

Casework, Issues and Voting in State Legislative Elections: A District Analysis

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Congressional research has addressed questions regarding the electoral consequences of service and policy responsiveness, as well as whether service responsiveness eliminates the need for policy responsiveness. However, less is known about the criteria by which constituents reward their state representatives. Part of the problem with resolving these questions at the state level has been the absence of data, since individual-level data on state legislative districts are hard to find and are unlikely to combine measures of both kinds of responsiveness. This study utilises data gathered in a particular state legislator's district (both data on actual member-constituent contacts and survey data) to discern more explicitly whether ombudsman service and constituent issue proximity to the incumbent affects vote choice. Our findings support the proposition that like their counterparts in Congress, state representatives prosper when paying attention to both service and policy responsiveness; however, we find convincing evidence that casework enables state legislators to gain support from constituents who otherwise would not vote for them.

Democratic theory suggests that representation should be associated with both service and policy responsiveness. Representatives should be responsive to constituents by representing their grievances and requests to government and by representing constituent policy views.¹ However, a strong case can be made that if legislators utilise casework (that is, service responsiveness) to insulate themselves from policy and partisan-based concerns, the practice would undermine policy accountability. Policy is frequently less than a critical component of vote choice; many voters lack well-defined policy positions and often have only vague ideas of where parties and congressional candidates stand on issues.² Voters know even less about state legislative candidates

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(particularly challengers) than congressional candidates. Furthermore, while party identification affects vote choice,³ especially in state legislative elections,⁴ it is important to emphasise that incumbent activities and resource allocations, even in the more party- and leader-oriented British House of Commons, are reflected in constituents' evaluations of legislators.⁵ Thus it is important to consider issue voting in state legislative elections, voter response to casework and other factors (such as party identification) together within a single framework. Moreover, it is desirable to examine state legislative elections in a manner more comparable to the way scholars have looked at congressional contests.

Congressional research has addressed questions regarding the electoral consequences of service and policy responsiveness, as well as whether service responsiveness eliminates the need for policy responsiveness.⁶ However, less is known about the criteria by which constituents reward their state representatives (service-oriented versus policy-oriented representation). There is little written on the role of representational responsiveness at the state level. Surprisingly, fewer works rigorously examine whether casework or state legislators' issue positions affect electoral success.⁷ This study hopes to close this gap.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The institutional characteristics of state legislatures have come to resemble more closely those of the United States Congress; for example, state legislatures are more professional, with longer sessions, and better operations budgets.⁸ Furthermore, as state legislatures have become more professional, legislators are serving longer terms⁹ and gaining greater visibility.¹⁰ There is also considerable evidence that the electoral success of incumbents in state legislatures rivals that of incumbents in Congress¹¹ and that members enjoy increasingly large margins of victory.¹²

We might therefore expect familiar theories of incumbency advantage in Congress to provide additional insight into the relationship between state legislative incumbents' electoral success and controllable political resources.¹³ Specifically, we might expect state legislative incumbents to enjoy some of the electoral benefits of casework that incumbent members of Congress enjoy.¹⁴ Of course, state legislative races are different from congressional elections in at least two ways. 'State legislative elections are generally less visible to voters, and they take place in smaller, more homogenous districts; [each] of these factors might reinforce party voting rather than support for incumbents.'¹⁵ In other words, it may be the case that neither service nor issue responsiveness plays a big role in state legislative races.

However, it may just be that state legislative elections are like those of the United States House of Representatives (that is, low salience, low information, small and homogenous districts) only more so, and surely this implies that casework may in fact have a greater value at the state level. This review indicates the need for clarification of what incumbent state legislators do to improve their re-election prospects. We can say what state voters are doing but are less able to say why.

