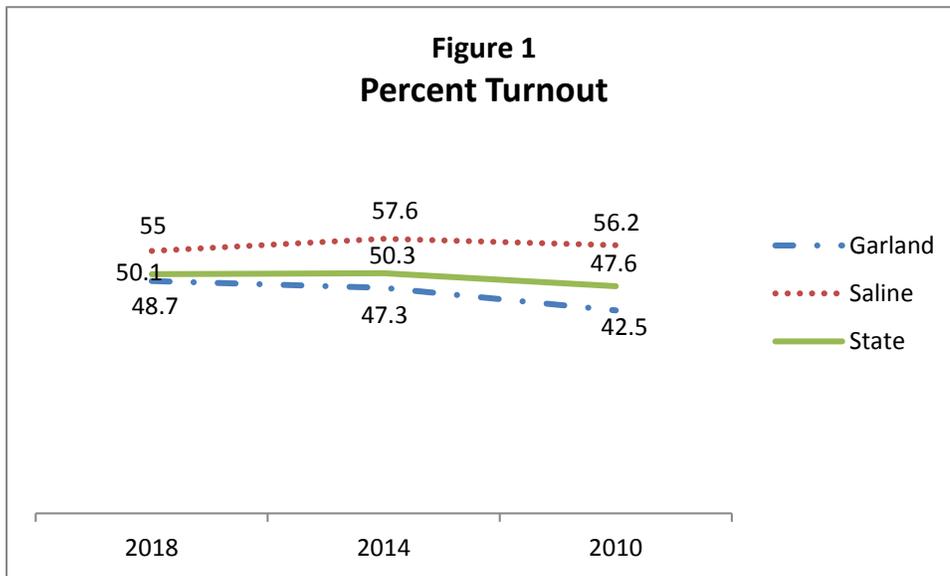


2018 Arkansas Election: Observations

Elections resemble finger prints--no two are identical, but like finger prints they too have general patterns. Some elections are discernable by highly competitive races, others with candidates whose personalities seem to transcend politics; others identified by issues and others by their abnormal patterns of citizen involvement, to mention to mention a few. The 2018 election in Arkansas left its print as one that had few competitive races and a large number of uncontested. Though there were three statewide issues none appeared to arouse the public's interest. Nationally there was a great deal of excitement and interest and record involvement but Arkansas did not reflect the nation. Instead the unique print of the 2018 election, in Arkansas, was not the outcome of races; rather when one choose to cast their vote. The state turnout for 2018 did not exceed that of the 2014 midterm and this pattern was also reflected in both Garland and Saline Counties. The following analysis will focus on turnout, selected races, and issue voting.

Turnout: The national turnout for the 2018 election was the highest midterm since the 1974 elections. Arkansas did not follow the nation. There are three matrices used in measuring turnout. First is the percent of people of voting age within the population (VAP), second is the percent of eligible voters within the population (VEP) and finally the percent of those registered (VRP). The first underestimates the turnout and last overestimates. A quick review of the 2014 midterm election illustrates these variations. In that election 33.2 percent of VAP in Arkansas voted, compared to 40.3 percent of VEP and 50.4 percent of the registered voters¹. Arkansas reports its voting as a

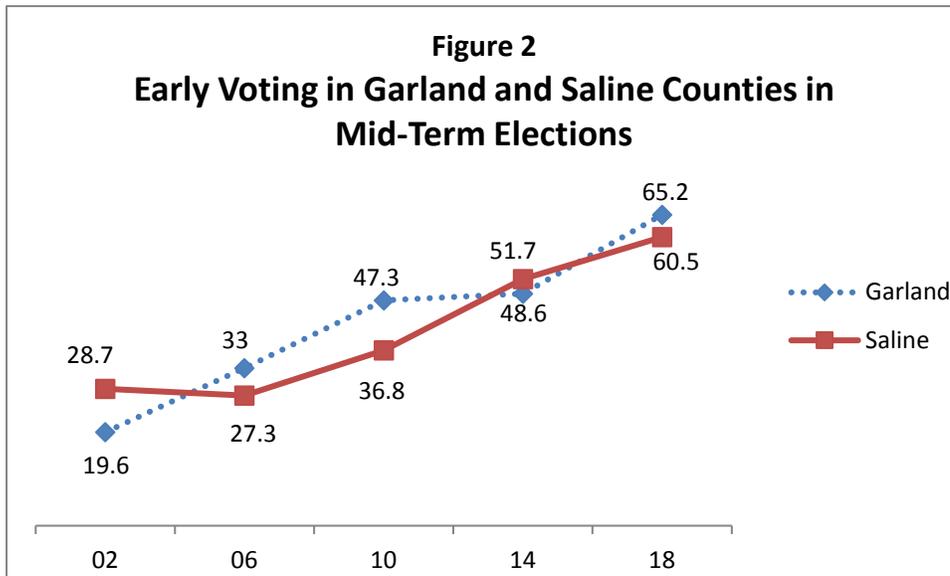


percent of registered voters. Figure 1 shows Arkansas turnout of registered voters in the past three midterm elections. As one can see 2018 turnout statewide was the same as 2014. While the counties were also similar there was a slight decline in Saline County and a slight increase in Garland County in the 2018 election. However the general pattern holds--Saline

