The Effects of Early Voting on Campaign Advertising

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1. Introduction

Researchers studying early voting and related election reforms (e.g. Election Day registration) have been preoccupied with the direct effects these reforms have on voter participation (see Hanmer 2009; Berinsky 2006). Researchers have found that early voting adopted in part to increase voter turnout, especially among historically under represented voters has had a mixed and very modest effect on voter turnout in the states where it has been adopted (Berinsky 2006; Neeley and Richardson 2001; Karp and Banducci 2000; 2001; Gronke et al 2007; Kousser and Mullin 2007). We find the relatively narrow focus on voter turnout to be a shortcoming of the early voting literature and ask whether early voting affects the behavior of candidates and parties who may act as an important mediating force with respect to election reforms and voting behavior. In this paper, we examine whether early voting influences campaigns' advertising strategies, specifically focusing on how early voting influences the volume, timing and content of paid political campaign ads. Understanding how election laws shape campaign advertising strategy is penultimate to asking how the effects of election laws on campaigns and their coverage in the media influence voter behavior.

Our thesis is that early voting increases the length of political campaigns which in turn influences the volume, distribution and content of campaign ads over the course of political campaigns. Elsewhere we have demonstrated that a longer campaign season increases the demand for and production of political campaign news coverage which increases the information available to and needed by voters to make competent electoral choices (Dunaway and Stein forthcoming). Here, we build on those findings and offer some related expectations for how early voting influences campaign advertising.

We use campaign advertising to examine the question of whether an earlier Election Day (made possible by the institutional allowance for early voting) leads to significant differences in the political advertising strategies pursued by parties, candidates, and their campaigns. We ask whether the quantity, timing, and content of campaign advertising is independently shaped by opportunities for voters to ballot before Election Day. We examine the timing and volume of various types of campaign ads released during gubernatorial, Senate and House elections for the 2000 and 2004 elections.

The plan of the paper is as follows. In section two we discuss how early voting as practiced in U.S. states might influence the volume and nature of political campaign advertisements and offer several hypotheses for testing our explanations. In section three we describe the method by which we test our hypotheses with data on campaign advertising from the 2000 and 2004 elections in a sample of states with and without early voting. In section four we present qualified tests of our hypotheses. We conclude with a discussion of our findings, alternative explanations for our findings and how to model campaign ad buys over the course of a political campaign.

2. Early Voting and Campaign Strategy

In the 2004 Presidential election 20% of all ballots were cast before Election Day. In 2008, good estimates suggest this proportion rose to 30% (McDonald 2010). Opportunities to vote before Election Day are not new to the American electoral process. Voters have long had the opportunity to vote before Election Day by casting an absentee ballot, normally by mail (see Bensel 2004). In the past, states limited this form of early voting to individuals who were unable for reasons of travel or disability to vote on Election Day at a voting place in their voting

jurisdiction. The significant rise in the number of votes cast before Election Day begins with the adoption of in-person early voting in Texas in 1988 (Stein and Vonnahme 2010).

In-person early voting differs from absentee voting in that voters may ballot at one or more satellite voting locations, and cast a vote in person without offering an excuse for not being able to vote on Election Day (Cemenska et al 2009; Gronke et al 2006; Stein and Garcia 1997; Stein 1998). Satellite voting locations vary by state, and may include government facilities as well as non-traditional locations such as grocery stores, shopping malls, schools, libraries, and other locations. Early voting is generally conducted on the same voting equipment used on Election Day, as opposed to vote by mail, which is conducted on paper ballots. The time period for early voting varies from state to state, but most often it is available during a period of 10-21 days before the election, generally ending on the Friday or Saturday immediately preceding the election. As of 2008 more than half the states, 32, permit in-person, no excuse early voting (*Electionline* 2007; Cemenska, Leighley, Nagler and Tokaji 2009; National Council of State Legislatures 2008). The added convenience of early voting was intended to increase voter turnout, especially among historically under-representative populations of the electorate (Stein and Vonnahme 2010).

The convenience and accessibility of early voting appears not to have enhanced turnout among habitual non-voters. To the contrary, researchers have found that it is frequent voters who are more likely to vote early (Berinsky 2006). Moreover, others (Stein 1998) have found that early voters tend to be partisans, ideologues, more attentive to and interested in politics and more likely to report reading news reports about politics and campaigns. Thus, current research on the effects of early voting reform reveals mixed to modest effects in terms of raising turnout. Those who have detected a positive relationship between early voting and voter participation

have found the relationship to be dependent on the presence of another electoral reform, specifically Election Day voter registration (Burden et al. 2010; Giammo and Brox 2010). We also suspect that effect of early voting on voter behavior is partially dependent on other mediating factors, specifically the conduct of political campaigns

