The Electoral Connection in the Early United States:
The U.S. Congressional Elections of 1826-27

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Abstract

Students of American political development are divided over the extent to which an electoral connection existed in the antebellum United States. In this paper, we provide a critical test of the electoral connection in early American politics by examining the electoral aftershocks of the disputed presidential election of 1824. Specifically, we focus on the midterm congressional elections (1826-27) that followed this watershed presidential election. Using newly available data of county-level presidential voting, we construct the presidential vote by congressional district. Our central test will concern those members who voted for Adams in the House election, yet were from districts that supported Jackson. We find that these members were targeted for ouster and suffered a substantial vote-loss in the midterm elections. We also find that the entry of a quality challenger had a substantial impact on the fortunes of incumbent legislators. These results have direct implications for pinpointing the historical timing, and hence institutional pre-conditions, for the development of a strong electoral connection in the United States.

Prepared for presentation at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA. We thank Nathan Monroe and Jason Roberts for helpful comments and suggestions.
Students of American political development are divided over the extent to which an electoral connection existed in the antebellum United States. In this paper, we provide a critical test of the electoral connection in early American politics by examining the electoral aftershocks of the disputed presidential election of 1824. Specifically, we focus on the midterm congressional elections (1826-27)1 that followed this watershed presidential election.

The failure of the 1824 presidential vote to produce a majority winner in the Electoral College sent the election to the House of Representatives. The eventual selection of John Quincy Adams was bitterly contested, forced House members to make a very public vote, and led to charges of a “corrupt bargain” between Adams and Henry Clay (Remini 1963; Jenkins and Sala 1998). While this is well known, less studied is the aftermath of this election. How members of the House voted on the presidential question became a defining campaign issue in the next midterm election, with some representatives being placed on ‘black-lists’ for voting in contradiction to the revealed opinion (i.e. the presidential vote) of their district (Ratcliffe 2000; Leonard 2002). The president’s party lost ten seats along with their majority in the House to the upstart Jacksonians. This outcome marked the first time in U.S. political history that an out-party captured control of the House during a midterm election. In addition, this election marked the beginning of mass political organization that would culminate in the triumph of Jackson in 1828 and the emergence of the second party system (Remini 1963; McCormick 1966; Aldrich 1995, ch.4).

Yet despite the importance of the 1826-7 election for American political development, there has been no systematic study ever conducted of this historic election. The only previous political science study that touches on it is Jenkins and Sala (1998), who in the course of

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1 Congressional elections in this era were not all held in November. Some were held months before or months after November.
debunking the ‘corrupt bargain’ story briefly consider the subsequent midterm election. Looking at the aggregate results of the 1826-7 election, they argue that there was little evidence that representatives who voted against their constituency suffered in the following election. Their finding casts doubt on the existence of an electoral connection in the antebellum United States. Yet, given the previous unavailability of disaggregated electoral data, they were at the time precluded from conducting a district level analysis of the 1826-7 election. In this paper, we take advantage of newly released data, and a more fine-grained research design, to reassess this election, and with it, the electoral connection in this early era of American politics.

The question we ask in this paper is: Were members of Congress in this era punished for voting against the will of their constituencies? The election of 1826-7 is an almost ideal laboratory to put this question to the test. A perennial problem plaguing research on constituency-representative linkages (in any time period) is matching district-level opinion with electoral outcomes. This problem is especially acute in the 19th century where nothing like modern polling organizations existed. In this paper, we are able to overcome this problem by using newly released data of county-level presidential election returns. By aggregating this data to the congressional district level (something never previously done for the pre-Civil War era) we are able to construct perhaps the closest analog to constituency ‘public opinion’ data that one can get in this pre-polling era. This data gives us an unprecedented ability to directly observe the connection between constituency ‘public opinion’, representative’s behavior, and subsequent electoral outcomes. We can, in a remarkably clean way, match up constituency opinion with

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2 We are persuaded by Jenkins and Sala’s evidence that a corrupt bargain between Adams and Clay most likely did not take place. Indeed, political observers of the time even doubted the veracity of the corrupt bargain story (Ratcliffe 2000: 203-4). Nevertheless, charges of a corrupt bargain, and shirking on the part of MC’s, served as a potent rallying cry during the subsequent congressional campaigns.

3 Politicians of the era often had reliable information on voters’ partisan leanings, but only in very rare cases (see Kernell 2000) has this information been unearthed by modern researchers.
representative behavior, and then examine if there were retrospective sanctions levied on those who went against voters wishes.

