

Progressive Ambition and Representation: The Case of Mexico

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Abstract

Can legislators be responsive without reelection? This paper examines the role of the local electoral context in activating the career ambitions of representatives in ways that increase their responsiveness to constituents, even without the reelection incentive. Extending scholarship that argues sitting legislators may aspire to attain other political posts (progressive ambition), I argue that such tendencies can be activated by factors that structure political opportunities, such as electoral calendars. Making sense of the relationship between career ambition and political action is critical to understanding how legislators can be motivated to represent their constituents when reelection is infrequent. Using the case of Mexico, I investigate how federalism and the staggered nature of the federal, state, and municipal electoral calendars affect legislators' career ambitions and consequently the extent to which they represent their district's local interests, by shifting the local electoral opportunities. I also find evidence in support of a mechanism that connects electoral incentives and responsiveness to constituents based on building personal reputation rather than party discipline. In order to measure district-oriented behavior, I make use of an original data collection of the frequency of legislators' bills that pertain to local interests in the 62nd Legislature (2012-2015).

Introduction

Does the lack of reelection entail the absence of representatives' responsiveness to their constituents? Critics of term limits have argued that such rules sever the link between representative and district by removing the reelection incentive (Cleary 2010). The desire to maintain office forms the basis of traditional explanations for legislators' behaviors as representatives for their district (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978). This perspective does not bode well for the quality of representation in the world's democracies where reelection is infrequent or institutionally limited. However, a growing literature has demonstrated that "progressive ambition" – the aspiration to attain future posts – can motivate legislators to be responsive to their district. Previous work has shown that legislators who go on to pursue subnational posts are more likely to engage in behaviors such as pork barreling and bill submissions that target their future constituencies (Micozzi 2014a, Kerevel 2015). Yet, this work is limited theoretically, in not incorporating the role of political and electoral contexts in systematically influencing the behavioral consequences of career ambitions, as well as empirically, in its ability to make causal inferences about the relationship between career ambitions and political action. Extending prior research, I argue that the structure of electoral opportunities activates the progressive career ambitions of legislators, leading legislators to increase their degree of responsiveness to their districts in order to build local electoral support, even in the absence of reelection.

I test this argument using the case of Mexico, where federal deputies are constitutionally barred from pursuing reelection after their term in office. This institutional arrangement means that every legislator must look to other offices, particularly at the subnational level, if they aim to continue building a political career beyond their three-year term in the legislature. Therefore, combined with the federal structure of the Mexican political system, I can assume that legislators are progressively ambitious and subnational posts are valued components of political careers. Per my thesis, these career ambitions are activated by the local electoral opportunity structure, specifically whether a deputy faces the prospect of coming local elections. The staggered nature of federal and local elections means that deputies from different states face distinct electoral opportunities at different points in their legislative term. Thus, the electoral calendar provides exogenous variation in the electoral opportunities and therefore the activation of progressive ambitions. I argue that

the presence of an upcoming local election positively predicts deputies' level of responsiveness to the interests of their constituents. In order to measure responsiveness to the district, I make use of an original data collection of the frequency of legislators' bills that pertain to local interests in the 62nd Legislature (2012-2015) of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies.

My core finding is that deputies from states with upcoming local elections, compared to those from states without approaching local elections, submit more district-targeted bills in the legislative year leading up to those elections. Moreover, through an analysis of legislators' party discipline measured using roll call votes, I find that deputies are less likely to vote along the party line in the year leading up to local elections. This evidence suggests that the electoral connection between progressively ambitious representatives and constituents is driven by efforts to build their personal reputation rather than serve their party's electoral prospects. Taken together, these results demonstrate that even in the absence of reelection, representatives can still be responsive to their constituents when career ambitions and electoral opportunities combine to incentivize district-oriented political behaviors.

In the remainder of the paper, I review research on political ambition and responsiveness of legislators to constituents. I then develop a hypothesis regarding the relationship between electoral incentives and responsiveness in conditions where legislators will not seek reelection. Along with this main hypothesis, I also develop a test derived from the empirical implications of competing explanations for the mechanism motivating responsiveness: party discipline or personal vote. Finally, I discuss the data and methodology of the empirical analyses and present the results.

Political Ambition and Responsiveness

The structure of electoral incentives has long been held as the starting point for understanding the behavior of legislators. This is particularly the case for the issue of representation and the linkage between representatives and voters in the district. In U.S. politics, the desire for reelection amongst members of Congress drives them to engage in activities such as credit claiming, pork barreling, and maintaining contact with constituents that will enhance their electoral prospects in the district (Mayhew 1974, Fenno 1978). In this model of representation, elections are meant to serve as the time to hold representatives accountable for their behavior and performance while in

office. Forward-looking and ambitious politicians will work to cultivate support in their districts to fight off potential challengers.

While this assumption of reelection goals has been the starting point for valuable insights in American politics, it is not an appropriate assumption in many other contexts. In developing a typology of political ambition, Schlesinger (1966, 10) differentiates “static ambition,” where “the politician seeks to make a long-run career out of a particular office,” with “progressive ambition,” where “the politician aspires to attain an office more important than the one he now seeks or is holding.” Comparative analyses of legislative behavior have found that the static ambition assumption has widely varying degrees of applicability to the career paths of legislators across the world (Morgenstern and Nacif 2002, Matland and Studlar 2004). Rather than static ambition, many politicians in the world’s democracies go on to seek other posts. For example, around 83% of members of the lower house in the United States returned to office after their term (in 1996). In the same period, only 17% and 43% of legislators in Argentina and Brazil returned to office, respectively.¹ Samuels (2003) builds on Schlesinger’s typology by expanding the definition of progressive ambition to incorporate a world where politicians move up and down the levels of government throughout their political careers, which characterizes the aforementioned cases of Argentina and Brazil. Rather than a strict hierarchy from local to national posts, sitting federal legislators may value and desire subnational offices as part of their long-term career goals.

