Contesting the Rules of the Game: Organized Groups in Election Policymaking

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Abstract

Organized groups often pursue influence by lobbying policymakers and working to elect allies. Research on groups' efforts to shape who governs, especially through campaign contributions, generally treats electoral rules as fixed. I argue that groups work strategically to change those rules and explain why and when they take action using records from 22 U.S. legislatures. Group participation marks divisive legislative debates and is concentrated where elections are close enough to make rule changes consequential. Frustrated groups are especially likely to act under those conditions, while groups with fewer opportunities to advance their priorities act more where legislative majorities tightly control the agenda. Using a human-in-the-loop approach combining large language models and machine learning to measure policy change, alongside new group ideal point estimates, I show that position-taking is ideological. These findings broaden accounts of group influence and illuminate their role in the politicization of American election policy.

Keywords: interest groups, lobbying, state politics, election administration, polarization, large language models

Word Count: 11,699

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> "The pro-life movement must engage in election transparency and integrity reform or their ability to elect pro-life, pro-family lawmakers—and pass laws that save lives—will be greatly diminished, if not extinguished."
>
> —Ken Cuccinelli, National Chairman, Election Transparency Initiative

1 Introduction

Election policy has become one of the most polarizing issues in American politics. The 2000 presidential election set off what Hasen (2014) calls a "partisan war over election rules" (p. 4) and, since 2020, disputes over voting and election administration have moved to the center of partisan conflict (Jacobson 2021, 2024). Which rules states adopt increasingly depends on which party governs them as Republican-led states have restricted access to the ballot with measures like voter identification requirements (Hicks et al. 2015; Biggers and Hanmer 2017), while Democratic-led states have expanded it with reforms like early voting and same-day registration (Biggers and Hanmer 2015; Caron 2022). Americans themselves hold differing views about how elections ought to be run, at times split across party lines (Stewart 2021, 2025). Accordingly, voters' confidence in elections depends in part on whether they support the procedures under which they vote (Clinton 2026), and as partisan conflict draws clearer lines around where the parties stand and who benefits from which rules, that confidence divides along the same lines. Beyond shaping how Americans view their elections, election rules are also one step in the larger contest to gain, retain, and exercise policymaking power (Campbell and Karch 2026). The procedures of American democracy are therefore not fixed background conditions but objects of political conflict, with consequences for political authority and democratic legitimacy.

Existing scholarship has emphasized the parties and elected officials who drive this conflict over the direction of election policy (Palazzolo and Moscardelli 2006; Bentele and O'Brien 2013; Grumbach 2022) and the election administrators who put the resulting policies into practice (Hale and Brown 2020). Yet these actors operate alongside or within broader political coalitions that include organized groups and activists with stakes of their own in the rules of electoral competition. These groups care foremost about policy, but winning on policy requires sympathetic officeholders. Whether their allies reach office depends in part on the election rules under

which they compete. As the epigraph illustrates, the anti-abortion organization Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America made exactly this argument in launching the Election Transparency Initiative, warning that the movement's ability to elect allies and enact the policies it seeks rests on the rules governing elections (American Principles Project 2021). When groups take public positions in policy areas outside the central focus of their work, they engage in what I term *out-of-portfolio participation*, a behavior previously documented in Congress (Fagan, McGee, and Thomas 2021; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2023). This paper shows that such participation has become a defining feature of election policymaking and identifies organized groups as a key link between broader party coalitions and the politicization of election policy.

Organized groups have long fought over who could vote as a means of advancing policy goals elsewhere (McConnaughy 2015; Bateman 2018). Temperance organizations supported women's suffrage in the expectation that women would vote "dry," while the liquor industry opposed it (Teele 2018). There was similar division over Black enfranchisement, with organized labor backing expansion of the southern Black electorate and planters and Farm Bureaus working with state officials to keep Black voters off the rolls (Luders 2010). Shaping who could vote often meant shaping how elections were run. What distinguishes conflict over election policy today is the breadth of the rules and organizations involved. Conflict now extends across the seemingly bureaucratic procedures of how voters register, how ballots are cast and counted, and how results are certified. As these procedures have come to carry apparent partisan implications, election law has become "part of a political strategy" (Hasen 2014, p. 5) for organized groups and political parties alike.

In pursuit of their policy goals, organized groups draw on a range of strategies, most prominently lobbying policymakers (Hansen 1991; Hall and Deardorff 2006) and working to elect allies (Cassie and Thompson 1998; Welch 1980). Both strategies operate within election rules that groups can take as given or work to change. I argue that groups do the latter, because changing rules complements everything else they do. Favorable rules make mobilizing supporters more efficient, apply across many contests at once, and can, in turn, increase the number of officeholders with whom groups can work to enact their preferred policies (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Issacharoff and Pildes 1998; Hall and Deardorff 2006). Yet the strategy is costly and its returns are uncertain, since most, but not all, election rule changes have small effects on turnout and

little effect on who wins (Grimmer and Hersh 2024).

I argue that out-of-portfolio participation in election policymaking should therefore be conditional, with groups deploying resources when and where their effort is likely to pay off. Groups should engage when they are sufficiently *motivated* to alter the terms of competition, when proposed changes are *consequential* for electoral outcomes, and when an established legislative *presence* lowers the cost of action. Groups are most motivated when they experience legislative frustration, a repeated failure to achieve their policy goals. Changes are consequential where control of government is closely contested and new rules could plausibly tip the balance of power. Finally, groups with an established presence, already monitoring bills, testifying, and lobbying in a state, can extend that work to another issue with little additional effort.

These expectations frame the first of three research questions. First, when do out-of-portfolio groups engage in election policymaking? Answering this question requires records of group positions across states and policy areas that until recently did not exist systematically. I overcome this challenge with an original dataset linking more than 12,000 election bills introduced across 22 states over three decades to roughly 37,000 group positions collected from lobbying disclosures and committee testimony records (drawing in part on Hall et al. 2024). To my knowledge, this is the most comprehensive record of engagement in election policymaking currently available. I find that out-of-portfolio participation is widespread and systematic. Nearly seven in ten positions come from groups whose core work lies outside elections and voting rights. Consistent with my argument, participation is more likely where elections are close and among groups already active in a legislature. Furthermore, legislative frustration spurs engagement where competition makes rule changes consequential and groups with fewer opportunities to advance their priorities are likely to act where legislative leaders exercise tighter control over the agenda.

Second, do groups take predictable positions when they engage? Democrats and their liberal allies have long been thought to benefit from an expanded electorate, and Republicans and their conservative allies from a restricted one. Testing whether groups act on this assumption requires knowing both what a bill would do and where the group stands. To evaluate what a bill would do, I introduce a human-in-the-loop classification approach that combines fine-tuned large language models with supervised machine learning to assess whether legislation expands or restricts voter access, with human coders intervening where the automated classifiers disagree. To

measure where groups stand, I construct the largest available set of group ideal point estimates based on state legislative activity, jointly scaling group positions, legislators' roll-call votes, and sponsorship records using a Bayesian item response theory model. Combining these measures, I find that liberal groups support expansive bills and oppose restrictive ones while conservative groups do the reverse, showing that group position-taking follows the same ideological divisions that organize elite conflict over election policy.

Finally, how does out-of-portfolio participation relate to the outcomes of election legislation? I find that group contestation concentrates on the proposals that most divides the parties. Bills drawing opposition from out-of-portfolio groups receive far more partisan final-passage votes, and the balance of support and opposition distinguishes which bills become law, though whose positions correspond to enactment depends on who governs. Groups may be joining fights already primed to divide legislators rather than driving that division, but either way their participation marks the legislation over which partisan and ideological lines are drawn most starkly.

Overall, this paper contributes a general theoretical explanation for why organized groups are incentivized to shape the rules of the game and the conditions they do so. It builds on narrower accounts of their advocacy for voter identification laws (Hertel-Fernandez 2019) and resistance to changing the timing of certain elections (Anzia 2014). The broader point is that political actors do not simply pursue their goals within the electoral institutions in which they operate, but they also work to reshape them. Thus, organized groups, like politicians, engage in what Riker (1986) called *heresthetics*—the art of political manipulation. Because political competition is ultimately a struggle over policymaking authority (Hacker and Pierson 2014), its rules and procedures are themselves something to be won, revised by those seeking to gain or keep it (Boix 1999; Colomer 2004). Each position a group takes further recasts rules that might otherwise be seen as matters of bureaucratic administration as a contest one side wins and the other loses. Consequently, the growing politicization of election policy in the U.S. is not just a story of the policymakers who write the rules and the officials who implement them, but of the broader network of organized interests around them, whose stake in who governs gives them reason to shape both.

2 Theory and Background

2.1 Electoral Federalism and Election Policymaking in U.S.

Springer (2014) defines state electoral institutions as "the laws and procedures governing registration and voting in the American states" (p. 2). This paper examines how these laws and procedures are enacted and revised. I focus specifically on rules governing voter access and election administration, including who administers elections, how they are funded, and how ballots are cast, counted, and certified.

Election policymaking in the United States operates through *electoral federalism*. The Constitution assigns states primary responsibility for conducting elections, so state legislatures largely establish the rules governing federal, state, and local contests. States then delegate much of the administration to county and municipal offices, which register voters, operate polling places, and count ballots. Policy authority is therefore concentrated at the state level even though implementation is largely local.

The federal government primarily establishes national protections and administrative requirements. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) prohibits discriminatory voting practices, while the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993 and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 create specific administrative directives, from registration through motor vehicle and social service agencies to statewide voter rolls and equipment standards. No federal agency, however, holds general regulatory authority over elections. National authority is instead exercised through Department of Justice enforcement of these statutes and federal courts' review of state policies. Limited federal intervention thus leaves states considerable discretion over voter eligibility and identification, the timing and methods of voting, districting, and the organization of election offices. *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013), which invalidated the VRA's preclearance coverage formula, expanded that discretion further.

Election officials themselves have limited room to remake this system. Local officials may experiment with administrative practices but often lack the resources or legal authority for broader change, while state election officials operate largely within guidelines set by policymakers. State legislatures are thus the central arena in which policymakers, election officials, and organized groups shape the rules of the game.

2.2 Organized Groups and the Pursuit of Policy Influence

Organized groups seek to influence policy outcomes by setting agendas, defining policy alternatives, and shaping what becomes of policies after they are enacted (Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Berry 2010; Patashnik 2003). In doing so, groups choose among different venues and tactics, weighing their capabilities against their competitors' (Holyoke 2003).

One tactic is publicly taking positions on policy questions, most prominently in legislatures, where groups testify or lobby for or against specific proposals.[1] These efforts may subsidize allies with policy information and legislative labor (Hall and Deardorff 2006), or define what a proposal is about on the group's terms (Hansen 1991; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Ban, Park, and You 2023). Yet this strategy has limits. A group's influence rests on its reputation as a primary advocate on particular issues (Browne 1990) and a reliable source of information for policymakers (Hayes 1981). Furthermore, it requires partners in government receptive to groups' goals and positioned to advance them.

Securing partnerships increasingly requires groups to demonstrate alignment with a broader political coalition. Political parties fight for control of government, and in that fight they do everything necessary to stand apart from one another (Lee 2016). Policymakers therefore favor groups that share their goals and help their side gain and hold power (Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2023). One way groups demonstrate this alignment is by taking positions on legislation beyond the policy areas central to their missions. I refer to this behavior as *out-of-portfolio participation*. Doing so signals that a group is a reliable partner across issues that are important to the coalition rather than an advocate for its own narrow interests. The signal is credible because it is costly, strengthening a group's access to one party while narrowing it to the other (Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2023). Parties, for their part, also draw aligned groups into a wider range of policy conflicts than they would otherwise join (Fagan, McGee, and Thomas 2021).

By aligning with a party and its associated coalition of interest groups and activists (Bawn et al. 2012), groups tie their opportunities for policy influence to the electoral fortunes of the coalition. Thus, as Hacker and Pierson (2014) notes, "elections are just one means to the greater end" of securing the authority to enact preferred policies (p. 648), the central "prize" of contemporary

1. Groups also take positions in other venues through agency comments (Kerwin and Furlong 2019), advisory committees (Balla and Wright 2001), amicus briefs (Caldeira and Wright 1988), and litigation (Olson 1990).

politics. Groups therefore pursue a second tactic: shaping who governs by helping preferred candidates win office. One avenue is the through nomination process, where coalitions of organized groups and activists coordinate behind candidates with a demonstrated commitment to their shared goals (Bawn et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2008). At the state-level, the impacts of the nomination process are clear where legislative candidates have polarized sharply and contested primaries increasingly favor more extreme candidates (Handan-Nader, Myers, and Hall 2026).

A second avenue is campaign contributions where groups look to change the legislature's *ideological composition*, using there financial resources to back committed candidates in competitive races or favor the party most aligned with their goals (Cassie and Thompson 1998; Welch 1980).[2] This strategy becomes more common as groups' policy areas grow more politicized (Barber and Eatough 2020) and helps drive legislative parties toward their ideological extremes (Phillips 2024). Yet whether these efforts yield favorable electoral outcomes depends on the broader rules and procedures governing American elections.

Groups can take the rules governing who can vote, how ballots are cast, and how election results are determined as given or they can work to change them. I argue that groups do the latter and in predictable ways. Changing the rules complements everything else a group does. Favorable rules make it easier for a group's supporters to register, turn out, and cast ballots that count, raising the return on investments in campaign mobilization made through their contributions (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Hersh 2015). A contribution must be targeted to specific contests, but a rule change applies across many at once, insulating advantages for incumbents or opening opportunities for challengers (Issacharoff and Pildes 1998). In turn, the more allies groups help elect under favorable rules, the more officeholders they can subsidize with information and resources to carry out their policy goals (Hall and Deardorff 2006).

While voting rights and civil liberties organizations naturally engage when election rules are debated, out-of-portfolio participation should also be expected. Many groups act in ways consistent with the idea that election rules shape who holds office and, by extension, whether government policy reflects their interests. The American Legislative Exchange Council, known for circulating model legislation on taxes, labor, and regulation, has also promoted voter iden-

2. Contributions may instead aim to secure *access*, targeting contributions to incumbent officeholders already capable of carrying out a group's policy goals (Welch 1980; Barber 2016; Fouirnaies and Hall 2018).

tification laws, rules it sees as helping its allies win future elections (Hertel-Fernandez 2019). Republican majorities across states have pursued this strategy, enacting rules viewed as restricting access for an expanding electorate that could threaten their hold on power (Grumbach 2022). Teacher unions have opposed consolidating school board elections with higher-turnout contests because off-cycle elections increase their influence over boards and policies such as teacher pay (Anzia 2011, 2014). Coalitions of labor unions, environmental groups, civil rights organizations, and immigrant advocates have backed ranked-choice voting, multi-member districts, and state voting rights acts, expecting that these changes will empower their constituencies and help elect more officeholders receptive to their agendas.[3]

Under electoral federalism, state legislatures provide the main venue for these efforts, and groups take positions there publicly through lobbying and committee testimony. When groups from a broader coalition weigh in, they signal that a proposal matters to interests beyond the organizations that routinely work on election policy and legislators see it as meriting greater attention (Lorenz 2020). Public positions also serve as cues that help the public, policymakers, and other stakeholders infer a proposal's ideological or partisan consequences (Zaller 1992; McDermott 2006; Boudreau 2009; Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009), cues that carry particular weight when statutory language obscures what a change would do (Lupia 1994). Because a group's identity rests on whom it represents, its position also conveys what a proposal would mean for that constituency (Heaney 2004; Nicholson 2011).

Not every group takes up this strategy because public position-taking consumes resources. Lobbying and preparing testimony require staff time, expertise, and money that most organizations have committed to their core issues (Leyden 1995; Rosenthal 2001; Strickland 2020; Ellis and Groll 2020). Taking positions on election legislation also deepens a group's alignment with one party coalition (Fagan, McGee, and Thomas 2021; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2023), which can be costly for organizations whose influence depends on maintaining relationships across party lines. The returns are also uncertain as most contemporary election reforms have small effects on turnout and even smaller effects on who wins office (Grimmer and Hersh 2024). Since most proposals are unlikely to substantially alter a group's fortunes, weighing in on every one would

3. For example, the Sierra Club backed Maryland HB 334 (2023), requiring voting systems to accommodate ranked-choice elections (Sierra Club Maryland Chapter 2023) and broad coalitions signed letters supporting state voting rights acts in Connecticut, Maryland, and Michigan (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund 2023, 2025, 2024).

squander resources better spent on its primary policy work. Groups should therefore be strategic about when and where they participate.

2.3 Expectations

Changing election rules is one option on groups' menu for pursuing policy influence, consumes resources, and offers no certain return. I argue that out-of-portfolio participation is thus conditional. Groups engage when they are sufficiently *motivated*, when proposed changes are *consequential* for electoral outcomes, and when they have an established legislative *presence* that lowers the cost of action.

Groups should be most *motivated* to act on election legislation when they are frustrated with their performance in policymaking. I refer to this as *legislative frustration*, a repeated failure to achieve policy goals in which bills a group supports die and bills it opposes become law. A frustrated group can continue advocating their cause with the officeholders currently in power, or seek more favorable representation by changing the terms of electoral competition. This is a form of what Riker (1986) calls *heresthetics*—the art of political manipulation. As Shepsle (2003) highlights, political losers have the strongest incentive to do so, and the rules governing who may vote or run and how votes are cast and counted are obvious targets.