We find strong evidence that MC’s were indeed punished at the polls for shirking the will of their constituencies. Specifically, MC’s who voted for Adams, yet were from districts with strong Jackson support suffered a substantial vote loss in the subsequent midterm elections. Moreover, buttressing our story, we do not find similar effects for those MC’s who were new to the 19th Congress (i.e. our control group) and therefore had not voted in the House balloting.\footnote{We also find that the entry of an experienced challenger had a substantial, negative effect on incumbent vote margins. No previous study has ever examined the impact of quality challengers this early in American politics, much less found an effect.}

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we review the literature on the electoral connection in the 19th century. In section two, we provide historical background on the election of 1826-7 and provide anecdotal evidence that the presidential question directly intruded into congressional campaigns. In the third section, we test for an electoral connection, finding that members who voted for Adams yet were from Jacksonian strongholds suffered a substantial vote-loss in the following election. In section four, we supplement this finding by examining the strategic behavior of challengers and the probability of incumbent victory. In the final section, we discuss the implications of our findings for the study of American political development.

\footnote{This task was greatly enhanced by the fact that most congressional districts during this era were comprised of one or more whole counties.}
\footnote{Balloting for the president took place in the lame duck session of the 18th Congress, which meant that in the 19th Congress those members who were freshmen had not voted in the presidential question. This provides two distinct groups of MC’s, giving us an opportunity to conduct a quasi-experiment.}
1. The Electoral Connection in the 19th Century

In his seminal book on Congress, David Mayhew (1974) treats legislators as if they were “single-minded seekers of reelection.” While acknowledging that this assumption is a simplification, he contends that it provides a useful mechanism for explaining many of the institutional features of the modern Congress. While Mayhew’s assumption has become the theoretical workhorse driving many of the advances in modern legislative studies, there are a number of reasons to question whether the electoral connection assumption applies outside of the modern era. Many characteristics of 19th century electoral politics, such as the predominance of presidential elections, the party strip ballot, rotation, and limited media outlets, would seemingly augur against a strong electoral connection between congressmen and their constituents (Formisano 1974; Price 1975; Jacobson 1990; Bensel 2003).

This suspicion is buttressed by studies showing that individual accountability was dramatically enhanced by the adoption of anti-party reforms such as the Australian ballot and the direct primary between 1890 and 1910 (Rusk 1970; Kernell 1977, 2003; Katz and Sala 1996). The advent of the secret ballot had a profound effect on the electoral environment by giving voters a greater opportunity to punish or reward candidates individually (Katz and Sala 1996: 21; Engstrom and Kernell 2003) while also giving incumbents the institutional means to develop a “personal vote” (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1992; Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2000). Although not usually stated explicitly, a direct implication of these findings is that an individual electoral connection was tenuous before the reform era.

Other students of congressional politics in this era have nevertheless suggested that Mayhew’s ‘electoral connection’ may still be applicable. Swift (1987), for instance, argues that an electoral connection in Congress may have existed as early as 1789. Following up on Swift’s
analysis, Bianco, Spence, and Wilkerson (1996) investigate the Compensation Act of 1816, finding that electorally vulnerable legislators were less likely to support the unpopular compensation plan and that those who voted in favor of the plan were less likely to seek reelection, forecasting that their support of the pay-raise greatly increased the probability of electoral defeat.\footnote{Bianco, Spence, and Wilkerson (1996: 147) note, “It is one thing to argue that a congressional career was less attractive or less feasible in an earlier time than it is today, but another to conclude that members of the early Congress were unconcerned about the electoral consequences of their behavior.”} Jumping forward a half-century, Carson, Jenkins, Rohde, and Souva (2001) examine the midterm House elections of 1862-63 finding that the electorate’s dissatisfaction with the course of the Civil War led to a systematic backlash against Republican candidates. They demonstrate that, much like modern elections, both national forces (i.e. the course of the war) and district specific conditions (i.e. the entry of quality challengers, district-level war casualties, and the timing of individual races) substantially affected legislator’s electoral fortunes in predictable ways.

