

# Legislative Term Limits and Polarization \*

Michael Olson<sup>1</sup> and Jon Rogowski<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Candidate, Department of Government, Harvard University

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Government, Harvard University

May 24, 2018

## Abstract

How do legislative term limits affect representation? Despite proponents' arguments that term limits reduce the level of partisan conflict and improve the quality of representation, these expectations have been subjected to little empirical scrutiny. We argue that term limits increase party polarization by reducing legislators' electoral incentives and diminishing the value of elective office, in turn increasing the role of parties in legislative processes. Using a panel design and data on roll call voting patterns from 1993 to 2014, we show that term limits produced systematically higher levels of polarization in state legislative voting patterns by increasing the ideological gap between Republicans' and Democrats' voting records and had greater effects on polarization in states with more professional legislatures. Contrary to the goals of their proponents, terms limits appear to have exacerbated the legislative consequences of contemporary partisanship and have implications for understanding how electoral and career incentives affect legislative outcomes.

---

\*Brian Lash was a collaborator on an earlier version of this manuscript and we thank him for his contributions to the project. We are grateful to Corban Ryan, Enrique Rodriguez, and Michael Scherr for excellent research assistance and Steve Rogers for sharing some of the data used in this project. Rogowski thanks the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University and the Department of Political Science at Washington University in St. Louis for generous research support.

Contemporary frustrations with gridlock in the United States Congress have renewed interest in term limits as a potential solution from both sides of the partisan aisle. For instance, in a debate among candidates for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, former Utah governor Jon Huntsman declared that “[w]e need a Washington that works . . . we have a Congress that can’t even figure out how to balance the budget. They need term limits.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, former Senator Joseph Lieberman remarked that Congress “might be healthier and less partisan and less rigid if it turned over more often, and term limits are one way to do that.”<sup>2</sup> Even sitting members of Congress have expressed support for limiting their own terms in office and have introduced legislation in recent congresses to amend the Constitution and limit the number of years served by members of the House and Senate.<sup>3</sup> And in early 2018, Maryland’s Republican Governor Larry Hogan proposed an eight-year term limit for that states’ legislators.<sup>4</sup>

As the quotes above suggest, proponents of term limits argue that limiting the number of terms legislators can serve would reduce the level of partisan conflict, encourage compromise and cooperation, and improve the quality of representation. Consistent with these claims, scholars have argued that term limits put an end to “politics as usual” (Petracca 1991) by producing “citizen legislators” who are more likely to behave in the public interest (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; Glazer and Wattenberg 1996; Smart and Sturm 2013), more responsive to public opinion and constituent needs (Caress and Kunioka 2012; Chen and Niou 2005; Grofman 1996), and less beholden to political parties (Malbin and Benjamin 1992). Other scholars argue, however, that term limits produce more partisan legislatures by reducing legislators’ incentives to moderate their behavior, instead choosing to vote with the party

---

<sup>1</sup><https://goo.gl/p41J7Y>.

<sup>2</sup><https://goo.gl/SMPnHf>.

<sup>3</sup><https://goo.gl/vgYZbR>; <https://goo.gl/DajdTM>; <https://goo.gl/QnZDCq>.

<sup>4</sup><https://goo.gl/tcvP53>.

over their constituents (Cain and Kousser 2004; Cohen and Spitzer 1992; Masket and Shor 2015; Wright 2007; but see also Titiunik and Feher 2017).

In this paper, we study the effects of term limits on legislative behavior in the U.S. states. We argue that term limits increase party polarization by reducing legislators' electoral incentives and diminishing the value of elective office, in turn increasing the role of parties in recruiting and supporting legislative candidates. After more than two decades of experience with term limits, strikingly little is known about their effects on partisanship and polarization.<sup>5</sup> This omission is surprising given the expansive literature on legislative term limits' effects on other important outcomes, including fiscal policy (Cummins 2013; Keele, Malhotra, and McCubbins 2013), legislative expertise (Kousser 2005), policy complexity (Kousser 2006), descriptive representation (Carroll and Jenkins 2005), electoral competition (Daniel and Lott 1997; Powell 2000), the incumbency advantage (Rogers 2014), attentiveness to district interests (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; Carey et al. 2006), cosponsorship activity (Swift and VanderMolen 2016), abstention rates (Clark and Williams 2014), the distribution of power within the legislature (Alvarez and Sinclair 2012), and the balance of power across chambers (Cain and Levin 1999) and branches of government (Baker and Hedge 2013; Grofman and Sutherland 1996; Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011).<sup>6</sup>

We report new evidence about the relationship between term limits and party polarization in state legislatures using a panel design and data on roll call voting patterns from 1993 to 2014. Consistent with our argument, we show that term limits produced systematically higher levels of polarization in state legislative voting patterns by increasing the ideological gap between Republicans' and Democrats' voting records. These results are robust across

---

<sup>5</sup>Wright (2007) is a notable exception, who reports null findings. Clark and Williams (2014) also studies the effect of term limits on legislative behavior but focuses on ideological change and abstention rates.

<sup>6</sup>Cain and Levin (1999) and Mooney (2009) provide thorough reviews of this literature.

a wide range of model specifications, identification strategies, and characterizations of key variables. We further show that the effects of term limits were significantly greater in more professionalized legislatures, where career incentives would be most weakened, and that term limits significantly increased the share of campaign funding provided by party committees to legislative candidates. Contrary to the goals of their proponents, terms limits appear to have exacerbated the legislative consequences of contemporary partisanship and have implications for understanding how electoral and career incentives affect the quality of governance.

## **Term Limits and Legislative Behavior**

Though American interest in term limits has intensified over the last quarter-century, they are hardly a novel idea. The ancient Greeks favored a view of representatives as citizen leaders rather than career politicians and limited many elected officials to a single term in office. The American Founders also initially supported legislative term limits. During the Second Continental Congress in 1776, for instance, Thomas Jefferson (1900, 373) warned of “every danger that might arise to American freedom by continuing too longer in office,” and the Articles of Confederation prohibited delegates from serving more than three years out of every six-year period. During the twentieth century, term limits for national legislatures were enshrined in new constitutions in countries including Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Philippines (Carey 1998). The term limits movement in the United States in the last several decades resulted in their passage in 21 states (and were later repealed or struck down in six).

Existing scholarship investigates a variety of potential effects of term limits on representation and legislative behavior. First, term limits may increase the supply of candidates who traditionally would not seek office. The increased availability of open seat contests may appeal to potential officeseekers who would be less inclined to challenge an incumbent, and proponents of term limits have argued that this would facilitate the election of legislators

from underrepresented groups, including women and people of color (Glazer and Wattenberg 1996; Petracca 1992).<sup>7</sup> Second, term limits may change how legislators make decisions. For instance, some have argued that term limits induce a “Burkean shift” (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; Carey et al. 2006) in which legislators behave more as trustees by voting for policies they believe are in the long-term interests of their constituents rather than as delegates who are tethered to constituent opinion and electoral pressures. Third, term limits may affect overall government performance, including legislators’ budgetary effectiveness (Kousser 2005), state fiscal performance (Keele, Malhotra, and McCubbins 2013), the complexity of policies passed by state legislatures (Kousser 2006), and the legislature’s power vis-à-vis other institutions (Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011).

Despite widespread attentiveness to party polarization and proponents’ emphasis on term limits’ potential for reducing legislative gridlock and partisan influences in legislatures, few studies have directly examined this relationship. Using data from roll call votes in state legislatures in the 1999-2000 sessions, Wright (2007) provides the best empirical evidence to date on term limits’ relationship with polarization in state legislatures. In comparing legislative behavior in states with and without term limits, Wright finds no evidence that term limits are associated with greater polarization at the aggregate level, nor does he find that individual legislators compiled more ideologically extreme voting records in states with term limits. While Wright’s data collection is impressive, the research design limits strong conclusions about the effect of term limits on polarization. As Wright shows, polarization varies considerably across states due to factors beyond the implementation of term limits, and thus a cross-sectional comparison of chambers and legislators cannot tell us whether polarization increased or decreased in term-limited states compared to what would have been observed in their absence. Moreover, many of the term-limited states in Wright’s

---

<sup>7</sup>The lack of evidence supporting this claim, however, led Carey et al. (2006) to characterize it as “the dog that won’t bark.”

analysis had passed but not yet implemented term limits, thereby limiting what can be learned about the effects of term limits once legislators had begun to be termed out.

Other research on term limits provides mixed conclusions about their implications for polarization and representation. In a study of the term-limited California legislature, [Cain and Kousser \(2004\)](#) found that termed-out legislators vote with their party more frequently, but downplay term limits as a major source of polarization. [Titunik and Feher \(2017\)](#) take advantage of a natural experiment that randomly imposed term limits on legislators in the Arkansas state senate, and similarly find no evidence that term limits increased ideological shirking. [Cain, Hanley, and Kousser \(2006\)](#) report that term limits argue that term limits' impact on legislative polarization may have had more substantial effects had they not been enacted during an era in which polarization increased across all levels of government. However, research by [Clark and Williams \(2014\)](#) indicates that legislators who are termed-out exhibit greater ideological drift and abstain at greater rates. Recent research on term limits in the Michigan legislature similarly concludes that term limits have “unfastened the electoral connection” between voters and legislators by increasing the number of lame-duck legislators ([Sarbaugh-Thompson and Thompson 2017](#), 72-3), but it is unclear whether these findings apply more systematically across states.

## **How Term Limits Affect Polarization**

We argue that term limits contribute to greater polarization in state legislatures and identify two key mechanisms that generate these effects. First, at the individual level, term limits reduce the incentives for legislators to learn about and respond to the interests of their constituents. The threat of electoral sanction provides incentives for legislators to represent their constituents while in office ([Barro 1973](#); [Ferejohn 1986](#)). Most obviously, therefore, term limits sever the electoral connection ([Mayhew 1974](#)) for officeholders serving in their

final legislative terms.<sup>8</sup> Even before their final terms, however, legislators seeking to advance to higher office may perceive that audiences other than their district constituencies hold greater importance for realizing their career ambitions. The shorter time horizons reduce the need for legislators to establish personal relationships with voters in their districts and the relatively weak relationship between legislative behavior and election results (Rogers 2017) suggests that they may suffer few electoral penalties as a consequence.

Instead, legislators in states with term limits may be relatively more free to pursue their own favored policy goals. They may also perceive incentives to toe the party line more closely, as future career advancement depends more heavily on support from their party, rather from the electoral constituency they represent for a relatively limited period of time. Consistent with this claim, Swift and VanderMolen (2016) use cosponsorship patterns to show that legislators in term-limited states engage in fewer instances of bipartisan collaboration. Collectively, the reduced electoral incentives for legislators to respond to constituency opinion and pursue relatively moderate policies increases ideological extremity among legislators and generates greater polarization across party lines.

