

King-Makers in Presidential Nomination Campaigns

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Abstract:

Most studies characterize political party organizations as having little impact in the selection of the presidential nominees since the McGovern-Frazier reforms. The circumstances that gave rise to this minimalist view, however, have changed. Front-loading of the primary schedule, rising campaign costs, declining media coverage, and adaptive behavior by presidential candidates have lessened the uncertainty of the primary campaign as the front-runner is increasingly likely to gain the nomination. The pre-primary competition is now the crucial stage of the presidential nominating campaign. One of the central questions about presidential nomination campaigns is who or what determines *which candidate* will emerge as the front-runner during the pre-primary period? This paper looks at the role of party elites in this regard.

My thesis is that the extent to which party and elected officials coalesce around a single candidate, determines whether the primary campaign will be characterized by a clear front-runner or divided among a more competitive field. Using newspaper reports of endorsements from all 50 states, I analyze candidate endorsements by party and elected officials in the pre-primary campaigns from 1992 to 2000. The results support the idea that party elites *can* influence which candidate emerges as the front-runner during the pre-primary season. Republican elites appear to be more potent than Democratic elites, who tend to endorse candidates later and be less unified around a single candidate. Additional findings are reported regarding the ideological positions of endorsing party officials.

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In contemporary presidential nomination campaigns, the pre-primary period has emerged as the crucial time in which the eventual nominees are selected.* Since 1980, the candidate identified as the front-runner in January of the election year has gone on to win the presidential nominations of both major political parties since 1980 (Dodenhoff and Goldstein 1998, 147-49). Recent forecasting models (Mayer 1996b; Adkins and Dowdle 2000, 2001; Steger 2000) demonstrate that the presidential primary vote is well predicted with information about finances and poll position prior to the primaries. If the front-runner on the eve of the primaries is prohibitively favored to win the presidential nomination, the central question for understanding presidential nominations is who or what determines *which candidate* will emerge as the front-runner during the pre-primary period? My thesis is that the party elites *can* play crucial roles in determining which candidate will emerge as the front-runner. Specifically, the extent to which party elites unify behind a single candidate determines whether the candidate field has several viable candidates or a single front-runner. By rallying around a single candidate, party elites help that candidate become the favorite going into the primaries. Though cue-giving and surrogate support, party elites can help a candidate gain funds, media coverage, organizational support, and perhaps even public support in and at the polls.

While the nation's print media discuss candidate endorsements in thousands of articles every nomination campaign, political scientists generally discount the role and influence of candidate endorsements in the presidential nominating process. Most studies view the McGovern-Fraser reforms as opening and democratizing the presidential nomination process (e.g., Ranney 1975, 1977; Kirkpatrick 1978; Ceaser 1982; Polsby 1983; among others). The

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subsequent adoption of primaries in most states shifted the locus of decision for selecting convention delegates from party officials to party activists and identifiers (e.g., Shafer 1983; Polsby 1983; Crotty and Jackson 1985). The mediating role of party elites declined as party organizations lost control of the selection of delegates to the national nominating conventions (e.g., Shafer 1983; Polsby 1983; Wattenberg 1984). The Midlarky Commission reforms of 1974 further eroded party influence by effectively giving presidential candidates control of their delegates to the national nominating conventions (e.g., Ceaser 1982; Epstein 1986). Candidates and their organizations, the media, and party activists came to play the dominant roles in the selection of the parties' presidential nominees (e.g., Kirkpatrick 1978; Patterson 1981, 1993; Wattenberg 1991). Candidates could campaign outside of party networks by building their own organizations and using polls, media and direct mail advertising to identify, communicate with, and mobilize potential primary voters (e.g., Patterson 1980; Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter 1986; Wattenberg 1991). In such circumstances, there was little reason to expect a substantial party role in the nominations of presidential candidates.

Some have argued specifically that the McGovern-Frazier reforms had the effect of eroding peer review by party and elected officials (e.g., Ranney 1975, 1977; Kirkpatrick 1976, 1978; Ceaser 1982; Polsby 1983; Price 1984, ch. 6; Norrander 1986). Theodore White (1972) observed that party endorsements were ineffective in Edmund Muskie's 1972 presidential nomination bid. White described how Muskie's nomination bid failed despite his enormous advantages in finances, staff, the endorsements of the party's leading figures, and relatively high support in pre-primary public opinion polls. The lesson of the '72 Democratic nomination was that candidates could no longer rely on the party establishments to deliver convention delegates as they had in the pre-reform era. Since then, most students of presidential nominations have accepted this minimalist view of the party establishments in the nomination process.

Yet the presidential nomination process has evolved since the 1970s in ways that have increased the influence of the political parties (e.g., Bibby 1980; Price 1984; Cohen 2001b). The relative openness of presidential nomination campaigns in the 1970s tapered as the political parties, candidates, and the media adapted to the strategic environment created by the reforms (Steger 2000). Candidates routinely begin raising money, organizing, and campaigning early in preparation for the primary competition. Most enter the early caucuses and primaries, effectively denying dark-horse candidates of the competitive advantages that enabled Jimmy Carter to gain momentum in the 1976 Iowa caucuses (e.g., Mayer 1996a). Front-loading and rising campaign costs have forced candidates to raise the bulk of their money and have their organizations in place prior to the primary season since they lack the time to raise enough money or expand their organizations during the primaries (e.g., Kamark and Kenneth Goldstein 1994; Haskett 1996; Sabato 1996; Steger 2000; Adkins and Dowdle 2001). Few candidates have the resources to compete beyond the first few caucuses and primaries (Adkins and Dowdle 2000). Candidates today also are less able to use free media to compensate for a lack of resources because of declining network news coverage of nomination campaigns (e.g., Steger 2002), and increasingly critical news coverage presidential candidates (Owen 1991, 1997; Steger 1999; 2001a). Trailing candidates thus are less able to “break through” during the primaries. It is not surprising that candidates identified as the front-runners in January of the election year have gone on to win the presidential nominations since 1980 (Mayer 1996b; Dodenhoff and Goldstein 1998, 147-49; see Buell 1996 for alternate view).

Only recently are scholars beginning to take another look at candidate endorsements in presidential nomination campaigns (e.g., Steger 2000a, 2000b; Cohen, et al. 2001a, 2001b). Candidate competition is a central part of our understanding of presidential nomination. The competitiveness of the campaign is crucial for democratic input in the selection of presidential

nominees. At a minimum, voters in a representative democracy are supposed to have the power to select leaders. Electoral power derives in part from having choices among candidates or parties (Shumpeter 1942, 281-83). According to E.E. Schattsneider (1960, 140-141), competition among political organizations and leaders is what provides people with the opportunity to make a meaningful choice in elections. Without viable options, voters' power to choose may be little more than a plebiscitary vote of confidence (or no confidence) of the mediating choices of those who define voters' options (Held 1987, 154-166). Inequities in candidates' capacities to compete for votes—to communicate ideas to and inform voters about why they and not some other candidate should be elected, is a major constraint on primary voters' options. Primary voters' choices are constrained to the extent that money, organization, and media attention concentrate in the hands of a single front-runner. If party elites do effectively constrain the set of viable candidates to those they endorse, then those elites play a substantial mediating role in determining who becomes the nominee. In the extreme, caucus and primary voters' decision may reduce to a plebiscitary choice of accepting or rejecting the party establishment's choice, in favor of whichever candidate emerges as the leading alternative.

