

How Candidates View the Blanket Primary in California

Christian Collet
Department of Political Science
University of California, Irvine

Working Paper 2000-17

Working Papers published by the Institute of Governmental Studies provide quick dissemination of draft reports and papers, preliminary analysis, and papers with a limited audience. The objective is to assist authors in refining their ideas by circulating results and to stimulate discussion about public policy. *Working Papers* are reproduced unedited directly from the author's page.

How Candidates View the Blanket Primary in California

Christian Collet
Department of Political Science
University of California, Irvine

If democracy is thought of as the interaction of choices, competition and representation, then the political candidate is certainly at its epicenter. The ideas of candidates serve both as fodder for debate and stimuli for action; their ambition for office drives political discourse, provides necessary contrasts for voters, and sets agendas for government. In states such as California, where party attachment is weak and paid media play a major role in the electioneering process, candidates literally become the focus of politics: their character, backgrounds, and beliefs serve as the basis for fundamental decisions about who wins and who loses -- in the words of Harold Lasswell, who gets what, where, when and how -- in both the campaign realm and, eventually, the policy arena.

Yet, in spite of the candidate's centrality and importance, his or her perceptions are often unconsidered. As Richard Fenno explains, there is "a huge mismatch between the central importance of elective politicians to our system of government and their peripheral importance in political science scholarship."¹ Fenno's important question, slightly rephrased, "What did the politician see when

Taken from the introduction of Fenno (1990).

looking at his or her constituency?"², seems a crucial one to ask in any attempt at understanding the dynamics of a given election. But in most scholarly work it defers to questions about what voters see and, increasingly, what journalists see. Simply put, election postmortems are often filled with insights on politicians by voters and the media; few consider the insights of politicians themselves.³

As we deconstruct California's first experience with the blanket primary, it becomes necessary to consider Fenno's question, again rephrased: what did candidates see when they ran in the first blanket primary? How, if at all, did the electoral environment change? What do candidates see as the long-term effects of the blanket primary on their own career, and on politics in California?

These questions serve as the basis for this study. Using data from a survey of candidates who ran for statewide and legislative offices in the June 1998 election, I find a variety of opinions, mostly lukewarm, concerning the blanket primary. Overall, in spite of the official opposition of most political parties to Proposition 198⁴, candidates from both major parties and all minor parties (except the Libertarian Party) narrowly support the blanket primary and say it is a "good reform". Moderate candidates are particularly supportive. When controlling for a variety of contextual factors, including the candidate's success in the primary, it is the strength of party affiliation that is the most important variable

² This was the opening phrase from Fenno (1974).

³ This is particularly so in the small literature addressing the effects of open primaries, which has focused primarily on incidence and motives of crossover voters (Hedlund, Watts and Hedge 1982; Cohen and Sides 1998). Only in studies seeking to determine whether crossover voting would have produced different candidates (Southwell 1988), and how the system affects candidate entry (Gerber and Morton (1999)) have we seen office-seekers at all considered.

⁴ For the record, the Democratic, Peace and Freedom, Libertarian and Republican parties officially joined the suit against Proposition 198. The American Independent, Green, Reform and Natural Law Parties did not join the plaintiffs.

predicting a candidate's position on the blanket primary. Yet, on a number of different measures, candidates say the blanket primary had little effect on their own election. Most, however, concede that the reform helped them win more votes. This is particularly so for minor parties.

When asked to assess the broader effects of the blanket primary, candidates agree that it confuses voters, undermines political parties, and increases the costs of campaigns. Most disagree that the primary produces bad or extremist nominees and believe that it produces nominees who are more moderate in their ideology. Candidates, in thinking about the future of the blanket primary, agree that it will further weaken parties, but disagree with the notion that it would make party labels meaningless altogether.

Survey Methodology.

The data presented here derive from the "California Blanket Primary Candidate Opinion Survey" -- a mail questionnaire that was distributed to every candidate that appeared on ballots for statewide constitutional office, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, Board of Equalization, State Senate and State Assembly in the Primary Election, June 2, 1998. Candidate addresses were collected from the Secretary of State's website at <http://Primary98.ss.ca.gov>. Questionnaires were mailed on September 9 and completed replies arrived through the cutoff date, October 31, 1998. Overall, 735 questionnaires were distributed and 179 completed, usable forms were received. Subtracting 13 "undeliverable"

questionnaires that did not make their destination (change of address, etc.) from the total, the project ended with a response rate of 25 percent.

The results presented below are raw and unweighted. They are subject to the self-selection biases that are inherent in mail surveys, and are not intended to be reflective of a representative, random sample of candidates or candidate opinions. At the same time, the results do represent a wide variety of candidates' views and experiences with the blanket primary, and indicate areas where the reform is having its most (and least) significant impact in the electoral process.

Sample Characteristics.

