**ONLINE APPENDIX**

**The Conditional Effect of Local Party Organization Activity on Federal Election Outcomes**

***Section A1. Representativeness of Respondents***

Given the availability of county-level census demographics, we are able to assess whether the county chairs who responded to our survey tended to be from a representative pool of counties based on county level measures derived from the U.S. Census’ American Community Survey 2015 5-year averages for U.S. counties. Descriptive statistics for the sample of chairs who participated in the survey are reported in the last column of Online Appendix Table A1. As shown in that table, the samples for both parties are representative of known U.S. county-level characteristics.

***Section A2. Electoral Past and Current Local Political Activity***

In this section we assess how well the distribution of party activity across counties conforms to the strategy suggested by our findings. In Figure A1 we present smoothed LOWESS lines that illustrate the relationship between party performance in the 2012 presidential election (bottom- and top-coded at 20 and 80 percent, respectively) and residuals from a model predicting *Local Party Activity* with the county-level demographic characteristics, an indicator for the chair’s party, interactions between party and demographics, and state fixed effects. This provides a way to illustrate the relationship between past performance and activity after accounting for structural features of counties that may affect *Local Party Activity*. We present a line for the full sample as well as separate lines for Democratic and Republican chairs. The gray line shows the relationship between 2012 performance and the raw (not residualized) measure of activity. Each line points to a similar conclusion: *Local Party Activity* is weakest in counties where the party performed poorly in the last election and increases with improved past performance. This relationship then tapers off—and appears to modestly reverse—among chairs serving in counties where their party’s presidential candidate won at least 40 percent of the two-party vote in the last presidential election.

***Figure A1. LOWESS Lines Showing Relationship between Past" "Electoral Performance and Local Party Activity***



*Residuals are from model predicting Local Party Activity with county demographics, state fixed effects, and indicator for Democratic chairs.*

In Table A15 we report parametric tests of this relationship. We begin by estimating a regression model predicting party activity with county characteristics: total county population (logged), share of Hispanic households, share of black households, median household income, and share of county residents with a college degree. Our model also includes an indicator for Democratic chairs, interactions between the party indicator and county demographics, and state fixed effects. Finally, our model includes a measure of the share of the two-party vote won by the candidate from the chair’s party in the 2012 presidential election. We present this model in column (1) of Table A15.

The results indicate that total population is the only demographic factor that predicts *Local Party Activity*: larger counties tend to have more active party chairs (a relationship that is somewhat stronger among Democratic chairs). The coefficients on the remaining county characteristics each fall well short of conventional thresholds of statistical significance as do the interactions between party and these characteristics. This model also suggests that chairs tend to be modestly more active in counties where their party performed well in the previous presidential election. In a separate model excluding interactions between chair party and county characteristics we do not find evidence that chairs from one party are more active than the other (p = .475), nor is the bivariate relationship between chair’s party and activity significant (p = 0.852).

This said, as suggested by the LOWESS lines in Figure A1, the relationship between past performance and party activity does not appear to be linear. We consider nonlinear specifications in columns (2) and (3) of Table A15, where we add a squared, and then cubed, past performance term to our model—terms that each significantly improve the fit of the model (p = .060 for cubed term). We illustrate the relationship between past performance and current activity indicated by the column (3) specification in Figure A2. The figure shows a strong, positive relationship between past performance and party activity in counties where the party failed to garner majority support in the previous election. However, this relationship flattens out, and modestly reverses in counties where the party won a majority in the previous election.

***Figure A2. Parametric Relationship between Past" "Electoral Performance and Local Party Activity***



*Note: Estimates from Table A15, column (3). Covariates set to their means.*

In column (4) of Table A15 we estimate an alternative model interacting the *Share of Two-Party Vote Won by Party* measure with an indicators for counties where the party won 45 to 55 percent of the two-party vote in 2012 (*Electoral Competition*) and counties where the party won more than 50 percent of the vote (*Electoral Dominance*). The results indicate that in counties where the party’s candidate fell short of 45 percent of the two-party vote, a two standard deviation (34 percentage point) increase in the share of the vote won by a party’s candidate is associated with a 1.64 standard deviation increase in *Local Party Activity*. In contrast, among chairs serving in counties where their party won at 45-55 percent of the vote, a similar increase in vote share is associated with a 0.88 standard deviation decrease in *Local Party Activity* (p=.385). The comparable estimate for chairs serving in counties where their party won more than 55 percent of the vote is a 0.76 standard deviation decrease (p = .013).

As suggested by Figure A1, this analysis demonstrates that, after controlling for other county characteristics, *Local Party Activity* is greatest in closely divided counties. Chairs in counties where their party has a history of losing by fairly wide margins report particularly low levels of activity. This pattern is consistent with a party focus on “winning counties” rather than engaging broadly to improve party outcomes. This is a sensible strategy if local party organizations are solely interested in improving the party’s ability to elect county commissioners, sheriffs, and other county-level officials. However, elections for higher office are not decided by the number of counties where a candidate wins a majority of votes. From the perspective of a Republican candidate running for the U.S. Senate in Illinois (and the perspective of Republicans nationally), an additional thousand votes from Cook County—a county the candidate is extremely unlikely to “win”—are just as helpful as an additional 1,000 votes that may “win” DeKalb county.

Considered in concert with the results presented in Table 2, these patterns suggest that parties would be well-served in national elections to devote greater resources toward engaging in counties where the party tends to perform poorly. Party chairs do tend to report being engaged in counties where their party’s candidate won between 40 and 45 percent of the vote in 2012. However, these counties account for just over 11 percent of counties in our sample. Thirty-four percent of chairs in our sample serve in counties where their party’s presidential candidate won less than 40 percent of the vote in 2012. Our findings suggest that greater party activity in these counties could improve candidates’ chances in up-ballot races, even if they fall (substantially) short of winning a majority of votes within the county.