I will begin by discussing how and why endorsements affect presidential nomination campaigns. These arguments yield several hypotheses about the effects of candidate endorsements, which are assessed later in the paper.

Effects of Candidate Endorsements

Endorsements as Cues

Candidate endorsements by party and elected officials and of interest groups provide cues about the viability and ideological positions of the candidates. Such cues are important in the nomination stage when party labels cannot be used to distinguish between candidates and the ideological distinctions between candidates are nuanced (e.g., Lengle 1981; Wattier 1983;

Norrander 1988). Different signals are sent when Jesse Helms or Christine Todd Whitman endorses a Republican candidate. Primary voters seem to respond to the ideological appeals and images of the candidates in presidential nomination campaigns (Wattier 1990; Wattier and Jackson 2001). The impact of an endorsement depends also on the views of the cue recipient. A given endorsement may help or hurt a candidate depending on the endorser's esteem with various party constituencies. This fits with the view that nomination campaigns are contests among candidates as well as among the various factions that form the party membership (e.g., Brams 1979; Aldrich 1980; Polsby 1981).

Unfortunately, we cannot directly assess the effects of cue giving on primary voters since sufficient data is not available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the candidate endorsements do not have much effect on rank-and-file partisans. Dozens of newspaper articles quote campaign professionals, party officials, and office holders to the effect that endorsements do not carry much weight with most primary voters.¹ Primaries can and are won by candidates other than the candidate with the most endorsements in a state. Phil Gramm lost the '96 Louisiana caucus despite having the backing of most of the state's Republican establishment. Similarly, George W. Bush had the support of John Engler and most of the Michigan Republican establishment, yet lost to John McCain in the state's 2000 Republican primary. Endorsements would appear to have only marginal effects on rank-and-file partisans and independents voting in primaries.

Instead, the main targets of party elite endorsements are other elites during the pre-primary period. The information provided by endorsements is more likely to influence other party and elected officials, campaign contributors, the media, and groups aligned with the parties. The press view endorsements as evidence of candidate viability, giving more press and broadcast news coverage to candidates with more endorsements (see below). Since many

¹ Endorsements are particularly ineffective with independent voters in open primaries in states like Michigan and Wisconsin.

(though not necessarily a majority of) large contributors give money strategically (e.g., Corrado 1996), such information could affect candidates' fund-raising success. Ideally from a candidate's standpoint, endorsements have a contagion effect producing more media-coverage, more poll support, more campaign contributions, more endorsements, and so on.

Endorsements send signals about a candidate's viability because party and elected officials assume a reputational risk when they back a candidate. As long time Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley put it, one of the cardinal rules of politics is, "don't back no losers." Unless the symbolic benefits—derived from the value of promoting an issue or policy position, outweigh the political costs of supporting a loser, a rational endorser will be expected to support a candidate who is ideologically acceptable and electable. That endorsers consider the viability of a candidate before making an endorsement means that the endorsements provide meaningful information to contributors, the media, and part activists about who the serious candidates are. Information on candidate viability plays a relatively greater role in public evaluations of candidates early in the nominating process, when prospective primary voters have the least information about the candidates (Bartels 1988). The effect on viability is mutually reinforcing; more viable candidates tend to attract more endorsements and endorsements signal those attentive to the campaign as to which candidates are more or less viable.

The absence of endorsements may signal that a candidate lacks viability or acceptable personal characteristics or policy positions. The lack of endorsements is probably most damaging when a candidate creates the expectation for them. Steve Forbes, for example, failed to gain the endorsement of his childhood friend, and then New Jersey Governor, Christine Todd Whitman. Whitman's endorsement of Dole in the 1996 Republican nomination campaign was widely interpreted in the media as undermining Forbes' ability to be taken as a serious candidate.

At a minimum, candidates act *as if* endorsements matter a great deal. Virtually all candidates announce endorsements at rallies or press conferences. Candidates use endorsements in their advertisements, web pages, and fund-raising efforts. Bob Dole, for example, distributed a 20-page list of endorsements to potential contributors in 1995. Candidates who do not receive endorsements try to spin their lack of endorsements as a positive, down-playing a lack of endorsements by framing the situation as evidence of their “outsider” status. This spin is often transparent since these same candidates herald endorsements when they get them, as Steve Forbes did when Jack Kemp endorsed him on the eve of the '96 New York primary.

Surrogate Attacks

Candidates sometimes use their supporters to attack rivals on their behalf (e.g., Garramone 1984, 1985). Such negative attacks and criticisms of rival candidates are effective because party and elected officials are "credible" sources of criticism. The use of surrogates to attack rivals may insulate the candidate from charges of negative campaigning since the campaign itself does not make the attack (e.g., Garramone 1985). Candidates using surrogates to attack their rivals can disavow the attack if it generates a backlash (Sabato 1981, 166; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1993). In the 1996 Republican presidential nomination campaign, Bob Dole used such surrogate testimonials and attacks. Iowa Senator Charles Grassley appeared in television spots urging Iowans to reject Steve Forbes because of his ads attacking Dole. Dole backers New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and New Jersey Governor Christine Todd-Whitman criticized Buchanan's "extremism," racism, anti-Semitism. In the 2000 primaries, George Bush's supporters in South Carolina attacked John McCain's lack of support for policies favored by the Christian Coalition (though these attacks were mitigated partially by McCain's endorsement by Gary Bauer, whose credentials in this regard were unparalleled in the

Republican candidate field). Bush supporters criticized McCain' opposition to federal funding of particular projects that had appeal in those states in California and New York.

Fund-Raising and Organizational Effects

Endorsements may also have surrogate fundraising and organizational effects. Modern political party establishments consist of small organizational cores of professional party officials and broader networks of campaign professionals and party activists operating at the national, state and local levels. Elected officials also develop their own organizations and networks of volunteers and contributors. These overlapping organizations and political networks form the webs of the modern political party establishments. Recognizing the party establishments as such helps us understand the role of the political parties in the contemporary presidential nomination campaigns. Endorsements are part of a candidate's efforts to build strong organizations and to discourage potential challengers (Embrey, 1995; Cohen, et al. 2001b). Endorsements matter most when the endorser works on behalf of the candidate, helping him or her in fundraising and building organizational networks at the grass roots level.

Early endorsements matter more than endorsements occurring during the primary season since candidates must have the bulk of their campaign organizations in place before the voting begins. Endorsements coming right before the primaries cannot carry as much weight as those occurring earlier since the endorsing official lacks the time to raise funds for, or recruit volunteers to, the endorsed candidate's cause. Late endorsements are also less useful for soliciting funds since candidates need most of their money before the primaries begin. Finally, later endorsements tend to reflect rather than effect a candidate's viability. In 1992, for example, many US representatives and senators held off endorsing Bill Clinton until he won the Maryland and Pennsylvania primaries. Thus, the timing of endorsements is a central factor in assessing the potential impact of endorsements on presidential nominations.

The status of the endorsing official also may affect the extent of support received by a candidate. Gubernatorial endorsements are the most prized endorsements because governors typically have extensive, statewide networks of political supporters. U.S. Senators also may have extensive networks of political supporters. Much political fund-raising occurs through networks of individuals who solicit funds on behalf of candidates. According to press reports, gubernatorial and senatorial endorsers frequently raise funds and recruit supporters on behalf of the candidate they endorsed. Contributor and volunteer networks may be tapped as endorsers seek to support their candidate financially and organizationally.

