

Trends in Political Contributions by Otolaryngologists in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Given the intersection of politics and healthcare policy, physician engagement in the political arena has become increasingly paramount. This study aimed to analyze trends in Otolaryngologists' political contributions in the United States.

Methods: A cross-sectional review of political contributions from 2003 to 2022 was performed using public finance data available on the Federal Election Commission website and selected for Otolaryngologists via occupation and employer search. Donor and recipient committee details were reviewed.

Results: From 2003-2022, a total of \$5,229,248 (18,392 donations) were donated to political committees by self-identified Otolaryngologists. Of that amount, \$4,624,172 (88%) were donated by males and \$605,077 (12%) by female ENTs; private practice ENTs made 96% of contributions. The most contributions were made by ENTs in the South (50%), followed by the Midwest (19%), Northeast (23%), and West (7%). Most funds (43%) were donated to Republican committees, followed by Democrat (31%) and Bipartisan committees (26%). \$926,343 (18%) was donated to the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery PAC. Contributions generally increased for each consecutive Presidential election year, with \$146,850 in 2004 and \$751,933 in 2020. Democrat donations peaked in 2016 (\$200,448), exceeding Republican donations. There was a significant increase in Republican donations in 2020 (\$450,518) compared to other election years ($p < 0.0001$).

Conclusions: In the last two decades, ENT political donations have increased, reflecting greater political engagement, particularly by private practice and male ENTs. Future studies are needed to analyze other ENT efforts toward actionable health policy.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, healthcare reform in the United States has changed how Americans access and finance quality patient care. Healthcare Legislation has become a critical topic in political debates, resulting in healthcare being a top concern among eligible voters in the previous 2020 Presidential election. Furthermore, these changes have increased physician involvement in healthcare legislation. In recent years, physicians have sought to identify specialty-specific trends in political contributions to better understand our political interactions via monetary contributions to political parties and candidates. The primary purpose of this study was to measure the political contributions of otolaryngologists and characterize these contributions based on geographic location, partisanship, and temporal patterns. The secondary goal was to analyze these characteristics and trends within the AAO-HNS PAC.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

- The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is a national public campaign database showing how candidates and committees spend their money in federal elections.
- Database variables include the donor's name, address, occupation, amount donated, date of donation, and to what committee the donor funded.
- Contributions from 2003-2022 were selected for self-identified Otolaryngologists via occupation searches.
- Results that did not specify occupation were excluded.
- Figures were generated using Google Numbers (Alphabet, Inc.).
- Analyses were performed using STATA.
- Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

