Southern Fried Governors: Republican Governors in the South, 1950-2004

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Abstract

This paper begins with an electoral conundrum: namely, what explains the election of Republican gubernatorial candidates in the post-war South? For nearly a century, the Democratic party had enjoyed unparalleled dominance in the region, its success interrupted only by an aberrant Tennessee, which elected Republican governors in 1911 and 1921 before returning to the Democratic fold. By the late 1960s, however, the partisan tide had turned. We theorize that Republican electoral success is determined by the presence of quality Republican gubernatorial candidates. The analysis shows that quality candidates—in both parties—affect GOP success. Additionally, we explore the size of the pool from which these quality Republican candidates emerge. Our expectation is that a larger pool of quality candidates will increase the likelihood that a quality candidate will be nominated. The results of the analysis did not bear this out, suggesting that better measures of quality candidate pool are needed.

For nearly a century, the Democratic Party enjoyed unprecedented dominance in the electoral politics of the states of the old Confederacy. One-partyism characterized both the legislative and executive branches of government throughout the region from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century. And in states in which judicial candidates ran on partisan ballots, the Democratic Party ruled the day in that branch as well. The solid South returned Democrat after Democrat to its states' elected offices. In many instances, the Republican Party declined to even offer up a nominee to play the role of sacrificial lamb. While the Democratic Party's electoral success in the region has been examined (c.f., Key 1949), an interesting issue remains substantially less explored: the Republican Party's inability to unseat the Democrats, especially in the single most important office in the state—the governorship.

In this paper, we test possible answers to two research questions related to this phenomenon. First, what explains the election of Republican gubernatorial candidates in the post-war South? We offer a theory that Republican electoral success is determined by the presence of quality Republican candidates. Because of our focus on the importance of quality Republican candidates, our research also evaluates factors determining the nomination of these quality candidates in southern states, focusing on the size of the pool from which they emerge.

In the remainder of this section, relevant literature on southern politics and gubernatorial elections is reviewed. Following that, we develop our theory of Republican gubernatorial success and the emergence of quality Republican candidates in southern states. Hypotheses are derived from the theory. After describing the data and methods used to test the theory, a discussion of the results of the statistical tests follows, and from that, we consider the implications of the findings.

Before proceeding to the literature review, a definitional clarification is necessary. In the analysis that follows, we use a conventional definition of the South: the eleven states that seceded from the Union during the Civil War[1]: This delineation excludes border states such as Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, which, on occasion, exhibit similar behaviors and preferences as their southern neighbors. Some scholars such as Matthews and Prothro (1966) have subdivided the region into two parts: the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) and the Peripheral South (Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia), based primarily on the strength of the commitment to racial segregation. Our theoretical and statistical analyses consider each of the states individually and do not differentiate between the two subregions.

The Solid South

In terms of partisanship, just how solidly Democratic was the South? Very solid. From the early 1880s until the late 1960s, southern states elected Democratic governors in every gubernatorial election, save two. The string of Democratic successes was broken only in Tennessee which, in 1911 and 1921, elected Republican governors before returning to the Democratic fold for another fifty years (Key 1949; National Governors Association 2006). In some states, more than a century elapsed before the Republican Party tasted victory in a gubernatorial election. For example, Georgia elected a Republican governor in 1872; it took more than 130 years before the Peach state elected another. The period from Reconstruction to the mid-20th century was one of unparallel electoral success for the Democratic Party. It was not until 1966 with the election of Claude Kirk in Florida and Winthrop Rockefeller in Arkansas that

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[1] These states include: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Republicans were able to break through the Democratic wall to win a gubernatorial election in the South.