The extent of surrogate support also varies with the strength of state party organizational structures. In states where the political party establishments are stronger, the endorsements of the state party establishment can provide candidates with ample organizational support. In states like New York, the imprimatur of the state party establishment is tantamount to winning the state's delegation to the national convention. In 1996, for example, New York state officials informed Bob Dole that the endorsement of the state party establishment on March 14, 1995 meant that he could count on the entire state's delegation to the national convention (Lombardi 1995, 14). Though Steve Forbes succeeded in forcing New York Republicans to open the primary ballot, the New York Republican establishment easily overcame Steve Forbes' court challenge and professional petition drive to deliver all of the state's convention delegates to Dole. Even in states with less extensive organizational networks, the organizational and financial advantages conferred on a candidate by mobilization of the networks of party and elected officials supplement a candidate's efforts to build his or her own state-level organization.

Deterrent Effects

Endorsements may also limit the resources available to other candidates (Embrey 1995). There is a direct effect in which resources secured by one candidate may be denied to others.

Partisans who "know their governor and state legislators are saying George Bush is our best chance," are less likely to "get involved actively or make contributions to other candidates" (Broder 1999; Cohen 2001a, 9). Endorsements also have an indirect, deterrent effect on other candidates' efforts to organize and raise funds in a particular state. Scarce time and resources force candidates to target their efforts. Candidates who gain the support of party networks in a state may deter their rivals from investing time and money into that state. Dominating a state, signals to other candidates that their own organizing efforts will be less productive in that state. The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If candidates avoid a state, they necessarily develop less fund-raising networks and organization in that state.

Deterrence happened frequently in the crowded '96 Republican nominating campaign when candidates generally avoided states supporting candidates like Lugar (Indiana), Alexander (Tennessee), and Specter (Pennsylvania). George W. Bush's unprecedented endorsements by majorities of state and federal office holders in 1999 had the effect of cutting off his rivals before they could get their campaigns off the ground. Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson didn't even make his exploratory committee public, even though he raised money, hired staff, and visited Iowa several times. Thompson aborted his effort in March of 1999, complaining that he simply couldn't compete given the overwhelming advantages held by Bush.² In a competition for resources, candidates gain when their rivals do not.

In general, the concentration of candidate endorsements by state party and elected officials should be indicative of a candidate's relative strength in a state. Concentrated candidate endorsements reflects agreement among party notables and indicates the potential organizational and financial operations put forth on behalf of candidates within that state. When the party establishments in different parts of the country rally around a candidate; that candidate stands to

² Personal communication with a Thompson staff member.

gain a relative advantage in fund-raising, organizational support, media coverage, and public support as a result of the cue-taking and surrogate-organizational dynamics.

In addition to these functional elements that enhance a candidate's ability to compete, a consensus among the various party establishments reflects a widely held belief that a particular candidate is philosophically desirable and electable. A candidate who receives a disproportionate share of endorsements probably has the characteristics that make him or her likely to win, independent of the competitive advantages afforded by cue-taking and surrogate support. This is the essence of the peer review that Polsby (1983) and others argued was eliminated with the shift from closed caucuses to open caucuses and primaries. Given the attentiveness of political and party activists to print-media coverage of politics (e.g., Zukin and Keeter 1983; Bartels 1988), we can expect that party elites and activists are exposed to this information. Thus I expect candidates' primary vote shares to correlate positively with the number and status of their endorsements.

There is a potential intervening factor between the occurrence of endorsements and state primary elections. Candidates may drop out of the race before the effects of endorsements can be fully realized on primary voting. Alexander, E. Dole, Kasich, and Quayle all dropped out of the nominating campaign before the 2000 primaries. These campaign terminations reflect recognition of a battle lost, which is in keeping with our argument. If their backers switch their support to another candidate, this is reflected in a later date of endorsement. If their backers opt not to endorse another candidate, this fact will be indicated by fewer overall endorsements of other candidates. Early dropouts thus are not major theoretical or empirical obstacles if we think about and measure both the timing and number of endorsements of presidential candidates.

H1: Candidate endorsements send signals about a candidate's ideological or policy positions.

H2: Candidate endorsements relate positively to media coverage received by candidates.

H3: Candidate endorsements relate positively to the funds raised by candidates.

H4: Candidate endorsements relate positively to candidates' position in national opinion polls.

H5: Candidate endorsements relate positively to candidates' share of the primary vote.

Measurement of Variables

Data on candidate endorsements were obtained through a content analysis of newspapers identified in a Lexis-Nexis search from January 1 of the year prior to the elections through June 30 of the election year. The Lexis-Nexis search identified 599 articles referring to endorsements of candidates for the '92 Democratic presidential nomination; 4346 articles in the '96 Republican presidential nomination, and 9,513 articles in the 2000 Democratic and Republican presidential nominations. Articles were identified through Lexis-Nexis using candidate names (and variations of the names) and 'endors!' or 'back.'” Each article referring to a previously unidentified endorsement was coded for: endorsed candidate, date of story, name of newspaper, date of endorsement (if discernible), endorsing individual or group, position of endorsing individual, state of endorsing individual, and a brief description. Each endorsement is counted as a separate unit of analysis. Endorsers were categorized as governor, US Senator, statewide party or elected official, US Representative, state legislator, local official, or other.

Lexis-Nexis has several limitations as a measuring instrument. The method likely undercounts endorsements. One, the number of newspapers included in the Lexis-Nexis database decreases going back in time. There are approximately one-third as many newspapers in 1992 as there are in 2000, though the vast majority of recent additions do not include information on presidential candidate endorsements. Thus, there may be somewhat greater undercounting of endorsements in earlier years than in later years, but this problem is less significant because most papers referring to endorsements are included in the various election years.

Two, news reports of endorsements might use words like “support” rather than variations on the word “endorse” or “back.”³ Three, news articles sometimes report an imprecise number like “most state legislators have endorsed George Bush.” Such imprecision precludes reliable measurement of state and local party and elected official endorsements. These problems are most acute for endorsements by state and local officials. The problem is less serious for top-level officials--governors, US senators and US representatives whose endorsements generally are reported in multiple newspapers in different regions of the country. Multiple reports of an endorsement increase the odds that the endorsement is included in our search.

Four, measuring endorsements through newspaper reports is problematic because reporting varies from newspaper to newspaper and from state to state.⁴ Newspapers of different states do not give similar coverage to campaign endorsements. Endorsements in states like Iowa, New Hampshire and other early states are well reported. Endorsements in states like Alabama, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Alaska and Hawaii appear to be under-represented in the sample. Some papers (e.g., Cincinnati Enquirer) report on endorsements by officials from the governor down to city commissioners. In other states, the endorsements of state legislators and county officials may not be reported at all. In these cases, we cannot ascertain if no endorsements were forthcoming, or if endorsements occurred but were not reported. Such inconsistencies limit the reliability of state-level comparisons.

These factors produce an incomplete picture of candidate endorsements. The endorsements of US congressional and gubernatorial endorsements are well reported, while the endorsements of state and local officials are inconsistently reported across states. Excepting

³ I did not use these terms because of the enormous time needed to sift through the additional thousands of newspaper articles that use these terms in stories about candidates' support for or backing of particular policy positions or legislation before a state legislature or the US Congress.

