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Organized Labor's Influence on Local Elections: A Case History of Snohomish County, Washington

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ORGANIZED LABOR'S INFLUENCE ON LOCAL ELECTIONS:
A CASE HISTORY OF SNOHOMISH COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Jonathan Stuart Burr



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Organized Labor's Influence on Local Elections:
A Case History of Snohomish County, Washington

Jonathan Stuart Burr

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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This is to certify that I have examined this copy of a master's thesis by


Jonathan Stuart Burr

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Abstract

Organized Labor's Influence on Local Elections:
A Case History of Snohomish County, Washington

Jonathan Stuart Burr

Candidates seeking public office must build a strong political following to be successful. This applies at national, state, and even local levels. The support generated for a candidate's campaign can be attributed to factors such as personal characteristics, political following, political resources, and endorsements. This analysis focuses on union endorsements in relation to other political endorsements. The case study of the race for Snohomish County Council in District Five illuminates the connection between endorsements, monetary contributions, and voting behavior. Union political coordinators were interviewed and results from the primary and general election 2005 were compiled. The findings support previous studies that candidates should have a strong coalition of endorsements from multiple sources, not just unions; and that monetary contributions are proportional to voting share in primary elections, but not necessarily in general elections.

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INTRODUCTION

This analysis attempts to apply at a local level what research studies have proven repeatedly at state and national levels. Not many studies have been conducted in the realm of city and county politics, with the exception of Timothy Krebs who has researched Chicago's city council multiple times (1998, 1999, and 2001). This research attempts to both fill the void of election research at lower levels of government while at the same time attempting to dissect the influence exerted by different entities. Specifically, since this research occurs in the northwestern United States where organized labor is strong, the role of the labor union will be scrutinized to determine its role in local politics.

Labor organizations, otherwise known as unions, have been involved in the political arena for decades. Reputed to hold a stake in the outcome of elections on multiple scales, including national, state, and local government, unions take an active role in promoting union-friendly candidates. Union power has fluctuated over the years, however, undergoing a lull in the 1980s, followed by a re-energized effort in the mid 1990's (Targ, 2002).

This analysis will examine what role organized labor plays in the local election process and how significant that role is to the candidate who is eventually elected. A number of factors contribute to a successful campaign and a candidate's ascension to public office, and it is difficult to dissect the varying proportions of influence each factor exerts. Another notion to consider is the significance of endorsements, other than unions, and how they impact campaigns for incumbents and non-incumbents alike.

Little research exists in the domain of local elections, and even fewer studies address organized labor's influence specifically. By building on city council research conducted in Chicago (Krebs, 1999), this case study will shed light on the power of endorsements by organized labor in local elections, as well as other influential variables in the electoral process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To set the stage for the research, the electoral process must first be broken down in terms of the necessary ingredients a candidate needs to run for office. Once successful candidate attributes are identified, the union's role in the process will be spotlighted and dissected as well. Finally, the electoral process will be put in context, i.e., geographic and demographic characteristics of Snohomish County are discussed.

Candidate Prerequisites for Public Office

Congressional and state legislative election literature suggests that candidates' performance in elections is largely a function of incumbency, campaign spending, and party support (Krebs, 1998). Yet, Lieske, who takes a different approach, asserts that the most important predictors of electoral success are those that measure the candidates' relative political acceptability, political following, political resources, civic endorsements, and personal achievements (1989).

A theoretical model suggests the primary ingredients for successful candidates for public office (see Figure 1). These political credentials appear to be mutually dependent and help to predict whether a candidate will win his or her targeted election (Lieske, 1989). In the diagram, 'Y' signifies the year of the election and political following refers to the most recent election. The terms in the diagram will be explained in the following sections.

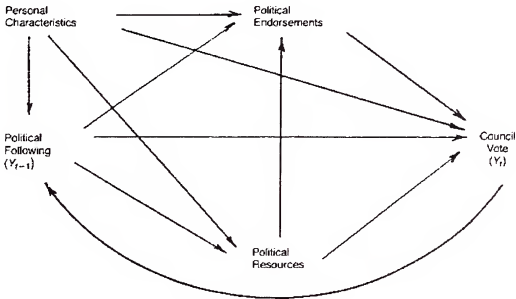


Figure 1: A theoretical model of the council vote (Lieske, 1989).

Personal Characteristics. This variable, which includes both the candidate's ascribed and achieved personal characteristics, focuses on the sex, age, religion, ethnic background, education, and occupation. These determinants are buttressed by a legitimacy theory which argues that "the outcomes of local elections are primarily shaped, first, by the cultural acceptability of candidates for public office and second by their social standing within the community" (Lieske, 1989).

Many times when an individual seeks public office, voters question the candidate's ethics and motivation. The decision to run for office can include enjoyment of politics, desire to address particular issues, aspiration to help people, motivation to promote group interests, or simply a self-interest to advance personally (Bledsoe, 1993).

Political experience also serves as a predictor for success and whether a candidate is recruited by elites. Because of the name recognition benefits that accrue to incumbents, this is the most important type of political experience a candidate can possess. Frequently candidates who have held elected office previously are encouraged to run by groups such as political parties and other public officials (Krebs 1998).

