Research Article

Who Donates to Party Switchers?

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Abstract

What are the causal effects of legislative party switching on campaign fundraising? Using a selection-on-observables strategy (a first in the study of U.S. party switchers), we demonstrate that relative to other similarly situated legislators, party switchers rely more heavily on partisan and ideological, out-of-district individual donors, and direct party contributions. In short, switchers—in trying to alleviate the electoral costs of switching—rely disproportionately on donors motivated to protect vulnerable incumbents of a particular party. We conclude with a discussion of how these dynamics reinforce partisan polarization and raise normative questions about representation and the role of the "surrogate constituency."

Keywords

party switchers, campaign donors, parties, Congress, money in politics

> I had a Republican colleague—he was very powerful—call me and ask me to [switch parties]. And he told me that I wouldn't have to worry about money. I always had trouble raising money, I was never good at it . . . But this person told me I would not have to worry about raising money.
>
> —Interview with a potential switcher from Yoshinaka (2016)

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With the typical U.S. House winner spending close to $1.5 million in 2014 (Brookings, 2019), winning and retaining elective office can be an expensive proposition; doing so after having changed party labels can be even costlier in terms of resources and the potential for voter backlash. Yet, over the last several decades, a handful of incumbent members of Congress (MCs) have switched parties, and an even larger number of legislators have done so in lower levels of government. This unique situation affords us with the opportunity to answer the following question: What are the financial consequences of party switching for incumbent politicians?

This question is important for at least two reasons. First, switching parties is arguably the most important career decision for a sitting politician, and it carries electoral, representational, and legislative consequences. The reaction among voters, colleagues, staffers, and the media can produce backlash. Yet, we know little about how switchers attempt to mitigate such uncertainty and shore up their bid for reelection. We open the "black box" of postswitch electoral politics and argue that campaign fundraising plays an important role. Second, we use this unique situation in which an incumbent's relationship with constituents is altered to build on previous research and further explore the intersection of the geography and the motivations of donors.

Our results show that switchers turn to out-of-district donors who are more likely to exert ideological behavior by donating to like-minded politicians with whom they lack geographical ties. Switchers are also more likely to rely on party sources to remedy any shortcomings felt among other donors. Our results help disentangle the dynamics that occur in the aftermath of the decision to switch parties: switchers turn to out-of-district, ideological donors and party support to alleviate the *local* costs of switching parties. In short, we suggest that the role of constituents living outside the district—or what Fenno (1978) calls the "surrogate constituency"—is an important source of support for incumbents who face significant in-district uncertainty.[1]

Our article makes several contributions. First, we expand the literature on party switching by examining a mechanism to overcome the electoral costs of a switch. Second, we estimate the first-ever causal inference-based model of party-switching effects in the United States by juxtaposing traditional observational models to models that rely on a selection-on-observables strategy. Third, we highlight what Fenno (1978) calls the "surrogate constituency" in shoring up support for vulnerable incumbents. In the context of an increasingly polarized polity, our results point to another factor that can exacerbate the partisan divide: an increased reliance on ideological donors who may pour money into any district to help vulnerable incumbents. Fourth, we take a novel approach to the study of representation. Rather than estimating the effect of a representational shock on the behavior of legislators (for instance,

the effect of redistricting on roll-call behavior), we examine the effect of such a shock (party switching) on the behavior of constituents (contributors).

The Costs and Consequences of Party Switching

Why do elected officials arrive at a decision—party switching—that, according to Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991), few would ever make? Scholars point to a number of possibilities, including reelection, the political context, and ambition (Aldrich, 2011; Aldrich & Bianco, 1992; Castle & Fett, 2000; King, 1988; McKee & Yoshinaka, 2015; Yoshinaka, 2016; Yoshinaka & McKee, forthcoming). Much of this scholarship assumes that the decision to switch party is fraught with uncertainty and can be a costly one for any incumbent. As former Democratic Rep. Glen Browder notes, "Switchers have a difficulty. Democrats are mad at them for leaving, Republicans fault them because they're a Johnny-come-lately. Their old friends hate them and their new friends don't trust them" (Glaser, 2001, p. 75). In short, party switching can lead some voters and partisans to view an MC as untrustworthy, driven entirely by political ambition, or worse (see Evans, Peterson, & Hadley, 2012); it has been shown empirically that party switching exacts significant costs at the ballot box (Canon, 1992; Grose & Yoshinaka, 2003; Yoshinaka, 2016; Yoshinaka & McKee, forthcoming). That switching is costly is also assumed in the theoretical accounts of Bianco (1994), Cox and McCubbins (2005), and Hirschman (1970). Beyond electoral consequences, a significant amount of research demonstrates that party switchers' legislative behavior moves dramatically in the ideological direction of their new party (Hager & Talbert, 2000; McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2001; Nokken, 2000; Nokken & Poole, 2004). Switchers may also get rewarded for switching parties by receiving good committee assignments (Choate, 2003; Yoshinaka, 2005, 2016).

Limited attention, however, has been devoted to changes in the composition of a party switcher's contributor pool. Alluding to the uncertainty of party switching, Cox and McCubbins (2005) ask (but do not answer), "How many names on the member's donor list will stop contributing?" (p. 31). Only two empirical studies have considered this question. Hall (2013) examines the pre- and postswitch aggregate contribution patterns of unions and corporations to party switchers. Barber (2016) uses party switchers to show that the average ideology of a legislator's donor pool changes most significantly among individual contributors following a party switch.

There are good reasons why this question deserves more attention: given the important role money plays in U.S. politics, analyzing contributions to switchers should help explain the aforementioned electoral and legislative

consequences. We suggest that switchers overcome the local costs of switching parties by reaching out to ideological and party donors residing outside of the constituency. Our theory and findings therefore support the idea that party switching can induce significant transaction costs, and that support from particular donors is one way in which switchers can try to overcome these costs. In doing so, we also build on some existing scholarship on the behavior of campaign donors and the geography of campaign contributions.

The Motivations of Campaign Contributors

Scholars have long been interested in the motivations behind campaign contributions, with most studies focusing on the behavior of individual donors. These studies generally argue that donors are both ideological and strategic. Contributors are expressive and seek to voice their policy positions by supporting candidates with whom they share issue positions (e.g., Barber, 2016; Bonica, 2014; Francia, Green, Herrnson, Powell, & Wilcox, 2003; Stone & Simas, 2010). Individual donors, on average, are said to be more ideologically extreme than nondonors, tend to donate to ideologically extreme candidates, and overwhelmingly support candidates only from one party (e.g., Bafumi & Herron, 2010; Bonica, 2014; Johnson, 2010; Stone & Simas, 2010).