Thus, the literature presents us with two different portrayals of the electoral connection in early American politics. We argue that the election of 1826-7 offers a critical test to build on these previous findings, and has advantages that other studies do not. First, we can directly match up ‘public opinion’ data with members’ voting on a single issue. Moreover, the overlap between opinion and MC behavior on this issue is almost one-to-one. Second, as we will argue in the next section, opposition candidates used the presidential question as campaign fodder in the subsequent midterm elections. If we do not find an electoral connection here then we can call into question the existence of one in the 19th century. Third, the particular timing of the election – providing a mixture of new and returning members – creates a natural experiment which we can exploit to more directly pinpoint what effects, if any, constituency level shirking
had on electoral outcomes in this era. In the next section, we begin by providing the historical background of this election and anecdotal evidence to suggest that how members voted on the presidential question directly intruded into the subsequent midterm elections.

2. The Presidential Election of 1824 and the Midterm Election of 1826-7

The presidential election of 1824 is one of the most (in)famous elections in American political history. The unprecedented four-way contest between John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, William H. Crawford, and Andrew Jackson, ended with none of the candidates able to garner a majority in the Electoral College. As a result, the duty of selecting the president devolved to the House of Representatives. Under the constitutional rules for electing presidents (Article II), the House selected from among the top three finishers in the Electoral College (which in this case meant that Henry Clay was no longer in the running). Each state delegation was given one vote and the determination of how the state was to cast its vote was decided by a majority vote within each state delegation. For our purposes, the most important point to note is that this process forced each member of the 18th Congress to make a highly public vote for one of the presidential candidates.

Balloting for the president took place in February of 1825, which was part of the lame duck session of the 18th Congress. As is well known, John Quincy Adams emerged victorious but not without controversy. Many charged that Adams had ‘bought’ his victory through a back-room arrangement with Henry Clay in which the latter would deliver his supporters to Adams in exchange for being named Secretary of State. Charges of a ‘corrupt bargain’ cast a cloud over Adams’ election and, as we will show below, became a defining campaign issue in the subsequent congressional elections two years later.
Whether or not there was *actually* a bargain struck between Adams and Clay is an open question that has tantalized historians and political scientists alike. Previous research, however, is mixed on whether there was a corrupt bargain, but the most systematic study to date (Jenkins and Sala 1998) concludes that there is little evidence to support the corrupt bargain thesis. To demonstrate this, Jenkins and Sala construct ideological measures (i.e. common-space Nominate scores) for each MC and for each of the three presidential candidates. Jenkins and Sala find that almost all MC’s voted consistently with their ideological predispositions, choosing a presidential candidate that was closest to them on the ideological spectrum. This finding leads them to conclude that there was only marginal ideological shirking, and therefore little evidence of the kinds of strategic voting one would associate with a corrupt bargain hypothesis.

Although the determinants of the presidential election is not the main focus of this paper, we want to briefly offer some evidence to suggest that at least *some* members, while perhaps not engaged in ideological shirking, nevertheless shirked the revealed preferences of their constituency. We can do this by looking at the presidential vote within each district and comparing MC’s voting with the preferences of their district. In Table 1, we list the percentage of MC’s who voted for a presidential candidate that was different from what the majority of voters in their district voted for. Although most MC’s voted in line with their district, there is still a substantial number who voted against the majority wishes of their district. In addition, there is a significant difference between MC’s who were elected to return to the 19th Congress, and lame-duck MC’s. The latter group was significantly more likely to shirk district preferences, which is in line with modern findings on lame-duck MC’s (Nokken 2003).

Insert Table 1 Here
What impact did this constituency level shirking have on the 1826-7 election? There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that opposition party leaders and opportunistic challengers discerned that those who voted against the wishes of their district would be ripe targets for ouster. In Ohio for example, Jackson party leaders created an explicit ‘black-list’ of candidates who had voted for Adams yet were from districts with strong Jackson support. Representatives who were placed on this black-list were specifically targeted for ouster by the Jacksonians, who pumped numerous campaign resources into those districts. The Jacksonians exerted much effort in informing voters that the representatives had shirked the will of voters. Jacksonians published, and widely distributed, a pamphlet entitled *The Voice of the People*, which directly attacked members of the black-list for defying their districts and voting for Adams (Ratcliffe 2002: 128).

Political observer, and campaign handicapper, Hezekiah Niles wrote that in the effort to oust one of these black-list MC’s - John Sloane (OH-12th District) - “A Jackson press was established, and hundreds of Jacksonian papers were weekly distributed gratis, filled with the vilest calumnies against the administration and Mr. Sloane” (*Niles Weekly Register* November 11, 1826, quoted in Ratcliffe 2002: 128). Although Sloane hung onto the seat, it was by the slimmest of margins (98 votes).

