Prior Experience and State Legislative Effectiveness

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Abstract

How do the prior experiences of lawmakers affect their performance in office? Elected representatives who have professional backgrounds in fields closely related to lawmaking—specifically law, government, or politics—or who held prior office seem to have an advantage in winning elections, but it is unclear that such experience makes them better legislators. Using a variety of data sources, we assess whether legislators with relevant prior experiences are more effective in advancing bills in the 50 state legislatures. We find mixed results. Among occupational groups, lawyers alone seem to make more effective lawmakers than their colleagues. Among elected officeholders, we find that prior local officeholders are no more effective in state legislatures than first-time officeholders. However, we find that state senators are more effective than their colleagues if they first served in the state house. The results suggest that some narrow types of experience may help lawmakers be more effective in office, but that general experience in government and politics does not consistently appear to be associated with any advantage in lawmaking. The results can help political observers and voters assess candidates' claims about how their prior experience will help them contribute to governance.

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Does prior experience in politics, law, or government make lawmakers more effective? Candidates on the campaign trail frequently talk about their past positions and occupations, and how these experiences prepare them for serving in the legislature. Candidates with prior experience in elected office or cognate fields like law, government, and politics also seem to have advantages in winning elections (Bonica 2020; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Roberds and Roberts 2002). While these experiences might help at the ballot box, it is not clear that a background in these fields helps lawmakers wield power inside government. On one hand, direct experience in elected office or related fields may give lawmakers the skills, networks, and information necessary to become effective lawmakers. On the other hand, these capacities can also be developed in other lines of work. All legislators, regardless of background, must have proven their skills to voters and political insiders on the campaign trail before serving. Moreover, there is newfound evidence in the literature on congressional elections that the value of incumbency and past political experience may be on the decline (see Jacobson 2015; Porter and Treul 2024). This could also mean that the skills accumulated in past political office (or other similar occupations) may not benefit lawmakers much upon assuming their new office.

Interestingly, little political science literature tests whether the experiences candidates *say* prepare them to serve—and the ones that help them get elected—actually make them productive legislators once in office. We investigate whether prior experience is associated with a greater ability to advance legislation, providing original data alongside data from multiple sources (Bucchanieri, Volden, and Wiseman 2023; Klarner 2018; Lollis 2023; Makse 2019). First, we examine occupational backgrounds in cognate fields. We test whether lawyers, government workers, and political professionals are more effective in advancing legislation in state legislatures. We find mixed results. Lawyers appear more effective than other legislators, but

former government employees are estimated to be less effective than other legislators. Political professionals appear no more effective than the average legislator. We also test whether experience matters more earlier in a legislator's career, finding mixed evidence on the question.

Second, we examine the electoral backgrounds of first-term legislators. Gathering original data on their backgrounds across all state and local offices, we find no difference in effectiveness between prior officeholders and novice politicians. However, we find evidence that the kind of experience legislators bring and make a difference. Using data from Klarner (2018), we leverage the bicameral structure of most state legislatures and show that newly elected state senators with prior experience serving in the state house are more effective in their early senate careers than their rookie colleagues.

The results show that prior experience is not consistently related to higher performance in office, at least when performance is measured by a legislator's success in advancing bills through the lawmaking process. It remains possible that other aspects of legislative performance—for example, communicativeness with constituents or winning appropriations for the district—are associated with experience. The findings contribute to our understanding of the importance of traits like expertise, experience in office, and the benefits of occupational history in lines of work directly related to lawmaking. This, in turn, can inform how candidates campaign for office and how voters choose their elected representatives.

Prior Experience and Legislative Elections

Political science literature has long noted that one of the best predictors of candidate success in elections is previously holding elective office. The underlying theoretical concept of "quality candidates"—Jacobson and Kernell's (1983) term for experienced officeholders—is that

their electoral success indicates they possess attributes that are correlated with running a successful campaign. These attributes include, but are not limited to, fundraising (Abramowitz 1991; Box-Steffensmeier 1996; Maestas and Rugeley 2008), strategic entry decisions (Cox and Katz 1996; Jacobson 1989; Jacobson and Kernell 1983), and higher levels of name recognition (Grimmer 2013). Congressional candidates choose to highlight past occupations based on what they think makes them best suited to serve as a legislator and/or what voters are more likely to be drawn to (Case and Treul 2023).

While the evidence is strong that candidate quality indirectly affects election outcomes, evidence is more mixed on the question of whether voters consciously back candidates with prior elected experience. Part of quality candidates' success should depend on voters finding experience to be an asset and associated with viability (Gronke 2000; Utych and Kam 2014). Some studies show that voters use incumbency and quality as heuristics when deciding who to vote for, particularly in the absence of other information (Buttice and Stone 2012; Fridkin and Kenney 2011; Lau and Redlawsk 2001). However, survey experimental evidence elsewhere suggests conditional or null effects of prior experience on vote choice. Kirkland and Coppock (2018) find that Democratic (but not Republican) voters prefer mayoral candidates with prior experience only in the absence of party cues, while Hansen and Treul (2021) show no effect of prior state legislative officeholding on preferences for congressional candidates.

Candidates without elected experience but with professional experience in cognate fields like law, government, and politics also seem to have electoral advantages. However, those advantages seem more likely to stem from structural advantages in elections than voters' preferences between candidates of differing occupational backgrounds. Lawyers and non-elected government officials with no prior officeholding experience are more likely to emerge in

winnable congressional races than other amateur candidates (Roberds and Roberts 2002).

Lawyers also have an advantage in early fundraising that allows them to outcompete primary

election rivals (Bonica 2020). Working class candidates—who, with the possible exception of

union organizers, are arguably situated further from the lawmaking process than people with

experience in cognate fields—rarely emerge in congressional races and struggle to win primary

elections once they decide to run (Carnes 2018; Treul and Hansen 2023). Yet, occupational

experience does not seem to affect voters' choices between candidates in survey experiments

(Carnes and Lupu 2016).

Prior Experience and Legislative Effectiveness

Political science tells us a lot about how previous experience in elective office or cognate

fields can aid a candidate on Election Day. It tells us less about whether past experiences lead to

better performance in office once elected. One important way to measure performance is a

lawmaker's effectiveness, or a legislator's ability to advance legislation through the process and

toward final passage. Though legislators perform many other roles in office, such as oversight of

the state bureaucracy, helping constituents navigate government agencies, and communicating to

the public about important issues, proposing and advancing new bills falls among the core

functions of the legislature. Volden and Wiseman (2014) initially developed a measure of

individual lawmaker effectiveness, denoted as the Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES), and

they identified a wide range of personal and institutional factors that are correlated with a

member's effectiveness. More recently, Bucchianeri, Volden, and Wiseman (2022) generated

similar scores for state legislators.

Building on the elections literature, it follows that legislators who have relevant experience—whether in terms of occupation or past elected office—would be more prepared to hit the ground running once in office. Legislators with backgrounds in these areas may be more likely to possess the skills, networks, and information needed to perform well in office. Relevant skills include, but are not limited to, negotiation or bargaining over policy details and effective communication with colleagues and stakeholders. Having a preexisting social network of stakeholders, constituents, and colleagues could create the kind of interpersonal trust that allows for compromise necessary to advancing legislation. Knowing the institutional rules for advancing legislation, holding expertise on a handful of policy areas, and familiarity with the political environment—who the key players and potential holdouts in the legislature are—would give legislators an edge in advancing legislation early in their careers.

Some existing evidence suggests that elected experience matters to performance in office. Members of Congress who carry experience in state legislatures are more likely to be effective lawmakers (Volden and Wiseman 2014). These freshmen members have firsthand experience participating in the legislative process, sponsoring legislation, and moving it through the chamber. Relatedly, Treul (2018) finds that those who enter Congress *without* experience in office introduce fewer pieces of legislation in their first year in office.