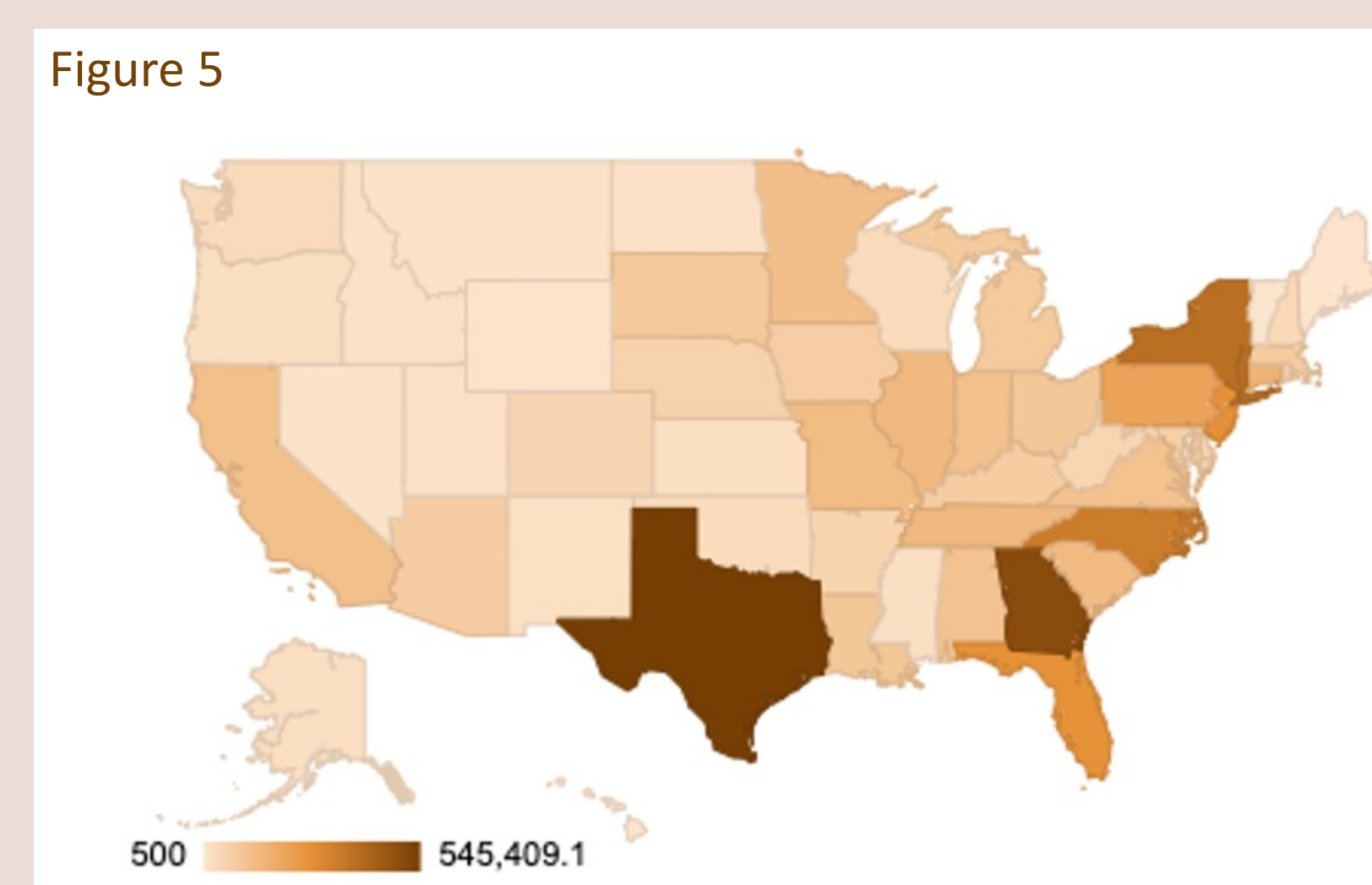
