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# *Presidential Electoral Performance as a Source of Presidential Power\**

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One of the most fertile areas of research in American politics has been that focusing on the vote in presidential elections. Most studies in this area, however, take the presidential vote as the dependent variable. This research carries the analysis further and examines the influence of the presidential vote in a congressional constituency on the support of that constituency's congressman for the President's policies. Using the techniques of causal modeling and path analysis, this article tests for both the direct influence of the presidential vote on presidential support and for its indirect influence through its effect on the party which wins the seat in a congressional district while controlling for the effects of constituency party strength. The basic finding is that presidential electoral performance does influence presidential support, particularly in Democratic presidential years.

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There are many suggested sources of presidential influence in Congress. Among these are the President's party leadership, messages to Congress, personal persuasion, status as Chief of State, "professional reputation," and prestige. This study deals with presidential electoral performance as a source of presidential influence in the House.

Although one of the most fertile areas of research in American politics has been a focus on the vote in presidential elections, most studies in this area have taken the presidential vote as their dependent variable. In this study we examine the influence of the presidential vote in a congressional constituency on the support for the President's policies of that constituency's representative in the House of Representatives.

This research is concerned with the strategic, not the tactical, level of presidential power. It examines one factor (presidential electoral performance) which may increase a president's chances to influence congressmen in general and not on just one particular issue.

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(The terms *power* and *influence* are used interchangeably throughout this article to denote the ability of the President to move congressmen to support him when they otherwise would not.)

### **Relation to Previous Research**

There have been very few empirical studies of presidential influence in Congress, and most of those focus on the party leadership of the President (Kesselman, 1961, 1965; Clausen, 1973; Cooper and Bombardier, 1968). Other sources of power, with the exception of constituency support for the President, have been largely ignored. This author has used public opinion polls on presidential popularity (based on national samples) to indicate constituency views and has related these to aggregate measures of House and Senate presidential support (Edwards, 1976, 1977). Using this type of "political" variable is more theoretically useful than using demographic variables because it helps us to understand the linkages (or lack of them) between public opinion and congressional behavior.

Unfortunately, there has not been a full constituency-by-constituency survey of public opinion about the President. Thus, the one indicator of constituency opinion about the President that can be consistently employed over several years is voting behavior in presidential elections. For several reasons, this is a good indicator for the study of the influence of the President's popular support on congressmen's presidential support. First, both public opinion and congressmen are oriented toward the same object: the President. Second, the President is a constant across all congressional districts. Third, votes in presidential elections represent, at least in part, the public's evaluation of the President. Finally, the sample of public opinion (voters) is better in presidential elections than in other elections or in other common means of individual expression of opinion because participation is generally higher.

Despite its utility, only a few studies have employed congressional district-level voting behavior in presidential elections as an independent variable to explain presidential influence in Congress (Waldman, 1967; Cummings, 1966; Weinbaum and Judd, 1970; Buck, 1972; Martin, 1976). Moreover, these studies extend over only a few years, do not include all congressmen, fail to differentiate between domestic and foreign policy presidential support, aggregate congressmen from widely varying circumstances, and/or do not use

analytical techniques which allow conclusions about the influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support.

### Basic Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of this study is that the better a President runs in a congressman's district, the more support for his policies he should receive from that congressman. Conversely, the more poorly a president runs in a congressman's district, the less support he should receive from that congressman.

Elsewhere (Edwards, 1976, pp. 104–6) I have presented two explanations for this hypothesis. The first is based on role theory. If congressmen respond to their own expectations regarding representing public opinion or the public's expectations of cooperation with the President, they should increase their support for the President as the public increases its support for him.

The second explanation is based on the incentive for reelection. In other words, if only for purposes of reelection, congressmen may desire to remain close to or independent of the President, depending on the latter's popularity as indicated by his success at the polls. This model of congressional behavior is based on several components. Congressmen must desire reelection, they must gauge and be concerned about the President's standing with the public (the lack of systematic indicators of public preferences provides the incentive for this), and they must anticipate reactions from the public to their behavior towards the President and his policies. There is substantial reason to believe all three of these components are accurate descriptions of congressional behavior. The fourth component of the incentive model, that congressmen *act* on the basis of the President's electoral performance, is the major question of this study.

