

# Institutional Change and the Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection

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*The influence of the vice presidency has expanded dramatically in recent years, yet scholars know surprisingly little about how presidential nominees choose their running mates and how the selection process has changed over time. This study argues that the confluence of two events—the McGovern-Fraser reforms of the early 1970s and the exogenous shock of George McGovern's ill-fated selection of Thomas Eagleton as his running mate in 1972—changed the factors driving running mate selection. Specifically, in the post-1972 era, presidential nominees have looked less to traditional incentives such as ticket balancing and more toward governing experience to help them in the general election and, if they succeed, in the White House. We test a model with empirical data from 1940 to 2004.*

The American vice presidency has recently matured into a distinguished office of considerable authority (David 1967; Goldstein 1982; Light 1984; Mayer 2000; Nelson 1988a; Pomper 1966). Vice President Richard Cheney's unprecedented power in the administration of George W. Bush, from advocating the Iraq War to shaping the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 and forging the nation's energy policy, is only the latest manifestation of the newly invigorated office.<sup>1</sup> The rapid growth in its substantive responsibilities dates back largely to Jimmy Carter's inclusion of Vice President Walter Mondale among his inner circle, the first time a president treated his vice president as a valued advisor on a

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1. For an illuminating account of Vice President Cheney's influence in the George W. Bush White House, see Barton Gellman and Jo Becker's four-part *Washington Post* chronicle (2007).

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broad array of issues (Light 1984). Since then, presidents have frequently vested their seconds in command with real authority and, at least in the cases of Albert Gore and Richard Cheney, positions akin to true partnerships.

Despite the office's growth, the vice presidency has evaded scholarly attention, and relatively little is known about how presidential candidates choose their running mates. Here we analyze the vice presidential selection process by focusing on the incentives facing presidential nominees, who since 1940 have handpicked their running mates,<sup>2</sup> and how these incentives have changed over time. We propose a new model of vice presidential selection that emphasizes the influence of two major developments—one a set of institutional changes, the other a historical accident—that substantially changed the incentives driving nominees' choice of running mates. We modify and temporally extend an existing empirical analysis of the selection process (Sigelman and Wahlbeck 1997) to test our belief that these forces lessened the strategic value of ticket balancing, widely emphasized in the literature, and instead increased the importance of choosing running mates with extensive backgrounds in public service who would appeal to the mass electorate in the general election. Freer to choose running mates based on their qualifications and more personal factors, presidents have become more willing to entrust their vice presidents with governing authority once elected, further enhancing the office and the incentive to fill it with a capable running mate.

## The Changing Incentives of Vice Presidential Selection

When choosing a running mate, presidential nominees must balance two potentially competing goals: maximizing their chances of actually being elected president and selecting a vice president who is capable of sharing the burdens of government and, if necessary, succeeding to the presidency. Because the latter is meaningless without the former, the academic and popular consensus is that electoral motivations drive the choice of a running mate (Goldstein 1982; Natoli 1985; Polsby and Wildavsky 1991; Sigelman and Wahlbeck 1997). Generally, the conventional wisdom is that presidential candidates seek to balance their ticket by choosing a running mate who contributes key qualities that the presidential nominee lacks. The particular electoral environment will determine which balancing characteristics—such as age, nature of political experience, ideology—matter most.

The most rigorous existing empirical analysis of the dynamics driving vice presidential selection is Lee Sigelman and Paul J. Wahlbeck's 1997 study. To test the ticket-balancing theory, Sigelman and Wahlbeck constructed a conditional logit model of 22 major party selections from 1940 to 1996 comprising a variety of measures of ticket balance along regional, ideological, experiential, and demographic dimensions, as well as a measure of the electoral size of a prospective running mate's state.

2. That year, Franklin D. Roosevelt bucked party leaders, who traditionally chose vice presidential candidates, by insisting on the nomination of Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace. Since 1940, presidential candidates have chosen their running mates all but two times, when they instead threw the decision to the nominating convention.

Empirically, the ticket-balancing theory failed to pass muster. Factors long thought to influence the selection process, including region, political ideology, religion, race, gender, and ethnicity, were shown, surprisingly, to have little or no effect on the likelihood of selection. Another criterion, balancing experience inside and outside the Beltway, performed, paradoxically, contrary to expectations, as it was found to harm a prospective running mate's chances for selection.<sup>3</sup> The only relationships in accord with expectations were that potential running mates were more likely to be chosen if they hailed from populous states, a different age cohort from the presidential nominee, or had challenged the presidential nominee in a past (but not the current) presidential race.

The failure to find much empirical evidence for ticket-balancing concerns, particularly regional balance, a factor widely emphasized as a dominant consideration of nominees in historical and political science scholarship (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Goldstein 1982; Friedman 1988; Witcover 1977), is initially puzzling.<sup>4</sup> However, the mixed results of Sigelman and Wahlbeck's model are less surprising when existing theories of vice presidential selection are modified to account for the confluence of two forces that changed both the incentives presidential nominees face when choosing running mates and the mechanics of that selection process: the watershed institutional changes in the presidential nominating system wrought by the McGovern-Fraser reforms of the 1970s, and the exogenous shock of the 1972 fiasco surrounding George McGovern's selection of the late Missouri senator Thomas Eagleton as his running mate on the Democratic ticket.

Scholars have long studied how institutional changes in the system in which political actors maneuver dramatically influence their behavior (March and Olson 1984; Moe 1987; Orren and Skowronek 1994; Shepsle 1989; Shepsle and Weingast 1987, 1994; Skowronek 1997). Indeed, an extensive literature on presidential primaries has investigated the far-reaching impacts of the McGovern-Fraser reforms on nearly all facets of presidential elections, from the types of candidates who throw their hats into the ring to the campaign strategies they adopt and the nature of media coverage the press employs (Bartels 1988; Ceasar 1979; Kernell 1997; Pious 2003; Polsby and Wildavsky 1991). Absent from the scholarship, however, is an examination of how the McGovern-Fraser

3. Sigelman and Wahlbeck (1997, 861) noted that presidential candidates who are political outsiders—those lacking prior political experience inside Washington, DC—strongly prefer insiders as running mates but that the aggregate statistic was strongly affected by the number of insider presidential candidates who selected insider running mates.

4. However, Sigelman and Wahlbeck's null finding for many balancing characteristics is not evidence that balancing does not influence selection at all; rather, meeting balancing criteria may be critically important in determining an individual's likelihood of making the short list of potential vice presidents considered in the empirical analysis. For example, 90% of all vice presidential candidates in the finalist pools balanced the party ticket regionally. Appendix 1 explores trends in the percentage of vice presidential finalists meeting balancing criteria in different election years. Throughout the entire period, the vast majority of candidates hailed from a different geographic region than the presidential nominee. In most years, a majority of the finalists balanced the nominee ideologically, though a significant percentage did not. On the other balancing dimensions, we see considerable variance from year to year, with perhaps the most significant trend being the rising percentage of nominees adding religious balance to the ticket beginning in the 1960s. Aside from the rising rate of religious balance, the distribution of vice presidential candidates across the balancing criteria looks rather similar in more recent decades to the distribution of candidates in the more distant past (see also Goldstein 1982, 46-89).

reforms unintentionally influenced the mechanics and incentives of vice presidential selection as well.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the reforms' enactment in the early 1970s, the primaries and caucuses that dominate today's presidential selection process were relatively insignificant. As late as 1968, primaries were held in only 15 states and accounted for no more than 41% of each party's delegates (Euchner, Maltese, and Nelson 2002). Would-be presidential candidates instead depended largely on state and local party bosses for both the nomination and the general election. Frequently, this structure produced hotly contested nominations that were decided only shortly before or at the nominating convention, as well as disgruntled party factions upset over the defeat of their standard-bearer.

