

**Liz Cheney, Donald Trump, and
the 2022 House Election in Wyoming**

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***Abstract:** The defeat of Liz Cheney for the Republican nomination in the race for U.S. House was the culmination of two years of conflict between the congresswoman and Donald Trump. Cheney's prominent role in the hearings of the House Select Committee was only the last act of that drama. But Cheney's relationship with the state's electorate was never affectionate and throughout the campaign, Cheney was swimming against the current of public opinion as majorities of Wyoming Republicans believed Biden's election was not legitimate and evidence of voter fraud in 2020 exists. That current ultimately proved too powerful for Cheney to overcome.*

Introduction

Elections to Wyoming's seat in the U.S. House of Representatives attracted national attention in recent years for the simple reason that Elizabeth "Liz" Cheney—the elder daughter of former U.S. Representative, Secretary of Defense, and Vice President Richard B. "Dick" Cheney—was among the candidates. In 2016, Cheney was elected after prevailing in a multi-candidate primary. Following re-election in 2018, Cheney began her advancement within the House Republican leadership. And in 2022, her bid for a fourth term failed in the wake of challenges to former President Donald Trump. It was a rollercoaster ride that few members of the House have experienced. Although Cheney was only one of ten Republicans to vote for Trump's impeachment in January of 2021, she became the focus of the former president's rage and personal attacks.

This paper examines the 2022 U.S. House race in Wyoming, focusing on public attitudes regarding Cheney and the 2020 presidential election and their effects in the campaign.

Ultimately, Cheney's decision to oppose Trump following the attack on the U.S. Capitol and to assume a prominent role in the subsequent congressional investigation proved fatal to her re-election bid as the state's Republicans aligned with Trump and his endorsed candidate.

Cheney's Electoral History

Liz Cheney's entry into Wyoming electoral politics came in 2013 when she declared her candidacy for the U.S. Senate seat held by three-term incumbent Mike Enzi. A common interpretation of the situation was that Cheney mistakenly believed that Enzi was planning to retire. Analyst Larry Sabato offered a counter interpretation, suggesting that "she's trying to force Enzi out of the race. Because of his age, he may be uninterested in a hard re-election campaign."¹ Regardless of which interpretation is correct, Enzi quickly announced his candidacy for a fourth term.² These events sparked an intra-party squabble that roiled for several months with the Senate's Republican leadership, fellow Wyoming Senator John Barrasso, and retired Senator Alan Simpson supporting Enzi's re-election bid. The race also drew national scrutiny when Cheney announced her opposition to same-sex marriage despite her sister being in a same-sex relationship.³ A survey by Public Policy Polling, conducted in July of 2013, showed Enzi leading Cheney 54% to 26% among likely Republican primary voters. Both candidates demonstrated fundraising prowess as Cheney received \$1.7 million in individual contributions to Enzi's \$2.5 million by the end of 2013. The contest ended in January of 2014 when Cheney announced her withdrawal from the race, citing family health issues.⁴

¹ Dan Whitcomb, "Liz Cheney, daughter of ex-VP Dick Cheney, will run for Senate," *Christian Science Monitor* (July 16, 2013). URL: <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2013/0716/Liz-Cheney-daughter-of-ex-VP-Dick-Cheney-will-run-for-Senate> (last accessed February 21, 2023).

² The events of Cheney's Senate bid are recounted in Michelle Cottle, "Liz Cheney Makes Nice," *The Atlantic*, February 1, 2016. URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/02/liz-cheney-makes-nice/436683/> (last accessed February 21, 2023).

³ Cheney's comments came eighteen months before the U.S. Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). Cheney later renounced her earlier position on same-sex marriage. See: Jonathan Martin, "Dispute over Gay Marriage Erupts in Cheney Family," *New York Times* (November 17, 2013); Annie Karni, "'I was wrong': Liz Cheney Announces Support for Same-Sex Marriage, Reversing a Longstanding Position," *New York Times* (September 27, 2021).

⁴ Jonathan Martin, "For Cheney, Realities of a Race Outweighed Family Edge," *New York Times* (January 6, 2014). URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/07/us/politics/liz-cheney-to-quit-wyoming-senate-race.html> (last accessed March 4, 2023). At the time, there was speculation that "family health issues" was a cover story for withdrawing from a losing race. However, a newspaper reporter in Jackson, Wyoming, told the author that there

Table 1
Wyoming Voters' Perspectives of Cheney, 2013

A. "Do you consider Liz Cheney to be a Wyomingite or not?"

	Registered voters	Prospective Republican primary voters
Consider her a Wyomingite	31%	36%
Do not	50%	44%
Not sure	19%	20%
N =	1,203	780

B. "Do you think it would be more appropriate for Liz Cheney to run for the Senate from Wyoming or Virginia?"

	Registered voters	Prospective Republican primary voters
Wyoming	28%	33%
Virginia	50%	45%
Not sure	22%	20%
N =	1,203	780

Source: Public Opinion Polling survey of Wyoming voters, July 19-21, 2013.

An issue that arose during the abandoned Senate campaign was whether Cheney truly is "of Wyoming." Cheney was born in Madison, Wisconsin, while her parents were graduate students; lived in the Washington, D.C., area while her father served in various governmental positions; graduated from a Virginia high school; attended college in Colorado and law school in Chicago; and worked in the U.S. Department of State during the two Bush presidencies. Her Wyoming connection was living and attending middle school in Casper during her father's first campaign for Congress. Her family's purchase of a house in the Jackson area in 2012

was a serious medical issue involving one of Cheney's children; no specifics were provided out of respect for the family's privacy.

