

Battle for the Buckeye State:
Analysis of the 2010 Ohio Gubernatorial Race

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What factors led to victory for the Republican candidate in the 2010 governor's race in Ohio? My research demonstrates that Democratic candidates are generally favored in Ohio counties with high unemployment. Ohio's unemployment nearly doubled in size from 2006 to 2010. Why was Democratic incumbent Governor Ted Strickland unable to capitalize on this historical advantage? I argue that Strickland's loss can be attributed to his inability to shift the "blame" onto the national level, due a Democratic president and Strickland's visible ties to the Obama Administration. John Kasich was electorally successful because he was able to control the economic debate, verified through campaign and media output.

Introduction

The 2010 midterm elections commanded national headlines and seized the attention of the country. The Tea-Party Movement, heated rhetoric, and high stakes added to the excitement. The bellwether State of Ohio's gubernatorial race was no exception to this trend. This election determined if Democratic incumbent governor, Ted Strickland, would maintain control of the statehouse or if the Republican challenger, John Kasich, would seize control with a victory.

My analysis of this election investigates the causal factors of John Kasich's gubernatorial victory. In the first section, I provide an overview of the campaign. This provides a solid foundation in understanding major campaign events. Next, I explore existing literature on theories of gubernatorial success. In the third section, I present the data I collected and the importance of the data and methods I employed in my analysis. I address theories of gubernatorial success and explain how I will account for these theories in my analysis of the 2010 gubernatorial election in Ohio. In the fourth section, I present my analysis of the data and examine my findings. I further explore the underlying reasons for Kasich's victory. Finally, I provide a summary of my findings in my conclusion.

Overview of the Campaign

June 2, 2009 was the official kick-off of the election with Kasich's announcement of his bid for the Ohio governorship. Kasich eventually ran unopposed in the primary after state senator, Kevin Coughlin, withdrew his bid. In his announcement speech, Kasich emphasized "personal responsibility" and economic prosperity, principles he has advocated throughout his political career.

Kasich was born and raised in a working-class town in Southeast Pennsylvania. After high school, Kasich relocated to Ohio to attend The Ohio State University. Kasich commenced

his political career as a senator in the Ohio General Assembly where he served from 1979 to 1982. He moved on to become the representative for Ohio 12th district and garnered the powerful position of Chairman of the House Budget Committee. While in this position, Kasich had tremendous influence in balancing the federal budget. This was one of the biggest accomplishments for Republicans after they seized control of the House in 1994. Kasich touted this accomplishment throughout his gubernatorial bid and frequently expressed his aspirations to balance the Ohio budget. After serving in the House for nine terms, Kasich moved to the private sector and focused his efforts in business and media. Kasich considered a possible presidential bid in 2000, even forming an exploratory committee. After the Iowa Caucuses, Kasich cast off this interest and endorsed then-former governor, George W. Bush. Kasich worked as a managing director for Lehman Brothers, a position that came back to haunt him throughout the gubernatorial race. The extent of Kasich's association with the failed Lehman Brothers was a question debated by both sides and used by Democrats to tie Kasich to "Wall Street values." Kasich also held a commentator position at the Fox News Network and eventually hosted his own program. He wrote several bestselling books, including *Every Other Monday*, a faith-based book published and released during the campaign.

A "Republican with rough edges," Kasich is known for his unscripted and sometimes politically vulnerable remarks and his "fighter" attitude (Apple 1998). This quality surfaced often in his attacks against incumbent Governor Strickland, another candidate with a strong political history in Ohio.

Like John Kasich, Ted Strickland also came from a blue-collar background. Strickland was born in Lucasville, a small town in southern Ohio. Following high school, Strickland earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Asbury College, a Masters of Art and a Master's of Divinity, and

finally a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. Strickland served as an ordained Methodist minister, psychologist at a state correctional facility, and professor preceding his career in public service. Strickland was also elected as a member of Congress, serving from 1993 to 1995 and again from 1997 to 2006. Strickland represented the long-spanning 6th district of Ohio. While in Congress, Strickland coauthored the Children's Health Insurance Program. Strickland would go on to advocate for these types of social programs as governor.

In 2006, Strickland glided into the Governor's mansion after swiftly defeating Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell. Strickland promised to "Turn around Ohio" during his highly successful campaign bid. He campaigned against the unpopular policies of the Bush administration and gained the endorsement of law enforcement groups, teacher groups, and most of the major Ohio newspapers. Strickland secured the Democratic vote and was able to gain the support of many Republicans. While Strickland was economically liberal, he touted moderate and even some conservative social principles. Strickland had a strong pro-gun rating from the NRA and held moderate views on abortion. His status as an ordained minister also appealed to religious conservatives. Strickland gained a little over sixty percent of the vote while his opponent, Kenneth Blackwell, earned around thirty-seven percent of the votes.

Strickland's tenure as governor has been described as "rocky." During Strickland's tenure, Ohio's population decreased while unemployment increased, brewing an unsavory combination for this incumbent seeking re-election. The Great Recession loomed over the economy nationwide. It was uncertain to voters how much blame should actually be placed on Strickland and his decisions, yet Strickland's approval rating unquestionably suffered. Following Kasich's announcement, Strickland had a 52 percent approval rating (Quinn 2009). The administration was plagued by a budget crisis and several mishaps, including the

mismanagement of a list of state employees and their social security numbers. During his tenure, Strickland also changed his position on gambling, a move making him politically vulnerable.

At the start of the campaign, Kasich touted fiscally-conservative principles, even proposing an elimination of the state income tax and the implementation of a “fair tax,” a tax based solely on sales. Kasich contended that this would help bring businesses and individuals to the state. These references to the economy proved to be important throughout the course of the election. Like the rest of the nation, Ohio was plagued by high unemployment and growing state deficits.

Leadership in the Ohio Democratic Party immediately attempted to label Kasich as a “Wall Street insider” due to his previous employment at Lehman Brothers. Kasich struggled to fight this image throughout the entire campaign.

In the statehouse, Strickland was busy fighting a budget war against the Republican majority in the state senate. Caught up in budget shortfalls, Strickland converted from his original position of opposition to gambling in Ohio to support this measure in order to raise additional revenue. This gambling position followed Strickland through the campaign. Lengthy debates between Strickland and Senate Majority leader, Bill Harris, and other Republicans elongated the passage of a state budget. Ohio voters did not look favorably on this apparent inability to control the direction of the state budget. Strickland’s approval rating dropped to 46 percent (Quinn 2009). Meanwhile, Kasich was able to capitalize on the budget fiasco by pointing to the ineffectiveness of Governor Strickland’s leadership. While Kasich admitted he was not “ideologically opposed” to gambling, he described Strickland’s measure as “goofy” and unable “to produce the numbers they're saying it's going to produce” (Hallet 2009). Other than a few comments like the previous, Kasich was able to take a “backseat” and allow Strickland’s poll

numbers to self-destruct. Kasich turned his efforts to name-recognition and attempted to undo the perception of his close ties to Wall Street that the Ohio Democratic Party had promulgated.

The budget “stalemate” finally ended after an executive order authorizing slot machines. Governor Strickland also used his executive power to line-item veto numerous proposals in the budget. The budget included several cuts which angered many state employees. Additionally, Strickland praised the unpopular federal stimulus program and advocated for a second stimulus to assist in budget shortfalls in Ohio. Following this grueling battle, the governor refocused his efforts to promoting education programs, a steady issue throughout his administration.

