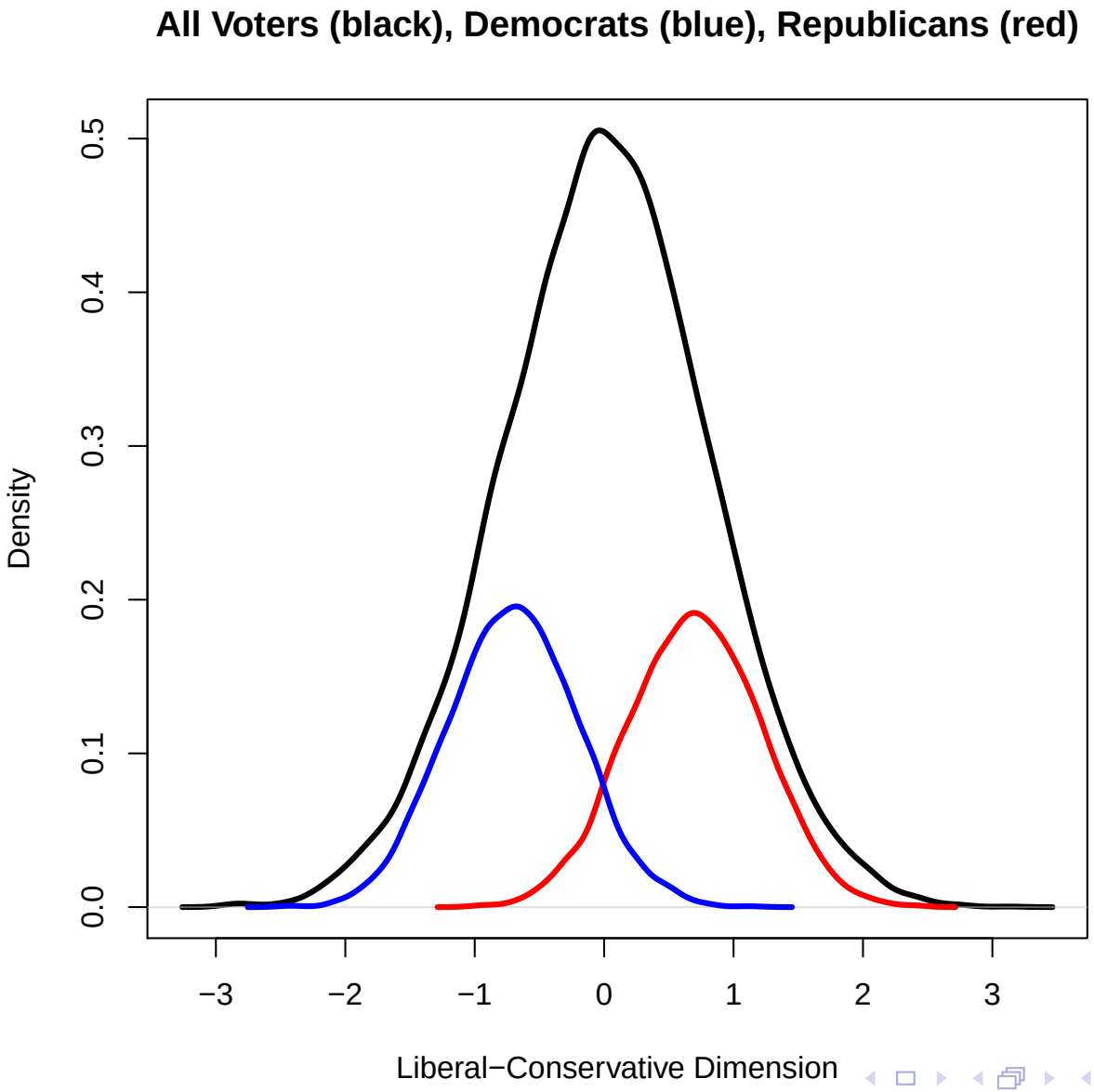
Campaign Contributors and Party Activists

