PARTISAN STRATEGY AND
SUPPORT IN STATE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
The Case of Illinois

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Using state-level data from Illinois General Assembly elections, I test the implications of a formal model of electoral competition where political parties present voters with platforms of ideological locations and levels of partisan support for their candidates. Consistent with the model, I find that candidate policy positions and parties' campaign contributions are responsive to district partisan predisposition, even when controlling for the policy preferences of the district's median voter and other conventional determinants of candidate ideology and funding. Also consistent with the theory, uncontested elections occur more often in politically lopsided districts than in districts where there are more even levels of partisan competition, and there is an inverse relationship between candidate policy extremity and campaign contributions. These results support a theory of activist programmatic parties in the electoral arena and highlight the need for further scholarship on the role of parties in the electorate and their connections with parties in the legislature.

Keywords: *electoral politics; campaign platforms; party endorsements; ideal points; valence model*

Contemporary scholarship on American political parties seems to uncover a nest of questions and contradictions. On one hand, the research on the "remarkable resurgence of parties" (e.g., Rohde, 1991) would seem to argue that contemporary parties are able to wield

a good deal of influence in legislatures to achieve their policy goals. On the other hand, a wide body of research (e.g., Krehbiel, 1998) argues that a simple median voter model of legislative politics is sufficient to explain much of the variation in legislative outcomes; what matters is not the presence of political parties but rather the policy preferences of legislators, and the median legislator in particular. On the electoral front, it seems that parties have become much more active in recent years (e.g., Herrnson, 1988), as they have developed various candidate recruitment strategies and directed funds toward candidates' campaign efforts. At the same time, elections in the United States are conducted under a direct primary system with the Australian ballot, and hence, it is not obvious how these new partisan activities might influence electoral and, eventually, legislative outcomes. If one believes that political parties are policy motivated, what tools could they plausibly use, and how might they use them to achieve their policy goals?

I address this question by testing the implications of a recently developed theory of electoral politics (the support provision game; Wiseman, 2003). The support provision game is a game-theoretic model in which parties present platforms to voters that include candidate policy locations and levels of campaign support. Parties strategically devise their platforms to elect the most desirable candidate as possible (from a policy standpoint) while trying to conserve costly campaign resources. Voters are responsive to both candidate locations and the level of partisan campaign support. Equilibrium results identify conditions under which voters elect candidates with policy positions biased away from the district median (contrary to the bevy of formal theories predicting centrist electoral outcomes). The theory provides a unified framework of electoral politics that illuminates various stylized facts of American elections. The findings explain the logic behind conventional wisdom—why we see uncontested elections more often in politically lopsided districts, and why political parties donate fewer campaign resources to districts that are dominated by one party. At the same time, the theory provides a more nuanced picture of why parties donate to candidates who face no electoral opposition at all, or why parties consistently give nontrivial support to losing incumbents (e.g., Jacobson, 2001).

Given the broad set of predictions generated by the support provision game, it is important to provide a unified test of the theory within a single institutional setting. This article uses data from the Illinois General Assembly from 1990-1996 (four election cycles) to test predictions concerning (a) the location of the winning candidate, (b) the amount of campaign support provided by the winning candidate's party, (c) the propensity of uncontested elections, and (d) general legislator extremity. Consistent with the theory, candidate policy positions and partisan campaign contributions respond to a General Assembly district's partisan predisposition, even when controlling for the policy preferences of the Assembly district's median voter and other conventional determinants of candidate ideology and funding. Uncontested elections are found to occur more often in politically lopsided districts than in districts where there are more even levels of partisan competition. Finally, consistent with the analytical results of the theory, we observe an inverse relationship between candidate extremity and campaign contributions.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Herrnson (1988) has argued that "American political parties are not dying, but are instead finding new ways to assert themselves in the ever-changing electoral politics of the late twentieth century" (p. 5). By assuming a "National Party as Intermediary" role, political parties have begun to actively assist candidates with their elections by providing get-out-the-vote efforts, channeling monetary campaign assistance, and tailoring generic, party-centered campaign messages to "evoke a particular image for an entire political party" (p. 60). Although many of these activities do not explicitly speak to the policy concerns of voters, they are nevertheless expected to make their candidates more attractive and electable. Although such efforts seem sensible, prevailing theoretical frameworks do not explicitly account for the role of non-policy-relevant party support in electoral competition.

In the canonical spatial voting model (Black, 1958; Downs, 1957; Hotelling, 1929), candidates compete for an office by announcing a position in a one-dimensional issue space, where voters' preferences are defined solely over the candidates' policy announcements. As is

well known, the seminal finding of this model is that both candidates will locate at the median voter's ideal point. Although this model is attractive in its parsimony, it likely misses some important components of electoral politics in the United States. Fiorina (1999) has noted in a recent review article that the most fundamental implications of the median voter theorem include, first, that candidates should converge to the same (median) location in electoral competition and, second, that legislators should be ideologically congruent with the median members of their constituencies. A casual glance at the existing empirical scholarship on these topics demonstrates that neither of these tendencies are generally observed in the United States. Candidates do not locate at identical policy positions during electoral competition (Ansolabehere, Snyder, & Stewart, 2001; Fiorina, 1974; Sullivan & Minns, 1976), and legislators are often not congruent with the median member of their constituencies (Canes-Wrone, Brady, & Cogan, 2002; Miller & Stokes, 1963; Shapiro, Brady, Brody, & Ferejohn, 1990). Taken together, then, it seems that the standard spatial voting model is lacking in several areas. First, it does not account for many activities that parties undertake that may be deemed valuable to voters, such as campaign support, and second, many of its empirical implications are flawed.[1]

The theoretical model developed in Wiseman (2003) specifically addresses these concerns by investigating electoral outcomes when parties are able to use electoral support to influence voters' preferences over candidates. Parties in this model have resources they can dole out to support candidates in the form of campaign funding, organization, advertising, district visits, and so on. If voters value a party's support for its candidate, independent of the candidate's announced policy, the equilibrium results of the model pinpoint cases in which the provision of partisan support leads to the election of candidates who are biased away from their districts' median voters and toward the policy preferences of their political parties. Similar to other models of electoral competition with nonpolicy *valence* dimensions (e.g., Groseclose, 2001; Londregan & Romer, 1993), my findings provide a theoretical rationale for candidate nonconvergence in elections. Furthermore, by explicitly allowing parties to influence the value of this valence dimension in voters' preferences, my model offers a more complete picture of electoral competition that articulates the tradeoffs

parties make among providing electoral support for their candidates, shaping candidates' ideologies, and maintaining candidates' electoral viability.

