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## Candidate Recruitment in American State Legislatures

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CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT IN AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATURES

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Government  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

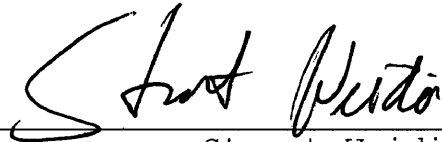
Stuart Weidie

2002

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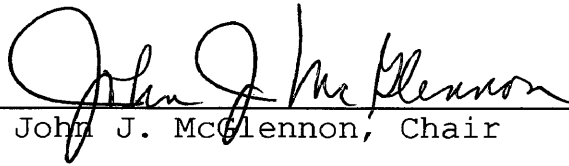
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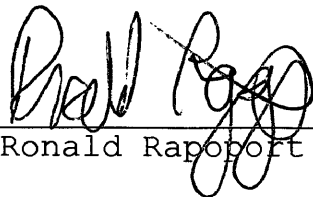
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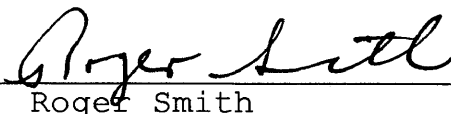
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## Abstract

The recruitment of candidates for political office is an important part of the political process. The purpose this study is to recognize the way candidates for the Virginia General Assembly were recruited in the elections of 1991.

Many students of the American political system believe political parties have been diminished in the electoral process. One of the primary responsibilities of any political party is the recruitment and support of candidates for public office and this study focuses on which actors are influential in attracting and encouraging candidates to run for office.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT IN AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATURES



## CHAPTER I

### THE INFLUENCE OF PARTY STRUCTURE ON CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT

Nearly twenty years have passed since political journalist David Broder wrote about the failure of the American political system. In "The Party's Over," he asserted that the governmental system is not working.<sup>1</sup> Other political observers have described a decline in partisan identification among the electorate and the unresponsiveness of votes to partisan appeals. Martin Wattenberg has suggested that mountains of survey evidence attest to Americans' declining concern over partisanship and the role of political parties.<sup>2</sup> Weakened partisan attachments have led to the general acceptance of partisan decline and while there is little doubt regarding the validity of this phenomenon, it would be erroneous to judge the political parties on that criterion alone.

Students of American politics who hold a contrary view believe the parties have not similarly declined when different standards are considered. One such standard, the

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<sup>1</sup> David S. Broder, The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Martin P. Wattenberg, The Decline of the American Political Parties 1952-1958 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 48.

recruitment and nomination of candidates, is a basic and important function of political parties. As E. E. Schattschneider said, "Unless the party makes authoritative and effective nominations, it cannot stay in business. . ."<sup>3</sup> According to Robert Huckshorn, the overall goal of a political party is to select government leadership.<sup>4</sup> Candidate recruitment is an important function of political parties because it is integral to the selection of political leaders and public officials. The nomination of qualified and electable candidates is often a reflection of a party's ability to recruit good candidates. Candidate quality is particularly important to American political parties, which unlike parties in many parliamentary democracies, cannot rely on a heavily affiliated electorate for electoral success. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that party organizational strength is not determined by levels of partisan identification alone.

The thesis of partisan decline has been accepted by many because the definition of a political party in the American system is the subject of much disagreement. Many doomsdayers of the party system focus on one particular function of a party, such as creating partisan attachments in the electorate. They conclude that the parties are failing in that particular area.

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<sup>3</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1942), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Huckshorn, Political Parties in America (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1980), p. 13.

Frank Sorauf has qualified the meaning of a political party, analyzing it not as a monolithic beast, but as an organization comprised of three separate structures.

Sorauf asserted that "the American political parties are three-headed political giants - tripartite systems of interactions," that embrace many individuals. As political structures, they include a party organization, a party in office, and a party in the electorate.<sup>5</sup> These separate structures consist of people in various roles, responsibilities, patterns of activities, and reciprocal relationships.

The party organization is comprised of the formally chosen party leaders, the informally anointed ones, the local leaders, the precinct captains and the activists of the party. These are the people who give their time, money, and skills to the party. They conduct most of their work through the formal machinery of committees and conventions which operate by laws set within the fifty states.<sup>6</sup>

The party in government is made up of those who have captured office under the party label and those candidates who seek to do so. "The chief executives and legislative parties of the nation and the states are its major components."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Frank J. Sorauf, Party Politics in America, 5th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 0.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Although the elected officials are not necessarily subject to the control or discipline of the party organization, they often speak for the party since their statements carry the most weight with the public. A party's president or leader in the Congress claims more attention than its national chairperson.

The party in the electorate is the most difficult structure of the party to define. "It comprises the men and women who affiliate casually with it, show it some degree of loyalty, and even vote habitually for it, even though they do not participate in the party organization or interact with its leaders and activists."<sup>8</sup> These people are the consumers of the candidate's appeals and therefore make up the majorities necessary for effective political power in the country's legislative bodies. "Their association with the party is a passive one, however--accepting here, rejecting there, always threatening the party with the fickleness of their affections."<sup>9</sup> It is thus easy to see why a student of the American party system could conclude that the political parties are failing today if they focus on the absence of partisan identification among the electorate. However, if Sorauf's definition of a political party is accepted, it becomes apparent that focusing solely on partisan identification would be erroneous when reaching a conclusion about the party system as a whole.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

It is important to understand the activities of the three parts or sectors of a party and the various relationships among them. The relationships between the three sectors describe both a division of labor and a hierarchy of authority within the parties.<sup>10</sup>

In some states, the party organization is the strongest sector of the party while in others the party in government dominates. This can have dramatic effects on the recruitment of candidates for the state legislatures. Researchers who have not differentiated between those sectors have not accounted for all the variables in the recruitment process.

For example, an outstanding study by Tobin and Keynes looked at the relationship between structural variables (i.e., legally prescribed nomination procedures) and the role of political parties in recruiting state legislators.<sup>11</sup> They analyzed the role of political parties in four states (Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Washington) and concluded there were statistically significant differences among nominating systems. In order to test the structural influences on candidate recruitment in the four states, they developed four hypotheses:

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

<sup>11</sup> Richard J. Robin and Edward Keynes, "Institutional Differences in the Recruitment Process: A Four-State Study," *American Journal of Political Science* (November, 1975): p. 667.

*Hypothesis 1:* In closed or restrictive nominating systems, party leaders and organizations are more likely to encourage candidates to run than are party leaders and organizations in open or nonrestrictive nominating systems.

*Hypothesis 2:* In closed nominating systems, candidates are more likely to have had prior contact with and/or involvement in party organizations than are candidates in open nominating systems.

*Hypothesis 3:* In closed nominating systems, party organizations are more likely to endorse candidates than are party organizations in open nominating systems.

*Hypothesis 4:* In closed nominating systems, a party organization's endorsements are more likely to be effective in narrowing the scope of electoral conflict than in open nominating systems.<sup>12</sup>

The data Tobin and Keynes collected confirmed all four hypotheses and they concluded that institutional differences in nominating systems seem to influence the process of recruitment and selection.<sup>13</sup> The validity of their findings are difficult to question. However, other variables are involved.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678.

The instruments used by Tobin and Keynes made no distinction between the different sectors of the political parties and treated the party as a monolithic structure. Also, in their questions to candidates they only referred to party leaders. Huckshorn has noted that there are really two different categories of party leaders. Some party leaders never run for public office and are called organizational leaders. Public party leaders, on the other hand, serve as elected officials.<sup>14</sup> Tobin and Keynes did not make this important distinction and therefore do not completely depict the process of recruitment in either the direct or open primary nominating systems.

Neglecting to make a distinction between party leaders can be problematic when studying the recruitment process as the following example illustrates. A state with an open primary nominating system could have strong party leadership in the state legislature. In the 1980s, Tom Loftus, the Assembly Speaker in Wisconsin, argued that the political parties have let legislative candidates fend for themselves. In the interest of maintaining a partisan majority, Loftus said that his Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee recruited candidates and supported their campaigns monetarily.<sup>15</sup> "To a lesser or greater extent, each partisan caucus in each house of the legislature in each state is

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Huckshorn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Tom Loftus, "The New 'Political Parties' in State Legislatures," *State Government* (Vol. 57-58, 1984): p. 108.

operating in this same way." He pointed out that party caucus committees in the Wisconsin legislature dated from only about 1982. "We formed to fill a void and to fight for the rather abstract goal of partisan control." He also said that these committees are like parties because, "they do what parties do."<sup>16</sup> Thus, an accurate picture of the recruitment and support of candidates cannot be presented when the role of the party in government is neglected. To focus on the party as a monolithic structure is to not grasp the reality of parties today.