Second, we posit that the diminished opportunities for career advancement in term-limited legislatures dissuade otherwise-qualified potential candidates from seeking office (Hall Forthcoming). Individuals drawn to public service or who possess policy expertise and are motivated to craft good public policy may be less inclined to seek election to a state legislative position whose time horizon is relatively short (Mondak 1995; Montcrief and Thompson 2001; Powell 2000). Not only do term limits induce greater turnover by prohibiting legislators from seeking office once they have served the allotted number of terms, but term limits may also encourage state legislators to seek higher office (such as state senate or U.S. House)

---

<sup>8</sup>This logic may explain why state economies fare worse under incumbent governors who are prevented by term limits from seeking another term in office compared to states with re-election-eligible incumbents (Alt, Bueno de Mesquita, and Rose 2011).

earlier than they otherwise would (Francis and Kenny 1997; Ban, Llaudet, and Snyder 2016). To fill these candidate vacancies, parties expend greater effort to recruit potential candidates, which leads them to favor candidates with stronger ideological views whose support for the party program is more assured. Similarly, term limits may empower ideologically-oriented interest groups and other donors to play a greater role in recruiting and promoting candidates who are reliable allies for their preferred agendas. As Kurtz, Cain, and Niemi (2007) argue, the greater frequency of open seats may allow parties and interest groups to play a greater role in the legislative process by recruiting candidates with less experience legislating and fundraising, and who are therefore more dependent on them (see also Montcrief and Thompson 2001).

Studies of individual state legislatures provide evidence for how term limits increase the roles played by parties and other interested political actors. Officials in Maine after that state's adoption of term limits reported that "[m]ore members are coming to the legislature with particular agendas" and that "there is more external [party] focus on recruitment than in the past" (Powell and Jones 2005, 8). As a consequence, one official expressed the view that "[t]he legislature has become more ideological with fewer moderates" (Powell and Jones 2005, 8). Masket and Shor (2015, 86) document similar phenomena in a study of the (officially nonpartisan) Nebraska legislature, where "[t]he forced retirement of a large segment of the legislature in 2006 due to term limits spurred the parties and the governor into action, recruiting, training, and funding candidates at levels not previously seen in modern Nebraska." Masket and Shor further observe that, as a consequence of Nebraska's term limits, legislative candidates are increasingly selected for their expected loyalty to partisan agendas. They conclude that because elite campaign contributors are increasingly divided across party lines, "to the extent that legislators want to keep their donors happy, they will do so by voting more with their party" (Masket and Shor 2015, 86).

Though the mechanisms described above lead us to expect that term limits increase



partisan polarization, we suspect that the effects of term limits vary across institutional contexts. Chiefly, term limits are likely to have different effects in more professional legislatures by altering our posited mechanisms in stronger ways. Service in professional legislatures is a relatively full-time commitment and legislators in these settings have the most expertise and experience; therefore, term limits should provide the greatest opportunity for outside actors to influence newly elected legislators in these settings. Similarly, while legislators' voting records in states with greater professionalism exhibit more congruence with district opinion (Maestas 2000), the weakening of career opportunities is likely to reduce legislators' incentives to continue doing so. Moreover, due to the full-time nature of professional legislatures, candidate recruitment is likely to be especially challenging when professional legislatures adopt term limits as the shock to the value of holding office is especially large. The candidates that emerge in these settings may be less motivated by career incentives and instead may be especially eager to advance more ideological policy agendas. Therefore, consistent with other research which argues that term limits have greater effects on legislators' career ambitions (Maestas 2000) and the reallocation of power within legislatures (Hall 2014), we argue that the effects of term limits on polarization are moderated by legislative professionalism with more professional legislatures exhibiting higher levels of polarization in response to term limits.

## Data and Empirical Strategy

We begin our analysis by studying the effects of legislative term limits on aggregate levels of polarization between 1993 and 2014. In an ideal scenario, we would randomly assign states to treatment and control conditions, where states assigned to the treatment condition would implement term limits, and control states would not. Of course, such a research design is not possible in the context of the U.S. states. Instead, we use observational data in a panel

setting to examine our hypothesis that term limits increased polarization in state legislatures.

Our measures of polarization are based on estimates of legislative ideology developed by [Shor and McCarty \(2011\)](#). These measures use roll call data for all state legislative chambers to characterize legislators' voting behavior and are constructed such that they are comparable across states and time. We use these estimates to construct a state-level measure of *Legislative Polarization* that reflects the difference in roll call estimates between the median Democratic and Republican members of the state legislature.<sup>9</sup> The values of this variable range from approximately zero to three, with higher levels indicating states and chambers with more polarized legislatures. As [Shor and McCarty \(2011\)](#) show, these measures document considerable variation in polarization across states and legislative chambers. Because our focus is on party polarization, we exclude Nebraska and its unicameral, nonpartisan legislature from our analysis.<sup>10</sup> As we discuss below, the [Shor and McCarty \(2011\)](#) scores are constant by construction across a state legislator's career; therefore, our estimates of the effects of term limits reflect the replacement of legislators who leave the chamber once term limits are implemented with legislators who are systematically more extreme.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>We use this aggregate measure to avoid chamber-specific polarization measures that are very sensitive to sample size, as most state legislatures' upper chambers have fewer than fifty members. We discuss the results when separated by chamber below.

<sup>10</sup>There may be many other potential manifestations of partisan conflict in state legislatures beyond polarization. One possibility, which we discuss in greater detail in the Conclusion, is that term limits could affect how district lines are drawn, particularly given the reduced incentives to protect current incumbents' seats.

<sup>11</sup>There is not an obvious solution for identifying the within-legislator effects of term limits. For instance, DW-NOMINATE and related estimates which provide time-varying measures of legislator behavior smooth changes in voting patterns over the legislators' time in office, complicating efforts to identify discontinuities in voting behavior in response to institutional

Our primary independent variable is an indicator, *Term limits*, for whether term limits were in effect in a given state-year. Term limits were implemented in 14 states (excluding Nebraska) during the period under study; they took effect first in California and Maine (1996) and most recently in Nevada (2010).<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 displays the share of states using term limits (for their lower chambers) over the period of study and indicates the timing of their adoption. While most states that have implemented term limits did so in the late 1990s or early 2000s, we have good variation in time of implementation across the period of study.

We use a panel design and leverage within-state changes in the presence of term limits to identify their effects on polarization. We assume, therefore, that the adoption of term limits is orthogonal to potential outcomes after we condition on time-invariant state characteristics

---

changes like term limits.

<sup>12</sup>One may argue that the date of *enactment* is a more appropriate indicator of treatment status since legislators may adjust their behavior in anticipation of the impending change (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000). Though we simply lack sufficient data on legislative voting records to examine the effects of term limits based on when they were enacted (the vast majority of which occurred in 1990 or 1992, prior to the starting date of the Shor-McCarty data), we are comfortable using the implementation date as the indicator of treatment status for several reasons. First, our theoretical perspective suggests that legislators that are termed-out are replaced by legislators who differ from them in systematic ways. Thus, the effect of term limits on polarization is posited to result from, at least in part, the replacement of termed-out legislators rather than changes in behavior from existing officeholders. Second, to the extent that changes in polarization were due to the *enactment* of term limits rather than to their implementation, we are likely to *underestimate* their effects, thus making our empirical strategy a more difficult test. Third, research on other consequences of term limits reports similar results whether the date of enactment or implementation is used (see, e.g., Keele, Malhotra, and McCubbins 2013).

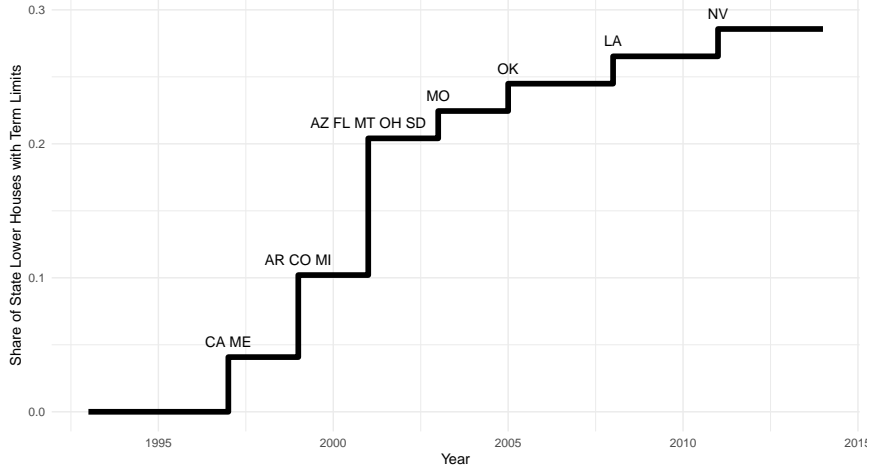


Figure 1: Implementation of Term Limits

and, in some models, a battery of time-varying covariates. This assumption of parallel trends maintains that the “treated” states that adopted term limits reacted to them in the same way that “control” states would have reacted if they had adopted term limits. Given the circumstances surrounding the passage of term limits<sup>13</sup> and the subsequent plausibility of accounting for potential confounders through state fixed effects in addition to time-varying controls, our approach provides credible causal estimates of the effect of term limits on state legislative polarization.

We employ a multi-period, multi-unit difference-in-difference (DID) design, implemented with the following linear regression model:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Term Limits}_{ijt} + \mathbf{X}_{ijt}\Omega + D_i + T_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}, \quad (1)$$

where  $Y$  is the level of polarization in state  $i$  in year  $t$ , *Term limits* indicates whether state  $i$  had term limits in effect in year  $t$ ,  $\Omega$  is a vector of coefficients for a matrix of time-varying state covariates  $\mathbf{X}_{it}$  described below,  $D_i$  is an indicator for each state,  $T_t$  is an indicator for each year, and  $\varepsilon_{it}$  is a random error term, which we cluster on state.

<sup>13</sup>Most term limits requirements were passed via referendum rather than legislation.

Though our analyses begin with a bivariate regression of polarization on term limits along with state and year indicators, we also estimate models which include a variety of other state-level covariates that could confound the potential effects attributed to term limits. First, to account for structural features of state governance, we include indicators for the presence of *Divided government*, whether the state has a *Democratic governor*, *Legislative professionalism* (Squire 2017),<sup>14</sup> and the difference between the share of seats held by the majority and minority parties (*Party competitiveness*). We also account for attributes of the state population, including *Population* (logged), *Per capita income*, and *Unemployment rate*. Finally, as McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006) find that congressional polarization is closely correlated with both immigration and income inequality at the national level, we also include annual measures of each state’s *Percent foreign-born* and Gini coefficients to account for secular trends that may relate to greater party polarization at the national level and could be associated with state-level polarization. Summary statistics for all variables are presented in Table A.1.

## Panel Evidence

We begin by estimating our baseline model, which represents Equation (1) but includes only our indicator for *Term limits* along with state and year fixed effects. The results are shown in Table 1. The coefficient estimate for *Term limits* is positive (0.105) and statistically significant, providing strong evidence that term limits increased legislative polarization. This finding is robust to the inclusion of the covariates discussed above. Column (2) presents

---

<sup>14</sup>Because this measure is updated intermittently, we assign to each state-year the legislative professionalism score from the nearest year for which the scores are reported. Below we also discuss results where we use values of legislative professionalism that pre-date the beginning of our analysis.

results when accounting for the partisan and political environment of state legislatures. In column (3), we report findings when accounting for characteristics of the state population, and in model (4) we add measures of state foreign-born population and economic inequality. Across each model, we find strong and consistent evidence that term limits were associated with significant and positive increases in legislative polarization. Moreover, despite adding a variety of control variables, the coefficients for *Term limits* are relatively consistent in magnitude across each specification, ranging from 0.083 to 0.105.