Evidence indicates that service responsiveness (that is, casework) increases the popularity and salience of members of Congress.¹⁶ However, impact of casework on state legislators' ability to buy voters' loyalty is less clear.¹⁷ Except for the work of Freeman and Richardson,¹⁸ which examines constituents' requests for casework and time spent by state legislators performing casework, there is very little written on this subject at the state level. A major difficulty in relating casework to voter reaction in state elections, as well as comparing congressional and state elections, has been the limitation on available data. As with congressional studies, it is difficult to obtain data at the state level on actual contact between incumbent legislators and constituents. Most studies on the impact of casework at the congressional level, except for the series of work by Serra and Cover,¹⁹ relate quantitative data provided by congressional offices to reports of constituents in national surveys. Results are affected by measurement error in the data and the effect of explained variance on using data for individuals rather than districts as a whole.²⁰

In addition, individual-level data on issue voting in state legislative contests are generally unavailable. Many questions could be addressed by surveying voters in state legislative districts; unfortunately, major survey data do not address state legislative issue voting. This stands in fairly sharp contrast to studies on congressional elections that have relied on survey data provided by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. There is recognition of the fact that we need additional district-level data to examine voter behaviour in particular state districts.²¹

More generally, the absence of data on individual-level evaluation of candidates at the state level has limited the extent to which state and congressional election studies resemble one another. To be sure, there are pronounced differences between the contexts of congressional elections and state legislative elections. Nevertheless, the voters in the two kinds of elections are the same, and it seems unreasonable to suppose that they engage in two completely different decision processes when evaluating candidates in each contest. There is a need to examine whether models like those used in congressional election studies work for state legislative contests.

This research addresses these problems. First, one state legislator from the Massachusetts House of Representatives provided the researchers with a list of

constituents for whom casework had been performed, as well as those who had not benefited from such service.²² A comparison of these constituents helps us to discern more explicitly the link between casework and voter response. Second, district surveys enable us to examine the role of incumbent issue positions in state legislative elections. District surveys allow us to use measures of issue proximity analogous to congressional elections studies measures.²³ Moreover, the study allows the construction of a model for state legislative elections that is similar to those used for congressional elections.

RESEARCH DESIGN: THE CASEWORK DATA

This study makes use of state legislative office files to designate constituents for whom casework has been performed, as well as those who have not benefited from casework assistance. Casework is defined here as the provision of assistance to constituents to resolve a problem with the state bureaucracy; constituents in the study requested assistance from their state representative with regard to welfare benefits, workers' compensation, state pensions, government jobs, the department of motor vehicles and other state bureaucracies.²⁴

Over a two-week period, we conducted 120 telephone interviews with constituents whose names were provided by the state legislator's office. The names were assigned two categories: (1) beneficiaries of casework, and (2) constituents who had not had casework performed and were randomly selected from the roll of registered voters in the district.²⁵

The survey instrument assesses attitudes towards the incumbent state representative and perceived policy congruence between constituents and the incumbent legislator. The survey questions rely on forced-choice scaling and are similar to standard questions and scaling techniques used in the Survey Research Center National Election Studies to study house contests. The research design, outlined here, is described in greater detail elsewhere.²⁶

CASEWORK IMPACT ON INCUMBENT EVALUATION AND RECOGNITION

To address the efficacy of casework a standard feeling thermometer was used to assess how warmly respondents felt toward the incumbent (among other political figures – also listed were George W. Bush, the state governor, the district challenger and the local state senator); responses range from 0 degrees (*extremely unfavourable*) to 100 degrees (*extremely favourable*). Respondents were instructed to select a number from this scale to reflect their relative degree of favourability or unfavourability towards the incumbent (and other political figures whose names were listed).

To assess the impact of the state representative's behaviour on constituent response, we began by looking at the impact of receiving ombudsman service

on constituents' evaluations of the incumbent. For those constituents who benefited from ombudsman assistance, the state representative's mean temperature score was 78.9 degrees ($n = 56$); for constituents who had not received ombudsman assistance, the representative's mean temperature score was 64.3 degrees ($n = 64$). A comparison of the mean temperature scores for each group of respondents indicates that ombudsman service increased candidate evaluation by 14.6 degrees. We are dealing with a 'favour', a discretionary act by the state legislator's office; thus, it is hardly surprising that the impact of receiving casework was to make constituents regard their representative more warmly than would otherwise have been the case. Ombudsman service also increased the representative's saliency among constituents by 14.4 per cent. Incumbent recognition among constituents increased from 62.7 per cent to 77.1 per cent.²⁷

