

IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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SUMMER 2003

CAPC Receives NSF Grant

By Philip T. Krauss

The Center for American Politics and Citizenship has been awarded \$900,000 from the National Science Foundation's Digital Government Program to conduct "an Assessment of Voting Technology and Ballot Design." The project will bring together social and computer scientists from the University of Maryland, the University of Michigan, and the University of Rochester to investigate ways to improve how Americans vote. The team will assess the impact of existing technology and ballot designs on a variety of factors: the ability of voters to cast their ballots accurately and efficiently, voter ease in casting complete ballots, voter comfort using different technologies and ballot interfaces, voter confidence that their ballots will be accurately and confidentially recorded, and the level of ballot completion. The research team will create a generalized protocol for testing voting technology and ballot formats that will be disseminated

for nationwide use, hopefully preventing problems such as those experienced in the 2000 presidential election.

While the 2000 presidential election will be considered as one of the most intriguing races in the history of the nation, it will also be remembered as being a major wake-up call for America. The race was the closest in four decades, with one candidate winning the popular vote while the other was victorious in the Electoral College. The election demonstrated that voting technology, ballot designs, and election procedures are subjects of concern to citizens, elected officials, election administrators, and scholars. CAPC's voting technology project will focus on these public policy issues of major importance.

Voting is the defining feature of a democracy, and the 2000 election suggests the need to develop ways to assess and improve voting technology and ballot designs in the United States. We must see to it that new voting procedures conform to the high standards included in legislation that recently has passed or is under consideration in state legislatures and

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CAPC Study of the 2002 Congressional Campaign

By Nidhi J. Thakar

From mid-October, 2002 to early January, 2003, the Center for American Politics and Citizenship conducted a survey of all 2002 general election candidates for the U.S. House and Senate to get candidates' perspectives on how political campaigns are run. More than 300 campaigns responded to the survey by mail, fax, telephone, or e-mail. Survey results will figure prominently in the soon-to-be-released fourth edition of CAPC Director Paul Herrnson's *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and In Washington*, published by CQ Press. The fourth edition will include data from previous elections and the 2002 election.

Congressional candidates were asked to identify the one most important issue in their campaigns. Nearly 40 percent of survey respondents answered the economy

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Letter from the Director

This Spring been an exciting one at the Center. The National Science Foundation granted \$900,000 for us to work with the University of Michigan and the University of Rochester on a voting technology and ballot design research project. *The Debate Book*, a book of standards and guidelines for sponsoring political candidate debates in congressional, state, and local elections, was published as part of CAPC's Debate Advisory Standards Project funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. A video titled "Political Campaign Debates: What Every Candidate Needs to Know," was also produced this spring as part of the project.

We offer our congratulations to CAPC board member Dick Bennett who was recently appointed a U.S. District Court Judge. We wish him well in his service to our nation. We're also pleased that Glenn Ivey, state's attorney for Prince George's County, Maryland, and Casper Taylor, former speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, have joined CAPC's board.

We say goodbye to Owen Abbe, a research fellow at CAPC. We wish him and his family well as they move to Washington.

At the end of the spring semester we said goodbye to two outstanding undergraduate research assistants who graduated. Nidhi Thakar and Samantha Yellin have contributed much in their time at CAPC. We wish Samantha well in her law studies at Pace University and wish Nidhi well in her position as an assistant to Congresswoman Shelley Berkley.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *In The Public Interest*, the newsletter of the University of Maryland's Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

With best wishes,



Paul S. Herrnsen

CAPC Research Contributes to Maryland General Assembly Study

By John Blessing

The Center for American Politics and Citizenship's research on campaign finance in the Maryland General Assembly continues to play an important role in Annapolis policymaking.

During the 2002 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly, the Study Commission on Public Funding of Campaigns in Maryland was established to analyze the state's current system of campaign finance and consider publicly funding General Assembly campaigns. Currently, Maryland law provides public financing for gubernatorial candidates only.