Presidential electoral performance is operationalized as the percentage of the vote which the President received in each House constituency in his most recent election. This should function as a readily available and easily interpretable indicator for congressmen of the President's support in their constituencies.<sup>1</sup>

The dependent variables in this study are the *Congressional Quarterly's* Presidential Support Scores, which permit us to measure

<sup>1</sup> A second way to measure presidential electoral performance focuses on the difference between the President's percentage of the presidential vote and a congressman's percentage of the congressional vote in their most recent election.

each congressman's level of support for the President's program. We are not limited to a measure of the success of the President in passing legislation per se. This latter measure would yield only one figure per session of Congress and would mask any variability in support among individual congressmen. (For a more thorough discussion of Presidential Support Scores, see Edwards, 1976, pp. 102–3.)

The time period of this study is 1953 through 1972 (although some portions cover only 1955–1970). There are several advantages to this political era. First, it extends over a wide range of historical and political circumstances. During this period there were four Presidents—two Republicans and two Democrats. There were several recessions, a war, a strong third party movement, “landslide” and very narrow presidential elections, “active” and “passive” Presidents, divided and unified governments, and presidents from the East, South, Midwest, and West. Nevertheless, this entire period is within the post-New Deal era of positive government, the welfare state, and an internationalist foreign policy based in part upon nuclear weapons. Thus, we control for system-level factors that may fundamentally alter the relationship while examining the hypothesis in different political circumstances.

### **Indirect Path of Influence**

In addition to influencing presidential support directly, presidential electoral performance may also indirectly influence it by determining which party holds the district's seat. Since congressmen of the President's party can generally be expected to give the President more support than opposition congressmen, the influence of presidential coattails on which party wins the seat in a congressional district and

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The larger the absolute difference, the more one ran ahead of the other. The difference demonstrates the relative popularity of the two and may serve to indicate to the congressman his constituency's desires. This latter point should be true regardless of the party of the congressman and regardless of whether the figure for the congressman refers to presidential or midterm election years.

This formulation of presidential electoral performance was substituted for the percentage of the President's vote in each district in an analysis which parallels that which follows in the text. The results for both variables were similar, and therefore the findings reported here are those using the original operationalization of the variable.

the influence of the winning congressman's party affiliation on presidential support are relationships which must be examined.

To do this the party affiliation of a congressman will be operationalized as a dummy variable with "1" representing "Democrat" and "0" representing "Republican." Both the direct and indirect paths of influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support are portrayed in Figure 1.

At first glance it may not seem reasonable to look at coattail effects in the latter two years of a presidential term, but there are several reasons for examining the persistent effects of coattails. First, once they obtain office, incumbents have numerous and well-known advantages over challengers in the succeeding election. Second, some of those who voted for congressmen on the basis of the President's coattails may persist in their loyalty to them. Finally, if the President remains popular with those who voted for the congressman on the basis of the President's coattails, these voters may continue to identify the congressman with the President in the midterm election.

### **Control Variable**

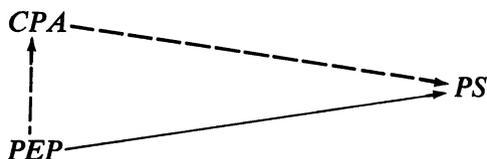
It is possible that any influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support that may appear to exist (through the direct or indirect paths) is spurious, flowing from a third variable which is related to them both. The level of support for a political party in a congressional constituency undoubtedly influences the presidential vote as well as congressional party success in that constituency.<sup>2</sup> A visual portrayal of these relationships, along with the possible paths of influence of presidential electoral performance on president support, is shown in Figure 2.

The variable of constituency party strength should be an accurate representation of party strength at the national office level and not the results of a deviant election. Its measurement should also be as current as possible to the outcomes in the most recent presidential and congressional elections. At the same time, it is important to avoid measuring constituency party strength in terms of the most recent presidential vote in the constituency, because this would lead

<sup>2</sup> It is not likely that constituency party strength would directly influence presidential support because each congressman has more recent indicators of public opinion: his own vote percentage and that of the President.

