

## **Representation and Elections**

Something is missing. Senators may lose votes because they or their supporting constituencies stray too far from public opinion. If voters pay enough attention to where senators and their core constituencies stand, they should also heed the spatial locations of challengers and their key supporters. Our attention thus far has concentrated on incumbents. What about challengers?

Opponents matter mightily in Senate contests. Senators are more vulnerable than representatives because they face stronger challengers (Mann and Wolfinger 1980; Krasno 1994) and are more likely to be punished because of their voting records (Abramowitz 1988; Wright and Berkman 1986; G. Wright 1989). Asking whether shirking senators lose more than legislators who hew to their constituents' lines ignores electoral dynamics. Incumbent A may appear to be out of step with her constituents, but the challenger may be even further away. Incumbent B may be just as far removed from public opinion as A, but he may face a challenger who is right on the mark. Current officeholders are only half of the story (Sullivan and Uslander 1978). If challengers are more extremist than incumbents, sitting legislators may escape the electorate's wrath when they deviate from public opinion.

Studies of representation, and of roll call voting more generally, concentrate on incumbents because data on challengers are elusive. Opposition candidates don't have voting records. Many don't even have backgrounds in public service from which we could impute an ideology. This time we get lucky. CBS News surveyed both incumbents and challengers in 1982 about a wide range of issues that cohere quite well. I can derive measures of ideology for both candidates that will permit, albeit with small samples, estimates of the impact of shirking on fortunes in

both the primary and general elections. I test models similar to those in chapters 3 and 4.

When we break down a small sample even further, it is right to be cautious. So I rely upon another database that makes comparisons between incumbents and challengers less tenuous: the 1988 Senate Election Study of the National Election Studies—to augment the aggregate findings from the CBS candidate survey. The survey results confirm the impact of both incumbent and challenger ideology on Senate elections. When I analyze Northern Democrats and Republicans separately, there is little support for the idea that candidates gain votes by taking immoderate positions. Northern Democrats who tilt rightward and Republicans with moderate-to-liberal state parties who are liberal gain votes.

Challengers are essential for understanding representation, but they don't all tell the same story. Good opponents are more likely to surface when they are most likely to win. Strong challengers, according to the conventional wisdom, can exploit issue differences better than weak pretenders (Westlye 1991). When candidates take distinct positions on issues, the ideologies of both incumbents and challengers should play a more critical role in elections when the aspirants have similar views.

The conventional wisdom doesn't survive intact: The biggest impact for issues in general elections comes in contests where candidates take distinct positions (quite reasonable), but where the incumbent is expected to win easily (quite surprising). In these states the big impact comes from challenger-induced partisanship. Downsian models and principal-agent frameworks would expect issues to be most prominent when candidates take different positions. This is the voter's grand opportunity to punish incumbents who insist on voting their own preferences rather than the electorate's. A challenger closer to public opinion can bring the errant incumbent to heel by waging a highly public campaign on the issues.<sup>1</sup> According to Downs (1957, 55–60), a well-placed challenger can *always* beat an incumbent if the issue space is multidimensional.

Yet this is *not* how issues shape Senate elections. When issues matter, they work to the *advantage* of incumbents whose ideology is more extreme than their geographic constituents would prefer. There is a great ideological divide, but it is not between an out-of-touch incumbent and a centrist challenger. It is between an ideological incumbent and an even more extremist challenger. The opposition candidate does not wage a highly publicized campaign that highlights how immoderate the

incumbent is. Instead, these races heavily favor the incumbent. Moderate challengers pass up the opportunity to run, leaving the field to candidates who are further away from the center than the incumbent is. So voters reward the incumbent for ideological stands that are less extreme than those offered by the challenger. Hard-fought races, in contrast, are not nearly the ideological battlegrounds that races with “lost cause” challengers are. Even hard-fought races where candidates are ideologically distinct don’t lead to a great role for issues. Principal-agent models cannot readily account for such a result. They would expect that voters would be better able to monitor shirking in races with the high levels of publicity that accompany hard-fought races.

Immoderate challengers make sense in a world of ideological equilibrium (cf. G. Wright 1989). Most challengers represent minority parties.<sup>2</sup> Their parties are likely out of sync ideologically with statewide opinion. Challengers start from behind and must first shore up their base by taking more extreme positions. Strongly ideological candidates give up a key advantage that accrues only to challengers: the ability to exploit multidimensionality of issues to defeat an incumbent. Minority party candidates have to build support across partisan and ideological lines. A single dimension of conflict helps the incumbent solidify her support across the geographic constituency. Multiple dimensions let the challenger pick off some incumbent supporters and perhaps forge a majority. Strongly ideological outsiders give up this strategy and cede the issue advantage to incumbents.

Not all incumbents find ideology a blessing. An extreme position may bring extra votes in primaries but can be costly in general elections (chapter 4). It is not the positions of legislators, but those of their core partisans, that are costly in November. And most senators, even those who are out of sync with the electorate, manage to win. The answer lies in part with challengers, who are even more out of touch than incumbents (who don’t do that badly).

Some races find challengers echoing incumbents, others don’t. Incumbents don’t have a distinct advantage over challengers in getting to the middle (though they are almost always closer to their own reelection constituencies). And there is no clear connection between proximity to the public and which candidate wins. *Closeness to public opinion doesn’t count. The direction of shirking matters* (cf. Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). It helps to veer rightward to win votes in November. But not too far. Incumbents gain votes if they are more conservative than their

*geographic* constituency. But challengers lose votes when they get too far to the right of their own partisan supporters. In primaries, more *liberal* reelection constituencies bring extra votes, but this is balanced off by an even larger increment when a legislator's *own partisan values* tilt rightward.

