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## CHARACTER ISSUES

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# AEA Ideology: Campaign Contributions of American Economic Association Members, Committee Members, Officers, Editors, Referees, Authors, and Acknowledges

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[Abstract, Keywords, JEL Codes](#)

*The purpose of the American Economic Association, according to its charter, is the encouragement of economic research, the issue of publications on economic subjects, and the encouragement of perfect freedom of economic discussion. The Association as such takes no partisan attitude, nor does it commit its members to any position on practical economic questions. It is the organ of no party, sect, or institution. People of all shades of economic opinion are found among its members, and widely different issues are given a hearing in its annual meetings and through its publications.*

—American Economic Review Papers & Proceedings *May 2004*, vi.

**FOR YEARS THOSE WORDS HAVE APPEARED ON THE OPENING** page of the May *American Economic Review*. What evidence speaks to whether the Association encourages “perfect freedom of economic discussion” and is “the organ of no party”? Does the AEA represent “people of all shades of economic opinion”? One way to get at these questions is to examine the party affiliation of those involved with the Association’s leadership and publications. A dominating ratio of one party, particularly among officers,

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editors, and authors, would raise questions about the ideological character of the Association.

The problem is uncovering party affiliation. Because party registration is public information, one could in principle identify the party registration of each AEA officer. Voter registration records, however, remain local, and AEA leadership is not concentrated in a particular geographic area, so one would have to embark on a large research circuit to gather the information. Eventually all voter registration records may become available online, but until then uncovering the party registration of AEA leaders seems out of reach.

Another approach is to survey the target groups. Several recent studies ask academics about their political leanings (e.g., Brookings 2001; Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte 2005). Klein and Stern (2006, 2005b) report on their survey of AEA members, including a question about voting behavior. But a survey directed specifically at the AEA leadership would face response gaps and the possibility of strategic responding. With the growing public attention given to academic ideology, there are increasing concerns about response biases.

Another possibility is campaign contributions. Under Federal election law, political organizations must report the source of any contribution of \$200 or more.<sup>1</sup> Contributions capture the intensity of political preferences in a way that other measures of party affiliation do not. Research suggests that those who contribute to campaigns are more likely to be politically engaged in other ways, as with meeting attendance, letter writing, talking with others, and voting (Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003, 118, and references therein). The party-attachment signal of a campaign contribution may be stronger than that of party registration, self-identification, or voting pattern.

Using campaign contributions, however, creates some problems. First, some contributors fail to provide all the information the law requires. For example, in the 2004 election cycle, about 17 percent of \$200+ Kerry contributors lacked full disclosure, as did 6 percent of Bush contributors.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Such contributions make up most of the money coming from individual contributors. For example, 70 percent of all individual contributions to presidential candidates in the 2004 election cycle came from \$200+ contributions (based on figures reported by [Opensecrets.org](http://Opensecrets.org)).

<sup>2</sup> These percentages were reported by [Opensecrets.org](http://Opensecrets.org). Campaigns are allowed to accept contributions with less than full disclosure as long as a “best effort” is made to secure the information.

But even in such cases, there is usually enough information to identify the donor.

A more significant problem is that only a tiny minority contributes a reportable amount. In the 2004 election cycle, for example, roughly 600,000 contributors gave \$200 or more to presidential candidates or to national party committees.<sup>3</sup> Since the U.S. voting-age population was about 220 million, those giving a reportable amount constituted just 0.3 percent of that population.

Thus, campaign contributions reflect party preference, but few give a reportable amount. Even so, campaign contributions may still shed light on the ideological character of those who control the Association and its publications. For example, examining campaign contributions can tell us whether there are at least *some* supporters of each party among AEA leadership and publications. It may also tell us whether there is a noticeable preponderance of supporters of one party.

### AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

To get an idea of the political makeup of the Association, I begin with contributions from a large sample of members. Reports to the Federal Election Commission of individual contributions of \$200 or more to presidential campaigns or to national party committees have been compiled online at Fundrace 2004 ([www.fundrace.org/neighbors.php](http://www.fundrace.org/neighbors.php)). Using that search engine, I identify each individual contributor based on a first and last name cross-referenced with an occupation, employer, and address. Whenever I talk about campaign contributors, I mean contributors of \$200 or more to the presidential candidates or to national party committees in the 2004 election cycle.<sup>4</sup> This covers contributions made throughout 2003 and during 2004 up to the cutoff date of October 13, 2004.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is based on actual figures for presidential contributors from Opensecrets.Org reports and estimates for those giving to national party committees. Though estimates of contributions by party are less precise, the ratio of Democrat to Republican contributors was about 1.4 to 1.

<sup>4</sup> Candidates include all Democrats and Republicans who sought the presidential nomination. National parties include the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee. Not captured are contributions to third-party presidential candidates and parties, but such contributions were miniscule in the 2004 election cycle.

### **AEA Members: 5.1 to 1**

I investigate the contribution records for a sample of 2,000 AEA members with U.S. addresses appearing in the Association's online directory.<sup>6</sup> The sample is limited to those with U.S. addresses because campaign officials cannot legally accept contributions from foreign nationals (except those with "green cards").<sup>7</sup> Among this sample, 77, or 3.8 percent, gave to Democrats. Fifteen members, or 0.7 percent, gave to Republicans. The Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio was 77 to 15, or 5.1 to 1. The 77 Democrat contributors gave an average of \$1,391, or about one fifth more than the \$1,152 averaged by the 15 Republican contributors. The overall contributor rate among the AEA member sample

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Contributors of \$200 or more to Ralph Nader, for example, amounted to only 0.001 percent of the voting-age population. And he drew twice the support of any other third-party presidential candidate.

<sup>5</sup> Since President Bush and Senator Kerry accepted public funds for the general election, neither could accept individual contributions after their nominating conventions. Thus, nearly all individual contributions to presidential campaigns would have been reported by the October 13, 2004 cutoff date. But contributions could still have been made to the national party committees after that date, so they would not be captured in my survey.

<sup>6</sup> The directory reflects the roster as updated by AEA members through December 31, 2004. The sample originally consisted of the first 500 names with U.S. addresses to appear in the online directory, which limited it to last names beginning with "A." The editor asked that the sample be expanded to 2,000 by adding the first 60 names with U.S. addresses for the letters B through Z. The letters Q and X had insufficient entries to reach 60 so names were added to the next letters. A 2,000 member sample amounts to well over 10 percent of all AEA members with U.S. addresses. Excel files in Appendix 1 show amounts given by each contributor in this sample and by all the other AEA groups examined in this study. Even though contribution data are public, contributor names are redacted to keep the focus on the larger issues of the study. For a few key individuals, such as AEA presidents, top editors, and committee chairs, even though names are redacted, a curious reader could easily identify them. More generally, a curious reader could use the search engine at Fundrace 2004 to look up anyone's campaign contributions of \$200 or more.