Last fall, Center for American

Politics and Citizenship Director Paul Herrnsen testified before the study commission regarding CAPC's research on campaign finance in Maryland. This project examined the sources and recipients of campaign contributions in the 1998 elections for the Maryland House of Delegates and Senate. It showed that candidates raised \$16.7 million from interest groups, individuals, political parties, and their own personal resources. In the 2002 election cycle, that figure nearly doubled to more than \$30 million. In his testimony, Herrnsen discussed the

see Research on page 6

Running a Winning Campaign: Lessons Learned from Congress

By Timothy Daly

The University of Maryland recently completed its annual spring Student Government Association elections. Usually uncompetitive and one-sided, interest in these elections is typically limited to the small minority of voters who do vote every year, which is generally less than 20 percent of the undergraduate student body. Though with five slates of experienced and well connected candidates running for office, excitement surrounding this campaign reached a fever pitch; a level of competitiveness soared among all five presidential candidates.

For the 2002 Congressional election cycle I worked as a PAC fundraiser for Fraioli & Associates, a political consulting firm that specialized in general

congressional consulting and PAC fundraising for 30 members and candidates for Congress. As a result of this experience and time off from my formal education, I was neck high in real life congressional campaign decision-making and built a strong understanding of how campaigns are run on the federal level.

When I decided to run for student body president, I made the conscious decision that I wanted my ticket to run this campaign like we would have run for the U.S. Congress. We wanted to be the campaign that set up a professionally run organization to win. We started this process by bringing in many of my old colleagues to help consult on the campaign.

We brought together a pollster from Bannon Communication Research, the field director from Congressman Sherrod Brown's campaign, the D.C. finance director for Congressman John Dingell, a direct mail consultant from BatesNeimand mail house, and a general consultant/fundraiser who was my former

boss at Fraioli & Associates. We brought together a team of top notch caliber consultants that many competitive congressional candidates do not even have!

Once the team was assembled, we created a division of labor much like a professional campaign. We had candidates be candidates, and consultants and volunteers develop the message, campaign materials, and logistics. We even went so far to develop a survey to test name identification of our candidates and opponents, conduct extensive research on all of our candidates and our opponents, and developed a "message box" that would be the center piece to the entire campaign message.

We also needed to raise \$4,000 to run this campaign, which was the maximum allowed under the campaign guidelines. To do this, our approach was very similar to that of congressional candidates: we dialed for dollars. I created call lists of likely donors and called down

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The Annapolis Scene: Interning Clarifies One Student's Focus

By Erica Burr

I can vividly remember the first day of my internship at the Statehouse. I started my day in a memorable way—I got lost! The mixture of emotions I felt that day left me nervous and excited. As I headed to the capital that morning, I managed to drive past the Naval Academy stadium where I was supposed to park and take the shuttle to the Statehouse. Although I had to take a small detour, once I made it to the Lowe House Office Building, I began an amazing experience. Having already interned in Washington for an established congressman, I decided to intern in Annapolis in hopes of gaining a different experience.

Working for Delegate Justin D. Ross, a freshman from the 22nd district, was thrilling. I knew working for a freshman would entail more work, including setting up the office and establishing office policies and procedures, but I was ready for the challenge. After interning for long-time Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) in Washington, the idea of working for someone newly elected was enthralling and offered many new opportunities.

After the office was organized, my main job was to take care of all of Del. Ross' constituent correspondence. The two issues that I received the most mail on were the legalization of

slot machines at racetracks and additional budget cuts to higher education.

Del. Ross is firmly against legalizing slot machines due to the high social costs gambling brings to a community. He hosted a town hall meeting about the issue and I helped with the research and event planning needed for the meeting. The forum was a resounding success with approximately eighty people in attendance, all of whom were against slot machines.

I received even more mail and e-mail concerning additional cuts to higher education, especially at the University of Maryland. Del. Ross' district includes the area surrounding College Park and many students, faculty and staff reside in his district. As a Maryland alumnus himself, Del. Ross actively works to combat any cuts to higher education, especially because it is a major concern of his constituents.

