**national partnership
for women & families**

To:	Interested Parties
From:	Vicki Shabo, Vice President for Workplace Policies and Strategies
Re:	2018 Midterm Elections Saw Candidates in Competitive Races Embrace Equal Pay, Paid Leave and Related Issues in Record Numbers – and Win
Date:	November 16, 2018

Equal pay. Paid family and medical leave. Harassment in the workplace. These issues – which are central to building working families' economic security, promoting gender, racial and economic justice and building a more inclusive, vibrant economy – were part of more than 150 campaign platforms of candidates in competitive races for U.S. Senate, U.S. House and governor across the country during the 2018 election cycle. Candidates who included these workplace policy issues in their campaign platforms often won, creating new opportunities for federal and state policy progress.

The National Partnership for Women & Families analyzed the campaign platforms of candidates for governor, U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate using candidates' websites, as we have done after the previous two election cycles. This year, we limited our analysis to the 310 candidates in races rated as "competitive" by the Cook Political Report, and we re-ran data from competitive races in 2014 and 2016 to draw comparisons.[1] We reviewed each candidate's website for mention of the following issues: equal pay, paid family and medical leave, sexual harassment, paid sick days and pregnancy discrimination.[2] We also conducted statistical analyses to determine the extent to which these policy proposals were associated with candidates' victories. This memo highlights our results for 2018, with greatest attention to comparisons to the last midterm elections in 2014.

Our analysis reveals that candidates whose platforms included workplace issues of key importance to women and families were more likely to win, controlling for incumbency and other important factors. Our 2018 findings reinforce findings from our prior analyses.

— **Fifty percent of all gubernatorial and congressional candidates in competitive races included at least one of five important workplace issues** – equal pay, paid family leave, sexual harassment, paid sick days or pregnancy discrimination – in their platforms.

— **These issues were part of campaigns in all of the 42 states with competitive races** for governor, U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

— **Both men and women as well as Democrats and Republicans included these issues in their campaign.**

— **Candidates whose platforms included paid family leave as a standalone issue or in combination with other issues were 14 percent more likely to win**, controlling for other factors like incumbency.

— **Democrats whose platforms included at least one workplace equity issue were 21 percent more likely to win** than Democrats who did not. Mentions of paid leave, equal pay and sexual harassment were each significant factors.

Over the past two years, tangible policy progress, organizing and activism and a growing body of economic and health research have fueled national momentum on paid leave and paid sick days, equal pay, pregnant workers' fairness and sexual harassment. New laws have been adopted in dozens of cities and several states, covering tens of millions of working people and families.[3] These issues are regularly in the news, as federal policymakers and private sector leaders consider new policies and as diverse, activated constituencies – women's leaders, health professionals, civil rights organizations, child and elder care advocates, working people and more – demand them. Polling shows that voters – across party, gender, region and age – are supportive of policymakers taking action.[4] Against this backdrop, it is a reflection of progress that a substantial share of candidates chose to highlight these issues in their campaigns.

