

Campaign Agendas and Issue Group Strategy in Congressional Primaries*

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Abstract

Which candidates do issue PACs support in House primaries? Competing theories suggest a focus on either friendly incumbents or new potential allies, yet evaluating divergent predictions requires data on candidates' agendas. I leverage original issue platform text from campaign websites, FEC receipts, and bill summaries to measure campaign attention, PAC funding, and legislative activity across nine major issue areas from 2016 to 2022. Within-candidate analyses show that candidates enjoy greater support from groups centered around their campaign priorities, with larger absolute effects for incumbents and larger relative effects for non-incumbents. Further investigation via first-differences reveals an incumbency boost in issue group funding disproportionately concentrated among those who campaigned on the issue. Differences are not driven by legislative activity: issue PACs are more responsive to campaign attention than to bill introductions. Results suggest that groups rely on campaign rhetoric to identify and cultivate long-term relationships with potential champions of their cause over rewarding incumbents for past lawmaking activities.

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Issue-centric groups constitute many of the most widely recognized and longstanding political spending organizations in U.S. elections. Interest groups focused on a particular issue area, such as Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, and the National Rifle Association, are fixtures in congressional elections which themselves receive millions of dollars in contributions from individuals who share the groups' issue priorities. Literature on extended party networks suggests that such groups are especially active and influential in primary elections, where candidate differences are less salient and voter information is low (Bawn et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2008). However, existing theories offer divergent predictions regarding how issue groups should use campaign contributions to achieve their policy goals, and candidate-side data limitations have hindered empirical efforts to assess them. This paper investigates how issue groups trade off between bolstering potential champions of their cause and seeking access to friendly lawmakers.

Like corporate PACs, issue groups may generally fund incumbent candidates in hopes of "buying" favor, access, or influence (Denzau and Munger 1986; Gordon and Hafer 2005; Fourinaies and Hall 2014, 2018; Powell and Grimmer 2016; Snyder 1990). However, unlike obscure corporate regulations, candidates are more likely to have already decided the extent to which they care about the more salient issues upon which issue groups are formed, rendering contributions inefficient. In a similar vein to theories of lobbying, issue groups could instead target contributions to incumbents who have already signaled a commitment to their issue in order to induce greater effort (Hall and Wayman 1990; Hall and Deardorff 2006). However, to better ensure that they receive returns on their investments, group-centric theories of parties instead suggest that a more effective way for issue groups to achieve their policy goals is by helping to nominate and elect a true issue champion (Bawn et al. 2012).

One way for candidates to indicate their priorities is choosing to devote finite campaign attention to an issue. However, limited data on candidates' issue priorities have prevented large-scale empirical studies of whether issue groups' primary contribution

strategies are responsive to these potentially low-cost signals. An accounting of campaign issue priorities is especially elusive for large swaths of primary candidates due to the price of running television advertisements and the *de minimis* media coverage of the vast majority of primary races, which existing work typically uses to capture campaign agendas (Banda 2015; Sides 2007; Sulkin 2005; Sulkin, Moriarty, and Hefner 2007; Spiliotes and Vavreck 2002). Evaluating issue PACs' contribution strategies in primaries is especially important given the decline of two-party district competition (Abramowitz, Alexander, and Gunning 2006), yet few studies have systematically examined interest group giving in congressional primaries specifically.¹ By focusing on the primary stage, I advance our understanding of how issue groups select among co-partisans, an especially important calculus given many issue groups' increasing alignment with one political party (Barber and Eatough 2019; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2020; Herrnson 2009; Lacombe 2019; Phillips N.d.).

To test the extent to which issue groups focus on access-buying versus helping elect potential allies, I leverage an original collection of campaign platforms from the websites of candidates who ran in House primaries in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022. Combined with primary contribution receipts, these data allow me to match campaign attention to issue group support across nine major issue areas: Guns, Abortion, Environment, Animal Rights, Police, Elderly, LGBTQ, Campaign Finance, and Israel.² First, I show that primary candidates are generally more likely to receive contributions from PACs centered around the issues on which they chose to campaign. I estimate this relationship based on variation in issue attention within a given candidate's campaign in a particular year, using candidate-year and issue-year fixed effects to account for all campaign-specific characteristics and issue-specific time trends. Comparing across electoral contexts, I find that although absolute campaign priority effects are largest among incumbents, effects rela-

¹For some excellent exceptions, see Hassell (2016, 2023); Grumbach (2020); Patterson (N.d.).

²As discussed in Appendix D, I focus on issues which are sufficiently broad yet non-boilerplate, and whose interest groups' goals are primarily collective rather than particularistic.

tive to the baseline are largest among non-incumbents. I further assess how issue groups respond to candidates' issue prioritization and officeholding status by leveraging within-candidate changes in incumbency. Between candidates' last election as non-incumbents and first election as incumbents, issue PACs increase funding to those who previously campaigned on their issue twice as heavily as those who did not.

Furthermore, I probe whether issue PACs appear to seek greater access to legislators who campaigned on their issue due to the rhetoric itself, or merely its signal of their subsequent legislative activity. Analyses of text summaries and sponsors of legislative bills demonstrate that while legislators are somewhat more active on their most recent campaign priorities, issue PACs are more responsive to campaign rhetoric than to bill introductions. Incumbents are more likely to receive contributions from issue groups after campaigning upon the issue even if they did not propose bills on it, yet they are not more likely to receive issue PAC contributions for proposing bills on the issue in the absence of campaign prioritization. Taken together, these results are consistent with issue groups relying on campaign rhetoric to identify and cultivate long-term relationships with potential champions of their cause rather than rewarding legislative activity.

Recent research has predominantly viewed moneyed interests' motivations through the lens of access versus partisanship and ideology, with corporate PACs falling into the former and individuals and general ideological PACs into the latter (Barber 2016; Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003; Fourniaies and Hall 2014, 2018; Kujala 2020; Powell and Grimmer 2016). However, the results presented here contribute to ongoing efforts to illuminate the heterogeneity of strategy and motivations among both organized interests and individual donors (Barber, Canes-Wrone, and Thrower 2017; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz N.d.; Gordon, Hafer, and Landa 2007; Li 2018). In particular, these findings demonstrate that the feature which most distinguishes issue PACs from other financial contributors — a focus on one issue, akin to issue publics among voters (Hill 2022; Karol 2015) — likewise produces a distinct contribution strategy. Moreover, this evidence of

targeted access-seeking behavior highlights that issue PACs are more strategic than suggested by recent characterizations (Barber and Eatough 2019; Grumbach 2020; Phillips N.d.).

Issue PACs' apparent responsiveness to campaign attention over bill introductions on their issue may also shed light on conflicting findings regarding the feasibility of long-term alliances between politicians and organized interests (McCarty and Rothenberg 1996; Snyder 1992). Advancing a formal model which offered a resolution to this debate, Hall and Deardorff (2006) concluded that "money buys access only to one's allies, and the behavioral consequence is greater legislative effort on behalf of a shared objective" (80). However, given the fate of the vast majority of bills to die in committee during eras of unorthodox and partisan lawmaking (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Lee 2016; Sinclair 2016), simply having an ally with shared priorities in Congress is likely the best that many issue groups can hope for during a given session in the modern Congress. Consistent with their cultivation of relationships with legislators who previously articulated shared issue prioritization, issue groups may instead turn to campaign attention — a signal as cheap as legislative sponsorship, yet clearer — as an indication of like-mindedness.

Theoretical Foundations of Issue Group Primary Strategy

Donating to campaigns is one of the most critical electioneering activities in which interest groups can engage. While strong fundraising is no guarantee that a candidate will win an election, money is a prerequisite for hiring staff and consultants, nearly every aspect of campaigning, and signaling viability and strength — particularly in primary elections (Biersack, Herrnson, and Wilcox 1993; Epstein and Zemsky 1995; Jacobson 2015; Maestas and Rugeley 2008; Thomsen 2022). The importance of campaign contributions and the incentives that they create for candidate behavior are reflected by a sustained scholarly focus on the potential distorting effects of money in politics (Canes-Wrone and Gibson

2019; Francia et al. 2003; Kalla and Broockman 2016; Kujala 2020; Powell 2012).

Issue groups have collective³ policy goals, and existing theories suggest different primary campaign contribution strategies that such groups might employ to best achieve them. The first approach centers around seeking access to legislators directly, akin to corporate PACs contributing to legislators with the greatest policymaking influence over their industry (Fouirnaies and Hall 2014, 2018; Powell and Grimmer 2016; Romer and Snyder 1994). However, a wide range of unorganized interests are indifferent to obscure corporate regulations, the minutiae of which fly under the political radar and are unlikely to activate the public (Arnold 1990; Denzau and Munger 1986). This contrasts with the more salient and controversial policies around which issue groups are formed, making it a much taller order to influence legislators' opinions on the same. As such, formal theories of lobbying suggest that issue groups should target like-minded legislators in hopes of inducing greater legislative effort on their mutual goals (Hall and Wayman 1990; Hall and Dardorff 2006). In the context of modern primary elections, issue priority may be a more relevant indicator of like-mindedness than shared preferences, as co-partisans' specific preferences are relatively homogeneous (Levendusky 2009).⁴

However, focusing contribution strategies on access to incumbents constrains issue groups to form relationships with those already in office, who may be insufficiently reliable allies. Group-centric theories of political parties suggest that a more efficient way to ensure a return on investment is by getting "a genuine friend nominated and elected to office" (Bawn et al. 2012, 575). Because of low participation and widespread voter apathy toward the relatively small differences between co-partisans, special interests are thought to exert especially strong influence at the primary stage (Grumbach 2020; Hassell 2016; Karol 2009; Masket 2009).⁵ At the same time, co-partisans with relatively similar ideolog-

³Importantly, this contrasts with corporate PACs, trade groups, and groups oriented around particularistic benefits for members which are tailored as narrowly as possible to their organization or sector.

⁴For this reason, my analyses exclude nonpartisan or multiparty primaries (see Appendix C).

⁵Another key tenet of this theoretical tradition is coordination among coalitions of different interest groups (e.g. Cohen et al. 2008; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz N.d.; Hassell 2023; Patterson N.d.), which some have called into question (e.g. McCarty and Schickler 2018). While I largely set aside the possibility

ical stances can attempt to distinguish themselves via issue priorities. Because co-partisan (or co-ideologue) candidates are relatively unlikely to face opponents actively hostile to most of their general positions,⁶ polarized groups have a real opportunity to identify and support a true friend. By helping to elect a genuine issue ally whose priorities are aligned with theirs, groups can reduce the need for costly oversight, monitoring, and discipline (Stratmann 1998).

In most cases, however, identifying a true champion is no easy task for issue groups. Even for incumbents, who have records of activity in the legislative arena of interest, it may be challenging to separate legislators' priorities from their strategic response to dynamics of agenda control (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Denzau and Mackay 1983), temporal changes in windows of legislative opportunity on an issue (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Krehbiel 1998; Romer and Rosenthal 1978), and individual ability to marshal bills through the legislative process (Hitt, Volden, and Wiseman 2017; Volden and Wiseman 2014). And while some non-incumbent primary candidates have mayoral or state legislative experience, the extent to which these records predict future priorities in the federal legislative setting is unclear. Moreover, relying upon such records precludes comparison between candidates with and without prior officeholding experience — the latter of which have become increasingly viable contenders in recent years (Porter and Treul 2023).

On the other hand, campaigns provide a relatively level playing field for candidates to more cleanly signal their issue priorities.⁷ Campaign platforms are selected on the basis of factors such as national and district issue salience, personal importance of an issue, and constituency composition (Druckman et al. 2010; Sides 2006; Spiliotes and Vavreck 2002). Candidates choosing of their own volition to campaign on an issue suggests that they find it important, whether for personal, electoral, or representational reasons. To the

of such dynamics here, Figure 3 suggests some co-occurrence of primary contributions by different issue groups — but this does not appear to be related to co-occurrence of campaigning upon the different issues.