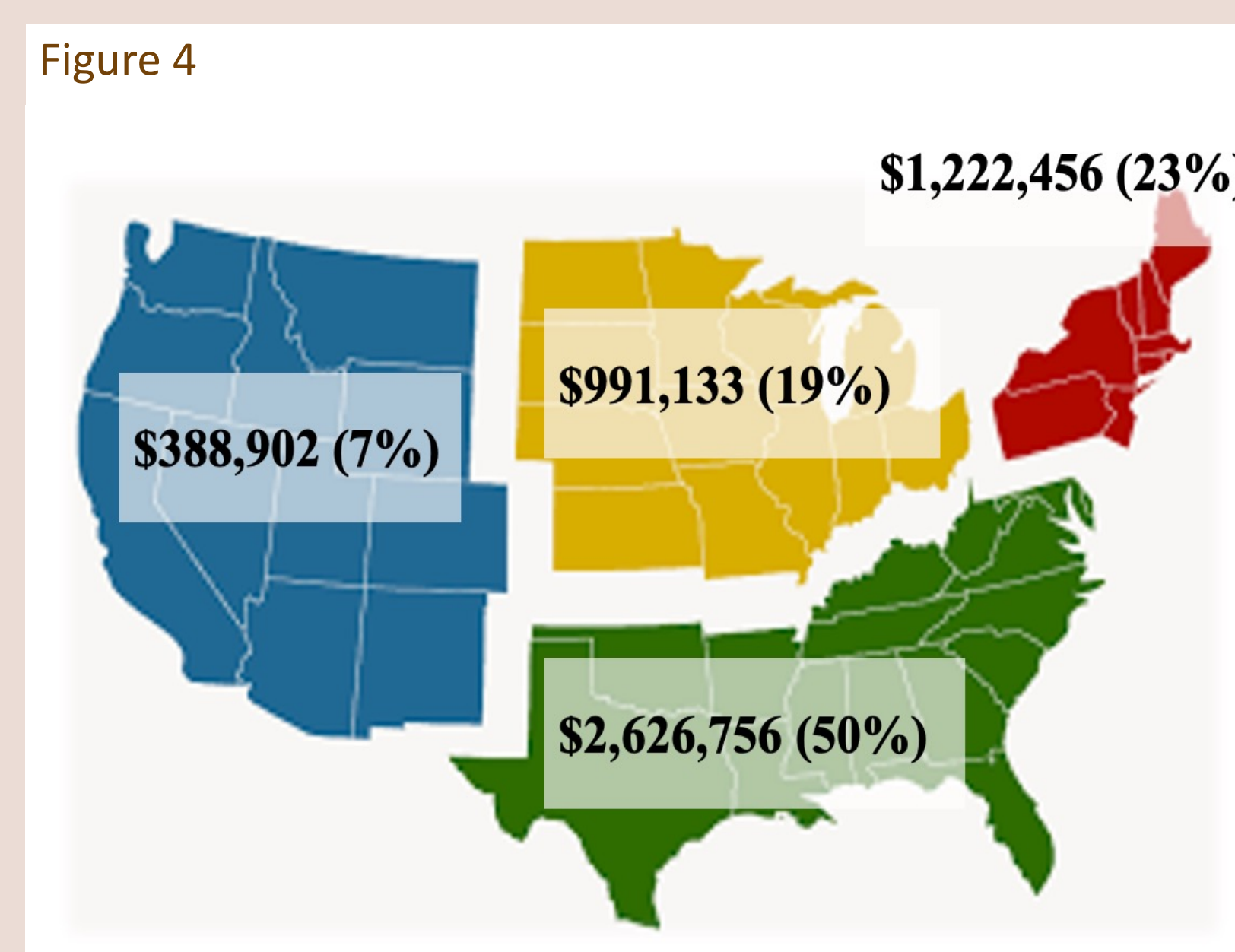
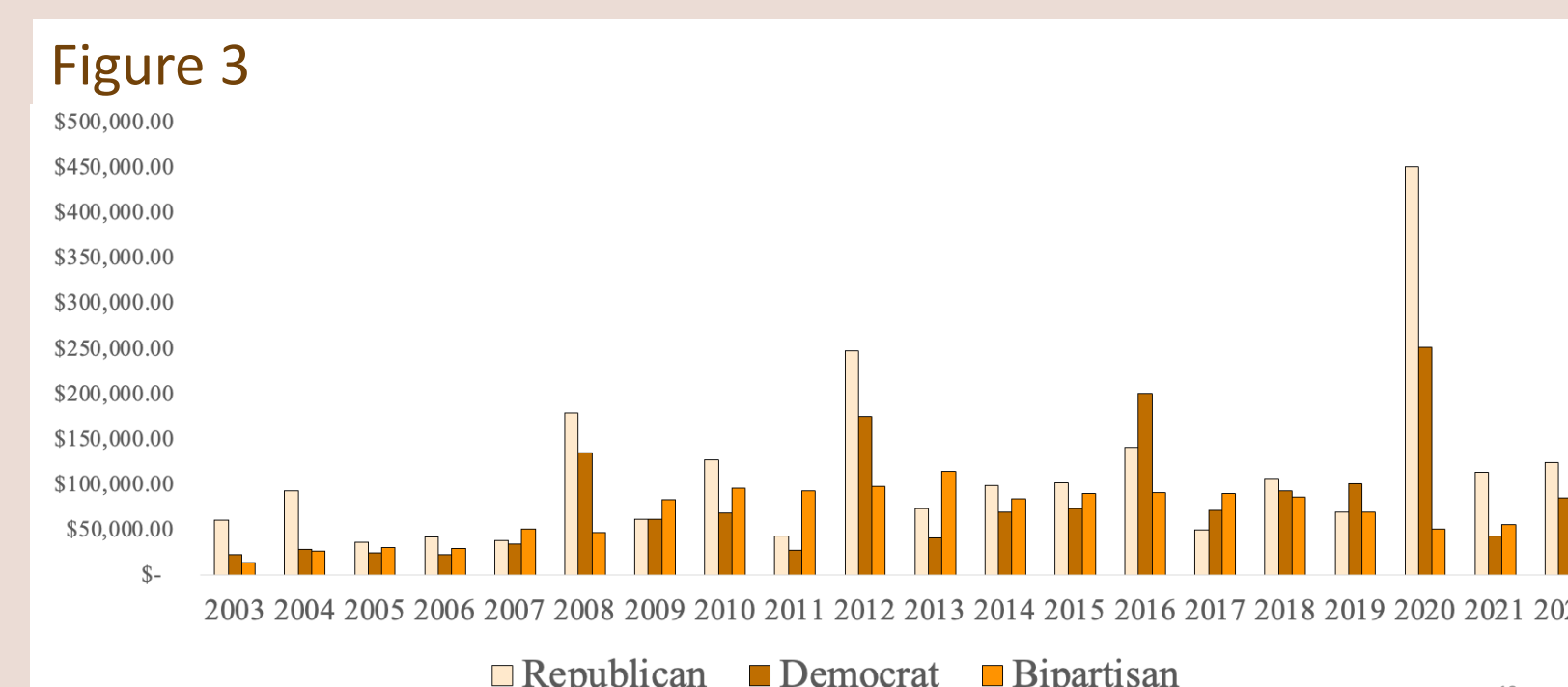
