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A recent increase in the number of states sending mixed delegations to the U.S. Senate, i.e., having one senator of each political party, has led scholars to ask why essentially stable electorates produce different partisan outcomes. We contend that the existing arguments do not, and cannot, adequately explain this phenomenon. The failure of these earlier attempts is the direct result of a misinterpretation of the choices faced by voters in sequential elections. The existence of mixed Senate delegations is not all that extraordinary in an era of candidate-centered, rather than party-centered, campaigns. In short, sequential, binary decisions are not equivalent, and mixed delegations are perfectly consistent with general expectations of voting behavior and electoral politics. A model consisting of election-specific variables is used to predict transitions to and from mixed delegations, and to directly test, and reject, the primary existing explanation.

Each Congress since 1972 has had 21 or more Senate delegations with one member from each party, and in the Ninety-sixth Congress the number peaked at 27. We believe that this increasingly common phenomenon depicted in figure 1 is consistent with Jacobson’s (1990) observation of “a pattern of electoral disintegration” (7). He and others (Alesina and Rosenthal 1991; Cox and Kernell 1991; Fiorina 1992) have accumulated an impressive body of evidence that the electorate is increasingly likely to abandon partisan loyalties, express inconsistent preferences, and divide their votes.

The Senate problem, as it has been conceptualized, is distinct from the more general question of divided government in two important ways. First, except in the rarest of instances, delegations are elected sequentially. When explaining divided government, we examine a single pool of voters making multiple, and inconsistent, decisions on the same day. This simultaneity creates an information deficit that can, at least in part, account for apparently inconsistent behavior. The election of a

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Sequential Choices and Partisan Transitions

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF MIXED DELEGATIONS: 1948–1988

Senate delegation, however, occurs in two iterations. Voters have information regarding the outcome of the other race including the party preference and behavior of the other senator—information that they lack when multiple elections are held simultaneously, where all results are uncertain.

Second, explanations that focus on the variance in the popular demands associated with particular institutions are not helpful in explaining transitions. Jacobson’s (1990) observations regarding how expectations of the citizenry differ from the House to the presidency can account for behavioral variance in voting decisions across branches. But sequential decisions pertaining to Senate elections are, on this issue, essentially the same—institutional expectations, therefore, should not vary.

The divided Senate delegation, then, results from inconsistent decisions made by better informed voters under identical institutional circumstances.1 An answer, then,

1One possibility is that demographic changes in the electorate are driving transitions. If so, we should observe more frequent transitions to mixed delegations after four-year intervals rather than two—
may provide important insights into the causes of divided government. We argue that existing explanations of this phenomenon based on voter characteristics are unsound and result from incorrect assumptions. We offer an alternative model that predicts transitions to and from mixed delegations that is built strictly upon the political characteristics of each race. Our results lend strong support to Jacobson’s (1990) explanation of electoral disintegration under more constrained circumstances.

**Existing Approaches**

*Strategic Citizen.* The first approach, which we call the strategic citizen model, has been proposed by a number of scholars (Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal 1991; Fiorina 1992). The strategic citizen model begins with the recognition that Senate elections are a serial process. There is a sitting senator who is not facing the voters at the time of the election. A critical number of citizens, it is argued, recognize that representation in the Senate is accomplished through two delegates rather than one. Rather than being concerned, then, about the ideological tenor or partisanship of each senator, voters “may very well care about the total representation of their state in the Senate” (Fiorina 1992, 83) and seek a delegation that, as a whole, approaches a moderate ideological ideal point.

As in figure 2, if the sitting senator lies to one side of the ideal point, the strategic citizen will vote for the current candidate who is closest to being as far from the mid-point as the sitting senator, but on the opposite side. Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal (1991, 9) call this tendency the “opposite party advantage,” since, in all but the rarest instances, that candidate best able to “balance” the sitting senator is from the opposing party. The idea is that the resulting delegation’s ideological mix will approximate that of the strategic citizen.

This model is built upon three assumptions: (1) the median voter’s ideal point lies between the sitting senator’s and the candidate’s of the opposite party; (2) the candidate from the opposite party is farther from the sitting senator than the candidate from the senator’s own party; and (3) the state ideological distribution is more or less normal. If any of these three assumptions are violated, the finding of an “opposite party advantage” is likely wrong. In fact, this error amounts to little more than a failure to conceptually distinguish the national partisan dichotomy from the ideological continuum within a state.

