Party Control of Party Primaries: Party Influence in Nominations for the US Senate

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Scholarship on primary election outcomes has largely ignored the ability of political parties to shape outcomes and influence the decisions of candidates to compete for the party's nomination. Only recently have theories of parties as networks of policy demanders suggested that parties influence the candidate nomination process. Previous attempts to document party control of primaries, however, have only tested these theories on small or unrepresentative samples of primary races or have looked at general election results after the party's nominee has already been selected. Using a simple and easily understood measure of party support, I show that candidates who are less connected to the party are less likely to win and also less likely to remain a candidate in the primary. I find that parties not only are effective in helping candidates win but also are influential in excluding certain electoral options from being presented to primary voters.

What kind of third world politics does [the party chair] want to impose on the Republican Party? The delegates won't be elected for another year. The convention is 18 or 17 months away and he wants to have a single name on a slate. That's kingmaking. I thought the role of the party . . . was to encourage all good candidates to run.
—Former Senator Rod Grams ([R-MN], March 7, 2005)

Although he had lost his reelection campaign in 2000 by about 5 percentage points, the late Senator Rod Grams saw an opportunity to win back his seat in 2006 from Democratic Senator Mark Dayton. Infamously dubbed "The Blunderer" by *Time* magazine, many of Dayton's failures were clearly visible to the public (Time 2006), and by early 2005 his approval ratings had sunk into the low 40s. Grams seized his chance and moved quickly, declaring his candidacy for the US Senate in early February of 2005. Yet, Grams's candidacy soon stalled in spite of grassroots support without the support of party leaders and elites who instead backed Congressman Mark Kennedy (R-MN6) (Homans 2005; Hotakainen, Smith, and Sand 2005; Stassen-Berger 2005; Stassen-Berger and Salisbury 2005).[1] Despite his rants against party kingmaking, Grams soon realized that without the support of party elites, his hopes of winning the nomination were small. About a month after accusing party leaders of kingmaking, Grams dropped out of the Senate race, vowed his support of the party nominee, and turned his sights to a congressional seat in Minnesota's 8th district (Forliti 2005).

The influence of party elites as seen in the Republican primary in Minnesota in 2006 is not uncommon. Anecdotes abound of how party insiders from both parties influence primary outcomes and dissuade candidates from running for public office. Indeed, Paul Herrnson (1988) reported in the 1980s that officials from both national party organizations indicated that dissuading individuals from running for public office was "one of their most important and difficult election activities" (54). And yet, the decision to run for office, and a candidate's success, has continued to be considered largely candidate driven (Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Maestas et al. 2006; Maisel and Stone 1997; but see Broockman 2014).

Only recently have scholars questioned the candidate-centric view of primary election campaigns. Recent research arguing for a broader understanding of political parties has

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1. Not only had Republican Party leaders and elites shunned Grams, they also strongly supported Kennedy over Congressman Gil Gutknecht (R-MN1), who had also expressed interest in running for Senate (Homans 2005; Stassen-Berger and Salisbury 2005). Gutknecht also voiced objections to what he perceived as kingmaking but would ultimately decline to run for the Senate. Instead, Gutknecht ran for reelection, breaking a previous pledge to limit himself to six terms.

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provided preliminary evidence that party support influences electoral outcomes (Bawn et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2008; Desmairais et al. 2015; Dominguez 2011; Masket 2009, 2011). These studies, however, either have looked exclusively at presidential nominations, which are unique in their long, drawn-out process of multiple contests across several months (Cohen et al. 2008), have relied on small or nonrepresentative samples of races (Dominguez 2011; Masket 2009; Masket 2011), or have looked at general election outcomes (Desmarais et al. 2015) rather than primary outcomes where the party's nominee is chosen. No research has used a large representative sample of primaries to examine party elites' control over the outcomes of primary elections. Using primary elections for the US Senate from 2004 to 2012, I show that party support has a significant effect on a candidate's chances of winning the nomination.

However, I also show that party influence goes beyond outcomes, even affecting the choices presented to primary voters. In their study of presidential nominations, Cohen and his colleagues (2008) bemoan the fact that "so many candidates [enter] the invisible primary but [drop] out before we can learn their true potential" (257), making it difficult to measure the full extent of the influence of parties on the nomination process. I find that parties effectively dissuade Senate candidates from competing for the nomination. I show that a candidate's decision to remain in the race is influenced by the support of party elites. Contrary to previous assumptions, parties are not impartial bystanders, but rather key players that influence the primary election process and outcome.

THE EXTENDED PARTY AND PRIMARIES

Unlike previous theories of parties that posit their formation as the result of enterprising politicians (Aldrich 1995), recent research has conceptualized parties as a loose network of individuals and groups (Bawn et al. 2012; Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009). These individuals and groups coordinate together to achieve electoral and policy goals (Bawn et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2008; Desmarais et al. 2015; Herrnson 2009; Koger et al. 2009; Masket et al. 2012; Nyhan and Montgomery 2014; Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2013) in part by sharing information and electoral tactics (Grossmann and Dominguez 2009; Koger et al. 2009; Nyhan and Montgomery 2015; Skinner et al. 2013). The theory of parties as an extended network of individuals and groups, however, rests on the ability of these networks to control the nomination process (Bawn et al. 2012). Political parties have an interest in ensuring that the right election candidate emerges from the party's nomination process to give themselves the best chance

to win a majority of seats in the Senate and the House and ultimately the policies they want (Bawn et al. 2012; Menefee-Libey 2000).

