

Candidate Emergence in State Legislative Elections:

Does Public Funding Make a Difference?

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the effect of public funding on candidate emergence in state legislative elections. Using new data from a survey of community leaders in three states, it examines factors that influence the decision to run for state representative, looking especially at whether the availability of public funds induces qualified citizens to become candidates. The findings remain tentative because not all the data have been collected, but they point to the conclusion that public funding of elections appears to encourage low income candidates and those who dislike fundraising or perform poorly at it. Public funding also appears to encourage high quality candidates to run, as well as those who tend to be more liberal ideologically.

Running for office is a demanding form of political participation, but the health of American democracy depends on the willingness of some citizens to declare their candidacy. Indeed, a dearth of candidates and lack of diversity have significant implications for electoral competition, political representation and political accountability (Gordon et al 2007). Elections between or among qualified candidates are an essential mechanism for creating responsive political leaders and enhancing voter interest and turnout (Carson et al 2007; Cox & Munger 1989; Verba et al 1995). Moreover, diversity of candidates matters too. When minority candidates run for office they tend to attract additional voters from minority communities (Barreto 2007). For all these reasons, it is critical to explore factors that influence candidate emergence.

Previous research has focused on how candidates emerge in congressional elections, demonstrating that many come from the ranks of state legislatures (Francis & Kenny 2000; Maisel et al 2001). But there has been relatively little research on how candidates emerge in state legislatures. While previous studies analyzed how and why non-incumbents choose to run for state legislature, they have not fully considered potential candidates who choose *not* to run. These are the citizens whose decision not to participate ultimately affects levels of political competition and the quality of representative government (Hogan 2001; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Squire 2000). Since state legislatures appear to be the training ground for future national leadership, it is critical to understand the obstacles that deter potential leaders from running for the statehouse. If

individuals lack the opportunity to run at the grassroots level – the proverbial “farm system” – they may never seek higher elective office.

This study explores whether a public financing system would encourage quality candidates to run for the lower chamber of the state legislature. The passage of the Connecticut’s Clean Election Law Public Act 05-5 provides an ideal opportunity to assess the effect of public funding of campaigns on candidate emergence. By providing public funds to qualifying candidates the law seeks to encourage potential candidates and increase the diversity of the candidate pool. At the same time, Clean Elections promises to reduce the role of money in politics, especially that which goes to incumbent officeholders.

The current study is part of a larger project about candidate emergence. Using new data from a survey of community leaders in three states (Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island) the broader study seeks to understand why some citizens who are potentially good candidates ultimately refrain from running.<sup>1</sup> For present purposes, however, this analysis focuses on the extent to which the availability of public funds stimulates participation.<sup>2</sup> Research on congressional elections demonstrates that the most often cited factor in potential candidates’ thinking about running for the U.S. House is the necessity of raising large amounts of money to fund their campaign (Maisel et al. 2001). The presence of public funds has the potential to offset misgivings about running for elective office.

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<sup>1</sup> As of this writing the survey instrument remains in the field. The analysis here does not include roughly 100 surveys that were returned August 10-24, 2007. Furthermore, the Rhode Island surveys are not included in this analysis.

## **Background and Previous Research**

The dearth of competitive elections has spawned numerous theories and empirical studies about root causes, and generated a number of electoral reform proposals to stimulate competition. Most knowledge about the lack of competition comes from the literature on Congressional elections. A strong consensus exists that incumbent deterrence powerfully shapes the level of political competition (Banks & Kiewiet 1989; Bianco 1984; Bond et al 1985; Goodliffe 2001; Hogan 2001; Jacobson 1989; Jacobson & Kernell 1981; Krasno & Green 1988; Levitt & Wolfram 1997; Squire 1989). Incumbents, of course, have many advantages, including the fact they are typically high quality candidates and officeholders (Erikson 1971; Erikson & Wright 2000; Zaller 1998), they can exploit the perquisites of office to improve their standing with constituents (Ansolabehere & Snyder Jr 2000; Cain et al 1987; Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1977; Mayhew 1974) they have access to abundant campaign resources (Abramowitz 1991; Abramowitz et al 2006; Goodliffe 2001; Jacobson 1980) and they enjoy favorable district partisanship (Abramowitz et al 2006; Levitt & Wolfram 1997).