Although a few states in other regions had periods of one-partyism, no state experienced the single party dominance to the degree southern states did, and certainly no region was as defined by its uniform embrace of a single party. In his book, *American State Politics* (1956), V.O. Key, Jr., includes data that arrays the states from low to high according to the frequency of divided control of the executive and legislative branches from 1931 to 1952. Clustered together at the top (or bottom) of the list were the eleven southern states for which the sum total of years of divided control was zero.[2] In 32 states, however, "a sufficiently competitive political order existed to prevent consistent capture of governor and legislatures by the same party at all elections during the period" (Key 1956, 56). But not so in the South, which clung to its one-party ways. The rub is that interparty competition is considered the *sine qua non* of an effective, responsive government. As Sabato (1983, 117) puts it, "a one-party system is undesirable for a state because it easily can result in second-rate government." And even though the Democratic parties in most southern states developed factions, these divisions were termed by Key (1949, 11) to be "transient and amorphous…ill-designed to meet the necessities of self-government." Without competitive parties, the South's political (and economic) development was stunted.

It is not as if there were no Republican loyalists in the South. Presidential Republicans—individuals who voted in Democratic primaries for state offices but supported the Republican nominee for President—could be found in all states, albeit it in small numbers (Key 1949).[3] Mountain Republicans of southwestern Virginia, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee

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[2] Four other states scored zero: the border state of Oklahoma, and New Hampshire and Vermont which were consistently Republican states at the time, and South Dakota, which, at two elections, experienced a synchronized shift in party control in the governor's office and in both houses of the legislature.

[3] Many of these Republicans were newcomers to the region, having relocated from the North.

were victorious in elections for county office, the state legislature, and on occasion, Congress. And up until the presidential administration of Franklin Roosevelt, there were numerous black Republicans in the South, although the dearth of GOP candidates and discriminatory election practices minimized their impact.

These days, of course, the South has been transformed in terms of partisanship (Bullock and Rozell 2003). The South is no longer the reliable source of Democratic votes for the presidency, the Congress, the governorship, or the state legislature. In fact, the South has become a land of red states, that is, states that support Republican presidential candidates. Whereas in 1950, all 22 U.S. senators from the south were Democrats; after the 2000 elections, only 8 of them were (Black and Black 2002). Every southern state has elected at least one GOP governor since the late 1960s, some have elected several; and in many states, the Republican Party has gained control of one or both houses of the legislature. As of 2006, Republicans occupied seven of 11 governors' seats and controlled half of the legislative chambers in the region. The growth of interparty competition is one reason why contemporary analyses of state politics no longer automatically exclude southern states from the analysis or treat their regional identity as a dummy variable. The transformation of the South has had another important consequence. What federalism scholar Martha Derthick (1987) termed "the end of Southern exceptionalism," legitimized the notion of a "devolution of power" from the federal government to the states.

Governors

Governors matter. After decades of institutional reform resulting in lengthened terms of office, greater veto authority, and broader appointment powers, governors have become central

actors in state government, perhaps the central actor. As Beyle (2004, 194) puts it, "At the top of each state's political and governmental hierarchy is the governor…he or she is seen as the most powerful political personality in most states." Herzik and Brown (1991, ix) are unequivocal: "Governors are the most salient political actors in state government." The popular press offers a similar assessment. Squire (1992, 126) cites a *Washington Post* article which proclaimed, "After a decade in which Republican administrations in Washington have sought to shift power to the states, many politicians find the governorship more attractive and rewarding than the once-prestigious U.S. Senate."

In addition to the growing importance of governors, gubernatorial partisanship is particularly important given the increasing role of state governments over the past quarter century (Bowman and Kearney 1986; Hedge 1998; Nathan 1989). The growing importance of states in the American federal system (but see Krane and Koenig 2005) makes understanding the factors that lead to the election of Republican rather than Democratic governors crucial. This is particularly true given that policy outputs of states differ significantly based on partisan institutional control (Brown 1995; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Hill and Hinton-Anderson 1995; Kone and Winters 1993; Lowry, Alt, and Ferree 1998; Royed and Borrelli 1997).

Yet, the governorship has not always been viewed as a politically attractive office to hold. Early on, the governorship as an institution suffered from the anti-executive sentiment of the post-colonial era. The first state constitutions created a governorship to be subordinate to the legislative branch. The most extreme of these legislatively dominated structures were those in which the legislature itself selected the governor who served a one-year term. The gubernatorial

institution was strengthened during the Jacksonian period and later, in the Progressive era.[4] But

the formal powers of the post continued to lag those of the legislature in many states. And, it

was not that long ago that governors were labeled "goodtime Charlies," more concerned with the

ceremonial aspects of the job than the substantive work of the office (Sabato 1983).

