

State Parties in the 2000 Senate Elections*

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Objective. This article examines state party activity in support of U.S. Senate candidates during the 2000 election. The literature on the service role of parties suggests that national parties will be active in support of candidates, while state parties will be inclined to provide mobilization services. However, state parties are also in a good position to provide campaign contributions and technical services usually supplied by national party organizations. *Methods.* Focusing on the 2000 elections, I use campaign finance data from the Federal Election Commission as well as original data derived from a survey of the state parties to investigate the relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates. *Results.* The results indicate not only that state parties were remarkably active in support of U.S. Senate candidates, but also that Republican state parties appeared to better target their support to more deserving candidates than did Democratic state parties. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that the Democrats, by using state party organizations as the conduit of coordinated expenditures, were more successful in providing resources to candidates who would win. *Conclusions.* Although much of the activity of state party organizations is explained by money transfers from national party organizations, it is the transfer of hard money that accounts for state party activity in U.S. Senate campaigns. This brings into question the impact of recent campaign finance reforms on the relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates.

The Electoral Role of State Political Parties

The 1986 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association featured a roundtable discussion in which panelists assessed the state of the research on American political parties. Among the insights offered at that roundtable was the recommendation made by Cornelius Cotter and John

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Bibby (later echoed by James Gibson) that future research into state and local parties needs to examine the interactions among various party organizations and between parties and other political organizations (quoted in Jewell, 1986).

Working from the perspective that parties now fulfill a service, or brokerage, function (Bibby, 1998; Aldrich, 1995; Frantzich, 1989; Herrnson, 1988; Kayden and Mahe, 1985), scholars have heeded the call of Cotter, Bibby, and Gibson by examining the numerous functions of state and local parties and the relationships that have developed among party (and nonparty) organizations. We now have a better understanding of the interaction between party and candidate (Monroe, 2001; Herrnson, 1998a; Aldrich, 1995; Kayden and Mahe, 1985) as well as the relationship between different levels of party organization (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2001; La Raja and Jarvis-Shean, 2001; Morehouse, 2000; Arterton, 1982; Cotter and Bibby, 1980). We also have a better understanding of the way parties coordinate electoral activity through the sharing of resources (especially manpower) and the provision of voter/constituent services through both candidate and legislator organizations (Monroe, 2001). In addition, the role of the parties in campaign finance—both as independent actors and as sources of money for candidates—has been brought to light (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2001; La Raja, 2001; Aldrich, 2000; Herrnson, 1998a, 1998b; Jacobson, 1985–1986). Finally, the role of parties as “brokers,” or organizations that link candidates to political action committees, political consultants, and other resources, has been analyzed (Monroe, 2001; Bibby, 1998; Frantzich, 1989; Herrnson, 1988).

Yet one area in which scholars have made only limited forays is the nature of the relationship between state parties and candidates for federal office. Several scholars note that state parties can play an important role in federal elections (Bibby, 1999), particularly in terms of mobilizing voters (Herrnson, 1988, 1995, 1998a). Few scholars, however, have presented empirical accounts of the relationship between state parties and federal candidates.¹

In this article I look squarely at the relationship between state party organizations and candidates for federal office. To do so, I examine data from the 2000 elections. In 2000, state parties were remarkably active in support of candidates for the U.S. Senate. State parties, because of their permanence and institutional memory (as well as their ability to provide technical services and campaign funds), are in a perfect position to support federal candidates running in a statewide contest. Through analyses of survey data gathered from state parties following the 2000 election, and data

¹Notable exceptions to this generalization include La Raja and Buchler's (2002) assessment of the impact of state party services in campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as Herrnson's analyses (1986, 1988) gauging the helpfulness of state party services for congressional candidates.

from the Federal Election Commission, I will present a picture of a robust relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates, a relationship that some had believed to be underdeveloped.

