

“No Party Preference Voters in an Era of Party Polarization: Registration Trends and Potential Influences on Party Politics in the Suburban Electorate”

Alexandra Macias, California State University Northridge
(alexandra.cole@csun.edu)

Paper prepared for presentation at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Western
Political Science Association.

Draft version, please do not cite without permission of the author

On August 7, 2019 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Orange County, California officially had more registered Democrats than Republicans¹. The number of registered Democrats in the county was 547,458 compared to 547,369 registered Republicans. For longtime political observers this was a shocking, if not entirely unexpected, development. In the 2018 Congressional elections, each of the Congressional Districts located in Orange County (CA-38, CA-39, CA-45, CA-46, CA-47, CA-48, CA-49) would elect a Democrat to represent them in Congress, some for the first time ever². Nationwide discussions of a ‘Blue Wave’ inevitably mentioned Orange County, with some suggesting that this political shift would not just be limited to Orange County. “What’s happened in Orange County is also unfolding in other large, affluent suburbs that Republicans have long counted on to offset Democratic votes in the nation’s large cities, said Stu Rothenberg, veteran political analyst and senior editor at Inside Elections. He described these areas as mainly “upscale suburbs with college-educated voters who have more suburban and cosmopolitan concerns.”³ When the *Orange County Register* reported that “Orange County is the New Blue”,⁴ demographic changes incorporating age, race, and ethnicity were used to explain the registration shift away from the Republican Party—not shifts in public opinion at the time. Even so, in 2020, the *Register* reported low approval ratings for President Trump (in February 2020 around 42%⁵), and high levels of support for “clean sources of energy.”⁶ This would lead *OC Poll* director Fred Smoller to remark that Orange County “does not live up to its previous right wing image.”

Less emphasized in analyses, though no less important, has been a concurrent increase in registered No Party Preference (NPP) voters. When the *Register* declared “Orange County is the New Blue,” registered NPP voters made up 27.0% of the electorate.⁷ With small margins between the number of Democrats and number of Republicans it is reasonable to expect that No Party Preference segment of the electorate is significant enough to influence election outcomes. **What is the potential for influence of NPP voters on Congressional elections?** This project will examine party registration data, public opinion data, and interview data from candidates and political parties from the Congressional Districts based in Orange County (CA-38, CA-39, CA-45, CA-46, CA-47, CA-48, CA-49) in order to explore avenues of potential NPP influence. Specific questions which will be explored below include: 1. Are the registration trends for NPP voters similar in all of the Congressional Districts in the county, or are there differences by district?; 2. Are there similar demographic factors associated with registering as No Party Preference across the districts?; 3. Are there similarities or differences in terms of issue preferences for NPP? and; 4. How have the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as their candidates for office in Orange County responded to the increase in NPP registered voters? After the 2020 general election, two

¹ Source: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2019-08-07/orange-county-turns-blue-with-more-registered-democrats-than-republicans> (accessed 9/26/19)

² <https://prospect.org/power/blue-wave-swelled-tsunami-orange-county/>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <https://www.ocregister.com/2019/08/09/why-orange-county-is-the-new-blue/>

⁵ <https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/>

⁶ <https://www.ocregister.com/2020/05/05/o-c-poll-surprises-reconsider-nuclear-power-ban-internal-combustion-engines/>

⁷ Source: <https://www.ocvote.com/datacentral/> (accessed 9/26/19).

of the Congressional seats (CA-39 and CA-48) flipped back to Republican representation, which prompted descriptions of a ‘Red-riptide.’⁸ The following analysis will suggest a ‘Blue Wave’ or ‘Red-Riptide’ can be affected by NPP ‘cross-currents.’

I. What is going on in the suburbs? Shifting Demographics and Value Priorities

The 2018 midterm elections were significant on multiple levels. With respect to control over the House of Representatives, the represented a loss of power for the Republican party, and a return to control over the House by the Democratic Party. Midterm elections are often perceived as a referendum on the Presidency, and it is common for the President’s party to lose seats in their first midterm election. The 2018 midterm elections went against the norm, as a strong economy, which was in place at the time, usually insulates the President’s party against a loss of seats. Gary Jacobson (2019) wrote that there was a “crucial oddity (in) the disjunction between presidential approval and the economy,” with “the extremely polarized responses to Trump and his Presidency (giving rise) to the most partisan, nationalized and president-centered midterm elections on record.” (pp. 11-15)⁹ The influence of public opinion toward Donald Trump was not the only factor influencing the election outcome—high levels of voter turnout, well-funded Democratic challengers, and changing demographics with respect to partisan support additionally played a role in the Democrats’ success. “The most important demographic contribution to the Democrats’ gains in 2018... (was the) well-educated women in suburban districts whose reaction to Trump drove them to the polls and (influenced them to) vote Democratic in large numbers.” (Jacobson, 2019: 32). Younger voters also held negative views of Trump, which for Jacobson suggested that the partisan balance may tilt toward Democrats moving forward.

Headline grabbing evidence of this shift took place in California, where the ‘California Seven’ (House Republicans whose districts were won by Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential election¹⁰) all lost their re-election bids. Four of those seats were in Orange County, California. The significance of this made national news. “This will be the first time since the 1930s that the one-time GOP stronghold won’t have a Republican presence in the House.” (Ortiz, 2018)¹¹ Initial analyses of election outcomes suggested that the Orange County GOP had not adjusted to demographic changes in Orange County. As Orange County became younger, more diverse, and more socially tolerant, analysts suggested that “most of its Republican lawmakers failed to change with it (only focusing) on their right-wing base.” (Barabak, Mozingo and Finnegan, 2018)¹². The flip in Orange County notably reflected a larger trend in California, the western part of the United States, and in suburban districts in general.

⁸ Christopher, Ben. 2020. “After California’s ‘blue wave’ to Congress in 2018? A GOP red riptide in 2020.” Cal Matters, November 16. (<https://calmatters.org/politics/post-it/2020/11/california-blue-wave-red-riptide-republican-congressional-wins/>; accessed March 16, 2021)

⁹ Jacobson, Gary C. 2019. “Extreme Referendum: Donald Trump and the 2018 Midterm Elections.” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 134 (No. 1): 9-38.

¹⁰ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/democrats-house-california/527958/> (accessed 9/22/17).

¹¹ Ortiz, Jorge. 2018. “Orange is the new blue: California Democrats sweep 7 House seats in former GOP stronghold,” *USA Today*. November 18.

¹² Barabak, Mark Z., Joe Mozingo, and Michael Finnegan. 2018. “Must Reads: Orange County goes blue, as Democrats complete historic sweep of its seven congressional seats.” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 17.

Outside of Orange County, Republicans were found to “hold an advantage over Democrats in most of California’s inland and rural counties (though) the margins are less than they were in the 2016 presidential election.” (Sheehan, 2020)¹³ Voter registration data from the state shows that the proportion of voters registering as Democrats has increased while the proportion of voters registering as Republicans has decreased. There is a geographic element to this shift, with the only places in the state that show gains for the Republican party located in the rural and semi-rural northern California counties.¹⁴ Per the *Los Angeles Times*, “White working-class, non-college-educated voters are increasingly aligning with Republicans over cultural and social issues, while college-educated voters are increasingly at odds with a national GOP that has grown more hardline on issues such as immigration, according to political experts.”¹⁵ The large size of the state, coupled with the different economic drivers across different regions of the state, can explain some of the differences in party registration as well as reflect patterns which have also been noted in other parts of the western United States.

In their analyses of the changing electoral landscape of the western United States¹⁶ (excluding California), Balentine and Webster (2018) note an overall decrease in support for GOP presidential candidates. Part of this is related to the lesser relevance of ‘cultural wedge’ issues for Republicans who were initially drawn to the party based on shared values of fiscal conservatism. The libertarian streak of Republicans in western states exists uncomfortably with the social conservatism of Southern state Republicans. Balentine and Webster write that “the incongruity between much of the West and the South in terms of social conservatism is evident in the recent examples of support for marriage equality in the West.” (Balentine and Webster, 2018: 573). Some of the tolerance is borne of the increased ethnic and racial diversity of western state populations, as the evidence shows that “counties experiencing decreased support for Republican candidates generally have higher proportions of Hispanic and Native American residents.” (Balentine and Webster, 2018: 571). In their analysis of competitive congressional elections nationwide, Bader (2020) suggests that the relationship between district racial diversity and partisan representation is quite strong with Democrats tending to be elected in multiracial districts and Republicans elected in those districts that are whiter.¹⁷ Historically, this was understood to represent a difference between multiracial and urban areas compared to the more homogenous and whiter rural areas, but recent research on the relationship between geographic location and political attitudes suggests a more nuanced relationship, one especially relevant for the changes in where people live, especially as it relates to California and Orange County more specifically.

Scala and Johnson (2017) suggest that the urban-rural dichotomy, which has characterized research on the relationship between geographic location and political attitudes, is not so much a dichotomy but rather two ends of a continuum which better describes the effects of location on political

¹³ Sheehan, Tim, 2020. “Is Merced County Still a Valley Stronghold for Democrats?” *Merced Sun-Star*. October 11.

¹⁴ Reese, Phillip. 2020. “Are Placer and El Dorado Counties Still Republican Strongholds?” *The Sacramento Bee*, September 21.

