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John J. Hudak  
*University of Connecticut*

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An Appropriate Role for the Leadership:  
A Quantitative Analysis of the Effects of House Leadership on  
Open-Seat House Races

John Joseph Hudak  
University of Connecticut  
Department of Political Science  
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Debates exist regarding the strength of party power in the United States.<sup>1</sup> At different times in American history, the strength and influence of parties have been supreme. At other times, the two major parties have been weak actors in the political landscape. This research delves into the current political situation in terms of party power.

With Congressional majorities hinging on only a handful of seats, to a candidate it is as much what your party can do for you as what you can do for your party. By becoming a serious contender, you offer the party another seat in a sharply divided House of Representatives. In most cases, getting the opportunity to win a Congressional election depends on timing, financial backing, name recognition, ties to the community, personal and professional background, and other factors. In terms of elections, generally, the chance of beating an incumbent is slim, and for challengers, the aforementioned qualities often are insufficient to overcome a congressman's reelection effort.

During a time in American politics when almost every incumbent seeking another term in the U.S. House of Representatives is reelected, the electoral advantage that Members of Congress have is indisputable. However, open-seat elections are immune to this phenomenon. In

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Hudak is a undergraduate at the University of Connecticut. He is currently seeking a Bachelor's of the Arts in Political Science and Economics. This work was submitted on 8 April 2005, as an Honors thesis to fulfill the requirements set forth by the University of Connecticut Honors Program for graduation as an Honors Scholar. He can be contacted at University of Connecticut; 216 South A; Storrs, CT 06269.

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fact, even as the political landscape provides fewer competitive races each election cycle, open-seat elections remain divisive (Mayhew, 1992). Due to the powerful incumbent advantage, open-seat House elections are the only examples that allow for a control such that all other forces acting on an election result can be examined.

This examination of the influences on open seat House races will provide an understanding of the effectiveness of House leadership in the current political scene. This study will allow for an evaluation of the ability of the leaders in Congress to improve their power standing, a judgment of the efficacy of leaders' decisions to allocate funding, experience, and personal influence within specific races, and a comment on the current standing of the power and influence of national parties on a local level.

Much investigation has been launched into different influences on open-seat House elections. Moreover, several studies have been conducted as to the influence of party leadership and/or party organizations on Congressional elections (Herrnson 1986, 2004; Medvic 2001). However, none has conducted an in-depth quantitative analysis of the influence of House leadership on open-seat races. While the theoretical framework for the study has been established through several different studies, in different forms, my research will conjoin the quantitative and qualitative efforts to produce conclusions regarding the effect of party leadership on House races.

### **Competitiveness**

The dynamic of open-seat elections gives political scientists a useful tool in electoral examination and analysis. One important aspect of understanding these races is their competitiveness. Unlike incumbent races, these elections, more often than not, give an opportunity to examine competitiveness. However, during every election cycle a portion of open-

seat races are not competitive (Mayhew 1992). Competitiveness is vital to understanding the dynamics of an open-seat race. Some elections may see one candidate perform very poorly against another. This situation may occur for a number of reasons; however, the competitiveness of a specific district could be paramount. Bond, Fleischer, and Talbert (1997), while investigating candidate quality, examined the conditions present within a campaign. In terms of the likely competitiveness of a district, they measured the district vote for President in the past two elections and the vote for several offices over a period of several elections. This analysis provided a clue to the partisan leanings of that given district. A district that overwhelmingly votes Republican in every election during every period measured may not provide the foundation for a competitive, open-seat race.

Other factors weigh on the natural competitiveness of an open-seat House race. The “friends and neighbors” effect, whereby a geographically small district may provide candidates better name recognition, will naturally create a more competitive race (Miller, 1992). Because one of the most difficult problems facing challengers is voters’ failure to know them, the “friends and neighbors” effect may provide both candidates nearly equal name recognition in an open-race (Herrnson, 2004).

### **Other Influences in Open-Seat Elections**

Once incumbency advantage is removed, a better understanding of the influences in an election can be examined. Several investigations have been launched with regard to these influences. A Republican running for an open House seat on the same ballot as a popular Republican President seeking reelection may fare better (Bullock and Gaddie, 2000; Flemming, 1995). This dynamic, known as the Presidential coattail effect, can be powerful enough to influence or even swing an election. On the other hand, the President can negatively impact

elections. Midterm elections almost always provide a net loss of seats in the House for the President's party (Sabato, 2003). In many cases, voters become disenchanted with the Executive branch, and the midterm elections serve as a referendum on the President's handling of his job. Flemming performed a statistical analysis of the positive influence of the Presidential coattails. While Sabato did not perform an historical-statistical study of midterms, his results, coupled with reasonable explanations for the exceptions, provide necessary qualitative support in the absence of quantitative data for the positive effect of Presidential coattails.

Among the many factors that allow House incumbents to be so successful, their ability to fundraise is one of the most important. The fundraising ability of incumbents and their subsequent ability to fund a dominating campaign directly contributes to their success (Bullock and Gaddie, 2000). In open-seat elections, a candidate's success at fundraising contributes to his or her success in the election (Bullock and Gaddie, 2000). As a result, money serves as an effective influence in open-seat House races. However, Bullock and Gaddie fail to examine the funding capabilities of party organizations.

While a candidate can fundraise among his constituents, one contributor with immense resources is the party organization. In the case of the House of Representatives, the party organizations are the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). These two groups raise large sums of money nationally and are able to distribute these funds as they deem necessary and beneficial. Much research has been done concerning the influence of the party organizations on House elections. Herrnson (1986) analyzed candidates' perceptions of the influence of party organizations. The study looks at whether candidates believe that the support they receive from the congressional campaign committees was effective or beneficial to their campaign. The Herrnson (1986) study,

however, examines the influence on all House elections, including those with incumbents. Yet another study by Herrnson (2004) devoted specific attention to open-seat elections. However, this examination lacks a statistical analysis of such influences, while merely focusing on an explanation of the situation.

The DCCC and the NRCC also contribute to campaigns in ways beyond direct transfers of money. They also provide professional, trained consultants to assist candidates in their bids for a seat in the House of Representatives (Medvic, 2001). In this case, consultants are trained by the party organizations on specific matters such as media, fundraising, management, and grassroots/voter mobilization (Medvic, 2001). These consultants allow for campaigns to be run efficiently and professionally, with costs covered by the party organizations (Medvic, 2001; Kolodny, 1998). As a result of this assistance, many times at no cost to the campaign, campaign resources can be directed to other important areas. The use of consultants provided by the party organizations affords the campaigns a two-pronged benefit: a more professionally run campaign and more funds with which to work. This influence will put a campaign in excellent shape in fighting for the seat.

Much of the analysis conducted as to the influence that the DCCC and the NRCC have in an election has been discussed as the influence of party organizations on the elections (Herrnson, 1986; Herrnson, 2004; Medvic, 2001). However, Kolodny (1998) takes an important step away from the general trend in political science. He describes the influence as that of House leadership. This, I believe, is a very important distinction. Rather than designating the actions taken by the DCCC or the NRCC to be that of the party as a whole, he discusses it as the House leadership controlling the actions of the groups. This definition is far more accurate. While the leadership of the Republican Party as a whole does have contact with and a degree of influence



over the NRCC, the bulk of the influence will come from the Speaker, Majority Leader, and the Majority Whip (under the current make-up of the House of Representatives). For the Democrats, the Minority Leader and Democratic Whip wield intense influence over the DCCC. Furthermore, the chairmen of the DCCC and the NRCC exert a degree of their own power and take considerable direction from House leaders. Kolodny discusses and defines this power system. Explanations that “party organizations” control the influence on the House races are ambiguous, particularly when the chairmen are, at times, at the call of the Majority or Minority Leader s (Kolodny 1998).

## **Design**

Much of the research into the effect of money on congressional elections investigates races with incumbents running (Alexander, 1992; Jacobson, 1978). These studies examine the effects of money on races that already have the powerful influence of incumbency. They look into the influence of spending by incumbents and challengers (Erikson and Palfrey, 1998). Also, researchers have investigated the effects of party spending on these races (Herrnson, 1986). All of these studies focus on House races generally. That research groups all House races under the same heading, while failing to capture the possible influences on specific types of races, such as open seats.

Open-seat House races serve as examples of races with their own dynamic that the aforementioned research fails to distinguish. These races naturally remove the advantage that incumbents enjoy, as no candidate is serving as a Member of Congress at the time of the election. Researchers have launched examinations into these open-seat races. Specifically, political scientists have investigated how disposable income in a state affects the types of

candidates and candidate quality in open-seat elections (Bond, Fleischer, and Talbert, 1997), as well as individual candidate spending (Gaddie and Bullock, 2000). Unfortunately, most research fails to investigate the influence of party spending on these open-seat races. Paul Herrnson (1986) did conduct a qualitative evaluation of the influence of party organizations. However, the study lacks a quantitative analysis of that influence.

This research tries to bridge the qualitative study of the influence of party organizations with the quantitative studies conducted in most congressional research. The research focuses on party organizations, but I feel this label disregards a very important aspect of the electoral process. The House leadership dominates party organizations. This paper will refer to the influence of party organizations as the influence of leadership. This is an important distinction in understanding the system. Kolodny (1998) describes the leadership dominance over these organizations through both a history of the organizations and an analysis of their present-day function. While the term “congressional party organization” connotes participation of the entire caucus in decision-making, this is misleading. The reality is that the decisions of party organizations are made by a few high-ranking members of the party without necessarily having any regard for a consensus.

There are many party organizations in this country, ranging from political action committees which are constructed and run by elected officials and politicians, to state organizations, to federal committees. The federal committees are, by far, the largest party organizations. These groups will be under analyzed in this project. For the Republican Party, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) serves as the cornerstone of party funding for House elections. This committee has been in existence for decades. Because of this power, consistency, and longevity, it serves as the most logical organization to examine in order

to understand the phenomena under focused, research conditions. In addition, the Republican National Committee (RNC) directs funding toward select House races. The Democratic equivalent of the NRCC is the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). The national parties charge these organizations not only with winning the races, but with funding campaigns. Furthermore, these organizations conduct independent efforts such as training individuals for professional campaign staff positions, recruiting candidates, and get-out-the-vote efforts (Kolodny 1998). Also, analyzing the national party organizations allows for a more even evaluation of influence across states. Because the national organizations can send money wherever it is necessary, they are far superior to state organizations as a target of analysis (Herrnson, 1986).