For groups, contesting the rules can mean either pursuing favorable changes or blocking changes that would weaken them further. Even groups that keep losing in their primary policy areas can still use this strategy, since losing often reflects the preferences and agenda priorities of those in power rather than a group's own weakness (Nownes 2000). In election policy, they can act alongside coalition allies with the same stake in who governs (Hula 1999), which helps because proposals backed by a broader range of interests are likelier to win legislators' consideration (Lorenz 2020). As frustration grows, so does the incentive to use this alternative route to improve future policy prospects. *Groups experiencing greater legislative frustration should therefore be more likely to take positions on election legislation and to invest greater effort when they do.*

Motivation also depends on whether groups have meaningful opportunities to participate in policymaking. Groups seek influence not only over outcomes, but over which issues reach the agenda, which alternatives receive consideration, and how policies are implemented. Minority-

aligned groups have fewer opportunities to successfully intervene in these steps, especially where legislative majority parties exercise strong agenda control and can keep proposals from the floor (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Anzia and Jackman 2013). Favorable election rules, however, can help their allies regain the majority and the gatekeeping powers that come with it. *Minority-aligned groups should therefore be especially likely to participate where the majority possesses stronger agenda-setting powers.*

These motivations should translate into participation where election rules could plausibly affect who governs. Because most individual rule changes have limited electoral consequences, *groups should concentrate their efforts where control of government is closely contested* and proposed changes are therefore most *consequential*. Parties and politicians follow the same logic, leaving the rules alone while they serve them and rewriting them when new voters or new competitors make their hold on power insecure (Boix 1999; Colomer 2004; Teele 2018). Groups that keep losing likewise have little reason to spend scarce resources where rule changes cannot affect who governs, and more reason to act where the payoff could be greater. *Frustrated groups should therefore be likeliest to take action on election legislation where competition is greatest.*

Additionally, groups are more likely to act when they have an established legislative *presence*. Groups already active in a state have lobbyists in place, monitor legislation, and maintain relationships with legislators and staff (Holyoke 2003). Extending that activity to one more issue requires relatively little additional effort. *Groups that regularly testify and lobby in a state should thus be more likely to extend that activity to election legislation.*

Once groups decide to participate, their positions should reflect the perceived electoral interests of their broader coalitions. In the United States, those interests have long followed a clear ideological and partisan pattern: Democrats and their liberal allies are believed to benefit from an expanded electorate and Republicans and their conservative allies from a restricted one. Whether the rules still work this way is another matter, as Stephanopoulos (2025) argues that the premise behind these positions—namely, that low-propensity voters lean Democratic—no longer holds. Consequently, expansive and restrictive changes to election policy often have unclear or unexpected effects. State policymaking nonetheless continues to follow the common assumption. Voter identification laws and other restrictive measures are adopted overwhelmingly when Republicans gain control of state government, and more readily as a state's Black and Latino pop-

ulations grow (Bentele and O'Brien 2013; Biggers and Hanmer 2017; Morris 2023). Meanwhile, expansions such as early voting (Biggers and Hanmer 2015) and same-day registration (Caron 2022) are often adopted by Democratic majorities.[4] Groups should therefore evaluate election legislation through these same perceived coalition interests: *liberal groups should support expansive election legislation and oppose restrictive legislation; conservative groups should do the reverse.*

Group participation, finally, should be associated with distinct legislative outcomes, though these relationships require careful interpretation. Public positions may influence legislators by serving as cues that divide parties or groups may instead recognize fights already dividing legislators and join them, reinforcing what those positions mean for their coalitions. Observational data cannot easily distinguish influence from this strategic selection. Either way, *where groups divide over election legislation, legislators should be more cleanly divided by party*. This pattern holds within Congress, where votes pitting groups against their own party's leadership show weaker party cohesion (Harbridge-Yong and Snead 2025). Whether bills are enacted depends on the balance of group support and opposition, with lobbying against a bill weighing more heavily than lobbying for it (Butler and Miller 2022) and broad lobbying coalitions able to help advance bills the majority party would otherwise block (Kistner and Shor 2022). *A bill should therefore be most viable when groups support it, particularly when those groups are aligned with the party governing the state, and least viable when groups oppose it*. Taken together, these expectations cast organized groups as a link between party coalitions and the politicization of election policy.

3 Data

Examining when and how groups participate in election policymaking, as well as the legislative outcomes associated with their participation, requires data on introduced legislation and the positions organized groups take on that legislation. This section provides an overview of how relevant legislation is identified and classified, legislative records are collected, and group positions are captured using committee testimony records and lobbying disclosures.

4. Earlier convenience reforms showed little partisan pattern (Biggers and Hanmer 2015). Partisan control began shaping reform only after 2000 (Bali and Silver 2006; Bowler and Donovan 2016). The national party platforms stake out the same ground (Democratic National Committee 2020; Republican National Committee 2016; Stark 2026).

3.1 Election Legislation

Identification and Collection To identify election legislation introduced in state legislatures, I rely on legislative trackers produced by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Voting Rights Lab (VRL).[5] Each tracker tags bills with their date of introduction and the areas of election policy they affect, which I collapse into seven categories comparable across states and time, with illustrative examples in parentheses: *Absentee Voting and Vote-by-Mail* (ballot eligibility, distribution, and return), *Administration* (election officials' organization, funding, and duties), *Election Integrity* (counting, audits, security, and enforcement), *Logistics* (early voting, polling places, and voter information), *Voter Identification* (ID and proof-of-citizenship requirements), *Voter Registration* (eligibility, methods, and list maintenance), and *Campaign & Party* (ballot access, party organization, and primaries). For each bill, I collect its full text, list of sponsors, legislative status, and, where available, roll-call votes.[6]

Evaluating the Effect of Election Legislation Understanding how election legislation is likely to be perceived by stakeholders and policymakers requires assessing how a proposal would alter existing election policy within a state. I classify legislation according to its effect on voter access and the quality of election administration. This is consistent with previous scholarship and mirrors how experts and stakeholders discuss and evaluate election legislation.[7] I evaluate each bill in its entirety, coding them as *Expansive/Improves* if they lower barriers to participation or enhance the capacity or professionalization of election administration; *Restrictive/Worsens* if they raise barriers to participation or diminish administrative quality; *Mixed/Unclear* if they combine offsetting effects across policy areas or consist primarily of narrow technical changes; and *Neutral* if they affect neither dimension.[8] Because ratings are based on provisions affecting voter access and election administration, *Campaign & Party* provisions are excluded from the rating process.

To scale this evaluation to the full corpus of legislation, I use the three-step procedure outlined in Figure 1. States use different markup conventions to show how a bill would change

5. See Appendix Section A for how relevant legislation was identified.
6. See Appendix Sections B and C.1 for how these records were collected.
7. James and Stewart (2022), Springer (2014), and Brennan Center (2026) code election laws by whether they expand or restrict access. The expert-coded tracker of VRL (2026) rates both access and administrative quality.
8. See Appendix Section C.2 for the rating schema and Appendix Section C.3 for separate access and administration ratings. Key results are robust to rating each separately.

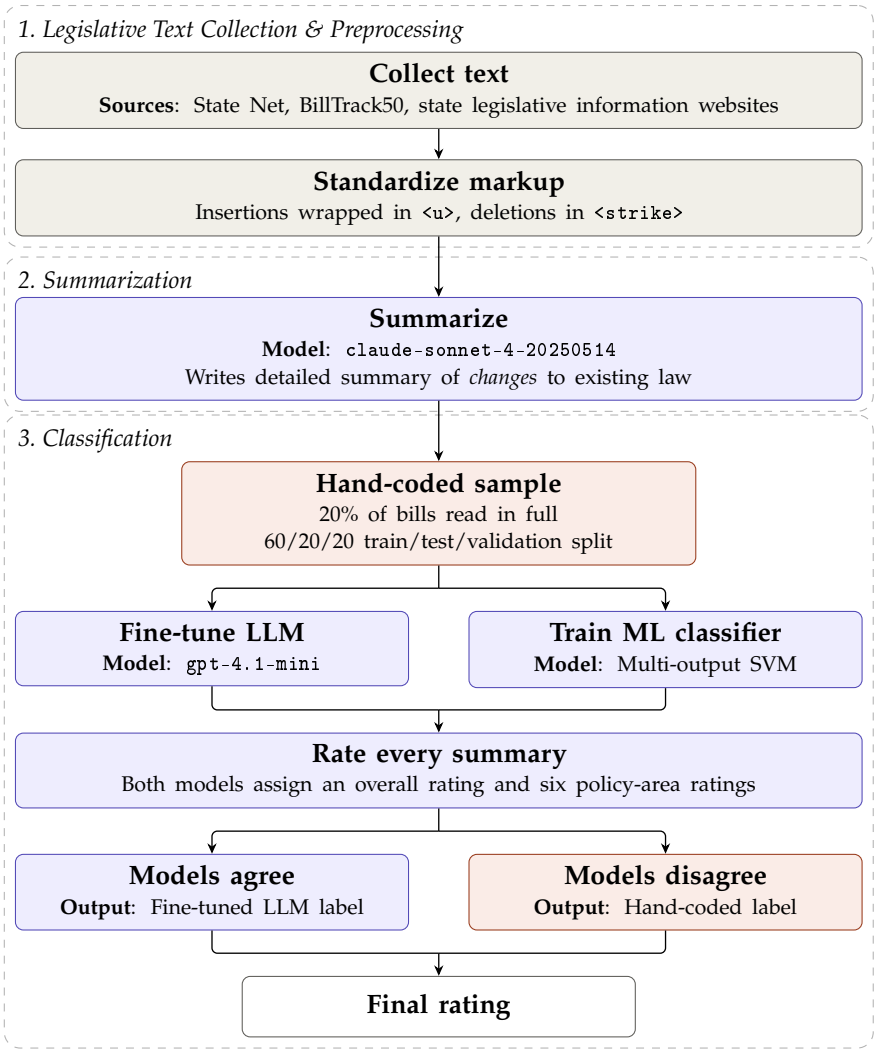

Figure 1: **Automated Approach for Evaluating the Effect of Election Legislation**. The three-step pipeline classifying legislation as *Expansive/Improves*, *Restrictive/Worsens*, *Mixed/Unclear*, or *Neutral*.

existing law, most commonly striking deleted language and underlining added language (NCSL 2026). I collect each bill's text so that this markup is preserved.[9] A large language model (LLM, Anthropic's `claude-sonnet-4-20250514`) then summarizes the changes each bill makes to existing election law.[10] Finally, each summary is classified by two independent models—a fine-tuned LLM (OpenAI's `gpt-4.1-mini`) and a multi-output support vector machine—trained on the 20% of election legislation that research assistants read and hand-coded in full. When the classifiers agree, I use the fine-tuned model's rating; when they disagree, research assistants assign the

9. See Appendix Section C.1.

10. LLMs perform well on summarization though remain susceptible to hallucinations (Goyal, Li, and Durrett 2022; Zhang, Yu, and Zhang 2025). An earlier model in this family produces summaries of higher human-like quality than comparable models (Janakiraman and Ghoraani 2025).

Table 1: **Data Collection and Record Coverage for Group Positions**

State	Record Type	Chambers	Coverage	Source
AZ	Testimony	Both	2006–2024	CHORUS
CA	Testimony	Both	1995–2024	Legislature
CO	Lobbying, Testimony	Both	2003–2024	CHORUS
FL	Testimony	House	2004–2023	CHORUS
IA	Lobbying	Both	2009–2024	CHORUS
IL	Testimony	Both	2013–2024	CHORUS
KS	Testimony	Both	2014–2022	CHORUS
MA	Lobbying	Both	2010–2021	CHORUS
MD	Testimony	Both	2020–2024	CHORUS
MO	Testimony	Both	2003–2022	CHORUS
MT	Lobbying, Testimony	Both	2006–2021	CHORUS
NE	Lobbying	Unicameral	2000–2024	CHORUS
NJ	Lobbying	Both	2014–2024	CHORUS
NV	Testimony	Both	2001–2023	Legislature
OH	Testimony	Both	2015–2024	CHORUS
OR	Testimony	Both	2013–2024	Legislature
RI	Lobbying	Both	2018–2024	CHORUS
SD	Testimony	Both	1997–2024	CHORUS
TX	Testimony	Both	1997–2023	CHORUS
UT	Testimony	Both	2002–2024	Legislature
WA	Testimony	Both	1995–2024	Legislature
WI	Lobbying	Both	2002–2024	CHORUS

Note: "CHORUS" records were collected by Hall et al. (2024). "Legislature" records come from committee reports on state legislative websites. More details provided in Appendix Table D-5.

rating manually, thus reserving human coding only for contested cases (an approach consistent with Heseltine and Von Hohenberg 2024). This procedure yields an overall rating for each bill as well as area-specific ratings, each evaluating how the bill changes access or administration. The analyses that follow rely on the overall rating, with the area-specific ratings reserved for validation. The ratings perform well, with 86.5% accuracy for the overall rating on a held-out validation set and 74.9% agreement with the VRL's expert ratings on the bills both rate.[11]

3.2 Group Positions

To identify whether organized groups support or oppose legislation, I rely on records from the Dataset on Policy Choice and Organizational Representation in the United States (CHORUS) (Hall et al. 2024), supplemented with committee records (bill analyses and hearing minutes documenting group positions) that I collect from legislative information sites in five additional states. Table 1 summarizes these records, which cover 22 states beginning as early as 1995.[12] These states are representative of the country and provide variation in partisan control, electoral competitive-

11. Appendix Section C.4 presents model testing comparisons and evaluation metrics. The overall rating achieves an F_1 score of 0.85 on the held-out validation set. Appendix Section C.5 reports full validation metrics. Chance-corrected agreement with the VRL is $\kappa = 0.59$, moderate to substantial by conventional benchmarks.

12. See Appendix Section D.1 for collection details.

ness, and legislative professionalization.[13] Whether observed through lobbying disclosures or committee testimony, these records capture public and costly acts of position-taking.[14] Bills attracting positions resemble the full universe in rating and policy-area composition, but are more often bipartisan and nearly twice as likely to be enacted.[15] Across analyses, I use the *last* position (support, oppose, or neutral/monitoring) a group takes on a bill. Because groups may revise positions as legislation is amended, the final position reflects a group's assessment of legislation in its final form and what legislators observe when deciding whether it becomes law.

For Wisconsin, I supplement group positions records collected by CHORUS with legislation-level lobbying effort data from the Wisconsin Ethics Commission's lobbying disclosure system where registered groups must report the hours lobbyists devote to specific legislative proposals.[16] Because groups may register positions without devoting lobbyist hours, these records distinguish pure position-taking from costly lobbying activity. I use these data to measure the intensity of participation as the share of its lobbying hours a group devotes to election legislation in a session.

To prepare these records for analysis, I standardize organization names, classify each group's organizational type, and identify its primary policy area. Standardizing names allows participation to be tracked consistently across states and over time and treats federated organizations as a single entity. Groups are classified as *Advocacy*, *Government*, or *Political*; my analyses exclude government actors. A group's primary policy area determines whether election legislation falls within its portfolio. Groups whose primary area is *Civil Rights & Constitutional Issues* or *Elections & Voting* are classified as in-portfolio; for all others, election legislation is out-of-portfolio.[17]

To test whether groups' positions align with their broader coalitions, I also require a measure of group ideology. I construct ideal point estimates from groups' positions across *all* legislation, not only election bills, introduced in the sample states. Following Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz (2020), I estimate a Bayesian item response theory (IRT) model within each state that places groups and legislators on a common ideological scale using the bills groups support or oppose, legislators' roll-call votes on those bills, and which legislators sponsor them. To make estimates

13. See Appendix Table D-6 and Figure D-2 for comparisons with all states and within-state variation.
14. These records omit other forms of engagement (press statements, online advocacy, private coalition activity), so my results likely understate group engagement.
15. See Appendix Table D-7 for the full comparison.
16. See Appendix Section D.2.
17. See Appendix Section D.3 for details. For nonprofits, I also attach organizational capacity measures based on data collected from IRS Form 990 filings.

comparable across states, I regress legislators' common space scores from Shor and McCarty (2011) and Shor (2025) on their state-specific estimates. I then use predicted values from these regressions to translate group ideal point estimates to the common space scale.[18] Legislator estimates correlate strongly with their Shor–McCarty scores ($r = 0.91$) and group estimates correlate well with existing measures of group ideology ($r = 0.61$–0.86).[19]

Finally, I use groups' full position-taking record to measure their legislative success and partisan lean. A position is a *success* when the bill's outcome matches the group's stated preference (supported bills enacted, opposed bills defeated). Thus, a group's success rate in a biennium is the share of its positions that succeed.[20] A position *aligns* with the Democratic Party if it supports a Democratic-sponsored bill or opposes a Republican-sponsored one, and with the Republican Party in the mirror-image cases. A group's lean, across all its positions, is Democratic when Democratic-aligned positions outnumber Republican-aligned ones and Republican when the reverse holds. Where analyses locate groups relative to the party in control of government, I compare this lean to the party, if any, holding a *trifecta* (unified control of both chambers and the governorship). A group is *majority-aligned* in bienniums where its lean matches the governing party and *minority-aligned* where it does not, with divided-government bienniums a separate category.[21]

4 Analysis

In this section, I present analyses that examine (1) the out-of-portfolio groups taking action on election policy, (2) the conditions in which they take action, (3) the substantive positions they take on legislative proposals, and (4) how their participation relates to legislative outcomes. For each analysis, I present its empirical approach and corresponding results.

18. Groups active in multiple states receive the average of their state scores, weighted by the share of their positions in each state. See Appendix Section D.4 for estimation and validation details.

19. DIME CFscores (Bonica 2024) ($r = 0.61$), IGscores (Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2020) ($r = 0.80$), and Thieme (2020)'s lobbying-based estimates ($r = 0.86$).

20. See Appendix Section D.5 for measurement details.

21. Divided government is the baseline because there is no single governing party to compare a group's lean against. See Appendix Figure D-4 for a descriptive summary.

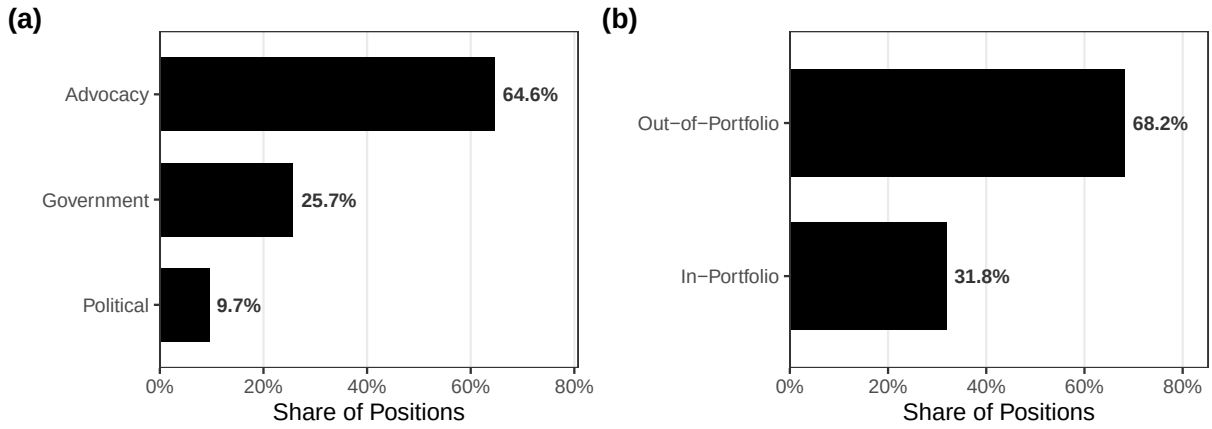

Figure 2: **Summary of Groups Taking Action on State Election Legislation**. Panel (a) shows the share of all positions by advocacy, government, and political groups. Panel (b) shows, among non-government groups, the share of positions from in-portfolio versus out-of-portfolio groups, where in-portfolio groups have *Civil Rights & Constitutional Issues* or *Elections & Voting* as their primary policy area.

4.1 Which Organized Groups Participate in Election Policy?

Before examining what drives organized groups to engage in election policymaking, I provide an overview of the ecosystem of groups that take part in lobbying or providing testimony on election legislation in Figure 2. As shown in panel (a), governmental representatives (election administrators, elected officials, and agency heads and employees) account for 25.7% of total recorded positions. The remainder consists of advocacy and political groups, which are the focus of this paper. Among these non-governmental actors, panel (b) shows that only 31.8% of recorded positions come from in-portfolio groups whose primary policy focus is election policy itself. This means that when legislators receive input from organized groups on state election legislation, nearly seven in ten positions come from groups whose core work lies elsewhere, underscoring the prevalence and potential importance of out-of-portfolio participation.

In Appendix Table E-8, I provide further information about these groups, along with examples. Although they represent a range of interests, roughly four-fifths come from six issue areas: health and public health, local and state government, business and commerce, judiciary and law enforcement, education, and labor. Among advocacy groups, policy and issue-advocacy organizations and industry and trade associations are the most common organizational types, together accounting for more than half. Appendix Figure E-5 details the dynamics of out-of-portfolio

participation over time, showing a general increase in the share of out-of-portfolio groups taking a position on election legislation.