I consider three types of contexts: whether candidates converge or diverge, whether a senator's race is tough or easy, and whether the senator is a Democrat or Republican. Conventional wisdom yields easy predictions for each scenario. Ideology matters more to voters when candidates take distinctive positions (Abramowitz 1981; Wright and Berkman 1986). We shouldn't ask voters to pore over issue positions when candidates are vague (Downs 1957, chap. 12; Page and Shapiro 1992, 9). Issue voting should also be greater in states when senators face sharper challenges. In hard-fought races quality challengers can get their (ideological) message across and make incumbents sweat (Westlye 1991, 13–14). There is little room for issues in low-key races.<sup>3</sup>

Ideology matters most in elections when candidates take distinct positions and in races where the incumbent is highly favored. Close races are not doctrinal battles. Republicans can win extra primary votes if their own partisan values are more conservative than their core partisans. Northern Democrats neither gain nor lose from being too liberal for their reelection constituents in spring elections. If they are more liberal than their reelection and primary constituents, Northern Democrats will lose votes in November. And Republican incumbents gain when their challengers' partisans veer *leftward*.

### **Incumbent and Challenger Ideology**

The analysis thus far has employed roll call measures based upon League of Conservation Voters (LCV) scores as the basis of legislator ideology. Jackson and Kingdon (1992) criticize roll call–based measures of ideology as predictors of other votes. Mostly we have no other alternative. This time we do. CBS News surveyed Senate incumbents and challengers in 1982 on a series of issues. Wright (1989; cf. Wright and Berkman 1986) obtained the interview data from CBS and derived incumbent and challenger conservatism scales from questions on individual issues.<sup>4</sup> The survey yielded 61 usable responses for all incumbents and 26 incumbents seeking reelection in 1982.<sup>5</sup> This sample is somewhat biased: 1982 was kind to incumbents. Only two lost, one of whom was

not in the CBS sample. The sample reelection rate is 96.2 percent, compared to 65.3 percent for other senators in my sample ( $p < .003$ , two-tailed). On a wide variety of other measures, there are no significant differences between the CBS and larger samples.<sup>6</sup>

While the recession of 1982 and voter discontent with President Ronald Reagan's ideology hurt House Republicans (Abramowitz 1984), the GOP picked up a seat in the Senate. The country was still in a conservative mood, and GOP senators up for reelection seem to have profited from their ideology (Stimson 1991, 61–62; Hurley 1991).

The incumbent measures of personal ideology should be similar across methods. I used the same procedure to construct the shirking indices as I did in chapters 2 and 4, substituting the (standardized) CBS scores for the (standardized) roll call indices. These analyses are based on comparisons of standardized measures of shirking analogous to those presented in previous chapters. I standardized the incumbent and challenger ideology scales separately.<sup>7</sup>

The correlations are far from perfect, either for the roll call measures (table 14) or the shirking indices (table 15). To test whether the problem could be due to period effects—whether changing issues from

TABLE 14. Correlations between Roll Call Measures and CBS Conservatism Index

	PRO-LCV	PRO-LCV Stratified	ADA
	Full Sample		
All senators (57)	-.784	-.771	-.808
Republicans (25)	-.811	-.706	-.831
Northern Democrats (24)	-.624	-.648	-.628
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (21)	-.761	-.689	-.646
	Senators Running in 1982		
All senators (26)	-.660	-.681	-.846
Republicans (9)	-.931	-.538	-.981
Northern Democrats (13)	-.383	-.637	-.719
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (10)	-.550	-.667	-.815

*Note:* Entries are correlation coefficients between conservatism index from CBS survey and the roll call measures. Entries in parentheses are numbers of cases.

1977–78 to 1981–82 could lead to different LCV scores—I computed stratified indices for the LCV measure. I computed PRO-LCV measures for senators up for reelection in 1980 and 1982 based upon their group ratings for the preceding biennium.

For the 57 senators for whom I can make comparisons, the LCV ratings and liberalism scores from Americans for Democratic Action (cf.

TABLE 15. Correlations between Roll Call and CBS Personal-Ideology Measures

	PRO-LCV	PRO-LCV Stratified	ADA
Full Sample: Geographic Constituency			
All senators (57)	.829	.775	.876
Republicans (25)	.891	.846	.939
Northern Democrats (24)	.612	.561	.698
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (21)	.754	.573	.648
Full Sample: Reelection Constituency			
All senators (57)	.630	.719	.807
Republicans (25)	.860	.652	.880
Northern Democrats (24)	.561	.596	.581
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (21)	.721	.635	.515
Senators Running in 1982: Geographic Constituency			
All senators (26)	.668	.743	.895
Republicans (9)	.934	.860	.987
Northern Democrats (13)	.384	.561	.783
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (10)	.550	.633	.854
Senators Running in 1982: Reelection Constituency			
All senators (26)	.587	.755	.853
Republicans (9)	.898	.409	.976
Northern Democrats (13)	.339	.754	.700
Northern Democrats without 3 moderates (10)	.542	.654	.776

*Note:* Entries are correlation coefficients between personal-ideology measures from CBS survey and the roll call personal-ideology estimates. Entries in parentheses are numbers of cases.

Kalt and Zupan 1990) have similar correlations with the CBS conservatism index.<sup>8</sup> The correlations center around .80. There is little gain from using stratified group ratings. The LCV measure does not fare as well for the 26 senators up for reelection in 1982. The correlation falls to  $-.660$ —and to  $-.383$  for Northern Democrats. The ADA correlations remain strong. Much of the problem is attributable to differences in scores for three moderate Democrats. When we remove them, the correlation increases to  $-.550$ . The story is pretty much the same for the personal ideology measures (table 15).

Some of the modest correlations give pause, but they do not suggest that a “Stop” sign is in order. The correlations with measures based on ADA scores are respectable. Virtually all of the analyses in previous chapters were replicated with ADA-based measures; the differences in interpretation are marginal. And the analyses to follow strongly confirm my larger thesis: When legislator ideology matters, it is the “induced” component—the shared values of legislators and their supportive constituencies—that looms largest in the electoral connection.

