PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES IN MIDTERM U.S. HOUSE ELECTIONS, 1982-2006

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Political Science

May 2010

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Travis Ridout for his invaluable assistance and guidance throughout the completion of this manuscript. I also extend thanks to Dr. David Nice and Dr. Cornell Clayton for their input and contributions to the successful completion of this project and their welcome advice for avenues of further research. Finally, to the late Dr. Lance T. LeLoup who encouraged me to conduct research in American Politics. Though you left us far too soon, you will live on through all the scholars you faithfully trained and influenced.

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Abstract

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May 2010

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Presidents have invested their time and energy campaigning for members of their own party during midterm elections since the middle of the 20th century. Presidents, their advisors, the media, and the candidates they campaign for all believe the appearances have a positive effect on the outcome of the midterm elections. Yet, little empirical evidence exists suggesting that presidential appearances are anything more than window dressings.

In this dissertation, I examine presidential midterm campaign visits on behalf of candidates for the United States House of Representatives between 1982 and 2006. I find evidence that campaign visits are strategically allocated to competitive House districts which supported the president in his previous electoral bid. I also find that presidential visits are allocated relatively equally to such districts, regardless of whether or not the president's co-partisan is favored to win the election. I examine the effects of presidential visits during midterm elections and find that visits produce little discernible effect on whether a co-partisan wins the election or upon her share of the popular vote. I find evidence of a limited effect on reducing the typical decline in voter turnout in midterm elections in the most competitive House races.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

George W. Bush awoke on the morning of November 6, 2002 to the news that his party, the GOP, had managed to gain seats in both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate in the previous day's midterm elections. It was the first time since Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democrats had gained 9 House and Senate seats in 1934 that a sitting president's party had accomplished that feat. The major news magazines, Time and Newsweek, credited Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist and political confidante, for orchestrating a strategy that placed President Bush front and center in 21 of the most competitive House races that fall (Carney and Dickerson, 2002; Fineman, 2002). In effect, Rove's strategy turned the midterm elections of 2002 into a referendum on the presidency of George W. Bush. The verdict by all accounts was a very good one for President Bush.

Fast forward eight years as President Barack Obama heads into his first midterm election season. The president's advisors hope to replicate the Bush team strategy of sending the president into the most competitive House districts in an effort to persuade voters to support the president's co-partisans on Election Day, November 2, 2010. Convinced that a visit by the president to a competitive congressional district benefits a co-partisan, President Obama is holding out the reward of a presidential visit to Democrats in difficult races who support his health care reform plan (Wilson, 2010). Will the utilization of the Bush approach prove fruitful for the Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections?

Clearly, the popular press, political advisors, and presidents themselves believe that midterm campaign appearances on behalf of co-partisans provide enough benefits to be desired

by a candidate for Congress. After all, who wouldn't want to stand on a stage with the president in front of thousands of energized supporters? But do visits by the President of the United States have the effect that members of the media, candidates, advisors, and presidents believe they do? Is there an empirical basis for these beliefs or are they simply based on anecdotal evidence? Remarkably, political scientists have conducted relatively little research that addresses this question. This manuscript examines the role of the president in midterm congressional elections and develops a theory of presidential campaign activity during midterm elections.

The President and the Midterm Election

Presidents have injected themselves into elections for the United States Congress for much of the history of the United States. The shape of presidential intervention in these elections has taken on many different forms depending upon the president's goal. As technology has advanced and the ability for a president to travel around the country relatively quickly has improved, so too has the willingness of presidents to inject themselves into races for the United States Congress. For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on at least one occasion, issued a public statement regarding his administration's disapproval of a member of Congress's lack of support for his legislative program, the New Deal. President Roosevelt then resorted to a written statement urging the defeat, in a primary contest, of an incumbent Democrat who had failed to support the administration on a key piece of New Deal legislation (Gertzog, 1965).

President John F. Kennedy, speaking in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in September 1962 at a Democratic Party fundraiser said,

> "*I am not on the ballot in this campaign, but as President of the United States I have a large responsibility for the progress that this country makes, and one fact is clear beyond dispute and that is that this country requires, if it is to move, a progressive Congress--in short, a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate"* (Woolley and Peters, 2005).

In another address during the same week, President Kennedy promised to hit the campaign trail every weekend on behalf of Democrats around the country during the month of October. However, the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted within a few days and effectively put an end to the president's campaign appearances. His party went on to lose four seats in the House and gain four in the Senate.

President Richard Nixon engaged in numerous campaign appearances during the 1970 midterm congressional election on behalf of his fellow Republicans. He then instructed his staff to conduct private polls in an effort to determine if his appearances had any impact upon the electoral fortunes of those for whom he had expended a considerable amount of time and energy (Jacobs and Shapiro, 1995). President Nixon's Republicans lost twelve seats in the House and three in the Senate on Election Day in November.

Likewise, President Ronald Reagan stumped for members of Congress and challengers, attempting to maintain control of the Senate in 1982 and perhaps parlay support for Reagan into electoral success for Republicans seeking election to the House of Representatives. His successor, President George H. W. Bush, was also very active on the campaign trail for Republican candidates seeking election to Congress, making no fewer than twelve appearances during the 1990 midterm campaign.

In both of President Bill Clinton's midterm elections he took to the campaign trail on behalf of Democrats running for Congress. President Clinton campaigned for fourteen

Democrats seeking election to the House of Representatives in 1994. Four years later, however, he was limited to only four appearances, largely because Democrats wanted to distance themselves from the president while the investigation that would lead to his impeachment was in progress.

In both 2002 and 2006 President George W. Bush campaigned fervently on behalf of Republican candidates for the U.S. House. In 2002, President Bush engaged in a barnstorming campaign swing during the final two weeks before the midterm election, appearing at rallies across the country for candidates for the United States House of Representatives[1]. At one of those appearances on October 24, 2002, he said,

> *"I'm (also) here to make it clear to you, as clear as I can for the people of this district: you need to send Mike Rogers to the United States Congress. And there are a lot of reasons why. We've got some big hurdles in the country and I need a man up there with whom I can work representing this great district. ... make sure you send to the United States Congress a man I can work with, and that man is Mr. Mike Rogers"* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

Over the course of the general election campaign in 2002, President Bush made twenty-four campaign appearances on behalf of members of the Republican Party seeking election, or reelection, to the United States House of Representatives. Twenty-two of these appearances occurred in very competitive races for a seat in the United States House. The president's fellow partisan won seventeen of these. By comparison, in electoral contests where the president did not campaign, Republican candidates were successful in about one-third of the competitive races. The overall result was quite impressive for President Bush's party as it gained six House seats and two Senate seats.

[1] In both 2002 and 2006 President Bush also made numerous campaign appearances on behalf of candidates for the United States Senate. However, those are beyond the scope of this project and will not be discussed here.

The results were viewed as a rousing success for the administration of President George W. Bush. Bucking a trend that had not seen the party holding the White House gain seats in the U.S. House and Senate in a midterm election since 1934, the Republican Party strengthened its narrow majority in the House and reclaimed control of the Senate, which it had lost in May of 2001 when Senator Jim Jeffords switched his party affiliation from Republican to Independent, leaving the Senate with 50 Democrats, 49 Republicans, and 1 independent (who caucused with the Democrats).

Immediately following this momentous election, journalists and scholars alike lavished praise on the frenzied campaigning by President Bush in the days and weeks leading up to the elections. *The Washington Post* attributed the Republican victories to a plan hatched in the mind of President Bush's chief strategist Karl Rove that had the president on the campaign trail nearly every day for two weeks leading up to the midterm elections (*Washington Post*, 2002). Scholars likewise credited President Bush with delivering a consistent message and beating the drum for fellow Republicans to turn out *en masse* and ensure the election of a Congress that would support the president and his agenda, both domestic and foreign, in the coming years (Jacobson 2003).

Four years later, President Bush was once again extremely active on the campaign trail, making personal appearances for seventeen candidates for the United States House of Representatives in a frantic effort to maintain control of the House. In several of these appearances, stretching from just after Labor Day until November 6, the president delivered a variation of his standard stump speech urging voters to elect or reelect Republicans to Congress. Two days before the election at a rally in Grand Island, Nebraska, President Bush said,

> *"I know -- I'm sure you've heard the same predictions I've heard. The prognosticators have already decided the outcome of this election before the good people of Nebraska*

> *have voted. But don't worry about it; the same thing happened in 2004. Some of them up in Washington had already picked out their new offices in the West Wing. They listened to the prognosticators. Then the people showed up to the polls, and the movers were not needed. And the same thing is going to happen on November the 7th. You're going to elect Adrian Smith; you're going to elect Pete Ricketts. We're going to hold the House and hold the Senate* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

Altogether the president made eighteen campaign stops on behalf of seventeen candidates embroiled in competitive races for the House of Representatives in 2006. The majority of these appearances took place during the final two weeks of the general election campaign as the president campaigned across the Midwest and south on behalf of vulnerable Republicans, though he did include stops in California and Nevada along the way. Unlike in 2002, the candidates for whom the president campaigned were not as successful in their electoral bids. Of the seventeen candidates for whom President Bush appeared, seven were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

This brief review of presidential activity during midterm congressional elections from 1962 through 2006 makes it clear that most presidents have worked hard to encourage the election of their fellow partisans to Congress. Some have taken to the campaign trail; some have issued public statements, while others have attended fundraisers. All have engaged in some type of activity on behalf of their fellow partisans. In fact, lacking the emergence of an extraordinary crisis requiring the president to abandon the campaign trail, most presidents engage in significant campaign activities on behalf of their fellow partisans (Hoddie & Routh, 2004). Several questions remain unanswered, however, as to what factors determine the congressional districts presidents choose to visit, and what discernible effects presidential visits have on the electoral fortunes of presidential co-partisans.

The Puzzle of Midterm Elections

Midterm congressional elections present a significant puzzle for political scientists because they are so very different from presidential elections. When the president is on the ballot, or two major party candidates are vying to become the next president, voters nationwide pay a fair amount of attention to campaign politics, at least during the final month before the general election. Presidential elections are high interest affairs that capture the attention of the nation and its voters. Those who go to the polls during a presidential election typically cast a vote for congressional candidates as well as a candidate for president. In recent years, voter turnout in presidential elections has approached sixty percent of eligible voters while hovering in the mid thirties for midterm elections (Clerk, 2009)

In contrast, midterm congressional elections are marked by lower voter interest, a significant drop in voter turnout, and very high incumbent reelection rates. Often times these elections turn on local issues such as the presence or absence of a scandal, the amount of money spent by the candidates contesting the seat, or the perception of the local economy by voters. These types of midterm elections are what scholars typically refer to as "low stimulus" elections (Campbell, 1960). At other times, midterm congressional elections tend to take on a more national character and are referred to as "wave" elections, such as 1994 (and 2006), in which the ideological mood of the national electorate somehow comes in to sync, leading to a rising tide of support for one party or the other (Erickson & Wright, 1997). Numerous hypotheses and statistical models have been developed, tested, and subjected to empirical scrutiny in the search to explain the outcomes of congressional midterm elections. To date, however, none of these models considers how a campaign visit by a sitting president affects the outcome of a midterm

election for the U.S. House of Representatives. In fact, presidents are often considered passive actors when it comes to the outcome of midterm elections (Herrnson & Morris, 2007).

One aspect of midterm congressional elections remains troubling to scholars. Prior to 1998, scholars believed that seat losses by the president's party during midterm elections were as close to a sure bet as one could get. Dating back to 1894, the party holding the White House had lost seats in the House of Representatives during the midterm election on all but three occasions (Busch, 1999). Stated differently, the president's party has lost seats in midterm congressional elections nearly 90% of the time since 1894. This phenomenon has led scholars to develop and debate numerous theories to explain these losses. I briefly review these theories in detail in chapter 2. But even the best of these theories pay absolutely no attention to the campaign efforts of presidents during midterm congressional elections on behalf of their co-partisans.

The Strategic Nature of Presidential Visits

Given the predominant pattern of seat losses experienced by the president's party in midterm congressional elections, it is prudent to ask whether presidential campaign appearances on behalf of candidates for Congress are rational. In short, do these appearances accomplish anything and, if so, what do they accomplish? If they do not accomplish much, why do presidents expend their time and energy, and place their professional reputations on the line to campaign for their fellow partisans? Several reasons help to explain a president's willingness to campaign for his co-partisans.

The president is the de facto head of his party, at least in the eyes of his fellow partisans and the voting public. First and foremost, presidential appearances for fellow partisans can be

seen as party-building efforts apart from any electoral impact that might result. As the president ventures forth from Washington and addresses crowds gathered at local rallies in congressional districts, he may win over the hearts and minds of some citizens who eventually become loyal party supporters. Thus, his efforts could lead to long-term benefits for the party as a whole, particularly at the local level.

Second, the president has a tremendous stake in the effort of his party to control Congress if he desires to advance his legislative program. Neither Franklin Roosevelt's immense New Deal program nor Lyndon Johnson's Great Society agenda could have passed without a cooperative Congress comprised largely of like-minded fellow Democrats. More recently, President Bush may have had far more difficulty winning the confirmations of Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito if he had faced a Senate controlled by hostile Democrats. The desire to pass legislation, confirm appointments, minimize the likelihood of a congressional investigation, or even reduce the likelihood of a veto override may all lead the president to the campaign trail during a midterm election. It is also highly doubtful that President Obama would have been able to pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009 had he not enjoyed a strong Democratic majority in both chambers of Congress. Presidential appearances when his co-partisans are seeking re-election may help to shore up the support he receives from members of his party on major pieces of legislation. Conversely, presidents may avoid campaigning in some areas to avoid creating bad blood between himself and a member of the opposite party whose vote he may someday need.

Third, a president may even take to the campaign trail not necessarily expecting to gain control of the United States House of Representatives, assuming his party does not already have the majority, but to minimize the midterm seat loss his party is almost sure to suffer. After all, if

the president's party does not have a majority, the more of a president's co-partisans there are in the House the less he has to rely on opposition party crossovers to pass his preferred legislation.

Finally, as head of his party, a president may simply be expected to work towards furthering the electoral goals of the party by making campaign appearances during the midterm election. However, because a president has limited resources, the president cannot campaign everywhere and must therefore strategically allocate these resources in such a way as to maximize the return on his investment. I argue that each president strategically selects his midterm campaign appearances to benefit his party and himself, primarily through the election of more of the president's fellow partisans to Congress.

An integral assumption of this project is that presidential visits are strategically allocated to achieve a president's individual goals, perhaps the election of a fellow partisan who has demonstrated strong support for the president in the past or the defeat of an opponent who failed to support a key piece of legislation. Though the election of fellow partisans to Congress may be the primary goal of a president, this should not be viewed as the only rationale for a president to campaign for a co-partisan. The president may appear with her at a dinner or other fundraiser for the party in general, or he may simply be repaying a member of Congress for a past vote on a bill crucial to the president's program. This dissertation is not intended to exhaust all possible reasons why a president chooses to devote time and energy on behalf of fellow partisans; rather, it is designed to explore the conditions under which presidential appearances during midterm congressional elections should be expected and some of the consequences of those appearances.

The opportunity cost incurred by a sitting president on behalf of his fellow partisans is significant. Campaign activity requires time, money, and energy. Each of these resources is limited, and if a president chooses to expend them, he must expect some return on his

investment. Additionally, by choosing to campaign, the president is placing his professional reputation at risk in the sense that, if his efforts are unsuccessful, his ability to persuade members of the legislature to support his agenda may suffer, leading to a loss of public prestige (Neustadt, 1990). Thus, the expected benefit to be gained by campaigning must exceed the expected costs of campaigning; namely, both the risk of harm to his public prestige and the expenditure of scarce resources. Presidents must believe then, at the very least, that their campaign efforts in midterm elections will result in some benefit to the party or his presidency.

Where do presidents campaign, for whom do they appear, and are the visits effective?

As I have illustrated above, most recent American presidents have engaged in some form of campaign activity on behalf of their co-partisans seeking a seat in the United States Congress. The ensuing chapters in this dissertation will identify the congressional districts in which presidents have made campaign appearances and the individuals for whom they have appeared. How do these congressional districts differ from congressional districts that presidents do not appear in? How do the candidates in these districts where a president appears differ from those in districts with no appearance? Obviously, each president and his staff must choose where and when to make an appearance for a fellow partisan because it is simply impossible for any president to appear in all 435 congressional districts in an election cycle due to time, energy, and financial constraints. I will proceed to develop the argument that presidential campaign appearances during congressional midterm elections are strategic allocations of the president's resources to those co-partisans who have the best chance of providing the president with a return on his investment in them.

Congressional districts vary greatly in their degree of safety for one party or the other. In fact, in most congressional midterm elections only about ten percent of the seats in the House are considered competitive. The rest either strongly favor one party or the other, or are considered safe for one of the parties. Safe districts account for well over half of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives each election cycle. Given the relative safety of most seats, I expect that presidents will focus their midterm efforts on those seats most likely to be competitive in the upcoming midterm election. These are the seats that hold out the greatest prospect for a return on the investment of time and energy by a president as he gains little, if anything, by scheduling an appearance for a candidate who is sure, or almost sure, to win the election anyway.

In the chapters that follow I develop the theory more fully and examine several key measures of competitiveness in addition to the characteristics of districts likely to receive a visit from the president during a midterm election. Some of these measures will be based on the president's support in the district while others will be based on his party's past performance in the district. I will also examine the nature of the electoral contest itself to learn whether presidents are more likely to appear for incumbents or challengers, in districts they already control or districts likely to change party control, and whether or not the presence of other competitive electoral contests at a higher level (i.e., Senate or Governor) are likely to draw a president to a district.

Finally, I will collect data on presidential midterm visits from 1982 through 2006 and analyze the data by individual president and then, in the aggregate, for all presidents using several multivariate statistical techniques. Through these analyses I expect to learn whether or not presidential visits on behalf of a candidate make a significant contribution to the candidate's prospect of winning the election, her share of the two-party vote, and if a visit has an impact on

the level of voter turnout in a congressional district. The findings will chart a course for the development of a concise theory of presidential activity during midterm congressional elections and whether a president's involvement in congressional elections is good for American democracy as a whole.

The Plan of this Dissertation

This dissertation is designed to examine and explain the strategic nature of presidential campaign appearances during congressional midterm elections and the effects of these visits on candidate vote-share and voter turnout in these elections. As such, the remaining chapters will be as follows:

Chapter 2 will explore and review the extant literature focusing on the effects of campaigns, generally speaking. I then narrow the focus a bit and review the literature related to voter mobilization, and factors influencing voter turnout. Finally, I delve into the sparse literature dealing specifically with presidential appearances during midterm elections and develop a theory of presidential appearances during midterm congressional elections.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion of the data gathering and methodological issues contained in this dissertation. Here I present the statistical model and variables to be considered in my analysis. I also discuss some of the methodological difficulties associated with a study of this nature and how they were resolved.

Chapter 4 discusses the strategic nature of presidential campaign appearances more specifically. I examine the characteristics of the districts where presidents appear. I also discuss in detail presidential appearances and the factors likely to produce a visit by the president. I

refute the conventional wisdom by demonstrating that presidents, contrary to popular belief, do not primarily visit those districts where their co-partisans are most likely to win in order to make themselves look good. Rather, I show that presidential appearances are nearly evenly allocated across different categories of races, some friendly to the president and some not so friendly.

Chapter 5 is the heart of the dissertation. Here I address a large gap in the literature on congressional midterm elections. I begin with a look at each president and his activity during his midterm election(s). A multivariate analysis is conducted for each midterm separately, followed by an analysis that combines all years. In addition to presidential win/loss records in midterm congressional elections, I examine the two hypothesized effects on midterm elections, an expected increase in candidate vote share and a reduction in the decline in voter turnout for the district from the previous presidential election. In essence, I argue that a presidential appearance is meant to serve as a proxy for the president being on the ballot himself. The discussion will be primarily a quantitative analysis of the midterm elections from 1982 to 2006, though I include some descriptive discussion whenever possible.

The concluding chapter will summarize the findings from the previous chapters and suggest some implications for the forthcoming 2010 midterm elections. I also offer some thoughts about the effects of presidential campaigning, and perhaps, campaigns in general. I conclude with a discussion of what the results tell us about democracy and the implications for democratic theory and the future of campaign oriented research. Finally, I offer some thoughts about the normative question raised by presidential midterm involvement, namely, should presidents get involved in midterm elections at all? If they do, what are the implications of that involvement for citizens and for the presidency itself?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Do Electoral Campaigns Matter?

The conventional wisdom among political scientists used to be that electoral campaigns often don't make much difference in who wins or loses a given election. While it is probably more likely that a terrible campaign may cost a candidate her chance for elective office, history undoubtedly is filled with scores of candidates that conducted perfect campaigns and yet lost the election. The opposite is almost surely true as well. Why is it that candidates spend hundreds of millions of dollars every election season campaigning for office if those campaigns don't matter? Why do the media devote hundreds of hours of television time covering campaigns that don't matter anyway? And why do political scientists continue to study electoral campaigns if they have little effect on electoral outcomes? The short answer to each of these questions is that political campaigns actually do influence the outcome of electoral contests to one degree or another. This dissertation examines the effects of presidential campaign visits on midterm election outcomes.

One reason that political scientists often conclude that political campaigns do not have a significant impact on the outcome of an election is due to the limited political knowledge possessed by the electorate. Social scientists began examining political campaigns in earnest in the 1940's. Much of the early literature focused on what voters know and how that knowledge impacts their voting choice (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968; Campbell et al, 1960; Converse, 1964). One important conclusion reached by these scholars is that voters do not possess much political knowledge, but often make decisions based on heuristics like party identification. Another finding from these early studies is that the majority of voters have made up their minds regarding their vote choice long before the campaign has even begun and very

few voters change their vote choice based on the campaign (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944). For these voters, the primary impact of the campaign is to reinforce their predisposition to vote for their preferred candidate, which is ultimately a rather large campaign effect often overlooked by political scientists and the media. Given this, it is no wonder social scientists often conclude that the impact of campaigns on vote choice is relatively small because most citizens end up casting a ballot for the candidate they preferred prior to the commencement of the campaign. However, in very close congressional elections an appearance by the president leading just a small percentage of citizens to change their vote choice may be the difference between a president facing an opposition Congress and a Congress controlled by his own party.

One of the key arguments of scholars supporting the idea that campaigns have minimal effects on voters attitudes and choices is that most voters acquire little new information during the course of a campaign (Klapper, 1960). Candidates simply use partisan rhetoric to shore up their partisan bases. Converse (1962; 1964; 1966) argues that campaigns have little impact on vote choice because voters' partisan attitudes remain stable in the aggregate; most voters have little interest in politics, rely on a base of stored knowledge, and often filter out conflicting information during a campaign. He argues that the more stored knowledge a voter has, the less likely her opinions are to change and vice-versa. While this may be true, evidence exists that a decline in partisan attitudes among the electorate began in the 1960's as more and more voters become disenchanted with the two major political parties in America, preferring to label themselves as independents instead (Niemi and Weisberg, 1976;) However, the decline appears to have ended by the 1980's as partisan identification has returned to postwar levels (Miller, 1991; Bartels, 2000; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002). In a society with extremely high

levels of partisan stability and low levels of political interest how can candidates and their campaigns possibly matter beyond reinforcement of initial predispositions?

Zaller (1992) addresses this question by revisiting the "minimal effects" argument and adding a measure of exposure to new information. Essentially, more frequent exposure to new information increases the likelihood of the reception of that information. Once the voter has received the new information, it becomes a matter of acceptance or rejection of the new information, which depends in part on the voter's stored knowledge. The greater the amount of stored knowledge possessed by a voter, the less likely she is to be receptive to the new information. Of course, the lower the amount of stored information a voter has, the more likely she will be to receive new information. The problem for Zaller exists in the fact that those with higher levels of political knowledge are usually the most likely to be exposed to new information and the least likely to accept that information. The high-knowledge citizen has relatively well-established predispositions that may be based on policy or issue preferences. As new information flows in to the high-knowledge voter, it is either assimilated into the existing store of political knowledge or rejected because it conflicts with what is already known and accepted, thus having a minimal effect on the voter's attitude and vote choice.

Those with lower levels of political knowledge are less likely to be exposed to the new information in the first place. Citizens with lower levels of political knowledge typically invest little effort into increasing their knowledge of political affairs for a variety of reasons, the primary cause being the difficulty involved in understanding much of what goes on in politics. Low knowledge citizens do not watch issue oriented political programming nor do they investigate policy differences between candidates. Lacking the knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of political arguments may lead many of these citizens to fall back on heuristics,

such as party identification, when such citizens cast their ballots, should they choose to do so. In the end, low information citizens are not swayed by the messages produced by campaigns because they are not paying attention, and thus not exposed, to those campaigns and their messages.

The battle waged in a campaign will be for the hearts and minds of those somewhere between the highest and lowest levels of stored information. The effect of a campaign will hinge on a voter's reception to and acceptance of new information, and those in the middle of the spectrum are most likely to receive and accept—and thus be influenced by—this new information. These moderates become the target of much of the campaigning political candidates engage in as they attempt to promote reception of new ideas, hopefully followed by acceptance. Thus, a presidential visit on behalf of a candidate for Congress may rally the president's political supporters to get out and vote but probably won't draw the most apathetic voters to the polls. Those voters who are "on the fence" about whether to vote or not, or even for whom to vote, may be exposed to the increased media coverage and attention to the electoral contest resulting from a presidential visit, thus becoming more likely to receive sufficient information to draw them to the polls. But all that may be needed in a tight race is for those who supported the president in the previous election to get out and support his candidate in the midterm election. A "minimal effect" may well be enough to win a close race.

However, Zaller (1996) goes on to argue that campaign effects may be much larger than often presumed. The problem is that we have difficulty measuring these effects because of "noise" and the cross-cutting effect of different information flows. In other words, in a relatively balanced system of information flow where both campaigns are getting their messages out, such as a presidential campaign, the aggregate effect of the campaigns on vote choice will be minimal

even though individually they may be having significantly large effects. For this study, the appearance of a president on behalf of a candidate for Congress could serve to skew the information flow in one direction and lead to a larger net effect on voter choice than might be expected in a somewhat more balanced campaign. Lacking direct observation of this effect through surveys or polling data, I examine the winning percentage of presidential co-partisans, their share of the two-party vote, and voter turnout in competitive congressional districts visited by the president and make comparisons with competitive congressional districts not visited by the president.

Given the difficulty in identifying with any precision the effects political campaigns have on vote choice, candidate vote share, success rate, and even voter turnout, it is no wonder some political scientists argue that political campaigns just don't matter all that much. Yet, journalists devote yards of column space and barrels of ink covering political contests, constantly seeking that 'game changing' moment in the campaign. So, too, candidates for political office engage in nearly constant fundraising efforts and spend millions of dollars, sometimes from their own personal wealth, all with the goal of persuading enough citizens to vote for them (or against their opponent) on election day.

The Predictable Campaign

James Campbell (2000) sums it up best when he says that political campaigns make more difference than many political scientists think but less difference than most journalists believe. Campbell argues that campaigns in the United States are relatively well-balanced affairs with somewhat even levels of information flowing back and forth as the candidates put their message

out during the campaign, at least at the presidential level. Relying on this assumption Campbell develops a model he calls "the predictable campaign" that allows him to estimate the systematic effects of a presidential campaign on voters. He argues that two-thirds of the electorate already knows for whom they will vote before the first campaign event or rally is even held, largely due to the strength of party identification as discussed previously. He concludes that a presidential campaign ultimately affects the election outcome by about four percentage points, enough in a very close election to make the difference between winning and losing. Additionally, he notes that the gap between candidates tends to narrow as Election Day approaches, largely related to three factors: the economy, incumbency advantages, and information flow. The first two are beyond the control of the candidates, leaving information flow as the malleable factor over the course of the campaign.

Campbell limits his study to effects of campaigns at the presidential level, most likely due to the wealth of available data. The question raised by this dissertation is whether or not it is possible to discern any effects from presidential campaign appearances at the congressional district level during a midterm election. If presidential campaigns do indeed have systematic effects and lead some citizens to change their votes, might not a presidential visit to a congressional district, accompanied by all of the pomp and circumstance that goes with the president, skew the information flow in favor of the president's co-partisan just enough to increase his co-partisan's vote share as those voters whose minds have not yet been made up decide to vote for the president's co-partisan? Might a visit also increase the level of turnout in the congressional district by mobilizing some members of the electorate who might not have voted to actually go to the polls? These are two questions that have been under researched by political scientists that I will address in this dissertation.

The Presidency and Midterm Elections

Prior to the 1998 midterm congressional elections, the party controlling the White House had suffered a net loss of seats in Congress in every midterm election since 1934. In 1998 President Clinton's Democrats gained five seats in the House of Representatives while managing to stave off any losses in the Senate. In 2002, President Bush's Republicans became the first party since Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democrats to gain seats in both chambers of Congress in a midterm election. Since then, a few scholars have begun to examine the results of the 2002 midterm elections, looking for any evidence that presidential campaign visits by President George W. Bush were at least partly responsible for the historic gains made by the Republicans. The mass media quickly credited President Bush's frenetic campaign efforts in the weeks leading up to the midterm elections as the decisive factor in the historic gains the Republicans enjoyed in the House of Representatives and their ability to recapture the United States Senate. Scholars, on the other hand, were not quite as quick to applaud the president's efforts, although some concur with the media conclusion, albeit to a lesser degree (Jacobson 2003). What is certain, however, is that President Bush made numerous campaign appearances on behalf of Republican candidates seeking election (or reelection) to the Congress and that the candidates he campaigned for were more successful in their electoral bids than Republican candidates for whom the president did not campaign (Mellen, 2007). Prior to the 2002-midterm elections, most scholarly research regarding midterm elections focused on explaining seat losses in Congress by the president's party rather than examining the active role played by modern presidents in midterm elections. A brief review of that literature follows.

