

**Estimation of the Incumbency Effects in the US State Legislatures:
A Quasi-Experimental approach***

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Abstract

This paper estimates the incumbency effects in the legislative elections of 46 states in the US during the period 1968-89. I improve upon the existing measures of incumbency by disentangling the effect due to the quality of the candidates from the sole effect due to incumbency. To this end, the research design I use compares the candidates in closely fought elections and shows that the candidates in such contests are similar in quality. As a result, a comparison of the outcomes in the next election of the incumbents and the challengers in such contests identifies the true effect due to incumbency. The incumbency entails a significant advantage on the sitting legislators compared to their challengers. The incumbent candidates are 31.5 percentage points more likely to win the next election and gain 7.1 percent more votes compared to the challenger.

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