This paper will focus on the recruitment and support of candidates at the state level, and specifically state legislative candidates in Virginia, rather than candidates for national office. The reasons for doing so are twofold. First, the state legislative office is often the starting point in the political career of elected officials.<sup>17</sup> Since this is the first campaign for office for many political aspirants, it is important to understand how, and by whom these candidates are recruited. Second, the focus of this paper will be on Virginia where the Democrats have maintained their majority status in both the General Assembly and the Senate even though Republican candidates have enjoyed tremendous success at the congressional and state levels. This phenomenon is not unique to Virginia.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph A. Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966), p. 20.



Therefore, it is worth probing to discover if the quality of state legislative candidates nominated by the parties is a reflection of their ability to recruit candidates.

#### RESEARCH OF CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT IN STATE LEGISLATURES

The amount of scholarly research conducted on the recruitment and support of candidates for state legislatures has been relatively sparse. A recent study by Kazee and Thornberry on congressional candidate recruitment concluded that as a party function, recruitment has not been institutionalized in most congressional districts. However, they found that most successful candidates had a history of party involvement. "Recruitment, as a straightforward process in which party leaders hand-pick and groom chosen candidates, happens infrequently. Party involvement in the emergence of candidates occurs much more often."<sup>18</sup> While they concluded that the direct recruitment of congressional candidates happens infrequently, it is worth noting that some important variables separate congressional candidates from state legislative candidates. Kazee and Thornberry found that seventy-seven percent of the self proclaimed, self-starters also acknowledged their prior party activity to be moderate to extensive.<sup>19</sup>

Many congressional candidates have previously held an elective office while the state legislature is often the

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas A. Kazee and Mary C. Thornberry, "Where's the Party? Congressional Candidate Recruitment and American Party Organizations," *Western Political Quarterly* (March, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

first rung on the ladder for political aspirants. Joseph Schlesinger, in his study of ambition in political careers, found that of the candidates for governor in the 48 states from 1914-1958, only 18.7 percent of the congressmen gaining the governors office listed Congress as their first political office. Of the state legislators who attained the governorship, 63.6 percent said that the legislature was their first office.<sup>20</sup> Arguably, the career ambitions of congressional candidates are higher than state legislative candidates making them more likely to be self-starters. The experience of congressional candidates may give them enough confidence to run without the support of the party organization, whereas the political neophyte at the state level may not get involved without the urging of party leaders or other groups.

The aforementioned four state study conducted by Tobin and Keynes focused on the institutional differences in the recruitment process. They concentrated, therefore, more on the *ability* of a party to recruit and sponsor legislative candidates in a political system. Unlike the focus of this study, they did not actually concern themselves with "by whom" and "how" the legislative candidates were recruited.

Nevertheless, their conclusions regarding the institutional differences in nominating systems and their efforts on recruitment are very important.

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph A. Schlesinger, op. cit. p. 91.

A similar study conducted in Iowa by Patterson and Boynton in 1969 concentrated not on the institutional differences but on the political environment and the patterns of recruitment within different environments. They concluded that legislative recruitment can be thought of as operating within the boundaries of three fairly distinct typologies: First, it may occur in an environment in which political life is dominated by very highly organized political party organizations which control opportunities for political office. The party organizations virtually have total control over candidates and nominations. Second, political parties may indeed compete for public office but candidacy is largely a matter of self-recruitment and political ambition. In this environment, political recruitment is a "free-for-all." Third, an environment of civic culture may exist which is mixed in nature. Political parties are fairly decentralized and recruitment to legislative office is widely shared.<sup>21</sup> This study is very important because it gives students three broad civic cultures, or environments, in which states can be classified.

Generalizations are easier to make regarding candidate recruitment if you classify the state's political culture in one of the typologies.

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel C. Patterson and G. R. Boynton, "Legislative Recruitment in a Civic Culture," *Social Science Quarterly* (June, 1969 - March, 1970): p. 262.

The most extensive research on recruitment patterns in state legislatures has been conducted by Lester Seligman in the state of Oregon. His first study in 1961 identified two distinct stages in the process of recruitment: *certification*, which includes the social screening and political channeling that results in eligibility for candidacy, and *selection*, which includes the actual choice of candidates to represent parties in general elections. The focus of his study was on the selection of candidates.<sup>22</sup>

Seligman found that several different mechanisms of candidate entry could be distinguished, *i.e.*, the roles that candidates played in the groups involved in the instigation of their candidacy: conscription, self-recruitment, cooption and agency.<sup>23</sup> Conscription was found in areas where a hopeless minority party existed. Candidates would not run because the chance of general election success was so poor. The county party organization usually had to persuade people to run and the candidates were largely drawn from party activists. Self-recruited candidates were those that entered the primaries largely on their own initiative without clearing from party leaders.

He observed that these candidates were found both in areas where one party dominated and in competitive party systems. The process of cooption involved persuading a person to run

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<sup>22</sup> Lester G. Seligman, "Political Recruitment and Party Structure: A Case Study," *American Political Science Review* (March, 1961): pp. 77-86.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

who was not actively involved in the party but who usually enjoyed high social status. This type of candidate was found most often in competitive areas. Seligman called the fourth type of candidate entry, agency. By this method, individuals are almost "hired" to file, with the understanding that they are to represent organized interest groups. An interest group would instigate the candidacy and provide support.<sup>24</sup>

Seligman offered three generalizations of party recruitment patterns and their relations to interparty competitiveness: First, in areas safe for the majority party, party officials were least active in instigating or supporting candidates. Second, in districts safe for the majority party, the "hopeless" minority party officials had to conscript candidates for the primary. Third, in the more competitive districts, the marketplace for potential candidates was wide open, contrary to his hypothesis that in competitive situations, each party would be more centralized.<sup>25</sup>

Seligman's generalizations regarding patterns of recruitment based on interparty competitiveness are very constructive but limited.

Tobin and Keynes might have hypothesized that the fragmentation of party organizations in Oregon is to be expected due to its nominating procedures. Seligman does

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 84.

not consider these variables when developing his broad generalizations. Nevertheless, his focus on the competitiveness of districts provides information about yet another important variable in the process of candidate recruitment.

In perhaps the most comprehensive study on candidate recruitment in the states, Seligman, along with King, Kim and Smith conducted another study of Oregon in 1974. They considered both the effects of the direct primary and the competitiveness of a district by creating a model which both defined and developed the interrelationships among different variables in the recruitment process.

Seligman et al approached recruitment as a process of selecting individuals in three phases: certification, selection and role assignment. The first phase, certification, derives from a person's status in the structure of political opportunity, his opportunity costs and political socialization. The second phase, selection, involves the interaction among aspirants, candidates, sponsors, and the electorate. The final phase, role assignment, occurs when the successful candidate is chosen and legitimizes his assumption of the office of state legislator as representative of a particular legislative district.<sup>26</sup> Their major focus was on the selection process which was schematized in the following manner:

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<sup>26</sup> Lester G. Seligman, Michael R. King, Chong Lim Kim and Roland E. Smith, Patterns of Recruitment: A State Chooses its Lawmakers (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1974), p. 14.

1. *From What:* Social and political status as defined by the formal and effective political opportunity structures.
2. *By Whom:* The sponsors of the candidates which include political parties, interest groups, sub-cultures, primary groups and the electorate.
3. *What Criteria:* Ascriptive: age, family, social status, race, nationality, group affiliation  
Achievement: skill in organizing, communication, bargaining, policy expertise.
4. *How:* Selection Mechanisms: sponsorship, cooption, conscription, agency, bureaucratic ascent.  
Self-recruitment: self-starting candidate<sup>27</sup>

This schematization of the selection process is valuable because it provides a way to observe the interrelationships between the different variables in various legislative districts. The scope of this paper will not involve the social aspects of the selection process but only the "By Whom" and "How" variables of the process. Admittedly, this narrow focus ignores important aspects of the recruitment process because social and cultural variables have a profound impact.

