

Stacking the Political Deck:
Presidential Midterm Campaigning and the Separation of Powers

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This is the beginning of this dissertation as a manuscript, but it represents the end of the dissertation as an undertaking. A project of this nature, this scope and duration, is rarely the result of the actions of one person alone. In this instance, while the initial seeds of this project arose solely from my own mind, the final product came into being through the advice and assistance of numerous persons. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the individuals and institutions that have made this possible.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“The White House asserted a broad governing mandate for President Bush yesterday, maintaining that Republican gains in Tuesday’s midterm elections give him a legitimacy that eluded him in the litigated 2000 election. ‘The White House took a huge gamble; they rolled the dice and it worked,’ said Tony Coelho, who was Al Gore’s 2000 campaign chairman. ‘They won the 2000 election legitimately last night. He got his mandate, got his victory and now he can govern for two years.’”¹

In the late autumn of 2002, President George W. Bush was behaving as a man possessed. Faced with a closely divided Congress and the looming potential of the midterm loss, Mr. Bush used the weeks before the 2002 congressional midterms to stump for candidate after candidate, in a way never seen before. President Bush used this travel to impress upon the American people the stark choices he saw before them—and the consequent necessity of a Republican Congress. America needed “to change the leadership in the Senate so we can...have a Homeland Security Department where this President and future Presidents” could handle domestic security effectively.² To ensure economic prosperity, the nation required a Republican Congress “who will make tax relief permanent.”³ Moreover, the necessity of a strong and united (Republican) government was never greater, the public learned, in light of “the threat we face in the form of Saddam Hussein.”⁴ So it was, over and over again. The immensity of his undertaking was staggering—79 days of campaign travel, undertaking 131 events on behalf of 171 candidates, all while raising record amounts of money and traveling tens of

¹ Milbank, Dana and Mike Allen. “White House Claims Election is Broad Mandate.” *Washington Post* (Nov. 8, 2002): A27.

² “Remarks in Alamogordo, New Mexico” (Oct. 28, 2002) pp. 1916. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2002*.

³ Remarks in Denver, Colorado” (Oct. 28, 2002) pp. 1921. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2002*.

⁴ Remarks in Phoenix, Arizona” (Oct. 27, 2002) pp. 1908. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2002*.

thousands of miles.⁵ President Bush's success was equal to the undertaking, with his allies gaining 8 seats in the House and 2 in the Senate (thus returning it to a Republican majority), making him only the third president in the preceding 100 years of midterms to not lose seats in at least one chamber.

In light of these successes, the post mortems done on his actions were positively glowing. Journalists remarked on the apparent transformation of Bush's political standing and skill, in that he "demonstrated something Tuesday he so obviously lacked two years ago: coattails" (Tackett 2002, 1). Academics were rather more circumspect, but still laudatory, noting "the president was highly effective in helping the election efforts of his partisans in Congress" (Kelle et al. 2004, 827). Those who followed him on the trail and been behind the scenes remarked that "President Bush's frenetic state hopping and tireless fundraising for his handpicked Senate candidates paid off last night with broader Republican victories than his aides had foreseen under their most optimistic scenarios" (Allen 2002, 1). Even those with no reason to cheer his successes were willing to acknowledge the rarity of the occasion, and how Bush "risked his own personal political standing by campaigning long and hard for Republicans in close races, energizing the Republican base and reminding undecided voters whole side he was on" (New York Times 2002, 20). However, not a single commentator, academic or journalist, asked a most simple and fundamental question: why had the president undertaken these labors in the first place?

⁵ All travel data used herein is self-created and based on travel recorded in the Public Papers of the Presidents. This data is discussed below.

The presidency is a dominating force in American politics, but it is more importantly a disruptive one. As Steven Skowronek (1997) adeptly puts it, the history of the institution shows

an office that regularly reaches beyond itself to assert control over others, one whose deep seated impulse to reorder things routinely jolts order and routine elsewhere, one whose normal activities and operations alter system boundaries and recast political possibilities (4).

This disruptiveness is a necessary by product of the place of the presidency within American politics—the office most imbued with public ‘trust’, but lacking in the constitutional means to effectively carry it out. As Woodrow Wilson (1907) pointed out over a century ago, “the constitutional structure of the government has hampered and limited his action [with regard to leadership], but it has not prevented it” (56). As a result of this, presidents must constantly seek to reorder the political universe if they are to be successful, to find ways to strengthen a surprisingly weak hand. Unsurprisingly, scholarship is replete with presidential efforts to reshuffle the deck, from attempts at executive mastery of the bureaucracy (Golden 1992, Cooper and West 1988, and Howell and Lewis 2002), leveraging of presidential tools in inter-branch bargaining (Cameron 2000), or even illegitimate constitutional aggrandizement (Fisher 2005, Quirk 2008, Wormuth and Firmage 1986).

However, the quintessential disruptive tool of the modern presidency is public speaking and public campaigning. Labeled ‘going public’ by Kernell (1997), public campaigning allows presidents to break free from the Neustadian world of political negotiations and insider tactics, and enables presidents to leverage the extra-constitutional strengths of the office (Neustadt 1990). As Tulis (1987) shows, these

actions are not without cost, occurring directly at the expense of most historically rooted and discrete inter-intuitional conversations. Still, even with the potential of significant costs—such as the alienation of legislators or other parties—presidents have reason to act in this manner, as a large body of literature—such as Canes-Wrone (2001)—has shown that these actions are both successful and strategically chosen.

Presidential midterm campaigning is often elided into notions of ‘going public’ or the permanent campaign (Doherty 2007). It certainly bears similarities to these behaviors, and so it is not surprising that it often treated as merely a portion of these broader behaviors. However, understanding midterm campaigning in this fashion ignores fundamental tenets of the enterprise. For example, while we often associate the public presidency with the Progressive era and with the variations of behavior between Roosevelt, Taft, or Wilson (Korzi 2003, Morrisey 2009), it really began to gain steam a generation before in the midst of presidential campaigns by Garfield and Bryan (Harpine 2005). Midterm campaigning, on the other hand, is a different animal, only appearing in the mid 20th century. Moreover, the subsumption of midterm campaigning within the public presidency ignores the possibility of unique factors leading to its adoption by presidents, and distinct and important consequences of the undertaking.

Making use of a new, self created data set based on content analysis of every public, political statement made by a presidents during a midterm election in the modern era, this dissertation seeks to reorient the place of midterm campaigning within the literature, and to reframe its placement within American politics. Its fundamental purpose—through this new means of analysis—it to bring presidential midterm

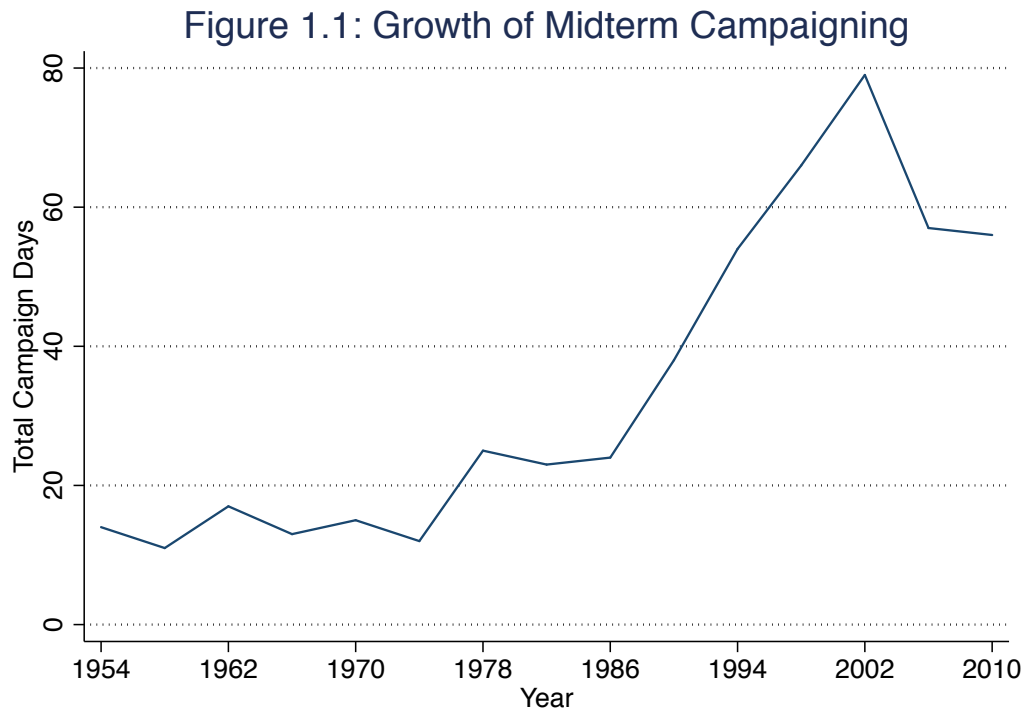
campaigning out of the shadows of the public presidency and the permanent campaign, and to show its unique origin, practice, and importance in American political life.

A Literature and its Problems

The task of this chapter (and, indeed, this dissertation) is to show that presidential midterm campaigning is both worthy of study in the first place, and worthy of a new style and manner of study. Midterm campaigning is a complex and nuanced behavior, and there are a number of reasons to examine it; two, however, stand out most clearly. First, even the briefest of glances at the undertaking suggest a number of fascinating and yet unanswered empirical questions. For example, it stands apart from other aspects of the modern, public presidency in that it is a distinctly modern behavior. As noted above, public speechmaking and campaigning by presidents on behalf of themselves and their favored policies have their roots in the early 20th and late 19th century—midterm campaigning alone is a recent development, with a start date in the post-war period. Indeed, it is definitively bounded, with a clear beginning in the 1954 efforts of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Until that time there was but one brief moment in the entire history of the republic that a president dared to actively engage himself in public midterm campaigning. That moment—the “Swing Around the Circle”—led directly to the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, for among other things, attempting to bringing “into disgrace, ridicule, hatred, contempt and reproach the Congress of the United States”⁶—by publically campaigning against some of its membership. In light of all of this, it

⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 3/2/1868, “Proceedings of the Senate Sitting for the Trial of Andrew Johnson, President of the United State, on Articles of Impeachment exhibited by the House of Representatives”

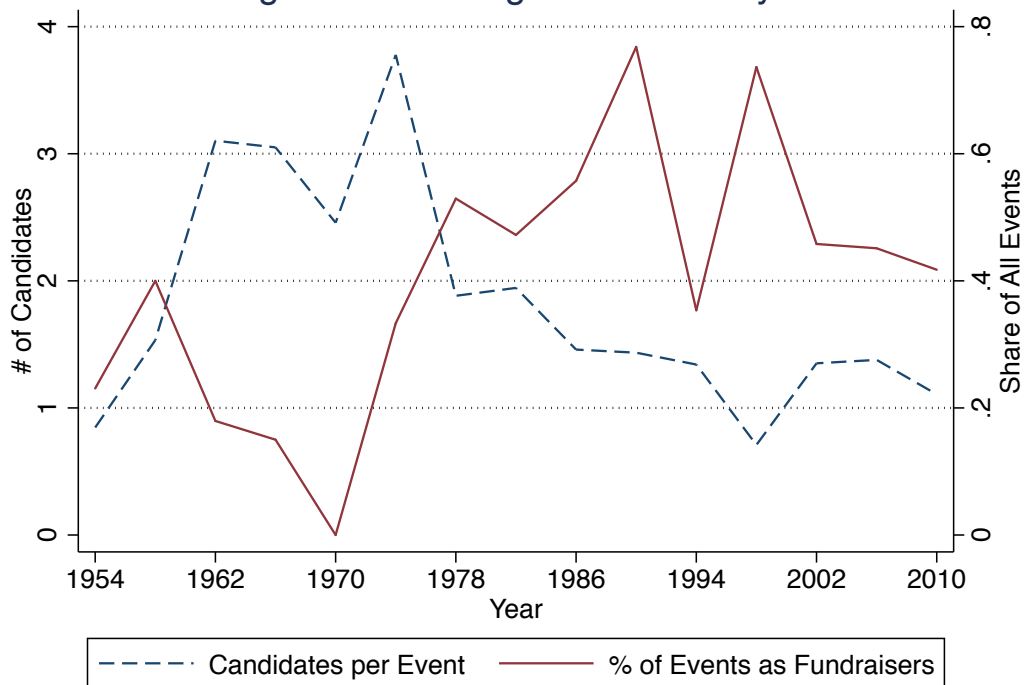
behooves us to understand how this dramatic change came about, and why a behavior so long anathematized was allowed to become mainstream.



Second, once it was adopted as a presidential behavior, midterm campaigning exploded onto the stage. As Figure 1.1 shows, midterm campaigning by presidents has expanded consistently and dramatically, from a paltry 14 days in 1954 to a peak of 79 days in 2002. Not only did the behavior become accepted, but became increasingly prioritized. In addition to expanding in simple numerical scope, midterm campaigning has also transformed in style and tenor. As seen in Figure 1.2, presidents do not just campaign more frequently, but in a much different fashion than they once did. At its inception, presidents focused their efforts on large public rallies; now, it often favors private fundraisers at the expense of public gatherings. To top it all off, presidents have also changed ‘how’ they campaign—right down to the language that they use. When

begun under Eisenhower, the activity was clearly rooted with the party, focusing his efforts on the need to ensure a Republican Congress, and warning the public that if “the Congress is controlled by one political party and the executive branch by the other, politics in Washington has a field day.”⁷ More recent presidents have effectively discarded this partisan basis and have personalized their efforts, instead asking the American people to “make sure you send to the United States Congress a man I can work with.”⁸ We need to better understand how this has come about, how and why these dramatic changes have come to pass.

Figure 1.2: Changes in Event Style



⁷ “Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, California” (Sept. 23, 1954) pp. 873-74. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*.

⁸ “Remarks in Auburn, Alabama” (Oct. 24, 2002) pp. 1890. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush, 2002*.

Finally, it is also worthwhile to understand why and how, for all that has changed over the past sixty years in style and frequency, presidential midterm campaigning has remained remarkably consistent in terms of substance. The sight of President Eisenhower urging the Republicans of California to ensure “the election of a Republican-led Congress”⁹ in 1954 would not seem odd to someone a half century later seeing President Obama beseech the same state’s Democrats that they do all they could to return “Barbara Boxer to the United States Senate.”¹⁰ Likewise, the manner in which President Bill Clinton mined the pockets of wealthy Democrats was not materially different from President Carter’s endeavors a generation before. Thus, for all the surface level differences between the behavior as it was and the behavior as it is, presidents travel, speak, rally, and fundraise on behalf of their co-partisans, in the most other directed actions of their entire presidency, in remarkably similar fashion across eras. It bears examining what factors tie these seemingly disparate acts together. For whom do presidents choose to campaign? What motives these actions and choices? Ultimately, what do presidents get in exchange for all of their trouble?

This brief examination of presidential midterm campaigning suggests a number of interesting and important areas deserving of study. Moreover, in addition to being interesting, these areas are also approachable, as they suggest three relatively simple, but fundamental questions. First, it suggests the questions “why”—as in why do presidents

⁹ “Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, California” (Sept. 23, 1954) pp. 874. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*.

¹⁰ “Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Barbara Boxer in Los Angeles, California” (April 19, 2010) pp. 7. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2010*.

engage in this activity in the first place? This is not a question of impact, or even of desired impact (that comes later). Rather, it is a question of motivation. Until 1954, presidents simply did not engage in public midterm campaigning—after that year they did. Moreover, in earlier elections, such as 1910 under Taft or 1938 under FDR, even limited, behind the scenes actions by presidents caused significant negative ramifications for those men. What changed to not only motivate presidents to campaign actively and openly, but to do so without sanction? Additionally, we need to understand what motivated presidents to expand their campaign behaviors as they have (see Figure 1.2). It may be the same factors that led to the inception of the behavior, but it need not be so—one is a moment of transformation, one an era of expansion. The question of *why* presidents choose to engage in these behaviors offers a great deal to examine and explore.

The second question that needs to be understood is “how”—how do presidents actually campaign? This is a question of strategy, of what drives presidents to campaigning where, for whom, and in what manner they do. Is this presidential strategy simply a facet of external factors like personal electoral concerns or candidate needs? Or is it more nuanced and truly strategic, the result of legitimate political calculus, driven by ambitions and limited only by the constraints of presidential influence? More than this, we need to understand the nature of presidential strategy, as it should illuminate the nature of presidential agency in midterm campaigns. Understanding why presidents campaign where they do should make it clearer the extent to which the behaviors are dominated by external factors—electoral concerns or candidate needs for example—or if it is a function of presidential needs and desires. By ascertaining what motivates

presidents to campaign as they do we can unlock valuable insights on what ambitions presidents possess, which candidates they truly care about, and how they hope to use them.

The third and final fundamental question it suggests regards “impact”—as in, to what impact does this behavior have on the real political world? This is distinct from motivation and the question of why president engage in the behavior. It is not about motivation or strategy, but about effect—the extent to which presidential actions actually alter the political environment. The most obvious aim of this behavior is to elect co-partisans to Congress, and (as we will see) it is on this that the majority of the literature is focused. However, that need not be the only thing that president achieve (or hope to achieve). Midterm campaigning could be used to impact not only current election returns, but also future congressional behavior, as well as future party and presidential fortunes. The question opens up a broad swath of avenues of investigation, and potentially implicates a great deal of our understanding of American politics—not simply within midterm election, but presidential-congressional relations, congressional decision making, and ultimately the separation of powers. Together, these questions open up a tantalizing and worthwhile field of investigation.

These three questions both individually and (more importantly) collectively, suggest the possibility of not only important and fruitful examination of presidential midterm campaigning, but a reorientation of how we understand important portions of American politics in light of this behavior. Unfortunately, a further examination of this material is called for not simply because of the import of these questions, but of the

limited way in which the existing literature handles them. It is not that there is no work on this topic—research on presidential midterm campaigning goes back to at least Ragsdale (1980), and a spurt of work has come out in the last several years, such as Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty (2009) and Herrnson et al. (2011). Nor is it a function of poor methodology or poor findings. Indeed, though not often consistent in its outcomes, the existing literature does excellent work in so far as it approaches the topic, and provides a solid foundation on which to move forward. The problem with the literature, rather, is that for all it does well it fails to do what must be done: answering the three questions that this behavior poses.

The existing literature fails to answer these three fundamental questions for two primary reasons. First, the literature does not appear to treat midterm campaigning as a behavior worthy of study in its own right, as something unique with its own justification. Rather, it is quite obvious to the literature that the purpose of the midterm campaign is rooted in the permanent campaign (Doherty 2007) or in response to the needs of partisans in Congress (Cohen et al. 1991), for example. These actions are simply a pre-determined response to outside needs, or a minor portion of a broader trend toward an active and public presidency. The literature, then, treats this behavior as obvious, its reasons apparent, its desired outcomes beyond question. This is a mistake.

As a behavior, presidential midterm campaigning is certainly related to and influenced by the public presidency, the permanent campaigning, and other ‘broad’ forces to which the literature believes these actions owe their existence. However, midterm campaigning is not simply the result of these broad forces, but influences them

in turn. Moreover, midterm campaigning has an equally reciprocal relationship with a wide range of factors (and literatures), from congressional voting behavior to party structure. Indeed, it sits at the nexus of a vast web of interconnected political behaviors, so networked that it sits in something of a blind spot. The literature sees it linked to the permanent campaign and runs with it—ignoring myriad other possibilities, the least of which is that midterm campaign represents a discrete behavior. In this fashion the literature can ignore the possibility that midterm campaigning has a logic and purpose all of its own—that it has a “why” needing to be answered. Rather than probing it further, “why” simply becomes assumed, and any distinct theory of midterm campaigning ignored. In this way the literature ignores a fundamental aspect of the behavior, and a fundamental questions that needs to be answered

The second flaw is that it asks them in the wrong fashion, and thus approaches midterm campaigning backwards. The three questions are structured lexically, with the order important to their understanding. “Why” (motivation) needs to be understood to fully grasp “how” (structure), which is in turn required to understand “for what” (impact). Unfortunately, the literature treats these questions in reverse. It begins with the question of impact, and goes from there. The result of this is that the literature lacks any firm foundation of which to advance from—it grasps at what seems obvious without knowing why. Hence, it largely focuses its efforts on whether or not midterm campaigning leads to increased elections of co-partisans and finding mixed results, it cannot switch gears because it has not idea of where to look. So, it starts at the end and does not really back it

back to the beginning—completely ignoring the basic and fundamental questions of the behavior.

The purpose of this dissertation, then, is to take the path yet untraveled and, while building off of the literature, to take a deeper, more nuanced, and more connected explanation of presidential midterm campaigning. In doing this, it will rest upon two main ideas. First, it will assume that midterm campaigning is a unique and distinct behavior. It is related to—and indeed, constituent of—well-studied areas like the public presidency, but is a discrete behavior in and of itself. As a behavior it arose in its own time, for its own purpose and with its own reasons. The things that motivate it, the rules that structure it, and the things that it impacts are not to be taken for granted. It is a new behavior, and this newness implies that this behavior arose in a distinct political, institutional, and partisans environment, one which allowed presidents to ignore historical taboos. Midterm campaigning cannot simply be a function of congressional needs—those are clearly not new. Nor can it simply be the result of presidential electoral considerations or the permanent campaign—these electoral concerns are truly permanent, and midterm campaigning is a part of the permanent campaign, not its result. To understand presidential involvement in midterm campaigns is to understand a unique moment and transformation—something related to, even intertwined with, broader trends, but unique nonetheless.

Second, going forward this dissertation assumes that midterm campaigning represents a conscious and deliberate choice by presidents—an important indicator of presidential agency. By largely lumping midterm campaigning into meta behaviors, the

literature ignores the role of presidential agency and instead suggests a level of determinism. It is not that it ignores the role of presidential choice entirely, as it does examine the choice it represents between candidates, places, or event—but even here it does not fully appreciate what these choices represent. However, the literature skates past the fact that midterm campaigning represents a choice by successive presidents to engage in a particular style of politics over another. Presidents could choose to remain aloof and above the fray, working behind the scenes to aid individual candidates and the broader party. They could focus exclusively on large-scale fundraising, or on aiding the party and the party ticket as a whole. But they do not. Presidents have chosen to work tirelessly on behalf of particular candidates, to discuss the campaign and the election in terms of their (presidential) needs rather than broad partisan goals, and to generally demonstrate not only which regions and candidates they favor, but what it is they desire that the political universe ultimately look like. This is not something to be overlooked.

Bearing these two points in mind, this dissertation seeks to both expand up and rather completely reorient the existing literature on presidential midterm campaigning. It will do so through a thorough and ordered examination of each of the three main questions, applying the findings and insights of each to the subsequent level. In so doing, it will show that having a fully formed theory of why presidents campaign in the first place allows, and indeed requires a re-imagination of the strategy by which presidents act, and hence the desired (and actual) impacts of these actions. The dissertation will show that presidential involvement in midterm campaigning did not arise accidentally or because it must, but as a reaction to a changing political landscape that both removed

prior impediments and greatly incentivized the adoption of these behaviors. Both these impediments and these incentives were altered largely through changed to the nature of the American party system in the second half of the 20th century. Consequently, rather than simply being a function of either presidential or congressional electoral needs, midterm strategy is an example of presidents reacting to an altered political landscape by seeking to disrupt traditional norms and rules to their own favor. Midterm strategy, then, is an attempt to master and harness the party system to the advantage of presidents, to use and shape it to their own ends. Furthermore, this suggests that the impact of midterm campaigning should not be understood in terms of simple electoral returns, but in changes to the balance and behavior of Congress. Ultimately, what this dissertation will show is that by answering three simple questions we can almost completely alter our understanding of a seemingly commonplace behavior, and fully recognize its importance and impact to American political life.

Data and Plan of Dissertation

In examining presidential midterm campaigning, this dissertation relies on a wide range of material—academic, journalistic, and historical. Moreover, as each question looks at slightly different slices of this behavior, the data and methods used herein will vary from chapter to chapter. However, the heart of these data and this analysis is a data set encompassing all midterm activities that have been undertaken in modern times—that is, all of them from 1954-2010. This data set catalogues not only what events were held but also when, on whose behalf, and in what manner—among other factors. These data

will allow a much finer examination of presidential midterm actions than has yet been done, as it allows for not simply analysis of when or for whom presidents campaign, but also analysis of the relative placement of these events to one another and the relative strength of a president's efforts on behalf of a particular candidate.

In order to do this, I constructed a data set from a content analysis of the *Public Papers of the Presidency* from January 1st through Election Day of each midterm year from 1954-2010.¹¹ I examined every presidential statement made during that period and included for analysis if it represented a) a spoken public statement made by the president, and b) a statement made at an event at which no elected members of the opposition party were listed as being present.¹² The statements from these events were then further examined, with the date and location of the event recorded, and were noted for the presence of any candidate for the House, Senate, or a governorship, as well as whether the event was a public function—a speech or rally—or a private event—that is, a fundraiser.¹³ Next, a content analysis was done on what was said about a candidate at the event. If the president's statement included 'strong' language-- 'I/X Need(s); (re)elect; vote for; send to; make a great; I am/be for him/her; right man/woman; is essential; speak up for; is good for; needs your help; I look forward to seeing'—then it was coded as an

¹¹ A longer explanation of this coding schema is laid out in Appendix A.

¹² This was done so as to exclude 'presidential' travel—like ribbon cuttings or dedications—from 'political' travel.

¹³ Additionally, public events had to occur within a member's own state/adjointing state to be counted as an event for that member. Other work has required that events be held in a member's district. However, given the nature of media and media markets, it seems reasonable the events held out of district—but still in market—are just as important.

‘endorsement’, and if not it was classified as a ‘visit’.¹⁴ These were further refined by removing from the data set any instances of visit level statements at private events, as were deemed to be insufficiently strong indicators of support.

Herein, the analyses will focus largely on the content analysis data, and so will be centered at who was at what type of event (public or private) and what was said about them (visit or endorsement). To facilitate empirical analysis, these data were both aggregated up from the individual to the state and national level (events in states, total events in nation), and broken into categories by event types. Hence, for all three levels of analysis (nation, state, and individual) there are multiple forms of campaign data to look at, largely built around three event types. In ascending order of assumed importance these types are: Visit, Endorsement, and Fund(raiser). These events are assumed to be more or less important than one another because of what they signify. A public visit is nice, but is really just a chance to stand by the president. An endorsement is better than a visit (as it shows a higher level of commitment), and could potentially increase both voter and donor support. Finally, a presidentially attended or facilitated fundraiser should be

¹⁴ Presidents are relatively parsimonious in use of such strong language, though the parsimony varies between presidents. For an example of the difference, compare the two statements below, made within moments of each other at the same campaign event:

“We need Mitch McConnell back in the Senate. He’s doing a really, really good job for the State of Kentucky.” (GWB 2002, 1537)

“I appreciate the fact that Geoff Davis, candidate for the U.S. Kentucky Fourth District, is with us. **And Geoff, I appreciate you putting your hat in the ring.**” (GWB 2002, 1537)

The former is a request that voters elect Mitch McConnell; the latter is a ‘thanks for coming’. Thus the former, I would posit (and the data will show), suggests a strong embrace of the candidate and his campaign on the part of the president. Relative to that, the later instance is somewhat akin to a kiss from one’s sister. More importantly, such distinction in language is frequent and quite clear—presidents will often rattle off that ‘I need X, Y, and Z re-elected...and let’s thank W for running...’ Such distinctions, I would suggest, is not arbitrary and suggest different levels of presidential interest. Furthermore, any ‘visits’ that occurred at private events were thrown out of the analysis, as they were felt to be insufficiently indicative of presidential preference.

the best of both worlds, not only indicating presidential preference, but also directly aiding a candidate by replenishing campaign coffers. Just as it allows analysis of different levels of support within events, this data set also allows analysis of different types of events—an important refinement.

Making use of these data, I am able to provide a much finer and deeper level of analysis than has yet been conducted, allowing a much clearer method of answering the three fundamental questions. With this in mind, the dissertation advances on each question individually and in turn, using their lexical nature to build each chapter upon that prior to it. Therefore, I begin in Chapter Two by examining the question of why presidents campaign at all, and as they do. Laying out the basic outlines of the development of this behavior—initiation, growth, and transformation—I argue that in addition to lacking a clear theory to explain midterm campaigning, even those things the literature hints at as causes do not stand up to scrutiny. In their place I offer the dramatic changes that occurred within the American party system in the second half of the 20th century. These changes both weakened the capacity of the party system to restrain presidential actions (as it previously had) and created a situation that motivated increased and increasing amounts of presidential action. I close the chapter by showing how one of these changes—party realignment at the state level—impacted the competitive balance between parties nationwide, and so inspired the dramatic growth of presidential campaigning over the past 60 years.

I carry these findings forward to Chapter Three, where they help answer the question “how”, and explain the basis of presidential midterm strategy. Highlighting

some of the repeated behaviors shown by presidents within midterm elections, it shows how the favored explanations of the literature—presidential or congressional electoral needs—fail to explain the real world substance of presidential actions. Rather, in keeping with the findings of the previous chapter, I argue that a desire to gain control of a weakened party apparatus serves as the basis of presidential strategy. Presidents do not campaign to simply elect partisans to Congress, but rather to elect the right partisans, so that the ideological makeup of both their party and of Congress as a whole will be as favorable as possible. I show these through an empirical analysis of House and Senate midterms from 1970-2010, finding that the choice of candidates, the frequency of visits, and the timing of events to be influenced by relative placement of candidates within their respective parties.

In Chapter Four I turn to look at the impact of midterm campaigning, seeking to understand what returns presidents generate for their efforts. There are any number of things that presidents could receive for their endeavors, and again contra the literature I argue that rather than being the election of greater number of partisans (which does not really occur), the impact of presidential campaigning is seen in congressional behavior. Specifically, I argue and find that presidential actions alter the amount of support both partisans and opponents give to presidential legislation, with partisans granting even greater support, and opponents becoming more likely to withhold it. Moreover, I also argue and find that in addition to altering congressional behavior presidential campaigning alters the long term prospects of the presidents party in visited states—

leading to increases in both congressional and presidential vote share in subsequent elections.

I close the dissertation in Chapter Five, looking to the future and discussing future ways of understanding this behavior. I summarize the results and argue for a reexamination of the importance of this behavior based on what has been found. Then, I examine what the upcoming 2014 midterm may feature on the basis of these findings, arguing that President Obama will be active, but less so than his initial statements make out. Finally, I wrap up by discussing ways through which the behavior can be further examined as well as other important topics that are raised by this material and worthy of independent study.

Chapter Two: Theories of Midterm Campaigning

“The 1954 campaign ended in an atmosphere wholly unlike what had been expected. This was largely due to the changed role of President Eisenhower. He said he has no intention of going out and getting into the partisan struggle of any district or state...[However, after] all the polls and surveys showed the Democrats running strong, he began to wade in. At the end he was behaving like an ‘old pro’ and waging an all out campaign on behalf of his party.”¹⁵

An interesting thing about epochal change is that it can both be underwhelming and leave us surprised, often (both) in ways we might not expect. Such an outcome is clearly seen the above description of President Eisenhower’s 1954 midterm campaign. It is a measure of surprise that finds itself in the notion that the General ever behaved as an ‘old pro’. This was a president, a leader of his party, who only began campaigning when in “mid-October, with clear indications that party fortunes were in peril, he belatedly responded to the pleas of party leaders” (CQ Press 1997, 69). The campaign came in like a lamb—with Eisenhower strenuously warning the public that if “the Congress is controlled by on political party and the executive branch by the other, politics in Washington has a field day.”¹⁶ It went out like a slightly more assertive lamb, with Ike finally being able to countenance to tell voters “now, of course, I would like you to vote for Senator Cooper”, and several other candidates besides.¹⁷ Indeed, he somehow managed to find a way to both cross and then retreat across this personal Rubicon, by giving his first endorsement without uttering that candidates name: “I am in the district

¹⁵ Folliard, Edward T. "Republicans Appear to be Losing House Rule." *The Washington Post and Herald* (Nov. 2, 1954): A1.

¹⁶ “Address at the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, California” (Sept. 23, 1954) pp. 873-74. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*.

¹⁷ “Remarks in Cadillac Square, Detroit, Michigan” (Oct. 29, 1954) pp. 996. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*.

where my Congressman...is running. It seems to me I have a right to speak of him.”¹⁸

Thus, when he exited the stage on November 4th, 1954, Eisenhower may have seemed an ‘old pro’, but only compared to his utter amateurishness over most of his endeavors.