There is both anecdotal and empirical evidence that early voting has significantly changed the way candidates and parties conduct their campaigns. Several researchers (Patterson and Calderia 1985; Oliver 1996; Leighley 2001) have shown that candidates and parties adopt campaign strategies around opportunities for voters to ballot before Election Day. One Republican pollster aptly described the effect: "You need to divide the electorate into two groups. Run one campaign at early voters and another at Election Day voters (Nordlinger 2003)." Common to all campaigns are efforts to bring voters to the polls on Election Day. These get out the vote (GOTV) activities are expensive in terms of both labor and capital. Before the adoption of early voting, GOTV activities were concentrated on the weekend before Election Day.   Every day of early voting, however, is an occasion for GOTV activities, significantly increasing campaign activity. One Democratic consultant estimated that early voting has increased campaign expenditures by 25 percent (Nordlinger 2003).

Studying county party chairs in Texas Leighley (2001) and Stein, Leighley and Owens (2003) confirm that both parties took significant steps to mobilize their supporters through early voting opportunities in their respective counties. Moreover, the incidence with which leaders in each party have used early voting to mobilize their base has increased over time. Leighley's 1996 survey of county party chairs found that 42% of county party chairs reported using early voting as part of their campaign strategies to mobilize partisan supporters (i.e., provide voters with transportation to the polls during early voting). Replicating Leighley's survey in 2002

Stein, Leighley and Owens (2003) found that nearly two-thirds of all county chairs in Texas reported they encouraged their supporters to vote early. The question is: Do these specific early voting efforts extend to campaigns' ad buying strategies?

Stein et al (2003) find that when Democratic mobilization activities are matched with significant opportunities to vote early (i.e., a great number of sites and days of early voting) there is a significant increase in the likelihood that Democratic partisans will ballot. These findings are consistent with and partially explain the weak relationship between early voting and voter turnout, especially among infrequent voters. In addition to significant opportunities to vote early at places where voters are likely to be located, there must also be a partisan effort to use early voting to mobilize likely party supporters before early voting will have a positive effect on turnout. Here, however, the beneficiaries of early voting are both strong partisans and likely voters.

Our expectation is that campaigns in states with early voting begin earlier than campaigns in states without early voting, *ceteris paribus*. We focus specifically on campaigns' political advertising behavior – the strategy behind their ad buying in particular. The focus on political advertising strategy as a measure of general campaign activity is both appropriate and necessary; political advertising is the largest expense for most federal and state level campaigns (West 1994; Fowler and Ridout 2010), and the task of tracking and measuring individual campaigns' myriad behaviors would be too difficult for a study of this scope, if not impossible. Fortunately, political advertising tracking data make it possible to measure campaign spending and activities in an accessible way.

The effects of early voting on campaign advertising: Alternative scenarios

One means of identifying alternative ways early voting might influence campaign advertising is to differentiate between slope and intercept effects of early voting on the quantity and content of campaign advertising over the campaign. We assume that spending on campaigns in general and advertising in specific is governed by a budget constraint; the mix of spending on different campaign activities, including television advertising is determined in part by a fixed budget[1] and prices (i.e., ad costs). Slope effects refer to the how early voting changes the trajectory of spending and number of campaign ads over each segment (e.g., day or week) of the campaign. Here we are interested in knowing whether a fixed advertising budget produces an earlier number (proportion and outlay) of ads before Election Day in early voting states compared to the distribution/trajectory of spending in non-early voting states. Intercept effects refer to the number of ads and money spent by content on campaign advertising over the course of the entire campaign. Here we are interested in knowing whether the longer and earlier period of voting in states with early voting produces a greater number of ads and spending on ads than we observe in non-early voting states. Assuming campaigns operate under a budget constraint we should expect the trajectory of campaign spending to diverge between early and non-early voting states. In non-early voting states the trajectory of spending should be linear, increasing as Election Day approaches with the heaviest of spending occurring closest to Election Day. With multiple Elections Days in early voting states we expect ad spending in these states to be non-linear. Specifically, we expect an initial surge of spending as early voting approaches, with

[1] Our characterization of campaign budgets as fixed maybe problematic. Over time campaigns surge and decline which in turn changes the demand for and supply of money that funds campaign advertising. Early voting increases the length of the campaign season and thus the opportunities for surges and declines as measured by public opinion polls. Our expectation is that whatever dynamics might be operating in a campaign the amplitudes between declines and surges are shorter requiring more care in the distribution of campaign spending over the course of the campaign. Of course, this constraint is mitigated by the wealth of the candidate and campaign. Thus candidates able to self-finance without significant limitations are not expected to be significantly affected by the demands of early voting.

spending receding briefly after early voting and another surge in spending just before Election Day approaches.

