

April 2006

Running Against the Political Winds: How Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Contribute to Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Christopher J. Devine
Connecticut College, cjdev@conncoll.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/govhp>

Recommended Citation

Devine, Christopher J., "Running Against the Political Winds: How Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Contribute to Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections" (2006). *Government and International Relations Honors Papers*. 3. <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/govhp/3>

This Honors Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Government and International Relations Department at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Government and International Relations Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Running Against the Political Winds

How Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Contribute
to Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous
Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

An Honors Thesis
Presented By
Christopher Devine

To the Department of Government
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Honors in the Major Field

Connecticut College
New London, Connecticut
April 28, 2006

Abstract

This study analyzes mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. It examines the twentieth century State Reorganization Movement that separated most gubernatorial elections from presidential elections, and evaluates the electoral consequences of these reforms against their stated aims. This study also attempts to provide an explanation for the occurrence of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. It tests the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. The methodology for testing this thesis incorporates data interpretation, media analysis, and case studies of two 2004 gubernatorial elections featuring personal interviews with campaign participants and observers. The data thus collected indicate the validity of this study's thesis, albeit with minor qualifications. Yet conclusive quantitative data are not available to test the thesis further. As a result, this study is indicative but not conclusive.

In dedication to my parents, Michael and Donna Devine.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to pursue my dreams
thanks to many years of their loving sacrifice and direction.

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	1
 <i>Chapter I: Introduction to the Study of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections</i>	2
Why Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?	3
How To Explain Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?	5
Analysis of Literature Relevant to This Study	6
This Study's Contribution to the Literature	14
How This Study is Designed to Test Its Thesis	18
 <i>Chapter II: The Development and Significance of the State Reorganization Movement</i>	20
Historical Development of the American Governorship	20
The State Reorganization Movement Begins	23
The State Reorganization Movement Leads to a Strong Modern Governorship	24
The Role of Election Timing in the State Reorganization Movement	32
Assessing the Impact of Election Timing in Recent Gubernatorial Elections	37
Assessing the Electoral Significance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections	42

<i>Chapter III: The 2004 Vermont Gubernatorial Election.</i>	44
Vermont's Political Transformation	45
Governor Jim Douglas	46
Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Peter Clavelle	55
The Gubernatorial Election Takes Shape	59
National Politics Gain Prominence in the Late Campaign Period	69
Assessing the Relevance of the 2004 Presidential Election to the Vermont Gubernatorial Election	77
Why Did Vermont Voters Reelect Governor Douglas?	81
The Role of Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies in Determining the 2004 Vermont Gubernatorial Election	85
 <i>Chapter IV: The 2004 Montana Gubernatorial Election</i>	 93
Montana: A Solidly 'Red' State?	94
Dissatisfaction with Republican Governance Entering the 2004 Elections	97
Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Bob Brown	100
Brown Wins a Divisive Republican Primary	102
Governor Brian Schweitzer	107
Leadership Emerges as the Central Issue of the Gubernatorial Campaign	110
Schweitzer's Bipartisan Appeal	119
Prominent Issues in the Gubernatorial Campaign	132

The Presidential Election Minimally Impacts the 2004 Montana Gubernatorial Election	141
Assessing Schweitzer's Gubernatorial Election Victory	145
Evaluating the Significance of Schweitzer Campaign Strategies	149
<i>Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study</i>	<i>155</i>
Differing Dynamics Among States With Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections.	156
Conclusions on the Relevance of Presidential Elections to Simultaneous Gubernatorial Elections	159
Conclusions on the Role of Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies in Producing Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections	166
Areas for Further Study	176
<i>Bibliography.</i>	<i>181</i>

Acknowledgements

Several people deserve my gratitude and acknowledgement for the important contributions they have made to this work.

First, I must recognize Dorothy James, professor of government at Connecticut College. I could not have asked for a more thorough,

dedicated, and insightful thesis advisor to guide me through this challenging process. Since this work represents the culmination of my undergraduate studies, this is also an appropriate time to acknowledge Professor James' contributions to my progress more generally. It has been a privilege to work closely for four years with a scholar of such depth and a person of such warmth. She has done her best to prepare me for the challenges of academic life that are ahead. I will always owe part of my success to my mentor, Professor James.

Second, I was also well-served in this process by the guidance and expertise of John Nugent, visiting assistant professor of government and senior research analyst at Connecticut College. As my second thesis reader, Professor Nugent made many valuable, thoughtful suggestions that contributed importantly to the quality of this work.

Lastly, I would like to thank the many campaign participants and observers who allowed me to interview them for this work, particularly Vermont Governor Jim Douglas and Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer. I greatly appreciate their generosity and candor.

Chapter I: Introduction to the Study of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

In recent years, it has become commonplace to label states ‘red’ or ‘blue’ in accordance with their vote for a Republican or Democratic presidential candidate. These partisan labels vastly oversimplify the nation’s political landscape, implying monolithic political characteristics among the states that fail to account for either varying degrees of polarization or the full range of electoral outcomes. In fact, voters in so-called red or blue states often defy such partisan categorizations by electing to other offices candidates of a different party than their presidential favorite.

A particularly compelling illustration of state electorates’ complex voting behavior is found in state selection of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties. Although the specific functions of governors and presidents differ in many important respects, their offices are unique within their respective spheres of government, as primary sources of legislative agendas and symbols of executive leadership. Shared partisan affiliation is a strong, although not a foolproof, indicator of coherent values and policies. Assuming that voters have clear hopes for the direction of their government, one would expect voters to support gubernatorial and presidential candidates of the same political party. Yet modern voters do not behave with the coherence or predictability often ascribed to them by such assumptions.

This study demonstrates state electorates’ complex voting behavior by focusing on simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. To explain the causes of mixed

partisan outcomes in such elections, this study analyzes the campaign strategies used by gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations in years when the politics winds blow against their party in the state presidential race.

Why Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?

Following the 2004 elections, twenty-one out of fifty U.S. governors served in states whose voters selected a presidential candidate of another party that year. Included among these states were many that produced the nation's most lopsided presidential votes: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.¹ Why not, then, study *all* the states that have produced mixed partisan outcomes in gubernatorial and presidential elections? Why restrict this study's focus to *simultaneous* gubernatorial and presidential elections? This study's focus on simultaneous elections is designed to provide the most accurate analysis of partisan incoherence in gubernatorial and presidential elections. This study is also designed to consider the dramatic ramifications of state reform efforts to strengthen American governorships over the past century, and to evaluate the success of these efforts against their stated aims.

Analytical Advantages of Simultaneous Versus Separated Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Analysis of mixed partisan outcomes in all fifty states' recent gubernatorial and presidential elections would be fascinating. Why, for example, have Massachusetts voters selected Republican candidates in four consecutive gubernatorial elections while overwhelmingly selecting Democratic candidates in presidential elections? Answers to

¹ Democratic presidential states with Republican governors included: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont. Republican presidential states with Democratic governors included: Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming.

this question and others pertaining to all states, irrespective of their gubernatorial and presidential election schedules, are worthy of thorough study. Unfortunately, a general study of this nature would confront substantial analytical barriers. Separated gubernatorial and presidential elections are influenced differently by disparities in voter mobilization and political contexts; voter mobilization is much higher in presidential election years (see Chapter V), and influential atmospheric conditions, such as the economy, can change dramatically between an off-year gubernatorial election and a presidential election year. Simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections eliminate such disparities in voter mobilization and political contexts. As a result, they provide a superior method for examining mixed partisan outcomes in gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Contemporary Relevance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Today, simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections occur in only eleven out of the fifty states.² In recent decades, typically one-third to nearly one-half of these elections has favored gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties. In 2004 this occurred in Montana, North Carolina, Vermont, and West Virginia, and very nearly occurred in Washington.³ The fact that so few states today hold simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections represents a dramatic change from the early twentieth century when presidential elections coincided with gubernatorial elections in more than three-quarters of the states.

² The eleven states that hold simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections include: Delaware, Indiana, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia.

³ A recount found that Democratic gubernatorial candidate Christine Gregoire defeated Republican gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi by a 129-vote margin in 2004. The initial vote tally showed Rossi defeating Gregoire, in a state that voted heavily that year for Kerry.

Historical Relevance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections to Reforms of the Governorship

Simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections are much less common today than they were a century ago, due to state reform efforts that isolated many gubernatorial elections from the presidential election cycle. In the twentieth century the State Reorganization Movement emerged in many states for the purpose of strengthening traditionally weak governorships. Many states amended their constitutions to expand gubernatorial terms and also to separate gubernatorial elections from presidential elections. The latter reform was aimed at eliminating the influence of presidential coattails in gubernatorial elections. The widespread enactment of these two reforms indicates the success of the State Reorganization Movement. During the twentieth century, the number of states holding simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections was reduced from a high of thirty-seven out of forty-eight states (as recently as 1932) to eleven out of fifty states by the century's close. Similarly, the number of states allowing one, two, and three-year gubernatorial terms declined from twenty-four out of forty-five states to only two out of fifty states.

How To Explain Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?

Having controlled for differences in voter mobilization and political contexts, this study is designed to test the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. To test this thesis, several key questions must be answered: What is the effect of presidential elections on simultaneous gubernatorial elections? Do gubernatorial candidates believe

that presidential politics are relevant to their elections? If so, how do they incorporate presidential politics into their campaigns? What campaign strategies do gubernatorial candidates of the same party as the state's losing presidential candidate use to address the simultaneous presidential election? How do they speak about their party's presidential candidate? How do they distinguish themselves from that candidate? Do state voters carefully distinguish between gubernatorial and presidential elections?

Methodology

Thorough analysis of information from many sources is required to answer the above questions and test this study's thesis. To that end, this study analyzes the relevant literature in the fields of elections and voting behavior, focusing specifically on the literature about changes in gubernatorial power, straight and split-ticket voting, state versus national political alignments, electoral contributions of political parties, and the significance of election campaigns. It also presents the 2004 gubernatorial elections in Vermont and Montana as case studies. The Vermont and Montana gubernatorial elections were won by candidates of the party whose presidential candidates lost their states by landslides in the same year. The case studies are based primarily on media analysis, data interpretation, and personal interviews with campaign participants and observers.

Analysis of Literature Relevant to This Study

A substantial body of political science literature is relevant to this study, providing insights into the factors underlying voters' choices of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. This body includes analyses of changes in gubernatorial power, straight and split-ticket voting, state versus

national political alignments, electoral contributions of political parties, and the significance of election campaigns. The works of Larry Sabato, Mark Tomkins, Dennis Simon, James Campbell, James Gimpel, Paul Herrnson, and Susan Howell are particularly relevant. Sabato details the transformation of the governorship into a more consequential, professionalized institution. He also discusses the significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, concluding that the latter obscures the former. Tomkins' study of voting behavior in gubernatorial and presidential elections leads him to conclude that voters choose deliberately between the two. Simon's study of voting behavior in gubernatorial and presidential elections leads him to conclude the opposite, that presidential coattails determine individual votes and gubernatorial elections in many cases. Campbell finds evidence of presidential coattails in simultaneous state legislative elections. Gimpel's study of state versus national voting patterns leads him to conclude that voters typically align differently in state versus national elections. Herrnson argues that political party organizations make important electoral contributions, despite losing influence in recent decades. Howell finds that institutional factors typically determine electoral outcomes, not campaign activities.

Review of Relevant Literature

Analysis of why voters choose gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year involves several related areas of study in elections and voting behavior. First, to understand recent changes in the American governorship and the electoral consequences of a strengthened governorship, Sabato

(1978), Ransone (1982), and Holbrook (1993) are particularly useful.⁴ Second, important works concerning straight and split-ticket voting include Miller (1955), Key (1956), Press (1958), Trilling (1976), Campbell (1986), Tomkins (1988), Simon (1989), Fiorina (1991), Petrocik (1991), and Feigert (1979).⁵ Third, works that analyze state versus national political alignments are relevant, including Erickson, Wright, and McIver (1993), Brown and Wright (1991), Carsey and Wright (1998), Jackson and Carsey (2002, 1999), Partin (1995), Holbrook (1987), Renner (1999), Gimpel and Schuknecht (2002), and Gimpel (2003, 1999, 1996).⁶ Fourth, Herrnson (1988, 1986) explores the contributions of

⁴ Larry J. Sabato, *Goodbye to Good-Time Charlie: The American Governorship Transformed, 1950-1975* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1978); Coleman B. Ransone, Jr., *The American Governorship* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982); Thomas Holbrook, "Institutional Strength and Gubernatorial Elections: An Exploratory Analysis," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (July, 1993), pp. 261-271.

⁵ Warren E. Miller, "Presidential Coattails: A Study in Political Myth and Methodology," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (Winter, 1955), pp. 353-368; V.O. Key, Jr., *American State Politics: An Introduction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Charles Press, "Voting Statistics and Presidential Coattails," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 52 (December, 1958), pp. 1041-1050; Richard J. Trilling, *Party Image and Electoral Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976); James E. Campbell, "Presidential Coattails and Midterm Losses in State Legislative Elections," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 8 (March, 1986), pp. 45-63; Mark E. Tomkins, "Have Gubernatorial Elections Become More Distinct Contests?" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 50 (February, 1988), pp. 192-205; Dennis M. Simon, "Presidents, Governors, and Electoral Accountability," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 51 (May, 1989), pp. 286-304; Morris P. Fiorina, "Divided Government in the States," in Gary W. Cox and Samuel Kernell, eds., *The Politics of Divided Government* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991); John R. Petrocik, "Divided Government: Is It All in the Campaigns?" in *Ibid.*; Frank Feigert, "Illusions of Ticket-Splitting," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (October, 1979), pp. 470-488.

⁶ Robert S. Erickson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, *Statehouse Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Robert D. Brown and Gerald C. Wright, "Elections and State Party Polarization," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 20 (October, 1992), pp. 411-426; Thomas A. Carsey and Wright, "State and National Factors in Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42 (July, 1998), pp. 994-1002; Robert A. Jackson and Thomas M. Carsey, "Group Effects on Party Identification and Party Coalitions Across the United States," *American Politics Research*, Vol. 30 (January, 2002), pp. 66-92; Randall W. Partin, "Economic Conditions and Gubernatorial Elections: Is the State Executive Held Accountable?" *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (January, 1995), pp. 81-95; Thomas Holbrook, "National Factors in Gubernatorial Elections," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 16 (October, 1987), pp. 471-483; Tari Renner, "Electoral Congruence and the Autonomy of the American State Party," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (January, 1999), p. 122-132; James Gimpel and Jason E. Schuknecht, "Political and Demographic Foundations for Sectionalism in State Politics," *American Politics Research*, Vol. 30 (March, 2002), pp. 193-214; James Gimpel, *Patchwork Nation* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 2003); James Gimpel, "Contemplating Congruence in State Electoral Systems,"

political party organizations to electoral campaigns.⁷ Finally, Gosnell (1950) and Howell (1982) consider whether campaigns make a difference in electoral outcomes.⁸

Sabato on the Modern Governorship and Gubernatorial Election Scheduling

Larry Sabato's *Goodbye to Good-Time Charlie* analyzes the transformation of governorships between 1950 and 1975, from positions of limited responsibility to positions of substantial consequence, independence, and professionalism. His work, as it pertains to this study, is particularly useful in evaluating the development and significance of the State Reorganization Movement.

Sabato also comments on the significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. He writes, "Too often the platforms and pronouncements of gubernatorial aspirants... have been lost in the glare surrounding tumultuous presidential contests, and the state issues have been relegated to the back pages of the newspapers."⁹ Consequently, he recommends separating all gubernatorial and presidential elections. "Scheduling elections in the off-years or odd-numbered years makes sense [because voters then] have a better chance to evaluate the candidates and their programs wisely and unencumbered by the distractions and complexities of presidential politics."¹⁰ Many

American Politics Quarterly, Vol. 27 (January, 1999), p. 133-140; James Gimpel, *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

⁷ Paul S. Herrnson, "Do Parties Make A Difference? The Role of Party Organization in Congressional Elections," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 48 (August, 1986), pp. 589-615; Herrnson, "The Importance of Party Campaigning," *Polity*, Vol. 20 (Summer, 1988), pp. 714-719.

⁸ Harold F. Gosnell, "Does Campaigning Make a Difference?" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (Autumn, 1950), pp. 413-418; Susan E. Howell, "Campaign Activities and State Election Outcomes," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 4 (1982), pp. 401-417.

⁹ Sabato, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

state reformers attempting to separate gubernatorial elections from presidential election cycles have used such arguments.

Tomkins on the Weakness of Presidential Coattails in Gubernatorial Elections

Tomkins analyzes gubernatorial and presidential elections held between 1947 and 1986. He chooses gubernatorial elections for comparison because they “[offer] a set of quasi-autonomous but highly visible contests for analysis.”¹¹ Tomkins notes that some people believe gubernatorial elections have been “nationalized” by increased media focus on issues applicable to state and national politics (health care, education, and so forth), increasingly expensive gubernatorial campaigns that require out-of-state fundraising, weakened state parties, and the growth of nationally potent interest groups. However, he finds that short-term forces in the states were relatively stable in gubernatorial competition during the period studied, while they fluctuated more in presidential elections. This leads him to conclude that “the gubernatorial election contest has, in general, become more distinctive from the national context, reflecting a more fully autonomous office.”¹² In other words, he believes gubernatorial elections are beyond the influence of presidential coattails.

Simon on the Strength of Presidential Coattails in Gubernatorial Elections

Unlike Tomkins, Simon finds that presidential coattails play a clear and decisive role in gubernatorial elections. He claims that voters’ attitudes toward presidential performance act as a “mechanism of accountability” by which they judge members of the president’s party in all other elections. “[Citizen] evaluations of presidential performance

¹¹ Tomkins, *op cit.*, p. 193.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

operate as an influence on voting in gubernatorial elections,” Simon writes, and “the impact of these evaluations is sizable enough to alter both the voting of individuals and the outcomes of gubernatorial contests.”¹³ Moreover, he suggests that efforts to insulate gubernatorial elections by scheduling them in non-presidential years has had the opposite effect of what was intended by state reformers. “Rather than insulating gubernatorial elections from national politics, holding gubernatorial elections in midterm years has, in practice, produced the unintended consequence of reducing the vote garnered by candidates of the president’s party,” he claims.

Campbell on the Strength of Presidential Coattails in State Legislative Elections

Presidential coattail effects are most often discussed in relation to U.S. congressional elections. They are used to explain the fact that a president’s party typically loses seats in midterm elections. Campbell examines presidential coattail effects in state legislative elections to determine whether they experience the same trends as national legislative elections. He finds that presidential coattail effects are quite evident in state legislative elections: “The analysis indicates that the president’s party gains seats in presidential elections in proportion to the presidential vote in a state, and subsequently loses seats in mid-term elections also in proportion to the prior presidential vote in the state.”¹⁴

It is also worth noting that much of what Campbell writes about the relationship between state legislatures and presidents applies to this study’s focus on governors and presidents. He writes,

¹³ Simon, *op cit.*, p. 286.

¹⁴ Campbell, *op cit.*, p. 45.

State legislatures and presidents deal at different levels of government and for the most part are concerned with different issues. Nevertheless, parties are generally known by the presidential candidates they nominate, and candidates for state legislative seats are a good deal less well known to voters than the congressional candidates who ride presidential coattails. Therefore, even though one can make a case that there may be no good policy reasons for coattails to affect state legislative races, many voters may use the presidential vote as a guide in casting a vote for the state legislature because they lack other information.

This description of presidential coattail effects for the most part mirrors the argument advanced by many, including Sabato above, to explain the consequences of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Like the relationship between state legislatures and presidents, governors and presidents also work on different levels of government and handle many different issues.

Gimpel on State Voter and Party Autonomy

Gimpel and Schuknecht recognize the unique executive relation between governors and presidents. They analyze substate sectionalism, in terms of political partisanship, by studying gubernatorial and presidential election results in Connecticut between 1928 and 2000.¹⁵ Gimpel also expresses particular interest in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections in *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems*, when arguing that simultaneous choices of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in Utah, Montana, and Washington represent “not merely a fluke or an accident of the off-year election calendar.”¹⁶ This comment, however, stems from Gimpel’s discussion of the local implications of presidential Republicanism in western states; simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections are not the focus of his analysis.

¹⁵ Gimpel and Schuknecht, *op cit*.

¹⁶ Gimpel, *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems*, p. 24.

Gimpel's work is primarily important to this study because of its findings on the differences between state versus national political alignments. In the 1950s, V.O. Key described state parties as "but the shadow of their national counterparts."¹⁷ Gimpel's *National Elections* explains that by the mid-1990s state parties had become largely autonomous of national control, and the political cleavages that defined them were typically different from those in national politics and in other states.¹⁸ Gimpel also challenges the notion advanced in many other works, including those of Key, Sabato, Simon, and Campbell, that national politics exert a powerful influence on state level elections. Instead, Gimpel posits that electoral coalitions align differently for state versus national elections, often producing mixed electoral outcomes. Thus Gimpel's work contributes importantly to understandings of voting behavior and state party activities, two research areas that are relevant to analysis of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Herrnson on the Electoral Contributions of Political Parties

Herrnson (1988) notes the many reasons why political parties are widely considered to be less important in modern elections than they were in previous decades. These reasons include decreasing partisanship, the influence of special interests and political action committees, candidate-centered elections, and the rise of professional consultants. Despite these developments Herrnson concludes that parties remain relevant in modern elections; "party activity in elections reveals that parties are meeting the

¹⁷ Key, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁸ On page 206 of *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems*, Gimpel writes, "States maintain their own unique political identities and react to national circumstances differently."

challenges posed by the new politics and that parties really do matter.”¹⁹ Their contributions include campaign funds, professional services and strategic advice, facilitating relationships between campaigns and potential consultants and special interest contributors, voter registration, get-out-the-vote efforts, and advertisements on behalf of the party ticket.

Howell on the Significance of Election Campaigns

Howell divides campaign activities into five categories: researching constituencies; personally reaching the electorate through speeches and public appearances; mobilizing voters; gaining the support of political elites, including organizations, political leaders, and business leaders; media advertising. She concludes that these activities typically do not determine election outcomes. Instead, she finds in three-quarters of elections that the outcomes are attributable to four institutional factors: incumbency, competition levels, candidates’ years of political experience, candidates’ prior elective offices. Incumbency is the most important factor, accounting for 56% of variance in vote percentage. She writes, “The painfully obvious conclusion is that campaigning, in many instances, is a waste of time.”²⁰

This Study’s Contribution to the Literature

Sabato, Tomkins, Simon, Campbell, Gimpel, Herrnson, and Howell provide analyses relevant to the study of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. However, further analysis is necessary to fully understand the characteristics and implications of the phenomenon. This study updates and clarifies the

¹⁹ Herrnson, “The Importance of Party Campaigning,” p. 714.

²⁰ Howell, *op cit.*, p. 414.

arguments made in their work by focusing exclusively on one revealing aspect of electoral behavior.

Focusing Sabato's Analysis of Gubernatorial Transformation and Evaluating His Conclusions About Gubernatorial Election Scheduling

Sabato analyzes the transformation of state governorships and the scheduling of gubernatorial elections. This study focuses Sabato's work by analyzing the entire historical development of the State Reorganization Movement, particularly in terms of gubernatorial election scheduling. This study also measures the electoral significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections against the aims of state reform efforts, by examining mixed partisan outcomes in such elections. The data presented in this study indicate that, as Sabato contends, mixed partisan outcomes are more likely to occur in separate versus simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. The data also indicate, however, that presidential elections do not obscure simultaneous gubernatorial elections to the extreme argued by Sabato. Scholarly understanding of the actual, against the perceived, impact of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections is enhanced by this study's analysis of their outcomes over the last forty years.

Testing Tomkins' Conclusions About Presidential Coattail Effects in Simultaneous Gubernatorial Elections

Tomkins makes an important contribution to the literature of the field by challenging popular notions of presidential coattail effects. His work, however, can be significantly strengthened by two elements unique to this study. First, Tomkins does not focus on simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, although he notes the important correlation claimed by state reformers between voting patterns in simultaneous

versus separated elections. For reasons set forth above, simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections are uniquely valuable bases for assessing presidential coattail effects and voting behavior. Second, Tomkins does not make a significant attempt to explain why voters in some states choose gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in any year, let alone the same year. This study improves on Tomkins' work and makes a unique contribution to the literature of the field, by proposing that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year.

Testing Simon's Conclusions About Presidential Coattail Effects in Gubernatorial Elections

This study tests Simon's conclusion that presidential coattails exert a decisive influence in gubernatorial elections. It does so by examining the most recent electoral data from presidential and gubernatorial elections, as well as presenting case studies of two gubernatorial elections. It also evaluates Simon's claim that off-year gubernatorial elections have failed to isolate gubernatorial elections from presidential politics, by comparing electoral outcomes and voting patterns in simultaneous versus separated elections.

Improving on Campbell's Analysis of Presidential Coattail Effects in State Level Elections

Campbell studies presidential coattail effects in state level elections by focusing on state legislative elections. He explains the influence of presidential coattails in these elections in part by stating that "candidates for state legislative seats are a good deal less

well known to voters than the congressional candidates who ride presidential coattails.” While this may be true of state legislative candidates, it is unclear whether it applies to gubernatorial candidates. Sabato, in a comment above, contends that presidential elections obscure simultaneous gubernatorial elections. His description of a more independent and consequential governor, as well as Tomkins’ finding that voters distinguish between gubernatorial and presidential elections, suggest that gubernatorial candidates are in fact well known to voters and therefore capable of defying presidential voting trends. A finding that presidential coattail effects do not significantly influence simultaneous gubernatorial elections would indicate that coattails are limited to certain types of state elections, instead of applying generally.

Applying Gimpel’s Findings to Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Gimpel’s analysis of differences in voting behavior and party activity between the state and national levels is among the most relevant to this study. More than the other works highlighted here, Gimpel’s is based on relatively recent data. Therefore, it does not require a significant updating. However, like Tomkins’, it is not specifically focused on the study of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Gimpel briefly refers to this phenomenon when discussing the election of Democratic governors in western states that tend to vote for Republican presidential candidates.²¹ Yet he does not use this analysis of differing state and national political cleavages and state party autonomy to explain how voting behavior and state party activity contributed to such outcomes. A contribution of this study is its application of Gimpel’s findings to the analysis of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.

²¹ Gimpel, *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems*, p. 24.

Focusing Herrnson's Analysis on State Political Parties

This study focuses Herrnson's analysis of the electoral contributions of political parties by examining the role of state party organizations in gubernatorial elections. It exposes their functions primarily through case studies of gubernatorial elections. These case studies give specific insights into the contributions and limitations of state party organizations. They also reveal the different ways in which state party organizations work with gubernatorial campaigns. As a result, this study provides a concrete basis for assessing the electoral contributions of political parties beyond what is offered in Herrnson's analysis.

Challenging Howell's Dismissal of Campaigns

Howell quite boldly dismisses campaigns as a "waste of time." Yet her analysis is too limited to justify discounting all campaigns. Howell's analysis focuses on state legislative elections, which, as noted in the above discussion of Campbell's work, enjoy a much lower profile than elections to other offices including governor. This study further tests the significance of campaigns. It does so by focusing on the contributions of campaign strategies in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections that produce mixed partisan outcomes. In particular, it presents case studies of gubernatorial campaigns that detail campaign strategies and evaluate their effectiveness.

How This Study is Designed to Test Its Thesis

In order to test the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and

presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year, this study is organized into five chapters covering the development and significance of the State Reorganization Movement, case studies, and conclusions.

Chapter II traces the historical development of the State Reorganization Movement during the twentieth century, and measures the effects of that movement on today's gubernatorial elections. Specifically, Chapter II considers the frequency of, and possible explanations for, mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections over the last four decades.

Chapters III and IV focus specifically on the campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations in Vermont and Montana, respectively. In Vermont's 2004 gubernatorial election, Republican Governor Jim Douglas was reelected overwhelmingly in a state that strongly supported Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry. Gubernatorial campaign strategies appear to have played a key role in Douglas' success, but observers have often cited voter independence, candidate organizations, and incumbency as alternative primary explanations. The 2004 Montana

gubernatorial election further tests this study's thesis by eliminating some of the Vermont case study's alternative primary explanations.

Democrat Brian Schweitzer was narrowly elected in Montana at the same time that voters overwhelmingly supported Republican President George W. Bush. Schweitzer had never held political office, and he was running for an open gubernatorial seat. In this race gubernatorial campaign strategies also seem to have been critical to Schweitzer's success.

Drawing on the preceding chapters, Chapter V presents conclusions on the viability of this study's thesis and makes recommendations for further research.

Chapter II: The Development and Significance of the State Reorganization Movement

The twentieth century State Reorganization Movement transformed the governorship from a weak to a strong position across the United States. Gubernatorial election timing was an important element of this movement. Many reformers believed that presidential elections exerted undue national influence on simultaneous gubernatorial elections. To highlight state issues and give governors the appearance of independence,

many states separated gubernatorial and presidential elections through constitutional amendments.

This chapter begins by analyzing the historical development of the American governorship through the colonial, early constitutional, Jacksonian Era, and post-Civil War periods. It continues with analysis of the development of the State Reorganization Movement and its implications for the modern governorship. It considers gubernatorial election timing and existing theories about presidential coattail effects. The chapter concludes by measuring the impact of these elections and considering arguments about why and how frequently they produce mixed partisan outcomes. Election data show that states are more likely to select gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in separated elections, but simultaneous elections are more likely to produce mixed partisan outcomes than reformers have often suggested.

Historical Development of the American Governorship

Before the State Reorganization Movement began, the governorship had already undergone several stages of development during its three centuries of existence in America. The major stages of development have been colonial, early constitutional, Jacksonian Era, and post-Civil War. Beginning as a position of strong colonial authority, the governorship was weakened by state legislative control in the early constitutional period. Governors increasingly became subject to direct election during the Jacksonian Era and gained substantial administrative responsibility during the post-Civil War period. Yet the governorship remained a weak position due to shared executive power and insufficient administrative authority.

Colonial Governorships

Prior to the American Revolution, most governors were appointees of the British Crown. Only Rhode Island and Connecticut elected their governors, annually through their state legislatures. Governors in others colonies represented the monarch and enforced his policies. During the Revolutionary period, many considered governors tyrants for enforcing what were perceived to be the abusive policies of King George III. From this came the stigmatization of gubernatorial power that discouraged a strong governorship throughout early United States history.

Early Constitutional Governorships

After declaring their independence, American colonies drafted state constitutions. To avoid the perceived tyrannical abuses of colonial governors, early constitutional governors were subject to control by their state legislatures. State legislatures selected governors in every state except Massachusetts and New York, and only Massachusetts and South Carolina permitted their governors to veto legislation. Also, executive councils were appointed by state legislatures to share executive power with most governors. The weakness of the governor was well-known and widely celebrated as a deterrent to government abuse. Asked about the amount of authority given to the state's governor under its new constitution, a returning delegate from the North Carolina convention said approvingly, "Just enough to sign the receipt for his salary."²²

Jacksonian Era Governorships

²² Leslie Lipson, *The American Governor: From Figurehead to Leader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 14.

During Andrew Jackson's two terms as president, from 1829 to 1837, suffrage requirements were liberalized across the American electorate to make the political process more representative of popular will. In every state except South Carolina (where governors were appointed by the state legislature until 1865) constitutions were changed to allow statewide plurality election of governors. The direct election of the governor in most states enhanced his symbolic authority as a representative of the people's will, at the expense of the legislature. Nonetheless, state legislatures still exercised considerable control over governors' institutional authority. During this period, legislatures began creating new executive positions to share power with the governor. The product is often referred to as the "plural executive." Furthermore, legislative committees continued to conduct the bulk of administrative affairs rather than entrusting them to the executive branch.

Post-Civil War Governorships

After the Civil War, the United States experienced massive urbanization and a consequent expansion of government services. Yet while state government gained substantial power in this process, most governors did not. State legislatures created numerous agencies, boards, and commissions to share administrative authority with the governor. Legislators believed that corruption and abuses of power were less likely to occur under independent bodies than under a strengthened governor with increased patronage opportunities.

The former Confederate states underwent a somewhat different process of gubernatorial change following the Civil War than other states. At the behest of the federal government, states reentering the Union during the Reconstruction period of 1866

to 1876 rewrote their constitutions to centralize power in the governor. Federal officials feared that disloyal or rebellious members of state legislatures would dominate state government and thwart Reconstruction efforts otherwise. After Reconstruction ended, ex-Confederate state officials wrested control back from the “carpetbaggers” who had ruled for the previous decade. They immediately began diluting the strength of the governorship through statutory constitutions and the “long ballot.” Statutory constitutions are extremely specific constitutions mandating financial and administrative policies. (For example, Oklahoma’s current constitution declares that all public schools must teach home economics.) The “long ballot” refers to the legislature’s creation of new elected executive offices, such as auditor or comptroller and superintendent of public instruction, to absorb executive duties that would otherwise fall to the governor.

Professor John Fairlie referred to the post-Civil War governorship as “neither the single executive, nor the collective executive, nor any intermediate type.”²³ Most state constitutions endowed the governor with “supreme executive power” to see that the laws were faithfully executed, yet governors lacked administrative authority over the executive branch because most of its power was distributed among appointed agencies, boards, and commissions and elected executive officials. While governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson was a leader in the State Reorganization Movement. In 1889, he wrote: “Of state officials associated with the Governor it may be said that both in law and in fact they are colleagues of the Governor, in no sense his agents or subordinates, except perhaps in mere formal procedure.”²⁴ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, governors

²³ A.E. Buck, *The Reorganization of State Governments in the United States* (New York: Morningside Heights, 1938), p. 10.

²⁴ Lipson, *op cit.*, p. 31.

were widely regarded as figureheads incapable of initiating and administering significant changes in state government. In his influential book on American government, *The American Commonwealth*, British Ambassador to the United States James Bryce concluded at this time, “State office carries little either of dignity or power.”²⁵

The State Reorganization Movement Begins

Displeasure with state governments grew in the early twentieth century. Reformers had been disappointed in their expectation that improvements in state government efficiency and integrity would result from the creation of the plural executive. Instead, the wide distribution of executive authority came to be regarded as an obstacle to good governance. The solution, many believed, was to increase gubernatorial authority in terms of leadership and administration.

Investigating State Government Inefficiency

Most states in the early twentieth century distributed executive authority across at least fifty independent agencies, boards, and commissions. New York, for example, went from having ten agencies in 1800, to twenty in 1850, to eighty-one in 1900. Within another twenty-five years, the number doubled.²⁶ Investigations into the efficiency of various states’ agencies, boards, and commissions yielded dramatic results. Many days were required just to record the names of all agency, board, and commission members in some states; weeks were required to quantify the members and determine their functions. According to A.E. Buck, “Those who surveyed the situation in these states were literally amazed at the complexity of the administration; they found agencies that even the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

governor did not know existed.”²⁷ Often these administrative bodies were duplicative and wasteful. For example, New York Governor Alfred E. Smith lamented the creation of the Soldiers’ Bonus Commission after World War I, when agencies and executives already existed to identify deserving veterans and authorize payments.

