



# Strategic Decision-Making in Presidential Nominations: When and Why Party Elites Decide to Support a Candidate

*Kenny J. Whitby*

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## **Strategic Decision-Making in Presidential Nominations: When and Why Party Elites Decide to Support a Candidate** Kenny J. Whitby

*Seeks to understand and explain the behavior of party elites during the 2008 Democratic Party presidential race.*

What is the dominant force in presidential nomination campaigns? Are nomination outcomes decided largely by the political party or by the candidates and their activities? In *Strategic Decision-Making in Presidential Nominations*, Kenny J. Whitby aims to provide some answers to these important questions, focusing on the closely contested 2008 race between Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. It was this race that spotlighted the role played by “superdelegates,” the unpledged party elites who were added to the nomination process in the 1980s. Whitby’s central argument is that superdelegates are strategic actors and their endorsements are a response to a variety of demographic, institutional, and campaign factors. While some weigh in early with an endorsement, many adopt a wait-and-see approach. Using a novel framework generally known as survival analysis, Whitby provides us with a method for understanding when and why party elites decide to chime in on their presidential nomination campaign.

Kenny J. Whitby is Professor of Political Science at the University of South Carolina and the author of *The Color of Representation: Congressional Behavior and Black Interests*.

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