

# School Spirit: Legislator School Ties and State Funding for Higher Education

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## Abstract

State funding of public colleges and universities has been declining across the nation, generating debate in academia and the popular press about the politics of higher education. We explore a new mechanism to explain state support for universities, leveraging one salient personal experience of state legislators: if and where they attended college. Using novel, hand-collected data from 2002 through 2014, we document – for the first time in the literature – the educational backgrounds of state legislators. We find a statistically significant, positive association between state funding for higher education and the share of legislators who attended their states’ public colleges and universities. This relationship is more pronounced during the six-year period following the Great Recession and among publicly educated legislators who represent the district that contains their alma mater. We discuss the implications of our findings for academic studies on how politics and legislator experience influence support for higher education.

*Keywords:* Higher Education; State Appropriations; State Legislators

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## 1 Introduction

Legislators weigh electoral considerations and their own individual preferences in developing positions on public policy issues (Downs, 1957; Black et al., 1958; Bianco, 1994; Cohen, 1999). Although elections create strong incentives for legislators to respond to the preferences of their constituents (Geer, 1996; Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson, 1995), political scientists and other scholars have also documented how personal experiences can influence political decisions. (Kingdon, 1989; Levitt, 1996; Bianco, 1994). A gap in the extant research exists around which kinds of personal experiences are most salient and how they are weighed alongside traditional political considerations in practice. We aim to address this open question by exploring the relationship between a particular kind of legislator experience, if and where each member attended college, and how the school ties influences the legislature's support for higher education.

State legislators in the United States have historically assumed the primary responsibility for budget policy, including investments in higher education, for their respective states (Hovey, 1999). In recent years, state funding of higher education has declined substantially relative to surges in enrollment and tuition, falling to as little as 10% of total institutional revenues for some states (Ehrenberg, 2006). This decline in funding has draw significant media attention and generated a debate over whether publicly funded higher education is becoming too expensive (Mitchell and Leachman, 2015) and whether legislators are specifically targeting public universities for political reasons (Ehrlich and Fu, 2015).

For political scientists, a key question concerns the determinants of public higher-education funding. In principle, the variation in funding across states may stem from a variety of factors related to economic, demographic, and political conditions (e.g., Archibald and Feldman, 2006; McLendon, Hearn and Mokher, 2009; Okunade, 2004; Rizzo, 2004; Toutkoushian and Hollis, 1998). However, comparatively little work has explored how the personal experiences of state legislators themselves, arguably the key decision makers on

higher-education funding, influence outcomes. Some prior work has documented relationships between the personal experiences of federal legislators and policy choices. For example, Washington (2006) documents that legislators who have daughters are more likely to support progressive policies, particularly related to reproductive rights.

We adopt a related approach by investigating how state legislators' college and university ties influences higher-education policy. We do not claim the decision to attend a particular university is exogenous nor can we definitively ascertain a causal relationship between attending a particular university and supporting higher education. Instead, we first seek to investigate whether a statistical relationship indeed exists between school ties and support for higher education and then present several additional analyses to shed some light on possible mechanisms.

At least three potential mechanisms can explain the proposed relationship between attending a state college and support for increased funding. First, legislators who attended public four-year colleges or universities (hereafter, public institutions) may have an inherent affinity for public goods or were influenced in that direction by their college experience. Second, legislators who attended in-state public institutions might evolve into loyal alumni who support their alma mater in decisions about funding. Third, a legislator's vote on higher-education funding could be based on traditional political factors, such as ideology, partisanship, or campaign contributions that are also correlated with having a college education.

If legislators are motivated by the first rationale, a positive relationship should emerge between funding levels and the share of legislators who attended any public institution, including out-of-state public schools. Conversely, such an association should only be observed for legislators who attended in-state public institutions if they are expressly motivated by loyalty to their alma mater. Our third rationale would imply party affiliations, committee memberships, political ideology, and campaign contributions likely determine legislative voting outcomes. Further, the second and third rationales would imply a positive relationship

should be more pronounced for those legislators representing districts containing their alma mater, which amplifies both alumni loyalty and the political imperative to satisfy their constituents (Black, 1972; Keefer and Khemani, 2005; Cook, 1998; Goodall, 1987; Steinbach, 2014).

Anecdotal accounts demonstrate how school ties might relate to legislators' views on higher education. State Senator Julie Lassa of Wisconsin, a UW-Stevens Point graduate and prominent advocate of increased funding for higher education, argued in 2016 that recent budget cuts to the University of Wisconsin system were "doing long term damage to our universities." Relatedly, the North Carolina General Assembly debated a proposal in 2016 that would lower tuition to \$500 a semester at several UNC campuses. The bill was designed to make public universities more affordable but also drew criticism from those worried about how dramatically lower tuition would affect the quality and prestige of UNC institutions. By the end of a contentious debate, only two schools, including lead sponsor Tom Apodaca's alma mater Western Carolina University (WCU), were subject to the new tuition plan. In discussing the legislation with the *Smoky Mountain News* (2016), WCU Faculty Senate Chair David McCord said, "Apodaca is a champion of our school – maybe he wanted WCU on the list because he saw this as a windfall for the university." McCord expressed a similar sentiment to the *Citizen-Times* (2016), saying, "I trust him...Sen. Apodaca has been very, very helpful to Western. He's a close friend to this university."

Moving beyond selected anecdotes, we systematically examine the links between legislators' school ties and higher-education funding by using a novel dataset that covers 96,010 legislators for the years 2002 through 2014. Our unique data allow us to provide the first statistics in the literature (to our knowledge) on the educational backgrounds of state legislators. We find state funding of higher education is positively associated with an increase in the share of legislators who attended their states' public institutions: a one-standard-deviation increase in the proportion of legislators with ties to their states' public colleges and universities is associated with a 4.8% increase in state funding for higher education,

holding all else constant. In the average state, this percentage represents an additional \$80 million in annual funding. Furthermore, this effect is more pronounced among state senators with in-state college ties and for female representatives. This effect also differs depending on the location of one's alma mater, where we find a much stronger relationship between state funding and publicly educated legislators who represent their alma mater's district. Lastly, we find school ties matter more for poorer, less-populated states, as well as in the years after the Great Recession.

In the next section, we review the relevant literature on the motivations of legislators and state funding for higher education, along with their implications for our study. In Section 3, we present several stylized facts from our data. In Section 4, we discuss our methodology and present our key findings. We conclude in Section 5.

## **2 Conceptual Framework and Implications**

The traditional model of American electoral politics is that elected officials respond to public opinion (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000; Black, 1972). That is, legislators work primarily to garner support from voters, appealing to the median voter to raise their chances of re-election (Downs, 1957; Black et al., 1958; Caselli and Morelli, 2004; Keefer and Khemani, 2005). For example, prior work has documented how public opinion motivated the US Congress to enact more liberal policies in the 1960s, followed by a reversal toward a more conservative course in the early 1980s before rebounding back in the liberal direction in the late 1980s (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson, 1995). Other work has suggested a connection between the provision of public goods and electoral motivations (e.g., Mayhew, 1974; Fiorina, 1977; Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1987).

