high levels of approval less likely to be challenged by a serious contender: Jerry Brown 2012
- That incumbent also is unlikely to experience intra-party challenges
- Good challengers have: significant political experience, considered to be high-quality candidates (usually accomplished, articulate, \$). Think Meg Whitman
- Candidates who win in otherwise other-party dominant states tend to stress: independence (think Scott Brown), non-ideology, partisan domination, run against an unpopular president

Who Runs for Office?: Governor

- Despite the fact that many states tend to lean more Democrat or more Republican, competitive two-party elections exist in most states.
- For example, Republicans govern several traditionally or leaning Democratic states: IL, ME, MD, MA, MI, NJ, WI
- An incumbent with high levels of approval less likely to be challenged by a serious contender: Jerry Brown 2012
- That incumbent also is unlikely to experience intra-party challenges
- Good challengers have: significant political experience, considered to be high-quality candidates (usually accomplished, articulate, \$). Think Meg Whitman
- Candidates who win in otherwise other-party dominant states tend to stress: independence (think Scott Brown), non-ideology, partisan domination, run against an unpopular president

Who Runs for Office: State Legislature

- Not uncommon for 35-40 percent of state legislative elections to go uncontested

Who Runs for Office: State Legislature

- Not uncommon for 35-40 percent of state legislative elections to go uncontested
- Nearly 75 percent of state legislative primaries are uncontested. And many that are contested are not really contested (weak, joke, candidates)

Who Runs for Office: State Legislature

- Not uncommon for 35-40 percent of state legislative elections to go uncontested
- Nearly 75 percent of state legislative primaries are uncontested. And many that are contested are not really contested (weak, joke, candidates)
- Recently, just 40 percent of contests are somewhat contested (within 20 points). 20 percent seriously contested (within 10 points)

Who Runs for Office: State Legislature

- Not uncommon for 35-40 percent of state legislative elections to go uncontested
- Nearly 75 percent of state legislative primaries are uncontested. And many that are contested are not really contested (weak, joke, candidates)
- Recently, just 40 percent of contests are somewhat contested (within 20 points). 20 percent seriously contested (within 10 points)
- As regards the latter, state legislative elections are similar to U.S. Congressional elections

Who Runs for Office: State Legislature

- Not uncommon for 35-40 percent of state legislative elections to go uncontested
- Nearly 75 percent of state legislative primaries are uncontested. And many that are contested are not really contested (weak, joke, candidates)
- Recently, just 40 percent of contests are somewhat contested (within 20 points). 20 percent seriously contested (within 10 points)
- As regards the latter, state legislative elections are similar to U.S. Congressional elections

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized
 - 2. Do not respond to strategic pressures in the same way. Often “sacrificial lambs”, in it for self-promotion, personal satisfaction, etc.

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized
 - 2. Do not respond to strategic pressures in the same way. Often “sacrificial lambs”, in it for self-promotion, personal satisfaction, etc.
 - 3. Parties help recruit candidates

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized
 - 2. Do not respond to strategic pressures in the same way. Often “sacrificial lambs”, in it for self-promotion, personal satisfaction, etc.
 - 3. Parties help recruit candidates
- At district level – the share of the vote the opposing party got in the previous election is the biggest predictor of a potential challenger winning – provides strong signal to potential candidates: “Look, Johnson only lost by 3 points in 2014, you can do it!”

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized
 - 2. Do not respond to strategic pressures in the same way. Often “sacrificial lambs”, in it for self-promotion, personal satisfaction, etc.
 - 3. Parties help recruit candidates
- At district level – the share of the vote the opposing party got in the previous election is the biggest predictor of a potential challenger winning – provides strong signal to potential candidates: “Look, Johnson only lost by 3 points in 2014, you can do it!”
- Level of legislative professionalism (proxy for value of seat, prestige, etc.) – More professionalized legislatures have greater budgets, staff, salaries, more opportunities to pursue politics full-time for everyone involved

- Determinants of who contests: 1. Potential serious candidate; 2. Potential non-serious candidate; 3. Political parties
 - 1. Most likely to participate when combination of success (primary and general) and value of the seat is maximized
 - 2. Do not respond to strategic pressures in the same way. Often “sacrificial lambs”, in it for self-promotion, personal satisfaction, etc.
 - 3. Parties help recruit candidates
- At district level – the share of the vote the opposing party got in the previous election is the biggest predictor of a potential challenger winning – provides strong signal to potential candidates: “Look, Johnson only lost by 3 points in 2014, you can do it!”
- Level of legislative professionalism (proxy for value of seat, prestige, etc.) – More professionalized legislatures have greater budgets, staff, salaries, more opportunities to pursue politics full-time for everyone involved
- Incumbency (challenger less likely to win); term-limits (more opportunities)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower
- Nearly 6 million citizens denied right to vote based on felony disenfranchisement laws – most restrictive in Southeast (surprise surprise!)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower
- Nearly 6 million citizens denied right to vote based on felony disenfranchisement laws – most restrictive in Southeast (surprise surprise!)
- 2012 Turnout by State

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower
- Nearly 6 million citizens denied right to vote based on felony disenfranchisement laws – most restrictive in Southeast (surprise surprise!)
- 2012 Turnout by State
- 2014 Turnout by State

