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The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns

D. Sunshine Hillygus, Todd G. Shields

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The use of wedge issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and immigration has become standard political strategy in contemporary presidential campaigns. Why do candidates use such divisive appeals? Who in the electorate is persuaded by these controversial issues? And what are the consequences for American democracy? In this provocative and engaging analysis of presidential campaigns, Sunshine Hillygus and Todd Shields identify the types of citizens responsive to campaign information, the reasons they are responsive, and the tactics candidates use to sway these pivotal voters. *The Persuadable Voter* shows how emerging information technologies have changed the way candidates communicate, who they target, and what issues they talk about. As Hillygus and Shields explore the complex relationships between candidates, voters, and technology, they reveal potentially troubling results for political equality and democratic governance.

The Persuadable Voter examines recent and historical campaigns using a wealth of data from national surveys, experimental research, campaign advertising, archival work, and interviews with campaign practitioners. With its rigorous multimethod approach and broad theoretical perspective, the book offers a timely and thorough understanding of voter decision making, candidate strategy, and the dynamics of presidential campaigns.

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