⁴ Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain reliable lists of endorsements for past elections. Nor is it reliable to use the websites of candidates for the 2000 election. Candidates selectively advertise their endorsements on state-by-state web pages. Further, some candidates like Bill Bradley did not advertise many of their endorsements as they sought to cultivate a “non-establishment” or “outsider” image.

endorsements by governors I excluded state- and local- level endorsements because of these inconsistencies. These sources of bias matter because non-front runner candidates tend to build organizations with the support of state and local level officials. Note that the excluded endorsements also are missing for front-runner candidates who generally get large numbers of endorsements by lower-level state and local officials. Still, evidence exists in states like Iowa and New Hampshire that non-front-runners like Lamar Alexander had relatively more success with state legislators than did frontrunners like Dole. Though the data are not a complete picture of candidates' endorsements, most of the consequential endorsements are included in the dataset, so the study remains valuable for studying the effects of candidate endorsements in presidential nomination campaigns.

To ensure that all possible gubernatorial, US Senate, and US Representative endorsements were included in the dataset, we reiterated our content analysis using Lexis-Nexis to search for the names of presidential candidates and the names of each governor, senator and representative in each nomination campaign. This method of triangulation yielded a few additional endorsements in each year, giving us greater confidence that the endorsements of these office holders are included in the dataset. We further cross-referenced our lists of endorsements with those reported on candidate websites for 1996 and 2000.⁵ Using candidate websites we found only two additional congressional endorsements not already in our dataset, giving us even more confidence that our measurement efforts are reliable for gubernatorial, senate and US representative endorsements of presidential candidates.

Another limitation is that the date of an endorsement sometimes cannot be discerned from news articles. Endorsements were coded for the date of the endorsement if reported. Otherwise, we used the date of the press report of the endorsement. Since these may not be the

⁵ Not all candidates reported endorsements on their websites.

same, there can be error in the coding of endorsement timing. We minimized this source of error by collapsing these dates into quarters. Few endorsements were reported outside of the quarter in which they occurred, with the exception of a few endorsements occurring late in each quarter that may be reported early in the next quarter. The limited data available on the timing of endorsements, however, does limit our ability to make precise measurements of the temporal sequence between endorsements and other variables.

Despite these limitations, measuring endorsements through newspaper reports of endorsements is useful because they are public reports of support. The quality of "being public" is important because one of the major theorized effects is cue-giving. The level of exposure of a given endorsement clearly varies with the status of the endorsing individual. Gubernatorial and senatorial endorsements receive widespread attention—repeatedly in the newspapers in a state, and repeatedly in papers in other states. Endorsements by these officials also are theorized to be important for the potential resources that they may bring to a campaign. Thus, we feel justified assessing the effects of endorsements, while recognizing limitations of the data.

In addition, I collected data on several variables to assess the status of a candidate's presidential campaign. "Funds Raised" is the total revenue raised by each candidate's principal campaign committee beginning from the date that the Federal Election Commission takes delivery of the campaign's official "Statement of Organization."⁶ Revenue includes contributions received from individuals and groups, federal matching funds, transfers from

⁶ Only funds received by or transferred to the candidate's principal campaign committee were included. Increasingly, candidates make use of "leadership" PACs or "exploratory" committees to fund pre-announcement activities. Use of these committees allows aspirants to raise funds and make expenditures that would "reasonably be expected" in determining whether to become a formal candidate without counting those expenditures against state spending limits (see 11 CFR 100.7(b)(1)(ii)(B)). Thus, although these organizations play a role in exhibition season activities, they represent a relatively minor factor in relation to overall fundraising during the pre-primary period. In fact, the incentive for candidates (particularly dark-horse candidates) to make formal with the Federal Election Commission their intent to run is quite strong since the FEC will not match individual contributions until receiving the official Statement of Organization.

authorized committees, and loans secured by the campaign.⁷ “Cash Reserves” are measured as the amount of unspent money that a campaign has on hand at the end of the quarter. “Poll Position” is measured as the candidates’ positions in the last national Gallup poll in each quarter of the year prior to the primaries through the first two quarters of the election year, for 1991 to 2000. Gallup poll data were obtained from the *Gallup Poll Monthly*. “Primary Vote Share” is the percent of the vote cast received by a candidate in all of the primaries. Vote shares were obtained from the presidential primary tables in *The Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, 4th edition.

“Campaign news coverage” was measured as the frequency of candidate appearances or mentions in campaign stories on nightly national network news programs.⁸ The variable excludes network news stories relating to candidates’ governing activities.⁹ Such coverage is uncorrelated with candidates’ standing in the polls or their performance in the polls (Steger 2002). That portion of candidates’ network news coverage relating to the campaign correlates strongly with candidate standing in the polls and in the primaries. The Vanderbilt Television Archives were used to generate an event-count of nightly network news stories that referred to or mentioned candidates campaigning for the presidential nomination of one or the other major

7 A summary statistic found on individual Reports of Receipts and Disbursements filed with the Federal Election Commission quarterly in the years prior to the election and monthly in the year of the presidential election (FEC Form 3P, page 2, line 22) represents the total for campaign contributions, federal matching funds, transfers from authorized committees, and loans to the campaign. Randall Adkins and Andrew Dowdle graciously provided these data to me. Any mistakes with the data are mine.

8 Ideally, a measure of candidates' campaign coverage would include a measure of the tone coverage. Limitations of the Vanderbilt television archives, however, preclude obtaining a reliable measure of coverage tone. See Steger (2002) for a discussion on usage and problems with the Vanderbilt Television archives.

9 The substantive focus of network news stories was coded into as “campaign,” “governing,” “mixed campaign/governing,” or “other” categories. Campaign coverage was defined as a news story that mentioned the candidate in the context of any aspect of the campaign. Candidate views on a policy matter, in which he or she is not directly involved in the unit of government making decisions, were coded as campaign stories. Governing coverage was defined as a news story that mentioned the candidate in the context of his or her official duties as a government official. Mixed campaign-governing coverage was defined as a news story about the implications of the campaign for events in government or the implications of events in government for the campaign. The other category included items as varied as Jerry Brown attending the Academy Awards to Jesse Jackson traveling to the Middle East to request the release of American hostages. The variable used is the frequency of candidate-mentions in campaign stories on the nightly network news programs, cumulated to the end of January.

political parties.¹⁰ These event counts were aggregated to get a daily summary count for each candidate. Since a news story may refer to multiple candidates, the number of candidate-mentions exceeds the actual number of network news stories mentioning candidates in each nomination campaign.

For estimates of congressional endorsers' ideological positions, I use the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and American Conservative Union (ACU) scores from the year prior to the election. I use ACU scores for Republicans and ADA scores for Democrats because the two rating groups make more fine tune distinctions among their friends while generally lumping those disagreeing with the group into extreme categories (Brunnel, et al 1999). ADA scores rate legislators on a scale from 0, most conservative, to 100, most liberal. ACU scores rate legislators on a scale of 0, most liberal, to 100, most conservative.

Results and Discussion

I will discuss in order: 1) the concentration and timing of endorsements, 2) the ideological signals in endorsements, and 3) the relation between endorsements and other variables.

Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, Al Gore, and George W. Bush emerged as the front-runners in their respective nomination campaigns, all had the most endorsements by major party officials (see table 1a, 1b, and 1c). These candidates also had the greatest geographic dispersion of endorsements. Other candidates received endorsements and their endorsers tended to be concentrated regionally or scattered sparsely across a few states. While most endorsements go to the front-runner, there are differences between Democrats and Republicans in this respect. First, fewer Democratic governors, senators and representatives endorse presidential candidates compared to their Republican counterparts. Second, these office holders tend to divide their endorsements among the presidential candidates to a greater extent than do Republicans. This

¹⁰ The network news abstracts can be obtained from the website at <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu>

pattern is evident in both 1988 and 1992, though not in 2000. Third, Democratic office holders endorse presidential candidates later than do Republicans. Democrats tend to bandwagon after a presidential aspirant demonstrates support in or at the polls; Republicans tend to rally around a front-runner well before the primaries.

