PRESIDENTIAL MIDTERM CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND CAMPAIGN VISITS: THE

CASE OF 2002 AND 2006

by

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(Under the Direction of Paul-Henri Gurian)

ABSTRACT

Midterm elections in the United States are often seen as less important than presidential elections. This is evidenced by their lower turnout and the relative inattentiveness of the media. That the president campaigns is a well-known fact, but few scholars have sought to understand the strategy undertaken by the president in determining where to visit and where to stay away. In this thesis I propose that the president develops and implements a cohesive strategy for campaigning for or against incumbent Congressmen and Senators in midterm elections. First, the president takes into account the party of the incumbent, the office of the incumbent, and the contextual differences of the election year. Factors such as the competitiveness of the race, the president's popularity, and the incumbent's support of the president all influence the way the president makes his midterm campaign decisions.

INDEX WORDS: Midterm elections, presidential visits, campaign strategy, George W. Bush, 2002, 2006

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Sonya. She has been nothing but caring, supportive, and loving throughout my graduate education, and I know she looks forward to my finishing as much as I do. Also I cannot forget my immediate and extended family for their years of encouragement as I was growing up. I would also like to thank my Dad for giving me his stubbornness, my Mom for giving me her patience, and my sister for all the cage-fighting training. Without them I would not be the person I am today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the President and Congress has been studied since the very beginning of our nation. The framers of the Constitution understood the need for the separation of the three branches of our federal government and the implications that such a separation would entail. This system ideally serves to hold our representatives in Washington, D.C accountable for their governance, so that no one branch can act without approval and validation of the other two institutions. However beneficial this setup is to "slowing" down and making transparent unwanted policy or legislation, it can also have the effect of frustrating politicians in their day-to-day tasks. Therefore, it is only rational that members of our nation's two major political parties wish to gain as much control as possible, both in the White House and on Capital Hill. With your man (or woman) in the executive and a solid majority in the House and Senate, "politics as usual" can often be bypassed, or, at worst, only the best of your proposed legislation becomes law. This increased productivity may not always be beneficial to the maximum number of Americans, but it is definitely helpful in furthering the goals of the party and its members.

That being said, the desire to hold as much power in Washington as possible (and to receive the rewards that come as a result) manifests itself in our country every two years. Political campaigns start well before the election, and enormous amounts of money are channeled into both competitive and non-competitive races all around the

country. All of this activity has a goal – winning an election; and it is no surprise that

winning is more often than not the goal of such an expensive and time-consuming

enterprise. However, it is important to look at what comes between wanting to win and

the eventual outcome.

Strategy in Midterm Campaigns

Any number of things can be done to maximize one's chances of winning an

election. The offices sought by candidates are numerous and varied, and so are the

methods used by those seeking election. Networking, money, and luck are all inherent to

politics, but lucky for us, we have a greater understanding of the things that seem to

matter most in the pursuance of public office. Specifically, this thesis looks at the

campaigns for the two federal legislative bodies, the United States Senate and the House

of Representatives and how these campaigns are viewed by the president, thereby

fostering and strengthening the ties between these two branches of government.

The campaigns wrought by those running for these high offices are well-studied, both

across time and on multiple levels of observation. However, there are some still some

questions regarding Congressional campaigns that are relatively new and open to further

discussion. It is one of these areas that I hope to contribute. One such question revolves

around a very simple and apparent phenomenon – the President campaigning for office-

seekers of his party in their home states during the midterm election campaign.

Ever since the genesis of commuter air travel and the christening of Air Force

One, the President of the United States has been subject to a veritable gauntlet of

international relation affairs, domestic public appearances, and innumerous political

functions. These political flights range anywhere from the President's personal agenda such as his reelection or to push his pet legislation in the "Heartland" to comforting regions in a time of crisis. Somewhere in between, however, falls campaigning on behalf of his fellow partisans in their respective constituencies, without a doubt seeking to improve their respective fares on Election Day. This idea hints at a very interesting relationship: the one between Congress and the president. While the political parties might have a vested interest in increasing the number of governors, state legislatures, and other lower offices held by their members, even if for no other reason than bragging rights, the party and especially the president have a real political stake in gaining or keeping control of Capitol Hill. By controlling as much of the Washington power structure as possible, the party increases its chances that it will be able to enact legislation that furthers its agenda and wins support amongst their base. Similarly, the president, with limited time in office, would likely see a benefit in having like-minded members in the House and Senate (Hoddie and Routh 2004, 259). The president needs Congress, and one way he can strengthen individual members' of Congress need for him is to campaign on their behalf. This game of reciprocal back-scratching makes the presidential-Congressional relationship far more complex than its Constitutional relationship suggests. The interplay of individual personalities, historical events, and local election rules all combine to make the answer to the question "who does the president campaign for in midterm elections?" much more complex and multifaceted.

That being said, it is a given that the president travels to a variety of states during the midterm election campaign even though the direct benefit he receives from these visits will be less tangible than those during presidential election years. The purpose of

this thesis is to help further the understanding of how the President or his advisors attempt to manage their time in order to maximize their effect on the midterm election. In the small body of research on this topic, a couple of generalizable results have been found. First, the president does implement a strategy when choosing in which states to focus his efforts to sway voters to the candidate from his party. According to prior research, the president's strategy is focused on maximizing his party's influence, and by extension his influence, on Capitol Hill by controlling as many seats in the Senate and the House as possible, thereby easing friction between the two branches of government (Hoddie and Routh 2004; Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991). Second, the president's efforts are not in vain; it appears that in Senate races, an appearance (or appearances) by the President during the campaign will have a positive impact on the result of that election for his party (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991; Herrnson and Morris ND). In fact, Cohen et al finds that a visit by the President, in some cases, may even be enough to make up the crucial deficit in especially tight races. These findings point to the importance of Presidential campaigning in midterm elections. They also begin to offer us insight into the process of Presidential strategy, given the complex relationships of the President to Congress, the President to voters, and the candidates to their constituencies.

If the President can affect the outcomes of midterm elections in favor of fellow politicians in his party, it would be reasonable to expect that he will campaign for candidates for national office. However, this ability and presumed willingness to go out and stump for his co-partisans is overshadowed by the President's very limited and extremely valuable resource – time. Therefore, the President must devise and incorporate a strategy that will both maximize the effect he has on the election outcome and minimize

the time and energy required to do so. This strategy must weight races with the goal of helping candidates that seem to be important, in trouble, or both. This necessarily implies that candidates who do not need help will be looked over during the campaign season. This thesis proposes a two-front presidential strategy. First, the president will be more likely to campaign in a midterm election for a Congressional incumbent of his party if they are involved in a competitive race, and this effect will be enhanced by the presence of multiple competitive races within a state. Second, the president will be more likely to campaign in a midterm election for his party's Congressional incumbents when they have a record of supporting him. The opposite should be true of incumbents not in his party, meaning that the president will not campaign against incumbents not of his party if they support him. These hypotheses offer the president two approaches to a midterm strategy. The former gives him the opportunity to use his political clout and resources to bolster the campaigns of crucial Senate and House seats that are at risk of being lost in the election. The latter is a way that the president can reward loyal party members and strengthen partisan ties to Capitol Hill. Both of these approaches, however, are different means to the same end: maximizing the president's influence in the Senate and the House of Representatives. By targeting competitive races, the president hopes to maximize the number of seats his party controls by maintaining old seats and gaining new ones. By targeting loyal co-partisans and avoiding campaigning against friends from the other side of the aisle, the president seeks to maintain ties with those already in office.

This simple extension of logic yields questions that begin to get at the reasoning under the seemingly obligatory campaign stops the president makes during these off-years. When is it deemed necessary for the president to visit a state or race on the

campaign trail? And what factors are important in discerning one state or race from another? We do not have perfect knowledge about the president's intentions, but the president does not have prior knowledge of the outcomes of the numerous Senate and Congressional races every two years. This common ground between students of political science and the president (and his strategists) is of great consequence in this thesis. The major assumption that lies within is that the president, in choosing between the many states and races throughout the country, is thinking and acting rationally and in a systematic way. With this basic underlying assumption one approaches the intricate and multifaceted relationship between Capital Hill and the White House. This long and storied relationship goes beyond the day-to-day grind in our nation's capital; it is also carried out in the streets of the many states of the country.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature directly concerned with presidential campaigning in midterm elections is brief; however, the literature dealing with midterms in general is a bit broader and older. The fact that midterms are different is not surprising, given that their chief difference is the lack of a presidential election which changes the rules of the game considerably. Here the focus is not on midterms in general; however, it is useful to consider some of the important research that is relevant to how both presidents and scholars perceive midterm elections. It is also important to look closely at the immediately relevant literature, that concerning presidential strategy in midterm campaigns.

Midterms in General

One of the first substantial, cumulative pieces of research concerning Congressional elections was The Politics of Congressional Elections by Gary C. Jacobson, and this is where most contemporary studies can trace their roots. Fittingly, this is where my research began. Pointed out in the foreword of the 6th edition by David Brady and Morris Fiorina, prior lack of interest in Congressional midterm elections to scholars simply writing them off as predictable and easy-to-understand political events with little information and strong party-line influences (xiii). However, interesting and consistent phenomena were apparent in these elections, including in a fact that was easily

observable and readily accepted as part of Congressional midterm elections: prior to 2002, the president's party lost seats in every midterm election except for two (Campbell 2003, 203).

