Multiple Principals and Constituency Representation under Closed-List Proportional Representation

Eduardo Alemán¹  Juan Pablo Micozzi²  Pablo M. Pinto³  Sebastián Saiegh⁴

Abstract

It is conventional wisdom in the discipline that closed-list proportional representation (CLPR) creates incentives for legislators to favor the party position over the representation of their constituents. However, even under CLPR, legislators have incentives to accommodate their voting behavior to represent their voters’ views. Moreover, other institutional features, such as the distribution of power between federal and state governments, can affect legislators’ incentives to vote against their party. Relying on original data of legislators’ voting records and voter preferences in Argentina, we evaluate whether partisan constituencies, district traits, and institutional characteristics affect legislators’ ideal points. Our findings suggest that even when institutionally constrained by electoral rules to respond to party leaders, the influence of other principals and voters’ preferences can creep up to affect legislators’ choices.

Keywords: Closed-list Proportional Representation, Legislative Behavior, Argentina

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Houston; ealeman2@uh.edu.
² Department of Political Science, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México; juan.micozzi@itam.mx.
³ Hobby School of Public Affairs, University of Houston; ppinto@central.uh.edu.
⁴ Department of Political Science, University of California San Diego; ssaiegh@ucsd.edu
1. Introduction

Democratic governance is supposed to foster responsiveness of elected officials to the will of the voters. The extent to which legislators fulfill this mandate is difficult to evaluate. Legislators have multiple principals, who may have competing interests. In addition to electoral incentives to represent the positions of their constituencies, legislators are often pressured by party leaders, who tend to hold sway over important career benefits and policy outcomes. In federal systems, state or provincial leaders can also exert pressure on individual legislators, affecting their legislative behavior. These influences are often mediated by the institutional structure, such as the constitutional regime and the electoral system in place. Assessing the influence of multiple principals over legislators’ behavior is fraught with methodological challenges. Studying aggregate outcomes rather than individual-level behavior, for example, is likely to weaken our ability to evaluate legislators’ responsiveness.

The goal of this paper is to examine whether partisan constituencies, district traits, and institutional characteristics affect the ideal position of legislators estimated from roll call votes. Most studies to date evaluate the connection between roll call votes and such variables as partisanship and issue-specific opinions by focusing on the US Congress (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Bartels 1991; Fleck and Kilby 2002; Haider-Markel 1999; Markus 1974). Research on legislative responsiveness in other contexts, however, remains scant.¹ Our paper extends this line of research to the study of congressional behavior in the Argentine Congress, where closed-list proportional representation (CLPR) and leadership control over nominations presuppose negligible constituency influence.

¹ For an exception see, for example, Rosas and Langston (2011).
The contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, we broaden the understanding of legislative behavior in countries other than the US by analyzing whether theoretically relevant covariates measuring different sources of political influence systematically affect legislators’ voting patterns. Prior work has established that in many legislative bodies, including the Argentine Congress, the main dimension of conflict reflects the government-opposition divide (Hix and Noury 2016). While some have concluded that, in such contexts, legislators’ revealed preferences are determined by the position of their party vis-à-vis the federal government, we show that they do in fact reflect a number of other influences. Second, the conventional view is that CLPR tends to mute the responsiveness of individual legislators to their constituents and enhance party discipline. However, we show that the influence of party voters also matters and that such influence varies according to specific features of the electoral system. Our findings suggest that even in contexts where legislators are institutionally constrained and appear dominated by the pressure of party leaders, the influence of constituents can creep up to affect their political choices.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we highlight our contribution to the literature, introduce our argument, and derive testable hypotheses. A discussion of our empirical strategy and the main results come next. The paper concludes with a brief summary of our findings and some suggestions for future research.

2. Unpacking Legislators’ Voting Behavior

The literature on party unity in legislative voting has persuasively argued that almost all legislators are subordinate to the party leadership within their assemblies (Carey 2007). This is the result of various factors that make party leaders central actors. Leaders typically control the appointment of legislators to coveted positions within the chamber, allocate among them valuable resources such as staff and other perks of office, and influence the chances that the bills and amendments that legislators seek to
pass are addressed by the plenary. But perhaps the most consequential tool that party leaders can have to influence the behavior of their legislative contingent is the ability to affect individuals’ career prospects, whether this involves access to the ballot, re-nomination to the chamber, or appointment to other offices. For instance, in line with conventional wisdom on the dominant role of electoral rules, Carey (2007, p.93) argues that in places where “party leaders draw up lists of candidates that are presented in general elections and cannot be altered by voters … electoral responsiveness to a competing principal is minimized.” The electoral rules used to elect members of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies, the focus of our empirical analysis, fall within this category.