¹⁵ Source: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2019-08-07/orange-county-turns-blue-with-more-registered-democrats-than-republicans> (accessed 9/26/19)

¹⁶ Balentine, Matthew D. and Gerald Webster. 2018. “The Changing Electoral Landscape of the Western United States. *The Professional Geographer*. Volume 70, Number 4: 566-582.

¹⁷ Bader, Michael. 2020. “Can Racial Diversity Swing Competitive Congressional Districts?” *Contexts*, Volume 19 (Number 2): 68-70.

attitudes in the United States.¹⁸ Rather than a blanket designation of “urban,” Scala and Johnson utilize the 2013 Office of Management and Budget definition of counties in the United States to reflect a difference between Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan areas. Metropolitan counties are defined as those counties “containing an urban core of a population of 50,000 or more residents,” (Scala and Johnson, 2017: 166), which would include suburbs. In their analysis of public opinion data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) they found that residents of the large urban cores and suburbs were more likely to identify as Democrats, be less likely to be culturally conservative, be more willing to grant legal status to illegal immigrants, and were more likely to acknowledge climate change as a significant problem. Although the factor most highly correlated with Democratic vote for President was percentage of the population that was African American, the second largest correlation was with the percentage of the population that was a college graduate. The latter factor was one which developed over time, and coupled with a younger population, showed that urban core areas, including suburbs, were becoming more Democratic. Research focusing on attitudes toward same sex-marriage,¹⁹ and toward undocumented immigrants²⁰ and geographic based identity shows a similar development for metropolitan suburbs. Kinsella, Mctague and Raleigh (2019) find that the higher levels of opposition to same-sex marriage bans located in metropolitan areas were related to the lower concentration of religious conservatives and Republican voters in these areas and higher concentration of residents employed in the service sector who were younger, and had a higher SES and level of education. Frasure-Yokley and Wilcox-Archuleta (2019) found that differences in public opinion toward undocumented immigrants were not only differentiated by community type but also by the racial and ethnic characteristics along with the tax capacity of the area, population density and home values (p. 946). Residents of suburbs had more favorable attitudes toward undocumented immigrants compared to those living in rural areas (those less favorable compared to those living in central cities) (Frasure-Yokley and Wilcox Archuleta, 2019: 945). This gradual change over time in the suburbs may be related to changes in suburbs themselves. Increasingly, suburbs have become economically diversified with respect to the location of research hubs as well as more ethnically diversified.²¹ The result of this, according to Pierre Fillion (2018) is a similarity in ‘lived experiences’ for suburbanites which may translated into a “determining role suburban areas play in the election of federal and state officials....reflecting their demographic weight.”

II. Congressional Districts in Orange County, California

Demographic, geographic, and political trends aside, one of the most important determinants with respect to Congressional registration is the way in which congressional districts are drawn. Congressional districts in California are drawn by the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, an

¹⁸ Scala, Dante J. and Kenneth M. Johnson. 2017. “Political Polarization along the Rural-Urban Continuum? The geography of the Presidential Vote, 2000-2016.” *ANNALS, AAPSS*. Volume 672 (July): 162-184.

¹⁹ Kinsella, Chad J., Colleen Mctague and Kevin Raleigh. 2019. “Geographic Polarization, Partisan Voting, and the Battle over Same-Sex Marriage within the Culture War.” *The Geographical Review*. Volume 109, Issue 2 (April):

²⁰ Frasure-Yokley, Lorrie and Bryan Wilcox-Archuleta. 2019. “Geographic Identity and Attitudes toward Undocumented Immigrants.” *Political Research Quarterly*. Volume 72, Issue 4: 944-959.

²¹ See Fillion, Pierre. 2018. “Enduring Features of the North American suburb: Built Form, Automobile Orientation, Suburban Culture and Political Mobilization. *Urban Planning*, Volume 3, Issue 4 (December).

independent commission charged with drawing electoral districts for Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly and Board of Equalization seats.²² This commission came into being after California voters passed Proposition 11 in the November 2008 general election. The first districts drawn under the passage of Proposition 11 were contested during the Fall 2012 elections. Election districts in California are drawn to reflect “Communities of Interest” which are described by the California State Constitution as,

a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Examples of such shared interests are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area, or an agricultural area, and those common to areas in which the people share similar living standards, use the same transportation facilities, have similar work opportunities, or have access to the same media of communication relevant to the election process. (Section 2(d)(4) of Article XXI of the California Constitution)²³

Given the directive that electoral districts reflect shared interests such as geographic setting, economic development, or even living standards, the result are districts that are very different from those drawn by partisan state legislators, as is the case in many other states. Lived experience becomes a more important defining characteristic in understanding these election districts than political control at the state level. Instead, a district’s characterization of urban or rural; the ethnic and racial breakdown of the district; and the median level of education and income may play a larger role in understanding the politics of the district itself. Each of these factors has been found to play a role in the changing partisan make-up of suburban districts. With a major goal of Proposition 11 being “districts (drawn) to maximize voters’ opportunity to elect representatives of their own choosing,”²⁴ the anticipated result is more competitive races. The midterm elections of 2018 suggested this is in fact what took place across the Orange County congressional districts, especially those that were flipped. To this end, a deeper look into the ‘lived experience’ within these Orange County congressional districts is necessary to better understand the more competitive nature of these districts.

a. Demographic Trends across the Orange County Congressional Districts

At first glance, demographic data suggests more differences than similarities of the Orange County Congressional Districts. The congressional districts are most similar with respect to the median age of residents in each district, ranging from 33.8 years to 41 years. Nationwide, the average number of residents per Congressional District is 710,767.²⁵ Only one of the seven districts (CA-38) has less residents than the nationwide average, with the largest of the districts, CA-45, having 791,311 residents (see Table 1). With respect to race and ethnicity, the districts range from 41.4% White to more than

²² <https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/faq/>

²³ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=CONS&division=&title=&part=&chapter=&article=XXI

²⁴ <https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/faq/>

²⁵ See Burnett, Kristen D. 2011. “Congressional Apportionment.” *United States Census Bureau*. (<https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-08.pdf>). Accessed 12/29/2020.

80.64% White, from 18.19% to 67.77% Latinx, from 6.87% to 32.71% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, and from 1.73% to 6.89% African American. In terms of the percentage of foreign-born residents, the Congressional Districts in Orange County range from 17.25% to 36.36% of residents classified as foreign born according to the American Community Survey. The range of median income across the districts is from \$71,800/year to \$115,427/year and the percentage of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree ranges from 21.1% of the population to 56.6% of the population. The variance with respect to race/ethnicity, education and income across the districts does suggest that some factors, such as ethnic and racial make-up may be more salient in some districts than others.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Orange County Congressional Districts²⁶

	CA-38	CA-39	CA-45	CA-46	CA-47	CA-48	CA-49
Estimated Population	704,515	717,176	791,311	734,651	717,594	726,516	731,366
Percentage White	41.4%	51.9%	61.94%	50.68%	52.48%	61.40%	80.64%
Percentage Latinx	61.49%	32.87%	18.19%	67.77%	36.00%	21.47%	27.79%
Percentage Asian-American	16.1%	32.71%	26.23%	13.81%	23.45%	19.58%	6.87%
Percentage African American	4.8%	1.73%	1.85%	2.05%	6.89%	1.36%	2.31%
Percentage Foreign Born	30.71%	33.5%	30.00%	36.36%	29.03%	24.45%	17.25%
Median Income	\$79,573	\$96,431	\$115,427	\$71,800	\$72,493	\$100,604	\$100,037
Percentage With BA/BS+	24.8%	43.1%	56.6%	21.1%	34.1%	44.6%	47.2%
Median Age	38.0	40.5	39.3	33.8	38.2	41.0	39.0

b. Party Registration Trends Across Orange County Congressional Districts

Democratic, Republican, and No Party Preference registration fifteen days before the general election in each of the congressional districts (from the time the districts were created in 2012) are shown in Table 2.²⁷ Of the districts, only three are completely within the boundaries of Orange County: CA-45, CA-46 and CA-48. The other congressional districts cover multiple counties, with CA-38 and CA-47

²⁶ Sources: The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=38> (accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=39> (accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=45> (accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=46> (accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=47> (Accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” , <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=48> (accessed 12/9/20); The United States Census Bureau, “My Congressional District” <https://www.census.gov/mycd/?st=06&cd=49> (accessed 12/9/20).

²⁷ Source: California Secretary of State, Elections and Voter Information (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/report-registration>; accessed 3/11/21).

spanning into Los Angeles county, CA-49 extending into San Diego county, and CA-39 incorporating three separate counties: Orange, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino counties. For these congressional districts, voter information data must be provided by the Registrar of Voters from each county, and then combined by congressional district by the California Secretary of State in advance of the general election.