Coattails Theory

Much of the existing literature regarding presidents and their effects on congressional elections tends to view the president as a passive influence on election outcomes. The theory contends that some voters in presidential elections cast straight party ballots based on their choice for president. The winning presidential candidate thus extends "coattails" that result in some of his fellow partisans winning election to Congress. Hence, some of the president's fellow partisans are swept into office with the president by virtue of their party affiliation. Thus, some of those who rode the president's coattails into office are unable to secure reelection on their own, thus leading to a loss of seats for the president's party. Thus, one explanation for presidential campaign visits during the midterm election is to extend those coattails to endangered co-partisans. Although, scholars have questioned the validity of coattails theory in recent years due to rising incumbent reelection rates and the perception that many presidents have had little or no coattails at all (Ferejohn and Calvert, 1983). Seemingly, even these fellow partisans who may have benefited from the president's coattails in the previous election have managed to stand on their own two feet by the time they seek reelection.

Surge and Decline

Another attempt to explain midterm seat losses has nothing to do with the candidates but rather focuses on voter turnout in presidential elections followed by a decline in the succeeding midterm election. The 'surge and decline' hypothesis attributes the losses to low turnout by independent voters in congressional midterm elections (Campbell, A. 1966). Campbell argued that independents turn out to vote in greater numbers in presidential election years and many cast

straight ticket ballots for the president and his fellow partisans running for Congress. Two years later these independent voters lack the motivation and interest to go to the polls, which results in a decline in support for the president's fellow partisans. The "surge" of independent voters in presidential election years followed by their "decline" in midterm election years leads to a "surge and decline" theory explaining presidential party seat losses.

James Campbell (1985) attributes the surge to the fact that presidential elections are "high-stimulus" events featuring extensive media coverage and a wealth of information being disseminated about the election, increasing the interest and political knowledge of many voters. Two years later, when the president is not on the ballot, the information flow shrinks, media coverage is sparse, and some voters are not sufficiently stimulated to cast a ballot. While Campbell concedes the essential truth of surge and decline theory, he finds it less than satisfactory in explaining the variation in congressional seat losses. Campbell (1985) also claims the "surge" in presidential elections results from weak partisans casting ballots in presidential election years rather than independent voters casting ballots in those elections. Campbell then contends that there is truth in both the coattails model and the surge and decline model, yet neither theory is fully satisfactory in addressing the problem of seat losses during midterm election years. If Campbell is correct, perhaps presidential campaign visits during congressional midterm elections are strategically selected to increase voter turnout in districts favoring the president by mobilizing presidential supporters. Presidential visits could also send a signal of support to independents or weak partisans who have supported the president previously but typically don't vote during midterm elections. A presidential visit is likely to produce significantly enhanced local media coverage of the race and increase the information flow and

name recognition of the president's co-partisan prior to and during the president's visit.[2] The increased attention might serve to motivate those independent or weak partisan voters who supported the president in the previous presidential election to support the president's fellow partisan in the midterm election.

Scholars have paid no attention to the impact of presidential campaign appearances on voter turnout in midterm elections, largely due to the perception that campaigns simply don't matter a whole lot, especially if the electorate is not paying much attention anyway! Another reason for this neglect is immediately apparent: it is extremely difficult to measure the direct impact on voter turnout of a presidential appearance on behalf of a candidate for the U.S. Congress. I discuss the difficulties associated with this measure in chapter 3.

Referendum Theory

Some scholars argue that midterm elections ought to be seen as referenda on a president's job performance to date and on his party in general. This is especially true in midterm election years viewed as so-called 'wave' elections where an overwhelming tide of voter negativity is directed towards the president and his party, such as in 1994 and 2006. If a president is unpopular at the time of the midterm election *and* voters are selecting members of Congress based on the president's popularity, it makes sense that seat losses would follow. The assumption is that voters go to the polls and intentionally evaluate their choices for Congress in

[2] While conducting research for another paper I noted an increase in media coverage centered on the time of presidential visits on behalf of Senate candidates in 2002. Theoretically, the same should be true, possibly to a greater degree, when the president visits a lower profile House district.

light of their perception of the economic impact of the president's job performance (Jacobson and Kernell, 1983; Tufte, 1975, 1978).

Two problems with this theoretical approach are immediately evident. The first is that many voters simply do not have enough stored political knowledge to make an informed decision about the president's job performance and how it relates to the overall economic picture. The lack of stored political knowledge leads these voters back to their original predispositions and the casting of ballots based on heuristics, such as party identification, if they bother to vote at all. Those at the top of the knowledge pyramid are not likely to be swayed by economic conditions anyway due to their higher level of political information, which leads them to dismiss information that contrasts with their deeply rooted ideological position. The election then hinges upon those with moderate levels of political information. In seriously dark economic times we should expect to see these voters abandoning the president and his party due to what is likely a unidirectional negative economic message leading them to hold the president's party responsible for the poor economy. But that leads to a second problem.

The second problem is that the president's party has lost seats in the House in *every* midterm election since 1934 except 1998 and 2002. Surely the United States economy was not in the doldrums at every midterm election since 1934! In fact, in the seven midterm elections between 1982 and 2006, the economy was officially in a recession during the year of the midterm election only once, in 1982. In the other midterm years contained in this study, the economy was growing at or above average levels so it seems unlikely that economic factors are to blame for the seat losses experienced by the president's party in every case. Thus, citizen evaluations of presidential job performance may explain why presidential co-partisans fare poorly when the economic news is constantly bad but they offer no explanation for why a

president's party has a terrible showing during relatively good economic times, such as the Democratic losses in 1994. Additionally, referenda theories of presidential co-partisan performance during midterm elections lack any empirical account of the impact of a presidential appearance on behalf of a co-partisan. Perhaps a president can mitigate or eliminate the losses his party may suffer during the midterm elections by engaging in an extensive campaign on behalf of his co-partisans?

Retrospective Voting

We do know that some, but not all, voters engage in retrospective evaluations of political parties and presidential administrations, which informs their perception of candidates in the current electoral contest (Fiorina, 1977, 1981). However, much of the campaign-related research previously discussed indicates that the majority of voters lack the political knowledge to engage in such complex evaluations before deciding whether to vote and for whom to vote (Lazarsfeld et al, 1940; Campbell et al, 1960; Converse, 1964). Yet, a significant portion of the electorate may possess just enough information to make their vote choice during a midterm election based on their perception of the president's performance in office. For most voters, party identification and incumbency are far better predictors of their votes in congressional elections than are judgments based on presidential job approval ratings (Campbell 1960; Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Cover 1983). However, the impact of a popular president making an appearance on behalf of a candidate in a congressional midterm election has yet to be thoroughly investigated. I argue that presidents associate voter choices for Congress with their approval of the president's job performance. Therefore, presidents are expected to strategically allocate appearances in midterm

contests to states and districts where they are most popular in an effort to parlay their popularity into seats in Congress.

Assuming that presidents strategically allocate their campaign visits to the districts where they are most popular and expect to receive the greatest benefit for themselves and their party, we should expect increased turnout of voters loyal to the president's party in districts visited by the president. Indeed, Jacobson (2003) argues that increased turnout by Republican loyalists in 2002 was one of the keys to the historic Republican victory in the 2002 midterm elections. Nevertheless, Jacobson does not provide any empirical evidence that turnout actually increased in districts won by Republican candidates. This dissertation will fill that gap in the literature by analyzing voter turnout in each congressional district visited by a president during the midterm elections from 1982-2006.

In the midterm elections of 1998 and 2002, the president's party gained seats in the House of Representatives. This led some scholars to ask questions about the role played by the president during the midterm election and what, if any, effect his role had on the election. The existing literature examining presidential activity during midterm elections generally falls into one of two categories. The first category examines presidential activity seeking to address questions about whether or not presidential visits are strategically allocated, and, if so, on what basis. The second category of research assumes that presidential visits are strategically selected and seeks to understand what effect the visits had on the elections.

President Bush and the 2002 Midterm Election

Recent research into the midterm congressional election of 2002 attributes the seat gains realized by the Republican Party to extensive campaigning by George W. Bush, the impact of the 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., and the geographical location of several key races for the U.S. Congress. According to Gary Jacobson (2003, 19), "Bush's near-universal approval among Republicans, his energetic fundraising and frenzied last-minute campaigning in competitive states…put Republicans over the top." The primary explanation is that Bush's campaign efforts produced increased turnout of partisans looking to ensure support in Congress for the president's agenda. While turnout was certainly higher nationwide in 2002 as compared with previous midterm elections, there is little empirical support for the idea that this increase was responsible for the Republican victories in 2002 (Statistical Abstract, 2003)

In contrast, Campbell (2003) argues that the result of the 2002 midterm congressional election should not have surprised anyone. He attributes the gains to the fact that the out-party (the Democrats) received a plurality of the popular vote in the 2000 presidential election, the effects of partisan district realignments after 2000, the nearly equal partisan balance between Democrats and Republicans in the country, and the unusual popularity of President Bush.[3] Each of these variables played a significant role in determining the outcome of the 2002 midterm election, at least according to Campbell. However, Campbell does not address the issue of President Bush's campaign visits nor their effects.

Are Presidential Campaign Visits Strategic?

[3] In effect, had Al Gore Jr. won the presidency in 2000, the Democrats would have controlled the White House and the Republican victories in 2002 would be seen as just part of the historic pattern of seat losses by the party in the White House.

Though President Bush and his predecessors had actively campaigned for many of their fellow partisans during midterm elections, it remains unclear what distinguished the candidates whom the president campaigned for from those candidates for whom he did not campaign. Recent scholarship has begun to investigate this question more fully. One possibility is that presidents strategically allocate their visits as rewards for those who had faithfully supported their legislative agenda in the previous Congress.

Vaughn (2004) asked this question while examining presidential campaigning in midterm Senate elections from 1990-1998. Vaughn explores the idea that the president "rewards" a member of the Senate who supports his legislative agenda by campaigning for her reelection in the congressional midterm election. Alternatively, the president may "punish" a member of the Senate for failing to support his legislative agenda by withholding a campaign appearance in the midterm election. Either way, Vaughn finds little support for this hypothesis and suggests that presidential campaign appearances in midterm elections on behalf of members of the Senate may not be as strategic as some scholars presume. However, Vaughn's observations are limited to three U.S. Senate midterm elections (1990, 1994, and 1998) in which the president campaigned for a total of six senators. Focusing on the House of Representatives, I expand upon Vaughn's observations and utilize data from 1982 through 2006 from the U.S. House to examine presidential visits to congressional districts, identifying those factors that increase the likelihood of a presidential visit, thus addressing an existing gap in the scholarly literature.

More recently, Bryan and McClurg (2009) look at President Bush's campaign visits on behalf of candidates for the U.S. Senate in 2002 and 2006. Bryan and McClurg ask what criteria the president used in deciding for whom to campaign in each of these midterm elections. They

hypothesize that presidential appearances are likely to be a function of several variables, including previous legislative support, competitiveness of the race, incumbency, and presidential popularity (nationally and within the particular state in the most recent presidential election). They find, as expected, Bush's visits in both 2002 and 2006 were targeted at the most competitive races and that he was more likely to appear for an incumbent than for a challenger. For 2002, Bryan and McClurg find that previous legislative support played little role in determining which states Bush visited but the opposite is true in 2006. Essentially, when Bush was most popular (2002) he was more willing to take a chance and campaign for a Senate candidate with a lower ideology score than when he was less popular (2006) and allocated his visits to Senate incumbents with more conservative ideologies.[4] Bryan and McClurg also find that Bush made fewer appearances in 2006 than in 2002, as their popularity indicator predicts.

The 'Dress Rehearsal' Hypothesis

If presidents are not rewarding or punishing members of their own party or the opposition for legislative support, or lack thereof, what else might explain the expenditure of time, energy, and other limited resources by presidents during midterm elections? One examination of presidential activity in midterm elections suggests that presidents are primarily concerned with their own reelection when scheduling campaign appearances. Sure, the president may hope to influence the outcome of the election and help his fellow partisan win a congressional election but that is not the primary goal (Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty, 2003). Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty develop a model predicting where a president will campaign based on

[4] As expected, all of his visits were on behalf of Senators in competitive races.

presidential approval ratings, economic conditions, and the competitive nature of congressional races within a state. In this view, the midterm election is a "dress-rehearsal" for the reelection campaign two years hence. The general idea is that presidential activity during a midterm election is not Congress-centered, rather it is self-centered. While this may be true during a president's first term, it cannot explain presidential campaign visits on behalf of members of Congress during his second term.

A State-Centered Approach

Yet another approach to predicting presidential campaign appearances during midterm congressional elections focuses on the president's popularity in a given state. Viewing presidential activity in midterm elections as a function of several national level variables, including the partisan division of the previous Congress and the ideological polarization of Congress, Hoddie and Routh (2004) find that presidential activity in midterm congressional elections is strategically designed with a focus on states with the highest combination of competitive races for Senate, House, and Governor. Other variables such as the partisan division of Congress or ideological polarization do not seem to affect the president's choice of where to campaign during the midterm election. According to Hoddie and Routh, the president's primary concern appears to be securing the election of as many of his fellow partisans as possible to individual statehouses and the U.S. Congress. Their conclusion strongly supports the strategic nature of presidential midterm campaign visits.

Nevertheless, the research design employed by Hoddie and Routh fails to address some key questions. It does not tell us anything about the individuals for whom the president

campaigned, whether a presidential visit leads to a successful election of his fellow partisan, or how the president's activities affect his legislative prospects for the next two years. Additionally, Hoddie and Routh identify races as competitive using a post-hoc evaluation developed by Mayhew (1974) and Jacobson (1987), which labels a race as competitive if the winner received fifty-five percent or less of the popular vote in the previous election. Declaring a race competitive *ex post facto* may obfuscate the effect of presidential campaign appearances by including races that became competitive because of presidential activity. It may also lead to the exclusion of races that turned out to be non-competitive due to presidential involvement. Therefore, my analysis will rely on projections of races expected to be competitive, as I discuss in more detail in chapter 3.

Strategic Choices and the Effect on Candidate Vote-Share

Another group of researchers asked whether President Bush's 2002 midterm campaign visits were strategically allocated among his fellow partisans and, if so, what effect they had on the candidates share of the two-party vote in the races Bush visited (Keele, Fogarty, and Stimson, 2004). First, they identify all the races President Bush visited in 2002. Second, they analyzed the characteristics of these races compared with the races Bush did not visit in 2002. From their analysis Keele, et al., conclude that President Bush strategically allocated his visits in 2002 to competitive congressional districts. Further, these visits were allocated to the states and districts where he was most popular and his candidate was most likely to win.

Breaking races into one of seven categories based on how the race was rated by *The Cook Political Report* in August prior to the election, Keele, et al., compare the expected vote share of

Republican candidates in each category to the actual vote share received by Republican candidates in districts Bush visited.[5] Keele, et al., find that candidates receiving a visit from Bush in 2002 received approximately a .55% smaller share of the of the two-party vote than candidates not receiving such a visit.[6] However, Keele and colleagues do not provide any information as to the breakdown of the vote share by race classification. In the end, Keele, et al., conclude that Bush's visits in 2002 were tilted toward districts favoring Republican candidates who were likely to win anyway. This dissertation will investigate presidential campaign visits to U.S. House districts between 1982 and 2006 to address the question regarding the strategic nature of campaign visits. I also analyze the vote share received by the president's candidate and compare that with the vote share received by candidates of the same party in races the president did not visit.

Beyond Coattails: President Bush and the 2002 Midterm House Elections

Herrnson and Morris (2007) look a President Bush's campaign visits in 2002 on behalf of candidates for the House of Representatives, reaching the conclusion that the president and his staff strategically allocated the president's visits to the congressional districts where they were most likely to produce a successful result.[7] Presidential visits in 2002 were directed primarily to competitive congressional districts, as expected. The president was also more likely to appear for an incumbent Republican or in a district with an open seat being vacated by a Republican

[5] Expected vote share is calculated as the average share of the vote received by all Republicans falling into each specific category. It is unclear from their analysis whether the figures for districts visited by the president are included when calculating the average for each category.

[6] My own preliminary analysis of the 2002 midterm election indicates that candidates whose districts Bush visited did receive a higher share of the two-party vote than candidates in districts he did not visit when the sample is restricted to the most competitive races. Obviously, the data would need to be analyzed for Democratic candidates in midterm election years when the president was a Democrat.

[7] Herrnson and Morris consider all presidential appearances during the calendar year 2002 as a visit, whether a fundraiser, speech, or public rally.

than he was to appear on behalf of a challenger. They also found that presidential visits targeted districts that were competitive for the president in 2000 and avoided those districts he won or lost by significant margins. This finding adds some credence to Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson-Crotty's 'dress rehearsal' hypothesis as the president could have been shoring up support for his reelection bid while working to elect his fellow partisans. Finally, Herrnson and Morris conclude that presidential visits in 2002 had a significant impact on a Republican candidate's chance for victory. The effect was more pronounced for incumbents or Republicans running in open seat races than for challengers seeking to unseat a Democrat.

Presidential Campaigning in Midterm U.S. Senate Races

As shown above, the conventional wisdom among political scientists has been that presidential campaigning in midterm congressional elections makes little or no difference in the outcome of congressional races (but see Herrnson and Morris, 2007). A simple look at the win/loss rates for Senate candidates from 1966-1986 leads many to conclude that presidential appearances on behalf of Senate candidates accomplish little (Cohen, et al, 1991). The Cohen study examined presidential campaigning on behalf of Senate candidates from 1966 to 1986. During this period, they identified one hundred and ninety-nine (199) races for the U.S. Senate in which both parties fielded a candidate. The incumbent president made a campaign appearance in ninety of those races with the president's fellow partisan winning thirty-one of those contests (34.4%). In races where the president did not campaign, one hundred and nine, his fellow partisan won the election in forty-five of those races (41.3%). This might lead to the conclusion that presidential campaign appearances are more of a hindrance than a help to prospective

members of Congress. However, this conclusion fails to take into account candidate strength, or whether the candidate for whom the president campaigned was an incumbent, a challenger, or whether the seat was open. In short, did the candidate the president campaigned for expect to win or lose? If the candidate was expected to lose but actually won more than a third of those races then the effect of a presidential appearance could be quite substantial. An examination of each of these variables could lead to different conclusions. In my examination of House races I will control for each of these variables.

Senate races may not be the proper subject to analyze the impact of presidential campaigning since, unlike many congressional districts, states generally are not homogeneous, i.e., either all Democratic or all Republican. Rather, most states tend to be shades of purple. For example, the state of Mississippi is often thought of as a solid Republican state. Yet, some parts of the state are solidly Democratic, such as the Delta and portions of the Gulf Coast. An appearance by a Republican President in Jackson, Mississippi, the centerpiece of the only Republican district in Mississippi, is likely to have a different effect on voters than an appearance in Yazoo City, Mississippi, which is largely African-American and sits in the center of a strong Democratic congressional district. Additionally, a presidential visit on behalf of a Senate candidate may only generate headlines and attention in a small part of a state, the part he actually visits. A visit by a Democratic President to Seattle may generate some news coverage and attention there but is unlikely to have much effect on citizens in Spokane or in Eastern Washington. Because the partisan composition of a state may vary from one area to another, such as in Mississippi or Washington, the observable effect of a presidential visit on behalf of a candidate for the Senate may be large in one area but muted on a statewide basis. Thus, studying

presidential visits at the congressional district level should provide us with a better set of data to measure the effects of these visits.

Another reason a focus on success rate is a poor evaluation of impact is that this narrow focus fails to address issues such as candidate strength, campaign spending, incumbency, and other exogenous variables that may influence the outcome of an election (Jacobson 1978; Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Jacobson, Kernell, and Lazarus 2004). Senate races generally tend to be more competitive and better financed than House races, but the incumbent re-election rate remains substantial in the Senate, averaging between 85 and 90 percent of incumbents achieving reelection in any given year. The more competitive nature of
Senate races make an in-depth examination of presidential influence somewhat less tedious than a similar examination at the congressional district level, where most races are not competitive (Mayhew 1974; Ansolabehere, Brady, and Fiorina 1992; but see also Jacobson 1990). Additionally, there are no more than 34 Senate seats up for election at a time while there are 435 House seats up for election each cycle.

The Keys to Victory: Vote Choice and Voter Turnout

For any candidate to successfully win an election to the U.S. House of Representatives, two related components are absolutely essential. The first is for the candidate to receive more votes than any of his or her opponents. Achieving this requires a candidate to expend significant sums of money on advertising, campaign appearances, staff salaries, and voter mobilization efforts (Rosenstone and Hansen, 2002). The second is to get those citizens to actually cast a ballot on election day. After all, it doesn't matter how many supporters one has if they don't show up on election day!

As shown above, most voters' minds are already made up long before the electoral season begins and the candidates have filed to run for office. The ensuing campaign is not fought to persuade this voter but rather to reassure her that she has selected the right candidate. The campaign serves only to confirm the voter's existing predispositions, not change them. For those voters who have yet to make a final decision as election day draws near the information generated by the campaign, if the voter is exposed to it, receives it, and accepts it, will likely be responsible for the success or failure of the candidate's electoral bid, at least in the most competitive electoral contests. One component of the information generated by the campaign may be the endorsement of the candidate by the president as it sends a signal to undecided voters that the candidate has the president's approval. Of course, this may work either for or against the candidate depending upon the disposition of the voter, which is why I argue that presidents carefully select the districts in which they choose to appear.

The flip side to voter choice is, of course, voter turnout. It makes no difference how many citizens are persuaded that a candidate is the right choice for Congress if those same citizens are not motivated to vote. Citizens choose to vote for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, a desire to make a difference, civic duty, or simply due to peer pressure (Putnam, 1993; Campbell, 2006). Some may vote to demonstrate their support for a particular candidate or their dislike of another candidate. A midterm election contest that is highly competitive is more likely to draw more citizens to the polls than an uncompetitive election (Key, 1966; Phillips & Blackman, 1975; Gilliam, 1985; Franklin, 2004). Dawson and Zinser (1976) find that a simultaneous Senate election boosts turnout while Conway (1981) finds that a simultaneous gubernatorial election depresses turnout. Thus, many factors contribute to the level of turnout in midterm House elections. While it is clear that many citizens are not as motivated to vote during

midterm congressional elections as they are during presidential elections, scholars have yet to address the question of whether an appearance by the president in a competitive race promotes increased turnout on Election Day. Normatively speaking, the more citizens participate in a democratic society, the more power they should retain in choosing their representatives. If a presidential visit has no other effect on an election than to boost voter turnout it would still be a good thing for a democratic polity.

Towards a theory of presidential activity in midterm elections

The majority of congressional districts are considered 'safe' for the incumbent party in most midterm elections, for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, gerrymandering, lack of a quality challenger, superior fundraising ability, name recognition, a record of service to constituents, and the ideological composition of the district. In an average midterm election CQ Weekly rates a little less than ten percent of the seats in the House as competitive. The well-known incumbency advantage (Mayhew, 1974) persists even during so-called "wave" elections such as 1994 and 2006. Simply put, most incumbent members of the House who seek re-election are re-elected. Those who are likely to lose usually choose to retire rather than face a tough re-election battle that they may ultimately lose (Jacobson, 1989). Given the aforementioned costs to a president in time, energy, and political capital, I argue that presidents will direct the bulk of their appearances during midterm congressional elections toward those districts viewed most likely to feature a competitive House race in the upcoming midterm election. Logically, it makes little sense for a president to expend limited resources on behalf of co-partisans who are seeking election in "safe" districts. Thus,

H_1: Presidential campaign appearances during midterm congressional elections are more likely to be allocated to competitive U.S. House districts than to "safe" U.S. House districts.

More specifically, presidential campaign appearances are attempts by presidents to mobilize their supporters to get out and vote for candidates whom the president supports, perhaps minimizing or eliminating the typical seat loss that occurs for the president's party in the U.S. House during a midterm congressional election. While some voters in nearly every congressional district will be supportive of the president, presidential popularity is not uniform across all congressional districts. Some districts are far more favorable to the president than others. Thus, I argue that a president will focus his efforts not only upon competitive congressional districts, but specifically upon those he carried in the previous presidential election.

H_2: Presidential visits during a midterm election will be more likely to occur in districts carried by the president in the previous election than in districts carried by the president's opponent in the previous election.

While merely the presence of a competitive race for Congress should increase the likelihood of the president making a campaign appearance for a fellow partisan, it alone is not enough to explain the pattern of presidential activity during midterm elections. Presidents don't campaign in every competitive district. Nor do they campaign in every competitive district that they carried two years earlier. Rather, presidents select a handful of districts in which to employ their considerable campaign skills on behalf of their fellow partisans. Why does a president choose to make a campaign appearance for a fellow partisan embroiled in a hotly contested race

while foregoing an appearance for another partisan in a similar situation? As I discussed earlier, the vast majority of incumbents are relatively secure when seeking reelection. However, when a seat becomes open the incumbency advantage often evaporates (Jacobson, 1987). Among the many reasons a president may choose to campaign for a co-partisan in a competitive race is the desire to hold an open seat already belonging to his party or to add a seat to his party's delegation in Congress by taking an open seat from the opposition. Thus, I state the following hypothesis:

H_3: Presidential visits are more likely to occur in districts featuring an open seat than in districts featuring an incumbent seeking re-election.

Yet, not every district featuring an open seat race is vulnerable to a party switch. Though becoming somewhat more competitive without an incumbent in the race, most districts still favor one party or the other. Indeed, most members of the House serve in districts that also voted for the presidential candidate of their party two years earlier. For example, in the 111th Congress, only 83 of the 435 members of the House represent districts that voted for the opposite party's candidate for president in 2008 (Cook, 2010). Thirty-four of those are Republicans serving in districts carried by President Barack Obama. If a presidential visit is strategically designed to maintain or add to a president's congressional delegation he is most likely to target those districts represented by the opposite party in which he enjoyed popular support two years earlier. Many of these districts will not be competitive in the ensuing midterm election and will likely be of little concern to the president. However, some of these seats may have become open since the president's election for a variety of reasons. Such is the case in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District, now rated as a tossup, after the death of incumbent Democrat John

Murtha, who had been re-elected sixteen times in a district with a slight GOP tilt (CQ Politics, 2010). A president's desire to protect his party's open seats in the House or take an open seat from the opposition party may lead a president to visit friendly congressional districts with open seat races. Thus, when considering a visit to a district with an open seat, I hypothesize that:

> *H_4: Presidents are more likely to make a visit to a congressional district with an open seat that the president carried in the previous presidential election than to a district with an open seat that the president did not carry in the previous presidential election.*

Finally, presidents seek to get the most "bang for their buck." Often times there may be a competitive House race in progress when a president visits a district but there may also be a heated Senate race and/or gubernatorial election on the same ballot drawing the president to the district or state. I expect that presidents are more likely to visit those districts which feature a competitive race for the House as well as at least one other contested race than they are to visit a district that has only a competitive race for the House of Representatives.

> *H_5: Presidential visits are more likely to be allocated to congressional districts carried by the president that feature higher level competitive races than to districts carried by the president featuring only a competitive House race.*

Additionally, a previous limited examination of presidential activity during midterm congressional elections argues that presidents are most likely to visit the states with the most electoral votes. The general idea is that presidential visits are a dress rehearsal for the next presidential election. In this case, the president is either trying to create goodwill for himself when he seeks re-election or goodwill for the presidential candidate representing his party in the

next election. I will subject this argument to empirical scrutiny by testing the following hypothesis:

> *H_6: Presidents are more likely to allocate midterm campaign visits to states with greater numbers of electoral votes than to states with lower numbers of electoral votes.*

Finally, another possibility, if presidents are allocating campaign visits to congressional districts based on their electoral significance for the presidency, we should expect to see the lion's share of visits concentrated in the districts within states that were most competitive in the prior presidential election between the president and his opponent. To measure this, I include the absolute margin between the president's share of the vote and his opponent's share of the vote in the state in the prior presidential election. Thus, if presidents are using midterm campaign appearances to shore up their support for their next presidential campaign (or build party support in the event it is a 2nd midterm):

> *H_7: Presidents are more likely to visit congressional districts in states that are expected to be the most competitive in the next presidential election than to visit congressional districts in states not expected to be competitive in the next presidential election.*

The Effects of Presidential Visits

Having identified how and where presidents choose to allocate their campaign appearances during congressional midterm elections, I now turn to a more detailed examination of presidential campaign activity and the consequences thereof. I have already briefly discussed

why a president may expend time, energy, and resources on behalf of a fellow partisan. A president may choose to employ his limited resources to campaign for a fellow partisan to enhance the likelihood that his administration will be able to pursue its political agenda and prevent the opposition party from setting the agenda. That is most likely to occur if his party controls at least one chamber of Congress, and preferably both chambers. If the president's efforts are successful, more members of Congress will share the president's party affiliation and, theoretically, policy preferences, particularly when party polarization is high. If the president's party controls Congress it should lead to smoother passage for the president's legislative agenda.[8] President Kennedy's words in 1962 are as relevant today as they were then. To move a nation in one direction or the other a president must have support for his agenda in Congress. Lacking this support, a president is apt to have considerable difficulty achieving his policy preferences.

Presidential Visits and the Electorate

A few other considerations are in order here regarding the study of presidential visits in midterm elections. Examining presidential appearances on behalf of a fellow partisan is important to study as it may enhance our knowledge regarding the effect of these appearances on things such as media coverage, fundraising, candidate vote share, and voter turnout. The effect of presidential appearances on media coverage and fundraising is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, in the 2002 midterm elections, local media coverage of races for the U.S.

[8] Note, however, that this is not a guarantee. President Clinton's Democrats controlled both chambers of Congress from 1993-95 and he was unable to secure a floor vote on his proposed healthcare reform package.

