

Illustrative Presentation

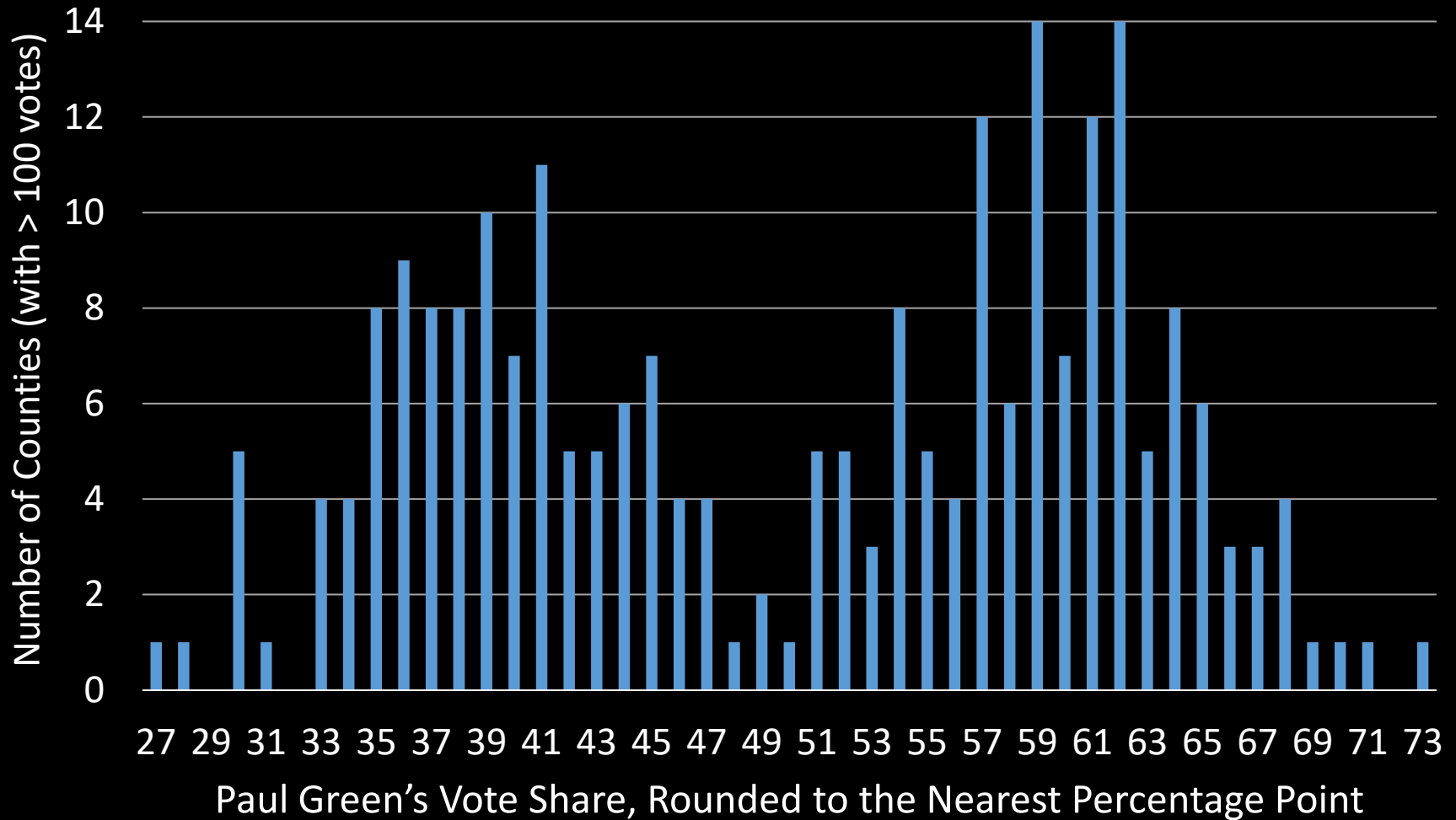
*The Ballot Order Effect is Huge:  
Evidence from Texas*