POLS 4790: Political Polarization

Week 5, Fall 2013

Returning to the Median Voter



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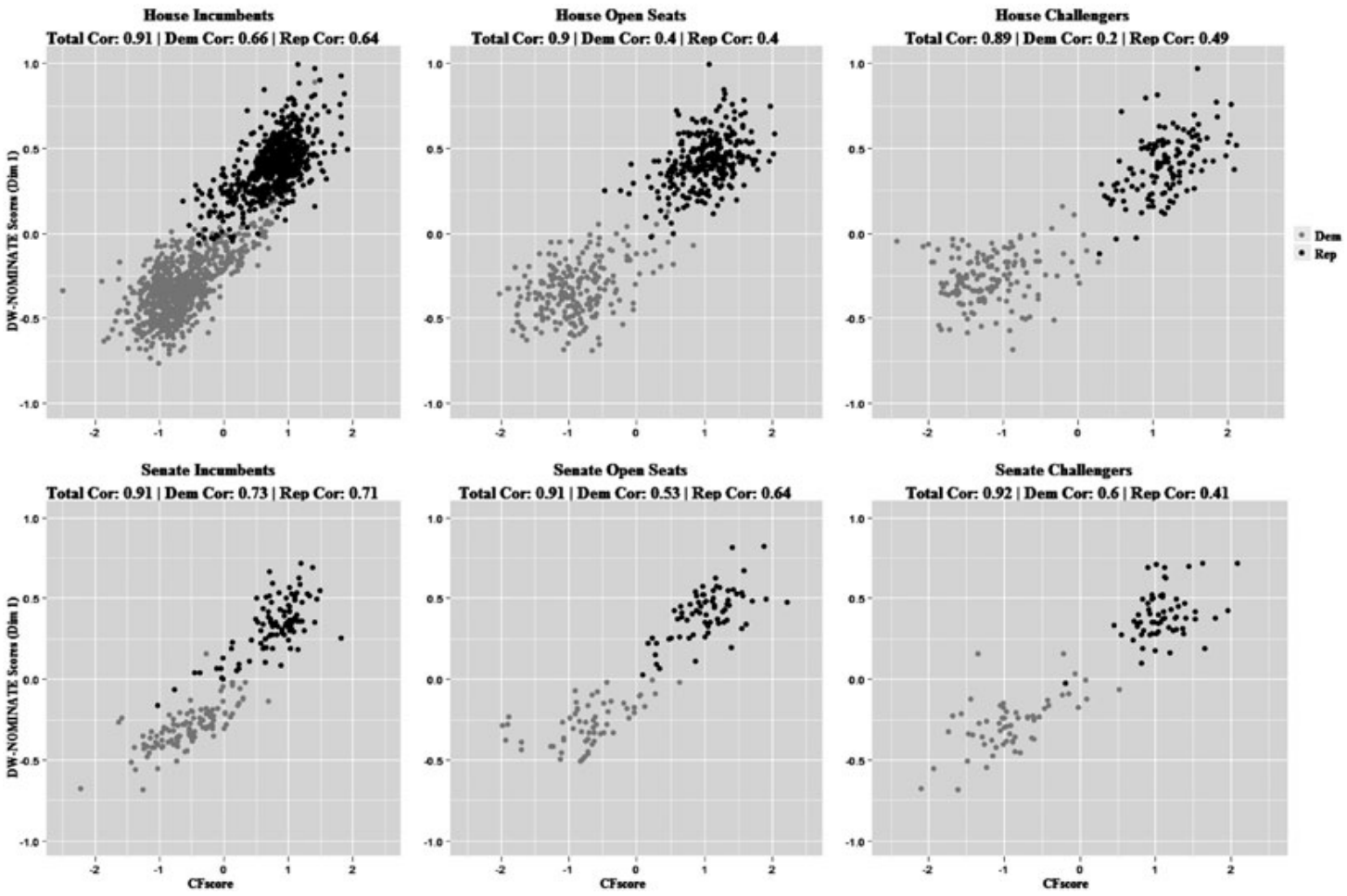
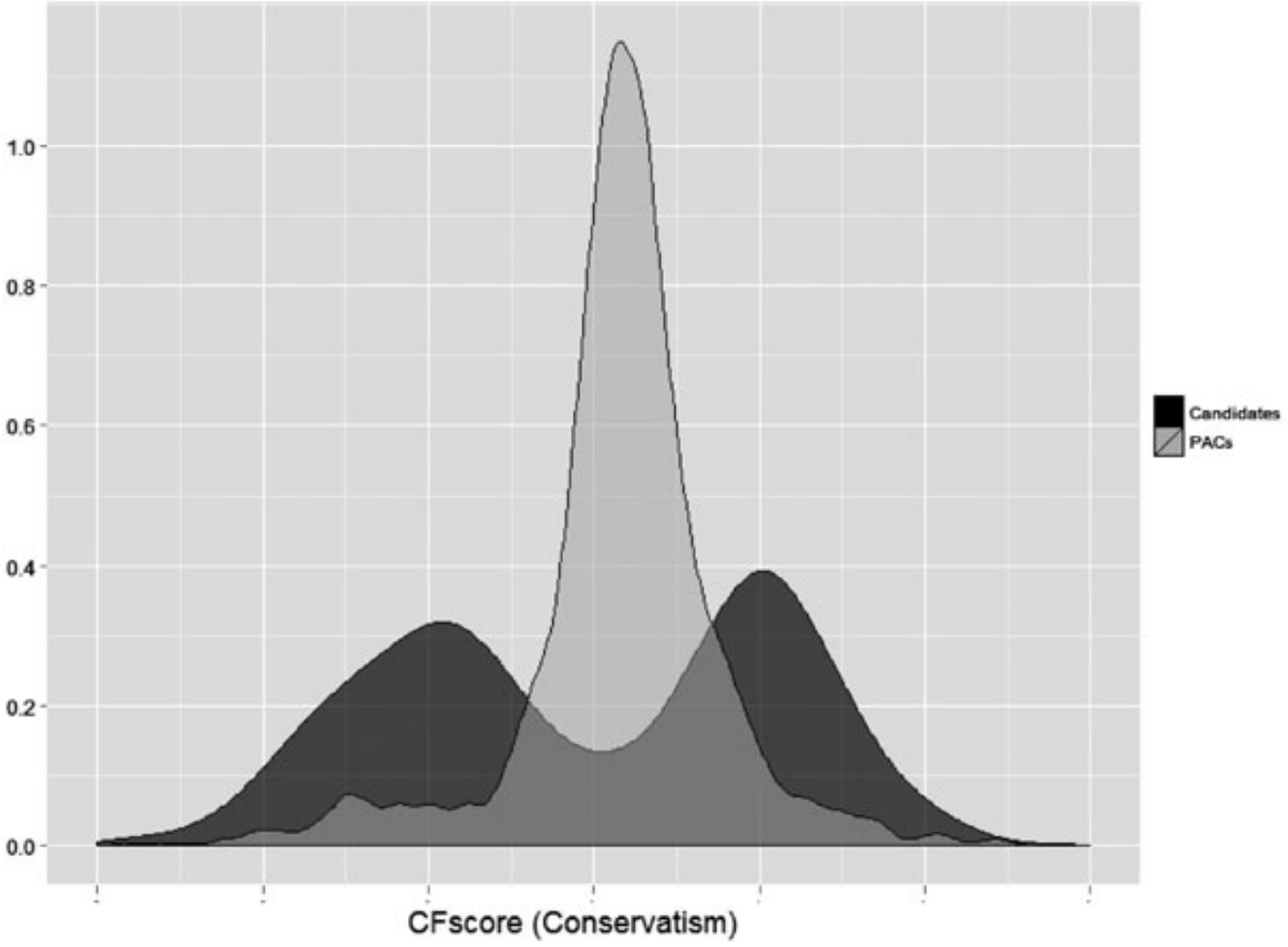
- Can directly compare ideological positions of contributors, candidates, and elected officials.

