



## Elections Research Center

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# 2018 Annual Report

### Overview

The Elections Research Center had a successful 2018: expanding its reputation for excellence in the study of elections, producing valuable scholarly studies, supporting student research, and offering outreach to the broader community.

These successes have been made possible with the financial support of Jeffrey and Susanne Lyons and other generous donors, the involvement of a Steering Committee of three faculty members, and the affiliations of a dozen other faculty and over 25 students from the Department of Political Science, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, and other units on campus.

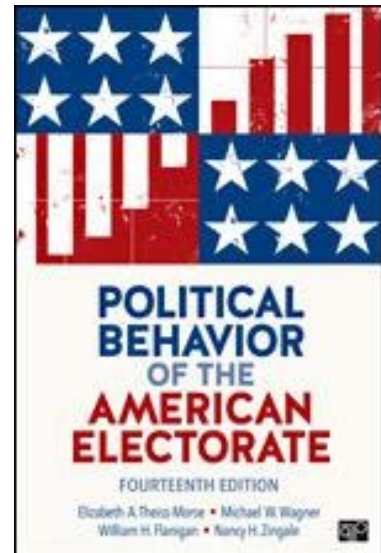
### Publications and Research

#### *Books and Articles*

Affiliates of the Center were active producers of impactful research. In addition to the many papers presented at academic conferences, a sampling of books and articles published in 2018 includes:

- **“Learning from Recounts”** by Barry C. Burden and Kenneth R. Mayer with Stephen Ansolabehere and Charles Stewart III (*Election Law Journal*)
- **“The Stealth Media? Groups and Targets Behind Divisive Issue Campaigns on Facebook”** by Young Mie Kim, Jordan Hsu, and Levi Bankston with David Neiman, Colin Kou, Soo Yun Kim, Richard Heinrich, Robyn Baragwanath, and Garvesh Rashkutt (*Political Communication*)
- **“Campaigns, Inc.”** by Robert Yablon (*Minnesota Law Review*)

- **“The Effects of Malapportionment on Cabinet Inclusion: Subnational Evidence from India”** by Rikhil Bhavnani (*British Journal of Political Science*)
- ***Political Behavior of the American Electorate*** by Michael W. Wagner with Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse, William H. Flanigan, and Nancy H. Zingale
- **“Polls and Elections: Institutional Dynamics and Nominating Processes: The Latest Twists on a Familiar Story or the Emergence of a Brave New World?”** by Byron E. Shafer with Elizabeth M. Sawyer (*Presidential Studies Quarterly*)
- **“Social Distraction? Social Media Use and Political Knowledge in Two U.S. Presidential Elections”** by Michael Xenos with Sangwon Lee
- **“‘Little Marco,’ ‘Lyn’Ted,’ ‘Crooked Hillary,’ and the ‘Biased’ Media: How Trump Used Twitter to Attack and Organize** by Ayellet Pelled and Dhavan Shah with Josephine Lukito, Fred Boehm, and JungHwan Yang (*Digital Discussions*)
- **“Who Gets Covered? Ideological Extremity and News Coverage of Members of the U.S. Congress, 1993 to 2013** by Michael W. Wagner with Mike Gruszczynski (*Journalism & Mass Communication*)
- **“Do the Effects of Temporary Ethnic Group Quotas Persist? Evidence from India”** by Rikhil Bhavnani (*American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*)

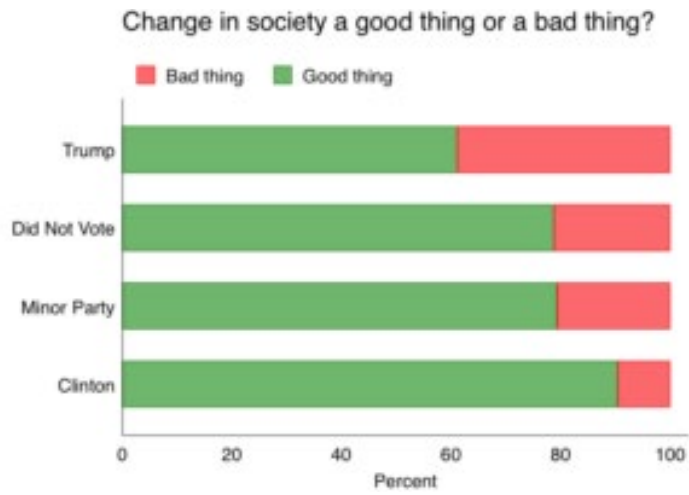


### *Kavanaugh Survey Commissioned*



In partnership with the media outlet Vox, the ERC commissioned a nationwide survey about Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and his accuser Christine Blasey Ford in fall 2018. The poll re-asked the same questions that were asked about Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill in 1991 to determine how the nomination battle affected the midterm elections. The Center plans to make the data public in the coming year.

## Changing Values Study Made Publicly Available



The Center released the data from its first poll conducted in 2017. The data are now posted on the Harvard Dataverse for public use. The nationwide poll explored public attitudes about changing American values and who should be trusted to make public decisions.

