# Who Decides?

## Media, MAGA, Money, and Mentions in the 2022 Republican Primaries

Rachel Blum
University of Oklahoma
rblum@ou.edu

Seth Masket
University of Denver
seth.masket@du.edu

Mike Cowburn
European University Viadrina
cowburn@europa-uni.de

Political elites play an important role in determining who wins primaries, yet comparatively little is known about whose voices matter when different intra-party signals are sent. We examine this question using an original dataset of Republican Senate and gubernatorial primaries in 2022, an election cycle with substantial intra-party conflict in primary elections. We demonstrate that Fox News appearances (media), Trump's endorsements (MAGA), campaign fundraising (money), and Twitter engagement (mentions) were all positively associated with vote share. We then assess the state of primary fields prior to Trump's endorsements, showing that endorsed candidates were outperforming their competitors prior to his involvement. Finally, we consider how primaries changed after Trump endorsed, demonstrating that his support was associated with a thirteen percentage-point increase in both fundraising share and polling which lasted through to the primary. These findings provide clarity on how Trump shaped Republican primary outcomes, and provide empirical evidence of his influence over the party's nominations.

**Keywords**: intra-party, Republican Party, Trump, primary elections, candidate selection

*Paper presented at the Political Science Section of the German Association of American Studies (DGfA)*

*Berlin, Germany*

*Friday 26th May 2023*

We are grateful to Peter McLaughlin for his assistance with data collection.

Primary elections offer a rare glimpse of intra-party competition. Elite influence in primary elections is well established (Cohen et al. 2008; Hassell 2018), yet we know comparatively little about whose voices matter in the context of conflicting elite signals. To better understand the influence of disparate cues, we focus on non-presidential primaries, which have become increasingly important for U.S. party politics in the twenty-first century (Cowburn 2022), and in particular on the 2022 Republican primaries. These primaries featured candidates with the support of distinct parts of the party network, and where one individual—Donald Trump—loomed large across all nominations. We disentangle the importance of varying elite cues by measuring the relationship between Fox News coverage (media), Donald Trump's endorsement (MAGA), campaign fundraising (money), and social media attention (mentions), on the outcomes of the highest profile, state-wide primary contests: governor and U.S. Senate.[1]

We first tackle the question of who decides, demonstrating that all of these signals were, to varying degrees, positively associated with vote share in Republican primaries. Trump's endorsements were strongly associated with winning primaries. Candidates who Trump endorsed received roughly ten additional percentage points of the vote, with a further six percentage point penalty for candidates' whose opponents were endorsed.

We further investigate Trump's role in shaping the field by focusing on the extent to which he served as a party "kingmaker or a cheerleader" (Kousser et al. 2015). In a second set of analyses, we focus on who Trump endorsed. There, we find that when Trump endorsed, he did so in support of candidates who were already leading their primary fields. Prior to receiving his support, Trump's endorsees raised more money, appeared on Fox News more often, received more attention on Twitter, and were around eleven percentage points better off in the polls than their opponents.

Given that Trump's candidates were already outperforming their opponents prior to his endorsement, our third set of analyses consider the impact his support had on primary outcomes. Receiving an endorsement by Trump was associated with a roughly thirteen percentage point boost in both campaign fundraising and polling, and the improved polling positions lasted until

[1] These intra-party contests have been shown to be the primaries which voters know most about and are comparatively able to identify and position same-party candidates absent party labels in a way that they cannot in lower profile contests such as U.S. House elections (Bawn et al. 2019). In short, if primary voters are able to receive these signals, it is in these contests we should expect them to do so.

the primary election. Conversely, Trump's endorsement had little impact on the media landscape, with no associated increase in Fox News appearances or social media attention.

The finding of increased financial support following a Trump endorsement suggests that the former president retains the ability to influence both large donors and small-dollar grassroots supporters in the Republican Party. This appears to be one important way in which Trump's endorsement mattered. More broadly, these findings help us better understand the mechanism through which a single individual now dominates the party's legislative nomination process, with consequences for both the identity of general election nominees and the dynamics of intra-party politics in the modern Republican Party.

We proceed as follows. First, we consider how different party signals in a primary might determine nomination outcomes. Next, we introduce our original dataset of Republican primary candidates. We then present the results of our three analyses, before discussing their implications in the Republican Party and beyond.

## What Matters in Primary Elections?

In 2017, then-Representative Ron DeSantis (R-Florida) embraced a singular strategy to defeat the better-known and better-funded Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam for the Florida Republican gubernatorial nomination. DeSantis' approach was to appear on Fox News as much as possible. This "Fox First" campaign defied the notion that politics is local, with DeSantis instead deliberately making himself available to a national audience. His reasoning was that more than seventy percent of Florida's Republican primary voters regularly watch Fox, as did President Donald Trump. The approach paid off, dramatically increasing DeSantis' name recognition. Shortly thereafter, he received Trump's endorsement, and DeSantis went from trailing Putnam in the polls to leading him, ultimately defeating him in the July 2018 primary by roughly twenty points (Caputo 2018).

This account suggests that our understanding of primary elections may require updating. To be sure, media coverage, name recognition, and the pursuit of prominent endorsements have long been staples of primary election campaigns. But the overwhelming prominence of *one* media outlet and *one* endorsement in modern Republican primary elections would be something novel.

American political parties slowly embraced binding primary elections. But by the mid-nineteenth century, primaries had become prominent methods for parties to nominate

candidates for most state and national offices (Kamarck 2018). Unlike general elections, where partisan cues guide voters, primary outcomes are more sensitive to features like name recognition, campaign spending, endorsements. In the absence of a partisan signal, primary voters have little information to guide their choices, instead relying on campaign advertising and signals from party elites in making their decisions. We examine the impact of both of these factors more explicitly.

First, we look to the impact of campaign advertising, which is often a function of campaign fundraising. We know from previous studies that fundraising plays a particularly important role in primary elections—likely an even more powerful role than in general election contests, where increased campaign spending is known to boost primary vote shares (Breaux and Gierzynski 1991). Funds may matter more if they come from the right places. Albert *et al.* (2015) find that donor *networks* were key in explaining primary success. Similarly, Hassell (2018) finds that candidates tended to prevail in primaries when their donations predominantly came from people who also donated to the party's organized campaign committees. The loosening of campaign finance restrictions in the wake of the *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* (2010) case may have fractured some of those party financing networks (Boatright 2013), increasing the importance of non-party organized and networked donor groups can play in boosting primary candidates (Manento 2019).

We also know that endorsements from influential party insiders can play a role in determining primary voters' choices. Cohen *et al.* (2008) found that presidential candidates who received the majority of insider endorsements typically win the nomination, and Dominguez (2011) and Masket (2009) find a similar dynamic in congressional and state legislative primaries, respectively. In this context, the endorsement of Donald Trump is something of an anomaly for political science research, which generally assumes that one single endorsement should not matter as much as insider consensus. We also don't have a baseline for a presumption of effects; presidents and ex-presidents rarely get involved in intra-party contests. Trump, however, has issued endorsements quite liberally since the 2018 midterm cycle. In the 2022 primaries, he endorsed over 200 candidates up and down the ballot.[2] A *Washington Examiner* analysis gave Trump credit for 214 wins and nineteen losses for his chosen candidates by late August (King

[2] Indeed, in September of 2022, with the US primaries almost over, Trump issued an endorsement for President Jair Bolnosaro's re-election bid in Brazil (Rupar 2022).

2022). Yet, a *New York Times* study (Astor and Paybarah 2022) noted that the effect of these endorsements can be difficult to assess as they were cast in a very wide range of political circumstances–some went to unopposed candidates, some to incumbents who seemed very likely to win, etc. Trump issued some endorsements months before the contest, allowing the endorsee to capitalize on them for fundraising purposes, but others were issued just days before the contest. Green (2022) notes that Trump has endorsed—and unendorsed—for strategic reasons, sometimes to enhance the perception of his own power, but also sometimes out of personal pique.

Making it harder to assess these endorsements is the fact that they do not occur in a vacuum. In Wyoming's U.S. House primary, for example, Trump endorsed Harriet Hageman to oppose incumbent Rep. Liz Cheney. Given the size of Hageman's primary win, it is unlikely that Trump's endorsement made the difference. Cheney had been a deeply unpopular figure in Wyoming Republican politics for over a year, with the state party censuring her in February of 2021 (Ruwitch and Sprunt 2021). However, she was only this unpopular because she had publicly opposed Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and was leading a congressional inquiry into his orchestration of the January 6$^{th}$ insurrection. Cheney was one of House's more conservative members, but fell out of her state party's graces for opposing Trump, so even if his specific endorsement may have not mattered in that contest, his presence cast a long shadow over it (Knowles, Dawsey, and Weigel 2022).

## Data

We collected data for all 2022 Republican primaries for Senate and governor. Our analyses include all primary contests that featured more than one Republican candidate on the ballot. In states that run 'non-partisan' top-two (California, Washington) or top-four (Alaska) primaries, we divide the field into Republican and Democratic candidates. Following the extant literature, we treat these situations as 'party primaries' if two or more Republicans feature on the ballot (Thomsen 2021; Boatright 2014).[3] We only include the initial round of primary contests rather than run-off elections. Beyond these special situations, we include all candidates

[3] Neither of Louisiana's Senate seats nor gubernatorial election took place in the 2022 cycle.

that were on the primary ballot.[4] This provides us with a total of 362 candidates in sixty primary elections. We evaluate which signals mattered in these contests by comparing the effects of *Media*, *MAGA*, *Money*, and *Mentions*.

**Media**: We operationalize our media variable as the relative number of Fox News appearances a candidate made during the primary. Fox has long been shown as influential in Republican and conservative politics (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007) to such an extent that we think it is reasonable to consider Fox the most influential media source in a Republican primary (Hoewe, Brownell, and Wiemer 2021). Using the search feature on the Fox News website, we collected data on candidate appearances on Fox as follows. For each candidate, we searched their name for all video appearances between January 1st 2021 and the date of their primary where they appeared on a national Fox News program as a guest.[5] This included in-person interviews with the candidate in the studio, on-camera interviews with the candidate, and interviews where the candidate was a panelist either in-studio or in-camera.

We think that the potential benefit of appearing on Fox will be relative to appearances by one's primary competitors. In other words, we do not expect the same benefit of an additional appearance if your primary opponents are also appearing. To capture variation in appearances at the contest level, we rescale this variable as a percentage of the total number of Fox appearances by the primary field. We expect that frequent appearances in Fox's schedule will be positively associated with performance in a Republican primary. We not only recorded the number of appearances, but also the dates on which candidates appeared, enabling us to segment these data temporally into a percentage of the field's appearances before and after Trump made an endorsement.

