House Members on the News: Local Television News Coverage of Incumbents*

Gregory A. Huber
Yale University

Patrick D. Tucker
Edison Media Research

Abstract: The accountability relationship between voters and elected members of Congress (MCs) hinges on the potential for citizens to learn about legislator behavior. In an era of declining local newspapers, local television coverage of MCs potentially fulfills this important role. But few studies have comprehensively examined the determinants of contemporary MC coverage by local television news broadcasts. In this paper we leverage a vast database of local television news broadcast transcripts spanning a two-year period to identify what factors explain coverage of MCs. We find that outside of the general election campaign season, MCs receive little coverage. When coverage occurs, we find media market and campaign specific factors are associated with more exposure. Finally, we find that within competitive elections, incumbents receive only a marginal advantage in coverage. These findings provide a springboard to explore further questions regarding Congress, local media, and political accountability.

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For democratic accountability mechanisms to function, the voting public must (potentially) be informed about their elected representatives' actions (Prior 2014). Yet, research on contemporary information environments regarding legislator performance is scarce. In particular, can voters rely on the media to learn about their members of Congress (MCs) and candidates for that office? Prior work has largely focused on local newspaper coverage of MCs. While local newspapers' circulations continue to decline and cable television and national broadcasts remain salient news outlets, local television news remains the most common source of local news for most Americans.[1] Can citizens learn about incumbent MCs from television news coverage? Given how news is produced, do incumbents dominate coverage, or can credible challengers garner sufficient coverage to become known to voters? Furthermore, what factors shape patterns of coverage across candidates, districts, and stations?

We provide what we believe is the first near-comprehensive descriptive analysis of how frequently MCs are featured on contemporary local news broadcasts. While previous studies have addressed how changes in local media ownership structure influence news reporting patterns (e.g. Martin and McCrain 2019), few have specifically examined incumbent coverage on local television in and outside of a campaign (although see Schaffner and Gadson 2004, Hale et al. 2005, Fowler et al. 2007, and Dunaway 2008). Using a novel data set of local television news broadcasts, we demonstrate that locally elected incumbent MCs receive little coverage from their local television press. During election season, however, we observe sharp increases in airtime devoted to incumbents. Focusing on this period, we investigate how geographic congruence between the boundaries of a legislator's district and the district's media market, the competitiveness of

elections, and corporate ownership structure affect the frequency of coverage of incumbents and challengers.

Our approach and findings are important in several respects. First, we find little evidence that incumbents are advantaged in a large-scale fashion vis-à-vis credible challengers. This lack of coverage has implications for citizens' knowledge of political actors. Limiting coverage to campaign season and "horse race" dynamics could disincentivize attentiveness to local constituencies if roll call votes and casework remain unreported, perhaps further nationalizing elections (Hopkins 2018). Second, MCs in districts that overlap substantially with a media market's boundaries are more likely to be covered than those in metropolitan markets that extend across many districts. Unlike newspapers that publish subregion-specific content (see Arnold 2004), television broadcasts are largely "one size fits all", exacerbating these pressures. Finally, our approach encourages more textual analysis of coverage. Unlike previous work that relied on limited broadcast recordings, the tools we use can capture nearly all stations on a continuing basis. This study serves as a foundation to better understand the electorate's political information environment and lay the groundwork to answer essential questions regarding Congress and the media.

Local media coverage of MCs

Previous studies of how local press cover MCs primarily analyzed print newspapers (Schaffner and Sellers 2003, Vinson 2003, Arnold 2004, Dunaway 2008, 2013, Snyder and Stromberg 2010, Fogarty 2008, 2011, Gershon 2012ab, Hayes and Lawless 2015, Hall and Lim 2018). Many television studies focus on MCs' appearances on national television rather than local news (e.g. Kuklinski and Sigelman 1992, Dietrich et al. 2019). Earlier studies of local television occurred in a vastly different media landscape, but they were novel in collecting recordings from

local broadcast stations (33 and 8 stations, respectively) (Hess 1991, Vinson 2003). More recent work uses broadcast news transcripts to circumvent recording challenges (Ansolabehere et al. 2006, Schaffner 2006, Moskowitz 2019). Overall, past work highlights television's potential as a news source about MCs, but most evidence is dated or limited in the number of stations considered. Nor has analysis been undertaken to understand the relative advantage in coverage that incumbents enjoy vis-à-vis challengers, both on average or across districts and races with different characteristics. While studies outside of the US have addressed legislator appearances on television, they are typically limited to national broadcasts (Tsfati et al. 2010, Amsalem et al. 2018) or based upon perceptions of media coverage by survey respondents (Elmelund-Præstekær et al. 2011, Maier and Nai 2020).

A consistent finding across media studies is that frequency of MCs' coverage varies across legislators, markets, and electoral context (Vinson 2003, Arnold 2004). When a congressional district's and media market's borders are more *congruent,* the market's press has more incentive to cover the incumbent since they represent more of an outlet's potential audience (Manheim 1974, Vinson 2003, Schaffner and Sellers 2003, Arnold 2004, Schaffner 2006, Snyder and Stromberg 2010, Ansolabehere et al. 2006, Moskowitz 2019, Levy and Squire 2000). Additionally, representing more of a market translates to fewer rival MCs competing for coverage.

Local media ownership structure may also influence the coverage of MCs. Profit drives corporate media ownership, while political ideology may motivate independently owned outlets (Hamilton 2004). Corporately owned media may cut resources necessary to regularly cover incumbent MCs, instead relying on national wire services. Empirically, congressional reporting from corporately owned newspapers is less substantive and focuses more on the horse race aspects of elections (Arnold 2004, Dunaway 2008, Dunaway 2013) and mentions incumbents less

frequently (Schaffner and Sellers 2003). This relationship is particularly interesting considering that between 2004 and 2020, the number of local television affiliates owned by the five businesses that owned the most local affiliates (Sinclair, Nexstar, Gray, Tegna, and Tribune) has more than tripled. While previous work has not taken up this question directly, using a large data set of local television news transcripts from 2017 through 2018, Martin and McCrain (2019) demonstrated that those affiliates purchased by Sinclair Broadcasting in 2017 provided significantly less coverage to local politics following the ownership change.

District competitiveness is also associated with greater newspaper coverage. Incumbents facing no challenger or only a token challenger typically receive less coverage. Conversely, more viable candidates who raise and spend more money gain greater visibility from the local press (Snyder and Stromberg 2010, Gershon 2012ab). Incumbents or challengers who raise large sums of money can signal to local press that their campaign is intense and worth covering (Gershon 2012b). Additionally, they can afford to hold more campaign events that local press may attend. Swing districts are associated with more coverage for incumbents (Arnold 2004, Gershon 2012a, Hayes and Lawless 2015). Local newspapers are drawn to campaigns' horserace aspects (Kahn 1991). As a result, they are more likely to cover incumbents during the final months of a general election campaign. For example, Arnold (2004) found that while the average MC received between 14 and 15 mentions per month in his sample, the average number of newspaper mentions jumped to 19.6 and 24.4 in September and October 1994, respectively.