⁶For example, a modern pro-abortion Democratic candidate is relatively unlikely to face a primary opponent who is both anti-abortion and would exert substantial effort to enact anti-abortion policy.

⁷This is true even for incumbents, who may be partially constrained by their past legislative activity.

extent that they are constrained in the number of issues upon which they can campaign (perhaps because campaigning on fewer issues is more effective than campaigning on many), candidates can expend costly campaign focus to reveal their “type” — whether they are an issue champion or not — across issues. However, groups’ responsiveness to such rhetoric likely depends upon how costly, and therefore informative, of a signal they believe it to be.

Existing theories also suggest divergent implications for whether issue groups should respond more strongly to incumbents’ versus non-incumbents’ issue priorities. If issue PACs most value access to friendly lawmakers, responsiveness to incumbents’ issue priorities should be especially strong. This could either be due to the reinforcing relationship between legislators’ campaign and legislative priorities (Sulkin and Swigger 2008; Sulkin 2009, 2011), or the informativeness of rhetoric itself as a less-mediated signal of incumbents’ priorities (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009). Moreover, incumbents’ *a priori* higher likelihood of election to office than non-incumbents (Abramowitz, Alexander, and Gunning 2006) heightens the stakes of their (implicit) campaign promises due to increased possibility of electoral accountability and punishment in the subsequent election.⁸ Conversely, group-centric theories of party nominations suggest that the effect of campaign issue attention on issue group support should be strongest among non-incumbents. Precisely because non-incumbents do not have prominent officeholding records, campaign rhetoric may constitute an especially important source of information for issue groups to draw on when seeking to identify new issue champions.

The extent to which issue groups prioritize access-seeking versus electing potential issue allies also suggests different levels of responsiveness to campaign priorities by district competitiveness. If issue groups most value access to like-minded legislators, their contributions should be more strongly influenced by shared priorities in districts safer for candidates’ parties. Similar to the logic of corporate PAC funds flowing disproportionately

⁸This is true even at very low levels of future accountability.

to favored candidates (Fouirnaies and Hall 2014), those in safe districts face a more certain victory in the general election. This means that issue PACs can attempt to financially bolster candidates during the primary, after which the electoral outcome is relatively secured. If issue groups instead prioritize electing new issue allies, they should gamble on candidates in competitive districts who share their priorities, as these contributions have the greatest marginal impact on legislative composition all else equal. Moreover, this riskier strategy can potentially offer a higher return on investment, as nominees are in greater need of a financial edge in competitive general elections.⁹

To summarize, existing theories offer different predictions about issue group contribution strategy in modern primaries. Access-centered approaches suggest that issue groups should target incumbents and electorally safe primary candidates who have demonstrated shared issue priority. Group-centric theories of parties instead suggest that issue groups should prioritize electing new issue champions by targeting non-incumbents and primary candidates in competitive districts who have demonstrated shared issue priority. However, the extent to which issue groups should rely upon candidates' rhetoric to identify issue allies is also unclear. While incumbents' campaign platforms may reflect their real legislative priorities, other candidates' platforms could be too "cheap" to constitute meaningful signals of issue priorities.

Data and Measurement

Data challenges have limited large-scale investigation of questions related to congressional campaign platforms and agendas. While previous studies have used television advertisements to examine candidates' campaign priorities (Banda 2015; Sides 2006, 2007; Sides and Karch 2008; Sulkin and Swigger 2008; Sulkin 2009, 2011; Spiliotes and Vavreck 2002), the cost of running such ads is prohibitive for most House primary candidates and not a

⁹Primary-designated contributions not spent during the primary election are legally allowed to go toward general election expenditures.

worthy investment for those in all but the most competitive races. Other scholars have employed media coverage of campaigns to identify candidates' issue priorities (Sulkin 2005), yet these characterizations of campaign priorities are mediated by a third party and, likewise, only offer coverage of races that clear some threshold of newsworthiness.

To overcome these hurdles, I turn to campaign platforms from primary candidates' websites, which constitute a uniquely well-suited source of data on issue priorities. The vast majority of websites contain a page or section clearly delineated as a collection of issue stances, resembling a stated policy platform more closely than any other campaign activity. Moreover, the priorities and positions found on websites are selected and articulated by candidates themselves,¹⁰ in contrast to media interviews, televised debates, and newspaper writeups. Websites also provide candidates an opportunity to present a more comprehensive campaign platform than purchased advertisements in newspapers or on television (Sulkin, Moriarty, and Hefner 2007). Creating and maintaining a website is easy and far cheaper than fundraising, sending mailers, and running television advertisements, resulting in a relatively even playing field with regard to candidates' resources. For these reasons, campaign websites "provide an unmediated, holistic, and representative portrait of messages aimed at voters in general" (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009, 346-347) and scholars have long recognized their value for studying campaigning strategy in general (e.g. McDonald, Porter, and Treul 2020; Nyhan and Montgomery 2015) as well as campaign issue platforms in particular (Druckman et al. 2010; Porter, Treul, and McDonald N.d.; Milita, Ryan, and Simas 2014).

I characterize modern House primary candidates' issue priorities by collecting original data on the issue positions of all candidates who appeared on the ballot in a Democratic or Republican primary in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 from campaign webpages. This effort includes 6,274 unique candidate-year observations, and over 60% (3,816) of all major-party primary candidates from 2016 to 2022 hosted campaign websites with issue content.

¹⁰This remains true in the case of political consultant influence (e.g. Nyhan and Montgomery 2015), as candidates can ultimately fire consultants advocating strategies with which they disagree.

In Appendix C, I explicate and provide examples of each step of the data collection process, as well as provide evidence of the representativeness of candidates with and without campaign website platforms.¹¹

I then match these data on primary candidates' issue priorities with their funding from issue groups using itemized PAC-to-candidate primary contribution receipts from the Federal Election Commission (FEC). With unique PAC identifiers assigned by the FEC, I merge the itemized contributions with OpenSecrets' PAC-level information, which include codes for business sector or policy area with varying levels of specificity. As a starting point for identifying groups centered around a broad political issue, I inspected the organization names and most granular topic code for PACs broadly labeled by OpenSecrets as "Ideology/Single-Issues" (in contrast to corporate PACs and labor PACs). I then altered some PACs' issue areas to better align with the broad issue upon which they are centered. For example, I recode PACs falling under OpenSecrets' "Anti-Guns" and "Pro-Guns" categories as simply "Guns."

Finally, I narrowed down to the handful of issue areas upon which candidates actively campaigned and PACs actively spent in House primaries from 2016 to 2022. Importantly, issues needed to be broad enough that candidates across the nation feasibly consider staking positions and House primary spending PACs have formed around the issue, yet narrow enough that candidates do not feel uniformly compelled to take boilerplate positions on the issue.¹² Moreover, issues with a predominant "economic" interest group base of organizations primarily concerned with members' material interests — including corporate business, labor, education, and agriculture — are excluded as union and trade

¹¹While incumbents and those who garnered more than a *de minimis* share of their primary's total fundraising create websites with campaign platforms at a higher rate, the magnitude of missingness among candidates without viable fundraising is relatively quite modest considering the large portion of non-incumbents who did not even file pre-primary fundraising reports.

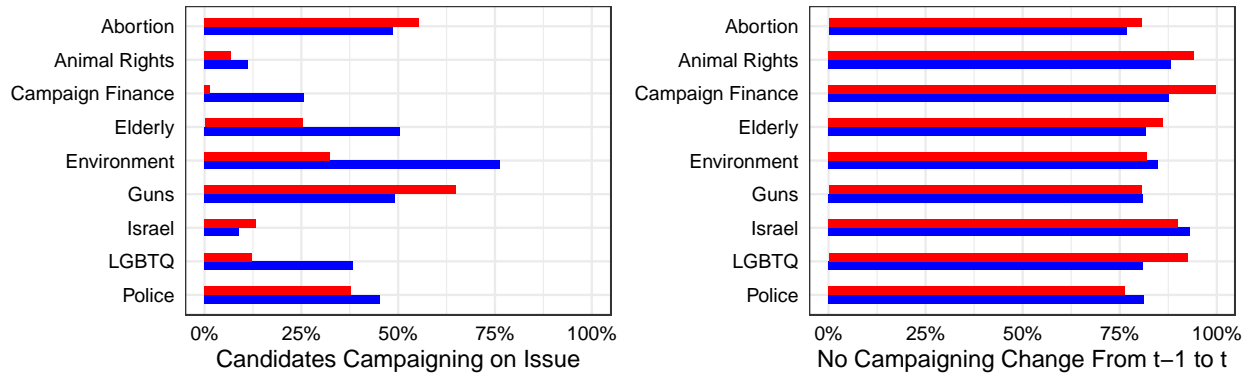
¹²As an example of the former, some candidates take a position on curbing the invasiveness of Asian carp or Copi, yet this issue is highly localized to areas around the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes, and no PACs are currently formed around the issue. With regard to the latter, positions on macroeconomic policy such as taxes and government spending are so widespread among House candidates' platforms that it is infeasible for economic policy PACs to factor issue attention into their decisions.

groups' structures and goals are distinct from other issue PACs' (Barber and Eatough 2019; Phillips N.d.; Welch 1980). Ultimately, I include the following issue areas: Guns, Abortion, Environment, Animal Rights, Police, Elderly, LGBTQ, Campaign Finance, and Israel. Appendix A further discusses this selection process and Appendix B lists PACs included within each issue area. To identify which issues candidates included in their platforms, I generated a collection of terms associated with each. For example, terms associated with Guns include 2nd amendment, nra, rifle, ammunition, firearm, gun, and shooting, with the full collection of terms linked to each issue area reported in Appendix D.¹³ I then used automated string matching to code each of the nine issues mentioned in all campaign platforms.

The left side of Figure 1 suggests heterogeneity in issue prevalence within and between parties: for example, Democrats out-campaigned Republicans on LGBTQ and campaign finance issues, and far fewer Democrats campaigned on campaign finance than on the environment. This is consistent with findings regarding partisan differences in issue coalitions and perceived "ownership" (e.g. Banda 2016; Lacombe 2019; Noel 2012) and highlights the necessity of controlling for candidate partisanship, which is absorbed by candidate fixed effects in the analyses that follow. The right panel of Figure 1 reveals considerable individual-level stability in issue agendas, as over 75% of candidates in both parties maintained their choice to campaign on or omit each issue from election to election. In other words, if candidates choose to announce a position on an issue (or not), they are likely to make the same choice again. This suggests that issue agendas tend to be a stable, like the continuity of roll call voting behavior over time (Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Methodologically, it implies that issue agendas are akin to a candidate characteristic rather than an endogenous response to contributions. The possibility of such "reverse" causality is examined further in Appendix C, finding little evidence of candidates systematically adapting campaign issues based on previous funding.

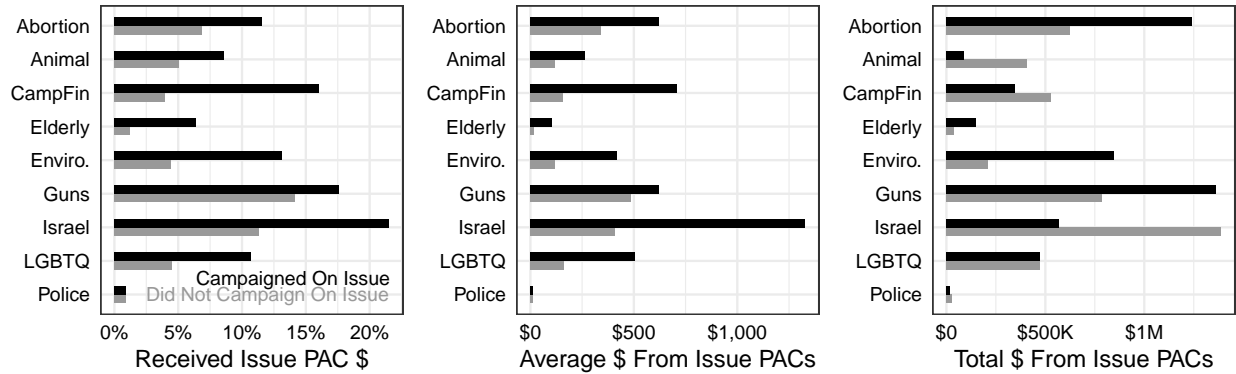
¹³Keywords were selected by browsing all terms used in over 100 separate platforms (~4% total).