The extent to which legislators are responsive to the preferences of constituents has long been of interest to legislative scholars. One strand of research, going back to Miller and Stokes’s (1963) seminal examination of constituency influence in the US Congress, has sought to uncover legislators’ responsiveness by analyzing legislative behavior.\(^2\) Often, this has involved trying to ascertain the impact of constituency effects on roll call votes. In many of these studies, the dependent variable is either a set of legislators’ ideal points derived from running scaling applications such as NOMINATE developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1985) in the 1980s (Aldrich, Brady, de Marchi, McDonald, Nyhan, Rohde and Tofias 2008; Fleck and Kilby 2002; Jenkins 2006; Sussell and Thomson 2015), or specific votes considered particularly salient (Bailey 2001; Bartels 1991; Bishin 2000), while the independent variables are typically proxies for constituency preferences.

Comparative research has paid particular attention to the impact of institutional incentives on legislators’ behavior. For the most part, this research has examined how different constitutional structures and electoral incentives affect such outcomes as bill initiation, cosponsoring, law

\(^2\) Given the electoral rules in place (plurality rule in single-member districts) and the relative autonomy of legislators from party bosses with regards to the re-nomination process, the US represents a case where constituency influence on legislative behavior should be expected to play a prominent role.
production, speechmaking, or parliamentary questions. One fruitful line of research within this literature stems from the idea that electoral rules affect legislators’ incentives to follow the party line. Under electoral rules where voters must show a preference for candidates who compete not only against candidates from other parties but also against members of their same party, legislators have high incentives to cater to specific electoral constituencies by building a personal reputation distinct from that of their party. The paradigmatic electoral rules that foster this kind of behavior are the single-non-transferable-vote (SNTV) and open-list proportional representation with high district magnitude (Cox 1997). Several studies have shown that electoral systems that promote intra-party competition tend to lower the unity of legislative parties (Hix 2004; Carey 2007; Depauw and Martin 2009; Crisp, Olivella, Malecki, and Sher 2013). In contrast, under closed-list proportional representation, the value of the partisan reputation is crucial, and the incentives to cultivate a personal vote, particularly in districts of high magnitude, are minimized (Shugart and Carey 1995). Partisan control over the ballot as well as over the nominating process, are considered to be key contributors to party unity in legislative votes (Hazan 2014).

Unlike research on the US Congress, the vast majority of comparative legislative research using roll call votes has focused on variations in party unity rather than on measuring the impact of constituency effects. In this paper, we examine the influence of competing principals, including constituents, on voting behavior in the Argentine Congress. Aside from data availability – which can be particularly challenging in developing countries where roll call votes are not always systematically recorded and information regarding constituency opinions is not readily available – other reasons make Argentina a potentially illuminating case. Particularly relevant is the fact that the Argentine case allows us to examine the roles of principals other than legislative party leaders – i.e., governors and party constituents – in a context where prior works have either empirically rejected their hypothesized
influence (as in the case of gubernatorial effects) or hypothesized the absence of such influence (as in the case of constituency effects).

As Gervasoni and Nazareno (2017) note, the literature on the relationship between federalism and legislative politics in Argentina assumes, but does not prove, that governors exercise much influence over national legislators. Argentina is a federal country where governors allegedly have significant control over party resources, including access to the ballot, which they can use to influence the province's congressional delegation. According to Jones and Hwang (2005, p. 272), given “superior resources and institutional advantages, a provincial boss who is a governor will on average be more powerful and thus have greater ability to affect the political future of deputies belonging to their provincial delegation, than a boss who does not control the governorship.” Nonetheless, the evidence in Cherny, Figueroa and Scherlis (2018) suggests that governors’ ability to nominate legislative candidates vary significantly by province as well as electoral cycle (i.e., midterm versus concurrent elections).

