



Lopsided Elections Prompt Voters to Skip Some Races, Hughes Center for Public Policy Finds

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Galloway Township, NJ - Voters skipping over candidates on the ballot for state Legislature – often because the race is not competitive enough to interest them – could change the outcomes of those elections, according to research published today by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

The results of three contested New Jersey state Assembly elections in 2011 could have been reversed by voters who went to the polls but did not vote in those races.

That trend was found in the 7th Legislative District in Burlington County, where Democrat Troy Singleton won an Assembly seat previously held by a Republican. The number of possible votes that were not cast in that race was nearly three times higher than the winner's margin of victory.

Voters who failed to vote for Assembly candidates also could have changed the outcomes in tight Assembly races in the 1st District (Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic) race won by former Assemblyman Matthew Milam and in the 38th District (Bergen, Passaic) race won by Assemblyman Timothy J. Eustace. To illustrate, 1,051 votes separated the Assembly winners and losers in the 1st District. However, voters who were actually in the booth could have cast another 3,200 possible votes in that race, but skipped it on their ballots. Those uncast votes were more than three times the amount that would have been necessary to change the outcome in the 1st.

“Election results in three tight Assembly races could have gone the other way based on people in the voting booth who did not cast votes,” said John Froomjian, Senior Research Associate for the Hughes Center at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, who conducted the research originally for a master's thesis.

Technically, the undervote could also have reversed Assembly race outcomes in the 11th District (Monmouth) and in the 2nd District (Atlantic). But the margins were so close that nearly every

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uncast vote would have had to go to the losing candidates to reverse the results.

While undervoting potentially affected several close races, it is often a sign of lack of voter