

Gubernatorial Popularity across Space and Time

by

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Abstract

We know much about the popularity of presidents, but little about other political leaders. In this paper we address the question of gubernatorial popularity, with an eye on building a more general understanding of leader approval than we can accomplish by focusing on the president exclusively. On several fronts, governors and presidents are comparable. They both govern in separation of powers systems and are highly visible. But the fact that presidents govern a nation and governors states raises the issue that the sources of variation in their popularity may vary. In particular, factors emanating from outside of the state may affect how citizens evaluate their governors. In this paper, we investigate the popularity of American governors, using a new and extensive data set. Results indicate that while a host of state based economic and political factors affect gubernatorial popularity, one national factor, the popularity of the president strongly redounds onto governors. Furthermore, we find that the individual in office may influence popular regard, although we are not sure what individual level factors affect public perceptions.

Gubernatorial Popularity across Space and Time

Introduction

Approval and popularity polls have become ubiquitous in American politics.¹ They are important to those polled, the media, political and opinion elites, and the mass public. As Brody (1990, p. 4) argues with regard to the president, presidential standing with the public is a political resource that can help the president “achieve his program, keep challengers at bay, and guide his and other political leaders expectations about the president’s party’s prospects in presidential and congressional elections.” Approval polls also inform us about the standard by which the public evaluates its leaders (Erikson, MacKuen, Stimson, 2002). And in as much as political leaders respond to their approval and popularity levels and take them into account when making decisions, approval links the governed and the governors. In this way, approval has an important representational quality. Approval polls, then, provide us with a sense of the constraints and possibilities under which political leaders operate. To a large degree, they have become the measure of our modern political leadership.

But while we know much about the dynamics of presidential approval polls,² we know comparatively less about how the public evaluates other political leaders. To build a more general theory of political leadership and to understand how and why approval and popularity evaluations vary across leaders and institutions requires that we extend our understanding of leader approval from the U. S. presidency to other political leaders.

In this paper, we investigate the sources of gubernatorial popularity.³ Studying the popularity of governors is important and useful in several regards. First, the governorship resembles the presidency in that it is situated in a separation of powers and checks and balances

system. Although certain institutional differences exist between governors and presidents, the fact that both types of executives govern in a “separated” system (Jones, 1994) allows us to ask whether factors that affect presidential approval similarly affect the public standing of the governor.

Second, like the president, governors, are highly visible political leaders, perhaps only second in public visibility to the president. For instance, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 70) report that 86 percent of respondents could name their governor in a 1970 survey and a 1985 survey found that 59 percent could identify correctly the governor’s party (pp. 74-77). In 1987 the General Social Survey found that 76 percent of respondents could correctly name their state governor. A 1989 ABC News/Washington Post poll found that 79 percent of voters could correctly recall their governor’s name, but only 52 percent could name either of their U. S. senators (Squire and Fastnow, 1994). Thus, the scattered evidence that exists suggests that governors are generally highly visible.

These two similarities, constitutional design and visibility, allow us to compare governors with presidents and attempt to build a more general understanding of public evaluations of political executives in separated systems. Hence, we follow Brace and Jewett’s (1995) admonition to use the states as laboratories to test ideas developed at the national level in search of more general understandings of political processes and relationships.

Despite these similarities between the presidency and the governorship, differences between the offices exist. In this paper, we exploit one such difference to our advantage, the fact that governors preside over sub-national political units, while the presidency is a national level office. Thus we ask: how autonomous are states as political units? Do factors specific to the state context affect gubernatorial popularity or do national level factors seep down to affect public

evaluations of the governor?

Considerable debate exists in the small literature on gubernatorial popularity around this question.⁴ For example, Crew and Weiher (1996) and Cohen (1983) find that presidential popularity, a national level factor, affects gubernatorial popularity, but other studies detect no presidential popularity effect (Orth, 2001). National economic factors also have been found to affect gubernatorial popularity (Howell and Vanderleeuw, 1990; Orth, 2001; Crew and Weiher, 1996; Crew, et. al., 2002). But so have local economic conditions (Howell and Vanderleeuw, 1990; Hansen, 1999a, 1999b; Orth, 2001), while others find mixed or weak local economic effects (Crew and Weiher, 1996; Adams and Squire, 2001).

These conflicting findings stem in part from data, design, and conceptual limitations. In the next section, we discuss a new data set that allows us to overcome some of the data limitations of past studies of gubernatorial popularity. Succeeding sections discuss the state autonomy and federalism perspectives as they pertain to gubernatorial popularity. Then we present our analysis. In the conclusion we return to two issues, the nature of gubernatorial approval and thoughts on leader approval more generally.

The Official State Job Approval Data Set

The literature on gubernatorial approval is filled with contradictory and conflicting findings. In part, this results from data limitations. Past studies had to make do with whatever data were at hand. Usually that consisted of severely limited data sets, which forced major analytic and conceptual compromises on researchers. For instance, several studies employ times series analyses of gubernatorial popularity, styled after the more familiar mode of presidential approval studies. But such studies often only look at several states where long time series exist

(Crew and Weiher, 1996; Crew, et. al. 2002; Hansen, 1999a, 1999b). Generalizing from the small set of states for which time series data exist to the universe of governors is problematic. Similarly, several cross sectional analyses exist. Most of these studies look at individual level assessments of governors utilizing surveys of citizens in one state (Howell and Vanderleuw, 1990) or on occasion several states (Cohen, 1983). But like the time series analyses, the small number of states employed limits generalizability. One recent effort compares, in a cross sectional design, all fifty states (MacDonald and Sigelman, 1999). But this one shot cross sectional approach limits the ability to assess to the influence of national factors, which remain constant in such a design.

As a result of these data limitations, the estimation models of previous research may be misspecified. Model misspecification may result in spurious or suppressor effects. These design issues may in part account for the disagreement over the factors that affect gubernatorial popularity. In this study, we use a new data set that allows us to incorporate a more extensive set of factors measured at both the state and national levels, and allows both cross sectional and longitudinal measurements.

Data for this study come from the Official State Job Approval Project (JAR),⁵ which collected state-level job approval ratings for governors from numerous survey organizations from 1947 through 2001. All told, the JAR project supplies us with 2000 readings of state-level gubernatorial popularity. This is the most comprehensive collection of gubernatorial popularity ratings in existence. We focus on the data from 1976 onward because of difficulty of collecting other data on some variables of interest for earlier years and because the overwhelming number of cases come from this period.⁶ (For a fuller discussion of these data see Beyle, Niemi, and Sigleman, 2002.)