**MAGA**: We contend that the MAGA narrative is embodied by former president Donald Trump, who is often framed as exerting almost complete control over the apparatus and direction of the Republican Party (Ware 2016) via his influence with the MAGA base. One way that Trump has been particularly notable, both during and since his presidency, is through the comparatively large number of formal endorsements that he has made in primary contests (Chu and Moore 2022). These endorsements are frequently positioned as deterministic of success in

[4] In the supplementary material we repeat our first-round analysis with a minimum vote share threshold (see Boatright 2014) and a financial threshold (see Thomsen 2021).

[5] We validated these findings using Google video.

popular media coverage (Silver 2019) and among scholarly sources (Cohen et al. 2008). To avoid confusion, we only use endorsements from Trump himself.[6] To assess whether Trump's endorsements were associated with primary vote share and the likelihood of winning, the state of the primary fields prior to Trump's endorsement, and how the primaries changed following his endorsement, we also record the date when Trump endorsed in each primary.

**Money**: Campaign finance has long been shown as one key indicator of success in primaries in the modern era (Klumpp and Polborn 2006), and we do not think that the Republican Party has altered so fundamentally in recent years that this association has changed. We operationalize this signal as the total amount raised during the primary, as per candidates' 12P Federal Election Commission (FEC)[7] reports (for Senate candidates) and the National Institute on Money in Politics (NIMP)[8] (for gubernatorial candidates). Senate candidates who raise less than $5,000 are not legally required to file a campaign report with the FEC, we consider their campaign fundraising as basically non-existent in those cases and therefore assign a value of zero.[9]

As with media appearances, we expect that the importance of campaign finance will be affected by relative spending by primary opponents (see also Thomsen 2021). We thus rescale these totals as a percentage of the total amount raised. Given our substantive interest in Trump's endorsements, we also segment these data temporally, as a percentage of the field's finances before (January 1st 2021 to endorsement) and after (endorsement to primary date).

**Mentions**: Committed partisans are disproportionately active on social media (Gayo-Avello 2012; Gayo-Avello, Metaxas, and Mustafaraj 2011). Online attention can serve as a proxy for dedicated support for a candidate among activists, donors, and elites who might be influential in primary elections (Chen, Wang, and Sheth 2012). We use Twitter data to create a variable that gauges online interest in a candidate. Because some candidates posted prolifically and others rarely posted, we operationalize mentions on social media as the average number of

[6] In the Missouri Senate primary, Trump endorsed 'Eric' in a race featuring two Erics (Warburton and Ulmer 2022). Both candidates subsequently claimed he had endorsed them. Given this confusion, we code this race as no-endorsement, meaning we exclude it from our models assessing how Trump shaped the primary landscape.

[7] www.fec.gov

[8] www.followthemoney.org

[9] This assignment enables the inclusion of many low-salience candidates whose contests would otherwise have to be dropped from our analyses.

retweets per post during the primary period.[10] Where candidates had multiple verified accounts (typically incumbents with a public office and campaign account) we only used the campaign account, as our interest is in these individuals as candidates rather than officeholders. As a robustness check, we repeat our analyses using the average number of favorites, which does not change our results. Given that missing data did not necessarily indicate an insignificant share of online attention,[11] we keep this variable in its raw form rather than transform into a relative percentage of online attention. As with the Media and Money signals, we also segment these data pre and post-Trump's endorsement.

**Outcomes**: In our first set of models we are interested in how our signals relate to primary outcomes. We operationalize primary outcomes in two ways: first, as the percentage of vote share a candidate receives, and, second, as a dichotomous variable of whether they win or advance from the nomination. Vote share is taken as the percentage of all votes in most states. In Nevada, we remove votes for 'None of These Candidates' from the totals, and only include the total of Republican votes in non-partisan primaries, following Boatright (2013; 2014) in both cases. We consider candidates as having won or advanced from their primary when they move on to the next round, almost always the November general election. In our second and third models, our outcomes include polling data. We used Ballotpedia, which collects and aggregates publicly available (that is, not from the campaign) polling data. Ballotpedia listed polling numbers before and after Trump's endorsement from the same firms for many of these primaries. For further clarification about our use of polling data and the authors' collection process see the supplementary material. We discuss the outcome variables for each model in greater detail in the analysis section below.

**Control variables**: We include several controls from the primary elections literature, and to account for other important dynamics in the modern Republican Party. These controls can be broadly grouped into three levels: candidate, primary, and state.

[10] Data was collected using the twitonomy analytics platform (www.twitonomy.com) in late 2022. All Twitter data was collected prior to any substantive changes to access following the takeover by Elon Musk on 27th October 2022.
[11] In particular, we note that eight candidates wiped their Twitter profiles from the period before we could collect their data meaning these candidates are excluded from all analyses that include Twitter data: Kari Lake (AZ-Gov), Doug Mastiano (PA-Gov), James Bradley (CA-Sen), Billy Long (MO-Sen), Curtis Vaugh (MO-Sen), Marjorie Eastman (NC-Sen), Josh Mandel (OH-Sen), and Mark Pukita (OH-Sen).

*Candidate-level* controls relate to characteristics that might impact a candidate's chances of success in the primary. Chief among these is whether a candidate is the incumbent, which is clearly associated with primary vote share and success (Boatright 2013). Among non-incumbents, we expect that candidate 'quality' will also matter. We follow the literature, defining candidates who have previously held elective office (Jacobson 1989) as quality, and all other candidates as 'amateurs'. Non-incumbent candidate quality was personally hand-coded by the authors using data from Project Vote Smart, Ballotpedia, and personal biographies on candidate websites, with a subset of those codes checked by another author to ensure inter-coder reliability.

Given the recent amplification of White nationalist and openly patriarchal narratives and structures from Republican elites (Kalmoe and Mason 2022), we also think candidate race and gender may be important in the party's primaries. We include dummy variables for White and Female[12] candidates, coded by the authors using available demographic information on these candidates from online searches. Finally, since newer research suggests that being an election denier translated into higher vote share in Republican primaries (Malzahn and Hall 2023), we include whether a candidate denied the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election result. This variable comes from *FiveThirtyEight*'s dataset of primary candidates (FiveThirtyEight 2022), and takes the value one if candidates "raised questions" or "fully denied" these results, and zero otherwise.[13]

We also include several controls for variation at the *primary level.* The most important feature of a primary contest is the position of the incumbent (Boatright 2014). We include a factor variable of primary type in our models, using the base category of challenger primary (where the incumbent is running in the alternative party's primary), and report coefficients for incumbent primary (incumbent running in that party's primary) and open primary (incumbent not running in either primary) in our models. We include a further dummy variable for Alaska, California, and Washington due to their use of non-partisan primaries, where Republican candidates are competing not just among themselves but also against Democrats and third-party candidates to advance to the November election.

[12] We consider any candidate who uses she/her pronouns as being female.

[13] We repeat our analyses with the inclusion of a more granular control for election denialism as well as a further model with these variables as our outcomes of interest in the supplementary material.

Because we analyze two different offices in this paper which likely have different primary dynamics, we control for whether the primary is for a Senate or gubernatorial race. In addition, we include a dichotomous control of whether the seat in question was held by a Republican before the election cycle. Perhaps most obviously, the dynamics of a primary are strongly conditioned by the number of candidates that run. We do not expect outcomes such as primary vote share to be linearly related to the number of candidates in a contest, meaning we include a control not only for the total number of candidates but also the total number of candidates squared.[14] In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that the number of candidates is indeed not linearly associated with our outcomes and show that our findings are robust to factorizing this control variable.

Finally, we include controls at the *state level*. Most obviously, we note that the value of winning a primary is highly dependent on the partisanship of the seat in question. We control for state partisanship using Trump's 2020 vote share, and demonstrate that our main results are robust to the alternative inclusion of Trump's 2016 vote share in the supplementary material. We further control for other state-level factors associated with Republican performance in general elections (Gelman et al. 2007; Gramlich 2020): median household income, percent of White voters, and urban population as a percentage. These data are all taken from the most recent (2021) one-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. We repeat all our main models with the addition of state fixed effects in the supplementary material, in all cases our results are unchanged.

## Analyses

In our first set of analyses, we identify whether each of our theorized signals—Media, MAGA, Money, and Mentions—are associated with a higher share of the primary vote. We demonstrate that all four signals were, to differing degrees, associated with vote share during the nomination.

Having done so, we then focus on how Trump's endorsement mattered for the field. In this second set of analyses, we assess the state of primary fields prior to the former president's endorsement, demonstrating that the candidates he formally supported already had a higher

[14] For example, we would, on average, expect a larger change in candidates' vote share between a contest with two and three candidates than a contest with fourteen and fifteen. Empirically, we expect the number of candidates to be negatively associated with primary performance but the number of candidates squared to be positively associated.

percentage of media coverage, campaign finance, social media attention, and a polling lead *before* Trump intervened in the nomination contest.

Finally, we consider how the primary field changed after Trump's endorsement. In this third set of analyses, we show that Trump's picks subsequently increased their share of campaign fundraising and also saw polling increases that held through to the primary election. Trump's endorsement, however, was not associated with increased media coverage or social media attention.

### *Who Decides?*

We demonstrate that all four signals were associated with a greater percentage of the primary vote share using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in Figure 1 and Table 1. Candidates who dominated their primary field in media appearances, with all of their race's appearances on Fox News outperformed candidates who never appeared on the channel by twelve (0.123) percentage points give or take two and a half points (0.026). In the supplementary material, we also demonstrate an association with *ever* making a Fox News appearance, estimated at eight percentage-points (0.079).[15] Trump's endorsements were also a further key predictor of primary vote share. Our model finds that endorsed candidates received on average almost ten percentage-points (0.097) more of the vote compared to candidates in races where Trump declined to endorse. Facing a Trump-endorsed opponent was associated with a six percentage-point (–0.062) decrease in vote share.[16]

Campaign fundraising was another indicator of performance in the primary. All else being equal, candidates who received 100 percent of the funding in their primary race outperformed opponents with zero percent of the primary receipts by over thirty-three points (0.327) give or take three points (0.033).[17] Finally, we see that social media attention also mattered. Every thousand additional average retweets that a candidate received on Twitter was associated with roughly thirteen additional percentage-points of primary vote share (0.133). In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that this relationship is also present for the average

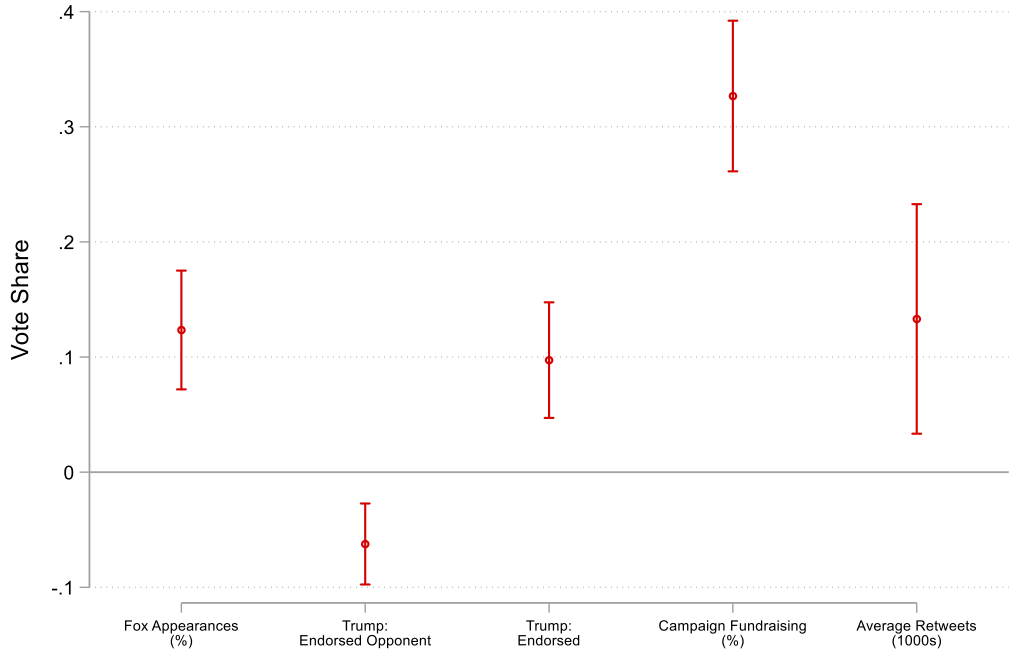
[15] Each individual Fox appearance was somewhat associated with a roughly half percentage point vote share increase, though this relationship was not statistically significant.