The field lacks information on whether experience in cognate fields is also associated with effectiveness. However, there are good reasons to doubt that relevant experiences will help lawmakers become more effective. The first reason is that lawmakers can build relevant skills, networks and content knowledge coming from any background. Negotiation and communication skills can be developed in many lines of work. Social and political networks can be developed

from community involvement instead of the workplace. Knowledge about the legislative process is generally available to anyone who closely follows news and information about the state house.

The second reason is that officeholders are not selected randomly from the population. Officeholders self-selected into candidacy for office assuming they had the relevant skills and information necessary to perform the job if elected. Another layer of selection comes during the campaign. Voters may select candidates based in part on their qualifications, even if salient heuristics (e.g. party ID) are more likely to sway their choices. However, party officials, donors, endorsers, and other "insiders" will likely assess candidates' skills and act to influence the outcome of the race. By the time lawmakers reach the state house, they have both self-selected into candidacy and been vetted by voters and insiders. Therefore, even if a lawyer randomly selected from the population was more likely to possess skills relevant to lawmaking than a randomly selected IT specialist, the IT specialists who chose to run for office and win may hold comparable lawmaking abilities with the lawyers who run and win.

Some prior work is consistent with the idea that legislators with any kind of background experience can become effective lawmakers. The closest work on this question is research by Lollis (2023), who shows that working class state legislators are just as effective as their white-collar counterparts. Hansen and Clark (2020) demonstrate that working class and white-collar legislators are equally likely to become leaders in state legislatures. Makse (2022) provides evidence that legislators can become credible policymakers in policy domains closely linked to their occupational backgrounds across a wide variety of job experiences, especially early in their legislative careers.

The element of time also factors into our expectations about how experience matters. As they spend more time at the state house, legislators should learn the knowledge and develop the

skills and networks needed to become effective lawmakers. Seniority is a strong predictor of legislative effectiveness in Congress (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Therefore, lawmakers should benefit from their prior experience most in their first few terms in office. By the time lawmakers have spent several terms in office, pre-legislative experience should matter less as they have become more familiar with the institution.

Data

To test our expectations, we turn to data from Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2023) on legislative effectiveness in state legislatures. The authors generated nearly 80,000 state legislative effectiveness scores for legislators who served in 97 different state legislatures between 1987-2018, by employing a methodology that is analogous to the method Volden and Wiseman (2014) use to study Congress. State legislative effectiveness scores are generated for every state legislature except for Kansas, where the prevailing legislative procedures do not allow the analyst to identify which state legislator is the primary sponsor on bills that are introduced into the chamber. They draw on publicly-available data to identify every bill that was introduced into every state legislature (other than Kansas), to match the bill to its primary sponsor, and to identify how far each bill went through each of five different status steps in the legislative process between introduction until (possibly) becoming law.[1] Each bill is coded as being commemorative, substantive, or substantive and significant; and then a State Legislative Effectiveness Score (SLES) is generated for each state legislator which captures how successful they were at moving their sponsored legislative agenda items through the lawmaking process during a fixed legislative session, in comparison to all other legislators in their chamber. Like

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[1] Similar to Volden and Wiseman's (2014) analysis of Congress, Bucchianeri et al. (2023) only consider bills that, if enacted, will change existing state law.

Volden and Wiseman's LES, each SLES is normalized to take a mean value of "1" within a chamber for each session. Hence, those state legislators who have SLESs higher than 1 are (by definition) above average in lawmaking effectiveness, in comparison to their peers, while those who have scores below 1 are below average.

We use data from Lollis (2023), who merged Bucchanieri et al.'s (2023) SLES scores with data collected by Makse (2019) to identify the professional background of state legislators. These data classify all legislators' backgrounds into one of 44 categories based on the author's assessment of the source data. Legislators' occupations are identified based on self-identification in government sources (e.g. Blue Books) and publicly available online profiles (e.g. LinkedIn).[2] When more than one occupation is identified, the data records the positions legislators held when they entered the legislature. Unfortunately, this raises the possibility of measurement error in some cases. The expectation that experience in cognate fields distinguishes lawmakers hinges on the idea that the skills, networks, and information that individuals develop over the course of their careers, rather than their positions at the time of starting office, should matter most to their effectiveness. If a legislator worked in a government agency for twenty years, then left to start a small business before running for office, the legislator would be recorded as a small business owner and the data would fail to capture the legislator's relevant background. Likewise, a legislator who worked as a small business owner most of their career but held a government post for a year before running for office would be recorded as a government employee. This

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[2] Legislators have incentives to characterize their background in public-facing profiles to burnish their public image (see Maddox 2004). For example, a legislator might list "small business owner" when working as a lawyer in private practice to capitalize on the relatively greater popularity of small business owners over lawyers. Such a characterization would be misleading, but factually correct. This habit could create measurement error, but rarely do the public profiles present outright falsehoods (as in the case of U.S. Rep. George Santos).

possibility notwithstanding, Makse's data offers the greatest over-time and cross-sectional variation among occupational data sets with which to test our expectations.

We operationalize our three main independent variables using binary indicators. A value of "1" is assigned respectively to each variable if Makse (2019) coded the legislator as working in *Law* (including judges and attorneys), *Government* (including non-elected officials at all levels of government but excluding public employees covered by other common occupational categories like teachers, social workers, and police officers), or *Politics & Advocacy* (including elected officials, political aides, lobbyists, and organizers).[3]

Lollis' (2023) merged data yields 51,929 observations of legislator-terms with full occupational data. This includes 8,637 observations of state legislators who worked as lawyers, another 4,342 who have a background in politics or advocacy, and another 1,264 who worked in government. In total, 27.4% of our observations are of legislators with cognate field experience.

To model the association between legislative effectiveness and a background in the political pipeline while accounting for the time-series cross-sectional structure of the data, we estimate two-way fixed effects (TWFE) models. We include fixed effects for states and legislative terms to account for fixed characteristics of the state legislative environment as well as term-to-term variation in legislating.[4]

We also control for a series of individual-level characteristics that may confound the relationship of interest, all taken from Bucchanieri et al. (2023). We include binary indicators of legislators serving in leadership positions, particularly the *Speaker/President* of each chamber,

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[3] We note that these categories depart from Makse's definition of pipeline professions, based on a definition provided by Fox and Lawless (2005). Makse's variable includes state legislators with a background in law, business, education, or politics and advocacy. We exclude business and education but include government workers in our tests.

[4] Legislators' occupational backgrounds, as measured in these data, do not vary across time. As a result, including fixed effects at the legislator level, rather than the state level, would not allow for estimation of the relationship of interest.

the *Majority Leader*, the *Minority Leader*, and all *Committee Chairs*. We include another

indicator for *Power Committee Members*, the legislators serving on influential committees like

rules, appropriations, finance, and budget. We include a measure of *Seniority* as a count of the

consecutive terms the legislator has served in the chamber. To account for possible differences in

effectiveness due to gender and racial dynamics in chambers, we include indicators for *Female,*

Black, and *Hispanic* legislators. We control for the legislator's membership in the majority party

with an indicator for legislators *In Majority*. Assuming legislators with ideological differences

from the mainstream in their chamber will be less effective, we control for the *Ideological*

Distance between the legislator and the chamber median using data from Shor and McCarty

(2011). We include an indicator for whether the legislator has a *Same-Party Governor* in their

state, under the presumption that legislatures will be more likely to advance bills in the absence

of a veto threat from an opposing-party governor. Finally, we include an indicator for legislators

serving in their state's upper chamber (*Senate*). Summary statistics for all variables are presented

in Table A1 in the appendix.