Leadership can fund campaigns in a few distinct ways. First, there can be direct contributions from the committees to the candidate's campaigns. The next type of donation is independent expenditures on behalf of a candidate. These expenditures are spent on behalf of the candidate, but not coordinated in any directly communicated way with the campaign (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2003). This type of spending is of particular interest to this research because independent expenditures have no limit, as long as they are not coordinated with the campaign directly (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2003). It is in this context that the leadership can spend huge sums of money, as they see fit, in an attempt to win the House seat for their party. Because this spending can be unlimited, it has the prospect of exerting great influence on the outcome of these races. Candidates' own campaigns are often scattered in terms of how to spend their money effectively and often emulate the ineffective methods of campaign spending practiced in other local campaigns (Kenny and McBurnett, 1997). Independent expenditures from the leadership

are allocated by well-trained experts during campaign efforts. These expenditures serve as effective and influential tools in the campaign process.

Coordinated spending on behalf of a candidate is another type of spending that allows the leadership to expend large sums of money. In this case, the leadership is able to converse with the candidate's campaign with regard to deciding how the money is to be spent. This type of spending is a very useful tool. While the effectiveness of independent spending comes with its professional distribution of funds, coordinated spending combines the effectiveness of leadership decisions on how best to use the money with the campaign's discussion of the real, on-the-ground demands that it faces. Coordinated spending gives the leadership even greater power over the process. Independent expenditures allow the leadership to oversee their own operations. Coordinated expenditures, however, give the leadership control over how the campaign is to use the funding that the leadership is supplying. Coordinated expenditures effectively give the House leaders positions of power and influence before the individuals are elected or arrive in Congress.

The last type of spending that I will analyze is spending directly against the candidate. Often this spending comes in the form of attack advertisements. Both parties have made use of this type of spending at varying times during the period covered by this study. As the amounts for this type of spending is, at times, in the millions of dollars on a single race, it is an important variable to measure.

## **Methods**

### ***Dependent Variable***

In understanding the influences in congressional elections, a researcher must decide on the most effective way to measure the dependent variable. While the outcome of an election is

important, a simple *win/loss* analysis does little for understanding the true effect of the leadership on open-seat House races. The most effective measure of the dependent variable would indicate the percent of the vote received by a candidate. This research defines the dependent variable as the Republican candidate's percent share of the two-party vote. This measure, as seen in Bullock and Gaddie (2000), explains the positive influence of Republican leadership spending, as well as the negative influence of the spending by the Democratic leadership. Because the study examines the two-party vote only, the negative influence of spending by the Democratic leadership on the Republican share of the vote is also the positive influence on the Democratic share of the vote. Thus, a simple sign reversal of the Democratic effect on the Republican vote will exemplify the Democratic effect on the Democratic vote.

### ***Independent Variables***

The key independent variable in this study will be the spending by party organizations. Types of expenditures can vary greatly. Data from the Federal Election Commission show that, often times, party organizations will utilize several types of spending in races during the election cycles . Because of the variability of types and amounts of spending, it is important to see what is specifically influential. Thus, all spending will initially be analyzed separately in the following categories: DCCC direct spending, DCCC coordinated spending, DCCC independent spending, DCCC spending against the opposing candidate, NRCC spending against opposing candidate, NRCC direct spending, NRCC coordinated spending, NRCC independent spending, and RNC coordinated spending. In the model, these factors will function as distinct variables. Federal law mandates that, throughout the campaign, all candidates and organizations participating in the elections must file detailed spending and fundraising declarations with the Federal Election

Commission. The reports filed by the DCCC and the NRCC are an accurate, complete, and detailed report of the spending by the party organizations.

Another important variable that this project will consider is that of leadership visits on behalf of candidates. These stops can serve to benefit a candidate in several ways. First, they will motivate the party base. This move will bring out the most important voters on Election Day. Second, such a visit will tell the voters that the most powerful members in the party have confidence in the ability of that candidate. Last, it provides a type of star-power. This star-power provides the type of name recognition that incumbents enjoy. While people may not be familiar with an up-and-coming congressional candidate, they may be better acquainted with the name of the Speaker of the House. And even if a voter is not familiar with the name J. Dennis Hastert, he will still be impressed to hear that the Speaker of the House is appearing with the House candidate.

With widespread communications readily available via television, newspapers and the Internet, most voters will learn of visits by members of the House leadership. The House Leadership will be defined as the Speaker of the House, the Majority and Minority Leaders, Majority and Minority Whips, and the chairmen of the DCCC and NRCC. These visits will be coded as simply the number of visits by this group, by party. As stated above, the press coverage of an event such as a visit by a member of the leadership of the United States House of Representatives is extensive. For this reason, the data will be taken from newspapers from the district.

### *Control Variables*

While this research removes the influence of incumbency from the House races, there still exist other variables of influence that must be considered. First, I will control for

competitiveness. If a district has an overwhelming majority of voters registered for one party, it could be an indication of a lack of competitiveness. However, candidates often encounter the difficulty of gaining a voting percentage commensurate with their party's registration (Costantini and Dannehl, 1993). Similar studies that seek to control for the competitiveness of a given district have a dual-pronged approach for its determination. Bond, Fleischer and Talbert (1997) used this method first by examining one party's share of the vote in the past five congressional elections. However, this subset is liable to include the incumbent advantage. Therefore, they examined the share of the vote for president, senator and governor over the past ten years. Through this process, they evaluated races across years and across seats for national and state offices. They combine this information, and data are then comparable across different congressional races. However, because of the redistricting subsequent to the 2000 census, eighteen states redrew their district lines. Furthermore, after the Texas legislature changed from Democratic to Republican control, there was a second redistricting of the Lone Star State in 2002. As a result, using the aforementioned method for measuring competitiveness becomes difficult.

To avoid this complication, I will use the *Congressional Quarterly's* measure of the competitiveness of races. While it comes with the limitations of any secondary source, it will remain a concise, uniform, nationwide measure through a non-partisan source. *Congressional Quarterly* ranks races in seven categories: 'Safe Democrat', 'Democrat Favored', 'Leans Democrat', 'No Clear Favorite', 'Leans Republican', 'Republican Favored', and 'Safe Republican'. For purposes of simplification, I will combine the ratings "favored" and "leans" for both parties into one category. The *Congressional Quarterly* ratings incorporate candidate fundraising and activeness, as well as past competitive elections in determining their rankings.

Also, these rankings take into account candidate quality, based on past elected office and name recognition within the district. The *Congressional Quarterly* competitiveness rankings will be built into the statistical model through a series of dummy variables in order to control for the effects of non-competitive and less competitive districts on the data.

Using the competitiveness rankings issued by *Congressional Quarterly* also provides a general benefit for investigation into open-seats. In the past, research has been constrained in its study of open-seat races by the post-census redistricting (Bullock and Gaddie 2000; Bond, Fleischer and Talbert 1997). However, this study removes the need to compare districts across time. *Congressional Quarterly* releases its competitiveness rankings for each election and is based on a set of variables influencing competitiveness on a race-by race, year-by year basis. This method of controlling for competitiveness also provides for a researcher to overcome this issues of a second redistricting, as was the case in the state of Texas in 2002. According to the guidelines set forth by Bullock and Gaddie (2000), the Texas races would need to be excluded. In the end, a researcher can develop a longitudinal study to examine the long-term trends in open seats. The researcher is not constrained to eight- and ten-year segments of Congressional composition.

Furthermore, campaign fundraising varies significantly both between races and within them. As a result, a candidate's fundraising will be controlled. The fact that one candidate has raised far more than his opponent may factor directly into the amount of party money being sent to that race. The data used will be a candidate's fundraising minus direct and coordinated party spending. It is important to examine campaign fundraising and not campaign spending. Candidates are armed with their opponents' fundraising reports as filed with the FEC each month. The decision regarding campaign fund allocation is a type of anticipation game. One



campaign must anticipate what the other campaign can and will do. The significance is not what a campaign spends, but what a campaign *can* spend. A race in which fundraising is close may translate to a situation in which campaigns are far more careful as to how much to spend, when to spend, and what types of efforts on which to spend money.

Last, I will control for the year. In a study in which there are two election years under consideration, an interesting, and possibly telling result is whether one year was significantly beneficial to one party or another. Such information would give credence to any styles of leadership behavior that year. Further, it allows the researcher to examine the dynamic of that year and see what variables within the data may have caused such a situation. Or it would give the researcher the opportunity to look beyond the model to other variables that may lead to a change.

The leadership influence is seen through the leadership spending decisions and visits, and the resultant voting percentage will exhibit the effects of that influence. Similarly, candidate fundraising should exact an effect on the dependent variable. Because of all of this several hypotheses develop.

**H1: Increased party spending increases that party's percent share of the two-party vote.**

When the leadership of one party directs spending in a race, that party's candidate, in terms of his share of the vote, should benefit. If the Republican leadership directs party spending in the race, the value of the dependent variable should increase. Likewise, if the Democratic leadership directs party spending, the value of the dependent variable should decrease.

**H2: Increased Leadership visits increase that party's percent share of the two-party vote.**

An increased number of leadership visits by a party should benefit that party's candidate's share of the vote. Republican leadership visits should increase the value of the dependent variable. Visits by Democratic leaders should decrease the value of the dependent variable.

**H3: Increased candidate fundraising should increase that candidate's share of the two-party vote.**

A Republican candidate's fundraising should increase the value of dependent variable. Similarly, a Democratic candidate's fundraising should decrease the value of the two-party vote. In the same sense, the candidate who benefits from a net gain in fundraising should benefit from a net increase in the two-party vote.

## **Case Selection**

Choosing the cases under analysis is a complex process. Many factors beyond a simple definition of "open-seat races" need to be considered. The cases for this research will be defined as races for seats in the United States House of Representatives in which no current Member of Congress is seeking reelection. Also, both the Republican and Democratic parties must each field one candidate only. Third parties may also run in the cases, but cannot be the sole competitors of only one of the major parties. While the candidacy of third parties will not preclude a case, the analysis will not consider the role of the third party because the dependent variable measures the percent share of the two-party vote. The campaigns must occur during the general election cycles in the years 2002 and 2004. As a result, special elections will be excluded from the study. It is of

vital importance to exclude special elections. Special elections allow the parties to send atypical sums of money to those races because they are the only races requiring funding at that time.

Budgetary constraints are naturally built into the model; the leadership is forced to decide exactly how much money can be spent on specific races, while factoring in the need to spend on other races. Special elections lack the budgetary constraints that occur during the general election.