Nationwide, the federal stimulus and healthcare debates stirred division within the country. The stimulus, tied to the budget crisis, was also tied to new services and projects funded by the stimulus. In Ohio, the debate turned to the controversial high-speed passenger rail system. Along with other prominent Midwest leaders, Strickland advocated for Ohio’s piece of the rail-system, connecting the 3 “Cs,” Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. This measure was criticized by John Kasich as “wasteful spending.” This particular instance accurately depicted the differing ideologies concerning the role of the federal government between the two candidates.

In November of 2009, the gambling issue resurfaced. This time it reemerged at the polls as Issue 3. Ohio voters approved the building of casinos in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo. While projected casino tax-revenue was expected to fill the budget gap, voters were left wondering about Strickland’s indecisive position on the issue and his overall ability to lead Ohio effectively.

In January 2010, both Kasich and Strickland announced their running mates. Kasich selected state-Auditor Mary Taylor. Taylor’s tenure as Auditor and her CPA status enticed the Kasich campaign team. In his announcement of his running mate, Kasich “praised Mary Taylor’s

fiscal skills” (Fields 2010). Strickland was also charged with selecting a new running mate. Strickland’s lieutenant governor, Lee Fisher, decided to run for the open Senate seat. Strickland turned to the well-respected community leader, Yvette McGee Brown. Brown was the founding president of the Center for Child & Family Advocacy at the Nationwide Children's Hospital and a former Franklin County juvenile court judge (Fields 2010). Brown shared Strickland’s passion for education and children’s issues. Both choices echoed the goals of the respective campaigns. While these choices were important in that they represented the overall tone of the campaign, these selections were in no way “game-changing” or unexpected.

Shortly following the announcement of his running mate, Strickland delivered the State of the State speech. Strickland’s State of the State speech highlighted programs that Strickland believed would bring jobs to Ohio. He stressed the importance of the renewal of the “Third Frontier,” a program that “makes investments through bond sales to foster technology transfer from university, medical and other research centers to the private sector” (Fields and Marshall 2010). The influence of election year politics was apparent in the Republicans’ unyielding attack against not only Strickland’s speech, but more generally, the policies of the Strickland administration.

As campaign reserves grew, attacks between the candidates steadily increased. Nationwide, the Tea Party gained momentum and Republicans attacked the economic policies of the Democratic Party. In Massachusetts, Scott Brown won the late-Ted Kennedy’s Senate seat in an unprecedented victory. Kasich, a friend to the Tea Party, continued to attack Strickland for the lack of jobs and unfriendly business climate in Ohio. Strickland was unrelenting in his criticism of Kasich’s association with Lehman Brothers and Wall Street. This criticism and public pressure prompted Kasich to release his income tax return from the previous year to prove he did

not profit in the hands of Wall Street. His returns showed that while Kasich was a millionaire, the Lehman portion of his income totaled around \$587,175 plus benefits (Fields and Naymik 2010). Critics still pressed Kasich to release his decade-long returns.

At the end of April 2010, a scandal arose out of the governor's mansion concerning an inmate work program. Strickland, a long advocate of inmate "rehabilitation" programs, allowed inmates to work at the governor's mansion. Some of the program's participants developed a smuggling operation right out of Strickland's home. Furthermore, there were accusations of a cover-up by some state officials and the fabricated testimony of Safety Director Cathy Collins-Taylor. While Strickland was not connected to any of these unlawful events, Strickland appointed her for reconfirmation, which the Ohio Senate rejected (Niquette 2010).

The summer preceding the election amplified the themes propelled in the beginning of the election. Strickland fired the first ad against Kasich and his Wall Street ties. These negative ads foreshadowed the negative ads to follow produced by the Strickland campaign. Kasich traveled the State of Ohio touting his plan to bring jobs and business growth. The Republican Governors Association was quick to fire back anti-Strickland ads in a series that featured "ordinary" Ohioans and their frustration with the economic conditions in the state. Kasich also released his faith-based memoir, *Every Other Sunday*. The tax release issue resurfaced, this time concerning decade-long tax returns. President Obama made several trips to the Buckeye State in support of Strickland in both the summer and the fall. Republican leaders such as Indiana governor Mitch Daniels stumped for Kasich.

Another important issue, not tied to the economy, was the gun-control issue. Ted Strickland had a long history of gun rights support. He earned an A-rating from the NRA. The Strickland campaign exposed Kasich's less than favorable ratings by the same conservative-

leaning group. In 1994, Kasich received an F-rating from the organization for his support of a ban on assault rifles. Kasich quickly back-pedaled, trying to defend his pro-gun stance, hoping to retain members of the conservative base.

Between the archetypical campaign ads and budget proposals, a few other atypical campaign events arose. Strickland was criticized by the Kasich campaign for his participation in a video urging basketball star LeBron James to stay with the Cleveland Cavaliers, while Kasich was criticized for not caring enough about the matter. A member of the Kasich campaign also committed a political faux pas when he described Strickland's childhood home as a "chicken coop." Even after a public apology, the matter had already gained public traction. The Strickland campaign accused Kasich and his campaign as "out of touch" with average Ohioans.

Rapidly approaching November 2nd, the candidates agreed to two debates. The debates were hosted by the Ohio Newspaper Organization and held in Columbus and Toledo. The candidates answered questions primarily concerning jobs and the economy, with a few questions pertaining to social issues. The candidates differed on the outlook of the state economy. Kasich pointed out what he saw as mistakes made by the Strickland Administration, while Strickland maintained an exceedingly upbeat tone. When cornered, Strickland once again fired the Wall Street attacks and argued that economic problems were nationwide and not just exclusive to the State of Ohio. Overall the debates stayed civil, yet not overly-friendly.

Outside of the debates, Kasich and Strickland clearly defined their stances and their differences. Kasich strongly advocated more emphasis on the private sector, including the privatization of the Department of Development, while Strickland touted programs located in the public sector. Kasich's JobsOhio promised to bring new incentives and initiatives to attract business growth in the Buckeye State. Kasich and Strickland wrestled over how to fix education

in Ohio. While Strickland stood firmly to his belief in the importance of public-school funding, Kasich proposed increased competition and new performance evaluators in schools.

Donations continued to grow as Kasich surpassed Strickland in fundraising. A debatable donation was made to the Republican Governors Association, a group unaffiliated with the Kasich campaign but with the ability to discredit Strickland. Kasich's former Fox News boss, Rupert Murdoch, made a hefty one million dollar donation to the RGA. While the Kasich campaign denied any ties, this donation was questionable in the eyes of some Ohioans. Another group, Our Future Ohio, quickly surfaced and started to attack Kasich with \$2.5 million dollars worth of ads. Republicans called foul on this group, an accusation never proved true or false.

High profile politicians steadily rolled into Ohio as the election neared. President Obama made yet another visit to stump for Democratic candidates. Kasich held his own rally with popular Republican governors Haley Barbour, Tim Pawlenty, and Chris Christie.

After much smearing and election board contests, November 2nd finally arrived. Kasich held the lead in the polls, but not to the same wide margin he had held earlier in the race. Kasich defeated Strickland in the closest race for governor in 32 years. The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that "John Kasich rode a wave of voter anger Tuesday to become Ohio's 69th governor in a race that proved to be a referendum on incumbents and the state's anemic economy" (Fields Naymik 2010). The Cincinnati Enquirer reported the excited exclamation that Kasich opened his victory speech. "Guess what?" he shouted to the crowd. "I'm going to be governor of Ohio!" Following a long campaign, filled with promises, smear, and other oddities, the State of Ohio finally had its next governor.