Are Legislators with Professional Experience More Effective?

If occupational experience in law, government, or politics gives individuals an advantage

in effective lawmaking, we should expect to see a higher average SLES for lawmakers with

those experiences, controlling for other variables in the model. Figure 1 displays the predicted

SLES for each of the occupational categories, while Table A2 in the appendix provides the full

regression results. The figure shows that predicted SLES values vary somewhat across

occupational categories. The models estimate lawyers to be more effective than average, with an

average effectiveness score of 1.28. (Recall that the average SLES for all legislators is 1.)

Figure 1: Occupational Background and Legislative Effectiveness
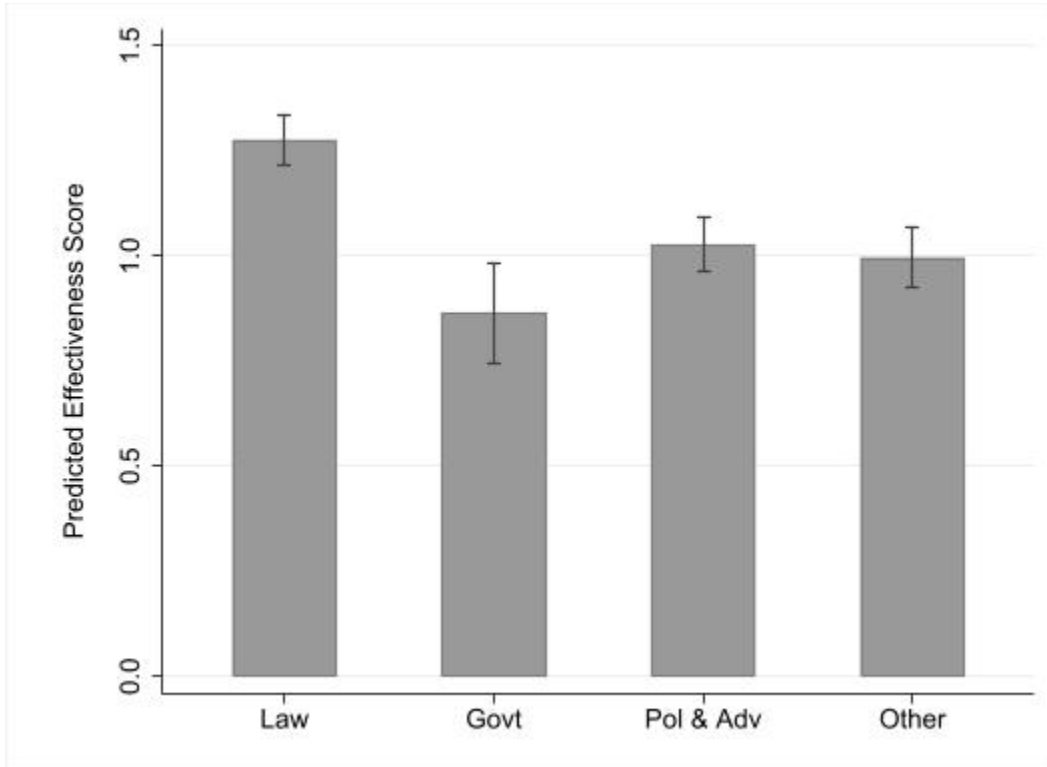
Note: The figure displays the predicted SLES by occupational category for a white, male rank-and-file member of the lower chamber whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

Conversely, former government employees are estimated to be less effective than average, with an average effectiveness score of 0.86. Legislators who used to work in politics and advocacy are predicted to be similarly effective as legislators coming from all other occupational backgrounds. The two groups have predicted effectiveness scores of 0.99 and 1.02 respectively, but these estimates are not statistically different from one another or from the average of all legislators. Substantively, the differences across all four groups are small but noteworthy. Former lawyers' average predicted effectiveness is one quarter of a standard

deviation higher than average, and about two-fifths of a standard deviation higher than former government employees.

Surveying the controls in Table A2 in the appendix, the model performs in line with expectations. Chairing a committee and sitting on a power committee is positively and significantly associated with effectiveness. More senior members, legislators in the majority, and legislators closer to their chamber medians are also found to be significantly more effective. While remaining controls do not reach statistical significance in all cases, they are generally signed in expected directions.

Because SLES values are calculated using an aggregate index, we also estimate the relationship between occupational backgrounds and each of the component variables of the index as separate outcomes. Specifically, we examine the weighted shares of each legislators' bills that were introduced but not withdrawn (BILL), received action in committee (AIC), received action beyond its original committee (ABC), passed its chamber of origin (PASS), and were signed into law by the governor (LAW). The results for these outcomes are also presented in Table A2 in the appendix. Consistent with the findings in Figure 1, lawyers are found to be more effective than average at each stage of the legislative process, while government employees are found to be less effective than average. Coefficient estimates are consistently signed across outcome variables. Control variables remain consistently signed across models, though some estimates vary in statistical significance depending on the outcome variable. One notable exception is the indicator for state senators, who are found to be more effective than state house members when component variables are used instead of the SLES index.

Given the wide range of variation in procedures and practices across state legislatures, it is difficult to compare the raw SLES of legislators across different states and time. An alternative

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is to consider how effective a state legislator is in comparison to how effective one might expect them to be, given their institutional position and other personal characteristics. Bucchianeri et al. (2023) generate such a metric by first regressing a state legislator's SLES on a dummy variable for whether they were in the majority party, whether they held a committee chair, and the number of terms that they had served in the state legislature. From these regression results, the researchers generate a predicted ("benchmark") SLES, which captures how effective the average state legislator would be expected to be in advancing their agenda, given their party affiliation, committee position, and seniority in the chamber. Finally the researchers create a ratio, dividing the legislator's observed SLES by the benchmark SLES. A legislator is considered "above expectations" if the ratio is greater than 1 and "below expectations" is the ratio is less than 1.

We conduct the analysis using this alternate outcome of effectiveness relative to expectations, substituting the ratio described in the previous paragraph as the dependent variable. The specification remains the same as in the main results (Figure 1 & Table A2 in the appendix) except we omit the controls for party affiliation, committee position, and seniority (because they are used to construct the dependent variable) and include a control for the legislator's lagged SLES. We present the results in Table A3 in the appendix. The results suggest a slightly smaller effectiveness advantage for lawyers (roughly one fifth of a standard deviation higher than average) and a slightly smaller disadvantage for government employees (less than a tenth of a standard deviation lower than average). Coefficient estimates for some control variables change in terms of sign, size and significance—specifically those for the three indicators of leadership positions, as well as controls for Black legislators, ideological distance, and same-party governors. However, changes in estimates of our primary variables of interest are not sufficient to alter any conclusions.

Though studies of effectiveness frequently include controls for leadership positions and seniority, one might reasonably criticize their inclusion for introducing posttreatment bias into the models. In other words, the estimates of the direct relationship between prior experience and effectiveness could be biased because prior experience may also positively predict assuming a leadership position or remaining longer in office, factors that occur after entry into office and which correlate with effectiveness.

We find some evidence to validate such concerns. In Table A4 in the appendix, we estimate a series of models using occupational background as a predictor of four outcomes that were included among the original controls: chairing a committee, serving in a leadership role, sitting on a power committee, and terms of seniority in the legislature.[5] We find that occupational background is sometimes, but not always, associated with these outcomes. Lawyers are significantly more likely than their colleagues to become chamber leaders and to chair committees. Government employees are also more likely than their colleagues to chair committees, while legislators with professional backgrounds in politics and advocacy (intriguingly) remain in office longer and thus reach higher levels of seniority. However, these are the only significant relationships we find in the data. In all other cases, occupational background is unrelated to reaching a position of greater institutional power.

