CHAPTER 6

Voters in U.S. Legislative Elections

The U.S. House and Senate share many similarities in the electoral arena. On most measures, states and congressional districts are indistinguishable. During campaigns, robust differences are observed—contenders for Senate seats are more experienced, more prominent, and raise and spend more money—but these differences are substantially attenuated once campaign intensity and population size are taken into account. Is it also the case that voters use a common set of standards to evaluate and choose House and Senate candidates? In this chapter, I compare and contrast voter information and choice in the U.S. House and Senate in 1988 and 1990.

It is not my intent to develop a comprehensive model of voter learning and decision-making in congressional campaigns. Instead, the focus is on comparing voter behavior across the House and Senate with the aim of finding out whether the observed differences in voting are a consequence of observed differences in intensity or some function of institutional effects. I start with the assumption that the voter applies a fairly simple vote calculus in all elections, be they Senate or House or for that matter presidential, gubernatorial, or mayoral. The fundamental basis of the decision is identical. Yet we know that actual votes vary across institutions. How can my theory be reconciled with the empirical evidence?

What we observe, the final vote, is the output from a long and complex process. I tried to represent most aspects of that process in my three-stage model. It is quite possible that the inputs at the final stage (e.g., candidate visibility and political information flow) may vary across institutions while the voters apply a uniform decision rule. However, that is surely an oversimplification. Still, I believe that information operates like a rising tide that lifts all boats. There is variation among voters—some are attentive to every news item and candidate activity while others pay only passing attention to the evening news during dinner. But the high flow of information in high-intensity contests means that even the less attentive will be *relatively* more informed than might otherwise be the case. In a high-information setting, voters can more readily

"turn on" variables such as policy and ideological positions and will rely less on prior beliefs such as partisanship or evaluations of the "nature of the times."

In this chapter, I disentangle institutional accounts of election outcomes from outcomes that are a product of coincidental distributions of quality candidates, campaign funds, and electoral settings. This thesis militates against explanations that focus on the uniqueness of the Senate or the House, instead focusing on shared features of voter information and behavior. If I can somehow identify House campaigns that look like Senate campaigns, I expect that voter information and behavior will look quite Senate-like. If I can identify Senate contests that are as low-key as a typical House election, then voters should display the same low levels of information and relatively simply decision rules that I associate with the House. I examine this thesis in three arenas: voter learning, voter evaluative standards, and voter choice.

Any study of voting starts with information. Many have asserted that differential information is *the* key difference between House and Senate races, so I compare the levels, and causes, of voter recall, recognition, and likes and dislikes about House and Senate candidates. I find, contrary to my theoretical expectations, that a significant gap between voter responses to Senate and House campaigns remains even after I control for campaign intensity. The results show that voters hold more information about Senate candidates even after candidate spending, candidate quality, and campaign intensity are taken into account.

Next, I ask whether voters have separate sets of expectations about representatives and senators. Is the job of the House and the Senate different (in the voter's mind), and does this difference modify the voting rule? Or is there a House and Senate "prototype" that feeds into the candidate evaluation process, similar to what has been found with regard to presidential candidates (Aldrich, Gronke, and Grynaviski 1999). For example, it might be that senators are held more responsible for foreign policy successes and failures while House members are expected to bring home the bacon. Thus, even if information flow and content were equal, different standards and expectations would result in different outcomes. I find, however, that voter standards and evaluations are independent of institution. If there is a prototype, it is for "legislator," not "senator" or "member of the House."

If political and institutional settings form a stage upon which the main electoral actors (candidates, parties, interest groups, and the media) play their roles, then voting is the final act in this drama. If voter expectations are converging, next I ask whether voter decision rules are as well. I provide good theoretical reasons to expect substantial similarity in voting across the House and Senate and present a simple model of voter choice that can be applied to U.S. legislative elections. I make explicit the links between stage two of

the election process—candidate emergence and campaign activity—and stage three—voter information and choice. As in previous analyses, I always test for institutional differences, thus allowing me to evaluate the relative similarity and difference in House and Senate voting. I find that the set of considerations that voters use and the weight that they attach to these considerations look alike.

Virtually all my attempts to tease out institutional differences fail. The weights that voters attach are the same, but the levels of these variables, such as candidate quality, remain dissimilar. These variations in flow—in inputs to the system—result in large differences in observed outcomes, even though they are channeled through the same decision making "pipe." I close by commenting on the implications of my research for comparative electoral analysis.

A Brief Digression on Data and Methods

From 1988 through 1992, the National Election Study administered a unique Senate Election Study (NES/SES), designed to improve the scientific study of Senate elections. The many academic papers using these data testify to the study's success.[1] The survey covered all 50 states, providing a large and more geographically dispersed sample of House and Senate voters and thus avoiding the large state bias noted by Westlye (1983). The NES/SES also contained a battery of survey items for both the sitting Senator(s) and the Senator up for reelection, including candidate recognition, job evaluation, issue positions, and candidate "likes and dislikes." Identical questions had been asked of House candidates since 1978. These batteries, besides advancing the study of Senate elections, allowed for the first time the kind of comparative analysis that is presented here.

Even so, I limit my study to voting behavior in 1988 and 1990. This decision is driven mostly by practical considerations. The 1992 component of the NES/SES, for reasons of cost and complexity related to the 1992 redistricting, dropped many of the questions about House candidates. Still, I continue to feel confident about the generalizability of the results. First, remember that the two main justifications for pooling in chapters 3 through 5 were, first, to make sure that the explanation was not bound to any particular year and, second, to increase the number of hard-fought races, thereby producing efficient statistical estimates. The second problem is rectified in the survey data set. Even when limited to two years, the NES/SES has 6,494 respondents. The smallest theoretically important subset of respondents are those facing intensely fought

1. Virtually all studies of Senate elections published after 1982 draw on the NES/SES. Its legacy continues almost a decade after the initial release in books such as this one and a recent study of Senate representation (Lee and Oppenheimer 1999).

House campaigns in 1988, a relatively less competitive year. These total 13.8 percent of that year's sample, nearly 400 cases. The data cover one presidential and one midterm year, thus eliminating the possibility that a single type of election accounts for the patterns revealed here. In the end, any questions regarding the generalizability of my results must rest on an argument whereby the two electoral institutions are closely tied in the voters' eyes in 1988 and 1990 and are somehow more separate in other years. I can see no reason to sustain this argument.

Information and Context

A large difference between House and Senate elections is the amount of information that voters have about candidates. Differential information flows could be an underlying cause of observed differences in voting rules. Hinckley (1981) makes information the centerpiece of her theory of congressional elections. Zaller (1992) describes the House campaign as a "low-information environment in which a few people know the name of the incumbent and perhaps something about his or her record; many others can, with a prompt, recognize the incumbent's name . . . and still others know nothing at all" (1992, 19). Ragsdale (1981) refers to challenger "invisibility" in the title of her article on House challengers. Maisel (1982) bemoans his own trip "from obscurity to oblivion" in a personal account of a congressional campaign. Where there are high levels of information flow, voters can include a wider variety of considerations when making their choices. In a low-information setting, most voters will have to employ a few simple cues such as party or incumbency. The first step in understanding voting, therefore, is to understand information.

Therefore, information is a key part of any House and Senate comparison. How much do voters know about Senate and House candidates? Are any differences a product of increased media attention paid to the Senate (Hess 1986; Foote and Weber 1984), higher interest among voters in Senate elections, or perhaps of campaign differences? Answering these questions requires that I first explore relative levels of knowledge about House and Senate candidates.

Voter Information about Senate and House Candidates

As in each of the previous chapters, I start with a well-established descriptive finding: voters are much more likely to recall and recognize the name of Senate challengers. They are also willing to provide an answer to a greater variety of informational and evaluative questions. These results are well established

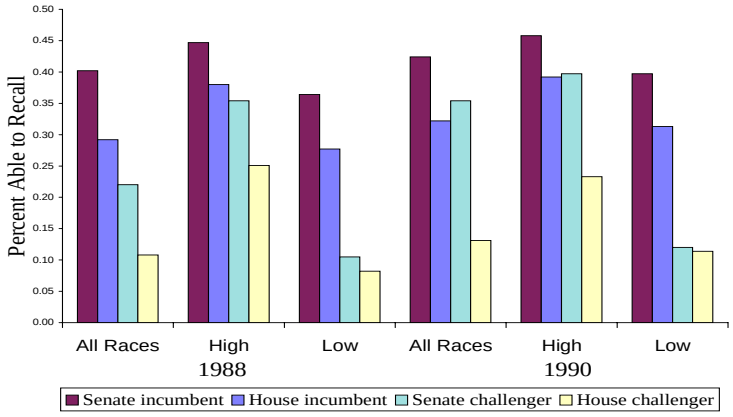

Fig. 6.1. Recall rates across institution and type of race, 1988 and 1990

and are only briefly recapitulated here.[2] Respondents report higher levels of recall and recognition, remember more contacts, and provide more "likes and dislikes" for Senate incumbents and challengers.[3] Just as campaigns are constrained by the political setting, however, voter information may also be conditioned by context. Perhaps I can disentangle the causes of higher information levels about Senate candidates. For example, we found in chapters 3 and 4 that Senate challengers involved in low-intensity races expended campaign funds at a rate comparable to that of the typical House candidate. Similar comparisons may be revealing for voter information. The first step, then, is to compare information over intensity as well as institution.

A visual inspection of recall rates in all races—the first and fourth sets of bars in figure 6.1 and the first four rows of table 6.1—suggests a step function.

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2. More extensive treatments can be found in Jacobson 1997, 1990; Krasno 1994; and Abramowitz and Segal 1992, among others.

3. *Recall* refers to the ability of a respondent to provide, unprompted, the name of a candidate to the interviewer. On a "recognition" item, the respondent is provided a list of names and asked to identify the candidate. *Contacts* refers to the National Election Study candidate contact battery. Respondents are given a list of ways that they may have seen, heard, or been contacted by a candidate or his or her political campaign. "Likes and dislikes" are open-ended questions allowing respondents to freely cite things they like and dislike about the candidates. More information on these variables is contained in appendix B.

There are roughly three levels of respondent recall. Senate incumbents occupy the step, with roughly 40 percent of respondents able to recall their names without further prompting. Next come House incumbents and Senate challengers; respondent recall lags 5 to 10 percent behind that of Senate incumbents. House challengers bring up the rear. Less than 15 percent of respondents are able to recall these candidates' names without additional prompting.