Similar efforts were employed in Illinois, where the lone incumbent Daniel Cook gave Illinois’ vote to Adams despite Jackson having won a majority of the electoral vote in Illinois. Cook went on to lose to the state legislator Joseph Duncan who made Cook’s defiance the central issue in the campaign (Leonard 2002: 70-71). In Missouri, where Jackson won ten times the
number of votes than Adams, the incumbent John Scott nevertheless gave his vote to Adams. He was subsequently tossed out of office (Mering 1967: 10-12). Similar dynamics could be found in Maryland (Haller 1962) and Kentucky (Remini 1963).

There is therefore ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that how MC’s voted in the presidential question became a central issue in the ensuing congressional campaigns. In particular, those who voted ‘out of step’ with their districts became targets for ouster by the opposition. If there was an electoral connection – where voters sanctioned members who voted against district preferences – then we should expect to see incumbents from districts where Jackson had run strong, but the MC voted for someone other than Jackson, suffering in the subsequent election. In the next section, we test this expectation.

3. Evidence of an Electoral Connection

3.1 Model and Data

Our main expectation is that members who voted for Adams, yet were from districts with strong Jackson support suffered a significant vote loss in the congressional elections of 1826-7. This would be evidence that MC’s were retrospectively sanctioned for shirking the interests of their districts. To test this expectation, we estimate the following model:

\[
\text{Incumbent Vote Share} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Previous Vote Share} + \beta_2 \text{Presidential Vote by District} + \\
\beta_3 (\text{Presidential Vote by District} \times \text{MC Vote}) + \beta_4 \text{MC Vote} + \beta_5 \text{Quality Challenger} + \\
\beta_6 \text{Ideology} + \beta_7 \text{Party Affiliation}
\]  

(1)

7 In Missouri, Clay had actually won all three electoral votes, with Jackson second and Adams third. Scott justified his decision arguing that he assumed voters would rather he vote for Adams (who was closer in ideology to Clay
Our dependent variable is the percentage of the two-party vote received by the incumbent in the 1826-7 election.\(^8\) Our data for this variable comes from Dubin’s (1998) *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997*, the most comprehensive source of congressional election data over time. Using this invaluable source of candidate information, we were able to collect relevant information on the names of the incumbent and related challengers, the vote totals on which percentages of the two-party vote were computed, as well as partisan affiliation for each candidate. The latter was supplemented with information contained in Martis (1989).

Our key test will be an interaction between the district level presidential vote and how each representative voted in the House balloting for president. Since the presidential vote in congressional districts has not been compiled systematically prior to the 1950s, we had to construct it for the 1826-27 congressional elections. To do this, we utilized Dubin’s (2002) *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-1860* which reports presidential vote data at the county-level and matched this up with congressional district maps (Parsons, Beach, and Herrmann 1978; Martis 1982). Given that congressional districts in this era were comprised of one or more whole counties, we were able to match up districts and counties for over ninety percent of the congressional districts.\(^9\) To our knowledge, this is the first time that presidential votes have been aggregated at the congressional district level for the Jacksonian era.

We are also interested in examining the effects of experienced candidates on incumbent electoral performance. Consequently we collected data on candidates’ political backgrounds. While most scholars of congressional elections agree that the “quality” of the congressional

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\(^8\) To be more precise – since party labels were fluid during this period – the ‘two party vote’ here is the vote of the top two finishers.

\(^9\) A small handful of states did not use popular voting; instead the state legislature selected the electors. In these cases, for the district level presidential vote, we have used the statewide proportion of electoral votes each candidate received. Excluding these states from the analysis does not change the results. Nevertheless, in future iterations of
challenger plays an important role in affecting elections in the contemporary era (Jacobson 1989), we know far less about its effect on elections prior to the mid-twentieth century (but see Carson, Jenkins, Rohde, and Souva 2001; Carson and Roberts 2003). This is due largely to the lack of sufficient data on candidates’ political backgrounds prior to this time, thus making it more difficult to offer broad generalizations on the effects of candidate quality in elections across time.

In an attempt to overcome this limitation, we took advantage of the increased amount of turnover in the House during this era by utilizing the online Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774 to Present. This resource allowed us to obtain relevant background information on candidates who defeated congressional incumbents as well as candidates who served prior to or after the election in question. We supplemented this data with information found on “The Political Graveyard’s” website, which often provides extensive background information on politicians from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in addition to where they are buried). Background information for a few candidates was also collected from the New York Times Historical Index and Google™.

