

1 Abstract

This paper aims to fill the gap in quantitative research on out of district donations at state levels of American government. Examining inequality in donor representation is an important part of ensuring an equitable and just democracy. Using donor data from the Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) we identify unjust patterns in out of district contributions to state representatives in the 2016-2018 Massachusetts campaign cycle. Specifically, we examine economic, occupational, and racial factors through the use of home price estimates as a proxy for wealth, self-reported occupation data, and Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG). Our economic findings prove that out of district donors tend to be wealthier than in district donors demonstrated by a 5% to 24% higher mean home value for out of district donors. Our occupational findings indicate that the voices of constituents who are most impacted by the policies in their home district (educators, retirees) are diluted by the social capital of individuals outside of their district (executives, lawyers). Our racial findings conclude that the difference between the average out of district and in district contribution for white donors is significantly higher than minority donors at +42% and +19% respectively. We also find some evidence of racial homophily in out of district contributions that could benefit historically underrepresented candidates. However, our results indicate that the majority out of district donations give disproportionate influence to a socioeconomically privileged subset of citizens, undermining our representative democracy.