[16] The asymmetry in the size of the Trump endorsement coefficients is the result of endorsed candidates taking vote share from multiple of their primary opponents.

[17] Of course, few candidates dominated their primary fundraising to this extent.

number of favorites that candidates' Twitter posts received. In other words, all four of our expected signals were, to different degrees, positively associated with higher primary vote share.

**Figure 1**: Who Decides? Vote Share Coefficients




We also report coefficients of the significant control variables in Table 1.[18] Candidates' prior experience—incumbency and non-incumbent candidate quality—was predictive of vote share in the theorized direction. Candidates' gender was also positively associated with vote share, with female candidates receiving, on average, four and a half points (0.046) more of the vote. Women are consistently perceived by voters as being more liberal (Kitchens and Swers 2016; Koch 2000), which might be expected to hurt a candidate in a Republican primary while being advantageous for a Republican candidate in a general election, particularly in a close election. This advantage may have led the formal apparatus of the Republican Party to help female candidates during their primaries, for example by offering endorsements, providing staffers, or clearing the field of alternative strong candidates. These tactics may have also been an attempt to redress the partisan imbalance in women's descriptive representation.[19] Women also self-select out of running for public office as they perceive that they are held to a higher standard (Fox and Lawless 2005; Lawless and Fox 2010; Kanthak and Woon 2015). This process of self-selection means that only highly ambitious, qualified, and capable women emerge as

[18] We report coefficients for all control variables in the supplementary material.

[19] Other studies (Cowburn and Conroy 2023) indicate that the Republican Party has attempted to provide additional support to female candidates running for statewide office in recent election cycles.

candidates, creating a qualifications gap. In other words, the women in our sample are likely more qualified than the men, or, at least, there are fewer 'amateur' female candidates in our data than men who run without any form of qualification or institutional support.

**Table 1**: Who Decides? Vote Share Model

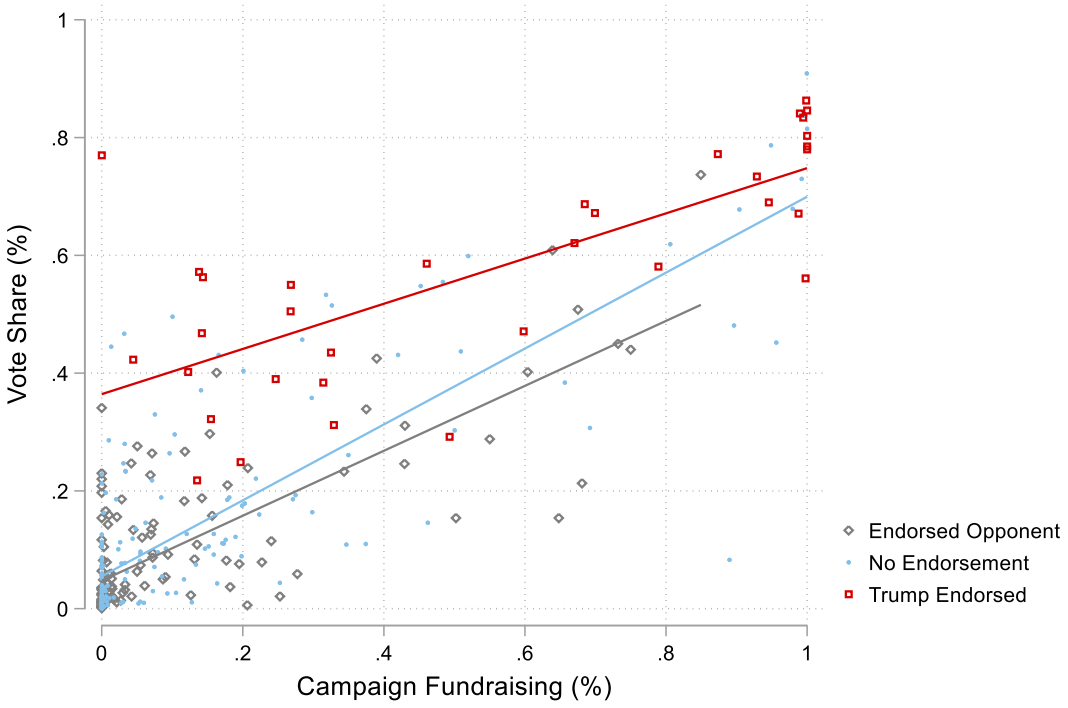
| | Vote Share (%) |
|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.123*** |
| | (0.026) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | –0.062*** |
| | (0.018) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.097*** |
| | (0.025) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.327*** |
| | (0.033) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.133** |
| | (0.051) |
| Candidate Incumbent | 0.145*** |
| | (0.037) |
| Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent) | 0.091*** |
| | (0.017) |
| Candidate Female | 0.043** |
| | (0.016) |
| Candidate Election Denier | –0.039** |
| | (0.015) |
| Number of Candidates | –0.028*** |
| | (0.006) |
| Number of Candidates$^2$ | 0.001** |
| | (0.000) |
| Observations | 239 |
| R-squared | 0.841 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Our election denialism control was also substantively significant, with candidates who "raised questions" or "fully denied" the 2020 presidential election results receiving, on average, roughly four (0.039) percentage-points less vote share, give or take a point and a half (0.015). In the supplementary material we also operationalize election denialism as a continuum using all of *FiveThirtyEight*'s categories, where each step change in denialism was significantly associated with a more than one percentage-point (0.012) decrease in vote share. These findings run counter to research examining general election candidates' 2022 primary performance (Malzahn and Hall 2023). That we find Republican primary voters prefer candidates who do not deny the legitimacy of elections suggests that primary voters are highly conscious of

candidate 'electability' in general elections (see also Owen and Grofman 2006; Masket 2020). This finding also aligns with the substantial body of empirical scholarship that runs counter to the narrative of primary voters as ideologically extreme (Boatright 2014; Hirano and Snyder 2019; Hirano et al. 2010; Sides et al. 2020). That our findings here are not just zero but negatively associated with primary vote share suggests that the salience of this issue did cut through to Republican primary voters in 2022. Candidates who denied the results of the 2020 election were supported at a lower rate either because primary voters disagreed with them on the issue, or because they thought having an election denier as the nominee would harm the party's chances in November.[20]

**Figure 2**: Correlation Between Fundraising & Vote Share by Trump Endorsement




Descriptively, we also see some clear associations between our signals and the share of the primary vote. Figure 2 shows the correlation between candidates' campaign fundraising and their vote share across different categories of Trump endorsement. Candidates who Trump endorsed received a higher share of the vote than their competitors across all levels of fundraising such that these trends are parallel. In races where Trump made no endorsement,

[20] All of our state-level controls were non-significant and no difference between Senate and governor candidates was observed. We demonstrate the robustness of our findings to the inclusion of state fixed effects in the supplementary material. Our two controls for the number of candidates in a primary contest were significant in the expected direction as shown in Table 1.

campaign fundraising was even more important. For these candidates, receiving little in the way of finance meant they received similar vote shares to those candidates Trump endorsed against, yet, when they dominated their primary fundraising, they received almost as much of the vote share as those candidates who Trump endorsed.

Though candidates care about their vote share, their ultimate goal when running in a primary is to advance to the general election. We therefore attend to the qualities of candidates who won primaries. All incumbents in our sample advanced from their primary, so we only include non-incumbents in this analysis. When candidates are in competitive or difficult primary competitions, as most non-incumbents are, which of our intra-party signals are associated with success? To determine this, we run a logistic regression with the outcome of whether a candidate advanced from the primary election, with the results presented in Table 2.[21]

**Table 2**: Who Decides? Primary Winner Model (Non-Incumbents Only)

| | Won/Advanced |
|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 3.643** |
| | (1.217) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | –4.549** |
| | (1.612) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 4.079* |
| | (1.671) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 2.563 |
| | (1.561) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 1.110 |
| | (9.161) |
| Observations | 217 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

The results in Table 2 suggest that, of our intra-party signals, Fox appearances and Trump endorsements were predictive of non-incumbents being able to *win* a primary contest. Though campaign finance alone is likely sufficient to ensure candidates receive a non-negligible number of votes, money is not enough to get them onto the general election ballot. A high-profile example of this phenomenon was seen in the Democratic presidential primaries in 2020,

[21] In almost all cases, winning/advancing from the primary meant that a candidate became the general election nominee. Under Alaska's top-four primary two Republicans advanced to the general election in both the governor and Senate primaries. In addition, the Senate races in Alabama and Oklahoma's special election both went to run-offs, in both cases, we code the two candidates who advanced to the run-off as having won/advanced from the initial primary.

where billionaires Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer blew their rivals out of the water in fundraising terms to propel themselves into the competition but failed to win a single nomination contest between them. It may be that a similar dynamic took place at a smaller scale in Republican gubernatorial and Senate primaries in 2022. Perhaps less surprisingly, mentions and attention on social media were also not sufficient to get candidates over the finish line in the nomination contests.

