Center for
Effective Lawmaking

# Are Workers Effective Lawmakers?*

**Jacob M. Lollis** †

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**Abstract**

Are workers effective lawmakers? Throughout American history, some politicians and elites have argued that white-collar Americans are more qualified than working-class Americans to govern. To date, however, we know relatively little about the legislative effectiveness of working-class lawmakers. I develop a theory of class-based electoral selection that links class-based discrimination in elections to legislators' performance in office. I argue that working-class candidates face class-based biases in elections that make it more difficult to emerge and successfully win elected office. As a result, I expect the working-class candidates who do become lawmakers to be equally or more effective than their white-collar colleagues. To test these expectations, I create a data set merging the occupational background of over 14,000 individual state legislators with their state legislative effectiveness score (SLES). The resulting data set includes over 50,000 state legislator-term specific observations. Consistent with my expectations, I find that working-class lawmakers do not underperform white-collar lawmakers. Further, I provide evidence that, across various models and specifications, the gap between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness is negligible. Given that workers do not underperform white-collar lawmakers, the primary cause of workers' numerical underrepresentation in legislatures is likely not their lawmaking abilities.

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†Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Politics, University of Virginia, jml7hf@virginia.edu

# Introduction

Approximately half of U.S. citizens are employed in manual labor or service-based jobs, yet only 6% of state legislators and 2% of U.S. representatives have previously been employed in a working-class occupation (Carnes 2013; Carnes 2016). The effects of America's white-collar government are clear—wealth inequality has dramatically increased in the last half-century with the top 1% of Americans becoming increasingly wealthy while workers' wage earnings have stagnated. Scholars find that U.S. policy advantages the rich while ignoring the interests of working-class and poor Americans (Gilens 2012; Bartels 2016; Miler 2018; Persson & Sundell 2023).[1] One potential reason that policy reflects the interests of the rich is the drastic overrepresentation of wealthy Americans serving in political office (Carnes 2013).

The primary explanation for why workers are underrepresented in American legislatures is that structural biases exist in American elections that prevent working-class candidates from emerging and successfully running for elected office (Carnes 2018). And while a growing literature examines how and why American elections disproportionately disadvantage candidates from a working-class background (Carnes 2018; Truel & Hansen 2023), it is also necessary to consider how class-based electoral bias is related to workers' ability to effectively govern. The current literature suggests that if workers' numerical representation in legislatures increases, better policy representation for working-class Americans will likely follow (Mansbridge 1999; Carnes 2013; Carnes 2018). And based on the policy priorities of working-class lawmakers this appears to be true—working-class legislators are more likely than white-collar legislators to introduce and vote for pro-worker policies (Carnes 2013). This logic, however, is contingent on the assumption that workers perform equally or better than white-collar lawmakers once elected to legislative office. If workers are ineffective lawmakers, their policy preferences are unlikely to be successfully legislated into law. In this article, I examine whether a class-based effectiveness gap exists in American legislatures.

Throughout America's history, some political leaders have advanced arguments suggesting

[1] A debate exists among scholars as to whether affluent and poor Americans' policy preferences differ and whether poor Americans lack political representation. See Gilens (2009) for a review.

that, if elected, working-class lawmakers would be ineffective at carrying out the duties and responsibilities of a legislator. Alexander Hamilton, writing in the federalist papers, suggests that workers are less politically skilled than individuals working in white-collar jobs and are, therefore, less suitable for political office (Hamilton 1788). More recently, President Trump publicly stated in reference to his selection of cabinet secretaries that he preferred to appoint rich cabinet secretaries because he "just didn't want a poor person" in the position (Times 2017). If these arguments are correct and white-collar lawmakers are better suited to govern, we may expect working-class legislators to be less effective lawmakers than their white-collar colleagues. To date, however, there is no empirical evidence suggesting that working-class legislators are less effective lawmakers than white-collar legislators.

I argue, in contrast, that working-class legislators should perform equally or better than white-collar lawmakers. I develop a theory of class-based electoral selection that links class-based discrimination in elections to legislators' performance in office (Anzia & Berry 2011). Working-class candidates face class-based biases in elections that make it more difficult to emerge and successfully win elected office (Carnes 2018). Given that white-collar candidates do not face similar biases in elections, working-class candidates must work harder and develop skills to overcome these barriers. As a result, the workers who do win elected office are qualified, hard-working candidates capable of effective lawmaking.

My data set pairs pre-legislature occupational data for over 14,000 unique state legislators (Makse 2019) with Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman's (2020) state legislative effectiveness scores (SLES). The data set in total includes over 50,000 legislator-term specific observations from 49 states over thirty years (1988-2017). Of these 50,000 legislator-term specific observations, approximately 3,500 are working-class legislators. A simple comparison of means shows that, on average, white-collar legislators are marginally more effective than working-class legislators. However, in a multivariable model with controls, this relationship disappears. To ensure that working-class and white-collar legislators are indeed equally effective lawmakers, I conduct several robustness checks. As one example, I examine the precision of the coefficient of interest

using an inverted confidence interval approach (Rainey 2014). This estimation confirms that the original multivariable model is precisely estimated, providing more empirical support for the idea that working-class legislators are no less effective at lawmaking than white-collar legislators.

Studying legislators' performance in office, particularly for underrepresented groups, is necessary for several reasons. First, empirically evaluating the legislative effectiveness of underrepresented groups empowers scholars to address discriminatory arguments that these groups are in some way less capable than majority groups. My analysis provides some evidence against these discriminatory arguments; I find no evidence that white-collar legislators are more effective lawmakers than workers. Indeed, my findings stand in contrast to arguments that suggest workers are less suitable for political office because of their occupational background (Hamilton 1788). Second, examining the legislative effectiveness of underrepresented groups allows scholars to better understand the root causes of numerical and descriptive underrepresentation. Given that working-class lawmakers are equally as effective as white-collar lawmakers, their numerical underrepresentation in legislatures is likely not caused by their lawmaking abilities.

## The Legislative Effectiveness of Underrepresented Groups

There is an extensive literature that seeks to conceptualize, measure, and analyze legislative effectiveness in the U.S. Congress and U.S. state legislatures (Matthews 1959; Weissert 1991; Volden et al. 2013; Volden & Wiseman 2014; Hitt et al. 2017; Volden & Wiseman 2018; Bucchianeri et al. 2020; Stacy 2020). Volden and Wiseman define legislative effectiveness as "the proven ability to advance a member's agenda items through the legislative process and into law" (2014, p. 18). Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman's (2020) state legislative effectiveness scores (SLES) measure legislative action throughout the lawmaking process (sponsorship, action in committee, action beyond committee, a bill passing one chamber, and a bill becoming law). This measure comprehensively describes legislators' lawmaking efforts at each stage of the lawmaking process. Legislative effectiveness scores are used to analyze institutional and individual-level factors, and how the intersection of both, shapes legislators' effectiveness. Scholars have primarily analyzed the legislative effectiveness of two underrepresented groups—women and Black legislators—in

the U.S. Congress (Volden et al. 2013; Volden & Wiseman 2014).

Volden and Wiseman (2014) find that women legislators, when in the minority party, are more effective than male legislators. In the majority party, however, women are equally effective as male legislators (Volden et al. 2013). Women legislators are particularly effective at the consensus-building portions of the lawmaking process, like committee and floor action (Volden & Wiseman 2014; Volden et al. 2013). Volden et al. attribute women's increased effectiveness at consensus-building stages of the legislative process to behavioral differences between genders—women are more collaborative than their male colleagues (Volden et al. 2013).[2]

Black legislators are less effective than White legislators when Democrats are in the majority party. However, they are equally as effective as White legislators when Democrats are in the minority party (Volden & Wiseman 2014). Volden & Wiseman (2014) theorize that this is a result of Black legislators developing a more specialized legislative agenda. Existing scholarship on the legislative effectiveness of women and Black legislators suggests that underrepresented groups are not uniformly less effective than majority groups. Instead, their effectiveness is uniquely shaped by the interaction between legislative institutions and their descriptive identities. Therefore, while considering the legislative effectiveness of women and Black legislators may be theoretically useful, workers' effectiveness will likely be, in part, unique.

There is limited scholarship directly analyzing the relationship between legislators' social class backgrounds and their performance in legislatures. While no existing work uses legislative effectiveness scores (Volden & Wiseman 2014; Bucchianeri et al. 2020) to analyze how legislators' social class backgrounds are related to their legislative effectiveness, scholars have used other measures of legislative productivity. The findings are mixed among the existing literature but broadly suggest that working-class legislators are not uniformly less effective than white-collar legislators. Carnes, in his book *White-Collar Government* (2013), examines the legislative entrepreneurship of workers in the U.S. Congress in the context of economic policy. He finds that workers sponsor

[2]In contrast, Lawless et al. (2018) argue that female legislators are more likely than male legislators to engage in activities that foster collegiality and collaboration. However, their behavior within the legislative process is not distinct from that of male legislators.

and cosponsor more economic legislation than white-collar legislators, and pass economic policy at equal rates as their white-collar colleagues.[3] Likewise, Carnes and Lupu (2016b) examine the relationship between legislators' educational backgrounds and their performance in office and find that legislators pass the same number of bills regardless of their educational background. Finally, in an examination of underrepresented groups in state legislative leadership positions, Clark and Hansen (2020) find that workers are equally as likely to be represented in state leadership positions as white-collar legislators. While state legislative leadership positions are not a direct test of legislators' effectiveness, existing work suggests that legislative leaders are among the most effective lawmakers (Volden & Wiseman 2014).

I provide a more robust analysis of class-based legislative effectiveness in three ways. First, I consider legislative effectiveness across all policy areas rather than only economic policy. Considering workers' effectiveness in all policy areas allows me to examine whether workers are effective lawmakers on issues not directly related to their descriptive identity. Second, using SLES allows me to define legislative effectiveness as a lawmaker's effectiveness at all stages of the legislative process rather than only sponsorship and vote choice. Importantly, this allows me to observe workers' actions at less visible stages of the lawmaking process, like committee hearings and floor proceedings. Third, I analyze state legislators rather than examining workers in the U.S. Congress, where only 2% of representatives have previously been employed in working-class occupations. State legislatures are a valuable laboratory for my analysis because workers have greater numerical representation within state legislatures (Carnes 2016), offering more variation in levels of representation across time to examine.