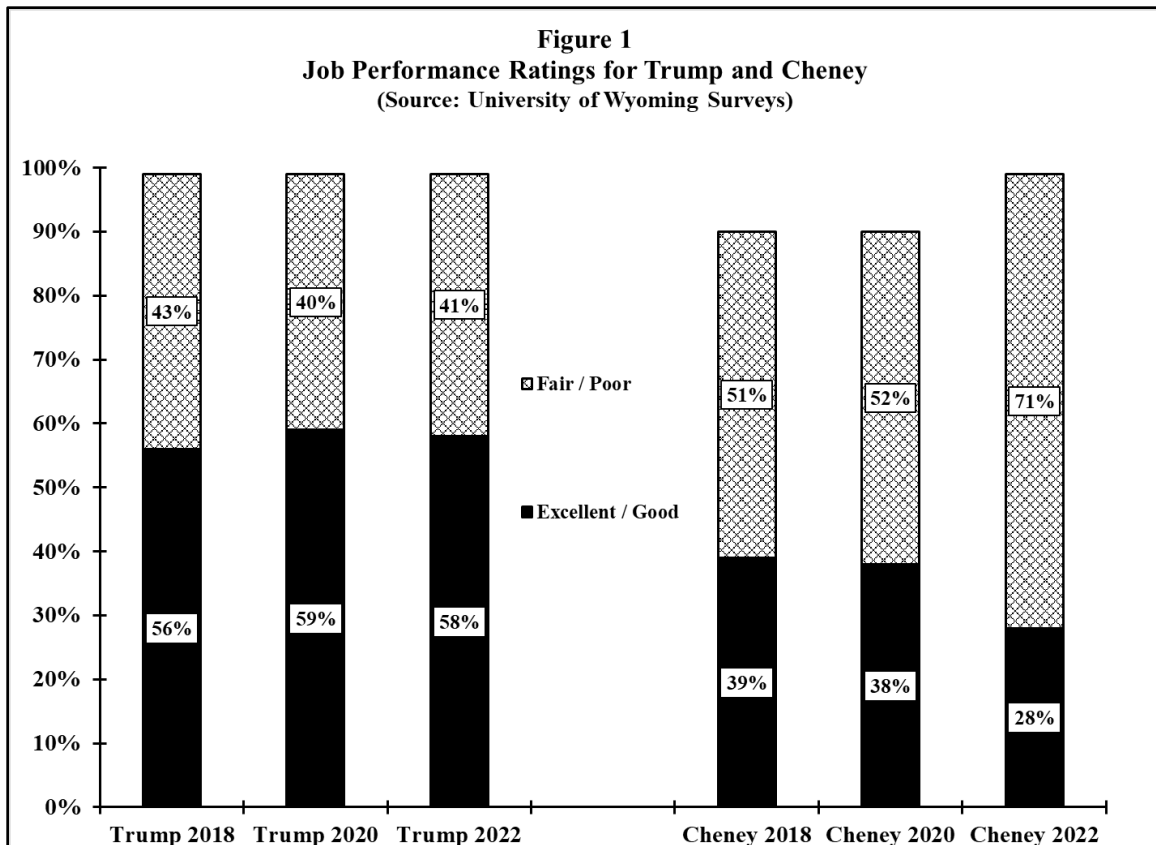
immediately prompted speculation that Cheney would run for Congress sooner or later—sooner, as it turned out. The 2013 Public Policy Polling survey exposed the vulnerabilities of Cheney’s biography. As seen in Table 1, pluralities of Wyoming registered voters and prospective Republican primary participants did not consider Cheney a Wyomingite and thought she was better suited to seek a Senate seat from Virginia.

The residency issue cast a shadow over Cheney’s campaign for the House of Representatives two years later. As Michelle Cottle of *The Atlantic* described the situation, “not all the scars have healed from Liz Cheney’s last rodeo.”⁵ Former Representative Barbara Cubin (R-WY, 1995-2009) commented, “I think they [the voters] feel they were at the worst lied to and at the best manipulated because she claimed to be from Wyoming and had been here a short time.”⁶ Cynthia Lummis (R-WY, 2009-2017), then Wyoming’s congresswoman, offered a similar assessment: “It is a unique strategy to live your entire life elsewhere and then come to a state a year before you’re going to announce you’re going to run for that state’s highest office.”⁷ Nonetheless, Cheney prevailed, winning 39% of the vote in a crowded GOP primary and 62% of the vote in the general election. In two subsequent elections, Cheney breezed to nomination and election against nominal opposition.

⁵ Cottle, “Liz Cheney Makes Nice.”

⁶ Ibid. In an op-ed essay published two weeks before the August 16, 2022, primary, Cubin endorsed Cheney’s principal challenger, Harriet Hageman, emphasizing Hageman’s life-long ties to the state: a fourth generation Wyomingite, born and educated in Wyoming, legal career challenging federal government programs. Cheney was not mentioned by name in Cubin’s essay but the obvious point was to draw contrasts between Cheney’s and Hageman’s biographies. See: “Former U.S. Rep. Barbara Cubin: Why I Am Supporting Harriet Hageman,” *Cowboy State Daily* (August 2, 2022). URL: <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2022/08/03/former-wyoming-congresswoman-barbara-cubin-why-i-am-supporting-harriet-hageman/> (last accessed March 2, 2023).

⁷ Sheldon Alberts, “Poll: 31 percent in Wyoming think Liz Cheney not a ‘Wyomingite,’” *The Hill*, July 22, 2013. URL: <https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/senate-races/156975-poll-31-percent-in-wyoming-think-liz-cheney-not-a-wyomingite/> (last accessed February 23, 2023). When Mike Enzi announced that he would not seek re-election in 2020, there was speculation that Cheney would surrender her seat in the House and start a campaign for the Senate. She decided to remain in the House and Lummis was elected to the class II seat.



Success in elections does not always equate to popularity. Figure 1 displays results from University of Wyoming surveys on the question of job performance.⁸ Respondents are asked to rate the performance of various public officials as “excellent,” “good,” “fair,” or “poor.” Donald Trump, as president and former president, was viewed favorably with at least 56% of Wyomingites giving him a rating of “excellent” or “good.” In contrast, Cheney’s job performance ratings were always “under water.” Near the ends of her first two terms, roughly one-half of the state’s residents rated her job performance as only “fair” or “poor.” There were

⁸ The University of Wyoming has sponsored surveys in conjunction with the general election since 1972. Utilizing a panel design, respondents are interviewed in October and again in November, immediately after the election. The pre-election wave of interviews includes various questions, including evaluations of various elected officials, intended vote, perspectives of candidates (president or governor), party identification, various policy questions, and demographics. The second wave of interviews are conducted immediately after the election and focus on the respondents actual votes.

the expected partisan differences in Cheney’s job performance ratings. In 2018, for example, two-thirds of Republicans rated Cheney favorably compared to only one-eighth of Democrats doing the same. Cheney was able to overcome these negative assessments by overwhelming primary opponents in finances and name recognition, and gaining general election votes from supporters and critics among both Republicans and independents who, other things being equal, preferred a Republican over a Democrat for the state’s lone seat in the House of Representatives.⁹

Cheney in the 115th and 116th Congresses

Members of Congress enter office with a variety of goals. Richard Fenno identified three principal goals for members of the House of Representatives: re-election, good public policy, and influence within the House. According to Fenno, “All congressmen probably hold all three goals. But each congressman has his own mix of priorities and intensities—a mix which may, of course, change over time.”¹⁰ Upon joining the House, Cheney received appointments to the Committee on Natural Resources, a traditional appointment for Wyoming’s representative, and to the Committee on Armed Services, reflecting the importance of Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne. These committee assignments reflected “good public policy” when defined as protecting the economic interests of her constituents. But it was apparent early during her tenure that Cheney’s principal goal was Fenno’s third: influence within the House.

⁹ Indicators of the security of the House of Representatives seat for the Republican candidate are that Republican candidates have won all elections dating back to 1978 and that the 1989 special election is the most recent in which the Democratic candidate in a general election had experience in elective office above the local level.

¹⁰ Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Congressmen in Committees* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 1.

Cheney clearly used her knowledge of Washington politics—from her own experiences during earlier Republican presidential administrations and probably from discussions with her father—to advance rapidly within the Republican leadership. During her first term she received a coveted seat on the Committee on Rules, which David Mayhew identified as one of three “control committees” in the House that serve to maintain the prestige of the chamber and provide avenues of influence for individuals.¹¹ As with members of the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Appropriations, members of the Committee on Rules are positioned to advance or to impede legislation favored or opposed by party leadership and individual members. During her second term, Cheney was elected chair of the Republican Conference, at the time the number three position in the Republican hierarchy. Such rapid advancement fueled speculation that Cheney might become the first Republican woman chosen speaker of the house.

