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Challenger Quality And Voting Behavior In U.S. Senate Elections

A number of aggregate-level studies find that challenger quality is an important variable in explaining congressional election outcomes. Using the National Election Studies' 1988 Senate Election Study, I provide individual-level evidence supporting this claim. I develop and test measures of two aspects of challenger quality, one based on political experience and the other on campaign skills. Senate challengers who hold higher profile offices and those who are good campaigners are better known and better liked by voters and are much more likely to get votes, even with partisanship and campaign spending controlled. The findings reaffirm that candidates and campaigns matter in explaining election outcomes.

The dynamics of Senate elections are very similar to those of House campaigns, according to recent aggregate-level studies (e.g., Abramowitz 1988; Squire 1989). In particular, challenger quality is an important variable in explaining election outcomes. The higher the quality of the challenger, the more campaign money he or she can raise and, consequently, the more votes he or she receives at the polls. In addition to affecting money raising ability, however, challenger quality exerts a direct effect on votes received.¹ This finding suggests that higher caliber challengers are already known and liked by voters and that their campaigns use money to build on that strength.

In this paper I examine individual-level evidence to support or refute aggregate-level findings on the importance of challenger quality. I propose two measures of challenger quality, one based on a candidate's current office and the other on his or her campaign skill. Using the National Election Studies' 1988 Senate Election Study, I demonstrate that both aspects of challenger quality have a large effect on voter behavior.² I show that, as challenger quality increases, so does the proportion of voters who have had contact with the candidate, know who the candidate is, and have a favorable impression of him or her. Higher quality levels greatly increase the probability of voting for the

challenger, even with the other important influences controlled. Higher quality challengers do better at the polls because they raise more money and because large numbers of voters already know and like them.

These findings are important for at least two reasons. First, they demonstrate that candidates and campaigns matter, the latter being something that students of congressional elections do not always acknowledge. Second, confirming aggregate-level findings with individual-level data is comforting. Much effort, for example, has been expended trying to reconcile contradictory evidence on economic voting for Congress. Moreover, Born (1986) uses individual-level data to argue that office holding actually has a negative relationship with House challengers' vote totals. The results presented here give a consistent view of the importance of challenger quality in Senate elections.

Measuring Challenger Quality

Conceptually, higher quality challengers are those individuals who possess campaign skills and personal characteristics that enable them to make a strong race against an incumbent. In large part, this concept implies the ability to raise the money necessary to be competitive. The concept also suggests, however, that these candidates have other positive attributes, such as campaign management and oratorical skills. In general, previous political experience is a good approximation of quality level and has been the basis of other measures of quality. Most employ only a dichotomy (e.g., Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Bianco 1984; Born 1986; Ragsdale and Cook 1987; Abramowitz 1988; Jacobson 1989). Some (e.g., Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Green and Krasno 1988; Stewart 1989) make a small distinction among officeholders based on the perceived size of the electoral constituency. I employ a full-blown ranking of elective offices, based on established political career ladders, because not all positions are of equal electoral value. Candidates who have held more impressive elective offices rate higher than individuals with less imposing credentials because they have had to raise more money, appeal to larger numbers of voters, and face better opponents to attain their positions. Indeed, from 1980 to 1988, 43% of governors beat incumbent senators, as did 41% of U.S. representatives, 36% of statewide officeholders, 17% of local elected officials, and 11% of those with no current political office. No state legislators were able to defeat an incumbent senator. On the index of challengers, I scored a governor 6; a U.S. representative, 5; a

statewide officeholder, 4; a state legislator, 3; an elected local government officeholder, 2; those holding another political position 1; and those holding no political office 0.

But office ranking alone may not fully capture differences in candidate quality. For example, a U.S. representative from California, who represents only 2% of the state, should not be rated as strong a Senate challenger as his or her colleague from South Dakota, whose constituency is the entire state. Of the 22 representatives who ran for the Senate from 1980 to 1988, 7 were from large states and represented districts comprising less than 9% of the population. The mean vote received by these challengers was 44.6%, and they won two contests (29%). Those from districts representing 11% to 25% of the state got 45.4% of the vote and won 4 of 10 contests. Representatives in small states (those representing 50% or 100% of the state) enjoyed the most success. They won three of their five races and garnered an average 48% of the vote. Along these same lines, the mayor of a large city such as San Diego ought to be a better candidate than his or her counterpart from a smaller city like Fresno.

