Who Decides?

Media, MAGA, Money, and Mentions in the 2022 Republican Primaries

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Rachel Blum
University of Oklahoma
rblum@ou.edu

Mike Cowburn
European University Viadrina
cowburn@europa-uni.de

Seth Masket
University of Denver
seth.masket@du.edu

Political elites play an important role in determining who wins primaries, yet comparatively little is known about which voices in party networks matter when different intra-party signals are sent. We examine this question using an original dataset of Republican Senate and gubernatorial primaries in 2022, an election cycle with substantial intra-party conflict in primary elections. We demonstrate that Fox News appearances (media), Trump's endorsements (MAGA), campaign fundraising (money), and Twitter engagement (mentions) were all positively associated with vote share. We then assess the state of primary fields prior to Trump's endorsements, showing that endorsed candidates were outperforming their competitors prior to his involvement. Finally, we consider the state of primary fields after Trump endorsed, demonstrating that his support was associated with a thirteen percentage point increase in both fundraising share and polling which lasted through to the primary. These findings provide clarity on the relative weight of different signals in contested party nominations.

Keywords: intra-party, Republican Party, Trump, primary elections, candidate selection

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Primary elections offer a rare glimpse of intra-party competition. Elite influence in primary elections is well established (Cohen et al. 2008; Hassell 2018; Manento and Testa 2021), yet we know comparatively little about whose voices matter in the context of conflicting elite signals. To better understand the influence of disparate cues, we focus on non-presidential primaries, which have become increasingly important for U.S. party politics in the twenty-first century (Cowburn 2022). By 2022, the Republican Party was in a historically unusual position, where one individual—Donald Trump—loomed large across nominations. We disentangle the importance of varying elite cues by measuring the relationship between Fox News coverage (media), Donald Trump's endorsement (MAGA faction), campaign fundraising (money), and social media attention (mentions), on the outcomes of the highest profile, state-wide primary contests: governor and U.S. Senate.[1]

We first tackle the question of who decides, demonstrating that all of these signals were, to varying degrees, positively associated with vote share in Republican primaries. Trump's endorsements were strongly associated with vote share and winning primaries. Candidates who Trump endorsed received roughly ten additional percentage points of the vote, with a further six percentage point penalty for candidates' whose opponents were endorsed.

We further investigate Trump's role in shaping the field by focusing on the extent to which he served as a party "kingmaker or a cheerleader" (Kousser et al. 2015). In a second set of analyses, we focus on who Trump endorsed. There, we find that when Trump endorsed, he did so in support of candidates who were already leading their primary fields. Prior to receiving his support, Trump's endorsees raised more money, appeared on Fox News more often, received more attention on Twitter, and were ahead in the polls. These findings highlight the endogeneity issue present when studying intra-party signals that are likely interrelated and empirically difficult to isolate, suggesting two-way flows with Trump both leading and following candidates' performance.

Given that Trump's candidates were already outperforming their opponents prior to his endorsement, our third set of analyses consider the relationship between his support and primary outcomes. Receiving an endorsement by Trump was associated with a roughly thirteen percentage point boost in both campaign fundraising and polling, and the improved polling positions lasted

[1] These intra-party contests have been shown to be the primaries which voters know most about and are comparatively able to identify and position same-party candidates absent party labels in a way that they cannot in lower-profile contests such as U.S. House elections (Bawn et al. 2019). In short, if primary voters are able to receive these signals, it is in these contests we should expect them to do so.

until the primary election. Conversely, Trump's endorsement bore little relationship to the media landscape, with no associated increase in Fox News appearances or social media attention.

The question we pursue here is whether Donald Trump's unusually prolific endorsement behavior offset the fundamentals of elections (e.g., campaign finance, media attention, incumbency, and activist support) in a substantial way. In answering this question, we focus on two possibilities: that Trump selectively endorsed the candidates most likely to be successful, or that his endorsement made candidates successful. Our findings suggest that Trump's endorsement mattered in that it attracted more of the things that make primary candidates successful in the first place, such as campaign fundraising. Candidate quality and early performance also mattered, as Trump disproportionately endorsed candidates who were already leading their fields.

We recognize that this study suffers in terms of generalizability. That is, Trump and Fox News' influence over one of America's two major political parties does not export well to other eras or political actors. This may be an unusual—perhaps even unique—moment in the nation's political history, though it is certainly conceivable that Fox's and Trump's influence are just larger than most other actors in the same category. Even if this is a unique moment, the moment has been going on for nearly a decade, is highly consequential for U.S. politics, and does not appear likely to abate in the near future. We have a sense of how primary election dynamics function in "normal" times; we believe the current dynamics in the Republican Party warrant further attention from scholars.

We proceed as follows. First, we consider how different party signals in a primary might determine nomination outcomes. Next, we introduce our original dataset of Republican primary candidates. We then present the results of our three analyses, before discussing their implications in the Republican Party and beyond.

What Matters in Primary Elections?

In 2017, then-Representative Ron DeSantis (R-Florida) embraced a singular strategy to defeat the better-known and better-funded Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam for the Florida Republican gubernatorial nomination. DeSantis' approach was to appear on Fox News as much as possible. This "Fox First" campaign defied the notion that politics is local, with DeSantis instead deliberately making himself available to a national audience. His reasoning was that more than seventy percent of Florida's Republican primary voters regularly watch Fox, as did President Donald Trump. The approach paid off, dramatically increasing DeSantis' name recognition. Shortly thereafter, he received Trump's endorsement, and DeSantis went from trailing Putnam in

the polls to leading him, ultimately defeating him in the July 2018 primary by roughly twenty points (Caputo 2018).

This account suggests that our understanding of primary elections may require updating. Media coverage, name recognition, and the pursuit of prominent endorsements have long been staples of primary election campaigns. However, the overwhelming prominence of *one* media outlet and *one* endorsement in modern Republican primary elections would be something novel (Cassino 2016; Hyun and Moon 2016).

American political parties slowly embraced binding primary elections and by the mid-twentieth century, primaries had become prominent methods for parties to nominate candidates for most state and national offices (Kamarck 2018). Unlike general elections, where partisan cues guide voters, primary outcomes are more sensitive to features like name recognition, campaign spending, and endorsements (Aldrich 2011). In the absence of a partisan signal, primary voters have little information to guide their choices, instead relying on campaign advertising and signals from party elites in making their decisions. We examine the impact of both of these factors more explicitly.

First, we look at the impact of campaign advertising, which is often a function of campaign fundraising. We know from previous studies that fundraising plays a vital role in primary elections—likely an even more powerful role than in general election contests, where increased campaign spending is known to boost primary vote shares (Breaux and Gierzynski 1991). Funds may matter more if they come from the right places. Albert *et al.* (2015) find that donor *networks* were key in explaining primary success. Similarly, Hassell (2018) finds that candidates tended to prevail in primaries when their donations predominantly came from people who also donated to the party's organized campaign committees. The loosening of campaign finance restrictions in the wake of the *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* (2010) case may have fractured some of those party financing networks (Boatright 2013), increasing the importance of non-party organized and networked donor groups can play in boosting primary candidates (Manento 2019).

We also know that endorsements from influential party insiders can play a role in determining primary voters' choices. Cohen *et al.* (2008) found that presidential candidates who received the majority of insider endorsements typically win the nomination, and Dominguez (2011) and Masket (2009) find a similar dynamic in congressional and state legislative primaries, respectively. These endorsers and other actors form the "extended party network"—a collection of officeholders, major donors, interest group leaders, activists, media figures and others who guide the party's nomination choices and policy stances (Bernstein 1999; Dominguez 2011; Koger,

Masket, and Noel 2009; Desmarais, La Raja, and Kowal 2015). In this context, the endorsement of Donald Trump is something of an anomaly for political science research, which generally assumes that one single endorsement should not matter as much as insider consensus. We also don't have a baseline for a presumption of effects; presidents and ex-presidents rarely get involved in intra-party contests.

Trump, however, has issued endorsements quite liberally since the 2018 midterm cycle. In the 2022 primaries, he endorsed over 200 candidates up and down the ballot.[2] A *Washington Examiner* analysis gave Trump credit for 214 wins and nineteen losses for his chosen candidates by late August (King 2022). However, a *New York Times* study (Astor and Paybarah 2022) noted that the effect of these endorsements can be difficult to assess as they were cast in a very wide range of political circumstances—some went to unopposed candidates, some to incumbents who seemed very likely to win, etc. Trump issued some endorsements months before the contest, allowing the endorsee to capitalize on them for fundraising purposes, but others were issued just days before the contest. Green (2022) notes that Trump has endorsed—and unendorsed—for strategic reasons, sometimes to enhance the perception of his own power, but also sometimes out of personal pique (Heseltine 2023).

Complicating matters further is the role of intra-party factionalism in the contemporary Republican Party. Between 2010 and 2014, the far-right Tea Party faction gained substantial influence in Republican politics by fielding Tea Party-style Republicans against establishment-style Republicans in factional congressional primaries (Cowburn 2022; 2024), and by taking control of state and local party organizations. By the time Trump ran for the presidency in 2016, the Tea Party had become a dominant faction in many state Republican parties, and a formidable force in Congress (Blum 2020; Blum and Cowburn 2024). Inasmuch as Trump and his "MAGA faction" built on and continued the Tea Party's legacy (Gervais and Morris 2018), Trump's endorsements could be seen as the efforts of a high-profile factional leader to continue remaking the party in a new image.

Yet, Trump's is not the only faction competing in modern GOP nominations. In 2022, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and his allies actively tried to recruit an alternative to the Trump-backed Herschel Walker for the Georgia Senate seat,[3] and convinced South Dakota Senator John Thune to run for a fourth term rather than retire and open up the party to a difficult

[2] Indeed, in September of 2022, with the US primaries almost over, Trump issued an endorsement for President Jair Bolnosaro's re-election bid in Brazil (Rupar 2022).

[3] McConnell ultimately supported Walker after this effort proved unsuccessful.

primary (Caputo 2022; Elliott 2022). Senator Ted Cruz endorsed and heavily campaigned for Josh Mandel in the Ohio Senate race and David McCormick in the Pennsylvania Senate race, only to see those candidates lose to Trump-backed primary candidates (Everett 2022).

Making it harder to assess these endorsements is the fact that they do not occur in a vacuum, posing endogeneity challenges for our research design. In Wyoming's U.S. House primary, for example, Trump endorsed Harriet Hageman to oppose incumbent Rep. Liz Cheney. Given the size of Hageman's primary win, it is unlikely that Trump's endorsement made the difference. Cheney had been a deeply unpopular figure in Wyoming Republican politics for over a year, with the state party censuring her in February of 2021 (Ruwitch and Sprunt 2021). However, she was only this unpopular because she had publicly opposed Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and was leading a congressional inquiry into his orchestration of the January 6th insurrection. Cheney was one of the House's more conservative members but fell out of her state party's graces for opposing Trump, so even if his specific endorsement may have not mattered in that contest, his presence cast a long shadow over it (Knowles, Dawsey, and Weigel 2022).

Data

We collected data for all 2022 Republican primaries for Senate and governor. Our analyses include all primary contests that featured more than one Republican candidate on the ballot. In states that run 'non-partisan' top-two (California, Washington) or top-four (Alaska) primaries, we divide the field into Republican and Democratic candidates.[4] Following the extant literature, we treat these situations as 'party primaries' if two or more Republicans feature on the ballot (Thomsen 2021; Boatright 2014).[5] We only include the initial round of primary contests rather than run-off elections. Beyond these special situations, we include all candidates that were on the primary ballot.[6] This provides us with a total of 362 candidates in sixty primary elections. We evaluate which signals mattered in these contests by comparing the effects of *Media*, *MAGA*, *Money*, and *Mentions*.

Media: We operationalize our media variable as the relative number of Fox News appearances a candidate made during the primary. Fox has long been shown as influential in

[4] In the supplementary material we also present our main results with these states removed.
[5] Neither of Louisiana's Senate seats nor gubernatorial election took place in the 2022 cycle.
[6] In the supplementary material we repeat our first-round analysis with a minimum vote share threshold (see Boatright 2014) and a financial threshold (see Thomsen 2021).

Republican and conservative politics (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007) to such an extent that we think it is reasonable to consider Fox the most influential media source in a Republican primary (Hoewe, Brownell, and Wiemer 2021). Using the search feature on the Fox News website, we collected data on candidate appearances on Fox as follows. For each candidate, we searched their name for all video appearances between 1st January 2021, and the date of their primary where they appeared on a national Fox News program as a guest. We then watched the video results and coded for Fox News appearances. We operationalized Fox News appearances broadly to capture the range of ways that a candidate might use this network to reach potential voters, including: in-person interviews with the candidate in the studio, on-camera interviews with the candidate, and interviews where the candidate was a panelist either in-studio or in-camera. We validated and supplemented these data using independent searches of the Google Video database.[7]

We think that the potential benefit of appearing on Fox will be relative to appearances by one's primary competitors. In other words, we do not expect the same benefit of an additional appearance if your primary opponents are also appearing. To capture variation in appearances at the contest level, we rescale this variable as a percentage of the total number of Fox appearances by the primary field. We expect that frequent appearances in Fox's schedule will be positively associated with performance in a Republican primary. We not only recorded the number of appearances but also the dates on which candidates appeared, enabling us to segment these data temporally into a percentage of the field's appearances before and after Trump made an endorsement.

MAGA: We contend that the MAGA faction is embodied by former president Donald Trump, who is often framed as exerting almost complete control over the apparatus and direction of the Republican Party (Ware 2016) via his influence with the MAGA base. One way that Trump has been particularly notable, both during and since his presidency, is through the comparatively large number of formal endorsements that he has made in primary contests (Chu and Moore 2022). These endorsements are frequently positioned as deterministic of success in popular media coverage (Silver 2019) and among scholarly sources (Cohen et al. 2008). To avoid confusion, we only use endorsements from Trump himself.[8] To assess whether Trump's endorsements were

[7] In the supplementary material, we demonstrate the robustness of our findings to two alternative constructions of the media variable: number of times a candidate was mentioned (using the GDELT dataset), and number of times a candidate spoke on Fox (using LexisNexis Transcripts). In both cases, our results are unchanged.