Table 2: Democratic, Republican and No Party Preference (NPP) Registration for each Orange County Congressional District in Advance of the 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018, 2020 General Elections²⁸

	2012 15-Day General Election (%)	2014 15-Day General Election (%)	2016 15-Day General Election (%)	2018 15-Day General Election (%)	2020 15-Day General Election (%)	Change (%)
CA-38						
Democrat	49.28	48.67	49.80	47.97	49.89	+0.61
Republican	25.73	24.5	22.18	20.62	20.98	-4.75
NPP	17.2	22.09	23.56	26.76	23.77	+6.57
CA-39						
Democrat	32.34	32.42	34.49	33.92	36.8	+4.46
Republican	39.23	38.46	36.26	33.39	32.64	-6.59
NPP	23.07	24.88	25.27	28.72	25.86	+2.79
CA-45						
Democrat	28.15	28.11	30.49	30.57	34.6	+6.45
Republican	43.7	43	39.88	36.39	35.09	-8.61
NPP	23.86	24.52	25.44	28.94	25.65	+1.79
CA-46						
Democrat	44.3	47.28	48.92	46.96	48.74	+4.44
Republican	30.07	27.79	24.16	21.8	22.09	-7.98
NPP	21.39	20.96	23.09	27.51	24.49	+3.1
CA-47						
Democrat	43.06	43.57	45.11	43.43	45.78	+2.72
Republican	29.57	27.68	25.28	23.83	24.39	-5.18
NPP	19.37	23.25	24.55	27.63	24.49	+5.12
CA-48						
Democrat	28.38	28.2	30.01	29.8	32.87	+4.49
Republican	43.88	43.83	41.42	38.42	38.15	-5.73
NPP	22.68	22.95	23.88	27.18	24.7	+2.02
CA-49						
Democrat	28.79	28.82	31.2	31.01	35.22	+6.43
Republican	41.49	40.18	37.79	34.77	33.95	-7.54
NPP	24.44	25.49	25.78	28.71	24.70	+0.26

²⁸ Source: California Secretary of State, Elections and Voter Information (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/report-registration>); accessed 3/11/21).

In terms of congressional representation, CA-38, CA-46, and CA-47 have all been represented by Democratic representatives since 2012. The other districts (CA-39, CA-45, CA48, CA-49), had been represented by Republican representatives until 2018, when each was flipped by a Democratic challenger. In each of the districts, Republican party registration percentages have decreased since 2012, with total decline ranging from -4.75% (in CA-38) to -8.61% (in CA-45). In contrast, Democratic party registration has increased in each of the districts from +.61% (in CA-38) to +6.45% (in CA-45). Similarly, No Party Preference registration has also increased in each of the districts, ranging from +.26% (in CA-49) to +6.57% (in CA-38). Interestingly, the highest percentage of NPP registration in each of the districts was reported in advance of the Fall 2018 election. In each of the districts, registration percentages of NPP voters two years later (in advance of the 2020 election) were more reflective of the 2016 percentages of NPP registration. A potential explanation offered for this spike in NPP registration is that voter registration done through the State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) starting in April 2018 automatically defaulted to NPP, leading to what the *Sacramento Bee* termed an “unusual spike in people registering with ‘no party preference.’”²⁹ By 2020, then the natural slope in NPP registration returned. Given that the percentage of Republican voters in each district remained lower in 2020 compared to 2018 and even 2016, the pattern of registration losses over time seems to have continued, with an almost equal and opposite increase in Democratic party registration in the districts. By 2020, congressional candidates in all the districts, including the ones with strong Democratic Party registration such as CA-38, CA-39, and CA-47, would still need to appeal to NPP voters to win their seats.

Two hypotheses have consistently been presented as explanations for the shifts in party registration seen in Orange County, California, as well as suburban congressional districts across the country: generational replacement and demographic change. Although the voter registration data from the California Secretary of State provides information about party registration totals, it does not provide information broken down by groups so that hypotheses such as these can be tested. For this, one must analyze the actual voter registration datafiles, which are publicly available.³⁰ In advance of the 2020 General Election, voter registration datafiles were obtained from the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters (9/18/20), Orange County Registrar of Voters (5/27/20), San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters, (9/18/20) and San Diego County Registrar of Voters (9/14/20). For the Congressional Districts in Orange and Los Angeles Counties (CA-38 and CA-47) voter information for these districts were separated out from the overall county voter datafile and combined into Congressional District datafiles, with the same process repeated for CA-39 (spanning Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties) and CA-49 (spanning Orange and San Diego Counties). After the voter files were separated out by Congressional District (and merged across the counties for the aforementioned districts), voters’ birthdate information was used to calculate age variables, which then allowed for a comparison of voter registration patterns across different age groups. Voters in each of the Congressional districts were placed into four age groups: 18-29 years, 30-49 years, 50-65 years, and those aged 66 and older. Comparison of voter

²⁹ Anderson, Bryan. 2018. “Motor Voter sparks unusual spike in ‘no party’ registrations at California DMV” *The Sacramento Bee*, September 6. (<https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article217947420.html>; accessed March 15, 2020)

³⁰ Albeit only after applying for the data, submitting an affidavit for the use of the data, and paying a fee to the County Registrar of Voters.

registration by age demonstrated statistically differences. Table 3 shows party registration percentages for the youngest age group by congressional district.

Table 3: Party Registration of 18-29-year-old Voters Across Orange County Congressional Districts³¹

Party Registration 18-29 years	CA-38 ³²	CA-39 ³³	CA-45 ³⁴	CA-46 ³⁵	CA-47 ³⁶	CA-48 ³⁷	CA-49 ³⁸
Democrat	50.20%	43.10%	41.10%	52.90%	49.20%	38.70%	38.50%
Republican	11.30%	19.80%	20.90%	10.50%	12.30%	22.50%	21.40%
NPP	30.60%	30.40%	31.50%	30.80%	30.80%	31.30%	31.40%
Other Party	7.90%	6.70%	6.60%	5.90%	7.70%	7.50%	8.70%

For this group of voters, most, if not all their voting experience, will have taken place in the districts as currently drawn. In each of the districts, Democratic party registration is higher for voters aged 18-29 years of age compared to Republican party registration. The gap in party registration is largest in the districts which have been historically represented by Democrats (namely CA-38, CA-46 and CA-47) with 50.2% of younger voters in CA-38 registered as Democrats, 52.90% of younger voters in CA-46 registered as Democrats and 49.2% of younger voters in CA-47 registered as Democrats. In the districts that flipped in 2018, the percentage of Democrats was 43.10% in CA-39, 41.10% in CA-45, 38.50% in CA-49 and 38.70% in CA-48. The importance of NPP voters across all the districts becomes even more evident given that No Party Preference registration across all the districts is higher than Republican registration for this younger group of voters³⁹. When compared to other age groups, the youngest group of voters are different from the older groups,⁴⁰ providing evidence of a potential generational change effect over time.

In terms of the second hypothesis explaining change in Orange County and suburban districts, that of demographic shifts within the districts, voter registration data in California does not publicly identify voters with respect to racial or ethnic group. However, voter registration data does include place of birth, which enables a comparison of natural born versus naturalized voters. Referencing the data from Table 1, Orange County Congressional districts range from 17.25% foreign born (in CA-49) to 36.36% foreign born (in CA-46).

³¹ Sources: Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters, 9/18/20; Orange County Registrar of Voters, 5/27/20; San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters, 9/18/20; San Diego County Registrar of Voters, 9/14/20; calculations by author.

³² Overall n=402241, with n=85676 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square= 15958.021; p<.001

³³ Overall n=399765, with n= 82550 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=17605.949; p<.001 Lambda=.062; p<.001

³⁴ Overall n=448284, with n=87236 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=23726.865; p<.001 Lambda=.096; p<.001

³⁵ Overall n=275286, with n=81052 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=16542.576, p<.001.

³⁶ Overall n=397637, with n=81104 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=20914.876; p<.001

³⁷ Overall n=430626. with n=77345 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=22718.207, p<.001; Lambda=.061, p<.001

³⁸ Overall n=431082, with n=77148 18-29-year-old voters. Chi-Square=18429.842; P<.001 Lambda= .067; p<.001

³⁹ Arguments have been made to the effect that the reason for this is a change in procedure at the Department of Motor Vehicles widely reported in 2018, but this would only have reflected one spike year.

⁴⁰ The other age groups are: 30-49 years, 50-65 years, and 66 and older.

Table 4: Party Registration of Foreign-Born Voters Across Orange County Congressional Districts⁴¹

Foreign Born Voter Party Registration	CA-38 ⁴²	CA-39 ⁴³	CA-45 ⁴⁴	CA-46 ⁴⁵	CA-47 ⁴⁶	CA-48 ⁴⁷	CA-49 ⁴⁸
Democrat	49.80%	36.20%	38.20%	53.80%	44.10%	34.60%	38.20%
Republican	18.20%	26.30%	26.30%	20.70%	22.90%	34.20%	25.40%
NPP	26.90%	33.70%	32.40%	23%	27.50%	27.60%	30.00%
Other Party	5.10%	3.80%	3.10%	2.50%	5.50%	3.60%	6.30%

When broken down by nativity, there is a clear difference in registration patterns between voters born in the United States and those born outside of the United States. In each of the Congressional districts, a higher percentage of foreign-born voters are registered as Democrats than Republicans. The largest gap is in CA-46 where 53.8% of foreign-born voters are registered as Democrats and only 20.7% are registered as Republicans. The smallest gap is in CA-48, where 34.6% of foreign-born voters are registered as Democrats and 34.2% are registered as Republicans. Except for CA-48, in every Congressional district the percentage of foreign-born voters registered as NPP is higher than the percentage registered as Republicans, with the highest percentage of foreign-born voters registered as NPP in CA-39. In each district, excepting for CA-46, foreign born voters have a higher percentage of NPP registration than the electorate.