Candidates with substantial non-elective political experience are also pursued, but are not considered as strong. Between non-incumbent candidates with political experience and those without, the ones with experience tend to do better at the polls than do non-incumbents without experience. Perhaps they do better because non-incumbents with experience are more selective about the kinds of contests they enter (Krebs, 1999).

Previous studies suggest that race is a critical personal characteristic of political candidates. Racial characteristics seem to be particularly important in nonpartisan, at-large elections where majority voting preferences are more likely to exclude minority candidate from elective office. Thus, candidates with Anglo-Saxon and northern European surnames can generally count on greater voter support than other ethnic candidates. In addition, some research has shown bias against younger, female candidates. A similar selection bias has been found in ethnically divided cities. This effect may be most pronounced in nonpartisan, ward races where ethnic voting cues actually supplant partisan voting cues (Lieske and Hilliard, 1984).

Political Following. Best described as voter commitments, a candidate's political following is easier to determine if a candidate has been elected to political office or at least has campaigned for office. Political following is measured by total vote received in the most recent election. This variable is more difficult to assess for non-incumbents who have not run for office. Candidates can expect, on average, to retain support of over 75 percent of all voters who backed them in their most recent try for elected office (Lieske, 1989).

Since incumbents and former losers already have name recognition and are relatively well known, their job is to sustain and build the electoral coalition that supported them before. Hence, their electoral success is heavily dependent on the fidelity, size, and composition of their respective political following (Lieske, 1989).

Finally, a candidate's political following is seen to operate in local elections in much the same way that party identification operates in national elections; namely, as a mediating force that structures and stabilizes candidate voting preferences. Thus, on the one hand, a political following serves to identify a segment of the urban electorate who sees a candidate as best representing its cultural and socioeconomic interests. On the other, it represents the long-term reaction of voters to a candidate's personal characteristics, local popularity, and political record (Lieske, 1989).

Candidates with loyal political followings will be better equipped to mobilize the resources required to launch a major campaign and to secure key political endorsements. Those who lack a political following must depend, of course, on the other three sources of candidate advantage (Lieske, 1989).

Political Resources. Quite similar to political following, political resources focuses more on incumbency and campaign expenditures. Incumbents and former losers face a simplified task relative to non-incumbents since they only need to "sustain and build the electoral coalition that supported them before" (Lieske, 1989). Political resources can be both money contributions and political action provided by volunteers and support provided by various organizations.

It is common knowledge that upper status candidates are favored at all electoral levels, particularly in nonpartisan, at-large settings. Highly educated candidates with law degrees appear to do especially well. Presumably this is because they have the education to plan and execute an effective campaign strategy, the social and professional contacts to solicit political support, and the time and expertise to pursue a political career. However, the most salient fact about legislative elections in the United States is the extremely high reelection rate of incumbent candidates. This bias may be most pronounced at the local level where reported figures indicate a return rate of up to 90 percent or higher for elected incumbents. Finally, another critical resource at the local level is money, presumably because of its value in buying name recognition (Hamilton, 1978).

Similarly, it is assumed that candidates who have greater political resources at their disposal are more likely to "wage effective campaigns that capture the attention of voters, provide needed name recognition, and secure key political endorsements" (Lieske, 1989).

Political Endorsements. Composed of groups such as party organizations, special interests, and newspapers, these organizations engage in political action, provide valuable campaign contributions, and serve to advertise the candidate (Krebs, 1998).

The backing and assistance of a party organization can have a direct and measurable impact on a candidate's vote. Party workers get out the message for

candidates and get out the vote. Party backing can also bring votes from loyal party voters (Gierzynski, Kleppner, and Lewis, 1998).

Endorsements are especially important for non-incumbents, who need endorsements to legitimate their campaigns. The source of the endorsement provides varying benefits as well. Whereas a newspaper endorsement provides a widely circulated advertising, political parties and organized labor can often provide financial contributions and volunteer support (Lieske, 1989).

State party endorsements in primary elections also discourage potential candidates from running for office (Rice, 1985). The process of moving from the ranks of a potential candidate to an actual candidate can be complicated by careful elite recruitment processes, especially in areas dominated by machine politics like Chicago (Krebs, 1999). Among non-incumbents, weak challengers are ignored and politically experienced candidates for open seats are targeted (Krebs, 2005).

Another well-accepted tenet is the presumed influence of partisan and newspaper endorsements. Nonetheless, few studies have attempted to assess the relative impact of these endorsements or to control their effects for other factors that affect the vote. Supposedly, newspaper endorsements are a more relevant source of political information for Republican than for Democratic voters because of the generally higher education levels among Republicans. However it is not clear whether partisan or newspaper endorsements are more important to structuring the vote in a nonpartisan, at-large setting. Neither has it been established whether newspapers independently affect the results of local elections or whether they merely jump on the bandwagon of an acceptable, predicted winner (Lieske, 1989).

Political endorsements, in turn, are seen to provide voters with important voting cues as to the candidates' qualifications and political acceptability to key organized interests, such as local party organizations, civic reform groups, newspapers, downtown business, racial minorities, and neighborhood groups (Lieske, 1989).

Clearly, none of these factors acts in an isolated fashion, and all of them are mutually dependent upon each other, as demonstrated in Figure 1. Although political following has been the top-ranked factor for predicting a candidate's success in the election (Lieske, 1989), this study will focus on organized labor endorsements, and how they compare with the variety of other endorsements, such as those from a political party or newspaper.