The general theory behind midterm seat loss is that of "presidential coattails," the idea being that candidates in presidential election years are advantaged simply by being of the same party as the president whose political power and recognition becomes their indirect advantage and that this edge is lost in midterm elections. This loss of seats also occurs in spite of findings that point towards an electoral benefit of divided government. Our national government is more often divided than not in the last half of the last century (Cox and Kernell 1991, 3) and even before (Mayhew 1991, 1), and there is a whole line of research dealing with the topic. Ideally, midterm elections are events that allow voters to pass judgment on the party or administration currently in control of the national government (Petrocik and Steeper 1986, 225). However, one study in particular found that the clouding of information, particularly the type of retrospective information needed to "judge" an administration's or party's performance, can benefit the president's party in midterm elections (Nicholson and Segura 1999, 627). This means that the president's party loses seats in spite of all of its inherent advantages. This puzzle has long been wrestled with by political scientists.

One popular explanation for this effect became known as the "surge and decline" theory, first put forth by Angus Campbell in 1960. The premise is that in presidential election years, the short-term effect of the presence of presidential candidates on the ballot, and therefore and increased turnout, and partisanship combine to cause presidential elections to have both high turnout and high interest; this is the "surge." The

"decline" comes during midterm elections, where interest is lower and the president's party loses its advantage (398-402). This theory offers a good explanation for what seems to be happening in Congressional elections, but it has lost favor among political scientists in its original form (Hinckley 1981, 115), and as James Campbell would point out some years later, some things, such as political climate, are not taken into account and could potentially make the model stronger (1997, 18). Another factor found to be extremely important in predicting the outcomes of Congressional elections is summed up in the aptly named exposure thesis. The conclusion of this study is that as a party's exposure in an election increases, meaning the more seats it currently holds over its historically "normal" average, so does its loss of seats (Oppenheimer et al. 1986). This model of self-normalization is very powerful in its predictions. It also attempts to fill a large gap in theory of surge and decline – the magnitude of seat loss or gain. This model also includes both midterm and presidential year elections within its scope. In the end, it offers an alternative to surge and decline that is worth considering; since this model also explains the ebb and flow of party control on Capitol Hill, it seems that surge and decline requires yet another update.

However, midterm election years are inherently different from presidential election years, particularly in their lack of a presidential race which has a discernable impact on turnout and other political effects. This leads to the obvious question, what factors influence Congressional elections in tandem with or in spite of presidential elections? Edward Tufte's ground breaking work on the subject points at a simple model that describes the loss of Congressional seats pondered earlier by Angus Campbell. Tufte had strong results using only presidential support and change in real disposable income,

describing over 90% of the variation in the data (1975, 818). Tufte concluded this as evidence that midterm elections are referendums on presidential administrations (824), which is inline with Campbell's surge and decline theory and is confirmed by the findings of Alan Abrimowitz (1985, 42) and James Piereson (1975), though Piereson would find that presidential popularity was less of an issue for partisans than independents (687). The major difference with this logic is that we begin to explore the underlying reasons midterms end up the way they do. This work presents as many questions as answers, but one thing it does is solidify the link between the president and midterm elections; national factors, including presidential popularity, seem to have an effect on midterm election for lower offices (Pierson 1975, 686).

In summary, we know that the president's party loses seats in the vast majority of midterm elections when the so-called coattail effect is not present, or when the president's party's exposure is the greatest. We also know that national issues and political and economic circumstances affect these seemingly state and district level elections. This leads to an obvious question: if the president and national politics are intertwined with midterm Congressional elections, then how does the president figure into these non-presidential elections?

The President and Midterm Elections

Several things are known in this area. For example, the president does campaign during these elections, presumably in hopes of helping his fellow party members and therefore gaining party influence in Washington, despite the obvious fact that it is more likely than not that his party will lose seats in the election, even if the effects of

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presidential campaigning seem to have a negative or zero impact (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991, 165-66). The fact that the president campaigns in midterm elections means that it is presumed by those in power that campaigning is better than staying at home and that the outcome taken as a whole will be improved by the president's presence. However, this assumes a positive answer to one of the great questions of campaign studies: do campaigns matter?

While this debate is long and storied, it is dominated by two simple assertions: that campaigns do not matter or that campaigns do matter, to a varying degree. Indeed some researchers have concluded that campaigns do not matter; most of these studies point to other factors not influenced by the campaign that have a strong influence over the outcome of the election (Holbrook 1996, 43). This hypothesis was, for a long time, backed up by the repeated success of predictive models, particularly in the case of presidential elections. Why have an election, much less a campaign, if the winner can be predicted far before either occur?

It is conventional political wisdom that campaigns do matter, and there is plenty of research to back it up (Holbrook1996; Shepard 1977; Jackson 2002). Also, the reliability of the aforementioned predictive models was called into serious question with the still-debated outcome of the 2000 presidential election. Though political scholars will continue to revise these models, there are numerous factors found both in scholarly studies and in candidates' offices that suggest that campaigns at least seem to matter, given the amount of time, energy, and capital spent on them every election cycle. Increased spending, particularly in Congressional election, points to an assumption that candidates view campaigns as important and malleable as well. This idea that campaigns

are both important and controllable leads to the center of the argument for a presidential strategy in campaigning in midterm elections. Campaign spending and presidential visits have one thing in common: a presumed positive effect on Congressional elections. Candidates spend to increase their election fares much the same way that president's campaign for their co-partisans in midterm elections in hopes of the same results. The president believes that campaigns matter (just look at presidential campaigns) and, when appropriate, seeks to ramp up the campaign of a fellow party member-in-need by making an appearance. This idea is valid according to the limited research on the topic (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991; Herrnson and Morris ND).

Presidential campaigning in midterm elections would be for naught if the outcome was not affected in a positive way. Previous research shows that the president does have a positive and significant effect on the electoral outcome of his co-partisans that is able and willing to make a campaign appearance for (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991, 172; Herrnson and Morris ND, 15). The idea here is that even though the president's party has lost seats in the midterm election every time except for twice in the last century, 1932 and 1998 being the exceptions, combined with the fact that the president does make campaign appearances midterm after midterm suggest a simple explanation: the president does positively affect those campaigns he chooses to visit, even if that effect is small. For example, it is possible that a campaign visited by a president could still lose but by a smaller margin thanks to the presidential visit, but there is a more likely explanation and it revolves around presidential strategy.

Given the fact that the presidential visits appear to have a positive impact on the outcome of a Congressional election, then it would seem rational and desirable that the

president would visit all campaigns that he possibly could in hopes of increasing his party's influence in our national government. And indeed, this is the case. The president does visit numerous races, especially in the days leading up to the election. However, two major problems face politicians hoping for a presidential visit. The short collective memory of the voting public and the twenty-four hour news cycle demands that a presidential visit be late in the campaign period. Also, in the limited number of days in an active campaign, the president is in high demand by those who hope to have their electoral fares enhanced by a visit. This gives candidates and the presidents both a narrow window of opportunity in which to determine a) if a presidential visit will be fruitful and b) would the president's limited time be better spent elsewhere. It is this action of picking and choosing between states and races that begins to approach an understanding of presidential strategy in midterm campaigns.

One study in particular seems to be the beginning of the limited literature that seeks to understand the strategy the president plans and implements in the midterm election cycle. Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman (1991) assert that the perceived negative or non-impact of presidential campaigning in midterm elections (evidenced by the almost guaranteed loss of seats in midterm elections) arises from a misconceptualization of exactly how the president impacts these elections. Rather than simply being a national factor evenly distributed in all races, the president implements a strategy of where he campaigns in order to affect what are deemed key races. They find evidence for this strategy-based version of presidential campaigning. They also find, as mentioned before, that the president has a positive influence on the eventual outcome of the vote, particularly by mobilizing non-voters. Significantly, they determine that in some cases,

this presidential bump was sometimes enough to turn a narrow loss into a narrow win for the candidate, and therefore a worthy enterprise by the president, despite the record of the president's party in previous midterm elections. This study's intent is to disprove what the authors call the "conventional wisdom" of presidential midterm campaigning, or the assumption that the loss of seats is inevitable and the president's time is wasted in efforts to reverse this trend. It appears to accomplish this goal and points toward a greater understanding of how the president and his advisors view these elections and their place in the American political system.

The other substantial piece of literature that attempts to tackle the quest to understand presidential strategy in midterm elections was written by Hoddie and Routh (2004). Here, the authors seek to do more than observe the effects of presidential visits as Cohen et al did; the focus is centered on presidential strategy. The principle assertion is that if the president follows a strategy in his own electoral contests, then it is reasonable to assume that he does so in his midterm attempts at helping his fellow party members. The authors use a combination of national and state level variables to predict how many times the president will visit a state and find that the appearance of a presidential strategy in choosing states that will be more receptive to a presidential endorsement.

