

The Department of Defense and its Correspondence Relationship with Legislators

PS 699: Independent Study (Spring 2020)

Fatima Ali

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Introduction

Literature Review

Theory

Design

Data

Altogether we have 7635 letters received by the Department of Defense that are marked as “congressional” from 2007-2017. All of these letters are from Members of the U.S. Congress. Note: During my independent study, I handcoded approximately 3,492 letters from a variety of Department of Defense agencies. Unfortunately, we were not able to implement these observations into the final data set. Thus, observations that are missing a Policy Type Category have a current Type of NA.

A Potential Outlier

In this analysis, Senator Grassley (R-IA) is considered to be an outlier. He wrote 188 letters to the Department of Defense, the most out of any other members of congress. However, he was never a part of any committee that actively work for the Department of Defense. Although at this point, we are unable to see what are the policy categories of the letters he wrote to the Department of Defense, based off of the hand-coding I did, Grassley wrote a majority of his letters on behalf of constituents, specifically for Veterans in Iowa. On further analysis, Grassley’s campaign has largely been based on providing veterans in Iowa opportunities to present their legacy to other residents in Iowa and the US, and more within the realm of congressional agencies, aid with ensuring that veterans receive their benefits after retiring or being discharged from the military. These benefits include disability compensation, education programs, health benefits, and more. A majority of these concerns would be best addressed via the Department of Veteran Affairs versus most of the Department of Defense agencies, however, many of the issues, such as Military Pay complaints as well as sexual harrassment allegations can indeed be addressed with the Department of Defense agencies, such as the Department of Defense and Accounting Service (DFAS) as well as the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense (DOD_OIG). Thus, at this time, I am not considering Senator Grassley to be an outlier in my analysis.

Table 1: Top Policy Categories within Grassley’s Letters to the DOD

bioname	party	TYPE	cqlabel	n
GRASSLEY, Charles Ernest	(R)	NA	(IA)	168
GRASSLEY, Charles Ernest	(R)	1	(IA)	19
GRASSLEY, Charles Ernest	(R)	5	(IA)	1

Top 10 Legislators who wrote the most letters to the DOD

Except for Senator Grassley, many of the legislators who most frequently wrote letters to the DOD were

Table 2: Legislators who wrote the most letters to DOD

bioname	party	chamber	cqlabel	n
GRASSLEY, Charles Ernest	(R)	Senate	(IA)	188
McCAIN, John Sidney, III	(R)	Senate	(AZ)	116
FORBES, J. Randy	(R)	House	(VA-04)	86

bioname	party	chamber	cqlabel	n
NELSON, Clarence William (Bill)	(D)	Senate	(FL)	84
BURR, Richard M.	(R)	Senate	(NC)	75
McCASKILL, Claire	(D)	Senate	(MO)	70
TOOMEY, Patrick Joseph	(R)	Senate	(PA)	60
WITTMAN, Robert J.	(R)	House	(VA-01)	60
BOOZMAN, John	(R)	Senate	(AR)	59
HUNTER, Duncan Duane	(R)	House	(CA-50)	59
PELOSI, Nancy	(D)	House	(CA-08)	59

Table 3: Policy Categories within Legislators' Letters to the DOD

bioname	party	chamber	TYPE	cqlabel	n
GRASSLEY, Charles Ernest	(R)	Senate	NA	(IA)	168
FORBES, J. Randy	(R)	House	NA	(VA-04)	58
McCAIN, John Sidney, III	(R)	Senate	NA	(AZ)	58
McCASKILL, Claire	(D)	Senate	NA	(MO)	52
NELSON, Clarence William (Bill)	(D)	Senate	1	(FL)	50
BOOZMAN, John	(R)	Senate	1	(AR)	48
McCAIN, John Sidney, III	(R)	Senate	1	(AZ)	46
WEBB, James H. (Jim)	(D)	Senate	NA	(VA)	45
PELOSI, Nancy	(D)	House	6	(CA-08)	43
TOOMEY, Patrick Joseph	(R)	Senate	1	(PA)	40