Donors are also strategic. They are attuned to the political climate and seek to channel funds to ideological friends faring well in the polls and, more broadly, to candidates running in competitive districts around the country (e.g., Francia et al., 2003; Gimpel, Lee, & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2008; Mutz, 1995). Gimpel et al. (2008) show this is particularly true for nonresident donors (i.e., living outside of the legislator's state or district). Simply put, contributions follow the strategic logic of elections; partisan loyalty drives out-of-district contributors to funnel money into competitive elections (Wilhite & Theilmann, 1989).

From these two literatures—on party switching and on campaign contributions—we provide a theoretical framework and develop our expectations about the relationship between legislative party switching and campaign fundraising. Specifically, we argue that the electoral costs of party switching lead to predictable patterns with respect to the ideological leanings of campaign donors, their interplay with the geography of campaign contributions, and the overall sources of campaign contributions (e.g., party vs. PAC-based) in the postswitch period.

In a way, our framework builds on the work of Crespin (2005) and Crespin and Edwards (2016) on the effects of redistricting on the geography of campaign contributions, but there are important differences. First, that research

focuses on the geographic origins of individual donations (i.e., the "where"), whereas we also examine the ideology of donors and the sources of contributions (i.e., the "who" and the "what" along with the "where"). Second, party switching is unique in that only the concentric circles below that of the geographic constituency change; redistricting alters the entire constituency—including the geographic constituency. Finally, the question with redistricting is not whether former opponents will now support the incumbent, but rather whether the incumbent can get the support from voters with whom they did not share a representational linkage at all. As a result, redistricting raises a different—albeit related—question.

Party Switching and Campaign Contributions: Theory and Hypotheses

We begin with the assumption that switching parties is costly (see previous section) and that the costs are felt largely at the constituency level; the switch severs representational ties that need to be rebuilt. These changes in both the reelection and primary constituencies (Fenno, 1978) will bring about some uncertainty for incumbents who must quickly navigate the new electoral landscape ahead of the next election. The extent to which voters will fail to endorse a party-switching incumbent is an empirical question, of course, and it varies from case to case. What we assume, then, is that there will be *some* level of voter resentment due to the switch.[2]

How can reelection-seeking incumbents alleviate some of these costs? One set of actors that incumbents rely on for their reelection are financial donors. While some donors may remain through thick and thin with a specific incumbent, we know that donors are much more partisan and ideological than the average voter. Just like in the case of voters, some donors will likely resent the switcher for having deserted their party. Unlike voters, however, the donor pool is not district-specific: Campaign money can come from anywhere in the United States. Following previous work, we assume that out-of-district donors are motivated more by ideology and partisanship than in-district donors for whom other considerations, such as personal relationships, are more likely to matter. Indeed, it is likely that local donors (relative to nonresidents) will feel most betrayed by their representative's decision to change party affiliation. The more ideological and strategic nature of out-of-district individual donors, though, leads them to donate to incumbents in jeopardy as well as those with whom they share an ideological affinity. From these theoretical assumptions, we derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Party switching will lead to a higher share of contributions from out-of-district individual donors.

We also expect the ideological and strategic nature of out-of-district donors to be reflected in the ideological composition of the switcher's donor pool, both overall and across geographies:

Hypothesis 2: Party switching will lead to a shift in the ideological makeup of the individual donor pool in the direction of the switch (e.g., the individual donor pool of D-to-R switchers will be more conservative postswitch than preswitch), and this shift will be larger among out-of-district individual donors than among in-district individual donors.

Finally, we assume that parties—through direct contributions from party organizations and associated members—will play an outsized role postswitch. The party that welcomes a switcher will have an incentive to see that incumbent reelected. The new party is a critical player because it has the incentive and the wherewithal to help switchers, as it wishes to build legislative majorities and is in a prime position to help vulnerable incumbents. Such behavior is consistent with research suggesting that parties use campaign contributions strategically (e.g., Hassell, 2016, 2018; La Raja & Schaffner, 2015; Nokken, 2003). And while instances of party switching may be relatively rare, this rarity sends a costly signal to voters, elites, and the media. It is not that parties will build a majority on the backs of switchers; rather, parties benefit from an incoming switch by highlighting its significance as an indication of broader partisan trends (see Yoshinaka, 2016, for a description of how parties promote and highlight party switchers). There is evidence that parties are cognizant of party-switching costs and that they attempt to reward incoming switchers (e.g., Yoshinaka, 2005, 2016), which serves the dual purpose of helping one of their own (vulnerable) incumbents, while sending a positive signal to two audiences: potential switchers and partisan and ideological supporters who will observe these party efforts and conclude that the new switcher is an acceptable option. These party efforts provide a costly signal of "teamsmanship" (Lee, 2009). As a result, we should expect the following:

Hypothesis 3: Party switching will lead to an increase in party-based campaign contributions.

Data

We focus on MCs who switched parties between 1980 and 2012. We emphasize party switching at the federal level (rather than the state level) for several

reasons. First, the federal level is where money is most needed and where parties can most convincingly entice, reassure, and work "in service" to switchers by relying on their national networks of donors. Second, one key component of the data that we use is the donor's district of residence, which is available with respect to congressional districts, not state legislative districts. Third, our classification of donors necessitates industry codes (e.g., labor, business) based on a set of criteria that have been applied more systematically and at lower levels of aggregation for federal contributions.

We define a party switcher as any MC who formally changed party affiliation from Democrat to Republican (D-to-R) or Republican to Democrat (R-to-D), or who became an independent while joining the caucus of the opposing party. Table 1 lists 22 party switchers during our period of study, each of whom is one of four types: (a) sought and won reelection, (b) sought and lost re-nomination/reelection, (c) immediately ran for higher office, and (d) other.