They are also careful to control for the difference between an explicit campaign appearance and a simple presidential visit to a non-campaign related event. However, one potential flaw in this study is that the authors use the eventual results of the election to determine whether or not a race was competitive. This violates the very definition of strategy; perfect prior knowledge is a luxury not available to even the greatest political

minds. Also the inclusion of the rationally irrelevant variable "distance from Washington, D.C," which would have marginal if any effect on presidential visits for campaign or any other purposes. The ability of the president to travel is only limited by time, not distance. However, this study does highlight a void in the literature of campaign strategy. The president does appear to choose between states much the way he does in presidential elections in hopes of garnering votes within the Electoral College.

Both of these studies have one thing in common that could be conceived as a weakness: they are comparing states in their data to get at presidential campaigning in particular races. In other words, the unit of analysis is at the state level. For Cohen et al, this is not a big problem, considering that study only looked at Senate races, which are state-wide races. However, Hoddie and Routh are also interested in gubernatorial races, which are also state-wide elections, and House races, which are in a very few cases state-wide but more typically held within much smaller districts. Why is this a problem? In order to understand presidential strategy in midterm elections, a good model should mimic the behavior of the real-life subject. I propose that the president does consider the consequences of state-wide data for appropriate elections, Senate and gubernatorial races. But House races, which are inherently different than their in-state counterparts, must be viewed differently. Here a race-to-race comparison will rest more on a possible evaluation by the president of the candidates involved, particularly incumbents, rather than state-level data. Simply put, a race-level analysis is state-level analysis for state-wide races, but this is not the case for House races.

Studies like Cohen et al (1991) and a forthcoming paper by Herrnson and Morris (ND) do look at the effects of presidential campaigning at the level of the individual race.

It is a straightforward conclusion that if the president does affect Congressional elections at the individual level rather than the state-wide level, then it is easy to see the need for a model based on a strategy that looks at individual races to make a determination on which are good candidates for a presidential visit. In this thesis I hope to do just that. By building a model that compares individual races relative to one another, a greater understanding of how the president views midterm Congressional races should come into view. Looking at only one president has the benefit of controlling automatically for numerous other factors such as presidential charisma or changes in national political climate. However, by looking at more than one year and building on studies such as Herrnson and Morris's, more can be learned by observing how differences in circumstances of election years can greatly change the president's midterm strategy. Luckily, two recent elections and one current president fit this case well.

CHAPTER 3

THE GEORGE W. BUSH MIDTERMS ELECTIONS

In particular, two recent midterm elections promise to offer two very different contextual situations. While the midterms of 2002 and 2006 had a president in common, other factors, such as his popularity, varied greatly between these two elections. In 2002, after 9/11 and before the military action in Iraq, President Bush enjoyed enormous popularity nationally. In the 2002 midterm election he found himself to be a very busy campaigner. According to my data, the president made 86 campaign visits from early September to Election Day (Keep in mind that the president can "visit" or promote multiple campaigns within one speech). Once the results were in, the Republican Party had gained seats on Capitol Hill, a feat only accomplished twice since 1866 under FDR in 1934 then Clinton in 1998 (Campbell 2003, 203). As Maureen Schweers points out, even often ignored House races were heavily campaigned for and the pay-off was a six-seat gain. Much of the credit had to be given to the president; Schweers even coins it "the Bush bounce" (2003, 74).

It is also important to note the other historical factors against Bush and the Republicans in this particular election. As Tufte (1975) points out, the state of the economy plays a large role in the retrospective voting that presumably goes on in midterm elections, and much of this is attributed to the president. Here the economy did not seem to matter (Campbell 2003). The economy was not at its prime in 2002, but it is likely that other factors such as Bush's wave of popularity and the impending war in Iraq

overshadowed this typically important factor. Campbell also points out that 2002 technically did not break the decades-old surge and decline pattern; Gore actually won the popular vote in 2000, so a small loss of Democratic seats in 2002 would be expected. Whatever the case, the Republican Party beat the odds in 2002.

However, any magic worked in 2002 seems to have been exhausted by 2006. Rather than gaining seats or even retaining control on Congress, Republicans found themselves being overthrown in a milder version of their boom in 1994. Democrats gained 28 seats in the House, 5 seats in the Senate, and saw the instating of the nation's first female Speaker of the House (CNN America Votes 2006). This election year found President Bush as unpopular in 2006 as he was popular in 2002; this is also evidenced in his campaign appearances, down to 44. Also, many Republicans found themselves on the wrong end of the foreign policy question that was one of their advantages in 2002; foreign policy is not typically at issue in Congressional elections but this was not the case in 2006 (Terhune 2006).

With the fading popularity and increasing skepticism of the war in Iraq, one of the chief rallying points of 2002, it is no surprise that the 2006 midterm election fell more in line with the traditional midterm outcome. In this instance, Republicans avoided Bush's presence as much as they had sought it in 2002. In some races, Republicans even found their ties to Bush being used against them in the form of Democratic political ads (Buncombe 2006). More proof that Bush was seen as "political poison" came after the results of the election were revealed when Bush took partial blame for GOP losses in the election (CNN America Votes 2006). However, not all of the blame could be placed on the president; Republicans in the House and the Senate also found themselves at the

center of numerous investigations involving personal and political scandals leading up to the 2006 midterm. These scandals could have been just as costly to Republicans in the districts and states that found themselves home to candidates in these circumstances (Wasserman 2005).

The differences in the two midterms of the presidency of George W. Bush, their consequences, and their influence on his strategy in campaigning during these elections will be discussed more in depth later. What is important here is that these two cases present themselves as almost ideal situations, from one extreme to another, with a president in common. This will allow ample room for comparing and contrasting results while making it easy to keep the individual cases in mind by holding constant the differing priorities and personalities that change with administrations.

CHAPTER 4

AN EMPIRICAL MODEL OF PRESIDENTIAL VISITS TO STATES IN

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

It seems logical that the president implements a strategy in choosing where to campaign for his fellow partisans. For example, Hoddie and Routh found that the president weighs factors between states in choosing where to campaign in midterm elections much in the same way he chooses where to spend his time during presidential election years in hopes of maximizing the efficiency of his quest for Electoral College votes, with seats on Capitol Hill taking the place of the Electoral College. When working towards a campaign strategy, the president must make comparisons between a great number of races in all fifty states. This means that in any given election, the president will actively seek out visiting certain races while consciously not visiting others. Therefore, variables that capture differences between individual races will do a better job at explaining how the president (and his strategists) must view races in order to choose between them.

In this thesis, I will focus on two elections in particular, both of which have their own special circumstances that make them excellent compliments to each other. National elections occur every two years. However, presidential elections occur every four years, and it is arguable that this fact makes these years very different from the less prestigious midterm elections. If the president is visiting multiple states in order to campaign for himself, it is likely that he would also campaign for other candidates in his party on those

visits. This would make it very difficult or even impossible to distinguish when and how the effects of the situation of that individual congressional campaign are influencing the decision of the president on where to visit. For this reason, I have chosen to look at midterm elections. It is arguable that presidential-race campaigning is going on even in these off years (Campbell 2000, 3); however, this should allow the effects that the individual campaigns have on presidential visits to overcome the more selfish motivations that the president may have when the campaign is more focused on his (or his successor's) reelection.

For the purposes of this model, the unit of analysis will be the number of explicit campaign visits the president makes in a state either campaigning for a candidate of his party affiliation. The dependent variable will be defined as the number of visits to a given state by the president between Labor Day to Election Day; this is also called the "fall campaign" by Erikson and Wlezien (1999, 169). The question of when the campaign begins is vital here. As we well know, campaigns for national offices do not have a definitive beginning, at least not in a measurable sense. Often, office seekers will start the process of "feeling out" the electorate years in advance and begin fund raising well before the primaries begin in their state or district. Others may have started campaigning from within another elected office with higher office being their eventual goal the entire time. While being more obvious in presidential races, these same types of activities occur in campaigns for other offices as well both during presidential election years and midterm elections. There is some point at which the switch is flipped and the campaign becomes self-aware and deliberate. This particular window of early September to early November was chosen for a couple of reasons. This is the traditional window of

the active election and for good reason. Early September is relatively close to early

November and efforts made by candidates during this time period will be less likely to be

forgotten due to time passed or larger events occurring. This same logic applies to

presidential visits during this time. A visit by the president in late October will likely

have different effects than a similar visit in May. Additionally, the flurry of activity by

the president during this time points toward a presumption by the president and his

advisors that this is the time of the "real" campaign. In my data, visits to campaigns

became more frequent as Election Day neared. Also and of less significance, in the

interest of data collection, a constrained window of time was more desirable given the

time constraints of my research.

There are two general types of visits that can be made by the president during the

campaign. The first is and explicit campaign visit. An explicit visit may have multiple

functions, but its major function is to actively campaign for one or more of the

president's co-partisans. A visit to a race during this time period in a midterm election

year is coded as a visit for a candidate if the candidates name is mentioned along with

references to the election. This definition, used both by Cohen et al and by Hoddie and

Routh, will be coded as an explicit visit for the campaign. This is in contrast to incidental

visits, where the president may be in the state for other reasons and may be seen with a

Congressional or Senate candidate. However, with incidental visits, it is obvious that

campaigning is not one of the primary motivations of the visit or function. Hoddie and

Routh measured for this difference, calling them "official visits," presuming that they

were beneficent to the president's own electoral interests. I presume that these visits do

not necessarily have political motivations for anyone and could be harmless events that

have as little to do with politics as a presidential visit can. These are races are kept separate because of the obvious differences in the motivations of the two visits[1]. However, with this close proximity to the election, it is likely that any media coverage, controlling for other factors, will be good for the candidate. So, even if the president is giving a warm speech at a veteran's hospital instead of a stump speech at a political rally, the media attention covering a visit by the president may be enough to help the candidate in question.