The existing literature does not offer much empirical support for the claim that governors condition the behavior of deputies elected from their party in their province. For example, Jones and Hwang (2005) examine roll call data from six legislative terms in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and find not only a lack of provincial-based effects on the main dimension of conflict but also no signs of gubernatorial effects on legislators’ voting behavior. Using data from an expert survey, Gervasoni and Nazareno (2017) also fail to find strong evidence in favor of Argentine governors’ alleged legislative influence. In this paper, we reexamine the hypothesized relationship between governors and their congressional delegation accounting for the existence of multiple principals.

Our study also seeks to uncover the presence of constituent effects in a context where such influence should be minimized by electoral rules that emphasize the partisan vote. Argentina uses
CLPR to elect members to the Chamber of Deputies. Voters cannot alter the ranking of candidates in the party list, candidates do not compete electorally against other candidates from the same party, and nominations are often in the hands of party leaders, usually at the provincial level. As the literature on comparative elections has repeatedly noted, under these rules the influence of constituents on the individual behavior of legislators is expected to be inconsequential (Norris 2004; Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005).

Yet, we argue that even under contexts where there are few apparent incentives for legislators to engage in constituency service and campaigning based on personal characteristics is discouraged, constituency representation still matters. On the one hand, parties often encourage legislators to build linkages with distinctive electoral constituencies, even at the cost of some deviation from the party line, because it is ultimately advantageous for the electoral fortunes of the party as a whole (Taylor 1992; Carey 1998). While discipline in key votes is typically enforced by the party whip, in some circumstances, allowing marginal dissent by some members in favor of representing constituency groups can be an asset to keeping the party competitive. Thus, even when lists are closed, locally popular candidates can help the vote-seeking goals of the party within the district (Fiva and Halse 2016; Fiva and Smith 2017). On the other hand, legislators sometimes want to dissent from the party leadership in favor of particular constituencies for strategic reasons, even under CLPR. Legislators may want to enhance their reputation before pursuing executive office at the provincial level or seeking a Senate seat; strengthen their support among voters to improve their chances of a hostile takeover of the party’s leadership; build a reputation with constituents before defecting to form a new party; or shirk from the party line in favor of voters when they plan to retire.

To sum up, the search for constituency effects on roll call votes has been almost exclusively focused on the case of the US Congress, where the personal vote is dominant. In this paper, we search
for constituency effects in a chamber whose members are elected using CLPR, where conventional wisdom tells us that its presence is unlikely. In the next section, we further elaborate on our expectations.

2.1 Testable Hypotheses

Our study of the impact of multiple principals on the voting behavior of legislators in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies centers around six hypotheses. Each of these hypotheses is linked to a different set of electoral and institutional incentives that we expect should influence legislators’ ideal points derived from scaling roll call votes. We restrict our analysis to legislators’ placement along the government-opposition issue space. As earlier studies have demonstrated, the main dimension of conflict in the Argentine congress captures the government-opposition divide (Jones and Hwang 2005; Jones, Hwang, and Micozzi 2009). There is ample evidence showing that this dimension properly accounts for the overwhelming majority of votes (i.e., a one-dimensional spatial model correctly discriminates around 95% of roll call votes). This configuration is consistent with the comparative study of legislative behavior in sixteen legislatures undertaken by Hix and Noury (2016), which finds that government-opposition dynamics are the main drivers of voting behavior in most institutional contexts. Hence, we examine how different theoretically relevant covariates capturing incentives to respond to multiple principals affect legislators’ ideal point along the main dimension of conflict.

Our first hypothesis arises directly from the previous point: according to the conventional wisdom, legislators in closed list systems are supposed to respond to their party leaders in congress. The influence of these principals, captured by legislators’ “partisanship” or “legislative bloc,” usually correlates with positions in favor or against the government. As such, we should differentiate legislators who formally belonged to the federal government’s legislative bloc from legislators who
belong to various opposition blocs. We expect the Congressional party leadership, a key principal, to influence legislators’ roll call behavior.

**Hypothesis 1:** A legislator’s affiliation with the government’s (opposition’s) legislative party bloc, should shift that legislator’s ideal point towards (away from) the position of the national government.