The respondents in the sample were, on most measurable indicators, representative of the 1998 candidate field. As Table 1 shows, the sample follows the general universe of candidates in terms of geography, seat type, and candidate success.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample (Compared to the 1998 Primary Candidate Universe)

	<i>Universe</i>	<i>Sample*</i>
<i>Geography of seat</i>		
Statewide	12%	12%
Northern California	30	34
Central California	5	1**
Southern California	53	53
<i>Makeup of district</i>		
Urban	---	36%
Suburban	---	50
Rural	---	14
<i>Type of seat</i>		
Statewide	10%	10%
Constitutional		
U.S. Senate	2	3

	<i>Universe</i>	<i>Sample*</i>
U.S. House	31	29
Board of Equalization	5	5
CA Legislature	53	55
<i>Party</i>		
Republican	39%	34%
Democrat	34	24
Libertarian	13	26
Natural Law	6	5
Peace & Freedom	4	4
Green	2	3
Reform	2	3
American		
Independent	1	1
<i>Strength of Party ID</i>		
Very Strong	---	71%
Somewhat strong	---	21
Not at all strong	---	8
<i>Ideology</i>		
Very liberal	---	7%
Somewhat liberal	---	8
Centrist	---	20
Somewhat conservative	---	19
Very conservative	---	16
Other	---	29
<i>Candidate success</i>		
Won primary	69%	73%
Lost primary	31	27
<i>Money spent in primary</i>		
<\$1,000	---	53%
\$1,001 to \$5,000	---	10%
\$5,001 to \$10,000	---	10%
\$10,001 to \$25,000	---	6%
\$25,001 to \$50,000	---	5%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	---	11%
>\$100,000	---	5%

* All sample characteristics described here are based on self-reporting by the respondents. Universe characteristics derived from Certified List of Candidates.

** Volunteered response.

Note: Columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

The one significant incongruity is in partisanship, where Democrats are underrepresented and Libertarians are overrepresented in the sample. Overall, Libertarians make up nearly twice as much of the sample as the candidate universe. For this reason, and because Libertarians often exhibit attitudes that differ from other partisans (Collet and Hansen 1997), I have, in most of the analyses below, devoted separate columns for Libertarian responses.

Table 1 also shows general characteristics of the sample that could not be measured against the universe, including strength of makeup of district, party identification, ideology, and money spent in the primary election. What emerges is a sample of candidates who mostly ran in suburban or urban districts, who are loyal to their party, and who spent relatively little in the primary.

There are some inter-party differences in the descriptive data that are worth noting. Ninety-five percent of minor party candidates ran unopposed in their primaries, versus just 35 percent of Democratic candidates and 27 percent of Republican candidates. As a consequence, minor party candidates spent next to nothing on their campaigns: 89 percent report spending \$1,000 or less and no minor candidate exceeded the \$10,001 to \$25,000 category. By contrast, only 23 percent of Republican candidates and 21 percent of Democratic candidates spent \$1,000 or less. Most minor party candidates (65 percent) avoid ideological labelling (including 85 percent of Libertarians⁵), while 78 percent of Republican

⁵ Libertarians fervently adhere to what they call the "Nolan Chart", which simply measures one's political philosophy in two-dimensional space, with social values or "personal freedom" (authoritarianism to libertarianism) on one axis and economic values (laissez-faire capitalism to socialism) on the other. The name stems from David Nolan, the founder of the Libertarian Party, who originally published the theory in an article, "Classifying and Analyzing Politico-Economic Systems", that appeared in 1971 in the publication *Individualist* (Fritz 1986).

candidates say they are "somewhat" or "very" conservative and 43 percent of Democrats say they are "somewhat" or "very" liberal. Thirty-six percent of Democrats and 22 percent of Republicans say they are moderates, yet only 9 percent of minor party candidates label themselves as such.

General Attitudes toward the Blanket Primary.

Overall, candidates have vaguely supportive feelings toward the blanket primary. The sample was asked two questions to summarize their attitudes toward the reform: early in the survey, they were asked to rate their feelings toward the blanket primary on a ten-point scale; at the end of the survey, they were asked whether the primary, in all, is "a good reform", "a failure" or if "it doesn't make much difference either way."

In spite of the stated positions taken by the major parties against California's blanket primary (see *amici curiae* brief filed by the Republican and Democratic National Committees in *CA Democratic Party v. Jones* (1997) or "Joint DNC-RNC Statement" (1998)), we see that the general attitudes of Republican and Democratic candidates are actually lukewarm, leaning slightly in support of the reform. Republicans are almost equally divided, giving a mean rating of 5.0 to the primary; with 48 percent falling in the 0-4 "opposed" category and 47 percent falling in the 6-10 "support" category. Democrats, similarly, gave the primary a 5.1 mean rating, but were slightly more supportive (47 percent) than opposed (43 percent). Where Republicans split 47 percent to 45 percent on whether the primary "is a good reform" or "a failure", Democrats were more clearly in support (43 percent to 33 percent). Democratic candidates were,

however, the most likely to say that the reform "doesn't make much difference either way" (25 percent).