The advantage enjoyed by Senate incumbents narrows when the more lenient recognition item is used.[4] Well over 90 percent of respondents recognized both Senate and House incumbents—so many, in fact, that I chose not to report the numbers in table 6.1. Yet, even when provided the name, only one-half of respondents in the NES/SES were able to recognize the House challenger's name. Compare that to the Senate, where more than 80 percent recognized the challenger. These are the sizable differences that first led analysts in the early 1980s to point to challenger recognition as the *key* difference between House and Senate elections (e.g., Hinckley 1980a, 1980b; Mann and Wolfinger 1980).

But appearances can be deceiving. I know that Senate races are more closely contested. Does this account for the advantage in name recognition? Apparently it does. I break the recall data down by race intensity, reported in the additional bars in figure 6.1 and additional columns in table 6.1. Once again, there appears to be a step function to recall, and this is encouraging. But the candidates have been reshuffled. In high-intensity contests, nothing much has changed. The highest step is still occupied by Senate incumbents (45 pecent), House incumbents and Senate challengers occupy the second step (much more clearly equal in both years, at 40 percent recall) and House challengers (25 percent) rank at the bottom. In low-intensity contests, however, the position of Senate challengers shifts. Only incumbents display high levels of visibility (with a significant advantage still held by senators), whereas challengers are equally *(in)visible,* regardless of institution.

These patterns are repeated in most respects in the recognition data (reported in the fifth and sixth rows of table 6.1). Thirty percent more respondents recognize the name of the average Senate challenger than recognize the average House challenger. The gap shifts as expected in high- and low-intensity contests, although in a less regular fashion. In 1988, there is almost no difference in high-intensity contests, whereas the gap in low-intensity contests is reduced from 30 percent to 22 percent. In 1990, the gap in high intensity contests declines from 28 percent to 22 percent, yet it is statistically indistinguishable in low-intensity contests. Note, finally, that in both years, the recognition (and

4. Mann (1978) argues that the recognition items more closely simulate the voting booth.

Table 6.1. Recognizing the Candidates, 1988–90

	1988			1990		
	All Races	High Intensity	Low Intensity	All Races	High Intensity	Low Intensity
Recall name						
House incumbent	0.292	0.380	0.277	0.322	0.392	0.313
Senate incumbent	0.402	0.447	0.364	0.424	0.458	0.397
House challenger	0.108	0.251	0.082	0.131	0.233	0.114
Senate challenger	0.220	0.354	0.105	0.354	0.397	0.120
Recognize Name						
House challenger	0.506	0.894	0.446	0.523	0.720	0.501
Senate challenger	0.813	0.954	0.666	0.801	0.938	0.542
Number of likes						
House incumbent	0.628	0.556	0.642	0.832	0.844	0.829
Senate incumbent	0.706	0.652	0.752	1.120	1.209	1.210
House challenger	0.163	0.413	0.118	0.257	0.388	0.217
Senate challenger	0.345	0.531	0.189	0.471	0.740	0.207
Number of dislikes						
House incumbent	0.179	0.341	0.149	0.321	0.359	0.309
Senate incumbent	0.177	0.174	0.179	0.284	0.535	0.235
House challenger	0.119	0.291	0.088	0.171	0.263	0.142
Senate challenger	0.122	0.224	0.035	0.177	0.277	0.079

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES.

Note: Entries for recall and recognition are the proportion correctly identifying the name of the candidate. Incumbent recognition rates are so high for both the House and Senate (over 88 percent) with minimal variation across intensity levels that they are not reported here). Likes and dislikes are the average number of mentions in each category, including zero mentions.

recall) rate for a Senate challenger in a low-intensity contest is equal to or higher than the rates for the *average* House challenger.[5] The figures are close, mathematically and empirically, because such a large proportion of respondents faced low-intensity House contests. The "average" House race is a low-intensity contest. Yet the comparison is valid, theoretically, because it identifies a very important institutional difference. Senate contests are harder fought on average, and as a consequence Senate challengers enjoy far higher voter recognition. Statistical controls are unlikely to diminish this gap much further.

Finally, I turn the the frequency of freely mentioned "likes and dislikes" about the candidates. These survey items allow a respondent to summon up almost anything he or she thinks about a candidate for office, from personality to partisanship to policy and much in between. They are useful because they allow a more fine-grained look at the level and content of respondent information and reactions to political candidates. Respondents are not asked to simply identify a name but have to expend the additional effort required to express a like or dislike. These items also allow me to discriminate between respondents who recognize the candidate's name but have nothing substantive to say (and are coded zero on these items) from those who provide one or more distinct mentions (up to five are coded by the NES staff). As will become clear, I can also use the likes and dislikes items to test specific hypotheses about institutional differences (e.g., whether respondents are more likely to mention district benefits when describing House candidates and foreign policy when listing Senate candidates). Here I am only concerned with raw information levels—how much respondents say about Senate and House candidates. Furthermore, I focus mainly on the "likes" mentions since, as is clear from both figure 6.2 and the last eight rows of table 6.1, respondents are far more willing to tell survey interviewers things they like about candidates than things they dislike.

Most importantly, as shown in both figure 6.2 and table 6.1, the now familiar three-step pattern emerges once more. For all races, respondents have the most to say about Senate incumbents, trailed closely by House incumbents. Respondents had only half as much to say, on average, about Senate challengers, followed by another drop of 50 percent for the typical House challenger.[6] Also once again, discriminating by means of race intensity reveals a far more complex picture. Senate incumbents still lead the pack but

5. For example, 10.5 percent of the respondents recalled the name of the Senate challenger in a low-intensity contest in 1988 compared to a 10.8 percent recall rate for House challengers in all races.

6. For unknown reasons, more likes and dislikes were mentioned in 1990 than in 1988. This may be because the NES subcontracted the survey in 1988 but conducted it in-house in 1990. Perhaps the outside contractor failed to record the open-ended responses carefully or did

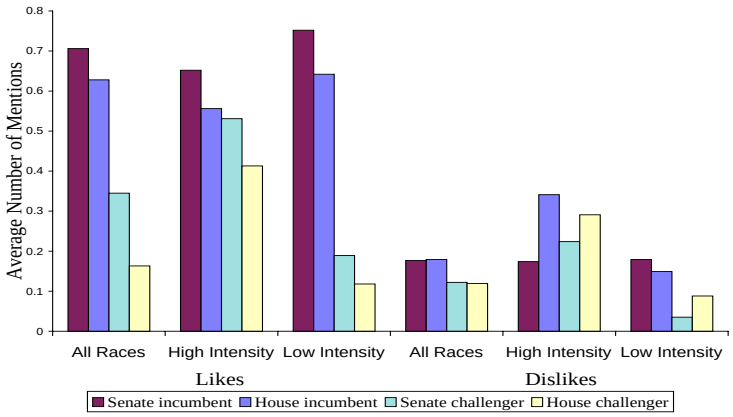

Fig. 6.2. Likes and dislikes across institution and type of race, 1988

by a very slim margin, with House incumbents and Senate challengers being virtually indistinguishable. In low-intensity contests, the most mentions are made about Senate incumbents, followed by House incumbents, with Senate challengers and House challengers again mired in virtual invisibility. As mentioned, respondents are less willing to provide the reasons why they dislike a candidate. Even so, the same pattern obtains across all three comparisons: in high-intensity contests, Senate challengers and House incumbents look alike, whereas in low-intensity contests Senate and House challengers look alike.

To summarize, roughly half of the difference between average level of recall and recognition is explained by intensity and the other half is explained by institution. Institutional differences, although still evident, have been substantially reduced. A persistent, three-step pattern to candidate recognition emerged. One set of candidates (Senate incumbents) enjoyed high levels of recognition and another set (always including House challengers) suffered low levels of recognition. The relative placement of House incumbents and Senate challengers depended on the intensity of the contest. This proves that the level of information that voters are exposed to about challengers is as much a function of the intensity of the campaign as it is something unique to the House and Senate.

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not prompt as persistently as the NES interviews did. Fortunately, the patterns are the same, albeit at higher levels, in 1990.

TABLE 6.2. Information, District Diversity, and District Size

Recall Name	All	Low	Moderate	High
Diversity				
House incumbent	.292	.288	.297	.292
Senate incumbent	.402	.481	.378	.336
House challenger	.108	.079	.133	.112
Senate challenger	.220	.296	.189	.164
Size: population				
Senate incumbent	.402	.442	.340	.418
Senate challenger	.220	.192	.194	.273
Size: square Miles				
Senate incumbent	.402	.422	.313	.424
Senate challenger	.220	.299	.167	.175
Size: population density				
Senate incumbent	.402	.442	.369	.401
Senate challenger	.220	.333	.118	.227

Source: 1988 NES/SES.
Note: Entries are the proportion correctly identifying the name of the candidate. The categories (low, moderate, high) break the sample into thirds.

If intense campaigns lead to well-informed voters, perhaps other features of the context function the same way. I speculated in previous chapters that a candidate will have a more difficult time placing his or her name in front of the public when the district is particularly heterogeneous or media markets are inefficient. Analysts have noticed that Senate contests in large states tend to be more closely contested, thus leading to the obvious question of whether voters in these states tend to be more highly informed.[7] In fact, these relationships hold (table 6.2) but only for the Senate. About 15 percent fewer respondents in the most diverse states recall the names of the Senate incumbent and challenger than do respondents in the least diverse states.[8] Similarly, residents of more populous states seem to have a harder time learning the names of their Senate candidates, at least as reflected in the recall figures. There is no relationship between diversity and recall rates within congressional districts.

7. Abramowitz and Segal (1992, chap. 2) found that voters in large states were more informed about Senate candidates, while Hibbing and Alford (1990) found no relationship between state population and recall, recognition, or electoral support.

