

Outside Money in the 2000 Presidential Primaries and Congressional General Elections

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Beginning with the 1996 election cycle, political parties and interest groups, through soft money and issue advocacy, have mounted substantial campaigns in competitive elections. Noncandidate campaigns, funded with this outside money, are in some ways extensions of independent expenditure campaigns. However, by avoiding the words of express advocacy, as defined by the Supreme Court, groups may avoid the disclosure requirements imposed on independent expenditures. Party soft money contributions are disclosed but spending is unlimited.

The unlimited spending and limited disclosure of outside money prompted me in 1998 to organize a data collection effort by political scientists to determine the extent and nature of this noncandidate campaign activity in 16 congressional races. This symposium builds on that project and reports our findings on outside money in five presidential primaries, five U.S. Senate races, and 12 U.S. House races, all from 2000. These collected abstracts briefly summarize each of the 22 case studies. The full monographs on both the presidential primaries and the congressional general elections may be accessed at <www.byu.edu/outsidemoney>. The 1998 and 2000 research projects were funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Despite the presumption that "issue ads" are about issues, over three-fifths of all issue advocacy in the five monitored presidential primaries were actually candidate-specific electioneering. In the hotly contested South Carolina Republican primary, nearly three fourths (74 percent) of the issue advocacy communications supported or opposed a candidate. In contrast, pure issue advocacy was more prevalent in the Iowa caucuses (68 percent). Labor issues, followed by education, healthcare, Social Security, and abortion were the most

frequent topics of issue advocacy communications in the Democratic primaries, and labor unions were especially likely to use the mail in their efforts to elect Al Gore. The topics emphasized in the Republican primaries were abortion, taxes, the environment, and religion. Not surprisingly, the parties did not invest soft money in their respective nomination contests.

However, party soft money was a very important part of the outside money story in competitive congressional general elections. Aggregating all national party committees, the two parties were near equal in soft money receipts—\$244 million for the Republicans and \$243 million for the Democrats. The Democratic surge in soft money was most pronounced in the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), which outraised all other congressional campaign committees. Moreover, as the case studies in this symposium demonstrate, the Democrats were more effective in deploying soft money to the state parties. House Democrats also saw substantial growth in soft money, while Republicans continue to enjoy a substantial hard money advantage.

Although interest group issue advocacy was not as extensive as party soft money communications, several groups reported that 2000 was their biggest year ever, including the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the League of Conservation Voters, the National Rifle Association, and the Sierra Club. Overall, outside money spending on television and radio in the 17 congressional races in this symposium exceeded candidate spending on television and radio by a factor of two to one. Outside money was spent extensively on the ground war—telephones, direct mail, and personal contact—and on voter registration and mobilization activities. An average of 72 unique pieces of direct

This issue of *PS* introduces a new feature to the *PS* reader, an online symposium. The advantages of an e-symposium are many: articles pertaining to current political controversies can be presented in a more timely fashion; articles can present more detailed analysis than is possible in the traditional print format; and symposia can incorporate more essays enabling the topic to be covered more fully. *PS* anticipates that the online format will also enable readers to have immediate access to new data sets and linkages to related materials. The expansion of *PS*Online to include materials abstracted in the print version of the journal is one step closer to a fuller integration of *PS* and the APSA web site <www.apsanet.org>.

The addition of the electronic format will not change either the criteria or process by which articles are selected for publication. If interested in taking advantage of the e-symposium format, please contact *PS* Editor Rob Hauck at rhauck@apsanet.org.

mail and at least seven different telephone communications went to targeted voters in each of these same campaigns.

As experts on the politics of their respective states, the authors of each case study built a network of informants to assist them in gathering data on all forms of campaign communication in the elections that they monitored. The authors of the case studies also conducted extensive interviews with campaign staff, party and interest group elites, and other knowledgeable individuals. These interviews were supplemented with scores of interviews that I conducted with party and interest group elites in Washington, DC, and around the country. We also used data collected by the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG), which monitors all broadcast advertising in the 75 largest media markets.

There is little prior research on interest group issue advocacy and party soft money electioneering, in part because it is a recent development and is very difficult to study comprehensively, particularly after the fact. The premise of this research is that the essential first step in

understanding the impact of outside money is systematic and thorough descriptive analysis.

We orient our research by a set of questions that are linked to important issues in democratic theory, like representation, electoral accountability, the role of political parties, organized interests, and liberty. Among the important driving questions are: Why do groups/individuals engage in issue advocacy? Is issue advocacy really about issues or is it more about electing or defeating candidates? Are interest groups running positive or negative ads? Why do some groups stay out of the issue advocacy game? How is party soft money spent and how does that relate to party building and candidate promotion? At a more specific level, when and why do

political parties and interest groups use different communication strategies—television, radio, print ads, mail, telephone, or person-to-person contacts? Is the tone or content of noncandidate electioneering more negative/attack-focused than candidate electioneering? If so, why? Are communications with voters that are not broadcast, like phone calls and mail, more negative?