**Figure 3**: Winning Probability Over Fox News

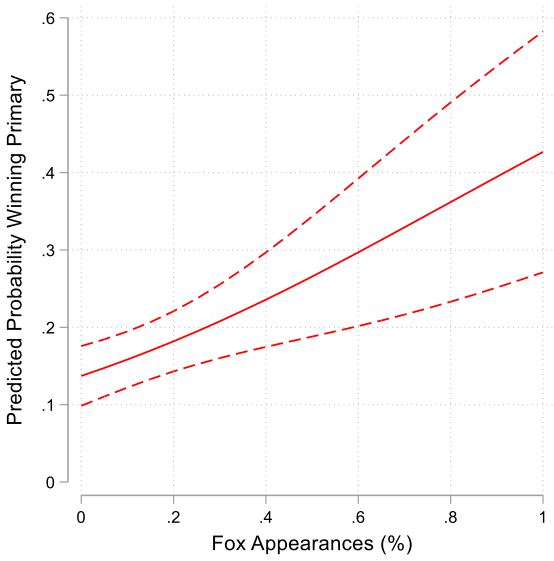
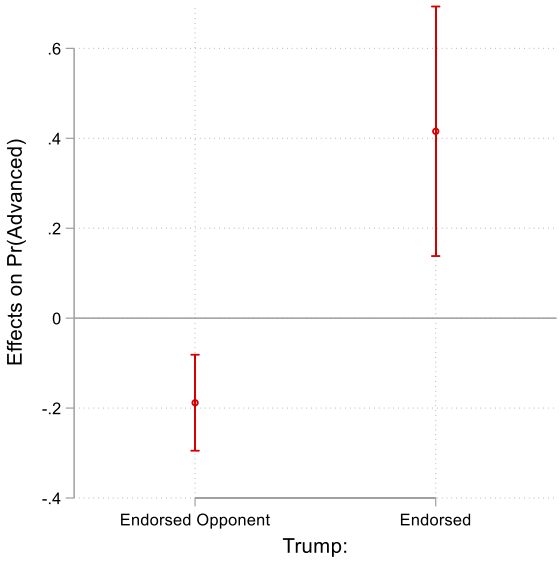



**Figure 4**: Trump's Endorsement Effects




Due to the difficulty in interpreting logistic regression outputs, we present the predicted probabilities of candidates' advancing across different levels of the significant variables, with Fox News appearances in Figure 3, and the marginal effect of Trump's endorsements in Figure 4, with all other variables held at their means or reference values. We see a clear alignment between the candidates' share of Fox News appearances and their probability of winning a primary. Figure 4 shows a clear effect both for Trump's endorsees and the candidates he endorsed against when compared to primary contests where he made no endorsement. Endorsed candidates were, on average, roughly forty-two (0.416) percentage-points more likely to advance, whereas candidates whose opponents Trump endorsed were roughly nineteen (0.188) points less likely to become the party nominee than candidates in races where the former president did not intervene.

*Who Does Trump Endorse?*

Next, we consider the features of endorsed candidates in primary contests *before* Trump decided to endorse. We briefly consider those contests where Trump might have been expected to pick a favorite, but elected not to. Table 3 presents the list of contests that took place in competitive or Republican-leaning states where Trump made no endorsement. Due to Trump's desire to be on the winning side of election contests, we suppose that he is unlikely to endorse in blue states where his candidate will have little chance of winning the general election.[22]

Of the thirteen primaries in Table 3, three featured some kind of endorsement by Trump, who eventually endorsed Katie Britt and Markwayne Mullin in their run-off elections and also endorsed 'Eric' in Missouri where candidates Eric Schmidt and Eric Greitens claimed the endorsement. Trump's non-endorsement in the two Colorado primaries may have been a recognition that candidates in both races were unlikely to prevail against popular incumbent Democrats in a state that had been steadily trending more Democratic in recent cycles.

**Table 3**: Competitive and Republican Leaning States where Trump did not Endorse

| State | Race | Trump |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | Governor | No endorsement |
| Colorado | Governor | No endorsement |
| Minnesota | Governor | No endorsement |
| New Hampshire | Governor | No endorsement |
| New Mexico | Governor | No endorsement |
| Ohio | Governor | No endorsement |
| Wyoming | Governor | No endorsement |
| Alabama | Senate | Endorsed Katie Britt in the run-off |
| Colorado | Senate | No endorsement |
| Missouri | Senate | Endorsed 'Eric' in a race with two Erics: coded as no endorsement in our data. |
| Oklahoma | Senate | No endorsement |
| Oklahoma (Special) | Senate | Endorsed Markwayne Mullin in the run-off |
| South Dakota | Senate | No endorsement |

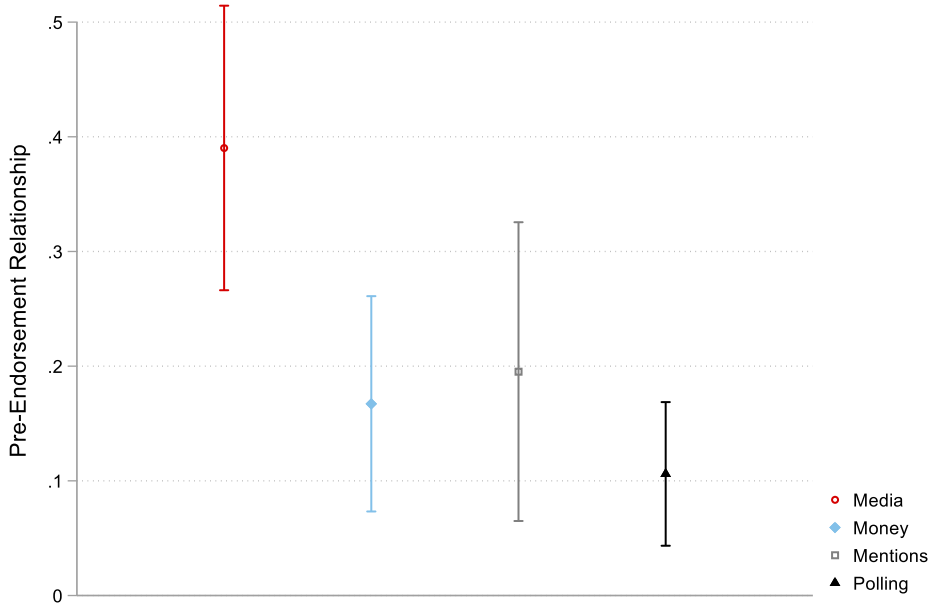
Elsewhere, Trump's non-endorsements appeared to be the result of frosty personal relationships with incumbent Republican officeholders. In the Oklahoma Senate primary, Republican incumbent James Lankford had a contentious relationship with Trump; Lankford initially supported the January 6$^{th}$ challenge to Arizona's 2020 vote count, but then changed

[22] Indeed, Trump rarely endorsed in races in highly Democratic states. The few instances that he did were the gubernatorial races in Illinois (Darren Bailey), Maryland (Dan Cox), and Massachusetts (Geoff Diehl), and the Senate race in Connecticut (Leora Levy).

his mind following the insurrection on the Capitol.[23] Trump eventually endorsed Lankford against his Democratic opponent, saying "sometimes we didn't exactly agree on everything, but we do now" (Snyder 2022).

A similar pattern occurred in the Ohio gubernatorial race, where Trump eventually endorsed incumbent Mike DeWine after the primary (Orr 2022). Trump's relationship with incumbent Senator John Thune from South Dakota was even less cordial, where Trump publicly and unsuccessfully lobbied Governor Kristi Noem to primary the incumbent senator (Trump 2021).[24] Trump's non-endorsement of incumbent Alabama Governor Kay Ivey was connected to his belief that she canceled one of his rallies (Bender 2021),[25] and his multiple differences with New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu has been seen as encapsulating the party's internal cleavage both in terms of style and substance. The central narrative of these contests was that Trump personally disliked the Republican incumbent, was unable to convince a suitably high-profile alternative to run, and so declined to support a candidate he likely perceived would lose.

**Figure 5**: Who Does Trump Endorse? Pre-Endorsement Coefficients




In contests where Trump made an endorsement, he did not do so at random. Trump's preferred candidates were outperforming their opponents across four key metrics before his

[23] The state party chair went as far as to endorse his primary challenger, Jackson Lahmeyer.

[24] Yet, no serious alternatives were willing to take on Thune, and he received more than seventy percent of the vote.

[25] As in South Dakota, Trump unsuccessfully attempted to persuade more notable challengers to emerge.

intervention. In Figure 5, we present the coefficients of four OLS regressions which each include Trump's endorsement as the key independent variable.[26] Because our dependent variables in these models reflect different aspects of the primary race prior to Trump's endorsement, we can only include races where Trump eventually endorsed. Within these contests, candidates who garnered Trump's endorsement take a value of one, and those who did not take a value of zero. The total number of candidates included in these models varies based on data prior to Trump's endorsement due to missing Twitter data and publicly-available polling.

Trump's eventual endorsees had, on average, almost forty percentage-points (0.390) more Fox News coverage than their non-endorsed opponents prior to Trump's intervention. Similarly, those candidates had nearly seventeen points (0.167) more campaign fundraising, almost 200 more average retweets (0.195), and an almost eleven (0.106) percentage-point polling lead. Examples of Trump endorsing candidates already leading their primary polls included Tudor Dixon (MI-Gov), Joe Lombardo (NV-Gov), and Doug Mastriano (PA-Gov). Similarly, Trump endorsed candidates such as Kari Lake (AZ-Gov) and Adam Laxalt (NV-Sen) who were already ahead in terms of fundraising. Put simply, Trump was far more likely to support candidates who were already leading their field.[27]

### *How Does Trump Matter?*

Having established that Trump's candidates were outperforming their opponents prior to his endorsement, we attempt to quantify the impact of his support, empirically testing how primary fields changed after the endorsement. Given the clear differences between candidates who Trump endorsed and their opponents, these results should not be interpreted as causal. We note multiple potential explanations for our findings.[28] In Figure 6, we present the results of five OLS regressions where the dependent variable is the *change*[29] in outcomes following Trump's intervention. Trump's endorsement is the key independent variable in each model. As in the

[26] These models include all of the same controls used previously, see supplementary for full models with all coefficients.

[27] Interesting, Trump's endorsees were not significantly more likely to be election deniers, as shown in the supplementary material.

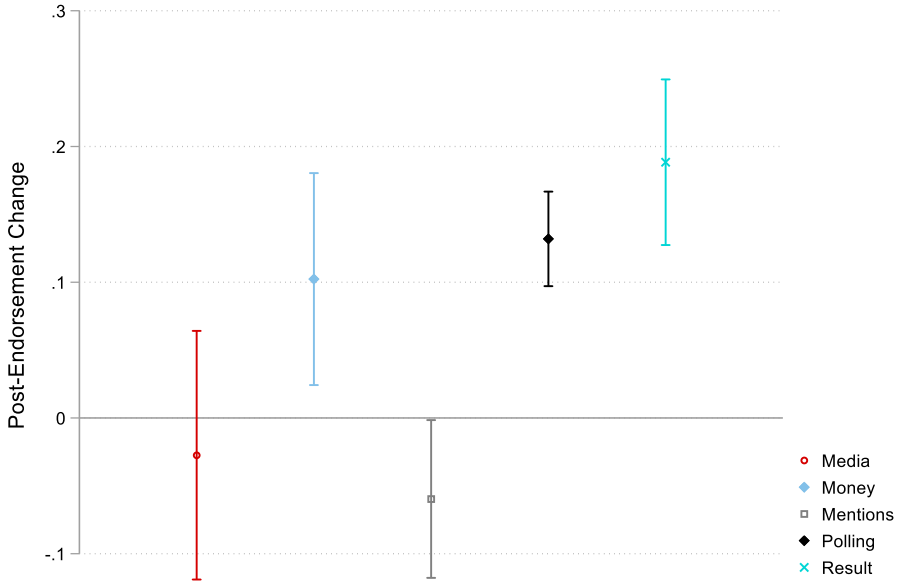
[28] For example, if Trump's endorsees received a higher share of donations prior to his endorsements then perhaps this financial advantage helped them raise even more money or improved their polling numbers later in the contest.

