

FORECASTING THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WITH THE FISCAL MODEL:

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Alfred G. Cuzán

The University of West Florida

acuzan@uwf.edu

The fiscal model of American presidential elections, which borrows or adapts four of its six variables from Ray Fair's eight-variable [Presidential Vote Share Equation](#), is represented as follows:

$$\text{VOTE}_2 = A + b_1(\text{GROWTH}) + b_2(\text{ALLNEWS}) + b_3(\text{DURATION}) + b_4(\text{PARTY}) + b_5(\text{FISCAL or FPRIME}) + e, \text{ where}$$

VOTE_2 = incumbent share of the two-party presidential vote (adapted from Fair's V^p , the "Democratic share of the two-party presidential vote");

GROWTH (G in Fair's equation) = "growth rate of real per capita GDP in the first three quarters of the [presidential] election year (annual rate)";

ALLNEWS (z) = the "number of quarters in the first 15 quarters of the administration in which the growth rate of real per capita GDP is greater than 3.2," except that Fair zeroes out this variable in 1920, 1944, and 1948, whereas in the fiscal model the actual values are entered;

DURATION (DUR) = 0 if the incumbent party has been in the White House for one term, 1 if two terms, 1.25 if three, 1.5 if four, and so on;

PARTY = 1 if the incumbent is a Democrat, -1 if a Republican;

FISCAL or FPRIME (explained below) = 1 if expansionary or expansive and -1 if cutback or contractionary;

A is a constant (intercept), b1-b5 are coefficients, and e is an error term.

The fifth predictor, the one that lends the model its name, measures the change in federal outlays/GDP, what we call "fiscal policy" ([Cuzán and Heggen 1984](#); [Cuzán, Heggen and Bundrick 2009](#)). As noted above, we have two metrics for fiscal policy, FISCAL and FPRIME. In most years, these variables take the same sign, but for reasons explained elsewhere (see [Cuzán and Bundrick, 2008](#) and [Cuzán and Bundrick, 2009](#)), in 2008 they took opposite signs. In 2012, however, both are equal to 1. That is a given, as are PARTY (Democrat=1) and DURATION (first term=0).

So, to forecast the outcome of next year's presidential election, all that remains is to enter into the fiscal model the values of GROWTH and ALLNEWS. [Fair's April 27, 2012 forecast](#) is $g=2.95\%$ and, $z=1$. Plugging these values into the two versions of the fiscal model, each estimated over two periods, 1880-2008 and 1916-2008 (the latter being the one Fair uses), and averaging across all four estimates, I get $VOTE_2=47.6$. In other words, the election is expected to be close, with the edge going to the Republicans.