

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE, MOBILIZATION, AND TURNOUT IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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This study takes a two-stage approach to examining the impact of the electoral college on turnout in the 2000 presidential election. First, we examine whether battleground states received more media spending and visits by the candidates and their party committees compared to nonbattleground states. Second, we examine whether media spending and candidate visits were related to state-level turnout. The results of the project show that the battleground states did receive significantly more media expenditures and candidate visits from the two major party campaigns than nonbattleground states. Furthermore, when controlling for state-level contextual and political factors, the more media expenditures and candidate visits a state received the higher the state turnout. Finally, the analysis reveals that state battleground status indirectly impacted state-level turnout through its effect on media spending and candidate visits.

Keywords: electoral college; presidential elections; mobilization; turnout; campaign strategy; presidential candidates

The 2000 presidential contest was truly unique in the history of presidential elections. Not only was it one of the closest in American history, but it was also the first to be decided by a Supreme Court decision. The legion of media reports concerning recounts and legal wrangling, however, overshadowed the importance of the electoral college (EC) in shaping the electoral strategies of the Bush and Gore campaigns. Most of the discussion on the role of the EC focused on the fact that Al Gore won the popular vote by a margin of 543,895 votes (0.5%), and George W. Bush won the EC with a bare majority of 271 electoral votes (<http://www.fec.gov>).

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Beyond the potential for creating controversy in the selection of presidents, the EC has other possible effects on American electoral politics. For instance, Powell (1986) notes that the EC (among several American institutional features) tends to work to depress turnout on a national scale. Because states deliver their EC votes in blocs (Maine and Nebraska are the exceptions)¹, they are effectively single-member districts. Like other types of single-member districts, some states are competitive when the outcome of the presidential election is uncertain, whereas other states are uncompetitive when the outcome is relatively certain prior to the election. Because of this, the two major-party campaigns within a presidential election have great incentive to focus on the competitive states (battleground states) and largely ignore those states where the outcome is already known (nonbattleground states).²

Using state-level data, this study takes a two-stage approach to examining the impact of the EC on turnout in the 2000 presidential election. First, we examine whether battleground states received more media spending and candidate visits compared to nonbattleground states. Second, we explore whether media spending and visits were related to state-level turnout. The results of the project indicate that the battleground states did receive significantly greater amounts of media spending and more candidate visits from the two major-party campaigns. Furthermore, when controlling for state-level contextual and political factors, the more media spending and candidate visits a state received the higher the level of turnout. In short, it appears that the EC affected turnout in the 2000 presidential election by shaping the resource allocation strategies of the Bush and Gore campaigns and their respective party committees.

THE EC AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

As the central governing institution of presidential elections, the EC necessarily shapes the behavior of the actors involved in the election. According to Thomas E. Patterson (2002),

The Electoral College works to the advantage of a mere handful of competitive states, which change from one election to the next. These

states drive the candidates' strategies in the final phase of a closely contested campaign. . . . The only states that truly count in a close election are those that either candidate could win. In 1960, 1968, 1976, 1980, and 2000, the candidates poured nearly every available resource into the toss-up states. Even campaign issues were shaped to suit the interests of their residents. (pp. 139, 141)

Third-party campaigns aside, the obvious goal of presidential candidates is to win the election, and the EC makes achieving this goal somewhat complicated. In a presidential election, the United States, in effect, holds 51 separate elections with each state's electoral votes contributing to the total of 538 votes. To win the presidency, a candidate must reach the minimum of 270 electoral votes, and campaigns therefore must devise strategies that maximize their chances of reaching the majority threshold (Bartels, 1985; Brams & Davis, 1974; Colantoni, Levesque, & Ordeshook, 1975; James & Lawson, 1999; Shaw, 1999a, 2004).

Because campaign resources are finite, campaigns must allocate them in a way that will maximize their effectiveness in reaching the goal of 270 EC votes (Bartels, 1985; Brams & Davis, 1974; James & Lawson, 1999; Shaw, 1999a, 2004). Because not all states are competitive, campaigns have little incentive to expend resources where they are either assured of victory or defeat (e.g., Texas and New York were bedrock Republican and Democratic states, respectively, in 2000).³ Instead, the campaigns have great incentive to focus resources on those states where the outcome is uncertain or doubtful. These states have been aptly dubbed the battleground states because they are where the campaigns in a presidential election choose to wage their war for the presidency (James & Lawson, 1999; Shaw, 1999a).

Electoral strategy is a product of the electoral system. Under each type of electoral system, a different subset of votes becomes more important or gains more weight in deciding the election (see Neubauer & Zeitlin, 2003). In the case of a popular vote system, heavily populated places are necessarily privileged. But under the EC, population is necessarily less important if a candidate can string together a majority of electoral votes by winning many small- to medium-sized states.⁴ In the case of the EC, then, competitive states are privileged because the objective is to win states, not the most votes.

Furthermore, we expect that in those places where votes are more valued as a consequence of the electoral system, turnout will be greater because candidates will devote more resources to these places. Greater resource allocation should lead to greater campaign visibility, greater interest in and knowledge of candidates among citizens, greater mobilization, and, ultimately, all of this should amount to an increase in voting. From this perspective, then, we expect that the structure of the EC provides the incentive for campaigns to allocate their resources in competitive states.