The quality measure I constructed multiplies the rank of the elective office by the percentage of the state's electorate covered by that office. Using the office ranking alone as a measure of office profile produces the same substantive results. The multiplicative measure, however, performs slightly better statistically and seems consistent with how candidates and political operatives assess candidate prospects (see, for example, Fowler and McClure 1989, 30–34, 65–67). The resulting variable runs from 0 (no current political office) to 600 (incumbent governor).³

The group of challengers in 1988 was not particularly different from those in other years (cf. Squire 1989). About the same number of governors, state legislators, and local government officials ran. The major difference with the 1988 candidate crop was that it had fewer U.S. representatives (one: Boulter of Texas) and more statewide officeholders (five: McCarthy of California, Lieberman of Connecticut, Woo of Delaware, Humphrey of Minnesota, Licht of Rhode Island) than is typical. Judged on most measures of candidate quality, the 1988 challenger class was about average. The number of them who won was about the mean for elections over the last decade. As in most other years, the winners were drawn disproportionately from the elite ranks: Lieberman, attorney general; Kerrey, ex-governor; Bryan, governor; and Burns, county commissioner.⁴

One weakness of this challenger quality variable is that, like other office-based measures, it does not fully capture candidate attrac-

tiveness or campaign appeal. It is a measure of candidate experience or office profile. It may underestimate the campaign talents of challengers not holding high office or any political position at all and may overappraise the abilities of those currently holding important posts. To compensate for this failure, I have created a crude measure of candidate skill, based on media reports of challenger abilities before the start of the race and performance during the campaign. For example, Alan Keyes, a former State Department employee who was the Republican nominee in Maryland, was reported to "have the capacity to draw attention." Other candidates were applauded for being energetic and engaging (Woo of Delaware), vigorous and upbeat (Nixon of Missouri), or a superior campaigner (Kerrey of Nebraska). In contrast, reports characterized Jack Wickes, the Democratic candidate in Indiana, as being "unable to attract attention." The campaign skills of some others were denigrated as being too caustic (Dunn of Michigan), not scintillating and poorly organized (Humphrey of Minnesota), even less effervescent than the incumbent (Valentine of New Mexico), and cold and irascible (Strinden of North Dakota).

I drew the characterizations of campaign abilities from various issues of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and, to a lesser extent, from *The New York Times*, *National Journal*, and *Campaigns and Elections*. I gave candidates with clearly and overwhelmingly positive reports on their campaign abilities a 1. Those with a preponderance of poor marks earned a -1. I gave a score of 0 to challengers with mixed comments. Of the 27 challengers, six got a favorable rating, and six got the lowest mark. Only two of the good campaigners won (Kerrey and Burns). No poor campaigners won, but only two (Humphrey and Strinden) were thought to have had a serious shot at victory.

The comments used in coding this measure are based in part, no doubt, on reporters' interpretations of various campaign surveys. The idea that a measure partially derived from campaign polls is used to explain election behavior—that is, the challenger is doing better than expected in the polls, therefore he or she is a good campaigner—may be unavoidable, but it is also less troubling than might appear. First, there are probably no alternatives. As any perusal of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* or *The Cook Political Report* reveals, candidate surveys are ubiquitous; at no point in any major campaign—even very early—have poll results not somehow contaminated opinion. In addition, the Senate race is the initial foray into politics for many challengers (Squire 1989); thus, they have no track record to analyze. Finally, relatively few challengers have serious pri-

mary campaigns, we cannot therefore use their performance in that arena as the sole guide.