Given that incumbents have so many advantages, potential challengers take a rational approach before running. They typically consider the odds of winning the race before committing (Black 1972; Jacobson & Kernell 1981). Aside from the need to raise money, they weigh the strategic environment, including factors such as the partisan make-up of the district, local and national economic conditions, political scandals, and

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<sup>2</sup> Future analyses will examine the effect of the nominating system, partisan redistricting, and the role of parties and interest groups in recruitment.

other races on the ballot (Herrnson 2004; Hogan 2004; Jacobson & Kernell 1981) . At a personal level, they consider the difficulties of the campaign trail, with long-hours away from home and their jobs. Many good candidates prefer to wait for the incumbent to leave office rather than try to contest the seat (Maestas et al 2006). Recent scholarship of potential candidates at the congressional level has extended the logic of the strategic politicians to demonstrate complex calculus of potential candidates, which includes not only the personal qualities and strategic resources of potential candidates themselves, but also *their* appraisal of the quality of the incumbent (Stone et al 2004).

While candidate emergence studies have provided invaluable insights into why and when citizens choose to run for Congress, such decisions cannot be generalized to the local level where citizens are often considering their first run for office. The vast majority of citizens who are considering a run for Congress made the choice to enter elective politics at an earlier stage (Francis & Kenny 2000). For this reason, it is important to understand the incipient stages of engagement, when citizens choose to enter the lower rungs of the political ladder.

Few previous studies that look at the state legislature have focused on the role of money as a deterrent to candidate emergence although several have illustrated the dampening effect of campaign finance laws on political competition. To this point, we have learned much about the behavior of candidates who have already decided to run (Hamm and Hogan 2004; (Moncrief et al 2001). Studies that actually observe potential candidates focus primarily on social roles, specifically gender, and how it diminishes prospects for women (Fox & Lawless 2004; 2005; Lawless & Fox 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Sanbonmatsu 2006). These studies demonstrate the important role for recruiting

agents, such as political parties, in encouraging candidates to run. However, there is little said about the role of electoral institutions, such as the campaign finance system, in influencing the choice of potential candidates. Yet it seems clear that the need to raise campaign cash to match incumbent “war chests” serves as a deterrent to potential challengers (Hogan 2001).

This study fills an important gap observing whether the availability of public funds would affect candidate decisions to enter the electoral arena. Although money is not the only obstacle for challengers, it looms large because of its high value for emerging candidates. Among potential congressional challengers who choose not to run for office, the most cited reason is the burden of raising large amounts of money (Maisel et al 2001). To get money, challengers need money to demonstrate to potential donors they are viable. But to prove they are viable, they need name recognition among voters. Early money, then, is critical for introducing oneself to voters. Many candidates, particularly minorities and women, appear to lack the personal and professional connections that might draw them into politics or boost their prospects of raising money (Lawless & Fox 2005; Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Connecticut offers an ideal opportunity to test the effect of public financing on candidate emergence because it is possible to assess the pool of potential candidates before and after implementation of its “clean elections” system. The 2008 election is the first cycle in which clean elections is in place. Two other states, Arizona and Maine, have been using this system since 2000.

To qualify for public financing, clean elections programs typically require candidates to collect a minimum number of signatures and small (\$5) contributions,

which are deposited into each state's clean elections fund.<sup>3</sup> General revenues supplement the fund. Candidates who meet these requirements and who agree not to raise or spend private contributions during their campaigns receive a set amount of money from each state's clean elections fund. The funding level is established based on previous election spending levels and is not dependent on the number of candidates who participate. In Connecticut, the amount of public subsidy for a participating legislative candidate in the 2008 elections will total \$10,000 in the primary and \$25,000 in the general.<sup>4</sup>

In the event that a publicly funded candidate in these states faces a privately financed opponent who outspends the public subsidy, the publicly funded candidate is entitled to matching funds of up to two times the size of the original subsidy. Independent expenditures made for or against a publicly financed candidate by outside groups are treated like private candidate contributions, and reduce the amount of public subsidy or increase the amount of matching funds respectively. These matching fund provisions appear to provide a powerful incentive for candidates to participate, including incumbents who typically outspend challengers in private-funded systems.