Voters in electoral settings with active party soft money campaigns and issue advocacy face the challenge of assessing communications not only from the candidates, but also from the interest groups and parties. Voters and candidates have operated on the premise that candidates should be held accountable for their campaigns. Can voters differentiate between candidate and issue

advocacy? Since much of this activity may avoid disclosure, how effective is the media in reporting noncandidate electioneering? Is the media less able to monitor communications via the telephone or through the mail?

Candidates now must operate in an environment in which they not only run against other candidates but also must anticipate attacks or support from groups on a wide range of issues. Does the increased volume of interest group voices promote discussion of the issues, or does it confuse and distort the issues? How does active noncandidate campaigning by interest groups impact candidates? When does this electioneering help or hurt a candidate? We explore these research questions in the case studies included in this symposium.

Abstracts of online articles

The 2000 Arkansas Fourth Congressional District Race

Harold F. Bass, Kathryn A. Kirkpatrick and Amber E. Wilson, Ouachita Baptist University

In November 2000, state senator Mike Ross defeated four-term incumbent Republican Representative Jay Dickey, 51 to 49 percent. This spirited contest attracted national attention, and campaign fundraising and spending far exceeded any previous House race in the state.

Dickey's surprise victory in 1992 marked the district's first departure from its Democratic roots since Reconstruction.

Ross emerged early on as the Democratic frontrunner. In his nomination effort he attracted substantial financial support from nonlocal political action committees that were against Dickey and viewed Ross as a strong challenger.

The Dickey–Ross race set new statewide standards for congressional campaign finance, more than doubling previous totals. The candidates' campaign organizations reported raising over \$3.3 million.

In addition, the political parties took advantage of the soft money loophole to allocate over \$3.1 million to "party-building" activities, thereby funneling unprecedented support to their nominees.

This contest also featured extensive independent expenditures and issue advocacy by interest groups. By far, the most visible combatant on Dickey's behalf was Citizens for Better Medicare. The most noticeable groups actively supporting Ross were the AFL-CIO and the National Education Association. These independent expenditures totaled over \$400,000, and parallel exercises in issue advocacy amounted to approximately \$1.5 million.

Our imprecise accounting thus indicates that over \$8 million was spent on this race. In each category—campaign organizations, political parties, and interest groups—funds were allocated fairly evenly on behalf of the nominees. Dickey held slight advantages on all three fronts, but Ross, as the challenger, benefited from the relatively level playing field.

The 2000 California Twenty-Seventh Congressional District Race

**Drew Linzer, University of California, Los Angeles
David Menefee-Libey, Pomona College**

The 2000 election contest in California's Twenty-Seventh Congressional District between Democratic state senator Adam Schiff and incumbent Republican Jim Rogan was the most expensive U.S. House race ever, and played out as the electoral equivalent of a spiraling arms race.

Rogan had been one of the most visible and outspoken members of the House Judiciary Committee and a House manager during President Bill Clinton's 1999 impeachment trial in the Senate, and topped the Democratic Party's list of House members targeted for defeat. The Republican Party refused to cede Rogan's seat to the Democrats, and rallied to his defense. Meanwhile, Rogan's district was undergoing profound demographic changes: young Democrats were moving in as the district's traditional Republican base dwindled. As a result, the race was one of few in the country in which two candidates as different as Rogan and Schiff each had a legitimate chance of victory—if they had the resources to stay competitive.

In the end, the candidates raised and spent over \$11 million, political parties spent approximately \$5.5 million, and outside organizations spent over \$2 million, for a total price tag over \$18.5 million. Each campaign hired a full staff of professional consultants and operatives and generated voter persuasion material at a staggering rate. In addition to the political parties, outside groups saw a unique opportunity in the Twenty-seventh District to affect the outcome of a close race between two sharply contrasting candidates. A large number of those independent advocacy organizations entered the fray with television ads, mailers, and phone calls.

On Election Day, both candidates and outside groups mounted large-scale efforts to ensure that their identified voters went to the polls. Amid all this activity—and with nearly complete information about the electoral choice at hand—voters chose Schiff over Rogan, 53 percent to 44 percent.