CF Scores vs. NOMINATE Scores



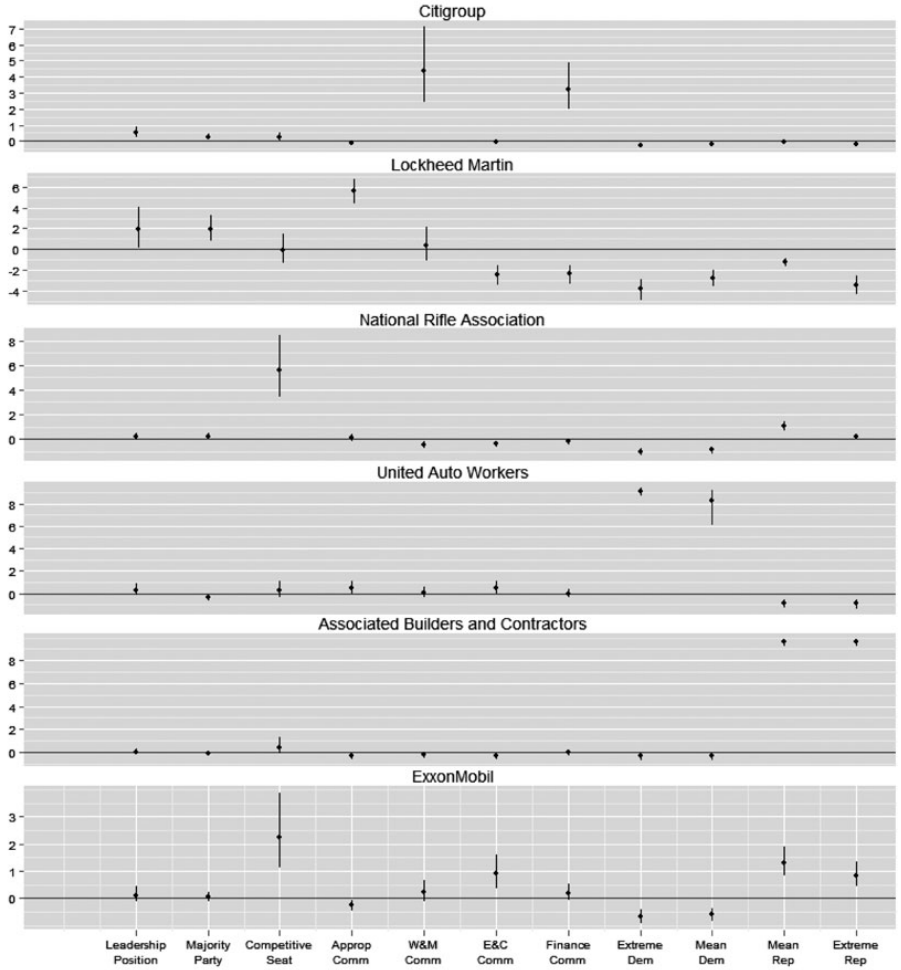
Source: Adam Bonica

Are PACs Ideologically Extreme?



Source: Adam Bonica

What Motivates PACs to Give?



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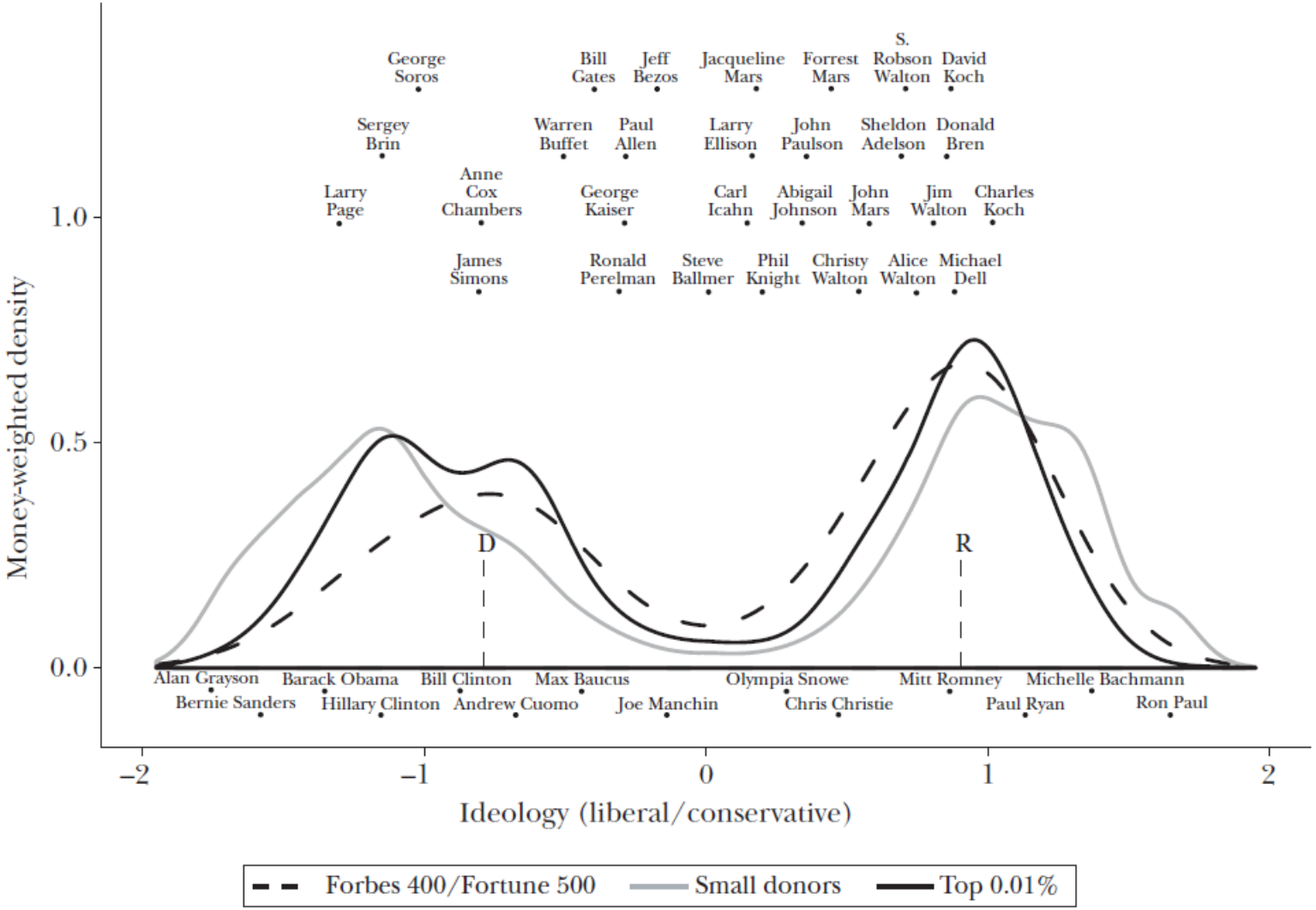
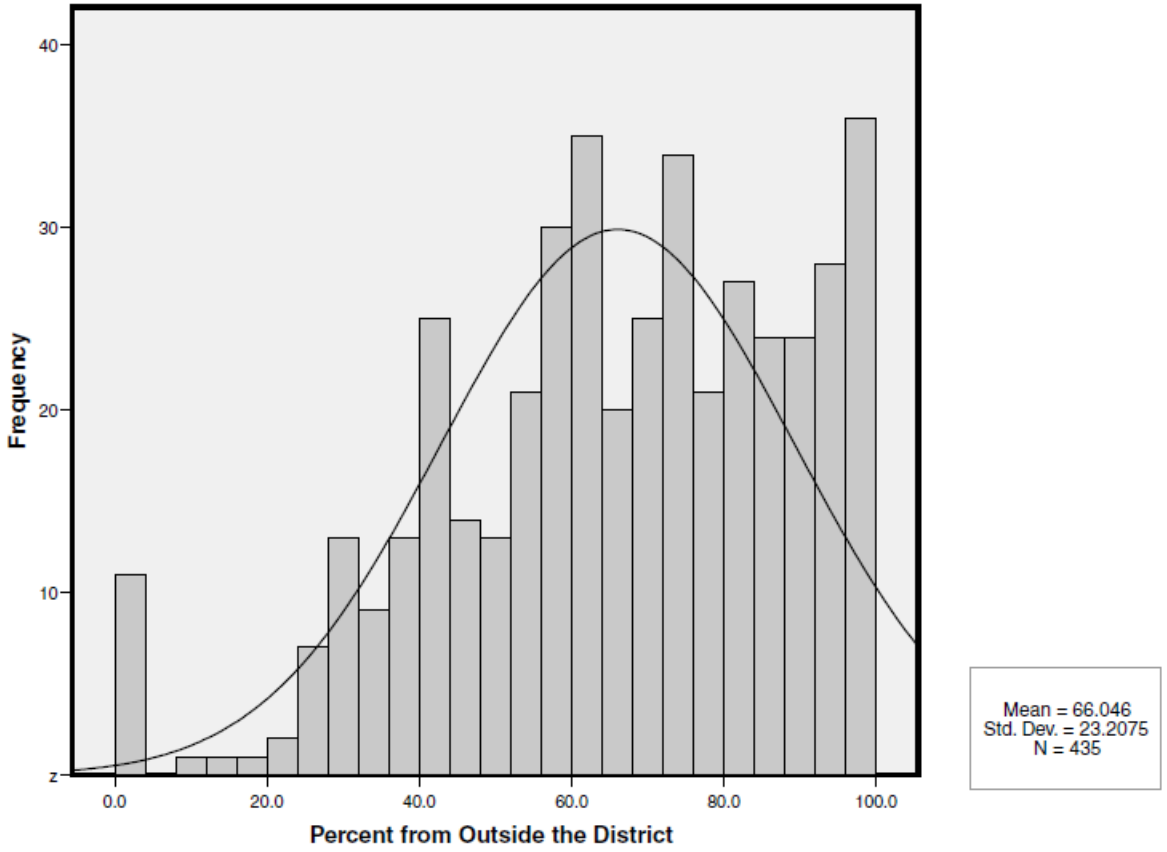
Ideological Distribution of Campaign Contributors