What factors were most central to Kasich's victory? My analysis includes several elements of gubernatorial electoral success, including state unemployment figures, incumbency

status, campaign and media output, and national influences to explicate Kasich's victory over Strickland. My analysis indicates that Democratic gubernatorial candidates benefit in counties with high unemployment in the State of Ohio. However, my analysis also suggests that the highest benefit is achieved in the case when there is a Republican president. This suggests that Democratic gubernatorial candidates are able to effectively "shift the blame" onto Republican presidents. However, when a Democratic president is in power, Democratic gubernatorial candidates do not electorally benefit at a high level in harsh economic times. With regards to the 2010 election, Strickland was unable to shift the blame for high unemployment in Ohio into the national arena due to a Democratic president in power. Furthermore, by directing his attacks at John Kasich and his association to Lehman Brothers, Strickland wasted valuable time and resources. While I am unable to measure the effects of an alternative campaign strategy, Strickland may have fared better if he attempted to "blame" the previous Bush administration. Correspondingly, I argue that national political factors are invaluable for analysis and most certainly contribute to the outcome of this specific case.

In the next section, I will explore existing literature on theories of gubernatorial electoral success. Although literature is sparse in this area of political study, I will draw on articles that offer insight to understanding the findings of my research. Following the literature review, I will present my research specific to the State of Ohio. I will explain what types of data I collected and the importance of this data and the methods I employed in my analysis. Subsequently, I will further address my argument concerning the electoral success of John Kasich in the 2010 Ohio gubernatorial election. I will draw on the data that I have collected and discuss the steps that directed me to my conclusion.

Theories of Gubernatorial Electoral Success

Political scientists are divided on what factors most affect the electoral outcome in gubernatorial elections. This specific type of election is much different from other local, state, and national races mainly due to the variety of influences and the nature of the office. Gubernatorial elections lack “systemic data on state-level events and on governors themselves, which imposes limits on our current ability to understand the link between governors and their constituents” (MacDonald 1999). The position of governor is subject to evaluation based on executive performance, yet the evaluation can, knowingly or unknowingly, be viewed through a lens blurred by national trends and influences. This includes presidential performance and party approval. Additionally, an incumbent governor seeking reelection may be evaluated on the condition of the economy. Many scholars argue that retrospective analysis is one of the main factors voters employ when deciding what candidate or party for which to cast their vote. These economic evaluations include unemployment, economic growth, taxes, and varying combinations of these indicators. The importance of fundraising and campaign spending are factors that echo through all types of races, including gubernatorial elections. Incumbency can benefit or disadvantage a candidate based on his or her perceived performance while occupying the office. Finally, additional factors such as the perceptions and characteristics of specific candidates and further types of issue-based voting may also play a role in election outcomes. In the next section, I will explore prevailing theories of electoral success and the arguments made by their proponents.

National Politics

In his article “Institutions, the Economy, and the Dynamics of State Elections,” John E. Chubb (1998) argues that certain national factors play a role in statewide elections. He contends

that presidential turnout and coattails have significant effects on voter participation. While these types of influences may be a factor in some states, it is not the case for a state like Ohio, which holds off-year, midterm elections for the office of governor.

Chubb proposes that while state economic conditions can influence elections, “state elections are becoming more susceptible to swings in the national economy” (Chubb 1998). His model examines the changes in real per capita income, a measure that attempts to account for both national and state economic conditions. He also looks at the perceptions of the economy held by the average voter. He finds that gubernatorial elections are “perturbed by national conditions.” Heavily influenced by these economic trends, presidential approval ratings play a role in these elections. This is reflected at a higher rate in states which hold on-year elections. Chubb asserts factors specific to the election including personality characteristics of the candidates and party associations may also play a role in voter choice.

Other theorists on the evaluation of gubernatorial performance, such as Brown (2010), argue that blame or satisfaction is assigned to the governor or president in varying degrees by the electorate. When evaluating an incumbent governor running for reelection, voters often attribute the successes or failures of the governor on the basis of political party affiliation.

Brown argues that “Americans rely heavily on partisan shortcuts when deciding whether to hold their governor (as opposed to President) responsible for state-level policy outcomes” (Brown 2010). This is especially helpful to voters when they are unable to differentiate the responsibilities of either office. This type of partisan-lens theory follows from the party identification arguments first made by the authors of *The American Voter*. Its authors contend that politics “can be very complex, so it is important for citizens to be able to use simple cues to interpret what they cannot experience directly” (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960).

Brown examines the 2006 election results of races with Democratic incumbents. He selects only Democratic incumbents in order to contrast them to Republican President George W. Bush. He finds that voters' perceptions of the economy are largely based on partisan evaluations. Those voters that identified themselves as Democrats in a state with a Democratic governor would most likely assign the blame to the president if economic conditions were unfavorable. Republicans in the state with a Democratic governor would assign the blame for economic hardship to the governor, and not the president. Those voters in a state absent this sort of divided federalism would be unable to assign varying degrees of blame. However, the economic outlook of these voters would be susceptible to influence based on their own partisan attitudes.

Although national factors are important to examine when performing an analysis of a particular election, they are not a direct predictor of election outcome. The difficulty in separating the state economy from the national economy leads to this inconsistency.

Campaign Money

Campaign money can be used on literature or media spots to increase name-recognition of a particular candidate, discredit an opponent, communicate with base voters and sway independent voters, along with numerous other strategic operations. Campaign money has been termed the "mother's milk of politics" (Partin 2002). Political scientists, including Randall Partin and Kihong Eom, attempt to measure the affect of the dollar on gubernatorial elections (2002 and 2006).

Partin argues that campaign spending, specifically in gubernatorial elections, "dramatically influences the outcomes of these races" (Partin 2002). Gubernatorial elections are highly visible and "competitive" races. Incumbents benefit from name-recognition. This makes

amplified name-recognition for challengers a critical portion of the campaign and requires high media output generated through campaign funds and spending.

After accounting for other possible influences in state-wide contests, Partin examines the trends in campaign expenditures and general electoral success. His results find that candidates benefit from campaign expenditures at varying degrees. Out-party candidates tend to benefit from increased spending at a much higher rate than in-party candidates.

Kihong Eom (2006) also explores the differences in spending benefits between incumbents and challengers. He examines the allegations that campaign contribution limits unfairly favor incumbents by looking at the varying types of campaign contributors. Some contributors are “particularistic,” in that they favor influence over a specific policy, while other contributors are more candidate-oriented or “universalistic” contributors. By differentiating between these two types of contributors, Eom finds that campaign contribution limits increasingly influence particularistic contributors to donate to both candidates. This is to “insure” favorable policy measures, no matter what the outcome of the election. This reduces the campaign contribution “bias” that favors the incumbent and works to foster a more competitive race.

Campaign contributions are important for message output by both candidates. Nevertheless, the extent of the help is questionable. Certain instances, such as the defeat of candidates with very large budgets, raise serious concerns with using campaign contributions in accounting for all instances of gubernatorial success. Campaign contributions make up one of many multi-causal factors in gubernatorial election outcomes.

Incumbency

As the popularity of an incumbent seeking reelection increases, his or her chance of success in a campaign is directly boosted. James E. Piereson (1977) notes a slight transition in factors that account for candidate success in gubernatorial elections from 1910 to 1970. During this time, he documents a decline in the importance of party identification and an increase in the importance of incumbency. He emphasizes the necessity of further study on this matter to explore if this is a lasting trend or if it merely attempts to account for some other unknown variable.