Not only do parties have an interest in who wins the primary election; they also are concerned about the process. The surest way to secure the nomination is to eliminate possible competition. Yet, while we know a little about a party's success in recruiting candidates to run for office (Broockman 2014; Fox and Lawless 2010; Kazee and Thornberry 1990; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Seligman et al. 1974), we know much less about the effectiveness of their efforts to discourage candidates from seeking the party's nomination (but see Niven 2006).

Parties and candidates also want to eliminate competition in primaries to limit the potential negative effects of divisive primaries. While there is a long, messy, and largely inconclusive literature about the effect of divisive primaries on general election outcomes (Bernstein 1977; Born 1981; Hacker 1965; Jewitt and Treul 2014; Lazarus 2005; Miller, Jewell, and Sigelman 1988; Pierson and Smith 1975), the media and political practitioners have largely viewed competitive primary elections as detrimental to the eventual nominee (Alvarez, Canon, and Sellers 1995). Party elites believe that "certain candidates must be discouraged from running to allow party members to unite behind and nominate their most electable candidates" (Herrnson 1988, 54), thus saving scarce resources for the general election, where winning equates to holding public office. And yet, although parties have obvious incentives to clear the primary field for favored candidates—and attempt to do so by concentrating resources (Masket 2009)—we have little understanding of how effective parties actually are in doing so across the vast array of electoral races.

THE CAUSAL ARROW OF PARTY INFLUENCE

Before examining the effect of party support on primary outcomes, it is important to answer a couple of questions relating to the potential causal influence of party support. First, how is party support critical to candidate continuation and success? What resources do parties provide that are scarce elsewhere? What powers of persuasion might the party have over candidates to encourage them to drop out? Just because party networks want to influence primaries does not mean that they have the resources or power to do so.

Second, because political elites have a strong incentive not to back losing candidates, which might undermine their credibility (Rakove 1975), how can we know that party elites are influencing primary outcomes rather than following candidates already more likely to win? If party elites are merely joining the bandwagon of a successful candidate, claims of party influence are not credible.

To answer these two questions, I begin by relying on interviews with party elites. Interviews can help provide a better understanding of the causal effect process (Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2010; Mahoney 2010; Martin 2013). In this case, interviews with party leaders, donors, and candidates provide insights into the mechanisms behind the influence of party support. These interviews can illuminate the motivations of party elites to support particular candidates and assuage concerns that party support is driven by primary election viability factors. Combined with quantitative evidence presented later, these interviews provide insight into party coordination and how it influences primary candidates.

What I present in this section comes from interviews and conversations in 2013 and 2014 with 25 party elites, donors, and national and state party officials and staffers from both parties active in party politics in California, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC. While these 25 individuals are not a fully representative sample of political operatives and party elites active across the United States, they come from both large and small states, from both parties, and have many years of political experience. Because party elite structure and unity vary significantly across (and even within) regions (Bawn et al. 2014; Masket 2009), no information from these interviews is included that was not confirmed from multiple sources. The interviews, which ranged in length from 15 minutes to almost two hours, consisted of a series of open-ended questions about the relationships between party elites and candidates. More details about the respondents and interview format are available in the appendix, available online. In these interviews, I drew upon the work of prominent scholars such as Richard Fenno (1978), where interviews and open-ended surveys provide insights into the behaviors of political elites. By talking with those involved in party politics, I aim to understand, first, how party support might advantage primary candidates (thus understanding the process by which party support helps candidates win and encourages other candidates to drop out), and second, how party elites identify preferred candidates (thus understanding whether or not party elites identify preferred candidates on the basis of perceived viability in the primary).

GAINS FROM PARTY SUPPORT
Political resources

In response to questions about why non-party-supported candidates seeking the nomination might face an uphill battle, party elites identified two essential campaign resources that, while found in relative abundance inside the party network, are scarce outside that network. The first is competent and experienced campaign staff. Campaign consultants and staff are an intricate part of the party network, and effective campaign practices are shared through these networks (Nyhan and Montgomery 2015). As one party official explained, "There are two reasons the party's preference is upheld. One, people don't run. And two, if they do run, they run inept campaigns. The smart campaign people get behind the party's candidate and there's no one left for the candidate that wants to challenge the party's candidate." Without a competent staff, a candidate's campaign struggles to gain traction with primary voters.