[29] In other words, our dependent variable for each model is the difference between the value in the dependent variable after endorsement minus the value prior to endorsement. For the 'result' model, we subtract candidates' final pre-endorsement poll number from the final vote share in the primary election.

previous analysis, we require Trump to endorse to be able to construct these outcome variables, meaning our data are restricted to races in which he endorsed and the coefficients reported are for endorsed candidates against their primary opponents who Trump not only did not endorse but endorsed *against*.[30]

Figure 6 shows that Trump's endorsement was, on average, associated with a fourteen percentage-point increase in campaign fundraising (0.142) and a thirteen percentage-point increase in polling (0.128) versus their opponents. Conversely, Trump's endorsement had little impact on the media landscape in the primary, with no associated increase in Fox News appearances or social media attention. Though Trump's candidates had, on average, an eleven-point polling lead prior to his involvement in the primary (see Figure 5), in the first available polling we have after his endorsement, this lead had more than doubled. The increase in vote share following Trump's endorsement was not a temporary phenomenon for these candidates. As shown in the result model, these candidates received, on average, eighteen percentage points more of the vote share on election day in the pre-endorsement polling (0.185), give or take three points (0.032). These findings suggest that Trump's intervention had an immediate and long-lasting impact, both shaping the Republican primary fields and influencing who emerged as the general election candidate.

**Figure 6**: How Does Trump Matter? Post-Endorsement Change




[30] We include the same controls as the previous models, and full results are reported in the supplementary material.

Trump's influence can also be seen in high profile contests where he endorsed a candidate who was not already leading in the polls. Endorsements of candidates such as Tim Michels (WI-Gov), Blake Masters (AZ-Sen), J.D. Vance (OH-Sen), and Mehmet Oz (PA-Sen) all coincided with these candidates jumping to the front of the next poll following their endorsement. All four of these candidates went on to win their primaries. Similarly, his support of candidates such as Herschel Walker (GA-Sen) and Charles Herbster (NE-Gov), who were not leading the fundraising prior to his endorsement, became the largest fundraisers in the period following Trump's intervention. Walker went on to win his primary, though Herbster lost to the pre-endorsement fundraising leader Jim Pillen.

Trump's endorsements appear to have helped his candidates by funneling financial resources toward them.[31] Though his candidates had, on average, roughly seventeen percentage points more of the fields' money than their competitors prior to his intervention (see Figure 5), that lead increased a further thirteen points for the period between Trump's endorsement and the primary date. Money is therefore one mechanism through which Trump shaped Republican primary fields, and suggests the former president retained the ability to influence large donors and small-dollar grassroots supporters. Money is a key determinant of primary election outcomes (Thomsen 2021) and though Trump's endorsement almost certainly served as a direct signal to many primary voters, others likely supported his preferred candidates as a result of their—now better-financed—campaign efforts.

To shed further light on the question of influence, we restructure our data as a panel with two time periods. Period one is the figure for each of our signals prior to the Trump endorsement and period two is the respective value following Trump's endorsement. We then run a series of two-way fixed effects models, including controls for our other signals. These results align with those presented in Figure 6, with a clear association between the interaction of Trump's endorsement and time with both the immediate change in polling numbers (roughly thirteen percentage-points) and the primary result (roughly eighteen percentage-points). Our main finding is unmediated by the inclusion of controls for change in Fox News coverage, campaign fundraising, and social media attention, indicating a direct relationship between Trump's endorsement and eventual primary vote share.

[31] Though, as the above example from Nebraska demonstrates, these resources were not always deterministic of success.

# Discussion & Conclusion

What was the relative impact of media, MAGA, money, and mentions on the outcomes of 2022 Republican primaries? In this paper, we assessed the association and impacts of these different signals, helping explain what matters when elites send diverging messages about candidates. Overall, our analyses suggest that all these influences matter. Fox appearances, Trump endorsements, campaign funds, and Twitter attention all had substantively large, independent, and statistically significant relationships to the vote share. Republican candidates who did better on more of these measures tended to win the primary. Relatedly, incumbents advanced from their primaries without exception.

In this respect, our findings cleave to existing explanations for what matters in contemporary contests for elected office. Existing explanations do not, however, consider a possible situation where a party leader takes an historically active role in shaping the candidate field. Because the story of the contemporary Republican party cannot be told without acknowledging the influence of Donald Trump, we devoted substantial attention to the peculiar nature of Donald Trump's endorsement, attempting to uncover whether his behavior in the 2022 midterms offset the fundamentals of elections in a substantial way.

We confronted a substantial endogeneity problem: did Trump selectively endorse the most successful candidates, or did his endorsement make candidates successful? We assessed different avenues by which Trump's endorsement and candidate success might be causally connected. We find some evidence in both directions. Trump's endorsement mattered in that it attracted more of the things that make primary candidates successful in the first place: an increase in name recognition among the electorate, an increase in campaign funds, and an increase in attention from engaged elites. Candidate quality and early performance also mattered, in that Trump tended to endorse candidates who were already leading their fields.[32]

Our results show that the fundamentals were stronger predictors of 2022 Republican primary success than popular wisdom has allowed. They can also be interpreted as providing insight into who exactly the party *is*; an essential precursor to understanding what it would mean for the contemporary Republican party 'to decide'. Today's Republican Party is, as it

[32] We are working on an identification strategy that will allow us appropriate leverage on the causal question in a future iteration of this paper.

has been for several decades, a coalition of interest and donor groups, activists, media elite, and current or former elected officials. There are a few implications of this. The first is that Donald Trump overestimates his influence as a kingmaker. In some situations, the aura surrounding the *person* of Donald Trump might produce outsized attention to the fanfare surrounding actions—like endorsements—that would otherwise be in the realm of normal for the current leader of an American party. Finally, in his deeply public and often heavy-handed approach to the role of party leader, Trump will impact how party leaders handle endorsements in future contests, spurring some to a more active role, and producing a backlash against such leadership in others.

## References


Albert, Zachary, Bruce A Desmarais, and Ray La Raja. 2015. "Donor Networks and Their Influence in Congressional Primaries 1980-2014." *Unpublished Manuscript*. bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Donor-Networks-and-Their-Influence-in-Congressional-Primaries-1980-2014.-Albert-Desmarais-and-La-Raja.pdf.

Astor, Maggie, and Azi Paybarah. 2022. "Here's Where Trump's Endorsement Record Stands as the Primaries Wind down." *The New York Times*, August 23, 2022, sec. U.S. www.nytimes.com/2022/08/23/us/politics/trump-endorsed-candidates.html.

Bawn, Kathleen, Stephanie L. DeMora, Andrew Dowdle, Spencer Hall, Mark E. Myers, Shawn Patterson, and John Zaller. 2019. "Policy Voting in U.S. House Primaries." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 29 (4): 533–49.

Bender, Michael C. 2021. "Republican Governors Distance Themselves From Trump, Drawing His Ire." The Wall Street Journal. November 20, 2021. https://www.wsj.com/articles/republican-governors-distance-themselves-from-trump-drawing-his-ire-11637357756.

Boatright, Robert G. 2013. *Getting Primaried: The Changing Politics of Congressional Primary Challenges*. University of Michigan Press.

———. 2014. *Congressional Primary Elections*. Routledge.

Breaux, David A., and Anthony Gierzynski. 1991. "'It's Money That Matters': Campaign Expenditures and State Legislative Primaries." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 16 (3): 429–43.

Caputo, Marc. 2018. "How Ron DeSantis Won the Fox News Primary." Politico. August 29, 2018. www.politico.com/story/2018/08/29/ron-desantis-fox-news-florida-governor-primary-800706.

Chen, Lu, Wenbo Wang, and Amit P Sheth. 2012. "Are Twitter Users Equal in Predicting Elections? A Study of User Groups in Predicting 2012 US Republican Presidential Primaries." In *Social Informatics: 4th International Conference, SocInfo 2012, Lausanne, Switzerland, December 5-7, 2012. Proceedings 4*, 379–92. Springer.

Chu, Haidee, and Elena Moore. 2022. "Tracking Trump's Endorsements: Here's How His Picks Have Fared in Primaries." *NPR*, August 9, 2022. https://www.npr.org/sections/2022-live-primary-election-race-results/2022/09/06/1120652541/donald-trump-republican-primary-endorsement-performance.

Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cowburn, Mike. 2022. "Partisan Polarization in Congressional Nominations: How Ideological & Factional Primaries Influence Candidate Positions." Doctoral Thesis, Freie Universität Berlin.

Cowburn, Mike, and Meredith Conroy. 2023. "Where Do Women Win Primaries? Candidate Gender, District Partisanship, and Congressional Nomination." In *Midwest Political Science*

*Association*. Chicago, IL.

DellaVigna, Stefano, and Ethan Kaplan. 2007. "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122 (3): 1187–1234.

Dominguez, Casey B. K. 2011. "Does the Party Matter? Endorsements in Congressional Primaries." *Political Research Quarterly* 64 (3): 534–44.

FiveThirtyEight. 2022. "FiveThirtyEight's Election Deniers." GitHub. 2022. https://github.com/fivethirtyeight/data.

Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2005. "To Run or Not to Run for Office: Explaining Nascent Political Ambition." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): 642–59.

Gayo-Avello, Daniel. 2012. "'I Wanted to Predict Elections with Twitter and All I Got Was This Lousy Paper'–A Balanced Survey on Election Prediction Using Twitter Data." *ArXiv Preprint ArXiv:1204.6441*.

Gayo-Avello, Daniel, Panagiotis Metaxas, and Eni Mustafaraj. 2011. "Limits of Electoral Predictions Using Twitter." In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 5:490–93.

Gelman, Andrew, Boris Shor, Joseph Bafumi, and David Park. 2007. "Rich State, Poor State, Red State, Blue State: What's the Matter with Connecticut?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2: 345–67.

Gramlich, Josh. 2020. "What the 2020 Electorate Looks Like by Party, Race and Ethnicity, Age, Education and Religion." *Pew Research Center* (blog). October 26, 2020. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/26/what-the-2020-electorate-looks-like-by-party-race-and-ethnicity-age-education-and-religion/.