CASEWORK, ISSUES AND THE VOTE

To understand fully the extent to which ombudsman service gains state legislators' support from constituents who otherwise would not vote for them, we estimate a multivariate model that depicts the vote for the incumbent as a function of citizens' exposure to casework, issue proximity to the incumbent and a range of control variables. Thus vote choice in state legislative elections can be considered in a framework that is more analogous to congressional election studies. The vote for the incumbent is defined here as whether the constituent voted for the state representative. It is measured as a dichotomous variable, coded 1 for respondents who reported that they voted for the incumbent in the 2000 state legislative district race, and 0 otherwise. Non-voters were asked for whom they would have voted and their responses were coded the same as for voters.²⁸

The Model

Although the electoral benefits of casework to state legislators are not known, observers of state legislatures maintain that 'Probably of greatest help to members, as far as reelection is concerned, are the services they perform for constituents'.²⁹ From the telephone survey of the constituency in this study, we have demonstrated that the effect of receiving ombudsman service was to increase citizen's evaluation and recognition of the state representative. Of course, to reap the electoral benefits of casework, constituents must be satisfied with what the member's office has done to resolve their problem. Scholars investigating the impact of casework on electoral success in Congress have shown that most constituents who contact their representative are either 'somewhat satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the incumbent's efforts.³⁰ Thus we expect that the receipt of casework should influence vote

choice. To capture these effects, we measure casework performance as a dichotomous variable, coded 1 for respondents who benefited from such assistance and 0 otherwise.

The policy choices incumbents offer to the electorate are also an important means by which members earn electoral support. Vote choice is partly a function of the perceived issue 'distance' between the constituent and the incumbent.³¹ The use of proximity as a measure of issue influence is consistent with traditional spatial theory, which uses a principle of proximity to measure the relationship between voters' preferences and their voting choices in relation to candidates and policies. Our study examines constituent issue proximity to the incumbent, that is, the absolute difference between the respondent's self-placement on an issue and the mean placement of the incumbent, by all respondents, on that issue. The variable is measured by regressing the thermometer score on three issues, providing a composite measure of proximity.³² Using the predicted value from the regression captures only that portion of the variance in the thermometer score that is due to issue proximity, while avoiding the problem of different scales and, more importantly, allowing the issues to be weighed by their average salience to voters.³³

If state legislators can in fact utilise casework to insulate themselves from policy-based concerns, we would expect issue responsiveness to be less important to the voting decisions of those who received casework than to the voting decisions of those who did not. To discern more explicitly the impact of casework, we assess the interaction between casework performance and issue proximity to the incumbent. The coefficient for the interaction variable represents the difference between the slope coefficients for the group receiving casework and those who did not. For example, if the impact of issue proximity is the same for both the contact group and the no-contact group, the coefficient for the interaction variable would fail to achieve significance. However, we expect the coefficient for the interaction variable to reflect a significant reduction in the influence of issue proximity on voting decisions among those receiving casework compared to those who did not, indicating that casework does enable members to gain support from individuals who otherwise would not vote for them.

To ensure that casework and issues are not merely capturing the effects of excluded variables and to make this study more comparable to congressional studies, additional theoretically important predictors of constituent vote choice are introduced into the model.³⁴ Some studies suggest that incumbent character evaluation – for example, perceived competence, morality and leadership – influences vote choice.³⁵ Even when policy agreement (or disagreement) and constituency service factors are taken into account, it is reasonable for voters to evaluate the honesty and competence of the incumbent. Incumbent character evaluation is measured by regressing the differences in each

respondent's rating of the incumbent against the difference in the incumbent's thermometer score. Respondents were asked to rate the incumbent's personal characteristics (competency, morality and leadership). The scale for each of these characteristics is 'extremely well', 'fairly well', 'not too well' and 'not well at all', coded 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