Figure 1. Primary Campaign Issue Prevalence and Continuity by Party



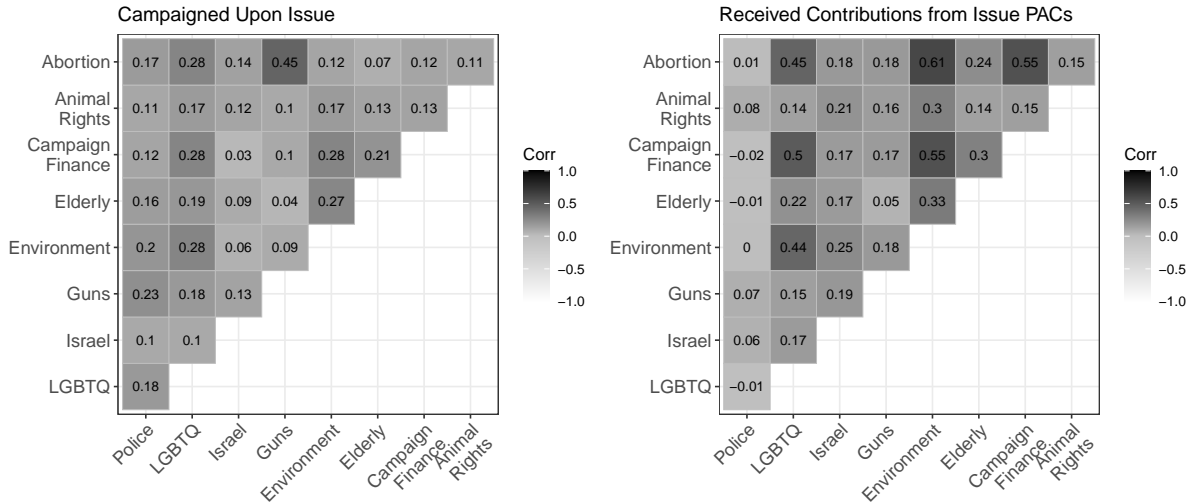
Note: Includes 2016–2022 House primary candidates with campaign website platforms. Left: share of candidate–year observations which included issue in platform. Right: share of candidates with platforms in consecutive campaigns who did not add or delete issue. Republicans in red and Democrats in blue.

Figure 2. Issue PAC Primary Fundraising by Campaign Attention



Note: Includes 2016–2022 House primary candidates with campaign website platforms. Observations at candidate–year level where campaigned on issue in black and did not campaign on issue in gray.

Figure 3. Issue Correlations Within Campaign Attention and PAC Contributions



Note: Includes 2016–2022 House primary candidates with campaign website platforms. Correlations between campaigning on issues (left) and between receiving issue PAC contributions (right).

The three subplots in Figure 2 provide descriptive evidence that issue groups further fund candidates who campaign on their issue. Across issues, candidates who campaign on an issue are more likely to get contributions from issue groups, receive higher average contributions, and receive higher aggregate funds from issue groups than those who chose not to campaign on the issue. However, substantial differences across candidates may driving the observed patterns, again suggesting the importance of controlling for candidate-level characteristics. Finally, Figure 3 explores correlations between campaigning on different issues and correlations between receiving funds from PACs in different issue areas. There is a 0.45 correlation between campaigning on guns and abortion, yet other issues' correlations tend to be far smaller. And while a handful of issues are correlated above 0.5 for PAC funding, these do not appear to be the issues with the strongest correlations for campaign attention. Taken together, these figures suggest that primary candidates' issue agendas are temporally stable, yet issue attention varies substantially within and across candidates, and groups further support those who choose to prioritize their issue.

Issue PAC Response to Campaign Rhetoric

Aggregate descriptive patterns suggest that primary candidates garner greater contributions from issue PACs related to their campaign priorities, but this may be partly driven by differences across candidates and district context. To hold such characteristics constant, I leverage a within-candidate design which tests whether, for a given primary candidate in a given election cycle, campaigning on an issue in the primary is associated with garnering more primary contributions from the issue's PACs. I estimate the following equation:

$$f(\text{Contribute}_{ijt}) = \beta \text{Campaigned}_{ijt} + \alpha_{it} + \phi_{jt} + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

where Contribute_{ijt} is candidate i 's total itemized primary contributions from PACs associated with issue j during election cycle t . The function $f(\cdot)$ maps these contributions into two dependent variable measures: $I(\text{Contribute}_{ijt} > 0)$, an indicator for any positive contributions, and $\log(\text{Contribute}_{ijt} + 1)$ given the inclusion of many zeroes and data skewedness. Fixed effects at the candidate-year level (α_{it}) and the issue-year level (ϕ_{jt}) control for all observed and unobserved election-specific candidate attributes and issue-specific time trends, respectively. Importantly, this means that β captures the change in candidate i 's contributions from PACs centered around issue j in election t associated with candidate i choosing to campaign on issue j in election t , or $\text{Campaigned}_{ijt} = 1$. Thus, β is identified by comparing the same candidate's issue PAC contributions across issues for which they did and did not campaign upon in a given primary.¹⁴ As an alternative measure of issue attention, I also examine the number of issue-related words included in the campaign platform.¹⁵ This design ensures that differences in candidates' attributes and electoral contexts — such as incumbency status, ideological positioning, competitiveness, or newsworthiness — do not confound the relationship between campaign attention to an issue and campaign contributions from issue groups associated with the issue.

Table 1 reports estimated effects of campaigning on an issue on issue PAC contributions. The first four columns use a linear probability model with an indicator for having received any contributions, while the middle columns exclude candidates who either did not receive contributions from PACs in any issue area or received contributions from PACs in all issue areas.¹⁶ The last two columns log-transform the raw contribution amount. In Appendix F, I also re-estimate Equation 1 separately for Republicans and Democrats, and by issue (with year fixed effects only).

¹⁴Given that this specification relies upon within-candidate-year variation in issue attention, β is assumed to be constant across issues. In Appendix F, I report results from regressions run separately by each issue area (with year fixed effects only).

¹⁵Fixed effects control for platform-level characteristics, including total length and total number of issues.

¹⁶Reporting results from observations with only a mix of zeroes and ones in the dependent variable follows Beck's (2020) recommendation for grouped linear probability models, as groups with known zero marginal effects violate the constant marginal effects assumption of grouped linear probability models.

Table 1. Issue Attention and Primary Fundraising From Issue PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		Contributions (0/1), Mixed		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.035*** (0.003)		0.127*** (0.010)		0.275*** (0.025)	
# Issue Words Used		0.003*** (0.000)		0.009*** (0.001)		0.019*** (0.002)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	34,380	34,380	9,738	9,738	34,378	34,378
R-Squared	0.004	0.002	0.017	0.008	0.004	0.002

Note: Observations are candidate–issue–year. Explanatory variables indicate whether campaigned on the issue and count of issue–related words included in platform. Columns 1–2 are linear probability models with DV equal to 1 if received any contributions from PACs centered around the issue. Columns 3–4 are equivalent but include only candidate–year observations with mix of 0 and 1 DVs. Columns 5–6 take natural log of contribution amount. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Across specifications, candidates receive significantly more contributions from PACs centered around issues they campaign upon than PACs centered around issues they do not campaign upon. As a baseline, note that a contribution occurred for 5.7% of all candidate–issue combinations where candidates chose not to campaign on the issue. Given the coefficient in Column 1 of Table 1, this means that the rate of issue PAC contributions increases to over 9% for candidates who campaigned on their issue — more than a 60% increase from the baseline. Column 2 suggests that these effects are identical among candidates who received funds from PACs in some but not all issue areas, as a coefficient of 13 percentage points likewise constitutes a 60% increase over their baseline (21%). Moreover, Column 3 suggests that the relationship is not limited to binary presence of funding: campaigning on an issue is associated with an increase in contribution amount of over 30% from the issue’s PACs. Each additional issue word in candidates’ platforms is also significantly associated with increased contributions, as reported in even–numbered columns.

The parameter estimates in Table 1 seem especially large considering aspects of the analysis which may lead to underestimation. I pool candidates who campaigned on any side of an issue into the “treated” category, even though many issue groups would not consider contributing to candidates who take stances opposed to their own, regardless of such candidates’ attention to their issue. Similarly, while the analyses include all candidate–

year–issue combinations, PACs in certain issue areas (and perhaps in certain cycles) may adopt rules against contributing to certain types of candidates, such as those unopposed or primary challengers. For these reasons, estimates of β may be significantly biased toward zero by including observations where the possibility of “treatment” effects were precluded. Additionally, I focus solely on one manifestation of support — direct contributions — while issue groups and their affiliates may also use independent expenditures or official endorsements to bolster candidates who prioritize their issue.

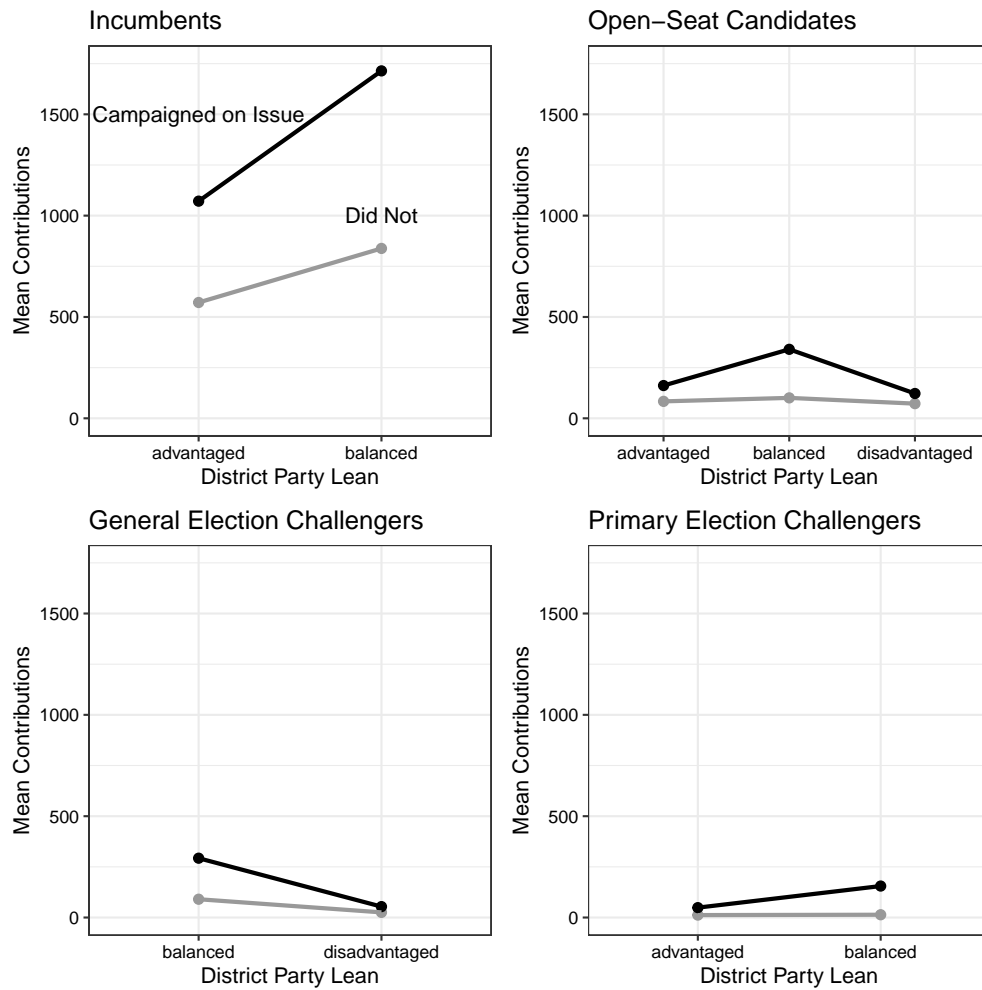
Issue PAC Strategy: Campaign Rhetoric and Access

Having demonstrated a general relationship between campaigning on an issue and fundraising from the issue’s PACs, I evaluate competing theoretical predictions about where this relationship should be largest. In particular, access—centered approaches suggest that effects should be strongest among incumbents and electorally safe primary candidates, while group—centric theories of parties suggest stronger effects among non-incumbents and in competitive districts. Figure 4 first plots average issue–level PAC contributions by candidate type, district lean, and campaign attention to the issue.¹⁷ Incumbents garner substantially higher contributions on average than non-incumbents, consistent with financial incumbency advantages (Fouirnaies and Hall 2014). Comparing candidates of the same type and district lean, those who chose to campaign on an issue also receive greater contributions from the issue’s PACs than those who did not campaign on the issue. Likewise, comparing candidates of the same type and issue attention suggests that candidates in more competitive districts (parties balanced) also tend to have higher fundraising than those in less competitive districts (party advantaged or disadvantaged).