8. I use the summary index of diversity (see chap. 3). The categories break the sample into thirds.

The process that generates these results is difficult to envision. A heterogeneous district is often described as more difficult to campaign in because there are more interests to alienate (Fiorina 1974; Fenno 1982). Senate races in large states are more competitive because large states are more heterogeneous (Lee and Oppenheimer 1999; Abramowitz and Cribbs 1989). One problem with this hypothesis is that heterogeneity and population size are not linearly related, as I show in chapter 3. The first six rows of table 6.2 shed some additional light on this hypothesis. Neither "size" as population size nor square miles is consistently related to voter information.[9] Some interaction of population and size is what seems to matter: dense states make communication easier (it is easier to meet voters, to attract coverage in wide-circulation newspapers and on large-market television and radio stations, and to get voters to talk to each other), and sparsely populated, media inefficient states make campaigning particularly difficult. Abramowitz and Cribbs (1989), in contrast, speculate that *less dense* states are more amenable to competitive contests since they encourage a different, personalized style of campaigning that challengers can more easily accomplish (see also Baker 1995). The data here are inconclusive on this point: both challengers and incumbents are most widely known in the least-dense states. The relationship breaks down, however, when we examine the other levels of population density. Institutional differences in respondent knowledge persist even after controlling for variations in political settings.

I have examined some simple descriptive measures of candidate information in the House and Senate. The results highlight substantial institutional differences in the amount of information about challengers, thus replicating results from two decades of congressional voting research (now in the Senate as well as the House). Once campaign intensity is taken into account, respondent information levels about Senate and House challengers are closer, although Senate challengers are still better known. The consequences for the electoral outcomes that we observe in November should be clear. Because Senate challengers are far more likely to be recognized than their House counterparts, voters are far more likely to learn about, and vote for, Senate challengers. The observed differences are real, but their causes are more than just institutional.

To close the section, I examined a few of the more popular reasons given to explain higher levels of information about Senate incumbents and challengers. Neither diversity nor "size" (expressed as either population or square miles) has any relationship with knowledge about the incumbent. There does appear to be some tendency for respondents in the smallest and least-dense states to

9. One might suspect that these figures are skewed because there are few states fall into each category. However, since I have broken the sample into thirds, and the NES/SES has rough parity among state sample sizes, there are respondents from between seven and 10 states in each category.

have higher levels of recall of Senate challengers. While not eliminating the heterogeneity or population size argument, these results do call them into question.[10]

In chapter 2, I laid out a three-stage model. Some of those pieces have fallen into place, but there are still gaps to be filled. I eliminated the political setting as a cause of campaign activity and now as a cause of informational differences. The information gap remains. Different levels of respondent knowledge across the Senate and House may be a function of differential visibility of the two institutions or greater prominence of the average senator—the institutional explanation—or they could be a function of the relatively higher campaign spending levels, harder fought campaigns, higher quality candidates, and more efficient media markets evident in states. Controlling for individual level, campaign, and institutional influences on voter information lets me zero in on the causes of informational differences. In the next section, I propose a causal model of respondent information and test it using the 1988 and 1990 NES/SES data.

The Correlates of Voter Informedness

Why do voters know so much more about Senate than House challengers? What are the causes of higher or lower levels of voter information about political candidates and do they help me understand the differences observed here? To answer these questions, I must attend to both individual and contextual influences on voter learning. Individual correlates of informedness—political interest, media usage, and education—all will increase the probability that an individual will recall or recognize a candidate's name. Individuals are also affected by the political context in which they live. I discovered that more intense political contests result in higher levels of voter information. Varying levels of campaign spending, candidate quality, and campaign intensity, along with institutional controls, also need to be included in my model of voter information.

Models of political perception focus on the interaction between an individual's ability and desire to learn about politics and the way that the political environment supplies information. At the individual level, a generally attentive and politically interested respondent will be more likely to recall the names of political candidates and to make substantive comments about their characters,

10. Two ways to extend these tests would be expand the sample over time, adding recognition and recall tests for other years, and over institutions, obtaining district size measures for congressional districts or looking at governors and other statewide officeholders.

records, and political positions.[11] Media usage should also increase the likelihood that voters will be exposed to political information about the campaign.[12]

Accordingly, I hypothesize that information about candidates in the House and Senate is in part a product of individual levels of political attentiveness and informedness about politics. I include a summary measure of political interest,[13] the respondent's level of education, and strength and direction of partisanship. Education and partisan strength are additional realizations of informedness and attentiveness to politics (i.e., more educated respondents are more likely to recall political figures and stronger partisans are more likely to attend to political information). I include partisan direction in order to test whether the incumbent's partisans are more likely to recall the incumbent's name and less likely to recall the challenger's name.

The campaign environment also provides information to the voter. Higher levels of spending by a candidate should be positively associated with information about that candidate. For the incumbent, I need to control for the amount of time that the incumbent has been in office, under the assumption that more years means more campaigns and more chances to employ the tools of incumbency to place his or her name before the voters.[14] For the challenger, I need to allow for an independent contribution of candidate quality. Finally, I add campaign intensity, under the assumption that intensity provides an additional boost to voter information levels above and beyond that caused by campaign spending, candidate quality, and voter interest.[15]

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11. Political sophistication plays a central role in individuals' evaluations of political candidates (Aldrich, Gronke, and Grynaviski 1999; Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, and Sullivan 1990); in the susceptibility of individuals to "priming" (Iyengar and Kinder 1987); and, more broadly, in the way individuals respond to political stimuli (Zaller 1992).

12. Frequency of exposure to political information also affects the likelihood of exposure (Zaller 1992) and acceptance (Zaller 1992; Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

13. The summary measure is a combination of self-expressed political interest, how often the respondent reported reading a newspaper, and how often the respondent reported watching the network news. Weights were obtained via principal components analysis. Details are contained in appendix C.

14. I log the number years in office. The log reflects diminishing gains in recognition and recall as tenure increases.

15. Campaign learning also depends on the interaction between the credibility of the source, the direction of the message, and the individual's prior beliefs (Franklin 1993; Zaller 1992). Zaller presents a compelling argument for a complex non-linear specification of the effect of the campaign on the likelihood of defecting from the incumbent's party. I replicate the defection models in appendix C but do not use the non-linear specification. Zaller focuses on House elections, where he can assume that the bulk of information is incumbent-oriented, enabling him to use a simpler "one-way" message model (1992, chap. 10). The majority of Senate races, however, are high-intensity contests that require me to use the dual-flow model, which is substantially more complex.

The dependent variable in this model is the ability to recall a candidate's name. Recalling the candidate's name is a more difficult test of respondent information about candidates than is recognition, and it yields the most interesting empirical results.[16] The dependent variable is dichotomous, so the coefficient estimates are obtained via maximum likelihood probit. The model is shown below.[17]

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(Recall) \quad = \quad & \beta_0 + \beta_1(Political\,Interest) \\ & + \beta_2(Education) + \beta_3(Strength\,of\,Partisanship) \\ & + \beta_4(Partisanship) + \beta_5(Challenger\,Quality) \\ & + \beta_6(Incumbent\,Spending) + \beta_7(Challenger\,Spending) \\ & + \beta_8(Intensity) + \beta_9(Institution) \\ & + \beta_{10,11,12}(Instit) * (ChallQual + Inc\$ + Chall\$) \\ & + \beta_{13}[\log(Tenure)] + \varepsilon. \end{aligned}$$

The equation can be read thus: the probability that a respondent is able to recall the name of the candidate is a function of a series of variables meant to represent interest in and attentiveness to politics and the media, including political interest;[18] education; strength and direction of partisanship;[19] campaign activity;[20] the intensity of the campaign; and remaining institutional effects. Because the strength of the relationship between recall and campaign activity might vary between the House and the Senate, I include interaction terms (Institution$*$Campaign).[21]

16. Recognition rates for incumbents in both institutions are so high that there is very little variance to explain. I did estimate these models using recognition and likes/dislikes as dependent variables. In the interests of brevity, I only present the recall model here. The results in the recognition models were substantially the same, except that the partisanship measure is statistically significant while it is statistically insignificant in the recall models. The likes/dislikes models yielded mixed results that are more difficult to summarize. Likes/dislikes can be thought of as both an information and an evaluation measure (i.e., Zaller 1992), so it might not be appropriate to force them into a learning model. The result was a confusing set of estimates.

17. In the results, I test for model stability across the House and Senate by interacting the institution dummy variable with each of the other variables.

18. Political interest is a scale consisting of interest in politics and attentiveness to the media. See the appendix C for details.

19. Partisanship is coded in a pro-incumbent direction.

20. The campaign measures include challenger quality and logged per capita spending by the incumbent and the challenger.

21. Unlike ordinary least squares coefficients, probit estimates cannot be interpreted as change in the dependent variable associated with a unit change in the independent variable. The magnitude of the effect changes with values of the independent variables (Aldrich and Nelson

Results

The results of these models, shown in table 6.3 lend support to most aspects of my model. Individuals who are more interested in politics and have more formal education are more likely to recall both the incumbent's and challenger's names. Partisanship (strength and direction) functions less well as an additional measure of political interest. Stronger partisans are more likely to recall the name both candidates, ceteris paribus, but the estimates are statistically indistinguishable from zero in the incumbent recall equation. The contextual side of the model operates as expected, with two surprises. Challenger spending, not surprisingly, is particularly influential in helping citizens learn about challengers. All campaign spending coefficients are correctly signed, but only the coefficient on challenger spending was statistically significant.[22] Respondents do not know more about quality challengers, contrary to my expectations.

Table 6.3 further shows that a respondent's ability to recall the name of the incumbent or the challenger is most strongly determined by that individual's general interest in politics and only secondarily (for challenger recall) by education and strength of partisanship. The relative strength of the other variables confirms my expectations about how challengers and incumbents gain recognition. For incumbents, tenure plays an important role in establishing name recognition (see also Zaller 1992 and Franklin 1991, 1993), as does the campaign. Ironically, however, only challenger spending and challenger quality

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1984). The usual solution is to present predicted values of the dependent variable based on typical or interesting combinations of the independent variables. There are some complications in this case. It is unrealistic to increase campaign variables in isolation. For example, if challenger spending increases by one standard deviation, incumbent spending increases in response. Campaign "intensity" cannot be isolated from challenger spending, incumbent spending, and candidate quality. I employ a mixed strategy to explain the probit results. First, I interpret the coefficients based on their magnitude, signs, and statistical significance. I assess the contribution that the institutional block of variables makes to the goodness of fit of the model to the data. Finally, I interpret point estimates in two ways, first by the standard method (increase one variable, hold all others constant, report the change in probability), and second by selecting out particular illustrative cases and comparing relatively high- and low-intensity races in the House and Senate. This gives me a feel for the impact of campaign intensity on voter informedness with real combinations of intensity, spending, and candidate quality.