[3]In contrast, Stacy (2020) examines the relationship between legislators' personal wealth and their effectiveness and finds that the most wealthy legislators have a higher legislative effectiveness score than the least wealthy legislators.

# Class-Based Electoral Selection Effects & Legislative Effectiveness

I argue that working-class lawmakers are equally or more effective than white-collar lawmakers due to class-based electoral selection effects. Building on existing work, I develop a theory of class-based electoral selection that links class-based discrimination in elections to legislators' performance in office (Anzia & Berry 2011). This theory suggests that because workers face prejudice and discrimination during legislative elections as a result of their class identity, they are forced to work harder and develop the necessary skills to win elections. As a result, the working-class candidates who win elections become effective lawmakers.

Electoral selection effects occur when political candidates face biases in elections as a result of their identity (Anzia & Berry 2011; Ashworth et al. 2023). Existing research suggests that women, non-white, working-class, and LGBTQ+ candidates disproportionately face electoral obstacles that increase the difficulty of winning elections (Piston 2010; Anzia & Berry 2011; Carnes 2018; Wagner 2019; Bateson 2020). As a result, candidates from underrepresented groups must work harder than majority groups to win elections. There are at least three causes of electoral selection effects (Anzia & Berry 2011; Ashworth et al. 2023). First, voters may be biased towards a given social group, requiring that candidates who identify with these groups be exceptionally qualified to secure electoral support. Second, candidates may perceive that voters are biased against them, even if they are not. If this is the case, only the most ambitious and qualified candidates will emerge and enter the electoral arena. Third, political elites and gatekeepers may be biased against certain social groups, forcing candidates who identify with these groups to work harder to gain elite support during their campaigns.

Existing scholarship suggests that the type of selection effects candidates face varies across identity groups.[4] Prejudice and discrimination from political elites and gatekeepers—rather than

[4]For example, Anzia and Berry (2011) argue that women candidates perceive and experience sexism within congressional elections and, as a result, perform better than their male colleagues to overcome this discrimination. More recent work also suggests that sex-based selection leads to

voter bias or perceived bias—is likely the primary obstacle preventing working-class candidates from winning elections (Carnes & Lupu 2016a; Carnes 2018; Griffin et al. 2020; Hoyt & DeShields 2020; Truel & Hansen 2023). Evidence from survey experiments suggests that voters are not biased against working-class candidates relative to white-collar candidates. Carnes and Lupu (2016a) find that respondents in the United States, Britain, and Argentina viewed hypothetical working-class candidates as "equally qualified, more relatable, and just as likely to get their votes" (2016a, p. 832). Other work suggests that voters rate workers as more "warm" relative to white-collar candidates (Hoyt & Deshields 2020). On the other hand, voters rate white-collar candidates as less honest and less caring than working-class candidates (Griffin et al. 2020). Likewise, working-class candidates do not see themselves as unqualified for elected office. When asked whether they had ever thought about running for elected office, working-class respondents reported a similar level of political ambition as white-collar respondents (Carnes 2018). Similarly, working-class Americans are equally as likely to feel qualified to run for office as white-collar Americans (Carnes 2018).

Workers do experience discrimination during campaigns from political elites and electoral gatekeepers. Carnes (2018) finds that party leaders view the working class as less viable political candidates, often citing their difficulty to fundraise and win elections (Carnes 2018, p. 110). As a result, party leaders are less likely to recruit and support working-class candidates in legislative races. Relatedly, without the financial support of party leaders, working-class candidates struggle to fundraise in elections.[5] This dual resource and recruitment burden makes it extremely difficult for workers to enter the electoral arena, and even more difficult to win the race.

As a result of class-based discrimination, working-class candidates and white-collar candidates experience a very different electoral environment (Carnes 2018). Working-class candidates must work harder than white-collar candidates to receive the same electoral outcome (Carnes 2018). In doing so, I argue that workers develop and refine skills that promote effective lawmaking once in office (Anzia & Berry 2011). To date, there is little work directly testing mechanisms that

women lawmakers being more effective than their male counterparts (Ashworth et al. 2023).

[5]For example, Carnes (2018) finds that workers are less likely to win electoral office in districts that run more expensive electoral races (p. 135).

may explain why electoral selection effects produce effective lawmakers (Anzia & Berry 2011). I suggest three plausible mechanisms that may explain why class-based electoral selection produces effective working-class lawmakers.

First, one way class-based electoral selection may produce effective lawmakers is that less qualified working-class candidates will lose elections. Working-class lawmakers who do not overcome class-based electoral barriers—whether it be because they were not qualified candidates or because the electoral barriers were insurmountable—will lose their election. Given that white-collar candidates face fewer electoral obstacles than working-class candidates, they may be more likely to win elections even if they are less qualified than working-class candidates. Workers' performance in primary versus general elections lend some evidence in support of this expectation. Truel and Hansen (2023) find that workers underperform white-collar candidates in primary elections; however, workers are equally as likely as white-collar candidates to win general elections (Carnes 2018). One explanation for this seemingly inconsistent trend may be that less qualified working-class candidates are weeded out during primary elections, while qualified workers perform equally as well as their white-collar opponents in general elections. This selection process results in only the most effective working-class candidates winning elections and gaining representation in legislatures.

Second, in addition to hollowing out the working-class candidate pool, I expect class-based biases in elections to meaningfully influence the working-class candidates who do win elections. The working-class candidates who do successfully win elections have experienced the effects of class bias in elections, and are aware of the effort that is required to outperform their white-collar colleagues. There is reason to expect that workers will carry this over-performance mindset with them as they begin working in legislatures. Put differently, class-based biases exist within American political institutions, and so similar to the electoral stage of the political process, workers must work harder than their white-collar colleagues in legislatures to accomplish their goals (Carnes 2013; Carnes 2018).

Third, a practical skill that workers may acquire during elections is the ability to work alongside

white-collar political elites. One reason that party elites do not recruit working-class candidates to run for office is their social networks are comprised primarily of other white-collar individuals. Existing work suggests that when white-collar party elites are considering potential candidates to recruit, they are more likely to consider their own white-collar social ties, rather than potential working-class candidates (Carnes 2018). Therefore, the working-class candidates who do win congressional elections may have pre-existing white-collar social ties, or be uniquely skilled at integrating into white-collar social networks. This is a skill that not only benefits working-class candidates during elections when they need to gain support from party elites, but also when workers become lawmakers and find themselves serving in legislatures comprised primarily of white-collar members. The ability to develop social ties with white-collar legislators may allow workers to become more effective lawmakers.

Working-class candidates face electoral biases that white-collar candidates do not face. The result of this electoral selection effect is that only the most qualified and capable workers win elected office and gain representation in legislatures. As a result, I hypothesize that working-class lawmakers should be equally or more qualified than their white-collar colleagues.

***H1 (Class-Based Legislative Effectiveness)***: Workers are equally or more effective lawmakers than white-collar legislators.

# Data & Measurement

To test this hypothesis, I pair pre-legislature occupational data for over 14,000 unique state legislators (Makse 2019) with Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman's (2020) state legislative effectiveness scores (SLES). The data set includes SLES for 51,929 legislator-term-specific observations for 49 states from 1987-2017.[6] Of these observations, 3,572 (or 6.8% of my sample) were previously employed in a working-class occupation.[7]

[6]SLES for four states appear in the data set post-2003: Massachusetts (2009), Nebraska (2007), Oregon (2007), and Rhode Island (2007). SLES do not exist for Kansas due to insufficient data.

[7]See Figure 4.1 in Appendix A.4.

SLES are constructed similarly to legislative effective scores (LES) used to measure effectiveness in the U.S. Congress (Volden et al. 2013; Volden & Wiseman 2014). SLES, like LES, captures the weighted average of a legislator's actions throughout five stages of the lawmaking process: bill introduction, action in committee (AIC), action beyond committee (ABC), passing one chamber (PASS), and becoming law (LAW) (Bucchianeri, Volden, & Wiseman 2020). Therefore, these scores evaluate effectiveness throughout the entirety of the legislative process rather than simply analyzing roll-call votes. Additionally, SLES are weighted to reflect the substance and significance of legislation. Commemorative and symbolic legislation influences a legislator's effectiveness score less than substantive and significant legislation. Bucchinaeri, Volden, & Wiseman (2020) calculated SLES by scraping the legislative history of every bill available on state legislative websites. Bill data are available for some states (Maine, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Texas, and Pennsylvania) dating back to the 1980s. The legislative history of every bill for every state (except Kansas) is included in the data set after 2003.[8]

To operationalize social class, I use pre-legislature occupational data (Makse 2019). Working-class occupations "provide employees with little material security" and "require little capital or formal education" (Carnes 2013, p. 21). Legislators are coded as workers if their most recent pre-legislature occupation was in construction, office or clerical work, public safety, retail and service, a skilled trade, or as semi-skilled or unskilled laborers (Carnes 2013; Makse 2019).[9] I use the occupational backgrounds of legislators to operationalize social class because it is arguably the best predictor of individuals' income and social status (Matthews 1954; Hout 2008, cited in Carnes 2012), and it has become convention in the study of social class (Carnes 2013; Makse 2019; Barnes et al. 2021). A complete list of working-class and white-collar occupations can be found in the appendix (A.1).

One limitation of Makse's (2019) occupational data is that lawmakers' occupational histories

[8]See the appendix (A.2) and Bucchinaeri et al. (2020) for a more detailed explanation of how SLES scores are calculated.

[9]Makse's (2019) data set includes two additional working-class occupations—construction workers/contractors and public safety personnel—that are not included in Carnes' (2013) definition of working-class occupations.

are limited to their most recent pre-legislature occupation. If a lawmaker's most recent occupation before being elected is in real estate, they are coded as white-collar. Conversely, if a lawmaker's most recent occupation prior to being elected is a retail worker, they are coded as working-class. This data cannot distinguish legislators who worked in a working-class occupation prior to working in a white-collar occupation. For example, a legislator who worked as a retail worker for five years before transitioning into a job in real estate is coded as white-collar. Ideally, I would have complete occupational histories for every state legislator. I would then be able to analyze how legislators' occupational histories influenced their effectiveness within legislatures. Perhaps legislators who entered the workforce as working-class but transitioned into a white-collar job have a higher or lower effectiveness score than legislators who entered the workforce in a working-class job and remained in a working-class job until their election.