### Spaced Out?

Do incumbents defeat challengers because they are closer to their common geographic constituencies? No. Only 14 of 26 (53.9 percent of incumbents) are closer to statewide public opinion than are their challengers. When the incumbent and challenger adopt similar ideological positions, 58 percent of incumbents are closer to public opinion; when they diverge, the incumbent wins the ideological race only half of the time.<sup>9</sup>

Incumbents who are closer to public opinion get 56.6 percent of the vote; those who are further away secure 59.7 percent. Senators who take the same position their challengers take do just a tiny bit better (59.1 percent) than legislators who take different positions (57.1 percent, not significant). *When the candidates diverge and the incumbent is closer to public opinion, the incumbent is still stuck with about the same vote share (55.9 percent) as other senators (58.8 percent). Sitting senators get no electoral boost when the candidates converge and the incumbent is closer (57.4 percent compared to 58.3 percent).* The message so far seems ironic: Regardless of the context, ideological proximity conveys no electoral benefits.<sup>10</sup>

A majority (14 of 26) of *challengers* are closer to their reelection

constituencies than incumbents are to their own fellow partisans. When candidates converge, incumbents hew more to their party line than challengers do to theirs: 75 percent of sitting senators (9 of 12) are closer to their reelection constituencies than are challengers to their own partisans. When an incumbent and challenger take distinct positions, the challenger is more in tune with her reelection constituents (by 78.6 percent). Why, then, do incumbents win, generally with votes to spare? The key lies in breaking ideology into its component parts.

### Another Triple Play

I construct measures of pure personal and induced ideology for both incumbents and challengers from the CBS survey. I report the equations for pure personal ideology and pure partisanship for incumbents and challenger-induced partisanship in table C.1 in appendix C. These are the variables that affect primary- and general-election vote shares, so I concentrate on them. The equations for induced partisanship employ familiar predictors.<sup>11</sup> The correlation between statewide induced partisanship for the roll call and survey measures is .742; the linkage for induced partisanship is slightly weaker ( $r = .602$ ).<sup>12</sup>

Personal ideologies vary widely among incumbents and challengers. Even though, as in chapter 4, induced ideologies include both the reelection and primary constituencies, I shall sometimes refer to induced partisan constituencies — the predicted part of senator deviations from their reelection constituencies — as primary constituency attitudes.

Neither measure of pure legislator ideology — measured as deviations from either the geographic or the reelection constituency — is related to challengers' personal values ( $r = .036$  and  $.0003$ , respectively). Statewide supporting constituencies — the induced ideologies of geographic constituencies — aren't similar for incumbents and challengers ( $r = .045$ ). However, *core partisan constituencies* — induced partisanship for reelection constituencies — are very similar for incumbents and challengers. The correlation between incumbent and challenger induced partisanship is .772. *When one party's core supporters and activists are liberal (conservative), so are the other's.*

Incumbents and challengers have similar *reelection constituencies*. The correlation between incumbent and challenger induced partisanship is high across the contexts I examine: whether candidates converge or diverge and whether the upcoming election is expected to be tough or

one-sided. The correlation between reelection constituencies of incumbents and challengers is .860 for all 96 senators and .890 for the 26 senators in the CBS sample. And the primary/personal constituencies of the two parties are similar: The correlation between party elite ideologies is .609 for all senators and .671 for the CBS sample.<sup>13</sup>

Incumbents and challengers have reelection, primary, and personal constituencies that tilt in the same direction. This would suggest that candidates should converge, as Downsian models predict. They don't. Northern Democratic incumbents are moderate to liberal (with a mean score on the 10-point CBS conservatism scale of 4.115), while their opponents are quite conservative (mean = 8.538,  $p < .05$ ). GOP incumbents are moderate to conservative (mean = 6.000), and they run against very liberal Democrats (mean = 2.444,  $p < .0001$ ).<sup>14</sup> Incumbents occupy positions slightly to the left (Northern Democrats) and right (Republicans) of center. Challengers are the outliers. As Wright and Berkman (1986, 572) argue, using the same CBS sample, "Challengers . . . run much more as good ideological representatives of their parties than as seekers of middle-of-the-road votes." And they lose because they are *too ideological*.

Misrepresentation is not simply a matter of ideological challengers facing moderate incumbents. When incumbents deviate from their constituencies, they take advantage of the limited leeway their constituents give them. The correlations between statewide opinion and core partisan supporters are higher for incumbents than for challengers except in hard-fought races (where they are almost equal) and where candidates converge.<sup>15</sup>

### **Incumbents, Challengers, and Ideology**

I begin with a general model of incumbent vote share in the general and primary elections for the full CBS sample. It includes the challenger's pure partisan ideology and both pure and induced partisanship for the incumbent. I then estimate truncated models for the different contexts (convergence versus divergence, hard-fought versus low-key races, and separate analyses for Northern Democrats and Republicans). I include the candidate ideology measures that matter most across the contexts: incumbent pure and induced partisanship and challenger induced partisanship.

In primaries, incumbents face a trade-off (see table 16). They gain

votes when their own partisan values are conservative and when their *core partisan supporters are more liberal* (both  $p < .0001$ ). The gain from conservative personal principles (13.5 percent) is stronger than the boost from liberal supporters (10.6 percent). In a conservative era, voters reward legislators for being even more conservative than their strongest supporters. But they don't want their senators going too far out on a limb.<sup>16</sup>

TABLE 16. Election Models

Independent Variable	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	<i>t</i> -Statistic
A. Primary Election Model			
Constant	327.200	44.635	7.330****
Incumbent pure partisanship	-13.476	3.035	-4.440****
Incumbent induced partisanship	10.575	1.896	5.577****
Other party opinion standard deviation	-339.900	63.880	-5.321****
Polarized parties	6.942	4.047	1.715*
$R^2 = .662$ Adjusted $R^2 = .598$ SEE = 9.729 $N = 26$			
B. General Election Model			
	Coefficient	Standard Error	<i>t</i> -Ratio
Constant	43.786	6.451	6.787****
Incumbent pure ideology	-2.675	1.233	-2.170**
Challenger induced partisanship	-3.174	0.744	-4.264****
Primary votes	.173	.070	2.474**
Challenger quality	-2.993	1.568	-1.909**
$R^2 = .643$ Adjusted $R^2 = .575$ SEE = 3.825 $N = 26$			