Working from the progressive ambition framework, the lack of reelection does not necessarily entail a disconnect between representative and constituents, as the static ambition perspective would predict. Legislators who are progressively ambitious and aspire to attain a subnational post may be responsive to the constituents, not because they wish to secure reelection, but instead because they desire to build a base of support for election to their next post. In order to study the relationship between progressive ambition and responsiveness to the district it is necessary to identify legislators who are progressively ambitious. This is difficult in contexts such as Brazil and Argentina where it cannot be known beforehand whether legislators will try to keep their seat or pursue subnational posts, since they have the option of both. For this reason, I use the case of Mexico, which presents a useful case in that progressive ambition is forced upon politicians via the constitutional ban on reelection. This ban on direct reelection means that each office holder must

¹Data is from p. 416 Table 14.1 of Morgenstern 2002.

look elsewhere if she wishes to continue her political career once the term is over. While cases with explicit term limits (such as Mexico) permit a clean test of the influence of the electoral opportunity structure on progressive ambition, findings from such analyses permit inferences about behavior in other democracies where rates of reelection are low but politicians have both static and progressive career options.

The institution of no reelection within Mexican politics is argued to have significant implications for representation. The conventional wisdom on Mexican democracy is that limits on reelection have been detrimental to the development of governments and politicians that are responsive to their voters. From a practical point of view, the inability to stay in office past the three-year term (or six-year term for senators) limits the ability of deputies to invest in and develop the necessary resources and skills to act as effective legislators (Ugalde 2000). The ban on consecutive reelection has also been a source of leverage for political party leaders since they traditionally have control of nominating procedures for elected office. In order to gain elected office, politicians must first secure the nomination of their party and it is here that party leaders can exercise influence in their role as gatekeepers to elected office. This, along with party control of campaign resources, produces politicians who serve as agents to party leaders when formulating and voting on policy (Béjar Algazi and Waldman 2004, Langston 2007). In theory, this pattern holds little room for any influence from the district on legislator behavior. A more basic concern over the consequences of the ban on reelection is the argument that it severs the link between voters and their particular representative. Without the prospect of being able to hold onto their job for the next term (as well as the looming referendum on their performance it entails), politicians are unlikely to engage in activities that serve their electorate when reelection is simply not part of their career. The implication is that elections fail in their role as mechanisms of accountability and representation. In his book length examination of the (non-)role of elections in local government performance as a result of term limits, Matthew Cleary went so far as to state, “the conclusion is inescapable: electoral competition does not make Mexican municipal governments more responsive to the interests of the citizens (2010, 188).”

As stated above, comparative scholars have recognized that reelection-based accounts of representative behavior may not fit the career paths of legislators in democracies outside the United States. While one conclusion from this may be that the ability of elections to motivate representa-

tion and accountability from elites is eliminated (as in the common portrayal of the Mexican case above), another interpretation is that a different model of career ambition and elite behavior is needed to explain a markedly different political context. Working from this second tack, scholars have increasingly looked to progressive ambition as an alternative motivation for legislators' behavior in office. From this perspective, rather than aspiring to hold onto their legislative seat for the foreseeable future of their career, legislators aspire to move on to another (often subnational) post once their current mandate is over.

This perspective of career ambition has been especially applicable to federal regimes with low rates of reelection. In Brazil, Samuels (2003) argued that federal legislators have low rates of reelection because their political careers are more focused on attaining positions at the local level, either through mayorships or governorships. Rather than long careers in the national legislature, Brazilian deputies' stints in office serve as opportunities to deliver pork to local interests and therefore build up their base of support at the local level. In Argentina, federal legislators who ultimately go on to run for municipal or provincial offices tailor their behavior while in the national legislature in anticipation for these future career moves. Compared to Argentine legislators who do not go on to run for local office, deputies with subnational ambitions draft more bills that target localities (Micozzi 2014a) and are more likely to engage in legislative cooperation (in the form of cosponsoring bills) with other aspiring subnational executives to signal the strength of their impending candidacy (Micozzi 2014b). Similarly in Mexico, Kerevel (2015) finds that legislators elected through single-member districts (SMDs) who intend to pursue local office in the future submit more budget amendments targeted to their constituency (as a form of pork-barreling). Even in a country like Uruguay, where the party and electoral system are thought to diminish incentives for the development of personal reputations, legislators who go on to run for departmental executive office submit more bills targeting their districts (Chasquetti and Micozzi 2014).

While these studies have contributed significantly in developing our theoretical and empirical understanding of viable alternatives to the static ambition model, there remain significant limitations to current research on the topic. The work cited above has established a consistent link between legislators' future career choices and their behavior in office. Yet, why do some legislators develop progressive career ambitions and therefore work to cultivate local electoral support in the first place? This paper makes a theoretical contribution in the study of progressive ambition by

building on the link between career choices and legislative behavior to include the role of the local electoral context. Rather than taking a politician's desire for subnational office as the starting point, I examine the causal effect of local electoral opportunities in activating the link between career ambition and district-oriented legislative behavior. If the basic assumption of progressive ambition theory, that politicians focus their efforts in working to secure their next (often subnational) post, is correct, then these politicians should also be sensitive to the local electoral context. I argue that the local electoral opportunity structure influences the responsiveness of progressively ambitious politicians to the interests of their district. This argument leads to the following hypothesis about electoral incentives and responsiveness.

