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The Subnational Connection in Unitary Regimes: Progressive Ambition and Legislative Behavior in Uruguay

How do legislators develop reputations to further their individual goals in environments with limited space for personalization? In this article, we evaluate congressional behavior by legislators with gubernatorial expectations in a unitary environment where parties control political activities and institutions hinder individualization. By analyzing the process of drafting bills in Uruguay, we demonstrate that deputies with subnational executive ambition tend to bias legislation towards their districts, especially those from small and peripheral units. Findings reinforce the importance of incorporating ambition to legislative studies and open a new direction towards the analysis of multiple career patterns within a specific case.

Introduction

How do legislators with personalized career goals behave in systems that provide minimal spaces for individualization and are also controlled by strong parties and leaders? What can politicians do to further their own ambition in environments where there is little room for individualist maneuvers? Decades of literature on electoral rules, candidate selection mechanisms and party organization have shown that systems where parties have solid control over careers and political futures tend to generate a dependence of legislators on party elites. Given such constraints, individual legislators are likely to follow party mandates strictly; hence, strong discipline, low levels of deviation from the leadership's decisions, and activities centered on the party brand should be the most frequent observable actions. Broadly speaking, in environments where other individual and collective actors are the principals of the game, subjects with all kinds of aspirations are expected to satisfy their

individual political capital *vis-à-vis* their voters. Multiple activities have been recognized in the literature as devices for enhancing personal reputations, such as delivery of public policies (Stein and Bickers 1994), amendments to the budget (Ames 2001) and relevant bills (Hibbing 1986), public speeches (Highton and Rocca 2005; Rocca 2007), communication of policy expertise (Victor 2011), bill drafting (Cooper and Rybicki 2002; Crisp, Escobar-Lemmon et al. 2004; Gamm and Kousser 2010; Rocca and Gordon 2010; Schiller 2006), and patterns of cosponsorship (Alemán, Calvo, Jones, and Kaplan 2009; Crisp, Kanthak, and Leijonhufvud 2004; Magar and Moraes 2012). In this article, we follow the approach developed by Micozzi (2009, 2013, 2014a) and utilize the submission of bills targeting legislators' home states as a proxy for personalization efforts. We base this decision on the assumption that bill drafting indeed makes a difference for voters (Mayhew 1974; Hill and Williams 1993; Schiller 1995) and that legislators expect an electoral reward for these clearly directed signals. Targeted bills can be used as devices for communicating responsiveness to and genuine representation of local interests, beyond the collective decision involving final passage (largely out of the control of individual legislators). In addition, using bill drafting helps to solve a theoretical inquiry: how personalization efforts do not conflict with leaders' desires and preferences. As stated by Highton and Rocca (2005), bill drafting, as a non-roll-call position taking, prevents sponsors from paying the costs of explicit manifestations, such as negative voting or abstentions. Doing so, unless extreme standpoints are communicated or unreasonable policies are proposed, the process of drafting bills can be an equilibrium in which rank-and-file legislators win without harming their principals. As mentioned, this strategy was already utilized in the literature. Ames' (2001) depiction of Brazilian deputies campaigning with their *avulsos*⁸ in hand is representative of this strategic use. Based on this choice of dependent variable, we develop two main hypotheses:

H1: Deputies who expect to become governors in the next period tend to submit more bills targeted to their districts

H2: Deputies from peripheral states who expect to become governors in the next period tend to submit more bills targeted to their districts

In order to empirically assess our theoretical inquiries, we created an original database of legislation in Uruguay. We collected information on every single one of the 17,673 bills submitted by legislators to the House between the 44th and 46th Congresses (1995–2010). Information is

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