Testing Models of Distributive Politics using Exit Polls to Measure Voters' Preferences and Partisanship. Larcinese, Snyder, Jr., and Testa (2012)

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Models of distributive politics give use three hypotheses:

1. Swing Voters
2. Battleground States
3. Core Voters

Do any of these hypotheses find support in the United States?

Empirical Problem

Using vote shares (even lagged vote shares) to predict distribution of federal funds is at least partially endogenous.

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2. Budget allocations are sluggish
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Simulation demonstrates significantly biased results from using vote shares. Solution: use exit polling data for ideological distribution within states.

Empirical Strategy

Authors regress distribution of federal funds on measures for proportion of independents (swing), closeness of previous vote share (battleground), and proportion of copartisans (core) with demographic controls and state fixed effects.

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No luck. Neither the swing voters no battlegrounds hypothesis show results robust to different model specifications or with the expected sign.

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Modest support for core voters, but the size of the relationship is small (1 percent increase in partisan support correlated with increase of $4.30 in per capita spending).

Finding may be a function of the institutional organization of fund distribution in the United States (especially with regard to the President) or a general practice in the United States to use campaigning rather than distributive goods to swing voters.