Darren Grant

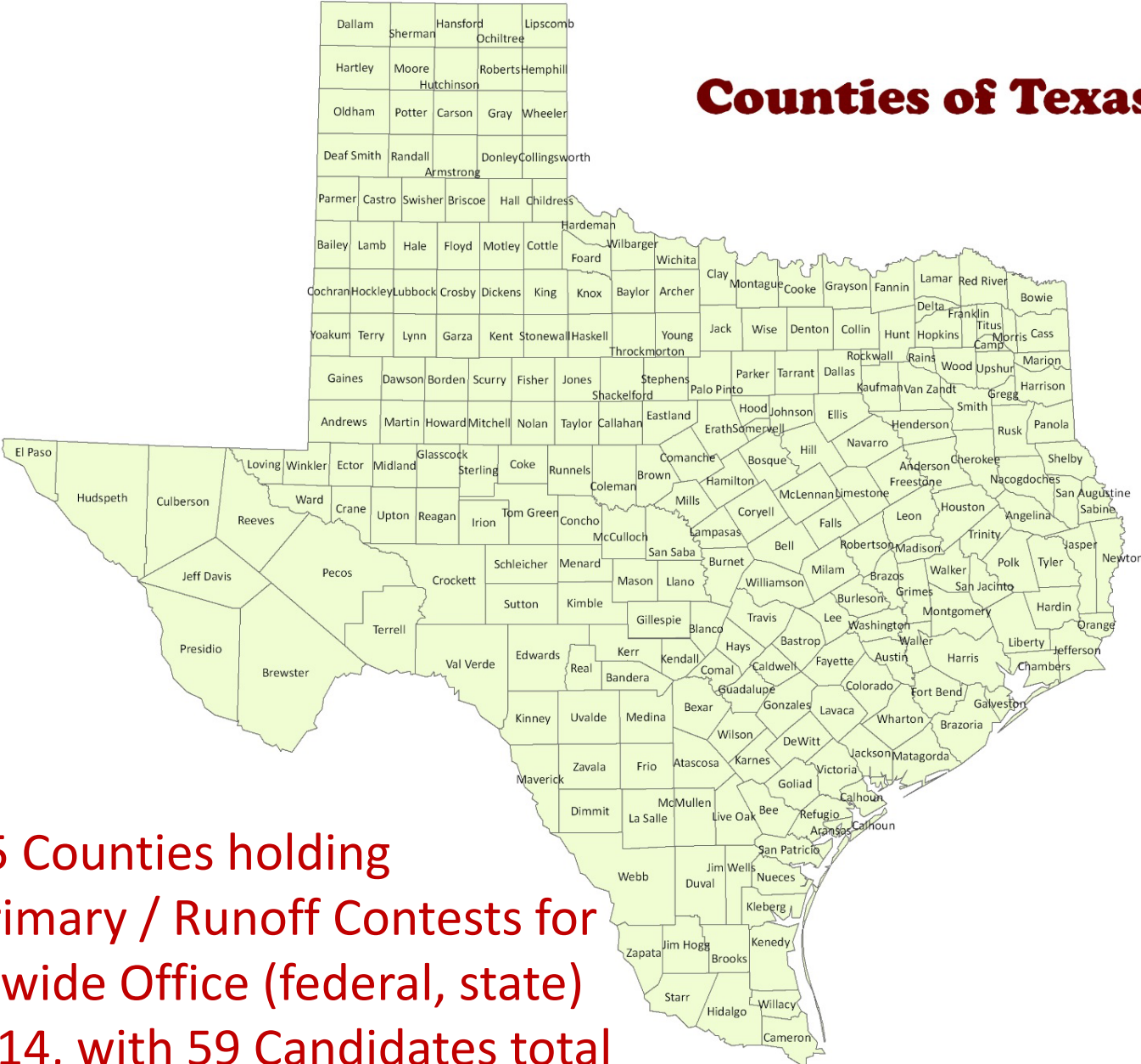
Sam Houston State University

(published in *Public Choice*, 2017; new  
evidence from Wyoming on SSRN soon)

# Paul Green vs. Rick Green: the 2016 Republican Primary for Seat 5 on the Texas Supreme Court



# Counties of Texas



≈ 225 Counties holding  
24 Primary / Runoff Contests for  
Statewide Office (federal, state)  
in 2014, with 59 Candidates total

# Why This Study Matters

(state studied, effect size, and number of studies if plural)