Gubernatorial Inability to Promote State Efficiency

Governors were unable to improve state government efficiency because they lacked necessary administrative authority. Agency, board, and commission members usually served longer terms than the governor and were appointed by state legislatures or previous governors. In Ohio before 1921, for example, some governors inherited nearly all appointed administrators from their predecessors. Walter Dodd declared in his 1922 study of state government that the governor’s task, “from an administrative standpoint [is] largely a hopeless one.”²⁸ Many politicians and reformers concurred in this assessment. William Anderson and Edward Weidner later described the genesis of the State Reorganization Movement as follows:

Budgets and payrolls began to get out of hand. Waste and corruption were widely suspected and occasionally found. Who could be made responsible for supervising and controlling this enlarged administration?... The evidence suggests that no one but the governor was seriously considered for the new managerial role.²⁹

Early Events in the State Reorganization Movement

A confluence of initiatives provided the impetus for the State Reorganization Movement. In 1910 the People’s Power League of Oregon published a plan to centralize

²⁷ Buck, *op cit.*, p. 12.

²⁸ Walter F. Dodd, *State Government* (New York: The Century Company, 1922), p. 246.

²⁹ William Anderson and Edward W. Weidner, *State and Local Governments in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951), p. 395.

state power in the governor. Also that year, New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes became the first governor to advocate greater power for his office in hopes of improving government efficiency. In a message to the state legislature, he called for administrative centralization in the governor and his cabinet, the latter to be chosen by the former instead of being elected. In a subsequent speech at Yale University, Hughes declared that problems with state government efficiency required

the grouping of administrative powers, with the necessary divisions or departments, under a chief administrative head; the enforcement of responsibility of the administrative head through an election upon which the attention of the people can be centered with respect to the importance of which they are fully convinced, - in these, I believe, will be found important securities of efficient administration.³⁰

One year later, President William Howard Taft asked Congress to appropriate \$100,000 for the purpose of evaluating efficiency in national government, and for the authority to carry out necessary changes previously unauthorized for the executive. The Taft Economy and Efficiency Commission's report was rejected by Congress the next year, but it inspired similar investigations in many states. According to Leslie Lipson, "Those who had intimate knowledge of the states knew well that, however bad the national government, the organization of the state executive branches was far worse."³¹ Wisconsin became the first state to investigate government efficiency, in 1911; sixteen states followed by 1917.

Constitutional Reforms Sought for State Government Reorganization

The achievement of a strengthened governorship and a more efficient state government required constitutional changes. While the reorganization plans of various states and reform groups differed, they shared many of the same goals. Most state

³⁰ Buck, *op cit.*, p. 7.

³¹ Lipson, *op cit.*, p. 82.

reorganization plans advocated concentration of administrative authority in the governor; gubernatorial budget-making authority; expanded gubernatorial terms; gubernatorial veto power; consolidation of executive departments; reduction of agency, board, and commission size and authority; coordination of staff services administration; provision for an independent state auditor; recognition of the governor's cabinet, as selected by the governor. In 1921 the National Municipal League, one of the leading organizations in the State Reorganization Movement, published an influential blueprint for reform called "A Model State Constitution." This work encompassed many of the goals just described, but it also advocated direct gubernatorial participation in legislative agenda-setting; provision of seats in state legislatures for the governor and his cabinet; quarterly reports from the governor to the legislature; power for the legislature to remove the governor with a two-thirds vote. Unlike later reform efforts, early state reorganization plans did not mention the timing of gubernatorial elections.

Objections to the State Reorganization Movement

Many objected to state reorganization plans because they feared the creation of "autocratic government." A strengthened governor, they contended, would use his new power to abuse the patronage system and serve his political interests, at the expense of his constituents. Even some governors condemned the reforms as unnecessary and dangerous. "The governor has no need for further power," argued Maryland Governor Albert C. Ritchie in 1921.

[In] large measure, the things done in other states thus to centralize power in the governor, do not centralize any powers in him at all, but simply remove the checks and balances which now exist, and which certainly for the most part, ought to be retained.³²

Even those advocating reform conceded that most governorships had gained power in recent years. Dodd, a strong proponent of state government reorganization, wrote in 1922: “With the rapid increase in the number of things that the state government undertakes to do, there has thus been an increase in the power vested in the office of the governor, and at the same time an increase in the importance of the office.”³³ Unlike Ritchie, though, Dodd and other reformers believed that recent increases in gubernatorial power still fell short of providing governors the administrative authority necessary to promote state government efficiency.

The State Reorganization Movement Leads to a Strong Modern Governorship

The state reorganization initiatives of the 1910s led to decades of constitutional change, resulting in strong modern governorships. While the State Reorganization Movement has impacted every state’s system of government, its progress has not been linear or uniform across the states. Lipson writes,

The reorganization movement proceeded independently from state to state at various times and was modified to suit local exigencies. One must expect to find not a logically coherent scheme perfectly applied but a patchwork threaded with compromise and conflict.³⁴

The movement’s early strength dissipated in the 1930s, before blossoming in the 1960s. It has had a major impact on the conduct, character, prestige, and election of governors.

The 1910s and 1920s: Governors Advance Reform Efforts

³² Buck, *op cit.*, p. 16.

³³ Dodd, *op cit.*, p. 242.

³⁴ Lipson, *op cit.*, p. 80.

Ambitious governors eager to improve state government efficiency championed the initial state reorganization plans. Among the most prominent of these governors were Woodrow Wilson (New Jersey), Charles Evans Hughes (New York), Frank Lowden (Illinois), Robert La Follette (Wisconsin), and Hiram Johnson (California).³⁵ Hughes was the first to propose state constitutional amendments to achieve a strengthened governorship. New York voters rejected his plan in November 1915. Two years later, Lowden was successful in pursuing government reforms that led to the reduction of independent state agencies from fifty to fourteen. By the mid-1930s, twenty-six states had strengthened their governorships through major revisions to their state laws and constitutions. Often this was the result of governors' leadership in emphasizing state government reorganization. For example, Virginia's Governor Harry Byrd, Sr., used it as a major campaign issue in his 1926 bid for reelection. His success in the election gave him a mandate to achieve state government reorganization.

The 1930s Through 1960s: The State Reorganization Movement Stalls

The State Reorganization Movement lost its momentum in the 1930s, and for the most part lay dormant until the 1960s. The shift toward centralization of federal power during the Great Depression and later World War II diminished enthusiasm for strong state government, to the point that New Dealers briefly flirted with the idea of replacing states with "regional commonwealths." Also, state government revenues and services decreased during this period, for two reasons. First, taxable income dropped sharply

³⁵ This list, including leading Democratic, Republican, and Progressive governors, indicates the emerging consensus in favor of state government reorganization at the time.

during the Great Depression and did not recover until after the war. Second, increased urbanization without corresponding reapportionment by state legislatures in many states created malapportionment in favor of rural voters. Rural voters tended to prefer lower taxes and fewer government services than urban voters. Revenue losses and decreased demand for services lessened the need for a strong administrative governor. Consequently, the State Reorganization Movement experienced a lull in the 1930s that lasted for three decades.

The 1960s and 1970s: The State Reorganization Movement Blossoms

In 1962 the Supreme Court ruled in *Baker v. Carr* that malapportionment of state legislatures violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. In accordance with *Baker v. Carr* and other relevant court decisions, many state legislatures were reapportioned to give urban voters proportional, and therefore much greater, representation. Taxes and government services subsequently increased, renewing the need for strong and efficient administration of state government. Then, during the late 1960s, President Richard Nixon's New Federalism program increased revenue sharing with the states by delivering large sums of money, often in block grants. (Block grants are funds provided for a general interest, such as education, to be spent at the state government's discretion.) As a result of increased administrative demands, state reorganization and strengthened governorships became a major priority of state governments once again.

The Achievement of a Strengthened Governorship

The renewal of the State Reorganization Movement had swift and dramatic consequences. Whereas five states rewrote their constitutions from 1902 to 1963, ten approved new constitutions and ten others restructured theirs significantly from 1964 to 1976; the average number of elected executives per state decreased from thirteen in 1950 to ten in 1975;³⁶ constitutional restrictions against consecutive gubernatorial terms were eliminated in every state except Virginia; the number of governors serving four-year terms swelled from twenty-nine in 1955 to forty-seven in the mid-1980s.

The modern governor, as a result of the State Reorganization Movement and other changes, is a much more consequential actor in state politics than a century ago. Governors typically play a central role in the agenda-setting process, submit budgets, veto legislation, send messages to the legislature, set out clear objectives in high-profile campaigns, and communicate directly to constituents through the media, particularly television. The enhanced prestige of the governorship has attracted a new breed of governors over the last several decades. They now tend to be younger, better educated, and more ambitious in their agendas than in previous eras. Governors are also prime contenders for national office, as indicated by the fact that all but one of the presidents elected since 1976 served previously as governors.

The Electoral Significance of a Strengthened Governorship

The achievement of a strengthened governorship through the State Reorganization Movement has had important implications for gubernatorial elections. Most gubernatorial elections are now, like other elections for prominent offices, candidate-centered. This is due in part to other changes independent of the State Reorganization Movement, including decreased partisan identification, increased split-ticket voting, and the influence

³⁶ Larry J. Sabato, *op cit.*, p. 68.

of television. Yet, according to Barbara Salmore and Stephen Salmore, candidate-centered elections were slower to develop for governorships than were candidate-centered elections for other offices, because they were not considered as important or worthy of close attention. As the office gained in power and prestige, however, gubernatorial elections became more prominent. “There is more at stake in state level elections, more political players are interested in their outcomes, and more resources are available to wage campaigns,” wrote Salmore and Salmore.³⁷

The Role of Election Timing in the State Reorganization Movement

Simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections were slow to emerge as an essential element in the State Reorganization Movement. Ignored by early reformers, it became a common notion in the mid-twentieth century that such elections negatively affected gubernatorial selection by elevating partisan affiliation above competence and policy matters. As a result, many states amended their constitutions to schedule gubernatorial elections in non-presidential years.

Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections a Non-Factor in the Early State Reorganization Movement

Election timing, particularly in terms of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, was simply not an issue in the early years of the State Reorganization Movement. Such elections were not mentioned in early works on state government, such as Dodd’s (1922) and Buck’s (1938). They were not mentioned in the National Municipal League’s 1921 “A Model State Constitution.” Furthermore, they do

³⁷ Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, “The Transformation of State Electoral Politics,” in Carl E. Van Horn, ed., *The State of the States* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1989), p. 175.

not seem to have concerned state governments in the early movement years. In 1911, as efficiency and government reorganization were first attracting attention on the state and national levels, Arizona and New Mexico were admitted into the Union. That year, the two states held their first gubernatorial elections. Instead of scheduling their next gubernatorial elections two years later, also in a non-presidential year, Arizona and New Mexico temporarily extended their first governors' terms to three years so that the next gubernatorial election would be held in 1914, and then every two years henceforth. By going out of their way to hold gubernatorial elections in even-numbered years, the new states showed no concern for the potential pitfalls of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Similarly, the revised New York constitution proposed in 1927 would have expanded the governor's term from two to four years, starting in 1928. The fact that all subsequent gubernatorial elections would occur at the same time as presidential elections apparently did not alarm state reformers advocating the new constitutional provisions.

Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections Are Deemed Significant by Some Politicians of the Early Movement Years

Among the first to recognize the potential significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections were the people affected by them most, the gubernatorial candidates. New York Democratic Governor Al Smith objected in part to the revised 1927 state constitution on the basis that it established simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Scarred by his gubernatorial defeat in the Republican landslide of 1920, "He wanted a state election to be concerned with state

affairs” and believed that simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections inhibited that ideal.³⁸ Smith later attempted to use simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections to his advantage. Running for the presidency in 1928, Smith recruited fellow Democrat Franklin Roosevelt to seek the New York governorship because he believed that Roosevelt’s popularity would boost his chances of winning the state’s electoral votes. Similarly, Roosevelt in 1936 urged incumbent New York Democratic Governor Herbert Lehman to seek reelection, in order to help him gain New York’s vote for a second term as president.

Scholars Begin to Recognize the Potential Significance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections in the 1950s and 1960s

Starting in the 1950s, many scholars began to consider the potential influence of presidential elections on simultaneous gubernatorial elections. Anderson and Weidner speculated in 1951 that “partisan issues important on one level may also affect the results on another.”³⁹ V.O. Key elaborated on the potential of coattail effects in *American State Politics* (1956):

The presidential candidate who leads his party to a landslide victory carries into office with him large numbers of gubernatorial candidates of his party, who win without much regard to their role or place in the state, but because they float along with national movement of sentiment.⁴⁰

Joseph E. Kallenbach, in a section of *The American Chief Executive* (1966) entitled “Election Reform Issues,” highlighted simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential

³⁸ Lipson, *op cit.*, p. 99.

³⁹ Anderson and Weidner, *op cit.*, p. 268.

⁴⁰ Key, *op cit.*, p. 29.

elections as “warrant[ing] special significance in connection with the choosing of executives.”⁴¹

Many scholars who acknowledged the potential significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections were skeptical about its actual impact. Anderson and Weidner said “The argument [that presidential elections obscure state issues in simultaneously held gubernatorial elections] is plausible, but it is hard to adduce evidence to prove the point.”⁴² Kallenbach noted that nearly four out of ten gubernatorial candidates were chosen at the same time that state voters selected a presidential candidate of a different party from 1956 to 1964. On this basis, he wrote

The conclusion seems warranted that coincidental presidential and gubernatorial elections, even when coupled with voting procedures that tend to encourage straight-ticket voting, are by no means an insurmountable obstacle to a discriminating choice by voters.⁴³

Kallenbach also detailed the potential benefits of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. He said they decreased the burden on voters by electing both positions at one time rather than at two separate times; decreased state and municipality expenses by holding one rather than two elections; increased voter turnout for gubernatorial elections, since presidential elections tend to draw more voters than other elections. He also indicated that they

induce greater harmony and identification of interest between the state party organization and its candidates and the national party and its leadership, thus making for a somewhat clearer fixing of party responsibility and a strengthening of party ties generally between national and state interests.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Joseph E. Kallenbach, *The American Chief Executive: The Presidency and the Governorship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 101.

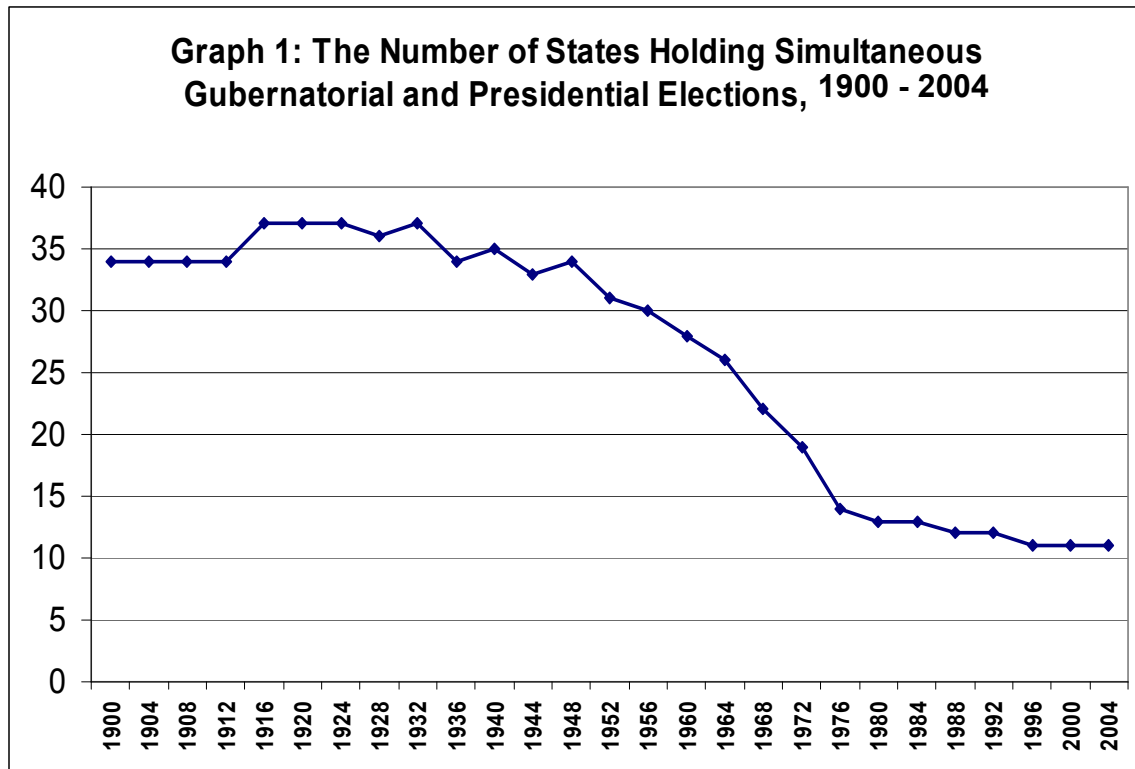
⁴² Anderson and Weidner, *op cit.*, p. 399.

⁴³ Kallenbach, *op cit.*, p. 105.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Election Timing Becomes an Essential Aspect of the State Reorganization Movement

By the end of the 1960s, the separation of gubernatorial elections from presidential elections became a major element in the State Reorganization Movement. Between 1964 and 1996, the number of states holding simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections dropped from twenty-five to eleven, while only North Dakota moved its gubernatorial election to coincide with the presidential cycle. The pattern of change over the past century is striking. At the beginning of the twentieth century, thirty-four out of forty-five states held simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Today, as a result of the State Reorganization Movement, only eleven out of fifty states hold them simultaneously. (See Graph 1, which tracks the number of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections held, 1900-2004.)



More changes in election timing are still possible. The National Municipal League and the National Governors Association recommend holding gubernatorial elections in odd-numbered years, to avoid the potential national influences of presidential and congressional elections. Currently, only Virginia, New Jersey, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Kentucky, elect their governors in odd-numbered years

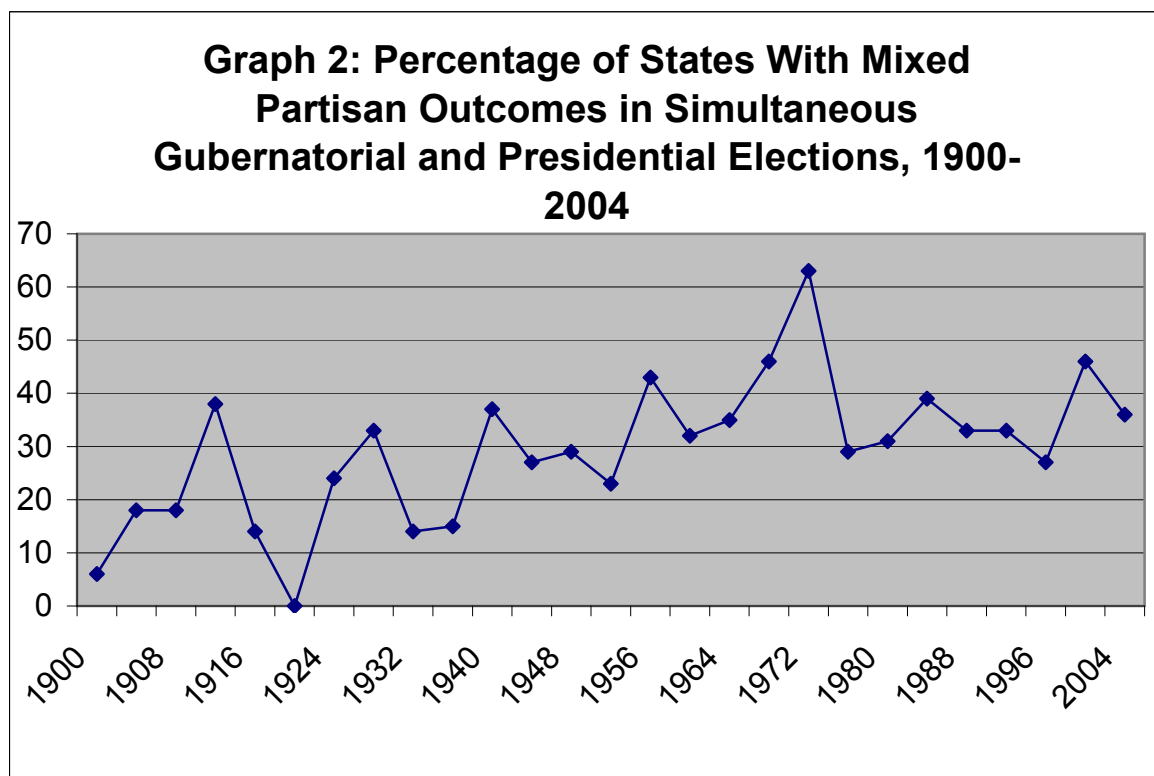
Assessing the Impact of Election Timing in Recent Gubernatorial Elections

Many reformers have claimed that states with separated gubernatorial and presidential elections are more likely to produce mixed partisan outcomes than those with simultaneous elections. Since many states began separating gubernatorial and presidential elections as part of the State Reorganization Movement, election data from the last forty years provide the optimal available basis for assessing these claims. The data indicate that states with separated gubernatorial and presidential elections are more likely to produce

mixed partisan outcomes than those with simultaneous elections. However, states with simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections are much more likely to produce mixed partisan outcomes than state government reformers have often suggested.

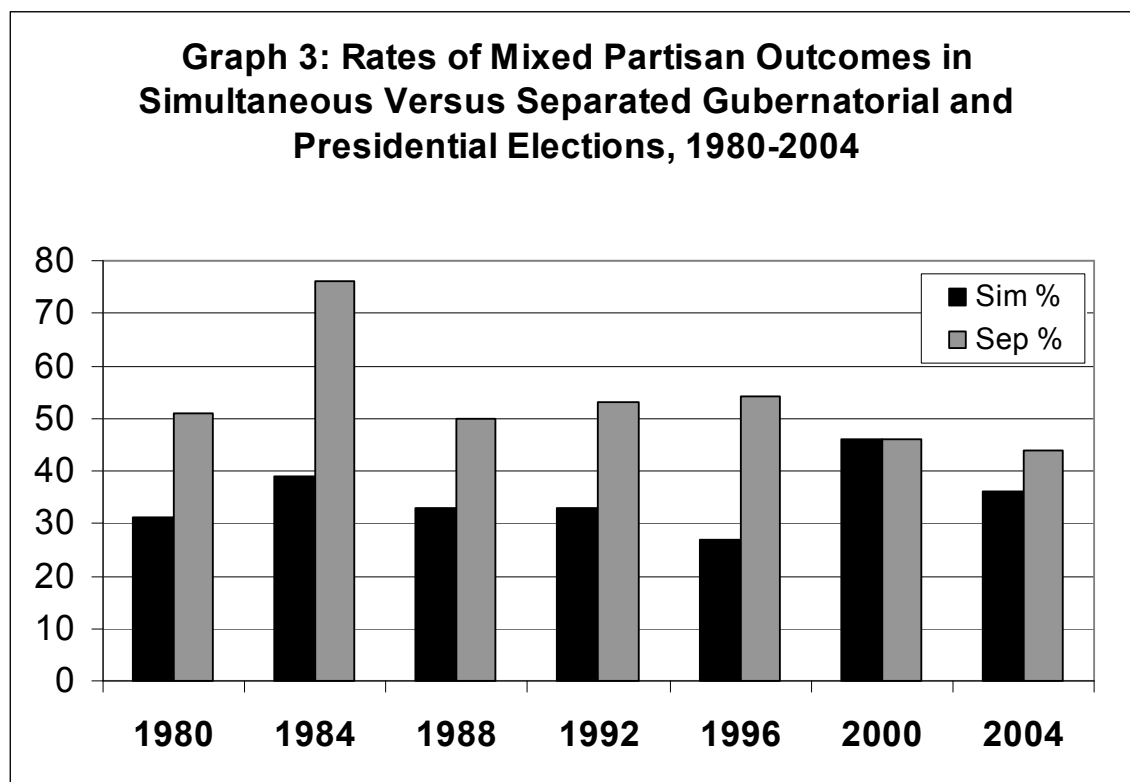
Are Separated Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections More Likely to Produce Mixed Partisan Outcomes than Simultaneous Elections?

Despite many state government reformers' claims that national politics dramatically overshadows state politics in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, mixed partisan outcomes in these elections occur frequently. Since 1980, twenty-nine out of eighty-three, or thirty-five percent, of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections have produced mixed partisan outcomes. (See Graph 2, detailing the historical trend toward increased occurrence of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.)



These data prove that voters are not only capable of separating presidential from gubernatorial preferences, but they do so very often.

Analysis of recent election data also shows that separated gubernatorial and presidential elections are significantly more likely to produce mixed partisan outcomes than simultaneous elections. Since 1980, one hundred forty-two out of two hundred sixty-seven, or fifty-three percent, of separated gubernatorial and presidential elections have produced mixed partisan outcomes. (See Graph 3, comparing mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections, since 1980.)



Recent election data thus reinforce the State Reorganization Movement claim that off-year gubernatorial elections are less likely to be influenced by national politics than simultaneous elections.

Is There a Pattern of Voting for Change in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?

Some scholars and other observers have proposed that there are patterns in voter selections of gubernatorial and presidential candidates in the same election year. Recent election data provide the basis for assessing their theories.

Kallenbach hypothesized that presidential coattail effects are particularly strong in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections when state voters support a change of presidential party. He wrote, “The influence exerted by the presidential election upon the outcome of gubernatorial contests is most likely to be felt in those years when there is a change in national party control of the presidency.”⁴⁵ He based his theory on Angus Campbell and Warren E. Miller’s 1957 study, “The Motivational Bases of Straight and Split-Ticket Voting.” Yet Campbell and Miller’s analysis applied to all offices on the ballot in presidential elections years, meaning that split-ticket voters may still have supported the same party for governor and president.

Kallenbach’s hypothesis is not supported by recent election data. Since 1980, twenty-nine out of thirty-nine states (seventy-four percent) voting for a change in presidential party leadership during simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections have also voted to maintain the party in gubernatorial power. Only ten out of eighty-three simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections since 1980 (twelve percent) have produced state votes for changes in the party leadership of the presidency and the governorship. In fact, since 1960, years in which a new party is elected to the presidency have proven *less* likely to produce mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

gubernatorial and presidential elections than years in which the president's party remains in power (thirty-six versus forty percent).

Nor do election data support an assumption that Kallenbach's theory is better applied to landslide votes for change. For example, in 1980, the most recent case of a landslide vote for change in presidential party leadership, Republican Ronald Reagan defeated incumbent Democratic President Jimmy Carter with 489 out of 538 electoral votes. Yet only four out of eleven states voting for a change in presidential party leadership in 1980 (thirty-six percent) also voted for a change in gubernatorial party leadership.

Does the Competitiveness of a Presidential Election Affect Rates of Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?

It might also be suggested that the closeness of a presidential election affects the rate of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. A close presidential race would perhaps lead to more split-ticket voting and more mixed partisan outcomes between states' choices of gubernatorial and presidential candidates, as non-partisan or loosely partisan "swing" voters divide somewhat evenly between unusually appealing candidates of different parties. Conversely, perhaps a dull presidential election contest causes voters to focus their attention on the governor's race, inducing greater scrutiny and more mixed partisan outcomes. Again, recent election data do not support a pattern in either case. Since 1960 there have been six highly competitive presidential elections (1960, 1968, 1976, 1992, 2000, 2004), during which thirty-six out of ninety-eight states (thirty-seven percent) have voted for gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties. Also since 1960, there have been six largely

uncompetitive presidential elections (1964, 1972, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1996), during which thirty-seven out of ninety-four states (thirty-nine percent) have voted for gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties. Judging from the election data, whether a presidential election is competitive or uncompetitive makes virtually no difference in the national incidence of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Assessing the Electoral Significance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Analysis of recent election data suggest that gubernatorial elections held at the same time as presidential elections are, as State Reorganization Movement reformers have argued since the 1950s and 1960s, more likely to be influenced by presidential politics than are separated gubernatorial elections. Despite evidence of heightened national political influence in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, however, many produce mixed partisan outcomes in which gubernatorial elections and state politics are certainly *not* obscured by presidential politics. Thus, this evidence indicates that State Reorganization Movement reformers have been correct to a certain degree about the electoral significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Chapter V, however, presents conflicting evidence of presidential coattail effects.

Contrary to many existing theories, there does not seem to be a clear formula for predicting patterns of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Other factors must be considered to explain this phenomenon. This study proposes that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party

organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. To test this thesis, the following two chapters present case studies of the 2004 gubernatorial elections in Vermont and Montana, in which state voters selected gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year.

Chapter III: The 2004 Vermont Gubernatorial Election

"I always do what's right for Vermont, regardless of party affiliation." – Governor Jim Douglas⁴⁶

"If you support the candidacy of Jim Douglas, make no mistake: You support the candidacy of George Bush." –B.J. Rogers, spokesman for Peter Clavelle⁴⁷

In 2004, Vermont's Jim Douglas was the only Republican governor in the nation elected by a state that voted for the Democratic presidential candidate, John Kerry. Douglas' reelection was especially noteworthy because it occurred in what was widely considered the most liberal state in the nation. Moreover, Douglas (who was initially elected governor by a narrow plurality in 2002) defeated Democratic challenger Peter Clavelle in 2004 by a slightly greater landslide than Kerry's margin over Republican President George W. Bush in the state. Douglas won 59% of the vote to Clavelle's 38%, whereas Kerry won 59% to Bush's 39%.

Governor Douglas' victory has been attributed to a variety of factors, primarily voter independence, candidate organization, and incumbency. Campaign strategies attracted little attention in evaluations of the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election. This chapter analyzes the issues and factors influencing the Douglas-Clavelle race, with particular attention to the campaign strategies used by the Douglas campaign and the Vermont Republican Party to elect a Republican governor at the same time that Vermont

⁴⁶ Mike Kalil, "Clavelle Slams Douglas Over Iraq War," *Brattleboro Reformer*, October 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=13&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=e370322d3b29da417c66050325322683.

⁴⁷ "Prominent Democrats Endorse Douglas' Re-election," Associated Press, August 4, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=84f7c27b40c677eb74f4325fed66400b&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=20940ff91acc5d8035e1bcb1de48a7d5.

overwhelmingly supported the Democratic presidential candidate. By specifically analyzing the role of campaign strategies in the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election, this chapter tests the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year.

Vermont's Political Transformation

Governor Jim Douglas' election as a Republican governor in Vermont was very surprising to many, given Vermont's reputation as an exceptionally liberal state. Yet for most of the twentieth century, the election of a Vermont Republican would not have been noteworthy. Before its recent political transformation, Vermont had long been recognized as perhaps the most Republican state in the nation. In 1936 it was one of only two states, along with Maine, to support Republican presidential nominee Alf Landon over Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt. Before 1992, Vermont had backed only one Democratic candidate for president since the creation of the Republican Party, President Lyndon Johnson in 1964. In the early 1960s, however, the state began a period of dramatic change that continues to impact its culture and politics today.

In 1960, Vermont was still the small, agrarian state it had always been; the 390,000 people living in the state that year were outnumbered by cows. Within the next two

decades, Vermont's population surged to 511,000, then to 609,000 by 2000.⁴⁸ At the same time, Vermont underwent an economic transition in which tourism, skiing, summer resorts, computer technology, and Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream diversified and enhanced a state economy long known primarily for its agriculture. Most important for Vermont's political environment, the immigrants of this period tended to be much more liberal than the native population.

While next-door New Hampshire, trumpeting its low taxes and aversion to government, attracted right-leaning migrants from Massachusetts and elsewhere who were happy to live in spanking-new developments and ravenous for low taxes, Vermont, proclaiming its desire to preserve the environment and the past, attracted left-leaning migrants from New York and elsewhere who were willing to pay higher taxes and higher prices for the privilege of living in a seemingly pristine setting.⁴⁹

The younger and wealthier immigrants eventually redefined Vermont, so that by 2004 it had "become the leader of America's left."⁵⁰ At that point, the state was well known for its stringent environmental standards, homosexual civil unions, and its regular reelection of Independent Congressman and self-described socialist Bernie Sanders. In 2004, Vermont gave Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry his third greatest vote percentage of any state, while distinguishing itself as the only state in the nation to give President Bush a lower percentage of the vote than it had in 2000 (41% in 2000, 39% in 2004). Given these facts, Vermont did not seem a likely setting for a Republican landslide in the 2004 gubernatorial election.

Governor Jim Douglas

⁴⁸ Michael Barone and Richard E. Cohen, eds., *The Almanac of American Politics 2006* (Washington, D.C.: National Journal Group, 2005), p. 1690.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1690.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1692.

Governor Douglas possessed many important electoral advantages that helped him to overcome the stigma of being a Republican candidate in Vermont. Most notably, Douglas' familiarity with Vermonters, moderate image, and first-term record made him an unusually appealing gubernatorial candidate, even while the presidential candidate of his party was headed for certain defeat the same year.

The Political Rise of Jim Douglas

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1951 and raised in neighboring Longmeadow, Jim Douglas came to Vermont as a Middlebury College student in 1968. A lifelong Republican, Douglas campaigned for Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964 at age thirteen, and while in college led rallies in support of Republican President Richard Nixon amid protests against the Vietnam war. Upon graduation in 1972, Douglas ran successfully for Middlebury state representative, and five years later he became majority leader of the Vermont House of Representatives. In 1979, Douglas lost a bid for House speaker and subsequently became an aide to Republican Governor Richard Snelling. He also worked as a radio announcer and executive director of the United Way before being elected Vermont's secretary of state in 1980. After being reelected five times to that office, he attempted to enter national politics by challenging popular three-term U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy in 1992. Douglas presented the greatest electoral threat of Leahy's senatorial career, but lost by a 54% to 43% margin. In 1994, Douglas returned to state politics when elected treasurer, a post that he held for four consecutive terms.