Hypothesis 1: The presence of local electoral opportunities motivates term-limited legislators to be responsive to the concerns of constituents.

There is also the question of the mechanism driving the behavior for this hypothesized relationship between electoral incentives and responsiveness. In the discussion above, the focus has been on the individual politician and her incentives to cultivate a personal reputation with the electorate through attention to local issues. The literature on representation has placed great attention on the ways in which politicians can benefit electorally by developing personal reputations distinct from those of their party (Fenno 1978, Cain et al. 1987, Carey and Shugart 1995). An alternative explanation for the relationship between elections and responsiveness is one based on the central role of parties. Rather than individual electoral motivations, the party and its membership, who wish to someday gain seats currently held by the party, deter shirking by officeholders. In this situation, incumbents act in the interest of their constituencies to improve the electoral prospects of the party-at-large (Alesina and Spear 1988). In his examination of term-limited Costa Rican legislators, Carey (1998) argues that behaviors such as bringing pork to the district are motivated by a desire to gain favor with the party leadership and future national executives. This, in turn, is expected to improve the electoral performance of the party in future elections.

A challenge for the research on progressive ambition (and for the study of political representation in general) is disentangling these different mechanisms that can both bring about legislative responsiveness. To distinguish between these theoretically distinct explanations, I examine the party discipline behavior of legislators. The central hypothesis of this paper is that local electoral opportunities motivate responsiveness from term-limited representatives. If this relationship

is driven by loyal partisans working to improve the electoral prospects of their party, then one would expect that measures of a legislator's party discipline should also follow a similar pattern with respect to electoral opportunities. However, to the extent that party discipline is unrelated to or negatively associated with local electoral opportunities, then responsiveness is likely driven by incentives to build a personal reputation with constituents. Deputies who are working to cultivate their personal electoral base are unlikely to vote along the party line and in fact may be more inclined to defect if such a position is personally electorally advantageous (Carey 2009, Tavits 2009). This discussion suggests a hypothesis that can be tested with data from the Mexican case.

Hypothesis 2: [If deputies' responsiveness is motivated by efforts to aid their personal reputation rather than their party's electoral prospects], their likelihood of voting with the party line will be negatively associated with the presence of local electoral opportunities.

In addition to the theoretical contribution of this paper, there are also important empirical limitations to the current research on progressive ambition. Specifically, the way the independent variable of interest, career ambition, is commonly operationalized is problematic for causal identification. The standard practice is to code progressively ambitious representatives based on their next career moves. This generally means a legislator with progressive ambitions is one who ran for a subnational office during or immediately following their legislative mandate. This is a fairly intuitive coding scheme and it is also a practical choice. How is it possible to know what the personal ambitions of a legislator are unless they reveal those ambitions through their career moves? However, this scheme encounters two problems. First, from a measurement perspective, simply looking at candidatures surely does not reflect all legislators who maintained ambitions for subnational posts while in their legislative seat. Before candidacies, there are party primaries or nomination methods, and before that, ambitious legislators may ultimately forgo a subnational run altogether once other factors (such as anticipating a strong opponent) come into play. These legislators who ultimately are not candidates, however, may still behave in ways that try to shore up their local reputation in the anticipation for a potential campaign. A second problem is that in models of legislator behavior that try to examine the effect of progressive ambitions, the independent variable is based on an observed activity (running for local office) that happens after the behavior being explained.

Research Design

This paper addresses these limitations in two ways. First, I use data from the Mexican case, where an institutional feature (the ban on consecutive reelection) makes it possible to make plausible assumptions about Mexican politicians' immediate career ambitions. Unlike cases like Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay mentioned above where reelection is possible and whether it is pursued is up to the legislator, every Mexican federal legislator will be forced to look for another job once their term is over. In this case, progressive ambition is essentially exogenously applied to any politician interested in maintaining an electoral career. Therefore, I treat progressive ambition in this case as a common latent trait among all legislators. Secondly, and unlike other studies of progressive ambition in Mexico, I exploit the staggered nature of federal, state, and municipal electoral calendars as a source of exogenous variation in electoral opportunities. The presence of these electoral opportunities activates the latent progressive ambitions of term-limited legislators. To illustrate this point, Figure 1 shows that there is considerable variation across Mexico's political geography in the timing of elections. More importantly, one should note that all federal deputies and senators are elected at the same time. For example, the horizontal line at the 1st of July 2012 is the point when members of the 62nd Legislature were elected into office. Comparing each state delegation, it is apparent that federal legislators experience different electoral opportunity structures based on the point in time of their legislative term. For instance, deputies in Aguascalientes will have the opportunity to run for local offices after their first year in congress. At the same time, deputies in Jalisco will not have that opportunity until the end of their third year.

Previous research has shown that these subnational posts have become increasingly important in the careers of Mexican politicians (Béjar Algazi 2012). As elections have become more competitive since the period of PRI one-party dominance, Langston (2006) finds that the PRI has been forced to search for politicians popular with local voters when making senate candidate nominations. Looking at the career paths of federal deputies in the post-democratic-transition period, Langston and Aparicio (2008) find that many politicians begin their careers in municipal and state arenas, and then go on to return to these localities after their legislative term. Studying a broader range of Mexican political elites, Camp (2010, 32-39) finds that the share of prominent national politicians holding office who were mayors has steadily increased from 6% during the De la Madrid

administration (1982-1988) to 21% under the Calderón administration (2006-2012). In the same time period, the share of national politicians who were state legislators rose from 12% to 35%. Camp goes on to underscore the growing importance of having been a mayor in the career paths of governors, which are among the nation's most prominent political positions. In the period between the De la Madrid and Calderón administrations, the share of governors who were mayors has risen from 31% to 71%.

