Center for
Effective Lawmaking

The Bipartisan Path Revisited: Collaboration and Legislative Effectiveness in the U.S. States

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Abstract

Does bipartisan collaboration enhance legislative success in U.S. state legislatures, as it does in Congress? This article extends Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman (2023), who find that members of Congress are more effective lawmakers when they attract a greater share of cosponsors from the opposing party. I adapt their framework to the state level using an original dataset of 401,720 bills introduced across 43 state legislatures between 2009 and 2018. These data enable new, fine-grained measures of bipartisanship, capturing both legislators' ability to attract out-party cosponsors and their willingness to cosponsor legislation introduced by the opposing party. On the whole, bipartisanship is positively associated with lawmaking success in the states, as it is in Congress. Notably, however, substantial variation across legislatures—such as institutional rules and design, party competition, and majority security—likely shape the contours of bipartisan collaboration. These findings underscore the value of state legislatures for evaluating how structural features of policymaking environments condition cross-party collaboration and open avenues for comparative institutional research.

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Bipartisan Collaboration and Legislative Success in Congress

The persistence of bipartisanship in American lawmaking is, at first glance, puzzling. Although polarization between the parties has increased sharply in recent decades (Theriault 2008) and primary election threats have made cross-party cooperation electorally risky (Anderson, Butler and Harbridge-Yong 2020), bipartisan coalitions still form around many legislative proposals, and major legislation often passes with broad bipartisan support (Curry and Lee 2020; Harbridge 2015). Harbridge-Yong, Volden and Wiseman (2023) offer a clear and compelling answer to this puzzle: bipartisan collaboration enhances legislative effectiveness. Legislators who attract greater support from the opposing party are substantially more successful at advancing their policy agendas. Drawing on data from the U.S. House and Senate from 1973 to 2016, they show that members who attract a larger share of cosponsors from across the aisle are more effective lawmakers than those who rely primarily on support from their party. These patterns are remarkably robust across time, chambers, and party status, persisting even as polarization intensifies. Importantly, they find that bipartisan attraction, rather than simply offering bipartisan cosponsorship to others, drives these lawmaking benefits. Furthermore, they highlight reciprocity as a key mechanism: Legislators who cosponsor bills introduced by the other party are more likely to attract cross-party support for their proposals, establishing a cooperative equilibrium sustained by reciprocal behavior.

These findings demonstrate that bipartisan engagement remains an individually rewarding legislative strategy despite increasing electoral and ideological incentives for partisan behavior. By cultivating bipartisan coalitions, lawmakers signal broad support for their initiatives, increase the likelihood of bill advancement, and ultimately enhance their legislative effectiveness. Whether this finding extends to other legislative settings remains an open question that the present study addresses.

State Legislatures as a Test of Empirical Scope

While bipartisan collaboration enhances legislative success in Congress, it is unclear whether this relationship exists across other legislative environments. State legislatures offer a valuable test

of empirical scope. They vary widely in institutional structure, party competition, professionalism, and majority party security—all of which can shape incentives for cross-party cooperation in ways that differ from Congress. Testing whether bipartisan collaboration continues to enhance legislative success across such institutionally diverse environments provides a demanding extension of previous findings.

This study draws on an original dataset of 401,720 bills introduced across 43 state legislatures between 2009 and 2018.[1] By adapting measures of bipartisan attraction and cosponsorship behavior to the state level, the analysis offers a comprehensive evaluation of whether the lawmaking benefits of bipartisanship observed in Congress extend to a broader and more varied set of legislative institutions. More specifically, this study evaluates whether legislators who attract a greater share of cosponsors from the opposing party are more effective lawmakers. The findings mirror those in Congress: bipartisan attraction is associated with greater lawmaking success. However, the strength and consistency of this relationship varies across legislatures. This variation is both theoretically and normatively significant. It suggests that bipartisanship is not a uniform practice across American legislatures but is shaped by institutional context. Future work should examine when and why bipartisan collaboration emerges, how it is constrained, and whether it meaningfully empowers legislators across parties.

Extension of *The Bipartisan Path to Effective Lawmaking*

Measuring Bipartisan Collaboration in the States

Extending Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman (2023) to the states requires the ability to measure bipartisan cosponsorship in state legislatures. Measuring legislative behavior through bill-level cosponsorship data in the states presents distinct empirical challenges. Unlike federal

[1]The primary data span from 2009-2018, given that this period is when complete bill-level observations are available for the 86 state legislative chambers in this analysis. In this paper, complete bill-level information is necessary to construct the two measures of bipartisan collaboration. However, scores are available starting in 2007 for legislators serving in the Ohio and Pennsylvania statehouses. Seven state legislatures are excluded from this analysis: Kansas, Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, and Nebraska. In Kansas and Idaho, most bills are introduced by committees rather than individual legislators. Nebraska is excluded, as the state is nonpartisan. Cosponsors are not systematically recorded in Maine, Minnesota, and Mississippi, making it difficult to construct adequate scores for both measures of bipartisan collaboration. Finally, few individuals cosponsor in Montana (copartisans or otherwise).

legislative data, which is relatively standardized and accessible, state records vary widely in format, completeness, and availability. This inconsistency complicates efforts to gather and compare cosponsorship activity across states and over time, often requiring tailored data collection strategies for each legislature. As a result, most prior studies of state-level cosponsorship have focused on a specific subset of lawmakers (e.g., Holman and Mahoney 2018) or a single state or legislative session (e.g., Bratton and Rouse 2011; Cook 2012; Kirkland 2011, 2014; Schilling, Matthews and Kreitzer 2023). This study addresses those challenges by building on Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025) compilation of primary sponsor information for bills introduced in state legislatures. I extend their work by undertaking an original data collection effort to recover corresponding cosponsorship data for those bills. By recovering sponsorship and cosponsorship ties for every bill, this dataset offers an unprecedented view of cross-party collaboration across the states. I provide the first comprehensive foundation for analyzing the relationship between bipartisan cosponsorship and legislative success beyond Congress.