Endorsements will be broken down into four sources: elected officials, political parties, unions, and other special interests. This study will focus on union endorsement, individually and as part of the collective endorsements.

Organized Labor Endorsement

There are two types of unions: craft and industrial. Craft includes carpenters, plumbers and electricians. Industrial encompasses steelworkers, autoworkers, and packing house workers (Targ, 2002).

The 1980s demonstrated a significant decline for union membership. In 1995 the AFL-CIO spurred the massive re-energizing campaign for labor councils (Targ, 2002). During the nineteenth century, labor councils were critical institutions for coordinating citywide economic strategies, such as building political support for the enactment of state-level social policy. Unions grew into national organizations in the twentieth century and the power of labor councils declined. Under a program called Union Cities, the AFL-CIO is attempting to bring back the labor councils as centers for political activity (Zullo, 2004).

The purpose of the central labor council is to promote union recognition, support local organizing drives, and mobilize members of all locals in a geographic area to promote pro-labor political candidates. Mainly they call themselves "vehicles of horizontal organizing" (Targ, 2002).

Union endorsement potentially provides multiple benefits to a candidate. Examples include monetary contributions, political action in terms of volunteers, favorable member voting behavior, and most importantly for a non-incumbent, increased candidate credibility and name recognition.

Campaign Finance. Labor unions direct more than 90 percent of their contributions to Democrats (Weissman, 2000). In 1980, one-half of the money available to Democrats came from organized labor (Delaney, Masters and Schowchau, 1988).

Spending enables candidates to advertise themselves and to stimulate interest in their campaigns, involving the use of direct mail, the production of sophisticated brochures, and advertising that is shown on billboards and lawn signs (Krebs, 1998). Money has always been a factor in American elections. In 1757, while campaigning for the House of Burgesses in colonial Virginia, George Washington "provided a quart and a half of rum, wine, or beer for each voter, a not-insignificant expenditure" (Douglass, 2000).

Candidates who are able to spend large sums of money in their campaigns can more effectively increase their name recognition among voters than can poorly-funded candidates (Krebs, 1998).

Political Action Committees (PAC) allocate their money with three sets of legislator attributes: the policy positions of the candidate, the vulnerability of the incumbent and the challenger's prospects for success, and the power of the incumbent" (Grenzke, 1989). Additionally, there is a positive and significant

relationship between endorsement and corporate and labor contributions" (Krebs, 2005).

Strategic contributing theory suggests that donors behave with an eye toward maximizing the effect of their donation. Consistent with this theory, two or more important factors driving contributions are the ability to win an election and the ability to influence the political process" (Krebs, 2005).

Volunteer Personnel. Running a campaign involves strategy, organization, and activity. In order to execute much of the voter outreach activities, a sizable staff is needed. Where do these volunteers come from? In addition to family and friends who have the time and dedicated political followers, independent interest groups, such as unions, provide the needed help (Zullo, 2004).

Assisting with tasks such as telephone banking, voter registration, canvassing neighborhoods, marching in parades, stuffing envelopes, and waving signs on the street corner, there is never a shortage of activities for volunteers to perform. Particularly in larger areas with multiple precincts and multiple central business districts, the number of volunteers enables enhanced voter outreach (Zullo, 2004). Additionally, canvassing door-to-door has been shown to typically raise turnout by about 6 percent (Gerber, 1999).

Member Voting Behavior. Labor unions leaders serve as liaisons, communicating workers' concerns to prospective political leaders, and at the same time educating the rank-and-file about issues and candidate positions (Zullo, 2004). Articles about candidates and their backgrounds in labor publications help to provide a flow of information to rank-and-file membership (Masters, 1962).

The probability of voting for an endorsed candidate is 15 to 20 percentage points higher for union members than for individuals who are not union members, and do not live in a household with a union member (Delaney, 1990). Get-out-the-vote telephone calls performed just before the election "increased the probability of voting by 27 percentage points" which asserts a "positive association between the outreach efforts of a politically active labor council and union member turnout" (Zullo, 2004).

In a contrary vein, some members will assert their independence from their union leaders and "a substantial number of union members" have been known to vote contrary to the public endorsements of their leadership (1962, Masters).

Candidate Credibility. Success by a non-incumbent depends enormously on "having one's candidacy legitimized by outside sources" (Krebs, 1998). Labor support helps "to pave the avenue toward other liberal endorsements" (Masters, 1962) and candidate acceptability. However, unions themselves are strongly

influenced by the acceptability of a candidate to other groups, "liberal and conservative alike" (Masters, 1962).

Lieske (1989) makes an important point with the issue of endorsements providing legitimacy for non-incumbents, particularly candidates without much political experience. Legitimacy and endorsements can lead to various other endorsements from not only unions, but different other groups as well. Credibility and campaign contributions go hand-in-hand, as there is a significant correlation between the two (Krebs, 2005).