Data and Methods

Our primary dependent variable is the frequency of MC mentions during local news broadcasts in their home district. This measure is constructed from local news transcripts collected

by a private company, TVEyes. TVEyes monitors radio and television broadcasts in every local American market. For their project monitoring local news broadcasts, Martin and McCrain (2019) obtained from TVEyes records of each local news broadcast from television stations in each media market. Martin and McCrain generously supplied us with their raw data for this project. Their study resulted in a database that contained the transcripts for local news broadcasts in six different time periods over the course of 2017 and 2018. The periods cover 2017 (3/10/17-9/5/17, 9/8/17-10/10/17, and 10/25/17-12/8/17), the pre-general election campaign in 2018 (1/10/18-2/9/18 and 2/21/18-5/8/18), and the 2018 general election campaign season (9/7/18-10/1/18). While off-year elections are typically less salient in the eyes of the public than presidential elections, research suggests that congressional races receive more news coverage during midterms (e.g. Kahn 1991).

Transcripts for each station's newscasts were segmented into 2.5-minute intervals. We counted the number of blocks that mention the incumbent or challenger in each relevant district. For example, if an incumbent is mentioned within the first and last minute of a half-hour transcript, they are coded as being mentioned twice on that station. Similarly, if their name appears two times within the first minute of the transcript, they are coded as only being mentioned once. While the data are intended to capture the content of local news coverage, the intervals may include campaign advertisements. Therefore, we omit intervals mentioning the incumbent's or challenger's name that include the phrase "approve this message," because candidates are required to provide such an approval in a campaign ad by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA).[2] Excluding these intervals has little effect on our counts during the months leading up to the general election campaign, but decreases the average counts by 35% for incumbents and 53% for challengers.

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[2] Note that this means we would not exclude independent advertising (non-candidate spending) that mentions either the challenger or incumbent by name. Since independent media spending tends to favor incumbents, it is likely that ads that this screener did not catch would bias coverage frequency against challengers (Miller 2017).

We measure competitiveness in 3 ways. First, we use a transformation of the Cook Presidential Vote Index (PVI) as calculated following the 2016 presidential election for each district. District PVI is calculated by taking the average of the difference between the two-party presidential vote averages for the Democrat and Republican for the two previous presidential elections. Scores are reported as being an advantage for one party (e.g. R+1 indicates a district that leans only slightly favorable to Republicans). We take the *absolute value of the PVI*. Higher values indicate less competitive districts.

Second, we gathered disbursements for both challengers and incumbents for the entire 2018 congressional election cycle as reported in millions of dollars from the Federal Election Commission (FEC). To account for the possibility that one-sided races are less newsworthy, we test for the effect of the absolute difference in spending between the Republican and Democratic candidates in a given race. One sided spending is distinct in that it likely does not indicate a competitive race worth covering.

Finally, we collected data on the *types of challengers* and the *types of incumbents*. We create an indicator variable for incumbents *facing a general election challenge*. We divide challengers into two groups: *viable challengers*, coded as those who spent at least $500,000 (mean spending is $2.21 million), and *not viable challengers*, those who spent less than $500,000 (mean spending is $79,025). We also identify which incumbents were *unchallenged in the general election and* incumbents who *did not run for reelection*, subsetting the latter groups further into those who ran for higher office (i.e. governor, senator, or another statewide office) and those who did not. For challengers, we create an indicator variable for open seat elections. We also create a variable measuring primary competitiveness. We identify *competitive primaries* as elections where the general election candidate finished with a margin of less than 20 percentage points relative to

their next closest competitor. *Uncompetitive primaries* have margins of 20 points or larger, including uncontested primaries.

We mapped districts to media markets using data from Daily Kos and dishuser.org. This allows us to identify which stations cover any portion of a district and identify which names we should search for in each station's transcripts. We calculate *Station District Congruence* for each MC-station dyad for which a district is any proportion of that station's media market. This measure is calculated as the proportion of a station's viewership population that lives in a member's district. A score of 1 means that all of a station's viewership lives in a member's district (e.g., 100% of the Bangor, ME media market is contained in ME-2), while scores closer to 0 indicate that the district is only a small proportion of the station's viewership, which can happen in large urban areas with many districts (e.g., New York City) or if only part of a district lies in a market (e.g., Levy and Squire 2000, Schaffner and Sellers 2003, Snyder and Stromberg 2010).

Finally, we gathered local affiliate ownership data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing data. While previous work has focused on the differences between corporately and privately-owned newspapers, this approach is infeasible when analyzing local television stations because the overwhelming majority of stations are currently owned by corporations (There are only 73 owners of the 702 local American television stations.). Instead, we focus on whether stations owned by larger corporations cover incumbents and challengers differently from those stations owned by companies that own fewer stations. We created a dichotomous indicator for *Large Media Corporation* that indicates a station is owned by a company that owned more than 5% of all stations. Eleven companies owned more than 5% of local affiliates, and they accounted for over 70% of all stations (Only 4% of local television stations are individually owned).

We examine coverage rates at the station/district dyad level separately for incumbents and challengers over time and by our different categorizations of race-level features. This choice allows us to understand patterns in coverage, differences between incumbents and challengers, and how these patterns vary by race (e.g., incumbent vs. viable challenger vs. open seat races). We then turn to multivariate regression to examine the effect of multiple predictors of coverage. We focus on coverage during the fall election season.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the frequency of coverage for MCs in the 115th Congress. The values reported in the table are the average number of 2.5 minute segments mentioning an incumbent per week for a station in a media market that serves their district in the three periods we present: 2017 (3/10/17-12/8/17), 2018 in the pre-general election period (1/10/18-5/8/18), and the 2018 general election period (9/7/18-10/1/18). The average station covering an incumbent mentions them in 0.38 2.5-minute segments per week in a non-election year. This frequency increases slightly in the early parts of 2018 to 0.79, but then increases to 5.78 segments in September.