The results shown in Table 1 are substantively meaningful in addition to statistically significant. We evaluated the substantive magnitudes of our estimates by comparing the results from Table 1 to the within-state variation in polarization. The average *within-state* standard deviation is 0.119; restricting the sample to states without term limits, the comparable value is 0.097.<sup>15</sup> Our reported point estimates therefore constitute a shift of nearly one standard deviation in within-state polarization levels.

We also find that some of our control variables are significantly associated with polarization. Increases in population were associated with greater polarization, while states with larger majority parties (perhaps proxying for less party competition) and higher per capita incomes experienced declines in polarization. The coefficient estimates for *Divided government*, however, are all extremely small in magnitude and none are statistically significant. We also find no significant differences in polarization based on the partisanship of the governor or the partisan composition of the electorate (as measured by state voting patterns in presidential elections). Interestingly, we do not find support for the claims of [McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal \(2006\)](#) in the context of state-level polarization: states' foreign-born population shares and economic inequality are negatively associated with polarization, though neither is statistically distinguishable from zero.

---

<sup>15</sup>The median within-state standard deviation is in both cases slightly lower.

Table 1: Fixed Effects OLS Estimates: State Legislative Polarization and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.105* (0.044)	0.096* (0.044)	0.083* (0.034)	0.085* (0.033)
Divided Gov.		-0.007 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.003 (0.012)
Democratic Governor		-0.022 (0.017)	0.000 (0.015)	0.001 (0.015)
Leg. Professionalism		0.145 (0.168)	0.022 (0.111)	0.017 (0.109)
Party Competitiveness		-0.005* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)
ln(Population)			1.000* (0.353)	1.002* (0.352)
Per Capita Income			-0.013* (0.004)	-0.013* (0.004)
Unemployment Rate			-0.036 (0.900)	0.021 (0.896)
Percent Foreign Born				-0.004 (0.010)
State Gini Coefficient				-0.323 (0.264)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.049	0.091	0.296	0.3
Observations	881	881	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

## Robustness Checks

The results in Table 1 are robust across a wide range of additional analyses. We estimated a number of alternative models to highlight the plausibility of our assumptions and the robustness of our results across model specifications. We discuss these additional analyses below and present the results in the Supplementary Materials in the interest of space.

First, because our binary indicator for states with term limits ignores qualitative differences in term limits enacted across states, we adopt a continuous measure of “term-limitedness” developed by Sarbaugh-Thompson (2010) and subsequently used in Baker and Hedge (2013). This measure describes the change in turnover due to term limits relative to turnover from earlier years. We replace our binary treatment variable with this measure in the same panel specification as above,<sup>16</sup> and report the results in Table B.1. Using this measure, we continue to find strong evidence that term limits substantially increased polarization in state legislatures.

Second, we employ two alternative modeling strategies to guard against common concerns about the differences-in-differences framework in a panel setting. First, we account for potential biases that result from controlling for post-treatment covariates. While incorporating time-varying covariates into the analysis allows us to control for changes in potential confounders, this approach has two possible issues: first, covariate values in post-treatment periods are possibly themselves post-treatment; second, the effect of these covariates is restricted to be constant across the period under study. To address these concerns, we estimate an alternative model in which we fix each state’s pre-treatment value for each covariate but allow the effects of each covariate to vary over time. The results of this alternative specification are shown in Table B.2; the point estimates from this specification are extremely

---

<sup>16</sup>Specifically, we mark every state-year without term limits with a zero, and give each state-year with implemented term limits that state’s term-limitedness score.



similar to those in Table 1, though reduced power results in estimates significant only at the  $p < 0.10$  level in some models.

We also estimate an entirely different panel model which includes one-period lagged dependent variables to account for unobserved state characteristics, rather than state fixed effects.<sup>17</sup> The results of this model specification are shown in Table B.3. The reported effects are substantively smaller than those reported in Table 1 yet statistically significant. Consistent with the interpretation offered by Angrist and Pischke (2008), this result suggests a statistically significant lower bound on the magnitude of the relationship between term limits and polarization.

Third, we have estimated our model on a matched sample of states. In this context, matching serves to reduce the dependence of our results on the assumption that our control variables enter additively and linearly into our estimating equation (Ho et al. 2007).<sup>18</sup> For each state that adopts term limits at any point in our sample, we match control state(s) on the covariates from 1993 to 1996, which constitutes our pre-treatment period.<sup>19</sup> We present results from model specifications analogous to Models 1 and 4 from Table 1, using matched samples based on both one-to-one and two-to-one matching procedures. The results, presented in Table B.4, are extremely similar to those above. The coefficients on *Term*

---

<sup>17</sup>Angrist and Pischke (2008, 246-247) discuss a useful bracketing property of the lagged dependent variable model in comparison with the fixed effect model from above: if the fixed effect model is the true model, then the LDV model results will tend to underestimate the true effect of term limits; if the LDV model is “true,” the fixed effects estimator for the effect of term limits will be biased upwards.

<sup>18</sup>Matching can also be used in panel settings to control for time-varying but unobserved confounding by matching on pre-treatment outcomes; unfortunately, the relatively few states with outcome data in the earliest years of our panel make this impractical.

<sup>19</sup>We implement nearest-neighbor matching using the `Matching` package in R.

*Limits* are between 0.071 and 0.098 and are significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level in models with covariates. These results ought to ameliorate concerns about model dependence.

Fourth, we have taken care to note that our results are not driven by any particular state or year. To do so, we have re-estimated our fullest specification (Model 4 in Table 1) while systematically dropping states and years. The results are presented in Figures B.1 and B.2 and show that our findings are quite consistent across each of these samples. The coefficient on *Term limits* is statistically significant in all models and its magnitude is consistently between 0.06 and 0.10.

Finally, we have re-estimated our results while measuring polarization using measures of legislator ideology derived from campaign contributions (Bonica 2016). The results are presented in Table B.5. Though the results are somewhat noisier than those reported above, they strongly suggest the same pattern ( $p < 0.10$ ) shown in our models that use the Shor and McCarty (2011) scores as the dependent variable. This provides confidence that our findings are not driven by potential idiosyncrasies in the Shor and McCarty (2011) data but instead reflect a broader trend where more extreme legislators replaced those removed by term limits.

Taken together, our robustness checks provide strong and consistent evidence in support of our baseline estimates of the effect of term limits on state legislative polarization. Because our outcome measure of polarization is a reflection of state legislators' policy positions and roll call voting records, this suggests that we can soundly reject term limit advocates' claims that term limits would reduce inter-party conflict; rather, our results suggest that they markedly increase it. Moreover, in the aggregate, our findings suggest that term limits are associated with declining levels of collective representation. To the extent most constituents are relatively more moderate than most elected officials (see, e.g., Bafumi and Herron 2010) and constituent preferences are relatively stable over short periods of time, the increasing movement of state legislators toward the ideological poles suggest that greater numbers of

legislators vote in ways that are less representative of constituent preferences. Rather than enhancing democratic representation, as proponents of term limits argued they would, our evidence suggests that term limits may worsen it.

## **Additional Analyses and Extensions**

Though less centrally connected to our theoretical expectations, we conducted additional analyses to explore how the effects of term limits varied across institutional features of legislatures and states and the characteristics of individual legislators.<sup>20</sup> First, we studied whether the effects of term limits varied across state legislatures' upper and lower chambers. As [Cain and Levin \(1999\)](#) report, term limits may have asymmetric effects across chambers as legislators first learn the craft of legislating in the lower chamber before being termed out and pursuing office in the upper chamber. Consistent with this account, we find stronger evidence for the effects of term limits in states' lower chambers. Term limits had a positive, substantively large, and statistically significant effect on polarization in lower chambers; while we continue to find a positive relationship between term limits and polarization in states' upper chambers, the estimates are smaller in magnitude and not statistically significant at conventional levels. Though the coefficient estimates are themselves not statistically distinguishable across chambers, our results provide suggestive evidence that the effects reported above are concentrated disproportionately in state lower chambers.

Second, we studied whether term limits had asymmetric effects across political parties. This investigation stems from substantial scholarly interest in whether growing party polarization is driven primarily by disproportionate movement toward the ideological poles among Republicans. We reestimate our full model (Column 4 from [Table 1](#)) separately using the Democratic legislative median and the Republican legislative median as our outcome

---

<sup>20</sup>Detailed results for these analyses are presented in [Supplementary Appendix C](#).

variables. The results indicate that the adoption of legislative term limits led to a statistically significant shift to the ideological right among Republicans (0.063); among Democrats, term limits were accompanied by a shift in the liberal direction ( $-0.023$ ) but the estimate is not statistically distinguishable from zero. Thus, the estimates suggest that term limits' effects were about three times greater among Republicans than among Democrats, though we emphasize that we cannot dispositively rule out the null hypothesis that both parties contributed equally to increased polarization from term limits.

Finally, we conducted analyses at the individual level to study whether the effects of term limits varied among legislators with varying degrees of electoral security or who served in leadership positions.<sup>21</sup> Using data on state legislative elections, we distinguished marginal districts as those in which the incumbent legislator won by 10 percentage points or fewer and interacted this indicator with *Term limits*.<sup>22</sup> While the results suggest that term limits had a slightly smaller effect on polarization among representatives from marginal districts than among their safe-seat counterparts, none of the interactions terms is significant at  $p < .05$ . We also interacted *Term limits* with an indicator for legislators who served as presiding officers (including President, President Pro Tempore, Speaker of the House, or Speaker of the House Tempore), majority leaders, minority leaders, and majority and minority whips.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Each observation in these analyses is a legislator  $i$  serving in state  $j$  in year  $t$  using the same covariates as Column (4) in Table 1 and estimating separate models by party.

<sup>22</sup>Incumbent vote shares may be an imperfect measure of district competitiveness because they reflect the incumbent's "personal vote" as well as the constituency's political composition.

<sup>23</sup>Speakers of the House often do not cast votes, and so their preferences may be measured with error. However, the inclusion of many leaders who *do* cast votes should weigh against any systematic biases. In addition, because the ideology estimates are static, they do not allow us to account for changes in voting behavior that accompanied the legislators'

These data were obtained partially from [Fournaies and Hall \(2015\)](#) and [Fournaies \(Forthcoming\)](#) and supplemented with original data collection from the state *Yellow Books* to assemble a complete roster of legislative leaders between 1993 and 2014. We find no evidence that term limits had differential effects among leaders and other legislators, as the coefficient for the interaction between term limits and the indicator for leader is inconsistently signed, substantively small, and not statistically distinguishable from zero. Thus, our findings do not indicate that legislative leaders, as providers of partisan “brand names” ([Cox and McCubbins 1993](#)), were disproportionately affected by term limits.

