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The Curious Case of Missouri:

A look at why a 2016 campaign finance reform amendment passed in a landslide
in a Republican state and what that means for Republican elite

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Abstract

The Republican Party's opposition to campaign finance reform is based on the idea that limiting spending in elections by individuals and groups, including corporations, is a violation of the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech. Nationally, however, the majority of people, including a majority of Republican voters, are in favor of at least some campaign finance reform. In 2016, Missourians voted a wave of Republicans into office while simultaneously approving, in a landslide, a constitutional campaign finance law amendment. Using this ballot initiative as a case study, this paper will explore the degree to which the views of the Republican elite on this issue have been translated to and adopted by rank and file Republican voters and the association between agreement on the issue and voter party preference. It appears that the Republican elite's view of campaign finance reform has not largely been adopted by rank and file voters. So far, it has not mattered because those voters are still voting Republicans into office. However, the fact that voters bypassed the legislative process through a state campaign finance constitutional amendment may mean that Republican elites may not be safe on this issue.

Introduction

November 8, 2016 was a notable and shocking night. The electoral victory of Donald Trump came as a surprise to many, but it was not the only remarkable thing to happen that night. In Missouri, Amendment 2, a state constitutional amendment that would create campaign finance laws and contribution limits, passed with almost 70% of the vote. This is unusual because Missouri is a Republican leaning, conservative state and anti-campaign finance reform has become the Republican and conservative stance on this issue.

Past works by Andy Lewis and Wayne Batchis have described how conservatives and Republicans have adopted an anti-campaign finance reform position. These studies show how this issue became partisan, with the GOP against reforms. The Republican National Party Platform in 2016 also supports the idea that Republicans at the national level are anti-campaign finance. Despite this, the people of Missouri, who in large part voted for Republicans in 2016 at the national and state levels, also overwhelmingly voted to pass a campaign finance amendment,

limiting campaign contributions. However, this rift between party elites and voting masses is not unprecedented.

This paper will attempt to answer why an amendment imposing campaign finance limits was passed by the citizens in a Republican leaning state in the same year they voted a wave of Republicans into office. Given that Republican elite have pushed against campaign finance reform because they have adopted the view that it violates the First Amendment's protection of free speech, what can this specific state's case tell us about how well that view of campaign finance has been translated to and adopted by rank and file voters and whether that transition even matters? This will be done by examining Amendment 2 on the 2016 Missouri ballot and its effect on Missouri's campaign finance laws. I will also examine articles from three geographically diverse Missouri Newspapers, the *St Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Kansas City Star*, and the *Springfield News-Leader* to see how Amendment 2 was covered in the lead up to the election. Specifically, I will examine why a Republican businessman brought the amendment forward and bankrolled it, what people on both sides of the issue said about the amendment, and how much it was covered in comparison to other issues in this election.

Overall, what I found was there was not a strong opposition movement to the amendment, most of the coverage of was positive, and the amendment and campaign finance reform, in general, was covered significantly less than other issues during the election. What this means is that right now it may not matter that there is a divide between Republican elite and the Republican voting masses on this issue because the masses are still voting Republican, but the fact this happened in Missouri may mean the Republicans could have a problem in the future.

Literature Review

There have been several studies that have shown how campaign finance has become a partisan issue with the Republicans on the side against reform. The question then, is has the Republican elite opinion on this issue been adopted by the Republican voting masses? Wayne Batchis's book *The Right's First Amendment* describes how conservatives have shifted in their opinion on campaign finance reform. Most of the 20th century saw the liberal members on the Supreme Court upholding free speech while the more conservative members favored some limitations on speech. In *The Right's Turn in Conservative Christian Politics*, Andy Lewis points out that Evangelicals in the 1970s through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) supported campaign finance reform in order to limit the crisis of confidence in American politics and for concern of common morality and government integrity. Evangelicals were not yet citing First Amendment concerns, just moral ones (37).