We might expect that early voting will place greater demands on campaigns to spend more money on advertising earlier in the campaign season, driving up total campaign activities and total campaign ad costs in early voting states.[2]   Alternatively, if early voters are strong partisans and ideologues for whom the vote choice is relatively fixed (i.e., partisan straight ticket voters) we might expect only a small if not inconsequential shift in campaign activities to accommodate the information and mobilization needs of these decided and partisan voters. Alternatively, we might only expect to observe a shift in the content of campaign ads early in the campaign emphasizing stronger appeals to partisan and ideological voters (e.g., policy positions) without any significant increase in the either the total volume or outlay for campaign ads.

Generally speaking, policy oriented ads should always be more prominent earlier in a campaign. Early in campaigns candidates focus on issues and personal statements. Studies of campaign news patterns typically reflect this condition. Issue oriented news coverage of electoral contests diminishes in the latter weeks of a campaign (Dunaway 2008), perhaps because of the increased horserace campaign coverage (i.e., reports of polling results about which candidate is leading) as Election Day nears. Another expectation is that issue advertising drops off as the campaign progresses because candidate position statements lose novelty once they have already been reported early in the campaign, as is the case with policy related campaign news coverage (Bruni 2002; Hayes 2009; Patterson 1994). This pattern to the content of campaigns may be significantly altered by the introduction of early voting. If early voting status

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[2]There is some anecdotal evidence of this. See "Early Voting is a Game Changer," October, 3, 2010 (authored by Carolyn Crist and Melissa Weinman). http://gainesvilletimes.com/archives/38813.

does in fact mean that campaigns move up the timing of campaign activities, early voting may increase the volume of issue oriented advertising. GOTV efforts directed at more partisan and ideological voters may require issue oriented and attack ads to motivate the faithful to turnout.

Elsewhere (Dunaway and Stein forthcoming) we have shown that political news coverage of gubernatorial and senatorial elections in 2006 and 2008 was significantly greater in states with in-person early voting. We further demonstrated that the content of campaign news coverage varied between early and non-early states including a greater incidence and proportion of issue oriented news stories occurring earlier in the campaign in early voting states. Our explanation of these findings is anchored in the idea that political parties and candidates have an incentive to employ early voting related campaign strategies, including the campaign's ad buying strategies as part of their effort to win the election.

An alternative perspective suggests campaigning, at least television advertisements, might not vary by states with and without in-person early voting; Benoit (2007) argues that television political advertising has the most impact on those that are least informed and little impact on those who are informed. Zaller (1992) makes a similar argument, arguing that it is moderately informed voters who are most likely to be influenced by campaign messages. Patterson and McClure (1972) also demonstrate this point. It follows that early voters who are more likely to be strong partisans and ideologues may not require any targeted political advertising. Therefore, it could be expected that campaigns are aware of this and do not change their campaign activities in states with in-person early voting. Finally, ad spending by national parties or outside groups may reflect strategic considerations that do not take into account electoral institutional variation across states.

Given these alternative expectations about early voting's influence on electoral campaigns we hypothesize:

H1a: The trajectory of campaign advertising in non-early voting states is linear.

H1b: The trajectory of campaign advertising in early voting states is non-linear.

H2: The total incidence and cost of political advertising is greater in states with early voting.

H3: The policy, personal candidate attributes, attack and contrasting content of campaign advertising in early voting states is proportionally greater earlier in the campaign cycle.

Consistent with Benoit (2007) and Patterson and McClure (1972) we also hypothesize:

H4: Early voting has no significant effect on the incidence, timing or content campaign advertising.

3. Research design

Measuring the incidence of campaign activities across states, offices, time and the myriad discrete activities that define political campaigns is a daunting if not an impossible task. We have chosen to measure candidate based campaign activities by the incidence, over of time, of paid television advertising by media market and electoral contest. Paid television advertising is common and ubiquitous to contests we study including congressional contests for the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate and Governor. Moreover, paid television advertising is readily available and objectively measured over time (Goldstein et al 2002). This condition is not operative for many other campaign activities (e.g., door-to-door canvassing, candidate appearances) where candidate self-reporting is the only source of information on these activities. We contend that campaign advertising is the best proxy for the measurement of campaign

activity, timing, and tone. Research demonstrates that political advertising is usually the largest proportion of spending in political campaigns (Fowler and Ridout 2010; West 1994). West (2001) argues that political advertising constitutes a major portion of all campaign expenditures and reveals that in recent presidential elections ad spots have made up about 60 percent of total campaign costs (Benoit 2007).

