

Why do Some Candidates Run to Lose?: Partially Binding Platforms and Endogenous Candidates

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of campaign platforms in political competition when campaign platforms are partially binding: a candidate who implements a policy different from his/her platform must pay a cost of betrayal, which increases with the size of the discrepancy. I also analyze endogenous decisions by citizens to run for election. First, partially binding platforms can show an asymmetric electoral outcome and predict who wins. A candidate who is more moderate, less policy motivated and whose cost of betrayal is higher than that of the opponent with the same degree of betrayal wins. Second, even though a citizen knows that he/she will lose, he/she enters the race to induce the opponent to approach the loser's ideal policy.

Keywords: electoral competition, citizen candidates, campaign platforms

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