The pattern of fewer, divided, and later endorsements was particularly prominent in the Democratic nomination of 1992 when only Senator Paul Wellstone endorsed a Democratic presidential candidate (Harkin) prior to November of 1991. Clinton received more endorsements from US senators, representatives and governors than did any of the other Democrats, but many of these occurred after Clinton emerged in the primaries as the candidate with the most delegates (see table 1a). Democratic senators and representatives spread their (pre-primary) endorsements among Clinton, Bob Kerrey, Tom Harkin, and Paul Tsongas, though Clinton received more than the others even before the primaries.

Table 1a: Reported Candidate Endorsements by Elected Officials, Jan. 1, 1991 to Jun. 30, 1992.

	Governor	Senator	US Representative
Brown, Gerry			
Clinton, Bill	9	9	42
Harkin, Tom		9	2
Kerrey, Bob		8	10
Tsongas, Paul	1	5	13
Wilder, Douglas			

Source: Author's compilation from content analysis of newspapers using a Lexis-Nexis search.

The lateness of candidate endorsements in 1991 owes to several factors. First, there was considerable uncertainty about who would be in the candidate field until October of that year. The individuals considered heavyweight candidates (Mario Cuomo, Al Gore, Dick Gephardt, and Sam Nunn) all officially declared their intent not to run late in 1991. With uncertainty about whether these candidates would run, most major Democratic officials held off endorsing candidates. Second, some Democratic office holders refrained from endorsing him because they didn't like him as a candidate (e.g., Apple, 1992a, p 22). There were numerous news reports

quoting congressional democrats trepidation about Clinton's history (draft status during Vietnam, not inhaling, and extramarital affairs); and his moderate programmatic approach that liberal Democrats were not keen on (e.g., Lightman 1992, p. 1; Apple 1992b, A26). Third, many Democratic major office holders tend to refrain from endorsing a candidate until that candidate emerges in or at the polls. Democratic office holders were hesitant to commit to a candidate that may not have support among their constituencies (e.g., Apple Apple 1992a, p A22; 1992c).¹¹ Fourth, most Democratic governors, senators and representatives are super-delegates to the conventions. Superdelegates are not supposed to endorse presidential candidates in order to enable primary voters to have more choices (Winneker 1991). According to Rep. Romano Mazzoli (KY), "We're supposed to be uncommitted. That's the whole theory of the [super-delegate] designation." (quoted in Ifill 1992, A1).¹²

The upside is that primary voters, at least those in the initial caucuses and primaries, are more likely to have several viable candidates to select from. The downside for the Democrats is that primary voters have fewer cues as to which candidates are viable, can govern. These divisions at the elite level may contribute to the relatively more divisive presidential primaries of the Democratic Party.

The pattern of endorsements is different for Republicans in 1996 (see table 1b).¹³ Bob Dole received nearly all of the endorsements of Republican governors, senators and representatives.¹⁴ Dole was the only candidate in the '96 field who had gubernatorial, federal and

11 This occurred in 1988, 1992 and in 2000 for Democrats.

12 The creation of superdelegates in the 1978 Hunt Commission included a tradeoff that super-delegates were not to declare their support for candidates prior to the primaries. Since most top-tier Democratic office holders have a direct vote on their party's presidential nominee, the Hunt Commission encouraged Super-Delegates to refrain from pre-maturely narrowing the range of choices by endorsing candidates before party members had their input in the primaries.

13 The pattern of early and concentrated Republican endorsements occurred in 1988, 1996 and 2000.

14 State legislative endorsements were more divided among the candidates of 1996 (Steger 1999). Alexander, Dole and Gramm all gained respectable numbers of endorsements by state legislators--particularly in Iowa and New Hampshire. Buchanan had the endorsements of more state legislators in New Hampshire--the only primary he won,

state- legislative endorsements throughout the country. Republican office holders also endorsed candidates earlier in 1995 than had their Democratic counterparts in 1991. Dole's major rival prior to the primaries was Phil Gramm, who ranked second in endorsements from these office-holders. Phil Gramm was a major competitor of Dole for endorsements in the first quarter of 1995, receiving more endorsements in that quarter. Combined with his sizeable war chest, these endorsements appear to be the major factors referred to by the media in stories identifying Gramm as Dole's main rival for the nomination. The lesser candidates had such endorsements in one or two states (e.g., Lugar in Indiana; Alexander in Tennessee; Specter in Pennsylvania).

While Dole received an endorsement rally-effect in 1995, there were more reports of party elite trepidation about Dole as a candidate given his age, his prior support for tax increases, and ambiguity about his positions on abortion. The same criticisms that plagued Dole's general election campaign (lack of focus, message and energy) were repeatedly mentioned in press coverage of the 1996 Republican presidential nomination. The ability of a candidate to generate coattails seems to be a far bigger concern for US legislators than it is for governors.

Table 1b: Reported Candidate Endorsements by Elected Officials, Jan. 1, 1995 to Jun. 30, 1996.

	Governor	Senator	US Representative
Alexander, Lamar	1	2	6
Buchanan, Pat	1		
Dole, Bob	25	41	116
Dornan, Bob			1
Forbes, Steve			1
Gramm, Phil	2	5	41
Keyes, Alan			
Lugar, Richard	1		6
Specter, Arlen		1	2
Taylor, Morry			
Wilson, Pete	1		9

Source: Author's compilation from content analysis of newspapers using a Lexis-Nexis search.

than any other state. Alexander did the best in Iowa and New Hampshire where he had as many or more endorsements from state legislators than did Dole. Not coincidentally, the most competitive primaries were in those states where state-level endorsements were distributed among several candidates (Steger 1999).

Republican Party officials rallied around George W. Bush in 1999 to an even greater degree than they had done with Dole in 1995. Bush received more than double the number of reported endorsements in 1999 than Dole had in 1995.¹⁵ Bush's advantage over the rest of the candidate field also was far greater than was Dole's advantage in 1996 when Phil Gramm attracted some senatorial and congressional endorsements and Lamar Alexander had large numbers of state legislators' endorsements in Iowa and New Hampshire. Republican Party elites from across the country were falling in line behind Bush even before he formally declared his candidacy. Throughout the spring of 1999, Texas newspapers carried stories about large delegations of state legislators coming to Austin with petitions signed by state legislators encouraging Bush to run, endorsing him, and offering him their support. Alan Keyes was the only other Republican entering the 2000 primaries who had a majority of state legislators endorsing him in a single state (Montana).¹⁶

One reason for the rallying effort in 1999 was that Republican elites were determined to avoid a repeat of the '96 debacle in which Dole bankrupted his treasury fending off Forbes and Buchanan in the early primaries. Many Republicans blamed the divisive primary season of 1996 (when Dole's campaign was bankrupted by May) as a major reason he fell so far behind Clinton. Strong efforts were made to minimize intra-party conflict in 2000. A second reason is that George W. Bush had characteristics that made him an attractive Republican candidate. He had name recognition, came from a large state, was a proven tax-cutter, had pro-life credentials, charisma, and extensive connections to the fund-raising machinery of his father. Further, Bush had won a convincing reelection victory in 1998 with good support from women and Latinos—whose support would be needed if the Republicans hoped to regain the White House. Numerous

15 The ratio is almost four to one if we included identifiable state legislative endorsements (Steger 2001).

16 The majority of Montana's state senators endorsed Keyes. Perhaps not coincidentally, Keyes' best primary finish occurred in Montana.

articles described how Christian Coalition and pro-life group leaders were not fond of Bush, but were supporting him because he was widely perceived as the most viable candidate against Gore. Bush, in short, had the right mixture of policy positions, personality, and could get the money needed to make a serious run for the presidency. Bush’s presidential nomination was a story of party establishment coalescence behind a single candidate.

