

BOARD OF OVERSEERS

National Election Studies
Center for Political Studies of the University of Michigan

Reply to: P.O. Box Z

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July 27, 1977

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Overseers of the National Election Studies of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. As the enclosed announcement indicates, the Center recently received a national resources grant from the National Science Foundation to continue its election surveys over the next five years. The work of the Center, in this connection, will be advised and guided by the Board of Overseers as trustees for the larger scholarly community interested in electoral and related research.

In carrying out its charge, the Board will arrange a series of conferences and workshops designed to bring the research ideas and interests of the scholarly community to bear on the content and design of future election studies. A number of conferences are being planned for the academic year 1977-78. The Board will, in due time, alert you and your colleagues to all of these conferences, but the immediate purpose of this letter is to call attention to the conference on "Congressional Election Research" to be held at the University of Rochester on October 27-28, 1977.

Because of limited resources, we will only be able to invite to this conference a relatively small number of scholars, certainly no more than twenty. However, because we are seeking as wide participation as possible, we hope that all of those interested in Congressional election research will respond to the enclosed memorandum. This memorandum was prepared by Professors Richard Fenno and Edward Tufte to suggest the substantive contents and to delineate the boundaries of the conference on Congressional election research. From among those responding to the Fenno-Tufte memorandum, the Board of Overseers will select the largest number whom our resources permit to participate in the conference.

Inasmuch as the announcement of the NSF grant was made only recently, we are pressed in regard to the deadline for receipt of papers or memoranda which will be considered by the conference. The conference, in turn, must be held as early as possible because it will be only the first step in designing the 1978 election survey. We must have all responses to this invitation in hand by September 26. We will then send out

invitations to those selected for participation by the end of September. Needless to say, the Board will cover the travel, lodging, meal and out-of-pocket expenses of the participants.

As to the nature or length of the papers or memoranda which the Board would like to receive, we must remain rather vague, leaving it up to the respondents to define for themselves both the nature and scope of the reply. The conference objectives are outlined in the Fenno-Tufte memorandum. A single good idea presented in a relatively short memorandum might be more persuasive than presenting many less well-developed ideas in a long paper. Moreover, at this stage of developing the 1978 study design we are more interested in receiving broad suggestions and general arguments concerning Congressional election research than in assessing the merits of particular items one might wish to see included in the survey instrument.


This conference is intended to be only the beginning of the involvement of the broader scholarly community in the Congressional election studies. The Board expects to choose from among conference participants a much smaller number who are prepared to work more intensively with the CPS/NES staff in pre-testing new material and in other ways shaping the final research instrument. Moreover, as the Fenno-Tufte memorandum indicates, we are looking forward to 1982 and 1986, and we intend to organize further occasions for bringing still other interested scholars into the orbit of the Congressional election studies.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the importance of your bringing this request to the immediate attention of your colleagues and other scholars. Wide participation in the work of the National Election Studies, now made possible by the grant from the National Science Foundation, has been the dream of many scholars for many years. While the relationship between the national scholarly community, the Board of Overseers and the Principal Investigators at Michigan will have to evolve gradually as experience accumulates, an unusual opportunity has been created by the national resource grant. Much of what will be done in the coming years will be experimental and may be flawed, but we believe that a giant stride in the development of political science is in the making. We hope that many scholars, even those who may not be able to participate in the October conference, will make the effort to contribute to the Congressional election studies by responding at this time. All memoranda should be typed to permit ready reproduction. They should be sent not later than September 23 to Board of Overseers, National Election Studies, P.O. Box Z, Stanford, California 94305.

If there are several persons at your institution who would like to receive the Fenno-Tufte memorandum in order to prepare a memorandum for consideration at the October conference, please have them write to me or call 415-497-2612 at Stanford University. Questions concerning the program of the Board in general can be directed to any of the Board members. Particular questions concerning the conference on Congressional Election Research should be addressed to Professors Fenno or Tufte.

Speaking for the Board of Overseers,

Sincerely yours,


Heinz Eulau