The mid-1960s ushered in a period of broad executive branch reform (Bowman and

Kearney 1986). This meant shortening the statewide ballot (i.e., electing fewer administrative

officials such as the secretary of education), strengthening gubernatorial appointment and

removal powers, creating an executive budget, lengthening the governor's term of office and

allowing consecutive succession, and enhancing veto powers. Not all of the states enacted all of

the reforms, but enough states adopted a sufficient number of them so that governors could

become powerful actors. For example, in 1940, half of the states had a gubernatorial term length

of two years. By 1980, most of these states had switched to four-year terms of office, while only

four states retained the shorter tenure.[5]

As shown by Beyle (2006, 61), gubernatorial power has increased significantly since

1960. Based on the original scores devised by Joseph Schlesinger (1965) and updated and

expanded subsequently, the governors' veto power has grown 61%, and the tenure potential and

the short ballot have increased 28% each. Appointment power has improved only nominally

(7%) and gubernatorial budget power has decreased by 14%, due primarily to reforms in the

legislative budgetary process. The latter point is worthy of elaboration. Just as the executive

branch underwent significant reform aimed at improving its performance, so did the legislative

branch. The result is empowered institutions, both committed to the goal of policymaking. Add

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[4] The Jacksonian era was not a time of uninterrupted empowerment. Even as gubernatorial terms were lengthened, enthusiasm for the "long ballot" led to the popular election of more statewide executive branch officials, thus limiting a governor's ability to create a presidential-style cabinet.

[5] As of 2006, two states continued to use two-year gubernatorial terms: New Hampshire and Vermont.

to that the presence of often divided government and the seeds of inter-institutional conflict are sown.

In terms of governance, the South persisted in failing to encourage the development of executive leadership. As a whole, southern states have demonstrated a fondness for structurally weak governors. The Schlesinger (1971) index of formal gubernatorial powers showed only Tennessee and Virginia scoring above the median value. Texas was at the bottom of the 50 states, with South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi and North Carolina scoring only slightly higher and well below the median. Beyle's (2004) update as of 2002 found Alabama with the lowest score in the nation, with Georgia and North Carolina just one increment higher. Of the southern states, only Tennessee was above the fifty-state average. Thus, even with the spate of institutional reform that has increased the formal powers of governors in both the South and the non-South, the states in the region continue to lag on this indicator.

Quite apart from the structural characteristics of the office are the informal or personal powers of the governor. Reflecting on the mid-1970s, Sabato (1983) noted not only the strengthening of the office, but also the new breed of highly-qualified, anxious to lead, governors. The days of glad-handing politicians had given way to well-trained, harder-working executives. Beyle (2004) measured the powers that individual governors brought to the office, including a governor's electoral mandate, his or her position on the state's political ambition ladder, gubernatorial performance ratings and so on, as of 2003. On this index of personal powers, six incumbent southern governors scored above the mean (the Texas governor was the highest of them) and five fell below it (anchored by Virginia's governor). This finding suggests that southern governors, comparatively weak in terms of structure, stack up similarly to other governors regarding personal powers.

Electing Republican Governors in the South

Much of the literature on gubernatorial campaigns has sought to explain the relative influence of national factors such as presidential politics and economic conditions on electoral outcomes (e.g., Carsey and Wright 1998; Chubb 1988; Stein 1990). More recently, the focus has shifted to the impact of campaigns on voter choice in gubernatorial races (Carsey 2001) and especially, the role of gubernatorial popularity (King 2001). Here we propose a theory that Republican electoral success in southern gubernatorial elections is driven primarily by the presence of a quality Republican candidate in the general election.

