

The Split-ticket Voting Behavior of the 1996 American Electorate— Exploration of Two Issue Models

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Abstract

When we study voting behavior, we used to say that party identification is the dominant explanatory variable. But with the increase in split-ticket voting in the American elections, party identification has been declining and voters are less affected by party affiliations. These changes also pushed researchers to look for other factors to explain split-ticket-voting behavior.

There are two issue models explaining split ticket voting. The first is the “policy-moderation model,” which assumes that split-ticket voters wish to have a divided government, to have administrative and legislative powers belong to different parties, and to balance policy output.

The second model comes from voters’ expectations. This model assumes that voters have different expectations of the President and Congress, and that the two main parties excel in different issues. Consequently, voters are motivated to vote split ticket by their different expectations.

The purpose of this article is to test these two models which the 1996 survey data. We found that the strength of party identification is still the dominant variable, and that both of the models

have explanatory power.

Key Words: spilt-ticket voting, the policy moderation model, the voters' expectation model, divided government, party identification