Data collected by the Wisconsin Advertising Project (Goldstein et al 2002) provides a means of assessing whether candidates in states with early voting begin their campaign activities (i.e., television advertisements) earlier than candidates in states without significant opportunities for in-person early voting and whether campaign activities are greater in early voting states as a result of beginning earlier.   In 2000 and 2003-2004 the Wisconsin Advertising Project compiled a detailed enumeration of political television advertisements in the 75 largest U.S. media markets.[3] Our analysis of these data examines the political advertisements of candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate and Governor in 2000 and 2004. The Appendix reports the number of electoral contests studied by year, office, state, and media market with and without in-person early voting.[4]

The Wisconsin Advertising Project reports detailed information on each advertisement run on local licensed television stations as well as national networks including ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN and TBS. Two types of information are reported in the data: advertising content and ad frequency. Advertising content identifies information on 35 questions including whether the ad emphasized the candidate's policy positions, personal traits, attacks on opposing candidates and contrasting positions of contesting candidates. Other information in the Wisconsin Advertising

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[3] Approximately 80% of the U.S. population lives in one of the 75 largest media markets.
[4] For a more detailed discussion of the Wisconsin Advertising Project and data sources and coding rules for ad content see: http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/

Project include the date on which the ad ran, length of ad, market location, estimated cost of airing the ad, and the sponsor of the ad.

In 2000 29 states allowed for in-person no excuse early voting. In 2004 31 states allowed for in-person no excuse early voting (Cemenska et al 2010). None of these states dropped no excuse in-person early voting between 2000 and 2004. A second measure of early voting is the proportion of vote cast before Election Day and includes both in-person early voting and traditional absentee mail-in voting. We have opted not to use this second measure of early voting in this study for two reasons. First, a continuous measure of early voting does not lend itself to the type of descriptive analysis we present. Second, including mail-in absentee voting in a measure of early voting may not capture some of the strategic choices campaigns make when confronted with voters balloting in-person before Election Day. This assessment reflects the differences between in-person early voting and mail-in voting and how candidates employ each mode of voting in their campaigns. In-person early voting places significant demands on candidates and their campaigns to engage in costly get-out-the-vote activities. Locating and bringing supporters to the polls before Election Day places significantly different demands on campaigns than mobilizing voters to mail-in their ballots. Mail-in voting is not likely to generate extensive GOTV activities or unique political advertising strategies. Moreover, the requirements of mail-in voting are such that voters must initiate the request for a mail-in ballot.[5] Campaign activities oriented to mobilizing mail-in voting are focused on mailing voters information about how to obtain mail-in ballots (see Paterson and Calederia 1985).

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[5] Several states including Colorado have permanent mail-in voting where the voter is automatically sent a mail-in ballot before every election and is not required to make a separate request for each election.

Our focus is on the nine weeks preceding Election Day in 2000 (November 7) and 2004 (November 2). Beginning with the first week in September (September 3, 2000 and September 5, 2004) we aggregated by day and week the total number of television ads run by candidates for each office and the cost per ad. In addition to the frequency of total ads per day and week, we also calculated the proportion of ads run by day and week that addressed the candidates' policy positions, personal traits, candidates' contrasting policy positions and 'attacks' on opposing candidates. Our analysis addresses two questions: does the number and cost of campaign advertising differ between states with and without in-person early voting? Does the timing of campaign ads and their content differ between states with and without in-person early voting? Comparisons are between the frequency, cost and content of candidate ads in early and non-early voting states over the nine week period preceding Election Day in 2000 and 2004. To control for the effects associated with different sized states and media markets we have reported total campaign ads per 10,000 households in each media market. Similarly, expenditures for ad spots are also reported per 10,000 households in each media market and average cost per ad.

4. Findings

4.1 The volume and cost of campaign advertising in early and non-early voting states

Tables 1-2 report the mean daily values for selected measures of campaign advertising by office for the nine weeks preceding Election Day 2000 and 2004 by early and non-early voting states. These measures include: the mean number of ads per 10,000 households in each media market, the average cost per ad and average daily cost per household. The findings are somewhat unambiguous about the differences in the frequency and the cost of campaign advertising in early and non-early voting states.

The volume of daily campaign advertising is significantly greater in early voting states for all but the 2000 House races. These differences are, however, modest. When we turn to spending on campaign ads, both spending per ad and spending per media market household, the findings are more ambiguous. Spending, both per ad and per household is significantly greater in non-early voting states for the 2000 House and Senate races but higher in early voting states for the same contests in 2004. Spending differences for gubernatorial races are not observed between early and non-early voting states in either year.

One obvious conclusion to draw from these findings is that early voting does not have a substantial or consistent effect on either the incidence or cost of campaign advertising. Rival explanations related to time, office and individual contests are likely candidates for explaining variation in these indices of campaign advertising. There is, however, an alternative explanation that may be drawn from the findings in Table 2. The divergent findings between the frequency of campaign advertising and the costs of these ads suggests that campaigns in early voting states may have to make a trade-off between the greater demand for campaign ads (i.e., the longer period of early voting before Election Day) and the budget constraints most campaigns face. Our findings suggests that one way candidates address this budget constraint is to spend less per ad/household on campaign advertising, at least during the nine weeks before Election Day in early voting states. Another means of coping with the budget constraint candidates may confront in early voting states is to target campaign ads to specific niches of voters by varying the content of advertising over the course of the campaign. In early voting states a campaign's response to their budget constraint is expected to produce an earlier distribution of ads and ads by content. This strategy might enable candidates to reduce the unit costs per ad and household, allowing them to keep within their campaign budgets.