In his article, “The Electoral Fortunes of Gubernatorial Incumbents,” Mark E. Tompkins (1984) presents an inconclusive analysis on the effects of incumbency as well. He notes the “growth in the importance of incumbency in the last decade” and weighs the advantages and burdens that come with office. He rejects the institutional argument that bureaucratic resources greatly enhance the reelection prospects for the incumbent and points to the importance of performance while in office along with the advantages for those identified as “outstanding” governors. His theory also requires analysis of additional elections.

James D. King argues that the incumbent popularity is an important factor in examining gubernatorial electoral success that has been largely overlooked. He contends that in numerous statewide elections, voters hold incumbents “directly accountable” (King 2001). In his article, King creates a model that includes other theories of gubernatorial success and measures them against incumbency status and popularity. In open contests, voters are likely to base their decision on the previous governor from the same political party. King is only able to perform this analysis for four states, due to the nature of the survey questions asked. Most survey questions do

not include any type of reference to incumbency, making it increasingly difficult to measure voter preference.

The importance of incumbency in the decisions of the electorate is a difficult variable to measure. Lack of additional information and multi-causal variables make conclusions about the blame or reward attributed to a former governor open to much debate. While this factor may prove to be important, additional exploration on the motivation of voters is required.

Economic Factors

Economic factors such as taxes, unemployment, and real-disposable income dominate the debate on voter decision analysis in gubernatorial elections. Political scientists in this school of economic retrospective voting vary on the degree of accountability and on which economic aspect is most important in this type of analysis.

In “Taxes and Voting: Electoral Retribution in the American States,” Susan L. Kone and Richard F. Winters (1993) examine 407 gubernatorial elections nationwide to determine the importance of different types of tax policies implemented throughout a governor’s administration. They find that an increase in sales tax has greater negative implications for a governor seeking reelection than an increase in the income tax. Additionally, their analysis shows that the impact of new program implementation is greater than marginal increases in existing duties. Incumbents who significantly raise taxes will face an up-hill reelection battle, if their challenger is able exploit and propel this issue.

Jason A. MacDonald and Lee Sigelman (1999) also explore public assessments of incumbent governors who preside over tax increases. Their findings show that while increasing taxes has a significant impact on elections, voters only hold the governor accountable for the increase if it is made during that specific election year. After accounting for other variables, the

authors analyzed the effects of six different types of taxes and their varying implications. They found that if challengers are effectively able to “blame governors and governors’ party for higher taxes,” this issue will become increasingly salient with voters (MacDonald and Sigelman 1999). Furthermore, as states increase their amount of “institutional” power, governors are held accountable at an increasingly higher rate.

Another approach finds tax increases combined with decreased disposable income and perceptions of a “poor” state economy “all contribute to votes against incumbent governors and their parties.” Richard G. Niemi, Harold W. Stanley, and Ronald J. Vogel (1995) examine CBS/NYT exit polls coupled with state economic data to find the association between these variables. The authors conclude that the governor is found responsible for the state government. The extent of the responsibility fluctuates from state to state and from election to election, depending on perceptions of the voters. The authors contend that the decision of an incumbent to seek reelection is based on state economic factors. The authors find that national issues coupled with state-level economic factors are important indicators of electoral outcome.

In his article, “Votes & Taxes: The Political Economy of the American Governorship,” Theodore J. Eismeier (1983) finds that while there is a relationship between increased taxes and electoral reckoning, the association is not devastating to incumbents. He examines the most visible types of tax increases, legislated increases and proposals. Eismeier examines election data from 1950 to 1980 and finds that while voters tend to punish some governors who preside over tax increases, many times the electorate is more lenient than expected. If tactical, incumbent governors are often able to shape their assessment by voters in respect to economic policy.

Political scientist Randall W. Partin (1995) examines the relationship between national economic forces and state economic forces. Partin (1995) examines data from the 1990 ANES

and examines voter evaluation of the economy. He controls for national forces and incumbency and finds that incumbent governors are held accountable for the condition of the economy. Party identification plays a role in this assessment. He also determines that open races “take on some of the external influences of the national political arena” at a higher rate than in races with an incumbent candidate.

Kevin M. Leyden and Stephen A. Borrelli (1995) examine the relationship between the governor and the state legislature in regard to economic responsibility. They contend that when the state government is “unified,” that is when the majority of both houses in the state legislature and the governor’s office are occupied by the same party, the incumbent is held accountable for state economic conditions at a much higher rate than if the state government were divided. The model they develop measures the “electoral consequences” of a unified government in contrast to a divided government. They ascertain that in a united government, the in-party is held responsible for the economy by voters. The in-party candidate is not required to be an incumbent to be held accountable during the election.

By using electoral data post-World War II and multiple regression models, author Sam Peltzman (1987) determines that voters tend to hold the national government responsible for macro-economic factors. The electorate typically only holds the governor accountable when the state budget expands. Peltzman notes that when a governor is in the same party as a president with unpopular economic policies, voters are more likely to punish the president by rejecting the incumbent from this party. Voters send a referendum to Washington through their choice in gubernatorial elections.

Noneconomic Factors

In their article, “Issue Voting in Gubernatorial Election: Abortions and Post-Webster Politics,” Elizabeth Adell Cook, Ted G. Jelen, and Clyde Wilcox reject solely using economic factors as a measure when assessing gubernatorial elections (1994). By examining exit polling from 1989 and 1990, the authors determine that social issues, especially abortion, play a significant role in voters’ support for gubernatorial candidates. *Post-Webster* refers to the case decided by the Supreme Court that ultimately put more regulation power regarding abortions in the hands of the state government. This enlargement of gubernatorial power to influence these types of issues has increased the presence of these issues in campaigns. The pro-choice or pro-life attitudes of the winners in these contests reflect the overall attitudes of the voters. Their findings lead the authors to conclude that “studies of gubernatorial elections would benefit from a consideration of noneconomic issues” (Cook 1994).

While noneconomic issues may have held greater influence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the salience of these issues has most likely decreased. This is due to the increase in salience of economic issues. When economic conditions are less desirable and have a greater impact on voters, the result is most likely a decrease in importance of non-economic issues, simply because of the nature of the times.

Candidate Characteristics and Personality

Another factor is the projected personality and the characteristics of a specific gubernatorial candidate. Daniel J. Benjamin and Jesse M. Shapiro attempt to measure the effects of “thin slice forecasts” through a study (2009). The researchers ask voters to project successful gubernatorial candidates based on their initial impressions from short video clips of unknown candidates during gubernatorial debates. The body language and overall appearance of the

candidate proved to be fairly successful in predicting electoral outcomes. The authors argue that these “forecasts” outperform even the strongest economic indicators. While this study is successful in predicting election outcome, it does not account for all factors that measure the personality characteristics of candidates, leaving it vulnerable to criticism. In fact, the authors acknowledge that this is not a “causal factor in determining election outcomes” (Benjamin 3).

Data and Methods

The data and the methods that I employ reflect the previously mentioned theories of gubernatorial electoral success. I analyze four specific gubernatorial elections, economic factors, vote share for the 2010 election and foregoing elections, media output, and specific campaign spending with measurable message output. The importance of these variables and the methods of measurement are explained in the succeeding section.

I account for previous theories on gubernatorial success by examining campaign expenditures and tax issues. Tax issues are marked by the presence of any tax increase during Strickland’s administration and campaign expenditures are measured using information reported to the Office of the Ohio Secretary of State.

