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From House to Home: Strategic Bill Drafting in Multilevel Systems with Non-static Ambition

JUAN PABLO MICOZZI

How do legislators behave in systems where pursuit of re-election is not the rule, and ambition is channelled through multiple levels of government? Is their legislative behaviour biased towards their immediate career goals? In this paper, the Argentine case is analysed in order to explore the link between political ambition and legislative performance in a multilevel setting where politicians have subnational executive positions as priorities, rather than stable legislative careerism. The piece demonstrates that legislators seeking mayoral positions tend to submit more district-level legislation than their peers. This finding contributes to the knowledge of strategic behaviour in multilevel settings, and provides non-US-based evidence regarding the use of non-roll call position-taking devices.

Keywords: *progressive ambition; Congress; Argentina; federalism; bill drafting; political careers.*

Introduction

The reason, of course, is that in a large class of legislative undertakings the electoral payment is for positions rather than for effects. (David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 1974, p. 132)

How do legislators behave in settings where ambition involves subnational executive positions, rather than stable legislative careerism? Are their congressional activities conditioned by these career goals? Multiple factors have been pointed out in the literature as predictors of legislative behaviour, such as party pressures (Cox & McCubbins, 1993, 2005), policy preferences (Krehbiel, 1991), convergence with voters' predilections (Miller & Stokes, 1963) and the development of a 'home style' (Fenno, 1978). However, deeply inspired by the US House model, a central factor has been highlighted to explain legislators' performance inside and outside Congress: political ambition. After Mayhew's seminal book in 1974, a substantive part of the literature devoted time and effort to explaining how an *electoral connection* between voters and representatives influences congressmen's activities. This causal argument inspired a huge portion of the pieces on American legislative politics, but also framed numerous works in a comparative perspective. As most authors point out, an axiomatic assumption of the Mayhewian argument is that representatives pursue permanent re-election in the House across time. Once this supposition is relaxed, several behavioural expectations of the model may be revealed as erroneous (Carey, 1996;

Carroll & Shugart, 2007; Geddes, 2003). However, scholars also noted that a lack of static ambition does not equal absence of career aims in general (Schlesinger, 1966). As several authors demonstrate, comparative experiences show patterns of movement across levels of government as leading career strategies, as in the cases of Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and even the US at the subnational level. In such settings, rational politicians should use all their available assets to improve their prospective electoral chances at each stage. With the exception of a few high-quality works (Ames, 2001; Carey, 1996), there are very few comparative pieces that have paid attention to how legislators in office try to maximise their future perspectives using congressional resources. If there is a typical asset in legislators' hands, it is the ability to write bills, and it is reasonable to expect that it will be used to create political capital. Even though studies recognised the relevance of bill drafting as a signalling device (Highton & Rocca, 2005; Hill & Williams, 1993; Rocca & Gordon, 2010; Schiller, 1995), and scholars have created huge data sets of legislation to test their hypotheses (Crisp, Escobar-Lemmon, B. Jones, M. Jones, & Taylor-Robinson, 2004; Gamm & Kousser, 2010; Molinas, Pérez-Liñán, & Saiegh, 2004; Taylor-Robinson & Díaz, 1999), not many systematic studies beyond the US Congress have analysed legislative production as a function of career goals. This piece provides certainty about this relationship by exploring how a particular kind of progressive ambition creates incentives for the submission of locally targeted bills in a multilevel environment: the Argentine federal system.

Exploring the Electoral Connection

Seminal scholarship on legislative behaviour in the US Congress emphasises re-election as the main goal of current legislators. In an environment characterised by single-member districts, mandatory direct primaries (with minimal party control over candidate access to their primary ballot) as candidate selection mechanisms, and legislative careerism, individual incumbents try to be re-elected and increase their power in the electoral arena, within their parties and also in the legislature. Even though this path becomes the rule at the national legislative level, politicians usually start their careers in local spheres and climb up the political ladder. These patterns of progressive ambition (Schlesinger, 1966; Squire, 1988) tend to stop at the congressional level, where legislators' aims mostly become static.¹ Given the structure of opportunities and the distribution of power in the American system,² this model explains US politics well, but not necessarily other cases. If politicians were motivated by a diverse set of incentives and faced dissimilar constraints, the causal chain might differ, and legislators might be engaged in different dynamics of responsiveness, accountability and legislative activity.³

Studies of presidential cases other than the US show that re-election can still be the main goal of politicians in legislative office. Londregan (2002) and Carey (2002) work under that assumption in their studies of Chile, as do Crisp and

Desposato (2004) and Botero (2008) in their analysis of the Colombian Senate and House, respectively. Carey (1996) shows the validity of the same claim for the *Punto Fijo Pact*'s Venezuela. By contrast, other scholars reveal that legislators tend to pursue different goals during their careers. Taylor (1992) demonstrates that Costa Rican representatives expect further positions in the national executive, and therefore remain accountable to the perceived most successful presidential candidate of each of their parties. Samuels (1999, 2003) and Ames (2001) show that a substantive share of Brazilian deputies seek subnational executive positions, and thus submit budgetary amendments to redirect resources to their districts. Altman and Chasquetti (2005) point out that 25 per cent of legislators run for a mayoral spot in Uruguay after their term; in a similar vein, Chasquetti and Micozzi (2014) show that these deputies with subnational ambition tend to draft more local bills, especially if they belong to peripheral states. Jones, Saiegh, Spiller, and Tommasi (2002) find that Argentinean legislators pursue and hold multiple offices across time, and seldom develop stable legislative careers. In such frameworks, becoming a federal representative may be an important political position, but not necessarily the final stage of a political career.