22. Challenger spending remained significant in the recognition and likes/dislikes models, while the estimated coefficient on incumbent spending was statistically insignificant in all models. One might suspect that multicollinearity is the culprit, but the coefficient remained statistically insignificant even when challenger spending and intensity were removed from the model.

have a statistically significant relationship with incumbent recall.[23] Respondents are much more likely to recall *both* candidate names in the presence of high-spending *challengers.*

Finally, note that institutional effects are evident in this model. Challenger spending is less productive in Senate than in House races, while incumbent spending is more productive. And there are institutional differences in recall that are not captured by other variables. Still, institution and the interaction terms improve the fit of the model less than any other block of variables.[24] Institutional differences have not been eliminated, but they do less to explain the patterns in the data than any of the other factors considered.[25]

Another way to illustrate the impact these variables have on citizen recall is to vary just one measure, holding all other measures constant, and examine changes in the predicted probability of recall. This exercise only reinforces the central role of individual interests in learning about political campaigns. Moving from the average level of political interest to one standard deviation above average causes a 15 percent increase in the predicted probability that a respondent will recall the incumbent's name and an 11 percent increase in the probability that a respondent will recall the challenger's name. Compare this to the impact of institution (an 8 percent increase, ceteris paribus) and intensity (a 7 percent increase, ceteris paribus). Even the impact of challenger and incumbent spending, the main focus of most studies of House voting, have

23. This is another indication of potential multicollinearity between the campaign variables. See also Erikson and Palfrey 1998 and Palfrey and Erikson 1993.

24. By sequentially restricting the coefficients to zero on blocks of variables and then comparing the log likelihood, I can see how much a set of variables adds to the goodness of fit (King 1989). In the incumbent recall model, the institutional variables only increase the goodness of fit by 15 points (two times the log likelihood ratio, where the log likelihoods are taken from the full model reported here, and the model with the institutional variables removed) out of a total reduction in log-likelihood of 704.4; in the challenger recall model, the institutional variables increase the goodness by 20.6 points out of 2,461.4.

25. I estimated these models under a variety of specifications: separately for the House and Senate, separately for high- and low-intensity races, and crossing the two categories (high/low $*$ Senate/House). I chose to report the full model because it tested all of the hypotheses made in the chapter, produced the highest correlation between actual and predicted probabilities, and produced the closest match between actual and predicted probabilities for various subsamples (low-intensity House, high-intensity Senate, etc). The most noteworthy result from these disaggregated models is the stability of these findings. Not only is the relative strength of the variables similar, but the estimated coefficients, particularly for the individual-level variables, are surprisingly close across various specifications. The estimated impact of political interest, for example, varies from .83 to 1.03 across 10 different estimations (for *both* challenger and incumbent recall). The coefficient on education is between .2 and .3 for nine of 10 estimates. While the estimated impact of spending, intensity, and institution obviously vary more as I select out House or Senate and high- and low-intensity contests, the direction and magnitude of their effects on recall are very stable, with some (challenger quality in particular) changing only in the second decimal point.

Table 6.3. Ability to Recall Candidate Names

Variable	1988: Recall Incumbent	1988: Recall Challenger	1990: Recall Incumbent	1990: Recall Challenger
Political interest	1.059 (.079)**	.893 (.103)**	1.561 (.067)**	1.236 (.295)**
Education	.154 (.076)*	.217 (.102)*	.242 (.058)**	.369 (.090)**
Strength Party ID	.233 (.140)	.369 (.175)*	.303 (.161)*	.327 (.182)
Partisanship	.023 (.037)	−.072 (.047)	.100 (.068)	.021 (.062)
Challenger spending	.098 (.027)**	.279 (.043)**	.134 (.045)**	.410 (.093)**
Incumbent spending	.028 (.057)	−.120 (.076)	.040 (.036)	−.073 (.057)
Challenger quality	.063 (.027)	.074 (.033)*	.000 (.032)	.101 (.043)**
Intensity	.186 (.083)*	.371 (.097)**	.201 (.092)**	.389 (.088)**
Instit∗Chall$	−.118 (.056)*	−.199 (.070)*	−.097 (.076)	−.187 (.091)*
Instit∗Inc$	.121 (.095)	.312 (.116)*	.038 (.089)	.290 (.094)**
Instit∗ChallQual	−.089 (.046)	−.038 (.056)	−.104 (.087)	.001 (.060)
Institution	.238 (.168)	−.008 (.204)	.109 (.126)	.021 (.156)
Tenure (log)	.079 (.037)*	—	.092 (.033)**	—
Constant	−1.520 (.146)**	−2.073 (.192)**	−.903 (.123)**	−1.689 (.309)**
$-2\ln(L_0/L_1)$	704	2,461	691	1,916
N of cases	3,696	3,696	3,225	3,225
Percentage predicted	68	85	72	91

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES.

Note: Variable coding information is in appendix C. Entries are maximum likelihood probit coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients with two asterisks are three or more times their standard errors; coefficients with one asterisk are between two and three times their standard errors.

less influence than individual characteristics. A one standard deviation increase in challenger spending is associated with a 6 percent increase in the probability of recalling the House challenger, and a 1.2 percent drop in the probability of recalling the Senate challenger; a one standard deviation increase in incumbent spending is associated with a 1 percent increase in House incumbent recall and a 4 percent increase in Senate incumbent recall, ceteris paribus.[26] Institution matters, but campaigns, and especially individual motivation to become informed, matter far more.

Citizen Recall and Campaign Environments

Finally, what do I make of the improved predictive power of our models when they are estimated in the challenger recall models and the off-year election? I know that candidate recall is lower in 1990 (as in most off-years contests) and that respondents are less likely to be able to recall a challenger's name than they are the name of an incumbent. Ironically, from the perspective of a survey analyst lower knowledge levels in the aggregate improve our ability to discriminate between the more and less informed and thus increase the statistical fit of our model. For example, note that the log likelihood is lower and the proportion correctly predicted is higher for both estimates of challenger recall. In similar fashion, the statistical model performs better in 1990 compared to 1988. While the log likelihoods cannot be directly compared, since these models are estimated with different samples, the coefficients in 1990 have higher t-statistics and the proportion predicted correctly is noticeably higher. Statistical jargon aside, this pattern comports with our intuition. It is easier to predict who will be informed or uninformed in a case of low information flow in which citizen knowledge levels are much more likely to be determined by the citizen's own interest in politics.

A final way to look at these results is to compare across years, across incumbents and challengers, and in high-intensity contests. These examples provide benchmarks with which to assess the impact of citizen information levels over widely varied informational environments. High intensity contests should be particularly instructive since here I can gauge the marginal contribution of individual variables when campaign information flow is at its peak.

I selected a subset of House and Senate races in 1988 in which the ratio of incumbent to challenger spending was less than 1.5 and compared the forecasted recall with levels in the "average" race and a low-intensity race. I chose 1.5 as a cutpoint using my own understanding of what makes for a competitive

26. The negative effect of challenger spending in the Senate is striking. This are another indication of how closely challenger and incumbent spending are linked, so closely that there is probably multicollinearity problems. If I increase both challenger and incumbent spending in the Senate, I produce the expected increase in recall rates for both candidates.

TABLE 6.4. High-Intensity Campaigns and Candidate Recall

Recall	Low-intensity Probability	Average Probability	High-intensity Probability	Increase (low to high)
House incumbent	.276	.293	.395	.119
Senate incumbent	.239	.408	.448	.209
House challenger	.075	.113	.288	.213
Senate challenger	.097	.216	.362	.265

Source: 1988 NES/SES.

Note: Entries are for the predicted proportion correctly identifying the name of the candidate. The entries in the low-intensity column were produced by setting the intensity variable to zero. High-intensity races are defined as races in which the ratio of incumbent to challenger spending is less than 1.5. The estimates were caculated by substituting the mean values for challenger spending, incumbent spending, and challenger quality from the subset of high-intensity race.

race (see appendix C for a more elaborate empirical justification). Under 1.5 qualifies as a hard-fought race by almost anyone's criteria, particularly for the House.[27] For the "low-intensity" comparison, I set intensity to zero, left all other variables at their mean, and calculated the predicted probability of recall. For "average" races, I took the mean value of the predicted probabilities (this means that "intensity" and "institution" take on rather odd values, somewhere between zero and one). For the set of high intensity races, I substituted the average value of challenger spending, incumbent spending, and challenger quality for the chosen subset of races.

The relative levels of recall make clear the importance of campaign intensity, more so for challengers than incumbents and especially for high-quality challengers. Respondents are 15 percent more likely to recall the name of a challenger in races with high levels of campaign spending and challenger quality than they are in an average race. For incumbents, the predicted increases are smaller: 10 percent for House and 4 percent for Senate incumbents (compare columns 3 and 4 in table 6.4). Campaign intensity works disproportionately in favor of challengers.[28]

27. In the House, the selected contests are CA 19, Lagomarsino vs. Hart; HI 1, Sakai vs. Bitterman; MI 2, Purcell vs. Pollack; NY 32, DioGuardi vs. Lowey; NC 4, Price vs. Fetzer; NC 5, Neal vs. Gray; OH 11, Eckhart vs. Muller; SC 4, Patterson vs. White; TN 3, Lloyd vs. Cutler; and WA 1, Miller vs. Lindquist. In the Senate, the selected contests are DE, Roth vs. Woo; SD, Melcher vs. Burns; NE, Karnes vs. Kerry; ND, Burdick vs. Strinden; and RI, Chaffee vs. Licht. In appendix B I explain in more detail how I selected out high-intensity races.

28. This is also evident in the recall figures in table 6.1.

Discussion: Candidates, Campaigns, and Citizen Information

What aspects of the campaign most improve the prospects for a challenger? Candidate quality has by far the largest impact. Of the 21 percent increase in recall of House challengers (from low-intensity races to the sample races in table 6.4), 8 percent is accounted for by changes in the level of challenger quality and 5 percent by increases in challenger spending. For the Senate, 14 percent of the 18 percent increase is accounted for by changes in challenger quality, with only 3 percent being accounted for by changes in spending.[29] Obviously, challenger quality does not "increase" in a vacuum: quality challengers spend more money. Still, recall rates are determined in large part by the quality of the challenger and much less by how much that challenger spends. This reinforces Gary Jacobson's (1990b) credo: you can't beat somebody with nobody, regardless of the seat for which you are running and whether you have money.