We need to control also for party affiliation and socio-demographic factors. Although party identification may not be as potent as it was 30 years ago, it remains an important determinant in congressional and state legislative contests, where less is known about individual candidates than in more publicised presidential or gubernatorial contests. Party affiliation is coded: strong Republicans, weak Republicans and Republican 'leaners' as 1, 'true' Independents as 0; and strong Democrats, weak Democrats and Democratic 'leaners' as -1. Respondents who chose the 'don't know' response to the party question were coded as Independents. There may also be distinct class and educational differences in constituent role expectations. For instance, white-collar workers appear to have a relative preference for policy-oriented representation, while blue-collar workers prefer tangible rewards; that is, they are service-oriented.³⁶ Highest level of education attained by respondent is measured by the last grade of school completed, and respondent's family income is self-reported.

Finally, we control for the effect of constituents' perceptions of the status of the economy. Extant research has found that the state of the national economy has a significant impact on the success of the president's party in state legislative elections.³⁷ When the national economy is in a slump, constituents will blame the president's party and the candidates from the president's party will lose elections. Likewise, when the economy is robust, the president's party will win more seats. State of the economy is measured by respondent's assessments of how the national economy is doing compared to two years ago. The scale varies from 'gotten much better', 'gotten somewhat better', 'stayed about the same', 'gotten somewhat worse' to 'gotten much worse', coded 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. Since the targeted state representative and the president are from the opposite party, we expect a negative relationship between the economic variable and vote choice.

Of course, one could criticise the use of national economic indicators to predict state legislative elections on the grounds that it is the state economy that is most likely to affect the electoral success of state representatives. This criticism may be intuitively appealing, but there is little evidence to suggest that it is valid.³⁸ First, voting trends in presidential elections, as well as in mid-term elections, affect the outcome of state legislative elections and gubernatorial contests.³⁹ Indeed, some scholars go as far as to suggest that state-level elections are not influenced by state economic conditions but are in fact sensitive to swings in the national economy.⁴⁰ Second, the focus of this

investigation is to bridge the gap between national and state legislative elections. While an examination of state-level economic conditions might be interesting, we are concerned with the construction of a model for state legislative elections, which is essentially similar to those used for congressional elections.

In sum, the model focuses on the effects of casework and incumbent issue positions on constituent reactions, controlling for the effects of other variables. Thus the following multivariate probit model is estimated:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vote} = & a + b_1 \text{ Casework} + b_2 \text{ Issues} + b_3 \text{ Casework} \times \text{Issues} \\ & + b_4 \text{ Character} + b_5 \text{ PID} + b_6 \text{ Education} \\ & + b_7 \text{ Income} + b_8 \text{ Economy} + \text{error} \end{aligned}$$

Where *Vote* is whether or not the constituent supported the incumbent in the 2000 election; *Casework* is whether or not the respondent benefited from ombudsman service performed by the incumbent; *Issues* is issue proximity to the incumbent; *Casework* \times *Issues* is an interaction variable; *Character* is incumbent character evaluation; *PID* is the respondent's party affiliation; *Education* is the respondent's level of education; *Income* is the respondent's level of income; and *Economy* is the respondent's assessment of the state of the economy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Given that the dependent variable is a dichotomous categorical variable (either the constituent supported the incumbent or did not), probit is more appropriate than ordinary least squares.⁴¹ One measure of the adequacy of the model is a comparison of the cases correctly predicted by the model with the modal response. For the vote model, the percentage predicted correctly using the modal response is 69 per cent. Probit classifies 86.8 per cent of the individual's votes correctly, a reduction in error of 57.4 per cent [(31.0 - 13.2)/31.0 = 0.574].

Results indicate (see Table 1) that ombudsman service has a positive influence on vote choice.⁴² Casework performance helps incumbent state representatives at the polls regardless of policy positions and other considerations. State representatives who engage in casework do indeed build and maintain support among grateful constituents. Issue proximity also is positively associated with vote choice. Policy responsiveness appears to be a factor in at least some voting decisions in state legislative contests.

However, issue responsiveness is less important to the voting decisions of those who received casework than to the voting decisions of those who did not.