An analysis of voter registration data from each of the Orange County Congressional Districts demonstrates a statistically significant difference in party registration patterns for younger and foreign-born voters, compared to older and native-born voters. Overall, younger, and foreign-born voters are much less likely to register as Republicans. That said, there are some notable differences in the specific districts themselves. In districts where the foreign-born population is larger (such as CA-39 where the foreign born population is about 33.3% of the district) foreign born voters have a higher rate of NPP registration (33.7%) compared to the district as a whole (25.86%). In other districts, such as CA-46 where the foreign-born population is 36.36%, but 53.8% Democratic, NPP voters might have less influence over election outcomes. The extent to which these differences register in public opinion and candidate/party strategies will be examined in the following sections.

⁴¹ Sources: Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters, 9/18/20; Orange County Registrar of Voters, 5/27/20; San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters, 9/18/20; San Diego County Registrar of Voters, 9/14/20; calculations by author. Note: in some cases, birthplace information was missing from the voter record. These cases were excluded from analysis.

⁴² Overall n=401444, with n= 158356 foreign born voters (n=997 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=2186.477, p<.001

⁴³ Overall n=372531, with n= 124443 foreign born voters (n=27351 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=8823.728, p<.001

⁴⁴ Overall n=398463, with n= 93502 foreign born voters (n=49821 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=8007.344, p<.001

⁴⁵ Overall n=237142, with n= 71906 foreign born voters (n=36144 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=1154.982, p<.001

⁴⁶ Overall n=379159, with n= 117289 foreign born voters (n=18478 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=1519.151, p<.001

⁴⁷ Overall n=383022, with n= 75929 foreign born voters (n=47604 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=2068.549, p<.001

⁴⁸ Overall n=420060, with n= 92950 foreign born voters (n=11022 cases missing from analysis). Chi-Square=4631.806, p<.001; Lambda=.027, p<.001

III. Public Opinion in Orange County Congressional Districts

Public Opinion research in Orange County has been undertaken by various organizations over time, though research not yet been consistently undertaken, nor has the data been made available to researchers outside those organizations. Luckily, there has been weekly public opinion polling done in Orange County since July of 2019, which is publicly available and comes at a time in which the demographic and political shifts discussed above can be examined in the dataset. Nationscape⁴⁹ is a partnership between Democracy Fund Voter Study Group and UCLA Political Scientists Chris Tausanovitch and Lynn Vavreck. Each week of polling results in approximately 6,250 cases, which can be broken down by Congressional District. The Nationscape survey is administered by Lucid which is a private market research organization. Respondents complete the interviews online and while they may participate more than once, they are prohibited from doing so more than once in a twelve-week cycle. Respondents have been determined to be as representative as government estimates of significant populations, with samples like those obtained by Pew in the own public opinion research.⁵⁰

To examine public opinion in Orange County, cases from each of the congressional districts in Orange County (CA38, CA39, CA45, CA46, CA47, CA48 and CA49) were separated out from the overall weekly Nationscape datasets⁵¹. These weekly results were combined into twelve week quarters, with four quarters of data in total: July-September 2019 (n=1000), October-December 2019 (n=996), January-March 2020 (n=867), and March-June 2020 (n=1137). With most of the questions remaining the same week after week, the Nationscape dataset provides for public opinion on various issues over a one-year period. The data in Table 5 reflect Nationscape data from March-June of 2020, which at the time of this analysis, was the most recent update. In terms of demographic characteristics, 49.5% of the dataset was female, 29.5% identified as Latinx, 57.7% of the dataset was White, 6.7% African American, and 20.0% identified as Asian-American/Pacific Islander. The median age of respondents was 40 years, the median household income of respondents was \$70,000-\$74,999, and the median level of education was an associate degree.

When asked how they felt things were headed in the country, 64.7% of respondents indicated that things were off on the wrong track and compared to a year ago, 73.8% indicated that the economy was worse. Of the respondents, 38% somewhat or strongly approved of the way in which Donald Trump was handling his job as President, though only 36% of respondents indicated that they would consider voting for Donald Trump in the 2020 general election. More specifically, 53.6% of respondents indicated they would vote for Joe Biden if the election were to be held the next day, 37.3% indicated they would be voting for Donald Trump, and 10.5% indicated that they did not know. When asked if elections for the U.S House of Representatives were to be held the next day, 46.3% indicated they would be voting

⁴⁹ <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publication/nationscape-data-set>

⁵⁰ <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/uploads/reports/Data/NS-Methodology-Representativeness-Assessment.pdf>

⁵¹ Tausanovitch, Chris and Lynn Vavreck. 2020. *Democracy Fund and UCLA Nationscape*, Retrieved from <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publication/nationscape-data-set>.

for the Democratic candidate, 33.2% indicated that they would be voting for the Republican candidate, and 14.8% indicating they did not know which congressional candidate they would vote for.

Table 5: Nationscape Data from Orange County Congressional Districts, March 26-June 25, 2020

Issue	All respondents (n=1137)	Political Independ. (n=285)	18-29-year-old respondents (n=312)	Foreign Born respondents (n=176)
Things in this Country are off on the wrong track	64.7%	68.8%***	67.4%	60.8%
Compared to a year ago the nation's economy is worse	73.8%	80.6%***	73.5%*	74.9%
Approve of Donald Trump's job performance	38%	28.4%***	24.6%*	30.3%**
Consider voting for Donald Trump in 2020 election	36%	21.4%***	18.6%*	24.4%*
Would elect Democratic Representative if elections held next day	46.3%	29.9%***	52.6%***	49.4%
Would elect Republican Representative if elections held next day	33.2%	20.4%***	17.9%***	28.4%
Would Vote for Biden for President	53.6%	50.9%***	61%*	56.9%
Agree to Build a Wall on the southern US Border	34.1%	28.5%***	17.4%*	33.5%
Agree to cap carbon emissions to combat climate change	65.2%	68.7%***	64.4%*	73.1%
Require background checks for all gun purchases	86.8%	85.6%***	83.6%*	89.8%
Cut taxes for families making less than \$100K per year	70.7%	66.4%**	65%	71.6%
Raise taxes on families making over \$600K	64.1%	57.7%***	58.3%	63.1%
Agree that students can graduate from state college debt free	59.8%	59.5%***	68.3%	56.3%
Permit abortion in cases other than rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger	62%	60.2%***	60.6%	62.5%
Provide government run health insurance to all Americans	56.2%	57.8%***	63.7%*	63.6%
Create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children	69.7%	59.0%***	72.4%	61.7%*
Favor a larger government with more services	54.6	57.8***	67.2*	64.4%**

Source: Nationscape dataset, March 26, 2020-June 25, 2020; calculations by author

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

With respect to specific political issues, in terms of immigration and border policy only 34.1% of respondents agreed with the policy of building a wall on the border. In contrast, 69.7% agreed that a path should be created for undocumented immigrants brought here as children (“Dreamers”). On the environment, 65.2% agreed that carbon emissions should be capped to combat climate change. In terms of taxes, 70.7% of respondents agreed that they should be cut for those making less than \$100,000 per

year and 64.1% agreed that they should be raised for families making over \$600,000 per year. With respect to making college more affordable, 59.8% agreed that all students should be able to graduate from state colleges debt free. On the issue of abortion, 62% of all respondents agreed that abortion should be permitted in cases other than rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger. In terms of healthcare, 56.2% of all respondents agreed that government run-health insurance should be provided to all Americans. With respect to guns, 86.8% of all respondents agreed that background checks should be required for all gun purchases. Finally, when asked if they had to choose between a larger government with more services or a smaller government, 54.6% indicated they would favor a larger government with more services.

How might NPP voters differ from partisans in terms of their issue positions? The Nationscape dataset did not include the California-specific political party designation of NPP; instead self-described Independents to Democrats and Republicans are compared in Table 5. With respect to their responses, political independents were more likely to agree that things in the country are off on the wrong track (68.8%) and that compared to a year ago the nation’s economy is worse (80.6%). Political independents were less likely to approve of Donald Trump’s job performance (28.4%) and consider voting for Donald Trump in the 2020 election (21.4%). Interestingly, while a slight majority of political independents would vote for Joe Biden were the election to be held the next day (50.9%), they were more likely not to know who they would vote for in the election to Congress (43.3%) compared to those who said they would vote for the Democratic candidate (29.9%) or the Republican candidate (20.4%). Self-described independents were less likely to agree to build a wall on the Southern Border (28.5%). They were also less likely to want to require background checks for all gun purchases (85.6%), agree to cut taxes for families making less than \$100K per year (57.7%), raise taxes on families making over \$600K per year (66.4%), agree that students can graduate from state college debt free (59.5%), permit abortion in cases other than rape, incest or when the woman’s life is in danger (60.2%), and create a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children (59%), though it must be noted that on all of these issues a majority was in fact in favor. Political independents were more likely to agree to cap carbon emissions to combat climate change (68.7%), provide government run health insurance to all Americans (57.8%), and favor a larger government with more services (57.8%). On all the issues, save for their choice of who they would vote for Congress, the issue stance of self-described political independents in the Orange County Congressional districts was more reflective of the responses of self-described Democrats than self-described Republicans. Comparisons based upon self-described political affiliation were statistically significant for each question, indicating clear differences of opinion between Democrats and Republicans.