In any case, legislators in each of these environments can be considered rational actors in that they try to keep and increase political power. In doing so, they are likely to use all their resources to contribute to their political improvement. As stated in the literature on incumbency advantage in the US (Ansolabehere & Snyder, 2002; Cox & Katz, 1996, 2002; Gelman & King, 1990), legislators in office have some valuable goods to use in their favour: contracts, staff, media exposure, subsidies and, of course, legislation. By writing, pushing, and achieving the passage of bills, legislators affect the distribution of resources, highlight selected events, target groups, create a sense of responsiveness, and control other branches of power. As most legislators do not usually retire after serving one legislative term, we can safely assume that prospectively they use their current term in office to advance their future careers (Crisp & Desposato, 2004). Following this reasoning, present legislative behaviour is likely to be influenced by career perspectives. The question is how it is affected, and whether seeking specific offices fosters particular kinds of behaviour.

In an environment like that of the American system (a multilevel system), the mechanism is clear: representatives' legislative efforts are oriented towards targeting territorially bounded and (mostly) stable constituents. However, in other cases, subnational executive positions concentrate more and better resources in order to become a powerful political actor. Scholars (Ames, 2001; Benton, 2002; Spiller & Tommasi, 2007) have already pointed out how important governorships can be. Other contributions (Samuels, 2003) have also highlighted that municipal executives can be profitable offices for ambitious politicians, even more so than a position in the House. Compared with mayors of districts with a budget for public works, services, health and transportation, an ordinary seat in Congress may be considered a small prize. In consequence, it is reasonable

that progressively ambitious legislators in these systems try to bias legislation towards their prospective targets to accumulate political capital. As aforementioned, these bills could be considered direct signals to voters, but also indirectly affect party elites and possible rivals in the elections. Once a representative with local ambition has increased his/her territorial presence via symbols and signals, other relevant actors may perceive this position taking, consider it a credible challenge, and therefore develop defensive strategies, make support to other candidates explicit, or simply be deterred from running for the same office, among other likely reactions. If we believe that this mechanism is realistic, there is theoretical space to suppose that multilevel progressive ambition can play a role in bill drafting.

Multilevel Politics without Legislative Careerism: Argentina

This paper deals with the case of Argentina, a country where previous evidence depicts it as a multilevel system without static ambition. As shown by different authors (Calvo & Escolar, 2005; Jones, 2002; Saiegh, 2007), Argentina is a strong federal country where many relevant political decisions are made at the provincial level, such as candidate designation and selection (De Luca, 2008; De Luca, Jones, & Tula, 2002), the design and reform of provincial institutions (Calvo & Micozzi, 2005) and the determination of the amount and destination of a majority of government spending (Eaton, 2002; Remmer & Gélinau, 2003; Remmer & Wibbels, 2000). It is significant that every elected office,⁴ with the exception of the presidency, is chosen at the provincial (or lower) level in Argentina. In parallel, appointed offices such as provincial or municipal ministers, secretaries or advisors obviously involve subnational decisions. Hence, such a distribution of political and economic power is likely to increase the influence of subnational actors over federal politics. In addition, given the components of the electoral rules (proportional representation with closed party lists), the theoretical literature would predict considerable levels of party discipline in Argentina – a claim verified by empirical pieces (Calvo, 2007; Jones, 2002; Mustapic, 2002). Leaders controlling a small set of fixed positions in party ballots are likely to have influence on candidates' expected future behaviour. Electoral thresholds (3 per cent of registered voters) and small district magnitudes (only four districts choose more than five seats per election) also reduce the incentives for running outside the party. All these rules reinforce the strength of subnational leaders and their control over current national legislators, concomitantly decreasing the opportunities for congressmen's personalisation.

The same political and institutional constraints might, however, create exactly opposite pressures. Given that just one in four (26 per cent) deputies obtain a place on the ballot after four years in office, and only one in five (20 per cent) are re-elected, current representatives need to act prospectively if they want to secure their political fates.⁵ It seems reasonable to suppose that politicians are likely to be more competitive for any future position if they can build

personal political capital.⁶ However, as mentioned above, available resources in the hands of legislators tend to be scarce in this case. In such a context, if legislation is recognised as a device for enhancing individual reputation (Gamm & Kousser, 2010; Mayhew, 1974), and we take into consideration that most positions have subnational ties, we can conclude that legislators have incentives to write, push, and submit bills in order to communicate responsiveness to local voters, consolidate their public image for future campaigns, send credible signals to comrades of their districts and, therefore, improve their prospective chances in further races. This should be particularly salient in the case of subjects with subnational executive ambition, given the (by definition) personalised characteristics of these offices. Empirically speaking, we should be able to recognise these patterns of bill drafting, given that 30 per cent of the legislators in the period have occupied a gubernatorial or mayoral spot, or have run for those positions from the House ('subnational executive link'), a larger share than those pursuing legislative re-election. As a consequence, even though, theoretically, the characteristics of electoral institutions would not foresee high levels of personalisation, mixed incentives emerge from the structures of electoral federalism and the patterns of political progression.