Also, this study includes races in which the incumbent runs in the primary and loses. This phenomenon occurs twice during the two election cycles. First, in the fourth district of Georgia in 2002, Denise Majette defeated incumbent Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney for the Democratic nomination. Second, in the 18<sup>th</sup> district of California in 2002, Dennis Cardoza defeated incumbent Congressman Gary Condit, also for the Democratic nomination. These cases are included because neither candidate in the general election enjoyed the advantage of incumbency.

Similar to the budgetary dynamics of special elections, the structure of Louisiana elections must also be considered. On the day of the general election in Louisiana, all races for the United States House of Representatives are primaries, in which every individual from each party can run. If no individual receives a majority of the vote, the highest vote-getters will face a run-off in December. If this occurs, the leadership can fundraise specifically for those races, and its spending decisions are based on one or a few campaigns. So, the Louisiana races that end in December run-offs maintain the same complications of special elections, and for this reason, they must be excluded.

The 2002 and 2004 election cycles had 82 open-seat races. The special elections in the second district of Hawaii, the 19<sup>th</sup> district of Texas, the sixth district of Kentucky, and at-large district in South Dakota (June 2004) must be excluded. Among the remaining 78 races, some

need exclusion from this study. First, there were two races in which the candidates ran unopposed. In 2002, in the 17<sup>th</sup> district of Florida, Democrat Kendrick Meek ran without a Republican opponent, and in 2004, in the sixth district of Georgia, Republican Tom Price ran without a Democratic opponent. During the 2002 election, one open-seat race in Louisiana was decided in a December run-off. These cases will be excluded. During the 2004 election, the open-seat race in the first district of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal won a race against one other Republican and four Democrats. This case will be excluded. Also, the open-seat races in the third and seventh districts of Louisiana produced December runoffs and will not be analyzed in this study. Thus, the result is 74 races with 148 candidates being studied. Among the 74 races, 44 took place in 2002 and 30 occurred in 2004.

One more complication for case selection that will be kept under consideration is the influence a leader can have in his or her own state. In this case, the leaders are defined as the Speaker of the House and the House Majority and Minority Leaders. This consideration grows from the actions of House Majority Leader Tom Delay from the 22<sup>nd</sup> district of Texas. His dominant role in the 2002 second redistricting of his home state has raised state and federal investigations into the legality and ethics of those actions. Furthermore, the House of Representatives Committee on Ethics recently admonished the Leader for his actions involving the redistricting, while the United States Supreme Court ordered reconsideration of the legality of the drawing of the congressional districts (New York Times, October 18, 2004). As a result, I will evaluate whether the Texas districts considerably skew the data after the model is run. If so, all races from the states from which the Speaker and the Majority and Minority Leaders hail will be excluded. There were no open-seat races in the state of Missouri in 2002, from where then-Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (MO-03) hails. The 2002 race in the fifth district of Illinois

would be excluded as the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert hails from that state's 14<sup>th</sup> district. The House Majority Leader in 2002 was Dick Armey from the 26<sup>th</sup> district of Texas. As a result, the open seat races in that state's fifth, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> districts would be excluded. In 2004, the race in the third district of Illinois would be excluded as Dennis Hastert retained the gavel. Also the races in California's third and 20<sup>th</sup> districts would be excluded, as Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi hails from that state's eighth district. Further, the 2004 House Majority Leader Tom DeLay represents the 22<sup>nd</sup> district of Texas. As a result, that state's races in the second, ninth, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> districts would be excluded

In addition, the 2004 election cycle provided a special case. In the fourth district of Georgia, Cynthia McKinney ran as the Democratic candidate as the incumbent, Denise Majette, sought the open seat in the U.S. Senate. However, Cynthia McKinney held the fourth district seat from 1992-2002. This case will be included in the analysis. Cynthia McKinney did not enjoy the benefits of an incumbent congressperson during 2003 and 2004. And while she has name recognition, many other candidates in open-seat races do, as well. For example, William Janklow, the 2002 Republican nominee for the at-large seat in South Dakota, served as governor for four terms.

I chose 2002 and 2004 for the data set because these years present several important characteristics. First, many media organizations and political analysts considered 2002 to be a year in which the Democratic Party could have won a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. Many deemed the election the Democrats' best chance to win back the House since the Republican Party took the majority in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. This so-called Democratic opportunity and Republican vulnerability would particularly motivate the parties to work toward a majority.

Table 1

## House Leaders

	2002			2004	
	Republicans	Democrats		Republicans	Democrats
Floor Leader	Richard Armey	Richard Gephardt		Tom DeLay	Nancy Pelosi
Whip	Tom DeLay	Nancy Pelosi		Roy Blunt	Steny Hoyer
CCC Chair	Tom Davis	Nita Lowey		Tom Reynolds	Robert Matsui
Speaker	Dennis Hastert	////////////////////		Dennis Hastert	////////////////////
Source: <a href="http://www.house.gov/">www.house.gov/</a>					

The two years under analysis provide an interesting setting for analysis. The two election cycles provide different House leadership, as seen in chart 1. This allows for an examination of different styles of leadership in terms of the direction of the party organizations, as well as different priorities. The dummy variable distinguishing the year will illustrate this distinction.

While the quantitative analysis in this study sheds light on the influence of leadership overall, it is important to understand some individual cases in order to appreciate the dynamics of specific races. As a result, after an analysis of the results of running the model, I will evaluate a few specific races in detail to understand the applied meaning of the data. It would be best to choose one race in which the data seems to align well with the hypotheses. This qualitative analysis will show specific race dynamics and the ways in which the independent and control variables interact within those dynamics. Furthermore, another case study should interpret another instance in which the model failed to interpret the outcome of the race. This analysis, in evaluating the conditions of a specific race, could provide the research both with an understanding of which other variables may influence races and an example in which those variables become prominent. Thus, the case studies will be important to translate the statistical

interpretation of the political phenomenon to a qualitative, applied understanding of that phenomenon in the current political environment.

## Results

The model for this experiment involves a dependent variable measuring the Republican Party share of the two party vote. The independent variables include a dummy variable reflecting the year, by which a 2002 race takes the value one and a 2004 race takes the value zero. Four dummy variables reflect the competitiveness of the race as ‘Safe Republican’, ‘Safe Democrat’, ‘Leans Republican’, and ‘Leans Democrat’. For these variables, a value of one signifies that competitiveness designation. If all four dummy variables take the value zero, it reflects a competitiveness designation of ‘No Clear Favorite’. Five variables measure, in dollars, the Republican party spending: NRCC direct spending, NRCC independent spending, NRCC coordinated spending, NRCC spending against the Democratic candidate, and RNC coordinated spending. Four more variables measure the Democratic party spending: DCCC direct spending, DCCC independent spending, DCCC Coordinated spending, and DCCC spending against the Republican candidate. Two variables measure the number of visits by the House leadership for the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively. Last, two variables measure the fundraising by each candidate less the direct and coordinated party spending.

The equation takes on the form of a basic regression equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots \beta_{18} X_{18} + \varepsilon,$$

where Y is the dependent variable,  $\alpha$  is the constant,  $\beta_n X_n$  are the independent variables, and  $\varepsilon$  is the statistical error. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the results. Table 1 shows that the findings for party spending were not statistically significant. The lack of statistical

significance could come as a result of too few cases. A higher number of cases could improve the statistical significance of the results.

The regression results do show statistical significance for the measures of competitiveness. The measures for competitiveness were very accurate. 'Safe Republican' and 'Safe Democrat' labels had p values of .000. A designation of 'Safe Republican' will cause an increase of 11.232 in the dependent variable. More simply, a race designated 'Safe Republican' will give the Republican 11.232% more in the two-party vote. A race designated 'Safe Democrat' will decrease the Republican share of the two-party vote by 21.133%. This information is statistically significant and the signs of the coefficients are as expected. A race designated as favoring the Republican Party has a positive sign, thus increasing the Republican share of the two-party vote. Conversely, a race favoring the Democratic Party has a negative sign, decreasing the Republican's share of the vote.

Further, the results show races designated as leaning toward a specific party are statistically significant. A race designated 'Leans Republican' was significant at a level  $p < .01$ . The data show such a designation is associated with an increase in the Republican share of the two-party vote of 6.793%. This finding aligns with expectations. The coefficient has a positive sign, which would indicate that a race favoring a Republican leads to an increase in the Republican share of the vote. Moreover, the value of the coefficient is less than that of the 'Safe Republican' designation. The 'Leans Republican' designations indicate that the Republican is favored in the race, but should have a closer, more difficult race than those designated as 'Safe Republican'. Similarly, races defined as 'leans Democrat' have a coefficient of -6.176 and were significant at a level  $p < .05$ . Again, this finding is as expected. The sign is negative, indicating that a race that favors a Democrat is associated with a decrease in the Republican share of the



Table 1<sup>3</sup>

Leadership in Open Seat House Races			
Variable		B	T
Year		2.927	1.431
Safe Republican		11.232	3.168*
Safe Democrat		-21.13	-5.664*
Leans Republican		6.793	2.582**
Leans Democrat		-6.176	-2.034***
NRCC Direct (\$10,000)		-2.122	-0.688
NRCC Independent (\$10,000)		0.0029	0.033
NRCC Coordin. (\$10,000)		-0.115	-0.188
NRCC Against (\$10,000)		0.0101	0.219
RNC Coordin. (\$10,000)		-0.354	-1.203
DCCC Direct (\$10,000)		0.6	0.018
DCCC Independent. (\$10,000)		-0.059	-0.846
DCCC Coordin. (\$10,000)		0.39	1.535
DCCC Against (\$10,000)		0.271	0.836
Republican Ldrshp. Visits		-1.439	-1.321
Democratic Ldrshp. Visits		0.948	0.75
Republican Fundraising		6E-05	-0.004
Democratic Fundraising		0.0046	-0.466
Constant		54.514	
R <sup>2</sup>		0.835	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.781	

\* p<.001 (one-tailed test)

\*\* p<.01 (one-tailed test)

\*\*\* p<.05(one-tailed test)

<sup>3</sup> A copy of the data table for this project fills an area over nine square feet in area. As a result, it is not included with this material. The data table is available upon request from the author. Further, the sources used in the data collection include dozens of newspaper articles, several hundred reports from the Federal Election Commission. As the documents were not directly cited within the text, they were not included in the Works Cited Page. A list of sources used in this study or a copy of the documents utilized in compiling the data for the study are also available from the author per request.

two-party vote. Moreover, the actual coefficient for a ‘Leans Democrat’ race is less than that of a ‘Safe Democrat’ race.