Cheney’s election to the House coincided with Trump’s election to the presidency and, for the most part, their policy agendas matched. The new congresswoman’s preferences for lower taxes, reduced governmental regulation, immigration control, and repeal of the Affordable Care Act were shared by the new president. On the other hand, the two would disagree on some foreign policy questions: sanctions against Russia, Iran, and North Korea; international trade policy; and ultimately withdrawal from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Cheney voted in agreement with Trump’s positions on 94% of the issues coming to the House floor. This figure placed at the median for members of the Republican House leadership during the 115th and 116th congresses.

A major test of loyalty to the president and House leadership came in 2019 when it was alleged that Trump inappropriately pressured the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to

¹¹ David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 149.

investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and declare that foreign interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election originated from Ukraine rather than Russia. Two articles of impeachment, one charging abuse of power and one charging contempt of Congress, were brought before the House. On December 18, 2019, Cheney joined all other House Republicans in opposing the two articles of impeachment.

The 2022 Election

Setting the stage

Wyoming often is characterized as one of the most Republican states, based on the continued success of GOP candidates who regularly win office by margins that qualify as landslides. But at times voters cast their ballots not because they like a particular candidate but because they dislike other candidates. A University of Wyoming survey conducted prior to the 2016 presidential election found that 58% of respondents intending to cast their ballots for Trump were doing so because they opposed the other candidates (principally Hillary Clinton). In contrast, four years later, 78% of prospective Trump voters reported that they were doing so because they supported his candidacy. In short, Wyoming voters underwent a transformation during Trump's presidency, from casting anti-Democrat votes to casting pro-Trump votes.

The contentiousness of the 2022 House race in Wyoming had its seeds in the contentiousness of the 2020 presidential election. As Trump and his allies in Congress and the conservative media advanced narratives of the election being stolen by Joe Biden and the Democrats, Cheney issued a statement two weeks after the November election challenging the president and his supporters to present their evidence:

America is governed by the rule of law. The President and his lawyers have made claims of criminality and widespread fraud, which they allege could

impact election results. If they have genuine evidence of this, they are obligated to present it immediately in court and to the American people.

If the President cannot prove these claims or demonstrate that they would change the election result, he should fulfill his oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States by respecting the sanctity of our electoral process.¹²

As the 117th Congress convened in January of 2021, Cheney issued a statement concerning the certification of the electoral college results, scheduled for January 6, praising Trump for his accomplishments in office but supporting deference to the states regarding election results:

Congress has an important role to play in supporting states as they address election fraud. Congress does not, however, have the authority to overturn state presidential election results by refusing to count electors and thereby substituting our views for the votes of the people in the states. Doing so would be establishing a tyranny of Congress and stealing power from the states and the people in those states.

Like all of you, I am thankful for the work President Trump and his administration has accomplished on behalf of Wyoming and our entire nation, and I am not happy about the result of the presidential election. This vote in Congress is not about President Trump. It's about following the Constitution and recognizing that the authority here rests with the states and the people, not the federal government.¹³

When the House of Representatives re-convened following the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, Cheney joined 82 other Republicans in opposing the challenge to Arizona's electoral vote count and 63 other Republicans in opposing the challenge to Pennsylvania's electoral vote count.¹⁴

The next two weeks set the stage for challenges to Cheney's re-election. Cheney voted with her Republican colleagues in opposition to a House resolution calling on Vice President

¹² "Cheney to Trump: Either Prove Fraud or Accept Results," Cowboy State Daily (November 23, 2022). URL: <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2020/11/23/cheney-to-trump-either-prove-fraud-or-accept-results/> (last accessed February 23, 2023).

¹³ Ellen Fike, "Cheney Explains Opposition to Electoral College Challenge: 'This Vote Is Not About President Trump,'" Cowboy State Daily (January 5, 2021). URL: <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2021/01/04/cheney-explains-electoral-college-stance-this-vote-is-not-about-president-trump/> (last accessed February 23, 2023).

¹⁴ Had both challenges been successful, the electoral vote count would have been 275 for Biden and 263 for Trump and therefore would not have changed the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

Mike Pence and the cabinet to activate section 4 of the 25th Amendment to declare Trump unable to discharge the office and against two procedural votes leading to the House vote on impeachment. However, one week after the Capitol riot and one week before he was scheduled to leave office, Cheney and nine other Republicans voted with Democrats to impeach President Trump for “incitement of insurrection.” Her criticism of Trump did not abate, which led to Cheney being replaced as chair of the Republican Conference by Elise Stefanik (R-NY), whose record of 78% agreement with Trump on House votes was lower than Cheney’s. Later in 2021, Cheney joined 34 other Republicans in voting to create a national commission to investigate the events at the Capitol on January 6 (the proposal died in the Senate) and, with Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), voted to create and was appointed to the House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack.

As someone who values personal loyalty, Trump’s anger rained on several Republicans. But his most vitriolic comments were directed at Cheney. Trump’s attacks on Cheney began before the 2020 election, when she opposed the administration’s plans for withdrawing from Afghanistan and clashed with the administration over handling of the coronavirus pandemic. The attacks intensified after the impeachment vote and continued throughout the 2021-2022 campaign season with Trump disparaging Cheney as a RINO (Republican In Name Only), “warmonger,” “a bitter, horrible human being,” and “despicable.”¹⁵

Cheney’s role as vice chair of the committee and continued attacks on former President Trump received substantial exposure during the committee’s public hearings in the weeks

¹⁵ Lindsay Wise and Kristina Peterson, “Liz Cheney Ousted From House Republican Leadership,” *Wall Street Journal* (May 12, 2021), URL: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/liz-cheney-set-to-lose-gop-leadership-post-11620819337> (last accessed March 15, 2023); Mark Moore, “Trump Rips ‘Despicable’ Liz Cheney After She Suggests Jan. 6 Charges for Ex-President,” *New York Post* (July 4, 2022), URL: <https://nypost.com/2022/07/04/trump-rips-liz-cheney-after-she-suggests-jan-6-charges/> (last accessed March 15, 2023).

preceding the Wyoming Republican primary.¹⁶ Most importantly, Cheney’s criticisms of Trump and participation on the Select Committee did not coincide with public opinion in Wyoming, especially public opinion among Wyoming Republicans. As seen in Table 2, two-thirds of Wyomingites identifying as Republican believed that Biden was not elected legitimately (panel A) and that there is solid evidence of voter fraud in 2020 (panel B). Four-fifths of Wyoming

Table 2
Wyomingites’ View of the 2020 Presidential Election & House Select Committee

A. “Regardless of whom you supported in the 2020 election, do you think Joe Biden’s election as president was legitimate, or was he not legitimately elected?”

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
Biden’s election legitimate	31%	65%	98%
Biden not legitimately elected	69%	35%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N =	333	255	118
	Somers’s D = -.421		p<.001

B. “Do you think there is solid evidence that there was widespread voter fraud in the 2020 election, or no solid evidence?”

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
Solid evidence	69%	39%	3%
No solid evidence	31%	61%	97%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N =	345	257	118
	Somers’s D = .403		p<.001

¹⁶ The University of Wyoming’s 2022 primary election survey was the first of its kind and separate from the general election survey described in footnote 8. The primary election survey was conducted between July 23 and August 6.