To address concerns about the accuracy of the estimates in the main model, we re-estimate the regression models from Figure 1 (and presented in Table A2) and exclude the set of posttreatment controls. We present the new results in Table A5 in the appendix. However, differences in the estimates of the relationship between occupational backgrounds and effectiveness are not large enough to alter our conclusions. In fact, coefficient estimates for each

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[5] In the test in Table A4, we collapse all leadership variables in the main models (*Speaker/President*, *Majority Leader*, and *Minority Leader*) into a single variable, *Leader*, for the sake of parsimony.

of the occupational background indicators are remarkably similar in terms of size, sign, and statistical significance in Table A2 and Table A5. Across all models, we find consistent evidence that lawyers are more effective than average, government workers are less effective than average, and politics and advocacy workers are not different from average in effectiveness.

Does Prior Experience Matter Less over Time on the Job?

The models above do not capture *when* in a legislator's career that experience matters. We might expect legislators to learn on the job—they will acquire necessary skills, build networks and gather institutional knowledge the longer they remain within the institution. Following this expectation, we should expect experience in a cognate field to provide a larger boost to effectiveness earlier in a legislator's career.

To test this expectation, we interact each occupational indicator with the measure of the legislator's *Seniority*. Otherwise, model specification and control variables remain the same as before. Figure 2 displays the predicted effectiveness of experience across legislators' tenure for each of the four occupational groups, while Table A6 in the appendix presents the corresponding regression results. If career experience gave stronger benefits earlier in a legislator's career, we should expect to see the predicted effectiveness of lawyers, government employees, and politics & advocacy workers start at higher absolute levels than all other legislators at low levels of seniority on the left side of the figure. The effectiveness of all four groups would converge moving right across the figure into higher levels of seniority. However, the results show that the predicted effectiveness of the four groups does not converge. Instead, government workers tend to remain equally effective regardless of their time in the legislature, while lawyers, politicos &

Figure 2: Occupational Background and Effectiveness over Time in Office
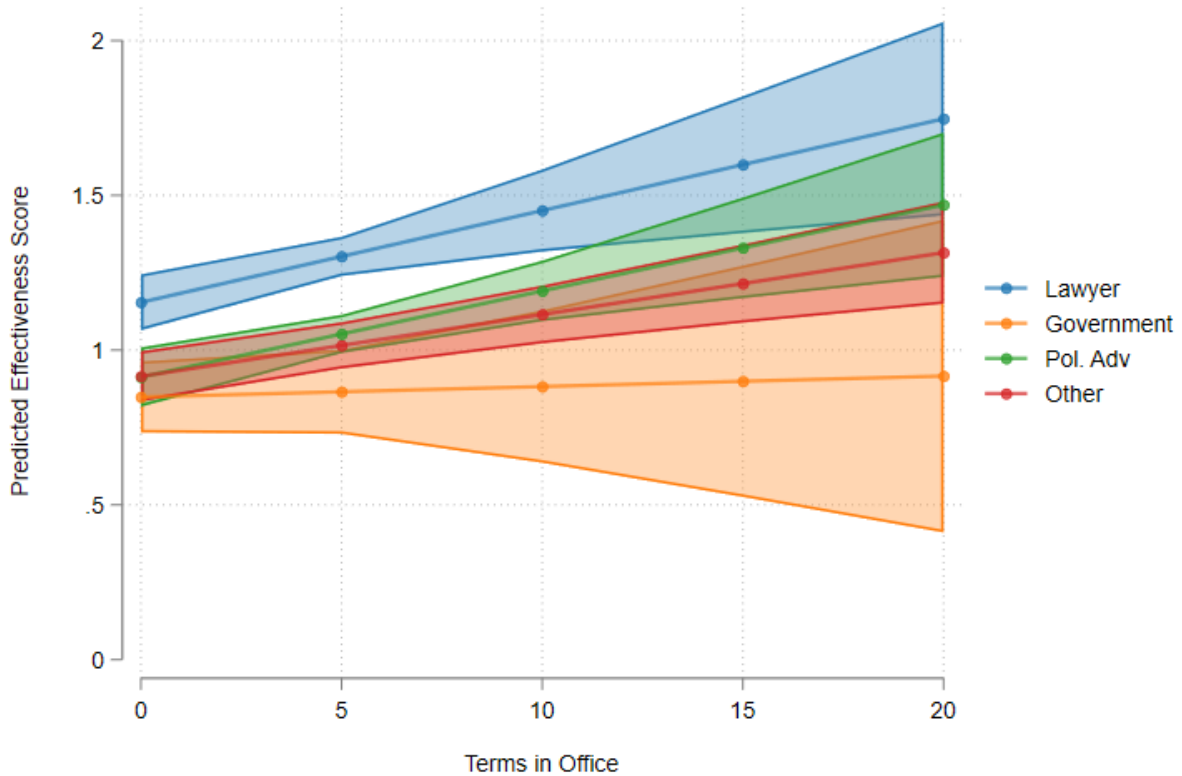
Note: The figure displays the predicted effectiveness of legislators from different occupational backgrounds over the number of terms in office. The model assumes the legislator is a white, male rank-and-file member of the lower chamber whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

advocacy workers, and all other legislators tend to become increasingly effective at roughly equal rates as they gain seniority.

This model assumes the size of the relationship between experience and effectiveness changes monotonically as seniority increases. However, it is possible that the relationship is nonlinear—perhaps the relationship between experience and effectiveness is strongest in early career stages but decreases nonmonotonically in later career stages. To probe for this possibility, we convert seniority into a series of four binary variables indicating whether the observed legislator has fewer than one, fewer than two, fewer than five, or fewer than ten terms in office.

We interact each indicator with prior experience predicting legislative effectiveness in separate models. If experience mattered less as seniority increased, we should expect to see the size of the marginal effect of experience decrease at higher cutpoints of seniority.

Table A7 in the appendix presents the marginal effects derived from these models. Each of the three occupational groups follows differing patterns. For lawyers, the marginal effect of experience increases in size as seniority increases, suggesting that lawyers start off more effective as freshmen and grow even more effective than their colleagues as time passes. For government employees, the marginal effect of experience is not different from zero in the first term, then decreases and remains flat over time. This finding suggests that government employees start off with average effectiveness but begin to lag their colleagues in effectiveness as their legislative careers progress. For legislators with backgrounds in politics & advocacy, the marginal effects follow the expected pattern, with experienced legislators exhibiting a first-term boost in their effectiveness but converging in effectiveness with all other legislators over time. Given these divergent findings across types of experience, we cannot draw the broad conclusion that the association between experience and effectiveness decreases in size over the course of legislative careers.

Prior Officeholding Experience

Occupational experience is not the only type of experience that might benefit legislators in their work. Before running for the state legislature, many legislators serve in other elected state and local offices. All elected officials must learn to navigate institutional rules, build coalitions among colleagues, and develop relationships with constituencies and stakeholders. Local officeholders may also develop early relationships with the very same legislators who later

become their colleagues at the state house, relationships that support them as they transition into their legislative roles.

However, the roles and requirements for each office vary. It could be that the skills officials develop in lower-level offices do not translate into greater effectiveness in the state legislature. For example, a former mayor accustomed to a more hierarchical structure in an executive office and deference from other local officials may find that his leadership style and skill set translate poorly to a rank-and-file position in the legislature. The types of issues that local officials encounter—for instance, zoning permits or secondary road construction—also differ substantially from the issues that state legislators tackle. They may have no special advantage in information about relevant policies compared to colleagues without prior officeholding experience.