To quantify the magnitudes of these heterogeneous relationships, Table 2 reports the results of Equation 1 estimated separately by candidate type and whether the district is

¹⁷Following Hirano and Snyder (2019), a district is coded as advantaged for the candidate’s party if the party’s nominee received over 57.5% of the two-party vote share in the most recent presidential election, disadvantaged if they received under 42.5%, and balanced if their vote share was somewhere in between.

Figure 4. Average Primary Fundraising From Issue PACs by Electoral Context and Campaign Issue Attention



Note: Figures plot mean candidate–issue–year level primary contributions across levels of party advantage in district and candidate attention to issue. Top left includes incumbents, top right includes open-seat candidates, bottom left includes those running in primary opposite incumbent’s party, and bottom right includes candidates challenging incumbent in primary. Averages for disadvantaged incumbents and primary election challengers and advantaged general election challengers omitted due to small sample.

a “toss-up” or leans toward one party.¹⁸ Overall, Table 2 suggests that no one candidate type or district competitiveness is driving the pooled result in Table 2, as coefficients are statistically significant across each subset of candidates. While the effects of issue attention on issue PAC contributions appear much larger for incumbents than for non-incumbents,

¹⁸Given the similar average contribution patterns between primary election challengers and prospective general election challengers in Figure 4, I collapse challengers into one category, and I collapse districts advantaged and disadvantaged for the party into districts that lean toward one party for the same reason. I also focus on the specification from Column 1 in Table 1 with results from the others in Appendix E.

Table 2. Issue Attention and Issue PAC Fundraising by Candidate and District Type

	DV: Presence of Contribution					
	Incumbents		Open Seat		Challengers	
	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean
Campaigned on Issue	0.126*** (0.018)	0.086*** (0.014)	0.026*** (0.008)	0.02*** (0.006)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.007*** (0.002)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,853	5,040	3,708	4,878	6,552	11,331
R-Squared	0.02	0.008	0.004	0.003	0.002	0.001

Note: Observations are candidate–issue–year. Linear probability models with DV equal to 1 if received any contributions from PACs centered around the issue. Explanatory variable indicates whether campaigned on the issue. Columns are separate models by candidate type and district competitiveness. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

the differences between their baseline rates of receiving issue PAC contributions are even greater. These baseline rates imply that, in swing districts, the increase in likelihood of receiving issue PAC contributions associated with campaigning on the issue is 56% for incumbents, 119% for open–seat candidates, and 108% for challengers.¹⁹ In districts leaning toward one party, incumbents see a 43% increase while the increase is 100% and 135% for open–seat candidates and challengers, respectively.²⁰ Although the *absolute* increase in issue PAC funding associated with campaign attention is greatest among incumbents, the proportional increase relative to the baseline is twice as large for non–incumbents. Moreover, comparing within candidate type suggests small effect differences between swing and leaning districts, yet none are statistically distinct.

These results are consistent with issue PACs responding especially strongly to non–incumbents’ campaign prioritization of their issue in primaries. However, making comparisons between incumbents and non–incumbents is difficult due to systematic differences in quality, campaigning skills, strategic positioning, and more. To quantify the relative effects of incumbency, campaign issue attention, and their interaction on primary contributions from the issue’s PACs, I employ a first–differences design equivalent to a

¹⁹Respectively, their baseline rates are 0.226, 0.022, and 0.016.

²⁰These baseline rates are 0.199, 0.020, and 0.005.

two-period candidate-issue and issue-year fixed effects analysis. This allows for a test of whether candidates who are successfully elected to Congress receive an even larger issue PAC fundraising advantage if they campaigned on the issue as non-incumbents. The specification is as follows:

$$f(\Delta_t \text{Contribute}_{ijt}) = \beta_1 \Delta_t \text{Incumbency}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} + \beta_3 (\Delta_t \text{Incumbency}_{it} \times \text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1}) + \epsilon_{ijt}. \quad (2)$$

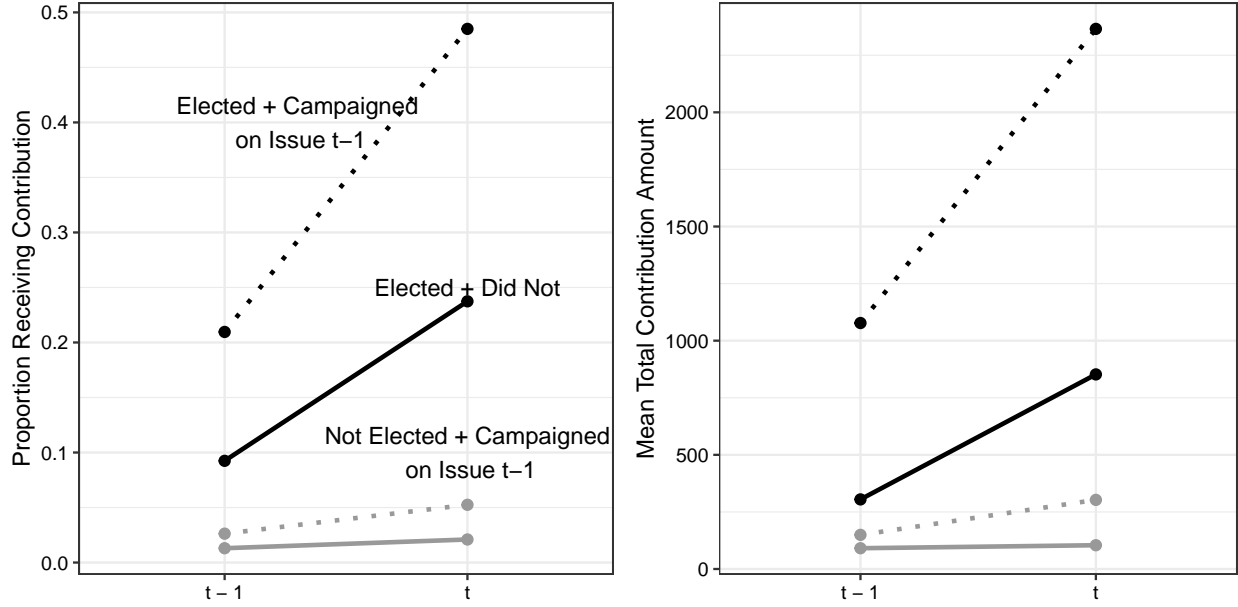
The outcomes represented by $f(\Delta_t \text{Contribute}_{ijt})$ capture the change in candidate i 's binary and logged contributions from PACs centered around issue j from year t_{-1} to year t ,²¹ i.e. $I(\text{Contribute}_{ijt} > 0) - I(\text{Contribute}_{ijt-1} > 0)$ and $\log(\text{Contribute}_{ijt} + 1) - \log(\text{Contribute}_{ijt-1} + 1)$. The main treatment variable $\Delta_t \text{Incumbency}_{it}$ takes the value of 1 if candidate i ran as a non-incumbent in t_{-1} and an incumbent in time t , a value of 0 if she ran as a non-incumbent in both t_{-1} and t , and NA if she ran as an incumbent in both years.²² For candidates i who campaigned on issue j in t_{-1} , $\text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} = 1$, and $\text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} = 0$ otherwise. Finally, I include an interaction between change in incumbency and choosing to campaign on the issue in the previous election.

Given this interaction, β_1 estimates a within-candidate incumbency advantage in issue PAC primary fundraising among candidates who did *not* campaign on the issue in the previous election by comparing the issue PAC fundraising changes among candidates elected to office to those who were not elected. Conversely, β_2 estimates the effect of campaigning on the issue in the previous election on change in issue PAC fundraising among candidates who were not elected to office. Lastly, the sum of all three β coefficients represents

²¹Given the short time frame, I include candidates' non-consecutive elections if they did not run for office in the intervening years (e.g. candidates who ran in 2016 and 2020 but not 2018 are included). Such cases constitute less than 8% of the sample and analyses are robust to including only sequential years.

²²I exclude existing incumbents as the "treatment" is winning election for the first time. However, including incumbents in the "counterfactual" group does not meaningfully alter the substantive size nor the statistical significance of results.

Figure 5. Change in Issue PAC Funding by Previous Electoral Success and Issue Attention



Note: Left figure plots share of candidate–issue–year level observations receiving issue PAC contributions while right figure plots candidate–issue–year level average PAC contributions. Candidates running as incumbents in primary t represented in black and candidates running as non-incumbents represented in gray. Candidates who campaigned on issue in primary $t - 1$ represented by dotted lines and those who did not are represented by solid lines. Figures exclude candidates who were incumbents at $t - 1$.

the change in issue PAC primary fundraising associated with both incumbency and prior issue attention, with β_3 capturing any additional effect of both.

Figure 5 plots the temporal change in share of primary candidates receiving issue PAC contributions and average issue PAC contribution amount by whether candidates campaigned on the issue in the previous election and went from a non-incumbent to an incumbent. Consistent with access-seeking behavior, the increase in issue PAC contributions is far larger for candidates running as incumbents in the next period (gray) than for those running again as non-incumbents (black). However, among candidates who went from non-incumbents to incumbents (gray), Figure 5 shows that those who chose to campaign on an issue as non-incumbents (dotted) saw an even larger average increase in funding from that issue’s PACs than those who did not campaign on the issue (solid).

These first differences are quantified in Table 3. Compared to those who lost and did not campaign on the issue in their previous election, candidates who were successfully

Table 3. First Differences: Change in Primary Fundraising Before and After Election to Office

	Δ Contributions (0/1)	$\log(\Delta \text{ Contributions} + 1)$
Elected to Office t	0.137*** (0.015)	1.561*** (0.115)
Campaigned on Issue t_{-1}	0.018 (0.013)	0.228* (0.100)
Elected * Issue	0.112*** (0.024)	1.588*** (0.186)
Observations	2,880	2,812
R-Squared	0.095	0.209

Note: Observations are candidate–issue–year. DVs are change in binary presence of contributions from issue’s PACs and logged change in contribution amounts from primary t_{-1} to primary t .

Predictors indicate whether candidate went from a non–incumbent in t_{-1} to incumbent in t , whether she campaigned on issue in primary t_{-1} , and their interaction. Includes those who were non–incumbents at t_{-1} . * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

elected but did not previously campaign on the issue saw a 14 percentage point greater increase in likelihood of receiving contributions from the issue’s PACs. However, the increase in likelihood of garnering contributions from issue PACs for candidates who were elected *and* campaigned on the issue as non-incumbents was 25 percentage points more than those who lost and did not campaign on the issue in their previous election. For both likelihood of contributions and logged contributions, the incumbency increase in issue PAC funding for issue champions is twice the increase for candidates who did not previously campaign on the issue.

