

【연구논문】

U.S. State Legislative Professionalization: Redefining the Connection to Divided Government

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1. Introduction

Since the 1960s U.S. state legislatures have experienced considerable changes in terms of their institutional features. They have longer sessions, hire more staff for legislative services, and offer better paid and more stable jobs for legislators than they did in the past. This change, which we call legislative professionalization, has affected both legislative behavior and electoral behavior. As state legislators have more resources, they work more on local services, and voters are more likely to reelect their incumbent representatives. At the same time, along with the era of divided government at the federal level, it also has been observed that more and more U.S. states have been under divided government since the 1950s.

Studies have explored the connection between state legislative professionalization and divided state government (Fiorina, 1991, 1992,

1994, 1997, 1999; Squire, 1997). Looking at the election outcomes from 1946 to 1990, Fiorina (1991, 1992, 1994) claims that there is a positive relationship between the incidence of divided government in U.S. states and professionalization in state legislatures, which is mediated by partisan differences among potential candidates for the state legislature. According to Fiorina (1994), as state legislatures have become professionalized, legislative service has become a full-time and more demanding occupation. This development had a different impact on people from different occupational and income sectors, especially on the pools of Democratic candidates and Republican candidates. State legislative service attracted more Democrats than Republicans because Democrats had lower opportunity costs to take the career of legislators while Republicans preferred private-sector careers. Given that more Republicans are elected as governors, Fiorina argues that this career orientation of Democrats resulted in an unintended consequence, that is, more divided government in states.

After Fiorina's finding of a significantly positive relationship between professionalization and divided government,¹⁾ Squire (1997) tried to redefine the causes of this relationship by directly estimating the effect of professionalization on the incidence of divided government from 1960 to 1990. He hypothesizes that if there is a positive

1) Actually Fiorina does not test the direct relationship between professionalization and divided government. Note that his dependent variable is the Democratic seat share. Therefore, unless all the governors are Republicans, more Democratic seat share does not necessarily mean more divided government. Stonecash and Agathangelou (1997) question Fiorina's reasoning and suggest that Democratic success in state legislative elections is mainly due to the realignment.

relationship between professionalization and divided government, it should be through the strong incumbency advantage. But he finds only a very weak relationship between professionalization and divided government in U.S. states. Analyzing the cases of divided government in U.S. states from the years 1982 to 1990, first, Squire categorizes states in terms of the level of professionalization. However, the proportion of divided government does not monotonically increase in the level of professionalization. Second, he runs an OLS regression of professionalization on the percentage of years that each state experienced divided government, but only finds an insignificantly positive coefficient for the professionalization. For this weak relationship, Squire suggests that most states are not professionalized yet and still professionalizing, so that the incumbency advantage has not been in effect.

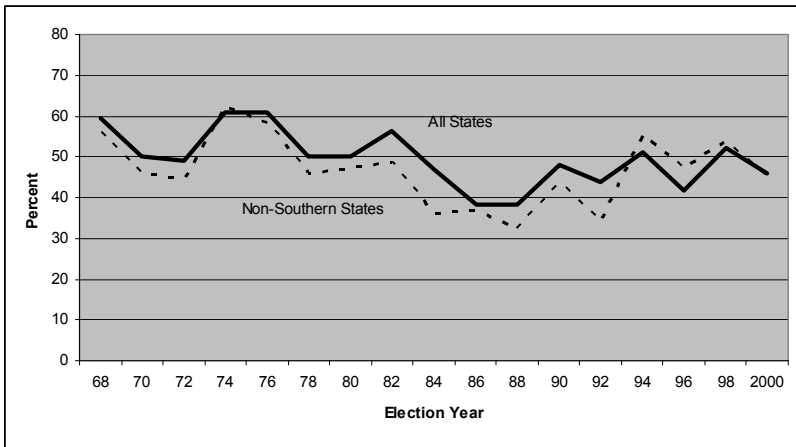
Why does Squire only find a weak relationship between the legislative professionalization and state divided government, about which Fiorina theorizes a significant positive relationship? In this paper, with an alternative approach, I provide the answer for this puzzle.