The value of subnational elected office is also apparent to federal legislators serving in the Chamber of Deputies. Kerevel (2015) finds that the percentage of immediate positions sought or obtained by federal deputies after leaving office that were mayorships or local deputy seats increased from 19.3% to 41.6% from the 57th (1997-2000) to the 60th (2006-2009) legislatures, respectively. These posts are valuable enough to term-limited deputies that they are willing to campaign for local office after only a year into their federal term. For example, one can look at the case of Baja California, which Figure 1 shows had statewide elections in 2013. In that year, three sitting federal deputies from that state, Fernando Castro Trenti, Gilberto Hirata Chico, and Benjamín Castillo Valdez stood as candidates for governor, mayor, and local deputy, respectively. This does not take into account federal deputies from Baja California who may have sought local posts but failed to secure their party's nomination. This case, along with the empirical evidence cited above, demonstrates that Mexican federal deputies have good reason to be mindful of local electoral opportunities, especially the timing of these opportunities in the context of their single term.

My empirical strategy of using the staggered federal and local electoral calendars draws from diverse studies that treat the timing of elections as an exogenous variable to explain political behavior. This is particularly notable in research on the political business cycle which posits that government's spending patterns are conditioned by the electoral calendar (Alesina et al. 1997). In Mexico, Rosas and Langston (2011) leveraged the same features of the electoral calendar noted above to estimate the causal influence of governors on their co-partisan deputies in the national legislature. Similarly, Berliner and Erlich (2015) exploit variation in the timing of elections and the lengths of the preceding lame duck periods in order to assess the relationship between electoral competition and Mexican states' adoption of access to information laws.

Building on the progressive ambition literature, I examine if and how the desire for subna-

tional office influences the extent to which a legislator's activities are oriented toward serving her district. I expect that term-limited legislators who face the coming prospect of being able to run for local offices in their district are more likely to engage in activities that serve district interests than legislators who do not have the same upcoming opportunity. It is important to note, that unlike previous analyses of legislator behavior (including the Mexican case) that use the legislator's term as the unit of analysis, I exploit the meaningful variation across time that can accurately reflect the changing electoral opportunity structure.

Dependent Variables

In order to examine the effects of the local electoral opportunity structure on the responsiveness of federal deputies to district interests, it is necessary to define the measurement strategy for such a behavior. In other words, how can I measure responsiveness to the interests of the district in the context of the Mexican congress? In the American politics literature, where scholars have placed greater focus on dyadic representation than in the field of comparative politics, the standard approach is to use the voting record of representatives and measuring the extent to which this behavior reflects the ideological preferences of their district (Clinton 2006, Bartels 2008). However, the applicability of this approach to the Mexican context is limited by features of the political system. As stated earlier, the combination of a ban on consecutive reelection and party control of campaign resources and nomination procedures has resulted in party discipline that is comparatively high (Nacif 2002, Carey 2009) for the region. As a result, roll call voting and policy initiatives are areas of legislative behavior dictated primarily by the national party (Béjar Algazi 2006).

While voting is an important aspect of a legislator's ability to represent her district, it is not the only means by which she can serve the interests of the district and ultimately increase her own reputation in the district. Representation is a multidimensional concept (Pitkin 1967) and representatives' behaviors toward that end will also vary. Aside from the legislator's role as a voter on the chamber floor, scholars of representation have also paid substantial attention to activities such as constituency service, pork-barreling, and communication with the district. These behaviors offer an avenue for legislators to develop a base of support that is independent of their partisan affiliation, referred to as "the personal vote" (Cain et al. 1987).

One such activity available to legislators is through their bill submissions (Schiller 1995).

In Mexico, there are two types of bills federal deputies can submit: *iniciativas* (initiatives) and *proposiciones con punto de acuerdo* (propositions). As Kerevel (2010, 699) notes, “initiatives are formal bills and involve substantive legislation, such as Constitutional reform, proposing a new law, or reforming an existing law. Propositions are not actual legislation, but are pronouncements made by individual legislators on political, cultural, economic and social matters.” The key difference is that while the development and content of initiatives is largely the purview of the national parties (as noted above), propositions offer legislators the ability to engage in credit-claiming or position taking. As I will demonstrate below, these propositions are often used to request federal funding go to particular projects or that federal resources (often particular agencies) be directed toward solving some local concern. In his study of legislative behavior in Mexico’s mixed-member electoral system, Kerevel (2010) treats the number of initiatives and propositions submitted by deputies as measures of activity directed towards national and parochial concerns respectively. He finds that deputies elected in single-member districts (SMD) submit more propositions whereas deputies elected in proportional representation (PR) districts submit more initiatives. This is in line with the expectation in the mixed-member system literature that SMD representatives will work to favor local interests while PR legislators will serve the parties that placed them on the ballot list. The use of bill submission activity in this and other studies as a measure of legislator’s national or parochial orientation provides a firm foundation for developing a measure of responsiveness to district interests based on proposition submission.