There are several complications in using the JAR data, however. First, because the data come from a variety of data sources and polling organizations, data quality varies. For instance, sometimes only positive evaluations of the governor were available (Beyle, et. al., 2002) and the percentage of “Don’t Know” responses appears to vary because of the large variety of question wordings and other factors. In order to retain as many cases as possible, we need to make the data as comparable as possible and compensate when comparability is at issue. To correct for the variability in “don’t know” responses, we use the formula “Percent Positive / (Percent Positive + Percent Negative)” to measure gubernatorial approval.⁷ On average, governors received a 55 percent approval rating, which varies widely from a low of 10 to a high of 97, with a standard deviation of 16. Our dependent variable is then this monthly adjusted gubernatorial popularity score.

Second, this data set combines numerous variations on the general approval question.⁸ Some questions presumably ask about gubernatorial job performance, like the Gallup approval question, others ask how much the respondent likes the governor. Exact question wordings are not available, but the response categories (e. g., approval v. disapproval, like v. dislike) are. Beyle et. al.’s (2002) initial analysis found that as the number of response categories increases, the likelihood of a negative rating also rises. To compensate in the statistical estimation for the number of response categories, we employ a set of dummy variables for whether the question allowed three, four, or five response categories; two response categories is the criterion case.⁹

Third, house effects may be present because the data set combines polls across many firms. To help control for house effects, we create dummy variables when 30 or more observations from a single polling firm exist, a total of 41 dummies. A regression analysis (not shown) of gubernatorial approval on the response category and firm dummies produced an R^2 of

.31. Each of the response category dummies is statistically significant with the expected negative sign and 25 of the firm dummies are also significant, displaying both positive and negative signs.¹⁰ This indicates that one should not compare across these raw approval readings without making such adjustments and that it may be difficult to build a statistical model that fits the data well. We include these variables as controls in the analysis below.

States as Autonomous Governing Units

One can argue that the states are relatively autonomous political units and that factors particular to each state's political and economic circumstances will affect public approval of the governor. The combination of public orientations towards states and the policy making authority of state governments provide the foundation for making such an argument.

States are important to citizen political identity. For instance, Erikson, Wright, and MacIver (1993) find that "state" helps account to some degree for the partisan and ideological composition of the mass public within each state. In other words, each state possesses its own identifiable state politics, at least in the public mind. If the public views its "citizenship" in a state as being important, then it is not much of a stretch to suggest that state citizens will hold its political leaders accountable for what happens within the state.

Not only do citizens identify with their state and its politics, the states possess some policy making authority, and recently, increased policy making autonomy. The resurgence of state governments as policy makers over the final decades of the twentieth century is evident in many areas. The New Federalism initiatives of presidents Nixon and Reagan sought to shift responsibility for education, welfare, and health programs, among other policy areas, from the national government to the states (Nathan, 1983). State government innovations in welfare

reform became the mode for revamping the national system in the 1990s, allowing much greater state independence from the federal government in the design and implementation of welfare programs. The performance of state economies has become less dependent upon the performance of the national economy and more subject to manipulation by state policy makers (Brace, 1993).

At the center of these changes are the governors. The chief executive in most states has been transformed fundamentally over the past several decades. Prior to the 1980s, the governorship was a relatively weak office. But modern governors now possess enhanced authority over appointments, budgets, and legislation due to reforms of the chief executive's office throughout the nation (Beyle, 2000; Bowman and Kearney, 1986; Sabato, 1983). As noted above, the governor also stands out as the most visible figure in state politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Fastnow and Squire, 1994; King, 2001). As a result of the governor's enhanced policy making authority and visibility, people hold them responsible for the quality of state government, public policy, and life in the state.

In this regard, the governor holds a post somewhat analogous to the president. Citizens unhappy with the direction and policies of the national government hold the president accountable regardless of whether the president can control or affect the source(s) of their displeasure. Similarly, citizens unhappy with the direction and policies of state government may make the governor the target of their discontent. This connection is clearest on election day, when voters are more likely to cast their ballots for popular governors (King, 2001) and popular governors are more likely to win re-election than less popular incumbents (Rice and Kenney, 1983). We may witness similar public reactions in popularity polls, with the public (dis)approving of the governor, because they believe the governor is responsible for the direction and policies of state government and the ups and downs in the aspects of the quality of life in the

state over which the state may possess some policy tools and authority.

Independent Variables

The state autonomy model suggests two sets of factors that may affect gubernatorial popularity, policy responsibility and state political conditions. Taking policy responsibility first, clearly, presidents and governors are held to different policy standards because of the differing policy responsibilities of the two levels of government. Foreign policy has no relevance in evaluating governors. But like presidents, governors may be held responsible for the condition of the economy because citizens view governors as possessing some policy making tools for managing certain aspects of the state's economy.

Economic Factors. Obviously states do not possess the policy making tools to manage as much of the economy as the national government. For instance, states have no tools for dealing with inflation. Also, the national economy impacts state and local economies profoundly. Still, governors and state politicians have used available policy tools to bring employers and jobs into their respective states and to protect existing jobs (Brace, 1993). And through other policy tools, for instance tax, subsidy, and investment incentives, state policy makers have aimed to boost state income levels. Thus, we can reasonably argue that state publics may hold governors responsible for state unemployment and income growth. To measure the relevant aspects of the state economy, we use lagged per capita quarterly state income (in constant dollars) and lagged monthly state unemployment. Monthly state income data do not exist. Both come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics web cite (www.bls.gov). Table 1 presents information on all independent variables used in this analysis. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics.

Tables 1 and 2 About Here

State Partisan and Ideological Composition. Political conditions within the states may

also affect the governor's popularity. At the national level, strong evidence exists that members of the president's party and those whose ideological leanings correspond to the president's are more likely to judge the president approvingly than disapprovingly (Bond and Fleisher, 2001). Agreement with the executive's policies may account for this effect.

We expect a similar dynamic to occur at the state level. Everything else being equal, we expect governors to find more support from members of their own party than from opposition party members and from people who hold similar views about public affairs (ideological leanings) than from people who hold divergent views. Thus, the greater the relative advantage that the governor's party holds in party membership (and ideological leaning) over the opposition party (and ideological opponents), the higher the governor's level of popularity.