It is also interesting to consider that a single visit by the president can serve the interest of multiple candidates in his party. By showing up, shaking hands, and nodding humbly as the president acknowledges their presence, these candidates can share the spotlight of a single event. In this way, it is necessary to understand these visits to a state or race as "campaign visits," meaning that if multiple campaigns are touched in a single event, then multiple campaign visits have occurred. This also explains how the president can go into any given city within a state and effectively campaign for Congressional candidates without even going into their district. The candidate simply comes to the president. So it does not matter whether or not the president visits a district, only that the campaign is "visited" by the president[2]. Once the information is passed down through the media, politically savvy voters can find out which candidates are deemed worthy of a presidential visit.

In relation to campaign visits by the president, it is expected that competitiveness of the races within a state will have a significant positive effect. This variable is coded

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[1] There were too few incidental visits during this time period to be of use in the model, but it was important to distinguish between the two types.
[2] A House "race" is the competition between candidates running for Congressman of a district; a Senate "race" is the competition between candidates running for Senator of a state.

from CQ Weekly's competitiveness score that rates each race as safely Republican or Democrat, favored Republican or Democrat, leaning Republican or Democrat, or no clear favorite. These easily break down into three levels of competitiveness. A safe seat is essentially noncompetitive. A favored seat is potentially competitive, and these seats are controlled for separately because while they may have some inkling of an upset in their future, this is still an unlikely event. Both leaning seats and "no clear favorite" races are considered to be highly competitive by Congressional Quarterly, and in these cases the seat is literally up for grabs. At the time that CQ rates these races, neither party can reasonably be considered the favorite in either category, and in the eyes of the politicians involved, their chances of winning are good and only limited by their willingness to work to win the election. For the purposes of this thesis, I assume that all open seat contests are highly competitive, meaning that they will be more likely to attract the attention of the president holding other factors constant. Though some open seat contests will invariably be more competitive than others, they take away the well-recorded and highly influential incumbent advantage thus making them a different type of race altogether and as many as two-thirds are won with less than 60 percent of the vote (Flemming 1995, 198). Highly competitive races as a category are expected to attract the attention of the president, because it is in these close races where the president could potentially make a real difference in the outcome of that particular race (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991). Due to limited time resources, the president must choose which campaigns to visit during these last weeks leading up to the election. It is reasonable to believe that very competitive races, where controlling for other factors an appearance by the president

could tilt the favor towards his party's candidate, will be a higher priority for the president's attention.

H1: In midterm elections, the president will campaign more frequently in states that have a greater percentage of competitive races.

This variable is measured as the percentage of races within a state that are deemed highly competitive. The influence this has on presidential visits is expected to be greater in 2002, when the president was more popular nationally and would be seen as an irrefutably positive force in a Republican candidate's campaign.

The other principle variable that potentially asserts influence over the destination of a presidential visit during the midterm campaign is the loyalty of the candidate to the president in the previous year. The idea here is that the president will seek to reward those who have supported his policy agenda during their term in Congress or the Senate while simultaneously boosting their margins in the current election in hopes of their returning to Washington to continue to support his agenda. This variable is measured by finding the mean of a state's previous year's Congressional delegation's CQ rating for presidential support; it is a percent value based on the voting record of that congressman or Senator and how often they vote with the president when the president has a clear opinion on the legislation. As this percentage increases, the more that statesman or woman can be said to "support" the president due to a tangible voting record that shows consistency with the president's policy views. Using the average presidential support of Senatorial and Congressional support among a state's delegates would give the president

a rough idea of what to expect from candidates from that state should they, in the case of incumbents, get reelected and stay in Congress; in the case of challengers, this should give the president an idea of what to expect from someone with no voting record given their presumed similarities to the state's other national politicians.

If the president acts rationally, then he will want to encourage and nurture his supporters on Capitol Hill. This means that an increased average presidential support score would increase the likelihood of a presidential visit to a state.

H2: In midterm elections, a president will campaign more frequently in states where the previous delegation has a higher average presidential support score.

When taking election year into consideration, however, presidential support should behave similarly across the two elections though perhaps to a greater degree in 2006 than in 2002. If anyone deserves a reward or encouragement visit from the president during their midterm campaign, it is those candidates who have supported the president's nationally unpopular policies.

Also important to keep in mind is how this factor might affect candidates of the two major parties differently. To campaign *for* a member of his party is the same as campaigning *against* the opposition. Also important to keep in mind here is how this variable would presumably different between the two parties. For example, high presidential support by a Republican incumbent would suggest an increased chance for the president to visit that race while a low presidential support score would suggest the opposite, or a decreased likelihood of a presidential visit. For Democrats, the effects are

expected to be polarized. A Democrat who supports the president should have a decreased chance for a presidential visit against him or herself.

A final factor that seems important to understanding the strategy of the president in respect to midterm election campaigning is some sort of gauge of how popular the president is in the state or district where a prospective candidate is seeking election or reelection. The general idea is that the president will be more likely to campaign for co-partisans in states or districts where he is popular because his appearance would be more likely to have a positive impact on the electorate in the geographic constituency.

Essentially there are two measures that could potentially get at the effect of presidential popularity on the likelihood of a presidential visit to a congressional campaign. One is simple presidential popularity, survey style. There are state level polls that ask questions of individual approval of the job that the president is doing. These were aggregated from two sources for this thesis, one from a website that is a project maintained by Patrick Wohlfarth at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in cooperation with the University of Rochester, and the George Washington University (http://www.unc.edu/ ~beyle/ jars.html), which contained adequate observations for 2006 but was missing data for many states during the 2002 election cycle. For 2002 a compilation of polls from iPOLL (a database that includes numerous academic and media polls) provided a similar measure of state level presidential popularity.

This data enables one to get a snapshot of presidential popularity during a confined time period, early September to early November, which is directly applicable to Senate races given that they are also politically located at the state level. This is preferable to using the more rudimentary measure of the president's popularity in a state

by including his previous vote percentage in that state. Here the president is expected to behave in a very simple way; higher popularity should equate to more campaign visits and lower popularity should scare the president away. If the idea is to improve the chances of the candidate of the president's party winning the election, then the president should expect to have a stronger positive effect in states where his state level popularity is higher.

Expected Outcome

A Poisson Event Count Model will be utilized[3]. Ordinary Least Squares is not ideal in this case, mainly because it can generate predicted values less than zero; obviously a negative value would be meaningless in terms of presidential visits. The Poisson model is does not make this same assumption. The model will attempt to cut through the complexity of the two years in question (2002 and 2006), particularly how the president's strategy changed in campaigning in two very different midterm elections. In 2002, the popular Bush would have enjoyed a welcome to most any district or state where his party's candidates are concerned; however, in 2006, as told by the media, the president was actually asked to stay away from certain competitive campaigns due to his polarizing polity. Here we would expect other factors to be stronger in determining presidential visits.

One logical possibility is presidential support. If Senators and Congressmen are voting using their constituency's principles, then a lawmaker who strongly supports the president should have a constituency that supports the president as well. In a way, this

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[3] A likelihood ratio test sustains the assumption of equidispersion, so a negative binomial model is not necessary.

becomes a proxy for presidential support and may point the president toward a district or state where he is viewed in a positive light and therefore, in the case of a Republican, least likely to hurt the incumbent's chances of winning. Where he is supported by a Democratic incumbent we expect the president to still choose to not campaign in a district where he is getting support from the other side of the aisle.

Before the president can make a difference in the outcome of the election, he must choose where to visit and who to campaign for. With hundreds of campaigns occurring simultaneously throughout the country, these decisions must be made through a wall of political noise. The results offered here will hopefully offer a clearer understanding of the factors determining the president's strategy in deciding where to visit in midterm campaigns.

Results at the State Level

The results in Table 1 point toward a cohesive presidential strategy for campaigning in midterm Congressional elections. By separating the data by year, discrepancies in variables unique to each election are inherently controlled for. For example, 2002 provides an excellent contrast to 2006 in terms of national presidential popularity. Given the results, variables such as the ones included in the model do seem to have a profound impact on where the president chooses to campaign.

In both 2002 and 2006 when controlling for other factors, a state with a higher percentage of competitive races received more presidential campaign visits. It is not surprising that this is the case; however, the fact that the effect was considerable stronger in 2006 is a bit unexpected. While Poisson results cannot be interpreted in a one to one

Table 1
Poisson Model of Presidential State Visits by Year

	2002		2006	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Competitive race	1.373766*	.3982524	2.558821*	.7222207
Presidential support score	.0018941	.0067886	.0221553*	.0130622
Previous vote for Bush	.006311	.0109168	-.0416808	.0322922

prob > chi2 = .0013   prob > chi2 = .0005
n = 50   n = 50
pseudo r2 = .0641   pseudo r2 = .1006

* denotes statistical $p<.05$, one tailed

relationship in the same way that OLS results are, it is still apparent that 2006 saw a stronger positive relationship between the percentage of competitive races in a state and the number of presidential campaign visits to that state. Regardless, the president does appear to give more consideration to states that have at least one competitive midterm race when determining where to visit; and as the percentage of races in that state are competitive increase, so do presidential visits.