Second, just as with campaign talent, party support facilitates the acquisition of monetary resources necessary to compete in the primary. As Hal Daub, former mayor of Omaha, explained when he dropped out of the primary to replace outgoing Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska in late 2007, "I was in Washington (last) Monday and Tuesday and came away convinced [Mike] Johanns was [the party's] chosen spearcarrier. He will have all the money he needs" (Walton 2007, B1). Although Johanns had not yet announced his candidacy, Daub recognized that without party resources, it would be difficult for him to compete in the primary. Likewise, as one party official explained, "The local party doesn't do a whole lot of trying to talk people out of races, but the national party has a different stance on that. There are a lot of people that, in their eyes, aren't viable right off the bat. I've been in conversations along the lines of asking candidates to maybe reconsider or just being very blunt with them that they're not going to get the support of national Democrats because they don't have what it takes to be a viable general election candidate." Without party support, candidates struggle to acquire the staff and monetary resources necessary to mount a competitive campaign. This affects both the outcome and the candidate's willingness to press onward. As one party official explained, "It can be quite discouraging to a potential candidate when they're not getting their calls returned or they're not getting their needs met." Party support provides access to key resources, the absence of which affects the decisions of candidates to continue to compete and their ability to win.

Political aspirations

Losing the battle for key campaign resources makes it difficult to press on, especially as candidates consider future options. Party elites also indicated that parties influence the set of choices presented to primary voters because candidates have political aspirations (Canon 1993; Jacobson and Kernell 1981). Individuals I spoke to, both former candidates and party officials, explained that part of the reason candidates who lack party support drop out is because they desire

to be politically influential. Pressing onward will only limit future opportunities for political influence. As one party leader explained, "Why piss off a bunch of people you're going to need someday? That's the other thing, when you run against the 'anointed one' all you end up doing is pissing off people you might need someday, and you look like the hero when you announce that you're not going to run against the 'anointed one.'" Candidates who aspire to elected office recognize that fighting against elite party preferences reduces future opportunities for elected office and positions of influence within the party network.[2] Thus, strategic candidates persist without the support of party elites only when there is a clear pathway to victory. One former Republican candidate explained his decision to drop out of the primary this way, "If you want to [go against the party's choice], you can get press, but it's like Benedict Arnold. The Brits didn't want him because he was a traitor and he certainly wasn't going to go back to America, and it's the same kind of thing. If you do that, as a Republican, you're done. So you get ostracized from the party and the Democrats aren't going to pick you up. The media will take you and use the heck out of you and spit you out and you're going to be partyless after that." Thus, while a frustrated candidate may be inclined to run to spite party leaders, many ultimately choose not to because of a desire for future political influence. By acting on that urge to "buck the party," they risk forgoing future opportunities in the party network.

PARTY ELITE EXPLANATIONS OF PARTY SUPPORT

Armed now with an explanation for why parties might influence primary outcomes, I turn to the second question of causality. In these interviews, I also probed respondents about the process of coordination to understand what party elites say about their motivations to support particular candidates. Are they merely following the primary candidate with the best ability to appeal to an ideological primary base (rendering party support endogenous to primary outcomes that were already foreordained)? Or do party elites use other factors in identifying a preferred party candidate, thus suggesting a larger role in influencing primary elections?

As should be expected of the coordination of a multitude of actors that make up the extended party network, coordination of party elites in support of a single candidate is not a simple process. Unlike glamorized accounts of party politics in the age of the party machine, all individuals I spoke to indicated that there is no one individual, or even one formal organization, whose unilateral decision to support a candidate causes party elites to line up behind that candidate. As one former state party chair explained, "It's more shifting coalitions, rather than a center, command and control type of model. As chair, I remember walking around often saying 'Where's the back room? Where's the room where I get to go smoke cigars and make all the decisions, because I haven't found the door.'" At the same time, party elites also indicated that a party-preferred candidate need not necessarily fit the ideological mold that satisfies the party's primary voters. Party elites often described the tension between the party and primary voters as the party worked to nominate a candidate that local party members did not want. Party elites indicated they were willing to overlook a lack of ideological purity if it increased the likelihood of holding public office. Primary viability was not important to party elites; general election viability was. As a Democratic Party official stated, "The reality is that we need to elect Democrats . . . and at the end of the day if I or others tried to find a candidate who fit the party [and just focused on satisfying primary voters] as opposed to the district, we'd lose. So first and foremost when you're recruiting candidates you've got to find a candidate who . . . can win the general election." Another party staffer explained that while party regional staffers had met with a number of viable candidates in a competitive primary, the party directed them not to reach out to one competitive candidate, because the candidate "didn't have a chance in the general election." Likewise, a former state party staffer indicated that he and other staffers gave preferential treatment to some candidates and responded slower to requests from other competitive primary candidates because "if they won the nomination we'd be embarrassed in the general election, and there's no way we'd have wanted that." Party elites made it clear that they were less concerned about primary viability and more concerned about general election viability and perceived their colleagues to be focused in the same way.[3]

Yet, in their search for viable general election candidates, parties search where they can see.[4] Many with whom I spoke acknowledged that the perspective of party elites was limited to their extended network and those in public prominence.

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2. Around two-thirds of candidates who dropped out of the primary between 2004 and 2010 went on to seek and hold other political and governmental offices in future years.

3. Party elites I talked to were concerned about ideology, but it was tempered by reality. As one former Republican state party chair explained, "Higher up the [political] food chain, there's less idealism. It's more about winning. Not to say that there's not idealism, but it becomes pragmatic idealism."