I argue that Fiorina's theory cannot be the full story of the relationship between professionalization and divided government for two reasons. First, his argument is restricted to the beginning period of legislative professionalization. When the legislative job suddenly becomes a full time job and demands more work, it could have different effects on potential candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties. However, it is not easy to see how this logic should be applied, after the change has been institutionalized. Second, Fiorina's argument focuses only on the supply side and completely

ignores the voter side. It only explains how professionalization should motivate different party candidates in elections, and does not answer how professionalization affects voting decisions. In this paper, I propose that in order to understand how professionalization determines the incidence of divided government, we should also ask what kind of institutional effect professionalization has on voters' behavior. By ignoring voters' response to the state legislative professionalization, Fiorina's explanation does not provide a complete understanding of the institutional effect of professionalization, and therefore, his analyses could be misleading.

In this paper, by investigating how professionalization affects voters, I propose more systematic arguments about the relationship between legislative professionalization and divided government. With an alternative theory, I hypothesize that there are two different effects of professionalization on divided government: a positive effect through incumbency and a negative effect due to voters' institutional considerations. Contrary to Squire's finding, in this paper I argue that when handled correctly, we could find a strong positive effect of professionalization through incumbency advantage on state divided government. And most of all, this paper hypothesizes that after controlling for the incumbency effect, professionalization has a negative effect on the probability of divided government. In the next section by offering the descriptive statistics of divided government I claim the need for a more generalized systematic approach. The following section presents the theoretical foundations of my two hypotheses. Then, in final sections I summarize my hypotheses and discuss possible approaches of testing the hypotheses.

2. Patterns of divided government

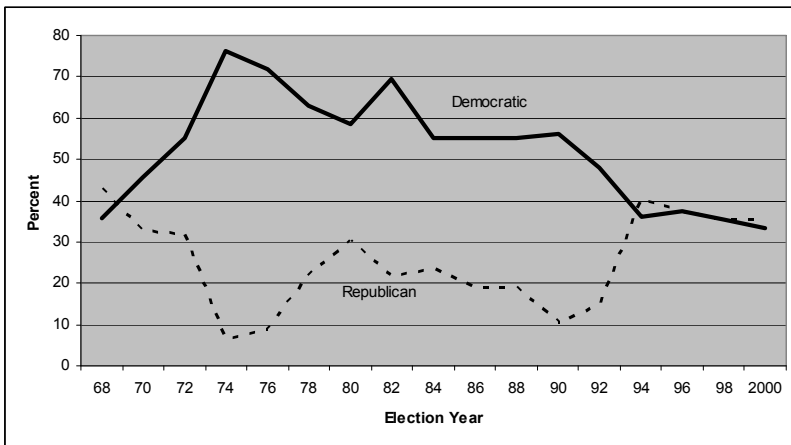


<Figure 1> Unified State Governments

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

One of the reasons that I claim Fiorina's partisan argument cannot be generalized to the longer period arises from observations of the trend of divided government from 1967 to 2000. Fiorina's partisan careerism argument is based on the parallel phenomena of the growth of divided government and the decline of Republican fortunes in legislative elections from 1946 to 1990. However, when I include data from 1991 to 2000 to Fiorina's original dataset, first, I find that after several decades of decrease in unified governments, the proportion of unified government in U.S. states had stopped decreasing in the late 1980s and started increasing, and second, there is not much difference between parties in terms of state legislative electoral outcomes in the 1990s. In Figure 1, I examine the

proportion of unified governments in U.S. states since 1967. Here by unified government I mean a state government where the governor's party controls a majority of both the state House and Senate. From 1968 to 1986 there seems to be a long run decreasing trend in the proportion of unified governments. However, as we extend the time period to 2000, we see that it stopped decreasing in 1986 (1988 for nonsouthern states) and started going upward and became stable.²⁾ And when we extend the timeline to the recent elections, we can see the proportion of unified governments out of all state governments has increased again since 2006 (see "Party control by state" (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/national/red-blue/>)).