In fact, calculating the means of the voting results by competitiveness designations further exemplifies the accuracy of the competitiveness variables. As seen in Table 2, increasing competitiveness leads to a lower percent of the vote for the candidates, and of course, a lower margin of victory for the winning candidate. The ‘Safe’ designations resulted in a substantially higher percent of the vote share for the party favored. The most competitive races designated ‘No Clear Favorite’ had an average vote margin of 4.400%. Furthermore, of the 62 races in which one party was favored (either ‘Safe’ or ‘Leans’), the party favored won 61 of the races. The one exception was the race in the 11<sup>th</sup> district of Georgia in 2002. The race, designated as ‘Leans Democrat’, sent a Republican to Congress. In that race, the margin of victory was only 3.28%.

Table 2

Voting Means by Competitiveness Designation		
Competitiveness Designation	Republican share of 2 party vote	Vote Margin (%)
Safe Republican	65.82	31.64
Safe Democrat	37.104	25.792
Leans Republican	58.89	17.78
Leans Democrat	46.53	6.94
No Clear Favorite	52.2	4.4
Source: Congressional Quarterly		

What results is that the competitiveness rankings issued by *Congressional Quarterly* are highly accurate predictors of the vote. For races labeled ‘Safe Republican’, ‘Safe Democrat’, and ‘Leans Republican’, the *Congressional Quarterly* rankings for competitiveness were perfect predictors of the outcome of the election. The designation ‘Leans Democrat’ predicted 17 of 18 races correctly, for an accuracy of over 94%. A commonly referenced measure of competitiveness is the Bond and Fleischer (1997) study. In addition to the limitations imposed by redistricting, this study encounters more theoretical constraints. Past voting fails to take into account several race-specific dynamics that can drastically affect an election. For example, although the incumbent effect is removed, an individual who served as a state legislator in the past will have name recognition, at least, within a portion of his district. Most importantly, an individual who held past elected office, even over a small constituency in a congressional district, has a fundraising base. Moreover, the experience of political fundraising puts one at an advantage in a race against an opponent who has no experience. *Congressional Quarterly* takes fundraising and fundraising ability into account. Part of their criteria involves how well a candidate fundraised during the year. Moreover, the candidates’ standing in the district is measured by how strong of a candidacy they are maintaining, given the district composition and given the time.

Simply examining the party voting in past elections, particularly for President, can be a very inaccurate way of accounting for competitiveness in a district. For example, if a Democratic candidate for President is a pro-choice, anti-death penalty, tax-and-spend liberal, a conservative district would not deliver a large percentage of the vote for that candidate. However, a Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives who is a pro-life, pro-death penalty, proponent of low taxes and smaller government will, most likely, wage a more effective,

competitive campaign against a Republican opponent. However, a measure that examines the vote for President may explain the type of candidate who would be more likely to win if the candidate is measured on a liberal-conservative continuum. However, a discussion of the party favored to win, based on that criteria, would not necessarily be accurate.

Because candidates from either party can occupy such a wide spectrum of views, simply labeling competitiveness based on party is naïve. This is an age when the term “moderate” is often times a euphemism for *conservative* Democrat or *liberal* Republican. Thus, defining party performance in a House election based on the statewide or nationwide ideological position of the party leaves open the likelihood of error. The *Congressional Quarterly* rankings of competitiveness take into account the necessary dynamics that influence races, on a case by case basis. The rankings issued within weeks of the election are not intended to be used from year to year as a measure of the district’s leaning. This distinction is important. The Bond and Fleischer (1992) study attempts to predict the competitiveness of a race without knowledge of the candidates. While this measure is the most accurate means toward a specific, predictive end, that end is only useful if the Republican and Democratic candidates are ideologically aligned with the national party and are on an equal footing in terms of fundraising ability, experience, and all other dynamics that influence their ability to function competitively in the race. *Congressional Quarterly*, however, tacitly accepts that races are so individualistic and dynamic that one cannot possibly comprehend their competitiveness with a high degree of accuracy without knowing the candidates and their abilities.

The *Congressional Quarterly* rankings of competitiveness include, as part of the criteria, a candidate’s fundraising. As a result, the model should experience some degree of colinearity between the competitiveness variables and the candidate fundraising variables. To test this, I

removed the competitiveness variables and reran the regression to see if there would be a change in the output with regard to candidate fundraising. As the results show, the fundraising less the coordinated party spending is now statistically significant. The Republican fundraising is significant with a p-value less than .001 and Democratic fundraising has a p-value less than .0001.

Table 3

Leadership in Open Seat House Races without Competitiveness as a Variable				
Variable		B		T
Year		3.323		0.845
NRCC Direct (\$10000)		3.829		0.796
NRCC Independent (\$10000)		0.05607		0.334
NRCC Coordinated (\$10000)		0.581		0.501
NRCC Against (\$10000)		-0.0326		-0.38
RNC Coordinated (\$10000)		-0.168		-0.331
DCCC Direct (\$10000)		-0.91		-0.214
DCCC Independent (\$10000)		0.00226		0.017
DCCC Coordinated (\$10000)		-0.828		-1.847*
DCCC Against (\$10000)		0.06151		0.1
Republican Leadership Visits		0.994		0.489
Democratic Leadership Visits		-0.0408		-0.018
Republican Fundraising		0.07049		3.256**
Democratic Fundraising		-0.0599		-3.599**
Constant		47.635		
R <sup>2</sup>		0.33		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.199		
* p<.05 (one tailed test)				
**p<.01 (two tailed test)				

Furthermore, the signs of the coefficients are as expected and are coherent with past results. The Republican candidate fundraising has a positive sign, showing that greater Republican

fundraising is associated positively with the Republican vote. Similarly, the Democratic candidate's fundraising has a negative sign, meaning an increase in a Democrat's fundraising will decrease the value of the dependent variable and increase the Democrat's share of the two-party vote.

The data show that an increase of \$10,000 in a Republican candidate's fundraising leads to an increase of .07049% of that candidate's vote. The Bullock and Gaddie (2000) study examining open seat House races looked at candidate spending. They found similar results. Measuring candidate spending at a unit of \$100,000, they found a \$100,000 increase in Republican spending led to an increase of 1.11% of the Republican's share of the two-party vote. Comparably, a \$100,000 increase in Republican fundraising in this study results in a .7049% increase in the Republican's share of the vote.

Democratic fundraising was also statistically significant with a p-value of less than .0001. In this case, a \$10,000 increase in a candidate's fundraising will result in a decrease in the value of the dependent variable by .05994. In other words, that \$10,000 increase will decrease the Republican share of the two-party vote by .05994%. To set the units equal to compare this study to the Bullock and Gaddie (2000) study, a \$100,000 increase in the fundraising of a candidate would result in a .5994% decrease in the Republican's share of the two-party vote. The Bullock and Gaddie (2000) study found a \$100,000 increase in a Democrat's spending would result in a .79% decrease in the Republican share of the two-party vote.

In a sense, a Republican's fundraising is worth more than a Democrat's fundraising. If a Republican and a Democrat both raise the same amount in a race, for example \$1,000,000, a Republican will benefit by an increase of 7.049% of the two-party vote. The Democrat will decrease the Republican's share of the vote by 5.994%. Thus, the Republicans have a net

increase of 1.055%. This situation holds only if both candidates spend the same amount. However, on average, for both election years, the Republicans raised \$1,182,060 and the Democrats raised \$953,195. Based on these fundraising numbers, a Republican would see an increase of 8.33% of the vote, and the Democratic fundraising would decrease the Republican vote share by 5.71%. The average Republican netted a 2.62% vote gain from the fundraising advantage alone.

The result is that in order to keep up and not lose any ground in the vote, for every \$10,000 that the Republican candidate fundraises, the Democrat needs to raise \$11,760. The Democrats needed to raise 17.60% more than Republicans to keep pace in terms of the vote. In 2002 and 2004, on average, the Republicans raised 24.01% more than Democrats. In effect, the Democratic candidates fell far behind Republican candidates both in terms of fundraising and effective fundraising. In order for Democrats to have garnered the same effect on the dependent variable they would have needed to raise 41.61% more than they had in the two years studied.

Among the party spending variables, the coordinated spending by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) becomes statistically significant with a p-value < .05 with a one tailed test once the competitiveness variables are removed. Sensibly, this variable becomes significant when the competitiveness variables are removed as coordinated party spending is a expenditure coordinated with the campaign. However, this variable would be included in the fundraising of a campaign in *Congressional Quarterly's* determination of competitiveness. The coefficient has a sign consistent with the party spending hypothesis (H1) that increased Democratic Party spending leads to an increase in the Democratic share of the vote or, conversely, a decrease in the Republican share of the two-party vote. The data show a finding of particular interest. An increase of \$10,000 in DCCC coordinated spending will result

in a decrease of the dependent variable by .828. In other words, for every \$10,000 the DCCC spends in coordinated expenses, the Democrat's share of the two-party vote increases by .828%. This is a significant finding. In the past, it was assumed that no party spending had a relevant effect on the vote. This study shows that the Democratic Party's coordinated spending has an effect stronger than that of fundraising. More clearly, for a Democratic candidate's fundraising to have the same effect on the dependent variable that \$10,000 of DCCC coordinated spending has, the candidate would need to raise over \$138,138.

Similarly, the DCCC coordinated spending is far more effective than a Republican candidate's fundraising. Again, DCCC coordinated spending decreases the Republican share of the two party vote by .828%; a Republican candidate's fundraising increases his share of the vote by only .07049%. What this means is that for every \$10,000 in DCCC coordinated spending, a Republican candidate needs to raise over \$117,463 to affect the dependent variable to the same extent. In the same sense, the effect on the dependent variable from every \$10,000 in a Republican candidate's fundraising can be equally offset by only \$852 of DCCC coordinated spending. In 2002 and 2004, the average DCCC coordinated spending per race was \$14,916. A Republican candidate would need to raise over \$175,202 to offset the effect of the Democratic spending on the dependent variable. However, leadership directed DCCC coordinated spending was only used in 47 races. Among those 47 races, the average DCCC coordinated spending was \$23,484. The effect of that spending on the Republican share of the two-party vote was a decrease of 1.944%. In order to offset this decrease in the vote, the Republican candidate would need to raise \$275,784.

Overall, the Republican candidate's fundraising, on average, was a reasonably effective counter to the DCCC coordinated spending. The average net gain in fundraising was \$228,865



advantaging the Republican candidate. This benefited the Republican's vote by 1.61%. As the average DCCC coordinated spending of \$14,916 decreased, the Republican's share of the vote increased by only 1.24%. As a result, the Republican's net gain in fundraising, accounting for the DCCC coordinated spending, gives the Republican candidate a net vote gain of 0.37%.