4. I might use the well-traveled analogy of a drunk searching for his keys under the streetlamp; however, many of those I interviewed would object to the comparison of political parties to an inebriate.

Some even complained that the party as a whole missed good candidates because they were outside the network. Coordination of large numbers of individuals is easiest when the point of coordination is a focal point (Lewis 1969). While party elites want to coordinate behind a viable general election candidate, coordination as a party is easier when coordination points are restricted to individuals well known among those trying to coordinate.[5] As one former party official involved in the candidate recruitment process explained, "The party has become such an inside game. I mean you say 'give me a candidate for any office' and the first thing they do is name ten state legislators. People in the party tend to gravitate towards the legislators. They go with people that they know." Even beyond legislators, the identification of viable candidates occurs within the circles of the political elite. As one former state Republican Party Chair explained,

> If the NRSC or the NRCC is looking for candidates, they're most likely going to call people they know and respect, people like the [former Congressman] of the world. So they'll call [this former congressman], and they'll say "Who's out there in your state?" And it's people like them that really provide the information. If he doesn't know, he'll call people in his network and ask who's a possible up and comer. And then he'll go back and say "here's who you should talk to." So, even if he doesn't know the person, he's been told by his people that this is the guy that they should back. So, it's all about who knows who and connections. . . . [When] the national party members are looking for candidates they gravitate towards people who are known commodities.

The successful coordination of donors and party elites behind a single candidate relies on recognition within the network. Coordinating on known commodities is common not only in the recruitment process but also once candidates have emerged. One well-networked donor explained his choice to support one candidate or another as a matter of connections: "How can I not support this person, I've known them since my first race? Or I've known them since 1984. That's generally how I make all my decisions now." While party elites are interested in getting the most viable general election candidate through the nomination process, the list of potential candidates is often limited to individ-

uals who are salient in the party network in order to facilitate coordination. Even when viable alternatives present themselves, partisan elites have a harder time coordinating on individuals outside the network.

Finally, many individuals explained that party elites acted strategically rather than sincerely in their recruitment and coordination efforts in order to maximize electoral victories. Although many viable candidates may express interest in running for a seat, the party has an incentive to try to encourage candidates not to congregate in a single race. As one national party official involved in the candidate recruitment process explained, "It's partially the party making sure that they have good candidates in every race. They're going to try and convince people to get into races where they have a chance. You don't want two good candidates running in one race and a crappy candidate running in another especially when you've got a good political environment on your side." Rather than waste good candidates in a primary election, parties want to maximize their potential for general election victories. At times, this means discouraging well-qualified candidates from running because they are needed in other electoral races. As one former staffer for Representative David Minge (D-MN1) explained,

> Minge had announced he was running for Senate in mid-1999. Well, [House Minority Leader] Dick Gephardt got this news and went absolutely apoplectic because he was going to lose that congressional seat because he was in a rural Republican district and David was the only one who could win that and if he didn't run they were going to lose that seat. So Gephardt, or his people, went to all the major donors or people who could help out with fund-raising and told them basically to not give money. I don't think it was a hard sell for them, basically telling them to hold off, or let the field develop, or see what happens if a better candidate emerges, and so David couldn't raise the funds because they had all been told to wait. So by October of '99 David came to us and said, "I've got a decision to make, I can either say 'Screw you Gephardt,' or I can admit that he was right, and the bottom line is that I want to be a member of Congress." So he dropped out, and ran for his old seat.

These strategic considerations are evident in both parties. When Republican Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie of Vermont dropped his aspirations to run for Senate in 2006, the Associated Press reported that Dubie "acknowledged that he faced pressure from leading Republicans to defend a seat that they feared they would lose if he sought a move to

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5. This might also partially explain the higher success of experienced politicians. Being more salient in the party network, they are more likely to attract party resources than other equally qualified and competent campaigners.

Washington" (Associated Press 2005).[6] Thus, while parties prioritize getting the best general election candidate to run for a particular office, they are, at the same time, concerned about maintaining the current offices that they hold and maximizing the opportunities to control additional political offices.

PARTY SUPPORT AND CANDIDATE VIABILITY

These interviews help clarify the causal process of party support and candidate decisions and viability (Lynch 2013; Mosley 2013). The question, however, is whether systematic empirical data can corroborate these party insiders' perceptions and beliefs about the nomination process. Even though party insiders indicate that they do not choose who to support on the basis of primary election viability, concerns about the validity of these statements still remain (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013).

As such, it is important to corroborate these claims. To do so, I also consider quantitatively whether candidate viability predicts levels of party support. If other factors that have been previously shown to predict candidate success do not predict subsequent changes in party support, we can be more confident that party elites are not merely jumping on the bandwagon of successful candidates. As I show below, I find that measures of primary viability do not influence future levels of party support. Instead, I find that party support Granger-causes primary viability.