State Party Services and U.S. Senate Candidates

Political parties provide a number of valuable services to their candidates. Party organizations at the national and state levels help candidates by providing training, polling information, communications facilities, issue research, fund-raising assistance, and mobilization efforts (Bibby, 1998, 1999; Herrnson, 1988, 1998b; Aldrich, 1995). In addition, multiple levels of party organization provide financial assistance to candidates, either in the form of hard money contributions or as coordinated expenditures (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2001; Herrnson, 1998a, 1998b).² Yet conventional wisdom suggests that state party organizations play a limited role in providing services and financial support to U.S. Senate candidates. Herrnson (1998a, 1998b) notes that national party organizations play a much larger role financially in U.S. Senate (and U.S. House of Representatives) campaigns than do state and local political parties. Indeed, Herrnson (1998b) points out that state parties often make “agency agreements” with the national parties so that the latter may exercise the former’s right to make coordinated expenditures.³ In terms of campaign services, U.S. Senate candidates tend to get more support from national or senatorial party committees (Herrnson, 1998a), and Senate candidates themselves report that the senatorial party committees are the most important sources of support for their campaigns (Herrnson, 1988). In fact, one of the only areas in which state parties provide useful U.S. Senate campaign support is through voter registration and mobilization efforts (Herrnson, 1995, 1998a).

State parties, however, would seem to be a logical source of support for a U.S. Senate candidate waging a statewide campaign. Beginning in the 1980s, state parties strengthened both in terms of organizational complexity and electioneering capacity (Gibson et al., 1983), and today they remain organizationally strong and active (Aldrich, 2000). Specifically, state parties are important providers of voter contact and mobilization services (Hogan, 2000; Bibby, 1998; Herrnson, 1986). State parties are also capable of providing technical services (Hogan, 2000; Bibby, 1998; Herrnson, 1986),

²Clearly, the financial involvement of state parties in U.S. Senate elections is not limited to direct contributions and coordinated expenditures. State parties spend large sums of soft money on party building and mobilization activities that benefit all candidates on the party’s ticket, including the U.S. Senate candidate. But as soft money spending is done for the benefit of the party and not on behalf of any individual candidate, activities performed by state parties using soft money do not bear directly on the relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates. Instead, this study will focus on those activities that highlight the unique relationship that has developed between these two actors.

³See Dwyre and Kolodny (2001) for a different perspective.

services heretofore provided to congressional candidates by congressional party committees (Herrnson, 1998a). As state parties have developed into permanent organizations (Bibby, 1999), they have developed extensive knowledge of the laws, voters, and fund-raising opportunities in their respective states. This institutional memory makes the state parties valuable resources for U.S. Senate candidates.

However, we have little empirical evidence of state parties playing an expanded role in support of U.S. Senate campaigns. To get at the nature of this relationship, I gathered data from the Federal Election Commission website on the financial activities of the 68 Republican and Democratic parties from the 34 states in which there were U.S. Senate campaigns in 2000. These financial data are supplemented by state party activity data derived from surveys I sent to the 68 parties following the 2000 elections. Twenty-seven parties responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of nearly 40 percent. Of the 27 responses, 15 were from Democratic state parties (44 percent response rate) and 12 were from Republican state parties (35 percent response rate). These 27 responses came from a broad range of parties: those supporting incumbents (45 percent response rate), quality challengers (38 percent response rate), nonquality challengers (38 percent response rate), and open-seat candidates (30 percent response rate), as well as those supporting candidates in both close races (margin of victory less than 10 points: 30 percent response rate) and blow-out races (42 percent response rate).

The focus on 2000 is necessary because the survey data do not exist for previous elections. Although electoral contexts certainly vary between midterm and presidential elections, there is no reason to believe state parties will be any more or less active in support of their candidates in 2000 compared to other years. Ultimately, there is no reason to believe that the sample of 34 states with U.S. Senate campaigns in 2000 is unrepresentative of the population of 50 states that theoretically could have had one.

The data from the 2000 campaign show that state parties were, in fact, quite active in support of their U.S. Senate candidates. The first indication of a strong relationship is the amount of interaction the state parties reported having with their U.S. Senate candidates. When asked to rate on a five-point scale⁴ their level of interaction with the candidates, state parties reported a mean level of interaction of 3.89, with two-thirds of the state parties reporting having "moderate" or "very frequent" interaction with the candidate. The mean level of interaction for Democratic parties was 4.00 compared to 3.75 for Republicans. For both Republican and Democratic state parties, though, two-thirds reported having "moderate" or "very frequent" interaction.