4.2 When Do Organized Groups Participate in Election Policy?

Having established the types of groups engaged in state election policymaking, I now turn to the question of *when* organized groups take action. To do so, I construct a panel of group-state-biennium observations covering every period in which a group could have participated. Groups enter when state coverage begins or when they first take a position on *any* legislation in the state (not only election bills), whichever comes later, and remain through their last observed activity in any state. Bienniums with no position are coded as non-participation.

This structure lets me model participation as a function of time-varying group and state characteristics. Each of the three analyses that follow estimates a fixed-effects linear probability model of the form:

$$\text{Participation}_{gst} = \beta_1 x_{gst} + \alpha_g + \gamma_s + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{gst}. \tag{1}$$

where $\text{Participation}_{gst}$ takes a value of 1 if group g took a position on at least one piece of election legislation introduced in state s during biennium t, and 0 otherwise. The analyses differ in the explanatory variable x_{gst}: state electoral competitiveness, a group's established legislative presence, and its legislative frustration, each defined below. Group fixed effects (α_g) ensure that identification comes from within-group changes in participation over time, while state (γ_s) and biennium (δ_t) fixed effects account for persistent differences across states and common temporal shocks. Standard errors are clustered by group throughout.

4.2.1 Groups Participate When and Where Elections are Close

I first examine the effect of electoral competition on a group's propensity to take action on election legislation. Here the variable of interest is Competition_{st}, defined as one minus the average margin of victory in the most recent presidential and gubernatorial elections in the state, capturing how closely contested recent statewide elections were. I estimate this specification first for participation on any election legislation, then separately for legislation pertaining to each area of election policy (e.g., absentee and mail voting, voter identification).

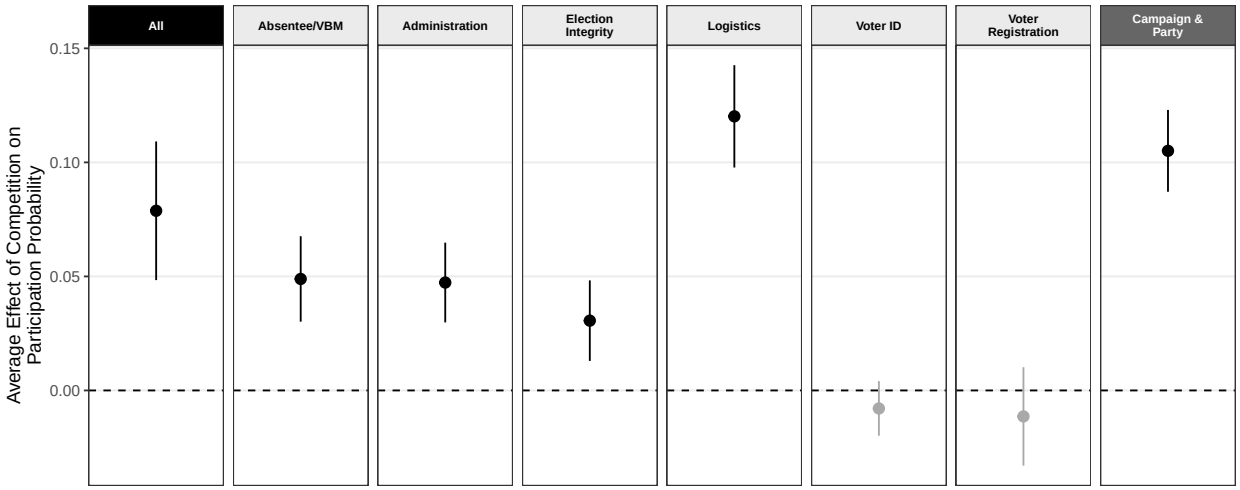

Figure 3: **Average Marginal Effect of Increased Electoral Competition on Out-of-Portfolio Group Participation**. Points show the average change in the predicted probability of taking a position in a biennium when competition rises from 0.5 to 1, pooled (first panel) and by policy area. Estimates not statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$ are shown in gray. Standard errors clustered by group. Full estimates in Appendix Table E-9(a).

Figure 3 summarizes the results, displaying the average change in the predicted probability that a group takes action on election legislation in a given biennium associated with an increase in statewide electoral competition from 0.5 to 1 (i.e., from a 50-point margin of victory to a tied election). Complete estimates from these models are shown in Appendix Table E-9(a).

As shown, statewide electoral competition is a statistically significant predictor of out-of-portfolio participation across *all* election legislation, with the shift from 0.5 to 1 associated with a 7.9 percentage point (pp) increase in the probability of taking action. Out-of-portfolio participation is thus strategic. Groups mobilize where and when electoral stakes are highest and the perceived impact of election policy is greatest. The pattern holds across most areas of election policy: *Absentee Voting and Vote-by-Mail* (4.9 pp), *Administration* (4.7 pp), *Election Integrity* (3.1 pp), *Logistics* (12.0 pp), and *Campaign & Party* (10.5 pp). The exceptions are *Voter Identification* and *Voter Registration*, where competition has a negligible and statistically insignificant effect. This is perhaps unsurprising. Voter ID bills feature among the most overtly partisan and racially charged debates in election policy (Bentele and O'Brien 2013; Hicks et al. 2015; Morris 2023; Coll and Clark 2024), and precisely because these debates are morally framed and nationally coordinated (Conover and Miller 2018; Hertel-Fernandez 2019), groups take action whenever such legislation is on the agenda, regardless of the electoral context.

In Appendix Section E.2, I present two supplemental analyses. First, interacting Competition_{st} with an indicator for the period after the 2020 U.S. election shows that competition's effect on participation has shifted. Its effect weakens in the areas that had previously driven it (*Campaign & Party*, *Logistics*, *Administration*) while strengthening (or reversing from negative to positive) in the areas at the center of the nationalized post-2020 fight over voting rules (*Absentee Voting and Vote-by-Mail*, *Election Integrity*, *Voter Identification*, *Voter Registration*).[22] Second, this responsiveness to political context is not unique to out-of-portfolio groups. In-portfolio groups' participation is predicted by competition just as strongly, and the difference between the two is not significant at conventional levels.[23] Thus, it appears that groups of all kinds engage more when electoral rules are perceived to have greater potential to shape electoral outcomes.

4.2.2 Legislative Presence Drives Participation; Frustration Matters Conditionally

The preceding analysis shows how the political environment draws groups into election policy-making. Next, I turn attention from the political context to groups' internal motivations, asking whether their legislative experience explains participation by examining two variables of interest.

First, Presence_{gst}, measured as the total number of bills on which a group took a position in the previous legislative biennium.[24] Second, Frustration_{gst}, measured as the share of the group's positions within its primary policy area that did not succeed in the previous legislative biennium. Because the value of contesting the rules of the game depends on how contested elections themselves are, I estimate the effect of frustration both directly and conditional on the electoral competition measure introduced above. Additionally, to capture whether a group's frustration reflects an inability to move its priorities into active legislative consideration, I test whether minority-aligned groups participate more where the majority party more tightly controls the agenda. I measure agenda control with an additive index of majority-party gatekeeping powers built from indicators collected by Anzia and Jackman (2013), where larger values indicate a stronger capacity to keep bills from the floor.[25]

22. See Appendix Table E-9(b).
23. See Appendix Table E-10.
24. The count enters models as the log of one plus its value.
25. Anzia and Jackman (2013) document six committee and calendar institutions that let majority parties block bills from the floor. I sum them within each chamber and average across a state's chambers, yielding an index from 0 to 6. Though dated, these remain the best systematic measure of state majority-party power.

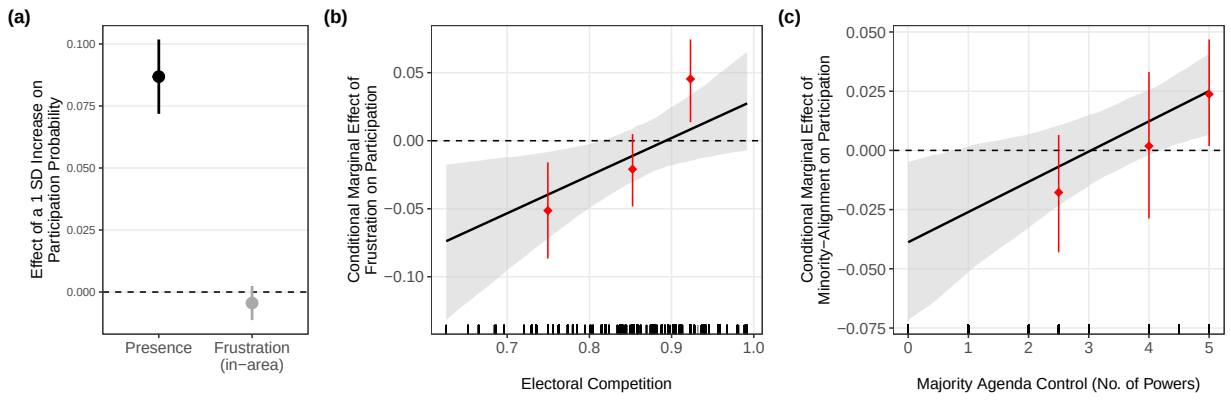

Figure 4: **Effects of Presence and Frustration on Participation**. Panel (a) shows the average change in participation probability associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in presence and in in-area frustration, estimated jointly in a linear probability model. Panels (b) and (c) show the conditional marginal effects of in-area frustration across electoral competition and of minority-alignment across majority agenda control. Lines and bands are linear-interaction estimates with 95% confidence intervals, red diamonds are binning estimates (Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu 2019). All models include group, state, and biennium fixed effects, with standard errors clustered by group. Full estimates in Appendix Table E-11.

I summarize the results in Figure 4 and provide complete estimates in Appendix Table E-11. From a model with both Presence_{gst} and Frustration_{gst} as explanatory variables, panel (a) displays the average change in the predicted probability of group participation associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in each variable. It is clear that already having a legislative presence is a key factor in explaining when groups take action on election legislation. A one-standard-deviation increase in Presence_{gst} is associated with an 8.7 pp increase in the probability of participation.[26] Frustration_{gst}, by contrast, has no direct effect. The corresponding estimate is a fraction of a percentage point and statistically indistinguishable from zero.

Following the expectations outlined above though, I test whether frustration's effects on participation are conditional. Panel (b) of Figure 4 visualizes estimates from a model that includes an interaction between Frustration_{gst} and Competition_{st}, showing the conditional marginal effect of frustration across the observed range of electoral competition (the corresponding estimates appear in column 2 of Appendix Table E-11). These models retain the fixed effects and clustering of Equation 1 and control for presence. The solid line shows the conditional marginal effect implied by the linear interaction model, which rises steadily with competition. Frustration

26. See Appendix Table E-12, which reports estimates from participation models that add financial-capacity measures from groups' IRS Form 990 filings as covariates. None positively predicts participation, and the presence coefficient is essentially unchanged.

depresses participation where statewide elections are lopsided but becomes a positive predictor as they become more closely contested on average. Because linear interactions can manufacture such a pattern by extrapolating beyond the support of the data, I overlay estimates from the binning estimator of Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2019), which splits the sample into terciles of competition and estimates the effect of frustration within each.[27] As illustrated, the marginal effect of frustration is negative in the least competitive tercile (-5.1 pp), indistinguishable from zero in the middle tercile, and positive and significant in the most competitive tercile ($+4.5$ pp). Frustrated groups, in other words, turn to election policy only where elections are close enough such that rewriting the rules could plausibly change who wins.

Panel (c) turns from whether a group has *lost* to whether it is institutionally disadvantaged, plotting the conditional marginal effect of minority-party alignment across the agenda-control index.[28] The pattern mirrors panel (b). Where the majority holds few gatekeeping powers, minority alignment does not distinguish which groups act, and the binned estimates are negative but imprecise in the lowest tercile and indistinguishable from zero at intermediate levels. At the top of the index, however, minority-aligned groups become significantly *more* likely to participate ($+2.4$ pp). Thus, groups are motivated to contest the rules where the majority can most shut them out of the policymaking process.

4.2.3 Lobbying Hours in Wisconsin as a Measure of Effort Intensity

The analyses above measure participation as a binary outcome. Wisconsin allows me to examine how intensively groups participate, since its disclosure system reports bill-specific lobbying hours. The state is also a useful setting for analysis as it is among the most consistently competitive state in the sample and has had substantial variation in partisan control. Notably, lobbying hours on election legislation in Wisconsin rose sharply in 2011–12 under unified Republican control and again in 2021–22 amid nationalized conflict over election rules.[29] In my analysis, I estimate group fixed-effects models relating legislative frustration to three outcomes: (1) whether a group takes any position on election legislation, (2) the share of its lobbying hours allocated

27. Implemented using the `interflex` R package (Xu et al. 2026).
28. See Appendix Table E-11, column 4, for the corresponding estimates. Columns 5 and 6 show the interaction is robust to controlling for competition and in-area frustration.
29. See Appendix Figure E-6 for these trends.

Table 2: **Election Lobbying Activity Among Out-of-Portfolio Groups in Wisconsin**

	Participation	Prop. Allocated	log(Hours)
Frustration	0.028*	0.007*	0.097**
	(0.013)	(0.003)	(0.031)
Presence (Hours)	-0.004	-0.000	0.007
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.007)
Presence (Positions)	0.018+	-0.002	0.004
	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.017)
State Government: Democratic Trifecta	-0.000	-0.003*	-0.035+
	(0.013)	(0.001)	(0.019)
State Government: Republican Trifecta	0.019*	0.002	0.031
	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.022)
N	3,016	2,783	3,016
R^2	0.478	0.321	0.323
FE: Group	X	X	X

Note: Session lobbying-effort reports from `lobbying.wi.gov`; the unit is the group-biennium and all models include group fixed effects, with standard errors clustered by group. Outcomes: any position on election legislation (Participation), share of lobbying hours devoted to election bills (Prop. Allocated), and log lobbying hours on election bills (log(Hours)). Frustration is the share of prior-biennium positions that did not succeed; Presence (Hours) and Presence (Positions) are logs of one plus prior-biennium hours and positions; trifecta indicators are relative to divided government. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

to election bills, and (3) its total election-lobbying hours. The models control for prior lobbying presence and partisan control of state government.[30]

As shown in Table 2, the results are consistent with the frustration mechanism. Frustrated groups are more likely to take a position on election legislation (column 1), devote a larger share of their total lobbying hours to it (column 2), and log more hours in absolute terms (column 3).[31] Thus, the additional hours frustrated groups devote to election legislation do not simply reflect an overall expansion of their lobbying, but a reallocation of effort toward election policy.

4.3 Do Groups Take Expected Positions on Election Legislation?

Having established when organized groups take action on election legislation, I now turn to the question of *which* positions they take. Throughout this section, I classify a group's stance on a bill as *pro-expansion* if it supports a bill rated *Expansive/Improves* or opposes one rated *Restrictive/Worsens*, and *pro-restriction* if it opposes an expansive bill or supports a restrictive one.[32]

As shown in Appendix Figure E-7, out-of-portfolio position-taking leans heavily pro-

30. Biennium fixed effects are omitted so the models can estimate the direct effect of partisan control. Appendix Table E-13 adds them, and the frustration–hours effect persists.

31. The Republican trifecta indicator also predicts participation, consistent with mobilization during Wisconsin's unified Republican government in the 2010s. The frustration effects attenuate only when the 2011–12 and 2021–22 sessions are dropped (Appendix Table E-13).

32. For brevity, I refer to *Expansive/Improves* bills as "expansive" and *Restrictive/Worsens* bills as "restrictive."

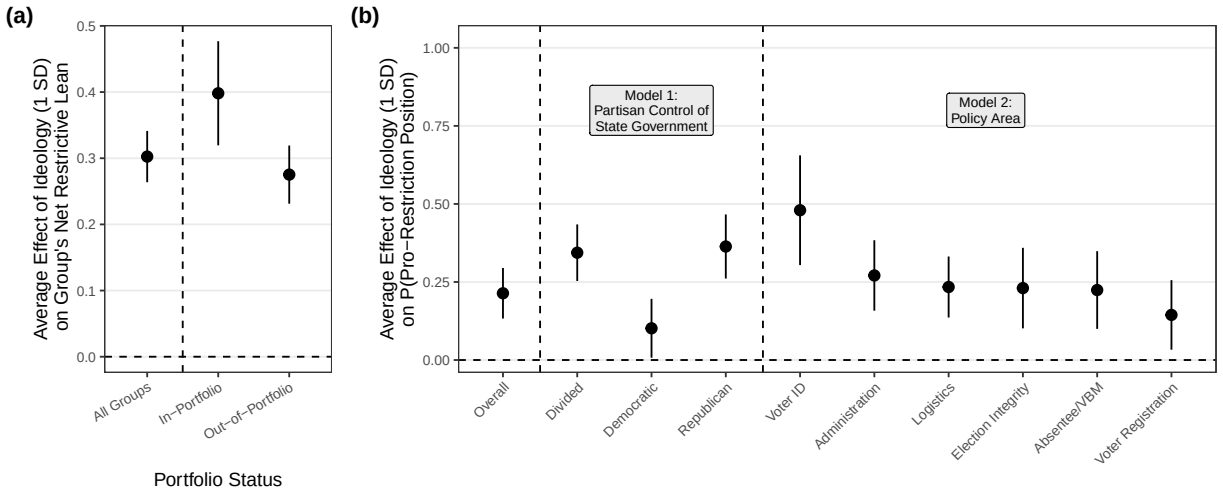

Figure 5: **Group Position-taking as a Function of Ideology**. Panel (a) shows the change in a group's net restrictive lean (pro-restriction minus pro-expansion positions) from a one-standard-deviation (conservative) increase in ideology. Panel (b) shows the change in the probability of a pro-restriction position from the same increase, estimated from position-level models: the overall effect, then the effect by partisan control of state government (Model 1) and by policy area (Model 2), with dashed rules separating the three sets of estimates. Full estimates in Appendix Table E-14.

expansion. Among positions in which groups take a clear stance (i.e., excluding neutral positions and bills rated *Mixed/Unclear*), 56% support expansive legislation and another 23% oppose restrictive legislation, though the balance between them shifts with the legislative agenda. In the 2021–22 biennium, opposition to restrictive legislation surged to 42% of all clear stances as the post-2020 wave of restrictive proposals pushed pro-expansion groups onto the defensive. The division also falls along partisan lines as Democratic-leaning groups take pro-expansion positions 86% of the time, while a majority of positions from Republican-leaning groups (54%) are pro-restriction.

If groups view expansive election policies as benefiting liberal coalitions and restrictive policies as benefiting conservative ones, this is exactly the sorting we should expect. To test this directly, I model the positions groups take as a function of their ideology.

I first begin at the group level, regressing a group's net restrictive lean (share of its positions that are pro-restriction minus the share that are pro-expansion) on its ideal point estimate. As shown in panel (a) of Figure 5, a one-standard-deviation increase in ideology is associated with an average 30-point shift in net restrictive lean. The average shift for out-of-portfolio groups

(28 points) is only modestly weaker than for in-portfolio groups (40 points). Out-of-portfolio positions are thus structured similarly to groups whose work centers on election policy.