Table 1 also displays how these mentions are related to electoral context. First, we find minimal difference in the earliest period between incumbents who will face or will not face a challenge in the general election. As time progresses, those facing challengers and running for reelection are much more likely to be discussed (5.01 mentions) compared to those unopposed (1.03 mentions). Candidates facing less well-funded challengers are discussed about 50% less than those facing stronger challengers in the earlier months. In the general election, incumbents facing a viable challenger were discussed 11.61 times, while incumbents facing less viable challengers were discussed only 1.84 times per week. That is, in the pre-general election

campaign period incumbents facing viable challengers were discussed about twice as much as incumbents facing weak challengers. By the general election, the former were discussed about 6.3 times more than the latter. Incumbents not running for reelection are discussed very frequently. We find that an incumbent running for higher office received 26.20 mentions in September per week, compared to 1.98 mentions for an incumbent not running for higher office (which is about the same as the coverage an incumbent running against a non-viable challenger attracts). See Appendix Table A5 for general election challenger descriptive statistics.[3]

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[3] These frequencies are much lower than those for incumbent governors (Table A10). Leadership is more likely to be covered in the pre-election campaign than non-leadership, but leaders are covered less frequently in the campaign season (A14).

Table 1. Incumbent House Members: Mean Number of Mentions Per Week Per Station

	2017 3/10/17-12/8/17	2018, Pre-General Election 1/10/18-5/8/18	2018, General Election 9/7/18-10/1/18
All Incumbents	0.382	0.786	5.780
	(0.823)	(1.746)	(16.581)
Challenged in General	0.347	0.666	5.010
	(0.769)	(1.486)	(14.144)
Viable Challenger	0.495	0.960	11.608
	(1.006)	(2.028)	(22.421)
Not Viable	0.273	0.520	1.844
Challenger	(0.605)	(1.094)	(4.126)
Unchallenged in General	0.337	0.729	1.027
	(0.502)	(0.946)	(1.758)
Don't Run in General	0.590	1.485	10.560
	(1.097)	(2.782)	(26.970)
Running for Higher	0.811	2.199	26.199
Office	(1.099)	(3.155)	(40.420)
Not Running for	0.467	1.088	1.980
Higher Office	(1.078)	(2.469)	(4.554)

Cells present the mean number of 2.5-minute segments in which a local television station's news program mentioned an incumbent MC whose district was included in its media market per week. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 2 investigates the effect of structural, district, and candidate level factors in explaining incumbent coverage during the general election campaign season.[4] Greater geographic congruence between the incumbent's district and the media market are associated with significantly more coverage. Column I demonstrates that a district that is perfectly congruent with the media market (a value of 1) is associated with 58.77 mentions more mentions. A one standard deviation in congruence (i.e. an increase of 0.23) is associated with an increase of 13.52 mentions. This increase is roughly one-fourth of the standard deviation of mentions for incumbents (i.e. 49.74). The models predict a relatively more modest relationship with respect to media ownership: incumbents will receive 3.69 to 5.58 more mentions on stations owned by large media

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[4] For a discussion of how these factors relate to coverage of incumbents during the pre-general election campaign period, see Table A1 in the Supplementary Appendix.

corporations, roughly 0.07 to 0.11 of the outcome variable's standard deviation. These findings are largely consistent with previous work that suggests that more congruent legislative districts and media markets are associated with higher levels of coverage for representatives (e.g. Ansolabehere et al. 2006, Snyder and Stromberg 2010, but see also Levy and Squire 2000 for similar implications with challengers).

Table 2. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts (Fall 2018)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	58.766* (9.939)	59.622* (10.199)	58.354* (9.904)	58.321* (9.722)	52.102* (8.414)	44.695* (6.668)
Large Media Corporation		3.989 (2.118)	4.670* (2.066)	4.716* (2.062)	5.582* (2.079)	3.685* (1.662)
PVI Absolute Value			-1.079* (0.181)	-0.993* (0.189)	-0.637* (0.164)	-0.124 (0.105)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				7.946* (3.327)		
Viable Challenger					24.204* (4.611)	-8.830 (5.432)
Not Viable Challenger					1.785 (2.444)	0.351 (1.729)
Not Running in General				20.827* (8.163)		
Running for Higher Office					68.222* (18.666)	
Not Running for Higher Office					-1.357 (3.120)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						7.922* (2.713)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						9.298* (1.878)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-8.540* (2.555)
Constant	5.407* (0.277)	2.130 (2.743)	16.868* (3.55)	6.066 (4.780)	0.271 (4.059)	-5.239 (4.121)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	2,969
R^2	0.076	0.077	0.114	0.106	0.220	0.304

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

We find consistent evidence that district partisan composition predicts coverage: incumbents in less competitive districts are less likely to receive coverage. This effect may be mediated by candidate spending, per column VI. Coverage of incumbents running for higher office surges during the general election. On average, Column V's model estimates that they receive roughly 68.22 more mentions than an incumbent who faces no challengers. This effect is more than double that of an incumbent who faces a challenger who spent more than $500,000. Those incumbents facing non-viable challengers are predicted to receive coverage that is not statistically distinct from an unchallenged incumbent. Finally, in Column VI, we find that both incumbent and challenger spending is associated with greater coverage for the incumbent. We also find that the absolute difference between the two candidates is associated with less coverage. This finding indicates that although greater spending increases coverage, the value of spending decreases as one candidate spends more than the other. In Appendix Table A4, we perform the same analyses, but focus on general election *challengers*.[5] The results are largely consistent with Table 2.[6]

In Table 3 we limit our analysis to the general election season and those races in which an incumbent faces a challenger, including both challengers and incumbents. Our results are consistent with Table 2. Congruence, ownership, and competitiveness are associated with greater coverage of candidates. The candidate's own spending, as well as the spending of opponents, is positively associated with coverage, but lopsided spending is associated with less coverage. Columns VII and VIII subset the results to races in which both candidates spent more than

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[5] See Table A2 for pre-election results.
[6] We include several robustness and ancillary analyses. In Table A6, we include a dummy variable for Sinclair ownership, finding the conglomerate's affiliates cover incumbents less often. We include controls for station ownership structure, incumbent extremism, viewership, and number of newscasts and find no relationship to coverage (Tables A7-A11). While the number of ads aired are related to coverage, our main results hold when controlling for "I approve this message" counts (A12). Logging the spending variables and outcome variables produces similar results (A13 and A16). Fixed effects models find similar results for geography (A15).

$500,000. Our results are consistent with the greater sample in these analyses, suggesting that the findings were not the result of races in which incumbents were assured victory. Rather, we find that the magnitude of our effects increases significantly. These results suggest that the effects of congruence and ownership are stronger in a competitive race. The effects of spending are more consistent with those of the broader sample, suggesting that in competitive and noncompetitive elections spending is a strong predictor of coverage.