FIGURE 1

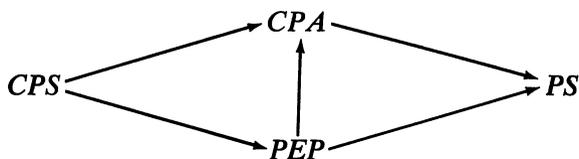
Direct and Indirect Paths of Influence of Presidential  
Electoral Performance on Presidential Support



*CPA* = Congressman's Party Affiliation  
*PEP* = Presidential Electoral Performance  
*PS* = Presidential Support  
 ————— Direct Influence  
 - - - - - Indirect Influence

FIGURE 2

Possible Relationships in the Model of the Influence of  
Presidential Electoral Performance on Presidential Support



*CPS* = Constituency Party Strength  
*CPA* = Congressman's Party Affiliation  
*PEP* = Presidential Electoral Performance  
*PS* = Presidential Support

to reciprocal causation between it and presidential electoral performance.

With these considerations in mind, constituency party strength is operationalized as the average of the Democratic percentage of the vote in the elections for three national offices (president, senator, and congressman) in each constituency. Using three components of constituency party strength allows us to triangulate its measurement, thereby including elections from different years and allowing us to average out the results of deviant elections. To avoid the problem of reciprocal causation, data are used from the presidential election *previous* to that measured in the presidential electoral performance variable.<sup>3</sup>

Two examples of the data comprising the index of constituency party strength illustrate this procedure. For the 1961 and 1962 sessions of Congress, the three components of the variable are the 1958 congressional election, the 1956 or 1958 senatorial election (whichever is most recent), and the 1956 presidential election. For the 1963 and 1964 sessions of Congress, the components are the 1960 congressional election, the 1958 or 1960 senatorial election (whichever is most recent), and the 1956 presidential election.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Special care was taken to ensure that the data used for any given district over a period of years actually represented the voting that took place in that district. Reapportionment created some problems here, particularly in the early 1950s and 1960s, because new districts were created and others had their numbers (i.e., the "first" congressional district) changed. If a district was entirely new, with no history of voting, it was eliminated from the analysis. If it was two years old, and therefore might not have had a history of presidential or senatorial voting (usually the former), the remaining voting statistics were averaged to arrive at the measure of constituency party strength. Finally, if the district changed its number, the most recent data for the district were matched with older data from the same district but with the old district number.

<sup>4</sup> In the latter two years of each presidential term the variables measuring presidential electoral performance and constituency party strength contain data from the same election (though *not* the same office). Thus, when presidents have coattails there can be an element of reciprocal causation between the presidential vote and the congressional vote. The general effect of this is to increase the strength of the estimated relationships between constituency party strength and presidential electoral performance and between constituency party strength and congressman's party affiliation. This in turn decreases the estimated relationship between presidential electoral performance and constituency party affiliation.

The question is whether including this coattail effect is likely to have a strong or a weak influence. The answer has several aspects. First, the constituency party strength variable is only partially composed of data from elections

## Data Analysis

The first step in the data analysis is to calculate the influence of constituency party strength (CPS) on presidential electoral performance (PEP) through the use of equation (1).<sup>5</sup>

$$PEP = b^* CPS + e \quad (1)$$

The second step is to estimate the influence of presidential electoral performance and constituency party strength on congressman's party affiliation (CPA) through the use of equation (2).

$$CPA = b_1^* CPS + b_2^* PEP + e \quad (2)$$

The results of both equations are shown in Table 1.<sup>6</sup> To maintain

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which took place simultaneously with the presidential election measured in the presidential electoral performance variable. Second, presidential coattails are only a small part of the explanation for the vote of congressmen or senators. Third, because we have one coefficient estimating both aspects of the relationships between constituency party strength and presidential electoral performance, the bias of presidential coattails reflected in the estimated coefficient will be less than the full impact of whatever reciprocal causation exists. Fourth, the type of coattail effect measured in constituency party affiliation (seats) is different than the type of coattail effect measured in constituency party strength (votes) and the two relationships are different enough that controlling for one is not equivalent to controlling for the other. Therefore, the estimated relationship between presidential electoral performance and constituency party affiliation is unlikely to be significantly decreased. Finally, it should also be remembered that whatever bias does occur works against the hypothesis of presidential electoral performance influencing presidential support by decreasing the strength of part of its path of indirect influence (through congressman's party affiliation).

<sup>5</sup> All of the figures which appear in the following tables and are discussed in the text are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights). Using them allows us to assess the relative impacts of two or more variables on another variable and to take advantage of the technique of path analysis. The beta coefficients are symbolized as  $b^*$  in the equation which follows.