We restrict our analyses to MCs who sought reelection and who were serving in at least their second term at the time of their switch (because our analyses require a full cycle of preswitch data). Moreover, given our interest in fundraising in and around the switch cycle, we must exclude U.S. Senate switchers from the analyses because the 6-year term makes it virtually impossible to capture fully the effects of party switching on the true dynamics of fundraising.[3] Thus, we move forward with 11 party switchers from the U.S. House: Bob Stump, Eugene Atkinson, Andy Ireland, Bill Grant, Nathan Deal, Greg Laughlin, Billy Tauzin, Mike Parker, Michael Forbes, Virgil Goode, and Ralph Hall (denoted by boldface in Table 1). Although a smaller sample sacrifices degrees of freedom, our decision to restrict our analyses to these cases provides enough leverage to examine the consequences of party switching on campaign finance.[4]

We gathered data on campaign contributions from Bonica's (2013, 2014) *Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections* (DIME), which includes all contributions to federal candidates from 1979 to 2012. Four features of DIME are key for this study. First, it allows us to track every contribution to a given legislator over several cycles including the date of the contribution. Second, it allows us to determine whether donors give to candidates running in-district or out-of-district.[5] Third, it provides a measure for the ideology of each donor (i.e., a CFscore).[6] Finally, DIME includes contributor codes provided by the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP). We identify six distinct categories: (a) party organizations and committees, including leadership PACs, (b) access-seeking/business PACs, (c) individual contributions, (d) labor organizations, (e) ideological/issue-oriented, and (f) other and unknown industries. Table A1 (in the Online Appendix) provides the full list of codes with CRP's industry description and our categorization.

Table 1. List of Congressional Party Switchers, 1980-2012.

Switcher	State-district	Switch	Switch date	Left office
(a) Sought and won reelection				
Bob Stump	**AZ-03**	**D-to-R**	**September 24, 1981**	2003
Andy Ireland	**FL-10**	**D-to-R**	**March 24, 1984**	1993
Richard Shelby	AL	D-to-R	November 9, 1994	—
Ben Nighthorse Campbell	CO	D-to-R	March 3, 1995	2005
Nathan Deal	**GA-09**	**D-to-R**	**April 10, 1995**	2010
Billy Tauzin	**LA-03**	**D-to-R**	**August 6, 1995**	2005
Mike Parker	**MS-04**	**D-to-R**	**November 10, 1995**	1999
Virgil Goode	**VA-05**	**D-to-I/R**	**January 27, 2000**	2009
Ralph Hall	**TX-04**	**D-to-R**	**January 2, 2004**	2015
Rodney Alexander	LA-05	D-to-R	August 6, 2004	2013
(b) Sought and lost renomination or reelection				
Eugene Atkinson	**PA-25**	**D-to-R**	**October 14, 1981**	1983
Bill Grant	**FL-02**	**D-to-R**	**February 21, 1989**	1991
Greg Laughlin	**TX-14**	**D-to-R**	**June 26, 1995**	1997
Michael Forbes	**NY-01**	**R-to-D**	**July 17, 1999**	2001
Arlen Specter	PA	R-to-D	April 28, 2009	2011
Parker Griffith	AL-05	D-to-R	December 22, 2009	2011
(c) Sought higher office				
Tommy Robinson	AR-02	D-to-R	July 28, 1989	1991
Jimmy Hayes	LA-07	D-to-R	December 1, 1995	1997
(d) Other				
Phil Gramm[a]	TX-06	D-to-R	January 5, 1983	1985
Wes Watkins[b]	OK-03	D-to-R	January 12, 1996	2003
Matthew Martinez[c]	CA-31	D-to-R	July 27, 2000	2001
Jim Jeffords[d]	VT	R-to-I/D	May 24, 2001	2007

Note. D-to-R = Democrat to Republican; R-to-D = Republican to Democrat.
[a]Phil Gramm resigned his seat at the start of the 98th Congress and ran in a special election in February 1983 as a Republican. He then ran for Senate in 1984.
[b]Wes Watkins served nonconsecutive terms: 1977-1991 as a Democrat and 1997-2003 as a Republican. We use the date on which he declared his 1996 campaign—per his FEC Statement of Candidacy—as his switch date. Note too that Watkins also ran for Governor of Oklahoma as an Independent in 1994, before switching fully to the Republican Party prior to seeking his U.S. House seat again in 1996. Because we are interested in party switching in Congress, we include the 1996 date here, but we recognize that he had left the Democratic Party earlier.
[c]Matthew Martinez joined the Republican Party after losing the Democratic primary on March 7, 2000. He did not seek reelection as a Republican.
[d]Jim Jeffords retired at the end of the 109th Congress and, as a result, never sought reelection as an Independent/Democrat.

From here, we measure our outcome variables for each legislator in each cycle: (a) the proportion of funds raised from in-district individual donors, out-of-district individual donors, and (geographically) unknown individual donors; (b) the average ideology of the individual donor pool (overall and among out-of-district/in-district/geographically unknown donors); and (c) the proportion of funds raised from each type of contributors. We do so for

the preswitch and postswitch periods. The switch dates for each switcher are provided in Table 1. For nonswitchers, we use the switch date of the switcher from that cycle.[7] We consider the preswitch period to include all contributions made in the cycle immediately prior to the switch up to the date of the switch. Contributions made after the switch date through to Election Day in the switch cycle are considered postswitch. We now outline the two research designs to assess our three hypotheses.

Research Design: Two Approaches

Approach 1: Nonmatched Data

Our first approach compares the set of 11 switchers to the population of nonswitching MCs from a given Congress. For each party switcher, we trim our data set by identifying nonswitching legislators who meet two conditions: (a) the member served in the Congress immediately prior to the switch cycle and (b) the member is seeking reelection in the switch cycle.[8] This data set thus includes 1,949 unique legislators and 3,436 legislator observations (due to cycles with multiple switchers). Using the full population of incumbent MCs that meet the above criteria as a comparison group, we increase the power of our study and avoid some of the challenges of small-N empirical research.

Our key explanatory variable is an indicator equal to 1 if the legislator switched parties. In addition, we control for the following *preswitch* covariates that we expect to be associated with both the "treatment" (switcher) and the outcomes of interest. *Democrat* equals 1 if the MC is a Democrat.[9] *DW-NOMINATE* (first dimension) is an MC's ideal point along a liberal-conservative continuum. *Seniority* is the number of terms served up to and including the previous Congress. *District presidential vote* is the district-level Democratic two-party vote share from the previous presidential election (e.g., 1992 for the 104th Congress). *Legislative effectiveness* is the ability of a legislator to advance items through the legislative process and into law in the previous congress. *Vote percentage* is the legislator's vote share from the previous cycle.[10] *Preswitch contribution* measures are lagged values of the outcome variable. *Switcher code* is a categorical variable, running from 1 to 11, which differentiates between repeated members per cycle. It also enables us to control for both Congress-specific and—because it is based on the timing of the switch itself—any temporal effects related to the timeline of the campaign.[11] Finally, we control for the number of days between the primary date and the general election to take into account the possibility that MCs with an earlier primary date may raise more money.