MODEL

The support provision game is a three-stage game of complete and perfect information played between two parties, an incumbent and a challenger, and N voters distributed across an interval in a district with the median voter located at $v_i = v_m = 0$. In the first stage, the incumbent party presents a platform to the voters for its candidate that includes a candidate location and a level of partisan support. In the second stage, the challenger presents a platform for its candidate. In the third stage, voters see the candidate locations and the levels of party support provided to candidates and vote for the candidates they prefer.[2]

Voter i's utility is represented by the following quasilinear form:

$$U_i(C_k, \varepsilon_k) = -(v_i - C_k)^2 + \varepsilon_k \tag{1}$$

where v_i is voter i's ideal point, C_k is the location announced for candidate k, ($k \in \{I, C\}$, for *incumbent* or *challenger*), and ε_k is the level of support the party has given to its candidate. Hence, voters like candidates more the closer they lie to their preferred policies, and voters also like candidates more when they receive higher levels of campaign support from their parties, independent of party affiliation or policy location. A candidate elected at C_k is assumed to carry C_k into the legislature as his or her electorally induced ideal point.

Party support might be interpreted as general get-out-the-vote efforts or party endorsements that remind voters of their identifications with each party.[3] Taken together, these reminders of party identification may, all else equal, predispose voters toward one candidate over another (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960, pp. 137-142; Herrnson, 1988, p. 15). Although this conceptualization is unconventional in that it assumes that voters identify with and can value the endorsements of more than one party, it is consistent with a body of behavioral literature (Valentine & Van Wingen, 1980; Weisberg, 1980) in which voters might not limit their identifications

to one party. As will be discussed below, the winner of the election is determined entirely by the preferences of the district median voter. Hence, if one believes that the median voter in a given district places even marginally positive value on campaign support from both parties, then this assumption seems reasonable. Moreover, the results considered here hold even if one believes that voters to the ideological right of the median voter favor rightist party support over leftist party support and that the converse holds true for left-leaning voters.

Parties' preferences in this model are defined over the policy location of the winning candidate and the support levels they dole out to their candidates. The assumption that parties are policy-motivated is consistent with a body of historical research (e.g., Sundquist, 1983) demonstrating how American political parties, and party activists more specifically, have embraced distinct policy stances over the past 200 years. More recent examples of such activities can be found in studies of the Republican Party's takeover of the 104th Congress (e.g., Evans & Oleszek, 1997) that identify strategies that the Republicans employed to recruit and promote candidates who would embrace the party's "Contract with America." Party k's utility is represented by the following quasilinear form:

$$V_k(C_w, \varepsilon_k) = -(p_k - C_w)^2 - \varepsilon_k \qquad (2)$$

where p_k is party k's ideal point, ε_k is the support level it provides to its candidate, and C_w is the location of the winning candidate. Hence, $C_w = C_I$ if the incumbent party's candidate wins, and $C_w = C_C$ if the challenger party's candidate wins, and parties are happier the closer the winning candidate is to their preferred policies, and the less campaign support that they donate to their candidates.[4] Finally, it is assumed that parties' ideal points p_I and p_C are located on opposite sides of a district's median voter's ideal point: $p_I < 0 < p_C$.[5]

Parties in this model are constrained in the amount of support they can provide to their candidates. In a given district, a party is assumed to have a budget that is the maximum level of support it can provide to its candidate in that district. A party's district support budget is assumed to be positively related to the partisan predisposition of the voters toward that party in that district. For example, if more voters in a district consider themselves strong Republicans than strong Demo-

crats, the Republicans will have more resources with which to support their candidate than Democrats in that district. Because support provision is equated with get-out-the-vote efforts and endorsements, this assumption is reasonable. In a strongly Republican district, there is likely an upper bound on how much Democratic endorsements are valued to district voters, which is less than the upper bound on the value of Republican endorsements.[6] Finally, candidates in this model have no explicit preferences but exist solely to accept the platform offered to them by their parties.[7]

The full equilibrium is characterized in Wiseman (2003). We focus here on the main testable propositions arising from the model. To understand the results and theoretical predictions of this model, it is instructive to consider the logic behind the game and two examples that illustrate the properties of the equilibrium platforms. First, note that despite voter preferences being affected by candidate policy locations and a policy independent support level, the preferences of the median voter still determine the winner of the election—hence, we can confine our attention to what the district median voter prefers.[8] Second, also note that upon reaching its turn to move, the challenger party has observed the location and support the incumbent party has provided its candidate. Because electoral support is costly, the challenger will support its candidate only if it wants to win given the policy location of the incumbent party's candidate, who will win if the challenger chooses to abstain, and if it can win, meaning, if it has a large enough budget. In the first stage, then, the incumbent party is faced with the following problem: Because the challenger party will only enter the race if it wants to win and it can win, what platform should the incumbent party present so that the candidate elected from the district is as reflective of its policy preferences as possible while minimizing its support expenses?