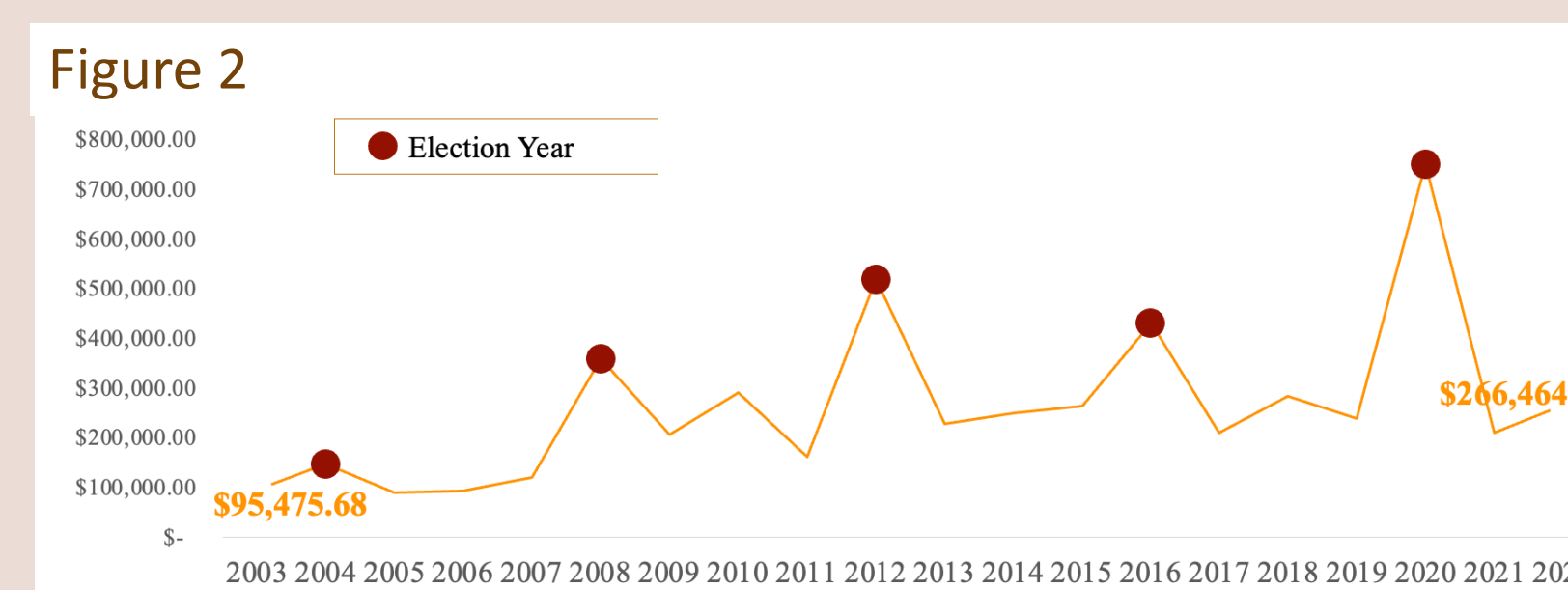