Table 3. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents and Challengers, Limited to Districts with Incumbents and Challengers Running in the General Election

							Races in which both candidates are viable	
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VII
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	43.112* (4.486)	43.748* (4.560)	42.960* (4.301)	42.967* (4.285)	42.326* (4.224)	40.534* (3.976)	76.611* (9.702)	73.466* (9.181)
Large Media Corporation		2.973* (1.224)	3.673* (1.192)	3.654* (1.191)	3.059* (1.151)	3.081* (1.112)	8.462* (2.656)	7.270* (2.511)
PVI Absolute Value			-1.050* (0.114)	-1.067* (0.116)	-0.354* (0.088)	-0.113 (0.076)	-1.077* (0.395)	-0.762* (0.344)
Incumbent				4.435* (1.915)	5.240* (2.245)	4.471* (1.997)	7.814 (4.675)	4.746 (4.478)
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)					4.215* (0.949)	6.686* (0.919)	3.069* (1.321)	6.193* (1.400)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)					4.453* (0.999)	6.981* (0.998)	4.407* (1.421)	7.466* (1.415)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-6.853* (1.065)		-7.418* (1.553)
Constant	4.787* (0.816)	2.339 (1.232)	16.271* (1.839)	14.577* (1.931)	-8.637* (2.779)	-8.700* (2.506)	-9.231 (7.408)	-13.575 (7.055)
N	6,526	6,526	6,526	6,526	6,526	6,526	2,455	2,455
R^2	0.066	0.067	0.121	0.124	0.226	0.296	0.187	0.223

When we account for all of these factors, incumbents still have a marginal advantage in local television coverage over their general election challengers. The incumbent can expect to receive between 4.44 and 5.24 more mentions in the general election period than a challenger, all else equal. When we limit this sample to those races in which both candidates are viable, our estimates still suggest incumbents have an advantage in coverage over challengers, although the estimate is less precise. These results indicate that challengers still face obstacles in reaching the level of coverage of incumbents on local television during a general election campaign.

Conclusion

Local television news plays a key role in citizens' ability to hold legislators accountable. Prior research did not fully measure the context in which the medium covered incumbents and challengers. We have provided what we believe to be the most systematic and comprehensive analysis of local television news coverage of MCs. Incumbents receive little coverage outside of a general election campaign. During a campaign, this coverage increases significantly, but wide variation still exists. Most campaign season coverage of incumbents and challengers occurs in competitive contests. We also found significant variation in coverage was predicted by the geographic congruence between a media market and congressional district. In the campaign context, those races with greater spending and more competitive electoral environments were predicted to provide more coverage of both incumbents and challengers. We found marginal evidence that stations owned by the larger media corporations were associated with more coverage of challengers and incumbents. Finally, we found marginal evidence that incumbents hold a slight advantage in coverage, but when we control for disbursements in a race, this effect is less clear.

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These results have ambiguous implications for representative government. On the one hand, incumbents receive little coverage of their activities for most of the legislative cycle. That we observe frequent discussion of the candidates on news broadcasts only during the campaign season suggests that local television news provides little substantive coverage of MCs' behavior in Congress. Previous studies on the closure of local newspapers suggest that media outlets not focusing on local politics reduces the incumbency advantage and decreases the frequency of split ticket voting (Darr et al. 2019). While we are unable to identify a relationship between local television consolidation and a lack of incumbent coverage, our results suggest that local television broadcasts do not provide a sizable amount of coverage year-round.

If local television news remains a primary source of information, then MCs may be free from adversarial coverage. They could provide their own press as a substitute for work previously performed by journalists (Grimmer 2013). At the same time, news coverage allows for an incumbent MC to provide their own personal brand. Without a foundation to create that personal brand through traditional media, MCs may be less able to cultivate a personal vote (Snyder and Stromberg 2010). As a result, they could become more vulnerable to national mood and economic conditions. As American elections become more nationalized, incumbent MCs may lament the lack of local television press to provide them an opportunity to distance themselves from their party (Hopkins 2018).

The changing media environment's effects on accountability demand more attention, particularly through a longitudinal perspective. We have demonstrated that local coverage of incumbents and challengers is affected by the political, geographic, and commercial structure of local markets. While the local media landscape has changed, many of the market incentives that are associated with varying levels of coverage have remained the same. Broadcasters are still

motivated by attracting larger audiences and thus tend to promote competitive elections and legislators that represent the most viewers. Yet, as these market structures continue to change, we might expect that the relationship between the press and political elites will follow suit. Our approach can be adapted to not only observe shifts in the frequency of coverage, but also the tone and content of such coverage. If American politics continue to move in a more nationalized direction (e.g. Hopkins 2018), local news may lose its local content. This analysis serves as a foundation to answer future questions regarding the congressional information environment and potential shifts from that foundation.

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House Members in their Media Markets: Local Television News Coverage of Incumbents

and Challengers: Supporting Information

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Table A1. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts (2017 and Early 2018 Pooled)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	121.700* (9.968)	121.901* (10.037)	121.509* (9.940)	121.505* (9.999)	119.923* (9.806)	115.157* (10.665)
Large Media Corporation		0.933 (2.455)	1.138 (2.365)	1.319 (2.304)	1.452 (2.328)	2.181 (2.355)
PVI Absolute Value			-0.335 (0.191)	-0.246 (0.181)	-0.017 (0.184)	0.043 (0.181)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				-1.312 (5.956)		
Viable Challenger					7.448 (6.593)	3.971 (7.966)
Not Viable Challenger					-4.412 (5.814)	-4.267 (5.863)
Not Running in General				14.384 (8.795)		
Running for Higher Office					23.144* (8.102)	
Not Running for Higher Office					12.099 (11.252)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						6.730* (2.102)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						-2.063 (1.826)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						1.882 (2.728)
Constant	1.956 (1.601)	1.190 (2.834)	5.777 (4.357)	3.392 (7.040)	-0.494 (7.015)	-13.230 (7.584)
N	3,466	3,466	3,466	3,466	3,466	2,965
R^2	0.242	0.242	0.245	0.254	0.262	0.317

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A1 provides a series of ordinary least squares regressions in which we regress the total number of mentions of an incumbent by a station during 2017 and the pre-general election period in 2018. In the first model, we find that the proportion of the district that covers the media market is strongly predictive of coverage., For example, consider a district that accounts for 11% of a media market, the median value for the district coverage variable for a given district-station dyad. The model predicts that this overlap would be associated with 15.34 mentions on the relevant station. For a MC who represents 26% of a district (the 75th percentile value for the district-station coverage variable), by contrast, this level of congruence is associated with 33.60 mentions in the pre-general election period. Notably, these effects are largely consistent across the inclusion of additional covariates in columns (2) through (6).