Although this measure is rough, it has merit. It reflects the instincts and judgments of political professionals. It is developed independently of the Senate Election Study data. It does not replicate the profile measure. The simple correlation between the two is only around .20, indicating that higher profile challengers do exhibit more campaign skills but also that the relationship is far from perfect. This low correlation should not be surprising. Candidates may gain office for a variety of reasons having little to do with their personal campaign abilities: family name and weakness of the opponent, for example. Moreover, holders of lower office or even novices can prove to be good campaigners. Finally, skill is not a surrogate for money-raising ability. The simple correlation between the two variables is very low, and several "good" campaigners ran on shoe-string budgets. This is the case for at least two reasons. First, contributors with large sums of money are likely to place their early bets on those candidates with established track records, thus emphasizing the office profile aspect of challenger quality. Second, campaign skills are usually demonstrated too late to influence the distribution of money greatly. While candidates may take heart in the fact that their campaign abilities have lifted them from 34 points to 38 points in the polls large sums of money are only likely to flow to those who have a chance to win.

At the aggregate level, challenger profile measures are positively related to money raising (Squire 1989; Stewart 1989), a relationship confirmed for 1988 by OLS equations not reported here. But, even with a challenger's financing controlled, the candidate's profile level influences the percentage of votes received. The task I undertake here is to determine the individual-level relationship between challenger quality and various voter attitudes and behavior. In particular, I want to assess the contributions of the two aspects of quality: office profile and campaign skills. I leave the problem of untangling various attitudes and developing a full blown model of the vote decision for another time.

Challenger Quality and Contact with Voters

Incumbents enjoy a great advantage in congressional elections because many, if not most, voters know who they are. Far fewer people know who the challenger is (Mann and Wolfinger 1980, 627; Abramowitz 1980; Jacobson 1987, 111; Ragsdale 1989, 27). This is an important advantage because, of course, people are highly unlikely to

cast their ballot for a candidate about whom they know nothing (e.g., Westlye 1983). The initial problem faced by almost every challenger, then, is how to get better known.

Obviously, the more contact an individual has with a candidate, the more he or she is likely to know about him or her. Incumbents regular exploit the numerous activities available to them to get better known (Mayhew 1974). Higher profile challengers ought to be able to reduce the incumbent's edge because of the relatively important offices they hold (and resources of the office they can exploit) and the large number of constituents they represent. Campaign skills are unlikely to matter much because many contacts will be registered before the campaign begins.

Contacts can be of various sorts. The 1988 Senate Elections Study inquires about eight different contacts. I summed the contacts to create a single measure of total contacts. Contacts ought to increase with the challenger's office profile. In addition, individuals with more interest in politics are likely to have more contacts, in large part because they seek them. People of the same party as the candidate should have more contact than those identifying with the opposition because the former are more likely to seek and be receptive to information and the candidate is apt to target them for attention. State size ought to have a negative relationship with all sorts of contacts (Hibbing and Alford 1990). Personal contacts should decrease because the candidate can only be spread so thin; Nevadans are more apt to see their senators than are Californians. Contacts through the media should be fewer in larger states because of the increased competition for news attention from other politicians and events.

Table 1 presents OLS equations with the three different contact measures as dependent variables. (Cases used in this table and those that follow are voters in states with an incumbent senator facing a major party challenger. The coding for all variables used in this study is in the Appendix. I recoded each variable to apply to the challenger. Party identification, for example, is coded 0 for an identifier with the incumbent's party and 1 for an identifier with the challenger's party.) The results are as we would expect, and the same basic set of relationships hold with each dependent variable. Contacts increase with campaign expenditures. People are more likely to gain information about challengers from their own party. Interest in politics and contacts are positively related. Contacts of all sorts decrease with larger state populations. Primary contests and campaign skills do not make a difference. Most important, contacts increase with office profile. The effects appear small, but a governor enjoys over one more reported contact

TABLE 1
The Effect of Challenger Quality on Contact with Voter
(standard error in parentheses)