So far, the most influential empirical pieces on Argentine legislative politics (Calvo, 2007, 2014; Jones & Hwang, 2005) have used a particular theoretical approach that is centred on leadership's control and enforcement: cartel party. Their findings support the notion that the majority coalition and the governors exert strong controls over legislative behaviour through positive and negative agenda-setting powers, and also via control of the future of individual political careers. Thus, for the conventional literature, there is almost no space for personalisation from congressional activity. Nonetheless, the characteristics of the Argentine legislative system provide an ideal scenario to try to match these apparently contradictory principles. This opportunity is based on the distinction among the five different kinds of legislation that can be introduced: presidential decrees, laws (*proyectos de ley*), declarations, resolutions, and communications. Presidential decrees are basically procedural and involve requests of agreement to appoint ambassadors or judges, and announcements of vetoes.⁷ Law projects mostly involve major and general topics (that is, budget, civil and penal law, regulations, or military decisions), and have been the source of conventional empirical analyses.⁸ Finally, declarations, resolutions, and communications have a more limited scope, especially regarding the topics involved and the enforcement of their mandates.⁹ Specifically, these projects are recommendations to the other branches to do something specified in the bill. Any single legislator can ask the executive to 'allocate two millions of pesos in order to finish the road of Route 40'. However, its approval does not automatically imply the disbursement of the funds, which should be bargained with the minister of infrastructure. They are, basically, position takings regarding an issue judged relevant by a legislator. Another common use has to do with targeting places or activities of different interest (for instance, 'Declare the city of Ushuaia the "National

Capital of snow sculpture”’, or ‘Repudiate the military coup in Honduras’), in line with how House and Senate Resolutions are used in the American Congress. However, just a static comparison illustrates how much more relevant they are in the South American case: while US congressmen (535 per period) submitted fewer than 9000 resolutions between 1984 and 2007, their Argentine colleagues ($N = 329$ per session) wrote more than 127,000 of these bills in the same period, more than 70 per cent of their whole production (see Table 1). Such an overwhelming predominance of symbolic legislation bolsters the expectation that they can be used strategically for several political goals.¹⁰

It must be clarified, however, that the notion of instrumental utilisation of legislation involves a conjecture: bill drafting is a good in itself. Far from denying the (obvious) importance of final passage, this piece follows the literature on non-roll call position taking (Highton & Rocca, 2005; Hill & Williams, 1993; Rocca & Gordon, 2010; Schiller, 1995) that recognises that bill submission (individual decision) can be considered an asset to further individual-level benefits. In particular, given the aforementioned enormous numbers of bills drafted, there is space to consider these projects as a personal political resource in the hands of Argentine legislators. This notion is similar to Ames’s (2001) description of how Brazilian deputies campaign town by town showing the so-called *avulsos* (tickets certifying the submission of a bill) as evidence of constituency service. Following this argument, it makes sense to utilise bill introduction as a proxy of personalisation efforts by legislators with subnational executive career ambition.

Usually overlooked by the literature, this symbolic legislation has been excluded from all previous analyses. Jones and Hwang’s (2005) study is based on estimations of roll call votes, with a sample of 473 bills between 1989 and 2003. In Calvo’s piece (2007), only the set of presidential bills ($N = 2969$) are used to test his hypotheses, which equal 1.5 per cent of the whole legislation introduced. The use of all legislation can be useful for several reasons. First, it avoids any kind of selection bias in the choice of the sample. Second, an omission of such a majority of bills would clearly undermine the validity of generalisations. Third, holding the assumption that legislators use these bills as

Table 1: Bills Submitted to the Congress, by Type and Share with a Territorial Target 1983–2007

Type	<i>N</i>	% Total	% Targeted
Executive decrees	2392	1.35	13.55
Laws	48,072	27.15	15.39
Declarations	49,308	27.85	39.13
Communications	21,180	11.96	38.4
Resolutions	56,106	31.69	28.72
Total:	177,058	100	28.95

Source: Official Statistics of the Camara de Diputados, www.diputados.gov.ar

individual-level signals, it becomes possible to test comprehensively whether party-based and individually motivated approaches can be complemented, and create an integral explanation of Argentine congressional behaviour. Descriptive statistics show some preliminary support for this supposition. [Table 1](#) demonstrates that a much higher share of declarations, resolutions and communications have a provincial and municipal content, compared with law projects. That distribution boosts the expectation of a strategic use of these bills as means of creating a territorially targeted political capital at the individual level.

Hypotheses, Measurement and Estimations

Recapitulating, if the literature on the electoral connection is right, ambitious legislators seeking the support of territorially delimited bases, or interested in demonstrating to leaders that they are increasingly popular, should submit more policies focused on their territories of reference. Following these speculations, legislators expecting a subnational executive position at $t + 1$ should be more likely to write targeted legislation. It is presumed that this effect is consistent for congressmen interested in both a gubernatorial and a municipal spot.

H1: Legislators running for a mayoral position are more likely to submit legislation targeted at their home municipality.

H2: Legislators running for a gubernatorial position are more likely to submit legislation targeted at their provinces.

To test these hypotheses, the paper relies on an original database containing information about the 177,058 bills introduced in Congress between 1983 and 2007.¹¹ The database includes detailed information at the bill level, including sponsor, period introduced, committees that treated the piece, type of bill, and, very important, a one-paragraph summary of the content of the project. This last piece of information was crucial to create the two dependent variables. In order to distinguish whether each bill has a territorial target (and which one, if they do), a keyword analysis over the description of the legislation was conducted, which recognised which (if any) of the 24 provinces or 2191 municipalities was mentioned in each bill. On that basis, the variables ‘municipal target’ and ‘provincial target’ were coded as one if the name of the home municipality or province of the sponsor, respectively, was mentioned in the bill content, or zero otherwise. Several rounds of revision polished the results of the coding scheme.¹²