Next, we find little evidence that station ownership is associated with the level of incumbent coverage in this pre-general election period. Per column (2), stations that are owned by larger market share firms provide slightly more coverage, but in none of our estimated models does the coefficient reach acceptable levels of precision to identify a statistically significant association.

There is also inconsistent evidence that the partisan make-up of the district is associated with discussion of the incumbent. In the less saturated model reported in columns (3), we find that those districts in which one party enjoys a large advantage in presidential elections are associated with *less* coverage of an incumbent in the pre-general election period. Incumbents get more coverage in districts that are more likely to be competitive, an effect that may arise due to differences in candidate viability and spending. In particular, the effect of presidential vote margin is greatly reduced once we account for election-specific covariates. As with the Table 1

result, the Column 5 results describe differences in coverage for incumbents by their status and their challenger's viability. Incumbents running for higher office receive considerably more coverage, while those who are leaving office (not running for their old seat or a different office) receive more attention (not statistically significant) than unchallenged incumbents. Among challenged incumbents, those facing a viable challenger get more coverage than those facing a non-viable challenger, although neither effect is distinguishable from the coverage of unchallenged incumbents.

Finally, in Model 6 we investigate whether candidate spending is associated with incumbent coverage. In this model we include only those incumbents who ran for re-election. Incumbents who spent more money over the course of the campaign received more coverage even before the general election season. For each million dollars spent by the incumbent, the model predicts an additional 6.7 mentions. There is no evidence that the challenger's spending was associated with coverage of the incumbent in the pre-general election period.

Table A2 focuses on the pre-general election period, most variables have insignificant effects. However, district-market congruence increases coverage (across all models), less extreme districts warrant more coverage (an effect that changes sign in models accounting for candidate spending and viability, per columns 6 and 7, and reaches statistical significance), candidates who spend more attract more coverage (column 6), and open seats with viable candidates attract more coverage (columns 7 and 8). Notably, there is little evidence that competitive primaries alone increase coverage (either whether a challenger was present or if the race was decided by less than 20 points), implying that, on average, House primary elections receive relatively little coverage from local broadcasters. Perhaps surprisingly, we find marginal evidence that a viable candidate who faces weaker competition in their primary election can

expect more coverage than a viable candidate who faces a competitive primary challenger, consistent with our summary statistics in Table 2. This finding suggests that challengers who may be presumptive general election nominees might receive more coverage than those in competitive primaries in the months before the general election.

Table A2. Predicting Coverage of Challengers, All Districts (2017 and Early 2018 Pooled)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VII
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	11.950* (2.970)	11.467* (2.878)	11.470* (2.877)	11.476* (2.881)	11.346* (2.866)	11.206* (2.792)	11.152* (2.808)	11.174* (2.810)
Large Media Corporation		-2.225 (1.469)	-2.207 (1.470)	-2.205 (1.472)	-2.213 (1.471)	-2.208 (1.467)	-2.170 (1.470)	-2.175 (1.465)
PVI Absolute Value			-0.030 (0.034)	-0.029 (0.044)	-0.034 (0.035)	0.055 (0.032)	0.051 (0.040)	0.045 (0.039)
Challenged in Primary				0.130 (1.238)				
Competitive Primary					-0.946 (0.873)	-1.186 (0.876)	0.050 (0.993)	-1.262 (0.871)
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						0.697* (0.253)		
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						0.057 (0.271)		
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-0.566* (0.262)		
Open Seat						3.067* (1.290)	2.417 (1.326)	1.317 (2.143)
Viable Candidate							3.232* (1.477)	1.880 (1.110)
Viable Candidate X Competitive Primary							-2.746 (1.814)	
Viable Candidate X Open Seat								1.456 (2.713)
Constant	-0.005 (0.438)	1.820 (1.399)	2.202 (1.464)	2.090 (2.112)	2.624 (1.763)	0.686 (1.694)	-0.400 (2.050)	0.250 (2.047)
N	3,601	3,601	3,601	3,601	3,601	3,601	3,601	3,601
R^2	0.014	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.022	0.022	0.021

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-challenger pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in a challenger's district that mention the challenger. Standard Errors are clustered by candidate. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A3. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents and Challengers, Limited to Districts with Incumbents and Challengers Running in the General Election, Clustering by Congressional District

	I	II	III	IV	V	Races in which both candidates are viable	
						VI	VII
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	43.112* (5.956)	43.748* (6.060)	43.762* (6.064)	42.475* (5.704)	40.538* (5.252)	74.908* (13.572)	72.134* (12.594)
Large Media Corporation		2.973 (1.633)	2.951 (1.638)	2.814 (1.529)	3.007* (1.478)	8.847* (3.607)	7.480* (3.344)
Incumbent			3.127* (1.287)	4.897* (1.473)	4.349* (1.364)	7.364* (3.097)	4.287 (2.829)
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)				4.678* (1.473)	6.884* (1.003)	3.790* (1.150)	6.842* (1.583)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)				4.678* (0.794)	7.158* (1.116)	5.062* (1.324)	8.066* (1.628)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)					-7.011* (1.362)		-7.774* (2.045)
Constant	4.787* (1.072)	2.339 (1.657)	0.978 (1.848)	-14.50* (2.910)	-10.49* (2.309)	-21.85* (7.449)	-22.53* (7.044)
N	6,526	6,526	6,526	6,526	6,526	2,455	2,455
R^2	0.066	0.067	0.068	0.221	0.270	0.179	0.219

Table A4 Predicting Coverage of Challengers, All Districts (Fall 2018)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	38.167* (5.041)	38.57** (5.073)	38.709* (4.854)	38.843* (4.843)	39.131* (4.862)	36.855* (4.392)	37.650* (4.654)	37.560* (4.644)
Large Media Corporation		1.776 (1.575)	2.376 (1.521)	2.458 (3.078)	2.407 (1.530)	2.225 (1.427)	2.572 (1.502)	2.578 (1.499)
PVI Absolute Value			-1.003* (0.138)	-0.954* (0.136)	-0.990* (0.138)	-0.090 (0.082)	-0.497* (0.113)	-0.486* (0.114)
Challenged in Primary				4.631* (2.109)				
Competitive Primary					3.576 (2.425)	1.397 (2.113)	0.576 (0.828)	2.521 (2.313)
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						6.214* (0.997)		
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						5.908* (1.320)		
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-6.292* (1.297)		
Open Seat						5.625* (2.565)	-1.634 (3.160)	1.036 (1.209)
Viable Candidate							16.966* (3.020)	19.280* (3.345)
Viable Candidate X Competitive Primary							4.031 (4.823)	
Viable Candidate X Open Seat								-3.679 (4.654)
Constant	4.413* (1.039)	2.949* (1.492)	15.595* (2.417)	11.585* (2.959)	13.997* (2.706)	-7.416* (2.745)	0.889 (2.144)	-0.199 (2.428)
N	3,655	3,655	3,655	3,655	3,655	3,655	3,655	3,655
R^2	0.060	0.061	0.115	0.119	0.118	0.249	0.166	0.166

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-challenger pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in a challenger's district that mention the challenger. Standard Errors are clustered by candidate. *=p<0.05.