In this uncertain environment, would-be presidential candidates focused their attention on winning their own nominations, and choosing a running mate was often a secondary concern.<sup>6</sup> To the extent that presidential candidates and their advisors did consider the issue, they viewed a running mate chiefly as one among other political tools.<sup>7</sup> For example, as William Mayer has noted, "for the presidential aspirant who needed a few final votes to achieve or protect his majority," the vice presidency was "an invaluable piece of bait that could be used to attract last-minute support from favorite sons, second-tier candidates, interest-group representatives, and state party leaders" (2000, 346).<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps even more importantly, the selection of a vice president was also an instrument of a candidate's general election strategy. Because the running mate was usually first announced at the convention shortly after the selection of the presidential candidate, the vice presidency offered an effective salve that presidential candidates could apply to fresh party wounds, produced by divisive conventions, to unite the party for the general election. Because state and local party leaders played a prominent role in waging

5. An important exception is Mayer's (2000) study, which emphasized that the McGovern-Fraser reforms ultimately gave presidential nominees more time to conduct a thoughtful and thorough vetting and selection process.

6. For example, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. recounted the 1960 Democratic selection: "The week of the convention had been too tense and chancy to give [Senator John] Kennedy time for serious thought about the vice presidency. Now the question could no longer be postponed. During the victory celebrations Wednesday night he observed a little wistfully how terrible it was to have only twenty-four hours in which to make so fateful a choice" (1965, 45). Not much had changed almost a decade later. Political journalist and perennial convention observer Theodore H. White disparaged the process as "the most perfunctory and generally the most thoughtless [choice] in the entire American political system. . . . The traditional script in both parties reads the same: the Presidential candidate is nominated on Wednesday of convention week. His speech is usually unfinished at that point, and with the mantle of history being pleated for him, he insists on fussing with the speech once more, giving it that final gloss which will shimmer through time. The choosing of a vice president at this point is not only a bother to him—it is a curse. Matters never look quite the same to the principal candidate the night of his victory as they did when he arrived at the scene in full combat ardor. His defeated party rivals must now become tomorrow's allies; their supporters must be appeased; the half-promises, half-commitments he has given to friends on the way hang over him; the names he or his staff has floated to test public reaction have frozen into print. Concern about who could best govern the nation fades to the far corner of the tired mind" (1973, 193). For historical accounts of other vice presidential selections, see Williams (1956), Young (1972), and Witcover (1992).

7. An aide to Vice President Hubert Humphrey remarked, "Once the election is over, the Vice President's usefulness is over. He's like the second stage of a rocket. He's damn important going into orbit, but he's always thrown off to burn up in the atmosphere" (quoted in Light 1984, 11).

8. During the contentious 1960 Democratic convention, for example, Oklahoma congressman Mike Monroney quipped, "If [the JFK people] called a meeting of all the people to whom they've promised the Vice Presidency, they couldn't find a room in Los Angeles large enough to hold it in" (Schlesinger 1965, 37).

the fall election campaign on the ground in the prereform era, selecting a vice president from a disaffected region or from a large state with important party leaders was critical for forming a unified partisan front that could mobilize effectively the entire party apparatus for the general campaign.

For these reasons, ticket balancing was a logical strategy for choosing a running mate. By selecting a running mate from a populous state or, in an era of intrapartisan cleavages along geographic lines (Rohde 1991), from a different region, a would-be presidential candidate could serve his dual aims of shoring up support for the nomination among party factions and mollifying any lingering intrapartisan divisions after the convention as the critical fall campaign season approached. Moreover, because presidents during this period had yet to infuse the vice presidency with the authority it enjoys today, presidential candidates had little incentive to treat the selection of a running mate as anything other than a strategic political tool.

This system—and the mechanics and incentives for vice presidential selection it produced—was dramatically reformed in 1970, when the Democratic Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, informally known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission, issued 18 guidelines that ultimately transferred the power to choose and control national convention delegates away from political bosses to the popular electorate in the form of primaries and caucuses.<sup>9</sup> Two effects of these reforms especially influenced running mate selection. The first was the timing of the selection. No longer would nominees hastily choose a running mate at party conventions with little time for extensive thought and reflection. Henceforward, virtually every presidential candidate would arrive at the convention hall assured of his presumptive status, often weeks or even months in advance thanks to decisive primary wins.<sup>10</sup> Candidates of the last three decades have thus had much more time than their predecessors to choose their running mates and have done so knowing that their own nominations were already effectively secure.<sup>11</sup> Second, by making primaries and the electorate decisive in the nomination, the reforms displaced party leaders as the center of the presidential campaigns, transferring the locus

9. The commission convened in response to popular calls for greater party accountability following the Vietnam War and the riotous 1968 Democratic nominating convention in Chicago. Following the McGovern-Fraser Commission, the Democrats continued reforming their delegate selection procedures through various additional commissions, including the Mikulski Commission (1972-73), the Winograd Commission (1975-76), the Hunt Commission (1980-82), and the Fairness Commission (1984-86). Though several of the proposed reforms sought to return control of delegate selection to state and local party bosses—for example, the Hunt Commission created a new “superdelegate” category comprising party and elected officials who would attend the 1984 convention uncommitted and who controlled approximately 14% of the ballots—state primaries and caucuses indisputably remain the dominant vehicle through which today’s presidential hopefuls pursue the nomination. The Republicans also took steps to democratize the delegate selection process through, for example, the “DO” Committee (1969-71) and the Rule 29 Committee (1973-75). Indeed, since 1980, a greater percentage of delegates have been selected through the Republican primaries than through Democratic ones (Moore 2003). While the majority of convention delegates are still selected through primaries, Burden (2005) noted that the 2004 election cycle demonstrated a slight move away from primaries toward caucuses in a number of states.

10. While it is certainly possible in the current era that no candidate will secure enough convention delegates through the primaries to ensure a first ballot victory, political momentum and bandwagon effects, increasingly acute in our ever more front-loaded primary sequence, virtually preclude such a result (Bartels 1988; Mayer and Busch 2004).

11. The recent phenomenon of *front-loading*, in which states try to maintain or bolster the significance of their primaries by pushing their dates ever earlier (Mayer and Busch 2004), has accelerated this trend.

of power to the individual presidential contenders and giving rise to the candidate-centered campaigns familiar today (Mayer 2003; Patterson 1980; Steger 2000; Wattenberg 1984, 1991).

These changes have lessened the strategic value of traditional vice presidential ticket balancing. With attenuated parties, less coherent factions, and a presidential race atomized by individuals who organize their own campaigns, intraparty appeasement and the value of regional ticket balance now matter less. Moreover, postreform nominees have enjoyed an elongated time frame in which to choose their running mates, which has afforded them considerable time to make use of a variety of political tools besides running mate selection to heal whatever party wounds exist after the primaries.<sup>12</sup> Even choosing a running mate from a populous state is also less useful now than it once was. Throughout American history, there is scant evidence that running mates have helped deliver their home states in a general election (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Garand 1988; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1983; Rosenstone 1983; Tubbesing 1973).<sup>13</sup> Thus, the incentive to select a running mate from a large state likely stemmed from its value within the partisan apparatus. With party nominees secure in their hold on the nomination and freed from reliance on major state party leaders to fuel their general election campaigns, the size and importance of a prospective vice president's home state matters considerably less in the contemporary era.

