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978-0-521-11265-9 - Discount Voting: Voter Registration Reforms and their Effects

Michael J. Hanmer

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## Discount Voting

### *Voter Registration Reforms and Their Effects*

In the United States, there is wide variation from state to state in the institutional arrangements – for example, registration laws – that structure the environment in which citizens decide whether to vote and parties decide whom to mobilize. This has important consequences for who gets elected and the policies they enact. Michael J. Hanmer argues that to understand how these institutional arrangements affect outcomes, it is necessary to consider the interactions between social and political contexts and these laws. He tests this theory by examining how the factors that influence the adoption of a set of registration laws affect turnout, the composition of the electorate, and party strategies. His multi-method research design demonstrates that the effect of registration laws is not as profound as either reformers would hope or previous studies suggest, especially when reform is a response to federal legislation. He concludes by arguing for a shift in the approach to increasing turnout.

Michael J. Hanmer joined the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland as an assistant professor in the fall of 2007. He is also a Research Fellow with the University of Maryland – Center for American Politics and Citizenship. Hanmer is a co-author of *Voting Technology: The Not-So-Simple Act of Casting a Ballot* (2008). He has published articles on electoral reform, voting technology, and the overreporting of voting in surveys and is listed as an expert in election issues by the AEI–Brookings Election Reform Project.

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*University of Maryland, College Park*



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*To the memory of my father, Frank Hanmer.*

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Approach to Estimating Who Is Most Likely to Respond to Changes in Registration Laws,” portions of which appear in this book.

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