



Elections Research Center

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2017 Annual Report

Overview

In its third year of existence, the Elections Research Center maintained its reputation for excellence in the study of elections while also expanding its influence and developing new resources for future expansion.

These successes have been made possible with the financial support 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 and other units on campus.

Working with the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association – particularly Katie Kruse Rather – Director Barry Burden and other faculty members have been actively collaborating in development and outreach activities in Madison and around the country. Among other accomplishments, in 2017 the development team raised \$200,000 in gifts to match a pledge from Jeff Lyons and received a gift of \$120,000 gift from the Mai Foundation. All told, the ERC has earned pledges of private gifts totally more than \$2.3 million.

Research and Publications

Affiliates of the Elections Research Center published many books and articles in 2017. A sampling of their published research includes:

- Jack Edelson, Alexander Alduncin, Christopher Krewson, James A. Sieja, and Joseph E. Uscinski, “The Effects of Conspiratorial Thinking and Motivated Reasoning on Belief in Election Fraud” (*Political Research Quarterly*)
- Robert Yablon, “Campaign Finance Reform Without Law” (*Iowa Law Review*)
- Chris Wells, Katherine Cramer, Michael Wagner, German Alvarez, Lewis Friedland, Dhavan Shah, Leticia Bode, Stephanie Edgerly, Itay Gabay, and Charles Franklin, “When We Stop Talking Politics: The Maintenance and Closing of Conversation in Contentious Times” (*Journal of Communication*)

- Barry Burden, Jason Fletcher, Pamela Herd, Bradley Jones, and Donald Moynihan, “How Different Forms of Health Matter to Political Participation” (*Journal of Politics*)
- Amnon Cavari, Richard Powell, and Kenneth Mayer (eds.), *The 2016 Presidential Election: The Causes and Consequences of a Political Earthquake* (Rowman & Littlefield)
- Katherine Cramer and Benjamin Toff, “The Fact of Experience: Rethinking Political Knowledge and Civic Competence” (*Perspectives on Politics*)
- Barry Burden, David Canon, Kenneth Mayer, and Donald Moynihan, “The Complicated Effects of State Election Laws” (*Political Research Quarterly*)
- Dhavan Shaw, Douglas McLeod, Hernando Rojas, Jaeho Cho, Michael Wagner, and Lewis Friedland, “Revising the Communication Mediation Model for a New Political Communication Ecology” (*Human Communication Research*)
- Barry Burden, Yoshikuni Ono, and Masahiro Yamada, “Reassessing Public Support for a Female President” (*Journal of Politics*)



In addition, six articles were published in *The Forum* in early 2017 based on presentations by faculty and students at the post-election symposium that the ERC hosted on campus in December 2016.

Katherine Cramer’s book, *The Politics of Resentment*, continued to attract intense national and international attention. Among other highlights, it led to an in-depth interview with Slate, a roundtable of scholars responding to her book in the journal *Political Communication*, and even a tour of the state with comedian and television host Jon Stewart as part of his planning for a potential film to be set in Wisconsin.

The ERC commissioned its first-ever nationwide survey of the American electorate in the fall of 2017, a national poll administered by YouGov and focusing on the issues of alienation, discontent, and views of the media in the Trump era. Analysis of the survey produced the following opinion columns by ERC faculty members:



- Barry Burden, “Trump’s Base Wants to Hold on to the Past At All Costs” (*Los Angeles Times*)
- Michael Wagner, “One Year Later, Who Do Trump Voters Trust?” (Vox.com)

Media

Faculty and student affiliates of the center continued to be featured prominently in journalistic coverage of elections and related topics. Outlets in which faculty members appeared include *The New York Times*, Wisconsin Public Radio, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Atlantic*, Vox, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the Associated Press, Politico, Slate, and many other international, national, state, and local sources. Some highlights of these media appearances include the following:

Monkey Cage • Analysis

Everything you need to know about the Supreme Court’s big gerrymandering case

- “Wisconsin Strict ID Law Discouraged Voters, Study Finds” (*The New York Times*)
- “Trump’s Alienation of Congress Could Be His Undoing, Experts Say” (*USA Today*)
- “Donald Trump’s Political Stew” (*The New York Times*)

Faculty and students were also the authors of numerous columns and other articles in the media. A sampling of these include:

- Katherine Cramer, “The Great American Fallout: How Small Towns Came to Resent Cities” (*The Guardian*)
- Barry Burden, “Everything You Need to Know about the Supreme Court’s Big Gerrymandering Case” (Monkey Cage/*Washington Post*)

Campus Events

The Elections Research Center helped to engage the UW-Madison community in the 2016 elections, providing insight, access to expertise, and motivation to participate.

The Elections Research Center co-sponsored several events for members of the campus community. In April the center



co-sponsored a talk by Washington Post reporter Amy Goldstein about her book, *Janesville: An American Story*.

In October the ERC co-sponsored a multiday conference and workshops on the “Geometry of Redistricting.” Presentations from many experts including ERC affiliates David Canon and Robert Yablon attracted hundreds of participants from around the country for the timely event.

Robert Yablon hosted several speakers at UW Law School whose presentations focused on aspects of election law. These include a talk by University of Kentucky law professor Josh Douglas on “Local Democracy on the Ballot,” NYU law professor Samuel Issacharoff on “Democracy’s Deficits,” and Stanford University law professor Nathan Persily on “The Campaign Revolution Will Not Be Televised.”