In place of these traditional selection criteria, an increasingly important and perhaps unexpected criterion to emerge in the last 30 years is a running mate's governing experience and perceived competence. The rise of governing experience as a selection criterion is intimately tied to George McGovern's ill-fated selection of the late Senator Thomas Eagleton as his running mate on the 1972 Democratic ticket. That year, on the eve of the convention, McGovern tapped Eagleton at the last minute after a host of other individuals had turned him down.<sup>14</sup> Disaster ensued days later when McGovern and the press learned that Eagleton had earlier received electroshock therapy to treat depression and fatigue. Fearful that the issue would overshadow his campaign, McGovern encouraged Eagleton's resignation and replaced him with former ambassador Sargent Shriver. The unfortunate decision and reversal doomed whatever slim prospects McGovern enjoyed against the popular incumbent, President Richard Nixon, whose overwhelming victory McGovern attributed to the Eagleton fiasco, "the number one news and editorial

12. In 1992, for example, Bill Clinton, after effectively winning the Democratic presidential nomination through primary victories in early April, "was under no illusions about how badly damaged I had been, or how little I could do about it before the Democratic convention in July" (Clinton 2004b, 407). Clinton sought to battle back and regain his campaign's momentum by, among other things, "reach[ing] out to specific constituencies and the general public directly, and to keep pushing the issues" (411).

13. Of course, there are other reasons that a nominee might strategically pick a running mate from a large state besides the hope of boosting his or her electoral prospects directly in that state; however, these incentives should be less important than those that encouraged candidates in the old system to seek vice presidential candidates from populous states with large convention delegations and important party leaders that would play a key role in the general election campaign, where the potential benefit could be more directly and immediately realized.

14. McGovern, who capitalized on his commission's reforms by creating the first modern grassroots presidential campaign, would have had far more time to choose a running mate had his rival Democratic contenders not contested his otherwise decisive California victory. The disagreement consumed the campaign and was not resolved until shortly before the nominating convention.

development of that campaign. It overshadowed the Watergate scandal as a subject of journalistic concern. It—not Watergate, not Vietnam, not the American economy—was *the* political story of 1972” (McGovern 1977, 192).

The Eagleton affair, combined with the McGovern-Fraser reforms, profoundly influenced how later presidential nominees would choose their running mates. Indeed, the effects were direct and nearly immediate. In the next presidential election, Democratic campaign manager Hamilton Jordan advised Georgia governor Jimmy Carter that his decision on a running mate was “the first of presidential magnitude that you will make,” and “in 1976 the best politics is to select a person who is actually perceived by the American people as being qualified and able to serve as president if that became necessary” (quoted in Witcover 1977, 361).<sup>15</sup> Carter heeded the advice and orchestrated what became the prototype for almost all future selections: He coupled an emphasis on governing competence with an intricate vetting process—made possible by his early primary victories and necessary by McGovern’s debacle—replete with comprehensive background checks and interviews in which Carter sought both to ensure there would be no repeat of McGovern’s late summer surprise and to learn “how compatible we would be during the remaining months of the campaign and if we served together in the White House” (Carter 1982, 36). Virtually every presidential nominee since Carter has followed a similar selection procedure, taking advantage of the months before the national convention to meticulously select a running mate whose contributions to the ticket included, among other things, the ability actually to serve as president.<sup>16</sup>

Choosing running mates with lengthy governing experience is strategically valuable for at least two reasons. First, although there is limited evidence that a “good” vice presidential candidate can directly help a campaign, McGovern’s fiasco and the efforts of later presidential nominees to avoid its repeat amply show that a “poor” choice can hurt it.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, choosing a running mate who has already had years of experience in the public eye supplements the vetting process by further reducing the chances of

15. In addition to the specter of an Eagleton repeat, Vice President Spiro Agnew’s 1973 resignation and plea of no contest on charges of tax evasion no doubt motivated Carter’s concern about finding a capable running mate.

16. Michael Dukakis, the 1988 Democratic presidential nominee, recounted the influence of these events on his own experience: “I was determined to take some time and to follow a process which not only picked the right person but avoided some of the pitfalls that had hurt other nominees in the past in both parties because of a hurried, poorly considered and poorly investigated choice . . . I thought—and think—the world of Tom Eagleton, but I certainly didn’t want to go through what George McGovern went through in that case” (e-mail interview with the authors, August 15, 2004). In 2004, President Bill Clinton similarly concluded, “[The vice presidential selection] is the most intensely personal decision. And the only presidential decision a candidate gets to make . . . John Kerry only gets to make one presidential decision [during his campaign], who is his running mate. Everything else about a challenger’s campaign is words. So the most important thing is that he picks somebody that he believes with all his heart would be a great president if he dropped dead, got shot, was in a plane crash. And the second most important thing is that he pick somebody that he likes and has confidence in, that he’ll give a lot of responsibility to and form a real partnership with. If those two conditions are met, everything else is secondary. . . . And that’s more important than what state they’re from or any of this other stuff. If he feels good, if he feels I did right by my country with this decision, that will help him more politically than anything else” (2004a).

17. Goldstein found that during the general election campaign, vice presidential candidates are most likely to make the front pages of newspapers because of gaffes, blunders, or other negative coverage (1982, 123-27).

repeating McGovern's perceived blunder.<sup>18</sup> Second, the increased attention showered on the vice presidency as a result of this event and the subsequent growth of the office's authority and prestige have dramatically heightened voters' expectations.<sup>19</sup> As a result, today "most presidential nominees realize that voters now care more about a vice presidential candidate's competence and loyalty—the ability to succeed to the presidency ably and to carry on the departed president's policies faithfully—than they do about having all religious faiths or party factions represented on the ticket" (Nelson 1988b, 862).<sup>20</sup> As a result, in the post-1972 environment, selecting a nominee who meets the increased public demand for competence, not a candidate who soothes intrapartisan tensions and appeals to powerful party leaders, has been the best politics; electoral and good governance incentives have come into closer alignment (Goldstein 1982; Nelson 1988b).<sup>21</sup>

The institutional changes wrought by the McGovern-Fraser reforms and the exogenous shock of the Eagleton flop thus altered the mechanics and strategy underlying vice presidential selections. Electoral concerns are still paramount—and certainly some traditional coarse political calculations still matter<sup>22</sup>—but the strategic calculus has changed in key respects. Prior to the reforms, when would-be presidential candidates depended on bosses and parties for the nomination and general election, it made sense to use the vice presidency to bolster convention and party leader support and to soothe angered factions. Running mates from populous states or who represented a different

18. This does not imply that Eagleton lacked significant prior experience in office or that he lacked the competence to succeed as vice president. Indeed, Eagleton was an experienced politician, and a greater weighting of experience in McGovern's decision calculus would not necessarily have led him to avoid his mistake. Nonetheless, on average, choosing a vice president with extensive prior experience is less likely to produce unforeseen, damaging revelations during the campaign than selecting a vice president with little prior experience in the public eye. In this way, a greater reliance on governing experience complemented the institutionalization of a thorough, independent vetting process. Moreover, the greater emphasis on experience reflected the electorate's increasing expectations for a vice president perceived as tested and competent to assume the reins of the presidency if needed.