\* $p < .10$ .    \*\* $p < .05$ .    \*\*\* $p < .001$ .    \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

In the general election, conservative personal values wins votes two ways. There is a direct effect ( $p < .05$ ) from pure ideology on vote share in November. And there is an indirect effect from pure partisanship through the primary. Every additional primary vote boosts November vote shares by almost one-fifth of a vote ( $p < .05$ ).<sup>17</sup> While this is not a big impact, the powerful force of pure partisanship in the spring translates into an indirect effect (2.334) that rivals the coefficient on pure ideology. Yet moving to the right is not an unambiguous blessing. If *challengers' primary constituents* are too conservative, the incumbent reaps extra votes ( $p < .0001$ ). When challengers move too far to the right, they can make a liberal incumbent appear moderate. Challenger extremism brings in slightly more votes (3.2 percent compared to 2.7 percent) compared to incumbent ideology.

### Context Matters

Member ideology and supporting constituencies have different effects in different contexts. Breaking the small number of cases for the CBS sample (26) into different contexts leads to precariously small *N*s. So I estimate truncated models for each context: whether candidates diverge or converge, whether a race is expected to be close or lopsided, and Northern Democrats versus Republican incumbents. Issues should play a most prominent role when candidates take distinctive issue positions and when races are hard-fought. I classify elections as either low-key or hard-fought (see n. 17) based upon criteria suggested by Westlye (1991, chap. 2). While I used Westlye's logic, our results differ significantly. The classifications agreed only 62 percent of the time ( $\tau\text{-}b = .231$ ,  $\gamma = .438$ ).<sup>18</sup> My classification scheme yields crisper results for the models estimated below.

These models include only the ideology measures and (for general elections) the primary vote shares. I present the regression coefficients, significance levels, and impacts in table 17. The impact is simply the regression coefficient times the standard deviation. It provides a way of assessing how powerful each measure of partisanship is.

What happens when I break the samples down by context? First, consider the results for primaries. Not surprisingly, whether candidates converge or diverge in November has only modest impacts on the importance of issues in primaries.<sup>19</sup> The expectation of a hard-fought race in November makes the primary battle a contest about the incumbent's

personal partisan values. When there is smoother sailing ahead, the primary revolves around induced partisanship – what the party faithful believe. In hard-fought races, an incumbent should tilt rightward in her personal values; in low-key contests, it helps to have a *liberal* supporting constituency. When I control for partisan contexts, the only significant result comes from pure partisanship for Republicans. Ideology doesn't seem to matter for Northern Democrats; for Republicans, it helps to go further than your fellow partisans wish if you want to prosper in the primary. A standard-deviation change in pure partisanship can yield 11.3 percent more votes. Note, however, that these trimmed models don't perform terribly well. Two have negative adjusted  $R^2$ 's and only two

TABLE 17. Effects of Ideology under Different Contexts

	Converge	Diverge	Hard Fought	Low Key	Northern Democrats	GOP
Primary Vote Share						
Incumbent pure partisanship	-15.045 (.01)	7.394 (n.s.)	-12.329 (.001)	-3.378 (n.s.)	-5.516 (n.s.)	-21.871 (.05)
Incumbent induced partisanship	-9.539 2.838 (n.s.)	3.305 13.288 (n.s.)	-8.026 2.770 (n.s.)	-1.317 4.956 (.0001)	-3.078 7.743 (n.s.)	-11.307 5.025 (n.s.)
	3.474	10.192	2.950	4.629	4.096	3.593
Adjusted $R^2$	.156	.166	-.004	.280	-.083	.245
$N$	12	14	13	13	13	9
General-Election Vote Share						
Incumbent pure ideology	-7.384 (.01)	-4.841 (.05)	1.135 (n.s.)	-5.835 (.001)	-6.191 (.0001)	-.649 (n.s.)
Challenger induced partisanship	-3.352 -2.775 (.0001)	-3.084 -5.108 (.0001)	.452 -2.748 (.05)	-2.486 -3.380 (.01)	-2.860 3.100 (n.s.)	-.249 -3.719 (.05)
Primary votes	-2.939 -.034 (n.s.)	-4.531 .352 (.0001)	-2.781 .203 (.01)	-3.184 .164 (.05)	.825 .305 (.0001)	-1.183 .058 (n.s.)
Adjusted $R^2$	.633	.807	.708	.456	.880	.346
$N$	14	12	13	13	13	9

*Note:* Entries on the first line are unstandardized regression coefficients from models based on table 16. Significance levels are in parentheses (n.s.: not significant) on the second line; the third line is the total impact (regression coefficient multiplied by standard deviation).

account for as much as 20 percent of the variance even with tiny numbers of cases.

For the general elections, the equations fare much better, and there are bigger impacts for ideology. Incumbent pure ideology matters across a variety of contexts in the fall. Moving too far to the left of the full electorate hurts incumbents when candidates converge and when they diverge. It hurts incumbents in low-key races and Northern Democrats — and in each case, the effect is between 2.5 and 3.5 percent. Only incumbents in hard-fought races and Republicans escape the effects of personal ideology. In hard-fought contests, there is a spillover from the primary. Incumbents in these contests gain 1 percent of the vote for every 5 percent of the vote in the primary; in these contests pure conservative partisanship produces a bonus of 8 percent, so even the small gain from primary vote shares can be substantial. In the two other cases where primary votes help substantially in November, there are *no* significant effects of ideology in the spring (when candidates diverge and for Northern Democrats).

Again, there is an asymmetry. When challengers' *induced* partisans are too conservative, incumbents gain votes — in almost every context. (Alternatively, when challenger induced partisanship is too liberal, incumbents lose votes.) The sole exception is where we might expect a strong relationship: for Northern Democrats. Incumbents should tilt to the right in their own values. They also gain when their challengers' supporting blocs move in the same direction. Here is evidence that *ideological balancing matters*. But it matters more for races when candidates diverge (impact =  $-4.531$ ) than when they take the same positions (impact =  $-2.939$ ). And it matters more in low-key races (impact =  $-3.184$ ) than in hard-fought contests (effect =  $-2.781$ ). And Democratic challenger induced partisanship helps Republican incumbents; Democratic incumbents have no gain when Republican challenger ideology is too conservative.