Table 4: Most Common Policy Areas

TYPE	n
1	3798
5	149
6	88
0	43
2	35
3	25
4	3

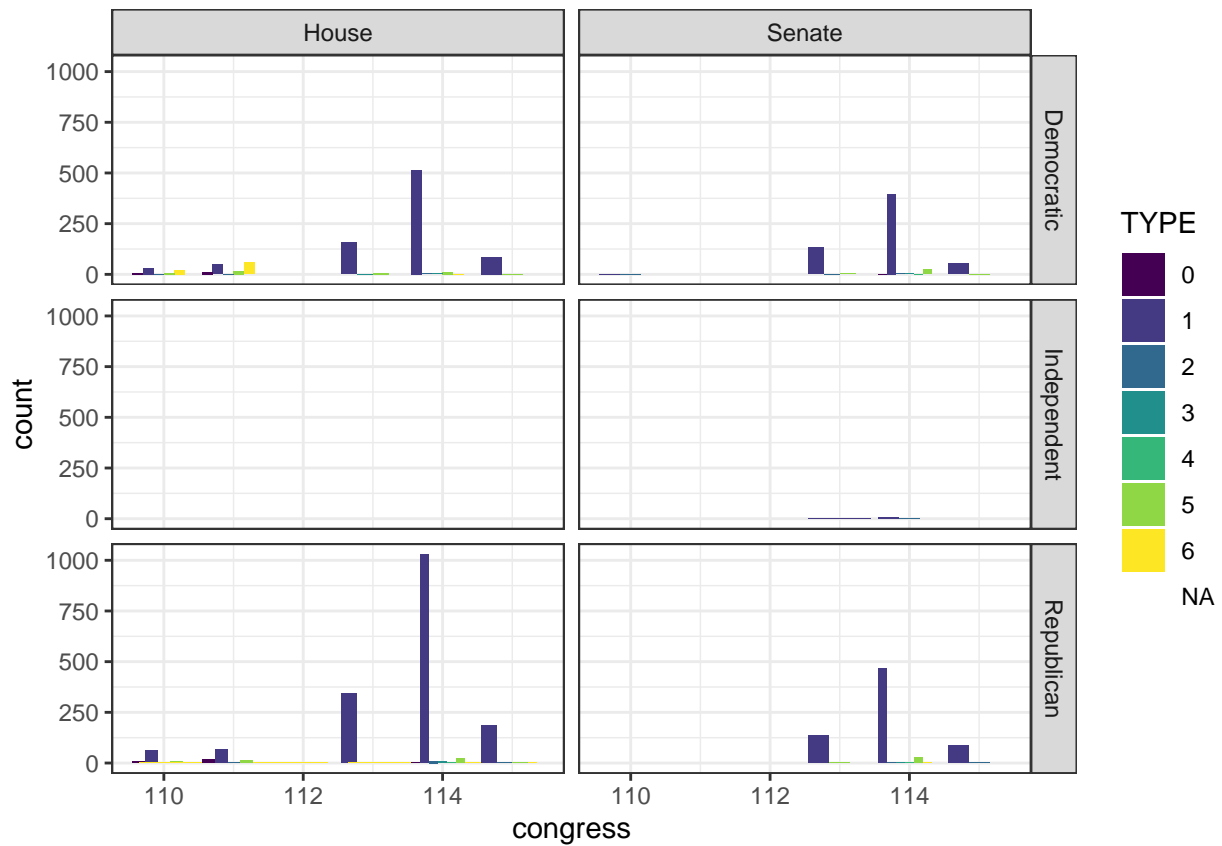
##COULD ANYTHING BE DONE HERE

Table 5: Most frequent letter positions for a given legislator in a cycle

bioname	party	cqlabel	TYPE	congress	n
NELSON, Clarence William (Bill)	(D)	(FL)	1	114	39
BOOZMAN, John	(R)	(AR)	1	114	37
TOOMEY, Patrick Joseph	(R)	(PA)	1	114	32
BURR, Richard M.	(R)	(NC)	1	114	30
PELOSI, Nancy	(D)	(CA-08)	6	111	29
OBEY, David Ross	(D)	(WI-07)	6	111	28
KAINE, Timothy Michael (Tim)	(D)	(VA)	1	114	26
MURRAY, Patty	(D)	(WA)	1	114	25

bioname	party	cqlabel	TYPE	congress	n
RIGELL, E. Scott	(R)	(VA-02)	1	114	25
DAVIS, Susan A.	(D)	(CA-53)	1	114	24
McCAIN, John Sidney, III	(R)	(AZ)	1	114	24