Community and Alumni Outreach

An important part of the center’s activities is outreach to alumni and community beyond the university.

In Madison, professors Burden, Canon, Cramer, Mayer, Wagner, and Yablon gave presentations to the League of Women Voters of Dane County, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, and many other local community organizations and institutions.

Barry Burden gave a presentation titled “Another Look at the Electoral College” to students at UW-Eau Claire. He also participated in a panel discussion at UW-Barron County on “The Constitution, Congress, and the Presidency: What Are the Limits of Power?”



Kenneth Mayer repeated his practice of inviting local kindergarten students to attend a session of his introductory course on American politics and “stump the professor” with challenging questions. The event was covered by local media outlets including WISC television. Katherine Cramer was featured as part of UW-Madison campus Go Big Read panel discussion of J.D. Vance’s book, *Hillbilly Elegy*.

Faculty associated with the ERC gave Founders’ Day presentations to eager alumni gatherings in Cincinnati, OH, Green County, WI, Washington, DC, and Baltimore, MD. Barry Burden participated as a panelist in the Alumni Association’s “UW Now” events in Boston, New York, and Silicon Valley.

Faculty members were also invited to present research at prestigious universities across the county and around the world. These presentations include talks at Boston University, the University of Chicago, University of Amsterdam, Ohio State University, Harvard University,



Notre Dame University, Oxford University, London School of Economics, Northwestern University, Brown University, University of California-Berkeley, and Princeton University.

Kenneth Mayer testified before the Wisconsin Elections Commission about his research with graduate student Michael DeCrescenzo on the effects of the state's voter identification law on turnout in the

2016 presidential election. Barry Burden testified in state court in Massachusetts in a case involved voter registration deadlines in the state.

To recognize his exceptional efforts in this area, Michael Wagner was presented with the Ken and Linda Ciriacks Alumni Outreach Excellence Award from the Wisconsin Alumni Association.

Other Professional Activities

Affiliates of the Elections Research Center were engaged in multiple ways to serve the campus, academic fields, administrative professionals, policy makers, and the broader community.

Barry Burden and Eleanor Powell were part of a faculty team that hosted the 2017 conference of the Society for Political Methodology (PolMeth). The prestigious gathering brought 200 of the world's foremost experts in statistical analysis of political data to the UW-Madison campus for a multiday conference.

Donald Moynihan continued his position of director of the La Follette School of Public Affairs while completing his term as president of Public Management Research Association. Michael Wagner took the reigns as founding editor of "The Forum," a review section of the journal *Political Communication*, and continued his term as chair of the Education/Social and Behavioral Sciences IRB Committee. Nils Ringe continued as director of the Center for European Studies and the Jean Monnet European Union Center of Excellence.

Katherine Cramer completed her term as director of the Morgridge Center for Public Service. The Morgridge Center facilitated multiple engagement activities including voter registration activities as the campus representative of the Big Ten Voting Challenge.

Michael Xenos continued his term as chair of the Department of Communication Arts. David Canon completed his term as chair of the Department of Political Science. In September he began a term as editor of *Election Law Journal*.

Faculty and graduate student affiliates were quite active professionally in 2017. They participated on dozens of panels and other presentations at national and international meetings throughout the year. Young Mie Kim began service as chair of the Mass Communication division of the International Communication Association.

Katherine Cramer and Donald Moynihan were both selected as winners of the Kellett Mid-Career Award, given to outstanding UW-Madison faculty seven to 20 years since tenure.

Recent Ph.D. graduate Benjamin Toff won the best dissertation award from the Political Communication section of the American Political Science Association.



Michael Wagner was co-PI on a project awarded a \$60,000 grant from the American Council of Learned Societies to fund a series of workshops to understand local news coverage of politics and religion.

Serving Students

Affiliates of the Elections Research Center actively engaged with students, journalists, and the broader community in a variety of ways. In addition to hosting events on campus and speaking to student groups, faculty members advised undergraduates writing senior honors theses, collaborated and mentored students, and taught hundreds of students.

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

- Political Behavior and Mass Communication
- Introduction of American Politics
- Election Reform in America
- The U.S. Congress
- The Changing Structure of American Politics
- Mass Media Practices
- New Approaches to American Politics
- Introduction to Survey Research
- Political Communication

Two grant competitions provided funds for graduate student 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 following: the effects of Donald Trump's rhetoric on public opinions about race, how European government actions help define social cleavages among voters, the use of populist language by the UK Independence Party, analysis of uncontested elections for Congress and state legislative seats, classification of language used in Trump's campaign tweets, the effect of a photo ID requirement on voter turnout.

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 on the connections between candidates' use of social media and the campaign funding, polling place incidents in the 2016 presidential election, and factors influencing student participation in elections.



Looking Ahead

The Elections Research Center is eagerly anticipating an array of events and opportunities in 2018.

Several activities are aimed at enhancing the center's public visibility. A new ERC web site is in the works to launch early in the year. Faculty recently coordinated with the university's incoming national media relations specialist to develop materials for journalists seeking covering legislative gerrymandering decisions this spring from the U.S. Supreme Court.

The center will be hosting several high profile events during the year. In February the ERC will co-sponsor a panel for the campus community with UW Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia on Russian influence in the 2016 elections. In July the center will play host to the prestigious Election Sciences, Reform, and Administration conference on campus. Finally, the year concludes with the second Elections Research Center symposium following the 2018 midterm elections.