To measure partisan advantage, we use the updated Erikson-Wright-MacIver (EWM)¹¹ state partisanship data, which relies on New York *Times* surveys from 1977 through 1999. Following the EWM methodology, we calculate the percentage of Democratic and Republican identifiers for subsets of years (1977-1985, 1985-1992, 1993 -1999). The subsets are long enough to protect against short term variation that may result from sampling and other error, but still remain relatively close in time to the measurement of the governor's popularity. Then we calculate a net partisan advantage score with the formula: (Percentage of Identifiers of the Governor's Party) - (Percentage of Identifiers of the Opposition Party).

We use ideological identification to indicate agreement or disagreement with the governor's policies, assuming that liberal identifiers are more likely to agree with the policies of Democrats than Republicans, while the opposite will hold true for conservative identifiers. Again, we use the updated EWM data for the distribution of ideological identifiers in a state. We calculate a net ideological advantage for Democratic governors with the formula: (Percentage of

Liberal Identifiers) - (Percentage of Conservative Identifiers). For Republican governors, the formula becomes: (Percentage of Conservative Identifiers) - (Percentage of Liberal Identifiers).

The partisan advantage argument also implies that independent governors are may have a harder time rallying public support than partisan affiliated governors, who possess a ready-made core of supporters.¹² Thus, we also enter into the analysis a variable for whether the governor was an independent, expecting independents to have lower approval levels. Lastly, we include a variable for whether the governor is a Republican to distinguish any possible partisan effects between Democrats and Republicans that remain unmeasured. We have no theoretical expectation on the sign of this variable.

Governing Difficulty: State Diversity and Size. Some states may be harder to govern than others. For instance, the greater the similarity among people within a state, the easier it may be for the governor to find policies that meet the approval of large segments of the population. In contrast, the more dissimilar people are in the state, the more likely that a gubernatorial action will meet with the disapproval of some segment of the state. Although severe political divisions may appear in states with few, but deep socioeconomic distinctions, in general, more heterogeneous states are likely to possess greater levels of dissimilarity than homogeneous states. Research on U. S. Senate elections finds that victors win with larger margins in smaller, presumably less diverse states, than larger states (Oppenheimer and Lee, 1999). We measure heterogeneity-homogeneity with two variables, an index of sociocultural diversity (Morgan and Wilson 1990; MacDonald and Sigelman, 1999) and population size. As diversity and population size increase, we expect gubernatorial popularity to fall.¹³

Length of Tenure. Time in office may affect gubernatorial popularity. Crew and Weiher (1996) note a “honeymoon” effect on approval of California’s governor with his popularity

dropping as his term progresses.¹⁴ Hansen (1999a) finds that governors' "fair" or "poor" ratings increase the longer they are in office. In their preliminary analysis of the JAR data, Beyle et al (2002) detect mixed support for a linear decline as tenure lengthens. No temporal relationship exists for nearly one half of cases looked at, and nearly as many cases indicate an upward as a downward trend.

The presidency literature has also investigated the impact of time on approval. Two major alternatives exist—that time's effect is linear or cyclical. Although Kernell (1978) argues that time is atheortic, others have developed theoretical notions about why time may influence approval. Mueller (1970) makes the case for a linear decline, arguing from his "coalitions of minorities" explanation that over time presidents must make decisions, and as decisions mount, an increasing number of people object to or disagree with the president's decision. Thus, the number of people who disapprove will increase overtime.

Stimson (1976) and Brace and Hinckley (1991) provide evidence of a cycle in which approval first declines, but then turns upward near the end of the term. Stimson grounds his cyclical model in an "expectations-disillusionment" notion, in which the less informed bring unrealistically high expectations for the incoming president, which translates into artificially high approval ratings. As presidents can not meet such expectations, approval drops. The approaching election restores presidential approval somewhat, as people begin to make comparisons between the sitting incumbent and the challenger. Brace and Hinckley (1991) offer a similar account, tying declining approval to diminishing presidential influence, what they term a cycle of deflating expectations. President's begin office in the glow of election victory. Their rhetoric adds to heightened expectations and high approval. Governing proves difficult, disillusionment sets in, and approval erodes to rebound near the end of the term, although Brace and Hinckley do

not specify the end of term dynamic that restores approval.

Thus, theoretical accounts exist to explain temporal patterns in approval although no one has been able to sort through the alternative underlying dynamics and provide evidence in favor of one over the other. Yet the fact that others suggest that there are temporal patterns in gubernatorial popularity requires that we take this into account. Accordingly, we test both the linear and cyclical models on gubernatorial popularity, measuring length of tenure as months in office at the time of the poll. The linear model predicts a negative impact of tenure on approval. The cyclical model predicts the same, but further predicts that as tenure extends, approval will increase. To test this cyclical aspect, we also use a variable of tenure in months squared, which we hypothesize to have a positive sign. The major drawback of time as a variable is that while it may capture the pattern, it cannot sort among the alternative dynamics that move approval over time. Still gubernatorial approval, like presidential approval, may cycle over time, and a fully specified model requires taking this into account.

United Government. Lastly, whether state government is united or divided may affect public approval of the governor. When the opposition party holds at least one house of the legislature, tensions between the governor and the legislature are likely to rise. Open conflict between the executive and legislature may undermine public confidence in gubernatorial leadership. But Nicholson, Segura, and Woods (2002) suggest a contrary and counterintuitive effect of divided government, namely, that presidents will see higher popularity under divided than unified government. They argue that under divided government, the executive and legislature can point the finger of blame at each other. When government is united, the president bears the full brunt of public outcry and criticism because the president cannot easily deflect blame onto a Congress of his own party. They find evidence for this effect on presidential data at

both the individual and aggregate level. We test their divided government hypothesis on the governor, suggesting that a similar effect may operate in the states.

States in a Federal System

Although states have become increasingly important policy making units, another perspective views state politics and policy as fundamentally subject to national economic and political forces (e. g., Chubb, 1988; Holbrook, 1987). The national integration of the economy and polity and the limited attention and information of voters about politics and policy provide the theoretical underpinnings for why national factors should influence state politics, including gubernatorial popularity.