Warning: position_dodge requires non-overlapping x intervals

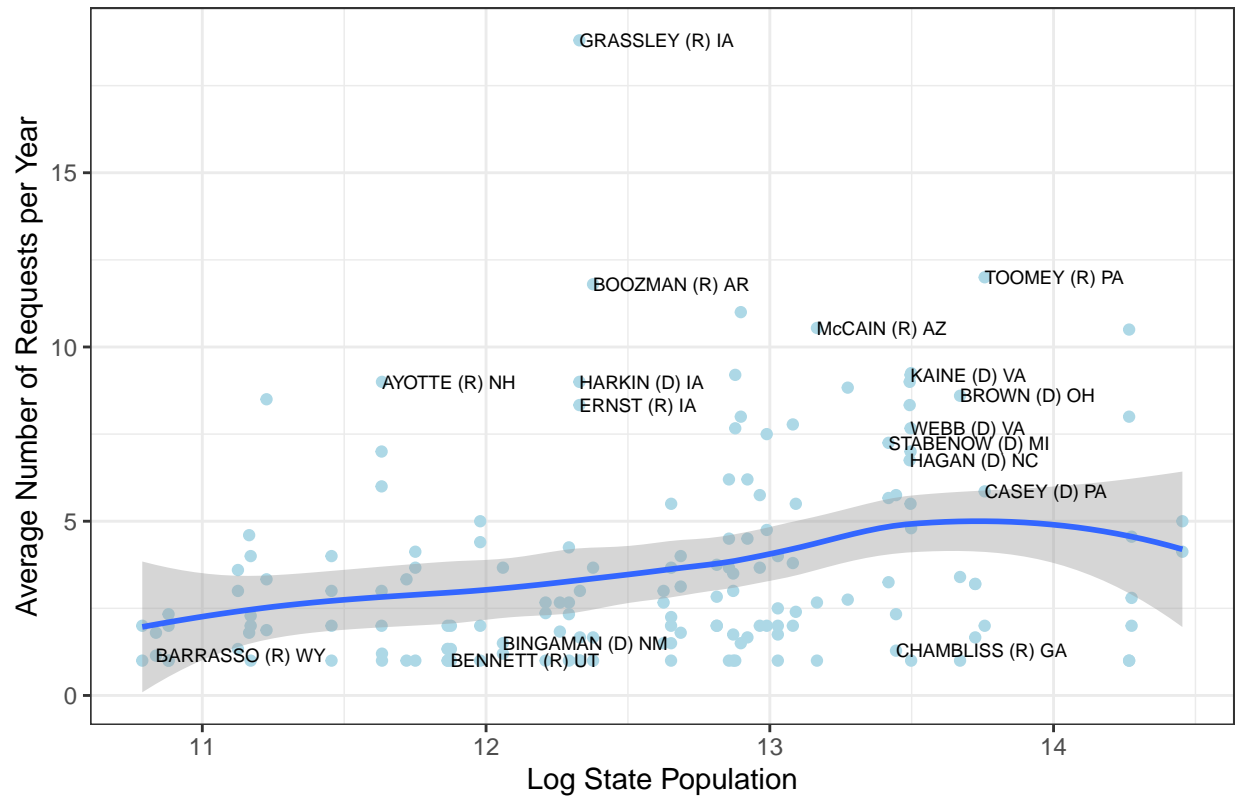


###Senators and Veteran Population ###HELP WITH THIS #Representative per district??

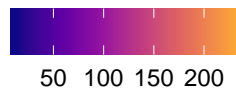
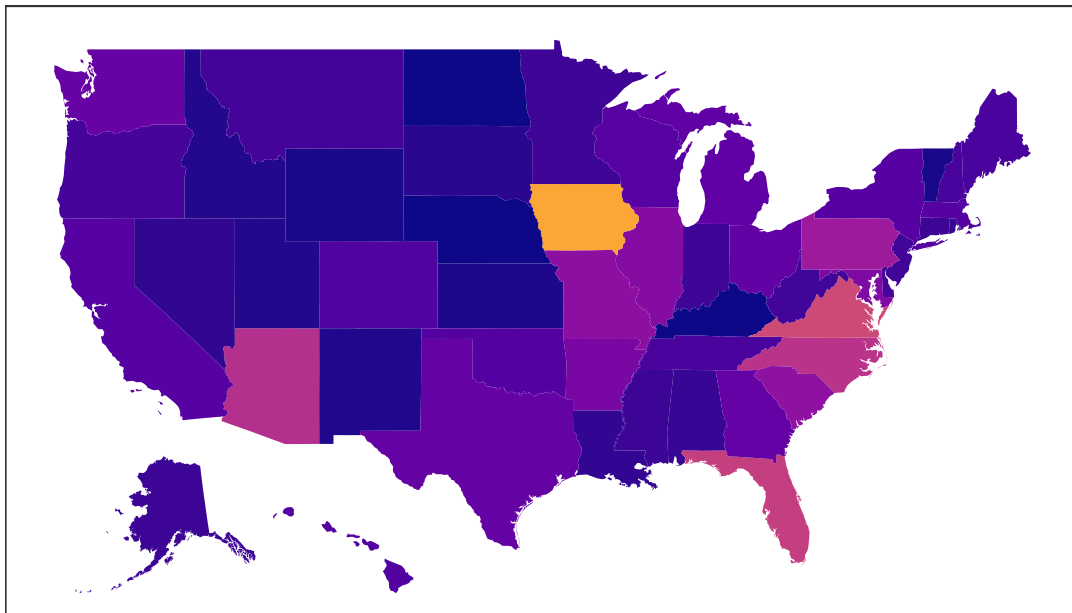
Joining, by = "state"

`geom_smooth()` using method = 'loess' and formula 'y ~ x'