Snohomish County Labor Council. The Snohomish County Labor Council (SCLC) is a federation of 63 unions in Snohomish County (SCLC, 2005). These unions represent 42,000 working families for the purpose of bargaining wages/salaries and working conditions with their employers. The Labor Council and its member unions (see Table 1) are dedicated to helping workers organize their workplaces so that they are ensured economic justice and dignity (SCLC, 2005). Only 31 organizations in Snohomish County coordinate with political entities, some of which are a combination of the unions listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Snohomish County Labor Council Members*

Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers 183	Amalgamated Transit Union 1576
Amalgamated Transit Union 883	Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers 644
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America 562	Communications Workers of America 7800
County & City Employees Council 2	Edmonds Community College Federation of Teachers 4254
Everett Community College Federation of Teachers 1873	Everett Education Association/United Teachers of Everett 772
International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), Everett 46	Graphic Communication International Union 767
Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 8	International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees 15
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) 191	IBEW 77
IBEW 89	International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) 17
IFPTE 2001	Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific
International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers 506	Iron Workers 86
International Union of Operating Engineers 302	Laborers International Union of North America 292
Lathers & Drywall Systems 1144	Longshore & Warehouse 32
Lumber & Sawmill Workers 2659	Lynnwood Firefighters 1984
Machinists & Aerospace Workers 751	Machinists 130
Marysville Firefighters 3219	Masters, Mates & Pilots, Pacific Maritime Region
Medic 7 Paramedics Association	Mukilteo Firefighters 3482
National Association of Letter Carriers 791	Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) 277
OPEIU 8	Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild 37082
Painters District Council 5	Plumbers & Pipefitters 265

Postal Workers 484	Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199NW
Service Employees Local 120	Sheet Metal Workers 66
International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), Snohomish 2694	Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace
State Employees 1020	State Employees 1355
State Employees 2753	State Employees 2964
State Employees 435	State Employees 881
State Employees 948	International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) 174
IBT 38	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) 1001
UFCW 1105	UFCW 44
United Staff Nurses	Union, UFCW 141

Source: *Snohomish County Labor Council (2005).*

* Not all listed members are organized to endorse candidates.

Geographic and Government Background

This case study examines the primary and general election of 2005 for Snohomish County. Specifically, the position for County Council members in District Five will be the elected office in question.

Snohomish County. Snohomish County (see Figure 2) is located on Puget Sound, between Skagit County to the north and King County (and Seattle) to the south. Covering 2,090 square miles, it is the 13th largest county in Washington. Snohomish County's geography ranges from saltwater beaches, rolling hills and rich river bottom farmlands in the west to dense forest and alpine wilderness in the mountainous east. Glacier Peak, at 10,541 feet, is one of the highest mountains in the country. According to 1993 figures, 68 percent of the county is forest land, 19 percent is rural, 8 percent is urban/city and 5 percent is agricultural (Snohomish County, 2005).

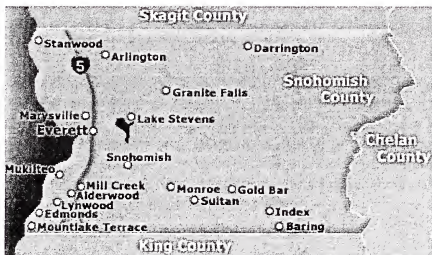


Figure 2: Snohomish County Map (Snohomish County, 2005)

Snohomish is the third most populous county in the state, and one of the fastest growing. The county's population as of April 2001 was 618,600. Between 1990 and 2000, Snohomish County population grew by about 30 percent. The unincorporated (outside cities) population is 294,088 and the incorporated (inside cities) population is 324,512. As of the General Election of 2004, approximately 352,000 people were registered to vote (Snohomish County Auditor's Office, 2005).

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council (1995), the population forecast for Snohomish County for year 2010 is 706,959, and for 2020 is 833,661. Job forecast for 2010 is 265,061, and for 2020 is 303,405. The population forecast used for Growth Management planning is 714,244 in the year 2012. Everett, population 91,488 (2001) is the largest city and has served as the county seat since 1897 (Snohomish County, 2005).

As of December 2001, there were 213,800 nonagricultural wage and salary workers employed in Snohomish County according to Washington State Employment Security Department estimates. A year earlier, in December 2000, there were 216,700 workers in the county. Average annual employment for all of 2000 was estimated at 215,400 (Snohomish County, 2005).

In 1999, residential building permits were issued for 7,452 new units (including single family, duplexes, multi-family and mobile homes). The unincorporated area had 4,534 units permitted (down from 5,262 in 1998), and the cities had 2,918 units (down from 3,784 in 1998). From 1990 through 1999, total county residential permits have been issued for 62,435 housing units. In 2000, the unincorporated area had 3,786 units permitted, down 17% from 1999.

According to 2000 Census results, the county's population was 85.6 percent white, 1.7 percent black, 1.4 percent Native American Indian, 5.8 percent Asian and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Persons identifying themselves as multiracial were 3.4 percent of the county's population. Persons of Hispanic origin represent 4.7 percent of the county's population (Snohomish County, 2005).

County Council. The Snohomish County Council is the legislative authority for the county. The five members of the Council are elected to four-year terms. Each member represents a specific geographic district (see Figure 3). The Council's duties include identifying and articulating the needs of the citizens of Snohomish County, and providing a framework for county administration to carry out its work efficiently, ensuring that county government responds effectively to the community's needs (Snohomish County, 2005).