TABLE 1
 PROBIT MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD ESTIMATES FOR THE VOTE MODEL
 (DEPENDENT VARIABLE - WHETHER OR NOT CONSTITUENT SUPPORTED
 THE INCUMBENT IN THE 2000 ELECTION)

Independent Variables	Maximum Likelihood Estimates	Standard Error
Constant	-45.0201**	17.1663
Casework performance	46.4415**	20.0708
Issue proximity to incumbent	0.6068*	0.2398
Casework × issue proximity to incumbent	-0.6449*	0.2968
Incumbent character evaluation	0.6550**	0.0217
Party affiliation	0.9176**	0.3183
Level of education	0.2164	0.2136
Level of income	-0.0529	0.1545
Constituent assessment of the state of the economy	-0.4603*	0.1879

Notes: N = 91.

Log likelihood - 26.6901.

Per cent correctly predicted 86.8.

Modal response 69.

* Significant beyond the 0.05 level.

** Significant beyond the 0.01 level.

The coefficient for the interaction variable indicates that issue proximity is less effective as a predictor of vote choice than casework; casework operates to supplant the impact of issue positions. Holding all other variables constant at their means, casework performance is associated with a 26 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting for the incumbent.

Not surprisingly, those constituents who rated the incumbent's character favourably are more likely to vote for the incumbent than the challenger. Respondents' party affiliation also influences their propensity to support the incumbent.⁴³ Level of education and income, however, has no effect on constituent decisions.

Finally, the variable for constituent assessment of the state of the economy has an impact on the vote; state legislative elections are sensitive to swings in the national economy. This finding is consistent with the work of Holbrook-Provow⁴⁴ and others, which suggests that state-level elections are not insulated from national economic factors.

The findings obtained from this research dovetail nicely with the congressional elections literature. We find convincing evidence that state legislative incumbents indeed enjoy some of the same electoral benefits from casework that incumbent members of Congress enjoy. These results suggest that service responsiveness at the state level has an electoral payoff for incumbent representatives, regardless of their issue positions or other factors. It is important to emphasise that, unlike in congressional elections, casework operates to

supplant issue positions in state legislative contests. We find convincing evidence that issue responsiveness is less important to the voting decisions of those who received casework than to the voting decisions of those who did not.

This is not to say incumbent state legislators should be unconcerned about policy responsiveness; the effect of the issue proximity variable is sufficiently large that policy responsiveness should be an important consideration in state legislative contests. Rather, the findings reinforce that there are differences between state legislative elections and congressional elections, and how these differences might affect the impact of casework and issue voting. Factors such as incumbent character evaluation and partisan affiliation, which are not unambiguously related to either notion of responsiveness, also play important roles in vote choice.

Some scholars⁴⁵ argue that the effects of ombudsman service are inevitably marginal because of the inherently limited number of constituents who receive this service. The frequency of a representative's contacts may be less important, however, than its capacity to increase subsequent electoral support. If every citizen initiated contact with his or her representative, but the contact had only a marginal effect on electoral support, the representative would gain very little. On the other hand, if contact with the incumbent was infrequent but had a significant electoral impact, the incumbent would benefit notwithstanding the limited audience reached by the contact. Based on the results reported here, casework is the latter type of contact – that is, infrequent but with a significant impact. Moreover, casework has a ripple effect; there is an indirect benefit to the incumbent from constituents who hear about services provided to friends, relatives or neighbours in the district.⁴⁶

Of course, we are cautious about generalising these results. These findings are derived from the analysis of one state representative and one district. The incumbent and the district are not typical of all 160 districts in the Massachusetts House of Representatives or the rest of the country.⁴⁷ While the special characteristics of the district must be kept in mind as results are interpreted, there is no reason to believe *a priori* that the structure of the relationship between legislative activity and constituent reaction should be fundamentally different in districts with varying socio-economic compositions. It is instructive to note that generalisation is a matter of relationships, not discrete characterisations. The real issue here is validity. Although case studies sacrifice some external validity, they gain in return internal validity; without internal validity, external validity is meaningless.