Empirical support for this “advantage” is weak at best (Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal 1991), having a significant effect only for incumbents and only in

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allowing for more change—and subsequent “corrections” to unified delegations after two years, reflecting enduring population changes. Of the 165 valid transitions between 1948 and 1988, 91 took place two years or less since the electorate last exhibited a senatorial preference for the opposite party, while only 74 took place after the longer interval of four years. That transitions are more likely to occur after only two years (or less) suggests that demographic changes and their political implications are not driving the creation of mixed delegations.

2 From this point, the term *sitting senator* will always refer to the member of the Senate not running in the current election. For members participating in the election in question, the term will be incumbent.
FIGURE 2
STRATEGIC CITIZEN MODEL'S DISTRIBUTIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

DC—Democratic Candidate Ideological Placement
RC—Republican Candidate Ideological Placement
M—Population Mean Ideological Ideal Point
RS—Republican Sitting Senator Ideological Placement

presidential election years.\textsuperscript{3} But more importantly, to the extent that this “opposite party advantage” exists, it is more a description of an aggregate-level empirical regularity than an \textit{ex ante} factor that contributes to the individual votes which are collectively producing these outcomes. While Fiorina (1992) later stipulates to the “as if” character of this model, such a stipulation is insufficient when drawing inferences about individual behavior based on collective, occasional, regularities. In short, the data and analysis employed in existing research does not provide a plausible nexus between the political dynamics described and the individual behavior necessary to produce these outcomes.

The most serious objection offered to the strategic citizen model is the portrait it paints of the American voter. The strategic behavior described requires: (1) that a crucial segment of the electorate possesses a large amount of information concerning the ideological tendencies of the sitting senator, both candidates (including any incumbent), and their own preferences; (2) that citizens can accurately evaluate this information and calculate which of the available choices would produce the ideological outcome most desired; and (3) that citizens act on these evaluations by voting for a candidate further from their own position in hopes of achieving a

\textsuperscript{3}This finding is not surprising and might well be an artifact of the political trends in the executive branch. In 1965, Democrats held 26 unified delegations and shared in 16 mixed delegations, while in 1985 they held only 12 unified delegations and shared in 23 mixed delegations. Over the same interval, Republicans won 4 of the 5 intervening presidential elections. We fully expect, then, that in presidential election years when incumbents are running, a disproportionate number of losers (or less than impressive winners) were Democrats running in states where a Democrat held the other seat.
long-run strategic outcome. This model predicts a significant number of citizens voting for both the sitting senator and his or her ideological opposite.

We argue two points in response to this portrait of the strategic voter. First, the model actually *underestimates* the demands made on the citizenry because it assumes that citizens are interested in the ideological cast of their Senate delegations but not in public policy outcomes. It is more reasonable to believe that policy is the central concern of informed citizens. When attempting to cast optimal votes, the strategic citizen is concerned about producing a policy-making apparatus that will, in turn, produce outcomes closest to his or her ideal point. A state delegation that mirrors one's ideological preference is of little comfort to the informed voter when that delegation is part of a larger political structure that consistently produces policy in conflict with that preference.

Fiorina (1992) recognized this point when developing his explanation for divided government. His "model of policy balancing" (Fiorina 80) is premised on the notion that citizens are outcome-driven, and they recognize the input of both elected branches to those outcomes. Curiously, Fiorina and his colleagues opt to exclude both the outcome orientation and the role of the other elected branches in the process from their model of Senate delegations.

To assume that citizens are outcome-focused, rather than concerned only with the ideological bent of their state’s delegation, makes the strategic voting model considerably more complex. In addition to balancing the influence of the state’s other senator, this highly sophisticated voter would have to evaluate other political actors: the likely ideological complexion of the House of Representatives, the occupant of the White House, and the remaining members of the Senate. However, these evaluations occur in an information-poor environment since the determination of the entire House, one third of the Senate, and occasionally the president, is simultaneous. As seen in figure 3, a moderate voter would be well advised to vote for GOP Senate candidates in both elections if that voter anticipates a heavily Democratic House, Senate, and a Democratic president. In short, when we shift our focus from the individual state’s Senate delegation to policy outcomes, the strategic citizen model of ideological balancing requires substantially greater information and evaluative skills from voters.