## Media

### Featured in the News

ERC faculty and student affiliates were featured in many prominent news outlets in 2018. These outlets included national news agencies such as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *NBC*, *CNN*, and *Fox News*. Affiliates were also quoted in specialized outlets including *Politico*, *Vox*, and *Wired*. State and local news sources, such as *Wisconsin Public Radio* and the *Wisconsin State Journal*, also featured ERC faculty members.



Stories featuring ERC faculty included salient topics such as voting rights, digital misinformation, redistricting, and much more. Some media appearances to highlight include:

- **“Democracy in Peril: The War on Voting Rights”** with Barry Burden and Kenneth Mayer (*CNN*)
- **“Election expert: Wisconsin GOP’s power grab is ‘a textbook example of how democracies die’”** with Michael Wagner (*Salon*)
- **“Wisconsin Democrats fear GOP redistricting end-around”** with David Canon (*Associated Press*)
- **“‘Weaponized Ad Technology’: Facebook’s Moneymaker Gets a Critical Eye”** with Young Mie Kim (*The New York Times*)
- **“TV anchors decrying ‘fake’ news puts spotlight on Sinclair Broadcast Group”** with Lewis Friedland (*NBC*)
- **“Inside Scott Walker’s Survival Plan”** with Michael Wagner (*Time*)



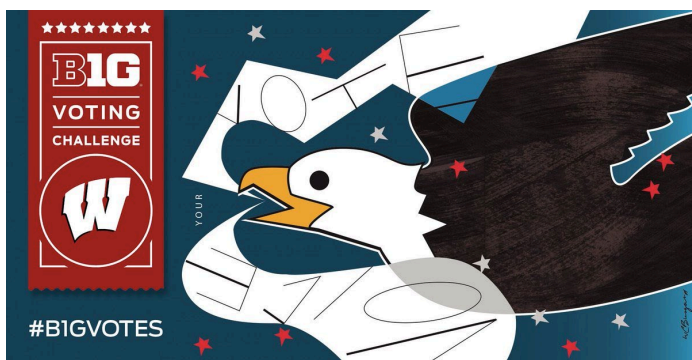
### *Authored Columns*

Faculty and students also authored numerous columns and other articles in the media. A sampling of these includes:

- **“In the 2018 midterms, many more people are running – and far more seat are contested – than we’ve seen for a generation”** by Barry Burden and Rochelle Snyder (*Monkey Cage/Washington Post*)
- **“How might recent confrontation with Hamas influence Israeli elections?”** by Chagai Weiss (*Monkey Cage/Washington Post*)
- **“No bright line ruling likely on SCOTUS gerrymandering cases”** by Barry Burden and Robert Yablon (*The Hill*)

## Big Ten Voting Challenge

Throughout 2018, the Elections Research Center organized and coordinated events to help UW-Madison compete in the Big Ten Voting Challenge. Endorsed by Chancellor Blank, the Challenge was a competition among Big Ten institutions to encourage student turnout in the 2018 midterm election. Led by Katherine Cramer in the spring and Barry Burden in the summer and fall, the UW-Madison team coordinated with the Morgridge Center for Public Service and a team of campus leaders to register, educate, and mobilize thousands of UW-Madison student voters.



As part of the Big Ten Voting Challenge, the Center linked up with other organizations to engage students with several election-related events. On National Voter Registration day, Director Barry Burden participated in an election voting forum with Wisconsin Union Directorate Society & Politics group and the Political Science Student Association. The event featured an expert panel and gave attendees the opportunity to register to vote.



The Center also sponsored events such as a free public screening of the film *One Vote: Every Vote Tells a Story* that featured a Q&A session with the director.

On election day evening, affiliates David Canon, Kenneth Mayer, and Michael Wagner participated in an election viewing party and discussion panel.

## Community Engagement

The ERC and its affiliates also extended engagement to the community. Faculty spoke at many events in the Madison community and gave expert insights to many local news outlets.

Faculty participated in several events hosted by the local newspaper *Cap Times*. Starting in January, Katherine Cramer gave a “Cap Times Talk” where she discussed state elections. After the UW System Board of Regents adopted a controversial expulsion policy for students who interrupt others’ speech, faculty affiliate Don Moynihan participated in a panel hosted by the paper about free speech on campus. In April, affiliates Michael Wagner and Young Mie Kim spoke at the Cap Times Idea Fest. The two-day event featured dozens of sessions about problems and issues facing the city, state, and nation.



## Hosted Events

In addition to other more focused events such as a panel discussion about Russian influence in U.S. elections, the Elections Research Center organized two major events on the UW-Madison campus in 2018.

### *Election Sciences, Reform, and Administration Conference*

In collaboration with the MIT Elections Data and Science Lab, the ERC hosted the Elections Sciences, Reform, and Administration (ESRA) conference on July 26 and 27. The two-day conference brought together political scientists and elections professionals to discuss how law and administrative procedures affect the quality of elections in the United States. Some of the talks and presentations included voter ID laws, registration, election security, and election funding.