We begin with an easy test of the relationship, observing the effectiveness of state senators who have prior experience serving in the state house. The set of skills that legislators develop serving in the lower chamber should directly translate to their service in the upper chamber. Moreover, the social and political environment in the state senate will not be drastically different from that in the state house. While new state senators will be working more directly with a new set of colleagues and chamber leadership, they may have standing relationships with those new colleagues from their time in the house. They also may have relationships with the cast of characters outside the legislature who regularly interact with it, such as lobbyists, gubernatorial liaisons, or bureaucrats. Finally, evidence shows that former state legislators tend to make more effective members of Congress (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Given the parallel working conditions between the two chambers of a state legislature, it would be quite surprising if prior house experience *did not* make a difference to newly elected state senators.

Bucchanieri et al. (2023) merge data on prior statehouse service from Klarner (2018) into their data set. Due to data limitations, we only observe state senators serving in their first elected term.[6] Though we cannot observe whether prior experience has lasting impacts through a state senator's career, we can observe whether prior statehouse experience improves their effectiveness at a stage when most state senators enter the institution with a blank slate. While it undoubtedly would be useful to examine the length of statehouse service as a predictor of state senate effectiveness, Klarner's (2018) data only measures prior statehouse service using a binary indicator.

We examine whether newly elected state senators with prior experience in the state house are more effective than their inexperienced colleagues. We estimate the same TWFE models used above, substituting the occupational experience variables with a single binary indicator for *Lower Chamber Experience*. Control variables remain the same, including the control for seniority in office.[7] Figure 3 depicts the results, while Table A8 in the appendix provides full regression tables. The figure shows that, on average, newly elected state senators with prior house experience have significantly higher effectiveness scores than their colleagues without house experience. The 0.13-unit difference in scores is modest but notable, representing about 13% of a standard deviation. Comparing the size of this association to other associations found in the fully specified model, the effectiveness advantage from prior house experience is estimated to be roughly the same as the advantage coming from one additional term in office, and about

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[6] Klarner (2018) constructs his variable of political experience such that prior experiences are only observed among first-term legislators. All legislators serving their second elected term or later are observed as "incumbents."
[7] We maintain the control for *Seniority* in the model, despite the sample being restricted to state senators serving their first elected term. Bucchanieri et al. (2023) measures seniority in terms of the number of house terms served, meaning that first-term senators serving four-year terms can be observed as having one or two terms of seniority. Moreover, Klarner (2018) observes senators as non-incumbents if they were appointed to their seats before standing for election. Therefore, a state senator in her first elected term (if appointed first) can have up to four terms of seniority in the data.

Figure 3: Prior Experience and Effectiveness among Newly Elected State Senators
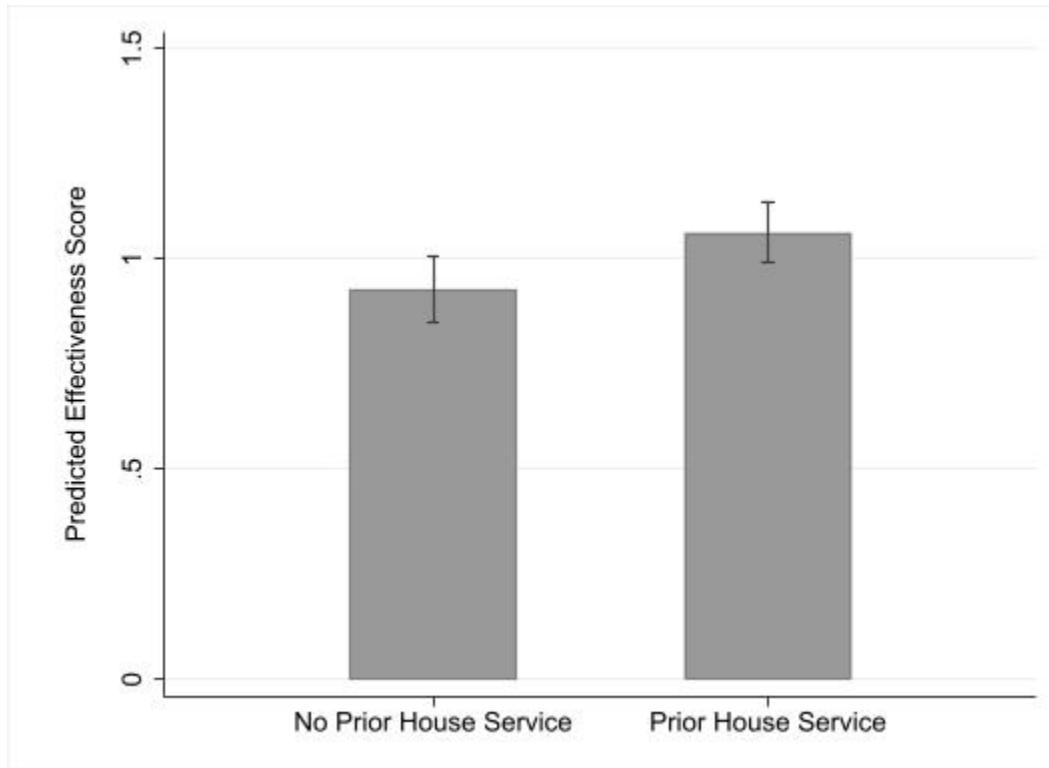
Note: The figure displays the predicted SLES by experience type for a white, male rank-and-file member whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

half the effectiveness advantage that comes from serving as a committee chair. As seen in Table A8 in the appendix, other controls perform in line with expectations in terms of the direction of the coefficient estimates.

The fact that former state representatives make for more effective state senators on average does not mean that all state legislators with prior elected experience will be more effective. For a more comprehensive test of the relationship between elected experience and effectiveness, we gathered original data on the officeholding backgrounds of all state legislators elected between 2013 and 2017 in Bucchanieri et al.'s (2023) data set, excluding those who had served previously in the same chamber (n=4,072). We instructed research assistants to utilize

Table 1: Most Recent Elected Offices Held by Non-Incumbent State Legislators, 2013-2017

Prior Office	Count	Percent
Former State Legislator	959	23.6%
City Council (or local legislature)	288	7.1%
Mayor (or local executive)	80	2.0%
School Board Member	77	1.9%
Other Local Office	18	0.04%
None	2650	65.2%
Total	4072	100%

Note: Data collected by the authors.

state-issued Blue Books to identify the most recent elected office held by the legislator. When Blue Book data were not available, research assistants conducted online searches and gathered information from publicly available sites like Ballotpedia, campaign sites, and official social media accounts. From these data, we constructed a binary variable *Prior Officeholding* that takes a value of "1" if the legislator had held any elected office before and a "0" if not. [8]

Table 1 lists the distribution of prior offices that legislators in our sample held. Former state legislators comprise the plurality of former officeholders, nearly a quarter of the sample. These legislators had either previously won election to the lower chamber and were serving their first terms in the higher chamber (or vice versa) or had left the legislature and reentered it after a minimum one-term absence. Other local offices comprised a combined 11.3% of the legislators' most recent elected offices, with mayors, city councilors, and school board members most

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[8] There is no official data source listing all prior local offices of state legislators. Research assistants had the difficult task of wading through complex information from multiple sources to identify legislators with prior local officeholding experience. To validate the research assistants' efforts, we conducted a 20% resample of the data and asked a second team of research assistants to recollect the data from original searches. In coding the *Prior Officeholding* variable, the teams of RAs agreed 81% of the time that a legislator had held prior office. Cohen's kappa is 0.56, indicating fair intercoder reliability. Readers should treat this variable as the product of a complex coding task rather than as a perfectly accurate recording of state legislators' prior experience.

