# VOTER TURNOUT & THE POLITICAL MACHINES

#### A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout



1. larger turnout for presidential elections than for midterm elections.

#### A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout



2. larger turnout when state and local elections are on national election day.

#### A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

3. larger turnout if vote is taken on weekends than if it is taken on weekdays.

#### A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout



4. Voter turnout has been in the decline in the United States.

#### <u>Voter Turnout</u>

#### A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout



5. Voter turnout in the U.S. is among the lowest of the Industrialized Countries.

- A. Fun Facts about Voter Turnout
  - 7. Voter turnout is greater when the vote is close than when it is not close.
  - 8. Calling the election early reduces voter turnout.



2000 Presidential Election

- B. The Rationality of Voting
  - 1. Voting as a Collective Action Problem.
    - a. Focus on people who support the same candidate.
  - 2. The Candidate Differential the relative benefits of your favorite candidate winning.
    - a. An individual's benefit from their favorite candidate winning minus their benefit from the candidate that would win if their candidate did not win.

3. Basic Step Good Game (two candidates)

Number of Others Voting for *i*'s favorite candidate

		51 to 100%	50%	0 to 49%
Individual i	Vote			
individual i	Not			

3. Basic Step Good Game (two candidates)

Number of Others Voting for *i*'s favorite candidate

		51 to 100%	50%	0 to 49%
Individual <i>i</i>	Vote	b	b	0
	Not	b	0	0

b = individual i's benefits from favorite candidate winning (i.e., the candidate differential).

3. Basic Step Good Game (two candidates)

Number of Others Voting for *i*'s favorite candidate

		51 to 100%	50%	0 to 49%
Individual <i>i</i>	Vote	b - c	b - c	0 - c
	Not	b	0	0

b = individual i's benefits from favorite candidate winning (i.e., the candidate differential).

c = individual *i*'s cost of contributing.

3. Basic Step Good Game (two candidates)

		Number of Others Voting for <i>i</i> 's favorite candidate		
		p <sub>1</sub> p <sub>2</sub>		P <sub>3</sub>
		51 to 100%	50%	0 to 49%
Individual <i>i</i>	Vote	b - c	b - c	0 - c
	Not	b	0	0

A rational individual votes iff:

 $p_2(b) - c > 0$ 

...let  $R = p_2(b) - c$ . A rational individual votes if the rewards from voting exceed zero (i.e., R > 0).

3. Basic Step Good Game (two candidates)

Number of Others Voting for *i*'s favorite candidate

		51 to 100%	50%	0 to 49%
Individual <i>i</i>	Vote	b - c	b - c	0 - c
	Not	b	0	0

What's the problem if this is the complete story?

It's never rational to vote!

C. Paradox of Participation



Hence, if this were the full story it would never be rational to vote!

- C. Paradox of Participation
  - Civic Duty (D) benefits from the act of voting, like patriotic duty.



Now the rewards from voting equation simplifies to:

 $R = p_2(b) - c + D$ If D > c, then R > 0 and it is rational to vote. Does this seem reasonable or is it ad hoc?

- C. Paradox of Participation
  - 3. Selective Incentives (S) private rewards from the act of voting and punishments from the act of not voting.
    - a. Ex: social sanctions from not voting; praise from voting.
    - b.  $R = p_2(b) c + D + S$ .
    - c. Knack (1992) found that 42% of people surveyed said that their friends, neighbors, or relatives, would be disappointed if they did not vote in this election. The same people were significantly more likely to vote than people who did not expect disapproval from their friends.

- D. Discussion
  - 1. Can all of voter turnout be explained by civic duty and selective incentives?
  - 2. Does this model help us understand why voter turnout is greater when the election is close?
  - 3. Does this model help us understand why voter turnout declines when the election is called too early?
  - 4. Does this help us understand why candidates will hire vans to drive people to the polls?
  - 5. What does the motor voter bill do to the rationality of voting?

- A. The Gilded Age (1868-1890)
  - 1. Political Machines organizations that assure the support of the party rank and file through patronage.
    - a. EX: Tammany Hall
      - 1) Primary objective of Tammany was to get its members elected.
      - 2) Secondary objective was to provide something for machine supporters.
    - b. Machines had strange norms about acceptable corruption.
      - 1) Honest find out that the city wanted to buy a particular dock and buy it before them, so they could sell it to the city at a profit.
      - 2) Dishonest stealing gold plates off a government building and selling them.
  - 2. Vocabulary (for movie)
    - a. Precinct captain.
    - b. Alderman.
    - c. Ward.

- B. Discussion
  - 1. How did the political machines assure victory in local elections?
  - 2. What were the incentives of party bosses? Local supporters? Precinct captains?
  - 3. Why was voter turnout so high around 1870?
  - 4. Why did voter turnout drop so abruptly between 1880 and 1910?

- C. The Rationality of Voting During the Gilded Age
  - 1. Bribes from Voting

R = p(B) - c + \$If \$ > C, then R > 0.

- D. The Progressive Era and the Fall of the Machines (1890-1912)
  - Australian Ballot
    \$↓
  - 2. Enacting Poll Taxes

c ↑

- 3. Civil Service b  $\downarrow$
- 4. Voter Registration
- 5. Primaries.
- 6. Woman's Suffrage.

- 7. Heckelman study.
  - a. Australian ballot causes an 8.2% decline in voter turnout.
  - b. Poll taxes had a large effect on turnout.
  - c. Woman's suffrage had no effect.
- E. 1993 Los Angeles Mayoral Election
  - Michael Woo (D) versus Richard Riordan (R) in a tight race.
  - Woo offered six free donuts for anyone who offered proof of voting.
  - But he forgot one fundamental rule of the political machines... ...Woo bought \$100,000 of donuts, but he couldn't verify that the recipients voted for him and lost the race!