Next, I switch the unit of analysis to the bill level, asking whether this pattern holds within individual bills and across contexts. I estimate linear probability models of the form:

$$\text{Pro-Restriction}_{bgt} = \beta_1 \text{Ideology}_g + \beta_2 \left(\text{Ideology}_g \times M \right) + \eta_b + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{bgt} \tag{2}$$

where $\text{Pro-Restriction}_{bgt}$ equals 1 if group g's position on bill b in biennium t is pro-restriction and 0 if it is pro-expansion, and Ideology_g is the group's ideal point estimate. The legislation fixed effects (η_b) absorb differences in bill content, so the ideology effect is estimated from groups taking opposite sides of the *same* bill. Standard errors are clustered by group and legislation. The moderator M is a state-biennium indicator of partisan control of state government or a bill-level indicator for a policy area, and is omitted from the overall specification. I report the average marginal effect of a one-standard-deviation increase in ideology, overall and within each level of the moderator, in panel (b) of Figure 5.

As illustrated in panel (b), a one-standard-deviation increase in ideology raises the probability of taking a pro-restriction position by an average of 21.4 pp overall, and the effect is positive and statistically significant under every configuration of state government.[33] The same panel interacts ideology with an indicator for each policy area and reports the resulting slope on that area's bills, showing that it is positive in all six. Position-taking is most explained by group ideology on voter ID bills, the area most associated with partisan conflict over election rules, and pairwise tests show the voter ID effect significantly exceeds that of every other area.[34] Thus, it appears ideology is predictive of position-taking regardless of political context or the content of legislation.

33. See Appendix Table E-15(a) and Table E-15(b) for robustness. The estimate is essentially unchanged on near-universal-coverage bienniums, within both rating dimensions, and framed as support versus opposition.

34. Each test estimates Equation 2 with a voter ID indicator as the moderator on bills tagged with exactly one area of the pair, retaining its fixed effects and clustering. The voter ID effect is 24–34 pp larger ($p < 0.05$ throughout).

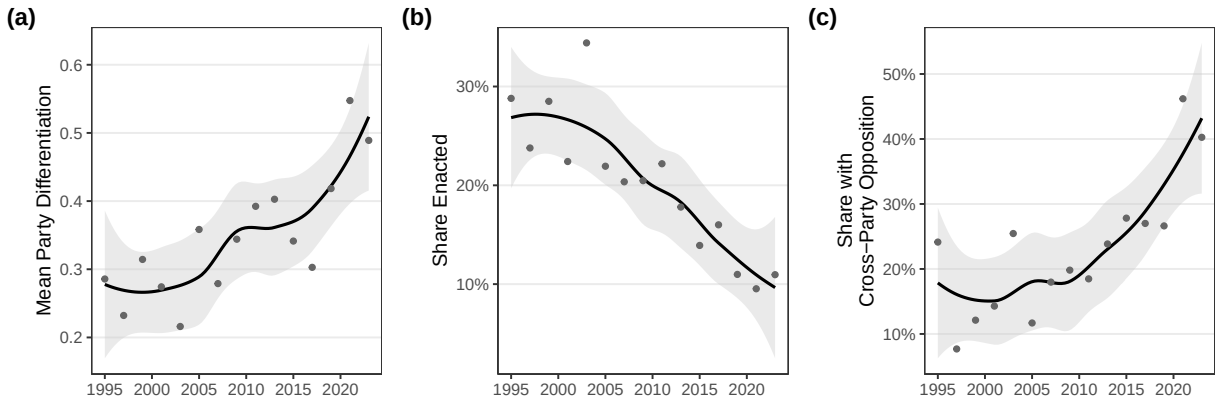

Figure 6: **Legislative Outcomes on Election Legislation Over Time**. Mean party differentiation on final-passage votes (a), share of election bills enacted (b), and rate at which Democratic- or Republican-sponsored bills draw opposition from out-of-portfolio groups aligned with the other party (c). Points are biennium means at each biennium's first year. Lines are loess trends with 95% confidence bands.

4.4 How Does Group Contestation Relate to Legislative Outcomes?

Finally, I turn to how out-of-portfolio group participation relates to legislative deliberations over state election policy, focusing on two outcomes. First, I consider whether legislation is signed into law: Enacted_{bst} equals 1 if bill b introduced in state s and biennium t becomes law, and 0 otherwise. Second, I examine the partisanship of legislator support for election legislation, asking whether group participation is associated with legislators of each party voting more differently from one another. Following Garlick (2022) and Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz (2023), I construct $\text{Party Differentiation}_{bst}$, a roll-call measure capturing this divergence between Democratic and Republican legislators on final-passage votes for bill b. For each vote, I calculate each party's unity, the balance of yea over nay votes among its members, and take the absolute difference between the two parties. The measure ranges from 0 (the parties vote identically) to 1 (maximal partisan separation).[35]

Figure 6 contextualizes both outcomes, showing that since the late 1990s, average party differentiation on election legislation has nearly doubled while the share of bills enacted has fallen by more than half (panels a–b). Over the same period, the rate at which legislators' bills draw opposition from groups aligned with the other party has risen in similar fashion, from about a

35. Party unity for party P is $\text{PU}_P = \frac{V_{YP}-V_{NP}}{V_{YP}+V_{NP}}$, where V_{YP} and V_{NP} count its members' yea and nay votes. $\text{Party Differentiation}_{bst}$ ranges from -1 (unified opposition) to $+1$ (unified support) and is a modified version of the metric introduced by Rice (1925).

quarter of bills over the 2010s to 46% in 2021–22 (panel c). Underlying these trends is a clear pattern in which legislation groups support and which they oppose. Expansive bills draw only support 65% of the time, while restrictive bills draw opposition or positions on both sides 83% of the time. The sorting falls along partisan lines, with 72% of Republican-sponsored restrictive bills drawing opposition from Democratic-leaning groups and 78% of Democratic-sponsored expansive bills drawing their support.[36] The following analysis asks whether this engagement is associated with how partisan roll-call voting is and how likely a bill is to become law.

I model each outcome with bill-level fixed-effects linear regressions of the form:

$$Y_{bst} = \beta_1 \,\text{Engagement}_b + \beta_2 \,\text{Bipartisan}_b + \beta_3 \,\text{Rating}_b + \lambda' \,\mathbf{Z}_{st} + \phi_s + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{bst} \tag{3}$$

where Engagement_b classifies each bill's out-of-portfolio engagement in one of four categories: no out-of-portfolio positions (the reference category), support only, opposition only, or groups on both sides. Bipartisan_b indicates the bills was sponsored by legislators from both parties; Rating_b classifies legislation as *Expansive/Improves*, *Restrictive/Worsens*, or *Mixed/Unclear* (bills rated *Neutral* are excluded); and $\mathbf{Z}_{st}$ collects electoral competition and partisan control of state government. All models include state and biennium fixed effects, with standard errors clustered by state. The party-differentiation models are estimated on bills that receive a final-passage roll call.

One point of interpretation applies throughout. Because groups choose which bills to engage, these estimates capture whether groups take positions in a manner *consistent* with how legislators act on the same legislation. Engagement may shape how legislators vote and whether bills pass, or groups may join fights already primed to divide legislators, as a bill's partisan implications may be apparent from who introduced it. Importantly, groups largely take positions before legislators cast roll-call votes. On 90% of bills with dated positions, the first out-of-portfolio position arrives before final passage, and on 51% it arrives between committee referral and the first recorded vote (Appendix Table E-20).

In panel (a) of Figure 7, I examine how out-of-portfolio engagement relates to the partisanship of final-passage voting on election legislation. Compared to legislation with no out-of-portfolio positions, legislation drawing only opposition sees final-passage votes that are 26.0 pp more parti-

36. The same sorting appears in the ideal point estimates: the more conservative a bill's sponsors, the more conservative its supporters and the more liberal its opponents (Appendix Figure E-8).

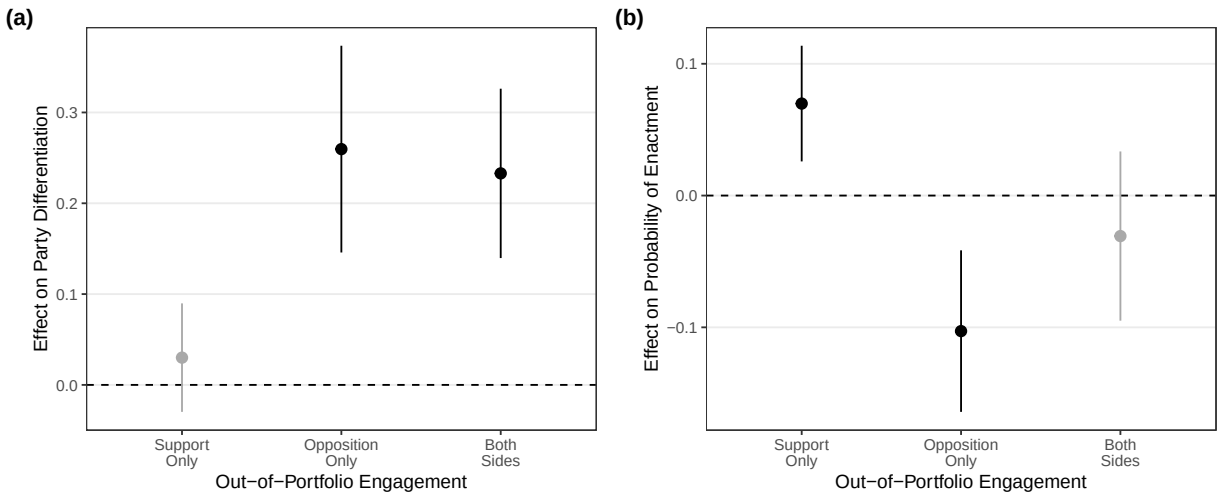

Figure 7: **Out-of-Portfolio Engagement and Legislative Outcomes**. Panel (a) shows the association between each engagement category and party differentiation on final-passage votes; panel (b), with the probability of enactment. Estimates are relative to bills with no out-of-portfolio positions, with 95% confidence intervals; estimates not statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$ are shown in gray. Full estimates in Appendix Table E-16 and Table E-17.

san, and legislation contested on both sides sees votes that are 23.3 pp more partisan. Legislation drawing only support, however, is no more partisan than legislation without any out-of-portfolio engagement. Panel (b) turns to enactment, where the balance of group pressure matters instead. Support-only legislation is 7.0 pp more likely to become law and opposition-only legislation is 10.3 pp less likely. When groups take positions on both sides, these forces offset and enactment remains unchanged even as roll-call voting polarizes.[37]

Focusing on engagement alone, however, masks much about where the politics of election legislation concentrate. As shown in Appendix Table E-16 and Table E-17, restrictive bills produce final-passage votes that are 20.4 pp more partisan than mixed or technical legislation and are 10.8 pp less likely to pass, while bipartisan sponsorship cuts partisan division by 16.5 pp. Votes are also more partisan where statewide elections are more competitive and enactment is most likely under unified Democratic control, 10.5 pp higher than under divided government.

The relationship between engagement and enactment also depends on whether the groups taking positions are aligned with the governing party. I reestimate the enactment model sepa-

37. Estimates are nearly identical on non-final-passage roll calls, stronger where most positions predate any recorded vote, and unchanged with separate access and administration ratings (Appendix Table E-16, columns 4–6; Table E-17, column 4). The pattern also holds within rating classes and across divided, Democratic, and Republican governments (Appendix Table E-18).

rately for each combination of government control and bill rating, replacing the engagement indicators with ones for whether any Democratic- or Republican-leaning group supports or opposes the bill (Appendix Table E-19). The most interesting case is restrictive bills under Republican trifectas where the post-2020 wave of proposals was concentrated. Democratic-leaning groups frequently opposed these bills, placing themselves in some of the most politicized election-policy fights, but their opposition was not associated with a lower probability of enactment. Even where it did not change what became law, that opposition highlighted what these bills potentially did for the constituencies these groups represent. What distinguishes bills more likely to be enacted under Republican trifectas is support from Republican-leaning groups, for expansive (10.2 pp) and restrictive (14.7 pp) bills alike. Under Democratic trifectas, it is instead opposition that matters, with expansive bills 13.0 pp less likely to be enacted when Democratic-leaning groups oppose them and 12.0 pp less likely when Republican-leaning groups do.

Overall, whether groups drive these fights or join them, opposition from out-of-portfolio groups identifies the election bills that divide the parties, the balance of support and opposition distinguishes the bills that become law, and whose positions matter depends on which party controls government. Groups recognize the most politicized election legislation and thus their participation provides one of the clearest signals of where partisan and ideological lines over election policy are drawn most starkly.

5 Discussion

The throughline of this paper is that organized groups do not merely work within the institutional rules that shape the representation of their interests in the policymaking process. Instead, when sufficiently *motivated* and aware that changes to these rules may be *consequential*, they put in the effort to ensure these rules serve their goals. The positions they take are principled in an ideological sense, with liberal groups backing legislation that expands voter access and conservative groups backing legislation that restricts it, each favoring the rules their allies are presumed likelier to win office. Furthermore, their activity marks the bills that divide legislators along party lines and, depending on who governs, the ones that become law. In all, this work sheds light on why and how disputes in the U.S. over voting and election administration have become

a prominent feature of partisan and ideological conflict.

Until recently, scholars of state politics lacked the sort systematic data on necessary to take on this line of inquiry. This paper demonstrates how newly available data on lobbying and testimony can be used to study organized group activity across states and over time. Interpreting those positions, however, also requires knowing what legislation proposes to do, including which parts of existing law it changes and in what direction. The scalable, human-in-the-loop classification approach introduced here addresses that challenge, enabling a more precise understanding of what group positions on individual bills reveal about preferences within a policy area.

The findings also raise questions for future research. Legislation is only one venue through which groups pursue their aims, and lobbying and testimony are only one channel within it. Litigation is an increasingly attractive avenue and Hasen (2014, 2022) in fact documents a sharp rise in election litigation since *Bush v. Gore* (2000) and even more so since 2020. Groups also use public statements, grassroots mobilization, and ballot-measure campaigns that ask voters to change election policy directly. Finally, as the Election Transparency Initiative illustrates, groups increasingly act through coalitions that take positions on behalf of member organizations, activity my data cannot observe. Future work should examine how groups select among these options and with what success.

Assuming groups are successful in shaping election rules to their liking, the next natural question for future work is whether their engagement actually delivers the representational and policy gains they seek. Most contemporary reforms target narrow slices of the electorate and move results only in the closest contests (Grimmer and Hersh 2024). Groups behave as if they grasp this and understand that not every proposal will change their fortunes. Concentrating their efforts where elections are closest and a marginal change is likeliest to prove decisive thus suggests that groups are strategic. That selectivity also sets this behavior apart from partisan signaling where the value of a position comes from demonstrating coalition loyalty rather than the outcome for any particular bill (Fagan, McGee, and Thomas 2021; Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2023). Still, groups have to pursue rules that actually serve them. Stephanopoulos (2025) argues that a transforming electorate has unraveled traditional assumption, so that expansive legislation no longer reliably favor Democrats nor does restrictive legislation favor Republicans. As shown, however, groups continue to take positions as though that this still holds. Consequently, their

failure to appreciate this may undermine the gains they look to obtain.

Finally, groups that take up election policy face risks beyond the resources required to lobby or testify, including reputational damage and, as these debates have grown more heated, political retaliation. Georgia shows how those risks shift with the political climate. In 2021, voting and civil rights groups pressed the state's largest corporations to oppose SB 202, which tightened mail-ballot identification, limited drop boxes, and expanded legislative control over election administration. Delta and Coca-Cola were among those that criticized the law. In response, Republican officials cast them as partisan actors and threatened retaliation (Timm 2021). By 2026, as Georgia advanced a mid-decade redistricting plan favorable to Republicans, the same appeals fell flat and the same corporations stayed silent (Hallerman, Hansen, and Wenk 2026). Corporations are a unique example within the set of groups my analysis covers, unusually open to economic retaliation from activists and policymakers. Nevertheless, the point is that even if groups feel compelled to take action on election policy, context shapes the extent to which they feel free to do so.

That debates over election rules can provoke retaliation leads to the larger implications of this work. As Przeworski (1991, p. 10) writes, "Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections." Losers accept defeat because it is temporary, with the rules of the game leaving open the chance of winning next time. The concern raised in broader discussions of democratic backsliding is that political actors may reshape election rules to make their advantage durable, bundling and sequencing changes with other tools until the outcome of any single election become harder to reverse (Campbell and Karch 2026). Furthermore, improving election administration often requires practical cooperation and some willingness to treat administrative problems as shared problems (Hale and Brown 2020). When groups recast solutions to those problems in zero-sum terms, where one side wins and the other loses, the cooperation needed to bring innovation into election administration and improve its performance becomes harder to sustain. Even more fundamentally, public trust in elections depends not just on how well they are run, but on how political actors describe and contest them (Kerr, King, and Wahman 2024). By extending partisan and ideological conflict into how elections are conducted, organized groups risk eroding the public trust that gives elections their legitimacy and secures acceptance of their outcomes.

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Online Appendix for "Contesting the Rules of the Game: Organized Groups in Election Policymaking"

Contents

A Identifying Election Legislation

To identify election legislation, I rely on trackers maintained by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and Voting Rights Lab (VRL). Legislation introduced between 2001 and 2010 are identified by a legislative log provided by NCSL staff. Legislation introduced between 2011 and 2024 are collected from the NCSL's "State Elections Legislation Archived Database" (NCSL 2024) and the VRL's "State Voting Rights Tracker" (VRL 2026). Any legislation included in this study that was introduced prior to 2001 was identified using legislative journals produced by state legislatures in the following states: California, Texas, and Washington. Research assistants were instructed to log any legislation under topic headers related to "Elections and Electors," "Elections Code," "Election Administration," and "Election Law."

Each tracker records legislative history (introduction date and document number) and categorizes the areas of election policy each bill affects. I collapse these labels into the seven categories below; legislation identified through legislative journals was manually coded into the same categories.

- *Absentee Voting/Vote-by-mail*: application process; distribution procedures; return rules and procedures; eligibility; rules concerning military/overseas voters; MOVE Act; no excuse absentee voting; permanent status; mail voting
- *Administration*: cost/funding elections; emergencies/disasters; campaign activities of election officials; general oversight of election officials; responsibilities of local election officials;

responsibilities of state election officials; poll worker compensation; poll worker qualifications; poll worker training; regulation of centralized voting lists; regulation of voter list maintenance

- *Election Integrity*: post-election audit procedures; election contests (court challenges); election crimes; cybersecurity; collection/retention procedures for election data; DRE use; recount protocols; selection and standards of voting equipment/technology; ballot counting procedures; voting system testing/security/storage; policies for challenging voter eligibility; voter assistance rules

- *Logistics*: ballot design; Election Day as a holiday; dates/timing of elections; disability access; electioneering; internet voting; locations; polling place arrangement/procedures; polling place disability access; polling place locations; vote centers; polling place operating hours; poll watchers; early in-person availability; provisional voting availability; voter education/information

- *Voter Identification*: requirements/requests in place; types of identification accepted; alternatives to identification allowed; proof-of-citizenship requirements for voting

- *Voter Registration*: application form/content; automatic voter registration (AVR); dates/deadline; election-/same-day registration; electronic; general requirements; miscellaneous provisions; availability of registration drives; preregistration; ID requirement; proof-of-citizenship requirements for registration; rights for former felons and voting from jail

- *Campaigns and Parties*: candidate ballot access, filing, qualification, and withdrawal procedures; Electoral College; dual-party/fusion voting; political party organizational rules; primary election dates, rules, and procedures; runoff election procedures

B Legislative Record Collection

For legislation introduced between 2009 and 2024, I use the document number and introduction date to identify the corresponding legislation in the records compiled by LegiScan. Using the matched LegiScan bill records, I retrieve sponsorship, bill history, and roll-call data. I code a bill as enacted when its final recorded action indicates enactment (e.g., "chaptered," "enacted," "signed by governor"), and I identify floor roll-call votes corresponding to final passage based on vote-title keywords (e.g., "final passage," "third reading," "final vote"). For legislation introduced prior to 2009 or not located in LegiScan, I rely on the replication data provided by Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman (2024) (SLES), which provide sponsorship records and enactment status only. Records for remaining legislation not available through LegiScan or SLES were collected by scraping legislative information sites maintained by individual state legislatures in the following states: Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas, and Washington.[1] For these states, complete legislative records—including sponsorship, enactment, and roll-call voting—are available for all years in which group position data are collected. In the remaining states where group position data begin prior to 2009, only sponsorship and enactment records are available.