County continues to vote above the state level and Garland County below the state. HSV voters continue to outpace all voters with a turnout of 64.7 percent in this election, which is one percent lower than in 2014. A look inside the numbers reveals that Saline County residents of HSV voted 16.7 higher than the county and Garland residents were 8.4 higher than the county. The higher voter turnout of HSV voters can be attributed primarily to its demographics of age and income, factors that have been found to relate to higher voter turnout for decades.

Factors that aided in the lower voter turnout in this election were: lack of competitive races, large number of uncontested races, and lack of highly visible and emotional issues on the ballot.

The story of the 2018 election in Arkansas is when the voter decided to go to the polls. As noted above there was little variation in the percent turnout, however that cannot be said for when the voter cast their ballot. Figure 2 displays the percent of early voting in the past five midterm elections. As one can see there has been a steady increase in early voting. This year well over half of all votes cast in Saline and Garland County were done so in early voting. This pattern is similar to the other 34 states that have early voting—there has been a continued



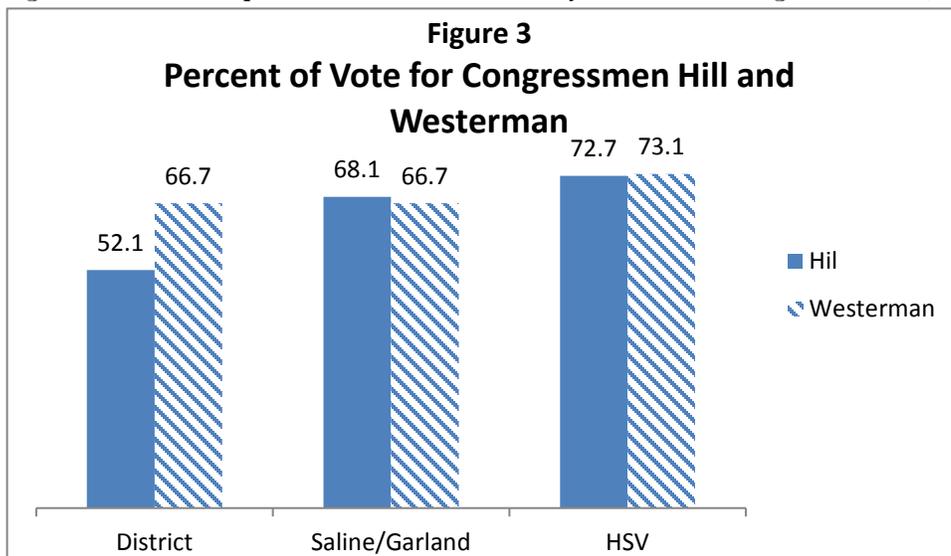
upswing in those availing themselves to this opportunity. However, early voting is not strongly associated with higher turnout. The most important factors are highly competitive statewide races and same day registration. These two factors are by far better predictors of high turnout than early voting. In 2018 Arkansas demonstrated that early

voting did not increase turnout and the state had neither a highly competitive statewide race nor same day registration.

Selected Races

While there was a general lack of competition for statewide office it is informative to see how the counties (Garland and Saline) and HSV residents cast their votes. We will focus on the two congressional races, the governorship, and the two state races that are most directly related to HSV, the State Senate District 14 and the State House District 22 which represents the majority of HSV. In addition, we will examine the most competitive statewide race—the non-partisan Arkansas Supreme Court. And finally there is the race for Garland County JP District 11 for it was an open seat contested by a village resident versus a non-resident.