Source: Adam Bonica, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal

Congressional Campaigns Rely on Out-of-District Funding

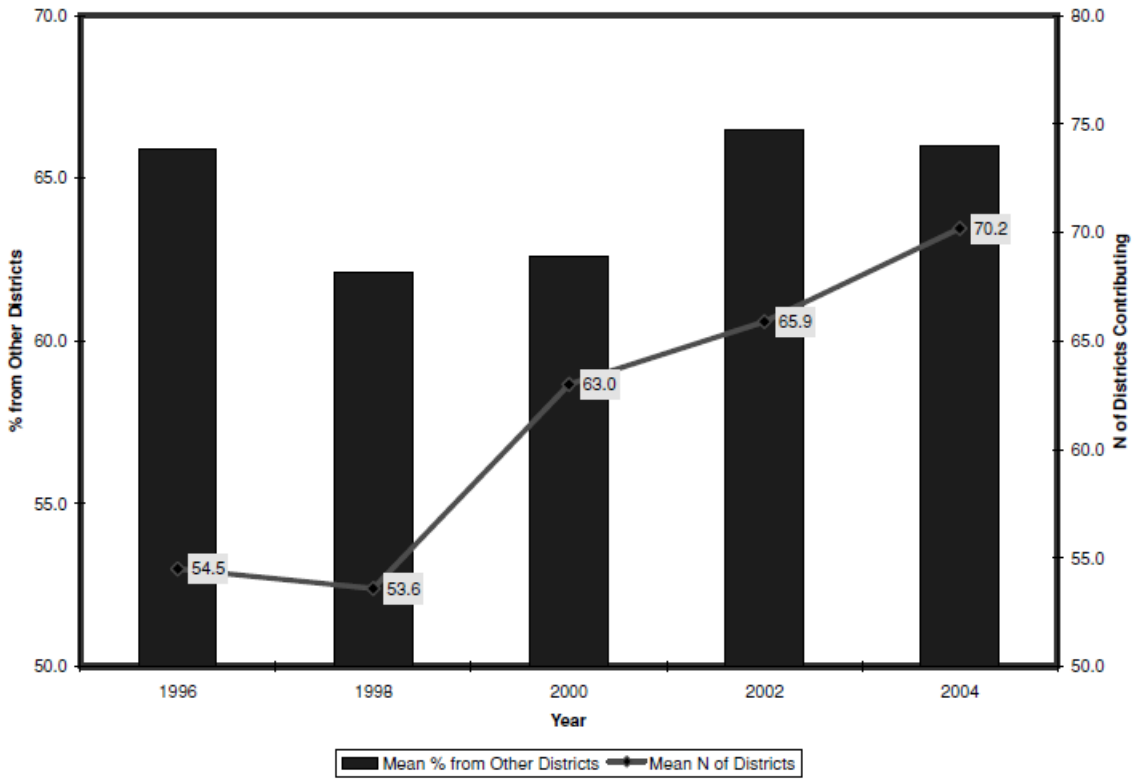
FIGURE 1 Distribution of the Out-of-District Percentage of All Itemized Contributions to U.S. House Campaigns, 2004



Source: James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

Congressional Campaigns Rely on Out-of-District Funding More over Time

FIGURE 2 Mean Percentage of Large Individual Contributions from Other Congressional Districts, and Number of Other Contributor Districts, by Election Year



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Which Types of Districts are Giving? Which are Getting?