CAMPAIGNS AND TURNOUT

There is great variation in turnout levels across states within presidential elections. Much of this variation is because of contextual and political factors such as state demographics, interparty competition, elite ideology, the degree of competitiveness of statewide races, and registration laws (Brown, Jackson, & Wright, 1999; Hill & Leighley, 1993, 1996; Jackson, 1997; Jackson, Brown, & Wright, 1998; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). However, given the evidence for a positive relationship between close elections and turnout (Cox & Munger, 1989), one can reasonably expect that variation in the competitiveness of the presidential contest across states should also have a significant impact on state-level turnout.

The impact of competitive elections on turnout is witnessed mainly through elite behavior.⁵ The uncertainty and greater stakes of close elections cause candidates and their supporters to devote greater resources to mobilization efforts that, in turn, are significantly and positively related to turnout (Aldrich, 1993; Caldeira, Patterson, & Markko, 1985; Cox & Munger, 1989; Gerber & Green, 2000; Jackson, 1997; Wielhouwer, 2000; Wielhouwer & Lockerbie, 1994). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, 2001) argue that mobilization increases turnout primarily because as candidates and parties seek electoral support to increase their chances of winning, they reduce the costs of participation for potential voters. When candidates and/or parties directly contact potential voters—whether it be through the mail, on the phone, or by face-to-face canvass—they inform potential

voters about when, where, and how they can vote; they notify voters of upcoming rallies and visits by the candidates; and even provide transportation for those who need it on Election Day (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Given the reduction in voting costs because of mobilization efforts, it is not surprising that direct contact by the parties and candidates is significantly and positively related to turnout (Gerber & Green, 2000; Wielhouwer, 2000; Wielhouwer & Lockerbie, 1994).⁶

In most large-scale elections, and especially in a presidential election, the lion's share of campaign resources (i.e., money) are devoted to television advertising, which can obviously reach larger numbers of potential voters than the face-to-face canvass or other forms of direct contact.⁷ Increases in the level of advertising result in greater visibility of the campaign, and as the visibility of the campaign increases so should the interest in the campaign among the electorate. The politicized environment created by the campaign, then, should result in increased turnout (Bullock, Gaddie, & Ferrington, 2002; Jackson, 1997).

Paid media advertising is not the only way candidates and parties can reach out to large groups of potential voters. Although candidate visits are retail campaigning in that the candidates are appearing before a relatively small group of citizens, the media coverage of the event provides the candidates with a much larger audience. In fact, in-person visits by presidential candidates tend to take place in a state's largest media market to attract maximum media coverage, and such a visit by a candidate of either of the two major parties to a media market increases turnout by about 0.5% in that market (Jones, 1998). Furthermore, this effect is cumulative; so, in a highly competitive state where candidates are likely to visit a large media market many times, there should be a noticeable positive impact on turnout (Jones, 1998).

The research on mobilization and turnout indicates that whether through direct face-to-face contact or indirectly through the media, the efforts by the candidates and parties to reach out to potential supporters result in a higher level of turnout. As mentioned, however, the nature of EC competition creates incentives for the campaigns to expend their resources in a manner that will maximize their chances of winning the required 270 electoral votes. Thus, most campaign expenditures in presidential elections tend to go to the battleground states, whereas the rest of the states are largely ignored. We expect,

therefore, that the concentration of campaign resources into the battleground states produces higher levels of turnout in these states than in the nonbattleground states.

CLASSIFYING STATES BY COMPETITIVENESS

A cursory look at what the media and other political observers deemed battleground states during the 2000 presidential campaign makes it evident that there is no consensus. Even among strategists working on the same campaign there was a level of disagreement about which states were winnable (Jamieson & Waldman, 2001). Academics have used several methods to determine which states are pivotal in presidential contests. Some approaches include the margin of victory for the parties in the most recent previous elections, poll numbers during the campaign season, and the final electoral margins in the election. We chose not to use any of these measures because we argue that what matters most are the Bush and Gore campaigns' perceptions of competitiveness because we expect them to allocate resources accordingly.

To gauge what the campaigns considered battlegrounds, we relied on the advice of campaigns and elections scholar Daron R. Shaw, who served as director of election studies for the Bush campaign. Shaw was assigned the task of devising the electoral strategy for the Bush campaign, and thus he implemented a classification scheme for the states based on their level of competitiveness (see Shaw, 2004). We asked Shaw to provide us with a classification of the states that coincided with the perception of their competitiveness at the start of the general election season.

Given the timing of our research (it began after the election), the categorization of states is necessarily post hoc. Nonetheless, we are confident in the reliability of this classification of the states for two reasons: (a) Every classification of battleground states we have seen—before, during, and after the election—does not differ by more than a handful of states, and (b) the vast majority of campaign resources (e.g., advertising and candidate visits) were allocated to the states we identify as battlegrounds.⁸

Table 1 presents the presidential election strategies for Bush and Gore. Consistent with the classification of Shaw (1999a), the typology classifies states as base, marginal, or battleground and according to party (a Democratic or Republican state if base or marginal). What is interesting is the symmetry between both campaigns in their categorization of states. Among the 50 states and District of Columbia, the Bush and Gore campaigns differed on the classification of eight states (California, Louisiana, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia), and those states not considered to be battlegrounds (Louisiana, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia) by one campaign are all placed in the marginal category.