Figure 4: Prior Officeholding Experience and Legislative Effectiveness
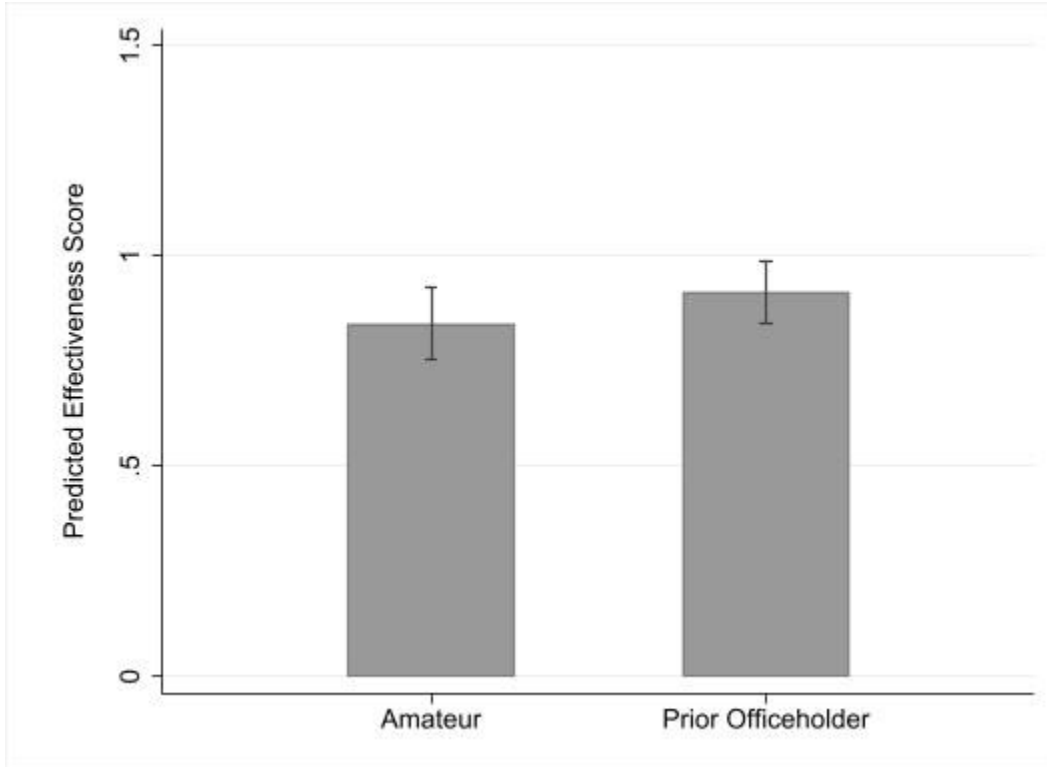
Note: The figure displays the predicted SLES by experience type for a white, male rank-and-file member whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

numerous among this subset. However, for most of our sample, about 65%, we could find no evidence of prior elected experience.

Figure 4 displays the average effectiveness of legislators in our sample with any elected experience against political amateurs, based on the full regression results presented in Table A9 in the appendix. Consistent with the results in Figure 3, we find that prior experience gives legislators a small but significant boost in effectiveness. Prior officeholders in the sample are estimated to have an average effectiveness score of 0.91, compared to 0.84 for amateurs. The difference is less than a tenth of a standard deviation, indicating that the differences between the two groups are minimal.

Figure 5: Prior Local Officeholding Experience and Legislative Effectiveness
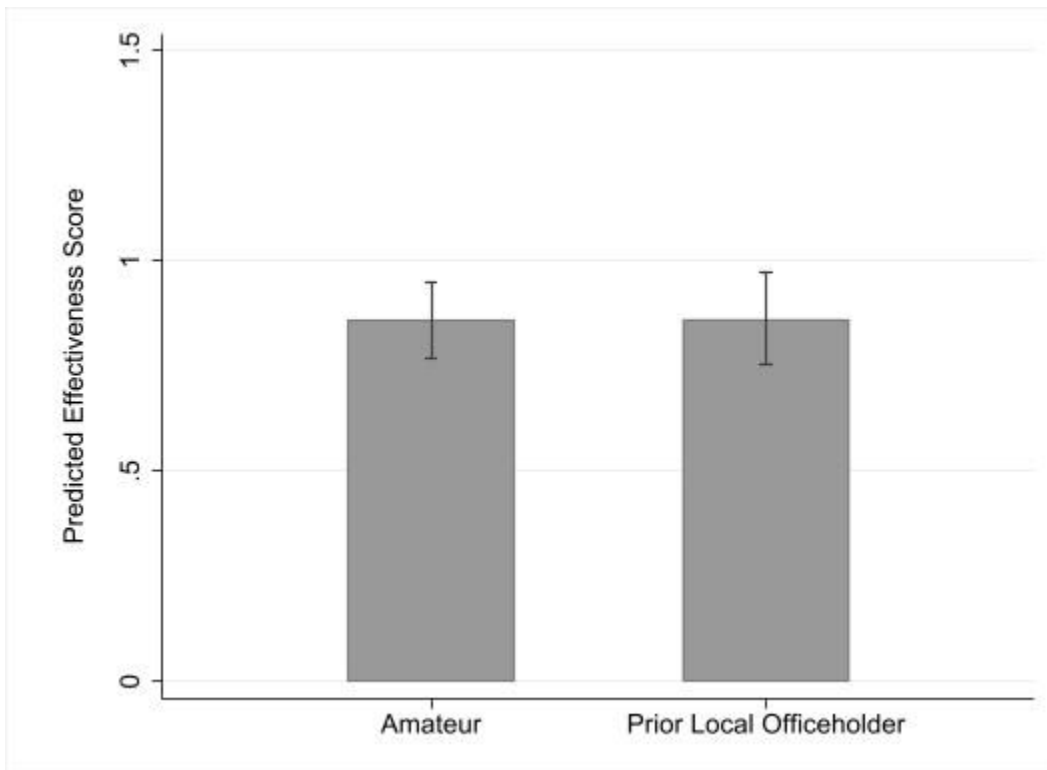
Note: The figure displays the predicted SLES by experience type for a white, male rank-and-file member whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

What might explain the smaller gap in this sample as compared to the analysis of former state representatives serving in the state senate? As mentioned above, there may be differences in effectiveness between prior state legislators and former local elected officials, whose roles and responsibilities often diverge from the work done at the state house. In Figure 5, we compare the effectiveness of the 463 former local officials to the political amateurs. (Table A10 in the appendix presents the associated regression results.) In this case, we find no significant difference in effectiveness. We find that the average effectiveness of the two groups is virtually equivalent (0.85 for former local officeholders, 0.86 for amateurs) and the difference is not statistically different from 0. Taken together, the findings indicate an association between elected

experience and effectiveness, but only if that experience occurs in the legislature itself. Experience in local office does not seem to translate into greater effectiveness upon arriving in the legislature.

Conclusion

Does prior relevant experience make state legislators more effective? The answer seems to be "depends on the experience." When it comes to occupational backgrounds, we find evidence that lawyers are more effective than average, government employees are less effective than average, and legislators with backgrounds in politics and advocacy work perform on par with average. Time on the job only seems to reinforce these initial differences. Lawyers tend to grow even more effective as they spend more time in office. Government employees start off with average effectiveness but lag behind their colleagues throughout their time in office. Political professionals exhibit a first-term boost in their effectiveness but converge in effectiveness with all other legislators over time.

When it comes to a background in elected office, results also depend on the experience. While former local officeholders do not appear to be more effective in office than amateur politicians, newly elected state senators show an effectiveness boost if they previously served in the state house. This finding mirrors the previous finding that former state legislators make for more effective members of Congress (Volden and Wiseman 2014) and suggests that prior elected experiences most closely related to the current position matter most.