Senate increased dramatically in the days surrounding a presidential visit[9]. Barrett & Peake (2007), though not studying campaign appearances, find that local media coverage of presidential visits tends to be more favorable and thorough than national media coverage. Eshbaugh-Soha (2008) finds that local media coverage of the presidency is more frequent and favorable in areas with greater support of the president. Though not studying a midterm election, some scholars (Jacobson, Kernell, & Lazarus, 2004) found that President Clinton's campaign appearances on behalf of Democratic candidates for Congress in 2000 contributed significantly to the ability of those candidates to raise money by sending signals of candidate viability and presidential approval to prospective donors. If presidents are visiting districts more favorable to them then the information flow from the local media will presumably tilt in favor of the president's co-partisan as well.

I expect to find two measurable effects on the election related to the presidential visit. The first is rather straightforward. Simply put, candidates for whom the president makes an appearance should receive a greater share of the two-party vote than their fellow partisans in similar situations for whom the president does not campaign. In other words, a presidential appearance should generate greater interest among the party faithful to get out and vote for the president's fellow partisan. By strategically allocating presidential visits to friendly congressional districts presidents may also hope to engage sympathetic independents and weak partisans who normally vote only in presidential election years. If the president is able to sufficiently motivate these voters to get out and vote while persuading them to vote for his co-

[9] While conducting research for another paper, I compiled a database of local news references to Senate races in the 2002 midterm elections. I noted a sharp increase in the number of stories devoted to the race shortly before and after a presidential visit.

partisan his efforts will have been successful, even if the candidate does not win the election, perhaps by making the election closer than it might have been without a presidential visit. Thus,

> *H_8: Candidates receiving a presidential visit are expected to receive a greater share of the two-party vote than candidates who do not receive a presidential visit.*

Presidential Visits and Voter Turnout

The mere presence of a competitive electoral race usually results in higher levels of voter interest and voter turnout (Gilliam Jr, 1985). I expect that when the President of the United States comes to town we should see a surge of voter interest in the race. This is likely a result of increased media coverage surrounding the president's visit and the awareness of the upcoming election and the issues involved generated by media coverage of these visits, though such an analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Visits may enhance a candidate's fundraising ability and also energize a candidate's campaign staff, potentially leading to better mobilization efforts to encourage potential voters to actually get to the polls.

Voter turnout in presidential election years typically ranges between fifty-five and sixty percent while voter turnout during midterm elections often falls to the mid-thirties (Clerk, 2009). If presidential campaign appearances during midterm elections are able to stimulate voter interest, mobilize supporters, and energize campaign workers there should be a discernible effect on voter turnout in these typically low interest elections. I expect that a presidential appearance will result in a reduction in the decline in voter turnout typically witnessed in these districts when compared with the prior presidential election. The primary effect of a presidential visit to a congressional district on voter turnout should be to rally his supporters and encourage them to

vote for his co-partisan. If he is successfully able to mobilize and motivate his supporters to turn out and vote on election day, my analysis ought to detect a difference in the decline in voter turnout from the previous presidential election. Thus,

> *H_9: The difference in voter turnout between a presidential election and the ensuing midterm election is expected to be smaller in districts where the president campaigns than in districts where he does not campaign.*

In sum, I have argued that presidential appearances on behalf of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives are strategically selected to make the best use of the limited resources each president has at his disposal. These resources include the president's time, energy, and political goodwill. The primary goal of a president when he expends these resources is to help a fellow partisan win a seat in the next Congress. Presumably, a Congress with more of a president's fellow partisans is more likely to support his legislative program than a hostile Congress will be. That primary goal will not be achieved in every case but that should not be construed to mean that presidential visits are neither strategic nor useful.

In addition to the strategic nature of presidential appearances, there should be some measurable effects of campaign appearances on the voting public. I have identified two primary effects I think should be evident in the data. The first is that candidates in competitive races for whom the president campaigns should poll better on Election Day than their counterparts in competitive races for whom the president did not campaign, whether they win the election or not. Second, if presidential appearances are effective tools to mobilize voters we should expect to see

evidence of that through a reduction in the turnout decline from the previous presidential election[10]

Conclusion

Two schools of thought run through much of the campaign oriented literature. The conventional school appeals to early research and argues that campaigns do not have much effect on voter choices and election outcomes (Lazarsfeld et al 1948; Campbell et al 1960; Converse 1964). The revisionist school argues that political campaigns do have discernible effects on vote choice and election outcomes but recognizes the difficulty measuring the precise impact of those effects because of factors such as 'noise', party identification, and ideology (Zaller 1992; Holbrook 1996; Campbell 2000). I lean more toward the revisionists than the conventional school in this dissertation, while recognizing that the effects of presidential campaign visits are likely to be difficult to discern for the reasons already stated. Presidential campaign visits and their effects on congressional elections are an under researched topic by political scientists, though the historic gains by the Republican Party in 2002 certainly sparked more scholarly interest in the subject. This dissertation will flesh out and develop more fully the role of the 'president as congressional campaigner' and hopefully provide answers to some of the questions regarding the effects of presidential visits during midterm congressional elections.

CHAPTER 3

[10] The best measure of this would be comparing voter turnout in the election in which the president appeared with the historic level of turnout in midterm elections for the congressional district. However, such data is not maintained and is virtually impossible to tabulate due to factors such as competitiveness, redistricting, and changing population figures for districts that are not uniformly available.

Data and Methods

In chapter one I began to examine the involvement of presidents in midterm congressional elections. Every modern president has devoted his time and energy, to one degree or another, during midterm congressional elections on behalf of his fellow partisans. The goal, I theorize, is to help elect a Congress amenable to the president and his agenda. His agenda may include the confirmation of his appointees to the Supreme Court or other administrative posts, approval of treaties, and easing the path his legislative program takes through Congress, in addition to numerous other aims that may vary from one president to another. In constructing a theory of presidential midterm activity I posed several hypotheses. It is helpful to review those hypotheses now.

Presidential campaign appearances during midterm elections are not simply a collection of randomly scattered events. Rather, they are presumed to be strategically allocated to best serve the president's goals, as well as those of his co-partisans. I begin by examining the factors that are most likely to predict a presidential appearance on behalf of a co-partisan. His fellow partisans, as well as the general public, consider the president the head of his party. Depending on his party affiliation, the president is either the most well known Democrat or most well known Republican. The electorate also tends to equate a president's political preferences with those of the party he represents. Thus, if a president desires voters to elect members of his own party to Congress, it is logical for a president to assume the role I refer to as 'campaigner-in-chief.'

As I discussed in chapter one, all modern presidents have actively campaigned on behalf of members of their party seeking election to the United States House of Representatives, in one form or another. If every midterm election was fought under the same conditions with either

party having an equal chance to control the House we might expect more or less the same effort to be expended by each president during his midterm election(s). But, alas, all elections are not equal nor is every seat in the House equally winnable for either party in a given midterm election. Simply stated, the majority of seats in the United States House of Representatives are relatively safe for one party or the other for a variety of reasons beyond the scope of this dissertation. This fact is expected to affect the strategic calculations each president makes about how much time and effort he will devote to campaign appearances and for whom he will campaign during the midterm election. Succinctly stated, presidents are expected to schedule campaign appearances in the congressional districts with the most competitive races in any given year.

The first few hypotheses deal with where a president is most likely to campaign during a midterm congressional election. As stated above, the majority of seats in the House of Representatives are considered safe for the incumbent party. Thus, I expect presidents will not expend their resources on behalf of candidates running in safe districts. It makes little sense for a president to expend his time and energy campaigning on behalf of a candidate for Congress who appears certain to win, unless the president simply desires a good win/loss ratio regardless of his actual effect on the outcome of the race. An additional possibility is that presidential visits are designed to reward those who have supported his legislative program in the past while visits are withheld from co-partisans with less stellar records of legislative support. As discussed in the previous chapter, Vaughn (2004) cast serious doubt upon this possibility through his examination of presidential visits on behalf of Senate candidates from 1990 to 1998, which showed no significant differences in legislative support scores for those candidates who received a visit from the president versus those who did not receive such a visit.

Further, the assumption of rationality on the part of a president dictates that he direct his energy to those races where he can do the most good, not where his candidate is a sure bet. Likewise, presidents are not expected to make appearances in races where his fellow partisan stands no chance of victory. Therefore, I argue, presidents are more likely to campaign for candidates in competitive congressional districts than in non-competitive congressional districts. Of course, this assumption requires a definition of precisely what constitutes a competitive congressional district.

Identifying Competitive Congressional Districts[11]

David Mayhew popularized the standard definition of a competitive district utilized by many political scientists in an article entitled "The Case of the Vanishing Marginals" (1974). By this definition, a congressional district is considered "marginal" or competitive when the incumbent won her last election by a margin of less than ten percentage points. In essence, this means as little as a five percent swing in candidate vote share could lead to the defeat of the incumbent candidate. Mayhew noticed that the number of such congressional districts in each election had been steadily declining since the beginning of the twentieth century, making large seat swings between the parties in Congress much less probable. The decline in these "marginal" districts was largely attributed to advantages inherent to incumbency in office. Mayhew argued that incumbents used the franking privilege, federal programs, and issue taking opportunities to increase their visibility and name recognition, thus providing voters in an era of declining party

[11] For the purpose of this analysis the terms 'marginal' and 'competitive' should be considered analogous and will be used interchangeably.

affiliation with an alternative cue to help them when casting a vote. Other scholars have debated Mayhew's contentions but have nevertheless utilized his standard definition of what constitutes a 'marginal' congressional district (Jacobson 1988; Fiorina 1995).

In this dissertation, however, I reject the definition of marginality constructed by Mayhew and used by other scholars. I choose to utilize a different standard, one that provides sufficient leeway to account for endogenous or exogenous factors that could cause a congressional seat to be competitive in the current electoral cycle even though it was not 'marginal' in the previous election. I used the CQ Weekly pre-election forecast, which categorizes races as either safe for one party, favoring one party, leaning toward a party, or having no clear favorite (tossup). For this dissertation, I chose the latest CQ Weekly pre-election forecast published prior to Election Day. Typically, this forecast appears in late September or early October, at least a month prior to election day. Using the pre-election forecast closest to Election Day allows the inclusion of the most competitive races based on late developing circumstances affecting the categorization of a race. It also permits the exclusion of any effect a presidential visit may have had on the classification of the race.[12]

CQ uses various criteria to categorize each race, including the margin of victory in the previous election, whether the seat is open, or if district lines have been redrawn since the previous election, as well as the strength of the candidates, fundraising, scandals, etc. This allows a race that may not have been competitive in the prior election to be considered in this analysis when it might otherwise have been excluded based on the 'marginality' criteria alone. Additionally, this method allows the inclusion of races that unexpectedly become competitive

[12] My survey of presidential appearances indicated that the earliest date which a president made a campaign appearance was September 29 while the latest date was the night prior to the election.

during the campaign period leading up to the midterm election, though such a race would be categorized by its pre-election rating.

For each congressional midterm election included in this study a database containing all 435 congressional districts was assembled. A dummy variable was created for each congressional district and coded as "0" if the district was not expected to be competitive and "1" if the district was expected to be competitive. Additional dummy variables were created for each of the CQ categories utilized in the dissertation (leans president, leans opponent, tossup). If a district was rated as falling into the category it received a "1" while those not fitting the criteria received a "0". Coding the congressional districts in this way permits testing the hypothesis that presidential campaign activity during a midterm congressional election is more likely to occur in competitive congressional districts as opposed to those that are not competitive. Additionally, creating dummy variables for each CQ category permits me to test each category separately to discern the effect of a presidential visit to a congressional district.

Other important variables in my model include the partisan makeup of a congressional district (the Cook PVI), whether the president carried the district in the previous presidential election, whether an incumbent is seeking re-election or the seat is open, and which party controlled the seat entering the midterm election. These variables allow me to test whether presidents focus their activities on behalf of their fellow partisans involved in the most competitive races, on behalf of their fellow partisans seeking to unseat an incumbent from the opposite party, or on behalf of their fellow partisans seeking to maintain control of a seat already held by the president's party.

The primary units of analysis in the dissertation are U.S. Congressional Districts for each midterm election year from 1982 through 2006.. My overarching goal is to identify the factors

that make a presidential visit to a congressional district during a midterm election more probable. Having accomplished that, I will examine the effects a presidential visit may have on election outcomes, candidate vote-share, or voter turnout.

Identifying Presidential Visits

The next stage is to identify those races in each congressional midterm election that received a presidential campaign visit. I defined a presidential visit as any appearance with a candidate for Congress by the president during which he delivered a public address urging the election of that candidate. While it is true that presidents often engage in other types of activities on behalf of candidates, such as private fundraisers, the effects of such activities are difficult to ascertain and are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Further, for the purpose of this study, I considered the midterm election period to begin on Labor Day and end the day prior to the election, except in those states that held primary elections in September. The general election period in those states runs from the day following the primary until Election Day in November.

My primary source to identify presidential visits was *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (PPPUS). Each volume in this series provides transcripts of public speeches, addresses, and statements made by the president. I used the PPPUS to identify presidential visits on behalf of congressional candidates during midterm elections. Congressional districts receiving a visit from the president are coded as "1" since presidents do not visit many districts during the electoral season, while districts not receiving a visit are coded as "0."

The process of cataloguing presidential visits involved searching through the official papers of the presidents, the aforementioned *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*,

as posted on the website maintained by The American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I examined each entry between Labor Day and election day to determine whether the president delivered a speech that day. The PPPUS includes a brief categorization of the entry such as "presidential proclamation" or "attended a rally for Republican candidates in Minnesota." If the entry indicated the president had traveled to deliver a speech or attend a rally I examined it in more detail to determine whether it should be categorized as a visit or not. As stated above, only those entries indicating that the president appeared with and urged the election of a specific candidate by name are considered as visits for the purpose of this dissertation.

Congressional Districts Most Likely to be Visited

I have already stated that I expect to find presidential midterm campaign appearances largely focused on competitive congressional districts. In any given midterm, roughly ten to twelve percent of seats are competitive between the two major parties (Jacobsen 1988). The result is somewhere between forty-four and fifty-five competitive congressional districts in each midterm election. Due to the limited nature of presidential resources such as time and energy, not to mention presidential responsibilities, each president must choose where and for whom to make an appearance. Simply put, presidents cannot and do not make an appearance in every competitive congressional district during the midterm election. What are the strategic calculations a president and his staff use to select where to make an appearance? Are presidential appearances randomly selected from the universe of competitive races? I argue they are not random but are carefully selected based on several considerations.

First, I argue that a president is most likely to concentrate his activity in competitive congressional districts where he received a plurality of the popular vote in the previous presidential election, or was defeated by an extremely small margin. It seems unlikely that a president will spend time in congressional districts that supported his opponent in the last presidential election, though he might visit such a district if it also elected a member of the president's party to the House, and the margin between the president and his opponent was within a few percentage points. Due to the nature of presidential coattails, however, such districts are expected to be extremely rare. In order to test this hypothesis, it is necessary to include the president's vote share in each district from the previous presidential election. For these data, I rely upon CQ's *Politics in America*, which lists the presidential vote totals by congressional district for the election prior to each midterm. The president's share of the two-party popular vote is used for each congressional district from 1980 through 2004.[13] The greater a president's share of the popular vote in the previous election, the greater the likelihood of a visit is expected to be, controlling for the competitiveness of the district (i.e., I do not expect presidents to visit districts they won by large margins because those districts are likely safe for their co-partisans already). In order to create a standard measure of how well a president fared in a particular district I use the margin of victory over his opponent in the previous presidential election rather than percentage of the two-party vote received.[14]

Additionally, I use the Cook Partisan Voting Index measure of district partisanship to evaluate how favorable a district is to the president and his co-partisan, as reported by the

[13] New districts created as a result of the 1980 and 2000 censuses have no previous record of the vote share received by the president and are excluded from analysis. A total of seven districts were affected by this decision.

[14] This is primarily a result of the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections featuring a three way race that included H. Ross Perot in addition to the two major party candidates. An alternative would have been to calculate the share of the two-party vote for each district. However, I found that figure to be unreliable as often times only the percentages received by the candidates were reported with no indication of the number of votes cast.

National Journal's *Almanac of American Politics* for the midterms in 1998, 2002, and 2006. For midterm elections prior to 1998 I calculated the PVI for each district based upon data included in CQ's *Politics in America*. The PVI is calculated by averaging the presidential vote in the district over the previous two elections and then subtracting the national average received by recent candidates the same party. For example, if George W. Bush received 64% of the district vote for president in 2004 and John McCain received 61% of the district level vote for president in 2008, the district would report an average vote for Republicans of 62.5%. Now, suppose the average percentage of the nationwide vote received by Republican candidates for president in 2004 and 2008 was 48.5%. Subtracting the nationwide average from the actual district vote yields a district with a Cook PVI of R +14, indicating that, on average, Republicans earn a 14 percentage point higher share of the vote in the district than they do nationwide. I have made one modification to the Cook PVI for the data in this dataset by recalibrating the PVI to reflect whether a Democrat or Republican held the office of president at the time of the midterm. Thus, a district that that is rated D +7 with a Republican President is recalculated as -7, indicating a 7 point disadvantage for the president's party in the district. I expect presidents to visit districts with PVI ratings closest to zero with the likelihood of a visit decreasing as the PVI moves away from zero.

Two other hypotheses related to presidential appearances will also be tested. The first argues that a president will be more likely to make an appearance in a district currently controlled by the opposing party if that district supported the president in the previous presidential election. The second hypothesis related to presidential appearances argues that a president is more likely to appear in a congressional district with an open seat race if the president carried that district in the prior presidential election. I have already hypothesized that

presidents are more likely to campaign where they are more popular. It seems unlikely a president would be willing to place his prestige on the line for a member of his party holding a seat in a district where the president is personally unpopular as a loss in such a district could be viewed as a repudiation of the president and his policies, thus reducing his public prestige and power to persuade other members of Congress to support his agenda. Each district will be coded as to whether the incumbent was of the same party as the president or not. Open seats are coded as belonging to the party that last occupied the seat. The data for this variable was also obtained from CQ's *Politics in America*.

The Higher Race Hypothesis

One additional hypothesis predicting where a president is likely to devote his time and energy on behalf of a fellow partisan states that presidents are most likely to be drawn to districts with other important races on the ballot, such as a hard fought race for the United States Senate or a battle to control the Governor's Mansion. The presence of either, or both, of these ought to make a president more likely to appear for his fellow partisan, perhaps combining a trip to the congressional district with a speech for a candidate for the U.S. Senate or Governor's Office. Each congressional district will include a variable coded as "0" if no higher-level race existed or "1" if such a race also appeared on the ballot during the midterm election. A separate category will be created for each level of higher race on the ballot (i.e., senate or gubernatorial). Further, content analysis of the presidential speeches collected from the libraries will allow me to determine whether presidential visits are solely for one candidate or if presidents might be "killing two birds with one stone" by combining appearances for candidates at multiple levels.

The analysis for each of the hypotheses discussed above will be conducted using logit regression models with presidential visits as the dependent variable and the other variables I discussed as covariates or control variables. Logit models will be estimated for each president individually (if sample size allows) and aggregately for the entire data set. I discuss the results of these models in chapter 4.

Presidential Appearances and the Electorate

The final empirical chapter in this dissertation, and potentially the most rewarding, is an examination of the effects of midterm presidential campaign appearances on the electorate. Specifically, I am interested in answering two questions. The first question I address is whether candidates receiving a campaign visit from the president performed better at the polls than their counterparts in similar electoral situations who did not receive a presidential visit. The reader will recall from the discussion of political campaigns that a key objective every politician hopes to achieve by campaigning is to convince citizens to vote for her. Without votes, achieving the electoral goal is impossible, as are the related goals of designing good public policy and gaining power (Fiorina 1977). An appearance by the President of the United States will generate significant media coverage, enhance a candidate's fundraising ability, and, theoretically, persuade more voters to support her electoral bid. I expect that the effect a president has will be closely tied to his popularity in each congressional district, as measured the Cook PVI as discussed above. As previously noted, most congressional districts are relatively safe for one or the other of the two major parties, being either deep red or deep blue (Oppenheimer 2005). But in those few somewhat purple congressional districts relatively evenly divided between the

Republicans and the Democrats, a presidential campaign appearance may serve to tip the balance in one direction or the other. A popular president campaigning in a congressional district where he is personally popular may be able to transfer some of his popularity to his fellow partisan. If so, this should be reflected in the candidate's share of the two-party vote. I will estimate the effects of presidential visits on a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote using linear regression models for each president as well as in the aggregate.

The final question I will address related to the electorate is the effect of presidential campaign appearances on voter turnout. A president might campaign for a fellow partisan for any number of reasons as stated above. One thing every president who makes a campaign appearance hopes to accomplish is to help motivate citizens to get out and vote. The choice of whether to vote or not is an individual calculus made by every rational citizen. Some citizens choose to vote based on a sense of duty, while others may weigh the benefit to be gained from voting versus the cost incurred by voting. If the benefits outweigh the costs then the citizen votes, if not then she does not. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in a full rational choice analysis of the costs and benefits of voting, it is certainly plausible to surmise that a citizen might view the opportunity to support a candidate she knows is preferred by a president she supports as a benefit to casting a vote in the midterm election. Such knowledge may also lead to a reduction in information costs for the citizen, thus increasing the likelihood of the citizen voting.

It is helpful here to recall the discussion of presidential coattails and the theory of surge and decline used to explain congressional seat losses by the president's party in midterm elections. In a nutshell, the theory of presidential coattails posits that many voters in presidential elections vote straight party tickets based on their preference for president. This leads to many

of a president's fellow partisans being elected to office on the strength of the president's showing in the national vote. The weakest among these fellow partisans then fall victim to withdrawn coattails two years later when the president is not on the ballot.

There are two competing ideas for precisely why these coattails are withdrawn. One argues that weak partisans are drawn to the polls in presidential election years but not in midterm congressional election years. The second approach argues that it is independent voters who lack the motivation to vote during midterm congressional elections rather than the weak partisans. Whatever the case may be, voter turnout tends to decline dramatically between presidential election years and congressional midterm election years. As such, one effect to be expected from presidential appearances during midterm elections would be a smaller decline in voter turnout from the prior presidential election in districts visited by the president than in districts not visited by the president.

I measure the change in voter turnout in the midterm election versus voter turnout in the previous presidential election in each district. Calculating voter turnout by congressional district is relatively straightforward but a bit imprecise due to the lack of specific data on the voting age population for each district.[15] Congressional districts more often than not reflect a cobbled together variety of disparate political interests based on geographical contiguity rather than a neatly packaged set of political entities from which one might gather political data (Winburn, 2010). In other words, congressional districts often cross many political and geographic boundaries, making population estimates somewhat more difficult than, say, a single member district contained wholly within a single county or state. The U.S. Census Bureau periodically

[15] I am aware of the controversy regarding the underestimation of voter turnout using the voting age population (VAP) versus the voting eligible population (VEP) as argued by McDonald and Popkin, 2001. Due to the lack of precise data on the VEP by congressional district, I chose to utilize the broader measure of voter turnout in this project.

reports an estimate of congressional district populations designed to reflect changes in district sizes due to population change patterns. While the data are not as precise as I would prefer, errors in estimation are likely to be randomized across all congressional districts making the data useful for my current purpose. Vote totals for each congressional district were obtained from the office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives website. I use the total votes cast for candidates for the House of Representatives in both the presidential election year and the midterm election year to calculate voter turnout for each congressional district. Dividing the total number of votes cast by the voting age population provides us with the estimate of voter turnout for the congressional district I utilized in this dissertation.

At this point it is possible a slight problem will be encountered due to the reapportionment process that occurs after each decennial census. Once the census bureau has concluded the census and reported the results it is customary for states affected by population shifts to redraw one or more district lines. It is normally the case that these redrawn districts will be in place by the time of the first congressional election of the decade (i.e., 1982, 1992, and 2002). A few exceptions do exist, such as North Carolina in the 1990's, and the mid-decade redraw in Texas for the 2000's. I discuss the handling of these cases below. In some cases, district lines may have been redrawn in such a way as to cast doubt on the validity of the turnout data for that district. In other instances, states may have created brand new districts due to gaining a seat in the House of Representatives. These new districts lack any historical data to rely upon when analyzing the effect of a presidential visit upon voter turnout. All such districts have been excluded from the ensuing analysis.

To determine whether or not to include a district's data for 1982 and 2002, I checked the CQ *Politics in America* redistricting data for significant changes to a district's boundaries since

the previous presidential election. After a careful check of the data for 1982 I decided to remove all of the districts from the analysis of voter turnout due to a lack of certainty regarding the scope of district boundary changes. As a result, I do not include an analysis of the effect of President Reagan's campaign appearances on voter turnout in 1982 or 1986.

For 2002, many of the changes were relatively minor and did not affect the validity of the voter turnout data. If significant changes to a district's boundaries occurred as a result of redistricting or the reapportionment process, the district was dropped from the analysis. To make a determination of whether or not a district's boundaries had changed significantly as a result of redistricting I relied upon data gathered by CQ and published in *CQ's Politics in America 2004: The 108th Congress*. For each congressional district CQ includes a description of the district and any changes that were made to the district following the 2000 census. If CQ's analysis indicated that the district was redrawn to include territory previously belonging to another district I excluded the district when measuring voter turnout. I also excluded districts that CQ determined had lost large portions of their previous territory, or had been redrawn to benefit a particular candidate or party. One example of such a district, Pennsylvania's 6th Congressional District, was redrawn to provide a slight partisan edge for Republican Jim Gerlach in 2002. The district was excluded from the analysis because the new district was markedly different from the old 6th district. In the end, a total of seventeen congressional districts either had no data for 2002 or were removed due to significant boundary changes during the redistricting process, or about 1/3 of all competitive districts for the year.[16]

[16] The excluded districts are AZ-1, CO-7, CT-5, FL-5 & 24, GA-3, 11, & 12, IL-19, IN-2, MD-2 & 8, MS-3, NV-3, NC-8, PA-6 and UT-2.

Finally, the strange case of the Texas redistricting scheme spearheaded by former Majority Whip Tom DeLay is sure to cause some problems. Texas gained several seats in the House after the 2000 census and new districts were created. In 2003, a new redistricting plan was proposed that would benefit the GOP by eliminating several Democratic held seats and rolling some Democratic voters in Dallas and other major metropolitan areas into heavily Republican districts. The new districts were created to ensure Republican control of the Texas delegation to the United States House of Representatives. However, none of the newly redrawn Texas districts were considered competitive in either 2002 or 2006.[17]

Controversy over the drawing of congressional district lines also erupted in the 1990s when North Carolina, redrew the lines of its congressional districts after the 1990 census. One of these, the 12th congressional district, was drawn to enhance the voting strength of North Carolina's black population. The Supreme Court declared such 'majority-minority' districts unconstitutional in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993). A series of court cases ensued and new district lines were in place for both the 1996 and 1998 elections. None of the North Carolina districts were competitive in 1998 while two districts (the 3rd and 4th) were competitive in 1994. However, the 1994 midterm elections were carried out using the same district lines as existed in 1992, thus posing no problems for my data.

As noted previously, voter turnout in midterm elections declines precipitously from voter turnout in presidential elections. Normal voter turnout in a presidential election averages

[17] After a lengthy legal battle that culminated with a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in *League of Latin American Citizens v. Perry* (2006), the new district lines were allowed to stand, with the exception of one in West Texas that the court held to be in violation of the Voting Rights Act. This case could have been problematic because the Texas Congressional District map had been redrawn following the 2000 census and the new districts were in place for the 2002 midterm elections. They were then redrawn under this plan and new districts were in place for the 2006 midterm elections, which could have affected the data for the 2006 midterm elections. Only one congressional district in Texas was considered competitive for the 2006 midterm election, the 22nd district formerly held by Majority Whip Tom DeLay, whose boundaries were unaffected by the GOP led redistricting plan. Thus, the inclusion of Texas 22nd Congressional District poses no problem for the validity of my data. Additionally, the earlier redistricting process affected none of the Texas districts deemed competitive in 2002.

between 55 and 60 percent of the voting age population. Normal voter turnout for midterm congressional elections ranges from 32 to 40 percent of the voting age population. Numerous reasons have been given for the difference in turnout between midterm elections and presidential elections, including the lack of a national component, the president, during midterm elections. By making an appearance on behalf of a fellow partisan during the midterm election the president may be able to inject that national component back into the race and encourage voters who might otherwise stay home to come out and vote for his preferred candidate. If so, one expects that the decline in voter turnout between the presidential election and the ensuing midterm election will be smaller in districts visited by the president than in districts he does not visit.

I test each of the above hypotheses using a multivariate linear regression model. After compiling the data on voter turnout for each midterm election in this study I also collect data on the economic and political conditions present at the time such as whether the country was in a recession, at war, or the president was embroiled in a political scandal. Of course, each of these are reflected to one degree or another by the president's approval rating but a specific variable identifying the presence or absence of one of these conditions could help account for fluctuations in the effect of presidential visits on voter turnout, if such effects exist. I also include additional confounding variables as controls in order to avoid overestimating the effect of presidential visits. Each race for the House of Representatives is coded as either a "1" if it is expected to be competitive (leans Democrat, leans Republican, or toss up) and "0" if not expected to be competitive (safe for one party). Other factors that could affect voter turnout include competitive races for higher offices such as the U.S. Senate or state governor. Each district is coded as "1" if there is a competitive higher race on the ticket and "0" if no competitive race

exists. Using data collected previously, I also include control variables for incumbency and open seats.

Having finished gathering the data, it is time to turn to a discussion of the results. Chapter 4 will discuss the 'who, what, and where' aspect of presidential midterm election visits, identifying the conditions necessary to expect a presidential visit to occur. Over the course of the next two chapters each midterm election will be discussed in some detail, providing a good picture of the type of activity presidents engage in on behalf of their fellow partisans, which of their fellow partisans they are most likely to campaign for, and where the president is most likely to campaign. Chapter 5 discusses the effect of presidential visits on candidate vote-share and voter turnout. The final chapter offers some conclusions from an aggregate and individual perspective as well as some implications of the findings for democratic theory and the study of campaigns and elections in general. I also discuss the implications of the data for future research and offer some insight into where President Barack Obama might be most useful to his co-partisans in the 2010 midterm election.