C. “Do you think the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6 Attack is or is not conducting a fair and impartial investigation?”

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
Fair and impartial investigation	20%	51%	95%
Not a fair and impartial investigation	80%	49%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N =	336	258	112
	Somers’s D = -.443		p<.001

Source: University of Wyoming survey, July-August 2022

Republicans believed that the Select Committee’s investigation was not fair and impartial (panel C). Clearly, Cheney was swimming against the current of public opinion.

Opposition to Cheney’s re-election arose shortly after her vote for impeachment. In late January 2021, state Senator Anthony Bouchard announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination and appeared at rally of the steps of Wyoming’s Capitol in Cheyenne that featured U.S. Representative Matt Gaetz (R-FL), another House Republican whose record of agreeing with Trump votes in the House was lower than Cheney’s. Gaetz did not endorse a specific challenger to Cheney but posed the question that would resonate throughout the campaign: “How can you even call yourself a representative when you don’t represent the will of the people?”¹⁷

Other candidates soon joined the race but the most formidable was Harriet Hageman, a conservative land-use attorney, unsuccessful candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 2018, former ally of Cheney, and member of the Republican National Committee who led efforts to deny Donald Trump the 2016 GOP presidential nomination. A supporter of

¹⁷ Tom Coulter, “Hundreds gather as Gaetz, Trump Jr. criticize Cheney,” *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* (January 28, 2021) URL: https://www.wyomingnews.com/news/local_news/hundreds-gather-outside-capitol-to-hear-gaetz-trump-jr-criticize-cheney/article_ee168ccf-692d-57c6-aa8f-eda88d8dbcc1.html (last accessed March 1, 2023).

U.S. Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, Hageman in 2016 reportedly characterized Trump as Republicans’ “weakest candidate” and “somebody who is racist and xenophobic.”¹⁸ By 2022, however, Hageman was all-in on Trump, boldly displaying “Endorsed by President Trump!” on her campaign website. On her conversion from Trump critic to Trump devotee, Hageman said:

I heard and believed the lies the Democrats and Liz Cheney’s friends in the media were telling at the time, but that is ancient history as I quickly realized that their allegations against President Trump were untrue. He was the greatest president of my lifetime, and I am proud to have been able to renominate him in 2020. And I’m proud to strongly support him today.

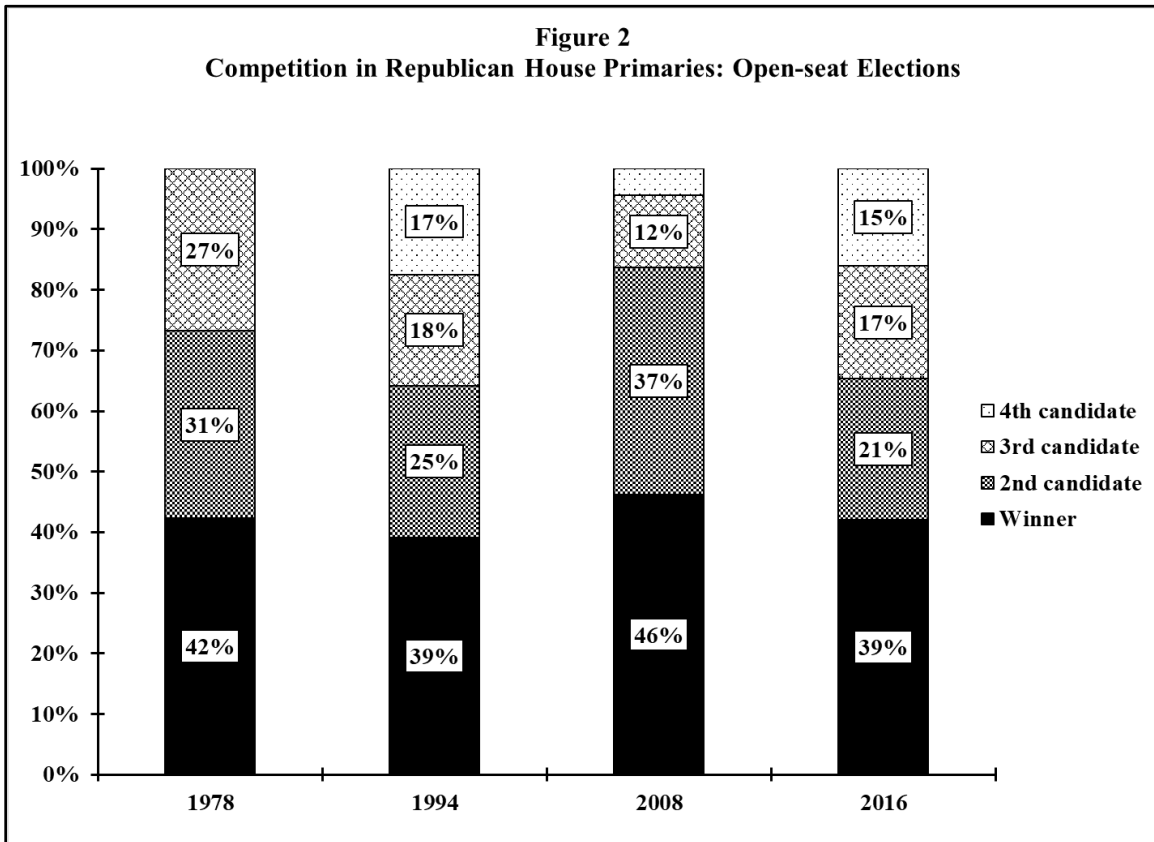
With Trump’s backing, Hageman was able to launch a significant fundraising campaign, one that yielded four million dollars in individual contributions before the August 2022 primary.

The thrust of Hageman’s campaign was simple: criticize Cheney and praise Trump. At the 2016 Republican state convention, Hageman called Cheney a “courageous constitutional conservative.”¹⁹ Six years later, at a campaign rally attended by the former president, Hageman proclaimed: “We’re fed up with the January 6 committee. And we’re fed up with Liz Cheney.” The issue of Cheney’s personal connection to Wyoming was revived, with the Hageman declaring, “I am going to reclaim Wyoming’s lone congressional seat from that Virginian who currently holds it.” The Eleventh Commandment of California party leader Gaylord Parkinson—”Thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow Republican”—certainly was not the standard for the 2022 primary election in Wyoming.

¹⁸ Quotes by Hageman in this paragraph are from Reid J. Epstein, “How an Anti-Trump Plotter in 2016 became His Champion against Liz Cheney,” *New York Times* (September 27, 2021) URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/us/politics/harriet-hageman-liz-cheney-trump.html> (last accessed March 1, 2023).

¹⁹ Quotes by Hageman in this paragraph are from Trip Gabriel, “Lawyer Who Defeated Cheney Spent Career Fighting Environmental Rules,” *New York Times* (August 16, 2022) URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/us/politics/harriet-hageman-trump-cheney.html> (last accessed March 1, 2023).