In 2002, Douglas ran for the governor's seat being vacated by Democratic presidential aspirant Howard Dean. His opponents in this three-way race were Democratic Lieutenant Governor Doug Racine and Con Hogan, an Independent candidate who had initially sought the Republican nomination. Douglas' campaign focused on economic recovery for the state. He sought to "create a more business-friendly environment in Vermont," primarily by proposing tax cuts, spending cuts, and major reforms of Acts 250 and 60.⁵¹ Act 250 was an environmental measure passed in the early 1970s under liberal Republican Governor Deane Davis. The act set ten stringent criteria for the construction of housing developments and ski resorts. The authority for evaluating construction plans was distributed across five different commissions, and an automatic right of appeal was granted to any citizen objecting to commission decisions. Act 60, also called the Equal Education Opportunity Act, was passed in 1997 in response to a Vermont Supreme Court ruling mandating equal educational opportunities throughout the state. The act complied by equalizing property tax rates statewide, so that wealthier districts could no longer use these taxes to raise and spend disproportionate amounts of money on their public schools. Many blamed Acts 250 and 60 with discouraging business activity in Vermont, causing job cuts and slowing economic growth. (Lieutenant Governor Racine joined Douglas in advocating revisions of the acts.) Additionally, Douglas ran on the theme of change. He blamed many of the state's problems on seventeen years of Democratic governorship over the previous eighteen years.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1695.

In the November election, Douglas received 45% of the vote, to Racine's 42% and Hogan's 10%. Douglas' victory was especially noteworthy because Democrats exceeded expectations in that year's state legislative elections, maintaining their Senate majority and taking control of the House of Representatives.

Governor Douglas' Familiarity to Vermont Voters

By the time Jim Douglas was elected governor of Vermont in 2002 he had been on a state ballot every other year since 1972, statewide since 1980. In that time, he received more votes than any other candidate in Vermont's history and, by the estimate of Eric Davis, professor of political science at Middlebury College, Douglas had personally met a quarter of Vermont's 600,000-plus residents.⁵² Douglas' familiarity to Vermonters provided a substantial electoral advantage. It was particularly relevant because, according to Douglas, Vermont "is a small state where politics is retail and local; meeting a candidate for a major office, regardless of ideology or positions, certainly makes a difference."⁵³ Consequently, Douglas maintained a strong presence across Vermont while holding each of his statewide offices. Douglas' 2004 campaign chairman Neale Lunderville described his interaction with constituents as "essential to the success of Jim Douglas" because it allowed him to establish personal connections and spread his messages.⁵⁴ Douglas' extensive travels as governor attracted criticism from many of his opponents, who

⁵² Professor Eric Davis, Telephone interview, December 6, 2005.

⁵³ Governor Jim Douglas, Telephone interview, December 23, 2005.

⁵⁴ Neale Lunderville, Telephone interview, December 23, 2005.

claimed that he could be performing more important functions than “ribbon-cutting.”

Some referred to him derisively as “Governor Scissorhands.”⁵⁵ Douglas dismissed

these criticisms, responding:

If there’s a ribbon to be cut, it means something good is happening in our state. It means a business is opening or expanding; it means a new school; it means a nonprofit organization that is providing a new program or service; it means the state is moving forward economically or socially in a positive way.⁵⁶

Irrespective of opinion concerning the propriety of his travels, there can be little doubt that Douglas’ familiarity to Vermont voters was a valuable element in his political success.

Governor Douglas’ Personal Appeal

Governor Douglas’ familiarity with state voters allowed him to market what many regarded as an attractive personality, in a state where personal appeal had great resonance. “I think at least Vermont is more personal than it is party,” said Bill Grover, professor of political science at St. Michael’s College.

Vermont, being a small state, a state where everybody pretty much knows everybody, you can’t overemphasize how much face-to-face politics matters here. You can’t overemphasize how much people thought of Douglas... as a ‘nice guy’ and an ‘honest guy,’ and how much that mattered to them.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Democratic State Representative Steve Darrow: “For the last two years, Douglas has spent most of his time driving around the state, going to meetings and ribbon cuttings, and we call him Governor Scissorhands.” Kalil, “Weighing the Odds Douglas, Clavelle Tout Differences,” *Brattleboro Reformer*, October 28, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b035ceff00388a7c1632a927a98dcb33&_docnum=10&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=e2ee413d84a62c3981a794408bf69fe5. [Hereafter cited as Kalil, “Weighing.”]

⁵⁶ Ross Sneyd, “AP Newsmaker: Douglas Favors Private Market for Health Care,” Associated Press, August 30, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=a456a8f6230a691420abcd0be4a4be2b&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=c47714314f676d355b121421c0bb389c. [Hereafter cited as Sneyd, “Newsmaker.”]

⁵⁷ Professor Bill Grover, Telephone interview, December 8, 2005.

Indeed, Douglas' reputation as an honorable and friendly person was widely recognized and often cited as one of his greatest assets in wooing voters. It helped distinguish him from other Republicans, particularly on the national level, whom Vermonters distrusted or disliked. For example, Professor Davis said, "Douglas' personal style – outgoing, friendly, dry sense of humor – is very engaging, and voters like him personally. He's not a polarizing candidate, such as George [W.] Bush."⁵⁸ Lunderville described him as "very genuine, very affable... the kind of guy you would want your sister to marry."⁵⁹ While this view, to varying degrees, was widely shared and valued in Vermont, it was not universally accepted. Professor Grover dismissed Douglas' friendly image as "a fraud,"⁶⁰ while the *Brattleboro Reformer*, in endorsing Peter Clavelle over Douglas in the 2004 election, wrote, "we share the view of many Vermonters that Governor Douglas... [is] generally [a] nice [guy], [but] being amiable isn't as important as being creative and bold."⁶¹

Governor Douglas' Moderate Image

Governor Douglas' lengthy political experience in Vermont and strong relationship with voters gave him the opportunity to cultivate his image as a pragmatic moderate Republican. Though fiscally conservative in many ways, Douglas was quite socially liberal. He supported legalized abortion, accepted Vermont's civil union law, and

⁵⁸ Professor Eric Davis, Correspondence with the author, December 8, 2005.

⁵⁹ Lunderville, *op cit*.

⁶⁰ Grover, *op cit*.

⁶¹ "Clavelle and Rivers," *Brattleboro Reformer*, October 29, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b035ceff00388a7c1632a927a98dcb33&_docnum=9&wchp=dGLbVlbzSkVb&_md5=da38ed757c0c7899ad0b55608abbc479. [Hereafter cited as *Brattleboro Reformer*, "Rivers."]

allowed a medicinal marijuana bill to become law, though without his signature. “Governor Douglas isn’t a social conservative to begin with,” said Vermont Republican Party Chairman Jim Barnett, “and he probably would not have made it as far in his career if he were. He’s not a firebrand by any account.”⁶² This perception was reinforced by the way Douglas spoke about himself and his policies. Shortly after the 2004 election, he described his plans for a second gubernatorial term as “my agenda of moderate mainstream bipartisanship.”⁶³ Douglas also made efforts to distinguish himself from national Republicans, by saying “I’ve never applied labels to myself. I’m a Vermont Republican.”⁶⁴

Douglas often shifted attention away from his ideology by emphasizing his pragmatism and willingness to work with others, particularly Democrats. On the campaign trail in 2004, he described his “approach to government” as “very collaborative, bringing people together to solve problems and embrace opportunities.”⁶⁵ Typical were Douglas’ comments on divisions over health care following the 2004 election:

When two points of view are different, I suppose compromise is likely. My most important objective is to make progress to ensure we address the issues that are important to Vermonters and that I talked about during the campaign.⁶⁶

⁶² Jim Barnett, Telephone interview, December 15, 2005.

⁶³ Sneyd, “Douglas says he’ll work with Democrats in Legislature,” Associated Press, November 4, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=739546145fc27427df3d044a07107e75&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=0759ca86969ed04395e05ece8c847b26. [Hereafter cited as Sneyd, “Legislature.”]

⁶⁴ Kalil, “Weighing.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Sneyd, “Legislature.”

This is hardly the type of rhetoric that would lead Vermonters to view
Douglas as an ideologue.

Governor Douglas was largely successful in convincing voters and other observers of his moderate approach, thereby defusing concerns about his association with conservative national Republicans. Professor Davis said of Douglas, “He’s not a far-right conservative by any means.”⁶⁷ Most major Vermont newspapers agreed. In fact, in their endorsements of Douglas many newspapers indicated that his political differentiation from national Republicans was a significant element in his attraction. The *Valley News* claimed, “It’s clear to anyone paying attention that Douglas comes from a very different Republican tradition”⁶⁸ than George W. Bush. The *Herald-Times Argus* argued, “Douglas is the kind of Republican who could help to pull the party back from the extreme ideological direction in which Bush has taken it.”⁶⁹ Such comments recurred in many supporters’ discussions of Douglas. They suggest that one of the motivations for supporting Douglas was to prove to national Republicans that the moderation of party policy could widen their electoral appeal in states they typically lost. This logic may have had particular potency in a state that was once the party’s most loyal supporter until, many Vermonters believed, Republicans abandoned their founding principles.

⁶⁷ Davis, *op cit.*, December 6, 2005.

⁶⁸ “Valley News Endorses Douglas,” Associated Press, October 30, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=0481268897a3e561c8a1add6871b3a59&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=bad92f406c290f83b82a9eaa514a946.

⁶⁹ “Bennington, Burlington, Rutland, Barre Newspapers Endorse Douglas,” Associated Press, October 24, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=7&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=b91aeea26b41eca5dbd0c3814602df25. [Hereafter cited as Associated Press, “Bennington.”]

Were he not so successful in cultivating an image of political moderation, it is doubtful that Governor Douglas would have experienced such success as a Republican politician in Vermont. “The political graveyard here is littered with candidates, Republicans, who tried to just dust off the party platform in Vermont and run on it,” explained Lunderville. “That’s not going to win elections, because it generally flies completely counter to the majority of the voters.”⁷⁰ Yet a moderate image seemed useful to Vermont candidates generally, not just Republicans. According to 2004 exit polling, four in ten Vermonters described themselves as “moderates.”⁷¹ Being seen as a moderate in Vermont was not always essential; as Professor Grover cautioned, “It depends on the nature of the race.” However, in a statewide election where the constituency is larger and more diverse, “Probably being seen as some kind of problem-solving, pragmatic moderate would help.”⁷²

Governor Douglas’ First-Term Record

The Douglas campaign believed that its greatest asset in the 2004 gubernatorial election was Governor Douglas’ first-term record. Depending on commentary, polling, and the election results, it appears that this was a wise strategy upon which to base the campaign. Douglas’ first term included significant legislative accomplishments, particularly on the central 2002 campaign issues of Act 250 reform and economic improvement. In April 2004, the House and Senate approved the first major revisions of

⁷⁰ Lunderville, *op cit.*

⁷¹ David Gram, “Anger at Bush, Iraq War Big Motivators of Vermont Voters,” Associated Press, November 3, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=65cdb55beb77a6c2171779ealadec426&_docnum=15&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=486d2f5afdcdb5dcbe2b51a3d2845f4. [Hereafter cited as Gram, “Anger.”]

⁷² Grover, *op cit.*

Act 250 in its 34-year existence. The revisions eliminated the five citizen approval boards designed to evaluate construction plans, transferred their authority to a single Environmental Court, and withdrew the automatic right of appeal the act had previously accorded to objecting citizens. In terms of the economy, Douglas claimed that 7,000 new jobs were created during his first term (although some economists, using different definitions of job growth, revised that figure to 1,200), and Vermont's unemployment rate became the third lowest among all the states during his tenure.⁷³ Corporate taxes for Vermont businesses were cut 14%, while taxes were increased on out-of-state corporations, and Douglas presided over two balanced budgets.

Despite Governor Douglas' accomplishments, there was certainly room for more action. He failed to inspire any major revisions of Act 60, and some criticized him for his incremental approach. The *Herald-Times Argus* cautioned, "Douglas could be more ambitious or bold in leading Vermont forward, and Douglas would do well to pay attention."⁷⁴ The *Bennington Banner* instead portrayed Douglas' incrementalism as one of his strengths, commenting "He has worked methodically, tortoise-like, to move Vermont forward."⁷⁵

Governor Douglas' first-term performance was received well by Vermonters. In the 2004 election, he earned the endorsement of every major state newspaper except the *Brattleboro Reformer*. He also received the endorsement of ten prominent Democrats, including legislators, businesspeople, and government officials. In an April 2004 poll conducted by the polling firm Research 2000, 48% of respondents characterized Douglas'

⁷³ Sneyd, "Newsmaker."

⁷⁴ Associated Press, "Bennington."

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

gubernatorial performance as good or excellent, while 36% rated it fair, 7% poor, and 9% were unsure. In terms of favorability, 46% of respondents described themselves as favorable towards Douglas, while 35% were unfavorable, and 19% were neutral.⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, on June 28, 2004, Douglas announced that he would seek reelection in November.

Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Peter Clavelle

Governor Douglas' 2004 gubernatorial election opponent was 55-year-old Democrat Peter Clavelle. Though an accomplished 30-year political veteran and seven-term Burlington mayor, Clavelle was not expected to present a serious challenge because he lacked many of Douglas' key political assets. Most significantly, Clavelle was unfamiliar to most Vermonters. Also, his recent switch from the Progressive to the Democratic Party led to divisions among Democrats and the perception that Clavelle was outside the political mainstream.

The Political Rise of Peter Clavelle

Peter Clavelle entered Vermont politics in 1972, as town manager of Castleton and later city manager of Winooski. In 1982, Burlington's Socialist Party mayor, Bernie Sanders, selected him to become the city's personnel director. The next year Clavelle was appointed Burlington's first director of community and economic development. In 1989, after Sanders moved on to become Vermont's lone U.S. Representative, Clavelle was elected to the first of seven terms as mayor of Burlington, running on the left-wing

⁷⁶ "WCAX Poll: Douglas Leads Clavelle in Governor's Race," Associated Press, May 5, 2005. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=3e358e9b4c35c9704f79e85886642f23&_docnum=62&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=12da04d547c2c30e05c031e4e4869c5c. [Hereafter cited as Associated Press, "WCAX."]

Progressive Party ticket. As mayor, Clavelle focused on housing programs, job creation and training, community policing, and waterfront revitalization. Many later attributed Burlington's economic recovery to Clavelle's leadership in these areas.

Shortly prior to the beginning of the 2004 campaign, Clavelle left the Progressive Party to seek the Democratic nomination for governor. According to Professor Grover, Clavelle switched in order to avoid a three-way gubernatorial race that would fragment the liberal vote and ensure a Douglas victory. Clavelle won the Democratic nomination without opposition, and then arranged for the Progressive Party to nominate a political ally who declined to contest the election.⁷⁷ "Clavelle was not a bad candidate," conceded Lunderville. "He was a good campaigner in the sense that he worked the crowds very well, he was good with people, very blue-collar, down-to-Earth, people liked him as much as they liked Douglas, and he articulated a lot of the ideological issues very well."⁷⁸ In terms of familiarity and a moderate image, however, Clavelle entered the election against Douglas at a substantial disadvantage.

Clavelle's Lack of Statewide Familiarity

As a career Burlington-area politician, Clavelle was virtually unknown outside of Burlington's Chittenden County. He was particularly unfamiliar in the Northeast Kingdom and southwestern Vermont, where Governor Douglas was well-known. This discrepancy between the two candidates was evident in a May 2004 poll conducted by Research 2000, in which 24% of respondents did not recognize Clavelle's name, and 38% had no opinion of him. In the same poll, all 400 respondents recognized Douglas'

⁷⁷ It is interesting to note the reluctance of Democrats to challenge Governor Douglas in this election, as evidenced by the uncontested party primary. If members of the party truly believed that a simultaneous presidential election would sway the gubernatorial vote, many more would have entered the race.

⁷⁸ Lunderville, *op cit*.

name.⁷⁹ Garrison Nelson, professor of political science at the University of Vermont, observed in October 2004, “Peter is running into the classic problem of a first-time statewide candidate for major office without statewide experience, and that usually means you lose.”⁸⁰ Many cited Clavelle’s lack of statewide familiarity as his greatest obstacle against Douglas, perhaps dooming him from the start of the campaign.

Clavelle Is Perceived as Being Outside the Political Mainstream

Clavelle’s policies, comments, and particularly his former membership in the Progressive Party led many to believe that he was further outside of Vermont’s political mainstream than Governor Douglas, although Douglas was a Republican in the very liberal state. Clavelle attempted to overcome the perception that he was an ideologue; “On the campaign trail, Clavelle seeks to portray himself as a liberal pragmatist,” said the *Boston Globe*.⁸¹ However, his behavior sometimes jeopardized these efforts. Visiting a small electronics firm during the 2004 campaign, he unexpectedly asked its owner: “So, what’s your social mission?” The owner was caught off guard, unable to respond. The *Globe* described the incident as “the sort of thing that makes the Republicans gleefully certain that they will be able to cast Clavelle as a radical leftist.”⁸² Defining Clavelle as an extremist was not a simple task for the Douglas campaign, however; according to

⁷⁹ Associated Press, “WCAX.”

⁸⁰ Kalil, “Weighing.”

⁸¹ Sarah Schweitzer, “Vermont Slugfest: Mirroring National Politics, Two Candidates for Governor Battle for the Middle Ground,” *Boston Globe*, August 19, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=459d2ba1b96e32608284dd690de4a7d0&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlbzSkVb&_md5=2b6a6fac3f52649922d8b44e185f8113. [Hereafter cited as Schweitzer, “Slugfest.”]

⁸² *Ibid.*

Professor Davis, “[Clavelle’s] on the left, but clearly not radical.”⁸³ Still, Clavelle unnerved many of the moderate Democrats and Independents who might otherwise have opposed a Republican gubernatorial candidate, particularly when roused by anti-Bush sentiments. Professor Grover observed,

I think that many people saw him as a charlatan for leaving the Progressive Party.... Many Democrats never believed that he was a Democrat, and I kind of don’t blame them.... He did appear more moderate, he did run as a Democrat, kind of a liberal Democrat, a lefty Democrat. But I don’t think that helped him.⁸⁴

Indeed, divisions were much stronger among Democrats than Republicans in the election. One-third of identified Democrats said they voted for Douglas, whereas less than one-tenth of identified Republicans supported Clavelle.⁸⁵

The Gubernatorial Election Takes Shape

The early stages of the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election revealed the issues and strategies that the two campaigns hoped would lead them to victory. Governor Douglas focused mainly on his first-term record, while Peter Clavelle highlighted his universal health care plan and Douglas’ support of President Bush and the Iraq war. This section analyzes the candidates’ campaign announcements, early advertisements, and early tours, in order to assess their intentions and successes in defining the gubernatorial election.

February 2004: Clavelle Enters the Gubernatorial Race

On February 6, 2004, Peter Clavelle officially announced that he would seek the Democratic Party’s nomination for governor of Vermont. Clavelle began by emphasizing

⁸³ Davis, *op cit.*, December 6, 2005.

⁸⁴ Grover, *op cit.*

⁸⁵ Gram, “Anger.”

his accomplishments as mayor of Burlington, namely waterfront revitalization, affordable housing, and energy conservation efforts. He said, “What I have done in my thirty years of public service is committed myself to building stronger communities, stronger communities where everyone has the chance to build a better life for them and their families.”⁸⁶ Among the issues highlighted for the gubernatorial campaign were health care, energy, education, and economic development. Clavelle linked Douglas to the Republican presidential ticket when discussing the Governor’s energy policy, speculating that it “may have been written by Dick Cheney and his cronies.”⁸⁷ Clavelle twice referred to President Bush and Vice President Cheney disapprovingly during his opening speech, receiving loud reactions from the crowd both times.

Clavelle’s announcement for the gubernatorial race was first among Democrats. Senate President Peter Shumlin had considered entering, but immediately after Clavelle’s announcement he declared that he would not seek his party’s nomination. Subsequently, no Democrats challenged Clavelle in the party primary. It is likely that Democrats were reluctant to challenge Governor Douglas because they did not believe that he could be defeated. In addition to the previously cited polling that showed Douglas’ high job performance and favorability ratings, a late April 2004 poll conducted by Research 2000 had Douglas beating Clavelle in a head-to-head race, 48% to 34%.⁸⁸ Campaign insiders believed from the beginning that Douglas was bound for reelection; according to Lunderville, “Our polls never showed that race close. I’m sure [the Clavelle campaign’s]

⁸⁶ Tim McCahill, “Clavelle Kicks Off Campaign for Governor,” Associated Press, February 7, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=3e358e9b4c35c9704f79e85886642f23&_docnum=66&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=8f16ada36a417ce5d3432957f0214c94.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Associated Press, “WCAX.”

polls never showed that race close.”⁸⁹ Barnett said that the question in the campaign was never whether Clavelle could defeat Douglas, but “is there anything [Clavelle] could have done to close that margin up, make it a more competitive race?”⁹⁰

June 2004: Governor Douglas Announces He Will Seek Reelection

Months after Clavelle began his gubernatorial campaign, on June 28, 2004, Governor Douglas officially announced that he would seek reelection in November. Indicating the strategy that would define his campaign, Douglas focused on his first-term record as governor, particularly in terms of economic growth. To highlight this theme, Douglas’ announcement was held at SBE, Inc., an electronics manufacturer in Barre, Vermont, that had doubled its workforce since the beginning of Douglas’ governorship. Douglas boasted, “SBE electronics is an example of success because of the policies we put in place over the last seventeen months.”⁹¹ SBE Sales Manager Stuart Deliduka supported this claim, asserting “It is not coincidental that SBE has seen dramatic growth... at the same time Jim Douglas has been governor.... Jim equals jobs!”⁹²

Douglas went on to discuss his record of attempting major reforms of Acts 250 and 60, increasing drug trafficking prosecutions, and procuring agricultural benefits. Somewhat surprisingly, he also highlighted party differences when criticizing Democrats in the state legislature for rejecting his proposed health care reforms. “I know the voters will remember that we had the opportunity to make these reforms, but Senate Democrats

⁸⁹ Lunderville, *op cit.*

⁹⁰ Barnett, *op cit.*

⁹¹ Sneyd, “Vermont Governor Announces for Reelection,” Associated Press, June 29, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=fc3f7636b1e3c2f4c035069b5694d445&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=9c1dbd80391f7caf0120f9b7beeabff6.

⁹² *Ibid.*

blocked our efforts,” remarked Douglas. “They offered no alternative, and no regret, just obstruction and an unbending adherence to hand-me-down ideas.”⁹³ This provocative jab at Democrats showed them that Douglas was not about to cede health care reform to his opponent, although Clavelle planned on making it his central campaign issue.

Health Care Emerges as a Central Issue in the Gubernatorial Campaign

For most of the gubernatorial campaign, Clavelle attempted to overcome Governor Douglas’ popularity by focusing narrowly on providing Vermonters with universal healthcare. Douglas’ plan for health care reform was a rather conventional, market-based approach. His primary objective was to heighten competition by attracting private insurers to Vermont. Douglas claimed that competition would lead to lower insurance premiums and reductions in the Medicaid rolls as private coverage became more affordable for Vermonters. His plan stressed faith in the capability of the free market. He said, “I’m not in favor of a large, government-run, taxpayer-funded program. I believe the private sector can and will play a key role.”⁹⁴ Douglas also advocated health savings accounts, initiatives to address chronic illness, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, particularly among children. As the emphasis on children’s health indicated, Douglas’ plan focused on the long-term health care picture. “While Vermonters need temporary relief from health care costs,” he explained, “the only real long-term solution is to make sure people are taking care of themselves. Costs won’t shrink until people start taking better care of themselves.”⁹⁵ Many agreed with the long-term perspective of his

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Sneyd, “Newsmaker.”

⁹⁵ Associated Press, “Bennington.”

approach; the *Bennington Banner*, for one, said Douglas' plan provided the best hope for decreasing health care costs in the long term.

Clavelle dismissed Governor Douglas' health care plan as timid, unimaginative, and overly reliant on the free market. He cited it as evidence of Douglas' alliance with national Republicans, claiming his opponent "supports the standard GOP position that the public sector should not be involved in solving the health care problem."⁹⁶ In contrast, Clavelle proposed "Vermonters First," a state-run program requiring all Vermonters to possess health insurance. According to Clavelle, the elimination of insurance premiums would yield \$90 million to provide coverage for the poor. After controlling administrative costs, importing prescription drugs from Canada, and allowing small businesses to provide their own insurance, Clavelle would use the money saved from these adjustments to provide health insurance for low- to moderate-income Vermonters. The plan was intended as something more than a pragmatic solution to a Vermont problem, it was to be a national model for revolutionizing the health care system. "I believe Vermont can lead the country," Clavelle declared proudly. "We can provide health care to all citizens at a price they can afford."⁹⁷

The Douglas campaign tried aggressively to discredit Clavelle's Vermonters First program. Governor Douglas charged that a state-run health care program would be bureaucratic and unaffordable. His campaign also raised persistent questions about how Vermonters First would be funded. "That money is going to come from somewhere," said

⁹⁶ *Brattleboro Reformer*, "Rivers."

⁹⁷ Sneyd, "Voters Bombarded with Phone Calls, Mailings Amid Final Debates," Associated Press, October 31, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=5&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=9d890704eac26c9a4009062fbdeb433d.

Lunderville, skeptically. “It’s going to be a tax increase in the end.”⁹⁸ Indeed, the *Brattleboro Reformer*, in its endorsement of Clavelle, conceded that his health care plan might lead to additional taxes.⁹⁹ It is worth noting that even the Democratic leadership was not enthusiastic about Clavelle’s plan. After Douglas’ victory in November, the Democratic House majority leader declined to advance Clavelle’s health care proposals in the state legislature, although he was unsatisfied with Douglas’ plan as well.

Prominent Issues in the Gubernatorial Campaign

Education, energy policy, environment, taxes, and prescription drug reimportation emerged as other prominent issues in the gubernatorial campaign. Most of these issues followed a consistent pattern in which Governor Douglas touted his first-term record while Clavelle criticized it and accused him of being beholden to President Bush and national Republicans. For example, on education Douglas boasted about the passage of Act 68, which lowered tax rates in most Vermont communities while increasing them in towns and cities with greater property wealth. These costs were covered by raising the sales tax one percent, thereby helping to wean the state off its reliance on property taxes for revenue, according to Douglas. Douglas claimed that 83% of school districts saw a reduction in their tax rates as a result of this measure.¹⁰⁰ Clavelle’s criticisms focused on

⁹⁸ Gram, “Clavelle Proposes Universal Health Plan,” Associated Press, September 15, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=71caf23546f3fe86748a540a692ec050&_docnum=38&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=e44c82e9dcc033e2e49591ba177cca62.

⁹⁹ *Brattleboro Reformer*, “Rivers.”

¹⁰⁰ Sneyd, “Newsmaker.”

issues of national prominence. He attacked Douglas for not opposing the federal No Child Left Behind Act, over which other states had initiated lawsuits. Clavelle also claimed that Douglas' "support of unfettered school choice would threaten small schools and widen the educational gaps between those Vermonters with ample financial resources and those struggling to make ends meet."¹⁰¹

In terms of energy policy, Governor Douglas' stated goal was to "promote development and use of renewable energy by facilitating collaboration and market-based incentives that encourage employees and residents to install these alternatives."¹⁰² To that end he noted that his administration had provided \$1 million to 200 renewable energy systems in Vermont.¹⁰³ Clavelle condemned Douglas' energy policy as ineffective, often repeating the suggestion that Vice President Cheney and national oil magnates had written it. For his part, Clavelle recommended that Vermont acquire and operate hydroelectric facilities in the state to provide cheaper, cleaner sources of energy.

The environment is always an issue of great importance in Vermont. Conscious of the strong displeasure with President Bush's environmental policy, even among state Republicans, the Douglas campaign often touted a lawsuit the state had filed against the Bush Administration to address pollution from coal-fired power plants in the Midwestern United States. Governor Douglas also frequently pointed to efforts to reduce phosphorus levels in Lake Champlain, whereas Clavelle advocated total removal of phosphorus from

¹⁰¹ Sneyd, "Clavelle Lays Out Agenda; Complains Lack of Debates," Associated Press, September 8, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=71caf23546f3fe86748a540a692ec050&_docnum=40&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=4ae00dfb3bc77b66f64c0024a53e2382.

¹⁰² Barone and Cohen, *op cit.*, p. 1692.

¹⁰³ Sneyd, "Douglas Touts Energy Program – Maybe Too Much," Associated Press, September 24, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=a81a8b75fed87fa1adac3363204be7dc&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=59b7fcf2ecccc3790b775bcbd0bdd478.

the lake. Clavelle claimed that Douglas lacked a clear long-term vision for Vermont's environmental status. Clavelle also alleged that Douglas' attachment to business interests obstructed his commitment to environmental safety.

On tax policy, Clavelle proposed using more taxes to fund education by lowering property taxes and relying more on income taxes. Governor Douglas claimed that Clavelle's plans would lead to significant tax increases. "To pay for all public education with the income tax would require a tripling of the income tax rates that you now pay," Douglas said at an election debate.¹⁰⁴ Acknowledging the fact that Act 68 raised the sales tax, Douglas compared his one tax hike to the forty such proposals he claimed that Clavelle had made. "I think forty [tax increase proposals] versus one is a major message that the people of Vermont will weigh when they decide who's best prepared to provide fiscal leadership and responsibility to the state over the next two years," Douglas contended.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, anticipating the election contest ahead, Douglas had made tax cuts the focus of his second State of the State address, in January 2004. In his speech, Douglas proposed substantial personal and corporate income tax reductions and advocated the elimination of tax loopholes and exemptions to help balance the state budget.

Prescription drug reimportation was another prominent topic in the campaign. In August 2004 the federal Food and Drug Administration denied authorization for the reimportation of prescription drugs to the United States from Canada, and Vermont became the first state to sue the federal government over this ruling. Governor Douglas

¹⁰⁴ Sneyd, "Two-Man Gubernatorial Race Shifts Dynamic for Candidates, Voters," Associated Press, October 11, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=15&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=0a3e12a5248a5a02a4b294e9f7aa9184.

¹⁰⁵ Sneyd, "Newsmaker."

used this lawsuit prominently as evidence that he was willing to oppose the Bush Administration when it served Vermont's interests. Clavelle rebutted this claim on the grounds that Douglas was too cautious in opposing the federal policy. Clavelle cited a program he had started in Burlington, whereby city employees and families could buy prescription drugs from Canadian pharmacies. During the campaign, Clavelle even posted a link on his website to this service so that all Vermonters could obtain prescription drugs from Canada. He believed that the governor should pursue such methods to ensure affordable prescription drugs for Vermonters, regardless of federal policy.

Early Campaign Advertisements

Early campaign advertisements help to identify the campaign strategies being used by both sides to draw voters' attention and define the election. Early advertisements in the Douglas-Clavelle race were designed to weaken the opponent through negative attacks. In late July, Clavelle released the first television ad of the campaign, focusing on prescription drugs and Governor Douglas' ties to President Bush. In the ad, Clavelle lamented that "Jim" was "dragging his feet, preventing Vermont from buying safe, lower-cost prescription drugs from Canada, waiting until George Bush says it's okay." As Clavelle concluded, "We don't need to wait around for Jim and George," the camera

zoomed in on a car with two bumper stickers, one for Douglas and the other for Bush-Cheney.¹⁰⁶

Within days of the Clavelle ad's airing, the Douglas campaign released an Internet ad targeting Clavelle's tax policies. In the ad, a driver pulls his car up to "Clavelle's Restaurant," hoping to order fast food. To his surprise, he is instead bombarded by a list of tax increases made or considered by Clavelle as mayor of Burlington, including property, small business, and gasoline taxes. Finally, the customer drives away disgustedly, to the jingle: "Higher taxes at Pete Clavelle's!"¹⁰⁷ The Douglas campaign e-mailed the ad, which it claimed to be the first Internet ad in Vermont's political history, to its supporters and made it available on its campaign website.

Early Campaign Tours

While Clavelle began his campaign tours early to overcome his lack of statewide familiarity, Governor Douglas began campaigning aggressively in August 2004. That month his campaign began airing television advertisements statewide, focusing on his first-term accomplishments and second-term goals. The advertisements were designed to coincide with his statewide "Promise of Vermont" tour, which visited fifty communities and each county. The tour allowed Douglas to promote his administration's record on job growth, education spending, tax cuts, health care, illegal drug prosecution, environmental protection, and farming benefits. The confident, optimistic tenor of the tour was captured

¹⁰⁶ McCahill, "Governor Launches Internet Ad Criticizing Clavelle on Taxes," Associated Press, July 27, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=3e358e9b4c35c9704f79e85886642f23&_docnum=53&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=99c03aa52bd2c0975f8da0f3cd66e12e.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

in its slogan: “We have. We can. We will.” The contrast to Clavelle’s campaigning struck many observers. According to Associated Press reporter Ross Sneyd,

The launch of Douglas’ campaign illustrated the very different approaches the two men [Douglas and Clavelle] are taking. Douglas spends his time talking about a long list of accomplishments from his first two years in office, listing additional challenges the state faces and promising to tackle them if re-elected... Unlike Douglas, though, [Clavelle] focused on a single issue in [his recent] tour, talking about the shortcomings in the state’s health care system, especially the lack of affordable, prescription drugs.¹⁰⁸

The Clavelle campaign was defensive about the perception that it was running on a single issue. Spokesman B.J. Rogers said, “It’s not that we’ve only been talking about health care,” stressing Clavelle’s discussion of energy, environment, farming, and education policies. Yet Sneyd maintained, “Up to now, voters primarily have heard from Clavelle on two topics... escalating health care costs and [Douglas’] ties to President Bush.”¹⁰⁹ As the campaign progressed, the latter assumed a more prominent role.

National Politics Gain Prominence in the Late Campaign Period

As the gubernatorial campaign entered its later phases, the issues turned increasingly toward national politics. Clavelle had discussed the links between Governor Douglas and the Bush Administration through the early part of the campaign, but as his universal health care plan failed to generate momentum, Clavelle began relying on the Bush-Douglas connection to rescue his candidacy. The evidence suggests that Clavelle was largely unsuccessful in establishing a meaningful connection between the Republican gubernatorial and presidential candidates, in voters’ minds. This failure must be understood in part as a product of the Douglas campaign’s successful counterstrategies.