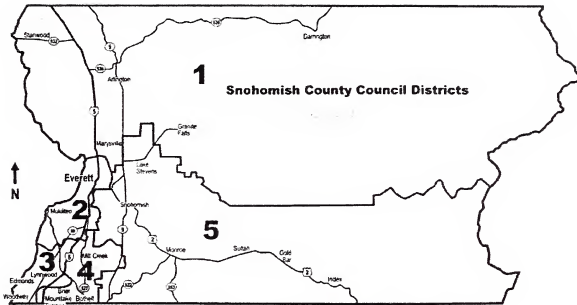


Figure 3: Snohomish County District Map (Snohomish County, 2005).

The County Council adopts and enacts ordinances, resolutions, and motions; levies taxes; appropriates revenue; and adopts budgets for the county. The Council confirms nominations to county boards and commissions and has concurrent authority with the County Executive to nominate members to the Snohomish County Planning Commission. The Council also appoints the Hearing Examiner (Snohomish County, 2005).

The council prioritizes its time on the following subcommittees: *Planning & Community Development, Public Works and Transportation, Finance & Economic Development, Operations/Performance Audit, and Law & Justice/Human Services*. Council subcommittees offer the council and the public an opportunity to preview and analyze many issues before the council. These include reviews of regular legislative functions – official motions and ordinances, budget authority and other priority matters for Snohomish County residents – prior to the Council taking official action (Snohomish County, 2005).

All council committee meeting times and locations are publicly advertised well in advance and are open to the public as per the requirements of state law: RCW 42.30 (Snohomish County, 2005).

District Five. This district includes the cities of Monroe, Snohomish, Sultan, Gold Bar, Index, and Lake Stevens (see Figures 2 and 3).

Important discussion issues for this district include annexing growth areas into existing cities for tax and water/sewer service, how mitigation fees should be used, allowing commercial airlines to provide service at the local airfield, land zoning for development versus critical areas to protect wetlands, sheriff deputy staffing levels, and road maintenance and construction. A major concern in light

of the population growth forecasts is intercity traffic congestion relief along highways 2 and 9. Possible solutions under consideration include highway expansion or establishing an inter-rail transit service and bus-feeder system.

Election Cycles Included in Analysis. The election periods analyzed include both the primary and general election results for 2005. This time frame assesses monetary contributions and endorsements for the County Council position in District Five.

OBJECTIVES/HYPOTHESES

This analysis seeks to determine the role unions play in local elections, in the context of other candidate endorsements. First there is the question of why unions choose to endorse particular candidates. Second, once a candidate does receive an endorsement, what proportion of total union endorsements must be obtained in order to have a significant impact on election results. Finally, other endorsement is translated into dollar amounts to discover correlations with voting behavior.

Research Objectives

1. To discover the primary reason(s) why unions endorse local candidates.
2. To discover if candidates with endorsements from at least 25 percent of total local unions will win their primary election.
3. To discover if the variety of endorsements a candidate receives positively correlates with monetary contributions.
4. To discover if monetary contributions positively correlate with percentage of voting share in the primary election.
5. To discover if monetary contributions positively correlate with percentage of voting share in the general election.

Hypotheses

1. Unions primarily endorse local candidates for the following reasons: State Democratic Party endorsed candidate.
2. Candidates with endorsements from at least 25 percent of total local unions will win their primary election.
3. The variety of endorsements a candidate receives will positively correlate with monetary contributions.
4. Monetary contributions will correlate positively with percentage of voting share in the primary election.

5. Monetary contributions will correlate positively with percentage of voting share in the general election.

Operational Definitions

“State Democratic Party” refers to all political organizations at the local and state level affiliated with the Democratic Party.

“Positive history” refers to pro-labor voting record, pro-labor public statements, and general actions which promote organized labor.

Hypothesis Linkage to the Literature

Partisan organizations such as political parties and unions endorse candidates based on personal characteristics and achievements, political following, political resources, and other political endorsements (Lieske, 1989). Although some studies have been conducted at the local level on candidate emergence and voting behavior in cities like Chicago and Cincinnati (Krebs, 1998, 1999, 2005 and Lieske, 1989), there are relatively few studies overall which address primary predictors for candidate endorsements. Additionally, no studies were discovered which look at the isolated impact of unions on election results, most likely because the individual cause and effect relationships between endorsements are difficult to assess.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The methods, sampling, and data collection for this study were based on the availability and high probability of obtaining accurate data. Data tabulation and analysis facilitated comparisons and confirmed results to either accept or reject hypotheses.

Research Method

Primary data was generated by a questionnaire which was administered via an interview with select respondents. Other primary data was gathered by researcher observation of candidate forums, candidate brochures, and candidate websites. The researcher gathered the election results as secondary data, archived at the Snohomish County Auditor’s Office.

Sampling

The three methods employed to collect data included several populations. The first method, the questionnaire, sought information on the populations of union leadership decisions regarding candidate selection. The second method, observation, focused on the populations of Snohomish County public office

candidates, and local partisan interest groups, union and non-union. The third method, gathering secondary data from the election results archived at the County Auditor's Office, targeted all registered voters in District Five of Snohomish County for the primary and general elections of 2005.