With this motivation, I wrote a Python script to scrape the propositions submitted by federal deputies in the 62nd Legislature (2012-2015) available online in the *Gaceta Parlamentaria*, the congressional record. For each proposition, I am able to record the author (or co-authors) of the bill, the date on which it was submitted, and a brief description of the bill. From these descriptions, I then coded bills for whether they targeted local interests. This was done by going through each bill’s description and coding whether a bill relates to the state or municipalities in the deputy’s district. In the simple case, this means that a municipality or state is specifically referenced in the description. For example, a deputy can call on a federal agency to lower electricity rates for their state. It is important to note that the locality or geographic area referenced in the bill must be in the deputy’s district or state. There are many cases of deputies submitting bills concerning issues in other areas of the country. For example, following the mass disappearance of students from the

Ayotzinapa teachers' college in the fall of 2014, numerous deputies from outside Guerrero submitted bills calling on federal and state authorities to investigate the matter. Unless the deputy is from Guerrero, such a bill is not coded as locally-targeted. In a more complicated case, the description refers to a program or initiative that would directly benefit the deputy's district. Examples of this second case include propositions to protect local crops or industries from foreign competition, developing government programs to benefit local industries, and establishing special committees that deal with industries important to the state or district. Yet, simply because a bill targets a specific industry does not mean it is considered locally-targeted. In many cases, legislators will submit bills that concern industries that are difficult to clearly associate with their district, or often any area. For example, a bill may request a federal agency develop programs to regulate used car sales. While it is possible that such a bill may reference an idiosyncratic local issue, without a clear association to a geographic area, I code such bills as not locally-targeted.

In order to demonstrate the validity of using locally-targeted propositions as a measure of responsiveness to the district's interests, I provide some examples of propositions that were coded as locally-targeted. The following are descriptions of a few of the local propositions included in the analyses that follow:

- María Teresa Jiménez Esquivel (PAN) of Aguascalientes' 2nd district presented a “proposition which requests the Attorney General of the Republic to use its power of jurisdiction to investigate the alleged criminal acts in the disappearance in similar fashion of women in Aguascalientes.”
- Salvador Ortiz García (PRI) of Michoacán's 12th district presented a “proposition which exhorts the Secretariat of Public Education to revise and update the annual stipends granted to students at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo.”
- Javier Filiberto Guevara González (PRI) of Puebla's 14th district presented a “proposition which exhorts INEGI to revise and in some cases modify the indices of social development referred to in articles 34 and 35 of the Law of Fiscal Coordination since their application has resulted in disadvantaging several municipalities of Puebla.”
- Heriberto Manuel Galindo Quiñones (PRI), a PR representative from Sinaloa (a major pro-

ducer and exporter of tomatoes), presented a “proposition pertaining to the termination of the Agreement on Mexican Tomato Imports to the United States; and the creation of a special committee to assist, support, and defend the local producers of the fruit, particularly those focused on exporting.”

Using this coding scheme, out of 2,959 instances in which a deputy authored (or coauthored) a proposition, 645 of those instances were locally-targeted propositions.² With these entries I can generate counts of the number of locally-targeted propositions a deputy submits at different points in time of their term. In the analyses below, I use the legislator-legislative year as the unit of analysis. Therefore, the dependent variable is the count of locally-targeted propositions a deputy presents in a given legislative year.³

In order to test the auxiliary hypothesis concerning legislators’ party discipline, I gathered roll call data for all recorded votes taken in Mexico’s lower house in the 2012-2015 legislative term from the *Gaceta Parlamentaria*.⁴ Following previous analyses of party discipline in the Mexican context, I measure discipline using a party unity score for an individual legislator (Díaz Rebolledo 2005, Weldon 2008, Kerevel 2010). It is the number of times the legislator voted the same position as the majority of her party, divided by the total number of actual votes taken.⁵ Simply stated, it measures how frequently the deputy votes along the party line. Again, since the level of analysis is the deputy-year, the party unity score is calculated for votes taken in a given legislative year.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variable of interest is whether a deputy faces the prospect of local elections in her state at the end of the legislative year. I use this simple indicator variable as the dependent variable for several reasons. First, since statewide elections in this period are held during the summer, the legislative year preceding that summer provides a natural length of time that also

²Deputies can also cosponsor propositions. For these analyses however, I only focus on whether a deputy is listed as being one of the bill’s presenters.

³In the Chamber of Deputies, there are three legislative years with two ordinary periods each (Fall 2012-Spring 2013, Fall 2013-Spring 2014, Fall 2014-Spring 2015). With the deputy- legislative year as the unit of analysis, the count of locally targeted bills in the data ranges from 0 to 11, with a median value of 0 and a mean of .41.

⁴<http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>

⁵Absences were excluded from the calculation. Abstentions were considered as voting against the party’s position, except in cases where a party’s position was abstention. I also exclude any roll call votes in which there were no dissenting votes from the calculation of party unity scores since many votes are noncontroversial and their inclusion artificially inflates the extent of defection from party unity.

corresponds with the manner in which the legislative schedule is organized (with two periods, fall and spring, for each year). Second, it provides a simple comparison between deputies from states where there are statewide elections in the summer and those where there are no upcoming elections, for a given legislative year. Finally, I do not utilize a more continuous measure such as months or weeks from a local election because this would not be in line with the reality of Mexican politics, where deputies who wish to campaign for another post (or contest a primary for a candidacy) must request a leave of absence from the chamber and therefore would not be able to submit locally-targeted propositions during points of the spring legislative period.

In a context where legislators are limited to one term and subnational posts are valuable components of political careers, I expect that the opportunity of a coming local election will motivate progressively ambitious deputies to engage in behaviors that can increase their appeal to voters back in the district. One means by which they can accomplish this is through submission of propositions that signal the deputy's responsiveness to local concerns and interests. Therefore, I expect a coming election to increase the number of locally-targeted propositions.