Following Harbridge-Yong, Volden and Wiseman (2023), I conceptualize bipartisan behavior across two distinct dimensions: a legislator's willingness to cosponsor out-party bills and her ability to attract out-party cosponsors to her legislation. *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* is defined as the average share of a legislator's cosponsorships given to bills introduced by opposing party members. *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* captures the average proportion of out-party cosponsors across all of a legislator's sponsored bills. Together, these measures capture both dimensions of bipartisan lawmaking.[2]

Theoretical Expectations from Congress

Harbridge-Yong, Volden and Wiseman (2023) articulate two competing hypotheses about the relationship between bipartisan behavior and lawmaking success. The first holds that bipartisan engagement enhances lawmaking success by signaling broad support and reducing legislative resistance. The second contends that partisan coalition-building may be more effective, especially

[2]For additional information on the formal specification of these measures, see Part 3 of the Supplementary Materials.

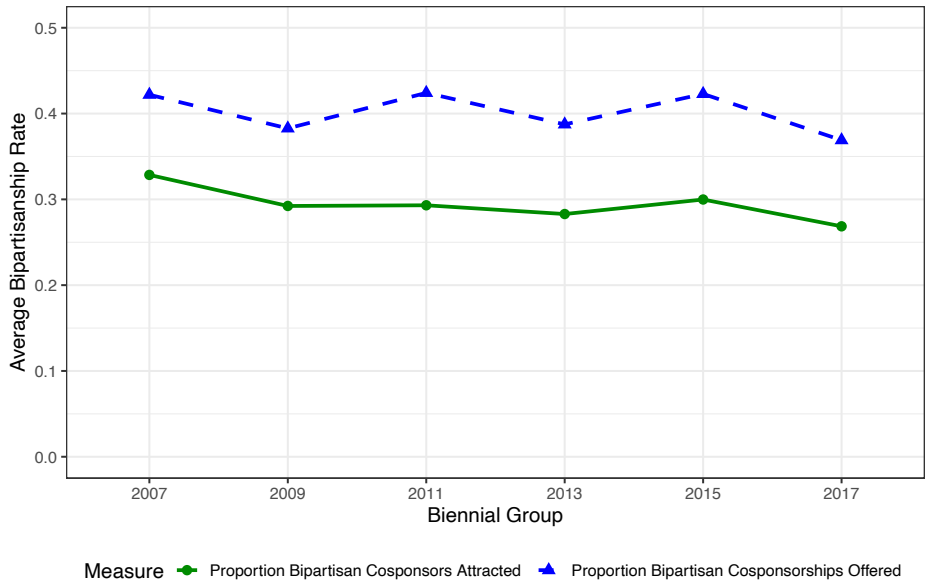
when legislators align closely with party leaders who control the legislative agenda. These hypotheses directly test whether bipartisan lawmaking is individually beneficial or whether partisan loyalty better predicts success. The authors also explore several conditional expectations and behavioral mechanisms. They suggest that bipartisanship may be especially valuable for minority party members, whose proposals require cross-party support to advance. They also highlight the role of reciprocity, showing that legislators who cosponsor out-party bills are more likely to attract bipartisan support in return. Finally, they assess whether the value of bipartisanship varies over time or in response to institutional factors such as polarization or majority size. While not framed as formal hypotheses, these expectations structure their empirical analysis. Table 1 summarizes their expectations, which I adapt to state legislatures in the extension below.

Table 1: Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) Expectations

Hypothesis	**Statement**
H1: Bipartisanship Hypothesis	Legislators who exhibit higher levels of bipartisan activity will be more effective lawmakers.
H2: Partisanship Hypothesis	Legislators who exhibit lower levels of bipartisan activity will be more effective lawmakers.

Before testing the hypotheses above, it is helpful to examine descriptive trends in bipartisan behavior across the decade covered by the dataset. Figure 1 displays averages by biennium, defined here as a two-year legislative term that typically corresponds to a single legislative session in most states. Grouping data by biennium allows for consistent comparisons across states and over time, despite variation in session calendars and bill volume. The figure reports biennium-level averages of *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* and *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Several patterns stand out. First, bipartisan offering consistently exceeds bipartisan attraction in every period, suggesting that legislators are more willing to support out-party legislation than they are successful at drawing such support in return. Second, both measures exhibit modest fluctuation but no clear long-term trend—indicating that, despite increasing polarization, bipartisan behavior remains a persistent feature of state legislatures during this period.

Figure 1: Average Bipartisanship Rates in State Legislatures by Biennial Group



Note: The figure displays average rates of bipartisan collaboration across U.S. state legislatures, grouped into biennial periods from 2007 to 2017. The solid green line represents the average proportion of cosponsors from the opposing party attracted to each legislator's sponsored bills. The dashed blue line shows the average proportion of cosponsorships that legislators offered to out-party sponsored bills. Values are averaged across all legislators in each biennial group.