4.2 The distribution of campaign advertising over time

Figure 1 reports the daily number of campaign ads run in 2000 and 2004 for gubernatorial, Senate and U.S. House contests by states with and without in-person early voting. The unit of analysis in these figures is the electoral contest by race. The number of ads represents the total number of ads run by all contesting candidates in each race (see Appendix for list of contested races by state and year).[6]

There is evidence that the incidence of campaign advertising over the course of the campaign does diverge between early and non-early voting states, but only for gubernatorial contests, and not for either federal contests. The plot for 2000 gubernatorial candidates' ad buys shows that the incidence of advertisements in states with in-person early voting increases significantly beginning in the first week of September, peaking in last week of September. After October 1, the fourth week before Election Day, the incidence of political ads per day remains stable through Election Day. In states without in-person early voting the number of ads per week declines between the first week in September and the first week in October, after which the incidence of daily ads in states without in-person early voting increases monotonically through Election Day. These data provide some support for the expectation that candidates in early voting states engage in campaign activities earlier in the election cycle than candidates for similar offices in states without opportunities for early voting.

In 2004 the pattern of gubernatorial advertising again diverges between states with and without in-person early voting. In early voting states the number of ads starts at a higher level and rises more steeply between September and October, than in non-early voting states. Between the end of September and the first week of October the number of ads run by

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[6] The same results were obtained for the proportion of total ads run daily.

gubernatorial candidates in early voting states declines, during the same period the number of ads run by gubernatorial candidates in non-early voting states continues to increase through Election Day. After the first week in October, the number of ads run by gubernatorial candidates in early voting states resumes an upward trajectory through mid-October after which the incidence of daily advertising plateaus through Election Day. In 2004 the trajectory of campaign advertising for House and Senate candidates is positive, monotonic and undifferentiated between early and non-early voting states.

A means of assessing whether the trajectory of campaign advertising in early and non-early voting states is significantly different is to regress daily ad buys on number of days from Election Day, the square and cube of days from Election Day. The expectation is that one of the non-linear/polynomial forms of days from Election Day (i.e., its square or cube) will be significant for ad buys in early rather than non-early voting states. Table 3 reports the regression estimates for the daily number of ads by race and year. Only for gubernatorial ad buys in early voting states are the coefficients for either the quadratic or polynomial term of days from Election Day significant and in the expected direction. Estimates of ad buys in all non-early voting states for all electoral contests are positive and significant for the linear measure of days from the Election Day; neither the quadratic or cubed terms are significant in these models. This is also true of all Senate and House contests.

These findings suggest that gubernatorial candidates rather than candidates for either congressional office are responsive to the potential demands early voting places on campaign television advertising. In early voting states candidates may have to spread a fixed campaign budget for advertising over a longer period of time, choosing between fewer ads per day and week or distributing their ad buys in a more strategic manner. Together with the findings in

Tables 1-2 we have a partial answer to the question, how, if at all, do candidates adapt their television buys to the longer campaign season in early voting states? Gubernatorial candidates in early voting states choose to distribute a higher proportion of their total ad buy earlier in the campaign season than their counterparts in non-early voting states. Moreover, as reported in Tables 1-2 this is done without gubernatorial candidates spending more per ad or household in early voting states. How and why do gubernatorial candidates make this accommodation to early voting? And why are congressional candidates less susceptible to these influences from early voting? A partial answer to these questions may lie with the content and timing of campaign advertising , the effect of term limits for governors, and the nationalized spending in House and Senate races. The former explanation is discussed in section 4.3 and the latter explanation s will be taken up in the discussion section.

4.3 The content and timing of campaign advertising

Tables 4 and 5 report the mean number of daily campaign ads by the content/tone of the ad in early an non-early voting states by office for the nine weeks preceding Election Day 2000 and 2004. For most races across both years the frequency of different ad content does not vary by early and non-early voting states. This is true for attack ads, ads that highlight candidate personal traits and contrast opposing candidates. The exception to this non-finding is policy oriented ads. As expected we observed a significantly greater mean daily number of policy oriented ads in early voting states than in non-early voting states. On average gubernatorial candidates in early voting states ran .78 policy oriented commercials per day during the 2000 campaign compared to only .44 policy oriented commercials in states without early voting. The same relationship, albeit less skewed is observed for U.S. Senate and House races in 2000. In 2004 the average number of policy oriented ads run daily only varies between early and non-

early states for U.S. House races.   These findings are consistent with our view that early voters are partisans, ideologues more attentive to campaigns, and, are more likely to be attentive to and want (demand) information about the contesting candidate's issue positions.