In the 1970s, some conservatives started to assume a more pro-free speech position on campaign finance. One *National Review* article said "financing a candidate to one's heart's content is presumably among the activities the First Amendment protects. Free speech has some limitations, but the evidence disclosed to date is not convincing on the point that giving more than \$3,000 to a candidate is like crying fire in a crowded theater" (Batchis, 186). The First Amendment's protection of political spending became the view that many conservative and Republican party elites would eventually adopt.

By the 2000s, almost all the conservative and Republican elite had adopted this position. This can be seen in the sharp 5-4 ideological divide in the 2010 case, *Citizens United v FEC*. In the decision, all of the conservative justices voted that limiting spending by corporations and unions in elections is unconstitutional under freedom of speech, a decision praised by the

National Review and evangelical leaders (Batchis 188-89; Lewis 50). Evangelical leaders and organizations came out against campaign finance reform, despite the fact that in 2000, 81% of rank and file evangelicals supported or had no opinion about campaign finance reform. It was largely the leaders who were against it (52).

Batchis and Lewis describe the evolution of Republican and conservative elites' views on campaign finance reform based on First Amendment concerns. Batchis's discussion only focuses on the views of the elites, not the rank and file Republican and conservative voters. As Lewis briefly discusses, these opinions may not align.

The divide between party elites and rank and file members is not unprecedented. Ursula Hoffmann-Lange's book *Studying Elite vs Mass Opinion* finds that "because of their regular involvement in public affairs, elites are generally more knowledgeable about politics than non-elites (or the general public) ... It can, therefore, be assumed that the value orientations and political attitudes of elites differ from those of the broader public" (2-3). Two studies done in the second half of the 20th century further show that the opinion of the masses does not always match up with party elites. One found that rank and file members opinions on several issues were not as far apart as those of the party leaders (Browning) and a similar study, focusing on Indiana had analogous findings; "elite interparty cleavages are much greater than those displayed by any of the mass public groupings" (McClosky, 87).

Eric Shickler's book *Racial Realignment* addresses the divide between party elite and rank and file members in the 20th century on the issue of civil rights. He found that throughout the 1940s and 1950s, rank and file Republicans had less support for civil rights while the Republican national platform and GOP presidential candidates were much more in the middle on the issue (267). The Republican party did not take an anti-civil rights stance until the 1960s and

it was the rank and file members who drove the change; this helped shift the GOP platform to the right (270).

Even though some of these studies are older and American Politics has become more polarized, it seems that rank and file party members historically have not always shared the same ideas as the party elites. However, people continue to vote for their party because they share similar values in general, even if the rank and file members do not agree with party elites on every issue. However, a large gap between the party elite and the voting public on a single issue, could leave the party vulnerable and cause problems as the issue becomes more salient.

While the Republican party platform shifted to opposing campaign finance reform, as national polling and Missouri in 2016 show, the rank and file Republican voters have not necessarily shifted with them. Does the fact that rank and file Republican voters have not adopted the national party's position matter? Missouri 2016 is a good case study to try to answer this question because even though the Republican elite did not want campaign finance laws, the people of Missouri voted in these laws anyway.

Methods

In order to answer these questions, I primarily looked at articles from three large Missouri Newspapers with the highest distribution rates for their region from November 1, 2015, to the day of the election, November 8, 2016. The three newspapers I used were the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (SLPD) which covers St. Louis and surrounding counties in eastern Missouri, the *Kansas City Star* (KCS) which covers Kansas City, Missouri and surrounding western Missouri counties, and the *Springfield News-Leader* (SNL) which covers Springfield, the Ozarks and the surrounding southern Missouri counties. In each of these newspapers, I searched for articles and

editorials about the 2016 election, specifically ones addressing Amendment 2, campaign finance reform and campaign contribution limits to find out what was said about the amendment and this policy area during the election.