Table 2: General Attitudes Toward the Blanket Primary, By Party

	<i>Republicans</i>			<i>Democrats</i>			<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
	Lib Mod	Con	Tot	Lib Mod	Con	Tot		
<i>Position on the blanket primary (ten point scale)*</i>								
Percent giving scores of...								
6-10 (support)	62%	44%	47%	17%	54%	47%	27%	77%
0-4 (opposed)	31%	52%	48%	61%	29%	43%	58%	19%
5 (neutral)	8%	4%	5%	22%	17%	19%	16%	3%
Mean	5.9	4.8	5.0	3.2	6.4	5.1	3.6	7.3
(S.D.)	(4.2)	(4.1)	(4.1)	(3.1)	(4.2)	(4.0)	(3.4)	(3.2)
<i>Percent that believes the blanket primary...</i>								
Is a good reform	62%	44%	47%	24%	57%	43%	27%	83%
Is a failure	31%	48%	45%	53%	17%	33%	50%	10%
Doesn't make much difference either way	8%	9%	8%	24%	26%	25%	23%	7%

* Actual question worded as: "On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being very strongly opposed and 10 being very strongly in support, how would you rate your position on the open/blanket primary?"
 Note: Columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

When partisanship is broken down by ideology, we see that moderate candidates in the major parties are warmer toward the blanket primary than their ideological counterparts. Sixty-two percent of liberal to moderate Republicans and 57 percent of moderate to conservative Democrats say the primary is a "good reform", and give it mean scores above 5. Majorities of liberal Democrats

and conservative Republicans, by contrast, are likely to say the reform is a "failure" and give it unfavorable ratings.

Minor party candidates are either hot or cold. Libertarians are the most resolutely opposed to the blanket primary, with just a 3.6 mean score and 58 percent of candidates falling in the 0-4 category. When asked to sum up their feelings on the blanket primary, 50 percent of Libertarians say it "is a failure", while just 27 percent say it "is a good reform". Candidates vying for the nominations of other minor parties, however, were quite supportive, with a mean score of 7.3 and 77 percent falling in the 6-10 range. Overall, 83 percent say they blanket primary "is a good reform" and just 10 percent say it is a failure.

Why Candidates Support or Oppose the Primary: In Their Own Words.

An open-ended question was asked of candidates in order to gauge their explanations for why they support or oppose the open primary. Table 3, showing the recoded results, indicates that responses largely cluster around two major themes. For supporters of the blanket primary, giving voters more flexibility and power seems to be the greatest concern (15%). As one candidate explained, "It gives the opportunity to vote for candidates other than the limited choices of a single party." Another put it this way: "It is the best means for voters to show their support for any candidate."

Some supporters also pointed to the notion that the primary impels candidates to run less extreme campaigns, and challenge for the moderate voters. "It will depolarize the parties and cut down on nutball candidates," said one Republican candidate for the State Legislature. Ethnic candidates saw it as

an opportunity to appeal to bi-partisan coalitions: "I thought it might be interesting to see how many crossovers [supported] Asian-American candidates," said one Democrat from Northern California. Others, even those who ran for major party nominations, saw it as a benefit for minor parties. As one Democrat explained, "I have changed from being a strong proponent of the two-party system to being an advocate of a multi-party system. The blanket primary is pro-multi-party." "It's the best thing that ever happened to independent candidates," said a statewide candidate for the Peace and Freedom Party.

Table 3: Recoded Open-Ended Responses -- Why Candidates Support or Oppose the Blanket Primary

Why candidates <u>support</u> the blanket primary...		Why candidates <u>oppose</u> the blanket primary...	
It gives voters more power and freedom.	15%	Parties should have the right to nominate their own candidates/rights of free association/right to exclude outsiders	24%
It impels candidates to run moderate campaigns/can appeal to all voters/produces fewer extremists.	4%	Allows voters to undermine party candidates.	3%
It can increase participation.	3%	It undermines party autonomy.	2%
It helps minor parties.	3%	It increases the costs of campaigning.	2%
It gives independents a voice.	2%	It confuses voters.	2%
I got more votes.	2%		

Note: Three percent said primary did not play a significant role in their campaign. The remaining responses were scattered.

Opponents, on the other hand, are predominantly concerned with the associational rights of political parties to nominate their own candidates (24%). As one candidate put it, "I do not agree that Democrats should have a say in [selecting the] Republican nominee -- and vice versa." A Libertarian was more direct: "It thwarts the primary purpose of a political party -- to nominate the candidate that best represents its members' positions on the issues." A Republican who ran for State Board of Equalization complained about the ballot length and its impact on voters and elections. "It dilutes the strength of the party", said the candidate. "In every race you shall see at least one candidate from each party. [The] list is too crowded and too long, [and] it becomes a name recognition contest. The easier the name, the better your chances." A Democratic candidate for the State Legislature was more concise: "With many people, it was confusing for the voters." Others were concerned about crossover voting and manipulation of party nominations by outsiders. "The possibility for shenanigans is troubling," said one candidate. Another, seemingly a victim of such "shenanigans" explained that "there is an elimination of fairness [in the blanket primary system]. It seems as though deals are made months prior to the election."