The question becomes: what does a candidate need to do to win a race, given these statistically significant spending data? In order for the average Republican to win, for every \$10,000 that a Democratic candidate fundraises, the Republican candidate must raise just over \$8,503, *ceteris paribus*. Furthermore, for every \$10,000 in DCCC coordinated spending that a Democrat receives, the Republican must raise another \$117,463. Such fundraising is the necessary minimum level to offset the effects on the dependent variable due to Democratic fundraising and spending efforts.

In terms of fundraising, a Democratic candidate faces more of an uphill battle. Whereas in terms of simple fundraising, the Republican candidate only needs to raise 85.03% of the Democrat's fundraising, a Democrat must raise 17.60% more than the Republican. In other words, for every \$10,000 that the Republican raises, the Democrat needs to raise more than \$11,760 to see a net gain in the vote share. For every \$10,000 in Republican candidate fundraising, the Democrat must receive \$852 in DCCC coordinated spending to maintain the vote.

Like candidate fundraising, DCCC coordinated spending is a statistically significant variable when the competitiveness variables are removed. This change in significance can easily be accounted. The *Congressional Quarterly* determination of the competitiveness of a House race is determined, in part, by the money raised by each candidate. In the model used in this study, the candidate fundraising variable is defined as the total fundraising by a candidate less

the direct and coordinated party spending. I made this adjustment to the fundraising variables to avoid a double-counting of data because of the introduction of individual party spending variables. Because the competitiveness variables account for coordinated party spending, DCCC coordinated spending would have a relationship with those competitiveness variables. This colinearity within the model that includes the competitiveness variables would not be an issue when those variables are removed. As a result, the shift to statistical significance for the DCCC coordinated spending variable is accounted.

One might ask why DCCC Coordinated Spending affects the vote so much more than does individual candidate spending. As discussed above, party funds are allocated by organizations that are highly professional, specialized campaign operators that understand the most effective and efficient ways to spend in a race. Coordinated spending combines that efficiency with campaign coordination. This coordination allows for the campaigns to inform the party organizations exactly where they need help, financially. In addition, as every district, arguably may have different demands, the combination of professional fund allocation and specific district experience will make Coordinated Spending a highly effective tool in a given race.

One question that naturally evolves from this statistical outcome is why the other variables still lack statistical significance even after the competitiveness variables are removed? More important, why do the other coordinated spending variables (that from the NRCC and the RNC) fail to gain statistical significance after the removal of the competitiveness variables? Table 4 sheds some light on this finding. The DCCC coordinated spending was used in more races than any other type of spending in the study. DCCC coordinated spending was used in 47

races or 63.5%. The next highest type of spending was NRCC independent spending. NRCC independent spending was used in only 30, or 40.5%, of races. More significantly, DCCC

Table 4

Open Seat Races and Spending		
Type of Spending	Number of Races Using Such Spending	Percent of Races*
NRCC Direct	42	56.8%
NRCC Independent	30	40.5%
NRCC Coordinated	10	13.5%
NRCC Against	12	16.2%
RNC Coordinated	26	35.1%
DCCC Direct	37	50.0%
DCCC Independent	10	13.5%
DCCC Coordinated	47	63.5%
DCCC Against	5	6.8%
* Based on N=74 Source: FEC		

Coordinated Spending was, by far, the most frequently used type of coordinated spending.

NRCC coordinated spending was only used in 10 races or 13.5% of races. RNC coordinated spending was used in 26 or 35.1% of races. The other types of coordinated spending are only a fraction of that used by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. These significantly lower numbers of data for the other spending could be an explanation for their lack of statistical significance.

One theory mentioned above centered on the idea that some House leaders may exercise greater influence in their own home state. The model was run excluding the 2002 races in the fifth district of Illinois (the Speaker's home state) and the races in Texas' 5<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> districts of Texas (the Majority Leader's home state). There were no open seat races in the Minority Leader's home state, Missouri, in 2002. In 2004, the races in the third and 20<sup>th</sup> districts

of California (the Minority Leader's home state), the third district of Illinois (the Speaker's home state) and the ninth, 11<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> districts (the Majority Leader's home state) were all excluded. The model excluding the races in the home states of the three highest ranking leaders in the House produced very similar results (not included). The same variables remained significant, while no more became significant. The regression coefficients changed minimally, and I determined the Leaders exercised no greater effect in their home states.

Leadership visits did not show a statistical significance when using the full model that includes the competitiveness variables. Moreover, the model that removes the competitiveness variables also shows a lack of statistical significance. The individual candidate fundraising variables experienced colinearity with the competitiveness variables because *Congressional Quarterly* based part of its criteria on a candidate's fundraising through a good portion of the campaign. The leadership visits, however, are not explicitly mentioned as part of the criteria for the competitiveness determination. Moreover, even if leadership visits are factored in, the data for the rankings is compiled several weeks in advance, as the rankings are issued at least a week before the election. Thus, leadership visits occurring closer to Election Day would not be factored into the consideration of CQ competitiveness rankings. Thus, colinearity would not be an issue if many leadership visits occurred closer to the election. Thus, the removal of the competitiveness variables would not result in leadership visits becoming statistically significant because of any relationship among independent variables.

As Table 5 shows, many of the leadership appearances were in fact made during the last month before the election. For many states, the campaign season lasts from March until the beginning of November. During this period of eight months, House leaders made 75 appearances in 2002 and 2004. However, in the last month before the 2002 election, House leaders made

Table 5

Leadership Visits by Year				
Year	Republican	Democrat	Total	Total in Last Month*
2002	41	12	53	23
2004	13	9	22	10
Total	54	21	75	33
* 2002: All visits on or after October 5th; 2004: All visits on or after October 2 <sup>nd</sup>				

43.4% of their visits. Similarly, in the last month before the November 2, 2004, election, House leaders made 45.5% of their visits to districts on behalf of their party's candidates. Overall, House leaders made a full 44.0% of their visits in the last month before the polls opened.

Thus, because a large percentage of leadership visits occurred very late in each election cycle, those data could not factor into the CQ competitiveness rankings accurately. If such appearances were considered, the information would be largely incomplete. As a result, any possible change in the level of statistical significance in the variables measuring party leadership appearances cannot be attributed to an overlap in the information being measured by the competitiveness variables.

The leadership visit variables failed to attain statistical significance. Appearances by the House leadership compose a complex variable both in terms of its effect and its measurement. First we will discuss measurement. This experiment first examined the leadership variables by simply measuring the number of appearances *en bloc* by the Speaker, the floor leaders, the whips and the congressional campaign committee chairs. The measurement was established by publication in district newspapers, in order to gauge the effect on the voters. The model used above operationalizes the variables in this way. After finding no statistical significance, I examined the data as a dummy variable, coding a visit by any of the members of the leadership

as one and no visit as zero (not included). The same result, a lack of statistical significance, occurred by measuring the leadership visits in this way.

A simple count of visits by House leaders is the most effective and efficient way of measuring such a dynamic. However, leadership appearances are more complex. First, leadership appearances affect one district differently than they affect another. For example, a conservative, rural Southern district that runs a moderate (conservative) Democrat faces different constituent relations to the national party than does a more liberal, urban Northern district. A visit by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to the former district may result in a negative effect on the Democratic candidate who seeks to bring conservative values both to the Democratic Party and to Congress. In this case, the failure of a leader to visit a district can be significantly positive to such a candidate. What would function most effectively for that candidate is to have a fellow conservative Democrat, well-established locally, statewide or nationally to appear on his behalf. This dynamic forces another complication for the measurement of this variable.

The determination of who qualifies as a House leader is a judgment call for a researcher. One must weigh parsimony against explanatory accuracy. In this study, I focused on seven House leaders who are charged with the day-to-day operations of the House of Representatives, both legislatively, administratively, and in terms of inter- and intraparty relations. These seven individuals, elected by their peers, maintain positions of authority over every member of the House or, at least, every House member of their respective party. Other individuals wield significant amounts of power within the House of Representatives. Committee chairmen and ranking members maintain a good deal of prestige and power; combined, they number 42. In addition, senior House members from state delegations can influence races within those states. Furthermore, any established House member can serve as a leader, in some sense, to an adjacent

or nearby district. Female Members of Congress may function as leaders in front of certain women's rights groups. African-American or Latino congressmen may serve a leadership-type role in certain urban districts. What results is a situation in which, given a certain set of circumstances, almost any incumbent member of the House of Representatives can function as a House leader. The seven leaders used in this experiment are the best choices for measuring this variable. They attain national acclaim by virtue of their office. Their leadership role is not issue-oriented as would come with a chairmanship, nor is it localized according to proximity of districts. Instead, they are the most widely-recognized, clearly-defined leaders in the Congress and are the only individuals who such a variable should evaluate, in order for that variable to be efficient and manageable.

A visit by a member of the leadership of the House of Representatives brings a seemingly unmatched set of benefits to a race. First, a visit by a leader motivates that party's base within the district. Such a visit functions as a Homecoming Rally for the political Fall classic. Seeing an all-star from Washington, DC, whirl into town in a dark-colored vehicle, flanked by guards in order to give an address about the issues that define that party during that election is a thrill to the political base. The party base is a vital asset for a candidate. As candidates in competitive races tend to move toward a more moderate position to attract the most voters, a visit by a party leader offset any discouragement the party base develops as a result of such a moderate shift.

Next, a visiting House leader legitimizes the candidate on whose behalf he is visiting. While a candidate may be run by the state party committee unopposed or come to win the nomination through a hard-fought primary battle with a fellow party member, a candidate may face one of two situations. In the first case, the candidate may lack general name recognition among most of the electorate, but was chosen for fundraising capacity or personal wealth. In the

latter case, a little less than half of the party's voters in the district may be dissatisfied with the candidate and be unmotivated to visit the voting booth, as they feel his primary opponent was the better candidate. A leader's visit to the district on behalf of the candidate tells the party and the district as a whole that this candidate is what the national party is seeking. And more importantly, the visit is a statement from the legislative leaders in the House of Representatives that they are ready and willing to work with this candidate. This tacit approval tells voters that the candidate has a legitimate chance of influencing, molding, or producing policy and legislation that is meaningful and beneficial to that district. While the failure of a leader to appear on behalf of a candidate may occur for a variety of reasons (e.g., lack of competitiveness, the possible negative effects of a visit), a lack of such national attention can convey to the voters that the House leadership is not motivated or looking forward to working with this candidate.