Relevant to the research question at hand, and supportive of our theoretical claim, candidate quality has been shown to be a factor in gubernatorial elections (Squire 1992), as it has in congressional elections as well (Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Lublin 1994; Squire 1989). Examining the period 1977 to 1989, Squire (1992) found that two-thirds of gubernatorial challengers had held a political office within two years of their race. Unlike some of the earlier work on candidate quality, he attempted to gauge the electoral value of previously-held political offices. To calculate candidate quality (or as he termed it, candidate profile), he assigned a value to various elective positions and multiplied that value by the percentage of a state's electorate covered by that office. The data show that in open-seat races and in those involving incumbents, winning candidates tend to have higher profiles. We build on the scholarship indicating that the quality of a challenger is an important determinant in winning an election and test the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1*: *The presence of a quality Republican gubernatorial candidate will increase the probability that a Republican will be elected governor.*

Because quality candidates can emerge from both parties, we expect that the presence of a quality Democratic candidate in a state's gubernatorial election will reduce the likelihood that a Republican will be elected governor. Based on this we propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2*: *The presence of a quality Democratic gubernatorial candidate will decrease the probability that a Republican will be elected governor.*

Finally, given the democratic nature of American gubernatorial elections, we believe that the aggregate preferences of a state's electorate are an inherently important factor in determining the election of a governor. States with conservative electorates are more likely to elect Republicans to important political offices than their liberal counterparts. Therefore, we expect that as the citizens in a state become more conservative, they are more prone to elect Republican governors, and we test the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3*: *Increasingly conservative citizen ideology should increase the probability that a Republican will be elected.*

Because our theory suggests that the election of Republican governors in the South is in large part determined by the presence of a quality Republican gubernatorial candidate, we estimate a second model testing factors we believe are predictive of the emergence of these quality Republican candidates. If quality Republican candidates are an important predictor of Republican electoral success, then developing an understanding of the emergence of these candidates presents an important theoretical puzzle. Here we propose a theory that posits that as the pool of quality Republican candidates in a state increases, it will become more likely that a quality Republican will emerge to seek a state's governorship.

This assertion finds support in the literature. Squire (1992) finds that the size of the challenger pool matters, however not consistently across open-seat and incumbent races. Related research has taken a close look at the strategic decisions by potential challengers to enter

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nonincumbent party primaries for governor (Kang, Niemi, and Powell 2003). Among other findings, the research showed that the amount of competition (the number of candidates) in the nonincumbent party primary is influenced by the supply of potential challengers (in this instance, the number of congressional seats controlled by the nonincumbent party). As a result we test the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 4*: *As the pool of quality Republican candidates increases, it is more likely that a quality Republican candidate will be nominated for governor.*

We conceive of the pool of quality candidates as consisting of individuals who hold or have held important state-level elective positions. As a result we believe that these individuals act strategically when deciding to ascend the political career ladder. These individuals have established reputations within their party and their state, and should be unwilling to risk these reputations on a quixotic bid for the governorship. Therefore, we expect that the emergence of a quality Republican candidate will be affected by the political environment in which they operate. For example, research has shown that incumbency tends to be an important predictor of electoral success, as is state partisanship (Erikson, Wright, and McIver1993; Piereson 1977; Tompkins 1984; Turett 1971). Therefore, a quality Republican candidate may be less likely to emerge if a sitting Democratic governor is seeking reelection. We derive the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 5*: *A Democratic incumbent governor seeking reelection will decrease the probability that a quality Republican candidate will be nominated for governor.*

In addition we expect that potential gubernatorial candidates will be more likely to seek the governorship when they perceive their chances of winning are good. In this vein, perhaps the best cue for a potential Republican gubernatorial candidate is the support that the previous Republican candidate received. A quality Republican candidate may be tempted into the race if

the last Republican gubernatorial candidate received significant popular support. Thus, our final

hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 6*: *The higher level of support (in terms of votes) the previous Republican gubernatorial candidate received, the higher the probability a quality Republican candidate will be placed on the ballot in the following gubernatorial election.*

The Squire (1992) and Kang, Niemi, and Powell (2003) research on gubernatorial

elections provides a place to start in our effort to understand the obstacles facing the GOP in its

efforts to gain a foothold in the solidly Democratic South. Perhaps Southern Republicans were

unable to unseat Democrats because the party lacked a sufficient supply of qualified candidates.