Despite the fact that the public seems easily able to recognize or recall their governor's name, we should not infer that knowledge about the governor or state politics and policy runs much deeper. In general, studies indicate that the public possesses only a limited amount of attention and interest in political affairs (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). As a consequence, people may use heuristics, cues, or other short-cuts in organizing their thinking about state level politics. The president and the parties often are used as referents for people in organizing their political world. Voters who rely on such short-cut devices may associate all politicians of a particular party as part of one team, rewarding or blaming the entire set rather than distinguishing between national and state politicians (see Carsey and Wright, 1998). People also may be inclined to see parties in terms of the president in office and generalize their attitudes towards the president to all political leaders of his party. Thus, voters may displace their (dis)content with the president onto other politicians of the president's party, including the governor. Through such a mechanism, the president's approval may affect the approval level of governors of the

president's party, much as it has been found to effect gubernatorial voting decisions and elections (King, 2001; Simon, 1989).¹⁵

To measure this presidential effect, we use the Gallup presidential approval measure, lagged one month corrected for party of the governor. Thus, when the president and governor share party affiliation, we use the Gallup approval reading. When they come from different parties, we transform the measure, subtracting approval from 100 (100- approval). This suggests a process in which governors of the opposition party are helped when the president is unpopular, but harmed when he is popular. Lastly, we enter a dummy variable, indicating whether the governor comes from the president's party to pick up an aspects of presidential-gubernatorial partisanship that the approval variable leaves unmeasured.

A series of studies find that the national economy affects voting in gubernatorial elections (Chubb, 1988; Holbrook, 1987; Simon, Ostrom, Marra, 1991) and popular assessments of the governor (Howell and Vanderleeuw, 1990; Orth; 2001; Crew and Weiher, 1996). The question turns on whether the public assigns local level leaders responsibility for the national economy (Stein, 1990; Chubb, 1988). One mechanism through which national economic factors may affect gubernatorial popularity is the presidential linkage, already discussed. With controls for presidential approval we might not witness any direct impact of the national economy on gubernatorial approval. Past research that investigates the impact of the national economy on gubernatorial approval often fails to include presidential approval into the estimation model. Thus, the noted effect may be spurious.

The national economy may impinge on gubernatorial approval, not because of a linkage to the president, but because the public holds all incumbents in office, especially executives, accountable for the health of the economy. Such a linkage makes sense in the case of state

economic factors. But why would the public hold governors accountable for the national economy? Several possibilities present themselves. First, the public may misunderstand the role of the governor in a federal system. Second, the governor, irrespective of party, may be a handy target to vent displeasure. With fixed terms of office, often withholding approval is the only way that the public can signal displeasure with the way things are going in the interim between elections.

Third, people's understanding of the economy may not effectively or finely distinguish between the state and national economy. On the one hand, the national economy is quite integrated. National economic forces often strongly influence the quality of local and regional economies. Furthermore, there is much news reporting about the national economy. By this dynamic, we begin by noting that people are sociotropic in orientations, especially with regard to the economy, as opposed to egocentric, as much research indicates (Erikson, MacKuen, Stimson, 2002). Furthermore, because of news reporting, people's understanding or view of the economy is primarily national. They then apply this understanding of the economy in evaluating governors, and perhaps most other office holders, as well.¹⁶

We use the following variables to measure the national economy: 1) monthly national inflation (percentage change in the consumer price index, 2) monthly national unemployment, 3) monthly consumer economic confidence, and 4) monthly consumer economic expectations. All are measured as one-month lags. The source for the inflation and unemployment data is the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov). We use the University of Michigan's monthly Survey of Consumers for data on current economic confidence and economic expectations, which tap into retrospective and prospective evaluations, respectively. To our knowledge, no one has used national perceptual economic data in a study of gubernatorial popularity.¹⁷ The monthly Survey

of Consumers, however, only dates to 1978. Fortunately, we lose very few cases for analysis because not many gubernatorial popularity readings exist before 1978. We hypothesize that as the inflation rate and unemployment rises, and as confidence and expectations fall, gubernatorial popularity will be lower.

The Individual Effects Critique

Thus far, we have emphasized systemic factors that might affect gubernatorial popularity. Several studies have a difficult time accounting for the variance in gubernatorial popularity, and as discussed, considerable debate exists over factors that influence gubernatorial approval. In a recent paper, Adams and Squire (2001) frontally challenge the systematic perspective, arguing instead that factors idiosyncratic to each governor better account for gubernatorial popularity. In their comparative analysis of all 50 states, MacDonald and Sigleman (1999) also argue for the need to include information about individual governors.

MacDonald and Sigleman (pp. 213-214) postulate that state politics is not very salient. Thus one should expect a high degree of noise in estimations of gubernatorial popularity, as well as the potential for idiosyncratic characteristics of governors to enter into people's evaluations. In contrast, Adams and Squire (2001, p. 390) argue that governors are well covered in the media, which opens the avenue for the personality and other personal traits to affect evaluations. But both sets of scholars agree that individual attributes of governors may strongly color people's evaluations of their state's executive.

In an effort to identify one set of relevant individual attributes, Barth and Ferguson (2002) test for the influence of personality on approval by measuring governors' motivations through a psychometric textual analysis of inaugural speeches. They find that power and achievement motivations may affect popularity, but in directions counter to their theoretical

expectations. Other governor-specific factors, specifically being associated with a serious scandal and having an expansive policy agenda, seem to decrease approval ratings (Barth and Ferguson 2002).

Barth and Ferguson's findings regarding personality and scandal reinforce suggestions that idiosyncratic factors of governors affect public evaluations but these studies offer little in the way of theory to guide us in developing measures about gubernatorial characteristics. The best that can be said thus far is that idiosyncratic factors will vary by individual and that they may affect gubernatorial approval.

Therefore, without much theory or reliable past measurement to rely on, we follow Adams and Squire's (2001) lead and use gubernatorial dummy variables to capture idiosyncratic effects on gubernatorial approval. We employ two approaches. First, we enter into our equation dummy variables for the 26 governors for whom 30 or more observations exist. Second, we also enter in a separate estimation, dummy variables for all 195 governors in the data set. Although the second approach will use up many degrees of freedom, with nearly 2000 cases for analysis one can estimate such an equation. Still, introducing such a large number of dummies increases the likelihood of multicollinearity, making it difficult to interpret to interpret the coefficients of individual gubernatorial variables. But as we show below, even with the introduction of the entire set of gubernatorial dummies, many of the systemic factors identified above reach statistical significance with properly signed coefficients.