Seligman et al found that only a small proportion of candidates in Oregon received party support after their candidacies were initiated, compared to a large number who were sponsored by their friends and neighbors or by interest

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

groups.<sup>28</sup> This phenomenon occurred in part because of the direct primary but also because party leaders do not exercise much influence in instigating candidates, except in the case of the minority party in the districts with one dominant party. The Oregon political parties at the time of their study in the early 1970s were fragmented organizations with sporadically active volunteers. Also, the boundaries between party association and nonparty association were blurred.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it would be dangerous to generalize about the role of political parties in the recruitment process by studying a state which obviously has a weak party system. Conflicting with Seligman's conclusion that political parties play a very limited role in the recruitment of candidates for the state legislature is a work assessing party organization strength by James Gibson, Cornelius Cotter and John Bibby. Their article from 1983 presents evidence that state party organizations have not suffered during the last two decades and they challenge the hypothesis that only strong party organizations are more likely to be more successful at fielding candidates. For example, they argue that the Democratic Party in the South has experienced unchallenged electoral success until recent times but that it has been organizationally weak traditionally.<sup>30</sup> They conclude that the relationship

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> James L. Gibson, Cornelius P. Cotter, and John F. Bibby, "Assessing Party Organizational Strength," *American Journal of Political Science* (May, 1983): pp. 193-217.



between electoral success and the condition of party organizations is curvilinear: "Organizationally strong parties will be found only in the absence of extreme electoral success and extreme electoral failure, that is, in the presence of interparty competition."<sup>31</sup> In their twenty-seven state study, they found that sixty-five percent of candidates in state legislative races were recruited by the parties. Their data found a *decline* in the proportion of parties that recruit candidates for gubernatorial races but an *increase* in the percentage recruiting for state legislative races.<sup>32</sup> This indicates that although recruitment for higher statewide offices has decreased, the overall level of recruitment activity has increased since there are over seventy-five hundred legislative seats in the United States. Thus, party organizations are providing an important function--the recruitment and support of state legislative candidates--despite the weakening of subjective party attachments.

If parties are indeed increasing their involvement in the recruitment process, the question becomes, how? There is increasing evidence that the party in government--the elected public officials--is playing a prominent role in this process. This sector of the party may influence

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

recruitment and operate independent of interparty competition and instituted nominating procedures.

The weakness of party attachments in the electorate has been an antecedent to recent growth in regularized party organizations. Martin Wattenberg made the point that in this sense, "the revitalization of some aspects of American political parties has been an adaptation to an electoral process increasingly oriented around candidates."<sup>33</sup> The partisanship of people may be shifted with every election year and this has triggered a period of candidate-centered elections. The parties now find it necessary to take a more active stance in the recruitment of candidates since the candidates, not the parties, attract voters. Elected officials, especially at the state legislative level, are one sector of the party organization that is more active than ever in the process of recruitment.

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<sup>33</sup> Martin P. Wattenberg, op. cit., p. 167.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PARTY IN GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND THE SUPPORT OF CANDIDATES

In 1984, Assembly Speaker Tom Loftus of Wisconsin in remarks at the Annual Meeting of The Council of State Governments said that there are two new political parties emerging in the United States: "In each state, 100 flowers are blooming."<sup>1</sup> Loftus asserted that partisan caucuses in the legislatures of each state are providing everything that political party organizations are supposed to do. In Wisconsin, for example, Loftus said the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee raised about \$150,000 to help Democrats running in marginal seats. In most cases, the candidate was recruited by the Committee. In addition, the Campaign Committee provided training through campaign schools, personnel and logistical support, issue papers, press releases, speakers for fundraisers, and phone banks.<sup>2</sup>

In Wisconsin, the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee, the Assembly Republican Campaign Committee, the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee, and the Senate Republican Campaign Committee were not formed until 1972,

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Loftus, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

according to Loftus, in order to fight for the rather abstract goal of partisan control in the state houses. These committees recruit and support candidates who have a good opportunity to win seats. The majority party's incentive is to maintain power while the minority party hopes to increase its seats. "We don't care if a person believes in the principles of the Democratic Party or if he or she belongs to the Democratic Party. We know if they make it they will vote with the Democrats to organize and that's the goal we care about."<sup>3</sup> The basic point of Loftus' argument is that caucus committees in the state legislatures are concerned about the candidates for state legislatures. They don't care about national elections or who's elected governor. They only care about maintaining or assuring a majority. Therefore, they recruit and support candidates who will strengthen their support in the legislative body. These committees are like parties because they provide a vital function of parties; the recruitment and support of candidates.

Similarly, Sarah Morehouse has pointed out the symbiotic relationship between the need of the legislator to be elected and the need of the legislative party organization to maintain itself.

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<sup>3</sup>ibid. p. 109.

"Legislative campaign committees also are devoting time and effort to the task of candidate recruitment.

Electoral success stories have been attributed to recruitment efforts in both parties; for example, the 1984 Republican wins in the Minnesota House. Electing legislators from marginal districts are of great interest to the state political leaders, be they inside or outside the legislature. In closely competitive states, legislative majorities are won or lost in marginal districts.

Recent research on 13 competitive states indicates that as the legislative parties are becoming more competitive, the legislative districts are becoming less. Thus the number of competitive districts which can make or break a majority are continually decreasing. This may account for the increased interest in legislative elections on the part of state and legislative parties."<sup>4</sup>

Thus Morehouse concluded that state parties and legislative campaign committees are increasing their efforts to recruit candidates while spending significant resources helping those favored win the nomination. If legislative parties in states with competitive party systems are increasing their efforts involving the recruitment and support of candidates, it seems plausible that for the same reasons, the legislative parties in states like Virginia--where a rise in interparty competition has been observed--would increase efforts in the recruitment and support of candidates.

In a 1984 article based on a study of partisan behavior in the legislative bodies of forty-four of the nation's states, Alan Rosenthal argued that the party in office (government) may be stronger than it used to be.

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<sup>4</sup>Sarah M. Morehouse, "Legislatures and Political Parties," *State Government* (59:1, 1986), p. 20.

He stated that partisanship in state legislatures is "on the rise in states where it means relatively little, such as Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas and Vermont. It is on the rise also in states where it means a lot, such as California, Michigan, New Jersey and Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup> There are two primary reasons for the rise of partisan activity within many state legislatures. One involves the party organization and the other concerns electoral activity.

Rosenthal said that party caucuses are the principle mechanisms of party organizations in the state legislatures and that there is an increase in electorally related activity. These legislative parties calculate the potential effects of issue positions, try to influence the reapportionment process in redistricting years and provide material support to their candidates.<sup>6</sup>

One example that Rosenthal provides is California. "It began in California almost 30 years ago, when Jesse Unruh had money left over from his own campaign and parceled it out to other Democrats. Since then, the role of leadership in raising and allocating funds has progressed further in California than anywhere else." That practice was continued through 1982 when Speaker Willie Brown raised \$1.7 million and allocated it to Democratic candidates for the Assembly.

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<sup>5</sup>Alan Rosenthal, "If the Party's Over, Where's All that Noise Coming From?" *State Government* (57:2, 1984), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

He also observed that legislative leaders in Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin played a significant role in campaign finance.<sup>7</sup> This study seems to corroborate the conclusion of Morehouse. Legislators are concerned with getting elected, staying elected and maintaining or gaining a majority status in the state houses. A growth in partisanship for this reason affects Democrats and Republicans in various states in different ways, but it seems to reflect a phenomenon that is burgeoning in all states.

Two hypotheses emerge regarding the partisan activities of members of the state legislatures:

*Hypothesis One:* In state legislatures, the party in government takes an active role in the recruitment of candidates through newly created campaign committees and party caucuses.

*Hypothesis Two:* In state legislatures, the party in government provides more support to candidates for their particular branch than regular party organizations through campaign committees, party caucuses and party leaders.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 53.

This study was conducted in the state of Virginia. The general pattern of involvement by General Assembly members in Virginia may reflect the active role of the party in government in various states throughout the country. The political culture produced by Virginia's long history of oligarchical control by the Democratic party would lead one to expect such a pattern of involvement by members of the Democratic party in the state legislature. Simultaneously, the success of the Republican party in the past twenty years and Virginia's increasing status as a competitive state advances anticipation that Republican members of the General Assembly would take an active role in the recruitment and support of candidates in hopes of decreasing the control of the Democrats in the two houses of the legislature. The dominance of the Democratic Byrd Machine, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, and its tight-fisted control over Virginia's political environment provides a foundation for the expectation that state officeholders play a prominent role in the recruitment process.

Another reason to expect Virginia state legislators to be prominent in the recruitment and support of candidates is a structural variable. Virginia's unique nominating system often allows strict control by party leaders. The use of a convention--or a primary in certain circumstances--theoretically allows state leaders to exert a tremendous amount of influence over the candidates chosen.