Using the Access World News database, I searched the archives of all the articles in the three newspapers. In addition to examining what was said about the amendment and how it was covered, I looked at the frequency with which it was mentioned in articles concerning the 2016 election as well as the articles that brought up the issue area of campaign finance related to reform. I compared these numbers to the frequency with which other Missouri state-wide ballot questions and the general issue areas of health care, education, and the economy were covered in articles concerning the 2016 election. I chose these issue areas to compare to campaign finance reform after looking at the “issues” page on the campaign websites for all the Democratic and Republican candidates in the two statewide races in 2016, the gubernatorial race and the United States Senate race. Health care, education, and the economy were all addressed as major issues in at least three of the four candidates’ websites.

To find the frequency with which the ballot initiative and general issue areas were addressed in articles about the 2016 election, I searched in each of the three newspapers, individually, on Access World News, limiting the dates from 11/01/2015 (a year before the election) to the day of the election, and a second search with the dates from 08/01/2016 to the day of the election. The second search with the narrower dates was to account for the fact that information about the 2016 statewide Missouri ballot initiative did not come out until August 2016. Once I found the total number of articles in each of the three newspapers about the 2016 election, I searched for the number of articles that mentioned each statewide ballot question and the number of articles that mentioned campaign finance reform or contribution limits, health

care, the economy, and education in the context of the 2016 election. I looked over the articles to ensure that they were actually addressing what I was counting them as addressing. Then, I calculated the percentage of the articles that addressed each ballot question and each general issue from each of the three newspapers.

In addition to articles from these three Missouri newspapers and the websites for gubernatorial and Senate candidates, I searched the Missouri Ethics commission site for the actual text of the Amendment to determine how it would change Missouri's campaign finance laws. I also read articles and listened to podcasts from Missouri Public Radio on their website. This provided additional background on the amendment; information about Fred Sauer (the man behind the amendment), the potential effect and limits of the amendment, and arguments for and against the amendment.

Data

Republican Platform vs Public Opinion on Campaign Finance

As Batchis and Lewis demonstrate, Republican and conservative elites have shifted to the view that campaign finance reform is unconstitutional because they feel it would violate the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech because money is speech even if contributions come from a corporation. This is further reinforced by the 2016 Republican Party national platform which states:

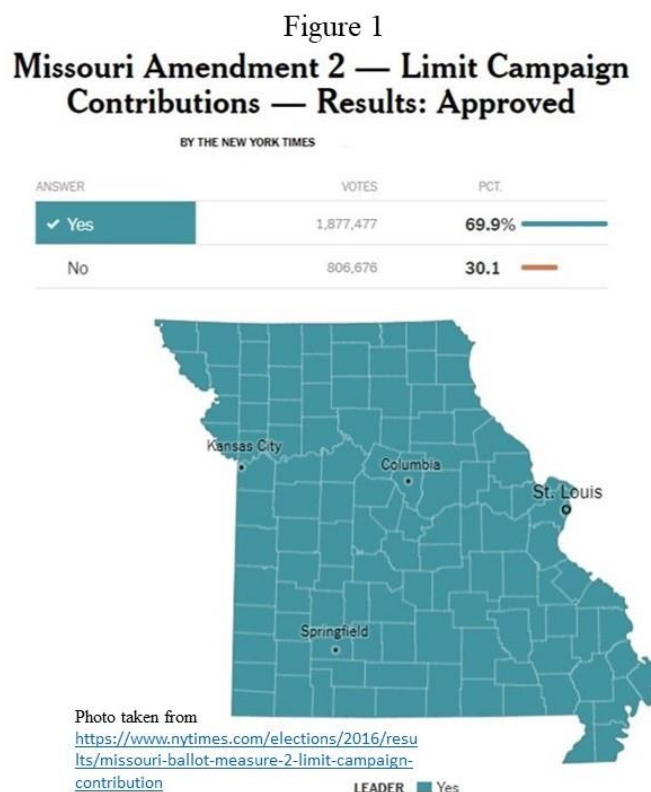
The rights of citizenship do not stop at the ballot box. Freedom of speech includes the right to devote resources to whatever cause or candidate one supports. We oppose any restrictions or conditions that would discourage citizens from participating in the public square or limit their ability to promote their ideas, such as requiring private organizations to publicly disclose their donors to the government. Limits on political speech serve only to protect the powerful and insulate incumbent officeholders. We support repeal of federal restrictions on political parties in McCain-Feingold, raising or repealing contribution limits, protecting the political speech of advocacy groups, corporations, and

