An Anecdote Relevant to the Paper

From a friend in the Dept. of Health & Human Services:

- Bureaucrats are most likely to “fill in the details” when Congress doesn’t have the time/expertise to do so.

- Section 4302 of the ACA requires HHS to collect demographic data relevant to health disparities (“as deemed appropriate by the Secretary”)

- The Office of Minority Health within HHS interprets this as requiring collection of data on LGBT population (not mentioned in ACA) → eligible for extra funding as “at risk”

- Controversial within HHS b/c other groups were ignored.

- [Consistent with Obama’s desire for LGBT support.]
Outline

1. The Puzzle of Predictability
2. Campaign Effects
Outline

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2. Campaign Effects
The Predictability of Elections

Elections are predictable on the basis of “fundamentals”:

- Internal (e.g., party ID)
- External (e.g., economy)
Structural Forecasts: The “Bread and Peace” Model

- Incumbent share of two-party vote (%)
- Real income growth and military fatalities combined

2012 prediction for Obama: 47.5%

Image by MIT OpenCourseWare.
If Elections Are Predictable, Why Are Polls Unstable?

- Why are polls so variable?
- Do campaigns matter at all?
Outline

1. The Puzzle of Predictability

2. Campaign Effects
How Campaigns Still Could Matter

Even if elections were completely predictable, campaigns could still matter if they:

- Inform voters about the fundamentals ("enlightening")
- Have large but counterbalancing effects
  - Assumes optimal campaign and balanced resources

But elections are not entirely predictable...
Campaign Effects

Campaigns can affect outcomes in the following ways:

- **Reinforcement** (bringing partisans back to the fold)
- **Persuasion** (issues, attributes)
- **Priming** (criteria of evaluation)
- **Mobilization** (convince supporters to vote)
President Campaign Strategies

- **Clarifying Campaign**: Candidate advantaged by fundamentals (prosperity, peace) emphasizes (primes) those issues and clarifies his connection to them
  - Examples: Johnson in 1964, Reagan in 1984
  - Counterexample: Gore in 2000

- **Insurgent Campaign**: Disadvantaged candidate emphasizes issue on which their have an advantage and which their opponent’s position is unpopular
  - Losers: Stevenson, Goldwater (1964), Dole (1996),...
Early polls not very accurate
Over time, polls become
  - less variable (fewer swing voters)
  - more even
  - more accurate and closer to forecast (informing)
Some campaign effects persist ("bump") but most effects dissipate quickly ("bounce")
Short-term campaign effects can still matter if occur late
  → deluge of late ads
Do Campaigns Matter?

- Affect outcomes, esp. if candidates not well known (e.g., primaries, open seats) or resources are unequal
- We don’t observe “non-optimal” behavior very often
- Campaigns affect candidates
  → Learn from voters, challengers
17.20 Introduction to American Politics
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