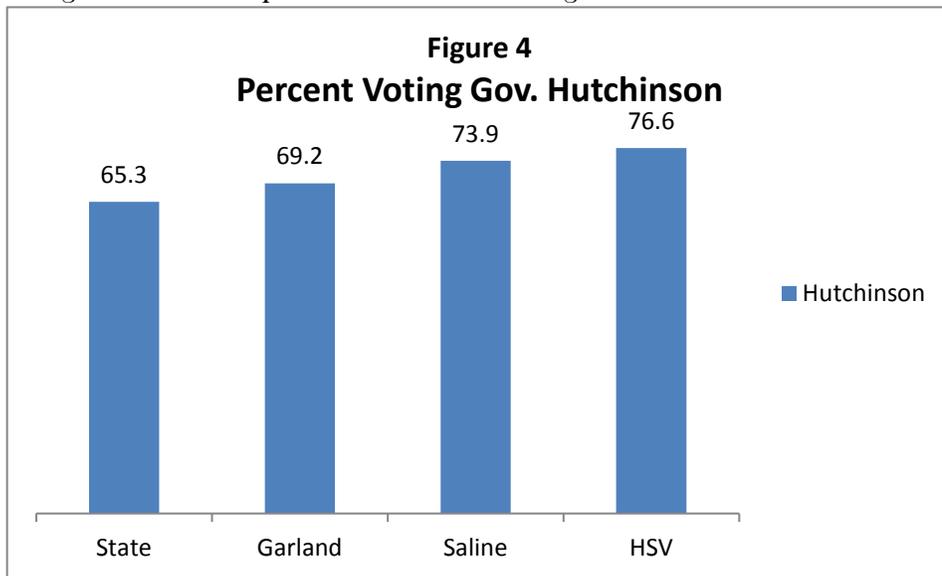
Figure 3 shows the percent of vote received by the two winning candidates, incumbents French Hill in



Congressional District 2 and Bruce Westerman in Congressional District 4. As one can see from the outcomes, these are two very different districts. District 2 is more competitive due to its composition than district 4. While Congressman Hill carried his district with 52 percent of the vote, Saline County, a traditionally strong Republican

county, was 15 percent above the district total and HSV voters were five percent higher than the county. In contrast the race in Congressional District 4 Garland County mirrors the district with 66.7 percent favoring Congressman Westerman, while the voters of HSV gave him six percent more than the county.

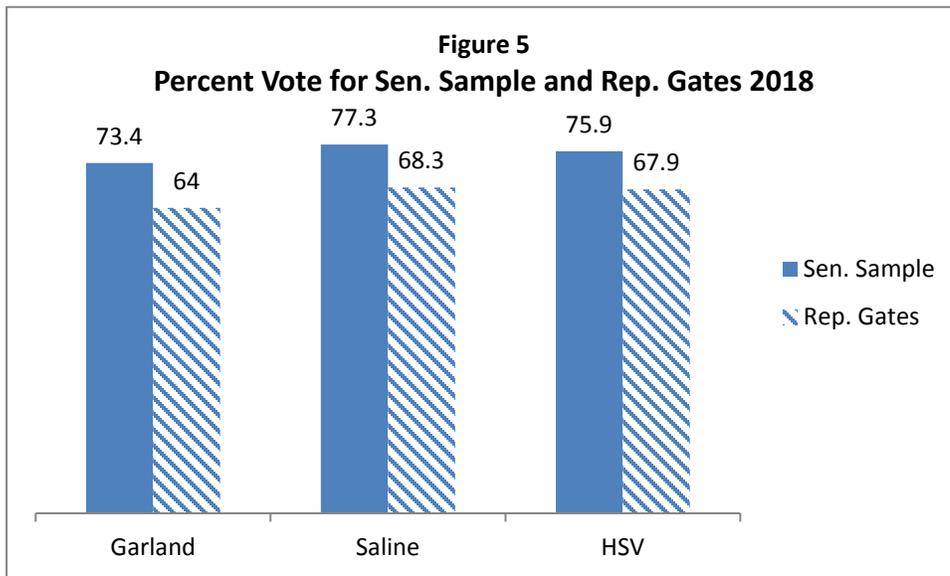
The governor's race provides a clear and insightful role of the differences between the state, counties and HSV.



As Figure 4 shows that while a popular governor was re-elected, Saline village residents were strongly Republican in their voting. This pattern holds for all offices in this election cycle. While the county voted 8.9 percent higher than the state, the HSV vote was 11 percent above the state.

Next we examine the vote for State Senator and State Representative. Both were incumbents and each represents the entire village as is the case with Senator Sample, or the vast majority of it in the case of Representative Gates. A factor of particular interest in this observation is that Representative Gates was running while under six felony changes, stemming from failure to file