Next, similar to the party base motivation, a leader's visit can motivate an ideological base to vote. In any race there are hundreds of issues that matter to certain groups of individuals. However, in most elections there exist certain issues and concerns that are more general, that matter to a huge percentage of the electorate. For example, Social Security reform and national and international security were two of the central issues in the minds of voters in 2002 and 2004. While these issues have obvious local effects, they are handled nationally. Such issues are so divisive that voters understand that one man or woman from one congressional district will do little to solve the problem. Because of this sentiment, voters can become apathetic. A visit by a House leader, an individual in charge of setting the legislative agenda, can motivate an individual, independent of their party preference, who holds the same beliefs on these issues. At certain times in history, these issues can be so dominant in an individual's interests (i.e., they involve life, personal security, or the safety of their posterity) that people are willing to listen to



whichever individual promotes an effective, logical, and clear way to solve the problem. This search for an answer to national issues can cross party lines. What it means is that the leader, with a star-like, national, political power who discusses the solutions to these issues may motivate a certain sect of the electorate not only to vote in the November election, but to vote for that party's candidate.

With regard to leadership visits during the 2002 and 2004 open seat House races, a qualitative analysis of the data displays very telling information about the priorities and processes of the Democratic and Republican parties. Examining the visitation activity of the Republican party shows a dedication to the open-seat races. As Table 6 shows, the four Republican leaders visited 37 of 74 races—exactly 50%—during the two election cycles. The

Table 6

Visits by House Leadership						
Competitiveness	# of Races	# of Races with Leadership Visits	# of Races Visited by a Republican Leader	# of Visits by a Republican Leader	# of Races Visited by a Democratic Leader	# of Visits by a Democratic Leader
Safe Republican	19	9	9	10	1	2
Safe Democrat	15	2	2	2	0	0
Leans Republican	19	13	11	18	3	4
Leans Democrat	9	6	5	8	3	3
No Clear Favorite	12	10	10	16	6	12

leaders visited these 37 races, a combined 54 times. These data ignore the other incumbent-races that the House leadership visit during these election cycles. So, the true number of overall visits

is actually higher. What this data shows is that the Republican party sees the visitation of their leaders to open-seat races as a very important part of the campaign season. While the regression cannot confirm a relationship between leadership visits and the vote, the Republican Party obviously believes it makes a difference. The leadership takes the time and effort to travel to the races, supports individuals, and, at least to some extent, addresses the issues vital to that candidate's campaign. They spend valuable resources that could be sent elsewhere to speak on behalf of these district nominees. Thus, they must believe in the benefits to the party.

The data also show that the leadership visits are not just meaningless political actions, used to thank the candidates for running under the GOP banner. While the data show that the House leadership visited 50% of open seat House races, visits were not equally dispersed across different competitiveness rankings. Equal dispersion across the rankings would give credence to a theory that the visits were meaningless political ploys. Instead, the data show that among the three most competitive types of races (those labeled 'Leans Republican', 'Leans Democrat', and 'No Clear Favorite'), the Republican Party leadership visited 26 of 40 races or 65%. This marked increase from the overall percentage of visits shows the importance of these visits to competitive races. Furthermore, of the 12 races labeled 'No Clear Favorite', the Republicans visit ten of them or 83.3%. Under the three most competitive rankings, of the 26 races visited by the Republican House leadership, they made 42 visits. Similarly, 16 Republican visits were made to the ten races labeled 'No Clear Favorite'. To compare, the Republican leadership visited 11 of 34 or 32.4% of races labeled 'Safe'. Only 12 visits were made to these 11 races. Thus, the data in Table 6 are clear; the more competitive a race, the more likely a district is to be visited by the Republican House leadership.

The Democrats showed a less enthusiastic effort in making leadership appearances. Among the 74 open seat House races in 2002 and 2004, the Democrats only visited 13 races. This performance is considerably low compared to the Republican efforts. These 13 races account for only 17.57% of the races. The Republicans visited 50% of races. To compare, the Democrats visited only 35.14% of the number of races visited by the Republican House leadership.

Similar to the Republican leadership visits, the Democratic leaders visited more competitive races with higher frequency. Twelve of the 13 races visited by the Democratic leadership occurred in the three most competitive types of races: 'Leans Republican', 'Leans Democrat', and 'No Clear Favorite'. Moreover, six of the 13 visits, or 46.15%, were in the most competitive races, labeled 'No Clear Favorite'. In the 13 races visited by Democratic leaders, those individuals made only 21 appearances. To compare, the Republican leaders made 157% more visits—54 overall—than did the Democratic leaders.

There could be several explanations for the lower frequency of visitations by the Democratic leadership. First, the Democrats have fewer leaders in this study. The Republicans, being the majority party in the House of Representatives, have the speakership, a position without a minority counterpart. Thus, if the Democratic leadership had three-quarters as many visits or if three-quarters as many districts were visited by Democratic leaders, then the difference in leadership numbers could explain the disparity. Taking the 37 districts visited by Republicans and the 54 visits in those districts into account, the Democrats would need to make 41 visits in 28 districts. The Democrats actually made only 21 visits to 13 districts. Thus, the differences in the number of leaders cannot be an explanation for the differences in leadership visits.

Another explanation for the disparity in leadership visits could be that the Democrats do not see value in its leaders visiting the open seat districts. Focusing on the visits to the 12 most competitive races, in which *Congressional Quarterly* could not determine a favorite, can qualitatively examine the value of leadership visits. Within these 12 races, both parties' leaders combined to visit ten races. The Republican leadership visited all ten, while the Democratic leadership visited six. The Republicans won nine of the 12 races. The Democrats failed to visit four districts visited by Republicans. The Republicans won all four of these races; however, on average the Republican candidate only received 53.74% of the vote. The races were considerably close, and the Democratic leadership failed to appear. Of the three races the Democrats did win, they visited two of them and the third race was not visited by either party. More significantly, the other district not visited by either party was the 2002 race in the at-large district in South Dakota. The Republican winning this seat, William Janklow, received less than 54% of the vote.

Within the races visited by the Democratic leadership, the Republican candidate did win four races. In one of these races, the Republican candidate received more than 60% of the vote, an exception to that level of competitiveness. Aside from this race, the average Republican margin of victory was only 2.9%. This shows that while the Democrats did not win the races, these races were among the closest in the country. The leadership visits in these races could have added to the increased competition. It is not clear how much a leadership visit will benefit a candidate or a candidate's chance of winning a race. Nor is it clear whether one party benefits more from leadership visits than another. The leadership visits may very well make a race closer than it would be without such visits. One could criticize this relationship by claiming that leaders simply visit more competitive races, instead of the visits making races more competitive. However, the evidence clearly shows that the Republican Party, visiting more districts and

having more visits to those districts resulted in three times as many wins than Democrats in the races in which *Congressional Quarterly* deemed there to be ‘No Clear Favorite’.

The data also show a stark difference between the party spending in 2002 and that in 2004. As Table 7 shows, the party spending in 2004 drastically increased over the levels in 2002. Spending in open seat races increased over \$25 million dollars from one election cycle to the next. Most significantly, the spending per open seat race increased even more dramatically.

There were 14 more races in 2002 than in 2004. From 2002 to 2004, total party spending increased from just under \$3 million to more than \$28 million—an increase of 800.7%. Similarly, party spending increased by nearly \$900,000 per race on average—an increase of 1221.0%. Obviously, these increases between the two years both in party

Table 7

Combined Party Spending in Open Seat Races			
Year	Total Spending	# of Races	Spending per Open Seat Race
2002	\$3,162,468	44	\$71,874
2004	\$28,484,595	30	\$949,487
Total	\$31,647,063	74	\$427,663
Source: FEC			

spending and party spending per race between the two years are not insignificant increases that can be attributed to chance. Instead, such increases need a more qualitative explanation.

There are many reasons explaining drastic increases in party spending from one election year to the next. First, an increase in competitive races in 2004 could lead to an increase in party

spending. If the party sees that more open seat races are more competitive during an election cycle, then they will send more funding to those races. The data, however, paint a different picture of race competitiveness between the two years. There were 28 races in 2002 labeled 'No Clear Favorite' or 'Leans' and only 12 in 2004. In 2004 there were 46.7% fewer races overall than in 2002. However, there were 57.1% fewer competitive races in 2004 than in 2002. Thus, an increase in the number of competitive races cannot be an explanation for the increase in party spending.

It could be argued that the Presidential year could cause an increase in party fundraising and, in effect, party spending, in the same way it increases voter turnout. However, there are fundamental problems with this idea. First, during a Presidential year, while there tends to be more political involvement, that number mathematically could not account for the increase in party spending. According to a George Mason University study, voter turnout increased from 40% in 2002 to 60% in 2004. This increase is due to individuals' attention to the Presidential election. Thus, much of the additional fundraising that would occur due to this increase in political participation would be toward the motivating force during that year: the Presidential campaign.

Another explanation for increases in party spending between two election cycles comes from the inflation rate. However, according to the Department of Labor, the inflation rate from 2002 to 2004 was only 5.00%, far short of the increase in spending.

Next, an increase in party spending from one election cycle to the next can come with the overall risk associated with the election. If the minority party has an opportunity to take over majority control of the House of Representatives, it is likely that party spending would increase, particularly in the naturally competitive open-seat races. This cannot explain the increase in party

spending in 2004. In 2002, the Republican party held a six-seat majority in the House. In 2002, the Republican advantage was 12 seats. Aside from the difference in the size of the majority, the 2002 election was considered “too close to call” (Reddy 2002). In 2004, however, the only individuals discussing the possible Democratic takeover were the members of the Democratic leadership, and this effort was widely seen more as party cheerleading than a serious evaluation of the election outcome. In 2004, “there [were] few doubts over which party [would] control Congress” (Meek 2004). The risk of a majority party change was higher in 2002.

The day after the 2002 election, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), went into effect. While the act did limit soft-money donations and set higher limits on direct, hard-money donations, the act did little to affect party spending on behalf of candidates. Originally, the act did force the national party organizations to choose whether they would use independent or coordinated expenditures in support of a candidate during a campaign. However, in 2003, this clause of BCRA was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in *McConnell, et al. v. Federal Election Commission, et al.* Thus, the legislation’s only real effect on the parties was the removal of soft money donations. As Table 8 shows, this legislation resulted in an overall decrease in spending by the DCCC and the NRCC. The effect, then, should have limited the amount of party spending per open-seat race. However, open-seat races differed drastically from the average and saw a dramatic increase. Hence, the legislation does not explain the difference in spending, as the spending increased only in open seat races.