labor unions, and protecting political speech on the internet. We likewise call for an end to the so-called Fairness Doctrine and support free-market approaches to free speech unregulated by government. (12)

However, as Lewis and Shickler note, the view of the Republican, conservative, and evangelical elite may not reflect the position of the rank and file members. A Pew Research Center poll showed that 77% of people think there should be limits on campaign spending, including 72% of Republicans and 68% who identify as conservative. Also, 58% of Republicans and 57% of conservatives think that new laws would curb the role of money in politics.

Election Results

Missouri has long been a conservative, Republican leaning state. In the past 10 presidential elections (1980-2016) Missouri has voted for the Republican candidate in eight of those elections, only voting for the Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 (Missouri). In 2016



Missouri voted Republican in almost every race. Donald Trump won Missouri with 56.4% of the vote while Hilary Clinton only won 37.9%, Republican Roy Blunt won the US Senate seat and Republican Eric Greitens won the gubernatorial race. Of the eight US House races, six of them went to Republicans and just two (the districts with St. Louis and Kansas City) were won by Democrats. In the state legislature elections, there were 17 State Senate races and Republicans won 11 of them, and 163 State

House races with Republicans winning 117 seats (Missouri Results). In addition, Republican candidates also won the offices of lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer. This gave the Missouri state government a Republican trifecta; while the state had leaned Republican before, this election was the first time the party has held power across the board (Salter).

Despite this Republican wave and the Republican Party’s platform on campaign finance, Amendment 2 imposing campaign finance laws, passed with nearly 70% of the vote. As Figure 1 shows, Amendment 2 won the majority of the vote in every single county in the state (Missouri Amendment 2).

Amendment 2: What it says

The question on the ballot for Amendment 2 ask voters “Shall the Missouri Constitution

Figure 2 Amendment 2 on Ballot

**CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT NO. 2**
Proposed by Initiative Petition

Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

- establish limits on campaign contributions by individuals or entities to political parties, political committees, or committees to elect candidates for state or judicial office;
- prohibit individuals and entities from intentionally concealing the source of such contributions;
- require corporations or labor organizations to meet certain requirements in order to make such contributions; and
- provide a complaint process and penalties for any violations of this amendment?

It is estimated this proposal will increase state government costs by at least \$118,000 annually and have an unknown change in costs for local governmental entities. Any potential impact to revenues for state and local governmental entities is unknown.

☐ YES ☐ NO

be amended to establish limits on campaign contributions by individuals or entities to political parties, political committees, or committees to elect candidates for state or judicial office; prohibit individuals and entities from intentionally concealing the source of such contributions; require corporations or labor organizations to meet certain requirements in order to make such contributions; and provide a complaint process and penalties for any violations of this amendment?” (Sample Ballot). Figure 2 shows exactly how the question was presented on the ballot.

The ballot question simplified the amendment. The full text of the amendment is, of course, much more detailed. The contribution limit is set at \$2,600 from any person, other than the candidate, to a campaign to elect a person to the Missouri state offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, State Auditor, Attorney General, State Senator, State Representative, State Judicial Office, and any other state office. The amendment did not address campaign finance laws for candidates in local elections. The amendment also prohibited political parties from accepting aggregate contributions from any person or committee over the amount of \$25,000 per election at the state, county, municipal, district, ward, and township levels combined (MO Const. art VIII, § 23; & Constitutional Amendment 2).