[8] In the Missouri Senate primary, Trump endorsed 'Eric' in a race featuring two Erics (Warburton and Ulmer 2022). Both candidates subsequently claimed he had endorsed them. Given this confusion, we code

associated with primary vote share and the likelihood of winning, the state of the primary fields prior to Trump's endorsement, and how the primaries changed following his endorsement, we also record the date when Trump endorsed in each primary.

Money: Campaign finance has long been shown as one key indicator of success in primaries in the modern era (Klumpp and Polborn 2006), and we do not think that the Republican Party has altered so fundamentally in recent years that this association has changed. New pathways to giving now enable interest group networks to circumvent the formal party structures (Oklobdzija 2023). We follow the established method for calculating primary fundraising in the literature (Thomsen 2023), using candidates' 12P Federal Election Commission (FEC)[9] reports (for Senate candidates), and the National Institute on Money in Politics (NIMP)[10] (for gubernatorial candidates). Senate candidates who raise less than $5,000 are not legally required to file a campaign report with the FEC, we consider their campaign fundraising as basically non-existent in those cases and therefore assign a value of zero.[11]

As with media appearances, we expect that the importance of campaign finance will be affected by relative spending by primary opponents (see also Thomsen 2021). We thus rescale these totals as a percentage of the total amount raised. Given our substantive interest in Trump's endorsements, we also segment these data temporally, as a percentage of the field's finances before (January 1st, 2021 to endorsement) and after (endorsement to primary date).

Mentions: Committed partisans are disproportionately active on social media (Gayo-Avello 2012; Gayo-Avello, Metaxas, and Mustafaraj 2011). Online attention can serve as a proxy for dedicated support for a candidate among activists, donors, and elites who might be influential in primary elections (Chen, Wang, and Sheth 2012; Cowburn and Sältzer 2024) and behavior on social media reflects traditional positional indicators (Cowburn and Knüpfer 2024). We use Twitter data to create a variable that gauges online interest in a candidate. Because some candidates posted prolifically and others rarely posted, we operationalize mentions on social media as the average number of retweets per post during the primary period.[12] Where candidates had

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this race as no-endorsement, meaning we exclude it from our models assessing how Trump shaped the primary landscape.

[9] www.fec.gov

[10] www.followthemoney.org

[11] This assignment enables the inclusion of many low-salience candidates whose contests would otherwise have to be dropped from our analyses. We repeat our analysis without these candidates in the supplementary material, our results are unchanged.

[12] Data was collected using the twitonomy analytics platform (www.twitonomy.com) in late 2022. All Twitter data was collected prior to any substantive changes to access following the takeover by Elon Musk on 27th October 2022.

multiple verified accounts (typically incumbents with a public office and campaign account) we only used the campaign account, as our interest is in these individuals as candidates rather than officeholders. As a robustness check, we repeat our analyses using the average number of favorites, which does not change our results. Given that missing data did not necessarily indicate an insignificant share of online attention,[13] we keep this variable in its raw form rather than transform it into a relative percentage of online attention. As with the Media and Money signals, we also segment these data pre- and post-Trump's endorsement.

Outcomes: In our first set of models, we are interested in how our signals relate to primary outcomes. We operationalize primary outcomes in two ways: first, as the percentage of vote share a candidate receives, and second, as a dichotomous variable of whether they win or advance from the nomination. Vote share is taken as the percentage of all votes in most states. In Nevada, we remove votes for 'None of These Candidates" from the totals, and only include the total of Republican votes in non-partisan primaries, following Boatright (2013; 2014) in both cases. We consider candidates as having won or advanced from their primary when they move on to the next round, almost always the November general election. In our second and third models, our outcomes include polling data. We used Ballotpedia, which collects and aggregates publicly available (that is, not from the campaign) polling data. Ballotpedia listed polling numbers before and after Trump's endorsement from the same firms for many of these primaries, given the unreliability of individual primary polls and bias induced by individual pollsters' 'house effects', we aggregate polls before and after Trump's endorsement.[14] For further clarification about our use of polling data and the authors' collection process see the supplementary material. We discuss the outcome variables for each model in greater detail in the analysis section below.

Control variables: We include several controls from the primary elections literature, and to account for other important dynamics in the modern Republican Party. These controls can be broadly grouped into three levels: candidate, primary, and state.

Candidate-level controls relate to characteristics that might impact a candidate's chances of success in the primary. Chief among these is whether a candidate is the incumbent, which is clearly associated with primary vote share and success (Boatright 2013). Among non-incumbents,

[13] We note that eight candidates wiped their Twitter profiles from the period before we could collect their data meaning these candidates are excluded from all analyses that include Twitter data: Kari Lake (AZ-Gov), Doug Mastiano (PA-Gov), James Bradley (CA-Sen), Billy Long (MO-Sen), Curtis Vaugh (MO-Sen), Marjorie Eastman (NC-Sen), Josh Mandel (OH-Sen), and Mark Pukita (OH-Sen).

[14] This limits our ability to identify causality as we are unable to establish pre-endorsement trends, but we are not confident in these data at the level of individual polls.

we expect that candidate 'quality' will also matter. We follow the literature, defining candidates who have previously held elective office (Jacobson 1989) as quality, and all other candidates as 'amateurs'. Non-incumbent candidate quality was personally hand-coded by the authors using data from Project Vote Smart, Ballotpedia, and personal biographies on candidate websites, with a subset of those codes checked by another author to ensure inter-coder reliability.

Given the recent amplification of White nationalist and openly patriarchal narratives and structures from Republican elites (Kalmoe and Mason 2022), we also think that candidates' race and gender may be important in the party's primaries. We include dummy variables for White and Female[15] candidates, coded by the authors using available demographic information on these candidates from online searches. Finally, since newer research suggests that being an election denier translated into a higher vote share in Republican primaries (Malzahn and Hall 2023), we include whether a candidate denied the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election result. This variable comes from *FiveThirtyEight*'s dataset of primary candidates (FiveThirtyEight 2022) and takes the value one if candidates "raised questions" or "fully denied" these results, and zero otherwise.[16]

We also include several controls for variation at the *primary level.* The most important feature of a primary contest is the position of the incumbent (Boatright 2014). We include a factor variable of primary type in our models, using the base category of challenger primary (where the incumbent is running in the alternative party's primary), and report coefficients for incumbent primary (incumbent running in that party's primary) and open primary (incumbent not running in either primary) in our models. We include a further dummy variable for Alaska, California, and Washington due to their use of non-partisan primaries, where Republican candidates are competing not just among themselves but also against Democrats and third-party candidates to advance to the November election. In the supplementary material we also demonstrate the robustness of our results to the inclusion of primary fixed effects.

Because we analyze two different offices in this paper which likely have different primary dynamics, we control for whether the primary is for a Senate or gubernatorial race. In addition, we include a dichotomous control of whether the seat in question was held by a Republican before the election cycle. Perhaps most obviously, the dynamics of a primary are strongly conditioned by the number of candidates that run. We do not expect outcomes such as primary vote share to be

[15] We consider any candidate who uses she/her pronouns as being female.

[16] We repeat our analyses with the inclusion of a more granular control for election denialism as well as a further model with these variables as our outcomes of interest in the supplementary material.

linearly related to the number of candidates in a contest, meaning we include a control not only for the total number of candidates but also the total number of candidates squared.[17] In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that the number of candidates is indeed not linearly associated with our outcomes and show that our findings are robust to factorizing this control variable.

Finally, we include controls at the *state level*. Most obviously, we note that the value of winning a primary is highly dependent on the partisanship of the seat in question. We control for state partisanship using Trump's 2020 vote share and demonstrate that our main results are robust to the alternative inclusion of Trump's 2016 vote share in the supplementary material. We further control for other state-level factors associated with Republican performance in general elections (Gelman et al. 2007; Gramlich 2020): median household income, percent of White voters, and urban population as a percentage. These data are all taken from the most recent (2021) one-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. We repeat all our main models with the addition of state fixed effects in the supplementary material, in all cases our results are substantively unchanged.

Analyses

In our first set of analyses, we identify whether each of our theorized signals—Media, MAGA, Money, and Mentions—are associated with a higher share of the primary vote. We demonstrate that all four signals were, to differing degrees, associated with vote share during the nomination.

Having done so, we then focus on how Trump's endorsement mattered for the field. In this second set of analyses, we assess the state of primary fields prior to the former president's endorsement, demonstrating that the candidates he formally supported already had a higher percentage of media coverage, campaign finance, social media attention, and a polling lead *before* Trump intervened in the nomination contest.

Finally, we consider how the primary field changed after Trump's endorsement. In this third set of analyses, we show that Trump's picks subsequently saw an increase in their share of campaign fundraising and also saw polling increases that held through to the primary election.

[17] For example, we would, on average, expect a larger change in candidates' vote share between a contest with two and three candidates than a contest with fourteen and fifteen. Empirically, we expect the number of candidates to be negatively associated with primary performance, but the number of candidates squared to be positively associated.

Trump's endorsement, however, was not associated with increased media coverage or social media attention.

Importantly, data availability prevents us from implementing a causal research design. Individual primary polls are notoriously unreliable and subject to pollsters' 'house effects' (see e.g., Silver 2012). Further, these polls are conducted intermittently, presenting challenges in the sequencing of performance that would be necessary to identify change precisely. Similarly, campaign finance reporting is less than precise temporally, meaning we aggregate these variables into pre- and post-endorsement periods. These restrictions limit our ability to conduct causal analyses using these data,[18] meaning we instead use a sequential approach to better identify and understand the relationships in our data. We also note that our intra-party signals are almost certainly interrelated and not exogenous to one another, we address this problem empirically by running separate models with further robustness checks in the supplementary material.

Who Decides?

We demonstrate that all four signals were associated with a greater percentage of the primary vote share using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in Figure 1 and Table 2.[19] OLS estimates may be biased when independent variables are too highly correlated, meaning we present the correlations of our key independent variables in Table 1. Here, we see that none of our variables are correlated above the standard measure of 0.6 (the highest correlation is Media with Money at 0.596). Given the potential for these correlations to produce biased estimates, we perform a variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis after this regression with results shown in the supplementary material. None of our key independent variables have a VIF above two-and-a-half. In the supplementary material, we also repeat our analysis with the removal of the control variables that score above five in our VIF, our results are unchanged. To further address the question of multicollinearity, we also perform a series of ridge regressions[20] with cross validation

[18] We are, for example, unlikely to observe anything close to random assignment of Trump endorsements that would be needed to construct the reliable counterfactual group needed to infer causality. Moreover, the temporal variation in these data, with some endorsements coming many months before a primary and likely conditioning the (non-)entry of alternative candidates and others coming days before the election mean we would observe heterogenous effects. Most fundamentally, we do not have enough dynamic time series data in the form of reliable polling to be able to estimate endorsement effects.

[19] The total number of observations in Table 2 is 239 rather than the full 362 candidates due to missing data in our key independent variables (most often Twitter). In the supplementary material we demonstrate the robustness of our results to using each independent variable separately, incorporating all 362 candidates across different models.

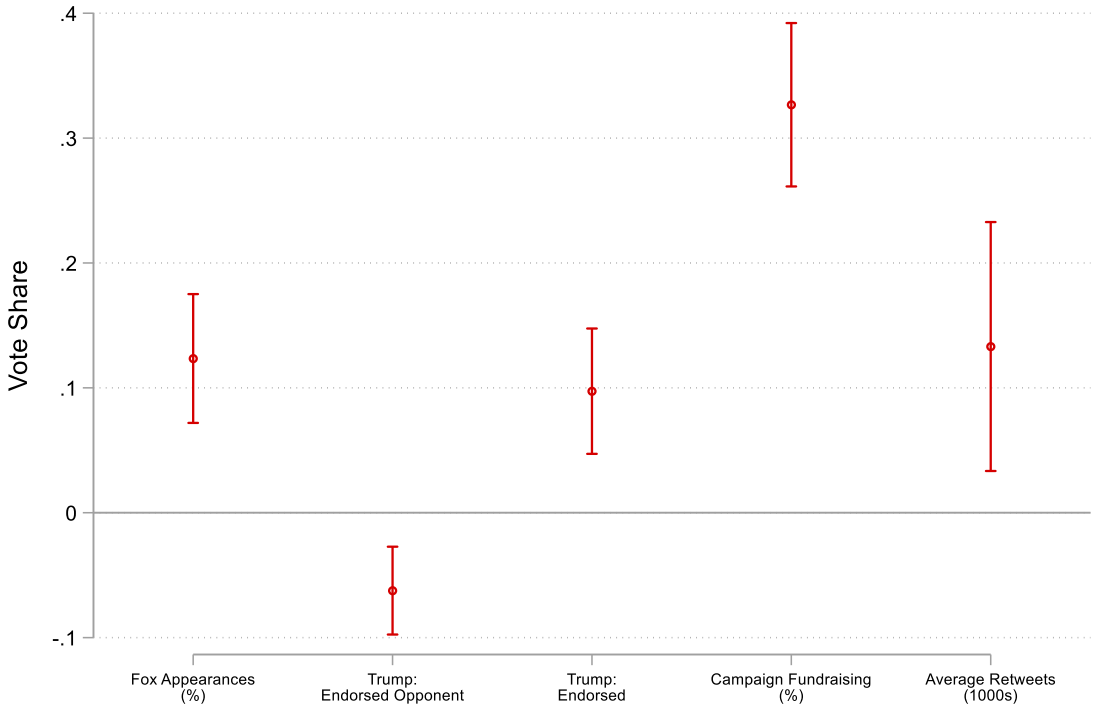
[20] Including ordinary ridge regressions with varying levels of k (from 0.1 through 1), a generalized ridge regression, an iterative ridge regression, and an adaptative ridge regression. See supplementary material Table A.23 to Table A.28.

in the supplementary material, again our results are unchanged. That the results from these further models closely align with our initial OLS estimates gives us confidence that these findings are unbiased and not an artifact of multicollinearity between our independent variables.

