

Gov 1539: Section 8

Laura Royden & Tyler Simko

April 9th, 2021

The goals for today

- Memo #2
- Presidential **representation**
 - Trustee vs. delegate models
 - Electoral incentives
 - Structure of presidential elections
 - Kriner & Reeves (2015) - how electoral incentives shape policy
 - Public opinion and presidential responsiveness
 - Pandering – Canes-Wrone et al. (2001)
 - Approval ratings and policy influence – Return to Canes-Wrone and Marchi (2002)
 - Protest and presidential attention – Gillion (2013)

Forms of representation

In lecture, we saw two theories of representation.

- **Trustees**

- representatives act to advance public interests **as they see fit**.
- so, policies may conflict with public opinion.
- presidents are wise - do what they think is best.
- elections are based on competence / expertise.
- frequently associated with Edmund Burke (*"Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion."*)

- **Delegates**

- representatives are **the voice of the people**.
- must advocate for policies the public supports, even if rep. personally disagrees.
- elections are based on opinion overlap.
- frequently associated with J.S. Mill.

Presidents as national representatives

*Members of the House and Senate are representatives of localities, are voted for only by sections of voters, or by local bodies of electors like the members of the state legislature. **There is no national party choice except that of President. No one else represents the people as a whole, exercising a national choice.***

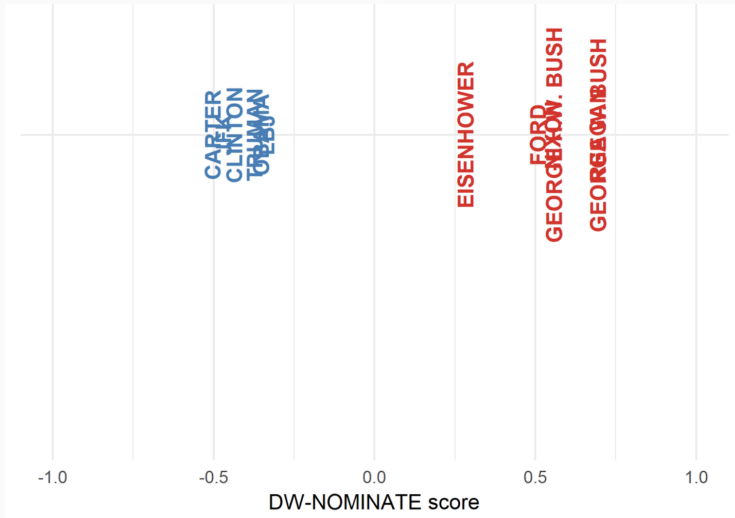
Wilson (1908), pg. 67-68

Presidents as national representatives

*My view was that every executive officer, and above all every executive officer in high position, was a steward of the people bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin. I declined to adopt the view that what was imperatively necessary for the Nation could not be done by the President unless he could find some specific authorization to do it. My belief was that it was **not only his right but his duty to do anything that the needs of the Nation** demanded unless such action was forbidden by the Constitution or by the laws.*

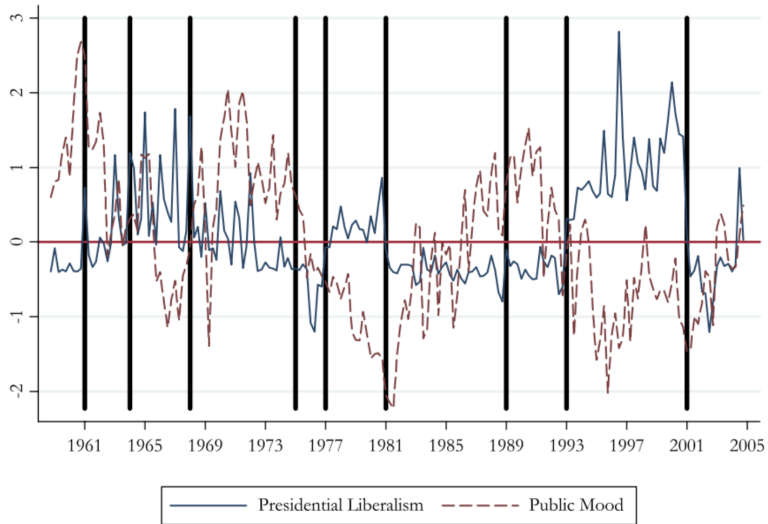
Roosevelt (1913), Ch. 10

Presidential ideology (1946-2017)