And, perhaps GOP success since those breakthrough elections of the late 1960s is a result of a

deepening pool of qualified candidates.

Data and Methods

Our primary purpose is to understand the election of Republican gubernatorial candidates

in the Democrat-dominated South. The analysis begins by assessing the effects of candidate

characteristics and citizen ideology on the probability of electing a GOP governor.

Theoretically, we expect the election of Republican candidates to be determined by the presence

of quality candidates and increases in citizen conservatism, but that the existence of Democratic

incumbents will prevent GOP success. From there, we explore the decisions of southern

Republican parties to nominate quality candidates for the governorship. If candidate quality is a

determinant of GOP success, then what explains the nomination, or lack thereof, of quality

Republican candidates in these races? We expect that the size of the quality Republican

candidate pool should be influential in selecting a quality challenger, but that Democratic

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incumbents will suppress the nomination of quality opponents. Also, an increasingly

conservative constituency will encourage the nomination of quality GOP candidates.

Modeling Republican Gubernatorial Success

Concerning the success of Republican gubernatorial candidates, we use as our dependent

variable the election of a Republican candidate in a given race. That variable is coded as 1 if a

Republican candidate was elected governor and a 0 if the Democrat challenger won. We include

all gubernatorial elections in the 11 southern states during the period 1950 to 2004. We model

the probability of electing a Republican governor in the South by estimating a logit model with

fixed-effects, specified by state (Long 1997). Estimating fixed-effects accounts for

heterogeneity that exists across states by accounting for numerous omitted state-specific

variables that are individually unimportant and allows for those variables to be collectively

absorbed into state-specific intercepts (Hsaio 2003).

Candidate-Specific Characteristics. Because candidate quality should impact the election of

governors, we include two variables to account for its effect. In coding these variables we define

a quality candidate as someone who has served in any of the following statewide elected

positions: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, or Treasurer.

We also code candidates as quality if they serve, or have served, as a member of the United

States Congress or in their state's legislature. This classification goes beyond previous work

which simply classifies all candidates as being quality if they have previous elective experience

(Abramowitz 1988; Bianco 1984; Born 1986; Jacobson 2001; Jacobson and Kernell 1983;

Ragsdale and Cook 1987), but does not weight candidate quality in the way that Squire (1992)

does. Finally, we include candidates who were elected to the bench of their state's court of last resort as quality candidates. *Quality GOP* is coded 1 if the Republican gubernatorial candidate is a "quality" candidate and 0 otherwise. Following Hypothesis 1 we expect the presence of a quality Republican candidate to increase the likelihood that a state will elect a Republican governor.

As predicted by Hypothesis 2, Republican gubernatorial candidates, regardless of previously held elective positions, are less likely to be successful in their bids for election if the Democratic Party fields a quality candidate. We include a *Quality Democrat* variable, coded 1 if the Democratic candidate for governor meets the quality candidate criteria described above. Specifically, we expect quality Democrats to exert a negative effect of the likelihood that a Republican wins election.

Citizen Ideology. Hypothesis 3 predicts that citizens will be more likely to elect a Republican governor as they become more conservative. We measure citizen ideology with the percentage of votes cast for the Republican presidential candidate in the current or most recent election (*GOP Presidential Vote*), and we expect a positive estimate for this variable. While recognizing that this is an imperfect measure of aggregate state-level citizen ideology, we are unaware of an existing measure of citizen ideology that covers our time period.[6] Because of the potential concern over using presidential election returns as a proxy for citizen ideology, we estimated separate models using the Berry et al. (1998) citizen ideology scores, updated through 2004 to

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[6] The earliest Berry et al. (1998) state citizen ideology scores are calculated for the year 1960. The Brace et al. (2004) state citizen ideology scores are bound between the years 1974 and 1998 and are biennial. McIver, Erikson, and Wright (2001) developed citizen ideology scores, as well, but those are only available for the years 1977 to 1999.

measure citizen preferences. The results from those models were not substantively different from those reported here.