## Legislative Professionalism, Parties, and Polarization

Our theoretical account posited that the effects of term limits are larger in more professionalized legislative settings. By removing experienced legislators who harbor a great deal of institutional wisdom, term limits empower alternative sources of information and influence such as parties and ideologically-motivated interest groups. The reduction in the value of holding office that accompanies term limits also means that the full-time nature of legislative service limits the potential pool of candidates. Moreover, in these states the removal of experienced legislators requires parties to engage in more significant efforts to recruit candidates for office. Therefore, evidence of larger effects of term limits in more professional legislatures would also provide suggestive evidence in support of our proposed mechanism in which term limits increase polarization by shifting legislative power shifting away from individual legislators and toward political actors with more extreme policy views such as

---

elevation to leadership positions. However, to the extent legislators’ voting records are expressions of their personal ideologies and constituency interests, this analysis allows us to study whether extreme legislators were more likely to serve as leaders in term-limited states.

parties and interest groups.

To test whether professionalism moderates the effect of term limits on polarization, we interact our term limits indicator with the continuous professionalism measure reported in [Squire \(2017\)](#). We present the results in a marginal effects plot shown in [Figure 2](#).<sup>24</sup> The  $x$ -axis shows values of legislative professionalism and the  $y$ -axis plots the estimated effect of term limits on polarization across these values. The solid line plots these marginal effects and the dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals. The tick marks along the  $x$ -axis indicate the distribution of values of professionalism.<sup>25</sup>

The results are consistent with our expectations. Among states with low levels of professionalism, term limits have little if any effect on polarization. However, the effect increases strongly with professionalism and suggests that the polarizing effect of term limits are concentrated in highly professional states. For context, our estimates suggest that the states at the twentieth percentile of legislative professionalism (the relatively non-professional Georgia and Mississippi) would experience a relatively small (and statistically insignificant) increase in polarization of 0.048 after term limits are adopted, while the effects would be more than twice as large for the state at the eightieth percentile (Maryland), with a statistically and substantively significant increase of 0.101.

Legislative professionalism is composed of a number of constituent elements, which have varying degrees of relevance for our theoretical claims. Using data from [Bowen and Greene](#)

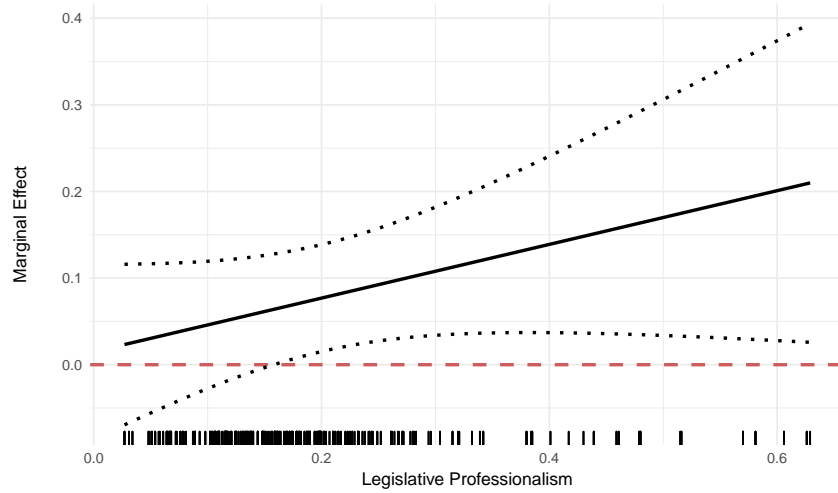
---

<sup>24</sup>The full table of coefficients is shown in Column 1 of [Table D.1](#).

<sup>25</sup>As the rugplot indicates, the distribution of legislative professionalism is quite right-skewed.

Our results are robust to analysis using the logged value of legislative professionalism as the moderator (see [Table D.2](#) and [Figure D.4](#)). We also conduct the analysis with alternative measures of professionalism produced by [Bowen and Greene \(2014\)](#). These results are presented in [Figures D.2](#) and [D.3](#). We find a similarly positive moderating effect using their first dimension of professionalism, and no relationship with the second dimension.

Figure 2: Marginal Effect of Term Limits over Legislative Professionalism.



The  $x$ -axis shows values of legislative professionalism and the  $y$ -axis plots the estimated effect of term limits on polarization across these values. The solid line plots these marginal effects and the dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals. The horizontal dashed line at zero shows the null hypothesis of no effect of term limits. The tick marks along the  $x$ -axis indicate the distribution of values of professionalism. The figure shows that the effect of term limits is larger in more professional state legislatures.

(2014), we also explored the degree to which three component elements of professionalism — legislative salary, session length, and expenditures per legislator — moderate the effect of term limits. Because session length is a reasonable proxy for the extent to which legislating is a full-time job, it is most closely associated with the challenges term limits present for securing legislative candidates in states with more professionalized legislatures. Full-time legislatures are also the settings where decreases in legislator expertise may provide the largest openings for parties, interest groups, and other actors to most dramatically affect the kinds of information legislators bring to bear when making roll call voting decisions. Our theoretical expectations for per-legislator expenditures and salaries are more ambiguous. We find that while each of the three component parts are positive moderators, session length in particular stands out. States with longer sessions see substantially larger polarizing effects of term limits, while states with higher legislative salaries and higher per-legislator expenditures

do not have markedly higher polarizing effects.<sup>26</sup> These analyses therefore provide support both for our expectation that the effects of term limits are moderated by professionalism and for our proposed mechanisms.

## Campaign Finance and Opportunities for Party Influence

Finally, we explore our proposed mechanisms more directly. Our primary theoretical claim is that term limits generate opportunities and incentives for political parties and similarly motivated interest groups to further involve themselves in state legislative politics. When the political knowledge and experience housed in experienced legislators is removed, parties help fill the vacuum left behind and contribute to greater polarization. While we lack the research design to conduct a well-identified mediation analysis, we focus on studying whether term limits are associated with plausible mechanisms that could explain our findings above.

We test the hypothesis that parties demonstrated heightened involvement in state legislative politics after term limits were adopted. Specifically, we investigate whether term limits increased the share of campaign contributions legislative candidates received from party campaign organizations.<sup>27</sup> The dependent variable was collected from [Bonica \(2016\)](#) and characterizes the average share, measured in percentage points, of legislative campaign contributions that are attributable to parties in each legislative election year from 1993 to

---

<sup>26</sup>The results of these analyses are presented graphically in [Figure D.1](#) with the full set of coefficients in [Table D.1](#). As with legislative professionalism, we also perform these interactions with logged values of these moderators. These results are presented in [Table D.2](#) and [Figures D.5](#) through [D.7](#).

<sup>27</sup>Parties could also exert greater influence over voting patterns in term-limited states through, e.g., increased party leadership control in the legislature ([Sarbaugh-Thompson and Thompson 2017](#)).



2014. We expect that term limits increased the share of contributions from political parties to legislative candidates, particularly in more professionalized states.

Figure 3 shows the results of this additional analysis.<sup>28</sup> The figure plots the marginal effect of term limits on the share of party contributions across the range of values of professionalism. Among states with the lowest levels of professionalism, our results suggest that party contributions comprised *smaller* shares of legislative candidates' contributions, though this result is substantively small and not statistically distinguishable from zero. However, term limits *increased* parties' contribution shares in more professional state legislatures. Among the most professional states, such as California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York, our results imply that the adoption of term limits is associated with a more than 7.5 percentage point increase in the share of state legislative campaign finance contributions deriving from party organizations. This finding provides strong evidence that term limits increased the involvement of party organizations in recruiting and supporting legislative candidates and is consistent with our proposed mechanisms that link this increase in party involvement to subsequent increases in party polarization.

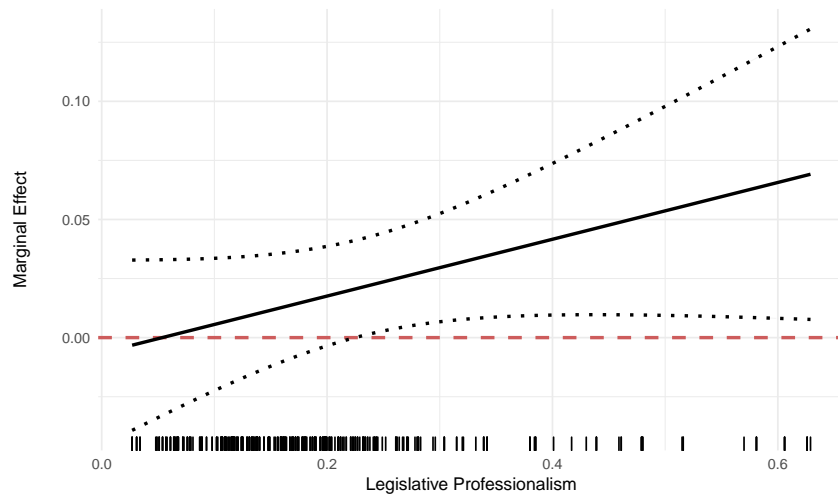
## Term Limits and Electoral Competition

Proponents of term limits argued that they would increase electoral competition and open up opportunities for legislative service to candidates who may not otherwise seek office. The available evidence, however, suggests that term limits may not have realized this goal. Instead, [Rogers \(2014\)](#) reports that while term limits may increase electoral competition in the first election following the removal of a term-limited incumbent, the incumbency advantage in subsequent elections is larger than in states without term limits. Though these findings run contrary to the arguments put forth by term limits' supporters, they suggest an

---

<sup>28</sup>The full table of results is shown in [Table D.3](#).

Figure 3: Marginal Effect of Term Limits over Legislative Professionalism, Party Contribution Share Outcome



The  $x$ -axis shows values of legislative professionalism and the  $y$ -axis plots the estimated effect of term limits on the share of campaign funds contributed by party organizations across these values. The solid line plots these marginal effects and the dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals. The horizontal dashed line at zero shows the null hypothesis of no effect of term limits. The tick marks along the  $x$ -axis indicate the distribution of values of professionalism. The estimates indicate that term limits significantly increased the share of legislative candidates' contributions from political parties in states with more professional legislatures.

alternative explanation for the findings shown above: that increases in polarization are due to declining electoral competition in term-limited states.

To explore this alternative explanation, we calculated the share of competitive legislative elections in each state. We identified competitive elections as those where the margin of victory was five percentage points or fewer, or ten percentage points or fewer.<sup>29</sup> We then estimated our full model specification (column 4 of Table 1) but used these indicators of

---

<sup>29</sup>These data were obtained from ICPSR study 34297 and supplemented with: Klarner, Carl, 2013, "State Legislative Election Returns Data, 2011-2012," [hdl:1902.1/21549](https://hdl.handle.net/1902.1/21549). Due to missing elections results for some states and years, we included only those states where elections results for at least half of the seats were available.

competitiveness as the dependent variables. If declines in electoral competition due to term limits explain our results, these declines must have been especially large in states with more professional legislatures. Therefore, we also estimate models that include the interaction between term limits and professionalism.