More telling is the effect of a delegation's mean presidential support score in relation to these two election years. This coefficient is not statistically significant in 2002 but is statistically significant and has a positive effect in 2006. This reflects a trend that is seemingly built-in to presidential campaigning on behalf of another candidate; individuals who are more supportive of the president increase the likelihood that they will receive support from the president in return. In this model, an increase in the average presidential support score for a state's delegation in 2005 increased the number of visits by the president that state got in the midterm campaign of 2006. The reason this variable

has no effect in 2002 but has a positive effect in 2006 comes back to the differences in the circumstances between the two elections.

A likely explanation for this is that in 2002, when the president enjoyed high popularity, visiting states based on the percentage of competitive races was a better way of judging which states would most benefit from a campaign visit. In 2006, however, when the president was less popular, other factors became more prominent in judging where a presidential visit might be best received and therefore have the intended impact on the outcome of the election. Another consideration is that given the "fall" of the president's popularity during these four years, it could be that part of the intention of a visit in this case was a "reward" for a state's relative loyalty to the president. The important thing here is that there is a discernable difference in the effect (or lack thereof) of this variable between the two years.

Finally, there is the absence of statistical significance in respect to state level presidential popularity. This means that the popularity of the president in a given state had no discernable effect on presidential visits to that state; this could be due to the sweeping changes in the president's national popularity. Perhaps the "big picture" has more influence when it comes to this particular measure.

In conclusion, a higher percentage of competitive races within a state does make that state a more likely target for the presidential campaign machine. Also, the higher the average presidential support score a state's delegation, the more likely that state is to receive a presidential visit; however, this is only the case in 2006, suggesting that this effect comes more into play as the president looks for other factors when devising a strategy for campaigning when the circumstances of the election put him in a less

desirable political position. Overall these results are promising. They point toward a real

presidential strategy in midterm elections. This furthers the findings of previous studies

while offering the perspective of a recent election in contrast to another. When it comes

to presidential visits to states in midterm election, it seems that all states are not created

equal.

CHAPTER 5

AN EMPERICAL MODEL OF PRESIDENTIAL VISITS TO RACES IN

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

In comparison to these findings, there is at least some anecdotal media evidence that a state level model may not be the only way to conceive a presidential strategy. The literature is clearly lacking a solid attempt at understanding the president's strategy as it relates to individual Senate and House races. This smaller-scope perspective would more closely resemble the real process of weighting races and deciding which ones will get a presidential bump and is potentially more attuned to the president's and his staff's point of view than the typically more nationally focused coverage given by the media and much of the prior research on this topic. For example, Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman found that the prior success of the president's policies had little impact on his decision to campaign in more elections (169). However, this is very different than saying that president will look at an individual candidate running for a given seat and deciding whether he or she has been supportive of his policy and deserving of his support in the election (in the case of an incumbent) or not supportive of his policy and therefore not deserving his blessing or even earning a campaign visit against the current officeholder (in the case of a challenger).

The effects of presidential support may mean little in the aggregate sense, but back home in the district or state, supporting or standing up to president could make or

break a candidate's chances of receiving a presidential visit, controlling for other factors within the individual race. The idea here is that taken together, all of the Senate and House campaigns exist relative to one another. There are things that make each important and ordinary at the same time. Given the president's limited time and energy resources, looking at races side-by-side will offer an alternative understanding of how the president might view individual races during the midterm campaign season. Further, there is the anecdotal evidence in both 2002 and 2006 that Karl Rove, the president's former chief strategist, was consciously focused on races at the individual level (Carney 2002; *All Things Considered* 2006). He evens references early competitive race scores in 2006, confirming the logic and practicality of this line of inquiry. Therefore, variables which are relevant to a strategy understood and implemented by the president at the level of the individual race are required.

Some of these variables are defined in the same way as in the previous state level model with a key difference in the unit of analysis; here the president visits an individual race rather than a state. A visit by the president for a Republican challenger is also coded as a visit against a Democratic incumbent. The idea is that once party is controlled for, some of the coefficients of the factors determining the visit should be in the opposite direction for the two parties. For example, a Democratic candidate with the same desirable traits as a Republican candidate (such as strong presidential support) should not have visits made against them. If the idea is to create a Congress conducive to his party's political agenda, then time is better spent campaigning elsewhere. To take the expected differences in party into account, party will be controlled for in the model, and in the

following discussion of independent variables, the expected differences will be pointed out with this in mind.

Also coded slightly differently is the independent variable for competitive race. Here the competitive nature of individual races will be captured in two dummy variables[4]. One is for highly competitive races, which CQ names leaning and toss up seats. The variable here is simply coded as 1 for highly competitive and 0 if it is not. The other dummy captures the races where an upset is possible, the "favored" category of races, also coded as 1 and 0. A competitive or non-competitive race describes both parties equally. For example, a competitive race is competitive for both the challenger and the incumbent. Here we expect party to have little or no effect; the coefficient should be virtually the same when comparing the two models for each party.

H1: In midterm elections, the president will campaign more frequently in races that are competitive.

However this should not be the case when comparing the difference between 2002 and 2006. Because of the circumstances revolving around the change in popularity of President Bush and the popularity of the war in Iraq between 2002 and 2006, we should see competitive races having a more pronounced impact on presidential visits in 2002 than in 2006. The idea is that in 2002, a popular Bush would have been welcomed by candidates to bolster their campaigns. Conversely, in 2006 distancing oneself from the

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[4] The reason for combining "no clear favorite" and "leaning" races is both theoretical (as discussed above) and methodological. Separately, "no clear favorite" has too few observations at only 22 across the entire dataset. When breaking out data into multiple models to control for party, office, and year, there are as few as 2 or 3 observations for this variable on its own.

president was more likely to be considered a viable strategy especially in competitive districts and states. There was much discussion of this idea in the news media leading up to the 2006 election, so it is safe to assume that the president and his strategists were at least aware of the perceived negative impact the president could have with a visit to the wrong race. In short, we expect to see little or no difference when comparing the two major parties in relation to presidential visits where races are competitive and expect a noticeable difference when controlling for election year.

Similarly, presidential support score will now be utilized at the level of the individual candidate. Similar to the idea behind this variable at the state level, a rational president will want to encourage and nurture his supporters on Capitol Hill. This means that an increased presidential support score would increase the likelihood of a presidential visit for Republican incumbents and decrease the probability of that same event occurring where presidential support was high for a Democratic candidate. Therefore the coefficient should be positive for Republicans and negative for Democrats.

H2: In midterm elections, a Republican president will campaign more frequently in races where Republican incumbents have a higher presidential support score and less frequently where Democratic incumbents have a higher presidential support score.

An unfortunate side-effect of including this variable in this format at the individual race level is its inapplicability to open seat races. This measure requires that one of the candidates in the race to be an incumbent and have a voting record in the previous Congress in relation to the president's policy. For this reason I have chosen to only look

at incumbent/challenger races in this model, and this choice should not be understated. By taking these races out, I am artificially decreasing the number of competitive races observed in my dataset and could, as a result, bias the results. The retrospective nature of presidential support scores are a hindrance in this respect, but they also mirror the situation of a president going into a midterm campaign: only retrospective and speculative data are available. Given the choice between the two, retrospective data is advantaged by its concrete, matter-of-fact nature and could be an important factor when a president is forced to take a hard look at a few hundred midterm election campaigns when creating a strategy for visiting candidates. For this reason, disregarding open seat races may not be ideal methodologically, but theoretically, it could be that the president disregards them in a sense as well by considering them separate from incumbent/challenger races. While this rationale is neither conclusive nor ideal, it provides a justification for approaching a race level presidential strategy in this way.

Another important factor to consider is summed up earlier in the explanation of how presidential visits are defined and what they actually look like in practice. The president rarely visits a single campaign and only announces support for one candidate on that stop. More often than not, there are multiple candidates gathered at the same event and the president offers his support to all present. Since this is the case, it is likely that the president and his strategists take into account the number of races they can touch with the fewest possible campaign stops. To take this a step further, if it is important for a show of presidential support in a competitive race but time is of the essence and multiple candidates' needs can be attended to in one speech, then by extension, the most desirable campaign stops in terms of time management would be those with the greatest potential

of impacting multiple competitive races at once. However, for this to be possible there must be other competitive races in the state in question.

This factor is controlled for by a dummy variable similar to the two dummy variables that account for "highly competitive race" and "potentially competitive race." This variable is simply named "presence of another competitive race" and 1 indicates the presence of a "no clear favorite" or a "leaning" seat in the state and 0 indicates only "favored" and "safe" seats. These are combined because of their similarity, as with competitive races. This is an attempt to get at an understanding of the concept of the president stumping for multiple candidates in single states. Here, any other competitive race (Senate, House, or gubernatorial) within a state is enough to qualify that state as a mutli-competitive contest arena[5]. Again party should have no influence over the effects of this variable; a competitive race for a Republican is more often than not also a competitive race for their Democratic opponent. And of course the effects of election year are expected to be the same as laid out above in reference to "competitive race." However, if the president can sway voters under the right conditions and make a difference in competitive races (Cohen, Krassa, and Hamman 1991), then it is logical that the potential effect on multiple candidates in one state would make that state more desirable than one where only one competitive race is there to draw (or discourage) the interest of the executive.