Approach 2: Matched Data

The previous approach may not alleviate the concern that switchers differ fundamentally from nonswitchers. It is possible—in fact, probable—that these two groups are not drawn from the same population, leading to a selection issue. Thus, the above research design might not adequately satisfy the conditional ignorability assumption and, as a result, our estimates might not capture the true causal effect of switching parties.

We mitigate these concerns with a selection on observables strategy that matches switchers to a set of nonswitchers who most resemble them. We implement this strategy with matching, a technique for observational data that enables researchers to better satisfy the conditional ignorability assumption for identification. By matching, we identify control units that look similar to the treated units on confounders expected to influence both assignment to treatment (switching) and the outcome(s) of interest. By matching on observables, we can more closely approximate randomization and create balanced treatment and control groups. Our second set of analyses, then, more closely follows the Neyman–Rubin causal framework (Neyman, 1990; Rubin, 1974), where the difference in the outcomes for the treated and control units can be attributed to the treatment itself. These analyses are the first-ever attempts to model party-switching effects in the U.S. Congress within a causal inference framework.

We use genetic matching to select nonswitchers (e.g., Diamond & Sekhon, 2013). Genetic matching searches for the matches that minimize the difference—across predefined confounding variables—between the treatment and control groups. It generates covariate weights that maximize balance and, in turn, enables us to more accurately identify causal effects. Many studies of political institutions and mass political behavior use this technique (e.g., Hamel & Miller, 2019; Henderson & Chatfield, 2011; Herron & Wand, 2007; Ladd & Lenz, 2009).

Using the nonmatched data set of 3,436 observations described above, we specify the genetic match as follows. First, the treatment is whether the legislator switched parties. Second, we match on the same set of covariates held constant in the first design. We exact match on two of those variables: party and the switcher code, requiring that each Democrat-to-Republican switcher be matched to a Democrat from the same Congress.[12] We match with a population size of 15,000 to maximize the likelihood of strong balance (i.e., the number of individuals used to solve the optimization problem) and with replacement to reduce conditional bias in the estimator (Abadie & Imbens, 2006). With this design, what we might lose in power we gain in confidence that the comparisons will yield unbiased estimates of the causal effect of

switching. Nevertheless, we seek to overcome concerns about sample size by employing 1-to-1, 1-to-2, and 1-to-3 matching, which match each switcher to one, two, and three nonswitchers, respectively. The 1-to-1 match should provide the most apt comparison because bias will likely increase as we force the algorithm to find multiple (potentially less similar) nonswitchers for each switcher.

Before proceeding to the results, we walk through an example of how genetic matching allows us to make apt comparisons. Consider Rep. Ralph Hall who, prior to switching to the GOP in 2004, was quite different from the average Democrat: He was more senior than most (11 terms), and he represented a Republican district (30% Democratic presidential vote). In all three 1-to-1 matches, Hall matched with Democratic Rep. Charlie Stenholm (TX-17), a similarly senior member (12 terms) from a Republican district (28% Democratic vote share). Tables A3, A7, and A11 in the Online Appendix provide the list of matched pairs for each model.

Results: Geography of Individual Contributions

Does party switching change the geography of the individual donor pool? We split individual donors into three proportions: in-district, out-of-district, and unknown.[13] Because we have three discrete outcomes with proportions that sum to one, we estimate a fractional multinomial logit model, which is a multivariate generalization of the fractional logit model from Papke and Wooldridge (1996).[14] By definition, an increase in one category leads to a decrease elsewhere, and this method is ideally suited to model this aggregation of proportions. The top panel of Figure A1 in the Online Appendix shows that about 60% of the typical Democratic MC's individual donor pool consists of out-of-district donors; the figure among a typical Republican MC is about 50%.

Table 2 presents the results using our nonmatched data set. For the sake of space, we only present the estimates for our key explanatory variable: switcher (see Table A2 for the full results). Our results show that switchers receive a greater proportion of funds from out-of-district individual donors following a party switch relative to nonswitchers.[15] For ease of interpretation, we calculate the average marginal effects (AMEs) of party switching; we find that a switch is followed by a 10-percentage point increase in the share of individual out-of-district donors and a corresponding 8-percentage point decrease from in-district donors. Given the baseline figures in the preceding paragraph (50%-60%), a 10-percentage point increase is far from trivial.

Next, we present results from our analysis using matched data. Tables A4 and A5 in the Online Appendix provide the summary statistics and two

Table 2. Party Switching and the Geography of Individual Contributions (Nonmatched).

	β (*SE*)	AME (*SE*)
Outcome: Proportion Out-of-District		
Switcher	.457* (.216)	.098* (.039)
Outcome: Proportion (Geographically) Unknown		
Switcher	−.314 (.403)	−.022† (.012)
Outcome: Proportion In-District (reference)		
Switcher	—	−.076† (.039)
Covariates	Yes	
Observations	3,405	

Note. Covariates include the following preswitch variables (see Table A2 for full results): Democrat, DW-NOMINATE, seniority, district presidential vote share, legislative effectiveness, vote percentage, proportion out-of-district, proportion out-of-district, and the number of days between the primary and the general election. We also include fixed effects for the switch date.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$ (two-tailed).

tests of covariate balance before and after matching (for all three matches): paired *t*-test *p* values—which test balance on the mean—and Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS) naïve *p* values associated with the balance along the entire distribution. As expected, before matching, switchers and nonswitchers differ along a number of important pretreatment dimensions, and many differences are statistically distinguishable from zero and substantively notable. Matching—especially in the 1-to-1 match—significantly improves balance for each confounder. Using these matched data, we estimate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT). We estimate these models using the optimal covariate weights provided by *GenMatch*. The ATT can be interpreted as the causal effect of switching parties on the given outcome variable. With these estimates, we report Abadie–Imbens standard errors, which take into account the uncertainty of the matching procedure.