	Donor Districts		Recipient Districts	
Variable	Top 10% Mean	Top 25% Mean	Top 10% Mean	Top 25% Mean
Median Income	$53,044.3*	48,697.0*	45,438.0*	44,325.8*
% High Income	9.2*	6.9*	5.1*	4.7*
% Professional	26.9*	23.6*	20.2*	18.9*
% College Educated	36.8*	31.8*	26.0*	25.1*
% Elderly	12.1	12.1	12.0	12.1*
% Black	11.8	12.5	10.7	10.3*
Population Density	16,216.1*	12,374.5*	8,414.2	8,477.1
% Farm	.3*	.4*	.5*	.7*
% Democratic	50.2	51.4*	47.6	47.7
% Rated Competitive	7.0*	10.0	32.0*	30.0*
N	218	544	218	544

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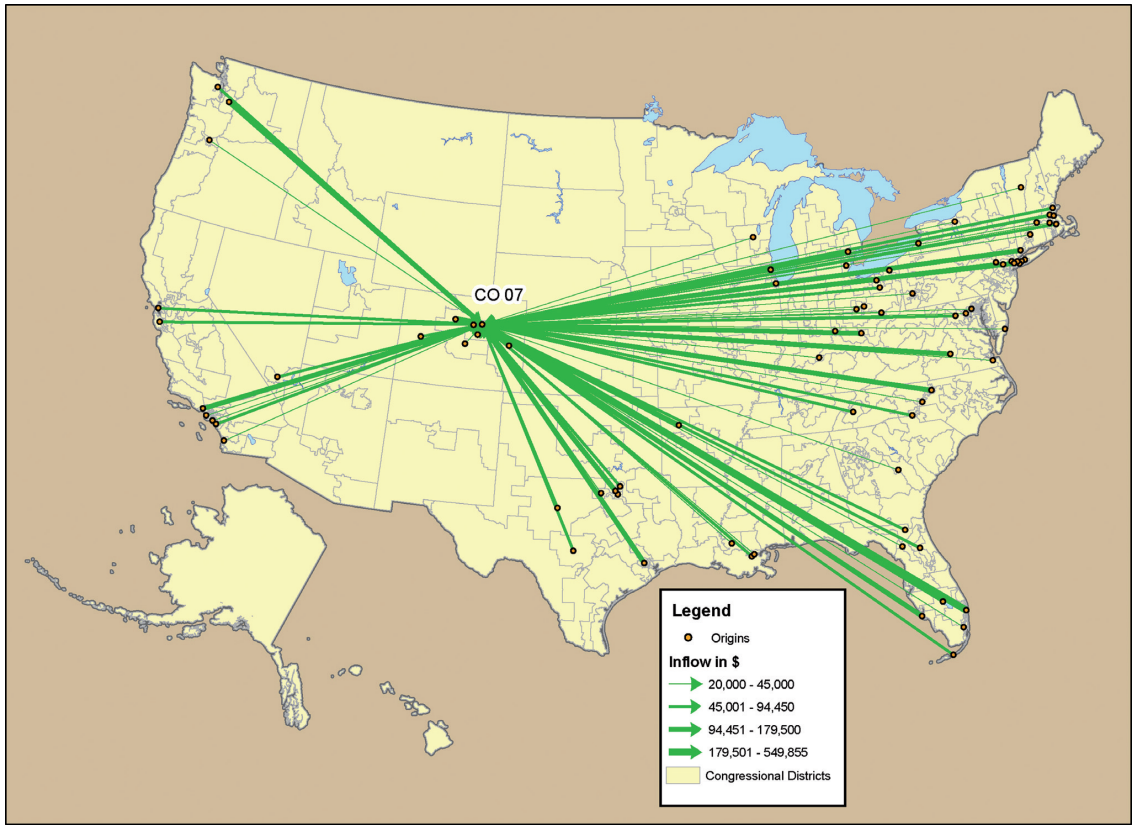

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What Factors Explain Which Districts Receive Contributions?

TABLE 3 Predictors of Receipt of Out-of-District Individual Contributions, Campaigns for the U.S. House, 1996–2004

Variable	Local Contiguous	Distant Non-Contiguous	All Districts
Partisan/strategic			
Primary Contest	15,343.14*	33,461.52	48,988.59*
	(6,954.76)	(20,856.91)	(23,834.61)
Open Seat	140,339.10*	227,233.51*	365,300.11*
	(10,704.06)	(32,286.62)	(36,779.58)
Previous Competitiveness	496.96*	1,520.47*	1,991.91*
	(126.90)	(376.72)	(433.85)
Current Competitiveness	90,694.76*	242,273.12*	332,212.81*
	(9,293.79)	(27,932.12)	(31,883.17)

Source: James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

What Factors Explain Which Districts Receive Contributions?

Access-oriented			
Seniority	**−1,532.08***	874.90	−608.93
	(466.77)	(1,365.61)	(1,587.99)
Leadership	10,716.38	**148,685.71***	**149,502.61***
	(16,568.12)	**(49,476.59)**	**(57,011.59)**
Republican	12,138.61	**53,066.55***	**66,126.35***
	(8,389.44)	**(24,073.65)**	**(28,368.79)**
Banking Committee	2,944.20	−16,649.34	−13,553.29
	(10,162.13)	(29,816.19)	(34,580.89)
Appropriations Committee	−12,752.19	−16,866.84	−29,141.29
	(10,705.33)	(31,227.82)	(36,393.07)
Ways and Means Committee	−9,870.34	−40,458.25	−48,423.31
	(13,356.48)	(38,486.72)	(45,150.63)
Energy Committee	−6,589.49	−10,674.47	−16,707.61
	(11,163.04)	(32,421.94)	(37,827.45)

Source: James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

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Expressive/identity			
Ideological Extremism	58,952.03*	115,255.91*	172,283.12*
	(18,199.41)	(54,633.76)	(62,425.15)
Woman	−23,769.56*	18,996.46	−111.42
	(11,306.55)	(32,925.73)	(38,493.04)
Gay	−42,595.65	−133,071.52	−175,144.91
	(43,322.36)	(1,25,488.12)	(146,937.51)
Black	−19,787.34	−26,193.96	−45,334.26
	(17,198.38)	(48,498.13)	(57,849.92)
Latino	−23,982.72	1,03,298.72	77,540.96
	(21,488.29)	(61,505.22)	(72,631.72)

Source: James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

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- These individual contributors are non-centrist and motivated by ideological factors.
- PACs/big donors not uniformly extreme; but many give to both sides so it may appear they are more centrist than they actually are (Bonica 2013).