I also include other variables to control for factors that have been found to influence legislative behavior in Mexico. The first is the deputy's mode of election (either through SMD or PR), since this has been found to influence the type of bills deputies submit. SMD deputies are more likely to submit propositions and PR deputies are more likely to submit initiatives (Kerevel 2010). Another important variable is the influence of a co-partisan governor in the deputy's state. Specifically, I code whether a deputy has a co-partisan governor whose term outlasts that of the deputy. Previous work has shown that this type of governor can influence the voting patterns of the state's delegation of deputies, because such a governor can provide deputies with resources for campaigns or provide positions in the state bureaucracy after their term (Langston 2010, Rosas and Langston 2011). I expect that, to the extent that deputies are using locally-targeted bills as a means of building their electoral support in the district, co-partisan governors should have a negative effect on the number of propositions they submit. The reason for this is that a co-partisan governor who will be around after the deputy's term ends provides the legislator with opportunities to advance their political career outside of appealing to district interest and cultivating local electoral support. Specifically, governors can offer career paths in the state bureaucracy and state party where the governor is the *de facto* leader. With these possible non-electoral career paths, deputies may place less focus on

building personal electoral support through their bill submission.

I also control for partisanship by including a set of party indicator variables (for the PAN, PRD, and PVEM) as well as a minor party indicator (which includes PT, PANAL, and Movimiento Ciudadano). The PRI are the reference category since they are the party in government during the 62nd legislature. I also include an indicator of whether a deputy switched parties during their term and whether the deputy is an alternate.⁶ Finally, the models include an indicator for the deputy's gender, with a value of zero for male and one for female. Previous research has found that women are more active than men in legislatures (Anzia and Berry 2011, Kerevel and Atkeson 2013). Moreover, in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, women are found to submit more initiatives (Bárcena Juárez 2017). Therefore, I expect that women submit more locally-targeted propositions on average.

Explaining Locally-Targeted Bill Submission

Since I am interested in the effect of a coming election at the end of the legislative year, the unit of analysis is the deputy-legislative year. I pool the three years in the data together into a single model. Specifically, I first fit a negative binomial regression since the dependent variable is a count with overdispersion.⁷ In order to account for intragroup correlation of observations at the deputy level, standard errors are clustered by deputy.⁸ Since there are multiple years pooled in the model, I also include legislative year indicator variables with the first year as the reference category. This is to account for year specific factors that may affect all legislators.

Table 1 shows the results of the mixed effects negative binomial model in column (1).⁹ The effect of a coming local election is in the expected direction (positive) and statistically significant at the .05 level. Among the other variables, PAN, PRD, and minor party affiliation are also significant positive predictors of the number of locally-targeted propositions a deputy presents. The

⁶Each deputy is elected along with an alternate who steps in if the deputy temporarily or permanently steps out of office. Since office holders must temporarily step down while they campaign for another office, there are many alternates who come in during the spring legislative period and serve briefly. I include only deputies who served in more than one ordinary period.

⁷The conditional variance is over 2.5 times greater than the mean, violating the necessary assumption in order to fit a poisson model. The model presented in Table 1 was estimated using the nbreg command in STATA 14.2.

⁸As an alternative to fitting a model with clustered standard errors, I also ran a mixed effects negative binomial model with deputies as the second level grouping. The results of this model, available upon request, are substantively identical to the model reported in Table 1.

⁹Table A1 in the appendix shows the results of negative binomial regressions for each legislative year individually.

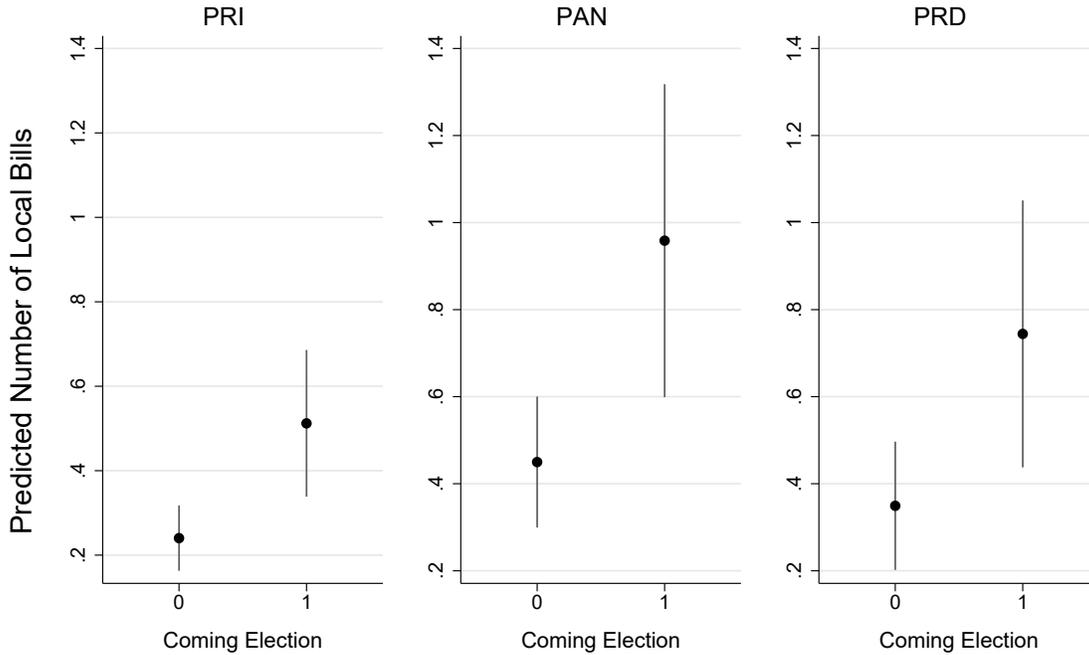
Table 1: Count Models Predicting the Number of Locally-Targeted Propositions