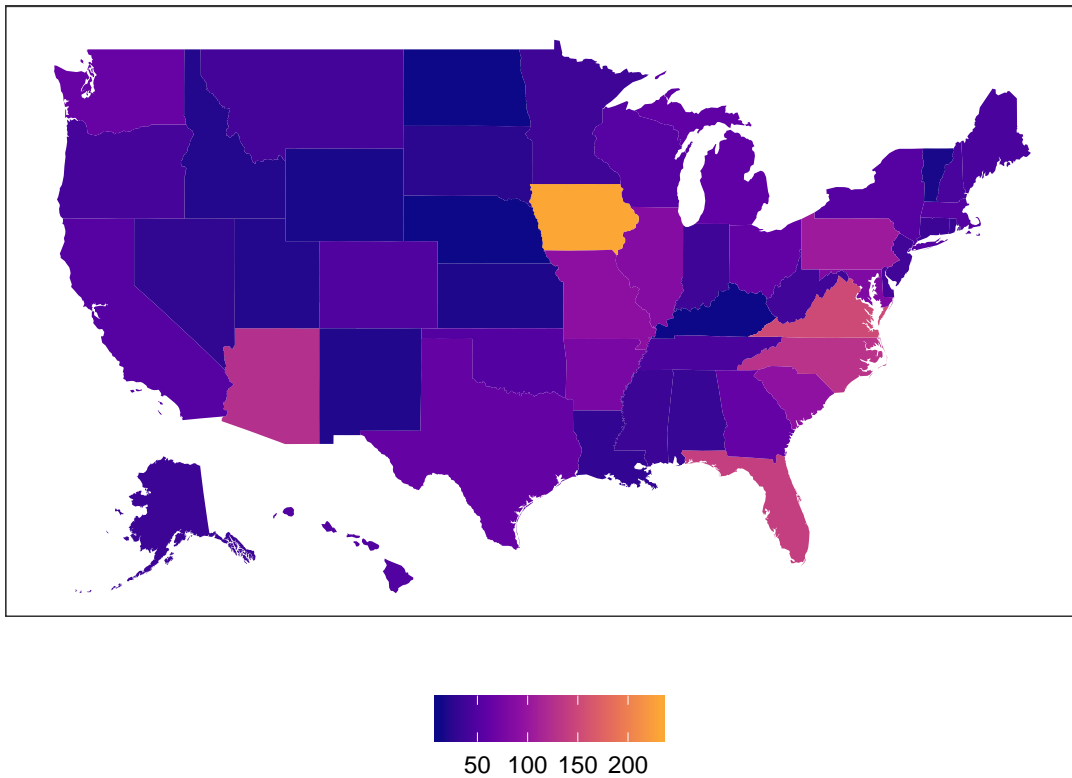
Senator Requests per Year by State Population



Total Number of Contacts from members of the Senate



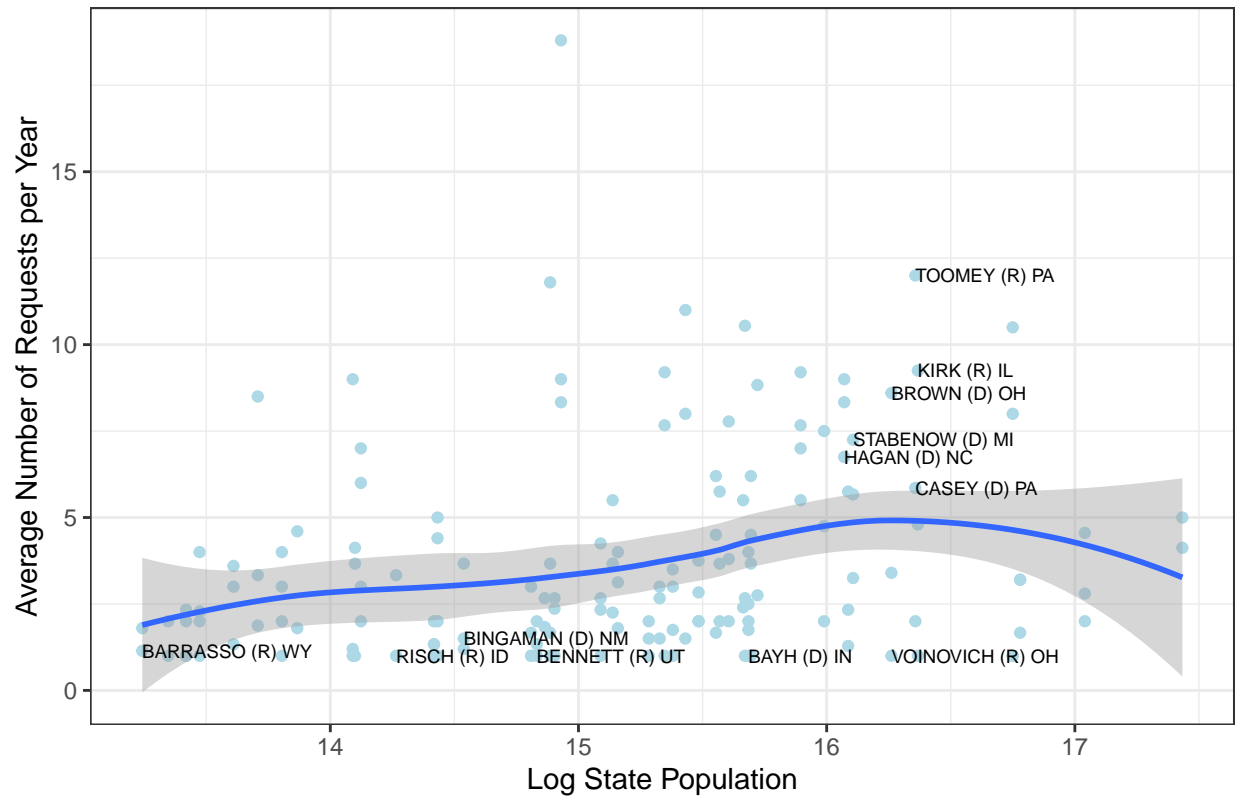
Total Number of Contacts from members of the Senate