In short, we find no evidence that our main findings are driven by declines in electoral competition rather than by increased party involvement.<sup>30</sup> Overall, term limits *are* associated with declines in electoral competition. Across both indicators of competition, the proportion of legislative seats decided by fewer than five percentage points was four to six percentage points lower in states with term limits. However, the interaction terms for legislative professionalism are positive, indicating that term limits had smaller effects on electoral competition in states with more professional legislatures. This latter finding, in particular, contrasts with the pattern of results shown above. Though not dispositive, the results strongly weigh against the possibility that changes in the larger electoral environment that accompanied term limits explain our main results. Moreover, they further weigh against claims proffered by term limits' supporters. Not only do term limits increase party conflict and polarization, but they also may lead to further decreases in electoral competition.

## Conclusion

Scholars, political observers, and the public consistently identify partisan conflict, ideological polarization, and the accompanying legislative gridlock as major sources of frustration in contemporary American politics. For the last quarter century, proponents of term limits have argued that limiting the number of years legislators can serve in office would remedy polarization and other perceived legislative ills. Our analysis, however, provides no evidence that term limits ameliorate partisan conflict in state legislatures; instead, we find strong and

---

<sup>30</sup>See Table D.4.

consistent evidence that term limits *increase* partisan polarization. To the extent most citizens have relatively moderate ideologies, our findings suggest that term limits have amplified “leapfrog representation” (Bafumi and Herron 2010) and reduced the quality of collective representation.

Our findings contribute new evidence about the relationship between the electoral connection and democratic governance. Elections are the primary way through which citizens affect government activity in democratic societies and electoral incentives are a key mechanism for ensuring that government actors behave in ways that reflect citizen preferences. As Madison wrote in *Federalist* #51, for instance, “[D]ependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government.” By reducing or eliminating legislators’ electoral incentives, our results suggest that legislators exhibit voting behavior that is less congruent with the state electorate. Building upon other studies on electoral accountability (Rogers 2017), future research could explore whether legislators in term-limited states receive fewer sanctions from voters for their roll call behavior and examine whether individual legislators’ behavior deviates more from constituent preferences in their final terms in office. In addition, while we provided suggestive evidence for parties’ roles in producing greater polarization in term-limited states, additional research could study other potential actors and mechanisms that may also contribute to these patterns, such as interest groups and activists. Moreover, term limits could strengthen parties’ influences within the chamber, perhaps by increasing legislators’ willingness to delegate power to party leaders (see Sarbaugh-Thompson and Thompson 2017).

By necessity, our findings have important limitations of their own. The estimates of the effect of term limits on legislative behavior are limited by the data currently available for characterizing legislative behavior. By assumption, the scores provided by Shor and McCarty (2011) are constant over time within legislators. Thus, the results uncovered in our research are driven entirely by changes in legislative composition but do not reflect the possibility

that an individual legislator’s behavior may change over time. Our theoretical perspective suggests that this likely results in an underestimate of term limits’ effects, as legislators may be increasingly beholden to parties over time as their subsequent electoral careers depend upon party support. However, further research is needed to identify whether and how term limits affect within-legislator changes in voting patterns.

Our results suggest that term limits exacerbate partisan conflict as measured by polarization in roll call voting patterns across party lines. But there may be other ways that term limits generate more partisan outcomes. One of the most important tasks for most state legislatures, for instance, is to draw legislative districts. Preliminary analyses we conducted suggested that states with term limits have more partisan districting plans, both for state legislatures and the U.S. House. Using data on the efficiency gap for states with state legislative elections in 2016, for instance, we found that the efficiency gap was more than 50 percent larger in states with term limits (5.9%) than without (3.6%). This difference is statistically significant ( $p < .02$ ) and indicates that legislatures in term-limited states adopted districting plans that led to significantly more wasted votes. What is more, according to the standard advocated by [Stephanopoulos and McGhee \(2015\)](#), the efficiency gap was large enough (more than 8 percentage points) to trigger presumptive constitutional review in 31% of term-limited states, compared with only 3% of states without term limits. We find similar patterns based on U.S. House districting, where the efficiency gap is generally larger and provides greater partisan advantages in states with term limits. We emphasize that these results are preliminary and not dispositive, nor do they permit causal inferences. However, they are consistent with the manifestation of heightened partisanship that accompanies the implementation of term limits. Additional research could study other legislative outcomes that may have been affected by term limits.

Finally, while our results focus on how term limits affect one observable component of legislative behavior, partisan polarization in roll call voting records, our analysis does not

directly address how term limits may affect other dimensions of legislative behavior that may have implications for political representation. For instance, term limits could induce a “Burkean” shift in representation such that legislators act more as trustees rather than as delegates. Our estimates of legislative ideology based on roll call voting scores do not allow us to evaluate whether term limits change the way legislators make decisions. They also do not characterize whether term limits affect the policies considered or adopted by state legislatures. In addition, legislators can also represent their constituents through securing distributive outlays and providing constituency service. Future research is necessary to study how term limits affect legislative behavior on these additional dimensions.

## References

- Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. 2011. “Disentangling accountability and competence in elections: evidence from US term limits.” *The Journal of Politics* 73(1): 171–186.
- Alvarez, R. Michael, and Betsy Sinclair. 2012. “Electoral Institutions and Legislative Behavior: The Effects of Primary Processes.” *Political Research Quarterly* 65: 544–557.
- Angrist, Joshua D, and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2008. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist’s companion*. Princeton university press.
- Bafumi, Joseph, and Michael C. Herron. 2010. “Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress.” *American Political Science Review* 104: 519–542.
- Baker, Travis J., and David M. Hedge. 2013. “Term Limits and Legislative-Executive Conflict in the American States.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 38: 237–258.

- Ban, Pamela, Elena Llaudet, and James M. Snyder. 2016. "Challenger Quality and the Incumbency Advantage." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 41(1): 153–179.
- Barro, Robert J. 1973. "The Control of Politicians: An Economic Model." *Public Choice* 14: 19–42.
- Bonica, Adam. 2016. Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections: Public version 2.0 [Computer file]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Libraries. Available at <https://data.stanford.edu/dime>.
- Bowen, Daniel C, and Zachary Greene. 2014. "Should we measure professionalism with an index? A note on theory and practice in state legislative professionalism research." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 14(3): 277–296.
- Cain, Bruce, and Mark Levin. 1999. "Term Limits." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 163–188.
- Cain, Bruce E., and Thad Kousser. 2004. *Adapting to Term Limits: Recent Experiences and New Directions*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- Cain, Bruce, John Hanley, and Thad Kousser. 2006. "Term Limits: A Recipe for More Competition?" *The marketplace of democracy: electoral competition and American politics* pp. 199–221.
- Caress, Stanley M., and Todd T. Kunioka. 2012. *Term Limits and Their Consequences: The Aftermath of Legislative Reform*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Carey, John M. 1998. *Term Limits and Legislative Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carey, John M., Richard G. Niemi, and Lynda W. Powell. 1998. "The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23: 271–300.

- Carey, John M., Richard G. Niemi, and Lynda W. Powell. 2000. *Term Limits in State Legislatures*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Carey, John M., Richard G. Niemi, Lynda W. Powell, and Gary F. Montcrief. 2006. "The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures: A New Survey of the 50 States." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31: 104–134.
- Carroll, Susan J., and Krista Jenkins. 2005. "Increasing Diversity or More of the Same? Term Limits and the Representation of Women, Minorities, and Minority Women in State Legislatures." In *Contemporary Patterns Of Politics, Praxis, And Culture*, ed. Georgia Anne Persons. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Chen, Kong-Pin, and Emerson M. S. Niou. 2005. "Term Limits as a Response to Incumbency Advantage." *Journal of Politics* 67: 390–406.
- Clark, Jennifer Hayes, and R. Lucas Williams. 2014. "Parties, Term Limits, and Representation in the U.S. States." *American Politics Research* 42: 171–193.
- Cohen, Linda R., and Matthew Spitzer. 1992. "Term Limits." *Georgetown Law Review* 80: 477–522.
- Cox, Gary W., and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cummins, Jeff. 2013. "The Effects of Legislative Term Limits on State Fiscal Conditions." *American Politics Research* 41: 417–442.
- Daniel, Kermit, and John R. Lott. 1997. "Term Limits and Electoral Competitiveness: Evidence from California's State Legislative Races." *Public Choice* 90: 165–184.
- Ferejohn, John. 1986. "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control." *Public Choice* 50: 5–25.



- Fournaies, Alexander. Forthcoming. “When are Agenda Setters Valuable?” *American Journal of Political Science* .
- Fournaies, Alexander, and Andrew B. Hall. 2015. “The Power of Legislative Leaders”. Working paper; available at <https://goo.gl/DVgByG>.
- Francis, Wayne L, and Lawrence W Kenny. 1997. “Equilibrium projections of the consequences of term limits upon expected tenure, institutional turnover, and membership experience.” *The Journal of Politics* 59(1): 240–252.
- Glazer, Amihai, and Martin P Wattenberg. 1996. “How Will Term Limits Affect Legislative Work?” In *Legislative term limits: Public choice perspectives*. Springer pp. 37–46.
- Grofman, Bernard, and Neil Sutherland. 1996. “The Effect of Term Limits When Competition is Endogenized: A Preliminary Model.” In *Legislative Term Limits: Public Choice Perspective*, ed. Bernard G. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Grofman, Bernard, ed. 1996. *Legislative Term Limits: Public Choice Perspectives*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hall, Andrew B. 2014. “Partisan Effects of Legislative Term Limits.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 39: 407–429.
- Hall, Andrew B. Forthcoming. *Who Wants to Run? How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ho, Daniel E, Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Elizabeth A Stuart. 2007. “Matching as non-parametric preprocessing for reducing model dependence in parametric causal inference.” *Political analysis* 15(3): 199–236.
- Jefferson, Thomas. 1900. *The Life and Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Kessinger Publishing.

- Keele, Luke, Neil Malhotra, and Colin H. McCubbins. 2013. “Do Term Limits Restrain State Fiscal Policy? Approaches for Causal Inference in Assessing the Effects of Legislative Institutions.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 38: 291–326.
- Kousser, Thad. 2005. *Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kousser, Thad. 2006. “The Limited Impact of Term Limits: Contingent Effects on the Complexity and Breadth of Laws.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 6: 410–429.
- Kurtz, Karl T., Bruce E. Cain, and Richard G. Niemi. 2007. *Institutional Change in American Politics: The Case of Term Limits*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Maestas, Cherie. 2000. “Professional Legislatures and Ambitious Politicians: Policy Responsiveness of State Institutions.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25: 663–690.
- Malbin, Michael J., and Gerald Benjamin. 1992. “Legislatures After Term Limits.” In *Limiting Legislative Terms*, ed. Gerald Benjamin, and Michael J. Malbin. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Masket, Seth, and Boris Shor. 2015. “Polarization without Parties: Term Limits and Legislative Partisanship in Nebraska’s Unicameral Legislature.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 15: 67–90.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Miller, Susan M., Jill Nicholson-Crotty, and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2011. "Reexamining the Institutional Effects of Term Limits in U.S. State Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36: 71–97.
- Mondak, Jeffery J. 1995. "Focusing the Term Limits Debate." *Political Research Quarterly* 48: 741–750.
- Montcrief, Gary, and Joel A. Thompson. 2001. "On the Outside Looking In: Lobbyists? Perspectives on the Effects of State Legislative Term Limits." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 1: 394–411.
- Mooney, Christopher Z. 2009. "Term Limits as a Boon to Legislative Scholarship: A Review." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 9: 204–228.
- Petracca, Mark P. 1991. "Divided Government and the Risks of Constitutional Reform." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 24: 634–637.
- Petracca, Mark P. 1992. "Predisposed to Oppose: Political Scientists and Term Limitations." *Polity* 24: 657–672.
- Powell, Richard J. 2000. "The Impact of Term Limits on the Candidacy Decisions of State Legislators in U. S. House Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25: 645–661.
- Powell, Richard J., and Rich Jones. 2005. "First in the Nation: Term Limits and the Maine Legislature." Joint Project on Term Limits, National Conference on State Legislatures. Available at <https://goo.gl/cosDXP>.
- Rogers, Steven. 2014. "Term Limits: Keeping Incumbents in Office". Presented at the Annual Meeting of the State Politics and Policy Conference, Bloomington, IN (available at <https://goo.gl/rdr49F>).