Northern Democrats seem to pay a bigger price from ideology than Republicans. Northern Democrats lose votes in November for being too liberal, without any compensating gain in the primary. Republicans benefit from conservative pure partisanship in their primaries; they get no direct spillover in the fall, but they do benefit when Democratic core supporters are too liberal. Beyond the context of party, issues matter both when candidates converge and when they diverge and more in low-

key races than in closer contests. What about low-key races where candidates diverge? Is this the key to the puzzle?

### **Low-Key Divergence and Issues**

We don't need an elaborate model to explain why issues matter more when candidates take distinct stands. The stronger effect of ideology in low-key races is less intuitive, at least according to Downsian arguments. Hard-fought races should lead candidates to race toward the center of their constituencies. But this is not what we find: Candidates are more likely to converge in low-key races (53.9 percent) than in hard-fought contests (38.4 percent). The races in which issues matter most — low-key elections where candidates take distinct stands — comprise just 23 percent of all Senate elections in 1982.

Low-key races where candidates diverge are the mark of ideological-equilibrium models. One candidate is strongly advantaged by a brand name. And that brand name is associated with a strong — and dominant — ideology, shared by the elites and both the reelection and the geographic constituencies. The opposition candidates are out on an ideological limb. It's easy for incumbents to run on issues when most people agree with you and when you have challengers who are scornful of public (and elite) opinion.

Low-key diverging races provide a fertile culture for strong effects of issues. These six races involve three Northern Democratic incumbents and three Republicans. These senators are strong ideologues. They are not more electorally secure than other senators. Nor have they built up an immunity to issues over time, since they are more junior than their colleagues. They have a secure base, being more likely to come from dominant party systems (66.7 percent) than other senators (45 percent). They face challengers who are their ideological opposites and less in touch with mass or elite opinions, from either statewide or state parties.

Table 18 summarizes differences between low-key diverging (LKD) contests and other races by party. Even with a small number of cases, I must control for party. Small *N*s make it difficult to obtain significant differences, yet they abound in these comparisons. LKD Northern Democrats have an average ADA rating of 86.4 percent, compared to 59.1 percent for others ( $p < .04$ ). LKD Republicans average a meager 0.6 percent on the ADA scale, compared to 45.9 percent for their colleagues

( $p < .004$ ). Both Northern Democrats ( $p < .05$ ) and Republicans ( $p < .05$ ) face more conservative challengers than their colleagues.<sup>20</sup> The ideological spread between incumbents and challengers is twice as great in low-key diverging races as in others, for both Northern Democrats ( $p < .01$ ) and Republicans ( $p < .035$ ).

LKD Northern Democrats don't share a distinctive personal ideology. But Republicans from these states are slightly more likely to have conservative personal values ( $p < .11$ ). Their primary constituents are

TABLE 18. Attributes of Low-Key Races Where Candidates Diverge

	Northern Democrats			Republicans		
	Other Races	LKD Races	$p$ -level <sup>a</sup>	Other Races	LKD Races	$p$ -level <sup>a</sup>
ADA rating	59.1	86.4	.04	45.9	.600	.004
Incumbent ideology	4.273	2.667	.16	4.667	8.667	.002
Challenger ideology	7.727	10.333	.05	2.000	3.333	.05 <sup>b</sup>
State ideology	2.188	2.029	.05	2.090	2.208	.01
Party ideology (standardized)	-.777	-.379	.09	.809	1.437	.025
Independent liberal share	23.437	27.217	.09	24.663	20.283	.06
Independent conservative share	30.926	28.713	.12	28.567	39.353	.001
Incumbent party elite	.445	.828	.20	1.024	-.478	.01
Challenger party elite	-.007	1.308	.005	-.056	-.195	.40
Senator party ID-opposition party ID	5.140	17.467	.025	-6.967	.400	.13
Incumbent induced partisanship (CBS survey)	-.964	-.354	.07	1.264	.241	.04
Incumbent induced partisanship (LCV measure)	-.261	.721	.01	1.068	-.763	.01

Note: Entries are mean scores for predictors.

<sup>a</sup> All  $p$ -levels are based on one-tailed tests except as indicated.

<sup>b</sup> Two-tailed test.

no different ( $p < .26$ ) than GOP legislators from non-LKD states. As the ideological-equilibrium model would expect, there are strong differences between LKD and non-LKD states for both parties. LKD Northern Democrats have more liberal ( $p < .05$ ) and LKD Republicans more conservative ( $p < .01$ ) geographic constituents than their non-LKD colleagues. The differences extend to state partisans. Half of the incumbents in low-key diverging races come from states with polarized reelection constituencies,<sup>21</sup> compared to 20 percent of incumbents in other states ( $p < .08$ ).

LKD Northern Democrats are more likely to represent liberal reelection constituencies ( $p < .09$ ), and similarly situated Republicans reflect more conservative party identifiers ( $p < .025$ ). Core partisan supporters (induced partisanship) are more liberal for this Northern Democratic group, whether measured from the CBS survey of candidate ideology ( $p < .07$ ) or the LCV construct ( $p < .01$ ). The Republicans' primary constituents are more conservative by either measure ( $p < .04$  and  $.01$ , respectively). Democratic party elites tend to be slightly more liberal in LKD races ( $p < .20$ ), while Republican activists are decidedly more conservative ( $p < .01$ ).

These Senate races are ideological because both masses and elites are polarized. But why are they low-key? Northern Democrats benefit from an advantage in party identification. Their party affiliation advantage—the difference between Democratic and Republican identification—is 17.5 percent compared to 5.1 percent for other Northern Democrats ( $p < .025$ ). LKD Republicans have a smaller advantage (0.4 percent), though they don't share the deficit of other GOP senators ( $-7.0$  percent,  $p < .13$ ).

