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978-1-107-06667-0 - The Measure of American Elections
Edited by Barry C. Burden and Charles Stewart III
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THE MEASURE OF AMERICAN ELECTIONS

Policy making in the realm of elections is too often grounded in anecdotes and opinions rather than in good data and scientific research. To remedy this, *The Measure of American Elections* brings together a dozen leading scholars to examine the performance of elections across the United States, using a data-driven perspective. This book represents a transformation in debates about election reform, away from partisan and ideological posturing and toward using scientific analysis to evaluate the conduct of contemporary elections. The authors harness the power of newly available data to document all aspects of election administration, ranging from the registration of voters to the counting of ballots. They demonstrate what can be learned from giving serious attention to data, measurement, and objective analysis of American elections.

Barry C. Burden is a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is the author of *Personal Roots of Representation* (2007) and coauthor of *Why Americans Split Their Tickets* (2002, with David C. Kimball). Burden has written or cowritten more than thirty-five articles in peer-reviewed journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, and *Electoral Studies*.

Charles Stewart III is the Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science and the former head of the political science department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of *Budget Reform Politics* (1989) and *Analyzing Congress* (2nd ed., 2011) and the coauthor of *Fighting for the Speakership* (2013, with Jeffrey Jenkins). Stewart's writing has appeared in the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, the *Election Law Journal*, and *Harvard Law Review*.

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CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ELECTION LAW AND DEMOCRACY

Recent developments have pushed elections scholarship in new directions. As a result, interdisciplinary work has flourished and political scientists and law professors have developed a more sophisticated sense of the relationship between law and politics. This series seeks to create an intellectual road map for the field, one that systematically examines the issues confronting both mature and emerging democracies. It will chart those new intellectual paths to spur interdisciplinary work, to identify productive ways in which scholars' research agendas connect to policy makers' reform agendas, and to disseminate this body of work to the growing audience interested in the intersection of law, politics, and democracy.

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The Measure of American Elections

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Acknowledgments

Although our names are listed on the cover of the book, *The Measure of American Elections* is the product of many people and institutions. This book would have been impossible to produce just a few years ago because of a lack of data and intellectual community. Things have changed in dramatic fashion over the past decade.

The contemporary study of U.S. election administration can trace its origins to the meltdown in Florida following the 2000 presidential election. The recounts and legal disputes that took place over the thirty-five days between Election Day and the Supreme Court's resolution in *Bush v. Gore* illuminated just how little systematic knowledge existed about how states and localities manage elections.

The academic community responded in part through the creation of the CalTech-MIT Voting Technology Project (VTP) in 2001 and launch of the *Election Law Journal* in 2002. These new initiatives helped bring together scholars from multiple fields and established connections among scholars and election officials, the legal community, and advocates. The CalTech-MIT collaboration also led to the creation of a new metric, the "residual vote," to evaluate how successfully ballots were being counted.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, passed into law as a direct response to the 2000 election, created the Election Assistance Commission and an invaluable source of data: the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). The EAVS has improved significantly since its first administration in 2004. It has become an indispensable source of data on election administration, covering everything from voter registration to provisional ballots and voting technology.

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With growing availability of data came further initiatives to use those data to evaluate election administration. An opening salvo was the publication of Heather Gerken's *The Democracy Index* in 2009. The book proposed an index that would rank states based on how well they conducted elections. Among others, the book inspired the Election Initiatives team at the Pew Charitable Trusts to assemble an advisory group of scholars, election officials, and other experts to consider development of a similar index. (Charles Stewart III was heavily involved in that effort.) After two years of study and development, the group issued the first ever Election Performance Index (EPI). An elaboration of Gerken's initial proposal, the EPI produced performance scores for the states in the 2010 and 2012 elections. The scores drew on indicators from the EAVS, the Census Bureau, existing Pew reports, and the Survey of the Performance of American Elections (SPAE), funded by Pew and developed by the VTP research team. Release of the EPI was testament to the power of data to reveal truths about election performance and serve as a value diagnostic for improving elections.

As the EPI was coming to fruition, we convened a conference at MIT in the summer of 2012 that brought together the expert scholars who appear as contributors in this volume. They were asked to produce "white papers" on specific measures that had been considered for inclusion in the EPI. The careful scrutiny applied to those measures helped inform which elements appeared in the EPI and led to this edited volume. It is testimony to the integrity of the authors of the chapters that follow that all approached their intellectual task impartially and without anticipating what the Pew EPI development team wanted to hear. It is testimony to the rigor and thoughtfulness of the Pew Election Initiative team that they supported this project without hesitation from start to finish.

The burgeoning science of election administration continues to develop. The EAVS provides more complete and higher-quality data with each election cycle. The SPAE has now gathered survey-based measures for multiple elections. These two sources, along with the Current Population Survey, permit tracking of indicators over time in a way that was never before possible. States and localities are improving the transparency, reliability, and validity of the data they collect. A second edition of the EPI will be released in close chronological proximity to the publication of this volume, updating the analysis to include the 2012 presidential election. President Obama's bipartisan Commission on Election Administration's report, issued in December

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2013, further highlighted the power of scientific analysis of election data to identify concerns and best practices for improving elections. Indeed, the Commission was given advance access to this book manuscript and heard testimony from many of its contributors.

There are many people to thank for their involvement in the project. The twelve experts who contributed to the volume represent the best in scholarship on election administration. We are grateful for their contributions. David Kimball, Martha Kropf, Michael McDonald, and Quin Monson provided excellent oral and written feedback as discussants at the MIT conference where the chapters were first presented. Stephen Pettigrew, a PhD student at Harvard, provided superb research assistance in support of the entire project. Justin de Benedictis-Kessner and James Dunham, PhD students at MIT, pitched in to provide invaluable assistance during the summer of 2012. Data-hungry researchers at Pew were especially helpful in providing an interface between the data sources and state election officials. Aleena Oberthur and Andreas Westgaard deserve a special note of commendation. Daniel Guenther of MIT helped to facilitate the production process.

The Election Initiatives team at the Pew Charitable Trusts has been pivotal in advancing the study of election administration. Their financial support made the EPI possible, facilitated the MIT conference, and has underwritten other valuable data-driven projects, including dissemination of election information to voters and modernization of voter registration. In particular, we single out David Becker, Sean Greene, and Zachary Markovits for their efforts to bring together scholars, practitioners, and advocates as part of a continual effort to improve elections.

This book is published as part of the Cambridge Studies in Election Law and Democracy series. We appreciate the endorsement of the series' editors, Guy-Uriel Charles, Heather Gerken, and Michael Kang. Finally, we thank the Press's law editor, John Berger, for his support and assistance with the project.

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