We also include a measure of ideology as reflected by Poole and Rosenthal’s (1997) first dimension DW-Nominate scores. Including this variable in our regression analysis allows us to control for the ideological extremity of legislators which previous research has found to be an important determinant of incumbent success in the modern era (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan

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10 The congressional biographical directory can be accessed at http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp.
12 Utilizing each of these sources, we managed to collect background information on 75 percent of the candidates seeking office in the 1826-27 congressional elections. Following the lead of Jacobson (1989), we code candidates for whom we could not find any background information as non-quality in our dataset. We have also tried restricting the sample to only those candidates for which we could find background information and the substantive results do not change.
We also include dummy variables for how the MC (or their predecessor) voted the House balloting, and their party affiliation as control variables. This data comes from Martis (1989).

3.2 Research Design

To enhance the internal validity of our study we take advantage of the peculiar timing of the presidential election, which presents us with a quasi-experiment. Balloting for the presidential election took place in February of 1825, which was part of the lame-duck session of the 18th Congress. Of those who voted in the presidential question, 131 MC’s had already been elected to return to the 19th Congress, while 81 were lame ducks (having either been defeated or not seeking reelection). Thus in the subsequent 19th Congress there were two types of Congressmen – returning members who had voted in the presidential election, and a batch of freshmen who, obviously, had not voted in the presidential election. The importance of this dichotomy for us is that it presents us with an opportunity to conduct a quasi-experiment with a treatment group (i.e. those who voted in the presidential election) and a control group (i.e. those who had not voted in the presidential election).

To more clearly see this, consider two districts (see Figure 1 on next page). In the first, the MC served in the 18th Congress, was elected to return to the 19th Congress, voted in the February presidential election, and ran for reelection in 1826. In this district, if there is an electoral connection we would expect to see a pattern of retrospective sanctions or rewards. In the second district, there is a new member, who won for the first time in 1824, did not vote in the Presidential balloting, and then served in the 19th Congress and ran for reelection. Rewards or punishment based on shirking in the presidential election – which we capture by looking at how the incumbents’ predecessor from that district voted in the presidential question – should not be relevant in this district. We expect that in districts with freshmen legislators that the presidential
vote interacted with how the previous MC from that district voted in the presidential election should have no effect on their subsequent vote margins.

**Figure 1. Timeline of Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1824 Election</th>
<th>Voted in Feb. 1825 presidential balloting</th>
<th>1826 Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist.1</td>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist.2</td>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Vote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we find that the district level dynamics of negative sanctions (associated with the presidential vote) are not relevant for the latter group, then we can be much more confident of the internal validity of our study. This also allows us to control for any national level forces, such as an anti-administration or anti-incumbent backlash, which may sweep across all districts and therefore isolate the individual level consequences of shirking. Thus the strategy we will pursue is to estimate Equation 1 twice – once for returning MC’s and then again for new MC’s.  

There are a couple of potential threats to the internal validity of this design that must be kept in mind. The first is that selection into the groups is not random. If those MC’s who shirked district opinion bailed out at a higher rate, because they anticipated their behavior would cost them at the polls, then a potential selection bias may enter into our study (Achen 1986). We did not find any evidence, however, to support a strategic retirement hypothesis. Running a logit with ‘incumbent seeking reelection’ as the dependent variable, and the same independent variables as our main regression, we find that the interaction between district-level presidential
vote and MC voting was not a significant predictor of retirement. The second threat is a potential ‘regression to the mean’ effect. New members may be the beneficiary of a ‘sophomore surge’. Given, however, that there is little evidence to suggest that there were strong incumbency, or sophomore surge (Erikson 1971), effects in the antebellum era we feel comfortable in treating our two groups as roughly equivalent.

3.3 Results

The results are presented in Table 2. The first column presents the results for MC’s who served in both the 18th and 19th Congresses. The coefficient on the interaction between district level vote – here measured as the vote in support of Jackson – and voting for Adams in the House balloting is negative and significant: incumbents who voted for Adams suffered a vote drop off of half a percent for every percent of Jackson support in their district. Thus, in a district with 50 percent of the presidential vote going to Jackson, and the incumbent voting for Adams, we would expect to see the incumbents’ vote cut in half in the 1826-7 election, all else equal. We do not find a significant interaction, however, for MC’s who voted for Crawford. This is perhaps not surprising given the ideological similarity between Jackson and Crawford, and therefore voting for Crawford did not merit the wrath of voters in the same way that voting for Adams did. In a separate analysis (not shown) we combined votes for Jackson or Crawford into a simple dummy variable (i.e. Adams/Not Adams). The results are again very similar.