Some candidates, who took neutral positions on the primary, saw both sides of the issue. One Green candidate for Congress explained, "The expanded voter choice is positive, but it very seriously compromises the ability of parties to nominate candidates who represent their own principles." A Republican saw it this way: "The bad [aspects are] that campaigning costs double and funds

become more important. The good [aspects are] that voters have more choices and, [as a candidate], you can appeal to other party voters." Some chose to withhold their judgment. "[The blanket primary] can be manipulated, so naturally so people will try. Will they succeed? It is too soon to tell."

The Impact of the Primary on Candidate Behavior.

A battery of items tested the impacted of the blanket primary on aspects of candidate behavior. On a ten point scale, candidates were asked to rate how much influence each of the following had on their campaign: a) their decision to run for office; b) their fundraising; c) the allocation of their funds; d) their strategy; and e) the outcome of their election. Candidates were also asked how they felt the blanket primary impacted their opponents' strategies, and how the reform might impact their decision to run for office in the future.

What becomes immediately apparent, when looking at the results in Table 4, is how little impact the blanket primary seems to have had. In only one instance is there a mean that exceeds 5: Republican candidates considering the effect of the primary on their campaign strategy (5.2). Otherwise, in every case, candidates considered the impact of the primary to be insignificant. The initial decision to run and fundraising were two aspects, in particular, that seemed to be impervious to any influence from the blanket primary. Strategic aspects were the most significant, but with the Republican exception above, none attracted a plurality of candidates who ranked them as influential (score between 6 and 10).

Table 4: How the Blanket Primary Affected Various Aspects of Candidate Behavior (Ten-point scale)*

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
<i>Your personal decision to run for office</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	73%	81%	93%	87%
5 (neutral)	5%	5%	2%	3%
6-10 (influential)	22%	14%	5%	10%
Mean (S.D.)	2.6 (3.6)	1.9 (3.4)	0.7 (2.0)	1.2 (2.2)
<i>Your fundraising</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	78%	79%	93%	90%
5 (neutral)	3%	5%	5%	3%
6-10 (influential)	19%	17%	2%	7%
Mean (S.D.)	2.3 (3.2)	2.3 (3.2)	0.5 (1.6)	1.0 (2.0)
<i>The allocation of your funds and resources</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	47%	68%	91%	77%
5 (neutral)	13%	2%	2%	7%
6-10 (influential)	40%	29%	7%	16%
Mean (S.D.)	4.2 (3.4)	3.3 (3.7)	0.9 (2.1)	1.6 (2.9)
<i>Your campaign strategy</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	37%	45%	84%	61%
5 (neutral)	12%	17%	7%	19%
6-10 (influential)	52%	38%	9%	19%
Mean (S.D.)	5.2 (3.4)	4.5 (3.7)	1.8 (2.5)	2.7 (3.1)
<i>Your opponents' campaign strategy</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	51%	47%	68%	70%
5 (neutral)	11%	13%	11%	9%
6-10 (influential)	39%	41%	22%	22%
Mean (S.D.)	4.3 (3.8)	4.5 (3.9)	2.8 (3.2)	2.8 (3.3)
<i>Your decision to run for office in the future</i>				

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
0-4 (not influential)	62%	68%	79%	63%
5 (neutral)	7%	5%	12%	17%
6-10 (influential)	32%	28%	9%	20%
Mean (S.D.)	3.4 (3.9)	2.9 (3.8)	1.5 (3.7)	2.9 (3.8)

* Preamble to question worded as: "On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL and 10 being EXTREMELY INFLUENTIAL, how would you rate the influence of the open/blanket primary on..."

Note: Columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

In spite of this, there are some interesting differences between parties. Major party candidates, more than minor candidates, perceive that the blanket primary influenced their campaigns. And Republicans, overall, perceive more influence in their campaigns from the blanket primary than Democrats. Though some minor candidates perceived influence on their strategy and future decision to run, Libertarians, almost uniformly, saw the blanket primary as inconsequential. The passionate opposition of the Libertarians, thus, was more rooted in philosophy than any perception of impact on their campaigns.

How did candidates believe the primary impacted their performance and the outcome of their election? Two separate items addressed this question. The first asked candidates simply, "Overall, how would you say the open/blanket primary affected your vote totals in the June election?". The second item, similar to those above, asked candidates to rank, on a 0 to 10 scale, the level of influence they believed the blanket primary had on "the outcome of [their] election."

The data in Table 5 show a wide divergence between major and minor party candidates -- with the latter clearly seeing the blanket primary as a benefit to their campaigns. While 41 percent of Republicans and 39 percent of Democrats believe the primary "helped [them] win more votes", 74 percent of Libertarians and 68 percent of other minor candidates believe the same. Similarly, more than one in five major party candidates believe the primary actually "hurt" them and "cost" [them] votes. Just 2 percent of Libertarians and 7 percent of other minor candidates believe they lost votes because of the primary. Noteworthy proportions of candidates from all parties (most notably Democrats and Republicans) believe, however, that the blanket primary "didn't make much difference either way."