1. Because not all states provide records that can be accessed through automated scraping, this approach was limited to this set given their relevance to election policymaking and inclusion in the group data used in this study.

C Evaluating the Effect of Election Legislation

C.1 Legislative Text Collection and Summarization

All text for legislation included in this study was obtained from one of three sources. For legislation introduced between 2015 and 2024, text was retrieved as `.html` files from the links made available in the NCSL's "State Elections Legislation Archived Database" (NCSL 2024). These links provide legislative text collected by Lexis Nexis State Net.[2] For legislation introduced between 2009 and 2014 for which a LegiScan record ID was available, text was retrieved from `.XML` files provided by BillTrack50.[3] All remaining text was collected using custom web scrapers written for each state legislative information site.

States use different markup conventions to indicate how legislation amends existing policy.[4] Retrieved text is therefore saved to plain-text files with a standardized markup, such that:

- All text that is inserted into existing policy is wrapped in `<u class=‘‘amendmentInsertedText’’>` and `</u>`.
- All text that is deleted from existing policy is wrapped in `<strike class=‘‘amendmentDeletedText’’>` and `</strike>`.

For legislation in which text was saved as `.html` or `.XML` files, simple string replacements in an `R` script were used to remove erroneous formatting and translate indications of insertions and deletions into the standardized format. For legislation in which text was saved as `.pdf` files, I relied on the optical character recognition capabilities of multimodal large language models (Greif, Griesshaber, and Greif 2025). Depending on their relative success in a handful of test cases, I either used Google's `gemini-2.5-flash-preview-04-17` or Anthropic's `claude-3-7-sonnet-20250219`. Regardless of the model used, the prompt was tailored to each state legislature's markup conventions and instructed the model to output the complete bill text with amendments converted to the standardized tags.

Using the resulting plain-text files, Anthropic's `claude-sonnet-4-20250514` model then summarizes each piece of legislation. The prompt, reproduced below, is written to elicit concise, human-quality summaries focused on the specific changes a bill makes to existing election law.

```
You will be provided a text file that contains the text of state election legislation. Your task is to WRITE
    ↪ a summary of the legislation. Your summary should be specific to detail all the ways how the
    ↪ legislation changes existing policy in the given state.

INSTRUCTIONS: No proper grammar is needed. Write ONLY the summary content.
Do NOT include any extra comments, explanations, or introduction in your response. This is especially the
    ↪ case if you are presented with only a section of the full text of a bill. For example, do not start
    ↪ with "This legislation...", say "Here are the key changes:", or use markdown formatting. Just write
    ↪ the summary content directly. Begin your response with an action verb.

Use the HTML format to help you identify language this is inserted into existing policy. Inserted language
    ↪ will be wrapped in <u class="amendmentInsertedText"> and </u>. Further, you should also use the HTML
    ↪ format to help you identify language that is removed from existing policy. Removed language will be
    ↪ wrapped in <strike class="amendmentDeletedText"> and </strike>.

If the bill contains an abstract, summary, or digest, you may use that to help you summarize the bill.

Here are a few examples of how the summaries should be written:
1. "Allow county board of elections to meet up to 10 days before election day to pre-canvass all absentee and
    ↪  mail ballots recieved before the
```

2. An example can be found here: Alabama SB 27 (2024).
3. See https://www.billtrack50.com/info/.
4. See the NCSL's Types of Markup Used in Bills guide.

```
Friday before election day"
2. "Establish same-day registration; establish early in-person voting"
3. "Allow counties to establish satellite election offices; allow registered voters to submit absentee
    ↪ ballots in person on election day in satellite election offices"
```

C.2 Rating Schema

Each bill is assigned one of four labels describing its overall effect on voter access and election administration quality: *Expansive/Improves*, *Restrictive/Worsens*, *Mixed/Unclear*, or *Neutral*. Classification is based on a close reading of legislative text, with attention to provisions that insert, amend, or remove language in existing election law. This schema mimics, but varies slightly from those used by James and Stewart (2022) and the Voting Rights Lab. These labels are defined as:

- *Expansive/Improves*: Lowers barriers to participation or improves the capacity, professionalism, or quality of election administration.
- *Restrictive/Worsens*: Raises barriers to participation or diminishes the capacity, professionalism, or quality of election administration.
- *Mixed/Unclear*: Combines offsetting effects across policy areas or consists primarily of narrow technical changes with ambiguous implications.
- *Neutral*: Does not substantively affect the election policy areas examined in this study.

The complete lists of example provisions for each policy area appear verbatim in the classification prompt reproduced in Appendix Section C.4; the bullets below give only a few illustrative examples per area.

- **Absentee Voting and Vote-by-Mail**: expanding eligibility (e.g., no-excuse absentee voting), automatically sending ballots or applications, extending deadlines, and expanding ballot curing or drop boxes are expansive; restricting eligibility, shortening deadlines, tightening assistance or signature-matching rules, and reducing drop boxes are restrictive.
- **Election Administration**: increasing election funding, strengthening oversight and accountability, improving poll worker pay and training, and authorizing participation in ERIC are improvements; cutting funding, weakening oversight, reducing poll worker compensation, and prohibiting ERIC participation are the reverse.
- **Election Integrity**: establishing audit and recount standards, strengthening cybersecurity, and increasing penalties for threats against election officials are improvements; eliminating audit requirements or weakening interference penalties are the reverse.
- **Logistics of Voting Procedures**: expanding polling place hours and locations, early voting, provisional voting, and disability or language access are expansive; reducing them or banning voter assistance is restrictive.
- **Voter Identification**: eliminating photo ID or proof-of-citizenship requirements and expanding acceptable identification are expansive; imposing or narrowing them is restrictive.
- **Voter Registration**: implementing automatic, same-day, or online registration and extending deadlines are expansive; eliminating those options, shortening deadlines, restricting registration drives, and requiring proof of citizenship to register are restrictive.

C.3 Separating Access and Administrative Quality

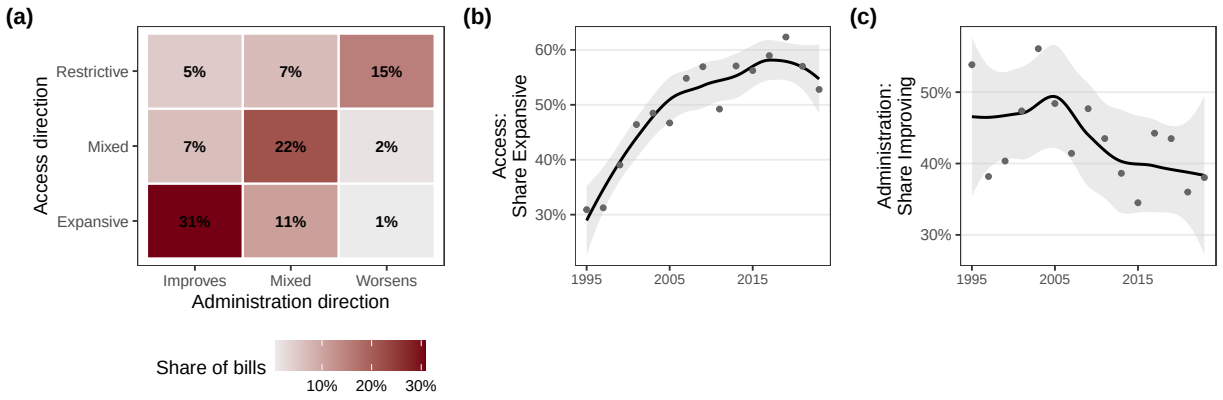

Figure C-1: **Separation of Access and Administrative Quality Dimension**

Some might argue that voter access and election administration are two distinct dimensions and should not be collapsed in this manner. In Figure C-1, I attempt to disentangle the two. I map the six area-specific ratings onto two summary dimensions: *access*, which aggregates the ratings for absentee and mail voting, election logistics, voter identification, and voter registration; and *administrative quality*, which aggregates the ratings for election administration and election integrity. For each dimension, I code an area rating of expansive/improves as $+1$, restrictive/worsens as -1, and mixed as 0, and assign the bill the sign of the net sum across the areas it addresses—expansive (improving), restrictive (worsening), or mixed when the components offset. Panel (a) displays the joint distribution of the two dimensions among bills rated on both, showing the share of bills in each access $\times$ administrative quality cell. The two dimensions largely move together—bills that expand access tend to also improve administration. The off-diagonal cells indicate they are not interchangeable, capturing bills that, for example, restrict access while improving administrative quality. Panels (b) and (c) plot the share of bills coded expansive on access and improving on administrative quality in each biennium, showing that the two dimensions follow distinct trajectories over time.

C.4 Automated Rating Methodology

Approach To automate the assignment of *Expansive/Improves*, *Restrictive/Worsens*, *Mixed/Unclear*, and *Neutral* labels, I pass each bill's summary to two separate models. Where the models agree, labels from the better-performing model during testing are used; where they disagree, a research assistant manually assigns the label. This follows Heseltine and Von Hohenberg (2024), who find that annotation performance improves under a "hybrid approach" combining multiple classification runs with human intervention.

The two models are (1) a multi-output support vector machine (SVM) classifier and (2) a fine-tuned large language model (LLM). The success of LLMs in annotating political text motivated their use here (Gilardi, Alizadeh, and Kubli 2023; Halterman and Keith 2024; Heseltine and Von Hohenberg 2024). Concerns about hallucinations (Ji et al. 2023) motivated pairing the LLM with a traditional machine-learning classifier.

Prior to implementing these models, a team of research assistants read the full text of 20% of

election legislation introduced since 2009.[5] A 60/20/20 split was used to create training, testing, and validation datasets.

Table C-1: Bill Rating Classification Metrics (Testing)

Approach	Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F_1 Score
Traditional ML	multioutput_svm	0.729	0.766	0.626	0.689
Traditional ML	multioutput_logistic	0.703	0.640	0.681	0.660
Traditional ML	2stage_svm	0.677	0.666	0.650	0.657
Traditional ML	2stage_random_forest	0.683	0.677	0.630	0.652
Traditional ML	multioutput_random_forest	0.672	0.668	0.614	0.640
Traditional ML	2stage_logistic	0.666	0.583	0.663	0.621
Traditional ML	multioutput_gradient_boosting	0.709	0.705	0.552	0.619
Traditional ML	2stage_gradient_boosting	0.617	0.570	0.601	0.585
LLM	ft_gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14_personal_election-leg_BumQ03pZ	0.760	0.718	0.727	0.723
LLM	claude-opus-4-8	0.720	0.654	0.670	0.662
LLM	claude-opus-4-20250514	0.689	0.616	0.664	0.639
LLM	claude-sonnet-4-6	0.657	0.576	0.671	0.620
LLM	claude-sonnet-4-20250514	0.662	0.584	0.630	0.606
LLM	claude-3-7-sonnet-20250219	0.665	0.582	0.603	0.592
LLM	claude-3-5-haiku-20241022	0.652	0.551	0.618	0.583
LLM	gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14	0.599	0.507	0.632	0.563
LLM	gemini-2.5-flash-lite-preview-06-17	0.598	0.516	0.591	0.551
LLM	gpt-4o-mini-2024-07-18	0.573	0.487	0.623	0.547
LLM	gemini-2.5-flash	0.606	0.524	0.539	0.531
LLM	o4-mini-2025-04-16	0.470	0.789	0.264	0.395

Table C-2: Policy Rating Classification Metrics (Testing)

Approach	Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F_1 Score
Traditional ML	2stage_random_forest	0.704	0.626	0.683	0.615
Traditional ML	multioutput_random_forest	0.704	0.626	0.683	0.615
Traditional ML	2stage_svm	0.728	0.698	0.504	0.577
Traditional ML	multioutput_svm	0.728	0.698	0.504	0.577
Traditional ML	2stage_gradient_boosting	0.869	0.630	0.508	0.561
Traditional ML	multioutput_gradient_boosting	0.869	0.630	0.508	0.561
Traditional ML	2stage_logistic	0.628	0.518	0.643	0.547
Traditional ML	multioutput_logistic	0.628	0.518	0.643	0.547
LLM	ft_gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14_personal_election-leg_BumQ03pZ	0.885	0.663	0.621	0.640
LLM	claude-opus-4-8	0.798	0.536	0.650	0.587
LLM	claude-sonnet-4-6	0.805	0.537	0.616	0.573
LLM	claude-opus-4-20250514	0.766	0.521	0.610	0.561
LLM	claude-sonnet-4-20250514	0.772	0.524	0.603	0.560
LLM	claude-3-7-sonnet-20250219	0.722	0.490	0.607	0.542
LLM	o4-mini-2025-04-16	0.683	0.551	0.557	0.536
LLM	gpt-4o-mini-2024-07-18	0.779	0.473	0.588	0.523
LLM	gemini-2.5-flash-lite-preview-06-17	0.734	0.480	0.575	0.523
LLM	gemini-2.5-flash	0.721	0.470	0.578	0.518
LLM	claude-3-5-haiku-20241022	0.535	0.630	0.484	0.489
LLM	gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14	0.528	0.447	0.442	0.425

To select the specific models, I trained a range of candidates on the training data and evaluated them on the test data. Each bill receives an overall rating and six policy-area ratings. Table C-1 reports performance metrics for the overall ratings and Table C-2 reports each model's average across the six policy-area ratings. Traditional ML approaches labeled with `multioutput_` are multi-output models that fit one classifier of the indicated type per target (six policy areas plus overall rating); those labeled with `2stage_` implement a two-stage hierarchical approach where policy area predictions are augmented into the feature space to train a downstream overall bill rating classifier. Among commercial LLMs, only OpenAI's GPT models allow for fine tuning. Thus, I test performance across a range of commercial LLMs plus a fine-tuned GPT model (`gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14`).

5. This text was collected prior to writing web scrapers that collected text for legislation introduced before 2009. Thus, this manually classified set includes text collected from Lexis Nexis State Net and BillTrack50 only.

By F_1-score, the multi-output SVM classifier and the fine-tuned GPT model perform best on overall ratings. The fine-tuned GPT model also leads on policy-area ratings; among traditional classifiers the multi-output SVM trails the random forests only slightly there, so I select it on the strength of its overall-rating performance.

Details for fine-tuning `gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14` are presented below:

- **Training method**: supervised
- **Base model**: `gpt-4.1-mini-2025-04-14`
- **Trained tokens**: 5,883,810
- **Hyperparameters**:
  - Epochs: 3
  - Batch size: 2
  - LR multiplier: 2
  - Seed: 125

The multi-output SVM classifier was trained using the entire training dataset. The fine-tuned model is trained on a 25% sample of the training dataset (due to file size limitations for batch uploads) and fine-tuning was validated using the test dataset. I provided the following prompt for fine-tuning and for using the fine-tuned model to assign labels for legislation:

```
You are tasked with analyzing election administration legislation and providing classifications of its impact
    ↪  on voter access and election administration quality. For each bill, you must provide an overall
    ↪ rating and individual ratings for six policy areas.

## Classification Categories

Use these four categories for all ratings:

- Expansive/Improves: Makes it easier and more accessible for voters to cast a ballot OR improves the quality
    ↪  and professionalization of election administration
- Restrictive/Worsens: Makes it harder and less accessible for voters to cast a ballot OR worsens the quality
    ↪  and professionalization of election administration
- Mixed/Unclear: Contains provisions that affect voter access and election administration quality in
    ↪ different ways across policy areas, OR contains mostly small, technical wording changes
- Neutral: Has no relevance to voter access or election administration quality (e.g., provisions about
    ↪ healthcare, taxation, campaign finance, administrative procedures unrelated to elections)

## Policy Areas to Analyze

Evaluate each bill's impact on these six policy areas:

### 1. Absentee Voting/Vote-by-Mail (abvbm)

Expansive/Improves examples:
- Expands eligibility (e.g., no-excuse, universal vote-by-mail)
- Automatically sends mail ballots or applications to eligible voters
- Extends deadlines to request/return absentee/mail ballots
- Allows or expands ballot curing or voter assistance for mail/absentee voting
- Expands electronic voting options or number of dropboxes/drop-off locations
- Implements ballot tracking systems

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Limits eligibility (e.g., age, disability)
- Shortens application or submission deadlines
- Restricts automatic sending of ballots/applications
- Imposes signature matching requirements
- Prohibits or limits voter assistance for mail or absentee voting
```

```
- Limits ballot curing processes
- Reduces number of ballot dropboxes/drop-off locations

### 2. Election Administration (admin)

Expansive/Improves examples:
- Strengthens institutional capacity or professional standards
- Provides additional financial resources for elections
- Requires state (vs. local) funding of elections
- Expands emergency powers
- Restricts officials from political activities
- Increases oversight and accountability mechanisms
- Improves poll worker pay, training, and resources
- Provides additional staffing and professional development
- Increases penalties for threatening officials
- Provides standards and tools for voter list maintenance
- Authorizes ERIC participation

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Reduces institutional capacity or weakens professional standards
- Delegates authority over election officials without guidance
- Cuts or limits funding
- Places funding burden on local jurisdictions
- Restricts emergency accommodations
- Reduces oversight or poll worker compensation/training
- Weakens penalties for threatening officials
- Limits voter roll maintenance tools
- Lowers thresholds for voter removal
- Prohibits ERIC participation

### 3. Election Integrity (integrity)

Expansive/Improves examples:
- Sets standards for audits, recounts, and election challenges
- Lowers penalties for minor, unintentional infractions
- Improves voting technology security and testing standards
- Requires use of modern, auditable voting systems (e.g., paper ballots, optical scan)
- Phases out outdated voting technology
- Establishes procedures for data collection/retention

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Removes audit or recount requirements
- Increases penalties for minor infractions
- Mandates DRE voting machines or outdated technology
- Reduces security standards
- Leaves local jurisdictions without state oversight for technology

### 4. Logistics of Voting Procedures (logistics)

Expansive/Improves examples:
- Expands polling hours, locations, or early/advanced voting days
- Improves accessibility (ballot design, disability access, language)
- Makes Election Day a state holiday
- Expands eligibility for in-person absentee or early voting
- Expands provisional ballot use
- Strengthens anti-electioneering rules
- Improves voter education and notification
- Allows poll watchers without disruption
- Allows or expands voter assistance

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Decreases polling hours, locations, or early voting
- Restricts in-person absentee or early voting eligibility
- Bans providing food/water to voters in line
- Restricts provisional ballot use or voter assistance
- Limits language or disability accommodations

### 5. Voter Identification (voterid)
```

```
Expansive/Improves examples:
- Removes photo ID requirements
- Adds acceptable forms of identification
- Removes proof of citizenship requirements

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Implements photo ID requirements
- Reduces acceptable ID types
- Requires proof of citizenship

### 6. Voter Registration (vtrreg)

Expansive/Improves examples:
- Implements or expands automatic (AVR), same-day, pre-, or online registration
- Extends registration deadlines
- Expands role of motor vehicle (DMV) and government agencies
- Provides resources for registration drives
- Allows incarcerated individuals/parolees to register
- Uses inclusive voter eligibility language

Restrictive/Worsens examples:
- Eliminates AVR, same-day registration, pre-registration
- Pushes back registration deadlines
- Increases standards for maintaining active status
- Restricts registration drives
- Limits outreach or third-party registration
- Prevents incarcerated individuals from registering
- Adopts exclusionary eligibility language

## Output Format

Provide analysis in JSON format:

{ "UUID": "[provided UUID]", "version_number": "[provided version_number]", "bill_rating": "[Expansive/
    ↪ Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear |
Neutral]", "abvbm": "[Expansive/Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear | Neutral]", "admin": "[
    ↪ Expansive/Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear | Neutral]", "integrity": "[Expansive/
    ↪ Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear |
Neutral]", "logistics": "[Expansive/Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear |
Neutral]", "voterid": "[Expansive/Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear | Neutral]", "vtrreg": "[
    ↪ Expansive/Improves | Restrictive/Worsens | Mixed/Unclear | Neutral]"
}

## Important Guidelines

1. Be comprehensive: Consider all provisions in the bill
2. Distinguish between policy areas
3. Consider practical impact on voters and election administration
4. Classification logic: If provision doesn't clearly fit examples but has obvious impact, classify based on
    ↪ whether it makes voting easier/harder or improves/worsens administration quality. Use Mixed/Unclear
    ↪ for provisions with ambiguous impact. Use Neutral only for provisions completely unrelated to
    ↪ elections.
5. Output only JSON: Return only the JSON object, no additional text, explanation, or justification
6. Terminology clarification: "In-person absentee voting," "advance voting," and "early voting" refer to the
    ↪ same concept. "Provisional ballot" might also be called "affidavit ballot."
```

After both models assigned ratings, approximately 32.5% of all election legislation required manual evaluation. Research assistants read summaries for each piece of legislation and assigned labels for an overall rating and the six policy-area ratings.