For the purpose of our analyses, we construct a dummy variable labeled battleground status (1 = battleground, 0 = nonbattleground). We consider the battleground states to be the 12 states where the Bush and Gore campaigns match.⁹ Henceforth, the remaining 38 states (plus District of Columbia) are nonbattlegrounds.¹⁰

Our decision to use a simple dichotomous measure is based on the dynamics of the 2000 presidential election. Unlike the previous four elections, the 2000 campaign was highly competitive, and both candidates knew it would be well before the general election season kicked off. In a close election, strategy shifts to winning the toss-up states at the expense of spending considerable resources in marginal states (see Shaw, 2004). What makes the 2000 contest notable is that the delineation between marginal and battleground states was so difficult. In essence, with the exception of a few states, the campaigns perceived states to be either "in play or not" (Shaw, 2004, p. 17), and, hence, resources were expended on the basis of what appeared to be a dichotomous (battleground and nonbattleground) conception of the electoral map.¹¹

So even though we agree that presidential campaigns generally view states in an ordinal perspective (e.g., base states [noncompetitive], marginal states [modestly competitive but leaning in one direction], and battleground states [toss-ups]; see Goldman, DeFrank, Miller, Murr, & Matthews, 1989, 1994; Matalin, Carville, & Knobler, 1994, p. 442; Shaw, 1999a, 2004), the 2000 election was different because both campaigns anticipated a nail-biter with only a small number of states in play.¹² Finally, we should note that campaign strat-

TABLE 1
2000 Presidential Election Strategies

<i>Gore Electoral College Strategy</i>	<i>Bush Electoral College Strategy</i>			
	<i>Base Republican</i>	<i>Marginal Republican</i>	<i>Battleground</i>	<i>Marginal Democratic</i>
Base Democratic				CA CT DC HI MA MD NJ NY RI VT
Marginal Democratic			TN WA WV	IL MN
Battleground		LA	AR DE FL IA ME MI MO NM OH OR PA WI	
Marginal Republican	NC VA	AZ CO GA KY NV	NH	
Base Republican	AK AL ID IN KS MS MT ND NE OK SC SD TX UT WY			

egies are dynamic in the sense that there is a constant reevaluation and reordering of the importance of each state as Election Day nears (Shaw, 2004). This reality, however, does not discredit a simple dichotomous classification of states for the 2000 election because adjustments in resource allocation as the campaign progressed were almost wholly confined to the states already designated battlegrounds (see Novotny, 2002).¹³

DESIGN AND MEASURES

This study takes a two-stage approach to exploring the impact of the EC on turnout. First, we examine the degree to which the candidates and their parties allocated resources across the states with the central focus on determining whether the battleground states received more media expenditures and candidate visits than nonbattleground states. Second, we explore whether or not media expenditures and/or candidate visits had a significant effect on state-level turnout. If the hypothesized link between battleground status and resource allocation (media spending and candidate visits) is significant, and the resource variables are significantly related to turnout, then there is evidence for an indirect relationship between battleground status and turnout.

As discussed, campaign resources are key explanatory variables in this project. They are what we use to operationalize the concept of mobilization. For the purposes of this study, resources are measured in two ways. First, candidate visits are measured as the total number of campaign appearances in each state by the two presidential candidates and their respective running mates between the time of each party's national convention and Election Day. Each visit is recorded at the city level and counted individually for each candidate appearance. For example, if a candidate were to appear in a city on one day but at two different times, then this would be recorded as two visits. In addition, a visit is assigned to a single state even though the visit may occur in a media market that spans multiple states.

Second, media spending is measured as a weighted summation of gross rating points (GRPs) purchased in each state by the Bush and

Gore campaigns and their respective national party committees for the 11 weeks prior to the election. Gross rating points provide a reliable measure of media spending as the total number of GRPs is an approximation of an audience's exposure to a campaign's advertisements. One hundred GRPs are roughly equal to the average viewer seeing an ad one time.¹⁴ Put another way, total GRPs purchased in a state media market (e.g., Boston) indicate approximately how many times the typical viewer will see an advertisement in that specific market. Gross rating points equalize market-advertising cost discrepancies. This is important given that the cost of advertising in New York City, for instance, is much more expensive than in Omaha, Nebraska, and without some sort of adjustment, it would make comparisons difficult if not impossible.

For each state, the media-spending variable is constructed by dividing the total amount of advertising dollars spent (Gore/Democratic National Committee [DNC] + Bush/Republican National Committee [RNC]) in each media market by the average cost per 100 GRPs in that market then multiplying this quotient by the percentage of the state's registered voters in that market. This procedure is repeated for all of a state's markets (where advertising was purchased), and the resulting products from each market are summed to get the final statewide value. More formally, the media spending calculation is

$$\text{Media Spending} = \sum \frac{(\text{Total}\$}_i)}{(\text{Cost}_i)} * (\text{Market Size}_i). \quad (1)$$

$\text{Total}\$}_i$ is the total number of dollars spent by the Bush and Gore campaigns and the Republican and Democratic parties in the i th state media market, and Cost_i is the average cost of 100 GRPs in the i th state media market. Market Size_i is measured as the percentage of the state's registered voters residing within the market.¹⁵

BATTLEGROUND STATES AND CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY

Table 2 presents the average and median GRPs purchased (media spending) and the average and median candidate visits for both campaigns according to state classification (battleground/