Controls. In addition to the theoretically motivated independent variables, we include a number of control variables in our model accounting for GOP success. We control for the size of the pool of quality Republican candidates with two variables. First, *Pct. GOP Legislature* is the percentage of Republicans serving in a given state legislature in a gubernatorial election year. The second, *Pct. GOP Congress*, is the Republican percentage of each state's Congressional delegation. Gubernatorial term limits, *Term Limit*, are controlled for with a dichotomous variable, coded 1 if a state's governor is term-limited, and 0 if no rule exists. We also consider the impact of population shifts on partisanship. Converse (1972), Wolfinger and Hagen (1985) and Wolfinger and Arseneau (1978) show that migration into the South has significantly changed the partisanship of that region (but see Beck 1977; Campbell 1977; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; Petrocik 1987). Therefore, we include a measure of the percentage of the population that migrated into each southern state in a given year (*In Migration*). Finally we account for time using two dummy variables. First, we include a variable to account for the effect of George Wallace's presidential bid on southern partisanship. This variable, *Wallace1968*, is coded 1 for each year after Wallace's presidential campaign, and 0 for the years before 1968 (Black and Black 2002). In the same vein, we account for the possible realignment of the South after Reagan's first presidential election by including the variable *Reagan1980*, coded 1 in the years after 1980 and 0 before (Black and Black 2002).[7]

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[7] We made several attempts to account for temporal dependence in both sets of models. Our first attempt involved including 5 and 10-year splines (Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998). In addition, we ran both sets of models with a counter variable to account for a linear effect of time on the dependent variables. Following that, we included a

Modeling Selection of Quality Republican Candidates

Next, we model the probability of selecting a quality Republican candidate in southern gubernatorial elections. The dependent variable in this model is the nomination of a quality Republican candidate defined as above, coded 1 if the Republican nominee is a quality candidate and 0 otherwise. Again, we examine the same set of gubernatorial elections as in the previous model, and we estimate this model using fixed-effects logit to account for heterogeneity across states.

The Candidate Pool, Democratic Incumbents, and Previous GOP Gubernatorial Vote. We measure the pool of quality GOP candidates using two variables, *Pct. GOP Legislature* and *Pct. GOP Congress*. These variables were used previously as control variables, but we distinguish them here as theoretically important predictors for selecting quality Republican candidates. As already stated, we expect that increases in this candidate pool should be positively related to our dependent variable.

We include *Democratic Incumbent* to account for the negative effect that these candidates should bear on the GOP's probability of choosing a quality challenger, as we predict in Hypothesis 5. Our final hypothesis predicts that a quality Republican candidate is more likely to emerge if previous Republican candidates did well. We test this hypothesis by including *Previous GOP Gubernatorial Vote*, which is simply the Republican vote share in the previous gubernatorial election. We expect the estimate for this variable to be positive.

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counter^2 to account for a quadratic temporal effect. Results for these models indicated that the specification reported in this text is most appropriate.

Controls. _Wallace1968_, _Reagan1980_, _In Migration_, _Term Limit_, and _GOP Presidential Vote_ are also included our model predicting the selection of a quality Republican candidate. Furthermore, we add one additional control variable, _Primary Type_, coded as an ordinal variable in the following manner: closed (1), semi-closed (2), semi-open (3), open (4), and nonpartisan (5). This order reflects the institutional barriers to citizen participation in primary elections.

Findings

Of the 149 Republican gubernatorial candidates in our data, only 43 (28.9%) were elected. Not surprisingly, 32 (74.4%) of the successful Republicans were quality candidates. Also of interest is that while all but one election in our data included a Democrat gubernatorial candidate, 21 elections passed uncontested by the Republicans.

