

# Do Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Decisions?

## Evidence from the Field

### (Online Appendix)

**Table A1: Balance Tests**

|   | Entire<br>Sample | Win<br>Before<br>Election | Loss<br>Before<br>Election | Difference<br>[t-statistic] |
|---|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Incumbent's previous vote<br>percentage | 55.32<br>(11.60) | 55.47<br>(11.44)          | 55.17<br>(11.76)           | 0.30<br>[0.58]              |
| President                               | 0.36<br>(0.48)   | 0.36<br>(0.48)            | 0.35<br>(0.48)             | 0.01<br>[0.29]              |
| Governor                                | 0.30<br>(0.46)   | 0.30<br>(0.46)            | 0.29<br>(0.46)             | 0.01<br>[0.43]              |
| Percent black in the county             | 11.20<br>(10.74) | 10.81<br>(10.20)          | 11.61<br>(11.28)           | -0.80<br>[-0.82]            |
| Percent high school<br>graduates        | 1.08<br>(0.69)   | 1.04<br>(0.70)            | 1.12<br>(0.68)             | -0.07<br>[-1.11]            |
| Farms per capita                        | 0.01<br>(0.01)   | 0.01<br>(0.01)            | 0.01<br>(0.01)             | 0.00<br>[-0.97]             |
| Unemployment rate                       | 4.65<br>(1.97)   | 4.70<br>(1.98)            | 4.60<br>(1.97)             | 0.10<br>[0.51]              |
| Per-capita income                       | 2.64<br>(0.55)   | 2.63<br>(0.52)            | 2.65<br>(0.58)             | -0.02<br>[-0.36]            |
| Log Population                          | 12.37<br>(1.17)  | 12.38<br>(1.07)           | 12.36<br>(1.26)            | 0.01<br>[0.11]              |
| <i>N</i>                                | 1786             | 912                       | 874                        |                             |

Notes: The first three columns report means and standard deviations (in parentheses). The last column shows the difference in means by win/loss status and reports the t-statistic (in bracket) for the null hypothesis of equality in means, correcting for clustering at the county level.

**Table A2: Randomization Checks**

|                                      | Week of Election |                | One Week Before  |                 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                                      | (1)              | (2)            | (3)              | (4)             |
| Incumbent's previous vote percentage | .001<br>(.001)   | .001<br>(.001) | .001<br>(.001)   | .0004<br>(.001) |
| President                            | .024<br>(.02)    | .02<br>(.02)   | .005<br>(.02)    | -.01<br>(.02)   |
| Governor                             | .022<br>(.02)    | .02<br>(.02)   | .015<br>(.02)    | .008<br>(.01)   |
| Percent black in the county          | -.004*<br>(.003) | .004<br>(.01)  | .00004<br>(.003) | -.002<br>(.01)  |
| Percent high school graduates        | -.053<br>(.04)   | .055<br>(.07)  | -.049<br>(.04)   | .03<br>(.06)    |
| Farms per capita                     | -6.41<br>(4.44)  | .275<br>(7.34) | -.892<br>(5.09)  | 5.43<br>(6.2)   |
| Unemployment rate                    | .0002<br>(.01)   | -.012<br>(.03) | .004<br>(.01)    | .011<br>(.02)   |
| Per-capita income                    | -.005<br>(.05)   | -.041<br>(.16) | .053<br>(.05)    | -.045<br>(.17)  |
| Log Population                       | -.019<br>(.03)   | -.01<br>(.20)  | -.011<br>(.03)   | -.062<br>(.19)  |
| Constant                             | .85**<br>(.38)   | 1.08<br>(2.28) | .514<br>(.46)    | 1.74<br>(2.23)  |
| Year fixed effects?                  | N                | Y              | N                | Y               |
| County fixed effects?                | N                | Y              | N                | Y               |
| R-squared                            | .012             | .019           | .006             | .022            |
| <i>N</i>                             | 1786             | 1786           | 1770             | 1770            |

Notes: \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Dependent variable is outcome of college football game (win=1). Regression standard errors, corrected for clustering at the county level, are in parentheses. Senator is the excluded category for the office.

**Table A3: Heterogeneity by Office**

|   | (1)               | (2)               |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Total football team wins in two weeks before the election | 1.50***<br>(.50)  | 1.36***<br>(.51)  |
| Incumbent's previous vote percentage                      | .43***<br>(.06)   | .50***<br>(.06)   |
| President   | -3.43***<br>(.78) | -2.83***<br>(.85) |
| Governor  | -2.26**<br>(.92)  | -3.05***<br>(.97) |
| Percent black in the county                               | -.004<br>(.04)    | -.05<br>(.12)     |
| Percent high school graduates                             | -.10<br>(.4)      | -.02<br>(.7)      |
| Farms per capita  | 73.69*<br>(44.77) | 64.81<br>(87.93)  |
| Unemployment rate   | .05<br>(.11)      | .001<br>(.21)     |
| Per-capita income   | -.59<br>(.64)     | -2.75**<br>(1.39) |
| Log Population  | .36<br>(.27)      | 2.03<br>(2.2)     |
| President x total football team wins                      | -1.10<br>(1.04)   | -.69<br>(.87)     |
| Governor x total football team wins                       | -.83<br>(1.08)    | -.85<br>(1.08)    |
| Year fixed effects?                                       | N                 | Y                 |
| County fixed effects?                                     | N                 | Y                 |
| R-squared   | .194              | .335              |
| N   | 1632              | 1632              |

Notes: \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Dependent variable is vote for the incumbent party. Regression standard errors, corrected for clustering at the county level, are in parentheses. Senator is the excluded category for the office. Constant for the regression is not reported.