Unfortunately, a data set including the occupational histories of state legislators from all state legislatures across the time series of my data does not exist.[10] While this is a limitation within my data, I argue that defining a legislators' social class by their most recent pre-legislature occupation is a reasonable test for my theory. I argue that working-class lawmakers should be equally or more effective than white-collar lawmakers because of electoral selection effects. These electoral selection effects will likely be most pronounced for working-class lawmakers currently employed in a working-class occupation during their campaign (rather than a formerly working-class candidate employed in a white-collar occupation during their campaign). For example, given that party leaders discriminate against the working class when recruiting potential candidates, this discrimination will be most pronounced for working-class candidates who are currently employed in a working-class occupation rather than candidates who were previously employed in a working-class occupation. Thus, if class-based electoral selection effects influence working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness differently, this effect will be most pronounced for candidates whose most recent occupation was a working-class job. Therefore, while operationalizing legislators' so-

[10]Hansen and Clark's (2020) data set includes the occupational histories of state legislators, but for only thirty state legislatures across twelve years. The time series of the Makse (2019) data set better approximated the time series of the SLES.

cial class as their most recent pre-legislature occupation does not comprehensively describe their occupational history, it is a reasonable test for my theory.

I condition on several covariates that likely influence legislators' effectiveness. I include demographic covariates like race, gender, and party identification.[11] Additionally, I include chamber-specific covariates, like seniority, vote share, majority party status, governor's party, leadership positions, and polarization. I also include state legislature specific covariates like professionalism and term limits. Finally, I include state and term fixed effects to control for variation specific to each state legislature and term.[12]

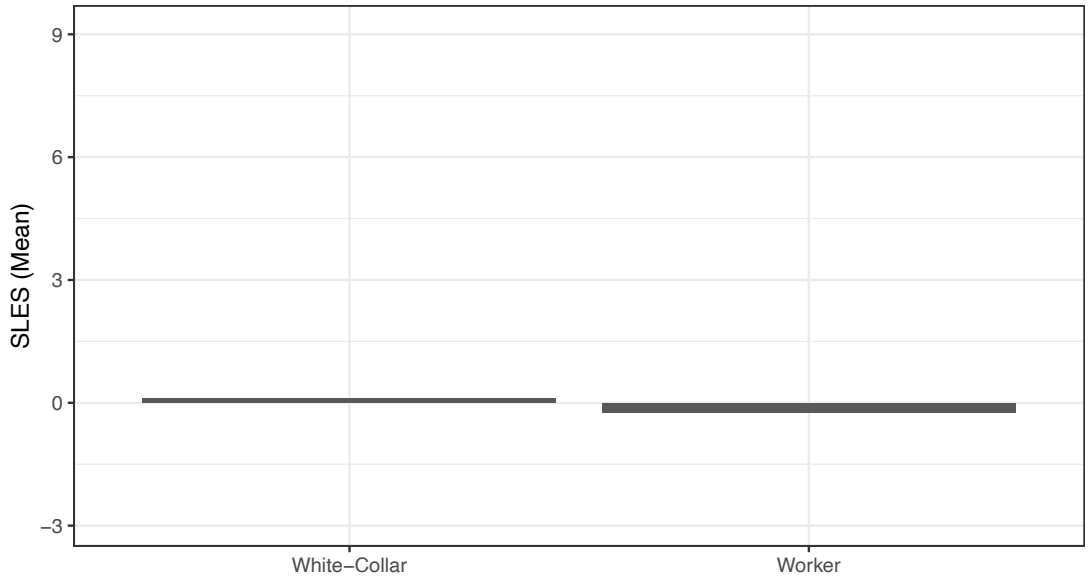
# Are Workers Effective Lawmakers?

I first analyze the mean effective score of white-collar and working-class state legislators. Figure 1 plots the mean SLES for both white-collar and working-class legislators. White-collar legislators, on average, have a mean SLES of .01. Working-class legislators, on average, have a mean SLES of -.02. After plotting the average effectiveness score for both white-collar and working-class legislators against the range of the dependent variable, it becomes clear that a class-based effectiveness gap of 0.03 in the raw data is substantively small.

[11]Barnes et al. (2021) have argued that pink-collar workers—female workers— are theoretically and empirically distinct from blue-collar workers. I investigate whether gender moderates workers' effectiveness and find that the interaction term is statistically indistinguishable from zero, suggesting that a worker's gender does not influence their legislative effectiveness (see Appendix A.4).

[12]Descriptive statistics for the variables of interest are presented in Appendix A.3

**Figure 1: Average SLES of Working-Class and White-Collar Legislators**




The substantively small difference in means between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness entirely disappears in a multivariable model. I estimate an OLS regression model using clustered standard errors with state and term fixed effects. The dependent variable is SLES, and the independent variable is a dichotomous "Worker" variable (coded 1 for working-class). I control for relevant demographic and chamber-specific covariates. I also control for the percentage of workers serving in a legislature in a given term. As Column 6 in Table 1 shows, all else equal, workers are, on average, 0.028 times less effective than white-collar legislators. However, the magnitude of the relationship is small and not statistically significant.[13] The depen-

[13]One concern regarding the model estimated in Table 1 may be that the data are structured in a way that creates a two-level model—the data set includes multiple observations for each legislator (given that the unit of analysis is legislator-term observations), and while the occupational background of the legislator is static for each observation, legislators' effectiveness scores are dynamic. To address this, I estimate a model including only observations from a legislator's first term in office. Given that legislators will only have one occupational observation in this model, the two-level data structure becomes a one-level data structure. The results are presented in A.5 (Table 5.2). The results are similar to the results presented in Table 1. Working-class lawmakers are no less effective than white-collar lawmakers, and the error estimates are precisely estimated. The results in Table 5.2, however, may not be generalizable to all legislators if white-collar or working-class legislators disproportionately become more (or less) effective throughout their legislative careers. To

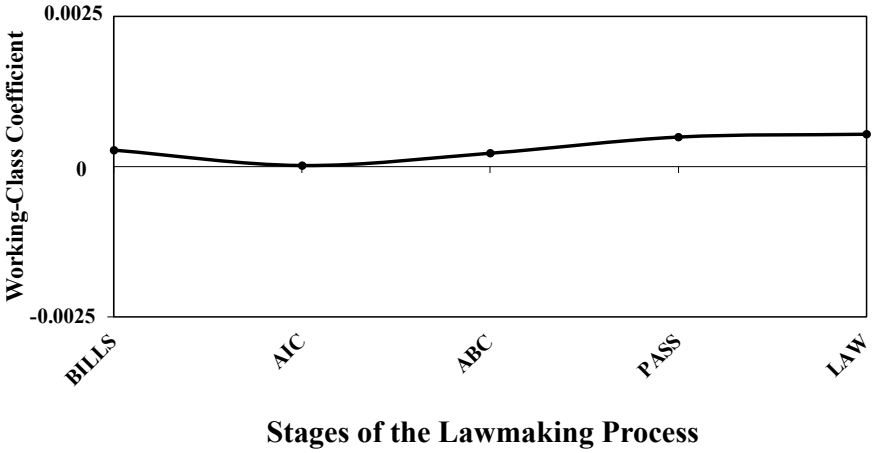
dent variable ranges from -2.9 to 9.9, indicating that an effectiveness gap of 0.028 is substantively small. Put differently, the difference in working-class and white-collar lawmakers' effectiveness is approximately 2.8% of a standard deviation.

I also estimate workers' effectiveness at each stage of the lawmaking process. Table 1 (columns 1-5) shows that the worker coefficient is positive, though small in magnitude and not statistically significant at each of the five stages of the lawmaking process. Figure 2 displays the effectiveness gap between working-class and white-collar legislators at each stage of the lawmaking process—bill introduction, action in committee (AIC), action beyond committee (ABC), passing chamber (PASS), and becoming law (LAW). A point estimate greater than zero indicates that workers are more effective than white-collar legislators. Likewise, a point estimate below zero indicates that white-collar lawmakers are more effective than working-class legislators. To observe any variation away from zero, the Y-axis must be set to a substantively small range (0.0025 to -0.0025) of the dependent variable, suggesting no meaningful difference between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness. Importantly, the absence of a class-based effectiveness gap is independent of workers' numerical representation in the legislature. Working-class lawmakers are equally as effective as white-collar lawmakers in legislatures where workers comprise 2% of the chamber and in legislatures where workers make up 20% of the legislature. This relationship also holds in various state legislative institutional arrangements.[14] The evidence from Figure 2 and Table 1 is consistent with my expectation that workers are no less effective than white-collar lawmakers.

test whether this is the case, I interact the dichotomous worker variable with a seniority variable, which measures the number of terms legislators have served in a given chamber. The results from Table 5.3 (in A.5) suggest that while legislators do become slightly more effective throughout their legislative career, working-class and white-collar lawmakers experience this effectiveness boost equally. Collectively, the results from Tables 5.2 and 5.3 suggest that the multi-level structure of the data is not meaningfully changing the observed results.

[14]See Table 5.1 in Appendix A.5 that displays the moderating effect of state legislative institutions and the percentage of workers in the legislature on class-based legislative effectiveness. The professionalization of the legislature does not meaningfully moderate the relationship between social class and legislative effectiveness. Similarly, workers are equally as effective as white-collar legislators in states with and without term limits. Finally, the percentage of workers in a legislature does not meaningfully moderate class-based legislative effectiveness.