Table 1: Correlation Coefficients Between Independent Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Media (1)	1.000				
Trump: Endorsed (2)	0.465	1.000			
Trump: Endorsed Opponent (3)	-0.192	-0.317	1.000		
Money (4)	0.596	0.456	-0.278	1.000	
Mentions (5)	0.340	0.322	-0.102	0.257	1.000

Figure 1: Who Decides? Vote Share Coefficients



Candidates who dominated their primary field in media appearances, with all of their race's appearances on Fox News outperformed candidates who never appeared on the channel by twelve (0.123) percentage points give or take two and a half points (0.026). In the supplementary material, we also demonstrate an association with *ever* making a Fox News appearance, estimated at eight percentage points (0.079).[21] Trump's endorsements were also a further key predictor of primary vote share. Our model finds that endorsed candidates received on average almost ten percentage points (0.097) more of the vote compared to candidates in races where Trump declined

[21] Each individual Fox appearance was associated with a roughly half percentage point vote share increase.

to endorse. Facing a Trump-endorsed opponent was associated with a six percentage point (–0.062) decrease in vote share.[22]

Table 2: Who Decides? Vote Share Model

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.123***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***
	(0.018)
Trump: Endorsed	0.097***
	(0.025)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.327***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.133**
	(0.051)
Candidate Incumbent	0.145***
	(0.037)
Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.091***
	(0.017)
Candidate Female	0.043**
	(0.016)
Candidate Election Denier	-0.039**
	(0.015)
Number of Candidates	-0.028***
	(0.006)
Number of Candidates^2	0.001**
	(0.000)
Observations	239
R^2	0.841

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Campaign fundraising was another indicator of performance in the primary. All else being equal, candidates who received 100 percent of the funding in their primary race outperformed opponents with zero percent of the primary receipts by over thirty-three points (0.327) give or take three points (0.033).[23] Finally, we see that social media attention also mattered. Every thousand additional average retweets that a candidate received on Twitter was associated with

[22] The asymmetry in the size of the Trump endorsement coefficients is the result of endorsed candidates taking vote share from multiple of their primary opponents.

[23] Of course, few candidates dominated their primary fundraising to this extent. We present our results using the standard deviations of our Media, Money, and Mentions variables in the supplementary materials. For campaign financing, a one standard deviation increase was associated with almost ten percentage point rise in vote share.

roughly thirteen additional percentage points of primary vote share (0.133).[24] In other words, all four of our expected signals were, to different degrees, positively associated with higher primary vote share.

We also report coefficients of the significant control variables in Table 1.[25] Candidates' prior experience—incumbency and non-incumbent candidate quality—was predictive of vote share in the theorized direction. Candidates' gender was also positively associated with vote share, with female candidates receiving, on average, four and a half points (0.046) more of the vote. Women are consistently perceived by voters as being more liberal (Kitchens and Swers 2016; Koch 2000), which might be expected to hurt a candidate in a Republican primary while being advantageous for a Republican candidate in a general election, particularly in a close election. This advantage may have led the formal apparatus of the Republican Party to help female candidates during their primaries, for example by offering endorsements, providing staffers, or clearing the field of alternative strong candidates. These tactics may have also been an attempt to redress the partisan imbalance in women's descriptive representation.[26] Women also self-select out of running for public office as they perceive that they are held to a higher standard (Fox and Lawless 2005; Lawless and Fox 2010; Kanthak and Woon 2015). This process of self-selection means that only highly ambitious, qualified, and capable women emerge as candidates, creating a qualifications gap. In other words, the women in our sample are likely more qualified than the men, or, at least, there are fewer 'amateur' female candidates in our data than men who run without any form of qualification or institutional support.

Our election denialism control was also substantively significant, with candidates who "raised questions" or "fully denied" the 2020 presidential election results receiving, on average, roughly four (0.039) percentage points less vote share, give or take a point and a half (0.015). In the supplementary material, we also operationalize election denialism as a continuum using all of *FiveThirtyEight*'s categories, where each step change in denialism was significantly associated with a more than one percentage point (0.012) decrease in vote share. These findings run counter to research examining general election candidates' 2022 primary performance (Malzahn and Hall 2023). That we find Republican primary voters prefer candidates who do not deny the legitimacy of elections could suggest that primary voters are conscious of candidate 'electability' in general

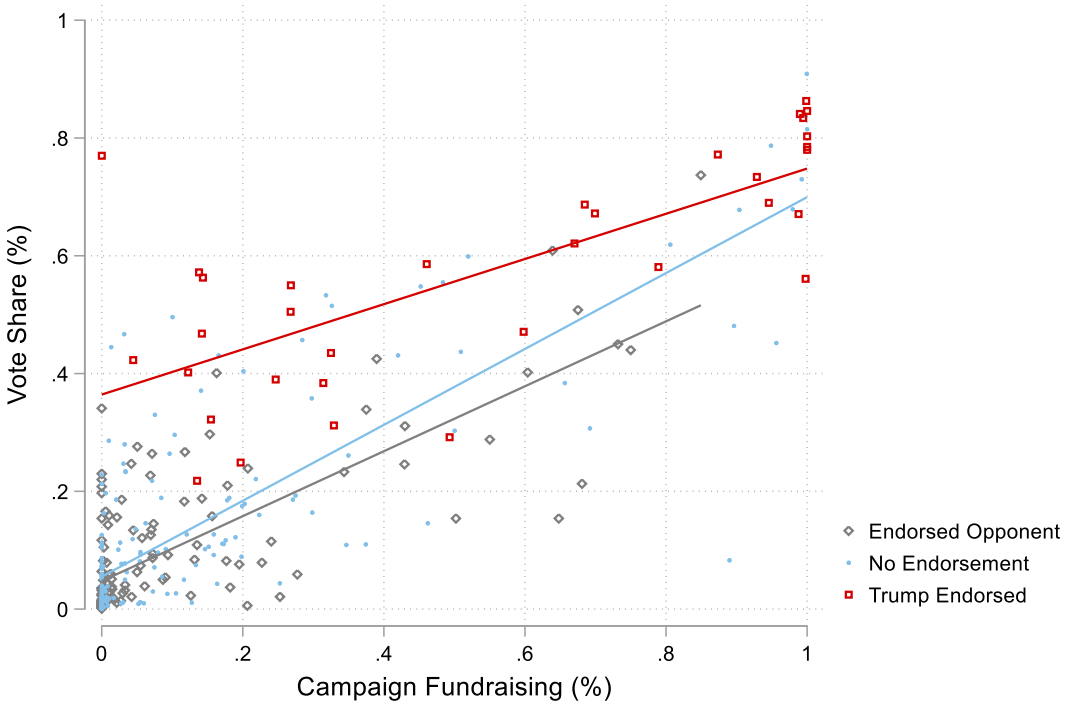
[24] In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that this relationship is also present for the average number of favorites that candidates' Twitter posts received.

[25] We report coefficients for all control variables in the supplementary material.

[26] Other studies (Cowburn and Conroy 2023) indicate that the Republican Party has attempted to provide additional support to female candidates running for statewide office in recent election cycles.

elections (see also Owen and Grofman 2006; Masket 2020). This explanation would with empirical scholarship that runs counter to the narrative of primary voters as ideologically extreme (Boatright 2014; Hirano and Snyder 2019; Hirano et al. 2010; Sides et al. 2020). That our findings here are not just zero but negatively associated with primary vote share suggests that the salience of this issue may have cut through to Republican primary voters in 2022. Candidates who denied the results of the 2020 election could have been supported at a lower rate either because primary voters disagreed with them on the issue, or because they thought having an election denier as the nominee would harm the party's chances in November. Alternatively, these candidates may just have been worse than alternatives, with more 'electable' candidates potentially less likely to embrace election denialism and fringe candidates openly adopting denialist positions to garner attention.[27]

Figure 2: Correlation Between Fundraising & Vote Share by Trump Endorsement



Descriptively, we also see some clear associations between our signals and the share of the primary vote. Figure 2 shows the correlation between candidates' campaign fundraising and their vote share across different categories of Trump endorsement. Candidates who Trump endorsed received a higher share of the vote than their competitors across all levels of fundraising such that

[27] All our state-level controls were non-significant and no difference between Senate and gubernatorial candidates was observed. We demonstrate the robustness of our findings to the inclusion of state fixed effects in the supplementary material. Our two controls for the number of candidates in a primary contest were both significant in the expected direction as shown in Table 1

these trends are parallel. In races where Trump made no endorsement, campaign fundraising was even more important. For these candidates, receiving little in the way of finance meant they received similar vote shares to those candidates Trump endorsed against, yet, when they dominated their primary fundraising, they received almost as much of the vote share as those candidates whom Trump endorsed.

Though candidates care about their vote share, their goal when running in a primary is to advance to the general election. We therefore attend to the qualities of candidates who won primaries. All incumbents in our sample advanced from their primary, so we only include non-incumbents in this analysis. When candidates are in competitive or difficult primary competitions, as most non-incumbents are, which of our intra-party signals are associated with success? To determine this, we run a logistic regression with the outcome of whether a candidate advanced from the primary election, with the results presented in Table 2.[28]

Table 3: Who Decides? Primary Winner Model (Non-Incumbents Only)

	Won/Advanced
Fox Appearances (%)	3.643**
	(1.217)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-4.549**
	(1.612)
Trump: Endorsed	4.079*
	(1.671)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	2.563
	(1.561)
Average Retweets (1000s)	1.110
	(9.161)
Observations	217

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

The results in Table 2 suggest that, of our intra-party signals, Fox appearances and Trump endorsements were predictive of non-incumbents being able to *win* a primary contest. Though campaign finance alone is likely sufficient to ensure candidates receive a non-negligible number of votes, money is not enough to get them onto the general election ballot. The bulk of elections we

[28] In almost all cases, winning/advancing from the primary meant that a candidate became the general election nominee. Under Alaska's top-four primary two Republicans advanced to the general election in both the governor and Senate primaries. In addition, the Senate races in Alabama and Oklahoma's special election both went to run-offs, in both cases, we code the two candidates who advanced to the run-off as having won/advanced from the initial primary.

examined were crowded multi-candidate races where the winner often edged out their competitors only slightly. Thus, while fundraising helps us distinguish between those who receive many votes and those who receive almost none, it does not help us distinguish among the top few vote-getters. Additionally, Trump's endorsement in many of these races is a confounder, as it provides a vote share boost to some candidates and even secures a win for those candidates who aren't necessarily the top fundraiser in their races. Perhaps less surprisingly, mentions and attention on social media were also not sufficient to get candidates over the finish line in the nomination contests.

Figure 3: Winning Probability Over Fox News

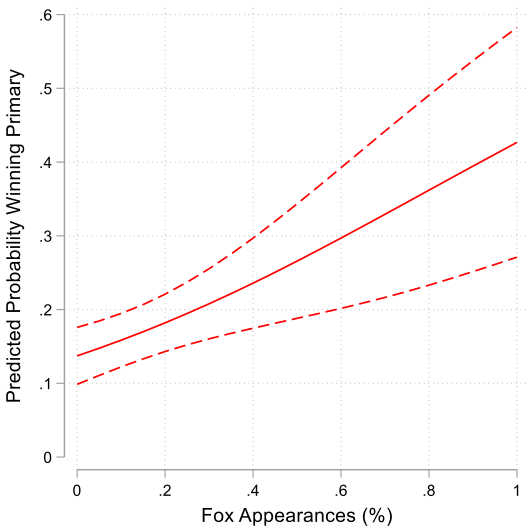
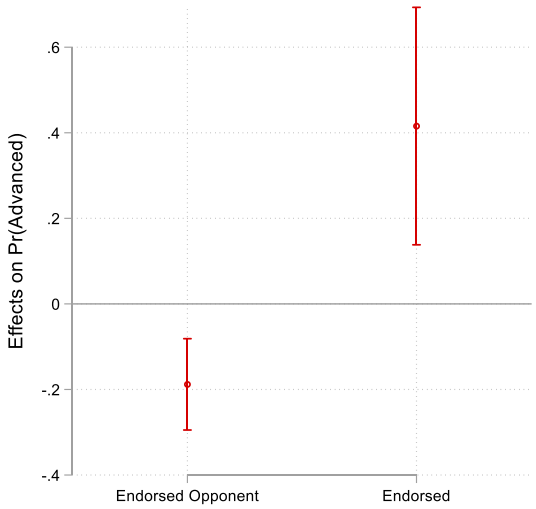


Figure 4: Trump Endorsement



Due to the difficulties in interpreting logistic regression outputs, we present the predicted probabilities of candidates' advancing across different levels of the significant variables, with Fox News appearances in Figure 3, and the marginal effect of Trump's endorsements in Figure 4, with all other variables held at their means or reference values. We see a clear alignment between the candidates' share of Fox News appearances and their probability of winning a primary. Figure 4 shows a clear effect both for Trump's endorsees and the candidates he endorsed against when compared to primary contests where he made no endorsement. Endorsed candidates were, on average, roughly forty-two (0.416) percentage points more likely to advance, whereas candidates whose opponents Trump endorsed were roughly nineteen (0.188) points less likely to become the party nominee than candidates in races where the former president did not intervene.

Who Does Trump Endorse?