Table 1c: Reported Candidate Endorsements by Elected Officials, Jan. 1, 1999 to Jun. 30, 2000.*

	Governor	Senator	US Representative
Alexander	2	2	
Bauer			
Buchanan			
Bush	31	43	137**
Dole			7
Forbes	1		4
Hatch		1	
Kasich		3	1
Keyes			1
McCain		5	8
Quayle	2	1	6
Bradley	1	4	7
Gore	16	36	134

Source: Author’s compilation from content analysis of newspapers using a Lexis-Nexis search.

* The number of endorsements sum to more than number of positions held by the political party due to switching of endorsements, most commonly after candidates drop out. The figure for Bush reflects identifiable individual representatives who publicly endorsed Bush. The number also corresponds to names on the Bush campaign website; *Roll Call* reported that 174 Republican Representatives endorsed G. W. Bush.

Bush’s huge lead in endorsements also owed to a weaker candidate field than that of 1996. John McCain, GW Bush’s main rival, had developed an image as a “maverick”—the word most frequently used to describe him in the press. Though a senator, McCain secured few senatorial and congressional endorsements, in part, because he alienated many with his attacks on Washington Democrats and Republicans alike. McCain was anti-establishment, not because he was a moderate as he was frequently portrayed in the media, but because he criticized congressional Republicans for acting like Democrats—engaging in pork barrel spending and cooperating too much with Bill Clinton. One of the story lines after McCain conceded defeat in March of 2000 was whether and how Republicans in Congress would deal with McCain when he

returned to Washington. The other declared candidates in the Republican field were either lacking in elective office experience (Bauer, Forbes, and Dole), had lost in a previous nomination bid (Alexander, Buchanan, Forbes and Quayle), or had only regional support (Kasich and Hatch). None of these candidates offered Republican voters a viable alternative to Bush.

The pattern of endorsements in the 2000 Democratic nomination campaign is similar to the '92 Democratic race even though the candidate field was set by the second quarter of 1999 (see Table 3c). Al Gore gained a substantial lead among top-tier partisan endorsers (Steger 2001). Gore's endorsements also were more geographically distributed than Bradley's. Despite his strong support in New England, Bill Bradley received fewer reported endorsements from officials in his home state (NJ) than did Al Gore.

Notably, neither Gore nor Bradley received many endorsements prior to the third quarter of 1999 (see table 2c). Press coverage of Gore's endorsements was replete with comments that revealed an unwillingness to endorse his candidacy too early (though his victory was widely seen as a far-gone conclusion). Several factors appear to account for this hesitancy. As noted earlier, Democrats have developed a norm of not "crowning the prince" before the voters have had the chance to decide. As in 1992, there also were numerous reports of Democratic officials who expressed doubts about Gore's ability to beat George W. Bush. The electability of a candidate is clearly a consideration of potential endorsers in both political parties. The electability issue had two general dimensions in articles on endorsements in the 2000 Democratic presidential race. One, there were concerns about Gore's appeal. One aspect of this dimension were concerns about his personal flaws as a candidate. Gore was frequently described in press reports as not generating much excitement among rank-and-file partisans. This is almost the same description used to describe Bob Dole in 1995 and 1996, when the search was on for the "real" Bob Dole. The second general concern among Democratic office holders (according to press reports) was

widespread trepidation about Gore's association with the Clinton Administration. Many Democrats feared a backlash against Clinton that would undermine Gore's chances. Notably, none of the Democratic Senators expecting to face tough reelection races endorsed Gore in 1999. Finally, the Gore campaign sought to control the timing of endorsement announcements. In contrast to the Bush campaign strategy of cornering the market on endorsements, organization and money, the Gore campaign sought to create the appearance of a gradual groundswell of support for Gore as Gore worked for that support (i.e., as he became his "own man"). In part, this strategy appears to have been a way of coping with the trepidation about Gore being in the shadow of Clinton. Despite the appearance of disunity among Democratic elites, Gore was never really in danger of losing his position as the front-runner. The bigger question was how to distance themselves (Gore and his Democratic endorsers) from Clinton without offending groups with whom Clinton remained popular.

The signal sent by non-endorsements

In every year, the extent to which a candidate's home state politicians support them is a major factor in press reports of candidate endorsements. Such favorite son endorsements indicate ideological or programmatic acceptability as well as information about the ability of the candidate to work with partisans of his or her home state. Most all of the state and congressional officials from the home states of Lamar Alexander, Phil Gramm and Richard Lugar supported their state's candidate. Similarly in 2000, John Kasich and Dan Quayle received the endorsements of most of their states' party and elected officials. A candidate's failure to obtain endorsements from their home state officials signals weakness. Bill Bradley's failure to gain as many endorsements from New Jersey politicians was seen as evidence of his weakness as a candidate. In 1996, Representative Robert Dornan, Senator Arlen Specter, Governor Pete

Wilson, and businessmen Morry Taylor and Steve Forbes all failed to secure many endorsements from their home party elites in the 1995-96 nomination campaign.¹⁷

The failure to secure endorsements from home state politicians also signals to other candidates that the state remains “in play.” In both 1996 and 2000, Steve Forbes failed to obtain the endorsements of most New Jersey Republicans outside his home county. Elizabeth Dole did not to have much backing from either Kansas (her husband's home state) or South Carolina (her home state) Republicans. Lamar Alexander had fewer endorsements from Tennessee Republicans than did G.W. Bush at the time he dropped out of the race in 1999.

Endorsements that were expected but not forthcoming serve as negative cues indicating that a candidate is ideologically unacceptable and/or not viable. Phil Gramm, for example, hurt his '96 campaign by announcing several times his anticipation of an endorsement by New Hampshire Governor Steve Merrill and of the *Manchester Union Leader*. Merrill opted not to endorse Gramm after Gramm got the Arizona legislature to move its primary date close to New Hampshire's primary. Some interpreted Dole's endorsement by Merrill--who was ideologically closer to Phil Gramm, and the endorsement of Pat Buchanan by Loeb Nackey, editor of the influential *Manchester Union Leader*, as nails in the coffin of Phil Gramm's presidential campaign (e.g., Nichols, 1995).

Despite being a popular governor, Pete Wilson failed to obtain many endorsements from California's congressional delegation. Wilson's presidential bid antagonized state Republican office-holders because he had promised not to run for the presidency in his reelection campaign in 1994 and because California's Lt. Governor was a liberal Democrat (Stall 1995; Morain and Warren 1995). There were a number of notable non-endorsements in 2000. Most notably, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander failed to obtain endorsements of most of the party

¹⁷ Pat Buchanan likewise failed to receive many endorsements, but his home is the District of Columbia, which is notably devoid of Republican elected officials who could endorse his candidacy.

and elected officials who had endorsed him in 1996. Few of the state legislators in Iowa and New Hampshire endorsed Alexander in 1999 even though a plurality of the legislators in each state had endorsed him four years earlier. Similarly, Steve Forbes failed to obtain the endorsement of New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman--his childhood friend and classmate. It is worth noting, however, that Whitman did not endorse George W. Bush until after he had secured the nomination. Other Republican candidates like John Kasich, Orrin Hatch, and Dan Quayle received few endorsements beyond party and elected officials of their home states. Their inability to secure endorsements beyond their states foretold the limited appeal of their candidacies (or vice versa).