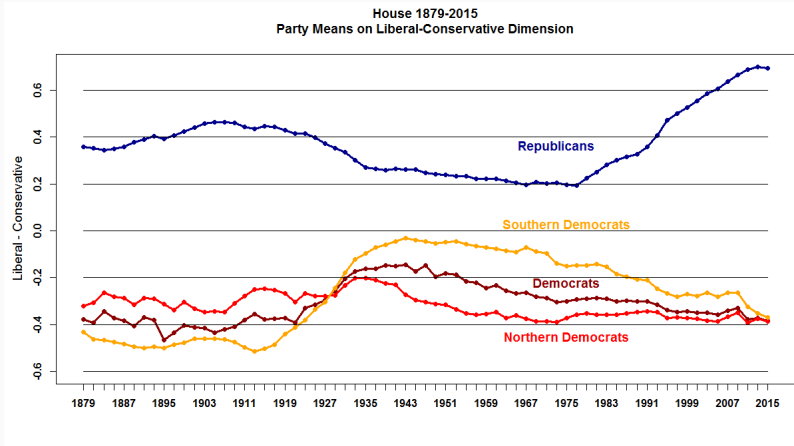


If presidents represent some average of entire nation (median voter?), we might expect all moderates. But ...

Presidential rhetoric and public opinion (1945-2005)



Presidents as party leaders?



How can presidents juggle national constituency with increasing polarization? (Source: VoteView)

Does the structure of presidential **elections** create incentives to distribute attention / policy in particular ways?

- Electoral College
 - Each state gets “electors” (# of House + Senate reps.) - 270 to win.
 - “Winner-take-all” in all but two states.
 - Possible to win Electoral College and lose popular vote.
 - Happened 5 times (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, 2016).
- What else? Donors? Media?

Electoral incentives?

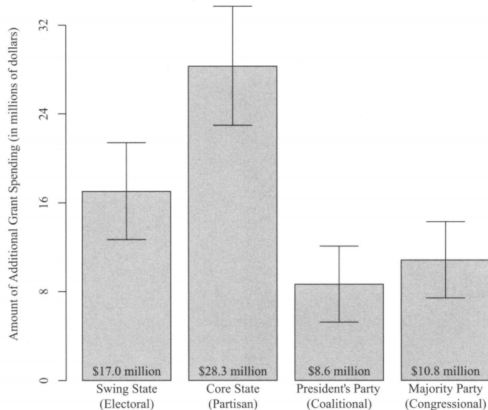


Locations of 2016 Campaign Events *Source: FairVote*

Areas differ in how electorally influential they are. Do these electoral incentives influence policy?

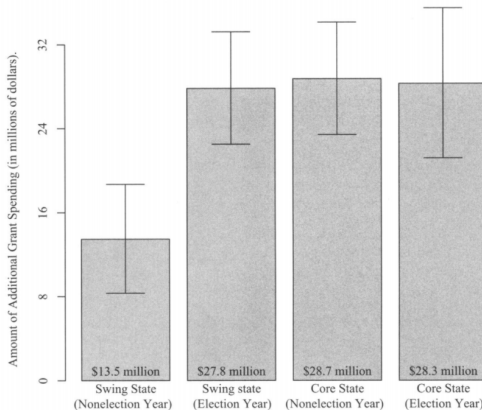
- We've seen both sides before:
 - **universalism**: Roosevelt / Wilson from earlier, presidents have a national constituency.
 - **particularism**: presidents will strategically target policy to electorally important places.
- What places and times are electorally important?
 - Swing states.
 - Core support areas / states.
 - Represented by co-partisans.
 - All effects should be stronger in election years.