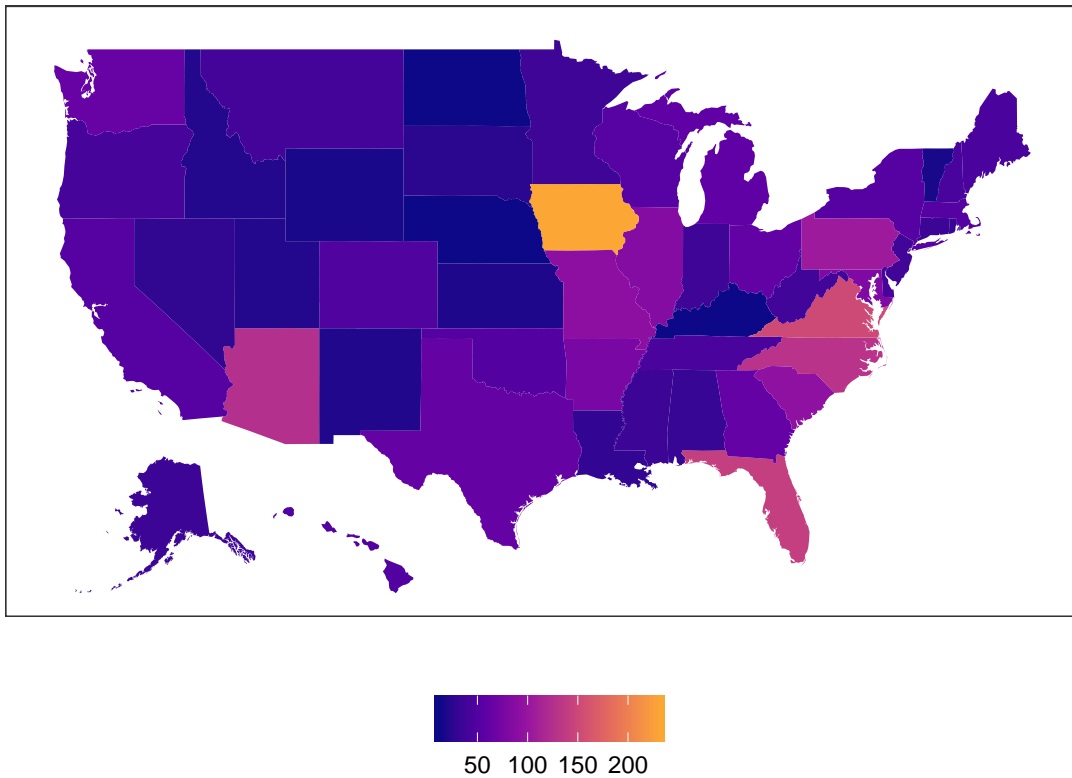
Senators vs. state population

```
## `geom_smooth()` using method = 'loess' and formula 'y ~ x'
```

Senator Requests per Year by State Population



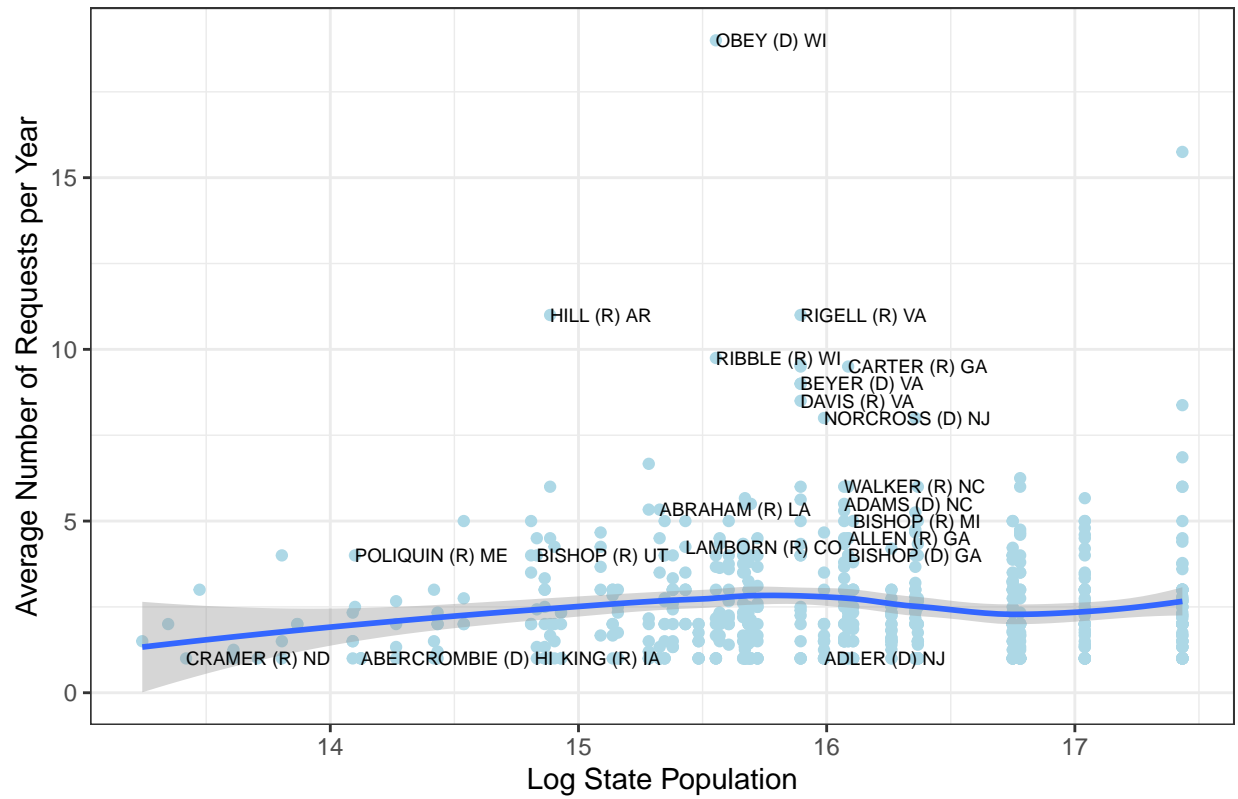
Total Number of Contacts from members of the Senate