The most clear and logical explanation for the difference in party spending is the change in leadership and in priorities. From 2002 to 2004, the only individual who stayed in his or her position was Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert. House Whips, Republican Tom DeLay and Democrat Nancy Pelosi, became Majority and Minority Leaders respectively in 2003.

Table 8

Overall Party Spending in 2002 and 2004 <sup>1</sup>		
	2002	2004
Total NRCC Spending	\$204,010,188	\$185,790,511
Avg. NRCC Spending per Race <sup>2</sup>	\$482,782	\$427,104
Total DCCC Spending	\$103,776,331	\$92,703,542
Avg. DCCC Spending per Race <sup>2</sup>	\$238,566	\$213,111
<sup>1</sup> Source: Opensecrets.org <sup>2</sup> Average spending is (Total spending)/435		

Meanwhile, both parties elected new whips and new campaign committee chairs. Under this new leadership, it can be assumed that new priorities, styles, and agendas could result in a change in party spending. In coherence with this theory, Nancy Pelosi and Tom Delay, throughout 2003 and 2004, worked tirelessly with their respective congressional campaign committees on open-seat special elections in Kentucky and South Dakota. These types of races functioned as the keys to their legislative success.

The best explanation for the difference in spending is the difference in leadership styles. In 2002, Republican and Democratic floor leaders, Dick Armey and Dick Gephardt had served in their positions for several congresses, offering the same leadership styles. The *new-blood*, trying to empower their parties given their new positions, chose to focus on open-seat races as their keys to increased political power.



## Case Studies

Human behavior is a complex and dynamic variable to measure. Electoral behavior is just as complicated. The choice of which candidate to choose is often made on a voter-by voter basis. One speech, one handshake, even one television commercial can determine a vote. Voter preference extends from any of thousands of variables, and short of a voter-by-voter interview within a district, it is impossible to know why any given individual back a certain candidate. As thus, this model does not attempt to explain every dynamic that occurs a race. This study examines one general type of variable (leadership), on a specific type of race (open seats). The money that the leadership directs to House elections is overwhelming. Some candidates will see millions of dollars pour into their district from the congressional campaign committees in Washington, DC. This study has begun to examine the influence that the leadership has on races. The data have shown that certain types of spending and fundraising is quite valuable. Moreover, while visits by the House leadership do not have statistical significance, the qualitative examination of the data shows striking differences between the two parties. Whereas the influence of leadership through campaign visits and congressional campaign committee spending has been overlooked by scholars up to this point, this study shows that an influence does exist and that future research offers the opportunity for even greater findings.

Like most statistical models, there exist cases that fail to fit the model perfectly. At the same time, other cases clearly exhibit the relationships derived from the regression. Hence, case studies will examine races that fit the model and will observe the actual data that function to produce the result. Next, case studies will view the cases that did not behave as the model would expect and will investigate the other dynamics in the races that produced the unexpected result.

The first case study shall focus on the race that did not fit the competitiveness variables. *Congressional Quarterly's* measures of competitiveness were accurate in every race except one. In the 11<sup>th</sup> district of Georgia in 2002, CQ labeled the race as 'leans Democrat'. However, Phil Gingrey, the Republican, won the race by over three percent. There must, then, be a dynamic not factored into the CQ rankings that explains the case. I begin with fundraising—a vital part of the CQ determination of competitiveness. This factor was probably the item that cursed the label. The Democrat in this race, Roger Kahn, raised \$3,644,255. This figure dominates the \$1,530,762 raised by Phil Gingrey. This figure would imply that the Democrat would benefit. In fact, according to this model, the more than \$2.1 million advantage in Democratic spending should have given the Democrat a more than 11-point advantage. More to the point, the \$23,071 in DCCC coordinated spending is associated with a vote increase for the Democrat by 1.91% of the vote. By this measure, Roger Kahn should hold a nearly 13-point advantage. However, the Republican party spent money in the district as well. The NRCC spent \$9,500 in direct funding, \$16,766 in independent spending on behalf of the candidate, and the RNC spent another \$71,000 in coordinated spending. Republican party spending totaled \$97,266 compared to Democratic party spending of only \$23,321. While the model did not find statistical significance in the Republican party spending variables, it does not mean that in a given race, such a variable exerts no influence. In this case the money that the Republican leadership directed through the party committees could have made the difference. Add to this, House Speaker Dennis Hastert made a campaign appearance on behalf of Republican Phil Gingrey just four days before the election. This leadership appearance by the most powerful member of the House of Representatives may also have contributed to the success of the Republican.

Next, Phil Gingrey was a two-term Georgia state senator who may have benefited from better name recognition. However, as Georgia state senate districts are smaller than its national congressional districts, name recognition may have only been an issue in a small area of the 11<sup>th</sup> district.

Another more vital dynamic that may have influenced the election is the partisan makeup of the district. The new 11<sup>th</sup> district of Georgia is composed of many of the counties that composed the old seventh district. While the comparison is not exact, it is very close in size, shape and composition. Prior to the 2002 election, the old seventh district of Georgia (the new 11<sup>th</sup> district) sent Bob Barr to Congress four consecutive times. Bob Barr was a staunch Southern conservative whose election sheds light on the partisan and ideological composition of this area of the Peach State. During his eight years in Congress, Representative Barr received an average rating from the American Conservative Union of 98.5 with 100 being most conservative (*Congressional Quarterly*). His eight-year average rating from the American Civil Liberties Union was 9.75 with 100 being most liberal (*Congressional Quarterly*). Moreover, George W. Bush won the seventh district of Georgia by 21.8% in 2000 ([www.polidata.org](http://www.polidata.org)). In the end, the efforts of the Republican leadership, both through intense party spending and a last minute visit by the Speaker, coupled with the intense conservatism of the district, was enough to overcome the huge fundraising advantage by the Democrat Roger Kahn.

The 2004 race in the 13<sup>th</sup> district of Pennsylvania offers an example of a race which followed both the expectations of the model in this study and the *Congressional Quarterly* rankings. In this race, the Democrat Allyson Schwartz faced off against Republican Melissa Brown to take over the seat being vacated by Representative Joseph Hoeffel III. Allyson Schwartz enjoyed a major fundraising advantage. She raised over \$4.5 million while Melissa

Brown raised just over \$1.9 million. This over \$2.6 million dollar advantage, according to the model is associated with a 13.77% decrease in the dependent variable. Next, Allyson Schwartz received \$45,444 in DCCC coordinated spending. This is associated with an increase the Democrat's vote share by an additional 3.76%. According to the data thus far, Allyson Schwartz should benefit by 17.53%. Schwartz actually won the race by 15.04%.

The Republican leadership did pour huge sums of money into the race. Combining NRCC independent and coordinated spending and NRCC spending against Allyson Schwartz, the leadership directed \$2,345,938. The Democratic leadership spent \$1,476,888 on the race. While the model was inconclusive as to the influence of these spending variables, it can be assumed that this \$869,000 would benefit the Republican, Melissa Brown's share of the vote, brining down Schwartz' 17.53% advantage. Next, it is difficult to determine the partisan advantage in this district. In 2002, the Democrat Joseph Hoeffel was elected to a third term. His interest group ratings were very liberal. The American Civil Liberties Union's average rating of Congressman Hoeffel's first four years in office was an 87.5 out of 100 (*Congressional Quarterly*). Similarly, the American Conservative Union gave Hoeffel a four-year average of 4 out of 100 (*Congressional Quarterly*). While this would appear to benefit the Democrat, Hoeffel won the 2002 election with only 51% of the vote (Capitol Advantage, 94). The Democrat may only have a slight benefit based solely on the partisan makeup of Pennsylvania's 13<sup>th</sup>.

In the end, the dominance in fundraising was the key to Allyson Schwartz' success. There were no visits from the House leadership from either party. Thus, that variable exacted no influence. The model showed with reasonable precision the benefits of the fundraising and the party spending in terms of the predicted vote outcome and the actual outcome. The difference of only 2.5% could easily be attributed to the possible influence of other spending variables.

A case study analysis of the data also shows an important finding regarding an absence of party spending. When one party fails to spend money in a race, and more importantly, when both parties' leadership fail to direct money in a race, it does not signify a lack of interest in the race. In fact, a lack of spending shows that the leadership has considered the race settled, such that their money, visits and prestige will exact little or no influence on the outcome in the race. This situation brings another dynamic that occurs in open seat House races. While a powerful incumbent can enjoy little meaningful or no competition when seeking reelection, part of that assured electoral success comes not necessarily from the typical incumbent advantages. Some districts, due to ideological composition, naturally vote for a single party. For example, the Republican Congressman, Spencer Bachus, from the rural sixth district of Alabama may have received 90% of the vote in the 2002 election partly because of his five-term incumbency. However, the widely-accepted conservatism of the rural South makes it difficult for a contemporary Democrat to fare well in an election.

In 2004, there was an open seat race in the fourth district of South Carolina, as incumbent Congressman Jim DeMint sought election to the United States Senate. Neither the Democratic or Republican leadership directed party money to the race. No member of the House leadership visited the race. In fact, the total fundraising for the race was just over \$500,000, less than a quarter of the average fundraising per race. This conservative district in northwestern South Carolina elected Jim DeMint three times. In the 2002 election, Congressman DeMint garnered nearly 70% of the vote (Capitol Advantage, 82). During his first two terms, Jim DeMint received an average rating from the American Civil Liberties Union of 13 out of 100, while the American Conservative Union bestowed a rating of 97.75 out of 100 on him over the same period of time.

The district is unmistakably conservative, and the 2004 election displays the strength of that ideological lean.

As the leadership for both parties failed to involve themselves in the race and very little fundraising occurred, *ceteris paribus* the race should have been reasonably close. The Republican candidate, Bob Inglis, raised only \$503,834. Meanwhile, Brandon Brown, the Democrat, raised a meager \$15,842. According to the results of the model, this fundraising is associated with an advantage for the Republican of 3.56%. In reality, Republican Bob Inglis won by a more than 41% margin—70.66% to 29.34%. What this situation shows is that a striking difference in the vote outcome is best attributable to the partisan leaning of the fourth district of South Carolina. A conservative, Republican-dominated district naturally will benefit a Republican seeking election, even without an incumbent advantage.