<Figure 2> Unified State Legislatures

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

- 2) In Figure 1, I plot the trend of unified state governments for both all states and only nonsouthern states. As we see, the two lines show similar patterns, which implies that this trend is a general phenomenon, not restricted to certain regions.

One of the most important features Fiorina observed in support of his careerism argument is the partisan difference in the electoral success in legislative elections. In Figure 2, I investigate Republican fortunes in state legislative elections from 1967 to 2000 comparing to Democrat's, and find that the partisan difference in terms of state legislative election outcomes no longer exists in the 1990s. Figure 2 plots the proportion of unified state legislatures under Democratic and Republican control. Obviously, a unified legislature refers to one where one party takes a majority in both chambers. In the picture, a solid line shows the unified Democratic legislatures while a dashed line shows the unified Republican legislatures. We can see that there was a "collapse" in the proportion of Republican legislatures and a "jump" in the proportion of Democratic legislatures in the 70s, and a gap between the Democrats' luck and the Republicans' misfortune lasted until the early 1990s. However, this gap became smaller and disappeared in the early 1990s. Figure 2 shows that since 1994 the two lines have almost collapsed to a single line and have stabilized at around 35%. Moreover, when we extend our observation further, we can see the Democrats' luck and the Republican's misfortune have been switched in recent elections (again see "Party control by state" (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/national/red-blue/>)).

In sum, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that there is no increasing pattern of divided government and no difference in partisan luck in state legislative elections in U.S. states after the transition period of professionalization. That is, the empirical regularities Fiorina's argument stems from are no longer observed in recent elections.

Although the findings in these figures do not falsify Fiorina's

partisan careerism argument, I find that after the 1990s partisan differences cannot explain divided government any longer, which clearly shows the limitation of Fiorina's explanation. The changes we observe in the above figures suggest that Fiorina's hypothesis could have worked during a restricted time period, the transitional period. As Fiorina suggests, when state legislatures started to be professionalized, it had different effects on potential candidates from different parties. As legislative service became a full time occupation from a part-time job, more Democrats were willing to sacrifice their current jobs for legislative work because legislative service became better compensated and more highly regarded. However, we do not see much reason why this partisan difference should be sustained beyond the transition period as the legislative professionalization became institutionalized. The findings in the above figures suggest that there is no partisan specific theory that explains the overall relationship between divided state government and state legislative professionalization. Therefore, to analyze the relationship beyond the transitional period, we need more general approaches.

3. Professionalization and Divided Government

How does professionalization impact voting decisions in state legislative elections? First, I claim that there is a positive correlation between divided government and legislative professionalization through the incumbency advantage. Legislative professionalization positively affects the incumbency advantage. As legislatures have become

professionalized, legislators have had more resources that they can use for retaining their seats. For example, as they gain more specialized staff and operational budgets, they can provide more constituency service. Also, as they become better paid, they work full time and concentrate their effort on legislative work, which gives them a better reputation and leads to a higher evaluation from their constituency.³⁾ There is substantial literature on this strong positive relationship between legislative professionalization and increasing incumbency benefit (Weber, Tucker, and Brace, 1991; Cox and Morgenstern, 1993, 1995; Shan and Stonecash, 1994, Carey, Niemi, and Powell, 2000; Berry, Berkman, and Schneiderman, 2000; Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell, 2004). It is empirically observed that the more professionalized the legislature is, the more likely incumbents are reelected.