In order to account for the partisan leanings of counties in Ohio, I examine data from the Presidential elections of 2000, 2004, and 2008. Those counties with a larger composite vote share for the Democratic presidential candidate are labeled as “blue,” while those counties with a larger vote share for the Republican presidential candidate are labeled as “red.” This variable is used to account for differences in voting patterns between “red” and “blue” counties displayed during the gubernatorial elections. Prior research would lead us to believe that there will be significant differences in voting behavior of these two types of counties regardless of economic

status. Economic status, as previously mentioned, is measured by unemployment statistics for the purpose of this analysis.

Additionally, the distinction between “red” and “blue” counties allows us to account for any drop-off rates in turnout in counties. Previous studies have shown that there is a significant drop in turnout of registered voters during midterm election cycles. I study these figures in order to account for the notion that Democratic voters may not have “turned out” for Strickland at the same rate as they did for Obama in 2008 or for Strickland in 2006. Moreover, Republican voters may have dropped-off at a lower rate than Democrats, accounting for Kasich’s victory.

Gubernatorial Elections in the State of Ohio

I surveyed four modern gubernatorial elections in Ohio from 1998 through 2010. I utilized vote share and unemployment in all 88 Ohio counties for these elections. This information was available through the Ohio Secretary of State’s records and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 1 summarizes the major variables for each election. Unemployment is calculated by taking the average percent of unemployed in all 88 Ohio counties for that specific year. If there is an incumbent, his political party is listed in the next column. Finally, the party of both the president and the successful electoral candidate are listed in the final two columns.

TABLE 1 Gubernatorial Election 1998-2010

	Unemployment	Incumbent Y/N	Running Party	Incumbent’s Party	President’s Party	Winner’s Party
1998	5.08	N	-	-	D	R
2002	5.83	Y	-	R	R	R
2006	5.40	N	-	-	R	D
2010	10.15	Y	-	D	D	R

Results

My results include analysis of campaign expenditures, taxes, drop-off statistics, national forces, incumbency, the economy and media output. These factors are measured and analyzed in this section.

Prior to measuring national forces, incumbency, the economy and media output, it is important to explore both campaign finance and tax issues. I find that these factors are not significant as national forces and the economy in the 2010 gubernatorial election.

As an incumbent governor, Strickland immediately benefitted from name-recognition. It was critical for the Kasich campaign to increase Kasich's visibility through increased campaign spending. Spending for Kasich totaled around \$17.2 million, while spending for Strickland totaled around \$16.7 million (Associated Press 2010). While Kasich did benefit from higher campaign spending, incumbent Strickland benefitted from high visibility, due to his position. The difference in spending between the two campaigns and Strickland's immediate visibility neutralize effectiveness of these factors.

As previously stated, some scholars argue that the loss of an incumbent can be attributed to tax increases during his administration. While Strickland did not raise taxes during his administration, the Kasich campaign argued that Strickland "delayed a tax cut" (Naymik 2010). According to previous literature, delaying a tax cut does not have the same effect as a tax increase. It is doubtful, therefore, that Strickland was held accountable for this factor as illustrated by previous literature. I turn next to drop-off and turnout rates.

Along with the analysis of these variables, I performed tests to account for any cases of drop-off in both "red" and "blue" counties. I compared the 2010 midterm election with the 2006 midterm election in "red" and "blue" counties. Additionally, I compared the 2010 midterm

election to the 2008 general election in “red” and “blue” counties. The mean drop-off rates of Democratic counties are displayed in Table 2. The mean drop-off rates of Republican counties are displayed in Table 3.

TABLE 2 Drop-off Rates in Democratic Counties

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.
Drop-off 06-10	16	6.29	3.38
Drop-off 08-10	16	21.23	3.54

TABLE 3 Drop-off Rates in Republican Counties

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.
Drop-off 06-10	72	5.89	3.96
Drop-off 08-10	72	20.12	3.64

Using a two sample *t*-test with equal variances, I compared the statistical significance of the difference in Republican and Democratic counties to account for voter turnout and drop-off. A two-sample *t*-test assuming equal variances using a pooled estimate of the variance was performed to test the hypothesis that the resulting mean drop-off of the voter turn-out for the two types of counties were equal. A 95% confidence interval on the difference between “red” and “blue” counties using a two-sample *t*-test with 86 degrees of freedom indicates that drop-off rates from 2006 to 2010 were not significant. This test was repeated again for drop-off from 2008 to 2010. Again drop-off rates were not statistically significant. This indicates that the Republican victory in 2010 was not centered on voter turnout and a significant drop-off of Democratic voters. This dispels the notion that Kasich benefitted electorally from a smaller drop-off, thus a higher turnout rate, in Republican counties.

Economic and National Factors

To analyze the relationship between economic factors and voting, I computed the correlation between unemployment and the Democratic candidate's percent of two-party vote share for governor across 88 different counties. I performed this analysis through the past four gubernatorial election cycles and compared this with the average unemployment for the year, as previously mentioned. The results are listed in Table 4.

TABLE 4 Democratic Vote Share and Unemployment

	Correlation (demct/unempl)	Unemployment %
1998	0.23	5.08
2002	0.36	5.83
2006	0.52	5.40
2010	0.26	10.15

The first column displays the results of the correlation analysis between two variables: unemployment and the Democratic candidate's percent of two-party vote share for governor. The second column displays the average unemployment. Utilizing our knowledge of the incumbency status and the party status of both the gubernatorial winner and the president located in Table 1, we can analyze the conditions and the possible reasons for the variance in correlation.

Table 4 leads to the conclusion that in the past four gubernatorial elections, Democratic candidates have benefitted from high unemployment. While the correlation between unemployment and the Democratic candidate's percent of two-party vote share for governor varies from election to election, the correlation is always positive. Why do Democratic candidate benefit in counties with a higher rate of unemployment? One possible explanation is that Democratic officeholders have supported government programs that provide assistance to the unemployed. Additionally, Ohio is a state where a large number of unemployed workers lost their manufacturing jobs. The loss of jobs in this sector is largely blamed on free trade measures,

most typically associated with Republicans. These unemployed workers will be more likely to vote for Democratic candidates.

In 1998, unemployment was at 5.08 percent and there was an open governor's seat. Democratic president Bill Clinton was in power. The correlation between Democratic vote share and unemployment was at its lowest, 0.23. The Republican gubernatorial candidate, Bob Taft, won the election. The Democratic candidate, Lee Fisher, was unable to capitalize on unemployment in that election, although he still benefitted.

In 2002, unemployment was at 5.83 percent. This was slightly, but not extensively, higher than unemployment in the previous midterm election cycle. Republican incumbent Taft sought reelection and was victorious. The correlation between Democratic vote share and unemployment was higher than 1998 at 0.36.

Moving ahead to 2006, there were some significant changes. The governor's seat was open and Republican president George W. Bush was in power at the national level. Unemployment was at 5.40 percent, not much of a change from 2002, but the correlation between Democratic vote share and unemployment was at 0.52. Democrat Ted Strickland became the governor of Ohio.

Finally in 2010, Governor Strickland sought reelection. In this election, Democratic president Barack Obama held power at the national level. Unemployment was at a high 10.15 percent. The correlation between vote share and unemployment was at 0.26. Governor Strickland lost to challenger John Kasich.

These four trials performed over 88 different cases indicate that while Democratic gubernatorial candidates do benefit in cases of high unemployment, maximum benefit is only gained when a Republican president is in power. I argue that Democratic candidates, regardless

of incumbency status, mainly benefit from high unemployment when they are able to effectively shift the blame to a Republican president. This argument is applicable to the State of Ohio, not tested in other states.