Figure 1 shows the causal effects of party switching on the geography of individual donors in our matched analyses (with 95% confidence intervals). Focusing on the 1-to-1 match, we see a positive treatment effect of about 18 percentage points for the proportion of out-of-district donors. That is, relative to nonswitchers, switchers raise 18 percentage points more of their funds from out-of-district individual donors following their switch. In turn, and unsurprisingly, switchers receive less money from in-district individual donors (relative to nonswitchers). These substantively significant effects demonstrate the local costs of party switching, and

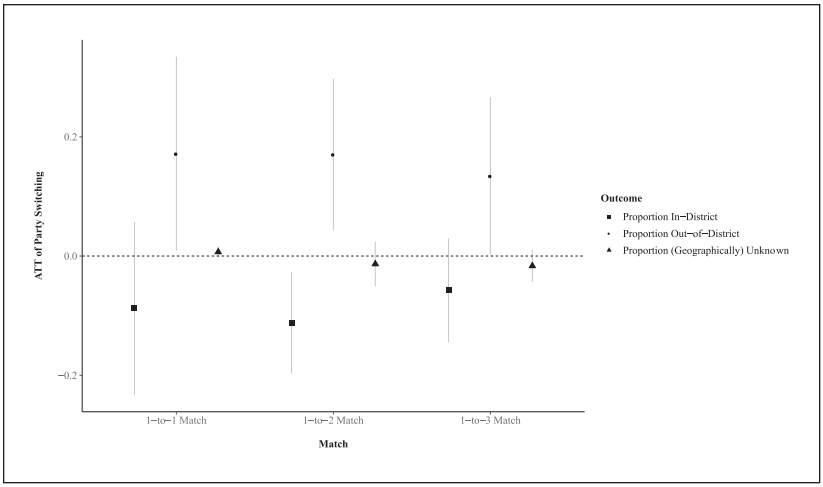

Figure 1. Party switching and the geography of individual contributions (matched).

how, as we theorized, a change in party affiliation forces legislators to tap into a new network of donors: those with whom they have no direct geographic ties.

When we examine raw dollar figures, we find that the average switcher raises more than $45,000 more from outside the district after the switch. Why is that? As noted, these MCs face significant changes in their reelection and primary constituencies. Out-of-district support is a natural way for these legislators to shore up their reelection campaign. Indeed, research suggests that many out-of-district donors give to incumbents in jeopardy out of partisan loyalty and in response to party appeals (e.g., Gimpel et al., 2008; Wilhite & Theilmann, 1989). For these "surrogate constituents," contributing money is about supporting party members in need. We explore this possibility in more detail in the next section.

Results: Partisanship of the Individual Donor Pool

If our argument is correct, we would expect individuals who give to switchers in the postswitch period to be particularly strong partisans, motivated to elect members of their party stripe above all else. As noted, previous research shows that out-of-district donors are particularly motivated to protect vulnerable incumbents, and so we should also expect the out-of-district donor pool to be the most partisan (whereas the in-district donor pool should have a much larger share of individuals who contribute for personal and nonpartisan

reasons). These "surrogate constituents" have no link to the incumbent other than that provided by party and ideology.

To test this hypothesis, we need to proxy the ideological composition of each MC's donor pool. DIME includes an ideology score for each donor based on an item response model that uses every donation to every candidate to place donors and candidates on a comparable scale. The scale ranges from −2 (liberal) to +2 (conservative), with more extreme positive (negative) values denoting extremely conservative (liberal) donors. We use these data to proxy the strength of donor ideology and partisanship by computing the average contributor ideology for every MC in our data set (weighted by each donation amount). We multiply the average contributor ideology of every Republican nonswitcher and R-to-D switcher by −1 in both periods (pre- and postswitch), so that the expected effects for all MCs regardless of party are in the same direction and should be interpreted as changes in the direction of the party joined by the switcher. Our expectation is that party switching will have a positive coefficient, which would be associated with a more conservative (liberal) donor pool for D-to-R (R-to-D) switchers.[16] We estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions on the full donor pool, the in-district donor pool, the out-of-district donor pool, and the (geographically) unknown donor pool. Again, we use both nonmatched and matched data, and we expect a positive coefficient for switchers. That is, for each switcher, we expect the donor pool to be more ideologically extreme in the direction of the party joined (i.e., we use the term "extreme" to denote a more conservative donor pool for a D-to-R switcher and a more liberal donor pool for an R-to-D switcher).

The middle panel of Figure A1 in the Online Appendix shows the average ideology scores of the donor pool (overall, in-district, out-of-district, and unknown). The typical Democrat's overall donor pool average is around −0.3; the typical Republican's donor pool average is around 0.6 (these values are negative in Figure A1 because we multiply Republican MCs by −1). Table 3 shows the results of the nonmatched analyses.[17] We find that the switchers' donor pool moves toward the direction of the party joined. Most notably, we find that the postswitch ideology of the donor pool for switchers (relative to nonswitchers) moves significantly in the direction of the party joined among out-of-district donors (with an effect of about .34).

Again, we use genetic matching to compare the ideology of switchers' donor pools relative to similar nonswitchers. Tables A7 to A9 in the Online Appendix present the matched pairs from all three matches, as well as the summary and balance statistics before and after matching. Following matching (especially the 1-to-1 match, which should reduce bias the most), we see

Table 3. Party Switching and Ideology of Individual Contributors by Geography (Nonmatched).

	Outcome: Ideology	Outcome: Out-of-District Ideology	Outcome: In-District Ideology	Outcome: (Geographically) Unknown Ideology
	(1) β (*SE*)	(3) β (*SE*)	(2) β (*SE*)	(4) β (*SE*)
Switcher	.279*** (.029)	.335*** (.043)	.247*** (.040)	.241* (.104)
Adjusted R^2	.911	.806	.865	.273
Observations	2,997	2,997	2,997	2,997

Note. Covariates include the following preswitch variables (see Table A6 for full results): Democrat, DW-NOMINATE, seniority, district presidential vote share, legislative effectiveness, vote percentage, ideology, in-district ideology, out-of-district ideology, (geographically) unknown ideology, and the number of days between the primary and the general election. We also include fixed effects for the switch date.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

no statistically distinguishable differences between the mean ideology of donors to switchers and nonswitchers prior to the switch date, suggesting that we have achieved balance.

Looking at Figure 2, we find—in the 1-to-1 match (which achieves the highest balance)—evidence that the ideology of the postswitch out-of-district donor pool to switchers has moved toward the new party more so than for the in-district donor pool and the pool of individual donors overall. We see that following the switch the out-of-district donor pool has changed much more for switchers than nonswitchers by a considerable amount (0.49 on a variable that ranges from −2 to 2). This difference is actually quite large when one considers that the ideology of the typical incumbent's donor pool hardly changes at all from one cycle to the next. The change in the in-district donor pool, however, is not as large, which is consistent with our expectations.