Analysis

Table 3 presents the regression results of three models. The first includes the seventeen substantive variables discussed above and listed on Table 1, the three response category variables

and the polling firm dummies. A second model adds the set 26 gubernatorial dummies, while the third model includes dummies for all 195 governors.¹⁸

Table 3 About Here

First, adding the gubernatorial dummies significantly improves the R^2 . The adjusted equation R^2 with the 26 gubernatorial dummies rises from .50 to .57 and to .76 when all 195 are entered. Importantly, the gubernatorial dummies do not eliminate the impact of the substantive variables. In model 1, which does not include any gubernatorial dummies, ten of the substantive variables are significant at the .05 level or better. Each retains its statistical significance in model 2. In model 3, with all gubernatorial dummies entered, 15 of the substantive variables attain statistical significance at the .05 level. As we discuss below, inclusion of all gubernatorial dummies actually improves the performance of several substantive variables.

Thus, the individualist critique of Adams-Squire and MacDonald-Sigelman is partially correct. Gubernatorial popularity depends in part on who the governor is, although from this analysis we can not pin down just what it is about individual governors that affects popularity. But systemic factors also matter and the impact of systemic factors remains in the face of controls for individual governors, contrary to the individualist argument.

Although model 3 has the highest R^2 , with the greatest number of significant substantive variables, the inclusion of so many gubernatorial dummies causes some estimation problems. First, the constant is thrown off wildly and the coefficients of several variables (state diversity, Republican governor, and independent governor) become hard to interpret. Still, with the inclusion of all the gubernatorial dummies, other variables attain statistical significance (e. g., unified-divided government). A properly specified equation will probably include more than the 26 gubernatorial dummies of model 2, but not all of the 195 dummies of model 3. Without a

better theoretical guide about the personal attributes of individual governors, we are unable to settle on a definitive model for estimation. Thus, in reporting the effects below, we point out similarities and differences in the behavior of coefficients across models 2 and 3. We begin with the national factors, and then discuss the statistical performance of the state factors.

National Impacts on Gubernatorial Popularity

Both national political and economic factors affect gubernatorial popularity. Three of the national economic variables are significant: inflation, current economic confidence, and economic expectations. National unemployment shows the wrong sign in all three models. This is a function of multicollinearity with state unemployment. National and state unemployment are correlated at .65 ($p = .000$). When state unemployment is dropped out of the estimation, the sign for national unemployment becomes negative, as it should. Further, the coefficient is strong ($b = -.88$) and highly statistically significant ($p = .000$).¹⁹ We retain than state unemployment variable because it holds the correct sign even with controls for national unemployment.

As for inflation, results for model 2 indicate that each one percentage point change in the consume price index leads to a hefty 2.2 percentage point decline in popularity. In model 3, inflation seems to have no significant impact ($b = -.6$, $p = .24$). Based on results of model 2, governors can expect a monthly shift in popularity of about .9 percentage points,(the average monthly change in inflation is .4; $.4 * 2.2 = .88$). Thus, we are unlikely to see much impact of inflation from one month to the next, but aggregated over several months, a trend of rising or falling inflation can take its toll on the governor.

National economic perceptions strongly influence gubernatorial approval. Results are nearly identical across models 2 and 3, although consumer expectations is slightly stronger in model 2. Here current consumer confidence seems slightly more potent in affecting gubernatorial

popularity. Each one percentage point change in current economic confidence translates into a .17 percent change in gubernatorial approval. A one standard deviation shift in economic confidence (about 10 points) can convert into nearly a 2 percentage point impact on approval. The maximum effect can be computed by comparing the high and low values of consumer confidence, a difference of 55 percentage points. Across this extreme range, current economic confidence can swing popularity by about 9.4 points.

Each one percentage point change in economic expectations will have about a .10 percentage point effect on popularity (we use the more conservative figures from model 3). A one standard deviation shift in expectations (12 points) can shift gubernatorial popularity by about 1.2 percentage points. Again we can compute the maximum effect. Expectations range from a high of 108.6 to a low of 44.2. This 64.4 percentage point range can represent about a 6.5 percentage point shift in popularity. Given the impact of these national perceptions on gubernatorial approval, it is enticing to conjecture the effect of perceptions of the state economy on gubernatorial approval, especially given the importance of the state economy on gubernatorial approval, as reported below.

Besides these national economic effects, national politics, mediated through the presidency, also strongly affect gubernatorial approval. Presidential popularity affects gubernatorial approval in all three estimations by about the same amount. Using the figures for model 2, a one percentage point change in presidential approval translates into a .08 percentage point shift in gubernatorial popularity. Although seemingly small, the great swings in presidential approval, which are sometimes quite sudden, can markedly affect the governor's popularity. A one standard deviation shift in presidential approval (11.2%), converts into about a .9 shift in gubernatorial approval. However, presidential approval ranges some 71 percentage

points in these data, which amount to about a 5.7 percent impact on gubernatorial approval.

We should not take these results in isolation of the fact that merely being of the president's party will depress the governor's popularity by 6.5 percentage points (in model 2) and 3.1 points (in model 3). If we assume a president of average popularity (47.9), the net impact of these two variables is -2.7 ($47.9 * .08 - 6.5$). A president has to have an approval level of around 80, nearly unheard of, before governors of the president's party glean some positive effect from the president. Opposition party governors stand in a strong position; unless a president is highly popular, they will benefit with high popularity.

Without the dummy variable for gubernatorial-presidential co-partisanship, the presidential popularity variable itself does not register significantly on gubernatorial approval. We see this here when we net out the effects of the two variables. Clearly, presidential effects go beyond popularity. Why being of the president's party harms governors is unclear, but as the president is often the object of much political sniping, visible members of the president's party may feel the effects of attacks on the president, which harm their popularity independent of the impact of the president's popularity. In all, national factors strongly affect gubernatorial approval. We now turn to the impact of state factors.

State Impacts on Gubernatorial Popularity

Results indicate that economic and political state factors play a large part in the governor's popularity level. Reviewing the impact of economic factors first, we find that both state income growth and unemployment affect gubernatorial popularity in model 2, but income fails to attain statistical significance in model 3. The regression coefficients from model two indicate that a \$100 change in state per capita income translates into a 3 percentage point increase in gubernatorial popularity. However, income jumps rarely occur in short periods of

time. The average quarterly change in income, based on these data, is only about \$22, which gains the governor a mere .6 change in popularity.