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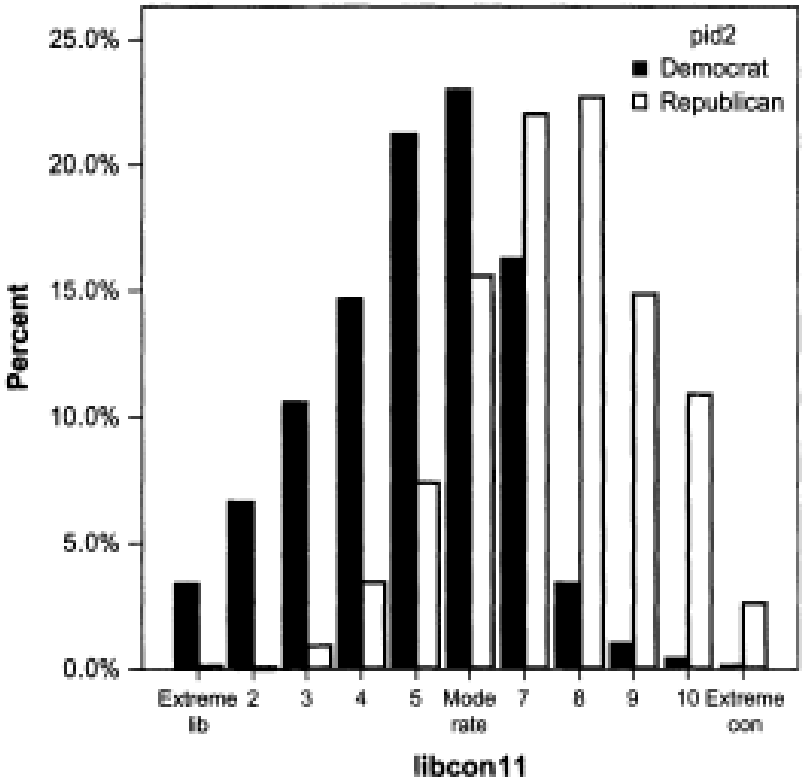
- Party activists are also ideologically polarized (Fiorina et al. 2011) and ideologically homogenous across a broad range of policy arenas ("conflict extension": 2002)

Active Partisans are more Ideologically Extreme

FIGURE 2 Liberal-Conservative Policy Preferences of Democratic and Republican Identifiers in 2004



Source: 2004 National Election Study

Source: Alan Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders

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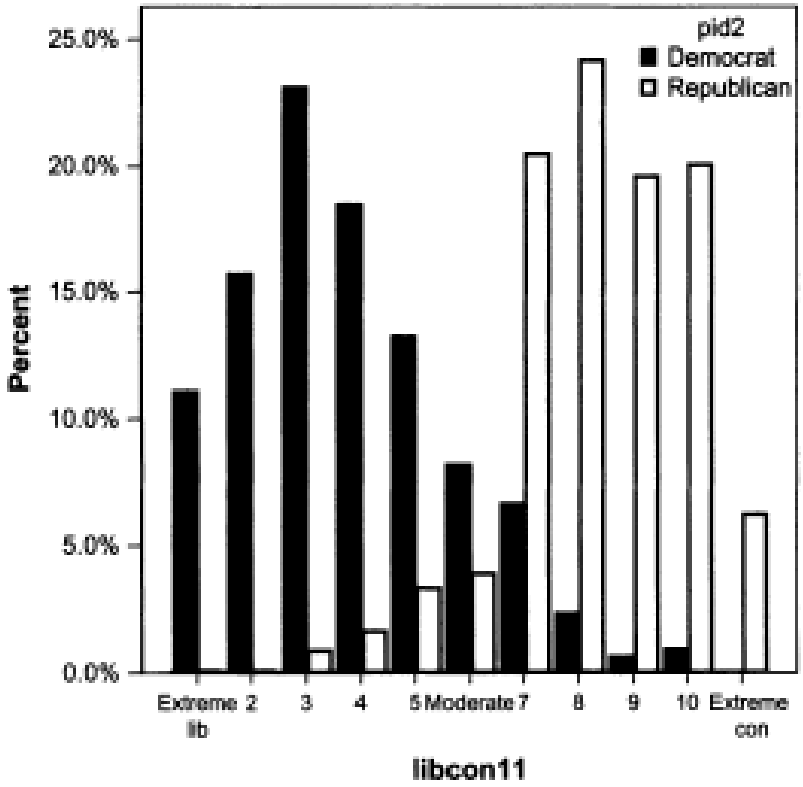
FIGURE 4 Liberal-Conservative Policy Preferences of Politically Engaged Democratic and Republican Identifiers



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Fiorina et al.: Party Activists Compared to Party Identifiers

TABLE 2.1

Party Activists are More Extreme than Partisan Identifiers

	DELEGATE DIFFERENCE	IDENTIFIER DIFFERENCE
Government should do more to solve national problems	72	13
Cut taxes to improve economy	67	35
Make all or most tax cuts permanent	88	35
Abortion should be generally available	62	32
New anti-terrorism laws excessively restrict civil liberties	62	28
Extremely important to work through UN	72	35
No legal recognition of gay relationships	44	19
Government should do more to promote traditional values	40	35

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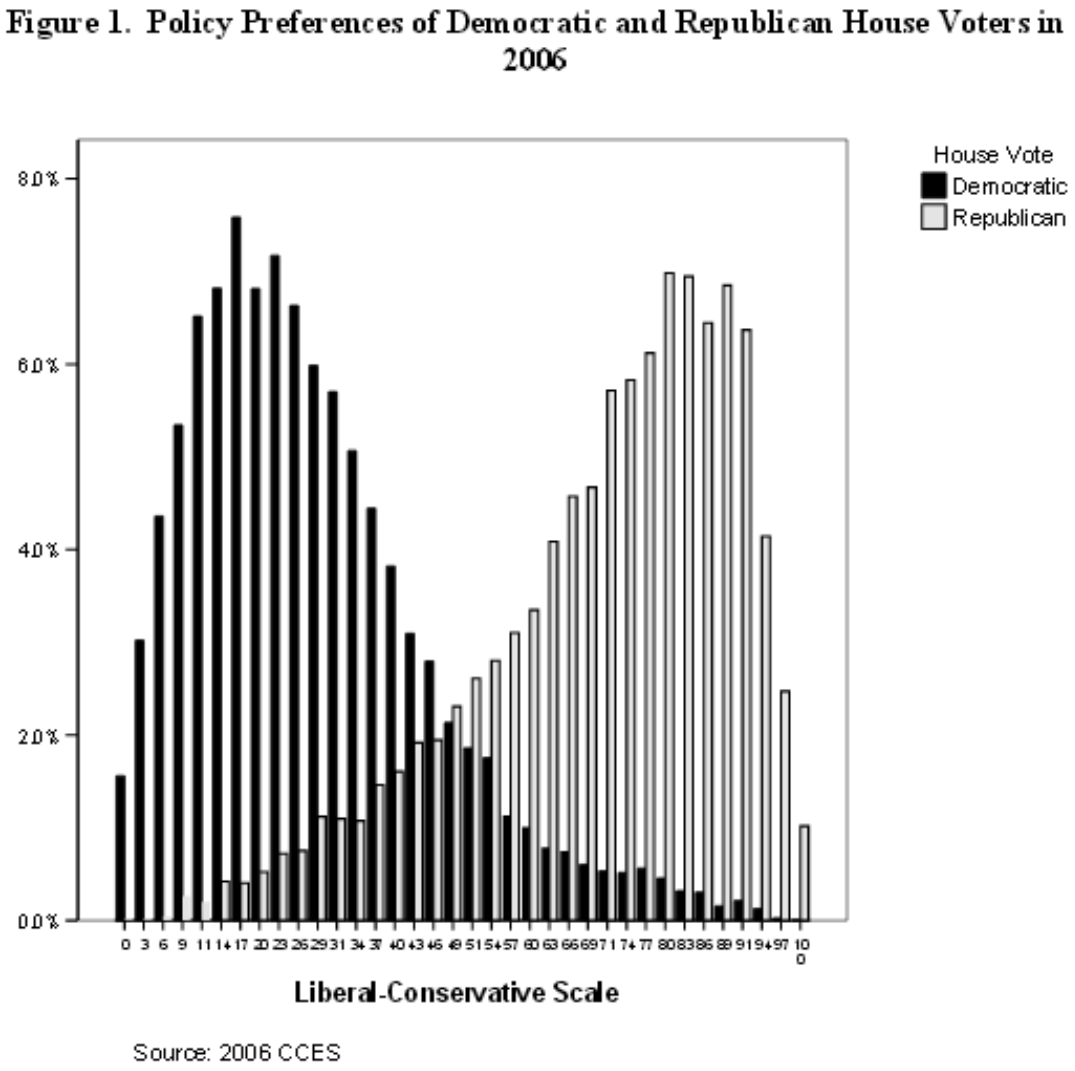