And yet, this description of the campaign does ring true with respect to the fact that this was a transformative endeavor, an epochal change had truly been made; it just wasn’t in the realm of President Eisenhower’s public political savvy. Rather, the great change that took place over the campaign was the campaign itself—for the first time ever a president not only engaged in midterm campaign and did so without suffering traumatic and lessening consequences. The presidential midterm campaign was out of the bottle, and it was here to stay. The question we must ask ourselves, however, is why: why was this neophyte, cautious, seemingly un-partisan president the one who added a new (and previously taboo) wrinkle to presidential behavior, and what about his and subsequent eras allowed that behavior to be not only continued but constantly and continuously expanded and modified?

The task of this chapter, then, is to understand why presidents began to campaign in midterm elections, and why subsequent presidents continued and expanded the behavior. While a growing batch of literature examines midterm campaigning, almost no attention is paid to these questions. The literature ignores it because it does not see it as important, or because it assumes it to be (implicitly) answered. However, without a clear and definitive answer to why presidents campaign, we cannot hope to understand the nature and import of this behavior. Therefore, I argue that the presidential midterm

¹⁸ “Remarks in Gettysburg to a Group of Republican Candidates” (Oct. 23, 1954) pp. 946. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*.

campaigning did not simply spring into being, but represented a conscious choice by presidents in reactions to a changed political environment. In what follows, I will show that, driven by a transformation of the American party system, presidents were both enabled and incentivized to engage in midterm campaigning, and hence they began and expanded this behavior.

In order to accomplish this, the chapter proceeds as follows. It begins with an examination of the contours of presidential midterm behaviors, and looks (so much as is possible) at what the literature suggests for a ‘cause’. Laying out why these suggestions cannot support the real nature of midterm campaigning, it argues instead that we can best understand midterm campaigning’s birth and expansion as a reaction to an altered partisan and institutional environment, brought about by changes to the party system over the 20th century. These changes both removed impediments to presidential involvement and also incentivized presidential actions. With this in mind, the chapter closes with an empirical examination of factors related to party transformations, and how they related to changes in midterm behaviors.

Understanding Midterm Campaigning

The first step in examining what factors caused/motivated/allowed presidents to engage in midterm campaigning in the middle part of the 20th century, is to look at a basic question: is the question of ‘why’ ultimately important? In some measure this is done in any bit of research, but is doubly important in this case because of how this question is treated by the literature. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the

existing literature pays almost no heed to ‘why’ this behavior occurs, or why presidents chose to engage in it over other possible actions. At first blush this move is, in fact, not without reason: the strategy of midterm campaigning and its outcome are seemingly much more important, as they can directly impact substantive politics.

‘Why’ presidents campaign may be interesting, even fascinating, but it is not substantive in the same way. Relatedly, it is more difficult to even examine the question of why, as it is not ‘visible’ in the same way as strategy or outcome. Public endorsements and election results are solid things on which to base investigation, whereas examining ‘why’ requires theorizing and no small measure of guess work. It makes some sense, then, that the literature would not grant the question of ‘why’ much importance.

However, it is a mistake to overlook the basic motivations of this behavior. This is because without understanding ‘why’, we cannot hope to truly understand what is going on, and what is at stake truly at stake. It is easy to pass over ‘why’ if we simply think of presidential midterm campaigning in terms of the choices made within the behavior—who, where, how, and when. This, it seems, is what the literature does. But what is fundamentally important is the decision to engage in the behavior at all, and the choice presidents made between active midterm campaigns and previous accepted actions. Presidential midterm campaigning was not foreordained, and it did not have to occur. It represents a conscious choice on the part of presidents, from Eisenhower on down, to engage a particular form of action at the expense of the potential universe of other options. Thus, if we are to truly comprehend how presidents strategize or what they

get for their actions, we need to understand why they chose to take it rather than doing something else entirely—we need to be able to answer the question ‘why’.

In order to really understand why presidents campaign we need to take the question in two parts, and understand both the causes for the imitation of the behavior under Eisenhower and the factors motivating its subsequent expansion under his successors. Turning first to its initiation, what need to be understood is not why midterm campaigning began in 1954 as opposed to a term before or after—that is immaterial. What we need to understand is what changed (prior to 1954) that allowed President Eisenhower to act as he did. This notion of *allowance* is important, because it is not that prior to 1954 presidents did not try to involve themselves in midterm campaigns—on at least three separate occasions they did. However, these attempts were not only unsuccessful electorally, they also illustrated the dangers of the undertaking, as they resulted in severe political punishments for the offending presidents. The political universe made it very clear that midterm campaigning was not allowed.

The first of these three failures occurred in the presidency of Andrew Johnson, in the midterm of 1866. As an accidental president “bereft of a strong party organization, dealing with an independent-minded Congress, facing deep sectional division, and lacking control over patronage, Johnson desperately needed a way to build his political strength”; so, he organized what became known as the Swing Around the Circle (CQ, 8). The trip was to take him up the East Coast to New York, up the Hudson Valley to the Great Lakes and then through the Old Northwest before turning around again in St. Louis

(Boulard 2008). Though billed as traditional ‘inspection tour’ that would culminate in the dedication of a monument to Stephen Douglas, it quickly got out of hand. Johnson repeatedly used these tour stops to attack his legislative opponents and call for their replacement, breaking an unspoken rule: “chief executives could be attacked, always and forever by name, but it was considered bad form to similarly respond” (ibid., 31). For his actions, Johnson was rewarded with a (Radical) Republican landslide, and a Congress that was resolved to impeach him.

Early in the next century, the normally taciturn President William Howard Taft got the campaign bug, with similarly abysmal results. Faced with the prospect of a leftward turn for the Republican Party in the form of a post-African safari, New Nationalism toting Teddy Roosevelt, the more conservative Taft was anxious to shore up his wing of the party. (Harrell et al. 2005, 806) He set about using the 1910 midterm election as a chance to purge the party of its more progressive members, and return it to old-fashioned orthodoxy. In this he failed, and in spectacular fashion. Not only did the progressive wing survive the purge, but also “forty incumbent conservatives lost to progressives in the primaries” (ibid.). Thus, when a chastened GOP return for the next Congress (having ceded 10 Senate seats along with 57 seats and the House majority to the Democrats), it faced minority status in the lower chamber, and a Senate run by a cross party ‘liberal coalition’. Midterm campaigning 2, Presidents 0.

The final major pre-Eisenhower attempt at midterm action took place a generation after Taft, in FDR’s 1938 midterm. Facing a similar situation to Taft’s, and with a similar (though ideologically reversed) goal, Roosevelt set out to remake his party—only

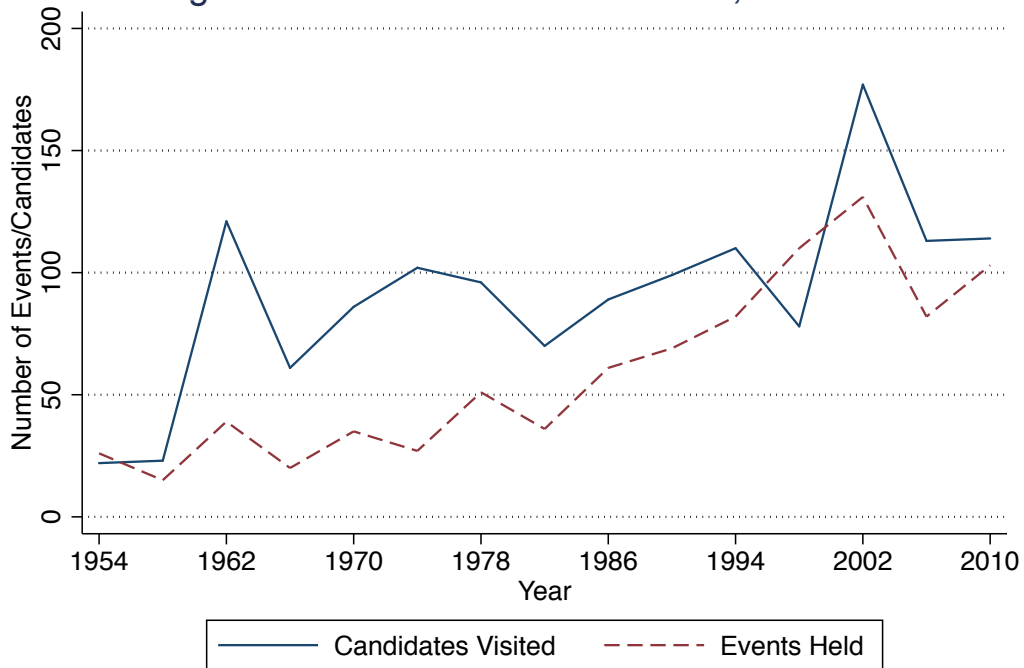
to similarly have it remake his presidency. FDR saw the midterm as a chance to make his party more ‘responsible’, and he tried to do so “by intervening in Democratic primaries and backing liberal challengers to the wayward [conservative] incumbents” (Dunn 2010, 6). Just as had occurred with Taft, FDR’s plan backfired, and in just as spectacular of a fashion. The 1938 midterm was not only a crushing defeat for the Democratic Party—with the Republicans gaining 81 seats in the House and 7 in the Senate—but also a crushing defeat for FDR. Some candidates he favored did hold on to win, but the backlash against him was huge and the backlash from his involvement was huge. As a consequence of his actions, the New Deal was effectively dead, and the Conservative Coalition, which would stifle liberal governance for a generation, was born. Strike three.

As these examples illustrate, what needs to be understood is not so much why President Eisenhower did campaign, but why he was able to with no backlash, with no negative reaction whatsoever. Indeed, as this chapter’s opening quote indicates, the better part of the public (and political) reaction to Ike’s behavior was not anger that he did it, but surprise at how active his involvement ultimately was. Therefore, we need to ascertain what changed—institutionally, politically, socially, or otherwise—to allow he and his successors to act as they wished without reprimand.

We also need to understand what changed to allow or incentivize presidents to handle midterm campaigning as they currently do. As we saw in the last chapter, midterm campaigning under Eisenhower or Kennedy bears largely superficial resemblance to the same actions under Bush or Obama—the purpose and the structure may largely be the same, but the extent, style and tenor are dramatically different. We

can see this in a number of ways. Figure 1.1 showed just how much midterm campaigning has grown as a function of presidential time; Figure 2.1 illustrates a similar trend in terms of the actual units of the campaign: candidates and states. Just as they have expanded the amount of time they devote to the campaign, they have also expanded the reach of the behavior. This allows them to exert (potential) presidential influence into a much greater number of races and places than previously.

Figure 2.1: Candidates and Events, 1954-2010



Moreover, just as midterm campaigning has expanded it has also transformed in terms of style and tenor. We saw in the previous chapter that midterm campaigning has moved away from a focus on large, public events to a more mixed approach with an increased preference toward private, elite level activities. We also saw that the very language of campaigning has changed, from a clear emphasis on the party, to a clear emphasis on the president. Something similar can be seen in the fashion in which this

activity has expanded. Over the second weekend in October 1962, President Kennedy did a swing through Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Indiana, and New York. On that same weekend 40 years later, President Bush cast a wider net, vesting Florida, Georgia, Missouri, and Montana. But while Bush made one stop and one event per state, President Kennedy held events in Aliquippa, Pittsburgh, McKeesport, Monessen, and Washington, Pennsylvania. President Kennedy's travels were clearly about rallying the state party, as a whole to victory; President Bush's were just as clearly about particular candidates. We need to understand what changed to inspire presidents to so dramatically alter their behavior as much as we need to understand what occurred to allow them to campaign in the first place.

Presidential midterm campaigning is a behavior that was once so taboo that it led intra-party retaliation in the good times and impeachment in the bad ones. It is an activities that has exploded in practice and transformed in form, such that it bears only superficial resemblance to was it was only a few decades ago. Yet, at present it is practiced without a second thought, and without sanction. This is something worth examining, but unfortunately, as noted above, the literature has surprisingly little to say about 'why' presidents campaign in midterms. This is because the existing literature does not really seek to answer these questions; they do not really look at the questions of why the behavior occurs. Rather they ask why presidents campaign as they do, or what things aid the expansion of the activities. But these are distinct, and subsequent to why presidents campaign in the first place. Unfortunately, the literature does not treat with

this question because it has no concern with it—it appears to simply accept that presidents campaign, that they ought to, that they must, and then goes from there. This is a mistake. As we saw above, midterm campaigning as we know it has a start date—October 8th, 1954; thus the push to begin it, to originate it, must have come from somewhere. The literature, however, breezes past this.

Consequently, it is difficult to engage with the literature on this question. It is not that the literature offers no possibilities for what motivates presidential behavior, but even this is not done explicitly. Rather, the manner in which the literature is organized, and the manner that scholars approach and frame midterm campaigning suggests several basis for their investigations. To the extent that they can be defined they are, at least in part, straw men—they require no small measure of license to arrive at. Nonetheless, without putting too many words in the mouth of others there appear at least three factors that the literature proffers for why presidents campaign (at all).

The first factor that the literature suggested by the literature as a root cause of presidential midterm campaigning is the rise of political modernity. Starting with the ‘public’ and ‘rhetorical’ presidencies (Kernell 1997; Tulis 1987) the argument goes that having gained the accepted capacity to speak publically, and realizing that carrying that on in a permanent campaign (Blumenthal 1980) can be help, presidents merely view the midterm elections as yet another opportunity to hold forth with the public and hence increase their own standing, politically and electorally. As a result, the reason why president campaign in midterms is to help ensure their own reelection (and they now can do so without punishment), and they do it more often because they find it advantageous

to do so. This is a useful thesis for the literature because it provides a reason for both why presidents were able to campaign in 1954 but not before (public presidency), and why they expanded their campaign efforts so dramatically in more recent years (permanent campaign). Midterm campaigning, in this scenario, is simply an extension of broader trends within presidential behavior.

The second factor offered within scholarship is the rise of modern technologies for travel and communications. The replacement of the train with the plane, and the telegraph with the satellite mean that presidents can engage in travel not only with much greater speed, but can do so without losing the ability to effectively act. As Hager and Sullivan (1994) put it, “President Reagan should pursue more public activities than President Truman because Reagan can travel to more places, faster and more comfortably” (1085). Kernell (1986) suggests that there might be substantial lag time in this (hence why travel does not spike immediately after the introduction of jet travel), but that it really picked up steam with the advent of outsider presidents—they, being less inclined to inside baseball, took to the public; modern technology aided them. Thus, the combination of modern technology and modern presidents meant that president could have their cake and eat it too, and so they did.

The last of these is not so much an explicit motivation, but an outcome transformed into one. As noted in the previous chapter, inspired by the notion that 100% of policies that do not gain the assent of Congress fail to become law, the third motivation suggested by the literature is that president began engaging in midterm campaigns to elect more member to Congress—or at least to see fewer defeated (inter

alia, Cohen et al. 2001; Kelle et al. 2004; Lang et al. 2009). Midterm elections are notorious for the ‘midterm loss’ and they been an ever-present problem for sitting presidents. Though the literature is uncertain of the origins of the loss, it sensibly argues that presidents try and deflect it by trying to create ‘coattails effect’ in midterm years. In presidential election years the impact of coattails can be quite significant—“ a party can expect to gain about three seats more than they would have won otherwise with every additional percentage point of the two-party vote won by the parties’ presidential candidate” (Campbell 1986, 181). Presidents thus began to engage in midterm campaigning is thus reactionary, and designed to return the most partisan Congress possible under the circumstances. Midterm campaigning does not represent something dramatic, then, but something wholly utilitarian (if perhaps belated in inception).

At first blush all three of these make sense as rationales for the emergence of the behavior. Clearly without the board acceptance of presidential as active partisan orators, there would be not real ability to campaign in midterm elections; they would be physically able to campaign, of course, but not practically. If presidents were relegated to campaigning via horse and buggy, midterm campaigning would be likewise impossible (or at least highly inefficient), and it is doubtful that it ever would have come into existence. Finally, it makes perfect sense that the aim of midterm campaigning is the election of more partisans, and the reason midterm campaigning came into being is reflexively straightforward: to do just that.

However, that is just the first blush. Under any close inspection these three possibilities can be seen as deeply flawed, for individual reasons. For example, to hold that presidential midterm campaigning is an outgrowth of modern traits like the public presidency captures important truth, but it only gets us no more than halfway to understanding the reason(s) why the behavior emerged and expanded. Certainly, scholars are correct that that the acceptance of the public presidency is essential to the story of midterm campaigning, but such gets us no closer to understanding its beginnings. Why were presidents unwilling to campaign publically in midterms when the likes of Garfield or Bryan (Harpine 2005) were willing to campaign for themselves, and TR, Taft and Wilson were willing to publically fight for legislation (Korzi 2003; Morrisey 2009) generations earlier? It also makes sense to draw upon our understanding of the permanent campaign to understand midterm campaigning as an action, but again, it cannot get us to why presidents choose/chose to engage in it—midterm campaigning is constituent of the permanent campaign, not caused by it.

Likewise, to see the birth (and expansion) of midterm campaigning through the lens of modern technology makes sense, but it still only takes us halfway. Certainly Air Force One makes travel easier, as do satellites, the Internet, and a thousand other creations. President Kennedy commented on this himself, noting during the 1962 midterm “that by November 6 we’ll have traveled more than any President and almost as much as all of them in this century in an off year, but that’s partly because of jet travel.”¹⁹ However, to go from this point to a declaration that technology led to the birth of the

¹⁹ “Transcript of Interview with William Lawrence Recorded for Program ‘Politics—‘62’” (Oct. 14, 1962) pp. 777. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962.*

behavior ignores and obscures key points. Presidents were able to travel extensively and effectively well before the creation of jet aircraft or satellite communication. A century and half ago Johnson's 'Swing Around the Circle' took him up the eastern seaboard and west of the Mississippi—and back—in a few short weeks (CQ Press 1997), actions mirrored in the extensive (train-bound) travel of men like Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Technology makes it easier and faster for presidents to campaign, but it does not allow it. Indeed, it may be more reasonable to see technology as something that enables modern presidents to engage in travel as freely as their predecessors given increased demands of their office. Technology allows quicker hops, and ever-present abilities to communicate, but it certainly does not explain why presidents travel, or even why they travel as much as they do.

Finally, the notion that the 'why' of midterm campaigning is the same as its presumptive impact is likewise problematic, and fails to provide an adequate basis for either phase of the activity's history—it neither tells us why they campaign as they do or why they do so at all. On one hand, this is because they provide answers that cannot realistically serve as solutions to the question(s) at hand. Certainly, for example, presidents engage in midterm campaigning to help elect for partisans MC's, to gain a more supportive Congress, to gain more electoral strength—it would only make sense for them to do this. Yet, suggesting or admitting that does not get us any closer to understanding why president choose to campaign at all, or in the radically different way they presently do, because such things are universal goals desired by every president the nation has seen. If the cause of midterm campaigning is simply that presidents want

these things, then one must ask why did it not occur sooner? FDR, Truman and indeed, all presidents between Johnson and Eisenhower wanted these things, and indeed, may have wanted them more given the larger historical impact of midterm losses (Campbell 1991; 2003). Yet, they did not seek them in this manner. Hence, while it certainly makes sense that presidents hope that more partisans get elected as a result of their efforts, this cannot serve as a valid basis for why they chose to campaign (instead of pursuing other options) in the first place.

While the ‘causes’ offered by the literature make sense at first blush, they do not hold on closer inspection, as they either do not fit with the visible pattern of behavior or fail to differentiate between varied changes within it. What we need, then, is an explanation (or set of them) that can both illuminate not only why this behavior occurs at all, but also why it occurs as it does. The answer to this, I submit, is quite straightforward in form (if complex in execution): presidential midterm campaigning arose in response to changes in the American party system. The party system offers a potential solution to questions of both inception and growth, and it fits well with the general nature of the midterm campaigning. This is because the party system structures the relationships between presidents and MCs, shaping communication, rewards and punishments, and voting behavior (Rhode 1991; Snyder and Groseclose 2000). Moreover, the 20th century was a period of massive upheaval within the party system of the United States, bringing about dramatic changes to a long established political order (Aldrich 1995). In the next section, I will show how these transformations of American parties both brought about a

situation in which presidents could campaign without sanction, and one which has consistently called for and incentivized greater presidential action.

A New Theory of Midterm Campaigning

In order to show that party changes were the key drivers in the development and growth of modern presidential midterm campaigning, we need to find strong evidence of it both in the inception of the behavior, and in its expansion. Turning first to its initiation, it makes sense to break the investigation down into parts—to look at why they did not do so in the ‘pre-modern’ (19th century) presidency, why they did not do so in the ‘early modern’ (first half of the 20th century) presidency, and why it then emerged as it did in 1954. This will allow us to not only see the restrictions that once existed upon presidential actions, but what and how things changes in order to allow them to do so in good time.

Beginning, as it makes sense to do, at the beginning, the answer to the first of these questions is fairly straightforward: (early) 19th century presidents simply could not campaign in midterm elections. This inability was twofold, part practical and part political. Practically speaking presidents could not campaign in that era because of the inability to efficiently travel between various parts of the Union. Presidents did travel, and rather extensively, even in the early 19th century. Washington—intent on showing the face of the new government to the people “left the nations capital for a month’s tour of the states of New England” (Ellis 2008, 20). His early successors followed suit, and even began to travel for explicitly partisan purposes under Jackson and Van Buren (Ellis

2008). But, for the purposes of a campaign—particularly a campaign lasting within any sort of campaign season—some travel was utterly unsuited. This is because it simply took too long. Washington traveled the length and breadth of the nation in his flag showing tours—and it took him multiple trips across multiple years to do so. Thus, even a president desirous of making midterm campaigns could likely have only done it on a regional basis, presumably making it a much less worthwhile undertaking.

The political inability of that era is more straightforward still: presidential public speech that was political in nature was unacceptable. Of course, to our modern sensibilities “nothing seems more unremarkable than a [president] delivering a speech before a large, enthusiastic crowd” (Ellis and Dedrick 2000, 185). However, the Framers viewed this with suspicion, if not always concern, and “Madison predicted that the executive branch would lose policy influence from such appeals” (Cannes-Wrone 2001, 325). The public taboo of political speech has of course been long studied, by the likes of Kernell (1997) and Tulis (1987). Well through the 19th century this taboo was largely respected, and presidents abstained from public political speech. It was not absent from American politics—it certainly occurred in non-presidential political actors—and before the century was out “Bryan’s Herculean speaking tours” were largely accepted, “made possible by a decisive change in public expectation...that had occurred in the previous decade and a half” (Ellis 2000, 113). However, for the first several generations of presidents, public political pronouncements for anathema, and so to engage in midterm campaigning would have been both unseeingly, and dangerous (as the impeachment of Andrew Johnson shows).

Yet, these practical and political restrictions on presidential action had been removed by the end of the 19th century at the latest. As Johnson's 'Swing Around the Circle' made evident, by midcentury presidents could travel extensively and quickly. In the decades that followed this was quickly standardized, at least within presidential campaign travel, with extensive activity undertaken by Garfield and Bryan when seeking election (Harpine 2005). This only expanded in the following decades, with Roosevelt and Wilson introducing travel on behalf of policies (Korzi 2003). Therefore, the second small question that we have to answer is why president midterm campaigning took another generation to develop, when the prior century's restrictions had long since vanished.

The answer to this is both political and institutional, but is lodged in one factor: the party system. The American party system had, since its true rise in the Jacksonian era, been designed to guide and limit presidential action; it was historically organized "to constrain national administration and to engage the participation of ordinary citizens" (Milkis and Rhodes 2007, 473). It did so in several ways. First, the system was largely decentralized, build on a bottom up, local centered structure. The national party apparatus existed (by at least 1856), but any attempt to centralize control was met "by the tenacity of [a] highly mobilized, highly competitive, and locally orientated democracy" (Skowronek 1982, 40). Thus, the real partisan action was within the state and local parties.

Moreover, presidential capacity to interfere would have been sorely limited. The presidency certainly possessed resources—as Woodrow Wilson (1907) noted (prior to his own turn in office):

His patronage touches every community in the United States...and he can go far towards establishing a complete personal domination. He can even break party lines asunder and draw together combinations of his own devising (215).

But these were tools used within governing, and required no campaigning to be made use of. Outside of these, however, presidents held little sway. The national party (of which they might be able to claim control) was weak, and devoid of permanent resources. Local bosses, however, were truly powerful within both political and general realms. Tweed, Pendergast, and Weed; these were the individuals that controlled the working structure of the party and dispensed aid and favors to partisans. These units chose candidates, collected funds, and organized campaigns. Thus, each was its own fiefdom, represented local or state interests rather than any overarching national polity. They had no wish for external forces—presidential or other—to interfere in this dynamic. Thus, well through the 20th century, the presidency was, within the realm of party, simply another powerful actor, and not necessarily the most powerful one, and fear of upsetting powerful, established, and seemingly permanent interests likely held back presidential ambitions in this sphere.

But eventually, of course, presidents were able to campaign in midterm elections (and all elections, really) without fear of partisan punishment. The third question we need to answer, then, is why this occurred, and why Eisenhower in 1954 (and all who

followed him) we able to engage in a behavior that was so clearly proscribed in prior decades. This occurs, I would suggest, largely due to several major changes within the party system that begin to manifest themselves midcentury. First, by the time of Eisenhower's campaigning, the 'traditional' mass level American party system had begun to break down, as mass partisanship lessened (Hetherington 2001) and individuals 'dealigned' (Cox and Katz 1996) from partisan affiliations. At the heart of this change, it is often posited, is the rise of the welfare state (Aldrich 1995; Fiorina 1980). "The great, mass-based parties of the nineteenth century were fueled by patronage, government jobs, contracts, and subsidies, all distributed by victorious parties", (Arnold 2005, 174) and so the modern liberal welfare state largely displaced the system's *raison d'être*. No longer able to distribute services through the party, local bosses were unable to control the support of the mass public. Denied the ability to distribute patronage, party leaders were unable to control their lieutenants. Denied the ability to soak public workers for campaign funds and services, the local party leadership was bereft of leadership. The party machines largely collapsed (Mayhew 1986), and in its place presidents were eventually able to construct "national party machines able to cope with local party oligarchies" (Herring 2006, 75). Thus, an important source of opposition to presidential actions was removed, making it easier for presidents to act, as they desired.

Contemporaneous to these changes in party structure, the period also saw the beginnings of a major ideological realignment between the two major parties. Coming in to the 20th century both parties had possessed strong liberal and conservative wings, highlighted by the Southern Democrats and progressive Republican. The strength of

these wings inhibited presidential action, by presenting presidents with a semi-cohesive unit that could retaliate to presidential actions. However, the ideological centers of each party slowly moved left and right (respectively) in the first half of the 20th century, and conservatives gained greater control of the Republican and liberals the Democratic Party. The impact of this ideological shift can likewise be seen in the election of Harry Truman in 1948. A generation before the defection of the South would have doomed a Democratic candidate. However, the rising strength of the northern liberal wing of the party was more than able to offset this, and grant Truman his victory. While the ideological difference within parties was still vastly greater than it was today, it was a first step towards homogenization, which in turn would weaken the ability of presidential opponents within the party to effectively punish him.

Finally, along side these two changes we also see a related rise of presidents as powerful and independent political forces. It goes without saying that the institutional strength of the presidency increased dramatically over the course of the 20th century, and that the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt was much different than that of Theodore—in terms of perceived powers, staff, budgets, and myriad other factors. However, more important for our story is the fact that this era saw the rise to dominance of presidents as pure political (which is to say partisan) leaders. While this was certainly aided by the weakening of their potential opponents, it is also a function of modernity generally (as the literature does point out). As Wilson pointed out in *Constitutional Government* (1907),

He has become the leader of his party and the guide of the nation in political purpose, and therefore in legal action. The constitutional

structure of the government has hampered and limited his action in these significant roles, but it has not prevented it (54).

The ability of presidents to be unique focal points for public attention in an increasing connected age allowed them to assert power and control over their parties in a way not seen prior. In addition to simply being head of government, the president “is also the political leader of the nation, or has it in his choice to be” (ibid., 68). The acceptance of public speaking had been long granted, and with the lessened capacity of other actors to punitively react to presidential ambitions, there was little to stand in the way of presidential ability to engage in any form of campaigning they wished.

Just as changes to the structure of the American party system made it possible for presidents to campaign in midterm election without sanction, so do did they allow and incentivize presidents to campaign in an increasingly active and personal manner. These changes impacted presidential incentives in several ways. First, the collapse of the traditional party system did more than weaken the institutional ability of parties to resist and punish presidential actions; they also removed basis of the historical relationship between parties and candidates/office holders. Parties were mass level institutions that could deliver votes to candidates by delivering services to the partisan public. However, unable to continue to do this, the parties lost their *raison d’etre* and any real purpose; so, the parties (as institutions) floundered. Many scholars and pundits argued that parties were obsolete (Fiorina 1980), but they did not vanish, and they eventually reformed themselves. State and local parties revitalized themselves first (Cotter et al. 1984), and

eventually “national party organizations . . . reemerged from the depths . . . of the 1970’s” (Shea, 2003, 287). They did so by becoming service organizations—no longer built on patronage but on information and electoral information (Aldrich 1995). They continue to help candidates gain election, but in a much different fashion.

The collapse of the traditional party-candidate relationship also had an impact on the other side; that is, the candidate. As parties stumbled down, partisan identification in the mass public weakened with it, leading to a rise in the number of independents. (Broder 1971; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976; Smith, 1988) Alongside this, electoral changes, such as redistricting, displaced established party organizations and increased the incentives for candidates to individualize their campaigns (Cox and Katz 1986), while changes in election timing weakened their capacity to enforce party voting (Engstrom and Kernell 2005). Reforms put into place by the McGovern-Fraiser Commission and other changes weakened the parties’ links to candidate selection and federal efforts to control campaign finance remove much of their monetary powers (Fiorina 1980), giving it instead to outside groups with personal missions (Hall and Wayman 1990; Wright 1990). As a result, even as parties returned to strength in the later 20th century, political candidates became much more independent, and rather than party loyalists we are likely to see candidates who are “self-chosen . . . [who’s] background is likely to be less in party service than in intellectual and advocacy organizations” (Sundquist, 1981, 371). Moreover, these independent candidates were much more likely to be beholden to outside groups with personal missions, rather than parties with long standing interests (Wayman 1990; Wright 1990).

Finally, in addition to seeing a transformation of the institutional structure of American parties, the post war period also saw a dramatic realignment in their ideological composition and geographic basis. Demographically, the parties became more racially polarized (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Poole and Rosenthal 1997); geographically, the South shifted to the Republicans and the northeast to the Democrats; ideologically, the moderate middle collapsed, and caused a rise in internal ideological homogeneity with the parties (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 1992; Bond and Fleisher 1990; Fleisher and Bond 1996). This shattered the backbone of a party system that had held up since the end of the Civil War, and ushered in a dramatically different era of politics.

This new era may have been painful to long existing party organizations, but they were manna from heaven to presidents. They provided two key positives for presidents that opened up a new ball game. First, the opening of ‘virgin’ territories for the party—particularly in the case of the Republicans in the South—should have allowed presidents room to intervene heavily without the fear of stepping toes, for there were no toes to be stepped on. Likewise, the collapse of the old regionality of the parties and their increasing polarization made it more practical and desirable for presidents to engage in full scale party building—building a consistent national brand became more possible, and (again, particularly Republican) presidents were given “a chance to construct a new political majority in their image and secure for themselves a place in the history books” (Galvin 2010, 20).

Additionally, perhaps no one entity has capitalized more on the collapse of the old party structure than has the presidency, and it has done so in two distinct and powerful

ways. First, wearing the hat of party leader, presidents aided the resurgence of their parties, but in a fashion that suits their own needs. Though the “national party organizations ... have reemerged from the depths...of the 1970’s” (Shea, 2003, 287), due to presidential action they are not as the parties of old, but in no small way parties molded in the image of the president, designed to suit their needs. Thus, under presidential leadership modern parties have strengthened institutionally, and developed better capacities to aid candidates and influence elections—but quite often on presidential terms.