To avoid reverse causality problems, we use the information on the party list under which a legislator was elected to the Argentine Chamber of Deputies to establish his or her affiliation with the federal government’s legislative bloc. In other words, we consider the identity of the principal from the party who nominated the legislator rather than the legislator’s subsequent behavior to code this variable. So, for example, Victoria Donda was elected in 2007 under the government’s Frente para la Victoria (FPV) list but later switched to the opposition Libres del Sur party. Given our coding rule, we consider her key principal (the FPV) as aligned with the government.

Our second expectation is about gubernatorial effects, more specifically, the effect of belonging to the party that controls the governor’s office in the legislator’s province. A large body of literature on fiscal federalism and subnational politics in Argentina has underlined that governors are financially dependent on the largess of the federal government. The power of the purse, which is in the hands of the federal government, is recurrently used to pressure governors to side with the central government (Benton 2009, González 2012). More often than not, governors engage with the presidency in quid-pro-quo exchanges of favors for votes. Previous work has shown that funds discretionally managed by the president are used regularly in exchange for legislative support from provincial delegations (Gibson and Calvo 2000). The President enjoys ample discretion to distribute

---

3 In the period analyzed the government includes the Frente para la Victoria, as well as its closed allies such as the Consenso Federal, the Partido de la Concertacion, and the Frente Civico de Santiago del Estero. The opposition bloc during this period was comprised of UCR, Coalicion Civica, PRO, Partido Socialista
federal funds and uses it to reward governors from their own party and buy off governors from other parties. Governors, in turn, use federal transfers to keep their consistently underfunded provincial governments running and to prop up their bases of support. There is evidence that fiscal transfers from the central government correlate with electoral success in gubernatorial elections (Gervasoni 2013).

In short, legislators who belong to the same party as the governor of their province, irrespective of political orientation, are often pressured to support the president because it suits the electoral and financial needs of another important principal, the governor (i.e., their local party boss). This leads us to our second hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 2**: Belonging to the provincial delegation of the party that controls the governorship should shift a legislator’s ideal point towards the position of the national government.

It should be noted that prior work on Argentina seeking to find gubernatorial effects on roll call votes analyzed the level of unity among the provincial legislative delegation (Jones and Hwang 2005; Kikuchi 2018). Our hypothesis differs from these prior works in that rather than expecting greater unity, we expect that, all else equal, belonging to a provincial party delegation that has a fellow partisan holding the governor’s office should move a legislator’s ideal point towards the federal government end of the main latent policy dimension.

Our third proposition refers to the impact of a legislator’s local constituency on his or her voting behavior. To capture the incentives to cater to local voters, we analyze the impact of district-level public employment. In Argentina, public employment is rather high in comparison to other Latin American countries. Many analysts of Argentine politics have argued that public employment is used for political reasons and have stressed the potential electoral costs for elected officials trying to curb
public employment (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Gervasoni 2010). Several provinces have more public than private employees, and in most of these provinces, the salary of public employees is higher than the salary of employees in the private sector. Provincial and local governments depend heavily on the transfer of fiscal resources from the central government, as noted earlier. Hence, for the most part, the salary of public employees depends on transfers from the federal government.

Our variable capturing public employment measures the total number of public employees as a proportion of the number of heads of households in the municipality where the legislator resides. We expect the level of public employment in a legislator’s geographical stronghold to affect his or her position vis-a-vis the government. More specifically, we expect public employment in a legislator’s locality to affect roll call behavior, with higher levels moving his or her position towards the government’s side.

**Hypothesis 3**: Higher public employment among the legislator’s home constituency should shift a legislator’s ideal point closer to the national government.

Our fourth hypothesis focuses on the preferences of partisan constituencies. The period analyzed corresponds with the presidency of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who succeeded in office her husband Néstor Kirchner. Many comparative studies of the rise of the left in Latin America include the Kirchners as part of this movement (Levitsky and Roberts 2011, Blanco and Grier 2013). The governments of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner (2003-2015) relied heavily on the support and mobilization of social movements, human rights organizations, and leftist groups. Their support of other regional presidents like Hugo Chávez, Lula Da Silva, Evo Morales, or Rafael Correa, and their commitment to the regional movement ALBA, also exemplify their allegiance to the ideological left.
In Argentina, ideology has always been considered secondary to the main government-opposition political cleavage. Nonetheless, the ideological stances of partisan constituencies still offer legislators an informational signal that influences their voting decisions. Most voters place themselves on the left-to-right dimension and often evaluate policies and programs through ideological lenses. While we agree with most observers of Argentine politics that voters’ ideological positions are not a dominant force behind legislative behavior, we believe that the ideological implications of many voting decisions are often inescapable on the floor of Congress. They are raised by advocates and detractors of the bills being debated in the legislature, including by the executive. This view leads us to our fourth hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4:** Party voters to the left (right) of the ideological spectrum should shift the position of the legislator towards (away from) the national government.