Next, we consider the features of endorsed candidates in primary contests *before* Trump decided to endorse. We briefly consider those contests where Trump might have been expected to pick a favorite but elected not to. Table 3 presents the list of contests that took place in competitive or

Republican-leaning states where Trump made no endorsement. Due to Trump's desire to be on the winning side of election contests, we suppose that he is unlikely to endorse in blue states where his candidate will have little chance of winning the general election.[29]

Table 4: Competitive and Republican Leaning States where Trump did not Endorse

State	Race	Trump
Alabama	Governor	No endorsement
Colorado	Governor	No endorsement
Minnesota	Governor	No endorsement
New Hampshire	Governor	No endorsement
New Mexico	Governor	No endorsement
Ohio	Governor	No endorsement
Wyoming	Governor	No endorsement
Alabama	Senate	Endorsed Katie Britt in the run-off
Colorado	Senate	No endorsement
Missouri	Senate	Endorsed 'Eric' in a race with two Erics: coded as no endorsement in our data.
Oklahoma	Senate	No endorsement
Oklahoma (Special)	Senate	Endorsed Markwayne Mullin in the run-off
South Dakota	Senate	No endorsement

Of the thirteen primaries in Table 3, three featured some kind of endorsement by Trump, who eventually endorsed Katie Britt and Markwayne Mullin in their run-off elections and also endorsed 'Eric' in Missouri where candidates Eric Schmidt and Eric Greitens claimed the endorsement. Trump's non-endorsement in the two Colorado primaries may have been a recognition that candidates in both races were unlikely to prevail against popular incumbent Democrats in a state that had been steadily trending more Democratic in recent cycles.

Elsewhere, Trump's non-endorsements appeared to be the result of frosty personal relationships with incumbent Republican officeholders. In the Oklahoma Senate primary, Republican incumbent James Lankford had a contentious relationship with Trump; Lankford initially supported the January 6th challenge to Arizona's 2020 vote count but then changed his mind following the insurrection on the Capitol.[30] Trump eventually endorsed Lankford against his Democratic opponent, saying "sometimes we didn't exactly agree on everything, but we do now" (Snyder 2022).

A similar pattern occurred in the Ohio gubernatorial race, where Trump eventually endorsed incumbent Mike DeWine after the primary (Orr 2022). Trump's relationship with

[29] Indeed, Trump rarely endorsed in races in highly Democratic states. The few instances that he did were the gubernatorial races in Illinois (Darren Bailey), Maryland (Dan Cox), and Massachusetts (Geoff Diehl), and the Senate race in Connecticut (Leora Levy).

[30] The state party chair went as far as to endorse his primary challenger, Jackson Lahmeyer.

incumbent Senator John Thune from South Dakota was even less cordial, where Trump publicly and unsuccessfully lobbied Governor Kristi Noem to primary the incumbent senator (Trump 2021).[31] Trump's non-endorsement of incumbent Alabama Governor Kay Ivey was connected to his belief that she canceled one of his rallies (Bender 2021),[32] and his multiple differences with New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu have been seen as encapsulating the party's internal cleavage both in terms of style and substance. The central narrative of contests that Trump did not endorse and where we might otherwise expect him to do so was that he personally disliked the Republican incumbent but was unable to convince a suitably high-profile alternative to run, consequently he declined to support a candidate he likely perceived would lose.

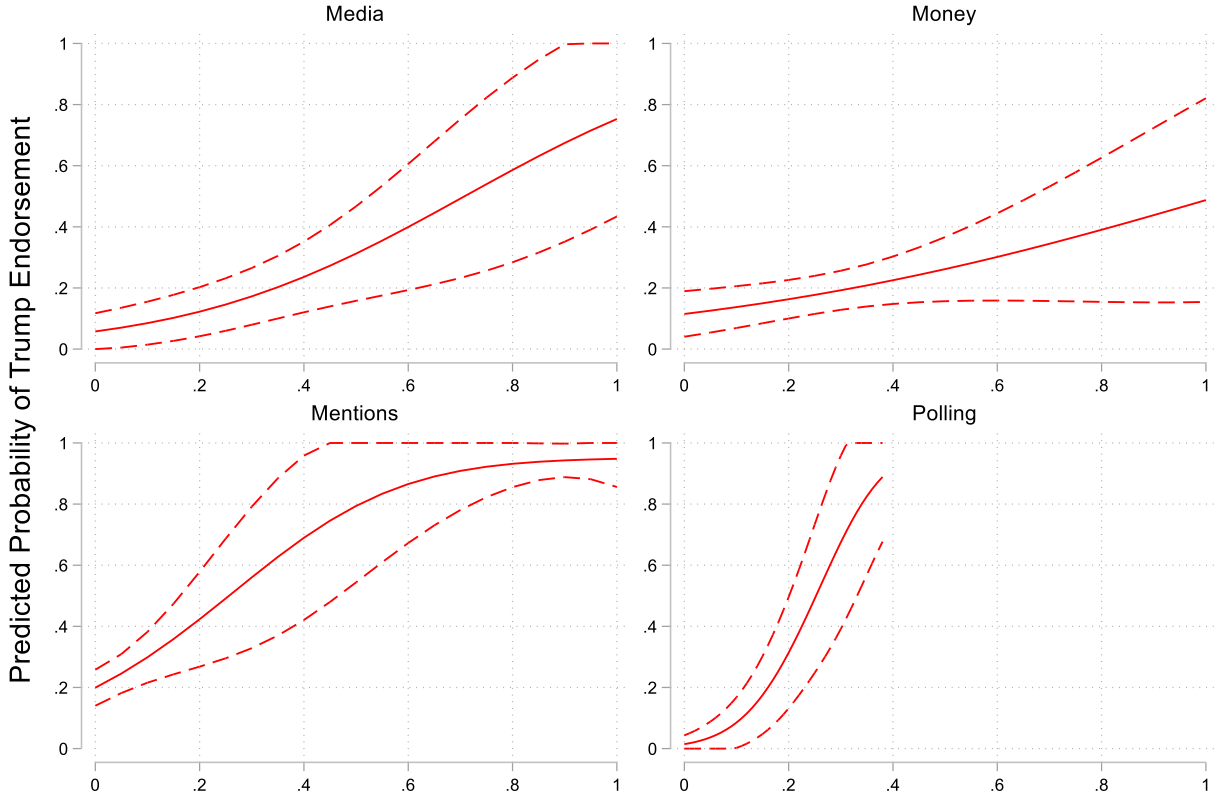
In contests where Trump made an endorsement, he did not do so at random. In Figure 5, we present the predicted probabilities of receiving a Trump endorsement across values of key pre-endorsement signals, calculated using four logistic regressions with Trump's endorsement as the dependent variable.[33] Because our independent variables in these models reflect different aspects of the primary race prior to Trump's endorsement, we only include contested races where Trump eventually endorsed. Among these contests, candidates who garnered Trump's endorsement take a value of one, and those who did not take a value of zero.

[31] Yet, no serious alternatives were willing to take on Thune, and he received more than seventy percent of the vote.

[32] As in South Dakota, Trump unsuccessfully attempted to persuade more notable challengers to emerge.

[33] These models include the same controls used previously, see supplementary for full models with all coefficients. We run separate models given the potential endogeneity issues discussed previously.

Figure 5: Predicted Probabilities of Trump Endorsement in Contested Primaries[34]



Having a higher percentage of Fox News appearances, raising a greater share of campaign finance, attracting attention on Twitter, and leading the polls all significantly increased candidates' chances of being endorsed by Trump (Figure 5). Examples of Trump endorsing candidates already leading their primary polls included Tudor Dixon (MI-Gov), Joe Lombardo (NV-Gov), and Doug Mastriano (PA-Gov). Similarly, Trump endorsed candidates such as Kari Lake (AZ-Gov) and Adam Laxalt (NV-Sen) who were already ahead in terms of fundraising. The mechanism for Trump endorsing candidates who appear more frequently on Fox appears to follow the logic of the 2018 DeSantis campaign discussed at the start of this paper, where appearing more frequently on the channel may have served to attract Trump's attention given his well-documented record of intense viewership (Stelter 2020). Trump also endorsed candidates who received more attention on social media. Across all four signals, Trump was far more likely to support candidates who were already leading their field.[35]

[34] Media, Money, and Polling are shown as a percentage of the primary field. Mentions are raw values in 1000s, two outliers were excluded from the mentions model.

[35] Interestingly, Trump's endorsees were not significantly more likely to be election deniers, as shown in the supplementary material.

How Does Trump Matter?

Having established that Trump's candidates were outperforming their opponents prior to his endorsement, we attempt to quantify the impact of his support, empirically testing how primary fields changed after the endorsement. Given the clear differences between candidates who Trump endorsed and their opponents and our inability to demonstrate pre-intervention trends, these results should not be interpreted as causal.[36] We note multiple potential explanations for our findings.[37] In Figure 6, we present the results of five OLS regressions where the dependent variable is the *change*[38] in outcomes following Trump's intervention. Trump's endorsement is the key independent variable in each model. As in the previous subsection, we require Trump to endorse to construct these outcome variables, meaning our data is restricted to races in which he endorsed, and the coefficients reported are for endorsed candidates against their primary opponents whom Trump not only did not endorse but endorsed *against*.[39]

Figure 6 shows that Trump's endorsement was, on average, associated with a fourteen percentage point increase in campaign fundraising (0.142) and a thirteen percentage point increase in polling (0.128) versus their opponents. Conversely, Trump's endorsement had little impact on the media landscape in the primary, with no associated increase in Fox News appearances or social media attention. Though Trump's candidates had polling leads prior to his involvement in the primary (see Figure 5), in the first available polling we have after his endorsement, this lead had more than doubled. The increase in vote share following Trump's endorsement was not a temporary phenomenon for these candidates. As shown in the result model, these candidates received, on average, eighteen percentage points more of the vote share on election day in the pre-endorsement polling (0.185), give or take three points (0.032). These findings suggest that Trump's

[36] We have relatively little confidence in the accuracy of individual primary polls in particular, which makes casual identification strategies such as a staggered difference-in-differences or regression discontinuity impossible. For example, we would be unable to show parallel trends in a diff-in-diff in part due to the well-known 'house effects' of pollsters. Given these data limitations, we present the results of descriptive analyses only. To be clear, we are therefore unable to say that Trump caused these increases, as he may simply have been endorsing surging candidates, but we are again limited by data availability.

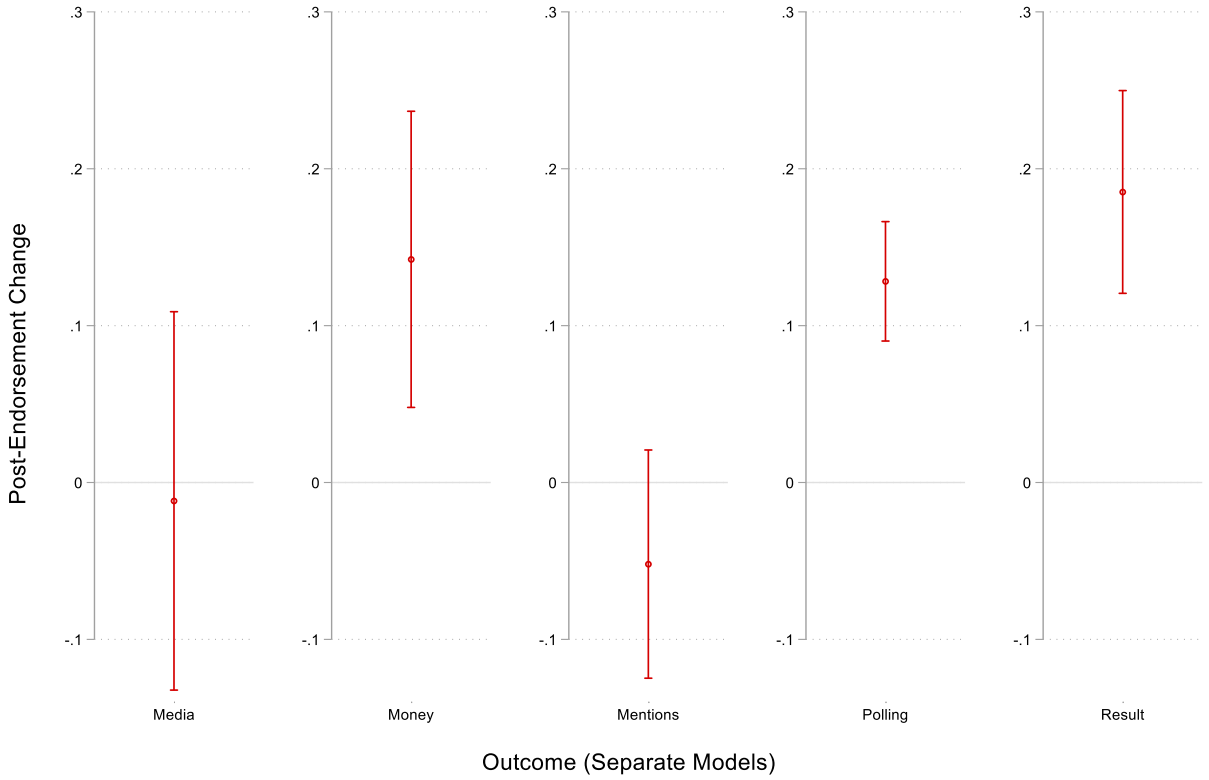
[37] For example, if Trump's endorsees received a higher share of donations prior to his endorsements then perhaps this financial advantage enabled them to raise more money or improved their polling numbers later in the contest.

[38] Our dependent variable for each model is therefore the difference between the value in the dependent variable after endorsement minus the value prior to endorsement. For the 'result' model, we subtract candidates' final pre-endorsement poll number from the final vote share in the primary election.

[39] We include the same controls as the previous models, and full results are reported in the supplementary material.

intervention had an immediate and long-lasting impact, both shaping the Republican primary fields and influencing who emerged as the general election candidate.