<sup>7</sup> In addition, a member who in the directory identifies his or her "Principle Current Position" as "student" or "graduate student" was excluded from the sample, first because many students, as foreign nationals without green cards, could not legally contribute to U.S. campaigns and second because few of the rest would have sufficient income to contribute \$200 or more. Because the contribution profile of members will serve as a benchmark for comparison with those involved in the Association's leadership and publications, including in the member sample those clearly identified as students would merely introduce noise into such a comparison. Many AEA members offer no information beyond a mailing address, so the sample inevitably includes some students. But no campaign contributor in the AEA sample identified himself or herself as a "student" or a "graduate student," so it's reasonable to conclude that few, if any, AEA student members in the sample made campaign contributions during the 2004 election cycle.

was about 15 times that for the U.S. voting-age population. Some of this difference was likely due to the higher average incomes of AEA members compared to the voting-age population.<sup>8</sup> Among the member sample's academic contributors, 32 gave to Democrats and 8 gave to Republicans, for a contributor ratio of 4 to 1. Among nonacademic contributors, 45 gave to Democrats and 7 to Republicans, for a ratio of 6.4 to 1.

How does the Democrat advantage found among AEA members compare with other findings using other measures of party affiliation? In a 2001 phone survey, 160 mostly academic economists were asked about their political affiliations. Forty-one percent described themselves as Democrats and 6 percent said Republicans, for a ratio of about 7 to 1 (Brookings 2001, 54). Another 22 percent identified themselves as independent but leaning Democrat, while 11 percent said they were independent but leaning Republican. When those groups are added in to get a broader definition of political leanings, the comparison is 63 percent Democrat or independent but leaning Democrat versus 17 percent Republican or independent leaning Republican, for a contributor ratio of 3.7 to 1. This is similar to the 4-to-1 ratio found among academics in my AEA sample.

Klein and Stern conducted a mail survey of 1,000 AEA members, asking among other things "To which political party have the candidates you've voted for in the past ten years mostly belonged?" (2005c). The response rate was 26.6 percent, but nearly all who responded to the survey answered that question. Weeding out those not in academia and those 71 years of age or older reduced the sample further. The bottom line is that 72 said they voted mostly for Democrats in the last ten years and 24 said mostly Republicans, for a ratio of 3 to 1. This is not far below the 4-to-1 ratio found among academics in the AEA sample.

The 3.8 percent Democrat contributor rate and the 5.1-to-1 ratio of Democrat-to-Republican contributors found for the AEA member sample will serve as a frame of reference, or a benchmark, for comparison with AEA leaders.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Ansolabehere, de Figueirero., and Snyder (2003, 118), survey research in political science and sociology finds income the best predictor of campaign contributions.

### ***AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW***

The *American Economic Review* (*AER*) is the flagship publication of the Association and arguably the premier economic journal in the world.<sup>9</sup> Submissions are blind-refereed, and the reviewing process is fairly decentralized, with an acceptance rate in recent years under 10 percent. Editors have little control over what gets submitted and, consequently, are more reactive than proactive.

#### ***AER* Editors: 9 to 0**

My focus will be on articles published in 2003 and 2004, but, on average, articles were initially submitted two years before publication,<sup>10</sup> so I examined the campaign contributions of editors serving anytime between 2000 and 2004. Of the 88 such editors (including the editor, co-editors, managing editor, and editorial board members)<sup>11</sup> 84 were from U.S. institutions and four had foreign affiliations and are excluded.<sup>12</sup> Nine of the 84 contributed to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. Thus, 10.7 percent of *AER* editors from the United States gave to Democrats, a rate nearly triple the 3.8 percent among the AEA member sample. The nine editors gave an average of \$1,044 to Democrats.

#### ***AER* Referees: Data unknown**

It would have been nice to track down *AER* referees' contributions. Identifying contributors requires at least a first and last name, however, and an affiliation is also helpful. The *AER* editor thanks referees in the annual

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<sup>9</sup> In a world-wide ranking of journals, the *AER* finished at the top by a comfortable margin (Kalaitzidakis, Mamuneas, and Stengos 2003, 1349).

<sup>10</sup> In January 2004, the editor reported that the average lag between submission and publication had declined from three years to two years (Minutes 2004, 489).

<sup>11</sup> Here and elsewhere, the term "editors" excludes professional staff serving as assistant editors.

<sup>12</sup> Because the *AER* does not list editor affiliations, I used the AEA online directory as a first pass to determine affiliation. If an editor was not among listed members, I searched the web to find the affiliation. By ruling out those with foreign affiliations, I could possibly miss contributions from those Americans working abroad, who can legally contribute to U.S. campaign. But a check found that no editor or author with a foreign affiliation contributed during the 2004 election cycle. This holds for all publications examined in this study.

report but recognizes them only by a first initial and a last name without an affiliation.

### ***AER* Authors: 19 to 2**

A total 379 authors published articles or shorter papers in regular issues of the *AER* in 2003 and 2004 (*Papers & Proceedings* issues are examined separately). The 112 authors with foreign affiliations are excluded, leaving 267 with U.S. affiliations.<sup>13</sup> Nineteen authors, or 7.1 percent, contributed an average of \$871 to Democrats. The Democrat contributor rate of authors was below that of editors but nearly double that of the AEA member sample. A lone Republican contributor, who gave \$500, authored two papers, or 0.7 percent of the 267 total. Recall that no editor gave to Republicans. The Republican contributor rate among *AER* authors of 0.7 percent is the same as for the AEA member sample. With 19 giving to Democrats and two to Republicans, the ratio of Democrat-to-Republican contributors among *AER* authors is 9.5 to 1.<sup>14</sup>

### ***AER PAPERS & PROCEEDINGS***

In May of each year, the *AER* publishes papers from selected sessions of the Association's annual meeting. According to AEA Bylaws, the president-elect is responsible for the program. After appointing a committee to help, the president-elect identifies sessions for inclusion in the May *AER Papers & Proceedings (P&P)*. In 2003, the Association solely or jointly sponsored 145 sessions, but papers from only 25 sessions were published in the May issue. In 2004, only 25 of 138 made it. Assembling the

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<sup>13</sup> An individual who authored two articles was counted twice in the author totals. Thus, the total author count of 267 does not mean 267 unique authors. There were 267 author slots, and an author of two papers filled two author slots. No distinction was made between sole and joint authorship.

<sup>14</sup> All *AER* authors who made campaign contributions were from academia. One might be tempted to conclude that *AER* authors lean more Democratic than do AEA members because authors are more academic. But recall that the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio of 4 to 1 for academics in the 2,000 member sample was below the 6.4-to-1 ratio for nonacademics.