## **Expectations**

Based on theories of political ambition, I expect the availability of public funds to increase the likelihood that potential candidates will run for office. Not only does access to public funds decrease the amount of effort required to gather essential campaign

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<sup>3</sup> In Connecticut, candidates for state representative must collect a minimum of \$5,000 in amounts ranging from \$5-\$100 from 150 residents of municipalities included, in whole or in part, in the district.

<sup>4</sup> Candidates in "party-dominant" districts are eligible for larger grants of \$25,000 in primary campaigns. A "party-dominant" district is one in which the percentage of active electors (registered voters) in the district who are enrolled in a major party exceeds the percentage of active electors in the district who are enrolled

resources, but it encourages a more “level” playing field with incumbents by equalizing campaign money. Thus, potential candidates will likely view the clean election system as a low-cost option to enter a contest and a way to boost their electoral prospects vis-à-vis incumbents.

To clarify, consider the basic model of candidate decision to run for office:

$$u(L) = PB - C$$

where,

$u(L)$  = the utility of being in the legislature (a seat in the lower house) to  
the potential candidate

$P$  = the potential candidates esteem of the chances of winning

$B$  = the benefit the candidate receives from winning

$C$  = the cost associated with running for the state legislature

The availability of public funds under the clean election system has the potential to lower the value of  $C$  by making it easier to obtain campaign funds. Rather than spend countless hours trying to find political contributors, the candidate receives public funds after demonstrating sufficient popularity by raising a threshold of contributions in small increments up to \$5,000. To be sure, raising money is not the only cost that candidates will consider, but previous research suggests it looms large.

The cost of raising money is especially salient for individuals who remain marginal to traditional political networks where campaign money is raised. These might include members of any the following demographic groups: low family income, blue

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in the other major party by at least 20 percentage. See Connecticut Elections Enforcement Commission (2007).

collar occupations, women, and minorities. In addition, political factors related to previous political experience should have a differential effect on how individuals view the cost of raising money. For example, citizens who have never been officeholders, who have limited campaign experience, or who have limited contact with party and interest groups will be more likely to appreciate the availability of public funds. Finally, personal characteristics should also be considered. Some people simply do not like to raise money or they are not very good at it. For them, the privately-funded system seems particularly onerous, and the availability of public money should increase the likelihood that they run.

Under clean election rules, the  $P$  term in the equation may change as well. With the public subsidy, the candidate has greater potential to approach or match the incumbent's spending. Recall that candidates receive matching contributions if a rival candidate with private funds exceeds the public subsidy threshold. For this reason, many incumbents will choose instead to participate in the clean elections program. Either of these scenarios can be expected to create relative financial parity between the candidates, and under these circumstances challenger's chances of winning should improve (Jacobson 1980; Krasno & Green 1988).

To be sure, potential candidates consider many other factors before jumping into a race. These include district level variables such as the presence of an incumbent (versus an open seat), marginality of previous races, and the partisanship of voters. Additionally, candidates might be influenced by systematic variables beyond the campaign finance system, such as the types of nominating systems, the level of professionalization in the state legislature, partisan competition across the state and its unique political culture.

## Data and Methods

The data for this Connecticut-based study comes mostly from sources within the state. Connecticut is a useful state to study for wider applications because it falls in the middle range along several dimensions of state politics. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Connecticut is considered a “hybrid” legislature, because it shares features of both professional and amateur state legislatures.<sup>5</sup> In hybrid legislatures, members spend more than two-thirds of a full time job being legislators.<sup>6</sup> While election expenses in Connecticut are in the lower range among American states – especially because the districts are relatively small – they fall somewhere closer to the middle on a per capita basis. In one study of the 1994 elections, the average spending in a Connecticut legislative contest was \$11,841, compared with a 27-state average of \$46,000. The spending per voter was 72 cents in Connecticut versus a national average of 98 cents (Hogan 2000).