Furthermore, as the incumbency advantage grows, the probability that divided government is formed increases. Some scholars observe that the growing incumbency advantage in state legislative elections is positively correlated with increasing divided government in U.S. states (Ansola-behere et al., 1992; Fiorina, 1992; Born, 2000). Since a strong incumbency effect encourages voters to cast their votes with more personal and local considerations in legislative elections, it is more likely that voters split their votes. Therefore, it is more likely

3) There are studies showing that public opinion does not always support more professionalized legislatures (Squire, 1993; Richardson, Konisky, and Milyo, 2008). Squire shows professionalism lowers public attention and performance rating on state legislatures. Richardson et al. find positive attitudes on legislative professionalism, but the relationship varies depending on partisanship and the level of political knowledge.

that divided governments are formed. Together these arguments imply that as state legislatures become professionalized, incumbent legislators have more resources they can use for electoral purposes, and this increased incumbency advantage insulates incumbent legislative members even when the gubernatorial party changes. That is, professionalization increases the incumbency advantage and makes voters decide whom to vote for without considering a candidate's party. Thus, I suggest that professionalization encourages voters to cast more personal votes, not partisan votes, which promote split-ticket voting behavior and then, the occurrence of divided government.

Second, aside from this positive effect through the growing incumbency advantage, I propose that there is also a negative institutional effect of legislative professionalization. As legislatures are more professionalized, we expect that the power relationship between the governor and the legislature should change. With amateur legislatures, where members rarely meet and do not have many resources, governors should have the dominant power in deciding state policies. However, with highly professionalized legislatures where the members have plenty of resources, the power relationship between the governor and the legislature in state policy making process should be more balanced. It is difficult to measure this power relationship, especially over time, and therefore, there is no agreed method for calculating the relative power of governors.⁴⁾ Fortunately, in terms of state appropriations, the changed power

4) There are a couple of measures of governors' power (Dometrius, 1979; Beyle, 2003). However, they are just assessing governors' power, not the power relative to the legislatures.

relationship has been observed by Abney and Lauth (1998). According to them, while in the 1950s and 1960s governors had dominant power against parochial legislatures, as state legislatures became more professionalized, legislatures became as influential as governors in the state appropriations process. Since more professionalized legislatures have more resources, including specialized staff, they have independence in information from the governor, and it has undermined the informational advantage that governors have dominated.⁵⁾

For the split-ticket voting behavior, a balancing theory suggests that voters intentionally split their ballots in order to moderate the policy outcome (e.g., Alesina and Rosenthal, 1995; Fiorina, 2003). The main assumption in this theory is that the final policy is determined by political bargaining between the executive and the legislature. As one of the testable hypotheses, this theory predicts that as the lopsided power relationship between the executive and legislature becomes balanced, voters are less likely to split their ballots so that a divided government is less likely to be created. The intuition is that, for example, when the governor has dominant power to decide state policies, most moderate voters do not want extreme policies under a unified government and therefore, prefer having a legislature controlled by the nongubernatorial party, which might result in moderate policy outcomes. However, when the power relationship is

5) The argument that as state legislatures became professionalized, they have had as much power as the governors sounds straightforward. However, Abney and Lauth's argument about the balanced power relationship between governors and legislatures is restricted to the appropriations case. Moreover, their measurements are, in fact, from 99 chief executive and legislative budget officials' survey responses.

balanced, for some moderate voters the policy outcome under a divided government is too moderate to support. Therefore, as lopsided power relationship becomes balanced, some moderate voters stop splitting their votes and switch to support their preferred party to control both the executive and the legislature.⁶⁾ (For a detailed theoretical explanation, see the Appendix.) That is, as state legislatures become more professionalized, it is less likely that divided governments are created. Although many studies test whether balancing theory explains split-ticket voting (Erikson, 1988; Born 1994, 2000; Alvarez and Shousen, 1993; Mattei and Howes, 2000), so far, this institutional aspect of legislative professionalization on split-ticket voting has not received much attention. In this paper, I propose the existence of this so far ignored institutional effect of professionalization on divided government and suggest a significant negative effect of professionalization on divided government.

