

Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: a Randomized Field Experiment

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November 23, 2021

Research Question

Do campaign contributions affect access to influential policy makers?

Theory/Hypothesis

- ▶ Campaign contributions affects access to policy makers in the eyes of the public
 - ▶ Existing studies struggle with endogeneity
- ▶ Money = greater chances of reelection
- ▶ Money = shared ideology/preferences/concerns
- ▶ Campaign contributions can become a quid pro quo between legislators and contributors

Research Design

- ▶ Field Experiment
 - ▶ Political organization attempts to arrange meetings with congressional officials
 - ▶ **Control**: Organization did not mention they donated to the official's campaign
 - ▶ **Treatment**: Organization mentions they donated to the official's campaign
 - ▶ Random Assignment by groupings of legislators

Methods/Results

- ▶ **IV:** Whether the email mentioned the people donated or not
- ▶ **DV:** Rank of the most senior official in the meeting (or no meeting)
- ▶ **Methods:** Randomization Inference used to get p-values
- ▶ **Results:** Political organizations mentioning they donated increased the chances of meeting with a more senior legislative official.

Discussion Questions

- ▶ If this experiment was done at a state-level (with state senators/legislators) would you expect the effect of the experiment's treatment to increase or decrease?
- ▶ This paper focuses on the impact of donations on access to policy makers, but not on how donations influence actual policy. How could this paper be expanded to measure the influence donations have on actual policy?