Connecticut also provides a good test case for the effect of reform on expanding participation among under-represented groups. According to the Institute on Money in State Politics, Latinos comprise 9.4 percent of Connecticut’s population but represented just 3 percent of 2004 general-election House candidates running on major-party tickets. Moreover, Latino House candidates collected less, on average, than non-Latino counterparts (Moore 2006).

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<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2004/backgrounder\\_fullandpart.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2004/backgrounder_fullandpart.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Although their income from legislative work is greater in hybrid than that in the amateur legislatures, it is usually not enough to allow members to make a living without having other sources of income.

Massachusetts and Rhode Island are part of this study as well because these states provide good comparisons with Connecticut. Massachusetts was selected because the state adopted clean elections in 2002, but the legislature failed to fund the program. Thus, the voters of the state showed a willingness to have this program even though it never was implemented. Another feature of Massachusetts is that it has a professional legislature, which makes for a good comparison with Connecticut's semi-professional legislature. For a similar reason, Rhode Island was also selected because, as an amateur legislature, it offers another basis for comparison. The data for Rhode Island, however, have not been used in the analysis for this paper. All three states reflect a New England political culture, dominated by the Democratic party, and they share similar political histories, particularly the emergence in the twentieth century of strong ethnic Irish and Italian urban machines. While a study of New England states might limit generalizability of the findings, this design allows for some control for political culture – a notoriously difficult variable to measure.

Data on potential candidates has been assembled through two separate surveys, based on the instruments developed by L. Sandy Maisel and Walter Stone for their 1998, 2000, and 2002 studies of candidate emergence in congressional elections. The first survey is an Informant Survey, which was sent to several individuals in all of Connecticut's 151 legislative districts for the lower house. These informants were selected based on the expectation that have political knowledge about the district, but are not likely to run as candidates themselves. Informants include delegates to state party conventions, county and town party chairs, local officeholders, business, labor and other civic leaders. Informant-respondents were asked to provide an analysis of the district, the

incumbent representative in the district, and suggestions of potential candidates who might have considered running but did not (up to 4) for the Connecticut House of Representatives.

The second survey, the Potential Candidate Survey, was sent to potential candidates identified by informants in the first survey for whom we have valid addresses, and to all locally elected officials in those districts, including municipal chief executive officers, municipal clerks and those who serve in a municipal legislative body whose towns overlap with the legislative district, whether or not they had been named by the informants. Local town officials are included in this survey because these offices are typically where state legislative candidates emerge. In the Potential Candidate Survey, respondents have been asked about decisions related to whether they would run for the state legislature in the 2006 election or in the foreseeable future.<sup>7</sup> These questions related to their personal and political background, their interest in running for state legislature (and other offices), the deterrents to and motivations for running for office, and their assessment of their chances of winning the party nomination and general election in upcoming elections.

For the purposes of this analysis, I sought to understand whether a public financed system would alter their decision to run for office. Each candidate was asked, “Would the availability of public funds increase the chances of your running for state representative?” The response choices were “Yes”, “No”, and “Do not know.”

One important criticism of using the “reputational” approach to identify potential candidates is that it systematically ignores individuals who are not part of traditional

networks of political elites (Fox & Lawless 2005; Lawless & Fox 2005).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, marginalized groups such as women and minorities are under-represented in the pool. I have tried to address that issue by over-sampling among these groups. As you see from Table 1, the data show a relatively low percentage of potential candidates among women and minorities (although the numbers reflect the actual representation of these groups in office). However, new data which are based on over-sampling will be added in coming weeks, so the results discussed here should be viewed as tentative.