The race in the third district of Missouri in 2004 offers an extremely insightful case study when understanding the dynamics that can enter a race. The third district of Missouri was being vacated in 2004 by the retirement of the former Democratic Floor Leader and 14-term Congressman Richard Gephardt. The race saw two reasonably strong candidates face off. The Republican party fielded a popular author and pro-life proponent, Bill Federer, who enjoyed name recognition from challenging Congressman Gephardt in the 1998 and 2000 elections ([www.federer04.com](http://www.federer04.com)). The Democratic party ran Russ Carnahan, whose father was elected governor of Missouri and then Senator after dying in a plane crash weeks before the election. His mother was appointed to fill the Senate seat. His grandfather was a United States Congressman, and Russ Carnahan himself was a two-term member of the Missouri House of Representatives, serving as chair of the Democratic Caucus ([www.russcarnahan.com](http://www.russcarnahan.com)). The Republican leadership directed no money to the race, nor did any member of the Republican House leadership visit the

district on behalf of Bill Federer. Similarly, no member of the Democratic House leadership visited the third district of Missouri during the campaign. However, the popularity and influence of Congressman Gephardt, could have played a beneficial role for the Democratic candidate. The Democratic leadership spent only \$8,500 in direct expenditures on the campaign.

The race in the third district of Missouri in 2004 produced a remarkable result in fundraising. In effect, the Republican and Democratic candidates raised exactly the same amount of money. Federer, the Republican, raised \$1,352,598. Carnahan, the Democrat, raised \$1,352,579—a difference of only \$19. According to the model, the Republican fundraising should have increased the Republican's share of the vote by 9.53% while the Democrat's fundraising should have decreased the Republican's share of the vote by 8.11%. The result is a net gain by the Republican by 1.42%. Arguably, the Democrat enjoyed better name recognition, coming from a dynasty of Missouri politics, while his opponent had never held elected office. And while Russ Carnahan likely received a type of coattail effect from the incumbency of Dick Gephardt, in this case, name recognition and previous experience were the dynamics most likely to deliver a Democratic victory. The third district of Missouri composes the southern suburbs of St. Louis and is likely a moderate district that would not benefit either candidate significantly, in terms of partisan composition. Between 1979 and 2002, Congressman Gephardt's average ranking from the American Civil Liberties Union was 64.92 out of 100, showing that they listed him as somewhat moderate. Moreover, when Congressman Gephardt was first elected and before he rose to the popularity of a member of the House leadership in the mid 1980s, the American Conservative Union gave him an average rating of 21.56 out of 100.

The vote results for the third district race favored the Democrat, Russ Carnahan, 53.98% to 46.02%. By some accounts, a nearly 8% victory may be a sound win. However, in a race

where the Republican leadership failed to visit the district or direct any spending from the congressional campaign committees, one must wonder whether doing so would have turned the tides of the race. True, the Democrat enjoyed greater name recognition, but the Republican candidate proved to be a truly competitive fundraiser, for which a leadership visit would have benefited in two ways. First, a leadership visit almost always comes in the form of a fundraiser that would have brought money to the Federer campaign. Second, a visit by a leader may have motivated prospective donors to give money to Bill Federer as the campaign and political ambitions of the candidate would be validated by a Washington powerbroker. Instead, a moderate district in a swing-state was given the same attention by the Republican leadership that a conservative district in a former Confederate state received.

## **Conclusions**

This study does not attempt to explain every influence in open-seat House races. However, the study uses several dynamics to examine what affects the vote outcomes in races for seats in the House of Representatives. Open-seat races in the House create an interesting situation for a researcher. As the reelection rate of House incumbents is well over 90%, open-seat races naturally remove the benefits that incumbents enjoy. While open-seats have been studied in the past, most researchers have ignored the influence that House leaders have on these races. While this ignorance of such an effect can be attributed to an assumption that House leaders exert direct power only over incumbents, the case is not true. House leaders direct the congressional campaign committees to spend money where necessary. As a result, the House leaders exert influence over the money that will be infused into a race. Moreover, a qualitative



examination of the benefits of a visit by a House leader can also show its effects on the vote, particularly in a race without an incumbent.

Furthermore, the 2002 and 2004 elections create a prime situation with which to evaluate the effect of the 2003 Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act. The 2002 and 2004 races are based on the same congressional districts. The races in 2002 were based on the older campaign finance laws; the 2004 races were forced to abide by the new law.

The funding of elections both in terms of party spending and candidate spending is a multi-million dollar business. Spending comes from both parties in many different forms. The money can be used to fund independent efforts or it can be coordinated with the campaign to best serve its needs. Spending can also be specifically used against the opposing candidate.

This study uses the 2000 study by Charles Bullock and Ronald Keith Gaddie as a general framework for a study of open seat House races. It differs, however, from Bullock and Gaddie (2000), as it focuses on a model that examines the effects of leadership both in the forms of visits and directed party spending on the two-party vote. First, the study uses the *Congressional Quarterly* measures of competitiveness. The model shows that this measure is extremely accurate in predicting which party will win a race as well as a range in which the vote will fall. The measures take into account several dynamics of the election process, including fundraising and candidate quality. The results show that CQ called every race designated ‘Safe Republican’, ‘Safe Democrat’, and ‘Leans Republican’ correctly. It only called one race labeled ‘Leans Democrat’ incorrectly. As expected, the margin of victory decreased as competitiveness increased. Moreover, this study introduces a method of controlling for competitiveness in the face of redistricting. It allows the researcher greater choice in case selection and more freedom in the scope of the study. Rather than only being able to examine cases from a 2002-2010, a

researcher can examine trends over a period of time concurrent with the existence of *Congressional Quarterly* competitiveness rankings.

As fundraising was a factor in determining competitiveness and the fundraising variables in the model did not reach statistical significance, removing the competitiveness variables from the model, it was assumed, would change the significance results for fundraising. The results show that they did. The fundraising variables became statistically significant and the signs were as expected, such that an increase in Republican fundraising increases the dependent variable—the Republican share of the two party vote. Similarly, an increase in Democratic fundraising decreases the value of the dependent variable.

Among the party spending variables, only one shows statistical significance: coordinated spending by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. This variable shows that a change in that variable results in a relatively high decrease in the dependent variable, with the sign as expected, negative. This is a significant finding. Not only is a type of party spending statistically significant, but its effect is quite large. The other party spending variables may lack significance because of too few data points under those specific types of spending.

From a more qualitative perspective, the data do show some interesting facts about leadership visits and overall spending. First, the leadership visits showed that the Republican House leaders were far more dedicated to hitting the road and stumping for candidates in open-seat House races. These individuals who represent the strength of the Congress and who set the legislative agenda for the United States, busy themselves with visits to individual congressional districts. Republican leaders seemed to plan effective visits to districts that were both competitive and ones in which the Republican party was thought to have a reasonable chance of electoral success. The Democrats, on the other hand, participated less zealously in campaign

visits. Even in the most competitive races, those labeled ‘No Clear Favorite’ the Democrats only visited half of the districts. These races, arguably represented the races in which Democratic leadership neglect could likely translate to a Democrat’s loss.

Next, overall party spending in open-seat races showed important results, particularly in the context of the new campaign finance law. What the data show is that from 2002 to 2004 the total spending of the DCCC and the NRCC for all races decreased. However, party spending per open-seat race dramatically increased. The data show that dynamics must be at play motivating the leadership to fund heavily open-seat races. As Herrnson described open-seats to be the only elections that are naturally competitive, the new House leaders seem to put those words into action. Leaders DeLay and Pelosi and then congressional campaign committee chairmen Reynolds and Matsui seem to place greater emphasis on open seat races as a key to electoral success. Every election brings distinct drives to a House leader: protect your majority or win a majority. It seems that in 2004, both the Republican and Democratic leaders saw open seat races as the most important forums to meet or actively work toward their goals.

The Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002 was effective in its objective to stop soft money fundraising. This limit, in effect, led to a decrease in overall spending by the party organizations. However, open seat races saw a dramatic increase in party spending, and an even greater increase in average spending per race. The campaign finance law did not cause this change in party spending; instead, it seems the cause was a drastic shift in leadership style.

In the end, this study shows that in campaigns just like in the halls of Congress, the House leadership is not to be ignored. The people who are elected by their colleagues to control the function of the House of Representatives also dictate much of what goes into the campaigns. While individual candidate fundraising was statistically significant, the leaders directed large

sums of money to be spent on the campaigns in 2002 and 2004. On average, parties spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on each race between the two years. While only one of the spending variables registered statistical significance, it is by no means a reflection of the lack of importance of party spending. Instead, it calls for greater research in the area. While the effect of the leadership's direction of party spending has been ignored by scholars, this study should be a starting point for the future. Future elections should give more data points to examine whether other party spending variables attain statistical significance.

One of the resource limits to this study was the lack of information regarding the Presidential coattail effect. The effect of that the President can have, positively or negatively, can be an important element in the study of House races. The Bullock and Gaddie (2000) study examines the Presidential coattail effect. To measure the coattail effect during a midterm they examine the Presidential voting by congressional district in the last Presidential election. During a Presidential election year, they use that year's voting data. For this study, this method would not be accurate. For two reasons, one should use the congressional district voting data for the 2004 Presidential election. First, the congressional districts in the 2000 Presidential year were reconfigured after the 2000 census. As a result, the congressional districts in 2002 are incomparable to those in 2000. Second, the issues most important to voters in the 2002 election were closer to those at issue in the 2004 Presidential election, rather than the 2000 Presidential election. Issues such as national and international security and war were not at the forefront for voters in November 2000. Conversely, they were some of the most important issues in 2002 and 2004. As a result, a future study should incorporate the effects of the Presidential coattails, as is done by the Bullock and Gaddie (2000) study, with the aforementioned adjustments because of the specific issue dynamics of the 2002 and 2004 election cycles.

Moreover, future research should examine the leadership styles. If the styles of the House leaders should remain the same, as the same Majority and Minority leaders from the 2004 election were reelected to their posts in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress and the emphasis remains on open-seat races, it will be telling of the political-electoral preferences of these individuals. It will show consistency in style and a conviction in the importance of open seat races to the overall success of Congressional electoral pursuits. It will further add credence to the theory that the emphasis on open-seat elections comes from a personal preference of the leaders, rather than another political dynamic solely affecting the 2004 congressional election cycle.

In the end, the House leadership does affect the vote. Such an effect has been illustrated both statistically and qualitatively. As expected and more specifically, money matters in open seat House elections. Party spending has been shown to exert influence. Moreover, candidate fundraising is critical in winning open seat House races. While not a perfect predictor, and its influence for each party differs, a fundraising advantage often signifies the winner. Overall, what it means is that the wealthier a candidate's campaign, coupled with a closer relationship with the House leadership and the congressional campaign committees, will produce a greater likelihood of winning a House race. In a sense, for races in which no candidate wields the advantage of incumbency, it still remains a connection to Washington that may seal the deal.

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