Though this work sees voters as interested in "a balanced executive-legislative package" (Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal 1991, 29) a policy-outcome focus is

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4 Alvarez and Schousen (1993) find little empirical support for the policy-balancing explanation of divided government.

5 Like Fiorina, his colleagues have demonstrated concern for outcome focus and the role of all elected branches in their determination, though again this was brought to bear on the general divided government question and not the specific problem of Senate delegations. See Alesina and Rosenthal (1991).

6 It is important to point out that a shift in emphasis to policy outcomes yields expectations that are fully consistent with the existence of mixed delegations. Single-issue voting is, we have argued, more likely than the complex ideological calculations proposed. Since issues vary in saliency over time, and issue majorities are seldom congruent, we should fully expect that sequential issue-oriented elections would yield politically inconsistent outcomes.
FIGURE 3

DISTRIBUTIONAL ASSUMPTIONS, ENHANCED EXPECTATIONS, AND POTENTIAL OUTCOME DISTORTIONS IN THE STRATEGIC CITIZEN MODEL

DC—Democratic Candidate Ideological Placement
RC—Republican Candidate Ideological Placement
M—Population Mean Ideological Ideal Point
RS—Republican Sitting Senator Ideological Placement
HR—House of Representatives' Anticipated Mean Ideological Placement
P—President's Anticipated (or estimated) Ideological Placement
S—Senate's Anticipated Mean Ideological Placement

considered only in a simple test to see if the partisan composition of the entire Senate is significantly related to the aggregate results (it is not). The presidency is addressed only in a midterm dummy variable, and the House is ignored altogether.

Our second point is that the model’s expectations of the electorate do not fit well with what we know about the abilities and behavior of the American voter (e.g., Converse 1964 among numerous others). Moreover, when our objections concerning the need for an outcome focus are taken into consideration, further raising the cognitive and informational demands on the voters in question, the model becomes even more implausible.

Two Constituencies. The second general explanation is commonly known as the two constituencies thesis (Fiorina 1974; Bullock and Brady 1983; Shapiro, Brady, Brody, and Ferejohn 1990). Essentially, this argument assumes that each senator is elected by different coalitions of voters, and it is to these specific coalitions that the senator responds when making policy decisions. The assumption, of course, is that each party enjoys about the same general strength in the populace, again more or less normally distributed. Each senator modifies his positions only slightly, falling generally between the ideal points for their coalition and the median voter position. This slight shift allows the senator to maintain his or her party’s base of support,
and simultaneously to appeal to that small margin of voters around the state mean to provide the necessary margin of victory.

Unlike the strategic citizen model, this approach makes no unrealistic assumptions about the level of information or cognitive abilities of voters. Also, this model anticipates only a small margin of nonideological switchers, rather than the significant oscillation of sophisticated voters implied by the strategic citizen model.

The two constituencies thesis offers an explanation of electoral instability built upon the existence of two capable and competitive coalitions. However, it does not specifically provide a model of electoral outcomes. We expect that the candidates of both the sitting senator's party and the opposite party will adopt positions intended to maintain party support and to appeal to the median voter. Absent the advantages of incumbency, there is no reason to assume that the candidate of the opposite party is any more likely to win median voters than the candidate of the sitting senator's party. This model, therefore, can explain neither transitions to and from mixed delegations, nor when—under these electoral conditions—mixed delegations will exist.

We offer an explanation of transitions that is not reliant upon, but is consistent with, a two-constituencies portrait of the electorate.

**Rethinking the Problem**

The two-constituencies thesis and the strategic-voter thesis are attempts to explain apparently inconsistent choices made under identical circumstances. Of course, institutionally driven expectations of senators should not vary, and, ceteris paribus, voters should behave consistently in electing two people to the same office.

Sequential choices in Senate elections are not, however, identical. In fact, given the increasing disintegration of electoral politics, sequential Senate elections are increasingly related. The political characteristics of each race are important and may vary widely across elections. While voters' policy preferences, expectations of senators, and partisanship may not change appreciably, the binary choice—the candidates themselves, their campaigns, and the surrounding political landscape—change dramatically. In an era of declining partisanship and candidate-centered campaigns, these changes are of critical importance to voters. Transitions to and from mixed delegations, we argue, result directly from the impact of these characteristics.