Faced with this problem, the incumbent party will choose its candidate's platform from one of two classes of strategies, which we label "preemption" or "containment." A preemption platform effectively deters the challenger party's entry by making it too expensive for the challenger party's candidate to win, whereas a containment platform allows the challenger to win but effectively constrains the ideological extremity of the winning policy location to favor the incumbent party.[9] For example, suppose that the incumbent party has a budget of 3 and

the challenger party has a budget of 2. Given these support budgets, if the incumbent party had its candidate locate at $C_I = -1$ with campaign support $\varepsilon_I = 3$, it would ensure that the challenger party could not present any winning platform for its candidate. To see this, consider if the challenger had its candidate locate on the median voter's ideal point and supported him or her with its entire budget. Under such a scenario, the utility of the median voter from voting for the challenger would be

$$U_m(0, 2) = -(v_m - 0)^2 + 2 = -(0 - 0)^2 + 2 = 2 \qquad (3)$$

Conversely, if one voted for the incumbent, the median voter's utility would be

$$U_m(-1, 3) = -(v_m - -1)^2 + 3 = -(0 + 1)^2 + 3 = 2 \qquad (4)$$

Because the median voter is indifferent between the incumbent and challenger, he or she would vote for the incumbent.[10] It is obvious that the median voter would dislike the challenger even more for any location further away from his or her ideal point or with any support less than $\varepsilon_C = 2$. Hence, when the incumbent presents the above platform to the voters, the challenger will choose to sit out of the election by not supporting its candidate rather than enter the race and waste resources—the incumbent has preempted the challenger's entry.

In contrast, suppose that the budgets were 2 and 1.5 for the challenger and incumbent parties, respectively. Under such a scenario, if the incumbent had its candidate locate at the median voter ($C_I = v_m = 0$) and supported him or her with its entire budget ($\varepsilon_I = 1.5$), it would be playing a containment strategy. Presented with such a platform, the median voter's utility from voting for the incumbent is

$$U_m(0, 1.5) = -(v_m - 0)^2 + 1.5 = -(0 + 0)^2 + 1.5 = 1.5 \qquad (5)$$

In this situation, the farthest that the challenger party could move its candidate to the right and still win would be the location that makes the median voter indifferent between the incumbent and challenger when the challenger party supports its candidate with its entire budget. Formally, this location is the solution to the following problem:

$$U_m(0,1.5) = U_m(C_c, 2) \Leftrightarrow 1.5 = -(0 - C_c)^2 + 2$$
$$\Rightarrow C_c^* = \sqrt{0^2 + 2 - 1.5} = \sqrt{.5} = 0.7071. \qquad (6)$$
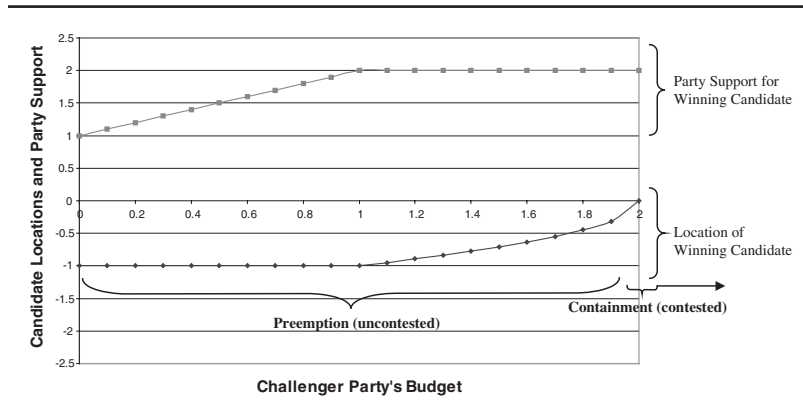
Figure 1:   **Equilibrium Candidate Locations and Party Support for Winning Candidates as a Function of Challenger's Budget**

Hence, the challenger party will locate its candidate at .7071 and support him or her with its entire budget. Even though the incumbent will lose the election, it has contained the ideological extremity of the winning candidate so that it is as left leaning as possible. Lower levels of support or more extreme positioning would allow a successful challenger to move further to the right.

In equilibrium, then, the incumbent party chooses the optimal platform from either preemption or containment wherein the equilibrium platforms are trade-offs between policy locations and electoral support.[11] When the incumbent party has a significantly larger budget than the challenger party, it plays preemption strategies but switches to play containment strategies as the parties' budgets become more comparable, as well as when the challenger party's budget is greater than the incumbent party's budget. Variation in the equilibrium location of the winning candidate and the level of support he or she receives will depend on variation in the exogenous parameters of the model: the distance between the parties' ideal points and a district's median voter, and the size of the parties' support budgets.[12]

Figure 1 presents the equilibrium winning candidate locations (bottom line) and party support levels (top line) for the cases where the incumbent and challenger party ideal points are located symmetrically opposite the median voter (at –2 and 2, respectively), the incumbent party has a support budget of 2, and the challenger party's support

budget ranges from 0 to 2. In discussing the testable hypotheses that follow from such analysis, remember that party support budgets are positively related to a district's partisan predisposition. Having said this, note that as the challenger party's support budget increases from 0 to 2, causing the incumbent party to become less dominant, the location of the winning candidate becomes more moderate, moving away from the incumbent party toward the median voter (from –1 to 0). At the same time, we see that as the partisan predisposition of the district becomes more equal between the two parties, the amount of campaign support doled out to the winning candidate increases from 1 to 2.[13] From these trends, we are able to identify our first two hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Ceteris paribus, the more predisposed a district is toward a party, the more nonmedian the candidate it will elect and the more that candidate's ideology will favor the district's dominant party.

Even controlling for variation in the location of a district's median voter, the model predicts an extra bump in how liberal (conservative) the winning candidate is, depending on how heavily a district's voters are predisposed toward Democrats (Republicans).[14] By comparison, the traditional median voter result predicts that changes in candidate ideology should be entirely accounted for by changes in the district median voter's preferences and not be directly related to the partisan predisposition of the district.