## Figure 2: Working-Class and White-Collar Legislators Are Equally Effective Lawmakers




**Note:** This figure plots the Worker coefficient estimated in Table 1 across each stage of the lawmaking process. If workers are more effective lawmakers than white-collar legislators, the coefficient would be positive. Conversely, if white-collar legislators are more effective lawmakers than workers, the coefficient would be negative. The Worker coefficient throughout each stage of the lawmaking process is effectively zero, given the range of the Y-axis, suggesting the absence of a class-based effectiveness gap. ***Working-class and white-collar legislators are equally effective lawmakers throughout each stage of the legislative process.***

## Table 1: Working-Class and White-Collar Legislators Are Equally Effective Lawmakers

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BILL | AIC | ABC | PASS | LAW | SLES |
| Worker | 0.000248 | 0.0000188 | 0.000223 | 0.000492 | 0.000539 | -0.0284 |
| | (0.57) | (0.04) | (0.47) | (0.95) | (0.97) | (-1.07) |
| % Worker | -0.00130*** | -0.00113** | -0.00105** | -0.00113** | -0.00111* | 0.0141 |
| | (-3.53) | (-2.99) | (-2.93) | (-2.87) | (-2.56) | (0.45) |
| Female | -0.0000376 | 0.000543 | 0.000655* | 0.000748** | 0.000851** | 0.0108 |
| | (-0.15) | (1.96) | (2.40) | (2.68) | (2.80) | (0.67) |
| Black | -0.00275* | -0.00332** | -0.00300* | -0.00279* | -0.00238 | 0.0551 |
| | (-2.29) | (-2.67) | (-2.37) | (-2.19) | (-1.57) | (0.79) |
| Hispanic | -0.000689 | -0.00127 | -0.000825 | -0.000743 | -0.000489 | 0.167* |
| | (-0.63) | (-1.09) | (-0.69) | (-0.61) | (-0.35) | (2.40) |
| Race (Other) | -0.00162 | -0.00157 | -0.00141 | -0.00552** | -0.00612** | -0.0790 |
| | (-0.65) | (-0.71) | (-0.60) | (-2.78) | (-3.04) | (-0.62) |
| White | -0.00166 | -0.00203 | -0.00174 | -0.00165 | -0.00126 | 0.144* |
| | (-1.64) | (-1.89) | (-1.59) | (-1.51) | (-0.98) | (2.52) |
| Democrat | 0.000279 | -0.000760*** | -0.000807*** | -0.000927*** | -0.000938*** | -0.0237 |
| | (1.28) | (-3.30) | (-3.41) | (-3.82) | (-3.59) | (-1.71) |
| Seniority | 0.0000867 | 0.0000750 | 0.0000692 | 0.0000578 | 0.0000979 | 0.0211*** |
| | (1.87) | (1.58) | (1.46) | (1.23) | (1.92) | (6.95) |
| Committee Chair | 0.00561*** | 0.00746*** | 0.00844*** | 0.00885*** | 0.00883*** | 0.513*** |
| | (23.98) | (27.77) | (29.50) | (29.59) | (26.68) | (30.38) |
| In Majority | 0.00236*** | 0.00428*** | 0.00468*** | 0.00495*** | 0.00434*** | 0.355*** |
| | (9.37) | (14.99) | (16.02) | (18.62) | (15.01) | (20.30) |
| Governor Same Party | 0.000590*** | 0.000747*** | 0.000643** | 0.000762*** | 0.00124*** | 0.0341** |
| | (3.44) | (4.06) | (3.25) | (3.82) | (5.83) | (3.04) |
| Majority Leadership | 0.00296*** | 0.00411*** | 0.00510*** | 0.00563*** | 0.00580*** | 0.179*** |
| | (4.47) | (5.60) | (6.39) | (6.96) | (6.94) | (4.78) |
| Minority Leadership | 0.00251** | 0.00211* | 0.00172 | 0.000628 | 0.000440 | 0.107** |
| | (3.21) | (2.17) | (1.72) | (0.97) | (0.63) | (2.92) |
| Polarization | -0.000213 | -0.00131*** | -0.00213*** | -0.00236*** | -0.00270*** | -0.175*** |
| | (-0.88) | (-4.74) | (-7.46) | (-10.53) | (-11.32) | (-11.06) |
| Leader, Speaker, President | 0.0000528 | 0.00101 | 0.00173 | 0.00297* | 0.00407* | -0.0370 |
| | (0.05) | (0.79) | (1.24) | (1.97) | (2.36) | (-0.55) |
| Term Limits | 0.00148*** | 0.00162*** | 0.00180*** | 0.00179*** | 0.00194*** | 0.114*** |
| | (5.57) | (5.99) | (6.20) | (5.87) | (6.00) | (6.75) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | -0.00815*** | -0.00759*** | -0.00757*** | -0.00761*** | -0.00743*** | -0.102 |
| | (-11.04) | (-9.89) | (-9.85) | (-9.54) | (-8.42) | (-1.81) |
| Vote Share | -0.00192*** | -0.00192*** | -0.00179*** | -0.00142** | -0.00146** | 0.0382 |
| | (-4.63) | (-3.83) | (-3.39) | (-2.75) | (-2.58) | (1.31) |
| Senate | 0.0142*** | 0.0135*** | 0.0131*** | 0.0132*** | 0.0131*** | -0.164*** |
| | (46.70) | (43.22) | (40.87) | (40.47) | (37.74) | (-10.10) |
| Intercept | 0.00698* | 0.00729* | 0.00659* | 0.00669* | 0.00629 | -0.331 |
| | (2.30) | (2.33) | (2.17) | (2.08) | (1.77) | (-1.40) |
| State Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Term Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 |
| Adjusted-$R^2$ | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.26 | 0.18 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A relationship between a set of variables that is not statistically significant, however, is not necessarily a negligible effect (Rainey 2014). A regression coefficient may be statistically indistinguishable from zero for reasons other than the absence of a relationship between a set of variables. For example, a small sample size can result in large error estimates that might make a large coefficient not statistically significant (Rainey 2014). To ensure that the effectiveness gap between working-class and white-collar lawmakers is indeed negligible, I follow the advice of Rainey (2014) and (1) define a contextually specific negligible legislative effectiveness score (-m and m) and (2) use a 90% confidence interval to examine whether the estimated confidence interval falls within the zone of negligibility (-m and m).[15]

I define the zone of negligibility as a SLES between -0.075 and 0.075. Importantly, the range of the negligibility zone is contextually specific to the data. The SLES variable ranges from -2.9 to 9.9. Therefore, an effectiveness score within the range of -0.075 and 0.075 is only 15% of a standard deviation. This suggests that an effectiveness gap of 0.075 does not meaningfully explain any variation in a legislator's effectiveness. Put differently, if two lawmakers' SLES differ by only 0.075, their actions in all five stages of the lawmaking process likely look very similar. I plot estimates and their confidence intervals and analyze whether they fall within this zone (-0.075 and 0.075). If the confidence intervals fall within the zone of negligibility, we can be confident that the insignificant results are truly null (Rainey 2014).

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 plots the estimated relationship between legislators' class backgrounds and their effectiveness using clustered standard errors, bootstrapped standard errors, and median regression.[16] The solid black line labeled "estimate" is the estimated relationship in row one,

[15]It is important to note that a 90% confidence interval is a harder test of whether the difference between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness is indeed negligible than a 95% confidence interval. Given that this approach considers whether any meaningful variation in the dependent variable occurs within the range of the inverted confidence interval, considering a "wider" 90% confidence interval rather than a more "narrow" 95% confidence interval provides a harder test of the negligible result.

[16]Two of the estimated models—the clustered standard error and the bootstrapped standard error—closely approach the negative bound of the negligibility zone. The zone of negligibility was defined prior to plotting the estimates for each of these models. Though the lower bound of the confidence interval for these models approaches the lower bound of the zone of negligibility,

column six of Table 1. Given that state legislative data is particularly likely to have clustered groups and heavy-tailed distributions, I replicate my results using clustered and bootstrapped standard errors and median regression. I use clustered standard errors and bootstrapped standard errors to ensure that the grouped nature of the data does not produce unmodeled correlations that result in a downward bias in standard error estimates (Harden 2011). Additionally, I replicate the OLS results using median regression to ensure that the heavy-tailed error term does not produce inefficient estimates (Harden & Desmarais 2011).

Figure 3.1 shows that all four estimates and confidence intervals are similar in magnitude and fall within the zone of negligibility. This means that, across four different models, the 90% confidence intervals only include estimates within the zone of negligibility. To better contextualize the negligible relationship between legislators' class background and their effectiveness, Figure 3.2 plots the same data as Figure 3.1 over the entire range of the SLES variable. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 collectively show that the absence of a class-based effectiveness gap is precisely estimated and negligible when considering the range of the dependent variable.

To further clarify the precision of the estimate, the lower bound of the 90% confidence interval for the worker coefficient is less than 1% of the range of the SLES variable. Even more striking, the largest possible value of the worker coefficient is less than one percent of the committee chair coefficient, which is the largest coefficient observed in the model. Therefore, consistent with the findings in Table 1, I conclude that there is no meaningful gap between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness in my sample. These findings support my expectation that workers will be no less effective lawmakers than white-collar legislators.

the observed relationship still remains within the zone of negligibility.

**Figure 3.1: Negligible Class-Based Effectiveness Gap**

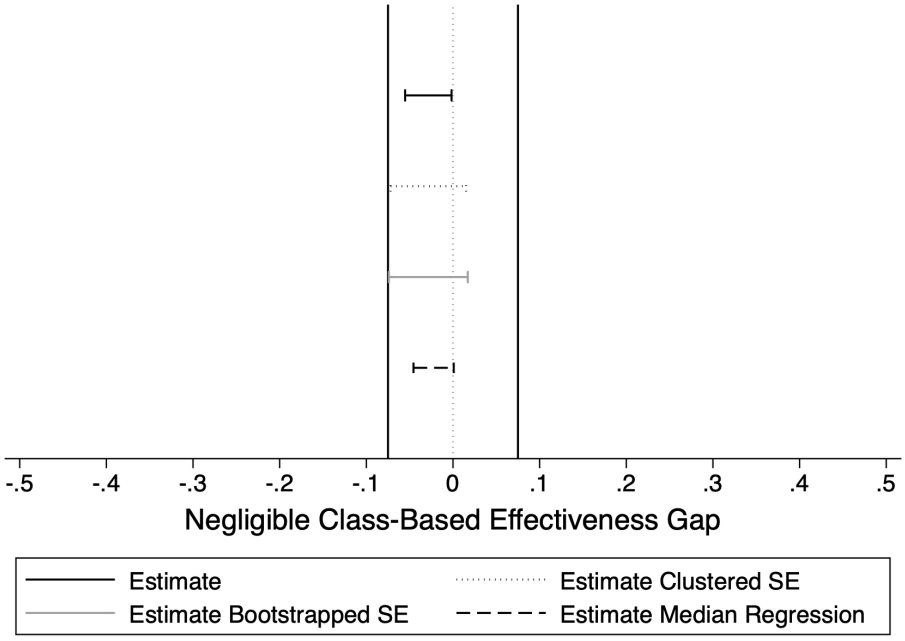
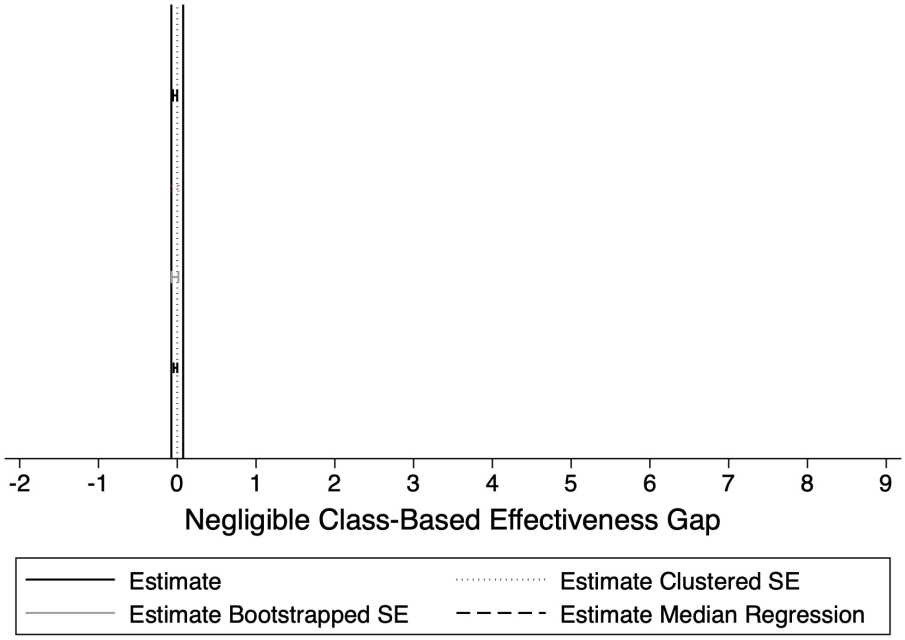