Legislative and Financial Implications of Campaign Rhetoric

Results from Table 3 demonstrate that newly elected incumbents who championed an issue in their non–incumbent campaigns see an even greater increase in contributions from the issue’s groups in their next primary compared to those who did not campaign on the issue as non-incumbents. This suggests that issue PACs seek access to legislators who have already signaled shared priorities. One explanation for this is that campaign priorities serve as a meaningful signal of future legislative activity (Schnakenberg 2016;

Sulkin 2011), which issue groups subsequently reward. Candidates may campaign upon issues that they intend to prioritize in office, follow through by disproportionately introducing legislation pertaining to such issues, then receive comparatively greater funding from PACs centered around those issues.

On the other hand, the findings in Table 3 could also be consistent with groups responding to the campaign rhetoric itself. First, groups may believe that they will benefit from increased salience of their issue as a result of public campaigning upon it (Berry and Wilcox 2015; Kollman 1998). In service of maintaining donors and raising further funds, issue groups may also be interested in informing members that their previous contributions have gone to true champions who prioritized the issue during the election. Alternatively, in eras of polarization, when lawmaking on contentious issues — such as those of the sample issue groups — is gridlocked, groups may simply be happy having issue allies in office (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Krehbiel 1998; Lee 2016). In contrast to “lobbying as legislative subsidy” (Hall and Deardorff 2006), wherein interest groups exchange informational resources for legislative effort, modern issue group contributions to true issue allies may not be meant to “buy” anything except insurance against undesirable legislative effort — at least in the short term.

To determine whether issue groups increase funding to incumbents who previously campaigned on their issue due to campaign rhetoric or legislative activity, I perform two sets of analyses. First, I investigate the within-legislator relationship between campaigning on an issue and bill sponsorship activity on the issue in the subsequent House session. I estimate the equation:

$$f(\text{Introduce}_{ijt}) = \beta \text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} + \alpha_{it} + \phi_{jt} + \epsilon_{ijt}. \quad (3)$$

I consider two outcome variables represented by $f(\text{Introduce}_{ijt})$: an indicator for whether

House member i sponsored any legislation pertaining to issue j during session t , and the raw count of such legislation. Using data on legislation summaries and sponsors of bills introduced during the 115th, 116th, and 117th congresses²³ from `congress.gov`, I coded whether H.R.s pertained to each of the nine issue areas or not by string matching the collection of terms used to identify the same issues in campaign platforms.²⁴ The explanatory variable $\text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1}$ indicates whether legislator i campaigned on issue j in election year $t - 1$, representing the election immediately preceding the legislative session in year t . Once again, α_{it} and ϕ_{jt} are respective legislator–year and issue–year fixed effects, which ensure that differences in legislators’ effectiveness, institutional power, committee assignments, and overall productivity levels do not drive results. As such, β represents within–legislator–year differences in bill sponsorship activity on issues that she did and did not campaign upon while also controlling for issue–specific time trends.

Table 4 reports the key parameter estimates from Equation 3 separately for freshmen and non–freshmen legislators, as the former allows us to determine whether patterns hold specifically for the “treated” candidates driving the results in Table 3, and the latter can inform us about whether the patterns hold more generally. Both freshmen and non–freshmen legislators tend to be more active on issues upon which they most recently campaigned, with results being weaker for first–term members. In terms of bill introductions across all combinations of legislators and issues, non–freshmen introduce at a baseline rate of 19 percentage points while freshmen introduce at a baseline rate of 15 percentage points. Given coefficients from the binary bill introductions model in Table 4, this suggests a larger (and more significant) relationship between campaign attention and bill introductions on issues for non–freshmen than for freshmen.

Having found suggestive evidence that legislators follow through on their campaign priorities, we can also try to estimate the responsiveness of issue PAC primary contributions to prior campaign attention versus bill sponsorship on the issue. Although propos-

²³Although the sample includes candidates elected in 2022, the 118th congress does not end until 2025.

²⁴Terms were modified slightly in order to adapt them to a legislative setting.

Table 4. Campaign Attention and Subsequent Legislative Activity on Issue

	Introduced Bill (0/1)		# Bills Introduced	
	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen
Campaigned on Issue $t-1$	0.093*** (0.016)	0.06 (0.033)	0.246*** (0.037)	0.151** (0.058)
Member-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,735	954	3,735	954
R-Squared	0.01	0.004	0.013	0.008

Note: Observations are member–issue–year. DVs are binary and count of bill introductions on an issue. Predictor indicates whether campaigned on issue in previous primary election. Models run separately for first–term and non–first–term members. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

ing legislation is a relatively low–cost legislative activity, which issue groups may view as little more than position–taking (but see Kessler and Krehbiel 1996), it is almost certainly higher–cost for legislators than editing the issue content on their campaign website. Moreover, an increase in scholarship on legislative activity which is even “cheaper” than bill proposals, such as floor speeches (Diermeier et al. 2012; Goel et al. 2023; Lauderdale and Herzog 2016) and press releases (Grimmer 2013; Taylor 2017), suggests it is important to understand the content and possible effects of lower–cost legislative activity. To determine the extent to which issue groups reward campaign rhetoric versus bill sponsorship, I estimate parameters of the equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Contribute}_{ijt+1} = & \beta \text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} + \mathbf{X}(\text{Introduce}_{ijt}) + \\ & \mathbf{N}(\text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1} \times \text{Introduce}_{ijt}) + \alpha_{it} + \phi_{jt} + \epsilon_{ijt} \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where $\text{Contribute}_{ijt+1}$ takes the value of 1 if and only if legislator i received positive contributions from PACs centered around issue j in election year $t + 1$, the election immediately proceeding legislative session t . Legislator i ’s campaign attention to issue j in previous election year $t - 1$ is captured by $\text{Campaigned}_{ijt-1}$. Given the fixed effects α_{it} and ϕ_{jt} and an interaction term, the parameter β represents the within–legislator–year relationship

between previously campaigning on an issue and receiving contributions from the issue's groups in the following election for those who did not introduce legislation on the issue. Conversely, the vector $\mathbf{X}(\text{Introduce}_{ijt})$ contains the coefficients corresponding to relationships between bill introductions and issue PAC contributions for the binary and raw count measures of bill introductions. Finally, the vector of coefficients \mathbf{N} includes any additional increase in issue PAC primary funding associated with both campaigning on the issue and the binary and raw measures of legislation introduction.²⁵

The results reported in Table 5 suggest that legislators' previous campaign attention to an issue matters for primary campaign funding independent of subsequent legislative activity on the issue. Campaigning on an issue without introducing legislation on it is associated with an increased likelihood of receiving contributions from the issue's PACs of around 9 percentage points for non-freshmen and 12–14 points for freshmen in the next primary election. On the other hand, most point estimates associated with introducing legislation on an issue without having campaigned on it beforehand are substantially smaller, and only one of four (number of bills among non-freshmen) is statistically distinct from zero at the traditional 95% level.²⁶ Finally, the coefficients from the interaction terms suggest that there is not a strong and consistent additional increase in issue PAC funding associated with both campaigning on an issue and introducing legislation on it. Only two of four interaction terms are positive, and none reach statistical significance. These findings are consistent with issue PACs systematically rewarding legislators for rhetorical attention to their issue in the previous election, while responding far less strongly to their legislative proposals on the issue.

²⁵Similarly to the problem of "bad controls" (Angrist and Pischke 2009), the inclusion of both previous campaign attention to an issue and bill introductions on the issue on the right hand side of Equation 4 may attenuate β toward zero, as bill introductions can be an outcome of campaign attention (as in Equation 3).

²⁶However, the confidence intervals of the non-interacted terms overlap in each model, so we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of campaign attention is equal to the effect of introducing bills.

Table 5. Legislative Activity, Campaign Attention, and Subsequent Issue Group Funding

	DV: Presence of Contribution (0/1)			
	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen
Campaigned on Issue $t-1$	0.094*** (0.018)	0.137*** (0.036)	0.087*** (0.017)	0.118*** (0.035)
Introduced Bill	0.036 (0.022)	0.087 (0.049)		
Campaigned * Introduced	0.025 (0.030)	-0.124 (0.064)		
# Bills Introduced			0.033** (0.012)	0.049 (0.035)
Campaigned * # Bills			0.016 (0.014)	-0.040 (0.040)
Member-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,735	954	3,735	954
R-Squared	0.016	0.019	0.025	0.016

Note: Observations are member–issue–year. Linear probability models with DV equal to 1 if received primary contributions from issue PACs, run separately by first–term status. Predictors are whether member campaigned on issue in previous primary, bill introductions on issue in previous Congress, and their interaction. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Discussion and Conclusion

Issue groups receive and spend millions of dollars in congressional races each election cycle, and previous work suggests that they are central players in primary elections. Moreover, existing theories predict divergent contribution strategies — yet a lack of data on primary candidates’ campaign priorities has hindered evaluation of their predictions. This paper provides new evidence that issue groups rely on campaign rhetoric at the primary stage to identify and pursue long–term relationships with potential champions of their cause. In doing so, I contribute to a new and growing literature on the diverse motivations, ideological views, and politicization levels of organized interests (Barber and Eatough 2019; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2020; Grumbach 2020; Hassell 2023; Li 2018; Phillips N.d.; Stuckatz 2022)

I introduce new data on the issue priorities of House primary candidates from the

most proximate four election cycles, which I pair with primary contribution receipts from groups formed around the same issues. Using within-candidate designs to hold constant characteristics of candidates, their districts, and their electoral contexts, I demonstrated that candidates garner more funds from PACs centered around their campaign priorities. In particular, while absolute effects are largest among incumbents, proportional effects relative to the baseline are largest among non-incumbents. I then further investigate how issue groups weigh issue priority and access considerations using a first-differences design to show a large issue PAC fundraising advantage among incumbents who previously campaigned on the issue. Finally, evidence from bill proposal summaries suggests that this is not driven by greater short-term legislative activity on PACs' issues. Overall, these patterns are consistent with issue groups cultivating and nurturing long-term relationships with legislators who have previously signaled prioritization of their issue, rather than rewarding actual bill proposals. While determining why issue groups respond more strongly to campaign priorities than legislative priorities is beyond the scope of the paper, the behavior is consistent with both legislative proposals and campaign rhetoric constituting relatively "cheap" signals of priorities, yet campaign platforms are clearer due to *de minimus* institutional constraints.

These new data on House primary candidates' issue priorities highlight the potential for important new avenues of research into issue group strategy in nominations. This paper focuses on nine key issue areas that map cleanly onto candidates' selective campaign attention, PACs' organizational priorities, and legislative activity. While macroeconomic issues are excluded due to many candidates making boilerplate campaign statements on the same, future studies could capture not just issue attention but specificity or substantive content of campaign appeals in order to test whether, for instance, conservative tax organizations support primary candidates who take conservative positions on tax policy. Additionally, this paper only analyzes issue PACs' direct contributions, which are one of a number of avenues of influence moneyed interests can pursue to support candidates or

attempt to influence the policymaking process. Subsequent research could also incorporate issue groups' lobbying behavior and independent expenditures to examine whether these activities are also more likely when candidates have rhetorically prioritized an issue in their campaigns, as well as how these activities may be used similarly or differently.

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Appendix

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A Issue Selection

I first identified PACs coded by OpenSecrets with an “Ideological/Single-Issue” (versus “Labor” or “Business”) sector code which contributed to any House primary elections in 2016, 2018, 2020, or 2022. I then dropped PACs with general ideological, leadership PAC, and candidate committee OpenSecrets industry codes as these are not centered around one single issue. Next, I used industry codes and organization names to drop PACs associated with issue areas insufficiently broad or narrow to feasibly be campaigned upon by some but not all candidates across the nation, as well as those with primarily electoral or representational goals rather than policy goals.

Within OpenSecrets’ “Women’s Issues” industry code, for example, many organizations such as Women Under Forty PAC leverage contributions in order to increase the number of women legislators, young women legislators, or women legislators of a certain party — a primary aim distinct from that of championing a particular issue. In contrast, abortion-centric organizations center a particular issue that some may consider a “women’s issue.” Likewise, while a number of PACs devoted to particular foreign policy matters exist, many of these (such as anti-Castro organization US-Cuba Democracy PAC) pertain to issues that are campaigned upon by vanishingly few candidates. However, organizations related to policy and treatment toward Israel are included, as the US’ partnership with Israel and geopolitical issues pertaining to Israel make the issue salient enough for candidates across the country to feasibly adopt stances on it.