Table 1 shows that respondents are very active in politics. 85% have held elective or appointed office in the past, 51% currently serve on the town select board, and 57% have helped on campaigns for the state legislature. While number of Republican respondents may appear low (36% in Connecticut and 20% in Massachusetts) they reflect the weak performance of the GOP in these states; Republicans occupy only 29% of the 151 seats in the Connecticut House of Representatives, and only 12% of seats in Massachusetts.

[Insert Table 1 here]

### **Preliminary Findings**

Before assessing the impact of public financing on willingness to run for the state legislature, it is important to know the extent to which potential candidates are genuinely interested in holding office. As Table 2 shows, 92% of our sample expressed a strong interest in holding some elective office in the future, with 1 in 3 claiming that a career in

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<sup>7</sup> This entire process should be repeated in 2008 to evaluate changes after Clean Elections takes effect. The post-reform data in 2008 will enable direct comparisons with the pre-reform period to isolate the effects of Clean Elections.

the state legislature would be attractive to them. Nonetheless, only 2% of the sample chose to run in 2006 for state representative (6% in Connecticut and 1% in Massachusetts). However, an additional 15% of the sample said that they actually considered running for this seat but did not jump into the race. These results suggest the difficulty of getting quality candidates to run for office.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Looking into the specifics of running for state representative, I found that even though relatively few said they would run in 2008 or the foreseeable future, many potential candidates appear quite confident they could win in either the primary or general election in 2008 or in the future. Table 3 shows that only 10 percent of Connecticut respondents said they were likely to run for state representative in 2008, while just 4% made this claim Massachusetts. However, when asked about the likelihood of them winning a race, many respondents appear confident they can win the nomination and general election *if* they chose to run. As Table 3 shows, 44% of candidates in Connecticut claim they could have won the party nomination in 2006 for state representative and 46% said they could have won the general election if they had run. This finding suggests that potential candidates believe that running for office may not be worth the risk – even a risk with relatively good odds – for a variety of reasons. It is noteworthy that when asked about the 2008 elections, the percentage of candidates who believe they could win the general election is much higher than for those who believe they can win the party nomination, indicating that the tough part of gaining office is the

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<sup>8</sup> Fox and Lawless use the eligibility pool sample which systematically seeks out respondents from similarly situated individuals who work in the professions where candidates are most likely to emerge.

primary election in districts with lopsided voter partisanship. Potential candidates also indicated a willingness to run if the seat opened: under this condition 1 in 5 said they would run in Connecticut while 1 in 3 said they would do so in Massachusetts.

[Insert Table 3 here]

What factors might induce more candidates to run? Table 4 demonstrates the conventional wisdom that strategic behavior strongly influences candidate emergence. When given a range of hypothetical situations in which they would join the race, candidates seemed motivated to run when they were favored to win. Indeed, the better the odds of success the more likely they were willing to consider running. Once the race moves from being considered a toss-up to one in which the respondent is slightly favored, a significantly higher percentage of respondents said they might run.

[Insert Table 4 here]

Moving beyond strategic factors, Table 5 begins to examine how personal costs weigh on the decision to run for office. When asked the extent to which particular factors might discourage them from running for office, the highest percentage of respondents identified “raising money” (82%). The next highest percentage (78%) was the “negative effect on home and family life (78%), followed by similar concerns such as “lost privacy” (73%) and “loss of leisure time” (69%). Clearly, potential candidates in both states view being a state legislator as a significant sacrifice on personal and family life, even in Connecticut’s legislature which is not full-time.

Additionally, candidates were concerned about the opportunity cost incurred by being a state legislator rather than staying in their current job: 66% cited lost income as a deterrent and 52% said having to give up their current career would negatively influence their decision to run.

The results also suggest that many candidates do not enjoy campaigning. 65% cited the length of the campaign as an important deterrent to run, while 63% mentioned the difficulty of running a campaign, and 59% were discouraged by negative campaign advertising.

Overall, respondents seemed least concerned about post-campaign activities of being a legislator. 32% reported that the time spent as a state legislator would discourage them. Even if they served in the minority party, only 15% said this would discourage them from running. Thus, it appears that the campaign itself, rather than the work of being a legislator discourages more potential candidates from running for office.