**Figure 3.2: Negligible Class-Based Effectiveness Gap Across Entire Range of SLES**



# Conclusion

Political elites have long argued that, if elected, working-class politicians would be less effective at governing than white-collar politicians (Hamilton 1788; Time 2017). In contrast, I find no evidence that working-class legislators are less effective lawmakers than white-collar legislators. Indeed, I provide evidence of a negligible relationship between working-class and white-collar legislators' effectiveness. White-collar and working-class legislators are equally effective throughout each stage of the lawmaking process.

I argue that workers perform equally as well as white-collar legislators once in office because they face class-based discrimination in elections. Class-based electoral biases create incentives for working-class candidates to work harder—both in terms of effort and skill development—than white-collar candidates. As a result, the working-class candidates that do win elections become effective lawmakers.

Existing scholarship seeks to identify the potential causes and consequences of workers' numerical underrepresentation in legislatures (Carnes 2013; Carnes & Lupu 2016a; Carnes 2018; Truel & Hansen 2023). The findings presented in this article have implications for the potential causes of workers' underrepresentation. First, workers' underrepresentation in legislatures is likely not caused by their lawmaking abilities. If workers underperformed white-collar lawmakers, we may expect that voters would electorally penalize them, causing or contributing to their underrepresentation. However, given that working-class and white-collar legislators are equally effective lawmakers, there is little reason to suspect that voters are disproportionately removing effective working-class lawmakers from office.

To provide some evidence that workers' underrepresentation is not primarily caused by their effective lawmaking, I estimate the relationship between legislators' SLES and their likelihood of winning reelection (findings reported in A.6). I use three electoral measures as dependent variables to examine the relationship between legislators' effectiveness and their electoral prospects: reelection, general election challengers, and vote share (Figure 6.1 & Table 6.2 in A.6). If effective lawmakers are more likely to win reelection, less likely to face challengers, and more likely to earn

a higher vote share than ineffective lawmakers, we can be confident that effective lawmaking leads to a greater likelihood of reelection. Likewise, if the electoral reward for effective lawmaking is experienced equally by working-class and white-collar lawmakers, then we should expect workers' likelihood of reelection to be similar to that of white-collar lawmakers.

The data suggest that effective lawmakers are no more or less likely to win reelection than less effective lawmakers. This finding is consistent with existing work suggesting that voters are more likely to reward effective lawmakers during primary elections rather than general elections (Truel et al. 2022). Important for my argument, however, is whether effective working-class lawmakers are equally as likely to be reelected as effective white-collar lawmakers. Indeed, the data suggest that working-class lawmakers' likelihood of winning reelection is not statistically distinct from white-collar lawmakers' likelihood of winning reelection (Figure 6.1 & Table 6.2 in A.6).

Therefore, given that working-class and white-collar lawmakers are equally as likely to be reelected, we should not suspect workers' lawmaking abilities to be the primary cause of their numerical underrepresentation. This finding narrows the possible causes of workers' underrepresentation. Existing scholarship suggests that voter bias and candidate ambition are likely not the primary causes of workers' underrepresentation (Carnes & Lupu 2016a; Carnes 2018; Griffin et al. 2020; Hoyt & DeShields 2020). I provide some evidence that may rule out another potential cause of workers' underrepresentation—their lawmaking abilities. My findings complement existing work suggesting that workers' underrepresentation likely stems from a dual resource and recruitment burden faced during elections.

Future research should continue to explore the potential causes and consequences of workers' underrepresentation. Two future directions are particularly relevant in light of the findings presented in this article. First, scholars should examine the policy areas in which working-class lawmakers are most effective.[17] If workers prioritize labor and economic policy, we can be more confident that the descriptive representation of working-class lawmakers leads to the substantive representation of workers' policy preferences (Carnes 2013). Second, future work should exam-

[17]This analysis is not currently possible given that SLES has not yet been expanded to include policy issue area scores.

ine whether working-class and white-collar legislators are electorally rewarded for their effective lawmaking during primary elections. Though effective lawmakers are no more or less likely to win their general election, effective lawmakers may be more likely to win their primary election (Truel et al. 2022). Examining whether this effect occurs for both working-class and white-collar legislators during primary elections is particularly important.

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# Online Supplemental Index

# Contents

# 1 Occupational Categories (Makse 2019)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Working-Class Occupations** | Contractors & Construction Workers |
| | Office & Clerical Workers |
| | Public Safety Professions |
| | Retail & Service Professions |
| | Semi-Skilled Laborer |
| | Skilled Trade |
| | Unskilled Laborers |
| **White-Collar Occupations** | Artist |
| | Attorney & Judge |
| | Business Executive |
| | Business owner |
| | Clergy |
| | Consultant |
| | Conservation Professions |
| | Design Professions |
| | Doctor |
| | Education Administrator |
| | Education Staff |
| | Educator |
| | Engineer |
| | Finance & Banking |
| | Financial Specialists |
| | Government |
| | Homemaker |
| | Humanities Professions |
| | Insurance |
| | IT Professions |
| | Journalism and Media |
| | Management Specialists |
| | Medical Professions |
| | Military Professions |
| | Non-profit |
| | Operations Managers |
| | Physical Scientist |
| | Politics & Advocacy |
| | Real Estate |
| | Social Scientist |
| | Social Worker |
| | Sports & Entertainment |
| | Technician |

# 2 Computing State Legislative Effectiveness Scores

State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) are weighted averages calculated for individual legislators (i) in each legislative term (t) within each legislative chamber. SLES consider the number of bill's a legislator (i) introduced (BILL), received action in committee (AIC), received action beyond committee (ABC), passed their chamber (PASS), and became law (LAW) (Bucchianeri et al. 2020, p.6). Each bill is weighted by its overall significance. Commemorative bills are weighed $\alpha$=1, substantive bills are weighted $\beta$=5, and substantive/significant bills are weighed $\gamma = 10$.

Finally, this equation is normalized (n/5) across N legislators to ensure SLES takes a mean value of 1 for each chamber (Bucchianeri et al. 2020, p. 6). I z-score the SLES variable to produce a normal distribution with a mean of zero.

The equation below explains how SLES scores are calculated. For a more detailed description of how legislative effectiveness scores are calculated see Volden & Wiseman (2014), and for more information on state legislative effectiveness scores see Bucchinaeri et al. (2020).

$$SLES_{it} = \left[ \begin{array}{l} \dfrac{\alpha BILL_{it}^{C} + \beta BILL_{it}^{S} + \gamma BILL_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^{N} BILL_{it}^{C} + \beta \sum_{j=1}^{N} BILL_{it}^{S} + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^{N} BILL_{it}^{SS}} \\ + \dfrac{\alpha AIC_{it}^{C} + \beta AIC_{it}^{S} + \gamma AIC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^{N} AIC_{it}^{C} + \beta \sum_{j=1}^{N} AIC_{it}^{S} + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^{N} AIC_{it}^{SS}} \\ + \dfrac{\alpha ABC_{it}^{C} + \beta ABC_{it}^{S} + \gamma ABC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^{N} ABC_{it}^{C} + \beta \sum_{j=1}^{N} ABC_{it}^{S} + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^{N} ABC_{it}^{SS}} \\ + \dfrac{\alpha PASS_{it}^{C} + \beta PASS_{it}^{S} + \gamma PASS_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^{N} PASS_{it}^{C} + \beta \sum_{j=1}^{N} PASS_{it}^{S} + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^{N} PASS_{it}^{SS}} \\ + \dfrac{\alpha LAW_{it}^{C} + \beta LAW_{it}^{S} + \gamma LAW_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^{N} LAW_{it}^{C} + \beta \sum_{j=1}^{N} LAW_{it}^{S} + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^{N} LAW_{it}^{SS}} \end{array} \right] \left[\frac{N}{5}\right]$$

Note: Equation from Bucchinaeri et al. 2020 (p.6)