In short, we believe that the emergence and disappearance of mixed delegations can be explained by specific political circumstances, are neither extraordinary nor unpredictable, and are not the result of unrealistically sophisticated behavior.

**Political Factors Facilitating Transitions**

Using all regularly scheduled Senate elections from 1972 to 1988, and building on the work of Abramowitz, Jacobson, Squire, and others, we offer a model built on

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7One election, the 1976 Virginia election, is excluded due to the presence of an incumbent that was not a member of either major party. The election is not a transition. This reduces the n to 299 and has no appreciable effect on the results.
long-identified political factors including four candidate-centered variables—candidate quality, short-term shocks, primary election results, and campaign expenditures—and two contextual variables—political competitiveness within the state electorate and the electoral cycle.

Candidate Quality. Jacobson (1990) argues that the quality of the challenger, his or her political experience, affects the outcome of any given House election. Modest evidence exists for a similar effect of challenger quality on Senate outcomes (Abramowitz 1988) and in voter information levels and evaluations in Senate elections (Squire 1992). We expect, then, that differences in the quality of candidates should be pivotal in predicting a transition. We argue that the presence of a highly qualified challenger may be sufficient to provide a victory margin to the candidate of a party with little history of success in seeking a given seat.

Using a modified version of Squire’s (1988) coding for previous political experience as a measure of quality, we test for the impact of candidate quality differences on the likelihood that an election will produce a transition in the partisan composition of a Senate delegation.8 The relative quality measure is the difference between the incumbent’s score (or incumbent party candidate’s score when the seat is open) and the challenger’s political experience score. The larger this difference, the smaller the chance that the election will result in a transition. By incorporating incumbents into this scheme, we also account for the differences that may occur due to the absence of an incumbent in open-seat elections.9

Short-Term Shocks. The impact of political controversy, scandal, and reported health problems on the electoral fortunes of the incumbent party is well documented (Abramowitz 1988). For example, a confession of alcoholism by Herman Talmadge in the 1980 Georgia race and Roger Jepsen’s membership in a “health spa” which was later closed for prostitution before the 1984 Iowa contest were likely instrumental in their defeats. For this reason, a dichotomous measure of short-term factors affecting the quality of the incumbent party candidate, coded

8Squire’s scheme is: Governor=6; House Member=5; State Official=4; State Legislator=3; Local Office Holder=2; Other Political Position=1; no experience=0. Three changes were made. First, we chose to eliminate the weighting system Squire uses to assess the value of running for Senate as an incumbent officeholder with an existing constituency that is part of the new constituency. The resulting weights can give an enhanced, and we feel inappropriate, value to state offices such as treasurer or insurance commissioner over incumbent House members. Second, we attempt to account for public personalities seeking elective office since the name recognition associated with their public personas should be figured into the measure of quality. Likewise, people less familiar to the electorate but well experienced in electoral politics present a difficulty. We have chosen to code the astronauts, the notorious college president, and the author in the data, as well as former governors and senators from neighboring states, as threes, trying to account for unusually high name recognition in the first four instances and the high degree of political experience in the latter two. Likewise, a former presidential adviser and U.N. ambassador was also coded as a three.

Finally, since our ultimate measure is comparative, we include incumbents and code them as sevens.

9Information on the political experience of each candidate, as well as scandals and controversies besetting incumbent party candidates, was obtained from the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report election roundup for each year.
one for the presence of political problems, controversies, or health issues and zero in their absence, has been included and should be a positive predictor of transitions. Information regarding the presence of these factors—disastrous campaigns for president, indictments, allegations of improprieties, etc.—was obtained from the Congressional Quarterly's preelection roundups which include descriptions and details of each race.

Primaries. A transition in the partisan control of a Senate seat should be more likely if the incumbent party is divided in its selection of a candidate. Divisive and hotly contested primary contests are apt to reveal candidate or incumbent weaknesses, highlight issues likely to splinter the incumbent party's coalition, and drive down the eventual turnout among the incumbent party's voters during the general election (Abramowitz 1988; Kenney and Rice 1984). For this reason, the percent of the primary vote received by the incumbent party's nominee is included as a predictor of transitions, with the likelihood of transition increasing as the primary percentage for the incumbent (or incumbent party nominee) decreases.10

Candidate Finances. The impact of money on congressional elections is well documented (e.g., Fenno 1982; Sorauf 1988; Jacobson 1980, 1990, 1992). A better financed challenger presents a more formidable obstacle to the reelection of any incumbent, and likewise should present the best opportunity for a transition in the partisan composition of a state's Senate delegation.