This analysis comes with several limitations. First, the analysis is entirely descriptive, and we make no causal claims. Occupations and elected offices are not randomly assigned; individuals select into career paths and public service. Though we observe null results, it could

be that the types of people with the skill sets that would make them effective lawmakers are more likely to choose some career paths over others. Therefore, we cannot claim that any specific prior experience "causes" effectiveness—we only observe associations with these data. Furthermore, all results are conditional on lawmakers having already been elected and serving in office. We cannot make claims about whether individuals from different backgrounds would be effective in office if randomly selected for service from the population. Finally, we caution against generalizing from the results for broad occupational categories to making predictions about individuals' specific experiences. We would not claim, for instance, that a long-serving chief of staff to a state house speaker would never be more effective in their own early legislative career than, say, a business owner or a political scientist. Having worked in the exact institution where they are now serving, the former chief of staff would likely have an effectiveness advantage. However, based on the broad categories of experience we examine here, only backgrounds in law and prior service in the institution seem to be related to greater effectiveness in office.

The findings can help voters and political actors make more accurate decisions about who is qualified to run for and hold office. For instance, Doherty et al. (2022) show that county party chairs, a set of influential actors in recruiting candidates for state and local office, think candidates with prior elected experience are much more likely to win elections. The results can help inform chairs how candidates' experiences matter. Some party chairs may value the ability to win elections over the ability of candidates to perform on the job. However, others who value workhorses over showhorses in the legislature can use the results to inform their choices between potential candidates based on their likelihood to deliver policy victories once they arrive in office.

Relatedly, this paper's finding that state senators who previously served in the state house perform well on measures of effectiveness suggests that, at least in some situations, quality candidates (Jacobson and Kernell 1983) make for quality legislators. On the other hand, the fact that state legislators elected without past service in elected office, but with career experience in the law, are also effective suggests scholars and practitioners should be open to different types of career experience in studying successful candidates and legislators.

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Table A1: Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
SLES	51,929	1.00	1.01	0	22.67
BILL	51,929	0.01	0.01	0	0.29
AIC	51,929	0.01	0.02	0	0.32
ABC	51,929	0.01	0.02	0	0.37
PASS	51,929	0.01	0.02	0	0.39
LAW	51,929	0.01	0.02	0	0.44
SLES to Benchmark Ratio	50,876	0.99	0.83	0	21.56
Lagged SLES	37,567	1.02	1.01	0	22.67
Lawyer	51,929	0.17	--	0	1
Government	51,929	0.02	--	0	1
Politics & Advocacy	51,929	0.08	--	0	1
Committee Chair	50,998	0.28	--	0	1
Chamber Leader	50,470	0.03	--	0	1
Majority Leader	50,470	0.03	--	0	1
Minority Leader	50,470	0.03	--	0	1
Power Committee Member	51,414	0.47	--	0	1
Seniority	51,929	3.89	3.24	1	25
Black (predicted)	51,929	0.12	0.12	0	0.95
Hispanic (predicted)	51,929	0.06	0.16	0	1
Female	51,929	0.23	--	0	1
In Majority	51,929	0.62	--	0	1
Ideological Distance	49,734	0.67	0.60	0	5.00
Same-Party Governor	51,925	0.54	--	0	1
Senate	51,929	0.27	--	0	1

Table A2: Legislative Effectiveness and Occupational Background

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Lawyer	0.280*	0.003*	0.003*	0.004*	0.004*	0.003*
	(0.039)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Government	-0.133*	-0.001*	-0.002*	-0.002*	-0.002*	-0.002*
	(0.041)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Politics & Advocacy	0.031	0.001*	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.023)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Committee Chair	0.477*	0.005*	0.007*	0.008*	0.008*	0.008*
	(0.049)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Chamber Leader	0.157	0.001	0.003	0.005*	0.006*	0.008*
	(0.141)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Majority Leader	0.052	0.001	0.002*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*
	(0.057)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Minority Leader	0.169	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.086)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Power Committee Member	0.099*	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*	0.002*	0.002*
	(0.028)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Seniority	0.022*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Black	-0.041	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.049)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Hispanic	-0.048	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.072)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Female	0.010	0.000	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*
	(0.016)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
In Majority	0.342*	0.002*	0.004*	0.004*	0.005*	0.004*
	(0.062)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Ideological Distance	-0.162*	-0.000	-0.002*	-0.003*	-0.003*	-0.003*
	(0.048)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.050*	0.000	0.001*	0.001	0.001	0.001*
	(0.023)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Senate	-0.190*	0.014*	0.013*	0.013*	0.013*	0.012*
	(0.023)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.631*	0.025*	0.024*	0.024*	0.024*	0.025*
	(0.077)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029
R-squared	0.166	0.387	0.364	0.356	0.352	0.306
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

Table A3: SLES Relative to Benchmark

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) SLES
Lawyer	0.280*	0.189*
	(0.039)	(0.028)
Government	-0.133*	-0.072*
	(0.041)	(0.028)
Politics & Advocacy	0.031	0.011
	(0.023)	(0.017)
Committee Chair	0.477*	
	(0.049)	
Chamber Leader	0.157	-0.123*
	(0.141)	(0.036)
Majority Leader	0.052	-0.107*
	(0.057)	(0.047)
Minority Leader	0.169	0.155*
	(0.086)	(0.040)
Power Committee Member	0.099*	0.034
	(0.028)	(0.018)
Seniority	0.022*	
	(0.004)	
Black	-0.041	-0.092*
	(0.049)	(0.034)
Hispanic	-0.048	0.013
	(0.072)	(0.040)
Female	0.010	0.023
	(0.016)	(0.016)
In Majority	0.342*	
	(0.062)	
Ideological Distance	-0.162*	0.050*
	(0.048)	(0.013)
Same-Party Governor	0.050*	-0.011
	(0.023)	(0.016)
Senate	-0.190*	-0.084*
	(0.023)	(0.015)
Lagged SLES		0.335*
		(0.016)
Constant	0.631*	0.716*
	(0.077)	(0.081)
Observations	48,029	36,292
R-squared	0.166	0.175
State FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$

Table A4: Prior Experience Sometimes Predicts Leadership Roles and Seniority

VARIABLES	(1) DV: Committee Chair	(2) DV: Leader	(3) DV: Power Committee	(4) DV: Seniority
Lawyer	0.144*	0.612*	-0.093	0.017
	(0.050)	(0.081)	(0.064)	(0.021)
Government	0.249*	-0.248	-0.077	-0.034
	(0.094)	(0.135)	(0.102)	(0.028)
Politics & Advocacy	0.084	0.068	0.071	0.087*
	(0.091)	(0.129)	(0.051)	(0.026)
Black	0.089	-0.280	-0.140	0.035
	(0.125)	(0.159)	(0.093)	(0.060)
Hispanic	-0.165	-0.133	-0.020	-0.114
	(0.145)	(0.188)	(0.083)	(0.080)
Female	-0.084	-0.264*	-0.031	-0.078*
	(0.045)	(0.070)	(0.057)	(0.021)
In Majority	1.888*	0.195*	0.256*	-0.010
	(0.331)	(0.090)	(0.040)	(0.031)
Ideological Distance	-0.580*	0.193*	-0.006	-0.051*
	(0.156)	(0.068)	(0.045)	(0.026)
Same-Party Governor	-0.108	0.004	-0.103*	-0.050*
	(0.065)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.024)
Senate	1.326*	1.005*	0.598*	0.098*
	(0.095)	(0.087)	(0.114)	(0.020)
Constant	-1.885*	-3.005*	-0.982*	1.356*
	(0.315)	(0.203)	(0.311)	(0.030)
Observations	48,869	48,363	49,342	49,734
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p<0.05$

Table A5: Legislative Effectiveness and Occupational Background, Removing Posttreatment Controls