> *Hypothesis 2:* Ceteris paribus, the more predisposed a district is toward a party, the less support a winning candidate will receive from his or her party.

When a district's voters are highly predisposed toward one party over the other, a winning party needs to spend very little for its candidate to win. In adopting a preemption strategy, it will be inexpensive for the incumbent to deter entry, whereas if it is playing a containment strategy, an incumbent party will not want to dole out any support if the district is heavily predisposed toward the challenger party. As the voters become more evenly predisposed to the two parties, however, an incumbent must pay out larger levels of support to preempt the entry of the challenger, or alternatively, it will support its candidate

more heavily to contain the ideological extremity of the winning candidate.

Considering Figure 1 again, we also see the ranges of the challenger party's support budget for which the incumbent party plays preemption versus containment strategies. Note that contested elections only occur when the incumbent party plays a containment strategy, which occurs when the district is equally predisposed between the two parties (or for the few cases that the district favors the challenger party over the incumbent). Hence, we can identify a third hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3:* Ceteris paribus, uncontested elections should occur more often in districts where voters are highly predisposed to one party over the other than in districts with more even levels of partisan competition.

Finally, considering the entire range of the challenger party's budget and the relationship between winning candidate locations and party support demonstrated established in Figure 1, we identify a final hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 4:* Ceteris paribus, the more centrist the candidate, the greater will be his or her partisan support.

Given the tradeoff between policy and partisan support, the model predicts that when parties are playing preemption strategies, they will pay out higher levels of support as their candidates move closer to the median to deter challenger entry. Conversely, when containment strategies are being played, winning parties need to pay out higher levels of support to overcome the incumbent party's containment efforts that keep their candidates near the district median. Taken together, these trends imply that the most moderate legislators will receive more support than extreme legislators. This may be surprising relative to the expectation that parties might especially support candidates near the party ideal point.

Taken together, then, Figure 1 identifies how parties, through their provision of campaign support, can influence the ideological location of the winning candidate. Furthermore, this partisan activity will lead

to some races being uncontested, and there should be an observable tradeoff between candidate policy locations and the amount of support expended. The extent to which these hypotheses hold true empirically is where we turn next.

DATA

To test these hypotheses, we need measures of the location of a district's median voter, district partisan predisposition, candidate ideology, and partisan support. For various reasons, the state of Illinois provides a unique site for developing such measures. Illinois is both economically and ethnically diverse; it has major commercial areas, agricultural and industrial sectors, and strong two-party competition. For much of the postwar era, the legislative and executive branches of government have been divided along partisan lines, and Illinois voting patterns have often closely matched national trends (Everson, 1990, pp. 1-5). For these reasons, scholars have used Illinois as a testing ground for theories on matters ranging from critical realignments in the electorate (MacRae & Meldrum, 1960) to structural changes in electoral systems (Adams, 1996; Sawyer & MacRae, 1962).

My data come from the 1990-1996 editions of the *Almanac of Illinois Politics* (Van der Slik, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996), which provide assembly district-level information on voting demographics, campaign dollars received by winning candidates, and roll-call-based ideology scores for legislators from several different interest groups (e.g., AFL-CIO, ACLU).

To operationalize the location of a district's median voter, I use a two-party share of the presidential vote. Following Ansolabehere et al. (2001) and Canes-Wrone et al. (2002), I assume that the two-party (here Democratic) presidential vote share in a district is a reasonable proxy for the liberalism of the district's median voter. To account for electoral shocks to presidential vote share, I average this variable across election cycles, by the decade in which the general assembly election occurred. Thus, for the elections in 1988 and 1990, I average the district Democratic presidential vote share over the 1984 and 1988 elections. Conversely, for assembly elections in 1992 and

1994, the Democratic vote share was averaged over the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections.[15]

The ideal measure of partisan predisposition would be an indicator of how likely voters in a district are to vote for a particular party, controlling for candidate characteristics and policy positions, district ideology, and so on, and the Illinois data are also useful for this task. During this period, Illinois voters directly elected state university trustees. Few voters had heard of individual trustees, but the ballots indicated the trustee candidates' partisan affiliations. Because voters had little or no information about the candidates, and the office of trustee was not salient to most voters, it is reasonable to expect that voters would simply vote for the candidate from the party that they felt most closely affiliated with. Thus, a trustee's vote share in a district serves to capture a district's predisposition toward a given party. Consistent with this interpretation, the editors of the *Almanacs* refer to the university trustee vote share as "the purest read on partisan inclinations of Illinois voters in each legislative jurisdiction" (Van der Slik, 1994, p. xii).[16]

To measure candidate ideology, I use AFL-CIO scores for the winning candidates. Scores range from 0 to 100 (conservative to liberal), and to allow for cross-time comparison, I use Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder's (1999) technique to generate "inflation-adjusted" AFL-CIO scores.[17] It is not ideal to use roll-call-based vote scores as measures of candidate positions, but it is a reasonable approximation of the policy stances legislators take during elections.

To quantify partisan support, I use the dollars (in hundreds) the two parties contributed to each candidate's campaign. Even though parties in my model support candidates in ways other than campaign contributions, it seems reasonable to assume that campaign contributions are proportional to overall partisan support. Political parties in Illinois are centralized and have significant influence over valuable resources to their members. On the electoral front, leadership campaign committees control large amounts of campaign money and resources distributed at the leadership's discretion to members. Party leaders also contribute additional funds to candidates' campaigns through their personal PACs. Hence, in Illinois, as in the support provision game, voters can observe parties supporting candidates and infer that certain candidates have received more partisan support than others.[18]

Several other variables figure as controls. Analyzing a different model of electoral competition with valence dimensions, Londregan and Romer (1993) argue that the most ideologically extreme legislators should be the most senior members of the assembly. To test for this possibility, I include the number of years a legislator has served in the General Assembly.