## METHOD

In order to test the hypothesis that members of the Virginia General Assembly actively recruit and support candidates for the General Assembly, it would be appropriate to take a closer look at the active participants in the process. By interviewing candidates for both the House of Delegates and the Senate it was hoped that revelations about the steps in the recruitment process could be observed. Ninety-seven candidates, sixty-three in the House of Delegates and thirty-four in the Senate, from both the Democratic and Republican parties were chosen to receive mail questionnaires. The only candidates who were not sent questionnaires were incumbents. In the House of Delegates, twenty-nine Democrats and thirty-four Republicans were surveyed. In the Senate, thirteen Democrats and twenty-one Republicans received questionnaires. Thus, a total of forty-two Democrats and fifty-five Republicans were selected.

There was no stipulation that candidates from only competitive or winnable districts be sent questionnaires because much can be learned from candidates in a variety of districts. Although it is very interesting to note the recruitment efforts of the political parties in competitive and non-competitive districts, this study focused on the overall efforts of the Republicans and Democrats in Virginia.

A study of candidates for the General Assembly running in the general election cannot, of course, cover the entire scope of the recruitment process. While it is unlikely in Virginia, many candidates who were recruited by the party may not have received the nomination. This is more true in Northern Virginia where primaries are more common than in the rest of the state. In addition, it is extremely difficult to measure the recruiting efforts of the General Assembly caucuses because many *potential* recruits opted not to run. Party leaders and caucus members would have to be interviewed to determine such information. Nevertheless, candidates generally give a more accurate description than the actual recruiters who tend to exaggerate their role in the process.

The mail questionnaires were sent to the candidates in two waves. The first wave was sent out the day after the November 5th election of 1991. A second wave was sent two weeks later to candidates who did not respond to the first wave of surveys. The candidate questionnaire included items concerning the decision to run, the influence of certain groups in the decision to run, contact with party officials in the district and the state, the amount of support received from certain groups, expectations of party support as well as the support of other groups and which groups' support was most helpful (see appendix for complete questionnaire).

It was designed to establish the associations between candidates and other actors such as party officials, elected representatives, interest groups, family, friends, personal interests and other important individuals in the recruitment process. In addition, some effort was devoted to understanding the amount of support various actors provided to candidates.

One distinction which may seem obvious but is often overlooked is the difference between recruitment and support. In many instances they converge, but often they do not. In the recruitment process the party organizations and the General Assembly caucuses are both trying to encourage attractive and qualified candidates to run under their party label. However, when supporting candidates they often compete for resources. Promises of campaign support may provide an incentive to individuals considering running for office, but the actual support may not result. In many instances the General Assembly caucuses--due to their successful fundraising efforts--are better able to provide support for candidates than the regular party organizations. Thus during the recruitment process the party in government (caucuses) and the party organization are more cooperative than during the campaign when support is vital to a candidate's success. It was anticipated that General Assembly members would be active in both the recruitment and

support of candidates while other actors--such as interest groups who play a more prominent role in the support of candidates than in their recruitment--would play varying roles in the recruitment and support of candidates.

## CHAPTER III

### VIRGINIA POLITICS: NO LONGER AN OLIGARCHY

The political system of Virginia has experienced a transition from one-party control to a two-party competitive situation in the last two decades. This transformation has produced a profound change in the recruitment process of candidates for the General Assembly. Indeed, much has changed since V.O. Key wrote about the governing oligarchy in Virginia led by Senator Harry Flood Byrd. At the half-century mark, Key asserted that political oligarchy was firmly rooted in the social structure of Virginia and the autocratic nature of the machine would live long after Byrd.<sup>1</sup> However, the breakdown of the Byrd-led, Democratic coalition in the 1960s precipitated statewide competition between Republicans and Democrats. The traditional stability of Virginia politics was replaced by a tumultuous atmosphere with Republican candidates benefitting from the conservatism of the states' electorate and Democrats scrambling to mend factional squabbling.

Prior to 1965, the Byrd machine depended on a number of factors to dominate the political system of Virginia and keep the opposition down. The most prominent were the following: The anti-organization faction of the Democratic party, the liberals, possessed no solid network of local officials or other organizational apparatus extending over

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<sup>1</sup> V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 19.

the entire state; the money honesty of the organization deprived the opposition of support because financial interests fully allied themselves with the organization; the opposition forces were weakly organized; and the organization was able to maintain a high degree of discipline over local political leaders due to patronage positions.<sup>2</sup>

Senator Byrd was able to exercise authority over the nomination of candidates for the General Assembly and other local offices because he tightly controlled the machine through patronage positions and the state compensation board. If he put his "stamp of approval" on a candidate, the local leaders unanimously accepted him and he was virtually assured of the nomination.<sup>3</sup>

The machine was built on a very tiny electorate which was kept small by poll taxes and other devices. To ensure loyalty, it regularly installed its people into patronage positions. Nevertheless, two racial factors expanded the electorate and greatly contributed to the downfall of the Byrd organization because it depended on low voter turnout for its success.<sup>4</sup> First, in the mid-1950s, popular support for the organization was mobilized with the addition of thousands of new voters because of its defense of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

segregation.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the enfranchisement of blacks in 1965 resulted in an electorate that almost doubled between the presidential elections of 1956 and 1968.<sup>6</sup> Both of these factors hurt the organization's strength in the long run.

The new voters caused a split within the Democratic party. This was the beginning of the decline of the Democrat's political dominance in Virginia. Blacks and urban whites were the basis of a liberal faction that began to challenge the Byrd organization's conservative faction. The presidential election of 1964 in which Barry Goldwater clearly divided the two parties along racial lines caused many Byrd Democrats, who represented economic conservatism along with white supremacy, to switch to the Republican party. This allowed the GOP to expand from its traditional mountain base to encompass a wide range of forces throughout the state.<sup>7</sup>

Another factor contributing to two-party competition in Virginia was the demise of the moderate Democrats who were squeezed between the conservative Democrats turned Republicans and the followers of the liberal champion, Henry Howell.<sup>8</sup> The 1969 Democratic gubernatorial primary was a

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<sup>5</sup> John J. McGlennon, "Virginia's Changing Party Politics, 1976-1986," in Robert H. Swansbrough and David M. Brodsky, The South's New Politics: Realignment and Dealignment (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Lamis, The Two-Party South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

three-way battle between Howell, the Byrd organization candidate, Fred G. Pollard, and the moderate candidate William C. Battle. Its outcome left deep scars upon the Democratic party and contributed to the election of a Republican governor, Linwood Holton.<sup>9</sup> Battle narrowly defeated Howell in the primaries and the organization candidate, Pollard, finished a distant third. The showing of Pollard made it obvious that the Byrd organization could no longer control the Democratic party. In the general election, many former Byrd Democrats fled the party and openly joined the Republicans, while at the same time, many disenchanted liberal voters defected and cast their votes for Holton.<sup>10</sup> The result was a Republican victory.

The liberal factions of the Democratic party--blacks, labor, and central city voters--increased their control over the Democratic party because, as the 1969 election proved, the Democratic primary was no longer "tantamount to election."<sup>11</sup> Voter participation in the primary began to dwindle as it became clear that the general election was more important than the primary. The gain in strength of the Howell forces led to a corresponding decline in the moderate Democrats strength. Moderate candidates such as

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<sup>9</sup> Ralph Eisenberg, "Virginia: The Emergence of Two-Party Politics," in William C. Havard, The Changing Politics of the South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> Larry Sabato, The Democratic Party Primary: Tantamount to Election No Longer (Charlottesville: Institute of Government, University of Virginia, 1977), p. 48.



William Battle and William Spong--the incumbent U.S. senator who lost his reelection bid in 1972--were the losers in this ideological split within the Democratic party.

The Republican party in the early 1970s benefited from the liberal philosophy represented by the newly constituted state Democrats.<sup>12</sup> It was clear that the majority of the Virginia electorate was not ready to support liberal Democrats but preferred moderates and politically conservative candidates. The Republicans won the governors mansion in 1969, 1973, and 1977 because the Virginia electorate's loyalties were not to the Democratic party but to cultural, social, and philosophical conservatism.