19. As noted in the introduction, the public stature of the office began to grow almost immediately when Jimmy Carter entrusted Walter Mondale with considerable governing authority.

20. For example, the following *New York Times* editorial, published during the 2000 presidential election, asserted, "If Mr. Bush does select Mr. Cheney, though, that choice might in some way be connected to Mr. Gore's own service as vice president. President Clinton and Mr. Gore got the public fully accustomed to seeing the vice president cast and marketed as a senior adviser rather than a space holder. If he chooses Mr. Cheney, Mr. Bush will be giving that model a place of even greater prominence." Four years later, when voters were polled to see how they thought Senator John Edwards's six years of public experience would influence his tenure if he were elected vice president, more than half responded that it would constitute a weakness (CNN/USA Today 2004). Goldstein found similar results in a survey of earlier polls (1982, 130-32).

21. Nelson posited that the incentive to choose an experienced running mate extends as far back as President Harry Truman, when a postwar, nuclear-era country learned firsthand the importance of vice presidential competence. We disagree with this time frame—despite the reality of Truman's succession, until Carter elected to transform the office, it was largely an impotent post of poor reputation. Moreover, the dynamics of the pre-McGovern-Fraser presidential nominating system strongly encouraged presidential candidates to exploit the office primarily as political capital. Perhaps tellingly, Truman was disengaged from the selection of his own running mate in 1948, which he evidently dismissed as a question of politics and not governance. Indeed, in 1952, Dwight Eisenhower, under the impression that the convention would choose his running mate, was reportedly surprised to learn from his advisors that he had any say at all. (See also the discussion of vice presidential selection in Nelson 1988a.)

22. See note 4 herein for why traditional balancing characteristics may still play a role when winnowing possible running mates down to a shortlist.



region or ideology were valuable. Conversely, in the post-McGovern-Fraser era, enfeebled parties, candidate-centered campaigns, and an advanced calendar by which candidates effectively secure the presidential nomination well before the convention have decreased the importance of these traditional balancing features. Instead, presidential nominees have been freer to base their decisions on new criteria that will best position them in the general election.

In this postreform era and in the wake of the Eagleton affair, selections based on a candidate's experience have both strategically satisfied voters' desire for a qualified second in command and, indirectly, have created the conditions necessary for the expansion of the office in power and importance over the last 30 years.<sup>23</sup> Having selected a running mate based on his or her merits, not to please a state delegation or wayward party faction, presidents in the post-McGovern era have become more willing to entrust authority to their vice presidents, further fueling demands for a qualified second in command.

## Model

To test for the impact of the McGovern-Fraser reforms on the criteria that presidential hopefuls employ when choosing running mates, this analysis modifies the conditional logit model of Sigelman and Wahlbeck (1997) and extends it through the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns. The conditional logit models the likelihood of each potential running mate's selection from the pool of individuals under consideration in a given election cycle.<sup>24</sup>

To extend the time series through 2004, this study maintains Sigelman and Wahlbeck's distinction between the presidential nominee's *first choice* for running mate—the individual to whom an invitation was first issued, regardless of whether it was accepted or declined—and the *chosen nominee*—the individual who was actually selected for and ran on the ticket, regardless of whether he or she was also the first choice.<sup>25</sup>

23. Light demonstrated that the nature of the personal and political relationship between a president and vice president is a key determinant of the latter's authority in the White House. Indeed, he specifically identified vice presidential competence as a factor driving the office's rapid growth (1984, 259).

24. The conditional logit model analyzes the probability that a specific individual will be selected given the characteristics of all of the other individuals in the selection pool. Formally, the model analyzes the probability of an individual ( $j$ ) being selected in a given finalist pool ( $i$ ) as a function of the characteristics of that individual divided by the sum of the characteristics of all other individuals ( $m$ ) in that pool:  $(\pi_{ij} = \exp(\beta'x_{ij}) / [\sum \exp(\beta'x_i)])$  (see Maddala 1983, 42). Not conditioning the probabilities by the characteristics of the other finalists in a given pool and instead pooling all candidates together in a single, simple logit model yields results very similar to those presented in Table 2 across specifications.

25. By comparison, Sigelman and Wahlbeck's model fared poorly when the actual nominee was substituted for the first-choice nominee in those instances in which the two individuals differed (1997, 862). When replicating our analysis with a conditional logit model of the actual nominees instead of the first choices, the empirical evidence for our hypotheses is considerably more mixed. However, further analysis leads us to believe that this is the result of simply asking too much of our limited data (reduced further by losing the 1944 Republican and 1948 Democratic contests) with a conditional logit approach rather than evidence of dramatically different dynamics driving the actual versus first-choice selection. To seek more leverage on the question, we first estimated a simpler binary logit model with the actual nominees as the dependent variable; this model offers considerable support for our theoretical contentions. Specifically, we observe the expected positive relationships between experience in the postreform period and state size and

Among the 25 vice presidential selections between 1940 and 2004,<sup>26</sup> there were nine occasions on which the presidential candidate's first choice for running mate declined the offer and the nomination was given instead to one of the remaining finalists (i.e., the chosen nominee).<sup>27</sup> In these instances, Sigelman and Wahlbeck identified the first choice—*not* the eventual nominee—as the winner of the finalist pool, as they considered it “inappropriate to designate someone like Bricker [1944] or a Muskie [1968] the winner of the pool simply because he ended up on the ticket” (1997, 859). This model maintains that distinction and therefore identifies the winning vice presidential finalist as the individual to whom an invitation was first offered, regardless of whether he or she accepted it. Table 1, adapted from Sigelman and Wahlbeck (1997, 858), contains the finalist pools for all 25 selections and indicates those instances in which the first choice for running mate was not the person ultimately nominated.

Our analysis retains all of Sigelman and Wahlbeck's explanatory variables. Following their work, the variables *Race-Gender-Ethnicity Balance*, *Religious Balance*, and *Age Balance* are coded 1 to denote balance and 0 to indicate that the running mate is of the same race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or age cohort as the presidential nominee.<sup>28</sup> For

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regional balance in the prereform period, though the latter fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Additionally, we estimated simple difference in means tests to explore whether the hypotheses hold at the bivariate level. In the pre-1976 period, all 14 men who became vice presidential nominees regionally balanced the presidential ticket. By contrast, 89% of the 55 candidates who did not receive the nod would have balanced the ticket geographically. The difference in means is statistically significant,  $p = .10$ , on a two-tailed test. In a similar vein, difference in means tests show that the actual nominees in the pre-1976 period also hailed from substantially larger states on average than did the candidates who failed to achieve the nod; the difference is significant,  $p = .02$ , on a two-tailed test. The only expected relationship that does not hold at the bivariate level when using the actual nominee instead of the first choice is governing experience in the post-1972 era. While candidates declined the vice presidential nod with some frequency in earlier decades, as the office has grown in importance refusing the offer has become a rare occurrence. Indeed, in only two cases since 1972 have candidates turned down a vice presidential offer. In each case, after the rejection, the presidential nominees turned immediately to their most formidable challengers in the primaries, George H. W. Bush in 1980 and John Edwards in 2004. Both of these candidates had less experience than some of their peers, and thus they are driving the lack of a significant relationship in the bivariate tests. However, in a way, these two decisions can be seen as a direct response to the Eagleton problem, as runners-up have undergone considerable vetting. Having failed to obtain their first choice from a governing or electoral appeal standpoint, Ronald Reagan and John Kerry turned to fellow primary candidates who had run the same gauntlet. Because of these two additional rounds of analysis, we believe there is considerable evidence that the same dynamics underlying the selection of the first-choice running mate also characterize the selection process of the eventual nominee.