Even though it can be subject to discussion, the most reliable strategy to recognise subnational ambition in this case was the effective candidacy in a general election. It is clear that, of course, not just individuals who competed for the spot on election day may have aspired to get it; other subjects might have lost a primary or stepped down in earlier stages. However, given the high degree of variation in candidate selection mechanisms (ranging from primaries and party conventions to no competition and the creation of new parties) and the lack of systematic information, the most conservative strategy ended up

being preferable.¹³ Over these bases, two main covariates, capturing whether a legislator was a mayoral or a gubernatorial candidate immediately after his/her legislative mandate, respectively, have been created. This was the trickiest part of the project, as, unlike systems with single-member districts, it is not possible to link automatically every legislator with his/her home municipality.¹⁴ For those representatives who have ever competed for mayoral office, it was a matter of collecting career data. To do so, the creation of a database of every single governor and mayor of the 24 provinces and 2191 municipalities of Argentina in the mentioned period was accomplished. This information was complemented with an ample map of candidacies to governorships and mayoral offices. However, as mentioned, only 30 per cent of legislators have had a subnational executive link. Thus, in order to recognise the municipal origin of the remaining 70 per cent, the piece relies on *Directorio Legislativo*, a publication that systematically keeps a record of legislators' backgrounds, and complements it with interviews, journalistic articles, phone calls, and even internet searches (see Baron, 2003–7). This strategy made the identification of the districts of 97 per cent of the legislators in the period viable.

Several control variables are incorporated on the right-hand side of the equations. First, a covariate measuring district size is specified, which should play a relevant role in strategic bill production. The reasoning is straightforward: more symbolic pieces may be needed to reach a broader audience, in contrast to smaller environments. Following this simple thought, congressmen expecting to become executives of provinces and municipalities with higher shares of population should be more likely to draft local bills. Information on the share of inhabitants of each province and municipality was taken from the 1980, 1991 and 2001 censuses. The covariate was maintained as a share, instead of positive numbers (or their logs), given that municipal population varies enormously across and within provinces. Otherwise, as an example, a district with half the population of the province of Tierra del Fuego would rank similarly to a medium–low municipality in Buenos Aires. Clearly, the relevance of each of these districts in their provincial context is very different.

Committee chairmanship is also specified, expecting a negative relationship, given that these powerful members have advantages in managing the legislative agenda and getting their bills passed. Given that they could claim credit through these more effective devices, they should be less likely to invest time drafting bills. Tenure in the House is an indicator of longevity in Congress. Following the literature, representatives in advanced years of their mandates tend to submit more legislation. However, in this setting, permanence in Congress may mean that politicians want to pursue a legislative career, which might decrease their expectations of becoming mayors or governors, and would therefore make them less likely to draft targeted bills. Hence, this control is incorporated without a clear expected direction. The absolute distance to the majority party median ideal point (Alemán, Calvo, Jones, & Kaplan, 2009) is included as a proxy of closeness to those actors with the greatest chance of passing

legislation; the higher the distance, the higher the need to forge capital through other means, and hence the higher the chances of drafting local bills. An inverse result is speculated for legislators of the governor's party in the province, given that, as suggested by Jones and Hwang (2005), they should care more about getting their principal's bills passed, and less about submitting symbolic pieces. The whole number of bills submitted by a legislator k in each period is also specified, in order to control for the impact of subjects with high levels of legislative productivity overall, which might also affect the number of local bills drafted. In parallel, as an imperfect but best feasible way of assessing chances of electoral success (and therefore concentration of efforts in targeted signals), the tenure of the current mayor and governor is incorporated, which, as it increases, should lower the competitiveness of the district and thereby diminish a challenger's legislative efforts. Both at the provincial level and the municipal level, the model controls by a socio-economic indicator taken from the 1991 and 2001 censuses: the share of residents who completed high school. Intuition suggests that districts with better socio-economic situations would be better recipients of symbolic signals, whereas poorer units might expect tangible benefits. Therefore, this covariate is expected to perform positively. Another variable measuring the membership to a territorially concentrated family is specified. Legislators who occupy relevant places in the ballots because of their family ties may have individual career ambitions; however, their futures may rely more on their relatives' decisions¹⁵ (or their health, indeed) than on individual behaviour in the legislature. Therefore, they should be less inclined towards the development of locally targeted bills. In order to code the membership to a territorially bounded family, *Directorio Legislativo* is also used, complemented with information from the House web page (see Baron, 2003–7). Spouses, children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins and relatives in law of current (or former) governors, mayors and party bosses have been coded as one, or zero otherwise. Finally, dummies for the main blocs (Peronist Party, Radical Party, centre-leftist *FrePaso*, and district parties¹⁶) are included.

For this article, the decision was to concentrate the analysis on the House, given substantial differences that suggest the convenience of a separate analysis for representatives and senators. Specifically, Upper House members were appointed by state legislatures until 2001, when direct elections were introduced. These patterns of chamber composition made the profile of the median senator (mostly former governors or relatives of local leaders) very different from the median deputy. Also, mandates used to run for nine years in the Senate, and just four for deputies. As a consequence, career perspectives differed substantially.¹⁷ Based on this decision, those bills submitted by senators were dropped, along with those written by the executive, leaving a sample of 117,085 observations. Over this new subset of bills, legislation submitted by representatives of the Federal Capital (about 16,000 drafts) is not included in the mayoral models, as no municipal structure exists. In addition, bills written

by legislators whose districts were not recognised have also been excluded, ending up with a sample of 84,410 pieces of legislation submitted by 1067 deputies in 24 years. Collapsed at the legislator/Congress level, observations equal 2665.¹⁸

Hypotheses are tested at two different levels of aggregation, replicating the strategy developed by Crisp et al. (2004). For the first set of estimations, every observation is a bill i submitted at time t by a legislator k who may have subnational executive ambition. These models calculate the probability of a submitted bill having a territorial content, as a function of the mentioned covariates. The second set of estimations utilises event count models to calculate the predicted number of targeted bills submitted by an ambitious legislator per Congress.