# 3 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 1:** Descriptions of Key Variables

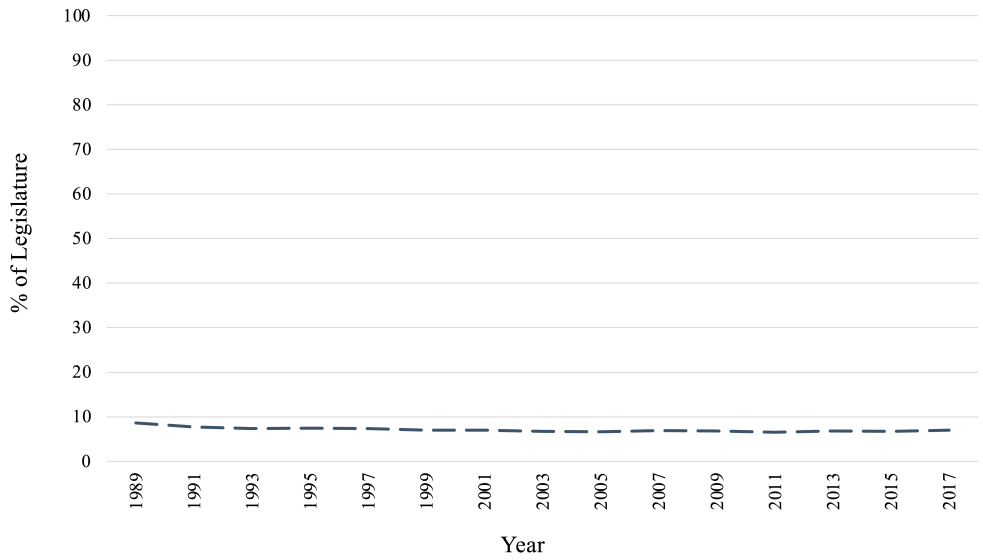
| Variables | **Min** | **Max** | **Mean** | **Std. Dev.** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent Variables** | | | | |
| Legislative Effectiveness Variables | | | | |
| SLES (SLES_z) | -2.94 | 9.92 | .009 | .981 |
| Bill Introduction (BILL) | 0 | .287 | .014 | .015 |
| Action in Committee (AIC) | 0 | .323 | .014 | .016 |
| Action Beyond Committee (ABC) | 0 | .367 | .014 | .017 |
| Pass One Chamber (PASS) | 0 | .014 | .014 | .018 |
| Become Law (LAW) | 0 | .014 | .014 | .019 |
| Electoral Variables | | | | |
| Reelected | 0 | 1 | .784 | .412 |
| Challenged | 0 | 1 | .737 | .440 |
| Vote Share | 0.015 | 1 | .713 | .225 |
| **Independent Variables** | | | | |
| Worker | 0 | 1 | .068 | .253 |
| % Worker | 1.11 | 22.97 | 6.88 | .991 |
| Female | 0 | 1 | .232 | .422 |
| Black | 0 | 1 | .023 | .149 |
| Hispanic | 0 | 1 | .184 | .184 |
| Race (other) | 0 | 1 | .031 | .031 |
| White | 0 | 1 | .929 | .257 |
| Democrat | 0 | 1 | .487 | .499 |
| Seniority | 1 | 25 | 3.894 | 3.245 |
| Committee Chair | 0 | 1 | .279 | .449 |
| Majority Party | 0 | 1 | .620 | .485 |
| Governor Same Party | 0 | 1 | .539 | .498 |
| Majority Leadership | 0 | 1 | .055 | .229 |
| Minority Leadership | 0 | 1 | .032 | .176 |
| Polarization | 0 | 4.999 | .674 | .602 |
| Leader, Speaker, President | 0 | 1 | .028 | .165 |
| Term Limits | 0 | 1 | .233 | .427 |
| Professionalism (Squire) | .027 | .629 | .216 | .124 |
| Vote Share | .015 | 1 | .713 | .225 |
| Senate | 1 | 2 | 1.283 | .450 |
| N | | | | 48,220 |

# 4 Demographics of Working-Class State Legislators

My data set includes 51,929 legislator-term specific observations. Of those legislator-term specific observations, 3,572 are from working-class backgrounds. From this, on average, 6.8% of state legislators are workers. The numerical representation of workers in state legislatures peaked in 1990 at around 10% (though the early data is sparse); however, the percentage of workers serving in state legislatures since 1990 has remained consistent around 6%. Figure A.4.1 shows the numerical representation of workers in state legislatures from 1989-2018.

The figures below present the partisan, race, and gender breakdown of workers across state legislatures. Workers are approximately evenly split between the two parties (Republicans = 47%, Democrats = 52%). Workers are overwhelmingly white (94%) and male (88%). I condition on gender, race, and partisanship to ensure that demographic factors aren't confounding the estimates of workers' effectiveness. I also consider whether demographic factors moderate workers' effectiveness. To do this I interact gender, race, and partisanship with the worker variable. All three of the interactions are not statistically significant, indicating that demographic factors do not moderate workers' effectiveness.

## 4.1 Figure 4.1: Numerical Representation of Workers in State Legislatures (1989-2018)



## 4.2 Table 4.2: Class-Based Effectiveness Given Gender, Race, and Party

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | SLES | SLES | SLES |
| Worker | -0.0163 | -0.0360 | 0.00190 |
| | (-0.56) | (-1.38) | (0.05) |
| Female | 0.0148 | 0.0108 | 0.00914 |
| | (0.90) | (0.67) | (0.57) |
| Worker + Female | -0.101 | | |
| | (-1.56) | | |
| Non-White | | -0.0525 | |
| | | (-1.85) | |
| Worker + Non-White | | 0.124 | |
| | | (0.81) | |
| Democrat | | | 0.216** |
| | | | (3.02) |
| Worker + Democrat | | | -0.0565 |
| | | | (-1.07) |
| % Worker | 0.0141 | 0.0142 | 0.0151 |
| | (0.45) | (0.46) | (0.49) |
| Black | 0.0554 | | |
| | (0.79) | | |
| Hispanic | 0.167* | | |
| | (2.40) | | |
| Race (other) | -0.0790 | | |
| | (-0.62) | | |
| White | 0.144* | | |
| | (2.52) | | |
| Democrat | -0.0240 | -0.0234 | -0.230*** |
| | (-1.72) | (-1.69) | (-3.35) |
| Seniority | 0.0212*** | 0.0211*** | 0.0211*** |
| | (6.96) | (6.96) | (6.95) |
| Committee Chair | 0.513*** | 0.513*** | 0.512*** |
| | (30.36) | (30.37) | (30.31) |
| In Majority | 0.356*** | 0.358*** | 0.362*** |
| | (20.30) | (20.42) | (20.55) |
| Governor Same Party | 0.0339** | 0.0336** | 0.0382*** |
| | (3.02) | (3.00) | (3.40) |
| Majority Leadership | 0.179*** | 0.178*** | 0.180*** |
| | (4.78) | (4.75) | (4.79) |
| Minority Leadership | 0.107** | 0.107** | 0.113** |
| | (2.92) | (2.93) | (3.08) |
| Polarization | -0.175*** | -0.172*** | -0.170*** |
| | (-11.05) | (-10.89) | (-10.69) |
| Leader, Speaker, President | -0.0372 | -0.0373 | -0.0387 |
| | (-0.55) | (-0.55) | (-0.57) |
| Term Limits Applied | 0.114*** | 0.116*** | 0.112*** |
| | (6.76) | (6.89) | (6.63) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | -0.104 | -0.0967 | -0.100 |
| | (-1.82) | (-1.72) | (-1.79) |
| Vote Share | 0.0384 | 0.0398 | 0.0383 |
| | (1.31) | (1.36) | (1.31) |
| Senate | -0.164*** | -0.164*** | -0.168*** |
| | (-10.10) | (-10.12) | (-10.26) |
| Intercept | -0.332 | -0.194 | -0.00269 |
| | (-1.40) | (-0.85) | (-0.01) |
| State Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Term Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 |
| Adjusted-$R^2$ | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

# 5 Additional Models

## 5.1 Table 5.1: Class-Based Legislative Effectiveness Given Professionalism, Term Limits, and % Worker

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | SLES | SLES | SLES |
| Worker | -0.0497 | -0.0342 | -0.330 |
| | (-0.91) | (-1.09) | (-1.34) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | -0.0649 | -0.0596 | -0.0599 |
| | (-1.11) | (-1.05) | (-1.06) |
| Worker + Professionalism (Squire) | 0.0804 | | |
| | (0.36) | | |
| Term Limits | 0.0643*** | 0.0638*** | 0.0642*** |
| | (3.91) | (3.77) | (3.91) |
| Worker + Term Limits | | 0.00595 | |
| | | (0.11) | |
| % Worker | -0.0116 | -0.0116 | -0.0152 |
| | (-0.37) | (-0.38) | (-0.49) |
| Worker + % Worker | | | 0.0429 |
| | | | (1.22) |
| Female | 0.00326 | 0.00321 | 0.00312 |
| | (0.20) | (0.20) | (0.19) |
| Black | 0.0610 | 0.0615 | 0.0612 |
| | (0.87) | (0.88) | (0.87) |
| Hispanic | 0.168* | 0.169* | 0.168* |
| | (2.38) | (2.39) | (2.38) |
| Race (other) | -0.0913 | -0.0908 | -0.0909 |
| | (-0.71) | (-0.70) | (-0.70) |
| White | 0.156** | 0.156** | 0.156** |
| | (2.70) | (2.71) | (2.71) |
| Democrat | -0.00749 | -0.00753 | -0.00760 |
| | (-0.54) | (-0.54) | (-0.55) |
| Committee Chair | 0.547*** | 0.547*** | 0.547*** |
| | (31.53) | (31.54) | (31.54) |
| In Majority | 0.337*** | 0.337*** | 0.337*** |
| | (19.53) | (19.52) | (19.54) |
| Governor Same Party | 0.0317** | 0.0317** | 0.0318** |
| | (2.81) | (2.81) | (2.82) |
| Majority Leadership | 0.207*** | 0.207*** | 0.207*** |
| | (5.58) | (5.58) | (5.58) |
| Minority Leadership | 0.133*** | 0.133*** | 0.133*** |
| | (3.60) | (3.60) | (3.61) |
| Polarization | -0.184*** | -0.185*** | -0.184*** |
| | (-11.63) | (-11.62) | (-11.61) |
| Leader, Speaker, President | -0.00954 | -0.00957 | -0.00942 |
| | (-0.14) | (-0.14) | (-0.14) |
| Vote Share | 0.0927** | 0.0928** | 0.0933** |
| | (3.20) | (3.20) | (3.22) |
| Senate | -0.167*** | -0.167*** | -0.166*** |
| | (-10.21) | (-10.21) | (-10.20) |
| Intercept | -0.114 | -0.115 | -0.0907 |
| | (-0.49) | (-0.49) | (-0.38) |
| State Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Term Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 |
| Adjusted-$R^2$ | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