¹⁰⁸ Sneyd, “Douglas Begins Tour; Clavelle Focuses on Bush, Health Care,” Associated Press, August 9, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=71caf23546f3fe86748a540a692ec050&_docnum=49&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=14b90612f5ed5a14cca08966c36661b7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Clavelle's Attempts to Tie Governor Douglas to President Bush

The Clavelle campaign believed that President Bush's unpopularity in Vermont could damage Governor Douglas' popularity, if the two were effectively linked in the public's perception. Indeed, Sneyd wrote, "A major part of Clavelle's campaign strategy is built on the assumption that the president is among the most unpopular figures in the state."¹¹⁰ Convinced that the strategy of invoking national politics in a state election would influence the campaign in his favor, Clavelle began "speaking of the two [Bush and Douglas] whenever possible."¹¹¹ His campaign produced and distributed bumper stickers reading "Jim = George," and in late August the Clavelle campaign released an Internet advertisement attacking Douglas' chairmanship of the Vermont Bush-Cheney campaign. In the ad, a photo of Douglas is superimposed on a cartoon character dressed in a business suit covered by chaps and donning a cowboy hat. In a thick Texas accent, Douglas' character drawls, "I'm the head honcho of the Bush-Cheney campaign. Don't you all go telling Vermonters, now."¹¹² The ad goes on to list Bush Administration policies against which it contends that Douglas should have voiced opposition, including Medicare reforms, which allegedly cost 13,000 Vermonters their state pharmaceutical assistance; prescription drug reimportation, which he should have opposed beyond the

¹¹⁰ Sneyd, "Clavelle Steps Up Criticism of Douglas Ties to Bush," Associated Press, October 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=11&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=bc7c5e618b6c5316f1141865aeffa2e9. [Hereafter cited as Sneyd, "Criticism."] Barnett made the interesting point that Bush was actually polling higher in Vermont than Clavelle during the campaign, and finished with a higher percentage of the vote.

¹¹¹ Schweitzer, "Slugfest."

¹¹² Sneyd, "Democrats Post Internet Ad Criticizing Douglas' Link to Bush," Associated Press, September 2, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=1e1fd0c4982b70d16d6bcb7706553ed0&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=bf5ac6a5ed60efdad9a4202c6592465c. [Hereafter cited as Sneyd, "Post."]

state lawsuit; the Bush tax cuts, which allegedly cost Vermont \$92 million otherwise destined for education, housing, and environment funding. In fact, throughout the campaign, Clavelle chastised Douglas for failing to oppose a number of federal policies, including the three mentioned above, the Iraq war, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Bush Administration's environmental policy in general. At one debate, Clavelle demanded in vain that Douglas resign as the Vermont Bush-Cheney campaign chairman in order to express his opposition to federal environmental policies.

The Douglas campaign countered Clavelle's efforts to link Governor Douglas with President Bush by emphasizing the Republicans' differences and questioning the relevance of national politics to a gubernatorial campaign. Douglas distinguished himself from Bush and other Republicans, arguing "No two people agree with their political colleagues or spouses all the time. The Republican Party is bigger than any one individual and I look forward to continuing to play a role in it."¹¹³ Lunderville dismissed national political discussions as a distraction from state issues that a governor can affect. He said, "I don't think Vermonters like these playground tactics of who's friends with whom. Vermonters are looking for a leader who will create jobs, bring about real health care reforms, bring down taxes and combat illegal drugs."¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that in responding to criticisms of Douglas for being too close to Bush, Douglas and his campaign did not attempt to defend Bush and his policies. Instead they dismissed discussions of national issues as irrelevant. Since they were unlikely to redeem Bush in the opinion of most Vermonters, it was probably the best decision to challenge anti-Bush

¹¹³ Sneyd, "Newsmaker."

¹¹⁴ Sneyd, "Post."

criticisms on the basis of their relevance to the gubernatorial campaign rather than debating the merits of Bush's policies.

The Douglas campaign found it necessary to distance itself from President Bush on only one issue. In Spring 2004, the campaign conducted polls to determine whether Bush's unpopularity among Vermonters in any policy areas impacted Governor Douglas' popularity in the state. It found this to be the case only in terms of environmental policy. Accordingly, Douglas and his campaign made deliberate efforts to inoculate him against negative associations with Bush Administration environmental policy, particularly by highlighting Vermont's lawsuit against the federal government over Midwest coal pollution. On the campaign trail, Douglas boasted of his administration, "We protected our environment and backed legal action against the Bush Administration when they wouldn't protect our air and water."¹¹⁵ One of Douglas' earliest advertisements focused on this lawsuit. Hence, the Douglas campaign clearly recognized the potential negative effects of association with an unpopular president, but it did not condemn Bush or attempt to divorce Douglas from support for Bush and his policies, in most cases. In terms of putting distance between the Republican gubernatorial and presidential candidates, Lunderville said, "We might have been putting yards, but where the conventional wisdom would say put football fields in-between you and the unpopular candidate."¹¹⁶

The Douglas Campaign's Strategy to Discredit Clavelle

¹¹⁵ Sneyd, "Douglas Begins Airing Radio Ads to Complement Statewide Tour," Associated Press, August 10, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=313f65624cc92f84a579053fce7732d2&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=baf49046f302c77e0eef446ee810d561.

¹¹⁶ Lunderville, *op cit*.

Cognizant that Governor Douglas' reputation as a moderate Republican was key to his electoral success, a major aspect of the Douglas campaign strategy was to discredit his opponent as an ideological extremist. In early August 2004, the Douglas campaign released news accounts of Clavelle's participation in a 1989 march commemorating the tenth anniversary of the overthrow of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza by Daniel Ortega's communist Sandinistas. "This is clearly a reflection of [Clavelle's] ideological commitments," Barnett commented at the time. "He's not moderate.... Make no mistake: Peter Clavelle is trying to portray himself as something very different than he is. He's a left-wing extremist."¹¹⁷ He went on to justify the story's release as an appropriate response to Clavelle's injection of national politics into the gubernatorial race.

From day one, Peter Clavelle has engineered a negative campaign based on political affiliations.... If that's the campaign he wants to run, then it's only fair that he should have to account for his own highly objectionable affiliations that show him to be out of the mainstream of Vermont for Republicans and Democrats alike.¹¹⁸

The Douglas campaign was sharply criticized among Vermont media for using the story to discredit Clavelle, and Douglas quickly backed off of the tactic, claiming that he had not officially "signed off" on it. He also reiterated his intention to run on his first-term record. Observers cited this episode as evidence of state party organizations' usefulness in communicating their candidates' messages. "That's smart," said Professor Grover. "Your attack dog is the guy who's not going to be elected, which is Barnett."¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁷ "Republicans Criticize Clavelle for Stand on Sandinistas," Associated Press, August 4, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=09bbf356cd2a5454a61b89ffe52b6c40&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=65da91eb53236f123913b28d0698ab9c.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Grover, *op cit.*

advantage of having state political parties and their operatives involved in the campaign, Barnett echoed, is that there are

things that we're able to do because we're not the candidate. We're able to push messages that the candidate might otherwise be uncomfortable doing personally, but that are important to help educate the voters with regard to your opponent's own record. So candidates like to stay above the fray and take the high ground, and political parties can sometimes be useful in delivering a message of contrast with the opponent.¹²⁰

Releasing the Sandinista story might be seen as a dangerous move on the part of the Douglas campaign, inviting a battle over candidate ideology that would seem to favor liberal Clavelle among Vermonters. It also distracted from Governor Douglas' otherwise steady focus on pragmatic governance. Yet the strategy was useful, according to several campaign participants and observers. They said it helped to discredit Clavelle among moderate Democrats and Independents who might have preferred a candidate whom they perceived to be a moderate Republican to a liberal radical. Professor Grover described the release of the Sandinista story as a "dirty... but brilliant" tactic by the Douglas campaign. He explained, "The target audience for a statement like that is probably going to be uncertain Democrats who wonder whether Clavelle is the real McCoy or not...."

¹²⁰ Barnett, *op cit.*

[A] statement like that... stoke[s] the fires of doubt among potential Clavelle supporters.”¹²¹ Barnett affirmed this assessment, noting:

Even in the Democratic Party there were divisions over whether or not Clavelle was a real Democrat or he was too far left, and things like his marching with pro-Communist Sandinistas is a message that, even though the press did not receive it well, I think there were plenty of Vermonters [for whom] it solidified in their minds that this guy is not a mainstream politician.¹²²

Barnett conceded that ideological battles were risky for the Douglas campaign, but he maintained that exploiting an opponent’s vulnerabilities, ideological or otherwise, is “just pragmatic politics.”¹²³ The strategy had its limits, though. Lunderville cautioned that ideology was never meant by the Douglas campaign to be its centerpiece and should only be discussed to a limited extent by a candidate in Douglas’ partisan circumstances.

In late September, the Douglas campaign made perhaps its most effective move to discredit Clavelle when it released a television commercial focusing on his universal health care plan. The ad was a sixty-second excerpt from Clavelle’s September 15, 2004, press conference introducing his Vermonters First program. He struggled to clearly explain his program at that press conference, often stuttering and fumbling for words. In the third week of September, the Douglas campaign released its ad. After witnessing its initial effectiveness, the campaign pulled all other ads to run the health care spot exclusively. Barnett and Lunderville cited the release of this advertisement as the strategic maneuver that finished the Clavelle campaign. According to Lunderville, after

¹²¹ Grover, *op cit.*

¹²² Barnett, *op cit.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

assuming the campaign chairmanship in June he received at least one phone call from media representatives every day, except on holidays, to discuss the campaign. After running the health care ad, he claimed that he received no more than three phone calls from media representatives until Election Day. “Suddenly, the environment changed,” Lunderville recalled, “everybody was like ‘The bubble’s burst, there’s really no race here.... The ad had eviscerated the opponent, there’s really no chance for recovery.’”¹²⁴

Barnett believed that the health care ad was effective because it convinced voters with reservations about Governor Douglas that his opponent was nonetheless unqualified to take over as governor. “[Clavelle] was not perceived to be an articulate or even particularly competent manager once Vermonters got a look at his performance during that particular press conference that we put on the air.... [Voters] didn’t view him as a compelling alternative,” Barnett explained.¹²⁵ The ad’s release marked the turning point in a campaign that Clavelle had previously waged mainly on health care. “[The Clavelle campaign] had a winning issue in health care,” according to Lunderville.

Health care really was the number one issue in the campaign – they *made* it the number one issue in the campaign. They did a good job with that.... [But] because [Clavelle] couldn’t explain his own healthcare plan, he stopped talking about the only issue where he was doing better than the Governor, and started talking about an issue that was completely disconnected from the governor’s race, which was the Iraq war.¹²⁶

Clavelle Focuses Narrowly on the Iraq War in the Campaign’s Last Month

After failing to gain traction against Governor Douglas over health care and other issues contested during the campaign, Clavelle focused almost exclusively in the last month on Douglas’ unwillingness to oppose the Iraq war. Although governors do not

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Barnett, *op cit.*

¹²⁶ Lunderville, *op cit.*

make foreign policy or declare or execute war, Clavelle argued that governors' alignment with their constituents on major issues such as war were symbolically important. "I think you have a rightful expectation that a chief elected official of the state of Vermont on this critical issue of war will be with the people of the state of Vermont, not blindly following the Bush Administration," Clavelle declaimed.¹²⁷ He contended that the Iraq war was relevant to the governor's race because 1,100 to 1,200 Vermont National Guardsmen were placed on alert and, according to the Massachusetts-based think tank National Priorities Project, the war had cost Vermont \$23 million that otherwise would have been available to spend on health care, housing, and education.

Governor Douglas rejected Clavelle's invocation of the Iraq war in the gubernatorial election. During a radio debate, he responded to Clavelle's arguments, with "an edge of anger in his voice," saying "What I hear Vermonters want us to talk about is what we can do, what things the governor of the state can do.... That's what I'm talking about; that's not what you're talking about, Pete. You don't have anything to offer." Lunderville amplified Douglas' objection, telling media, "It seems that Peter Clavelle has abandoned his race for governor and is now focusing solely on national policy and national politics. It's a last-ditch strategic move to turn the debate off of the issues that a governor can affect right here in Vermont."¹²⁸ Perhaps Clavelle pressed the Iraq war hoping that Douglas would run afoul of Vermonters with a vigorous defense of the President and the war. Douglas and his campaign, however, continued to respond by dismissing discussions of national politics as irrelevant, while they remained focused on

¹²⁷ Sneyd, "Criticism."

¹²⁸ Kalil, "Clavelle Slams Douglas Over Iraq War," *Brattleboro Reformer*, October 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b035ceff00388a7c1632a927a98dcb33&_docnum=22&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=6f105d4834b49f569a6d5d5acc6a4bf8.

state issues. This is one instance in which different gubernatorial campaign strategies, demonstrating less focus and restraint, might have jeopardized Douglas' candidacy.

Assessing the Relevance of the 2004 Presidential Election to the Vermont Gubernatorial Election

On November 2, 2004, Governor Douglas was reelected over Peter Clavelle by a landslide margin of 59% to 38%. Analysis of polling and election data provide a fascinating opportunity to evaluate the impact of the presidential election on the simultaneous Vermont gubernatorial election. Certainly, if presidential politics had the capacity to influence any gubernatorial election, this was the one; Vermonters turned out in record numbers to support Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry by a 20-point landslide, and Peter Clavelle made Douglas' support of President Bush and the Iraq war one of the central issues of the campaign, particularly in its last month. Yet data and observations suggest that the 2004 presidential election did not significantly influence voters' decisions in that year's Vermont gubernatorial election, although it clearly had an impact on mobilizing voters.

Data Suggest that the 2004 Presidential Election Did Not Significantly Influence the Vermont Gubernatorial Election

A Research 2000 poll conducted from October 10-12, 2004, found 51% of likely voters supporting Governor Douglas in the gubernatorial race and 37% supporting Peter Clavelle.¹²⁹ It was precisely around these dates, and particularly in the following week, that Clavelle shifted his campaign focus from health care and other state issues to the Iraq

¹²⁹ "WCAX Poll: Douglas Leads Clavelle," Associated Press, October 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=12&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=95547bff9de937aa1fd937a6b843d6f9.

war. If national issues had potency, data should have indicated a movement toward Clavelle over the last month of the campaign, since he was running in a state where the war was extremely unpopular. Instead, Clavelle gained only one percentage point by the November 2nd election over the October poll, whereas Douglas gained eight. Moreover, the same October poll had Senator Kerry leading President Bush 53% to 40% in Vermont, but Kerry gained six points over the next month and Bush lost one. Voters did not move consistently toward Republican or Democratic candidates, or toward challengers or incumbents. These facts demonstrate that Vermont voters distinguished among elections and candidates, thereby discounting categorical coattail explanations of the gubernatorial election and defying the expectations of the Clavelle campaign. Despite the Clavelle campaign's attempts to tie Douglas to Bush and the Iraq war, four in ten Vermont voters supported Douglas at the same time that they supported Kerry, and one-quarter of voters identifying themselves as "strongly opposed" to the Iraq war supported Douglas.¹³⁰

Campaign Observers and Participants Suggest that the 2004 Presidential Election Did Not Significantly Influence the Vermont Gubernatorial Election

At the outset of the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial race, the Douglas campaign conducted a poll to test whether Governor Douglas' relationship with President Bush made respondents more or less likely to vote for the former. According to Lunderville,

¹³⁰ "Terrorism Versus Iraq, and Other Fault Lines," Associated Press, November 2, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e8401a57176f8eca343e8c0c46d63f08&_docnum=3&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=ebe88168c2592792f3d3ce6ba598eaal.

the poll indicated “It really had no effect.”¹³¹ The subsequent campaign reinforced this finding. “The strategy of tying a gubernatorial race to a presidential campaign didn’t fly,” said Professor Davis. “Vermont voters realize that the state government does not make decisions affecting foreign policy, the federal deficit, and other national issues.”¹³² Lunderville echoed Professor Davis’ sentiments, stressing the voters’ ability to distinguish between state and national issues and offices. “Don’t underestimate the voter,” Lunderville warned.

Voters understand the governor cannot call the troops back [from war]. Voters understand the governor can wear a black armband around the state house but that is not going to effectively change what the president’s doing on the Iraq war, it doesn’t matter. People want to know, how are you going to fix health care? How are you going to lower my property taxes? They don’t want to know what you’re going to do to protest the Iraq war.¹³³

Douglas acknowledged that gubernatorial involvement in national decisions was sometimes warranted when it affected his state, but not in all cases.

If [an issue] affects Vermont I’d certainly speak up, like the budget priorities in Washington or other decisions that have a direct impact on what we do here. But just this whole notion of, ‘The governor’s got to get us out of Iraq,’ or ‘The governor’s got to do something that’s clearly in the national or international arena,’ voters just don’t buy that.¹³⁴

In some ways the presidential race indeed seemed to impact the gubernatorial race. Some voters explained their vote for Clavelle in terms of opposition to President Bush and national Republicans. For example, David Worthley, of Waitsfield, said he was voting for Kerry and Clavelle because “I think we need change all over.” Greg Haynes,

¹³¹ Lunderville, *op cit.*

¹³² Davis, *op cit.*, December 8, 2005.

¹³³ Lunderville, *op cit.*

¹³⁴ Douglas, *op cit.*

of Duxbury, explained, “I am disillusioned and disappointed with Republicans.” As a result, he said he would be voting the straight Democratic ticket.¹³⁵ Moreover, state Democratic officials used voter enthusiasm for Kerry’s candidacy to highlight other Democratic candidacies. Democratic spokesman Mark Michaud recalled supporters visiting party headquarters to pick up a Kerry lawn sign, only to leave with several other Democratic candidates’ lawn signs as well. “We’ve been able to generate a lot of volunteer energy from a lot of people,” he said.¹³⁶ Yet this enthusiasm for Kerry’s candidacy and antipathy towards Bush’s was not reflected in the results of the gubernatorial election.

The Presidential Election’s Effect on Turnout

How is a presidential election supposed to impact a simultaneous gubernatorial election? Typically, its impact is discussed in terms of prejudicing voters for or against a gubernatorial candidate based on whether he shares the political affiliation of their preferred presidential candidate.¹³⁷ Barnett believed this was the Clavelle strategy, to persuade anti-Bush moderate Democrats and Independents that Governor Douglas was very closely aligned with Bush and therefore

¹³⁵ Schweitzer, “Slugfest.”

¹³⁶ Sneyd, “Vermont Activists Volunteer in New Hampshire, Leaving Ranks Thin at Home,” Associated Press, October 29, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=049f91107f0cad4fe696662d83535ad&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=ab418130206477524f4507b1e696ddc8.

¹³⁷ One example is Key’s comment cited in Chapter II, under “Scholars Begin to Recognize the Potential Significance of Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections in the 1950s and 1960s.”

undeserving of their votes. The Douglas campaign, for the most part, was unconcerned that this strategy would work; instead, said Barnett,

Our concern was that with the presidential race, not that voters would necessarily associate Douglas with Bush, per the Clavelle strategy, but that turnout may be so high among Democrats, partisan Democrats eager to vote Bush out, that that could have the effect of swallowing the governor's campaign as well. So it wouldn't be that middle-of-the-road voters were being convinced that Jim Douglas was George Bush incarnate, but rather that heavy turnout amongst extreme partisans would engulf the governor's campaign, to a degree.¹³⁸

Yet even with record turnout in the state and a groundswell of support for Kerry's candidacy, turnout driven by the presidential election did not have the effect of "swallowing" the gubernatorial election.¹³⁹

Why Did Vermont Voters Reelect Governor Douglas?

The above analysis provides the basis for determining the primary factors for Governor Douglas' overwhelming reelection at the same time that his party's presidential candidate lost in Vermont by a landslide defeat. Many theories already exist as to the primary, or even the exclusive, explanation for Douglas' victory, namely voter independence, candidate organization, and incumbency. While these factors appear to have played important roles in Douglas' reelection, they cannot provide a comprehensive explanation for it.

Voter Independence

Vermont had perhaps the most independent electorate in the United States at the time of Governor Douglas' reelection. Though justly regarded as a politically liberal state, it was certainly not beholden to the Democratic Party. Indeed, it was served by the

¹³⁸ Barnett, *op cit.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

only two Independents in the U.S. Congress, Senator Jim Jeffords and Representative Bernie Sanders. Vermont also elected Republicans to three of its six statewide offices. To some observers, Vermont's independent voting habits were indicative of a preference for divided government; Professor Davis attributed Douglas' reelection to this. Douglas suggested that Vermonters' independent voting habits were linked to its history of independent attitudes, going back to its fourteen-year existence as an independent republic before joining the United States after the Revolutionary War. He also noted that many Vermonters historically had lived in the relative seclusion of countryside, hillsides, and farms, so that they had been independent in many of their habits.¹⁴⁰ His is an inadequate explanation, though, since the most politically influential Vermonters in 2004 were the left-leaning immigrants who typically did not share the history he described.

Candidate Organization

Vermont's party system is notoriously weak. Party staffs are small, only 1,000 signatures are required for candidates to get on state ballots, and there is no party registration, meaning voters can participate in whatever party primary they prefer. Consequently, "Candidate organizations are more important than party organizations," said Professor Davis.¹⁴¹ Professor Nelson, who has written extensively on the subject of personal political followings in Vermont, described the state Republican Party as "far better organized" and "coherent" in its messages than the state Democratic Party, yet still weaker and less financially reliable than other states' parties. This weakness is largely attributable to Vermont's stringent campaign finance laws. By 2004, Governor Douglas

¹⁴⁰ Douglas, *op cit.*

¹⁴¹ Davis, *op cit.*, December 8, 2005.

had built a strong political following based largely on his moderate image, familiarity with voters, and personal likeability. His entrenched position in Vermont politics presented Clavelle with a substantial challenge as he attempted to change Vermonters' minds about Douglas and cut into his high approval ratings. Barnett argued,

The bottom line is, it's very difficult to demonize someone whose constituents know him so well. So when you run into a situation like we had here with an unpopular president, it's a natural strategy for Democrats to link a Republican candidate to that unpopular figure, but because of Governor Douglas' long history here and his familiarity to the people, that was exceedingly difficult for them to do and it ultimately failed badly.¹⁴²

Perhaps if Clavelle had established a loyal statewide following prior to the gubernatorial election he could have more seriously challenged Douglas.

Incumbency

Incumbency was certainly an important, and some believe *the* crucial, factor influencing Governor Douglas' reelection. Since the introduction of the two-year gubernatorial term in Vermont in 1870, only Governor Ray Keyser, Jr., in 1962, was defeated for reelection. The two-year term forces governors to campaign constantly, using their high profile to communicate achievements and goals. Douglas deliberately took advantage of this opportunity in the way he conducted his first term. Barnett said, "Governor Douglas is a firm believer that good policy makes good politics. [Campaign] strategy obviously plays an important role, but part of that strategy is to be a good governor. And that's first and foremost."¹⁴³ Observers and voters seem to have shared Douglas' opinion of his first-term record as a sound basis for reelection; newspapers endorsing his candidacy attributed their support primarily to his gubernatorial

¹⁴² Barnett, *op cit.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

performance, and three-quarters of voters who considered themselves “better off” than four years before voted for Douglas.¹⁴⁴

While incumbency undoubtedly was an important factor in the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election, there is a tendency to overstate its value so as to make Governor Douglas’ reelection appear to have been a *fait accompli*. The notion that Douglas’ incumbency was sufficient to explain his reelection does not withstand scrutiny. The power of incumbency in Vermont does not explain the fact that incumbent State Auditor Elizabeth Reedy was defeated for reelection on the same ballot in which Vermonters reelected Douglas. Moreover, the two-year term frequently cited to explain Vermont’s penchant for reelecting governors provided no protection for New Hampshire Republican Governor Craig Benson, who was defeated for reelection in 2004 by Democratic candidate John Lynch, after two years in the governorship. It is also counterintuitive to claim that Vermont’s electorate, the only one in the nation to elect Independent congressmen, would be so adverse to change and deferential to the political establishment as to return to office governors who would be unacceptable if not for their incumbent status.

Do These Factors Explain Governor Douglas’ Reelection?

Attributing Governor Douglas’ reelection to any of the above factors appears to be unwarranted. “It’s not just... that people think [Douglas] should have a four-year term versus a two-year term,” argued Lunderville. Moreover, because of his personal appeal, “Jim Douglas started from a higher platform than a no-name Republican would.... But that platform alone didn’t give him the margin of victory, it just enabled him to start from

¹⁴⁴ Gram, “Anger.”

a higher level.”¹⁴⁵ It is difficult to determine exactly what value these factors had in determining Douglas’ reelection. Certainly, each one was important and one may indeed have been decisive. There is no conclusive way to measure this. Given the facts that Douglas attracted near-majority support before the campaign even began, according to above cited job performance and favorability ratings, and his opponent was virtually unknown throughout much of Vermont, it appears that Douglas’ reelection was very likely from the outset. Yet did this make the gubernatorial campaign irrelevant?

The Role of Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies in Determining the 2004 Vermont Gubernatorial Election

The 2004 Vermont gubernatorial campaign does not appear to have been irrelevant. It was entirely possible, after all, for the Douglas campaign to misuse Governor Douglas’ electoral advantages; most observers believed that the Clavelle campaign squandered its advantages by inadequately discussing Clavelle’s mayoral record and de-emphasizing health care and other state issues in order to debate national politics. The Douglas campaign, on the other hand, presented what many regarded as an effective, coherent strategy essential to explaining Douglas’ reelection. The decisive break towards Douglas at the end of the campaign suggests that the election results were shaped well after the campaign began, thanks in large part to the Douglas campaign’s strategies.

Coordination Between the Douglas Campaign and the Vermont Republican Party

Governor Douglas had an effective, well-coordinated campaign operation. Heeding the widespread notion that Vermont party organizations are weak and less consequential than candidate organizations, the Douglas campaign essentially combined

¹⁴⁵ Lunderville, *op cit*.

the two into a single organization. The Douglas campaign operated out of the Vermont Republican Party headquarters, with Party Chairman Barnett and Campaign Chairman Lunderville sharing an office. According to Lunderville, “The Governor’s campaign and the party worked *very* closely together. They worked hand-in-glove through the 2004 campaign.”¹⁴⁶

Contributions of the Vermont Republican Party

Barnett described political parties as “serv[ing] a good complementary role for the candidate” in gubernatorial elections.¹⁴⁷ This was certainly the case with the Sandinista episode, when Barnett, who in an above quote cited the unique role of the state party in “push[ing] messages that the candidate might otherwise be uncomfortable doing personally,” took the lead in attacking Clavelle’s ideology. The integration of Douglas’ party and campaign organizations also alleviated significant financial burdens. In a state with some of the most stringent campaign finance laws in the nation, where candidates could receive no more than \$400 from any single source for each two-year election cycle, the Vermont Republican Party covered many of the Douglas campaign’s overhead expenses, including rent, supplies, and telephone services. Governor Douglas was also able to receive funds through the state party that could not be raised legally by his campaign.¹⁴⁸

The Douglas Campaign’s Monetary Advantage

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Barnett, *op cit.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The Douglas campaign's coordination helped give it a substantial monetary advantage over its opponent. Governor Douglas consistently topped Clavelle in campaign funds, and outspent him on advertisements. Entering the last week of the election, Douglas had \$83,115 on-hand, to Clavelle's \$60,935.¹⁴⁹ After the election, the Douglas campaign still held \$56,655 while the Clavelle campaign ended \$30,697 in debt.¹⁵⁰ The financial disparity between the campaigns was especially apparent in terms of advertising; two weeks before the election, the Douglas campaign had spent nearly \$200,000 on advertisements while the Clavelle campaign had spent only \$126,533.¹⁵¹ Clavelle's inability to spend \$20,000 to \$30,000 per week on advertisements, particularly as a relatively unknown challenger to a popular governor, made it very difficult to run a "credible campaign," according to Professor Davis.¹⁵² Professor Nelson described Clavelle's fundraising challenges as general to his party, rather than specific to Clavelle's campaign. He explained,

The Democratic Party organization in Vermont is extraordinarily weak and statewide candidates have generally ignored it when conducting their campaigns. That is why so many Democrats operate their personal campaigns – fundraising and campaign advertising – separate from the state party organization.

¹⁴⁹ Lisa Rathke, "Republicans Outpace Democrats in Fund-Raising," Associated Press, October 25, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=716fb1ab9bb5d37c48b9feb09ecb7eb9&_docnum=3&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=92bd74afbe201d2244e551c695e94258.

¹⁵⁰ "Clavelle Campaign Ends in Debt," Associated Press, December 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=2f301a97c192267f8a13654d1995e677&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=4adfb2c01d24ac6e5d0dc4fd3566910e.

¹⁵¹ "Bush, Cheney Campaign Has Bought Nearly \$1 Million in Vermont Ads," Associated Press, October 20, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=620b22b36e4af47d9521a78e316ab3d3&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=966c803f5569f3dead8cd6d4240ca4bf.

¹⁵² Sneyd, "Clavelle Faces Difficult Task with Little Money, Less Time," Associated Press, September 28, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=d09d65468cecd4cbe94b70886c948612&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkVb&_md5=28354b3a14533468414b5af0ed688f78.

On the other hand, said Professor Nelson, “The Republicans are far better organized and try to maintain a coherent message.”¹⁵³ Professor Nelson’s analysis is certainly supported by evidence from the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election.

Evaluating the Significance of Douglas Campaign Strategies

Although campaign strategies of the gubernatorial candidate and his state party organization are often ignored as primary factors in Governor Douglas’ reelection, there is good reason to regard them as essential contributors to his victory. The preceding discussion highlights the structural advantages presented by the coordination of the Vermont Republican Party and the Douglas campaign. Their coordination helped to raise campaign funds, advertise the candidate, and maintain a consistent, coherent message, all of which exceeded the performance of the Clavelle campaign. In terms of actual strategy, the Douglas campaign was effective in maximizing its candidate’s strengths and exploiting its opponent’s vulnerabilities. The Douglas campaign understood from the outset that Douglas’ first-term record was his most potent electoral asset, particularly because it highlighted his pragmatism over his ideology in a state where Republican ideology was unpopular. Douglas’ announcement at the electronics manufacturer site, his initial campaign advertisements, and his statewide tour in August immediately demonstrated his campaign’s intention to focus on state issues and, with few exceptions, his first-term record. The Douglas campaign also compensated for President Bush’s impending loss in Vermont in the simultaneous presidential election. It polled Vermonters to assess the significance of the Governor’s relationship with the President, and whether unpopular federal policies might taint the former’s popularity. Finding only

¹⁵³ Professor Garrison Nelson, Correspondence with the author, January 2, 2006.

that the Bush Administration's environmental policies were likely to damage Douglas' popularity, Douglas noticeably distanced himself from these policies; he discussed Vermont's lawsuit over coal pollution in campaign speeches, and his campaign aired advertisements highlighting the lawsuit.

The Douglas campaign only shifted its focus from Governor Douglas' first-term record when seeking to discredit its opponent, Peter Clavelle. The first significant effort to discredit Clavelle was the release of the Sandinista story in early August, which the Douglas campaign believed was necessary to expose Clavelle as a radical ideologue rather than a center-left pragmatist. Even observers who regarded this as an unfair attack, such as Professor Grover, affirmed its usefulness in discrediting Clavelle, particularly given many Democrats' skepticism about his party credentials.

In addition to discrediting Clavelle over ideology, the Douglas campaign discredited Clavelle's central policy proposal for universal health care coverage. The Douglas campaign's exclusive airing of its health care advertisement beginning in late September and Lunderville's recollection of an immediate and dramatic decrease in media interest in the gubernatorial race afterwards, suggest that the campaign was successful in discrediting Clavelle on the basis of his proposals as well as his ideology. Indeed, Professor Davis said Clavelle realized at this time that he would not win the election and, with nothing else to lose, shifted his focus to criticizing Governor Douglas' unwillingness to oppose the Iraq war.¹⁵⁴

Finally, the Douglas campaign effectively countered many of Clavelle's attacks on Governor Douglas, particularly regarding Douglas' support of President Bush and the Iraq war. Instead of engaging these issues, on which Vermonters heavily sided with

¹⁵⁴ Davis, *op cit.*, December 6, 2005.

Clavelle over Douglas, the Douglas campaign dismissed them as irrelevant to the functions of a governor. Data and observations indicate that voters did not perceive national issues as relevant to the gubernatorial campaign. Consequently, it appears that the Douglas campaign responded wisely to Clavelle's efforts, by emphasizing state issues and declining to vigorously defend President Bush and his policies.

To What Extent Did Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Influence the Election Results?

In terms of structure and strategies, the Douglas campaign and the Vermont Republican Party seem to have devised an effective, well-coordinated gubernatorial campaign. Were gubernatorial campaign strategies, then, the primary factors affecting state voter choice of a Republican gubernatorial candidate at the same time that they selected a Democratic presidential candidate? The available election data make this impossible to determine conclusively. Exit polls taken in Vermont in 2004 did not ask voters whether gubernatorial campaign strategies influenced their votes. Exit polls also did not ask voters the extent to which other factors, such as divided government, familiarity with the candidates, and incumbency, influenced their votes. Thus, there is no concrete statistical basis for testing this study's thesis to be found in the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election. There are, however, other important bases available for judging the thesis viable.

Analysis of the Vermont gubernatorial election strongly indicates that campaign strategies were primary factors in voters' reelection of Republican governor Jim Douglas. Although Spring 2004 polls showed Douglas with near-majority support from Vermonters before his campaign began, he received much greater support, 59% of the

vote, in November 2004. Moreover, above cited polling indicates a decisive movement toward Douglas in the last month of the campaign and negligible gains for Clavelle, at the same time that Kerry gained significantly on Bush in the state's presidential race.

Clearly, many voters decided to reelect Douglas during the campaign process. This fact diminishes the importance of candidate organizations as a primary explanation for Douglas' landslide victory, because the argument supposes that voters are so familiar with a candidate that they decide to support him well in advance of the election. Voters surely knew Douglas well before the close of the campaign, yet the decisive break toward his candidacy occurred at the end. Some might also claim that voters chose Douglas based on their personal conditions during his tenure, rather than being swayed by the campaigns. For a large segment of voters, however, this was not the case. While three-quarters of voters who considered themselves "better off" than four years before supported Douglas, one-third of voters who considered themselves "worse off" still supported him.¹⁵⁵

The decisive break toward Governor Douglas at the end of the gubernatorial campaign indicates that, although many Vermonters formed their opinions before the campaign began, Douglas' landslide was shaped by later events. The effectiveness with which the Douglas campaign promoted his first-term record, discredited his opponent, and countered Clavelle's criticisms, provide a reasonable explanation for this occurrence. Yet it seems unwise to dismiss other factors as important contributors to Douglas' reelection, including voter independence, candidate organization, and incumbency.

To further test the extent to which campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations produce mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous

¹⁵⁵ Gram, "Anger."

gubernatorial and presidential elections, it is necessary to analyze a different election in which some of the key factors complicating the 2004 Vermont gubernatorial election are eliminated. The 2004 Montana gubernatorial election, in which Democrat Brian Schweitzer was elected governor at the same time that Montana overwhelmingly voted to reelect Republican President George W. Bush, provides such a case. Schweitzer was neither an incumbent nor the leader of an established candidate organization; he had never held political office, and he was running for an open gubernatorial seat. Therefore, the next chapter presents a case study of the 2004 Montana gubernatorial election, to further test the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year.