Two aspects of election administration in Wyoming were prominent in discussions during the weeks leading to the August primary. First, nomination and election in Wyoming are by plurality vote. As is typical for a state where one political party dominates general elections, the principal competition in Wyoming elections occurs within the Republican Party primary. As seen in Figure 2, between 1978 and 2016, no candidate for the Republican nomination for U.S. House of Representatives in an open-seat contest received a majority of the vote. Primary wins by plurality in some statewide contests—particularly for governor but for U.S. representative as well—yield discussions of whether the nominee truly reflects the ideological preferences of the state’s Republicans. Concern in 2022 that several candidates in the race might split the pro-Trump vote and allow Cheney to win with a plurality was a consideration for at least three



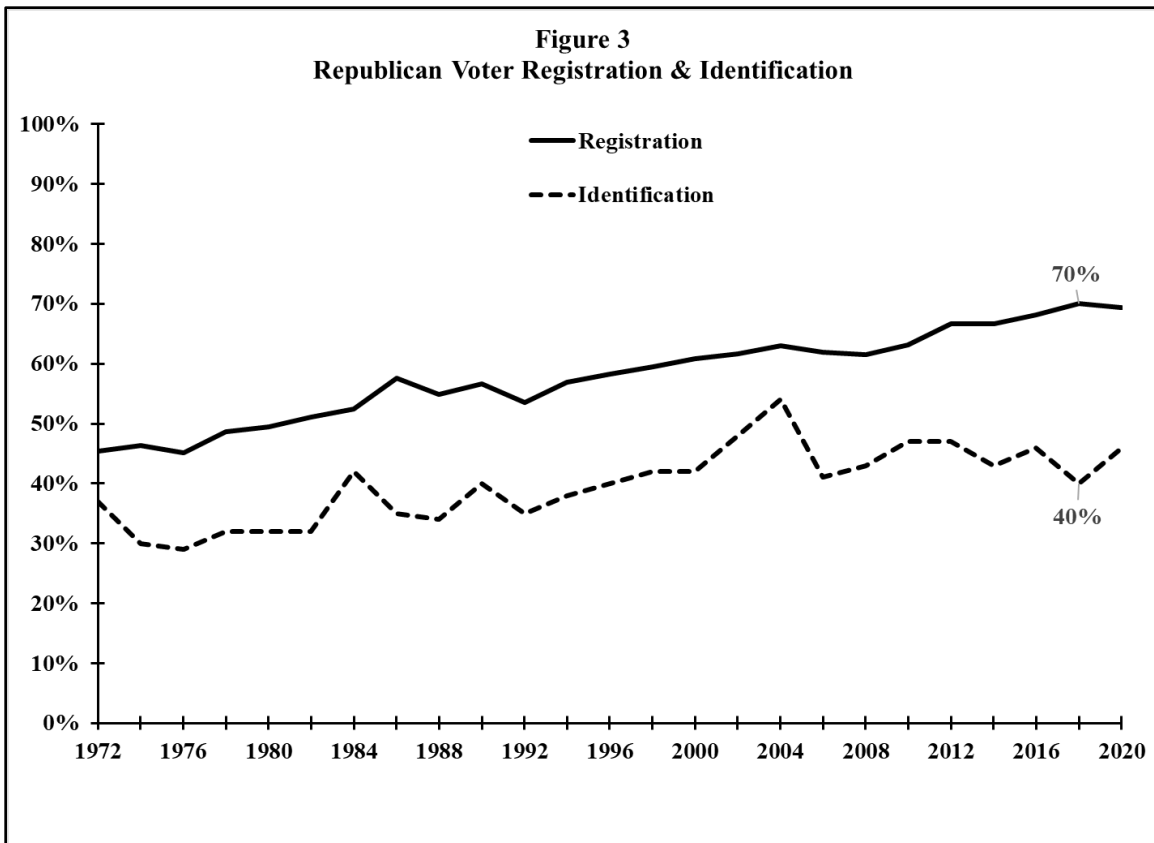
candidates who withdrew from the contest. Among these was state Representative Charles Gray, an election-results denier who instead sought and was elected to the office of secretary state.²⁰

The second administrative concern was crossover voting. Wyoming Republican leaders and activists often complain that Democrats and unaffiliated voters participate in Republican primaries with the potential of thwarting the preferences of “true” Republicans. Although categorized as a “closed primary” under standard definitions, Wyoming’s primary in 2022 was effectively an open primary as voters could change their party registrations in the weeks leading up to the primary or at the polls on the day of the primary. Crossover voting gained renewed attention in 2022, when some Democrats—including former Democratic Governor Mike Sullivan—announced intentions to change their registrations and vote for Cheney in the Republican primary.²¹ Cheney disavowed any “Democrats for Cheney” movement, but there was information on her campaign website advising potential voters of registration procedures. This was interpreted by some Republicans as an effort to attract Democratic voters to the GOP primary but defended as helping unregistered voters of all stripes navigate the process.

The issue of Democrats voting in the Republican primary was overblown but certainly Republicans were correct in their assertion that unaffiliated voters regularly participate in GOP primaries. Figure 2 shows the percentage of voters registered as Republican at the time of general elections, as compiled by the Office of the Secretary of State, and the percentage of the state’s population identifying as Republican in surveys conducted by the University of

²⁰ Tal Axelrod, “Third Republican Drops Out of Race to Replace Cheney after Trump Endorses Challenger,” *The Hill* (September 15, 2021). URL: <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/572403-third-republican-drops-out-of-race-to-replace-cheney-after-trump-endorses/> (last accessed March 2, 2023).

²¹ Victoria Eavis, “For Wyoming Democrats, Voting for Cheney is another Chance to Vote against Trump,” *Casper Star Tribune* (July 17, 2022). URL: https://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/for-wyoming-democrats-voting-for-cheney-is-another-chance-to-vote-against-trump/article_c7976d7a-f340-11ec-b570-a7f6cf68ebb0.html (last accessed March 9, 2023).



Wyoming.²² The most obvious conclusion from Figure 2 is that Republican voter registration is consistently higher than Republican identification. Notice the gap of 30 percentage points in the prior midterm election (2018), when 70% of voters were registered as Republican but only 40% of the population identified as such. As stated earlier, the choice for many offices—particularly the choice for U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives—is effectively made in the GOP primary. Thus it is rational for unaffiliated voters to register as Republicans as it provides them with the only effective avenue for having a voice in by whom they are governed. On the other

²² The voter registration data are from the general election as they match the survey data most closely in time frame. The University of Wyoming surveys providing data for Figure 2 are two-stage panel designs. Questions on party identification are asked in the pre-election interviews conducted in mid-October.

hand, registration and identification as Democrat track very closely in most years; in 2018, Democratic registration matched Democratic identification at 17%.