We are keenly aware that voters identified other pressing and important issues, including health care, immigration and views of the president as influencing their decisions on Election Day, according to exit polling.[5] But exit polling also tells us that many also identified the economy as a key issue and are looking for improvements in their own family's financial circumstances. The workplace policy issues candidates ran on address both. They are key elements of an agenda to promote gender equity and economic security that will improve the lives of millions of women and families and the country's economy.
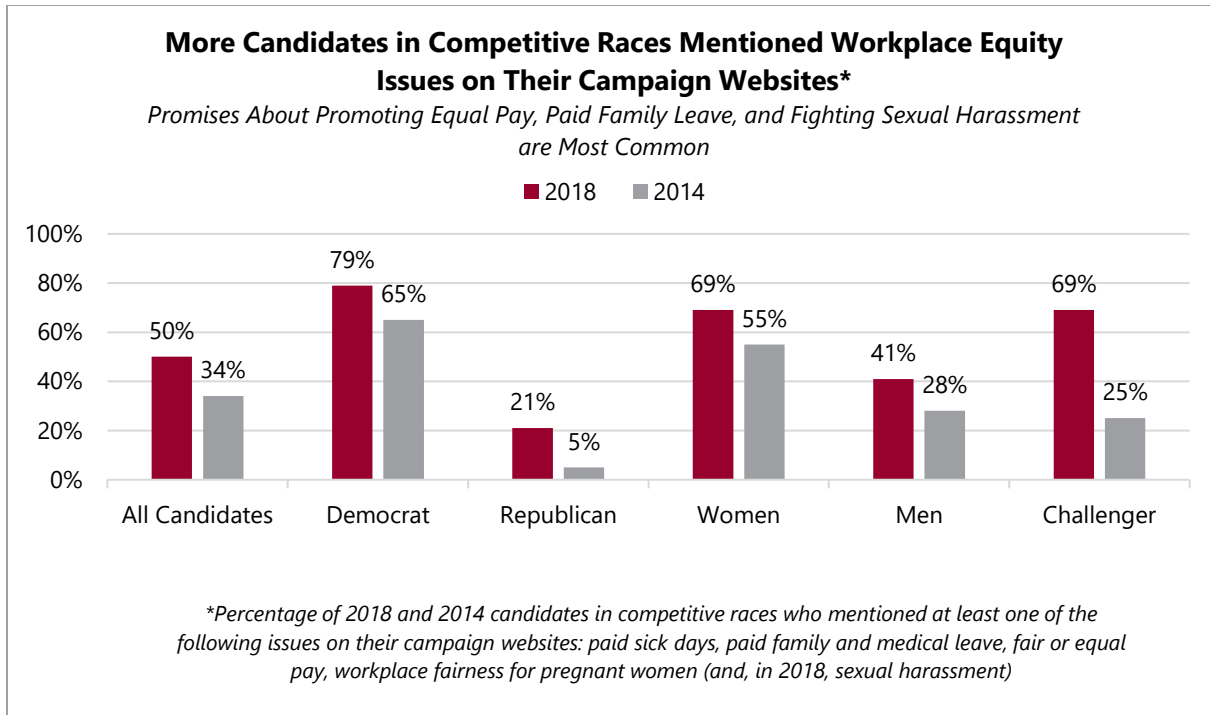
Looking ahead to 2019, we urge policymakers to pursue public policies consistent with successful campaign platforms on equal pay, paid leave, sexual harassment, paid sick days and pregnant workers fairness laws. When Congress sets the federal policy agenda and governors set priorities for their states, we hope our analysis helps to demonstrate growing resonance of these issues and contributes to an imperative for action.

Key Findings

Among candidates in competitive races for U.S. Senate, U.S. House and governor in 2018:

- **Half (50 percent) of candidates included equal pay, paid family leave, paid sick days, pregnancy discrimination or sexual harassment in their platforms.** Four years ago, during the 2014 midterms, only 34 percent of candidates in competitive races mentioned at least one of these issues. In both cases, those who mentioned these issues were more likely to win.

- **Equal pay is the issue most commonly included in candidates' platforms (36 percent), but references to paid family and medical leave have grown dramatically – from 4 percent of platforms in 2014 to 29 percent this year.** In addition, for the first time this year, we included workplace sexual harassment in our analysis and found it was included in 23 percent of candidates' platforms.

- **Challengers were the most likely to include workplace equity issues in their platforms – a shift from four years ago.** This year, nearly seven in 10 challengers (69 percent) included at least one of these issues in their campaign platforms, compared to 44 percent of candidates in open seats and 36 percent of incumbents. Four years ago, incumbents in competitive races (44 percent) were more likely to include these issues in their platforms than challengers (25 percent).

▸ **Women candidates embraced these issues at higher rates than men.** Nearly seven in 10 women (69 percent) included at least one issue in their platform, compared to four in 10 men (41 percent). A larger share of women candidates' platforms also mentioned multiple workplace equity issues rather than just one. But, overall, the share of both women and men who have taken on these issues has grown since the 2014 midterms, when 55 percent of women and 28 percent of men included at least one issue.

▸ **Most of the candidates who mentioned at least one of the issues were Democrats (79 percent).** However, partisanship has softened since 2014, when 93 percent of the candidates mentioning at least one issue were Democrats. Equal pay and paid leave were the two issues mentioned most frequently by Democrats in 2018, whereas sexual harassment was the issue mentioned most frequently by Republicans.