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[5] Though measuring multiple competitive races in this way is rather crude, the presence of one other competitive race is justified here because of the geographical nature of districts and states. Races can be spread out or close together, and candidates can travel great distances to make an appearance at the president's speech. It is also important to consider that even a single competitive race is justification for the president to make a trip to a state. Adding just one more should strengthen this effect, and it is easy to see how three or four or more competitive races within a state would make a visit even more efficient.

Finally, we need a measure of presidential popularity at the race level. This is problematic when thinking about Senate races in respect to House races because of the inherent difference between the two. Senate races are held state-wide while House races are confined to their district. This is a serious problem at all points of the spectrum. In highly populated states, numerous House districts and a varied population make it likely that support for the president or certain policies will not be uniform or even approaching a coherent level of unanimity between densely populated and independent electorates. This is in contrast to Senate races of sparsely populated states which have fewer districts or even one district. Here, elections are spread out over the whole state and necessarily touch a large variety of voters within a single district or electorate. There is of course the state level popularity from polls that was utilized in the prior model, and there is the simple measure of presidential vote in the previous election in a given state or district. This latter measure is at best almost two years old. The survey data, however, was collected during the same time period as the campaign itself and can give a better picture of any changes that may have occurred in the mood of the electoral since the previous election two years prior.

Unfortunately, this measure cannot be replicated at the district level with the available data. While the president's previous vote percentage is less desirable where better data is available for the reasons discussed above, other studies have used it as a proxy for presidential popularity when studying the effects of presidential popularity at the sub-national level (Borrelli and Simmons 1993; Gronke et al 2003). This at the very least gives us a better understanding of how popular the president is in a given district relative to other districts. This necessarily assumes that large national events will affect

the electorate in similar ways and to a similar degree. For example, as the Iraq war became less popular over the four years between 2002 and 2006, the popularity of President Bush would have dropped to a certain extent in all or most districts. Therefore the president would still be more popular in 2006 in a district where he received 80 percent of the vote in 2004 than one where he received only 40 percent of the vote. This relative measure is not as potentially powerful as one that is more directly attached to the time period of the election in question, but it at least gives us some understanding of how the strategy of choosing where to campaign is carried out. After all, the very idea of the president choosing to visit one campaign over another is an enterprise in judging needs relatively.

In the end, I chose to use previous presidential vote for both offices. Though state level presidential popularity was available in respect to Senate campaigns, it seems best to avoid the comparative problems that may have resulted given that one of my goals is to contrast and compare how office impacts presidential visits. This is best under the same rationale that justifies its use in House races. Since we are comparing the two offices, the relative measure of previous vote will be an appropriate way to measure the effect of presidential popularity[6].

There is, however, one other potential problem here. The crux of this problem lies in a potentially ulterior motive of the president: the possibility of the president visiting a state for his own gain. This should be expected in 2002 and to a lesser extent in 2006 where the president may have also been visiting a state to shore up support for his reelection in 2004 or for his party successor in 2008. The logic of the president visiting

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[6] The model was run with state-level popularity in place of previous vote for the Senate. The results were very similar and equally unremarkable.

states or districts where he was popular (or possibly where he enjoyed a high margin of victory in the previous presidential election) holds true. Here the president could be viewed as maintaining his base in preparation for the next presidential election. The other possibility is that the president may try to campaign in states where he either barely won or barely lost in hopes of maintaining or gaining that state's electoral votes in the next election. This idea is prevalent in the presidential campaign research concerning battleground states (Shaw 1999) and should be addressed here[7].

As a principle, it is possible that this factor could inflate presidential visits in states where the president had a close race in the previous presidential election. However, with further consideration, the main reason for previous presidential performance as a measure of whether or not the president will campaign for a candidate in a given race has little to do with the president seeking to increase his chances of winning a state in two years time. While it may be true that the president does tend to visit states in which his next election may be close, when it comes to midterm elections, this principle should take its place in the background. As related to earlier discussion, an unknown length of time precedes the "true" beginning of the presidential campaign as well (such as fundraising) that could be construed as part of the campaign. However, in this thesis it is asserted that the ramifications of political events are most effective at a time nearer the election, and this would mean that the factor of the presidential election two years down the road would have minimal bearing on where the president chooses to

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[7]The issue here is that the president may be campaigning early for his race in 2004. To test for this, I included a variable for number of electoral votes belonging to the state of each individual race. It was found to be significant in 2002 for Republicans but with a negative coefficient. This does not follow the rational of presidential campaigning to maximize electoral votes, and it makes other variables in the model lose their relationship with campaign visits. Given these factors along with the long length of time until the election, and the fact that other literature looking at presidential strategy in midterm elections (Cohen et al.; Hoddie and Routh) do not account for this, I chose to justify it in terms of a sensible strategy.

visit during the midterm campaign. It seems that the principle reason for the presidents

visit should be to campaign for members of the Senate and the House in order to maintain

or gain party control in Washington, D.C. in the immediate future.

The expected behavior of this variable is as follows. For Republican incumbents,

a strong presidential showing in the previous election is expected to have a positive effect

on the number of presidential visits to a campaign in the district or state. Conversely, a

previous presidential loss or even a close race will likely cause the president to stay away

from a campaign for the Republican incumbent in a marginal seat. For Democrats, the

opposite should prove to be true. A marginal seat or solid presidential win in the

previous election would encourage the president to visit in favor of the Republican

challenger in these races because of the increased likelihood that the voters in that state or

district would vote for the Republican candidate if backed by a locally popular president.

Expected Outcome for a Race Level Model

A Poisson Event Count Model will again be utilized[8]. Four runs of this model

will allow for better understanding of how these variables affect candidates from the two

parties. Controlling for party by running the model separately for Democratic incumbents

and Republican incumbents will highlight the differences presumed to be affected by

party (such as presidential support having a positive correlation in terms of presidential

visits for Republican candidates and the opposite effect for Democratic candidates). Also

controlling for the two chambers of Congress, House and Senate, should show difference.

One would expect Senate races to capture more presidential visits based on

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[8] A likelihood ratio test sustains the assumption of equidispersion, so a negative binomial model is not necessary.

competitiveness of the race and the support given to the president because of the higher profile and increased power this office holds. Key House races should also see a significant but lessened effect.

More complex are the two years in question (2002 and 2006); these will show how the president's strategy in campaigning in two very different midterm elections. In 2002, the popular Bush would have enjoyed a welcome to most any district or state where his party's candidates are concerned; however, in 2006, as told by the media, the president was actually asked to stay away from certain competitive campaigns due to his polarizing polity. Here we would expect other factors to be stronger in determining presidential visits. One logical possibility is presidential support. If Senators and Congressmen are voting using their constituency's principles, then a lawmaker who strongly supports the president should have a constituency that supports the president as well. In a way, this becomes a proxy for presidential support and may point the president toward a district or state where he is viewed in a positive light and therefore, in the case of a Republican, least likely to hurt the incumbent's chances of winning. Where he is supported by a Democratic incumbent we expect the president to still choose to not campaign in a district where he is getting support from the other side of the aisle.

Together, this set of results will offer a clearer understanding of the factors determining the president's strategy in deciding where to visit in midterm campaigns. The different models will also allow us to see how these factors can differ in the importance and relevance, depending upon the office the candidate is seeking, the party of the incumbent, and the year and circumstances of the election. Also, by making the individual race the level of observation, we can gain greater insight into how the relative

importance of individual races can potentially cloud appearance of rationality of the president as strategist.

Results at the Race Level

The model was again run on a filtered dataset in order to gain a better understanding of how controlled subsets of the data were affected differently by the independent variables. These subsets are office and year, both controlling for party. Each will be discussed, outlining their findings and significance. Then, by using these different models as a guide, a proposed comprehensive outline of the results of these models in combination will be discussed[9].

Office

The two chambers of Congress were controlled for – the House and the Senate, controlling for party within each chamber. This was done to distinguish the differences in the effects of the model on the president's decision to campaign in the two types of races. As previously discussed, this is important because of the differing nature of House races and Senate races. Senate races always occur at the state level, sometimes garnering national interest. House races can be very tightly geographically defined or even be as large a state and are much more rarely given attention at the national level. The results for these two offices could not be more distinct.

The results for House incumbents are promising. For Democrats, the coefficients for highly competitive race and mildly competitive race are positive and statistically

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[9] Given the scope of this thesis, substantive interpretation will not be provided. However it should be noted that the Poisson model is nonlinear; this means that the results cannot be interpreted in a 1 to 1 ratio as in OLS. The results give us an idea of what the president considers in a preemptive campaign strategy.

significant. This means that the challengers of at-risk Democratic incumbents in the House are indeed more likely to receive a campaign visit from the president. For Republican House incumbents, however, it seems that only loyalty is rewarded. Presidential support is both positive and statistically significant.

