FIGURES: Luck of the Draw?

Members' Bills & the Electoral Connection

Brian D. Williams
University of West Florida

Indridi H. Indridason*
University of California, Riverside

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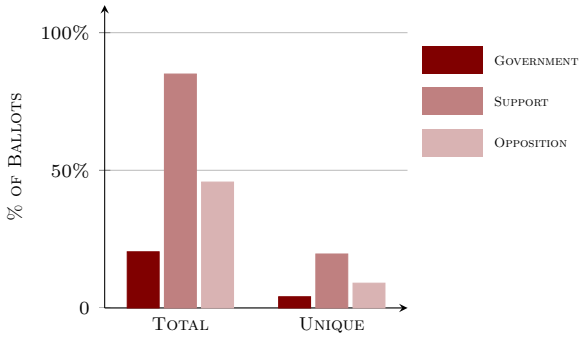
Abstract

The legislative agenda in most parliamentary systems is controlled tightly by the government and bills offered by individual members of parliament have low rates of success. Yet, MPs do seek to present (private) members' bills even where the rate of adoption is very low. We argue that members' bills serve as an electoral connection but also as an opportunity for MPs to signal competence to their co-partisans. To demonstrate the presence of an electoral connection we take advantage of the random selection of private members' bills in the New Zealand House of Representatives and show that survey respondents approve more of electorate MPs whose bills were drawn on the ballot. In addition, we show that MPs respond to the incentives created by the voters and parties' willingness to reward legislative effort and, consequently, that electorally vulnerable legislators are more likely to place members' bills on the ballot.

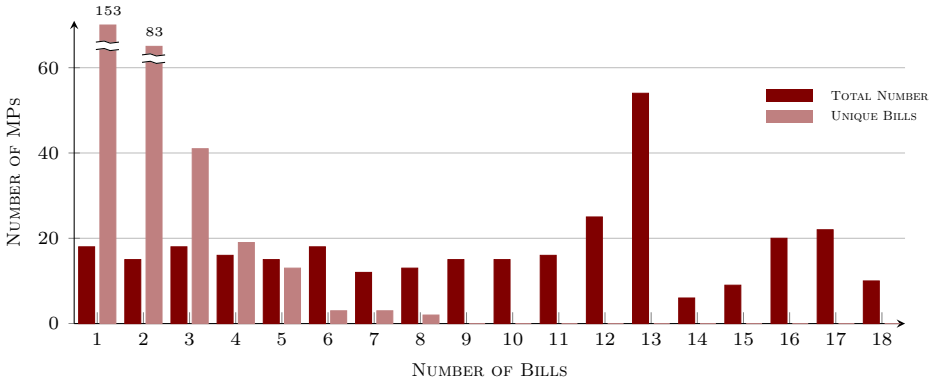
*Department of Political Science, 900 University Avenue, University of California, Riverside. We would like to thank Hannah Blumhardt for capable research assistance and Shaun Bowler, Jack Vowles, and the anonymous referees for useful comments and suggestions.

Figure 1: Share of Opportunities to Enter Bill Used*
—By Government Party Membership—



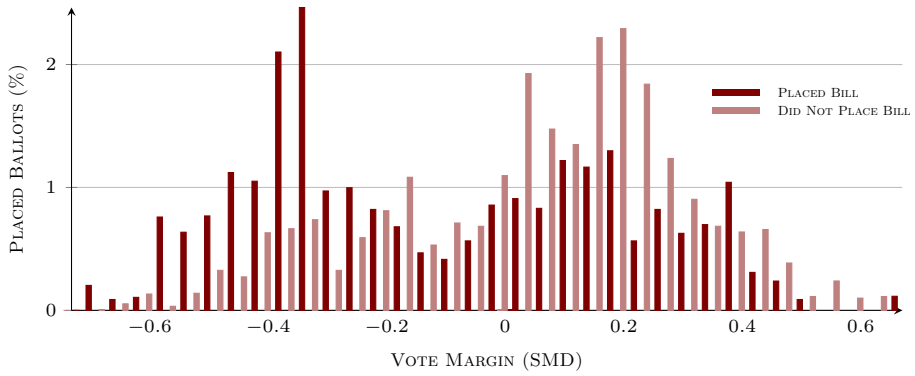
*Excludes Ministers, House Leaders, and All Speakers.
Source: New Zealand Parliament (www.parliament.nz)