⁴Each state party was asked to choose among five points on a scale that characterized the level of interaction with the U.S. Senate candidate. The five levels of interaction on the scale were: "none at all," "very little," "some," "moderate," and "very frequent."

Not only do the data on self-reported interaction between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates show a strong relationship, but the data on candidate support also illustrate that state parties were active players in the 2000 U.S. Senate campaigns. State parties assisted their U.S. Senate candidates through the provision of both campaign funds as well as technical services.⁵ Table 1 summarizes the nature of this support.

State parties aided U.S. Senate candidates through direct contributions and coordinated expenditures.⁶ On average, state parties contributed \$1.56 per 1,000 voters to their U.S. Senate candidates. All told, 25 state parties (13 Republican, 12 Democratic) made direct contributions. Republican state parties gave 75 cents more, on average, than their Democratic counterparts. Although this is to be expected given Republican advantages in fund raising and candidate contributions (Dwyre and Kolodny, 2002; Herrnson, 1988), the substantive impact of \$1 to \$2 per 1,000 voters is minimal given that the average Senate campaign spent over \$3,000 per 1,000 voters.⁷

With respect to coordinated expenditures, state parties provided over \$32 per 1,000 voters in coordinated expenditures on behalf of their U.S. Senate candidate. Yet the Republicans and Democrats showed a striking difference in their coordinated expenditure patterns. Only six Republican state parties made coordinated expenditures; 16 Democratic state parties did so. In addition, the Democratic state parties provided nearly \$20 more per 1,000 voters than did the Republicans. This reflects state Democratic parties making coordinated expenditures of nearly 16 percent of the total coordinated limit, with three spending 100 percent of the limit and six others spending over 25 percent of the limit. Among Republican state parties, only two spent more than 15 percent of the total coordinate limit, with one spending 75 percent of the limit and the other spending 100 percent.

This pattern seems to point to differing strategies for the two national parties. National Republican Party organizations (RNC, NRSC) made

⁵As mentioned earlier, much of the existing literature recognizes that state parties largely aid federal candidates through the provision of voter registration and mobilization services. However, these services are usually provided under the auspices of a coordinated campaign (Herrnson, 1998a), and thus are not directly contributed to the U.S. Senate candidate. To better illustrate the unique relationship that exists between a state party organization and a U.S. Senate campaign, I will focus on the provision of campaign contributions (direct contributions, coordinated expenditures, independent expenditures) and technical services (voter lists, polling information, fund-raising assistance, strategy development, and day-to-day campaign management) to the U.S. Senate candidate.

⁶Only 3 out of 68 state parties made independent expenditures (all of which were Republican). One large expenditure made by the Michigan Republican Party, along with minor expenditures made by the Republican parties of Nebraska and Wyoming, account for all the independent expenditure activity by state parties on behalf of U.S. Senate candidates in 2000.

⁷Although direct contributions from state parties to U.S. Senate candidates are relatively small given total campaign spending, party hard money contributions to U.S. Senate candidates (particularly incumbents and open-seat candidates) have been shown to influence patterns of PAC contributions (Gaddie and Regens, 1997).

TABLE 1
State Party Support of U.S. Senate Candidates

Variable	All Parties	Democratic	Republican
Direct contributions per 1,000 voters	\$1.56	\$1.18	\$1.93
Coordinated expenditures per 1,000 voters	\$32.01	\$46.85	\$17.17
Independent expenditures per 1,000 voters	\$0.57	\$0.00	\$1.15
Technical services (mean number of services provided)	2.38	2.50	2.25
Voter lists	88.5%	78.6%	100.0%
Polling information	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Fund-raising assistance	38.5%	50.0%	25.0%
Strategy development	46.2%	50.0%	41.7%
Day-to-day campaign management	15.4%	21.4%	8.3%