Table 2
Poisson Model of Presidential Visits by Office and Party

| | House | | Senate | |
	Republican Coef./ Std. Err.	Democrat Coef./ Std. Err.	Republican Coef./ Std. Err.	Democrat Coef./ Std. Err.
Competitive race				
Highly competitive	.3960059	2.600049*	-.4035145	.887406
	.2871049	.7172848	.7307626	.8346489
Mildly competitive	-.2718205	2.052779*	-.0022382	1.549435
	.4280595	.7754487	.8912091	1.005001
Presence of other	.2037249	1.010616	1.213517*	1.718224*
competitive race(s)	.22018	.7364624	.7145455	1.026207
Other factors				
Presidential support score	.0329604*	.0265329	.0834377*	.0559817*
	.0129066	.0198173	.047817	.0311237
Previous vote for Bush	-.0184587	-.0036114	-.1027743*	-.0375598
	.0137731	.0278648	.0609536	.0480919

prob > chi2 =	.0375	.0000	.1141	.0032
n =	406	379	28	26
pseudo r2 =	.023	.2672	.1721	.3157

* denotes statistical $p<.05$, one tailed

More surprising are the results for the Senate. The competitiveness of individual races does not seem to matter for either party; however, the presence of one or more other competitive races is both positive and significant for incumbents from both parties in the Senate. What this may suggest is within the bounds of my model, Senate visits may be secondary in terms of presidential strategy. These coefficients could mean that the president is only visiting incumbent Senate races of either party when he is visiting other competitive races. This is accounted for in the way the dependent variable is coded; a single presidential stop can simultaneously campaign in multiple races. Also significant and positive for both parties is presidential support. Again it seems that in the case of Senate incumbents, the president is rewarding loyalty amongst Republicans and targeting moderate constituencies amongst Democrats.

Also in this model, incumbents from neither chamber received any statistically decipherable benefit from previous presidential electoral performance, the lone exception being Senate Republicans, who again see a decrease in presidential visits as their constituency's previous vote for Bush increases. Another important thing to note is the low prob > chi2 score for Republican incumbent races in the Senate. This suggests that the model is doing a poor job of describing presidential visits to campaigns of these Senators and that taken together, the coefficients could be equal to zero. It may be that the inherent differences between these two types of campaigns make them different in the eyes of the president as well. Perhaps these more quantifiable variables, such as presidential support, are more appropriate for the "lesser" of the two chambers. As stated before, Senate races are inherently higher profile and Senators typically have a larger

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constituency. It may simply be that the president considers different factors when choosing Senate races to visit.

Election Year

Next, the effects of the model in the two election years in the data will be analyzed, once again controlling for party. As discussed previously, Bush's exceptionally high popularity in 2002 contrasted with his exceptionally low popularity in 2006 should provide a good example of each case in general. By controlling for year and being aware of the special circumstances of each campaign, further insight can be gained toward understanding presidential strategy in midterm elections. The results are as found in Table 3.

In the instance of 2002, the presence of a highly competitive race is positive and statistically significant for Republican incumbents between the two chambers, while both highly competitive race and a mildly competitive race is statistically significant and it has a positive coefficient for Democratic incumbents. The presence of another competitive race is also significant and positive for Democrats.   Enjoying high popularity, we would logically expect Bush to campaign in highly competitive races in 2002 in order to boost his party's chances of winning; the same intended effect is expected by actively campaigning against incumbent Democrats in competitive races while enjoying high approval ratings is to be expected.

Presidential support is statically significant and in a positive direction for Democrats in 2002. Again it is interesting and unexpected that this is the case for Democrats. The insignificance of the coefficient for Republicans in 2002 may also

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Table 3

Poisson Model of Presidential Visits by Year and Party

	2002		2006	
	Republican Coef./ Std. Err.	Democrat Coef./ Std. Err.	Republican Coef./ Std. Err.	Democrat Coef./ Std. Err.
Competitive race				
Highly competitive	.891773*	1.649845*	.4149546	3.543045*
	.3220595	.6477242	.4589239	1.13921
Mildly competitive	.3236405	1.443123*	-.3975028	2.960486*
	34429887	.8426525	.7440117	1.032981
Presence of other	.3787946	1.390808*	.3940291	.6690795
competitive race(s)	.2504313	.7311972	.4041119	.9911335
Other factors				
Presidential support score	.0027814	.0538007*	.0994774*	.0146035
	.0131394	.0158636	.0305012	.0349751
Previous vote for Bush	-.0089938	-.0167405	.0215717	.0026566
	.0158652	.025663	.028478	.0462454
prob > chi2 =	.0101	.0000	.0041	.0000
n =	211	200	223	205
pseudo r2 =	.0449	.3829	.0797	.3728

* denotes statistical *p*<.05, one tailed

reinforce the idea that Bush campaigned a lot in 2002 and targeted competitive with Republican incumbents due to his high national popularity.

Very much in contrast to these results, 2006 shows a single significant coefficient for Republican incumbents, presidential support. This coefficient is positive suggesting that the only meaningful variable for Republican incumbents within the model in this particular election revolved around the agreement with and support of the president in the

previous year. This is expected and it suggests that as the president becomes less

popular, competitive races become even more taboo and other, safer factors become more

relevant. Again the president resorts to rewarding the loyal and staying out of risky races

for his party's candidates. For Democrats, however, the only highly competitive race and

mildly competitive race were statistically significant; both were also positive. This

means that the president still made a campaign stops for Republican challengers in

districts where a Democratic seat was at risk. This strategy could suggest that the

president's low popularity is seen as less of a burden in races where the Democratic

incumbent is weak. Regardless, these results show very clearly the distinctions in

presidential campaign strategy in regards to both party and year.

CHAPTER 6

COMBINED ANALYSIS

In this section, I hope to synthesize the results of the previous state level model with the more untraditional race level model. The differences between 2002 and 2006 begin to illuminate the unique ways that individual elections are approached by our nation's presidents. Strategies must be constantly revised and updated even during the campaign cycle. If the president seeks to improve his party's results on Election Day, then he must be careful to campaign in a way that will benefit the maximum number of his party's members.

Overall, the findings of the both models are in line with expectations and are reasonable. The president's campaign strategy in respect to competitive Congressional races seems to be directly related to the context of the election year (such as his popularity). Along the same lines, the president appears to campaign where he has political support, be it from a Republican incumbent (conservative constituency) or a Democratic incumbent (moderate district). Given the findings in the above models, a better understanding of how this type of presidential strategy is starting to shine through, and a couple of things have become obvious.

First, this model does not do a thorough job of explaining presidential visits in Senate races. This could be related to the relatively small number of observations available in the data, but other theoretical considerations could be just as important. This same problem was found to an even greater degree when for gubernatorial races when

that data was in the model. Problems caused by these state-level races made it obvious that the differences between gubernatorial races and Capital Hill races were too vast to make any real use of that data, other than keeping in mind (and in the dataset) what states happened to also have competitive races for governor in that year. For example, the effects of Sonny Perdue's race in Georgia in 2002 are important and should not be completely dismissed. Methodologically, however, there was no legitimate way that gubernatorial races would enhance our understanding of presidential visits here. In this same way, Senate races seem to be complicating matters while House races fall nicely into place. I believe that the reason this is the case is related to the same problem that was present with gubernatorial races. Campaigns for the Senate are much larger and expensive undertakings. Senate races are generally more competitive and better financed, and it seems obvious that they will automatically draw more attention from the media and possibly the president just because of these differences.

Senate races are inherently different then House races, and it seems that this model is better at explaining presidential visits to House races and this could be the case for a couple of reasons. There are two types of variables at work in this model: retrospective measures and prospective measures. The former type, presidential support and previous presidential vote, are both low cost indicators of the president's appeal in a given district or state. This information is readily available and fairly objective. The latter type of variable is the competitive races measures, and these are at best educated guesses which require a certain amount of energy to measure. In addition to this, the question of the competitiveness of a race can be very subjective, especially when it comes to comparing the competitiveness of two races. For example, a race deemed

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competitive by certain standards for a Republican in Texas may be surrounded by very different circumstances than a race deemed competitive for a Democrat in Massachusetts. This is especially true for lower-profile House races.

Just as the president has limited time to make campaign visits, he is also limited in time and resources in making these decisions; and if either of the two types of Congressional races are going to suffer due to these constraints it will be the one that is "lesser" by definition. Therefore, these lower cost methods of sizing up races in need of presidential visits would be best utilized in determining which House campaigns to visit. The simple fact that Senate campaigns are better financed and publicized give them properties that can distort or even supersede the effects of this particular type of measurement. In other words, presidential visits to Senate races are best left described in a model that accounts for different variables.