Furthermore, one might argue that both prior and current electoral circumstances (e.g., the presence of safe districts), a candidate's ability to raise funds from independent sources, and the size of his or her campaign war chest might influence a political party's funding strategy.[19] To control for these possibilities, as well as for whether the election in question was contested, I include the previous electoral margin of victory in the district. I also include nonparty campaign contributions and the size of a candidate's war chest (adjusted for inflation) at the beginning of an election cycle.

ESTIMATION

HYPOTHESIS 1: DISTRICT PARTISAN PREDISPOSITION AND CANDIDATE IDEOLOGY

To test Hypothesis 1, that districts with uneven levels of partisan predisposition elect nonmedian candidates, I compute ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates for the following equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \tag{7}$$

where

Y = Legislator's inflation – adjusted AFL-CIO score
X_1 = District Democratic presidential vote share
X_2 = Republican $\times$ [District Republican trustee % – District Democratic trustee %]
X_3 = Democrat $\times$ [District Democratic trustee % – District Republican trustee %].

Variable X_1 captures the location of a district's median voter; the interactions X_2 and X_3 capture how politically lopsided a district is

TABLE 1
Determinants of Legislator Ideology

Variable	(1)		(2)	
Avg. Democratic presidential vote share	−.028	(.370)	.003	(.044)
Republican × [Rep. trustee % – Dem. trustee %]	−.175	(3.247)	−.173	(3.215)
Democrat × [Dem. trustee % – Rep. trustee %]	.123	(2.800)	.109	(2.482)
Republican × seniority			.261	(2.069)
Democrat × seniority			.114	(1.295)
Republican member	−62.419	(41.018)	−62.850	(33.877)
Constant	87.305	(25.204)	84.860	(22.935)
Number of observations	463		463	
Adjusted R^2	.933		.934	

NOTE: OLS estimates with t statistics are in parentheses.

toward one of the parties. For districts with a Republican assembly-man and a high predisposition toward the Republican Party, X_2 is large and positive; if the district is highly predisposed toward the Democratic party, X_2 is large and negative. Conversely, for those districts with a Democratic assemblyman and a high predisposition toward the Democratic Party, X_3 is large and positive; if the district is highly predisposed toward the Republican Party, X_3 is large and negative. The following hypotheses should hold true:

$$H1^1: \beta_2 < 0$$

$$H1^2: \beta_3 > 0.$$

The null hypotheses from the median voter model are $\beta_2 = \beta_3 = 0$: There should be no relationship between the partisan predisposition of the voters in a given district and the location of a candidate, independent of the policy preferences of the district's median voter. By contrast, if the support provision game's hypotheses hold, controlling for the location of a district's median voter, X_1, a Republican legislator will be more conservative if he or she comes from a district highly predisposed toward the Republican Party; a Democratic legislator will be more liberal if he or she comes from a district highly predisposed toward the Democratic Party.

Equation 1 in Table 1 presents estimates of a legislator's ideology controlling only for the location of his or her district's median voter and the partisan predisposition of the district.

Consistent with the support provision game, the coefficient on X_2 is negative and significant and the coefficient on X_3 is positive and significant. For every one-point shift in a district's partisan predisposition toward the Republican Party, a Republican legislator is approximately 0.17 points more conservative; a similar relationship holds for Democratic legislators.

Equation 2 examines whether, consistent with Londregan and Romer's model, this relationship is driven simply by a member's seniority. If Londregan and Romer are correct, Democratic legislators should become more liberal and Republicans more conservative with increases in seniority. The data do not support this prediction. The most senior Democrats are the most liberal, but the effect of an additional year of seniority on ideological extremity is not statistically significant. And, contrary to Londregan and Romer, the most senior Republicans are the most liberal Republicans. Although these results do not support Londregan and Romer's model, they are consistent with the support provision game: The sign of the coefficients on the Republican and Democratic interactions are still as hypothesized (negative and positive, respectively) and significant. More politically lopsided districts elect more ideologically extreme legislators, even controlling for the policy preferences of a district's median voter, and their ideologies are congruent with the district's dominant party.

HYPOTHESIS 2: DISTRICT PARTISAN PREDISPOSITION AND CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

To test Hypothesis 2, that winning candidates from districts with uneven levels of partisan predisposition receive lower levels of campaign support, Equation 8 is estimated by tobit analysis:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \tag{8}$$

where

Y = Party dollars contributed to candidate's campaign (in hundreds)
X_1 = District Democratic presidential vote share
X_4 = |District Democratic trustee % – District Republican trustee %|.

TABLE 2
Determinants of Party Dollar Contributions

Variable	(1)		(2)	
Avg. Democratic presidential vote share	4.388	(4.716)	3.320	(3.532)
|Dem. trustee % – Rep. trustee %|	–6.622	(9.339)	–4.043	(5.311)
Nonparty receipts			.045	(3.616)
War chest			–.052	(2.170)
Uncontested			–149.411	(5.369)
Previous margin			–3.894	(4.938)
Constant	58.732	(1.568)	161.561	(3.978)
Number of observations	460		396	
χ^2	89.60		150.47	

NOTE: Tobit estimates with t statistics are in parentheses.

Again, my model predicts the following hypothesis:

$$H2: \beta_4 < 0.$$

That is, controlling for the policy preferences of a district's median voter, the larger the absolute difference between the partisan predispositions of a district's voters for the two parties, X_4, the less money the winning party will contribute to its candidate's campaign in that district.

Equation 1 in Table 2 presents estimates of the effects of district ideology and partisan predisposition on party contributions. Consistent with the model, the coefficient on X_4 is negative and significant at greater than the 95% level. Hence, controlling for the location of a district's median voter, parties choose to spend their money in districts with more balanced levels of partisan competition. For every one point increase in a district's political lopsidedness, a party spends approximately $660 less on a candidate's campaign.