These patterns motivate the core analyses that follow. If bipartisan behavior is relatively stable, does it yield individual benefits in terms of legislative effectiveness? And if so, is offering bipartisan support enough, or do the returns depend more on legislators' ability to attract bipartisan coalitions? The results below speak directly to these questions, replicating the congressional models developed by Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman (2023) in a new institutional context and testing the extent to which the bipartisan path to lawmaking success extends to the states.

Results

This paper employs several models to estimate the relationship between bipartisanship and legislative effectiveness in state legislatures. Institutional heterogeneity, such as institutional design, rules and norms, and party competition, could plausibly moderate or counter the patterns observed in Congress. To address these challenges, I follow the analytic framework established by Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) original design, conditioning on a series of

institutional- and individual-level covariates, including seniority, party status, leadership positions, committee service, the ideology of the legislator, and vote share. I also control for covariates specific to state legislatures—term limits and legislative professionalism—that may otherwise confound the relationship of interest. In line with their approach, To account for unobserved, time-invariant traits of individual legislators, models include fixed effects at the legislator level.[3]

Table 2 presents the core findings. Consistent with the congressional results, the proportion of out-party cosponsors attracted to a legislator's sponsored bills is a strong and significant predictor of legislative effectiveness. In Model 2.1, a baseline estimate without controls, a higher share of bipartisan cosponsors is positively associated with effectiveness, though the coefficient only approaches statistical significance ($p \approx 0.12$). Model 2.2 conditions on a series of institutional- and individual-level covariates; the relationship remains positive and is statistically significant. Model 2.3 extends the more specified model and includes a control for the average number of cosponsors attracted to adjust for variation in cosponsorship activity across legislators. Even under this demanding specification, the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* remains statistically significant and substantively meaningful. A one-unit increase in *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* is associated with a 0.164-point increase in legislative effectiveness, or 15% of the dependent variable's standard deviation. Substantively, the effect of attracting out-party cosponsors is more than four times the size of an additional term of seniority and about two-thirds the size of holding a committee chair position. Notably, offering bipartisan support does not confer the same benefits. The coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* is small and statistically insignificant across all specifications, in line with Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) findings: it is the ability to attract bipartisan coalitions that yields measurable returns in effectiveness, supporting *Hypothesis 1*.[4]

[3]In line with Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) modeling strategy, Table 4 explores individual characteristics of legislators that might affect who reciprocates bipartisan activity. In Model 4.2, legislator fixed effects are relaxed and replaced with individual-level covariates and state fixed effects to gauge model robustness.

[4]The main results are robust to alternative political and institutional conditions. See Appendix Table A.8 for robustness checks interacting *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* with *Majority Margin* and *Polarization*. These models provide little evidence that the benefits of attracting out-party cosponsors are conditional on these factors. The main effect remains positive and robust across specifications. However, there is modest evidence that the marginal value of bipartisan attraction may diminish in chambers with extremely secure majorities—suggesting that

Table 2: Lawmakers Attracting Bipartisan Cosponsors Are More Effective

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**0.081**	**0.149*****	**0.164*****
	(0.052)	**(0.051)**	**(0.052)**
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered			−0.089
			(0.070)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted		0.001	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority		0.038***	0.038***
		(0.007)	(0.007)
In Majority		0.590***	0.579***
		(0.051)	(0.053)
Majority Party Leadership		−0.024	−0.023
		(0.065)	(0.065)
Minority Party Leadership		0.019	0.021
		(0.063)	(0.063)
Speaker/President		0.211*	0.211*
		(0.118)	(0.118)
Committee Chair		0.272***	0.272***
		(0.027)	(0.027)
Power Committee		0.116***	0.116***
		(0.022)	(0.022)
Distance from Median		−0.235***	−0.226***
		(0.041)	(0.041)
Term Limits		0.088	0.083
		(0.091)	(0.092)
Professionalism		−0.164	−0.164
		(0.297)	(0.297)
Vote Share		0.147***	0.147***
		(0.049)	(0.049)
Legislator Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Observations	25,388	22,880	22,880
Adjusted R^2	0.499	0.569	0.569

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Each model is estimated with legislator fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

Table 3 explores potential nonlinearities and differences by party status. Consistent with Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) expectations, the results reveal diminishing returns to bipartisan attraction: legislators gain effectiveness up to a point but extremely high levels of bipartisan sponsorship, particularly at the expense of support from one's party, may not yield further benefits. Still, the marginal gains from moving toward greater bipartisanship are sizable for most legislators. Moreover, when models are disaggregated by party status, majority and minority party legislators benefit from attracting out-party support. Although the coefficients are slightly larger for majority party members, this difference appears driven more by baseline differences in legislative effectiveness than by differences in the value of bipartisan engagement itself.

when parties can govern unilaterally, the functional benefits of bipartisanship may be somewhat reduced, even if the overall pattern holds.