Elizabeth Dole's endorsements represent an interesting side-note to the 2000 Republican nominating campaign. Thirteen of Dole's 25 endorsements came from women in statewide, congressional, or state legislative positions. According to news reports, gender played a major role in these endorsements, which were geographically and ideologically diverse. Still, gender appeal had limits. Articles in all four regions of the country noted that more female Republican office-holders endorsed George W. Bush than had endorsed Dole while she remained in the race.

The Ideological Content of Endorsements

Knowing who endorses various candidates provides an indication of their appeal among ideological factions of the party. Press portrayals of the candidates' ideological positions reflect the ideological positions of the US legislators endorsing presidential candidates (see table 2a-appended at the end). In 1992, Clinton was portrayed as the most moderate of the Democratic candidates, and his congressional endorsers had an average ADA score of 63.8. Bob Kerrey was portrayed as something of a maverick, and his congressional endorsers had an average ADA score of 60.76, but with a high standard deviation. Kerrey's congressional endorsers scored more conservative than did Clinton's. Paul Tsongas was portrayed as economically conservative

and socially liberal. His US congressional endorsers had an average ADA score of 81 in 1999. Tom Harkin was portrayed in the media as a liberal candidate; his congressional endorsers had an average ADA score of 91. Press reports in 1991 frequently discussed Clinton's association with the Democratic Leadership Council, which advocates nominating more moderate Democrats to be electorally competitive with the Republicans. This perspective received widespread currency in early press coverage of the '92 Democratic race, often with references to Dukakis' debacle in 1988. This view, however, was not the only one as more liberal governors and legislators were quoted to the effect that the Democratic Party needed only to energize its more liberal base. The ideological portrayal of the race was one of Clinton versus the three liberals (Brown, Harkin and Tsongas) and a maverick (Kerrey).

[Table 2a here]

The widespread perceptions of the Republican candidates in the 1996 presidential nomination campaign are largely borne out by their congressional endorsements (See table 2b). Bob Dole had endorsements from a wide range of US legislators (as indicated by the large standard errors around the quarterly means in table 3b), but was in the center of the Republican field. Dole's congressional endorsers had an average ACU score of 78.3--left of the median congressional Republican in 1995.¹⁸ Pete Wilson and Arlen Specter received endorsements from more moderate legislators. Steve Forbes, Richard Lugar, Lamar Alexander, Phil Gramm and Bob Dornan received endorsements from more conservative legislators. Dole alone drew endorsements from across the ideological spectrum of congressional Republicans (his congressional endorsers had the greatest standard deviation from the mean ACU scores).

[Table 2b here]

¹⁸ Dole had a lifetime ACU score of 82, but had increasingly conservative scores from 1992 to 1995 when the American Conservative Union gave him a score 90 (with 100 being most conservative).

A similar pattern occurred in the 2000 presidential nomination campaign (see table 3c). Like Dole, George W. Bush's congressional endorsements ran to the left of the ideological center of the Republican field, with an average ACU score of 80.1 (s.d. = 15.38). This score is closer to Bob Dole's in the '96 campaign than any other Republican candidate running in 2000. Elizabeth Dole and Steve Forbes received endorsements from moderate Republican legislators. The rest received endorsements from more conservative legislators, with Dan Quayle and Alan Keyes receiving endorsements from the most conservative legislators. As with Dole in '96, Bush received endorsements from across the ideological spectrum--reflecting the breadth of support from party elites.

[Table 2c here]

Two candidates in 2000, however, seemed to have media images that deviated from the ideological positions of their endorsers. Steve Forbes was widely described as threatening Bush from the right, yet his few endorsers were among the most moderate Republicans in the House and Senate.¹⁹ Forbes' home region, the Northeast, has relatively more moderate Republicans. All of Forbes' congressional endorsements came from that region. Forbes had run on more moderate social and cultural positions 1996. He reversed this approach in 2000, running as a strong pro-life candidate in his advertising in Iowa.

John McCain was widely described by the media as challenging Bush from the left, yet was endorsed by many of the more conservative legislators in the House and Senate. McCain's congressional endorsers had an average ACU score of 86.2 (s.d. = 8.74), the third most conservative set of congressional endorsers in the 2000 Republican candidate field. Interestingly, most of McCain's congressional backers had endorsed Phil Gramm in 1996. These cases indicate that the cue provided by endorsements *can* be overrun by media images. The

¹⁹ Forbes' endorsements came from Representatives in Georgia, Maryland, Delaware and Michigan.

media seemed to have morphed the adjectives "maverick" and "moderate" in labeling McCain, and that is what appears to have stuck in public perceptions. McCain ran strongest in the more moderate Republican Midwestern and Northeastern states, yet his own voting record in the Senate and those of his congressional supporters were far more conservative.²⁰ Much of McCain's criticism of Congress was for failing to stick to conservative ideological philosophies. For example, he criticized Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott for securing a contract to build in Mississippi, an aircraft carrier that the Defense Department had not requested. McCain's most common targets were pork-barrel projects. These also tend to be the targets of the most conservative Republicans in Congress—the kind of legislators who endorsed McCain. Even his rhetoric on campaign finance reflected a conservative approach, geared toward reducing special interest influence in order to make it easier to reduce wasteful spending. It is ironic that McCain's image as a moderate took off after the New Hampshire primary. Though New England Republicans in Congress are more liberal than most of the party, New Hampshire Republicans are among the most conservative in the region.

Ideological or policy compatibility appears to be a relatively more important factor in the endorsements occurring early in the campaign, before a front-runner emerges. The earliest endorsers of Bill Clinton were relatively conservative Democratic office-holders, coming entirely from Southern states. Harkin and Kerrey's endorsers in 1991 were geographically dispersed, with Harkin's endorsers described as liberal Democrats in the press. Ideology was not a topic in articles on Kerrey's endorsements, which were the most ideologically diverse in the '92 Democratic field.

The earliest endorsers of Bob Dole and Phil Gramm in 1995 came from Representatives and Senators with similar ideological and/or programmatic positions. US legislators endorsing

²⁰ McCain did moderate his voting patterns from 1996 to 2000, going from an ACU score of 92 in 1995 to 80 in 1999. McCain received ACU ratings in the 90s for most of his Senate career prior to 1996.

Bob Dole in the first six months of 1995 had an average ACU rating of 72.07 (see table 2b). Congressional Republicans endorsing Dole later were more conservative--suggesting that Dole's base was more moderate. Congressional Republicans endorsing Phil Gramm in the first two quarters of 1995 had an average ACU rating of 92.9. Endorsements occurring during the primaries, especially those occurring after a candidate becomes the presumptive nominee, are statements of support for the party's banner carrier as the party establishment seeks to present a unified front. Most of the endorsements of switchers--those who endorse a second candidate after their first choice drops out, went to Dole rather than to Alexander, Buchanan or Forbes.

Republican legislators endorsing George W. Bush in the first six months of 1999 had an average ACU score of 78.37. Those endorsing John McCain had an average ACU score of 86.67 during the same time period. Those endorsing Dan Quayle had an average ACU score of 90.43 (see table 2c). Bush's initial backers from Congress were relatively moderate Republicans. His later endorsements came from the full range of Republicans in the US Congress. Most of switchers in the 2000 Republican campaign went from candidates who dropped out in 1999 to Bush. Gary Bauer, however, endorsed McCain after the South Carolina primary, asserting that he was the stronger pro-life candidate.