Second, wearing his hat as an independent political operative, presidents seized on the relative weakness of the parties to strengthen their personal hand vis-à-vis candidates. As candidates are less able to rely on the parties for funding (Aldrich 1995; Fiorina 1980; Therlout 2003), presidents have stepped into fill that void. Indeed, if we look at Figure 1.2, we can see that it was not until *after* the creation of modern campaign finance laws that presidents began to fundraise during midterm elections. This restriction of traditional party activities and the subsequent collapse of their historical form doubly increased the valuing of campaigning in the eyes of presidents, and doubly increased the necessity of such action in the eyes of candidates. Thus, the presidential capacity to aid the candidates with national resources as party leader and local fundraising as a popular figure has meant that opportunities for (and demand for) presidential campaigning should never have been greater.

On the whole, the changes in the composition, nature and organization of parties have left presidents with significantly greater opportunity and reason to campaign in

midterm elections. The geographic/ideological transformation of the parties—ever nudged forward by presidents—opened new areas to presidential action. The collapse of party control and the rise of individualized candidates dramatically altered the potential costs of presidential involvement. Finally, even the resurgence of American parties served to create a situation wherein president held many more cards than before. Thus, aided by their status as party leaders and the dramatic change in the political landscape, late 20th century presidents were not only able to engage in midterm campaigning, but provided with more than ample opportunity and reason to do so.

Changes to the party system provide a much more satisfying answer to why presidents have chosen to campaign in midterm elections, and why they have expanded their efforts to the extent that they have than is provided by the literature. The party system works as a cause not just for initiation but also for growth, as it altered contemporaneously to changes in presidential behavior. It explains the great lags in the behavior of the ‘public presidency’—between the acceptance of wide ranging public campaigning and its adoption in midterm elections—and the uptick in campaign behavior over the last generation between presidents sharing similar backgrounds and technological advantages. All in all, party transformation fits as the primary reason why presidential behavior has changed with regard to midterm campaigning over the last sixty years. And so, this gives us our first hypothesis, and the general premise that will underlie the remainder of this dissertation.

Party Transformation Hypothesis

The rise and expansion of presidential midterm campaigning is a direct result of changes to the structure of the party system in the United States.

Data and Methods

While changes to the party system offer a much more satisfying and viable means of understanding the transformation of presidential behavior in midterm elections, it does not solve the basic problem: this is a tricky question to thoroughly examine. As noted at the outset of the chapter, one the reasons, perhaps, that the literature does not examine the question of ‘why’ presidents campaign in great detail is that it is a difficult question to approach empirically, as it does not leave much of a tangible trail to follow. For example, there is not a rigorous data driven manner in which to show that Eisenhower was able to campaign when he was due to changes to the party system, or because of any particular factor. Rather, it is a question of theory and framing, not something that is necessarily falsifiable.

On the far other side of the spectrum, the ‘why’ of midterm campaigning also includes things that are so blatantly obvious as to almost defy the need for investigation. The rise of presidential fundraising for congressional candidates is representative of this. There are certainly variations in its practice, and we could examine these in detail to determine why certain presidents behave as they do. However, the basic question of why has so straightforward an answer as to make it useless to examine: the passage of the FECA made it reasonable for presidents to do so. As Figure 1.2 indicates, prior to 1974

we have one fundraiser over 6 midterms; post 1974 we have dozens of fundraisers each year. Thus, it almost defies the need for study.²⁰

In attempting to study this, the tricky thing is to determine how to approach the question of why empirically, and to find the right proxies to track changing presidential behavior. I have settled on two of them: total campaign days and state presence. That one should try to ascertain what factors have influenced the number of days presidents have campaigned (and hence the growth in the behavior) seems reasonable enough, and gets to the heart of the issue. Moreover, it is a better measure of presidential investment than looking at the number of candidates campaigned for or the number of events held, as those are more representative of (changing) presidential styles, whereas the number of days represents a clear commitment of a president's scarcest resource, time. However, looking at time in this manner also ensures a weak final result, due to a small-n problem; there are, after all, only 14 elections in which midterm campaigning has occurred.

A way around this problem that also allows for an examination of the growth of the behavior is to examine what factors motivate presidential presence in particular states. Looking at what drives presidents to campaign where they do should allow us to see what factors control the basic aspects of the behavior, and hence which things cause it to expand (or not). Moreover, it should allow for a clear differentiation between those factors which are consistent across times—such as electoral concerns—and those that are changing with the times—such as party strength. It also has the benefit of not suffering

²⁰ This is not to suggest that presidential fundraising is a make or break factor for candidates, or that it necessarily contributes an overly significant portion of any candidates total resources. Rather, it simply serves to point out that without the increased (legal) necessity of presidential assistance, presidential fundraising would have had no obvious reason to increase as it has—with this 'necessity' it needs virtually no other reason.

from a small-n problem, with a minimum of 48 cases in each presidential contested midterm.

The data used to examine the time spent campaigning and the states visited by presidents are displayed below in Table 2.1. For the most part these data are fairly straightforward, and require little in the way of explanation. Several of them, however, do deserve greater attention. First, presidential popularity is designed, clearly enough, to capture the popular standing of a president in the run-up to the election. It represents the 90-day average of trended Gallup approval data as of September 1st for each election year. It was created by gather the results of every Gallup presidential approval poll taken during midterm years, plotting the recorded data and trending between points. Consequently, it assumes that a linear relationship exists between polling points, and gives a poll value to each calendar day. This is then averaged for the 90 days up to September 1st. The reason this date was chosen rather than, say, Election Day, is that I assume presidential travel is planned out with some level of lead-time. Thus, if popularity factors into the extent to which presidents travel in midterm years then it should be popularity from early in the year—in this case, from the summer months—that impacts that decision.

TABLE 2.1: VARIABLES AND EXPECTED DIRECTIONS

VARIABLES	EXPECTED	MODELS	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL				
# OF DAYS CAMPAIGNED	+	Presence	Count	Days campaigned in year
FIRST TERM	+	Both	1/0	If it is a first term
NIXON OR AFTER	+	Both	1/0	If it is 1970 or later
PRIOR PERCENT	-	Days	Continuous	Party share of presidential vote in prior election cycle
MARGIN IN HOUSE	-	Days	Count	Partisan margin in House of Representatives
SENATE SEATS DEFENDING	+	Days	Count	Number of Senate seats defended by the party in that election year
PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY	+	Days	Continuous	90 day average of presidential popularity as of September 1st
RANNEY STATES	+	Days	Count	Number of states with a folded Ranney index of greater than .75
STATE				
SENATE ELECTION	+	House	1/0	If there is a Senate election in state
GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION	+	Both	1/0	If there is a Governor election in state
# OF SEATS CONTESTING	+	Both	Count	House races with partisans
SWING STATE	+	Both	1/0	If there state was within 5% in presidential election
DISTANCE TO CAPITAL	-	Presence	Continuous	Straight-line distance from D.C. to state capital
FOLDED RANNEY INDEX	+	Presence	Continuous	Measure of inter-party competitiveness at state level

The other variables that need explanation are ‘Ranney States’ and ‘Folded Ranney Index’. A traditional Ranney Index measures state level partisan control. The ‘original’ Ranney index measured state level party strength by averaging: 1) the proportion of seats in the lower chamber of the legislature held by the Democratic party; 2) the proportion in the upper chamber; 3) the Democratic share of the two party gubernatorial vote; 4) the proportion of terms of office for governor and each chamber that the Democratic party

held control. This ‘Ranney’ index modifies that basis by taking the proportion of years of control—not the number of terms; it captures a ten-year index for each midterm. Furthermore, following King (1989) it ‘folds’ this index in order to look at competitiveness rather than control.²¹ Thus, the Folded Ranney Index captures the changing party dynamics within states, and illustrates the extent to which those states are becoming more or less competitive over this period in which the partisan environment was changing so rapidly. My contention is that presidential campaigning was predicated on this transformation and that as more states became competitive (largely due to ideological and geographic realignment) presidents campaigned more frequently, as they had more reason to do so. Ranney States, then, is simply a count of the number of states that were ‘competitive’, shown by a score of .75 or more on the Folded Ranney, which ranges from .5 (no inter-party competition) to 1 (perfect competition).

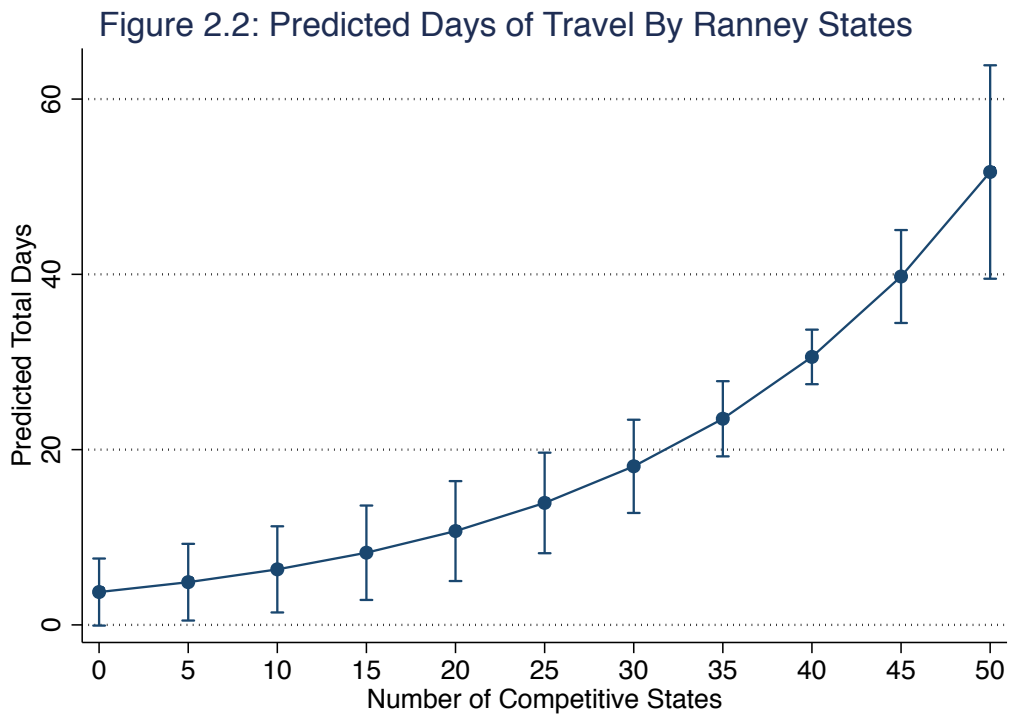
Making use of these data, two models were constructed. First, a Poisson model was created to examine the number of days, per year, in which presidents campaigned during midterm years. As these are count data it seemed appropriate to use a Poisson model rather than, say, and OLS regression. OLS could have been used given the number of days in question, but the results are not materially different if looked at one way or another. Second, a logistic regression model was created to look at presidential presence within states during midterm years. This data was pooled across elections, so the cases represent individual states in individual midterm years. By looking at 1/0 presence or absence from a given state, we should be able to understand what factors

²¹ Per King (1989: 85) the formula for this ‘fold’ is “ $IPC = 1 - [RI - .5]$ where IPC is the interparty competition index and RI is the original Ranney index.”

drive the most basic tenets of this behavior, and hence the extent to which its growth has been driven by a changing partisan environment (or other factors).

Results and Analysis

Turning first to the number of days that presidents campaign in midterm elections, there is good first glance evidence that party transformations—as captured in the Ranney Index—are important (perhaps driving) factors in determining the extent of presidential efforts. As Figure 2.2 shows, the relationship between the numbers of days spent of the trail the number of ‘partisanly’ competitive states is positive and strong—with the correlation of .78. Though hardly a silver bullet, this is important basic confirmation of the party transformation hypothesis—the increasing number of competitive states is highly correlated to the increasing time spent on the trail by presidents.



More detailed evidence in this regard can be seen in Table 2.2, which shows the results of the Poisson regression on factors influencing the total days spent campaigning in midterm years. As it shows, there are number of factors that have strong relationships to the extent of presidential campaigning. Era is important, with post-Nixon presidents having a significant bump in their commitment of time. Congressional factors such as the margin in the House and the number of partisan Senate seats up for election are both significant and indicate that presidential travel is predicated on protecting political power in Congress. Interestingly, presidential popularity is not shown to be a significant factor, and presidents who were more successful in their prior election are less, rather than more, likely to capitalize on that in the midterm.²²

Table 2.2: Predicted Number of Days Campaigned

VARIABLES	TOTAL DAYS CAMPAIGNED
'RANNEY' STATES	0.05*** (0.013)
POST-1970	0.40** (0.173)
PRIOR PERCENT	-0.05*** (0.018)
MARGIN IN HOUSE	-0.00*** (0.001)
SENATE SEATS DEFENDING	0.08*** (0.016)
PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY	-0.00 (0.006)
CONSTANT	2.46* (1.270)
OBSERVATIONS	15
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.67
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-46.47
WALD CHI2	185.27

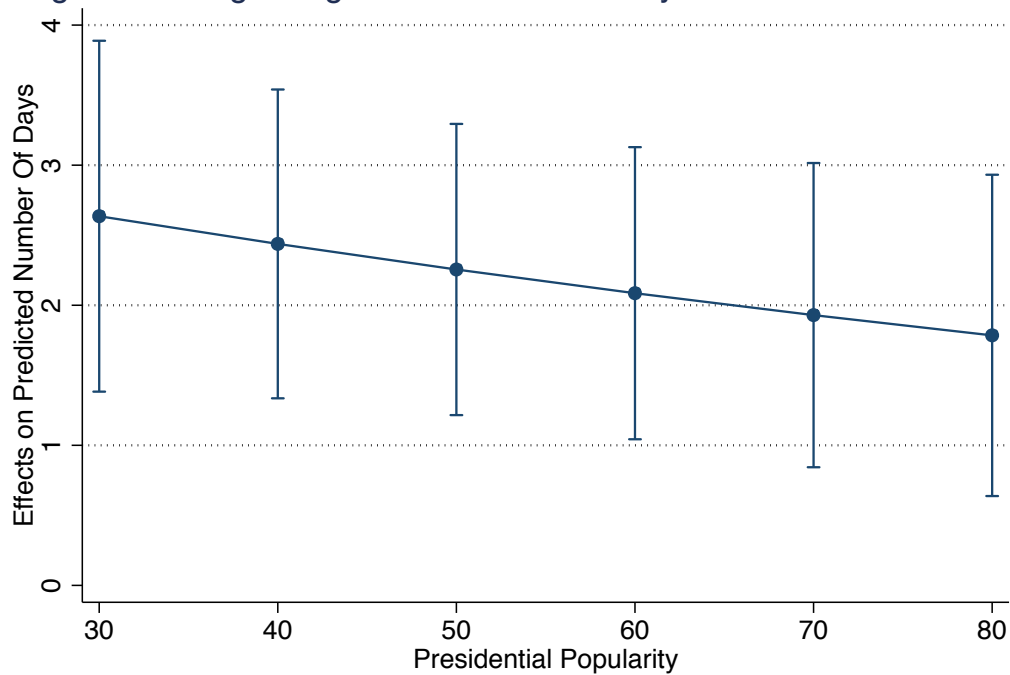
Poisson regression; standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

²² This, however, could be thrown off by the fact that two presidents who won huge popular victories in the prior election, Eisenhower and Johnson, did not campaign heavily; Eisenhower was ill for much of the campaign season (heart problems), and Johnson was mired in Vietnam.

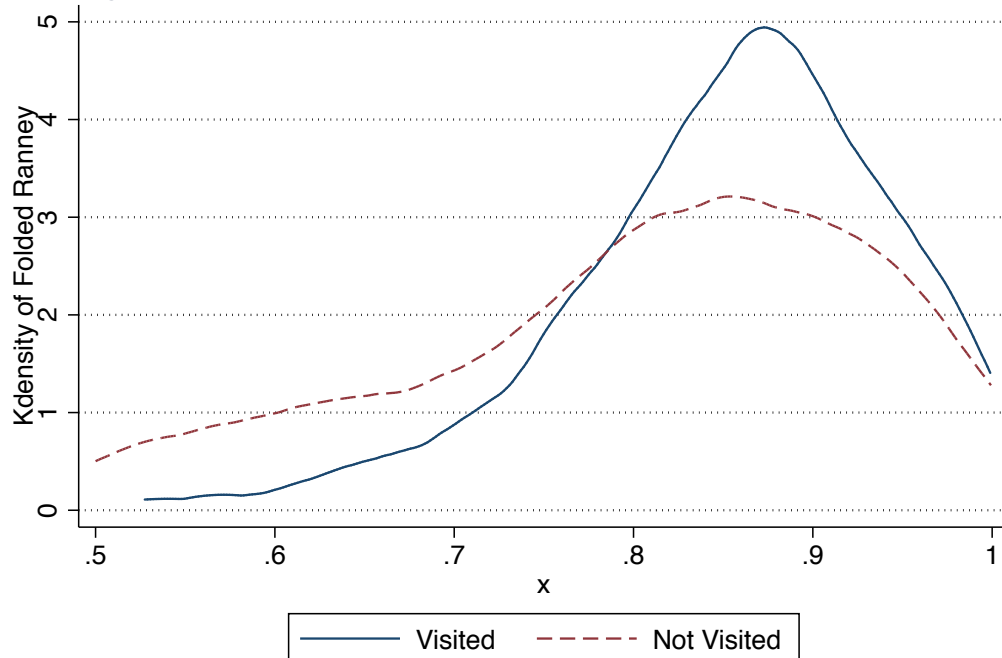
More importantly, the most significant and most influential variable in the model is Ranney States, suggesting that the increasing number of competitive states IS a driving factor in the time presidents commit to midterm campaigning. This makes sense: as the number of states that are truly competitive between parties increases, there are more places that it would be worthwhile for a president to spend time in. They should want to campaign in places where their efforts will have the potential for impact; that cannot be the case if a state is wholly dominated by one party or the other. However, this is not an all-powerful force within presidential decision-making. As Figure 2.3 indicates, the impact of competitiveness is moderated by other factors—this shows the relationship with presidential popularity, but similar results emerge for each factor. This, I think, gives a clearer picture of the place of state competitiveness within presidential decision-making: it helps to define the field of play, but the other factors (such as popularity or congressional needs) provide the actual impetus and capacity for action. Competitiveness in this regard is hugely important, but because of how it expands or contracts that field, not because it is something that presidents care about per se.

Figure 2.3: Avg. Marginal Effects of 'Ranney States' with 95% CIs



Turning next to state presence, there appears, at first blush, to be less evidence to support a role for state level partisan competitiveness (as a proxy for party transformation) in determining where presidents travel. Figure 2.4 illustrates the distribution (kernel density) of those states that were visited and those states that were not, by their level of competitiveness. As it shows, there is pronounced difference in the distribution of visited and non-visited states, with visited states more likely to be more highly competitive—but the distributions are not hugely distinct. Though less likely to do so than states in which presidents campaign, non-visited states still frequently possess ‘competitive’ scores on the Ranney Index. Therefore, it may be the case that competitiveness matters somewhat less than predicted

Figure 2.4: Distribution of Folded Ranney (by Visited/Not)



However, the results of the full model do seem to vindicate the party transformation hypothesis. Displayed in Table 2.3, we see once again a number of factors appear to be significant in determining presidential campaign behavior. Presidents are more likely to visit a state if they campaign more broadly over the year, if it is their first term, and if their presidency was more recent. They travel more frequently to states they won, to those that are nearer to Washington, and to those that have more ‘going on’—that is, more House, Senate, and gubernatorial contests. Most importantly, the state’s level of inter-party competition is, as expected highly significant and highly influential, with competitive state much more likely to receive presidential attention than those that are not. This fits well with the findings on total campaigning, and suggests a unified rational: as parties transformed and individual states realigned, new and broader

areas opened up to presidential action; so, presidents acted, and campaigned more heavily than they had in the past.

Table 2.3: Predicted Presence in State

VARIABLES	STATE PRESENCE
TOTAL CAMPAIGN DAYS	0.02*** (0.005)
TERM	0.88*** (0.238)
NIXON OR AFTER	0.89*** (0.277)
DISTANCE TO CAPITAL	-0.00*** (0.000)
FOLDED RANNEY INDEX	1.94** (0.830)
SWING STATE	0.30 (0.191)
WON THE STATE	1.11*** (0.214)
SEATS CONTESTED	0.13*** (0.020)
SENATE ELECTION	0.91*** (0.192)
GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION	0.34* (0.198)
CONSTANT	-6.31*** (0.801)
OBSERVATIONS	746
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.26
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-381.34
WALD CHI2	148.68

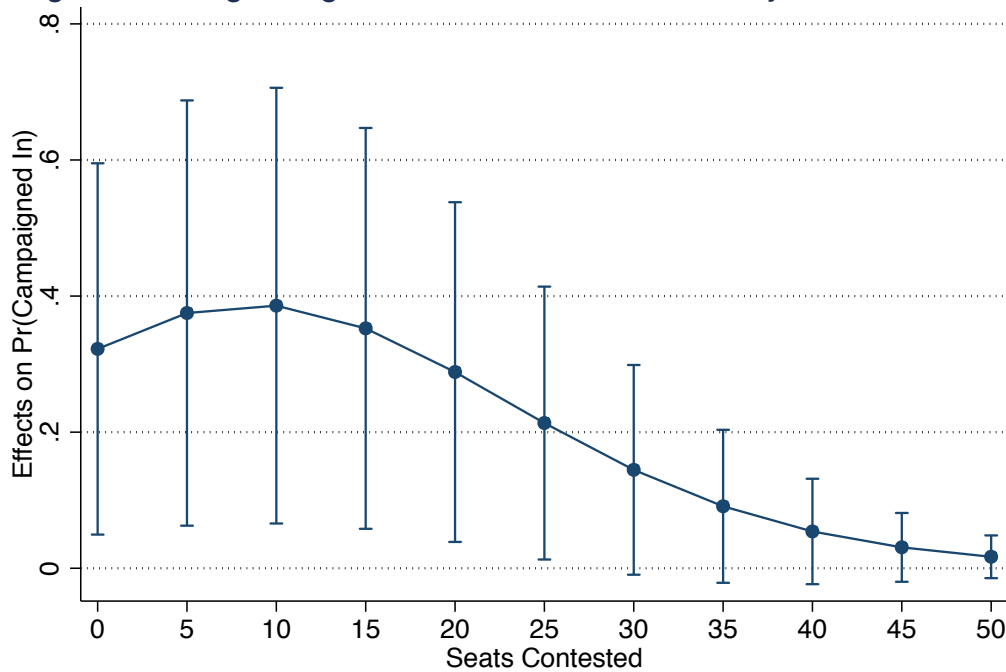
Logistic regression; robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.

Again, however, it bears noting that competitiveness is not the sole condition for travel or even the single most important, all things being equal. As Figure 2.5 illustrates, the impact of competitiveness is moderated by other factors—in this case the number of seats contested in a state. As this shows, competitiveness is highly important in some cases—namely for midsized states—and completely insignificant in others—that is, in large states. Presidents are going to campaign in California come hell or high water; it is

simply too large, with too many races, and too much cash to be ignored. However, they may or may not come to Minnesota or Alabama, and that decision is influenced by the state's partisan competitiveness, and greatly so. This once more indicates that the transformation of parties is important, but that this transformation is important in the context of basic political calculus. Presidents campaign to achieve political ends, and so are guided by political factors. The transformation of parties makes it more useful for presidents to campaign, and allows them to do so fruitfully in a wider range of places, but it is not the end in and of itself.

Figure 2.5: Avg. Marginal Effects of 'Folded Ranney' with 95% CIs



Discussion and Conclusion

In 1954 President Dwight Eisenhower entered in to the political fray of the midterm election a neophyte and came out an 'old pro'. Though halting and limited

when compared to our modern expectation, his actions were nonetheless important, as they ushered in a new era of presidential behavior. The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the factors that influence that behavior, and to try and ascertain why it became accepted under and after Eisenhower, and why it has exploded in scope and practice in the decades since.

While the existing literature is not blind to this question of ‘why’, it appears at best indifferent to it. To the extent it takes it up, the answers that it offers, while seemingly rational, fail to accord well with the real world nature of this behavior. I have offered a new explanation of why presidents began to campaign, and why they expanded their efforts so greatly: party transformation. The dramatic changes in the nature, structure, and purpose of American parties over the course of the 20th century created a situation in which impediments to presidential actions were removed and incentives for action greatly increased. These changes confirmed presidents as the leaders of their party, granted them greater freedom of action, and made it much more useful to campaign for individual candidates.

However, as noted above, the factors motivating this behavior, while useful to know, are only useful in so far as they shed greater light on the real world nature and impact of the behavior; that is to say, on the strategy that underpins these actions and the impact they have on the political universe. In the next chapter I turn to look at how presidents plan and organize their campaign, and the extent to which the party transformation thesis manifests itself in the real world choices of presidents on the trail.

Chapter Three: Strategies of Midterm Campaigning

“I’m delighted to see Christine Kehoe. And we are determined to see her prevail. If you want to do something for what you just stood up for, send her to Congress. Send her to Congress.”²³

On September 26, 1998, President Bill Clinton spoke at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Rancho Santa Fe, California. Over the course of his remarks he endorsed the candidacy of Christine Kehoe, who was running in a close race for a seat from California’s 49th district. That President Clinton endorsed Ms. Kehoe is interesting, because over the course of the entire campaign year he endorsed only 25 Democratic candidates for the House of Representatives—25 out of the 379 who ran. It begs the question: why Christine Kehoe? What made her deserving, and others not? Perhaps Mr. Clinton saw her as a strong candidate in a close race—she was a sitting city councilwoman and lost by only a few points to an incumbent Republican. It might have been a simple artifact of the fact that she was running for a seat from San Diego—President Clinton campaigned more heavily in California than in any other state, spending 11 days there over the course of the year. Or, her endorsement could have been the result of Mr. Clinton’s frenetic campaign pace in 1998—in the nation as a whole he was quite active, campaigning for 66 days and holding 110 campaign events in 19 different states. But, which of these possibilities—or what other factors—led to Ms. Kehoe’s endorsement in 1998?

As we saw in the previous chapter, presidential midterm campaigning came about as a direct and deliberate response to an altered political landscape. It represented a

²³ “Remarks at DNC Luncheon in Rancho Santa Fe, California.” (Sept. 26, 1998) pp. 1679. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William Jefferson Clinton, 1998*.

conscious choice to break with tradition and the structures of the past, to seize the opportunity for greater power within and control over American political life. As such, it is an example not of the unstoppable sweep of history or of modernity, but of basic agency on the part of presidents. However, midterm campaigning is not just a choice between action and inaction, but more fundamentally a choice between candidates. A campaign stop may be a great sign of presidential favor, but it cannot (or at least has not) been granted to all possible takers. Rather, midterm campaigning is a zero sum game, with time spent on one candidate lost and unavailable to others. Therefore, it behooves us to understand what factors generate presidential presence, and what this can tell us concerning the things that presidents hope to achieve.

The task of this chapter, then, is to understand what factors influence candidate selection, event choice, and campaigning timing—the who, how, and when of midterm strategy. In opposition to existing research, I argue that these campaign choices are not simply reactions to electoral considerations—presidential or congressional. Such an understanding assumes that modern presidents are taking modern actions for pre-modern reasons. Rather, in keeping with the finding of the previous chapter, I argue that presidential strategy is dedicated to seizing control of the political and partisan environment in which presidents operate. Instead of simply seeking to elect partisans, I show that presidents take the opportunity to support the candidates most useful to them, in a deliberate attempt to reshape both their party and the Congress in their own political image.

In order to accomplish this, this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I present the basic elements of midterm strategy as shown within presidential behavior, and examine the literature's arguments concerning them. Second, with the use of more nuanced data, I offer a reinterpretation of midterm strategy through the lens of the changing American party system, and I suggest a number of hypotheses to test. Finally, I close with an empirical analysis of my hypotheses with regards to candidate selection, event choice, and timing, and a discussion of my findings and their implications.

Outline of the Behavior and the Literatures Response

Midterm campaigning carries with it an implicit necessity of strategic thinking, due to the simple fact that it occurs in a world of scarcity—as presidents have a finite amount of time and resources, choices must be made. While it would conceivably be possible to campaign for every possible candidate, presidents never approach doing so, and instead focus their efforts on a particular set of individuals. Consequently, midterm strategy is a representation of presidential choices between candidates and states, races, places, and times. Three of these choices stand out as particularly important and influential to understanding the overall arc of strategic thought: candidate selection, event choice, and campaign timing.

The first of these choices—candidate selection—is the most self-evidently important, because it is the *sine qua non* of the behavior. This is the very essence of midterm campaigning, and if it has a purpose, then it is imperative that we understand why it is granted to whom it is. Moreover, understanding this choice is important

because it is clear that a great deal of discrimination occurs between candidates, because for all of the growth that the behavior has experienced, it is still not distributed particularly widely. As Table 3.1 shows, the percentage of candidates receiving some form of presidential campaign support is really quite small. Excepting the actions of President Bush in 2002 (where coverage peaked at 44% of all candidates), presidents have generally focused their efforts on a small fraction of the total pool.

Table 3.1: Rates of Candidate Visit (House), 1970-2010

YEAR	# VISITED	# OF CANDIDATES	% RECEIVING VISIT
1970	86	377	22.81
1974	102	377	27.05
1978	96	418	22.96
1982	70	389	17.99
1986	89	379	23.48
1990	99	388	25.51
1994	110	403	27.29
1998	78	379	20.58
2002	177	399	44.36
2006	113	391	28.90
2010	114	411	27.73

Just as importantly, there are no clear indicators as to what drives presidents to campaign for the candidates that they actually do. An examination of several potential influences is shown in Table 3.2, and it is not overly revealing. With the exception of candidates in close races, no other particular factors stands out as drawing increased attention. Neither large states nor swing states makes much of an impact, and race specific factors like the presence of a Senate election in the state are surprisingly unimportant. Even close elections, while drawing attention to 36% of them over time,

hardly stands out as overwhelming. Thus, there is a clear need to ascertain what factors entice presidents to act as they do.

**Table 3.2: Visit Rates by Factor (House),
1970-2010**

FACTOR	YES?	NO
TIGHT RACE	36.16%	9.91%
SENATE ELEC.	11.83%	12.01%
LARGE STATE	11.71%	15.28%
SWING STATE	9.95%	13.26%
OPEN SEAT	17.77%	12.93%
OVERALL RATE	13.42%	

The second important midterm decision that we must understand is event choice, the decision by presidents to give certain types of events to certain types of candidates. This is an important decision to understand due to what we saw in the last two chapters—the growth of private fundraising events alongside the general expansion of midterm campaigning (see Fig. 1.2). Still, as we can see in Figure 3.1, fundraisers for particular candidates are held sparingly—and rarer still for House candidates. In no midterm have more than 27 candidate fundraisers occurred, and no more than 16 on behalf of House candidate—individuals who constitute the bulk of those running in any given year. Thus, these fundraisers must be bestowed upon candidates for very particular reasons, and it should be valuable to understand how and why presidents choose to act as they do.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of Campaign Fundraisers



The third and final choice that we need to understand is campaigning timing. Just as presidential favor should be indicated by presence in a race and better events over the course of the year, so too should it be shown by the timing of a president's campaigning. In particular, this should be shown by the 'survival' of a particular candidate until late in the campaign season. This is because events later in the year should be more salient to the public, and hence more valuable to the candidates. Moreover, they should also be more costly to presidents, because the relative cost of each event should increase as the year goes on. Early in the year, when hundreds of days remain, the opportunity cost of visiting one candidate over another is extremely low—it is possible to make it up. However, this is no longer the case later in the season, and so each stop should be more 'costly' to presidents.