Aside from traditional political interests, however, legislators' personal beliefs, experiences, and even their children may affect their policy decisions (Kingdon, 1989; Levitt, 1996; Bianco, 1994; Washington, 2006). This channel seems particularly likely when the personal

experience is directly related to the issue at hand. For example, Senator Rob Portman of Ohio reversed his opposition to same-sex marriage in 2013, saying his son's sexual orientation had influenced his view. An experience that could plausibly influence legislators' opinions on higher-education policy is their own educational experience. By attending a particular college, an individual is more likely to identify with the institution (Astin et al., 1993), and the quality of his or her college experience could enhance the level of commitment (Taylor and Martin Jr, 1995; Gaier, 2005; Ade, Wunnava and Walsh Jr, 1994; Clotfelter, 2003). In turn, loyal alumni are more likely to donate generously and provide resources beyond the alma mater's own reach (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; McAlexander and Koenig, 2001). The geographic proximity of state legislators could also matter, because alumni loyalty may be reduced for those residing far from the institutions (Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995; Ridley and Boone, 2001).

Understanding the determinants of higher-education policy is also relevant for current policy debates. Since the 1970s, state funding of higher education has been decreasing. Reflecting a 26% drop since 1975, the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) reports state funding accounted for only 34% of overall federal and state spending in 2010. Similarly, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) lists a 41% drop in state funding per low-income household between 1976 and 2011 (Mortenson, 2012). In 2015, concerns regarding higher-education funding played a prominent role in many policy debates, as Republican governors in Arizona, Illinois, Louisiana, and Wisconsin, along with Democratic governors in Connecticut and West Virginia, proposed large funding cuts to higher education (Mortenson, 2015). Average state funding, which fell to as little as 10% of total institutional revenues for some states (Ehrenberg, 2006), has also necessitated large increases in tuition, with the national average tuition at four-year institutions rising by more than 36% since 2004. In most states, tuition consumes more than 15% of the state median household income, whereas it takes up less than 10% of the median household income in only five states (Hiltonsmith and Draut, 2014).

To date, the literature on higher-education financing has primarily focused on aggregate determinants at the state level, including political-system characteristics, economic and demographic conditions, and higher-education policies (e.g., Archibald and Feldman, 2006; McLendon, Hearn and Mokher, 2009; Okunade, 2004; Rizzo, 2004; Toutkoushian and Hollis, 1998). More recent work on political ideology has delved into the relationship between higher-education funding and partisan control of the legislature, whereas other studies have found the Democratic and Republican parties hold polarized preferences around taxation and spending on public services such as education and healthcare (Alt and Lowry, 2000; Barrilleaux, Holbrook and Langer, 2002). Empirical research suggests the Democratic party control of the legislature may favorably influence higher-education funding (Archibald and Feldman, 2006; McLendon, Hearn and Mokher, 2009). Similarly, some argue female politicians are more supportive of issues related to poverty, education, health, and feminist positions (e.g., Sapiro, 1983; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988; Carroll, 1994; Saint-German, 1989), though empirical studies on higher-education funding have not yet rigorously examined the effect of gender.

Gubernatorial power represents another important source of political influence, which varies considerably across states. For instance, a select group of states afford their governors significant power via broader appointment privileges, line-item vetoes, and no term limits<sup>1</sup> (Dometrius, 1987; Beyle, 2003). Lastly, state governments have different political ideologies along the liberal-conservative continuum (Berry et al., 1998); for example, states with more liberal politicians may have a greater affinity for supporting public services and providing more funding for public education.

Many economic and demographic conditions likely shape higher-education funding (McLendon, Hearn and Mokher, 2009; Okunade, 2004). Given that each state's funding is constrained by its available resources, funding should be positively associated with gross

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<sup>1</sup>Twelve states have no gubernatorial term limits: Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

state product (GSP) and tax revenue from the previous year. Conversely, higher unemployment rates should lead to lower funding as state governments anticipate weaker economies in subsequent years (Strathman, 1994). Likewise, factors such as enrollment and tuition influence funding. The enrollment share of out-of-state students should be negatively related to funding, because public institutions have been aggressively recruiting non-resident students in order to compensate for funding cuts. A recent study reported that a 10% drop in state funding was associated with a 2.7% increase in out-of-state enrollment for public institutions between 2002 and 2013 (Jaquette and Curs, 2015).

Notwithstanding a growing body of literature evaluating the determinants of higher-education funding, previous work has not considered how legislators' individual experiences shape funding decisions. In this paper, we explore whether one type of personal experience, the school ties of state legislators, is associated with the funding of higher education.

### 3 Data and Stylized Facts

For our study, we assembled a novel dataset from multiple secondary sources on each state's economic, demographic, educational, and political environment for the period 2002 through 2014 (see Table 1). Economic and demographic variables include population estimates, unemployment rates, GSP, and tax revenue from the previous year. Financial variables such as GSP and tax revenue are adjusted to 2014 constant dollars by cost of living and inflation. Education variables consist of full-time enrollment (FTE) and total tuition at public institutions and bachelor's degree attainment rate aggregated at the state level.

[Table 1 about here]

For our main variable of interest, we categorize the educational background data of each legislator and governor into one of seven mutually exclusive types of institutions: *in-state public*, *in-state private*, *in-state community*, *out-of-state public*, *out-of-state private*,

*out-of-state community*, and *no college education*. Our primary data source for this variable is Vote Smart, which is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that collects information on candidates for public office across six areas: background, voting records, campaign finances, issue positions, interest group ratings, and public statements (VoteSmart, 2016). Although Vote Smart is the only source that consolidates and licenses biographical data of state legislators, our manual data cleaning uncovered inaccurate entries for more than 25% of sampled legislators and missing data for approximately 13%. As a result, we cross-checked the Vote Smart dataset by searching each legislator online to validate and/or update his or her educational background using sources such as Ballotpedia (a non-partisan, non-profit political encyclopedia), LinkedIn, and state government and personal campaign websites. We also used the State Legislative Election Returns dataset to obtain the most accurate list of elected legislators for each year (ICPSR studies 3938, 8907 and 21480; Klarner et al., 2015).

State funding for higher education occurs through a multi-stage process. The appropriations bill for a given state, which is a legislative motion that authorizes state spending such as funding for higher education, is customarily introduced by the legislature subsequent to the governor’s budget proposal. Although in some states each chamber drafts its own version of the appropriations bill, most states give this responsibility solely to the lower house based on the idea that spending proposals should originate from those closest to the voters in terms of the number of representatives and election frequency (The Councils of State Governments, 2002; Hutchison and James, 1988).<sup>2</sup> The bill is then amended and voted on by each chamber, with a conference committee resolving any differences between the two. Finally, the governor may sign, sign with a line-item veto, or veto the entire bill; however, the extent of gubernatorial power and the specific budgeting process differ considerably across states

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<sup>2</sup>All US state governments are modeled after the federal government with three branches — executive, legislative, and judicial — serving as a system of checks and balances (Squire and Hamm, 2005). All but one state, Nebraska, have a bicameral legislature made up of two chambers: a smaller upper house (i.e., the Senate) and a larger lower house with relatively shorter terms (i.e., the House of Representatives, the Assembly, or the House of Delegates).

(Dometrius, 1987; Hutchison and James, 1988; Squire and Hamm, 2005).

Although we examined individual legislative votes, most voting records on amendments leading up to a state’s final appropriations bill are not available. For example, North Carolina’s Appropriations Act of 2007 (House Bill 1473) was introduced in early March. This bill was amended later in the month to include two bills that would increase funding for the North Carolina Research Campus (NCRC) in Kannapolis (S1050 and H1375) and revised once again to include funding for the University of North Carolina expansion (S1069), but no electronic records of legislative votes on these amendments exist. Another challenge in studying voting outcomes is the prevalence of partisan voting (Bartels, 2000). Between 2009 and 2011 in North Carolina, for instance, both the Senate and the House reflected party-line votes on the Appropriations Bill: 27 Ayes (all Republicans) and 18 Noes (all Democrats) in the Senate; 65 Ayes (all Republicans) and 52 Noes (all Democrats) in the House for 2009. Likewise for 2011: 31 Ayes (all Republicans) and 19 Noes (all Democrats) in the Senate; 72 Ayes (four Democrats) and 47 Noes (all Democrats) in the House. Such stability in voting patterns over time has been widely documented (e.g., Bender and Lott Jr, 1996; Bronars and Lott Jr, 1997; Peltzman, 1985).