*P&P* issues are two special editors not on the program committee or among regular *AER* editors. They have little say in what's published. Once the president-elect identifies a session for the May issue, a paper presented at that session is rejected by the special editors only if found to be "utterly without merit," a disclaimer that has appeared verbatim in every *P&P* issue dating back at least to 1999. The president-elect and program committee thus have much freedom in setting the agenda, selecting session chairs and authors, and deciding which sessions will appear in the *P&P* issue.

### ***AER P&P* Leadership: 7 to 1**

Counting the presidents-elect, there were 18 members of the program committee in 2003 and 19 members in 2004, all with U.S. affiliations and none appearing on both committees. Of the 37 program committee members, seven, or 18.9 percent, contributed an average of \$936 to Democrats. One member, or 2.7 percent, gave \$3,000 to Republicans. The lone Republican donor was the 2003 president-elect (and 2004 president) responsible for the 2004 program.

### ***AER P&P* Authors: 32 to 1**

Since program committee members had wider discretion in selecting authors than did regular *AER* editors, and since committee members had a higher Democrat contributor rate, some might be more willing and able than regular *AER* editors to select fellow Democrats and exclude Republicans. I am not suggesting that program committee members would be aware of political contributions of potential authors (for one thing, most authors were selected before the 2004 campaign was underway) or would even be thinking about the political affiliation of paper authors *per se*. By using campaign contributions to signal party affiliation, I am trying to uncover an affinity between the political sensibilities of some program committee members and the political sensibilities of some authors. Do birds of a feather flock together? A total of 305 authors appeared in *P&P* issues for 2003 and 2004. Sixteen had foreign affiliations, leaving 289 in the two-year sample. Thirty-two (16 each year), or 11.1 percent, contributed to Democrats. This exceeds the 7.1 percent Democrat contributor rate among authors in regular *AER* issues and is about three times the 3.8 percent Democrat contributor rate among AEA members. Democrat contributions

averaged \$2,056, well above the Democrat averages for regular *AER* authors and for AEA members. Only one author, or 0.3 percent of the 289, gave to Republicans—the 2003 president-elect who headed the 2004 program. The Republican contributor rate of 0.3 percent is less than half the 0.7 percent for regular *AER* authors and for AEA members. The 32-to-1 contributor ratio is more than three times that for regular *AER* authors and more than six times that for AEA members. The Republican influence of the 2004 president seems to have been limited to getting himself on that program and into the 2004 *P&P* issue.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, each year 16 authors contributed to Democrats. Sessions involving Democratic contributors covered international trade, globalization, the IMF and World Bank, monetary policy, fiscal policy, health care, federal health insurance, Social Security reform, welfare reform, environmental regulation, antitrust policy, labor markets, minority faculty representation, and gender issues in labor markets.

### ***JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC LITERATURE***

The *Journal of Economic Literature* (*JEL*), another publication of the Association, offers articles that describe and summarize research in various economic fields:

The *Journal's* purpose is to help economists keep up with the ever-increasing volume of economics research. This goal is effected by publishing survey articles and essays, book reviews, and an extensive bibliographic guide to the contents of current economics periodicals. (Editor's Note 2004)

According to *JEL* policy, articles are commissioned by the editors, as are book reviews. *JEL* editors, therefore, have far more discretion than do regular *AER* editors in choosing topics and authors. They are also free to

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<sup>15</sup> Apparently, this is not customary. In the five years prior to 2004, only one president-elect had a paper in the May issue. But all presidents-elect get their moments in the sun at the next annual meeting, when, as president, they address the membership. This presidential address is published in the *AER* as the lead article the following March.

choose which books to review and who should review them. For example, the *Journal* reviews only about 10 percent of the books sent by publishers. *JEL* editors do, however, invite proposals and use referees for some manuscripts.

### ***JEL* Editors: 5 to 0**

Of the 46 *JEL* editors (including the editor, associate editors, and editorial board members)<sup>16</sup> who served sometime between 2001 and 2004, 38 had U.S. affiliations.<sup>17</sup> Five of the 38 editors gave an average of \$640 to Democrats, for a contributor rate of 13.2 percent. None gave to Republicans.

### ***JEL* Referees: 16 to 0**

Again, the *JEL* sometimes uses outside referees. To some extent, referees could limit an editor's freedom to select papers. Thus, we might expect some editors to rely on referees who share their political sensibilities. This affinity should show up in campaign contributions by referees. The editor's annual report thanks referees by listing their first and last names but without affiliations (McMillan 2002, 507; 2003, 501; 2004, 517; Gordon 2005, 500). Because no affiliations were provided, I first checked each referee's name against the AEA online directory to rule out those with foreign affiliations. If the individual was not listed in the directory, I searched the web to find the affiliation. Excluding those with foreign affiliations cut the number by about one third, leaving 155 referees with U.S. affiliations. Sixteen, or 10.3 percent, gave an average of \$1,338 to Democrats. None gave to Republicans.

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<sup>16</sup> An associate editor serves as what the other journals refer to as managing editor.

<sup>17</sup> I assume a lag here that is one year shorter than for the regular *AER* issues. Although *JEL* editors pick authors, they also invite proposals, and some submissions are refereed. All this takes time, so an article appearing in 2003 may have been conceived by an editor or first presented to an editor in 2001.

***JEL* Authors: 24 to 0**

Since *JEL* editors have wider discretion in selecting authors than do regular *AER* editors, and since *JEL* editors have a higher Democrat contributor rate, *JEL* editors might be more inclined than *AER* editors to select authors who also gave to Democrats and less inclined to select authors who gave to Republicans. In 2003 and 2004, a total of 292 authors with U.S. affiliations published articles or book reviews. Twenty-four gave to Democrats, for a contributor rate of 8.2 percent.<sup>18</sup> None gave to Republicans. The 24 *JEL* authors gave an average of \$1,279 to Democrats. Topics addressed by Democrat contributors include the effects of globalization, economic development, growth divergence across countries, world poverty, Russia in transition, the soft budget constraint, law in transitional economies, international labor markets, business strategy, barter economies, political economy, the commons, technological innovation, electronic markets, the Civil War, slavery, higher education, faculty diversity, and school choice.

***JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES***

The third publication by the AEA is the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (*JEP*). According to its editor,

The *Journal* seeks to contribute to the economic profession in a number of ways: introducing readers to state-of-the-art thinking on theoretical and empirical research topics; encouraging cross-fertilization of ideas among the fields of economics; providing analyses of public policy issues; providing readings for students; offering illustrations that are useful in lecture; sparking discussions among colleagues; suggesting directions for future research; and analyzing features of the economics profession itself. (Shleifer 2004, 518)

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<sup>18</sup> Four of the 45 authors of articles gave to Democrats, as did 20 of the 247 authors of book reviews. Thus 8.9 percent of article authors and 8.1 percent of review authors gave to Democrats.