NOTE: Data are from the author's survey of state parties ($N = 26$: 12 Republican and 14 Democratic) and from the Federal Election Commission ($N = 68$: 34 Republican and 34 Democratic). Voter lists, polling information, fund-raising assistance, strategy development, and day-to-day campaign management are expressed as the percentage of state parties performing each activity.

coordinated expenditures on behalf of 16 U.S. Senate candidates, expenditures that accounted for over 40 percent of the total coordinated expenditure limit. National Democratic Party organizations (DNC, DSCC), on the other hand, made coordinated expenditures on behalf of only three U.S. Senate candidates, with those expenditures accounting for about 1 percent of the total coordinated expenditure limit. In only two cases did both the state and national parties make coordinated expenditures; the state Republican parties of Michigan and New York and the National Republican Party organizations each made coordinated expenditures on behalf Spence Abraham and Rick Lazio, respectively. This result seems to contradict some notions prevalent in the existing literature. In particular, Dwyre and Kolodny (2001) note that the national parties in 2000 asked the state parties to take responsibility for their own portion of the coordinated expenditure limit. In the case of U.S. Senate elections, however, only the Democrats are shifting the responsibility of coordinated expenditures onto the state parties. In addition, Herrnson (1998b) points to the frequent use of agency agreements, pacts that allow the national parties to spend the state parties' portions of the coordinate expenditure limit. Interestingly, though, only the Republicans seem to be using national party organizations to spend the national portion (and sometimes the state portion) of the coordinated expenditure limit.

The survey demonstrates that partisan differences were much less prevalent in the provision of services by state parties to U.S. Senate candidates, a result that parallels findings of state party support to U.S. House candidates (La Raja and Buchler, 2002). State parties provided, on

average, 2.38 technical services (out of five). Most state parties provided voter lists to their U.S. Senate candidates while some provided polling information, fund-raising assistance, and strategy development to the candidates. Relatively few U.S. Senate candidates received day-to-day campaign management assistance from the state parties. Given that the conventional wisdom suggests that U.S. Senate candidates receive these technical services from the Senate campaign committees (Herrnson, 1988), the fact that the state parties reported providing these services in 2000 points either to a shift in the nature of service provision or to Senate candidates seeking services from multiple party organizations.

The differences between Republican and Democratic parties that did exist—in the provision of fund-raising assistance and day-to-day campaign management—can be attributed to the fact that 18 of the 29 nonopen-seat races featured a Republican incumbent. Given that incumbents have already run (and won) a campaign, they are less likely to need assistance raising money or running a campaign. The relative dearth of Democratic incumbents makes it more likely that their U.S. Senate candidates would require such assistance from the party.

Who Benefited from State Party Activity?

Although it is clear that state parties were active in their support of U.S. Senate candidates, it should not be assumed that all candidates benefited equally from the efforts of their state parties. The concept of targeting is often used to describe the process whereby party organizations (usually the national party organizations) choose among numerous candidates, singling out particular ones for assistance.⁸ In the case of U.S. Senate campaigns, state parties have but one candidate to support (or not to support). Yet in any given election year, state parties have numerous candidates that they can support: candidates for U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, as well as candidates for statewide constitutional offices and for the state legislature. Thus state parties are faced with a different kind of targeting decision: by contributing funds and offering services to the U.S. Senate candidate, they are targeting scarce resources (even if the only resource being spent is the time of the state party workers) to one candidate at the expense of other federal and state candidates.

Thus state parties must make targeting decisions about whether to provide funds and services to U.S. Senate candidates. State parties consider two factors when deciding whether to help the U.S. Senate candidate. First, party organizations consider the type of candidate when making targeting

⁸The most common understanding of “targeting” is the process by which parties and candidates select individual voters (or types of voters) for particular attention. Thus, parties and candidates frequently talk about targeting “soccer moms” or “voters who voted in the last midterm election.” See Malchow, 2000.

decisions. Vulnerable incumbents, quality challengers,⁹ and candidates for open seats (Bibby, 1998; Squire, 1991; Jacobson, 1980) tend to get more assistance from party organizations, thus making those types of candidates likely recipients of state party assistance.¹⁰ Second, party organizations tend to focus resources on competitive contests (Bibby, 1998; Herrnson, 1986, 1998b; Kayden and Mahe, 1985), so a state party may be more likely to help a U.S. Senate candidate who appears to be in a close race.