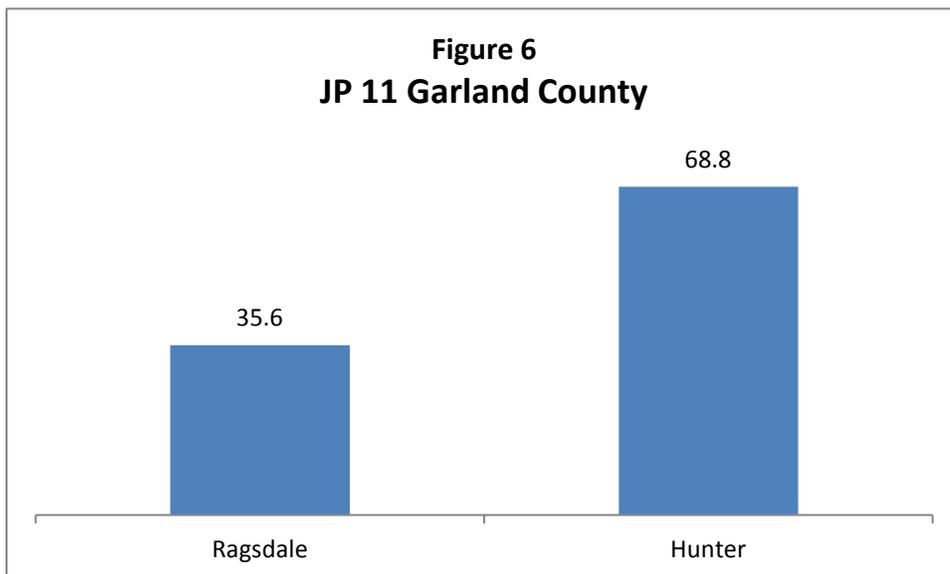
state income tax returns, and the Governor called upon him to not run. As Figure 5 indicates, each won re-election easily. Senator Sample's percentage was in the 70s, and Representative Gates in the 60s. In both cases the village was higher than Garland County, the home of both candidates, although marginally. The final state race examined was the race for the Arkansas Supreme Court. The race between Courtney Goodson and David



Sterling was one of the most competitive and costly statewide races. There was a great deal of outside money spent on this race. Courtney Goodson received 55.7 percent of the statewide vote. In Garland County she received 52.4 percent of the vote. However, in Saline County she narrowly lost with 49.4, and within the village she received less support with 48.5

percent.

The final race selected was in Garland County for the open seat for Justice of the Peace 11. It had a longtime village resident Linda Ragsdale, a Democrat, running against Ronald Hunter Jr. as the Republican candidate. This is essentially a HSV district, for 90 percent of voters reside in the village. While JP races are normally low profile,



Ragsdale was active within the village and participated in the Candidate Forum. Hunter, on the other hand, was not visibly active within the village and did not participate in the Candidate Forum. However the results from this race reflected the general pattern in the 2018 election. Republican candidates prevailed. Figure 6 show the distribution within the Garland

County section of the village. Partisanship always drives voters but in this particular case, the margin indicates that partisanship within HSV is heavily concentrated.

The final area of examination involves the three statewide Constitution Amendments before the electorate. Table 1 shows the three issues and the vote they received from statewide, in Garland and Saline Counties, and within HSV. Issue 2 was the requirement of a photo ID for voting and was more heavily supported in the two counties and HSV with 83 percent favoring the issue which was a nine percent increase over the statewide vote. Issue 4 dealt with granting four counties (Crittenden, Garland, Pope, and Jefferson) the ability to obtain licenses for casino gaming. The issue passed with 54 percent of the vote statewide and the two counties reflected the state. However, residents of HSV were more favorability disposed toward the issue by four percent. The final issue number 5 addressed increasing the state minimal wage and nearly 70 percent of the voters in the state, Garland and HSV supported the increase. Saline County's support was seven percent less than the state's.

Table 1 2018 Vote on Constitutional Issues

Issue 2 Voter I.D.

	For	Against
State	74.5	20.5
Garland	82.2	16.6
Saline	83.3	16.7
HSV	83.6	15.5

Issue 4 Casinos

	For	Against
State	54.1	45.9
Garland	54.9	45.1
Saline	54.3	45.7
HSV	58.9	41.1

Issue 5 Minimum Wage

	For	Against
State	68.5	31.6
Garland	68.8	31.2
Saline	61.2	38.8
HSV	66.8	32.4

Summary: There are several general observations to be made about the 2018 general election. The first is that Arkansas did not increase its voter turnout over the previous midterm election. In addition, the patterns from previous midterm elections remained regarding Garland County and Saline Counties and the residents of HSV. Second, there continues to be greater use of early voting with 65 percent of the Garland Voters casting an early vote and 60 percent of the Saline County voters. HSV residents were 75 percent early voters. Third, HSV residents of Garland County comprised 13 percent of the registered voters in 2018, and 15 percent of the total voters. In Saline County HSV residents were 8.9 percent of the registered voters and 11.6 percent of the total

vote. HSV residents outperformed their counties in actual voting. Fourth, Saline County voters are more Republican than Garland, but residents of HSV are even more Republican than either county. Fifth, HSV voters provided Congressman French Hill with 20 percent higher support from that of his district. Sixth, there was a consistency in voting patterns regardless of the race or issue in this year's election. Residents of HSV are more conservative and more partisan in their political outlook than either county or the state.

ⁱ American Elections Project