Different statistical models are utilised to test the hypotheses, starting with those that use the municipal content of each bill as a dependent variable. First, a simple pooled logistic model with errors clustered at the legislator–Congress level is run, in order to take the dependency among bills submitted by the same congressman/period into account. In the second model, a random effects logistic model that weights individual bill drafting propensities by state is utilised. By doing so, it is assessed whether the main effects of ambition are general, or basically driven by a subset of districts. Second, after collapsing the information at the legislator/Congress level, two negative binomial models are utilised (one pooled and another with random effects) to compute the number of bills that ambitious legislators are likely to write. These four models are reported in Table 2.

As can be observed, empirical analyses provide strong and robust support for the first hypothesis. In all four models, the coefficient of the main covariate is positive and significant, confirming that legislators with mayoral expectations are more likely to draft bills targeting their home municipalities. For the first pair of models, setting continuous parameters to the mean and binary variables to zero, the marginal difference in the probabilities of submitting a local bill by legislators who became mayoral candidates is about 50 per cent compared with those who did not. Predictions closer to real world that include partisanship, committee membership and continuous variables set to the mean provide similar results, where a prospective mayor has a 0.064 (0.001) chance of sending a local bill, compared with 0.041 (0.004) by colleagues with other kinds of ambition. Once the main control covariate, the municipal share of population, is included, effects are even clearer. In all three models, the population ratio of each municipality is positive and significant, and also substantively affects the delivery of local bills. As can be seen in Figure 1, the more citizens a district hosts, the higher the expectations of targeted bill drafting. However, ambitious legislators of small districts are even more likely to write local bills than a native of a huge district without progressive ambition. This reinforces the notion that career goals are the main determinant of this strategic behaviour, something ratified by models 3 and 4. The predicted number of local bills drafted by prospective mayors is always greater than for those without a mayoral candidacy; in parallel,

Table 2: Municipal Models

	Model 1 Logistic	Model 2 RE Logistic	Model 3 Neg Binomial	Model 4 RE Neg Binomial
Mayoral candidate	0.359** (0.150)	0.342*** (0.063)	0.514*** (0.134)	0.248** (0.105)
Population ratio	0.541** (0.244)	0.433** (0.198)	0.508** (0.243)	1.308*** (0.257)
Committee chair	-0.406*** (0.120)	-0.473*** (0.063)	-0.499*** (0.106)	-0.344*** (0.090)
Distance majority party median	-0.224** (0.092)	-0.263*** (0.045)	-0.0629 (0.087)	0.075 (0.067)
Peronist	0.625*** (0.155)	0.699*** (0.0819)	0.462*** (0.157)	0.402*** (0.127)
Provincial party	0.0512 (0.231)	0.403*** (0.133)	0.176 (0.215)	0.173 (0.177)
UCR	0.558*** (0.155)	0.675*** (0.0773)	0.394*** (0.149)	0.399*** (0.120)
Frepaso	0.067 (0.203)	0.217* (0.124)	-0.117 (0.222)	0.327* (0.188)
Member of governor's party	-0.037 (0.0892)	0.064 (0.045)	-0.0264 (0.0882)	0.0274 (0.0717)
Tenure	-0.0181 (0.014)	-0.017** (0.007)	-0.0228 (0.0151)	-0.013 (0.013)
Territorial family	-0.621** (0.271)	-0.589*** (0.186)	-0.531** (0.240)	-0.309 (0.256)
Municipal completed HS	-0.01** (0.004)	-0.015*** (0.003)	-0.009** (0.004)	-0.013*** (0.004)
Mayoral tenure	0.0282 (0.052)	-0.011 (0.026)	0.022 (0.056)	-0.071 (0.046)
N of bills submitted	-0.002*** (0.0001)	-0.002*** (0.001)	0.017*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)
Constant	-3.297*** (0.242)	-3.396*** (0.174)	-0.697*** (0.223)	-1.165*** (0.190)
Observations	84,410	84,410	2543	2543

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. UCR: Union Civica Radical; HS: High School.

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

legislators targeting huge districts are also more likely to write more symbolic pieces than those of small units. Their combined effect follows the prescribed enounced direction, and is reflected in [Figure 2](#). As can be seen, municipal candidates' productivity outperforms that of those with different career goals, especially if they belong to considerably sized districts. Nonetheless, if targeted activity by legislators of the same unit but dissimilar career goals is compared, the confidence intervals of their predicted outcomes barely overlap. Therefore, ambition is the main difference over revealed congressional behaviour of Argentinean legislators, at least in patterns of bill submission.