TABLE 2
Resource Allocation: Media Spending and Candidate Visits

State Category	Average GRPs (Gore + DNC)	Average GRPs (Bush + RNC)	Average GRPs (Total)	Average Visits (Gore/Lieberman)	Average Visits (Bush/Cheney)	Average Visits (Total)
BG	162	196	359	12	15	27
NBG	24	40	64	3	3	7
Ratio (BG:NBG)	7:1	5:1	6:1	4:1	5:1	4:1
State Category	Median GRPs (Gore + DNC)	Median GRPs (Bush + RNC)	Median GRPs (Total)	Median Visits (Gore/Lieberman)	Median Visits (Bush/Cheney)	Median Visits (Total)
BG	165	203	368	13	13	29
NBG	5	11	21	1	1	3
Ratio (BG:NBG)	33:1	18:1	18:1	13:1	13:1	10:1

NOTE: GRPs = gross rating points; DNC = Democratic National Committee; RNC = Republican National Committee; BG = battleground; NBG = nonbattleground. Media spending is for the last 11 weeks of both campaigns. Gore/Lieberman city visits were August 18 to November 6. Bush/Cheney city visits were August 4 to November 6. The data for calculating media spending (total spending by both campaigns, GRP cost estimates, and media market size) and visits were provided by Daron R. Shaw. The media market size data were provided by Daron R. Shaw via the Republican National Committee's 1998 *State Media Market Guide*.

nonbattleground). Clearly, for both candidates and their respective parties, the vast share of spending was concentrated in the battleground states. Gore and the DNC purchased an average of 7 times as many GRPs in the battleground states, whereas Bush and the RNC had a 5:1 ratio. Overall, the average expenditure of GRPs was 6 times larger in the battleground states.

Likewise, the average number of candidate visits is substantially higher in the battleground states (a ratio of 4:1 in favor of battleground states for Gore/Lieberman and 5:1 for Bush/Cheney; 4:1 overall). The median statistics tell the same story in a comparison of resource allocation between battleground and nonbattleground states, but the disparity is much larger. The similar ratios for media spending and candidate visits suggest that the Bush and Gore campaigns were in general agreement on their resource-allocation strategies.

Of course, it is possible that other factors apart from the competitiveness of the presidential election might lead to higher levels of spending and visits on the part of the candidates and parties. For instance, gubernatorial, senatorial, or House races might induce the candidates as well as their party committees to spend money or even visit a state in an effort to influence the outcome of an important down-ballot contest. To account for the impact of state-level political factors on presidential media spending and candidate visits, we estimated the following ordinary least squares (OLS) models.¹⁶

1. Media Spending = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Statewide Race}) + \beta_2(\% \text{ Competitive House Races}) + \beta_3(\text{Electoral Votes}) + \beta_4(\text{Battleground Status}) + \mu$.
2. Candidate Visits = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Statewide Race}) + \beta_2(\% \text{ Competitive House Races}) + \beta_3(\text{Electoral Votes}) + \beta_4(\text{Battleground Status}) + \beta_5(\text{Battleground X Electoral Votes}) + \mu$.

The results presented in Table 3 show that battleground status had a positive and statistically significant effect on media spending, whereas its impact on candidate visits was conditioned by electoral votes.¹⁷ The first column presents the OLS estimates for the influences on media spending.¹⁸ The battleground status dummy variable is the only coefficient significantly related to media spending. On average, battleground states received 305¹⁹ more GRPs than nonbattleground

TABLE 3
Effects on Resource Allocation in the 2000 Presidential Campaign

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Media Spending (GRPs)</i>	<i>Candidate Visits</i>
Statewide race	-43.807 (29.470)	-2.356 (2.337)
% Competitive house races	0.696 (0.587)	0.029 (0.046)
Electoral votes	-0.333 (1.424)	0.785** (0.121)
Battleground status	305.364** (30.834)	4.273 (4.264)
Battleground × electoral votes	—	1.268** (0.304)
Constant	79.414* (28.550)	-0.367 (2.343)
<i>n</i>	51	51
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.655	.760

NOTE: GRPs = gross rating points. Coefficients are unstandardized ordinary least squares regression values. Standard errors are in parentheses. The variable *statewide race* is a dummy coded one for the presence of either a gubernatorial or U.S. Senate contest.

p* < .01. *p* < .001, one-tailed.

states. Clearly, the two campaigns concentrated the bulk of their media spending in battleground states.

The second column in Table 3 presents the estimates for the influences on candidate visits. It is interesting to note that the battleground status coefficient is not significantly related to the number of candidate visits. Instead, candidate visits appear to be largely a function of the number of electoral votes and battleground status. This effect can be seen through the impact of the interaction term for battleground status and electoral votes. Among battleground states, for each additional electoral vote there were an additional 1.27 candidate visits. The coefficient for electoral votes indicates the impact of electoral votes in nonbattleground states, and it is also significant. For every one-unit increase in electoral votes in a nonbattleground state, there is an increase of approximately eight tenths of a candidate visit.

We can assess the impact of the number of electoral votes on candidate visits by comparing across the two categories of battleground status the change in the expected value of candidate visits because of a one standard-deviation unit (14.91) change in electoral votes. For example, among battleground states, the difference in the expected value of candidate visits between a state with 3 electoral votes and a state with 18 electoral votes is approximately 20 visits. Among nonbattleground states, the difference between states with 3 and 18

electoral votes, respectively, is approximately 12 visits. Clearly, electoral votes mattered in the distribution of candidate visits, and the effect of electoral votes on visits was greater in the battleground states than nonbattleground states because the campaigns used their most valuable resource, the candidates, where they would get the most return: battleground states with large numbers of electoral votes.