Table 5: Candidate Perceptions of How the Blanket Primary Impacted the Outcome of their Election

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
<i>How did the primary affect your vote totals in June?</i>				
It helped me win more votes.	41%	39%	74%	68%
It hurt me and cost me votes.	22%	22%	2%	7%
It didn't make much difference.	37%	39%	23%	26%
<i>How influential was the blanket primary on...</i>				

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
<i>The outcome of your election</i>				
0-4 (not influential)	48%	59%	80%	48%
5 (neutral)	5%	10%	7%	19%
6-10 (influential)	48%	32%	14%	32%
Mean	5.0	3.9	2.2	4.1
(S.D.)	(3.5)	(3.4)	(3.0)	(3.5)

Note: Columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

When asked about the influence of the primary on the outcome of their race, some different patterns emerge. Libertarians overwhelmingly (80 percent) say the primary was not a factor in their campaign's outcome; a majority of Democratic candidates believe the same. Republicans, however, are evenly divided: 48 percent give this item a score of 0 to 4, meaning the primary was not influential to them, while 48 percent give the item a score of 6 to 10, suggesting that the reform had a meaningful impact. Candidates representing minor parties, other than Libertarians, generally say the primary had little influence on their race, although nearly one in three believe that it did have some influence.

To get a sense of the cumulative impact of the primary on candidate behavior, I constructed an "Influence Index" based on candidate responses to each of the seven questions that measured the primary's "influence" on a ten-point scale, as shown in Tables 4 and 5. Responses for each of the items were recoded into three categories, with values of -1, 0 and 1, depending on whether the candidate rated each item from 0 to 4 (not influential), 5 (neutral), or from 6 to 10 (influential), respectively. In total, 76 percent of candidates had an Index of less than zero meaning that, on balance, they did not perceive the primary as

influential in their campaign. Twenty seven percent of all candidates scored -7 on the Index, indicating that the primary was not influential in any of the areas tested. By contrast, just 23 percent had an Index over zero, suggesting that, for about 1 in every 4 candidates, believed the primary did have some impact on the major aspects of their campaign. Fifty-eight percent of these candidates were Republicans; nearly 62 percent lost in June; 57 percent have less than a "very strong" attachment to their party; 57 percent are moderate or lean conservative.

Candidate Perceptions of Crossover Voting.

Although voter-level opinion data on statewide races in June revealed crossover voting to range from 9 percent to 26 percent (and sometimes higher in selected legislative races), depending on the race and the polling organization (DiCamillo 1998), most candidates believe that such voting actually occurred at relatively low rates in their elections. As Table 6 shows, majorities of all party candidates place the percentage of crossover voters at 10 percent or below. Republicans (70% say crossover voting was 10% or less) and Libertarians (71%) are those with the most conservative estimates of crossover voting; Democrats and candidates from other minor parties tend to perceive levels of crossover voting to be higher. More than one in four Democrats think the level of crossover voting in their race exceeded 20 percent.

Table 6: How Candidates Viewed the Extent and Nature of Crossover Voting in their Elections

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
<i>Roughly speaking, what percentage of voters in your district do you think crossed over and voted for a candidate from another party?</i>				
<1%	9%	3%	10%	10%
1-5%	27%	28%	44%	21%
6-10%	34%	21%	17%	31%
11-19%	9%	23%	10%	21%
20-25%	16%	21%	10%	3%
>25%	5%	5%	10%	14%
<i>What do you think is the reason why most voters crossed over? (forced choice)</i>				
They preferred that candidate more than one from their own party	51%	59%	41%	68%
They did so out of mischief so their favorite would be in better shape to win General Election.	18%	8%	12%	3%
They did so out of protest	7%	5%	29%	13%
Other (open-ended) (sum)	25%	28%	19%	16%
One party had a contested primary while the other did not	5%	10%	7%	10%
Incumbency	2%	5%	0%	0%
Candidate had better name ID	2%	8%	0%	0%

Note: Columns may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Most candidates believe that crossover voters in their races were "sincere" -- in other words, primarily concerned with supporting the candidate who is their most preferred candidate. Sixty-eight percent of candidates from minor parties, 59 percent of Democrats, 51 percent of Republicans say that voters who crossed over in their election did so because "they preferred that candidate more than the one offered by their own party." Forty-one percent of Libertarians agree. Some candidates attribute sincere crossovers to incumbency, or better name recognition for a given candidate; others point to the fact that voters might have wanted a "piece of the action" in a contested nomination battle. As for the perception of "strategic" crossovers or saboteurs, few believed that voters were that mischievous. Republicans (18 percent) were most likely to believe that crossovers occurred because voters were trying to place their favorite candidate "in better shape to win the General Election", followed by Libertarians (12 percent). Noteworthy proportions of Libertarian (29 percent) and other minor candidates (13 percent) believe that crossover votes were cast "out of protest."

Further analysis finds no significant correlates with candidate perceptions of crossover voting. Furthermore, in a variety of tests, perceptions of crossover voting are not significantly related to a candidate's position on the blanket primary.

How Candidates View the Broader Impact of the Primary on Political Parties and Elections.

At this point, we have considered only the opinions of candidates as they pertain to their own experience with the blanket primary in June 1998. But how do they perceive the reform's impact on broader aspects of California politics and elections? What do they see happening to state political parties and the nomination process as a result?