Election Date	<i>Office Contested</i>				
	Federal	State Executive	State Legislative	State Judicial	Local
General	CA-small (3) ND-small (2) OH-small (2)	CA-small (2) ND-small (2) OH-small (2)		ND-medium OH-medium	OH-small
Primary	CA-small NY-small	CA-medium NY-small <i>this study</i>	NY-small	<i>this study</i>	NY-small
Runoff		<i>this study</i>			
Local					CA-medium IL-medium

# Estimating the Ballot Order Effect (two candidates, Adams and Zolt)

Adams'

$$\text{Vote Share} = \alpha + \beta \text{ FIRST} + \gamma X + \varepsilon$$

Share

Dummy for Being Listed  
First on the Ballot

16 Controls: Demographic,  
Economic, Geographic, Political

Estimated across counties. Generalizes to multi-candidate races with SUR estimation, restricting  $\beta$  to be the same across all candidates in the same contest. “Slightly weighted” by # of voters.

# Illustrative Findings

(percentage point increase in vote share relative to last position, which is indicated with a 0)

Race	First Position	Second Position	Third Position	Fourth Position
Comptroller (Republican)	2.88	1.12	0.47	0
Agriculture (Democrat)	4.68	1.89	0	
Railroad Commissioner (Republican)	3.83	1.86	-0.03	0

(all first position effects highly statistically significant)