C.5 Rating Validation

Performance Metrics Appendix Table C-3 reports the classification performance metrics on the validation dataset following the full procedure:

Table C-3: Final Rating Classification Metrics

Label	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F_1 Score
Overall Rating	0.865	0.855	0.841	0.848
Absentee Voting/Vote-by-mail	0.932	0.844	0.801	0.822
Administration	0.851	0.771	0.679	0.722
Election Integrity	0.908	0.797	0.658	0.721
Logistics	0.880	0.829	0.771	0.799
Voter Identification	0.979	0.890	0.771	0.826
Voter Registration	0.945	0.874	0.841	0.857

External Validation I also benchmark the final ratings against the Voting Rights Lab (VRL) state legislation tracker, whose policy experts monitor and rate election legislation. I match bills in my data to VRL's ratings and refactor VRL's codes to match my rating categories. VRL assigns a "Neutral" label to technical changes with no substantive effect—the equivalent of my *Mixed/Unclear* category—so I recode it as such. Where VRL use their *Mixed/Unclear* label to indicate bills with provisions that combine both expansive and restrictive effects, I keep these bills rated in this way. Bills my pipeline codes as *Neutral* are, by definition, unrelated to voter access or election administration and thus fall outside the scope of the comparison. This yields 8,153 matched bills rated on the same three-category scale.

Table C-4: **Agreement Between Final Ratings and Voting Rights Lab Ratings**

	Voting Rights Lab Rating		
Final Rating	Expansive	Mixed	Restrictive
Expansive	3,466 (42.5%)	763 (9.4%)	172 (2.1%)
Mixed	471 (5.8%)	1,278 (15.7%)	316 (3.9%)
Restrictive	44 (0.5%)	278 (3.4%)	1,365 (16.7%)

Note: Cells show the number (and share) of the 8,153 matched bills in each combination of my final overall rating and the Voting Rights Lab rating.

Treating my final rating and VRL's as two independent coders, the two agree on 74.9% of bills (Holsti's CR = 0.749), with chance-corrected reliability of $\alpha = 0.593$ (Krippendorff) and $\kappa = 0.594$ (Cohen), moderate-to-substantial agreement by conventional benchmarks (Landis and Koch 1977). Table C-4 presents the full cross-classification. Disagreements are concentrated in cells involving the *Mixed/Unclear* category, and thus largely reflect differing judgments about whether a bill's combination of expansive and restrictive provisions nets out to a clear direction. Direct disagreement over a bill's direction (*Expansive* rated *Restrictive*, or the reverse) is rare.

D Group Position Data Collection

D.1 Sources and Record Linkage

To identify the positions (support, oppose, neutral/monitoring) groups take on legislation, I rely on (1) the Dataset on Policy Choice and Organizational Representation in the United States (CHORUS) (Hall et al. 2024) and (2) committee records available in state legislative information sites. CHORUS records cover Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin. Records that I collected from state legislative information sites cover California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

CHORUS covers both lobbying position disclosures and positions collected from public testimony, committee meeting minutes, or "witness lists." Records from California and Washington

are collected from bill analyses written by committee staff, which list the entities supporting and opposing a bill.[6] Records from Oregon are parsed from letters of public testimony, using an LLM to extract the organizational affiliation of each submitter.[7] Records from Nevada and Utah are collected from committee hearing minutes.[8]

Records from CHORUS are linked to election-related legislation (as described in Appendix Section A) primarily using LegiScan record identifiers, with remaining records matched on document number and legislative session identifiers. Across all analyses, I retain only the most recent position taken by each group on a given piece of legislation. For CHORUS records, recency is determined using the `start_date` and `end_date` fields; for records collected directly from state legislative information sites, it is determined by the date of the relevant testimony, submission, or committee report. This approach is intended to capture groups' positions as legislation approaches final consideration. Appendix Table D-5 reports, by state, the number of election bills introduced, number drawing at least one group position, and average number of positions per bill.

Table D-5: **Election Bills and Group Positions by State**

State	Coverage	Bills Introduced	Bills with Positions	Avg. Positions
AZ	2006–2024	1,033	426	6.90
CA	1995–2024	1,179	726	8.76
CO	2003–2024	192	160	17.26
FL	2004–2023	250	34	4.88
IA	2009–2024	259	255	8.60
IL	2013–2024	732	151	5.99
KS	2014–2022	200	60	5.70
MA	2010–2021	776	209	2.62
MD	2020–2024	264	208	4.65
MO	2003–2022	780	108	4.51
MT	2006–2021	162	39	7.13
NE	2000–2024	187	162	7.69
NJ	2014–2024	972	207	2.30
NV	2001–2023	303	140	9.84
OH	2015–2024	142	35	22.06
OR	2013–2024	268	102	4.30
RI	2018–2024	331	98	2.53
SD	1997–2024	177	128	2.86
TX	1997–2023	2,516	628	16.05
UT	2002–2024	361	192	3.02
WA	1995–2024	1,088	498	3.87
WI	2002–2024	599	334	4.85

Note: Bills Introduced counts election bills introduced during the state's coverage window; Avg. Positions is the mean number of group positions per bill with at least one recorded position.

Appendix Table D-6 and Appendix Figure D-2 summarize the sample along key political and institutional dimensions: average gubernatorial and presidential vote margins, the share of years under Democratic, Republican, and divided government, and legislative professionalism as measured by Squire (1992, 2024). The table shows that the 22 sample states are broadly representative of the nation across these dimensions over the study period (1995–2024). The figure shows that they also provide variation in these metrics.

6. Examples of bill analyses: California AB 626 (2023–2024), Washington HB 1443 (2023–2024).
7. Example of public testimony submitted for Oregon SB 1577 (2024).
8. Examples of committee hearing minutes: Nevada SB 404 (2023) and Utah HB 37 (2023).

Table D-6: Sample Summary

Variable	All States N = 50	Sample States N = 22
% Years Democratic Trifecta	21.9 (22.5)	23.0 (25.0)
% Years Republican Trifecta	36.0 (33.2)	38.9 (36.9)
% Years Divided	42.1 (21.4)	38.0 (21.1)
Gov. Vote Margin	0.162 (0.071)	0.153 (0.071)
POTUS Vote Margin	0.150 (0.082)	0.139 (0.082)
Legislative Professionalism	0.228 (0.140)	0.256 (0.135)

Note: Cells are means with standard deviations in parentheses, averaged over all years included in the study (1995–2024).

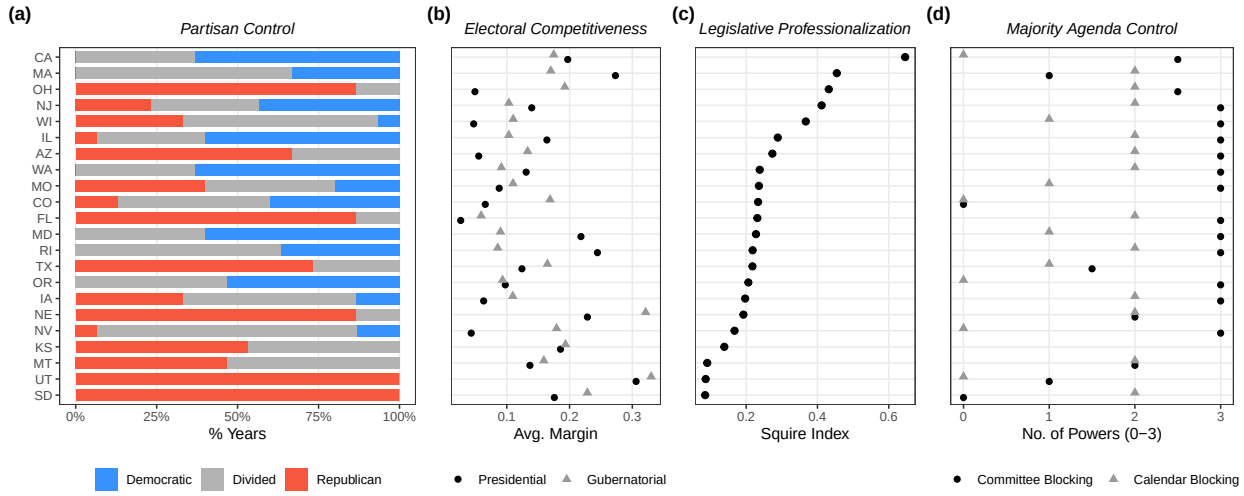

Figure D-2: **Summary of Variation in Key Political and Legislative Variables in Sample**. Within-state variation over the study period in partisan control of government, electoral competitiveness, legislative professionalization, and majority agenda control, for the 22 sample states.

Table D-7: **Bills Attracting Group Positions vs. All Introduced Election Legislation**

	All Introduced	Any Position	Out-of-Portfolio Position
Bills	12,771	4,900	3,968
% Expansive/Improves	43.6	45.6	47.7
% Restrictive/Worsens	12.9	13.6	14.3
% Mixed/Unclear	29.1	28.3	26.6
% Neutral	14.3	12.5	11.4
% Bipartisan Sponsorship	13.2	19.3	18.4
% Enacted	15.7	29.1	28.5
% Absentee Voting/VBM	19.5	22.9	24.0
% Administration	17.8	19.8	19.8
% Election Integrity	21.3	24.3	24.1
% Logistics	28.2	30.0	30.2
% Voter Identification	5.9	5.4	5.8
% Voter Registration	22.6	23.2	24.5
% Campaign & Party	21.0	18.6	17.0

Note: Election bills introduced in the 22 sample states during each state's position-coverage window. Columns restrict to bills with at least one group position and at least one out-of-portfolio position. Policy-area shares sum to more than 100 because bills can address multiple areas.

D.2 Wisconsin Lobbying Effort Records

Wisconsin requires registered lobbying organizations to report, in semi-annual filings, the number of hours their lobbyists devote to each legislative proposal on which the organization is registered. These filings are submitted to the Wisconsin Ethics Commission and are publicly accessible through the state's lobbying disclosure portal (`https://lobbying.wi.gov`). I scrape these records for all sessions from 2005 through 2024, covering ten legislative bienniums.[9] Each record links a registered principal (the lobbying organization) to a specific bill and reporting period and records the lobbyist hours devoted to that bill. The disclosure system also records the position taken by each principal on each bill. Positions registered as *For* or *Against* are treated as support and opposition, and positions registered without a disclosed side (e.g., *None*, *Undisclosed*, *Other*) are treated as neutral.

For each principal, I sum hours across reporting periods within each legislative biennium, yielding a single hours figure per principal per bill per biennium. Where a group registers a position without reporting lobbyist hours, I retain the position record and treat hours as zero, consistent with the disclosure system allowing organizations to register a stance without devoting paid staff time.

Principal names are run through the same text-normalization and deduplication steps described in Appendix Section D.3 and assigned the same group identifier used across all states.

D.3 Group Disambiguation & Metadata

CHORUS resolves organization identities by collapsing name variants and duplicate records through matches to external reference databases such as FollowTheMoney and OpenSecrets, assigning a unique identifier to each entity. I build on this work with the following that standardize organization names across datasets, allowing groups to be consistently identified in the five additional states for which I collect position data and enabling federated organizations operating across multiple states to be treated as a single organization.

1. **Rule-based normalization**: Starting from a master list of all organization names appearing in CHORUS and the additional-state records, I remove entries corresponding to individuals or self-references, standardize names with string-cleaning rules (lowercasing, punctuation and boilerplate removal, abbreviation expansion), and standardize the naming of widely observed national organizations (e.g., ACLU, League of Women Voters).

2. **Similarity-based deduplication**: I cluster near-duplicate names using n-gram Jaccard similarity (via the `zoomerjoin` package), capturing spelling variants and formatting differences.

3. **LLM-assisted adjudication**: Names still unresolved are submitted with their state to `gpt-5-mini`, which is instructed to merge chapters and affiliates into national organizations and fix remaining typos and abbreviations.

4. **Final identity assignment**: A second similarity pass consolidates the standardized names, and each unique organization receives the numeric identifier used to link all group position data in this study. The full cleaning rules and prompts are available in the replication materials.

9. Bills from sessions since 2009 are identified through LegiScan; bills from the 2005–2008 sessions, which predate LegiScan's Wisconsin coverage, are identified from state legislative records and linked to their lobbying disclosure pages directly.

Using these standardized names, I add two pieces of metadata. First, I label groups as *Advocacy*, *Government*, or *Political*. *Advocacy* groups encompass a broad set of non-governmental actors, including identity- or membership-based groups, policy and issue advocacy organizations, labor unions, industry and trade associations (including private corporations), service-providing nonprofits, and multi-organization coalitions. *Government* groups include state agencies, local governments, individual public officials, and professional associations of public administrators (e.g., associations of election officials). *Political* groups include formal party organizations, candidate and campaign committees, political action committees, and partisan political clubs or activist chapters. Initial classification is performed using a rule-based approach matching standardized group names to keyword patterns; groups that cannot be confidently classified are coded by a large language model instructed to use the taxonomy, and groups whose type cannot reasonably be inferred from their name are left uncoded.

Second, I determine the group's primary policy area from a fixed set of eighteen labels (e.g., *Business & Commerce*, *Civil Rights & Constitutional Issues*, *Elections & Voting*, *Health & Public Health*), similar to those used by Dee and Garlick (2025), which in turn mimic the Policy Agendas Project (Jones et al. 2023). I first determine the subjects of legislation on which the organization took positions—using both a collapsed version of LegiScan's subject names and the labels generated by Dee and Garlick (2025)—and assign the modal subject from each source. Where available, I also recode CHORUS-linked FollowTheMoney industry codes into the same policy-area labels. Each organization is then assigned a single primary policy area using the following rules: if any source classifies the organization as election-related, it is coded *Elections & Voting*; when multiple sources agree, I assign the shared category; when sources disagree, I follow a fixed priority order (FollowTheMoney industry, then LegiScan subject, then the Dee and Garlick subject). Groups still missing a label are coded with a structured LLM prompt using the same labels and a small set of well-known groups are mapped to the area they are widely understood to occupy (e.g., party committees $\rightarrow$ *Elections & Voting*, ACLU $\rightarrow$ *Civil Rights & Constitutional Issues*).

Finally, for nonprofit entities, I attach financial information from IRS Form 990 filings. Standardized group names are matched to filer names in ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer, retaining only high-confidence matches to employer identification numbers (EINs). Matched groups are linked to their full filing history, from which I retrieve total revenues, total assets, and staff compensation, deflated to real 2025 dollars and entered in analyses as $\log(1 + x)$.

D.4 Group Ideal Point Estimates

Approach To measure group ideology on a left-right dimension interpretable in the same manner as well-known ideological scores, I follow a process that borrows from Shor and McCarty (2011), Thieme (2020), and Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz (2020): a Bayesian item response theory (IRT) model that jointly scales group positions on legislation with legislators' revealed positions on the same legislation, observed through final-passage roll-call votes and bill sponsorships. The model is estimated separately for each state using all legislation for which group position data are available. Although the election legislation analyzed in this study is included, most of the data come from LegiScan and involve non-election legislation introduced between 2009 and 2024. Roll-call votes are taken from LegiScan for this period and from hand-collected state records for election bills predating it, retaining the final vote on each bill. Sponsorships, coded as support, come from LegiScan sponsor records, historical election-bill records, and the state legislative records assembled by Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman (2024), and enter only for legislator-bill pairs without an observed roll-call vote. For each bill I retain a group's most recent position, treating group support as equivalent to a yea vote and opposition to a nay. I then combine

groups and legislators into a single vote matrix in which rows are actors, columns are bills, and cells record positions.

Before estimation, I remove bills with unanimous positions and retain the dense core of the position-taking network: actors and bills in a 4-core bipartite actor-bill graph (Dorogovtsev, Goltsev, and Mendes 2006), with a 5-core applied in California given the volume of its records. Because the k-core guarantees connectivity but not sufficient information to place a group reliably, I additionally require each scored group to have at least five observed positions. I then fit a one-dimensional item-response model via Markov chain Monte Carlo using the `ideal()` function from the `pscl` R package, taking posterior means as ideal point estimates. To identify the model and place estimates on a common left-right scale, I constrain a set of anchor legislators to their common space scores from Shor and McCarty (2011) and Shor (2025). Within each state, among legislators whose roll-call participation exceeds the state median, I select five Democratic and five Republican legislators located at evenly spaced quantiles of the Shor–McCarty score distribution (the minimum, 25th percentile, median, 75th percentile, and maximum within each party) to serve as anchors.[10] The ideal points of all other legislators and groups are estimated freely relative to these anchors.

To make estimates comparable *across* states, I project state-specific ideal points onto the Shor–McCarty common space. Within each state, I regress legislators' common space scores on their estimated ideal points, weighting legislators by the number of roll-call votes in which they participated, and use the fitted model to project group ideal points onto the same scale. Because some groups operate in multiple states, I construct a single estimate per group as a weighted average of its state-level scores, with weights equal to the share of the group's positions taken in each state. This assumes groups possess a latent ideological position consistent across states. This external anchoring strategy differs from Thieme (2020), who achieves cross-state comparability by including multi-state groups and survey respondents as bridging observations in a single joint estimation. This is an approach that does not scale to the much larger number of states and actors in my data.