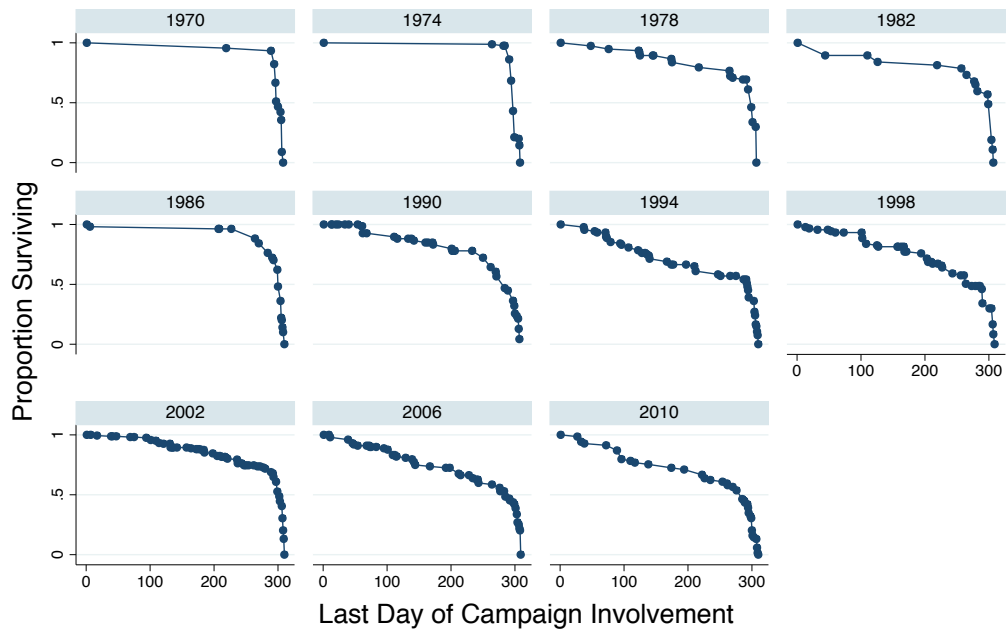
This relative tradeoff did not always exist—it is a function of the expansion of the behavior over time. As Table 3.3 shows, the campaign season has not only expanded in terms of events, but total time—pushing ever backward across the year.²⁴ The longer the campaign season, the greater a role that presidential choice should play—when the season was limited to a month, timing was just as likely to be driven by scheduling as by anything else. The role of these choices can be seen in Figure 3.2, which captures the survival of candidates across the course of the year. As it shows, the survival rate is not constant, but falls gradually for most of the year and then precipitously at the end. Thus, there should be something at work that separates those who fall out early and those who make the final weeks of the campaign. Just as presidents should grant favor by appearing or raising money, they should also show it by continuing their efforts for certain candidates later in the year.

²⁴ This temporal data is discussed in Chapter One. As noted above, it represents a universal ‘campaign year’ of which Election Day is the 311 and final day. Hence, all events happen between Day 1 and Day 310.

Table 3.3: Campaign Length By Year

YEAR	CAMPAIGN START	ELECTION DAY	LENGTH OF 'SEASON'
1954	OCTOBER 19 TH	NOVEMBER 2 ND	14
1958	OCTOBER 27 TH	NOVEMBER 4 TH	8
1962	MARCH 10 TH	NOVEMBER 6 TH	241
1966	JUNE 30 TH	NOVEMBER 8 TH	131
1970	OCTOBER 17 TH	NOVEMBER 3 RD	17
1974	SEPTEMBER 18 TH	NOVEMBER 4 TH	47
1978	FEBRUARY 17 TH	NOVEMBER 7 TH	263
1982	MARCH 2 ND	NOVEMBER 2 ND	245
1986	FEBRUARY 14 TH	NOVEMBER 4 TH	263
1990	FEBRUARY 8 TH	NOVEMBER 6 TH	271
1994	MAY 21 ST	NOVEMBER 8 TH	171
1998	JANUARY 9 TH	NOVEMBER 3 RD	298
2002	FEBRUARY 27 TH	NOVEMBER 5 TH	251
2006	FEBRUARY 23 RD	NOVEMBER 7 TH	257
2010	JANUARY 17 TH	NOVEMBER 2 ND	289

**Figure 3.2: Survival Over the Year
House Candidates, by Election**



There are three major presidential choices that a full understanding of midterm strategy needs to explain. The literature makes a good attempt at understanding these choices, but it is only an attempt. The literature's limited nature arises from two key factors. First, the literature focuses its entire energy on the question of presidential presence, leaving aside event choice and campaign timing. While this does limit its undertaking, for our purposes it is merely an inconvenience, as the relationship between these three choices should be quite tight. Presumably presidents will sort from the whole universe of candidates, find the best, and campaign for them—thus presence. Timing and event choice should be a second round of sorting, on the same principles, from this more limited group of candidates; the best of this field will get a better treatment. Thus, it is more a question of focus than the weakness of the literature that it fails to tackle event choice of campaign timing, and similar factors should hold for all three.

The second and more important problem with the literature is that it is internally divided. This division arises because even in its nascent state the literature possesses two distinct strands of thought, which sit on two foundation premises. Indeed, the division between these two threads is so great that the literature is clearly pulled in two very different directions—taking the appearance, as Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty (2009) note, of “two complimentary, but largely isolated bodies of scholarship” (37). That this division exists makes sense—the literature lacks a clear theory of why president campaign in midterms. This divide is not entirely bad, as it allows each thread to focus more intently on its set of aims. However, it also allows the literature to don theoretical blinders, to shut out from consideration myriad useful possibilities.

The first of these two threads sees midterm campaigning as a presidentially centered activity, and thus examines midterm strategy through the lens of the permanent campaign. Looking at midterm campaigning in this way greatly colors how the literature understands the basic motivations at play in midterm behaviors—as Doherty (2007) notes, “viewing presidential actions through the lens of the permanent campaign leads one to ascribe cynical, election motivations to much of what presidents do” (750). Rather than understanding presidential actions in midterm elections as internally manufactured, driven by factors within the election alone, these behaviors become subsumed into the broader ethos of the permanent campaign. Hence, they are understood to be artifacts of that ancient political truism, that the one thing every first term administration wants is a second one. Consequently, this batch of the literature fixates on state factors, specifically on their value as electoral prizes. This is not to say that these scholars treat midterm campaigning as one dimensional or simplistic—indeed, some argue that the “underlying strategy to a president's campaign activity during the midterm election season that is comparable to campaigns for the presidency itself” (Hoodie and Routh 2004, 257). However, by focusing so tightly on the idea of the permanent campaign this thread of literature greatly limits its capacity for understanding this behavior at the outset.

Driven by this focus, this scholarship centers its analysis on two primary factors. First, it argues that presidents should and do focus their attention on large and electorally rich states at the expense of smaller ones—and, they find strong evidence of this. Sellers and Denton (2006) find that electoral size leads presidents to campaigning in states regardless of the strength or importance of the candidates therein. Doherty (2007)

seconds this, though with the caveat that presidents do travel to small states in a disproportionate amount to their size; and he affirms it again in (2010), though again qualifying by finding that fundraising travel may be distinct from other types. Finally, Lang et al. (2011) reconfirm these findings, though suggesting they cannot stand apart from the odds of a president winning a particular state in the subsequent election.

Second, this thread argues that presidential strategy is a function of relative (presidential) electoral strength between states. Sellers and Denton (2006) go to lengths to show the relative costs and benefits of campaigning in states given prior levels of electoral success, noting that campaigning in states the president did poorly “may motivate voters in the opposing party to work against the president’s party”, while “the political costs of visiting [states he easily won] are lower” (413)—hence, presidents should focus on states that they performed well in previously. Subsequent scholars follow this and look at the impact of electoral strength broadly, such as Lang et al. (2001), who find that presidential vote share is significantly, strongly, and positively correlated with presidential travel. However, it is the middle ground, the highly competitive swing states, on which the literature largely focuses—which makes sense. Doherty (2007/2010) finds that swing state status is important for much of presidential travel, noting that the targeting of competitive states has “increased over time” (2007, 749). Likewise, Sellers and Denton (2006) find that competitive states will receive around 1 more day of travel per midterm than uncompetitive states. Presidential travel, then, can be seen as arising from a desire to shore up support in competitive states, particularly if they are electorally important.

The second and opposing thread of the literature sees presidential strategy arising from congressional, rather than presidential needs, and so sees presidential midterm actions through the lens of the midterm loss. Scholars are not entirely certain where this phenomenon comes from, suggesting it might represent a cyclical tendency toward of surge and decline (Hinckley 1967; Campbell 1985; 1991; Oppenheimer, Stimson, and Waterman 1986), a manifestation of changes in public opinion (Tufte 1975; 1978; Born 1986), a form of informed retrospective voting (Sheve and Tomz 1999), an inherent moderation within the American public (Mebane and Sekhon 2002), or even a basic desire for divided government (Erikson 1988)—but, no matter what the cause, it has cost the presidential party House (and normally Senate) seats in every midterm for over a century but three (1934, 1998, and 2002).

This thread, then, understands midterm campaigning to be evidence of a presidential desire to blunt the impact of the midterm loss by applying the resources and popularity of the presidency to individual races. Thus, it is seen as an attempt to more or less create coattails within the midterm year. Coattails, of course, are spillovers from presidential election—“a party can expect to gain about three seats more than they would have won otherwise with every additional percentage point of the two-party vote won by the parties’ presidential candidate” (Campbell 1986, 181). While there may be doubt of the effects strength (Campbell and Sumners 1990; Jacobson 1976), the directional nature of the effect (Press 1958), or the extent of their continuing influence (Flemming 1995; Calvert and Ferejohn 1983; Kritzer and Eubank 1979), it is undoubtedly an aid to

presidential ambitions—and something that presidents would like to recreate in the midterm year.

Consequently, this literature sees midterm campaigning as representing a presidential attempt to make the best of a bad hand, an attempt to reverse the seemingly unbreakable trend of midterm losses by playing on his strengths and resources, but deploying them strategically to maximize results (Herrnson and Morris 2007). “President’s strategically use their limited visitation resources to campaign where their personal popularity can have an additive outcome on local races” (Lang et al. 2001: 810) —or, more artfully put, they focus on “races where the clout of the president could make a difference” (Kelle et al. 2004: 829). Presidents focus, therefore, on races that are competitive, because that is where their actions might tip the scales. While also taking into account legislative success in the last Congress (Cohen et al. 1991) and state or national level popularity (ibid.; Hoddie and Routh 2004) to determine the overall extent of campaigning, the main thrust of this literature is that presidents see campaigning as a function of competitive races (Sellers and Denton 2006). Candidates may be more likely to gain presidential aid if they support the president more often in Congress (McDaniel 2008), and competitiveness may only impact presence with regard to certain event (Lang et al. 2011) or race types (McDaniel 2008), or even only in particular states (Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty 2009)—but it is race competitiveness that this thread of the literature sees as key.

Revision and Hypothesis

The literature on presidential midterm strategy is small in size, divided in basis, and limited in its aims. Nonetheless, it offers valuable analysis and a good jumping off point for a deeper examination. The literature passes, for lack of a better term, the gut check. It makes sense that presidents would favor campaigning in California over Wyoming, or that presidents would favor traveling to a purple Florida or Ohio over a deep red Nebraska or deep blue Vermont. Moreover, it makes sense that presidents would focus on tight races over blowouts, that they would shepherd their resources in order to spend them where most needed. It makes sense, in the end, that presidents base on both their own needs and desires *and* on the needs and desires of their co-partisans.

Still, while providing valuable insight and an excellent foundation on which to build, it paints a very incomplete picture of how presidents actually campaign. This incompleteness stems from both what the literature does and what it fails to do, and can be seen in two primary fashions. The literature's first major weakness is that it is myopically focused on its two threads—that is, each thread sees little beyond its own interpretation. This bias is perhaps the result, perhaps, of the backward induction going on within the literature, operating as it does from 'for what' backward, rather than from 'why' forwards. As a consequence of these, each thread dons theoretical blinders and so finds exactly what it seeks. The scholarship driven by the permanent campaign imagines presidents as motivated by electoral self-interest, and so they are. That which assumes travel to be guided by congressional needs, and so it is. This is not to suggest that these

finding are wrong, but that by failing to widen its gaze the literature ignores a large number of equally plausible explanation for what is going on.

These preconceptions and their problems can be clearly seen within each thread. For example, within the permanent campaign thread, the basic problem is the preconception that campaigning is merely a function of the presidents personal electoral agenda. While it may very well be that presidents use midterm campaigning to advance their own electoral needs (and we will examine that possibility in the next chapter), within the data there is no (explicit) evidence that presidents actually attempting to campaign—in any way—for their *own direct* benefit. Over the last 60 years, presidents have held events for Republican Women (Eisenhower in 1954), for Cook County Democrats (Kennedy in 1962), and for the South Dakota, Nevada, and Washington Republican parties—on successive days (Reagan in 1986). However, in the nearly 900 public and private events held across the 500 days presidents have spent campaigning in the past 15 midterm elections, not a single dollar was raised for a president nor a single statement found in the transcripts about a president or presidential election other than errant shouts of “Four more years!” Indeed, if we look at the data, it would appear that every facet of a president’s midterm campaign is other directed—they stump for others and they raise money for others, never for themselves. Midterm campaigning may be motivated by presidential factors, but this is not something that we can see in within the data.²⁵ Rather, what we do see in the data is presidents treating these elections as what

²⁵ I examine the impact of midterm campaigning on presidential success (legislative and electoral) in the next chapter.

they patently are: midterm congressional elections, midterm term gubernatorial election, and midterm legislative elections—not some sort of preliminary presidential election.

In both sets of literatures this tight focus blinds the literature to more fulfilling explanations for presidential behavior. In the permanent campaign thread, the error appears in the insistence of treating congressional elections as fully presidential events. It is not say that president do not engage in these behaviors with an eye to strengthening themselves *in the long run*—that idea is well supported both by empirical work and by the statements of those responsible for presidential campaigning.²⁶ However, the weakness of this argument is its emphasis on midterm campaigning as a presidential event alone. Presidents may favor certain races over others because of the electoral value of a state, but those states are also the locations of key gubernatorial and senatorial races and are politically important in their own right. Thus, it seem reasonable that in order to understand how state specific factors impact campaign strategy, we surely must pay some attention to state factors that have nothing to do with the president, those things that might make states enticing even in the *absence* of presidential electoral concerns.

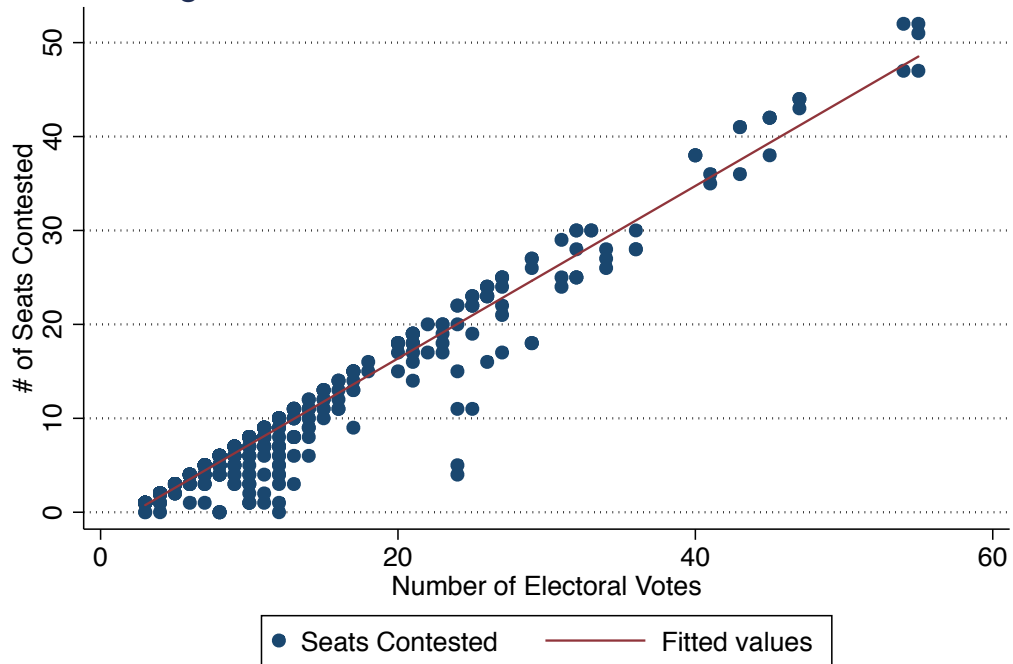
One such factor should hardly need mention—that states are the places wherein congressional races occur and that certain states simply have more congressional races being contested within them. In a midterm congressional election such a thing would seem of paramount importance. The existing literature is not blind in this regard: Seller and Denton (2006) argue that competitive Senate races drive presidential presence, and Lang et al. (2011) and Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty (2009) show the impact of

²⁶ See, inter alia, Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty (2009) for staffer statements about midterm strategy.

number of competitive races on presidential actions. Still, the literature does not focus on this idea with sufficient importance: if midterm campaigns are at all congressionally driven, then one should expect as robbers to banks, so presidents to states—one to the where the money is, the other to where the races are. Yet, competitiveness aside, this literature does not look at the impact of variance in the number of races a state possesses, at least not directly.

Instead, the literature looks at this indirectly through the use of electoral votes. These are, in the end, simply counts of a state's House and Senate delegation, and could perhaps be reasonable proxies. But, I would suggest that in approaching states as bearers of electoral votes rather than as bearers of congressional seats—that the literature's focus on all things presidential leads it into error. While the relationship between electoral votes and seats contested within the state is tight (around .97; see figure 3.3), there are important variations that the literature's focus causes it to miss. First, for an analysis that goes back into history as this one does, the use of electoral votes as indicators of a states value to a president is problematic as it ignores the historical political divisions of this country—particularly the existence of the 'Solid South'. Indeed, if you look at Figure 3.3, almost every point that is significantly below the fitted line is a pre-realignment Solid South state during a Republican presidency—they had electoral votes, but they were closed for business to Republican candidates (and largely to Republican presidents). Consequently, it is eminently problematic to rely on electoral votes for earl midterm cycles, as they reflect electoral 'values' for states that probably never existed—particularly in the context of a congressional election.

Figure 3.3: Electoral Votes and Seats Contested



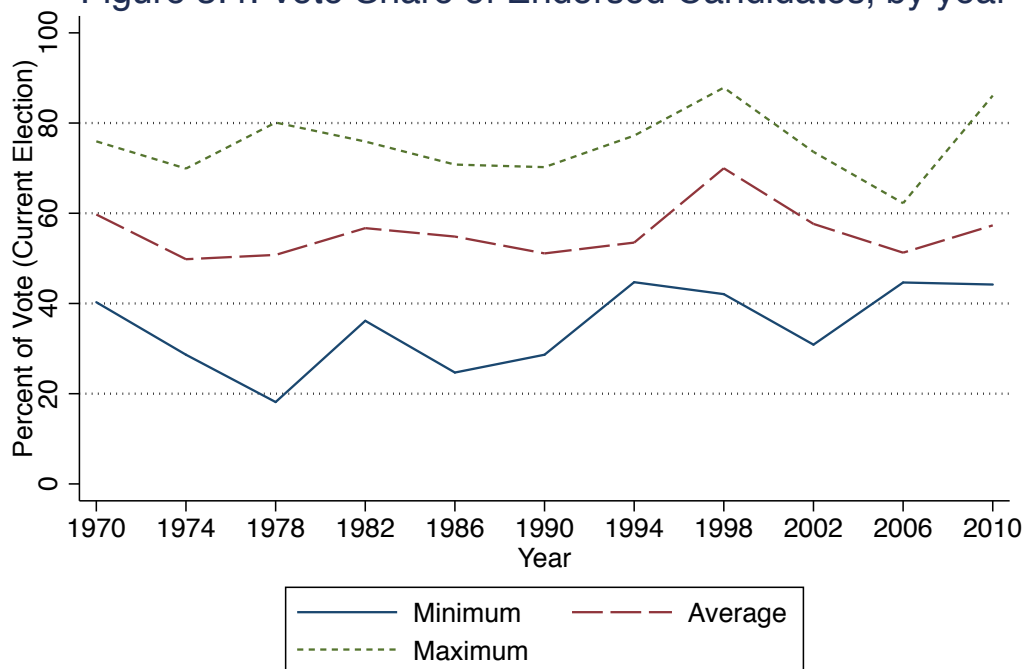
Second, even in more recent elections the use of electoral votes (as indicators of presidential electoral needs) in the context of a midterm is questionable, as it suggests that presidents necessarily hope to carry the large states that they end up campaigning in. Presidents of both parties campaign heavily in California—the most widely campaigned in state—but should we imagine that President Obama campaigned there because he was afraid of losing the state in 2012 or that George W. Bush did so because he thought he might win it in 2004? I think not. Rather, presidents campaign in these states because they simply have a lot of races and those races require a great deal of resources—resources that presidents can help provide. Presidents, therefore, should be drawn to states that are not simply large or small, but that possess a large number of races being contested by their party—and candidates in those states should be consequently be more likely to receive presidential aid.

Congressional Contests Hypothesis

Candidates in states with larger numbers of races being contested by the president's party should be more likely to receive campaigning on their behalf.

The impact of this bias can likewise be seen within the thread of the literature focused on the midterm loss. In this case, the danger of the literature's single-mindedness is manifest in its intense regard for the importance of the relative competitiveness of each race. Now, as Table 3.2 showed (above), the closeness of a race is an important factor in presidential presence, with close races much more likely to receive attention. Nevertheless, the competitiveness of each race can only gain us so much traction, for while they may make a race more desirable, they are far from the exclusive draw. As Figure 3.4 makes clear, presidents campaign frequently in races that are far from competitive—and these data exclude a large number of instances where presidents endorsed candidates who lacked major party opponents.

Figure 3.4: Vote Share of Endorsed Candidates, by year



But more importantly, the sole focus of this thread on competitiveness assumes that what president care about is candidate need—the demand side of the equation. Left out of this, however, is that just as important as the demand is the president’s ability to supply, not simply presence but influence. If a president could not influence a race, why would they campaign in it in the first place? The extent to which the literature looks past this is striking, because the very reason the literature focuses on competitive races is that these scholars believe that presidents favor races “where the clout of the president could make a difference” (Kelle et al. 2004, 829). Hence, this thread of literature acknowledges the importance of influence, and yet seems to confuse a candidate factor (competitiveness) with a presidential factor (influence). This is important, because while it makes sense for a president to campaign in competitive races more than non-

competitive ones, it makes little sense for him to campaign in either if he lacks potential influence on the race.

This is not to suggest that the literature has not offered possibilities in terms of influence or interest, means or motivation. Doherty (2007) offers prior presidential electoral strength in the state as a sign of electoral influence, Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty (2009) argue for state level approval rating, and Lang et al. (2011) make use of national approval from September of the election year. These are all valid markers of presidential strength and presidential political capital, and it is not unreasonable to assume that they are valid markers of how much potential influence a president might have, how many more voters he might be able to bring out for a candidate. However, these tell us ultimately very little about influence because influence in this case has to be relative—it is not about being strong, but about being stronger. A president might have sky-high approval in a state or nationwide, but if he is no more popular than a given incumbent, he would likely have little chance of influencing that race. To properly understand influence we have to understand it in the context of the relationship between the president and a candidate, we must be able to show the relative strength, the difference in strength, between the two. This is something with which the literature simply does not treat.

This is a major weakness of this group of scholarship, as influence should be a *sine qua non* of presidential campaigning. If we are to accept that “president’s strategically use their limited visitation resources to campaign where their personal popularity can have an additive outcome on local races” (Lang et al. 2001, 810) and that

there is an “underlying strategy to a president's campaign activity during the midterm election season that is comparable to campaigns for the presidency itself” (Hoodie and Routh 2004, 257), that strategy must be based on something—and influence should be at its root. Campaigning in races where they lack influence should be anathematic to presidents, worse, even, than campaigning in potential blowouts. Presidents are confronted with a vast universe of potential choices in every midterm election, but to campaign effectively they need to pick and choose between them—influence should be the initial decision making factor. Therefore, presidents should prioritize their campaign behaviors on the basis of their potential influence in given races, and greater influence should be linked to greater amounts of campaigning.

Relative Strength Hypothesis

Presidents should be more likely to campaign in races where they are relatively stronger than the present incumbent.

Moving beyond the its bias, the second and more important weakness of the literature is that it does not have a role for the party system, and so ignores the underlying forces that drive the rise and expansion of midterm campaigning (and hence strategy). As we saw in Chapter Two, changes to the party system drove the initiation and expansion of presidential midterm campaigning, by altering the relationship between presidents and their co-partisans—and hence allowing the capacity to engage in campaigning in the first place. The literature in this area does not seek to deliberately ignore parties— Sellers and Denton (2006), for example, tell us that “midterm campaigning is done by president’s in the hope of “helping his party realize a collective goal of electing more of its members to Congress” (412). However, this suggests the role

of the party system within midterm campaigning and, really, presidential midterm strategy is almost wholly straightforward—presidents find a group of co-partisans in need of aid and aid them. But that it were this simple. However, as we saw the story of parties in this context is much more complex and complicated than that.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the party system before the Second World War structured the political environment in such a way that presidents had little incentive to campaign—even if they had the ability to do so; such is no longer the case. The evolution of the American party system in the last 60 years has both encouraged this behavior on the part of presidents and, crucially, increased the presidential assistance on the part of candidates. Consequently, the ways in which the party system structured potential midterm choices has changed as well. No longer are presidents wholly bound by party, restricted to campaign simply as diligent and loyal members. Rather, parties structure campaign behavior in such a way that presidents possess *choice*—the ability to attempt to shape the type of party and Congress that they wish to interact with on the other side of the midterm election. They, they are a crucial link in providing presidents with legitimate agency within midterm campaigns—something the literature currently looks past.

By ignoring (or not recognizing) the place of parties in this environment, the literature presents presidential actions as determined by forces outside of their control, like race competitiveness. These have a role to play, but less than the literature insists. Moreover, by focusing on external factors, the literature suggest presidential strategy is, at its root, rather straight forward— that presidents simply favor electing as many

partisans as possible. I suggest that this is wrong. It is wrong because such an outcome may not be the optimal outcome for a president. Think of it: would a president rather have 435 members of the House and 100 members of the Senate all with the same partisan letter after their name, or would he prefer 218 MCs and 50 (or 60) senators who more whole heartedly share his beliefs and agenda? This is what the literature overlooks, the possibility that presidents may not simply be trying to create the strongest (i.e. largest) party or partisan collection in Congress, but the party in government (if not in other forms) most amenable to presidential desires. If that is the case, then presidential strategy becomes very different than what the literature has thus far suggested.

Indeed, all things equal, the midterms—particularly the president’s first midterm—are the perfect time for a president to attempt to shape his party. At the midterm, a president should be at the height of his powers vis-à-vis all other partisan actors, being not only the party’s ‘leader’ and chief fundraiser, but also the nominal head of the party, with his chosen persons running the national party machinery. So, when presented with a midterm election, with a contest featuring 500 odd congressional, senatorial, and gubernatorial races in which he is not running, in which he has no obligations, but in which his assistance, public and private, will be widely called upon, are we to expect he would act in to order to simply aid partisans? Or, would it be more reasonable to expect a more calculated approach, one which doles out aid in a manner that aids presidential desires, even if not wholly those of his party? I would suggest the latter.²⁷

²⁷ Moreover, presidents are historically likely to lose more seats during the first midterm election, perhaps making their efforts are the more important, but certainly making their strategy so.

Understood through the lens of party, midterm strategy ceases to be about big states or close races, but becomes about the relationships between presidents and other political actors—a relationship structured by the contours of the party system. Therefore, I would suggest that a much more nuanced interpretation as to how presidents interact with their party (and, consequently, Congress) has to be brought to bear if we are to understand midterm campaign strategy. Specifically, we need to understand the ways in which the president interacts with the partisan environment around him, through three key roles that define how president's campaign: presidents as party leaders, as faction leaders, and as ideological leaders.

In the first of these roles, that of party leader, we should expect the president to campaign in his most basic way, and largely as the literature expects—as the standard bearer of his party. Hence, when interacting with their party system as a party leader, presidents should campaign for their party, they should campaign for their co-partisans, they should show the flag and try and to rally support to their cause. This is shown in the data, for example, in Bill Clinton spending valuable time in 1994 campaigning for party elders like Teddy Kennedy (who held on to beat an unknown venture capitalist, Willard 'Mitt' Romney, by a paltry 18 points). Indeed, presidents have an incentive to do this even if they have zero connection to or concern for the party they are a 'member' of, as they should understand the personal advantages gained by having as many co-partisans in Congress as possible. As Dwight D. Eisenhower—perhaps the least overtly partisan president of modern times—reminded Americans in 1954, “when the Congress is controlled by one political party and the executive branch by the other, politics in

Washington has a field day”—so make sure to vote Republican. (Eisenhower 1954, 873-874)

However, the literature errs in suggesting that it is simply the party that the president is campaigning for, or that presidents care about partisan candidates at all equally. Rather, given that it is a midterm election and the president should expect to lose seats, it is more likely that presidents favor, first and foremost, the status quo, and hence act to defend the seats already possessed by his party. These races, if nothing else, should be more favorable to for his party, as incumbents are more likely to win election than are challengers, and even open seats are probably easy to capture if the prior incumbent was a member of the president’s party. Hence, as rational individuals who fear the possibility of the midterm loss, presidents should campaign heavily for their own partisans in midterm elections, but should favor those partisans running for seats already held by the party.

Partisan Preference Hypothesis:

Acting as risk-averse individuals, presidents should be more likely to campaign in races for seats currently held by their own party than for those seats held by the opposition.

As faction leaders, presidents should practice a more refined version of their partisan strategy, and more closely focus their efforts on those members of their party most likely to help them in the coming term—namely, those from their own ‘faction’ within the party. Factions are ever present in politics and within parties— Rockefeller and Goldwater Republicans, or Blue Dog and McGovern-ite Democrats—and presidents should want their own faction to come out on top. This is not to say that they would place the success of their faction over that of the party as a whole. However, if, as Galvin

(2010) suggest, midterm campaigning is broad attempt at presidential party building, then this party building should be done to suit the desires of the president—not necessarily the ‘party’. And again, we see such behavior in the data. Whether it is Nixon in 1970 actively campaigning *against* the candidacy of an incumbent Republican senator he deemed too liberal (CQ Press 1970)²⁸, or the Bush Administration throwing its weight behind the primary candidacy of Norm Coleman in 2002 (Smith 2002), presidents should have an interest in favoring partisan candidates that are aligned with them—even at the expense of offending others in their party.

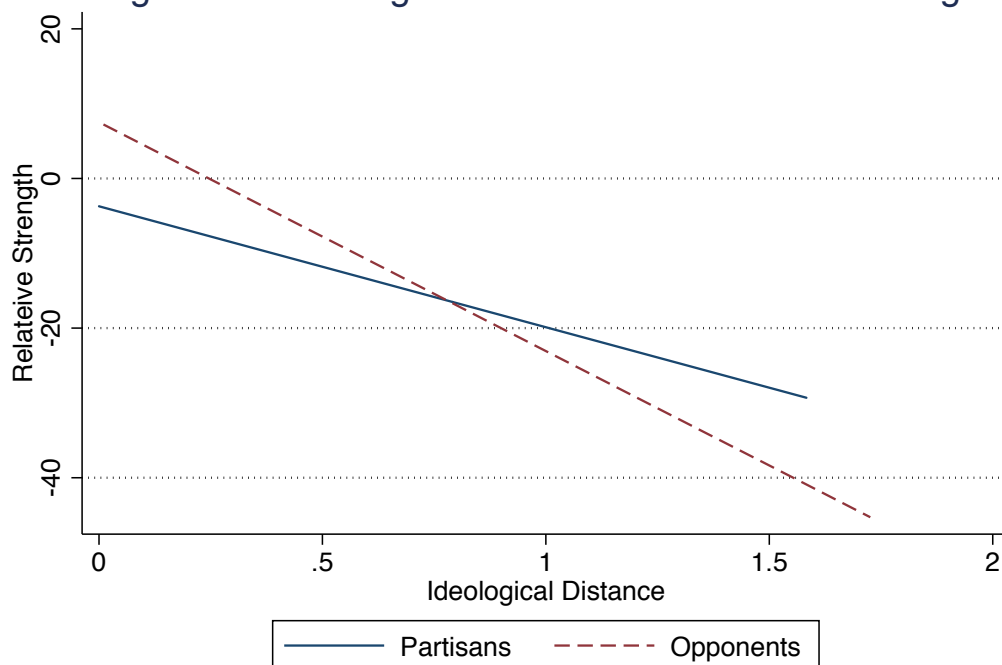
Moreover, in addition to have an ideologically component to it, such a strategy may have a practical one as well. As we can see in Figure 3.5, presidents are likely to have greater relative strength vis-à-vis an incumbent if that incumbent is more closely aligned with them ideologically—and this holds regardless of the party of the incumbent. Therefore, in addition to strengthening a president’s position vis-à-vis his partisans in Congress (and, presumably, strengthening his faction within the party broadly), such a strategy should also help him identify members of the opposition party to campaign against, as he is just as likely to be more ‘relatively strong’ with regards to them as he would members of his own party. Thus, for both the purpose of party building and simple smart politics, presidents should favor campaigning in races where the incumbent member is ideologically close to them—regardless of the incumbent’s party

Ideological Proximity Hypothesis

Wanting to push their party (and the Congress) towards their desired ideology, presidents should significantly more likely to campaign in races featuring ideologically proximate incumbents.