This finding is obviously consistent with the support provision game, but it is possible that other forces, such as uncontested elections and safe districts, might drive this result. Although no well-developed formal theory speaks explicitly to the effects of district competitiveness on party contributions, conventional wisdom dictates that a party will contribute less to candidates who face no opposition in the general election, or who have won their previous election by a wide mar-

gin. Similarly, parties would take a candidate's ability to raise funds, and the size of his or her war chest, into account when making campaign contribution decisions.

Equation 2 tests these conjectures by including controls for whether the general election was uncontested, the margin of victory in the district's previous election cycle, the amount of money received from nonparty sources, and the size of the winning candidate's war chest. The coefficients on uncontested and previous margin variables are significant in the equations. For the candidate fundraising variables, the coefficients are also significant. As a candidate's pool of nonparty receipts and war chest increases, parties donate more and less money to his or her campaign, respectively. These results aside, the coefficient on the partisan predisposition variable is still significantly negative: Parties make contributions as a function of district partisan predispositions.[20] These results are also robust to the inclusion of controls for a member's party, election-specific fixed effects, and whether the member was incumbent. Throughout all the analyses, support for the support provision game remains solid.[21]

HYPOTHESIS 3: DISTRICT PARTISAN PREDISPOSITION AND CONTESTED ELECTIONS

To test Hypothesis 3, that districts with more even levels of partisan predisposition tend to have uncontested elections, Equation 9 is estimated by probit analysis:

$$\text{Prob}(Y = 1) = \Phi(\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_4 X_4) \tag{9}$$

where

$Y = 1$ if election was uncontested, 0 otherwise
X_1 = District Democratic presidential vote share
X_4 = |District Democratic trustee % – District Republican trustee %|
$\Phi(\bullet)$ is the normal CDF.

The support provision game predicts the following: $H3$: $\beta_4 > 0$. Controlling for the preferences of a district's median voter, X_1, the larger the difference between the partisan predispositions of a dis-

TABLE 3
Determinants of the Probability of Uncontested Elections

Variable	(1)		(2)	
Avg. Democratic presidential vote share	−.006	(1.335)	−.004	(.757)
|Dem. trustee % – Rep. trustee %|	.016	(4.278)	.013	(2.785)
Incumbent			.782	(2.583)
War chest			−.000	(1.118)
Service			.001	(.107)
Previous margin			.011	(2.230)
Constant	−.815	(4.258)	−1.708	(4.963)
Number of observations	467		396	
Pseudo R^2	.05		.09	

NOTE: Probit estimates with t statistics are in parentheses.

trict's voters for the two parties, X_4, the greater the probability of an uncontested election.

Table 3 presents the results. Equation 1 estimates the probability of an uncontested election controlling only for the location of a district's median voter and the partisan predisposition of a district. Consistent with the theory, the coefficient on X_4 is positive and significant at greater than the 95% level: The more politically lopsided a district is, the greater the probability of an uncontested election.

Similar to the findings pertaining to partisan campaign expenditures, however, district partisan predisposition might not solely affect the probability of an uncontested election. Conventional wisdom dictates that the presence of a strong incumbent might deter potential electoral challenges; incumbent strength might manifest itself in the form of a long seniority, as well as being elected from a safe district. At the same time, potential challengers might take into account the funds available to an incumbent at the beginning of an election cycle in deciding whether to contest an election. To test for these possibilities, Equation 2 estimates the probability of an uncontested election, controlling for an assemblyman's incumbency, seniority, previous margin of victory, and the size of his or her war chest.

Consistent with conventional wisdom, the coefficients on incumbency and previous margin are positive and significant, indicating that they are directly related to the probability that he or she faces no challenge. It is surprising, however, that additional years of seniority do not have a significant effect on the probability of an uncontested elec-

tion. With respect to a candidate's war chest, the results indicate that the amount of cash a candidate has on hand at the beginning of the election cycle also does not have any measurable effect on entry deterrence.[22] This finding is consistent with other results on campaign finance by Goodliffe (2001). Conversely, and consistent with the support provision game, however, the probability of an uncontested election is positively related to the partisan predisposition of a district, even when controlling for factors such as incumbency, and incumbency strength more broadly defined, that are expected to deter challenger entry.

HYPOTHESIS 4: LEGISLATOR PREFERENCE EXTREMITY AND CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Finally, in testing Hypothesis 4, that the more ideologically extreme legislators receive the most campaign support from their parties, I need a measure of preference-extremity, and accordingly, I adopt the distance between a legislator's inflation-adjusted AFL-CIO score and the average inflation-adjusted score. Because party support and candidate positions are endogenous variables (i.e., depend on the policy preferences of a district's median voter and the partisan predisposition of the voters in the district, as well as theoretically endogenous functions of each other), OLS analysis with party contributions on the right side of the equation and the measure of candidate extremity on the left side would lead to simultaneous-equation bias (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 233-235). To avoid this bias, I conduct two-stage least squares on the following system of equations:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \gamma \hat{Z} + \varepsilon$$

$$Z = \kappa' W + \eta \tag{10}$$

where

$Y = |$(Legislator's inflation adjusted AFL-CIO score) – (average AFL-CIO score)$|$

$X_4 = |$District Democratic trustee % – District Republican trustee %$|$

$X_5 = |$District Democratic presidential vote share – District Republican presidential vote share$|$

TABLE 4
Determinants of Legislator Extremity

Variable	(1)		(2)	
|Dem. trustee % – Rep. trustee %|	.108	(2.888)	.084	(2.115)
|Dem. pres. % – Rep. pres. %|	–.114	(3.541)	–.121	(3.589)
Party receipts	–.110	(2.110)	–.019	(3.253)
Seniority			–.317	(3.251)
Constant	35.683	(26.591)	40.190	(19.595)
Number of observations	394		394	
F statistic	7.18		7.24	

NOTE: Two-stage least squares estimates with t statistics are in parentheses.