In the weeks leading to the 2022 primary election, a number of commentators in national media picked up on the open nature of Wyoming’s primary and argued that Cheney needed Democratic support to win re-nomination. Jason Lemon wrote in *Newsweek*, “Some analysts have speculated that Democrats in Wyoming could potentially save Cheney by casting ballots for her during the August primary.”²³ Reid J. Epstein of *The New York Times*, in an overview of the House race dynamic, concluded that it was “raising questions in Wyoming about whether [Cheney] is counting on Democrats to bail her out in the August primary.”²⁴ Jason Linkins argued in *The New Republic* that “it’s becoming clear that [Cheney] will probably need some additional assistance to win back her seat—specifically, from Democrats.”²⁵

Such contentions stoked the fears of the state’s Republicans but these fears were overblown. A University of Wyoming survey conducted in advance of the primary found that only 8% of Wyomingites planning to vote in the Republican primary self-identified as Democrats (Table 3). Republicans constituted 63% of the expected primary electorate, independents 21% and those affiliated with minor parties 8%. Thus, a more accurate interpretation of the election dynamic came from Geoffrey Skelley of the website *fivethirtyeight.com*, who wrote: “Her [Cheney’s] political future rests on winning over

²³ Jason Lemon, “Liz Cheney’s Chances of Beating Trump-Backed Harriet Hageman in Wyoming,” *Newsweek* (May 28, 2022). URL: <https://www.newsweek.com/liz-cheney-harriet-hageman-wyoming-republican-house-primary-1711035>.

²⁴ Reid J. Epstein, “Where’s Liz Cheney? The Wyoming Republican’s Exile from Wyoming Republicans,” *New York Times* (February 9, 2022). URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/09/us/politics/liz-cheney-wyoming-republicans.html>

²⁵ Jason Linkins, “The Democrats’ Complicated Dance with Neoconservative Heiress Liz Cheney,” *The New Republic* (March 19, 2022). URL: <https://newrepublic.com/article/165776/liz-cheney-reelection-democrats-odd-bedfellows-neoconservatism>.

Table 3
Composition of the Republican Primary Electorate

	All prospective voters	Prospective Republican primary voters
Republicans	53%	63%
Independents	24%	21%
Other political parties	8%	8%
Democrats	15%	8%
N =	683	562

Source: University of Wyoming survey, July-August 2022.

Republican voters rather than winning over Democratic or independent voters. She needs a good deal of the former for the latter to matter at all.”²⁶ Nevertheless, concern about crossover voting prompted the Republican-dominated state legislature to adopt during the 2023 general session legislation that requires primary voters in the future to register and to declare their party affiliations before the first day of candidate filings for elective office, approximately three months before the date of the primary.²⁷

²⁶ Geoffrey Skelley, “Why Liz Cheney Can’t Rely on Democrats to Save Her in Wyoming’s Republican Primary,” *FiveThirtyEight* (April 4, 2022). URL: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-liz-cheney-cant-rely-on-democrats-to-save-her-in-wyomings-republican-primary/>.

²⁷ A similar measure was introduced during the Legislature’s 2022 budget session but did not advance under the stricter rules for the short budget sessions. Election-day registration, Wyoming’s choice for implementing the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, remains available for general elections.

The Primary Vote

The results of the August 16, 2022, Republican primary were an overwhelming victory for Hageman and defeat of Cheney. As seen in the left-hand column of Table 4, Hageman garnered 66% of the vote to Cheney’s 29% with the remaining 5% of the vote divide among three other candidates. These figures tracked closely with the results of a University of Wyoming survey conducted in the weeks leading up to the primary election and other pre-election polling in the state.

Table 4
Vote Choice in the Republican House Primary: Survey & Election Results

	Official results	Pre-election survey	Pre-election survey
Harriet Hageman	66%	58%	67%
Liz Cheney	29%	29%	33%
Other candidates	5%	3%	
Don’t know (volunteered)		10%	
Totals	100%	100%	100%
N =		549	479

Sources: Official election returns, Wyoming Secretary of State; and University of Wyoming survey, July-August 2022.

In many ways, the reasons voters gave for their choice of candidate reflected the nature of the two campaigns. Cheney’s campaign emphasized her defense of constitutional principles that Trump had allegedly violated. Hageman’s campaign emphasized Cheney’s failure to reflect the will of the voters by criticizing Trump and her own championing of Trump and the endorsement

by the former president. Table 5 presents the results from the University of Wyoming survey on respondents’ reasons for their candidate preference. After identifying their choice of candidates, respondents were asked if their vote was because they supported their named candidate or because they opposed other candidates.

Table 5
Reason for Vote Preference in the Republican Primary

	Vote for Cheney	Vote for Hageman
Support Cheney / Hageman	68%	29%
Oppose other candidates	20%	40%
Both (volunteered)	12%	31%
Total	100%	100%
N =	158	333

Source: University of Wyoming survey, July-August 2022.

Two-thirds of Cheney voters indicated support for Cheney as the reason for their vote while 20% expressed their opposition to other candidates, most likely Hageman since the other three candidates were almost invisible at this point of the campaign. Hageman voters were more divided but leaned toward “against” rather than “for.” Just over a quarter (29%) gave support of Hageman as the reason for their vote while 40% cited opposition to other candidates—presumably against Cheney.

As noted earlier, Cheney’s criticisms of Trump and participation on the House Select Committee ran counter to public opinion in the state, especially among Wyomingites identifying as Republicans. Bucking the current of public opinion proved costly for Cheney. As seen in

Table 6, Cheney was the overwhelming choice of voters believing that Biden’s election as president was legitimate, there was not solid evidence of voter fraud in 2020, and the House

Table 6
Voters’ Perceptions of 2020 Election and Vote Choice for U.S. Representative

Ax. “Regardless of whom you supported in the 2020 election, do you think Joe Biden’s election as president was legitimate, or was he not legitimately elected?”

Vote choice	Legitimate	Not legitimate
Cheney	75%	2%
Hageman	25%	98%
Total	100%	100%
N =	201	207
	Lambda = .64	p<.001

B. “Do you think there is solid evidence that there was widespread voter fraud in the 2020 election, or no solid evidence?”

Vote choice	Solid evidence	No solid evidence
Cheney	2%	76%
Hageman	98%	24%
Total	100%	100%
N =	231	193
	Lambda = .67	p<.001

C. “Do you think the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6 Attack is or is not conducting a fair and impartial investigation?”

Vote choice	Fair and impartial	Not fair and impartial
Cheney	95%	4%
Hageman	5%	96%
Total	100%	100%
N =	214	282
	Lambda = .87	p<.001

Source: University of Wyoming survey, July-August 2022.

Select Committee’s investigation was fair and impartial. On the flip side, Hageman was the overwhelming choice of voters holding opposing positions on these three questions.

To further demonstrate the importance of voters’ perceptions of the 2020 election and the House Select Committee on voter choice for House of Representatives, logistic regression models were tested using a variable tapping election denial among respondents. The dependent variable is the choice between Cheney (1) and Hageman (0). Responses to the three questions presented in Table 2 were combined to create an election denial index that ranged from three (3) for responses that Biden was not legitimately elected, there is solid evidence of voter fraud in 2020, and the House Select Committee’s investigation was not fair and impartial, to zero (0) for the opposing responses to these dichotomous variables. Party identification is coded as 1 if Republican, 0 if independent, and -1 if Democrat. Political ideology is coded as 1 if conservative, 0 if moderate, and -1 if liberal.