26. Following Sigelman and Wahlbeck, our analysis excludes the seven occasions when an incumbent vice president was left on the ticket as well as the two occasions when the decision was left to convention delegates rather than made by the presidential nominee.

27. The first choices/chosen nominees were Cordell Hull/Henry Wallace (1940), Earl Warren/John Bricker (1944), William O. Douglas/Alben Barkley (1948), Nelson Rockefeller/Henry Cabot Lodge (1960), and Robert Finch/Spiro Agnew (1968) for the Republicans, and Nelson Rockefeller/Edmund Muskie (1968), Edward Kennedy/Thomas Eagleton (1972), Gerald Ford/George Bush (1980), and John McCain/John Edwards (2004) for the Democrats. For a list of sources from which Sigelman and Wahlbeck identified the first-choice running mates, see their appendix (1997, 863). The only instance we have identified since 1996 of the eventual vice presidential selection differing from the nominee's first choice is John Kerry's initial preference for John McCain in the 2004 presidential contest. For details regarding this case and judgment, see Purdum (2004), Stevenson (2004), Stevenson and Rutenberg (2004), Miga (2004), Halbfinger (2004), and Fournier (2004). Replicating our analysis with Edwards as the first choice or excluding the 2004 election yields results similar to those reported in Table 2.

28. The age cohort is 10 years, so that finalists born within a decade of the presidential nominee are coded 0; those born at least 10 years apart are coded 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**The Finalist Pool, 1940-2004**

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Democratic Finalists</i>   | <i>Republican Finalists</i>   | <i>Year</i> | <i>Democratic Finalists</i>   | <i>Republican Finalists</i>   |
|-------------|---|---|-------------|---|---|
| 1940        | Barkley (M)<br>Byrnes (C)<br>W. Douglas (L)<br>Hull <sup>a</sup> (C)<br>H. Wallace <sup>b</sup> (L)   | <i>McNary</i>   | 1976        | Church (L)<br>Glenn (M)<br>H. Jackson (M)<br>Mondale <sup>ab</sup> (L)<br>Muskie (L)<br>Rodino (L)  | Armstrong (C)<br>H. Baker (C)<br>R. Dole <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Ruckleshaus (M)                             |
| 1944        | Barkely (M)<br>Byrnes (C)<br>W. Douglas (L)<br>Truman <sup>ab</sup> (M)<br>H. Wallace (L)   | Bricker <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>Warren <sup>a</sup> (L)   | 1980        | Stevenson II (L)<br><i>Mondale</i>  | H. Baker (C)<br>Bush <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>Ford <sup>a</sup> (M)<br>Kemp (C)                                |
| 1948        | Barkley <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>W. Douglas <sup>a</sup> (L)   | Bricker (C)<br>Halleck (C)<br>Stassen (M)<br>Warren <sup>ab</sup> (L)   |             |   | Laxalt (C)<br>Lugar (M)<br>Rumsfeld (M)<br>W. Simon (C)<br>Vander Jagt (C)<br><i>Bush</i>                 |
| 1952        | Barkley (M)<br>Chapman (M)<br>Fulbright (M)<br>Kefauver (L)<br>Kerr (C)<br>Magnuson (L)<br>Monroney (M)<br>Russell (C)<br>Sparkman <sup>ab</sup> (M)                        | Halleck (C)<br>Judd (C)<br>Knowland (C)<br>Langlie (M)<br>Nixon <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Thornton (M)   | 1984        | Bentsen (C)<br>T. Bradley (L)<br>Cisneros (L)<br>M. Collins (M)<br>Dukakis (L)<br>Feinstein (M)<br>Ferraro <sup>ab</sup> (L)<br>Goode (L) |   |
| 1956        | <i>Kefauver</i>   | <i>Nixon</i>  | 1988        | Bentsen <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Gephardt (L)<br>Glenn (M)<br>Gore (M)<br>Graham (M)<br>Hamilton (M)  | Alexander (M)<br>Deukmejian (M)<br>R. Dole (M)<br>Demenici (M)<br>Quayle <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Simpson (C) |
| 1960        | Freeman (L)<br>Humphrey (L)<br>H. Jackson (M)<br>Johnson <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Symington (M)   | R. Anderson (C)<br>Ford (C)<br>Judd (C)<br>Lodge <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>Mitchell (M)<br>T. Morton (M)<br>N. Rockefeller <sup>a</sup> (L)<br>Seaton (C) | 1992        | Gore <sup>ab</sup> (M)<br>Graham (M)<br>Hamilton (M)  | Thompson (M)<br><i>Quayle</i>   |
| 1964        | Humphrey <sup>ab</sup> (L)<br>R. Kennedy (L)<br>McCarthy (L)<br>McNamara (M)<br>Mansfield (M)<br>Shriver (L)  | Ford (C)<br>Miller <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Scranton (M)  | 1996        | Kerrey (M)<br>J. Rockefeller (L)<br>Wofford (L)<br><i>Gore</i>  | Campbell (C)<br>Engler (C)<br>Kemp <sup>ab</sup> (C)  |
| 1968        | Harris (M)<br>R. Hughes (L)<br>Muskie <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>N. Rockefeller <sup>a</sup> (M)<br>Sanford (M)<br>Shriver (M)   | Agnew <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>H. Baker (C)<br>Finch <sup>a</sup> (L)<br>R. Morton (M)<br>Volpe (M)  | 2000        | Bayh (M)<br>Edwards (M)<br>Kerry (L)<br>Lieberman <sup>ab</sup> (M)   | Mack (C)<br>Cheney <sup>ab</sup> (C)<br>Danforth (L)<br>Hagel (M)<br>Kasich (C)<br>Keating (C)            |
| 1972        | Askew (L)<br>Church (L)<br>Eagleton <sup>b</sup> (L)<br>E. Kennedy <sup>a</sup> (L)<br>Mondale (L)<br>Nelson (L)<br>O'Brien (M)<br>Ribicoff (L)<br>Shriver (L)<br>White (L) | <i>Agnew</i>  | 2004        | Edwards <sup>b</sup> (M)<br>Gephardt (L)<br>Graham (M)<br>McCain <sup>a</sup> (C)<br>Vilsack (M)  | Ridge (M)<br><i>Cheney</i>  |

Note: The seven incumbent vice presidents who were left on their tickets, as well as the two running mates who were chosen by the party nominating conventions, are listed in italics but excluded from analysis.

The presidential nominees and their ideological categorizations as liberal (L), moderate (M), or conservative (C) are as follows: 1940-Roosevelt (L); 1944-Roosevelt (L), Dewey (L); 1948-Truman (M), Dewey (L); 1952-Stevenson (M), Eisenhower (M); 1960-Kennedy (M), Nixon (M); 1964-Johnson (L), Goldwater (C); 1968-Humphrey (M), Nixon (M); 1972-McGovern (L); 1976-Carter (M), Ford (C); 1980-Reagan (C); 1984-Mondale (L); 1988-Dukakis (L), G.H.W. Bush (M); 1992-Clinton (M); 1996-Dole (M); 2000-Gore (M), G.W. Bush (C); 2004-Kerry (L).