Although the Democrats rebounded in the 1981 elections for governor, lt. governor, and attorney general--due in large part to the nomination of moderate candidates by the convention system--the state was strongly two-party competitive and the effects were beginning to be seen in elections for the General Assembly. Also, the partisan identification of Virginians was in the process of undergoing a substantial change as Table III-1 reflects.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

TABLE III-1			
PARTY IDENTIFICATION IN VIRGINIA 1976-1985			
September 1976	31%	17%	52%
September 1978	32%	16%	52%
September 1980	29%	20%	51%
September 1981	20%	26%	46%
September 1982	29%	22%	49%
September 1985	29%	33%	38%

Source: John McGlennon; Virginia's Changing Politics

In addition, the percentage of vote the Republican party received in contested General Assembly elections from 1967 to 1989 rose nearly fourteen points. As Table III-2 illustrates, Republican candidates in 1967 received 35.5 percent of the vote compared to 49.3 percent in 1989. At the same time, the percentage of Democratic vote fell from 59.5 in 1967 to 51.7 in 1989.

TABLE III-2			
VOTE BY PARTY VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 1971-1989			
Year	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
1971	55.3%	37.1%	7.6%
1975	57.3%	40%	2.7%
1979	56.3%	43.4%	0.3%
1983	54.4%	45%	0.69%
1987	52.8%	46.3%	0.9%
1989*	51.7%	49.3%	----

\* No election for Senate in (\*) year(s).

SOURCE: Copied from official election results provided by the state board of elections.

Virginia Republicans were becoming competitive at every electoral level.

Republican candidates for the General Assembly also benefited from the abolition of multi-member districts in 1982 that had previously hindered both the GOP and blacks. Multi-member districts, in effect, caused Republican candidates to start with a deficit in votes because the majority of the voters were Democrats. In a district electing three members to the House of Delegates, it was very difficult for a GOP candidate to win if three Democrats were vying for the seats. When lines were redrawn creating newly formed districts, Republican voting strength was not diluted by the large multi-member districts and GOP candidates often had the opportunity to win seats.

As a result, party representation in the General Assembly significantly changed. Democrats no longer enjoyed a huge advantage in the number of seats held. Table III-3 reflects the gains Republicans made from 1967 to 1991.

Year	DEMOCRATS		REPUBLICANS	
	Senate	House	Senate	House
1967	34	85	6	14
1971	33	73	7	24
1975	35	78	5	17
1979	31	74	9	25
1983	32	65	8	34
1991	22	58	18	41

Source: Compiled from official election results by the State Board of Elections.

Inter-party competition brought to the fore three new phenomena in Virginia politics. First, there was an influx of new Republican leaders who were inspired by the potential for success in General Assembly elections. The incentive to recruit attractive candidates greatly increased because elections were no longer dominated exclusively by Democrats. Second, Democratic candidates no longer had to depend on the Byrd Machine to obtain the nomination. Third, party caucus committees began to form in each house of the legislature in hopes of solidifying their party's influence.

The success of Republican candidates at the statewide level in the late 1960s and 1970s made it easier for the GOP to recruit candidates for the General Assembly. The traditional Republican strongholds in the western mountains of the state were no longer the only areas where the potential for success existed. As Republicans began to mount effective campaigns through the attraction of qualified candidates, Democrats, in turn, had to step up their efforts to nominate candidates who could win elections. New leaders emerged within both parties.

In the 1980s, caucus committees of both parties in the House of Delegates and the Senate expended more energy urging people to run for office. In addition to recruiting candidates, the fundraising efforts of the caucus committees

have become quite productive in recent years. Because their numbers are so small, the Republicans have a joint caucus but they have raised substantial amounts of money. The Democratic caucus in the House of Delegates has a full-time executive director who plays a large part in the allocation of funds to candidates. Such a position is powerful since several hundred thousand dollars can be involved in a given election years. The Democrats have had an edge in fundraising which often frustrates Republicans. Steve Haner, the Executive Director of the Republican caucus shared these sentiments in 1989 when reflecting on the ability of Democrats to raise money from lobbying groups. "There's no way I can raise 'em."<sup>13</sup>

The caucuses and their executive directors also play a large role in the recruitment of candidates for General Assembly elections and, to a lesser degree, candidates for the Senate. The 1991 elections in which the Republicans made great strides toward gaining a majority in the Senate while winning more seats than ever in the House should provide more incentive for members of the General Assembly to recruit candidates in the future.

The manner in which candidates are recruited has changed in recent years because of the breakdown of the Byrd Machine. In Virginia, party nominations can be determined by either convention, where delegates meet until the nomination is settled, or by the direct primary, in which

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<sup>13</sup> *Washington Post* (July 18, 1989).

party nominees are chosen by a direct vote of the rank-and-file party members. In its prime, the machine designated or approved the candidates seeking the nomination. Until the late 1960s, it was extremely rare for a candidate running with the machine's endorsement to lose the nomination. However, when the machine crumbled, and the Republicans began to mount effective campaigns in statewide elections, receiving the Democratic nomination no longer guaranteed a victory in the general election. This encouraged Virginia Republicans at every electoral level. The elections of 1989 and 1991 illustrated that inter-party competition is very much alive at the state legislative level. Even though Democratic candidates are not given a "stamp of approval" by an organization such as the Byrd machine, the caucus committees are very much involved in the recruitment and support of candidates.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE 1991 GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS: CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT

The strength of a state political party and its nominating procedures during primaries play a large part in determining how active it will be in the recruitment of candidates for the state legislature. In Virginia, where both parties have been competitive at the statewide level for two decades and are now competing in legislative races, the opportunity exists for Republican and Democratic candidates to win elections. Along with Virginia's unique nominating system (i.e. the primary, firehouse primary, or convention method), inter-party competition makes it particularly interesting to find out who actually encourages candidates to run for the General Assembly.

The various actors involved in the recruitment process influence the decisions of candidates who are considering running for office. The majority of the candidates are sponsored by individuals and groups. Eventually, even those who initiate their own candidacies need and actively solicit sponsorship.<sup>1</sup> While it is expected that party organizations are one of the most prominent actors in the recruitment and support of candidates, political parties, as previously discussed, should not be regarded as monolithic structures.

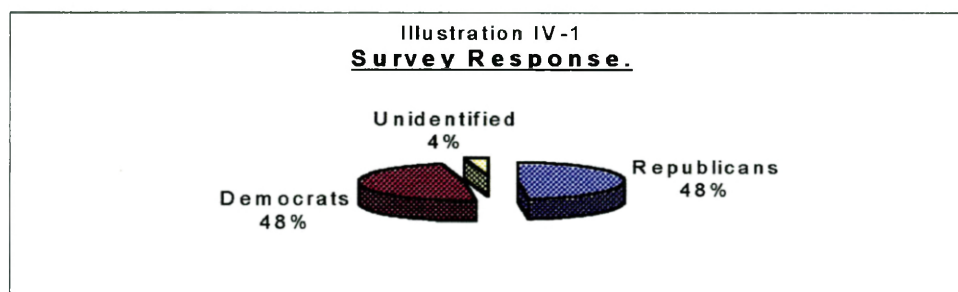
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<sup>1</sup> Seligman, et al., op. cit., (1974), p. 67.

The questions asked of the General Assembly candidates in this survey were designed to distinguish between the different sectors of the party. If, as hypothesized, members of the General Assembly take an active role--both as individuals and as members of caucuses--in the recruitment and support of candidates, the responses of candidates should reflect such a trend. When asking the candidates who encouraged them to run, the importance of various actors in their decision to run, and who supported their candidacy, the number of elicited responses for General Assembly members should be as high or higher than other sectors of the party apparatus.

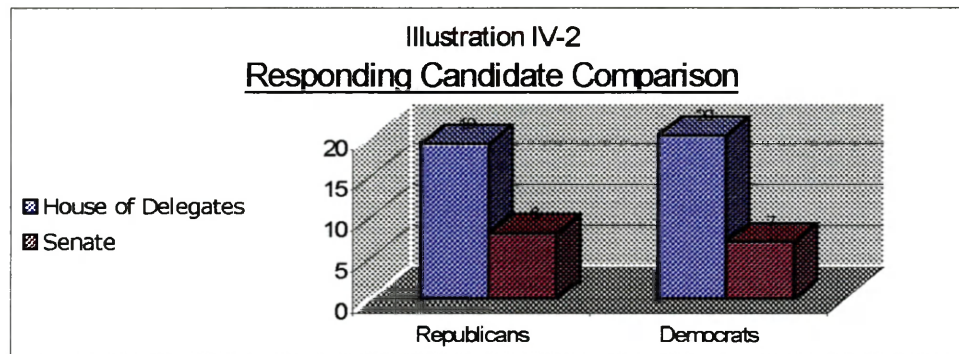
#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ninety-seven candidates running in the 1991 Virginia General Assembly elections were sent survey questionnaires in the mail and fifty-six (58 percent) were returned. Of the fifty-six respondents, there were twenty-seven Republicans, twenty-seven Democrats, and two unidentified cases. The equal number of Democrats and Republicans returning the survey provides a solid basis on which to compare the efforts of the two parties.