Outside Money in the California 2000 Presidential Primary

Diana Dwyre, *California State University, Chico*; **Bruce Cain**, *Ray La Raja*, *University of California, Berkeley*; **Joseph W. Doherty**, *University of California, Los Angeles*

The California primary election was less decisive than local leaders had hoped. By election day the candidacies of John McCain and Bill Bradley were dying as Gore and Bush prepared to secure the nominations of their respective parties. This reduced but did not eliminate outside money in the primary election. Labor unions, conservative groups, groups on both sides of the abortion issue, environmentalists, and pseudoenvironmentalists were active in the months before Super Tuesday. They had to compete for attention with the candidates and with a ballot full of hotly-contested initiatives. Unlike the

candidates and initiatives, which dominated the airwaves, most outside group activity was on the ground. Labor unions especially utilized grass-roots campaign techniques to raise turnout and communicate with their memberships. We found that most of the activities of these groups are exempt from FEC disclosure and thus beyond electoral accountability; and we predict that more money from the usual contributors will find its way to undisclosed issue advocacy groups in the absence of stricter campaign finance regulation.

Interest Group and Party Election Activity: A Report on the 2000 Connecticut Fifth Congressional District Race

Sandra M. Anglund and **Joanne M. Miller**,
University of Connecticut

The 2000 election in Connecticut's Fifth Congressional District was a bitter rematch between two-term Democrat Jim Maloney and former State Senator Mark Nielsen. Although Maloney barely survived Nielsen's 1998 challenge, this time he defeated the Republican by a decisive 10-point margin.

This was the first federal election conducted under a Connecticut state law banning soft money transfers to state parties. As a result, national parties, which could still spend soft money in the state, became the center of most of the party campaign activity. The major exception was a direct mail blitz funded by state Republicans with hard money.

On the interest group front, the American Medical Political Action Committee campaigned for Maloney for the first time in 2000, and traditional allies—labor unions and environmental groups—mounted intense efforts, with environmentalists being more active than they were in 1998. Although some interest groups, including the Republican Leadership Council, entered the fray on Nielsen's side, they were no match for the allied Democratic forces.

Ground war tactics, particularly direct mail, were extremely important in the party and interest group campaigns. The audience segmentation, targeting, and economies associated with direct mail are major advantages in this heterogeneous district, part of which falls in the expensive New York City media market.

Party soft money and interest group issue advocacy regulations are often thought to foster negativism and attack advertising, and they did to some degree in the Maloney-Nielsen race. However, the candidates themselves led the attacks. With voters perceiving Nielsen to have been more unfair in his attacks than Maloney, the candidates' messages may have been just as important as the outside money in ending the election in Maloney's favor.

The 2000 Delaware Senate Race

Joseph A. Pika, *University of Delaware*

Delaware's 2000 Senate race ended with the incumbent Governor, Democrat Thomas R. Carper, registering a surprisingly large victory of 56 percent to 44 percent over the Republican Senate incumbent and powerful chair of the Senate Finance Committee, William V. Roth. The contest posed difficult choices for Delaware voters. Each man had compiled an enviable record of electoral success and enjoyed very high approval ratings, and voters were accustomed to supporting both of them, not choosing between them.

Although the incumbent's advanced age and ill health were subplots, the story of this election hinges on the dramatic Democratic funding advantage. Carper's campaign overcame the fund-raising advantage everyone had expected Roth to enjoy because of help from national Democratic sources. Direct contributions to Roth exceeded Carper's by nearly \$1.66 million. But the DNC and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee contributed to the state party \$4.97 million, nearly all of which was spent on pro-Carper issue ads and mailings. In sharp contrast, the RNC and the National Republican Senatorial Committee contributed \$841,954 to Roth. Carper enjoyed a massive funding advantage despite the pro-Roth independent expenditures by business and health-industry interest groups. Roth's campaign believed Delaware voters would disapprove of outside money and discouraged the RNC and NRSC from contributing more.

The Democrats' issue ads focused on health, seniors, and education—themes also common to the presidential election; on each issue, Roth's voting record was examined and criticized. Because the party covered these largely generic issues, Carper's campaign was able to respond to issues raised by Roth. Roth's campaign followed its old formula, stressing experience, incumbency, and specific accomplishments.

Carper made an issue-based case for voters to oust the long-time incumbent. Remarkably, Roth's campaign made little effort to rebut the Democrats' charges. Perhaps they were counting on Delawareans' traditional respect for the incumbent to produce a backlash, or perhaps they were misled by internal campaign polls that reportedly showed Roth leading, even on election eve. By all accounts, Roth was genuinely surprised by the defeat, a startling end to a long career.

The 2000 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Race

Barry Rundquist, Ola Adeoye, Julia Dowse, Chris Christenson, and Randy Smith, *University of Illinois at Chicago*

The retirement of 11-term Republican congressman John Edward Porter in Illinois's Tenth Congressional District surprised both Republicans and Democrats and, because of the anticipated closeness of the partisan split in the 107th Congress, sent both parties scrambling to find good candidates. The Republican primary attracted ten candidates, most of them millionaires, but Mark Steven Kirk, a former aid to Porter who received his endorsement, ended up winning. Lauren Beth Gash emerged unopposed as the Democratic Party's nominee.