The amendment defines person to include,

an individual, group of individuals, partnership, committee, proprietorship, joint venture (including any department, agency, board, institution or other entity of the state or any of its political subdivisions), trade or professional or business association, association, political party or any executive committee, and any other club or organization however constituted, or any officer or employee of such entity acting in the person's official capacity (MO Const. art VIII, § 23).

Unions and corporations are also defined as persons, but there is a separate section of the amendment that sets up different restrictions for them. Unions and corporations are generally not allowed to make campaign contributions directly to a campaign or a candidate, with potential exceptions based on a review by the Missouri Ethics Commission for interpretation through an advisory opinion process. That also applies to contributions from campaign finance committees to other committees (MO Const. art VIII, § 23& Constitutional Amendment 2).

Primary elections and the subsequent general elections are considered to be separate elections under the amendment. This means that a person can donate to a campaign in the primary election up to \$2,600 and donate to the same campaign again in the general election up to \$2,600. The definition of election in the Amendment also includes “elections to nominate or

elect, retain or recall, and a caucus of other meetings of a political party” (MO Const. art VIII, § 23).

The amendment established penalties, ranging from misdemeanors to civil penalties and fines, for violating the law. Individuals who knowingly and willingly violate the contribution limits by making or accepting the donation, or knowingly and willfully concealing a contribution by not filling or incorrectly filing a report, are "held liable to the state in civil penalties in an amount of at least double and up to five times the amount of any such contribution." Purposeful violations of the amendment are classified as class A misdemeanors (MO Const. art VIII, § 23, cl. 5-6).

Amendment 2: How did it get on the 2016 Ballot?

Missouri was one of only 12 states in 2016 that did not have any campaign finance laws that set limits on contributions to candidates or campaigns. This was not always the case. In November 1994, 74% of Missouri voters approved a ballot measure that limited contributions to state candidates. The limits were \$1,350 for statewide candidates, \$675 for state senate candidates and \$325 for House candidates (Hancock). However, in 2008 the Republican controlled Missouri General Assembly repealed these contribution limits. After this repeal, campaign contributions in Missouri shot up. Six- and seven-figure dollar donations have become a regular occurrence. One donor, Rex Sinquefeld, has given over \$45 million in contributions to several candidates since the contribution limits were repealed in 2008 (Hancock).

This rise in contributions, with millions of dollars from one person going to one candidate, prompted Republican and self-affirmed social conservative Fred Sauer to work to get the amendment on the ballot. In 2012, Sauer ran for Missouri governor as a Republican, but ultimately lost in the primary election to Dave Spence. He had been a long-time critic of the role

of money in Missouri politics saying that it has too much influence which is what motivated him to get this issue on the ballot. He spent \$1.4 million of his own money to finance the amendment and pay for ads. It was pointed out that this kind of contribution, spending \$1.4 million from one person in a campaign for a ballot measure would be illegal under his proposed amendment (Rosenbaum; & Hancock). Sauer said in a statement in August 2016 when he was working to get the amendment on the ballot, “‘Campaign contribution limits are in the best interest of everyone in the state, both citizen and legislator...By reducing the extraordinary rivers of cash flowing from wealthy donors into Jefferson City, the (proposed amendment) will better assure that our government is truly representative of the people, and in turn provide an environment in which freedom and the will of the people can flourish’” (Hancock).

Tod Jones, who authored the amendment also believed that Missouri’s system of unlimited campaign contributions had a significant impact on candidates and politicians in office. “‘If you give a million dollars to a candidate, whose call are you going to take? Jones said. ‘Are you going to take mine? Or are you going to take the donor’s? So, there’s a lot of issues with undue influence and impact that donation has on the actual politician.’” Jones felt that the amendment would allow the people to take back control of the state government instead of leaving things in the hands of the few rich donors. He also hoped that the Amendment would make politicians more accountable the people and not just those who gave them large contributions (Rosenbaum).