Additionally, I exclude issues for which the main organized interests are primarily oriented toward furthering their members’ material interests, such as trade organizations and

unions. These include agriculture, education, labor, and corporate business.

B Issue PACs

Table B1. Included Issue PACs

PAC Name	Issue
Ocean Champions	Environment
Humane Society Legislative Fund	Animal Rights
Safari Club International	Guns
League of Conservation Voters	Environment
Human Rights Campaign	LGBTQ
National Cmte to Preserve Social Security	Elderly
National Rifle Assn	Guns
Joint Action Cmte for Political Affairs	Israel
Desert Caucus	Israel
Sierra Club	Environment
Planned Parenthood	Abortion
New Jersey Republican Pro-Life Coalition	Abortion
SunPAC	Israel
JStreetPAC	Israel
New Jersey Right to Life	Abortion
To Protect Our Heritage PAC	Israel
I-PAC JAX	Israel
Citizens Organized PAC	Israel
EMILY's List	Abortion
National Assn for Gun Rights	Guns
Maryland Assn for Concerned Citizens	Israel
National Action Cmte	Israel
End Citizens United	Campaign Finance
National Pro-Life Alliance	Abortion
Protectseniors.org	Elderly
National Shooting Sports Foundation	Guns
Tri-state Maxed Out Women	Abortion
Florida Congressional Cmte	Israel
Center for Coastal Conservation	Environment
Grand Canyon State Caucus	Israel
Washington PAC	Israel
Gun Owners of America	Guns
Republican Jewish Coalition	Israel
National PAC	Israel
Americans for Good Government	Israel
LGBTQ Victory Fund	LGBTQ
Susan B Anthony List	Abortion
Log Cabin Republicans	LGBTQ

Americans United in Support of Democracy	Israel
NRDC Action Fund	Environment
MaggiePAC	Abortion
American Principles	Israel
NARAL Pro-Choice America	Abortion
Louisianans for American Security	Israel
Bi-County PAC	Israel
Equality PAC	LGBTQ
Republican Majority for Choice	Abortion
Mid Manhattan PAC	Israel
Sustainable Energy & Environment Coalition	Environment
America's Conservation PAC	Environment
Illinois Right to Life	Abortion
L PAC	LGBTQ
Americans For Law Enforcement	Police
Friends of the Earth	Environment
Voter Education PAC	Abortion
Environment America	Environment
Giffords PAC	Guns
Ohio Gun Collectors Assn	Guns
White Coat Waste	Animal Rights
Democratic Conservation Alliance	Environment
Partnership for Conservation	Environment
Texas Right to Life	Abortion
Washington Women for Choice	Abortion
Social Security Works	Elderly
Because I Care PAC	Israel
City PAC	Israel
Protect Life PAC	Abortion
Sanctity of Life PAC	Abortion
Action Coalition PAC	Abortion
National Gun Rights PAC	Guns
Protect Our Future	Abortion
Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund	Guns
Population Connection	Abortion
Brady PAC	Guns
Police Action Fund	Police
Environmental Defense Action Fund	Environment
Pride Fund to End Gun Violence	Guns
Animal Wellness Action	Animal Rights
Pro-Israel America PAC	Israel
Pro-Life PAC	Abortion

Tri-State Maxed Out Women	Abortion
Alliance for Retired Americans	Elderly
American Unity Fund	LGBTQ
White Coat Waste Project	Animal Rights
To Protect Our Heritage PAC	Israel
US Israel PAC	Israel
LGBT Democrats of Virginia	LGBTQ
Grand Canyon State Caucus	Israel
National Wildlife Federation Action Fund	Environment
Sunrise PAC	Environment
Democratic Majority for Israel	Israel
Energy Innovation PAC	Environment
Equality California Majority Fund	LGBTQ
End the Occupation	Israel
American Horse PAC	Animal Rights
Illinois Citizens for Life	Abortion
Grass Roots NC/Forum for Firearms Educ	Guns
Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life	Abortion

C Campaign Platform Collection

Identifying relevant candidates. I used Ballotpedia.com to identify all candidates who appeared on a Republican or Democratic primary ballot in each district in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022, as well as take down the primary election date and candidate type (incumbent/open seat/challenger). Independent, write-in, and dropout candidates were excluded, as well as candidates who ran in the primaries in the table below.

Table C1. Excluded Primary Races

Locale	Reason
Alaska, 2022 only	Top-4
California	Top-2
Connecticut	Party Convention
Louisiana	Top-2
Utah	Party Convention
Virginia, 2016, Democratic: Districts 5,7,1,6,9,10	Party Convention
Virginia, 2016, Republican: Districts 3,8,5,11,7	Party Convention
Virginia, 2018, Democratic: District 5	Party Convention
Virginia, 2018, Republican: District 5,8,3,7,6	Party Convention
Virginia, 2020, Democratic: District 9	Party Convention
Virginia, 2020, Republican: District 8,5,10,11,4,7	Party Convention
Virginia, 2022, Republican: District 8,5,10,11	Party Convention
Washington	Top-2

Source: Footnotes of FEC primary date calendars.

Searching for campaign websites in real time. Data on 2022 primary candidates were collected in real time. Candidates' web pages were accessed as immediately as possible before their primary, always within a week of the election date. I first performed a web search for "[candidate name] for Congress [election year]". Official governmental websites and social media sites were ignored. If no website appearing to be the candidate's campaign website appeared in the first page of search results, I added the district (e.g. "AL-1") to the search terms. If nothing appeared, I then consulted Politics1.com and Ballotpedia.com, which compile fairly reliable lists of candidates' campaign websites at various levels of government. If no non-social media website or non-governmental campaign website was found, I moved on to the next candidate. Although it is possible that some candidate websites eluded this data collection process, websites that were not found while deliberating searching via numerous steps were not readily accessible to members of the public, activists, or journalists, who would almost certainly devote less effort to find them.

Searching for archived campaign websites. For candidates who ran in 2016, 2018, and 2020, the process was identical to that outlined above, with an added step of accessing the archived website as it appeared at the relevant time via the Wayback Machine (archive.org). I first performed a web site for "[candidate name] for Congress [election year]". Some candidates ran in more recent elections and maintained a new website at

the same URL which hosted their campaign website during the election year of interest. Because many candidates delete their campaign websites after losing election, I likewise consulted historic versions of Politics1.com and Ballotpedia.com. Once a potential historic campaign website URL was identified, I pasted it into the Wayback Machine and accessed the snapshot of the website most immediately before the date of the primary. While these archives ranged in time from very close to the primary to months before the primary, I also recorded the date of the archive version.

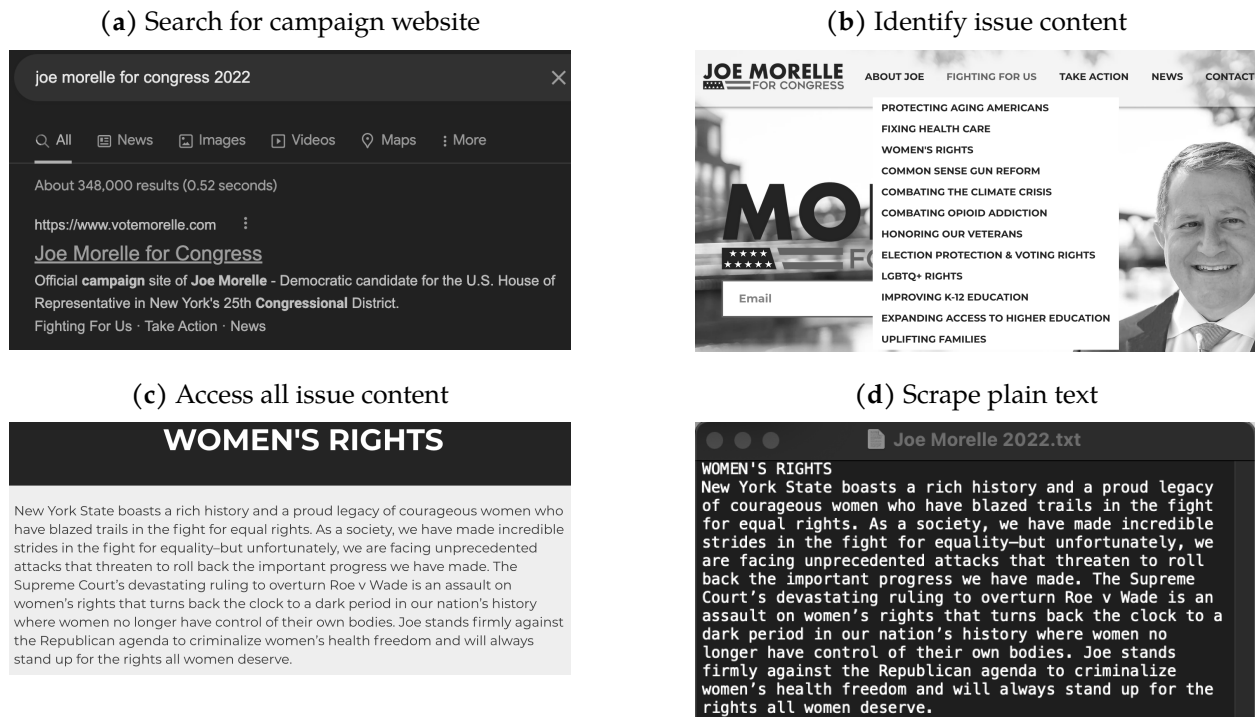
Identifying issue positions. The vast majority of campaign websites had clearly delineated pages or sections for policy platforms, issue positions, or candidate priorities. If the area devoted to positions was not readily obvious in the website architecture, I surveyed the entirety of the website for other places where one might find issue positions. I do not consider candidate biographies, endorsement lists, campaign updates, or volunteer/donation pages to be issue positions. Many incumbent candidates (and some candidates with state legislative experience) devoted a section of the website to their legislative achievements, and these were nearly always separate from issue position pages. I excluded pages devoted exclusively to legislative achievements, but some candidates relate positions on their issue pages to legislative achievements, all of which I include as issue positions. If a campaign website with issue position content was successfully accessed, the URL was recorded in a spreadsheet.

Collecting issue position text. Once issue position content was identified, I manually copied and pasted all of the associated positioning text — including the section header, issue stances, and candidate quotes — from each sub-issue page or section into one .txt file titled the candidate’s name and election year. I also captured the website content exactly as it appeared with a combination of manual screen capture and automated screen capture via the Awesome Screenshot extension on Google Chrome.

Representativeness. Table C2 reports relationships between the binary presence of campaign website positions and observable candidate, election, and district characteristics thought to relate to candidates’ willingness and ability to announce a platform. I estimate models separately by incumbency status due to different meanings of missingness in the data: incumbents virtually all hosted primary campaign websites over the period, but some omitted positions, whereas some non-incumbents lacked a website altogether, but those with websites nearly all included positions. Data on fundraising are from FEC pre-primary reports and presidential vote shares are from Daily Kos, which include 2020 election results for post-census 2022 districts. Competition is captured by indicators for whether the primary was unopposed or financially uncompetitive (with financially competitive as reference category), defined as financially competitive if the top fundraiser garnered under 57.5% of the total receipts in the primary, as well as the party’s advantage in the district, defined as a party advantage if their nominee received over 57.5% of the vote share in the most recent presidential election, disadvantaged if they received under 42.5%, and swing if their vote share was somewhere in between. In the non-incumbent model, I also indicate state legislative experience and whether a candidate raised under 10% of the total receipts in the primary.