Our final sample contains 96,010 legislators across all 50 states for the years 2002 through 2014. From this sample, we document several notable descriptive statistics on the educational backgrounds of legislators — these data represent an important contribution of our work in and of themselves because they have not been previously documented in the literature (to our knowledge). We find the average four-year college-degree-attainment rate is 87.3% for state senators and 81.6% for state representatives.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, 7.9% of senators and 12.7% of representatives did not receive any postsecondary education. The New Hampshire legislature has the highest average share of legislators without postsecondary education

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<sup>3</sup>All percentages in this section are not weighted. The total number of seats in each state’s legislature (i.e., number of senators and number of representatives combined) is used as the denominator. In the next section, *Results*, variables using weighted means are italicized (e.g., *in-state public*).

at 39%, followed by Arkansas (37%), South Dakota (33%), Montana (26%), Maine (25%), Kansas (24%), and New Mexico (18%).<sup>4</sup> The members in the House of Representatives drive New Hampshire’s high rate. With 400 seats, the largest lower chamber of all US state legislatures, only 57% of New Hampshire state representatives received a college education from four-year institutions, and 64% of all school ties were to out-of-state institutions (or 13.7% out-of-state public and 23.5% out-of-state private). By contrast, in South Dakota, 79% of college-educated legislators attended in-state institutions, 74% of which were public institutions (or 43.3% in-state public and 9.2% in-state private).

We obtained the dependent variable for our analysis — *state funding per capita* — from SHEEO Grapevine at the Center for the Study of Education Policy and Illinois State University (SHEEO, 2014). Funding reflects all tax funds appropriated for higher-education annual operating expenses within each state, which covers any public institution, including public two-year colleges and community colleges. We normalized our dependent variable by the state’s population for cross-state comparisons. By expressing state funding in terms of population, the variable represents each state’s effort in funding higher education relative to the population base it supports. State funding per capita and tuition are adjusted to constant 2014 dollars by cost of living, inflation, and enrollment mix. The enrollment-mix index reflects interstate differences in higher-education accessibility, accounting for the number of public institutions and the cost per FTE. Political variables include the share of Republican and female legislators, the presence of a Republican governor, and whether the governor attended an in-state public institution.

Our main independent variable — *in-state public* — represents the weighted mean percentage of state senators and representatives who attended in-state public four-year insti-

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<sup>4</sup>States with a high average rate of no postsecondary education in the Senate: SD at 26%, AR at 24%, IA at 22%, MT at 19%, ME at 17%, NH at 16%.

States with a high average rate of no postsecondary education in the House of Representatives: NH at 40%, SD at 36%, KS at 28%, MT at 28%, ME at 27%, VT at 27%, NM at 24%, AZ at 19%, DE at 18%, CO at 17%, KY at 16%.

tutions, where we used the number of legislative seats for the weights. For example, the Colorado General Assembly (Colorado state legislature) is composed of 100 seats in total, with 35 members for the Senate and 65 for the House. In 2010, 51% of senators (18 out of 35) and 48% of representatives (31 out of 65) had school ties to four-year public institutions in Colorado. The weighted mean accounting for the number of seats is then calculated as  $48\% \cdot (35/100) + 51\% \cdot (65/100) = 50\%$ . As opposed to an aggregate percentage across both chambers, a weighted mean percentage more accurately captures differences in institutional powers. Senators hold superior voting power, because the size of the lower chamber is, on average, roughly three times larger than that of the upper (i.e., mean of 39 senators vs. mean of 108 representatives).<sup>5</sup>

A broader measure of our main independent variable — *in-state public or community* — similarly represents the weighted mean percentage of state legislators who attended in-state public or community colleges. We include either public four-year or community colleges because state appropriations for higher education also extends to two-year institutions. We also split our main independent variable by chamber — *in-state public lower house (LH)* and *in-state public upper house (UH)* — to disentangle the effect of voting power. Some of our analyses exclude Nebraska because of its unique unicameral, nonpartisan legislature (Huber, Shipan and Pfahler, 2001).

Descriptive statistics of variables are presented in Table 2, and Table 3 provides the correlation matrix. We find strong correlations between *state funding per capita* and *in-state public* (0.30,  $p < 0.001$ ), *in-state community* (0.20,  $p < 0.001$ ), and *in-state public or community* (0.34,  $p < 0.001$ ). By contrast, *any out-of-state* is negatively correlated with state funding ( $-0.16, p < 0.001$ ).

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<sup>5</sup>All our results are robust to alternative specifications of the main independent variable, including equal weights between the two chambers (e.g.,  $in\text{-}state\ public = 0.5*[in\text{-}state\ public\ UH] + 0.5*[in\text{-}state\ public\ LH]$ ) and no distinction by chamber (e.g.,  $in\text{-}state\ public = [share\ of\ legislators\ who\ attended\ in\text{-}state\ public\ institutions] / [total\ number\ of\ legislators]$ ).

[Table 2 and Table 3 about here]

Overall, legislative school ties to in-state institutions, including both public and private, are relatively higher in the Midwest (77.4%) and South (74.8%) than in the West (59.3%) and Northeast (58.8%). The share of legislators who attended two-year community colleges, either in-state or out-of-state (and without any record of having attended a four-year institution), is similar across the four regions, with an average of 4.3%, 4.1%, 3.6%, and 2.5% in the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast, respectively. Interstate mobility for legislators who attended community colleges is very low. Of all community college ties, 84.7%, 88.4%, 89.8%, and 79.3% were in-state ties for each region, respectively.

For legislators who attended out-of-state institutions, the three regions other than the Northeast reflect a near 50/50 divide between public and private. Of all ties to out-of-state institutions, 53.1% were public institutions in the West, 48.2% in the Midwest, and 51.5% in the South. In the Northeast, however, 70.8% of all out-of-state ties were private institutions, whereas only 29.2% were public. The divergence in the Northeast could stem from both the clustering of states in the region and the preponderance of private colleges.

States with larger populations tend to have more legislators with ties to in-state public institutions, as the top 10 most populated states average 44.6% compared to an average of 36.1% within the 10 least populated states. Ties to in-state private institutions for the top 10 most populated states likewise are much higher relative to the 10 least populated (22.3% and 8.8%, respectively). However, this pattern flips for ties to out-of-state institutions, where the 10 least populated states have higher shares of legislators who attended either out-of-state public (15.0% vs. 9.8% for the 10 most populated) or out-of-state private (18.1% vs. 12.4% for the 10 most populated).

Because prior work has found that female politicians may be more predisposed to supporting public services (Sapiro, 1983; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988), we measure the share of female legislators across the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast, where the average is

27.7%, 22.6%, 18.4%, and 25.7%, respectively. The relatively higher share of female legislators in the West is more evident for liberal states such as Colorado (36.7%), Washington (33.2%), Hawaii (30.7%), and California (28.5%). By contrast, several conservative states in the South rank among the lowest in female legislative representation: South Carolina (10.2%), Alabama (11.8%), Mississippi (14.1%), Louisiana (14.9%), and Tennessee (17.5%). We also classify states based on the outcomes of past presidential elections, where conservative states are defined as those carried by the Republican in each of the past four presidential elections (2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012), and vice versa for liberal states. We have 22 conservative states and 18 liberal states based on this classification,<sup>6</sup> and the liberal states elected more female legislators compared to conservative states, averaging 26.6% against 17.3%.