FIGURE 1. Presidential Particularism and Federal Grant Spending (county-level effects)



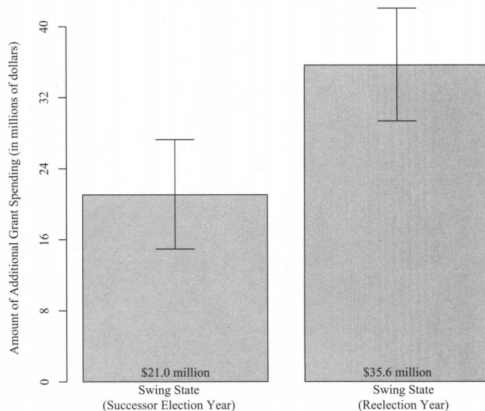
Notes: Each bar presents the additional estimated amount of money that the median population-weighted county receives if it is in a swing state (electoral particularism) or core state (partisan particularism), is represented in the House of Representatives by a member of the president's party (coalitional particularism), or represented by the majority party in Congress. The effects are estimated from the model in column 1 of Table 2. The amounts are relative to those received by a comparable county in a noncore, nonswing state, represented by a member of Congress not of the President's party. *For example, the model estimates that a county in a swing state sees \$17 million more in federal grant spending than a comparable county in a nonswing and noncore state.* The I bars around the top of each bar represent the uncertainty (the 95% confidence interval) around each estimate.

FIGURE 2. Presidential Particularism and the Political Business Cycle (county-level effects)



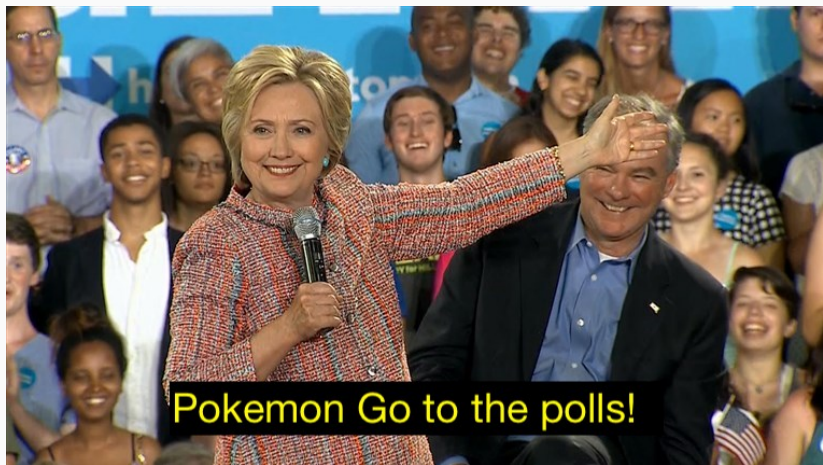
Notes: The bars present the estimated additional amount of federal grant dollars that a median population-weighted county receives in a swing state or core state in election versus nonelection years. The effects are estimated from the model in column 2 of Table 2. For example, the model estimates that in an election year a county in a swing state sees \$27.8 million more in federal spending than a comparable county in a nonswing and noncore state. Counties in swing states see a significant increase in federal spending during election years when compared to nonelection years. Counties in core states receive the same increase in election and nonelection years. The I bars around the top of each bar represent the uncertainty (the 95% confidence interval) around each estimate.

FIGURE 3. Presidential Particularism, and Presidential Incumbency (county-level effects)



Notes: Each bar presents the estimated additional amount of federal grant dollars that a median population-weighted county receives in an election year if the county is in a swing state. The effects are estimated from the model in column 3 of Table 2. The first bar is the effect if the incumbent president is not running for reelection and the second bar is the effect when he is. The amounts are relative to those received by a comparable county in a noncore, nonswing state. For example, the model estimates that, in an election year when the incumbent president is running for reelection, a county in a swing state sees \$35.6 million more in federal spending than a comparable county in a nonswing and noncore state. Counties in swing states see significantly more federal money in years when a president is running for reelection than when the president is a lame duck and his partisan successor is running for election. The I bars around the top of each bar represent the uncertainty (the 95% confidence interval) around each estimate.