Incumbents and challengers are sharply polarized in LKD states. The correlation between their ideologies is  $-.991$ . In other states, the two candidates are more likely to converge (with a correlation of  $.352$ ). Incumbent ideology is almost perfectly related to state mean opinions ( $r = .957$ ), state party attitudes ( $r = .935$ ), and to state party elites ( $r = .947$ ). In other states, incumbent ideology is not as closely tied to statewide attitudes ( $r = .558$ ). Nor are senators' values linked to their own party identifiers ( $r = -.070$ ) or their party's elites ( $r = .628$ ).

*Challengers flout statewide opinion in LKD states. There is almost a perfect negative correlation ( $r = -.951$ ) between state attitudes and challenger ideology.* In other states, challengers hover somewhere around the state mean ( $r = .419$ ). But contestants in these low-key races are not

driven toward extremes by party elites. They run away from both activists and fellow partisans as far as they can ( $r = -.961$  and  $-.985$ , respectively). *Challengers in LKD races are the “real” shirkers. They don’t represent masses or elites.* Incumbents manage to play to a variety of crowds—the full state electorate, fellow partisans, party activists, and independents—simultaneously. This gives them an instant advantage. Their challengers make life even easier for sitting senators by standing so far out afield.

Incumbents in LKD races have a lot going for them. They and their parties stand close to statewide public opinion. Independents also stand closer to the senator’s party. This strategic wealth scares off quality challengers. Only one of the six LKD incumbents (16.7 percent) faced a quality challenger, compared to twice as many other sitting senators. Challengers may be more extreme in these races because good moderates may be frightened away. State party leaders expressed outright hostility to three of the six challengers in 1982 and were none too comfortable with a fourth (Ehrenhalt 1983). The only way weak candidates can gain any media attention is to stake out strong ideological distinctions.

Consider LKD races involving Maryland’s Barbara Mikulski and Ohio’s John Glenn, both Democrats.<sup>22</sup> Mikulski established herself as a powerful electoral force after taking over moderate Republican Charles McC. Mathias’s Senate seat in 1986. She won 61 percent of the vote against Linda Chavez, a former Democrat who served in the Reagan administration and pursued Mikulski with an ideological and personal vengeance. Six years later, Mikulski ran against another Reagan administration official, Alan Keyes, who also ran a stridently conservative campaign. Mikulski beat Keyes with 71 percent of the vote (Duncan 1993, 682–84). Mikulski’s ADA rating has never fallen below 90 since she was first elected to the Senate. Yet, she campaigns as a pragmatist and makes strong appeals to working-class ethnic neighborhoods (Duncan 1993, 683).

Republican candidates would be well advised to moderate their positions in a state dominated by Democrats and marked by relatively liberal voters and activists in both parties. Yet, both Chavez and Keyes tilted against the prevailing winds in the state and in their own party. They later became frequent talk show guests, and Keyes got his own radio show in Baltimore. Had they converged, they might have faded into the woods like so many Maryland Republicans before them.

Glenn, a former astronaut who has often clashed with the liberal

wing of Ohio's Democratic party (Fenno 1990, 106–9), voted with the ADA 80 percent or more of the time in only 6 of 12 years from his first election in 1981 through 1992. Glenn also campaigned from the center. As a moderate, he is an unlikely candidate for an LKD race. Like Mikulski, however, he drew a very conservative challenger in 1986, six-term Republican House member Thomas N. Kindness. Kindness only rarely permitted his ADA rating to rise to double digits. Well before states rights became a national concern for the right, Kindness was its champion (Ehrenhalt 1985, 1206). His campaign against Glenn was sharply negative, while Glenn portrayed himself as a centrist. The incumbent was able to stand above the fray, gaining two-thirds of the vote from every demographic category as well as from independents, 90 percent of all Democrats, and a full third of the ballots of GOP identifiers (Fenno 1990, 272–79). In March 1986 only 7 percent of voters knew enough of Kindness to rate his job performance (Fenno 1990, 269).

Well-entrenched incumbents can campaign from the center against ideological challengers in low-key races. Sitting senators who develop their own dependable reelection constituencies succeed because they stay close to statewide ideology. The strongest challengers pass up the chance to take them on. The only candidates left to the out-party are ideological extremists who start with little name identification, can't attract as much support from campaign contributors, and wind up losing much of their base because they stand too far outside all mainstreams, even that of their own party.

Contrast the Mikulski and Glenn campaigns with that of North Dakota Republican Mark Andrews, who lost his reelection bid in 1986 to Democratic state tax commissioner Kent Conrad. Andrews touted his moderation and distance from both the Reagan administration and the Republican party in North Dakota (Fenno 1992, 252). He had long been considered vulnerable. Early polls had shown him badly trailing his probable Democratic opponent, Rep. Byron Dorgan. The Andrews-Conrad race focused more on the performance of the Republican party on farm issues and on the economy more generally rather than on broad questions of ideology.

Fearing a widespread reaction against the GOP because of the depressed economy, Andrews *converged toward the challenger*. He obtained the endorsement of the popular former Democratic secretary of agriculture Bob Bergland. Voters who cited issues as the basis for their vote were

split between the two candidates. Retrospective evaluations about farming and the economy boosted the challenger, but Conrad benefited even more from personal evaluations of the candidates (Fenno 1992, 174, 243, 267–70). In hard-fought races where candidates converge — the opposite of low-key contests in which the nominees take distinctive conditions — neither candidate has an incentive to push voters toward issues. The challenger may be just as much (or more) in touch with statewide opinion. The incumbent has no strategic advantage on ideology.

*Ideology is most important when a strong incumbent faces a weak challenger, not when a weak incumbent faces a strong challenger.* Well-situated opponents will be wary of getting too far afield from public opinion, thus muting the effects of issues in the campaign. In low-key contests where candidates diverge, it is *challenger* ideology that overwhelms everything else. The correlation between challenger induced partisanship and vote share in November is  $-.975$ .<sup>23</sup> LKD challengers may get off lightly. Voters make their decisions on challengers' induced partisanship. Yet, the challenger's reelection and primary/personal constituencies are closer to statewide public opinion than the challengers are themselves. If the voters cast ballots on pure personal partisanship rather than induced partisanship, landslides would turn into wipeouts.