We find no difference in educational backgrounds across genders. School ties to four-year institutions average 89.8% for female senators, 88.7% for male senators, 83.4% for female representatives, and 83.3% for male representatives. More than 90% of female legislators received postsecondary education in 19 states. Utah, on average, elected 20 female legislators (of 104 seats), and all attended four-year institutions. Alabama ranks second with 17 female legislators (of 140 seats) whose postsecondary education-attainment rates average 97.7%, followed by Kentucky's 20 female legislators (of 138 seats) at 97.0%, Massachusetts's 50 female legislators (of 200 seats) at 96.3%, Arkansas's 13 female legislators (of 135 seats) at 95.4%, and Indiana's 29 female legislators (of 150 seats) at 95.2%. The lowest-ranking state, South Dakota, has an average rate of 60.5% among its 19 female legislators (of 105 seats).

Of all female legislators, 42.2% had school ties to in-state public institutions, 13.6% had ties to in-state private, 14.1% to out-of-state public, and 15.1% to out-of-state private. The higher average for in-state public institutions is driven by six states in the Midwest that rank among the top 10: North Dakota (69.2%), Indiana (68.2%), Ohio (64.2%), Michigan

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<sup>6</sup>Conservative states are AK, AL, AR, AZ, GA, ID, KS, KY, LA, MO, MS, MT, ND, NE, OK, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, WV, and WY.

Liberal states are CA, CT, DE, HI, IL, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, NJ, NY, OR, PA, RI, VT, WA, and WI.

(62.3%), Wisconsin (60.0%), and Nebraska (57.2%). As before, female legislators' school ties to out-of-state private institutions are relatively higher in the Northeast, with Vermont leading at 38.0%, followed by Connecticut at 35.3%, New Jersey at 34.7%, Rhode Island at 29.7%, New Hampshire at 23.7%, and Massachusetts at 21.8%.

The share of Republican legislators, as expected, is higher in conservative states, at 54.9%, relative to liberal states' 38.5%. Of the seven states where the average share of Republicans exceeds 70%, only one state, New Hampshire, is categorized as liberal.<sup>7</sup> We find no meaningful differences in education across parties: 83.9% of Republican legislators attended four-year institutions compared to 86.1% of Democrats with analogous school ties. Broken down by chamber, we find 88.5% for Republican senators and 90.5% for Democrat senators, compared to 82.5% and 84.7% for Republican and Democrat representatives, respectively. The two parties have statistically identical shares of legislators with school ties to in-state institutions at 58.1%.

We check whether our proposed main effect is more pronounced with legislators representing their alma maters' districts, and account for all legislative redistricting, because district lines changed significantly for 40 states following the US Census 2010.<sup>8</sup> Legislative districts changed for 37% of the public institutions in our sample. On average, 11.1% of state legislators who attended in-state public institutions (or 5.0% of all legislators) also represent their alma mater's legislative district, which is captured by our independent variable *in-district public*. More than 10% of legislators represented their alma mater in seven states: 18% in West Virginia, 14% in Wisconsin, 11% in Louisiana, and 10% in Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio and Texas.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, such representation is less than 1.5% in 14 states: Alaska,

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<sup>7</sup>Seven states with the highest share of Republican legislators: ID at 79.5%, IN at 70.7%, KS at 74.8%, ND at 72.6%, NH at 72.6%, OK at 72.5%, SD at 73.4%, TN at 72.7%, UT at 74.8%, and WY at 76.9%.

<sup>8</sup>New Hampshire only redistricted for its Senate districts. Ten states without redistricting are AK, CA, FL, HI, KY MD, ME, MN, MT, and TX.

<sup>9</sup>To examine 11% in Louisiana as an example: 11% is a weighted mean between the Senate (12.0%, 39 seats) and the House (6.7%, 105 seats). The Senate's 12.0% is driven

Delaware, Iowa, Idaho, Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Wyoming.

The preceding descriptive analysis shows regional patterns in legislative school ties that resemble those in the accessibility of higher education, such as the number of institutions, acceptance rates, and interstate mobility. We also observe similar trends in school ties by gender and by party affiliation across the four regions in the United States. Many of our statistics are the first of their kind in the literature, providing background information on the politicians responsible for funding our nation’s colleges and universities. In the following section, we consider the relationship between legislators’ school ties and state funding with regressions that control for differences in states’ economic, demographic, political, and educational environments.

## 4 Results

To test the relationship between the school ties and funding, we regress state funding per capita for state  $i$  in year  $t$  on the share of legislators with in-state college ties.<sup>10</sup> For our main specification, we employ fixed-effects regression models in which the unit of observation is a state-year. The year fixed effect controls for unobserved characteristics that affect all

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by the max of 15.4%, which covers four years starting in 2008. Thirty-two senators, out of 39, attended a Louisiana public college in 2008. Six of them represented their alma mater:  $6/39 = 15.4\%$ . Sen. Lydia Jackson attended LSU-Shreveport and represented Shreveport, Sen. Gerald Long attended Northwestern State and represented Natchitoches, Sen. Dan Morrish attended McNeese State and represented Lake Charles, and so on.

<sup>10</sup>An alternative specification is to regress state-level per-capita funding on seven mutually exclusive school ties: *in-state public*, *in-state private*, *in-state community*, *out-of-state public*, *out-of-state private*, *out-of-state community*, and *no college education*. Saturating the specification with seven categories introduces considerable multicollinearity (because shares naturally sum to one), pushing up our standard errors. As a result, none of the individual coefficients is statistically significant when simultaneously tested with state and year fixed effects, although they are jointly significant and signs are in the expected direction with positive coefficients for *in-state public* and negative for *out-of-state public* (see Appendix A). We therefore focus our analysis on the coarser category of in-state higher education, rather than the finer categorization.

states uniformly within a given year (e.g., economic conditions in the US), whereas the state fixed effect controls for unobserved state characteristics that affect funding conditions consistently over time (e.g., state-specific budgeting process or a time-invariant proclivity for higher education). Note this specification is particularly conservative, because including a set of state and year fixed effects means our main parameter of interest is identified solely by variation in the educational experiences of legislators within a state over time, and any fixed unobserved confounds — such as a state’s voters’ persistent preference for public goods — are differenced out.

For our main result, state funding per capita is regressed on our main independent variable, *in-state public* (see Table 4). In addition to year and state fixed effects, our specification controls for the share of Republicans, the share of female legislators, the governor’s characteristics, GSP, tax revenue, bachelor’s attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE:

$$StateFundingPerCapita_{it} = \alpha + \beta(InStateCollegeTies)_{it} + \gamma(Controls)_{it} + \epsilon_{it}, \quad (1)$$

An important assumption in the fixed-effects specification is that no correlation exists between the time-varying component in the error term and the independent variables. Though our main results are less pronounced when employing state fixed effects, they are necessary to obtain unbiased estimates, because our Lagrange multiplier test of random effects shows a strong correlation among residuals within each state (Breusch and Pagan, 1980). Because both random and fixed-effects specifications are significant, we also conducted a Hausman test of strict exogeneity to confirm a fixed-effects specification remains unbiased and consistent (Hausman, 1978). Finally, we cluster our standard errors by state to account for the correlation among variables within a state over time (Hoechle et al., 2007).