The results presented in Table 3 show that the battleground states, as expected, received a far greater share of media spending and candidate visits than nonbattleground states. This is the pattern of uneven mobilization that Powell (1986) and Jackman (1987) noted in that the less competitive states were largely ignored by the campaigns, whereas the battleground states received the bulk of resources. The next step in the analysis is to examine the effect of this pattern on turnout.

THE 2000 CAMPAIGN AND TURNOUT

In the 2000 presidential election, the average turnout among the voting-eligible population²⁰ in the 12 battleground states was 60.2%, which is higher than the national turnout rate of 57.4%. The mean level of turnout in the 38 nonbattleground states (and District of Columbia) was 56.6%, which is somewhat lower than the national rate and substantially lower than the mean level for battleground states. State-level turnout, however, is a function of a variety of factors such as demographics, state elections, registration laws, party competition, and the ideology of state political elites as well as the presidential campaign. Without a properly specified multivariate model, then, it is difficult to identify whether or not the presidential campaign had any impact on state-level turnout.

We expect that a consequence of greater mobilization in the battleground states is a higher turnout rate. The two key independent variables, therefore, are candidate visits and media spending (GRPs). If the argument that turnout is related to mobilization efforts is correct, then these two variables should be significant when controlling for the other variables in the model.

To examine the impact of candidate visits and media spending while controlling for a variety of factors known to influence turnout,

TABLE 4
Influence of Resource Allocation on State-Level Turnout

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>State-Level Turnout</i>	<i>Standard Errors</i>
% Registered	0.145*** (2.474)	0.058
% College degree	0.277** (2.057)	0.135
Median income	0.001*** (3.395)	0.000
South	3.721*** (2.687)	1.385
Closing date	-0.219*** (-4.323)	0.051
Racial diversity	-0.179*** (-3.284)	0.055
Gubernatorial race	-7.934** (-1.858)	4.269
Senate race	-3.660** (-2.283)	1.603
Gubernatorial Race × Gubernatorial Spending	4.272* (1.410)	3.030
Senate Race × Senate Spending	2.506*** (2.780)	0.901
% Nader vote	0.630** (2.149)	0.293
Candidate visits	0.086** (2.230)	0.039
Media spending	0.005* (1.599)	0.003
Constant	30.235*** (4.875)	6.201
<i>n</i>	51	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.825	

NOTE: Coefficients are unstandardized ordinary least squares regression values. *t* scores are in parentheses.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01, one-tailed.

we regressed 2000 state-level turnout (among the voting eligible population) on the percentage of the voting eligible population registered to vote²¹; the percentage of the population older than 25 with a college degree; the state's median income; a dummy variable for southern states; the number of days allowed for voter registration before the election (closing date); a measure of the state's racial diversity; dummy variables for the presence of gubernatorial and senatorial contests²²; and two interaction terms that multiply, respectively, the natural log of per capita gubernatorial and senatorial expenditures with the dummies for the presence of gubernatorial and senatorial races²³; the percentage of the vote received by Ralph Nader²⁴; the total number of candidate visits; and media spending.

The estimates presented in Table 4 suggest that the Bush and Gore campaigns had a positive effect on state-level turnout. After controlling for state-level factors, the coefficient for media spending is positive and significant, showing a relationship between media spending and state-level turnout. A one standard-deviation (156.50) increase in

media spending is associated with a modest .78% increase in state-level turnout. The candidate visits coefficient is also positive and significant, indicating that increases in the number of visits leads to higher turnout. A one standard-deviation (14.91) increase in candidate visits, for instance, is associated with a 1.19% increase in state-level turnout.

The findings in Table 4 show that media spending and candidate visits have a positive impact on turnout. The analysis in the previous section revealed that battleground status increased both media spending and candidate visits (when interacted with electoral votes). Because of this, the significant impact of spending and visits on turnout suggests that battleground status works indirectly through spending and visits to increase turnout. The indirect effect of battleground status on turnout can be illustrated with the unstandardized coefficients from the OLS models in Tables 3 and 4.

The indirect effect of battleground status operating through spending is calculated by multiplying the battleground status coefficient from the spending model in Table 3 with the media spending coefficient in the turnout model (Table 4) $[(305.36) * (.005) = 1.53]$. This structural coefficient shows that the greater amount of spending in battleground states resulted in turnout 1.53% higher in the battleground states than the nonbattleground states.²⁵

We also calculated structural coefficients for the impact of candidate visits. Because of the significant impact of the interaction term in Table 3, this structural coefficient was calculated by multiplying the interaction term for electoral votes and battleground status in the candidate visits model in Table 3 with the coefficient for candidate visits in Table 4 $[(1.27) * (.09) = .11]$.²⁶ One additional electoral vote in a battleground state resulted in about a 0.1% increase in turnout. Therefore, a one standard-deviation unit increase in electoral votes among battleground states resulted in a turnout increase of more than 1% $(14.91 * .10 = 1.49)$. In nonbattleground states, a one standard-deviation unit increase (14.91) in electoral votes resulted in a 0.94% increase in turnout.²⁷

We began this article with Powell's (1986) argument that winner-take-all systems like the EC work to reduce turnout because of the uneven mobilization efforts of the candidates and parties. If Powell's argument is correct, then we should find that if all states received the