Unemployment, in contrast, has more pronounced effects. Each one percentage point shift in unemployment has approximately a 2 to 2.2 percentage impact on gubernatorial approval. A standard deviation shift in unemployment (1.8), produces nearly a 4 point impact on gubernatorial popularity. That unemployment, rather than income growth, affects gubernatorial popularity more strongly runs counter to most findings of national level approval, which tends to find that unemployment is less important than either inflation or income growth on presidential popularity. Perhaps this difference speaks to the different policy responsibilities at the two levels of government, with the national government being held responsible for inflation, where job growth is in part a state responsibility. Over the past two decades, state political leaders have proclaimed their ability to generate jobs for their states. Major auto plant openings in Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina, among other highly publicized events, may have instilled public expectations that state leaders should be effective in generating new jobs. From such a perspective, it then makes sense that citizens would use unemployment, an indicator of job growth, in evaluating their governor.

State political factors also affect gubernatorial popularity. As hypothesized, being an independent harms a governor's approval level. Model 2 indicates that the effect is substantial, about 4 percentage points. (It makes little sense to rely on the estimates from model 3. The inclusion of all 195 gubernatorial dummies means that the independence dummy is probably picking up one or a few governors or data points. The same point holds for the partisan affiliation dummy.) It is not clear what impact being a Republican or Democrat has, as the coefficients bounce around depending upon the set of gubernatorial dummies employed.

Social and political context is also important. Again, the inclusion of so many gubernatorial dummies in model 3 makes it hard to interpret some coefficients. Results from model 2 suggest that the more diverse the state population, the lower the governor's approval, as hypothesized. The diversity index possesses no natural metric, but we can estimate the loss of popularity by comparing the popularity of governors of the least, average and most diverse states. Moving from the least diverse (.395) to an average state (.47) will result in a loss of about 2.7 popularity points. Moving from an average to the most diverse state (.55) will lose the governor another 2.8 points. Overall the difference between severing in the least and most diverse states is about 5.5 percentage points. The effect of state population is highly unstable across estimations. This is because it is highly correlated with state diversity ($r = .50$, $p = .000$) and with the gubernatorial dummies. Without diversity in the equation, population has a downward pull on popularity; the larger the state the lower the governor's popularity.

Length of time in office affects gubernatorial approval. Results indicate support for the cyclical over the linear decline hypothesis. The linear term indicates that each month the governor is in office, s/he can expect to see a loss of .39 percentage points, offset by an increase of .004 in the squared term. At the end of a full term, 48 months, governors will see a net loss of 9.0 points as a function of service. Only governors who have other factors playing in their direction will be elected under such a disadvantage. They reach their nadir at about this time. Early in the second term, their popularity loss from service begins to abate. By month 95, the net effects of the linear and squared term cancel out, and governors register a tiny .4 percentage advantage as a function of service in the month that they leave office.

Model 3 indicates that unified government has the effects that Nicholson, et. al. (2002) hypothesize, although it does not reach statistical significance in any other model. Governors

who preside over divided government, according to model 3, can expect to garner about 2.7 percentage points in popularity. This impact is not far different from that that Nicholson, et. al, found, where their estimates range from 1.8 to 2.2 percentage points.

Governors seem advantaged when the ideological make up of the state citizenry leans in their direction. Again, however, this result is unstable. It nearly attains statistical significance in model 1, fails to do so in model 2, and emerges strongly significant in model 3. Model 3 suggests that each percentage advantage in terms of ideological identifiers translates into about a .4 percentage point gain in popularity. For an average state, where governors hold a tiny 1 point advantage, this effect barely registers. But a one standard deviation shift (14.7) accumulates a strong impact, 6.5 percentage points. Compared to the average state, a governor who is elected in the least favorable ideological circumstances (-29.5), can expect to see a popularity level some 13 points lower than a governor in an average state. Governors in the most ideologically advantaged circumstances can expect about a 12 point gain. Thus, popularity seems quite sensitive to the ideological composition of a state.

State partisan advantage has counter-intuitive effects. It shows a negative sign in all three models, although it fails to attain statistical significance in model 3. Model 2 indicates that each shift of one percent in state partisanship to the governor's party results in a loss of about .11 percentage points of popularity. Serving in a state composed of opposition identifiers (-23.5) compared to the average state (.9), results in a gain of 2.7 popularity points. In contrast moving in the other direction from an average state to one where co-partisans dominate most securely (35.2) will result in a loss of about 3.8 popularity points.

Why this seemingly counter-intuitive effect? Perhaps minority executives try harder to appeal to a broader set of voters because they have too few co-partisans to rely upon them

exclusively. In contrast, majority governors do not have to seek public support from outside of the ranks of their co-partisans in the mass public. Hence their public style may be more intensely partisan. As a result they may more easily (or intentionally?) alienate voters who are not members of their party.

Results indicate that both state and national factors affect gubernatorial popularity. If we estimate model 2, but delete all state variables, we generate an R^2 of .51. Deleting the national factors, but retaining the state ones, produces an R^2 of .52. Thus, it appears that each set contributes about equally toward explaining gubernatorial popularity.²⁰

Conclusions

Several conclusions emerge from this research. First, the results clarify some of the debates in the literature on the sources of gubernatorial popularity. By being able to estimate models that are better specified than those of past studies, we show that national economic factors do not directly affect the approval of governors. The theoretical linkage between national economic concerns and gubernatorial popularity was tenuous at best, as discussed above.

Although the visibility and constitutional systems of presidents and governors are somewhat comparable, we recognized that they also differ. In this paper, we focused on the fact that governors preside over states where the president presides over a nation. This difference raises the issue of how autonomous states are as political systems. Our results find that many factors about the state's economy and political context strongly affect gubernatorial popularity. From that account, people judge the governor on what is going on in the state and possibly on what the governor is doing in office.

But we also found that presidential evaluations strongly colored the governor's popularity. This finding underscores the complexity of our federal system, its multiple layers and

many political authorities. In such a complex system, many people may be confused about who is responsible for what. As a consequence, they may use short-cuts or heuristics to simplify and make sense of the political world. The president may serve that purpose for many, and through this process, people may generalize their attitudes about the president onto other political leaders, like the governor. Thus, this finding of presidential impacts on gubernatorial popularity not only speaks to the complexity of our federal system and how people cope with that complexity, but it also speaks to the importance and centrality of the president in our political system.

We also find that many of the factors that affect presidential approval at the national level affect gubernatorial approval at the state level. In particular, we find that gubernatorial approval, like presidential approval, cycles over time, bumps up a bit under divided government, and that economic conditions matter greatly. While each of these sources of popularity needs to be further developed, they may provide a foundation for constructing a more general understanding of leader popularity, an aim that motivated this paper.