Chapter IV: The 2004 Montana Gubernatorial Election

“[Bob Brown] is a product of the system. He is a candidate for governor because he has been in government for thirty years. I come from a different direction. I’m not beholden to any political party or power-brokers.” – Governor Brian Schweitzer¹⁵⁶

“The people in Montana basically repudiated the Republican leadership in the legislature and the incumbent Republican governor, and I happened to be standing in the wrong place at the wrong time. That’s the simple long and short of it.” – 2004 Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Brown¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Bob Anez, “2004 Governor’s Race as Much About Resumes as the Issues,” Associated Press, October 19, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=da3cacc18d17c4a2e3fe1d9e1e87f80b&_docnum=38&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=56c478cbff8f8fb3ee4907b1ca400e59. [Hereafter cited as Anez, “Resumes.”]

¹⁵⁷ Bob Brown, Telephone interview, February 3, 2006.

In 2004, Democrat Brian Schweitzer was elected governor of Montana by a 51% to 47% margin, defeating Republican Secretary of State and gubernatorial candidate Bob Brown. In that same year, Montanans supported Republican President George W. Bush over Democratic Senator and presidential candidate John Kerry, by a much wider 59% to 39% margin. The 2004 Montana gubernatorial election differed from that year's Vermont gubernatorial election (analyzed in the preceding chapter) in many important ways; Schweitzer was a political novice elected to an open seat in an election dominated by state issues. National issues, particularly the simultaneous presidential election, played a negligible role in the rhetoric and outcome of the Montana gubernatorial campaign.

Although Montana is typically regarded as one of America's "reddest" states, Governor Schweitzer attracted wide support by portraying himself convincingly as an effective agent for change in state government. Gubernatorial campaign strategies appear to have significantly contributed to Schweitzer's victory. These strategies included projecting an authentic Montanan image (called the "Brawny Rancher" image by some observers), highlighting hunting and fishing issues, linking Republican nominee Bob Brown to the unpopular Montana political establishment, and conveying Schweitzer's unconventional, bipartisan approach to governance. To be sure, Schweitzer benefited from weak opposition. Brown was widely viewed as an uninspiring candidate. His candidacy was also inhibited by a divided Republican Party, voter dissatisfaction with Republican governance, and poor fundraising. While the Schweitzer campaign very much benefited from the major weaknesses of its opponent, it also developed effective strategies to capitalize on those weaknesses and maximize Schweitzer's strengths.

This chapter analyzes the strategies of the Schweitzer campaign and the Montana Democratic Party, and the extent to which they influenced the outcome of the gubernatorial election. By eliminating variables of incumbency and familiarity to voters that were prominent in the Vermont case study, this analysis further tests the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year.

Montana: A Solidly ‘Red’ State?

Montana has experienced many stages of political development. Once a hotbed of left-wing labor movements, the state has been transformed by dramatic economic and population changes. In recent decades, Montanans have voted rather consistently for Republican presidential and congressional candidates, earning widespread recognition as a solidly “red” state. Yet closer analysis reveals a more complex political environment characterized by a competitive two-party system.

Left-Wing Politics Dominate Early State History

In spite of its reputation, Montana is not a political monolith. As Barone and Cohen noted in 2006,

There are two lively political traditions in Montana today. One draws on its heritage of class warfare politics, radical miners, and angry labor unions, which made Montana for many years the most Democratic of the Rocky Mountain States.... The other, more recent political tradition is in line with conservative activist Grover Norquist’s ‘Leave-Us-Alone Coalition’ – a fierce opposition to high taxes and federal government dictates.¹⁵⁸

In the early left-wing period, Montana sent many notable progressive representatives to the United States Congress. These representatives included Senator Thomas Walsh, who uncovered the Teapot Dome scandal of the Warren Harding Administration. At the

¹⁵⁸Barone and Cohen, *op cit.*, p. 993.

municipal level, Butte, a major Montana city, elected a Socialist mayor in the early twentieth century. As the century progressed, Montanans established a clear preference for Democratic representation. From 1911 to 1989, for example, state voters elected only one Republican to the U.S. Senate.

Economic and Demographic Changes Disturb the Political Order

The recent political transformation of Montana can largely be attributed to economic and demographic changes of the mid- to late-twentieth century. During this period, ore depletion in cities such as Butte led to mine closures across the state and the end of Montana's mining era. From there, the state transitioned into a primarily agricultural economy characterized by wheat and cattle grazing. As labor unions and class tensions became less prominent features of Montana's political environment, the left-wing politics that had defined most of the state's history gave way to a conservative preference for smaller, less intrusive government.

Further altering Montana's political characteristics were the significant demographic shifts it experienced during the late twentieth century, as wealthy individuals in search of privacy and solitude bought land and built second homes there. Montana's population grew by thirteen percent during the 1990s, and by 2006 native Montanans constituted only 56% of the population.¹⁵⁹

Republicans Gain Strength

By 2004, Republicans had gained unprecedented strength in Montana. For sixteen years, Republicans controlled Montana's governorship and state legislature. Moreover,

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 994.

Republican Conrad Burns represented Montana in the U.S. Senate from 1988, and Republican At-Large Congressman Danny Rehberg was elected to his sixth term, with two-thirds of the vote. Only two times since 1952 had Montanans voted for a Democratic presidential candidate (1964 and 1992). In 2000 it chose George W. Bush over Democratic candidate Al Gore by an overwhelming 58% to 33% margin. “There aren’t too many states in the union redder than Montana,” declared Schweitzer campaign consultant David Sirota.¹⁶⁰

Not Quite ‘Red’

Conclusions such as Sirota’s, although widespread, are deceptively simplistic. Bob Brown, who referred to Montanans as “chronic ticket-splitters,” disputed this popular notion.¹⁶¹ “Montana’s typically characterized as a ‘red state,’” he noted. “But, boy, if you look very far below the surface, it’s not very red.”¹⁶² He pointed out that Democrats, after the 2004 elections, held nearly every statewide office, including governor, attorney general, state auditor, and superintendent of public instruction. Democrats also controlled the state legislature and the State Service Commission, and claimed one of Montana’s two U.S. Senators, Max Baucus. Jim Lopach, professor of political science at the University of Montana-Missoula, agreed that popular conceptions of Montana as a solidly Republican state were misleading. “The Montana political culture is individualistic and populist. It’s bipartisan,” Professor Lopach argued.¹⁶³ He cited a

¹⁶⁰ David Sirota, “Top Billings,” *Washington Monthly*, December 2004. <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0412.sirota.html>.

¹⁶¹ Brown, *op cit*.

¹⁶² *Ibid*.

¹⁶³ Professor Jim Lopach, Telephone interview, February 3, 2006.

study by University of Vermont professor of political science Frank Bryan, who declared Montana the only truly competitive two-party state in America.

Montana is also receptive to third-party candidacies; in 1992 Montanans gave Independent presidential candidate H. Ross Perot one of his largest vote percentages in any state, 26%. Moreover, in 2000 Montanans gave Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader one of his largest vote percentages, with 6%.

Dissatisfaction with Republican Governance Entering the 2004 Elections

Entering the 2004 elections, Montanans exhibited widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of Republican legislators and governors over the previous sixteen years. Frustration over the state's weak economy, electricity industry deregulation, and the seeming incompetence of Republican Governor Judy Martz's administration permeated the political atmosphere.

The Discredited Republican Legislature

After sixteen years of controlling the Montana legislature, Republicans had failed many voters' expectations. The state economy remained weak, with wages the lowest in the United States. Most importantly, the legislature faced a tremendous backlash from its 1997 deregulation of the electricity industry. In the wake of deregulation, Montana Power, the largest corporation in Montana, sold its power facilities in 2000 for \$2.1 billion. Montana Power invested the profits of its sale in a fiber optics firm, only to have that firm go bankrupt. When the purchaser of the power facilities also went bankrupt, Montanans experienced substantial job cuts, increased utility rates, heavy investment losses, and high-profile lawsuits. Meanwhile, corporate executives involved in these

dealings received large severance packages, at the same time that corporate scandals such as the Enron debacle were commanding national attention. As a result of this catastrophic confluence of events, “Republican business-friendly policies were discredited.”¹⁶⁴ More specifically, the Republican-controlled Montana legislature that had engineered electricity industry deregulation was discredited.

The Unpopular Judy Martz Governorship

Judy Martz, “darling of the right wing of the [Montana] Republican Party,” was elected governor in 2000, with 51% of the vote to Democratic candidate Mark O’Keefe’s 47%.¹⁶⁵ During Governor Martz’s tenure, she delivered on important campaign promises, including an income tax reduction and the establishment of automatic state funding increases for public schools to keep pace with inflation. Yet her administration became one of the most unpopular in the nation due to a series of missteps and apparent ethical lapses.

The reasons for Governor Martz’s unpopularity were manifold. Perhaps most seriously, in August 2001 Martz’s chief policy advisor, Shane Hedges, was involved in a motor vehicle accident while under the influence of alcohol. Montana House Majority Leader Paul Sliter, a passenger in Hedge’s vehicle, was killed in the accident. Martz nearly earned an obstruction of justice charge by taking Hedges from the hospital to the governor’s mansion at four A.M. and washing his bloodstained clothes. The next year it was revealed that state employees were using the Governor’s office to raise funds for her political action committee, and soon after Martz underwent investigation for a suspicious

¹⁶⁴ Barone and Cohen, *op cit.*, p. 994.

¹⁶⁵ Lopach, *op cit.*

land purchase. The latter controversy arose when Martz purchased land from a company named Arco, at a lower price than Arco had offered to other purchasers. Arco operated mining sites previously owned by the powerful Anaconda Mining Company, and Marts was responsible for making recommendations regarding environmental cleanup at these sites. Democrats filed an ethics complaint alleging that Marts had obtained a lower land price in exchange for her leniency on the environmental recommendations. The Montana political practices commissioner eventually cleared Marts of any wrongdoing in this matter, but the investigation was lengthy and it further tarnished her already damaged reputation.

Adding to Marts's unpopularity was her penchant for off-putting comments. At one point in her administration, a reporter asked for her reaction to critics' charges that she was a "lapdog for big business." Marts responded that she would happily be a lapdog for business if doing so would bring jobs to Montana. Also, Lee Newspaper Statehouse Bureau Chief Chuck Johnson related a story, denied by Marts, about her introduction of husband Harry at a Butte Chamber of Commerce event. Supposedly, she remarked at the time that he had never beaten her because she had not yet given him a reason to do so.¹⁶⁶

After attracting over forty percent approval from Montanans early in her tenure, Governor Marts's poll numbers soon plummeted into the low twenties. Marts's extreme unpopularity persisted throughout her tenure, making her one of the most unpopular governors in the United States. Yet Marts gave every indication that she was planning to seek reelection, until announcing otherwise in August 2003. By that time, three other Republicans had already announced their candidacies for the party's gubernatorial nomination. First were Montana Republican Party Chairman Ken Miller and oilman Tom

¹⁶⁶ Chuck Johnson, Telephone interview, February 7, 2006.

Keating. However, Miller and Keating were widely considered exceptionally conservative and unelectable. Realizing this, many Republicans began pressuring Bob Brown to enter the race. Secretary of State Brown, the only Republican holding statewide office other than Martz and her lieutenant governor Karl Ohs (who had already decided not to run), seemed to be the Republicans' only viable gubernatorial candidate. Brown recalled, "There were people who came to me, oh gosh, for a while there practically on a daily basis... saying, 'There's no possible way Judy's going to be reelected. Bob, you have to step forward and do this.'"¹⁶⁷ Reluctantly, Brown acquiesced.

Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Bob Brown

Bob Brown entered the 2004 Montana gubernatorial campaign with strong government credentials and a sense of duty to the Republican Party. Born in Missoula, Montana, in December 1947 and raised on a small grain and cattle ranch near Kalispell, Brown came from a humble background. His father was a heavy machine operator and a member of the AFL-CIO, as his father had been. Bob Brown also joined the AFL-CIO later in life. Despite his strong union background, Brown identified as a Republican from an early age, signing up for the Teenage Republicans and campaigning for 1964 Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater.

In 1970, Brown earned his B.A. in history from the University of Montana-Bozeman. After serving in the U.S. Navy from 1971 to 1972, Brown added a B.A. in political science before obtaining a masters degree in education in 1988. After five years as a farmer-rancher, Brown became a teacher in 1979, the profession with which he

¹⁶⁷ Brown, *op cit.*

identified even after an extensive career in Montana politics. In addition to high school education, Brown became a University of Montana administrator in the early 1990s.

Throughout these endeavors, Brown served three months out of every year in the Montana legislature. At just 23 years old he was elected to the Montana House of Representatives in 1970, and in 1974 he was elected to the State Senate. He spent two years as senate president before being forced out by term limits in 1996. As a legislator, Brown was well-respected on both sides of the aisle and by observers. Johnson described him as “one of the most ethical and classy legislators I’ve ever covered.”¹⁶⁸ Brown was widely recognized as a moderate Republican who got along unusually well with traditionally left-wing groups such as teachers’ unions and environmentalists. In fact, his proudest legislative achievement was an environmental measure he sponsored, the 1970s Lakeshore Protection Act. This act protected Flathead Lake by allowing for the creation of local committees to set standards for preventing lake pollution. “He was a moderate Republican,” Johnson commented, “in a state where there aren’t too many moderate Republicans.”¹⁶⁹

After retiring from the legislature, Brown spent four years as a lobbyist for U.S. West and the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (a role that would be used against him in the gubernatorial campaign). Additionally, in 1998 Brown headed a campaign to renew the statewide property tax in order to better fund the Montana university system. This role enabled Brown to meet community leaders from across the state and build a network of working relationships that surely aided him in future statewide candidacies. Brown’s first statewide race took place in 2000, when he defeated Democrat Hal Harper 51% to

¹⁶⁸ Johnson, *op cit*, February 7, 2006.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

44% for secretary of state. It is unlikely that Brown intended at the time to run for governor four years later. “I’d never aspired to [the governorship],” he later explained, because “that’s a bonecruncher of a job.... It isn’t anything I’d ever had on my radar screen.”¹⁷⁰ Yet Brown felt pressured to seek the position when encouraged to do so by desperate members of his party. “Eventually, you think, ‘Well, duty beckons,’” he said, revealingly. “Sometimes you step forward when it seems that your service is called for, and you do what you need to do.”¹⁷¹

Brown Wins a Divisive Republican Primary

Bob Brown’s gubernatorial candidacy was handicapped by a bitterly contested and divisive Republican primary. Brown ultimately won the Republican nomination over his three more-conservative opponents, but he entered the general election campaign in a weakened position; the Republican Party was not united behind Brown and he had spent nearly all his money attaining the nomination. These factors seriously hindered Brown’s candidacy, costing him crucial support in terms of votes, organization, and campaign funds.

Maneuvering Around Governor Martz

Bob Brown’s decision to enter the gubernatorial race in July 2003 greatly upset Governor Martz, who had not yet announced her intentions. Brown and Martz did not have an especially comfortable relationship; according to Johnson, “She saw Bob as someone who was going to take her out... [although] Bob is not that kind of person.”¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Brown, *op cit.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

While she declined to challenge Brown for the nomination, Martz made it clear that she did not support his candidacy. The day after Martz announced her intention not to seek reelection, wealthy Billings business consultant Pat Davison entered the race, “from the blind side and late on” as Brown put it, with the Governor’s endorsement.¹⁷³ One of Davison’s greatest assets as a candidate was his ability to self-finance his campaign. Davison injected \$250,000 of his own money into his campaign, which ultimately totaled 35% of his campaign funds. Brown, as a career educator, had nowhere near this financial capability.

Brown Emerges as the Lone Moderate

Brown quickly distinguished himself as the only moderate Republican vying for the party’s gubernatorial nomination, within a state party known for its decidedly conservative inclinations. “It is my intention to appeal to voters across the Republican spectrum and beyond,” he explained at his campaign announcement.¹⁷⁴ This declaration indicated his strategy for the primary campaign to cast himself as the party’s only serious hope in a general election, due to his bipartisan appeal. As part of this strategy, Brown selected for his running mate state representative and House Appropriations Committee chairman Dave Lewis. Lewis also had strong bipartisan credentials, having served as budget director under four previous governors, including two Republicans and two Democrats. Brown further distinguished himself as the lone moderate in the Republican primary by refusing to sign a pledge never to raise taxes as governor. He was the only primary candidate not to sign the pledge. “You can’t adequately predict what will happen

¹⁷³ Brown, *op cit*.

¹⁷⁴ Anez, “Brown Calls for Unity in Starting Campaign for Governor,” Associated Press, July 15, 2003. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=9c00d49106921514719d05ec607e556a&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=43b11f201c6f7eb39290424dc313f756 [Hereafter cited as Anez, “Unity.”]

four years in the future,” Brown said in his defense. “No businessman would ever promise that he would never raise the price of anything he sells for the next four years.”¹⁷⁵

While Brown’s moderate campaign stances were consistent with the political instincts exhibited throughout his career, they also indicated an unmistakable electoral advantage; Brown had a solid grasp on the Republican Party’s moderate minority while his three opponents were certain to split the party’s conservative majority among themselves.

Brown and Davison Spar

Although four candidates competed for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, the only viable contenders were Brown and Davison. Brown touted his government experience and bipartisan appeal while Davison stressed his business experience and conservative credentials. The contest ultimately degenerated into a very negative exchange, in which both major candidates cast their opponent as untrustworthy, dishonest, unethical, and irresponsible. At one point, a complaint was filed on behalf of the Brown campaign that Davison’s running mate, who had spent considerable time outside of Montana as superintendent of Glacier National Park, did not meet state residency requirements. Davison supporters regarded this as a particularly petty

¹⁷⁵ Anez, “Candidates Take Chances in Race for Governor,” Associated Press, May 17, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=e9335e715c04ef5a8d82f64b74e174a6&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=e72e74dab476b8c906c57c5c7d0edce7 [Hereafter cited as Anez, “Candidates.”]

maneuver, and they did not soon forget it after the campaign. For its part, the Davison campaign charged that Brown unethically appeared as secretary of state in a public service announcement concerning voting law alternatives.

The Republican Party Fails to Unite Behind Nominee Brown

In the Republican gubernatorial primary held on June 8, 2004, Bob Brown defeated his three opponents with 39% of the vote. In second place, Davison finished with 23% of the vote, ahead of Miller with 22% and Keating with 16%. After the primary, Brown and Davison perfunctorily predicted a unified Republican Party entering the general election. Yet due to the bitter nature of the primary and many conservatives' skepticism about Brown's moderate politics, Brown's "defeated rivals never 'buried the hatchet' and supported him."¹⁷⁶ Brown believed that backers of his opponents eventually withheld critical support in the general election. "I think a fair number of the real, solid movement conservatives left us [the Republican gubernatorial ticket] blank, they just didn't vote for us," said Brown. Consequently, "I didn't have the full strength of my own side behind me, because of that divisive primary."¹⁷⁷ Brown's assessment is supported by polling data; an October 7-10 poll showed that a staggering 57% of identified Republicans were still undecided about whom to support in the gubernatorial election.¹⁷⁸

Monetary Consequences of the Primary Battle

¹⁷⁶ Professor Craig Wilson, Correspondence with the author, February 2, 2006.

¹⁷⁷ Brown, *op cit*.

¹⁷⁸ Anez, "Poll Shows Schweitzer with Big Lead Over Brown," Associated Press, October 14, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b59e6f34ec7aa95b22c05819938f964a&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=8b554f9d901535bdfb8b52ae8142be64 [Hereafter cited as Anez, "Lead."]

Beyond electoral support, the divisive Republican gubernatorial primary cost Bob Brown dearly in terms of campaign funds. As Johnson commented, “[Brown] basically came out of the primary broke, he had to start fundraising all over.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Brown spent 90% of his campaign funds to win the Republican nomination, leaving him with \$44,000. This sum was only one-tenth of the war chest retained by general election opponent Brian Schweitzer after his token Democratic primary.¹⁸⁰ Again, money was difficult for Brown to come by as a career educator and part-time legislator. Consequently, he spent most of his time between the primary and the general election fundraising. “In the situation I was in,” he explained, “I had to somehow or other get enough money to put on a decent poor boy act against [Schweitzer] in the general election.”¹⁸¹ One source of needed funds was political action committee contributions. As of September 5, Brown had received \$40,000 from PACs, a fact for which Schweitzer later attacked Brown as a conventional, insider politician. Schweitzer, of course, did not need to accept PAC money because he held such an enormous monetary advantage without it. This was only one of many ways in which Schweitzer cleverly exploited his opponent’s disadvantages, while utilizing his own advantages to convince voters that he was a more credible agent for needed changes in state leadership.

Governor Brian Schweitzer

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

¹⁸⁰ “Retirees Comprise Majority of Governor’s Race Contributions,” Associated Press, August 1, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=9f47b153fe1dbac62a9a23809ca3c28e&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=3e0c9575a3a5a4e3f521439430e54f0f. [Hereafter cited as “Retirees.”]

¹⁸¹ Brown, *op cit.*

Although he had never held political office before seeking the governorship in 2004, Brian Schweitzer had already established himself as a formidable presence in Montana politics. Born in September 1955 in Havre, Montana, and raised on a ranch near Great Falls, Schweitzer earned his B.S. in soil science at Colorado State University in 1978 before returning to earn his masters degree at Montana State University-Bozeman in 1980. Shortly after graduating from MSU, Schweitzer undertook the ambitious task of running a 15,000-acre farm in the Libyan Sahara. A year later, in 1981, Schweitzer helped build the world's largest dairy farm, in Saudi Arabia. The farm held 10,000 milking cows, and it also featured grain and vegetable crops. In 1987, Schweitzer returned to Montana, where he bought two farms spanning 27,000 acres near his hometown of Whitefish (coincidentally, also the hometown of Bob Brown). In 1993, the Clinton Administration appointed Schweitzer to his first government position, distributing federal funds to farmers through the Farm Service Agency. Although this was only a part-time position, it was important to Schweitzer's political ambitions because it allowed him to develop name recognition in the state and make useful contacts.

Schweitzer Runs for U.S. Senator in 2000

In 2000, Brian Schweitzer began an improbable campaign for U.S. Senator against incumbent Republican Conrad Burns. Despite spending twice as much as Schweitzer, Burns won only by the narrow margin of 51% to 47%. Schweitzer made an immediate impression on Montanans with his frank and unorthodox approach to politics. Standing 6'2" and typically clad in jeans with a gilded silver belt buckle, Schweitzer was also, in the words of David Sirota, "gregarious, tough-talking, and utterly without self-

doubt.”¹⁸² His candidacy was about more than image, though; Schweitzer inflamed populist sentiment against the two-term incumbent through a variety of clever and provocative maneuvers. For example, Schweitzer attracted national media attention when he became the first political candidate (in what would soon become a popular trend) to lead a bus full of senior citizens across the Canadian border to purchase prescription drugs. The trip was intended to highlight his proposal to reimport prescription drugs from Canada, contrary to federal policy. Schweitzer also focused on campaign financing issues by lambasting Senator Burns for accepting large PAC contributions. At one point, Schweitzer had armed guards dump a suitcase filled with \$47,000, the amount of money given to Burns by tobacco lobbyists, on the floor of the state capitol’s rotunda as reporters watched.

Schweitzer Enters the 2004 Gubernatorial Election

Although Brian Schweitzer lost his bid for the Senate in 2000, he used his formidable showing in that race to propel him toward the governorship in 2004. Johnson recalled,

When [Schweitzer] lost to Burns [in 2000], he never really stopped running. We [Lee Newspaper Bureau reporters] went through clippings from local newspapers, and there’d be six people out at some small town in Montana at a Democratic Club meeting, and – ‘speaker Brian Schweitzer,’ ‘speaker Brian Schweitzer.’ He just kept running.¹⁸³

Early in his campaign, Schweitzer acknowledged the unlikelihood of his 2000 candidacy and the role that played in preparing for his 2004 candidacy:

Probably [the 2000 Senate race] was a mountain too high for me to climb... me starting so far in the valley with so little equipment. But I’ve got a little more rope this time, I’m

¹⁸² Sirota, *op cit*.

¹⁸³ Johnson, *op cit*, February 7, 2006.

starting a little higher up the mountain and I think we know a little more about climbing.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, Schweitzer would prove his enhanced political skills in the election ahead.

Schweitzer Easily Wins the Democratic Primary

It was an impressive sign of Brian Schweitzer's strength as a candidate that, despite his governmental inexperience and the strong likelihood that a Democratic gubernatorial candidate could finally retake the governorship in 2004, he received only token opposition in the Democratic primary. Gallatin County Commissioner and former state legislator John Vincent entered the primary very late, in February 2004. Schweitzer handily defeated Vincent, 73% to 27%, although he faced stinging criticism in the process. Vincent attacked Schweitzer with more vigor than Brown later did, mainly for his governmental inexperience. Yet, according to Johnson, "Schweitzer would just look down at his shoes and say, 'John Vincent's a really nice guy and I'm glad he's running. He's a great man.'"¹⁸⁵ Schweitzer was probably wise not to engage in bitter disputes with Vincent when it was clear that Schweitzer was headed toward victory. Schweitzer also wanted to emphasize his constructive approach to governance at this time. He declared, "The days of political bickering, name-calling, and finger-pointing are over. We've heard from people in every corner of the state who were disgusted with the way candidates were conducting themselves."¹⁸⁶ Entering the 2004 gubernatorial campaign, there was

¹⁸⁴ Anez, "Schweitzer Sees Change in the Wind for Governor's Office," Associated Press, July 23, 2003. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=a56f1523fc188522901749509608c9a5&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=f7ed31941ae24d9ea26d233a3deb0dbc. [Hereafter cited as Anez, "Change."]

¹⁸⁵ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

¹⁸⁶ Anez, "Schweitzer Wins Democratic Nod in Governor's Race," Associated Press, June 9, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=34fc18f61cecbf4e69ea67fac09f477&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=d153d3824d0634e9390ec94d44032113.

little reason to doubt that Schweitzer would put forth a credible campaign, and quite possibly be elected the first Democratic governor of Montana in sixteen years.

Leadership Emerges as the Central Issue of the Gubernatorial Campaign

Given widespread voter dissatisfaction with the Republican legislature and governor, it was clear from the outset of the 2004 gubernatorial campaign that leadership would be a central issue. Therefore, capitalizing on his status as a political outsider, Brian Schweitzer tried ardently to focus the campaign on leadership and to cast himself as the most credible agent for change in state government. Professor Lopach explained,

My understanding is that [Schweitzer] set out in a very intentional, calculated way to be the candidate of change, which people wanted. They had had enough of Judy Martz, they wanted change. So he did things in his style of campaigning, his style of dress, his mode of speaking to communicate this.... He projected the image of being an engaged, vigorous candidate committed to making change on behalf of the state. And Bob [Brown] did not do it.¹⁸⁷

Schweitzer conveyed his credibility as an agent for change primarily through “Brawny Rancher” imagery, energetic campaigning, effectively tying Brown to the unpopular political establishment, and promoting himself as a government outsider.

Schweitzer’s “Brawny Rancher” Image

The Schweitzer campaign effectively portrayed its candidate as an authentic, average Montanan, or what many have referred to as the archetypical “Brawny Rancher.” This image reinforced Schweitzer’s populist message and assured voters that he was a different kind of politician than any they had elected to state leadership in recent years. In

¹⁸⁷ Lopach, *op cit.*

contrast to what voters expected from their politicians, Schweitzer regularly dressed in jeans, a flannel shirt, and a Bolo tie. At one point he took a two-week campaign tour in his pickup truck, tossing his clothes in the backseat and filling the bed with notepads for volunteers and additional bags of clothes. Television commercials featured Schweitzer working on his farm and herding cattle, because the Schweitzer campaign believed that imagery was essential to gaining voters' trust and affinity. "Visual images are very important," explained Schweitzer's 2004 campaign manager, Eric Stern.

The reality is, some voters turn the sound down [on their televisions or radios]. Some voters go to vote and they may not have followed the race very closely.... They follow the presidential election, they know what they're doing there. But the governor's race, they may not have focused on. And so they have one image of one guy [Schweitzer] in a flannel shirt cutting hay, another image of another guy [Brown] in a button-down suit with a big plush office at the capitol. And they say, 'Well, I like the first guy.'¹⁸⁸

Making this impression among the less-engaged voters might have been especially important in a presidential year. Instead of applying presidential preferences to their gubernatorial votes for lack of any other voting basis, voters motivated by the presidential election were also equipped with a reassuring "Brawny Rancher" image of Schweitzer that may have figured prominently in their decisions.

Schweitzer's Energetic Approach to Campaigning

Brian Schweitzer's energetic campaign style made a strong impression on voters and campaign observers. Johnson said, "I've never seen a harder campaigner" than Schweitzer.¹⁸⁹ As a candidate, he was skilled at maximizing his time and resources, using spare minutes to fundraise via telephone, conduct interviews, and greet voters.

¹⁸⁸ Eric Stern, Telephone interview, February 7, 2006.

¹⁸⁹ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

Schweitzer described meeting voters as valuable job preparation, not just an attempt to secure votes. “I want to meet as many people as possible,” he said.

A good governor needs to know personally all the people that pull the rope in Montana. It’s about building personal relationships. The more people you know, the more contacts that you make, the more likely that you’re going to be able to pick up the phone and ask someone a question or find out something about what government should or shouldn’t be doing.¹⁹⁰

Schweitzer’s energetic campaigning helped make up for his government inexperience by familiarizing him with voters’ concerns and expectations. In terms of leadership, it also conveyed to voters that he had the enthusiasm and vigor necessary to take on the imposing task of reforming state government. There was no doubt that Schweitzer wanted the job, which was more than voters could confidently say about his opponent.

Brian Schweitzer’s energetic campaign style was especially striking because it differed dramatically from that of Bob Brown. Indeed, “Schweitzer’s gregarious, almost bubbly campaign style is in contrast to Brown’s admittedly more low-key demeanor,” said Associated Press reporter Bob Anez.¹⁹¹ Professor Lopach recalled one incident from a debate late in the campaign, illustrating the contrast between the candidates.

Bob was sitting down on the stage studying notes, and Schweitzer, with his typical jeans and boots, kind of a tweed sportcoat, a western shirt, and Bolo tie, he was working the crowd *vigorously* – row to row to row to row, shaking hands and smiling.¹⁹²

Brown’s comparative lack of energy was not just a function of personality differences; according to observers, and judging by Brown’s reflections on the race, he was not fully committed to the gubernatorial campaign. “In reality, I don’t think that Brown much cared if he won or lost,” said Craig Wilson, professor of political science at

¹⁹⁰ Anez, “Schweitzer Passes Up Few Handshakes on Campaign Trail,” Associated Press, October 19, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=9766e03a68fdad9b3e98c58c1cb38439&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=7b88d7895630597df834ebac77e4950d.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Lopach, *op cit.*

Montana State University-Billings.¹⁹³ Johnson agreed, speculating that Brown had only gotten involved in the race because “others were twisting his arm.”¹⁹⁴ Brown’s earlier cited comments on getting into the race as a matter of duty certainly reinforce this assessment. Moreover, Brown had difficulty handling unsavory aspects of politics that are typically considered part of the business, such as fundraising and negative campaign advertisements. He referred to fundraising as “the most unpleasant feeling. Oh! It’s just the most sickening aspect of politics.”¹⁹⁵ In terms of negative ads, “Those things, they bother you, they bother your wife, they bother your kids. You see this ugly photograph of yourself on television, and the ominous background music.”¹⁹⁶ The gubernatorial campaign, unsurprisingly in light of these comments, took its toll on Brown. “I think that towards the end of the campaign Bob was very tired, maybe even somewhat ill,” said Professor Lopach. “He didn’t look good. And Schweitzer was just building momentum and rolling along, and I think that really hurt Bob.”¹⁹⁷ Indeed, voters must have gotten the impression that Schweitzer was up for the challenge of governor more than Brown. This was undoubtedly an important impression for him to make.

Schweitzer Effectively Ties Brown to the Unpopular Political Establishment

Associating Bob Brown with the unpopular Republican legislature and Martz Administration was a central goal of the Schweitzer campaign’s overall strategy. Stern

¹⁹³ Wilson, *op cit.*

¹⁹⁴ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

¹⁹⁵ Brown, *op cit.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Lopach, *op cit.*

said proudly, “We tied our opponent to the Governor and the current regime, to make it look like it was one big circle.”¹⁹⁸

Tying Brown to the legislature was somewhat difficult because Brown was retired when the legislature’s great sin, electricity industry deregulation, took place in 1997. The Schweitzer campaign managed to implicate Brown in similar activities, though, with an ad released in mid-October by the Montana Democratic Party attacking Brown for his role as a Columbia Falls Aluminum Company lobbyist. The ad, echoing a similar attack posted on the Schweitzer campaign’s website since September, claimed that Columbia had “stole[n] millions from workers’ profit-sharing and laid off hundreds of employees to make millions selling power out of the state.”¹⁹⁹ The ad also criticized Brown for supporting a 1987 tax cut that benefited Columbia, albeit eleven years before he joined the company as a lobbyist. In Brown’s defense, his campaign manager Jason Thielman pointed out that the alleged abuses by Columbia occurred in 1992 and were settled in 1998, all before Brown began lobbying for the company. Montana Democratic Party Executive Director Brad Martin maintained, “You’re judged by the company you keep. After this company had all this press about all of its poor dealing with its employees, and hiding money from profit-sharing, Bob Brown still felt quite comfortable going to work for them.”²⁰⁰ As for the tax cut, the Brown campaign argued that it reduced the Columbia plant’s property taxes at a time when it appeared on the verge of closure. Aluminum Workers Trade Council President Terry Smith said of Brown’s activities, “He did a lot to

¹⁹⁸ Stern, *op cit.*

¹⁹⁹ Anez, “Democrats Run First Ad Attacking Brown,” Associated Press, October 13, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=36fa18f06d2888f7b80746ab39110de2&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=d24627ac8420f680847bf468d07004c7.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

help the workers and the plant survive and preserve those good-paying jobs with good benefits.”²⁰¹ Yet the Schweitzer campaign’s efforts were useful in stigmatizing Brown in the absence of a direct tie to the legislature’s unpopular electricity industry deregulation.

Perhaps most importantly, Schweitzer (“cleverly and effectively” according to Bob Brown) tied his opponent to the Martz Administration.²⁰² Schweitzer typically spoke of Brown as part of the Martz Administration, although he was elected separately from the Governor, as were Democrats elected to other statewide offices. These associations were difficult for Brown to rebut because he did not want to further destabilize the already fragile Republican coalition by offending Martz supporters. At his campaign announcement in July 2003, Brown said approvingly, “Governor Martz has been a courageous governor. She’s stood by her convictions and her principles and I admire her.”²⁰³ Indeed, said Johnson, Brown “never really came out and criticized [Martz]. He sort of suggested he might do some things differently [than her], but he never really took her on as an issue.” Due to Republican divisions, though, “He probably had to play it that way.”²⁰⁴ Still, for those familiar with their private tensions, it was clear that Brown was not closely allied with Martz. “There had been a falling out between Bob Brown and Judy Martz,” noted Professor Lopach, “and I think he had established that distance between them that he couldn’t be viewed as any kind of successor.”²⁰⁵ The Schweitzer campaign attempted to make the connection between Brown and Martz, however, and by most accounts it was quite effective in doing so.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Brown, *op cit.*

²⁰³ Anez, “Unity.”