For the questionnaire, a non-random, expert sample of local union officers was employed. Local union organizations are composed of both union officers and rank-and file members. In order to discover special knowledge about how and why specific candidates are chosen for endorsement, it was necessary to speak with the political coordinator from the local organization. Independent variables include candidate personal characteristics, candidate political resources, candidate political following, and other partisan endorsements. The dependent variable is the union endorsement.

An endorsement census was conducted to determine which entities, both union and non-union, supported Snohomish County Council District Five candidates. The independent variables include endorsements, political following, political resources, and personal characteristics. The dependent variable is the number of different endorsements.

A monetary contribution census for Snohomish County Council District Five candidates was conducted to determine candidate financial spending capabilities. The independent variables include endorsements, political following, political resources, and personal characteristics. The dependent variable is the total contributions acquired for the primary election and general election of 2005.

The primary and general election results data for 2005 from the County Auditor's Office was enumerated and compiled according to vote share from District Five. The independent variable is monetary contribution. The dependent variables are percentage of voting share in the primary election and percentage of voting share in the general election.

Data Collection

- The questionnaire was brief, focusing on union leadership decisions regarding public office candidates. The researcher read the question to participating local union officers from Snohomish County in an interview setting, isolated from any type of distracting activity or possible eavesdroppers which might otherwise influence the participant's responses. Appointments were established beforehand, and participants were briefed on the nature of the research and their role in the data.

Time constraints did not permit formal pre-testing of the questionnaire, and in most cases the participants were on a tight schedule. Local union officers in Snohomish County participated in the survey on a strictly voluntary basis in

October of 2005, just prior to the general election. They were assured of anonymity, and individual questionnaires were kept strictly confidential.

- The endorsements obtained by respective candidates were advertised on candidate brochures, in local newspapers, and on candidate websites, in addition to being mentioned in public candidate forums hosted by local city officials. Data was collected from aforementioned sources between June and November 2005.
- Secondary data from the primary and general elections for the 2005 was compiled to assess trends in voting behavior as a function of candidate voter share. Aggregate approved data by the Snohomish County Auditor's Office was compiled by the researcher in December 2005. Monetary contribution records are kept with the Washington state agency, the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC). Candidate contribution records from the PDC provided secondary data, which the researcher collected in December 2005. -

Tabulation and Analysis Procedures

To measure union leader preference, candidate personal characteristics were ranked according to the total number of respondents choosing a characteristic. Each respondent chose their top three in terms of importance. Where there were ties in the rankings, the total number of respondents choosing the characteristic was the same, in addition to the level of importance assigned to the characteristic by the respondent.

To measure union endorsement, percentages were assigned to the proportion of total unions endorsing each candidate. The total union population consisted of the 31 organizations that participate in political activities.

To measure all endorsements for each candidate, a 5-point scale was used with 0 meaning no endorsements and 4 meaning one from each source. Sources included public officials, political party, unions, and other interest groups.

To measure candidate monetary contributions received, actual total dollar amounts were used for the primary election and the general election.

To measure voting behavior, each candidate's total number of votes was converted into percentages of total voting population.

The following comparisons between data were made: different types of endorsements and monetary contributions for all candidates, Democratic primary election monetary contributions and voting behavior, and general election monetary contributions and voting behavior.

A spreadsheet was used to calculate and convert data into usable formats, creating a series of graphs which facilitate comparison analysis.

RESULTS

This section briefly describes the population samples used in the research and discusses the findings for each hypothesis. In short, most of the suggested hypotheses were rejected with only a few exceptions.

Composition of Sample

A variety of samples were taken. The first sample included five union officers who were available to be interviewed by the researcher. Specifically the political coordinator/administrator was sought in order to provide special knowledge about the characteristics highly valued in candidates and their rationale behind candidate endorsement decisions. The second sample consisted of Snohomish County District Five candidate endorsement data generated from candidate websites and brochures, and the newspaper. The rest of the samples were census and enumeration secondary data from public records at the Snohomish County Auditor's Office and the Washington state Public Disclosure Commission.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: Unions primarily endorse local candidates for the following reason: State Democratic Party endorsed candidate.

Reject. The political coordinators (PC) interviewed to determine the primary reasons why their union-endorsed candidates answered unanimously with "pro-labor/ voting record" as their top attribute (see Table 2). Every union officer ranked it as their number one choice. The second place attribute, "other union endorsements," was supported by three PCs. "Electability" and "personal relationship" tied for third place with two PCs choosing each attribute. Fourth place was another tie between "candidate affiliation with union" and "willingness to learn union issues." None of the PCs in the sample chose "State Democratic Party" as a reason to endorse candidate.

Table 2. Rankings for Candidate Attributes

Ranking	Attribute	Score*
1	Pro-Labor/ Voting Record	4
2	Other Union Endorsements	3
3	Electability	2
3	Personal Relationship	2
4	Candidate Affiliation with Union	1
4	Willingness to Learn Union Issues	1

Source: Researcher interview results with local union officers in Snohomish County (2005).

* Score based on number of times attribute selected by a union officer.

Hypothesis 2: Candidates with endorsements from at least 25 percent of total local unions will win their primary election.