Challengers receive less coverage than incumbents in both 2017 and the pre-general election period (see Table 2). Compared to incumbents, the average challenger received about one-tenth the coverage in 2017 and roughly one-eighth the coverage in the pre-election period. By the general election, differences between incumbents and challengers decrease substantively. With respect to all incumbents and challengers, the average

Table A5. General Election Challengers for House Seats: Mean Number of Mentions Per Week Per Station

	2017 3/10/17-12/8/17	2018, Pre-General Election 1/10/18-5/8/18	2018, General Election 9/7/18-10/1/18
All General Election Challengers	0.035 (0.331)	0.098 (0.472)	4.105 (12.014)
Open Seats	0.068 (0.393)	0.218 (0.780)	6.223 (14.025)
By Primary Competitiveness			
Competitive Primary	0.056 (0.305)	0.171 (0.531)	6.704 (13.292)
Uncompetitive Primary	0.076 (0.451)	0.255 (0.928)	5.851 (14.568)
By Candidate Viability			
Candidate Viable /Opponent Not Viable	0.152 (0.562)	0.370 (1.031)	2.554 (4.642)
Candidate Viable /Opponent Viable	0.056 (0.384)	0.221 (0.804)	8.936 (17.070)
Candidate Not Viable/Opponent Viable	0.006 (0.024)	0.046 (0.153)	1.299 (3.071)
Candidate Not Viable/ Opponent Not Viable	0.176 (0.490)	0.314 (0.747)	1.667 (3.322)
Challengers to Incumbents	0.024 (0.306)	0.057 (0.295)	3.403 (11.182)
By Primary Competitiveness			
Competitive Primary	0.010 (0.053)	0.057 (0.252)	4.194 (13.196)
Uncompetitive Primary	0.031 (0.377)	0.057 (0.315)	2.981 (9.924)
By Candidate Viability			
Candidate Viable	0.040 (0.238)	0.121 (0.440)	8.758 (17.717)

Candidate Not Viable	0.015	0.024	0.605
	(0.336)	(0.167)	(1.920)

Cells present the mean number of 2.5-minute segments in which a local television station's news program mentioned a challenger whose district was included in its media market per week. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

incumbent receives about 1.68 mentions more than the average challenger, but challengers receive about 70% of the mentions as incumbents.

In both open seats and races with an incumbent, challengers receive little coverage before the general election campaign. In open seats, those who face uncompetitive primaries are discussed slightly more than those who face competitive primaries in the pre-election period. By the general election, however, the difference in coverage reverses. Challengers facing competitive primaries are slightly more likely to be discussed than those in less competitive elections.

Table A6. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts (Fall 2018) with Sinclair Broadcasting Control

	I	II	III	IV	V
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	59.065* (10.199)	57.749* (9.698)	57.676* (9.506)	51.314* (8.215)	44.180* (6.593)
Sinclair Broadcasting	-4.257 (2.220)	-5.756* (2.199)	-5.315* (2.060)	-5.585* (2.025)	-2.100 (1.941)
PVI Absolute Value		-1.083* (0.181)	-0.998* (0.188)	-0.639* (0.164)	-0.122 (0.104)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)					
Challenged in General			8.387* (3.214)		
Viable Challenger				24.777* (4.550)	-8.591 (5.391)
Not Viable Challenger				2.268 (2.270)	0.631 (1.598)
Not Running in General			21.001* (8.096)		
Running for Higher Office				68.186* (18.593)	
Not Running for Higher Office				-0.978 (2.970)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)					7.942* (2.725)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)					9.417* (1.888)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)					-8.566* (2.554)
Constant	5.903* (1.622)	21.447* (3.373)	10.241* (4.510)	5.072 (4.059)	-2.281 (4.471)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	2,969
R^2	0.076	0.114	0.123	0.219	0.303

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. $*=p<0.05$.

Table A7. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts (Fall 2018) with Indicator for Publicly Traded Company

	I	II	III	IV	V
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	59.255* (10.148)	58.089* (9.698)	58.025* (9.680)	51.936* (8.215)	44.299* (6.603)
Public Company	1.978 (2.163)	2.984 (2.095)	2.898 (2.075)	4.178 (2.140)	1.312 (1.633)
PVI Absolute Value		-1.078* (0.181)	-0.993* (0.188)	-0.636* (0.163)	-0.120 (0.105)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)					
Challenged in General			8.040* (3.272)		
Viable Challenger				24.304* (4.592)	-8.748 (5.406)
Not Viable Challenger				1.827 (2.388)	0.488 (1.659)
Not Running in General			20.857* (8.084)		
Running for Higher Office				68.168* (18.582)	
Not Running for Higher Office				-1.337 (3.090)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)					7.937* (2.724)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)					9.419* (1.886)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)					-8.541* (2.556)
Constant	3.735 (2.543)	18.172* (3.677)	7.398 (4.946)	1.265 (4.148)	-3.549 (4.150)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	2,969
R^2	0.076	0.113	0.122	0.219	0.302

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=p<0.05.

Table A8. Marginal Evidence that Extremism is associated with Coverage

	I	II	III	IV	V
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	59.690* (10.119)	58.379* (9.930)	58.383* (9.740)	52.142* (8.449)	44.639* (6.690)
Large Media Corporation	3.910 (2.094)	4.652* (2.047)	4.669* (2.045)	5.555* (2.068)	3.701* (1.652)
Ideological Extremism	-26.829* (11.267)	-2.716 (11.614)	-6.775 (11.948)	-3.376 (10.907)	2.891 (8.181)
PVI Absolute Value		-1.063* (0.187)	-0.952* (0.199)	-0.613* (0.173)	-0.144 (0.101)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)					
Challenged in General			8.346* (3.392)		
Viable Challenger				24.505* (4.743)	-9.107 (5.463)
Not Viable Challenger				1.951 (2.499)	0.208 (1.729)
Not Running in General			21.459* (8.269)		
Running for Higher Office				68.374* (18.613)	
Not Running for Higher Office				-0.915 (3.340)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)					7.985* (2.753)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)					9.378* (1.884)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)					-8.564* (2.549)
Constant	14.392* (5.031)	17.892* (5.039)	8.172 (5.607)	1.262 (4.958)	-6.147 (5.415)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	2,969
R^2	0.083	0.114	0.123	0.220	0.304