In response to this and many other concerns, Del. Ross continually receives mail from his constituents. Constituent correspondence is a very time consuming process. There were many steps I had to complete before I could write an appropriate response for each letter. The letters usually went through several

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Congress. We must also instill confidence in citizens that their votes are cast, transmitted, and counted properly, in secret and accurately. Moreover, to ensure that no group is disenfranchised, voting technology and ballot formats must take into consideration the capabilities and needs of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including less educated voters, non-native English speakers, individuals with disabilities, and members of traditionally underrepresented groups. Our research promises to test existing processes and to develop, test, and disseminate design principles that will lead to these kinds of improvements in the way Americans vote.

While many state legislatures and election boards have begun overhauling their voting systems, they have fallen short in giving answers to many remaining questions regarding long-term reforms, cost-effectiveness, and the revamping of ballot designs. The CAPC, Michigan, and Rochester research teams are optimistic that our work will enhance the electoral system as a whole. The public benefits of this approach are straightforward but powerful: nothing less than a substantial improvement in the totality of the election process, including reduced voter frustration, increased voter confidence in

elections, the casting of more completed ballots, and, possibly, an increase in voter turnout. The immediate scholarly benefits include improved understanding of human-computer interaction as it relates to voting behavior. The long-term scholarly benefits include the commencement of a new approach to data collection and analysis in the study of voting technology, ballots, and voting behavior.

In 2000, Americans learned that unreliable and ineffective technologies like punch-cards and lever machines can cause huge controversies in an election. A mere one out of three voters in the nation used computerized, ATM style voting systems. Research shows those who cast their ballots on outdated machines were most likely not to have their votes counted. Through complex research on new and old designs, features, and intricacies of voting equipment and the presentation of a detailed protocol on how to make these enhancements ubiquitous, the power of the vote will be vastly strengthened.

Phil Krauss is a junior government and politics major and an undergraduate research assistant at the Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

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that list asking for a specific contribution from each. Even though I was asking people unaffected by the SGA to contribute to the election, I was able to raise the \$4,000 needed.

Our better than 2-1 spending advantage over our closest opponent, coupled with our organization, allowed us to spend the two weeks that we were allowed to campaign talking to voters, dropping targeted direct mail, and handing out giveaways to raise our name identification.

The results of the campaign were certainly close, and no single slate of candidates could claim complete victory. However our ticket, the FLASH Party proved to be on top winning nearly 75 percent of our races and taking a majority of seats on the executive board, including student body president.

Tim Daly is a junior government and politics and economics double major and an undergraduate research assistant at CAPC. He was elected student body president for the 2003-04 academic term.

CAPC Participates in Fifth Annual Maryland Day

By Samantha Yellin

On Saturday, April 26, 2003, the University of Maryland hosted its Fifth Annual Maryland Day open house. The campus opened its doors to students, children, faculty, alumni, and residents of the region for a fun-filled day of activities, games, discovery, and learning. For two years, the Center for American Politics and Citizenship has represented the government and politics department with "Voting Rights and Wrongs," an exhibit aimed at educating the public about the ways Americans vote. CAPC's booth also had entertaining games for the children, such as a patriotic beanbag toss, which made the exhibit a popular site.

Samantha Yellin, an undergraduate research assistant at CAPC, graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in government and politics in May 2003.



Pictured: John Blessing and Samantha Yellin, undergraduate research assistants

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and jobs. Despite America's current involvement in the Middle East, the war on terrorism and situation with Iraq was the top issue in only 17 percent of campaigns. This means that double the percentage of candidates felt a domestic issue, the economy and jobs, was more important than the situation in the Middle East. Health care and prescription drugs followed closely in importance at 14 percent. Education, Social Security, and local concerns each garnered only six percent of responses. Taxes were the most important issue in only three percent of campaigns.

We also asked candidates how well they think the campaign process prepares a candidate to hold office. Sixty-five percent of candidates believe the campaign process prepares a candidate moderately to extremely well to hold office. However, nearly 60 percent of candidates also believe there are only a few important connections between being a good candidate and being a good public official. Unfortunately, what candidates do in campaigns too often has a little connection to what follows in terms of governing. To get elected, candidates must convince voters to choose them over their opponents. Modern campaigning has become more about dividing and conquering than bringing people together. Nevertheless, governing continues to be about building coalitions. Perhaps this explains why our respondents believe there are only a few important connections between being a good candidate and being a good public official.