²⁸ This is the only time we see this type of behavior. Just Nixon being Nixon.

Figure 3.5: Ideological Distance and Relative Strength



The final way the presidents interact with their party and the party system writ large is as an Ideological Leader. As Ideological Leaders presidents should take a step back from the political environment and survey the situation with an eye to constructing a bi-partisan ideological coalition capable of enacting the president’s favored policies. Such a approach is particularly useful within the context of a midterm election, because on the other side of the 15 midterm elections that presidents have campaigned in, only 4 have seen a Congress returned to Washington in which the president’s party had control over both chambers—indeed, this has occurred only once for a Republican president. Hence, both within their own party and within the political environment as a whole, presidents should favor campaigning in such a way as help construct what Milkis and Rhodes (2007) call the “new American party system”—a system less about ‘party’ and more about ideology—presidential ideology.

In order to do this, presidents should behave somewhat differently than previously expected. Rather than simply taking into account a candidate's party or their relative strength vis-à-vis the president, presidents should also factor in the relative ideological position of this individual within that candidate's party. Thus, all things equal, presidents should favor campaigning for ideologically close members of their own party over those who are distant, and should be more willing to campaign against members of the opposition who are ideologically distant over those who are ideologically proximate. This goes against conventional wisdom and what we saw in Figure 3.5, because ideologically closer members of the opposition are likely the easier opponents to pick off—they are more likely to be cross pressured, and to possess rather more marginal levels of local support. However, given the relative weakness of the presidents' congressional position on the other side of midterm election, I think it stands to reason that presidents are willing to take a longer view, and refrain from simply going after the 'easier' races.

We can see this, somewhat, within the data and in general experience. For example, in 2006 George W. Bush actively stayed out of the Connecticut Senate race featuring the newly independent Joe Lieberman, no doubt feeling that a Senator Lieberman was a better choice than a Senator Lamont. Likewise, in 1982 President Reagan honored a promise he made to the Boll Weevil Democrats (Cannon and Cannon 2008, 90-91)—who, theoretically, represented the easiest Democratic seats to pick up—and refused to campaign against any Democrat who supported his economic plan. That presidents should do this, particularly if they have a reasonable expectation of not only

losing seats but of having to deal with an opposition controlled Congress, makes sense. If such a situation is taken for granted, then the optimal situation would be for both a presidential and opposition party that are as close to the president as possible—and so better to spend his limited resources defeating those members of the opposition that are distant from him, than those that are potential allies. This, of course, all has to happen at the margin of influence, but, all things equal, Republicans who rather face an opposition of Blue Dogs than McGovernites—and vice versa.

Hierarchy of Needs Hypothesis

At the margin of influence, presidents should be more willing to campaign for ideologically close members of their own party, and against ideologically distant members of the opposing party.

Data

In order to test these hypotheses, I again make use of the midterm data set described in Chapter One. On the dependent side of the ledger these data are entirely consistent with those described above (and used in Chapter Two), except that these are the raw, candidate level data rather than the aggregated data examined previously. Hence, these data correspond to the individual candidates for House and Senate in year midterm cycle, capturing if they were campaigned for, in what manner, and when. For models of presence and frequency, the dependent variable is a simple binary—1/0 if they received a visit or not, and 1/0 if they received a visit a higher levels. For the timing models, the dependent variable is either the date of a president's last visit (discussed above) or another binary tracking whether that visit occurred in a particular time frame. For both offices these data are examined only from 1970-2010, rather than the whole

length of the midterm period.²⁹ While more limited temporally than what was used before, these data should nonetheless allow a more detailed and more nuanced view of midterm strategy than has yet been conducted.

The data used on the independent side of the ledger are described in Table 3.4. These data are mostly straightforward—whether or not a Senate race is occurring in the state, whether a seat is open or not, etc. However, three key things do need to be made clear. First, it is important to note that all independent data (with the exception of Current Margin and Highest Event Held) I use herein are data about the incumbent members at the time of the election. Hence, if it is a race in which a candidate from the president’s party is challenging an incumbent of the opposition party, the data used to describe the race come from that incumbent member of the opposing party. Likewise, in situations where the seat is open (but not newly created) it means that the data refer to someone who is not even running for that seat during that election. This is obviously not the optimal way of approaching this situation, but I think it preferable to alternate possibilities for several reasons.

²⁹ This is due to some issues with the data, particularly issues between the House and Senate data. This will be discussed below.

TABLE 3.4: VARIABLES AND EXPECTED DIRECTIONS

VARIABLES	EXPECTED	MODELS	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL				
# OF DAYS CAMPAIGNED	+	Both	Count	Days campaigned in year
FIRST TERM	+	Both	1/0	If it is a first term
NIXON OR AFTER	+	Senate	1/0	If it is 1970 or later
STATE				
SENATE ELECTION	+	House	1/0	If there is a Senate election in state
# OF SEATS CONTESTING	+	Both	Count	House races with partisans
RACE				
OPEN SEAT	+	Both	1/0	If the contested seat is 'open'
FRESHMEN INCUMBENT	+	House	1/0	If the seat has a freshmen incumbent
RACE MARGIN	-	Both	Continuous	Final margin in the race
PARTY	+	Both	1/-1	Party of present incumbent
RELATIVE STRENGTH	+	Both	Continuous	Difference in vote percentage between candidate and president
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-	Both	Continuous	Absolute DW-Distance between incumbent and president
RACE DESIRABILITY	-	Both	Interaction	Interaction of party, strength, and ideology

First, it would be a dicey exercise to attempt to formulate some type of data for candidates challenging incumbents—their ideological position, for example. It might be possible to do so, and it might not, but even if it were it would require no small amount of guesswork. It may be the case that presidents have a feel for factors such as the ideological placement of challenging candidates—particularly of their own party—but we as scholars have zero access to such information. Moreover, contrasting such a measure from post-hoc data would both implicitly limit examination to those challengers who happened to win election, and would ignore the possibility that they did not find

themselves on a sort of partisan or ideological ‘road to Damascus’ between the campaign and when such post-hoc data become available.

Second, I used the data in this way because it seems more reasonable than not that presidents are making their campaign choices off of what they see as the status quo ante, rather than predictions about subsequent results. That is, to the extent that a president wishes to campaign for an incumbent from his party, it is on the basis of what that member has done up to that point, and not what they may do in the future. Likewise, in deciding whether or not to attempt to unseat a member of the opposing party, it seems logical that a president would assume that any potential member of their party would be closer to them politically and ideologically than any member of the opposition, and so what matters is which members of the opposition the president would most like to be rid of himself. For both of these reasons (and others) it seemed more reasonable to make use of incumbent data than to pursue other possibilities.

Another point that needs some explanation is the nature of the Relative Strength variable, which, unsurprisingly, is used to test the Relative Strength Hypothesis. This variable is an attempt to measure the relative electoral standing of the president and the House or Senate candidate in a particular state or district. For House elections, then, it makes use of House election returns and a set of data graciously provided by Dr. Gary Jacobson, which captures presidential vote share by congressional district.³⁰ So, the Relative Strength variable simply captures the difference between the two party share

³⁰ It is because of issues with these data that the House models only look at data from 1970 onward. Due to a number of factors—from what I suspect is bad reporting to the frequent use of at large seats in the South prior to the 1970’s—too large a percentage of cases prior to 1970 were unavailable for examination with this variable, and so those years were excluded.

captured by the president in the district and same share captured by the House candidate from the president's party in the prior (presidential) election. For Senate elections it is somewhat trickier, as there is no guarantee that the current president was even in office the last time an incumbent senator ran for election. Therefore, it instead proxies the strength of the president's party within a senate candidate state by comparing the share of the two party vote captured by the president and the 'highest' contemporaneous election in the state during the presidential year—in descending order, election for Governor, Senate, and total House vote. In line with the hypothesis, the expectation is that with both variable types if the president was a better vote getter in the prior election, then he will have 'leverage' to make use of during the midterm.

A final thing that needs explanation is the nature of the Race Desirability, designed to test the Hierarchy of Needs Hypothesis. This variable is a triple interaction of the Party, Relative Strength, and Ideological Distance variables. Triple interactions can make it tricky to understand results (as we will see shortly). More than this, they make it tricky to contrast a model, as there both are used with all constituent interactions and with only those interactions deemed relevant/important.³¹ For my purposes, I have only included the component variables and the triple interaction. This is done because there is no theoretical reason to include the subordinate interactions, and every reason to think that only the triple action is relevant. As it is structured, what this triple interaction actually measures is the interplay of party and ideology at the margin of influence (relative strength). That interplay should be what president's take into account when

³¹ That is, as a triple interaction of A, B, and C, the model might include not only A B C ABC, but A B C AB AC BC ABC—or it might not.

making their campaign decisions, not some interaction between party and ideology, or ideology and relative strength absent the other factor. Constructed in this way, the model also allows us to see how president's make these choices from the full field of candidates—organized in another fashion it would simply show how he makes choices within and without his own party.³² Either way, should this variable come out as expected (with a negative sign) it will indicate that what the hypothesis suggests is true: president's favor campaigning for ideologically close members of their own party and against ideologically distant members of the opposition at the margin of potential influence within the race.³³

Analysis and Discussion

In order to analyze these data through these hypotheses, models were constructed to look at different aspects of presence, event choice, and campaign timing. These models are largely similar, though differing marginally by chamber; any particular differences between the models across the hypotheses will be noted and explained. These models are analyzed in order—presence, events choice, timing—as this allows one to

³² For this interaction, the outcome is Party (+/-)*Relative Strength (+/-)*Ideological Distance (+/0). Thus, presuming the particular case does not have a DW Distance of 0 (only one does), the outcome will be positive if the seat is held by the president's party and the president outdrew the incumbent, or held by the opposition and the incumbent outdrew the president; the outcome will be negative if held by the president's party and the incumbent gained more votes than the president, and if held by the opposition and the president outdrew the incumbent. Hence, DW Distance should act as an inflator—making it more or less like that a president will want to enter.

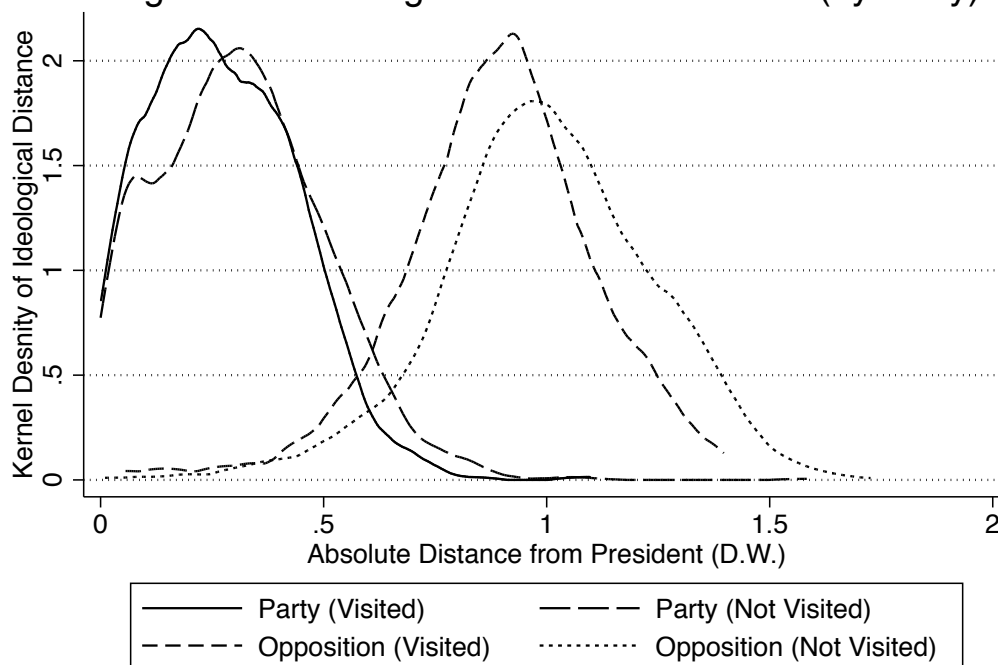
³³ The variable is constructed (per above) as $X = +/- * +/- * +$. Hence, if the variable itself is negative with respect to presidential involvement, that means that a president is more likely to campaign for ideologically close partisans than ideologically distant one if the president has positive plus score, more likely to campaign for ideologically distant partisans if the plus score is negative (and it is unlikely he would campaign in such a situation—unless the goal was to gain something from, rather than for, the incumbent member), more likely to campaign against ideologically distant opponents if the plus score is positive, and more likely to campaign against ideologically proximate opponents if the plus score is negative—all of which fit with the above theory.

build from a foundation up, and shows more clearly how general trends pull through all the various levels. The results of these models are presented below, and a fuller discussion of the models and methods can be found in Appendix B.

Presence/Frequency

The first element of presidential strategy is presence in a race—which can be understood both in terms of any appearance at all over the course of the years, or in repeated occurrences. Presence is the broadest cut of strategy, and as such it will necessarily capture the broadest swatch of all potential candidates. What is needed, then, is to understand what factors separate those candidates who receive any sort of presidential attention—from million dollar fundraisers to a simple “Thanks for coming” at a public rally—from those who receive the cold shoulder. As we saw above, there are some easily spotted differences between candidate who receive presidential attention and those who do not—Table 3.2, for example, showed the importance of a close race to presidential interest. However, such differentiation of candidate groups is not found only with regard to those factors that the literature has previously focused on. As Figure 3.6 shows, the ideological distance of a candidate also appears to be a drawing characteristic, with the visited members of both parties being rather more ideologically proximate to presidents than their fellows.

Figure 3.6: Ideological Distance and Visits (by Party)



This suggests some evidence in support of my ‘Ideological Distance’ hypothesis (and some against my ‘Race Desirability’ one, as well), but only anecdotally. To really see the factors influencing presidential strategy at this level, we need to examine a full model, the results of which are shown below in Table 3.5. This shows the result of two pairs of models, a logistic regression for simple presence and a Poisson regression for frequency (for both House and Senate). These models draw from both the theories suggested by the literature (with variables largely seen as controls) and from my above hypotheses, to construct a model that looks at national, state level, and race level factors that might influence presidential decision making during midterm campaigns.

Table 3.5: Simple Presence and Campaign Frequency

VARIABLES	HOUSE		SENATE	
	PRESENCE	FREQUENCY	PRESENCE	FREQUENCY
TOTAL CAMPAIGN DAYS	0.01*** (0.002)	0.01*** (0.002)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.002)
MARGIN IN SENATE			-0.03** (0.011)	-0.01 (0.007)
SENATE ELECTION	0.24** (0.099)	0.25*** (0.082)		
SEATS CONTESTING	-0.02*** (0.004)	-0.02*** (0.003)	0.06*** (0.015)	0.03*** (0.004)
OPEN SEAT	0.33** (0.147)	0.20* (0.110)	0.55** (0.236)	0.27** (0.111)
FRESHMEN INCUMBENT	0.28** (0.116)	0.24** (0.094)		
CURRENT MARGIN	-0.01*** (0.004)	-0.01*** (0.003)	-0.08*** (0.017)	-0.06*** (0.011)
PARTY	0.24** (0.096)	0.20** (0.092)	0.04 (0.270)	0.07 (0.136)
RELATIVE STRENGTH	0.02*** (0.004)	0.02*** (0.003)	0.03*** (0.012)	0.02*** (0.006)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-1.17*** (0.231)	-0.99*** (0.213)	-0.72* (0.438)	-0.44* (0.251)
RACE DESIRABILITY	-0.02*** (0.006)	-0.02*** (0.005)	-0.01 (0.009)	-0.01* (0.005)
CONSTANT	-1.14*** (0.211)	-1.45*** (0.186)	-2.00** (0.837)	-2.02*** (0.442)
OBSERVATIONS	4,636	4,636	524	524
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.15	0.14	0.19	0.20
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-1667.70	-2028.50	-291.11	-497.47
WALD CHI2	423.63	504.98	85.02	229.16

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The most immediately striking characteristic of these results is that they suggest important differences in how presidents treat House and Senate candidates. Within the national and state level control variables, the factors affecting presidential campaigning appear similar for both chambers; indeed, for the control variables that they share the models are entirely consistent, with strong significance (and expected direction) in all cases. Thus the key factors predicted by the literature—state size and race competitiveness, for example—hold up as expected, further validating prior work.

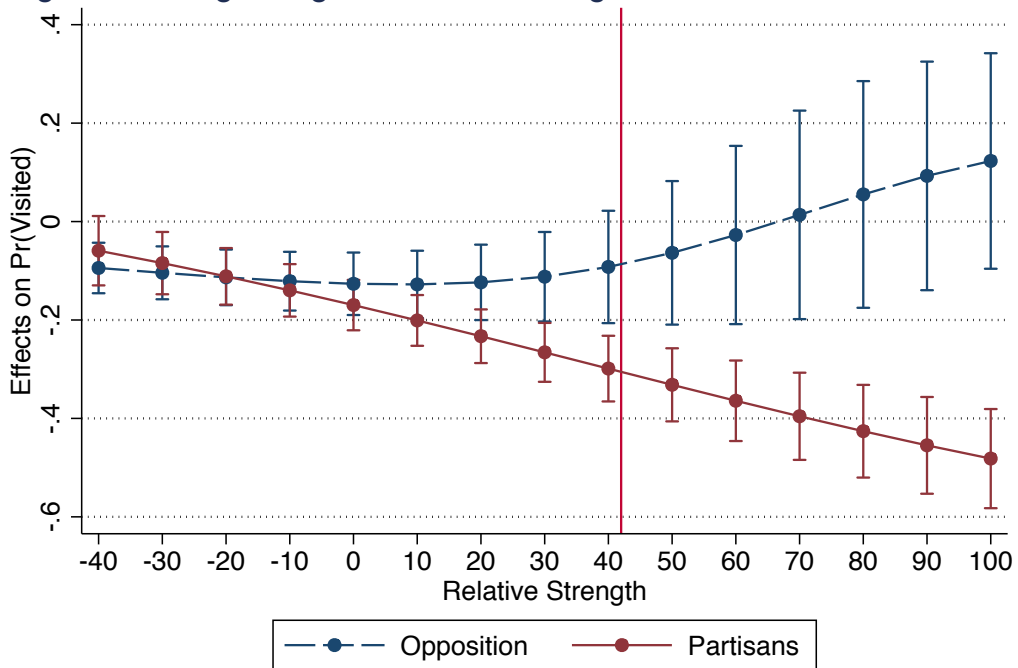
Moreover, additional controls also behave as predicted for both chambers, and suggest the importance of external factors to presidential strategy. Therefore, while approaching the question in a different fashion, these results are largely confirmatory of the status quo understanding.

This changes, however, when we move to the more important explanatory variables—‘party’ and below. Here also, we see a break between the chambers, with one heading one direction and the other the opposite. Turning to the House first, the results for both presence and frequency suggest strong support (at least in some levels) for the party orientated hypotheses. Presidents clearly favor campaigning for incumbents of their own party over trying to defeat incumbent members of the opposition; thus, the strength and significance of the Party variable. The importance of presidential influence is likewise shown, suggesting that presidents do favor races where their own efforts may actually have some sway. The ideological distance between presidents and candidates is also significant (and strongly so), with presidents (as expected) being less likely to campaign against candidates who are increasingly ideologically distant from them. Finally, these results support the ‘race desirability’ hypotheses for House candidates, with strong level of significance and expected direction.

More attention, however, needs to be paid to this race desirability variable, however, because it is a triple interaction between the three preceding variables—thus, any understanding of them requires an understanding of it. The behavior of this variable can be seen in Figure 3.7. As this shows, the interaction (and hence the other three variables) acts as expected, with ideological distance having an increasingly negative

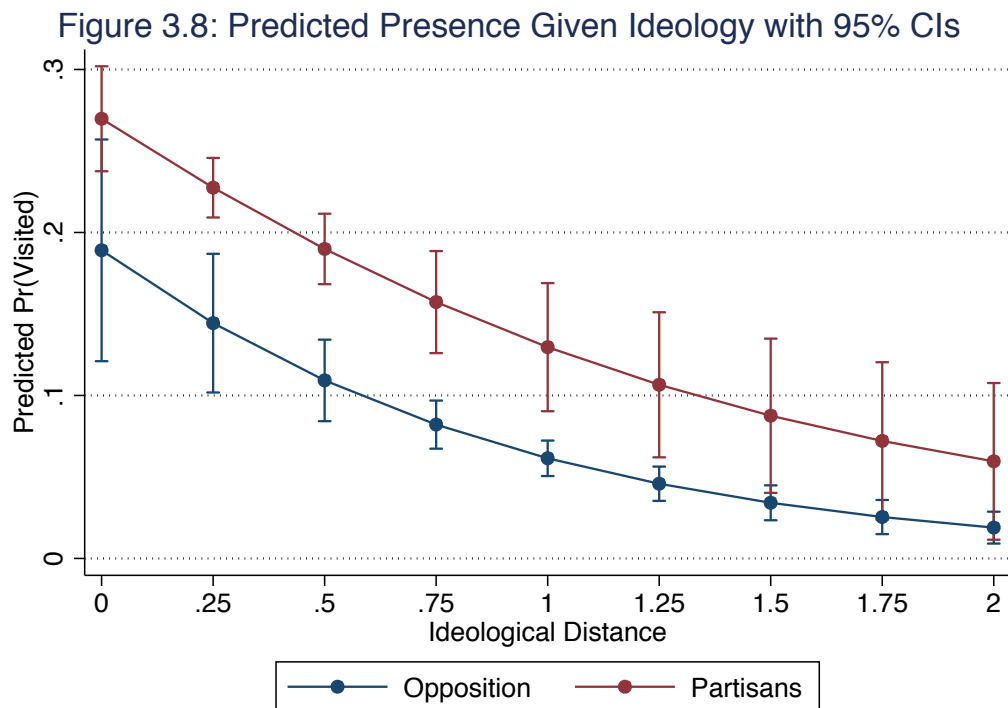
impact on members of the presidents party, and an increasingly positive impact on members of the opposition, as the relative strength (and hence potential impact) of a president increases. This would appear strongly confirmatory of the general party transformation thesis of the prior chapter—enabled as they are to do so, presidents take advantage of midterm elections to try and reshef Congress so that it is as ideologically close to them as they can make it (within both parties).

Figure 3.7: Avg. Marg. Effects of Ideological Distance with 95% CIs



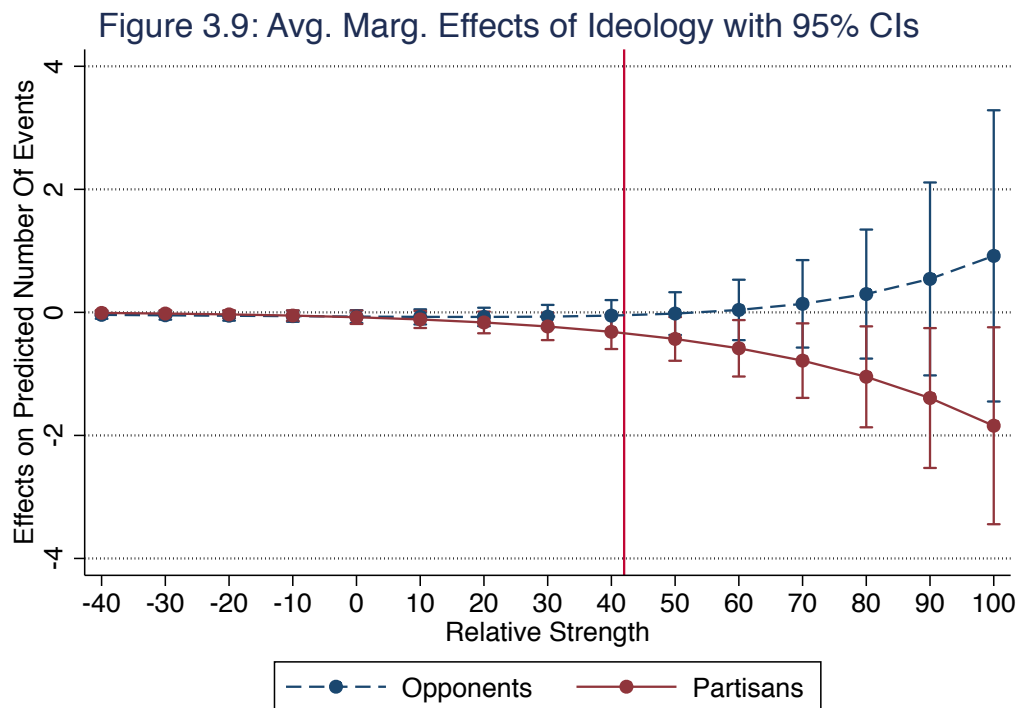
However, in a real sense this behavior appears to exist largely at the margins. This is because the maximum level of relative strength yet recorded is $\sim +42$ (shown by the vertical line), and the maximum it could reasonably be (for his own party, at least) is $+50$. Thus, while this triple balancing act may occur for members of the president’s own party, its impact on the opposition party should never be more than marginal—presidents

may be marginally less disposed to be less likely to campaign in those races. The true predicted probabilities of presence can be seen in Figure 3.8. As it shows, while the negative impact of ideology is rather more moderated for members of the opposition—suggesting some level of strength within the interactive effect—it is still the case that presidents are less likely (rather than more, as predicted) to campaign against distant members of the opposition. These findings, then, offering at best mixed support for my hypotheses.



The mixed results we find for the House, however, are more than we find with regard to the Senate. True, relative strength and ideological distance variables are significant and behave as expected for both presence and frequency. This does suggest some traction within the model (and within my hypotheses) and indicates a different set of behaviors than the literature has yet cared to examine. However, they are much less

influential than they were in the House models, suggesting that while they may moderate them, these factors do not drive presidential actions. Moreover, the partisan aspects of the hypotheses do not appear to be confirmed at all. While the race desirability variable is significant for Senate frequency, it is barely so. As Figure 3.9 indicates, the distinction it shows between parties is almost entirely inconsequential at any real world levels. Thus, while these findings suggests some support for my hypotheses, and that there is much that the literature has not yet examined, it does not support them fully.

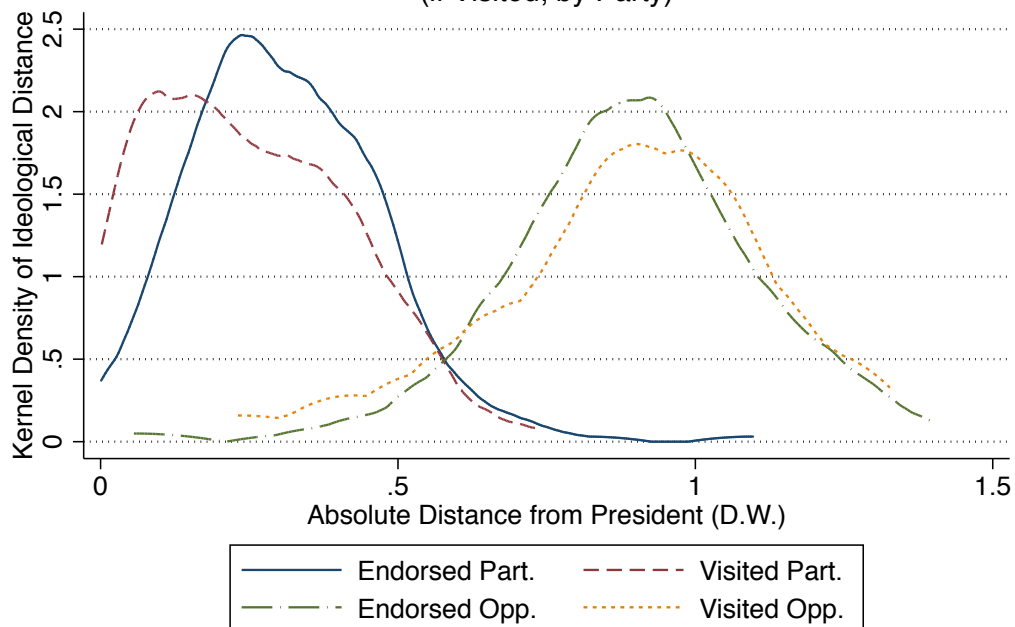


Event Choice

The second element of presidential strategy we need to understand is event choice, or why presidents give certain ‘better’ events (or better treatment) to some candidates and not others. This is necessarily a step above simple presence, as it implies

presence—one cannot receive a fundraiser if one has not been visited in the first place. Thus, what we are looking for are the factors that separate not the wheat from the chaff necessarily, but what separate the blue ribbon from the participation award. As we can see in Figure 3.10, at least with regards to ideology there does seem to be a difference between the broad group of candidates who were simply visited by presidents (but not endorsed) and those who were endorsed at some point over the course of the year. While this does suggest a distinction between the two, it is useful to note that the movement between these groups is opposite of what my theory expects—endorsed races feature candidates who are ideologically further within the presidents party and ideologically closer within the opposition.

Figure 3.10: Ideological Distance and Endorsement
(if Visited; by Party)



A full treatment of these groups can be seen in Table 3.6, which presents the model results for both endorsements and fundraisers, for both the House and the Senate. As noted above, these are second level results—so while the models are similar to the prior estimations of presidential presence, they are looking at a much smaller subset of races/candidates: those that actually received presidential attention. As the table shows, the results for these models largely mirror the prior results. Campaigning for Senate candidates continues to be largely unaltered by these factors, and those that do appear to have influence are external to the race, rather than internal (as predicted). Thus, Senate campaigning continues to behave as expected by the existing literature, as does not appear to be influenced (at least in this regard) by the party directed factors that my hypotheses would suggest.

Table 3.6: Presidential Event Choice

VARIABLES	HOUSE		SENATE	
	ENDORSED	FUNDRAISER	ENDORSED	FUNDRAISER
TOTAL CAMPAIGN DAYS	-0.01*** (0.004)	0.05*** (0.008)	0.00 (0.012)	0.03*** (0.007)
MARGIN IN SENATE			-0.07*** (0.027)	-0.04 (0.022)
SENATE ELECTION	0.44** (0.216)	-0.01 (0.383)		
SEATS CONTESTING	-0.03*** (0.008)	-0.00 (0.015)	0.03 (0.029)	0.00 (0.014)
OPEN SEAT	2.53*** (0.415)	0.52 (0.457)	-0.12 (0.543)	0.30 (0.337)
FRESHMEN INCUMBENT	0.61*** (0.234)	0.06 (0.434)		
CURRENT MARGIN	-0.04*** (0.010)	-0.08** (0.041)	-0.03 (0.022)	-0.06* (0.030)
PARTY	-0.32 (0.247)	0.22 (0.475)	0.01 (0.580)	0.51 (0.410)
RELATIVE STRENGTH	0.02* (0.008)	0.01 (0.014)	0.00 (0.021)	0.06*** (0.021)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	1.95*** (0.581)	0.76 (1.102)	-0.61 (0.887)	0.29 (0.646)
RACE DESIRABILITY	-0.02* (0.011)	-0.03* (0.018)	-0.02 (0.016)	-0.01 (0.012)
CONSTANT	0.32 (0.494)	-4.79*** (0.964)	2.34 (1.631)	-4.36*** (1.383)
OBSERVATIONS	691	691	223	223
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.26	0.17	0.10	0.15
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-352.01	-128.50	-76.05	-128.71
WALD CHI2	130.99	48.70	17.23	36.67

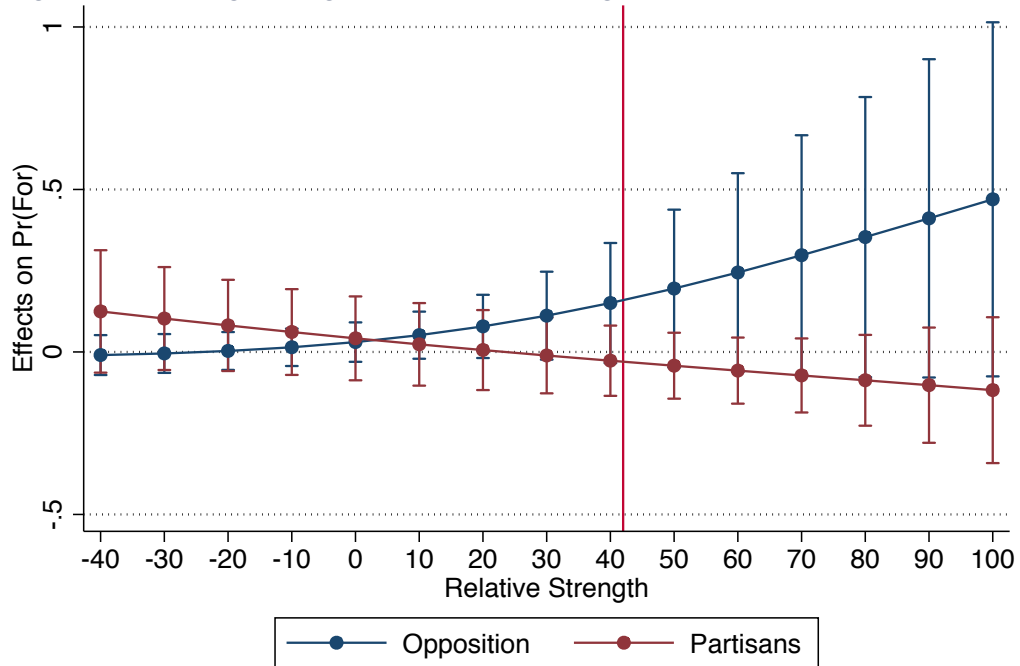
Logistic regression; robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

However, as above, the campaigning for House races largely behaves as predicted by my hypotheses—at least for endorsements. Indeed, the contrasts between the two levels is interesting, as the models are so strongly significant for endorsements and so weakly so for fundraisers. But within both of them the key variables (or key variable, in the case of ‘race desirability’) come out significant, though ideological distance behaves in the reverse direction of expectations. This suggests, that presidents make these second level decisions in a similar fashion to their more basic campaign decisions: on the basis

not simply of external factors, but as a result of a desire to construct a more amenable Congress. However, it again appears that this occurs largely at the margins. As Figure 3.11 indicates, presidential behavior is influenced by the intersection of party, influence, and ideology, but the impact is neither massive, nor hugely distinct (in terms of party effect). While Figure 3.7 suggested that distinct party effects did occur at real world of influence, this indicates that there is still overlap, and that the difference between parties may not be significantly different (which fits with the models results).