CHAPTER 4

Where Does the President Visit?

As Election Day neared in 2006, President George W. Bush scurried around the country to engage in a series of last minute campaign appearances on behalf of several Republican candidates for the United States House of Representatives. Time was running out for both the president and his party. The GOP had taken control of the House of Representatives in January 1995 after a stunning and virtually unpredictable sweep of the November elections a few months earlier. Though the Republican hold on the House would be tenuous for the next twelve years, it managed to withstand the reelection of President Bill Clinton in 1996, two exceptionally close election victories for George W. Bush, the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, and two wars in the Middle East. In fact, after President Bush's reelection in 2004, the Republicans held their largest majority of the twelve-year period, 232-202 over the Democrats. In speech after speech the president assured the party faithful that even though the GOP was likely to lose a few seats, the Republican majority was safe. For instance, at a rally on November 3, 2006, in Le Mars, Iowa, the president said:

> *"You know, it's amazing what happens in Washington. Some of them have already begun to measure for new drapes. [Laughter] People are already deciding how this election is going to turn out, before the people of Iowa or anywhere else have shown up to vote. You know, I'm used to that. I remember the 2004 campaign. The prognosticators said, "No way old George W. can carry Iowa." You proved them wrong. In 2004, a bunch of them in Washington were already picking out their offices in the West Wing. And then the people went to the polls, and the movers were not needed. And the same thing is going to happen this year. The people are going to go to the polls; you're going to elect a Republican Governor; and we're going to have a Republican-controlled House and Senate, and the country will be better off for it."* (Wooley and Peters, 2009)

President Bush made sixteen other campaign stops during the final two weeks leading up to the 2006 Congressional Midterm Elections, in a frantic, and ultimately futile, effort to

help his party maintain control of the House of Representatives.[18] In much the same way as 1994 was a "wave" election for the Republican Party, 2006 turned out to be a "wave" that swept many Republicans out of office and returned control of the House to the Democratic Party for the first time since 1994.

President Bush's frenetic campaign efforts in 2006 were not unusual, though he was more active on the campaign trail during both the 2002 and 2006 midterm elections than his three immediate predecessors had been. In the seven midterm elections from 1982 through 2006 presidents made a total of 81 visits to congressional districts on behalf of their co-partisans seeking election (or reelection) to the House of Representatives. During that same time frame, there were 3045 separate midterm contests for seats in the House of Representatives, plus a scattering of special elections held due to the death, retirement, or resignation of a sitting member of the House.[19] Thus, sitting presidents from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush made a campaign visit on behalf of a co-partisan in roughly 2.66 percent of all midterm congressional races during their respective presidencies. Table 4-1 displays the breakdown of these appearances for each president by midterm election. A quick look at the table might lead one to conclude that some presidents are not overly concerned with congressional midterm elections since those presidents were relatively inactive during the midterm election. A closer examination is in order here.

[18] President Bush also made numerous appearances on behalf of Senate candidates during this period. Additionally, I discuss the win/loss rate of presidents and their co-partisans in the next chapter.
[19] These special elections are excluded from this analysis as my interest at this point is solely upon midterm elections.

Table 4-1: Presidential Visits by Year, 1982-2006				
President	**Year**	**Visits**	**House Races**	**% Visited**
Reagan	1982	10	435	2.30%
	1986	1	435	0.20%
GHW Bush	1990	13	435	2.90%
Clinton	1994	14	435	3.20%
	1998	4	435	0.90%
GW Bush	2002	22	435	5.10%
	2006	17	435	3.90%
Total		**81**	**3045**	**2.66%**
Source: Compiled from Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States				

The Competitiveness Hypothesis

As indicated in chapter 1, making a presidential visit to a congressional district is costly for a president. That cost may be measured in terms of his time, his energy, his public prestige, or any combination of these and other factors. Assuming that presidents are rational actors within the political system I expect each president to engage in a rational calculation to determine where and when he will devote his time and energy on behalf of a fellow co-partisan. The initial calculation a president and his advisors are likely to make is whether or not a presidential campaign visit is likely to help his co-partisan's electoral effort. All things being equal, I would expect to find presidential visits randomly distributed throughout the universe of all races for the United States House of Representatives in a given election. All things, however, are not equal. Some House races are more competitive than others, and most congressional races are considered safe for either the Democrats or Republicans. Thus, I expect a president to focus his visits on the races where his efforts are more likely to affect the outcome of the race. Given the relative safety of most races for the House of

Representatives, there is little likelihood for a presidential visit to affect the outcome of an election on behalf of a co-partisan who is virtually certain to win or lose her race for Congress. Restating the hypothesis from chapter 2,

> *H_1: Presidential campaign appearances during midterm elections are more likely to be allocated to competitive races than to races that are not competitive.*

In order to test this hypothesis, I examined CQ Weekly's midterm election forecasts for each midterm election between 1982 and 2006 and recorded their rating for each midterm contest. CQ Weekly rates each race as either a toss-up, leaning Democratic, leaning Republican, or safe for the party currently holding that seat. I consider races falling into the former three categories to be competitive between the two major parties. This categorization produced a data set containing three hundred and forty-seven races ranked as competitive and two thousand six-hundred and ninety-eight races ranked as safe. Thus, over the twenty-four year period covered in this study, approximately 11.4% of all races for the United States House of Representatives were rated as competitive. The breakdown of these races is shown in table 4-2.

The competitiveness hypothesis states that a president is expected to devote his campaign visits to those races classified as competitive and avoid those races that are classified as safe for the party holding the seat. The data provide strong support for this hypothesis. As stated above, presidents from Reagan to George W. Bush engaged in eighty-one visits to congressional districts to campaign for their fellow partisans running for the House of Representatives. Seventy-one of these visits were to congressional districts that were rated as either a toss-up or leaning to one of the two parties. Only ten presidential visits in twenty-four years were made to congressional districts rated as safe. More than seven out of eight,

Table 4-2: Number of Competitive House Races by CQ Category, 1982-2006.				
Year	**President's Party Favored**	**Opponent Party Favored**	**Toss-Up**	**Competitive %**
1982	28	15	22	14.90%
1986	14	12	12	8.70%
1990	9	15	10	7.80%
1994	26	9	34	15.90%
1998	8	13	20	9.40%
2002	23	14	13	11.50%
2006	22	11	17	11.50%
Total	**130**	**89**	**128**	**11.40%**
Source: CQ Weekly midterm election forecasts 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006.				

or 87.7% of presidential campaign visits between 1982 and 2006 were allocated to congressional districts that had been rated as competitive by CQ Weekly, and likely by the president's advisors as well. Table 4-3 reflects the distribution of these campaign visits, both by midterm year and the CQ weekly rating.

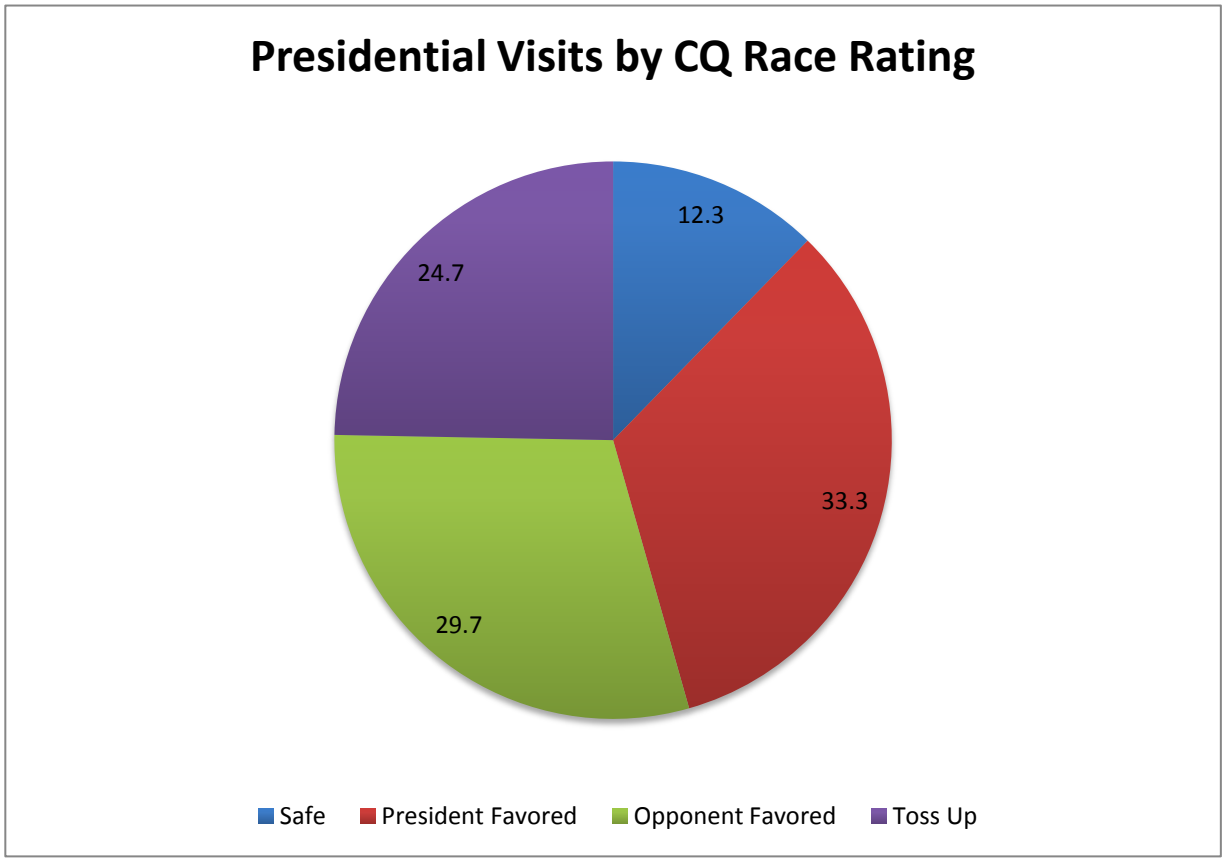
Table 4-3 shows the distribution of presidential visits by district rating. Overall, presidents have allocated an average of 33.3% of their visits to congressional districts that their co-partisan is favored to win, 29.7% to districts where the other party's candidate is favored, and 24.7% to races where no clear favorite exists. Presidents also allocated 12.3% of their campaign appearances to districts that were rated as "safe or favorable" for one party or the other by CQ Weekly (see Figure 4-1). Of the ten visits made by presidents to districts not forecast to be competitive, fewer than ten percentage points decided seven of the contests. Two others were won by candidates receiving between fifty-five and sixty percent of the vote. The other district, Pennsylvania's 2nd, was absolutely uncompetitive as President Clinton's co-partisan there received nearly 86% of the vote. Given that seven of the ten districts not forecast as competitive turned out to be competitive,

Table 4-3: Presidential Visits by CQ Race Rating						
Year	**Leans President**		**Leans Opponent**		**Tossup**	
1982	4/28	(14.3%)	0/15	(0.0%)	4/22	(18.2%)
1986	0/14	(0.0%)	1/12	(8.3%)	0/12	(0.0%)
1990	3/9	(33.3%)	6/15	(40.0%)	1/10	(10.0%)
1994	6/26	(23.1%)	3/9	(33.3%)	4/34	(11.8%)
1998	0/8	(0.0%)	2/13	(15.4%)	2/20	(10.0%)
2002	7/23	(30.4%)	7/14	(50.0%)	7/13	(53.8%)
2006	7/22	(31.8%)	5/11	(45.5%)	2/17	(11.8%)
Total	**27/130**	**(20.8%)**	**24/89**	**(27.0%)**	**20/128**	**(15.6%)**
Source: Compiled by author from Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States						

four of which were won by the president's co-partisan, it seems safe to conclude that presidential midterm campaign visits predominantly reflect strategic thinking on the part of the president and his aides.

Additionally, there are a few other interesting bits of information in the above tables. When only races that are competitive are considered the data indicate that a presidents is as likely to visit a congressional district that favors the president's opponent as he is to visit a district favoring his own party. Perhaps the opportunity to "steal" a seat from his opponent provides sufficient motivation to send the president into such a district. Overall, 33.8% of presidential visits to competitive districts fall into this category, with three-quarters of those visits made by President George H.W. Bush and his son. President George W. Bush allocated a presidential campaign visit to 48% of the competitive congressional district races that favored the Democratic candidate while his father visited 40% of similar districts during his only midterm election.

Figure 4-1: Percentage of Presidential Appearances by Race Rating



Source: Compiled by author from the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States and CQ Weekly.

The data indicate that of the classifications of competitiveness, presidents are least likely to devote their energies to races rated as pure "toss-ups" or "no clear favorite." Out of all the competitive races visited by presidents between 1982 and 2006, 29.6 percent were pure tossups, compared to 39.1 percent of competitive races not visited by a president. President George W. Bush made 45% of all presidential visits to races rated as pure tossups between 1982 and 2006, which is not surprising since campaign visits by President Bush account for 48% of all presidential appearances in the data set. Are the seats in this category somehow different from other competitive seats? If presidential visits are allocated solely on the level of competition for

a given seat we should expect the tossup category to contain the highest percentage of visits, not the lowest percentage of visits. I will examine the characteristics of these districts in more detail below. Additionally, I use several other measures of competitiveness, including the president's margin of victory in the district, his statewide vote, and the Cook Partisan Voting Index for the congressional district. For now, however, we can safely reject the null hypothesis that presidential visits are no more likely in competitive races than in non-competitive races.

Where the President Campaigns

As expected, presidential activity during midterm elections occurs primarily in congressional districts that are expected to be competitive in the forthcoming election. But, as we have seen above, presidents have visited only a portion of those races classified as competitive and, even then, allocated the frequency of their visits relatively equally among the three categories of competitiveness. A closer look at these visits and the districts in which they

Table 4-4: Percentage of Presidential Visits to Districts Won by President, 1982-2006.

President	Year	% Districts Visited/Carried
Reagan	1982	90.00%
	1986	100.00%
GHW Bush	1990	92.30%
Clinton	1994	71.40%
	1998	100.00%
GW Bush	2002	68.20%
	2006	88.20%
Total		**81.50%**

Source: Compiled by author

occur may provide us with a better picture of where presidents are most likely to campaign.

My second hypothesis proposes that there is a positive correlation between presidential visits and whether or not the president carried the district in the previous presidential election. I expect to find that presidents have allocated their campaign visits on behalf of co-partisans to congressional districts that the president carried in the previous election. The reason for this is that presidents are unlikely to have much persuasive power with an electorate that did not support the president in his own electoral bid. Stated differently, why would an electorate choose to support a candidate preferred by the president when that electorate did not support the president when he was on the ballot? A quick glance at the data confirms this hypothesis (Table 4-4). Restating the hypothesis from chapter 2,

> *H_2: Presidential visits during a midterm election will be more likely to occur in districts carried by the president in the previous election than in districts carried by the president's opponent in the previous election.*

Of the 81 presidential visits during midterm elections from 1982 through 2006, 66 were allocated to congressional districts the president carried in the previous presidential election. As indicated in the table, the percentage of visits allocated to congressional districts won by the president ranged from a low of 68.2% by President George W. Bush in 2002 (15/22) to a high of 100% by President Reagan in 1986 (1 visit) and President Clinton in 1998 (4 visits). The willingness of President Bush to campaign in districts he did not carry in 2000 cannot be explained by his approval rating, as it was roughly the same as that of President Clinton in 1998 and President Reagan in 1986 (Roper 2009). All three presidents had approval figures right around 62% heading into the midterm elections, though President Clinton was in the midst of an

impeachment effort by the Republicans in 1998, and news of the Iran-Contra scandal would break shortly after the midterms in 1986. Perhaps the lead up to the war with Iraq in 2002 and the narrow majority held by the GOP in the House convinced the president and his advisors to allocate nearly a third of his campaign appearances in 2002 to districts he had not won in 2000. Indeed, the effort was likely worthwhile as the president's co-partisan prevailed in five of the seven districts carried by Al Gore in the 2000 presidential race. In contrast, Bush's co-partisans won only 50% of the competitive races in districts carried by Al Gore in 2000 that Bush did not visit. I discuss presidential win/loss rates in more detail in the next chapter.

The data show that the majority of presidential campaign visits during midterm elections are allocated to districts carried by the president in the previous election. A bivariate logistic regression estimate indicates that presidential success in a particular district is a positive and significant predictor of a presidential visit at the $p = .016$ level. The null hypothesis stating that presidents are no more likely to campaign in districts that they carried previously versus districts they lost previously is rejected.

Presidential Visits and Open Seats

The next two hypotheses assumes that presidential visits are more likely to be allocated to congressional districts with open seats rather than congressional districts with incumbents seeking reelection. As I discussed in chapter 2, open seat races tend to be more competitive than races featuring an incumbent seeking reelection, for a variety of reasons (Jacobson, 1987). Thus, I hypothesized:

H_3: Presidential visits are more likely to occur in districts featuring an open seat than in districts featuring an incumbent seeking re-election.

Further, as shown above, a president is more likely to visit a congressional district he carried in the previous election than one he did not carry, I hypothesized:

H_4: Presidents are more likely to make a visit to a congressional district with an open seat that the president carried in the previous presidential election than to a district with an open seat that the president did not carry in the previous presidential election

One reason a president might choose to campaign in an open district rather than for an incumbent is the well-known incumbency advantage, chronicled by David Mayhew (1974) and many others. Incumbents enjoy exceptionally high re-election rates, even in down years for their party. In any given midterm, 90-95% of incumbents seeking re-election are successful, though incumbents in competitive districts enjoy a slightly lower success rate. Even in the so-called "wave" elections of 1994 and 2006, in excess of 90% of incumbents seeking re-election to the House were successful.

Generally speaking, candidates seeking election to open seats do not enjoy the same advantages as a sitting member of Congress, resulting in a greater likelihood of a more competitive race, and the possibility of the seat switching parties. A president must also rely on the support of his party members to pass his legislative program through Congress. Thus, it seems logical that presidents would direct their campaign efforts during midterm elections towards those seats most vulnerable for their party, those featuring an open seat race. Perhaps an appearance by the president can provide a co-partisan seeking election in an open seat district with some of the advantages typically enjoyed by incumbents, such as name recognition and

superior fundraising capability, whereas a co-partisan seeking election in an open district where the president does not visit may not enjoy these benefits.

Do presidents actually pay more attention to open seats than to seats where incumbents are seeking re-election? One hundred and twenty congressional races featured open seat contests between 1982 and 2006. The president made a visit to 23.3 percent of the races featuring an open seat contest compared to 18.8 percent of races with an incumbent seeking reelection. Though presidents devoted a greater percentage of their appearances to open seat contests than to contests with incumbents running, a chi-square test of the relationship between presidential visits and open seat districts produced a value of .790, indicating that the relationship is insignificant. Thus, I must fail to reject the null hypothesis stating that presidential visits are equally likely in districts with open seats as they are in districts with incumbents running for reelection.

The next question is whether presidential visits to open districts are randomly distributed or concentrated in congressional districts carried by the president previously. Overall, presidents made 28 visits on behalf of co-partisans seeking election to open seats between 1982 and 2006. Of these visits, 25 occurred in districts won by the president in the previous election while only three occurred in districts won by his opponent two years earlier. By a margin of better than eight to one, presidents are more likely to campaign for their co-partisans in open districts carried by the president than in open districts carried by his opponent. To be sure, there were three times as many races in districts won by the president (90) than in districts won by his opponent (30). But there were also nearly ten times as many appearances in those districts he won. A chi-square test of the relationship between presidential visits and open seats in districts carried by the president produced a value of 4.182 and a significance value of $p = .031$. Therefore, the null

hypothesis that the president is no more likely to campaign for an open seat in a district he carried than in one he did not carry is rejected.

Presidents, Senators, & Governors, Oh My!

An additional factor that might contribute to the willingness of a president to campaign for a co-partisan is the presence of one or more higher level races on the same ballot. Perhaps a president allocates an appearance in a congressional district race when he can "kill two birds with one stone" by campaigning for two or more co-partisans at the same time? Stated as a hypothesis:

> *H_5: Presidents are more likely to visit congressional districts featuring higher-level races that are competitive than congressional districts featuring only a race for the United States House of Representatives.*

To test this hypothesis I checked all of the races in this dataset for the presence of higher-level competitive races for the U.S. Senate or a state gubernatorial election. Three variables were created as a result; each coded either 0 or 1. The first variable is whether or not a competitive Senate race was also on the ballot. The second variable is the presence of a competitive gubernatorial race on the ballot. The third variable is an interaction variable indicating the presence of both a Senate race and a gubernatorial race. On the first measure, the presence of a competitive Senate race, 56 of the congressional districts contained in the dataset included a competitive race for the U.S. Senate. Presidents visited 17 of those 56 districts, or 30.3%. In contrast, presidents made campaign visits to 64 of the 301 districts that did not feature

a competitive Senate race during this period, or 21.3%. Though presidents were slightly more likely to visit a district with a competitive Senate race present, a chi-square test indicates that the presence of a competitive Senate race alone is not enough to draw a president to a congressional district. The null hypothesis must not be rejected in this case.

Turning to gubernatorial races, 87 of the 357 congressional races included in the dataset also featured a competitive race for state governor. Presidents made 29 appearances in the 87 districts featuring competitive gubernatorial races (33.3%) compared with 52 visits in the 270 districts that did not have competitive gubernatorial races (19.3%). A chi-square test indicates that the difference here is significant at $p = .006$. The null hypothesis can be safely rejected, as it appears that presidents are more likely to make an appearance in a congressional district also featuring a gubernatorial race.

Finally, considering the presence of both a competitive race for the U.S. Senate and a competitive race for governor there were 15 such races in the dataset. Presidents made eight campaign appearances in those 15 districts for a rate 53.3%. In contrast, 342 races did not have both a race for the Senate and governor in the same year. In those races presidents made 73 visits for a rate of only 21.3%. A chi-square test of the relationship between visits and the presence of both a competitive Senate race and a competitive gubernatorial contest indicates the relationship is significant at $p = .008$. However, it seems unwise to place much stock in this significance because the number of districts featuring both of these higher-level races is less than 5% of the entire dataset. A more robust sample is preferable before drawing firm conclusions or estimating the probability of future presidential campaign visits based on these two variables.

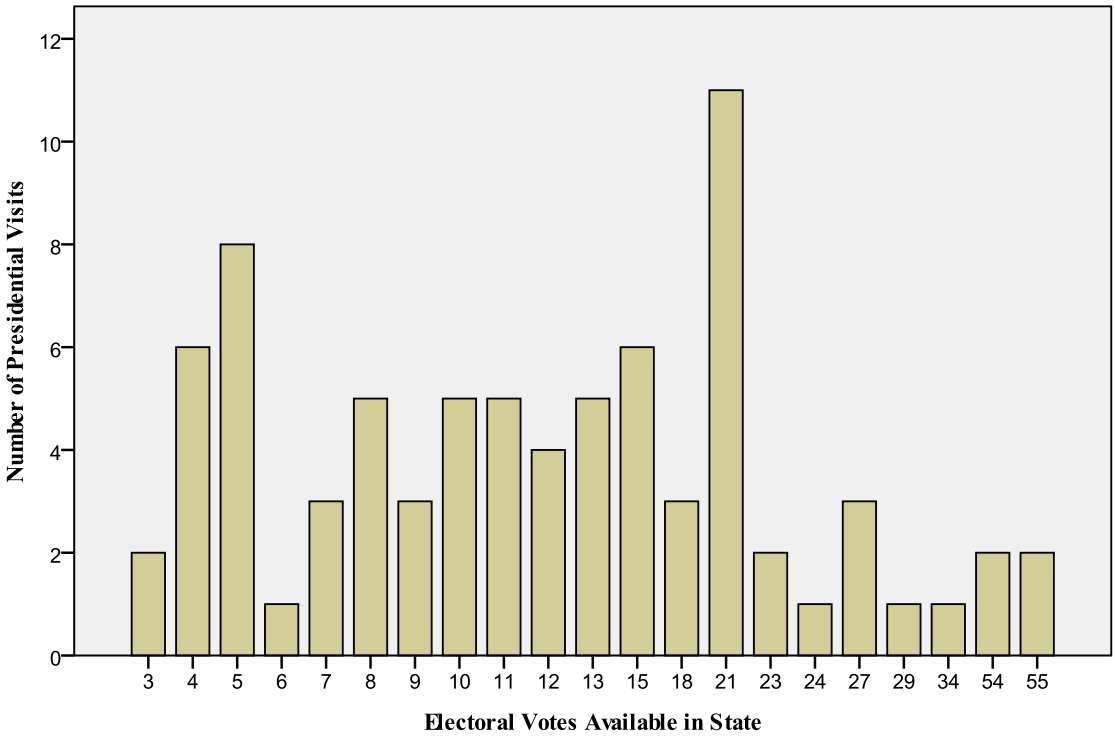
Presidential Visits and Electoral Votes

Some scholars have argued that presidents allocate their visits during midterm elections on the basis of the number of electoral votes the state will cast in the next general election for president (Eshbaugh-Soha and Nicholson Crotty, 2004). The reason given for this is that midterm elections are a chance for the president to engage in a "dress rehearsal" for his re-election bid. However, this only applies during a president's first midterm. A different rationale must apply for activity during a 2nd midterm, such as party building activity, rewarding faithful members of his party for past support on legislation, or some other reason. If presidents are more likely to visit a state based on the number of electoral votes it will offer in the next election, we should expect to see presidential visits clustered around the states with the most electoral votes. In chapter 1 I proposed the following hypothesis:

> *H_6: Presidents are more likely to allocate midterm campaign visits to states with greater numbers of electoral votes than to states with lower numbers of electoral votes.*

Testing the hypothesis simply required creating a variable containing the number of electoral votes in each state, which ranged from a minimum of 3 (several states) to a maximum of 55 (California). As figure 4-2 shows, presidential visits were allocated fairly evenly across the various values of electoral votes available in each state. A bivariate logistic regression analysis confirms that there is no significant relationship between the number of electoral votes available in a state and whether or not a president chooses to make a visit for a co-partisan. Based on the data, the null hypothesis is not rejected, as it appears that presidents do not consider the size of a state's Electoral College delegation when allocating midterm campaign appearances. Presidents,

Figure 4-2: Presidential Visits by Electoral Votes



it appears, are primarily focused on their immediate goals rather than looking forward to the next election for themselves or their party's next presidential candidate. The results of the analysis do not change if visits by presidents in their 2nd midterm are removed nor are they affected by controlling for whether the president won the congressional district in the previous election. The number of Electoral votes a state possesses does not appear to be a part of the strategic calculation a president makes when deciding whether to campaign on behalf of a co-partisan.

Presidential Performance and Campaign Visits

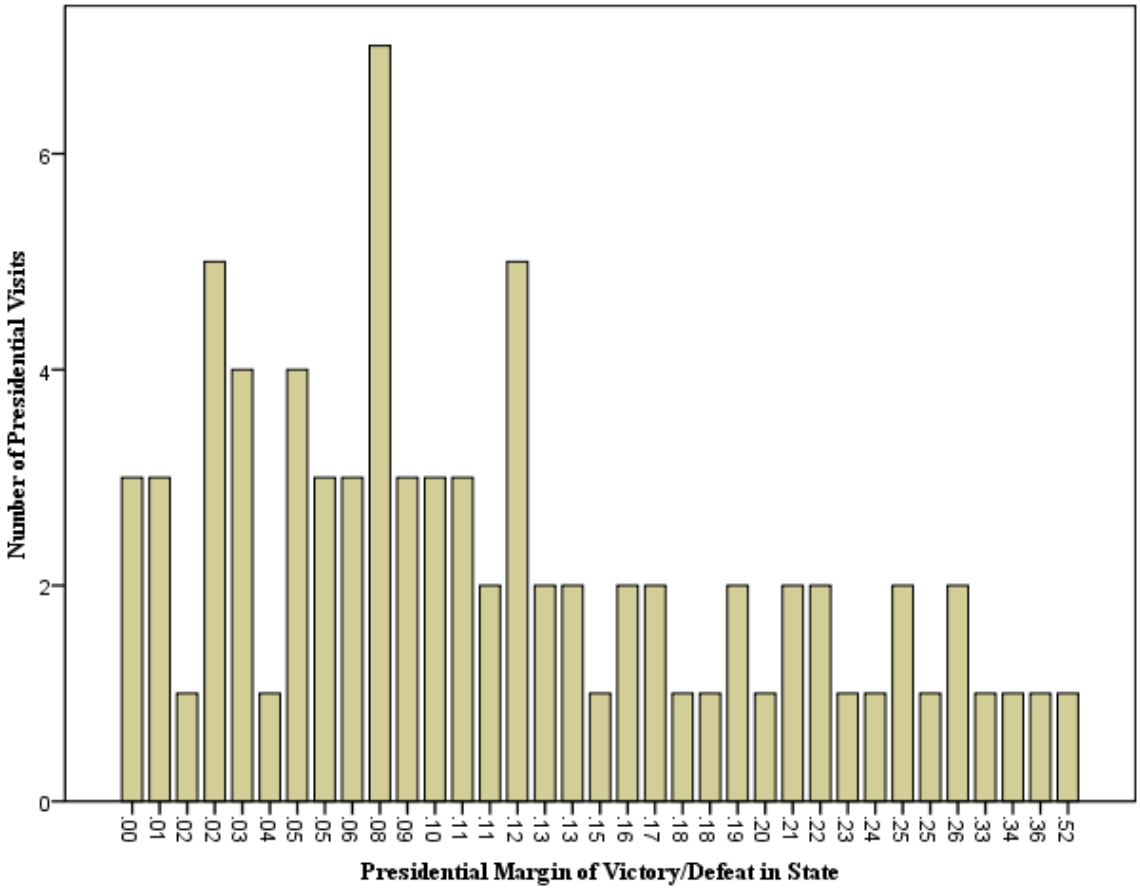
The final variable to test in this chapter is the absolute margin between the share of the popular vote in a state won by the president in the previous presidential election and that won by

his opponent. I hypothesized that a president will allocate his midterm campaign appearances to those congressional districts in states that the president was most competitive in the previous presidential election. The rationale for the hypothesis is similar to the one above, in essence just another way to test the notion that presidential activity during midterm elections is state centered rather than candidate centered. I chose to measure this as the absolute difference in the popular vote between the president and his opponent in the state regardless of whether the president or his opponent carried the state. A president who carried the state by three percentage points receives the same absolute value as a president who lost the state by three percentage points. If true, presidential visits should occur more frequently in states with lower absolute values than in states with higher absolute values. Stated as a hypothesis:

> *H_7: Presidents are more likely to visit congressional districts in states that were the most competitive in the previous presidential election than to visit congressional districts in states that were not competitive in the previous presidential election.*

A simple logistic regression analysis with presidential visits as the dependent variable and the absolute value of the margin of the popular vote between the president and his opponent in the state as the independent variable indicates there is no correlation between the margin of victory (or loss) in a state and the likelihood of a presidential visit during the midterm election. The model returned a chi-square statistic of .310 and *p* value of .578. A frequency distribution shows that about half of the visits made by presidents between 1982 and 2006 occurred in states with an absolute value between zero and nine, while the other half occurred in states with absolute values above ten. Visits were, however, more concentrated below the cutoff of ten points, likely due to the fact that relatively few states are won or lost by more than ten percentage

Figure 4-3: Presidential Visits by State Margin of Victory/Defeat Previous Election



points. Figure 4-3 shows the distribution of presidential visits based on the president's margin of victory or defeat at the state level.