Media Output

Media output is important to measure in order to understand the ebb and flow of the campaign. I selected this factor for analysis not only to supplement my previous findings concerning national forces and economic factors, but also to obtain a deeper sense of the significance of the message and tone of the campaign.

Messaging and talking points were measured through both output by major Ohio newspapers and the expenditures and types of television ads produced and viewed throughout the campaign. In the following portion, I will explain the importance of both these measurable sources.

In the previous section of my paper, I attributed Strickland's loss partially due to the fact that he was unable to shift blame for poor economic conditions onto the national level. Additionally, Kasich's victory signifies that he was able to control the economic debate. If this theory holds, I expect that media output would reflect these factors through messaging and talking points.

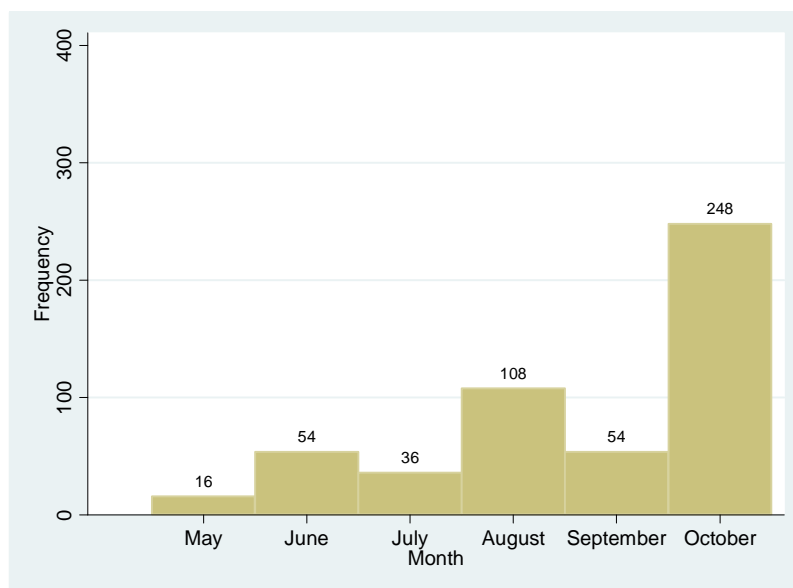
Newspaper output is calculated through articles relating to the race sixteen months prior to the election. Six of Ohio's major newspapers were utilized for this study. The newspapers include: the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Dayton Dailey News, Youngstown Vindicator and the Columbus Dispatch. The content of the compiled articles from each newspaper are analyzed for key terms relating to the economy, national factors, and

factors specific to this campaign. These key terms varied in mention throughout the election and functioned as a measurable output of the conversation during the campaign.

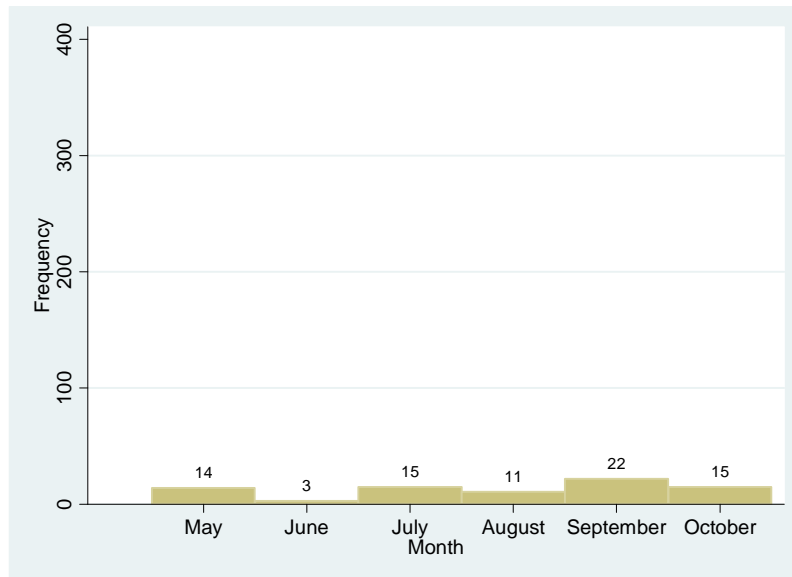
To further test my theory of the economic importance, national forces, and additional campaign messages, I selected a “dictionary” of terms and measured their occurrence in the six Ohio newspapers. I ran this test in May 2010 through October 2010. The terms I selected were based on previous literature and are utilized to further explore my theory regarding the electoral success of Kasich in 2010.

The first set of terms that I selected was grounded in national forces. First, I opted to run a search for the word “Obama” to determine the Democratic president’s presence throughout the race. The result is in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 Word Count of “Obama”



Next, I ran the frequency count for “Bush,” the former Republican president. The results are located in Figure 2.

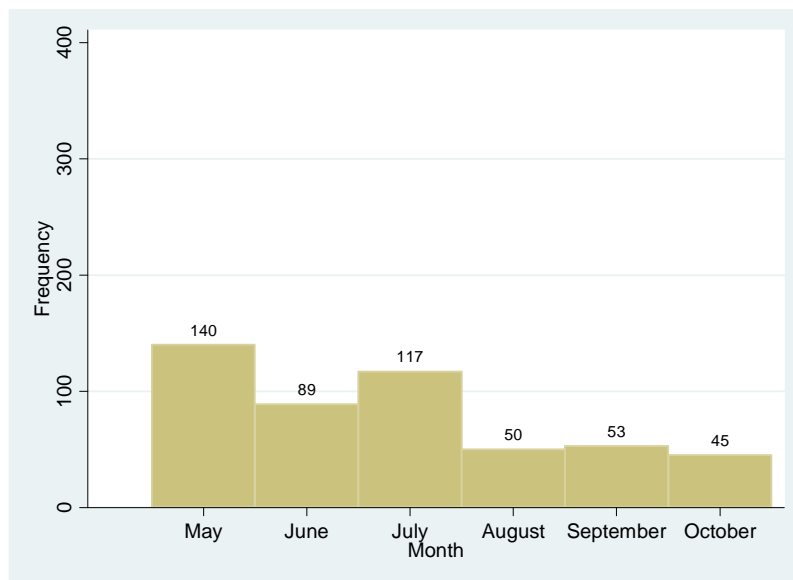
FIGURE 2 Word Count of “Bush”

According to the theory of blame that I offered in the previous section of my paper, Strickland would not benefit from a high frequency of “Obama” mentions in a time of elevated unemployment. As in 2006, Strickland would have greater electoral fortune if he was able to attribute the “blame” to a Republican president. While President Bush was not in office at this time, Strickland may have theoretically benefitted from increased references to the Bush administration. Whereas it is difficult to attribute the conversation and word frequency in the newspapers to one source, it can be reasoned that Strickland did not benefit from the high frequency of “Obama” mentions and the low frequency of “Bush” mentions.

Where did the Strickland campaign focus their efforts in influencing the conversation? Figure 3 indicates that while the Strickland campaign was effective at turning the conversation to “Lehman” at the beginning of the May 2010 and throughout the beginning of the summer, they were not able to command the same high output near the end of the election. Furthermore, by

focusing their efforts on pinning Kasich to Wall Street and Lehman, the campaign failed to address the former Republican national figure, George W. Bush. While evidence does not indicate whether shifting the conversation to Lehman was effective or ineffective, it does show that it was nearly impossible to direct the conversation to the former Republican Administration at the national level. Moreover, the high frequency of mentions to President Obama also establishes Democratic control at the national level.

