

# Political Knowledge and Straight Ticket Voting

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# Straight Ticket Voting (STV)

- ▶ Straight ticket votes are cast by selecting the straight ticket option or voting for candidates of the same party.
- ▶ Important because states are abolishing the STV option.
  - ▶ States that have abolished STV: Iowa, Texas, Indiana, West Virginia, and several other states.
- ▶ Why? Voting matters.

# Straight Ticket Voting (STV)




OFFICIAL BALLOT General Election Tuesday, November 4, 2014 Wexford County, Michigan Boon Township, Precinct 1M		
PARTISAN SECTION		LEGISLATIVE
STRAIGHT PARTY TICKET Vote for not more than 1		STATE SENATOR 35TH DISTRICT Vote for not more than 1
	Republican Party <input type="radio"/>	Darwin L. Booher Republican <input type="radio"/>
	Democratic Party <input type="radio"/>	Glenn Lottie Democratic <input type="radio"/>
	Libertarian Party <input type="radio"/>	
	U.S. Taxpayers Party <input type="radio"/>	REPRESENTATIVE IN STATE LEGISLATURE 102ND DISTRICT Vote for not more than 1
	Green Party <input type="radio"/>	Phil Potvin Republican <input type="radio"/>
	Natural Law Party <input type="radio"/>	John B. Ruggles Democratic <input type="radio"/>
		STATE BOARDS

Figure 1: Example of Straight Ticket Option. Source: 9 & 10 News

## Previous Literature:

- ▶ Party labels play a heuristic role in allowing voters to locate candidates on issue space and attribute blame (Down 1957; Key 1966)
- ▶ All voters use some form of heuristic (Lau and Redlawsk 2001 ; 2011).
  - ▶ Highly sophisticated voters are more likely to use ideological schema and endorsement heuristics.
  - ▶ No evidence for less sophisticated voters using party schema and candidate appearance.

## Research Questions:

- ▶ Does political knowledge determine the likelihood of casting a straight ticket ballot?
- ▶ Does having a STV option determine the likelihood of casting a straight ticket vote?

## Hypotheses:

- ▶ Low levels of political knowledge increase the likelihood of straight ticket voting.
- ▶ The STV option facilitates straight ticket voting.

# Hypothesis 1 - Research Design:

- ▶ Data: CCES 2016
- ▶ DV: Vote for same party in the following elections [0,1]
  - ▶ President
  - ▶ Both chambers of US Congress
  - ▶ Both chambers of state legislature
  - ▶ State Attorney General
  - ▶ State Secretary of State
- ▶ IV: Interaction between the effects of political knowledge and straight ticket option.
  - ▶ Combined Political Knowledge [0,1]. Includes national and state political knowledge.
    - ▶ Ability to identify the majority party in each of the four legislative chamber.
  - ▶ Straight Vote Option [0,1] if a respondent resides in a state that has the STV option on the ballot.

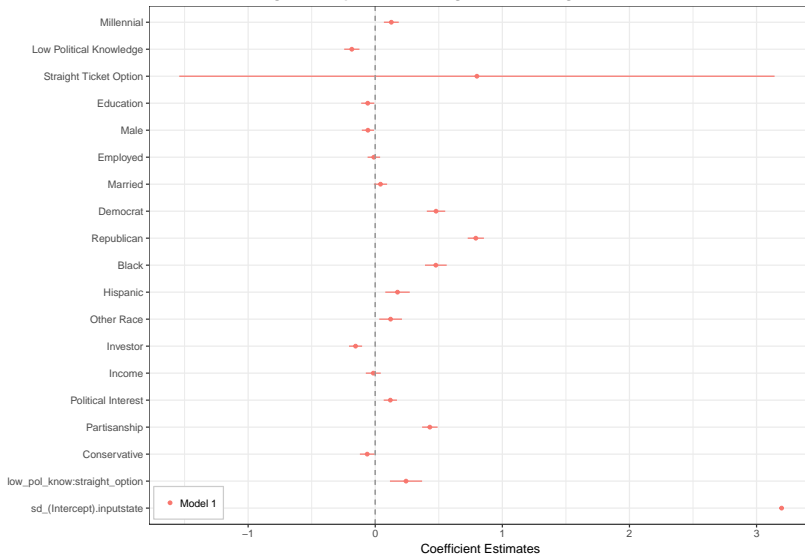
## Hypothesis 1 - Model:

- ▶ Random Intercept Model



# Hypotheses 1 - Results

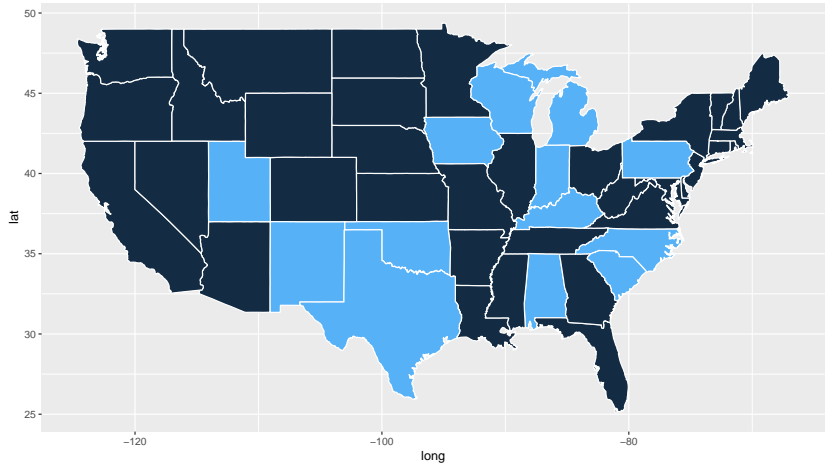
**Political Knowledge, STV Option, and Straight Ticket Voting**



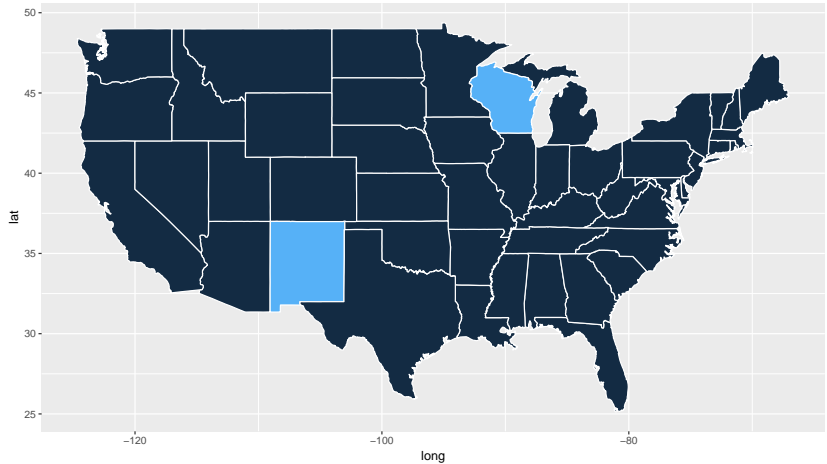
## Hypothesis 2 -

- ▶ STV option facilitates straight ticket voting.
- ▶ Institutional variation.

## Hypothesis 2 - Thirteen states had the STV option in 2010



## Hypothesis 2 - Two states removed STV option before 2014



## Hypothesis 2 - Difference-in-difference

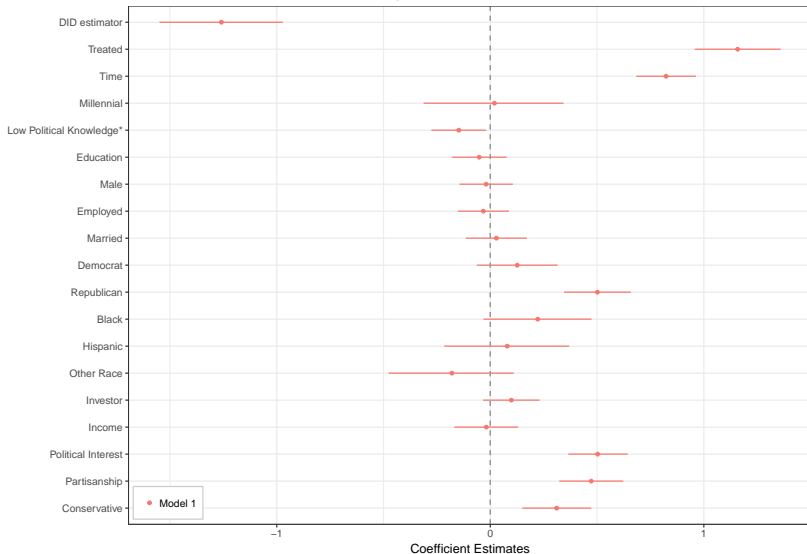
- ▶ Sample: States that had STV option in 2010
  - ▶ Treatment = Removal of the STV option.
  - ▶ Control = States the did not remove the option.

## Hypothesis 2 - Difference-in-difference

- ▶ Data: CCES Panel Data 2010-2014 (election years).
- ▶ DV: Straight Ticket Voting.
  - ▶ Legislative elections at both the national and state level.
  - ▶ Four elections.
- ▶ IV: Differences-in-Differences Estimator.
  - ▶ Interaction between time and treated.

# Hypothesis 2 - Results

**Differences-in-Differences for STV Option**



## Conclusion:

- ▶ Evidence of less sophisticated voters using party schema.
- ▶ Removal of STV will lead to more split ticket voting.