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A9. Controlling for Viewership

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	58.150* (9.096)	58.864* (9.930)	57.044* (8.851)	57.093* (8.741)	51.237* (7.761)	44.650* (6.534)
Station Viewership per Capita	-43.355 (33.892)	-41.796 (33.926)	-14.559 (32.585)	-17.230 (32.292)	-30.536 (32.453)	14.059 (23.476)
Large Media Corporation		3.695 (2.092)	4.505* (2.042)	4.534* (2.027)	5.150* (1.987)	3.642* (1.730)
PVI Absolute Value			-1.112* (0.186)	-1.029* (0.192)	-0.663* (0.168)	-0.118 (0.107)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				8.564* (3.337)		
Viable Challenger					24.796* (4.656)	-9.321 (5.637)
Not Viable Challenger					2.297 (2.467)	0.464 (1.737)
Not Running in General				21.043* (7.961)		
Running for Higher Office					68.815* (18.516)	
Not Running for Higher Office					-0.991 (3.128)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						8.196* (2.726)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						9.705* (1.927)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-8.467* (2.626)
Constant	6.656* (1.805)	3.591 (2.806)	18.142* (3.635)	6.900 (4.580)	1.460 (3.966)	-6.120 (3.994)
N	3,342	3,342	3,342	3,342	3,342	2,862
R^2	0.073	0.074	0.113	0.122	0.220	0.310

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A10. Incumbent Governors: Mean Number of Mentions Per Week Per Station

	2017 3/10/17-12/8/17	2018, Pre-General Election 1/10/18-5/8/18	2018, General Election 9/7/18-10/1/18
All Incumbents	10.328	10.935	15.350
	(15.632)	(13.883)	(33.545)
Running for Re-Election	11.663	14.632	26.123
	(12.195)	(17.374)	(33.545)
Term Not Up	9.551	8.783	9.079
	(17.282)	(10.813)	(11.309)
Retiring	5.773	6.854	7.204
	(7.035)	(7.976)	(8.445)

Cells present the mean number of 2.5-minute segments in which a local television station's news program mentioned an incumbent governor whose state was included in its media market per week. Standard deviations are in parentheses. We omit Rick Scott (R-FL) since he was the one incumbent governor running for Senate in 2018.

Table A11. Controlling for the Number of Segments Possible

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	66.845* (10.458)	67.270* (10.656)	65.744* (10.394)	65.659* (10.187)	59.417* (8.807)	51.239* (7.126)
Station's Total Number of News Programs	3.440* (0.441)	3.401* (0.432)	3.276* (0.431)	3.253* (0.414)	3.244* (0.420)	2.765* (0.367)
Large Media Corporation		2.328 (2.049)	3.147 (2.007)	3.208 (1.997)	4.120* (1.998)	2.294 (1.576)
PVI Absolute Value			-1.057* (0.180)	-0.974* (0.188)	-0.614* (0.163)	-0.091 (0.105)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				10.703* (3.506)		
Viable Challenger					27.057* (4.801)	-6.240 (5.376)
Not Viable Challenger					4.389 (2.563)	2.542 (1.697)
Not Running in General				22.823* (8.244)		
Running for Higher Office					70.349* (18.590)	
Not Running for Higher Office					0.640 (3.156)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						7.954* (2.684)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						9.331* (1.863)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-8.411* (2.527)
Constant	-25.288* (3.871)	-26.867* (4.660)	-11.459* (4.492)	-24.619* (6.458)	-30.360* (6.282)	-31.679* (5.353)
N	3,352	3,352	3,352	3,352	3,352	2,950
R^2	0.097	0.098	0.133	0.142	0.240	0.323

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A12. Controlling for Number of Ads

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	47.583* (7.679)	47.868* (7.889)	47.733* (7.842)	47.717* (7.647)	44.508* (6.787)	38.120* (4.545)
Number of Ads	0.716* (0.094)	0.716* (0.094)	0.696* (0.094)	0.695* (0.095)	0.638* (0.095)	0.576* (0.094)
Large Media Corporation		1.288 (1.684)	1.614 (1.661)	1.695 (1.653)	2.553 (1.667)	1.790 (1.271)
PVI Absolute Value			-0.395* (0.118)	-0.314* (0.135)	-0.212 (0.113)	-0.033 (0.092)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				4.818* (1.912)		
Viable Challenger					13.216* (3.477)	-1.610 (4.371)
Not Viable Challenger					1.880 (1.597)	1.204 (1.317)
Not Running in General				17.937* (6.726)		
Running for Higher Office					51.054* (15.908)	
Not Running for Higher Office					1.796 (2.351)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						4.074* (1.948)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						4.318* (1.340)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-3.794 (1.978)
Constant	1.500 (1.378)	0.445 (2.375)	5.896 (3.023)	-1.884 (3.794)	-3.693 (3.326)	-5.509* (2.710)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,342	2,969
R^2	0.391	0.392	0.396	0.405	0.444	0.488

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A13. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts, Logged Outcome (Fall 2018)

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	3.202* (0.174)	3.231* (0.176)	3.184* (0.166)	3.183* (0.166)	3.026* (0.160)	2.980* (0.171)
Large Media Corporation		0.137* (0.063)	0.162* (0.058)	0.160* (0.058)	0.179* (0.057)	0.150* (0.058)
PVI Absolute Value			-0.040* (0.005)	-0.039* (0.005)	-0.025* (0.005)	-0.013* (0.005)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)						
Challenged in General				0.290 (0.164)		
Viable Challenger					0.877* (0.192)	0.048 (0.813)
Not Viable Challenger					0.075 (0.157)	0.047 (0.148)
Not Running in General				0.373 (0.233)		
Running for Higher Office					1.450* (0.358)	
Not Running for Higher Office					-0.063 (0.194)	
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)						0.162 (0.085)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)						0.241* (0.039)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)						-0.091 (0.069)
Constant	0.721* (0.052)	0.609* (0.073)	1.157* (0.106)	0.853* (0.185)	0.613* (0.178)	0.338 (0.217)
N	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	3,472	2,969
R^2	0.231	0.232	0.284	0.286	0.359	0.417

Models estimated using ordinary least squares. Unit of analysis is station-incumbent pair. DV=Number of 2.5-minute segments by a given station in an incumbent's district that mention the incumbent. Number of mentions are logged. Standard Errors are clustered by incumbent. *=$p<0.05$.