# Deviation from Mean (Percentage Points)

-6      -4      -2      0      2      4      6

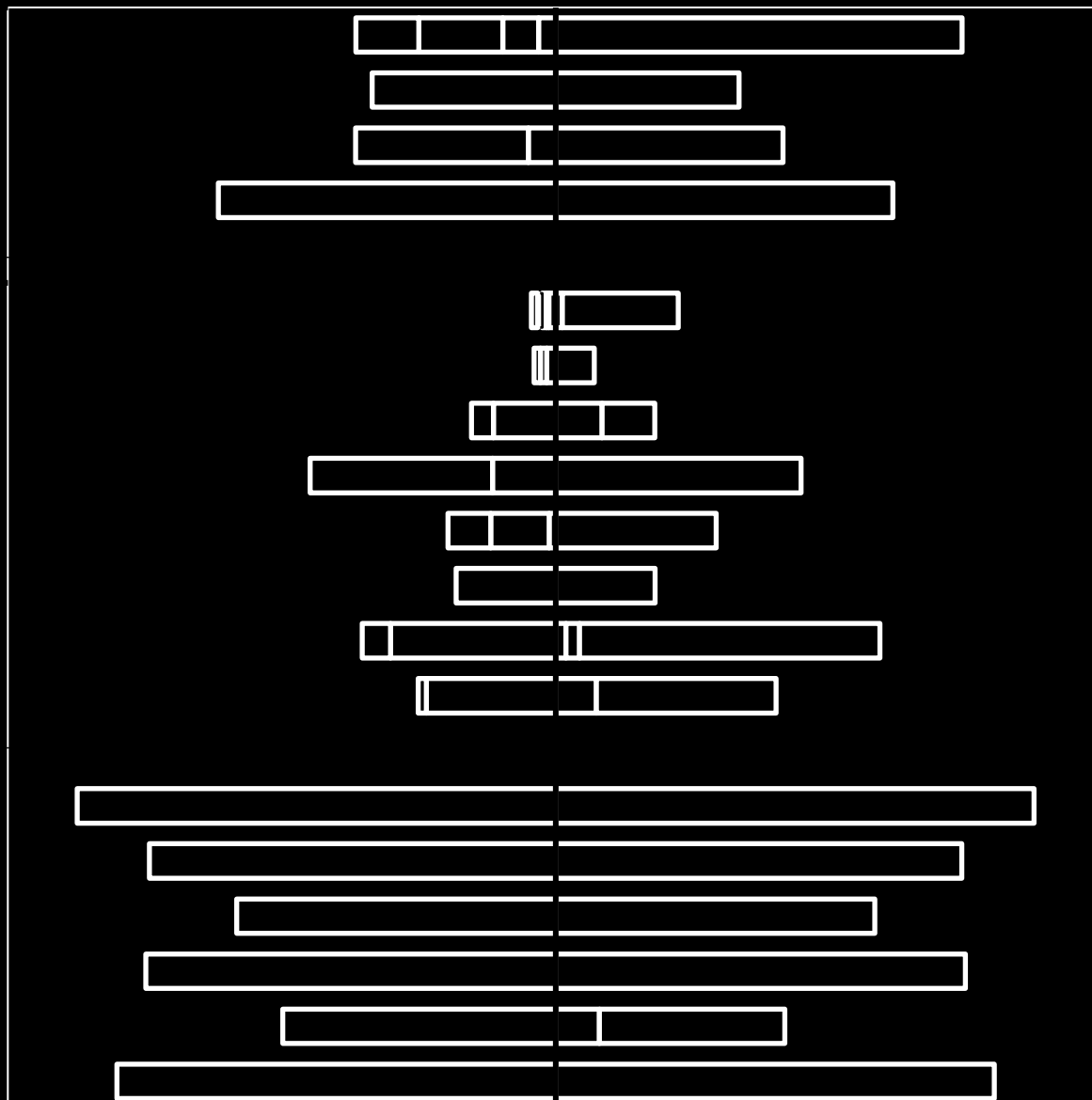
Democratic  
Primary

U.S. Senator  
Governor  
Ag. Comm.  
Railroad Comm.

Republican Primary

U.S. Senator  
Governor  
Lt. Governor  
Att. General  
Comptroller  
Land Comm.  
Ag. Comm.  
Railroad Comm.

Chief Justice SC  
SC Place 6  
SC Place 8  
CCA Place 3  
CCA Place 4  
CCA Place 9



# Conclusions

The ballot order effect is:

- LARGE, as much as 10 percentage points for judicial races
- MONOTONIC, declining rapidly in ballot position
- RELATED TO ELECTION TYPE, being much larger in down-ballot, “low information” elections than in up-ballot, “high information” elections
- DECISIVE, in one contest in this data (and one or two of 95 general election contests in Wyoming I have studied).



# Resources

Annotated Presentation  
(can read or watch)

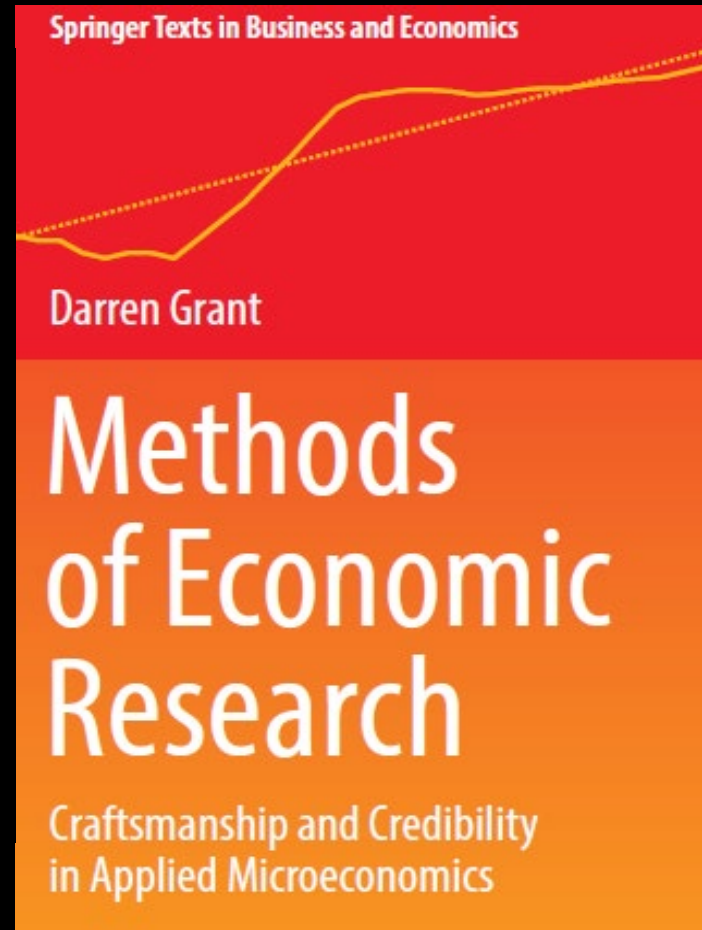
How to Give a  
Good Research Presentation  
*Three Essential Elements*

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Slides available on SSRN, RePec, Research Gate,  
and my web site, [www.shsu.edu/dpg006](http://www.shsu.edu/dpg006), with  
annotations in comments that can be toggled on.

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Craftsmanship Book



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