Green, Matthew. 2022. "Trump's Unusual Endorsement Game." Mischiefs of Faction. March 24, 2022. www.mischiefsoffaction.com/post/trump-s-unusual-endorsement-game.

Hassell, Hans J. G. 2018. *The Party's Primary: Control of Congressional Nominations*. Cambridge University Press.

Hirano, Shigeo, and James M. Snyder. 2019. *Primary Elections in the United States*. Cambridge University Press.

Hirano, Shigeo, James M. Snyder, Stephen Daniel Ansolabehere, and John Mark Hansen. 2010. "Primary Elections and Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Congress." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5 (2): 169–91.

Hoewe, Jennifer, Kathryn Cramer Brownell, and Eric C Wiemer. 2021. "The Role and Impact of Fox News." In *The Forum*, 18:367–88. De Gruyter.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946–1986." *American Political Science Review* 83 (3): 773–93.

Kalmoe, Nathan P, and Lilliana Mason. 2022. *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy*. University of Chicago Press.

Kamarck, Elaine. 2018. *Primary Politics: Everything You Need to Know about How America Nominates Its Presidential Candidates*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/61955.

Kanthak, Kristin, and Jonathan Woon. 2015. "Women Don't Run? Election Aversion and Candidate Entry." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 596–612.

King, Ryan. 2022. "How Trump's 236 Endorsed Candidates Fared in the Primary Season." Washington Examiner. September 14, 2022. www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/campaigns/comprehensive-look-trumps-endorsement-record.

Kitchens, Karin E., and Michele L. Swers. 2016. "Why Aren't There More Republican Women in Congress? Gender, Partisanship, and Fundraising Support in the 2010 and 2012 Elections." *Politics & Gender* 12 (4): 648–76.

Klumpp, Tilman, and Mattias K Polborn. 2006. "Primaries and the New Hampshire Effect." *Journal of*

*Public Economics* 90 (6–7): 1073–1114.

Knowles, Hannah, Josh Dawsey, and David Weigel. 2022. "Trump's Dominance in GOP Comes into Focus, Worrying Some in the Party -." *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2022. www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/17/trump-cheney-wyoming-republicans/.

Koch, Jeffrey W. 2000. "Do Citizens Apply Gender Stereotypes to Infer Candidates' Ideological Orientations?" *The Journal of Politics* 62 (2): 414–29. https://doi.org/10/dzs4k4.

Lawless, Jennifer L., and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes A Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malzahn, Janet, and Andrew B. Hall. 2023. "Election-Denying Republican Candidates Underperformed in the 2022 Midterms." *Working Paper*. https://andrewbenjaminhall.com/Malzahn_Hall_Election_Denying_Candidates_2022.pdf.

Manento, Cory. 2019. "Party Crashers: Interest Groups as a Latent Threat to Party Networks in Congressional Primaries." *Party Politics* 27 (1): 1–12.

Masket, Seth. 2009. *No Middle Ground: How Informal Party Organizations Control Nominations and Polarize Legislatures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

———. 2020. *Learning from Loss: The Democrats, 2016–2020*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Orr, Gabby. 2022. "Trump Endorses DeWine in Ohio Governor's Race in Marked Shift." CNN Politics. September 8, 2022. https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/07/politics/trump-endorsement-dewine-ohio-governor-race/index.html.

Owen, Guillermo, and Bernard Grofman. 2006. "Two-Stage Electoral Competition in Two-Party Contests: Persistent Divergence of Party Positions." *Social Choice and Welfare* 26 (3): 547–69.

Rupar, Aaron. 2022. "Bolsonaro Is Currently Trailing by Double Digits. But This Should Fix It." Tweet. *Twitter*. https://twitter.com/atrupar/status/1567872056905064449.

Ruwitch, John, and Barbara Sprunt. 2021. "Wyoming GOP Censures Liz Cheney For Voting To Impeach Trump." *NPR*, February 6, 2021, sec. Politics. www.npr.org/2021/02/06/964933035/wyoming-gop-censures-liz-cheney-for-voting-to-impeach-trump.

Sides, John, Chris Tausanovitch, Lynn Vavreck, and Christopher Warshaw. 2020. "On the Representativeness of Primary Electorates." *British Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 1–9.

Silver, Nate. 2019. "We're Tracking 2020 Presidential Endorsements. Here's Why They Probably Still Matter." *FiveThirtyEight*, February 28, 2019. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/were-tracking-2020-presidential-endorsements-heres-why-they-probably-still-matter/.

Snyder, Dan. 2022. "NEW: Former President #Trump Endorses Oklahoma Sen. James Lankford. Trump: 'Sometimes We Didn't Exactly Agree on Everything, but We Do Now.' @OKCFOX #Election2022." Tweet. *Twitter*. https://twitter.com/DanSnyderFOX25/status/1574888720108593165.

Thomsen, Danielle M. 2021. "Competition in Congressional Primaries." In *Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)*. Chicago (held virtually).

Trump, Donald J. 2021. "I Hope to See the Great Governor of South Dakota @KristiNoem, Run against RINO @SenJohnThune, in the Upcoming 2022 Primary. She Would Do a Fantastic Job in the U.S. Senate, but If Not Kristi, Others Are Already Lining up. South Dakota Wants Strong Leadership, NOW!" Tweet. *Twitter*. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1345077337633787905.

Warburton, Moira, and Alexandra Ulmer. 2022. "In Missouri Senate Race with Two Erics, Trump Endorses Eric." Reuters. August 2, 2022. www.reuters.com/world/us/missouri-senate-race-with-two-erics-trump-endorses-eric-2022-08-01/.

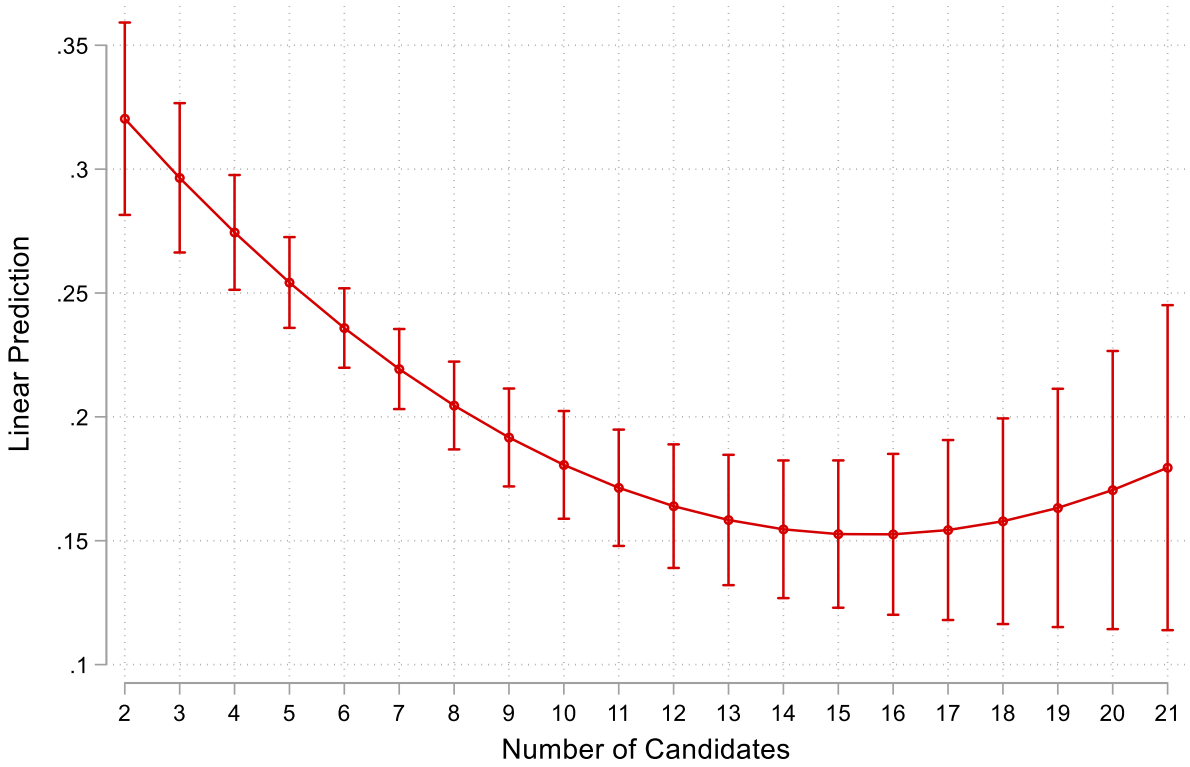
Ware, Alan. 2016. "Donald Trump's Hijacking of the Republican Party in Historical Perspective." *The Political Quarterly* 87 (3): 406–14.

# Supplementary Material

In the following we present the full results of each of our models with all control variables shown alongside a series of robustness checks including the addition of state fixed effects and our first series of models using thresholded data.

## *Justification for the Inclusion of Polynomial Control Term*

**Figure A.1**: Number of Candidates Effect




In our models, we include both the number of candidates and the number of candidates squared as controls. We do this because we expect this relationship to be non-linear. As shown in Figure A.1, we demonstrate that this is, indeed, the case.

## *Main Models with All Controls Shown*

In Table A.1 through A.4 we present the full results of the models included in the main paper, including values for all control variables.