<sup>a</sup> The presidential nominee's first choice for running mate.

<sup>b</sup> Actual nominee.

*Ideological Balance*, all finalists are classified as either conservative, moderate, or liberal within their respective parties. Individuals of the same ideology are coded 0; those of differing ideologies are coded 1.<sup>29</sup> For *Insider-Outsider Experience Balance*, outsiders are defined as anyone who, prior to the year in question, had neither served in Congress nor held an important government position in Washington, D.C. Tickets combining an insider and outsider (in either order) are coded 1; those pairing two candidates with the same nature of experience are coded 0. Finally, finalists are categorized according to whether they had also been opponents for the presidential nomination. A distinction is drawn between those individuals who rivaled the presidential nominee in the given election year (*Current Rival for Nomination*—those who did are coded 1 and those who did not are coded 0) and those who had never been rivals, during the current election year or earlier (*Never Rival for Nomination*—those who were *never* rivals are coded 1 and those who challenged during the given year or in the past are coded 0).

To test the theoretical argument that the McGovern-Fraser reforms and the Eagleton debacle diminished the incentives for traditional ticket balance and large state delegate sizes, our model interacts the *Regional Balance* and *Size of State* variables with pre-1976 and post-1972 dummy variables. The *Regional Balance* variable is coded 0 if a finalist's home state lies in the same geographic region as that of the presidential nominee and 1 if it does not,<sup>30</sup> and the *Size of State* variable captures the number of electoral votes that each candidate's home state possesses as a percentage of the national total in that election year.<sup>31</sup> The coefficients for these variables' relationships with the likelihood of selection should be strongly positive in the pre-McGovern-Fraser era (*Regional Balance Before 1976*, *Size of State before 1976*) but should have less effect on a nominee's decision calculus in the modern nominating system (*Regional Balance After 1972*, *Size of State After 1972*).<sup>32</sup>

Finally, to test for the growing importance of governing competence on a vice presidential candidate's prospects of selection, the model also introduces a new measure of each candidate's years of public service experience.<sup>33</sup> To construct a measure of vice

29. With a single exception, Sigelman and Wahlbeck adopted Goldstein's ideological classifications for finalists between 1952 and 1980. For the years in which Sigelman and Wahlbeck collected data (1940-48 and 1984-96), they relied on interest group ratings, contemporary media descriptions, and intraparty sources of support (1997, 859). When gathering data for the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, we adopted these methods and also made use of finalists' NOMINATE scores where possible.

30. Following Sigelman and Wahlbeck, for the regional balance variable, states are coded into one of the following categories: Western, Midwestern, Southern, Border, or Northern.

31. Even though our theoretical approach emphasizes the importance of state size because of the size of its delegation to the party conventions, not its contribution to the Electoral College, we adopt this measure to remain consistent with Sigelman and Wahlbeck. State delegate sizes and electoral votes are, of course, highly correlated.

32. Of course, a simpler operationalization including the three uninteracted variables—state size, regional balance, and logged years of public service—as well as an interaction for each variable after 1972—state size after 1972, regional balance after 1972, and logged years public service after 1972—yields identical results. However, the current method eliminates the need to then subtract one coefficient from the other to obtain the net impact of each variable in the post-McGovern-Fraser era.

33. Defining vice presidential or presidential competence, much less quantifying it, is, of course, a very subjective task. A running mate's prior governing or public administrative experience is perhaps the least controversial measure and, thankfully, one amenable to quantitative analysis. Goldstein (1982) and Nelson (1988) suggest others, too, including a potential running mate's breadth of experience and whether he or she has previously sought or been mentioned for the presidential nomination. Note that the latter

presidential candidates' prior experience in government, we consulted Barone and Ujifusa's *Almanac of American Politics* (1972-), *Who's Who in America* (1956-), and the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774–Present* to compile a record of each finalist's previous public and government posts, including elected and appointed offices and judgeships at the national, state, and local levels. The effects of governing experience on selection should be nonlinear. Increases in public service at the lower end of the range (say, from 8 years, one standard deviation below the mean, to the mean value of 17 years) should have a much larger effect on the likelihood of selection than an identical increase at the upper end of the range. For example, A 17-year government veteran would have a much greater advantage in experience and, on average, have undergone considerably more public scrutiny than a newcomer to the public sector with 8 years of service, whereas the differences between a 26- and 35-year political veteran would be noticeably smaller.<sup>34</sup> To account for this nonlinearity, the public service variable takes the natural log of each candidate's prior years in government.

If the length of a finalist's public experience never influenced the selection process, then the coefficients for both variables will be statistically insignificant. If, however, the McGovern-Fraser reforms and the lingering specter of the Eagleton debacle increased demand for vice presidential competence, before which it was downplayed or irrelevant, then we would expect the coefficient of *Years of Public Experience After 1972* to be statistically significant and positive and the coefficient of *Years of Public Experience Before 1976* to be either statistically indistinguishable from zero or, if positive, smaller than the former coefficient.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the conditional logit models are presented in Table 2. The first column replicates Sigelman and Wahlbeck's analysis from 1940 to 1996. As noted, the results for ticket balancing are quite mixed. This model offers no evidence of regional balance—a factor heavily emphasized in the conventional wisdom regarding vice presidential selection. Similarly, the results find no significant relationship between ideologi-

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measure differs from Sigelman and Wahlbeck's two rival variables, which look only at whether the presidential nominee has competed against a potential running mate for the presidential nomination in the current or a prior election.

34. Certainly, the political value of prior political experience may be higher for some elected offices or appointed positions than others. Indeed, we tried several weighting schemes that accord greater importance to experience at the national level and to major state-level offices. First, we created a simple additive index for whether each candidate had held these prior offices: vice presidency, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, cabinet secretary, Supreme Court justice, governor. Second, we expanded the previous index to include the following three categories: any appointed office in the executive branch, elected statewide office, state legislator. Finally, we created a more subjective ordinal index on a five-point scale assessing the entire corpus of a candidate's prior experience in government. All three measures yielded very similar results to those presented in Table 2. However, for the analysis presented previously, the least subjective operationalization is the cumulative number of prior years of public service. Additionally, we recognize that more years of prior government service do not necessarily equal greater levels of prior public scrutiny. For example, despite spending only six years in the Senate, John Edwards likely received substantially more media scrutiny while running for the Democratic nomination than if he had been a relatively anonymous 20-year veteran of the House. However, on average, we believe that the two are positively correlated.