Figure 6: How Does Trump Matter? Post-Endorsement Change



Trump's influence can also be seen in high-profile contests where he endorsed a candidate who was not already leading in the polls. As shown in Table 5, Trump's endorsements of candidates such as Tim Michels (WI-Gov), Blake Masters (AZ-Sen), J.D. Vance (OH-Sen), and Mehmet Oz (PA-Sen) all coincided with these candidates jumping to the front of the next poll following their endorsement. All four of these candidates went on to win their primaries. Similarly, his support of candidates such as Herschel Walker (GA-Sen) and Charles Herbster (NE-Gov), who were not leading the fundraising prior to his endorsement, became the largest fundraisers in the period following Trump's intervention. Walker went on to win his primary, though Herbster lost to the pre-endorsement fundraising leader Jim Pillen (Table 5). The descriptive patterns for our Media and Mentions indicators in key races shown in Table 5 indicate little change following Trump's endorsement, in line with our statistical analysis of all contests in Figure 6. Overall, Table 5 offers further descriptive evidence that in notable races, Trump frequently endorsed the candidate who was leading, and that when he supported someone who was not already ahead, they frequently went on to win the nomination.

Table 5: Descriptive Change in Notable Races

Race	Trump Endorse	Leader Pre	Leader Post	Winner
		Fox (Media)		
AZ-SEN	Masters	Brnovich	Brnovich	Masters
GA-GOV	Perdue	Kemp	Perdue	Kemp
GA-SEN	Walker	Walker	Walker	Walker
MI-GOV	Dixon	Dixon	Dixon	Dixon
OH-SEN	Vance	Vance	Mandel	Vance
PA-SEN	Oz	Oz	Oz	Oz
		Fundraising (Money)		
AZ-GOV	Lake	Lake	Robson	Lake
GA-GOV	Perdue	Kemp	Kemp	Kemp
GA-SEN	Walker	Saddler	Walker	Walker
ID-GOV	McGeachin	Little	Little	Little
MD-GOV	Cox	Schultz	Schultz	Cox
NE-GOV	Herbster	Pillen	Herbster	Pillen
NV-SEN	Laxalt	Laxalt	Laxalt	Laxalt
NC-SEN	Budd	McCrory	Budd	Budd
		Twitter (Mentions)		
AZ-SEN	Masters	Masters	Masters	Masters
MI-GOV	Dixon	Kelley	Kelley	Dixon
NV-GOV	Lombardo	Lee	Lee	Lombardo
OH-SEN	Vance	Vance	Vance	Vance
PA-GOV	Mastriano	Mastriano	Mastriano	Mastriano
PA-SEN	Oz	Oz	Oz	Oz
WI-GOV	Michels	Kleefisch	Kleefisch	Michels
		Polling		
AZ-GOV	Lake	Lake	Lake	Lake
AZ-SEN	Masters	Lamon	Masters	Masters
MI-GOV	Dixon	Dixon	Dixon	Dixon
NV-GOV	Lombardo	Lombardo	Lombardo	Lombardo
OH-SEN	Vance	Gibbons	Vance	Vance
PA-GOV	Mastriano	Mastriano	Mastriano	Mastriano
PA-SEN	Oz	McCormick	Oz	Oz

Trump's endorsements may have helped his candidates by funneling financial resources toward them.[40] Though his candidates had more money than their competitors prior to his intervention (see Figure 5), that lead increased a further thirteen points for the period between Trump's endorsement and the primary date. Money is, therefore, one mechanism through which Trump appears to have shaped Republican primary fields, and suggests the former president had the ability to influence large donors and small-dollar grassroots supporters. Money is a key determinant of primary election outcomes (Thomsen 2021) and though Trump's endorsement almost certainly served as a direct signal to many primary voters, many more may have supported his preferred candidates as a result of their—now better-financed—campaign efforts.

[40] Though, as the above example from Nebraska demonstrates, these resources were not always deterministic of success.

The lack of finding in terms of change in Fox News appearances or attention on Twitter is particularly interesting (Figure 6). One potential explanation in line with the descriptive change in races, is that Trump was just too frequently endorsing the person who already led by this metric. Yet, in cases such as the Arizona Senate race for Fox appearances, and the Michigan and Nevada governor races for Twitter, his endorsement failed to move the needle (Table 5). This finding could indicate Trump's lack of influence over those at Fox who made decisions about guest bookings, or an inability to reshape activist preferences online in races where they had a clearly preferred alternative candidate.

Table 6: Individual Fixed Effects

	Polling (No Controls)	Polling (Controls)	Result (No Controls)	Result (Controls)
Trump Endorsement : Time	0.132***	0.135***	0.188***	0.179***
	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.049)
Fox Appearances (%)		0.021		0.111
		(0.031)		(0.097)
Campaign Fundraising (%)		0.027		0.117
		(0.060)		(0.078)
Average Retweets (1000s)		0.128		0.135
		(0.124)		(0.103)
Constant	0.114***	0.107***	0.138***	0.108**
	(0.004)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.033)
Observations	159	117	236	162
R^2	0.535	0.612	0.470	0.553
Number of Candidates	106	78	177	117
Individual Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

To shed further light on the question of influence, we restructure our data as a panel with two time periods. Period one is the figure for each of our signals prior to the Trump endorsement and period two is the respective value following Trump's endorsement. We then run a two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model to demonstrate the significance of the interaction of Trump's endorsement and time on a candidate's polling and their eventual vote share. For each, we run a model without controls and a second model that controls for variation in our other signals following Trump's endorsement. We present the results in Table 6, with standard errors clustered at the individual level. Our main finding is unmediated by the inclusion of controls for change in Fox News coverage, campaign fundraising, and social media attention, indicating a direct relationship between Trump's endorsement and eventual primary vote share. That the substantive size and significance of our interaction term in both models does not change suggests a direct relationship

between Trump's endorsement and vote share, and further suggests that this relationship is not strongly mediated by other signals.

Discussion & Conclusion

We assessed the association between different intra-party signals and primary outcomes in the modern Republican Party, helping to explain what matters when elites send diverging messages about candidates. Overall, our analyses suggest that Fox News appearances, Trump endorsements, campaign funds, and Twitter attention all had substantively large and statistically significant relationships with vote share. Republican candidates who did better on more of these measures tended to win the primary. Relatedly, incumbents advanced from their primaries without exception.

In this respect, our findings cleave to existing explanations for what matters in contemporary contests for elected office. Existing explanations do not, however, take into account a possible situation where a party leader takes a historically active role in shaping the candidate field, and it seems possible that Trump's actions could disrupt our conventional wisdom about candidate selection. Yet, we find that campaign finance, media attention, and activist discussion online remain strong indicators of success in Republican primary elections.

Because the story of the contemporary Republican Party cannot be told without acknowledging the position of Donald Trump, we devoted substantial attention to the peculiar nature of Donald Trump's endorsement, attempting to uncover whether his behavior offset the fundamentals of elections in a substantial way. We confronted a substantial endogeneity problem: did Trump selectively endorse the most successful candidates, or did his endorsement make candidates successful? We assessed different avenues by which Trump's endorsement and candidate success might be connected. Trump's endorsement mattered in that it attracted more of the things that make primary candidates successful in the first place, most obviously in increasing their campaign funds. Candidate quality and early performance also mattered as Trump disproportionately endorsed candidates who were already leading their fields. Yet, Trump's endorsement did not appear to affect the amount of media coverage candidates received, either from legacy institutions such as Fox News, or on social media in terms of attention on Twitter.

As they currently stand, our results show that the fundamentals were stronger predictors of 2022 Republican primary success than popular wisdom has allowed. They can also be interpreted as providing insight into who exactly the party *is*; an essential precursor to understanding what it would mean for the contemporary Republican Party 'to decide' (Cohen et

al. 2008). Today's Republican Party is, as it has been for several decades, a coalition of interest and donor groups, activists, media elite, and current or former elected officials.

Yet, these results also illustrate the new environment in the modern Republican Party network. Though intra-party divisions persist, the "MAGA faction" around Trump now dominates and exerts substantial control over the party's nomination processes. Trump's personal power shows no sign of abating in the 2024 primaries, with early evidence of high-profile candidates dropping out once Trump endorsed an alternative (Mutnick, Beavers, and Everett 2024). As Mitch McConnell remarked after the November election, "our ability to control primary outcomes was quite limited in '22 because the support of the former president proved to be very decisive in these primaries so my view was do the best with the cards you're dealt." (Nava 2022). In much the same way that Chicago Mayor Richard Daley compiled a slate of candidates and made sure they were nominated in the mid-twentieth century, and Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren worked in the 1820s and 1830s to ensure that only Democrats loyal to their endeavor would run under the party's label, Trump has effectively consolidated a regime within his party through his influence over party nominations. It is not the first such faction in party history nor necessarily the strongest, but it is clearly the most powerful today, and it has substantially changed how both the Republican Party, and the nation, are run.

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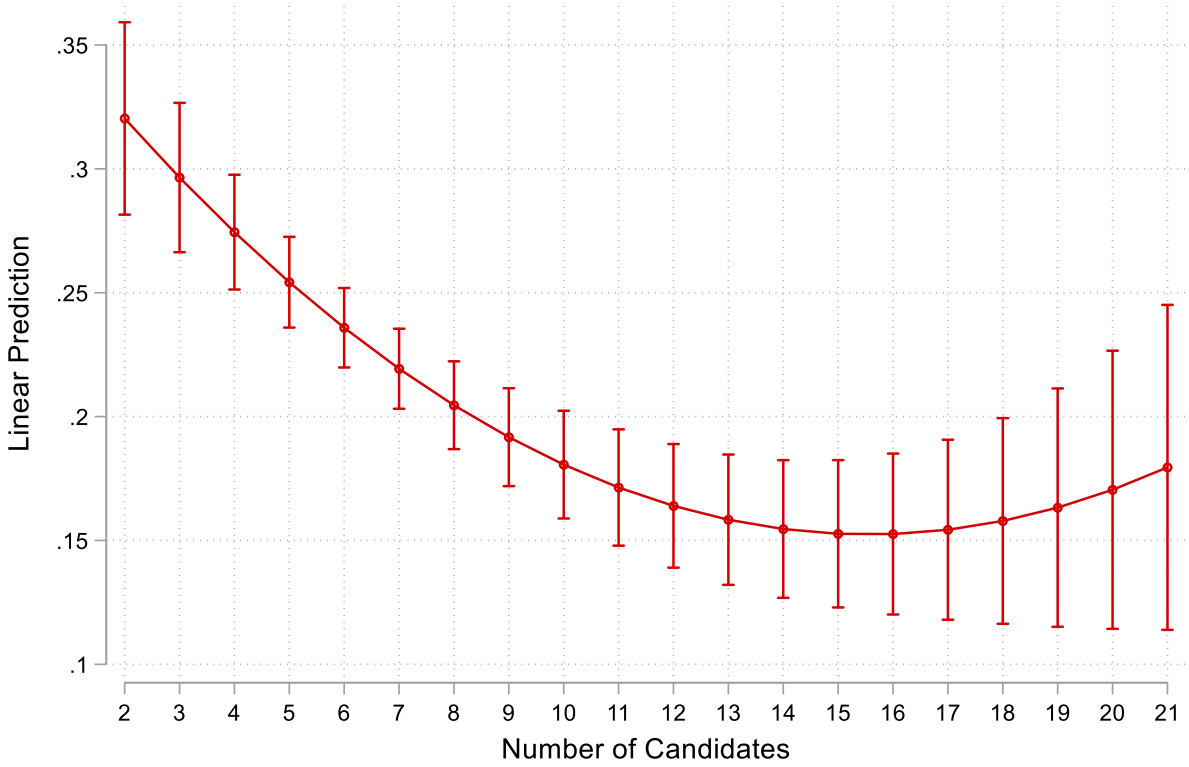
Supplementary Material

In the following we present the full results of each of our models with all control variables shown alongside a series of robustness checks including the addition of state fixed effects and our first series of models using thresholded data.

Justification for the Inclusion of Polynomial Control Term

Figure A.1: Number of Candidates Effect



In our models, we include both the number of candidates and the number of candidates squared as controls. We do this because we expect this relationship to be non-linear. As shown in Figure A.1, we demonstrate that this is, indeed, the case.

Main Models with All Controls Shown

In Table A.1 through A.4 we present the full results of the models included in the main paper, including values for all control variables.