Variable	Total Contacts	Personal Contacts	Media Contacts
Challenger Profile	.002*** (.0003)	.001*** (.0001)	.001*** (.0002)
Campaign Skill	.047 (.079)	.054 (.040)	-.003 (.059)
Campaign Expenditures ^a	.0002*** (.00003)	.00004* (.00002)	.0002*** (.00002)
Primary	.076 (.170)	.068 (.086)	.009 (.127)
Party Identification	.474*** (.108)	.216*** (.055)	.255** (.081)
Interest in Politics	.161*** (.041)	.088*** (.021)	.073* (.031)
State Population	-.0001*** (.00001)	-.00004*** (.000007)	-.0001*** (.00001)
Constant	2.826*** (.201)	.489*** (.102)	2.339*** (.150)
Number of Cases	1021	1023	1021
R ²	.23	.13	.20

Source: NES, 1988 Senate Elections Study.

Note: The table reports the unstandardized coefficients from OLS equations.

^aIn thousands of dollars.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

than a candidate with no office. The average number of contacts reported by all voters is just over two; thus, higher profile candidates are advantaged.

Challenger Quality and Recall and Recognition

Voters report more personal and media contacts with higher profile challengers. Office profile, then, ought to be positively related to the probability that a voter will know who the candidate is. The benefit for the highest profile challengers could be substantial. In a 1989

Washington Post-ABC News Poll, for example, 75% of the respondents could name their state's governor, while fewer than half could name even one of their state's two U.S. senators (Morin 1989). In addition, the efforts of challengers with impressive campaign skills should result in higher name familiarity.

Table 2 presents two probit equations with recall and recognition as the dependent variables. As we would expect, the probability of knowing the challenger, measured either as recall or recognition, increases with levels of education and interest in politics and with candidate contacts.⁵ Recall and recognition of the challenger decreases with state population size, probably because in larger states candidate names are apt to be lost in the greater clutter of information about other politicians and campaigns. This interpretation is consistent with Smith's (1989, 208-09) explanation for his finding that rural dwellers are more likely to recall the name of their U.S. representative than are those living in urban areas.

Name recall increases with challenger profile. Campaign skill has no effect on recall, and neither aspect of quality influences recognition levels. Recall is, of course, the more difficult of the two tasks. Voters in Senate elections are, in general, at least twice as likely to recognize the challenger as they are to provide an interviewer his or her name. Indeed, usually around 80% of voters can pick out the challenger's name. (In this sample, 87% recognized the challenger's name, but only 26% recalled it.) Profile and skill may not influence recognition in Senate elections, because any caliber challenger is apt to generate enough attention to break into the public's consciousness (e.g., Jacobson and Wolfinger 1989). Recall requires more familiarity, something which higher profile offices produce. The effect found here is impressive; on average, a governor is 11% more likely to have his or her name and party affiliation correctly recalled than is another challenger not holding an office.⁶ This difference may even be deflated a bit as a result of the postelection survey design employed, since respondents were questioned after lower quality candidates had benefited from the campaign.

Challenger Quality and Voter Attitudes

Any candidate's primary goal is not simply to be known but to be favorably known. The better liked a candidate is, the better he or she does in an election (e.g., Jacobson 1987, 126). Do more contacts and higher name recall produce better liked candidates? The 1988 Senate Election Study provides two approaches to determine how

TABLE 2
The Effect of Challenger Quality on Recall and Recognition
(standard error in parentheses)

Variable	Recall	Recognition
Challenger Profile	.0007** (.0002)	-.0006 (.0004)
Campaign Skill	.023 (.070)	-.033 (.082)
Campaign Expenditures ^a	.00004 (.00003)	.0002*** (.00006)
Contacts	.227*** (.029)	.280*** (.038)
Party Identification	.147 (.096)	.177 (.118)
Interest in Politics	.070 (.039)	.090* (.043)
Education	.116*** (.023)	.026 (.026)
State Population	-.00004*** (.00001)	-.00007*** (.00001)
Constant	-2.107*** (.233)	.518*** (.176)
Number of Cases	993	989
McKelvey Pseudo R ²	.32	.38
Dhrymes Pseudo R ²	.18	.22
Percentage Correctly Predicted	76.4	87.9

Source: NES, 1988 Senate Elections Study.