Given the statistically significant differences by age with respect to political party registration shown in Table 3, it is worth examining if there were also differences in public opinion based upon age. Table 5 shows the responses of those aged 18-29 years as compared to other age groups. Based upon the data, those in the age category 18-29 years old were: more likely to say that things in this country are off on the wrong track (67.4%), see the nation’s economy as worse than in the year previous (73.5%), less likely to approve of Donald Trump’s job performance (24.6%), less likely to consider voting for Donald Trump in 2020 (18.6%) and more likely to vote for Joe Biden for President (61%). Excepting

for the question on whether things in this country are off on the wrong track, responses to these questions were statistically significant. Respondents aged 18-29 years were more likely to say they would vote for a Democratic candidate for Congress were the Congressional elections held the next day (52.6%) compared to a Republican candidate (17.9%). These responses were also statistically significant. On the issues, those aged 18-29 years of age were less likely to agree to build a Wall on the southern U.S. border (17.4%), agree to cap carbon emissions (64.4%) and require background checks for all gun purchases (83.6%); all of these were statistically significant. Younger respondents had a more favorable view of government compared to older age groups, with 63.7% saying that government run health insurance should be provided to all Americans and 67.2% favoring a larger government with more services. Both responses were statistically significant. Although a majority of those aged 18-29 supported cutting taxes for families making less than \$100K per year (65%), raising taxes on families making over \$600K per year (58.3%), agreeing that students can graduate from state college debt free (68.3%) and permit abortion in cases other than rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger (60.6%), these were not statistically significant. Younger respondents were significantly more inclined to disapprove of Donald Trump and the Republican Party based upon their responses to these questions, as well as have a favorable view of government.

There were only n=176 respondents to the Nationscape surveys in this timeframe who identified as being born outside of the United States. Foreign-born respondents were statistically less likely to: approve of Donald Trump's job performance compared to native born respondents (at 30.3% approval); consider voting for Donald Trump in 2020 (24.4% likely to consider voting for Trump), and less likely to support creating a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children, though with 61.7% in support, a majority of foreign born respondents did approve of this. Foreign born respondents were also significantly more likely to favor a larger government with more services (64.4%) than were native born respondents. That said, there were fewer statistically significant differences in public opinion between foreign born and native-born respondents compared to the differences in question response seen between younger and older respondents and self-identified partisans and independents.

In the months leading to the fall 2020 general election, public opinion in the Orange County Congressional districts indicated that respondents felt that things were off on the wrong track, the economy was doing worse than a year ago, and had weak levels of support for Donald Trump. A slight majority indicated that they would vote for Joe Biden. With respect to their vote for a member of Congress, it is only among the youngest group of voters (along with self-identified Democrats) that a majority said they would vote for a Democrat. Independents and foreign-born voters, along with the sample was split. In the Orange County Congressional districts, support for a Southern Wall was weak, but strong for capping carbon emissions, background checks on all gun purchases, permitting abortion in cases other than rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger and creating a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants brought here as children. Wedge issues with resonance in other parts of the country, seem not to have made a dent.

IV. How Candidates and Parties respond to NPP voters

How have the established political parties and political candidates responded to the increased number and deciding factor of NPP voters in Congressional races? Interviews were conducted with representatives from the Democratic and Republican Party of Orange County, as well as with representatives from the Congressional campaigns (Democratic and Republican) in the Fall of 2020 to gauge how the parties and candidates for Congress viewed NPP voters compared to their own voters. What were their specific strategies with respect to NPP voters? At a larger level, how did they explain this trend in No Party Preference registration—was it because of an unpopular president, or a larger demographic trend? If they saw the increase in NPP voters as part of a larger trend, what would be the effects of this trend on the political system?

Each Congressional campaign in Orange County (CA-38, CA-39, CA-45, CA-46, CA-47, CA-48 and CA-49) as well as representatives from the Democratic and Republican Parties of Orange County was contacted via an email. The email introduced the primary investigator, explained the nature of the research, and asked if someone from the campaign would be willing to participate in a telephone interview of 20-30 minutes. If a response to this initial email was not received, a follow-up email was then sent. If a response was not received to the follow-up email, then a telephone call to the campaign office was made. This call introduced the investigator, explained the nature of the interview request, and asked to speak to a member of the campaign staff who would be able to complete the interview. If there was no campaign office number, then emails to campaign managers, followed by calls to these campaign managers using the same protocols. If there was no response to these calls, the campaigns were sent messages via Facebook Messenger and via Twitter using the same methodology. If at any time the campaign made a clear refusal, contact efforts were immediately halted.⁵² Out of all the Congressional districts, the only district in which an interview did not take place was CA-38. The investigator was able to interview four candidates for Congress and three members of campaign staff as well as a representative from each of the parties. Overall, four Republicans and five Democrats were interviewed.

There were five questions asked of each interview subject: 1. Can you tell me who the voters are that will support your campaign/party in terms of specific issues, ideological affinity, and demographic characteristics? 2. On the other hand, who do you think are the kinds of voters that will not support your campaign/party in terms of specific issues, ideological affinity, and demographic characteristics? 3. How would you characterize a Non-Party Preference (NPP) voter? Why do you think they are not affiliated with a political party? 4. Are there areas of overlap between those voters who will support your campaign/party and those who are registered as NPP? Are there areas of overlap between voters who will not support your campaign/party and those who are registered as NPP? 5. Looking ahead, what do you think will be the impact of NPP voters on the election and on political parties in general? The first two questions were asked to ascertain how the interviewees saw their likely voters—was it a partisan

⁵² The primary investigator was able to establish contact with every campaign except for the challenger in CA-38, who never responded.

view, an issue emphasis, or based on identity politics? The second question had the same intent, but in reverse—is the opposition based on partisanship, issue emphases or identity politics? The third question gets at how candidates and parties view NPP voters, with the fourth question intended to determine how candidates and parties attempt to bridge the divide between their own voters and NPP voters. Finally, the last question was intended to assess how the candidates and parties saw the how NPP voters might influence the political system in the future. Interestingly, there was the most agreement on the part of the interview subjects on this last question.

Most of the interview subjects viewed their own voters based on either partisan characteristics or demographic characteristics. That is, they specifically referenced their own party or demographic groups traditionally aligned with their party. For example a Democratic campaign consultant referenced “Democrats in the district, a good chunk of NPP voters and Republicans who voted for the candidate last time (as well as) union members, labor workers as well as support from the Vietnamese community which leans Democratic.” One republican candidate indicated their support came from “a majority of Republicans (who) care about the economy and jobs; a majority go to Church and are pro-life.” Another Democratic campaign consultant included anti-Trump sentiment among their support “more so than the other districts, Clinton won here by 8% in 2016 so this district is more anti-Trump than others. The district is more socially liberal and economic conservative as far as Republican support (which fits) the idea of suburban electorate with higher levels of education.” One democratic campaign consult did point to issues as an important motivating force for their candidate’s voters, “The base is issue based. The campaign itself is managed with an eye towards the issues because this matters the most for voters in the district... In 2018 the candidate presented themselves to voters as a clean energy advocate. Many Republicans have come to support him because of his introduction of bills to ban offshore oil drilling. The environment and climate change are major issue concerns.” With respect to the political parties, the Democratic party official referenced specific issues as an explanation behind Democratic support, “In a normal election year the economy, the environment, and racial equity are important issue concerns. This cycle COVID will be an important issue priority...In this election cycle we also see a visceral reaction to racial injustice and its effects. This can be with respect to prison reform/sentencing reform, also the recidivism rates of former prisoners.” The Republican party official saw support coming from specific demographic groups such as, “traditional Orange County families; those who have lived here decades and have retired here...Of the younger people like millennials, they are those who want less government and more freedom.”

In terms of who would NOT vote for the party/candidate, most responses specifically referred to partisan or demographic factors. A Republican candidate indicated that “Hard core Democrats and Never-Trumper Republicans will not vote for (the candidate) as well as some Independent NPPs.” Likewise, a Democratic campaign staffer indicated that “the campaign will not get the hardcore Trump supporters or the deeply Republican voters. (The campaign was) also not likely to get first generation Korean Americans who will share a comradeship with the opposing candidate.” There were some specific issues which campaigns identified as being important to some voters, and thus likely to influence a vote against the campaign. For one Republican candidate, “Anyone who puts pro-choice as

their #1 issue would not be a supporter,” while a Democratic candidate said that “voters who are passionate about “keeping illegals out” would probably not vote for this member of Congress.” Both the Democratic and Republican party officials pointed to specific demographic groups as less likely to support their party. Interestingly the Democratic party official suggested that “lower class white voters are the most likely to vote against Democrats,” while the Republican party official indicated that “newer people to Orange County, (not the traditional Orange County families which have been here since the time of Reagan)” might be more liberal and thus less likely to support Republican candidates.