Coverage of Amendment 2 in Missouri Newspapers: arguments for and against

Many of the arguments supporting Amendment 2 in news articles and editorials in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, the *Kansas City Star*, and the *Springfield News-Leader* as well as in Missouri Public Radio articles and podcasts reflected the views of Sauer and Jones. Many of the

editorials call for Missourians to vote yes on the amendment in order to take back the state government. Also, because it would reduce the influence of money in politics and make politicians accountable to the people. Many articles also opined that having no limits to contributions would concentrate the power and influence in elections and in politics in general into the hands of the wealthy donors and groups that give millions to individual candidates to fund campaigns (Canon; Editorial: Vote yes; Hancock; McCaskill, Moskop, Reject higher Missouri; Rosenbaum; & Schmitt). Making a similar argument, an editorial from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* stated “big-money contributions are poisoning Missouri’s political culture and undermining democracy by diluting the influence of voters in the electoral and decision-making process” and that voting yes on Amendment 2 is the best way to fix this problem of money in politics (Editorial: Yes, yes, yes).

Two Missouri billionaires were mentioned with particular concern; Rex Sinquelfield and David Humphreys. Both donors have given six or seven-figure contributions to candidates or political action committees that support specific interests. Sinquelfield has given millions across several campaigns in his attempt to eliminate Missouri’s income tax. Humphreys, a Joplin businessman, has donated similar amounts, attempting to limit the influence of labor unions (Canon). By just October 2016, these two individuals had given more than \$24 million between them in this election cycle to bankroll candidates who support their causes (Reject higher Missouri cigarette taxes). Overall, pro-Amendment 2 arguments in papers encouraged voters to vote yes on the amendment because it would be good for the state by making politicians accountable again.

Articles and editorials opposing Amendment 2 largely argued that it would not actually make the money in politics problem any better. Very few articles made the Republican National

Platform argument that campaign contributions are a form of free speech and therefore contribution limits violate the First Amendment. This argument only appeared, without elaboration, in three articles. One of the main arguments against the amendment was that it would actually lead to more dark money in Missouri elections, because donors who would be unable to support candidates directly with large donations, would reroute money through independent expenditure groups, who, protected by federal law, do not have to disclose where their donations came from. One critic stated, “Large donors will still be giving large amounts of support exceeding \$5,000. They would just be doing it in a manner that won’t be seen by the Missouri Ethics Commission” (Mathieu).

The Executive director of the Missouri Ethics Commission, James Klahr, responded to those criticisms saying that donors do not have to result to dark money if they want to donate more to a candidate. A section of the amendment allows donors to open committees which can give limited amounts of money to campaigns. As long as each committee has a treasurer, donors can open as many committees as they want. The amendment just makes it harder for wealthy individuals to give millions to individual candidates in the hope that it will discourage them from doing so (Mathieu; & Moskop).

Others argued that the Amendment did not go far enough and would not necessarily lead to a drop in political spending. “Though it caps donations to candidates at \$2,600 and makes it illegal in most cases to shuffle money between committees, any political action committee not affiliated with a candidate or party can still receive unlimited donations and spend freely to advocate for or against any candidate or cause” (Moskop). Jones pushed back against this argument saying that type of action is always going to happen because of the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in *Citizens United v FEC*, outside spending cannot be limited (Moskop). The

amendment would limit money coming from wealthy individual donors and take some of the power out of their hands, but it could not fix every problem or potential problem there is with money in elections.

Coverage of Amendment 2 in Missouri Newspaper: how strong was the opposition?

Some people in Missouri did have objections to Amendment 2. However, those objections never took the shape of an opposition movement to the amendment. In general, support for the amendment was very strong. Several days before the election, on October 30, a poll published in *St. Louis Post Dispatch* found that 76% of the public were considering voting in favor of the amendment, including 71% of Republicans in Missouri. Table 1 shows the breakdown of that poll.