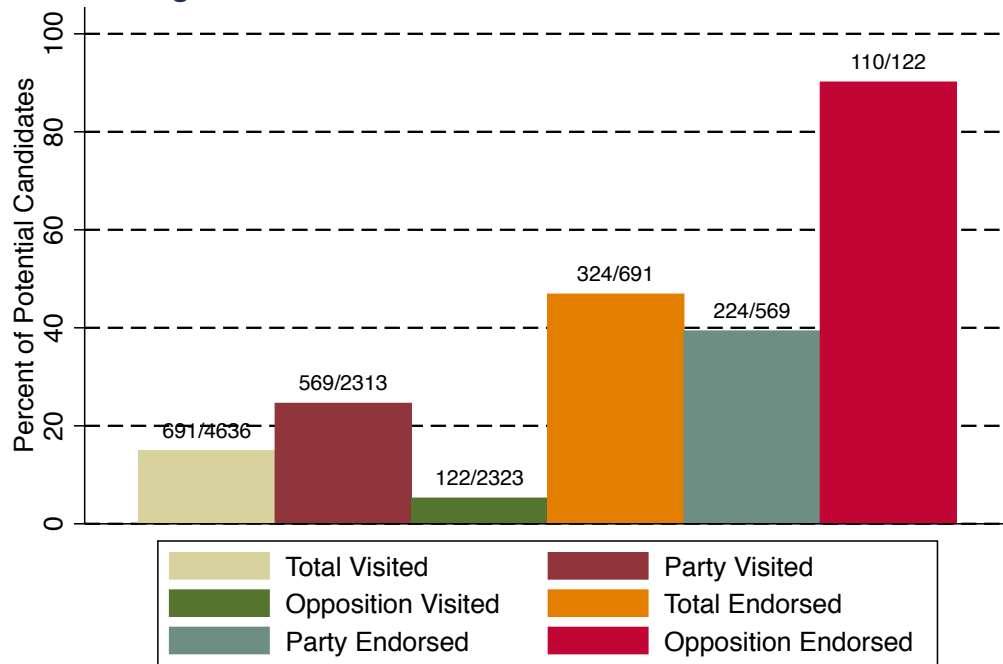
Figure 3.11: Avg. Marg. Effects of Ideological Distance with 95% CIs



This makes clear one interesting factor about these results, that the party variable (on its own) is not significant in any of the models. For the Senate this can perhaps be discounted—after all, nothing comes up significant. However, for the House it is interesting for two reasons. First, while it is not significant on its own, the race desirability variable is, and that is simply a triple interaction that includes party. Thus, its

insignificance clouds our understanding of this interaction, which can in part be seen in the confidence intervals of Figure 3.11. Second, it is rather odd that party is not a significant factor on its own because of the factor that party would appear to be a huge factor within event choice. As Figure 3.12 shows, presidents do tend to favor (as expected) their own party in terms of presence (569 races to 122), and even within endorsement (224 races to 110). However, this masks the fact that of the potential universe of choices for endorsement and fundraisers (given the need for simple presence in the first place), a race with an opposition incumbent is staggeringly more likely to receive a higher ‘level’ of attention, with 90% of visited races with opposition incumbents receiving endorsements compared to ~40% of partisan races. This, not surprisingly, hides large differences in the underlying factors of each race—there are, for example, great differences in things like the current margin and ideological distance between partisan and opposition races—but it is surprising that party does not emerge with any significance at all.

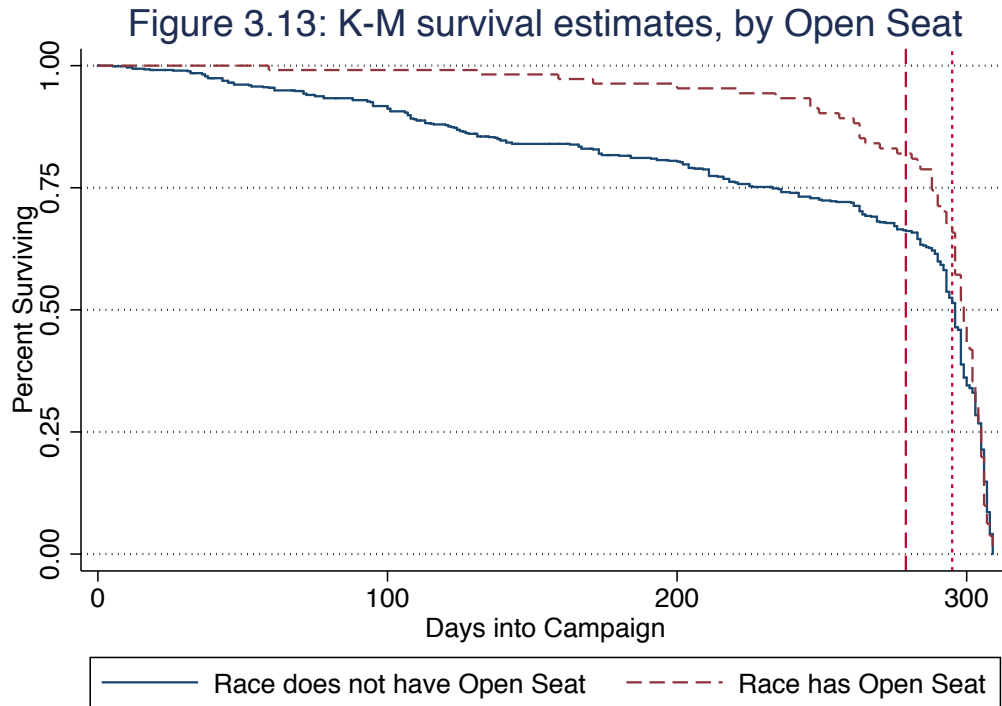
Figure 3.12: Rates of Visitation and Endorsement



Timing

The final facet of presidential strategy that we need to understand is campaign timing. As discussed above timing is important because of issues of salience and opportunity cost. Therefore, campaign aid should be more valuable to candidates later in the year as the public should be more interested in the election, and it should be more costly for presidents as they are dealing with an ever diminishing supply of time. Because of this, presidents should organize the timing of their campaign actions in a similar fashion to how they distribute them, favoring certain candidates with better timing (as compared to others. The key is to understand what factors influence decision making in this regard. As Figure 3.13 illustrates, these differences in timing can be substantial, and be so for the better part of campaign season. The two vertical lines are at four and

two weeks out from the election, and even at those late dates there are still substantial differences between the two curves. Such behavior can be seen for a number of other factors as well—they key is to understand them in tandem.



The normal route of examining these factors, then, would be to use either Cox Hazard or Kaplan-Meier Survival models to see how individual factors influence the rates of failure or survival of House and Senate candidates. However, in this instance that seems the wrong way to proceed. Such models would help us understand what factors help to end or extend presidential involvement, and that would seem to be what we want to know—but it is not. This is because this would presume that each day is equally valuable or significant, and we have no reason to expect that it should be. Rather, what we should be interested in is what factors get presidents to campaign late in the season, broadly defined—not what things gain someone an extra day. Thus, what is most useful

is a simple logistic regression, checking for the presence of candidates within particular campaign time frames (one month, two weeks, and one week out). This will show us what factors help to lump candidates into favored, most favored, and most favored groups, rather than being concerned with the simple number of days a candidate survives.

The first of these sets of regressions—those for Senate candidates—is shown in Table 3.7. In keeping with the results for the models above, there appears to be little of value (or at least little of note) in these results. Very little within the models is significant, and the models themselves are not overly significant. There is one key thing that stands out—the strength of Senate Margin and Current Margin within these models. While this tends to favor the existing literature over my own theories, this is an area in which the existing literature has not yet ventured. What these indicate, then, is that when thinking of how to time Senate events, president focus their efforts on those who need help, but do so through the lens of the needs of the institution (or of their party within it). Thus, while party as a discrete factor may not come into play, it does in terms of party represented within the institution.

Table 3.7: Timing/Survival for Senate Candidates

VARIABLES	MONTH	FORTNIGHT	WEEK
HOME STATE	0.35 (0.869)	0.87 (0.914)	0.79 (0.839)
TOTAL CAMPAIGN DAYS	-0.01* (0.007)	0.00 (0.007)	-0.00 (0.007)
SENATE MARGIN	-0.04* (0.023)	-0.09*** (0.025)	-0.08** (0.030)
SEATS CONTESTING	0.01 (0.017)	0.01 (0.016)	-0.00 (0.017)
OPEN SEAT	-0.69** (0.346)	-0.39 (0.340)	-0.26 (0.359)
CURRENT MARGIN	-0.07*** (0.028)	-0.07** (0.032)	-0.06 (0.040)
PARTY	-0.39 (0.423)	-0.27 (0.383)	-0.10 (0.409)
RELATIVE STRENGTH	0.02 (0.022)	0.03 (0.020)	0.03 (0.022)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-0.73 (0.686)	-1.20* (0.626)	-0.81 (0.662)
RACE DESIRABILITY	-0.00 (0.013)	-0.01 (0.012)	-0.01 (0.013)
CONSTANT	1.48 (1.448)	0.05 (1.301)	-0.80 (1.469)
OBSERVATIONS	223	223	223
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.10	0.11	0.09
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-125.02	-137.10	-131.88
WALD CHI2	21.05	21.90	14.34

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Within the models for House candidates (presented in Table 3.8), something entirely different emerges. Again, in keeping with the findings of the prior models, these results give at least some validation to my theories of party orientated midterm campaigning and strategy (even if party itself is not significant). As these results show presidential midterm timing is driven by different factors within different windows. Within the month and fortnight frames, party specific factors (within the race desirability interaction) are significant, and influence behavior in a similar fashion as above—they are not overpowering, but they allow for increased choosiness as presidential influence

expands. However, once we move to the ‘week’ frame, most everything falls out except ‘Home State’—that is, that race occurring in a president’s home state. This, along, with the overall significance of that model and the behavior of the survival curves in Figure 3.13 (above) indicates something interesting. Namely, it suggests that while timing is a factor of strategy within certain frames, towards the end of the campaign season non-examined factors and simple geography play a much stronger role.

Table 3.8: Timing/Survival in House Races

VARIABLES	MONTH	FORTNIGHT	WEEK
HOME STATE	0.42 (0.513)	1.01** (0.471)	1.89*** (0.486)
TOTAL CAMPAIGN DAYS	-0.03*** (0.004)	-0.02*** (0.004)	0.00 (0.004)
SENATE ELECTION	0.37* (0.192)	-0.06 (0.184)	-0.15 (0.191)
SEATS CONTESTING	-0.01 (0.007)	-0.00 (0.007)	-0.01 (0.008)
OPEN SEAT	0.84** (0.332)	0.66** (0.271)	0.30 (0.258)
FRESHMEN INCUMBENT	-0.43* (0.222)	-0.61*** (0.216)	-0.45* (0.239)
CURRENT MARGIN	0.01 (0.007)	0.01 (0.006)	-0.01 (0.007)
PARTY	-0.26 (0.219)	0.20 (0.192)	-0.04 (0.190)
RELATIVE STRENGTH	0.01* (0.007)	0.01 (0.007)	0.01* (0.007)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-0.18 (0.501)	0.49 (0.474)	-0.09 (0.481)
RACE DESIRABILITY	0.02* (0.013)	0.02* (0.011)	0.01 (0.010)
CONSTANT	1.91*** (0.416)	0.54 (0.405)	-0.35 (0.416)
OBSERVATIONS	691	691	691
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.11	0.06	0.04
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-404.84	-449.49	-413.05
WALD CHI2	85.05	49.54	26.36

Logistic regression, robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Discussion

Overall these results are something of a mixed bag, but they do offer two broad themes of findings. First, they largely, though not entirely confirm my hypotheses, and my general ‘midterm campaigning as party control’ thesis—at least in terms of strategy. While the results do also confirm the findings of the exiting literature, those were never really in doubt. That is because, as noted above, the problem with the existing literature is not that it is wrong, but that it overlooks a great deal, specifically in regards to the role of parties. Thus, the goal of these models was to build off of those findings and examine the extent to which party driven, race specific and president-candidate relational factors shaped presidential strategy. In this, it was highly successful (if only for the House). These models showed the importance of relative strength (as presidential influence) and ideological distance across all three levels of strategy, and showed the strong, independent strength of party-as-party in the broadest form of strategy—presidential presence. This, combined with strength of seats contesting variable, show the findings to be largely confirmatory of four of the five hypotheses.

The fifth hypothesis—race desirability—was, however, shown to be only marginally significant. This is unfortunate, because in some ways this was the key hypothesis and key variable, as it shows the extent to which presidential strategy is not simply a function of various party and relational factors, but an outcome of a calculus between them. It represented the core of the party control thesis, by examining the extent to which presidential behavior altered as potential influence increased, as seen through the lens of each party. While the results showed this interaction to be statistically

significant, it only achieved substantive significance at level of presidential influence that cannot exist in the real world. However, it was nonetheless a significant factor (for House candidates) in each level of analysis, suggesting that even if it only plays a marginal role it does play one. Thus, while presidents may be primarily driven by ideology or potential influence on their own, there is an extent to which that calculus is altered by the interaction between them. Though not decisive, this is still a new finding, and one worth further exploration.

The second major finding off these results arises from a non-finding, from the utter inability of these models to explain anything about Senate strategy. On one level this is disheartening, if only because it is unexpected. On another, it is fascinating because it suggests that House and Senate strategies are entirely different, and perhaps the opposite of what might be expected. This is because these results indicate that House candidates are campaigned for on the basis of ideology, on the basis of what presidents can get for them within Congress, but that this is not the case. However, given that the House is much more rigidly organized along partisan lines than the Senate, and that the Senate is the chamber in which ideologically charged issues like judicial nominations or important treaties will come up, it would make sense that the strategy for Senate candidates would be the one organized along ideological groups, and not that of the House.

However, as Table 3.9 indicates, it may simply be the case that presidents favor the Senate over the House at the outset, and so the factors that influence House strategy simply do not even appear when presidents ponder their Senate choices. As Figure 3.8

shows, presidents are much more likely to campaign for any given Senate candidate than they are for any given candidates for the House—generally 2-3 times more likely. This makes sense, as there are significantly fewer Senate races in any given year (and each race is more valuable), the Senate is generally more moderate than the House (and hence a president can pull support from the other side), and the Senate was the only body in which the Republican party had a majority (or even the chance of a majority) from decades. For all of these reasons, then, presidents would perhaps have simply campaigned in as many potential Senate victories as possible, discounting other factors that might come into play within the House. Majority alone became the key, as it was both attainable and necessary for key legacy items such as Court nominations. Thus, the second take away from these results is that presidential strategy is not consistent, but divided between chambers, one in which pure partisan politics dominates, and one in which more subtle factors come into play—and that this strategy is the reverse of these very same partisan aspects within the respective chambers.

FIGURE 3.9: HOUSE AND SENATE VISIT RATES

YEAR	HOUSE RACES	PERCENT OF TOTAL	SENATE RACES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
1970	45	12.36	21	61.76
1974	77	21.15	16	51.61
1978	60	14.59	17	48.57
1982	37	10.54	15	45.45
1986	50	13.33	20	58.82
1990	49	13.06	22	66.66
1994	74	18.73	19	54.28
1998	47	12.73	12	35.29
2002	111	29.52	24	72.72
2006	72	18.71	13	39.39
2010	69	17.1	17	45.49

Conclusion

Over the past 60 years of the behavior, presidents have campaigned heavily in midterm elections, and increasingly so. However, even as their commitment of time and energy has expanded, the actual number of candidates for whom they campaign has remained relatively small. Strong candidates in close races get ignored, and weak candidates in blowouts get notices. Some states see only one candidate visited from the entire ticket, while others are home to seemingly endless presidential events. There is, then, some sort of strategy at work, some sort of decision making process through which sorts out how, when, and where presidents campaign. As both an interesting empirical question in itself and because of the importance it could have for understanding American government, it bears understanding why presidents favor the candidates they do, and what factors structure presidential midterm campaigns.

This chapter has been an examination of presidential midterm strategy, why it needs to be understood, what the literature has discovered already, and how we can get a better handle on it. Building off of the existing literature, it has shown that there are valuable depths that research has yet to plumb, particularly in regard to the role of parties within midterm strategy. Taking my cue from the prior chapter, I have argued that presidential strategy is predicated not on simply electing as many partisans as possible, but of electing the right ones, and that presidents take advantage of their increased partisan leeway to try and reshuffle their party (and the opposition) into something more closely resembling their own political beliefs.

I examined these hypotheses through three levels of presidential action—presence, even choice, and timing—finding that while House candidates are generally treated as I predicted, Senate candidates are favored for entirely different reasons—and perhaps simply because they are Senate candidates. These results, then, suggest a much different way of understanding presidential actions than has yet been put forward, and a much different rationale for what is occurring within midterm elections. The next step is to applying these strategic findings to the outcomes of presidential actions, and to see if presidential strategy is ultimately successful in (re)shaping American government. In the next chapter, then, I move beyond strategy to look at the impacts of presidential actions, and show how presidents are (and are not) successful in their attempts to reshape the political and partisan environments in which they must act.

Chapter Four: Impacts of Midterm Campaigning

“Imagine the economy’s a car, and the Republicans drove it into a ditch. [*Laughter*] And it’s a very steep ditch. So somehow the Republicans walked away from the scene of the accident...And we got to say, no. You can’t have the keys back. You don’t know how to drive. We can’t give them the keys back.”³⁴

In the fall of 2010, President Barak Obama was in a difficult situation. In response to a weak economy and a protracted struggle over health care reform his personal approval rating had fallen from 64.63 in the afterglow of his inauguration to a low of 41.45 over that summer.³⁵ The Tea Party movement had burst out into the mainstream, “a platform for conservative popular discontent, [and] a force in Republican politics of revival” (Barstow 2010, A1). As if sharks smelling blood in the water the congressional Republicans circled, reminding voters that “if you are tired of all the stimulus spending, if you are tired of the government taking over virtually everything in America, remember what the president said: ‘That’s what elections are for’” (Herszenhorn 2010, A1). Yet, for all this turmoil, the president remained remarkably unfazed. When concerned Democrats asked him how they would be able to avoid a party wide debacle such as had befallen them in 1994, he told them “Well, the big difference here and in ’94 was you’ve got me” (Thrush 2010).

As if to back up his bold assertions, President Obama undertook a broad campaign in waning months of the election season. He beseeched the American people to talk to their friends and “describe to them the future that you see for this country.”³⁶

³⁴ “Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Bridgeport, Connecticut” (Oct. 20, 2010) pp. 3. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2010.*

³⁵ Polling data retrieved from The Gallup Brain (<http://brain.gallup.com/home.aspx>)

³⁶ “Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania” (Oct. 20, 2010) pp. 2. *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2010.*

He reminded them that they had “the chance to set the direction not just for this State [sic], but for this country, for years to come.”³⁷ He asked of them to “keep on believing...to talk to your neighbors...to go vote early.”³⁸ And, he did so widely and broadly, campaigning for 114 candidates in 28 states, and spending 56 days on the trail. Nonetheless, on November 2nd, the president awoke to find that his party had suffered a bloodbath, shedding 63 seats (an the majority) in the House and 6 in the Senate. The new era of Democratic dominance that had seemed at hand only 2 years prior was gone; in its wake, and President Obama was left with what he “described as an electoral ‘shellacking’ for his party” (Baker and Hulse 2010, A1).

Presidents have dramatically expanded their midterm campaign efforts of the past 60 years, but for what return? President Eisenhower spent 17 days on the trail in 1954, and saw the loss of 18 seats in the House and 2 in the Senate; President Obama spent 56 for much worse. Their methods are more targeted, their analysis more advanced, and their resources vastly superior. Yet, with the rare exceptions of 1998 and 2002, presidents cannot claim a clearly definitive benefit from their actions. Given the immensity of the undertaking, the vast commitment of time and money, and the apparent presidential focus on this method of engagement, it behooves us to understand, what is it that presidents actually get for their efforts?

The task of this chapter is to examine what it is that presidents actually receive from their midterm actions. The existing literature (almost) exclusively focuses on the

³⁷ “Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Rally in Bridgeport, Connecticut” (Oct. 20, 2010) pp. 1. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2010.*

³⁸ “Remarks at Democratic National Committee Rally in Cleveland, Ohio” (Oct. 31, 2010) pp. 7. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Barack H. Obama, 2010.*

simple election of partisans to Congress. This is sensible, and accords with any straightforward understanding of what presidents hope to achieve. However, as we saw in the last chapter, the focus of presidential campaign efforts is anything but straightforward, and is much more heavily focused on upending the status quo to their own benefit than it is to simply ensuring the election of their fellow ‘partisans’. Therefore, going against the grain of the literature I argue that the impact of presidential campaigning is not seen within congressional elections and subsequent presidential behavior, but in congressional behavior and subsequent presidential elections. Presidents make use of midterm elections to alter the voting behavior of Congress and to strengthen their own, and their party’s, chances for election in future contests.

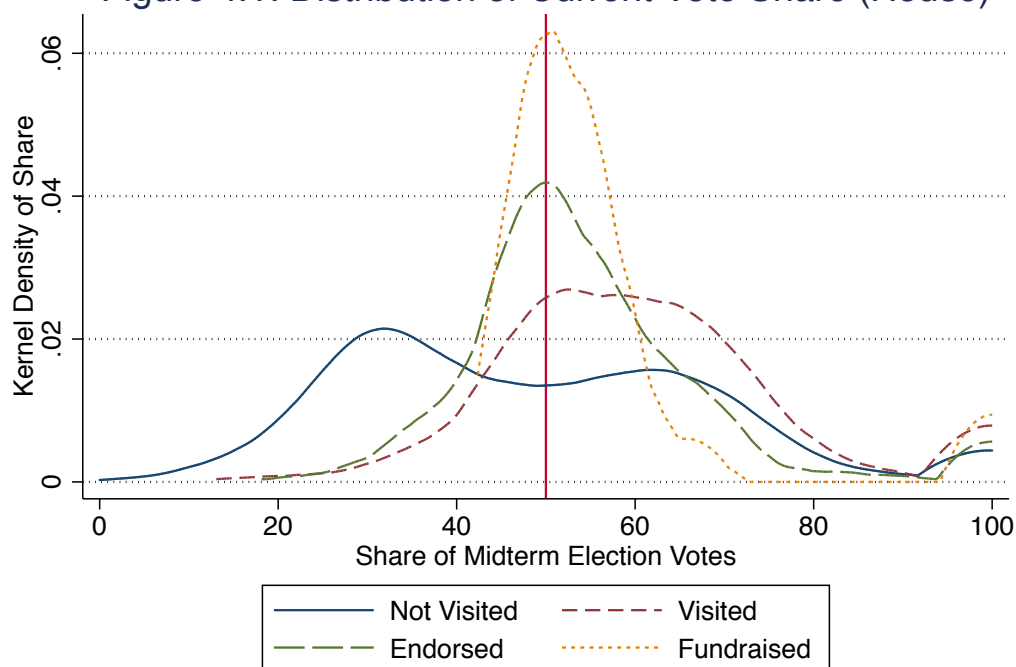
To examine these assertions this chapter advances as follows. First, it lays out the standard way of approaching questions of midterm impact, and how problematic that method can be. Moving through a brief review of the literature, it argues that rather than simply examining all the myriad factors that might be influencing the midterm election, it would be more fruitful to step outside the box and examine other possible avenues of impact. Thus, it suggests that presidents might gain from their midterm actions not through sheer partisan victories, but rather by gaining more influence over subsequent congressional actions, and by strengthening their own, and their parties standing for future elections. After examining these possibilities through a series of empirical models, the chapter closes with a discussion of what these new impacts might mean for our understanding of American politics.

Understanding Campaign Impacts

To the both the keen observer and the man on the street, it probably appears that the obvious thing to look for as the outcome of presidential midterm campaigning is an increased election of fellow partisans to Congress. Presidents, after all, spend this campaign time asking the people to please ‘elect’, to ‘send’, to ‘help’ particular candidates. Scholarship tells us that campaigning is driven by the competitiveness of races (Cohen et al. 1991) and the popularity of presidents within tight areas (Hoddie and Routh 2004). Moreover, these are after all congressional elections—there are no presidents on the ballot. Thus, the idea that presidential campaigning seeks to elect ever more partisans is a most sensible place to start.

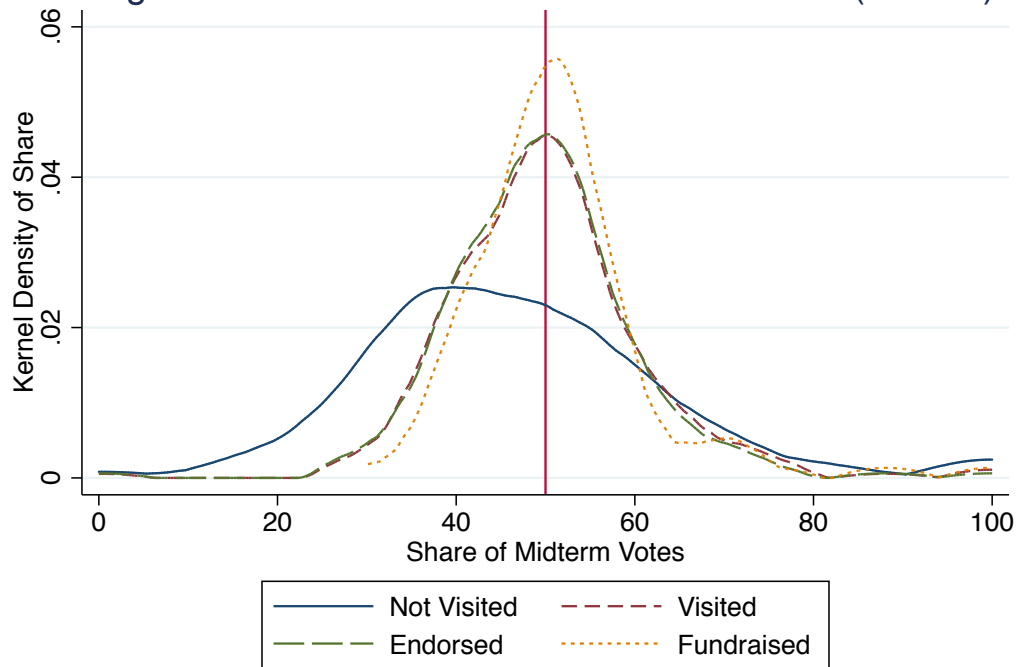
Presuming that this is the end of presidential ambitions, it would appear from initial evidence that presidents are successful at achieving them. For example, as Figure 4.1 illustrates, within the House (for members of the president’s party) those who receive presidential visitation are much more densely packed on the plus side of 50% (of the two-party vote) than are those who do not receive a visit at all—if nothing else, it would seem that presidents *pick* winners. This is not to say that those who receive visits all go on to get elected—indeed, as the figure shows, those who receive higher forms of visitation (endorsements or fundraisers) are actually tightly clustered on the threshold of victory (and defeat). However, this does appear to illustrate that presidential favorites are more likely to win than is your average congressional candidate.

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Current Vote Share (House)



A similar set of circumstances can be seen in Figure 4.2, which looks at the analogous distribution for those individuals running for the Senate. As this shows, Senate candidates of the president’s party appear remarkably similar to their counterparts in the House. They are more disposed to winning the race than are those who do not receive a visit at all, but they generally right on the fence in regards to their own chances of victory. Even more so than was the case with House candidates, those who run for Senate and receive presidential attention appear to be tightly clustered on the knife’s edge between victory and defeat; they are more likely to win than others, yes, but certainly not guaranteed to do so.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Current Vote Share (Senate)



These diagrams, however, only illustrate anecdotal evidence. For a somewhat fuller picture we can turn to Table 4.1, which presents a simple model of midterm vote share (for the House), broken down by visit type and drawing on three other factors: prior vote share, presidential popularity, and the six-month change in statewide unemployment. The results are, to say the least, interesting. As they indicate, it would appear that candidates do receive a significantly greater share of the two-party vote if they are graced by presidential attention—but that the greatest impact falls on those who receive the least consequential attention. Indeed, this model suggests an almost linear decrease in the impact of presidential actions, from a nearly 7% increase in predicted vote share with a simple visit to a statistically (and substantively) insignificant amount for a fundraiser.

Figure 4.1: Predicting House Share, by Campaign Type

VARIABLES	VISITED	ENDORSED	FUNDRAISER
PRIOR SHARE	0.83*** (0.013)	0.83*** (0.012)	0.83*** (0.012)
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.27*** (0.027)	0.27*** (0.027)	0.28*** (0.027)
Δ UNEMPLOYMENT	-1.35*** (0.385)	-1.05*** (0.375)	-1.08*** (0.374)
PRESENCE	6.80*** (0.832)	3.95*** (1.051)	0.39 (1.940)
CONSTANT	-9.95*** (1.557)	-9.33*** (1.534)	-9.65*** (1.515)
OBSERVATIONS	3,546	3,752	3,792
ADJ. R-SQUARED	0.66	0.65	0.65
F TEST	1265.43	1203.27	1204.20
PROB > F	0.00	0.00	0.00

OLS regression; robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Though it views these election in another manner, similar results can be seen in Table 4.2, which models the probability of winning a given House seat at the midterm. As the results make clear, just as with its impact on the vote share, presidential actions appear to have at best a light impact on the actual chances of victory or defeat. While it is significant for simple presence (visits), it is only weakly so when compared to changes in presidential approval. More importantly, neither endorsements nor fundraisers are, by themselves, linked to a greater propensity to victory by affected candidates. Indeed, the sole consistent variable throughout that possesses any meaningful movement is presidential approval—suggesting that if a party won the seat previously and a president was relatively popular they have a high probability of winning the seat again regardless of presidential actions. This, of course, makes sense, and perhaps suggests a limited consequence for presidential campaign actions.