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Lawyer	0.291*	0.003*	0.004*	0.004*	0.004*	0.004*
	(0.040)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Government	-0.121*	-0.001	-0.002*	-0.002*	-0.002*	-0.002*
	(0.041)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Politics & Advocacy	0.053	0.001*	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.028)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Black	-0.042	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.052)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Hispanic	-0.079	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.076)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	-0.009	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.018)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
In Majority	0.463*	0.004*	0.006*	0.007*	0.007*	0.006*
	(0.059)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Ideological Distance	-0.207*	-0.001	-0.002*	-0.004*	-0.004*	-0.004*
	(0.041)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.032	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001*
	(0.023)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Senate	-0.046*	0.015*	0.015*	0.015*	0.015*	0.015*
	(0.012)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.876*	0.027*	0.026*	0.026*	0.026*	0.027*
	(0.050)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations	49,734	49,734	49,734	49,734	49,734	49,734
R-squared	0.113	0.357	0.325	0.314	0.308	0.266
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p<0.05$

Table A6: Occupational Background and Effectiveness over Time in Office

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Lawyer	0.239*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*
	(0.041)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.020*	0.000*	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Lawyer X Seniority	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Government	-0.067	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002	-0.000	0.000
	(0.056)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Government X Seniority	-0.017	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.014)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Politics & Advocacy	-0.002	0.001	0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.001
	(0.035)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Politics & Advocacy X Seniority	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Committee Chair	0.478*	0.005*	0.007*	0.008*	0.008*	0.008*
	(0.050)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Chamber Leader	0.155	0.001	0.003	0.005*	0.006*	0.008*
	(0.140)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Majority Leader	0.052	0.001	0.002*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*
	(0.057)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Minority Leader	0.168	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.085)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Power Committee Member	0.099*	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*	0.002*	0.002*
	(0.028)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Black	-0.039	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.049)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Hispanic	-0.045	0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.072)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Female	0.009	0.000	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*	0.001*
	(0.016)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
In Majority	0.342*	0.002*	0.004*	0.004*	0.005*	0.004*
	(0.062)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Ideological Distance	-0.162*	-0.000	-0.002*	-0.003*	-0.003*	-0.004*
	(0.048)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.050*	0.000	0.001*	0.001	0.001	0.001*
	(0.023)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Senate	-0.191*	0.014*	0.013*	0.013*	0.013*	0.012*
	(0.023)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.642*	0.025*	0.024*	0.024*	0.024*	0.025*
	(0.081)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029	48,029
R-squared	0.166	0.387	0.364	0.356	0.352	0.306
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05

Table A7: Marginal Effect of Experience on Effectiveness at Increasing Levels of Seniority

	Lawyer	Government	Politics & Advocacy
<1 Term in Office	0.22*	-0.03	0.07*
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.02)
<2 Terms in Office	0.23*	-0.13*	0.04
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.02)
<5 Terms in Office	0.25*	-0.13*	0.04
	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.02)
<10 Terms in Office	0.29*	-0.13*	0.04
	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.02)

Note: * $p<0.05$. The table presents the marginal increase in effectiveness experience compared to legislators without that experience. The model assumes the legislator is a white, male rank-and-file member whose party holds the chamber majority and the governor's office, with other controls held at their means.

Table A8: Prior House Experience and Effectiveness among First-Term State Senators

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Lower Chamber Experience	0.134*	0.004*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*	0.004*
	(0.026)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Committee Chair	0.264*	0.004*	0.007*	0.008*	0.008*	0.009*
	(0.043)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Chamber Leader	0.044	-0.003	-0.001	0.001	0.004	0.006
	(0.145)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Majority Leader	0.142	0.002	0.003	0.004	0.005	0.006
	(0.104)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Minority Leader	-0.110	-0.001	-0.004*	-0.002	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.062)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Power Committee Member	-0.011	-0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000
	(0.026)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.143*	0.003*	0.004*	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*
	(0.022)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black	-0.157*	-0.003	-0.004*	-0.004*	-0.004*	-0.003
	(0.067)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Hispanic	-0.156	-0.001	-0.005	-0.005	-0.006	-0.007
	(0.098)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Female	0.008	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	0.000	-0.000
	(0.027)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
In Majority	0.327*	0.005*	0.008*	0.008*	0.009*	0.007*
	(0.065)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Ideological Distance	-0.133*	-0.000	-0.003*	-0.004*	-0.005*	-0.006*
	(0.040)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.025	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001
	(0.028)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.681*	0.047*	0.044*	0.043*	0.047*	0.049*
	(0.169)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Observations	4,178	4,178	4,178	4,178	4,178	4,178
R-squared	0.295	0.313	0.369	0.383	0.365	0.324
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p<0.05$

Table A9: Prior Officeholding and Effectiveness among First-Term State Legislators, 2013-2017

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Prior Officeholder	0.074*	0.002*	0.001*	0.001	0.001*	0.001*
	(0.028)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Committee Chair	0.350*	0.007*	0.010*	0.012*	0.013*	0.013*
	(0.071)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Chamber Leader	0.337	0.003	0.004	0.010	0.015	0.022
	(0.444)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.017)
Majority Leader	-0.076	-0.000	0.000	0.001	0.003	0.002
	(0.144)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Minority Leader	0.184	0.009	0.001	0.001	0.000	-0.001
	(0.174)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Power Committee Member	0.073*	0.002*	0.002*	0.001*	0.001	0.001
	(0.033)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.112*	0.002*	0.002*	0.002*	0.002*	0.001*
	(0.026)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black	-0.046	-0.000	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000	-0.001
	(0.077)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Hispanic	0.035	0.000	-0.002	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.093)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female	0.007	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
	(0.029)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
In Majority	0.304*	0.001	0.003*	0.004*	0.005*	0.003*
	(0.080)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Ideological Distance	-0.095*	-0.000	-0.001*	-0.002*	-0.003*	-0.003*
	(0.030)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.054	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.002*
	(0.039)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Senate	-0.045	0.012*	0.011*	0.011*	0.010*	0.011*
	(0.025)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.358*	0.017*	0.016*	0.014*	0.013*	0.018*
	(0.077)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Observations	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838
R-squared	0.240	0.491	0.487	0.477	0.451	0.399
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

Table A10: Prior Local Office and Effectiveness among First-Term State Legislators, 2013-2017

VARIABLES	(1) SLES	(2) BILL	(3) AIC	(4) ABC	(5) PASS	(6) LAW
Prior Local Officeholding	-0.004	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.037)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Committee Chair	0.249*	0.006*	0.008*	0.009*	0.010*	0.009*
	(0.085)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Chamber Leader	0.978	0.020	0.023	0.029	0.028	0.027
	(0.681)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.020)
Majority Leader	0.143	0.000	0.001	0.003	0.004	-0.001
	(0.163)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Minority Leader	0.263	0.012	0.002	0.002	0.002	-0.000
	(0.225)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Power Committee Member	0.054	0.001*	0.001*	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.034)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.151*	0.002*	0.002*	0.002*	0.002*	0.002*
	(0.042)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black	-0.045	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001	-0.000	0.000
	(0.087)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Hispanic	0.145	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002
	(0.096)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Female	-0.001	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.035)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
In Majority	0.337*	0.002*	0.004*	0.005*	0.005*	0.004*
	(0.091)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Ideological Distance	-0.066	0.000	-0.000	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002*
	(0.037)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Same-Party Governor	0.080	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.002*
	(0.040)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Senate	-0.060	0.010*	0.010*	0.009*	0.009*	0.009*
	(0.044)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.395*	0.019*	0.018*	0.015*	0.012*	0.017*
	(0.110)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Observations	1,957	1,957	1,957	1,957	1,957	1,957
R-squared	0.242	0.499	0.497	0.484	0.449	0.386
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p<0.05$