There is remarkable similarity in the ways voters learn about candidates in both the House and Senate. Individuals who care more about politics learn more about politics—there is nothing earth-shattering about this finding. What is surprising is the stability of this relationship, regardless of whether the candidate in question is an incumbent, a challenger, a senator, or a member of the House. Second, campaigns do matter but mainly for challengers. The most important feature that a challenger can bring to the table is himself—his or her previous political experience, previous time in office, or celebrity status. The "growing impact of the challenger" (Jacobson 1990b) is confirmed once more in these data. Finally, I found that institutional differences are exceedingly slight. Challenger spending appears to be somewhat more productive in the Senate and challenger quality hurt Senate incumbents somewhat more than House incumbents, but these effects pale in substantive significance compared to the impact of political interest, challenger spending, and challenger quality.

Does any of this really help us better understand House and Senate elections? After all, we saw in previous chapters that Senate candidates are generally of higher quality and spend more money. Now we discover that higher levels of challenger quality and challenger spending are associated with higher rates of challenger recall. Have I just confirmed the existence of a tremendous House/Senate difference via a roundabout path? In one respect, the answer is

29. I obtained these comparisons by setting intensity to zero, leaving all the other variables at their mean values, and calculating the predicted probability. Then, sequentially, I increased each variable from its mean value to the mean value for the selected set of races and examined the impact on the predicted probability. This is similar to the procedure followed earlier, except that I am not increasing variables by the standard deviation. Instead, I am increasing them to some number determined by the category "high-intensity race." On average, these increases are more than one standard deviation.

yes: when selecting out the most intensely fought contests, only 3 to 8 percent of House contests fall under scrutiny, compared to 18 to 26 percent of Senate contests. Even in these most similar races, Senate challenger quality ranks a good point above House challenger quality. The consequences for recall are made clear in table 6.4—Senate incumbents and challengers are better known than their House counterparts at all levels of campaign intensity. Whether this difference is attributable to the category "institution" rather than a consequence of different distributions of challengers and money is a topic that I will take up in the final chapter. Next, however, I would like to close the empirical analysis with a comparison of voting in the House and Senate.

Expectations and Evaluations of House and Senate Members

I began my study of House and Senate voting by examining the *amount* of information held by respondents. Now I turn to the *content* of that information. What are voter expectations about members of the House and senators? Are there differences in this realm that might cause me to expect different outcomes? Even if the overall level of information about, for example, a House incumbent and a Senate challenger is roughly the same, critical distinctions may appear in what voters want and therefore in what information they attend to, retain, and employ in the voting booth.

The intention here is to describe the basic outlines of voter expectations for House and Senate members. This should provide insights into differences that may emerge in the voting model. If, for example, I find no tendency to ascribe a "national" role to senators and a "district service" role to House members, it is unlikely that constituency service considerations will weigh more heavily when voters are choosing a House candidate. The results from this section challenge the proposition that House members are judged more on constituency service and senators on national policy stances. Respondents' descriptions of the jobs of a senator and House member are indistinguishable.

Potential Differences in Standards: Policy and Constituency Service

I often ask my students: what is the job of a member of Congress? I generally get answers that run the gamut from "writing legislation" to "being an ombudsman" to the inevitable "running for reelection." Eventually, however, some misguided soul provides the answer I am seeking—"representing their constituency"—and we proceed to discuss what this entails.[30] In the future, I

30. A good teacher can spend days deconstructing this phrase with students. What is meant by *represent* (delegate, trustee, something else)? Who makes up the *constituency* (geography, voters, supporters, contributors)? How does the representative know what the constituency wants?

will ask my students whether a senator's job is any different. The immediate response is likely to be: of course, the Senate is the forum for great debates, where issues such as tariffs, the national bank, slavery, a national income tax, and desegregation are argued. The House, in contrast, is where the nuts and bolts of local representation takes place, how much to spend here, how much to tax there.

These differences would be in line with our constitutional design, as Fenno (1983), Abramowitz (1988), and Baker (1995), among others, have noticed. The Founders hoped that institutional arrangements in the Constitution, combined with assumptions about human nature and political action, would have advantageous consequences. Regarding the Senate and House, the framers placed great emphasis on the salutary effects of bicameralism. The two chambers are different in almost every respect: term length, size of the chamber, and constitutionally assigned policy prerogatives.

Are these differences reflected in citizen evaluations of their Senate and House members? In this section, I present a series of tables showing how respondents view the jobs of their representatives and what they like and dislike about Senate and House candidates. These tables serve as an initial test of the proposition that respondents view the role of House members and senators differently and will help me anticipate whether these differences will carry over into voter decision making. They lead inexorably to the conclusion that actual differences in standards are hard to find. Voters view their legislative institutions through a single lens.

Actual Differences in Standards: Converging Institutions

What is the job of a senator or member of the House? One indication might be what is electorally beneficial. Mayhew (1974) pioneered an intellectual move to interpret congressional processes and politics as a product of the "electoral connection." The evidence that has accumulated since 1974 is compelling: the value for House members of constituency service and other varieties of constituency tending is well established.[31] The student who said "their job is to get

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This makes students reflect upon big issues about representation and voting and also more practical issues such as what a member does with his or her time and how a member monitors constituency desires.

31. The literature on constituency service and "home style" activities is large and cannot be cited in full here. See, for examples, Fenno 1978; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; and Fiorina and Rohde 1989. The *American Journal of Political Science*, volume 25, also contains a series of articles on the electoral benefit of casework.

reelected" was not that far off from the truth.[32] Much less attention has been paid to the electoral consequences of constituency service in the U.S. Senate.[33]

What happens when survey respondents are asked about the jobs of their representatives? The data indicate that respondent expectations of House and Senate members are virtually identical (see table 6.5). Respondents are no more likely to think a House member or senator will resolve a particular problem, vote the right way on bills, stay in touch with the district, or look out for local interests. The last three comparisons may be misleading because the National Election Study asked three questions about the senators and immediately followed with three questions about the House members. This may have been an attempt to get respondents to compare and contrast the roles. The result could have been the opposite—the close proximity of the survey items may have induced respondents to make sure their answers were consistent. Data from other surveys mirror these findings, however. Jacobson reports a table similar to this one, comparing respondent expectations for senators, from the NES/SES, with expectations about House members drawn from the 1990 and 1988 pre- and post-election NES. The response distributions are virtually identical (1997, 110–11).

The larger problem with these survey questions is that the socially acceptable response dominates: members should simultaneously stay in touch with the district, look out for citizens, and simultaneously attend to national issues. Respondents may say this to our interviewers, but this might not bear much of a relationship to the standards they apply when voting.

As an alternative, suppose respondents are provided with significantly more freedom than "yes/no" and closed-end responses allow. Such "open-ended" items allow respondents to freely supply answers, thus avoiding the problems associated with a closed response set. They let the respondent, not the survey analyst, determine what qualities are preferred in a senator or House member. The NES/SES has included an open-ended item, usually referred to as the "likes/dislikes" question, about presidential contenders and the two main political parties since the late 1950s, about House candidates since 1978, and about Senate and House candidates in 1988 and 1990.

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32. While some observers of Congress mean this cynically, many political scientists do not and bemoan the low esteem in which Congress is held (Dodd 1993). The electoral connection was an attempt to see how far a strictly self-interested model could go toward explaining congressional structure. Members of Congress clearly have other interests besides reelection (e.g., Hibbing 1993; Fenno, 1978).

33. The analyses of Senate elections by Abramowitz (1988) and Abramowitz and Segal (1992, 1990) focus on national conditions, ideological extremism and moderation, and campaign activity, with little attention devoted to constituency service. Krasno (1994) finds that contacts and perceived helpfulness are beneficial to senators as well as House members.

TABLE 6.5. Job Evaluations of Senators and House Members

	1988		1990	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Evaluations of performance				
1. If you had a problem that (senator/representative) could do something about, do you think s/he would be (VERY HELPFUL = 1)?	.634	.637	.592	.605
2. Do you happen to remember anything that (Senator/Representative) has done for the people in his/her (state/district) while s/he has been in Congress? (YES = 1)	.229	.220	.285	.234
3. Have you generally (AGREED = 1) with the way (Senator/Representative) has voted on bills?	.621	.622	.698	.692
4. How good a job would you say (senator/representative) does of keeping in touch . . . in your (state/district)? (VERY GOOD = 1)	.728	.729	.685	.732
National versus local concerns				
5. How about helping people in the (state/district) who have personal problems with the government? (EXTREMELY IMPORTANT = 1)	.803	.822	—	—
6. Working in Congress on bills concerning national issues? (NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT = 1)	.095	.105	—	—
7. Making sure the (state/district) gets its fair share of government money and projects? (EXTREMELY IMPORTANT = 1)	.907	.901	—	—

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES.

Notes: Some questions were not asked in 1990. All variables have been recoded to the zero to one range.

The open-ended items surely will reveal some discernible differences in the things respondents like and dislike about Senate and House contenders. Yet, even when respondents are allowed to employ their own categories, there is little to distinguish Senate and House candidates.[34] I have already noted one difference: respondents are more likely to supply a like or dislike about Senate incumbents and challengers.[35] Even though nearly one-third of the states in the NES/SES did not hold a Senate election in 1988 and 1990 (and thus have no Senate likes/dislikes in table 6.6), there are still more total likes and dislikes about Senate than House challengers. The dropoff in the frequency of comments from likes to dislikes is also more dramatic in the House. Respondents simply had more to say about Senate candidates. This indicates that they were drawing upon a richer repository of information about Senate candidates and suggests that they might use this more elaborate set of concerns when voting.

The content of the comments, however, belies this hypothesis. The majority of respondent comments about incumbents and challengers, independent of institution, refer to personal qualities of the candidates, with somewhat greater frequency for challengers (see row 1 of table 6.6). The other categories, in order of frequency of mention, are party or ideology, domestic policy, government management and efficiency, group affiliations, and foreign policy.[36] The ordering of likes and dislikes is nearly identical across the columns, and the relative frequency of mentions are comparable for incumbents and challengers.[37] Partisan ties and ideological positions are mentioned somewhat more frequently as a reason to like or dislike challengers more than incumbents. Contrary to expectations, domestic policy is more often mentioned as a reason to like or dislike Senate than House candidates, whereas foreign policy is mentioned just as often. Total public policy mentions are greater for Senate candidates, but this is strictly a function of more domestic policy mentions.