Over 15 million hard and soft dollars were spent on the primary and general elections in Illinois Ten. The interest group origins of soft money are ambiguous and hard to trace. However, all of the PACs that gave the legal limit in hard money to either the Kirk or the Gash campaigns also gave large amounts to the candidate's parent national and state party committees. In the end, both candidates raised and spent about the same amount of money on the election.

In the general election, both candidates took moderate positions on most issues. For the most part, ads bought by the

national and state party organizations with so-called soft money stuck close to the issues that the candidates themselves wanted to address. The candidates' efforts to appeal to voters with moderate positions on the issues resulted in diminished hard money contributions from groups—like the NRA—that espouse positions less popular in the district. However, Gash's campaign felt that ads by groups like EMILY's List and NARAL on abortion and prescription drugs were insensitive to the complexity of district opinion and made her appear less moderate than she was on these issues.

This case shows that, in very close elections like this one (Kirk won with 51 percent), soft money may be costly to both candidates and political parties. The candidate may relinquish control of some of the campaign dialogue. As Gash said, "It is difficult being the candidate when there is a message going out that you don't control." The party or group may have to modify some of its ads to fit the particular district and may end up with a candidate who does not consistently vote with the party or group in Congress.

Groups and the Grassroots in the Iowa Caucuses

David Redlawsk, *University of Iowa*
Arthur Sanders, *Drake University*

Political scientists who study elections have recently bemoaned the lack of a grassroots effort that seems to define the modern campaign. Perhaps because of their first-in-the-nation status or caucuses' simply being different from primaries, campaigns during the 2000 Iowa Caucuses appear to have spent significant efforts on grassroots mobilization—or the ground war, as it is otherwise known. Whether campaigns were candidate-driven interest group efforts in direct support of candidates, or pure issue advocacy, campaign activities in Iowa included extensive get-out-the-vote personal mobilization. Potential caucus-goers were directly contacted by well-organized efforts to get them to spend two hours on a cold January night in support of candidates and issues. This is not to suggest that the air war was not important; large sums of money were spent in all of the key Iowa media markets. But even so, the most successful campaign efforts were those that worked hard to mobilize actual voters, to get them out to the caucuses, and to have them offer resolutions that might ultimately affect political party platforms. This study, carried out during the height of Iowa's caucus campaigning, from October 1999 through 24 January 2001, attempts to quantify and describe the efforts expended by both candidates' campaigns and interest groups, as all jockeyed for position in this crucial early test of their staying power. In particular, interest group involvement was found to fit into one of three models: groups trying to influence directly the caucus results; groups that appeared to be positioning themselves for the November general election; and groups engaging in pure issue advocacy with the hope of influencing party platforms and candidate issue stands.

The 2000 Kentucky Sixth Congressional District Race

Penny M. Miller and Donald A. Gross,
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The Kentucky Sixth Congressional District race pitted three political adversaries against each other—first-term Republican incumbent congressman Ernie Fletcher, former three-term Democratic congressman Scotty Baesler, and Reform Party candidate Gatewood Galbraith. The race was heavily influenced by both interest groups and the parties, which spent a combined \$2.8 million of the nearly \$4.22 million for the battle's TV ads. The race ended with Fletcher scoring "a surprisingly easy knockout" over Baesler by nearly 50,000 votes; Galbraith, spending less than \$13,000, finished a "stronger-than-expected third" with 12% of the vote. Both Fletcher and Baesler were well funded, with Fletcher spending \$2,252,744 and Baesler \$1,466,345; parties and interest groups spent an additional \$4 million.

Political parties spared nothing in their fight for the nationally targeted seat. In support of Fletcher, the state GOP spent over \$687,110 on TV, mail, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) phone calls. The state Democratic Party spent more than \$1,020,000 on TV, mail, and GOTV phone calls.

Interest groups, too, made the Sixth District race a battleground. Among the major groups supporting Fletcher were Business Roundtable, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, Citizens for Better Medicare, National Federation of Independent Business, National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports, Right to Life of Central Kentucky, and the Christian Coalition. Fletcher also received modest help from The Seniors Coalition, National Taxpayers Union, and Americans for Tax Reform. Baesler received significant help from the AFL-CIO, internet-based Moveon.org, gun control groups, the National Education Association, and marginal support from Kentucky Education Association, Sierra Club, and Kentucky Nurses' Association. Overall, TV and radio ads, as well as direct-mail flyers and phone calls by interest groups, reinforced the candidate and party campaign themes.