Table 3: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Robust to Nonlinear Models and Party Status

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	All	Majority	Minority
	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**1.118*****	**1.251*****	**0.608*****
	(0.123)	**(0.171)**	**(0.122)**
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted^2	-1.237^{***}	-1.649^{***}	-0.644^{***}
	(0.146)	(0.221)	(0.151)
Legislator Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	22,880	15,174	7,706
Adjusted R^2	0.572	0.595	0.637

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Each model is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in these models. Models 3.2 and 3.3 disaggregate the sample by party status. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

Finally, Table 4 examines the underlying mechanism of reciprocity. Here, I model the determinants of *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*, focusing on whether legislators who cosponsor out-party bills receive greater bipartisan support in return. The results confirm that reciprocity operates in state legislatures as in Congress. Legislators offering more bipartisan cosponsorships attract significantly more bipartisan support for their bills. This pattern is robust to including legislator fixed effects and institutional controls, suggesting that reciprocal behavior is not merely a byproduct of member ideology or status but a persistent feature of legislative collaboration.

Table 4: Those Who Offer Bipartisan Cosponsorships Attract More Bipartisan Cosponsors

	DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	
	Model 4.1	Model 4.2
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	**0.344*****	**0.223*****
	(0.010)	**(0.013)**
Female	-0.007^{**}	—
	(0.003)	—
Asian	-0.026^{*}	—
	(0.014)	—
Black	-0.015^{*}	—
	(0.008)	—
Latino	-0.007	—
	(0.006)	—
State Fixed Effects	✓	
Legislator Fixed Effects		✓
Observations	22,880	22,880
Adjusted R^2	0.286	0.470

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*. Model 4.1 is estimated without legislator fixed effects; instead state fixed effects are included. Model 4.2 is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in the models. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

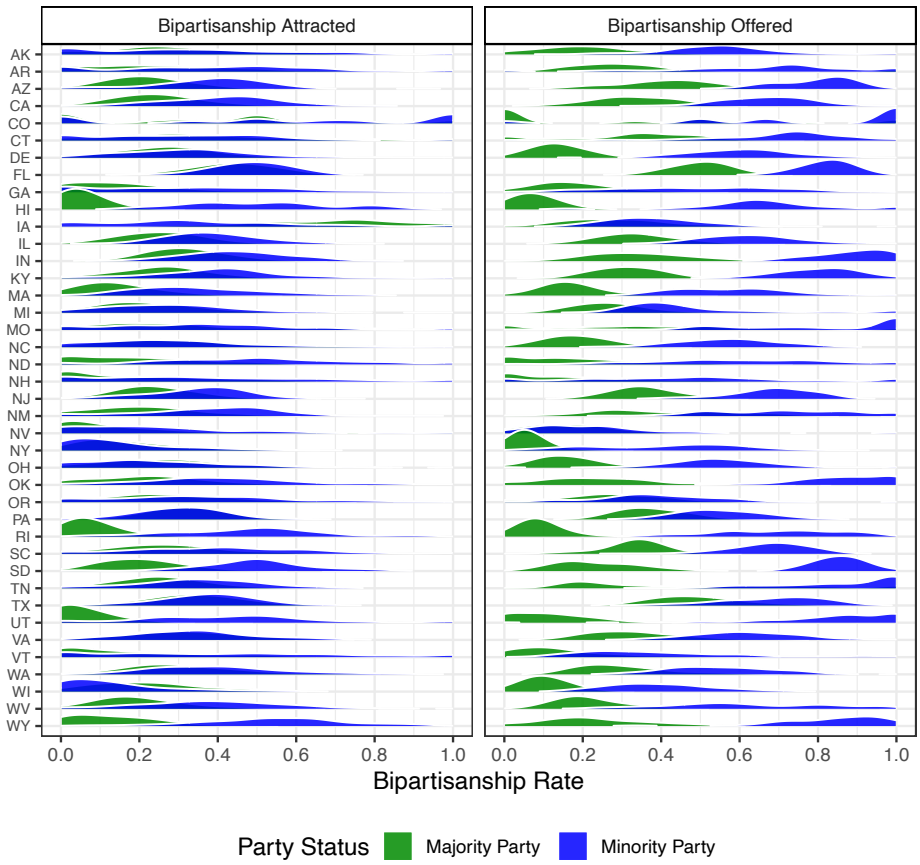
Implications and Conclusions

This study extends Harbridge-Yong, Volden, and Wiseman's (2023) findings to U.S. state legislatures, demonstrating that bipartisan collaboration is positively associated with legislative effectiveness across various institutional settings. Legislators who attract a greater share of cosponsors from the opposing party are more successful in advancing their policy proposals, even in an era of heightened polarization. This finding underscores the persistent value of cross-party coalition-building as a legislative strategy beyond the U.S. Congress.

Yet, the strength of this relationship likely varies considerably across states. As shown in Figure 2, some legislatures exhibit high levels of bipartisan engagement from both majority and minority party members, while others display asymmetrical or minimal patterns of cooperation. In some states, party status seems to matter little—legislators across the aisle reciprocate and collaborate. In others, bipartisanship is largely one-sided or absent altogether. These differences point to a deeper question: under what conditions does bipartisan collaboration emerge and endure?

The final analysis in this study reveals that reciprocity—a central mechanism behind bipartisan engagement in Congress—also operates in state legislatures. Legislators who offer bipartisan cosponsorship are significantly more likely to attract it in return. This finding provides a foundation

Figure 2: Distributions of Bipartisanship by Party Status Across States



Note: This figure provides density distributions that show the rate of bipartisan collaboration across state legislatures, disaggregated by party status and state. The left panel reports the rate at which legislators attracted out-party cosponsors to their sponsored bills (*Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*), while the right panel reports the rate at which legislators cosponsored out-party bills (*Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*). Distributions are shown separately for majority-party legislators (green) and minority-party legislators (blue). States in the sample with four-year terms (AL, LA, MD) are excluded.

for further inquiry into the dynamics of legislative cooperation. Future research should investigate the institutional, partisan, and strategic factors that condition reciprocity: when it is mutual and robust, when it is selective or symbolic, and when it breaks down altogether. Variability in bipartisan behavior across legislative chambers suggests that institutional conditions—particularly majority security, procedural rules, and electoral dynamics—may influence both the incidence of cross-party collaboration and the substantive domains in which it arises, as well as its legislative consequences.