**Table A4: The Effect of Football Game Outcomes by Office**

|                                       | Governor           |                      | Senate            |                     | President          |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                                       | (1)                | (2)                  | (3)               | (4)                 | (5)                | (6)                |
| Football team win before the election | 1.53**<br>(.63)    | 1.14<br>(.84)        | 1.41**<br>(.59)   | 1.69***<br>(.62)    | .70<br>(.47)       | .94**<br>(.40)     |
| Incumbent's previous vote percentage  | .45***<br>(.07)    | .41***<br>(.08)      | .50***<br>(.06)   | .46***<br>(.06)     | .33***<br>(.07)    | .57***<br>(.10)    |
| Percent black in the county           | .08**<br>(.04)     | -.32**<br>(.15)      | -.01<br>(.08)     | .40***<br>(.13)     | -.07**<br>(.03)    | -.26<br>(.24)      |
| Percent high school graduates         | 1.06<br>(.68)      | 3.96**<br>(1.62)     | .25<br>(.86)      | -3.27*<br>(1.80)    | -1.56***<br>(.49)  | -.18<br>(.67)      |
| Farms per capita                      | 108.57*<br>(59.98) | 461.06**<br>(182.47) | 90.12<br>(118.23) | -216.36<br>(255.17) | 58.13<br>(52.95)   | 126.24<br>(144.63) |
| Unemployment rate                     | -.01<br>(.21)      | -.88<br>(.55)        | .15<br>(.23)      | .24<br>(.49)        | -.004<br>(.13)     | .75**<br>(.31)     |
| Per-capita income                     | -.94<br>(.91)      | -2.13<br>(3.23)      | -1.83<br>(1.32)   | -3.86<br>(3.23)     | 1.29<br>(1.03)     | .22<br>(1.48)      |
| Log Population                        | .26<br>(.52)       | .32<br>(4.62)        | .69<br>(.56)      | 5.56<br>(5.40)      | .15<br>(.35)       | .55<br>(2.85)      |
| Constant                              | 22.61***<br>(7.78) | 25.88<br>(50.62)     | 20.86**<br>(9.32) | -16.54<br>(61.35)   | 28.46***<br>(6.07) | 2.75<br>(38.23)    |
| Year fixed effects?                   | N                  | Y                    | N                 | Y                   | N                  | Y                  |
| County fixed effects?                 | N                  | Y                    | N                 | Y                   | N                  | Y                  |
| R-squared                             | .164               | .220                 | .194              | .238                | .109               | .608               |
| N                                     | 488                | 488                  | 558               | 558                 | 586                | 586                |

Notes: \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Dependent variable is vote for the incumbent party. Regression standard errors, corrected for clustering at the county level, are in parentheses.

**Table A5: Symmetric Effect of Victories and Losses**

|   | (1)                | (2)               |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| Two losses in the two games before the election           | -2.36***<br>(.68)  | -2.21***<br>(.74) |
| One win and one loss in the two games before the election | -.82<br>(.75)      | -1.03<br>(.75)    |
| Incumbent's previous vote percentage                      | .43***<br>(.06)    | .50***<br>(.06)   |
| President   | -3.98***<br>(.66)  | -3.19***<br>(.76) |
| Governor  | -2.66***<br>(.62)  | -3.48***<br>(.72) |
| Percent black in the county                               | -.003<br>(.04)     | -.05<br>(.12)     |
| Percent high school graduates                             | -.09<br>(.4)       | -.03<br>(.69)     |
| Farms per capita  | 75.40<br>(44.82)   | 65.51<br>(87.13)  |
| Unemployment rate   | .06<br>(.11)       | .01<br>(.21)      |
| Per-capita income   | -.58<br>(.64)      | -2.75**<br>(1.37) |
| Log Population  | .36<br>(.27)       | 2.09<br>(2.21)    |
| Constant  | 28.79***<br>(5.78) | 17.65<br>(28.17)  |
| Year fixed effects?                                       | N                  | Y                 |
| County fixed effects?                                     | N                  | Y                 |
| R-squared   | .194               | .335              |
| N   | 1632               | 1632              |

Notes: \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Dependent variable is vote for the incumbent party. Regression standard errors, corrected for clustering at the county level, are in parentheses. Senator is the excluded category for the office. Constant for the regression is not reported.