One issue in using the presidency solely as a site to study leader popularity is that in some ways the presidency does not vary. For example, across the entire period in which we have data on presidential approval, we can characterize the nation as heterogeneous, diverse, and large. States, in contrast, vary in this regard. This variance allows us to address the question of whether it is easier to govern relatively homogeneous states, with the assumption that when populations are relatively homogeneous, it may be easier to find policies and courses of action that meet with the broad approval of the public than when populations are heterogeneous. This is what we find. Gubernatorial popularity is higher in less diverse states than more diverse states, a finding echoed in Senate election studies that find that senators from smaller states win re-election more often and with higher margins than senators from larger states. Such a finding

about leader approval could not emerge if we focused solely on the presidency.

Lastly, like presidency research, we find that “governor” makes a difference. It is not clear what the gubernatorial (or presidential) dummies mean theoretically. Future research efforts need to look more closely into these personal effects with an eye on detecting what it is about some leaders that makes them more popular than other leaders as personalities. That we find such strong statistical impacts from the gubernatorial dummies, like the strong statistical effects of presidential dummies, suggests that leadership, at least with regard to popularity and approval, is in part institutional and in part personal. That the personal should matter in a unitary institution should come as no surprise. What it is about the personal that matters should be high on our agenda in studying approval.

Our study points to other future directions that approval studies can take. First, although presidents and governors both govern in separation of powers systems, their particular constitutional designs often differ. Using the governorship as a research site allows us to address whether variance in constitutional design within a separation of powers framework affects the relationship between leaders and citizens. Does constitutional design affect the way governors behave in office and if so, does that affect how the public evaluates governors. For example, governors vary in length of terms of office, term limitations, and executive authority over policy and government. Do differences in these institutional attributes affect leader approval?

Another direction for research would look more closely at the policy areas for which governors have authority and for which the public holds governors accountable. We began such an exercise by looking at economic factors, but one may argue that the public generally holds the national government more responsible than the states for the economy. It is in other policy areas, like education, state taxes, crime, ect., that the public holds state and local officials responsible

for government performance and outcomes. Does the performance of government in these areas affect popular assessments of the governor?

Studies of the presidency laid the foundation for understanding the nature of public evaluations of leaders outside of the electoral context. Although we have learned much about public evaluations from the presidency literature, a more general understanding of leader approval requires that we study the popularity of other leaders to learn how much of our understanding of popularity that derives from the presidency literature is intrinsic to the presidency or is general across other leaders. Our study has taken an early stab at doing so in a conscious manner.

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Table 1. Variables Used in the Analysis

Variable	Prediction	Definition and Source
National Inflation Lagged	-	Monthly national inflation rate (CPI monthly change). Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
National Unemployment Lagged	-	Monthly national unemployment rate. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Nat. Consumer Confidence Lagged	+	Monthly Current Consumer Confidence, lagged. Source: Survey of Consumers, University of Michigan
Nat. Economic Expectations Lagged	+	Monthly Consumer Economic Expectations Confidence. Source: Survey of Consumers, University of Michigan
Lagged Quarterly State Income	+	Quarterly state per capita income growth. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Lagged State Unemployment	-	Monthly state unemployment. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Lagged Presidential Popularity	+	Monthly presidential popularity, corrected for party of the governor. Source: Gallup Polls
Gov.-Pres. Same Party	?	President and Governor of the Same Party, 1= yes. Source: Official Job Approval data set for governor's Party.
State Party ID	+	Percentage of State Identifiers of the Governor's Party - Percentage of Identifiers of the Opposition Party. Source: Erikson, Wright, MacIver
State Ideology	+	Percentage of State Identifiers of the Governor's Ideology - Percentage of Identifiers of the Opposition Ideology. Source: Erikson, Wright, MacIver
Tenure in Months	-	Length of Tenure in Months. Source: Official Job Approval data set
Tenure Squared	+	Length of Tenure in Months Squared. Source: Official Job Approval data set
Republican Gov.	?	Republican Governor 1= Republican, 0 = Other. Source: Official Job Approval data set
Independent Gov.	-	Independent Governor 1= Independent, 0 = Other. Source: Official Job Approval data set
State Diversity	-	State diversity: Morgan and Wilson, 1990
State Population	-	State population, in 000s. Source: Census Bureau and Statistical Abstract of the united states, various years.
Unified Government	-	Unified Government, 1 = Unified, 0 = Divided, Source: Book of the States.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Analysis

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Gubernatorial Popularity	55.09	16.21	10.22	97.26
State Income	22.24	16.87	-70.57	238.71
State Unemployment	6.03	1.84	2.20	15.40
National Inflation	0.39	0.29	-0.50	1.40
National Unemployment	6.01	1.24	3.90	10.80
Consume Confidence	103.31	10.14	67.4	121.10
Economic Expectations	83.83	12.14	44.2	108.60
Presidential Popularity	47.94	11.22	11.00	82.00
Gov.-Pres. Same Party	0.36	0.48	0.00	1.00
State Party ID	0.91	10.35	-23.49	35.24
State Ideology	1.01	14.72	-29.49	29.49
Tenure in Months	36.07	14.26	4.00	124.00
Tenure Squared	1504.65	1125.50	16.00	15376.00
Republican Gov.	0.53	0.50	0.00	1.00
Independent Gov.	0.05	0.22	0.00	1.00
State Diversity	0.47	0.04	0.40	0.55
State Population	7917.49	7581.92	431.00	33145.12
Unified Government	0.41	0.49	0.00	1.00

Table 3. Regression Results of Economic and Political Factors on Gubernatorial Popularity, 1978-2000