Regarding control covariates, several interesting findings become salient. First, the effects of tenure over bill drafting are minimal or insignificant. In other words, neither expertise nor longevity are substantive predictors of local

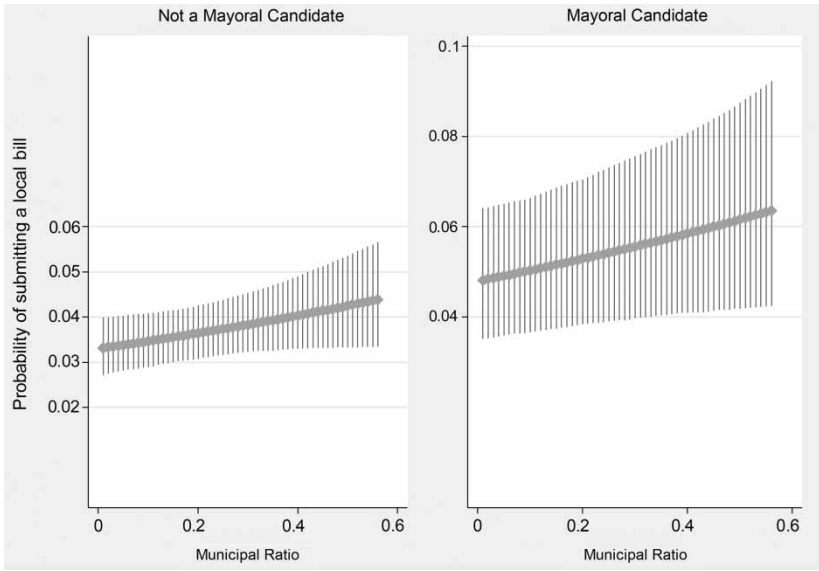


Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Writing a Local Bill, by Mayoral Candidacy and District's Share of Municipal Population

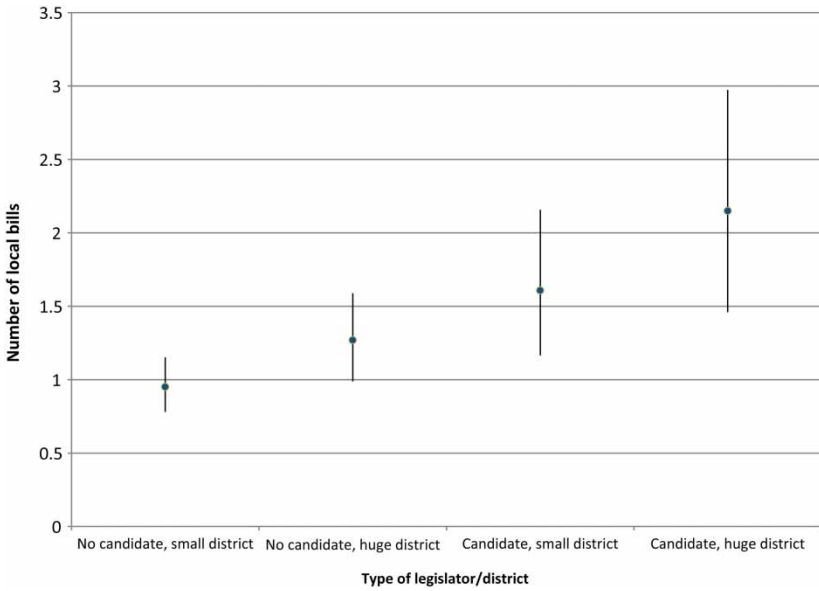


Figure 2: Predicted Number of Local Bills, by Mayoral Candidacy and District Size

bill drafting. Second, as expected, committee chairmanship drastically lowers the likelihood of targeted bill drafting. These results bolster the mentioned trade-off between chances of getting legislation passed and inflation of bill drafts. Regarding the education covariate, results are negative but minimal. Contrary to what was thought, socio-economic characteristics of municipalities do not severely affect targeted bill drafting in the way ambition and population do. Fourth, as expected, members of territorially concentrated families are less likely to draft local benefits for individual purposes. This finding also helps discard the latent idea that families might press their relatives in Congress to draft bills focused on their district. Finally, the relationship between overall bill drafting and the submission of local legislation, yet significant and with changing sign, is minimal and close to zero. This realisation is interpreted as reinforcement of the strength of the model's main covariate: local bill drafting is, in fact, a strategic and prospective decision, regardless of variation in legislative productivity.

The former estimations are replicated using the province-level targeted bills as dependent variable and replacing covariates with municipal scope with their equivalents at the provincial level. Contrary to theoretical speculations, gubernatorial ambition is an inconsistent predictor of targeted bill drafting. [Table 3](#) reports the same four statistical models estimated above, and the covariate's performance is erratic in the direction and significance of coefficients. Interestingly, the most salient contrasts show up when pooled models are compared with random effects estimations. Unlike models 5 and 7, gubernatorial ambition has a negative sign in estimations 6 and 8. Such salient differences based on model specification suggest that something non-random is going on at the provincial level.¹⁹ At this stage it is hard to assess, as most expected sources of subnational variation (size, wealth, and competitiveness) are included in the models. As a reliability check, fixed effects models with the same specification (not reported) were run, showing robust negative and insignificant results for the main covariate, while several provinces' coefficients (without a clear pattern) are strongly negative. These results reinforce the idea that gubernatorial ambition does not systematically involve strategic bill drafting, and that there is space for further analysis of the district-level determinants of legislative behaviour in national Congress.