	(1)	(2)
	Neg. Binomial	Poisson FE
Coming Local Election=1	0.757* (0.135)	0.658* (0.131)
Mode of Election (PR=1)	-0.0184 (0.156)	
Co-Partisan Governor	-0.329* (0.151)	
PAN	0.627* (0.197)	
PRD	0.374+ (0.204)	
PVEM	-0.278 (0.356)	
Other Minor Party	0.766* (0.292)	
Party Switcher	0.477+ (0.279)	
Alternate	-0.293 (0.373)	
Gender (Female=1)	0.0500 (0.152)	
Leg. Year 2013-14	0.210 (0.140)	0.229+ (0.133)
Leg. Year 2014-15	-0.299* (0.122)	-0.146 (0.135)
Constant	-1.417* (0.181)	
lnalpha	0.879* (0.118)	
Observations	1522	712

Robust standard errors in parentheses clustered by deputy.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$

Figure 2: Predicted Number of Locally-Targeted Propositions for Deputies of Major Parties



All other variables at their median values.

interpretation of these effects of partisanship are intuitive to the extent that opposition partisans are more willing to put pressure on executive agencies under a PRI government to address a local matter and they must also resort to such propositions because they have less access to those agency resources given their role as opposition parties. The effect of a co-partisan governor is also negative and statistically significant, providing some support for the expectation that deputies with co-partisan governors have access to resources that can further their political careers that are independent of their local electoral support. Among the null results, the finding for electoral mandate (SMD vs PR) stands out. This suggests that the local electoral opportunity structure rather than the mode of election is what motivates deputies' responsiveness to the district. Finally, there is also no substantive difference between men and women in the average number of locally-targeted bills they submit.¹⁰

In order to interpret the substantive significance of local electoral opportunities, Figure 2 plots

¹⁰Previous research had found that women submit more (programmatically-oriented) initiatives (Bárcena Juárez 2017) as well as maintain broad portfolios in their policy-making agendas (Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Combined with the null result here regarding a more particularistic behavior, this suggests that female legislators in Mexico engage in programmatic position-taking without being less responsive to local issues.

predicted counts of locally-targeted propositions for deputies facing different electoral prospects for each of the three major parties in the legislature. All other variables are held at their median, meaning these predictions reflect deputies who were elected via single member districts, do not have a co-partisan governor whose term outlasts the deputy's, are not party switchers or alternates, and are male. Substantively, an approaching local election at the end of the legislative year will lead to a .27 increase in the predicted count for PRI deputies, a .51 increase in the predicted count for PAN deputies, and a .4 increase for PRD deputies. These effects are substantively significant in light of the distribution of the number of locally-targeted propositions across the deputy-year observations in the data, with 76.5% having values of zero and 14.7% submitting one for the year.¹¹

As a check of the robustness of the results of the model in column (1), I also include in Table 1 the results of a poisson regression with deputy fixed effects. I opt for this model since the negative binomial with fixed effects produces inconsistent estimates caused by the incidental parameters problem (Cameron and Trivedi 1998, 280-282). The deputy fixed effects control for any time-invariant factors that may influence a deputy's propensity to submit locally-targeted bills. For this reason, the control variables in column (1) drop out. They are factors that only vary between deputies and not within a deputy in the panel data. The results in column (2) demonstrate that the positive relationship between a coming local election and local bill submission is robust to a fixed effects specification.

Local Electoral Opportunities and Party Discipline

To further unpack the effect of career ambitions and electoral opportunities on legislative responsiveness, I also examine their possible influence on legislators' party discipline. So far, I have argued that legislators are more responsive to district interests in the lead up to local elections in an effort to build local electoral support. This explanation is rooted in the notion that deputies are working to cultivate a personal reputation that is independent of their party. An alternative explanation of the mechanism connecting electoral opportunities and responsiveness is one in which loyal partisans engage in behaviors responsive to the district to advance the electoral prospects of the party. To adjudicate between these different explanations, Table 2 summarizes the results of OLS models of a legislator's party unity score (i.e. how often they vote with their party).

¹¹The mean of locally-targeted propositions submitted in a legislative year was .41.

Table 2: Models of Party Unity Voting

	(1)	(2)
	OLS	OLS FE
Coming Local Election=1	-0.356 ⁺ (0.210)	-0.408 ⁺ (0.213)
Mode of Election (PR=1)	1.273* (0.426)	
Co-Partisan Governor	-0.0395 (0.389)	
PAN	-5.640* (0.239)	
PRD	-15.18* (0.776)	
PVEM	0.867 ⁺ (0.465)	
Other Minor Party	-11.14* (1.350)	
Alternate	0.451 (0.906)	
Party Switcher	-4.764* (1.525)	
Gender (Female=1)	-0.394 (0.412)	
Leg. Year 2013-14	-1.474* (0.210)	-1.517* (0.208)
Leg. Year 2014-15	-0.0722 (0.220)	-0.102 (0.222)
Constant	98.09* (0.314)	92.98* (0.145)
R-squared	0.592	0.0466
Number of Deputies		522
Observations	1517	1517

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

⁺ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$

The results in column (1) are broadly consistent with conventional theoretical expectations regarding party unity. PR representatives are more likely to vote the party line. Opposition Deputies (PAN and PRD) are less likely to vote with their parties than deputies from the party in government. Deputies who switch parties during their term are also less likely to vote with their parties. As for the relationship of interest, a coming local election is associated with a decrease in a deputy's propensity to vote the party line, although this coefficient estimate is only marginally statistically significant. While the substantive size of the effect may seem small in comparison to the dependent variable's range of values (42 to 100 in the data), a more appropriate comparison would be the magnitude of other substantively important variables in the model. For example, the effect of a coming local election is roughly a third of the magnitude of the effect of a deputy being elected from the PR tier. The distinction between PR and SMD has received substantial attention in the literature on party unity (Haspel et al. 1998, Thames 2001, Thames 2005, Ferrara 2004, Olivella and Tavits 2014) and is therefore a useful benchmark for the substantive importance of the effect size. Column (2) reports the results of a model including deputy fixed effects. The conclusions of the simple OLS model are robust to controlling for time-invariant factors across deputies.