For each Senate election from 1972–1988, we recorded the total funds dispersed by each major party candidate who reached the general election, as reported to the Federal Elections Commission. As the ratio of challenger spending to incumbent spending (or spending by the incumbent party's candidate) increases, we expect that the likelihood of a transition to or from a mixed delegation will also increase.11

Political Competitiveness. Significant attention has been given to the political heterogeneity or homogeneity of states as an important factor contributing to national electoral outcomes (Bullock and Brady 1983). This concept is at the heart of the two constituencies explanation. We use the absolute difference between the percentages of a state's congressional delegation held by each party as a measure of its political competitiveness. The measure can take on a value from zero—meaning that each party holds the same number of seats in the state's House delegation—to one hundred—indicating a

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10In the absence of a primary, either due to the lack of an opponent or a caucus/convention system of nominee selection, the incumbent party nominee is coded to have received 100% of the vote. While this approach glosses over the possibility of continuing division within the party, it is likely that the deleterious effects of such low salience division are largely mitigated in the absence of direct primary elections.

11This calculation was helpful in that it implicitly controlled for state size, whereas a linear combination of the two spending totals would have been problematic. The downside was the loss of two additional observations. In the 1976 Senate race in Wisconsin, Proxmire spent only $697 as compared to his opponent's $62,210, producing a ratio that was enormous. In 1982, he spent nothing (at least as reported to the FEC), even while his opponent spent almost $120 thousand, making the value of the finance ratio undefined. This lowers the valid n to 297.
low degree of competition, as evidenced by the complete control of that delegation by one party.

To estimate the relationship between the competitiveness in the state electorate and the likelihood of transitions, we need to control for the composition of the existing Senate delegation. Domination of the state by a single party should be directly related to the likelihood of a transition if the challenger is of the state’s majority party, and inversely related if the challenger is of the state’s minority party. For this reason, we recoded the variable, multiplying by −1 when the challenger is from the politically disadvantaged party. This produces a political competitiveness variable that varies between −100 and +100. Negative values indicate that the challenger belongs to a party that captures only a minority of House seats and is therefore less likely to win and produce a transition; the converse is true for positive values. A value of 0 indicates that the parties show approximately equal strength in House elections. This variable should be positively related to the probability of a transition, regardless of the electoral circumstances.

Electoral Cycle. For whatever reason, the presidential/mid-term election cycle is well recognized as a significant predictor of any party’s chances in a general congressional election (Campbell 1960; Kernell 1977; Jacobson and Kernell 1981; and Abramowitz 1988). This cycle, therefore, should help explain transitions to and from mixed delegations. The winning presidential candidate should help his or her party win more votes for senator than the party might otherwise expect, and cost copartisans votes during the mid-term election. In an electorally competitive state, those boosts and hindrances might account for enough variance in the vote to produce a transition in the composition of the state’s Senate delegation.

In the model presented below, electoral cycle is a dichotomous variable coded as follows: presidential election year when challenger party’s presidential nominee wins−1; presidential election year when challenger party’s presidential nominee loses−0; midterm election year when the challenger’s party is in opposition−1; midterm election year when challenger’s party controls the White House−0. Electoral cycle should be a positive predictor of transitions since it takes on the value of one when the outparty is advantaged by the electoral cycle.

Testing and Results

We estimate two models—a model of transitions in general and one that considers the partisan composition of the delegation before the election—thereby specifically testing the strategic citizen model. The dependent variable is a dummy variable coded 1 when an election leads to a partisan change in the composition of the delegation to mixed or unified (indicating a defeat for the incumbent party)

12Certainly other measures of party competition are available. This particular measure captured our interest in each party’s ability to win elections to Congress within each state. Though small states are prone to extreme values, there is sufficient variance in the dependent variable—even at these extreme values—that no distortion results. Analysis of the residuals also yields no evidence of heteroscedasticity.
and 0 when the election has no effect on the partisanship of the delegation.\textsuperscript{13} The resulting number of cases, from 1972 to 1988, is 297 elections.