Posturing to certain groups?



Pokemon Go to the polls!

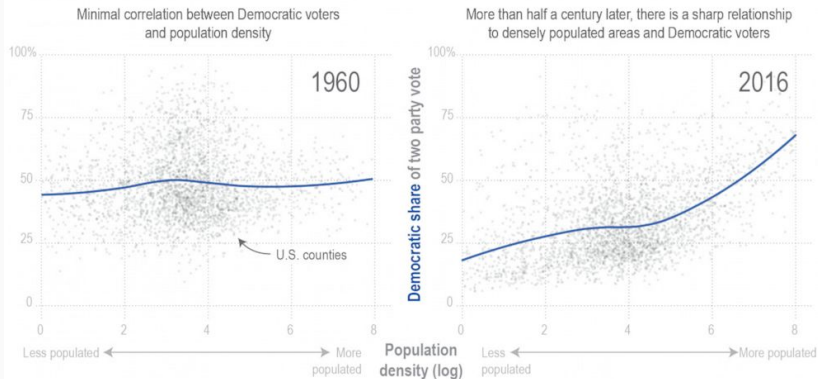
Posturing to certain groups?



What if geography helps define demographics?

Where you live may dictate how you vote

Population density vs. Democratic vote



Partisans increasingly living in different areas. *Source: AP*

Pandering - Canes-Wrone, Herron, Shotts (2001)

- How does public opinion affect presidential decisions? Under what conditions will the president act in the public interest?
- Takes *beliefs* or *preferences* into account, so three things matter:
 - which policy will end up being best (unknown!)
 - which policy the public *believes* is best (aka public opinion)
 - which policy the president *believes* is best based on their private information
- Four combinations of beliefs:

	President thinks it's best	President thinks it's bad
Public supports	Responsiveness	Pandering
Public disapproves	True leadership	Fake leadership

Which variables do they think affect whether a president exhibits responsiveness, pandering, true leadership, or fake leadership?

- **Whether voters misperceive their interests** - is the public right or wrong about what they think the best answer is?
- **Popularity of the president** - will their policy decision on this issue matter for their reelection chances?
- **Time horizon of the policy** - is the problem likely to resolve before reelection, leading to the public learning the truth about which policy is best?

Pandering - Canes-Wrone, Herron, Shotts (2001)

When do they predict the president will exhibit responsiveness, pandering, true leadership, or fake leadership?

- **True leadership:** short horizon for policy resolution, not close re-election race → hope the public sees the president was right before reelection. ex: *Lincoln & Civil War truce keeping slavery*
- **Pandering:** long time horizon, close election or when they're far ahead and want to block potential criticism → hope the public rewards the president for their popular stance before they realize the position is actually bad. ex: *Warren & anti-communism pledge*
- **Fake leadership:** when the president needs a hail mary! Likely when they're behind in the polls and are willing to gamble on what they & the public think is a bad policy, just in case it actually resolves positively. Trying to **fake** the public into thinking they're taking true leadership. ex: *Ford & Rhodesia*.
- **Responsiveness:** basically any other time.

Pandering - Canes-Wrone and Shotts (2004)

- We didn't read this, but they wrote a followup piece empirically testing their results!
- When are presidents responsive to public opinion?
 - Two key findings: presidents are responsive when an issue is **salient** to the public, and when presidents have **moderate** approval ratings.
 - **Why salient issues?** The public probably doesn't care much about other issues or have solid stances!
 - **Why moderate approval ratings?**
 - Presidents with **high approval ratings** can take unpopular stances that they know are right because the policy gain outweighs the chance they'll lose reelection over it
 - Presidents with **low approval ratings** know that pandering wouldn't make the difference in them winning.
 - Goes along with most of Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts findings except for very popular presidents pandering to ward off criticism – this paper doesn't find much of that, but it could still happen!