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13 Another strategy would be to pool the two groups together and then let each coefficient vary across groups. We considered this, but it would result in a series of triple interactions (e.g. District Vote*MC Vote*Returning/New MC), making interpretation difficult and also creating serious multicollinearity problems (Nagler 1991).

14 Although empirical studies of the incumbency advantage have never ventured this far back in time, there is little evidence of an incumbency advantage in the mid to late 19th century (Garand and Gross 1984; Alford and Brady 1989; Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2000; Gelman and King 1990). We feel rather confident extrapolating this finding back in time and arguing that a substantial ‘sophomore surge’ effect did not exist in the 1820’s (although this is still an open empirical question).

15 For the district level presidential vote, we have used the Jackson percentage of the total vote. In separate analysis, we have also used the Adams vote and the Jackson share of the combined Jackson and Adams vote. The results are not sensitive to these changes.
For freshmen MC’s (displayed in the second column), the interactions are not significant for either Adams or Crawford. MC’s who were from Jacksonian strongholds, but where the previous incumbent voted for Adams, were not punished at the polls. This finding further supports the claim that voters were punishing (or in some cases rewarding) MC’s for their voting behavior.

In addition the main effects of both the district level presidential vote and MC’s voting in the presidential question are not significant for either group. This result serves to bolster our main hypothesis. We do not see a general backlash against people who voted for Adams or Crawford, per se, nor is there a general anti-administration backlash. Instead, the electoral effects of MC’s voting are conditional on district level public opinion. It is only when MC’s voted against district level public opinion that they suffered a significant vote-loss.

Also important to note is that the coefficient for challenger quality is negative and significant (in both groups). The size of this coefficient is quite large (-21.8 and -15.9, respectively), indicating that when a quality challenger entered a race, incumbent vote margins took a large hit. Although this coefficient is significant for both groups it is six points larger for returning MC’s. Whether or not the effect of quality candidates is the consequence of challengers directly causing incumbent vote losses, challengers strategically entering when they sense blood in the water, or some combination thereof, is an open question that we do not fully resolve here (although in the next section we will briefly consider the strategic behavior of experienced challengers). Certainly, to the extent parties in this era controlled candidate nominations, they had strong reasons to be strategic and nominate experienced challengers in

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16 Following standard practice in the congressional elections literature, we have excluded uncontested races from the analysis.
seats where they spotted a vulnerable incumbent. As we saw above, in the case of Ohio, the Jacksonians put forward experienced challengers in districts where they discerned that the incumbent was vulnerable. Moreover, these challengers then used the issue of MC shirking as a centerpiece of their campaign against the incumbent. This finding would be consistent with contemporary research (e.g. Jacobson 1989) demonstrating the strategic behavior of experienced challengers in modern congressional races as well as more recent evidence suggesting a similar pattern in the context of late nineteenth century House elections (Carson and Roberts 2003).

In the previous estimation we found that how MC’s voted in the presidential election had a significant impact on incumbent vote margins. Here we turn from vote margins to considering the probability of reelection of incumbents. In the election 170 incumbents sought reelection, and 32 went down to defeat (18 percent). To see if the presidential question had an effect on the chances of victory we have run a logit equation with ‘incumbent victory’ as the dependent variable and the same independent variables used in the previous section. The results, presented in Table 3, provide some support for the story that incumbents were punished for ‘shirking’ constituency preferences. As in the previous section, the coefficient on the interaction between Jackson district vote and MC’s who voted for Adams is significant and negative. Moreover, this interaction is not significant for our control group (i.e. freshmen). In addition, the coefficient for quality challenger is negative and significant, but for both groups.