As Table 7 shows⁶, most candidates agree that the reform "confuses voters" and "raises the costs of campaigning", but give less endorsement to the idea that it lengthens the campaign season. Democrats (62 percent) are in most agreement about the confusion that results for voters; Republicans (70 percent) are ardent about the impact that the blanket primary has on the increasing costs of campaigns. Majorities of Libertarians agree with both propositions. Candidates from other minor parties, however, show very little agreement for these statements.

Table 7: Candidate Opinions on Broad Impact of Blanket Primary (Percent who agree with the statements)*

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
<i>Effects on campaign dynamics</i>				
"It confuses the voters."	56%	62%	57%	16%
"It raises the costs of campaigning."	70%	60%	54%	29%

⁶ It should be noted that candidates were given a "don't know" option on each of these items, so as to provide an outlet for those who did not want to speculate on these broader issues or for those who did not believe the primary had a significant impact in these areas.

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
"It lengthens the campaign season."	43%	45%	41%	16%
<i>Effects on Parties</i>				
"It undermines a party's ability to make its own decisions."	68%	80%	80%	58%
"It is an important mechanism for taking party nominations from the hands of insiders."	36%	33%	24%	68%
"It creates an opportunity for outsiders and political opponents to undermine political parties."	64%	60%	70%	42%
"It helps the alternative (or minor) parties."	29%	29%	46%	74%
<i>Effects on Nominations</i>				
"It produces nominees that are not the best representatives of their parties."	46%	28%	47%	13%
"It produces nominees that are more moderate in their political ideology."	54%	67%	49%	36%
"It produces nominees that are more extreme in their political ideology."	9%	15%	9%	3%

* Preamble to question worded as: "Based on your experience in June, please indicate whether you AGREE (strongly/somewhat) or DISAGREE (strongly/somewhat) with each statement concerning the open/blanket primary..."

There is more agreement on the primary's impact on political parties. Majorities of candidates from all parties say the reform "undermines a party's ability to make its own decisions". And, again, with the exception of candidates

from most minor parties, majorities agree that the blanket primary "creates an opportunity for outsiders and political opponents to undermine" parties. Most candidates disagree that the reform is "an important mechanism for taking party nominations from the hands of insiders." Only minor party candidates agreed, on the whole, with this statement (68 percent).

Candidates are in greater disagreement on the impact of the blanket primary on minor parties. Major party candidates, particularly Republicans, tend to disagree with the statement that the primary "helps the alternative parties." Libertarians (46 percent agree versus 37 percent who disagree) are more divided on the issue, but nonetheless supportive. Candidates from other minor parties (74 percent), though, believe strongly that the reform is a benefit to them and other alternatives.

Some disagreement persists among party candidates on the impact of the primary on nominations. While few candidates agree that the primary produces more extremist candidates, Republicans and Democrats differ on the extent to which the reform produces "the best" representatives of their party. Overall, 47 percent of Libertarians and 46 percent of Republicans agree that the primary does not produce the best representatives of their party, compared to 28 percent of Democrats and 13 percent of minor party candidates. On the other hand, more than half of Republicans and two-thirds of Democrats agree that the primary produces more moderate candidates, while less than half of Libertarians and just over one third of other minor party candidates agree with this notion.

**Table 8: Candidate Views on Long-Term Effects of Blanket Primary
(Percent who agree with the statements)***

	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Other Minor Parties</i>
"It will weaken political parties."	65%	63%	61%	42%
"It will make individuals more important than party platforms."	65%	65%	71%	55%
"It will make a candidate's party label and affiliation almost meaningless."	33%	34%	39%	29%

* Preamble to question worded as: "Thinking ahead to future elections, please indicate whether you AGREE (strongly/somewhat) or DISAGREE (strongly/somewhat) with each statement about the potential long-term effects of the open/blanket primary..."

What do candidates see as the long-term effects of the blanket primary?

Most agree that the reform will make individuals more important than party platforms and that the reform, overall, will weaken political parties (Table 8).

However, only a third of Republican and Democratic candidates, 39 percent of Libertarian candidates and 29 percent of minor party candidates agree that a candidate's party label will be rendered "almost meaningless."

Why Candidates Support or Oppose the Blanket Primary: The Role of Contextual and Political Factors.

What accounts for why a candidate supports or opposes the blanket primary? How do contextual factors, such as office type, geography of the district, the incidence of primary opposition, the number of candidates running for the seat, and the amount of money spent by the candidate, affect a candidate's

position? What about political factors, such as ideology, party affiliation and the strength of that affiliation? Or perceived benefit from the primary, such as gaining more votes? Altogether, how much does the perception that the reform affected a candidate's election explain his/her position toward it?

In order to answer these questions, I specified a series of regression models that use the candidate's ten-point rating of the blanket primary reform as the dependent variable.