An important concern regarding voters’ ideology vis-à-vis legislators is the well-known problem of response incomparability, where respondents may interpret identical questions (e.g., about ideological self-placement) in different ways. In the case of voters, their ideology is usually recovered from voting decisions or self-reported measures from survey data; yet, legislators' policy preferences are often estimated using observable roll call voting decisions. Since the latter is the object of our study, it is advisable to search elsewhere. A good solution to this problem is to use surveys of voters and legislators containing a common set of questions. We thus rely on joint scaling methods, and similar items from two surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008, to place voters and legislators on a common ideological space (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013; Battista, Peress, and Richman 2013; Malhotra and Jessee 2014; Saiegh 2015; and Jesse 2016).
Our public opinion data come from a face-to-face national public opinion survey (N=2,801) conducted in March/April of 2007.\textsuperscript{4} To measure legislators’ ideological preferences, we rely on an original survey conducted by the Fundación Directorio Legislativo in September/October of 2008. A total of 200 legislators (out of 257 members of the body) participated in the survey, all of whom were drawn from samples mirroring the relative influence of their political parties in the legislatures. In both surveys, respondents were asked to place themselves, as well as the country’s main political parties, and prominent politicians on a left–right ideological scale. We rely on these “bridge” questions to generate comparable measures of voter and legislator ideology using the Bayesian implementation of the Aldrich-McKelvey scaling method developed by Hare, Armstrong, Bakker, Carroll, and Poole (2015). This procedure allows us to create an indicator of the ideological position of the median voter of all relevant parties in the Argentine Congress. Figure 1 presents the distribution of the ideological positions of legislators and voters on a common scale.

\textbf{Figure 1: Ideological location of Argentine voters and legislators}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ideological_location.png}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} We thank Ernesto Calvo and M. Victoria Murillo for sharing the public opinion data with us.
\end{itemize}
We can also estimate the ideological location of the average voter in each of the seven major parties with parliamentary representation [Figure 2]. The voters’ survey includes the following question: “Which candidate did you vote for in the last presidential elections?” With a response rate of 81%, the vote choice question alleviates concerns regarding non-random selection. Dots are point estimates of the ideological location of each party’s representative voter, and the spikes depict 95% confidence intervals. They are arranged from left to right on the horizontal axis. In the vertical axis, we present each of the seven parties according to the government-opposition schism that characterizes legislative voting in Argentina. From top to bottom, we can identify: (1) the government party and its allies (Frente para la Victoria, Frente Cívico por Santiago, Partido Justicialista); and (2) a bloc of opposition parties conformed by the ARI, Coalición Cívica, Socialist Party, the UCR, and PRO. This arrangement, based on the government-opposition legislative divide, illustrates that ideology and pro-government stances vary significantly across parties.

**Figure 2: Voters’ Partisanship and Ideology**
As stated above, we expect voters’ ideological stances to affect individual legislators differently than the influence of the national party leadership, and both effects to be conditional on specific institutional factors. More specifically, we argue that the effect of the ideological positions of party constituencies is conditional on district magnitude, whereas the impact of a legislator’s affiliation with the government/opposition depends on their electability as candidates, proxied by their position on the party list.

When district magnitude is low and national parties are weak, legislators have greater incentives to cultivate a personal vote with their constituents (Carey and Shugart 1995). Voters, in turn, are more likely to pay attention and be responsive to the personal vote earning attributes of legislators (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). Yet, the expected responsiveness of legislators to the preferences of districts’ voters ultimately should be lower when the probability of victory depends on the party’s collective reputation. As a result, we expect that all else equal legislators from districts with lower magnitude to be influenced to a greater extent by the ideological leanings of the national party’s voters.

**Hypothesis 5.1:** The effect of voter ideology on a legislator’s ideal point should be stronger among legislators elected in provinces where district magnitude is low.