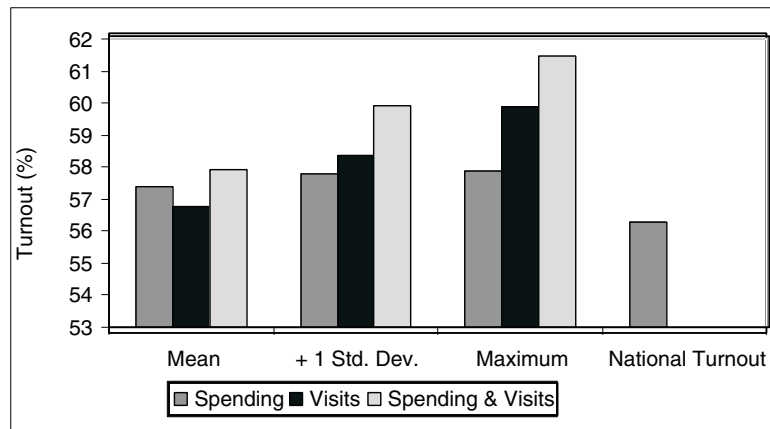


Figure 1: Predicted Turnout Based on Media Spending and Candidate Visits at Battleground-State Levels

level of media spending and candidate visits that the battleground states received, national turnout should have been higher than it was.

Figure 1 presents predicted turnout rates based on the level of resource allocation in the battleground states. The predicted level of national turnout (using the estimates from Table 4) based on each state's actual level of spending is 56.26%.²⁸ If each state received the mean level of media spending (357 GRPs) for the 12 battleground states, national turnout would have been 57.39%, or a 1.13% increase. If each state had received the mean number of candidate visits for battleground states (27), national turnout would have increased by approximately 0.5% (56.79%).

States did not receive only spending or visits, but, rather, citizens in battleground states were exposed to both types of campaigning. Therefore, if all states had received the mean level of spending and visits for battleground states, turnout would have been approximately 1.6% higher (57.92%) than the baseline rate. Six of the 12 battleground states, however, received higher than the mean level of spending and visits for battleground states. Thus, if all states received spending levels one standard-deviation (438.81 GRPs) above the mean for battleground states, turnout would have increased to roughly 57.80%. If all states received visits one standard-deviation above the

battleground state mean (44.62 visits), turnout would have increased to 58.38%. If every state received these levels of spending and visits, turnout would have been roughly 59.92%, which is a 3.6% increase over the predicted baseline turnout of 56.26%.

Finally, Wisconsin received the highest level of media spending at 457.63 GRPs, whereas Florida received the highest level of candidate visits at 61. If all states would have received these levels of spending and visits, national turnout would have been 61.48%. Although these numbers are based on simulated turnout and thus reflect unrealistic electoral conditions, they do highlight the point that disparate mobilization efforts created by the EC work to reduce national turnout by more than a marginal degree.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of the EC on state-level turnout by exploring the relationship between battleground status and resource allocation and the subsequent effect of resource allocation on turnout. Our findings confirm that the candidates and their parties concentrated more visits and media spending in those states that were pivotal to the outcome of the EC vote. And, as a result of greater resource allocation within the battleground states, turnout was significantly higher than in nonbattleground states.²⁹

Additionally, the results of this project add to the growing body of literature that shows active efforts by the candidates and parties to reach out to and engage voters as one of the key factors behind increasing turnout. Whether through direct contact, media reports, or campaign advertisements, mobilization subsidizes the act of participation and thus reduces the costs of voting (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Referring to presidential elections, Patterson (2002) puts the matter bluntly: "If candidates are no fools in how they allocate their time and attention, neither are citizens. They participate at lower rates when their state is ignored" (p. 142).

As the central governing institution for presidential elections, the EC shapes the strategic behavior of the actors involved in these contests (Patterson, 2002). In seeking to maximize their chances of achieving an EC victory, the candidates and their party committees in

2000 placed the bulk of their campaign resources in the battleground states and, therefore, essentially ignored those states where the outcome was relatively certain. The EC, effectively producing 51 single-member districts, leads to uneven campaign efforts across the country. We have shown that this campaigning imbalance affects turnout. Based on this project, and the work of others, it appears that in those places where political elites engage the electorate, more citizens respond by showing up on Election Day.

APPENDIX
Variable Definitions and Sources

Turnout	Votes cast in state/state voting-eligible population (http://www.fec.gov ; McDonald, 2002).
Registered population	The percentage of the state voting-eligible population registered to vote in 2000 (http://www.fec.gov).
Education	Percentage of 2000 state population 25 and older with a college degree (http://www.census.gov).
Income	The median income level of the state, measured in thousands (http://www.census.gov).
South	Dichotomous variable for southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia).
Racial diversity	$1 - \sum p_i^2$, where p_i is the proportion of the total state population in the i th racial group. The groups considered in the measure are non-Hispanic White, non-White Hispanic, African American, and "all other racial groups combined" (http://www.census.gov ; see Hill & Leighley, 1999).
Closing date	The number of days prior to the election that a state closes its registration books (The Council of State Governments, 2000).
Gubernatorial expenditures	\ln (total gubernatorial expenditures/state voting-eligible population; http://www.unc.edu/~beyle).
Senatorial expenditures	\ln (total senatorial expenditures/state voting-eligible population; http://www.fec.gov).
U.S. House competition	The percentage of U.S. House races in which the winner received 55% or less of the vote (http://www.fec.gov).
Ralph Nader vote	The percentage of a state's total vote received by Ralph Nader (http://www.fec.gov).

