Why are open seat elections such good barometers of the strength of parties?

In Open Seat House of Representative elections, does one party have an edge? Does the edge seem more to do with region than party (e.g., the GOP wins open seats in the South far more than anyplace else but 9 of the 20 open seat elections in this fictitious decade were in the South)? Does the edge shift to the party of the President? Or to the party of the President in election years (a coattail effect) or the first two years of a term (positive retrospective evaluations)? Are there other variables that influence open seat electoral outcomes?

Some open seat elections produce changes in party control of the seat while others replace a Democratic incumbent (or Republican) with another member of the same party. Open seat outcomes can be attributed to partisan support in the district but they can also be the product of intervening variables like coattails or redistricting.

Ten page maximum, plus tables and graphs.