[Insert Table 5 here]

Finally, in Table 6 I turn to the central question of this analysis, namely, whether public funding would make a difference in the decision to run. When asked whether the availability of public funds would *increase* their chances of running for state representative, 27% of respondents said it would.<sup>9</sup> The potential effect of public financing varies across demographic groups. Individuals with incomes under \$50,000 and nonwhites are more likely to say that the availability of public funds might encourage them to run for state representative. The opinion of women on this issue does not appear

to differ at all from men. Nor does public financing appear to matter more or less if you are younger than 50 years old. There is no difference between respondents in Connecticut and Massachusetts, even though elections tend to be more expensive in Massachusetts.

[insert Table 6 here]

Political factors also seem to matter regarding how much public funding would motivate a candidacy. Not surprisingly, individuals who profess a liberal ideology are more likely to say the availability of public money would encourage them to run (36% compared to the overall average of 27%). The causal mechanism behind this relationship is not clear, but it is clear from previous studies that public financing is more popular among liberal leaning activists than among conservatives (Francia et al 2003; Grant & Rudolph 2004). Presumably, conservative activists are much less likely to take advantage of public financing because they do not believe the government should subsidize campaigns.

The availability of public funds also appears to increase the likelihood of running for respondents who have been contacted by groups urging them to run. It stands to reason that people who have been contacted by political parties or interest groups are viewed as good candidates. Thus, it is likely that such individuals have seriously considered running. The promise of public funds, which might reduce the personal cost of running, could be the factor that tips them in favor of jumping into a race. The same reasoning applies to respondents who were confident about winning the general election

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<sup>9</sup> In a separate analysis, not shown here, given a choice between a public funding system similar to “clean elections” and one that involved partial public funding, 46% of respondents expressed a preference for the

in 2008 if they ran. 32% of people who said they were confident of winning the general election said that public money might induce them to run.

To put these findings to a stronger test, I ran a basic logit model with key demographic and political variables. Table 7 confirms some of the initial findings and suggests further plausible links between running for office and the availability of public money. First, as expected, the model indicates that a relationship exists between family income and willingness to run with public funds. Those who earn less than \$50,000 are more likely to say that a public funding program encourages them to run. The other demographic variables – being white, a woman, and Massachusetts resident – do not appear to matter.

[Insert Table 7 here]

The most interesting finding, however, is that individuals who claim to have weak skills as fundraisers say that the availability of public funds would make it more likely for them to run. The model indicates a negative relationship between your self-assessed strength as a fundraiser and how much the availability would encourage you to run. In other words, respondents with weak fundraising skills are more likely to say having public funds would encourage them to run for state representative. This finding suggests that public funding programs have the potential to attract candidates who are not necessarily talented fundraisers.

At the same time, the model predicts that respondents who are perceived as good candidates by others are likely to view public financing as an inducement to run. Specifically, the more frequently a candidate reported that they were contacted by a group or individual, the more likely they viewed that the availability of public funds

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former and 51% for the latter (and 3% suggested “other”).

would encourage them to run. As previously noted, public funds also appear to encourage more liberal respondents to consider running, even though this political reform does not appear to induce “independents” to run in greater numbers. Since the independent label potentially includes candidates with diverse perspectives it cannot be ruled out that many might take advantage of having public funds.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Overall, this preliminary analysis suggests that the availability of public funds might encourage more candidates to run for the state legislature, a finding that is consistent with a previous analysis on gubernatorial elections (Bardwell 2002). Clearly, many candidates in this study believe that fundraising is a serious obstacle to running for office. To be sure, quality candidates ponder other factors before running, especially the likelihood of them winning a race. According to the findings in this analysis, however, the option of having public funds appears to change the calculus for quality candidates. More than 1 in 4 said that the availability of having public funds would encourage them to run.