The 2000 Michigan Eighth Congressional District Race

Eric Freedman and Sue Carter, *Michigan State University*

In one of the most expensive House races of 2000, money flooded into Michigan's Eighth District, the site of the closest contest in the nation. Democratic and Republican party money, political action committee money, and independent interest group money savaged and boosted Republican Mike Rogers and Democrat Diane Byrum. When it came to independent expenditures and issue advocacy, Lansing pollster Ed Sarpolus observed, "There was equality in soft money. Neither one had the edge." Major players included pro- and anti-abortion rights groups, labor and business interests, environmental organizations, and GOP Governor John Engler. The dominant issues mirrored those of the national campaign, including Social Security, health coverage, Medicare, taxes, and education. Four minor-party candidates,

including the Green nominee, each drew many times more than the 111-vote Roges-Byrum margin. In this big-money contest with its resulting flood of television and radio commercials, direct-mail pieces, and incessant phone calls, the boundaries between direct expenditures, volunteer efforts, soft money, and independent expenditures blurred and dissolved. Without the fine print, it would be impossible for voters to distinguish the nominal source—let alone the funding—for much of the material and many of the calls. Meanwhile, the district's campaign and fundraising environment was complicated by the changing demographics of a ping-pong district, a tight U.S. Senate race, the presidential election, and big-money spending on state legislative and supreme court races.

Soft Money and Challenger Viability: The 2000 Michigan Senate Race

Michael Traugott, *University of Michigan*

The 2000 U.S. Senate race between Republican first-term incumbent Edmund S. (Spence) Abraham and his Democratic challenger Deborah Ann (Debbie) Stabenow was targeted early as a key national contest. Poll data suggested on a number of accounts that Abraham was vulnerable, and Stabenow emerged early as the single, strong challenger around whom the Democratic Party could unite. Both parties and many interest groups focused on the contest, and money poured into campaign coffers and the state's media markets. In all, the candidates and interest groups spent an estimated \$35 million on the race, almost equally divided between them.

Any first-term senator is highly vulnerable when seeking re-election; Spence Abraham was even more so because he chose to make a consistent voting record one of the cornerstones of his tenure. But he stayed in Washington to cast these votes, at the cost of infrequent visits to Michigan and resulting low levels of visibility and popularity among his constituents. This lack of identity proved to be an issue in the race.

Stabenow was a skilled campaigner with relatively limited resources. She devised a carefully controlled strategy that hoarded resources until the late stages of the campaign. She was then able to overtake Abraham with an orchestrated sprint to the finish line. At several crucial stages of the campaign, when she did not have resources of her own, various interest groups advertised in support of her or in opposition to Abraham in ways that kept her in the race.

Throughout the campaign, Abraham led consistently in the polls. But he could not crack the crucial 50 percent mark. The limited debates between Abraham and Stabenow proved to be critical events in the campaign. After they were held, with two weeks to go, she began to close the gap. In the end, a constellation of factors, including interest group mobilization and Democratic Party money, worked against Abraham and for Stabenow, as she captured the seat with a margin of only 43,000 votes out of four million cast, 50 percent to 49 percent.

The Presidential Primaries in Missouri

Terrence Jones, Martha E. Kropf, and Dale Neuman, with Chris Elkin and Maureen Gilbride, *University of Missouri, St. Louis* and *University of Missouri, Kansas City*

Missouri was a very modest sideshow to the 7 March presidential primary extravaganza of 2000. The Bradley, Bush, Gore, and McCain campaigns were off-the-shelf efforts, and they imitated those in other states in content only. Because independent expenditures were limited, with most of the focus on California and New York, and with pre-election internal Bush and Gore campaign polls forecasting comfortable victories, each did what was needed—no more and no less—to transform the survey projections into electoral reality.

In the Republican primary, George W. Bush topped John McCain 58 percent to 35 percent. Almost all of the Republican establishment in Missouri was lined up behind the Texas governor. In the Democratic contest, Al Gore outpaced Bill Bradley in votes by almost two to one, receiving 65 percent to the Missouri native's 34 percent.

Issue advertising was limited in Missouri. There was relatively little independent-issue television advertising in the six weeks prior to the primaries. Issue advertising appeared to be more related to the upcoming U.S. Senate race between incumbent John Ashcroft (R) and his expected challenger, Governor Mel Carnahan.

The National Right to Life PAC, the Missouri Right to Life PAC, and the MCCL Committee for Pro-Life Congress joined forces on a mailing to 24,000 of their supporters throughout Missouri. The National Right to Life Committee also spent money on radio spots on a small Kansas City Catholic-owned station.

As in other states, labor unions spent most of their resources on the ground war, establishing a hefty direct-mail effort for Gore. The Missouri AFL-CIO coordinated the distribution, but the recipients also included Teamster and United Auto Worker members. The Citizens for Better Medicare aired spots urging seniors to pay attention to Congress's failure to improve Medicare.

The 2000 Montana At-Large Congressional District Race

Craig Wilson, Montana State University

With the second largest district in geographic area and the single most populous district in the country, the 2000 contest for Montana's sole U. S. House seat was both close and contentious. Republican Dennis Rehberg (51 percent) won the open-seat race, defeating Democrat Nancy Keenan (47 percent) and Libertarian James Tikalsky (2 percent). The Republican electoral landslide that swept Montana overwhelmed Keenan and other major Democratic candidates.

