Stacking the Vote

Understanding Ideological Leanings of Supreme Court Justices and the Effect on Vote Outcome

> Prepared by: Nick Wilders

Opening Statement



- United States Supreme Court = 13,600 cases heard (since 1949)
 - 9 Judges affirm / reverse
 - Judge appointed by President
 - 50% / 50% Liberal / Conservative vote history

Opening Statement



- <u>United States Supreme Court</u> = 13,600 cases heard (since 1949)
 - 9 Judges affirm / reverse
 - Judge appointed by President
 - 50% / 50% Liberal / Conservative vote history
- Martin-Quinn score = Scores political sway
 - - 6 (Liberal) ---> 6 (Conservative)
- How does collective political sway affect case outcome?

How is court-wide sway measured?

THE SUPREME COURT DATABASE

- maintained by Washington
 University Law School
- 122,000 individual votes cast since 1949

Martin-Quinn s c o r e s

- maintained by U of Michigan
- Small dataset with yearly MQ score for every justice since 1937

How is court-wide sway measured?

The Supreme Court Database

- maintained by Washington
 University Law School
- 122,000 individual votes cast since 1949

Martin-Quinn scores

- maintained by U of Michigan
- Small dataset with yearly
 MQ score for every justice
 since 1937

```
Justice 1 MQ = 2 (Conservative)

Justice 2 MQ = 1 (Conservative)

Justice 3 MQ = -3 (Liberal)

Justice 4 MQ = -1 (Liberal)

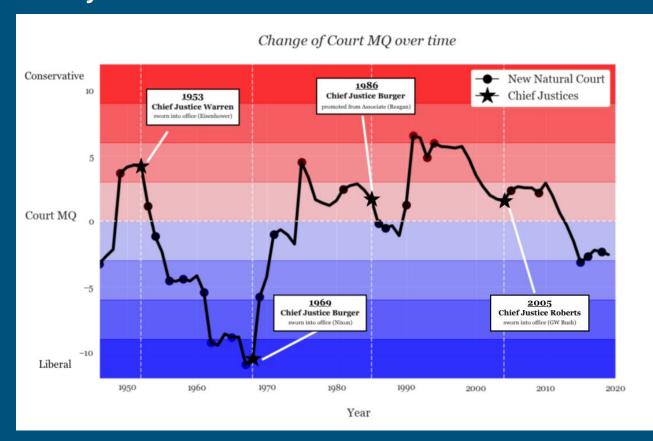
Justice 5 MQ = 3 (Conservative)

COURT MQ = 2 (Conservative)
```

Court Martin-Quinn changes significantly with new justices, particularly a new Chief Justice.

64% of rulings in a **very Liberal court** were **Liberal**.

57% of rulings in a **very Conservative court** were **Conservative**.



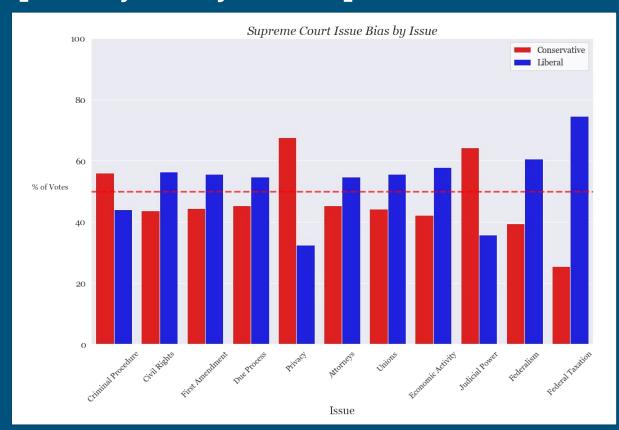
Topic of the case had a *dramatic effect*, particularly federal taxation, privacy, and judicial power.

64% of rulings in a **very Liberal court** were **Liberal**.