Reject. Figure 4 demonstrates that all the candidates received endorsements from less than 20 percent of total local unions in Snohomish County. Democrat 1 received 19 percent, followed by Democrat 2 with 16 percent. The Republican received 3 percent and the Independent did not receive any local union endorsements. The majority of local unions, 61 percent, did not endorse any candidate.

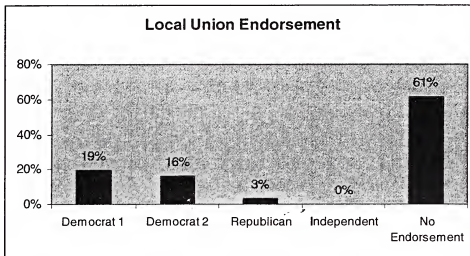


Figure 4: Percentage of Snohomish County local unions endorsing County Council candidates in district five for election cycle 2005.

Hypothesis 3: The variety of endorsements a candidate receives will positively correlate with monetary contributions.

Accept. Positive correlations can be seen clearly between monetary contributions for each candidate and the variety of endorsements received (see Figures 5 and 6). Democrat 1 received endorsements from unions, the Democratic Party, public officials, and other special interests such as environmental groups. As each of these entities typically contributes money, the contributions for Democrat 1 at \$62,640 reflect as much. Democrat 2 received endorsements from unions and public officials. Contributions for Democrat 2 amounting to \$27,998 are proportionate. The Republican received endorsements from a solitary union, the Republican Party, public officials, and other special interests such as master builder associations. Taking in the highest monetary contributions at \$158,036 correlates with the variety of endorsements. Lastly, the independent candidate acquired no endorsements, and the lowest amount of monetary contributions of \$1,675 reflects as much.

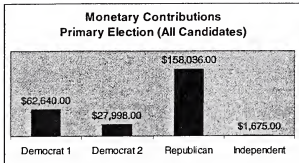


Figure 5: Monetary contributions recorded just prior to Primary Election 2005 for all County Council candidates in district five of Snohomish County.

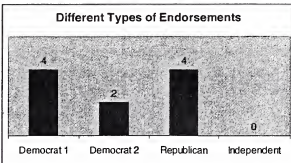


Figure 6: Illustrates the variety of endorsements received by each candidate for election cycle 2005. Types of endorsements include public official, union, political party, and other interest groups (e.g.: environmental and master builders).

Hypothesis 4: Monetary contributions will positively correlate with percentage of voting share in the primary election.

Accept. Both Democrats received voting share percentages which positively correlated with monetary contributions received (see Figures 7 and 8). Democrat 1 took in \$62,640 in contributions and received 64 percent of the Democratic vote, whereas Democrat 2 took in \$27,998 and received a proportional voting share of 36 percent.

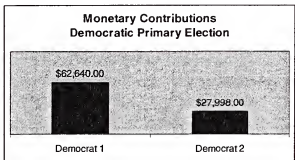


Figure 7: Monetary contributions recorded just prior to Primary Election 2005 for democratic County Council candidates in district five of Snohomish County.

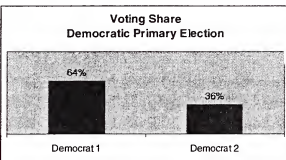


Figure 8: Democratic Primary Election 2005 results for Snohomish County district five.

Hypothesis 5: Monetary contributions will positively correlate with percentage of voting share in the general election.

Reject. In the general election, monetary contributions did not correlate positively with the percentage of voting share received (see Figures 9 and 10). Even though the Republican candidate's contributions of \$222,676 were much higher than the contributions for the Democrat at \$106,405, the Democrat received a larger voting share. The Democrat's voting share of 49 percent was only slightly higher than the Republican's share of 43 percent, but still the contributions and voting share were not correlated. The independent candidate came in much lower than both candidates with contributions of \$6,375 and a voting share of 8 percent.

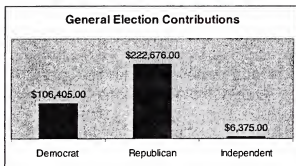


Figure 9: Monetary contributions recorded just prior to General Election 2005 for all County Council candidates in district five of Snohomish County.

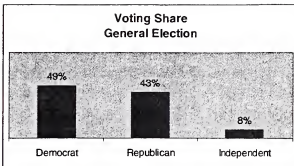


Figure 10: General Election 2005 results for Snohomish County district five.

CONCLUSIONS

The expectations for the hypotheses were only partially met. The five hypotheses set forth returned three rejections and two acceptances.

The first hypothesis assumed that the party endorsement would be the primary reason for unions endorsing a candidate, but such was not the case. Unions endorsed candidates primarily based on their pro-labor opinions and voting record. It is important also to note that “other union endorsements” and “electability,” or the candidate’s overall profile, played a key role for unions as well. As many of the reasons are mutually dependent, it is safe to assume that “electability” and “other union endorsements” are related and even perhaps a function of each other. “Electability might even include the party endorsement. Even though most of the reasons for endorsement are inter-related, candidates must demonstrate their willingness to be union-friendly to acquire union support.

Obviously, the rejection of the second hypothesis demonstrated that support from a high percentage of the total union population is not necessary to win a local election. It might be said that there is a large degree of disinterest by unions in local elections. With 61 percent of all the unions in Snohomish County not even bothering to endorse a candidate, let alone contribute money, it appears they are little concerned with the outcome and the effects. Further, for the unions that did endorse candidates, it demonstrates their elevated interest and likelihood to be impacted by local policies. Additionally, it might mean that the unions who participated in the election possess better political organization and a higher aptitude for political action.