There were multiple explanations given with respect to understanding who No Party Preference voters are and why they register as No Party Preference rather than affiliate with a party. A common interpretation was that NPP voters are politically moderate in their orientation. The Republican party official explained that “NPPs are people who are legitimately down the middle politically...NPPs are looking at the issues and are motivated by the issues of the day.” One Republican candidate described them as “the most beautiful people in the world. They are willing to sit back and make decisions after hearing all the information. They care enough and are willing to listen to both sides before making a decision.” Another Republican candidate said that “they span the spectrum of political support from Bernie Sanders voters on the left to Trump voters on the right (2 standard deviations in either direction). However, most of them are moderate to center moderate.” A Democratic campaign staffer said that “NPPs comprise a “squishy universe” of voters. They are not firmly democratic or Republican and reflect the classic swing or independent voters.” Another common explanation for NPP voters is that they do not want to identify with a party because of increasing levels of political polarization today. A Democratic campaign staffer saw NPPs as a combination of both, saying that “sometimes NPP voters do not like either party and thus remain NPP, but sometimes they are strong Democrats or Republicans but do not want to identify as such,” while another Democratic campaign staffer put it more directly: “NPPs are people who do not want to be tied to one party or another. They may in fact lean a certain direction, but because of the current environment to not want to be defined as partisan.” The democratic candidate agreed with this assessment, indicating that most have core beliefs which drive them to vote but “some do not want to be associated with a party and some may vote like a partisan but will not admit to it.” The Democratic party representative saw NPPs as encompassing a variety of sentiments: “In Orange County there are a great many disaffected Republicans... This is the newest group of NPP voters. Traditionally NPP voters are voters who are outside of the parties; they do not look to the parties for guidance... NPPs do not identify with political parties because they see the infighting and do not like the political system that it takes place in.” Age was mentioned as a factor by a Republican candidate, “NPPs are children of people registered with parties. They go to college and want to think on their own. They sway Green/AOC/Bernie Sanders; do not like Biden or Trump and will probably not vote for either,” though a democratic campaign staffer offered a slightly different explanation for the connection between registering NPP and age: “In California, the advent of automatic registration in the DMV(Department of Motor Vehicles) has led to an uptick in NPP voters as NPP registration is the default option. This is seen more often with younger voters.” The Republican party official also suggested the same DMV connection as an explanation for the increase in NPP registered voters.

Areas of overlap between NPP voters and the base voters for each candidate/party were for the most part based on specific issue concerns. A Democratic campaign staffer indicated that “NPP voters are disaffected by both parties BUT have mutual issues that they care about. The campaign then looks to find those voters who share the same issue concerns.” Many of the interview subjects spoke to specific issues in their comments. The Republican party staff member spoke to the need for different messages given both the basis for No Party Preference and location of the voters. “issue emphases thus are dependent upon where the voters live; (an) example is in coastal areas where there is a higher issue priority of the environment; the issue emphasis here is on how to work with both economic and environmental concerns.” Specific areas of overlap between NPP voters and democratic candidates were seen by democratic staffers to include healthcare, opposition to Trump and the environment. One campaign staffer said that “healthcare seems to resonate with NPPs as well as Democrats as an important issue. Protection of the Affordable Care act, protection for pre-existing conditions as well as keeping healthcare premiums low are important to these voters as well as standing up to the President.” For Republican candidates, the areas of issue overlap were slightly different. On the Republican side, one candidate said that “The major dividing point is between pro-life and pro-choice sides. NPPs who are pro-life will vote for him; pro-choice will not.” Another Republican candidate perceived the same area of overlap: “NPPs are more concerned with social issues. Many are pro-life because there are 3D sonograms and they can see the fetuses.” Interestingly, the same Republican candidate also mentioned that NPP voters were also ‘pro-LGTB.’

Interestingly, most of the interview subjects seemed to find the increase in the number of No Party Preference voters understandable given the recent increase in political polarization. One Republican candidate indicated that “the impact of NPPs will grow in the future as they will increase in number, especially for younger voters who “do not wish to discriminate” and are reluctant to register as partisans. Similarly, immigrant voters (whose background experiences can in some cases be traumatic) may also lead to a reluctance to affiliate with a party.” This does not mean that the development is seen as entirely negative. A democratic campaign staffer said that “because NPPs do not want to be tied down they can be beneficial to the system because the system is so polarizing. Perhaps they can help to overcome the chasm in politics.” Another Democratic campaign staffer made a similar comment: “NPPs will serve as a moderating influence on politics. There are wings of both the Democratic and Republican parties that have become more extreme, so the existence of NPP voters, who truth be told are moderate voters will become a stabilizing force in the electorate” A Democratic candidate said that “There is change in the electorate and the middle can become a controlled political force. This is where the NPP voters are.” Both Republican and Democratic interview subjects agreed that NPPs would have an important influence on political parties. The Democratic party official indicated that the influence of NPP voters might vary across political campaigns and areas. “NPP influence will depend on a race by race basis. In some areas such as Irvine, (Democratic) candidates can win by appealing to party because there are so many (Democrats). So, there is no need to spend money to reach out to NPPs (there). Republicans (on the other hand) need NPPs in Irvine. In other areas such as Orange, there is (an) effort to appeal to NPPs because Democrats are not enough (in number there).” Referencing a more national view of the phenomenon, one democratic campaign staffer hoped that the influence NPPs will have on

the system is to force parties to focus more on issues and not just ‘the team.’ In other words, “the more talk about issues the better.” For the Republican interview subjects, there was recognition of the specific effect that NPPs have on Republican candidates and platforms. One candidate said that “as the national parties move more to the left (Democrats move to AOC and Bernie Sanders) and the Republicans move more to the right (toward religious groups), the parties will need to listen and find out what the needs of NPP voters are.” The Republican party official was even more specific: “The influence of NPP voters on the system will be felt for a long time... this will force Republicans to work harder. For a long time in one will have to -earn the vote’ by learning what the issues are that are important to voters.”

V. Neither Blue Wave nor Red Riptide - The Congressional Elections of 2020 and NPP influence

Once the votes were counted after the 2020 general election, congressional representation in two of the districts, CA-39 and CA-48, reversed back to Republican representation. First term Congressmen Gil Cisneros (D) and Harley Rouda (D) were defeated by Young Kim (R) and Michelle Steele (R) in CA-39, and CA-48. The defeat of Rouda in CA-48 was the less surprising defeat of the two. Although Republican party registration in the district has decreased by 5.73% since 2012 (and Democratic registration has increased by 4.49%), Republicans retain a 5.28% registration advantage in the district (Table 6). Additionally, Rouda’s vote share in 2020 was 4.70% less than in 2018, which was not enough to overcome the Republican registration advantage in the district. In contrast, the defeat of Gil Cisneros (D) in CA-39 by Young Kim (R), 49.4% to 50.6%, is, on paper, more surprising.

Table 6: 2020 Congressional Election Results in Orange County⁵³

	Incumbent Vote Percent	Challenger Vote percent	Change in incumbent vote since 2018	%Dem - %Rep registration
CA-38	Linda Sanchez (D) 74.3%	Michael Tolar (D) 25.7%	+5.40%	28.91%
CA-39	Gil Cisneros (D) 49.4%	Young Kim (R) 50.6%	-2.20%	4.16%
CA-45	Katie Porter (D) 53.5%	Greg Rath (R) 46.5%	+1.40%	-0.49%
CA-46	Lou Correa (D) 68.8%	James Walters (R) 31.2%	-0.30%	26.35%
CA-47	Alan Lowenthal (D) 63.3%	John Briscoe (R) 36.7%	-1.60%	21.39%
CA-48	Harley Rouda (D) 48.9%	Michelle Steel (R) 51.1%	-4.70%	-5.28%
CA-49	Mike Levin (D) 53.1%	Brian Maryott (R) 46.9%	-3.30%	1.27%

⁵³ Source: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/prior-elections/statewide-election-results> (accessed 3/19/21), and Table 2. Calculations by author.

Compared to CA-48, party registration totals in CA-39 as of 2020 reflected a Democratic advantage in the district, with 36.8% of the voters registered as Democrats and 32.64% registered as Republicans (Table 2). The registration difference between Democrats and Republicans on the eve of the general election was 4.16% (Table 6). Cisneros lost 2.20% of his 2018 vote percentage, which should not have been enough to lose the district given the party registration gap.⁵⁴ In this election, the vote of NPP voters could very well have been decisive, given that CA-39 had the highest NPP registration of all the districts, with 25.86% of registered voters NPP as of 2020 (Table 2). Additionally, CA-39 had the second highest percentage of foreign-born residents with 33.5% (Table 1). Referencing the above analysis of registration trends among foreign born voters, foreign born voters in CA-38 were the most likely to register as NPP (33.70%, Table 4). Concerted outreach to foreign born and NPP voters might have made the difference in flipping the district back to Republican representation.

At the same time, if NPP voters could help to flip a Democratic-leaning district to Republican representation, the opposite could also be the case. In CA-45, one of the four flipped districts in 2018, Freshman representative Katie Porter (D) held her seat and even increased her vote share by 1.40% in 2020 (Table 6), despite a slight Republican registration advantage in CA-45 of 35.09% to 34.6% Democratic party registration (Table 2). In this district, foreign born residents made up approximately 30.0% of the district (Table 1), and much like foreign born voters in CA-38, were more likely to register as NPP, with 32.40% of foreign born voters registered as NPP (Table 4). In CA-45, younger voters were most likely to register as Democratic, with 41.10% of those aged 18-29 years old registered as Democratic, but also much more likely to register as NPP voters compared to other districts, with 31.50% of younger voters registered as NPP (Table 3).

