

# The Individual Consequence of Party Legislative Obstruction in the U.S. Senate

Carlos Algara<sup>\*</sup> and Joe Zamadics<sup>\*\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup>*Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis*

<sup>\*\*</sup>*Department of Political Science, University of Colorado*

March 2017

## Abstract

Do procedural votes impact the re-election prospects of Senators? If so, how do members make the strategic decision to break with their party? By analyzing the Senate, we gain an empirical advantage over the importance of procedural votes in reelection due to the ability of a few members to obstruct the legislative process. We posit that electorally vulnerable members break with their party on procedural votes in order to improve their reelection chances. We find that not only do certain defectors see an electoral boost, some members moderate how they vote on procedural items as their election nears. Our paper provides a new individual member measure of obstruction along with a detailed narrative explaining when members decide to support gridlock and the impact those decisions have on their reelection.

Key words: legislative gridlock, polarization, minority party obstruction, Senate elections, collective accountability

---

Manuscript prepared for the 2017 Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL (April 6-9, 2017). We thank Chris Hare, Scott Adler, and Gary Jacobson for constructive comments. Working title presented as a placeholder.