Predicting Transitions

We test the impact of six variables,\textsuperscript{14} candidate-centered and contextual, using logit analysis. The unit of analysis is the individual regularly scheduled Senate contest.\textsuperscript{15} Table 1 presents the results for the model.

\textsuperscript{13} There is one case, Minnesota in 1978, where the election results in the seat changing hands but, due to a simultaneous change in the other seat via a special election, the delegation's status as unified remains unchanged. Though here the electorate chose two senators of the same party, this case is still coded as a transition since a seat changes hands. Coding it as a nontransition or eliminating the case altogether do not fundamentally alter the substantive interpretation of the findings.

\textsuperscript{14} One variable noticeably missing from the model is whether or not the incumbent is a candidate for reelection. Transitions are approximately twice as likely in open-seat elections when we control for the relative frequency of each type of election.

We considered including this variable in the model but did not for both conceptual and methodological reasons. Since quality is measured as the difference between candidates, and incumbency is part of this measure, inclusion of a second variable measuring essentially the same thing would be redundant—likely resulting in multicollinearity problems. Also, its inclusion contaminates the results for other candidate-centered variables. The reason is simple: as borne out in a one-way analysis of variance, the mean quality difference is more than three times larger in elections contested by incumbents. Similarly, in races in which there was no incumbent, the ratio of challenger spending to incumbent party spending was more than twice that of races in which there was an incumbent.

Including open seats and challenger quality, instead of our comparative quality measure, has no significant impact on the predictive power of the model nor the significance of any of the remaining predictors.

\textsuperscript{15} With the exceptions previously noted.
The results of the logit routine are highly consistent with our expectations and the model goodness-of-fit tests easily meet the criterion for significance. The percent of transitions correctly predicted is 84.2 with the model performing somewhat better at predicting failures than successes, as expected given the inherently large stochastic term associated with these outcomes. The results support our contention that political variables, both candidate-centered and contextual, can help explain transitions without resorting to sophisticated voter models.

Candidate-centered variables are central to our explanation and are significant predictors of the probability of transitions. The variable Candidate Finances, critical to the candidate-centered age of politics, is highly significant beyond the .001 level. The sign of the coefficient is positive which suggests that as the ratio of spending increases between challenger and incumbent, the probability of a transition is more likely. In most of the cases in which transitions did not occur, the ratio of challenger spending to incumbent spending was small (mean = .47). In contrast, the average ratio of spending in elections where transitions occurred was greater than one (mean = 1.40). Thus, when a transition takes place, the challenger is likely to have spent more money than the incumbent (or the candidate of the incumbent’s party).

Two other candidate-centered variables, Primary Vote and Short-Term Shocks, are important predictors in our model. Both exceed the .001 significance level and the signs of their coefficients are in the predicted direction. The sign of the coefficient for Primary Vote is negative, suggesting that the greater the level of competition an incumbent (or incumbent party candidate) faces in the primary, the greater the probability the candidate will lose. The coefficient of the variable Short-Term Shocks is positive indicating that political controversies, scandals, and health concerns adversely affect an incumbent’s likelihood of reelection and, in this instance, transitions.

Interestingly, we find no support for the impact of Candidate Quality on transitions. Although the sign of the coefficient is negative, it is far from achieving statistical significance. Although we can only speculate as to the reasons why candidate quality did not affect transition elections, these results might be attributed to the relatively larger stakes involved in Senate elections. The high profile of Senate candidates may compensate for the low name recognition and inexperienced engineering which dooms many “low quality” House candidates.16

The contextual variables are important predictors in the model as well. As expected, the variable Electoral Cycle is highly significant beyond the .01 level and the sign of the coefficient is positive. Therefore, if challengers are either of the same party of a strong presidential candidate, or of the opposite party of an unpopular

16An alternative, of course, would be to use challenger quality as a predictor. We chose our measure because of its comparative nature, which accounts for incumbency and open seats. When substituted, challenger quality performs little better than our Candidate Quality variable, similarly never achieving significance, and adds nothing to the predictive power of the model.