As we see in the results of Model I in Table 9, contextual factors alone explain little ($R^2 = .18$). Region is significant ($B = -2.042$, $p < .01$) in the negative direction; in other words, accounting for all other contextual factors, being a candidate from Southern California accounts for roughly a 2 point lower rating on the blanket primary. Having an intra-party challenger is also significant ($B = -.549$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, winning a party nomination also lowers a candidate's rating on the blanket primary ($B = -1.755$, $p < .05$). The one significant variable in the positive direction ($B = 2.199$, $p < .05$) is a dummy variable coded for non-Libertarian minor party candidates. Simply put, while being a Libertarian lowers a candidate's feeling toward the blanket primary ($B = -.850$, $p = n.s.$) being affiliated with another minor party significantly increases a candidate's feeling in the blanket primary. Being a statewide candidate ($B = 5.952$) or being from an urban ($B = 2.175$) or suburban district ($B = 1.381$) also boost one's attitude toward the primary, but the three variables fail to achieve statistical significance. The number of candidates in the race ($B = -.039$, $p = n.s.$) seems to have virtually no impact on a candidate's feeling toward the primary.

Table 9: The Role of Contextual, Political and Individual Factors in Explaining Candidate Attitudes toward the Blanket Primary

	Model I: Contextual Factors	Model II: I, plus Political factors	Model III: II, plus Influence Index	Model IV: III, plus Helped me win votes
Statewide Candidate	5.952 (4.082)	6.805* (3.980)	6.265 (4.034)	6.001 (3.827)
U.S. House Candidate	.331 (1.705)	.854 (1.674)	-.038 (1.807)	.548 (1.722)
State Legislative Candidate	.358 (1.687)	1.105 (1.670)	.124 (1.748)	.782 (1.669)
Region	-2.042** (.680)	-1.773** (.665)	-1.740* (.739)	-1.546* (.704)
Urban district	2.175 (2.377)	1.451 (2.637)	1.598 (2.628)	1.768 (2.493)
Suburban district	1.381 (2.368)	.681 (2.624)	.994 (2.597)	1.378 (2.465)
Rural district	-.207 (.2578)	-1.249 (2.812)	-1.772 (2.876)	-1.504 (2.729)
No. of Candidates	-.039 (.163)	.019 (158)	.010 (.175)	.049 (.166)
Money	-.237 (.216)	-.229 (.209)	-.191 (.234)	-.174 (.222)
Intra-party challenge	-.549** (1.154)	-1.172 (1.141)	-.565 (1.364)	-.333 (1.291)
Win	-1.755* (1.023)	-1.657 (1.027)	-.920 (1.179)	-1.518 (1.132)
Democratic Candidate	.436 (818)	1.106 (1.012)	.488 (1.202)	.084 (1.146)
Libertarian Candidate	-.850 (1.027)	-.202 (1.068)	.056 (1.127)	-.761 (1.096)
Other Minor Party Candidate	2.199* (1.260)	2.974** (1.308)	3.332* (1.344)	2.588* (1.293)
Ideology	---	.555 (.616)	.264 (.709)	.014 (.677)
Strength of Party ID	---	-2.451** (.730)	-2.534** (.810)	-2.116** (.778)

	Model I: Contextual Factors	Model II: I, plus Political factors	Model III: II, plus Influence Index	Model IV: III, plus Helped me win votes
Influence Index	---	---	.055 (.103)	-.010 (.100)
Primary helped me win votes	---	---	---	2.421*** (.710)
Intercept	6.376* (3.027)	7.339** (3.381)	7.119* (3.407)	5.439 (3.353)
<i>N</i>	140	137	112	112
<i>R</i> ²	.18	.26	.31	.39

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: Dependent variable is candidates' ten-point rating of blanket primary. Table entries are OLS regression coefficients. Standard error is in parentheses. Coding is as follows: "Statewide candidate", "U.S. House candidate", "State Legislative candidate" all coded as dummies; "Rural", "Suburban", and "Urban" all coded as dummies; Region: 0=Northern CA; 1=Southern CA; "No. of Candidates": continuous; Money: 1= \leq \$1,000, 2=\$1,000-\$5,000, 3=\$5,001-\$10,000; 4=\$10,001-\$25,000, 5=\$25,001-\$50,000; 6=\$50,001-\$100,000, 7= \geq \$100,000; "Intra-party challenge": 0=no opponent, 1=opponent; "Win": 0=lost nomination; 1=won nomination; "Democratic Candidate", "Libertarian Candidate", "Other Minor Party Candidate" all coded as dummies; "Ideology": -1=liberal; 0=moderate/neither, 1=conservative; "Strength of Party ID": 0=not very/somewhat strong, 1=very strong; "Influence Index": 0-14; "Primary helped me win votes": 0=hurt me/no effect, 1=helped me.

Model II, which adds political factors such as ideology and strength of party identification is, on the whole, stronger ($R^2 = .26$). Region is still significant ($B = -1.773$, $p < .01$) and being a minor party candidate becomes even more powerful ($B = 2.974$, $p < .01$). The positive coefficient for the ideology variable ($B = .555$, $p = n.s.$) suggests that being more moderate to conservative has a positive influence on one's perceptions of the blanket primary, but it does not reach statistical significance. Strength of a candidate's party attachment, however, is highly significant ($B = -2.451$, $p < .01$). In other words, a strong attachment to one's party accounts for nearly a 2.5 point decrease in the

dependent variable. A crosstabular analysis shows that just 36 percent of those who say their party attachment is "very strong" support the reform. But 61 percent of those who say their party attachment is "somewhat strong" and 79 percent of those who say their attachment is "not very strong" support the blanket primary.