These differences are magnified once we account for the fact that the proportion of out-of-district donors increases following a party switch (as per the results of our previous analysis). Taken together, this indicates that the donor pool of party switchers is both more partisan and less local than for nonswitchers, as the former come to rely more heavily on more partisan out-of-district donors. This dynamic is consistent with the notion that switchers face local electoral costs that are in part mitigated by a national network of steadfast ideologues.[18,19]

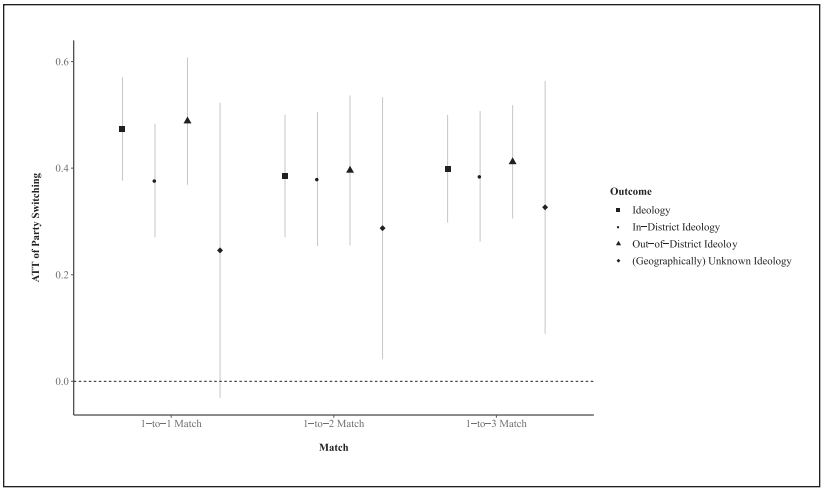

Figure 2. Party switching and the ideology of individual contributors by geography (matched).

Results: Sources of Campaign Contributions

Finally, we test our third hypothesis on the role of parties by examining the sources of campaign contributions. Figure A1 in the Online Appendix shows the sources contributions for Democrats and Republicans. As expected the former get significantly more support from labor than the latter, whereas the reverse is true (albeit less pronounced) with respect to business. More important for our analyses, the typical incumbent gets about 5% to 10% of contributions from party sources. The question is whether party switching changes these proportions.

Beginning with the nonmatched data, we estimate one fractional multinomial logit model with a six-category outcome variable and include each of our confounders and our treatment variable on the right-hand side. Table 4 shows the importance of party-based contributions following a change in party (see Table A10 for full results). Relative to the proportion of party funds (the reference category), switchers see a decrease in the proportion of funds received in every other category. On average, they receive about 8 percentage points more than nonswitchers in party funds as a proportion of their war chest.[20]

To estimate causal effects, we again run a genetic match. Tables A12 and A13 in the Online Appendix present the balance statistics and summary statistics before and after matching. We improve balance for each

Table 4. Party Switching and the Sources of Contributions (Nonmatched).

	β (*SE*)	AME (*SE*)
Outcome: Post-Switch Business PAC Donors		
Switcher	−1.408*** (.254)	−0.077 (.053)
Outcome: Post-Switch Individual Donors		
Switcher	−0.802** (.258)	0.102** (.039)
Outcome: Post-Switch Labor Donors		
Switcher	−2.274** (.842)	−0.130 (.085)
Outcome: Post-Switch Ideological Donors		
Switcher	−0.540** (.163)	0.027** (.009)
Outcome: Post-Switch Other/Unknown Donors		
Switcher	−1.772*** (.342)	−0.011* (.005)
Outcome: Post-Switch Party Donors (reference)		
Switcher	—	0.089*** (.018)
Covariates	Yes	
Observations	3,436	

Note. Covariates include the following preswitch variables (see Table A10 for full results): Democrat, DW-NOMINATE, seniority, Democratic presidential vote share, legislative effectiveness, previous vote percentage, proportion party, proportion business, proportion individual, proportion labor, proportion ideological, and the number of days between the primary and the general election. We also include fixed effects for the switch date.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

confounder after matching. For example, in the 1-to-1 match, the *p* value of the *t*-test for the proportion of preswitch party contributions is now .871, which indicates that the difference in the lag of our main outcome variable of interest between switchers and nonswitchers is now statistically indistinguishable from zero.

We estimate the ATT and present the results in Figure 3. Across all three matches, switchers receive 7 to 9 percentage points more from party donors (as a proportion of their war chest) than nonswitchers, which suggests that parties try to minimize the electoral difficulties of switchers by committing resources to their campaign. The raw amounts raised before and after the switch show a 660% increase in party source funds (from US$11,302.91 preswitch to US$86,397.09 postswitch). There is strong substantive evidence that parties purposely direct resources toward incoming switchers' war chests at levels that exceed that of other incumbents.

Finally, we find that switchers receive about 7 to 8 percentage points more than nonswitchers from individual donors, which is driven by a large increase in contributions from their new surrogate constituency: out-of-district donors.

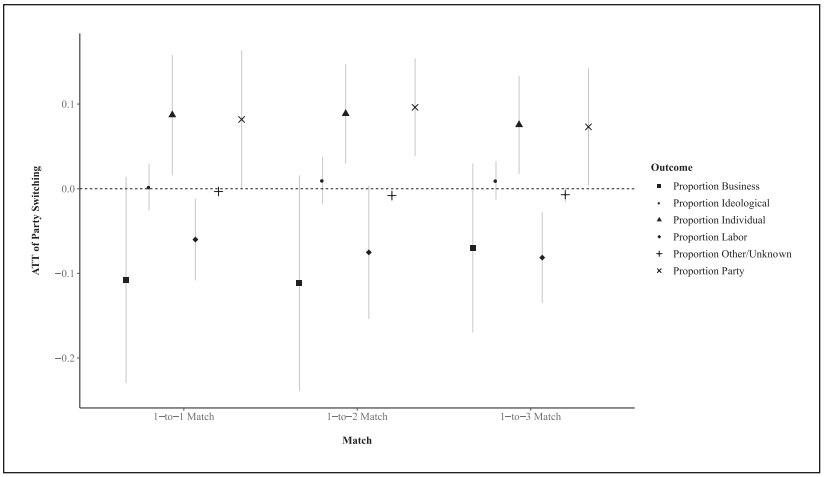

Figure 3. Party switching and the sources of contributions (matched).