Tables 6 and 7 report proportion of total campaign ads aired in the first half of the campaign cycle in 2000 and 2004 (i.e., weeks 9 through 5 before Election Day) by content of the ad for early and non-early voting states by office. Our hypothesis about the timing of policy oriented ads is confirmed but only for gubernatorial contests.   In 2000 and 2004 .57 and .48 proportion of all policy ads run in early voting states were aired in the first five weeks of the campaign season compared to .12 and .30 in non-early voting states. Evidence for this hypothesis is not observed for either of the congressional campaigns. Only in the 2000 congressional campaigns do we observe a higher proportion of policy ads aired early in the campaign season (i.e., during weeks 9-5 before Election Day) in early rather than non-early voting states.

 5. *Discussion*

Our findings provide limited and nuanced support for our hypotheses that the volume, content and distribution of campaign advertising varies between states with and without in-person early voting. Minimally we expected that early voting would extend the length of the electoral campaign and increase the volume of campaign ads or change the distribution and content of ads over time. What we found was partial support for this hypothesis. In states with early voting we observed a significantly higher volume of campaign ads than observed in states without early voting. This difference in the volume of ads in early voting states is not, however, accompanied by a greater amount of spending for these ads, either per ad or per household. Rather, candidates found ways to do more with less in early voting states. How candidates in

early voting states were able to increase the volume of ads over the campaign season without spending more than their counterparts in non-early voting is at least suggested by our findings for the distribution of ads over the course of campaign and the content of campaign advertising.

In early voting states we observed a higher number and proportion of ads aired earlier in the campaign season than observed in non-early voting states. Furthermore, the content of political ads in early voting states is skewed toward candidates' policy positions.   But again, these effects are only significant and pronounced in gubernatorial elections. We do not observe the same finding for the congressional campaigns. Why? Three explanations seem relevant here: the strong partisan and ideological makeup of early voters, term limits, and nationalized spending in House and Senate races. The former might account for the tepid influence early voting has on the paid advertising strategies of political campaigns. Term limits may explain why campaign ad buys vary among early and non-early voting states for only gubernatorial contests and not federal legislative contests.

The strong partisan and ideological makeup of early voters may make it unnecessary for contesting candidates in early voting states to alter their campaign strategies, particularly their paid media buys. Partisan and ideological voters are unlikely to be persuaded by campaign advertising, in part because they candidate choices and their likelihood of voting are well established and often determined well before the campaign begins. Consequently, campaigning to 'faithful' for either candidate and/or party would be an inefficient use of scarce resources. This condition of the early voting electorate may be changing. As noted before (McDonald 2010) the proportion voters balloting before Election Day is increasing and with this increase in early voters may be a greater diversity in the strength of partisan and ideological attachments of early voters. Should the early voting electorate come to include weak partisans and non-ideological

voters we should also expect to observe more divergent ad buying strategies across early and non-early voting states.

Governors in 36 states are term limited. There are no term limits for any federal office. Term limits for governors produces open seat races in which no incumbent Governor is running for reelection. Consequently, the vying gubernatorial candidates are less well known to the voters. One consequence of the greater frequency and regularity of open seat gubernatorial elections, at least in early voting states, is a need or demand for earlier campaigning. Less well known candidates might be expected to begin their campaigns earlier in early voting states to both familiarize themselves with the voters, some of whom are expected to ballot well before Election Day. The more competitive nature of open seat races might produce more divergent political advertising strategies between early and non-early voting states. We would expect the incumbency advantage shared by non-termed limited federal officeholders to mute the need and/or demand to begin campaigns earlier in early voting states. Of course, the opposite will be true for challengers, whose name identification and familiarity to the voters is expected to be lower than their incumbent challenger. Future research needs to differentiate the campaign ad buys of challengers and incumbents, especially in federal electoral contests where the incumbency advantage is likely to be strong.

House and Senate races are nested within states; yet they are federal (and in some ways nationalized) elections. This distinction is somewhat reflected in national party spending on behalf of House and Senate candidates. The national political parties pay for a much higher proportion of political advertisements in House and Senate campaigns relative to gubernatorial campaigns. As Table 8 reports, national party spending paid for 22 percent of ads in House and Senate races in 2000 and 11.5 and 22.9 percent in 2004, respectively. In gubernatorial contests

national party spending paid for only 2.6 percent of ads in 2000 and 8.2 percent in 2004. This helps explain our findings in the sense that national party spending on House and Senate races is likely based on strategic calculations in a larger context – and may not take into account the variable electoral institutional differences across states. Thus, the proportion of national party paid for ads may be large enough to mask early voting ad strategies adopted by candidates and campaigns. Future analyses should parse out ad patterns by early voting and ad sponsorship to see if in fact individual House and Senate campaigns adopt early voting strategies, even if the national parties do not.

