

The Statistics of Congressional Campaigning: Who Spends the Most and Why?

Our group poses the following question: how does tenure affect the amount of expenditures a candidate makes throughout his or her Congressional campaign? Given our own individual interest in economics and politics, attempting to understand how money affects elections excites our group and compels us to answer the aforementioned question. Variables like in which state the candidate runs, or for which district the candidate is up for election, or whether the candidate is a member of a certain political party are the ones that we immediately thought of when considering what has a strong effect on campaign expenditures; however, through analysis of the data set (VOTE2.DES) from Wooldridge Datasets, we will be able to find a precise and accurate answer. Having surveyed the data, it is clear that there are many other variables than we had first thought that we will have to analyze in order to find out what factor best indicates how much a Congressional candidate spends throughout his or her campaign. These variables include: tenure—that is the number of years the candidate has been in the House of Representatives previously—status as an incumbent or challenger, and former profession—like the fact of having previously been a lawyer. As students interested in economics, we know how expensive campaigns have become. We have wondered the following question: is such exorbitant spending a factor of circumstance—like geography or incumbency? Or is there a further underlying factor—like personality—that promotes a candidate's campaign expenditures? Our intent is to specifically analyze tenure. We aim to see if tenure promotes a candidate to spend a large or small amount. In either case, a conclusion will require analysis of the data which will occur in the coming problem sets.