Data on the relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates in 2000 bear out these expectations. In terms of focusing attention on competitive races, both Republican and Democratic state parties reported more interaction with candidates in close races.¹¹ Republican candidates in competitive races received, on average, a level of interaction of 4.25 (between "moderate" and "very frequent" interaction), while competitive Democratic candidates received a level of interaction of 4.50. This compares to levels of interaction with noncompetitive Republicans and Democrats of 3.50 and 3.92 (between "some" and "moderate" interaction), respectively.

As seen in Table 2, when considering the type of candidate, state parties in general (and Democratic state parties in particular) reported higher levels of interaction with candidates who were incumbents, followed by quality challengers and open-seat candidates. Nonquality challengers had the least frequent interaction with the state parties. Republican state parties, however, reported more interaction with incumbents and open-seat candidates and rather less with quality challengers.¹²

These findings confirm earlier research that suggests majority parties tend to focus on incumbents and open-seat candidates while minority parties focus on open-seat candidates and (quality) challengers (Bibby, 1998). Clearly, state parties are giving their attention to the U.S. Senate candidates who are in competitive contests and are more likely to win.

Table 2 also presents data on the types of candidates that received campaign funds and technical services from state parties. At first blush, these

⁹For the purposes of these analyses, a "quality" challenger is one that has held previous elective office (see Jacobson, 1980).

¹⁰Given the predisposition to help quality challengers and open-seat candidates, one might think that state parties provide support to nonincumbents (as well as vulnerable incumbents) that incumbents provide for themselves. Although this is an interesting possibility that merits further examination, without survey data from the U.S. Senate candidates, it is impossible to determine if incumbents are providing for themselves the types of services the state parties are providing for nonincumbents. However, the analyses below show that state parties have a great deal of interaction with incumbents and provide extensive support to them (especially in terms of technical services), which suggests that incumbents rely on state party support as often as do quality challengers and open-seat candidates.

¹¹Here, a close race is defined as having a margin of victory of 10 points or less.

¹²The mean level of interaction between state parties and nonquality challengers was 5.00, but this is a result of the fact that the data contain information from only one Republican party in a state with a nonquality challenger. This party reported "very frequent" interaction with the nonquality U.S. Senate candidate; I suspect this does not accurately represent the relationship between all Republican state parties and nonquality challengers.

TABLE 2
Beneficiaries of Party Services—Type of Candidate

Variable	Candidate	All Parties	Democratic	Republican
Interaction (mean value on five-point scale)	Incumbent	4.38	5.00	3.86
	Open seat	3.33	3.00	4.00
	Quality ch.	3.67	4.33	3.00
	Nonquality ch.	3.20	2.75	5.00 ^a
Direct contributions per 1,000 voters	Incumbent	\$1.26	\$0.82	\$1.54
	Open seat	\$3.69	\$1.67	\$5.71
	Quality ch.	\$1.08	\$0.97	\$1.25
	Nonquality ch.	\$1.16	\$1.65	\$0.39
Coordinated expenditures per 1,000 voters	Incumbent	\$15.06	\$38.31	\$0.85
	Open seat	\$61.39	\$68.35	\$54.43/\$0.00
	Quality ch.	\$45.58	\$46.34	\$44.32/\$3.61
	Nonquality ch.	\$30.52	\$47.78	\$6.09
Technical services (mean number of services provided)	Incumbent	2.58	3.40	2.00
	Open seat	1.67	1.50	2.00
	Quality ch.	2.67	3.33	2.00
	Nonquality ch.	2.00	1.25	5.00 ^b

^aSee footnote 12.

^bAs was the case with interaction, one state party reported providing all five technical services to a nonquality challenger. Again, I suspect that this case does not accurately represent the level of services that all Republican state parties were providing nonquality challengers.