By contrast, returning to the main models, the population covariate is negative in most estimations, suggesting that targeted bills might be useful just in small provincial environments. However, as mentioned, this seems to be totally independent from gubernatorial ambition, the article's main theoretical concern. The fact that only other control variables such as committee chairmanship, tenure, and several party-level controls perform with robustness forces us to reconsider the causal direction of the gubernatorial arguments. If ambitious prospective mayors have behaved strategically, especially those with bigger audiences, should we not expect gubernatorial candidates to emulate their behaviour? Or should our theoretical expectations be restricted to the lower level, given the different scope (and visibility) of a gubernatorial race? Should we suppose, extending the municipal and provincial-level findings, that targeted

Table 3: Gubernatorial Models

	Model 5 Logistic	Model 6 RE Logistic	Model 7 Neg Binomial	Model 8 RE Neg Binomial
Gubernatorial candidate	0.128 (0.088)	-0.071** (0.034)	0.133* (0.070)	-0.046 (0.058)
Committee chair	-0.459*** (0.111)	-0.267*** (0.041)	-0.311*** (0.076)	-0.087 (0.064)
Distance majority party median	-0.046 (0.089)	-0.065** (0.029)	-0.0164 (0.06)	0.254*** (0.048)
Peronist	0.329** (0.129)	0.299*** (0.054)	0.0977 (0.100)	-0.078 (0.087)
Provincial party	0.418*** (0.153)	0.344*** (0.068)	0.222* (0.124)	-0.198* (0.116)
UCR	0.170 (0.120)	0.321*** (0.047)	-0.071 (0.09)	-0.128* (0.077)
Frepaso	0.382** (0.177)	0.275*** (0.068)	0.110 (0.139)	0.354*** (0.107)
Member of governor's party	0.001 (0.080)	-0.025 (0.038)	-0.187*** (0.068)	0.0004 (0.059)
Tenure	-0.024** (0.01)	-0.028*** (0.005)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.009)
Territorial family	-0.113 (0.266)	0.093 (0.104)	0.0577 (0.196)	0.0431 (0.165)
Provincial completed HS	-0.011** (0.005)	-0.005 (0.035)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.001 (0.006)
Population ratio	-2.956*** (0.207)	-3.515 (4.474)	-3.016*** (0.166)	-1.775*** (0.309)
Gubernatorial tenure	0.055 (0.043)	0.016 (0.017)	0.057 (0.035)	0.719** (0.030)
N of bills submitted	0.0001 (0.002)	0.0002 (0.004)	0.0196*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.0002)
Constant	-1.410*** (0.289)	-2.180 (2.059)	0.845*** (0.208)	0.00691 (0.346)
Observations	87,199	87,199	2665	2665

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

bill drafting should be useful only in small provinces with a population size that is close to a big municipality? These questions need to be answered in a further research project. What seems to be clear is that prospective governors do not seem to utilise targeted legislation as a source of political capital for their prospective races, whereas mayoral candidates do.

Discussion

Years of empirical research on Argentine politics emphasised that political parties were the main determinant of legislative behaviour, governors were the main source of congressional power, and clientelism and patronage were the engines of campaigns and career progress. This study does not deny any of

these conventional statements, but does not support the argument that legislators in office are mere agents or automatons. Rather, they have reasons to use the existing resources to their own advantage. This study shows how legislators with progressive career goals tend to utilise the typical asset offered by congressional institutions: the ability to write bills. As the results clearly show, this resource is systematically used by legislators seeking an executive spot at the municipal level, who tend to submit twice as many local bills as their colleagues with other kinds of ambition. This effect tends to be stronger when deputies belong to a municipality with higher shares of provincial inhabitants. Conversely, no significant relationship could be found by prospective governors, which suggests that the pursuit of a gubernatorial office tends to be boosted by other kinds of political asset. The robustness of findings across models reinforces the accuracy of the theoretical directions investigated in the paper.

Several contributions have been added to the literature by this work. First, the personalisation component has been incorporated in an environment where individual-level activity was completely left out. Second, rather than contradicting previous findings, this approach shows that strict party responsiveness can be compatible with individualisation efforts, even in settings with institutions and practices that foster loyalty, discipline and multiple punishments for defectors. As argued, the compatibility between these goals can be better recognised in the literature if other empirical devices beyond final passage votes are taken into consideration. Following this line, the third contribution of this study is the systematic analysis of non-roll call position-taking devices in a comparative perspective. As mentioned in previous sections, the massive use of symbolic bills means clearly more than fireworks are used to show that ‘Congress is doing something’. Fourth, the incorporation of the municipal arena to the study of Argentine congressional politics is a contribution to the literature in general. The false assumption that subnational politics equal gubernatorial-level interactions omits an important dimension of politics and even policymaking. Finally, this study provides broader theoretical enquiry: can we reliably explain legislative behaviour without looking at patterns of ambition in multilevel systems? Do institutional analyses based on electoral rules and candidate selection mechanisms capture the whole variance if they omit what lies ‘at the heart of politics’? Can we predict party discipline in Congress if we do not consider short-term individual-level goals at many tiers, regardless of how strict national-level electoral rules are? This article does not answer all these questions, but at least provides systematic evidence that, in the Argentine multilevel system with non-static ambition, personal goals matter; at least, at the moment of drafting legislation.

Note on Author

Juan Pablo Micozzi is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico City, email: juan.micozzi@itam.mx