- Rogers, Steven. 2017. "Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll Calls and Ideological Representation." *American Political Science Review* 111(3): 555–571.
- Sarbaugh-Thompson, Marjorie. 2010. "Measuring 'Term Limitedness' in U.S. Multi-State Research." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 10: 199–217.
- Sarbaugh-Thompson, Marjorie, and Thomas L Thompson. 2017. *Implementing Term Limits: The Case of the Michigan Legislature*. University of Michigan Press.
- Shor, Boris, and Nolan McCarty. 2011. "The Ideological Mapping of American Legislatures." *American Political Science Review* 105: 530–551.
- Smart, Michael, and Daniel M. Sturm. 2013. "Term Limits and Electoral Accountability." *Journal of Public Economics* 107: 93–102.
- Squire, Peverill. 2017. "A Squire Index Update." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 17(4): 361–371.
- Stephanopoulos, Nicholas O., and Eric M. McGhee. 2015. "Partisan Gerrymandering and the Efficiency Gap." *University of Chicago Law Review* 82: 831–900.
- Swift, Clint S., and Kathryn A. VanderMolen. 2016. "Term Limits and Collaboration Across the Aisle: An Analysis of Bipartisan Cosponsorship in Term Limited and Non-Term Limited State Legislatures." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 16: 198–226.
- Titunik, Rocío, and Andrew Feher. 2017. "Legislative behaviour absent re-election incentives: findings from a natural experiment in the Arkansas Senate." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)* .
- Wright, Gerald C. 2007. "Do Term Limits Affect Legislative Roll Call Voting? Representation, Polarization, and Participation." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 7: 256–280.

# Supplementary Materials for “Legislative Term Limits and Polarization”

## Contents

<b>A Summary Statistics</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>B Robustness Checks, Polarization Result</b>	<b>38</b>
B.1 Term-Limitedness . . . . .	38
B.2 Pre-Treatment Covariates . . . . .	39
B.3 LDV Models . . . . .	40
B.4 Matched Sample . . . . .	41
B.5 Sample Robustness . . . . .	42
B.6 DIME Ideal Point Estimates . . . . .	43
<b>C Additional Results</b>	<b>44</b>
C.1 Chamber-Specific Estimates . . . . .	44
C.2 Party-Specific Estimates . . . . .	45
C.3 Electoral Marginality and Legislative Leadership Status . . . . .	46
<b>D Robustness Checks, Moderators, and Mechanisms</b>	<b>47</b>
D.1 Professionalism Figures . . . . .	47
D.2 Professionalism Tables . . . . .	48
D.3 Alternative Professionalism Measures . . . . .	50
D.4 Logged Professionalism Moderators . . . . .	51
D.5 Party Contributions . . . . .	53
D.6 Term Limits and Competition . . . . .	54

## A Summary Statistics

Table A.1: Summary Statistics of Key Variables

Statistic	Mean	Median	Min	Max	St. Dev.
Legislative Polarization	1.407	1.372	0.105	3.094	0.483
Term Limits	0.192	0	0	1	0.394
Divided Gov.	0.505	1	0	1	0.500
Democratic Governor	0.427	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.491
Leg. Professionalism	0.195	0.167	0.027	0.629	0.122
Party Competitiveness	13.218	10.714	0.500	41.137	8.897
ln(Population)	15.128	15.274	13.098	17.474	1.024
Per Capita Income	33.976	33.246	16.986	66.716	8.507
GOP Presidential State Share	0.502	0.498	0.270	0.746	0.091
Unemployment Rate	0.055	0.052	0.022	0.135	0.019
Percent Foreign Born	7.640	5.416	1.016	29.300	5.845
State Gini Coefficient	0.592	0.587	0.521	0.712	0.037

## B Robustness Checks, Polarization Result

### B.1 Term-Limitedness

Table B.1: Robustness: State Legislative Polarization and “Term Limitedness”

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limitedness	0.098* (0.048)	0.089 (0.051)	0.087* (0.043)	0.087* (0.042)
Divided Gov.		-0.006 (0.014)	-0.001 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.013)
Democratic Governor		-0.024 (0.017)	-0.001 (0.015)	-0.001 (0.015)
Leg. Professionalism		0.161 (0.181)	0.033 (0.120)	0.029 (0.118)
Party Competitiveness		-0.005* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)
ln(Population)			1.049* (0.349)	1.053* (0.347)
Per Capita Income			-0.012* (0.004)	-0.012* (0.004)
Unemployment Rate			-0.028 (0.884)	0.019 (0.883)
Percent Foreign Born				-0.007 (0.011)
State Gini Coefficient				-0.269 (0.261)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.036	0.08	0.294	0.297
Observations	881	881	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

## B.2 Pre-Treatment Covariates

Table B.2: Fixed Effects OLS Estimates: State Legislative Polarization and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Legislative Polarization		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Term Limits	0.098* (0.046)	0.086 (0.049)	0.085 (0.048)
Covariates	Institutional	+ Demographic	+ MPR
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Observations	881	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).



### B.3 LDV Models

Table B.3: Robustness: Lagged Dependent Variable Model

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.013* (0.007)	0.015* (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)
Divided Gov.		0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)
Democratic Governor		0.005 (0.004)	0.007 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)
Leg. Professionalism		-0.022 (0.014)	-0.033 (0.018)	-0.040* (0.019)
Party Competitiveness		-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
ln(Population)			0.004 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)
Per Capita Income			-0.001* (0.000)	-0.001* (0.000)
Unemployment Rate			0.048 (0.147)	-0.020 (0.155)
Percent Foreign Born				0.001 (0.000)
State Gini Coefficient				-0.027 (0.067)
Lagged Polarization	1.002* (0.003)	1.004* (0.004)	1.003* (0.004)	1.002* (0.005)
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	822	822	822	822

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

## B.4 Matched Sample

Table B.4: Matched Sample Fixed Effects Model: State Legislative Polarization and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.071 (0.041)	0.074* (0.031)	0.098* (0.043)	0.087* (0.032)
Divided Gov.		-0.006 (0.021)		-0.003 (0.017)
Democratic Governor		0.008 (0.026)		0.001 (0.022)
Leg. Professionalism		0.304 (0.320)		0.159 (0.210)
Party Competitiveness		-0.004 (0.002)		-0.004* (0.002)
ln(Population)		0.949 (0.503)		1.032* (0.434)
Per Capita Income		-0.010 (0.007)		-0.013* (0.006)
Unemployment Rate		0.482 (1.469)		-0.349 (1.227)
Percent Foreign Born		-0.014 (0.017)		-0.014 (0.014)
State Gini Coefficient		-0.262 (0.350)		-0.259 (0.315)
Matching	One-to-One	One-to-One	Two-to-One	Two-to-One
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.029	0.217	0.051	0.277
Observations	451	451	577	577

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. Sample is matched using inverse propensity weighting on the basis of pre-treatment (1993-1996) covariates using the `Matching` package in R. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