The \$5.6 million dollars spent by the major party candidates, and by their political parties on their behalf, made the U. S. House race the most expensive in state history. The equivalent of \$13.56 was spent for every vote cast in the contest.

The national political parties sent a record amount of money to their Montana counterparts for the House race. Both campaigns got more "bang for the buck" from their campaigns, due to political party and issue group spending on their behalf. Party money paid for a majority of the

mass mailings and a significant percentage of the television advertising for both candidates.

Based upon news articles and interviews, at least 26 interest groups appear to have spent about \$1 million in indirect support of Keenan and Rehberg. This interest group activity undoubtedly helped shape many voters' opinions about the candidates' positions on the issues, but did not appear to be a determining factor in the outcome of the race. Collectively, group activity was less significant than the actions supported by soft-money party and official campaign spending. And, as was the case with Montana's other major political races in 2000, the Republican landslide was too overwhelming to be blunted by group activity.

On election night Keenan's campaign manager blamed her defeat on George W. Bush's political coattails in Montana, while Rehberg attributed his victory to his successful work in building strong volunteer organizations in all of the state's counties.

The 2000 Montana Senate Race

Craig Wilson, Montana State University

Political party soft money and issue advocacy group activity were integral factors in shaping Montana's competitive 2000 U. S. Senate race. Republican incumbent Conrad Burns defeated Democratic challenger Brian Schweitzer by a margin of 51 percent to 47 percent. Reform party candidate Gary Lee received 2 percent of the vote.

The \$10.1 million dollars spent by the major party candidates and their allied parties made the Senate contest the most expensive political race in state history. In relative terms, the party hard- and soft-money spending appeared to help Schweitzer more than Burns because it represented a much greater percentage of his total campaign spending.

The number of mass mailings identified as coming from both campaigns was fewer than those financed for the candidates by party soft money. And while television advertising was costly for both campaigns, the Democratic party sponsored more ads for Schweitzer than Schweitzer's campaign produced. This did not appear to hold true for Burns.

Thirty-four interest groups were identified as independent participants in the campaign. While a majority of groups active in the ground war favored Schweitzer, or issues he supported, a slight majority of the groups participating in the air contest and/or running newspaper advertisements directly or indirectly backed Burns. Interest group spending appeared to help Schweitzer the most. Objective estimates gathered from multiple sources place issue group spending on the race at \$2 to \$4 million.

In the end, however, Conrad Burns' re-election to the Senate probably had less to do with outside money and more to do with the reality that the Montana electorate has become more Republican.

Group Advocacy in the 2000 New Hampshire Primary

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We use the 2000 New Hampshire primary as a case study to examine the strategic possibilities and limitations of group advocacy in a high-stakes, high-visibility race. After examining ad-buy data, interviews, and a convenience sample of volunteers who monitored contacts from candidates and groups, we observed different objectives for groups' involvement in the New Hampshire primary that, in turn, shaped their choice of strategies. Those that engaged in agenda setting or framing the discussion about particular candidates were visible through their use of television ads, but encountered enormous competition from the candidates. Others that concentrated on targeted mobilization of their own members were less visible publicly, but had a greater impact. Our results indicate that the context in New Hampshire, with its high voter turnout, intensive campaigning by candidates, and pervasive media, reduced the impact of group advocacy in the campaign. At the same time, the New Hampshire experience underscored the increasing dependence of candidates on the parties' affiliated groups to get their members to the polls. A more detailed description of this research will appear in Paul Herrnson, Ronald G. Shaiko, and Clyde Wilcox, ed., *The Interest Group Connection: Electioneering, Lobbying, and Policymaking in Washington*, Second ed. (Chatham House, forthcoming), or may be downloaded from <www.dartmouth.edu/~lvavreck>.

The 2000 New Jersey Twelfth Congressional District Race

Adam J. Berinsky, Princeton University
Susan S. Lederman, Kean University

The race in New Jersey's Twelfth District was one of the hardest fought congressional elections in 2000. On election night, the Republican candidate, former Congressman Dick Zimmer, was declared the winner over Democratic incumbent Rush Holt. For over two weeks after the election, it was a "race too close to call," with Zimmer contesting absentee ballots and complaining that Middlesex and Mercer County officials engaged in ballot tampering. A recount in the weeks following the election overturned this result and, on 30 November, Zimmer conceded the race.

The Zimmer–Holt contest was one of the most expensive races in 2000. The two candidates raised a combined total of nearly \$5,000,000. The New Jersey Twelfth District contest also attracted a great amount of political party activity, the majority of which came from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). But the DCCC's involvement did not prove to be an unqualified boon for Holt. Some of their controversial ads gave the Zimmer campaign a great deal of ammunition to use in its own ads.