Note: The table reports the results of probit equations.

^aIn thousands of dollars.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

favorable respondents feel toward candidates. The first is a series of open-ended questions that allow an individual to name up to five things he or she likes and five things he or she dislikes about a candidate. The second is a thermometer measure, which asks respondents to state how warm or cold they feel toward a candidate.

TABLE 3
The Effect of Challenger Quality on Candidate Evaluation
(standard error in parentheses)

Variable	Number of Likes	Number of Dislikes	Difference between Likes and Dislikes	Thermometer Rating
Challenger Profile	.0007*** (.0001)	.00004 (.00012)	.0006** (.0002)	.018*** (.004)
Campaign Skill	.065* (.033)	-.075* (.030)	.143** (.046)	3.667** (1.097)
Campaign Expenditures ^a	.00001 (.00001)	.00004** (.00001)	-.00002 (.00002)	-.0003 (.0004)
Strength of Party Identification	.071*** (.011)	-.036*** (.010)	.107*** (.015)	2.930*** (.347)
Interest in Politics	.035 (.018)	.039* (.016)	-.005 (.025)	.340 (.593)
Education	.022* (.011)	.039*** (.010)	-.017 (.015)	-.797* (.355)
Candidate Contacts	.117*** (.014)	.067*** (.012)	.051** (.019)	1.839*** (.457)
State Population	-.00001* (.000006)	-.00002** (.000006)	.000004 (.000009)	-.0001 (.0002)
Constant	-.270* (.105)	.119 (.096)	-.390*** (.146)	37.826*** (3.524)
Number of Cases	957	958	955	831
R ²	.23	.11	.10	.16

Source: NES, 1988 Senate Elections Study.

Note: The table reports the results of OLS equations.

^aIn thousands of dollars.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3 presents OLS equations with the numbers of like comments and dislike comments, the difference between the number of like and dislike comments, and the thermometer rating as dependent variables. The important hypotheses to test are whether the number of things people claim to appreciate about a candidate, the difference between the number of like and dislike comments, and the warmth they feel toward a challenger increase with profile and skill. We expect

those who are better educated, those who are more interested in politics, and those who have had more contacts to say more about the challenger (Glass 1985). Similarly, the challenger's stronger partisans should offer more positive comments and fewer negative ones than should adherents of the other party. The expected effect of state size, however, is unclear. Except for the ability to recall the candidate's name, urban dwellers are more politically knowledgeable than those living in rural areas (Smith 1989, 208-09). Thus we might anticipate that residents in larger states will have more to say about a Senate challenger. The same basic set of relationships ought to hold with the thermometer ratings. For the thermometer and difference equations, however, the expected relationships with level of education and interest in politics are not clear.

Most of the anticipated relationships occur. The number of comments increase with education, interest in politics, and strength of party identification. Larger state populations produce fewer positive or negative comments, a fact which again suggests that greater competition for the public's attention reduces information about Senate challengers. Interestingly, the challenger's campaign expenditures only increase the number of dislikes, probably because of the relationship between spending by the challenger and spending by the incumbent. When challengers spend more, incumbents respond in kind, and their response is apt to include negative information about their opponent. The net result is that in high spending campaigns voters learn more that they dislike about both candidates.⁷

Most important, both aspects of challenger quality are positively related to the number of favorable comments, to the difference between likes and dislikes, and to the thermometer rating. The coefficients for challenger profile in the dislikes equations are statistically insignificant but those for skill are negative and significant. They indicate that good campaigners generate fewer unfavorable comments. The effects of the quality coefficients on the number of like comments and the difference between the number of like and dislike comments again appear small. The size of these effects is not surprising, since a meager number of respondents have much of anything to say about the challenger. A governor benefits from almost one half more of a positive comment than a counterpart without an office, an important difference because the mean number of likes expressed is less than one half. Similarly, candidate profile and campaign skills produce an increase in the difference between likes and dislikes of .36 and .14 respectively. Each is a substantial advance beyond the mean .11 difference. More visible is the large effect both aspects of chal-

lenger quality produce in the thermometer rating. A governor running for the Senate is rated almost 11 points higher than a candidate not holding an office, even with the host of other variables controlled. A good campaigner can gain 4 points over a candidate with mediocre abilities, 8 points relative to one with poor skills. Given that the mean rating is a neutral 50, higher levels of challenger quality do produce much better liked candidates.