DATA SOURCES AND PROCEDURES

To examine this causal question and understand the influence of parties on primary outcomes and on the candidacy decisions of primary candidates, I compiled a list of individuals who declared their candidacy for the US Senate and filed with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) between 2004 and 2012. This includes candidates who only formed exploratory committees and candidates who withdrew shortly after announcing their intentions to run for Senate. For each candidate, I recorded whether the candidate had held previous elective office at any level (Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Lublin 1994) and recorded the percentage of the vote each candidate received.[7] If a candidate withdrew before the primary, I noted the date the candidate

date dropped out of the race. When no information about a candidate's date of withdrawal was available, I entered the date as a week after the last recorded donation to the campaign or the date of the filing deadline, whichever was earlier.

For each candidate, I compiled fund-raising totals from individual donors during each quarter in the primary. Although there are questions as to whether the dates of donations are completely accurate, candidates have an incentive to ensure that quarterly reports of fund-raising totals and donor lists are accurate. Candidates must file a report with the FEC on a quarterly basis, and campaigns use these reports to signal the strength of their candidacy. Most importantly, I limit my analysis to the primary and do not include donations occurring after the primary election.

Measuring party coordination

Part of the reason that research examining the influence of parties on political outcomes has been limited may be that previous ways of measuring party support, such as calculating the share of endorsements or using community detection methods to discover nonnetworked candidates, are either time-intensive or computationally and theoretically complex. Previous researchers have argued that we need to develop "other proxies of this partisan support" because previous measures "are cumbersome to gather for large numbers of candidates" (Dominguez 2011, 542).

To measure the strength of the relationship between party elites and a candidate in each quarter, I count the number of donors who donated money to both the candidate and the party's Senatorial Campaign Committee.[8] Using the number of donors a candidate shares with his or her party's senatorial committee quantifies accounts of the party organizations as the center of a coordinated effort to direct campaign funds to favored candidates (Herrnson 1988, 2009;

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6. Strategic considerations may even extend to considerations of political leadership. In March of 2015, the *New York Times* reported that Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi was working to convince Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD8) not to run for Senate because of her desire that he succeed her as House Minority Leader (Steinhauer 2015).

7. I also examined the effect of other variations of this measure of challenger quality that give higher values to higher officeholders (Squire 1992). Because these variations showed no differences in their effects and

had no effect on the other variables of interest, I have used the bivariate version in the models presented in this article for simplicity.

8. I also tested models that excluded from the count of party donors those individuals who gave to both major political parties' senatorial campaign committees. There is no difference in the results. Bipartisan party donors made up less than 1% of the sample of party donors. While there may be some concern that bipartisan party donors are not part of the party and are merely interested in access, this is less of a concern in a primary than in a general election. Eliminating these individuals, however, does not accurately represent the role that parties play in connecting donors (both bipartisan and partisan) to preferred candidates. As noted below, party organizations regularly bundle money on behalf of candidates, including money from donors who give to both parties (Herrnson 1988, 2009; Kolodny 1998). Not including these individuals eliminates an important part of the parties' efforts to coordinate in support of preferred candidates.

Koger et al. 2009; Kolodny 1998).[9] While official party organizations do not have the same financial clout that they once did, they continue to act as a coordinating mechanism for influential donors (Herrnson 2009).[10]

These donors are party elites and are major players in the process. Around one-third of these donors gave more than $1,000 to the party, and many gave much more. More importantly, these individuals are attentive to signals from the national party. Even if they are not asked explicitly, attentive donors pick up on cues from other party elites about which candidates they should support (Masket 2011). As one major party donor explained to me about a less attentive fellow donor: "When I go to talk to [Vincent Hartford] who doesn't or is no longer actively attending local party meetings or involved in the process, he's always trying to pick my brain about what's going on and where things stand so that he can get a better idea of who he should support." Even when donors do not pay attention to the national party committees, this and other evidence indicates that elite donors are highly connected to each other and take cues from each other and the party network (Sinclair 2012).

In addition, party elites, as part of the extended party network, continue to be organized in a network structure that has national party organizations at the center (Koger et al. 2009). Studies of formal party organizations also find evidence of official organizations as the center of party coordination efforts. In the late 1980s, the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) faced a new dilemma, having raised more money than it could legally transfer to candidates. Although accounts differ about when it began, the NRSC began bundling money to candidates as part of the solution (Herrnson 1988, 71–73; Kolodny 1998, 151). Bundling is a procedure by which an organization gathers a large number of donations on behalf of a candidate. The organization then "bundles" these checks and gives them to the

targeted candidate. What began in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the NRSC now is common practice for both the NRSC and its Democratic counterpart (Currinder 2009; Dwyre and Kolodny 2003; Dwyre et al. 2006; Jacobson 2010; Kolodny 1998). Parties continue to operate as a central means to coordination of donations to preferred candidates.

TESTING PARTY SUPPORT AND CANDIDATE VIABILITY

The largest predictor of success among nonincumbent candidates in primary elections is candidate fund-raising (Jacobson 1980; Jewell and Morehouse 2001). Although candidates may spend a lot of their own money, it is candidate fund-raising, not candidate spending, that is an indicator of candidate success (Brown 2013; Steen 2006). As such, even though quarterly polling numbers or media coverage are not readily available for each candidate as a means to measure primary viability, quarterly fund-raising totals provide the same indicator of success.[11] Using fund-raising as a measure of candidate viability, we can assess whether connections to the party committees are largely determined by perceived candidate viability or whether party donors support candidates through different coordination mechanisms, as the interviews of party elites suggested.