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34. I relied on the NES staff grouping of responses into various categories. It is possible that this induced comparability where it did not exist. A thorough reading of the actual interview protocols could reveal distinctions between House and Senate candidates, but I am doubtful that it would.

35. In table 6.1, I reported the average number of likes and dislikes. Respondents mentioned 80 percent more likes and dislikes, on average, for Senate challengers.

36. This is a rough ordering of the categories. There were more mentions of government management for House incumbents and fewer mentions of government management for House challengers.

37. The largest difference is in 1990 candidate mentions among House challenger dislikes (14 percent fewer mentions were made than for incumbents). Most differences are far smaller, on the order of 3 to 5 percent.

Table 6.6. Content of Likes and Dislikes in the Senate and House

	1988				1990			
	Incumbents		Challengers		Incumbents		Challengers	
	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate
Likes								
Candidates	60.87	60.10	65.30	62.74	68.33	64.28	66.02	56.33
Party, ideology	11.12	12.29	18.55	17.75	9.03	10.75	15.63	19.34
Domestic policy	8.10	11.25	6.75	9.49	12.33	14.93	10.74	18.25
Gov't management	11.31	8.42	4.82	2.46	3.87	4.81	3.71	3.29
Groups	7.41	5.67	3.86	7.03	5.62	3.51	2.93	2.29
Foreign policy	1.19	1.46	0.72	0.52	0.83	1.75	0.98	0.5
N of likes	1,592	1,164	415	569	1,939	2,391	512	1,003
Dislikes								
Candidates	59.51	55.27	69.00	65.25	57.02	56.32	72.81	58.81
Party, ideology	17.48	16.5	18.67	18.68	15.45	14.66	17.60	21.75
Domestic policy	10.62	13.12	5.67	8.51	13.62	16.89	6.44	13.49
Gov't management	5.09	6.76	4.67	4.49	7.73	5.56	1.60	2.55
Groups	4.65	5.57	1.33	2.13	4.78	3.84	1.60	2.07
Foreign policy	2.66	2.78	0.67	0.95	2.67	2.73	0.00	1.34
N of dislikes	452	503	300	423	712	989	375	823

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES. Calculated by author.

TABLE 6.6. (continued)

	1988–90, Pooled			
	Incumbents		Challengers	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Likes				
Candidates	64.97	63.82	65.7	58.28
Party, ideology	9.97	10.52	16.94	19.14
Domestic policy	10.42	13.17	8.95	14.81
Gov't management	7.22	6.06	4.12	3.22
Groups	6.43	4.91	3.34	4.12
Foreign policy	0.99	1.52	0.86	0.55
N of likes	3,531	4,934	927	2,174
Dislikes				
Candidates	57.55	56.14	71.11	63.41
Party, ideology	16.11	15.13	18.07	18.35
Domestic policy	12.36	14.99	6.07	11.89
Gov't management	6.65	6.27	2.96	3.04
Groups	4.69	4.89	1.48	2.28
Foreign policy	2.64	2.58	0.30	1.03
N of dislikes	1,173	2,168	675	1,842

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES. Calculated by author.

Once again, these data replicate tables that Gary Jacobson presents using House data from 1978, 1984, 1988, and 1994 and Senate data from the NES/SES (cf. tables 5.15 and 5.16 in Jacobson 1997). These are strong, consistent, and replicable results.[38]

Respondents know more about Senate candidates—this is evident here, as we saw earlier. The content of evaluations, however, differs only marginally. Voters apply one set of standards to the "jobs" of their elected representatives. While political cartoonists might draw the prototypical senator as a great debater in the tradition of John Calhoun and the prototypical House member as

38. My interpretation of these figures differs from that of Miller (1990). There are some differences in the way Miller and I categorized likes/dislikes. Although Miller claims that he used the NES staff coding scheme (532–33), the frequencies he reports differ from mine. According to his figures, more than 20 percent of challenger likes concerned issues, nearly double what I found. I was unable to reproduce the figures he presents on page 532. However, his figures do support my general claim that the ordering and relative frequency of mentions is remarkably similar across the institutions.

a ward heeler or pork-barreler in the tradition of Daniel Flood, respondents to this survey made no such clean distinctions. Of course, this may be due to the increasing number of "Senator Pothole" Al D'Amatos in the Senate, but this only reinforces my claim of converging institutions.

In the modern era, the Senate has become increasingly concerned with constituency service and reelection (Sinclair 1989; Ornstein, Peabody, and Rohde 1993). Others continue to claim that national issues and public policy concerns play a larger role in voter evaluations of senators (e.g., Fenno 1982; Abramowitz and Segal 1990, 1992). However, at least in the 1980s, the House was more able to respond and react to Reagan-era initiatives.[39] Perhaps these changes have been reflected in citizen evaluations of these two institutions. As their public policy roles have become increasingly indistinct, public perceptions have as well.

A single set of evaluative standards certainly fits the cognitive miser model. Experimental studies of political reasoning (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1993) as well as models of presidential voting (Rahn, Aldrich, Borgida, and Sullivan 1990; Alvarez 1999) demonstrate that citizens are apt to rely on simplifying devices, heuristics, and schematic assessments in order to make sense of a complicated political world. There is some evidence that the mass of the public holds a different set of expectations about the *institutions* of the House and Senate (Jacobson 1990b). Perhaps this reflects a distinction between Congress as a representative democratic institution and as a set of "members" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). Regardless of the source of institutional distinctions, the data reported here show no evidence of different expectations of *candidates* for the House and Senate.

From Information to Choice

The information gap plays a large part in helping us to discriminate between these two institutions. Voters recognize Senate challengers more frequently and have more things to say about them, even when controlling for campaign intensity. At the same time, the content of those likes and dislikes are no different than in the House. This implies that the average Senate voter will employ a more information-rich decision rule, perhaps "turning on" more switches than the average House voter. In an information-rich House setting, however, there should be little difference between the Senate and House voter. These differences are easily testable with pooled House/Senate voting data. Now let us turn to this final test of House versus Senate.

39. The House, because of its more structured rules and ability to limit debate and amendments, was a more aggressive and effective policymaker in the Reagan years (Rohde 1991).

Toward a Unified Model of Voting

The final, and decisive, stage of the electoral process is the vote. My intent here is not to develop a comprehensive model of voter decision making in the House and Senate. Instead, I zero in on those considerations that could arguably make a difference in the ways voters evaluate House and Senate candidates. This analysis is one cut at pooling Senate and House voting models, but it is not intended to be the only one. My suspicion, however, is that other scholars will reach the same conclusions that I reach here: there really is little to distinguish the House and Senate voter.

As a point of departure, I rely on Gary Jacobson's well-developed model of House voting. Jacobson, along with many other authors, has developed these models over the past 15 years. The literature on congressional voting is too extensive to cite here. See the bibliographies in this book, Jacobson 1997, and Dodd and Oppenheimer 1997. The main determinants of choice in that model fall into four categories: individual characteristics, national forces, candidate likes and dislikes, and candidate contacts. I add to the basic model my measures of campaign intensity and institution. I perform a series of tests for institutional differences, relying on dummy variable interaction terms. Any difference in the coefficients that is larger than zero—not a difficult standard given the sample sizes—will be reported in the tables. I do not report the results from fully interactive models—in which all variables are interacted with an institution dummy variable—because the vast majority of the coefficients are statistically insignificant. In addition, I subject House/Senate differences to two more detailed tests, comparing the weight voters place on foreign policy considerations and national forces. The hypothesis is that Senate voters ought to place greater weight on these matters, ceteris paribus.

The results provide a strong endorsement of the pooled approach. As in the information model, the causal structure is comparable across institutions. The estimated probit coefficients are nearly identical. Almost every attempt to tease out institutional differences in the voting models failed. Most of the institutional differences that I did obtain are in the predicted direction: respondents who expressed foreign policy concerns penalized Senate but not House incumbents and national forces were mildly more important in Senate contests. None of the estimated coefficients passed conventional statistical significance tests.

The overriding considerations for voters in the House and Senate are much the same. First and foremost, most voters are loyal to their parties, loyal to their president, and loyal to their incumbents. The balance of voter evaluations of the incumbent and challenger (likes and dislikes) are the next most important consideration. Finally, candidate contacts are a way for both incumbents and

challengers to improve the likelihood that a voter will select them. However, their relative influence on the probability model pales in comparison with partisanship, presidential approval, and candidate evaluations.

The Model

I consider three primary influences on the individual's vote: partisan leanings, evaluations of the two candidates, and the level of contact that an individual has had with the competing candidates. In order to test for institutional differences in the relative importance of constituency service, I add to this model the respondent's evaluations of whether the incumbent has "helped anyone with problems in the district/state." Second, I include a measure of presidential approval. This will account for the existence of presidential coattails as well as allowing me to test whether senators are more closely tied to the success or failure of the president. Finally, intensity and institutional variables are included in the model. As I did earlier, I interpret intensity as a summary measure of campaign activity. In an intensely fought campaign, voters will be exposed to more information about the challenger and will be comparatively less likely to vote for the incumbent. The institutional variable tests whether there are additional differences between House and Senate voting that are not accounted for by the other variables in the model. The equation shown here provides a mathematical representation of my model.

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(IncumbentVote) &= \beta_0 + \beta_1(PartyID) + \beta_2(PresApprove) \\ &\quad + \beta_3(HelpDistrict?) + \beta_4(Intensity) \\ &\quad + \beta_5(Institution) + \beta_{6,7,8,9}(Likes/Dislikes) \\ &\quad + \beta_{10,11}(Contacts) + \varepsilon. \end{aligned}$$

Verbally, the model implies that the probability of voting for the incumbent is a function of partisan leanings,[40] whether one approves of Ronald Reagan's or George Bush's performance as president,[41] whether one thinks the incumbent is helpful to people in the district, whether one particularly "likes" or "dislikes" the candidates,[42] and the number of contacts (of seven possible

40. Partisanship is coded in a pro-incumbent direction

41. Presidential approval runs from -1 to 0 for Democratic incumbents and from 0 to 1 for Republican incumbents.

42. The four variables are simply the number of incumbent likes and dislikes and challenger likes and dislikes. I already showed that respondents cited more likes and dislikes, on average, for Senate candidates. This means that the variable cannot be included in the voting model because

total) that one has had with the two candidates. The model estimated is reported below.