A Multivariate Analysis of Presidential Midterm Campaign Appearances

This chapter has focused on identifying the conditions sufficient to predict a presidential campaign visit on behalf of a co-partisan seeking a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives during a midterm congressional election. Using presidential visits as the dependent variable, I

Table 4-5: Logit Regression Estimate of Variables Prediciting Presidential Visit	
Variable	**B**
Absolute Margin	-2.771* (1.456)
Electoral Votes	-.015 (.013)
Governor's Race	.660** (.300)
President's Party Holds Seat	.528 (.504)
Open Seat	-.334 (.531)
President Party Incumbent	-.943 (.675)
President Carried District	.614* (.337)
Senatorial Race	.665* (.356)
President Party Favored	.509 (.348)
Opponent Party Favored	.677* (.412)
Constant	-1.740*** (.562)
Nagelkerke R^2	.119
X^2	27.232
Coefficients are unstandardized (standard errors in parentheses) Notes: *** = p<. .01; ** = $p < .05$; * = $p < .10$; N = 343	

examined several independent variables to determine whether or not they were sufficient to predict a visit by a president to a congressional district. Using a multivariate logistic regression

model I now estimate the effect of these independent variables upon the likelihood of a president making a campaign appearance on behalf of a co-partisan. The results are displayed in table 4-5.

The data indicate that the entire logit model is a significant predictor of presidential campaign appearances during congressional midterm elections at $p < .01$. There are five significant independent variables in the model predicting the likelihood of a presidential visit. The first significant predictor of a presidential appearance is the presence of a competitive race for governor on the same ballot ($p = .028$), which confirms the bivariate analysis discussed earlier. Additionally, the presence of a competitive Senate race on the ballot achieved significance as a predictor of a presidential visit ($p = .062$), which was not true when considered alone. Presidents, it seems, are more likely to appear in districts where other co-partisans are seeking higher offices as well.

A third predictor of the likelihood of a presidential visit is the absolute margin of victory/defeat between the president and his opponent in the state two years earlier ($p = .057$), which was not significant by itself in the earlier bivariate logit regression model. Here, the absolute value is significant and the sign is negative, which indicates some support for the hypothesis stated earlier that presidential visits in midterms are more likely in districts within states that were most competitive between the president and his opponent two years prior. Given that the p value is .057, we can say with a reasonable degree of confidence that presidents allocate their visits during midterm elections to the districts they themselves were most competitive in two years earlier. During a first midterm, an appearance may well be a 'dress rehearsal' for re-election two years hence, while during a 2nd midterm the president may be helping to build party support for the next candidate from his party. The regression analysis also

indicates that presidential visits are more probable in districts with the smallest absolute margin of victory or defeat in the previous presidential election.

Finally, the data in table 4-5 indicate that presidents are somewhat more likely to campaign in competitive districts favoring the opposing party's candidate for the U.S. House than in districts that favor their own co-partisan, though the *p* value is rather high at .10, controlling for the absolute margin between the president and his opponent, whether the president carried the district previously, and the presence of higher-level races. Apparently, the chance to steal a seat from the opposing party is an opportunity most presidents do not want to miss, particularly since the party controlling the White House is usually on defense during the midterm elections.

I also estimated the model including an interaction variable to account for open seat districts carried by the president, the folded value of the Cook Partisan Voting Index for each district, and whether the district was rated as a tossup. The variables were insignificant and are not included in the table.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined several independent variables that might explain the pattern of presidential campaign appearances during midterm congressional elections between 1982 and 2006. The data examined confirm the idea that presidents are indeed rational actors with strategic goals in mind when choosing to invest their time and energy to campaign for a fellow partisan during a midterm election. Appearances are not randomly distributed across all races

for the U.S. House of Representatives. They are largely allocated on the basis of competitiveness with presidents choosing to become involved in those races where their influence could make the biggest difference. Presidents are drawn to races that feature other important races on the ballot, such as Senatorial and Gubernatorial elections. They also focus their efforts primarily on those districts that supported them in their previous run for the presidency.

In contrast, the data also indicate that some factors just are not very important when deciding where to campaign for a fellow partisan. The number of electoral votes in a state, whether a seat was open, or whether a president's co-partisan was an incumbent seeking re-election, do not prove to be significant predictors of a presidential appearance. Of course, all of these factors contribute to the penultimate question every president and his advisors are likely to ask. That is, can the co-partisan win election to the U.S. House of Representatives? If the answer is no, the president is unlikely to make an appearance, but if the answer is maybe or yes, the odds of a presidential appearance improve substantially. How well have presidents done in their efforts to elect their co-partisans to the House? I examine presidential wins and losses as well as other possible effects related to presidential appearances in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

The Effects of Presidential Visits

In the previous chapter I discussed and analyzed several factors surmised to predict a presidential campaign appearance on behalf of a co-partisan in a competitive midterm congressional election race for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. Once again, competitive districts are those that are rated by CQ Weekly in the pre-election ranking of those congressional districts expected to have the tightest races in the upcoming midterm election. Races fall into one of three categories: (1) Leans Republican or; (2) Leans Democrat; or (3) No Clear Favorite (tossup). CQ's record since 1982 is quite impressive in ranking these competitive races. Presidential co-partisans win about 71% of the races rated as leaning toward them but only 14.7% of those races rated as leaning towards their opponents. Presidential co-partisans also won 38.3% of those races rated as having no clear favorite. The analyses that follow are based upon races falling into one of these three categories between 1982 and 2006.

The reader will recall from the previous chapter that presidential visits are most likely allocated to congressional districts expected to be competitive in the forthcoming election and that the president carried in his last race for the presidency. Additionally, the data indicated that presidents are drawn to congressional districts where they can get the most bang for their buck, those districts that also featured a competitive race for the United States Senate or for state governor, or both. Finally, there is some evidence that presidents tend to focus their campaign visits in congressional districts where the margin of victory or defeat for the president in the previous election was relatively small. Having discussed the factors that enhance our ability to predict presidential appearances, I now turn to a discussion of the effects of those appearances during midterm elections. The remainder of this chapter will examine each of the seven midterm elections between 1982 and 2006 in some detail, followed by a bivariate statistical analysis of the midterm elections under each president. First, I examine and discuss the economic and political

conditions leading up to each midterm election, presidential appearances during that election, and the win/loss record of the president's co-partisans in the midterm election. Next, I estimate the effect of a presidential campaign visit on a co-partisan's share of the popular vote in his race for the House of Representatives using a multivariate regression model. Finally, I estimate the effect of a presidential visit upon the difference in voter turnout between a midterm election and the preceding presidential election in competitive districts, using the aggregate data from 1982 through 2006, once again employing multiple regression analysis.

The Presidency of Ronald Reagan and the Midterms of 1982 and 1986

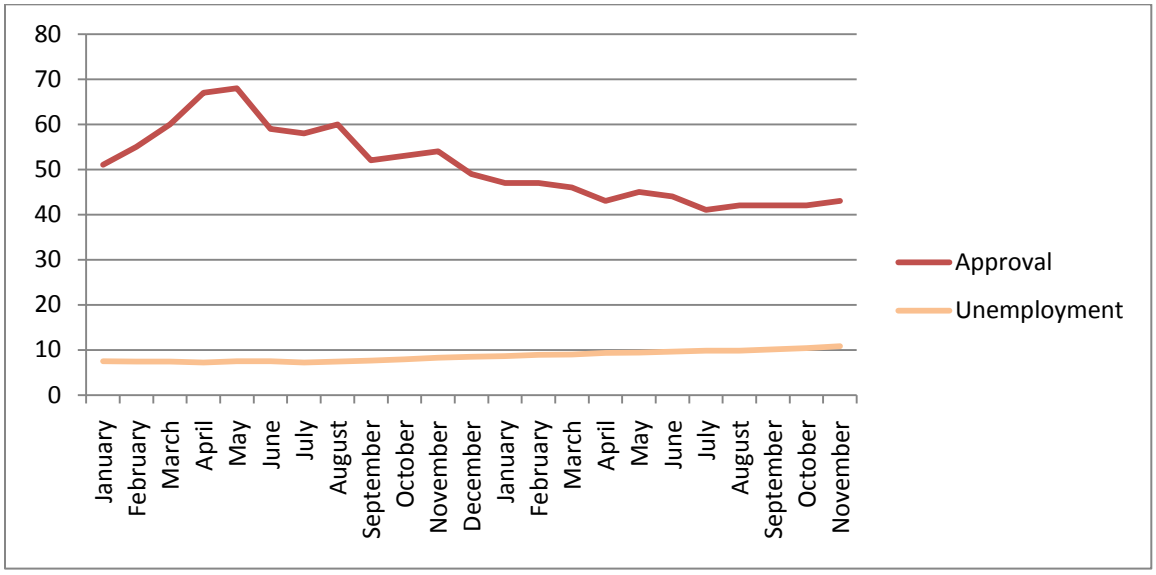
Ronald Reagan came to the presidency in 1981 on the heels of a blowout victory over the incumbent president, Jimmy Carter, winning just over 50% of the popular vote and more than 90% of the electoral vote (Wooley & Peters 2009). The nation was reeling from years of economic stagnation, an incumbent president perceived as weak in foreign affairs due to his tepid response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the failure to secure the release of more than fifty Americans held hostage in Tehran, Iran, for almost 15 months. The election of Ronald Reagan as America's 40th President also had some major implications for the United States Congress due to Reagan's extensive coattails. Reagan's victory brought control of the United States Senate to the Republican Party for the first time since the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. The takeover of the senate also witnessed the defeat of several prominent liberal Democrats, including Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana and Senator and former Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern of South Dakota (Milkis and Nelson 2008).

Republicans also did exceptionally well in the House of Representatives in 1980, posting a net gain of 34 seats, boosting their caucus from 158 seats to 192 seats.

Reagan's first year as president witnessed several tumultuous events from an assassination attempt in March to the passage of his budgetary program, which imposed steep domestic spending cuts, substantial increases in defense spending, and a multi-billion dollar tax cut aimed at the wealthiest Americans. Reagan's initial popularity and the presence of a large contingent of conservative southern Democrats known as "boll weevils" provided the impetus to move his program through the House of Representatives, even though it was still controlled by the Democrats. By the end of that first year in office, the United States had emerged from a recession that began shortly after Reagan's inauguration but then sunk into one that would last through the 1982 midterm election. As the unemployment rate rose throughout 1981-82, Reagan's job approval rating declined (Figure 5-1). By the time of the 1982 midterm elections, President Reagan's job approval stood at just 43% (Roper 2009). Nevertheless, the president was not disheartened entering the midterm elections of 1982 as he took to the campaign trail on behalf of his co-partisans. Knowing that his party needed to wrest control of only 25 House seats from the Democrats to give Republicans full control of Congress, President Reagan set out to convince Americans to change their government. On October 7th at a rally in Reno, Nevada, on behalf of Barbara Vucanovich, who was seeking election to the House in the newly created 2nd Congressional District, President Reagan said,

> *"Well, you know, there are times when I think some of our critics and our opponents must have been hit by something—meteors or something else. They've developed a very interesting case of amnesia. They can't remember a thing that was bad about the economy prior to my taking the oath of office. [Laughter] They make you think that everything economically that's bad started on January 21st, 1981. They don't remember that in the 4 years before we got to Washington, the entire Government of the United States was in their hands."*

Figure 5-1: Reagan Job Approval & Unemployment Rate 1981-82



Source: Approval ratings from Roper Center compilation of Gallup Poll Data. Unemployment figures from United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

He continued,

> *"And in their political amnesia, they've forgotten that under their leadership inflation went up from 4.8 percent in 1976 to 18 percent by January of 1980, and that at the same time the interest rates climbed from 7 percent to 21 1/2 percent and our taxes doubled in 5 years. Well, I can't blame them; if I were in their place, I guess I'd try to forget a lot of things, too."*

Then, to emphasize the positive changes occurring in the economy, President Reagan said,

> *"Earlier today—you haven't heard—I'm pleased to report that a number of major banks in the United States this morning lowered their prime lending rate to 13 percent. Now, that's a far cry from the 16 1/2-percent rate that prevailed just this last summer and the 21 1/2 percent that was in effect just before we took office. And as interest rates have tumbled, investment has been flowing into our equity and our bond markets. In the past 2 months alone, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has jumped more than 20 percent. And yesterday, it had the second biggest increase in the market in history."*

Concluding the rally, Reagan said,

> *"To those who are faint hearted and unsure, I have but one message: If you're afraid of the future, then get out of the way; stand aside. The people of this country are going to move forward with people like Governor List, Barbara Vucanovich and Chic Hecht and Peggy Cavnar down south. Nevada represents the true spirit of America"* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

President Reagan would go on to make a total of ten appearances on behalf of his co-partisans seeking election to the House of Representatives in 1982.

The obvious question then becomes one of whether or not these appearances by the president accomplished their primary goal…victory for his co-partisans. Barbara Vucanovich went on to win her race for the House with a little more than 55% of the district vote. The candidate for whom the president did not campaign, Peggy Cavnar, did not fare nearly as well, losing her race to Democrat Harry Reid in Nevada's newly redrawn 1st Congressional District by a little more than 16,000 votes.[20]

Altogether, President Reagan had a mixed record for the 1982 midterm elections. Of the ten candidates he campaigned for, six were successful in their electoral bids. In the fifty-seven competitive races in which the president did not make a campaign appearance, Republicans won only twenty-five of them. From that perspective it appears as though President Reagan's appearances may have helped his party, at least a little bit. However, a chi-square test indicates that the relationship between President Reagan's visits and the success of his co-partisans is insignificant, returning a *p* value of .382.

At this point it makes sense to discuss a potential objection to examining presidential influence in midterm elections, especially in terms of wins and losses. The objection is one of endogeneity, namely that presidents are most likely to campaign in the districts where they are most likely to win. In an effort to address this argument, I analyzed whether presidents were

[20] Nevada gained one seat through reapportionment after the 1980 Census, splitting the state into two districts with the 1st district composed primarily of the city of Las Vegas and the surrounding environs. Though President Reagan did not hold a campaign rally for Ms. Cavnar, he did attend a fundraiser for her at the home of Wayne Newton on the evening of October 7th. (Wooley, J. T., & Peters, G. (2009). *The American Presidency Project [online]*. Retrieved November 10, 2009, from The American Presidency Project: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu)

indeed more likely to campaign in those districts they were more likely to win. I classified each congressional race according to whether the president's co-partisan was favored to win, the opposing party was favored to win, or whether the race was purely a tossup with no clear favorite, as I discussed in chapter 4. It is important to note that presidents are more likely to make an appearance in congressional districts favoring the opposing candidate than they are in a congressional district favoring their own co-partisan. As shown in the table in chapter 4, presidents appeared in 26.9% of races favoring the opposing party, 20.7% of races favoring their co-partisan, and only 15.6% of races rated as tossups. While these differences are not statistically significant due to the infrequency of presidential visits in general, the data serve to dispel the notion that presidents visit only those districts most likely to favor their co-partisans. Additionally, Herrnson & Irwin (2007) studied President George W. Bush's appearances in 2002 and concluded that selection bias was not a factor in the midterm elections that year based upon a bivariate probit analysis of the candidates for whom George W. Bush campaigned.[21]

Let us now examine the share of the vote received by Republican candidates for whom the president campaigned versus those for whom he did not campaign. Did Republican candidates manage to secure a larger share of the vote in those districts visited by the president than in those he did not visit? The data show that there is a difference in the mean share of the vote for candidates the president campaigned for when compared with those for whom he did not.[22] Republicans for whom Reagan made an appearance in 1982 or 1986 collected approximately 51.12% of the two-party vote while Republicans for whom he did not campaign

[21] The study considers all presidential appearances for a candidate, both fundraising and public rallies, from January 1 to election day. My data set includes only those public appearances made by presidents during the period between Labor Day and the midterm election.

[22] For the regression analyses of President Reagan's effect on candidate vote share I have combined Reagan's 1982 and 1986 midterm elections. This is due to the fact that President Reagan made only a single campaign appearance in 1986 on behalf of a co-partisan seeking election to the House of Representatives, thus producing a sample size far too small to be meaningful.

collected approximately 49.2% of the two-party vote, a difference of 1.9%. An analysis of variance comparing the means is statistically significant at $p = .058$. However, the data should be interpreted very cautiously since the sample size for appearances is only eleven, with one of those appearances being in a district heavily favoring the Republican candidate (Dick Cheney-WY at large). Removing this race from the analysis reduces the mean difference in the percentage of votes for his co-partisan between Republicans the president made an appearance for and those for whom he did not to just 1.1%, a value that proves insignificant from a statistical standpoint, though in a very close race such a small margin could be the difference between winning and losing the election.

Finally, as discussed in chapter 2, one of the more notable aspects of midterm elections is the decline in voter turnout from the previous presidential election. Scholars are divided as to whether this decline is a result of weak partisans or independent voters lacking the motivation to vote in the midterm election. While it is virtually impossible to measure the direct impact of a campaign visit on actual voter turnout short of conducting a lengthy and detailed survey of actual voters, it is possible to examine the turnout rates in districts where the president campaigned and those where he did not. However, since turnout varies dramatically from one congressional district to another, I chose to standardize the figure by subtracting the actual voter turnout for the midterm election from the turnout for the previous presidential election. Theoretically, the decline in turnout between a presidential election to a midterm should be roughly equal across competitive congressional districts, unless other variables are affecting citizen participation at the polls. For example, if overall turnout for a presidential election is around 55% and overall turnout is around 40% for a midterm election, we should expect roughly a 15% decline across all districts. However, if presidential visits serve to reduce the decline in turnout by mobilizing

voters who approve of the president, and by implication his co-partisan, we should see a difference in the variation between districts where the president appeared and those where he did not. However, as discussed in chapter 3, I eliminated all of the districts from 1982 and about 1/3 of the districts from 2002 due to uncertainty regarding the validity of voter turnout data for the districts after states redrew their district lines. Thus, I do not conduct an analysis of the effect of Reagan's appearances on voter turnout for either of his midterm elections.

Overall, the 1982 midterm elections were not kind to President Reagan and his party. Voters, it seems, decided to punish the president for the recession and ongoing rise in unemployment, in spite of some otherwise positive economic news. In the end, Reagan's Republicans lost 26 seats in the House of Representatives or roughly three-quarters of what they had gained in 1980. Whatever else can be said about President Reagan's efforts in the midterm election of 1982, it is certain that they did not bring about the control of the House the president desired. Reagan himself would go on to win re-election in a landslide in 1984 and the Republicans would regain 16 of their lost seats through his coattails, setting the stage for a repeat performance by the president in 1986.

The economic and political conditions heading into the 1986 midterm elections were vastly improved over those of 1982. According to Gallup polling data, Reagan's job approval rating at the time of the 1986 midterm election stood at 63%, a full 20 percentage points higher than in 1982 (Roper, 2009). Additionally, the unemployment rate had declined from its high water mark of 10.8% in November of 1982 to 6.9% in November of 1986. All the indicators seemed to be pointing towards a very good midterm for the Republicans. However, an aging President Reagan chose not to hit the campaign trail for his co-partisans seeking election to the House, making only one appearance in the 8th Congressional District of Indiana for Republican

candidate Richard McIntyre (Wooley & Peters, 2009). Pointing out the accomplishments of his administration Reagan said,

> *"…the tax-and-tax and spend-and-spend policies left our country, just a few short years ago, with negative growth, double-digit inflation, the highest rates since—get ready—the highest rates since the Civil War. And so, as a part of that 1980 cleanup crew for the worst economic mess since the Great Depression, we Republicans headed for Washington. We cut government growth, we slashed regulations, and cut income taxes almost 25 percent. Today we're enjoying one of the longest economic expansions in our history. The prime interest rate has fallen by two-thirds. Mortgage and auto loan rates are down. Inflation has plummeted from more than 12 percent to 1.8 percent. And we've created over 11 1/2 million new jobs in a little less than 4 years"* (Wooley & Peters, 2009)

The final results of the 1986 midterm elections were better for the Republicans in the House than they were in 1982. Republicans lost only 5 seats in the House, far below the average midterm loss of just over 20 seats for the president's party between 1938 and 1978 (Busch). The resulting seat loss was also 21 fewer seats than the GOP lost in the 1982 midterm election. Reagan's high popularity and the country's very good economic outlook may have played a role in reducing the traditional midterm loss for the party holding the White House but since President Reagan made just a single appearance in 1986 it is impossible to use a regression analysis to estimate the effect of his visit on the candidate's vote share in 1986. The data for President Reagan's two midterm elections are shown in Table 5-1. The most interesting data are found in the tossup category. Candidates in this category for whom President Reagan made an appearance (n=4) received about 2.4 percentage points more of the popular vote than did their counterparts for whom he did not make an appearance. Given the infrequency of Reagan's appearances, however, it seems best to interpret the data cautiously at this point. Overall, President Reagan made a total of eleven campaign appearances on behalf of candidates for the U.S. House in his two midterms. His co-partisans were successful in six of those contests, or

Table 5-1: Co-Partisan Vote Share in Competitive Races, Reagan Midterms of 1982 and 1986

1982 & 1986	Category	*N*	Visited	Not Visited	Total
Co-Partisan Vote					
	Favors President	42	.4949	.5111	.5095
	Favors Opponent	27	.4674	.4699	.4698
	Tossup	34	.5109	.4870	.4898
	Total	**103**	**.5029**	**.4920**	**.4930**

Note: Numbers are proportion of two-party vote for co-partisans

about 54.5 percent. In contrast, Reagan's co-partisans won only forty-one of the ninety-four races in which he did not schedule a campaign appearance, a success rate of 43.6 percent, though as indicated above, a chi-square test indicates that the relationship between visits and wins is insignificant.

Turning to an analysis of the effect of Reagan's visits on the vote-share of his co-partisans, I constructed a linear regression model to estimate the effect of his visits in 1982 and 1986. I combined the two midterms because President Reagan made only a single visit in 1986. The full regression model is significant with a *p* value of .003. The results are shown below in table 5-2.

The first item to note is that visits by President Reagan did not have a significant effect on his co-partisans share of the vote during his midterms. Two other variables, however, did prove significant predictors of a candidate's vote share. First, the presence of a Republican incumbent was significant with a *p* value of .024. A Republican seeking reelection during these years was estimated to receive about a 1.8 percentage point greater share of the vote than a Republican not currently serving in the House, all other variables held constant. This result is consistent with the expectation that incumbents do better than non-incumbents at the polls.

Table 5-2: The Effect of Presidential Visits in 1982 and 1986 on Candidate Vote Share	
Variables	**GOP Vote Share****
Presidential Visit	.007
	(.009)
Partisan Voting Index	.000
	(.001)
GOP Holds Seat	.015
	(.009)
GOP Incumbent	.018*
	(.008)
Democrat Open Seat	.030**
	(.010)
President Won District	-.003
	(.009)
Tossup	-.004
	(.006)
State Margin	.026
	(.031)
Constant	.471***
	(.011)
Adjusted R^2	.151
F	3.196
Standard Error	.027
**** = P < .001; ** = P < .01; * = P < .05*	
Note: Figures are unstandardized coefficients w/ standard errors in parentheses	

Second, Republicans seeking election in open seat districts held by Democrats were expected to perform better than Republicans in general, receiving about three percentage points

more of the vote than their co-partisans when all other variables are held constant. Other variables such as whether the president carried the district or his margin of victory in the state were insignificant.

George H.W. Bush and the 1990 Midterms

Vice-President George H. W. Bush won the presidency in 1988 and promised to build upon the "proud record" of the Reagan Administration. Job growth had been exceptional for nearly six years, as unemployment had declined from 10.8% in 1982 to 5.4% on Inauguration Day in 1989 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). President Bush also enjoyed an approval rating of 51% when he took office as President Reagan's two terms came to an end. Yet Bush faced an opposition Congress controlled by liberal Democrats. In fact, President Bush extended virtually no coattails to his co-partisans running for Congress in 1988 as the Republicans suffered small losses in both chambers, 2 seats in the House and 1 seat in the Senate.

Twenty-two months later, as President Bush faced his only midterm election, Bush's approval rating sat at 55% (Roper, 2009) and unemployment had risen slightly to 6.2% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). The president headed into the midterm elections in the midst of budgetary negotiations with the majority Democrats somewhat optimistic, hoping to gain a few seats in the House to shrink the majority held by the Democrats. At a rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, just two weeks before election day Bush said,

> *"Let me just say a word about the mess in Washington. Congress wouldn't, in my view -- and I really mean this -- would not be in the mess that it is in today if we had more Republicans in the United States Congress. The Democrats control both Houses, and that means if a President is going to make something happen -- and I'm determined to do it -- you've got to reach out. And I want to get the best possible budget because I do not want*

> *to see us continue to mortgage the future of the young people in this country, year after year, with triple-digit deficits. And so, we are hanging tough for a good agreement. Right now it's in turmoil down there. And I want to see it be an agreement that is serious about driving the deficit down."*

A few moments later the president said,

> *"Only Congress has the power to tax, and only Congress has the power to spend. But Congress may have forgotten one thing: The people have the power to choose who sits in the United States Congress. And that's the message I'm going to take all over this country. We need more Republicans like Bob Smith and Bill Zelliff"* (Wooley & Peters, 2009)

One day prior to the midterm election, on November 5, 1990, President Bush signed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, abdicating his 1988 campaign promise of "No New Taxes." Republicans lost seven seats in the House of Representatives the next day. Whether there is a correlation between Bush's broken promise and the results on election day is very hard to say. To be sure, the losses were smaller than the typical loss for the president's party but they would serve to strengthen the Democratic majority going into the 1992 presidential election.

The data for competitive congressional districts in the 1990 midterm election are shown in table 5-3. President Bush made a total of thirteen appearances during the election season on behalf of his co-partisans.[23] Republicans won four of the ten competitive seats in the House where Bush appeared, or 40%. In contrast, they won only six out of twenty-four competitive races in which the president did not make an appearance, or 25%. As with Reagan in 1982, the difference in Republican win rate is slightly higher when the president campaigned in the

[23] Three of these races were not expected to be competitive and are excluded from the vote share and turnout figures listed in table 5-2. These races were in MA-10, NH-2, and FL-2. The president's co-partisans lost all three races, though the Massachusetts and New Hampshire races were more competitive than the CQ forecast as they were settled by margins of seven and six points, respectively.

Table 5-3: The 1990 Midterm of George H.W. Bush				
Candiate Vote Share		**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
	President Favored	.5187	.4866	.4973
	Opponent Favored	.4771	.4741	.4753
	Tossup	.4011	.4578	.4521
	Total	**.4761**	**.4711**	**.4729**
Turnout Difference	**President Favored**	.1583	.1307	.1399
	Opponent Favored	.0644	.0922	.0811
	Tossup	.0582	.0796	.0774
	Total	**.0783**	**.0971**	**.0905**
Note: Vote share is percent of two-party vote. Turnout variance is decline in district turnout from 1988 Presidential Election				

district, but it is not statistically significant. A chi-square test returned a *p* value of .497 and a Pearson chi-square of .142.

The first measure in the table below, the Republican share of the two-party vote, shows that Bush's co-partisans earned about three percentage points more of the two-party vote in competitive districts favoring the president's co-partisan when the president visited the district compared to districts Bush did not visit. The difference between a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote in districts favoring the Democratic candidate was much smaller, with Bush's co-partisans registering only three-tenths of a percentage point higher in districts visited by Bush versus those not visited by Bush. President Bush made only one visit to a tossup district in 1990 on behalf of Representative Peter P. Smith (R-VT), who was soundly beaten by independent Bernie Sanders. A multiple regression model indicates that the difference in the vote share of presidential co-partisans in competitive races in 1990 is not statistically significant, whether President Bush appeared for them or not, as shown in Table 5-4. Nevertheless, Republicans for whom President Bush campaigned did do slightly better at the polls than their co-partisans for whom he did not campaign, averaging roughly a half-percent higher share of the two-party vote.