Table 7**Logistic Regression of Vote Choice for U.S. House – Republican Primary**

	b (s.e.)	b (s.e.)
Election denial index	-3.59*** (.65)	-4.50*** (.68)
Party Identification	-.41 (.668)	
Political ideology	-1.01 (.66)	
Constant	3.95 (.66)	3.85 (.58)
N	321	355
Hosmer-Lemeshow pseudo R ²	.838	.855
Cases classified correctly	96.0%	96.6%

***p<.001

**p<.01

*p<.05 (two-tailed tests)

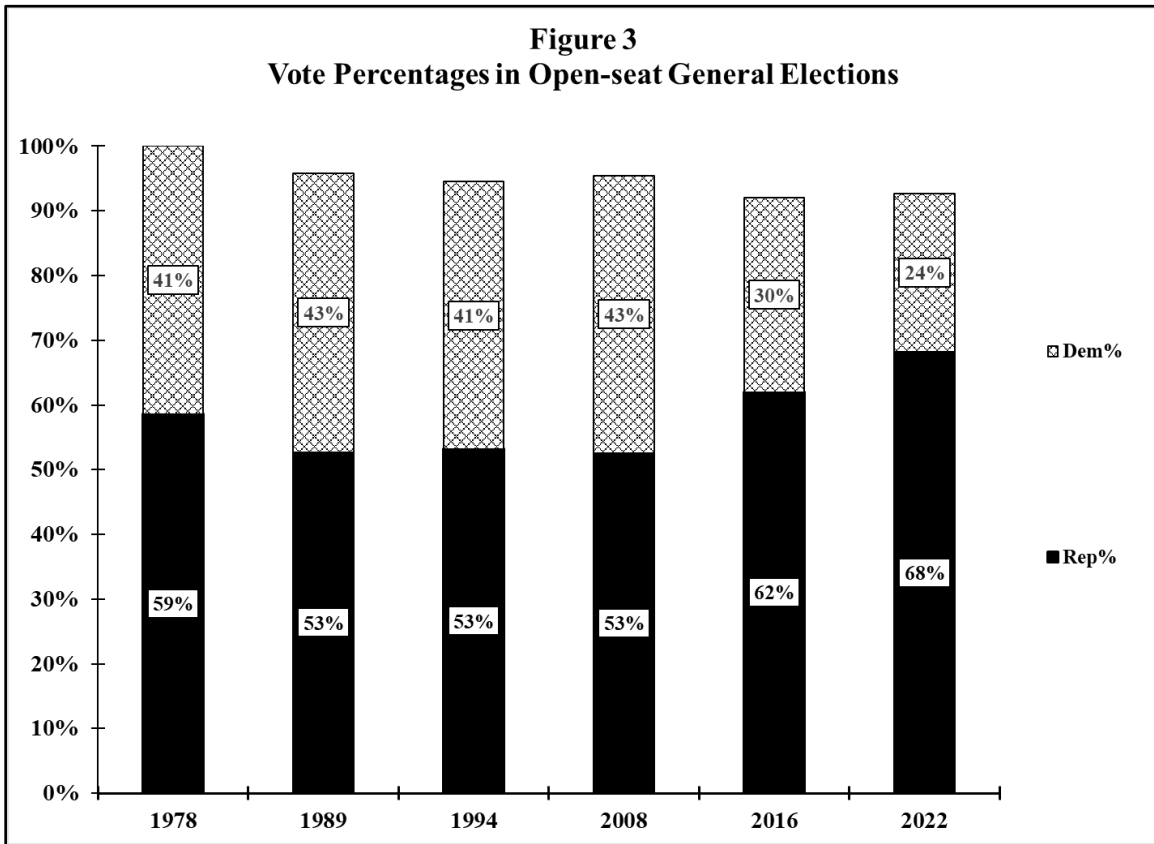
Dependent variable equals one (1) if the respondent indicated a preference for Cheney and zero (0) if the respondent indicated a preference for Hageman.

The left-hand column of Table 7 presents the results of a three-variable model with political party identification and political ideology included as control variables and the right-hand column presents the results of a bivariate model. Each independent variable has the expected negative effect on the choice of Cheney for the House seat, indicating that election-result deniers, Republicans and conservatives preferred Hageman over Cheney.

However, the coefficients for party identification and political ideology are not statistically significant and the goodness-of-fit measures indicate that adding the control variables does not improve the fit of the model. Rejection of Biden’s election, belief that voter fraud was present in the 2020 election, and rejection of the House Select Committee’s work explain voters’ choices between Cheney and Hageman without regard to party identification or ideology.

The General Election

The outcome of the general election in Wyoming was predictable as the Sun rising in the east. The Republican winning streak for U.S. House of Representatives dates back to 1978, when Dick Cheney returned to Wyoming and was elected to the seat being vacated by Democrat



Teno Roncalio.²⁸ For a twenty-third consecutive win in 2022, Republican nominee Harriet Hageman defeated Democratic nominee Lynnette Grey Bull by more than 40 percentage points. As seen in Figure 3, Hageman's was the largest margin in an open-seat contest during these years of Republican domination.

An interesting aspect of the general election was how voters' perspectives of the candidates who competed in the Republican primary influenced their choices in November. In a University of Wyoming survey conducted in conjunction with the general election, 98% of those reporting that they voted for Hageman in the primary also reported voting for Hageman in the general election. On the flip side, 92% of those reporting voting for Cheney in the primary cast their general election ballots for another candidate, most for Democrat Lynnette Grey Bull but some for third-party candidates.

Additional evidence of the influence of attitudes toward Cheney on choice of candidates in November is found in logistic regression results from University of Wyoming surveys conducted for the general elections of 2020 and 2022. In each estimation presented in Table 8, the dependent variable is the reported vote for the Republican candidate (1) and for other candidates (0). Party identification is coded as 1 if Republican, 0 if independent, and -1 if Democrat. Cheney and Trump job performance are measured on a scale of excellent (3), good (2), fair (1), and poor (0). As expected, in both 2020 and 2022, respondents identifying as Republican and rating Trump's job performance favorably reported casting their ballots for the Republican nominee, either Cheney (2020) or Hageman (2022). In 2020, respondent's rating of Cheney's job performance also significantly and positively affected vote choice.

²⁸ Roncalio won the Wyoming House seat in 1964 as part of the LBJ landside, defeating incumbent William Henry Harrison III, 51%-49%. He surrendered the seat in 1966 for an unsuccessful Senate campaign, returned to win the open House seat in 1970, and was reelected in 1972, 1974, and 1976.

Table 8
Logistic Regression of Vote Choice for U.S. House – General Election

	2020	2022
Party affiliation	1.77*** (.46)	1.69* (.79)
Cheney job performance	1.78*** (.34)	-1.83** (.74)
Trump job performance	1.34*** (.24)	3.36*** (1.14)
Constant	-3.22*** (.513)	-.65 (1.60)
N	350	241
Hosmer-Lemeshow pseudo R ²	.612	.907
Cases correctly classified	92.0%	98.8%

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05 (two-tailed tests)

Main entries are unstandardized logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Dependent variable: 1=vote for Republican candidate (Cheney in 2020; Hageman in 2022), 0=vote for Democrat Lynnette Grey Bull).