▸ **About half of the candidates in each region (Midwest, Northeast, West and South) and about half of the candidates for each office (governor, House and Senate) included at least one of these issues in their campaign platform.** In the past, a much higher percentage of candidates in the Northeast mentioned these issues, compared to those in other regions. In 2014, a much smaller share of candidates for each type of office included these issues in their campaign platforms.

▸ **Paid leave was the issue most highly associated with candidates' likelihood of winning this year.** Statistical analysis shows that candidates who included paid leave in their platform were 14 percent more likely to win than those who did not, controlling for other factors such as incumbency, type of office, candidate gender and region. Similarly, in 2016, paid leave was associated with a 10 percent bump in a candidate's chances of winning in competitive races. Candidates often mentioned paid leave in combination with other issues – most often with equal pay, sexual harassment or paid sick days – to illustrate their commitment to women and working families, but it was mentions of paid leave and not the other issues that proved statistically significant in predicting electoral success.

▸ **Democratic candidates, in particular, benefit electorally from featuring elements of a workplace equity agenda in their platforms**. Democratic candidates whose platforms included at least one issue were about 21 percent more likely to win their races than Democratic candidates who did not include any issues, controlling for other factors such as incumbency, region and gender. Equal pay, sexual harassment and paid leave each individually contributed to a 16 percent increase in winning among Democrats who mentioned them relative to Democrats who did not, controlling for other factors.

More Candidates in Competitive Races Mentioned Workplace Equity Issues on Their Campaign Websites*

Promises About Promoting Equal Pay, Paid Family Leave, and Fighting Sexual Harassment are Most Common

■ 2018   ■ 2014

Category	2018	2014
All Candidates	50%	34%
Democrat	79%	65%
Republican	21%	5%
Women	69%	55%
Men	41%	28%
Challenger	69%	25%

*Percentage of 2018 and 2014 candidates in competitive races who mentioned at least one of the following issues on their campaign websites: paid sick days, paid family and medical leave, fair or equal pay, workplace fairness for pregnant women (and, in 2018, sexual harassment)

Detailed Results

The National Partnership's analysis demonstrates the growing electoral resonance of workplace policy issues like equal pay and paid leave. These and the other issues we examined in this analysis connect deeply to the lived experiences of millions of women and families. Strong policies would promote economic security, women's workplace equity and fuel national economic growth.

A GROWING SHARE OF CANDIDATES – ACROSS GENDER, PARTY, REGION AND OFFICES – INCLUDED WORKPLACE EQUITY ISSUES IN THEIR CAMPAIGN AGENDAS

In 2018, 50 percent of all candidates – including 50 percent of candidates for governor, 53 percent of candidates for Senate and 49 percent of House candidates – included at least one workplace policy issue in their campaign platform. In 2018, among all candidates in competitive races:

Half of all 2018 candidates in competitive races mentioned at least one issue: equal pay, paid leave, sexual harassment, paid sick days or pregnancy discrimination.

- ▶ 36 percent mentioned equal pay or the gender pay gap

- ▶ 29 percent mentioned paid family and medical leave, paid family leave or paid parental leave

- ▶ 23 percent mentioned workplace sexual harassment

- ▶ 9 percent mentioned paid sick days

- ▶ 4 percent mentioned pregnancy discrimination or fairness for pregnant workers

4

Attention to each issue has grown since the 2014 midterm cycle. The shares of candidates who mentioned equal pay, paid sick days and pregnancy discrimination in 2018 were slightly higher than the share of candidates who mentioned each of these issues in 2014, when 34 percent mentioned equal pay, 7 percent mentioned paid sick days and 3 percent mentioned pregnancy discrimination. Mentions of paid leave, however, skyrocketed from 4 percent in 2014 to 29 percent this year. This year was the first time we analyzed the inclusion of sexual harassment in candidates' platforms, but given the heightened attention to workplace harassment arising from the #MeToo movement and some federal and state legislative action, it is likely there were more mentions this year than in previous years.