<sup>6</sup> As discussed earlier, the variables of constituency party strength and congressman's party affiliation have been operationalized as percentage Democratic and "1" for "Democrat" and "0" for "Republican," respectively. Thus, in Republican presidential years the relationships between these variables and presidential electoral performance and between congressman's party affiliation and presidential support are generally negative. This has no special significance as the negative direction of the relationships is a result of scoring Democratic districts or Democratic congressmen "higher" than their Republican counterparts. It is only when the beta coefficients are positive that the relationships are in a direction other than that which is expected under Republican presidents.

TABLE 1

Estimated Impact of Constituency Party Strength on Presidential Electoral Performance and Congressman's Party Affiliation and of Presidential Electoral Performance on Congressman's Party Affiliation

Years	N	Standardized Regression Coefficients of:		
		<i>PEP</i> on <i>CPS</i>	<i>CPA</i> on <i>CPS</i>	<i>CPA</i> on <i>PEP</i>
1953-54	410	-.72	.53	-.32
1955-56	429	-.72	.41	-.41
1957-58	413	-.79	.59	-.19
1959-60	420	-.84	.52	-.13
1961-62	420	.56	.63	.17
1963-64	390	.50	.45	.29
1965-66	415	.11	.53	.17
1967-68	411	.26	.63	.04
1969-70	398	-.69	.61	-.16
1971-72	419	-.74	.64	-.08

*CPS* = Constituency Party Strength

*PEP* = Presidential Electoral Performance

*CPA* = Congressman's Party Affiliation

focus, we shall defer discussion of this and the following table until the next section.

The last steps in testing the relationships predicted in the model involve estimating the influence of congressman's party affiliation and presidential electoral performance on each of the three measures of presidential support (*PS*) by the use of equation (3).

$$PS = b_1 * CPA + b_2 * PEP + e \quad (3)$$

The results are presented in Table 2.

The final phase of the analysis entails calculating the combined direct and indirect influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support, using path analysis. The direct influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support is added

TABLE 2

Estimated Direct Influence of Congressman's Party Affiliation and  
 Presidential Electoral Performance on Presidential Support

Year	Standardized Regression Coefficients of:					
	<i>OPS</i> on <i>CPA</i>	<i>OPS</i> on <i>PEP</i>	<i>DPS</i> on <i>CPA</i>	<i>DPS</i> on <i>PEP</i>	<i>FPS</i> on <i>CPA</i>	<i>FPS</i> on <i>PEP</i>
1953	-.67	.02	+	+	+	+
1954	-.65	.11	+	+	+	+
1955	-.20	.07	-.55	.08	.33	-.02
1956	-.56	.11	-.58	.15	.01	-.12
1957	-.04	.14	.04	.10	-.17	.17
1958	.02	.19	-.06	.18	.24	.13
1959	-.67	.23	-.79	.15	.32	.27
1960	-.38	.17	-.56	.15	.02	.14
1961	.62	.18	.69	.18	.28	.17
1962	.49	.29	.54	.26	.37	.26
1963	.69	.18	.70	.18	.63	.16
1964	.59	.22	.55	.25	.61	.15
1965	.57	.43	.58	.42	.53	.42
1966	.45	.46	.47	.44	.37	.47
1967	.54	.41	.55	.40	.46	.40
1968	.31	.45	.31	.42	.25	.46
1969	-.32	.17	-.44	.14	.32	.16
1970	-.37	.21	-.43	.19	.13	.27
1971	-.61	.02	+	+	+	+
1972	-.36	.10	+	+	+	+

+Domestic and Foreign Policy Support Scores not available for  
 1953-54 and 1971-72.

*CPA* = Congressman's Party Affiliation

*OPS* = Overall Policy Support

*PEP* = Presidential Electoral Performance

*DPS* = Domestic Policy Support

*FPS* = Foreign Policy Support

to its indirect influence. The indirect influence travels along the path from presidential electoral performance through congressman's party affiliation to presidential support and is the product of the two relationships composing the path.

TABLE 3  
Combined Direct and Indirect Influence of Presidential  
Electoral Performance on Presidential Support

Year	Overall Policy Support	Domestic Policy Support	Foreign Policy Support
1953	.23*	+	+
1954	.32	+	+
1955	.15	.31	-.16
1956	.34	.39	-.12
1957	.15	.09	.20
1958	.19	.19	.08
1959	.32	.25	.23
1960	.22	.22	.14
1961	.29	.30	.22
1962	.37	.35	.32
1963	.38	.38	.34
1964	.39	.41	.33
1965	.53	.52	.51
1966	.54	.52	.53
1967	.43	.42	.42
1968	.46	.43	.47
1969	.22	.21	.11
1970	.27	.26	.25
1971	.07	+	+
1972	.13	+	+

\*Standardized Regression Coefficients

+ Domestic and Foreign Policy Support Scores not available for 1953-54 and 1971-72.