By 2022, however, this had reversed. As noted earlier, in 2018 and 2020, assessments of Cheney’s job performance reflected the expected partisan differences with Republicans rating her performance favorably and Democrats negatively. By 2022, this had reversed and although Cheney was not on the general election ballot, voters’ evaluations of her influence their votes.

Conclusion

The 2022 Republican primary in Wyoming can be viewed from multiple perspectives. A simple perspective is in the context of the tensions within the Republican Party, the tensions between the pro-Trump and anti-Trump wings. The Republican candidates' positions on questions of public policy varied little. *The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* summarized a debate among the candidates for the GOP nomination in this way:

While not every candidate agreed it was an unnecessary investigation [into the events of January 6, 2021], they did stand together on the importance of rolling back federal regulations, cutting back funding, creating a competitive market for health care, providing school choice and empowering parents, and setting the stage for Wyoming to become an international energy powerhouse.²⁹

There was, of course, one significant difference among the candidates: Cheney defended her recent performance in the House as preserving the rule of law while her challengers highlighted their support of the former president. Harriet Hageman secured Trump's endorsement and emphasized this throughout the campaign. Robin Belinsky continued her alignment with Trump after seeking but not receiving Trump's endorsement.³⁰ Anthony Bouchard appeared at a pro-Trump rally at the Wyoming Capitol shortly after he launched his campaign. Denton Knapp contended that Cheney was pursuing a personal vendetta against Trump.

From an academic perspective, this election reflected the centuries-old debate of the role of a representative in government. Is a representative a delegate who gives voice to constituency opinion in the legislature or a trustee who acts in the constituency's best interest? Should the representative's focus be local, on the constituency, or be national? Although somewhat dated,

²⁹ Jasmine Hall, "Election integrity divides U.S. House Republican primary candidates," *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* (July 1, 2022). URL: https://www.wyomingnews.com/news/election-integrity-divides-u-s-house-republican-primary-candidates/article_ec445743-ebc8-5341-84aa-928bdb43848a.html (last accessed March 13, 2023).

³⁰ Leo Wolfson, "GOP House Candidate Robyn Belinsky Runs Self-Funded Campaign," *Cowboy State Daily* (June 27, 2022). URL: <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2022/06/27/gop-house-candidate-robyn-belinsky-runs-self-funded-campaign/> (last accessed March 13, 2023).

Roger Davidson's research on U.S. representatives' perceptions of their responsibilities points to pairings of representational role and geographic focus. In Davidson's analysis, 90% of representatives identifying as delegates indicated a district focus while 78% of representatives identifying as trustees indicated a national focus.³¹

Cheney established a solidly conservative voting record during her first two terms in Congress. The American Conservative Union (ACU) gave Cheney a 75% rating for the 115th and 116th congresses. This figure did not place her among the ACU's leading conservatives but nevertheless indicated a strongly conservative voting record that coincided with majority opinion in Wyoming. In the framework provided by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, Cheney was "acting for" the people of Wyoming; her conservative credentials were rarely questioned.³²

By the time of the August 2022 primary, Cheney's pronouncements presented her as a trustee with a national focus on the question of Donald Trump's responsibility for the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. During an interview on the ABC News broadcast *This Week* before the House Select Committee began public hearings, Cheney was pointed in her criticism of Trump and his actions on January 6, stating:

any man who would provoke a violent assault on the Capitol to stop the counting of electoral votes, any man who would watch television as police officers were being beaten, as his supporters were invading the Capitol of the United States, is clearly unfit for future office, clearly can never be anywhere near the Oval Office ever again.³³

On the CBS News broadcast *Face the Nation*, Cheney expressed her position regarding fidelity to Trump among Republicans very clearly:

³¹ Roger H. Davidson, *The Role of the Congressman* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), p. 126.

³² Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), chapter 6.

³³ Transcript of the broadcast of January 2, 2022: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/week-transcript-22-dr-anthony-fauci-rep-liz/story?id=82031557>.

We as Republicans, have a choice to make. I am a conservative Republican. I believe strongly in the policies of low taxes and limited government and a strong national defense. I think the country needs a strong Republican Party going forward, but our party has to choose. We can either be loyal to Donald Trump or we can be loyal to the Constitution, but we cannot be both. And right now, there are far too many Republicans who are trying to enable the former president, embrace the former president.³⁴

And, perhaps most famously, during the Select Committee’s first televised hearing, Cheney stated, “Tonight, I say this to my Republican colleagues who are defending the indefensible: There will come a day when Donald Trump is gone, but your dishonor will remain.”³⁵

Censured by the Republican National Committee, Wyoming Republican Central Committee and some Republican county organizations, Cheney argued that her loyalty was not to the Republican Party organizational apparatus and that mollifying organizational Republicans in Wyoming or anywhere was neither her responsibility nor for good for the nation as a whole. After the Republican National Committee adopted a resolution characterizing the rioters at the Capitol as “ordinary citizens engaged in legitimate political discourse,”³⁶ Cheney offered a defense of her position:

I’m not going to convince the crazies and I reject the crazies. I reject the notion that somehow we don’t have to abide by the rule of law. And the people right now who are in the leadership of our state party, I’m not trying to get their support because they’ve abandoned the Constitution.³⁷

³⁴ Transcript of the broadcast of January 2, 2022: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/full-transcript-representative-liz-cheney-face-the-nation-january-2-2022>.

³⁵ Transcript of the June 9, 2022, Select Committee’s public hearing: <https://www.congress.gov/event/117th-congress/house-event/LC69724/text>.

³⁶ Jonathan Weisman and Reid J. Epstein, “G.O.P. Declares Jan. 6 Attack ‘Legitimate Political Discourse.’” *New York Times* (February 4, 2022). URL: [G.O.P. Declares Jan. 6 Attack ‘Legitimate Political Discourse’ - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/04/us/politics/gop-declares-jan-6-attack-legitimate-political-discourse.html) (last accessed March 13, 2023).

³⁷ Epstein, “Where’s Liz Cheney?”

At the same time, the dominate view of Cheney’s constituents appears to have favored a delegate with a local focus. This was reflected in a comment by a Cheyenne businessman aligned with the Republican Party:

She speaks about her conscience, but you weren’t elected to do what you think is right, you were elected to do what the people want you do to. She didn’t do what the people want her to do. At the end of the day, that’s it.³⁸

With a plurality of pre-election survey respondents indicating their intended vote for Hageman was a vote against other candidates, presumably against Cheney, there is little doubt that GOP primary voters were rejecting the concept of a trustee with a national focus in favor of a delegate with a local focus.

James Madison wrote in Federalist #52,

As it is essential to liberty that the government in general should have a common interest with the people, so it is particularly essential that the branch under consideration [the House of Representatives] should have an immediate dependence on, and intimate sympathy with, the people.

The 2022 election demonstrated that Wyomingites expected the connection between government and populace of which Madison wrote to be honored. However principled her motives might have been, Cheney’s vote in January of 2021 to impeach President Trump, her participation on the House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack, and her criticisms of the former president in various forums ran counter to public opinion within the Republican electorate and severed the connection between her and her constituents. Wyoming Republicans had become devotees of Donald Trump and found in Harriet Hageman a candidate who would champion their cause.

³⁸ Epstein, “Where’s Liz Cheney?”

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