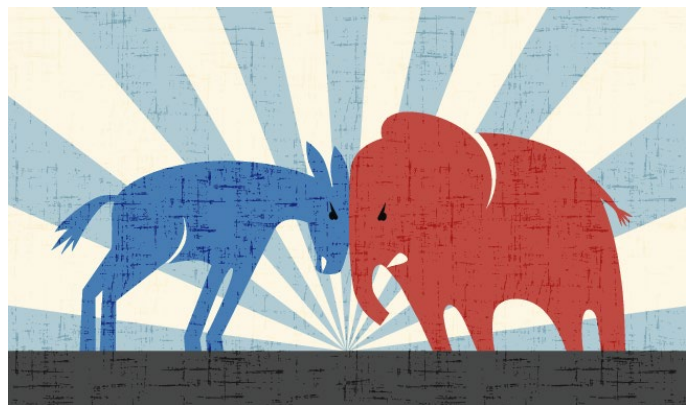
# ESRA2018

Election Sciences,  
Reform, & Administration



## Election Symposium 2018

On December 7, the Center hosted its second all-day election symposium. The event was open to the public and drew hundreds of attendees from the university and the wider Madison community. It featured nationally renowned experts who analyzed the results of the 2018 midterm elections. Experts discussed a range of topics, such as the rise of women candidates, the influence of misinformation, and the Wisconsin media environment. Invited speakers included *Washington Post* columnist Karen Tumulty and University of Michigan professor Brendan Nyhan in addition to other outside speakers and faculty from UW-Madison.



## Professional Activities and Awards

Affiliates were engaged both on and off campus in a variety of service and professional roles in 2018. Additionally, affiliates received many prestigious awards and research grants.

### On Campus Activities

- Dhavan Shah began his term as the director for the recently created Mass Communication Research Center, which coordinates and provides support for eight research groups on campus. He also served as scientific director at the Center for Health Enhancement System Studies (CHESS), a multidisciplinary organization that researches and develops technology to help people cope with adverse health conditions.
- Michael Wagner was the Associate Chair of the Education/Social and Behavioral Sciences IRB Committee. He also led Physiology and Communication Effects (PACE) research lab.

- Nils Ringe continued as director of the Center for European Studies and the Jean Monnet European Union Center of Excellence.
- Michael Xenos continued his term as chair of the Department of Communication Arts.

### *Off Campus Activities*

- Young Mie Kim spent six months in Washington, D.C. as a scholar-in-residence at the Campaign Legal Center where she provided expertise on divisive digital media campaigns. She also testified in front of the Federal Election Commission and prepared two congressional briefings.
- David Canon was Editor-in-Chief of *Election Law Journal*.
- Michael Wagner continued in his role as the founding editor of “The Forum,” a review section of the journal *Political Communication*.



### *Awards, Outside Grants, and other Notables*

- Katherine Cramer won the Heinz I. Eulau Award at the 2018 APSA annual meeting for her work with former graduate student affiliate Benjamin Toff. The award recognizes the best article published in *American Political Science Review* or *Perspectives on Politics*, the flagship journals of the American Political Science Association.
- Benjamin Toff won the E. E. Schattschneider Award. The award goes to the best doctoral dissertation on American government.
- Five other faculty affiliates won a \$460,000 grant from UW 2020, an initiative that seeks to fund innovative, groundbreaking research. Their project seeks to understand the growing polarization and fragmentation of Wisconsin’s media ecology. The faculty affiliates on the research team are Lewis Friedland, Katherine Cramer, Michael Wagner, Christopher Wells, and Dhavan Shah.
- Faculty and graduate students participated in dozens of panels and other presentations at meetings throughout the year. These included talks at prestigious universities, such as Stanford, Vanderbilt, Duke, Oxford, Georgetown, Columbia University, University of Michigan, and Louisiana State University.
- Graduate student affiliate Evan Crawford successfully defended his dissertation on local school board elections and accepted a position as assistant professor at the University of San Diego.



- Katherine Cramer partnered with collaborators at MIT and the media analytics firm Cortico to foster conversations with citizens around “digital hearths.” Trained facilitators will take these digital hearths into different conversations groups of around six people during the 2019 Madison mayoral campaign.

## Serving Students

Affiliates of the Elections Research Center actively engaged with students on campus. In addition to teaching a wide-range of courses, faculty members advised undergraduates writing senior honors theses, collaborated and mentored students, and spoke to many student organizations. The Center also funded many student research projects.

## Course Offerings

Faculty offered a range of popular undergraduate, professional, and graduate courses including:

- Elections and Voting Behavior
- Introduction to American Politics
- Public Opinion
- The U.S. Congress
- American Political Parties
- Mass Communication and Political Behavior
- Law of Democracy
- Politics in the Digital Media Age

## Financial Support for Student Research

Two grant competitions provided funds for graduate students to conduct research projects and participate in scholarly conferences. Multiple students received financial awards to support their work on a variety of topics including the effects of judicial reforms on elections, polarization and “fake news,” and the impact of combat deaths on elections in Israel.

In addition, the Rose Family Undergraduate Research Project award made funds available for undergraduate research on elections. Students receiving the initial awards are collaborating with faculty on projects about factors affecting student political engagement and levels of contestation in the 2018 elections.