Table C2 indicates high rates of campaign website position-taking, especially (and unsurprisingly) among incumbents and those who garnered more than a *de minimis* share of their primary’s total fundraising. Non-incumbents who raised under 10% of the total re-

Figure C1. Example Data Collection Workflow



Note: Visual depiction of simplified steps involved in collecting Representative Joe Morelle’s 2022 primary campaign issue positions from www.votemorelle.com. Appendix C describes each component of the data collection in detail.

ceipts are 15 percentage points less likely to have website positions than those who raised more. However, the magnitude of this missingness is relatively modest considering that nearly 40% of sample non-incumbents did not even file pre-primary fundraising reports, and a substantial portion of such candidates likely did not actively campaign after filing to run. Overall, the results do not suggest that large swaths of candidates are systematically excluded from data on campaign website priorities on the basis of candidate type, electoral competitiveness, or even resources.

Reverse causality — platform change in response to previous funding. While we cannot directly test the presence of reverse causality, the panel structure of the data allows for investigation into temporal changes in campaign platforms. After wrangling the data into observations at the candidate–issue–year-pair level (e.g. AOC, environment, 2018–2020) for candidates who ran in multiple cycles from 2016 to 2022, I calculated the net changes in issue word use between the two elections as well as whether they added the issue to their platform between the two elections. Figures C2 and C3 suggest that candidates who received funding from issue PACs in the previous election were not systematically more likely to increase attention (i.e. binary or word count based) to the issue in the next election. For police and campaign finance, a much larger proportion of candidates who received funds campaigned on the issue in the next election compared to candidates who didn’t receive funds. However, a much larger proportion of candidates who didn’t receive abortion–related funds campaigned on abortion in the next election compared to candi-

dates who did receive funds. The other six issues do not show major differences, and the differences are not consistently in the direction of candidates who received funding being more likely to campaign on the issue in the next election.

Table C2. Determinants of Primary Campaign Website Positions, 2016—2022

	Campaign Website Positions Present	
	Incumbents	Non-Incumbents
(Intercept)	0.866*** (0.068)	0.775*** (0.028)
Republican	0.025 (0.027)	−0.014 (0.014)
Unopposed Primary	−0.087 (0.065)	−0.054 (0.028)
Uncompetitive \$ Primary	−0.050 (0.065)	−0.014 (0.017)
Advantaged District	−0.076** (0.028)	
Receipts < 10%		−0.146*** (0.015)
State Legislator		0.025 (0.026)
Open Advantaged		0.001 (0.025)
Open Disadvantaged		−0.068* (0.034)
General Challenger Swing		−0.009 (0.024)
General Challenger Disadvantaged		−0.092*** (0.023)
Primary Challenger Advantaged		−0.046 (0.025)
Primary Challenger Swing		−0.029 (0.033)
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Observations	1,213	4,939
Adjusted R ²	0.012	0.100

Note: Linear probability models predicting presence (1) or absence (0) of campaign website issue positions during primary. Reference value for primary competitiveness is financially competitive, district type in incumbent model is swing, and district-candidate type in non-incumbent model is open-seat swing. HC3 standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Figure C2. Net Campaign Issue Word Change By Previous Issue PAC Funding

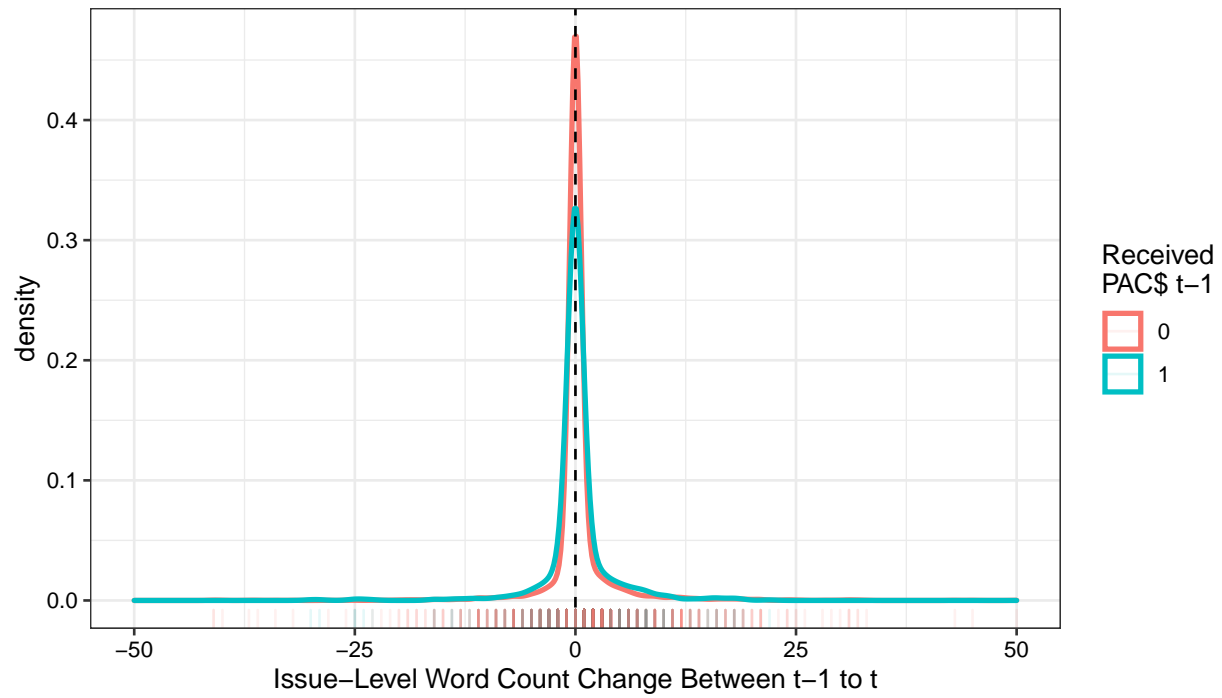
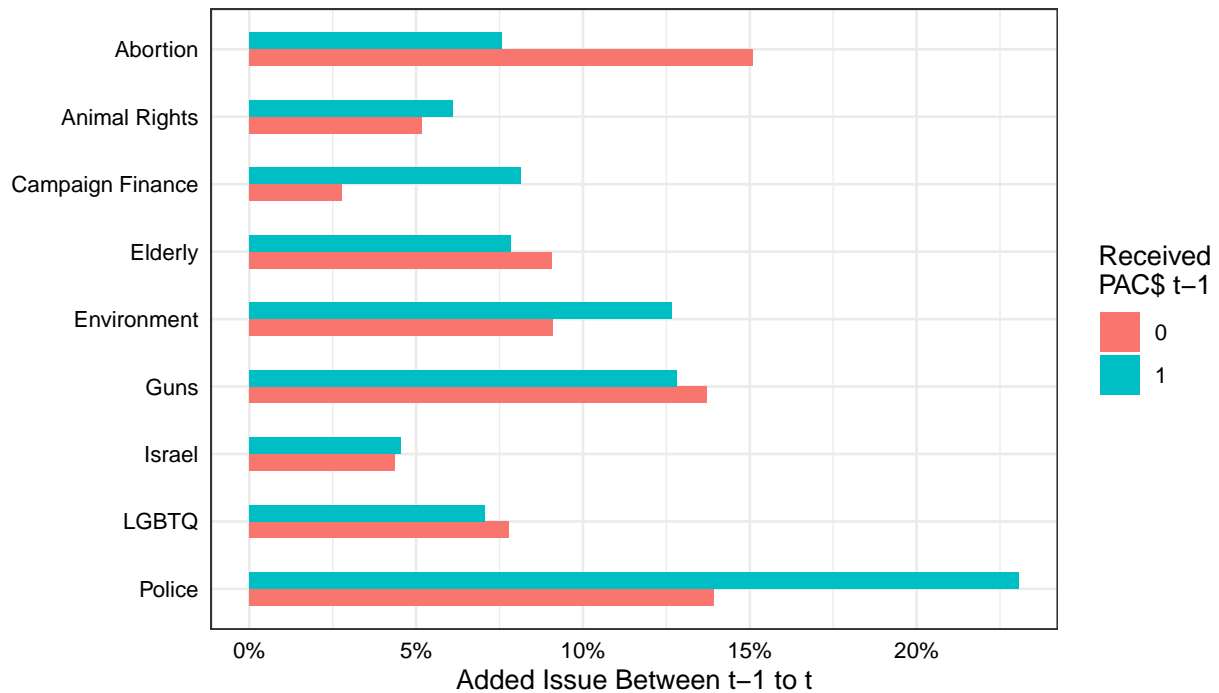


Figure C3. Rate of Campaign Issue Addition By Previous Issue PAC Funding



D Campaign Issues

Abortion Terms: "sanctity of life", "unborn", "pro-life", "fetus", "abortion", "abort", "nabal", "global gag", "planned parenthood", "terminate", "rape", "right to life", "right to choose", "pro-choice", "pregnancy", "roe", "hyde", "family planning", "reproductive"

Abortion Example: "Women's reproductive rights are under assault by the Trump Administration. A woman's right to choose is a healthcare issue and economic empowerment issue, which is why it is crucial that we take action to protect women's rights and reproductive freedom. Marilyn strongly supports a woman's right to choose and will fight attempts to restrict access to birth control and women's healthcare. In Congress, she will protect funding for Planned Parenthood and access to birth control, and will fiercely oppose attempts to overturn Roe v. Wade." — Marilyn Strickland (WA-10-2020)

Gun Terms: "2nd amendment", "infringe", "right to bear arms", "militia", "second amendment", "self-defense", "nra", "rifle", "rifles", "ammunition", "firearm", "firearms", "gun violence", "shooting", "shootings", "shooter", "assault rifle", "automatic rifle", "automatic rifles", "automatic weapons", "assault weapon", "automatic weapon", "background checks", "background check", "bump stock", "high-capacity magazine", "gun", "guns", "high-capacity magazines"

Guns Example: "When it comes to protecting our right to bear arms, there has been no greater champion than Matt. Marion Hammer, past President of the NRA, has called Matt "one of the most pro-gun members of the Florida Legislature." Matt successfully sponsored legislation banning local governments from infringing on our 2nd Amendment rights, and led the fight to bring Open Carry to Florida. When many called for the repeal of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, Matt fought to ensure that "not one damn comma" of the law was changed. Matt killed all taxes on gun club memberships, and passed legislation stopping insurance companies from discriminating against gun owners. Matt is once again leading the fight for our 2nd Amendment Rights in Congress by cosponsoring nationwide Concealed Carry Reciprocity legislation." — Matt Gaetz (FL-1-2018)

Animal Terms: "animal", "animals", "pet", "pets"

Animal Example: "I would also champion the promotion of humane animal treatment. I would fight to make sure the next President enforces, funds, and keeps in place current protections for animals and wildlife. I'd work to close loopholes like those in the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and others designed to benefit the few and risk animals and their habitats. And we need to establish and enforce stronger regulations on puppy mills and other inhumane commercial breeding facilities. Our pets are members of our families, and wildlife are an important part of our ecosystem. I am currently the mom of a dog named Winston, and have had pets throughout my entire childhood. As a child, I volunteered at Free Flight Exotic Bird Sanctuary, Helen Woodward Animal Center, and beach clean ups, in addition to supporting conservation efforts and taking wildlife classes at the San Diego

Zoo. I would bring this lifelong commitment to our environment, animals, and wildlife, which I know so many people in the 53rd District also share, to my work in Congress.” — Sara Jacobs (CA-53-2020)

LGBTQ Terms: "religious freedom", "marriage equality", "traditional marriage", "same sex marriage", "same-sex marriage", "traditional marriages", "same-sex marriage", "gay", "same sex", "same-sex", "sexual orientation", "lgbt+", "lgbt", "lgbtq", "lgbtq+", "transgend", "sanctity of marriage", "conversion therapy", "gender affirming", "gender-affirming"

LGBTQ Example: “I believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. It is important to our culture that it be defined as such. I believe in a constitutional amendment that would protect traditional marriage. Why is a constitutional amendment necessary? It is necessary because of the increasing number of liberal state legislatures pushing for state laws that permit unconventional marriage to occur, and activist judges are sanctioning those laws with increasing regularity. The attack on traditional marriage is an attack on the fundamental core of our society.” — Charles Fleischmann (TN-3-2016)