To those ends, the *Journal* commissions and publishes individual articles in addition to symposia on special topics, such as Political Economy, Cultural Economics, The Middle East, Activist Antitrust, and Global Poverty Reduction—some topics covered in 2003 and 2004 symposia. Such topics by definition would seem to call for a range of perspectives.

### ***JEP* Editors: 2 to 0**

According to the *JEP*'s "Statement of Purpose," "Articles appearing in the journal are normally solicited by the editors and associate editors" (2004, ii). So *JEP* editors get to pick their topics and authors.<sup>19</sup> The *JEP* apparently does not use outside referees, as the editor made no mention of them in annual reports going back five years. A total of 25 editors (including the editor, co-editors, associate editors, and managing editor) served sometime between 2001 and 2004,<sup>20</sup> all with U.S. affiliations. Two contributed an average of \$600 to Democrats, for a contributor rate of 8.0 percent. None gave to Republicans.

### ***JEP* Advisory Board Members: 12 to 0**

Although there were no referees, the *JEP* does have a 12-member advisory board listed prominently at the beginning of each issue. Editors presumably consult board members when casting about for issues and authors. Of the 23 members to serve on that board sometime between 2001 and 2004, all but one had U.S. affiliations. Twelve of the 22 U.S. board members gave to Democrats, for a contributor rate of 54.5 percent. None gave to Republicans. Advisors gave an average of \$2,146 to Democrats. How much influence the advisory board actually exerts remains unclear, but with only a dozen members, the group is at least small enough to operate

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<sup>19</sup> According to the editor, the *JEP* also receives 150 to 200 unsolicited proposals a year, but only "a handful" ultimately get published in the *Journal* (Shleifer 2004, 518).

<sup>20</sup> As with the *JEL*, I assume a publication lag for the *JEP* that is one year shorter on average than for the regular *AER*. The manuscript stage at the *JEP* is no doubt shorter than at the *AER*, but more up-front time is required to identify topics, line up authors, and arrange symposia.

effectively if advisors choose to do so.<sup>21</sup> Democrat contributors on the board would also seem to have little difficulty mustering majority support for suggestions or recommendations to the editors.

### ***JEP* Authors: 20 to 1**

*JEP* editors had more discretion in choosing authors than did *AER* editors. And, to the extent the advisory board had political say, that say would likely lean Democratic. *JEP* editors, therefore, might be more able and more inclined than *AER* editors to select authors who share the political outlook of some editors and most advisors as reflected by campaign contributions. Of 148 U.S. authors of symposia, articles, or features appearing in 2003 and 2004, 20 gave to Democrats, for a contributor rate of 13.5 percent. Democrat contributions averaged \$995. One author gave \$2,000 to Republicans, for a contributor rate of 0.7 percent. With author contributions favoring Democrats by 20 to 1, we might question whether the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* had enough “economic perspectives” in 2003 and 2004, especially for a journal with a public-policy focus. Topics addressed by Democrat contributors include globalization, Middle East policy, monetary policy, consumer behavior, consumer confidence, cost-of-living index, alternative minimum tax, welfare policy, antitrust enforcement, political economy of voting, incentive pay contracts, gender issues, and academic labor markets.

## **AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Acknowledgees: 11 to 0**

Most authors typically thank or acknowledge colleagues who help shape the manuscript. I compiled a list of those acknowledged in the three discretionary journals—*P&P*, *JEL*, and *JEP*—in 2003 and 2004. There were 828 distinct individuals acknowledged, which breaks down into 731 who

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<sup>21</sup> C. Northcote Parkinson argued that once a committee exceeds 20 people, it becomes dysfunctional. For a discussion of group size and policy effectiveness see McEachern (1987, 56).

were acknowledged once, 61 acknowledged twice, and 36 acknowledged three or more times. To keep the task of tracking campaign contributions manageable, I limited the investigation to the 97 acknowledged two or more times. Because an individual is usually acknowledged by name but not affiliation, I used the AEA online directory as a first pass to rule out those with foreign affiliations. If the individual was not in the directory, I searched the web. Of the 61 acknowledged twice, 5 with foreign affiliation were excluded. Among the 56 two-timers with U.S. affiliations, seven, or 12.5 percent, contributed an average of \$1,357 to Democrats. None contributed to Republicans. Thirty-four of the 36 acknowledged 3+ times had U.S. affiliations. Four, or 11.7 percent, contributed an average of \$1,350 to Democrats. None contributed to Republicans.

The 34 thanked three or more times are ranked in Table 1 by the number of times each was acknowledged (in parentheses). Six of the seven with double-digit acknowledgements were *JEP* editors. Because *JEP* editors have much discretion in commissioning pieces and because the journal does not use outside referees, the editors figure prominently in conceiving and shaping manuscripts and are acknowledged accordingly. Timothy Taylor, the *JEP* managing editor, received the most—57, or 60 percent of *JEP* publications during 2003 and 2004. Co-editor Michael Waldman was not far behind with 44 acknowledgements.<sup>22</sup> John McMillan, who ranked fifth, was the only non-*JEP* editor among those in double digits. He edited the *JEL*.

At each stage of the publication process, Democrat contributors dominate Republican contributors, especially among the three discretionary journals—from the author, to those whose comments helped shape the manuscript, to the referees who evaluate the manuscript, to the editor who accepts it for publication. Since the editor is the critical link in the publication chain, editorial appointments deserve a closer look.

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<sup>22</sup> These totals exclude blanket thanks to “the editors.” Incidentally, *JEP* top editor Alan Krueger and later Andre Shleifer each had three or more acknowledgements not counting those from *JEP* authors. The names of all those acknowledged even once, including those with foreign affiliations, along with the journal in which they were acknowledged can be found in Appendix 1.

**Table 1**  
**Rank of Those Acknowledged Three or More Times in the *AER***  
***P&P*, *JEL*, and *JEP* 2003 & 2004 (Total Acknowledgements in**  
**Parentheses)**

1. Timothy Taylor (57)	13. Jesse Shapiro (4)
2. Michael Waldman (44)	19. Daron Acemoglu (3)
3. Andrei Shleifer (28)	19. John Caskey (3)
4. Brad DeLong (18)	19. Frank Diebold (3)
5. John McMillan (17)	19. Ron Ehrenberg (3)
6. James Hines Jr. (16)	19. Robert Gibbons (3)
7. Alan Krueger (11)	19. Edward Glaeser (3)
8. Olivier Blanchard (7)	19. Bengt Holstrom (3)
9. Lawrence Katz (6)	19. Michael Kremer (3)
10. Gary Becker (5)	19. David Laibson (3)
10. Joshua Hausman (5)	19. Ellen Magenheim (3)
10. Richard Posner (5)	19. Pablo Montagnes (3)
13. Angus Deaton (4)	19. John Siegfried (3)
13. Mihir Desai (4)	19. Kent Smetters (3)
13. Daniel Hamermesh (4)	19. Lawrence Summers (3)
13. Ben McCallum (4)	19. David Wilcox (3)
13. Sam Peltzman (4)	19. Janet Yellen (3)

### COMMITTEES, PRESIDENTS, AND TOP EDITORS

How does someone become an editor? When a vacancy is expected at the top of one of the Association's journals, the president appoints an ad hoc search committee to recommend a replacement to the executive committee, which consists of the dozen elected AEA officers (a group to be examined shortly). All other editorial positions are filled by the top editor, subject to committee approval.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the ad hoc search committee, in finding a top editor, still plays the pivotal role in the publication.

