Research Question
How does the status of the macroeconomy affect monetary political campaign contributions made by individual citizens?

Method
We compare donations in the 2008 presidential election (Nov. 2008) and the 2008 financial crisis (Dec. 2007 - June 2009, NBER). Monthly presidential election contributions under $2,900 are assessed from March 2007 and onwards—a month following when John McCain and Barack Obama announced candidacy. Nine months before recession are used as control, and the following nine months (until October 2008) show contributors' behavior under recession. We use OLS regression to compare monthly change in unemployment against monthly quantity of donations from individuals.

Motivation
Given that voters are sociotropically motivated in their economic voting (support candidates perceived as beneficial to the macroeconomy,) and given that monetary political contributions are so influential to elections, this research observes changes in those contributions during times of national economic hardship.

Data
Campaign donation data: FEC candidate raising data, 2007-2008
- Organized by quantity of donations per month per candidate in either pre or during recession time. Summed for regression.
- Health of the economy: BLS monthly unemployment reports, 2007-2008

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-198.967</td>
<td>64533.37</td>
<td>-3.0831</td>
<td>0.006411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>33.786</td>
<td>18884.64863</td>
<td>1.7891</td>
<td>0.292425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recession Dummy</td>
<td>24981.806</td>
<td>22992.97478</td>
<td>1.7891</td>
<td>0.091429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=20 R Square=0.4339

Unemployment rates are positively related to campaign contributions. However, a recession is not statistically significant—we do not find evidence that donors behave significantly differently in the chosen time period.

Conclusion
This research supports the sociotropic theory of economic voting. Though, the research is limited in its lack of political controls. Further research might compare monthly trends in donations as elections near.

Discussion
This research supports the sociotropic theory of economic voting. Though, the research is limited in its lack of political controls. Further research might compare monthly trends in donations as elections near.