Figure 2: Bills Placed on the Ballot By MP
—Total Number of Bills & Unique Bills—



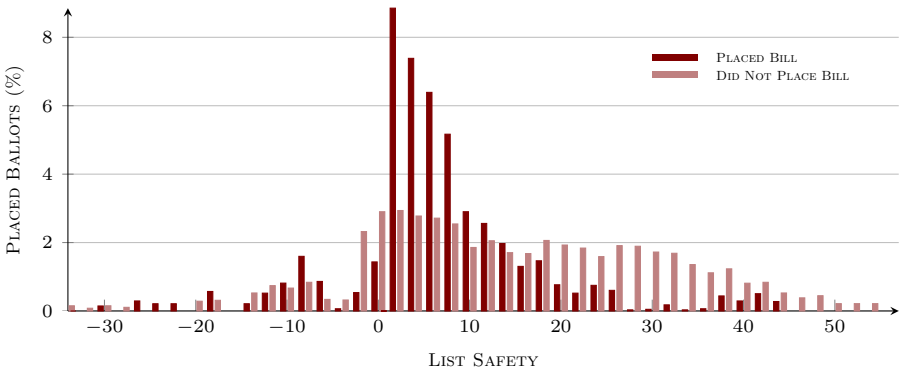
Source: New Zealand Parliament (www.parliament.nz)

Figure 3: Vote Margin and Placing Bills on the Ballot

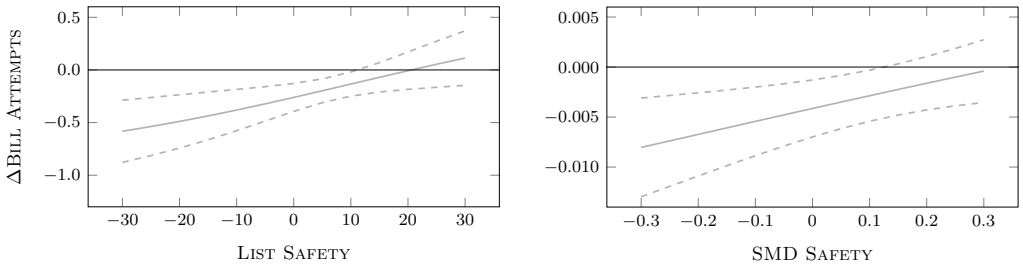


Source: New Zealand Parliament (www.parliament.nz)

Figure 4: List Safety and Placing Bills on the Ballot



Source: New Zealand Parliament (www.parliament.nz)



(a) Marginal Effect of SMD Safety — Conditional on List Safety —

(b) Marginal Effect of List Safety — Conditional on SMD Safety —

Figure 5: The Effect of List & SMD Safety on the Number of Attempts

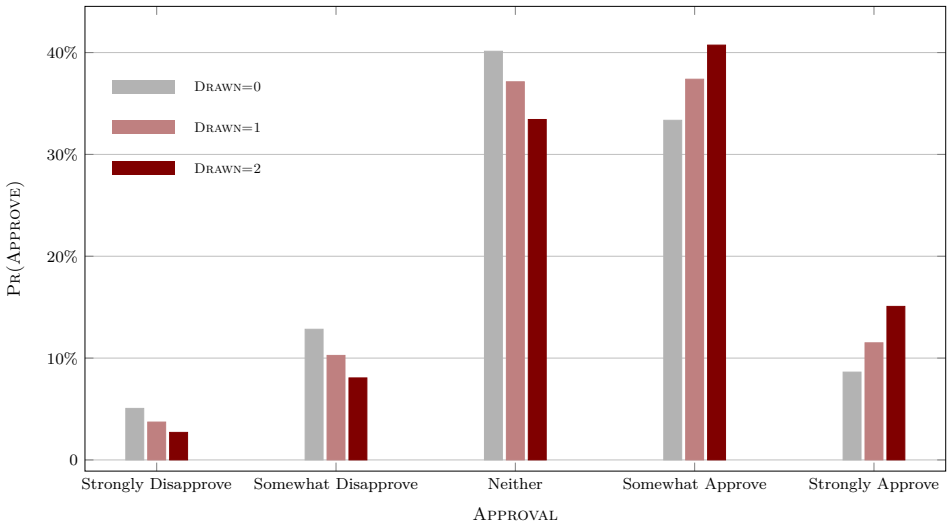



Figure 6: Predicted Respondent Approval of MP
—Conditional on Number of Bills Drawn—