Twenty-two respondents were winners, and thirty-two were losers, along with two unidentified cases. Thirty-nine of the respondents were running for the House of Delegates and fifteen for the Senate. Of the thirty-nine house candidates, nineteen were Republicans and twenty were Democrats. The fifteen state senate candidates were comprised of eight Republicans and seven Democrats.



In order to determine who played a role in the candidate's decision to run for the General Assembly, the respondents were asked which actors encouraged them to run. Eleven categories were provided, nine of which were associated with political parties or interest groups. One open category was included allowing the respondent to specify any actor not provided in the closed-ended question.

When observing the results, it became clear that members of the General Assembly played a prominent role in the recruitment process. Thirty-seven of the fifty-six respondents (66 percent) said that a state legislator encouraged them to run for office. With the exception of friends, this was the highest percentage of any actor in the survey. Three other actors whose base was at the local level closely followed and had nearly identical percentages.

Local public officials and local party officials were named by thirty-two of the fifty-six respondents (57 percent). Local party activists were named by thirty-three candidates (59 percent). While it is possible that local party officials and local party activists can be perceived as the same by the candidates, it is a fact that those actors received virtually the same number of responses. This would seem to rule out much of the possibility of random error and indicate that the candidates were careful in responding to the questionnaire.

TABLE IV-1	
INFLUENTIAL ACTORS	
State Legislators	66%
Local Party Activists	59%
Local Public/Party Officials	57%
Interest Group Leaders	30%

It is nevertheless significant that the actor named most influential in a candidate's decisions to run were General Assembly members. This reveals that the party in government is a very important sector of the party organization in Virginia when legislative politics is the concern. It is also interesting that only seventeen (30 percent) of the respondents named an interest group leader as encouraging them to run. However, this is not a surprisingly low number because interest groups usually take a more active role in the support of candidates than in their recruitment.

When comparing house and senate candidates, twenty-five of the thirty-nine (64 percent) house candidates responded that a General Assembly member encouraged them to run. Ten of the fifteen (67 percent) senate candidates responded in a like manner. Local individuals also played a prominent role in this process. Fifty-four percent of the house candidates and sixty percent of senate candidates said a local public official encouraged them to run. Local party officials and local party activists also played prominent roles, especially among candidates for the House of Delegates.

To what extent do the various actors influence potential candidates in their decision to run? Despite being the most frequently named actor in the recruitment process, do General Assembly members have as much influence as individuals at the local level? Recruiting a candidate can be a very subtle exercise, and the act of merely encouraging a potential candidate to run should be seriously considered as part of the recruitment process. It depends, to a large extent, on the personality of the potential candidate. It is plausible that many individuals would respond unfavorably to intense pressure by the recruiter. The second survey question dealing with recruitment attempted to gauge the impact of the different actors on the candidate's decision. It asked the candidates to rate, on a scale of one to five (one was not important and five was very important), the influence of various actors.

As expected, of the eight actors, the family category was considered more important to respondents than any other category. Even though families do not recruit candidates for office, they are nonetheless an important factor in a candidate's decision to run. Of the actors that recruit candidates, more respondents (eighteen) thought General Assembly members were a very important influence on their final decision to run for office than any other actor.

Ten respondents rated local public officials as very important. When combining the fourth and fifth categories on the importance scale, General Assembly members were named twenty-eight times, local party officials eighteen times, and local public officials seventeen times. These results seemed to indicate that not only do members of the General Assembly encourage many potential candidates to run but they also play an influential role in the decision to run.

TABLE IV-2	
INFLUENCE OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS IN DECISION TO RUN	
Candidates - House of Delegates	33%
Candidates - State Senate	27%

A significant number of candidates for the House of Delegates, thirteen out of thirty-nine (33 percent), rated a General Assembly member as very important in their decision to run.

Four of the fifteen (27 percent) state senate candidates felt General Assembly members were very important. Local individuals were important in influencing house and senate candidates, but not nearly as significant as General Assembly members.

Only two respondents rated advancement in their professional career as an important factor in their decision to run, although twelve respondents chose not to answer the question at all. It is likely that many candidates felt uncomfortable answering such a question, and face-to-face interviews might have produced different results. Nineteen respondents, a very high number, rated interest groups as not important.

#### THE RECRUITMENT OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

It is plausible to anticipate General Assembly members playing a vital role for many Democratic General Assembly candidates because of the aforementioned political culture of Virginia. The Byrd organization strictly controlled the nomination of candidates for much of this century, allowing elected officials in the state to exercise control over the candidates running for office. Incentives exist for the Democrats today because they are fighting to maintain their majorities in both houses of the General Assembly.

Malcolm Jewell has pointed out that one of the most difficult problems faced by a minority party is to recruit able, experienced candidates who can run strong campaigns. "Ambitious, talented young men and women usually launch

their political careers in the party that regularly wins elections."<sup>2</sup> In Virginia, the Republicans have had less trouble recruiting candidates for state legislative races during the past two decades because of successful campaigns at the statewide level. Indeed, the gains made by Republicans in the 1991 General Assembly elections call their minority party status into question. Therefore, the incentives for the Republican party in Virginia to recruit candidates have been increased by recent gains and the hope of gaining a majority of seats in the state legislature. Since there is a great degree of inter-party competition it should be interesting to observe the recruitment patterns of candidates from both parties.

There are remarkable similarities in the responses of the twenty-seven candidates from each party. Seventeen of the twenty-seven Republicans (63 percent) in the survey said a General Assembly member encouraged them to run, and eighteen of the twenty-seven Democrats (67 percent) responded in like manner. This seemingly indicates that General Assembly leaders and caucuses play a prominent role in both parties. Seventeen Republicans (63 percent) also responded that local public officials encouraged them to run--the same percentage of candidates listing General Assembly members. In contrast, only thirteen of the twenty-seven Democrats (48 percent) said a local public official encouraged them to run.

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Jewell, Representation in State Legislatures (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1982), p. 90.

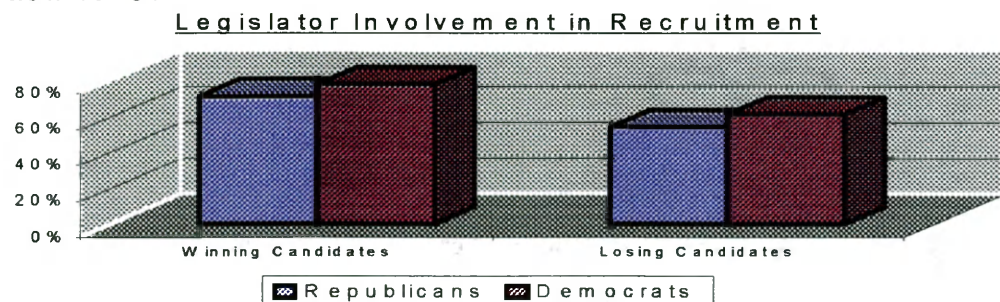
However, this cannot be taken as a measure of activity at the local level because nearly 60 percent of the Democratic respondents said local party activists encouraged them to run. The survey reveals that both members of the General Assembly and local party actors in both parties play an active role in the recruitment of candidates.

When candidates from each party were asked to rate the importance of various actors in their decision to run, no general pattern emerged. However, eleven Democrats (41 percent) said a General Assembly member was very important in their decision to run compared to only 22 percent of the Republican candidates. This could indicate that the importance of Democratic legislators is greater than the importance of Republican legislators even though candidate responses imply that their respective parties recruit in virtually identical numbers. However, the residuals are not high enough to support such a conclusion.

General Assembly leaders and caucuses must decide to which races they will direct their recruiting efforts. What criteria do they utilize in making such decisions? Does the district have to be winnable or are the parties primarily concerned with fielding a credible candidate? It is hoped that by observing the winners and losers in the house and senate races, some insight can be provided on this subject. If a higher percentage of winners than losers report that General Assembly members contacted them, then certainly one important criterion is the ability of a candidate to win the election.