Finding that higher profile candidates are better liked is not surprising. In effect, these results evidence a selection bias in the higher profile challengers who run for the Senate. Not only have these candidates demonstrated the positive characteristics and skills expected of successful politicians by winning their current posts, they also manifest continued public support by getting their party's Senate nomination. Under most circumstances only popular governors, for example, are likely to seek and get a chance to run for the Senate. Unpopular high profile office holders are not apt to get the opportunity.⁸

Challenger Quality and the Vote

A higher profile increases the number of contacts a challenger has with a voter, the voter's ability to recall the challenger's name, and the degree to which the voter likes the challenger. Better campaign skills also improve the challenger's public image. The equation in Table 4 represents a first cut at detecting the influence of both aspects of challenger quality on the vote.

Table 4 presents a simple voting model, with the challenger's office profile, campaign skill, and campaign expenditures, the strength of party identification, and the state population size as independent variables.⁹ As we would expect, the vote has a strong positive relationship with both the strength of party identification and the challenger's expenditures. Even with partisanship and spending controlled, profile and skill each increase the probability of a vote for the challenger. The mean estimated effect for profile is that a governor, for instance, is almost 11% more likely to get a vote than is a candidate with no office. Good campaigners are, on average, 10% more likely to get a vote than are those with poor campaign abilities. A voter has a 21% higher probability of casting his or her ballot for a governor with strong campaign skills than for a challenger holding no office and with poor campaign skills. Clearly, higher quality challengers do better at the polls.

TABLE 4
The Effect of Challenger Quality on Vote
(standard error in parentheses)

Variable	Coefficient
Challenger Profile	.0006* (.0003)
Campaign Skill	.179* (.069)
Campaign Expenditures ^a	.0001** (.00003)
Strength of Party Identification	.333*** (.022)
State Population	-.00002 (.00001)
Constant	-1.991*** (.123)
Number of Cases	993
McKelvey Pseudo R ²	.38
Dhrymes Pseudo R ²	.22
Percentage Correctly Predicted	76.1

Source: NES, 1988 Senate Elections Study.

Note: The table reports the results of a probit equation.

^aIn thousands of dollars.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Conclusions

Aggregate-level studies of Senate elections indicate that challenger quality has a direct effect on the vote, even with campaign money controlled. The analysis presented here confirms those findings at the individual level, an important confirmation given Born's (1986) contrary findings in House elections. Moreover, creating measures for two aspects of challenger quality advances our understanding of the concept. Specifically, higher profile challengers have more contacts of all sorts with voters, are more likely to be known, and, most significantly, are held in higher regard. Thus they are advantaged because more voters know and like them. Campaign skill also influences opinions of the challenger. Both profile and skill are related to

the vote. Finding that campaign abilities are important is significant because it demonstrates that campaigns can make a difference. Students of congressional elections often reduce explanations of outcomes to simple matters of partisanship and economics. The findings here suggest that who the candidates are and how they behave must also be considered. Both aspects of challenger quality matter to voters and help refine our understanding of Senate elections. Any explanations of the decisions of voters and of election outcomes must take into account the important characteristics of the challenger.

