
Contestation Rates in General Jurisdiction Trial Courts

Codebook

VERSION 2011.1
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Preface

This dataset contains information on contestation rates in general jurisdiction trial court elections. The data come from all 29 states that used contestable elections to both select and retain judges for their general jurisdiction trial courts in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. The general jurisdiction trial court(s) in each state were identified using the Survey of State Court Organization compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for State Courts as well as the classification system utilized by the American Judicature Society.¹ The data were compiled using election returns and candidate filing information provided by state and county officials, state blue books, newspaper articles, communication with county and state election officials and court administrators, and third-party sources (such as the California Elections Data Archive and voter information guides produced by the League of Women Voters). The contestation numbers have been double (and in some cases, triple) checked for accuracy; the names of the winning candidates are provided simply for convenience and have not been subject to double-checking.

The data do not contain contestation rates from Alameda County, California (county officials were unable to provide contestation statistics) or the Indiana Superior Court for the year 2000 (neither the Indiana Secretary of State's office nor the Indiana State Archives were able to provide primary election returns).

If you use these data, please cite the following article:

Michael J. Nelson. 2011. "Uncontested and Unaccountable? Rates of Contestation and the Quest for Accountability in General Jurisdiction Trial Courts." *JUDICATURE*. Forthcoming.

Should you locate any errors in the data, please e-mail mjnelson@wustl.edu.

Release Notes

Date	Version	Notes
1-01-2011	2011.1	This is the initial data release. This dataset serves as the replication dataset for Nelson (2011).

¹Am. Judicature Soc'y, *JUDICIAL SELECTION IN THE STATES: APPELLATE AND GENERAL JURISDICTION COURTS* (2010), http://judicialselection.us/uploads/documents/Judicial_Selection_Charts_1196376173077.pdf

Race Identification Variables

state

The U.S. Postal Service abbreviation for the state.

electtype

Factor. The ballot type used in the election. Takes two values: P for partisan elections or NP for nonpartisan elections.

court

The name of the General Jurisdiction Trial Court for which the election was held.

year

The year of the election.

gp

Factor. The point in the electoral process at which the race was decided. Takes a variety of values:

- G: General Election
- P: Primary Election
- NOB: Race did not appear on the ballot

district

The first seat identifier. For most states, this is either a district number or a county name.

seat

The second seat identifier (if any). This is typically a seat number. For some states, these seat numbers are assigned anew each election; for other states, the seat numbers stay consistent from election to election.

termdate

For Ohio, the date used to identify the seat on the election returns.

Contestation Variables

highcand

The highest number of candidates available to eligible voters at any point in the electoral process. For more information on the calculation of this variable, see Nelson (2011).

gcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the general election.

gwinname

The name of the winning candidate in the general election.

dpcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Democratic primary election in a partisan primary system.

dpname

The name of the candidate who garnered the most votes in the Democratic primary election.

rpcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Republican primary election in a partisan primary system.

rpname

The name of the candidate who garnered the most votes in the Republican primary election.

npcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the nonpartisan portion of the primary election in a nonpartisan system.

npname

The name of the candidate garnering the most votes in the nonpartisan primary or the name(s) of the candidate(s) advancing from the nonpartisan primary to the general election.

rprcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Republican primary runoff election in a partisan system.

rprwin

The name of the winning candidate in the Republican primary runoff election.

dprcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Democratic primary runoff election.

dprwin

The name of the winning candidate in the Democratic primary runoff election

nobcand

The number of candidates not appearing on the ballot for a given election.

nobname

The name of the candidate who won his or her seat in the election without appearing on the ballot.

nprcand

The number of candidates appearing in the nonpartisan primary runoff election.

nprwin

The name of the winning candidate(s) in the nonpartisan primary runoff election or the name(s) of the candidate(s) advancing from the runoff election to the general election.

grcand

The number of candidates appearing in the general election runoff election.

grwin

The name of the winning candidate in the general runoff election.

opencand

The number of candidates appearing in an open partisan primary election.

openwin

The name of the winning candidate in the open partisan primary election or the name(s) of the candidate(s) advancing from the open partisan primary election to the general election.

wigcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Wisconsin spring general judicial elections.

wigwin

The name of the winning candidate in the spring Wisconsin general judicial election.

wipcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in the Wisconsin spring primary election.

wipwin

The name of the winning candidate in the spring Wisconsin general judicial election.

natlawpcand

The number of candidates appearing on the ballot in a Natural Law party primary election.

natlawpname

The winning candidate in the Natural Law party primary election.