The third model adds the Influence Index -- the battery of items from Table 7 that measured the primary's perceived impact on various aspects of the candidates' campaign. As the weak coefficient indicates ($B=.055$), perceptions of the primary's influence, *ceteris paribus*, have virtually no relationship to a candidate's general feeling toward the reform. In other words, a candidate's general attitude toward the primary is not influenced by perceptions of how the primary strategically impacted their election. In Model III, region ($B=-1.740$, $p<.05$), affiliation with a minor party ($B=3.332$, $p<.05$), and strength of party ID ($B=-2.534$, $P<.01$) are still significant.

Model IV, which adds a dummy variable measuring whether the candidate thought the primary helped his or her vote totals, increases the overall explained variance to .39. The three variables that retained their significance throughout the three previous models -- region ($B=-1.493$, $p<.05$), being a minor party candidate ($B=3.038$, $p<.05$), and strength of party identification ($B=-2.122$, $p<.01$) -- are once again highly significant. But the added "primary helped me win votes" variable ($B=2.421$, $p<.001$) is the most significant variable in any of the four models. What this tells us is that, controlling for all other factors, believing that the primary increased one's vote totals results in a higher rating on the primary.

Conclusions.

In assessing California's first blanket primary, candidates reflect both the skepticism expressed by political parties and the idealism manifested by voters when they first passed Proposition 198. They are wary of the reform's potential downfalls, such as its capacity to weaken the power of political party organizations. They fear the potential corruption from outsiders. Yet, they believe that party labels will still be relevant in elections. They believe that crossover voting is sincere. And, in large part, they remain confident about the new opportunities it affords voters and, of course, themselves. As the results from the regression analysis indicate, the belief that the primary boosted one's vote totals is the most significant predictor for a candidate's feeling toward the blanket primary.

Libertarians and conservative Republicans show the most antipathy toward the reform. Although both groups of candidates share a strong party attachment which fuels negative perceptions toward the blanket primary, there are some important differences. Libertarians almost uniformly oppose the primary on the principle of associational rights of the parties, since they overwhelmingly recognize that it is a benefit to them electorally. But Republicans have mixed feelings. They share the Libertarians principled opposition, but perceive that the primary had greater impact on their campaigns, as witnessed in their negative scores on the Influence Index. Libertarians, nearly all of whom ran unopposed for their party's nomination in June, had only benefits to gain. But

many conservative Republicans, some of whom lost their party's nominations, may have felt that the structure of the primary worked against them.

In the end, the data reveal that party attachment -- not overall perceived impact of the reform -- that is an important variable behind a candidate's position on the primary. While, as ambitious politicians striving for a party's nomination for office, candidates would be thought of as strong partisans, such is not the case. The party remains, for some, merely a vehicle for running for and attaining office. For these types of candidates, the blanket primary is a blessing since it allows them to transcend party lines. But for those who remain deeply committed to the concept of party - and the belief that nomination decisions should be confined to party members - the primary is a curse. If, in the long run, the blanket primary fosters the emergence of more moderate and weak party candidates and stifles strong party activity, as many in the survey predict, it may have created its own mechanism of self-preservation.

References

Brief for the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Plaintiffs-Intervenors-Appellants, *California Democratic Party et. al. v. Bill Jones* (1997) 97-17440 and 97-17442.

California Democratic Party et. al. v. Bill Jones (1997), memorandum of opinion and findings of fact and conclusions of law. (97-17440).

Cohen, Jonathan M. and John M. Sides. 1998. "The Incidence and Importance of Crossover Voting in a Blanket Primary: Washington State Senate Elections, 1986-1996. Paper presented at the 1998 Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Los Angeles.

Collet, Christian and Jerrold R. Hansen. 1997. "The Performance, Characteristics and Attitudes of Libertarian Party Candidates", unpublished manuscript.

DiCamillo, Mark. 1998. "Data Relating to California's "Open/Blanket" Primary Election on June 2, 1998". Unpublished charts by The Field Institute, June 26.

Fenno, Richard. 1974. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Fenno, Richard. 1990. *Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation*. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies Press.

Fritz, Marshall. 1986. "The Nolan Chart: A True Political Spectrum". *LP News*, Spring.

Gerber, Elizabeth and Rebecca Morton. 1999. Manuscript.

Hedlund, Ronald, Watts, Meredith W. and David Hedge. 1982. "Voting in an Open Primary." *American Politics Quarterly* 10: 197-218.

"Joint RNC-DNC statement on California's open primary." 1998. *U.S. Newswire*, April 14.

Southwell, Patricia L. 1988. "Open versus Closed Primaries and Candidate Fortunes, 1972-1984". *American Politics Quarterly* 16: 280-8.