To test this, I rely on a Granger test of causality between the number of party donors who give donations to a candidate and candidate fund-raising. Party support can be said to Granger-cause candidate fund-raising if the lagged values of party support predict fund-raising, but the lagged values of fund-raising do not predict party support when both lagged values are included in both models (Woolridge 2012).[12]

As table 1 shows, party support Granger-causes candidate fund-raising. One hundred additional party donors cause roughly a 4% increase in fund-raising in the following quarter. While increases in the party's support of a candidate causes that candidate's fund-raising to go up in the subsequent quarter, increases in candidate fund-raising do not influence future party support. Party donors are not reacting to candidate fund-raising; instead, party support predicts future candidate fund-raising.

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9. I also considered using other measures of relative measures of party support to take into account the relative standing of candidates compared to the other candidates in the race (see, e.g., Norrander 2000). Models with the alternative specifications are available in the appendix (tables 3A–7A).

10. This measure of party support is also an excellent proxy for an endorsement. There is a significant and substantial increase in the number of shared donors between interest groups and a candidate immediately following an interest group's endorsement of that candidate. This finding is consistent for the relationship of interest groups to candidates on both sides of the political spectrum, including groups such as Club for Growth, Emily's List, Campaign for Working Families, and the Sierra Club. It is important to note, however, that there is little influence of an endorsement by these groups on total fund-raising. Analysis is available on request. It is also important to note that in high-profile instances where there was a perceived establishment candidate and an outside candidate such as in 2010 in Colorado or Delaware among Republicans, and this measurement matches those stories as well.

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11. Previous studies of presidential nominations have found no statistically significant effect of media coverage or polling numbers on levels of party support and act in much the same way that fund-raising does as a predictor of party support (Cohen et al. 2008).

12. These models include long-shot candidates and challengers to incumbents. If I exclude these candidates, the results are the same. These models also include observations where there was only one candidate, or where all but one candidate had dropped out. Again, if I exclude these candidates, the results are the same.

Table 1. Granger Causality Tests of Fund-Raising and Party Support

	All Candidates		Primaries with Candidates with Same Level of Experience	
	Logged Fund-Raising	Party Support	Logged Fund-Raising	Party Support
Party support (t-1)	.005**	.947**	.004**	.846**
	(.001)	(.071)	(.001)	(.031)
Logged fund-raising (t-1)	.772**	−.013	.747**	.063
	(.033)	(.439)	(.064)	(.415)
Constant	2.348**	3.931	2.770**	6.612
	(.356)	(3.222)	(.721)	(4.781)
Observations	2,449	2,449	797	797
R^2	.541	.756	.542	.678
RMSE	2.29	30.71	2.15	37.32

Note. OLS (ordinary least squares) coefficients with standard errors clustered by candidate in parentheses. RMSE = root mean squared error.
** $p < .01$.

It is still possible however, that party support and fund-raising are both motivated by candidate viability. To tell whether this is the case, we can restrict our analysis to only those situations where candidates had the same level of experience. As is evident in the second set of Granger-causality tests in table 1, the results are also the same if we look only at races where all candidates had the same level of experience. This confirms that these results are not driven by candidate quality and that party support Granger-causes future fund-raising levels.

EVIDENCE OF PARTY INFLUENCE IN SENATE PRIMARIES

Now that we understand more about the factors that motivate party elite coordination, we can examine the effects of party coordination on primary outcomes with confidence that these effects are not being driven by a candidate's viability in the primary. Moving to test the influence of party support in primary elections, I examine two things. First, I examine the influence of party support on a candidate's continued participation in the primary. Second, I test the effect of party support on primary outcomes.

Shaping the field

To quantify the effect of party support on the shape of the primary field, I estimate a logit model where the dependent variable takes a value of 0 if the candidate remained in the race and a value of 1 if the candidate dropped out during that quarter.[13] After a candidate drops out, all subsequent

quarters are then dropped from the sample.[14] For simplicity, I choose to report the results looking at the effect in an individual quarter. Alternative specifications using a Cox Proportional Hazard Model show identical results and are reported in table 2A in the appendix. Likewise, although some previous analyses of party support have excluded races where there is only one candidate running (Desmarais et al. 2015; Dominguez 2011), there are instances in the data where unopposed candidates have dropped out. To prevent biasing the likelihood of dropping out, I have not excluded races here where there was only one candidate. The exclusion of those races from the analysis, however, does not change the results (see table 2A in the appendix).

Table 2 shows the results of a logistic regression of the effect of party support on the likelihood that a candidate will withdraw from the race. Because more crowded primaries are more likely to cause strategic politicians to withdraw, I include controls for the number of candidates in the race.[15] I also include dummy variables for each quarter of the election cycle to correct for the temporal dependence of the model

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13. In most party primaries, coming in second behind another candidate of the same party means that the second-place candidate does not

compete in the general election. With top two primaries, this is not the case. For this reason, in all the analysis here I have excluded candidates competing in top two primaries.