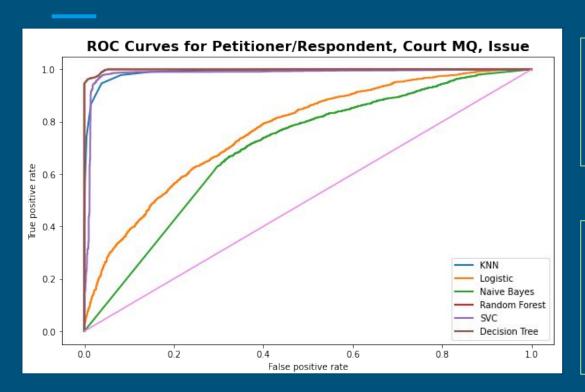
57% of rulings in a **very Conservative court** were **Conservative**.

74% of rulings on **Federal Taxation** were **Liberal**.

67% of rulings on *Privacy* were *Conservative*.

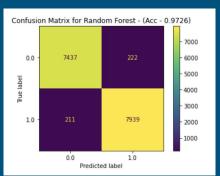


Random Forest displayed high accuracy and good interpretability.



RanFor -

.9726 Accuracy .9726 Precision .9726 Recall



Model Features:

- Court MQ (combined MQ's)
- Issue Type
- Petitioner / Respondent Type

Fantasy SCOTUS is a popular activity, and powerful educational tool to demonstrate judicial influence.

Fantasy SCOTUS Web App

- Educational tool to understand judge bias effect on policy
- Appropriate for both students and citizens
- Implements 5-factor and 3-factor model

The model is application-ready, but both model and application would benefit from further development.



- More CSS for workflow ease
- Second model to predict MQ (or first term MQ of new justices)
- EDA tools to increase citizen awareness of impact of judge bias

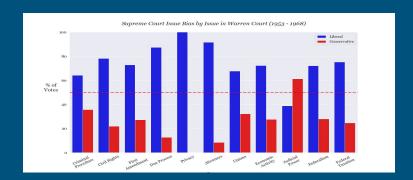
The model is application-ready, but both model and application would benefit from further development.

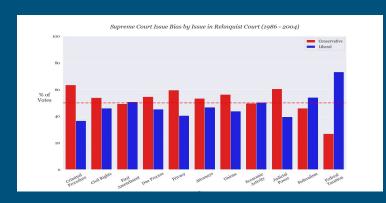


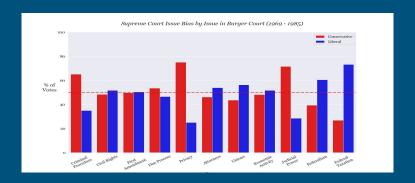
- More CSS for workflow ease
- Second model to predict MQ (or first term MQ of new justices)
- EDA tools to increase citizen awareness of impact of judge bias

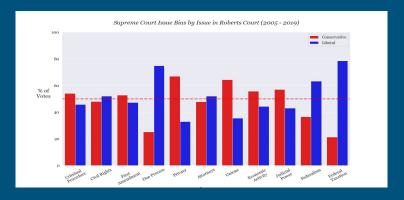
Questions?

Appendix A - Bias by Chief Justice



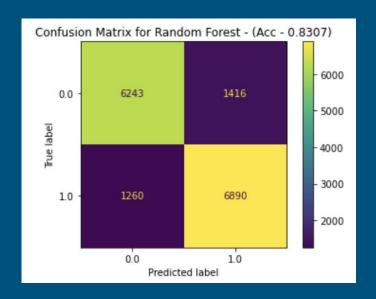




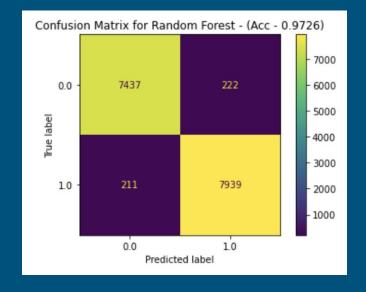


Appendix B - Web App Models

3-Feature Model - Court MQ, Issue Variables



5-Feature Model - Petitioner/Respondent, Court MQ, Issue Variables



Appendix C - Vote Ratio by Natural Court