Table 4.2: Predicting House Outcomes, by Campaign Type

VARIABLES	VISITED	ENDORSED	FUNDRAISER
WON PREVIOUS	5.72*** (0.180)	5.79*** (0.180)	5.79*** (0.177)
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.06*** (0.007)	0.06*** (0.007)	0.06*** (0.007)
Δ UNEMPLOYMENT	-0.09 (0.109)	-0.08 (0.110)	-0.08 (0.110)
PRESENCE	0.48** (0.201)	-0.08 (0.341)	-0.39 (0.695)
CONSTANT	-6.89*** (0.449)	-6.85*** (0.443)	-6.84*** (0.442)
OBSERVATIONS	3,807	3,807	3,807
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.64	0.63	0.63
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-959.18	-963.46	-963.19
WALD CHI2	1185.25	1180.26	1138.25

OLS regression; robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

While perhaps not jibing well with literature’s idea of midterm campaigning as being focused on congressional elections, these models (simple as they are) fit well with actual results found within the existing literature. Indeed, even with decades of research on this topic there is little evidence that presidential actions actually impact midterm election results. This is surprising, of course, given the focus that the literature places on midterm campaigning in this regard. As we saw in the previous chapter, a sizable portion of the literature argues that the primary basis for presidential campaigning, the linchpin of midterm strategy is to focus on close races because those are the races that presidents can help win. Presidents, we are told, focus their attention on “races where the clout of the president could make a difference” (Kelle et al. 2004, 829). They may grant more favor to those who support hem more (McDaniel 2008), and tailor their actions around things like popularity (Hoddie and Routh 2004), but the goals of midterm actions are to elect these members in tight races (Sellers and Denton 2006).

Yet, for all the energy the existing literature has put into arguing that the purpose of midterm campaigning is the election of more partisans, it has found almost zero evidence that this outcome actually occurs. Strictly anecdotal evidence often hints at a strong presidential influence in this regard from campaign behavior (CQ 1970, Kelle et al. 2004), but at other times does not (CQ 1974, CQ 1978). Cohen et al. (1991) find that although campaigned for Senate candidates lost 65.6% of the time, over half the candidates fared better than those for whom the president did not campaign (166). Likewise, Herrnson and Morris (2007) find that in the 2002 midterm elections, visits by President Bush significantly enhanced the prospects of campaigned for candidates. However, in direct opposition to this, Kelle et al. (2004) find that in the 2002 elections presidential activities had no discernable effects, and that “future presidential attempts to influence congressional campaigns are not likely to be any more effective than in 2002” (832). Ragsdale (1980) finds similar outcomes in the 1970, 1974, and 1978, arguing that campaign activities are of limited importance and that nonpresidential variables are the major predictors of the congressional vote. In the end, some scholars find little, others almost nothing, and the rest zilch to support the idea that presidential campaigning impacts congressional elections. What, then, to do?

In the face of this dearth of positive findings regarding the assumed purpose of midterm campaigning, one could decide to make another go of it, to try and find some new and better way of examining the question with the same end in mind. But, that seems the wrong way forward, for two reasons. First, the sheer volume of time and ink

that the literature has spent examining this question with no clear results suggests that this is not simply a situation in which we are unable to *show* that presidential actions (within particular races) do alter the results of congressional elections. It could be, given the clustering of races shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, that presidents so heavily favor tightly contested races that they break more or less 50/50, making it ultimately impossible to draw out a significant pattern. It could be that we are missing some significant connection or explanation. Or, it could be that presidential campaigning does not have a substantive impact on congressional elections, and as Rasgdale (1980) suggests, congressional election are not presidential events.

However, the fact of the matter is much simpler: the extent to which presidential campaigning impacts congressional election is largely irrelevant. Understanding the impact of midterms campaigning through congressional returns may be empirically and theoretically satisfying, and the absence of concrete results may be puzzling, but to continue to focus on it obscures simple truth that presidential campaigning continues to occur and almost ever more so. We are thus left with two ways of understanding the situation. First, it could be that presidents and their staffs insist on continually expanding an undertaking that consumes immense presidential resources, publically links the president to (and against) vulnerable political actors, and do so without finding some level of return commensurate to their efforts. Or, we could broaden our gaze, and accept that presidents might be seeking (and receiving) something other than what scholarship insists that they are. As it stands, we repeatedly try that same route, and find the same

dead ends. We could continue down this same path, but I suggest that the way forward is found in undertaking something rather different. That is what I propose to do.

New Impacts of Presidential Campaigning

There are a number of different areas in which one could look for potential impacts of presidential midterm actions. However, I want to focus on two of them, each suggested by discussion in the previous chapter. First, there is reason to suspect that, even if they do not influence congressional election results, presidential midterm campaigning does have a hand to play in subsequent presidential results. This, of course, is suggested by the literature's focus on the permanent campaign. However, it is also supported by statements by presidential staffers. Within the context of the 2002 midterms, Bush officials explicitly paired their midterm efforts with Bush's chances of reelection (Allen 2002). Others suggested that the midterm election was largely premised on its relation to the next cycle, noting the importance of gubernatorial elections to Bush's chances in 2004 (Milbank 2002). Therefore, there appears strong evidence that presidents do consider their future needs when deciding on their midterm courses of action.

What we need to do, then, is place midterm behaviors within the context of presidential forecasting, to understand how it impacts election results in the context of other, more established factors. Unsurprisingly, the literature on presidential elections, voter choice, and forecasting is, unsurprisingly, deep and varied, with multiple competing theories as to what drives voter behavior. Broadly, however, debates in this area are rather simple. They breakdown between those who see individual voters (and hence

aggregate voters) concerned about economic outcomes and those who see them concerned with political performance (Lewis-Beck and Tien 2011).

These two competing understandings, then, suggests divergent factors to look at when trying to understand or predict presidential election outcomes. Those who follow the economic line of thought tend to focus on proxies for economic health, be they GDP growth, income changes, or business confidence. There are any number of potential proxies, and it is more a matter of choosing one than on being able to do so. Some scholars use a ‘national business index’ (Lewis-Beck and Tien 2012), others a grouping of ‘leading economic indicators’ (Erikson and Wlezein 2012), while others keep it simple and stick to per-capita income growth (and peace) (Hibbs 2012). On the other hand, those who focus on ‘political’ outcomes are largely left to focus on “national survey measures of ‘popularity,’ such as government satisfaction or presidential job approval” (Lewis-Beck and Tien 2001, 6). Thus, these scholars are more limited in their tools, but nonetheless use tools that are readily available.

Neither of these two camps suggests much of a role for presidential campaigning in the determination of presidential election results. Indeed, work by Finkel (1993) goes so far as to suggest that campaigning has no impact, that these efforts largely activate voters, rather than actually changing them (or outcomes). However, the literature focused on midterm campaigning does hold that these presidential actions are at least attempts to influencing the outcome of events. How does this occur, if presidents are not ‘persuading’ voters (albeit two year in advance)?

At its root, the impact of presidential midterm actions on subsequent presidential elections should come in the form of network activations. Presidential actions in various states should help to strengthen state and local party organizations, to increase the fervency of the mass-level supporters of the president's party, and (hopefully) increase that party's strength within state and local political units. Each of these is important, as each of these can have an impact in subsequent elections. The strength of state and local parties, combined with the fervor of the local population, should make it all the easier to construct and maintain the necessary campaign infrastructure in state. Indeed, as the 2012 election showed us, one of the great advantages of incumbent president's is that they can have this infrastructure already in existence; midterm elections can certainly not harm this process, and likely help it. Likewise, the election of fellow partisans to important state offices is just, if not more important. These officials help to ensure that presidential policies are enacted and favorably so, help to steer state and federal actions in the same manner, and are often quite effective campaigners for presidents (as Milbank 2002 suggested). Just as importantly, midterm actions should give the incumbent party an advantage by establishing these networks before their future opponents are given the chance. Collectively, then, midterm actions have the potential to generate increased resources and support by creating or reactivating partisan and political networks in states. Thus, my first hypothesis is as follows:

Network Activation Hypothesis

By organizing and activating networks of support, presidential midterm campaigning in midterm elections should strengthen the party's presidential cause within visited states in the subsequent presidential election.

In addition to impacting presidential but not congressional vote shares, I would suggest that presidential midterm actions impact not congressional elections, but congressional behavior. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the literature's focus on the election of partisans to Congress obscures the fact that what presidents should ultimately care about is how Congress behaves. We saw outlines of this in presidential strategy: presidents paid close attention to tight races, but the real driver of action was candidate ideology. Presidential strategy was clearly focus not simply on electing partisans, but on electing the right partisans—those most likely to aid and favor them.

To bring this forward into potential impacts, presidential goals should be base around returning a Congress that behaves as closely to his ideal point as he can make them. The obvious goal of this, then, is to a return a Congress (at least within the president's party) that is most adapted to that president's personal ideal points. If the Congress is more ideologically aligned, then the policy that comes out will be closer to presidential preferences and will emerge at less political cost to presidents; so, all would be well. So, at its base, then, these actions are not about the mere election of partisan candidates, but about their behavior in the subsequent Congress. Presidents are not partisan egoists who revel in the number of their allies they elect; they are personal egoists who revel in the number of personal priorities they can achieve. Thus, the true goal of midterm campaigning should be to increase their overall levels of congressional support, by winning favors from these 'favored' members.

This brings midterm behaviors in to the realm of congressional decision-making, an area well and truly studied. The literature approaches the question in two ways. First,

it looks at it from the perspective of Congress as an institution. Key to this is the work of Adler and Lipinski (1997). They, with others, argue on behalf of strong, demand-side committees that direct the work of the larger body, with log-rolling occurring between the committees so as to get favored projects completed. Along side of this is the work of Shepsle and Weingast (1987), who add in a notion of a committee ex post veto, through which legislation is ultimately controlled by the originating committee via the conference bill. A third line of argument that is often taken is on behalf of (Conditional) Party Governance. Put forward by Rhode (1991), this argues that parties, given certain factors, can organize their chamber in such a fashion as to completely control it, ensuring that leadership decisions are almost invariably followed. This finding is (more or less) seconded by Aldrich and Rohde (1998), and Cox and McCubbins (2007), and Smith (2007), who all find pervasive effects from the organizational actions of parties. Fourth and finally, there is the notion of ideology as the determining factor in congressional behavior. This is most strongly argued by Krehbiel (1991/1993/1998), who holds out that parties are rather irrelevant factors in that their influence cannot be discerned past the exercise of basic ideological behavior. Hence, in this world the Congress is simply a body of ideological individuals, and party effects are simply the echoes of the innate, ideological choices that would already be made.

A second body of literature has examined the linkages that exist between executive actions/pressures/wishes and congressional behaviors. For presidents, these linkages are of supreme importance as every president has a legislative program, and key to their success is simply “getting is most important proposals on the congressional

agenda” (Edwards and Barrett 2000, 110). In determining what factors are the are most important, scholars have discovered something of a mixed bag. Bond and Fleisher (1990) argue for a number of possibilities ranging from policy domain to the prowess and makeup of the congressional leadership. However, they find evidence that party and ideology are far more influential at ensuring success than more presidentially based factors such as popularity or legislative skill (222). Likewise, Edwards and Barrett (2000) find that presidential advantages at agenda setting are limited to times of unified government, and dissipate when strict partisanship comes to the fore. Finally, Edwards (1989) finds that while both “congressional party cohorts and public support are the principle underpinnings of presidential leadership of Congress” (217), he makes clear that these resources are interdependent—one without the other is almost meaningless.

However, only one set of scholars has examined the relationship between midterm campaigning and congressional voting. Herrnson, Morris, and McTague (2009/2011) look at the 1998 and 2002 midterms and find evidence that presidential campaigning did cause members of the presidents party to increase their levels of support for presidential policies. While they lay a solid foundation, and I plan to extend their use of campaign frequency as the key variable, I want to expand on their effort in three two major ways. First, I want to introduce campaign timing into the analysis. As we saw in the last chapter, timing matters in terms of strategy. I argue that this arises because timing changes the value of presidential visits; as such, that changing calculus should be reflected in changing congressional behavior, and those candidates who receive campaign aid in the waning days of the cycle should be more receptive (and more obligated) to

helping push through the presidents proposals. This, then, leads to my second hypothesis.

Party Support Hypothesis

As a function of the relationship between campaign frequency and campaign timing, presidential campaigning should have a positive impact on targeted members of the presidential party, increasing their levels of presidential support in the subsequent Congress.

Additionally, while the work of Herrnson, Morris, and McTague (2009/2011) does find evidence of altered voting behavior within partisans, they eschew examining similar trends within the opposition party. I think this is something that should be examined further. As we saw in the last chapter, presidential midterm strategy is not simply focused on partisans, but on opponents, with presidents more likely to campaign against ideologically distant members of the opposition. In addition to simply wanting them defeated, presidents should also favor campaigning against them because any potential blowback (and blowback should occur) will be limited, given that these individuals are highly unlikely to support much of the president's agenda anyways. Thus, just as I presume that midterm campaigning will increase support for the presidents agenda among partisans as a function of frequency and timing, and I believe it will decrease it among members of the opposition. Thus, my third hypothesis is as follows.

Opposition Anger Hypothesis

As a function of the relationship between campaign frequency and campaign timing, presidential campaigning should have a negative impacted on targeted members of the opposition party, reducing their levels of presidential support in the subsequent Congress.

Data and Method

To examine these hypotheses, I constructed a series of models looking at how presidential behaviors impacted both subsequent presidential elections and subsequent congressional behavior. Turning first to the examination of presidential elections, in this regard I fashioned two models: an OLS regression model to look at changes in vote share, and a logistic model to look at changes in the probability of victory. Importantly, in both of these cases the unit of analysis is not the nation as a whole, but individual states within each election. This serves two purposes. First, it allows us to avoid issues of small-n problems. One could certainly look at presidential campaigning in the aggregate and presidential results in the same frame (as I did in Chapter Two), but doing so brings about limitation in our abilities to analyze these actions. Second, by focusing on states as the unit of analysis it emphasizes both that states are where the campaign events occur—that is, that they are linked to states as distinct political units—and that states are where the election actually occurs; there is, after all, no national election.

The data for these models is presented in Table 4.3, along with a brief description and the expected direction of each variable. As the table shows, these models are quite simple, relying on only four independent variables. However, in this regard they match the literature, as most prediction models are quite parsimonious. Moreover, this model seeks to combine elements of the two major threads of predictive models, by using elements of both the political and economic threads. Politically it makes use of Gallup approval data, using the trended average of that score on Election Day in each year.

Economically it uses the 6-month change in unemployment rate within each state; due to limitation on these data, they can only be analyzed from 1980 onward.

TABLE 4.3: VARIABLES AND EXPECTED DIRECTIONS

VARIABLES	EXPECTED	MODELS	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL				
PRESIDENT'S SHARE	+	OLS	Continuous	Share of two-party vote
WON PRIOR	+	Logit	1/0	If president won state prior
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	+	Senate	Continuous	Gallup Approval rating
STATE				
Δ UNEMPLOYMENT	+	House	Continuous	6 Mon. change in unemployment
TOTAL DAYS	+	Both	Count	Number of days in state

On the congressional behavior side, I constructed four models, two looking at the voting behavior of only returning members to the House and Senate, and two looking at the behavior of all members of the House and Senate. The reason for this is straightforward: only returning members can have prior support scores, and are valuable tools of estimation. All four are OLS regression models, and the dependent variable in each is the member's level of presidential support in the first session of the Congress subsequent to that midterm. I chose to use overall support scores rather than something like differences between terms because the overall score should be a better relative indicator. Support scores may fall or rise year on year due to any number of factors, and these would interfere with the importance of the year to year changes in a way that should be the case with overall scores. The Senate models make use of standard CQ scores, while the House models make use of support scores tabulated by George Edwards. The reason for the distinction between this two is that the Edwards scores are slightly more

nuanced, and hence preferable, but it become difficult to determine to which member they apply in early Senate sessions. Thus, while the models are examining very similar things, they are not entirely the same.

The remainder of the data used for these models is described in Table 4.4. As it shows, the data are mostly straightforward, with most being almost identical in type to the data used in Chapter Three. It is worth noting that there is again a triple interaction in the model, Party*Frequency*Timing. This interaction should help to both test the Party Support and Opposition Anger Hypotheses, by demonstrating not only potential impacts from campaigning, but the extent to which these impacts are moderated by a member’s party affiliation.

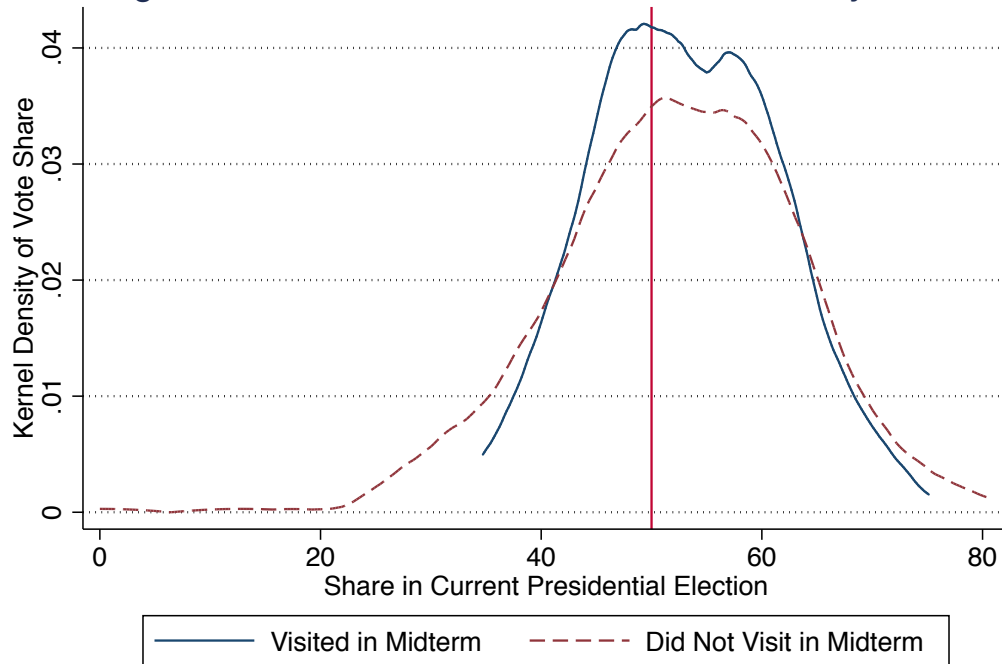
**TABLE 4.4: VARIABLES AND EXPECTED DIRECTIONS,
CONG. SUPPORT MODELS**

VARIABLES	EXPECTED	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
CONTROL			
PRIOR SUPPORT	+	Continuous	Support in previous session
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	+	Continuous	Gallup Approval rating
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	+	Continuous	Abs. distance on DW Nominate
ELECTION MARGIN	+	Continuous	Candidate’s margin in last election
PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE	+	Continuous	Difference in cand./pres. margin
EXPLANATORY			
PARTY	+	-1/1	MCs party affiliation
CAMPAIGN FREQUENCY	+	Count	Number of events held
CAMPAIGN TIMING	-	Continuous	Date of last event
PARTY*FREQ.*TIMING	+	Interaction	Interaction of prior three

Analysis and Results

The first thing that we have to ascertain is the extent to which presidential midterm campaigning impacts subsequent presidential elections, specifically presidential vote share within each state's election. Casual evidence would suggest that there is not much, if any, impact from presidential campaigning. This can be seen in Figure 4.3, which displays the distribution of two-party vote share in visited and non-visited states. As this shows, the two distributions are remarkably similar. States that are visited by presidents are more tightly clustered around 50%, but both sets appear to have fairly normal distributions, with the only major difference apparent in the left tail—presidents do not visit states where they are going to achieve very low shares of vote; this makes sense. However, this tells us much more about presidential choice—that presidents campaign in friendlier places—than about impact. For that, we need to ascertain what changes these campaign actions actually bring about.

Figure 4.3: Dist. of Presidential Vote Share, by Visited



A better example of potential impact can be seen in Table 4.5, which models that predicted vote share of the incumbent party's presidential candidate in the presidential election subsequent to the campaigned in midterm. These results indicate a couple of things. First, they show that a president who previously won a state is in a good place to win it again. Indeed, providing that he is reasonably popular, the model indicates there is little chance he will not win. It suggests that changes in unemployment are not significant factors, at least not within this context. And, most importantly, it indicates that presidential midterm campaigning is a significant factor in influencing voting results in the subsequent election. Given that the average state that is visited in an election (within this time frame) was visited on ~2 occasions, this suggests that such a state would

see a 1.5% swing in the two party vote in favor of the president’s party. Not a huge impact, but perhaps an important one.

Table 4.5: Predicted Vote Share in State

VARIABLES	Model
WON PRIOR	0.70*** (0.050)
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.17*** (0.030)
Δ UNEMPLOYMENT	0.32 (0.539)
TOTAL DAYS	0.74*** (0.173)
CONSTANT	3.92 (2.669)
OBSERVATIONS	450
ADJ. R-SQUARED	0.54
F TEST	97.56
PROB > F	0.00

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A better way to see if there is a substantive impact on election results is through a logistic model of win/loss. The results of such a model are presented in Table 4.6, and are remarkably similar to those in the vote share model. Just as above, the dominant forces appear to be (unsurprisingly) whether or not a president’s party won the state previously and how popular a president happened to be. If a president’s party had won a state and was reasonably popular, the model predicts a fairly high chance of winning that state again. However, again as above presidential midterm campaigning does have an influence, with a substitution rate of about 4-1 between popularity and campaigning—thus, a day of campaigning has the statistical influence of 4 points on the presidential approval score.

Table 4.6: Probability Of Winning State

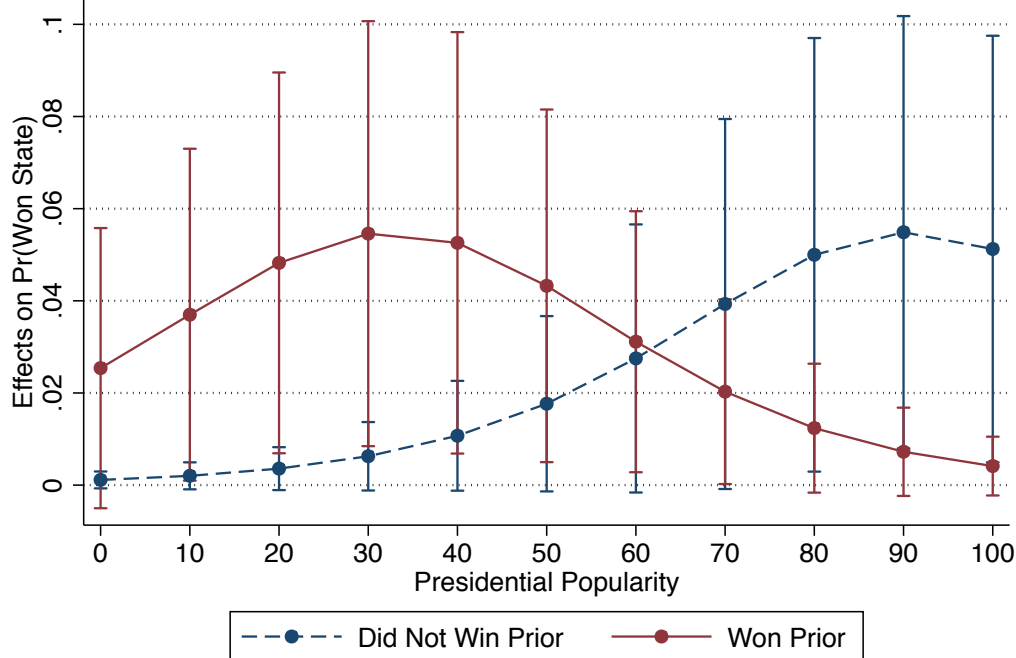
VARIABLES	MODEL
WON PRIOR	3.44*** (0.364)
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.06*** (0.014)
Δ UNEMPLOYMENT	0.06 (0.245)
TOTAL DAYS	0.23** (0.102)
CONSTANT	-5.59*** (0.768)
OBSERVATIONS	450
PSEUDO R-SQUARED	0.32
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-209.86
WALD CHI2	127.41

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A clearer explanation of this can be seen in Figure 4.4, which shows the marginal effect of campaigning across levels of popularity. This illustrates the relationship between the impact of campaigning and popularity in a better fashion, but in a more nuanced one as well. As it shows, the impact of midterm campaigning is different depending on the strength of a president's popularity and the nature of the state in question. Moreover, it suggests that midterm campaigning is largely a defensive weapon—it serves to beef up the party in states that the party already wins. While the impact of presidential campaigning in states a president did not win increases greatly as popularity increases (with a mirrored fall in states that have already been won), this shows mostly a theoretical state as no president has gone into a presidential election with much greater than 60% approval.

Figure 4.4: Avg. Marg. Effects of Total Days with 95% CIs

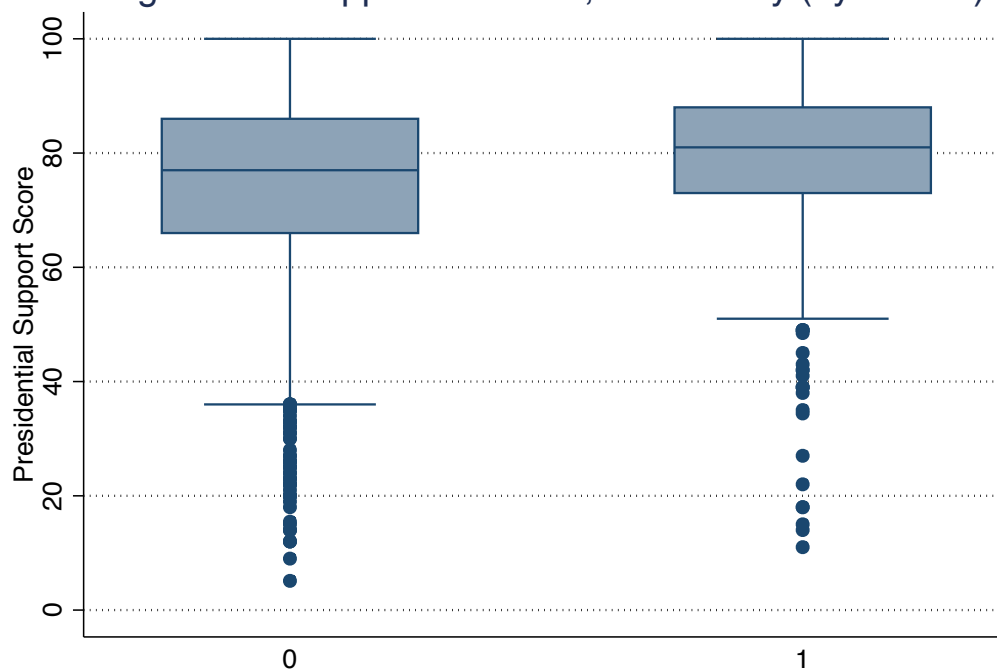


Collectively, these two models suggest moderate support for the Network Activation Hypothesis, and the idea that midterm campaigning impact subsequent presidential elections. It does appear that midterm campaigning influences subsequent outcomes (or at least helps explain them), but not in dramatic fashion. Rather, midterm campaigning has an impact on the presidential election, but in a moderate, and largely defensive sense. By this I mean that presidents do not benefit from midterm campaigning by gaining support in new states, but by preserving their prior levels of support in states that had previously won. This was seen in Figure 4.4, which illustrated the conditional impact of campaigning as a tool. Moreover, if we take the results from Table 4.5 above, the impact of campaigning on vote share turnout to largely impact no presidential victories, but to limit the size of defeats. For example, in 1976, President Ford won states with 79 electoral votes that had a final vote margin less than the predicted impact of his

midterm efforts—these efforts may have created a tighter race, but they did not win it for him. Indeed, the only election that this results show to be substantively impacted in that fashion is 2004, when 50 electoral votes won by President Bush came in states where his campaigning may have provided the margin (Florida, Iowa, Missouri, and New Mexico)—perhaps, more than just congressional majorities stood in the balance in the fall of 2002. While midterm campaigning appears to have an impact on subsequent presidential elections it is a limited one, and one more suited for holding partisan ground than extending control into new areas.

The second potential impact of midterm campaigning that we need to examine is the extent to which campaign actions impact subsequent congressional behavior. The notion, in this regard, is that presidential campaign actions create a debt (or vendetta) among members of Congress, and that this is repaid in the subsequent session by increased (or decreased) support for the president's agenda. Initial evidence suggests that this may be the case—or that presidents simply campaign more heavily for their more loyal supporters. Figure 4.5 illustrates the distribution of presidential support, within members of his own party in the House, between those who have and have not received a presidential campaign visit. As this indicates, there is a sizeable difference of ~5 points between the medians of these two groups, no small difference considering how much support is already given within this cohort.

Figure 4.5: Support in House, Pres. Party (by Visited)



However, this illustration not only limits us to the House, but also shows us correlation, not causation. For an examination of that we can turn to Table 4.7, which shows the results of the OLS support models for both the Senate. In this, we can again see that these models never quite act as expected with the Senate. Of the control variables, Prior Support, Ideological Distance, and Election Margin come up as significant. Interestingly, Election Margin behaves in the opposite manner than was expected, coming out as positive. This suggests that senators increase their support of the president as their own base of support grows—perhaps, because they are then more free to vote as they wish.

Table 4.7: Campaign Impact on Senate Support Scores

Variables	Returning	All
PRIOR SUPPORT	0.33*** (0.083)	
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	-0.11 (0.078)	0.04 (0.066)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-21.25*** (4.388)	-30.73*** (3.569)
ELECTION MARGIN	0.18** (0.081)	0.17** (0.072)
PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE	0.02 (0.061)	0.02 (0.055)
PARTY	6.18*** (1.990)	8.01*** (1.533)
CAMPAIGN FREQUENCY	1.11 (0.815)	2.59*** (0.872)
CAMPAIGN TIMING	-0.02 (0.014)	-0.02* (0.011)
PARTY*FREQUENCY*TIMING	-0.00 (0.003)	0.00 (0.003)
CONSTANT	56.18*** (8.135)	73.54*** (4.663)
OBSERVATIONS	256	370
R-SQUARED	0.66	0.65
ADJ. R-SQUARED	0.66	0.65
F TEST	63.10	86.20
PROB > F	0.00	0.00

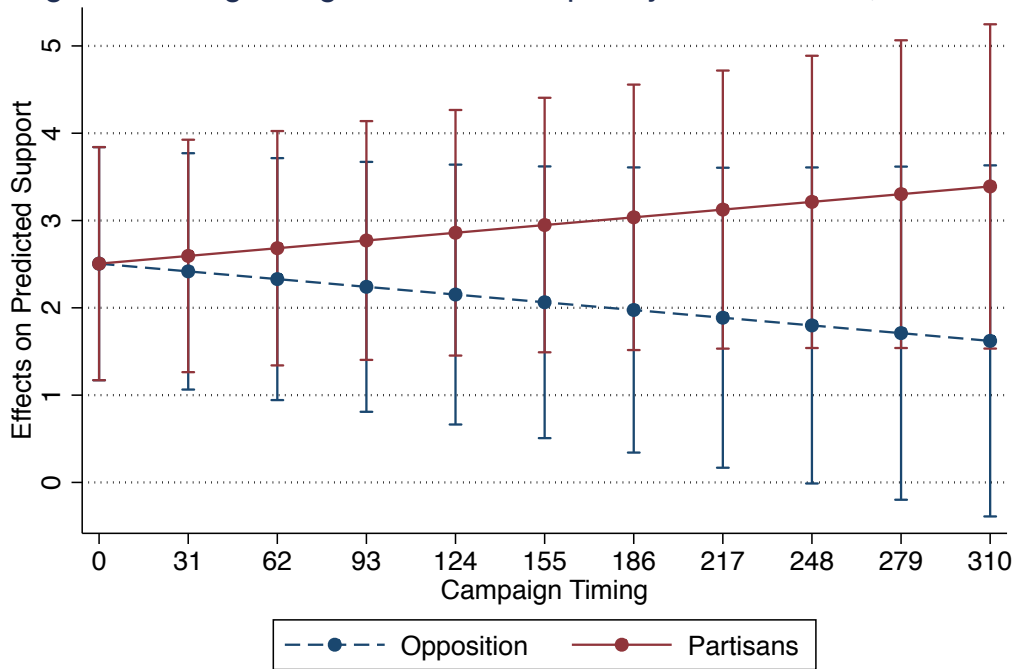
Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

More interesting than this, however, are the explanatory variables—Party, Campaign Frequency, and Campaign Timing. These are not significant at all for the returning members, suggesting that in this case prior support dominates for those who have previously held Senate office. However, when all members are considered all three variables are individually significant, but not as an interaction. The importance of this can be seen in Figure 4.6, which looks at the marginal impact of Frequency over Timing for both values of Party. Because the interaction is insignificant there is no different in the predicted direction of support between parties—thus, presidents are predicted to gain support even from those members of the opposition they campaign against. This is

unexpected, and may come back to the consistently bedeviling nature of the Senate in regards to midterm behavior.