Democratic legislators endorsing Gore during the first six months of 1999 had an average ADA score of 90.9 while those endorsing Bradley had an average ADA score of 72.5. Congressional endorsements suggest that Bradley was the preferred candidate of more moderate congressional Democrats, though the numbers are too small to make a reliable assessment. That was generally reflected in media portrayals of the candidate's ideological positions. Bradley was portrayed as running to the right (conservative side) of Gore, while Gore tried to run a slightly more liberal nomination campaign. Gore's liberal image might help explain his lack of support in crucial states like Tennessee in the general election.

Candidates do not welcome all endorsements since an endorsement may create an unfavorable image through an association with an unpopular individual or group. In 1996, for example, Pat Buchanan received the endorsement of David Duke—a former Grand Wizard of the Louisiana Klu Klux Klan (Freda 1995). Pete Wilson received an endorsement from an Idaho leader of the white supremacist Aryan World Congress as a result of Wilson's anti-immigration positions (Leshar 1995). Other candidates and the media latch on to undesirable endorsements as evidence of a candidate's unworthiness on some dimension. Buchanan's endorsements by white supremacists were proffered as evidence of his extremism and unfitness for office. None of the other presidential candidates received comparably damning endorsements (at least not reported in news papers). Indeed, some groups refrained from making public endorsements if doing so might harm their preferred candidate. The National Rifle Association, for example, refrained from formally endorsing George W. Bush in part to avoid giving Bush any stigma associated with the group (Dao 2000).\$\$

Correlations between endorsements and other indicators of campaign performance

Table 3 presents correlations for money raised and cash reserves at the end of December of the preceding year; candidate's position in the last national Gallup Poll before the caucuses and primaries; and endorsements by governors, senators and representatives through December; the number of network news campaign stories mentioning a candidate; and candidates' eventual shares of the primary vote, aggregated to the national level. All variables are measured cumulatively to the end of December of the year prior to the elections, except for Gallup poll position which is the candidates' positions in the last national poll before the Iowa Caucuses.

Table 3: correlations between endorsements and variables indicating candidate performance in the presidential nomination campaign

Endorse	Yr Receipts	Yr reserves	Jan. Gallup	Camp. TV	Prim. Vote
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Endorsements	1					
Yr Receipts	0.73	1				
Yr Reserves	0.72	0.81	1			
Jan Gallup	0.89	0.705	0.67	1		
Camp.Coverage	0.84	0.65	0.52	0.84	1	
Primary Vote	0.87	0.57	0.59	0.94	0.80	1

All correlations are significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Candidate endorsements correlate highly and significantly with all of the variables commonly used for, or referred to as, indicators of candidate performance in presidential nomination campaigns. Candidate endorsements by governors, senators and representatives by the end of December correlates at $r = .87$ with the candidate's shares of the eventual primary vote.²¹ Only candidates' standing in the last national Gallup Poll prior to the Iowa Caucuses correlates higher with candidates' share of the eventual primary vote (aggregated across all primaries). Candidate endorsements also correlate higher with funds raised, cash reserves, Gallup poll position and network campaign coverage, than do any other variables evaluated. Unfortunately, these high correlations preclude a multivariate analysis to see which variables relate to candidates' primary vote shares.

A qualitative analysis, however, suggests that candidates who receive these high profile endorsements do raise substantial funds. The candidates with the most endorsements (the eventual nominees) also are able to maintain sizeable war chests at the end of the pre-primary season. Endorsements also correlate higher with the number of times that candidates are mentioned on the network TV news programs in campaign stories during the year before the

²¹ Excluded from the correlations for primary vote are candidates who dropped out of the race prior to the Iowa Caucuses (i.e., Wilder '92, Specter and Wilson '96, Alexander, E. Dole, Kasich, and Quayle 2000).

primaries. Journalists and the media both pay attention to endorsements in deciding which candidates are worthy of news coverage.

Conclusions

Polsby (1983) and others argued that the expansion of primaries substantially limited peer review of presidential candidates. Adding more "peer review" was a major element in the Democratic Party's creation of super delegates in the Hunt Commission of 1980 (e.g., Price 1984). It appears that peer review never died in Republican circles, or at least that it is alive and well 20 years after the McGovern-Frazer reforms. Party networks can and do demonstrate their collective clout by rallying around candidates. Republicans appear to do this more than Democrats, but this begs further investigation across more nomination campaigns.

In terms of identifying a front-runner, endorsements would appear to be a good indicator, along with money raised, media coverage, and national poll position. These variables correlate highly with candidates' shares of the aggregate primary vote. Though behind Bush, using endorsements as an indicator would have identified John McCain as Bush's main rival in 2000. This matters because one of the main uncertainties (sources of error) in forecasting models of the primary vote is predicting who emerges as the leading alternative to the front-runner (Steger 2000). Other indicators (e.g., money or media coverage) are relatively poor predictors of the placement of the rest of the field. Money raised and cash reserves both would have indicated Forbes as the major challenger to Bush in 2000. Media and poll position also were good indicators that McCain would emerge as the main challenger to Bush in 2000, but these indicators did not do well in 1996 when Phil Gramm fared poorly in the primaries, despite having received more media coverage and trailing only Dole in 1995 polls. Endorsements indicated that Pat Buchanan and Lamar Alexander would have been major candidates in the primaries of 1996. In short, endorsements would appear to be a key variable missing in previous

forecasting models of presidential nominations (Mayer 1996a; Adkins and Dowdle 2000, 2001, 2002; Steger 2000).

A major question for future research will involve unraveling the causal arrows between these factors. Do candidates like Clinton, Dole, Bush and Gore receive more endorsements because they have higher polling numbers and more money, or do the endorsements come first? I suspect the effects are mutually reinforcing. More viable candidates tend to attract more endorsements and endorsements signal to others attentive to the nominating campaign as to which candidates are more or less viable. Future research on the topic will focus on unraveling the temporal sequencing between endorsements and fund-raising, media-coverage, and poll position. Future research also could investigate the overlap between the contributors of endorsing officials and presidential candidates.

Another question for future research is whether and why there are different patterns of endorsements and differing effects in the Democratic and Republican parties that may account for differences in the competitiveness of the fields of candidates in each party. The Republican Party has a history of party elites rallying around a single, insider candidate. The Democratic Party, in contrast, has a history of internal divisions (e.g., Mayer 1996b). The greater heterogeneity of the Democratic party's constituency groups means a greater probability of splits among party elites, all else being equal. Further, Democratic party endorsements tend to occur later in the nominating campaign, in part because of a understanding within that party as part of the 1980 compromise creating super delegates. As part of the Hunt Commission's recommendation that the party give high level party and elected officials a greater and more visible role at the Party's national nominating convention, those officials were expected to refrain from early commitments to candidates. The compromise basically was that party and elected officials would gain a formal role at the nominating convention, in exchange for delaying

their endorsements to “give voters a chance to decide” who would be the nominee. The result of this compromise may limit the Democratic party establishment’s ability to designate a clear front-runner. The result is greater uncertainty about which candidates are ideologically/programmatically desirable and electable, which in turn allows several candidates to develop viable campaigns, and thus more choices in the Democratic primaries relative to voters in Republican primaries.

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