Table 5-4: Effect of Presidential Visits on Vote-Share, Turnout in 1990		
Variables	**Vote-Share**	**Turnout**
Presidential Visit	.008	-.039
	(.019)	(.026)
Absolute Margin	.038	-.170
	(.285)	(.130)
Cook PVI	.002	n/a
	(.006)	
GOP Seat	.023	.003
	(.030)	(.035)
GOP Incumbent	.009	.059
	(.036)	(.045)
Open Seat	-.002	.022
	(.027)	(.034)
Leans Democrat	.035	.050
	(.032)	(.039)
Leans GOP	.025	.075
	(.039)	(048)
Tossup	.002	.011
	(.039)	(.049)
Senate Race	n/a	-.041
		(.036)
Governor Race	n/a	-.040
		(.025)
Senate & Governor	n/a	-.031
		(.057)
Constant	.446	.066
	(.060)	(.046)
Adjusted R^2	.024	.179
S.E.	.044	.055
F	1.087	1.652

Note: Coefficients are unstandardized with standard errors in parentheses

The second measure, the change in voter turnout between 1988 and 1990 is measured by subtracting the district turnout in 1990 from the turnout in 1988. Competitive districts favoring the president's co-partisans that Bush visited experienced a decline in voter turnout of almost sixteen percentage points while similar districts he did not visit saw an average decline of about thirteen percentage points. Districts favoring the Democratic candidate visited by President Bush had an average decline in voter turnout around six and a half percentage points while the decline in similar districts not visited by the president was almost three full percentage points higher. Perhaps presidential visits in these districts motivated some of the president's supporters to come to the polls on election day in hopes of defeating the favored Democrat.

A case could also be made that President Bush's appearance motivated Democratic supporters to show up at the polls to be sure Republicans were not able to "steal" a seat. It is impossible to discern which of these is most likely based on the data presented here. Again, since President Bush visited only one race rated as a tossup in 1990, no valid comparisons can be made between districts in that category that he visited and those he did not visit. Overall, turnout declined by approximately two fewer percentage points in the ten competitive congressional districts President Bush visited in 1990 than in the twenty-four competitive congressional districts Bush did not visit in 1990. However, the multivariate regression analysis reported in table 5-4 indicates that presidential visits in 1990 by George H.W. Bush did not have a significant effect on voter turnout. None of the other variables included in the model prove to be significant predictors of the variance in voter turnout for the 1988 presidential election and voter turnout for the 1990 congressional midterm elections.

President Clinton: The 1994 and 1998 Midterm Elections

Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992 after a competitive three-way race between himself, President Bush, and businessman H. Ross Perot. Clinton picked up 43.4% of the popular vote and 370 electoral votes to win the presidency. His initial approval rating upon taking office was 56% (Roper, 2009). The unemployment rate peaked at 7.3% in January of 1993 and would fall to 5.6% by the time of the 1994 midterm elections, seemingly good news for the president. The summer of 1993 would prove to be quite contentious for the new president, however. From the implementation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy permitting homosexuals to serve in the armed forces, to the struggle to pass the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 by a single vote in the House and Vice-President Al Gore casting the tie-breaking vote in the Senate, to the failed health care reform effort, 1993 was a very long year for the president. His approval rating suffered as well, falling to just 44% after the passage of the budget act (Roper, 2009). It would sink even lower the following year but rebound to a respectable 46% prior to election day.

At a rally for Harriet Spanel in Seattle on October 23, 1994, President Clinton emphasized his accomplishments in urging people to vote Democratic on election day. He said,

> *"I went to Washington 21 months ago to restore the American dream, to get our country together, to take up problems too long ignored because my predecessors didn't want to deal with all the heat that would come down, to seize opportunities that we had too long walked away from. My mission was pretty simple: I wanted to put Government on the side of ordinary Americans. I wanted to do it by supporting work and family with things like family leave and tax cuts for working people who work full time and have kids in the home that are just barely above poverty, and they ought never to be in poverty if you work full time and you got kids in your house. I wanted Government to be on the side of ordinary Americans by empowering people so they could assume responsibility for their own lives."* (Wooley & Peters, 2009)

President Clinton went on to talk about how he had reduced the deficit in consecutive years and how government payrolls would continue to shrink over the next several years. He spoke about how the Republicans were trying to convince Americans how awful things were in the country and how they would be building monuments to Republicans who presided over the kind of economic growth witnessed in the 21 months since his inauguration. He concluded the rally with an attempt to motivate the Democratic Party base by saying,

> *"One more thing. Don't you dare walk out of here and just think about the cheering. Spend your time for the next 2 weeks talking to people who weren't here. Go have a cup of coffee with your neighbor. And if they're mad and upset and fuming, ask them to relax, take a deep breath, look at the pretty fall coming on, and talk about your country. The people of this country will do the right thing if they know the facts."*(Wooley & Peters, 2009)

President Clinton clearly sought to motivate the Democratic base to get out and vote on election day and strengthen the Democratic majority in Congress.

As with President Reagan, I will consider President Clinton's midterms as a single unit when discussing the win/loss ratio, largely due to the fact that Clinton was active on the campaign trail in 1994, making fourteen campaign visits for his co-partisans, but bogged down by the Lewinsky investigation in 1998, when he made only four appearances as many Democrats tried to dissociate themselves from the president. In the 1994 midterm elections, which witnessed the Republicans gain an historic 54 seats and take control of Congress for the first time since 1954, President Clinton's Democrats won six of the fourteen competitive districts in which he appeared, but only nineteen of the fifty-six competitive districts he did not visit. Four years later they won none of the races in which he made an appearance, compared with twenty-one of the thirty-seven competitive races he did not appear in.

Also in 1998, President Clinton's Democrats gained seats in the House, the first time a sitting president's party had gained House seats in a midterm election since 1934. Overall, Democrats won 35.7% of the competitive races in congressional districts President Clinton did not make an appearance in and 33% of the competitive races in districts he did visit. The former figure is largely a result of the success of Democratic candidates in 1998 as the electorate apparently responded to what was viewed by many as an unfair railroading of President Clinton by congressional Republicans during the Lewinsky investigation. The latter figure is largely driven by the six Democratic victories in the fourteen districts visited by President Clinton in 1994. The former figure is somewhat skewed by the huge Democratic losses in 1994 when Democrats won only about 1/3 of all the competitive districts. Excluding the 1994 results, the party holding the White House averaged winning just over 45% of the competitive seats each year. A chi-square test indicates that presidential visits in 1994 and 1998 were not significant predictors of candidate success, measured as winning the election, producing a X^2 value of .096 and a p value of .497.

Moving beyond the wins and losses, I examined the share of the vote gathered by Democratic candidates for the House in competitive races in 1994 and 1998, as well as the change in voter turnout from each of Bill Clinton's presidential elections to the midterm elections. First, I tabulated the mean share of the two-party vote in 1994 and 1998 for Democrats in competitive races where the president campaigned and for those in competitive races where he did not appear. The data in table 5-5 show that Democrats did fare better in terms of their share of the vote in 1994 if President Clinton visited the district on their behalf. In 1994, Democrats averaged 52.14% of the vote when the president campaigned for them but only 48.58% of the vote when he did not. Considering the difference in turnout between the 1992

Table 5-5: Means of Candidate Vote-Share and Turnout Variance, 1994-98				
1994 Vote Share	***N***	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
Leans Democrat	26	.5248	.4974	.5037
Leans Republican	9	.4657	.4700	.4685
Tossup	34	.4738	.4813	.4804
Total	69	.5214	.4858	.4930
1994 Turnout Difference				
Leans Democrat	26	.1446	.1496	.1484
Leans Republican	9	.1352	.1230	.1270
Tossup	34	.1467	.1420	.1425
Total	69	.1445	.1426	.1430
1998 Vote Share				
Leans Democrat	8	n/a	.5336	.5336
Leans Republican	13	.4841	.4688	.4712
Tossup	20	.4790	.5060	.5033
Total	41	.4815	.5009	.4990
1998 Turnout Difference				
Leans Democrat	8	n/a	.1044	.1044
Leans Republican	13	.0938	.1308	.1246
Tossup	20	.1075	.1014	.1020
Total	41	.1007	.1102	.1093

Note: *N* is total number of races rated in each category for each midterm election

presidential election and the 1994 congressional midterm elections the reader can see that overall turnout declined by about 14 percentage points from the same districts in 1992. The decline is relatively constant across all the categories in table 5-5 except for the districts rated as leaning Republican that Clinton did not visit. It is clear that presidential visits in 1994 had little, if any, effect on the level of turnout in competitive races that year. I discuss the results of a multivariate regression model for 1994 below.

Turning to the 1998 midterm elections, the data paint a slightly different picture. The mean share of the vote earned by Democrats in the four districts where President Clinton campaigned was just over 48% while the share of the vote for Democrats where he did not go was just over 50%. However, looking at the data in column three for the 1998 midterm election one can see that President Clinton made no appearances in districts favoring his own party. He divided his four appearances between districts favoring the GOP candidate and those rated as tossups in 1998. Caution should be used interpreting these data because the president made only four appearances, leaving a sample size too small to be significant. Similar advice is prudent when considering the change in voter turnout in 1998 from the 1996 presidential election. The overall decline in turnout for all competitive races against 1996 was about 10.9%. The data in the table above shows that turnout declined slightly less in the four districts President Clinton visited, but that should not be interpreted to mean that visits by the president are the cause of the decline.

Returning to the 1994 midterm election, I conducted a multivariate regression analysis of the data for candidate vote-share and turnout variance, which is reported in table 5-6 below. The regression model predicting a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote performs reasonably well with a adjusted R^2 of .280, meaning the full model explains about 28% of the variance in vote-share among Democrats in competitive races in 1994. As shown in the table, however, presidential visits in 1994 were not a significant predictor of candidate vote-share. Three other variables are significant predictors of Democratic vote-share in these races that year: Democratic incumbency, whether the seat was open or not, and if the race was considered a tossup. As expected, incumbency on the part of a Democrat was a strong predictor of vote share as Democratic incumbents received about 6.2 percentage points more of the two party vote than

non-incumbents Democrats did when all other factors are held constant. Even in a year that was otherwise bleak for Democrats, incumbency was still an advantage.

The second significant variable is the existence of an open seat held by the Republicans. Interestingly, Democrats fared rather well in open seat races for seats held by the GOP, in a year that was otherwise unfavorable for Democrats. In these races, the data show a 4.8 percentage point increase for Democrats, controlling for other variables.

The final significant variable here was whether CQ had rated the race as a tossup. In these races, President Clinton's co-partisans received only about 45.3 percent of the two-party vote when all else is held constant, a decrease of 1.6 percentage points from their average performance. This category made up nearly half the competitive races in 1994, making it easier to see why the GOP was able to gain as many seats as it did that year.

On the other hand, the regression model predicting the difference in voter turnout between 1992 and 1994 did not prove to be significant, although having two significant variables. The first significant variable affecting voter turnout was the presence of a race favoring the Republicans. In such a race, the variance in turnout declined by about 4.5 percentage points *ceteris paribus*. This likely reflects the presence of an energized Republican base in 1994 as the GOP sought to take control of the House for the first time in forty years. The other significant variable affecting voter turnout in competitive races in 1994 was the presence of a competitive race for governor on the ticket. This accounted for a 2.6 percentage point increase in turnout. Apparently the presence of a higher-level competitive race does have some effect at drawing people to the polls who might otherwise have stayed home during the midterm election. As with the model of candidate vote share, presidential appearances seem to have had little effect on voter turnout in 1994.

Table 5-6: Effect of Presidential Visits on Vote Share & Turnout Difference in 1994		
Variables	**Vote-Share*** **	**Turnout**
Presidential Visit	.001	-.003
	(.009)	(.014)
Absolute Margin	.014	-.084
	(.101)	(.071)
Cook PVI	.003	n/a
	(.002)	
Democrat Seat	-.026	.042
	(.015)	(.024)
Democrat Incumbent	.062***	-.043
	(.020)	(.031)
Open Seat	.048***	-.008
	(.017)	(.026)
Leans GOP	-.016	-.045**
	(.013)	(.019)
Tossup	-.016**	-.013
	(.008)	(.011)
Senate Race	n/a	-.015
		(.013)
Governor Race	n/a	-.026**
		(.013)
Senate & Governor	n/a	.035
		(.030)
Constant	.469	.181
	(.024)	(.027)
Adjusted R^2	.280	.048
S.E.	.028	.039
F	3.933	1.313

*** = $p < .01$; ** = $p < .05$

Note: Coefficients are unstandardized with standard errors in parentheses

George W. Bush: A Tale of Two Midterms

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…or so it might be said about the midterm experiences of George W. Bush. President Bush came to office in January, 2001, after a rather lackluster race for the presidency between himself and vice-president Al Gore. The campaign itself was rather mundane with the candidates agreeing on more than they disagreed, with the exception of what to do about the budget surplus over the next several years. As the campaign came to a close it seemed as though both candidates were positioning themselves as the anti-Clinton candidate, though most voters approved of Clinton's job performance even though they did not approve of his personal failures (Roper, 2009). The real excitement in 2000 came on election night when the networks called Florida for Al Gore, then retracted the call, called it for George W. Bush, then retracted that call and suggested Florida was "too close to call." The nation endured nearly a five-week wait consisting of recounts, court challenges, and partisan bickering that ended with the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to end the recounts in Florida, making George W. Bush the 43rd President of the United States.

The election of George W. Bush carried few benefits for the Republican Party apart from capturing control of the White House, which was remarkable itself in many ways. Unemployment was at a historically low level of 3.9%, the economy was in its 7th consecutive year of growth, and the federal government had a budget surplus for the first time since 1969. All of these factors seemed to weigh against the Republicans winning the presidency, and indeed, George W. Bush did lose the popular vote to Al Gore by around a half-million votes. In spite of losing the presidency, Democrats did quite well in the congressional elections of 2000. A gain of four seats in the Senate dropped that chamber into a tie at 50-50 with the vice-

president, Dick Cheney, holding the tie-breaking vote for the GOP. Democrats also gained one seat in the House, leaving the Republicans with a threadbare majority of 221-212 (and two independents, who caucused with the Democrats). Republicans would lose control of the Senate in May when Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont became an independent who caucused with the Democrats.

George W. Bush's first seven months in office were relatively uneventful and somewhat productive as he managed to steer a $1.3 trillion tax cut through Congress and crossed the aisle to work with Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts on the No Child Left Behind Act, which he signed into law in 2002. The economy began to slow shortly after President Bush took office and unemployment rose from 4.2% in January of 2001 to 5.9% by the time of the 2002-midterm elections. However, all of that was overshadowed by the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. As the midterm elections approached in 2002, George W. Bush took to the campaign trail feverishly as Republicans sought to nationalize the election with the war on terrorism as its central theme. The President and his advisors, particularly Karl Rove, were determined to come out of the midterm with a firmer grip on the Congress than they had going in. At a rally in Denver, Colorado, on October 28th, the president said,

> *"And I'm here to make sure - to encourage you to work hard, to make sure that Denny Hastert remains the Speaker of the House of Representatives. And if you're interested in joining me in doing that, you'll make sure Bob Beauprez gets elected to the United States Congress. I appreciate Bob. He represents the Colorado story, the Colorado story from a pioneering family. He's an entrepreneur. He's a hard worker. He's a God-fearing man. He's a decent soul. For the sake of the country, it's important that Bob Beauprez become the United States Congressman from the Seventh District."* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

A short while later, making the plea for more Republicans in Congress to support his effort in the war against terrorism, and ultimately, Iraq, he said,

> *"...we've got to do everything we can to protect the homeland. We've got to be realistic about the threats we face. See, after September the 11th, 2001, it should be evident to all Americans that these oceans no longer protect us. A while ago it would be easy to say there's a conflict somewhere, and we can pick and choose if we want to be involved, or there may be a threat emerging, but we really don't have to worry about it that much because we've got oceans to protect us. Now we realize that the battlefield is here at home. The battlefields used to be elsewhere. They're here at home now, which means the stakes are much higher. And when we see a threat, we've got to be realistic about the threat, and we've got to be firm in our resolve to deal with threats. And there's a true threat, which exists in Iraq. Oh, we can hope the man changes, but I want you to remember that this is a person who has gassed his own people. It's a person who claims he has no weapons of mass destruction, in order to escape the dictums of the U.N. Security Council and the United Nations, but he's got them. See, he'll lie. He'll deceive us. And he'll use them"* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

In the end, the race for the newly created 7th Congressional District seat in Colorado proved to be one of the closest races in the country. The president's candidate, Bob Beauprez, prevailed over Democrat Mike Feeley by 121 votes out of more than 172,000 votes cast on election day. Did the appearance by President Bush just eight days prior to election day make the difference in that race? Perhaps.

Overall, President Bush would make twenty-two appearances for Republican candidates for the House and several more for Senate candidates. In fact, the president logged over 10,000 miles of travel and delivered dozens of speeches in the final week before election day on November 5th, 2002 (Milkis & Nelson, 2008). The results were very good for the president and the Republican Party. The GOP gained two seats in the Senate and retook control of the chamber with a 51-49 majority. In the House, Republicans gained eight seats to strengthen their majority to 229-204, with two independents. President Bush thus became the first president since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934 to gain seats in both the House and Senate during a midterm

election. The extra seats in both chambers would prove critical as the country moved towards war with Iraq and for the president's domestic agenda as well, with many pieces of legislation passing by the thinnest of margins over the next two years.

How much credit does President Bush deserve for the historic wins by the GOP? Let us take a look inside the numbers and see for ourselves. First, I asked whether or not visits by President Bush affected the success rate of Republican candidates for the House in the races identified as competitive by CQ Weekly. Of the twenty-two races where President Bush made an appearance in 2002, his co-partisans won seventeen times, or 77.3%. One of these was not predicted to be competitive, the race for Florida's 13th Congressional District featuring former Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris. Thus, I excluded it from this analysis leaving President Bush's co-partisans with a success rate of sixteen wins out of twenty-one appearances, or 76.2%. In races in which the president did not campaign Republicans were successful in eighteen out of twenty-nine, or 62.1%. A closer look at the data is even more revealing, however. Republicans won fifteen of the sixteen races they were favored to win when the president did not campaign, and all seven of the races they were favored to win where he did appear. In races favoring the Democratic Party candidate, Republicans won none of the seven races favoring the Democrats when the president did not appear and two of the seven races in which he did make an appearance. The most interesting finding comes from those races classified as a toss-up. In six such races where President Bush did not visit the GOP won three and lost three. In the seven tossups he did visit the Republicans posted a clean sweep. In spite of these data, a chi-square test indicates that President Bush's appearances in 2002 were not significantly related to his co-partisans' success rate. The X^2 value is 1.343 and the p value is only .197.

Table 5-7: Mean Co-Partisane Vote Share & Turnout Difference in 2002				
2002 Candidate Vote Share	***N***	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
Leans Republican	23	.5500	.5804	.5712
Leans Democrat	14	.4913	.4727	.4820
Tossup	13	.5290	.5144	.5223
Total	50	.5246	.5408	.5338
2002 Turnout Difference				
Leans Republican	16	.1149	.1099	.1111
Leans Democrat	10	.1178	.1155	.1164
Tossup	7	-.0275	.1205	.0571
Total	33	.0718	.1133	.0987
Note: Figures are proportion of the two-party vote & decline in voter turnout from 2000				

A different way to look at the effect of President Bush's appearances in 2002 is by comparing the mean share of the two-party vote won by Republicans in competitive races that he visited and competitive races that he did not visit, controlling for the CQ ranking of the race. As seen in Table 5-7, Republicans fared better in both the tossup races and races favoring the Democrat where President Bush made an appearance than in those races he did not. In the races favoring Democrats where Bush appeared the Republican mean share of the vote was almost two full points higher than in those races where he did not campaign. In the tossup races, Republicans did about one and a half points better in the districts where a visit was scheduled than in the districts where no visit occurred.

The bottom half of table 5-7 shows the mean values for the change in voter turnout in the congressional districts rated as competitive in 2002 from the turnout in those same districts in 2000. As noted in chapter 3, seventeen congressional districts were removed from the analysis in 2002 due to either being a newly created district or having had the district's boundaries

significantly changed as result of redistricting following the 2000 census, leaving me with 33 competitive districts in 2002. The most notable figure in the table is found in column 3 for the districts visited by President Bush that were also rated as a tossup. Altogether, Bush appeared in 3 of the 7 tossup races remaining in the analysis. In those three districts, voter turnout actually *increased* over 2000 levels by an average of 2.75 percentage points, while in the four tossup districts President Bush did not appear in voter turnout declined by an average of 12 percentage points. In the other competitive races turnout was down from 2000 by a little more than 11 percentage points. Were the appearances by President Bush in those tossup districts responsible for boosting voter turnout? Table 5-8 reports the results of a multivariate regression analysis addressing that question.

The first regression model in the table indicates that visits by President Bush in 2002 did not contribute significantly to the share of the vote gathered by his co-partisans in competitive districts. In fact, the entire model does a poor job explaining the variation in the share of the vote received by Republicans in competitive races in 2002 with an adjusted R^2 of just .015. No variable in the model comes close to being a significant predictor of Republican vote share.

The second regression estimate is significant but only at the $p < .10$ level. The only significant predictor in the model is a visit by President Bush with a p value of .07, indicating that a visit by the president boosted voter turnout by approximately 4.1 percentage points. The data should be interpreted cautiously because the sample size is very small with a total of 12 visits out of 33 competitive districts. None of the other variables demonstrated a significant effect on voter turnout in 2002, although the rating of a district as a tossup came very close at $p=$ .106. A larger sample is preferred before drawing any firm conclusions from the data.

Table 5-8: The Effect of Presidential Visits in 2002 on Vote Share & Turnout		
Variables	**GOP Vote Share**	**Voter Turnout***
Presidential Visit	-.022 (.016)	-.041* (.021)
Partisan Voting Index	.001 (.002)	n/a
GOP Holds Seat	-.014 (.028)	-.031 (.035)
GOP Incumbent	.048 (.036)	.043 (.043)
Democrat Open Seat	.035 (.026)	.010 (.032)
President Won District	.017 (.025)	-.034 (.024)
Tossup	-.009 (.021)	-.041 (.024)
Senate	n/a	.003 (.036)
Governor	n/a	.002 (.021)
Senate & Governor	n/a	-.022 (.049)
Constant	.510 (.019)	.148 (.025)
Adjusted R^2	.015	.221
F	1.109	2.009
Standard Error	.054	.051
N	50	33

Note: Figures are unstandardized coefficients w/ standard errors in parentheses

**** = p < .10***

George W. Bush and the 2006 Midterm Election

President Bush was re-elected in 2004 after a hard fought race against Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts. The campaign focused on issues of national security, terrorism, and the ongoing war in Iraq, which had begun in March of 2003. Bush was re-elected by the smallest margin of electoral votes (35) for an incumbent president since Woodrow Wilson won by 23 electoral votes in 1916 over Charles Evans Hughes. President Bush's popular vote margin was also small, but firm, as he became the first president elected with more than 50% of the popular vote since his father in 1988. Believing that he had accumulated some political capital with his re-election, President Bush set out to spend it by reforming the Social Security system, proposing to allow wage earners to invest a portion of their FICA taxes in private accounts. Neither the public nor the Congress took well to the proposal, in spite of the GOP having picked up four seats in the Senate, for a total of 55, and three seats in the House, for a total of 232 seats. The GOP's 232-202 advantage over the Democrats would be the high water mark of the 'permanent Republican majority' envisioned by Bush strategist Karl Rove. In spite of this majority, neither chamber of Congress took up legislation that would privatize the Social Security system. In addition, the war in Iraq seemed to be going badly as American troop casualties continued to mount and economic growth was below historical levels. As a result, the president's approval rating steadily declined throughout 2005 and the first half of 2006 before ticking slightly upward in September but falling below 40% by election day. All of these factors pointed to a midterm election that would not be kind to the administration.

As the midterm elections of 2006 approached, many scholars and pundits began to talk of a possible Democratic takeover of the House, and possibly, though less likely, the Senate. The

president's approval rating sat at just 38%, while his disapproval rating was over 50% (Roper, 2009). Democrats began smelling the scent of victory as several scandals unfolded involving members of the GOP and the public grew restless with President Bush and the two ongoing wars. Nevertheless, the president showed no public dismay and confidently asserted that Republicans would maintain control of Congress. Over the final week and a half prior to election day the president toured the country on behalf of his co-partisans, making seventeen campaign appearances in all for his co-partisans seeking election to the House. At a rally in Greeley, Colorado, for Marilyn Musgrave on November 4th he said,

> *"This election is just 3 days away. Oh, you've probably heard them in Washington--all the pundits and prognosticators have already determined the outcome of the election. I want to remind them, the folks of Colorado haven't even voted yet. Oh, it's not the first time we've been through this. You might remember 2004. I suspect it was about the time I came to Greeley that some of them in Washington were already picking out their offices in the West Wing. [Laughter] And then you voted, and the movers weren't needed. They're not going to be needed on November the 7th. With your help, we will hold the House, Marilyn will win, and we will control the United States Senate."* (Wooley & Peters, 2009).

Marilyn Musgrave would indeed go on to be elected as the representative from Colorado's 4th Congressional District by a margin of about 6,000 votes out of more than 240,000 votes cast in the election. Musgrave collected 51.40% of the two-party vote compared to 48.60% for the Democratic Party candidate. This race was listed by CQ as favoring the Republican candidate, though it turned out to be exceptionally close. Did President Bush's appearance on behalf of Ms. Musgrave push her over the top as his appearances in 2002 may have done for several Republican candidates? Or was the 2006 midterm election truly a 'horse of a different color"?

Though President Bush was very active on the campaign trail in 2006, his strategy was a bit different than in 2002, as were the results. Bush made 17 appearances in 2006 compared with 22 in 2002, 22% fewer visits, though there was only one less competitive race than in 2002. In addition, three of Bush's visits in 2006 were to districts not ranked as competitive.[24] They are included in the analysis because each of those districts turned out to be competitive, though I have left them coded as "0" indicating the race was not expected to be competitive by CQ. Removing these three races from the analysis did not change the results discussed below.

Looking at the data in table 5-9 shows that Republicans did earn a slightly higher share of the two-party vote in those races where President Bush campaigned in 2006 than did Republicans in those races that President Bush avoided. Overall, Republicans averaged about a 1.2% higher share of the vote in races the president visited than in those he did not visit. I discuss the results of a multivariate regression analysis of the data below.

Finally, examining the decline in voter turnout from the 2004 presidential election to the 2006 midterm election provides some rather interesting findings. Across all the competitive races in 2006 voter turnout declined by an average of 16.9% from 2004. As the table shows, the decline in turnout was not consistent across all categories of competitive races. In those races favoring the president's co-partisan turnout was down about 16.5%. In races favoring the Democratic candidate turnout declined by 17.8%, while in the tossup races turnout was down about 16.7%. Overall, there are not many differences across the categories. However, when controlling for a presidential visit the picture is a bit different. The decline in turnout is more

[24] President Bush visited California's 4th District, Kansas' 2nd District, and Nebraska's 3rd District races. In comparison, Bush made only one such visit in 2002, to Florida's 13th District on behalf of Katherine Harris.

Table 5-9: Mean Co-Partisan Vote Share & Turnout Difference in 2006				
2006 Candidate Vote Share	***N***	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
Leans Republican	22	.5030	.4961	.4983
Leans Democrat	11	.4749	.4551	.4641
Tossup	17	.4920	.4812	.4825
Total	50	.4958	.4831	.4871
2006 Turnout Difference				
Leans Republican	22	.1865	.1549	.1650
Leans Democrat	11	.2266	.1376	.1781
Tossup	17	.0786	.1790	.1672
Total	50	.1827	.1621	.1687
Note: Figures are proportion of the two-party vote & decline in voter turnout from 2004				

dramatic in the districts President Bush visited in 2006 than in those he did not, particularly in districts that favored the Democratic candidate. The mean decline in those districts he visited is about 22.7% compared to a decline of 13.8% in districts favoring Democrats that Bush did not visit. This data should not be interpreted to indicate that President Bush's appearance in a congressional district race *caused* a steeper decline in voter turnout, however. It is more likely that GOP supporters were far less enthusiastic in these districts and a presidential visit was scheduled to try to boost morale and draw supporters to the polls. It is also possible that an appearance by the president helped to persuade some who might have supported the Democratic candidate to abstain from voting, though this is purely conjecture.

Next, I conducted a multivariate regression analysis on the 2006 data similar to that for Bush's first midterm in 2002. Model estimates are reported in table 5-10. Unlike in 2002, neither model proved significant in predicting a Republican's share of the two-party vote or the difference in voter turnout for the competitive districts in 2006 from the 2004 presidential election. Additionally, there were no variables in either model that could have occurred due to

Table 5-10: The Effect of Presidential Visits in 2006 on Vote Share & Turnout		
Variables	**GOP Vote Share**	**Voter Turnout**
Presidential Visit	.012	.015
	(.014)	(.023)
Partisan Voting Index	.001	n/a
	(.001)	
GOP Holds Seat	.019	.104
	(.042)	(.075)
GOP Incumbent	.001	-.115
	(.049)	(.089)
Democrat Open Seat	-.005	-.086
	(.047)	(.082)
President Won District	.002	-.015
	(.016)	(.022)
Tossup	-.003	-.004
	(.012)	(.029)
Senate	n/a	.004
		(.029)
Governor	n/a	.007
		(.025)
Constant	.463	.178
	(.028)	(.047)
Adjusted R^2	-.070	-.069
F	.514	.578
Standard Error	.038	.067
N	50	50
Note: Figures are unstandardized coefficients w/ standard errors in parentheses		

chance as low as ten percent. The closest variable to significance was that of an open Republican seat ($p = .173$), predicting an additional ten percentage point decrease in voter turnout in those districts when other variables are held constant. Though insignificant, it

indicates that turnout in Republican held competitive districts was down substantially from 2004, likely accounting for the large gains by Democrats in districts that previously leaned to the GOP that year. Finally, though again insignificant, neither the presence of a senate race or gubernatorial contest had any measurable effect on voter turnout in 2006.