²⁰⁴ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

²⁰⁵ Lopach, *op cit.*

Beyond Bob Brown's ties to the Republican legislature and Governor Martz, the Schweitzer campaign tried to portray Brown more generally as an entrenched member of the Montana political establishment. This was partly enabled by Brown's discussion, more pronounced early in the campaign, of his ticket's government experience. For example, the Brown-Lewis ticket's initial campaign slogan was "Sixty-Six Years of Government Experience." Once the campaign recognized the liability of being identified with the Montana political establishment, it promptly retired this slogan. Brown also liked to refer to himself as a "workhorse" and to Brian Schweitzer as a "showhorse," describing the gubernatorial election as "a pretty clear contest between a flamboyant showman with a gift for finding the political hot buttons and a public servant who's been involved positively, constructively, and effectively in our state for many years, and has a record to prove it."²⁰⁶ Brown's emphasis on experience worked in some quarters; several newspapers endorsed Brown for governor largely on the basis of his governmental experience, noting that Governor Marts lacked government experience before being elected. Brown should have known early in the campaign, however, that government experience was an inadequate selling point. A poll conducted in late May 2004, before the Republican primary took place, showed Schweitzer beating Brown by a 45% to 35% margin, and Pat Davison losing to Schweitzer by a slightly larger margin of 47% to 31%.²⁰⁷ Judging by this poll, it made little difference to voters whether Schweitzer was matched against a Republican candidate with abundant government experience or none whatsoever.

²⁰⁶ Anez, "Resumes."

²⁰⁷ "Poll: Davison, Brown in Dead Heat: Schweitzer Would Beat Both," Associated Press, May 28, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b13f6eda1ebbbea00beb705a78b1dca5&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=bc61318f49950a0610e3fd99c0417e82. [Hereafter cited as "Poll."]

Bob Brown's governmental experience was cleverly used against him by the Schweitzer campaign. Brian Schweitzer blamed Montana's problems on Republican domination of state government, and he therefore held Brown responsible as a leading Republican legislator. At one debate he asked, "Mr. Brown, you've been a part of this group that have been running this government now for thirty years. Why should we stay the course with you?"²⁰⁸ In a later debate, Schweitzer analogized Brown to a contractor hired to fix a leaking roof for twenty-six consecutive years, with no success. He said Brown was now asking to be hired for four more years, but "After twenty-six years, I'd probably find a new contractor."²⁰⁹ He suspected that voters wanted a change also.

Schweitzer Promotes Himself as a Government Outsider

In contrast to Bob Brown's image as a career politician, Brian Schweitzer "portrayed himself as a government outsider promising change and bipartisan rule."²¹⁰ Schweitzer actually claimed that his lack of government experience was an asset, rather than a liability as Brown and John Vincent had alleged. Schweitzer said his lack of

²⁰⁸ Sarah R. Craig, "Candidates Debate Prescription Drugs, Coal Tax," Associated Press, October 2, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=9630ae55740558dfe897e05c32abfb79&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=ea9d6e330401ce44be15f54423d49ccf.

²⁰⁹ Sirota, *op cit*.

²¹⁰ Anez, "Schweitzer Claims Governor's Race," Associated Press, November 3, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=ba11da68a7e47b2e95065e093deec984&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=08ffc7a664326c6e86524dafa30845a2. [Hereafter cited as Anez, "Claims."]

experience allowed him to transcend traditional partisan loyalties and do what was best for the state, regardless of entrenched interests. He shrewdly pointed out that Republican icons Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Arnold Schwarzenegger had never held elective office before assuming their governorships. Besides, Schweitzer said, business experience was what Montana needed at the time.

I understand this business. I'm not talking about this in an abstract way. I've been an innovator in business. I've done things, gone places, built things that people hadn't done before. And that's what it's going to take to move Montana forward.²¹¹

As a symbol of his government outsider status, Schweitzer declared early in his campaign an open audition for a running mate. Over several weeks, he interviewed a wide variety of Montanans interested in the position, including small-time politicians and a part-time grocery store employee. While most observers regarded the audition as a symbolic gimmick, Schweitzer cited it as evidence that “This isn’t going to be an administration that is going to be an inside-Helena, back-door deal.”²¹² Whether voters believed that Schweitzer was sincere or not in his search, they certainly got the message that he was willing to defy political conventions.

Schweitzer’s Bipartisan Appeal

Although Montana was not exactly a “red state,” as many considered it in 2004, elected Republicans and Democrats tended to be conservative. Consequently, Brian Schweitzer, who “ran as a middle-of-the-road populist Democratic candidate,” knew he had to cast himself as a much different type of Democrat than presidential candidate John

²¹¹ Anez, “Change.”

²¹² “Schweitzer Meeting With Potential Running Mates,” Associated Press, October 22, 2003. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=89234064d2276cfd366d29a245e8f7cc&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=05cc27bf21109de459fd571d7943ba26.

Kerry and other national Democrats unpopular in Montana at the time.²¹³ Schweitzer recognized that Republican and Independent support was essential to electoral victory, and to his prospects for success once elected. Upon election in November, Schweitzer announced, “I’m the governor of the state, not just those who supported us.”²¹⁴ Indeed, Schweitzer had a keen understanding of conservative opinion. Often he would listen to conservative radio talk shows and call in to challenge local hosts. “Though he despised the hosts’ messages,” recalled Sirota, “he admired the way they stirred the listeners’ grievances about government and liberal elites.”²¹⁵ The Schweitzer campaign appealed to these voters, and others across a wide political spectrum, mainly through two brilliant campaign tactics: heavy identification with hunting and fishing issues, and the selection of a Republican running mate in John Bohlinger.

The Importance of Hunting and Fishing Issues to Montana Voters

Hunting and fishing issues were profoundly important to Montana voters in 2004, perhaps more than to voters in any other state. Brian Schweitzer referred to these issues as “The one[s] that [get] people’s blood pumping,” pointing to polls that showed this to be the case for both men and women.²¹⁶ Montana in 2004 was home to the highest percentage of hunters in the United States, and 70% of its residents reported owning a firearm.²¹⁷ According to a 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Survey, 723,000 of Montana’s 971,000 residents hunted, fished, or watched wildlife. Schweitzer had long

²¹³ Wilson, *op cit.*

²¹⁴ Anez, “Claims.”

²¹⁵ Sirota, *op cit.*

²¹⁶ Governor Brian Schweitzer, Telephone interview, February 8, 2006.

²¹⁷ Anez, “Lead.”

regretted underestimating the importance of hunting and fishing issues in his 2000 Senate race, and in 2004 he was determined to make them central to his gubernatorial campaign.

Schweitzer and Brown's Similar Positions on Gun Rights

Whereas gun rights versus gun control is often a volatile fault line between national Republicans and Democrats, Brian Schweitzer and Bob Brown differed little on the matter in their gubernatorial contest. Brown earned a slight advantage over Schweitzer by obtaining the endorsement of the National Rifle Association in 2004. Based on his voting record, public statements, and responses to NRA questionnaires, Brown received a grade of "A" from the NRA's Political Victory Fund. Schweitzer did little to excite NRA opposition, though; he received a grade of "A-" only because he lacked a voting record to demonstrate his commitment to gun rights. It probably did not help Schweitzer that his running mate, John Bohlinger, received a "C" while Brown's running mate, Dave Lewis, received an "A-." Yet, quite probably as a result of the efforts discussed below, Schweitzer fared very well among Montanans on hunting and fishing issues. According to an internal Schweitzer campaign poll from August 2003, voters believed that Schweitzer, more than Brown, "shared their values" when it came to hunting and fishing issues. Schweitzer assiduously cultivated this impression and utilized it to create bipartisan appeal.

Schweitzer Campaign Advertisements Highlight Hunting and Fishing Issues

Typically, Republican candidates take the offensive on hunting and fishing issues, while Democrats emphasize gun control and environmental protection. In the case of the Montana gubernatorial election, it was the Democratic Schweitzer campaign that took the

offensive on hunting and fishing issues. Its first task was to visually identify Schweitzer with gamesman culture. To that end, the campaign released a television advertisement entitled “Lifestyle.” It featured Schweitzer and his brother Walt carrying rifles through the forest, clad in full hunting gear. The ad also proudly announced Schweitzer’s “A-” rating from the NRA.

Schweitzer regarded “Lifestyle” as an essential message to voters about his populist identity, and he wanted it to be broadcast statewide. To illustrate its importance, Sirota recounted a telephone call he received from Schweitzer early one morning during the campaign, demanding to know why the “Lifestyle” ad was not already running statewide. After receiving an unsatisfactory response, Schweitzer accosted him.

Listen to me very carefully, and get your head in the game. No matter what our major ad of the week is, I want that damn gun ad running under everything! I want it in every media market, and I want it on TV and radio. The next time I call, I want to know it’s happening.²¹⁸

The *Great Falls Tribune* speculated that this ad would allow Schweitzer to “manage to hold his own in many rural counties and Republican urban areas,” indicating that it was an effective contributor to Schweitzer’s bipartisan appeal.²¹⁹ Still, the Schweitzer campaign realized that in order to gain an advantage on hunting and fishing issues, rather than merely inoculating its candidate, it had to go further. According to Sirota,

[If] we had simply tried to argue that Schweitzer was as hawkish on guns as any Republican, we would’ve won magazine covers but lost the election; in absence of indisputable proof, voters will believe that Republicans are more likely to protect gun rights. We needed to open another front with an issue that showed voters the clear difference.²²⁰

The Schweitzer campaign discovered that issue in hunting and fishing land access.

²¹⁸ Sirota, *op cit*.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²²⁰ *Ibid*.

The Schweitzer Campaign Outflanks Brown with Hunting and Fishing Land Access Issues

For years before the 2004 gubernatorial election, Republicans had been leading efforts to privatize land and strengthen private property rights throughout the Mountain West region. While these efforts followed Republican convictions about private ownership, they also had the effect of restricting access for gamesmen, who were an important element of the Republicans' traditional electoral coalition. Brian Schweitzer seized on the potential vulnerability this created. He criticized Republicans, particularly Bob Brown, for a recent party platform that had recommended turning over all federal lands in Montana to the state. Many believed that the state was incapable of managing these vast tracts of land, meaning they would have to sell them to private buyers. Consequently, said Sirota, "Some outdoorsmen became worried that the state's deficit woes would be used as a Republican rationale to reduce spending on public land management and sell off even more valuable hunting real estate."²²¹

The Schweitzer campaign's efforts to discredit Bob Brown on hunting and fishing issues focused mainly on the Stream Access Law. This law, originally passed in 1985 due in large part, ironically, to Brown's initiative, required private land owners to permit non-commercial fishermen to fish in streams that traversed their properties. In the late 1990s, the Montana Republican Party's platform, with Dave Lewis' support, called for revisions of the Stream Access Law that would have strengthened private property owners' rights. Brian Schweitzer cited this as evidence that a Republican administration would dramatically curtail access for Montana gamesmen. Schweitzer also criticized Brown for

²²¹ *Ibid.*

failing to oppose a 2003 measure designed to give landowners an allotment of big game licenses that they could then sell to the highest bidder, if they chose to do so.

Brian Schweitzer went to great lengths to identify with gamesmen and highlight hunting and fishing land access issues. At one point he met with a Gallatin County gamesman group, for the purpose of developing a plan to protect public and private land access rights. The completed plan focused on maintaining state control of public lands, increasing funding for state land upkeep, and improving access to fields and streams through private property easements funded by hunting license fees. The plan was announced at a Bozeman town hall meeting of hunters and fishermen, most of them political conservatives, who reacted favorably to it and pledged their support.

The Political Value of Land Access Issues

The Schweitzer campaign believed land access issues were politically potent for several reasons. First, they appealed to gamesmen, such as those at the Bozeman town hall meeting, who tended to vote Republican. Second, they appealed to environmentalists who wanted to prevent public land from passing to private owners. Schweitzer typically did not discuss protecting the environment, as such; “You won’t hear him say ‘environment’ much,” Johnson noted. “He’ll talk about [how] he wants to preserve places where people can hunt and fish and hike and camp.”²²² Land access issues allowed him to placate environmentalists without arousing suspicion among conservatives. “This was especially important because we [in the Schweitzer campaign] did not want to alienate the environmentalists who would be out in force on Election Day to vote against an

²²² Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

initiative to permit cyanide leach mining,” explained Sirota.²²³ Thirdly, land access had important demographic appeal. Gallatin County was one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, and many of the new residents were migrants attracted to the area by its trademark outdoors opportunities. “Targeting these new residents and making them Democratic voters were key not only to the election at hand,” said Sirota, “but also for building a majority for the long haul.”²²⁴ Lastly, “One key reason the access issue had such resonance for Schweitzer was that its propulsive, little-guy-versus-big-guy force was in perfect sync with much of the rest of his message and campaign.”²²⁵ Hence, the Schweitzer campaign’s focus on land access issues was a masterful tactic, useful in broadening Schweitzer’s appeal and reinforcing the populist approach to governance touted by his campaign.

Schweitzer Selects Republican John Bohlinger as His Running Mate

Perhaps the Schweitzer campaign’s greatest strategic coup was its selection of Republican John Bohlinger as its candidate for lieutenant governor. His selection marked the first time that a Democrat and Republican ran on the same gubernatorial ticket in Montana history. It was an unmistakable signal to voters of Brian Schweitzer’s dedication to unconventional, bipartisan governance.

John Bohlinger was a 68-year-old, three-term state senator from Billings. Like Brian Schweitzer he had made his living as a businessman, running an upscale women’s clothing store with his wife. Politically, Bohlinger was widely regarded as a very liberal

²²³ Sirota, *op cit*.

²²⁴ *Ibid*.

²²⁵ *Ibid*.

Republican; Bob Brown referred to him quite candidly as “The only guy in Montana solidly to the left of me in the Republican Party. In fact,” said Brown, “he would probably better be a Democrat.”²²⁶ The Brown campaign certainly tried to make this argument. Thielman asserted at the time of Bohlinger’s selection, “It is clear to any Montanan who has reviewed John Bohlinger’s voting record that he is a strong Democrat.”²²⁷ While in the Montana legislature, Bohlinger was known for his independence and willingness to stand up to the Republican leadership. Brown explained Bohlinger’s decision to join the Democratic ticket in terms of ambition, describing him as “frustrated, a little bit angry” that he had not ascended the Republican Party’s legislative leadership.²²⁸ Schweitzer’s offer appeared to be Bohlinger’s long awaited opportunity, and he accepted it.

Republican Objections to Bohlinger’s Candidacy

Bohlinger’s decision to run for lieutenant governor on Schweitzer’s ticket ignited fury among Republicans. Bob Brown, for one, felt betrayed by the decision. The two had known each other for many years and swapped political favors. Bohlinger had been Brown’s “sign captain” in Billings during the 2000 secretary of state campaign, ensuring that signs promoting Brown’s candidacy were posted throughout the city. When Bohlinger was challenged in a primary for his Senate seat, Brown “was one of just a

²²⁶ Brown, *op cit.*

²²⁷ Anez, “Complaint Targets Bohlinger’s GOP Label,” Associated Press, October 19, 2006. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=41a7e74636a9846488c17f785645f7aa&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=7b6c557380860f41ed000e1dbb70f4ca. [Hereafter cited as Anez, “Complaint.”]

²²⁸ Brown, *op cit.*

handful of Republican legislators who stuck their necks out to support John.”²²⁹ According to Brown, Bohlinger had even contributed money to Brown’s gubernatorial campaign and pledged his support, just a few months before joining the Schweitzer ticket. Bohlinger’s decision therefore struck a particular nerve in Brown; “It really wounded me because I regarded him as a personal friend and ally.”²³⁰

Many Republicans refused to accept Bohlinger as a member of their party after his decision to join the Schweitzer ticket. For example, in mid-October 2004, Lewis and Clark County Republican Central Committee chairman Bill Snoddy and vice chairwoman Jane Nofsinger filed a complaint with State Political Practices Commissioner Linda Vaughey, objecting to Bohlinger’s being called a Republican after filing on the Democratic ticket. Snoddy and Nofsinger asked Vaughey to order the Schweitzer campaign to halt all advertisements referring to Bohlinger as a member of the Republican Party, and to force the Schweitzer campaign to release new advertisements “correcting intentional misstatement.”²³¹ Snoddy portrayed the issue as part of a larger pattern of deception and misrepresentation by the Schweitzer campaign. “It’s part of the smoke-and-mirrors campaign that Brian Schweitzer has been giving the people of Montana for months,” lamented Snoddy.²³² Nothing came of the complaint, however; Vaughey announced that she did not have enough time to rule on the matter before the impending November 2 elections, and eventually she concluded that the Schweitzer campaign had done nothing wrong.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Anez, “Complaint.”

²³² *Ibid.*

For his part, John Bohlinger maintained that he was still a member of the Republican Party. “I’ve not left the Republican Party,” he announced shortly after joining the Schweitzer ticket. “I’m going to stay here until they kick me out.”²³³ He reaffirmed his political identity after the election, explaining, “I am a Republican. I’m remaining in the Republican Party. I feel that it would be disingenuous of us [the incoming administration] to suddenly announce to people that now that we are elected I’m becoming a Democrat.”²³⁴

Before leaving the subject it should be noted that some Democrats were just as displeased by the Bohlinger selection as were Republicans. According to Stern, “A lot of the Democratic Party insiders were furious about it at first. They thought this was some sort of betrayal.”²³⁵ The Bohlinger selection caused no lasting rifts in the Democratic Party, however; members quickly apprehended the important electoral advantage it provided their nominee and supported the ticket.

The Impact of the Bohlinger Selection on Schweitzer and Brown’s Bipartisan Appeal

The Schweitzer campaign’s selection of John Bohlinger provided significant strategic advantages in terms of bipartisan appeal, neutralizing the Brown campaign, and attracting support in Billings. The first and most obvious advantage of the Bohlinger

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Anez, “Lewis Wants to Replace Resigning Senator,” Associated Press, November 5, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=68cd15cbe43995154d65fd8253f681bd&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=eda7655a15dea7f5428871a86c23cef5.

²³⁵ Stern, *op cit.*

selection is that it reinforced the Schweitzer campaign's emphases on bipartisan governance and unconventional politics. At his press conference to announce Bohlinger's selection, Brian Schweitzer cited it as indisputable evidence of his commitment to bipartisan governance. "People have talked about coming to Helena to build bridges to bring the parties together," he said proudly. "Guess what? We've poured the concrete, we've bolted together the planks, we've put the steel over the top. The bridge is built."²³⁶ To some it was "an empty gesture" because Bohlinger was only nominally a Republican. According to Schweitzer, voters appreciated it nonetheless. He said,

We hear from the people that it's a breath of fresh air [to have a Democrat and Republican running together]. We will win this election, and the day after we will be uniquely qualified to bring Montana together to end this polarization, this finger-pointing, this partisan gamesmanship.²³⁷

To make the bipartisan appeal of the Schweitzer-Bohlinger ticket clear to voters, the Schweitzer campaign prominently featured party affiliations in its advertisements. One such advertisement began with Bohlinger standing in his clothing store and introducing himself as a Republican businessman from Billings. The video then cut to Schweitzer riding a horse and herding cattle. He introduced himself as a Democrat and a rancher from Flathead County. Bipartisan symbolism endured as a focus of the Schweitzer campaign beyond the 2004 election. As of early 2006, the Governor's updated campaign website led with a photograph of Schweitzer and Bohlinger together, and the headline: "A Democrat and a Republican, working together for Montana."²³⁸

²³⁶ "Schweitzer Files, Vows GOP-Friendly Administration," Associated Press, February 18, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=c96a22b6756ae5ce9acd5eba481f240b&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=0f980d097448d4772968cab6a908a546.

²³⁷ Anez, "Candidates."

²³⁸ Join Operation Brian Schweitzer: <http://www.brianschweitzer.com>. Accessed February 20, 2006.

In addition to strengthening Brian Schweitzer's candidacy, the selection of John Bohlinger neutralized Bob Brown's bipartisan appeal, which Brown referred to as "maybe the most important part of my political identity."²³⁹ Brown's bipartisan appeal was an essential aspect of his campaign from its outset. At his July 2003 announcement, he proudly claimed that he and Lewis "know how to forge majorities and build bridges. We have forged them and built them."²⁴⁰ The Bohlinger selection nullified this advantage. Said Brown,

What [the selection of Bohlinger] made possible to do was... [when] anyone would say, 'Bob Brown's pretty skilled as a bridge builder, he's reached out to groups and organizations and people that most Republicans can't reach out to,' Schweitzer would look at them and say: 'What do you mean Bob Brown's a bridge builder? Heck, my running mate's a Republican.' He trumped that.²⁴¹

The Geographic Significance of the Bohlinger Selection

Brian Schweitzer's selection of John Bohlinger as his running mate was not merely significant in terms of bipartisan appeal; Johnson described the selection as being "as much about geographics as demographics."²⁴² This was a crucial point that is often overlooked in discussions of the 2004 Montana gubernatorial election.

Bohlinger hailed from Billings, located in Yellowstone County. Electorally, this area was regarded as the most consequential, competitive region of Montana. "It is Yellowstone County," explained Sirota, "that is Montana's own Ohio, and Billings the state's Columbus."²⁴³ Since 1948, only one successful gubernatorial candidate had lost

²³⁹ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁴⁰ Anez, "Unity."

²⁴¹ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁴² Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

²⁴³ Sirota, *op cit.*

Yellowstone County. (Schweitzer won it in 2004, 51% to 45%.) Billings was Yellowstone's most competitive city; according to Stern, "Billings is where 25% of the persuadable vote is."²⁴⁴ Schweitzer ended up winning Billings, 52% to 48%, although it had typically voted Republican. Brown believed that Schweitzer's victory there, and the selection of Bohlinger, proved decisive. "In a statewide election," he explained, Billings' vote "would probably amount to close to half of [Schweitzer's] victory margin. I think [Schweitzer's election] was attributable to that crude maneuver of going in and recruiting John Bohlinger to be his lieutenant governor."²⁴⁵

Many observers believed that residents of Billings, Montana's largest city, were desperate to elect one of their own as Montana's governor or lieutenant governor, after many years without doing so. During the Republican primary, in which all three candidates besides Brown lived in Billings, there seemed to be a good chance that the Republican gubernatorial nominee would come from Billings. However, as Brown recalled, "When I defeated all three of them in the primary, there was still this lingering feeling that Billings was being kind of left out."²⁴⁶ Bohlinger filled this gap, and perhaps influenced the votes of many Billings residents as a result.

Assessing the Impact of the Bohlinger Selection

Opinions and data conflict on the significance of Brian Schweitzer's selection of John Bohlinger as his running mate. Schweitzer downplayed its importance as purely symbolic, asserting

²⁴⁴ Stern, *op cit.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Brown, *op cit.*

I don't think that brought me a single Republican voter. And the Independent voters don't like Democrats or Republicans, that's why they haven't picked a party. But what it said to Independent voters and to a small extent Republicans, is 'This guy really *is* different. He looks and talks different, his profile is different. But already the first decision he's made about being governor of Montana is different.'²⁴⁷

A May 2004 poll of Montana voters also suggested that the Bohlinger selection did not make a crucial difference in the gubernatorial election. Sixteen percent of respondents said that Bohlinger's presence on the Democratic ticket made them more likely to support Schweitzer, 12% said it made them less likely, 4% were unsure, and the vast majority, 68%, said it would have no impact on their vote.²⁴⁸ Other observers believed Schweitzer's selection of Bohlinger was quite significant. In Johnson's opinion, "I thought it was a very, very successful pairing of two people with different backgrounds and different parties, in a state where people get real tired of partisan politics."²⁴⁹ Moreover, Brown regarded the Bohlinger selection as a decisive element in the Schweitzer victory. He argued, "If you could point to one shrewd political move during the campaign that importantly influenced the outcome, I would say that was it."²⁵⁰

Determining the significance of Schweitzer's selection of Bohlinger as his gubernatorial running mate is very difficult. At the least, it was a notable symbol of Schweitzer's commitment to bipartisan governance and a new style of political leadership; at most, it was the decisive campaign strategy that attracted enough support among Republicans and Independents, particularly Billings residents, to deliver Schweitzer the election.

²⁴⁷ Schweitzer, *op cit.*

²⁴⁸ "Poll."

²⁴⁹ Johnson, *op cit.*, February 7, 2006.

²⁵⁰ Brown, *op cit.*

Prominent Issues in the Gubernatorial Campaign

It would be difficult to describe the 2004 Montana gubernatorial election as issues-based. Due to the overwhelming atmosphere of antipathy toward state leadership, it would more accurately be described as a referendum on leadership. Yet there were a number of issues addressed in the campaign that highlighted important differences between Schweitzer and Brown. Of these issues, the economy was the most prominent. Prescription drugs and state ballot initiatives also generated significant discussion in the campaign. Nonetheless, the campaign focused more on general themes of leadership and character, in no small part because Schweitzer's moderate stance on typically divisive partisan issues, such as gun ownership and gay marriage, removed them from contention. Desperate for compelling issues, the Brown campaign resorted to petty controversies that did not advance Brown's candidacy in any detectable way. Schweitzer ultimately shaped the election as a referendum on leadership, and this worked to his advantage.

Economy

Of any issue discussed seriously in the gubernatorial campaign, the economy was by far the most prominent. Montana's economy had been stagnant for several years. Wages were the lowest in the United States, and a large budget deficit loomed in the public mind. Brian Schweitzer and Bob Brown disagreed about the size of the impending budget deficit, but the governor's office estimated it at \$100 million and Schweitzer said that it would soon become \$250 million. Schweitzer blamed Republican leadership for the ballooning deficit, claiming that the legislature had relied too heavily on one-time taxes and business property tax breaks to balance the budget for the time being. Despite their disagreements about the nature and causes of Montana's economic trials, both

candidates made the economy the top substantive issue of their respective campaigns. Their similar focus was indicated by nearly identical slogans; Schweitzer sought to “Grow Montana,” while the Brown campaign sought to “Advance Montana.” According to polling done shortly before the election, economic distress was also the foremost issue in voters’ minds. A late September 2004 poll had 29% of voters ranking the economy and unemployment as the most important issues facing them that November, with state budget, taxes, and government spending coming in second at 17%.²⁵¹

Brian Schweitzer blamed the poor Montana economy on an era of Republican dominance that allegedly favored large out-of-state corporations over small in-state businesses. Therefore, Schweitzer’s strategy for reviving Montana’s economy centered on aiding small businesses. Schweitzer sought to shift the tax burden from in-state to out-of-state businesses, particularly “big-box” stores, such as WalMart, that avoided paying income taxes by registering as limited liability corporations. Schweitzer’s close association with small business interests suited the populist tenor of his campaign. In his first television advertisement, Schweitzer discussed his business experience and his intention to make small businesses the centerpiece of his economic recovery plan. He noted that 85% of Montanans owned or worked for a small business, and that Montana’s wages were the lowest in the country. As a result, he believed that small businesses merited substantial attention in order to reenergize the state’s dormant economy.

Besides small business development, Schweitzer presented many other proposals for economic development. He proposed creating an office for encouraging business in Montana, convening a task force of state businessmen to cut \$60 million in government

²⁵¹ “Poll Finds Schweitzer, Brown About Even,” Associated Press, September 26, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=46502259d0cc91b6e8bb1259dc4df8e3&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=7bc506d63addc766f2350e381f064c43.

waste without cutting services, and encouraging youth to attend college and work in Montana. Schweitzer referred to Montana as a “salmon economy” in which “all our young leave the state and then they come home to die.”²⁵² Montana’s trade school tuition was the highest in the nation while, again, state wages were the lowest. Therefore, it was no surprise that so many young Montanans pursued their aspirations elsewhere. To help address this problem, Schweitzer proposed forgiving up to \$12,000 of student debt for students who agreed to teach in Montana for four years or more. He also proposed training workers at two-year colleges of technology and Montana State University’s engineering school.

Bob Brown took a much different perspective on the economy than Schweitzer. Brown claimed that Montana’s economy had been disrupted in the 1980s by poor Democratic leadership, and that it was improving by 2004 thanks to traditional Republican policies of reducing taxes and government regulations. He acknowledged that further steps had to be taken to advance the economy. Brown believed that Montana’s future economic security depended on the development of natural resources such as coal, oil, gas, wind energy, and biofuels. Newer and cleaner technologies, he predicted, would allow for dramatically increased production of these resources, particularly coal, so as to create jobs (13,000 jobs, he boldly estimated at one point) and increase energy independence. Schweitzer did not oppose natural resource development, but he tended to focus more on developing incentives to encourage ethanol plants, hydrogen power projects, and wind power. Schweitzer did, however, object to the aspect of Brown’s plan that would divert money from the state’s coal tax trust fund in order to upgrade infrastructure and develop natural resources. While Brown foreswore any intention of

²⁵² Barone and Cohen, *op cit.*, p. 996.

raiding the trust fund to balance the budget or serve other purposes besides natural resource development, the issue provided a rare point of clear, substantive disagreement between the candidates.

Another essential aspect of Brown's economic development plan was to rein in taxing and spending policies. Brown advocated a cap on state spending and a new vote in the legislature on a statewide sales tax that would reduce the state's dependence on income taxes. While he refused to rule out tax increases, Brown made it clear that they would be a last resort; "rather than looking for more taxes, I would look for more taxpayers," he explained.²⁵³ Schweitzer countered that Brown and other Montana Republicans lacked credibility on tax issues because the Martz Administration oversaw tax increases on cigarettes, lodging, and rental cars. Schweitzer also claimed that Brown had supported tax increases on 73 occasions, although that figure included multiple votes on the statewide sales taxes (intended by its supporters to decrease overall taxes) and similarly complicated votes.

Prescription Drug Reimportation

Brian Schweitzer continued to emphasize prescription drug reimportation in the 2004 gubernatorial campaign, as he had in the 2000 Senate campaign. In the intervening four years, he lamented, "All we have gotten from state government is excuses,

²⁵³ "Schweitzer, Brown Debate Public Records," Associated Press, October 9, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=8357aef0948cc15d89f084706ca52d3&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=5f95e5a6887174b8102276b9283584cc. [Hereafter cited as "Records."]

obstruction, and inaction” on the issue.²⁵⁴ To emphasize the need for a drug reimportation plan, Schweitzer set up a press conference in October featuring Pfizer Vice President Peter Rost. At the press conference, Rost dismissed claims that reimported drugs are unsafe; “The thrust is that reimportation had been done safely within Europe for over twenty years and can be done safely here right now.”²⁵⁵

Bob Brown responded to the Schweitzer campaign’s drug reimportation plan by stating that he was in favor of finding ways to obtain affordable prescription drugs for Montanans, but that it was irresponsible for gubernatorial candidates to advocate violating federal law. “Lawlessness is not leadership,” he was fond of saying. Instead Brown vowed that as governor he would petition Congress to change laws prohibiting prescription drug reimportation. Yet he damaged his credibility on the prescription drug issue when, at a debate late in the campaign, he referred to it as “really not a relevant issue now.”²⁵⁶ He meant that the issue had been more relevant four years prior when Schweitzer was pursuing a Senate seat from which he could reshape federal policy, but Brown’s comment gave voters the impression that he cared less than Schweitzer about providing affordable prescription drugs.

State Ballot Initiatives

In addition to choosing a president, governor, and other public officials, Montana voters were faced in 2004 with decisions on several controversial state ballot initiatives. One of these initiatives was an attempt to end the state’s ban on cyanide mining. Montana

²⁵⁴ Anez, “Drug Executive Endorses Schweitzer Import Plan,” Associated Press, October 12, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=dcafbfac8070abf3424b36dfe28b7c80&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=c839ec4c89f2e0d659c7ce10a6433c99.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

was the only state in the nation to enforce such a ban. Brown supported ending it because he believed that this would help the mining industry to grow and revitalize southwestern Montana. This position was in line with his stated approach to environmental issues, which was that he would not “want to protect the environment to the extent that we foreclose on any job opportunities.”²⁵⁷ Schweitzer did not take a position on the cyanide mining issue.

Another important state ballot initiative proposed an amendment to the state constitution, defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The amendment passed with 67% of the vote. Schweitzer and Brown supported the amendment, although Schweitzer opposed a similar amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Agreement on Divisive Partisan Issues Focuses the Gubernatorial Election on Leadership

“I don’t think there were really great areas of disagreement” between the two major gubernatorial candidates, said Bob Brown. He added, “I don’t think [Schweitzer] wanted any big policy differences.... [His] powerful theme was, ‘It’s time for new leadership.’”²⁵⁸ Indeed, Schweitzer agreed with Brown on many of the major issues that divided Republicans and Democrats on the national level, including gun rights and same-sex marriage. His conservative positions on these critical issues, which aligned with the majority of Montana voters, deprived Republicans of traditional attack lines at a time when national partisan sentiments were most pronounced due to the simultaneous presidential election. Moreover, by removing divisive partisan issues from the campaign debate, Schweitzer was able to focus the election on the more general and advantageous

²⁵⁷ “Records.”

²⁵⁸ Brown, *op cit.*

theme of leadership. Montana voters, Schweitzer explained, “were looking for a chief executive of the state. And if you take some things off the table that make them nervous about your values, now they’re looking for the most competent guy.”²⁵⁹ It is impossible to know to what extent Schweitzer adapted or enunciated his conservative views on divisive partisan issues in order to remove them from debate. It is clear, however, that his approach helped Schweitzer to cultivate bipartisan appeal and keep the campaign focused on leadership.

Lack of Contentious Issues Leads the Brown Campaign to Focus on Trivialities

Brian Schweitzer and Bob Brown’s agreement on divisive partisan issues led the Brown campaign, in desperation, to seize on several issues that appeared petty and irrelevant to voters. The most prominent example involved Schweitzer’s purchase of a truck in Idaho. In June 2004, Kalispell auto dealer Greg Scarff faxed to other Montana auto dealers receipts from Schweitzer’s purchase of a truck in Idaho earlier that year. The Idaho dealership, Dave Smith Motors, was notorious among Northwestern dealers for attracting regional customers with exceptionally low prices. In 1998, the dealers’ resentment led them to threaten a boycott of Chrysler unless the company began providing fewer cars to Dave Smith Motors.