## Results

The results of these calculations are shown in Table 3, and we can see that they generally support the hypothesis that presidential electoral performance has a significant influence on presidential support. This is particularly true in each of the eight Democratic presidential years. As Table 4 shows, the median beta coefficients for overall, domestic, and foreign policy support are .41, .42, and .38, respectively. Not only is the strength of the influence of presidential electoral performance consistent between measures of presidential support, but it is also consistent over time as indicated by the modest size of the average deviations of the coefficients (also shown in Table 4).

The pattern for Republican presidential years is more mixed. The figures in Table 3 are considerably lower in these years than in the 1961–68 period for all three measures of presidential support. The summary figures in Table 4 indicate that the influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support was about half as great in Republican presidential years as in Democratic presidential years. In some years there appears to have been almost no influence at all. Moreover, in 1955 and 1956 the coefficients are negative for foreign policy support.

There are several possible reasons for the variability in the coefficients between administrations of the two parties. One might argue that Republicans tend to be less responsive to public opinion or less

TABLE 4

Median and Average Deviation of Beta Coefficients for  
Democratic and Republican Presidential Years

	Democratic Presidential Years		Republican Presidential Years	
	Median	Average Deviation	Median	Average Deviation
Overall Policy	.41	.07	.22	.07
Domestic Policy	.42	.06	.24	.06
Foreign Policy	.38	.09	.13	.11

responsive to general public opinion than Democrats (see, for example, Edwards, 1976, 1977; Converse, Clausen, and Miller, 1965; McClosky, Hoffman, and O'Hara, 1960; Shaffer, Weber, and Montjoy, 1973), and that the coefficients are higher in Democratic presidential years because there are more Democratic congressmen in these years. However, there actually were more Democrats in the House in 1959–60 under President Eisenhower than in 1961–64 under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and the coefficients are higher in the latter period.

Another possibility is that the coattail effect was stronger for Democratic presidents, and this in turn helped provide a stronger indirect influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support for them. Yet an examination of the last column in Table 1 shows that this is not so. Looking at the other half of the indirect path of influence, that between congressman's party affiliation and presidential support, we find that although the relationships, as shown in Table 2, are sometimes lower in Republican presidential years, this is not consistently the case. Moreover, the indirect path of influence usually represents only a minor portion of the total influence.

The answer is probably a combination of two factors. First, Democrats in Congress in each of the years under study here represented the majority party in the electorate. Thus, they may have felt more freedom than their Republican colleagues to oppose a president of the opposite party, reasoning that there was a favorable party bias in the electorate which helped to insulate them from more specific elements of public opinion. This makes considerable sense, given the important role of voter party identification in voting for congressmen (Arseneau and Wolfinger, 1973; Hinckley, Hofstetter, and Kessel, 1974; Hinckley, 1976).

At the same time, presidential support in the electorate should have a greater impact on congressmen when a Democratic president is proposing liberal programs. In this case the influences of ideology, party, and presidential electoral performance flow in the same direction for most Democratic congressmen (who were always a majority in the two Democratic administrations). In addition, the influences of ideology and presidential electoral performance flow in the same direction for liberal Republican congressmen (in whose districts the President probably ran well). Conversely, when there is a Republican president proposing more conservative programs, the influences of ideology, party, and presidential electoral performance overlap only

for conservative Republican congressmen (always a minority in the years under study here).

This helps to explain the very high coefficients in Table 2 for the relationships between presidential electoral performance and presidential support for the period of 1965–1968. Lyndon Johnson ran very well in the congressional districts electing liberal Democrats and Republicans, congressmen disposed to support his Great Society legislation on the basis of party and ideology (Democrats) or just ideology (Republicans). He ran unusually poorly for a Democrat in the South, particularly the Deep South, which also elected congressmen of generally conservative ideologies, those most disposed to oppose his policies. Thus, Johnson ran well where it would do the most good, i.e., in districts in which his visible popularity with the voters reinforced congressional predispositions to support his programs.