<sup>23</sup> The executive committee in 2003 approved a measure to exercise more ongoing oversight over the journals by having the president select from the executive committee a four-member advisory committee on editorial appointments. This advisory committee oversees any *reappointment* of a top editor and all editorial appointments below that of top editor

### Ad Hoc Search Committee Members: 7 to 1

I examine campaign contributions by members of the four search committees appointed since 2000.<sup>24</sup> An ad hoc search committee was appointed in 2000 to replace the *AER* editor, who had served since 1985. Two of its seven members gave an average of \$1,253 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle, and the committee chair gave \$2,000 to Republicans. The new editor was appointed in 2001 (“Minutes” 2001, 469). In September 2003, that editor announced he would not seek a second three-year term because he joined the Federal Reserve Board (he later briefly headed the President’s Council of Economic Advisors before being named to replace Alan Greenspan as chairman of the Federal Reserve). A search committee was appointed in late 2003 to find a replacement. Two of its 10 members gave an average of \$1,625 to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. The editor found through that search gave \$600 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle. Thus, the first search committee, chaired by a Republican contributor, helped find an *AER* editor who would later head the Council of Economic Advisors for a Republican president and then be appointed to head the Fed. The second search committee, with two of 10 members giving to Democrats and none to Republicans, helped find an *AER* editor who also contributed to Democrats.

A search committee for a new *JEP* editor was appointed in 2001 and reported in 2002 (“Minutes” 2002, 488). One of five committee members, the chair, contributed \$250 to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. A *JEL* search committee was appointed in 2003 and reported in 2004 (“Minutes” 2004, 488). Of its nine members, two, including the chair, gave an average of \$700 to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. Thus, of the 31 named to the four ad hoc search committees appointed since 2000, seven, or 22.6 percent, contributed an average of \$1,058 to Democrats. One appointee, or 3.2 percent, contributed \$2,000 to Republicans.

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(Minutes 2003, 476-77). Of the four appointed to this advisory committee, one, the 2003 chair, gave \$1,250 to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. The president still appoints an ad hoc search committee to help fill an opening for top editor, but two search committee members are appointed from the ranks of the advisory committee on editorial appointments.

<sup>24</sup> Prior to 2000 the most recent search committee was appointed in 1997, and prior to that in 1995.

### **Nominating Committee Members: 4 to 0**

I'll skip to the nominating committees, which help select presidents-elect, a process to be treated shortly. These committees are appointed by the president. The five presidents-elect serving between 2000 and 2004 were identified by five nominating committees with six to eight members each. Four of the five committees each had one member who gave to Democrats. No member gave to Republicans. Of the 37 members appointed to the five nominating committees, four, or 10.8 percent, gave an average of \$963 to Democrats. The one nominating committee with no contributors to either party proposed the 2003 president-elect/2004 president, who was a Republican donor.

### **Presidents: 5 to 2**

In light of the central role that presidents play in organizing annual meetings, in appointing ad hoc search committees to find top editors, in appointing a nominating committee to help pick the next president and identify candidates for other offices, and in appointing other committees, we should have a special interest in their political contributions. Of the 23 living AEA presidents as of January 2005 (including the 2005 president and the 2005 president-elect, who will become the 2006 president), five, or 21.7 percent, gave to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle, and two, or 8.7 percent, gave to Republicans. Democrat contributions averaged \$1,140 and Republican contributions \$2,500. Contributing to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle were the presidents serving in 1961, 1973, 1981, 1986, and 2006. Contributing to Republicans were presidents serving in 1967 and 2004.

### **Former or Current Top Editors: 5 to 0**

I have already profiled campaign contributions from all editors and editorial board members serving in recent years, but what about all former or current top editors? Among the 15 top editors of the *AER*, *JEL*, or *JEP* still living as of January 2005, five, or 33.3 percent, gave an average of \$3,820 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle. None gave to Republicans.

Two of the six top *AER* editors averaged \$1,300, and three of the five top *JEP* editors averaged \$5,500.

### **AEA “Democracy”**

A search committee recommends a new editor, but the president appoints the committee. Since the president is elected, the membership would seem to have ultimate control over editorial appointments. Members delegate that control to the president, who delegates it to a search committee, which makes a recommendation to the executive committee. This principal-agent story, however, is misleading. Technically, AEA members elect the president, but that’s a formality. One of the first responsibilities of a president-elect is to appoint a nominating committee to come up with a slate of candidates for the next election. The nominating committee proposes “at least two names” for president-elect and may add to one of them a recommendation to the executive committee. Acting jointly as an “electoral college,” the nominating committee and the executive committee<sup>25</sup> together nominate one candidate to go on the ballot sent to the membership. At this point the result becomes a *fait accompli*.<sup>26</sup> Thus the nominating committee helps find the president-elect, who appoints a nominating committee to repeat the process. There is no bottom-up input from the general membership. In a proximate sense, it is only the small group of organization elites who determine the president.

Each year, five executive committee slots become open: president-elect, the two vice-presidents, and two other elected members. As for the latter four slots, the nominating committee proposes two candidates for each slot. Once approved by the executive committee, names of the two candidates also go on the ballot sent to the membership. At this level, the general membership has democratic input into the determination of leadership: a choice between two executive-committee candidates who have been handpicked by the existing leaders.

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<sup>25</sup> The executive committee has twelve voting members: the president, the president-elect, the two immediate past presidents, two vice-presidents, and six other elected members.

<sup>26</sup> The process may be something of a *fait accompli* even at the nominating committee’s recommendation stage. In 2005 only the nominating committee chair attended the executive committee meeting; the other members sent their proxies, noting that the nominating committee had “reached unanimous agreement about the candidates they proposed for president elect” (“Minutes” April 22, 2005). In other words, there was nothing to discuss.

According to AEA Bylaws, the nominating committee must be chaired by a former AEA officer and must have no fewer than five other Association members. The practice has been to appoint a past AEA president to chair. Thus, the nominating committee chaired by a former president helps pick the president-elect, who then appoints the next nominating committee chaired by a former president to help pick the next president-elect. The vote for president-elect is insular and self-perpetuating, with no real member involvement short of petitioning the membership.<sup>27</sup>

### LOOKING INTO 2006

All that brings us up to 2004, but I want to push this line of inquiry one year further. No member of the nominating committee appointed by the 2004 president/Republican donor gave to either party. Of the five new AEA officers resulting from that nominating committee's efforts, however, three gave to Democrats. None gave to Republicans. The 2005 president-elect, who will become the 2006 president, gave \$2,500 to Democrats. Two other new officers averaged \$750 to Democrats. Thus three of these new officers contributed to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle (and none gave to Republicans).