It seems especially important that the provision of public funding has the potential to help groups that are typically under-represented in the pool of candidates for the state legislature. Such candidates include, for example, those with low family incomes. Further analysis with additional data might reveal its effect on other subgroups, including minorities. Despite the under-representation of women in the state legislature, it does not appear that the availability of public funds would increase the number of them running for office relative to men.

It is noteworthy that the availability of public funds does not appear to increase systematically the motivation of marginal candidates to run for office. The findings, in fact, indicate that clean elections-style reforms might induce more highly qualified people to run. The respondents for whom public financing seemed to matter were more likely to estimate that they had good odds of winning the next election regardless of the campaign finance system. Moreover, they were more likely to have been contacted by groups. The latter indicates that these respondents are not self-delusional about their prospects; others think they are good candidates too.

If the findings in this preliminary analysis hold up with additional data, then it is plausible that, over the long-term, the availability of public funding programs could alter the “skill set” required to be an officeholder. At the national level, at least, candidates must be formidable fundraisers if they want to win and stay in office. This study suggests that there are citizens genuinely interested in running, but who dislike fundraising or acknowledge that they are not very good at it. The availability of public funds appears to encourage them to enter the electoral arena at the state level. If such people run and win, the composition of the legislature may change away from one in which officeholders must be talented at fundraising to one in which fundraising skills are less salient. Of course, this dynamic is more likely to happen if the requisites for leadership in the chamber do not entail raising large amounts of money for the party caucus -- a scenario that becomes increasingly plausible if candidates use public funds for their campaigns.

To be sure, this analysis requires much stronger tests of the findings. A follow up study in the 2008 elections would allow a comparison with these pre-reform data to see

how attitudes and behavior changed in the electoral system. Moreover, while these initial findings regarding candidate emergence appear positive, this analysis has not considered any of the potential costs of a public financing system. For example, would such a system make candidates *less* responsive to party activists or constituents who typically help candidates raise money? Would such a system increase the likelihood of independent or unregulated spending by interest groups or parties that want to influence an election? And what about the potential for ideological or partisan bias in a public financing system? It appears from this study that liberal respondents are much more inclined to take advantage of a public financing system to run for office. These questions and other concerns need to be addressed if this kind of campaign finance reform is expected to become either effective or widespread.

**Table 1. Demographic and Political Profile of Potential Candidate Pool**

		<u>percentages</u>	
	<u>Overall Sample</u>	<u>Connecticut</u>	<u>Massachusetts</u>
Sex - Male	66	55	73
Race - White	91	89	92
Age - 50 and over	64	67	62
Children Under 6 in Household	12	12	11
Employed full-time	71	73	69
Employed in government or nonprofit	37	51	30
Family income greater than \$100,000	52	58	49
<u>Political</u>			
Partisanship - Republican	26	36	20
Previous campaign experience (state leg)	57	58	56
Currently hold elective or appointive office	85	71	93
Current member of town select board	51	24	65
	N	511	172
			339

Source: 2007 Candidate Emergence Survey for Connecticut and Massachusetts

**Table 2. Attraction to Holding Elective Office**

	Percentage		
	Overall Sample	Connecticut	Massachusetts
Ran for State Representative in 2006	2	6	1
Considered running for State Representative in 2006	15	12	16
Interest in holding elected office in future	92	87	95
Attracted to career in local office	72	59	31
Attracted to career in the state legislature	33	31	33
Attracted to career in the US House	15	16	15
Attracted to career in the US Senate	11	14	10
Attraction to career as Governor	9	12	8

Source: 2007 Candidate Emergence Survey for Connecticut and Massachusetts

Note: For questions regarding attraction of career the response is high or very high

**Table 3. Likelihood of seeking office and winning for State Representative (self-assessed)**

	<u>Percentages</u>		
	<u>Overall Sample</u>	<u>Connecticut</u>	<u>Massachusetts</u>
<b>Likelihood of seeking nomination:</b>			
in 2008 election	6	10	4
in foreseeable future	16	17	16
if seat opens	31	21	33
<b>If you HAD run in 2006, how likely is it that you would win</b>			
party nomination State Rep	34	44	29
general election State Rep	44	46	44
<b>Likelihood of winning nomination:</b>			
in 2008 election	30	38	26
in foreseeable future	39	46	36
if seat opens	49	53	46
<b>Likelihood of winning general election:</b>			
in 2008 election	43	46	41
in foreseeable future	50	52	49
if seat opens	58	59	57