Finally, we have not presented a model to test the effects of early voting on campaign ad buys. This awaits the further identification and measurement of alternative explanations of campaign ad strategies, including information on challenger quality, incumbency status, and competitiveness of races. Furthermore a test of our hypotheses requires a longer time-series (i.e., more than two elections) and pool of races to assure that our findings are not idiosyncratic to election years and presidential elections.

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	Governor		U.S. Representative		U.S. Senator	
	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early
Ads per 10K households	2	3*	12	8*	8	10
Cost per ad ($)	$509	$450*	$992	$658*	$156	$101
Cost per viewing household	$0.13	$0.12	$1.16	$0.50*	$0.91	$0.81

N=63, *P < .05

Table 1. Mean daily values for selected measures of campaign advertising in the 75 largest U.S. media markets by office and states with and without in-person early voting during the nine weeks preceding Election Day 2000.

	Governor		U.S. Rep.		U.S. Senator	
	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early
Ads per 10K households	6	7*	1	3*	10	21*
Cost per ad ($)	$717	$489*	$739	$517*	$542	$480
Cost per viewing household	$0.41	$0.32*	$0.82	$1.46	$0.54	$1.01*

N=59, * P < .05

Table 2. Mean daily values for selected measures of campaign advertising in the 75 largest U.S. media markets by office and states with and without in-person early voting during the nine weeks preceding Election Day 2004.

Number of Ads by Day and Contest: 2000

Senate Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 2000, 4000, 6000

9/3, 9/27, 10/17, 11/1

Date

House Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000

9/3, 9/27, 10/17, 11/1, 9/3, 9/27, 10/17, 11/1

Date

Gubernatorial Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 200, 400, 600, 800

9/3, 9/27, 10/17, 11/1, 9/3, 9/27, 10/17, 11/1

Date
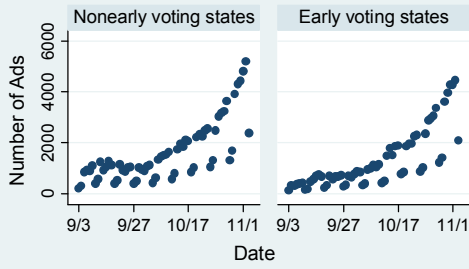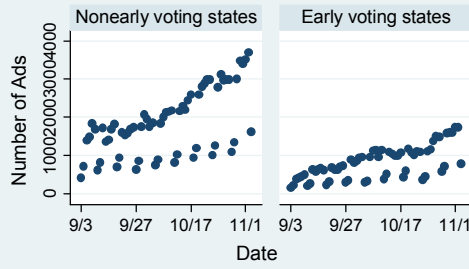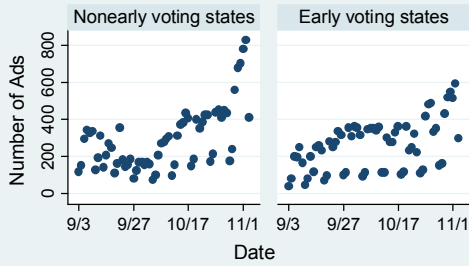
Number of Ads by Day and Contest: 2004

Gubernatorial Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 500, 1000, 1500

9/6, 9/26, 10/16, 11/1, 9/6, 9/26, 10/16, 11/1

Date

U.S. House Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 2000, 4000, 6000, 8000

9/6, 9/26, 10/16, 11/1, 9/6, 9/26, 10/16, 11/1

Date

Senate Elections

Nonearly voting states | Early voting states

Number of Ads

0, 2000, 4000, 6000, 8000

9/6, 9/20, 10/16, 11/1, 9/6, 9/26, 10/16, 11/1

Date

2000

Gov	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**5.63**	**09.4**	-5.2	**3.93**	2.2	**19.4**
	(.92)	(3.0)	(7.6)	(.79)	(3.1)	(7.3)
Days*2		**.243**	.073		.026	**-.67**
		(.048)	(.28)		(.048)	(.27)
Days*3			.001			**.007**
			(.003)			(.002)
Constant	115	268	248	139	156	71
	(33.)	(41.)	(54.)	(28)	(42)	(52)
R-square	.377	.548	.543	.275	.267	.329
N	63	63	63	63	63	63

Senator	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**48.9**	**-31.**	29	**50**	**-22**	**20**
	(5.1)	(17)	(41.)	(4.6)	(15)	(.38)
Days*2		**1.30**	-1.2		**1.18**	**-.58**
		(.27)	(1.5)		(.24)	(1.4)
Days*3			.026			**.019**
			(.016)			(.015)
Constant	106	926	620	-250	496	280
	(184)	(232)	(298)	(166)	(209)	(270)
R-square	.591	.699	.707	.656	.749	.752
N	63	63	63	63	63	63