Sitting senators are protected in the primaries. Both when candidates diverge and in low-key elections, incumbents pay a small price if their personal partisanship is too liberal. Such deviations will cost them at most 4 percent of the vote in contests that they usually win with more than 80 percent (over 90 percent in LKD races). In most other contexts, incumbents can lose between 7 and 12 percent of the primary vote. Induced partisanship has a big effect in primaries when candidates diverge. Liberals rally around the flag to boost the vote shares of sitting senators who anticipate an ideological battle in November. But there is no similar effect for low-key races. Senators who have an easy ride in November also get a pass in the spring. When they do face opponents, they coast by with little impact from their voting records.

### **Voters in Low-Key Races When Candidates Diverge**

How much confidence can we place in the results for low-key contests when candidates diverge? The analysis produces crisp results, but they are based on very small numbers of cases. The Senate Election Study of the American National Election Study offers an opportunity to test the

argument that ideological voting is most pronounced in low-key races where candidates diverge. I selected the 1988 wave of the Senate voter study since its contests comprise the same class as the 1982 sample.

I estimate a model of voting for incumbent senators in 1988 that is designed to incorporate much of what we know about Senate contests and the theoretical concerns from the analysis of LKD races. I include four indicators of ideology: (1) how much more liberal or conservative the incumbent is relative to the respondent; (2) a similar measure for the challenger; (3) an index of incumbent party ideology; and (4) the same measure for the challenger's party.<sup>24</sup> I also include a measure of whether the voter's party identification matches that of the incumbent.<sup>25</sup> Also included are variables tapping whether the respondent has met the incumbent or the challenger and the challenger's level of campaign spending. To classify races as low-key or hard-fought, I employed the *Congressional Quarterly* assessments (included as contextual data in the Senate study), with indeterminate races classified by the ratio of challenger to incumbent spending—the same procedure that I employed in the aggregate analyses. For convergence versus divergence, I used voters' classification of incumbent and challenger ideology. Only if more than half of the voters in a state agreed that the candidates took similar positions did I classify the race as converging. The six LKD contests in 1982 fell into the same category in 1988.

I present the probit results in table 19. I compare races in which candidates took distinct positions but were strongly favored first with *all other* contests and then with contests where candidates took different positions but the race was expected to be close. The table presents probit coefficients, standard errors, significance levels, a variety of summary statistics ( $-2 \times \text{Log Likelihood Ratio}$  and the estimated McKelvey-Zavoina probit  $R^2$ , and—in bold—the effect of each independent variable.

Issues are most important in LKD races. In these races, voters choose ideologically, but again they seek some balance. They prefer a liberal ideology for the incumbent, but a conservative challenger (effect =  $-.229$ ). They also want to balance the incumbent's own liberalism by a more conservative ideology for the incumbent's party (effect =  $-.332$ ). Outside of whether the voter met the challenger, the three measures of ideology dominate the vote choice model for LKD races. The direction of ideology seems to have shifted in 1988 races from the aggregate results in 1982. This may stem from the construction of the

TABLE 19. Effects of Ideology on Voter Choice in 1988 Senate Elections

Independent Variable	Diverge Low-Key	Other Races	Diverge Hard-Fought
Incumbent ideological proximity	.445**** (.127) <b>.518</b>	.237** (.090) <b>.193</b>	.215** (.124) <b>.293</b>
Challenger ideological proximity	-.184* (.094) <b>-.229</b>	-.136 (.094) <b>-.199</b>	-.127 (.132) <b>-.182</b>
Incumbent party ideology	-.013*** (.004) <b>-.332</b>	-.002 (.003) <b>-.059</b>	.012* (.007) <b>.160</b>
Opposition party ideology	-.002 (.007) <b>-.041</b>	.004 (.003) <b>.107</b>	.013** (.007) <b>.205</b>
Incumbent party identification	.287** (.142) <b>.175</b>	.278**** (.103) <b>.152</b>	.342** (.144) <b>.244</b>
Meet incumbent	.110** (.063) <b>.133</b>	.105** (.041) <b>.152</b>	.110** (.060) <b>.154</b>
Meet challenger	-.189** (.084) <b>-.262</b>	-.171** (.049) <b>-.171</b>	-.075 (.070) <b>-.109</b>
Challenger spending	-.00000009* (.0000006) <b>-.146</b>	-.00000003 (.0000003) <b>-.076</b>	.00000001 (.0000004) <b>-.031</b>
Constant	1.269* (.657)	.179 (.308)	-.548 (.559)
Estimated $R^2$	.343	.147	.201
% predicted correctly: model	70.7	62.2	62.1
% predicted correctly: null	67.8	58.3	56.9
$-2*\log$ likelihood	234.44	490.85	244.54
$N$	208	381	195

Note: Entries in the top row for each independent variable are probit coefficients. Entries in parentheses are standard errors; bold figures are impacts.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

measures (there is no way to get at state party ideology or deviations from it), or changes over time in voter preferences and the issues stressed by challengers. The basic result holds: LKD races are ideological battlegrounds.

In other races, incumbent issues matter far less. In all other races, incumbent ideological proximity matters, but with an effect (.193) that is barely 40 percent as strong as I find for LKD races. The prototypical ideological contest should see candidates diverge in a hard-fought race, but here the effect of incumbent ideology (.293) is just 60 percent of the LKD result. In other races, challenger ideological proximity is not significant. Incumbent party ideology matters (with  $p < .10$ ) only for hard-fought races where candidates diverge, but here the effect (.160) is only half as strong as for LKD races. To be sure, opposition party ideology is significant for hard-fought contests where candidates take distinct positions, but these contests are more marked by party identification than LKD races are.