Given the endogeneity of legislators’ college choice, an ideal experiment for testing our

conceptual framework would be to randomly assign school ties to our sample of legislators. Because this approach is clearly not feasible, we test the robustness of our specifications through a combination of various sample restrictions and alternative specifications. Based on the assumption that unobserved but fixed factors influence voters' choices of state legislators, our fixed-effects specification recovers plausibly causal estimates of the impact of legislators' school ties on state funding for higher education; that is, *within*-state variation in the education of elected legislators over time is likely exogenous. To the extent that this assumption does not hold — perhaps voters have an unobservable shift in tastes that favors funding for higher education, which they believe will be facilitated by electing legislators with ties to in-state public universities — our regressions will recover merely an association between school ties and funding, although the ultimate conclusions will remain the same: states that have more legislators with in-state school ties provide more funding for their public colleges and universities. We are careful to describe our results as associations rather than causal effects in the discussion below.

We present our main results in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 shows results for *in-state public*, and results for testing the alma mater district representation, *in-district public*, are shown in Table 5. In Specification 1 of Table 4, we regress state funding per capita on the main variable of interest, *in-state public*, without fixed effects or controls. We find a positive and statistically significant relationship between school ties and funding. Adding a year fixed effect in Specification 2 reduces the impact of school ties by nearly a third, reflecting the influence of nationwide economic conditions on state funding for education. In Specification 5, we include a series of controls described above; their inclusion scarcely affects our estimates. In Specification 6, we include our main controls along with state and year fixed effects and our results remain robust. Here, a one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public* is associated with a 4.8%, or \$13.19, increase in state funding per capita. Note we cannot reject that the coefficient on *in-state public* is the same as in Specification 5 without state fixed effects, suggesting selection bias is not a prominent concern.

[Table 4 and Table 5 about here]

We replicate Specifications 1 and 2 in Specifications 3 and 4, respectively, by legislative chamber *in-state public UH* and *in-state public LH*, and our results are largely consistent. In Specification 7, we add our series of controls to Specification 4, with results again remaining mostly unchanged. In Specification 8, our most restrictive specification that includes state fixed effects, the relationship is more pronounced among state senators who attended in-state public institutions (i.e., the upper legislative chamber or *in-state public UH*). For state senators, a one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public UH* is associated with a 3.9% or \$10.61 increase. Considering the average senate size of 39 members and a population of about 6.1 million, our results imply that an addition of one state senator who attended an in-state four-year public institution (from a mean of 19 senators per state) is associated with a \$22.5 million increase in state funding. As expected, a greater share of female legislators is associated with higher funding; however, the coefficient is only significant in the lower chamber. A one-standard-deviation increase in *female LH* is associated with a 3.7% increase in state funding per capita. Put differently, an addition of one female representative from the average female representation of 24% in the House is associated with a state funding increase of \$32.8 million.

We find similar results for *in-state public or community*, a broader measure of *in-state public*, where funding is positively linked to the weighted mean share of legislators who attended in-state public or community colleges (see Appendix D). In addition, our results indicate a statistically significant negative relationship between funding and legislators who attended out-of-state public institutions (see Appendix A).

We find consistent evidence that the positive effect on state funding is much more pronounced in poorer, less populated states (see Appendix B and C). Although this effect loses statistical significance among the 25 states that rank relatively higher in either population or GSP, the 25 low-ranking states have a much stronger relationship between funding and leg-

islaters who attended in-state public institutions. Specification 6 of Appendix B shows this positive effect is more than doubled for the 25 states that rank low in population ( $F = 4.14$ ,  $p = 0.042$ , for top 1-25 vs. bottom 26-50). For these states, a one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public* is associated with a 9.6%, or \$26.29, increase in state funding per capita, compared to the 4.8% increase for all 50 states from Specification 6 of Table 4 ( $F = 9.83$ ,  $p = 0.0017$ ). This difference translates to a funding increase of \$51.9 million given the average population of 2.0 million in these 25 states. Similarly, for the 25 states with relatively lower GSP, a one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public* is associated with a 10.8%, or \$60.8 million, increase in state funding ( $F = 4.99$ ,  $p = 0.025$ , for top 1-25 vs. bottom 26-50). For these states with low GSP, as shown in Specification 8 of Appendix C, electing one additional senator who attended an in-state public institution is associated with an increase of 8.8%, or \$24.08 per capita, rather than a 3.9%, or \$10.61 per capita, gain suggested by the 49 states from Specification 8 of Table 4 ( $F = 8.37$ ,  $p = 0.0038$ ). Among the 23 states that rank at the bottom 26-50 in both population and GSP,<sup>11</sup> where the positive effect is most prominent, state funding per capita dropped by 7% between 2002 and 2014 (from \$309 to \$288 on average) compared to a 22% drop (from \$276 to \$214 on average) experienced by the 23 states that rank in the top 1-25 for both. For the bottom ranking states, the positive relationship with higher funding is most pronounced for state senators with school ties to in-state public institutions; however, the positive effect is dampened for female representatives.

[Table 6 about here]

We also check whether the positive effect on state funding for higher education changes

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<sup>11</sup>Top 25 in both population and GSP (23): AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, IL, IN, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, TN, TX, VA, WA, WI.

Bottom 25 in both population and GSP (23): AK, AR, DE, HI, IA, ID, KS, KY, ME, MS, MT, ND, NE, NH, NM, NV, OK, RI, SD, UT, VT, WV, WY.

Bottom 25 in population and top 25 in GSP (2): CT, OR.

Top 25 in population and bottom 25 in GSP (2): AL, SC

after the Great Recession (i.e., financial crisis of 2007–2008 and subprime mortgage crisis of 2007–2009), as the average state funding per capita has declined by \$42.10 after the Great Recession (2009–2014), compared to an increase of \$14.15 reflected during the preceding six years (2003–2008). Specification 6 of Table 6 shows the effect is much stronger from 2009 through 2014, where a one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public* is associated with a 6.2% rise in state funding per capita, relative to a 1.8% gain indicated between 2002 through 2008 in Specification 2 of Table 6 (coefficient of 121.7,  $p = 0.005$  vs. 35.39,  $p = 0.56$ ;  $F = 1.49$ ,  $p = 0.22$ ). Likewise, electing one more senator with ties to an in-state public institution leads to an increase of 5.7% or \$5.46 per capita, relative to 1.6% or \$1.55 in the earlier period (see Specifications 8 and 4 of Table 6;  $F = 1.65$ ,  $p = 0.20$ ).

Finally, to test whether the main effect is more pronounced among legislators who represent their alma mater’s district, state funding per capita is regressed on *in-district public* and *not-in-district public* (*Note: in-district public + not-in-district public = in-state public*). As Table 5 shows, the main effect is indeed greater for legislators who represented their alma mater’s legislative district. Despite the diminished effect size, the remaining legislators who attended in-state public institutions yet did not represent their alma mater are still significantly associated with higher funding (i.e., *not-in-district public*). Specification 8 of Table 5 suggests an addition of one publicly-educated senator who also represents his or her alma mater is associated with an estimated \$375.9 million increase in state funding of higher education, compared to an increase of \$21.6 million by adding an identical senator without the alma mater representation (or gain of \$62.00 vs. \$3.57 per capita). The coefficients of the two, *in-district public UH* and *not-in-district public UH*, are statistically different only for bottom-ranking states with weak significance (e.g.,  $F = 3.66$ ,  $p = 0.068$ , for 25 states low in GSP). Contrary to expectations, Specification 8 of Table 5 also shows a negatively significant coefficient on *in-district public LH*. Although the underlying mechanism responsible for this negative effect is unclear, the significance seems to be driven by states with relatively lower estimates of both population and GSP.