By identifying consistent returns to bipartisanship and illuminating meaningful variation in its

practice, this study offers a framework for evaluating how legislative institutions structure opportunities for cooperation. Equally important, it provides the first comprehensive dataset of bill-level cosponsorship and sponsorship activity across 43 state legislatures over a decade. This empirical foundation enables a new wave of comparative institutional research on legislative behavior in subnational contexts. By moving beyond Congress and equipping scholars with tools to study cooperation in diverse institutional environments, this extension lays critical groundwork for future work on bipartisanship, democratic responsiveness, and the collaborative capacity of legislative institutions to represent diverse interests.

Supplementary Materials

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1 Variable Descriptions & Sources

Variable	Description	Source
Dependent Variables		
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	The average proportion of out-party cosponsors on a sponsor's bills during a given term.	Constructed by author
State Legislative Effectiveness Score (SLES)	Weighted averages calculated for legislator *i* during term *t* within each legislative chamber to reflect legislator's bills' success throughout the lawmaking process.	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Primary Independent Variables		
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	The proportion of all bills cosponsored by a legislator during a given term that were introduced by members of the opposing party.	Constructed by author
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	The average proportion of out-party cosponsors on a sponsor's bills during a given term.	Constructed by author
Control Variables		
Term Limits	Equals "1" if a state has adopted term limits for state legislators	National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
Professionalism	Squire index of legislative professionalism	Squire (1992, 2024)
Majority Margin	The number of majority party seats controlled above the simple majority requirements threshold.	Constructed by author
Polarization	Absolute difference in median Shor- McCarty ideology scores between parties	Shor and McCarty (2011)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	The average number of cosponsors legislator *i* attracts to her bills in term *t*, regardless of party.	Constructed by author
Distance from Median	Member *i*'s Shor-McCarty ideology score - Median member's ideology score	Shor and McCarty (2011)
Majority Party	Equals "1" if member is in majority party	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Committee Chair	Equals "1" if member is a committee chair	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Power Committee	Equals "1" if member serves on a power committee	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Majority Leadership	Equals "1" if member is a leader in the majority party	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Minority Leadership	Equals "1" if member is a leader in the minority party	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Speaker/President	Equals "1" if member is Speaker or President of the chamber	Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Female	Equals "1" if member is female	Center for American Women and Politics Women Elected Officials Database
Black	Equals "1" if member is Black	Estimated by Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Latino	Equals "1" if member is Latino	Estimated by Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)
Asian	Equals "1" if member is Asian	Estimated by Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)

2 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Unit of Analysis	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Dependent Variables				
State Legislative Effectiveness Score (SLES)	Legislator-Term	1.02	1.08	0 – 25.38
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	Legislator-Term	0.289	0.2	0 – 1
Primary Independent Variables				
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	Legislator-Term	0.394	0.267	0 – 1
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	Legislator-Term	0.289	0.2	0 – 1
Control Variables				
Term Limits	Legislature-Term	22%	0.416	0 or 1
Professionalism	Legislature-Term	0.242	0.126	0.048 – 0.629
Majority Margin	Chamber-Term	13.96	12.53	0 – 65
Polarization	Chamber-Term	1.60	0.445	0.487 – 3.041
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	Legislator-Term	10.98	13.137	0 – 250
Seniority	Legislator-Term	4.011	3.471	1 – 25
Committee Chair	Legislator-Term	26%	0.439	0 or 1
Majority Party	Legislator-Term	66%	0.475	0 or 1
Majority Party Leadership	Legislator-Term	5%	0.214	0 or 1
Minority Party Leadership	Legislator-Term	3%	0.163	0 or 1
Speaker/President	Legislator-Term	2%	0.151	0 or 1
Power Committee	Legislator-Term	43%	0.5	0 or 1
Distance from Median	Legislator-Term	0.678	0.652	0 – 4.293
Vote Share	Legislator-Term	0.711	0.245	0.045 – 1
Republican	Legislator-Term	53%	0.499	0 or 1
Female	Legislator	24%	0.425	0 or 1
Black	Legislator	3%	0.156	0 or 1
Latino	Legislator	4%	0.2	0 or 1
Asian	Legislator	1%	0.12	0 or 1

Note: For binary variables, the mean represents the percentage of observations with a value of 1.

3 Operationalizing Bipartisan Lawmaking

This section details the formal specifications of the two measures used to capture distinct dimensions of bipartisan collaboration among legislators: *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* and *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. These measures reflect, respectively, a legislator's willingness to engage in bipartisan cooperation by cosponsoring bills sponsored by members of the opposing party and their success in attracting cosponsors from the opposing party on their own sponsored legislation. While conceptually related, these measures are designed to capture different behavioral dynamics and provide complementary insights into bipartisan lawmaking. Below, I formally define each measure, including the necessary components and calculations.

