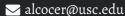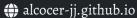# Minority Legislators (Co)Sponsor Differently From Whites Legislators.
Causal Evidence from U.S. Congress.

WPSA 2024
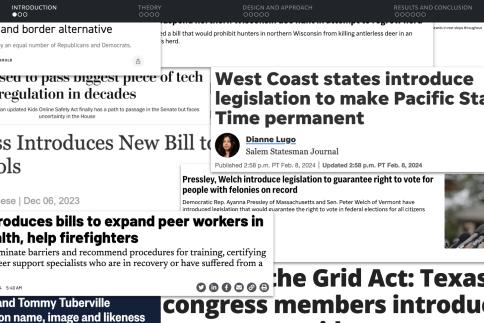*March 30, 2024*

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and border alternative

...y an equal number of Republicans and Democrats.

...sed to pass biggest piece of tech
...regulation in decades

...an updated Kids Online Safety Act finally has a path to passage in the Senate but faces
uncertainty in the House

...ss Introduces New Bill to
...ls

...ese | Dec 06, 2023

...roduces bills to expand peer workers in
...alth, help firefighters

...minate barriers and recommend procedures for training, certifying
...er support specialists who are in recovery or have suffered from a

...5:40 AM

...and Tommy Tuberville
...on name, image and likeness
...ge sports

...s to disclose how much money they make from name, image and
...restrict when players can transfer.

...spend northern Wisconsin doe hunt in attempt to regrow herd

...ed a bill that would prohibit hunters in northern Wisconsin from killing antlerless deer in an
...s herd.

West Coast states introduce
legislation to make Pacific Sta
Time permanent

Dianne Lugo
Salem Statesman Journal

Published 2:58 p.m. PT Feb. 8, 2024 | Updated 2:58 p.m. PT Feb. 8, 2024

Pressley, Welch introduce legislation to guarantee right to vote for
people with felonies on record

Democratic Rep. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Sen. Peter Welch of Vermont have
introduced legislation that would guarantee the right to vote in federal elections for all citizens

...the Grid Act: Texas
congress members introduc
to connect grids

By John Krinjak | Published February 14, 2024 10:07PM | Texas | FOX 7 Austin

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Bill (co)sponsorship

- Plenty of work exploring how institutional determinants affect these two activities:
  - Majority party status (e.g., Garand and Burke 2006)
  - Legislative seniority (e.g., Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski 2006)
  - Ideological extremism (e.g., Rocca and Sanchez 2008)
  - Committee leadership positions (e.g., Schiller 1995)

- Some association research has examined how race and ethnicity affect this behavior, but findings are mixed (e.g., Rocca and Sanchez 2008; Bratton and Rouse 2011)

- No causal work exploring this area of research

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Do minority legislators sponsor and cosponsor differently from those who are white?

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Theory

- Goal of legislators: reelection, the creation of good public policy, and the attainment of influence within Congress (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978)

- Elected officials continuously engage in activities that aid reelection prospects (e.g., Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Rocca and Gordon 2010)

- (Co)sponsorship activities provide legislators with a way to take positions, signal to voters and colleagues, and advance policy (e.g., Mayhew 1974; Schiller 1995; Hall 1996; Rocca and Sanchez 2008)

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Theory

- Rank-and-file minority legislators are often excluded from policy-making activities (e.g., Hawkesworth 2003; Preuhs 2006)
  - Lack of issue interests from majority legislative body (e.g., McClain 1993)
  - 'Racialized institutions' (Hawkesworth 2003)
- Results in the inability to meet legislative goals
- Marginalization creates disadvantages for legislators of color when crafting bills and garnering support for their legislation

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Strategic Minority Legislating

- Marginalized status forces minority legislators to think differently about how to expend electoral resources–focusing more on activities with 'lower risks'.

- Sponsoring legislation can be costly (Schiller 1995), and it becomes more challenging if you are marginalized, making it a high-risk legislative tool

- Cosponsoring can bring still minority legislators benefits (albeit not as large as introducing bills) but with lower electoral risk (e.g. still allowing them to take positions without risking not getting bills passed).

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Expectations/Hypotheses

- Expectation that minority legislators will then expend their effort on cosponsoring more legislation instead of sponsoring original legislation to meet legislative/electoral goals

- Given this framework, we can expect:

- H1: Legislators of color will sponsor less legislation than non-Hispanic White legislators

- H2: Legislators of color will cosponsor more legislation than non-Hispanic White legislators

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Research Design

- Look at congressional districts where:
  - minority congressmembers replaced white legislators (treatment group),
  - white congressmembers replaced white legislators (placebo group A),
  - minority congressmembers replaced minority legislators (placebo group B)

- Compare bill *sponsorship* and *cosponsorship* trends between these three groups to congressional districts where:
  - white congressmembers never left office (control group for treatment group and placebo group A)
  - minority congressmembers never left office (control group for placebo group B)

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Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (SDID)

- I construct counterfactual control congressional districts where minority/non-minority legislators never left office
  - Compare actual legislative activity to imputed activity