The 2000 Oklahoma Second Congressional District Race

Rebekah Herrick and **Charlie Peadar**, Oklahoma State University

The 2000 Second Congressional District race between Democrat Brad Carson and Republican Andy Ewing was anticipated to be competitive due to the retirement of Republican Tom Coburn in this historically Democratic district. Interest group and party activity was expected to be an important factor in both the primary and the general election. In the Democratic primary and run-off only four interest groups were active: NRA, AFL-CIO, BIPAC, and Concerned Citizens of Oklahoma. These groups relied mainly on ground war tactics. The Republican primary drew activity from term limits groups, who used radio. Party activity in the primaries was limited to a behind the scenes role; however, Andy Ewing benefited from the early endorsement from Rep. Coburn and other notable Republican leaders.

The general election yielded significant activity from the parties and interest groups. Both political parties outspent the candidates on the air war. The negativity of Republican television advertisements possibly helped Brad Carson by repelling Democratic crossover votes necessary for a Republican victory. Interest group activity in the general election focused on ground war tactics and was minor in comparison to party work. Americans for Limited Terms and the National Right to Life group conducted air wars, but both were limited. It seems the groups focused on ground war tactics to better target the message and to activate group membership, which likely persuaded and mobilized some voters. The relatively small amount of interest group activity was likely due to limited ideological distance between the candidates and early polls giving Carson a commanding lead.

The battle for the Twelfth District also attracted a substantial presence of interest groups, including the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the Sierra Club, The AFL-CIO, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Education Association (NEA), and the National Abortion and Reproduction Rights Action League (NARAL). These groups sponsored mailings and general get-out-the-vote efforts. Some groups, such as the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Congress, became involved because they strongly supported their candidates. But other groups apparently had their eye on a majority in Congress.

While it is difficult to assess the exact impact of spending in this race, it is clear that money played a large role in determining the final outcome. Given the closeness of the race, the get-out-the-vote effort was critical to both the Holt and Zimmer campaigns. But in light of the close outcome of the race, even campaigns that might have only had a marginal effect on turnout were almost certainly important. The closeness of Holt's margin of victory demonstrates that his is not a safe seat and the money chase will continue in the New Jersey Twelfth Congressional District.

The 2000 Pennsylvania Thirteenth Congressional District Race

Robin Kolodny, **Sandra Suárez**, and
Kyle Kreider, Temple University

One-term Democratic incumbent Congressman Joe Hoeffel held on to his seat against moderate Republican state senator Stewart Greenleaf with significant help from party soft money spending (over \$1.3 million), and active interest group involvement, especially from environmental and pro-choice groups. Hoeffel's victories in 1998 and 2000 are surprising because Republicans enjoy a 1.5 to 1 registration advantage over Democrats in this district. In this election, Stewart Greenleaf had a popular, and moderate, reputation. Here, then, the power of incumbency proved itself. The interest groups and parties behind incumbent Hoeffel were far more generous than those supporting Greenleaf. Some of the more liberal groups were clearly hoping to help the Democrats achieve a majority nationally, so every potentially vulnerable set got attention. The supporters of Greenleaf felt he ran a lackluster campaign with a grassroots strategy inappropriate for a congressional district and failed to make significant contrasts between himself and Hoeffel. Ultimately, incumbency, campaign quality, and national forces shaped political spending in this race.

The Critical Role of Party Activity in U.S. House Elections: The 2000 Pennsylvania Fourth Congressional District Race

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What role do modern political parties play in U.S. House contests? This paper analyzes the 2000 Pennsylvania Fourth District contest, in which Melissa Hart, a conservative Republican, defeated Democrat Terry Van Horne in a Democratic district that voted heavily for Al Gore. We contend that this unusual victory in the face of a substantial partisan disadvantage in the electorate can be largely explained by the discrepancy in fundraising and activity between the National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). Both in terms of fundraising and advertising, the NRCC outworked, outspent, and outmaneuvered the DCCC in support of their respective candidates. This advantage in party support allowed the Hart campaign to pursue a two-pronged campaign strategy: while the candidate cultivated a positive image and focused on issues of interest to various targeted constituents, the national party focused

on tarnishing the record and image of the Democratic opponent. Without the same level of support from the DCCC, Van Horne was unable to deliver a consistent message that resonated with voters. Moreover, the Democrat competed on an uneven playing field in the battle over image definition. Trends in public opinion within the Fourth District over the course of the campaign reveal that as NRCC activity intensified, relative support for the candidates diverged over time. This trend lends support to our argument regarding the salience of national congressional party activity to electoral success in the House, especially in the absence of an incumbency advantage. This case study also reveals how party organizational strength can help candidates overcome partisan weakness in the electorate, which reflects the bifurcated historical trend of party organizations becoming stronger as partisan loyalty among voters has weakened over the last generation.