3.1 *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*

Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered captures the average proportion of a legislator's cosponsorships that she provides to out-party sponsors relative to all of the cosponsorships she gives in a legislative term. This measure reflects the legislator's willingness to cooperate with the opposing party on legislative initiatives to build up a reputation as a bipartisan lawmaker. The measure is formally specified as:

$$\textbf{Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered}_{i,t} = \frac{\sum_{b=1}^{C_{i,t}} I(C_{sponsor,b} \in \text{Out-Party})}{C_{i,t}},$$

- $C_{i,t}$ is the total number of bills cosponsored by legislator i during term t,
- $I(C_{sponsor,b} \in \text{Out-Party})$ is an indicator function that equals 1 if the sponsor of bill b is from the out-party of legislator i, and 0 otherwise,
- The sum $\sum_{b=1}^{C_{i,t}} I(C_{sponsor,b} \in \text{Out-Party})$ counts the number of bills cosponsored by legislator i with sponsors from the out-party.

3.2 *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*

Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted reflects a lawmaker's ability to attract majority party cosponsors on her own sponsored legislation. This measure quantifies the average density of out-party cosponsorships across all the bills sponsored by a legislator, providing insight into the extent to which a legislator attracts support from the opposing party. This score captures the volume and the density of out-party support for a legislator's sponsored bills, on average. A higher value indicates that a legislator is more successful at attracting out-party cosponsors across her sponsorship portfolio. The measure is formally specified as:

$$\textbf{Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted}_{i,t} = \frac{1}{B_{i,t}} \sum_{b=1}^{B_{i,t}} \left(\frac{C_{out,b}}{C_{total,b}} \right),$$

- $B_{i,t}$ is the total number of bills sponsored by legislator i in term t.
- $C_{out,b}$ is the number of out-party cosponsors on bill b.
- $C_{total,b}$ is the total number of cosponsors on bill b.
- The sum $\sum_{b=1}^{B_{i,t}} \left(\frac{C_{out,b}}{C_{total,b}} \right)$ represents the sum of the proportion of out-party cosponsors for each bill sponsored by legislator i in term t.

4 State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES)

State Legislative Effectiveness Scores (SLES) are numerical representations of state legislators' "proven ability to advance [her] agenda items through the legislative process and into law" (Volden and Wiseman 2014, 18), estimated by Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025). A legislator's SLES is the weighted average that represents her legislative success within her chamber during term *t*. Specifically, it considers the number of bill's she introduces (BILLS), the number of bills that receive action in committee (AIC), make it beyond committee (ABC), pass the chamber (PASS), and are signed into law (LAW). Each bill is classified by its overall significance and is assigned a classification type of substantive and significant, substantive, or commemorative. Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025) classify substantive and significant bills as those that are are likely to have a large impact on state politics and policy. Identifying these bills, is motivated by this logic. Specifically, they argue that substantive and significant bills are more likely to receive coverage in a state-focused newspaper. Given this, they analyze newspaper coverage of state legislation by selecting state-specific newspapers using three criteria: extended availability in LexisNexis or Newsbank, inclusion of legislative coverage with specific bill references, and prominence either in state capitals or major cities. When larger outlets were unavailable, smaller newspapers meeting coverage requirements were used. For each legislative session, they collected articles mentioning "bill" or "legislation," refining results with additional keywords like "house," "senate," or "assembly" in states with broader terminology. They excluded non-legislative articles, such as those referencing federal bills, sports-related content, or irrelevant terms. Using flexible regular expressions, they extracted references to state bills in various formats (e.g., "HB1000," "Senate Bill 123") and filtered out false positives caused by numeric identifiers in non-legislative contexts. State-specific variations in legislative terminology and newspaper practices were accounted for, with adjustments made for states with unique naming conventions or cross-state coverage. Articles containing excessive bill mentions or ambiguous references underwent further filtering. The final dataset merges validated mentions with legislative databases, matching bills to legislative

terms and special sessions.

Each bill is weighted by its overall significance. Commemorative bills are weighed α=1, substantive bills are weighted β=5, and substantive/significant bills are weighed γ=10. Finally, this equation is normalized (n/5) across N legislators to ensure SLES takes a mean value of 1 for each chamber (Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman 2025). The equation below explains how SLES scores are calculated. For a more detailed description of how legislative effectiveness scores are calculated see Volden and Wiseman (2014), and for more information on state legislative effectiveness scores see Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025).

Figure A.1: State Legislative Effective Score Equation as Estimated by Bucchianeri, Volden and Wiseman (2025)

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

5 Fully Specified In-Text Models

All models presented in-text condition on several individual- and institutional-level covariates. The control variables that are not directly related to the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework are excluded from the tabular presentation of results in the main text for better readability. However, the models with full controls can be seen in this section of the Supplementary Materials. Standard errors in each model are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

Table A.2: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Robust to Nonlinear Models and Party Status
(Table 3 in-text)