Were the candidates aware of the need to reach out beyond their bases of registered partisans? Interviews with party officials, campaign staff and candidates for office across the Congressional districts, including CA-38 and CA-45, reflected a unanimity of opinion in terms of how the parties would need to respond to NPP voters: appeal to the issues that overlapped those of the candidates' natural constituent base and those of NPP voters. As the Republican party representative said, “The influence of NPP voters on the system will be felt for a long time... this will force Republicans to work harder. For a long time in one will have to -earn the vote’ by learning what the issues are that are important to voters.” This sentiment is in keeping with the literature on vote choice, especially for nonpartisan voters. In a study of voters with ambivalent partisan attitudes, Basinger and Lavine (2005) found that in the absence partisan cues to guide their vote, “weak partisans and independents might be expected to rely more heavily on specific issues, ideology, (and) economic performance.”⁵⁵

Narrow margins between Democratic party registration and Republican party registration have made the true battle for turnout is within the ranks of the nonpartisan voter. During presidential election years, voter attention to elections is much higher, making the elections themselves much more

⁵⁴ Foreign born voters in CA-46 were overwhelmingly registered as Democrats, at 53.8% (see Table 4).

⁵⁵ Basinger, Scott T. and Howard Lavine. (2005). “Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice.” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99 (2): p. 171.

intense. Lipinski, et. al (2005) found this to be the case. “Most scholars have argued that an important criterion of an intense race is that campaign spending be competitive: the typical measure of competitiveness is that the incumbent candidate should not spend more than twice the amount of the challenger.”⁵⁶ Quality challengers to House incumbents are characterized as having both experience and funding.⁵⁷ The campaign against the incumbent becomes more credible then, primarily because the challenger has the resources to do so.⁵⁸ Duquette, et. al. (2013) found that “a high level of spending by a U.S. House incumbent can often be a sign of political weakness, not strength.”⁵⁹ More specifically, “when each candidate spends \$2 million attempting to secure a given U.S. House seat, the incumbent’s vote share falls to about 53 percentage points, reflecting a relatively competitive race.”⁶⁰ Experience and issue positions also matter for challengers, especially when the degree of ideological difference between candidates is large.

Looking at the districts which were flipped back to Republican control in 2020, we can see that some of the characteristics of a ‘quality challenger’ apply to both Young Kim (R) in CA-39, and Michelle Steele (R) in CA-48. Both candidates were well known to voters: Kim had previously run for the seat in CA-39 and had a long history of outreach toward Asian-American voters in the district⁶¹, whereas Steel had been serving on the Orange County Board of Supervisors since 2015.⁶² Compared to the incumbents, the fundraising totals of the challengers were larger. Figure 1 shows that in CA-39 Young Kim’s total receipts at the end of 2020 were \$6,473,025.12 compared to Cisneros’ \$4523,137.53. In CA-48, Steel’s total receipts of \$6,428,812.51 were also larger than Rouda’s total receipts of \$6259,589.71. Young’s disadvantage in terms of political base could thus be made up by the larger campaign chest and long-standing appeal to foreign born and NPP voters.

However, we can also see that in the districts that were flipped in 2018, but held in 2020, the incumbents, Katie Porter (D) in CA-45 and Mike Levin (D) in CA-49 had both higher levels of campaign fundraising, and did not face challengers with the same sort of name recognition. In the specific case of CA-45, with its slight Republican party registration advantage, Porter’s total receipts for campaign fundraising of \$16,901,194.24 far surpassed the total receipts for challenger Greg Raths, a Mission Viejo City Councilmember⁶³, who had total receipts of \$1,412,756.96 as of December 31, 2020 (Figure 1). The total receipts of the candidates in CA-49 were closer, with incumbent Mike Levin reporting total receipts at the end of December 2020 of \$3,904,057.80 compared to challenger, and mayor of San Juan

⁵⁶ Lipinski, et. al (2005): 180.

⁵⁷ Jacobson, Gary C. 2009. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Longman

⁵⁸ Buttice, M., & Stone, W. (2012): 871.

⁵⁹ Duquette, et. al., (2013): 168-169.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*: 169.

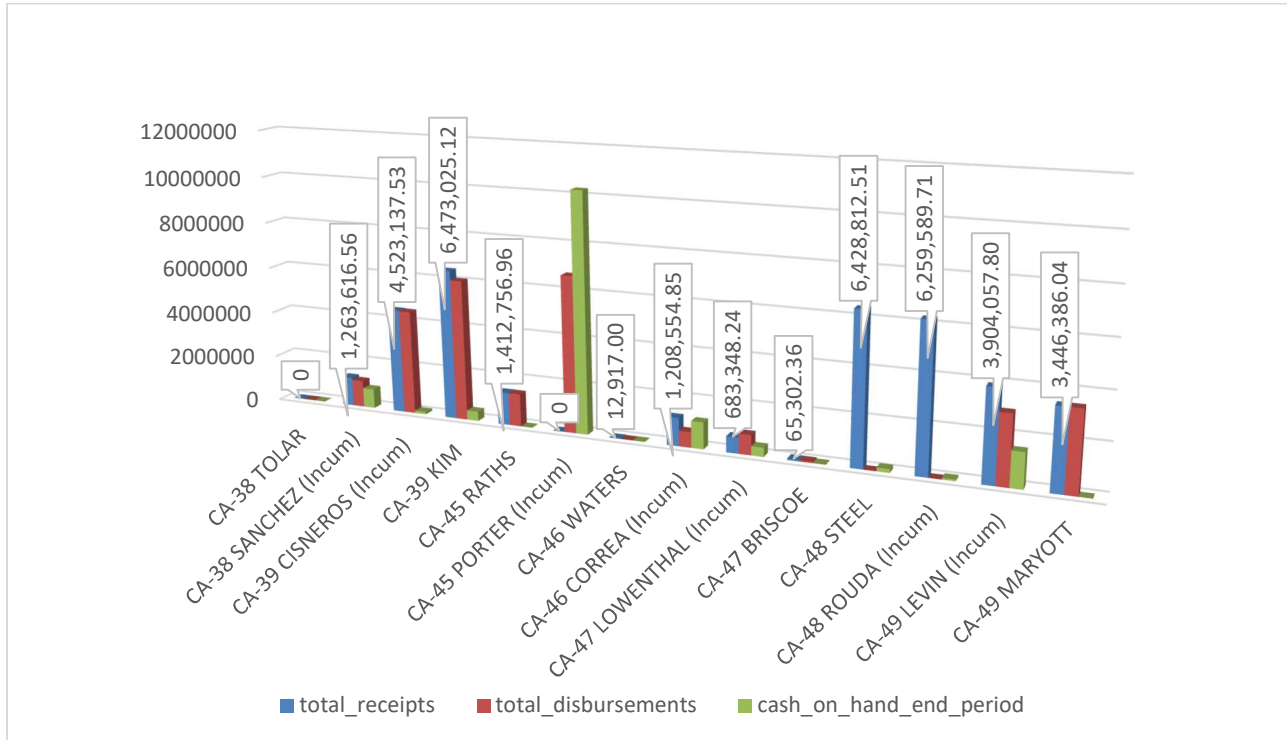
⁶¹ <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-midterms-asian-voters-20181102-story.html>.

⁶² <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/story/2020-11-03/harley-rouda-holds-significant-lead-over-michelle-steel-in-48th-congressional-district-race>

⁶³ <https://www.ocregister.com/2020/10/06/rep-katie-porter-favored-to-hold-ca-45-seat-but-greg-raths-fighting-to-flip-district-back-to-red/>

Capistrano, Brian Maryott⁶⁴ who reported total receipts of \$3,446,386.04, though the Democratic Party registration advantage of 1.27% helped to hold the seat.

Figure 1: Campaign Finance data for Orange County Congressional Candidates, December 30, 2020⁶⁵



VI. The cross current of NPP voters in Orange County Congressional Districts

This research began by asking the question: *what is the potential for influence of No Party Preference voters on Congressional elections?* The 2020 Congressional election results suggest a strong potential for influence over election outcomes, specifically in those congressional districts which have narrow gaps in party registration between Democratic and Republican voters (CA-39, CA-45, CA-48, CA-49).

⁶⁴ <https://www.kusi.com/republican-brian-maryott-advances-to-face-incumbent-democrat-mike-levin-in-general-election-for-ca-49/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/38/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/39/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/45/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/46/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/47/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/48/2020/>,
<https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/house/CA/49/2020/>

An examination of party registration trends across the districts reflected a long-standing, yet still increasing Democratic party registration advantage in three districts (CA-38, CA-46, CA-47), while in the other districts (CA-39, CA-45, CA-48, CA-49), Republican Party registration has been steadily decreasing, and Democratic Party registration has been steady increasing. This is also the case for those registered as NPP, with registration percentages increasing over time. For the fall 2020 Congressional elections, only in two districts did Republicans hold an advantage (CA-45, CA-48). Nevertheless, each district reflects statistically significant relationships with age and party registration (younger voters less likely to register as Republican), as well as for foreign born voters, who are also less likely to register as Republican. These results are consistent with trends seen across the state, country and in the literature.