Table A14. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts, District Fixed Effects

(Fall 2018)

	I	II
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	13.246* (2.188)	13.421* (2.215)
Large Media Corporation		1.056 (0.654)
Unchallenged in General (Baseline)		
Challenged in General		
Viable Challenger		
Not Viable Challenger		
Not Running in General		
Running for Higher Office		
Not Running for Higher Office		
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)		
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)		
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)		
Constant	5.363* (1.083)	4.484* (1.322)
N	3,472	3,472
R^2	0.712	0.713

Table A15. Incumbent House Members: Mean Number of Mentions Per Week Per Station, Including Leadership

	2017 3/10/17-12/8/17	2018, Pre-General Election 1/10/18-5/8/18	2018, General Election 9/7/18-10/1/18
All Incumbents	0.382	0.786	5.780
	(0.823)	(1.746)	(16.581)
Party Leadership	0.837	1.383	4.768
	(1.717)	(2.910)	(8.386)
Committee Chair	0.295	0.897	3.925
	(0.545)	(1.798)	(9.986)
Ranking Member	0.373	0.587	3.756
	(0.732)	(0.918)	(7.977)

Cells present the mean number of 2.5-minute segments in which a local television station's news program mentioned an incumbent MC whose district was included in its media market per week. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table A16. Predicting Coverage of Incumbents, All Districts, Logged Spending (Fall 2018)

	No Constant Added	Constant Added	Constant Added
Proportion of DMA Covered by District	46.663* (7.686)	44.572* (6.812)	45.059* (6.753)
Large Media Corporation	4.552* (2.088)	4.043* (1.749)	3.738* (1.671)
PVI	-0.391* (0.166)	0.177 (0.110)	0.009 (0.110)
Disbursements by Candidate (in Millions)	15.281* (4.154)	21.812* (7.601)	27.408* (8.245)
Disbursements by Opponent (in Millions)	2.585* (0.957)	22.536* (3.654)	37.813* (6.629)
Absolute Difference in Disbursements (in Millions)	-2.023 (2.554)	-12.712 (6.819)	-20.787* (7.772)
Viable Challenger			-28.073 (7.606)
Non-Viable Challenger			-2.432 (1.686)
Constant	8.887* (4.317)	-18.778* (5.359)	-13.912* (5.067)
N	2531	2969	2969
R^2	0.217	0.279	0.299

Dependent variable is the logged number of mentions for incumbents in Fall 2018. Column 1 includes no adjustments to the logged outcome. That is, those incumbents not mentioned on a station are coded as missing. Columns 2 and 3 add 1 to the dependent variable.

Figure A1. Distribution of Campaign Season Mentions by Incumbent Type

Incumbents

N = 3480   Bandwidth = 1.183

Incumbents Opposed

N = 2977   Bandwidth = 1.221

Incumbents Unopposed

N = 107   Bandwidth = 1.055
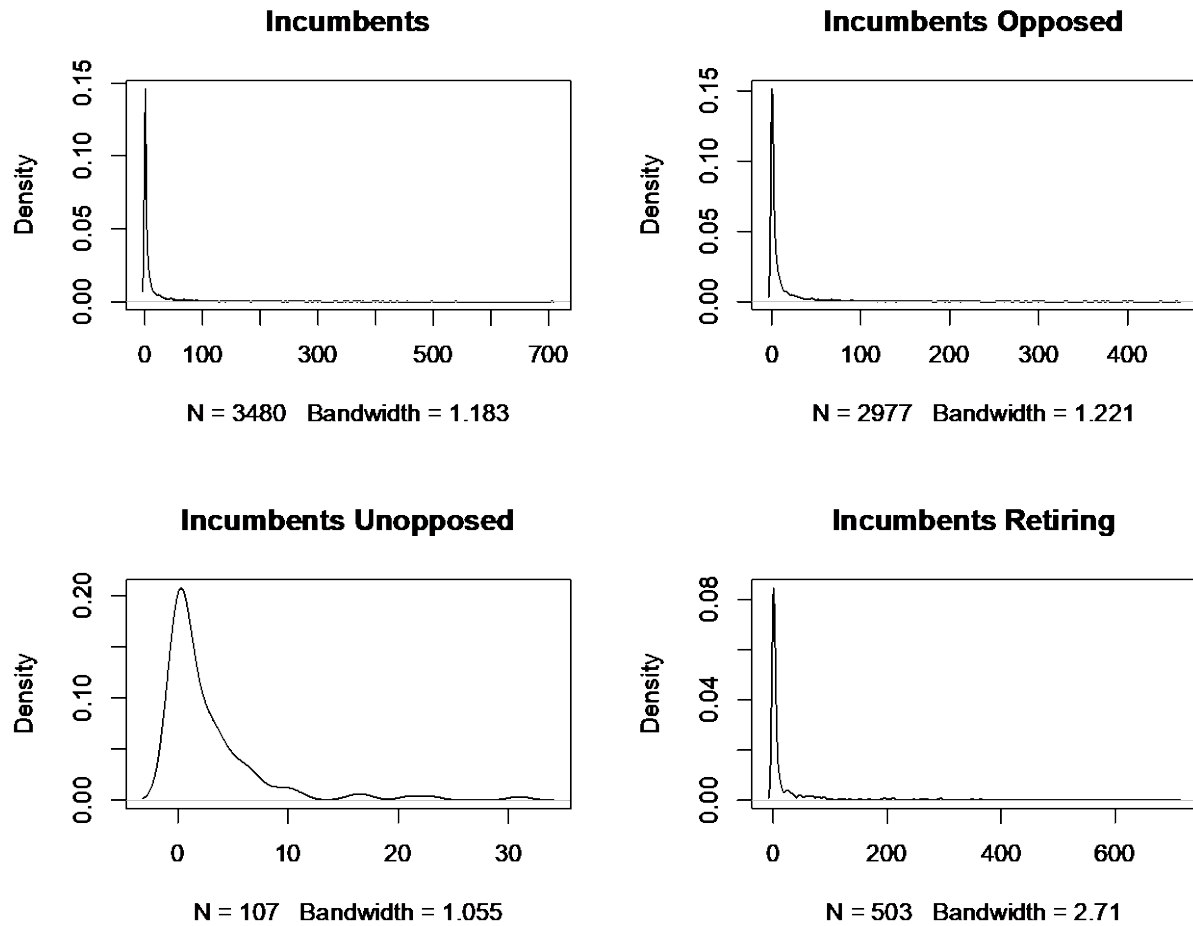
Incumbents Retiring

N = 503   Bandwidth = 2.71

Figure A1 displays the density plots of incumbent-station mentions in the general election campaign season. We also include the density plots for those incumbents running opposed for re-election, those who are unopposed for re-election, and those incumbents who are not running for re-election.

Competing Interests Declaration

Competing interests: The author(s) declare none.