Elderly Terms: "senior", "seniors", "retiring", "retired", "retire", "retires", "retirees", "retirement", "older americans", "old-age", "old age"

Elderly Example: “In Congress, I will always honor our commitments to seniors and protect the Social Security and Medicare programs that they have worked hard to fund. I oppose voucher schemes and support reforms that will ensure appropriate cost of living adjustments that account for the rising costs our seniors face. I’ve fought hard to improve service and cut costs by supporting efforts backed by the AARP and other organizations that represent older Americans. I was named a Medicare Advantage Champion by the Coalition for Medicare Choices, and I will continue these efforts to provide our most valued citizens with the health care and peace of mind they deserve. I’ve also advocated for a Caregiver’s Tax Credit to help families give their elderly loved ones the attention they need in the comfort of home. This effort is strongly supported by the AARP because it provides a tax credit for qualifying caregivers and recognizes the enormous contribution they make to their families and our healthcare system.” — Donald Norcross (NJ-1-2020)

Israel Terms: "israel", "israeli", "palestine", "palestinian", "israeli-palestinian"

Israel Example: “Israel is one of our strongest allies not only in the Middle East region but across the globe. Under President Trump, American-Israeli relations made great progress, but the Democrats in Congress and the Biden Administration threaten our partnership. With anti-Semitic activities on the rise, both nationally and in New York, it is the duty of our elected officials to properly and swiftly defend our allies. When he gets to Congress, Robert will join the fight to eradicate hate in all forms starting with his efforts to: Push legislation that clearly defines antisemitism and constructs clear punishments for those found engaging in antisemitic activities. Reaffirm and support legislation that maintains funding for Israel, our strongest ally in the Middle East and a beacon of democracy in the

region. Fight back against the Radical Left's crusade against Israeli sovereignty and their efforts to villainize American Jews. As we've seen across Long Island, New York, and the United States, anti-semitic activities and anti-Israeli sentiments are on the rise. We need to remember who our allies are and to make sure those relationships are reaffirmed. While in Congress, Cap will be vocal in standing by Israel and her right to protect the Israeli people from any outside influence or attacks." — Robert Cornicelli (NY-2-2022)

Campaign Finance Terms: "citizens united", "campaign finance", "financial disclosure"

Campaign Finance Example: "Raja opposes the unfettered influx of corporate and special interest money in politics made possible by the Supreme Court's wrong-headed Citizens United decision. In Congress, Raja will work to make sure that the voices of working people and the poor aren't drowned out by special interests. First, Raja supports a constitutional amendment to overturn the effects of Citizens United by stipulating that the rights guaranteed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights are only inherent to natural persons – not to corporations — and that spending unlimited money in elections is not the same as exercising free speech. Second, Raja will work to eliminate so-called "dark money" from our elections by requiring all organizations to disclose their contributions – including those that currently hide their activities by claiming they are for "social" or "educational" purposes. This huge loophole is enabling wealthy individuals and interest groups to hijack our elections without revealing their true identities or purpose. We must return transparency to our elections, so voters can know who is behind the ads and other spending designed to influence their vote. Third, Raja will push for campaign finance reforms that enables more citizens to participate in our democracy. He will advocate for increased public financing of elections, broader access to our public airwaves for credible candidates, and he will encourage such practices as matching funds for small donations to candidates who agree to spending-limits. This will empower ordinary voters and reduce the over-reliance on special interests that skews our politics in favor of the few over the many." — Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-8-2016)

Environment Terms: "clean energy", "environment", "environmental", "climate change", "global warming", "greenhouse", "pollution", "polluting", "pollutants", "polluters", "fossil fuel", "fossil fuels", "carbon", "clean fuel", "ecosystem", "planet", "solar energy", "solar panels"

Environment Example: "Our nation's increasing need for energy must be addressed in ways that balance our economy with the stewardship of our environment. Striking this balance is one of the most vital issues facing the United States. Climate Change, as the experts have proven, is a real problem that requires pro-active solutions from the federal government. We need programs that help the private sector explore new business models that can deliver clean energy and energy efficiency at lower cost. If elected to Congress, I will seek out and support appropriate solutions that put our country on a realistic and sustainable path to address this challenge. We need to increase funding for research & development of sustainable energy sources, support tax credits for the development and production of renewable energy like solar, wind, and more efficient and electric vehicles,

explore user fees to reduce pollution, and increase funding for mass transit. On a personal note, I grew up on the St. Clair River. Summers of boating, floating on the river in an inner tube, and the thrill of catching that big fish — be it perch, pickerel, bass or walleye — remain fresh in my memory. But the issue of protecting our fresh water supply is a serious one. The Great Lakes are a precious resource for our region and contain 20 percent of all freshwater on the planet. They face serious threats from invasive species, toxins, water diversion, wetland destruction, sewage overflows and Climate Change. I am committed to working with all communities to protect this valued asset of our region.” — Debbie Dingell (MI-12-2020)

Police Terms: "defund the police", "abolish", "law enforcement", "policing", "back the blue", "police", "protect and serve", "profiling", "incarcer", "officer", "officers"

Police Example: “We can’t have Law & Order without law enforcement. We all have seen the movies where the bad guys have a certain respect for cops – the attitude of “don’t kill a cop” because the entire weight of law enforcement would come down and eliminate them. Sadly, since the Obama terms, law enforcement has been vilified, attacked, and disrespected to the point where law enforcement officers have actually been assassinated, and lured into ambushes for harm. Never in my life have I seen this until the last few years. Most law enforcement is at the State and local levels. However, I will do my part to ensure that Federal and local law enforcement work together – one team, one dream! I will publically support law enforcement to renew the respect and honor they deserve. Be vocal!” — Marvin Boguslawski (NC-6-2022)

E Alternative Dependent and Independent Variables

Tables E1-E3 replicate Table 2 with the alternative specifications originally presented in Table 1. Tables E4-E5 replicates Tables 4 and 5 using word count as a predictor instead of binary word presence.

Table E1. Issue Attention and Issue PAC Fundraising by Candidate and District Type, Mixed DV Only

	DV: Presence of Contribution					
	Incumbents		Open Seat		Challengers	
	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean
Campaigned on Issue	0.147*** (0.018)	0.069*** (0.015)	0.118** (0.037)	0.119** (0.041)	0.098** (0.032)	0.101* (0.041)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,574	4,554	648	639	810	513
R-Squared	0.027	0.005	0.018	0.016	0.014	0.014

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table E2. Issue Attention and Issue PAC Fundraising by Candidate and District Type, with Logged DV

	DV: log(Contributions + 1)					
	Incumbents		Open Seat		Challengers	
	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean
Campaigned on Issue	1.01*** (0.134)	0.474*** (0.103)	0.151* (0.059)	0.128** (0.044)	0.139*** (0.037)	0.045** (0.016)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,852	5,021	3,708	4,878	6,552	11,313
R-Squared	0.022	0.005	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table E3. Issue Attention and Issue PAC Fundraising by Candidate and District Type, Word Count

	DV: Presence of Contribution					
	Incumbents		Open Seat		Challengers	
	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean	Swing	Lean
# Issue Words Used	0.011*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001* (0.001)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	2,853	5,040	3,708	4,878	6,552	11,331
R-Squared	0.009	0.007	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.003

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table E4. Campaign Attention and Subsequent Legislative Activity on Issue, Word Count

	Introduced Bill (0/1)		# Bills Introduced	
	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen
# Issue Words t_{-1}	0.011*** (0.002)	0.012*** (0.002)	0.030*** (0.004)	0.028*** (0.004)
Member-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,735	954	3,735	954
R-Squared	0.012	0.027	0.017	0.051

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table E5. Legislative Activity, Campaign Attention, and Subsequent Issue Group Funding, Word Count

	DV: Presence of Contribution (0/1)			
	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen	Non-Freshmen	Freshmen
# Issue Words Used t_{-1}	0.007** (0.002)	0.001 (0.004)	0.006** (0.002)	0.000 (0.003)
Introduced Bill	0.035 (0.019)	0.047 (0.038)		
Words * Introduced	0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.004)		
# Bills Introduced			0.031*** (0.009)	0.044 (0.023)
Words * # Bills			0.003* (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)
Member-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,735	954	3,735	954
R-Squared	0.013	0.003	0.022	0.005

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

F Alternative Specifications

F.1 Results By Party

Table F1. Issue Attention and Primary Fundraising From Issue PACs, Democrats Only

	Contributions (0/1)		Contributions (0/1), Mixed		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.027*** (0.005)		0.086*** (0.016)		0.233*** (0.041)	
# Issue Words Used		0.002*** (0.000)		0.007*** (0.001)		0.018*** (0.003)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	16,065	16,065	4,833	4,833	16,064	16,064
R-Squared	0.002	0.002	0.007	0.007	0.002	0.002

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F2. Issue Attention and Primary Fundraising From Issue PACs, Republicans Only

	Contributions (0/1)		Contributions (0/1), Mixed		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.008* (0.004)		0.047*** (0.011)		0.057 (0.031)	
# Issue Words Used		0.003*** (0.001)		0.011*** (0.002)		0.019*** (0.004)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Issue-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	18,315	18,315	4,905	4,905	18,314	18,314
R-Squared	0.000	0.001	0.004	0.009	0.000	0.001

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

F.2 Results By Issue

Table F3. Abortion Attention and Primary Fundraising From Abortion PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.050***		0.412***	
	(0.009)		(0.076)	
# Issue Words Used		0.005***		0.041***
		(0.001)		(0.008)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.021	0.020	0.020	0.018

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F4. Animal Rights Attention and Primary Fundraising From Animal PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.035**		0.286**	
	(0.013)		(0.097)	
# Issue Words Used		0.016***		0.131***
		(0.003)		(0.023)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.002	0.007	0.003	0.009

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F5. Campaign Finance Attention and Primary Fundraising From Campaign Finance PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.113***		0.954***	
	(0.011)		(0.090)	
# Issue Words Used		0.033***		0.276***
		(0.003)		(0.027)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.040	0.037	0.040	0.038

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F6. Elderly Attention and Primary Fundraising From Elderly PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.051***		0.373***	
	(0.006)		(0.042)	
# Issue Words Used		0.010***		0.069***
		(0.001)		(0.006)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.021	0.034	0.022	0.033

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F7. Environment Attention and Primary Fundraising From Environment PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.087***		0.681***	
	(0.009)		(0.071)	
# Issue Words Used		0.007***		0.057***
		(0.001)		(0.005)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,818	3,818
R-Squared	0.024	0.033	0.025	0.033

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F8. Guns Attention and Primary Fundraising From Guns PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.036**		0.289**	
	(0.012)		(0.096)	
# Issue Words Used		0.000		0.001
		(0.001)		(0.006)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.006	0.004	0.007	0.004

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F9. Israel Attention and Primary Fundraising From Israel PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.101***		0.875***	
	(0.017)		(0.134)	
# Issue Words Used		0.007***		0.058***
		(0.001)		(0.011)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.012	0.009	0.013	0.009

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F10. LGBTQ Attention and Primary Fundraising From LGBTQ PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.062***		0.460***	
	(0.009)		(0.068)	
# Issue Words Used		0.011***		0.074***
		(0.001)		(0.009)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.014	0.023	0.015	0.021

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F11. Police Attention and Primary Fundraising From Police PACs

	Contributions (0/1)		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.001 (0.003)		0.007 (0.021)	
# Issue Words Used		0.000 (0.000)		-0.001 (0.002)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	3,820	3,820	3,820	3,820
R-Squared	0.021	0.021	0.019	0.019

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table F12. Issue Attention and Primary Fundraising From Issue PAC

	Contributions (0/1)		Contributions (0/1), Mixed		log(Contributions + 1)	
Campaigned on Issue	0.006*** (0.000)		0.026*** (0.002)		0.049 (0.044)	
# Issue Words Used		0.000*** (0.000)		0.001*** (0.000)		0.004 (0.003)
Candidate-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PAC-Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	359,080	359,080	74,448	74,448	3,970	3,970
R-Squared	0.001	0.000	0.003	0.001	0.000	0.000

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001