TABLE 2  
The Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection, 1940-2004

| <i>Independent Variables</i>           | <i>I</i><br><i>Coefficient</i><br><i>(Standard Error)</i> | <i>II</i><br><i>Coefficient</i><br><i>(Standard Error)</i> | <i>III</i><br><i>Coefficient</i><br><i>(Standard Error)</i> |
|--|---|--|---|
| Regional Balance                       | -1.39<br>(1.18)   | -0.72<br>(0.90)  | —   |
| Ideological Balance                    | 0.74<br>(0.69)  | 0.50<br>(0.58)   | 0.25<br>(1.15)  |
| Religious Balance                      | -0.69<br>(0.90)   | -0.42<br>(0.71)  | -4.11*<br>(2.42)  |
| Race-Gender-Ethnicity-Balance          | -0.02<br>(1.71)   | -0.04<br>(1.61)  | 12.61**<br>(6.38)   |
| Current Rival for Nomination           | -6.32***<br>(2.25)  | -5.94***<br>(1.97)   | -26.54<br>(18.72)   |
| Never Rival for Nomination             | -4.81***<br>(1.79)  | -3.80**<br>(1.51)  | -16.95**<br>(8.15)  |
| Age Balance                            | 1.29*<br>(0.79)   | 0.94<br>(0.68)   | 3.27**<br>(1.29)  |
| Insider-Outsider Experience Balance    | -4.57***<br>(1.52)  | -3.27***<br>(1.22)   | -15.34**<br>(7.54)  |
| Size of State                          | 78.95***<br>(23.85)                                       | 51.12***<br>(17.75)  | —   |
| Effects of the McGovern-Fraser reforms |   |  |   |
| Regional Balance—Before 1976           | —   | —  | 10.95*<br>(6.47)  |
| Regional Balance—After 1972            | —   | —  | -3.95*<br>(2.18)  |
| Size of State—Before 1976              | —   | —  | 556.38**<br>(256.24)  |
| Size of State—After 1972               | —   | —  | -99.76<br>(61.08)   |
| Years of Public Experience—Before 1976 | —   | —  | -1.30<br>(1.08)   |
| Years of Public Experience—After 1972  | —   | —  | 2.43*<br>(1.30)   |
| N                                      | 127   | 142  | 142   |
| Log-likelihood                         | -21.20  | -29.15   | -10.44  |
| % Correctly Predicted                  | 68  | 52   | 84  |

\*  $p < .10$ .

\*\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

All significance tests are two-tailed.

cal, religious or race-gender-ethnicity balance and the likelihood of selection. The model does find evidence supporting the hypothesis that nominees try to pick a running mate from a different age cohort, but the negative coefficient for insider-outsider balance is actually contrary to theoretical expectations.<sup>35</sup> The negative coefficients for the *Current*

35. For Sigelman and Wahlbeck's explanation of this finding, see note 3 herein.

*Rival* and *Never Rival* variables suggest that vice presidential candidates who have sought the presidency in previous election contests have an advantage in the veepstakes. And finally, the model finds a strong correlation between the size of a prospective running mate's state and his or her prospects of receiving the nod.

Column 2 updates Sigelman and Wahlbeck's original model through the 2004 election. The relationships remain virtually unchanged, with two exceptions. The coefficient for age balancing is still positive in the temporally extended model, but it no longer reaches conventional levels of statistical significance, and the coefficient for a candidate's state size, while still strongly positive, is smaller than in the preceding model. Simply adding new data does little to resolve the puzzling insignificance of many ticket-balancing factors, particularly regional balance.

Finally, the model in Column 3 modifies Sigelman and Wahlbeck's specification to test for the impact of the McGovern-Fraser reforms and the Eagleton precedent on the dynamics governing vice presidential selection. The results for most of Sigelman and Wahlbeck's original variables correspond to the previous model specifications. The revised model suggests that candidates who balance the ticket along age or race, gender, or ethnicity lines do indeed have a higher probability of selection, though the race-gender-ethnicity balance finding is exclusively the product of a single election group, Walter Mondale's selection of Geraldine Ferraro in 1984. Past contenders for the presidency continue to have the greatest likelihood of receiving the vice presidential nod over those who never sought the presidency in previous or the current electoral cycles. And, contrary to expectations, the negative coefficients for insider-outsider balance and religion balance suggest that these balancing factors, if anything, are negatively correlated with a candidate's chance at gaining the number two spot on the ticket.

However, the expanded model does yield important new insights into how the institutional reforms of the McGovern-Fraser Commission and historical memory of the Eagleton drama changed the factors driving vice presidential selection. Perhaps one of the most puzzling results from Sigelman and Wahlbeck's models is the absence of evidence that presidents seek to regionally balance their tickets when selecting a vice president. However, as discussed, while the relationship between regional balance and the chances of being selected as a running mate should be strong and positive in the pre-McGovern-Fraser era, there is less reason to expect the relationship to continue to hold after the reforms.

When the model specification is adjusted to account for these transformations, the statistical results conform strongly to theoretical expectations. The coefficient for *Regional Balance Before 1976* is strongly positive and statistically significant. Running mates who brought regional balance to the ticket in the old nominating system had a significantly higher likelihood of capturing the vice presidential nomination than those from proximate geographic areas. However, after the McGovern-Fraser reforms, the demise of the convention system, and the rise of candidate-centered elections, regional balance was no longer as important to presidential nominees and the resulting coefficient is actually negative.<sup>36</sup>

36. Ideological balance is another factor that might have been quite important under the old system in which nominees sought to placate rival party wings or factions, but not as important in the post-

The expanded model reveals a similar pattern for the effect of a candidate's state size on his or her probability of selection. Before the McGovern-Fraser reforms, presidential candidates looked kindly on potential running mates from populous states who enjoyed close ties to their large convention delegations and support from key state party leaders, who would play an important role in waging the general election campaign. The model reflects this through the strong positive coefficient for the variable *Size of State Before 1976*. Conversely, in the postreform era, presidential hopefuls choose their running mates knowing that the nomination is effectively within their grasp and with fewer incentives to cater to disaffected state party leaders, who no longer play a pivotal role in leading the general election fight. Given the dearth of evidence that the vice presidential candidate can affect the general election directly, even in his or her home state (Dudley and Rapoport 1989; Tubbesing 1973), there is little incentive to pick a candidate based on his or her state's size. The model confirms this, as the relationship between state size and probability of selection in recent elections is even negative.<sup>37</sup>

Instead of regional balance or state size considerations, the expanded model finds evidence of at least one new factor driving vice presidential selection in the modern era: governing experience.<sup>38</sup> In the old nominating system, extensive experience in public service yielded candidates for the vice presidency few advantages. In fact, the coefficient for the *Years of Public Experience Before 1976* interaction is actually negative, though statistically insignificant. After the McGovern-Fraser reforms, particularly in the wake of the Eagleton selection, many presidential candidates have decided that a vice president with considerable experience and prior public vetting has significant electoral advantages. The strong positive coefficient for the *Years of Public Experience After 1972* variable confirms that in the post-McGovern era, candidates with extensive records of public service have been significantly more likely to gain the vice presidential nod than candidates with less experience in the public eye.<sup>39</sup>

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McGovern-Fraser era. Reestimating the model with pre- and post-McGovern-Fraser ideological balance variables produces a similar pattern—the coefficient for the pre-1976 component is positive, while the post-1972 coefficient is actually negative. However, neither coefficient is statistically significant and Wald tests cannot reject the null hypothesis that the pre- and post-coefficients are statistically indistinguishable with even 90% confidence.

37. Other electoral characteristics of a potential running mate's home state aside from its raw delegate count might also influence a candidate's probability of securing the nod. We reestimated the models with measures of whether or not each candidate's home state was a swing state (defined in various specifications as one in which the two-party vote was decided by less than 5% or 10% in the previous election) and an interaction between state size and a swing state indicator variable; however, all such measures failed to yield statistically significant results across specifications.

38. Because governing experience and age are correlated, to alleviate concerns of omitted variable bias, the models were also reestimated including each candidate's age, with virtually identical results.