The 2000 South Carolina Republican Presidential Primary

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The 2000 South Carolina Republican presidential primary offers a useful snapshot of several trends in modern campaigns. It illustrates the diverse array of communications strategies employed by candidates and interest groups and the high price tag associated with these tactics. Both major candidates, George W. Bush and John McCain, spent millions of dollars in South Carolina. The Bush campaign, targeting conservative Republicans, ran ads on television and radio and made more than 2.5 million phone calls to potential voters. Focusing on moderate Republicans, independents, and Democrats, McCain used television and radio ads and bombarded voters with mailings. Both candidates experimented with email to reach voters.

The race also reveals that the majority of interest group activity is directed toward attacking or supporting a specific candidate, rather than pure issue advocacy. At least twelve different interest groups spent money on the campaigns, separate from the candidates. Most of the money they spent, particularly that from anti-abortion and conservative religious groups, went to television and radio ads, mailings, and phone calls attacking McCain. A handful of organizations, primarily anti-immigration groups, engaged in pure issue advocacy.

We find that outside spending by groups and individuals, especially express advocacy, appears to have influenced the campaign and its outcome. Voters' exposure to the candidates generated interest in the campaign, and turnout was higher than expected in the state. The anti-McCain attacks by conservative interest groups complemented Bush's campaign tactics and led conservative voters overwhelmingly to cast their ballots for Bush. Conversely, the pure issue advocacy of the anti-immigration groups had no discernible impact on voters or the agendas of the candidates or the news media.

The 2000 Virginia Senate Race

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George Allen's victory over Senator Charles Robb in Virginia was the only 2000 senate election in which a Republican challenger defeated a Democratic incumbent. In terms of fundraising, Allen's campaign raised almost 48 percent more than Robb's. But transfers from the national Democratic Party to Virginia far exceeded those from the national Republican Party, thus making Robb fully competitive financially. The nature of the campaign was shaped by early polls showing Allen leading despite Robb's incumbent status.

The campaign drew an unprecedented amount of interest group involvement. Pro-Robb groups—including the League of Conservation Voters, the Sierra Club, the National Education Association, Handgun Control, Inc., and the AFL-CIO—attempted to reinforce the basic message of Robb's campaign about Allen. Pro-Allen groups included the NRA, the Christian Coalition, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. For the most part, interest groups reinforced the basic messages of the campaigns, with the interesting exception of the NRA. While Allen was publicly moderating his stance on issues such as assault weapons to appeal to suburban voters, the NRA launched a massive mail and billboard campaign on his behalf.

The results indicated that late spending on behalf of Robb reduced the size of Allen's margin, but that Allen's strategy of inoculation was successful in preventing slippage from suburban voters in highly populated northern Virginia. In addition, Allen was not damaged by the inconsistency of what he was saying in northern Virginia and what the NRA was saying about him elsewhere. In fact, the NRA mobilization efforts contributed to a decisive Allen margin in rural Virginia.

Allen's triumph was the culmination of a decade-long trend in Virginia, where Republicans now hold both Senate seats, all three statewide offices, and majorities in both chambers of the General Assembly.

The 2000 Washington Second Congressional District Race

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In 2000, Democrat Rick Larsen defeated Republican John Koster, 50 to 46 percent, to win an open seat in Washington's Second District. Total spending reached \$6 million, with the candidates' expenditures eclipsed by the parties and interest groups working on their behalf.

Spending was driven by the competitiveness of the district, competition for scarce TV time, candidate positions on "hot-button" issues, and a dearth of close House races. Koster defined himself as a social conservative vowing to fight "the abortion industry." This led pro-choice groups to the race, and provided Larsen, the Democrats, and interest groups with a message they would use repeatedly—that Koster was an extremist. In the end, Koster's campaign spent \$1.1 million, and Larsen's \$1.5 million.

National party transfers to Washington state boosted two Seattle stations into the nation's top-10 in political ad dollars received. Some stations quadrupled their charges for ads between August and October. Overall, we estimate that the parties combined to spend between \$2.5 million to \$3.7 million for this seat.

Interest groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Sierra Club, and the NEA, also made large TV and radio purchases and dominated the mail. The NEA, the state Labor Council/AFL-CIO, the Sierra Club, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and gun control groups all sent ads benefiting Larsen. Koster was aided by mail from Citizens for a Sound Economy, the National Right to Life PAC and the NRA. About one million pieces of mail were sent targeting the Second District race alone. In the last week of the campaign, some households received over 12 pieces of mail per day. Letter carriers were running two hours behind their regular schedule due to the heavy volume of campaign mail.

This level of spending is unusual for this district. It is understandable, however, given the candidates' issue differences, the open seat, and close presidential and Senate races that bid up the price of TV advertising in Western Washington.