After hearing about Schweitzer’s out-of-state purchase, the Brown campaign adopted it as an example of Schweitzer’s alleged hypocrisy. Brown, who vowed that he had never bought a vehicle out of state, ridiculed Schweitzer for promoting the growth of Montana small businesses at the same time that he bypassed them for major purchases. As a result, said Brown, “There is a question of Brian Schweitzer’s credibility. People

²⁵⁹ Schweitzer, *op cit.*

need to trust their governor as well as agree with him. This incident casts doubt on our ability to trust Brian.”²⁶⁰ Dave Lewis went so far as to hold a press event at the Helena car dealership where he purchased his new pickup truck. “I’m proud I could buy locally,” Lewis announced. “As a candidate for lieutenant governor, I know I can’t sell Montana and Montana products if I sell out by spending my money out of state.”²⁶¹

The Schweitzer campaign dismissed the controversy as trivial. The campaign even converted it to Schweitzer’s advantage by portraying his purchase as an act of admirable fiscal responsibility. Schweitzer produced documents showing that he had saved between \$5,000 and \$13,000 by purchasing his truck in Idaho, insisting that he had acted as any other Montanan would in seeking the best deal available. When urged to apologize for the purchase,

I said, ‘Like hell I’m going to do that. It was a good business decision to do that, and as my job in running a business is to buy for the lowest price and sell for the highest price, that’s my job. And as governor of Montana I’ll run Montana the same way.’²⁶²

The Schweitzer campaign also questioned the relevance of this controversy to the gubernatorial campaign; why not instead discuss important policy issues such as health care, prescription drugs, education, and the economy? Many observers agreed that the campaign needed to focus on more important matters of governance,²⁶³ leading Schweitzer to conclude that the truck purchase issue “hurt [supporters of the Brown campaign], not helped them.”²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Anez, “Candidate’s Auto-Buying Decision in Political Spotlight,” Associated Press, July 20, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=fd2e395c474cd6eca174389f24c7f013&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=7d6330151eebdcbbd01bc6016449c96a.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Brown, *op cit.*

²⁶³ Professor Wilson reflected, “It’s a little sad. Both [men] are qualified to be governor. One would hope they would use some bigger issues.” Wilson, *op cit.*

Likewise, in early October Brown released his tax records and challenged Schweitzer to do the same. When Schweitzer refused on grounds that, until elected, his taxes were matters of private record, the Brown campaign ran advertisements suggesting Schweitzer had something to hide. Then, in the last weeks of the campaign, the Republican Governors Association released television and radio advertisements alleging that Schweitzer was unethical in his business practices. The ads featured three people whom allegedly had been sold wet bales of hay by Schweitzer, leading them to describe him as “unethical.” It later turned out that one of the persons featured in the ad was a cousin of Brown’s. For his part, Brown disapproved of the ads. The Brown campaign, however, had no say in the matter because campaign finance laws forbid it from coordinating with the RGA, as a so-called 527 organization.²⁶⁵ Brown preferred focusing on state issues and maintaining a positive message. “If I was putting political ads together myself,” he said, “that’s not how I’d go about them.”²⁶⁶

Controversies such as the ones just described created a bitter campaign. Both candidates initially attempted to preclude a negative campaign when they drafted and signed pledges in Summer 2004 to refrain from negative attacks on their opponent, unless the other candidate first broke his pledge. The Brown campaign believed that the Schweitzer campaign broke this pledge with its website attacks on Brown’s lobbying activities for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company. Schweitzer, on the other hand, said Brown broke his pledge by focusing on the car and ethics controversies described

²⁶⁴ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁶⁵ The Internal Revenue Service defines Section 527 organizations as organizations designed to receive and utilize funds for the purpose of positively or negatively influencing or attempting to influence the nomination, election, or appointment of candidates for public office.

²⁶⁶ Brown, *op cit.*

above. Angrily, Schweitzer characterized a negative ad late in the campaign as “a desperate act from a desperate career politician who, after 26 years in Helena, has absolutely no record to run on and no ideas for the future of our state.”²⁶⁷ Schweitzer’s bitterness lasted well beyond the gubernatorial campaign, when he described the Brown campaign in early 2006 as follows:

Their campaign was negative, from beginning to end. All negative about me.... [Instead] of trying to sum up the case, ‘Vote for our candidate,’ they summed up the case, ‘Vote against the other guy’.... They ran 90% of their points negative on me.... They just claimed that I was a bad guy and [voters] should not trust me. It wasn’t even issues that they came after me for.²⁶⁸

Frankly, though, Schweitzer’s characterization of the Brown campaign does not comport with newspaper and observer accounts. Johnson, for one, called Schweitzer’s characterization an “overstatement,” and noted that the Brown campaign had produced positive policy statements on many issues.²⁶⁹

The Presidential Election Minimally Impacts the 2004 Montana Gubernatorial Election

As was the case in Vermont, there was very little evidence to suggest that the 2004 presidential election significantly impacted that year’s Montana gubernatorial election. Unlike Vermont’s gubernatorial election, however, the candidate whose presidential election counterpart was expected to win Montana’s vote, Republican Bob Brown, made no effort to link his opponent to unpopular Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry.

²⁶⁷ Anez, “Schweitzer, Brown Spar Over New TV Ad,” Associated Press, October 6, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=3647dc10bd34559f9d88e2d139f48b27&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=7ed811d5919024772572eccffb6e56ab.

²⁶⁸ Schweitzer, *op cit*.

²⁶⁹ Johnson, Correspondence with the author, February 22, 2006.

Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections in Recent Montana History

Recent Montana electoral history suggested that the presidential election would not play an important role in the simultaneous 2004 gubernatorial election. According to Bob Brown, Montana's "history shows no consistency between the candidate who carries the state for president and the candidate who carries the state for governor."²⁷⁰ Indeed, since 1964 Montanans have chosen gubernatorial and presidential candidates of the same party on only three occasions. More recent elections, however, indicate that a new trend might be emerging; Republican gubernatorial and presidential candidates were both chosen in three of the past five election cycles, 1988, 1996, and 2000.

2004: Montana's Gubernatorial Election Overshadows the Presidential Election

It was clear from the outset that 2004 presidential politics would be muted in Montana. According to Professor Wilson, "Democrats basically conceded the state well in advance of the election" because they knew that President George W. Bush would easily win its three electoral votes.²⁷¹ Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry was widely perceived as too liberal for Montana's tastes. "People in Montana, the only way they would like someone like John Kerry would be for breakfast," said Bob Brown. "He just doesn't *fit* here."²⁷² Consequently, there was minimal presidential campaign presence from either side. Kerry's sister was the only representative of either campaign to visit Montana, and the only time Montanans saw ads for the presidential race was when the ads were featured on national cable channels such as Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN. It was hardly surprising that the presidential election failed to swallow the simultaneous

²⁷⁰ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁷¹ Wilson, *op cit.*

²⁷² Brown, *op cit.*

gubernatorial election, given the subdued nature of the state presidential campaign. “The coattails of Bush were negated by the state issues that were more important,” according to Brown.²⁷³ The available evidence supports this assessment.

The Gubernatorial Candidates Choose Not to Emphasize National Politics

Some participants in the gubernatorial election expected national politics to play a very prominent role. Sirota typified this expectation by writing, “With gay marriage, medical marijuana, and environmental initiatives on the ballot, the Republicans would be relentless in calling Schweitzer a Kerry clone.”²⁷⁴ Yet in striking contrast to Peter Clavelle’s campaign for the Vermont governorship, the Brown campaign chose not to “nationalize” the gubernatorial election or attempt to tie its opponent to Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry. “I can’t remember that national issues, even including the Iraq situation, were important in this campaign at all,” said Brown, as if it were the first time the thought had crossed his mind.²⁷⁵ Besides featuring Kerry’s name in perhaps a campaign press release or two, Brown recalled, “I didn’t attempt to tie Schweitzer to John Kerry.”²⁷⁶ Nor was there strong pressure to do so, according to Brown.

We had people, old friends and political advisers and that sort of thing, and we had more than one bull session, and I’m sure it probably came up. But it never emerged as an important part of our campaign strategy.²⁷⁷

Surely, the Brown campaign resisted temptations to link Schweitzer to Kerry in part because it strongly doubted the efficacy of such a strategy. Brown was quite aware of

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Sirota, *op cit.*

²⁷⁵ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Montana's history of electing gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. He also realized that Schweitzer was too clever to align closely with Kerry and his policies. Brown speculated, "I think Schweitzer smelled that [Kerry was very unpopular in Montana] and he probably deliberately tried to make it as difficult as possible to tie him in any way to the Democratic national ticket."²⁷⁸

The Schweitzer campaign, for its part, also believed that national politics had little relevance to the gubernatorial election. "Voters tend to look at state issues separately from national issues," noted Stern.²⁷⁹ Schweitzer also believed strongly in the need to focus on state issues. He said,

A governor doesn't need to talk about national issues. The governor doesn't have any juicy national issues. There's no reason for you to even proffer an opinion about defense issues, and national taxation policies, and things like [abortion] choice or not, because those are all national issues.²⁸⁰

Thus, the 2004 presidential election figured minimally in that year's gubernatorial campaign because both candidates believed that it was irrelevant to the state issues that were most important to voters.

Assessing Schweitzer's Gubernatorial Election Victory

On November 2, 2004, Brian Schweitzer defeated Bob Brown in the Montana gubernatorial election by a margin of 51% to 47%. (A small percentage of the vote went to the Green and Libertarian candidates.) Despite Schweitzer's rather narrow margin of victory, he had been the favorite throughout virtually the entire campaign. Yet this hardly indicates that campaign strategies of the Schweitzer campaign and the Montana

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Stern, *op cit.*

²⁸⁰ Schweitzer, *op cit.*

Democratic Party were irrelevant. In fact, it is reasonable to conclude that campaign strategies were essential to preserving Schweitzer's lead and ultimately providing his narrow margin of victory.

Polling Shows Schweitzer Leading Brown During the Gubernatorial Campaign

Every significant poll conducted during the gubernatorial campaign showed Brian Schweitzer leading Bob Brown, by varying margins. The earliest poll, conducted in December 2003 by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, had Schweitzer leading Brown 42% to 39%, with 19% of respondents undecided. Mason-Dixon Managing Director Brad Coker attributed Schweitzer's early lead to his status as the best-known candidate in the race at the time. Indeed, the Mason-Dixon poll showed Schweitzer with 35% favorable name recognition, 14% unfavorable, 43% neutral, and only 8% of respondents failing to recognize his name. Brown, on the other hand, was known favorably to 28% of respondents and unfavorably to only 6%, while 43% were neutral and 23% did not recognize his name.²⁸¹ It is a testament to Schweitzer's hard-fought 2000 Senate race and constant activity around Montana in the years afterward that he was familiar to more voters entering 2004 than a twenty-six-year state legislator and sitting secretary of state.

Later polling continued to show Schweitzer with a healthy lead over Brown, although sometimes by widely varying margins. A Mason-Dixon poll released in late October gave Schweitzer a 48% to 43% advantage, while 8% of respondents were undecided.²⁸² Just days before that poll's release, a Montana State University-Billings

²⁸¹ "Poll: Pair of Whitefish Residents 'Leading' 2004 Governor's Race," Associated Press, December 14, 2003. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=1b28371c01ad4a349e2f7153a0f77e7c&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=5711778f2329438313325e41850b4fd7.

poll presented quite different results. The MSU poll showed Schweitzer leading Brown 43% to 28%, with 27% of respondents undecided.²⁸³ Given the wide discrepancy between this poll and others conducted throughout the campaign, Thielman dismissed it as inaccurate. “I don’t want to disparage the students and their polling,” he said, “but this is not a professional poll and doesn’t match with any of the other polling, public or private, that we’ve seen.”²⁸⁴

Schweitzer’s Decisive Monetary Advantage

One of Brian Schweitzer’s most important advantages throughout the gubernatorial campaign was his superior campaign funding. In total, Schweitzer raised nearly \$1.5 million, spending all but \$95,000, while Brown collected \$1.2 million and spent all but \$3,000. These figures were skewed by a late surge on Brown’s part; in the last twenty-five days of the campaign, Brown raised \$83,248 to Schweitzer’s \$40,545.²⁸⁵ By that point, though, it was difficult for Brown to compete with Schweitzer, as Schweitzer outspent him by an almost two to one margin in the critical months of September and October.

Complicating the fundraising activities of Schweitzer and Brown was the fact that the candidates were often competing for a very similar pool of donors. According to the

²⁸² “Schweitzer Leads Brown in New Poll,” Associated Press, October 24, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=0d8bcff63a469b36953ab7023815ac2a&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=8595e3babf593efe5f8797b58d787ccd.

²⁸³ Anez, “Resumes.”

²⁸⁴ Anez, “Poll Shows Schweitzer With Big Lead Over Brown,” Associated Press, October 14, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=8bf89dde980fc89c7dc8f10d289a3d3a&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=fd0d1bbf82ff9f6c59799c8c17b38640. [Hereafter cited as Anez, “Shows.”]

²⁸⁵ Anez, “Governor’s Race Fund-Raising Tops \$2.3 Billion,” Associated Press, October 18, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=2e107a7dfc113806758c6d204758a64e&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=f7c05a8de3e2bba968182b4117fa6e39.

Great Falls Tribune, both received most of their contributions from business owners, retirees, lawyers, teachers, and farmers.²⁸⁶ Moreover, most of their contributions came from the same six cities: Billings, Missoula, Bozeman, Helena, Great Falls, and Whitefish.²⁸⁷ There were important differences in their fundraising patterns, though. As of early September, Schweitzer had attracted 8,500 donors to Brown's 3,700. Out-of-state contributors, many of them donors to his 2000 Senate race, provided Schweitzer with \$214,000, or 19% of his total campaign funds. Meanwhile, Brown was able to attract only 8.5% of his contributions from outside Montana.²⁸⁸ Schweitzer boasted of his fundraising successes as evidence of broad and diverse support for his candidacy. "I've got a wide band of support," he said. "I have Republicans and Democrats and Independents. We have hundreds of people, maybe thousands of people, who have never contributed to a campaign before."²⁸⁹

Contributions of the Montana Democratic Party

As a candidate intent on distancing himself from partisan politics and portraying himself as a government outsider with broad bipartisan support, Brian Schweitzer did not rely heavily on the Montana Democratic Party to deliver his electoral victory. The party helped with many basic aspects of the campaign, including organization, leaflets, canvassing, and get-out-the-vote efforts. Moreover, it had the ability to raise money indirectly for Schweitzer's campaign and attack his opponent without reflecting directly

²⁸⁶ "Schweitzer, Brown Draw Money From Array of Sources," Associated Press, September 20, 2004. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=b3729b1f7e0d4db9f41b6dd17cab253d&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVb&_md5=24b4186c26ee8c37138c5d9245cf7b39. [Hereafter cited as "Sources."]

²⁸⁷ "Retirees."

²⁸⁸ "Sources."

²⁸⁹ "Retirees."

on Schweitzer. For the most part, however, Schweitzer “distanced himself from the formal [Democratic] Party in Helena.”²⁹⁰ This was indicated by Schweitzer’s decision to establish campaign headquarters in his hometown of Whitefish, two hundred miles outside of Helena. It was a very unusual move for a statewide candidate to run his campaign out of anywhere but the state capitol. Yet this decision was an important symbol of Schweitzer’s intention to run as an individual not bound by partisan constraints. “We didn’t call on them,” Schweitzer said dismissively of the Montana Democratic Party’s role in his gubernatorial campaign.

We had our own volunteers. We built a base of Brian supporters, not a base of Democrats who were showing up for Brian.... It looked a lot different than the traditional Democratic supporters. We went out and mined new people to get excited about politics. A great part of the people who worked for us had never been involved in politics in their lives.²⁹¹

While the Montana Democratic Party provided logistical assistance to the Schweitzer campaign, the above evidence indicates that it was not an essential strategic partner in the Schweitzer gubernatorial campaign. This level of involvement differs from the Vermont gubernatorial election, in which the Vermont Republican Party cooperated intimately with the Douglas campaign. Thus, even if campaign strategies are to be deemed primary factors in state voter choices of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year, in some cases the strategies are not attributable to the efforts of state party organizations. This study’s thesis therefore must be qualified to reflect the varying contributions of state party organizations.

Evaluating the Significance of Schweitzer Campaign Strategies

²⁹⁰ Wilson, *op cit.*

²⁹¹ Schweitzer, *op cit.*

The Schweitzer campaign believed it had a strong chance of victory from the outset of the campaign. “We were in about as good a position as you could possibly ask for,” Stern reflected.²⁹² Indeed, Brian Schweitzer was an excellent gubernatorial candidate who far exceeded expectations in his only previous race, while his opponent was a reluctant candidate hamstrung by party disunity and a backlash against Republican state governance. Although the presidential election did not seem to have any coattail effects in the gubernatorial election, Schweitzer was quite possibly the beneficiary of a late surge toward Democratic candidates in Montana. An October poll showed that 49% of respondents planned to vote for a Republican candidate in the upcoming legislative elections, while 35% said they would vote for a Democrat and 13% were undecided.²⁹³ Given the fact that Democrats won control of the legislature in the November elections, it would appear that voters broke heavily toward Democratic candidates at the end of the campaign. Thus, the Schweitzer campaign had several independent factors pointing toward victory, including voters’ strong preference for change in state leadership, an excellent candidate, a weak opponent, and the minimal attention paid to the presidential election by Montana’s largely pro-Bush electorate. Yet the foregoing analysis suggests that it would be a mistake to discount the role of gubernatorial campaign strategies in shaping the final election results.

As was the case in Vermont, Montana’s winning gubernatorial candidate never polled at his eventual vote percentage before Election Day. In Brian Schweitzer’s case, his 51% of the vote made for a much narrower margin of victory than Jim Douglas enjoyed in Vermont. Schweitzer’s slim victory meant that campaign strategies had all the

²⁹² Stern, *op cit.*

²⁹³ Anez, “Shows.”

more opportunity to influence the outcome of the election than Douglas' did in his race. As delineated above, the Schweitzer campaign introduced several brilliant tactics that may have accounted for voters' eventual decisions to support his candidacy. Projecting the "Brawny Rancher" image was important in gaining voters' trust while reinforcing the populist, outsider theme of the Schweitzer campaign. The Schweitzer campaign also succeeded in gaining voters' trust by identifying him with hunting and fishing issues. (Its success is indicated by the previously mentioned Schweitzer campaign poll in which respondents stated that Schweitzer "shared their values" more than Brown.) Instead of accepting a defensive stance on hunting and fishing issues, given Republicans' traditional advantages on them, Schweitzer masterfully outflanked his Republican opponent by focusing on land access. While appealing strongly to conservative gamesmen as the most aggressive protector of hunting and fishing rights in the race, Schweitzer also appealed to his Democratic base through land access because his plan benefited the environment and maintained state control of public lands. With hunting and fishing issues, as well as with gay marriage, Schweitzer cleverly removed from the gubernatorial election debate some of the most divisive partisan issues often used by Republicans to demonize Democratic opponents. While it is difficult to catalogue these positions as campaign strategies because they may simply represent honest enunciations of the candidate's deeply held convictions, it is fair to say that Schweitzer was forthright in advertising these views. Quite likely, he did this to assure Montana voters that he shared their core values. Most significantly, though, by taking these divisive issues off the table, Schweitzer ensured a campaign focused less on contentious issues and more on the general theme of leadership that was advantageous to his candidacy.

The Schweitzer campaign dominated the gubernatorial election's core issue, leadership, thanks in large part to its effective campaign strategies. Foremost among these strategies were tying Bob Brown to the Republican political establishment, portraying Schweitzer as a government outsider, and selecting Republican John Bohlinger to run on the Democratic ticket for lieutenant governor. The Schweitzer campaign managed to "cleverly and effectively" tie Brown to: the Republican legislature's unpopular 1997 electricity industry deregulation, although he was not a member of the legislature at the time; the Judy Martz Administration, although he was not a member of it and had little affinity for Martz; and the Republican political establishment, although he was among its most moderate, independent members. Given the strong antiestablishment current among voters at this time, it was a tremendous coup for the Schweitzer campaign to convincingly argue these tenuous ties, to the detriment of Brown's candidacy.

Moreover, the Schweitzer campaign was able to further capitalize on antiestablishment sentiment by effectively portraying Schweitzer as a government outsider. Since Schweitzer had never held political office, this should not have been very difficult. Yet he reinforced this perception cleverly, by distancing himself from the formal Democratic Party apparatus, holding a lieutenant governor's audition, and campaigning differently from typical candidates in terms of dress, speech, and enthusiasm. Lastly, and perhaps most important, was Schweitzer's selection of John Bohlinger as his running mate. This move unmistakably signaled to voters that Schweitzer was serious about bipartisan governance and defying political conventions. It also had other, less obvious consequences beneficial to the Schweitzer campaign. First, creating a bipartisan ticket deprived Brown of his general election trump card, his

reputation and record of bipartisan cooperation. Second, Bohlinger's selection helped Schweitzer to gain support in Billings, the most electorally significant city in Montana and typically a Republican stronghold.

Like the Vermont gubernatorial election, the Montana gubernatorial election did not produce exit polling in which voters were asked to assess the importance of gubernatorial campaign strategies and other factors behind their votes. While there is thus no way to scientifically measure the impact of gubernatorial campaign strategies in the 2004 Montana gubernatorial election, there are substantial indications that they played the decisive role in Brian Schweitzer's bare-majority victory. Certainly, factors independent of campaign strategies contributed to Schweitzer's victory, including voter dissatisfaction with Republican governance, Schweitzer's attractive personality and moderate political philosophy, Brown's uninspired candidacy, and Republican disunity. Voters were aware of these factors early in the campaign, or at least well before the very end. Yet Schweitzer's final share of the vote, 51%, was not reflected in any of the polling done throughout the campaign; he peaked in October at 48%.

Why did the necessary amount of voters decide at the end of the gubernatorial campaign to support Schweitzer? Might it have been that voters, as Stern suggested, opted for the populist image of the "Brawny Rancher" for lack of any substantive voting basis? Might they have been convinced by the Schweitzer campaign's arguments that Brown was an establishment politician incapable of bringing meaningful change to Helena, or by the argument that Schweitzer was actually capable of bringing such a change? Were they impressed by the symbolism of an unprecedented bipartisan ticket? Were they convinced that Schweitzer was the more credible protector of hunting and

fishing rights? These, too, are all distinct possibilities, and it is hard to see how they could be ruled out as contributors to the gubernatorial election outcome. They were also products of a very focused, perceptive, adept gubernatorial campaign on behalf of Brian Schweitzer.

Thus, the 2004 Montana gubernatorial election provides an important test of the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. The evidence shows that this study's thesis must be qualified to reflect the varying contributions of state party organizations to the development and implementation of gubernatorial campaign strategies. More importantly, though, the evidence does not provide a concrete basis for evaluating the essence of this study's thesis, that campaign strategies are primarily responsible for mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Yet the lack of a concrete basis for evaluation does not invalidate this study's thesis. This study has uncovered many important indications that its thesis is for the most part valid.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study

This study tests the thesis that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year. It does so by presenting data interpretations, media analysis, and case studies featuring personal interviews with campaign participants and observers.

The previous chapter has already indicated that this study's thesis necessitates qualification to reflect the varying roles of state party organizations in developing and implementing gubernatorial campaign strategies. Drawing firm conclusions on the validity of this study's thesis is further complicated by conflicting evidence on the influence of presidential coattails. Recent electoral data presented in Chapter II show that mixed partisan outcomes occur more frequently in separated versus simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Yet the explanation for this disparity is elusive. The preceding case studies of Vermont and Montana's 2004 gubernatorial elections exhibit no evidence of significant presidential coattail effects. Moreover, data presented later in this chapter indicate that, while presidential elections produce much higher gubernatorial vote totals in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial elections, they do not exert discernible coattail effects. In fact, the most recent electoral data actually indicate that gubernatorial candidates of a state's losing presidential party improve their vote percentages in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections, while outperforming gubernatorial candidates of a state's winning presidential party in simultaneous elections.

The intriguing disconnect between these data require further research. It also complicates evaluations of this study's thesis. If presidential coattails significantly influence simultaneous gubernatorial election results, this is all the more reason to expect that persuasive gubernatorial campaign strategies are necessary to produce mixed partisan outcomes. On the other hand, if presidential coattails do not significantly influence simultaneous gubernatorial elections results, there is nothing unique about the role of gubernatorial campaign strategies in causing mixed partisan outcomes in these elections.

This is not to say that gubernatorial campaign strategies then would not be decisive and this study's thesis would be invalid, only that they would be equally consequential in *all* cases of gubernatorial and presidential mixed partisan outcomes. As a result, there would be no need for gubernatorial campaigns to compensate in any way for simultaneous presidential elections. There would also be no reason to further study simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections as a unique phenomenon and no reason for state legislators to concern themselves with scheduling gubernatorial elections so as to avoid presidential influences.

This chapter presents conclusions on the significance of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, in terms of how they impact gubernatorial campaigns and election outcomes. It draws on these conclusions to evaluate the validity of this study's thesis, and proposes areas for further study.

Differing Dynamics Among States With Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

Chapter II indicates that there is no clear formula for predicting which types of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections will produce mixed partisan outcomes. Recent election data indicate that there are no sweeping votes for change and no correspondence between mixed partisan outcomes in close elections or landslides. Each election must be examined individually to determine the reasons for its outcome. As Bob Brown explained, "If you look at the governor's race in Kentucky or Missouri or Florida or wherever, you'd find a set of circumstances unique to that state and that

election and that time.”²⁹⁴ Although only four states produced mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections in 2004, they represented a remarkably diverse set of states and political environments. Moreover, the campaigns examined in this work’s two case studies demonstrate that presidential elections do not affect simultaneous gubernatorial elections uniformly.

Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections Occur in a Variety of States and Political Environments

The occurrence of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections is not restricted to particular types of states or political environments. The 2004 elections produced such results all over the country, including New England (Vermont), the Mid-Atlantic (West Virginia), the South (North Carolina), and the West (Montana). Moreover, they occurred in less populated, rural states (Vermont, West Virginia, Montana), as well as a more populated and industrial state (North Carolina).

In terms of political environments, mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections occurred in Republican presidential states (West Virginia, North Carolina, Montana) and a Democratic presidential state (Vermont); they occurred in a presidential swing state (West Virginia),²⁹⁵ the neighbor of a swing state (Vermont, neighbor of New Hampshire), a weakly contested state (North Carolina), and a virtually uncontested state (Montana); they occurred by narrow margins in gubernatorial elections (Montana), as well as by gubernatorial landslides (West Virginia, North

²⁹⁴ Brown, *op cit.*

²⁹⁵ Although Republican Bush won West Virginia by a landslide 56% to 43% margin (landslide being defined as a win by ten percentage points or more), the state was traditionally a Democratic stronghold and widely regarded as a swing state during the presidential campaign.

Carolina, Vermont),²⁹⁶ they occurred in incumbent gubernatorial elections (Vermont, North Carolina), as well as open seat elections (West Virginia, Montana); they occurred at the same time that the winning gubernatorial candidate's party gained control of their state legislatures (Montana, North Carolina), at the same time that the winning gubernatorial candidate's party lost control of its state legislature (Vermont), and at the same time that the winning gubernatorial candidate's party maintained control of its state legislature (West Virginia).

Gubernatorial Campaigns Do Not Uniformly Incorporate Simultaneous Presidential Elections

The case studies presented earlier on Vermont and Montana's 2004 gubernatorial elections demonstrate that presidential elections have widely varying impacts on simultaneous gubernatorial election campaigns. The presidential election and national politics played a very prominent role in Vermont's gubernatorial campaign. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Peter Clavelle made Republican Governor Jim Douglas' support of Republican President George W. Bush and the Iraq war a central campaign issue during the campaign's final month. Clavelle's first television ad featured a car with a bumper sticker for the Bush-Cheney presidential ticket alongside a Douglas for Governor bumper sticker. Clavelle's first Internet ad featured a caricature of Douglas in cowboy dress, speaking in a thick Texas accent about his support for the Bush ticket. Rhetorically, Clavelle and his campaign representatives told voters that they could not support Douglas' candidacy without also supporting Bush's candidacy.

²⁹⁶ In Montana, Democrat Brian Schweitzer defeated Republican Bob Brown, 51% to 47%; in West Virginia, Democrat Joe Manchin defeated Republican Monty Warner, 64% to 34%; in North Carolina, Democrat Mike Easley defeated Republican Patrick Ballantine, 56% to 34%; in Vermont, Republican Jim Douglas defeated Democrat Peter Clavelle, 59% to 38%.

By contrast, the campaign of Montana Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Brown did not attempt to tie Democratic opponent Brian Schweitzer to Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, despite Kerry's unpopularity in the state. Brown also did not emphasize national political issues, such as the Iraq war. Schweitzer, for his part, did not discuss the presidential election and national politics. He was not a visible supporter of Kerry, whereas Governor Douglas served as chairman of the Bush-Cheney campaign in Vermont.

Conclusions on the Relevance of Presidential Elections to Simultaneous Gubernatorial Elections

Analysis of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, particularly voting data from the 2004 elections, lead to two important conclusions about the relevance of presidential elections to simultaneous gubernatorial elections. First, the total votes cast for governor increases dramatically when coinciding with a presidential election. Second, the increase in votes cast for governor during a presidential election year does not confer a detectable benefit, or coattail effect, on the gubernatorial candidate of a state's winning presidential party. The second conclusion, as discussed earlier in this chapter, conflicts with the evidence presented in Chapter II

demonstrating that mixed partisan outcomes are more likely to occur in separated versus simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Thus, further study is required to explain this conflict before any definitive conclusions can be reached on the influence of presidential coattails on simultaneous gubernatorial election results.

Increases in Gubernatorial Voting

Presidential elections have a clear and dramatic impact on the total votes cast for governor. In simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, the total votes cast for governor are nearly identical to the number cast for president; in 2004, 15,225,053 votes were cast for governor in states that also cast 15,371,615 votes for president. The gubernatorial vote total in states with simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections thus equaled 99% of the total votes cast in those states for president. This is in sharp contrast to states with separated gubernatorial and presidential elections; in these states, 70,241,301 votes were cast for governor in elections held between 2001 and 2003, whereas 106,774,207 votes were cast in these states for president in 2004. The gubernatorial vote total in states with separated gubernatorial and presidential elections thus equaled only 65.8% of the total votes cast in those states for president. This means that gubernatorial voting rates increased by more than half in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial elections. (See Chart 1 for gubernatorial and presidential vote total comparisons in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections, 2001-2004.)

Chart 1. Gubernatorial and Presidential Vote Total Comparisons in Separated Versus Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections, 2001-2004

Separated Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

	Election Year	Presidential Vote Total	Gub'torial Vote Total	Presidential Minus Gub'l	Gub'l % of Prs'l Vote
Alabama	2002	1,883,415	1,366,603	-516,812	72.6
Alaska	2002	312,598	231,484	-81,114	74.1
Arizona	2002	2,012,585	1,226,111	-786,474	60.9
Arkansas	2002	1,054,945	805,332	-249,613	76.3
California*	2003	12,450,804	8,657,915	-3,792,889	69.5
Colorado	2002	2,129,630	1,412,602	-717,028	66.3
Connecticut	2002	1,578,769	1,022,942	-1,106,688	64.8
Florida	2002	7,609,810	5,058,272	-2,551,538	66.5
Georgia	2002	3,298,790	2,025,861	-1,272,929	61.4
Hawaii	2002	429,013	376,656	-52,357	87.8
Idaho	2002	598,376	411,477	-186,899	68.8
Illinois	2002	5,274,322	3,538,883	-1,735,439	67.1
Iowa	2002	1,506,908	1,025,802	-481,106	68.1
Kansas	2002	1,187,756	818,688	-369,068	68.9
Kentucky	2003	1,795,860	1,083,443	-712,417	60.3
Louisiana	2003	1,943,106	1,407,842	-535,264	72.5
Maine	2002	740,752	494,578	-246,174	66.8
Maryland	2002	2,384,238	1,693,014	-691,224	71.0
Mass.	2002	2,912,388	2,192,878	-719,510	75.3
Michigan	2002	4,839,252	3,177,565	-1,661,687	65.7
Minnesota	2002	2,828,387	2,252,473	-575,914	79.6
Mississippi	2003	1,152,145	894,487	-257,658	77.6
Nebraska	2002	778,186	480,991	-297,195	61.8
Nevada	2002	829,587	504,079	-325,508	60.8
New Jersey	2001	3,611,691	2,185,027	-1,426,664	60.5
New Mexico	2002	756,304	484,229	-272,075	64.0
New York	2002	7,448,266	4,579,078	-2,869,188	61.5
Ohio	2002	5,627,903	3,228,617	-2,399,286	57.4
Oklahoma	2002	1,463,758	1,035,620	-428,138	70.8
Oregon	2002	1,836,782	1,257,549	-579,233	68.5
Pennsylvania	2002	5,765,764	3,582,560	-2,183,204	62.1
Rhode Island	2002	437,134	331,834	-105,300	75.9
S. Carolina	2002	1,619,898	1,106,562	-513,336	68.3
S. Dakota	2002	388,215	334,559	-53,656	86.2
Tennessee	2002	2,437,319	1,624,087	-813,232	66.6
Texas	2002	7,410,749	4,553,982	-2,856,767	61.5
Virginia	2001	3,198,367	1,871,411	-1,326,956	58.5

Wisconsin	2002	2,997,007	1,720,749	-1,276,258	57.4
Wyoming	2002	243,428	185,459	-57,969	76.2
Totals		106,774,207	70,241,301	-36,532,906	65.8

* California held a special recall vote for governor in 2003. Its regular elections take place in even non-presidential years (2002, 2006).

Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

	Election Year	Presidential Vote Total	Gub'torial Vote Total	Presidential Minus Gub'l	Gub'l % of Prs'l Vote
Delaware	2004	375,190	365,008	-10,182	97.3
Indiana	2004	2,468,002	2,448,503	-19,499	99.2
Missouri	2004	2,731,364	2,719,599	-11,765	99.6
Montana	2004	450,434	446,146	-4,288	99.0
N. Hampshire	2004	677,662	665,539	-12,123	98.2
N. Carolina	2004	3,501,007	3,486,688	-14,319	99.6
N. Dakota	2004	312,833	309,873	-2,960	99.1
Utah	2004	927,844	919,960	-7,884	99.2
Vermont	2004	312,309	309,285	-3,024	99.0
Washington	2004	2,859,084	2,810,058	-49,026	98.3
W. Virginia	2004	755,886	744,394	-11,493	98.5
Totals		15,371,615	15,225,053	-146,562	99.0

Additional Voters in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections Do Not Create a Presidential Coattail Effect

The Douglas campaign, according to Lunderville, was concerned in 2004 that increased turnout among partisan Democrats for the presidential election “could have the effect of swallowing the governor’s campaign” in Vermont. Indeed, the disparity between gubernatorial vote totals in presidential and non-presidential years indicates that a large segment of the presidential-year gubernatorial electorate, approximately 33%, turns out only because it is motivated by the presidential election. Logic suggests that these voters are less knowledgeable and passionate about the gubernatorial election than the two-thirds of the presidential electorate that also turns out for separated gubernatorial elections. Logic further suggests that less knowledgeable and passionate gubernatorial voters motivated primarily by presidential politics will be heavily influenced by presidential politics when deciding their gubernatorial votes. In other words, presidential year gubernatorial voters seem much more likely than off-year gubernatorial voters to vote for the same party in gubernatorial and presidential elections. Surprisingly, the evidence does not support this logic.