39. A notable anomaly to this trend is George H. W. Bush's selection of Senator Dan Quayle. With 12 years of prior public service, Quayle had less experience than any other finalist in the 1988 selection pool except for Lamar Alexander. The limited historical literature suggests that Bush chose the fresh-faced, relatively unknown senator mainly to surprise the electorate and to inject life into his campaign, which at the time trailed that of Democratic contender Michael Dukakis. Although the Quayle selection runs counter to our expectations, the widespread criticism that Bush suffered as a result of choosing a perceived lightweight—especially in light of Dukakis's choice of the distinguished Lloyd Bentsen—underscores the sea change in public expectations of vice presidential competence. Indeed, in 1992, there was widespread talk of dumping Quayle from the ticket. Alternatively, the Quayle selection can be viewed as supporting another aspect of the theory, for it is a selection that almost certainly would never have occurred in the prereform



While in a conditional logit model, the size of each variable's effect on an individual's probability of selection is contingent on the characteristics of the other candidates in the field, first differences for selected nomination pools can illustrate the magnitude of each variable's effect on the likelihood of selection. To demonstrate the considerable importance of balancing considerations and state size in the prereform era, consider John F. Kennedy's selection of Lyndon B. Johnson in 1960. Because Johnson stood poised to deliver Texas and bolster the New Englander's appeal in the South, where Kennedy faced the possibility of a third-party challenge from Harry Byrd and Strom Thurmond, Johnson was the logical choice for the number two spot. Accordingly, our model yields a 99% predicted probability of selection for Johnson. If, however, Johnson's home state had been smaller, say, the same size as Kennedy's home state of Massachusetts, first differences show that the model's predicted probability would decrease to a mere 9% chance of Johnson receiving the nod. A second first difference demonstrates that regional balance was virtually required in the old convention era. If Johnson had hailed from Ohio rather than Texas, despite the virtually equal tallies of their electoral votes, his predicted probability of selection from the model would fall to under 4%.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, in the post-McGovern-Fraser-Eagleton era, first differences confirm that although regional balance and state size do not strongly influence a candidate's probability of selection, governing experience does. Hailing from Wyoming and its lowly tally of three electoral votes, Cheney would have been a most unlikely candidate in the old nominating system. However, with his 24 years of governing experience placing him in the top quarter of all vice presidential candidates of the last 60 years and other complementary characteristics, the model in Column 3 predicts that Cheney had a 63% chance of selection. First differences suggest, however, that if Cheney had possessed only the mean level of governing experience, 17 years, his probability of becoming vice president would have been only 13%.

Finally, not only does the expanded model in Column 3 reveal how the dynamics driving vice presidential selection have changed since the institutional watershed of the McGovern-Fraser reforms, but the revised specification also greatly augments the statistical analysis's predictive power. Whereas Sigelman and Wahlbeck's unaltered model correctly predicted 52% of all vice presidential selections from 1940 to present, the revised model accounting for the effects of the McGovern-Fraser reforms correctly predicts 84% of the contests.

Surely other factors, such as the specific political context in which the presidential nominee operates and the political and personal compatibility between the two individuals, also greatly influence vice presidential selections. However, the foregoing analysis suggests that even a parsimonious model, once it accounts for the changing dynamics

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selection system. Mayer (2000) noted that many in the Republican Party doubted Quayle's qualifications for the number two spot, yet Bush paid their concerns no heed. In the prereform era, such an open bucking of party leaders' concerns would have been highly unlikely.

40. For this illustration, Ohio, which had only one more electoral vote in 1960 than Texas did, is treated as a northern state (not a midwestern state) that does not regionally balance Massachusetts. Choosing instead Pennsylvania or New York would show the influence on the probability of selection not only of moving from regional balance to no regional balance but also of a significant increase in state size.

initiated by the McGovern-Fraser institutional reforms and the historical contingency of McGovern's ill-fated offer to Eagleton, can have a high degree of predictive power.

## Conclusion

The McGovern-Fraser reforms, which democratized the previously insular presidential nomination process, unexpectedly changed vice presidential selection strategy, too. With their front-runner status effectively assured weeks or months before the convention, presidential candidates no longer need to use the vice presidency to strengthen their grip on the nomination. And with weakened parties, less coherent factions, and candidate-centered campaigns, nominees feel less pressure than before to award the second spot to a regionally or ideologically distant individual to mollify a disgruntled party wing or court key state and local party leaders needed to orchestrate the general election campaign. Rather, because of the lingering specter of the Eagleton debacle and changing public expectations for vice presidential credentials over time, presidential nominees in the modern era have increasingly relied on an individual's prior experience in government when choosing a running mate. Echoing the advice of Hamilton Jordan, one of the first campaign managers of the modern nominating era, former vice president Albert Gore summed up his own thinking when he chose Senator Joseph Lieberman as a running mate in 2000: "If you focus on [selecting a qualified running mate] you will automatically cover a lot of other considerations. Ultimately, voters will ask the same question, so selecting a capable running mate will cover many political bases, too."<sup>41</sup> Strategic considerations are still paramount when choosing a running mate, but the decision calculus now values an individual's governing experience more than traditional balancing concerns.

While this article has shed new light on how presidential nominees choose running mates, there is of course much work still to do. Our analysis has emphasized the growing importance of governing experience in the post-McGovern-Eagleton era. However, these dual historical forces have also allowed additional factors to influence presidential nominees' choices. For example, the increased time to pick a running mate and the freedom to choose one who appeals not to an alienated party faction but to the median voter in November has enabled the greater use of opinion polls pairing the presidential nominee with various possible running mates to aid selection. Results from these trial heats, in addition to a candidate's record of experience in government, may affect his or her prospects of success in the current era. Another decision factor made possible by the McGovern-Fraser reforms is the influence of prospective running mates who, once the presidential nominee is effectively determined, tacitly campaign for the second spot.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, the growth of the vice presidency as an office of substance, spurred at least in

41. Telephone interview with the authors, November 29, 2004.

42. Many political observers have argued that John Edwards's race in 2004, as well as Bill Richardson's dark horse campaign for the 2008 Democratic nomination, was waged with an eye toward securing the vice presidential nod. [0] Moreover, candidates need not seek the presidential nomination to actively pursue the vice presidential nod. For example, Senator Joseph Lieberman wrote that in 2000, after he learned that Albert Gore was vetting him as a running mate for the Democratic ticket, he and attorney-friend Jonathan

part by changes in the incentives governing running mate selection, and the close proximity in which recent presidents and vice presidents have worked suggest that a prospective running mate's personal compatibility with the presidential candidate plays, alongside his or her governing experience, a greater role today than it did in the past. Future research into these and other factors affecting vice presidential selection will only grow more important as the office that one former inhabitant derided as "not worth a pitcher of warm spit"<sup>43</sup> continues its rapid ascendance toward prestige and power.

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Sallet "developed a strategy not simply for surviving the vetting, but for pursuing the nomination . . . We would not only work to reassure [Gore's vetting] team that there were no skeletons in my closet, we would also figure out ways to present positive reasons to choose me" (2003, 10, 12).

43. John Nance Garner, quoted in White (1961, 176). Garner made the comment while advising Lyndon Johnson to reject John F. Kennedy's offer to be his running mate at the 1960 Democratic National Convention. Apparently, this is a sanitized version of Garner's actual statement.

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### Appendix: Percentage of Vice Presidential Finalists Meeting Balancing Criteria by Election Cycle