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  - Pure-open: don't register by party, can crossover and don't have to publicly declare choice.
  - Non-partisan: don't register by party, can crossover between parties and *between races*.

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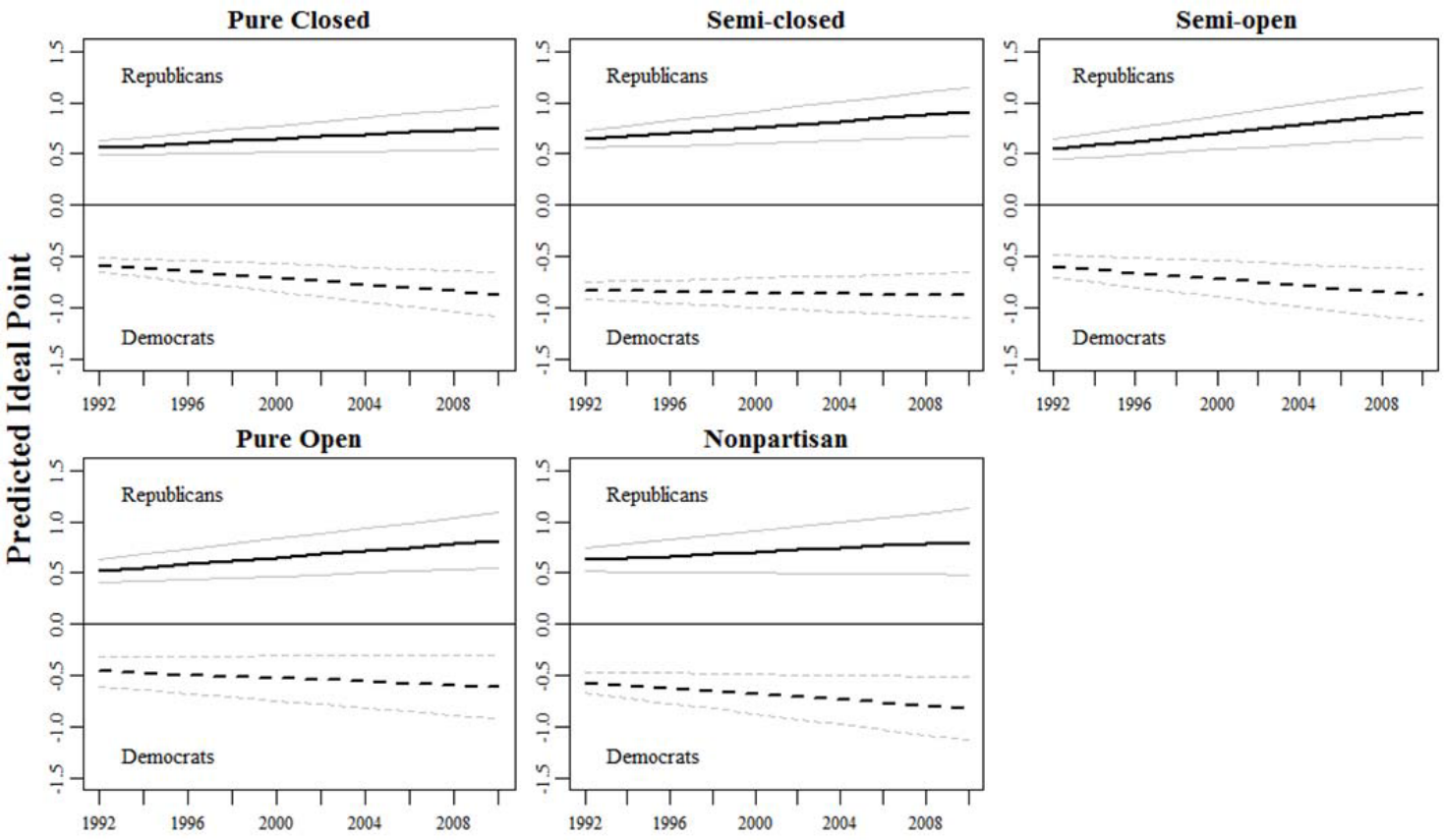