As Lucardi (2019) notes, small magnitudes are common in Argentina. Indeed, half of the legislators in the Chamber of Deputies come from provinces with a district magnitude smaller than six. To capture a candidates’ incentives to cultivate a personal vote, we code a district as being small if its size is less than six; in contrast, a province with a district magnitude higher than five is coded as large.\(^5\)

---

\(^5\) The results of our analysis are robust to an alternative coding that just indicates the district’s magnitude.
In addition to a legislator’s electoral district magnitude, his or her ranking within the party’s list can also influence legislative behavior. Parties decide the relative position of candidates in the closed-list before the elections. Such a decision is not trivial. It affects both the electability of an individual legislator in a particular district, and the overall traits of the party’s congressional delegation. Parties care not only about winning elections but also about the loyalty of the party’s congressional delegation. Therefore, they make lists composed of loyalists, experts, and sometimes popular outsiders (Serra 2011, Galasso and Nannicini 2015).

Buisseret et al. (2019) model the optimal party-list choice under closed-list proportional representation, considering how the party leadership allocates candidates of heterogeneous quality across list ranks depending on its electoral goals and its competitive environment. They conclude that if voters have partisan preferences, but also prefer more competent candidates, then parties should assign the most skilled candidates to higher ranks at all ballot levels. The incentives to place “better” candidates in safer ranks, however, should be stronger for electorally advantaged parties—those with the strongest prospect of controlling the executive branch of government. This optimal strategy comes with a nontrivial consequence: strong, popular, and competent candidates are also less willing to be whipped by party leaders and more likely to want to retain an aura of autonomy (Galasso and Nannicini 2015). This view about list rankings leads us to our last hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5.2:** Legislators who are ranked higher (lower) on their party list should be less (more) responsive to their party’s position, especially for the case of government legislators.

To empirically examine these six hypotheses regarding the impact of multiple principals on legislators’ voting behavior, we consider all the recorded votes that took place in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies during the years 2008 and 2009 (totaling 251 roll call votes). The roll call data
come from the *Década Votada* website.⁶ We estimate the legislators’ ideal points using the method based on Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) simulation within a Bayesian framework proposed by Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers (2004).⁷

### 3. Empirical Analyses

We proceed now to test the hypotheses presented in Section 2. Before we discuss our main results, we provide summary statistics of the data employed in the analyses. The top panel of Table 1 describes our indicators for government legislators, and the lower panel does the same for opposition legislators.⁸

The average estimated ideal point of the government legislators is -0.753, compared to 0.197 in the case of the opposition ones. The ideological location of the average voter of the parties in the federal government’s legislative block is to the left of the spectrum (at -0.864). The ideological location of the average voter of the parties in the opposition is also to the left of the spectrum (at -0.657), but has a much larger standard deviation (1.010 vs. 0.311).

A majority of governors in the period that we study were aligned with the federal government, which means that a significant number of government legislators (72 percent) were part of the incumbent party at both the national and provincial levels. Nonetheless, the country also had several *opposition* governors in the period under study (e.g., Neuquén’s Jorge Sapag, Santa Fe’s

---

⁶ For more details go to: http://www.decadavotada.com.ar/index-d.html.

⁷ Estimation was conducted using the R package ‘pscl’ (Jackman 2015). We discarded the first 10,000 iterations as a burn-in period, and we summarized the results of 2500 iterations. The chains show strong evidence of convergence according to the Gelman–Rubin diagnostic and the unimodality of posterior distributions.