The third hypothesis produced a positive correlation between the different types of candidate endorsements and monetary contributions. This breadth of support demonstrates several implications. First, that most likely each endorsing entity provided money to the candidate, which is proven by examining contribution records and the listed PAC donors. Secondly, people who are affiliated with

each endorsing entity, and have the financial resources, will in turn be likely to contribute. Finally, a candidate with multiple endorsements appears to possess the confidence of many people and of the breadth of the community, and confidence breeds confidence. Thus, a variety of endorsements legitimates a candidate and his or her issues, causing unaffiliated people, with financial resources, to potentially contribute.

The Democratic Primary Election results for 2005 supported the fourth hypothesis that monetary contributions positively correlate with voting behavior. The uncertainty remains, however, that money does not necessarily equal votes. What might be an alternative explanation is that money simply acts as a measure of votes, and that the attitudes of a particular voting constituency might be measured by the amount of money they donate to their candidate. Another explanation is that Democrat 1 previously held the office being sought in the same district, and just marginally lost four years ago to the incumbent Republican. As a former incumbent who had already participated in two elections with mostly the same voting population, Democrat 1 possessed a much larger political following, or voter base, than Democrat 2. Despite the various possibilities, in this scenario we can still assume that voter attitudes translated into dollar amounts, which yielded proportional voting shares for the respective Democrats.

The fifth hypothesis, even though similar to the fourth, produced contrary results in that the voting behavior in the General Election for 2005 was not positively correlated with monetary contributions. Several confounding variables exist in this situation which did not occur in the primary election however. First, the Republican, who received more monetary contributions than both of the other candidates, was an incumbent. As already mentioned earlier, incumbents enjoy the advantage of pre-established coalitions and typically larger amounts of monetary contributions (Lieske, 1989). A second variable deals with comparing a Democratic constituency with a Republican constituency. Studies have shown that Republican candidates consistently bring in more money on average than their Democratic counterparts at all levels of electoral politics (Weissman, 2000). Another confounding variable which might produce unexpected results is the fact that a scandal occurred during the incumbent Republican's term in office. This scandal, which received media coverage in the newspaper, and discussed in public forums by other officials, evidently was given credence. Research has proven that scandals play a role in contributing to an incumbent's vulnerability. Lastly, in the same vein, the incumbent's vulnerability was further accentuated by the fact that his victory in his most recent election was by a slim margin (Krebs, 2005).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis illustrated not only what unions look for in candidates and the role they play in local elections with other endorsements, but it revealed the candidate attributes and voting behavior which can provide insight into running for a local elected public office. Entities which stand to gain from this information include interest groups, particularly unions, and candidates – incumbents and non-incumbents alike.

Unions, who apparently already evaluate a candidate's attitude toward organized labor and take their cues from other union endorsements, can benefit by examining the candidate's political following. By looking at a candidate's previous election results, his or her approximate voter base can be determined (Lieske, 1989). Additionally, unions can benefit from looking not just at other union endorsements, but at all other endorsements, to determine the breadth of support the candidate has.

Non-incumbents who seek office must not get discouraged with failure, and must strive to build a strong coalition of endorsements. Previous studies on national elections, which also apply to the local level, stress that a candidate lacking elected political experience must have endorsement coalitions for legitimacy (Krebs, 1999). Additionally, sometimes multiple runs for office are necessary in order to build a sound political following and obtain the much needed name recognition to win (Lieske, 1989).

Lastly, incumbents should avoid scandal, of course, in addition to catering to their voter base. By solidifying their political following, they ensure a return to office by keeping the people happy who voted for them previously, thus giving them the necessary votes to be the elected official.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher was a participant observer for this analysis. As such, attitudes and recommendations expressed may result from personal bias. Although measures to control bias were taken by citing literature as a foundation for attitudes and recommendations, consideration must be made for the selective bias with methods used to obtain and scrutinize data.

Election cycles are a function of time, important dates, and deadlines. The data was dependent upon these dates and deadlines and was not available for analysis until certain benchmarks in the election cycle elapsed. Additional time constraints on the union officers impacted, first, the acquisition of the questionnaire data and, second, perhaps the quality of the data. Each interview with the union officers was by appointment and for a set period of time. As the series of interviews occurred within weeks prior to the general election of 2005

the emotional temperament of the union officer sample may have led to answers unrepresentative of the entire local union officer population.

The researcher has not published before nor is recognized as an established expert in the field of electoral politics. Consequently, the researcher underwent a steep learning curve through the course of the study to understand electoral theoretical models, to comprehend and use electoral terminology, and to investigate and analyze the various influences in local electoral politics.

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APPENDIX A:
Union Interview Questionnaire

What top three candidate factors are most important to your union?

- A. Fundraising ability
- B. Candidate experience
- C. Public official endorsements
- D. State party endorsements
- E. Other organization endorsements
- F. Candidate priorities and goals
- G. Candidate affiliation with union
- H. Viability (all-inclusive)
- I. Voting record, the candidate has been good to labor
- J. Other