#### Executive Committee Members: 4 to 2

The 2005 additions to the executive committee represent a jump in Democrat contributors. To put this in perspective, consider that of the 30 members to fill the 12 executive committee slots sometime between 2000 and 2004, four gave an average of \$1,225 to Democrats, and two, including the 2004 president, gave an average of \$2,500 to Republicans. But three of the five new officers elected for 2005 gave to Democrats and none to Republicans. Recall that the 2004 president had no apparent effect on the contributor profile of the *Papers & Proceedings* beyond his own presence on

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<sup>27</sup> There are provisions for an AEA member to get on the nominating committee by securing signatures from two percent of the membership, or about 370 signatures. Later in the process, nominees can be added to the ballot by securing signatures from six percent of the membership for president-elect and four percent for other elected positions. No petition could propose a slate of officers.

the planning committee and among published authors. Ironically, as a result of the nominating committee appointed by this Republican contributor, Democrat contributors on the 12-person executive committee doubled from two in 2004 to four in 2005. The 2004 president was the only Republican contributor on the board in 2004 and 2005.

Finally, the Association's publication footprint is growing. The executive committee has asked the *AER* editor to expand the publication by about 100 pages each year through 2007 or 2008. As noted earlier, the current top *AER* editor contributed to Democrats in the 2004 election. His term began with the September 2004 issue. Over the next two issues, the number of co-editors increased from five to eight. Two of the three additional co-editors gave an average of \$750 to Democrats; none gave to Republicans. The AEA president in January 2005, who contributed to neither party, appointed an ad hoc committee on journals to consider introducing some specialized field journals sponsored by the AEA (Minutes January 6, 2005). Two of the president's six choices gave an average of \$750 to Democrats; none gave to Republicans.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

One way of summarizing the findings is by showing those populations with no Republican contributors, those populations with one Republican contributor, and those populations with two Republican contributors, as is done in Tables 1, 2, and 3. These tables include all samples (aside from my small out-of-time-period digressions). Among the entire eligible set listed in the three tables, the overall tally is 182 Democrat contributors to 10 Republican contributors. Democrat contributors filled 182 of a possible 1,583 slots, or 11.5 percent. Republican contributors filled 10, or 0.6 percent. Incidentally, four of the 10 Republican slots were filled by the 2004 president, first as president-elect serving on the *P&P* program committee, second as a *P&P* author, third as president, and fourth as an executive committee member. Four of the remaining six Republican slots were filled by two individuals, one who authored two regular *AER* papers and another who served both on the executive committee and on an ad hoc search committee.

**Table 2: Subsample with No Republican Giver**

<i>Of this population,</i>	<i>None gave to Republicans and . . .</i>
84 <i>AER</i> editorial officers	9 gave to Democrats
38 <i>JEL</i> editorial officers	5 gave to Democrats
155 <i>JEL</i> referees	16 gave to Democrats
292 <i>JEL</i> authors	24 gave to Democrats
25 <i>JEP</i> editorial officers	2 gave to Democrats
22 <i>JEP</i> advisory board members	12 gave to Democrats
90 acknowledged 2+ in <i>P&amp;P</i> , <i>JEL</i> , or <i>JEP</i>	11 gave to Democrats
37 nominating committee members	4 gave to Democrats
15 former or current top editors	5 gave to Democrats
<b>758 Total</b>	<b>88 gave to Democrats, or 11.6 percent</b>

**Table 3: Subsample with One Republican Giver**

<i>Of this population,</i>	<i>Just one gave to Republicans and . . .</i>
37 AEA program committee members	7 gave to Democrats
289 <i>P&amp;P</i> authors	32 gave to Democrats
148 <i>JEP</i> authors	20 gave to Democrats
31 ad hoc search committee members	7 gave to Democrats
<b>505 Total</b>	<b>66 gave to Democrats, or 13.1 percent</b>

**Table 4: Subsample with Two Republican Givers**

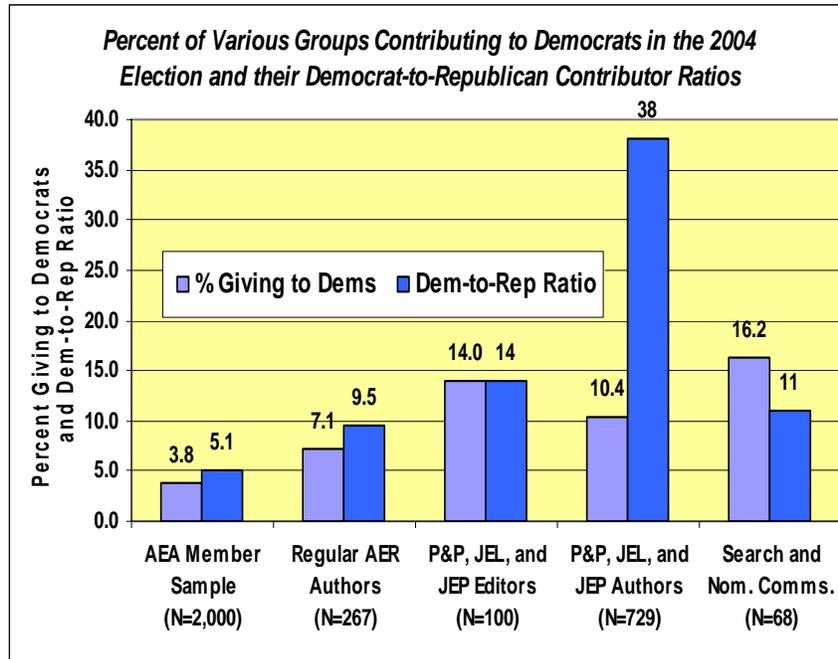
<i>Of this population,</i>	<i>Two gave to Republicans and . . .</i>
267 regular <i>AER</i> authors	19 gave to Democrats
23 AEA presidents	5 gave to Democrats
30 executive committee members	4 gave to Democrats
<b>320 Total</b>	<b>28 gave to Democrats, or 8.8 percent</b>

For the 2,000 AEA member sample, the ratio of Democrat-to-Republican donors was 5.1 to 1. For *AER* authors, it was 9.5 to 1, or nearly twice as large. The *P&P* program committee members and the *JEL* and *JEP* editors all had more discretion in selecting authors than did regular *AER* editors and also had a higher average Democrat contributor rate. Their wider discretion and greater willingness to contribute to Democrats suggest they might be more inclined than *AER* editors to pick authors who share the same political sensibilities as reflected by campaign contributions. In the *P&P*, *JEL*, and *JEP*, there were a total of 729 authors with U.S. affiliations, 76 of whom gave to Democrats and only 2 to Republicans, for a contributor ratio of 38 to 1, or four times that of regular *AER* authors and more than seven times that of AEA members. The Democrat contributor rate among these authors was 10.4 percent versus 7.1 percent among regular *AER* authors and 3.8 percent among the sample of AEA members. The Republican contributor rate of 0.3 percent for authors in the discretionary journals was less than half the 0.7 percent among regular *AER* authors and AEA members.