**Table 4. Strategic Conditions and Seeking Office**

	Overall Sample	Percentages	
		Connecticut	Massachusetts
<b>I would consider running in primary if:</b>			
no chance, but send message to party leaders	8	10	8
another candidate favored	24	26	24
race is considered toss-up	38	38	38
you are slightly favored	56	57	56
you are certain to win primary	65	66	64
<b>I would consider running in general election if:</b>			
no chance but wanted to get party on ballot	26	20	28
opponent slightly favored	45	42	47
race is considered toss-up	57	54	59
you are slightly favored	68	65	65
you are certain to win	74	70	76

**Table 5. Personal Factors that discourage respondents from running for State Representative**

	Percentages			
	Overall Sample	Connecticut	Massachusetts	
raising money	82	82	81	
negative home/family life	78	76	80	
lost privacy	73	72	74	
loss of leisure time	69	71	68	
lost income	66	70	64	
length of campaign	65	65	65	
difficulty of running campaign	63	64	62	
negative advertising	59	65	56	
give up career	52	59	49	
little power	42	43	41	
time spent as state leg	32	35	30	
negative political career	24	22	25	
redistricting	18	17	18	
serving in minority party	15	17	14	
	N	492	168	324

Note: Responses include: strongly discourages, discourages, somewhat discourages, makes no difference, do not know.

The entry above includes strongly discourages, discourages, and somewhat discourages.

Source: 2007 Candidate Emergence Survey in CT, MA and RI (entries above do not include RI)

**Table 6. Would the availability of public funds increase the chance of your running for office?**

	Percentages			Subgroup N	Total N
	Yes	No	Don't Know		
Overall sample	<b>27</b>	58	15	513	513
<u>Demographic variables</u>					
Nonwhite	<b>35</b>	55	10	40	513
Woman	<b>28</b>	50	22	164	504
Family income < \$50,000	<b>44</b>	44	12	43	484
Age under 50 yrs old	<b>31</b>	52	17	183	503
Massachusetts resident	<b>27</b>	59	14	337	513
<u>Political variables</u>					
Ideology (extremely to slightly liberal)	<b>36</b>	50	15	183	361
Elected official (mayor, select or school board)	<b>28</b>	55	17	339	512
Contacted by at least one group to run	<b>36</b>	48	17	311	513
Fundraising ability weak/somewhat weak (self-assess)	<b>30</b>	51	19	161	503
Run as Democrat	<b>30</b>	55	16	276	493
Run as 3rd party candidate	<b>22</b>	63	15	79	493
Likely to win primary in 2008 if I ran	<b>26</b>	56	17	151	506
Likely to win general in 2008 if I ran	<b>32</b>	53	15	198	506

**Table 7. Will the availability of money increase chances of your running for State Representative?**

	Logit	
	Coef.	Std. Err.
<u>Demographic variables</u>		
White	0.68	0.71
Woman	-0.46	0.29
Family income <\$50,000	0.86	0.43 *
Massachusetts resident	0.06	0.27
<u>Political variables</u>		
Liberal-Conservative (1-7)	0.81	0.28 **
Run as Independent	-0.23	0.40
Contacted by groups to run (count from 1 -13)	0.12	0.05 **
Hold elected office (mayor, select or school bd)	0.24	0.28
Skill as fundraiser (self-assessed)	-0.30	0.12 **
Estimate of winning 2008 general (1-5 self-assessed)	0.21	0.09 *
constant	-2.12	0.86
** p<.01, * p<.05		
Number of obs =	328.00	
LR chi2(10) =	29.71	
Prob > chi2 =	0.00	
Pseudo R2 =	0.07	
	-	
Log likelihood =	184.31	

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