## B.5 Sample Robustness

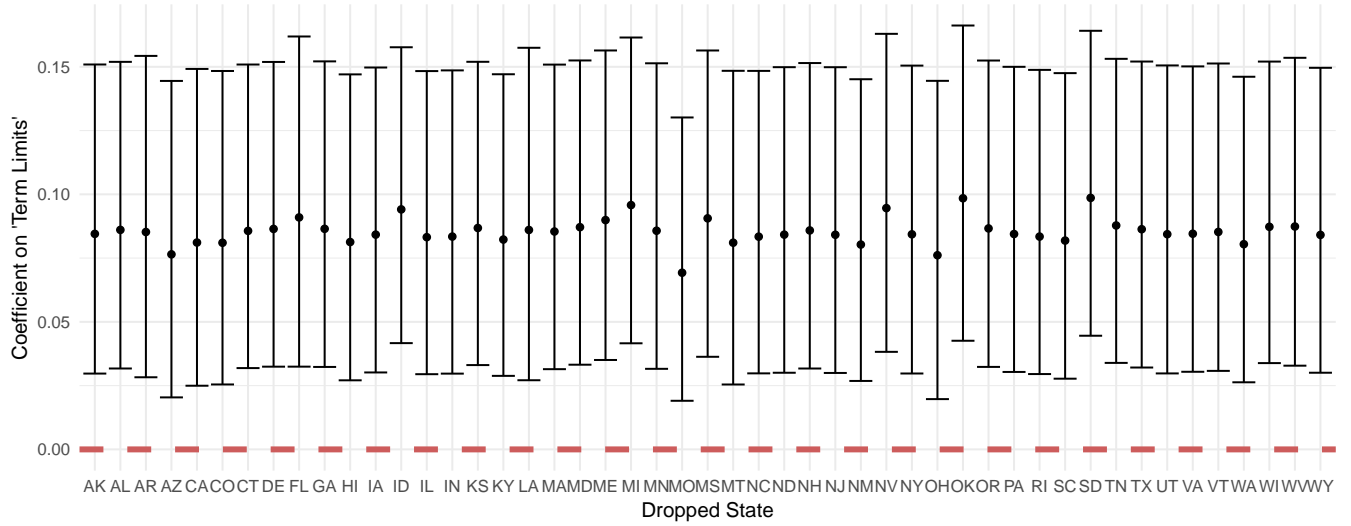


Figure B.1: Coefficients when Successively Dropping States

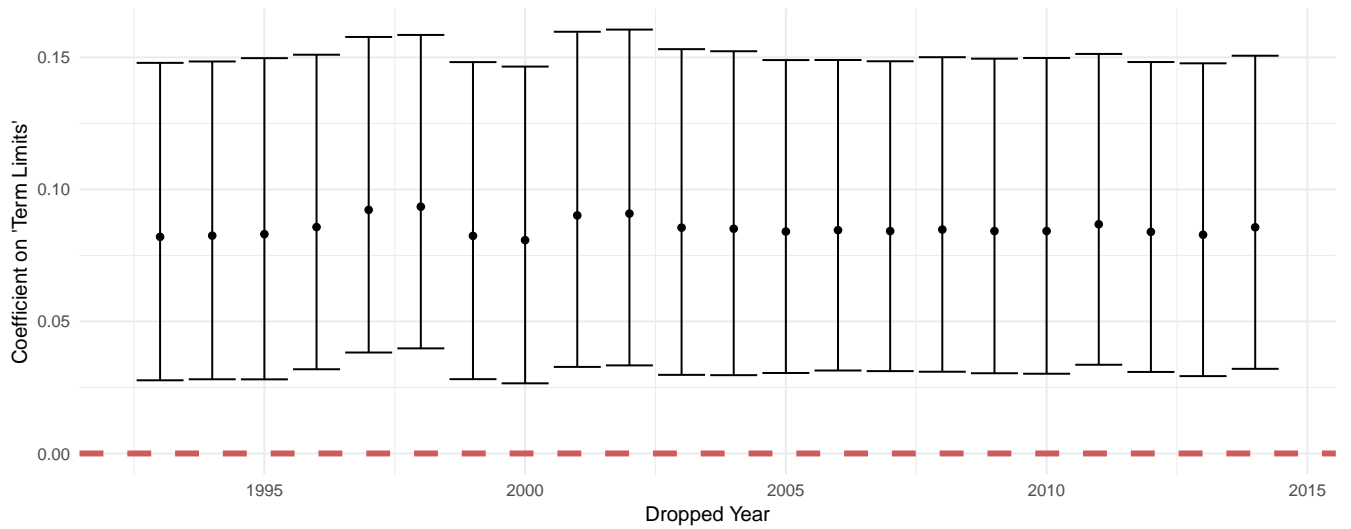


Figure B.2: Coefficients when Successively Dropping Years

## B.6 DIME Ideal Point Estimates

Table B.5: Polarization and Term Limits, Campaign Finance Polarization Measure

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization (DIME Outcome)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.081 (0.057)	0.085 (0.058)	0.077 (0.056)	0.095 (0.057)
Divided Gov.		-0.022 (0.028)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.032 (0.029)
Democratic Governor		0.000 (0.026)	0.001 (0.025)	0.003 (0.023)
Leg. Professionalism		-0.279 (0.659)	-0.239 (0.694)	-0.226 (0.691)
Party Competitiveness		-0.001 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.004)
ln(Population)			0.072 (0.319)	0.046 (0.303)
Per Capita Income			0.011 (0.013)	0.008 (0.014)
Unemployment Rate			2.879 (2.091)	2.941 (2.129)
Percent Foreign Born				-0.008 (0.032)
State Gini Coefficient				-1.299 (0.799)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.008	0.015	0.036	0.055
Observations	382	382	382	382

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

## C Additional Results

### C.1 Chamber-Specific Estimates

Table C.1: Fixed Effects OLS Estimates: State Legislative Polarization and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Lower Chamber Polarization	Upper Chamber Polarization
	(1)	(2)
Term Limits	0.108* (0.034)	0.014 (0.080)
Divided Gov.	-0.001 (0.015)	0.036 (0.019)
Democratic Governor	0.011 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.028)
Leg. Professionalism	0.063 (0.098)	0.072 (0.237)
Party Competitiveness	-0.003* (0.001)	0.000 (0.003)
ln(Population)	0.843* (0.339)	1.023* (0.490)
Per Capita Income	-0.016* (0.005)	-0.016* (0.007)
Unemployment Rate	0.513 (0.901)	-3.725 (2.442)
Percent Foreign Born	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.019)
State Gini Coefficient	-0.346 (0.277)	0.662 (0.603)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.282	0.125
Observations	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses.  
\* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

## C.2 Party-Specific Estimates

Table C.2: Fixed Effects OLS Estimates: Republican Median Legislator and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Democratic Median	Republican Median
	(1)	(2)
Term Limits	-0.023 (0.030)	0.063* (0.025)
Divided Gov.	-0.000 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.007)
Democratic Governor	0.016 (0.013)	0.017 (0.010)
Leg. Professionalism	0.111 (0.096)	0.127 (0.075)
Party Competitiveness	0.001 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
ln(Population)	-0.717* (0.272)	0.285 (0.185)
Per Capita Income	0.008* (0.004)	-0.005 (0.003)
Unemployment Rate	0.784 (0.639)	0.805 (0.548)
Percent Foreign Born	0.008 (0.008)	0.004 (0.005)
State Gini Coefficient	0.297 (0.215)	-0.026 (0.153)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.199	0.207
Observations	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

### C.3 Electoral Marginality and Legislative Leadership Status

Table C.3: Effect of Term Limits Across District Marginality and Leadership Status

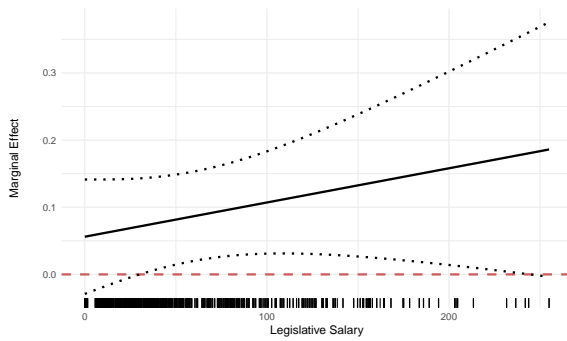
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	S-M Score, Dems	S-M Score, Reps	S-M Score, Dems	S-M Score, Reps	S-M Score	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Term Limits	-0.040 (0.028)	0.077* (0.026)	-0.022 (0.027)	0.031 (0.022)	0.091* (0.025)	0.054* (0.023)
Marginal District	0.084* (0.020)	-0.006 (0.008)			-0.064* (0.017)	
Leader			-0.065* (0.014)	0.031* (0.011)		0.026* (0.011)
Term Limit × Marginal District	0.005 (0.046)	-0.042 (0.024)			-0.014 (0.033)	
Term Limit × Leader			0.006 (0.029)	-0.016 (0.015)		0.009 (0.022)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Covariates	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.018	0.006	0.009	0.005	0.01	0.004
Observations	15,255	15,010	68,547	65,484	30,265	134,031

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).

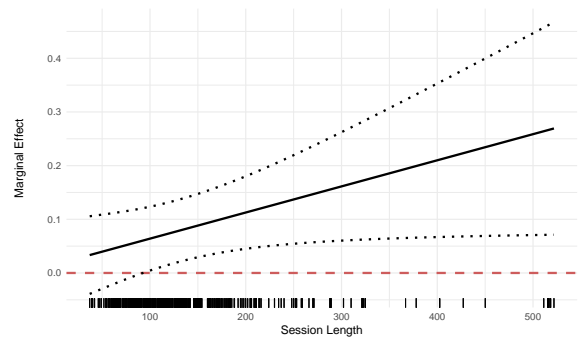
# D Robustness Checks, Moderators, and Mechanisms

## D.1 Professionalism Figures

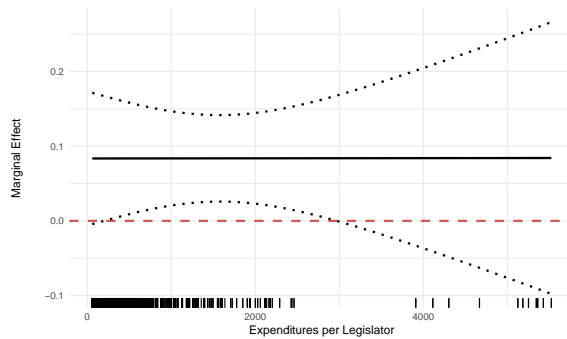
Figure D.1: Effect of Term Limits over Legislative Professionalism Component Parts



(a) Legislative Salary



(b) Session Length



(c) Per-Legislator Expenditures

The  $x$ -axes show values of each component of legislative professionalism and the  $y$ -axes plot the estimated effect of term limits on polarization across these values. The solid lines plot these marginal effects and the dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals. The horizontal dashed lines at zero show the null hypothesis of no effect of term limits. The tick marks along the  $x$ -axis indicate the distribution of values of professionalism. Though each slope has a positive estimate, we find the strongest evidence that session length moderates the effect of term limits on polarization.



## D.2 Professionalism Tables

Table D.1: Fixed Effects Model: State Legislative Polarization, Term Limits, and Professionalism

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.015 (0.052)	0.015 (0.043)	0.056 (0.044)	0.084 (0.046)
Leg. Professionalism	-0.018 (0.112)			
Session Length		-0.000 (0.000)		
Leg. Salary			-0.001 (0.001)	
Exp. Per Legislator				0.000 (0.000)
Divided Gov.	-0.002 (0.013)	-0.004 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)
Democratic Governor	-0.002 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.015)	0.000 (0.015)	0.002 (0.015)
Party Competitiveness	-0.005* (0.001)	-0.005* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)
ln(Population)	1.016* (0.348)	1.015* (0.345)	1.041* (0.351)	0.967* (0.357)
Per Capita Income	-0.012* (0.004)	-0.012* (0.004)	-0.013* (0.004)	-0.013* (0.004)
Unemployment Rate	-0.003 (0.907)	-0.031 (0.894)	-0.070 (0.882)	0.084 (0.913)
Percent Foreign Born	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.005 (0.010)
State Gini Coefficient	-0.292 (0.258)	-0.275 (0.263)	-0.397 (0.247)	-0.294 (0.258)
Leg. Professionalism × Term Limits	0.310 (0.206)			
Session Length × Term Limits		0.000* (0.000)		
Leg. Salary × Term Limits			0.001 (0.000)	
Exp. Per Legislator × Term Limits				0.000 (0.000)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.31	0.309	0.308	0.306
Observations	881	881	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

Table D.2: Fixed Effects Model: State Legislative Polarization, Term Limits, and Logged Professionalism

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Legislative Polarization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.235* (0.084)	-0.390 (0.215)	-0.010 (0.136)	0.044 (0.220)
ln(Leg. Professionalism)	0.002 (0.028)			
ln(Session Length)		-0.008 (0.019)		
ln(Leg. Salary)			-0.048* (0.023)	
ln(Exp. Per Legislator)				0.019 (0.057)
Divided Gov.	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.005 (0.013)	-0.000 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.012)
Democratic Governor	-0.003 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.015)	0.002 (0.015)	0.002 (0.015)
Party Competitiveness	-0.005* (0.001)	-0.005* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)	-0.004* (0.001)
ln(Population)	1.003* (0.344)	1.011* (0.338)	1.032* (0.349)	0.991* (0.357)
Per Capita Income	-0.012* (0.004)	-0.012* (0.004)	-0.012* (0.004)	-0.013* (0.004)
Unemployment Rate	-0.080 (0.898)	-0.040 (0.887)	0.021 (0.902)	0.017 (0.901)
Percent Foreign Born	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.006 (0.010)	-0.004 (0.010)
State Gini Coefficient	-0.263 (0.255)	-0.256 (0.263)	-0.351 (0.260)	-0.333 (0.268)
ln(Leg. Professionalism) × Term Limits	0.091* (0.042)			
ln(Session Length) × Term Limits		0.098* (0.045)		
ln(Leg. Salary) × Term Limits			0.025 (0.034)	
ln(Exp. Per Legislator) × Term Limits				0.007 (0.033)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.31	0.309	0.308	0.306
Observations	881	881	881	881

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

### D.3 Alternative Professionalism Measures

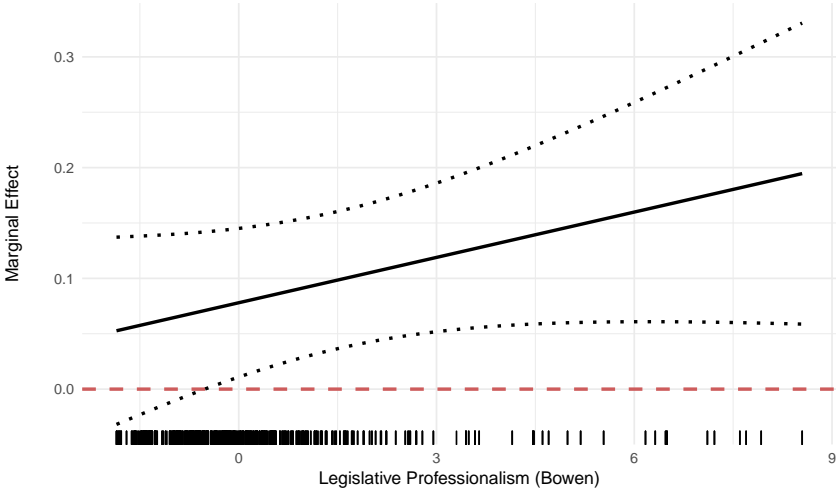


Figure D.2: Effect of Term Limits over Leg. Professionalism (Bowen-Greene First Dim.)