After a switch, the donor pool is tilted toward party sources and out-of-district individuals, both of whom are partisan and ideological warriors.

Discussion and Conclusion

First elected as a Democrat in 1988, Mississippi Congressman Mike Parker was one of a handful of southern Democrats to join the newly elected GOP majority in the 104th Congress. The data show that as a Republican, Parker received 40% of his individual contributions from outside his district (vs. 34% preswitch); the ideology of his out-of-district donor pool became more conservative (by 0.3 on a 4-point scale); and he now received 13% of his financial support from party sources (a more than fivefold increase from the preswitch period). Unsurprisingly, Parker's roll-call voting as a Republican also shifted to the right, and in doing so the middle of the ideological spectrum lost another member.[21]

We find systematic evidence that party switchers such as Parker receive more funds from ideological, out-of-district individual donors following their switch. Overall, switchers also raise more in direct party contributions, and a little more from ideological groups. Our findings are consistent with how we should expect nonresident individuals and party organizations to behave toward a new—and perhaps uniquely vulnerable—member of their "team." Our article also advances the literature on party switching by examining the

effects of that decision in a causal framework setting, which makes it a first-of-its-kind in the literature on U.S. party switchers.

To be sure, we do not suggest that switchers solely raise funds from party sources or out-of-district donors. We argue that in a context in which they must quickly navigate a new electoral terrain, the ability to turn to a national party network of motivated ideologues and party money can alleviate significant uncertainty. Given a party's interest in attracting and retaining switchers, it makes sense that it would allocate outsized resources to a newly converted MC.

The switchers we examine are taken from the U.S. House, and nearly all are Democrats who turn Republican. It is thus not necessarily representative of all legislative switchers, which would include cases from the U.S. Senate, state legislatures, pivotal switchers (such as Jim Jeffords), and R-to-D switchers. While we can only speculate as to the extent to which our findings generalize to other cases, it is likely that more salient cases (like that of U.S. Senators or pivotal switchers) would engender similar—if not stronger—effects given the larger stakes and the activation of national networks. This is an empirical question that future research can answer more definitively, but at the very least our results offer an initial baseline that can be used to compare results from institutional settings beyond that of the U.S. House.

We can also extend the framework of our article to other "shocks" that can affect the representational linkage between constituents and their representatives. One example discussed earlier is legislators facing changes due to redistricting (see Crespin, 2005; Crespin & Edwards, 2016). Another arena could be in special elections, where candidates often rely on out-of-district donors who are quite willing to open their wallets to help tip the scales. The desire for progressive or intra-institutional ambition (i.e., running for higher office or gaining influence within the legislature) could also lead to similar dynamics.

More broadly, our results speak to the growing level of partisan polarization that characterizes our politics both at the elite and mass levels. If out-of-district money flows disproportionately from more ideological and partisan contributors, and if party organizations also provide more direct funds to vulnerable incumbents, it is likely that these incumbents will seek to satisfy some of the demands of these donors. This, in turn, could lead to more ideological and partisan behavior as the now-reelected incumbent may push forward the policies favored by their ideological donors and party-based sources. If these are likely to come from outside the district, it has the potential to change the representational dynamics between representative and constituents, with the incumbent perhaps embracing a more extreme set of policies than that desired by constituents in the district (Baker, 2016; Gimpel et al., 2008). The "surrogate constituency," which falls outside

Fenno's (1978) concentric circles, may play a more important role—especially when incumbents' own choices affect their representational relationships and put them in a vulnerable electoral position. This raises normative questions regarding the representational ties between representatives and constituents and whether those living outside a representative's district ought to be a part of this equation.

Our results suggest that the financial ramifications of this decision must be accounted for when analyzing the causes of party switching or assessing its consequences. The dynamics we uncover are significant especially in light of the imperative to raise money in U.S. politics. Because much of these dynamics (such as the one we briefly alluded to in the epigraph) occur behind closed doors, political scientists should consider seriously engaging in more in-depth research to dig deeper into these dynamics—involving party leaders and networks of strategic donors—when attempting to gain insight into the decision to switch parties. And the question of who switches parties and to what effect is important because it is a career decision with far-reaching consequences for representation (especially in an era of polarized politics); it is also a theoretically important phenomenon for the understanding of elite behavior as it is arguably the most important decision any legislator will contemplate. Our scholarly understanding of this decision has improved significantly over the last few decades, and our study adds to this growing body of literature addressing this career-defining moment.

Authors' Note

Brian T. Hamel and Antoine Yoshinaka are listed in alphabetical order and both contributed equally to this manuscript.

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Notes

1. Crespin and Edwards (2016; Crespin, 2005) make a similar—yet different—argument about redistricting-induced constituency change, as they show that it leads to more out-of-district contributions. They do not, however, examine the ideological makeup of the individual donor pool or the overall sources of contributions (see section "The Motivations of Campaign Contributors").
2. Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) and Yoshinaka (2016) find evidence that the first postswitch election attracts significant opposition both from opposition-party quality candidates and in-party primary opponents. Elites see an opportunity to beat an incumbent whose advantage may therefore exhibit a short-term dip following a switch.
3. Except for Sen. Specter, every Senate switcher switched more than 2 years prior to the end of their term. Including these cases would mean examining their war chest at a time when campaigns are not particularly active and parties are not yet looking to activate on members' behalf as reelection is still several years away.
4. By comparing switchers to the universe of nonswitchers in one set of models (see the section "Research Design: Two Approaches"), we are including all available Members of Congress (MCs) who meet our criteria for inclusion (about 3,000 cases). Also, the relatively small number of cases undoubtedly increases the uncertainty around our estimated effects, which makes it harder to reject the null. Because we argue and find significant party-switching effects, we are less concerned about the possibility of committing Type II errors due to the small number of congressional switchers.
5. We note, however, that it only includes a contributor's congressional district for 1992-2000, 2002-2010, and 2012-2020. We estimate a contributor's district for prior years using the Missouri Census Data Center (MCDC), which allows us to measure the extent to which a given district in 1992 came from a given 1982 district. For each 1992-2000 district, we determined which 1982-1990 district comprised a plurality of the new district and coded it as such. While we recognize that this measure is imperfect, we also note that, on average, the 1990s to 1980s overlap is 74%. These data can be found at http://mcdc.missouri.edu/websas/geocorr90.shtml.
6. We note that these scores have been the topic of recent debate (e.g., Hill & Huber, 2017; Tausanovitch & Warshaw, 2017). The main critiques are that these scores do a poor job of distinguishing moderate and extreme candidates/legislators within parties, poorly relate to other measures of candidate ideology (such as DW-NOMINATE), and that these scores are only weakly related to the policy preferences of donors. The first point suggests that these ideology scores may "misplace" some legislators as more extreme relative to some copartisans, whereas the second suggests that the set of candidate's donors give to may not reflect their own ideology. We discuss the implications of these findings for our own in Notes 18 and 19.
7. In cycles with multiple switchers (e.g., 104th Congress), we calculate each proportion for each switcher–nonswitcher dyad, such that the number of times each