More closely related to being a good candidate are a candidate's ability to effectively communicate with voters. Ninety-one percent of candidates agreed that "direct contact with voters" was moderately to extremely important when running a campaign. Despite alternate methods of communication, such as direct mail, broadcast TV ads, and mass telephone calls, direct contact with voters remains the leading method of communication during campaigns. This is partly due to the exorbitant costs of TV ads, as well as the belief that old-fashioned, person-to-person contact between candidates and the public makes voters feel candidates are "one of them." It also sends a message that candidates are not too busy to interact with their voters, foreshadowing for voters what the candidates will possibly be like after they are elected.

Internet web sites and e-mail are the second most popular method of communication used in campaigns. Before 1996, the Internet was barely used to communicate and mobilize voters. Now approximately 62 percent of candidates feel that the Internet and e-mail is moderately to extremely important when communicating with voters. Web sites are a popular method for contact with voters, because they are often relatively inexpensive to create, once generated are easy to maintain, and disseminate lots of information by using few resources.

Our survey also asked candidates about how much time they devote to fundraising. Previous surveys conducted by CAPC in conjunction with *Campaigns & Elections* magazine and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts found that two-thirds

of all state legislative candidates spend less than or equal to 25 percent of campaign schedules raising money. The 2002 congressional campaign study found approximately 54 percent of candidates spend 25 percent or less of campaign schedules fundraising. Twenty-six percent spend between one-fourth and one-half of their time looking for cash.

Our findings show that candidates employ a wide variety of tactics when running their campaigns. Some opt to focus on domestic issues while others spend more time highlighting international issues, such as the situation with Iraq. In addition, despite the technology present in this day and age, personal contact with voters remains the most utilized form of communication for candidates. Although time-consuming, this old-fashioned form of campaigning requires little money and offers voters the feeling that candidates are equal members of the community. In spite of the use of various communication methods that require little funding, money in campaigns still plays a large role in the overall success of the campaign. Candidates are forced to devote a large chunk of their time raising money to ensure they can run a competitive campaign.

The fourth edition of *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and In Washington* will be available from CQ Press in October 2003.

Nidhi Thakar, an undergraduate research assistant at CAPC, graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in government and politics in May 2003.

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rewrites before they were ready to be mailed. I kept a log of each letter we received and the response sent out to the constituent, so that Del. Ross knew who wrote him, how many times they wrote, and what issues his constituents were most interested in.

The legislative session ended Monday, April 7. I absolutely loved my time in Annapolis and was sad to see it end. I wish I could work for Del. Ross again next year; interning was a great learning experience that introduced me to the workplace. I learned how important it is to work for someone with similar views on the issues that I am passionate about, and also the value of them not only asking my opinion, but also taking it into consideration.

My internship helped me to narrow down where I want to work in politics. I now know I want to work for a politician by doing legislative work. I encourage students and employers to take advantage of internship programs and the opportunities they offer. Interning allows students to see if a field really is one that they want to go into after graduation.

Erica Burr graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in government and politics in May 2003.

distribution of funds, their sources, and the time, resources, and money candidates spent raising contributions.

CAPC's findings for Maryland's state legislative candidates largely parallel those for U.S. House races. They show most elections are not financially competitive and reflect the incumbent's advantages as well as the partisan biases of the state. The fact that such a large amount of money is contributed to candidates in uncontested elections and lopsided races suggests that many contributions are not given to influence election outcomes, but are given to gain access to lawmakers in hopes of influencing policy-making.

CAPC's nationwide survey of candidates for public office conducted in conjunction with *Campaigns & Elections* magazine and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts found that two-thirds of all state legislative candidates spend less than or equal to 25 percent of campaign schedules raising money. About nine percent hire professional fundraisers and almost two-thirds of all state legislative candidates surveyed spend \$10,000 or more on fundraising. The more time, professional expertise, and money candidates invested in fundraising, the more money candidates raised. Obviously, time and money spent on fundraising is not spent elsewhere, such as meeting with voters or researching issues.