Demographic shifts alone do not completely explain the lack of support for Republican candidates and increases in registration for Democrats and NPP. An examination of public opinion across the Orange County Congressional districts in 2020 reflected a distinct lack of support for the incumbent president, Donald Trump, and his issue priorities of building a wall with Mexico, and higher levels of support for capping carbon emissions, requiring background checks for gun purchases and providing government run health insurance for all Americans. Notably, political independents and younger voters were significantly in favor of these later issue positions. Interestingly, interviews with campaign staffers, candidates and party representatives reflected knowledge of the polarizing effects of President Trump, and a desire on the part of many NPP voters to avoid this kind of polarization. On both sides of the aisle, the interviews substantiated that issue positions mattered to NPP voters, and that candidates on both sides of the aisle would need to find out the issue positions that mattered most to these voters. Interestingly, there was also agreement that NPP voters could in fact serve as a moderating force in politics and be influential depending on the specific race (e.g. ““NPP influence will depend on a race by race basis”). Election results in CA-39 and CA-45 show that even in districts in which one party holds a registration advantage, a ‘quality challenger’ like Young Kim, or an incumbent with a high level of resources and name recognition, can win despite a registration advantage of the other party.

That said, the trends in the Orange County Congressional Districts will continue, though with modification. Recently, the Cook Political Report suggested that California may lose at least one congressional seat as a result of the 2020 Census.⁶⁶ The specific areas which could be impacted include eastern Los Angeles County—or northern San Diego/southern Orange County, as in CA-49.⁶⁷ With Congressional districts potentially larger in population size, the impact of NPP voters could be even greater, especially in a district like CA-49 where the registration gap is still narrow. Assumptions of blue waves or red riptides will thus be incomplete without consideration of NPP cross currents.

⁶⁶ <https://cookpolitical.com/analysis/house/house-overview/redistricting-overview-over-half-house-seats-cant-be-gerrymandered>.

⁶⁷ <https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/san-diego-could-lose-a-congressional-seat-after-the-2020-census-expert-says>

VII. REFERENCES

Anderson, Bryan. 2018. “Motor Voter sparks unusual spike in ‘no party’ registrations at California DMV” *The Sacramento Bee*, September 6. (<https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article217947420.html>)

Bader, Michael. 2020. “Can Racial Diversity Swing Competitive Congressional Districts?” *Contexts*, Volume 19 (Number 2): 68-70.

Balentine, Matthew D. and Gerald Webster. 2018. “The Changing Electoral Landscape of the Western United States. *The Professional Geographer*. Volume 70, Number 4: 566-582.

Barabak, Mark Z., Joe Mozingo, and Michael Finnegan. 2018. “Must Reads: Orange County goes blue, as Democrats complete historic sweep of its seven congressional seats.” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 17. (<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-me-pol-orange-county-gop-house-20181117-story.html>)

Basinger, Scott T. and Howard Lavine. (2005). “Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice.” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99 (2): p. 171.

Brownstein, Ronald. 2017. Democrats Need these California Seats to win back the House.” *The Atlantic*, May 25. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/democrats-house-california/527958/>)

Buttice, M., & Stone, W. (2012). Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 870-887.

California Citizens Redistricting Commission. 2020. Frequently Asked Questions. (<https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/commission/>)

California Secretary of State, Elections and Voter Information. 2021. “Registration Reports.” (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/report-registration>).

California Secretary of State. 2021. “Statewide Election Results: Prior Elections” (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/prior-elections/statewide-election-results>)

Christopher, Ben. 2020. “After California’s ‘blue wave’ to Congress in 2018? A GOP red riptide in 2020.” *Cal Matters*, November 16. (<https://calmatters.org/politics/post-it/2020/11/california-blue-wave-red-riptide-republican-congressional-wins/>)

Duquette, Christopher M, Mixon Jr, Franklin G, & Cebula, Richard J. (2013). The Impact of Legislative Tenure and Seniority on General Election Success: Econometric Evidence from U.S. House Races. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 41(2), 161–172. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11293-012-9355-x>

Federal Election Commission. 2020. (https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/?state=&cycle=2022&election_full=true)

Filion, Pierre. 2018. “Enduring Features of the North American suburb: Built Form, Automobile Orientation, Suburban Culture and Political Mobilization. *Urban Planning*, Volume 3, Issue 4 (December).

Frasure-Yokley, Lorrie and Bryan Wilcox-Archuleta. 2019. “Geographic Identity and Attitudes toward Undocumented Immigrants.” *Political Research Quarterly*. Volume 72, Issue 4: 944-959.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2009. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Longman.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2019. “Extreme Referendum: Donald Trump and the 2018 Midterm Elections.” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 134 (No. 1): 9-38.

Jacobson, Louis. 2020. “Redistricting Overview: Over Half of House Seats Can't Be Gerrymandered.” *The Cook Political Report*. October 1. (<https://cookpolitical.com/analysis/house/house-overview/redistricting-overview-over-half-house-seats-cant-be-gerrymandered>).

Kinsella, Chad J., Colleen Mctague and Kevin Raleigh. 2019: “Geographic Polarization, Partisan Voting, and the Battle over Same-Sex Marriage within the Culture War.” *The Geographical Review*. Volume 109, Issue 2 (April).

Kristen D. 2011. “Congressional Apportionment.” *United States Census Bureau*. (<https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-08.pdf>)

KUSI. 2020. “Republican Brian Maryott advances to face incumbent Democrat Mike Levin in general election for CA-49” March 4. (<https://www.kusi.com/republican-brian-maryott-advances-to-face-incumbent-democrat-mike-levin-in-general-election-for-ca-49/>)

Lapinski, John, Matt Levendusky, Ken Winneg and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. (2016). “What do Citizens Want from the Member of Congress?” *Political Research Quarterly* Vol. 69(3): 535-545.

Mai-Duc, Christine. 2018. “Asian Americans hold the key to victory in this Orange County district, and Democrat Gil Cisneros knows it.” *The Los Angeles Times*. Nov 2. (<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-midterms-asian-voters-20181102-story.html>)

Mehta, Seema and Melanie Mason. 2019. “Orange County, longtime GOP stronghold, now has more registered Democrats than Republicans.” *Los Angeles Times*. August 7. (<https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/mes.com>)

Mouchard, Andre. 2020. “New Poll of Orange County Voters: We are as Conflicted as the rest of the Country”. *Orange County Register*. February 26. (<https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/>)

O’Leary, Kevin. 2018. “How the Blue Wave Swelled to a Tsunami in Orange County.” *The American Prospect*. November 30. (<https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/in-Orange-County-The-American-Prospect>)

Orange County Registrar of Voters, Data Central-Registration. 2019-2020. (<https://www.ocvote.com/datacentral/>)

Ortiz, Jorge. 2018. “Orange is the new blue: California Democrats sweep 7 House seats in former GOP stronghold,” *USA Today*. November 18.

(<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/11/18/california-democrats-sweep-house-seats-orange-county/2048696002/>)

Reese, Phillip. 2020. “Are Placer and El Dorado Counties Still Republican Strongholds?” *The Sacramento Bee*, September 21. (<https://brynneforcongress.com/2020/09/are-placer-and-el-dorado-counties-still-republican-strongholds-here-are-the-latest-numbers/>)

Scala, Dante J. and Kenneth M. Johnson. 2017. “Political Polarization along the Rural-Urban Continuum? The geography of the Presidential Vote, 2000-2016.” *ANNALS, AAPSS*. Volume 672 (July): 162-184.

Sforza, Terri. 2020. “OC Poll Surprises: Reconsider Nuclear Power, ban internal combustion engines.” *Orange County Register*. May 5. (<https://www.ocregister.com/2020/05/05/o-c-poll-surprises-reconsider-nuclear-power-ban-internal-combustion-engines/>)

Sheehan, Tim, 2020. “Is Merced County Still a Valley Stronghold for Democrats?” *Merced Sun-Star*. October 11. (<https://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/article246347610.html>)

Skaggs, Brooke. 2020. “Rep. Katie Porter Favored to Hold CA-45 seat but Greg Raths Fighting to flip district back to Red.” *The Orange County Register*. October 10.

(<https://www.ocregister.com/2020/10/06/rep-katie-porter-favored-to-hold-ca-45-seat-but-greg-raths-fighting-to-flip-district-back-to-red/>)

Snibbe, Kurt and Martin Wisckol. 2019. “Why Orange County is the New Blue.” *The Orange County Register*. August 9. ([https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/ter\(ocregister.com\)](https://www.ocregister.com/2020/02/26/new-poll-of-orange-county-voters-were-as-conflicted-as-the-rest-of-the-country/ter(ocregister.com)))

Stahl, Derek. 2020. “San Diego could lose a congressional seat after the 2020 Census, expert says.” *10news.com*. October 20. (<https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/san-diego-could-lose-a-congressional-seat-after-the-2020-census-expert-says>)

Tausanovitch, Chris and Lynn Vavreck. 2020. *Democracy Fund and UCLA Nationscape*, Retrieved from <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publication/nationscape-data-set>

United States Census Bureau. 2020. “My Congressional District” (<https://www.census.gov/mycd/>)

Zint, Bradley. 2020. “Election 2020: Harley Rouda locked in tight race with Michelle Steel for 48th Congressional District seat.” *Daily Pilot*. November 3. (<https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/story/2020-11-03/harley-rouda-holds-significant-lead-over-michelle-steel-in-48th-congressional-district-race>).