Candidates platforms generally acknowledged that women and families face multiple challenges and need multiple solutions: 62 percent of candidates who included workplace equity issues in their platform mentioned more than one issue. For example, about half (48 percent) of the candidates who mentioned paid leave also mentioned sexual harassment; more than one-third (35 percent) who mentioned paid leave also mentioned equal pay; one-seventh (14 percent) who mentioned paid leave also mentioned paid sick days; and 3 percent of those who mentioned paid leave also mentioned pregnancy discrimination.

WOMEN CANDIDATES FOCUS ON WORKPLACE EQUITY ISSUES MORE THAN MEN – BUT ATTENTION AMONG BOTH HAS GROWN

Female and male candidates both embraced these issues to a greater extent than in the last midterm election cycle: 69 percent of women and 41 percent of men running for office in competitive races included at least one of these issues in their platform this year. This is a substantial increase from 2014, when 55 percent of women and 28 percent of men included at least one issue in their platforms.

Both younger women and men, as well as candidates from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, highlighted workplace equity issues in their campaigns in exciting ways. Among numerous examples:

- **U.S. House challenger Abby Finkenauer (D-Iowa-1)**, who will be one of the youngest members ever elected to Congress, declared on her website, "In Congress, I will fight for equal pay, the unions that support our families, and a fair, living wage for every hard-working American" and "The time for enacting an effective paid family leave policy is long overdue… I'll fight to expand paid family leave because, when working families are given the time they need to care for themselves or their loved ones, our economy, our workforce, and our families thrive."[6]

- **U.S. House challenger Lucy McBath (D-Ga.-6)**, whose activism on gun violence prevention and candidacy for Congress were catalyzed by her son's senseless shooting and death, says two of her economic priorities are equal pay and paid leave. Her platform says, "I fundamentally believe that everyone should earn equal pay for equal work. I support the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and I wish to build on that law to make workplaces more equitable for Georgia women." It goes on, "One way to improve the lives of working women and their families is to ensure paid family leave. The United States is the only industrialized country in the world to not offer parental leave, and I will support legislation that would allow working mothers and fathers to care for their children appropriately."[7]

‣ **U.S. House incumbent Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.-1)**, included equal pay and paid leave in his platform, committing to "ensure equal pay for equal work" and to "ensure new mothers and fathers have access to flexible parental leave options to help support strong families."[8]

‣ **U.S. House challenger Colin Allred (D-Texas-32)**, the former NFL player, promised on his website, "I will be a champion in Congress for removing the barriers women still face in advancing in our society, from the fight for gender equality to combating violence against women." Allred also detailed his platform on equal pay, paid leave, child care, safeguarding Planned Parenthood and fighting for reproductive rights and ending violence against women.[9]

‣ **Gubernatorial candidate in open seat, Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-N.M.)**, put forth a plan for women that includes, "Fighting gender discrimination with pregnancy accommodation, strong harassment and discrimination protections, and diligent equal pay enforcement with state agencies and vendors."[10]

‣ **U.S. Senate incumbent Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)**, elevated his record on supporting women in the workplace that promises, "Sherrod is committed to closing the gender pay gap and ending gender-based pay discrimination, which costs Ohio women nearly $30 billion every year. He's co-sponsored all nine attempts to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and proudly helped pass the Lilly Ledbetter Equal Pay Act, which allows victims of pay discrimination to sue after discovering they have been paid less than men for equal work. Sherrod has also voted for workers to have more paid family, medical, and sick leave benefits to help support women's economic equality and prosperity."[11]

CHALLENGERS ARE TAKING ON WORKPLACE EQUITY ISSUES MORE THAN INCUMBENTS

This year, challengers included workplace equity issues as a distinguishing feature of their campaigns in much greater numbers than in the last midterm election cycle. Sixty-nine percent of all challengers, 44 percent of candidates running in open seats and 36 percent of incumbents mentioned at least one issue in 2018 – a trend that mirrored the 2016 elections. In 2014, the frequencies of mentions among incumbents and challengers were reversed, with just 25 percent of challengers, 42 percent of incumbents and 35 percent of candidates in open seats mentioning at least one issue as part of their platform.

