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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to explain the "sophomore surge," where members of Congress (MC) substantially build their margins of victory across their first term. Much of this electoral gain, Zaller finds, is due to the candidate's ability to slow the natural decay of recognition among voters. A significant fraction of whatever citizens know about their MCs is learned in the relatively partisan context of election campaigns and then generally forgotten in the inter-campaign period. Zaller, therefore, finds no great increase in name recall or recognition of first-term incumbents. There is, however, some evidence that "working the district" brings some benefits to freshmen Mcs. The rate of decline for name recognition of challengers is far larger, suggesting that district-campaign work stems the natural decline of recognition rates. In addition, affect measures rise slightly for incumbents over their first term. Though the absolute level of these changes are small, they are substantial in comparison to the affect score increases of previously elected MCs. Evidence from the Pilot Study, therefore, suggests that citizens do learn something in the inter-election period, though the less partisan nature of this information leads to less partisan assessments of MCs. Zaller also attaches an excerpt from a conference paper on the NES representative contact battery, which is not based on Pilot Study data. Using NES data from 1978 and 1980, Zaller finds an important attitudinal component in reported rates of contact with MCs. Specifically, when the incumbent is popular, both members of the MC's party and members of the outparty report nearly equal rates of contact. When the incumbent is challenged, however, reported contact levels fall and political groups polarize in the expected direction. Zaller concludes that rates of contact, which are supposed to be reports of actual behavior, in fact suffer from an endogeneity bias. Measures of candidate contact, in part, seem to be a proxy of incumbent popularity. Accordingly, models of incumbent support that are developed without regard for how dynamics of support might change in case of serious competition, may give a misleading impression of true constituent concerns.