Validity To assess convergent validity, Figure D-3 compares the estimates to established measures of left-right ideology.[11] Legislator estimates correlate strongly with Shor–McCarty common space scores ($r = 0.91$). Group estimates correlate well with three existing measures of group ideology: DIME CFscores ($r = 0.61$), IGscores ($r = 0.80$), and Thieme (2020)'s lobbying-based estimates ($r = 0.86$). The correlation is weakest for CFscores, which is expected as contribution behavior can reflect *access-oriented* as well as *ideological* strategies (Phillips 2024). Thus, a group's giving may diverge from what its public position-taking reveals.

10. In Nebraska, which has a nonpartisan unicameral legislature, anchors are selected in the same way within the liberal and conservative sides of the Shor–McCarty distribution.

11. Benchmark datasets are linked to my groups by name using n-gram Jaccard blocking followed by LLM-assisted record linkage via the `fuzzylink` package, retaining matches with probability of at least 0.5. The DIME comparison is restricted to organizational contributors active during each state's coverage window with at least ten distinct contribution records. The Thieme (2020) comparison covers Iowa, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, the states in his study.

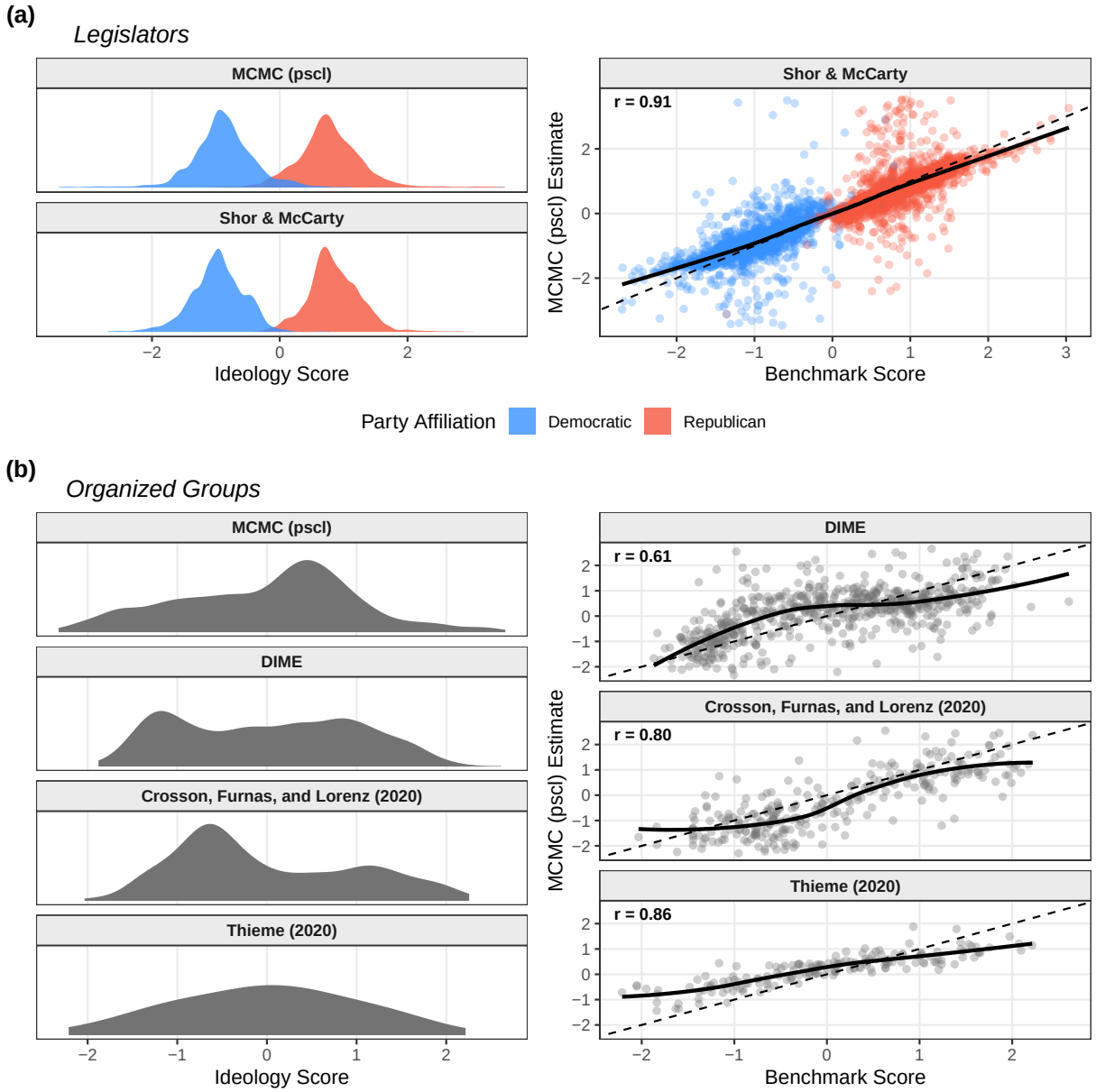

Figure D-3: **Validation of Ideal Point Estimates**. Densities and scatters of estimates against benchmarks: legislators versus Shor–McCarty common space scores in panel (a); groups versus DIME CFscores (Bonica 2024), IGscores (Crosson, Furnas, and Lorenz 2020), and Thieme (2020) in panel (b).

D.5 Group Success and Partisan Alignment

Legislative Success For every support or oppose position, I record whether the position succeeded. A supported bill that is enacted or an opposed bill that fails counts as a success, a supported bill that fails or an opposed bill that is enacted counts as a failure, and neutral/monitoring positions carry no success value. Position-level successes are then aggregated to the group-state-biennium level as success rates—overall, on election legislation, and within the group's primary policy area. The in-area rate underlies the Frustration$_{gst}$ measure used in the participation analyses. Because groups do not take positions in every biennium, prior-biennium rates are carried

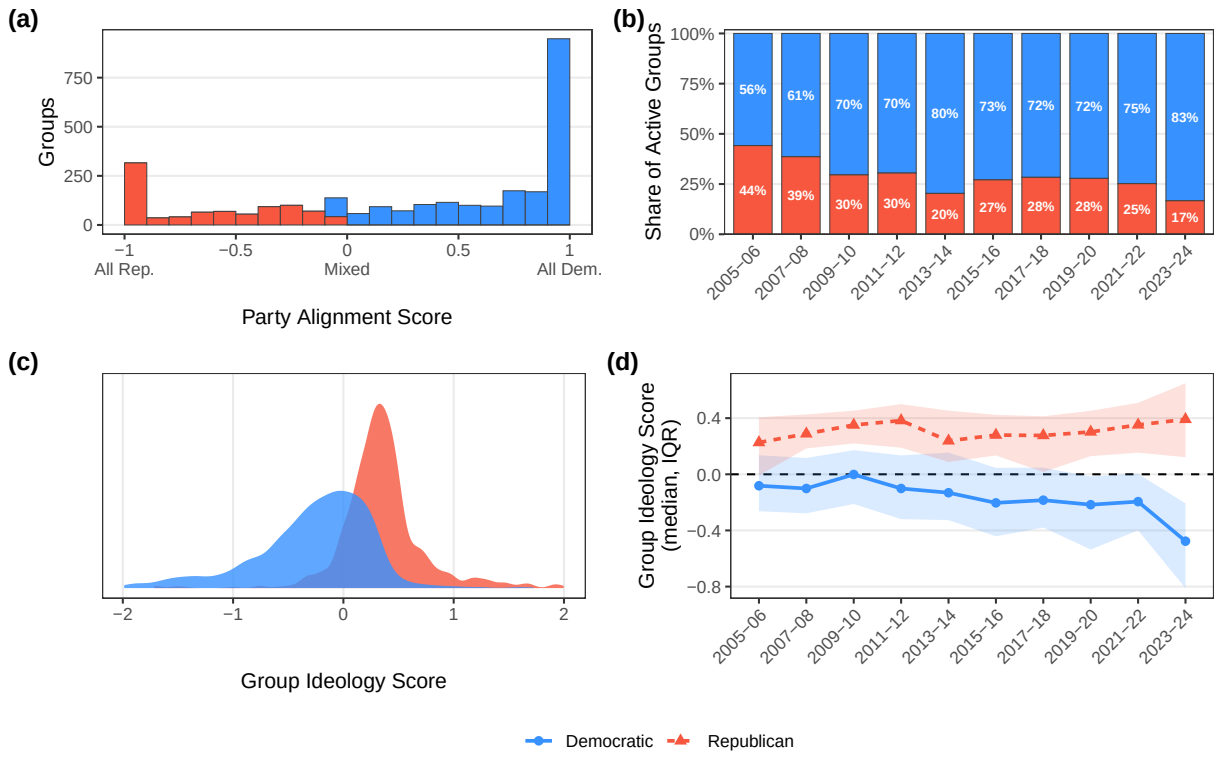

Figure D-4: **Partisan Alignment of Out-of-Portfolio Groups**. Distribution of party alignment scores, −1 (all Republican-aligned) to +1 (all Democratic-aligned) (a); share of active groups by partisan lean per biennium (b); and group ideology scores by partisan lean—distributions (c) and medians with interquartile ranges over time (d).

forward across gaps of at most two bienniums when constructing lagged values.

Partisan Alignment Each bill is assigned the modal party of its sponsors. A position is *Democratic-aligned* if it supports a Democratic-sponsored bill or opposes a Republican-sponsored one, and *Republican-aligned* in the mirror-image cases. For each group-state-biennium, I compute a party alignment score as the difference between Democratic- and Republican-aligned positions divided by their sum, ranging from −1 (all positions Republican-aligned) to +1 (all positions Democratic-aligned). A group's partisan lean is the sign of this score aggregated across its positions. A group is *majority-aligned* when its lean matches the governing party and *minority-aligned* when it does not, and bienniums under divided government form their own category.

Appendix Figure D-4 summarizes these measures for the out-of-portfolio groups in my data. Panel (a) shows that the alignment score distribution is strongly bimodal with most groups aligning consistently with one party rather than splitting their positions. Panel (b) shows that Democratic-leaning groups make up a majority of active out-of-portfolio groups throughout the period of this study and a growing one—rising from 56% of active groups in 2005–06 to 83% in 2023–24. Panels (c) and (d) validate the alignment measure against the ideal point estimates with Democratic-leaning groups holding more liberal ideology scores than Republican-leaning groups, and the two distributions separating over time.

E Supplemental Analyses

E.1 Group Composition and Participation Trends

Table E-8: **Composition, Ideology, and Net Restrictive Lean of Out-of-Portfolio Groups**

	% of Groups	Mean Ideology (SD)	Net Restrictive Lean
Panel (a): Primary Issue Area			
Health & Public Health (e.g., Planned Parenthood, National Organization for Women)	18.3%	-0.10	-0.26
Local & State Government (e.g., Texas Public Policy Foundation, Eagle Forum)	17.9%	-0.12	-0.49
Business & Commerce (e.g., National Federation of Independent Business, Iowa Broadcasters Association)	13.0%	+0.25	-0.41
Judiciary & Law Enforcement (e.g., Wisconsin State Bar, Austin Justice Coalition)	12.8%	-0.30	-0.61
Education & Schools (e.g., National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers)	11.0%	-0.03	-0.56
Labor & Employment (e.g., AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union)	7.3%	-0.07	-0.46
Housing & Community Development (e.g., Texas Association of Realtors, Associated General Contractors)	3.5%	-0.00	-0.23
Environment & Natural Resources (e.g., Sierra Club, Clean Water Action)	3.2%	-0.18	-0.39
Energy & Utilities (e.g., Xcel Energy, Dominion Energy)	2.9%	+0.08	-0.43
Social Services & Welfare (e.g., AARP, MALDEF)	2.7%	-0.20	-0.65
Agriculture & Food (e.g., Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Deere & Company)	1.9%	+0.36	-0.02
Fiscal & Economic Policy (e.g., California Taxpayers Association, Nebraska Appleseed)	1.9%	+0.04	-0.68
Transportation & Infrastructure (e.g., BNSF Railway, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers)	1.8%	+0.31	-0.07
Military, Veterans, & Defense (e.g., American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars)	1.2%	+0.01	-0.93
Taxation (e.g., National Taxpayers Union, Utah Taxpayers Association)	0.4%	+0.14	-0.07
International Affairs & Immigration (e.g., RAICES, Refugee Services of Texas)	0.2%	-0.69	-1.00
Panel (b): Organization Type			
Policy / Issue Advocacy	27.6%	-0.27	-0.53
Industry / Trade & Corporate Interests	26.2%	+0.29	-0.18
Coalition / Alliance	11.5%	-0.23	-0.43
Identity / Membership Group	9.7%	-0.27	-0.67
Educational Institution	6.9%	+0.05	-0.59
Labor / Union	6.7%	-0.11	-0.57
Service Provider / Nonprofit	6.2%	-0.20	-0.43
Professional Association of Public Officials	5.1%	+0.11	-0.34

Note: Distinct out-of-portfolio groups that took positions on election legislation. Panel (a) shows distribution of groups by primary issue area, with illustrative example groups shown. Panel (b) shows distribution by organization

type. The columns report each category's relative frequency, average ideology score (higher = more conservative), and the net restrictive lean (mean of each group's share of pro-restriction minus pro-expansion positions, ranging from -1 to $+1$; negative = net pro-expansion).

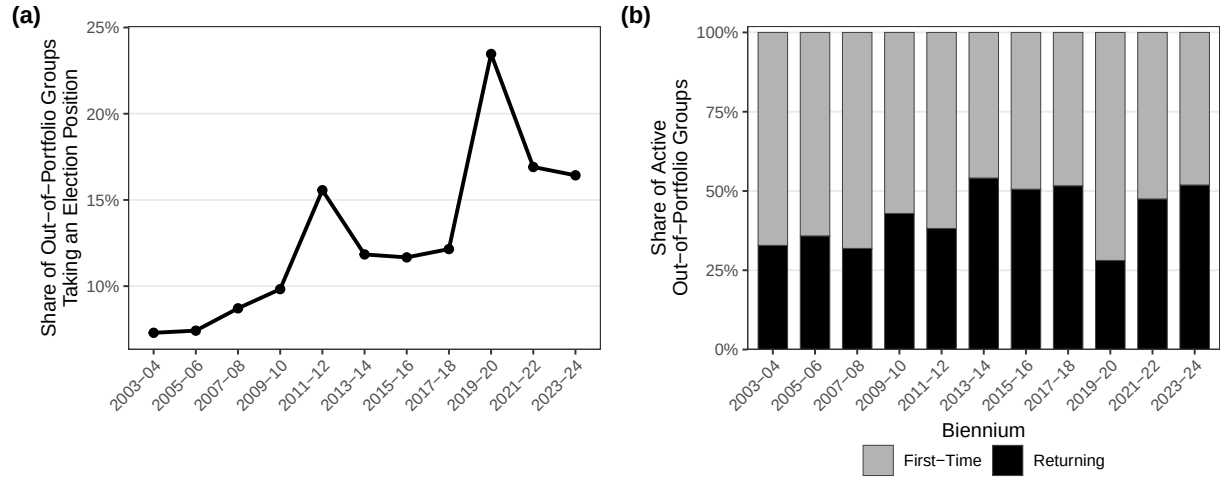

Figure E-5: **Out-of-Portfolio Participation Over Time**. The share of out-of-portfolio groups taking a position on election legislation in each biennium (a), and the share of active groups engaging for the first time versus returning (b). Both panels restricted to bienniums with at least ten covered states.

E.2 Determinants of Out-of-Portfolio Participation

Table E-9: **Effects of Electoral Competition on Out-of-Portfolio Group Participation, by Policy Area**

	All	Absentee/VBM	Administration	Election Integrity	Logistics	Voter ID	Voter Registration	Campaign & Party
Panel (a): Direct Effect								
Competition	0.158***	0.098***	0.095***	0.061***	0.240***	-0.016	-0.023	0.210***
	(0.031)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.018)
N	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329
R^2	0.273	0.270	0.255	0.276	0.259	0.228	0.275	0.250
FE: Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Panel (b): With Post-2020 Interaction								
Competition	0.197***	0.069***	0.114***	0.050**	0.275***	-0.043***	-0.047*	0.265***
	(0.032)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.022)	(0.020)
Competition × Post-2020	-0.189***	0.137***	-0.091**	0.055+	-0.164***	0.129***	0.117**	-0.264***
	(0.051)	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.020)	(0.038)	(0.027)
N	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329	50,329
R^2	0.273	0.270	0.255	0.276	0.259	0.229	0.275	0.252
FE: Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by group; all models include group, state, and biennium fixed effects. Panel (a) reports the direct effect of electoral competition; Panel (b) adds a post-2020 interaction (the post-2020 main effect is absorbed by the biennium fixed effects). Columns are the pooled panel (All) and the seven election policy areas. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-10: **Electoral Competition and Participation: Out-of-Portfolio versus In-Portfolio Groups**

	(1)
Competition	0.180***
	(0.032)
Competition × In-Portfolio	0.199+
	(0.115)
N	54,304
R^2	0.296
FE: Group	X
FE: Biennium	X
FE: State	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by group. The model includes group, state, and biennium fixed effects. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-11: **Legislative Frustration, Minority Alignment, and Out-of-Portfolio Participation**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Frustration (In-Area)	-0.013	-0.247*				-0.013
	(0.010)	(0.102)				(0.010)
Frustration (In-Area) × Competition		0.277*				
		(0.119)				
Minority-aligned			0.005	-0.069***	-0.069***	-0.031
			(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.025)
Minority-aligned × Agenda Control				0.022***	0.022***	0.018**
				(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Divided government			0.026***	0.002	0.002	0.010
			(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.024)
Divided × Agenda Control				0.008+	0.008+	0.006
				(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Competition		-0.215*			0.016	
		(0.094)			(0.056)	
Presence	0.068***	0.067***	0.057***	0.057***	0.057***	0.066***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
N	13,965	13,965	22,540	22,273	22,273	13,545
R^2	0.374	0.375	0.334	0.333	0.333	0.372
FE: Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by group; group, state, and biennium fixed effects throughout. Columns 1–2 interact in-area frustration (one minus the prior in-area success rate) with electoral competition; columns 3–6 interact government alignment (reference = majority-aligned) with agenda control, adding competition (5) and frustration (6) as controls. Agenda Control is an additive index (0–6) of majority-party gatekeeping powers (Anzia and Jackman 2013); Presence is the log of one plus prior-biennium positions. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-12: **Financial Capacity and Presence in Out-of-Portfolio Group Participation**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log Revenue (lag)	0.003	-0.004		
	(0.002)	(0.004)		
Log Assets (lag)			0.007	
			(0.006)	
Log Staff Compensation (lag)				-0.003+
				(0.002)
Presence		0.063***	0.062***	0.063***
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
N	18,470	9,959	9,959	9,959
R^2	0.284	0.325	0.325	0.325
FE: Group	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X
FE: State	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by group; all models include group, state, and biennium fixed effects. Revenue, assets, and staff compensation are prior-biennium IRS Form 990 totals in real 2025 USD, entered as log(x+1). Presence is log(1 + prior-biennium positions). Sample restricted to groups with high-confidence EIN matches in the ProPublica 990 panel. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

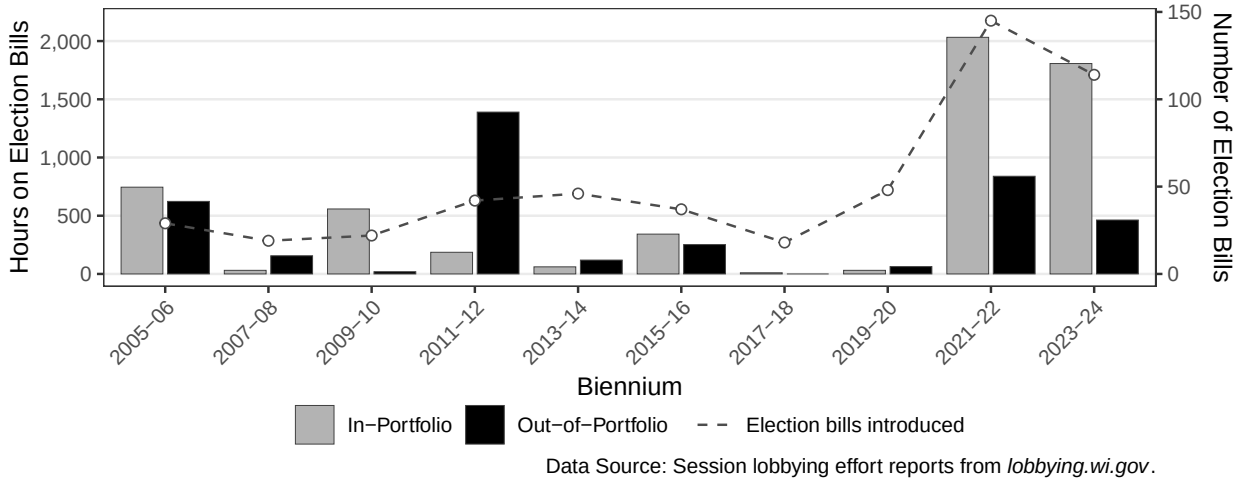

Figure E-6: **Lobbying Activity on Election Legislation in Wisconsin Across Time**. Bars display total lobbying hours devoted to election legislation by in-portfolio and out-of-portfolio groups in each biennium; the dashed line (right axis) displays the number of election bills introduced.