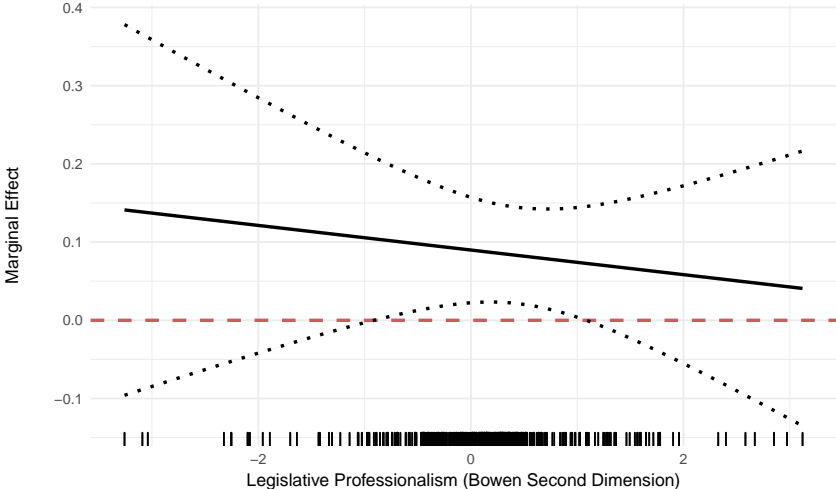


Figure D.3: Effect of Term Limits over Leg. Professionalism (Bowen-Greene Second Dim.)

### D.4 Logged Professionalism Moderators

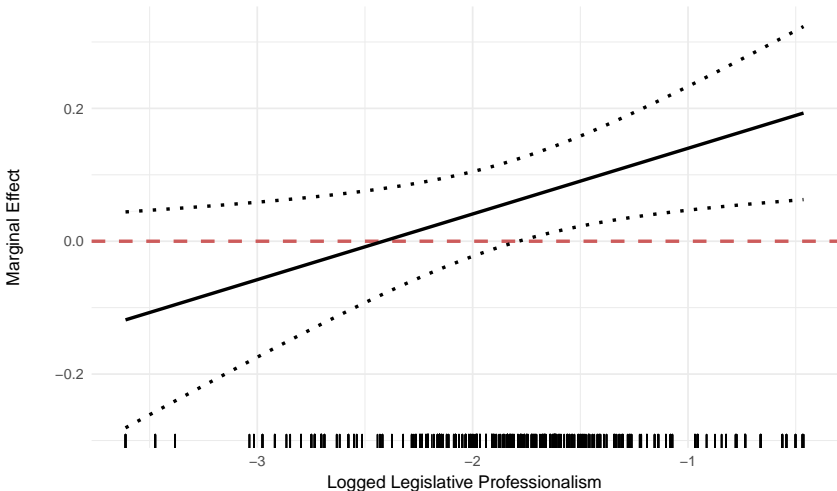


Figure D.4: Effect of Term Limits over Logged Leg. Professionalism

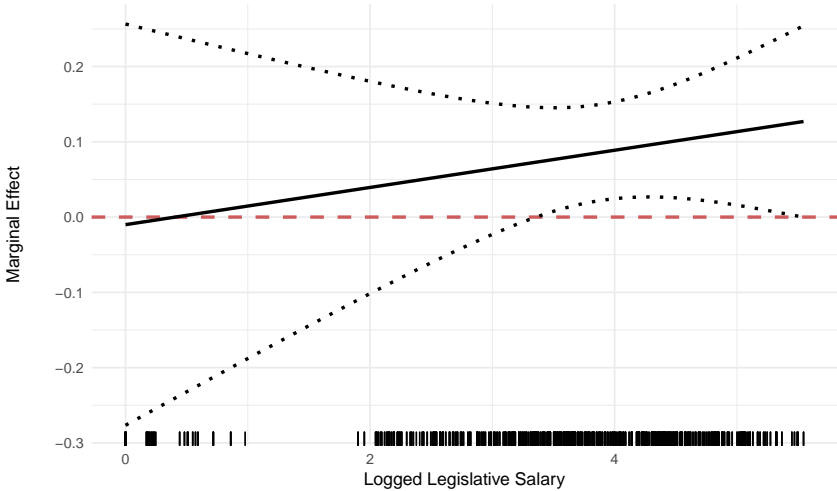


Figure D.5: Effect of Term Limits over Logged Salary

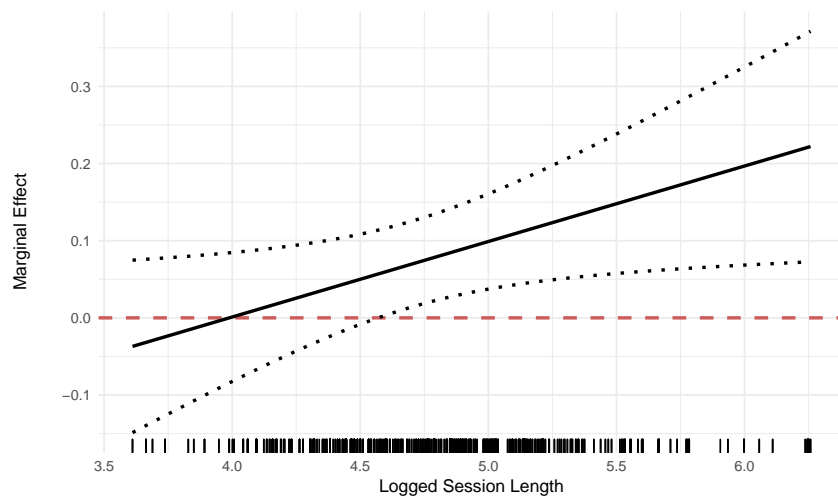


Figure D.6: Effect of Term Limits over Logged Session Length

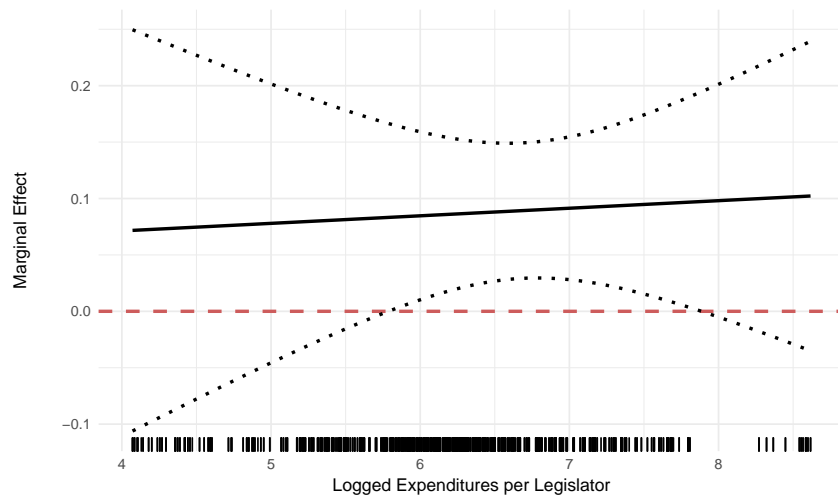


Figure D.7: Effect of Term Limits over Logged Per-Legislator Expenditures

## D.5 Party Contributions

Table D.3: Party Campaign Contributions and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Party Committee Share of Total Contributions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	0.027 (0.015)	0.020 (0.011)	-0.012 (0.024)	-0.006 (0.020)
Divided Gov.		0.002 (0.007)		0.002 (0.007)
Democratic Governor		-0.013* (0.005)		-0.013* (0.005)
Leg. Professionalism		0.331* (0.163)	0.298 (0.175)	0.316 (0.165)
Party Competitiveness		-0.001 (0.001)		-0.001 (0.000)
ln(Population)		-0.219* (0.096)		-0.211* (0.096)
Per Capita Income		-0.005* (0.003)		-0.005* (0.003)
Unemployment Rate		0.032 (0.357)		0.021 (0.354)
Percent Foreign Born		-0.008 (0.009)		-0.008 (0.009)
State Gini Coefficient		-0.048 (0.138)		-0.036 (0.138)
Term Limits × Leg. Professionalism			0.178 (0.092)	0.120 (0.074)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.011	0.135	0.06	0.137
Observations	394	394	394	394

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \*p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

## D.6 Term Limits and Competition

Table D.4: Fixed Effects OLS Estimates: Electoral Competition and Term Limits

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Share Races Close (5%)	Share Races Close (5%)	Share Races Close (10%)	Share Races Close (10%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Term Limits	-0.053* (0.024)	-0.086* (0.035)	-0.044 (0.024)	-0.081 (0.041)
Divided Gov.	0.020* (0.009)	0.021* (0.009)	0.014 (0.008)	0.015 (0.008)
Democratic Governor	0.014 (0.008)	0.012 (0.009)	0.013 (0.009)	0.011 (0.009)
Leg. Professionalism	-0.114 (0.150)	-0.140 (0.156)	-0.057 (0.126)	-0.087 (0.131)
Party Competitiveness	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
ln(Population)	-0.334* (0.148)	-0.329* (0.146)	-0.458* (0.130)	-0.452* (0.126)
Per Capita Income	0.001 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.000 (0.003)
Unemployment Rate	-0.036 (0.704)	-0.007 (0.707)	-0.068 (0.650)	-0.034 (0.650)
Percent Foreign Born	-0.000 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.008)
State Gini Coefficient	0.189 (0.363)	0.210 (0.365)	0.211 (0.272)	0.235 (0.272)
Term Limits $\times$ Leg. Professionalism		0.136 (0.101)		0.156 (0.126)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Projected $R^2$	0.08	0.084	0.084	0.089
Observations	360	360	360	360

*Note:* Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on states in parentheses. \* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed test).