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	All	Majority	Minority
	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**1.118*****	**1.251*****	**0.608*****
	(0.123)	**(0.171)**	**(0.122)**
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted^2	-1.237^{***}	-1.649^{***}	-0.644^{***}
	(0.146)	(0.221)	(0.151)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	0.0003	0.0002	-0.001^{*}
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.038^{***}	0.039^{***}	0.032^{***}
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)
In Majority	0.577^{***}	—	—
	(0.051)	—	—
Majority Party Leadership	-0.028	-0.038	—
	(0.065)	(0.073)	—
Minority Party Leadership	0.009	—	0.063
	(0.063)	—	(0.041)
Speaker/President	0.213^{*}	0.221^{*}	0.381
	(0.118)	(0.126)	(0.281)
Committee Chair	0.269^{***}	0.256^{***}	0.092^{**}
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.043)
Power Committee	0.116^{***}	0.117^{***}	0.023
	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.017)
Distance from Median	-0.248^{***}	-0.206^{***}	-0.120^{**}
	(0.041)	(0.069)	(0.053)
Term Limits	0.076	0.132	-0.061
	(0.091)	(0.123)	(0.096)
Professionalism	-0.205	-0.428	0.650^{*}
	(0.296)	(0.396)	(0.390)
Vote Share	0.143^{***}	0.110	0.078
	(0.049)	(0.068)	(0.053)
Legislator Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Observations	22,880	15,174	7,706
Adjusted R^2	0.572	0.595	0.637

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Each model is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in these models. Models 3.2 and 3.3 disaggregate the sample by party status. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

Table A.3: Those Who Offer Bipartisan Cosponsorships Attract More Bipartisan Cosponsors
(Table 4 in-text)

	DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	
	Model 4.1	Model 4.2
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	**0.344*****	**0.223*****
	(0.010)	**(0.013)**
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	0.001***	0.001***
	(0.0001)	(0.0002)
Seniority	0.001**	0.002
	(0.0005)	(0.001)
In Majority	−0.023***	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.009)
Majority Party Leadership	0.007	−0.012
	(0.007)	(0.010)
Minority Party Leadership	−0.001	−0.013
	(0.010)	(0.013)
Speaker/President	−0.005	0.002
	(0.011)	(0.014)
Committee Chair	0.026***	0.004
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Power Committee	0.004	−0.002
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Distance from Median	−0.037***	−0.021**
	(0.004)	(0.010)
Term Limits	−0.059*	0.005
	(0.035)	(0.035)
Professionalism	0.049	0.027
	(0.042)	(0.044)
Vote Share	−0.009	−0.011
Female	−0.007**	—
	(0.003)	—
Asian	−0.026*	—
	(0.014)	—
Black	−0.015*	—
	(0.008)	—
Latino	−0.007	—
	(0.006)	—
State Fixed Effects	✓	
Legislator Fixed Effects		✓
Observations	22,880	22,880
Adjusted R^2	0.286	0.470

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*. Model 4.1 is estimated without legislator fixed effects; instead state fixed effects are included. Model 4.2 is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in the models. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

6 Robustness Checks

To assess the robustness of the main findings, Tables A.4 - A.7 replicate each specification presented in the main text but are estimated without fixed effects. All models retain clustered standard errors by legislator to account for non-independence within units. These specifications allow provide the ability to examine whether the observed relationships hold when not conditioning on legislator or state-level unobserved heterogeneity. Table A.8 demonstrates that the lawmaking benefits of attracting bipartisan cosponsors is largely robust to changing political and institutional conditions.

Table A.4: Lawmakers Attracting Bipartisan Cosponsors Are More Effective and Are Robust to the Exclusion of Fixed Effects

(Robustness Check of Table 2 in-text)

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**-0.002**	**0.253*****	**0.250*****
	(0.042)	**(0.043)**	**(0.050)**
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered			0.008
			(0.061)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted		0.001	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority		0.037***	0.037***
		(0.008)	(0.008)
In Majority		0.561***	0.563***
		(0.046)	(0.054)
Majority Party Leadership		0.007	0.007
		(0.053)	(0.053)
Minority Party Leadership		0.130*	0.130*
		(0.072)	(0.072)
Speaker/President		0.383*	0.383*
		(0.199)	(0.198)
Committee Chair		0.337***	0.337***
		(0.030)	(0.030)
Power Committee		0.020	0.020
		(0.024)	(0.024)
Distance from Median		-0.032	-0.032
		(0.035)	(0.035)
Term Limits		0.080***	0.079***
		(0.021)	(0.021)
Professionalism		-0.450***	-0.448***
		(0.081)	(0.085)
Vote Share		-0.267***	-0.267***
		(0.051)	(0.051)
Observations	25,388	22,880	22,880
Adjusted R^2	-0.00004	0.130	0.130

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses. The models are originally reported in Table 2 in-text. The specifications above estimate the same models *without* fixed effects. The results are robust to the exclusion of fixed effects.

Table A.5: Bipartisanship Benefits Are Largely Robust to Changing Conditions and to the Exclusion of Fixed Effects
(Robustness Check of Table A.8)

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**0.250*****	**0.335*****	**0.323****
	(0.050)	**(0.061)**	**(0.152)**
Majority Margin	—	0.003**	—
	—	(0.001)	—
Majority Margin *X* Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	—	-0.006*	—
		(0.003)	
Polarization	—	—	0.107***
	—	—	(0.032)
Polarization *X* Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	—	—	-0.054
	—	—	(0.083)
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	0.008	0.013	-0.005
	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.063)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	0.001	0.001	0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.037***	0.037***	0.039***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
In Majority	0.563***	0.556***	0.512***
	(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.064)
Majority Party Leadership	0.007	0.013	0.010
	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.054)
Minority Party Leadership	0.130*	0.130*	0.134*
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.073)
Speaker/President	0.383*	0.386*	0.358*
	(0.198)	(0.198)	(0.202)
Committee Chair	0.337***	0.348***	0.328***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Power Committee	0.020	0.024	0.016
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Distance from Median	-0.032	-0.028	-0.077*
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.043)
Term Limits	0.079***	0.085***	0.066***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Professionalism	-0.448***	-0.458***	-0.493***
	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.091)
Vote Share	-0.267***	-0.269***	-0.252***
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.052)
Observations	22,880	22,880	22,545
Adjusted R^2	0.130	0.130	0.129

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Each model is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in these models. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses. The models are originally reported in Table A.8 i. The specifications above estimate the same models *without* fixed effects. The results are robust to the exclusion of fixed effects.