- SDID estimator (Arkhangelsky et al. 2021) calculates unit ($\hat{\omega}_{sdid}$) and time ($\hat{\lambda}_t^{sdid}$) weights that assist in the construction of a counterfactual whose control units' outcomes are, on average, parallel to the pre-treatment trends of the treated units' outcomes

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Synthetic Difference-in-Differences (SDID)

- These weights are then inserted into a two-way fixed effects
  regression model to estimate the average treatment effect of
  having a minority legislator in office (τ):

$$(\hat{\tau}_{\text{sdid}}, \hat{\mu}, \hat{\alpha}, \hat{\beta}) =$$

$$\arg \min_{\tau, \mu, \alpha, \beta} \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^{N} \sum_{t=1}^{T} (Y_{it} - \mu - \alpha_i - \beta_t - W_{it}\tau)^2 \, \hat{\omega}_i^{sdid} \hat{\lambda}_t^{sdid} \right\}$$

$$(1)$$

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Data

- Outcome variables:
  - No. of bills sponsored by legislator, per congressional session
  - No. of bills cosponsored by legislator, per congressional session

- Observe 2013 - 2020 period (113th - 116th congressional sessions)

- Leverage 2016 and 2018 congressional elections as moments of treatment.
  - Since two different treatment periods, take a staggered approach to SDID
  - Split into two blocks, apply SDID to each, calculate the weighted average between both blocks.

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Data

- Data restrictions
  - Democratic legislative sample only, due to no cases of same-party legislator replacement for minority legislators in the Republican Party during treatment periods of interest
  - To avoid endogeneity, restrict sample to congressional districts where the only change that occurred was race/ethnicity of legislator throughout entire study period

- Total of 161 congressional districts:
  - 9 congressional districts - White to Minority (treated)
  - 9 congressional districts - White to White (placebo A)
  - 10 congressional districts - Minority to Minority (placebo B)
  - 133 congressional control districts where no electoral change occured

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Weighted SDID Results

- Table displays estimated treatment effects for all three groups of legislators that took office across both points of treatment (2016 & 2018 elections):
  - (1) Minority replacing White, (2) White replacing White, (3) Minority replacing Minority

	(1) Treatment Group	(2) Placebo Group A	(3) Placebo Group B
Bill Sponsorship	-11***	-16	-3
	(3.508)	(11.387)	(5.709)
Bill Cosponsorship	91***	57	-72
	(28.585)	(104.599)	(46.535)
Treated District Representatives	9	9	10
Observations	324	324	240

Note: Bootstrap standard errors in parentheses are based on 1,000 replications.
* p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table 1: SDID weighted estimation results for legislative activity

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Weighted SDID Results

- Treatment group - Incoming Minority Legislators, on average:
  - Sponsored about 11 fewer bills and cosponsored about 91 more bills than White predecessors
  - Bootstrap inference suggests results to be significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance

	(1) Treatment Group	(2) Placebo Group A	(3) Placebo Group B
Bill Sponsorship	-11***	-16	-3
	(3.508)	(11.387)	(5.709)
Bill Cosponsorship	91***	57	-72
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Table 1: SDID weighted estimation results for legislative activity

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Weighted SDID Results

- Placebo groups A and B

- Measures difference in activity between White/Minority legislators that replace White/Minority predecessors

- Bootstrap inference suggests results for both columns are not significantly different from previous White/ legislators in office; high variance among estimates

	(1) Treatment Group	(2) Placebo Group A	(3) Placebo Group B
Bill Sponsorship	-11***	-16	-3
	(3.508)	(11.387)	(5.709)
Bill Cosponsorship	91***	57	-72
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Table 1: SDID weighted estimation results for legislative activity

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Can Differences in Activity Be for Other Reasons?

- Can the marginalization be explained by ideological extremity?
  - Studies demonstrate how ideological extremity is negatively correlated with sponsorship activity
  - When separating congressional districts into groups of increased and decreased ideological extremity , results still hold when conducting SDID

- Can it be explained by Primary election results?
  - It can be argued that if a legislator beats a predecessor that is favored in the Primaries, then they can be punished by Party
  - When separating congressional districts into groups where predecessors decided not to run for reelection and were beaten in the Primaries, results still hold when conducting SDID

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Key Findings

- Clear and significant difference in (co)sponsorship activity between minority and non-minority legislators
  - Sponsorship - in line with results in literature
  - Cosponsorship - contradict results in literature

- No clear or significant difference in legislative activity between legislators from the same majority/minority group

- Legislative seniority/freshman dynamic, ideological differences, or primary results do not explain differences

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Conclusion

- As a collective, minority legislators:
  - Disproportionately rely on cosponsorship to meet legislative goals
  - Take on more of a supportive role rather than leading role when it comes to agenda-setting and policy-making
  - Display higher willingness to cooperate with others on the floor

- Study is among the first to causally estimate the effects of the presence of minority legislators on non roll-call behavior

- Currently examining:
  - How electoral competition plays a role
  - Who minorities cooperate with more
  - How (co)sponsorship behavior looks like across racial groups

Thank You

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