## 5 Discussion

The role of public funding in higher education has been a contentious issue in the United States as recent fiscal conditions have compelled public institutions to pursue alternative sources of revenue. However, some experts argue that continued public funding at higher levels is essential given the limitations of revenue diversification, including reduced recoverability on student loans (Johnstone, 2002). In examining the factors that drive a state's commitment to higher-education funding, our analysis confirms and reinforces the importance of economic, demographic, political, and policy conditions as primary determinants of higher-education funding. Notably, our study also highlights that the personal experiences of state legislators, specifically educational background, are associated with funding outcomes.

We provide empirical evidence that state legislators' school ties are positively related to higher-education funding. Specifically, our results show a statistically significant, positive association between funding and the share of legislators who attended in-state public institutions. We also find such positive relationships are even stronger for legislators with school ties who also represent their alma mater's district. This finding accords with the notion that alumni will have strong ties to their alma mater and are more likely to provide personal support (e.g., Mael and Ashforth, 1992; McAlexander and Koenig, 2001; Taylor and Martin Jr, 1995; Gaier, 2005; Ade, Wunnava and Walsh Jr, 1994; Clotfelter, 2003). Our results also confirm that female politicians are more predisposed to support public services, because an increase in the share of female representatives is significantly associated with higher funding across all of our specifications.

Consistent with the expectation that states reflect divergent political views on the liberal-conservative continuum (Berry et al., 1998), we also find our main effect differs based on state ideology, where the positive link between funding and the share of legislators who attended in-state public institutions is more pronounced in liberal states. Similarly, we find our main effect to be stronger in states with relatively smaller populations and GSP, and

during the six-year period following the Great Recession.

Our study has important limitations. We do not distinguish between the different kinds of social experiences legislators might have had in college (e.g., membership in a fraternity or on a sports team), whether the legislator benefited financially through scholarships, or whether the legislator maintains on-going ties with public institutions. Further, we do not consider the full scope of political factors that might influence funding; instead, we show our results are robust to a number of alternative specifications. In future research, scholars could collect legislator-level data on committee membership and campaign contributions in order to more precisely account for the effect of other kinds of political interests on the link between alumni legislators and state funding. Importantly, however, a key implication from our work is that future studies on higher-education funding ought to not only include a comprehensive list of political variables, but also carefully account for individual legislator's personal experiences.

Table 1: Variable Description

Variable	Description	Year	Source
Any Institution	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended any higher-education institution*	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Any In-State	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended any in-state institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
In-State Public	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended in-state public institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
In-State Private	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended in-state private institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
In-State Community	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended in-state community institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
In-District Public	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended in-state public institution in their representative districts ( <i>Note: In-District + Not-In-District = In-State</i> )	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Not-In-District Public	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended in-state public institution outside of their representative districts	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Any Out-of-State	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended any out-of-state institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Out-of-State Public	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended out-of-state public institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Out-of-State Private	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended out-of-state private institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Out-of-State Community	Weighted mean percentage of legislators who attended out-of-state community institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Republican	Weighted mean percentage of Republican legislators	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Female	Weighted mean percentage of female legislators	2002-2014	Vote Smart, (Klarner et al., 2015)
Governor Public	Binary variable indicating whether the governor attended in-state public or community institution	2002-2014	Vote Smart
Governor Republican	Binary variable indicating whether the governor is a Republican	2002-2014	Vote Smart
State Funding per Capita	State funding for higher education normalized by state population, in 2014 constant dollars (adjusted with cost of living, inflation, and cost of enrollment)	2002-2014	SHEEO Grapevine
Tuition	Net tuition for public institutions by state, in 2014 constant dollars (adjusted with cost of living, inflation, and cost of enrollment)	2002-2014	SHEEO Grapevine
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) estimates for public or community institutions by state	2002-2014	SHEEO Grapevine
Tax Revenue	Total tax revenue from the previous year by state, in 2014 constant dollars (adjusted with cost of living and inflation)	2002-2014	US BEA
State GSP	Gross state product from the previous year. In 2014 constant dollars (adjusted with cost of living and inflation)	2002-2014	US BEA
Bachelor's Attainment Rate	Bachelor's degree (4-year) attainment rate from the previous year by state	2002-2014	US Census
Unemployment Rate	Unemployment rate from the previous year by state	2002-2014	US Census

\*any 4-year colleges and universities in the US

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Any Institution	650	0.88	0.09	0.50	0.98
Any In-State	650	0.62	0.15	0.18	0.90
In-State Public	650	0.45	0.14	0.21	0.80
In-State Private	650	0.15	0.11	0.00	0.50
In-State Community	650	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.13
In-District Public	650	0.05	0.04	0.00	0.22
Not-In-District Public	650	0.40	0.12	0.14	0.72
Any Out-of-State	650	0.27	0.12	0.06	0.60
Out-of-State Public	650	0.13	0.08	0.01	0.44
Out-of-State Private	650	0.14	0.09	0.02	0.47
Out-of-State Community	650	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.04
Republican*	637	0.50	0.17	0.07	0.90
Female	650	0.22	0.08	0.04	0.53
Governor Public	650	0.38	0.49	0.00	1.00
Governor Republican	650	0.53	0.50	0.00	1.00
State Funding	650	\$1.59 B	\$1.92 B	\$0.07 B	\$12.34 B
Population	650	6.06 M	6.69 M	0.50 M	38.80 M
State Funding per Capita	650	\$274.76	\$104.75	\$58.45	\$807.03
Tuition	650	\$0.96 B	\$0.91 B	\$0.05 B	\$5.09 B
FTE	650	0.21 M	0.24 M	0.02 M	1.62 M
Tax Revenue	650	\$15.24 B	\$17.89 B	\$1.16 B	\$122.19 B
State GSP	650	\$303.32 B	\$356.58 B	\$23.13 B	\$2,030.27 B
Bachelor's Attainment Rate	650	0.27	0.05	0.15	0.41
Unemployment Rate	650	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.15

\*Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	1.00																			
2	0.61***	1.00																		
3	0.20***	0.66***	1.00																	
4	0.31***	0.36***	-0.35***	1.00																
5	0.24***	0.07	-0.03	-0.16***	1.00															
6	-0.01	-0.80***	-0.68***	-0.22***	0.09*	1.00														
7	0.01	-0.54***	-0.39***	-0.37***	0.10**	0.69***	1.00													
8	-0.08	-0.64***	-0.67***	-0.00	-0.01	0.74***	0.16***	1.00												
9	-0.32***	-0.28***	-0.08	-0.25***	-0.02	0.11**	0.04	0.09*	1.00											
10	-0.09*	0.13	0.31***	-0.15***	-0.07	-0.23***	-0.12**	-0.24***	0.02	1.00										
11	0.10**	0.14***	0.14***	-0.01	-0.05	-0.10**	-0.03	-0.14***	0.02	0.05	1.00									
12	-0.05	0.00	0.09*	-0.20**	0.15	-0.04	0.21***	-0.20***	0.08*	0.11**	0.17***	1.00								
13	-0.20***	-0.55***	-0.47***	-0.09*	0.06	0.54***	0.19***	0.55***	0.08*	-0.17***	-0.17***	-0.21***	1.00							
14	0.07	0.17***	0.30***	-0.33***	0.20	-0.16**	0.14***	-0.30***	0.06	0.09*	0.07	0.10*	-0.35***	1.00						
15	0.37***	0.41***	0.07	0.36**	0.15***	-0.24***	-0.19***	-0.10*	-0.21***	-0.01	0.03	0.09*	-0.08*	-0.25***	1.00					
16	0.35***	0.39***	0.12**	0.28**	0.15***	-0.23***	-0.20***	-0.09*	-0.17***	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.02	-0.06	0.75***	1.00				
17	0.35***	0.35***	0.01	0.37***	0.15***	-0.18***	-0.22***	-0.03	-0.16***	-0.04	-0.02	-0.06	0.04	-0.08*	0.71***	0.96***	1.00			
18	0.36***	0.37***	0.04	0.36**	0.12**	-0.19**	-0.20***	-0.05	-0.17***	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.02	-0.09*	0.77***	0.97***	0.97***	1.00		
19	0.05	-0.30***	-0.57***	0.36***	-0.11**	0.42	-0.00	0.62***	-0.02	-0.30***	-0.07	-0.21***	0.57***	-0.46***	0.13**	0.16***	0.16***	0.16***	1.00	
20	0.21***	0.09*	0.03	0.04	0.20***	0.04	0.03	-0.00	-0.12**	0.05	-0.06	-0.08*	0.03	-0.10**	0.30***	0.27***	0.23***	0.22***	-0.07	1.00