The results of our model explaining the election of Republican candidates as governor in the South are reported in Table 1. This model is significant and superior to a constant-only model predicting Republican gubernatorial electoral success. The overall results from this first model support our hypotheses. The estimate for _Quality GOP_ is positive and statistically significant, indicating that when quality Republican candidates seek the governorship they are more likely to be elected than their low quality counterparts. In addition, the negative estimate for _Quality Democrat_ is significant, and its substantive effect on suppressing GOP success is over two times as great as the positive effect Republicans experience as quality challengers. This indicates that running against a quality Democratic candidate hurts Republican candidates more than occupying a previous state-wide, elective office helps. In our data only two quality Republican candidates managed to beat out their incumbent opponents—William Clements in

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Texas in 1986 and Mark Sanford in South Carolina in 2002. Meanwhile, the extent to which a state's citizens are conservative does not impact the election chances of a Republican candidate.

*** Table 1 Here ***

Two of our control variables prove significant effects on the success of Republican candidates. The positive estimates for *Pct. GOP Legislature* indicates that as state legislatures become increasingly composed of Republicans, their candidates are more likely to gain the governorship. Interestingly, the positive estimate for *Wallace1968* indicates that Republican candidates have a greater probability of winning gubernatorial office since George Wallace's presidential campaign, while the insignificant result for *Reagan1980* reveals that Reagan's bid for president played no part in placing his fellow partisans at the helm of southern states. *Pct. GOP Congress*, *Term Limit*, and *In Migration* show no effect on the probability of electing Republican governors in the South.

In sum, we find that being a quality Republican candidate increases one's chances of winning the governorship. Our next analysis investigates the determinants of nominating a quality Republican for governor, and those results are shown in Table 2. This model is also statistically significant and better-fitted to the data than a constant-only model in predicting the selection of a quality candidate.

*** Table 2 Here ***

In our data quality Republican candidates were nominated 69 (40.6%) times. Figure 1 shows the increasing number of quality Republican candidates nominated over the years in our data. While we expected the magnitude of the Republican quality candidate pool to increase the chance that parties nominate quality candidates, we find no such result. The estimates for *Pct.*

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GOP Legislature and *Pct. GOP Congress* fail to reach traditional levels of statistical

significance. In the following section we speculate on possible reasons for this null finding.

*** Figure 1 Here ***

As we predicted, the coefficient for *Democratic Incumbent* is negative, providing

evidence that state Republican parties are averse to nominating members with political

credentials when the current Democrat governor seeks reelection. It makes sense to avoid an

electoral failure when history demonstrates that incumbent Democrats have the electoral

advantage. In our data there are only 9 (5.3%) occasions when quality Republicans were

selected to face off with an incumbent Democrat. In addition, the positive and significant

estimate for *Previous GOP Gubernatorial Vote* lends support for the hypothesis concerning the

positive effect that citizens' previous votes for governor should send cues to the pool of potential

quality candidates that they may stand a viable chance of winning the next gubernatorial

election.

Finally, while we have no theoretical expectations concerning our control variables, some

of these results are nonetheless interesting. The positive and significant estimate for *GOP*

Presidential Vote shows that increasingly conservative citizen ideology does increase the

likelihood that Republicans will nominate a quality colleague to run for governor. Also, primary

type matters, as indicated by the positive estimate for our *Primary Type* variable. This indicates

that as southern states' primaries become more inclusive, quality Republican candidates are more

likely to be nominated. In other words, when states allow voters greater partisan fluidity in

primary voting, we should expect a greater number of quality GOP gubernatorial candidates on

ballots in the South. Finally, the *Reagan1980* variable is positive and significant in this model,

in contrast to the positive and significant effect of the *Wallace1968* variable in our model

predicting GOP electoral success. In this model, it appears that Reagan's bid for president, and

his subsequent successes, spurred Republican parties in the South to nominate candidates with

political credentials. The estimates for *Term Limit*, *In Migration*, and *Wallace1968* exert no

effects on the dependent variable.

