Motivation: Partisan loyalty all the way down the ballot?

Are national and local electoral politics contested on the same partisan dimension?

New Data: Ballot Image Logs from South Carolina

What are ballot image logs and how are they different from other datasets?

Ballot Image Log

- Voter Files
- Precinct Returns
- Surveys

Individual-level?

- Vote choice observed?
- Down-ballot races recorded?
- Population-based (no sampling error)?
- Linkable to precinct-level demographics?
- Linkable to commercial data?
- National Availability?

www.scvotes.org/election-audits-south-carolina makes public all voters’ ballot images from all state-involved elections since the 2010 General.

Example Log of Three Voters (Awendaw Precinct, Charleston)

- Hillary Clinton for President, but the Republican incumbent Andrew Smith for Treasurer.
- Precinct in Charleston, South Carolina, for the 2016 General Election.

Voter A voted for Democrat...

Data Processing

Encode, for each voter’s vote:

-1: Democrat candidate / Democratic party ticket / No on referendum
0: Abstain / Write-In / No major party ticket selected
+1: Republican candidate / Republican party ticket / Yes on referendum
NA: Office not on ballot

Moderate to High Partisan Correlation among Candidate Voting, Weak Correlation with Referendum

Voters among federal-level offices correlated 0.7 - 0.9. Correlation among votes for state and local offices are only around 0.4 - 0.6, even smaller with local referenda.

Pairwise Correlations across Voters (2016)

N = 20,695 voters for each correlation

Using Only Contested Races

N > 20,695 voters for each correlation

Three Principal Components (PCA)

With major offices and a class of referendums, three linear combinations of choice profiles explain around 80 percent of the variance (PCA via singular value decomposition). They distinguish, and roughly minor

First PC: A left-right dimension,
Second PC: A federal - subnational dimension, and
Third PC: A dimension specific to referendum.