DEMOCRATS INCLUDE WORKPLACE ISSUES MORE OFTEN THAN REPUBLICANS, BUT BIPARTISANSHIP IS GROWING

About four times as many Democratic candidates as Republicans mentioned at least one of these issues in 2018 (79 percent were Democrats, 21 percent were Republicans), but this is an improvement in bipartisanship from 2014, when 93 percent of those mentioning at least one issue were Democrats.

The most frequently mentioned issues among Democrats were equal pay (68 percent of candidates mentioned), paid family leave (53 percent mentioned) and sexual harassment (33 percent mentioned). Republicans most often addressed sexual harassment (14 percent), paid family leave (5 percent) and equal pay (4 percent).

NATIONALIZING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT WORKPLACE EQUITY

Workplace equity issues were part of campaigns in all of the 42 states where there were competitive races. In every region, roughly half of candidates mentioned these issues: (48 percent in both the Midwest and South, 49 percent in the West and 56 percent in the Northeast). This is a departure from prior years, when candidates in the Northeast were far more likely than those in other regions to address at least one of these issues; in 2014, less than one-third of candidates in the Midwest, South and West addressed at least one issue, compared to 50 percent in the Northeast.

WORKPLACE EQUITY ISSUES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH ELECTORAL SUCCESS

Dozens of candidates who included workplace equity issues in their campaigns won their competitive races. Our simple tabulations of wins and losses among subgroups of candidates showed that most – especially women and Democrats, as well as candidates in each category of challenger, incumbent and open seat – whose platforms included elements of our workplace issue agenda generally fared better than those who did not. We then tested this finding using multivariate statistical analysis to look systematically at whether the inclusion of equal pay, paid leave, sexual harassment, paid sick days or pregnancy discrimination helped increase the likelihood of electoral success once other important factors – especially incumbency – were taken into account.[12] As in previous years, our analysis suggests issues made a difference.

Candidates whose platforms included paid leave, alone or in combination with other issues, were 14 percent more likely to win, controlling for other factors.

Multivariate regression analysis shows that, in 2018, candidates who included paid leave in their platform, either alone or in combination with other key issues, were 14 percent more likely to win than candidates who did not include paid leave; this analysis controls for a candidate's status as an incumbent, challenger or open seat candidate, their gender, their party, their region and the type of office they sought (House, Senate or governor). This was similar to our finding in 2016 that, among candidates in competitive races, candidates who mentioned paid leave alone or in combination with other issues were 10 percent more likely to win than candidates who did not.

A second model from the 2018 cycle shows that Democrats who mentioned equal pay were 18 percent more likely to win than Republicans who did not mention equal pay, and Democrats who mentioned paid leave were 22 percent more likely to win than Republican candidates who did not mention paid leave, controlling for other important factors like incumbency.

Finally, looking only at Democrats, candidates whose platforms included at least one of the key issues were 21 percent more likely to win. In models testing each issue separately, equal pay, paid leave or sexual harassment each increased the likelihood of a Democrat winning by about 16 percent each relative to other Democrats, controlling for other important factors like incumbency.

* * *

We offer this analysis to help persuade policymakers and their staff to prioritize workplace policy issues that help support women in the workplace and their families. We stand ready to assist with policy development and look forward to lawmakers advancing policies that will help close the gender wage gap, guarantee working people the paid time off they need to care for themselves and their loved ones, and address persistent and rampant gender-based discrimination in workplaces across America. Addressing these issues will improve the lives of millions of working women and their families.

1 Cook Political Report. (2018). *Ratings*. Retrieved 2 November 2018, from https://www.cookpolitical.com/ratings. In 2018, 310 candidates competed in 155 races for governor, House and Senate that were rated as "competitive" by the Cook Political Report, compared to 158 candidates in 2016 and 212 candidates in 2014. Of the 310 candidates included in our analysis this year, there were 154 Democratic candidates, 155 Republicans and 1 independent. Of note: 99 women competed in competitive races in 2018, compared to 43 women in 2016 and 47 women in 2014.