Table 1: Poll “Yes or No on Amendment 2”

	State wide	Men	Women	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Yes	76%	70%	81%	80%	71%	78%
No	15%	19%	12%	16%	15%	15%

The lack of opposition to Amendment 2 is also evident in that a vast majority of the coverage of the amendment in Missouri Newspapers either presented a neutral view of the amendment, stating what it did and what the arguments were on either side, or was pro-amendment 2 and encouraged voters to support it at the polls. Of all of the articles (including editorials and letters to the editor) that address Amendment 2 across all three Missouri newspapers looked at in this study, 42.9% of the articles supported the amendment and urged Missourians to vote yes, 47.6% took a neutral stance (only gave information about what the amendment was and what it would do or dedicated equal time talking about the arguments in favor of and against the amendment), and just 9.5% of the articles criticized the amendment and urged no votes.

Coverage of Amendment 2 in Missouri Newspapers: how much was it talked about?

While the majority of the coverage of Amendment 2 was in favor of the amendment or was neutral, in the grand scheme of the election, it was not covered heavily in newspapers. In 2016 there were six amendments and propositions including Amendment 2 that the entire state voted on. Table 2 shows how often each amendment and proposition was mentioned in articles addressing the 2016 election. The percentage represents the number of articles each issue was mentioned in out of all of the articles that addressed the 2016 election from four months before the election. It shows that Amendment 2 was by no means the most covered ballot initiative in newspapers during the election. Across the three newspapers, Amendment 3 was addressed the most out of the six state ballot questions. Amendment 2 was the third most talked about in the SLPD, and in KCS it was tied with Proposition A as the 4th most talked about. It was tied for the lowest mentioned in SNL with Amendments 1 and 4.

Table 2 Percentage of articles about 2016 election that ballot initiatives are mentioned in

Newspaper	Amendment 1 (Renew Sales Tax)	Amendment 2 (Campaign Contribution Limits)	Amendment 3 (Cigarette Tax 60 cents)	Amendment 4 (Prohibit new state sales tax)	Amendment 6 (Voter ID)	Prop A (Tabaco Tax 23 cents)
SLPD	0.5%	2.2%	4.1%	1.3%	2.7%	5.2%
KCS	3.3%	4.9%	9.9%	7.4%	7.4%	4.9%
SNL	0.7%	0.7%	1.3%	0.7%	1.1%	1.3%

Amendment 2 and campaign finance reform or contribution limits were not one of the main issue areas addressed in the Missouri election. The Missouri Republican Party Platform in 2016 makes no mention of campaign finance reform or the role of money in elections and of the four candidates in the two statewide races, Roy Blunt, the Republican running for Senate, Jason Kander the Democrat running for Senate, Eric Greitens, the Republican running for Governor, and Chris Koster, the Democrat running for Governor, Koster was the only one who explicitly

mentioned campaign finance on their “issues” section on their campaign website. Kander only made vague reference to it and neither Republican candidate made any mention of it. Some of the main issues mentioned on their websites were health care, the Missouri economy, and education. All these issues are addressed in the 2016 Missouri Republican Party Platform as well as appear on at least three out of the four candidates’ websites in the issues section. As Table 3 shows, they were all covered significantly more in news articles and editorials about the election than campaign finance and contribution limits. Table 3 also shows that after the release of the campaign finance reform amendment the issue was still not heavily covered in the newspapers. What this demonstrates is that campaign finance, even though there was a statewide ballot question addressing the issue, was not the most important issue to Missourians.

Table 3 Percentage of times an issue was mentioned in articles about the 2016 election

Newspaper	Campaign Finance	Health Care	Economy	Education
SLPD Year out from Election	4.3%	12.4%	16.5%	10.6%
SLPD 4 Months out from Election	5.0%	9.5%	12.7%	9.9%
KCS Year out from Election	10.6%	25.9%	36.3%	16.9%
KCS 4 Months out from Election	16.5%	28.1%	39.6%	8.9%
SNL Year out from Election	1.5%	6.2%	12.2%	8.1%
SNL 4 Months out from Election	0.67%	7.9%	13.5%	9.9%

The Missouri specific results are consistent with national data. A New York Times and CBS national poll from 2015 found that while a majority of the public think that there needs to be at least some campaign finance reform and most are in favor of at least some contribution limits, almost no one ranks campaign finance reform or money in elections as the most important

problem facing the country. The economy, education, and health care were viewed as more important issues by national voters.