Table A.1: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with Full Controls

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.123***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***
	(0.018)
Trump: Endorsed	0.097***
	(0.025)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.327***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.133**
	(0.051)
Candidate Incumbent	0.145***
	(0.037)
Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.091***
	(0.017)
Candidate White	0.006
	(0.019)
Candidate Female	0.043**
	(0.016)
Candidate Election Denier	-0.039**
	(0.015)
Incumbent Primary	-0.074*
	(0.037)
Open Primary	-0.038
	(0.027)
Republican Held Seat	0.022
	(0.029)
State Median Income	0.021
	(0.012)
State White (%)	-0.019
	(0.066)
State Urban Pop (%)	-0.081
	(0.088)
State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%)	0.045
	(0.132)
Number of Candidates	-0.028***
	(0.006)
Number of Candidates^2	0.001**
	(0.000)
Senate	-0.014
	(0.015)
State Top-Two/Four Primary	0.006
	(0.030)
Constant	0.195
	(0.131)
Observations	239
R^2	0.841

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.2: Who Decides? Winner Model with Full Controls

	Won/Advanced
Fox Appearances (%)	3.643**
	(1.217)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-4.549**
	(1.612)
Trump: Endorsed	4.079*
	(1.671)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	2.563
	(1.561)
Average Retweets (1000s)	1.110
	(9.161)
Candidate Incumbent	-
Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent)	1.933*
	(0.776)
Candidate White	0.606
	(1.058)
Candidate Female	1.224
	(0.779)
Candidate Election Denier	-1.798
	(0.930)
Primary Type: Incumbent	-3.924
	(2.505)
Primary Type: Open	2.119
	(1.364)
Republican Held	-2.129
	(2.117)
State Median Income	0.906
	(0.625)
State White (%)	-1.566
	(3.527)
State Urban Pop (%)	1.831
	(4.176)
State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%)	8.067
	(9.434)
Number of Candidates	-0.141
	(0.426)
Number of Candidates^2	-0.001
	(0.018)
Senate	1.129
	(0.985)
State Top-Two/Four Primary	0.580
	(1.414)
Constant	-13.155
	(7.739)
Observations	217

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.3: Who Does Trump Endorse? Full Controls

	Media	Money	Mentions	Polling
Fox Appearances (%)	4.331***			
	(1.163)			
Campaign Fundraising (%)		2.369*		
		(0.948)		
Av. Retweet (1000s)			8.675**	
			(2.980)	
Polling (%)				20.567**
				(7.403)
Candidate Incumbent	1.668	2.975*	4.317***	
	(1.782)	(1.216)	(1.138)	
Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.943	1.077	1.863*	-1.736
	(0.908)	(0.634)	(0.724)	(1.408)
Candidate White	-1.074	-0.617	-0.265	-0.464
	(1.024)	(0.792)	(0.988)	(1.834)
Candidate Female	-0.118	0.147	-0.626	-0.685
	(0.966)	(0.630)	(0.780)	(1.724)
Candidate Election Denier	0.955	0.596	1.203	1.947
	(0.880)	(0.605)	(0.713)	(1.151)
Primary Type: Incumbent	0.006	-0.840	-15.428	-
	(2.492)	(1.567)	(990.467)	
Primary Type: Open	0.558	0.309	-14.259	-2.759
	(1.833)	(1.327)	(990.467)	(4.064)
Republican Held	-0.373	-0.086	14.006	1.355
	(1.819)	(1.279)	(990.467)	(2.319)
State Median Income	-0.392	-0.271	0.099	5.414
	(1.377)	(0.681)	(0.754)	(5.344)
State White (%)	2.315	1.065	6.263	38.150
	(5.141)	(3.264)	(4.108)	(57.923)
State Urban Pop (%)	1.779	0.918	-0.308	54.362
	(7.104)	(4.209)	(4.880)	(78.408)
State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%)	-2.651	-0.916	-2.151	98.085
	(14.261)	(7.667)	(8.386)	(76.831)
Number of Candidates	-0.223	-0.259	-0.416	-0.488
	(0.708)	(0.392)	(0.467)	(0.499)
Number of Candidates^2	0.007	0.007	0.022	0.000
	(0.039)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.000)
Senate	0.032	0.078	0.047	-3.707
	(0.927)	(0.536)	(0.644)	(3.227)
State Top-Two/Four Primary	0.994	0.614	1.812	-
	(3.142)	(1.839)	(2.241)	
Constant	-0.677	-0.186	-4.121	-149.313
	(13.309)	(6.748)	(7.169)	(154.744)
Observations	120	174	125	59

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure A.4: How Does Trump Matter?

	Fox Appearances (% Change)	Campaign Fundraising (% Change)	Av. Retweets (1000s Change)	Polling (% Change)	Result (% Change)
Trump: Endorsed	-0.012	0.142**	-0.052	0.128***	0.185***
	(0.060)	(0.048)	(0.037)	(0.019)	(0.032)
Candidate Incumbent	-0.025	-0.075	-0.021	-	-
	(0.085)	(0.073)	(0.055)		
Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.117*	-0.107*	-0.017	0.006	-0.007
	(0.058)	(0.042)	(0.035)	(0.017)	(0.028)
Candidate White	-0.066	-0.094	0.031	-0.031	-0.013
	(0.063)	(0.052)	(0.042)	(0.021)	(0.033)
Candidate Female	0.012	-0.002	0.001	0.000	0.035
	(0.048)	(0.039)	(0.032)	(0.018)	(0.033)
Candidate Election Denier	-0.043	-0.057	-0.016	0.010	-0.014
	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.019)	(0.030)
Primary Type: Incumbent	-0.001	-0.004	0.018	-	-
	(0.085)	(0.097)	(0.085)		
Primary Type: Open	-0.017	-0.021	-0.025	0.028	-0.102
	(0.081)	(0.085)	(0.074)	(0.038)	(0.094)
Republican Held	-	0.011	0.050	-0.016	0.052
		(0.082)	(0.071)	(0.027)	(0.056)
State Median Income	-0.015	0.027	-0.015	-0.005	0.194
	(0.094)	(0.046)	(0.037)	(0.057)	(0.135)
State White (%)	0.029	-0.027	0.372*	-0.561	1.057
	(0.291)	(0.217)	(0.186)	(0.644)	(1.277)
State Urban Pop (%)	-0.067	-0.018	0.448	-0.830	1.573
	(0.548)	(0.306)	(0.237)	(0.845)	(1.720)
State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%)	0.072	0.191	-0.300	0.357	2.918
	(0.642)	(0.486)	(0.406)	(0.841)	(1.723)
Number of Candidates	0.003	0.004	-0.013	-0.001	-0.020*
	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.005)	(0.010)
Number of Candidates^2	-0.000	-0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Senate	-0.017	-0.021	-0.022	-	-0.118
	(0.063)	(0.037)	(0.029)		(0.065)
State Top-Two/Four Primary	0.045	-0.037	0.085	-	-
	(0.226)	(0.115)	(0.103)		
Constant	0.139	-0.142	-0.340	0.904	-4.356
	(0.669)	(0.419)	(0.341)	(1.179)	(3.495)
Observations	88	164	124	53	59
R^2	0.088	0.115	0.119	0.595	0.523

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Table A.5: Who Decides? Dichotomous Fox Model (Media)

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances? Dichotomous	0.079***	1.933*
	(0.017)	(0.805)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.068***	-3.992**
	(0.018)	(1.372)
Trump: Endorsed	0.099***	4.153*
	(0.025)	(1.636)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.331***	2.908
	(0.033)	(1.485)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.133**	-0.272
	(0.051)	(6.471)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.840	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.5 demonstrates that our finding for Fox News appearances is robust to being operationalized as a dichotomous variable which takes the value one if a candidate ever appeared on Fox and zero otherwise. Here, we see that ever appearing on Fox was associated with a roughly eight percentage point increase in vote share (0.079) and was also positively associated with winning the primary.

Table A.6: Who Decides? Raw Fundraising Figure (Money)

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.183***	3.987**
	(0.030)	(1.233)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.085***	-5.085**
	(0.021)	(1.684)
Trump: Endorsed	0.118***	4.043*
	(0.030)	(1.731)
Campaign Fundraising ($10s millions)	0.008	0.417
	(0.004)	(1.012)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.131*	0.163
	(0.060)	(7.571)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.773	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.6 demonstrates that our finding for campaign finance is not robust to operationalization as the raw figure in dollars. This finding indicates that it is the relative amount of funding that a candidate raises rather than the absolute figure that matters in a primary.

Table A.7: Who Decides? Average Favorites Model (Mentions)

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.121***	3.626**
	(0.026)	(1.217)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***	-4.567**
	(0.018)	(1.616)
Trump: Endorsed	0.094***	4.026*
	(0.026)	(1.675)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.327***	2.570
	(0.033)	(1.565)
Average Favorites (1000s)	0.028**	0.478
	(0.010)	(2.225)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.842	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.7 demonstrates that our results are robust to the alternative operationalization of social media mentions using the average number of favorites rather than the average number of retweets of a Twitter post to operationalize our mentions variable.

Table A.8: Who Decides? Trump 2016 Control

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.123***	3.750**
	(0.026)	(1.201)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.063***	-4.535**
	(0.018)	(1.518)
Trump: Endorsed	0.100***	3.809*
	(0.026)	(1.626)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.319***	1.846
	(0.034)	(1.480)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.129*	1.123
	(0.051)	(8.656)
Trump 2016 Vote Share	0.106	7.811
	(0.130)	(8.743)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.839	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.8 demonstrates that our results are robust to the alternative operationalization of state partisanship using Trump's 2016 rather than his 2020 vote share as our control variable.

Table A.9: Who Decides? Election Denialism as Scale

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.124***	3.757**
	(0.026)	(1.204)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***	-4.511**
	(0.018)	(1.526)
Trump: Endorsed	0.101***	3.805*
	(0.026)	(1.616)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.319***	1.837
	(0.034)	(1.475)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.129*	1.260
	(0.051)	(8.312)
Candidate Election Denial Scale	-0.012*	-0.479
	(0.006)	(0.309)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.839	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

In Table A.9 we use the full range of election denialism rather than our dichotomous operationalization of this variable. *FiveThirtyEight* categorize candidates into one of the following categories which we assign the below values:

1	Fully accepted
2	Accepted with reservations
3	No comment
4	Avoided answering
5	Raised questions
6	Fully denied

Given the contestable nature of this order—for example, is "no comment" further along the denialism scale than "accepted with reservations" and less than "avoided answering"?—we use our dichotomous operationalization of this control in the main paper. In Table A.9, we also demonstrate that vote share is negatively associated with higher values along the full range of this scale, where each additional value of this scale was associated with just over a percentage point decrease in primary vote share (-0.012).

Table A.10: Who Decides? Number of Candidates Control Factorized

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.126***	4.321***
	(0.026)	(1.289)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.087***	-4.315*
	(0.021)	(1.877)
Trump: Endorsed	0.063*	4.273*
	(0.028)	(2.023)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.310***	2.026
	(0.033)	(1.799)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.164**	1.906
	(0.051)	(11.863)
Number of Candidates: 3	-0.108**	-3.711
	(0.041)	(8.837)
Number of Candidates: 4	-0.129***	-5.912
	(0.036)	(4.778)
Number of Candidates: 5	-0.132***	-5.804
	(0.033)	(4.925)
Number of Candidates: 6	-0.194***	-5.937
	(0.038)	(6.140)
Number of Candidates: 7	-0.181***	-3.963
	(0.042)	(4.785)
Number of Candidates: 8	-0.139***	-4.710
	(0.038)	(7.446)
Number of Candidates: 9	-0.207***	-5.963
	(0.041)	(5.555)
Number of Candidates: 10	-0.191***	-6.269
	(0.044)	(4.997)
Number of Candidates: 11	-0.327***	-10.505
	(0.057)	(6.301)
Number of Candidates: 13	-0.255***	-9.241
	(0.063)	(7.228)
Number of Candidates: 14	-0.158**	-7.531
	(0.053)	(16.640)
Number of Candidates: 15	-0.182***	-5.714
	(0.053)	(4.758)
Number of Candidates: 19	-0.276***	-4.386
	(0.058)	(5.303)
Number of Candidates: 21	-0.261***	-8.158
	(0.058)	(5.724)
Observations	239	217
R^2	0.857	

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement, Candidates Base Category = two candidates)

In Table A.10, we demonstrate that our findings are robust to factorizing the total number of candidates in a primary. As expected, the number of candidates are significant predictors of vote share under this operationalization. Candidates in primaries with more candidates were

significantly likely to receive lower vote shares compared to the baseline category of a primary with only two candidates running.

Table A.11: Trump Endorsements & Election Denialism

	Election Denier Dichotomous	Election Denier Scale
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.373	-0.241
	(0.309)	(0.170)
Trump: Endorsed	0.413	0.439
	(0.488)	(0.261)
Observations	371	371
R^2		0.200

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.11 considers the relationship between Trump endorsements and election denialism. In these models, the dependent variables are the dichotomous and scaled operationalization of *FiveThirtyEight*'s election denialism. The dichotomous model is a logistic regression that takes our dichotomous operationalization as the dependent variable. The scale model is an OLS regression with the scale of election denialism (see above) as our dependent variable. In both cases, there is no statistically significant relationship between Trump's patterns of endorsement and election denialism. Trump was only somewhat more inclined to support election deniers and endorse against election deniers.

Addition of State Fixed Effects

In Table A.12 through A.14, we demonstrate that the results reported in the main analysis are robust to the inclusion of state fixed effects.

Table A.12: Who Decides? State Fixed Effects

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.135***	4.071**
	(0.026)	(1.318)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.053	-2.864
	(0.036)	(6.039)
Trump: Endorsed	0.096*	5.170
	(0.040)	(6.160)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.291***	2.116
	(0.033)	(1.817)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.337***	2.741
	(0.089)	(9.906)
Observations	239	296
R^2	0.883	
State FE	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.13: Who Does Trump Endorse? State Fixed Effects

	Fox Appearances (%)	Campaign Fundraising (%)	Av. Retweet (1000s)	Polling (%)
Trump: Endorsed	0.153**	0.384***	0.164***	0.106**
	(0.050)	(0.066)	(0.048)	(0.031)
Observations	174	120	125	59
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Table A.14: How Does Trump Matter? State Fixed Effects

	Fox Appearances (% Change)	Campaign Fundraising (% Change)	Av. Retweets (1000s Change)	Polling (% Change)	Result (% Change)
Trump: Endorsed	0.146**	-0.015	-0.038	0.128***	0.185***
	(0.051)	(0.063)	(0.036)	(0.019)	(0.032)
Observations	164	88	124	53	59
R-squared	0.121	0.100	0.347	0.595	0.523
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Addition of Primary Fixed Effects

Table A.15: Who Decides? Primary Fixed Effects

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.143***	4.044**
	(0.027)	(1.312)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	0.426	-5.419
	(0.252)	(6.789)
Trump: Endorsed	0.570*	2.443
	(0.250)	(6.768)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.285***	2.137
	(0.036)	(1.814)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.328***	3.146
	(0.096)	(10.405)
Observations	239	159
R^2	0.889	
Primary FE	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.16: Who Does Trump Endorse? Primary Fixed Effects

	Fox Appearances (%)	Campaign Fundraising (%)	Av. Retweet (1000s)	Polling (%)
Trump: Endorsed	4.220***	2.217*	10.874**	20.567**
	(1.149)	(0.985)	(3.938)	(7.403)
Observations	120	174	113	59
Primary FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Table A.17: How Does Trump Matter? Primary Fixed Effects

	Fox Appearances (% Change)	Campaign Fundraising (% Change)	Av. Retweets (1000s Change)	Polling (% Change)	Result (% Change)
Trump: Endorsed	-0.015	0.147**	-0.031	0.128***	0.185***
	(0.063)	(0.052)	(0.036)	(0.019)	(0.032)
Observations	88	164	124	53	59
R-squared	0.100	0.121	0.367	0.595	0.523
Primary FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Restriction of Inclusion Based on Thresholds

In Table A.15 and A.16 we repeat our main models using the two most common thresholds in the primary literature. In Table A.15 we restrict inclusion to those candidates who received 15% or more of the primary vote share. In Table A.16 we restrict inclusion to those candidates who raised enough money to require them to file campaign finance reports.