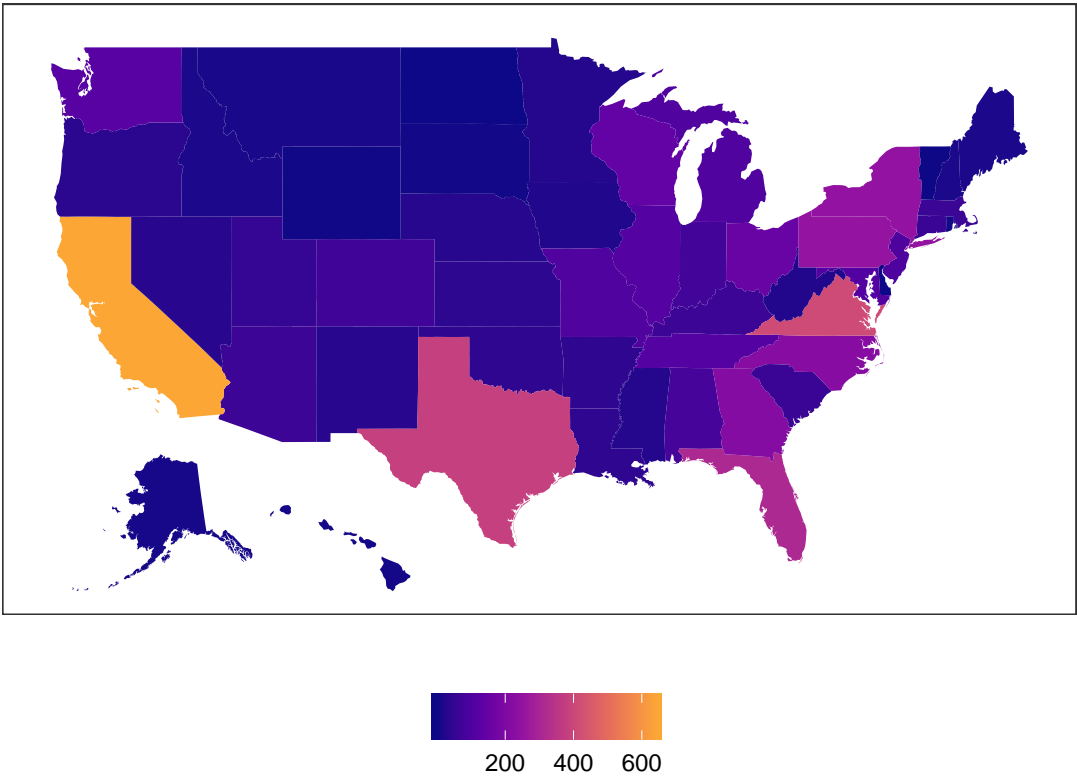
##House Contacts per State ##Contacts per district ##Would this be relevant??

```
## `geom_smooth()` using method = 'loess' and formula 'y ~ x'
```