Summary of Findings

All of this data analysis of the coverage of the 2016 election in Missouri with a focus on Amendment 2 shows the following:

- The Republican elite are anti-campaign finance reform because they see it as violating the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech, despite the fact that more than 70% of the general public, including 70% of self-identified Republicans support some degree of reform in this area.
- Amendment 2 was put on the ballot due to the actions of one wealthy individual who was a long-time critic of the role of money in elections. He believed that Missouri's lack of contribution limits allowed wealthy individuals to give huge donations to candidates, making politicians accountable to those individuals, not the public. He also had the resources and drive to do something about his concerns.
- While Amendment 2 may not reduce the overall amount of money spent by outside groups in Missouri state elections, it would make it much harder for wealthy individuals to influence elections through financial support of preferred candidates.
- Once the amendment to establish campaign contributions was on the ballot, there was not a strong opposition campaign. A majority of the articles and editorials that addressed Amendment 2 were in favor of it and encouraged Missourians to vote yes on it or were just informational articles and gave no recommendation just information about the amendment. The small number of opposition articles opposed it largely

because of a perceived lack of effect. Very few mentioned First Amendment concerns, the Republican elite's general opposition to campaign finance reform.

- In comparison to the other statewide ballot questions and other issues in the election, Amendment 2 and campaign finance, in general, were not covered or talked about a lot in newspapers.
- While about 70% of Missourians supported some form of campaign finance reform, it was not their most important issue. This finding is consistent with national polling.
- Despite the disconnect between the views of the public and the Republican elite, Republicans still won almost all of the 2016 Missouri elections.

This demonstrates that campaign finance reform is not an important enough issue for candidates to campaign on, nor does it seem to be a factor that influences how the public votes. The people in Missouri found other issues, such as health care, education, and the economy, more important than campaign finance reform; they voted in a wave of Republicans in 2016, likely because they agreed with the Republican party stance on these other issues. The success of Amendment 2 in Missouri also shows that since there is broad popular support for campaign finance reform, if the public has a chance to get reform through a nontraditional legislative avenue, such as a ballot initiative, it could pass despite the goals of the Republican elite.

Conclusion

There is a definite rift between the Republican elite's platform for campaign finance and what the voting masses want; the view that the Republican elite has taken on this issue has not been translated to and adopted by rank and file voters. However, Missourians still voted in a wave of Republicans in 2016 probably because they like the party platform on other issues they

found more important at the time. The Republican view of campaign finance did not matter as much to rank and file voters because it is not an issue they find to be the most important.

However, the fact that Missourians overwhelmingly passed Amendment 2 shows that this issue has momentum. It only took one individual in Missouri, who had the resources and passion, to get the amendment on the ballot. From there, it passed with relative ease. If campaign finance reform were to become more highly prioritized by voters, the passage of the 2016 campaign finance reform amendment in Missouri demonstrates that this could be an issue for the Republican elite and leadership in the future, even if it does not seem to matter as much right now.

If what happened in Missouri in 2016 with Amendment 2 is replicated in other states, it could undermine the national Republican party and elite because it effectively goes behind their backs to get campaign finance reform laws passed. Even though Amendment 2 was challenged in the courts just after the elections and sections of it have been struck down by conservative judges, Republican elite are going to have to watch this issue. Continually fighting against campaign finance reform may cause them some problems later on if they do not want to be undermined by state ballot initiatives and appear out of touch with the voters.

Further studies of this issue in other states, especially Republican leaning or solid Republican states, would be informative. Additional studies could also examine other issues that have caused rifts between the party elites and rank and file voters, exploring if and how those divides caused problems for the party elite and how and if those rifts were eventually resolved.

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