House	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**29.4**	11	18	**16**	12	**38**
	(4.5)	(17)	(44)	(2)	(8)	(19)
Days*2		.294	.001		.065	-.999
		(.279)	(1.6)		(.12)	(.74)
Days*3			.003			.01
			(.017)			(.007)
Constant	958	1143	1107	314	355	225
	(163)	(240)	(314)	(73)	(108)	(139)
R-square	.397	.398	.388	.495	.489	.522
N	63	63	63	63	63	63

2004

Gov	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**17**	11.9	.84	**6.1**	**15**	1.25
	(2.1)	(8.3)	(20)	(1.4)	(5.7)	(14)
Days*2		.09	.57		**-.15**	.44
		(.13)	(.82)		(.07)	(.56)
Days*3			-.005			-.006
			(.009)			(.006)
Constant	135	187	238	357	273	336
	(71)	(104)	(136)	(49)	(71)	(93)
R-square	.537	.533	.527	.222	.243	.245
N	59	59	59	59	59	59

Senator	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**32**	16.2	6.9	**82**	39	-7.4
	(3.6)	(14.2)	(35)	(7.8)	(30)	(75)
Days*2		**.28**	.68		.73	2.7
		(.23)	(1.4)		(.51)	(3)
Days*3			-.004			-.02
			(.015)			(.03)
Constant	230	385	428	-163	242	462
	(121)	(178)	(232)	(264)	(365)	(501)
R-square	.579	.582	.575	.653	.671	.656
N	59	59	59	59	59	59

House	Non-Early			Early		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Days	**40**	-8.2	-10	**98**	32	**052**
	(4.)	(14)	(35)	(8.8)	(33)	(82)
Days*2		.83	.92		1.1	4.8
		(.24)	(1.4)		(.56)	(3.3)
Days*3			-.00			-.04
			(.01)			(.03)
Constant	-108	350	360	-555	65	461
	(135)	(181)	(237)	(296)	(424)	(548)
R-square	.637	.690	.684	.680	.696	.698
N	59	59	59	59	59	59

Table 3. Regression estimates of daily campaign ads during September-November by race and year (bolded coefficients P <.05)

	Governor		U.S. Representative		U.S. Senator	
	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early
Attack	.33	.31	.37	.37	.28	.25
Contrasting	.21	.28*	.25	.16*	.28	.32
Personal	.08	.03	.11	.12	.10	.08
Policy	.44	.78*	.55	.61*	.57	.63*

N=63, *P <.05

Table 4. Daily mean number of ads by content for the nine weeks before Election Day 2000

	Governor		U.S. Representative		U.S. Senator	
	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early	Non-early	Early
Attack	.33	.35	.26	.28	.20	.24
Contrasting	.26	.04*	.24	.19	.29	.27
Personal	.62	.66	.53	.52	.62	.52*
Policy	.15	.15	.10	.13	.14	.18*

N=59,*P <.05

Table 5. Daily mean number of ads by content for the nine weeks before Election Day 2004

	Governor		U.S. Rep.		U.S. Senator	
	Early	Non-Early	Early	Non-Early	Early	Non-Early
Attack	0.37	0.34	0.23	0.31	0.51	0.36*
Contrast	0.58	0.28*	0.22	0.27	0.39	0.46
Personal	0.53	0.75*	0.32	0.45	0.46	0.45
Policy	0.48	0.30*	0.29	0.28	0.43	0.41

N=63, *P < .05

Table 6. Cumulative proportion of total ads by content aired between September 3, 2000 - October 7, 2000

	Governor		U.S. Rep.		U.S. Senator	
	Early	Non-Early	Early	Non-Early	Early	Non-Early
Total	0.50	0.39	0.27	0.30	0.32	0.39
Attack	0.44	0.29*	0.16	0.19	0.13	0.38
Contrast	0.06	0.41*	0.28	0.27	0.34	0.38
Personal	0.53	0.60	0.26	0.31	0.39	0.41
Policy	0.57	0.12*	0.23	0.17	0.31	0.33

N=59, *P < .05

Table 7. Cumulative proportion of total ads by content aired between September 5, 2004 - October 7, 2004

	Senate		House		Governor	
	2000	2004	2000	2004	2000	2004
Sponsor						
Candidate	57.5	79.8	50.8	72	71.8	88.9
National Party	22	11.5	22	22.9	2.6	8.2

Table 8: Percent of ads run by year, contest and sponsor

	2000			2004		
	Senator	U.S. Rep.	Governor	Senator	U.S. Rep.	Governor
# States						
Non-early	11	17	4	11	14	5
Early	18	21	11	19	28	9
# Markets						
Non-early	25	33	8	59	70	26
Early	38	40	13	33	47	13

Appendix: Number of states and media markets by year, contest and early/non-early voting states