Table A.6: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Robust to Nonlinear Models and Party Status and to the Exclusion of Fixed Effects
(Robustness Check of Table 3 in-text)

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	All	Majority	Minority
	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**1.407*****	**1.403*****	**1.367*****
	(0.100)	**(0.145)**	**(0.107)**
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted^2	-1.524***	-1.608***	-1.414***
	(0.122)	(0.191)	(0.133)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	-0.0001	0.002	-0.003***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.038***	0.050***	0.014***
	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.004)
In Majority	0.564***	—	—
	(0.046)	—	—
Majority Party Leadership	0.004	-0.024	—
	(0.053)	(0.056)	—
Minority Party Leadership	0.126*	—	0.166**
	(0.072)	—	(0.071)
Leader_speakerpres	0.387*	0.385*	0.223
	(0.199)	(0.205)	(0.317)
Committee Chair	0.325***	0.329***	0.221***
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.049)
Power Committee	0.019	0.060*	-0.066**
	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.027)
Distance from Median	-0.034	-0.013	-0.061*
	(0.035)	(0.070)	(0.031)
Term Limits	0.075***	0.119***	-0.008
	(0.021)	(0.032)	(0.022)
Professionalism	-0.482***	-0.395***	-0.704***
	(0.081)	(0.100)	(0.107)
Vote Share	-0.280***	-0.335***	-0.141**
	(0.051)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Observations	22,880	15,174	7,706
Adjusted R^2	0.136	0.063	0.060

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in these models. Models 3.2 and 3.3 disaggregate the sample by party status. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses. The models are originally reported in Table 3 in-text. The specifications above estimate the same models *without* fixed effects. The results are robust to the exclusion of fixed effects.

Table A.7: Those Who Offer Bipartisan Cosponsorships Attract More Bipartisan Cosponsors and Are Robust to the Exclusion of Fixed Effects
(Robustness Check of Table 4 in-text)

	DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted
	Model 4.1
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	**0.339*****
	(0.007)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	0.0003***
	(0.0001)
Seniority	-0.00002
	(0.0005)
In Majority	-0.022***
	(0.005)
Majority Party Leadership	0.015*
	(0.008)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.0001
	(0.009)
Speaker/President	-0.011
	(0.012)
Committee Chair	0.030***
	(0.003)
Power Committee	0.020***
	(0.003)
Distance from Median	-0.025***
	(0.003)
Term Limits	0.005
	(0.004)
Professionalism	-0.024*
	(0.012)
Vote Share	-0.028***
	(0.006)
Female	-0.005
	(0.004)
Asian	-0.052***
	(0.014)
Black	-0.025***
	(0.009)
Latino	-0.018***
	(0.006)
Observations	22,880
Adjusted R^2	0.193

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The model is estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*. All control variables from Table 2 are included. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses. The model is originally reported in Table 4 in-text. The specification above estimates the same model *without* fixed effects. The results are robust to the exclusion of fixed effects.

Table A.8: Bipartisanship Benefits Are Largely Robust to Changing Conditions

	DV: State Legislative Effectiveness Score		
	Model A.8.1	Model A.8.2	Model A.8.3
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	**0.174*****	**0.223*****	**0.129**
	(0.053)	**(0.068)**	**(0.228)**
Majority Margin	—	−0.002	—
	—	(0.002)	—
Majority Margin *X* Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	—	−0.006	—
	—	(0.004)	—
Polarization	—	—	−0.132
	—	—	(0.084)
Polarization *X* Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted	—	—	0.022
	—	—	(0.125)
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered	−0.094	−0.084	−0.064
	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.071)
Average Number Cosponsors Attracted	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.076***	0.042***	0.045***
	(0.015)	(0.007)	(0.008)
In Majority	0.581***	0.603***	0.533***
	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.055)
Majority Party Leadership	−0.032	−0.022	−0.031
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.066)
Minority Party Leadership	0.008	0.026	0.026
	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.064)
Speaker/President	0.216*	0.212*	0.155
	(0.118)	(0.118)	(0.108)
Committee Chair	0.280***	0.270***	0.262***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Power Committee	0.120***	0.114***	0.118***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Distance from Median	−0.222***	−0.209***	−0.277***
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Term Limits	0.141	0.082	0.105
	(0.095)	(0.091)	(0.093)
Professionalism	−0.086	−0.214	−0.187
	(0.287)	(0.295)	(0.298)
Vote Share	0.154***	0.144***	0.152***
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.050)
Term Fixed Effects	✓		
Legislator Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Observations	22,880	22,880	22,545
Adjusted R^2	0.570	0.570	0.570

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: The models are estimated using OLS regression. The dependent variable is *State Legislative Effectiveness Score*. The primary independent variable is *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. Each model is estimated with legislator fixed effects. All control variables found in Table 2 are also included in these models. Additionally, Model A.8.1 includes term fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by legislator and reported in parentheses.

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