⁸ Our sample consists of 256 rather than 257 Deputies because the president of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies seldom casts any votes. Therefore, we cannot estimate his ideal point.
As such, roughly 38 percent of the opposition legislators were part of the incumbent party at the provincial level. With regard to public employment in a legislator’s home constituency and ranking in the party’s lists, no significant differences between the two groups exist. The share of legislators elected in provinces with low district magnitude, however, is higher among government legislators (58 percent) than opposition ones (38 percent).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Government Legislators</th>
<th>Opposition Legislators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Point</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>-0.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Voter</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>0.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Spending</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Magnitude</td>
<td>0.4623</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>1.811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 2, we present the results of five different ordinary least square regression models. Negative coefficients indicate a pro-government effect of the covariate, while positive coefficients indicate a pro-opposition effect. The results conform to our expectations. Substantively, legislators’ revealed locations in the pro-government/anti-government policy space covary with the preferences of the national party leadership, their alignment with the party of the governor, and their electoral constituencies.
Table 2. Model Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>-0.799***</td>
<td>-0.914***</td>
<td>-0.779***</td>
<td>-0.662***</td>
<td>-0.625***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.094)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Voter</td>
<td>0.079**</td>
<td>0.076**</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.084**</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>-0.273***</td>
<td>-0.373***</td>
<td>-0.273***</td>
<td>-0.257***</td>
<td>-0.242***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor*Government</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Magnitude</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Magnitude*Median Voter</td>
<td>0.165*</td>
<td>0.191**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Employment</td>
<td>-1.297***</td>
<td>-1.278***</td>
<td>-1.203***</td>
<td>-1.352***</td>
<td>-1.109***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.313)</td>
<td>(0.313)</td>
<td>(0.380)</td>
<td>(0.342)</td>
<td>(0.378)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government * Position</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.042**</td>
<td>-0.042*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.644***</td>
<td>0.676***</td>
<td>0.591***</td>
<td>0.573***</td>
<td>0.514***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.082)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.108)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rmse</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>0.441</td>
<td>0.438</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The findings confirm that the government-opposition divide constitutes the main dimension of conflict in the Argentine congress. A negative coefficient for the Government variable indicates that a legislator’s affiliation with the government’s legislative block decreases his or her estimated latent position (i.e., it leads to a voting record more supportive of the federal government). The inclusion of this variable is very important as it (1) adds explanatory power, (2) captures the effect of a key principal, and (3) alleviates omitted-variable bias. Indeed, one of the most significant findings in Table 2 is that our other statistical results survive the inclusion of this control.
Moving onto Hypothesis 2, our findings reveal that having a provincial governor from the same party (Governor) influences the voting behavior of legislators. As noted earlier, existing research on the Argentine Congress expects strong provincial effects, but most have failed to find evidence of this influence on legislative votes. We find that belonging to the party that holds the governor’s office shifts legislators’ ideal points towards the position of the government (i.e., towards negative ideal point values along the main dimension). In other words, moving from 0 (being in the opposition at the provincial level) to 1 (being aligned with the provincial governor) leads to greater legislative support for the position of the party controlling the Presidency. These results, which are consistently significant in the five models, reflect the impact of the centralized nature of Argentina’s fiscal federalism over legislative behavior. It is a novel and significant empirical finding.

As Table 1 shows, a large number of opposition legislators were not part of the incumbent party at the provincial level. In contrast, a small share of government legislators was in the same position. These “orphaned” legislators should exhibit a different voting behavior vis-à-vis legislators aligned with their provincial governor. As such, it could be argued that to more accurately test Hypothesis 2, one should separate the scenario of a legislator being in the same party as the president, from the scenario of a legislator being in the opposition. To address this issue, we add an interaction term between the variable Governor and the legislator’s federal alignment (Government) in Model 2. We calculate our measures of additive interaction using the model’s parameters. Specifically, we estimate a legislator’s predicted ideal point for the combination of the legislator’s alignment with the federal government and with the provincial government at representative values of the other model covariates. Next, we compute the marginal effect as the difference between these predicted outcomes. Standard errors can be obtained using the delta method.
The results indicate that, in the case of opposition legislators, being in the same party as the governor is associated with a shift toward the position of the federal government. The effect is large and statistically significant (the coefficient of the marginal effect is -.0373, with a standard error of 0.097). In the case of government legislators, the effect of being in the same party as the governor leads to a modest (statistically insignificant) shift away from the position of the federal government.

Our results also show that public employment in a legislator’s home constituency has a significant impact on the location of legislators’ ideal points. As expected, more public employees tend to shift legislators’ ideal points towards the federal government’s position. This result is consistently significant across our five models. We believe that this finding reflects the considerable influence of the executive, who funds public employment with federal transfers. When legislators’ home constituencies are more heavily dependent on public employment, their positions in roll call votes tend to shift closer to the position of the national government.

