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No Time for Politics: How Campaigning Affects Legislators' Real Work
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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to determine how election cycles affect the quality and quantity of legislators’ work. The results of this research are important as they have implications for the efficacy of our legislature. Such questions are particularly relevant during election cycles, when questions about the work of current candidates are bound to come up.

“Despite a $174,000 salary, members of Congress do the job we elected them to do only ‘part time.’ The rest of the time, they are chasing money for their re-election campaigns.”

-- "Why do congressmen spend only half their time serving us?"
Tim Roemer, Newsweek

Methods and Materials

Data is being collected from records of the Florida House legislature from the years 2001 to 2015. Bills will be analyzed according to year and length of the body of the bill, and will be identified by number and sponsor. Sponsors will be analyzed based on biographical data, including gender, party affiliation, income, and net worth. This information will be tabulated to see if there is a correlation between election years and a lessening of bill quality and quantity.

Projected Results and Current Status

It is expected that legislators’ work will suffer during election years. This is due to the fact that running a campaign consumes a large amount of time and causes more stress in a legislator’s life. It is expected that both quantity and quality of individual legislators’ bills will decline during election years due to a lack of focus and time.

Furthermore, it is projected that this effect will be more pronounced for legislators who are personally less, as those with less personal funds available for campaigning will have to spend more time raising money than those who are independently wealthy.

Currently, information is being collected from the years 2007 through 2015. Casual observations of the data collected thus far appear to support the hypothesis.

Discussion

If there is a strong connection between election cycles and legislation, it has the potential to call into question the efficacy of frequent elections. This study will also offer insight into the effect that the use of personal funds in election campaigns has on legislators’ work, potentially uncovering an unfair advantage in those who have an abundance of wealth gained from work entirely unrelated to their government job.