## 5.2 Table 5.2: Class-Based Legislative Effectiveness for Legislators' First Term

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BILL | AIC | ABC | PASS | LAW | SLES |
| Worker | 0.000273 | 0.000143 | 0.0000824 | 0.0000857 | -0.0000107 | -0.0300 |
| | (0.65) | (0.34) | (0.19) | (0.19) | (-0.02) | (-1.29) |
| % Worker | -0.00224* | -0.00230** | -0.00208** | -0.00231** | -0.00238* | -0.102* |
| | (-2.52) | (-2.93) | (-2.63) | (-2.70) | (-2.39) | (-2.01) |
| Female | -0.000427* | -0.00000815 | 0.000323 | 0.000515 | 0.000574 | -0.0158 |
| | (-2.04) | (-0.04) | (1.35) | (1.93) | (1.89) | (-1.05) |
| Black | -0.00148 | -0.00174 | -0.00103 | -0.000358 | 0.000124 | 0.0250 |
| | (-1.42) | (-1.36) | (-0.76) | (-0.24) | (0.08) | (0.32) |
| Hispanic | -0.000473 | -0.00122 | -0.000995 | -0.000649 | -0.0000576 | -0.0130 |
| | (-0.51) | (-1.03) | (-0.82) | (-0.48) | (-0.04) | (-0.18) |
| Race (other) | -0.00191 | -0.00337 | -0.00283 | -0.00300 | -0.00354 | -0.177 |
| | (-1.30) | (-1.86) | (-1.54) | (-1.62) | (-1.85) | (-1.71) |
| White | -0.000354 | -0.000608 | -0.000504 | -0.000123 | 0.000664 | 0.0510 |
| | (-0.41) | (-0.54) | (-0.44) | (-0.10) | (0.47) | (0.80) |
| Democrat | -0.000541** | -0.00136*** | -0.00155*** | -0.00163*** | -0.00174*** | -0.0408** |
| | (-2.76) | (-6.63) | (-7.36) | (-7.26) | (-6.89) | (-3.02) |
| Committee Chair | 0.00755*** | 0.00971*** | 0.0103*** | 0.0109*** | 0.0116*** | 0.417*** |
| | (14.03) | (16.03) | (16.06) | (15.42) | (13.98) | (13.23) |
| In Majority | 0.00212*** | 0.00363*** | 0.00409*** | 0.00422*** | 0.00354*** | 0.249*** |
| | (7.33) | (12.28) | (13.43) | (13.17) | (10.03) | (13.36) |
| Govenor Same Party | 0.000727*** | 0.00104*** | 0.000923*** | 0.000916*** | 0.00123*** | 0.0371** |
| | (3.65) | (4.97) | (4.19) | (3.89) | (4.63) | (2.74) |
| Majority Leadership | 0.00282 | 0.00396* | 0.00430* | 0.00376 | 0.00344 | 0.191* |
| | (1.72) | (2.15) | (2.10) | (1.80) | (1.43) | (1.99) |
| Minority Leadership | 0.00125 | -0.000840 | -0.000794 | -0.000664 | -0.0000659 | 0.0628 |
| | (0.79) | (-0.63) | (-0.57) | (-0.48) | (-0.04) | (0.81) |
| Polarization | 0.000177 | -0.000577** | -0.00124*** | -0.00177*** | -0.00215*** | -0.182*** |
| | (0.82) | (-2.58) | (-5.36) | (-7.30) | (-8.19) | (-12.31) |
| Leader, Speaker, President | -0.00111 | -0.000618 | 0.0000762 | 0.000199 | 0.00106 | -0.00824 |
| | (-0.44) | (-0.23) | (0.02) | (0.06) | (0.30) | (-0.05) |
| Term Limits | 0.00157*** | 0.00170*** | 0.00118*** | 0.000769* | 0.000837* | 0.0582*** |
| | (6.12) | (6.25) | (4.17) | (2.50) | (2.39) | (3.33) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | -0.0000802 | 0.000429 | 0.00151 | 0.00214* | 0.00256* | 0.565*** |
| | (-0.11) | (0.54) | (1.85) | (2.43) | (2.55) | (9.09) |
| Vote Share | -0.00159*** | -0.00159*** | -0.00178*** | -0.00176*** | -0.00200*** | -0.0932** |
| | (-3.63) | (-3.41) | (-3.70) | (-3.42) | (-3.38) | (-2.98) |
| Senate | 0.0127*** | 0.0119*** | 0.0115*** | 0.0113*** | 0.0112*** | -0.0530** |
| | (39.86) | (37.21) | (34.87) | (31.76) | (28.00) | (-3.11) |
| Intercept | 0.0138 | 0.0155* | 0.0147* | 0.0167* | 0.0171* | 0.553 |
| | (1.92) | (2.32) | (2.17) | (2.28) | (2.00) | (1.32) |
| State Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Term Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 9927 | 9927 | 9927 | 9927 | 9927 | 9927 |
| Adjusted-$R^2$ | 0.39 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.37 | 0.32 | 0.20 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

## 5.3 Table 5.3: Class-Based Legislative Effectiveness Interacted With Seniority

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BILL | AIC | ABC | PASS | LAW | SLES |
| Worker | 0.000281 | -0.0000111 | 0.000120 | 0.0000386 | -0.000246 | -0.0496 |
| | (0.47) | (-0.02) | (0.19) | (0.05) | (-0.30) | (-1.18) |
| Seniority | 0.0000872 | 0.0000746 | 0.0000678 | 0.0000513 | 0.0000867 | 0.0208*** |
| | (1.82) | (1.52) | (1.39) | (1.07) | (1.67) | (6.69) |
| Worker + Seniority | -0.00000868 | 0.00000791 | 0.0000272 | 0.000120 | 0.000208 | 0.00559 |
| | (-0.06) | (0.05) | (0.16) | (0.59) | (0.86) | (0.46) |
| % Worker | -0.00130*** | -0.00113** | -0.00105** | -0.00113** | -0.00111* | 0.0142 |
| | (-3.53) | (-2.99) | (-2.93) | (-2.86) | (-2.54) | (0.46) |
| Female | -0.0000374 | 0.000543 | 0.000654* | 0.000744** | 0.000845** | 0.0107 |
| | (-0.15) | (1.96) | (2.40) | (2.67) | (2.77) | (0.66) |
| Black | -0.00275* | -0.00332** | -0.00301* | -0.00280* | -0.00240 | 0.0546 |
| | (-2.30) | (-2.67) | (-2.37) | (-2.20) | (-1.59) | (0.78) |
| Hispanic | -0.000688 | -0.00127 | -0.000826 | -0.000751 | -0.000504 | 0.167* |
| | (-0.62) | (-1.09) | (-0.70) | (-0.62) | (-0.36) | (2.40) |
| Race (other) | -0.00162 | -0.00157 | -0.00141 | -0.00552** | -0.00613** | -0.0792 |
| | (-0.65) | (-0.71) | (-0.61) | (-2.78) | (-3.04) | (-0.62) |
| White | -0.00166 | -0.00203 | -0.00174 | -0.00166 | -0.00126 | 0.143* |
| | (-1.64) | (-1.89) | (-1.59) | (-1.51) | (-0.99) | (2.51) |
| Democrat | 0.000279 | -0.000760*** | -0.000807*** | -0.000928*** | -0.000939*** | -0.0238 |
| | (1.28) | (-3.30) | (-3.41) | (-3.82) | (-3.59) | (-1.71) |
| Committee Chair | 0.00561*** | 0.00746*** | 0.00844*** | 0.00885*** | 0.00883*** | 0.513*** |
| | (23.98) | (27.77) | (29.50) | (29.59) | (26.68) | (30.38) |
| In Majority | 0.00236*** | 0.00428*** | 0.00468*** | 0.00496*** | 0.00435*** | 0.355*** |
| | (9.36) | (14.98) | (16.02) | (18.62) | (15.02) | (20.29) |
| Govenor Same Party | 0.000590*** | 0.000747*** | 0.000642** | 0.000760*** | 0.00124*** | 0.0340** |
| | (3.44) | (4.06) | (3.25) | (3.81) | (5.81) | (3.03) |
| Majority Leadership | 0.00297*** | 0.00411*** | 0.00510*** | 0.00563*** | 0.00580*** | 0.179*** |
| | (4.47) | (5.60) | (6.39) | (6.96) | (6.94) | (4.78) |
| Minority Leadership | 0.00251** | 0.00211* | 0.00173 | 0.000634 | 0.000449 | 0.107** |
| | (3.21) | (2.17) | (1.72) | (0.97) | (0.64) | (2.93) |
| Polarization | -0.000213 | -0.00131*** | -0.00213*** | -0.00236*** | -0.00269*** | -0.175*** |
| | (-0.88) | (-4.74) | (-7.45) | (-10.52) | (-11.30) | (-11.05) |
| Leader, Speaker, President | 0.0000530 | 0.00101 | 0.00173 | 0.00296* | 0.00407* | -0.0371 |
| | (0.05) | (0.79) | (1.24) | (1.96) | (2.35) | (-0.55) |
| Term Limits | 0.00148*** | 0.00162*** | 0.00181*** | 0.00179*** | 0.00194*** | 0.114*** |
| | (5.57) | (5.99) | (6.21) | (5.88) | (6.02) | (6.76) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | -0.00815*** | -0.00759*** | -0.00757*** | -0.00761*** | -0.00743*** | -0.103 |
| | (-11.03) | (-9.88) | (-9.85) | (-9.54) | (-8.42) | (-1.81) |
| Vote Share | -0.00192*** | -0.00192*** | -0.00179*** | -0.00142** | -0.00147** | 0.0380 |
| | (-4.63) | (-3.83) | (-3.39) | (-2.76) | (-2.60) | (1.30) |
| Senate | 0.0142*** | 0.0135*** | 0.0131*** | 0.0132*** | 0.0132*** | -0.164*** |
| | (46.71) | (43.22) | (40.86) | (40.47) | (37.73) | (-10.10) |
| Intercept | 0.00698* | 0.00730* | 0.00659* | 0.00671* | 0.00632 | -0.331 |
| | (2.30) | (2.33) | (2.17) | (2.08) | (1.77) | (-1.40) |
| State Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Term Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 | 48220 |
| Adjusted-$R^2$ | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.26 | 0.18 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

# 6 Does Effective Lawmaking Result in Reelection?

To measure legislators' likelihood of reelection, I use three electoral variables. The first dependent variable is a binary "reelection" variable coded 1 if the legislator won their second reelection after being elected to the legislature and 0 otherwise.[18] Second, I create a binary "challenger" variable coded 1 if a legislator is challenged in any of their reelection races after their first reelection campaign. Finally, I employ a "vote share" variable that measures the margin a legislator won by in all general election campaigns after their first reelection race. The independent variable in the model is a lagged SLES variable.[19] Therefore, the model predicts how a legislator's SLES in the prior term affects their electoral outcomes in their next election. Further, I condition on several electoral covariates like district competitiveness, challengers, and vote share.