Z = Party dollars contributed to a candidate's campaign
W = Matrix of instrumental variables correlated with party contributions.

In this set of equations, X_5, the absolute difference between Republican and Democratic presidential vote share, controls for the degree to which a district's median voter is noncentrist in comparison to all districts. Similarly, X_4, the absolute difference between Republican and Democratic trustee vote share, represents the degree to which the parties are evenly matched in a district. The matrix of instruments is similar to those in Equation 2, Table 2, which were significant correlates of party contributions. Hence, the model implies that $H4^1$: $\beta_4 > 0$, $H4^2$: $\gamma < 0$; consistent with the analysis in Equation 7, the more politically lopsided a district is, the more noncentrist will be the legislator from the district. In addition, consistent with Hypothesis 4, the more money a candidate receives from his or her party, the more centrist the candidate should be, which should be evident in a negative coefficient, γ, on party dollar contributions.

Table 4 presents the results. Equation 1 estimates the effects of district partisan predispositions and dollar contributions on the size of a given legislator's deviation from the mean inflation-adjusted AFL-CIO score.

As hypothesized, the coefficient on party trustee difference is significant and positive: The more predisposed a district is toward one of the parties, the more extremist its legislator is—even controlling for two-party presidential vote. Furthermore, consistent with Hypothesis 4, the coefficient on party contributions is negative and significant

at greater than the 95% level, indicating that most moderate candidates receive the highest levels of support from their parties.

Equation 2 replicates the analysis controlling for seniority, which, as demonstrated in Table 1, is positively correlated with a legislator's ideology (for Republicans, at least). Even controlling for an assemblyman's seniority, the results of Equation 1 still hold, with a significantly positive coefficient on the partisan predisposition variable and a significantly negative coefficient on party dollar contributions. The most moderate legislators receive the most campaign contributions from their party. That the coefficient on party trustee difference remains significantly positive in both specifications lends further support to the support provision game. There is something inherently valuable in a party's brand name that they are able to leverage in the electoral arena to elect members who represent their policies.

DISCUSSION

This article tested the implications of a theory of electoral competition with partisan influences. Supporting the theory, analysis indicates that candidate locations and partisan support respond to district partisan predisposition, that uncontested elections occur more often in politically lopsided districts, and finally, that more moderate legislators attract the highest levels of campaign contributions. All of these results hold when controlling for the policy preferences of a district's median voter and other conventional determinants of candidate positions, campaign contributions, and electoral competitiveness.

Although each of these hypotheses taken individually might seem uncontroversial, the fact that they follow from a parsimonious and logically consistent theory and are found to be empirically valid, even when controlling for alternative explanations, serves to reinforce Herrnson's argument that parties are not dying. If anything, these findings provide an explanation for how parties, through the provision of electoral support, not only can help their candidates secure office but can influence the policy positions they stake out in the electoral arena despite having minimal control over the nomination and general election process. Furthermore, if we believe that positions staked out

during elections are credible commitments to policy stances in the legislature (e.g., Downs, 1957), then the results also have implications for the ongoing debate over partisan influence in legislative politics. Even if parties are able to exert little influence over members once they are elected, this model explains why we might observe roll-call voting patterns that seem to reflect party pressure in the legislature. Influence has taken place in the electoral arena through the provision of party support. By systematically creating a legislature that is more favorable to what would have emerged in the absence of their support, parties can effectively sit back and let members vote their conscience as dictated by the positions they took during the election, which, by construction, reflected the interests of the parties. Hence, the evidence supports a theory in which parties can effectively institute legislative programs, with little or no control over their members once they reach the legislature.

There are several possibilities for further research. First, the implications of this model could be tested using data from congressional elections. The model's theoretical parameters are not easily operationalizable with national-level data, but one might try to operationalize partisan predisposition by analyzing the number of registered partisans in a district in states where such data are available. Or perhaps one could aggregate partisan vote shares from local elections where candidate name recognition might not be a factor.

Similar to this study, candidate policy positions could possibly be measured using a variety of roll-call-based vote scores. As noted above, however, using roll-call-based vote scores as measures of candidate positions is problematic. It is impossible to infer whether the scores accurately measure the positions candidates take during elections or postelection voting behavior that has been tainted by some sort of intralegislative influence, such as lobbying pressure, which seems particularly more likely at the national level. A more useful measure might be the candidate-position data from the National Political Aptitude Test developed by Project Vote Smart.

It would also be useful to replicate these findings for states with legislatures similar to Illinois. For example, Michigan's voters currently elect their state university trustees in a manner similar to Illinois (prior to 1994), and California collects very detailed information on party

registration data as well as party campaign expenditures. Another possibility would be to study these matters from a comparative perspective, focusing on other electoral systems that, a priori, are expected to have parties that exert more control over electoral competition than in the separation of powers, single-member district system of Illinois, and the United States more generally. Finding similar results in other states (and other nations) would provide further support for the electoral mechanism developed in the support provision game.

Regardless of what avenue is pursued, these findings draw attention to the need for scholars to focus more on the role of parties as institutions in electoral politics to enhance our understanding of the role of parties in the legislature. The support provision game assumes that parties interact with voters by presenting them with candidate policy locations and contributing campaign support. The tests conducted here lend support to this model in that candidate locations and party campaign support levels are shown to be responsive to a district's partisan predisposition. Uncontested elections occur more often in politically lopsided districts and the most ideologically moderate legislators receive the most support from their parties. All of these trends speak to how strategic programmatic parties can achieve their policy goals in legislative settings.

NOTES

1. Other spatial models of electoral competition produce implications that may be more empirically accurate, particularly with respect to candidate nonconvergence. For examples of such studies, see Calvert (1985), Snyder (1994), Snyder and Ting (2002), and Wittman (1983).

2. Wiseman (2003) provides a more detailed presentation of the model and identifies what assumptions support a unique equilibrium.

3. Because this is a game of complete and perfect information, support is not analogous to any sort of signal to the voters.