APPENDIX (continued)

Candidate visits	The total number of candidate visits a state received by either one of the two major presidential candidates or one of the two major vice presidential candidates (Shaw, 2001).
Media expenditures	Total gross rating points (GRPs) purchased in a state by the Bush and Gore campaigns and the Republican and Democratic National Committees; average cost per 100 GRPs purchased in each media market; media market percentage of state's registered voters (Republican National Committee, 1998; Shaw, 2001).

NOTES

1. As stated in *The Almanac of American Politics*, "Maine is one of two states (Nebraska is the other) where the electoral vote can be divided if one congressional district votes for a candidate that loses statewide" (Barone & Ujifusa, 1993, p. 559). In other words, a candidate who wins a congressional district receives one electoral college (EC) vote, and the candidate who wins the plurality vote in the state gets the two statewide EC votes.

2. In contrast to the American election system, many European countries have plurality or simple majority systems in which the executive or parliament is chosen by the entire nation. One reason these countries have higher levels of turnout is because all regions count equally, and thus there is incentive for the campaigns to allocate resources evenly across the nation (Jackman, 1987; Jackman & Miller, 1995; Powell, 1986).

3. However, one reason (apart from an EC strategy) why presidential candidates make appearances in states that are not competitive (e.g., California for the Bush campaign) is to engage in party-building efforts such as helping out congressional candidates of their party (see Shaw, 1999a, p. 911).

4. This is an attractive strategy for Republican candidates because more of their voters are located in these states.

5. Close elections are also believed to create an environment in which citizens perceive their vote will be decisive (or at least more important) in determining the outcome of the election (Blais, 2000; Downs, 1957; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). Critics of the instrumental voting argument (see Green & Shapiro, 1994) contend that in most close elections there is still an almost imperceptible likelihood that an individual's vote will be decisive, and thus it is unlikely that citizens vote instrumentally. In this project, we focus solely on the effect of close elections on mobilization efforts.

6. Gerber and Green (2001) found that the face-to-face canvass and direct-mail contacts were significantly and positively related to turnout. Phone contacts, on the other hand, were not significantly related to turnout.

7. The effect of television advertising on turnout is hotly debated, however, and that debate has largely centered on whether negative advertising depresses turnout, stimulates turnout, or has

no effect at all. Early work (mainly in the form of experiments) on the topic found that exposure to negative campaign ads reduced the likelihood that an individual would cast a ballot in an upcoming election (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994). Recently, several researchers have found that rather than having a depressive effect on turnout, negative advertising appears to stimulate turnout or at least has no significant effect at all (Clinton & Lapinski, 2004; Finkel & Geer, 1998; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Kahn & Kenney, 1999; Wattenberg & Briens, 1999).

8. Michael P. McDonald, a scholar who worked on behalf of the Gore campaign as a consultant for the Democratic polling firm Hickman and Brown, agreed with our classification (personal communication with Michael P. McDonald at the 2002 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago).

9. We also estimated models using both the Bush and Gore classifications for battleground states, and under both of these schemes the substance of our findings was not altered.

10. The battleground states are Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

11. We also ran the multivariate analyses using an ordinal classification of the states (1 = *base*, 2 = *marginal*, and 3 = *battleground*), and the substance of the results did not change. Shaw (2004, p. 37) presents a table (Table 3.2) that documents the campaign strategies for Bush and Gore in terms of the attention to give states based on the five category classification of competitiveness. He depicts the Gore campaign as devoting all its resources to states identified as battlegrounds and the Bush campaign giving all of its attention to states identified as battleground and marginal Democratic.

12. The decline in the number of competitive states is consistent with the increasing polarization of party politics (Jacobson, 2003).

13. According to Novotny (2002), days before the election “the Gore campaign became focused on what became known to staff in the inner circles of the campaign as the Trifecta: the states of Florida, Michigan, and Pennsylvania” (p. 64).

14. Gross rating points (GRPs) are a conceptual average and do not take into account variation in the amount of exposure across individuals; therefore, one would expect heavy viewers to see an ad more times than individuals who watch very little television.

15. For example, in the case of Maine, a state with three media markets (Portland-Auburn, Bangor, and Presque Isle), the media spending variable is calculated as follows: $[(\$1,719,641/\$6,400 * .67) + (\$695,570/\$2,500 * .27) + (\$423,036/\$1,500 * .06) = 272.07]$. With respect to market size for North Dakota and Wisconsin, states without voter registration records, the percentage of the market within the state is determined by a household estimate (the market’s percentage of a state based on the number of households in the market). If the household estimate varies (often it is equivalent) from the percentage of registered voters in the market, the difference is negligible. The media-spending variable is similar to the variable used by Shaw (1999b, p. 349). However, unlike Shaw (1999b), we account for advertising across state lines. For example, the Mobile-Pensacola media market covers parts of Alabama and Florida. Because we know the percentage of the registered voters who reside in this market at the state level (the size of the Mobile-Pensacola market in Alabama and Florida), we account for the advertising exposure in both states—even though Florida is the targeted state. The data for the percentage of registered voters in each state’s media market and household estimates (if there is no voter registration) come from the Republican National Committee’s 1998 *State Media Market Guide*.