I use a logistic regression model to examine the relationship between legislators' effectiveness and their likelihood of reelection (Column 1 of Table 6.2) and the number of general election challengers they face (Column 2 of Table 6.2). I use an OLS regression model to examine the relationship between legislators' effectiveness and their vote share (Column 3 of Table 6.2). If effective lawmakers are more likely to win reelection, less likely to face challengers, and more

[18]It is necessary to examine legislators' second reelection race for three reasons. First, the lagged SLES variable does not produce an SLES score for legislators' first term in office (legislators do not have a SLES before entering the legislature). Second, if the model is not limited to SLES and reelection data from one term, the model would then use time-varying SLES to predict a static reelection variable. Third, the reelection data measures a legislator's electoral performance *conditional on their decision to run for reelection.* Legislators may choose not to run for reelection for a variety of reasons (retirement/ death/ resignation). An important caveat to my reelection measure is that it cannot distinguish between legislators who lose reelection, and legislators who choose not to run for reelection. However, I do not suspect this is meaningfully changing the observed results, given that most incumbents choose to stay in office. To address this issue, I limit the reelection variable to measure whether legislators won their second reelection campaign. Given that legislators are less likely to vacate their seats earlier in their legislative career, limiting the dependent variable to only measure a legislator's second reelection campaign should better capture whether legislators won or lost their race.

[19]Given that legislators' SLES are calculated from their action during a given term (t), and their electoral information is calculated from the election prior to a given term (t-1), it is necessary to lag the SLES variable. The lagged SLES variable is a legislator's effectiveness score in the prior term.

likely to earn a higher vote share than ineffective lawmakers, we can be confident that effective lawmaking leads to a greater likelihood of reelection. Important for my argument, however, is whether working-class lawmakers' electoral prospects are similar to those of white-collar lawmakers. If the interaction term between the Worker and SLES variables is null, this would suggest that workers are no more (or less) likely than white-collar legislators to be reelected. One implication of this finding is that workers' lawmaking abilities are likely not the cause of their numeric underrepresentation in legislatures.

First, I examine whether effective lawmakers are more likely to be reelected than ineffective lawmakers. The data suggest that effective lawmakers are not more (or less) likely to be reelected at higher rates or win by a higher vote share than less effective lawmakers. Conversely, effective lawmakers are more likely than less effective lawmakers to be challenged in their general election race. This finding is consistent with Truel et al. (2022) who suggest that effective lawmakers are rewarded for their lawmaking abilities during primaries rather than general elections. Primary voters are more tuned into politics, and, as a result, are more capable of electorally rewarded effective lawmakers.

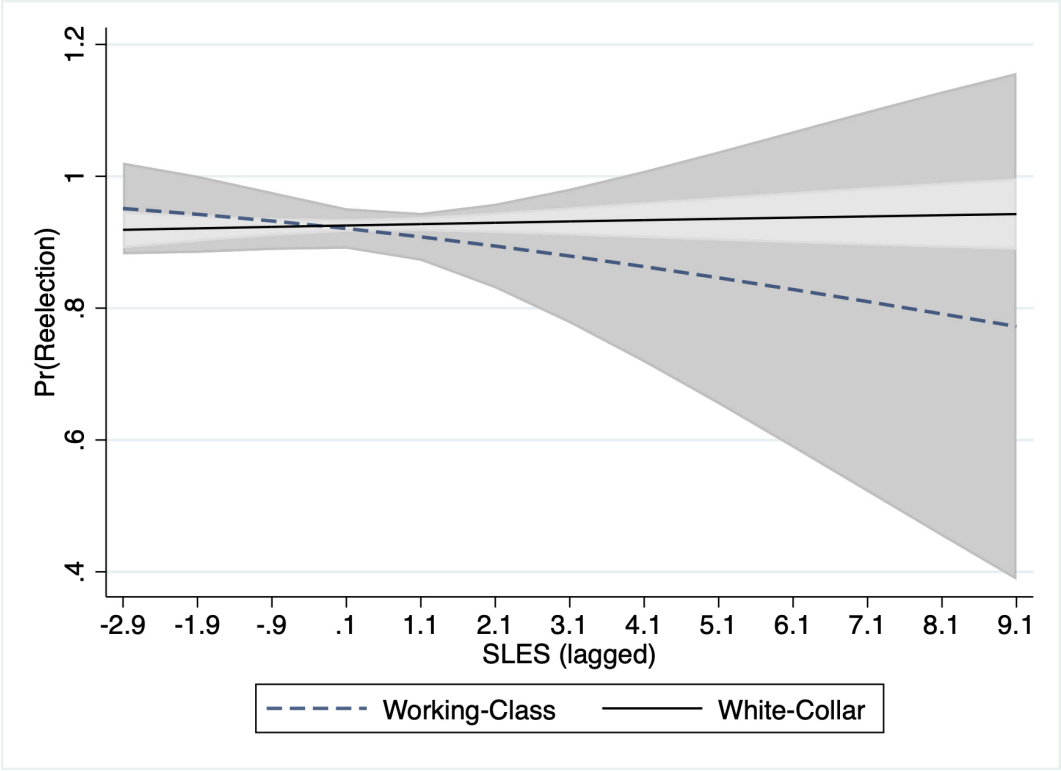
Second, I also expect working-class and white-collar legislators' electoral performance to be the same. Empirically, this means that effective working-class lawmakers will have a similar likelihood of reelection, challengers, and vote share as effective white-collar legislators. The third row of Table 6.2 displays an interaction between social class and legislative effectiveness. This interaction examines whether legislators' social class background moderates their electoral outcomes. The magnitude of these coefficients is small and not statistically significant, suggesting that while effective lawmakers are not rewarded for their effective lawmaking, this relationship is experienced equally regardless of legislators' class background. Said differently, effective working-class lawmakers win reelection (by similar vote margins) and face the same number of challengers as effective white-collar legislators.

Figure 6.1 clarifies the moderating effect of social class on the relationship between legislators' effectiveness and their likelihood of reelection. The y-axis details legislators' likelihood of

reelection. The x-axis describes legislators' effectiveness scores (lagged). The blue dashed line is workers' likelihood of reelection given their SLES, while the continuous black line is white-collar legislators' likelihood of reelection given their SLES. Two important findings are represented in this figure. First, both lines display a flat line that is not statistically significant. This suggests that effective lawmakers are not more (or less) likely to win their second general reelection campaign than ineffective lawmakers. Second, and most importantly for my argument, the relationship is similar for working-class and white-collar lawmakers—the lines are close together, and the difference between them is not statistically significant. This suggests that working-class and white-collar legislators experience the same likelihood of winning reelection.

These findings suggest that working-class lawmakers are equally as likely to win reelection as white-collar lawmakers. One implication of this finding is that workers' lawmaking abilities, given that they are similar to white-collar legislators' lawmaking abilities, are likely not the primary cause of their numerical underrepresentation.

## 6.1 Figure 6.1: Class-Based Reelection Given SLES



## 6.2 Table 6.2: Legislative Effectiveness and Reelection

| | 1<br>Reelected | 2<br>Challenged | 3<br>Vote Share |
|---|---|---|---|
| SLES (lagged) | -0.00342 | 0.0640*** | -0.00229 |
| | (-0.09) | (3.33) | (-1.69) |
| Worker | 0.0525 | -0.0415 | -0.00445 |
| | (0.44) | (-0.46) | (-0.85) |
| Worker + SLES (lagged) | 0.149 | -0.115 | 0.00330 |
| | (0.88) | (-1.38) | (0.79) |
| % Worker | 0.0306 | -0.00753 | -0.00674*** |
| | (0.97) | (-0.31) | (-4.00) |
| Female | 0.0778 | 0.158** | 0.00172 |
| | (1.22) | (3.02) | (0.48) |
| Black | 0.471 | -0.0349 | 0.0386** |
| | (1.36) | (-0.15) | (2.86) |
| Hispanic | -0.349 | -0.00108 | 0.0180 |
| | (-1.19) | (-0.00) | (1.38) |
| Race (other) | -0.345 | -1.052 | 0.0601* |
| | (-0.38) | (-1.44) | (2.02) |
| White | -0.245 | 0.0717 | 0.00643 |
| | (-0.94) | (0.35) | (0.62) |
| Democrat | 0.214*** | 0.0176 | 0.00620* |
| | (3.89) | (0.41) | (2.34) |
| Seniority | 0 | -0.00973 | 0.00154*** |
| | (.) | (-1.40) | (3.48) |
| Committee Chair | -0.292*** | 0.0412 | -0.00112 |
| | (-4.29) | (0.95) | (-0.42) |
| In Majority | 0.123 | 0.141* | 0.0162*** |
| | (1.50) | (2.25) | (4.29) |
| Governor Same Party | -0.0207 | -0.0392 | 0.00645** |
| | (-0.37) | (-1.07) | (2.90) |
| Majority Leadership | -0.185 | -0.0470 | 0.00446 |
| | (-1.13) | (-0.50) | (0.86) |
| Minority Leadership | -0.105 | -0.0235 | -0.000541 |
| | (-0.63) | (-0.26) | (-0.10) |
| Polarization | -0.0712 | 0.0354 | 0.0174*** |
| | (-1.10) | (0.63) | (5.20) |
| Laeder, Speaker, President | 0.677* | 0.0683 | 0.0124 |
| | (2.31) | (0.52) | (1.74) |
| Professionalism (Squire) | 0.195 | 1.894*** | 0.104*** |
| | (0.92) | (10.45) | (9.53) |
| District Competition | -0.0241*** | 0.0798*** | -0.00368*** |
| | (-9.30) | (39.89) | (-18.08) |
| Reelection | | -0.0285 | 0.0125* |
| | | (-0.27) | (2.32) |
| Challenged | | | -0.140*** |
| | | | (-23.53) |
| Intercept | 1.376*** | -2.719*** | 1.132*** |
| | (3.67) | (-8.76) | (59.87) |
| District-Level Fixed Effects | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *N* | 7235 | 21782 | 21782 |

*t* statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$