4. Consistent with the model, Republicans would prefer to elect right-of-center Democrats rather than left-of-center Republicans. This assumption is sensible if one assumes a model of weak party discipline in the legislature in which parties can exert very little influence over roll-call voting. Despite having a Republican label, conservative Democrats will vote in a manner more aligned with Republican party interests than will leftist Republicans. Hence, what matters is not who gets elected with respect to party label, but what they look like, ideologically speaking. This scenario, although consistent with majoritarian theories of lawmaking (e.g., Krehbiel, 1998), admittedly might not be applicable to certain roll-call votes on procedural questions, which as an empirical matter tend to split along party lines (Cox & McCubbins, 1993).

5. Here it is assumed, without loss of generality, that the incumbent party is left of the median, with the challenger party to the right.

6. It is worth emphasizing that a district's partisan predisposition does not relate to how close the party ideal points lie to the district's median voter. Partisan predisposition is related to the nonpolicy value of a party brand name in a district. Hence, a district could be very predisposed toward one party despite having a median voter who is far removed from the party's ideal point. Such would arguably be the case for right-of-center Southern Democratic districts until the 1970s, where the value of the Democratic Party label was very high.

7. Although such a conceptualization might seem terse, it is important to realize that this assumption is consistent with the notion of Downsian candidates who are pure office seekers (Mayhew, 1974). In the context of the model, one might envision such candidates being wholly dependent on parties as their sole source of campaign support (e.g., Aldrich, 1995, p. 14) and willing to accept any offer from them as long as it enhances their electoral fortunes.

8. The median voter determines the winner because voters' utilities are strictly concave in C_k.

9. Wiseman (2003) makes a simplifying assumption that when a challenger party cannot devise a winning platform, it does not contest the election. This assumption can be easily motivated by arguing that there is at least a trivial cost associated with backing a candidate. Furthermore, in the more complete version of the support provision game, the incumbent party also considers employing an appeasement strategy. Appeasement platforms allow for challenger entry but induce the challenger party to sit out of the election because it prefers the winning location of the incumbent candidate over the location it would present and the cost of the associated support it would pay out, if it entered the race. Because the data being analyzed are obviously not being drawn from cases in which appeasement strategies are being played, we do not consider it here.

10. This follows from a tie-breaking assumption in Wiseman (2003).

11. By "optimal," I mean that the incumbent party selects the utility-maximizing strategy from the set of optimal preemption and containment strategies.

12. In describing comparative statics in the section that follows, I am implicitly assuming that the support provision game is taking place in many isolated heterogeneous districts. Because the model describes equilibrium outcomes in only one district, projecting these results onto multiple districts might prove problematic for several reasons. In multidistrict competition, parties might try to engage in cross-district subsidization in campaign support and voters might have an incentive to vote strategically. My approach obviously disregards these possibilities, in that I implicitly assume that parties are unconstrained in the total amount of resources that they can disperse to districts and that voters are motivated by legislative positions rather than outcomes. That being said, my approach is still fruitful in that it identifies equilibrium strategies that parties would employ on the margin, even if they were faced with some universal budget constraint that made it impossible for them to spend up to the district-specific budget constraint in each district. Hence, we have a reasonable approximation of the strategies that parties would employ if they were so constrained. With respect to voters, my approach is consistent with a body of literature that assumes that legislators (and implicitly voters) are motivated by positions reflected in roll-call votes rather than final outcomes. Furthermore, recent research (Groseclose & Milyo, 2001) has also suggested that under certain conditions, if voters have both position-taking and outcome preferences, the position-taking preference component will dictate their choices. These issues are very important, however, and deserve further study.

13. Whereas the examples discussed above had the winning parties using their entire support budgets, in equilibrium, a party will often support its candidate with only part of its budget. In many cases, any additional support will either not influence the outcome, or the marginal policy gain will not be worth the cost.

14. In this and other hypotheses, ceteris paribus is taken to mean holding the preferences of the political parties and the district median voters constant.

15. Although it would be desirable either to average across all presidential elections, or perhaps to take a moving average of election cycles across years, the 1992 redistricting makes such a procedure impracticable.

16. MacRae and Meldrum (1960) also embrace this interpretation of the University Trustee vote by arguing that trustee returns should be interpreted as "the 'depersonalized' vote—at least unrelated to the personalities of the candidates for that office" (p. 673).

17. The Groseclose-Levitt-Snyder technique generates year-specific weights via maximum-likelihood estimation that can be used to transform pooled scores so that they are comparable by a common index. In the case of this project, all transformed AFL-CIO scores are being adjusted from a benchmark of 1988 scores. The inflation-adjusted scores range from 2.233 to 106.036 (increasing in liberalness).

18. The dollar contributions are adjusted for inflation using the seasonally adjusted consumer price index as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

19. *War chest*, as it is used here, is defined as the amount of cash that a candidate has on hand at the beginning of the election cycle.

20. The decrease in sample size between Equations 1 and 2 follow from including the variable *previous margin* in the analysis. Those 1990s districts that could not be matched with their 1980s counterparts (due to redistricting in 1992) were dropped from the sample.

21. Also consistent with the support provision game is the fact that a majority of the 120 candidates who ran in uncontested elections between 1990 and 1996 received nontrivial party funds, totaling as much as $10,000 in particular races, as would follow from parties playing preemption strategies. As an aside, analysis was also conducted to identify whether parties contributed to candidates at a similar rate or if they focused special attention on certain groups of legislators, such as centrist or pivotal legislators, which would be loosely consistent with a votebuying model of influence in legislative politics (Groseclose & Snyder, 1996). No substantive differences were identified in partisan donation patterns. Such findings are consistent with Herron and Theodos's (2004) study on the now-defunct "member initiative grant" program in Illinois.

22. The coefficient is actually –.0001421, not –.000 as it appears in Table 3.

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