My expectations are that partisanship, presidential approval, district help, incumbent likes and challenger dislikes, incumbent contacts, and incumbent tenure will all be positively related to the probability that a respondent will vote for the incumbent. Campaign intensity, incumbent dislikes and challenger likes, and challenger contacts should be negatively related to incumbent voting. I have no prior expectations about the institutional variable. Although House incumbents tend to receive higher proportions of the vote, they also are blessed with poorer quality challengers, low-intensity contests, and uneven partisan balance in the district. Institutional effects may wash out once other variables are controlled for.[43]

The Performance of the Basic Model

The results from this model from 1988 and 1990 are presented in table 6.7. In order to assuage any concern that House and Senate or high- and low-intensity elections look fundamentally different, I disaggregate the results by institution and intensity.

The estimates from the pooled model are reported in the first column of table 6.7. The overall performance of the model is quite good, correctly predicting more than 84 percent of vote choices. Partisanship, presidential approval, and perceptions of incumbent helpfulness are all positively and, in 1988, all statistically significantly, related to the probability of voting for the incumbent. This is not surprising: Republican identifiers and respondents who thought President Reagan had done a good job tended to vote for Republican incumbents. Democrats and voters who disapproved of Reagan's performance tended to vote Democratic. And voters who thought their incumbents helped people in the district tended to endorse the incumbent.

Campaign intensity also operates as anticipated: in 1988, voters were 12 percent less likely to vote for an incumbent in an intensely fought campaign, all other things being held equal. The candidate evaluation and contact variables are correctly signed and statistically significant. If a voter likes an incumbent (or a challenger), he or she is much more likely to vote for the incumbent; if a

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it conflates "institution" and "candidate likes." I solve this by standardizing the variable within "institution". Now "likes" represents the degree to which a respondent liked a candidate more or less than the *average* candidate and so on for the other variables.

43. Previous versions of this model included tenure of the incumbent under the assumption that voters are more likely to endorse an incumbent they have known for many years. The estimated coefficient under multiple specifications was zero, so I dropped this variable.

Table 6.7. Incumbent Vote, Pooled and Disaggregated Models

		By Institution		By Intensity	
	Pooled Model	House	Senate	Low	High
1988 estimates					
Constant	−1.871 (0.262)***	−1.692***	−2.394***	−1.846***	−4.446***
Party identification	1.688 (0.185)***	1.527***	1.858***	1.912***	1.579***
Presidential approval	0.308 (0.164)*	0.991***	−0.049	0.408**	0.366
Help district	0.389 (0.223)*	0.305	0.521*	0.222	0.618**
Job approval	2.222 (0.251)***	1.708***	2.611***	2.157***	3.125***
Intensity	−0.361 (0.143)***	−1.795***	0.023	—	—
Institution	−0.162 (0.135)	—	—	−0.559***	1.638***
Incumbent likes	0.478 (0.084)***	0.425***	0.577***	0.451***	0.798***
Incumbent dislikes	−0.219 (0.112)**	−0.389*	−0.188	−0.245*	0.004***
Challenger likes	−0.777 (0.091)***	−1.019***	−0.752***	−1.028***	−0.628
Challenger dislikes	0.276 (0.168)*	0.713**	−0.011	0.269	0.080
Incumbent contacts	0.140 (0.041)***	0.161***	0.113*	0.182***	0.087***
Challenger contacts	−0.155 (0.039)***	−0.126*	−0.139***	−0.107**	−0.264***
N	1321	589	732	940	381
Percentage predicted	84.77	83.19	85.68	84.54	80.34

Table 6.7. (continued)

	Pooled Model	By Institution		By Intensity	
		House	Senate	Low	High
1990 Estimates					
Constant	−1.640 (0.230)***	−1.538***	−1.832***	−1.596***	−1.962***
Party identification	1.452 (0.164)***	1.099***	1.670***	1.247***	1.709***
Presidential approval	0.126 (0.141)	0.523**	−0.099	0.396**	−0.212
Help district	0.242 (0.193)	0.445	0.146	0.302	0.101
Job approval	2.171 (0.218)***	2.158***	2.262***	1.971***	2.549***
Intensity	−0.307 (0.121)***	−0.681***	−0.161*	—	—
Institution	−0.113 (0.115)	—	—	−0.226	0.138
Incumbent likes	0.266 (0.051)***	0.363***	0.226***	0.264***	0.274***
Incumbent dislikes	−0.244 (0.070)***	−0.340***	−0.156*	−0.296***	−0.212*
Challenger likes	−0.449 (0.058)***	−0.601***	−0.403***	−0.493***	−0.452***
Challenger dislikes	0.402 (0.100)***	0.403**	0.420***	0.597***	0.312**
Incumbent contacts	0.058 (0.034)*	0.074	0.045	0.068	0.049
Challenger contacts	−0.061 (0.032)*	−0.168***	0.000	−0.058	−0.064
N	1494	555	939	893	601
Percentage predicted	84.53	84.5	84.15	84.54	84.42

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES.

Note: Variable coding information is contained in appendix C.

$*p = .05$ $**p = .01$ $***p = .001$

voter dislikes an incumbent, he or she is equally as likely to vote against the incumbent.[44] Voter contacts are beneficial, as expected. Contacts with the incumbent are positively related, and contacts with the challenger are negatively related, to the probability of voting for the incumbent.

Institutional effects disappear in both years. The estimated coefficient on the institution dummy variable is substantively small and statistically insignificant, although the sign is negative, as expected. I can push this argument even further. There is little to distinguish the pooled, House, and Senate estimates in columns 1, 2, and 3 of table 6.7. With a few minor exceptions, the same set of variables is statistically significant. The magnitude of the estimates is quite similar. Pooling not only provides greater statistical purchase on the choice process engaged in by the American legislative voter, but it solidifies the case for a "two-institutions, one-choice" conclusion, one that I argued for in chapter 2 and one to which I will return in chapter 7.

It is notable, however, that presidential approval benefits (and penalizes) House members, not senators, as I had expected. In contrast to the pooled model, this effect is discernible in 1988 and 1990. This might be indicative of greater personalization of Senate elections. Senators, who are more prominent in their own right (Hess 1986), might be individually more responsible for national policy but more immune from the negative consequences of presidential behavior.

Given the lower level of incumbency advantage in the Senate, how can I reasonably argue for "two-institutions, one-choice"? Incumbency "advantage" is not something that magically accrues to incumbent members of the legislature. Instead, incumbents build their advantages through multiple campaigns, frequent trips home, constituency service, and mass mailings. In an opinion survey, these activities show up as a positive balance in the "likes/dislikes" ledger. Jacobson illustrates this point in a simple yet powerful table (1997, table 5.12). By sequentially controlling for contacts and likes/dislikes in a model of the House vote, he is able to make the incumbency advantage disappear. Similarly, I have unpacked incumbency advantage in the Senate and

44. Including candidate likes and dislikes as independent variables might be viewed with suspicion. After all, how are likes and dislikes different from vote choice? These are distinct concepts. Theoretically, Alvarez (1999) and Kelley and Mirer (1974), among others, argue that likes and dislikes form only one portion, albeit a very important one, of the candidate choice process. Second, statistical diagnostics indicate that the measures are not collinear. First, none of the likes/dislikes measures correlates at greater than .3 with incumbent vote. Second, when these models are reestimated with likes/dislikes removed, the other coefficients in the model change only minimally. The estimated impact of campaign intensity increases, but that is not surprising. In more intense campaigns, voters cite more likes and dislikes. Institutional differences become *less* important. To reassure the skeptic, however, the results from a model excluding likes and dislikes are reported in appendix C.

House into its constituent parts. Candidate differences in recognition and evaluation are reflected via the likes/dislikes measure, regardless of the institution. If there is any remaining systematic tendency to vote for the incumbent, once I have controlled for these other effects, it ought to show up in the institution dummy variable. No such tendency is evident.

Another reason why institution fails to explain any variance in voter decision rules is that voters, unlike political scientists, opt for parsimony. As argued by Kelley and Mirer a quarter century ago (1974), and as shown in my discussion of voter expectations, voters generally choose simple decision rules. Prior beliefs (partisanship, presidential approval, and incumbent helpfulness) and reactions to the two candidates (likes/dislikes) are the most important determinants of the vote. A simple model containing only a constant term plus partisanship, presidential approval, and perceptions of incumbent helpfulness accounts for nearly half of the reduction in log likelihood relative to the null model. Likes and dislikes, when added to this simple model, reduce the log likelihood almost as much.[45] Put another way, if I know a voter's partisanship, attitude toward the president, and whether he or she has anything particularly positive or negative to say about the two candidates, I can make a very good prediction about that person's vote. Ninety percent of the explanatory power in this model is a function of attitudes that are largely exogenous to the campaign (partisanship, evaluations of Reagan or Bush, incumbent helpfulness) along with current reactions to the candidate. Adding contact and campaign intensity results in statistically significant probit coefficients, but provides comparatively little explanatory power. Institution adds *virtually nothing.*

Two other findings deserve comment: the lack of statistical significance of the presidential approval and "help district" variables in 1990. The presidential approval result can be explained, for 1990 was the first midterm election in the Bush administration. It was an election that the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* described as being "like a series of hard-fought city council races [with] a pronounced absence of clear-cut national themes" (Alston 1990). Bush enjoyed high levels of popularity, yet many Republicans were unhappy with the broken "no new taxes" pledge. The savings and loan scandal and real and perceived ethical lapses resulted in a generally anti-incumbent mood, reducing incumbent margins but failing to translate into significant wins by challengers (only 15 of 406 House incumbents were defeated).

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45. I obtained these figures by calculating the initial log likelihood and the final log likelihood from the full model. Then I calculated a model with *only* partisanship, presidential evaluation, and incumbent helpfulness. This accounted for 41 percent of the reduction in log-likelihood in 1988 and 39 percent in 1990. Adding likes/dislikes to this model accounted for another 49 percent (1988) and 44 percent (1990) of the reduction in log likelihood that occurred under the full model.

The insignificant result for "help district" is a cause for more concern. Member attentiveness to the district ought to operate in 1990 as in 1988 (as it does in most elections). The *Quarterly*, as we just learned, described 1990 as a year when local concerns predominated. Helpfulness to the district should be *more* important, not less. Most likely, the "help district" variable does not capture true voter perceptions of member helpfulness in the district beyond what is already reflected in the likes/dislikes term. Otherwise, it is just not credible to suggest that attentiveness to the district is unimportant in congressional elections.