Presidents and their midterms: 1982-2006

Having previously examined each midterm election between 1982 and 2006, I now turn to an aggregate look at the data. Presidents from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush made a grand total of eighty-one visits on behalf of their co-partisans in midterm election contests. Ten of these visits were in races rated as non-competitive by CQ Weekly, and seven of the ten did turn out to be non-competitive. A few were likely favors for a personal friend, such as Ronald Reagan's visit to Wyoming on behalf of Dick Cheney in 1982 and George W. Bush's 2002 visit to Florida on behalf of his former campaign co-chair for Florida in the 2000 presidential election. Three of the visits can be attributed to races that became competitive during the election season due to stronger than expected challenges from the opposing party, such as the 2006 visit of George W. Bush on behalf of Republican Adrian Smith in Nebraska's 3rd District. According to the political director for the Smith campaign, James Dukesherer, the internal polling data for the campaign showed the race within the margin of error heading into the final weekend. The campaign requested, and received, a campaign appearance by President Bush just two days prior to the election. Smith went on to win the race by almost ten percentage points

and was handily re-elected in 2008. The campaign firmly believed that the president put them over the top in that race.[25]

The other seventy-one presidential visits occurred in races that CQ Weekly forecast as competitive (either leaning toward a party or a tossup) prior to the election season kickoff, typically around Labor Day. There are a total of three hundred and forty-seven races classified as competitive between 1982 and 2006, as discussed in the previous chapter. How did the president's co-partisans do in these races? I will examine them from three perspectives. First, I look at the win/loss percentage by each category of competitiveness. Next, I examine the effect of presidential visits on a candidate's vote share. Finally, I look at the effect of a presidential visit on voter turnout in a congressional district, once again by category of competitiveness.

Wins and Losses

As stated above, presidents made a total of seventy-one visits to races rated as competitive by CQ Weekly from 1982-2006. Their co-partisans successfully secured election to the House in thirty-four of those contests, or 47.9%. In contrast, a president's co-partisans were successfully elected to the House in only 43.5% of those competitive races that presidents did not visit. Table 5-11 provides a complete breakdown of the data by competitive ranking. Clearly, presidential co-partisans won a higher percentage of their races when the president appeared than when he did not. Candidates did best in those races favoring the president's co-partisan as expected, and somewhat better in those races rated as a tossup, winning 50% of the races when

[25] Per a personal conversation with Mr. Dukesherer on November 12th, 2006.

Table 5-11: Presidential Co-Partisans Win Percentage, 1982-2006				
Category	***N***	**Visit**	**No Visit**	**Total**
Favors President	130	.741	.699	.708
Favors Opponent	89	.167	.138	.146
Tossup	128	.500	.361	.383
Total	**347**	**.479**	**.435**	**.444**

Note: Figures are proportion of races won by presidential co-partisans in each category

the president appeared but only 36.1% of tossup races without an appearance. Statistically, presidential co-partisans won about 16.7% of races favoring the opposing candidate when the president visited but only 13.8% of such races without a presidential visit.

Next, I estimated a logistic regression model predicting whether the president's co-partisan won or lost the race on the basis of the president's absolute margin of victory/defeat in the previous election, whether he visited the district or not, a measure of district partisanship based on the Cook Partisan Voting Index, and several control variables. The absolute margin of victory/defeat for the president in the district is simply the difference between the president's share of the two-party vote and his opponent's share of the two-party vote in the previous presidential election, reported as a positive number. I include this measure to provide a form of measuring the president's popularity in the district since polling data are not available on a district by district basis and state level data cannot be used because a president may be popular in one part of a state but not in another.

For each congressional district I also included the Cook Partisan Voting Index, a measure of the partisan leanings of a district's voters based on how the district voted for president in the previous two presidential elections and then subtracting the national percentage of the vote

cast for the current president from that figure. The PVI value is recorded as a positive number if the district leans toward the president's party and as a negative number if it leans toward the opposing party. This measure helps to refute one potential objection when examining presidential campaign appearances for their co-partisans, namely that presidents allocate their visits to the districts where they are most popular and most likely to be successful, i.e., where their co-partisan is likely to win anyway. As the table in chapter 4 indicates, presidents tend to spread their visits fairly evenly among districts in each of the three categories (president's co-partisan favored, president's opponent favored, and tossup), though tending to visit districts carried by the president in the previous election. A scatter plot of the presidential visits indicates that most of those visits occur in districts the president won by fewer than ten percentage points in the previous election. This is an important variable from a theoretical standpoint because most members of the U.S. House of Representatives in the president's party represent districts carried by the president himself in the prior election. A presidential co-partisan running in a district with a PVI favoring the president is thought to have a better likelihood of success than one running in a district unfavorable to the president. It likely occurs due to the strong tendency of voters to identify with one party or the other, leading to nearly consistent support of Democrats in Democratic leaning districts and Republicans in Republican leaning districts. For example, in the 111th Congress, there are a total of 83 members of the House serving in districts that voted for the opposite party's candidate for president in 2008 (Cook, 2010). This figure is well above the average and will more than likely be reduced after the 2010 midterm election as President Obama's coattails are withdrawn.

Additional variables included in this model are controls for each president serving between 1982 and 2006. I created four dummy variables, one for each president, coded as "0"

for midterm contests held during a different president's administration and "1" for midterms held during that president's administration. This control provides for a measure of campaign effectiveness due to the fact that some presidents might be better on the campaign trail than other presidents are. In the full model, only the dummy for George W. Bush is displayed as none of the others even approached significance and removal of them did not weaken the model.

I also included several control variables related to the status of the contest itself. The first of these records whether or not an incumbent of the president's party sought re-election in the district. It is important to control for this because incumbents have a very high winning percentage, even in years that are not favorable to a president's co-partisans. I also control for whether the president's party currently holds the seat or not. The likelihood of the president's co-partisan winning such a seat ought to be greater than the likelihood of his co-partisan winning either an open seat or one currently held by the opposite party. I also include a dummy variable indicating whether the seat was open but currently held by the opposing party in order to estimate the odds of a president's co-partisan being able to take a seat from the opposition. One logit model was created including all competitive districts from 1982 through 2006 as well as three separate models based on the CQ classification of the race as either leaning toward the president's party, leaning toward the opposition, or tossup. The results of the four models are reported in table 5-12. Two of the models proved to be significant in explaining the proportion of competitive races won by presidential co-partisans. Looking at the table, we can see that several variables have significant explanatory power. However, the one variable we are most interested in here, presidential visits, is insignificant in all four models. The model estimates provide no reason to believe that presidential visits on behalf of a co-partisan are sufficient to predict a win for that candidate, regardless of the race's classification. In the model for all races

Table 5-12: The Effect of Presidential Visits on Presidential Co-Partisan Win Rates

Variables	All Races***	Leans President	Leans Opponent	Tossup*
President Visited District	.079	.009	.241	.269
	(.291)	(.522)	(.728)	(.540)
Cook Partisan Voting Index	.041*	.075*	.020	.040
	(.018)	(.033)	(.046)	(.032)
President Party Incumbent	1.842***	-.363	-18.840	1.386
	(.522)	(1.710)	(15140.541)	(.928)
President Party Open Seat	-.574	-1.632	-.186	-1.343*
	(.401)	(1.262)	(.912)	(.637)
Opposing Party Open Seat	1.353***	-.476	.931	1.103
	(.426)	(1.645)	(.827)	(.774)
George W. Bush	.413	.007	-.552	1.166*
	(.258)	(.461)	(.809)	(.471)
Constant	-1.312***	2.694*	-1.979***	-.938
	(.298)	(1.298)	(.488)	(.640)
Log-Likelihood	443.606	147.228	69.676	154.555
Pseudo R^2	.105	.098	.084	.132
Wald X^2	27.894	9.171	4.341	12.853
Percent Predicted	72.5	70.5	85.4	64.8
N	347	130	89	128

Note: *** P<.001; ** *p<.01*; * *p<.05; Coefficient is B with Standard Error in Parentheses*

combined (column two) we can see three significant variables: the PVI, incumbency, and the presence of an open seat belonging to the opposition. None of these are surprising as I expected the PVI and incumbency to be solid predictors of a co-partisan's success, as discussed above. The final significant variable in this model, open seats belonging to the opposition, is probably a reflection of several different factors. Some of these open seats may be in districts with PVI's favorable to a presidential co-partisan, thus encouraging a 'strategic retirement' by a member of

the opposition party and putting the seat in play for the president's party to steal (Jacobsen, 1987).

In the second model, estimated using only data from races that leaned toward the president's party (column three), only the PVI demonstrates any statistical significance. One surprising, though insignificant predictor, aspect of this model is the coefficient for a co-partisan incumbent, which is actually negative. This is likely attributable to the limited number of incumbents of the president's party who find themselves in competitive races. Additionally, incumbents are more likely to be defeated in competitive races than at other times during their careers.

In the third model, estimated using only those races that leaned toward the president's opponent, none of the variables are statistically significant. The only variable that stands out to the naked eye is the presence of a presidential co-partisan incumbent in a race classified as leaning toward the opposition. The magnitude of the coefficient indicates that such a candidate has only a small probability of winning the race. However, the number of districts falling into this category was only six from 1982 through 2006 and the incumbent lost half of those races. Thus, the sample for such races is quite limited as it is clearly unusual for a presidential co-partisan to be an incumbent in a district favoring the opposition.

The final model, found in column four, proves significant as a whole with less than a .05 probability that the findings are due to chance. Two of the variables in this model are significant at the .05 level as well. The first is the presence of an open seat belonging to the president's party. The sign for this coefficient is negative, which indicates that presidential co-partisans seeking election in tossup districts during midterm elections face a difficult challenge. The expected probability of success for such a candidate is only .26 when the other variables in the

Table 5-13: Presidential Co-Partisan Vote Share, 1982-2006				
Category	***N***	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
Leans President	130	.5206	.5173	.5180
Leans Opponent	89	.4795	.4693	.4720
Tossup	128	.4992	.4869	.4888
Total	**347**	**.5063**	**.4941**	**.4968**
Note: Figures are proportion of the two-party vote received by presidential co-partisans, 1982-2006				

model are held constant. The second variable, races during the midterms of George W. Bush, produced an expected probability of victory in tossup races nearly double that of any other president, as Republicans won 17 of the 30 races classified as such during his two midterms, including 10 of the 13 tossups in 2002. Bush's visits may not have helped his co-partisans win their races but it certainly did not hurt them to be associated with the president, at least in 2002

Candidate Vote Share

Since it appears that campaign visits by the president may not lead directly to victories by his co-partisans the question must be raised as to what other effects these visits may produce. I hypothesized that one of the potential effects of a presidential campaign appearance will be a greater share of the two-party vote for the co-partisans receiving a visit than for his co-partisans who do not receive a visit. For each of the 347 competitive congressional races contained in this data set I tabulated the president's co-partisan's share of the two-party popular vote. I then conducted a means comparison test across the different categories of races rated by CQ Weekly based on whether the president visited the district or not. The data from 1982-2006 are shown in table 5-13 above. The table shows that candidates in each category for whom the president appeared did receive a slightly higher percentage of the two-party vote than those candidates for

Table 5-14: The Effect of Presidential Visits on Co-Partisan Vote Share, 1982-2006

Variable	All Races***	Leans President***	Leans Opponent	Tossup#
Presidential Visit	.002	-.007	.008	.007
	(.005)	(.008)	(.007)	(.010)
Cook PVI	.001#	.001#	.001	.001
	(.000)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
George W. Bush	.015***	.020**	-.002	.014
	(.005)	(.007)	(.008)	(.009)
Co-Partisan Incumbent	-.005	-.036*	-.012	.020
	(.006)	(.014)	(.011)	(.013)
Open-President's Party	-.005	-.033*	.005	.008
	(.007)	(.016)	(.008)	(.014)
Open-Opposing Party	.016*	.010	.010	.029*
	(.007)	(.019)	(.009)	(.014)
President Carried District	.002	.002	-.003	.004
	(.006)	(.009)	(.009)	(.010)
Leans President	.049***	n/a	n/a	n/a
	(.006)			
Tossup	.021***	n/a	n/a	n/a
	(.006)			
Constant	.465***	.540***	.471***	.466***
	(.006)	(.016)	(.008)	(.013)
R^2	.250	.175	-.008	.046
Standard Error	.036	.037	.028	.039
F-Test	13.658	4.868	.902	1.855
N	347	130	89	128

Note: ****=p <.001, **=p <.01, *=p <.05, #=p <.10.* Coefficients are unstandardized with errors in parentheses.

whom he did not appear. To see if this relationship holds with the inclusion of other predictors, I estimated a multivariate linear regression model using many of the same variables as above. I controlled for open seats held by the opposition, seats held by the president's party, incumbency

by a presidential co-partisan, whether or not the president carried the district previously, and whether a visit to the district occurred. Additionally, I included the Cook PVI as a presidential co-partisan is expected to receive a higher percentage of the vote in districts with a higher PVI. The PVI functions largely as a measure of the district's "normal vote" for regression purposes. I also included variables for whether the race was rated as a tossup or occurred during George W. Bush's presidency, since his co-partisans did better than others during the time frame studied. Finally, I eliminated the ten races visited by presidents that were not rated as competitive by CQ, to ensure that only the races rated as competitive were included in the analysis. A planned future iteration of this project will include all House races contested by the two major parties between 1982 and 2010. The model was estimated in the aggregate and also for each of the three categories of races. Each model was significant except for those races rated as leaning toward the opposing party. The results are reported in table 5-14 above.

The first thing to note from each of the models is that the primary independent variable, presidential campaign appearances, is an insignificant predictor of a co-partisan's share of the two party vote. Interestingly, in model two, candidates running in races rated as leaning towards the president's co-partisan received about seven-tenths of a percent less of the vote when the president appeared than did candidates in similar races for whom the president did not appear, when other variables are held constant. The opposite is true in those races rated by CQ as tossups. Clearly, presidential visits, in and of themselves, are insufficient to propel a co-partisan to victory. The data indicate that a number of factors must be working in the candidate's favor before victory can be realized. In combination with other favorable factors, a presidential visit may be able to push a candidate over the top in a tossup race, such as the race in Colorado's 7th

Congressional District, which I discussed previously, although the analysis conducted here does not allow me to draw that conclusion with any degree of confidence.

Altogether, five variables proved significant in the aggregate model. First, the Cook Partisan Voting Index for the district indicates that a co-partisan of the president is expected to receive one-tenth of a percent more of the vote for each 1 point increase in the index. The second important predictor in the aggregate model is that of a Republican running during George W. Bush's tenure in office. All else being constant, Bush's co-partisans received about 1.5 percentage points more of the two-party vote than did the co-partisans of all other presidents during the period studied. Once again, it is likely the bulk of this effect arises from the excellent showing of Republican candidates in the wave election of 2002, even though some of their gains are offset by their relatively poor performance in 2006. Third, a presidential co-partisan seeking election in a district with an open seat belonging to the opposite party received about a 1.6 percentage point higher share of the vote than co-partisans in other districts. Finally, the rating of the race itself mattered. A candidate running in a district leaning toward his party is expected to get 4.9 percentage points more of the vote than when her opponent is favored. Likewise, a presidential co-partisan running in a tossup district is expected to receive about 2.1 percentage points more of the vote than in a district favoring her opponent.

In the second model, districts favoring the president's co-partisan, there are two additional significant variables; co-partisan incumbency and open seats belonging to the president's party. Co-partisans in the first category are expected to receive about 3.6 percentage points less than co-partisans not in this category while co-partisans seeking election to an open seat already belonging to the party are expected to do about 3.3 percentage points worse than co-partisans elsewhere. In short, being a co-partisan of the president locked in a tight race for a seat

held by one's party does not bode well for one's electoral fortunes. Neither of these factors alone is likely to result in a loss, however, as presidential co-partisans in districts favoring them are expected to receive about 54% of the two-party vote. An interesting finding from this model is that an incumbent co-partisan who receives a presidential visit is estimated to suffer a 4.3 percentage point drop in his share of the vote, though the bulk of that drop is attributable to incumbency rather than the president's visit.

My third model, races favoring the opponent, showed nothing of significance. The final model for the races considered a tossup by CQ was significant with a probability of .083. The only significant predictor was the presence of an open seat currently held by the opposition party. In these districts presidential co-partisans are expected to receive an additional 2.9 percentage points of the popular vote, which would leave a president's co-partisan about ½ of a point short of victory when combined with the expected 46.6% in tossup races for a co-partisan. This is the type of district that might be a prime candidate for a presidential visit since the data indicate that presidential co-partisans are expected to enjoy about a seven-tenths of a point increase in tossup districts visited by the president, just enough to push past the 50% mark, though once again, I am unable to conclude that a presidential visit is a significant predictor of a candidate's vote share.

One last interesting note is evident in the data table above. In each of the models, except that favoring the opponent, the presence of an open seat is significant. In the full model, co-partisans running for an open seat currently held by their party are disadvantaged slightly (½ point) but benefit by seeking an open seat held by their opponents. Likewise in the districts rated as favoring the president's co-partisans. As I suggested above, these seats may become open due to strategic retirements, scandals, the death of an incumbent such as John Murtha in Pennsylvania's 12th, or a number of other reasons. Once they become open the data indicate the

out party has a pretty good shot at claiming the seat, perhaps due to anti-administration feelings among the electorate, a decline in turnout among supporters of the incumbent party, or a host of other reasons.

Voter Turnout

So far, an aggregate analysis of midterm elections since 1982 indicates that presidential visits alone are not significant predictors of a candidate's chance of success or her share of the two-party vote. The last area I turn to in my examination of the systematic effects stemming from a presidential visit is voter turnout in those districts where the president campaigns compared to those where he does not. Presidential elections are generally competitive affairs that motivate citizens to vote for their preferred candidate for president. In contrast, midterm elections are often marked by a significant decline in voter participation, in large part because there is no presidential race to pique a citizen's interest in the election. However, a presidential visit to a congressional district may serve to reduce or reverse the decline in voter turnout typically experience during a midterm election. Due to redistricting issues, noncompetitive races, and the near impossibility of tabulating accurate voter turnout information for every congressional district I chose to use voter turnout in the district in the prior presidential election as the baseline measure of turnout. If a presidential visit has any effect on voter turnout it should be evident in an analysis of districts visited by the president during the midterm election. One reason to expect a presidential visit to reduce the decline in voter turnout has to do with the media attention generated by a visit. The arrival of Air Force One and the President of the United States may provide a candidate with free media coverage for several days before and after

Table 5-15: Difference in Voter Turnout by District Ranking, 1986-2006				
Category	***N***	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
Leans President	95	.1554	.1376	.1413
Leans Opponent	69	.1270	.1293	.1286
Tossup	99	.0779	.1321	.1256
Total	**263**	**.1247**	**.1334**	**.1315**
Note: Figures are the aggregate decline in voter turnout in competitive districts from 1986-2006.				

a visit (Herrnson & Morris, 2007). The increased media attention, especially in the days right before an election, may be instrumental in mobilizing some citizens to vote. Thus, I hypothesized that visits to a district by the president will result in a smaller decline in turnout from the previous presidential election. Across all the districts included in this data set, voter turnout declined by an average of 12.1% from the prior presidential election. Much of the literature attributes the decline in voter turnout during midterms to either disinterested independents or a lack of motivation to vote on the part of weak partisans, as discussed in chapter 2. In either case, presidential visits to a congressional district are likely designed to mobilize those weaker partisans or independents that support the president to go to the polls on election day. The question is whether or not these efforts are successful.

Looking at table 5-15 provides an overview of voter turnout from 1986 through 2006 within the different categories of races examined in this dissertation.[26] Overall, turnout declined by about nine-tenths of a percentage point less in districts visited by the president than in the districts he did not visit, though there are some sharp between group and within group differences here. In the races not visited, the decline was roughly 13.34 percentage points, while in the visited races turnout declined by about 12.47 percentage points. Taking a closer look

[26] As noted in chapter 3, due to a lack of reliable data on redistricting after the 1980 census all 1982 districts were dropped. For districts redrawn after the 2000 census, only those districts not significantly changed were retained. A list of the excluded districts is found in chapter 3 on page 59.

across the different categories gives a clearer view of what is going on. In districts favoring the president's co-partisan, turnout actually declined more in the districts he visited than in those he did not, 15.54 percentage points compared to 13.76 percentage points. In those races favoring the opposing candidate, turnout declined by about 12.93 percentage points in races the president did not visit and 12.70 percentage points in races he did visit. The largest, and most significant, difference came in those races rated as a tossup. The average decline in districts not visited by the president was 13.21 percentage points but in those districts he visited the difference was a decline of only 7.79 percentage points. It seems that presidential visits may have the largest impact on voter turnout in those districts rated as the most competitive. A visit by the president to a district where the outcome is far less certain may draw his supporters to the polls in greater numbers than in those districts in which the president's co-partisans have a very good shot at winning or little chance of emerging victorious.

Using linear regression models, I estimated the effects of presidential visits on voter turnout while controlling for several other variables that likely have an impact on turnout as well. In addition to whether the president visited the district or not, I included dummy variables for the presence of higher level competitive races on the same ballot, such as a hot race for the U.S. Senate or a hard fought gubernatorial contest. Districts that also featured a competitive Senate race were coded as "1" while districts with no such race were coded as "0". The same standard was used for gubernatorial races. I also created an additional dummy variable coded as "1" if both a competitive Senate race and gubernatorial race were present and "0" if only one or neither were present. As with the data for the congressional districts, CQ's pre-election ratings were used when coding the data. I included these variables since the presence of either or both of

these attention-generating races could have a positive effect on voter turnout that could trickle down to the race for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Additional variables include the ones used in the previous regression model estimating the effect of visits upon a candidate's vote share, such as the type of race (favoring the president, favoring his opponent, or tossup), whether the race featured an incumbent or was an open seat race, and whether the president's party already held the seat or not. I also included the absolute value of the Cook Partisan Voting Index because voter turnout may be higher in more evenly divided districts with highly competitive races. I also include a variable for George W. Bush since he was the most active campaigner on behalf of his co-partisans (accounting for more than half the visits between 1986 and 2006) and his visits are the ones credited by the media and scholars as being the most effective in providing aid to his co-partisans (Jacobson, 2004; Smith, 2002). In addition to the aggregate model for all races, I performed linear regression estimates for each category of races. Results of the regression estimates are found in table 5-16.

The aggregate model for all competitive races in the data set is significant at $p < .001$, though the full model explains only about 9% of the variance in voter turnout in the districts compared with the previous presidential election. Additionally, the individual models for districts rated as lean to the opponent and tossup are each significant at $p < .01$, explaining 24% and 17.5% of the variance in voter turnout within each of those categories, respectively.

The full model contains several significant predictors affecting voter turnout at the district level, though an appearance by the president is not one of them. Significant variables include the presence of a competitive race for higher office, either senate or governor, but interestingly not both, though this could be due to the small number of races featuring both types of competitive contests. The presence of either higher-level race seems to reduce the decline in

Table 5-16: The Effect of Presidential Visits on Voter Turnout Difference, 1986-2006

Variable	All Races***	Leans President	Leans Opponent**	Tossup**
Presidential Visit	-.006	.020#	.008	-.049**
	(.008)	(.012)	(.013)	(.019)
Folded PVI	-.001	-.002	.002	-.004*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.002)	(.002)
George W. Bush	.012	.002	.032*	.013
	(.007)	(.010)	(.014)	(.014)
Co-Partisan Incumbent	.014	.007	-.003	-.012
	(.009)	(.028)	(.023)	(.022)
Open-President's Party	.021*	.000	.043**	.003
	(.010)	(.030)	(.014)	(.023)
Open-Opposing Party	-.003	-.037	-.005	-.018
	(.013)	(.036)	(.018)	(.026)
President Carried District	-.013	-.002	-.003	-.026
	(.007)	(.011)	(.013)	(.013)
Senate	-.020*	-.013	-.046*	-.018
	.010)	(.013)	(.021)	(.017)
Governor	-.019*	-.020#	-.033*	-.014
	(.008)	(.012)	(.013)	(.015)
Senate & Governor	-.016	.039	-.088	-.045
	(.020)	(.030)	(.055)	(.032)
Tossup	-.011	n/a	n/a	n/a
	(.007)			
Constant	.148***	.149***	.117***	.180
	(.011)	(.029)	(.016)	(.026)
R^2	.090	.030	.241	.175
Standard Error	.052	.045	.047	.057
F-Test	3.318	1.287	3.161	3.009
N	263	95	69	99

Note: ****=p <.001, **=p <.01, *=p <.05, #=p <.10.* Coefficients are unstandardized with errors in parentheses.

turnout by about 2 percentage points *ceteris paribus*. The other significant predictor is the presence of an open seat belonging to the president's party, which has the effect of decreasing turnout by about 2.1 percentage points. Two other variables achieve significance at $p < .10$: races held during George W. Bush's presidency and races in districts carried by the president. For the Bush years, overall turnout decreased by 1.2 percentage points *more* than during other presidencies, probably due to the dismal turnout figures among Republicans in 2006 in districts rated as favoring the Democrats. Finally, a district earning the rating of tossup approached significance with a *p* value of .104 and a coefficient of -.011, indicating that turnout was 1.1 percentage points higher in these districts, all other factors held constant. The variable is probably not significant due to the elimination of many tossup districts due to redistricting issues.

Considering the individual models in columns three through five the reader can see that there are two significant variables in column three, the model for races rated as leaning toward the president's co-partisan. Both variables are significant at the $p = .10$ level but the overall model for the category is not significant. The two variables that are statistically significant are a visit by the president, increasing the turnout decline by 2 percentage points, and the presence of a race for governor, producing a 2 percentage point reduction in turnout from the predicted decline of 14.9 percentage points. Thus, a visit by a president to a district favoring his co-partisan and featuring a competitive race for governor is predicted to have *no overall effect* on voter turnout! Once again it seems that presidents should simply avoid districts where their co-partisans are already favored to win.

Turning to those races favoring the opposing party (column four), there are four significant variables affecting the level of voter turnout. Two of them are just as expected, the

presence of a higher-level competitive race. A competitive race for Senate reduces the decline in turnout by about 4.6 percentage points while a race for governor reduces the decline in turnout by about 3.3 percentage points. The third variable, races favoring the Democrats during George W. Bush's time in office, predicted a decrease in voter turnout of 3.2 percentage points in these districts compared with races favoring the opponent that occurred during the administrations of other presidents. Finally, the presence of an open seat held by the president's party but favoring the opponent predicts a decline of about 4.3 percentage points above the expected constant of 11.7 percentage points. Thus, a race in one of those open seat districts was expected to have a decline in turnout of about 16 percentage points compared to two years earlier.

Finally, the model for tossup districts (column five) is also significant. This model has only two significant variables. The first significant variable here is the appearance of the president of the United States. The model estimates the effect of an appearance in a race classified as a tossup to be around 4.9 percentage points. The expected decline in turnout for tossup races is 18 percentage points, with all variables "switched off" or held constant. The presence of the president drops that figure to 13.1 percent. Coupled with other factors such as whether the president carried the district two years earlier and if his co-partisan is an incumbent, that figure is expected to decline to around 9.3 percentage points. If presidential visits on behalf of co-partisans matter at all, it is clear that they matter most in those few districts rated as tossups in each midterm election year.

Conclusion

Having examined the data from two different perspectives, individual midterms and in the aggregate, we can see that presidential visits may have some effect on races for the U.S.

House of Representatives, though they tend to be minimal and difficult to isolate. While a presidential visit may not be able to ensure a co-partisan's victory or deliver a crushing defeat to an opponent, it may help to boost her share of the vote by a few tenths of a percent under certain conditions by drawing some of the president's supporters to the polls on election day—and then only in tossup races. A president with a high approval rating is likely to be more effective in this regard than one who is rapidly losing popular support. In the next chapter I look to the future and examine what this means for President Barack Obama as he heads toward his first midterm election in 2010.

CHAPTER 6

2010 and Beyond

The preceding chapters have addressed two primary questions related to presidential campaign visits during midterm congressional elections. First, I addressed the question regarding where, and for whom, presidents are likely to schedule midterm election visits. Second, I asked what effect presidential visits on behalf of their co-partisans have on the candidate's likelihood of success, the candidate's share of the two-party vote, and upon voter turnout in the district for the midterm congressional election. The answers to these questions are multi-faceted and I will review them briefly below. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the implications of these findings for the 2010 midterm congressional elections for President Barack Obama, weaknesses present in this study, avenues for further research, and some general thoughts about presidential campaign visits and the democratic process.

Predicting the Presidential Appearance

Chapter 4 examined presidential visits on behalf of co-partisans in an effort to identify the type of congressional districts a president might visit. An analysis of all 3045 races in midterm elections for the United States House of Representatives between 1982 and 2006 indicates that presidential visits are very rare, occurring in only 81 of those contests. Breaking the districts down into those expected to be competitive by *CQ Weekly* and those expected to be safe for one of the two parties I found that only 347 congressional races during the period were expected to be competitive versus 2698 races expected to be safe. Of the 81 presidential appearances, ten occurred in districts expected to be safe while 71 occurred in the competitive districts. Clearly, the evidence shows that presidential visits are allocated primarily to the most competitive districts in a given midterm. Perhaps the other ten visits occurred in races that

became competitive unexpectedly or were simply the repayment of political favors by a president. We may never know precisely why a president devoted his time and energy on behalf of a co-partisan with very little chance of winning (or losing) the election.