Figure 1 summarizes the Democrat contributor rates and the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratios for those groups with at least one Republican contributor. This figure provides visual representation of the important finding that the Democrat-to-Republican imbalance increases, first, as we go from general membership to authors needed to satisfy regular *AER* editors and referees, and again sharply increases as authors need to satisfy AEA editors with greater editorial discretion. It seems that birds of a feather do flock together. A contributor ratio of 38 to 1 among the discretionary journal authors poses circumstantial evidence challenging the claim that the Association is “the organ of no party,” represents “people of all shades of economic opinion,” and that “widely different issues are given a hearing in its annual meetings and through its publication.”

Committees that search for top editors and committees that nominate executive officers combine for a contributor rate of 16.2 percent, the highest among the groups shown. Ratios for some populations could not be shown because these groups had no Republican contributors. Still, I'll repeat that Democrat contributors accounted for 10.7 percent of regular *AER* editors, 10.3 percent of *JEL* referees, 12.2 percent of those acknowledged more than once in the three discretionary journals, 33.3 percent of former or current top editors of the *AER*, *JEL*, and *JEP*, and 54.5 percent of *JEP* advisory board members.

Figure 1



### ARE THE RATIOS TELLING?

For several reasons, the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratios may exaggerate the influence of Democrats among AEA leadership and publications. Steven Levitt (1994) found that additional campaign spending has little impact on who wins. Most economists are likely aware that minor campaign contributions have little chance of affecting the outcome, and presumably contribute because they derive utility from political expression and political solidarity. If the utility of political expression is less for Republican than for Democrat economists, we would expect a lopsided ratio even if AEA personnel were not lopsided. The resulting ratio would exaggerate Democrat dominance of the groups observed.

Also, perhaps those with Republican leanings are reluctant to publicize their views with campaign contributions. Being identified as a Republican may not be a good career move in academia. Using a random survey of 1,643 faculty from 183 four-year institutions, Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte find that even after accounting for the effects of individual characteristics and scholarly achievements, Republicans teach at lower quality institutions than do Democrats (2005, 12). Surveying six scholarly associations, Klein and Stern (2005b) show at the 0.01 significance level that Republican scholars are more likely to have landed outside of academia. If Republicans are less inclined than Democrats to reveal their political preferences by contributing \$200 or more, an act that becomes part of the public record, then the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio overstates the underlying sentiments of the two groups.

As a way of untangling the possibility of greater Democrat solidarity from Republican reluctance to self-identify, I looked at campaign contributions among groups that otherwise identify their political preferences. The first sample draws on voter registration information among economists at 11 California universities collected by Daniel Klein and several colleagues.<sup>28</sup> Since registering as a Democrat or a Republican becomes public information at least in the local community, such economists could be viewed as self-identified partisans. Among the 84 economists registered as Democrats, 17, or 20.2 percent, gave an average of \$3,253 to Democrats (and none gave to Republicans). Among the 30 economists registered as Republicans, two, or 6.7 percent, gave an average of \$2,000 to Republicans (and none gave to Democrats). Thus, among this sample of academic economists, registered Democrats gave at 3.0 times the contributor rate as registered Republicans.

Another group of economists to publicly identify their political preferences are appointees to the President's Council of Economic Advisors. By accepting appointments, these economists were implicitly expressing at least some support for the economic policies of the president who appointed them. Seven of the 10 appointed by President Clinton gave an average of \$1,743 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle, for a contributor rate of 70 percent (none gave to Republicans). Only three of the 11 appointed in total by Presidents George H.W. Bush during his only term and by George W. Bush during his first term gave an average of \$2,000 to Republicans, for a contributor rate of 27.3 percent (one gave to

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<sup>28</sup> The data are the same used by Klein (2006, 202, Appendix 1).

Democrats<sup>29</sup> ). Among this group of self-identified partisans, Clinton-appointed CEA members gave at 2.8 times the contributor rate as Bush-appointed CEA members.

A third group of self-identified partisans emerged during the 2004 campaign. A month before the 2004 election, on the eve of the second presidential debate, 169 business school academics signed and published a letter to President Bush saying “As professors of economics and business, we are concerned that U.S. policy has taken a dangerous turn under your stewardship. Nearly every major economic indicator has deteriorated since you took office in January 2001” (Open Letter 2004). Although the letter makes no mention of Senator Kerry, the timing and content leave no doubt whom the professors support. Forty-three of the 169 gave an average of \$2,417 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle, for a contributor rate of 25.4 percent (none gave to Republicans). One week after the anti-Bush letter, 368 mostly academic economists signed a letter critical of Senator Kerry’s economic plan: “We, the undersigned, strongly oppose key aspects of the economic agenda that John Kerry has offered in his bid for the U.S. presidency.... All in all, John Kerry favors economic policies that, if implemented, would lead to bigger and more intrusive government and a lower standard of living for the American people” (Letter 2004). The letter was released by the “Bush-Cheney ’04” campaign. These economists were obviously willing to publicly declare their views. Thirty-three of the 368 gave an average of \$1,405 to Republicans in the 2004 election cycle, for a contributor rate of 9.0 percent (none gave to Democrats). Thus, the contributor rate among the open Democrats was 2.8 times that of the open Republicans.

For these three groups of economists—registered partisan voters, CEA appointees, and letter signers—self-identified Democrats contributed at a rate that averaged 2.8 times that of self-identified Republicans. If these results carry over to partisan economists more generally, then relying on campaign contributions could underestimate Republican partisanship measured by party registration, CEA appointment, or letter signing. If campaign contributions underestimate other measures of Republican partisanship among economist by a factor of 2.8, then the Democrat-to-Republican partisanship ratio among discretionary journal authors, instead of being 38 to 1, would be more like 14 to 1. But, of course, the benchmark contributor ratio among AEA members would also have to be reduced as

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<sup>29</sup> One member appointed by the first President Bush gave \$500 to Democrats (and did not give to Republicans) in the 2004 election.

well, from 5.1 to 1 to 1.8 to 1, so the relationship between the discretionary journal authors and the member sample would not change. Authors in discretionary journals would still have a Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio that is 7.5 times greater than that of the membership sample.