Furthermore, given that we are interested in incumbent behaviour and constituent response, it is noteworthy that the data were collected when the state representative's casework strategy was being put into place. Whatever positive effect an incumbent's casework strategy has on his or her re-election

success takes place during the sophomore surge. Moreover, these data do not exist elsewhere, and, until they do, this study establishes a parallel with congressional elections voting models. It is important to replicate this study in other state legislative districts to see if the results reported here are general to other settings. Finally, this study presents interesting evidence that state legislative elections should be examined in a manner more comparable to the way scholars have looked at congressional elections.

NOTES

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13. Fiorina, *Congress - Keystone of the Washington Establishment*.
14. G. Serra, 'What's In It For Me? The Impact of Congressional Casework on Incumbent Evaluation', *American Politics Quarterly*, 22 (1994), pp.403-20; Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.200-213.
15. Jewell and Breaux, 'The Effect of Incumbency on State Legislative Elections', p.496.
16. Cain *et al.*, *The Personal Vote*; Epstein and Frankovic, 'Casework and Electoral Margins: Insurance is Prudent', pp.691-700; Serra, 'What's In It For Me? The Impact of Congressional Casework on Incumbent Evaluation', pp.403-20; G. Serra and A.D. Cover, 'The Electoral Consequences of Perquisite Use: The Casework Case', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 17 (1992), pp.233-46; Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.200-213; but see Johannes, *To Serve the People*.
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20. Cain *et al.*, *The Personal Vote*, Ch.5.
21. Moncrief *et al.*, 'Revisiting the State of U.S. State Legislative Research', pp.301-35.
22. An ideal research design would include a panel of constituents receiving and not receiving casework assistance, rather than a cross-sectional survey. However, such a design is beyond the reach of most social scientists. We contacted only one legislator from the Massachusetts House of Representatives to participate in the research study. Convincing a state legislative office to participate was no small task. Thus the difficulty of convincing a member to cooperate, time constraints and other resource questions (for example, money to conduct the survey) confined our study to only one district.
23. Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.200-213.
24. Many activities can be incorporated under the rubric of casework: requests for information, assistance to individuals, groups and localities in coping with bureaucracy, and assistance to constituents in pursuit of funds for various projects (R. Fenno, *Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1978), p.101). But these forms of service are not equivalent. Focusing on the electoral impact of ombudsman activity has one major advantage over focusing on casework in general; the narrower focus means that we will be dealing with a reasonably standardised stimulus. This enables important distinctions to be made in assessing electoral impact. Although casework is a broader term than ombudsman service, the two will be used interchangeably in the subsequent discussion. The number of cases serviced by the state legislator's office is approximately 50 requests per week and the size of the district is 40,577 constituents.