14. Following Beck et al. (1998).

15. While interviews with party elites identify two resources (campaign staff and financial support) that party networks use to help party-supported candidates in their primaries, this analysis focuses only on party support as measured through party donors. There is no reason to believe, however, that parties would offer one resource but not the other (Kolodny and Logan 1998), and previous work has shown that parties are able to effectively diffuse and coordinate "campaign strategies among a party's candidates" (Nyhan and Montgomery 2015, 292).

Table 2. Likelihood of Withdrawing from a Non-incumbent Senate Primary Election Race

	All Candidates	Primaries with Candidates with Same Level of Experience
	Withdrawing from Primary	Withdrawing from Primary
Party support (t-1)	−.030**	−.027*
	(.011)	(.012)
Logged fund-raising (t-1)	−.082**	−.098*
	(.026)	(.048)
Candidate quality	−.497*	−.381
	(.225)	(.328)
Number of candidates (t-1)	.173**	.205*
	(.043)	(.080)
Constant	−2.511**	−2.521**
	(.490)	(.892)
Observations	2,449	766
Pseudo R^2	.160	.124
Log likelihood	−505.57	−190.81

Note. The second equation includes only candidates in primaries where that candidate shared the distinction of having the most political experience with at least one other candidate. More simply, this model looks only at situations where there were not disparities in political experience. Logit coefficients with standard errors clustered by primary race in parentheses. Quarter dummy variables not shown in results.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

(Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998). The model combines the five election cycles from 2004 to 2012, and I cluster standard errors by primary election race.[16] As explanatory variables I include the candidate's party support, the logged fund-raising of the previous quarter, and the quality of the candidate.[17]

It is important to note that, in a time when candidates continue to cite fund-raising shortcomings as a reason for dropping out of a race, the results confirm that fund-raising is crucial to a candidate's decision to continue to compete for the nomination. Without the monetary resources re-

16. There are roughly the same number of observations per year (431 [2004], 451 [2006], 387 [2008], 618 [2010], and 562 [2012]) and by party (43% Democrat).

17. Party support and logged fund-raising are correlated at .44 and have a variance inflation factor of 1.6, well below the normally accepted value of 10 (O'Brien 2007).

quired to fund advertising, turnout operations, and other campaign functions, campaigns are ineffective and unlikely to be successful. More importantly, the results also indicate the importance of the strength of a candidate's connection to party elites. The support of party elites has a significant effect on the willingness of candidates to continue to compete for the nomination.

The large effect size of candidate quality raises a question about spurious correlation. Again, it is entirely possible that funds donated by contributors to both the candidate and the party committee and by other contributors are both motivated by a candidate's quality. This raises the obvious question: Are both nonparty and party donors picking up on the same cue of candidate quality? To test this, we can again look at instances where candidate quality is the same. Model 2 of table 2 looks at races where candidates had the same level of previous political experience as another candidate in the race and no other candidate had more experience. By looking just at these candidates, we are able to eliminate the possibility that candidate quality is driving the effects that both fund-raising and party support have on the likelihood of remaining in the race. As model 2 in table 2 shows, in instances where there is no difference in candidate quality, party support is still a significant predictor of the likelihood that a candidate remains in the race.

Figure 1 shows the likelihood of a candidate dropping out of the race in a particular quarter with different levels of connectedness while keeping the total amount of money raised constant (using model 2 from table 2). As a candidate's party support moves from having 0 party donors to 100 party donors in the previous quarter, a change of roughly two standard deviations in party support, the likelihood that a candidate drops out of the race decreases al-
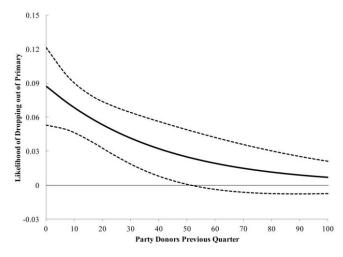

Figure 1. Likelihood of Senate candidate withdrawing from primary race

most 9% in that quarter.[18] The cumulative effect over the course of the campaign, as shown in the appendix in figure 1A, is almost 40%. When making decisions about their candidacy, candidates are influenced by not only the quantity of money raised each quarter but also the level of support they receive from party elites.

These findings are also robust to other specifications of the variable for party support. While, on average, party donors made up around 10% of a party-favored candidate's donors in every quarter, parties do not invest in all races evenly.[19] Concerned that these effects are being driven by differences in party support and fund-raising across different states and election cycles, I also calculated each candidate's fund-raising receipts and total party support as a percentage of the candidate in the primary who raised the most money and received the most party support in that quarter, consistent with past practices (Norrander 2000). Likewise, because raw counts may also cause some problems when pooling over states, I also specified models that calculated each candidate's party support as a percentage of the total party donors who gave to candidates in the primary (see tables 4A and 5A in the appendix). Regardless of the exact specification, party support influences the decision of candidates to continue to compete for the nomination.