FIGURE 3 Word Count of “Lehman”



In the last leg of the election, the debate centered on the economy, as evidenced by the high frequency of economic terms, such as “tax” and “jobs.” These counts are displayed in Figure 4 and Figure 5. While discussion of economic issues was prevalent nationwide, the Kasich campaign was also able to effectively harness this issue and direct the conversation to maximize electoral benefit. I will explore this issue even further in the next section relating to specific campaign output.

FIGURE 4 Word Count of “Tax”

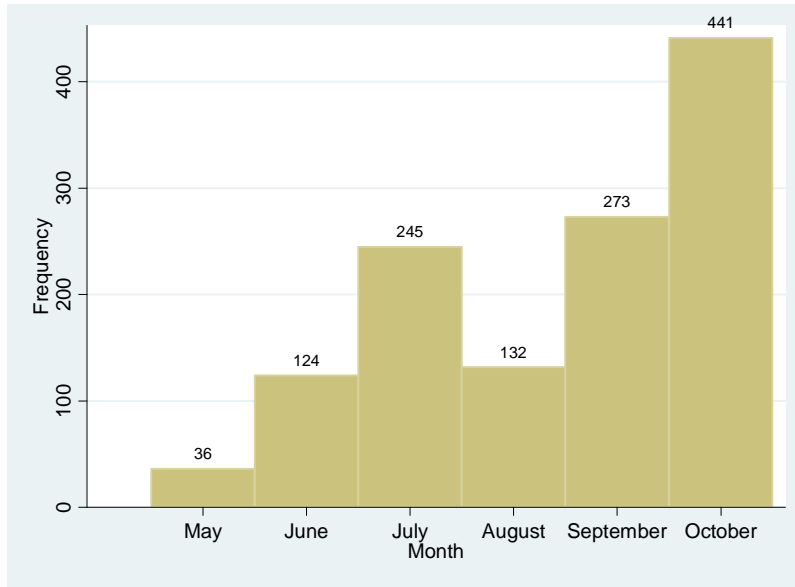
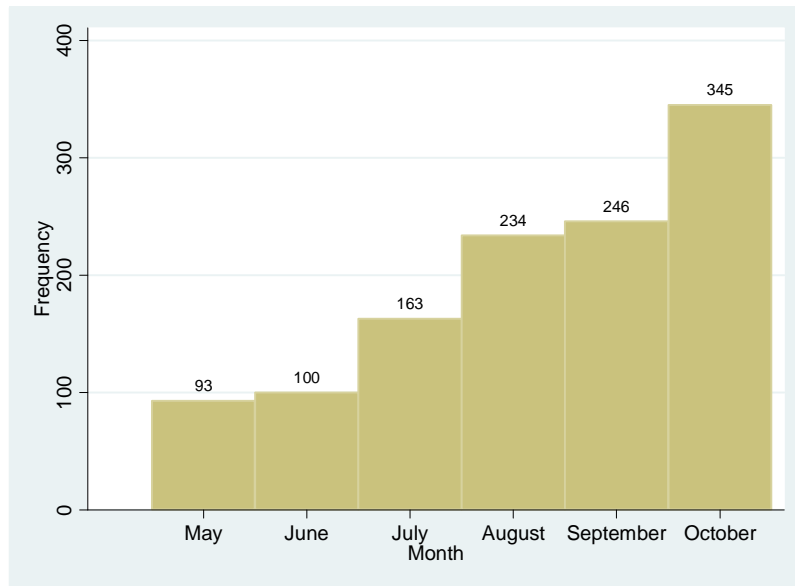


FIGURE 5 Word Count of “Jobs”



The graphs in this section provide a more quantitative measure of the tone of the campaign. The measure of word counts in the six major Ohio newspapers provides an average compilation of the direction of the election from May 2010 to October 2010. In the next section, I will provide another quantitative measure of the tone of the campaign.

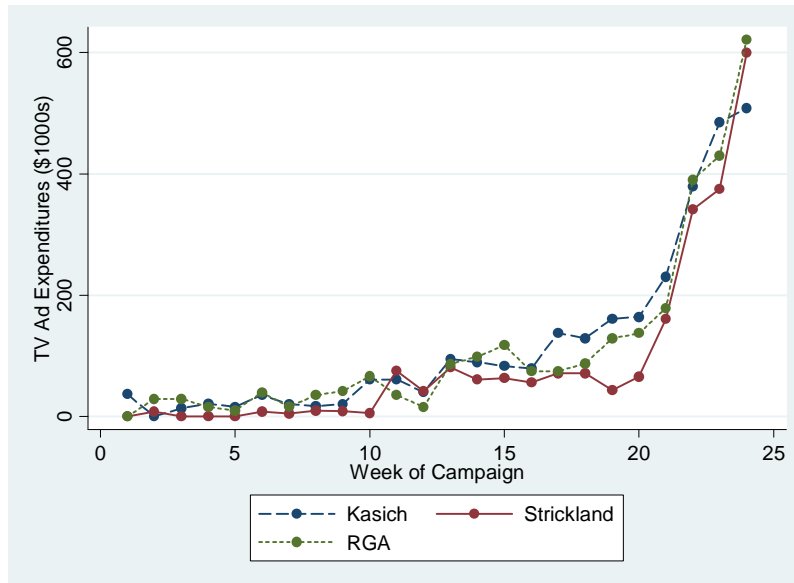
Campaign Ads and Spending

To account for activity and specific message decisions made by each campaign, I utilized campaign advertisement spending and the specific campaign ads used by each campaign. I collected week to week spending by both campaigns using a sample of news stations broadcasting to 78 of 88 counties. Broadcasts to the remaining 10 counties were either immeasurable or insignificant to my analysis of average output. The news stations in my sample include: WEWS ABC--Cleveland, WKYC NBC--Cleveland, WJW FOX--Cleveland, WHIO CBS--Dayton, WDTN NBC--Dayton, WBNS CBS--Columbus, WSYX ABC--Columbus, WTTE FOX--Columbus, WCPO ABC--Cincinnati, WKRC CBS--Cincinnati, EKRC CW--Cincinnati, WYTV ABC--Youngstown, WYFX FOX--Youngstown, WFMJ NBC--Youngstown, WNWO NBC--Toledo, WTVG ABC--Toledo, WTOL CBS--Toledo, WTRF CBS--Wheeling, ETRF FOX--Wheeling. These nineteen stations provide an adequate measure of campaign output, determined by expenditures.

Another important factor to explore is messaging and expenditure relating to the campaign by outside groups. While it is difficult to measure these expenditures separate from the campaign, I was able to investigate the influence of the national governor's associations. The Democratic Governors Association invested a minuscule amount into this campaign. In contrast, the Republican Governors Association's influence was increasingly present on televisions across Ohio. Figure 6 displays the total ad expenditures in the sample of television stations by both

campaigns and the significant Republican Governors Association. While this does not account for total television ad expenditures, it provides a close representation of the growth television expenditures throughout Ohio counties.

FIGURE 6 Expenditures by Strickland, Kasich and the RGA



It is evident from the total expenditures in Figure 6 that both campaigns and the RGA invested increasingly high amounts into television ad messaging.

In addition to campaign and group ad expenditures, I also analyzed the types of ads that the campaigns and the RGA produced. This is helpful in measuring the tone of the campaign and the strategies of the Kasich campaign, Strickland campaign and the RGA. In the three preceding tables, I analyze principle television ads of the Strickland campaign, Kasich campaign and the RGA. While data may vary from station to station, I include approximate air dates and the overall message concentration of the ads. I categorize the ads into four groups: strong positive message (sp), lean positive message (lp), lean negative message (ln), and strong negative

message (sn). The positive message group portrays that candidate in a positive manner, while the negative group portrays the opponent in a negative manner. Attention to the main concentration of the ad is also important in order to relate this to my previous argument concerning Strickland's inability to achieve electoral success in the 2010 election.