Aside from the variations among administrations, there is also variation in the size of the coefficients in Table 3 within the terms of presidents. A number of seemingly plausible hypotheses exist that may explain this variance.

First, the psychological impact of a landslide election on congressmen may sharpen or strengthen the relationship between presidential electoral performance and presidential support. To test this possibility, we can look at the 1956 and 1964 presidential elections as examples of landslides and compare the size of the coefficients in the years following the elections with those of the years preceding them and with those following more closely contested elections. The coefficients for 1965–66 are the highest as a group of any of the figures in Table 3, and this is true for all three measures of presidential support. Thus, they exceed in size those for 1964 (preceding the election) and for 1961–62 (following a close Democratic victory). Turning to the 1956 presidential election, the coefficients for 1957–58 are not higher than those of 1956, 1953–54, or 1969–70. In sum, the findings are too mixed to verify the hypothesis regarding the psychological impact of landslide presidential elections.

A second possible explanation for the variability in the influence of presidential electoral performance on presidential support is that the impact of a president's electoral performance is greatest in the year or years immediately following his election, but other factors intervene to obscure his electoral success after that time. Looking again at Table 3, we find that the coefficients are higher only in the years immediately following presidential elections for the full Johnson

term and the Nixon term, only two of the five presidential terms under study here. Thus, "nearness of election" does not appear to be a useful explanatory factor for the variance in the coefficients either.

A third potential explanation is that congressmen of the President's party are most sensitive to his electoral success. Therefore, the larger the number of members of the President's party in the House, the higher the coefficients shown in Table 3 should be. Since the 1958, 1964, and 1966 elections are those among the ten congressional elections studied here that resulted in the largest party turnover in the House, an examination of the coefficients before and after these elections should provide a reasonable test of this hypothesis.

Regarding the Republican losses in the 1958 congressional election, the coefficients are actually lower before than after the election. On the other hand, the coefficients rise after the Democratic gains in the 1964 election and decrease after the Democratic losses in the 1966 election. Thus, this hypothesis receives mixed support. It is limited in applicability, however, to years in which there is substantial party turnover in the House because there is variance in the coefficients among years in which there was very little difference in the party composition of the House (i.e., 1955–58, 1961–64, 1969–72). Nevertheless, it is consistent with the argument made earlier about the overlapping of influences on congressional voting.

A hypothesis of very limited applicability is that presidents near the end of their tenures are "lame ducks," and, therefore, congressmen perceive presidential electoral performance as no longer relevant to their decision making. There are only two examples of "lame-duck" presidents in this study—Eisenhower and Johnson. The coefficients in Eisenhower's second term or his last year in office are not unrepresentative of his tenure as a whole, while Johnson's 1968 figures are higher than those for 1967, when no one knew he would not seek reelection. Therefore, the "lame-duck" hypothesis does not seem to be very useful.

Overall, the proposed hypotheses have not had great success in explaining the variance in the impact of presidential electoral performance on presidential support within Democratic and Republican presidential years. It appears that nonsystematic factors are responsible for this variance. These could include everything from changes in presidential skills in using their popularity to gain support from congressmen, to changes in their desire to do so, to changes in broader environmental factors.

## The Findings in Perspective

The major conclusions are that presidential electoral performance has a significant impact on overall, domestic, and foreign policy support and that this impact is greatest under Democratic presidents.

The first consequence of these findings is that presidential candidates, particularly Democrats, have an incentive to win office by as large a margin as possible, since high vote percentages in congressional districts provide them with future policy support. Conversely, the supporters of a candidate who appears certain to lose, such as George McGovern in 1972, have an incentive to keep campaigning in order to keep the opposition candidate's percentage as low as possible.

In integrating these findings into larger theories of congressional voting, it appears that presidential electoral performance must be added to the list of variables useful in explaining roll-call behavior. Moreover, it is a more purely "political" variable than many of those which have served to indicate public opinion, such as the demographic characteristics of constituencies, states, and regions. Thus, it has greater value in explaining linkages between citizens and their elected representatives.

Finally, this research provides evidence that presidential elections do make a difference. That is, they not only are important in determining who will hold the office of the Presidency, but they are also important in influencing the President's chances of having his policy proposals enacted into law. Thus, presidential elections provide a vehicle through which the public can express its general views to congressmen and can have an effect on congressional behavior without having detailed views on specific policies.

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