NOTE: Data are from the author's survey of state parties ($N = 26$: 12 Republican and 14 Democratic) and from the Federal Election Commission ($N = 68$: 34 Republican and 34 Democratic).

data suggest Democratic state parties are not behaving strategically. Although they manage to give direct contributions and coordinated expenditures to open-seat candidates, Democratic state parties are also making direct contributions to nonquality challengers at the same level as open-seat candidates. Furthermore, they are making coordinated expenditures to nonquality challengers at roughly the same level as they are to quality challengers (both of which are more than the coordinated expenditure level for incumbents). Only in the provision of technical services do Democratic state parties appear to be behaving even remotely strategically—though again Democratic state parties are providing technical services at near the same rate to nonquality challengers as they are to open-seat candidates.

Republicans, on the other hand, appear to be acting quite strategically, at least with direct contributions. This form of assistance was given largely to open-seat candidates (also to incumbents and quality challengers, to a lesser extent), with nonquality challengers left out in the cold. Technical services, on the other hand, were distributed more broadly.

Coordinated expenditures appear to be focused on open-seat candidates and quality challengers. Yet the mean level of coordinated expenditures per 1,000 voters is being inflated by two state parties—Georgia and New York—which made extraordinary coordinated expenditures on behalf of Mack Mattingly and Rick Lazio, respectively. When these two cases are eliminated (see second entries for coordinated expenditures, Republican state parties, open-seat, and quality challenger rows), the assessment of strategic behavior on the part of Republican state parties falls away. Incumbents and quality challengers received smaller coordinated contributions (per 1,000 voters) from Republican state parties than did nonquality challengers, and the other four Republican parties in states with an open-seat U.S. Senate campaign failed to make any coordinated expenditures on behalf of their candidates.

These differences in the ability of state parties to identify worthy recipients of funds and services further illustrate the role of state parties in national electoral strategy. As mentioned above, the Democratic Party in 2000 used state party organizations as its vehicle for making coordinated expenditures in U.S. Senate campaigns. The Republican Party chose instead to utilize national party organizations. These two strategies yielded markedly different outcomes; one could, in fact, plausibly argue that the Democrats behaved more strategically in 2000.

Although Republican state parties focused overwhelmingly on open-seat candidates—they provided over \$4 more (per 1,000 voters) in direct contributions—Democratic state parties matched this amount with coordinated expenditures. All told, Democratic state parties spent more (per 1,000 voters) on open-seat candidates than did Republican state parties. In three of the open-seat races, National Republican Party organizations made coordinated expenditures that were greater than the state Democratic parties' coordinated expenditures (one could add New York as a fourth open-seat race where the Republican Party—national and state—made more coordinated expenditures than did the Democratic state party). Yet the Democrat won in four out of the five open-seat races. The story is thus that Republicans did not channel resources strategically in support of their open-seat candidates, while Democratic state parties provided important support to their open-seat candidates.

The story is even more subtle when one considers the ability of state parties to target candidates who are in competitive races. Table 3 presents bivariate correlations between the absolute margin of victory in a race and the amount of direct contributions, coordinated expenditures, or technical services provided by the state party.

Overall, state parties were more likely to provide direct contributions or coordinated expenditures to U.S. Senate candidates who were in close contests (both statistics are marginally statistically significant). When looking at the differences between the two parties, Democratic state parties were more likely to provide coordinated expenditures to candidates in close races (the relationship is marginally statistically significant). This makes

TABLE 3
Beneficiaries of Party Services—Closeness of Race

Variable	All Parties	Democratic	Republican
Direct contributions per 1,000 voters	0.238 (0.052)	−0.077 (0.672)	0.409 (0.016)
Coordinated expenditures per 1,000 voters	0.213 (0.084)	0.296 (0.094)	0.112 (0.527)
Technical services provided	0.082 (0.692)	−0.106 (0.718)	0.306 (0.333)
Voter lists	0.057 (0.782)	0.113 (0.701)	— ^a
Polling information	−0.008 (0.969)	−0.165 (0.572)	0.126 (0.695)
Fund-raising assistance	0.262 (0.196)	0.108 (0.713)	0.432 (0.161)
Strategy development	−0.027 (0.895)	−0.280 (0.331)	0.188 (0.559)
Day-to-day campaign management	−0.034 (0.867)	−0.114 (0.699)	0.048 (0.882)

^aNo entry because all Republican state parties provided voter lists.