Overall, these findings, while they confirm my expectations, deserve closer scrutiny. The null finding for institution flies in the face of many previous descriptions of congressional voting. The representation of institutional differences is sparse, to put it mildly. Also, campaign intensity has been left unexplored. Senate races are more likely to be intensely fought races. Is there more that I can say about the impact of campaign intensity on voter choice? I address each of these questions in the next two sections.

Searching for Institutional Differences

It is seldom the case that a scientific theory predicts a null finding. The first lesson in classical hypothesis testing is to "fail to reject" null hypotheses rather than accept alternative ones. There are numerous reasons why a statistical estimate might fail significance tests besides the obvious one of no effect, particularly when working with survey data. The sample might be too small, the model could be misspecified, or the operationalization of the theoretical construct could be flawed. I argue that institutional effects are minimal, based on statistically insignificant coefficient estimates and an eyeballing of the third and fourth columns of table 6.7. Does a closer look at institutional differences change this conclusion?

Not surprisingly, my answer is no. Across a wide variety of alternative specifications, the alternative hypothesis of institutional differences was rejected. Rather than just eyeballing the models estimates across institution, I tested model stability with a Chow statistic. None of the interaction variables (institution crossed with all other independent variables in the equation) was statistically significant. I estimated the model with partisanship, presidential approval, incumbent helpfulness, and institution only, to see whether any of the variation in likes/dislikes, contacts, intensity, or tenure might be taken up by institution. I then added to this previous model an interaction term (institution and presidential approval) to see whether Senate candidates are more closely tied to the president. In neither case were the institutional coefficients statistically significant. Finally, to see whether foreign policy matters more in

Senate voting, I created two special likes/dislikes variables, coded one if the respondent made any mention of foreign policy as a reason to like or dislike a candidate and zero otherwise. Here I found some hint of an institutional difference. If a respondent mentioned foreign policy in the likes/dislikes items, he or she was more likely to take this into consideration when voting for the Senate rather than the House. However, "more likely" only means that the estimated coefficients were larger than zero and correctly signed but still statistically insignificant.

It is difficult to find much support in these data for the claim that Senate and House voting models ought to be estimated separately. Institutional effects mean different things to different people, and this is unlikely to be the last word on the subject. I return to this issue in the conclusion.

The Effects of Campaign Intensity: Diversifying or Leveling?

Campaign intensity also merits a closer look. In previous sections, I theorized that intensely fought campaigns would result in a more elaborate and diverse set of decision rules. Voters would have access to more information and would presumably employ that information when choosing a candidate. The models here do not support this hypothesis. As shown in table 6.7, the *low-intensity* decision rule appears to be more elaborate. It is difficult to compare these two models directly because of different sample sizes. A larger N (1,232 in low-intensity contests vs. 564 in high-intensity contests) results in smaller standard errors and more statistically significant coefficients. Still I can compare the magnitude of the estimates. The impact of presidential approval and perceptions of incumbent helpfulness is smaller in high-intensity contests, and candidate contacts show only marginal effects. The model's forecasts are predominantly determined by individual partisanship and likes/dislikes.

How can these results be reconciled with claims that campaign intensity is a central variable in explaining electoral outcomes (e.g., chaps. 4 and 5; Kahn and Kenney 1997; Krasno 1994; Westlye 1983, 1991; Abramowitz 1988)? One possibility is that I have represented "information" far too sparsely. Perhaps policy opinions and ideological placements become activated in high-intensity contests. A more likely reason is that my model of individual perception and learning fails to properly describe voter behavior in low-information settings. In a low-information setting, voters may rely more on external cues such as partisanship but also on attitudes such as the "nature of the times" or perceptions of candidate helpfulness. While responses to these items are influenced by the campaign, there is an exogenous element. People generally know well before the fall campaign whether things are going well, the president has done

a good job, and the incumbent has helped the district.[46] It is precisely in a low-information setting that I expect people to use general assessments of government and candidates.Similarly, candidate contacts are less crucial in the high-intensity contest because every voter has experienced a relatively high number of contacts. According to this explanation, presidential approval and district help are less relevant in a high-intensity contest because voters rely on candidate likes and dislikes.

I do not have direct evidence to support this hypothesis. However, if intensity acts to level rather than diversify voter decision rules, there are corollary indicators that might help us evaluate this hypothesis. First, the average number of contacts is higher in high-intensity contest and, more importantly, the variation among voters is smaller.[47] The number of respondents reporting one or fewer contacts with challengers drops from 28 percent of respondents to only 7 percent, whereas the number reporting five or more contacts doubles, from 13 to 26 percent of the sample.[48] More respondents in high-intensity races are exposed to information about the challenger and the incumbent, so contacts are less important, on average, in the final decision. Shaking a candidate's hand or seeing an advertisement on television does not distinguish one voter from another in high-intensity contests.[49]

Yet intense campaigns do diversify in a way that is missed in these analyses. The average number of likes and dislikes that respondents mention in high-intensity contests increases, as would be expected. But notice that the standard deviation in the number of likes and dislikes in high-intensity contests is also larger and the number of respondents who have nothing at all to say drops by roughly 25 percent (except for incumbent likes). In an intensely fought contest, fewer respondents have nothing at all to say, and thus fewer have to rely solely on prior beliefs such as partisanship or incumbent helpfulness. In an intensely fought contest, there is greater variability among respondents in the information they have about candidates and the responses they have to the campaign. Thus, as I argued earlier, intensity and information do

46. Kinder and Mebane 1983, for example, find that individual perceptions of economic conditions are a product of both "ordinary theories" about economics and political assessments of blame for economic conditions. They are neither determinative of nor completely determined by political information and opinions. Popkin (1991) also claims that voters rely on a variety of information, much of it based on apolitical everyday experiences, in order to generate political choices.

47. The average numbers of incumbent contacts in low- and high-intensity races are 3.26 (SD 1.92) and 3.57 (SD 1.48). The average numbers of challenger contacts are 2.66 (1.81) and 3.75 (1.55).

48. The comparison is made only for the 1,796 respondents who fell into the voting model.

49. This point is echoed by Zaller's (1992) exposure and acceptance model. An individual cannot react to information unless that individual is exposed to it. In high-intensity contests, one would expect that the exposure side of Zaller's model would become increasingly irrelevant.

TABLE 6.8. Likes and Dislikes in Low- and High-Intensity Contests

	Low Intensity	High Intensity
Number of likes/dislikes		
Incumbent likes	.870	.789
(SD)	1.037	.916
No mention	47%	46%
Incumbent dislikes	.248	.440
(SD)	.558	.709
No mention	81%	67%
Challenger likes	.236	.603
(SD)	.595	.883
No mention	83%	60%
Challenger dislikes	.209	.441
(SD)	.531	.729
No mention	84%	66%
Policy mentions (likes)		
House incumbent	10.53	10.85
Senate incumbent	13.41	12.97
House challenger	11.11	6.95
Senate challenger	9.73	11.56

Source: 1988–90 NES/SES.
Note: Entries under "Number of likes/dislikes" are the average number of likes or dislikes mentioned. Entries under "Policy mentions" are the percentage of likes or dislikes that are domestic or foreign policy mentions. Only respondents who fell into the voting model are included.

not level but instead function as a rising tide that lifts all boats. And, to extend the metaphor further, as the information tide rises, the detritus of past political experiences (partisanship, presidential approval, and incumbent reputation) is obscured.

I would be remiss not to mention one piece of evidence to the contrary. I expected that the *content* of likes/dislikes might change during intense campaigns. This turned out not to be the case. In table 6.8, I compare policy mentions in high- and low-intensity contests. No pattern is evident. Other major categories (candidate, party/ideology, government management) do not grow or shrink in a systematic way across campaign intensity. Nor is it the case that respondents agree more about the incumbent's helpfulness in intense contests (the standard deviation for "help district?" is .32 in low-intensity contests and .34 in high-intensity contests).

I theorized that high-intensity contests allow voters to employ a more elaborate decision rule. These results, however, indicate a more complex set of relationships between campaign activity, political information, and voter choice. In the intensely fought contest, partisanship and likes/dislikes are the only statistically significant predictors of the vote. Contrast this with the model estimated in low-intensity contests. Not only are the votes slightly better predicted, but all the variables in the model have a statistically discernible relationship with the dependent variable.

Conclusion

Voting is the final act in the electoral drama. It is the arena where previous studies have noticed the most differences between Senate and House: Senate challengers are more widely recognized and Senate incumbents are more likely to be defeated. Senate voters appear to employ a more elaborate decision rule. However, there are good reasons why voting behavior should show substantial similarity no matter what the setting or office. Voting is a repetitive act engaged in often (in some localities many times a year) in the same setting (the polling booth) and requiring similar kinds of actions (pull a lever, punch a hole, mark a ballot). It would be surprising if voters used different rules to make this kind of repetitive decision, especially since theory predicts that it is just this kind of situation that leads to standardized, routinized rules.

Voting begins with information. I have stressed throughout this chapter the distinction between information *levels* and information *content.* While voters know more about Senate than House candidates, the content of that information is basically the same. Abstract evaluations of the job of the representative are indistinguishable. The categories of likes and dislikes also bear a strong resemblance across the two institutions. It is as if the respondents to this survey perceive the same thing that many political observers have speculated on: a converging of the House and Senate.

Has voting converged as well? I believe that it has. The evidence here indicates that voters employ a standardized rule, or at least use the same set of considerations, when choosing their federal legislators. In a low-intensity election, voters look to their partisanship, impressions of the nature of the times, and the incumbent's reputation for helpfulness. Candidate contacts explain more variance in a low-intensity election because contacts are a way to differentiate among voters. Finally, voters tend to choose the candidate they like the most (or dislike the least).[50] In a high intensity election, things are actually simpler. Contacts are no longer a significant way to distinguish voters, and

50. This simple rule bears a remarkable resemblance to Kelley and Mirer's quarter-century old model (1974).

they play a much smaller role in the final decision. Prior beliefs—partisanship, presidential approval, and incumbent helpfulness—also decline in impact. Instead, short-term, immediate reactions to the campaign, as reflected in the balance of likes and dislikes, determine electoral choice. These results all point in the same direction: voters learn about and choose their House members and senators in a similar fashion.