25. Interviews that had a discrepancy between actual contact and respondent recall were included in the analysis. Since we are interested in trying to measure the effectiveness of contact in affecting constituent perceptions, it is necessary to include cases where contact has been made, but there is no recall ($n = 5$), and cases where there is no contact, but the respondent thinks there is ($n = 5$). We also ran the model using only validated contact and no contact cases. Estimates were of virtually the same magnitude and significance.
26. Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.202-3.
27. The differences in the means of the thermometer scores, as well as those of incumbent recognition, are statistically significant. Serra and Cover ('The Electoral Consequences of Perquisite Use: The Casework Case', p.237) note that although aggregate estimates should be treated with caution (that is, constituents who do not contact their representative may be inclined to have less favourable evaluations), a comparison provides some idea of how much ombudsman activity affects incumbent evaluations. Moreover, there is reason to believe that these results are not constraining for our purposes; the mean thermometer scores in both the no contact and contact groups are consistent with the impact reported by A.D. Cover and B.S. Brumberg ('Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion', *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), pp.347-59) and Serra and Moon ('Casework, Issue Positions and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.202-3).
- There were also no significant differences between the contact and no contact groups on any of the issue questions (see note 32). The mean score on the services question was 4.71 and 5.03, respectively. On the expansion of Route 44 question, the mean for the contact group was 3.12 and the mean for the no contact group was 2.53. The means for the question on abortion were 2.94 (contact group) and 3.37 (no contact group). Furthermore, note that for those constituents in the contact group, 28.6 per cent recognised the challenger; for those in the no contact group, 29.7 per cent recognised the challenger.
28. The vote choice model was also estimated excluding non-voters. The results were of the same magnitude and direction.
29. Rosenthal, 'The Legislative Institution: In Transition and at Risk', p.128.
30. Yiannakis, 'The Grateful Electorate: Casework and Congressional Elections', pp.568-80.
31. D. Moon, 'What You Use Depends on What You Have: Information Effects on the Determinants of Electoral Choice', *American Politics Quarterly*, 18 (1990), pp.3-24; D. Moon, 'What You Use Depends on What You Have: Information Effects in Presidential Elections, 1972-1988' *American Politics Quarterly*, 20 (1992), pp.427-41; Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.202-3.
32. The three issue scales were:
- (1) 1 - Provide many fewer services, reduce spending a lot
7 - Provide many more services, increase spending a lot
 - (2) 1 - Strongly support the expansion of Route 44
7 - Strongly oppose the expansion of Route 44
 - (3) 1 - No legal abortions
2 - Legal abortions only in the case of rape, incest, or danger to the life of the mother
3 - Legal abortions for other reasons, but they must be clearly established
4 - Abortion should be a matter of personal choice.
33. See Moon, 'What You Use Depends on What You Have: Information Effects on the Determinants of Electoral Choice', pp.3-24; D. Moon, 'Information Effects on the Determinants of Electoral Choice in Presidential Elections, 1972-1988', *Southeastern Political Review*, 21 (1993), pp.365-88.
- While constituent issue proximity to the incumbent relative to issue proximity to the challenger would be a preferable measure of the impact of incumbent issue positions on constituent vote, only 25 per cent of the respondents were able to place the challenger on the issue scales. Given that state legislative elections are generally less visible to voters than are congressional contests, it is not surprising that few respondents could identify the challenger's issue stands.
34. Some studies suggest that approval of the incumbent's job performance in office is a critical threshold determinant of vote choice in congressional elections (Hinkley, *Congressional*

Elections). The decision on whether or not to use this variable presents an interesting specification dilemma. On the one hand, not using it might produce mis-specification. On the other hand, including incumbent job approval in the model may attenuate the probit estimates, since other variables (for example, casework performance, issues, character evaluation and party affiliation) demonstrate indirect effects on vote choice through the evaluation of job performance variable.

Using OLS, we regressed these four independent variables against incumbent job approval. The results suggested that casework, character evaluation and party affiliation were significantly (beyond the 0.01 level) associated with incumbent job approval. Thus we excluded incumbent job approval from the model.

35. Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.202-3.
36. Cain *et al.*, *The Personal Vote*, pp.47-8.
37. J. Bibby, 'Patterns in Midterm Gubernatorial and State Legislative Elections', *Public Opinion* (Feb./March 1983), pp.41-6; J. Campbell, 'Presidential Coattails and Midterm Losses in State Legislative Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), pp.45-64; J. Chubb, 'Institutions, the Economy, and the Dynamics of State Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 82 (1988), pp.133-45.
38. T. Holbrook-Provow, 'National Factors in Gubernatorial Elections', *American Politics Quarterly*, 15 (1987), p.473 - but see R.G. Niemi, H.W. Stanley and R.J. Vogel, 'State Economies and State Taxes: Do Voters Hold Governors Accountable?' *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1995), pp.936-57.

Given recent work suggests that state economy affects voting behaviour, we also estimated the vote choice model with a state economic measure that used the same scale as our national measure. The state economic variable failed to achieve significance.