NOTE: Data are from the author's survey of state parties ($N = 26$: 12 Republican and 14 Democratic) and from the Federal Election Commission ($N = 68$: 34 Republican and 34 Democratic). Cell entries are correlation coefficients with two-tailed significance levels in parentheses.

sense given the larger Democratic strategy to focus coordinated expenditures through the state parties; the state parties behaved responsibly, providing coordinated expenditures to those candidates for whom additional resources could make the difference. Republican state parties, on the other hand, were much more likely to provide direct contributions to candidates who were in close races (this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level). Given that most coordinated spending among Republicans took place at the national level, state party financial activity in the U.S. Senate campaign largely revolved around direct contributions, perhaps a result of the state parties fulfilling a gatekeeper role (Fowler and McClure, 1989) by using direct contributions to U.S. Senate candidates as a signal to other potential contributors. In terms of technical services, no provision of services produced a statistically significant relationship. This is not unexpected, as these service are relatively costless (compared to the money spent in direct contributions or coordinated expenditures), and therefore state parties can distribute them more broadly.

Summary and Discussion

State parties proved to be remarkably active in support of U.S. Senate candidates in 2000. This finding builds on the recent literature of the service

role of parties, and extends it by highlighting the unique relationship that has developed between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates. Not only were the state parties active in the provision of technical services to U.S. Senate candidates (a role usually filled by the congressional party committees), but they also provided financial support to the candidates. The use of state Democratic parties in 2000 as the conduit for coordinated expenditures on behalf of U.S. Senate candidates is a particularly interesting development.

These findings are not surprising given recent research that suggests state parties are getting stronger (Aldrich, 2000; Morehouse, 2000) and are becoming more adept in their role as service organizations (Morehouse, 2000). Yet one might expect that the increased role of state parties in U.S. Senate elections is merely an artifact of increased national party involvement with their state parties. Indeed, state parties tend to receive much of their money—particularly soft money—from national party organizations (La Raja and Jarvis-Shean, 2001).

But an analysis of the bivariate correlations between state party support of U.S. Senate candidates and fund transfers from national to state party organizations provides only partial support for this explanation. The correlation between national party hard money transfers and state party direct contributions is 0.301 (statistically significant at the 0.05 level) for all state parties and is 0.656 (0.01) for Republican state parties. On the other side of the ledger, the correlation between national party hard money transfers and state party coordinated expenditures is 0.239 (0.05) for all state parties and is 0.376 (0.05) for Democratic state parties.

The provision of technical services by state parties, however, is an activity that national party involvement does not explain. The correlation between national party transfers of soft money and the incidence of technical service provision by state parties fails to reach even the 0.10 level of statistical significance for all state parties as well as the subsets of Republican and Democratic state parties. In this sense, state parties are developing a relationship with U.S. Senate candidates on their own terms, reflecting recent findings that state party organizations are becoming more autonomous and less dependent on national party involvement (and resources) (Morehouse, 2000).

Thus, recent efforts at campaign finance reform may serve only to strengthen the relationship between state parties and U.S. Senate candidates. As hard money transfers from national to state party organizations help explain the incidence of direct contributions (for the Republicans) and coordinated expenditures (for the Democrats), the elimination of soft money at the national level forces national party organizations to focus all of their fund-raising efforts on hard money, money that can eventually be transferred to state parties for use on U.S. Senate (and other federal) campaigns. Furthermore, it appears likely that state parties will become the new loci for soft money fund raising (Frank, 2002). As a result, campaign

finance reform might only serve to strengthen the relationships between state parties and federal candidates. Of course, these relationship dynamics might take a different form. As always, further research into the nature of the interactions between various party organizations and between parties and other political organizations will be necessary to fully understand the impact of the reforms.

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