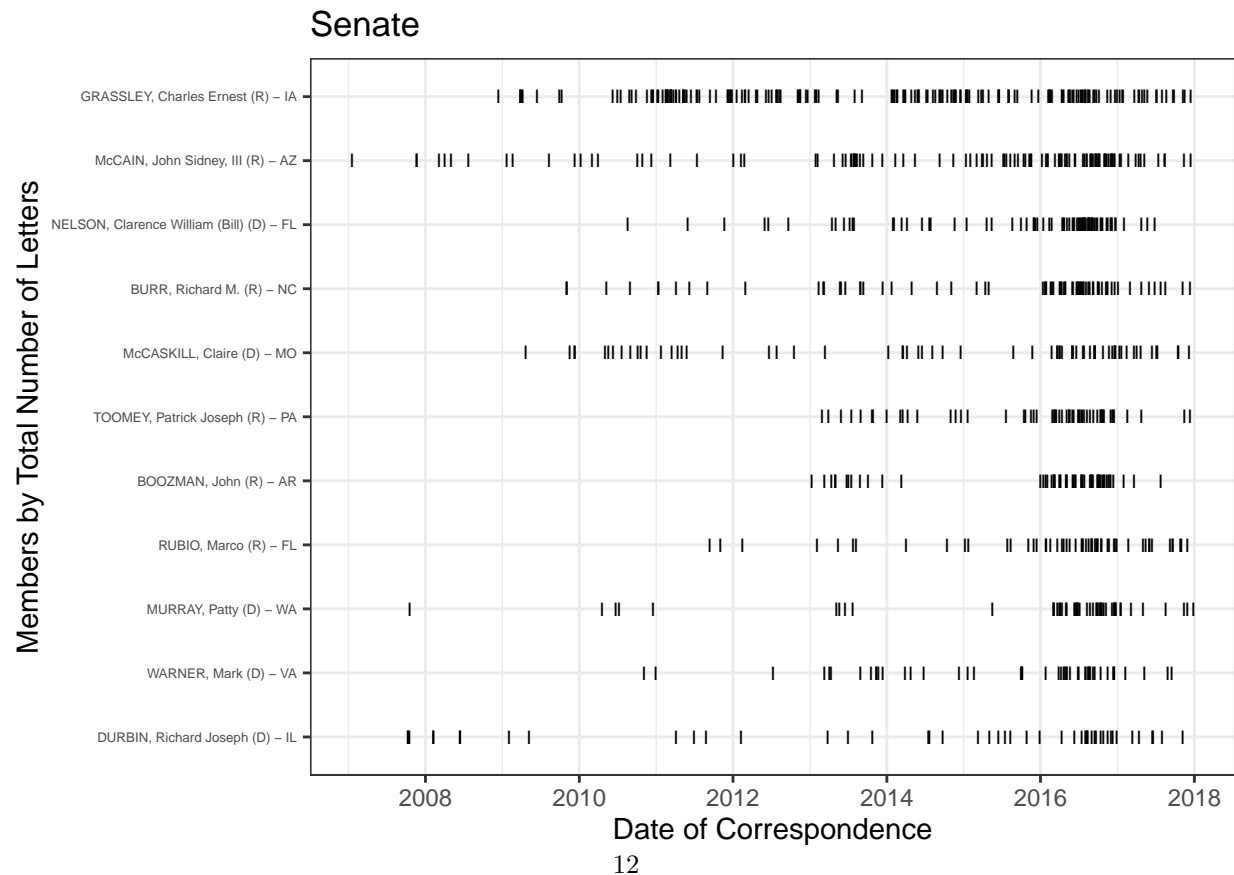
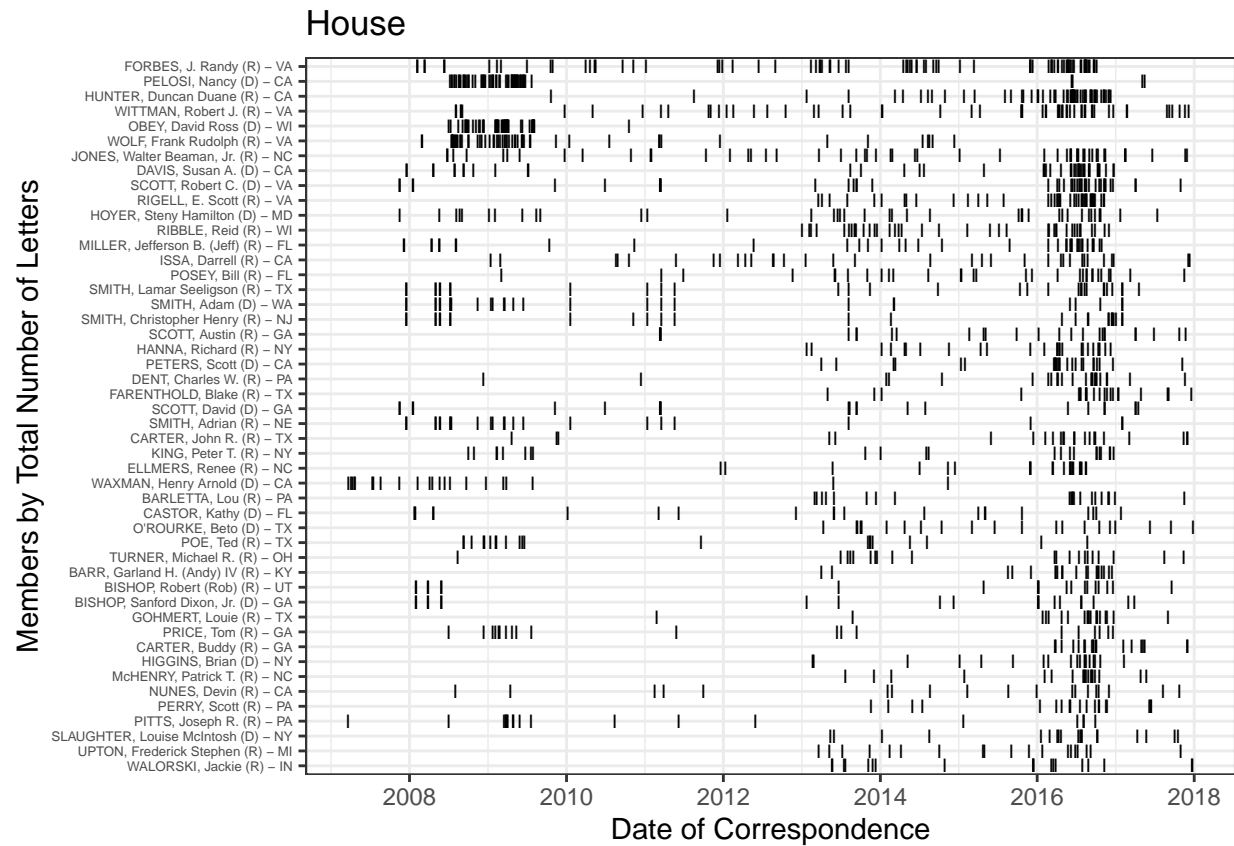
House Requests per Year by State Population



