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Unemployment and voter turnout revisited: A brief note

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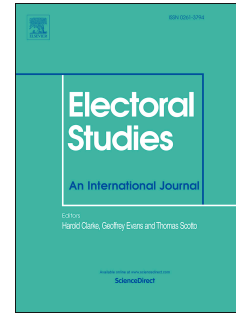
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## Unemployment and Voter Turnout Revisited

By

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Abstract. This brief study revisits the issue of whether higher unemployment rates elicit an increase in the voter participation rate. Using a state-level panel dataset for all five of the Presidential election cycles of this century, it is hypothesized that, following Cebula (2008) and Burden and Wichowsky (2014), the higher the unemployment rate, the greater the degree to which eligible voters, whether unemployed or employed, show up at the polls, arguably because they are expressing the concerns and fears regarding prevailing economic policies and conditions and because by voting they are *expressing* the desire for changes to address those concerns and fears. The estimation implies that a one percentage point higher unemployment rate leads to a nearly 1.0 % higher voter participation rate. This result is in principle compatible with and supportive of the hypothesis that higher unemployment rates motivate voters and the empirical finding of a positive voter turnout/unemployment rate association obtained in the studies by Cebula (2008) and Burden and Wichowsky (2014). Moreover, this finding is potentially important because it implies that elected officials are, to at least some degree, held accountable by the electorate for a weakly performing economy.

Keywords: *voter turnout; higher unemployment rates; panel data; recent Presidential elections*

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