

CEL 2025 Best Publication Citation

This year's award for the "Best Publication on Effective Lawmaking" goes to Fang-Yi Chiou and Max Goplerud, for their article "Effective Lawmaking across Congressional Eras," which was published in the *Journal of Politics* in July 2024.

In this article, the authors offer a new way to construct legislative effectiveness scores in Congress, extending research opportunities back to 1873 and across about a million additional proposed bills.

Methodologically, one major challenge in extending the approach that Alan and I generated, to different eras and contexts, comes from data availability. It is often not clear which bills moved through which lawmaking stages or which bills tackle the most significant policy challenges. The innovation that Fang-Yi and Max put forward in their article is to characterize each bill based on its legislative notability. Notability is here captured through Item Response Theory, with raters and indicators ranging from how many congressional reports accompanied each bill to how many members mentioned bills in their speeches to how many newspaper mentions the bill received. Coordinating across twelve raters over time lends a lot of confidence to how much credit is offered for each legislative proposal. In addition to taking us back in time, this methodology shows a lot of promise for translating congressional research on effective lawmaking to other levels of government and to legislatures around the world.

Substantively, Max and Fang-Yi establish that the determinants and characteristics of effective lawmaking have varied significantly across different congressional eras. They hypothesize that the relative influence of majority party members, committee chairs, and ideological moderates will depend on key features of legislative organization. And their data allow them to test these hypotheses cleanly. In so doing, they are able to systematically document the decline of ideological moderates and the rise of majority party influence over the past century, as well as a variety of other patterns, all linked to specific congressional reforms. Their work thus gives a sense not only of who has influence in lawmaking but also where that power comes from.

Please join me in congratulating Max (who is here with us today) and Fang-Yi (who we will congratulate separately in the future)!