nonswitcher appears is equal to the number of switchers in that Congress. That is, when comparing Rep. Billy Tauzin to a nonswitcher, we must ensure that the nonswitcher's contribution data reflect pre- and postchanges relative to the date of Tauzin's switch, rather than that of other switchers in the 104th Congress. This means that in the 1982, 1996, and 2000 cycles, nonswitchers will appear more than once in the data set (once for each switcher–nonswitcher dyad).

8. We are grateful to Dan Butler for sharing his "end-of-term action" data. We also exclude incumbent MCs who, during a switch cycle, ran in a primary against a co-partisan incumbent.
9. What this means is that we make comparisons between switchers and nonswitchers from their *old* party. As a robustness check, we also matched switchers to nonswitchers from their new party. We report these results in Figures A2 to A4 of the Online Appendix. The results generally support the findings of the manuscript in both direction and magnitude, though are admittedly weaker. What this tells us is that our story is not simply a static party affiliation story. Such a story would simply show that the donor pool of Republicans is different from that of Democrats. Instead, ours is indeed a party-switching story that tells us what happens when members switch their party affiliation. But we see comparing switchers to nonswitchers from their old party as the most appropriate framework for understanding how the switchers' campaign finance landscape changes as a function of the switch, *relative to what we think would have happened had the MC not switched parties at all*. The best way to do so, in our view, is to approximate what we think would have happened had the MC not switched parties at all by comparing actual switchers to MCs who *could have theoretically switched parties given their set of personal and political characteristics*.
10. DW-NOMINATE scores, seniority, legislative effectiveness, and vote percentage were provided by Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman and are available at http://www.thelawmakers.org/#/downloads. District presidential vote was provided by Gary Jacobson.
11. Each value corresponds to a switch date; for example, Rep. Nathan Deal is a 1996 switcher and is the fifth switcher in our sample. For all observations in the data set that include contribution data relative to his switch date, we assign the Number 5 as the "switcher code."
12. In all our analyses, the results are substantively and statistically similar even when looking exclusively at D-to-R switchers and Democratic nonswitchers. Our findings also hold when looking only at the one R-to-D switcher (Forbes) and the one D-to-I/R switcher (Goode).
13. Only about 3% of individual contribution amounts fall into the unknown category.
14. We estimate these models using fmlogit, a Stata module developed by Maarten L. Buis (http://www.maartenbuis.nl/software/fmlogit.html).
15. As a robustness check, we also estimate the effect of switching—with the full set of controls—with ordinary least squares (OLS) and the results are strikingly similar (see Table A14 of the Online Appendix).

16. We exclude from our analysis of the ideology of the donor pool any MCs who received zero funds from in-district or out-of-district individual donors. In doing so, we remove 439 observations from the analysis. As mentioned in an earlier note, our results hold even when looking only at D-to-R switchers and Democratic nonswitchers. Also, given the period of our study, we assume that conservative donors are more Republican than liberal donors and vice versa.
17. The full results are available in Table A6 of the Online Appendix.
18. As noted, we see the critiques of campaign finance-based ideology scores as important. These critiques call into question whether these scores capture the preferences of donors, and whether these scores can distinguish between extreme and moderate legislators within a given party. However, we do not see these concerns as particularly worrisome for our results, given our research question and design. First, we note that Tausanovitch and Warshaw's critique is really *not* one about donors or about the donor pool of MCs. Rather, it is really about whether CFscores and DW-NOMINATE scores capture the same underlying dimension of ideology. They show a lack of correlation between CFscores and DW-NOMINATE, but this is very problematic if, as Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2017) caution, we were "using non-roll-call based measures . . . to make inferences about hypotheses that implicate actual legislative behavior" (p. 181). Our article does not consider legislative behavior at all. As a result, what we require of the CFscores is simply that they capture the clustering of donors around certain candidates. Second, even if an incumbent's average donor pool ideology as measured by their CFscores does not neatly capture ideology or preferences, it is likely that whatever they capture prior to the switch is also what is captured after the switch (especially for nonswitchers whose donor pool typically remains quite similar). Thus, the *data-generating process*, while likely not entirely ideology or preference driven, will remain relatively constant over such a short period for most incumbents. Finally, even if CFscores are measuring ideology or preferences with error (and we agree that they do), that error is in the dependent variable, which will not bias our inferences as long as the errors are distributed independently from our independent variables. Our selection-on-observables approach—one that matches on preswitch CFscores—diminishes the possibility that the error in the outcome variable is correlated with party switching. Finally, to the extent that CFscores and DW-NOMINATE proxy for different dimensions of ideology, we note that we have matched on preswitch donor ideology and DW-NOMINATE. Doing so makes us reasonably confident that we are comparing switchers to nonswitchers who are similar across both dimensions of ideology. Given these features of our study, we do not see the drawbacks of CFscores identified by Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2017) are likely to substantially alter our substantive conclusions.
19. Hill and Huber (2017) focus on whether the policy preferences of donors correlate with their CFscores and show that these two are only weakly correlated. In our article, we use CFscores as a way to proxy for extremism and partisan

strength. What we want to show is that party switchers, more so than similarly situated nonswitchers, rely on strong partisans motivated to protect members. We thus do not need CFscores to tap into ideology or preferences for public policy, but only the degree to which donors tend to give to candidates of one party.

20. We check our estimate using OLS and the results hold (see Table A14 of the Online Appendix).
21. The GOP leadership gave Parker a seat on the Appropriations Committee, which is a plum assignment that attracts donors of all stripes. The fact remains that this assignment was directly a result of the switch and would likely have not been given had he remained a Democrat (as Parker's hopes for such a coveted seat had been repeatedly dashed by the Democratic leadership).

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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