2 Between Oct. 15 and Nov. 2, 2018, the National Partnership's staff reviewed the campaign websites of 310 declared general election candidates in races considered by the Cook Political Report to be "competitive," meaning the race was not considered a "solid Democrat" or "solid Republican" race. On each candidate's website, our staff reviewed the position statements of the candidate and campaign representatives, issue pages and press releases to determine whether they included any references to the candidate's positions on or accomplishments related to (1) equal or fair pay for women or the gender wage gap; (2) paid family leave, paid family and medical leave or paid leave for new parents; (3) paid sick days; (4) fairness for pregnant workers or pregnancy discrimination; and (5) sexual harassment in the workplace or gender-based workplace harassment. We also evaluated whether the candidate expressed clear support for a progressive or conservative solution as opposed to a more general mention. We did not include any other sources of information for determining the candidates' positions on these issues; for example, we did not take press mentions, organizational endorsements or social media content into account. We also included in the dataset we built and in our analysis (1) Cook Political Report race ratings as likely, lean or toss-up, as of Nov. 2, 2018; (2) candidate gender; (3) candidate political party affiliation; (4) the region and state in which the race occurred; (5) the status of candidates as incumbent, challenger or running in an open seat; (6) whether the race was for governor, U.S. House or U.S. Senate; and (7) the result of the election as of Nov. 9, 2018. The descriptive analysis includes 310 candidates in 155 races; the tabulations and regression results involving final election results include all 139 races in which a winner was declared as of Nov. 9 (two races for governor, two races for U.S. Senate and nine races for U.S. House had not yet been decided and one Senate race is headed for a runoff election on Nov. 27). As a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the National Partnership for Women & Families does not support or oppose candidates for office. This analysis is for educational purposes only and is not intended to suggest an organizational position on any candidate for office.

3 National Partnership for Women & Families. (2017, December 20). *Key Measures to Support Women and Families Taking Effect in 2018*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from http://www.nationalpartnership.org/news-room/press-releases/key-measures-to-support-women-and-families-taking-effect-in-2018.html. Many more laws have been adopted in 2018 that have or will soon take effect.

4 YWCA USA. (2018, September). *What Women Want 2018*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/WhatWomenWant2018_final.pdf; National Partnership for Women & Families. (2018, October). *Voters' Views on Paid Family and Medical Leave*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/voters-views-on-paid-family-medical-leave-survey-findings-august-2018.pdf; National Partnership for Women & Families. (2016, December 6). *New Poll and Website Analysis Show Candidates Benefit from Prioritizing Family Friendly Workplace Policies*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from http://www.nationalpartnership.org/news-room/press-releases/new-poll-and-website-analysis-show-candidates-benefit-from-prioritizing-family-friendly-workplace-policies.html; Center for American Progress. (2014, November 24). *Survey on Pregnancy Discrimination*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/YoungPollingMemo.pdf; Barbara Lee Family Foundation. (2018). *Topic: Voters, Candidates, and #MeToo*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from http://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/research/voters-candidates-and-metoo/

5 CNN Politics. (2018). *Exit Polls*. Retrieved 12 November 2018, from https://www.cnn.com/election/2018/exit-polls/national-results

6 Abby Finkenauer for Congress. (n.d.). *Fighting for Working Families*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from https://www.abbyfinkenauer.com/issues/fighting-for-working-families/

7 Lucy McBath for Congress. (n.d.). *Women's Rights*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from https://lucyforcongress.com/issue/womens-rights/

8 Brian Fitzpatrick for Congress. (n.d.). *(WATCH) Your Priorities are My Priorities*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from https://www.brianfitzpatrick.com/watch-your-priorities-are-my-priorities/

9 Colin Allred for Congress. (n.d.). *Women's Rights and Opportunity*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from https://www.colinallred.com/womensrights

10 New Mexicans for Michelle. (n.d.). *Fighting for Women*. Retrieved 14 November 2018, from http://www.newmexicansformichelle.com/policy/fighting-for-women

11 Sherrod Brown, Senator for Ohio. (n.d.) *Women's Rights*. Retrieved 15 November 2018, from https://www.sherrodbrown.com/issues/womens-rights/

12 All of the multivariate analysis results presented in this memo are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level or greater. All regression models show that incumbency and whether the seat was an open seat had the largest and most significant effect on a candidate's success in every model; the models also control for region, gender, party and type of office sought but none of these variables were significant.