To more clearly see the substantive impact of these logit coefficients we have converted them into probabilities. Specifically, we calculated the first difference of increasing the Jackson vote within a district from 40 to 60 for a member who voted for Adams. We set the other
parameters to the mean value for previous vote share; no quality challenger; a member of the Adams party; and the mean value of ideology. Given these values, the probability of victory, for someone who voted for Adams, declined from 84% to 66% (a difference of 18%).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the election of 1826-7, not only to enhance our understanding of this crucial election for American political development, but also because it offers a rare opportunity to test modern theory - in this case, the electoral connection - in the 19th century. A common problem besetting studies of constituency-representative linkages is the absence of public opinion data disaggregated at the congressional district level. In the 19th century this is even more acute given the absence of modern polling techniques. As a consequence, researchers are often limited in the ability to empirically say much about the generalizability of contemporary theories of representation cross-temporally. In this paper, we have used the unique circumstances of the election of 1826-7 to provide a test of the connections between representative behavior, voter opinion, and electoral outcomes in the antebellum era. Using district level presidential vote, we were able to directly test the linkages between representative behavior and subsequent electoral outcomes. We have found that MC’s who voted for Adams, yet were from districts with strong Jacksonian support, suffered at the polls in the ensuing Congressional elections. Thus, even in this era long before the emergence of candidate-centered campaigns, we have found evidence of individual MC’s being punished at the polls for their voting behavior.

17 For exposition purposes, we will treat candidate entry decisions as choices made by the candidates themselves. Of course, this is not quite accurate given that parties in this era, and party leaders, were largely responsible for deciding when and where candidates could run for office.
In addition to providing a test of the electoral connection in this early era of American politics, we also hope that this study casts light on an important, but long neglected, election. Heaps of attention has been given to the presidential elections of 1824 and 1828, and with justification. These two elections traditionally demark the birth place of the second party system, ushering in the ‘partisan era’ that would last until the realignment of 1896 (McCormick 1966; Silbey 1991; Aldrich 1995). The dramatic showdown in the House after the 1824 election, and the subsequent triumph of Jackson in 1828, make for riveting reading. Yet, wedged in between these two presidential elections stands an election largely consigned to the dustbin of history. This is unfortunate. The congressional election of 1826-7 marks the beginning of a pattern of congressional elections – the midterm decline – that would repeat itself over the next 180 years of American political life.
References


Table 1. Constituency Level Shirking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Returning to the 19th Congress</th>
<th>Lame-Duck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted With District Majority</td>
<td>121 (88%)</td>
<td>54 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted Against District Majority</td>
<td>17 (12%)</td>
<td>26 (32%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 13.02, p<.01$; Column percentages are in parentheses.
Table 2. The Impact of District Level Forces on the Vote Margins for Incumbents in the 1826-7 Election

OLS
DV=Incumbent Vote %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Returning MC’s</th>
<th>Freshmen MC’s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous Vote Margin (1824)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Presidential Vote %</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Jackson)</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote for Adams in House Balloting</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>11.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.29)</td>
<td>(9.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote for Crawford in House Balloting</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12.95)</td>
<td>(10.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Pres.Vote % * Vote for Adams in House</td>
<td>-.52**</td>
<td>-.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.21)</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Pres.Vote% * Vote for Crawford in House</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>(.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Challenger</td>
<td>-21.80**</td>
<td>-15.99**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.52)</td>
<td>(3.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW-Nominate (1st Dimension)</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.63)</td>
<td>(10.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>48.89**</td>
<td>39.93**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15.37)</td>
<td>(14.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N | 73 | 52

Adj. R Square | .24 | .30

Standard Errors in parentheses, **=p<.05
Table 3. The Impact of District Level Forces on the Probability of Reelection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logit</th>
<th>Returning MC’s</th>
<th>Freshmen MC’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV=Incumbent Victory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Vote Margin (1824)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Presidential Vote %</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Jackson)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote for Adams in House Balloting</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.37)</td>
<td>(1.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote for Crawford in House Balloting</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Pres.Vote % * Vote for Adams in House</td>
<td>-.09**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td>(.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Pres.Vote% * Vote for Crawford in House</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Challenger</td>
<td>-4.61**</td>
<td>-3.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.40)</td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DW-Nominate (1st Dimension)</td>
<td>4.94**</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.24)</td>
<td>(2.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.96)</td>
<td>(2.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psuedo R Square</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Likelihood</td>
<td>-24.16</td>
<td>-18.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All of the returning MC’s who voted for Crawford were reelected. Because these 11 cases predict the outcome perfectly they are therefore dropped (which also explains why there are only 62 observations in the first column of this Table as opposes to 73 in Table 2.

Standard Errors in parentheses, **=p<.05