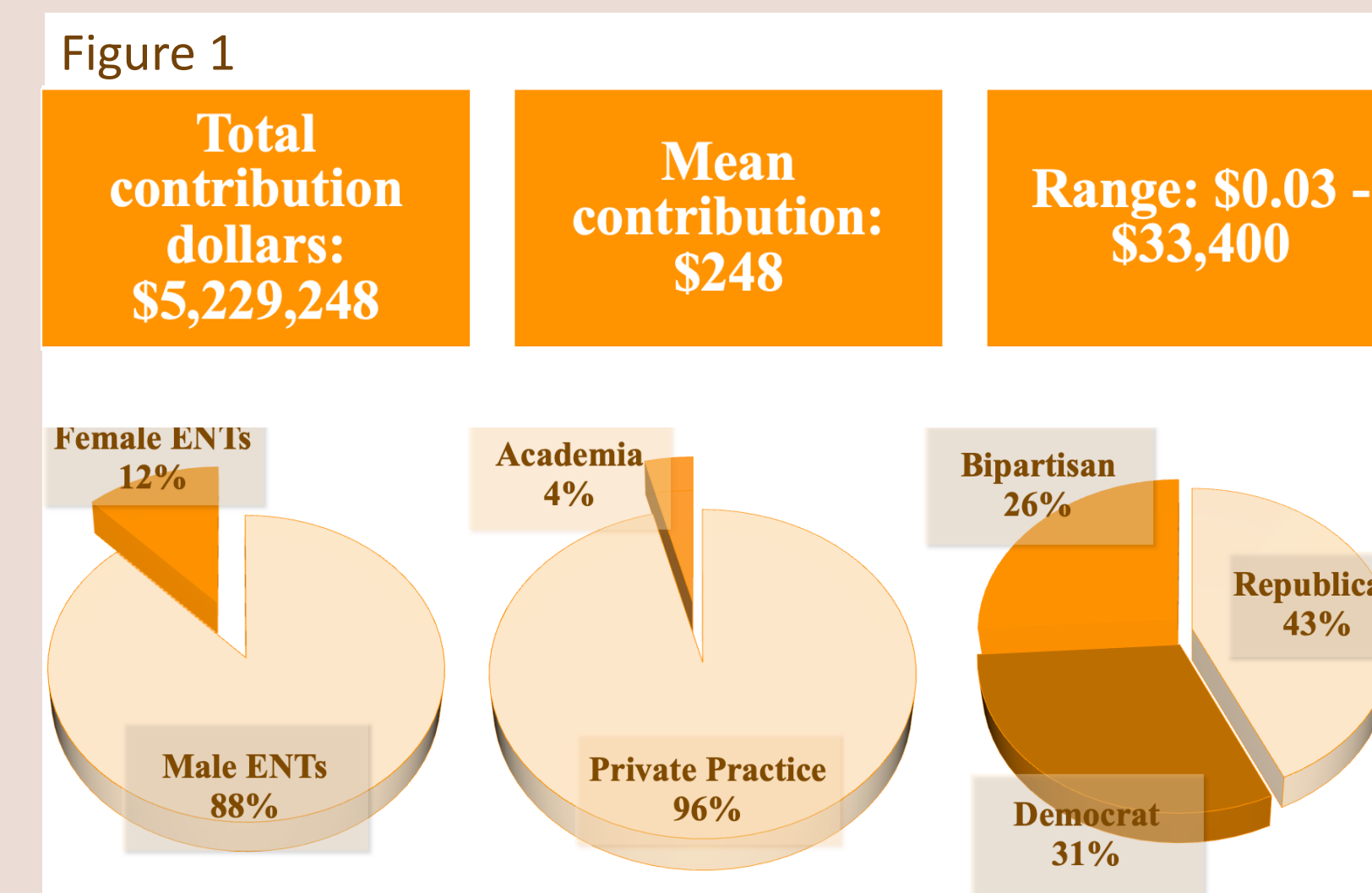
RESULTS