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APPENDIX Variable Coding

- Campaign expenditures: variables 5331 and 5332. The number used is the challenger's spending.
- Challenger profile: calculated as rank (see note 2) times percentage of the state represented by the current office. These data were collected from various issues of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.
- Campaign skill: coded 1 for good skills, 0 for average skills, and -1 for poor skills. The characterizations of campaign abilities were drawn primarily from various issues of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*. Also consulted were *The New York Times*, *National Journal*, and *Campaigns and Elections*.
- Contacts: the sum of variables 323 to 330.
- Difference between like and dislike comments: calculated from variables 202 to 224. A "no answer" response to the initial questions was treated as missing data; "do not know" was treated as a "no comment offered."
- Dislikes: calculated from variables 208 to 212 and 220 to 224. A "no answer" response to the initial questions was treated as missing data; "do not know" was included as a "no comment offered."
- Education: variable 807. Category 8 was collapsed into category 7.
- Interest in politics: variable 101, recoded to make 5 "very interested" and 1 "not much interested."
- Likes: calculated from variables 202 to 206 and 214 to 218. A "no answer" response to the initial questions was treated as missing data; "do not know" was treated as a "no comment offered."
- Media contacts: the sum of variables 326 to 329.
- Party identification: created from variable 705. Party of the incumbent was coded 0, party of the challenger was coded 1. Other party identification and "apolitical" were collapsed into the pure independent category.
- Personal contacts: the sum of variables 323, 324, 325, and 330.
- Recall: created from variables 119, 122, 123, and 126. A respondent was considered to have given a correct response and coded 1 if the correct name and party were given for the challenger. A 0 was coded for any other response.
- Recognition: created from variables 143 and 144. A yes answer was coded a 1, no a 0.

State population: variable 5370 (FEC estimate of state voting age population).

Strength of party identification: created from variable 705. A strong identifier with the challenger's party is coded 7, a weak identifier with the challenger's party is coded 6, and so on until a strong identifier with the incumbent's party is coded 1.

Thermometer rating: created from variables 152 and 153. "Do not know" responses were recoded to 50; refusals were considered missing data.

Vote: created from variable 441. A vote for the challenger was coded 1, a vote for the incumbent 0.

NOTES

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1. This has also been demonstrated at the aggregate level in House elections (Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1989).

2. These data have been made available by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, which bears no responsibility for the following analysis.

3. A similar measure, which does not penalize U.S. representatives from large states to the extent this one does, produces virtually the same results (Squire 1989). (As is discussed later, only one U.S. representative is in the group of challengers studied here.) Similarly, logging the measure to reduce the gap between the lowest and highest ratings does not change the findings. An office held within the last two years is substituted here for the more rigid current office requirement used in my earlier work. Robert Kerrey of Nebraska—a former governor who had left office two years before the 1988 races—can thus be coded 600 instead of 0.

4. Burns is an example of a local government official who represents a large number of people and is given a higher score on this challenger quality measure (28) than many other challengers who hold more prestigious offices.

5. I also created measures of personal and media contacts, similar to measures employed by Parker (1981) and Ragsdale (1981). Personal contacts include meeting the challenger, attending a meeting where he or she spoke, and communicating with the challenger's staff, either personally or by having family or friends do so. Media contacts include receiving mail from the challenger and seeing, hearing, or reading about the challenger on television or radio or in newspapers or magazines. Equations including variables for personal and media contacts produced results similar to those reported in Table 2.

6. This percentage is calculated in the manner described in Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, 123).

7. When incumbent spending alone is entered into the dislikes equation, its coefficient is negative and substantively and statistically significant. Challenger and incumbent spending are highly correlated (.75), and this correlation limits our ability to estimate their effects correctly and efficiently when they are entered into the same equation. Challenger spending was reported instead of incumbent spending because it is of more theoretical interest here and because the latter is also highly correlated with another independent variable—state population size—while the former is not.

8. There is one other finding of note. Personal contacts have a large positive

impact on attitudes toward the challenger (regressions not presented here). The coefficients for media contacts are much smaller and statistically insignificant, suggesting that politicians in larger states suffer because their ability to make personal contacts is more limited and they can not successfully substitute media contacts. This finding may help explain the negative relationship between state size and an incumbent's vote percentage found by Hibbing and Brandes (1983).

9. Undoubtedly, more sophisticated modelling efforts are needed to tease precise estimates of the relationships presented here. Missing from these equations are any measures of attitude toward the incumbent; thus they probably fail to capture the comparative nature of the voting decision.

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