Judging by the most recent electoral data, gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party actually benefit more from simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections than gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party. (See Chart 2, listing state votes for gubernatorial candidates of the winning and losing presidential parties in separated versus simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.) In gubernatorial elections held from 2001 to 2003, gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party received 47.9% of the gubernatorial vote, compared with 45.9% for gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party. In 2004, gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party received 48.7% of the gubernatorial vote, compared with 49.7% for gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party. This data indicate that voters were *not* more likely in a presidential election year to base their gubernatorial votes on presidential preferences than they were in non-presidential years. In fact, quite the opposite appears to have been the case. The vote percentage of gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party not only increased in a presidential election year, it exceeded that of gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party.

Moreover, gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party exceeded their party’s presidential vote total in 2004, while gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party fell short of their party’s presidential vote total. In these elections, gubernatorial candidates of a state’s winning presidential party earned 7,407,084 votes, equal to 85.3% of the state presidential winner’s 8,681,482 votes. Gubernatorial candidates of a state’s losing presidential party, on the other hand, earned 7,564,986 votes, equal to 115.8% of the state presidential loser’s 6,535,504 votes.

Chart 2. State Votes for Gubernatorial Candidates of the Winning and Losing Presidential Parties in Separated Versus Simultaneous Elections

Separated Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

	Elxn Year	Presidential Vote Totals	Gubernat'l Vote Totals	Pr'l Winner Vote Totals	Win.Pr.Party Gu.VoteTotals	Party %	Pr'l Loser Vote Totals	Los.Pr.Party Gu.VoteTotals	Party %
Alabama	2002	1,883,415	1,366,603	1,176,394	672,225 (R)	57.1	693,933	669,105 (D)	96.4
Alaska	2002	312,598	231,484	190,889	129,279 (R)	67.7	111,025	94,216 (D)	84.9
Arizona	2002	2,012,585	1,226,111	1,104,294	544,465 (R)	49.3	893,524	566,284 (D)	63.4
Arkansas	2002	1,054,945	805,332	572,898	427,082 (R)	74.5	469,953	378,250 (D)	80.5
California*	2003	12,450,804	8,657,915	6,745,485	2,724,874 (D)	40.4	5,509,826	4,206,284 (R)	76.3
Colorado	2002	2,129,630	1,412,602	1,101,255	884,583 (R)	80.3	1,001,732	475,373 (D)	47.5
Connec.	2002	1,578,769	1,022,942	857,488	448,984 (D)	52.4	693,826	573,958 (R)	82.7
Florida	2002	7,609,810	5,058,272	3,964,522	2,856,845 (R)	72.1	3,583,544	2,201,427 (D)	61.4
Georgia	2002	3,301,867	2,025,861	1,914,254	1,041,677 (R)	54.4	1,366,149	937,062 (D)	68.6
Hawaii	2002	429,013	376,656	231,708	179,647 (D)	77.5	194,191	197,009 (R)	101.5
Idaho	2002	598,376	411,477	409,235	231,566 (R)	56.6	181,098	171,711 (D)	94.8
Illinois	2002	5,274,322	3,538,883	2,891,550	1,847,040 (D)	63.9	2,345,946	1,594,960 (R)	68.0
Iowa	2002	1,506,908	1,025,802	751,957	456,612 (R)	60.7	741,898	540,449 (D)	72.8
Kansas	2002	1,187,756	818,688	736,456	376,830 (R)	51.2	434,993	441,858 (D)	101.6
Kentucky	2003	1,795,860	1,083,443	1,069,439	596,284 (R)	55.8	712,733	487,159 (D)	68.4
Louisiana	2003	1,943,106	1,407,842	1,102,169	676,484 (R)	61.4	820,299	731,358 (D)	89.2
Maine	2002	740,752	494,578	396,842	238,179 (D)	60.0	330,201	209,496 (R)	63.4
Maryland	2002	2,384,238	1,693,014	1,334,493	813,422 (D)	61.0	1,024,703	879,592 (R)	85.8
Mass.	2002	2,912,388	2,192,878	1,803,800	985,981 (D)	54.7	1,071,109	1,091,988 (R)	101.9
Michigan	2002	4,839,252	3,177,565	2,479,183	1,633,796 (D)	65.9	2,313,746	1,506,104 (R)	65.1
Minn.	2002	2,828,387	2,252,473	1,445,014	821,268 (D)	56.8	1,346,695	999,473 (R)	74.2
Miss'ppi	2003	1,152,145	894,487	684,981	470,404 (R)	68.7	457,766	409,787 (D)	89.5
Nebraska	2002	778,186	480,991	512,814	330,349 (R)	64.4	254,328	132,348 (D)	52.0
Nevada	2002	829,587	504,079	418,690	344,001 (R)	82.2	397,190	110,935 (D)	27.9
New Jer.	2001	3,611,691	2,185,027	1,911,430	1,256,853 (D)	65.8	1,670,003	928,174 (R)	55.6
New Mex.	2002	756,304	484,229	376,930	189,090 (R)	50.2	370,942	268,674 (D)	72.4
New York	2002	7,448,266	4,579,078	4,314,280	1,534,064 (D)	35.6	2,962,567	2,262,255 (R)	76.4
Ohio	2002	5,627,903	3,228,617	2,859,764	1,865,007 (R)	65.2	2,741,165	1,236,924 (D)	45.1
Oklah.	2002	1,463,758	1,035,620	959,792	441,277 (R)	46.0	503,966	448,143 (D)	88.9
Oregon	2002	1,836,782	1,257,549	943,163	618,004 (D)	65.5	866,831	581,785 (R)	67.1
Penns.	2002	5,765,764	3,582,560	2,938,095	1,913,235 (D)	65.1	2,793,847	1,589,408 (R)	56.9
Rhode I.	2002	437,134	331,834	259,760	150,147 (D)	57.8	169,046	181,687 (R)	107.5
S. Car.	2002	1,619,898	1,106,562	937,974	585,422 (R)	62.4	661,699	521,140 (D)	78.8
S Dakota	2002	388,215	334,559	232,584	189,920 (R)	81.7	149,244	140,263 (D)	94.0
Tenness.	2002	2,437,319	1,624,087	1,384,375	786,803 (R)	56.8	1,036,477	837,284 (D)	80.8
Texas	2002	7,410,749	4,553,982	4,526,917	2,632,541 (R)	58.2	2,832,704	1,819,843 (D)	64.2
Virginia	2001	3,198,367	1,871,411	1,716,959	887,234 (R)	51.7	1,454,742	984,177 (D)	67.7
Wiscon.	2002	2,997,007	1,720,749	1,489,504	800,515 (D)	53.7	1,478,120	734,779 (R)	49.7
Wyoming	2002	243,428	185,459	167,629	88,873 (R)	53.0	70,776	92,662 (D)	130.9
Totals		106,774,207	70,241,301	58,914,966	33,670,862	57.2	46,712,537	32,233,384	69.0

*California held a special recall vote for governor in 2003. Its regular elections take place in even non-presidential years (2002,2006).

Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

	Elxn Year	Presidential Vote Totals	Gubernat'l Vote Totals	Pr'l Winner Vote Totals	Win.Pr.Party Gu.VoteTotals	Party %	Pr'l Loser Vote Totals	Los.Pr.Party Gu.VoteTotals	Party %
Delaware	2004	375,190	365,008	200,152	185,687 (D)	92.8	171,660	167,115 (R)	97.4

Indiana	2004	2,468,002	2,448,503	1,479,438	1,302,907 (R)	88.1	969,011	1,113,879 (D)	115.0
Missouri	2004	2,731,364	2,719,599	1,455,713	1,382,419 (R)	95.0	1,259,171	1,301,442 (D)	103.4
Montana	2004	450,434	446,146	266,063	205,313 (R)	77.2	173,710	225,016 (D)	130.0
N. Hamp.	2004	677,662	665,539	340,511	339,925 (D)	99.8	331,237	325,614 (R)	98.3
N. Car.	2004	3,501,007	3,486,688	1,961,166	1,495,021 (R)	76.2	1,525,849	1,939,154 (D)	127.1
N. Dakota	2004	312,833	309,873	196,651	220,803 (R)	112.3	111,052	84,877 (D)	76.4
Utah	2004	927,844	919,960	663,742	531,190 (R)	80.0	241,199	380,359 (D)	157.7
Vermont	2004	312,309	309,285	184,067	117,327 (D)	63.7	121,180	181,540 (R)	149.8
Washing.	2004	2,859,084	2,810,058	1,510,201	1,373,361 (D)	90.9	1,304,894	1,373,232 (R)	105.2
W. Virg.	2004	755,886	744,394	423,778	253,131 (R)	59.7	326,541	472,758 (D)	144.8
Totals		15,371,615	15,225,053	8,681,482	7,407,084	85.3	6,535,504	7,564,986	115.8

Although a simultaneous presidential election produces a substantial increase in votes cast for governor over separated elections, the above data indicate that voters motivated to turn out by the presidential election do not automatically select gubernatorial candidates of the same party as their preferred presidential candidate. In fact, voters distinguish between gubernatorial and presidential elections and often choose candidates of different parties. This evidence, as well as the qualitative evidence gathered from the Vermont and Montana case studies, afford no method for explaining the consistent advantage of separated versus simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections in producing mixed partisan outcomes, as detailed in Chapter II.

Some speculative explanations for the mixed evidence of presidential coattails are worth considering. Perhaps separated and simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections are trending toward similar rates of mixed partisan outcomes and it is only showing in the most recent electoral results. This would explain why evidence from elections held between 2001 and 2004 give different indications about presidential coattail effects in gubernatorial elections than evidence from elections held between 1980 and 2004. Graph 3 from Chapter II indeed shows a smaller gap in recent years between simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections than in previous years when the gap widened consistently. In 2000, the rates of mixed partisan outcomes were virtually identical, and in 2004 there actually would have been a higher rate in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections had only 130 more Washingtonians voted for Republican gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi.

The last point highlights another important consideration; with only eleven states holding simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections today, compared with thirty-nine states that hold them separately, comparisons between rates of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous versus separated gubernatorial and presidential elections are highly sensitive to the political phenomena of a single state. Perhaps the small group of eleven states now holding simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, or even an influential one or two, weighs presidential coattails differently than most other states and that skews the overall statistics. These are possible explanations, but the truth is not yet clear. Perhaps election data from 2008 and beyond will provide needed clarification.

Conclusions on the Role of Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies in Producing Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections

The mixed evidence of presidential coattail effects in simultaneous gubernatorial election complicates evaluation of this study's thesis. If presidential coattails do not have a significant impact on simultaneous gubernatorial election results, the thesis would be valid yet misleading. It would then imply that campaign strategies of gubernatorial candidates and their state party organizations are the primary factors affecting state voter choice of gubernatorial and presidential candidates of different parties in the same election year, *but* not in other years. If presidential coattails do not significantly impact simultaneous gubernatorial elections, the primary factors affecting their outcome must be the same that affect all other types of gubernatorial elections. In other words, simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections would be unexceptional and the thesis' focus on them would be unnecessary.

While the above scenario would render the thesis somewhat misleading, it would not render it invalid. The thesis could still be valid, only it would need to be put in context. A more troubling obstacle when attempting to certify the thesis' validity is the lack of conclusive data, as well as methods for discovering them. Exit polling presents advantages toward producing such data, but, for reasons discussed below, it is not a conclusive source of information.

The best available tools for testing the thesis are utilized in this study, including data interpretation, media analysis, and case studies of Vermont and Montana's 2004 gubernatorial elections featuring campaign polls and personal interviews with campaign participants and observers. These sources of information yield valuable understandings of the campaign strategies useful to gubernatorial candidates running in the same year that their party's presidential candidate loses their state's vote.

Would Improved Exit Polling Help to Assess This Study's Thesis?

Exit polling has two distinct advantages over other methodological tools. First, unlike polls conducted during the gubernatorial campaign, they only elicit responses from people who have actually voted. Second, voters provide information to exit pollsters at the end of the campaign, after they have made their election decisions and absorbed all the potential factors influencing their votes.

Voters' responses to several exit poll questions would help to evaluate this study's thesis. Useful questions would include, "How important was the gubernatorial campaign run by your preferred gubernatorial candidate and his state party organization in influencing your vote?" "What campaign strategies were persuasive to you?" "What other factors influenced your vote?" "Did the presidential election influence your vote for governor?"

While responses to the questions would be helpful in assessing this study's thesis, respondent and institutional defects prevent exit polling from providing conclusive data. In terms of respondent defects, most voters are incapable of pinpointing with absolute certainty what factors have decisively influenced their votes. Some voters are able to identify exactly why they voted for a given candidate; for example, they may be single-issue voters or inflexible partisans. For most voters, however, their decisions are more complicated. Many factors contribute to human decision-making processes, consciously and subconsciously, making it extremely difficult for any individual to comprehensively assess the interplay and consequences of all the factors influencing their vote choices. Therefore, most voters would be unable to give exit pollsters a reliable explanation of their choices. Voters might also be incapable of distinguishing between campaign strategies and other factors independent of campaigns. For example, who and what is responsible for a vote cast in favor of Governor Jim Douglas based on a favorable opinion of his personality? Does the voter learn to value Douglas' personal traits by meeting him at campaign events designed to familiarize voters with him, or by observing him through the media coverage inevitably given to a sitting governor?

Voters' vanities might also obstruct accurate exit polling. Voters typically want to believe that they are knowledgeable and conscientious enough to reach electoral decisions on their own terms, rather than being manipulated by gubernatorial campaign strategies. They are also likely to be too embarrassed to admit the influence of presidential coattails on their gubernatorial votes, because their admission would make them appear uninformed and illogical. Exit polling is also complicated by institutional defects: absentee voters are not included in exit polls; not every voter is willing to reveal his vote or his understanding of the reasons behind it; not all respondents are honest when responding to exit pollsters.

The 2004 presidential election provides a fine example of the unreliability of exit polling. Election Day polls showed Kerry defeating Bush, only to have Bush win the nation's popular and electoral votes. Thus, exit polling is uniquely valuable because it polls actual voters at the end of the election campaign, but it is not a conclusive source of information for evaluating this study's thesis.

Campaign Polls and Interviews Indicate the Thesis' Validity

Although they lack the delineated advantages of exit polling, polls conducted during the gubernatorial campaign provide valuable indications of developing voter sentiment. One of the most important contributions they make to this study is the revelation that the final election results in Vermont and Montana's gubernatorial elections did not take shape until the end of the campaigns. In Vermont, Governor Douglas maintained a bare majority in polls conducted during the gubernatorial campaign, but he finished with a much higher share of the gubernatorial vote, 59%. Brian Schweitzer never polled a majority of respondents during his campaign, but he earned 51% of the vote on Election Day. The disparities between the candidates' performances during the campaign and in their elections indicate that gubernatorial campaign strategies had an opportunity to influence electoral outcomes, perhaps decisively. Other factors often cited in explaining Douglas' victory, such as incumbency and greater familiarity to voters than his opponent, were known from the outset of the campaign. Similarly, in Montana Republicans were divided from the beginning of the general election campaign, Bob Brown's weaknesses as a candidate were immediately evident, and Schweitzer had established his personal appeal in the 2000 Senate election. Yet campaign polls indicate that the decisive final results of these elections were not shaped early in the campaign when these realities first emerged. Since institutional factors such as those just described were constants throughout the campaign and gubernatorial campaign strategies are dynamic influences tailored to developing campaign conditions, it is reasonable to conclude that these strategies made the difference when voters formed their crucial final decisions at the end of the campaigns.

Without conclusive data to determine the validity of this study's thesis, perhaps the most useful source of information is the assessments by the campaign observers and participants who were most intimately involved with the gubernatorial campaigns. All interviewees for this study, including winning and losing gubernatorial candidates and their campaign chairmen, described gubernatorial campaign strategies as very important or decisive in shaping the election results. For example, Lunderville claimed that the Douglas campaign's September health care advertisement discredited Clavelle so thoroughly that it virtually ended the Clavelle campaign's chances of victory. In Montana, Brown described Schweitzer's selection of Republican John Bohlinger for his ticket's lieutenant governor candidate as the strategic maneuver that won Schweitzer the gubernatorial election. This is not to say that, according to the interviewees, the election outcomes would have been reversed if not for one strategy or another. Instead, they recognized the potential of gubernatorial campaign strategies to strongly influence public opinion, and they believed that this was accomplished by the winning gubernatorial campaigns in their races.

Which Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Are Most Useful in Producing Mixed Partisan Outcomes in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections?

The Vermont and Montana case studies provide valuable bases for evaluating which gubernatorial campaign strategies are most useful in producing mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. The central challenge to a gubernatorial candidate in these circumstances is overcoming the electorate's biases against his national party at a time when national partisan sentiments are charged by the presidential election. Many campaign strategies evident in the Vermont and Montana case studies were useful in overcoming voters' national partisan biases. First, the winning candidates muted discussions of ideology by emphasizing their interest in pragmatic, bipartisan governance. They often spoke of themselves as moderates and bolstered these claims through their actions and rhetoric. They also focused their campaigns on broad, unifying themes rather than divisive partisan issues; Douglas sought to build on his first-term record, particularly in terms of promoting economic growth, and Schweitzer focused on the need for change in state leadership.

One of the most effective ways in which the winning gubernatorial candidates overcame their electorates' national partisan biases was by adopting symbolically important state issues typically associated with the opposing party. Governor Douglas recognized that environmental protection was uniquely important to Vermont voters, and internal polls indicated that it was the only issue on which he needed to distance himself from President Bush. In response, Douglas touted his lawsuit against the Bush Administration over Midwest coal pollution and his efforts to remove phosphorous from Lake Champlain. He spoke of these issues prominently on the campaign trail and in television commercials. Environmental protection was a particularly safe issue for Douglas to adopt because it appealed to voters who typically would not support Republicans, but it also did not alienate state Republican voters who tended to favor stricter environmental policies than those advanced by their national counterparts.

Brian Schweitzer chose to emphasize hunting and fishing rights in the Montana gubernatorial election, an issue uniquely important to state voters and typically associated with the Republican Party. Montana had the nation's highest rate of gamesmen, and 70% of its residents owned guns. Consequently, Schweitzer identified himself very visibly as a hunter during the gubernatorial campaign. His campaign aired statewide an ad featuring Schweitzer and his brother carrying rifles and wearing hunting equipment. The ad also touted his "A-" rating from the NRA Political Victory Fund on gun issues. Substantively, Schweitzer gained a valuable advantage on hunting and fishing issues by promoting increased land access for gamesmen. These efforts led Montanans to regard Schweitzer as the campaign's more aggressive protector of hunting and fishing rights. A Schweitzer campaign poll showed that Montanans believed Schweitzer shared their values more than Brown did. Like Douglas, Schweitzer adopted an issue that appealed to voters typically unfavorable toward Democrats. At the same time, land access did not alienate Democratic state voters because it encouraged environmental protection and maintained state control over public lands.

Adopting symbolic issues was important because it helped Douglas and Schweitzer to gain the trust of the electorate and avoid categorical demonization as members of parties disfavored in their states. Another important way in which the gubernatorial candidates gained voters' trust was by meeting with them personally. Douglas was one of the most familiar faces in Vermont politics, having been a regular candidate for elective office since 1970. As treasurer and governor, he traveled extensively through the state, to the point that many opponents criticized him for excessive traveling. Douglas was widely regarded as a nice and genuine person. His cultivation of this reputation made it very difficult for Clavelle to foster distrust and dislike of Douglas when associating him with President Bush, the object of antipathy for many Vermonters.

Schweitzer was not as well known in Montana as Douglas was in Vermont, due primarily to his limited political experience. His run for the U.S. Senate in 2000, however, made Schweitzer a better-known candidate among the electorate than his opponent, Bob Brown. Schweitzer built on voter familiarity with him by meeting and talking with as many potential voters as he could during the gubernatorial campaign. Observers recalled debates at which Schweitzer would spend his extra time shaking hands with nearly everyone in the room, while Brown sat on the stage studying his notes. The Schweitzer campaign also gained voters' trust and approval by projecting the "Brawny Rancher" image that made Montanans believe he was "one of them." Television ads featured Schweitzer herding cattle, and he typically campaigned in jeans and flannel shirts.

Beyond overcoming national partisan biases among the electorate, gubernatorial campaign strategies were necessary to exploit opponent weaknesses. In Vermont, Clavelle was not well known to voters, his previous membership in the Progressive Party unnerved many Democrats and Independents, he was unable to clearly explain his universal health care program, and he focused intently and fruitlessly on national politics. The Douglas campaign exploited these weaknesses very effectively. It targeted voters unfamiliar with Clavelle, as well as moderate Democrats and Independents, when defining Clavelle early on as a liberal extremist and highlighting his participation in a 1989 pro-Sandinista march. The Douglas campaign also magnified Clavelle's failed attempt to clearly explain his universal health care proposal at a press conference, by using excerpts in a high-profile campaign advertisement.

In Montana, Brown was also not well known to voters, he led a Republican Party divided by a bitterly contested primary, he lacked compelling campaign issues, and he was widely regarded as an uninspiring, reluctant candidate. The Schweitzer campaign agitated existing divisions in the Republican Party by selecting Republican John Bohlinger as its nominee for lieutenant governor, while neutralizing the bipartisan appeal that was central to Brown's intended campaign. The Schweitzer campaign also successfully defined Brown as an extension of the governing political establishment for voters who did not fully understand his background and his place within the Montana Republican Party.

Lastly, the winning candidates were wise to dismiss national politics and the simultaneous presidential election. Certainly, gubernatorial candidates of a state's losing presidential party would be foolish to bring presidential politics into their campaigns. In Vermont, though, Douglas was forced to confront the presidential election and national politics because his opponent made them central issues in the gubernatorial campaign. Rather than defending President Bush and the Iraq

war when pressed by Clavelle, Douglas dismissed discussions of national politics as irrelevant to a gubernatorial election. He, like Schweitzer, remained focused on state issues. When insignificant issues distracted the gubernatorial campaigns, including national politics in Vermont and trivial issues such as car purchases in Montana, the Douglas and Schweitzer campaigns reminded voters that more serious and relevant issues merited discussion, such as the economy and health care. Based on discussions with the gubernatorial candidates and their top campaign officials, it is clear that the campaigns regarded national politics as irrelevant to gubernatorial elections. Many other participants and observers have agreed with this approach, and voters responded favorably to it.

Scant Evidence that Gubernatorial Campaign Strategies Useful in Simultaneous Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections Are Uniquely Applicable to Such Elections

The case studies of Vermont and Montana's 2004 gubernatorial elections indicate that the above strategies are useful for gubernatorial candidates running in the same year that a presidential candidate of their party is expected to lose the state's presidential vote. Yet these strategies (emphasizing practical, bipartisan governance; embracing broad, unifying themes; adopting symbolically important state issues; familiarizing voters with the candidate; exploiting opponent weaknesses; dismissing presidential politics to focus on state issues) seem equally applicable to gubernatorial candidates running in states that vote for presidential candidates of a different party in another year.²⁹⁷ Perhaps some strategies are more consequential in presidential voting years when voters intuitively seem more likely to bring national partisan biases into their gubernatorial voting decisions. Yet the data presented earlier in this chapter indicate that voters are not especially likely to apply their national partisan biases to gubernatorial votes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. If this is an accurate indication, then there is no need for gubernatorial campaigns to craft their strategies any differently in a presidential year than they would in a non-presidential year. Whether this is the case, of course, depends on whether presidential coattails have a significant impact on simultaneous gubernatorial election results, and the available evidence is mixed.

Areas for Further Study

This study provides useful insights about simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. It also highlights related issues worthy of further study that would help clarify contradictions in the election data and inform further research in the field. Specifically, it proposes further study of presidential coattail effects in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections, and partisan incoherence in gubernatorial popularity trends.

²⁹⁷ For most of the strategies, this observation is obvious. Dismissing presidential politics in favor of state issues is one strategy that may strike some as particular to simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Yet national politics often figure prominently in off-year elections, even in non-congressional election years. For example, in 2005, a year in which no federal offices were on the ballot, the campaign of New Jersey's winning Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Jon Corzine, ran advertisements focusing on Republican gubernatorial candidate Doug Forrester's ties to President Bush. Bush was very unpopular in New Jersey at the time.

Resolving Mixed Evidence of Presidential Coattails in Simultaneous Gubernatorial Election Results

Do presidential coattails significantly impact simultaneous gubernatorial election results? Or are presidential coattails an antiquated phenomenon ready to be declared nonexistent in today's electoral system? The mixed evidence of presidential coattails presented in this study indicates that further research must be done before these questions are answered with certainty. How can this be done?

This study was designed to explain the occurrence of mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Expanding its scope would help to determine whether presidential coattails still exist. First, case studies could be conducted on *coherent* partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections. Evidence of presidential coattails in simultaneous gubernatorial elections are most likely to be found in

cases where state voters choose gubernatorial and presidential candidates of the same party in the same year. For example, a case study of Indiana's 2004 gubernatorial election might be instructive. Indiana voted heavily for President Bush at the same time that it elected Republican Mitch Daniels to replace a Democratic governor. Perhaps presidential coattails were responsible for the governorship's partisan shift. Or perhaps the electoral results were driven by other factors. Further study would illuminate the true causes, and help to gauge the influence of presidential coattails in simultaneous gubernatorial election results.

Other presidential election years must also be studied in order to measure the impact of presidential coattails in gubernatorial elections. Case studies could be conducted on gubernatorial elections from other presidential years, particularly if doing so would introduce examples that differ importantly from those presented in this study.

Gubernatorial elections from non-presidential years should also be studied to determine why these elections are more likely than simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections to produce mixed partisan outcomes. Such research would seek answers to two questions:

Do national politics play a different role in off-year gubernatorial elections than in presidential year elections? Do national politics play a different role in congressional election years than in odd-numbered years, when no federal offices appear on the ballot?

Partisan Incoherence in Gubernatorial Popularity Trends

This study's focus on mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections highlights the frequent incoherence of voters' state versus national political preferences.

Another fascinating, and vastly underappreciated, example of this incoherence is found in gubernatorial popularity trends. Recent polls consistently show governors of different parties than their states' 2004 presidential favorite with higher approval ratings than governors of the same party as their state's presidential favorite. According to a February 2006 Survey USA poll, the two most popular governors in the country were Connecticut's Jodi Rell, a Republican in a solidly pro-Kerry state, and West Virginia's Joe Manchin, a Democrat in a solidly pro-Bush state. Meanwhile, the two least popular governors were Republicans from pro-Bush states, Alaska's Frank Murkowski and

Ohio's Bob Taft. In fact, of the thirty governors with approval ratings of 50% or higher, seventeen were governors of different parties than their state's presidential favorite. Of the twenty governors with approval ratings of less than 50%, sixteen were governors of the same party as their state's presidential favorite.²⁹⁸ The reasons for this counterintuitive trend would provide a fascinating study. It would also help to clarify many areas of scholarship related to this study, including straight and split-ticket voting and state versus national political alignments.

In short, this study is indicative but not conclusive. It presents qualitative data that support its thesis, including media analysis and case studies featuring personal interviews with campaign participants and observers. In terms of quantitative data, campaigning polling and comparisons of gubernatorial and presidential voting behavior also support this study's thesis. However, conclusive quantitative data are not available to test the thesis. Moreover, two instances of mixed evidence necessitate clarification. First, the varying role of state party organizations in developing and implementing gubernatorial campaign

²⁹⁸ "Approval ratings for all 50 governors as of 02/14/06," <http://www.surveysusa.com/50State2006/50StateGovernor060214Net.htm>. Accessed March 25, 2006.

strategies means that they are not essential to producing mixed partisan outcomes in simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Second, if presidential coattails do not significantly influence simultaneous gubernatorial elections, as much of this study's evidence indicates, campaign strategies are equally consequential in all gubernatorial elections. Hence, this study raises important research questions and provides answers that differ from some of the literature of the field. Further study is needed to test whether these findings are definitive.

The particular contribution to political science literature that this study makes is to: document the historical development of simultaneous gubernatorial and presidential elections; develop a compelling primary explanation for mixed partisan outcomes in such elections; present case studies that examine the influence of presidential politics and campaign strategies in simultaneous gubernatorial elections. This study also proposes areas for further research that will be useful in clarifying lingering questions and developing the literature of the field.

Bibliography

Articles

- Brown, Robert D., and Gerald C. Wright. "Elections and State Party Polarization," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 20 (October, 1992), pp. 411-426
- Campbell, James E. "Presidential Coattails and Midterm Losses in State Legislative Elections," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 8 (March, 1986), pp. 45-63.
- Carsey, Thomas A., and Gerald C. Wright. "State and National Factors in Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42 (July, 1998), pp. 994-1002
- Feigert, Frank. "Illusions of Ticket-Splitting," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (October, 1979), pp. 470-488.
- Gimpel, James, and Jason E. Schuknecht. "Political and Demographic Foundations for Sectionalism in State Politics," *American Politics Research*, Vol. 30 (March, 2002), pp. 193-214.
- Gimpel, James. "Contemplating Congruence in State Electoral Systems," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (January, 1999), p. 133-140.
- Gosnell, Harold F. "Does Campaigning Make a Difference?" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (Autumn, 1950), pp. 413-418.
- Herrnson, Paul S. "The Importance of Party Campaigning," *Polity*, Vol. 20 (Summer, 1988), pp. 714-719.
- _____. "Do Parties Make A Difference? The Role of Party Organization in Congressional Elections," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 48 (August, 1986), pp. 589-615.
- Holbrook, Thomas. "Institutional Strength and Gubernatorial Elections: An Exploratory Analysis," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (July, 1993), pp. 261-271.
- _____. "National Factors in Gubernatorial Elections," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 16 (October, 1987), pp. 471-483.
- Howell, Susan E. "Campaign Activities and State Election Outcomes," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 4 (1982), pp. 401-417.
- Jackson, Robert A., and Thomas M. Carsey, "Group Effects on Party Identification and Party Coalitions Across the United States," *American Politics Research*, Vol. 30 (January, 2002), pp. 66-92
- Miller, Warren E. "Presidential Coattails: A Study in Political Myth and Methodology," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (Winter, 1955), pp. 353-368.

Partin, Randall W. "Economic Conditions and Gubernatorial Elections: Is the State Executive Held Accountable?" *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (January, 1995), pp. 81-95.

Press, Charles. "Voting Statistics and Presidential Coattails," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 52 (December, 1958), pp. 1041-1050.

Renner, Tari. "Electoral Congruence and the Autonomy of the American State Party," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (January, 1999), p. 122-132.

Simon, Dennis M. "Presidents, Governors, and Electoral Accountability," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 51 (May, 1989), pp. 286-304.

Sirota, David. "Top Billings," *Washington Monthly*, December 2004.
<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2004/0412.sirota.html>.

Tomkins, Mark E. "Have Gubernatorial Elections Become More Distinct Contests?" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 50 (February, 1988), pp. 192-205.

Book Chapters

Fiorina, Morris P. "Divided Government in the States," in Gary W. Cox and Samuel Kernell, eds., *The Politics of Divided Government* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991).

Petrocik, John R. "Divided Government: Is It All in the Campaigns?" in Gary W. Cox and Samuel Kernell, eds., *The Politics of Divided Government* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991).

Salmore, Barbara, and Stephen A. Salmore, "The Transformation of State Electoral Politics," in Carl E. Van Horn, ed., *The State of the States* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1989).

Books

Anderson, William, and Edward W. Weidner. *State and Local Governments in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951).

Barone, Michael, and Richard E. Cohen, eds. *The Almanac of American Politics 2006* (Washington, D.C.: National Journal Group, 2005).

Buck, A.E. *The Reorganization of State Governments in the United States* (New York: Morningside Heights, 1938).

Dodd, Walter F. *State Government* (New York: The Century Company, 1922).

Erickson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. *Statehouse Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Gimpel, James. *National Elections and the Autonomy of American State Party Systems* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

_____. *Patchwork Nation* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 2003).

Kallenbach, Joseph E. *The American Chief Executive: The Presidency and the Governorship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

Key, V.O., Jr. *American State Politics: An Introduction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

Lipson, Leslie. *The American Governor: From Figurehead to Leader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939).

Moore, John L. et al, eds. *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1994).

Ransone, Coleman B., Jr. *The American Governorship* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982).

Sabato, Larry J. *Goodbye to Good-Time Charlie: The American Governorship Transformed, 1950-1975* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1978).

Scannon, Richard M., Alice V. McGillivray, Rhodes Clark, *America Votes: 2001-2002* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2003).

Schiller, Wendy J. *Partners and Rivals: Representation in U.S. Senate Delegations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Trilling, Richard J. *Party Image and Electoral Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976).

Internet Websites

Join Operation Brian Schweitzer: <http://www.brianschweitzer.com>.

LexisNexis Academic Search Page: <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.

Survey USA, "Approval ratings for all 50 governors as of 02/14/06:"
<http://www.surveyusa.com/50State2006/50StateGovernor060214Net.htm>.

Interviews and Correspondence

Jim Barnett, Vermont Republican Party Chairman, Telephone interview, December 15, 2005

Bob Brown, 2004 Montana Republican Party gubernatorial nominee, Telephone interview, February 3, 2006.

Eric Davis, Middlebury College professor of political science, Telephone interview, December 6, 2005.

_____. Correspondence with the author, December 8, 2005.

Jim Douglas, Vermont governor, Telephone interview, December 23, 2005.

Bill Grover, St. Michael's College professor of political science, Telephone interview, December 8, 2005.

Chuck Johnson, Statehouse bureau chief for Lee Newspapers of Montana, Telephone interview, February 7, 2006.

_____. Correspondence with the author, February 22, 2006.

Jim Lopach, University of Montana-Missoula professor of political science, Telephone interview, February 3, 2006.

Neale Lunderville, 2004 Douglas for Governor campaign chairman, Telephone interview, December 23, 2005.

Garrison Nelson, University of Vermont professor of political science, Correspondence with the author, January 2, 2006.

Brian Schweitzer, Montana governor, Telephone interview, February 8, 2006.

Eric Stern, 2004 Schweitzer for Governor campaign chairman, Telephone interview, February 7, 2006.

Craig Wilson, Montana State University-Billings professor of political science, Correspondence with the author, February 2, 2006.