More surprisingly given the prior literature is the strong evidence that legislators are responsive to the ideological preferences of their constituents: a rightward movement in the ideological position of voters belonging to the legislator’s party (Median Voter) is associated with a corresponding shift in the legislator’s ideal point towards the opposition camp (as reflected in the positive sign on the coefficient for the median voter’s position). In addition, our results indicate that the impact of voters’ ideology varies with electoral district magnitude. We calculate our measures of additive interaction using the parameters in Model 3 following the procedure outlined above. The marginal effect of voters’ ideology is statistically indistinguishable from zero (coefficient 0.043, z-score 1.19) in provinces with a large district magnitude; but, it is positive and statistically significant (coefficient 0.208, z-score 2.67) in provinces with a small district magnitude. This finding is consistent with the conjecture that
in CLPR, legislators are more responsive to voters’ positions when they are elected from districts with low magnitude.

Regarding legislators’ relative position in their party list, our findings suggest that its effect varies with parties’ electoral advantage. We calculate our linear predictions using the parameters in Model 4. Figure 3 shows the estimated results for the observed range of list positions in our sample (with a minimum of 1, and a maximum of 26 in the case of government legislators; and a minimum of 1, and a maximum of 9 for the opposition ones). The graph presents two sets of predictions: one for government legislators (left panel) and another one for opposition legislators (right panel). The two horizontal dashed lines indicate the latent position of the average member of each of these groups.

The results graphed in Figure 3 show that all else equal government legislators placed at the bottom of their party lists tend to be more responsive to their party’s position compared to those placed in higher positions. This effect is more pronounced below the 6th position. In the case of the opposition, the same is true: legislators placed at the bottom of their party lists tend to be more likely to adopt positions further from the federal government than those positioned at the top. The effect, however, is not as strong as it is in the case of government legislators. In short, legislators placed in top party-list positions at election time tend to have ideal points that differ from those in lower positions in the party-list, who tend to cluster further towards the end of the latent dimension associated with their respective legislative block (government or opposition). Therefore, the evidence reported in Figure 3 is consistent with the analysis in Buisseret et al. (2019).

Overall, the analysis sheds light on the impact that multiple principals have on the voting behavior of legislators, and the results provide strong support for our hypotheses. It shows that constituency preferences affect voting decisions under CLPR, and conforms with conventional notions of Argentine legislative politics that had, until this piece, no solid empirical grounds.
Finally, we must also note that our results remain valid under alternative modeling choices. For instance, following Armstrong et al. (2014), we employed a Multiple Indicators and Multiple Causes (MIMIC) model to estimate our latent variable (legislator position) as a function of legislators’ observed characteristics. This approach allows us to examine the impact of exogenous variables on the latent positions while considering the uncertainty associated with each legislator’s ideal point (Clinton 2001, Zucco and Lauderdale 2011, Bagashka 2013, Lewis and Linzer 2005). The results are substantively similar to the ones presented in Table 2. We describe this alternative empirical approach as well as its main results (Model 5) in the Online Appendix.
4. Conclusions

We argued that legislators respond to multiple principals and that these multiple influences are likely to be reflected in their patterns of legislative voting. Moreover, we posited that incentives to cater to the preferences of party voters and local constituents exist even in settings where electoral rules reward legislators who toe the party line.

To assess the empirical content of our hypotheses, we analyzed roll call vote data in the Argentine Congress, where CLPR and leadership control over nominations presupposes negligible constituency influence. Cross-country research on legislative behavior in countries with CLPR electoral rules, such as the Argentine Congress, has found that the main legislative cleavage tends to arise along the government versus opposition dimension. We find that in Argentina, legislators’ revealed preferences are strongly determined not only by the alignment of party voters vis-à-vis the government but also by voter’s ideology. We also show that ideal point estimates of legislative behavior reflect a number of other influences, including their partisan alignment between legislators and the governor of their province, and public employment in their geographic strongholds. Our findings show that legislators respond to voters, while also internalizing the need to acquiesce to the federal government (and the governor) when the wellbeing of their local districts is more dependent on the federal purse.

Lastly, our results suggest that the responsiveness to party voters’ ideological leanings is stronger among legislators elected in smaller districts. They also show that government legislators who are placed at the top of the party list are more likely to exhibit party “disloyalty” than legislators who are placed in more distant positions. These are novel and substantive results that shed new light into our understanding of legislative behavior and the multiple incentives created by electoral rules and other political institutions.
References