- From 2003 to 2022, 18,392 political contributions were made by self-identified Otolaryngologists totaling \$5,229,248 (Figure 1)
- 88% of these contribution dollars were donated by male ENTs (Figure 1)
- Private practice ENTs donated 96% of contribution dollars (Figure 1)
- 43% of all contribution dollars went to Republican committees, exceeding Democratic and Bipartisan (Figure 1)
- The total amount of money contributed each year over time rose from \$95,000 in 2003 to \$266,000 in 2022 (Figure 2)
- More money is contributed during election years (Figure 2)
- On a year-by-year basis, there is a strong preference for the political committees ENTs were contributing to, which means there isn't an even split in contributions, as seen in Figure 1
- ENTs in the South donated half of all contribution dollars (Figure 4)

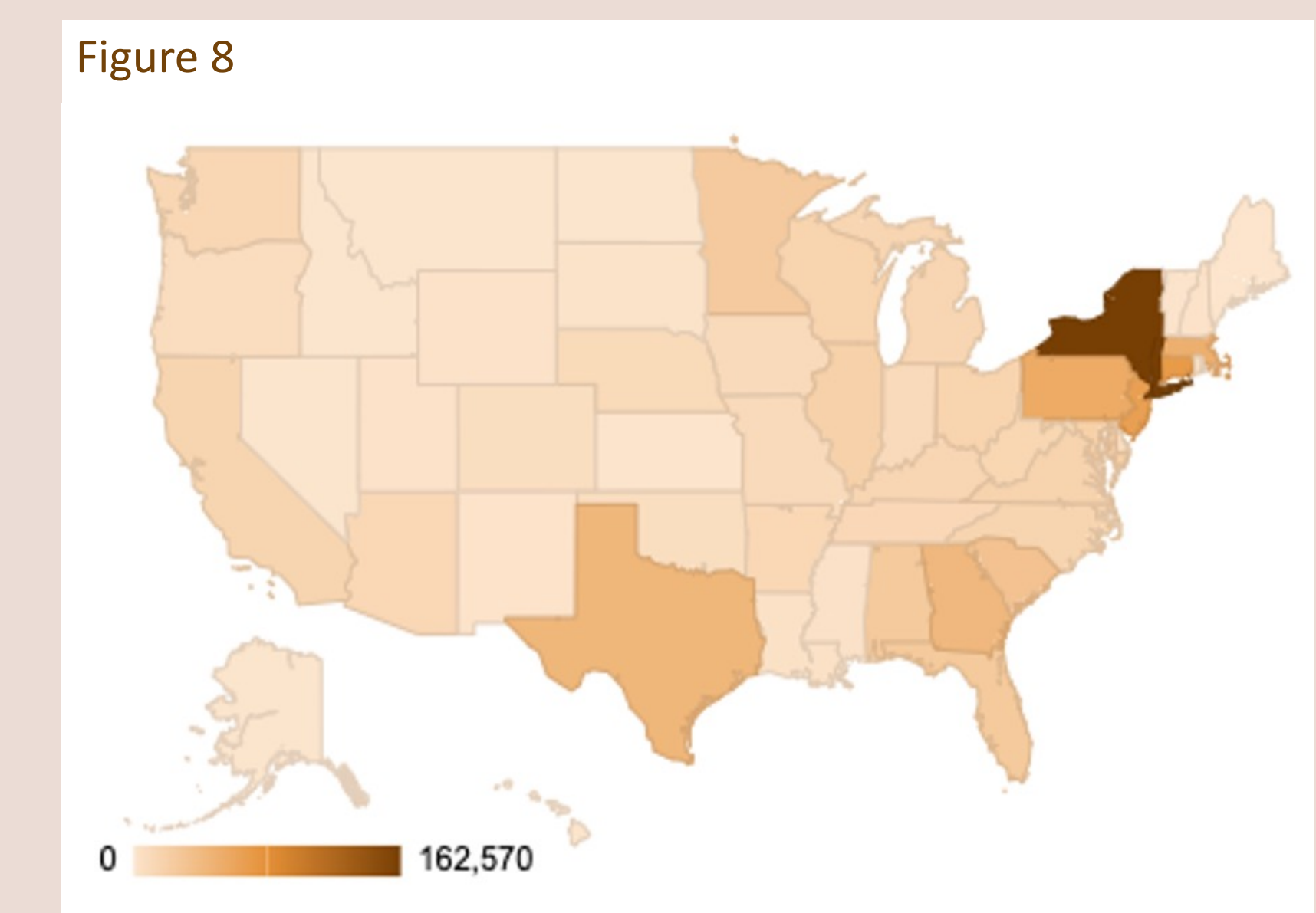
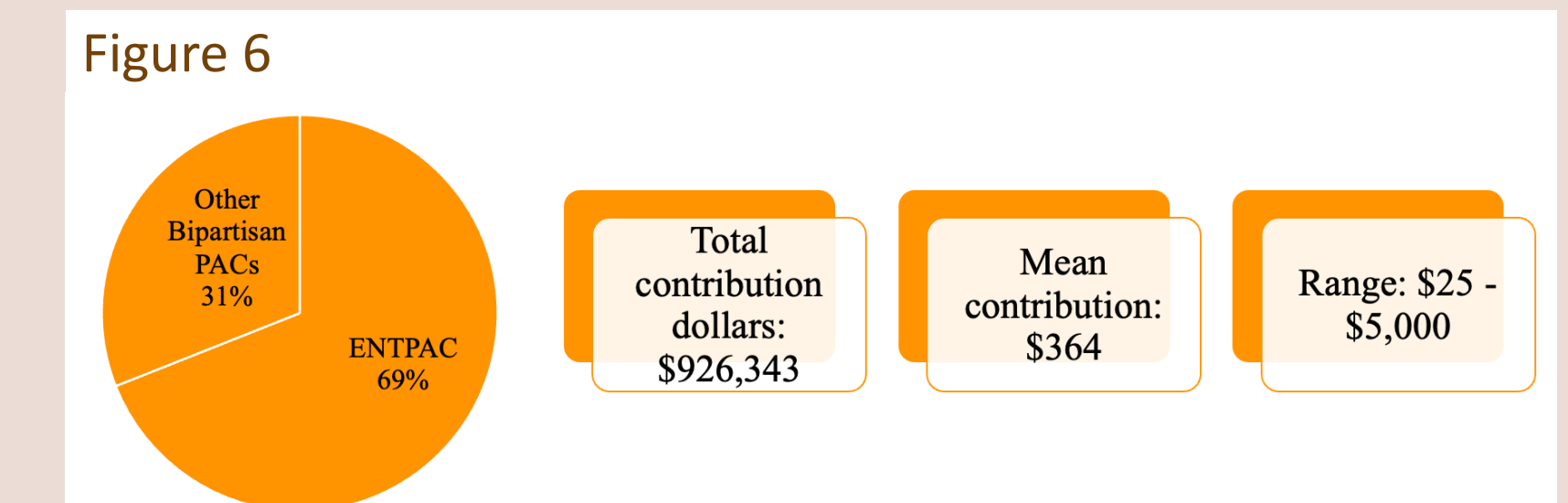
RESULTS CONTINUED

