State Legislative Legislator Ideology Data*

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1 Introduction

The Shor-McCarty state legislator ideology data (May 2013) is being released as an update to the data underlying Shor and McCarty (2011). The new data features over 18,000 state legislators.[1] 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 districts or parties.

The newest version of the data and codebook can always be found on the American Legislatures web site (http://americanlegislatures.com). The authors 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.[2] Or they can result from some bug in merging legislators across time. We welcome bug reports to our web site.

[1] These now include party data for Nebraska thanks to Seth Masket, who generously provided the informal but well-known partisan affiliations for Unicameral legislators.

[2] 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 consider these two separate individuals. We continue work on code to establish unique global identifiers to account for these quirks.

2 Codebook

`name`

Name of state legislator

`party`

Party of state legislator

`st`

State abbreviation

`party`

Party of state legislator

`sdistrict`

Senate district of state legislator, if any[3]

`hdistrict`

House/Assembly district of state legislator, if any

`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.**

`np_score`

Common space Shor-McCarty NPAT common space score.

`senate*`

Chamber-year indicator for state Senates

`house*`

Chamber-year indicator for state Houses

[3]Future versions of the data will break out district measures by year

References

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