

# SARAH ROBINSON

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CONTACT INFORMATION	2015 North Hall Department of Economics University of California Santa Barbara, CA 93106	<i>Phone:</i> (805) 316-1377 <i>E-mail:</i> sarahrobinson@ucsb.edu <i>Website:</i> <a href="http://www.s-robinson.com">www.s-robinson.com</a> <i>Citizenship:</i> U.S.
RESEARCH INTERESTS	Health Economics, Public Economics, Applied Microeconomics	
EDUCATION	<b>University of California, Santa Barbara</b>	
	Ph.D., Economics	Expected June 2023
	<i>Dissertation Committee: Heather Royer (advisor), Youssef Benzarti, H.E. (Ted) Frech III, Alisa Tazhitdinova</i>	
	M.A., Economics	2018
	<b>Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA</b>	
	B.A., Philosophy, Politics & Economics, <i>magna cum laude</i>	2013
WORKING PAPERS  (abstracts below)	<b>[Job Market Paper]</b> “Do Firms Avoid Health Insurance Mandates? Evidence from the Self-Funding of Employer Plans”  “What Drives Tax Policy? Political, Institutional and Economic Determinants of State Tax Policy in the Past 70 Years” with Alisa Tazhitdinova  “Corporate Political Spending and State Tax Policy: Evidence from Citizens United” with Cailin Slattery and Alisa Tazhitdinova (NBER Working Paper 30352)  “Geographic Variation in C-Sections in the United States: Trends, Correlates and Other Interesting Facts” with Heather Royer and David Silver	
WORK IN PROGRESS	“Employer Choice of Health Insurance Plans and Premium Sharing” (proposal approved by the Census Bureau and IRS; pending Special Sworn Status)	
FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS	<u>External</u> NBER Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Aging and Health Research 2021 – 2022  <u>University of California Santa Barbara</u> Job Market Fellowship 2022 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award 2019, 2021 Research Quarter Fellowship 2019 Gretler Fellowship 2019 Mortimer Andron Fellowship 2018 – 2022 Distinction in Ph.D. Preliminary Exam, Microeconomics 2018 Regents Fellowship 2017 – 2018	

	<u>Claremont McKenna College</u>	
	Phi Beta Kappa	2013
	Edward J. Sexton PPE Fellow	2011 – 2013
	Dean's List	2010 – 2013
RESEARCH ASSISTANCE	Heather Royer & David Silver	2020 – 2021
	Youssef Benzarti & Alisa Tazhitdinova	2019
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<u>University of California Santa Barbara</u>	
	* <i>Average rating 1.3 (1 = highest, 5 = lowest)</i>	
	Instructor, Math Camp for Ph.D. Students	Su. 2020
	Head Teaching Assistant, Economics 10A Microeconomic Theory	Sp. 2020
	Teaching Assistant, Economics 10A Microeconomic Theory (6 quarters)	2018 – 2022
	Teaching Assistant, Economics 134A Financial Management	W. & Sp., 2019
	<u>Claremont McKenna College</u>	
	Class Tutor, Economics 120 Statistics	F. 2012
PRESENTATIONS	All-California Labor Economics Conference ( <i>poster session</i> )	2022
	Online Public Finance Seminar Graduate Student Workshop	2022
	UCSB Applied Microeconomics Lunch	2021, 2022
	NBER Spring Public Economics Meeting ( <i>co-author presenting</i> )	2022
	AEA Annual Meeting ( <i>poster session</i> )	2022
	Mannheim Taxation	2021
WORKSHOPS	NBER Health Economics Research Bootcamp	2019
	7 <sup>th</sup> Lindau Meeting on Economic Sciences ( <i>successfully nominated by University of California; unable to attend</i> )	
REFEREEING	American Economic Journal: Economic Policy	
OTHER SERVICE	Mentor for First Year Economics PhD Students, UCSB	2018 – 2021
	Professional Development Committee, UCSB	2019 – 2020
	Health Reading Group, UCSB ( <i>organizer</i> )	2019 – 2020
OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE	<b>Deloitte Consulting LLP</b> , San Francisco, CA <b>Strategy &amp; Operations</b>	
	<i>Consultant</i>	2015 – 2016
	<i>Business Analyst</i>	2013 – 2015
SKILLS	Stata, Python, Excel, PowerPoint, L <sup>A</sup> T <sub>E</sub> X ( <i>advanced</i> ) MATLAB ( <i>basic</i> )	

## REFERENCES

**Heather Royer** (*advisor*)

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## ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

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of Recommendation**

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## ABSTRACTS

### **[Job Market Paper] “Do Firms Avoid Health Insurance Mandates? Evidence from the Self-Funding of Employer Plans”**

Fifty percent of the US gets health insurance through an employer. Thus, which plan(s) the firm offers limits the choices available to individuals, and these firm decisions are the mechanism through which policy can increase welfare. However, little is known about how firms decide what to offer. This paper focuses on an important dimension of the firm’s decision: whether to self-fund their health insurance benefits. Unlike fully insured firms, self-funded firms are exempt from all state-level regulations of health insurance. I study whether firms use self-funding to avoid complying with regulations that insurance must cover specific benefits. Using administrative data on the health plans offered by firms and a difference-in-differences identification strategy, I estimate the effect of state mandated benefits on self-funding rates among firms. I find that mandates substantially increase self-funding among smaller firms (100-250 employees). The mandates do not appear to affect larger firms (250+ employees), who are more likely to be already self-funded in the pre-period.

### **“What Drives Tax Policy? Political, Institutional and Economic Determinants of State Tax Policy in the Past 70 Years” with Alisa Tazhitdinova**

We study U.S. state tax rules over the past 70 years to shed light on the determinants of U.S. state tax policy, generating three key results. First, we show that long-term tax trends are not consistent with Tiebout sorting and race-to-the-bottom competition models. Second, we document evidence of increasing polarization of tax rates between Democratic and Republican states in the 1970s and from 2000 onward. Third, we use machine learning techniques to show that the timing and magnitude of tax changes are not driven by federal changes, economic needs, state politics, institutional rules, neighbor competition, or demographics. Altogether, these factors explain less than 20% of observed tax variation.

**“Corporate Political Spending and State Tax Policy: Evidence from Citizens United” with Cailin Slattery and Alisa Tazhitdinova**

To what extent is U.S. state tax policy affected by corporate political contributions? The 2010 Supreme Court *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* ruling provides an exogenous shock to corporate campaign spending, allowing corporations to spend on elections in 23 states which previously had spending bans. Ten years after the ruling and for a wide range of outcomes, we are not able to identify economically or statistically significant effects of corporate independent expenditures on state tax policy, including tax rates, discretionary tax breaks, and tax revenues.

**“Geographic Variation in C-Sections in the United States: Trends, Correlates and Other Interesting Facts” with Heather Royer and David Silver**

We use U.S. natality data from 1989 to 2017 to investigate county-level geographic disparities in the use of C-section among first-birth singleton mothers. We document the existence and persistence of geographic variation in C-section across low and high- C-section risk mothers, the degree to which this variation correlates with Medicare spending, and the sensitivity of C-section use and infant and maternal health outcomes to C-section risk across counties. Our key finding is that counties with high C-section rates perform more C-sections across the entirety of the risk distribution yet have nearly equivalent or better outcomes than counties with less intensive C-section rates.