**Table A.1**: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with Full Controls

| | Vote Share (%) |
|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.123*** |
| | (0.026) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.062*** |
| | (0.018) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.097*** |
| | (0.025) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.327*** |
| | (0.033) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.133** |
| | (0.051) |
| Candidate Incumbent | 0.145*** |
| | (0.037) |
| Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent) | 0.091*** |
| | (0.017) |
| Candidate White | 0.006 |
| | (0.019) |
| Candidate Female | 0.043** |
| | (0.016) |
| Candidate Election Denier | -0.039** |
| | (0.015) |
| Incumbent Primary | -0.074* |
| | (0.037) |
| Open Primary | -0.038 |
| | (0.027) |
| Republican Held Seat | 0.022 |
| | (0.029) |
| State Median Income | 0.021 |
| | (0.012) |
| State White (%) | -0.019 |
| | (0.066) |
| State Urban Pop (%) | -0.081 |
| | (0.088) |
| State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%) | 0.045 |
| | (0.132) |
| Number of Candidates | -0.028*** |
| | (0.006) |
| Number of Candidates$^2$ | 0.001** |
| | (0.000) |
| Senate | -0.014 |
| | (0.015) |
| State Top-Two/Four Primary | 0.006 |
| | (0.030) |
| Constant | 0.195 |
| | (0.131) |
| Observations | 239 |
| R-squared | 0.841 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

**Table A.2**: Who Decides? Winner Model with Full Controls

| | Won/Advanced |
|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 3.643** |
| | (1.217) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -4.549** |
| | (1.612) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 4.079* |
| | (1.671) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 2.563 |
| | (1.561) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 1.110 |
| | (9.161) |
| Candidate Incumbent | - |
| Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent) | 1.933* |
| | (0.776) |
| Candidate White | 0.606 |
| | (1.058) |
| Candidate Female | 1.224 |
| | (0.779) |
| Candidate Election Denier | -1.798 |
| | (0.930) |
| Primary Type: Incumbent | -3.924 |
| | (2.505) |
| Primary Type: Open | 2.119 |
| | (1.364) |
| Republican Held | -2.129 |
| | (2.117) |
| State Median Income | 0.906 |
| | (0.625) |
| State White (%) | -1.566 |
| | (3.527) |
| State Urban Pop (%) | 1.831 |
| | (4.176) |
| State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%) | 8.067 |
| | (9.434) |
| Number of Candidates | -0.141 |
| | (0.426) |
| Number of Candidates$^2$ | -0.001 |
| | (0.018) |
| Senate | 1.129 |
| | (0.985) |
| State Top-Two/Four Primary | 0.580 |
| | (1.414) |
| Constant | -13.155 |
| | (7.739) |
| Observations | 217 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

**Table A.3**: Who Does Trump Endorse? Full Controls

| | Fox Appearances (%) | Campaign Fundraising (%) | Av. Retweet (1000s) | Polling (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.390*** | 0.167*** | 0.195** | 0.106** |
| | (0.063) | (0.048) | (0.066) | (0.031) |
| Candidate Incumbent | 0.551*** | 0.663*** | 0.099 | - |
| | (0.093) | (0.073) | (0.098) | |
| Quality (Non-Incumbent) | -0.010 | 0.167*** | -0.015 | 0.087** |
| | (0.053) | (0.042) | (0.062) | (0.027) |
| Candidate White | 0.075 | 0.053 | -0.035 | 0.042 |
| | (0.061) | (0.051) | (0.075) | (0.032) |
| Candidate Female | 0.029 | 0.024 | 0.011 | 0.037 |
| | (0.050) | (0.038) | (0.057) | (0.032) |
| Candidate Election Denier | 0.045 | 0.066 | 0.018 | 0.010 |
| | (0.047) | (0.036) | (0.057) | (0.029) |
| Primary Type: Incumbent | -0.128 | -0.144 | -0.003 | - |
| | (0.137) | (0.097) | (0.153) | |
| Primary Type: Open | 0.027 | 0.006 | 0.019 | 0.148 |
| | (0.110) | (0.086) | (0.133) | (0.091) |
| Republican Held | -0.001 | 0.008 | -0.003 | -0.085 |
| | (0.111) | (0.083) | (0.128) | (0.055) |
| State Median Income | 0.012 | -0.018 | -0.034 | -0.288* |
| | (0.078) | (0.046) | (0.067) | (0.131) |
| State White (%) | -0.140 | 0.009 | -0.381 | -1.754 |
| | (0.292) | (0.218) | (0.330) | (1.238) |
| State Urban Pop (%) | -0.118 | -0.050 | -0.598 | -2.536 |
| | (0.426) | (0.299) | (0.426) | (1.667) |
| State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%) | -0.063 | -0.078 | -0.229 | -4.134* |
| | (0.743) | (0.492) | (0.723) | (1.670) |
| Number of Candidates | -0.014 | -0.036 | 0.088* | 0.011 |
| | (0.038) | (0.025) | (0.038) | (0.009) |
| Number of Candidates$^2$ | 0.000 | 0.001 | -0.006* | 0.000 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.000) |
| Senate | 0.006 | 0.008 | 0.084 | 0.173** |
| | (0.052) | (0.035) | (0.053) | (0.063) |
| State Top-Two/Four Primary | -0.019 | 0.052 | -0.199 | - |
| | (0.176) | (0.116) | (0.184) | |
| Constant | 0.251 | 0.400 | 0.767 | 6.849* |
| | (0.710) | (0.423) | (0.609) | (3.387) |
| Observations | 120 | 174 | 125 | 59 |
| R-squared | 0.651 | 0.594 | 0.218 | 0.466 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

**Figure A.4**: How Does Trump Matter?

| | Fox Appearances (% Change) | Campaign Fundraising (% Change) | Av. Retweets (1000s Change) | Polling (% Change) | Result (% Change) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trump: Endorsed | -0.012 | 0.142** | -0.052 | 0.128*** | 0.185*** |
| | (0.060) | (0.048) | (0.037) | (0.019) | (0.032) |
| Candidate Incumbent | -0.025 | -0.075 | -0.021 | - | - |
| | (0.085) | (0.073) | (0.055) | | |
| Quality (Non-Incumbent) | 0.117* | -0.107* | -0.017 | 0.006 | -0.007 |
| | (0.058) | (0.042) | (0.035) | (0.017) | (0.028) |
| Candidate White | -0.066 | -0.094 | 0.031 | -0.031 | -0.013 |
| | (0.063) | (0.052) | (0.042) | (0.021) | (0.033) |
| Candidate Female | 0.012 | -0.002 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.035 |
| | (0.048) | (0.039) | (0.032) | (0.018) | (0.033) |
| Candidate Election Denier | -0.043 | -0.057 | -0.016 | 0.010 | -0.014 |
| | (0.047) | (0.036) | (0.032) | (0.019) | (0.030) |
| Primary Type: Incumbent | -0.001 | -0.004 | 0.018 | - | - |
| | (0.085) | (0.097) | (0.085) | | |
| Primary Type: Open | -0.017 | -0.021 | -0.025 | 0.028 | -0.102 |
| | (0.081) | (0.085) | (0.074) | (0.038) | (0.094) |
| Republican Held | - | 0.011 | 0.050 | -0.016 | 0.052 |
| | | (0.082) | (0.071) | (0.027) | (0.056) |
| State Median Income | -0.015 | 0.027 | -0.015 | -0.005 | 0.194 |
| | (0.094) | (0.046) | (0.037) | (0.057) | (0.135) |
| State White (%) | 0.029 | -0.027 | 0.372* | -0.561 | 1.057 |
| | (0.291) | (0.217) | (0.186) | (0.644) | (1.277) |
| State Urban Pop (%) | -0.067 | -0.018 | 0.448 | -0.830 | 1.573 |
| | (0.548) | (0.306) | (0.237) | (0.845) | (1.720) |
| State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%) | 0.072 | 0.191 | -0.300 | 0.357 | 2.918 |
| | (0.642) | (0.486) | (0.406) | (0.841) | (1.723) |
| Number of Candidates | 0.003 | 0.004 | -0.013 | -0.001 | -0.020* |
| | (0.036) | (0.025) | (0.021) | (0.005) | (0.010) |
| Number of Candidates$^2$ | -0.000 | -0.000 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.001) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Senate | -0.017 | -0.021 | -0.022 | - | -0.118 |
| | (0.063) | (0.037) | (0.029) | | (0.065) |
| State Top-Two/Four Primary | 0.045 | -0.037 | 0.085 | - | - |
| | (0.226) | (0.115) | (0.103) | | |
| Constant | 0.139 | -0.142 | -0.340 | 0.904 | -4.356 |
| | (0.669) | (0.419) | (0.341) | (1.179) | (3.495) |
| Observations | 88 | 164 | 124 | 53 | 59 |
| R-squared | 0.088 | 0.115 | 0.119 | 0.595 | 0.523 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

## *Robustness Checks*

**Table A.5**: Who Decides? Dichotomous Fox Model (Media)

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances? Dichotomous | 0.079*** | 1.933* |
| | (0.017) | (0.805) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.068*** | -3.992** |
| | (0.018) | (1.372) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.099*** | 4.153* |
| | (0.025) | (1.636) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.331*** | 2.908 |
| | (0.033) | (1.485) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.133** | -0.272 |
| | (0.051) | (6.471) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.840 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.5 demonstrates that our finding for Fox media appearances is robust to being operationalized as a dichotomous variable which takes the value one if a candidate ever appeared on Fox and zero otherwise. Here, we see that ever appearing on Fox was associated with a roughly eight percentage point increase in vote share (0.079) and was also positively associated with winning the primary.

**Table A.6**: Who Decides? Raw Fundraising Figure (Money)

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.183*** | 3.987** |
| | (0.030) | (1.233) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.085*** | -5.085** |
| | (0.021) | (1.684) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.118*** | 4.043* |
| | (0.030) | (1.731) |
| Campaign Fundraising ($10s millions) | 0.008 | 0.417 |
| | (0.004) | (1.012) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.131* | 0.163 |
| | (0.060) | (7.571) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.773 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.6 demonstrates that our finding for campaign finance is not robust to operationalization as the raw figure in dollars. This finding indicates that it is the relative amount of funding that a candidate raises rather than the absolute figure that matters in a primary.

**Table A.7**: Who Decides? Average Favorites Model (Mentions)

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.121*** | 3.626** |
| | (0.026) | (1.217) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.062*** | -4.567** |
| | (0.018) | (1.616) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.094*** | 4.026* |
| | (0.026) | (1.675) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.327*** | 2.570 |
| | (0.033) | (1.565) |
| Average Favorites (1000s) | 0.028** | 0.478 |
| | (0.010) | (2.225) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.842 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.7 demonstrates that our results are robust to the alternative operationalization of social media mentions using the average number of favorites rather than the average number of retweets of a Twitter post to operationalize our mentions variable.

**Table A.8**: Who Decides? Trump 2016 Control

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.123*** | 3.750** |
| | (0.026) | (1.201) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.063*** | -4.535** |
| | (0.018) | (1.518) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.100*** | 3.809* |
| | (0.026) | (1.626) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.319*** | 1.846 |
| | (0.034) | (1.480) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.129* | 1.123 |
| | (0.051) | (8.656) |
| Trump 2016 Vote Share | 0.106 | 7.811 |
| | (0.130) | (8.743) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.839 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.8 demonstrates that our results are robust to the alternative operationalization of state partisanship using Trump's 2016 rather than his 2020 vote share as our control variable.

**Table A.9**: Who Decides? Election Denialism as Scale

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.124*** | 3.757** |
| | (0.026) | (1.204) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.062*** | -4.511** |
| | (0.018) | (1.526) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.101*** | 3.805* |
| | (0.026) | (1.616) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.319*** | 1.837 |
| | (0.034) | (1.475) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.129* | 1.260 |
| | (0.051) | (8.312) |
| Candidate Election Denial Scale | -0.012* | -0.479 |
| | (0.006) | (0.309) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.839 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

In Table A.9 we use the full range of election denialism rather than our dichotomous operationalization of this variable. *FiveThirtyEight* categorize candidates into one of the following categories which we assign the below values:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Fully accepted |
| 2 | Accepted with reservations |
| 3 | No comment |
| 4 | Avoided answering |
| 5 | Raised questions |
| 6 | Fully denied |

Given the contestable nature of this order—for example, is "no comment" further along the denialism scale than "accepted with reservations" and less than "avoided answering"?—we use our dichotomous operationalization of this control in the main paper. In Table A.9, we also demonstrate that vote share is negatively associated with higher values along the full range of this scale, where each additional value of this scale was associated with just over a percentage point decrease in primary vote share (-0.012).