Table A.18: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with 15% Vote Threshold

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.092**
	(0.031)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.069*
	(0.027)
Trump: Endorsed	0.056
	(0.029)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.254***
	(0.042)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.142*
	(0.054)
Observations	110
R^2	0.811

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.19: Who Decides? Vote Share Model with Financial Threshold

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.117***
	(0.028)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.073***
	(0.020)
Trump: Endorsed	0.096***
	(0.027)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.345***
	(0.038)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.108*
	(0.054)
Observations	200
R^2	0.840

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Descriptive Statistics

Table A.20: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
vote pct	362	.166	.217	0	.909
incumbent	362	.064	.244	0	1
non inc qual	362	.188	.391	0	1
candidate white	362	.845	.362	0	1
female	362	.199	.4	0	1
election denier scale	362	.445	.498	0	1
republican held	362	.525	.5	0	1
median income 10000	362	6.539	.991	4.948	8.706
primary type: challenger	362	.362	.481	0	1
primary type: incumbent	362	.276	.448	0	1
primary type: open	362	.362	.481	0	1
white pct	362	.629	.161	.216	.891
urban pct	362	.747	.127	.351	.942
trump 20	362	.49	.102	.307	.699
number candidates	362	8.917	5.142	2	21
senate	362	.511	.501	0	1
toptwo dummy	362	.113	.317	0	1

VIFs & Removal of Control Variables

When we run the VIFs on our OLS model for RQ1, the concerning variables are the candidates and candidates squared (this makes sense given that we include both), these are not a concern for our estimation.

Table A.21: VIFs

Variable	VIF
Media	1.82
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	1.82
Trump: Endorsed	1.75
Money	2.43
Mentions	1.24
Incumbent	2.73
Non-Incumbent Quality	1.23
Candidate White	1.26
Female	1.07
Election Denier	1.26
Primary Type: Incumbent	6.80
Primary Type: Open	3.94
Republican Held	5.16
Median Income	3.11
White Percentage	2.64
Urban Percentage	3.16
Trump 2020	4.33
Number of Candidates	23.67
Number of Candidates^2	22.92
Senate	1.36
Top-Two Primary	1.63
Mean VIF	*4.54*

Table A.21 does indicate that some of our control variables have multicollinearity, we repeat our main analysis for RQ1 with the removal of all controls that score above five (a conservative value) in Table A.22 below.

Table A.22: RQ1 with Reduced Controls

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.134***
	(0.028)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.038*
	(0.017)
Trump: Endorsed	0.127***
	(0.026)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.381***
	(0.034)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.114*
	(0.054)
Observations	239
R^2	0.812

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Ridge Regressions

Given the potential for concerns about multicollinearity in our data, we also perform a series of ridge regressions for RQ1. Our results are substantively unchanged when we perform: ordinary ridge regressions with varying levels of k (from 0.1 through 1), generalized ridge regression, iterative ridge regression, and adaptative ridge regression. The results of these additional models give us confidence that our OLS estimates are unbiased.

Table A.23: Ordinary Ridge Regression ($k = 0.1$)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.178***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed	0.130***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	0.393***
	(0.032)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.222***
	(0.020)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.036***
	(0.009)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table A.24: Ordinary Ridge Regression ($k = 0.5$)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.178***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed	0.130***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	0.393***
	(0.032)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.222***
	(0.020)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.036***
	(0.009)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table A.25: Ordinary Ridge Regression ($k = 1$)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.178***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed	0.130***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	0.393***
	(0.032)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.222***
	(0.020)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.036***
	(0.009)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table A.26: Generalized Ridge Regression

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.128***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed	0.099***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.066***
	(0.018)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.328***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.125*
	(0.051)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table A.27: Iterative Ridge Regression

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.130***
	(0.027)
Trump: Endorsed	0.100***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.067***
	(0.018)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.323***
	(0.034)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.121*
	(0.051)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

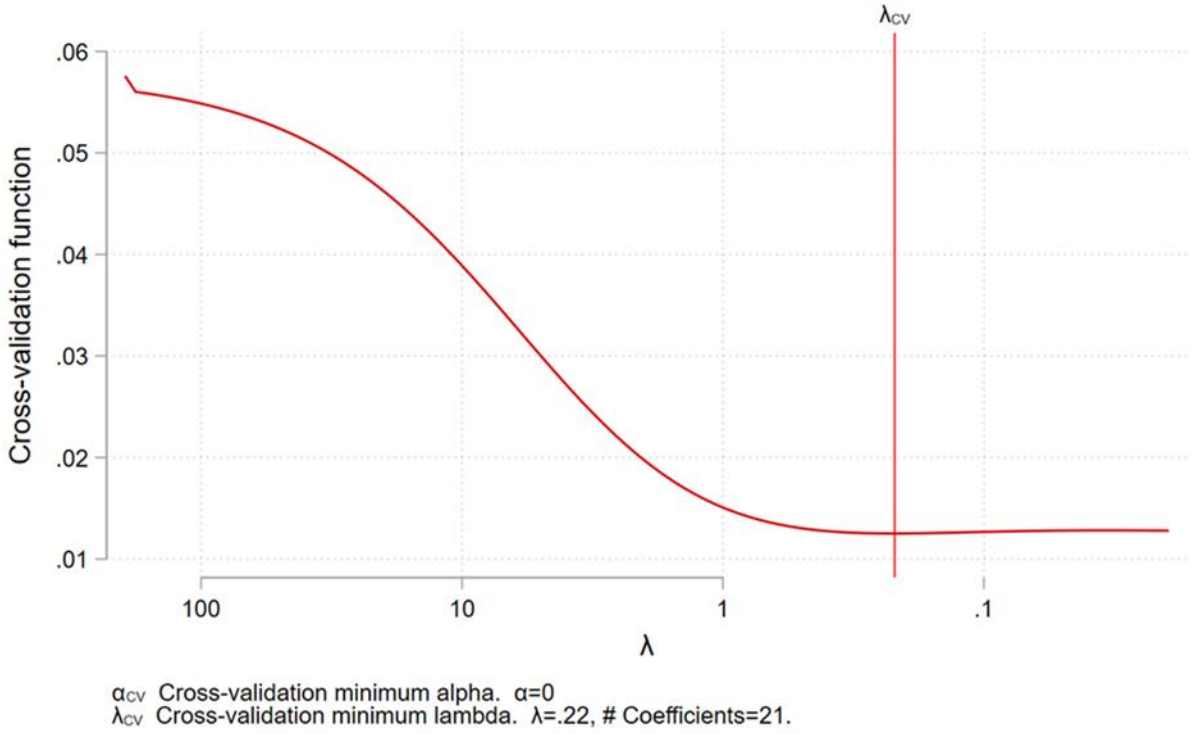
Table A.28: Adaptative Ridge Regression

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.124***
	(0.026)
Trump: Endorsed	0.097***
	(0.025)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.063***
	(0.018)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.327***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.132**
	(0.051)
Observations	239

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Finally, we conduct cross validation for the ridge regressions, with the results presented in Figure A.2.

Figure A.2: Ridge Regression Cross-Validation



Removal of Non-Partisan Primaries

We show the results of our main analyses without the inclusion of Top-Two (CA, WA) or Top-Four (AK) primaries.

Table A.29: Who Decides? Excluding Non-Partisan Races

	Vote Share (%)	Winner
Fox Appearances (%)	0.126***	4.579**
	(0.028)	(1.610)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.061**	-5.087**
	(0.019)	(1.833)
Trump: Endorsed	0.100***	4.275*
	(0.027)	(1.896)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.310***	2.696
	(0.034)	(1.700)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.135**	0.443
	(0.051)	(9.947)
Observations	219	155
R^2	0.840	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.30: Who Does Trump Endorse? Excluding Non-Partisan Races

	Fox Appearances (%)	Campaign Fundraising (%)	Av. Retweets (1000s)	Polling (%)
Trump: Endorsed	4.331***	2.369*	8.675**	20.567**
	(1.163)	(0.948)	(2.980)	(7.403)
Observations	120	174	125	59

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Table A.31: How Does Trump Matter? Excluding Non-Partisan Races

	Fox Appearances (% Change)	Campaign Fundraising (% Change)	Av. Retweets (1000s Change)	Polling (% Change)	Result (% Change)
Trump: Endorsed	0.109	0.163**	-0.053	0.128***	0.185***
	(0.060)	(0.052)	(0.039)	(0.019)	(0.032)
Observations	80	151	118	53	59
R^2	0.176	0.130	0.121	0.595	0.523

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Republican-Leaning States Only

To avoid a potential problem in RQ1 where low salience races are contributing to our outcome in terms of vote share, we re-run our initial model only in states where the Republican Party currently holds the seat in question.

Table A.32: Who Decides? Republican-Held Offices Only

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.129***
	(0.031)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.009
	(0.023)
Trump: Endorsed	0.113***
	(0.028)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.314***
	(0.044)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.090*
	(0.045)
Observations	122
R^2	0.918

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Missing Data

Table A.33: Missing Data

Variable	Missing	Total	% Missing
Vote Percentage	0	371	0.000
Fox Appearances (%)	0	371	0.000
Trump Endorsement	0	371	0.000
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0	371	0.000
Retweets (1000s)	**123**	**371**	**33.150**
Incumbent	0	371	0.000
Non-Incumbent Quality	0	371	0.000
Candidate White	0	371	0.000
Candidate Female	0	371	0.000
Candidate Election Denier	0	371	0.000
Primary Type	0	371	0.000
Republican Held	0	371	0.000
State Median Income	0	371	0.000
State White (%)	0	371	0.000
State Urban Pop (%)	0	371	0.000
State Trump 2020 Vote Share (%)	0	371	0.000
Number of Candidates	0	371	0.000
Senate	0	371	0.000
State Top Two/Four Primary	0	371	0.000

The only missing data in our dataset for RQ1 "Who Decides" comes from our Twitter variable, 123 missing candidates. Of these 123 candidates who we do not have Twitter date for, we can see that 8 wiped a previously active Twitter profile (see footnote 12). We expect that the other candidates had no or a very minimal Twitter footprint and therefore repeat our analyses with all missing candidates' values set at the dummy value of zero to enable them to be included. We repeat our initial analysis below with all candidates included. Our results are unchanged.

Table A.34: Who Decides? No Missing

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (%)	0.122***
	(0.022)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.042***
	(0.012)
Trump: Endorsed	0.122***
	(0.021)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.360***
	(0.027)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.121**
	(0.043)
Observations	362
R^2	0.849

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

For RQ2 and RQ3 we are only able to analyze those primary races where Trump made an endorsement, dropping those contests where Trump did not endorse. Given that Trump's endorsements have the potential to be correlated with candidate chances in the primary (therefore biasing our estimates), we present the descriptive differences between included and missing candidates in these races. We demonstrate minimal differences between the two groups on our key variables as shown in the below t-tests, with group 1 showing candidates in primaries where Trump did not endorse and group 2 being candidates in races where Trump made an endorsement. The absence of these differences is likely because Trump's endorsements are correlated with candidate chance in the *general* rather than the *primary* election. For example, someone has to win a Republican primary even a state that the candidate has no chance of winning the general election. We do observe a significant difference in terms of the number of candidates in races in which Trump does (an average of 6.667) and does not (10.684) make an endorsement, meaning we multiple those variables constructed as a percentage by the number of candidates in the primary to give comparable figures. All of these indicator variables produce non-significant t-tests, meaning we can have confidence that our findings in our "How Does Trump Matter?" section are not artificially biased upwards.

Table A.35: Differences Between Candidates in Endorsed & Not Endorsed Primaries

Variable	N1	N2	Mean1	Mean2	Diff	St Err	T-Value
Number of Candidates	190	181	10.684	6.668	4.016	.502	8***
Vote % x Number of Candidates	190	181	1.094	1.008	.086	.149	.55
Fox News % x Number of Candidates	190	181	0.706	.89	-.184	.205	-.9
Raised % x Number of Candidates	190	181	1.002	.987	.017	.163	.1
Retweets	119	129	0.021	.06	-.038	.019	-1.95

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Alternative Media Operationalizations

In response to comments from reviewers about potential problems with our operationalization of our Fox News "media" variable, we demonstrate the robustness of our measure to alternative operationalizations below.

GDELT Mentions

To account for potentially non-random missing data on Fox News's website videos, we re-run our models using an alternative variable of the raw number times the candidate was mentioned on the channel. We construct this variable using the GDELT Project Television Explorer. As in our main model, we rescale GDELT mentions as a percentage of mentions on Fox for candidates in each primary. Our results are unchanged by this alternative operationalization of the media variable, with significant results for RQ1 and RQ2, and non-significant results in RQ3. These findings give us confidence that our measurement of Fox news in the main paper is not biased by missing data.