Without securing party support, candidates recognize that they will struggle to be competitive. Parties shape the field of candidates by ignoring candidates they do not want in the primary field. Ambitious and strategic politicians pick up on these cues and use them in their decisions about whether to continue to pursue a party's nomination for a public office.

Shaping the outcome

Candidates who stay in the race fare little better. Almost 80% of party-favored candidates win contested primaries.[20] Table 3 shows the result of a logit model predicting the likelihood of a candidate's victory in Senate primaries between 2004 and 2012, controlling for the candidate's fund-raising in the primary, the quality of the candidate, and the amount of party support. In these models, I exclude

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18. This effect is even greater (upward of 13% in each quarter) if you exclude long-shot candidates who run for reasons other than to hold elected office (Boatright 2014; Canon 1993).

19. For more details on the distribution of party support, see fig. 2A in the appendix.

20. Parties are not always successful in their attempts to coordinate behind a candidate (Dominguez 2005). Party-favored candidates who lost often only held a slight advantage in party support over their opponents. Opponents of party-favored candidates who lost had on average just over twice the number of party donors as their opponents. In comparison, party-favored candidates who won had on average 10 times the number of party donors as their opponents.

Table 3. Likelihood of Winning Senate Primary

	All Candidates	Primaries with Candidates with Same Level of Experience
	Primary Win	Primary Win
Party support	.006**	.004*
	(.002)	(.002)
Logged fund-raising	.280**	.487**
	(.069)	(.152)
Candidate quality	.530*	
	(.255)	
Candidate (and opponent) quality		−1.777**
		(.364)
Constant	−4.771**	−5.697**
	(.835)	(1.746)
Observations	565	233
Pseudo R^2	.339	.295
Log likelihood	−233.30	−109.32

Note. The second equation includes only candidates in primaries where that candidate shared the distinction of having the most political experience with at least one other candidate. More simply, this model looks only at situations where there were not disparities in political experience. Logit coefficients with standard errors clustered by primary race in parentheses
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

primaries where there was only a single candidate in the race.

As before, the results show a strong relationship between the effect of campaign fund-raising and candidate success in the primary. More importantly, however, the results also confirm the importance of party elite support on a candidate's success. Likewise, again concerned about the possibility of the spurious influence of candidate quality, model 2 in table 3 examines only races where candidate quality is eliminated as a possible causal factor. These results continue to show that party-elite support significantly affects the likelihood a candidate will win the primary election.[21]

As previously, these findings are also robust to other specifications of the variable for party support. Models

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21. These results are also robust to primary spending by outside groups as measured by data available on OpenSecrets.org, most likely because outside groups are an intricate part of the party network (Koger et al. 2009; Skinner et al. 2013). Outside spending has no effect on the likelihood that a party-favored candidate wins the primary after controlling for candidate fund-raising and party support. More details on this model are available in table 8A in the appendix.
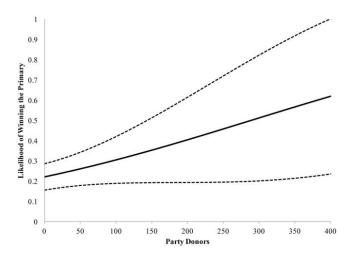
Figure 2. Likelihood of Senate candidate winning primary

using alternative specifications of fund-raising and party support detailed above show the same result (see tables 6A and 7A in the appendix). Holding candidate quality and fund-raising constant, as party support increases, candidates are more likely to win the nomination.

Figure 2 shows the influence of party support on the likelihood of winning the party's nomination (from table 3, model 2) while holding other variables at their means. As a candidate's party support increases two standard deviations, from having 0 party donors to 400 party donors, the likelihood of winning the nomination increases by 40%.

CONCLUSION

The evidence provided here shows that the primary elections are not merely the sum of a candidate's political ambitions and campaigning and fund-raising abilities. While the party cannot arbitrarily remove candidates from a primary, strategic candidates are susceptible to the persuasion of party elites. Candidates for the US Senate weigh the support they receive from the party in their decisions to continue or to conclude their campaign.

Party support matters. It provides access to competent and experienced campaign staff and financial resources essential to mounting a successful campaign. Without those resources, candidates struggle to compete and confront a more difficult pathway to victory. Recognizing that fact, candidates without party support are more likely to drop out in hopes of securing better odds in the future. Those who do compete for the nomination without the party's support are likely to fail to secure the nomination.

This evidence fundamentally alters our understanding of primaries, candidate emergence, and the roles of parties in these processes. Parties are not merely neutral players in the process. Their involvement in the process has a sig-

nificant and substantial influence on nomination outcomes and also on the choices presented to voters. Such evidence supports a wider view of parties as an extended network that is interested in ensuring the nomination of a preferred candidate.

Rather than disinterested and uncoordinated individuals who merely respond to a candidate's ambition and political abilities, party elites are actively engaged in determining the choices available to voters in primary elections. Party elites clear the field by directing their resources toward a preferred candidate and ignoring those candidates they do not want in the primary field. Aware of their political surroundings, candidates who find themselves without party support will be more likely to drop out of the primary race. Those who do not drop out generally fail to win the nomination.

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