1 Electoral Crimes and Performance: Evidence from Brazil

1.1 Summary

Office-seeking politicians employ various tactics to get elected, including actions banned by electoral oversight agencies. Using an unique dataset on candidate eligibility constructed from judicial decisions of the Brazilian Electoral Court (TSE), I estimate the impact of electoral code violations on performance at the municipal elections of 2012 and 2016. I recover causal effects of violations using an unique feature from Brazil's electoral system in which candidates run for office, and can be voted on election day, even if the Electoral Court has not issued a final decision on whether their candidacies met all code requirements.

1.2 Main Research Question

Do politicians who violate electoral code perform well at the ballot?

1.3 Hypotheses

1. Candidates who have clean records will perform better at municipal elections.

2. The effect of infractions is stronger (more negative) if the number of clean-record opponents in the race is higher.

1.4 Outcomes

1. Whether candidate was the most voted in mayor elections or last candidate voted in in city council elections (equivalent to being elected had all their candidacies been valid).

2. Vote share.

3. Vote distance to elected candidates.

1.5 Identification Strategy

IV where the the instrumented (explanatory) variable is the candidacy decision issued by the Electoral Court before the elections (trial stage) and the instrument is the decision issued after the elections (appeals stage) for all candidates who appealed their decision to run but have not had a final ruling before election day.

1.6 Data

Election results, candidate, judge, and municipal controls for 2012 and 2016 municipal elections in Brazil. All available at various Electoral Court (TSE) websites.

1.7 Contribution and Literature

It contributes the causal effect of electoral violations to previous works on determinants of electoral performance; in addition, it employs new identification strategy and dataset (analysis of judicial decisions regarding elections).

2 Judicial Favoritism of Politicians: Evidence from Small Claim Courts

2.1 Summary

Judicial favoritism has long been a subject of research in law, economics, and political science. However, scholars have mainly focused on gender and ethnicity bias but have largely ignored whether judges treat politicians the same way as ordinary citizens. I use a unique dataset of judicial decisions in small claims courts in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, where cases are assigned to judges at random, to verify whether local politicians have a higher winning rate against other plaintiffs or defendants. I combine empirical strategies in Shayo and Zussman (2011), Abrams, Bertrand, and Mullainathan (2012), and Sanchez-Martinez (2018) to test random assignment and provide robustness checks against potential spurious relationships between being a politician and having a favorable court outcome.

2.2 Main research Question

Are politicians more likely to receive favorable rulings in small claim courts?

2.3 Hypotheses

1. Politicians have a higher winning rate at the trial stage in small court claims against their counterparts.

2. Proximity to elections increases the winning rates for politicians on the campaign trail.

2.4 Outcomes

1. Whether politicians have had the case ruled in their favor.

2. The amount awarded to (or avoided by) politicians in small claim court cases.

2.5 Identification Strategy

Natural experiment. State Courts assign cases at random when the judicial district has more than one judge on the bench. I follow Abrams, Bertrand, and Mullainathan (2012) to check random assignment and uncover partial effects of being a politician on court outcomes.

2.6 Data

São Paulo State Court (TJ-SP) rulings involving candidates running for office in the State of São Paulo in the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 electoral cycles. Judicial district, judge and politicians' individual characteristics from the TJ-SP, Electoral Court (TSE), and the National Statistics Office (IBGE).

2.7 Contribution and Literature

It is the first paper to investigate judicial bias for individual politicians and it contributes to the literature on the benefits of political connectedness.

3 Active and Passive Transparency in Brazilian Municipalities

3.1 Summary

An important part of government accountability is the obligation of public officials to inform and explain their actions (Schedler, 1999; Bovens, 2007). In this paper, I propose and analyze two related forms of government accountability: *active transparency*, in which government actively reveals policy information via intra-government auditing and monitoring, and *passive transparency*, in which government passively reveals information through freedom of information requests. Using a natural two-by-two factorial experiment design in Brazilian municipalities between 2006 and 2017, I measure the effects of active and passive transparency on government performance (policy outcomes and corruption) and sanctions applied to public officials and companies found guilty of wrongdoing.

3.2 Main Research Question

Do passive transparency measures contribute anything more than active transparency to improve government performance and increase the number of sanctions applied for government wrongdoing?

3.3 Hypotheses

1. *Active transparency* measures unconditionally improve performance and increase the number of individual and company-wide sanctions.

2. *Passive transparency* only marginally improves performance and increases sanctions when *active transparency* policies are in place.

3. In the absence of *active transparency* measures, *passive transparency* has no effect on improving performance and does not increase the number of sanctions for individuals and companies found guilty of any wrongdoing.

3.4 Outcomes

1. Policy:
2. Sanctions:
3. Corruption:
4. Transparency:

3.5 Identification Strategy

Natural experiment coming from the combination of randomized audits (active transparency) plus the nation-wide implementation of the freedom of information act (FOIA) in 2012 (passive transparency). Municipalities fall into one of three treatments or one control group: audits after FOIA (active and passive transparency), audits before FOIA (active transparency), non-audit after FOIA (passive transparency), and non-audit before FOIA (control).

3.6 Data

Socioeconomic factors and policy outcomes from the National Statistics Office (IBGE); Random audits and transparency measures from two programs run by the Office of the Comptroller-General (CGU); Sanctions for individuals and companies and crackdowns from CGU; Convictions from the National Council of Justice (CNJ).

3.7 Contribution and Literature

First paper providing disaggregated evidence for the effect of passive transparency (FOIA) in development settings; paper advances theory by breaking transparency into active and passive arms; new transparency dataset and ingenious research design.