- From 2003 to 2022, 69% of contributions to bipartisan PACs have gone to ENT PAC totaling \$926,343 (Figure 6)
- 69% of contributions to bipartisan PACs went to ENT PAC (Figure 6)
- Total contributions rose from \$7,470 in 2003 to \$40,750 in 2022 (Figure 7)
- Almost half of all contributions to ENT PAC were made by ENTs in the Northeast (Figure 8)

Overall



ENT PAC



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Political contributions among otolaryngologists have expanded in the last two decades. This positive trend is seen in other specialties, including ophthalmology and orthopedic surgery. Substantial levels of political engagement in otolaryngology can be interpreted in many ways. The field of otolaryngology faces many challenges, including a motion to pass a bill in 2013 that would have allowed audiologists unlimited access to Medicare patients without a physician referral. In response, ENT PAC launched the "Protect Our Patients" campaign to increase contributions supporting political candidates voting against the bill. Figure 7 reflects this movement, which successfully shut down the bill. Such advocacy victories will likely increase confidence in future participation. However, future studies are needed to analyze other ENT efforts toward actionable health policy.

There are limitations to the study. Not all donations made to ENT PAC were captured by FEC data. The FEC relied on entries by self-identified otolaryngologists. Some of the otolaryngologists may have used descriptors not captured by our search.

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