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Notes

1. Several scholars have discussed under what conditions legislators may seek higher office (Brace, 1984), or even retire (Cox & Katz, 2002). Nonetheless, it is conventional wisdom that most legislators seek continuous re-election in Congress.
2. A Congress that can actually change policy, where legislators have incentives to develop legislative careerism.
3. In fact, Kernell (1977), Carson and Engstrom (2005), and Carson, Engstrom, and Roberts (2006) show that US federal politics in the nineteenth century involved very different dynamics, more associated with parties and local bosses than personalised constituency activity.
4. It includes councilmen, mayors, provincial deputies and senators, federal representatives, federal senators and governors.
5. It is worth mentioning that, even though legislative re-election is not the goal of most congressmen in office, they would hardly be better off in their attempts to be renominated if they used local bill drafting. Reappointment in the party ballot is usually determined by governors and party bosses. Hence, it can be supposed that re-election seekers would enact other kinds of strategy to further their goal (loyalty, money, or other assets).
6. The definition of political capital in this study is broad, and encompasses every asset that could be useful for the progression of a political career, including symbolic and material resources. The emphasis on symbols does not deny the demonstrated role of clientelism and patronage over political success (Brusco, Nazareno, & Stokes, 2004; Calvo & Murillo, 2004); rather, both approaches are complementary.
7. These decrees should not be confused with delegated decrees or constitutional decrees, which entail a different scope and salience. See Carey and Shugart (1998) and Negretto (2004) for a further discussion.
8. The word 'mostly' is explicit because ordinary laws have often been used to highlight events and target places or groups, as if they were declarations or resolutions. In these cases, their effects are not as strict as changes in penal law, for example; nor do they imply mechanic disbursement of funds.
9. Technically, resolutions are supposed to ask other branches and bureaucracies for reports, summon ministers and secretaries, or change internal rules. Declarations are supposed to highlight events, ask the executive to do something specific, rename streets, create memorials, or take positions in general. Empirically, both kinds of bill have been used indistinctively for these roles. Communications have the particularity of being used just in the Senate, and their use does not differ from declarations and resolutions either. Based on this conventional common use, they will be analysed all together. See Table A1 in the Appendix for more examples of these symbolic bills.
10. It must be noted that, unlike the US model, the allocation of material resources (pork) is not determined via congressional laws in Argentina. Legislators could pass many bills involving money or public works, but their further materialisation would depend on other actors in the executive branch.
11. Material was collected from Congress's website (www.hcdn.gov.ar).
12. Revision was performed by the author, and it involved several rounds of examination of those bills coded as targeted. The most frequent task was the recodification of positive values incorrectly coded by the program, given that other organisations and characters have the same name as the districts listed in the keywords. As an example, seven municipalities of different provinces are called 'San Martín', which is also the name of a metropolitan line of railways, and that of a national hero who was honoured multiple times in bills.

13. Every strategy has its trade-offs. The use of non-systematic information of candidacies would add data at the expense of multiple omissions, therefore creating bias. Conversely, the use of mere public statements as proxies would add information at the expense of precision, as it could just be cheap talk, or a strategic message to improve bargaining power. Just as a trial, an alternative estimation using a variable that includes non-systematic information about pursuit of the position in a primary was run. Results have not varied substantially in the estimations.
14. 'Home municipality' is recognised over the basis of the legal address declared by the legislator at the moment of running for the legislative seat.
15. If a governor retires, he/she is very likely to determine who his/her successor will be. A relative who is already in politics has a privileged position to be the recipient of the candidacy, more for the relative's last name than for personal political merits, all else being equal.
16. This is a typical category in federal countries, where several parties just run in one district. The most salient parties coded by this variable are *Movimiento Popular Neuquino*, *Pacto Autonomista Liberal*, *Movimiento Popular Fueguino*, *Movimiento Popular Jujeno*, *Partido Bloquista*, *Cruzada Renovadora*, *Fuerza Republicana*, *Partido Renovador Salteno* and *Partido Democrata*.
17. See Micozzi (2013) for an analysis of legislative performance in the Argentine Senate.
18. Several observations omitted in the municipal models for identification reasons are useful to compute provincial models. For this reason, the *N* is slightly smaller in the mayoral models.
19. An anonymous reviewer is thanked for having raised this point.

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Appendix

Table A1: Examples of Bills

Content	Type
Ask the executive a report on the contamination with nitrites of drinking water in Lomas de Zamora, Buenos Aires	Resolution
Ask the president to regulate Article 3 of Law 24698, which states special prices for gasoline in the frontier area of Corinda, Formosa	Declaration
Concede a subsidy of a million pesos to the community Vicaria Sagrado Corazon, Rosario, Santa Fe	Law
Construction of a bridge in Voladizo, by Route 11, km 790, in Reconquista, Santa Fe	Resolution
Declare congressional interest the 1st Meeting of Agriculture and Stockbreeding that will take place in Esquel, Chubut, on 25 April 2005	Resolution
Declare national interest the Third National Conference of Amateur Fishing in Resistencia, province of Chaco, 10-13 October 1984	Resolution
Declare the city of Rosario the 'hand-made ice cream capital'	Resolution
Declare the city of Zarate the national capital of atomic energy	Law
Declare the public utility of the national state-owned building at 2450 Peron, Rosario, Santa Fe	Law
Designate the city of San Fernando, Catamarca, as venue of the basketball world championship	Declaration
Express concerns for the abundance of rodents in the school area between 43th and 151st streets, city of La Plata	Declaration
Express concerns for the attack on the Jewish cultural centre of 8 November 2002, in La Plata, Buenos Aires	Declaration
Finish the maintenance works in the Technical School Nr 3, San Rafael, Mendoza	Declaration
Give a subsidy of 15 million australes to School 504, Lanus, Buenos Aires	Law
Include in the 2001 budget the funds for the public works on Route 9 in Escobar, Buenos Aires	Resolution
Incorporate the airport of P. Saenz Pena, province of Chaco, in the national airport system	Declaration
Provide drinking water and sewers to towns in San Rafael, Mendoza	Declaration
Speed up the approval of a fertiliser plant in Bahia Blanca, province of Buenos Aires	Declaration
Summon the minister of finance, Dr Domingo Cavallo, and the minister of defence, Mr Oscar Camilion, to the House	Law
Suspend the demotion to the second division of soccer teams for the 1983/84 season	Resolution