**Table A.10**: Who Decides? Number of Candidates Control Factorized

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.126*** | 4.321*** |
| | (0.026) | (1.289) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.087*** | -4.315* |
| | (0.021) | (1.877) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.063* | 4.273* |
| | (0.028) | (2.023) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.310*** | 2.026 |
| | (0.033) | (1.799) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.164** | 1.906 |
| | (0.051) | (11.863) |
| Number of Candidates: 3 | -0.108** | -3.711 |
| | (0.041) | (8.837) |
| Number of Candidates: 4 | -0.129*** | -5.912 |
| | (0.036) | (4.778) |
| Number of Candidates: 5 | -0.132*** | -5.804 |
| | (0.033) | (4.925) |
| Number of Candidates: 6 | -0.194*** | -5.937 |
| | (0.038) | (6.140) |
| Number of Candidates: 7 | -0.181*** | -3.963 |
| | (0.042) | (4.785) |
| Number of Candidates: 8 | -0.139*** | -4.710 |
| | (0.038) | (7.446) |
| Number of Candidates: 9 | -0.207*** | -5.963 |
| | (0.041) | (5.555) |
| Number of Candidates: 10 | -0.191*** | -6.269 |
| | (0.044) | (4.997) |
| Number of Candidates: 11 | -0.327*** | -10.505 |
| | (0.057) | (6.301) |
| Number of Candidates: 13 | -0.255*** | -9.241 |
| | (0.063) | (7.228) |
| Number of Candidates: 14 | -0.158** | -7.531 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (0.053) | (16.640) |
| Number of Candidates: 15 | -0.182*** | -5.714 |
| | (0.053) | (4.758) |
| Number of Candidates: 19 | -0.276*** | -4.386 |
| | (0.058) | (5.303) |
| Number of Candidates: 21 | -0.261*** | -8.158 |
| | (0.058) | (5.724) |
| Observations | 239 | 217 |
| R-squared | 0.857 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement, Candidates Base Category = two candidates)

In Table A.10, we demonstrate that our findings are robust to factorizing the total number of candidates in a primary. As expected the number of candidates is a significant predictor of vote share under this operationalization. Candidates in primaries with more candidates were significantly likely to receive lower vote shares compared to the baseline category of a primary with only two candidates running.

**Table A.11**: Trump Endorsements & Election Denialism

| | Election Denier Dichotomous | Election Denier Scale |
|---|---|---|
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.373 | -0.241 |
| | (0.309) | (0.170) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.413 | 0.439 |
| | (0.488) | (0.261) |
| Observations | 371 | 371 |
| R-squared | | 0.200 |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.11 considers the relationship between Trump endorsements and election denialism. In these models the dependent variables are the dichotomous and scaled operationalization of *FiveThirtyEight*'s election denialism. The dichotomous model is a logistic regression which takes our dichotomous operationalization as the dependent variable. The scale model is an OLS regression with the scale of election denialism (see above) as our dependent variable. In both cases, there is no statistically significant relationship between Trump's patterns of endorsement and election denialism. Trump was only somewhat more inclined to support election deniers and endorse against election deniers.

### *Addition of State Fixed Effects*

In Table A.12 through A.14 we demonstrate that the results reported in the main analysis are robust to the inclusion of state fixed effects.

**Table A.12**: Who Decides? State Fixed Effects

| | Vote Share (%) | Winner |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.135*** | 4.071** |
| | (0.026) | (1.318) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.053 | -2.864 |
| | (0.036) | (6.039) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.096* | 5.170 |
| | (0.040) | (6.160) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.291*** | 2.116 |
| | (0.033) | (1.817) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.337*** | 2.741 |
| | (0.089) | (9.906) |
| Observations | 239 | 296 |
| R-squared | 0.883 | |
| State FE | ✓ | ✓ |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

**Table A.13**: Who Does Trump Endorse? State Fixed Effects

| | Fox Appearances (%) | Campaign Fundraising (%) | Av. Retweet (1000s) | Polling (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.153** | 0.384*** | 0.164*** | 0.106** |
| | (0.050) | (0.066) | (0.048) | (0.031) |
| Observations | 174 | 120 | 125 | 59 |
| R-squared | 0.609 | 0.654 | 0.675 | 0.466 |
| State FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

**Table A.14**: How Does Trump Matter? State Fixed Effects

| | Fox Appearances (% Change) | Campaign Fundraising (% Change) | Av. Retweets (1000s Change) | Polling (% Change) | Result (% Change) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.146** | -0.015 | -0.038 | 0.128*** | 0.185*** |
| | (0.051) | (0.063) | (0.036) | (0.019) | (0.032) |
| Observations | 164 | 88 | 124 | 53 | 59 |
| R-squared | 0.121 | 0.100 | 0.347 | 0.595 | 0.523 |
| State FE | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

*Restriction of Inclusion Based on Thresholds*

In Table A.15 and A.16 we repeat our main models using the two most common thresholds in the primary literature. In Table A.15 we restrict inclusion to those candidates who received 15% or more of the primary vote share. In Table A.16 we restrict inclusion to those candidates who raised enough money to require them to file campaign finance reports.

**Table A.15**: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with 15% Vote Threshold

| | Vote Share (%) | Won/Advanced |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.092** | 4.805* |
| | (0.031) | (2.020) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.069* | -5.930** |
| | (0.027) | (2.090) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.056 | 1.810 |
| | (0.029) | (1.583) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.254*** | 0.874 |
| | (0.042) | (1.897) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.142* | -1.097 |
| | (0.054) | (7.004) |
| Observations | 110 | 88 |
| R-squared | 0.811 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

**Table A.16**: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with Financial Threshold

| | Vote Share (%) | Won/Advanced |
|---|---|---|
| Fox Appearances (%) | 0.117*** | 3.372** |
| | (0.028) | (1.221) |
| Trump: Endorsed Opponent | -0.073*** | -4.561** |
| | (0.020) | (1.701) |
| Trump: Endorsed | 0.096*** | 3.293* |
| | (0.027) | (1.575) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | 0.345*** | 2.839 |
| | (0.038) | (1.647) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | 0.108* | 2.502 |
| | (0.054) | (10.585) |
| Observations | 200 | 179 |
| R-squared | 0.840 | |

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

## *Descriptive Statistics*

**Table A.17**: Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | Obs | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| vote pct | 362 | .166 | .217 | 0 | .909 |
| incumbent | 362 | .064 | .244 | 0 | 1 |
| non inc qual | 362 | .188 | .391 | 0 | 1 |
| candidate white | 362 | .845 | .362 | 0 | 1 |
| female | 362 | .199 | .4 | 0 | 1 |
| election denier scale | 362 | .445 | .498 | 0 | 1 |
| republican held | 362 | .525 | .5 | 0 | 1 |
| median income 10000 | 362 | 6.539 | .991 | 4.948 | 8.706 |
| primary type: challenger | 362 | .362 | .481 | 0 | 1 |
| primary type: incumbent | 362 | .276 | .448 | 0 | 1 |
| primary type: open | 362 | .362 | .481 | 0 | 1 |
| white pct | 362 | .629 | .161 | .216 | .891 |
| urban pct | 362 | .747 | .127 | .351 | .942 |
| trump 20 | 362 | .49 | .102 | .307 | .699 |
| number candidates | 362 | 8.917 | 5.142 | 2 | 21 |
| senate | 362 | .511 | .501 | 0 | 1 |
| toptwo dummy | 362 | .113 | .317 | 0 | 1 |

*Individual Fixed Effects Models: How Does Trump Matter?*

In our analyses for our third research question we operationalize our dependent variable in the main text as the change in values before and after Trump makes an endorsement. To demonstrate the robustness of our main finding—an endorsement by Trump was associated with an increased vote share in polling immediately after the endorsement (polling) which held through to the primary election date (result)—we restructure our data as a panel with two time periods. Time period one is the figure for each of our signals prior to the Trump endorsement and time period two is the respective figure following Trump's endorsement.

We then run a two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model to demonstrate the significance of the interaction of Trump's endorsement and time on a candidate's polling and their eventual vote share. For each, we run a model without controls and a second model that controls for variation in our other signals following Trump's endorsement. We present the results in Table A.18, with standard errors clustered at the individual level. That the substantive size and significance of our interaction term in both models does not change suggests a direct relationship between Trump's endorsement and vote share, and further indicates that this relationship is not strongly mediated by other signals, most obviously campaign fundraising given our main results.

**Table A.18**: Individual Fixed Effects

| | Polling (No Controls) | Polling (Controls) | Result (No Controls) | Result (Controls) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trump Endorsement : Time | 0.132*** | 0.135*** | 0.188*** | 0.179*** |
| | (0.024) | (0.033) | (0.037) | (0.049) |
| Fox Appearances (%) | | 0.021 | | 0.111 |
| | | (0.031) | | (0.097) |
| Campaign Fundraising (%) | | 0.027 | | 0.117 |
| | | (0.060) | | (0.078) |
| Average Retweets (1000s) | | 0.128 | | 0.135 |
| | | (0.124) | | (0.103) |
| Constant | 0.114*** | 0.107*** | 0.138*** | 0.108** |
| | (0.004) | (0.011) | (0.008) | (0.033) |
| Observations | 159 | 117 | 236 | 162 |
| R-squared | 0.535 | 0.612 | 0.470 | 0.553 |
| Number of Candidates | 106 | 78 | 177 | 117 |
| Individual Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

*Additional Note About Polling Data*

We used Ballotpedia because it is one of the few sources to reliably collect primary polling numbers. Other organizations, including *FiveThirtyEight*, do not collect polling for primary

races. Ballotpedia's approach to covering polls is detailed here. Given the paucity of data in many races we include all polling information and aggregate into pre and post Trump endorsement periods as well as aggregating across the entire primary. Four examples of polling information from Ballotpedia are shown below:

1. https://ballotpedia.org/Arizona_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(August_2_Republican_primary)#Polls
2. https://ballotpedia.org/Georgia_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(May_24_Republican_primary)
3. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_election_in_Arizona,_2022_(August_2_Republican_primary)
4. https://ballotpedia.org/Alabama_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(May_24_Republican_primary)

When aggregating these data, we split by the final day of the polling period in all cases except the Nevada governor primary as this includes a pre-Trump endorsement poll (4/28) that is listed as the day after Trump's endorsement (4/27), because the polling period (4/25 to 4/28) included more pre-endorsement days than post-endorsement days and was the earliest poll available. The Nevada governor's primary is the only race that has pre and post endorsement polling data from different polling firms. All other contests either have data from the same firm or did not have both pre and post polls.