Table E-13: **Predictors of Election Lobbying Activity Among Out-of-Portfolio Groups in Wisconsin**

	Participation		Prop. Allocated		log(Hours)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Frustration	0.028*	0.020	0.007*	0.004	0.097**	0.075*	0.058+	0.059+	0.034
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Presence (Hours)	-0.004	-0.005	-0.000	-0.001	0.007	0.006	0.007	0.006	0.008
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Presence (Positions)	0.018+	0.017+	-0.002	-0.002	0.004	-0.000	-0.017	0.015	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.014)
State Government: Democratic Trifecta	-0.000		-0.003*		-0.035+				
	(0.013)		(0.001)		(0.019)				
State Government: Republican Trifecta	0.019*		0.002		0.031				
	(0.009)		(0.002)		(0.022)				
N	3,016	3,016	2,783	2,783	3,016	3,016	2,708	2,592	2,285
R^2	0.478	0.489	0.321	0.329	0.323	0.333	0.378	0.291	0.309
FE: Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium		X		X		X	X	X	X
Sample	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Excl. 2011–12	Excl. 2021–22	Excl. both

Note: Session lobbying-effort reports from lobbying.wi.gov; the unit is the group-biennium and standard errors are clustered by group. The outcomes are whether the group took any position on election legislation (Participation, columns 1–2), the share of its lobbying hours devoted to election bills (Prop. Allocated, columns 3–4), and log lobbying hours on election bills (log(Hours), columns 5–9). Odd-numbered columns include group fixed effects and the trifecta indicators; the remaining columns add biennium fixed effects (absorbing the trifecta indicators), and columns (7)–(9) re-estimate column (6) excluding the surge bienniums. Frustration is the share of the group's prior-biennium positions that did not succeed; Presence (Hours) and Presence (Positions) are the log of one plus its prior-biennium lobbying hours and number of positions. Trifecta indicators are relative to divided government. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

E.3 Ideology and Position-Taking

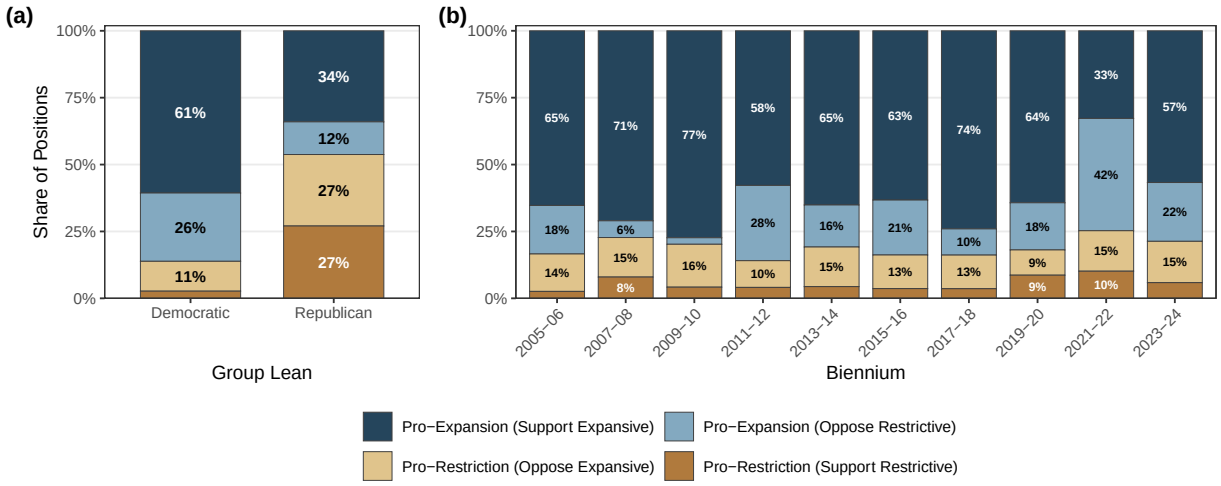

Figure E-7: **Components of Pro-Expansion and Pro-Restriction Position-taking**. Clear out-of-portfolio stances split into four components: pro-expansion (support expansive or oppose restrictive legislation) and pro-restriction (support restrictive or oppose expansive legislation), shown by the group's partisan lean (a) and by biennium, restricted to bienniums with at least ten covered states (b).

Table E-14: **Group Ideology and Restrictive (vs. Expansive) Position-Taking**

	Group Ideology	× Competition	× Dem. Trifecta	× Rep. Trifecta	× Policy Area	N
Panel (a): Group-Level Net Restrictive Lean						
All Groups	+0.302***					2,305
	(0.020)					
In-Portfolio	+0.398***					253
	(0.040)					
Out-of-Portfolio	+0.275***					2,052
	(0.022)					
Panel (b): Position-Level, by Specification						
Overall	+0.214***					9,371
	(0.041)					
Ideology × State Government	+0.344***		-0.242***	+0.020		9,371
	(0.046)		(0.063)	(0.063)		
Ideology × Competition	-1.026**	+1.505***				9,371
	(0.339)	(0.397)				
Panel (c): Position-Level, by Policy Area						
Voter ID	+0.188***				+0.292**	9,371
	(0.041)				(0.093)	
Administration	+0.196***				+0.075	9,371
	(0.047)				(0.069)	
Logistics	+0.204***				+0.030	9,371
	(0.051)				(0.064)	
Election Integrity	+0.207***				+0.024	9,371
	(0.047)				(0.075)	
Absentee/VBM	+0.210***				+0.014	9,371
	(0.047)				(0.071)	
Voter Registration	+0.280***				-0.135*	9,371
	(0.039)				(0.062)	

Note: Panel (a): group-level OLS of net restrictive lean (share of pro-restriction minus pro-expansion positions, -1 to $+1$) on standardized ideology, for all non-government groups and by portfolio status. Panels (b)–(c): position-level linear-probability models of a pro-restriction (1) versus pro-expansion (0) position among out-of-portfolio advocacy and political groups, each with legislation and biennium fixed effects and standard errors clustered by group and legislation: Panel (b) gives the overall ideology coefficient estimate and its interactions (the '×' columns) with electoral competition and a Democratic or Republican trifecta; Panel (c) gives one model per policy area, each interacting ideology with an indicator for that area, so the ideology coefficient is the slope on bills outside the area and the sum of the two is the slope on the area's own bills plotted in Figure 5(c). Group ideology is standardized, so each coefficient is the effect of a one-standard-deviation increase. + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table E-15: **Group Ideology and Position-Taking, by Subsample and Bill Rating**

	Group Ideology (SD)	Dem. Trifecta × Ideology	Rep. Trifecta × Ideology	N
Panel (a): Direction of Position (Pro-Restriction vs. Pro-Expansion)				
Full sample	+0.214*** (0.041)			9,371
High-coverage bienniums	+0.202*** (0.044)			8,606
Access-rated bills	+0.215*** (0.046)			7,935
Administration-rated bills	+0.254*** (0.051)			2,847
Panel (b): Support vs. Oppose, by Bill Rating				
Expansive/Improves	-0.258*** (0.069)	+0.126+ (0.072)	+0.403*** (0.110)	6,436
Restrictive/Worsens	+0.467*** (0.110)	-0.545** (0.169)	+0.141 (0.117)	2,935
Mixed/Unclear	+0.162 (0.128)	-0.351* (0.144)	+0.174 (0.149)	2,407

Note: Standard errors clustered by group and legislation ID; each row is a separate model with legislation and biennium fixed effects. In Panel (a) the outcome is a pro-restriction (1) versus pro-expansion (0) position; the high-coverage row restricts to bienniums with at least 15 of the 22 covered states (2009–2010 onward), and the access and administration rows recode positions on those two rating dimensions. In Panel (b) the outcome is support (1) versus oppose (0), split by the bill's overall rating, with trifecta interactions relative to divided government. + p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

E.4 Contestation and Legislative Outcomes

Table E-16: **Group Contestation and Party Differentiation**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Support Only	0.030			0.041	-0.029	0.020
	(0.030)			(0.033)	(0.075)	(0.027)
Opposition Only	0.260***			0.268***	0.345*	0.261***
	(0.058)			(0.052)	(0.136)	(0.055)
Groups on Both Sides	0.233***			0.248***	0.282*	0.229***
	(0.048)			(0.041)	(0.098)	(0.047)
Electoral Competition	0.570*	1.076	0.736	0.153	0.154	0.516+
	(0.234)	(0.670)	(0.718)	(0.157)	(0.737)	(0.247)
Supporter–Opposer Ideological Distance		0.032+				
		(0.015)				
Supporter Coalition Ideology (SD)			0.055			
			(0.091)			
Opposer Coalition Ideology (SD)			0.052*			
			(0.022)			
Bipartisan Sponsors	-0.165***	-0.299***	-0.329***	-0.146**	-0.197***	-0.164***
	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.056)	(0.038)	(0.023)	(0.031)
Restrictive Bill	0.204***	0.195**	0.218**	0.181**	0.286***	
	(0.047)	(0.059)	(0.067)	(0.051)	(0.051)	
Expansive Bill	0.112+	0.090	0.128	0.104	0.120	
	(0.063)	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.061)	(0.074)	
Democratic Trifecta	0.020	0.002	-0.031	0.153***	0.004	0.011
	(0.021)	(0.094)	(0.098)	(0.035)	(0.049)	(0.020)
Republican Trifecta	-0.038	0.059	0.023	-0.045	-0.006	-0.028
	(0.067)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.045)	(0.103)	(0.066)
Access: Restrictive Bill						0.166***
						(0.038)
Access: Expansive Bill						0.164*
						(0.065)
Admin.: Worsens Bill						0.171*
						(0.070)
Admin.: Improves Bill						0.012
						(0.041)
N	1,497	405	380	1,540	455	1,497
R^2	0.365	0.354	0.333	0.352	0.482	0.379
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by state; state and biennium fixed effects throughout. The engagement configuration is relative to bills with no out-of-portfolio positions. Columns: (1) featured specification; (2) supporter–opposer ideological distance and (3) coalition mean ideologies, both on two-sided bills; (4) non-final-passage roll calls; (5) bills with a majority of positions filed before the first recorded vote; (6) separate access and administration ratings in place of the overall rating (baseline = dimension not addressed). + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-17: **Group Contestation and Probability of Enactment**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Support Only	0.070**			0.074**
	(0.022)			(0.023)
Opposition Only	-0.103**			-0.105**
	(0.031)			(0.031)
Groups on Both Sides	-0.031			-0.031
	(0.033)			(0.032)
Electoral Competition	-0.086	0.026	0.145	-0.094
	(0.204)	(0.249)	(0.261)	(0.201)
Supporter–Opposer Ideological Distance		-0.017*		
		(0.007)		
Supporter Coalition Ideology (SD)			-0.066**	
			(0.020)	
Opposer Coalition Ideology (SD)			-0.032	
			(0.022)	
Bipartisan Sponsors	0.076+	0.083*	0.077	0.079+
	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.047)	(0.041)
Restrictive Bill	-0.108**	-0.125**	-0.113*	
	(0.030)	(0.043)	(0.040)	
Expansive Bill	-0.048+	-0.030	-0.053	
	(0.027)	(0.036)	(0.040)	
Democratic Trifecta	0.105**	0.113*	0.106*	0.104**
	(0.033)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.033)
Republican Trifecta	0.032	0.013	0.036	0.032
	(0.033)	(0.068)	(0.066)	(0.035)
Access: Restrictive Bill				-0.016
				(0.029)
Access: Expansive Bill				0.011
				(0.024)
Admin.: Worsens Bill				0.000
				(0.037)
Admin.: Improves Bill				0.089**
				(0.023)
N	4,125	904	871	4,125
R^2	0.213	0.174	0.178	0.217
FE: State	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by state; state and biennium fixed effects throughout. The engagement configuration is relative to bills with no out-of-portfolio positions. Columns: (1) featured specification; (2) supporter–opposer ideological distance and (3) coalition mean ideologies, both on two-sided bills; (4) separate access and administration ratings in place of the overall rating (baseline = dimension not addressed). + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

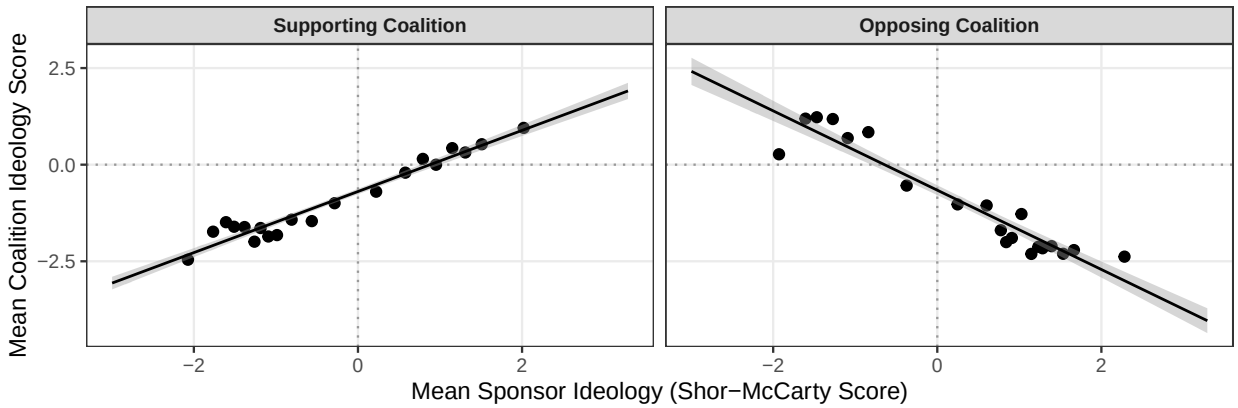

Figure E-8: **Ideological Congruence Between Group Coalitions and Bill Sponsors**. Mean ideology of a bill's out-of-portfolio supporting (left) or opposing (right) coalition against the mean Shor–McCarty score of its sponsors, scaled on the same ideological space. Points are vigintile means; lines are linear fits with 95% confidence bands over the bill-level data.

Table E-18: **Party Differentiation by Bill Rating and Government Control**

	Expansive	Restrictive	Divided	Dem. Trifecta	Rep. Trifecta
Support Only	0.094	0.035	-0.013	0.116+	-0.031
	(0.071)	(0.076)	(0.044)	(0.059)	(0.022)
Opposition Only	0.202+	0.263**	0.305***	0.112	0.240*
	(0.107)	(0.081)	(0.069)	(0.075)	(0.090)
Groups on Both Sides	0.262*	0.263**	0.233**	0.223*	0.241**
	(0.094)	(0.062)	(0.070)	(0.078)	(0.066)
N	794	174	420	545	531
R^2	0.283	0.716	0.492	0.239	0.568
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by state; state and biennium fixed effects and controls for bipartisan sponsorship and electoral competition throughout. The outcome is party differentiation on final-passage votes; the engagement configuration is relative to bills with no out-of-portfolio positions. Rating columns control for government control; government-control columns control for the bill's rating. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-19: **Enactment by Government Control, Bill Rating, and the Partisan Lean of Engagement**

	Dem. Trifecta	Divided	Rep. Trifecta	Divided	Rep. Trifecta
Support from Democratic-Leaning Groups	0.076+	0.064	-0.015	0.155	-0.007
	(0.036)	(0.042)	(0.039)	(0.102)	(0.070)
Support from Republican-Leaning Groups	0.024	0.103*	0.102**	0.018	0.147**
	(0.079)	(0.041)	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.044)
Opposition from Democratic-Leaning Groups	-0.130*	-0.108*	-0.029	0.020	0.011
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.056)	(0.036)	(0.045)
Opposition from Republican-Leaning Groups	-0.120*	-0.058	-0.115	0.008	-0.032
	(0.043)	(0.039)	(0.066)	(0.058)	(0.052)
N	879	692	578	204	328
R^2	0.250	0.203	0.286	0.448	0.203
FE: State	X	X	X	X	X
FE: Biennium	X	X	X	X	X

Note: Standard errors clustered by state; state and biennium fixed effects and controls for bipartisan sponsorship and electoral competition throughout. The outcome is enactment; columns 1–3 are *Expansive/Improves* bills and columns 4–5 *Restrictive/Worsens* bills within the indicated government-control subsample. Engagement is any out-of-portfolio support or opposition from groups of each lean. Restrictive bills under Democratic trifectas (n = 106, 9.4% enacted) are omitted. + p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table E-20: **Timing of Out-of-Portfolio Engagement Relative to the Legislative Process**

Legislative Stage	Bills	%
Pre-introduction	165	12.2
Intro to referral	84	6.2
Referral to first recorded vote	689	51.0
Committee vote to floor passage (chamber 1)	225	16.7
Between chambers	60	4.4
After final passage	128	9.5

Note: Legislative stage of each bill's first dated out-of-portfolio position, for the 1,351 bills (of 12,141 rated bills) with position-timing data. Median 27 days from introduction to out-of-portfolio positions (IQR 10–60).

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