TABLE 4 Principal Campaign Ads by Kasich

Name	Date	Main Theme	Type	Summary
"Record"	07/16/10	Economy	Sp	Centered on touting Kasich's past leadership, cutting taxes and lowering unemployment
"New Day" General	08/08/10	Inspirational Economy	Sp	Positive message about a new direction for Ohio
"New Day" Cincinnati	08/23/10	Economy	Sp	Focused on reducing the tax burden and growing the economy
"Stronger Ohio"	09/05/10	Economy	Sp	Set at Park Ohio, Kasich discusses how to make Ohio a "jobs friendly" state
"Opportunity"	09/17/10	Education	Sp	Kasich discusses education reform in a Columbus classroom
"Shake- up"	09/24/10	Economy	Sp	Mary Taylor speaks of her experience as Ohio Auditor of State and touts Kasich's economic plan
"400,000"	10/03/10	Economy	Ln	Strickland has not done enough to save jobs and Kasich can bring these jobs back to Ohio
"Compare"	10/08/10	Economy	Ln	Strickland has not done enough to save jobs and Kasich can bring these jobs back to Ohio
"Shipped Away"	10/08/10	Economy	Ln	Strickland has not done enough to save jobs and Kasich can bring these jobs back to Ohio
"Busted"	10/14/10	Attack response	Sn	Strickland has smeared Kasich and is attempting to distract from his own failed economic policies
"Strickland/ Strickland"	10/15/10	Attack Economy	Sn	Strickland has failed Ohioans. Kasich will bring jobs to Ohio
"Two Paths"	10/23/10	Leadership Economy	Sp	Kasich will bring jobs back to Ohio

TABLE 5 **Principal Campaign Ads by Strickland**

Name	Date	Main Theme	Type	Summary
"Good Work"	05/04/10	Wall Street Attack	Sn	Centered Kasich's votes to outsource jobs
"Revolving Door"	08/24/10	Wall Street Attack	Sn	Kasich's ties to Washington and Wall Street, includes outsourcing mentions
"Truth"	08/27/10	Economy Attack	Sn	Kasich ties to outsourcing jobs through NAFTA and China
"Nilda"	08/27/10	Economy	Sn	Kasich and outsourcing
"Mel"	09/25/10	Economy Jobs	Sp	Strickland's leadership and renewable jobs
"Listen"	09/16/10	Economy	Sp	Strickland's leadership and jobs CEO of MiracleGro
"Angry"	09/29/10	Economy	Ln	Strickland will do a better job than Kasich with economic issues. Wall Street
"Time"	10/04/10	Economy Trust	Ln	Strickland's record and Kasich and Wall Street
"Hunters"	10/04/10	Gun Rights	Lp	Strickland has a better record than Kasich on gun issues
"Reform"	10/07/10	Attack response	Ln	Kasich will repeal Kasich's reforms
"New Plan"	10/15/10	Trust	Sn	Kasich will give bonuses to his corporate friends
"Believe"	10/29/10	Leadership	Sp	Strickland believes in Ohio

TABLE 6 Principal Campaign Ads by Republican Governors Association

Name	Date	Main Theme	Type	Summary
"Worried"	05/21/10	Attack	Sn	Centered on Strickland's failed campaign promises
"Shift Blame"	05/22/10	Attack	Sn	Strickland is trying to shift the blame for his poor record as governor
"Jobs"	07/07/10	Attack	Sn	Strickland failed to create jobs in Ohio
"Twice"	08/25/10	Attack	Sn	Strickland outsourced to workers in El Salvador
"Texas"	10/01/10	Attack	Sn	Strickland's and loss of stimulus money to Texas
"Gone"	10/28/10	Attack	Sn	Loss of jobs under Strickland

By examining the information in the three previous tables, we can interpret various strategies of the Kasich and Strickland campaigns and the strategy of outside groups. Throughout the campaign, Kasich's television ads focused on economic issues. Kasich "introduced" himself to Ohioans, touting his fiscally conservative record. As the race progressed, Kasich's ads addressed economic issues throughout major regions of the state. These ads portrayed Kasich as capable of understanding the complex problems of an economically, socially, and politically diverse state. Attack ads against Strickland surfaced in October, criticizing Strickland's job as governor. The Kasich campaign presents Kasich's alternative solutions to Strickland's failing policies. Despite the central attack theme of these ads, positive undertones were always present. The ads depicted a brighter future for Ohio with the assistance of Kasich's leadership. The television ad set finishes on an extremely upbeat tone with the "Two Paths" spot, a message focusing on Ohio's bright future and that echoed the economic and optimistic tone present throughout Kasich's campaign.

In contrast, Strickland's ads were overwhelmingly negative and labeled Kasich as a "Wall Street insider." The ads pinned Kasich to outsourcing, corrupt Wall Street deals, and the bad practices of Lehman Brothers. The television spots began in May in attempt to define Kasich to Ohio voters. In addition to the numerous attack ads against Kasich, the Strickland campaign also touted Strickland's leadership as governor and his strong pro-gun record in contrast to Kasich's record. Despite the overwhelming number of negative ads focused on Wall Street and Lehman, Strickland managed to end on a positive note. Like Kasich's final message, Strickland also focused on his optimism for better times in Ohio.

While the Kasich campaign focused on a positive and upbeat message, the RGA attacked the poor economic policies of the Strickland administration. These ads portrayed "everyday Ohioans" talking about their economic frustrations in various settings such as the workplace, restaurants, and in their homes. These attacks were present throughout the campaign and focused on the economic policy failures of the Strickland administration.

The set of attack ads produced by the RGA coupled with Kasich's positive message and focus on the economy proved to be a successful combination for the Kasich campaign. Meanwhile, Strickland's constant attacks on Kasich and his "Wall Street ties," did very little to propel the success of this campaign.

Verified through newspaper themes and television ad output, Kasich was able to dominate the economic debate while Strickland focused attacks on Kasich's Wall Street ties. These message strategies reflected the overall tone of the campaign. Kasich's strategy proved to be successful in overcoming the historic advantage of Democrats in times of economic hardship.

Conclusion

My investigation of the causal factors of John Kasich's 2010 gubernatorial victory in Ohio leads to three major findings. First, I find that in that in most recent Ohio gubernatorial elections Democratic candidates benefit most in areas of high unemployment. My findings show that while the correlation between unemployment and Democratic vote share is always positive, the extent of the correlation varies from election to election. After accounting for drop-off, incumbency, total expenditures, and taxes, I find that national politics are highly related to recent gubernatorial elections in Ohio.

My second conclusion is undoubtedly associated with my first conclusion, the importance of a candidate's ability to control the direction of the economic debate. Strickland was unable to capitalize on historic advantage of Democratic candidates in times of high unemployment. Strickland was unable to shift the "blame" to the national level.

In the final portion of my analysis, I verify the campaign messaging and output for the 2010 gubernatorial elections and find that the Kasich campaign was able to effectively direct the economic debate while Strickland focused his strategy on unproductive attacks against Kasich's ties to Wall Street. Although my analysis presents shortcomings in its ability to transcend broad historical periods and state boundaries, it is useful in attempting to explain the recent successes of gubernatorial candidates in Ohio.

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