Source: McGhee, Masket, Shor, Rogers, and McCarty

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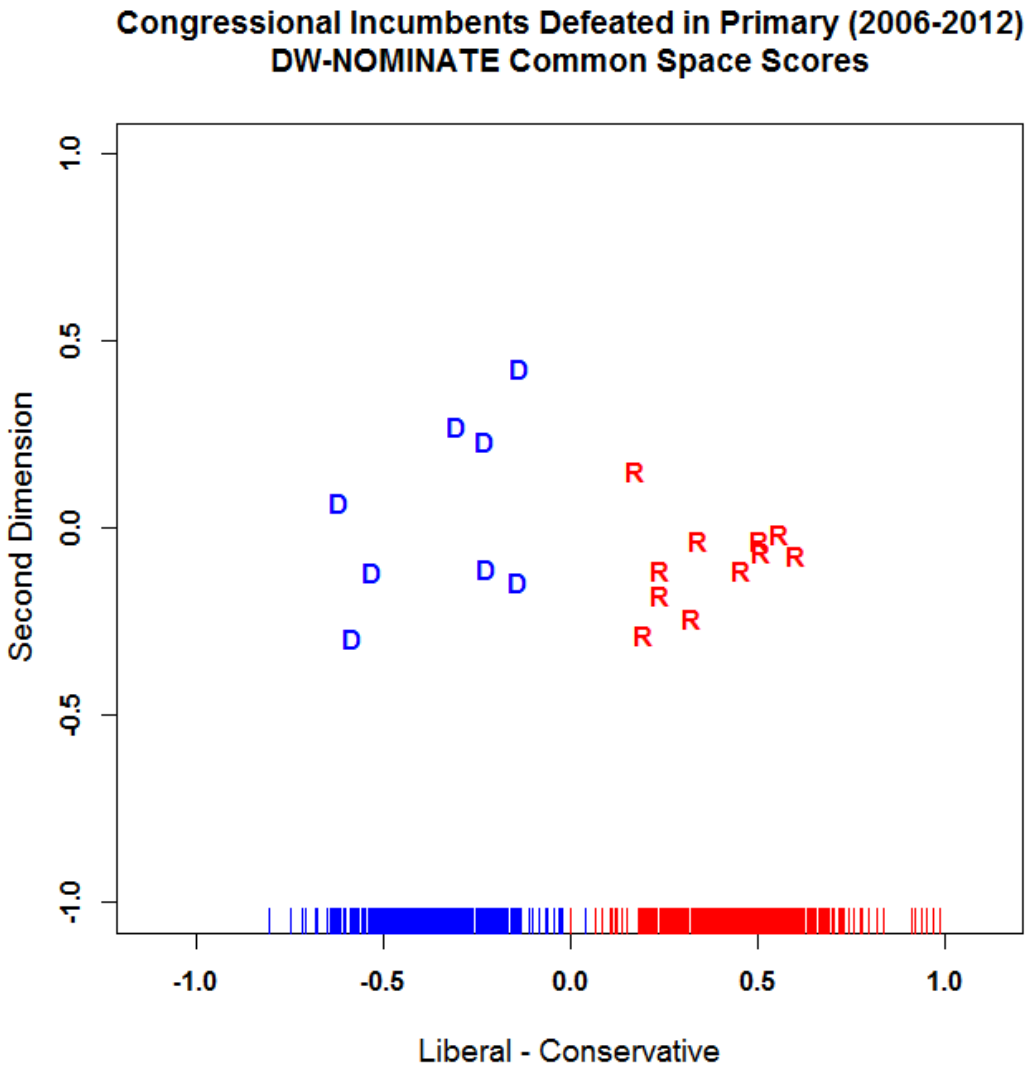
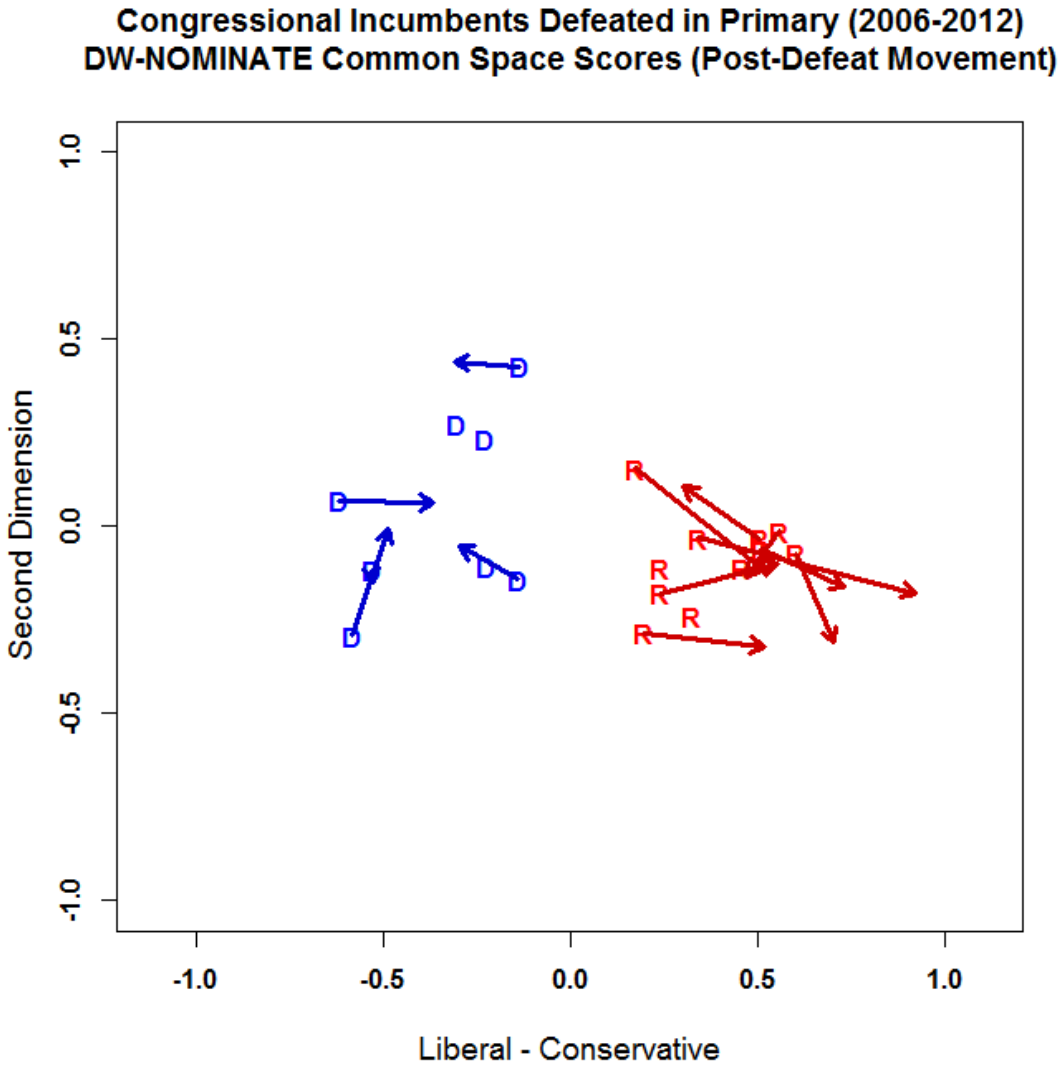
- However, few congressional incumbents lose in the general election, either. The mere *threat* of challenge may prevent convergence to the center.

Which Congressional Incumbents Have Been Defeated in Party Primaries?



Who Replaces Congressional Incumbents Defeated in Party Primaries?