Conclusions

In this paper we attempt to explain the success, or lack of success, of Republican

gubernatorial candidates in the South based on a theory that "quality matters." Because quality

should, and we find that it does, matter in electing governors, we argued further that the size of

the candidate pool of quality Republicans should impact gubernatorial elections. Specifically,

the larger the pool of these quality candidates, the more likely it should be that Republicans

control the executive branch in the South. This research adds confirmation that both the quality

of Republicans has a direct effect on electoral success, and also that facing quality Democratic

challengers and incumbents can be detrimental to southern Republicans. Furthermore, our

statistical models suggest that the presidential campaigns of two key national political actors bear

significant effects on electing Republican governors and choosing quality candidates to run for

those positions.

While we find strong support in our first model that the candidate characteristics of

Republican gubernatorial aspirants matter, we do not find support in our second model that the

size of pool from which they emerge is important. We believe that those results are driven more

by measurement of the quality candidate pool than our theoretical claim. Democratic

gubernatorial candidates continue to dominate in the South long after the electorate favored

Republican presidential candidates. We maintain that this disconnect is the product of the

historical Democratic hegemony in this region's elective positions. In other words, the election of Democrats inherently places quality Democrats on future gubernatorial ballots. As a result the statistical findings in our second model may be a function of incompletely measuring the quality candidate pool of Republicans.

Our work indicates that future research on the subject of gubernatorial should concentrate on better specifying the pool from which quality gubernatorial candidates emerge. This investigation was directed at the states of the old Confederacy, but subsequent work should incorporate cross-sectional time series data on all fifty states. That comparative research should allow us, also, to assess whether the emergence of quality gubernatorial candidates in the South is different than in other regions. Furthermore, it may be that the increasing institutional powers that have been bestowed on state executives affects who runs. Incorporating this notion into a theory of candidate emergence, and an updated version of Schlesinger's (1965, 1971) index of gubernatorial powers into statistical analyses, should shed light on the still understudied topic of gubernatorial elections.

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Table 1
Fixed Effects Model of the Likelihood of Electing a Republican Governor in the South

Pct. GOP Legislature	0.044+
	(0.028)
Pct. GOP Congress	-0.005
	(0.019)
Quality GOP	0.857*
	(0.499)
Quality Democrat	-2.128***
	(0.649)
Term Limit	-0.129
	(1.289)
In Migration	0.015
	(0.161)
GOP Presidential Vote	0.014
	(0.021)
Wallace1968	2.134*
	(0.954)
Reagan1980	0.073
	(0.668)

N = 170
number of groups = 11
LR χ^2 (9 df) = 56.95***
Log likelihood = -48.8227

- The dependent variable is the probability of electing of a Republican gubernatorial candidate (0 = if a Democrat is elected, and 1 = if a Republican is elected).
- Fixed effects have been estimated using state as the group identifier.
- Standard errors are reported in parentheses.
- *= significant at the .05 level; ** = significant at the .01 level; *** = significant at the .001 level; + = significant at the .10 level (one-tailed tests for directional hypotheses)

Table 2
Fixed Effects Model of the Likelihood of Nominating a
Quality Republican Gubernatorial Candidate in the South

Pct. GOP Legislature	-0.013
	(0.033)
Pct. GOP Congress	-0.016
	(0.021)
Previous GOP Gubernatorial Vote	0.060**
	(0.022)
Democratic Incumbent	-1.161*
	(0.552)
Term Limit	-0.972
	(1.178)
In Migration	0.069
	(0.102)
GOP Presidential Vote	0.043*
	(0.021)
Primary Type	1.913*
	(0.956)
Wallace1968	0.606
	(0.762)
Reagan1980	1.065+
	(0.663)

N = 170
number of groups = 11
LR χ^2 (9 df) = 69.04***
Log likelihood = -51.8364

- The dependent variable is the probability of nominating a quality Republican gubernatorial candidate (0 = if Republican candidate is not quality, and 1 = if a Republican is quality).
- Fixed effects have been estimated using state as the group identifier.
- Standard errors are reported in parentheses.
- *= significant at the .05 level; ** = significant at the .01 level; *** = significant at the .001 level; + = significant at the .10 level (one-tailed tests for directional hypotheses)

Figure 1
Number of Quality GOP Gubernatorial Candidates,
1950 to 2004