Herrnson's testimony included a comprehensive report on the public finance systems of other states across the country. The report detailed the impact of public finance laws on fundraising in state legislative elections. The study indicates that some of the predicted benefits of public funding appear to materialize only under full public finance systems and not under those that involve a combination of public and private funds. The focus on the reform states of Arizona, Hawaii, Maine, Minnesota, and Wisconsin has enlightened the commission on

the methods and effects of public finance laws. As this debate continues, CAPC's research will remain at the forefront of policymaking in Annapolis.

Findings from the 1998 and 2002 elections show most elections are not financially competitive and reflect the incumbent's advantages as well as the partisan biases of the state. The findings also show that business interests speak with more voice in the electoral process than any other groups.

Following Herrnson's testimony, Dr. Carl Steinberg, chairman of the study commission, requested CAPC and the Schaeffer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore survey Maryland citizens on campaign finance reform. The research shows that nearly all Marylanders believe that campaign contributions influence the policies supported by state elected officials, and most believe that fundraising is a major source of political corruption. Nearly 80% of Marylanders believe that public funding would make government work more in the interest of the people. However, people's opinions changed when asked about how to pay for public funding. Only 29% approve of funding election campaigns through tax revenue. And with Maryland attempting to manage a \$550 million budget shortfall and facing a record \$1.2 billion deficit in the upcoming fiscal year there are numerous questions and concerns that arise in the funding of such an endeavor.

The legislature recently extended the life of the commission. Recommendations regarding campaign finance reform in Maryland likely will be presented later this summer. CAPC's research will have much impact on these recommendations.

John Blessing is a sophomore government and politics major and an undergraduate research assistant at the Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

Abbe Leaves CAPC

By Randy Roberson

Owen Abbe, research fellow at CAPC, accepted a position as a research specialist with the Administrative Office of the Courts in Olympia, Washington. He begins the position on August 1.

As a research specialist, Abbe will serve as a principal researcher for policy-oriented research focusing on issues of long-range planning for the judiciary, innovative court programs, and various targeted studies. Current and potential future projects include evaluations of programs and practices such as Unified Family court, mental health and drug courts, juvenile justice programs, and alternative sentencing.

At CAPC, Abbe primarily focused on research related to the Maryland Campaign Finance Study and the Campaign Assessment and Candidate Outreach Project, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. His research at CAPC has helped policymakers, citizens, and academics develop a better understanding of the financing and conduct of state legislative and judicial campaigns.

Randy Roberson is the center coordinator at CAPC.



The Center for American Politics and Citizenship's research projects have helped increase support among candidates for adhering to high standards of campaign ethics and have helped maintain support for ethical practices in campaigning. We are making a difference in the way citizens understand government. CAPC research has been instrumental in enhancing the University's stature on Capitol Hill and in Annapolis. Yet we want and need to do more.

We need your financial support to

- continue timely, scholarly research
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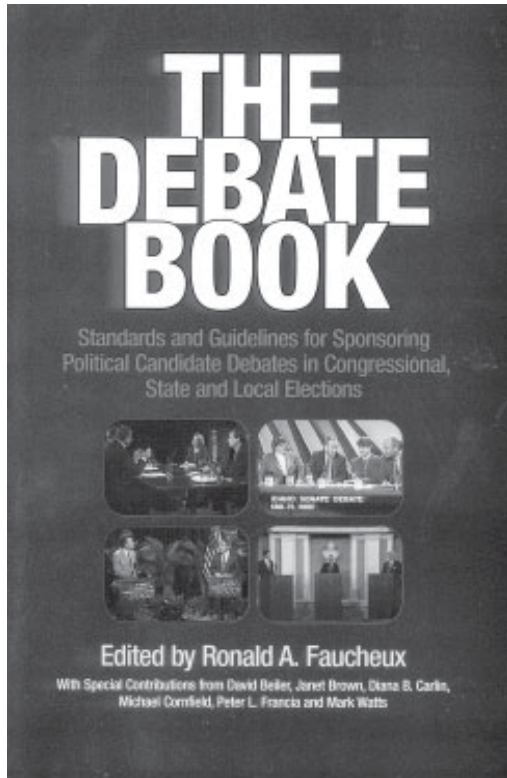
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