Multicollinearity is not a problem. This variable significantly correlates with only the Finance variable, and then only at \( r = -0.2475 \), well below the generally accepted level of tolerance.
president at the midterm election, they may have an advantage. *Political Competitiveness* is significant at the .05 level and the sign of the coefficient is in the hypothesized direction. This result suggests that the dominance of a state by the political party opposite the incumbent may increase the probability of an electoral defeat, and therefore a transition.

**Transitions to and from Mixed Delegations—A Test of the “Opposite Party Advantage”**

Evidence in support of our alternative model is strong. Reliance on simple, and well-established, contextual, and candidate-centered political variables allows us to correctly predict 84.2% of all transitions (incumbent party defeats), both to and from mixed delegations.

We are interested if the predictive power remains robust when we control for whether the potential transition creates a mixed delegation or signals its demise. To investigate this question, we add an additional variable to the model—*Delegation Partisanship*—which measures whether the delegation begins the election unified (coded 1) or mixed (coded 0).

The addition of this variable allows us to test the strategic citizen model directly. If Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal (1991) are correct in their finding of an opposite party advantage, then we should logically expect the coefficient on this new variable to be positive and significant, indicating that a unified delegation makes an incumbent party loss (and a transition to a mixed delegation) more likely, given the electorate’s alleged preference for the “opposite party.” Similarly, the presence of a mixed delegation would reduce the likelihood of an incumbent defeat and a transition. Our findings are presented in table 2.

The parameter estimate for *Delegation Partisanship* is insignificantly different from 0, lending support for our contention that the partisanship of the other senator is of no consequence—in either direction—to the outcome of the election at hand. Moreover, the inclusion of *Delegation Partisanship* causes virtually no change in the sign, magnitude, or significance levels of the estimates on the original variables (the sole exception being the competitiveness variable whose *p*-value falls a fraction to .053). The additional variable has little effect on the predictive power of the model since the percent predicted correctly remains a robust 83.8%.

But were the parameter estimate reported in table 2 to have reached significance, it would still provide no support for the strategic citizen model since the sign is in the wrong direction. What little relationship exists seems to indicate that the probability of a transition is higher when such a transition would result in a unified delegation. In short, we find absolutely no support for the existence of an opposite party advantage.

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17 An alternative approach would be to divide the population into two subsamples and test the consistency of the model’s performance across types. We performed this task and the results were generally supportive, the model accurately predicting 87.4% of outcomes when the delegation begins the cycle unified, and 83.2% when the delegation enters the election mixed. The method we choose to present here is somewhat more elegant and helpful in that it allows us to test an additional hypothesis.
### Table 2

**Logit Results for Delegation Transition in U.S. Senate Elections: 1972–1988**

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<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
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<td>% Predicted correctly</td>
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*Significant at $p < .05$; **significant at $p < .01$; ***significant at $p < .001$.

### Conclusion

Transitions are not surprising given the highly competitive nature of Senate elections in the candidate-centered era. In particular, challenger financing had a great impact on the probability of a challenger’s success, and is a critical factor in determining the probability of a transition in either direction. Consistent with the findings of Abramowitz (1988), improprieties are found to make transitions more likely. Focusing on primaries, we find that an incumbent facing serious opposition will be less likely to overcome intraparty divisiveness in a general election which, in turn, may well trigger a transition. Finally, contextual variables, including both the election cycle and state political competitiveness, are significant predictors of the probability of transitions.

Yet we find no support for the “opposite party advantage.” The partisanship of the other senator has no significant impact on the probability of incumbent defeat, substantially undercutting the validity of the earlier proposition—that some voters have a preference for mixed delegations that results in their increased frequency.

The strong results of our predictors, especially the candidate-centered variables, offer a unique insight into the causes of divided government. As previously argued, the mixed Senate delegation question has been viewed as more of an enigma than divided government since voter decisions are (1) made sequentially for (2) identical offices by (3) identical constituencies.

We have brought to this question Jacobson’s (1990) hypothesis of “electoral disintegration,” arguing that outcomes of sequential Senate elections in a candidate-centered era are largely unconnected. Our model successfully predicts inconsistent outcomes across a set of decisions made by voters operating with substantially fewer
uncertainties. In this context, the "electoral disintegration" hypothesis operates in a more demanding conceptual environment than the more general divided government question. Our results, then, serve as important additional support for Jacobson's theory.

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REFERENCES


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