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

- 
1. Any Institution
  2. Any In-State
  3. In-State Public
  4. In-State Private
  5. In-State Community
  6. Any Out-of-State
  7. Out-of-State Public
  8. Out-of-State Private
  9. Out-of-State Community
  10. Governor Public
  11. Governor Republican
  12. Republican
  13. Female
  14. State Funding per Capita
  15. Tuition
  16. FTE
  17. Tax Revenue
  18. State GSP
  19. Bachelor's Attainment Rate
  20. Unemployment Rate
-

Table 4: The Effect of Legislators with Ties to In-State Public Institutions on Funding

DV: State Funding per Capita	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-State Public	139.5*** (30.86)	94.99*** (27.00)			108.2*** (25.13)	92.90** (42.07)		
In-State Public UH			101.4*** (23.02)	74.40*** (20.11)			75.65*** (18.52)	66.92** (30.04)
In-State Public LH			86.59*** (32.96)	38.13 (29.14)			70.73*** (27.45)	40.70 (47.57)
Republican					45.07** (18.16)	48.54 (34.85)		
Republican UH							21.21 (21.44)	26.53 (41.01)
Republican LH							36.55 (24.97)	31.18 (30.11)
Female					6.520 (32.10)	42.08 (44.28)		
Female UH							-13.90 (25.19)	11.27 (39.97)
Female LH							116.8*** (35.03)	135.1** (53.12)
Governor Public					-5.579* (2.981)	-5.477 (4.392)	-5.475* (2.986)	-5.248 (4.112)
Governor Republican					-3.650 (2.672)	-3.066 (4.288)	-4.398 (2.689)	-3.658 (4.172)
Constant	211.6*** (19.56)	248.6*** (18.73)	189.4*** (22.20)	239.3*** (21.05)	201.2*** (39.14)	123.0 (81.31)	170.7*** (40.95)	97.06 (83.32)
Controls	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	650	650	637	637	650	650	637	637
No. of States	50	50	49	49	50	50	49	49
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.091	0.096	0.116	0.110	0.080	0.003	0.114	0.005

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (3,4,7,8).

Specification (6) provides our main results. The coefficient of 94.02\*\* shows that one-standard-deviation increase in *in-state public* (i.e., weighted mean share of state legislators who attended an in-state 4-year college) is associated with a 4.8%, or \$13.19, increase in state funding per capita. Considering the average population of 6.1 million, this amount translates to an increase of \$80.0 million in state funding for higher education.

Table 5: **The Effect of Legislators with Ties to In-District Public Institutions on Funding**

DV: State Funding per Capita	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-District Public	122.3* (72.15)	196.8*** (62.56)			127.1** (59.92)	125.6* (71.84)		
Not-In-District Public	142.8*** (32.25)	80.42*** (28.28)			105.8*** (26.54)	88.51* (45.41)		
In-District Public UH			152.6*** (58.37)	243.4*** (50.54)			145.5*** (48.48)	132.9* (75.66)
Not-In-District Public UH			94.70*** (24.47)	49.00** (21.14)			65.48*** (19.64)	57.29* (31.05)
In-District Public LH			-55.07 (116.2)	-301.1*** (103.0)			-211.6** (95.74)	-228.3* (126.2)
Not-In-District Public LH			99.60*** (34.12)	70.90** (29.63)			91.73*** (28.06)	61.90 (50.24)
Republican					44.99** (18.19)	48.67 (35.31)		
Republican UH							18.86 (21.33)	23.77 (39.47)
Republican LH							40.10 (24.86)	35.50 (28.31)
Female					3.353 (32.63)	38.21 (44.72)		
Female UH							-14.71 (25.12)	10.48 (38.77)
Female LH							116.1*** (35.30)	133.5** (53.40)
Governor Public					-5.527* (2.994)	-5.380 (4.310)	-5.955** (2.973)	-5.707 (4.106)
Governor Republican					-3.720 (2.684)	-3.165 (4.305)	-3.845 (2.680)	-3.182 (4.023)
Constant	211.1*** (19.23)	249.0*** (18.38)	187.9*** (22.24)	237.0*** (20.90)	204.0*** (39.09)	122.7 (81.66)	171.7*** (40.70)	102.5 (80.45)
Controls	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	650	650	637	637	650	650	637	637
No. of States	50	50	49	49	50	50	49	49
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.096	0.075	0.111	0.091	0.083	0.003	0.118	0.008

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (3,4,7,8).

Table 6: The Effect of Legislators with Ties to In-State Public Institutions on Funding before and after the Great Recession

DV: State Funding per Capita	Year 2002–2008				Year 2009–2014			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-State Public	81.93** (39.43)	44.75 (59.68)			142.2*** (38.16)	122.2*** (40.79)		
In-State Public UH			47.81 (32.19)	35.74 (44.74)			111.0*** (28.38)	99.04*** (28.99)
In-State Public LH			80.00** (39.60)	22.07 (64.52)			39.65 (36.79)	16.28 (51.91)
Republican	85.72*** (29.76)	114.8** (53.69)			-20.71 (25.10)	-28.73 (37.09)		
Republican UH			86.28*** (33.28)	101.8* (51.47)			-46.74 (29.32)	-40.19 (41.83)
Republican LH			5.000 (38.00)	15.02 (47.00)			56.81 (42.28)	33.50 (39.19)
Female	5.034 (47.67)	80.38 (63.04)			57.16 (48.83)	106.2 (75.87)		
Female UH			-28.92 (37.60)	27.11 (46.73)			46.03 (37.88)	79.15 (54.42)
Female LH			142.9*** (48.15)	174.2** (70.57)			-13.97 (59.11)	30.66 (74.24)
Governor Public	-10.82** (4.230)	-11.58 (7.092)	-12.28*** (4.266)	-13.01* (7.270)	-5.712 (4.666)	-2.711 (5.472)	-6.425 (4.774)	-2.930 (5.803)
Governor Republican	-6.999* (3.699)	-6.228 (5.878)	-8.114** (3.689)	-7.467 (5.603)	1.824 (3.885)	0.869 (4.983)	-0.364 (4.097)	-0.830 (5.035)
Constant	263.3*** (48.38)	213.8*** (79.72)	233.5*** (51.08)	194.0** (86.64)	304.0*** (69.84)	35.00 (77.47)	308.7*** (77.63)	36.22 (79.19)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	350	350	343	343	300	300	294	294
No. of States	50	50	49	49	50	50	49	49
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.090	0.000	0.129	0.000	0.197	0.007	0.230	0.006

