State Legislative Legislator Ideology Data
July 2020 Update*

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1 Introduction

The Shor-McCarty state legislator ideology data is being released as an update to the data underlying Shor and McCarty (2011). There are now 24,716 individual state legislators in the data, compared with 22,868 legislators in the previous release. The data stretch from 1993 to 2018, newly incorporating the 2016 and 2017 state legislative elections, and filling in a portion of data missing in previous releases. The ideology measures are based on individual-level ideal point estimates described fully in that article. Measures are all in NPAT common ideological space to facilitate explicit comparisons across time and between and within states. It is important to note that these are fixed scores by legislators. These are unique throughout their state legislative careers, except when they switch parties.

The newest version of the data and codebook can always be found on the American Legislatures web site (http://americanlegislatures.com). We are actively working on additional data, and will be releasing updated data sets over time.

The individual level data has been extensively cleaned to minimize the random noise inherent in acquiring roll call votes from printed journals. However, an important note of caution. Acquiring roll call votes from printed journal is still subject to measurement error. For example, these can result from OCR errors in recognizing names, districts, and votes from legislative journals. Another prominent example is when states switch their conventions for naming legislators.[1] Or they can result from some bug in merging legislators across time. We welcome bug reports to our web site.

[1] When there is a single "Smith," many states do not even supply a first name. When another "Smith" enters, they frequent attach an initial to distinguish the two. Thus "Smith" in one year and "Smith, B" in another can refer to the same person, and our code may be confused and consider these two separate individuals.

2 Codebook

`name`
Name of state legislator

`party`
Party of state legislator

`st`
State abbreviation

`party`
Party of state legislator

`st_id`
Temporary, local within-state within-version identifier. **This is not a unique global identifier. Do not rely on this number across versions of the data.**

`u_id`
Unique global identifier. This is a unique global identifier, but has not been assigned to every single legislator yet. This is under active development, and identifiers could possibly change over time (if unlikely).

`np_score`
Common space Shor-McCarty NPAT common space score

`sdistrict*`
Senate district of state legislator in that year, or NA if not serving

`hdistrict*`
House/Assembly district of state legislator in that year, or NA if not serving

`senate*`
Chamber-year indicator for state Senates

`house*`
Chamber-year indicator for state Houses

References

Shor, Boris and Nolan McCarty. 2011. "The Ideological Mapping of American Legislatures." *American Political Science Review* 105(3):530–551.