

## TO GIVE OR NOT TO GIVE: Modeling Individuals' Contribution Decisions

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Employing data from a recent national survey on campaign finance, we examine the contribution behavior of individual citizens in the 2000 election. By disaggregating types of contributions, our model enables us to observe potential heterogeneity in the determinants of giving money to parties and candidates. We find that for both types of contributions, the effects of informational resources and solicitation on the decision to contribute outweigh those of financial resources. In addition, we propose both a theoretical and an empirical distinction between the selection effects of solicitation and the stimulus effects of solicitation. By distinguishing between these dual dimensions of solicitation, our analysis provides new insight into the causal linkages between income, solicitation, and contributions. We find that while solicitation increases the likelihood of contributing through selective targeting or rational prospecting, it also does so through a stimulus mechanism.

**Key words:** contributions; solicitation; rational prospecting; information costs; selection effects.

Despite the enactment of tighter campaign finance regulations in the 1970s, the amount of money contributed in American elections has steadily increased. Accordingly, political scientists have become increasingly interested in investigating the sources and determinants of campaign contributions. Considerable attention has been given toward analyzing the contribution behavior of political action committees (Biersack, Herrnson, and Wilcox, 1994; Box-Steffensmeier and Grant, 1999; Clawson, Neustadt, and Scott, 1992; Cox and Magar, 1999; Endersby and Munger, 1992; Evans, 1988; Gais, 1998; Gopoian, 1984; Grenzke, 1989; Grier and Munger, 1993; Grier, Munger, and Roberts, 1994; Hall and Wayman, 1990; Handler and Mulkern, 1982; Poole and Romer, 1985; Rudolph, 1999; Sabato, 1984; Snyder, 1990; Sorauf, 1988, 1992; Strat-

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11. However, like Brady, Schlozman, and Verba (1999), we find that income does still have a direct effect on the size of contributions even after solicitation is taken into account.

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