Also notable is the persistent positive effect that presidential support seems to have on presidential visits for Democratic incumbents. This suggests that the president is not viewing races with Democratic incumbents in the same light as he is races with Republican incumbents. If support on Capitol Hill were the goal, then campaigning against members of the other party that are supportive would be irrational. With respect to incumbents, it seems that the temptation of gaining a seat that is potentially up for grabs is greater than retaining a single bi-partisan supporter. Considering the likelihood that a co-partisan would very likely also be supportive of the president, it is easy to see why this is the case.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: DECIDING WHERE TO VISIT

Targeting the right states and races with visits by the right president under the right circumstances can be a very powerful tool in minimizing seat loss in midterm elections. This tool is a formidable compliment to the president's already powerful arsenal in American elections. As we begin to hone our understanding of exactly how the president and his administration craft midterm election campaign plans, it is easy to get caught up in the media circus surrounding these events. Though public interest in midterms is relatively low, many of these races still end up as stories on the twenty-four hour news networks and on the front page of national papers. Political battles here can drastically affect the fortunes of politicians and political parties; one need look no further than the 1994 midterm election to see strong and lasting results. Not all midterms have the potential to be this type of watershed event; however, the fates of individual political careers can be challenged from midterm to midterm. This is where the persistent struggle is found, and these few races add up to the competitive part of the midterm cycle. It is these seats that will "swing" if care isn't taken.

Also important to consider here are the usually implicit and occasionally explicit motivations of the players involved in this process. I have cast the president almost as a campaign saint, moving from state to state giving his blessing to campaigns he deems needy or worthy. This oversimplifies the underlying political motivations that is the

endgame of national politics: getting legislation passed or money spent in areas or states beneficial to those in power. Campaigning in midterm elections is just another way that the president can and does make a concerted effort to influence members of Congress in hopes of gaining loyalty and trust in the ensuing two years. Indeed, the president's influence in Congress outside of campaigns consists mainly of proposing legislation and fielding questions about current bills at press briefings. Here, by making "local" appearances on behalf of candidates, the president becomes much more visibly connected to individual members of Congress in the eyes of the public and, by extension, the statesperson may be called upon to reciprocate the good will in a crucial vote in the term to come. These campaign appearances allow the president to invest more concretely into individual members of Congress and thus can have a better sense of what kind of support he will have on Capitol Hill over the course of the next two years.

Understanding why the president campaigns is a fairly straightforward matter. However, this thesis points toward a complex and nuanced strategy taken by the president in midterm elections. Competitive states and races are important factors in relation to presidential visits, but is contingent on other national and sub national factors that can vary from election to election, such as presidential popularity. It also seems that increased levels of presidential support have a positive effect on presidential visits for incumbents of *both parties*. It is not surprising that more support from a Republican Congressman would increase the likelihood of a visit by a Republican president, but by that same logic, a Democratic incumbent with high levels of presidential support should get fewer visits to his race, meaning less support for his Republican challenger. The data shows that the former is true; however, the latter also results in an increase in the

likelihood by a president of the opposing party against that candidate. Again, this may be a sign of a moderate district, but it is still unexpected.

Certainly, with each new election, the president and his strategists will have to adjust existing strategies and devise new ones to fit individual situations. As long as the president and others involved feel that these visits can influence the outcomes of key races, then we will continue to see the president picking and choosing which races to visit under the time constraints of his busy schedule. The outcome here further suggests that there is some underlying plan that the president starts out with at the beginning of the campaign season, and this type of plan must be common from election to election if it is rational. Working towards an understanding of the thought processes that are constant from president to president is important. Only then can we control for it when studying the real effects of the one-time circumstances of a single election or series of elections.

Suggestions for Further Research

Here I have narrowly focused on only two offices, two elections, and the visits of one president. That these elections (especially 2002) were "special" is of minimal consequence as all elections can be considered unique in one way or another. However, there could be something to be learned by looking at more elections and not just more at one time. The special circumstances of other elections may also point towards both consistent presidential visit strategies and special strategies molded to individual presidencies and election years. Also there are just as many presidential election years as there are midterms, though they bring their own set of problems. As long as these factors

are accounted for, then there are multiple other elections that offer themselves to further analysis in terms of presidential visits to Congressional campaigns.

Another very useful and obvious consideration is to add more elections to the data set. First, it would be very interesting to add the two previous midterms into the mix, 1994 and 1998. Their similarity to 2002 and 2006 would make them strong additions that would be useful in either backing up or toning down the conclusion made here. Clinton was very popular throughout his presidency, and he was also plagued by scandal from the onset of his first campaign. However, the Monica Lewinski situation was especially harsh and especially relevant during the 1998 midterm. Also similar to the two elections looked at in my thesis is that the Democrats lost seats in 1994 (when Clinton was "more popular") and gained seats in 1998 (when Clinton was "less popular); again, this was the second time in the 20th century such a thing happened. This general setup provides opposing outcomes to the Bush midterms and could bring great depth to the analysis and conclusions the study of midterms. Also, one could choose to go back many midterms, much like Hoddie and Routh; however, I still feel this is less desirable. To really get at what is happening in midterm campaigns, smaller sets of observations make it easier to both keep in mind and control for the quirky circumstances of individual election years.

Also I chose to observe visits at the level of the individual race. By considering the data on a race to race basis, we can begin to pick out how the president considers individual campaigns and how they fit into a larger national and party agenda. However, other ways of approaching the topic may be useful as well. The perspective of the president is presented here, but the view from the candidates, political parties, or grass-roots headquarters would also be very interesting. There is also the issue of the

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difference between types of elections. Going into this project, I knew that I would find differences between Senate races and House races. The idea of separate models for different types of races is not new or groundbreaking, and further research must keep this in mind. Lumping different types of races together is a tempting way increase the number of observations in a dataset, and indeed it may be warranted in some cases. However, careful consideration must be taken when doing this. Variables significant for one office can easily be meaningless for another. Also, my race level model could not include open seats because of the retrospective presidential support variable. The inclusion of these races is very important to the study of elections, and if race level data is to be taken seriously, open seat races will have to be worked into the model. This will provide both more observations in the data set and allow these important races to show their influence on the strategy of the president in midterm campaigns.

To further progress on what was found in this study, other candidate level, low-cost variables could be implemented, such as the individual incumbent's previous electoral performance or "closeness" of the previous race, campaign spending, the candidate's political stance relative to his or her constituents, their tenure in office, or their "rank" or possession of a leadership position in their respective body. Presidential factors such as those presented by Hoddie and Routh could be reconsidered. For example, perhaps "distance from D.C." is not important, but some other sort of geographical constraint is placed on the president. If one could map the route taken by the president on trips during the campaign season, then a pattern of convenience may emerge. At the Congressional level, exposure is relevant to a party's success in the forthcoming election, so it is not unreasonable that it could affect presidential

campaigning in midterms as well.   By increasing our understanding of relevant variables

and how they relate to one another in terms of both individual races and election years,

we can begin to further our understanding of the role the president's strategy in these

very important elections.

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using both print and electronic sources. First, a list of candidates, their party, and the district or state in which they were running was compiled using CNN's Election 2002 and 2006 websites. Also readily available on the internet, data on presidential visits was coded using the archived news records at www.whitehouse.gov. Here the daily activities of the president are recorded and transcripts of speeches given are provided in full. The speeches were read for content to determine which candidates were present and which the president was campaigning for in the case of Republicans (and therefore which Democrat he was campaigning against). Therefore a single speech could touch one or multiple Republican candidates while simultaneously campaigning against their Democratic or Independent rivals. As stated before, non-campaign speeches with references to candidates were recorded separately, though these were a far less common event during this constrained time period leading up to the election than outright campaign stump speeches.

The rest of the data was compiled from a combination of electronic and paper publications from Congressional Quarterly. Prior to each election, CQ Weekly ranks races in terms of their competitiveness; this information was accessible online. With some light recoding, this provided the basis for my variable of the same name and the data needed to control for multiple competitive races within the same state. Additionally, each year individual candidates are scored on their level of support for issues and

legislation which the president takes a stance on; this was included in my dataset as a percentage as it was originally reported by CQ Politics in America. Also available in this publication was the previous vote for president at the district level. To obtain the relevant data, the 2002 volume provided the 2001 presidential support for House and Senate incumbents and that district or state's vote for president in 2000. The 2006 volume provided the same data for 2005 and 2004 respectively.

The only other variable had to be derived from two different sources. State level presidential popularity has become increasingly used in political science literature. So in the most recent election, 2006, the data was easy to find and in spreadsheet format available at the UNC/Rochester/George Washington site (http://www.unc.edu/~beyle/ jars.html). This data contained a compilation of surveys of presidential job approval taken over decades with the date when and the state where the survey was taken included in the dataset. Sufficient observations from nearly all states were included for 2006; however, over a dozen states were missing or had an insufficient number of observations for 2002, which required my own compilation of relevant surveys. This data was collected from iPoll, which had data for 7 different Gallup surveys taken from early 2002 until the time of the election which included a variable for state. One of other Princeton survey was included and all but 3 states had enough observations in this dataset to get a good average of state level presidential popularity for 2002. This variable, however, was to only be used for Senate candidates, due to its level of observation. However, in the final model only previous vote for the president is used for races for both offices.

It should also be noted that information was included for governors' races as well, wherever that data was available. For example there is no reliable indicator of something

like presidential support for the gubernatorial office. However, a competitive governor's race could be a factor in presidential visits in the same way that multiple competitive House races could. In the end, the data for governors was only used in this way – to code for "presence of another competitive race" if there was a competitive gubernatorial race in that state. Also, to retain as many observations as possible, independent incumbents and challengers are included in the data the same way that Democrats are. Essentially they are both "not Republicans" and the variables in the model should have the same effect on presidential visits in these very few and far between cases.