Remarkable similarities exist between the two parties in the recruitment of candidates when observing winners and losers. Republican and Democratic General Assembly members appear to be only slightly more active in races where the opportunity to win is great. Winning Republican candidates reported that General Assembly members had encouraged them to run seventy-one percent (ten out of fourteen) of the time. Winning Democratic candidates responded in similar fashion seventy-eight percent (seven out of nine) of the time. A slight decrease in the involvement of legislators emerges when observing losing candidate's responses. Losing Republican candidates stated they were contacted by General Assembly members fifty-four percent (seven out of thirteen) of the time, and losing Democrats sixty-one percent (eleven out of eighteen) of the time. Therefore, even though legislators seemed to be more active in winning races, more than half of the time they were still recruiting in races where a candidate lost. No significant pattern emerged when the winning and losing candidates from each party were asked to rate the importance of state legislators on their decision to run.

Illustration IV -3.





The absence of a Democratic caucus in the state senate seemed to have no effect on the percentage of candidates responding that General Assembly members played a role in the recruitment process. It was anticipated that fewer senate than house candidates would say a General Assembly member had encouraged them to run.

In fact, ten of the fifteen (67 percent) senate candidates responding to the questionnaire said a legislator had encouraged them to run, compared to twenty-five of the thirty-nine (64 percent) house candidates. Among Democrats running for the senate, fifty-seven percent (four out of seven) indicated a General Assembly member encouraged them to run. This seemingly indicates that many members of the General Assembly acted on their own when encouraging candidates.

The general patterns of recruitment emerging from the data imply that both parties pursue candidates for each house of the General Assembly. General Assembly members are most active, and important, in the recruitment process according to the candidates. Closely following in their activities are local officials and party leaders. As noted earlier, General Assembly members from both parties encouraged losing candidates more than fifty percent of the time, indicating that the ability to win the district is not of absolute import. Although legislators were more active in winnable districts, they also played prominent roles in districts where candidates running under their party label

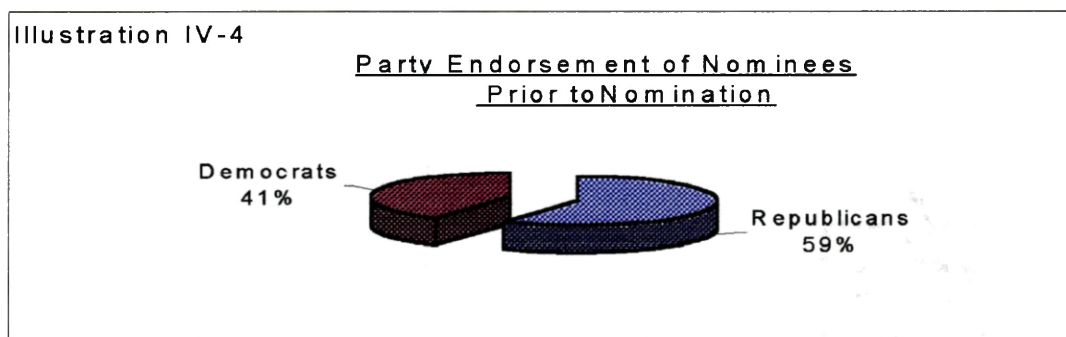
lost. In Virginia, parties are recruiting candidates in districts of a competitive status. Fielding attractive and qualified candidates is in the long-term interest of the party, and also helps candidates at the statewide level.

#### CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

Legislative endorsements can be very difficult to represent because it is often unclear which party sector is making the endorsement. Are local public officials, local party officials, state public officials, state party officials, or some other party apparatus making the endorsements in races for the party nomination? While conclusive evidence has been presented regarding the active involvement of General Assembly members in the recruitment of legislative candidates in Virginia, it is unclear how endorsements are parceled out, if at all. In fact, one Democratic senate candidate made the comment that "no such thing exists" in his district. Of course, in districts where the candidate is nominated by the convention method, the party's choice is obvious, as one candidate made clear when he said, "The party endorsement occurs with the nomination." Nevertheless, it is worth investigating the number of candidates running in the general election under a party label who obtained their party's endorsement prior to nomination.

Surprisingly, of the fifty-six candidates observed, only twenty-eight (50 percent) received their party's endorsement prior to gaining the nomination. When controlling for winners and losers, the breakdown was fairly even. Eleven of the twenty-three winners (48 percent) and sixteen of the thirty-one losers (52 percent) said they received their party's endorsement prior to gaining the nomination.

However, when observing the candidates from both parties, Republicans had a significantly higher percentage of candidates who received the endorsement of the party prior to gaining the nomination. Fifty-nine percent of the Republicans and only forty-one percent (11 out of twenty-seven) of the Democrats received their party's endorsement.



This disparity might be explained in two ways. First, there may be more competition for the Democratic nomination than for the Republican nomination. Second, the Republican party may be more structured and hierarchical than the Democratic party.

One Democratic house candidate commented on the "openness" of the nominating process, even though she was nominated in a firehouse primary.

"For the nomination, I faced a candidate who had the endorsement of many party and elected officials. I received 62 percent of the vote in a firehouse primary. The nomination process, at least in my case, clearly proved to be sufficiently open to enable the selection of someone who was not the pre-determined choice."

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATES AND SUPPORT

Once a candidate has been recruited to run for office, a new phase in the electoral process begins. As Seligman points out:

The candidates mobilize their sponsors in order to broaden their support among the voters. The original circle of family, friends, and others who initiated the candidacy evolves into a full-fledged campaign organization. As the campaign unfolds, the candidate recruits additional backers or new sponsors come forward and offer their support. Together, the initial and later sponsors make up each candidate's coalition of campaign support.<sup>3</sup>

Candidates need the support of parties, important individuals, and, often, interest groups to enhance their ability to win elections. One Democratic house candidate who lost in the general election made the following observation:

If you are going to run, you have to have a game plan. That is the first priority, and you need the money that is required to run a credible campaign.

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<sup>3</sup> Seligman, et. al., op. cit., p. 85.

In Chapter II, a brief distinction was made between the recruitment of candidates and the support of them. Recruitment refers to attempts to place men or women in power. While the individuals and groups who recruit and support candidates are often one in the same, many supporters emerge after a candidate has received the party nomination, and many recruiters are unable to provide actual support. A Democratic house candidate who succinctly wrote the following articulated this phenomenon:

Many encouraged me to run but they provided little support later on for various reasons.

Hopefully, some insight can be provided regarding the question of which actors support Virginia General Assembly candidates and to what degree. In addition, do the same people who play a prominent role in the recruitment process proceed to support them in the general election?

Candidates were first asked how much support they received from the local and state party organizations in gaining the party nomination. The results showed that local parties provided more support during this stage of the electoral process than the state parties. Thirty percent of the candidates said the local party provided them with a lot of support, while only seven percent said the state party provided a lot of support. In addition, fifty percent of the candidates said the local party provided some support, but only thirty-four percent said the same of the state party.

The above results are a bit unclear, however, because the questionnaire made no distinction between the party sectors at the state and local levels.

By contrast, the role of state party organizations in supporting candidates increased in the general election campaign. Forty-five percent said the state party provided a lot of support and only thirty percent responded in similar fashion for the local party. This reflects a trend present in most states where the local party is responsible for initiating candidacies but the state party provides much of the support in the general election if a candidate has the opportunity to win. Indeed, one candidate felt the lack of strength displayed by his local party organization hurt him during the general election. His comments leave little doubt that many candidates desire the local party organizations to provide better support in the general election.

I lost my race, and one of the major contributing factors was the lack of effective local party organizations in two of the three counties which my district comprised. I carried the one county with the strong organization.

Another candidate had similar sentiments:

The local party organization should coordinate all candidate campaigns in the general election . . . and this could be done by limiting PACs and making contributions go to the party units.

When candidates were asked to rate (on a scale of one to five with five being a lot of support) the amount of support they received from a list of seven actors, with the exception of friends, General Assembly members provided the

most support. Twenty-nine of the fifty-six candidates (52 percent) rated General Assembly members fourth or fifth on the scale. Candidates also said community leaders provided a lot of support (50 percent) to their campaigns.

Not surprisingly, interest groups took a more active role in the support of candidates than in their recruitment. While only eleven percent of the candidates indicated that an interest group provided a lot of support, 55 percent responded in the third or fourth categories on the support scale. This indicates that interest groups do not actually have their own candidates in various races, but they nevertheless play an active part in supporting many candidates.

The role of interest groups in General Assembly elections may have been diminished somewhat by the fact that only non-incumbent candidates were sent questionnaires. Of course, much of the interest group money and support goes to incumbents in order to have access to the legislator when issues of vital concern to the group come before the legislature. The following comments by one losing candidate reflect the views of a number of respondents in the survey.

