

Effects on Reelection Rates of the Introduction of Merit Civil Service Appointments in U.S. States

Authors: Miriam Golden, Eugenia Nazrullaeva, and Dylan Potts

Abstract:

Control over patronage appointments is typically believed to confer an electoral advantage for the incumbent. We study the effects of the introduction of merit civil service legislation introduced between 1900 and 2016 on reelection rates of individual legislators serving in lower houses of U.S. state legislatures. Using recently-developed statistical methods appropriate for the staggered introduction of reform legislation, our results show that reelection rates significantly increase following abolition of patronage appointments to the state bureaucracy. This result is at odds with the theory that patronage confers electoral advantages. Bringing in additional data on rerunning and legislator occupational backgrounds, we also investigate how much increases in reelection rates stem from the improvements in performance of legislators that a professional bureaucracy permits and how much from changes in the types of persons who enter office once it becomes a long-term career.

The information transmitted is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, retransmission, dissemination, distribution, forwarding, or other use of, or taking of any action in reliance upon, this information by persons or entities other than the intended recipient is prohibited without the express permission of the sender. If you received this communication in error, please contact the sender and delete the material from any computer.