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (3,4,7,8).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: The Effect of Legislator School Ties on Funding

DV: State Funding per Capita	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
In-State Public	34.24 (52.91)	50.06 (46.29)	30.67 (42.60)	8.061 (72.12)
In-State Private	-121.0* (62.84)	-83.12 (55.15)	-118.2** (51.44)	-88.00 (121.2)
In-State Comm	-263.7** (116.7)	-38.60 (104.5)	-17.97 (99.34)	-97.50 (136.7)
Out-of-State Public	-144.7** (63.07)	-77.77 (55.43)	-142.8*** (51.67)	-179.8 (141.8)
Out-of-State Private	-102.6* (54.27)	-26.68 (47.67)	-61.14 (44.34)	-49.38 (82.96)
Out-of-State Comm	287.7 (312.8)	105.3 (276.6)	142.4 (258.7)	237.5 (476.2)
Republican			43.01** (18.35)	48.67 (37.46)
Female			-0.616 (32.55)	43.66 (45.81)
Governor Public			-6.904** (3.028)	-7.130 (4.782)
Governor Republican			-4.125 (2.711)	-3.777 (4.298)
Constant	317.4*** (46.21)	295.3*** (40.86)	292.3*** (51.70)	205.0** (95.37)
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	No	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	No	No	Yes
No. of Observations	650	650	650	650
No. of States	50	50	50	50
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.058	0.103	0.091	0.000

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Appendix B: Table 4, Cut by State Population Rank

DV: State Funding per Capita	Population Rank 1-25				Population Rank 26-50			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-State Public	74.45** (32.52)	51.99 (53.06)			194.3*** (32.75)	184.8*** (49.06)		
In-State Public UH			47.33** (22.92)	33.45 (30.56)			130.6*** (24.44)	130.0*** (31.43)
In-State Public LH			36.09 (34.23)	1.282 (42.10)			86.34** (37.76)	54.91 (44.23)
Republican	-54.67** (24.04)	-44.23 (32.72)			111.3*** (23.43)	102.3** (37.22)		
Republican UH			-156.2*** (28.21)	-138.5*** (49.47)			107.6*** (26.96)	98.90** (36.15)
Republican LH			167.8*** (35.46)	152.1** (60.46)			-10.72 (29.87)	-16.64 (28.79)
Female	31.99 (41.52)	78.15 (77.79)			-37.18 (42.06)	5.489 (59.30)		
Female UH			24.63 (30.49)	55.32 (54.83)			-66.22** (33.44)	-42.66 (51.12)
Female LH			44.49 (44.87)	63.19 (77.45)			97.76** (44.26)	130.0** (58.49)
Governor Public	-6.611* (3.509)	-7.316 (5.604)	-3.554 (3.431)	-4.189 (5.639)	-6.265 (4.317)	-6.306 (4.723)	-4.434 (4.258)	-4.755 (4.342)
Governor Republican	-0.816 (3.067)	-0.700 (3.596)	-3.827 (3.032)	-3.716 (3.519)	-12.75*** (3.996)	-12.41* (6.145)	-13.09*** (3.974)	-12.84** (6.110)
Constant	264.5*** (52.12)	163.2** (66.53)	236.7*** (54.20)	167.3** (73.74)	129.4** (52.71)	-3.958 (94.20)	124.1** (54.95)	-7.851 (84.35)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	325	325	325	325	325	325	312	312
No. of States	25	25	25	25	25	25	24	24
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.116	0.018	0.192	0.038	0.271	0.080	0.296	0.079

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (7,8).

Appendix C: Table 4, Cut by GSP Rank

DV: State Funding per Capita	GSP Rank 1-25				GSP Rank 26-50			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-State Public	76.81** (30.04)	58.99 (46.07)			216.3*** (34.67)	208.9*** (61.92)		
In-State Public UH			52.94** (21.24)	41.54 (27.93)			153.8*** (26.22)	151.9*** (43.29)
In-State Public LH			-4.541 (29.64)	-38.85 (30.87)			49.27 (39.43)	19.08 (57.11)
Republican	-24.51 (23.95)	-21.38 (36.50)			129.1*** (23.89)	124.2*** (43.36)		
Republican UH			-116.9*** (26.20)	-106.1* (54.96)			118.9*** (28.60)	117.7** (45.88)
Republican LH			125.2*** (29.14)	110.5** (52.98)			7.025 (33.19)	-3.004 (33.56)
Female	48.21 (37.57)	75.69 (69.78)			29.73 (43.99)	60.75 (54.12)		
Female UH			16.37 (27.07)	36.85 (48.18)			-19.94 (36.39)	6.245 (53.74)
Female LH			70.79* (37.61)	81.57 (66.01)			119.7** (49.69)	130.7* (70.62)
Governor Public	-1.384 (3.087)	-1.994 (3.841)	0.662 (3.004)	0.306 (3.488)	-12.61*** (4.631)	-12.34* (6.615)	-11.20** (4.711)	-11.22 (6.717)
Governor Republican	-3.604 (2.674)	-3.371 (2.913)	-5.684** (2.616)	-5.461* (2.865)	-9.651** (4.227)	-9.347 (7.068)	-10.04** (4.331)	-9.629 (6.975)
Constant	186.3*** (50.76)	126.0 (73.82)	198.1*** (50.77)	151.7* (84.95)	74.10 (58.65)	-9.582 (97.29)	96.22 (60.71)	2.834 (88.96)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	325	325	325	325	325	325	312	312
No. of States	25	25	25	25	25	25	24	24
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.104	0.041	0.142	0.043	0.187	0.118	0.218	0.112

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (7,8).

## Appendix D: The Effect of Legislators with Ties to In-State Public or Community Institutions on Funding

DV: State Funding per Capita	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
In-State Pub/Comm	122.5*** (31.45)	93.75*** (27.37)			110.4*** (25.39)	91.58* (48.27)		
In-State Pub/Comm UH			93.04*** (23.48)	79.31*** (20.39)			85.15*** (18.74)	72.70** (35.97)
In-State Pub/Comm LH			70.09** (32.42)	17.01 (28.58)			39.14 (26.63)	4.452 (45.41)
Republican					44.35** (18.15)	48.01 (34.74)		
Republican UH							19.53 (21.43)	25.11 (41.12)
Republican LH							37.34 (24.95)	31.51 (30.31)
Female					10.15 (32.10)	44.91 (44.03)		
Female UH							-14.40 (25.23)	10.77 (40.57)
Female LH							114.4*** (34.88)	135.5** (50.70)
Governor Public					-5.381* (2.975)	-5.272 (4.415)	-5.078* (2.982)	-4.874 (4.164)
Governor Republican					-3.481 (2.667)	-2.894 (4.323)	-4.358 (2.690)	-3.587 (4.196)
Constant	215.6*** (20.31)	246.7*** (19.19)	195.2*** (23.34)	243.6*** (21.84)	200.3*** (39.14)	124.4 (83.84)	181.4*** (40.96)	108.2 (81.23)
Controls	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Err. Clustered by State	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
No. of Observations	650	650	637	637	650	650	637	637
No. of States	50	50	49	49	50	50	49	49
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>	0.113	0.111	0.136	0.111	0.094	0.005	0.113	0.002

Standard errors in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Controls include GSP, tax revenue, bachelor's attainment rate, unemployment rate, tuition, and FTE.

Nebraska state legislature is unicameral and thus not included for columns (3,4,7,8).