"I lost 49 percent to 51 percent and the biggest problem I faced was that interest groups such as business gave to the incumbent even though he had repeatedly hurt them in the past. They were more interested in buying access than studying-up and supporting people who agree with them."

The role of the candidate's friends is especially important in political campaigns. The 1991 candidates for the General Assembly were no exception.

Twenty-one percent of the candidates said their friends' support was very helpful during the campaign, the highest of any actor. Friends can play important roles by canvassing for the candidates in local neighborhoods, manning phone banks and carrying out other volunteer tasks. Parties usually provide money, issue papers, speakers for fundraisers, help in planning campaign strategy, and similar activities that most friends cannot provide. Nevertheless, the role of friends and volunteers can never be overestimated--they are, in fact, of vital importance and it is nearly impossible to win elections without them. A Republican candidate for the House of Delegates also stated his perception of the importance of volunteers to the parties:

. . . volunteers can seriously effect the party's ability to provide effective campaign services to a candidate once he is nominated.

When observing how candidates within each party rate the amount of support they received from General Assembly members during the campaign, a significant but not extremely powerful relationship emerges. Democratic candidates rated the support given to them by legislators higher than did Republicans. Twenty-six percent of the Democratic candidates said a member of the General Assembly gave them a lot of support while only fifteen percent of the Republicans responded in a like manner. Similarly, forty-one percent of the Democrats compared to only twenty-six percent of the Republicans responded to the fourth category. One obvious explanation for this phenomenon is that the House of



Delegates Democratic caucus is more successful at raising money--because they are in the majority and there are more Democratic incumbents able to raise money from interest groups--hence, it is better able to support candidates than the Republican caucus. Further study of fundraising efforts by both party's caucus committees could verify whether this explanation is legitimate. Nevertheless, the Republicans are steadily gaining seats in both houses and indeed are only three away from a majority in the Senate. In the future, Republicans will succeed in raising more money from interest groups--especially business political action committees whose views they represent more than the Democrats--as they come closer to gaining majorities in the General Assembly.

One of the most surprising findings of the survey was that neither Republican nor Democratic candidates had high expectations of support from party organizations. The area where the candidates had the highest expectations for support was money. However, only sixteen percent of the respondents expected the state and local parties to support them with money.

In conclusion, friends and General Assembly members were the most ardent supporters of candidates during both the nomination and the general election campaigns. Local parties played a more prominent role when candidates were vying for the nomination but state parties became slightly more important after a candidate was nominated and campaigned during the general election.

Members of the General Assembly followed through after recruiting a candidate with support while interest groups were active in supporting candidates but not in recruiting them for office. Local individuals and parties played an important role in the recruitment process. They also supported candidates when they attempted to secure the party nomination but played a lesser role in the general election campaign. In the final analysis, the data supported the hypothesis that Virginia state legislators recruit and support candidates for the General Assembly. Local party officials and committees also have a great influence on the process.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The Virginia General Assembly elections of 1991 revealed some basic trends in the recruitment and support of candidates. Of the three civic cultures outlined earlier by Patterson and Boynton, Virginia could best be characterized as "mixed" in its political nature. Recruitment of candidates is widely shared. However, definite recruitment patterns emerged in this most recent election. First, the party in government does play an active role in the recruitment of candidates. In addition to encouraging candidates to run for office, General Assembly members were also rated by the candidates as highly important in their decisions to run. One explanation for such involvement by legislators is the competitive party system in Virginia. Both Democrats and Republicans have ample opportunities to win in a majority of legislative districts.

Second, General Assembly members provided more support to candidates both in gaining the nomination and in the general election than any other actors in the survey except friends. The organized Democratic caucus committees seemed to offer support more readily than their Republican counterparts.

To a large degree this developed because of the Democratic majority both in the house and senate which allows incumbents to raise money more readily than the minority Republicans.

How the findings in Virginia compare with other states is still uncertain. The degree of two-party competition, the strength of traditional party organizations within the state, nomination procedures and party affiliation in the electorate all have an affect on political systems. Structural variables and institutional differences can diminish the ability to make generalizations about recruitment and support. However, one thing is clear. Any political party interested in maintaining or gaining a majority within a legislative body will have self-interested members of that body actively seeking to attract electable candidates under their party label. Both majority and minority parties will also support the recruited candidates in levels proportionate to the organizational strength of their caucus committees. This is a variation of the findings of Gibson, Cotter and Bibby in which organizationally strong parties will be found in areas with inter-party competition. Today, in many states, members of the legislature are a major actor of the putative party organizations.

APPENDIX A.

SURVEY

1. Have you ever held a public office other than a legislative seat?  
 1 ( ) Yes                      2 ( ) No
  
2. If Yes to question 1, what type of office was it? (Check all that apply.)
 

	Elective	Appointive
National Level	1 ( )	2 ( )
State Level	3 ( )	4 ( )
Local Level	5 ( )	6 ( )
  
3. Before you made your final decision to run for the General Assembly, which of the following encouraged you to run? (Check all appropriate responses.)
  - 1 ( ) County party chair
  - 2 ( ) Member of the General Assembly
  - 3 ( ) Local public official
  - 4 ( ) State public official
  - 5 ( ) Local party official
  - 6 ( ) State party official
  - 7 ( ) Local party activist
  - 8 ( ) State party activist
  - 9 ( ) Interest group leader
  - 10 ( ) Other (Please specify)
  - 11 ( ) None
  
4. On a scale of one (not important) to five (very important), rate the influence of the following on your decision to run for the General Assembly.
 

Encouragement of:	Not Important	Very Important
County party chair	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
General Assembly member	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Local public official	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
State public official	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Local party official	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
State party official	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Family	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Advancement in professional career	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Interest Groups	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
Concern for the condition of Virginia	1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( )	5 ( )
  
5. Did you receive the endorsement of your party prior to gaining the party nomination?  
 ( ) Yes                      ( ) No
  
6. How much support did you receive from the local party organization in gaining the party nomination?  
 1 ( ) No support      2 ( ) Some support      3 ( ) A lot of support
  
7. How much support did you receive from the state party organization in gaining the party nomination?  
 1 ( ) No support      2 ( ) Some support      3 ( ) A lot of support
  
8. Did you receive no support, some support, or a lot of support from the local party organization in the general election?  
 1 ( ) No support      2 ( ) Some support      3 ( ) A lot of support
  
9. Did you receive no support, some support, or a lot of support from the state party organization in the general election?  
 1 ( ) No support      2 ( ) Some support      3 ( ) A lot of support

10. On a scale of one (No support) to five (A lot of support), rate the amount of support you have received from these individuals and groups in your campaign for the General Assembly.

	No Support			A lot of Support	
Local party committee	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
State party committee	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
General Assembly leaders	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
Community leader	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
Interest group	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
Other _____	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )

11. Which, if any, interest groups have supported your campaign?

12. What specific aid did your party give you? Indicate the assistance you received from the state and local parties. Check all responses that apply.

	Local Party	State Party
Money	1 ( )	2 ( )
Planning Campaign Strategy	3 ( )	4 ( )
Polling	5 ( )	6 ( )
Production of Materials	7 ( )	8 ( )
Phone Banks	9 ( )	10 ( )
Fundraisers	11 ( )	12 ( )
Speakers for Fundraisers	13 ( )	14 ( )
Providing Campaign Staff	15 ( )	16 ( )
Providing Issue Papers	17 ( )	18 ( )
TV Commercial Production	19 ( )	20 ( )
Other _____	21 ( )	22 ( )

13. Given your expectations prior to your nomination, in which of these areas did you expect more support from the state and local parties and where would it have been most helpful? Check all responses that apply.

	Expect More Support		Been Most Helpful	
	Local	State	Local	State
Money	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Planning Campaign Strategy	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Polling	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Production of Materials	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Phone Banks	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Fundraisers	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Speakers for Fundraisers	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Providing Campaign Staff	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
Providing Issue Papers	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )
TV Commercial Production	1 ( )	2 ( )	1 ( )	2 ( )

14. Of all your supporters, which individual or group's support has been most helpful in your campaign for the General Assembly? Check One

- 1 ( ) Local party organization
- 2 ( ) State party organization
- 3 ( ) General Assembly member
- 4 ( ) Community Leader
- 5 ( ) Interest group or other organization (specify)
- 6 ( ) Friends
- 7 ( ) Other

15. Is there anything else about your decision to run for the General Assembly that you would like to convey?

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