39. Bibby, 'Patterns in Midterm Gubernatorial and State Legislative Elections', pp.41-6; Campbell, 'Presidential Coattails and Midterm Losses in State Legislative Elections', pp.45-64; Chubb, 'Institutions, the Economy, and the Dynamics of State Elections', pp.133-45; P. Kenney, 'The Effect of State Economic Conditions on the Vote for Governor', *Social Science Quarterly* (March 1983), pp.154-62; T. Holbrook-Provow, 'National Factors in Gubernatorial Elections', pp.471-83.
40. Kenney, 'The Effect of State Economic Conditions on the Vote for Governor', pp.154-62, Holbrook-Provow, 'National Factors in Gubernatorial Elections', pp.471-83.
41. J. Aldrich and C. Cnudde, 'Probing the Bounds of Conventional Wisdom: A Comparison of Regression, Probit, and Discriminant Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1975), pp.571-608.

One possible objection to the use of probit to estimate the vote choice model is that simple statistical techniques may not yield estimates of treatment effects. Another approach is to estimate the model employing an instrumental variable for casework. Several exogenous variables were used (for example, casework solicitation, word-of-mouth publicity, character, issues, party affiliation, education and income) to create an instrumental variable for casework performance. The predetermined variables are correlated with the endogenous variable, and the fact that they are predetermined guarantees (by assumption) that they are uncorrelated with the error term (R.S. Pindyck and D.L. Rubinfeld, *Econometrica and Models* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); see also Serra and Moon, 'Casework, Issue Positions, and Voting in Congressional Elections: A District Analysis', pp.200-213, and Serra, 'What's In It For Me? The Impact of Congressional Casework on Incumbent Evaluation', pp.403-20). Results from the revised incumbent vote choice model were of the same magnitude and direction.

42. To understand better the electoral consequences of casework, the vote choice model was also estimated using casework satisfaction instead of the casework performance variable. The results were of the same magnitude and direction. The coding for casework satisfaction requires some explanation. Respondents who are 'not at all satisfied' with the legislative office's handling of their problem were coded 0. Respondents who did not contact the legislative office were coded 1. Respondents who are 'somewhat satisfied' and 'extremely

satisfied' were coded 2 and 3, respectively. It is logical that constituents who had a negative experience with the legislative office would have lower evaluations of the incumbent than constituents who had no experience, negative or otherwise.

43. Research on the impact of casework in congressional elections indicates that the effect of ombudsman activity is considerably greater for voters of the challenger's party (Serra and Cover, 'The Electoral Consequences of Perquisite Use: The Casework Case', pp.223-46). Our model provides a means to test for the impact of casework service among voters of the incumbent's party, voters of the challenger's party and Independents. Holding all other variables constant at their means and computing the associated changes in the predicted values of the probit model, we estimate the changes in the probabilities that constituents will vote for the incumbent as a function of their partisanship and casework service (J. Aldrich and F.D. Nelson, *Linear Probability, Logit, and Probit Models* (San Diego, CA: Sage, 1984). The findings reported below are consistent with those of Serra and Cover ('The Electoral Consequences of Perquisite Use: The Casework Case', pp.223-46) on the electoral consequences of perquisite use in Congress. Since voters of the incumbent's party are already likely to support the incumbent, incumbent activity (that is, casework) has less of an impact on them than it does on voters of the challenger's party and Independents.

VOTE FOR THE INCUMBENT BY PARTISANSHIP AND
CASEWORK PERFORMANCE

		Probability of Voting for the Incumbent	Percentage Change Over the No Contact Group
Voters of the challenger's party	No Contact	0.57	
	Contact	0.72	25
Independent voters	No Contact	0.81	
	Contact	0.87	7
Voters of the incumbent's party	No Contact	0.89	
	Contact	0.90	1

44. Holbrook-Provow, 'National Factors In Gubernatorial Elections', pp.471-83.

45. Johannes, *To Serve the People*, p.204.

46. Serra, 'What's In It For Me? The Impact of Congressional Casework on Incumbent Evaluation', pp.403-20.

47. Ninety-five per cent of the district respondents graduated from high school, and 50 per cent completed a bachelor's degree or more. Eighty-five per cent of the state's population graduated from high school, and 30 per cent completed a bachelor's degree or more. Eighty per cent of the population in the US graduated from high school and 24.4 per cent completed a bachelor's degree or more. The median family income for the targeted district is \$60,000; the median income for households in Massachusetts is \$45,485; and, the median income for households in the US is \$41,994.