Taken together, the results summarized in this section provide support for Hypothesis 1. The presence of local electoral opportunities motivates term-limited legislators to be responsive to the concerns of constituents. This is supported by the robust positive relationship between a legislator having a local election in their state at the end of the legislative year and the number of locally-targeted bills they submit in that legislative year. These bills, focused on issues of importance to constituents, are aimed at building local electoral support for the deputy. Furthermore, the analysis of legislator's roll call voting supports Hypothesis 2, which sheds light on the mechanism driving responsiveness. Rather than locally-targeted bill submission being carried out by loyal partisans hoping to improve their party's standing with voters in the district, a coming local election is associated with greater defection from the party line. This evidence is consistent with the notion that deputies are seeking to build their personal reputation rather than support the party brand. Moreover, the combined empirical findings are consistent with comparative research linking strong local ties and individual support bases with maverick voting behavior in the legislature (Tavits 2009).

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that local electoral opportunities play an important role in activating the progressive ambitions of deputies in a way that makes them more responsive to their district's interests. In cases where Mexican deputies face the prospect of a statewide election at the end of the legislative year, they submit more locally-targeted propositions than deputies from states without local elections at the end of the legislative year. This demonstrates that the presence of local electoral opportunities activates the progressive ambition inherent in term-limited representatives. Moreover, local electoral opportunities are also associated with greater defection from the party line in deputies' roll call votes, suggesting the mechanism is one of personal vote cultivation rather than party discipline. This paper also provides a stepping stone for further research on the ways in which local electoral contexts can influence the degree of responsiveness of federal representatives to local matters. Mexico's recent constitutional reform allowing for reelection raises many questions. One possible implication is that the legislative behavior characterized in this paper may be unlinked from the local electoral cycle as deputies as well as senators will be able to seek out the opportunity to stay in the current posts. Adding to legislators' considerations about pursuing static or progressive career moves is the likelihood that they may now have to face an incumbent (either in the general election or the primary), compared to the previous state of affairs where every race was for an open seat. These new dynamics provide ample research opportunities.

This paper has shown that contrary to the conventional wisdom that the ban on reelection severs the link between representative and constituency, there is at least a tenuous connection provided through the progressive ambition of legislators. Local electoral opportunities, which arise at different times for different deputies, motivate legislators to represent local interests in the prospects of future electoral rewards. Also contrary to previous research, parties are not the sole drivers of legislators' political behavior. By examining the case of Mexico, with its ban on immediate reelection, this paper provides insight into the causal effects of local electoral contexts on the district-oriented behaviors of legislators across many of the world's democracies where rates of reelection are low and subnational offices are valuable.

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Table A1: Models of the Number of Locally-Targeted Propositions for Each Legislative Year

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Coming Local Election=1	0.971* (0.173)	1.045+ (0.563)	0.334 (0.238)
Mode of Election (PR=1)	-0.0517 (0.188)	-0.209 (0.260)	0.218 (0.251)
Co-Partisan Governor	-0.448* (0.193)	-0.479+ (0.265)	-0.0102 (0.260)
PAN	0.225 (0.225)	0.625* (0.309)	1.272* (0.318)
PRD	0.223 (0.240)	-0.0337 (0.326)	1.232* (0.312)
PVEM	-0.758+ (0.455)	-0.501 (0.542)	0.797+ (0.482)
Other Minor Party	-0.0861 (0.363)	0.606 (0.432)	1.852* (0.440)
Party Switcher	0.522 (0.407)	0.440 (0.486)	0.417 (0.467)
Alternate	-0.998 (0.670)	0.533 (0.570)	-1.799 (1.104)
Gender (Female=1)	-0.0695 (0.181)	0.0482 (0.241)	0.176 (0.233)
Constant	-1.175* (0.207)	-1.020* (0.256)	-2.299* (0.329)
lnalpha	0.0372 (0.258)	1.192* (0.189)	0.979* (0.196)
Observations	511	505	506
Pseudo R^2	0.049	0.025	0.064

Standard errors in parentheses.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$

Table A2: Descriptive Statistics

	mean	sd	min	max	count
Number of Locally-Targeted Bills	0.41	1.00	0	11	1522
Party Unity Voting	92.30	8.14	42	100	1517
Coming Local Election	0.34	0.47	0	1	1522
Co-Partisan Governor	0.39	0.49	0	1	1522
PAN	0.23	0.42	0	1	1522
PRD	0.20	0.40	0	1	1522
PVEM	0.07	0.25	0	1	1522
Other Minor Party	0.09	0.28	0	1	1522
Alternate	0.04	0.19	0	1	1522
Party Switcher	0.05	0.23	0	1	1522
Gender (Female=1)	0.37	0.48	0	1	1522
Leg. Year 2013-14	0.33	0.47	0	1	1522
Leg. Year 2014-15	0.33	0.47	0	1	1522