Table A.36: Who Decides? (GDELT)

	Vote Share (%)
GDELT Fox Mentions (%)	0.088**
	(0.029)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***
	(0.018)
Trump: Endorsed	0.100***
	(0.026)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.337***
	(0.034)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.144**
	(0.052)
Candidate Incumbent	0.142***
	(0.040)
Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.084***
	(0.018)
Candidate Female	0.041*
	(0.016)
Candidate Election Denier	-0.040*
	(0.015)
Number of Candidates	-0.030***
	(0.007)
Number of Candidates^2	0.001**
	(0.000)
Observations	239
R^2	0.831

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Figure A.3: Predicted Probabilities of Trump Endorsement in Contested Primaries (GDELT)

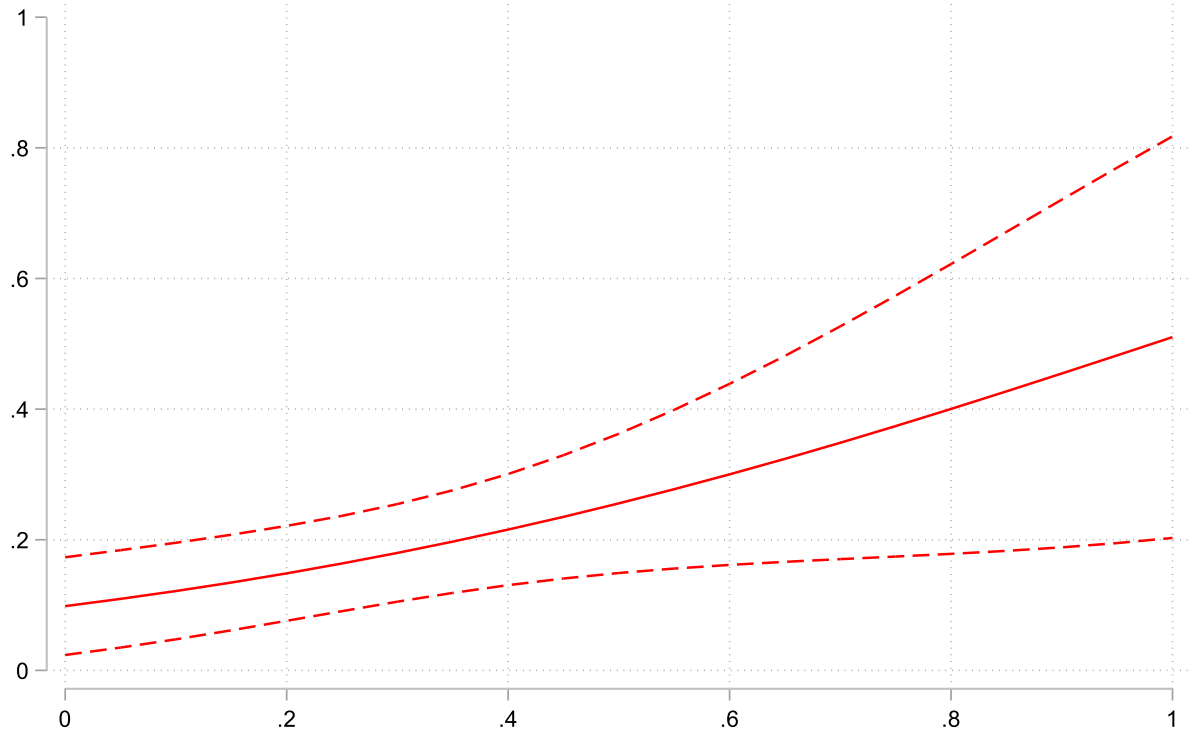


Table A.37: How Does Trump Matter (GDELT)

	GDELT Fox Mentions (%)
Trump: Endorsed	0.049
	(0.030)
Observations	127
R^2	0.042

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Lexis Nexis Speaking Occasions

To further account for potentially incomplete data in the video clips on the Fox website, we also search Nexis Uni to identify the number of times each candidate spoke on the channel. In Nexis Uni, a candidate is mentioned by someone else they appear in lower case lettering. In contrast, they appear in capital letters when they are speaking. We therefore searched each candidate in terms of the number of times they spoke on Fox News between 1st January 2020 and their primary date. For those candidates in a race in which Trump endorsed, we then segmented those data into the pre and post endorsement periods. Having done so, we follow the same approach as in our main operationalization of Fox media, rescaling the raw number of times speaking into a percentage of times for their primary field. As with the GDELT results above, this alternative operationalization of our Fox "media" variable produces results that are consistent with our main

findings (RQ1 and RQ2 significant, RQ3 non-significant), giving further confidence that the appearances identified in the main paper are not biased.

Table A.38: Who Decides? (Lexis)

	Vote Share (%)
Lexis Fox Talking Occasions (%)	0.099***
	(0.029)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.060**
	(0.018)
Trump: Endorsed	0.106***
	(0.026)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.331***
	(0.034)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.132*
	(0.052)
Candidate Incumbent	0.146***
	(0.039)
Candidate Quality (Non-Incumbent)	0.084***
	(0.017)
Candidate Female	0.040*
	(0.016)
Candidate Election Denier	-0.039*
	(0.015)
Number of Candidates	-0.029***
	(0.007)
Number of Candidates^2	0.001**
	(0.000)
Observations	239
R^2	0.833

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Figure A.4: Predicted Probabilities of Trump Endorsement in Contested Primaries (Lexis)

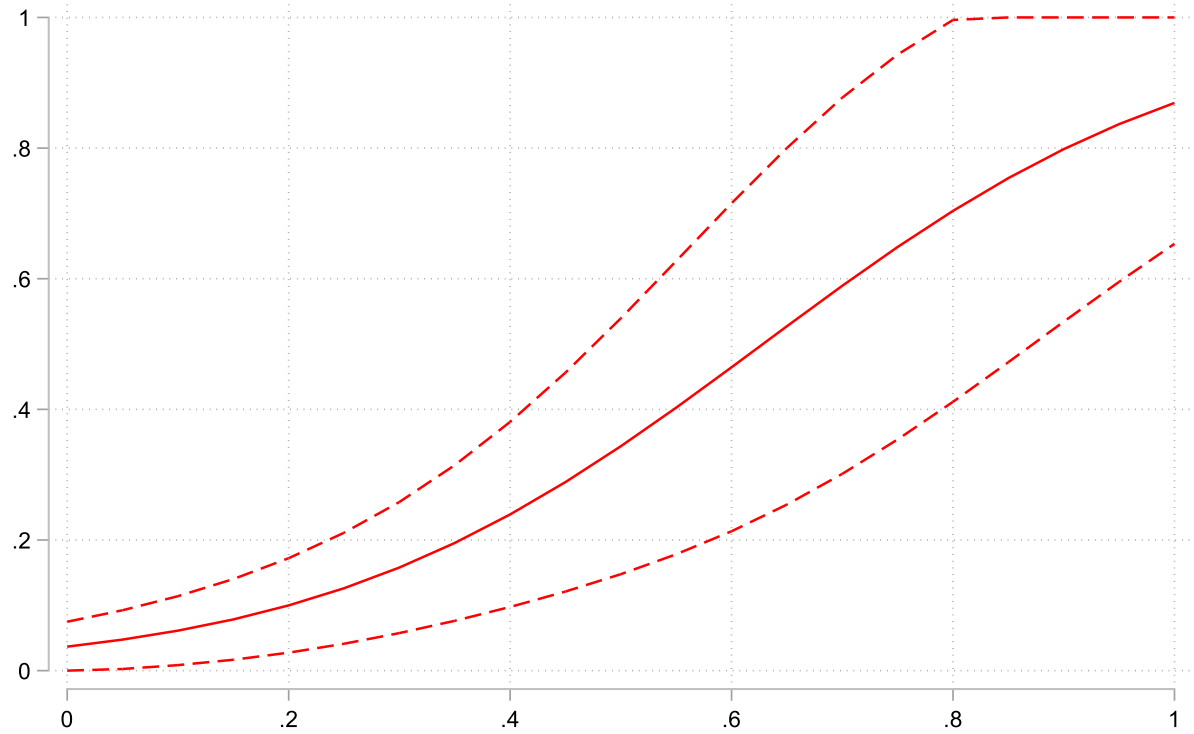


Table A.39: How Does Trump Matter (Lexis)

	Lexis Fox Speaking (%)
Trump: Endorsed	-0.012
	(0.047)
Observations	110
R^2	0.018

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Raw Fox Appearances

We also operationalize our measure in terms of the raw number of appearances on Fox between 1st January 2021 and the primary date. Given the large differences in endorsement timing, we contend that pre/post endorsement models with this raw variable are likely inaccurate. For example, if a candidate appears 14 times in 16 months prior to endorsement and then 3 times in the month between the endorsement and the primary, such a model would interpret this as a decrease (in absolute terms) rather than an increase (in frequency) of appearances. We can however demonstrate that each individual Fox News appearance was associated with a roughly half a percentage point increase in vote share, all else being equal.

Table A.40: Who Decides? (Fox Raw)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (Raw)	0.005*
	(0.002)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.063***
	(0.019)
Trump: Endorsed	0.104***
	(0.027)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.365***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.119*
	(0.057)
Observations	239
R^2	0.828

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Yet, using raw appearances might be problematic for RQ1 as primaries take place on different dates and our collection period starts on 1st January 2021 for all contests. Such a problem will be even more acute for RQ2 and RQ3, given the large differences in Trump's endorsement timing. We therefore rescale the raw number of Fox appearances in each given period by dividing it by the number of days. For clarity, this produces a variable of daily Fox News appearances that is very small (max = .050). The below models use this daily average of Fox News appearances as the media variable.

Table A.41: Who Decides? (Fox Daily)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (Daily)	2.626*
	(1.171)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.063***
	(0.019)
Trump: Endorsed	0.103***
	(0.027)
Campaign Fundraising (%)	0.366***
	(0.033)
Average Retweets (1000s)	0.112
	(0.058)
Observations	239
R^2	0.828

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.42: Who Does Trump Endorse? (Fox Daily)

	Trump Endorsement
Fox Appearances (Daily)	104.152*
	(46.171)
Observations	177

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.43: How Does Trump Matter (Fox Daily)

	Fox Daily (Change)
Trump: Endorsed	-0.005
	(0.004)
Observations	177
R^2	0.288

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Large Wins

Below we show the descriptive breakdown of candidates with large or comfortable primary wins versus other candidates. We split winning candidates into two groups, those who received over sixty percent of the vote share (>60%) and those who received less than this share (<60%). As the below descriptives show, three-quarters of these large wins were by incumbent officeholders. These individuals in particular had more of the Fox media coverage, more money, more attention on Twitter and were somewhat more often endorsed by Trump. In descriptive terms they were no different in terms of race or gender and were just as likely to be election deniers than other primary winners.

Table A.44: Large Winner Descriptive Data

Variable	>60% N	>60% Mean	<60% N	<60% Mean
Fox (%)	34	.753	39	.330
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	34	.059	39	.077
Trump: Endorsed	34	.559	39	.411
Money (%)	34	.908	39	.334
Retweets (1000s)	34	.183	39	.035
Incumbent	34	.735	39	.103
Candidate White	34	.882	39	.897
Candidate Female	34	.147	39	.282
Election Denier	34	.264	39	.231
Primary Type: Challenger	34	.235	39	.436
Primary Type: Incumbent	34	.735	39	.154
Primary Type: Open-Seat	34	.029	39	.410
Number of Candidates	34	3.059	39	8.179

Standard Deviations Instead of Percentages

Table A.45: Who Decides? Vote Share Model (Standard Deviation Model)

	Vote Share (%)
Fox Appearances (SD)	0.038***
	(0.008)
Trump: Endorsed Opponent	-0.062***
	(0.018)
Trump: Endorsed	0.097***
	(0.025)
Campaign Fundraising (SD)	0.097***
	(0.010)
Average Retweets (1000s) (SD)	0.020**
	(0.008)
Observations	239
R^2	0.841

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.46: Who Does Trump Endorse? (Standard Deviation Model)

	Trump Endorse	Trump Endorse	Trump Endorse
Fox Appearances Pre (SD)	1.546***		
	(0.415)		
Campaign Fundraising Pre (SD)		0.766*	
		(0.307)	
Average Retweets Pre (SD)			2.357**
			(0.810)
Constant	0.204	0.306	-3.505
	(13.297)	(6.737)	(7.127)
Observations	120	174	125

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = No Endorsement)

Table A.47: How Does Trump Matter? Post-Endorsement Change (Standard Deviation Model)

	Fox Change (SD)	Campaign Finance Change (SD)	Av. Retweets Change (SD)
Trump: Endorsed	-0.070	0.714**	-0.366
	(0.360)	(0.240)	(0.258)
Observations	88	164	124
R^2	0.088	0.115	0.119

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
(Trump Base Category = Endorsed Opponent)

Additional Note About Polling Data

Polling: We used Ballotpedia because it is one of the few sources to reliably collect primary polling numbers. Other organizations, including *FiveThirtyEight*, do not collect polling for primary races. Ballotpedia's approach to covering polls is detailed here. Given the paucity of data in many races, we include all polling information and aggregate into pre- and post-Trump endorsement periods as well as aggregating across the entire primary. Four examples of polling information from Ballotpedia are shown below:

1. https://ballotpedia.org/Arizona_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(August_2_Republican_primary)#Polls
2. https://ballotpedia.org/Georgia_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(May_24_Republican_primary)
3. https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_election_in_Arizona,_2022_(August_2_Republican_primary)
4. https://ballotpedia.org/Alabama_gubernatorial_election,_2022_(May_24_Republican_primary)

When aggregating these data, we split by the final day of the polling period in all cases except the Nevada governor primary as this includes a pre-Trump endorsement poll (4/28) that is listed as the day after Trump's endorsement (4/27), because the polling period (4/25 to 4/28) included more pre-endorsement days than post-endorsement days and was the earliest poll available. The Nevada governor's primary is the only race that has pre- and post-endorsement polling data from different polling firms. All other contests either have data from the same firm or did not have both pre- and post-polls.