Total Number of Contacts from members of the House



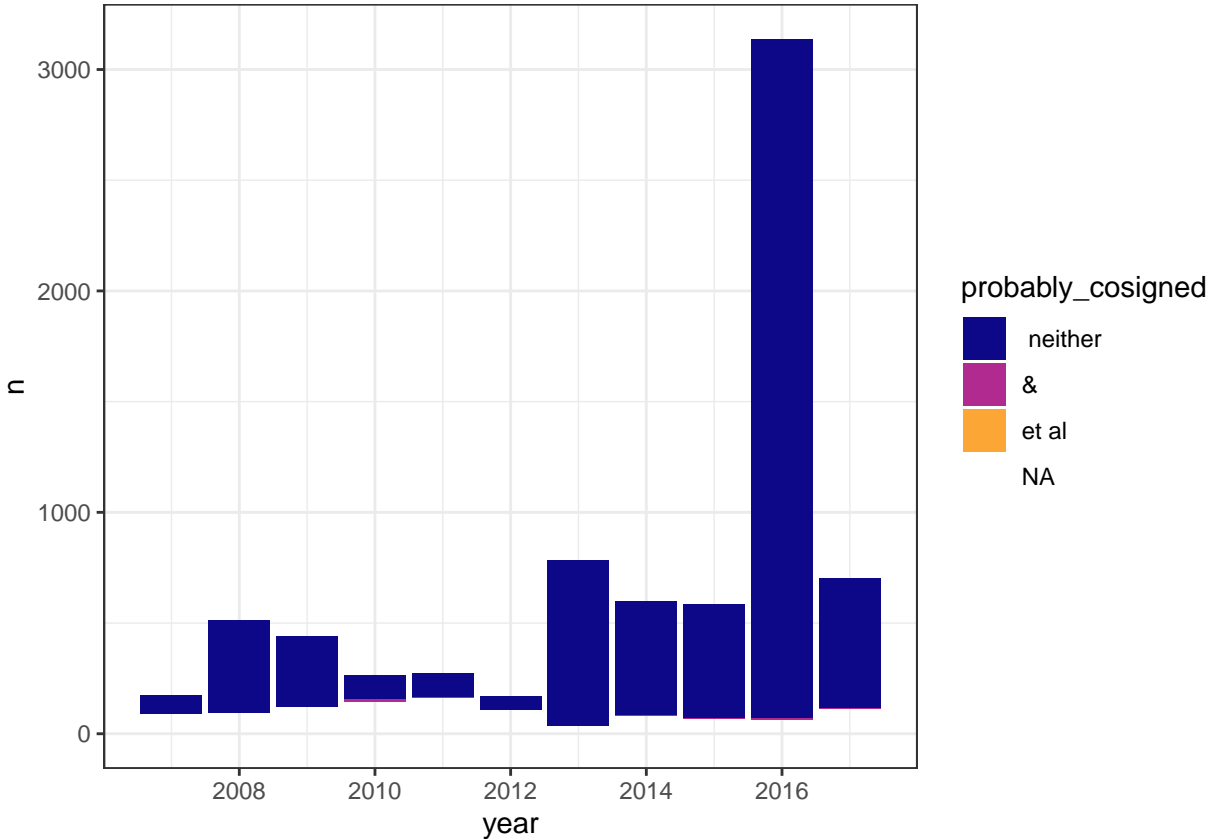
Members who contact DOD more than average:



Members who contact DOD more, relative to other agencies:

Many letters to DOD are cosigned

#A rough under-estimate based on whether “et al” or “&” appears in the summary: # INVESTIGATE



##How to fix this committee Code

#Left join committees into all_contacts #Group by ICPSR and Congress #Summarize committees = paste committee #Full join of all contacts and committees, larger data set

Modify committees variable, ICPSR, Congress, Committee= Armed Services

```
## Joining, by = c("icpsr", "female")
```

```
## Warning: Column `female` joining character vector and factor, coercing into  
## character vector
```

Conclusion

Limitations throughout the Independent Study

Throughout the course of this independent study, there were a few limitations I faced.

Future ideas to explore with this paper

In the future, I hope to continue my exploration with this topic by analyzing some different aspects that help evaluate

References

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Notes:

1. Count letters by member by year (including zero counts)
2. Policy Stuff
3. Divide by years—annualized by years
4. Control with Gender—how long they’re in congress
5. Veterans—More likely to write, shared Veteran status. Veterans-gender-bias
6. What Kind of Variate Models??—Pro-business/anti-business/Constituent vs. everyone else/ Party Explanatory #Party # constituent vs non constituent
7. Electoral Interests?—how to measure that? #Most important issue data #State