Another reason why the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratios in the 2004 election cycle may exaggerate the influence of Democrats on the Association is that 2004 may not have been a typical election. Some Republican economists may have sat out the election because they disagreed with President Bush on any number of issues, including the Iraq war, the Patriot Act, federal deficits, Medicare prescription drug coverage, the nationalization of airport security, stem-cell research, immigration policy, farm subsidies, and steel tariffs. At the same time, some Democratic economists may have been especially mobilized against President Bush and his policies. Thus, the 2004 campaign may have exaggerated what the Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratios would look like in a more typical election. But the polarity of the 2004 election should also be reflected in the contributor ratio among AEA members, so a comparison of contributions in the discretionary journals with member contributions should still be telling.

Hence there are some reasons to believe that the contributor ratios may overstate the eclipse of Republicans measured in other ways. But these reasons do not challenge the finding that authors in the discretionary journals had a Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio that was 4 times that of regular *AER* authors and 7.5 times that of the AEA member sample. One could also argue that contributors of \$200 or more are making at least as strong a political statement as someone who registers with one party, signs a letter, or even accepts a CEA appointment.

After making the rough adjustments, when all the qualifications are in, including the results of surveys by others, we have the following plain facts: the AEA is a predominately Democratic organization. Those responsible for the journals are especially Democratic, and they run the journals in a manner that tends to reflect that particular ideology.

Are AEA members representative of academic economics more generally? According to a 1996 survey of academic economists, 55 percent belonged to the AEA.<sup>30</sup> Klein (2006, 198) provides data on rates of AEA membership by party registration for the faculty from the 11 California

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<sup>30</sup> According to a table on the AEA website, 55 percent of the 7,704 academics surveyed in 1996 were AEA members.

schools. The sample of Republicans is so small as to render the evidence anecdotal, but the numbers do so show Democrats as having higher rates of membership than Republicans.

Finally, this study has not asked why Democrats dominate political contributions among those involved with the AEA journals. Nearly all of the editors, advisors, authors, reviewers and those acknowledged in the Association's three journals are from academia and academics generally lean Democrat. Based on contributions of \$200 or more from 1999 through 2004, college faculty across disciplines had a Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio of about 8 to 1.<sup>31</sup> But recall that in the AEA member sample, nonacademics had a higher Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratio than did academics, so we can't necessarily trace Democrat domination of AEA publications to the academic ties of those involved.

### ECONOMICS THROUGH DEMOCRAT LENSES

What's the harm of having extremely high Democrat-to-Republican contribution ratios among those involved with AEA publications, especially among the discretionary journals? The Association recognized the possible harm more than 80 years ago when the Certificate of Incorporation called for "perfect freedom of economic discussion." Recall that campaign contributors are also more likely to be politically engaged in other ways. We should not expect editors, referees, authors, reviewers, and acknowledgees who have contributed to campaigns to just turn off that mindset in their dealings with the Association's publications.

As an example of possible harm of a lopsided political representation, consider the absence of a Republican contributor among the 247 book reviewers with U.S. affiliations appearing in the *Journal of Economic Literature* in 2003 and 2004. A *JEL* review will likely be the most visible, if not the only, review some books will ever receive. Couldn't the same political sensibilities that motivated a reviewer to contribute to Democrats also shape his or her assessment of a book? As economists, we like to think we

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<sup>31</sup> By way of comparison, journalists gave to Democrats by a ratio of about 4.5 to 1, trial lawyers gave to Democrats by a ratio of about 7 to 1 (Campaign Finance in American Politics 2005), and faculty at the nation's top twenty law schools gave at a ratio 5.4 to 1 (McGinnis, Schwartz, and Tisdell forthcoming).

are above political bias even though we are usually the first to examine the personal motives of others. Any book author realizes that an editor's decision about whether to review a book and who should review it is something of a crapshoot. But loading the dice, however unintentionally, with 20 Democrat contributors and no Republican contributors seems unfair to some authors and unhealthy for the profession. As mentioned earlier, some topics addressed in books reviewed by the 20 Democrat contributors include the effects of globalization, economic development, world poverty, transitional economies, international labor markets, higher education, faculty diversity, and school choice.

Mark Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory University and research director at the National Endowment for the Arts, has argued that:

Any political position that dominates an institution without dissent deteriorates into smugness, complacency and blandness. . . . Groupthink is an anti-intellectual condition, ironically seductive in that the more one feels at ease with compatriots, the more one's mind narrows (2004).

During the appointment of the current *AER* editor, who took over with the September 2004 issue, the AEA executive committee ventured an opinion about the "diversity and openness" of its editors. According to the minutes,

There followed a brief discussion during which it was recognized that diversity and openness is best promoted through editors who individually are open to different viewpoints rather than building balance through a portfolio of editors and co-editors who hold less compromising views (Minutes 2005, 464).

Thus, the committee favors choosing editors who "individually are open to different viewpoints" rather than trying to achieve a balance through diversity of views across individual editors. Based at least on the metric of campaign contributions, the appointment of the current *AER* editor and, indeed, editorial appointments in general, reflect neither approach. Recall that the current *AER* editor contributed \$600 to Democrats in the 2004 election cycle, and two of the three co-editors he added over the next two issues contributed an average \$750 to Democrats.

More generally, none of the 147 AEA editors or editorial board members serving in the last few years gave to Republicans in the 2004 election cycle, though 16 gave to Democrats.

The AEA claims to be the “organ of no party.” That is, of course, true *de jure*, but contributor ratios that favor Democrats 9.5 to 1 among regular *AER* authors and 38 to 1 among authors in remaining publications at least raise a question whether the Association is *de facto* an “organ of no party.” The AEA is an influential and powerful organization. It is expanding the *AER* and is considering some specialized field journals. One third of the six appointees to the ad hoc committee now exploring the field journals gave an average of \$750 to Democrats; none gave to Republicans.

Recent Nobel prize winner Thomas Schelling noted in a committee report that the Association’s three journals “officially represent the scholarly profession; their policies and procedures determine what gets published in them; and what gets published strongly influences the image of economics in America” (Shelling 2000, 528). What gets published also directly influences who gets hired, promoted, and tenured. The AEA is of course central to the legitimation of economic ideas and opinions. To the extent that editors, referees, reviewers, and program committee members, at the margin, favor the political sensibilities expressed by authors who contribute to Democrats, this extends any political bias in these journals to systems that hire, promote, tenure, and pay economists based on the decisions rendered by these eminent journals. The entire process becomes self-referential and self-reinforcing.

One parting remark: as time goes by, research on campaign contributions could suffer from the Heisenberg principle. Focusing on campaign contributions could alter contributor behavior. If Democrat-to-Republican contributor ratios become relevant for policy consideration, then some economists will simply stop contributing. As a result, campaign contributions will become a less reliable indicator of ideological orientation.

#### Appendix 1:

Link to [Excel file](#) listing contributions from each AEA group (with names redacted) plus the names of all acknowledged in *P&P*, *JEL*, or *JEP*.

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