The survey data confirm the aggregate results that incumbent, challenger, and incumbent party ideology affect vote choice for senators. They also suggest that voters reward legislators for going beyond their own preferred positions. There are 114 respondents with Northern Democratic incumbents and 94 with GOP senators in LKD races. I estimate models similar to that in table 19, eliminating only challenger party ideology because of multicollinearity. There are sharp differences in how ideology affects vote choice for Northern Democrats and Republicans. Voters reward Northern Democrats for progressivism. Incumbent ideological proximity is the strongest predictor of vote choice for Northern Democratic incumbents (effect = .741,  $p < .0001$ ). Challenger proximity and incumbent party attitudes have no impact on voting for Democrats.

Northern Democrats in these contests are *closer* to the average constituent than their colleagues in other types of races, by a substantial margin. Republican challengers could meet the Democrats at the center and threaten to make a race of it. They don't. These Republican challengers are further to the right *than any other class*. Republican incumbents are further to the right of their constituents than any other GOP group—and again by a substantial margin. Their Democratic challengers are more out of touch—on the left—than the GOP challengers are. Republican incumbents in LKD races benefit from going right just as their Northern Democratic colleagues gain from going left.

Hard-fought races where candidates take distinct stands occurred primarily in the Northeast and Midwest in 1988. LKD races with Democratic incumbents also were northeastern contests, while those with GOP senators were mostly midwestern. As we shall see in chapter 6, these races fit political cultures with dominant political ideologies, natural sites for the politics of ideological equilibrium.<sup>26</sup>

### **Ideology and Elections**

Incumbents can prosper when they stake out an ideological turf that gives them a reputation they don't have to share with challengers (Glazer and Grofman 1989; Wright 1994, 10). They also do well when they converge. Incumbents who converge win 59.1 percent compared to 57.1 percent, an insignificant difference. There is no clear winner in the battle between the Downsian and ideological-equilibrium schools. The former school expects deviations from public opinion to cost legislators votes; the latter views ideology as a "sophisticated strategic choice for persuading voters in election campaigns" that constrains legislators to maintain their ideological reputations (Richardson and Munger 1990, 14–15).

Both perspectives make valid arguments, but neither is the correct model. The ideological-equilibrium thesis reminds us that both voters and candidates are motivated by issues. Most of the analyses in chapter 3 and in this chapter suggest that voters, especially in contests where candidates take distinct positions, select Senate candidates based upon their values. Electors care which values senators have. It doesn't matter whether a politician is close to your preferences. It does matter whether a senator is more liberal or more conservative than you are. Ideological-equilibrium advocates get so caught up in the importance of ideology that they don't recognize how deeply partisan conflicts structure competing belief systems. When I lump Northern Democrats and Republicans together, the polarizing effects of party overwhelm ideological differences. There are Republican legislators and elites mostly in the conservative quadrant and Northern Democrats in the liberal quadrant. It is easy to draw a line connecting the points clustered tightly in each segment. *Within* each domain, very different patterns emerge.

Equilibrium theories also presume, along with principal-agent models, that the legislator values that matter belong to the member alone. But the results of this chapter and the last suggest that legislators are rewarded or punished when they court their reelection and primary/

personal constituencies. There is little evidence so far that their own preferences, values not common to their mass and elite backers in their parties, seal their electoral fate. I present evidence in the next chapter that personal partisan values can matter, but the overall picture remains the same: Politicians are known by the company they keep.

Most senators, especially Northern Democrats, don't shirk much, once we take into account the pressures from their core partisan supporters. Challengers diverge more. And challenger ideology matters more in general elections. When issues matter most, in low-key races where candidates take distinct positions, the preferences of pretenders to the thrones are the key to incumbent electoral success.

Whether legislators respond to geographic or reelection constituents, it is logical for people to base voting decisions on induced partisanship. People find it easier to get information about parties and party coalitions than about individual officeholders. One may not always be a perfect guide to the other, but the generally good fit of the models predicting induced ideology suggests that the big picture is a reasonable approximation of a senator's distance from geographic and reelection constituencies. Voters form accurate images of parties and their supporting coalitions (Brady and Sniderman 1985). And they infer candidates' issues positions from the stands they attribute to their parties (Conover and Feldman 1989; Feldman and Conover 1983). People need less information to form impressions about state parties than about individual officeholders. It makes sense that they also use them to cast ballots for the Senate.

Party ideology is a good cue in low-key races and when candidates take distinct stands. It fares less well in other contests. In low-key races, the correlation between incumbent ideology (as measured by the CBS survey) and reelection constituency values (as measured by the share of partisans identifying as liberal minus the percent calling themselves conservatives) is .742. For hard-fought contests it is .051.<sup>27</sup> When candidates converge, incumbent ideology has an *inverse* correlation ( $-.102$ ) with partisan values; when they diverge, there is a strong relationship ( $r = .883$ ). The relationship is almost perfect (.998) for low-key diverging races, almost zero (.108) for other contests. The 1982 sample underestimates the overall linkage between partisan ideology and incumbent values, so we shouldn't make too much of some of the very low correlations.<sup>28</sup> The very high relationships for contests where there are big impacts for ideology in general elections suggest that issues count more

in some contexts than in others. The results for incumbent ideology are mirrored in challenger values. Incumbent positions are further away from challenger partisan ideology in low-key races, when candidates take distinct positions, and especially when both conditions hold.<sup>29</sup>

Voters make sharper distinctions between candidates' pure ideology when the opponents take distinct stands. This parallels claims by Wright (1978a), Wright and Berkman (1986, 582–83) and Abramowitz (1981).<sup>30</sup> If most senators don't deviate much from their reelection and primary constituents, it takes a fine eye to see these differences. When challengers draw stark differences with incumbents, minor differences become magnified and voters can look at candidate's own partisan values. Otherwise voters find it easier and more profitable to concentrate on the larger picture: How far away is the party elite from my values? Politicians' electoral fates depend on more than their own actions.

The representational nexus depends upon context. LKD races are different from contests where candidates converge and from hard-fought contests where candidates take distinct positions. Chapter 6 takes a journey to investigate what lies behind these political contexts: political culture.