16. One may argue that endogeneity is a problem with these models because it may be the case that the amount of spending and visits determines competitiveness (battleground status). We

disagree because, as stated previously, we argue that the candidates identify the battleground states near the start of the campaign and thus allocate their resources (spending and visits) according to their perceptions of competitiveness.

17. See the appendix for definitions and data sources for all variables in this study.

18. The coefficient for the interaction between battleground status and electoral votes was not significantly related to levels of spending. To facilitate the interpretation of the battleground status coefficient, the interaction term was excluded from the media-spending model.

19. The media spending variable is based on the cost of 100 GRPs. Therefore, the coefficient of 305.36 represents 30,536 total GRPs. In other words, on average, a voter in a battleground state viewed 305 more ads than a voter in a nonbattleground state.

20. McDonald and Popkin (2001) argue that turnout in the United States is artificially low because the voting-age population (turnout = votes/voting age population) includes individuals who are not eligible to vote such as legal and illegal aliens and institutionalized citizens. The authors reestimate turnout using what they call the voting-eligible population, which does not include ineligible persons, and conclude that turnout in American elections is, on average, about 4% higher than the artificially depressed rate using the voting-age population. To account for the inflated turnout because of inaccurate measurement of the voting-age population, state-level turnout in this project is calculated as the voting-eligible population. The data were acquired from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research located at the University of Michigan.

21. North Dakota has no registration requirement, and Wisconsin does not keep records on the size of the registered population. Because of this, data on the proportion of the voting-age population of these states do not exist. Rather than excluding these states from the analysis (Wisconsin is a battleground state), we imputed 100% as North Dakota's registered population (all citizens are eligible to vote) and used 97%, or the mean registration level of the five other states with Election-Day registration (Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Wyoming), as an estimate of Wisconsin's registered population.

22. Jackson (1997) found that in the presence of campaign expenditures, closeness of gubernatorial and senatorial contests has no significant impact on state-level turnout. Given that the gubernatorial and senatorial variables are simply controls for cross-state variations in turnout, we went with the much simpler model based on Jackson's work.

23. The interaction terms are created so that the gubernatorial and senatorial dummies can be used to turn on and turn off the expenditure variables (Jackson, 1997).

24. Given that much of the Nader vote came from young and presumably first-time voters, it is reasonable to conclude that in those states in which Nader received a significant proportion of the vote, turnout may have modestly increased. Based on this hypothesis, we include in the model the percentage of a state's vote that went to Ralph Nader.

25. The *t*-score for the indirect effect is 1.65 ($p = .05$; one-tailed test). The 95% confidence limits for the estimate are $-.29$ to 3.35 . The 90% confidence limits are $-.0$ to 3.06 . The confidence limits are calculated by $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta} \pm z_{1-w/2} * \hat{\sigma}_{\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta}}$ where $\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta}$, where is the structural coefficient, $z_{1-w/2}$ is the standard normal distribution for the desired Type I error rate, and $\hat{\sigma}_{\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta}}$ is the standard error for the structural coefficient (see McKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004).

26. The *t*-score for the indirect effect of the interaction term on turnout is 1.94 ($p = .025$; one-tailed test). The 95% confidence limits for the estimate are $-.02$ to $.22$. The 90% confidence limits for the estimate are $.03$ to $.21$.

27. The indirect effect of electoral votes on turnout in nonbattleground states was calculated by multiplying the electoral votes coefficient in the visits model in Table 3 (.79) times the coefficient for visits in the turnout model (.09) in Table 4.

28. This estimate is calculated as $\text{expected Turnout}_{2000} = 30.23 + (\text{registered \%} * .145) + (\text{College \%} * .277) + (\text{Median Income} * .339) + (\text{South} * 3.72) + (\text{Closing Date} * -.219) + (\text{Racial Diversity} * -.179) + (\text{Gubernatorial Race} * -7.93) + (\text{Senate Race} * -3.66) + (\text{Gubernatorial Race} \times \text{Log of Gubernatorial Expenditures} * 4.27) + (\text{Senate Race} \times \text{Log of Senatorial Expenditures} * 2.50) + (\text{Nader \%} * .630) + (\text{Candidate Visits} * .09) + (\text{Total GRPs} * .005)$. To calculate the base national turnout, the above model multiplied each state's actual level of media spending and candidate visits by the respective coefficients for media spending and candidate visits. To calculate turnout based on the various levels of spending in battleground states, mean expenditures (357.46), expenditures one standard-deviation above the mean (438.81), and the maximum level of expenditures (457.63) in these states were substituted in the model above for each state's actual level of spending. To calculate turnout based on various levels of candidate visits in battleground states, mean visits (27), visits one standard-deviation above the mean (44.62), and the maximum level of visits (61) were substituted for the state's actual number of visits. The turnout figures are the mean of the predicted state turnout weighted by the voting-eligible population.

29. Although the data in this article do not address direct citizen contact, the campaigns increased their direct mobilization efforts in their attempts to gain an advantage in the EC (see Patterson, 2002, p. 143). As discussed, the positive impact of direct contact on turnout is well established (Gerber & Green, 2000, 2001; Niven, 2004; Wielhouwer, 2000; Wielhouwer & Lockerbie, 1994), and one would expect, therefore, turnout to be higher in the battleground states because of increased direct mobilization efforts on the part of the candidates and parties.

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