Polarization & Three Reforms

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Three Reforms

- Closed vs. Open (Semi-closed) Primaries
- Redistricting
- Small donors
Primary Elections
With Matthew Thornburg
Primary Types

- Approach the issue from voters’ perspective, comparing party registration in closed and semi-closed states:
  - Main theoretical insight: partisans in states dominated by opposing party have greatest incentive to register as an Independent in semi-closed states
Party Registration (Aggregate Administrative Statistics)
Individual Analysis (2010 CCES)

Probability Registering as Unaffiliated

Obama Vote Share in State

Semiclosed
Closed
Individual Analysis (2010 CCES)

Democrats – 2010 CCES

Probability Registering as Unaffiliated

Obama Vote Share in State

Semiclosed
Closed
Redistricting
With Micah Altman
Public Mapping Project

- Created award-winning open-source, web-accessible redistricting software (www.DistrictBuilder.org) and deployed in support of advocacy efforts and official governmental redistricting.
  - Thousands of users created hundreds of redistricting plans.
  - Evaluate these plans on compactness, competitiveness, partisan fairness, locality splits, voting-rights, etc.
Compactness and Competitive Districts

Competitiveness (Dem Maj. Between 45%-55%)

- Florida
- Virginia
- Ohio

Compactness

Adopted Plan = ▲
Compactness and Partisan Balance

Partisan Bias (Dem Maj. Deviation from 50%)

Florida

Virginia

Ohio

Compactness

Adopted Plan = ▲
Small Donors

With Tyler Culberson and Suzanne Robbins
Small Donors to Congressional Candidates (give less than $200 aggregate)

- Analyze internal FEC data to examine patterns of aggregate small donor giving to incumbents, challengers, and candidates in open seats.
Using Bonica’s Candidate Ideology CF Scores:
- On average, ideologically more extreme incumbents raise $103,183 more than moderate incumbents.
- Challengers did not raise more money from their own extremism or the extremism of their incumbent opponent.
Three Reforms

- Primaries
  - May diminish polarization
- Redistricting
  - May diminish polarization
- Small donors
  - May increase polarization
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