Variable	Model 1**				Model 2**				Model 3**			
	b	SE	t	p	b	SE	t	p	b	SE	t	p
State Income Growth Lagged	.03	.02	1.84	.03*	.03	.02	1.97	.025*	.02	.01	1.38	.08*
State Unemployment Lagged	-2.71	.26	-10.3	.000*	-2.23	.27	-8.39	.000*	-1.98	.30	-6.65	.000*
Nat. Inflation Lagged	-1.91	1.07	-1.78	.04*	-2.21	1.01	-2.19	.015*	-.61	.85	-.72	.24*
Nat. Unemployment Lagged	1.77	.47	3.78	.000	1.41	.47	2.98	.003	1.16	.46	2.53	.01
Lagged Confidence	.20	.07	3.05	.001*	.17	.06	2.74	.003*	.18	.05	3.26	.001*
Lagged Expectations	.15	.05	3.23	.000*	.13	.04	2.98	.015*	.10	.04	2.65	.004*
Lagged Pres. Popularity	.08	.03	2.96	.002*	.08	.03	3.10	.001*	.10	.02	4.35	.000*
Gov.-Pres. Same Party	-5.24	.72	-7.25	.000	-6.47	.72	-9.00	.000	-3.11	.81	-3.85	.000
State Party ID	-.18	.04	-4.44	.000	-.11	.04	-2.77	.006	-.07	.08	-.82	.41
State Ideology	.06	.04	1.58	.06*	-.02	.04	-.37	.71	.44	.18	2.48	.006*
Tenure in Months	-.41	.08	-5.17	.000*	-.39	.07	-5.21	.000*	-.39	.08	-5.19	.000*
Tenure Squared	.004	.001	4.11	.000	.004	.0009	4.21	.000*	.004	.001	4.15	.000*
Republican Gov.	.11	1.32	.08	.94	5.13	1.59	3.22	.001	-35.58	8.90	-2.87	.004
Independent Gov.	-3.78	1.73	-2.19	.015*	-4.81	2.93	-1.65	.05*	-13.24	7.30	-1.81	.035*
State Diversity	-41.36	12.78	-3.23	.0005*	-35.50	13.78	-2.58	.005*	-201.78	62.48	-3.33	.0005*
State Population	-.00003	.00008	-.33	.36*	.0004	.0001	3.91	.000	-.0004	.0002	-1.62	.05*
Unified Government	.56	.76	.74	.46	-.83	.79	-1.06	.15*	-2.67	.87	-3.07	.001*
Constant	62.09	8.97	6.92	.000	59.90	9.24	6.48	.000	161.41	29.30	5.51	.00
R ² /Adj. R ²	.48	.46			.56	.54			.74	.71		
N	1938				1938				1938			
F	24.58				25.08				23.39			
Root MSE	11.93				11.03				8.78			

* one tailed test

Model 1 also includes 3 category response dummies, 21 annual dummies, and 51 poll dummies

Model 2 also includes 3 category dummies, 21 annual dummies, 51 poll dummies, and 24 governor dummies

Model 3 also includes 3 category dummies, 21 annual dummies, 51 poll dummies, and 195 governor dummies.

Endnotes

¹ In this paper, we use approval and popularity synonymously, recognizing the differences between them. Our data base of gubernatorial polls, described below, combines various types of popularity and approval polls into one data set in order to build a large enough n of cases for analysis. Thus, the distinction between popularity and approval fades this paper.

² This literature is massive. See the review in Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson, 2002 and Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, esp. pp. 184-188.

³ Here we distinguish between popularity and job approval. As we discuss below, our data consist of a variety of questions about public evaluations of governors in office. Only a subset are properly job approval questions. Thus we use the more general terminology, popularity.

⁴ Two recent studies (Adams and Squire, 2001; MacDonald and Sigelman, 1999) have a difficult time explaining much of the variance in gubernatorial approval at all.

⁵ This data collection project was directed by Thad Beyle, Richard Niemi, and Lee Sigelman, and funded by the NSF (Grant No. SES-9974176). We thank them for allowing us to use the data.

⁶ Only 171 (7%) of 2304 cases date prior to 1976. Almost all are from Minnesota, a few dozen from California, with less than a handful of readings from five other states.

⁷ Beyle, et. al. (2001) also recommend correct for “don’t know” variability across questions this way.

⁸ The data set contains general approval as well as policy specific approval questions. We only use general approval questions here.

⁹ We found that as the number of response categories increases, the likelihood of negative evaluations rises, but not linearly. Three response categories leads to more negative responses than two categories, but four response categories, although producing more negative responses than two categories, produces less negative responses than three categories. Five response categories leads to the highest likelihood of negative responses.

¹⁰ In several instances, more than one firm asked a gubernatorial evaluation question of a state’s citizens. We decided to keep both readings in the data set as separate data points because the above analysis suggests that it may be difficult to combine individual cases through techniques like averaging. And given the heterogeneity of questions, we have no framework yet to tell us how to combine cases, even when taken in the same month. In some instances, the resulting popularity readings were actually quite different. The use of polling form dummies, however, helps control for any of these house-question wording, etc., problems in comparing across these popularity readings.

¹¹ We downloaded these data from John MacIver’s web page at the University of Colorado, <http://socsci.colorado.edu/~mciverj/wip.html>.

¹² Moreover, the maverick behavior of many independents (e. g., Jesse Ventura) may alienate voters. Many independents came to office in three-way contests, and thus, rarely enjoyed majority vote support in winning the election.

¹³ Although state populations grow over time, they do so very incrementally. Much of the variation in the population size variable, thus, is cross sectional. Hence we do not difference this variable.

¹⁴ Crew and Weiher found no shift over time in the approval of the governor of Iowa or Minnesota.

¹⁵ This is similar to Simon, Ostrom, and Marra's (1991) presidential referendum effect in state elections.

¹⁶ Undermining this argument, however, is research suggesting that voters distinguish between the state and national economy, and that state economic conditions affect voters' assessment of the state's economy (Niemi, Bremer, Heel, 1999).

¹⁷ Howell and Vanderleeuw (1990) and Orth (2001) use perceptual economic data in their studies from their surveys of Louisiana and Michigan voters, respectively.

¹⁸ A large number of the individual governor dummies drops out of the estimation because their effects are subsumed in other variables or combination of other variables. Another issue is whether to include annual dummies to pick up temporal trends and other variables that remain unmeasured. On argument suggesting that we do so considers that our data structure resembles a pooled cross sectional design, despite the fact of so many missing cases. Often fixed effects (temporal and cross sectional dummies for time points and units) are used in pooled, cross sectional designs. When we apply annual time point dummies, variables that vary with time lose much of their variation, and fall out of the estimation. This is especially the case for the national economic variables. When we do not use the annual time point dummies, many of the national economic variables emerge as strong and significant predictors. Thus, in the presentation, we discuss equations without the time point dummies. Results with them can be obtained from the authors. Those results are essentially the same as results presented here, except that all of the national economic variables fail to attain statistical significance.

¹⁹ We experiment with another national variable, quarterly per capita national income growth, but like national unemployment, it shows the wrong sign because it is highly correlated with other economic variables.

²⁰ Another comparison only enters either the state or national variables, without any other controls. The state only model produces an R^2 of .21, and the national only an R^2 of .15. Thus, while state factors here seem more important, they do not overpower the national variables. An equation with both sets, but no other controls produces an R^2 of .27.