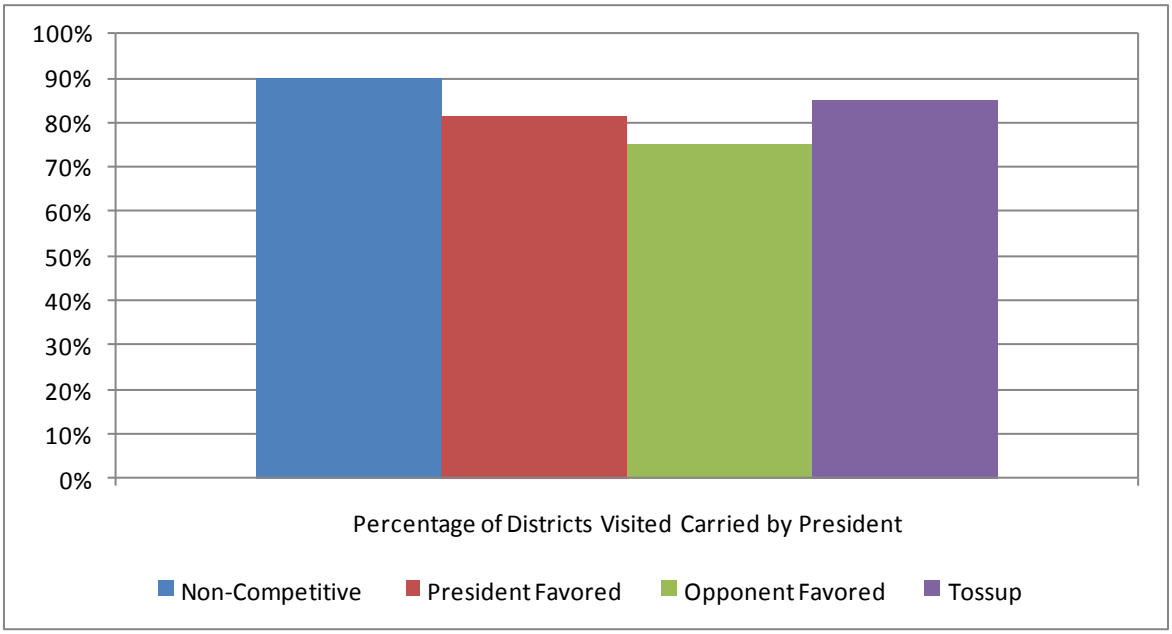
Including the ten visits in districts not anticipated to feature competitive races in the midterm election produced a data set containing 357 districts. Since my primary concern here is the characteristics of districts actually visited by a president, including these ten non-competitive districts does not introduce bias to the data at this stage. They were, however, excluded when discussing the effects of presidential visits.

Of the 357 districts included here, the president carried 252 of those districts in the preceding presidential election, or 70.6%. Further, presidents visited 66 of the districts they carried in the prior presidential election, or 26.2% of such districts, while visiting only 15 of the 105 districts the president did not carry, or 14.3% of such districts. Clearly, the data confirm that presidents tend to focus their midterm campaign appearances upon those districts where they themselves are most popular, once the competitiveness of the district is factored in, lending credence to the argument made by Keele, Fogarty, and Stimson (2004) that presidential visits don't matter much because they are directed toward those districts a president's co-partisan is likely to win anyway. However, the story does not end here as there is a difference between a president carrying a district and his co-partisan carrying the same district. If no difference existed, then the partisan makeup of the House would simply be a reflection of how popular a president was in each congressional district. A quick look at the House of Representatives at any given time will show this not to be the case as it is typical for the opposition party to hold the seat in several districts carried by the president, and vice versa.

To determine whether presidents are simply making appearances in the places their co-partisans are most likely to win I needed a better method of categorizing congressional districts than simply categorizing them on the basis of whether the president won the district previously. Thus, I separated the congressional districts into four categories based on the *CQ Weekly* rating: non-competitive, leaning toward the president's co-partisan, leaning toward the opposite party, or no clear favorite (tossup). As figure 6-1 shows, presidents are far more likely to visit districts they carried in the previous election in every category than districts they did not carry. The percentage of districts visited that were carried by the president in the previous election ranges from a high of 90% in the non-competitive districts to a low of 75% in the districts favoring the opposition party. But, as the data in chapter 4 show, presidential visits are not solely allocated to those districts where the president's co-partisans are expected to win. Fully 54.3% of all presidential visits were to congressional districts where the outcome was not a nearly certain victory for the president's co-partisan, while only one-third were scheduled in congressional districts favoring the president's co-partisans. Clearly, presidents are willing to put their prestige and reputation on the line in an effort to help a fellow partisan, but they do so in the places most favorable to the president, not necessarily his co-partisan. Political capital is extremely limited and presidents must choose to spend it wisely if they expect to profit from its expenditure.

Having concluded that presidents are most likely to make appearances in competitive congressional districts that they carried in the previous presidential election will allow me to narrow the focus just a bit more to see what other factors might draw a president to appear in a congressional district on behalf of a co-partisan. In chapter 4 I rejected the notion that presidents

Figure 6-1: Percentage of Presidential Visits to Districts Carried by the President by Category, 1982-2006



were more likely to schedule a campaign appearance on behalf of a co-partisan in an open seat race. The data indicate that presidents are just as likely to campaign for an incumbent in a tight race as they are for a co-partisan seeking to fill an open seat. I also established in chapter 4 that presidents tend to visit those congressional districts featuring higher-level competitive races for the U.S. Senate or state gubernatorial races, or both. The opportunity to campaign for multiple co-partisans in one stop may be simply too good for a president to forsake.

Finally, I tested the idea that presidents use campaign appearances as dress rehearsals for their re-election bid by visiting states with the greatest number of electoral votes and found no support for the hypothesis. That is not to say that a first term president is not using the visit to shore up his support for re-election, only that it is probably not his immediate goal when visiting the district. I also tested the hypothesis that presidents visit congressional districts in states where the battle for the presidency was most competitive two years earlier and found no support for the hypothesis. Of course, this still does not explain presidential midterm appearances during

a second midterm. Overall, however, the analysis conducted in chapter 4 demonstrates that presidential midterm campaign appearances are strategically allocated to competitive congressional districts where the president has fared well in the past, thus refuting Vaughn's (2004) contention that presidential visits really aren't all that strategic after all. I now turn to a discussion of the win/loss rate of presidential co-partisans in districts visited by the president as well as the effects of visits on candidate vote share and voter turnout.

Wins/Losses, Vote Share, and Voter Turnout

Chapter 5 examined all the competitive races for the U.S. House of Representatives during midterm elections from 1982 through 2006, a total of three-hundred and forty-seven electoral contests. I structured the analysis both by individual president and for all seven midterm elections in the aggregate.

When considering the win/loss rate of presidential co-partisans during midterm elections on a president by president basis the results do not appear to be significant. Some presidents such as Reagan, Clinton (1st term), and George W. Bush (1st term) saw the co-partisans for whom they campaigned win at a higher rate than the co-partisans for whom they did not campaign. However, George H.W. Bush, Clinton (2nd term), and George W. Bush (2nd term) all watched their co-partisans win fewer of the races they visited than did their co-partisans in races not visited. Logistic regression for each of the midterm elections, except 1986 (1 visit) and 1998 (4 visits), indicated that presidential visits in and of themselves were not significant predictors of a co-partisan's chance of winning her electoral contest.

In the aggregate, presidential visits did not seem to affect the outcomes of the races visited either, at least in terms of wins and losses. Several other factors, such as district's partisan voting index (PVI), whether the co-partisan was an incumbent or seeking a seat already held by the president's party, were significant predictors of whether or not a president's co-partisan was successfully elected to the House of Representatives. Once again, I must conclude that presidential visits by themselves do not seem contribute much to candidate's chance of winning election to the House.

Turning to an examination of candidate vote share provides a somewhat different picture of what is going on in the competitive races examined since 1982. With rare exception, candidates for whom a president campaigned averaged a higher share of the two-party vote than did candidates for whom a president did not appear. As the data in table 6-2 show, presidential co-partisans fared better in the districts visited by the president than in those districts not visited. The exceptions are 1986 (1 visit by President Reagan), 1998 (4 visits by President Clinton), and 2002 (22 visits by George W. Bush). Both 1986 and 1998 can be explained by the fact that Presidents Reagan and Clinton made a total of five visits out of seventy-eight competitive races in those years. The small sample size makes any comparisons in those years invalid. More puzzling, however, is 2002. In a year that saw President Bush's Republicans gain seats in the House and Senate, the candidates he campaigned for earned a lower average share of the vote than those for whom he did not campaign. This seems counterintuitive without stopping to consider a few things not immediately evident in the table. First, 2002 was an extremely good midterm for the GOP. As such, Republican candidates likely benefitted from the aggregate shift toward the GOP by many voters supporting President Bush's "war on terror" policies and the

Table 6-1: Co-Partisan Vote Share by Year, 1982-2006			
Year	**Visited**	**Not Visited**	**Total**
1982	.5156	.4941	.4973
1986	.4674	.4888	.4882
1990	.4761	.4711	.4729
1994	.5214	.4858	.4929
1998	.4815	.5009	.4990
2002	.5246	.5408	.5338
2006	.4958	.4831	.4871
Total	.5063	.4941	.4968
Source: Compiled by author from records provided by Clerk of the U.S. House			

march to war in Iraq. The reader will also note from the chart that it is the *only* year in the dataset when presidential co-partisans averaged more than fifty percent of the two-party vote.

Second, President Bush allocated his visits more often to those districts rated as tossups or favoring Democrats than did most previous presidents, districts where presidential co-partisans historically fare less well. His co-partisans in those districts did do better than his co-partisans in similar districts he did not visit. Nevertheless, a regression analysis controlling for the competitive ranking of the race indicates that Bush's presidential visits did not have a significant effect on a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote in 2002.

The aggregate analysis of the data reveals much the same as the individual midterm analyses do. Presidential visits in the aggregate account for about a three-tenths of a percent increase in the share of the two-party vote for a co-partisan receiving a visit compared with a co-partisan not receiving a visit. Still, the partisan voting index and status of the seat (open, incumbent, held by opponent) have a larger effect on a co-partisan's share of the vote than does a presidential campaign appearance, no matter the competitive rating of the contest. Presidential visits simply do not exert much effect on a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote. Yet, in

those very few contests in each midterm that are decided by a few tenths of a percentage point, a presidential visit may help a co-partisan, especially if the president himself is relatively popular in the district, although a multivariate statistical analysis is unable to detect any significant effect of a presidential visit upon a candidate's share of the two-party vote.

Finally, the preceding chapter examined the level of voter turnout in competitive congressional districts between 1982 and 2006. More precisely, I examined the decline in voter turnout from the presidential election to the next midterm election, hypothesizing that turnout would decline by a lesser amount in those districts where a president appeared than in the districts where he did not make an appearance. It was necessary to overcome a couple of hurdles before conducting the analysis on this data. The first of these hurdles was that of newly created congressional districts that did not exist at the time of the previous presidential election. This was only problematic in 1982 and 2002. Fortunately, the number of such districts was very small at only four. I chose to exclude these districts since there was no reliable way to calculate voter turnout in them. The second problem encountered was more pervasive and affected the same two midterm years, 1982 and 2002. As discussed in chapter 3, all of the 1982 districts were excluded, as were seventeen of the districts from 2002.

Many factors are known to influence the level of voter turnout for any given election, such as the weather, the competitiveness of the race, social capital (e.g., Minnesotans have much higher levels of turnout than do Kansans), incumbency, and district demographics just to name a few. One factor that had never been considered before is that of the impact of a presidential visit on voter turnout during a midterm election. This is an important question to address because one of the major arguments explaining seat losses by the president's party during midterm elections is that many presidential supporters, either weak partisans or independents, fail to turn out for the

midterm elections (Campbell A, 1960; Campbell J, 1986). If an appearance by the president can draw these supporters to the polls it might alleviate or eliminate the midterm losses for the president's party.

Measuring the effect of an appearance on voter turnout is much more difficult than it first appears. First, there is the problem of calculating voter turnout at the congressional district level. Because many districts cross political boundaries and contain multiple counties, towns, and precincts, there is no precise record of turnout available. I chose to calculate turnout for each district based on the total number of votes cast and the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent population estimate for each congressional district for both the midterm election and the previous presidential election. I then subtracted the turnout in the midterm election from the turnout for the presidential election to arrive at the total decrease (or, rarely, increase) in voter turnout between the two elections. This number is the basis for the regression estimates in chapter 5.

The data on voter turnout are unremarkable at first glance. Voter turnout for all competitive races over the seven midterm elections included in the study declined by an average of just over twelve percentage points from the previous presidential election. In the aggregate, the decline was a little more than one-half of a percentage point less in congressional districts receiving a visit from the president when compared to congressional districts not receiving a visit. However, there is a fair amount of variation across the different categories of competitiveness included here. For example, the decline in voter turnout was almost fourteen and a half percentage points in districts visited by the president that favored his co-partisan while only an eleven and three-quarter percentage point drop in visited district favoring the opponent. Perhaps a presidential visit serves to depress turnout by supporters of the opponent in districts favoring the president's co-partisans but motivates the president's opponents to vote in districts

favoring the opponent? Of course, there is no hard evidence to prove this is a valid explanation for the numbers in these districts and, in any case, there is no easy way to operationalize the concept and measure it.

The most interesting finding in the analysis comes from an analysis of those districts rated by CQ as a tossup. Voter turnout declined just over seven percentage points in districts visited by the president but right about the average of nearly twelve and a half percentage points in tossup districts not visited by a president. Of all the variables measured and included in the data set only one, presidential visits, has any significant explanatory power among tossup races. The difference of nearly five and a half percentage points is statistically significant and unlikely to be due to chance. Why do presidential visits exert this effect only in those races rated as a tossup? Perhaps it is because these are the races where the outcome is least certain and the president's supporters are most likely to be motivated and mobilized by a visit from the president. The arrival of Air Force One and a passionate speech by the President of the United States on behalf of a co-partisan involved in a very tight race may provide the impetus necessary for weaker partisans or independents who voted for the president two years earlier to get off their couches and vote for his co-partisan in the midterm election.

Overall, presidential co-partisans won only thirty-eight percent of such races between 1982 and 2006, but they won ten of the twenty congressional district races visited by the president that fell into this category. Seven of those victories came during the historic midterm election of 2002 as George W. Bush posted a seven to nothing sweep over the Democrats in the tossup category that year. This also explains why presidential visits are significant in the model for the 2002 midterms shown in the previous chapter. Of the ten victories in tossup races visited by presidents, eight belonged to George W. Bush (1 in 2006), and the other two belonged to

Ronald Reagan back in 1982. It seems likely that if a presidential visit is to have much of an effect on reducing the decline noted by Campbell (1960), it must be strategically allocated to a district where the outcome is least certain for the president's co-partisan, yet favorable to the president. Presidential co-partisans were successful in fifty percent of tossup districts visited by the president but only thirty-six percent of tossup districts not visited by the president. A frequency distribution of wins by presidential co-partisans in tossup districts shows that six of the ten wins occurred in districts with partisan voting indexes favorable to the president, from plus two to plus four, two wins in districts at plus eight or nine, and two wins in districts rated at minus two. Clearly, the president's co-partisans do best in districts already favoring the president's party. It is also possible that these results are merely an artifact of CQ's race predictions faring better in some years than in others. I now turn to a look at what we may expect in the 2010 midterm elections based on data from the previous two chapters.

The 2010 Midterm Election of President Barack Obama

Given the lessons from the previous two chapters about where and when presidents are likely to schedule a campaign appearance for a co-partisan and the effects of such visits, it is logical to look forward to the next midterm election and apply the knowledge I have gained. The reader will recall from chapter 4 that presidents are most likely to make appearances in races that are classified as either leaning towards one of the candidates or as purely tossups. Recall also that most of these visits are scheduled in congressional districts carried by the president in the previous election and that have a partisan voting index somewhat favorable to the president's co-

partisan. Finally, presidential campaign visits tend to occur more frequently in districts featuring higher level competitive races than in districts without such races.

Turning to the effects of presidential visits for a co-partisan, the evidence indicates that visits have little discernible effect on a co-partisan's chance of winning the contest. Further, while presidential co-partisans do earn a higher share of the two-party vote in districts visited by the president, the visit itself has little to do with the difference, accounting for perhaps three-tenths of a percentage point increase. The district PVI and the status of the candidate as an incumbent or seeking an open seat currently held by the opposition is far more important than the president's visit. Finally, on the question of voter turnout, the data indicate that visits have a minimal effect on voter turnout in districts leaning towards the president's co-partisan or his opponent. However, presidential visits do seem to reduce the decline in voter turnout from the prior presidential election in the select few districts where neither candidate seems to have an advantage. What does this mean for 2010 and the midterm election for Barack Obama's Democrats?

As of the beginning of February, CQ Politics (CQ, 2010) rates thirty-three seats in the House as leaning towards one of the two parties (22 Democrat, 11 Republican) and fourteen seats as purely a tossup. As President Obama is a skilled campaigner and not shy about making appearances for his co-partisans, such as Martha Coakley in the Massachusetts special election to fill the seat of the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy, it is reasonable to expect the president to hit the campaign trail on behalf of fellow Democrats in tough races come this November. Assuming his advisors are wise, they will likely schedule the president to make somewhere between fifteen and twenty appearances during the election season, mostly during the final two weeks of the campaign.

Where will the president most likely appear? At the time of this writing the political landscape does not appear favorable to the president and his co-partisans. In fact, it is almost a certainty that the Democrats will lose seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Charlie Cook's current projection is for Democrats to lose between twenty-five and thirty-five seats in the House and three to five seats in the Senate (Cook, 2010). Given the evidence in the previous chapters, there is little hope that appearances by the president will do much to stem the expected losses in most cases. However, if the president focuses on those tossup races in districts most favorable to him, he may be able to salvage a few seats for his party as it seeks to maintain control of Congress for the remainder of his first term by increasing turnout in these districts, presumably by his supporters. Additionally, focusing his efforts on a few select districts he carried in 2008 that elected Republicans may also prove beneficial.

As is typical for a midterm congressional election, the president's party has more seats at risk than the opposition. CQ currently rates forty-seven seats as competitive for the 2010 midterm election. Twenty-two of those lean towards the Democrats while eleven lean toward the Republicans and fourteen are rated as tossups. All fourteen of the districts currently rated as tossups are held by Democrats. This leaves Democrats defending thirty-six seats in competitive races this fall while Republicans will be defending only eleven. Of course, the status could change between now and election day in several of these districts. Of the fourteen seats rated as a tossup, ten are in districts with PVI's favoring the Republicans. The other four seats have PVI's from zero to plus three for the Democrats. These four seats, plus two others with PVI's of minus two and minus three are the districts where a presidential visit by Barack Obama is most likely to help his co-partisans by mobilizing Democrats and, perhaps, independents that

supported the president in 2008.[27] The president carried each of those six districts by at least three percentage points in 2008. The other eight districts were won by John McCain in 2008. In a year that looks to favor Republicans with a disheartened and unenthusiastic Democratic base, an appearance by President Obama in these six tossup districts may serve to mobilize some of his supporters, thus reducing the drop in voter turnout from 2008, and helping his co-partisans to victory in a few races. As control of the U.S. House could hang in the balance, every seat may be critical.

Looking at the historical data there is little likelihood that the president will go into a district carried by his opponent in the previous election and come out with a victory for his co-partisan. In fact, it may be the case that his co-partisans will ask him not to come to those districts so as to try and create the image of space between themselves and the administration, especially given the controversial nature of the Democratic health care reform plans and the "tea-party" protests that occurred in the summer of 2009. The bad news for the president is that at the start of 2010 there are forty-nine Democrats in the House of Representatives sitting in districts carried by John McCain in 2008 (Cook, 2010).

The good news is that there are also thirty-four Republicans sitting in districts won by President Obama in 2008, leaving a net difference of minus fifteen for the Democrats. CQ (2010) currently predicts each side will lose at least three of these seats. The president ought to consider these districts that supported him in 2008 but elected a Republican to the House as secondary targets where he might be able to swipe a seat or two from the Republicans to offset a couple of certain Democratic losses. The most amenable districts for appearances by the president are Washington's 8th (Reichert-R), California's 45th (Bono-Mack-R), Pennsylvania's

[27] The six districts are FL-8, KS-3, OH-1, OH-15, PA-7, and WA-3.

6th (Gerlach-R), and Pennsylvania's 15th (Dent-R). All four districts were carried easily by President Obama in 2008 and could be prime targets for Democratic pickups to offset losses elsewhere. Given that presidential visits seem to boost a candidate's share of the vote by only a few tenths of a percent, the best that Democrats can hope for is that these races will go down to the wire, the president will be relatively popular, and the economy will have improved substantially.[28] A presidential visit, in and of itself, is unlikely to make the difference in most of the competitive congressional races in 2010. However, in a year shaping up to be a bad cycle for Democrats, holding on (or capturing) any seat could preserve the Democratic majority in the House for another two years.

Avenues for Future Research

Though the data gathered to date indicates that presidential visits are not that important in determining whether a co-partisan ultimately wins or loses his or her race for a seat in the House of Representatives, we should not jump to the unwarranted conclusion that such visits serve no purpose at all. Perhaps, as Zaller (1992) argues regarding the effects of mass media, there is simply too much "white noise" present to distinguish the true effect of a presidential visit to a congressional district. Clearly, presidents, their aides, and the media believe that campaign appearances are important or it seems unlikely so much attention would be given to them. A planned future iteration of this project will expand the data set to include all congressional races between 1982 and 2010, not just the competitive races. The project will also examine media

[28] A regression analysis of districts leaning towards the opponent proved insignificant, showing that presidential visits accounted for a net effect of only about a ½ percentage point increase in a co-partisan's share of the two-party vote in such a district.

coverage of presidential visits and examine the timing of those visits. Perhaps a visit that occurs two or three days prior to the election exerts a larger influence on the outcome than does a visit occurring six weeks or more before election day.

Another future aspect this project will address is the question of legislative support for the president's agenda by members of Congress for whom he campaigned. If a *quid pro quo* exchange is expected, members of Congress who received assistance from the president should support his agenda at a higher rate than those members in similar districts for whom the president did not campaign. In an era of staunch party loyalty such as today, this effect might not be discernible but by looking at periods when partisanship was not as fierce differences in the level of presidential support may begin to emerge. Vaughn (2004) began such an attempt by examining Senate races in 1990, 1994, and 1998 but the small sample size produced no significant association between appearances and legislative support. A larger and more robust sample might alter those finding.

The data set will also be enhanced through the inclusion of more variables related to the demographic characteristics of each congressional district as determined by the decennial census. I intend to include variables on the ethnic and racial breakdown of a district, the median income for each district, average level of education, and regional variables to account for varying levels of social capital across the country.

Additionally, I will expand the project to examine the effect of presidential visits on fundraising efforts by his co-partisans. Doing this will require an expansion of the definition of a presidential visit. For the purposes of this study a visit was counted only if it entailed a public speech or rally on behalf of a specific candidate. Also, it must have occurred after Labor Day, or the primary, whichever was later. As the project is expanded, I will include all appearances in a

congressional district made by a president from January 1 to election day. The effect on fundraising could be an important contributor to the ultimate success or failure of a co-partisan's bid for elective office. Without funds a candidate may not be able to generate the name recognition necessary to remain viable in a race for the House and a presidential visit may signal to other donors that a candidate is indeed viable and has the support of his party's leader (Jacobson et al, 2004). Further, Herrnson and Morris (2007) concluded that President Bush's fundraising appearances did contribute significantly to the historic Republican gains in 2002. Inclusion of these data will allow us to see whether 2002 was merely an anomaly or if the president's efforts are actually helpful in any given year.

Finally, when considering the effect of a presidential visit on a co-partisan's share of the vote, it would be extremely helpful to have survey data from those congressional districts that are most competitive during a midterm election. A proposal for such a survey is in the works at Mississippi State University for the fall of 2010. The general plan is to survey voters in districts visited by the president to learn whether the visits influenced their decision to vote for or against a particular candidate. Additionally, we hope to learn what role the voter's approval of the president played in deciding for whom to vote. Additionally, the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) is planned for the fall of 2010, which should produce some good data early in 2011.[29]

[29] The study will be conducted by Polimetrix. Purchasing the data is currently under consideration at Mississippi State University.

Conclusion

Democratic theory rests on the principle that political power is rooted in a citizenry actively involved in the choice of its leaders. From a purely theoretical perspective, political campaigns should be designed to provide citizens with the information they need to make a responsible choice when choosing their leaders, and to mobilize voters to make sure their voices are heard on Election Day. Americans tend to be politically apathetic as slightly more than half of eligible voters participate in a presidential election every four years. The numbers for midterm elections are even worse with turnout typically averaging in the mid-30's, though the data in this study indicate that presidential visits to the most competitive districts may help to boost that turnout by five to six percentage points. Given that one of the primary explanation for seat losses by a president's party during a midterm election is that some weak partisans and/or independents are not motivated to vote when the president is not on the ballot, a presidential appearance may draw some of these voters to the polls. Doing so just might affect the outcome, even if my analysis is unable to detect a direct effect. My data show that presidential co-partisans are successful in fifty percent of the tossup races in which the president appears but less than thirty-five percent of those in which he does not appear. This should be heartening to presidents and their advisors as they seek to hold on to seats and stem the virtually inevitable tide of losses that occur each midterm cycle. When the House of Representatives is divided so closely along partisan lines as it is today, every single seat is important.

Though the broader data indicate that the president's role in midterm elections is more symbolic than substantive, a visit by the president likely delivers some intangible benefits for the co-partisan and district in which he appears. First, it reflects the confidence the president has in

his co-partisan, reflecting his willingness to place his prestige and political capital on the line in what may end up being an unsuccessful effort. Second, a visit from the president is accompanied by much pomp and circumstance, bringing media attention to the district that could go beyond just the visit by increasing the information flow and enhancing the political knowledge of citizens in the district. Third, a visit from the president will likely embolden a candidate for the stretch run, enhancing her reputation among potential contributors and possibly providing a bump in the polling numbers. Finally, a visit from the president is sure to energize those working on the candidate's campaign as they make their final efforts to get out the vote as the campaign enters the homestretch, believing that their efforts will get their candidate across the finish line ahead of her opponent.

In the end, the lesson for American style democracy may be that political campaigns do have effects, but those effects may only be discernible at the individual district level rather than at the aggregate national level. A wise president and his advisors will carefully select those co-partisans whom he will support based on numerous variables apart from the fact that the candidate is a member of the president's party. Looking at the year-over-year data, most presidents head into the midterm election at a disadvantage because their party is defending more seats than its opponents. Why this happens is not readily apparent. Perhaps midterm elections truly are regression to the mean elections, returning the partisan balance of the House and Senate to where it would have been apart from the president's coattails two years earlier. Or, perhaps midterm elections are referenda on the perception of the president's party's job performance. It also may be as Tip O'Neill famously stated, "All politics is local." In any case, presidential visits, like political campaigns in general, are unlikely to change many hearts and minds, but in a

very close election it may be only a few whose minds need to change to produce a victory for the president and his co-partisan.

Though the evidence compiled here does not conclusively prove that presidential campaign visits on behalf of co-partisans do anything to help them win their contests, it also does not indicate that those visits hurt a candidate's chances of winning. Perhaps the effects of presidential visits have yet to be discovered because presidents have visited so few races. It is also possible that presidential visits are allocated to the co-partisans facing the toughest fights to win their respective races, in which case a visit producing a minimal effect could go undetected, even if the individual candidate ends up winning the election.

A more normative question also comes to mind given that the evidence indicates presidential campaign appearances have minimal effects on candidate success, vote-share, and the level of voter turnout in a congressional district. Namely, *should* presidents inject themselves into the midst of congressional midterm elections at all? This is a rather difficult question to address for a few reasons. First, from the perspective of responsible party government, unified control of government by one party is good for a democratic society to hold its leaders accountable. When one party holds all the power it is easy for voters to assign blame when things are not going well. All they need to do is hold that party accountable by electing different leaders when the opportunity arises, as the voters clearly did in 2006 by returning control of the Congress to the Democrats. Voters then followed that up by electing Barack Obama in 2008, clearly refuting six years of single party rule by the Republicans from 2001 to 2007.[30] Now, two years later, things have not improved much and voters are grumbling once again and may return

[30] Technically, Republicans only had unified control for 4 ½ years because Senator Jim Jeffords switch from Republican to independent status in 2001 gave working control to the Democrats, 50-49-1.

the GOP to power in the House of Representatives after November's elections, reintroducing the postwar norm of divided government, perhaps making it far more difficult for the citizenry to hold its leaders accountable. In order to assign blame it must be clear who is responsible. When President Obama hits the campaign trail in late October and November for his co-partisans he will surely argue that the difficulty in reforming the health care system, or the failure to pass environmental legislation or improve the economy is a result of GOP intransigence. Thus, more Democrats are needed in Washington, D.C. If the president is able to help voters hold their leaders responsible then his efforts are worthwhile even if they have no other discernible effects. If a presidential appearance in a close race draws more citizens to the polls, thus broadening the scope of political participation in a largely apathetic nation, it is good for a democratic society, even if those who turn out do so to cast a vote against the president's co-partisan. If the president, through his appearances, can counter what is likely to be a strong anti-Democratic information flow this fall that may help his party maintain control of the House. If not, the next two years could be pretty bleak for his administration.

But, if a president's campaign appearances work to further the divide between the parties and polarize the American electorate, reducing its willingness to listen, learn, and ultimately reach a compromise, the impact for a democratic society could be quite negative. If so, these appearances could reduce the likelihood that the president will be able to achieve his stated goals as voters reject the overt display of partisanship by the only national representative they have, the President of the United States.

To be sure, the president is the head of his party and is expected to work towards the common goals of his party by using his power of persuasion to convince voters to send more of his co-partisans to Washington. As he does so, he runs the danger of becoming just another

shrill ideologue, albeit the most powerful one with the biggest bully pulpit in the world. When the president is reduced to what Gary Jacobson (2007) has called "A Divider, Not a Uniter", a play on George W. Bush's 2000 campaign promise to be a "Uniter, not a Divider", the entire nation suffers. Every candidate for president in 2008 emphasized his or her ability to overcome the gridlock that is perceived to exist in Washington. It seems that what many Americans still want in a president is a transcendent figure who will lead the nation not where his party wants to take it, but where the nation wants to go. Americans, in some way, still desire their president to remain above the partisan bickering that goes on in Congress every day. The president is the only one who can bring the warring factions together, both within his party and between the two parties in Congress. Americans will stand with a president whom they perceive as having the nation's best interests at heart. When the president dives into the political muck he may not only expend his limited political capital to realize insignificant gains, but he may also weaken the public prestige of the office, embolden those who oppose him, and ultimately risk his professional reputation by becoming just another partisan voice among many. And that is not good for democracy or the democratic process.

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