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower
- Nearly 6 million citizens denied right to vote based on felony disenfranchisement laws – most restrictive in Southeast (surprise surprise!)
- 2012 Turnout by State
- 2014 Turnout by State
- U.S. Constitution gives most responsibility for managing elections to the states, states differ in range of ways that affect participation (length polls are open, early voting, same day registration, location of polling places, etc.)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States vary in political participation and turnout (as we showed last week)
- Two terms to keep in mind: Voting-Eligible Population (VEP) and Voting-Age Population (VAP). The former takes into account non-citizen, prison, parole, so is lower
- Nearly 6 million citizens denied right to vote based on felony disenfranchisement laws – most restrictive in Southeast (surprise surprise!)
- 2012 Turnout by State
- 2014 Turnout by State
- U.S. Constitution gives most responsibility for managing elections to the states, states differ in range of ways that affect participation (length polls are open, early voting, same day registration, location of polling places, etc.)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)
 - Alaska (60.42): Competitive elections (Lisa Murkowski won on a write-in)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)
 - Alaska (60.42): Competitive elections (Lisa Murkowski won on a write-in)
 - Wisconsin (60.93): History of civic engagement, same-day registration, intensely competitive elections

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)
 - Alaska (60.42): Competitive elections (Lisa Murkowski won on a write-in)
 - Wisconsin (60.93): History of civic engagement, same-day registration, intensely competitive elections
 - Maine (62.1): First state to implement same-day registration, competitive gubernatorial races

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)
 - Alaska (60.42): Competitive elections (Lisa Murkowski won on a write-in)
 - Wisconsin (60.93): History of civic engagement, same-day registration, intensely competitive elections
 - Maine (62.1): First state to implement same-day registration, competitive gubernatorial races
 - Minnesota (67.6): State policies reducing barriers to voting (same-day registration), third-party candidates (Jesse Ventura)

Political Participation in State Elections

- States with traditionally high relative turnout:
 - Oregon (average: 60.13): Vote by mail, information pamphlet
 - South Dakota (60.17): Cultural factors – history of civic engagement (Populism movement early 1900s)
 - Alaska (60.42): Competitive elections (Lisa Murkowski won on a write-in)
 - Wisconsin (60.93): History of civic engagement, same-day registration, intensely competitive elections
 - Maine (62.1): First state to implement same-day registration, competitive gubernatorial races
 - Minnesota (67.6): State policies reducing barriers to voting (same-day registration), third-party candidates (Jesse Ventura)

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending
- Closeness of the election

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending
- Closeness of the election
- Degree of party competition (more generally)

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending
- Closeness of the election
- Degree of party competition (more generally)
- Competitive U.S. Senate, governor, and controversial ballot initiatives can drive turnout: GOTV campaigns

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending
- Closeness of the election
- Degree of party competition (more generally)
- Competitive U.S. Senate, governor, and controversial ballot initiatives can drive turnout: GOTV campaigns
- Social pressures, radio ads, tv ads, and phone calls all have some positive impact on turnout (a few percentage points or less)

Political Participation: Individuals

- What individual characteristics are associated with participation?
 - Level of *Education* and *Income* are the key characteristics
- State characteristics interact: campaign spending
- Closeness of the election
- Degree of party competition (more generally)
- Competitive U.S. Senate, governor, and controversial ballot initiatives can drive turnout: GOTV campaigns
- Social pressures, radio ads, tv ads, and phone calls all have some positive impact on turnout (a few percentage points or less)

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa
- 2. Impact of the economy – voters engage in retrospective evaluations of their state's economy

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa
- 2. Impact of the economy – voters engage in retrospective evaluations of their state's economy
 - Indicators of unemployment significant factor – higher unemployment lower vote for incumbent governor

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa
- 2. Impact of the economy – voters engage in retrospective evaluations of their state's economy
 - Indicators of unemployment significant factor – higher unemployment lower vote for incumbent governor
 - Increased state taxation yields a weak but consistently negative overall effect for governor in power – but the cause is the sales tax – that is where the link to vote exists.

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa
- 2. Impact of the economy – voters engage in retrospective evaluations of their state's economy
 - Indicators of unemployment significant factor – higher unemployment lower vote for incumbent governor
 - Increased state taxation yields a weak but consistently negative overall effect for governor in power – but the cause is the sales tax – that is where the link to vote exists.
- 3. National Context – national political climate and perceptions of national economy affect governor vote choice.
 - Issue sorting based on level of government (e.g., incumbent governors don't get blamed for foreign policy blunders)

Candidate Selection

- Process is similar to candidate selection at the national level
- 1. Party Identification – voters use this as a lens to filter their political atmosphere. Voters use this to link their voting behavior across different offices.
 - If president is popular, voters more likely to back same-party candidates for governor, state legislature; vice-versa
- 2. Impact of the economy – voters engage in retrospective evaluations of their state's economy
 - Indicators of unemployment significant factor – higher unemployment lower vote for incumbent governor
 - Increased state taxation yields a weak but consistently negative overall effect for governor in power – but the cause is the sales tax – that is where the link to vote exists.
- 3. National Context – national political climate and perceptions of national economy affect governor vote choice.
 - Issue sorting based on level of government (e.g., incumbent governors don't get blamed for foreign policy blunders)

External Pressures on State Legislatures

- Coattail Effect: Tendency for a popular public official from a given party to attract votes for other candidates of the same party
- Both gubernatorial and presidential coattails – so when a president/governor is popular candidates try to bring that president into their districts to gin up support and fundraising. The opposite when gov/pres is unpopular – they run, run far away!
- As legislature professionalism increases, coattail effect decreases. Institutional boundaries insulate members from external forces in more professionalized legislatures.