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Do Municipal Officials Represent the Views of their Constituents?

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Do Municipal Officials Represent the Views of their Constituents?

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Department of Political Science

Significance:
• Municipalities make decisions that effect millions of Americans every day
• Research has been done to assess the link between citizen’s preferences and municipal policy (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014)
• However, the link between the policies and the officials who make them is missing

Data: American Municipal Officials Survey (AMOS)
• The largest study of elected local officials in the country, more than 3000 observations in even numbered years
• In 2012 AMOS measured officials’ ideology by asking about 28 issues
• I combine the AMOS data with the city preference data (cities with pop. above 50,000) from Warshaw and Tausanovitch (2013)

Correlated Ideologies?
• I compare the preferences of cities to the preferences of officials elected city-wide - these variables are positively correlated
• Republican cities elect Republicans, and Democratic cities elect Democrats. Each have very different policy preferences.

Regression of per Capita Taxes on Citizens’ and Officials’ Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Policy Preferences (ideology)</td>
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<td>Percent of the Population that was black in 2000</td>
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<td>(285.64)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percent of Sales Tax</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Policy preferences of the City</td>
<td>-99.67***</td>
<td>(24.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Does an Officials’ Ideology Predict Policy Outcomes?
• Conservative cities have lower taxes (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014)
• Does the ideology of the city official predict the policies which the city adopts?

Taxes per Capita Coefficient
City Policy Preferences (ideology) -377.90*** (132.31)
Official’s Policy Preferences 28.02 (47.90)
Official is a Republican 34.82 (64.96)
Official is a Democrat 40.23 (64.04)
City Population 80.09 (51.78)
Percent of the Population that was black in 2000 645.81** (285.64)
Percent of Sales Tax 213.30** (104.46)
City is allowed to collect Sales Tax 31.27 (67.45)
Policy preferences of the City -99.67*** (24.07)

Correlated Ideologies?
• I compare the preferences of cities to the preferences of officials elected city-wide - these variables are positively correlated
• Republican cities elect Republicans, and Democratic cities elect Democrats. Each have very different policy preferences.

Ideology and Policy
• The ideology of officials and actual policy are not correlated
• The ideology of the citizens is a much better predictor of city policy
• Knowing the ideological/policy preferences of a city might be more predictive of a mayor’s policy preferences than the mayor’s political party itself