Figure 4.6: Avg. Marg. Effects of Frequency with 95% CIs, Senate



A more predictable (and predicted) set of behaviors are displayed within Table 4.8, which shows the models looking at the House of Representatives. Indeed, in this instance every variable control variable comes up as significant—prior support, ideological distance, and presidential popularity (among others) all impact presidential support scores, and in the manner predicted. Members of the House who support the president previously, are ideologically close to him, and are facing a popular individual will likely heavily support his agenda; no surprise there. What is surprising is that in both models two of the explanatory variables—Timing and Frequency—are not individually significant, but highly significant when interacted. Thus, they cannot be understood on their own.

Table 4.8: Campaign Impact on House Support Scores

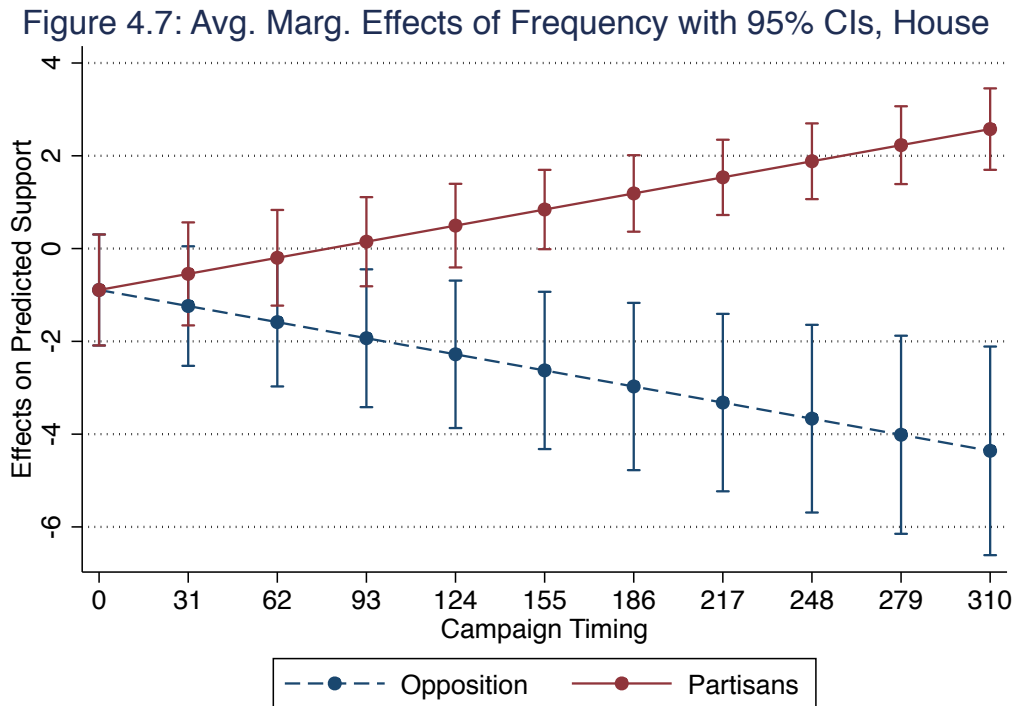
VARIABLES	RETURNING	ALL
PRIOR SUPPORT	0.29*** (0.017)	
PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL	0.16*** (0.018)	0.16*** (0.020)
IDEOLOGICAL DISTANCE	-16.01*** (1.398)	-25.25*** (1.074)
ELECTION MARGIN	0.13*** (0.017)	0.16*** (0.018)
PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE	0.08*** (0.014)	0.09*** (0.014)
PARTY	12.96*** (0.520)	16.76*** (0.451)
CAMPAIGN FREQUENCY	-0.89 (0.611)	0.20 (0.557)
CAMPAIGN TIMING	-0.00 (0.005)	0.00 (0.005)
PARTY*FREQUENCY*TIMING	0.01*** (0.002)	0.01*** (0.002)
CONSTANT	36.54*** (2.643)	55.36*** (2.183)
OBSERVATIONS	4,341	4,647
ADJ. R-SQUARED	0.80	0.77
F TEST	2880.07	2859.10
PROB > F	0.00	0.00

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

However, to the extent that they can be understood together they illustrate something that the Senate models failed to do: that there is a distinction between how partisans and opposition members react to presidential campaign actions. As Figure 4.7 makes clear, while both see ‘increasing’ presidential returns as campaign events are held closer to election day, they end up sharply positive for members of the presidents party by the last three months of the cycle, and increasingly negative for members of the opposition. Thus, both the Party Support and Opposition Anger hypotheses appear to be confirmed. Moreover, this illustrates something interesting and unexpected, in that campaign involvement that ends early in the year does not simply cause a smaller bump

in support, but in fact creates a loss of support from the MC. This, then, suggests yet another reason why presidents ought to be as thoughtful and strategic as possible in how they organize their midterm campaigns.



Collectively, these findings suggest two important things. First, they affirm the literatures focus on midterm campaigning as an aspect of the permanent campaign. Presidential actions in the midterm elections do appear to directly influence outcomes in the subsequent presidential elections, causing a small but potentially impactful increase in support for the president or his party’s candidate. I argue that this occurs because midterm campaigning helps to activate and develop networks of support in various states which then aid and advantage presidents within their own reelection attempts. Midterm

campaigning serves to the prime pump, so to speak, by developing networks on behalf of others than can then be put to use for a president's own advantage.

Second, and more importantly, these findings indicate a new way of understanding midterm campaigning's impact on congressional behavior. While Hernnson, Morris, and McTague have shown previously that midterm actions alter congressional voting behavior, these results extend and expand them. For one, they push the analysis onto a broader time frame, and show that it applicable across eras. Crucially, they also show that the extent to which congressional behavior is impacted is not simply a function of 'campaigned for or not' or 'frequency' but that the timing of these campaign events matters. This pulls forward the finds of the last chapter to show that not only do presidents strategically schedule their midterm campaigns, but that these strategic choices have varied impacts. Thus, presidents are right to be strategic in how they deploy these midterm events, and we have another wrinkle of presidential-congressional relations to understand

Discussion and Conclusion

In the fall of 2010, President Barak Obama and his allies in Congress were 'shellacked'. The once proud White House had been laid low, and the Republicans were resurgent. However, this was not for lack of trying on the part of the President. Yet, for all his efforts, for all his fundraising, and for all his travel, here he found himself. In this, Mr. Obama was in a similar position to all but two of his predecessors in midterm

campaigns—on the losing side. We are left to wonder what all those thousands of miles and days of travel get them if, in the end, they all land in the same (defeated) position.

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine this question, and to suggest new possible answers. The existing literature is fixated on the notion that the expected impact of presidential midterm campaigns is to be found in increased midterm victories. Unfortunately, evidence of this has proven as a unicorn, elusive to find. Consequently, I suggested two different outcomes—increased support from Congress and increased voter support in the presidential election—as the true potential outcomes of midterm campaigning. After analyzing midterm campaigning with relation to both subsequent presidential elections and congressional voting behavior, it looks clear that there is strong evidence to support for hypotheses.

While it is validating to find that presidential midterm actions do, indeed, increase electoral strength in the following presidential election, it is not entirely remarkable. This is an idea that is firmly lodged within the literature; these analysis, far from reshaping those thoughts, merely confirmed and extended it. What is remarkable, and important, however, are the findings with regard to congressional voting behavior. On one hand they do confirm existing findings and extend them into new election cycles. Additionally, they show the importance of a previously unexplored area—campaign timing—in the extent to which presidential campaigning ultimately impacts congressional actions. This is an important extension of our understanding, and one worthy of further study.

However, what is really important is that this impact exists at all, that while presidents may not cause more of their partisans to be elected they still reap significant rewards for their undertakings. It hints, in an interesting way, that presidents are stacking the deck—that even before the Congress comes into session, before all the intricacies of congressional decision making are brought to bear, some level of advantage has already been gained. This suggests the potential for a major revision in our understanding of how Congress behaves, how presidents interact with Congress, and how our institutions are structured to be responsive to the public rather than to each other. Thus, they are at least not insignificant findings.

Indeed, these findings combined with those of the previous two chapters suggest a major revision of our understanding of what the place, purpose, and impact of midterm campaigning actually is, and what that means for American politics. Our institutional and partisan structures were designed for a particular purpose, to deal with a particular set of expectations; presidential midterm campaigning exists and acts in such a manner as to dramatically upend them. In the next chapter I will tie together these three threads of midterm campaigning, and examine what they suggest about the future.

Chapter Five: The Future and Importance of Midterm Campaigning

“So, I think, while I recognize the limitations of Presidential campaigning, traditionally it has not been very successful, at least I think it may arouse some interest in this campaign and encourage the turnout...So, if we can arouse some interest and cause a bigger turnout then I’ll feel I’ve done the job, even though history’s against us.”³⁹

In the autumn of 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower threw down a gauntlet, and removed a long standing taboo by actively and publically campaigning within that year’s midterm congressional elections. Rather than being rejected, as had attempts before, his actions were accepted by the political order, and continued by his successors. Under Kennedy we see an explosion of action, a wide-ranging and vigorous campaign that would not be equaled for decades. Presidents Nixon and Reagan showed us a reemphasis on the Senate, and the importance of their roles in trying to expand their parties into new areas. George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton made use of midterm campaigning to strengthen their party apparatus, investing huge amounts of time raising funds, not for candidates, but for the party as an institution. Each president that followed Eisenhower took up midterm campaigning, but did so in his own way. But, in the end, does it all even matter?

As we saw in the previous chapters, midterm campaigning is a new arrival to our political scene, a behavior that arose in reaction to a changed political and partisan world. As such, it has allowed presidents to channel resources and assistance to chosen candidates, to try and get (re)elected those men and women whom they most favor. Yet, while it does influence congressional voting behavior, and has marginal impacts on

³⁹ “Transcript of Interview with William Lawrence Recorded for Program ‘Politics—‘62’” (Oct. 14, 1962) pp. 777. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962.*

subsequent presidential elections, these midterm campaigns have not resulted in landslides for the presidential party, for major reshuffling of the makeup or behavior of Congress. The Civil Rights Act was not passed because of Kennedy's efforts in 1962, the Reagan Revolution floundered in spite of Reagan's efforts in 1982 and '86, and even seemingly successful attempts (such as Bush in 2002) can largely be chalked up to non-campaign related forces (Kelle et al, 2004). Therefore, it behooves use to return to the start, and ask again why this is all important, and what substantive role midterm campaigning plays in American politics and democratic life.

The task of this chapter is to understand the importance of this behavior and of this dissertation's finding. Thus, this chapter it will look at both how these findings can be used to predict and explain future presidential behavior, and how they help to more accurately reorient the place and influence of midterm campaigning within American politics. This, again, fits with the initial discussion in Chapter One. Midterm campaigning is an interesting, and bedeviling empirical puzzle, and so we ought to try and understand it what sense it is order, structured, repeatable; thus, it make sense to understand if it is not simply repeated or cyclical, but predictable as well. Midterm campaigning also raises a series of fundamental questions as well, about the nature of presidential ambition, party strength, and congressional decision making to raise a few. As I close this study, it makes sense to return to the beginning, to wrap up these questions and to show the worth of this study, and the importance of midterm campaigning.

To do this, the chapter proceeds as follows. First, I examine the potential actions of President Obama in the upcoming 2014 midterm contest. Drawing from the findings

of the prior chapters, I predict the extent of his travels, on whose behalf he campaigns, and in what manner he does so. I also offer suggestions on what this means for the future of this behavior. Second, I discuss the long term impacts of this behavior, and what it means for our understanding of American politics. I close by arguing that our current perceptions of the place of midterm campaigning are wrong, and that it follows a long held pattern of failing to see the import of changes, and an overestimation of our political systems ability to easily react to underlying change.

Obama in 2014

Though given the nature of the permanent campaign it may be foolish to assign any start or end date to a campaign season, it is clear from the actions and statements of the Obama administration that they are gearing up for an involved 2014 campaign. They have already promised a robust schedule in 2013—pledging a total of 14 events (5 for the DCCC/DSCC outside of DC and 4 for both of them in the District) (Zelleny 2013). On top of this, many of his major policy proposals of late—such as immigration reform and green energy/climate change—were things that his erstwhile supporters were furious about with him in the run up to the 2010 election (Southall 2010). The president seems clearly focused on bringing as broad and as focused a coalition into the election, and acting as much as he can to aid his incumbents. In doing this, the above results suggest two major trends.

1. Broader Campaigning

That President Obama should campaign more frequently in the 2014 election than he did in 2010 is perhaps no surprise. For one, he has already more or less said as much, as noted above. This is no doubt a response (at least in some ways) to the criticisms lobbed at him in the aftermath of the 2010 midterm, and the idea that he failed to do enough. He did campaign heavily, but he was in something of a tight situation. As he acknowledged to some sitting Democrats, “You might not even want me to come to your district” (Zeleny 2010, A1). In many cases he did this (and stayed away); this perhaps was helpful, perhaps not. But he went beyond this, and angered some in his party by not only staying aloof, but occasionally intervening on the wrong side. The greatest example of this, perhaps, is in the Rhode Island gubernatorial race, where his not so secret preference for non-Democrat Lincoln Chaffee caused the Democratic candidate to pronounce that Obama could “take his endorsement and really shove it.” (Liasson 2010). Due to all of this, it makes sense that he would be eager to show his commitment on the trail more fully this year.

In addition to being what the president has more or less acknowledged, the prediction models from Chapter Two likewise predict a long, if not necessarily broad campaign. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the predicted extent of his travels and their predicted range.⁴⁰ These, of course, should be taken with a grain of salt. For example, I do not think that the President will effectively double his campaign schedule this cycle (when

⁴⁰ These figures make use of the same models as presented in Chapter Two. To generate results, they were supplied with information generated in the 2012 election—state by state results, the number of competitive House races, Ranney scores, etc. For Figure 5.2, all the data was ‘correct’ with the exception of total days campaigned, were inputted at 65 days (like) and 85 days (much less likely); thus, it presents two options for the extent of his travel, with the ‘85 day’ states being those that would only be added under that condition.

compared to the last), nor do I imagine that he will heavily campaign in Alabama but not appear in Minnesota. However, these results do suggest (and, I think properly) that Mr. Obama will be a more active campaigner and a very targeted one as well.

The factors underlying this expansion of his efforts are fairly straightforward. First, the White House knows as well as does the prediction model that the House is very competitive, with a pickup of 17 seats changing the majority party. Now, the administration and Democratic Party leaders have made clear that they have a “great chance” to take back the house in 2014 (Mall 2013). This seems unlikely to occur—the electoral situation is rather unlike 1998 or 2002, and is certainly not similar to 1934. Thus, we should expect that they will lose seats in the chamber. However, given small size of the Republican majority, it will be imperative for the Democrats to keep the post-election majority to as small a size as possible, to make it more manageable. Thus, just as we saw President Bush in 2006 greatly increase his campaigning on behalf of House candidates, so too should we see Mr. Obama redouble his efforts, to ensure the subsequent strength of the Democratic caucus in the chamber.

The second underlying factor that should cause him to expand his efforts is that he has a larger than normal cohort of Democratic Senate seats coming up for election this year, and (in part as a consequence) many of them are in state that will be difficult for Democrats to hold. In 2014 the Democratic Party will be defending 21 Senate seats that they currently hold, as opposed to 14 for the Republican Party, and a number of the those Senate seats are in places they likely would not have won were it not for the election of President Obama in 2008. Thus, as will Ronald Reagan's 12 seat pickup in 1980, President Obama has a great deal of work to do to defend his party's gain of 8 seats in 2008. Therefore, just as 1986 saw a major expansion of Reagan's efforts to defend what was effectively his class of senators, so too should be see President Obama expand his efforts to defend what is, in effect, the legacy of his own victory.

2. Heavier Fundraising

In addition to expanding the overall scope of his campaign, I predict that President Obama will increase his fundraising efforts in the upcoming election cycle. On some levels, this is a truism—fundraising levels are always 'higher' because spending is always greater. However, in this case I mean that the President will increase his reliance on private, fundraising events at the expense of public, rally events. This should occur for three reasons. First, one of the major facets of his announced campaign intentions are an increased number of fundraisers for members of the House. As we saw above, he has already said he plans to hold a minimum of 9 fundraisers for Democratic House candidates in 2013 (Zelleny 2013). This increased attention to House fundraising should

be a bit of happiness of the DCCC, as President Obama woefully neglected House fundraising in the 2010 cycle. While in 2006 President Bush held 16 fundraisers for the House and 6 for the Senate, President Obama held 16 for the Senate and 2 for the House. Look for this total to be increased somewhat significantly over the 2014 cycle.

In addition to increasing his fundraising for House candidates, we should likewise have a renewed emphasis on Senate fundraising, and for good reason. As noted above, the Democrats face a tough road vis-à-vis the Senate in 2014, with prognosticators declaring the majority to be, at best, a toss-up (Silver 2013). Moreover, the size of the Democratic cohort relative to the Republican one, and the marginal locations of many of those senators, mean that a significantly greater number of resources will be needed to defend control of the Senate in 2014. Moreover, if the President wishes to have anything approaching a successful agenda in the final two years of his presidency, he will need a Senate majority. Without them, his favored policies will be even more dead in the water, he will lack the ability to achieve any major international action, and any appointments to the bench will be fought tooth and nail. So, while he may spend relatively more time campaigning for the House than he did in the previous cycle, he should nonetheless spend a considerable (and increased) amount of time raising funds for his Senate allies.

The final reason we should expect an expanded fundraising effort in the 2014 midterm campaign is that it provides President Obama one last chance to cement a strong legacy within the party as an institution. His emphasis on the House and Senate are political expedients that will, if done right, help maintain his political legacy. However, by fundraising heavily for the institutional forms of the party—the local, state, and

national parties—President Obama will be more able to ensure his continued standing within them. We can see an example of this in President Clinton’s 1998 campaign efforts. Though he did heavily involve himself in raising money for House and Senate candidates, he also held 41 fundraisers for the national committees (DCCC, DSCC, DNC, and Unity ’98). This, as Galvin (2009) notes, allowed Mr. Clinton to build up the institutional resources of the party and combat the Republicans on a more ‘equal’ footing. We should expect to see something similar in President Obama’s swan song. Though not unpopular, his greatest draw will be, as ever, among partisans, and so he will be able to raise large sums for the future needs of the party. In doing this, he can cement his legacy within the party, ensure that his party appointees have the resources they need, and make it more likely that the future growth of the party occurs in the ways he wishes it to occur.

Why This All Matters

The above predictions about the 2014 cycle may be correct, or may not be so; either does not, I think, alter the value of this work. This because the value of this dissertation and the extent to which it adds to our knowledge should manifest itself more in reshaping how we think of and approach midterm campaigning than how we quantify and analyze it. This goal of this dissertation has never been to declare the modes and methods that have come before it to be wrong; rather, it has been an attempt to show that if we look up from the assigned path of inquiry, if we expand our field of view, then we can see and understand this behavior and its importance in ways that suggest whole new manners of exploration. As such, it has suggested three major points that we as scholars

should ponder as we consider presidential midterm campaigning, congressional-executive relationships, and American politics broadly.

The first of these take away points is the importance of understanding the extent and direction of presidential agency. Much of the literature looking at midterm campaigning allows itself to be caught up in the narrative of modernity, of the public presidency, and of the permanent campaign. Thus, presidential actions are reduced to either somewhat irrelevant sub-units of important global trends or of outcomes that in some ways must occur—modernity demands it. As I suggested at the outset of this dissertation, this understanding is deeply problematic. This is not to say that midterm campaigning is not a feature of the public presidency or of the permanent campaign; far from it, as it is clearly an integral and expanding part of both. But, it is not a deterministic outcome of these trends, but rather an independent action that helped to bring them (or at least the permanent campaign) into being).

Indeed, the most basic take away point of this dissertation may perhaps be this: presidents did not have to involve themselves in midterm campaigns in this manner, nor did they have to expand their efforts to the extent that they have. A world without midterm campaigning would be much different, and perhaps the power of the presidency would be less than it is currently, but the republic would have survived, and the presidency would have at least been *primum inter pars*. That midterm campaigning does exist, then, and that it has expanded to the extent that it has, is not a function of something preconditioned, but something that arose out of presidential choices. Midterm campaigning arose as a rational response to a changed and changing political

environment; its expansion was an equally rational response to a similarly changing environment. Its existence is not predetermined, and it is not necessary—it was a choice.

This element of choice is all the more valuable because it is so often overlooked. By focusing on it, by placing presidential actions within the universe of possible alternatives, we are able to see presidential midterm campaigning in a whole new light. Not only can its rise and growth be better understood, but its organization and its expectations. As we saw in Chapter Three, by understanding midterm campaigning as a series of choices, we can more fully understand that presidential strategy really is presidential in nature, that the behavior exists to serve the president, not the candidate. This is a dramatic break from the conception of midterm campaigning as partisan service, aimed at protecting vulnerable partisans; in its place, we can see presidents as strategic actors, making use of their campaign time to aid and indebt the members of Congress who will be most useful to their causes.

A second take away point from this dissertation is the overarching importance of the party system within any proper understanding of American politics. As this dissertation showed, whether as the patronage driven, mass public forms of the 19th century, the lost in the wilderness, fallen giants of the mid 20th century, or the renewed and reinvigorated service orientated parties of now, parties structure and delineate the acceptable behaviors of American politics. Midterm campaigning was one such behavior, once treated as anathema, but now largely accepted. Unfortunately, the existing literature places no role for party in their vision of the behavior, no place for the

structure and reward/punishment that the party system can provide. But, as we saw, the party system is the key to the whole undertaking. It was changes in the party system that allowed midterm campaigning to realistically occur, that allowed presidential agency to take center stage.

This is important, because it stresses the need for both those who look at midterm campaigning and those who look at American parties to understand the interplay that brought this behavior about, and the ways in which party continues to define and be defined by it. For, it is a two way street. On one hand, modern presidents are clearly bent on dominating the party system and bending it to their will. As Milkis and Rhodes (2007) point out, recent presidencies—most well defined in the tenure of George W. Bush—have sought to remake their parties into presidential parties, to make their congressional counterparts not equals, but pure allies. Midterm campaigning clearly plays a role in this, as we saw above. By allowing presidents to campaign for their favored candidates, they allow a virtuous/vicious (depending on your point of view) cycle to develop, wherein candidates receive and exchange aid and punishment with the president wholly outside of the party structure. Midterm campaigning helps to accelerate the ability of president's to 'capture their parties', and so we must work to understand this process.

However, on the flip side, it is clear the parties do still define the extent of presidential actions, and they do put up limits to what he is able to undertake. For example, almost nowhere in the history of midterm campaigning is there evidence of presidential interference in party primaries or of active campaigning against a member of

one's own party. Certainly, both of these have occurred, notably with the Bush administration intervention in the MN Senate primary in 2002 (Smith 2002) and the Nixon administration's active support of the Conservative Party candidate against a Republican incumbent in the 1970 midterm cycle. However, these occur nearly entirely behind the scenes; presidential public actions remain deliberately friendly to the whole of their party. Should they campaign in a state that has not decided its candidates, presidents of both parties acknowledge the situation, and thank all candidates for running.

Third, the findings of the preceding chapters make clear the importance of understanding the nature of the American party system, and the way that its structure shapes the political universe in which it exists. Party is, of course, key to understanding midterm campaigning, as it defines the limits of acceptable behavior, and constitutes the easiest means of punishing unacceptable behavior. The agency that presidents can now show within midterm campaigning is thus a function of a transformed party system: once such behavior was restricted or forbidden; now it is not, so it is freely and openly practiced. Likewise, the manner in which midterm campaigning is also a function of the party system. While presidents may be more able to campaign for whomsoever they wish, they almost entirely avoid interference in party primaries and strictly avoid campaigning for members of the opposition. This is not an absolute rule—the Bush Administration intervened in the 2002 MN Senate primary, and the Obama Administration made no secret of its preference for a non-Democratic candidate for Rhode

Island governor in 2010. But, by in large, these areas are still walled off from presidential action.

Nevertheless, the state of parties is all the more important as it not only structures the manner in which presidents can campaign, but how those campaigns are received by Congress and ways they alter how presidents interact with the institution, and how Congress actually behaves. Indeed, unless we take a strictly intuitionist tack and argue for a sole focus on committees (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Adler and Lipinski 1997), or look only at constituency factors (Fenno 1977; Sulkin 2005), the party ultimately defines this relationship. Parties, though differently than they once did, still organize and structure the Congress (Aldrich and Rhode 1998; Cox and McCubbins 2007; Smith 2007), and if a president cannot translate popular support into partisan support then it is meaningless (Edwards 1989). However, even more explicit ideas of party—like the notion of ‘Conditional Party Government’ (Rhode 1991)—obscure the true importance of party by overlooking the fact that it matters who in this relationship calls the shots: the party, or the president.

This, then, is the reason that party is quintessentially implicated in midterm campaigning—not only does it ‘cause’ it to occur, but it is potentially radically altered by that occurrence. As Milkis and Rhodes (2007) point out, the modern presidency is focused on not simply assuming leadership of their party, but in subsuming the party in its entirety. This is not a new desire—as Woodrow Wilson (1907) pointed out above His patronage touches every community in the United States. He can often by its use disconnect and even master the local managers of his own party by combining the arts of the politician with the duties of the statesmen, and he can go far towards establishing a complete personal domination (215).

But midterm campaigning provides something new. It is certainly part of a larger presidential strategy—Galvin (2010) shows at length how presidents have acted in the last 60 years to strengthen their parties, on their own terms; midterm campaigning is part of this. But what sets midterm campaigning—or any of these actions—apart from prior actions like the use of patronage, is that they have the appearance to be nothing out of the ordinary, and yet are; they appear to be structured to aid the party, when they are structured to aid the president. This is not something to be lightly overlooked.

Ultimately, then, what this all lays bare is the importance of placing changes in systemic context, of understanding how a transformation of one aspect relates to the whole. Presidential midterm campaigning is, on its face, a minor change in our political system, an extension of long established and accepted presidential actions. It is, in many ways, simply a facet of the public presidency, of the permanent campaign, of things that both the public and the political order accept without question or complaint. However, in its operation and in its impact it is more than this. As we have seen, midterm campaigning is an assault on a traditional order, a threat to an established (though changing) party system and the relationships its structures. To simply accept presidential midterm campaigning (and similar manifestations of presidential behavior) as par for the course, and how it is, is to the radical difference and potential change it represents. These behaviors represent a square peg that we as scholars, and potentially politicians as practitioners, simply assume fits into a round hole; that may not be the case.

By simply accepting this behavior and treating it as just another development, scholars understate its importance, overlook the extent to which it challenges long held assumptions of American politics. Midterm campaigning does not simply threaten an established partisan system, but it represents a presidential attempt to undermine fundamental tenets of our political order. Our notions of representation and of the separation of powers that come to us from the Founders on down, are predicated on the idea that ambition can counteract ambition, that pride of place will be something of value. But whether or not these have ultimately proved effective (and they seem rather to have not), the extent to which they can depend on ensuring that the legislative and executive branches meet each other within government, that the manner in which they partner or fight be one developed between elected officials—not one decided prior to election. Presidential midterm campaigning threatens this system, and upends notions of the separation of powers, because it short circuits process and establishes loyalty or enmity, presidential strength or weakness prior to when Representatives or Senators can meet the President as constitutional equals. Pride of place is unlikely to trump senses of debt or obligation, nor will ambition counteract ambition very often if it involves biting the hand that feeds. Presidential midterm campaigning may not be better or worse than that which has come before—be it patronage or outright graft—but it serves a similar purpose, and we do wrong to overlook that significance.

This is not meant to be a jeremiad against presidential campaigning, or a reactionary statement that the old order must be preserved and this menace put down; far from it. Presidential midterm campaigning and all it represents is neither good nor bad

in itself, and the impacts it has on our political system are certainly not normatively problematic. But they are they are potentially destabilizing to our established picture of how politics works. If president can gain an advantage even through what is perceived as a failure, if he is able to steer resources to fellow party members not on the basis of need (or worth) but on the basis of his own desires, if presidents can be successful in reshaping Congress and congressional behavior in their own image, then that is something worth understanding. Presidents seek mastery—that is in the nature of their office, and nothing new. But the institutions we have developed are, at least in theory, designed to channel that motive, to blunt it, to control it. If that is no longer the case, if midterm campaigning and actions like it allow presidents to can power and control through and within the institutions that are supposed to blunt them, then we need to understand how and to what extent that occurs. That this should come to be is neither good, nor bad in and of itself; but it may be bad (and harmful) if we do not see it occurring, and if we simply assume that square pegs will fit into round holes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Presidential Campaigning Coding Schema

The documents held in the *Public Papers* can rather quickly be broken down into various subgroups. First, the *Papers* contain both written and spoken statements; written statements were not included in this analysis as they either did not involve campaigning, or to the extent that they were press releases and ‘summations’ of upcoming speeches.⁴¹ The spoken statements can be further subdivided into official pronouncements, pressers, and campaign/travel speech. Official pronouncements—such as bill signings, or international speeches—were wholly excluded from the analysis, as were statements to the press/interviews. Ultimately, then, the only portions of the *Papers* that were included in the analysis were speeches made by in private events that included some level of candidates endorsement (or were specifically labeled as fundraisers), and public events that mentioned partisan candidates and at which members of the opposing party were present.

After those documents that were excluded from the analysis were removed, the various presidential statements were broken into public and private. Public events were those explicitly delivered in public spaces—fairs, schools, and the like—or those that were explicitly labeled as rallies. Private events were those held for political groups—dinners for the RNC/DNC, or the DCCC—or for private organizations—such as the Hibernian Society or the VFW. Theoretically these private speeches could have been held before a greater group of people, and could have a greater material impact on the

⁴¹ See, for example, “Statement in Support of Republican Candidates” (Oct. 31, 1970) pp. 1032-33. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1970*.

outcome of the race. However, they were treated as necessarily less important than public events because an assumed capacity for media attention. Presidential public events should be more likely to draw media coverage, and to have media access, and so there was a presumed greater potential ‘impact’ of presidential actions within public as opposed to private spaces.

Having been sorted into public and private these speeches were coded for timing, location, and content. Every speech was noted for location and date, both in calendar date and the number of days prior to the election. Then, every statement made about any partisan candidate was coded for what was said and the intensity of the statement. Intensity was divided between ‘appearance’ and ‘endorsement’. ‘Appearance’ included any statement by the president about a candidate who was present at the event, including innocuous things like ‘thanks for coming’—thus, it was the base code for all statements. For something to be coded as an ‘endorsement’ it had to include stronger language signifying a request by the president for those in the audience to aid that individual. Ultimately, it was limited to statements that included the following phrase: ‘I/X Need(s); (re)elect; vote for; send to; make a great; I am/be for him/her; right man/woman; is essential; speak up for; is good for; needs your help; I look forward to seeing’.

These coding guidelines were developed organically from examination of the text, because of the fact that different presidents used very different language in addressing candidates. The original plan was to use only phrases like ‘endorse, support, elect’ or other pre-determined phrases. However, on examination, many presidents consistently used phrasing that clearly implied the same level of support, the same request of the

public, but with idiosyncratic language. Early presidents used endorse, support, and so forth, but as time went on and the behavior became more personal, presidents shifted to ‘I need, I am for’ and other statements of personal purpose. Thus, as the analysis developed what was included expanded but was kept as tight as possible, and focused on words with implicit equivalent purpose.

After every statement was coded they were tabulated for each candidate. Statements that were coded as ‘appearance’ for private events were not included in the tabulations. These were excluded because they were deemed to be insufficiently important within their setting. ‘Appearance’ statements in public events were included because they invariably included presidential presence with a candidate that could be understood by the crowd (and the media). At minimum, then, it should have allowed for a photo op. Such statements in private settings, however, would simply have been ‘hellos’ said among other elites; thus, they would be perceived as much less valuable to the candidate. In addition to tabulating appearances and endorsements, total days, total events, and total fundraisers were tabulated, allowing each candidate to be broken into four levels of campaigning (none, visited, endorsed, fundraised), as well as to be compared in terms of frequency and style.

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