In sum, I theorize that legislative professionalization works in two different ways on the formation of divided government. Through the incumbency effect, it *promotes* personal votes which encourage split-ticket voting. At the same time, due to voters' policy concerns, it *decreases* split-ticket voting, which in turn decreases the incidence of divided government. Therefore, the overall effect of professionalization on divided government depends on whether voters are more concerned

6) In a balancing theory, given the policy points of the executive and a majority of the legislature, θ_E and θ_L , the final policy is determined by $\alpha \theta_E + (1-\alpha) \theta_L$, where α is the measure of power relationship between the executive and the legislature. Roughly speaking, as α becomes close to 1/2, this theory predicts the supporters for divided government shrink because the policy outcome under divided government also becomes close to 1/2.

with policy outcomes than candidates' personal characteristics. That is, with a more professionalized legislature, when voters have more policy concerns, they are less likely to split their votes and intentionally decrease the probability of making a divided government. On the other hand, when voters are more affected by the strong incumbency advantage, they are more likely to split their votes, and unintentionally it increases the chance of divided government.

4. Hypotheses

This paper redefines the connection between legislative professionalization and the probability of divided government by presenting a theoretical argument based on the comprehensive survey of existing studies. I propose two different ways they are connected, indirectly and directly. Indirectly, professionalization increases the probability of the incidence of a divided government and directly, professionalization decreases it. First, indirectly legislative professionalization increases the incumbency advantage, and an increased incumbency effect in turn increases the probability that a divided government results. The literature on the incumbency advantage has shown the positive relationship between professionalization and the incumbency benefit. Also, it has been observed that as elections become more candidate oriented, there are more split-ticket votes. That is, my first hypothesis is that increased incumbency advantage which is an indirect measure of legislative professionalization has a positive effect on divided government.

On the other hand, legislative professionalization implies that the legislative power in deciding state policies becomes balanced with the executive power. The balancing theory on divided government predicts that voters' considerations on state policies which are determined by collective bargaining between the executive and the legislature have a negative effect on the incidence of divided government as the lopsided power relationship between the executive and the legislature becomes balanced. Alternatively, we can understand this negative relationship in terms of the cost of divided government. When the governor has a dominant power, divided government does not make much difference in the policy making process, which means that voters do not have to concern about the possible negative results of divided government. On the contrary, as the power becomes balanced, there is a higher cost for voters to split their votes. For example, divided government can result in a deadlock situation. Therefore, voters are more cautious in electing a divided government. That is, as state legislatures becomes professionalized, knowing the power relationship in the government, voters become less likely to split their votes, which leads to a decrease of divided government. Therefore, my second hypothesis is that when one controls for the incumbency benefit, a higher level of legislative professionalization reduces voters' incentives to elect a divided government.

5. Discussion

Contrary to the previous observations on the increasing divided

government in U.S. states, recent election results show that the increasing pattern of divided government has disappeared. The proportion of divided government has become stable in the 1990s and recently it seems the trend has been reversed. However, it does not mean the end of the “era of divided government.” There are still substantial number of divided governments in U.S. states. It is more likely that divided government has been institutionalized in spite of the concerns about less efficiency and less responsive elections under divided governments (Thurber, 1991; Leyden and Borrelli, 1995; Edwards III et al., 1997; Norpoth, 2001), and therefore, more attention is asked about the causes of it. In this paper, I suggest that divided government is both a “historical and procedural accident” as Sundquist (1988) claims and an intentional outcome by voters. In this paper I showed that divided government is correlated differently to the increasing incumbency effect and voters’ considerations on policy outcomes, both of which are connected to legislative professionalization. First, professionalization increases the incumbency advantage, which promotes the chance of divided government. Second, professionalization decreases the motivation of voters’ splitting their ballots since professionalization leads to the balanced power relationship between the executive and the legislature. Based on the incumbency advantage literature and balancing theory literature, I proposed that there are two different effects of professionalization on divided government.

Fiorina shows a strong positive relationship between U.S. state legislative professionalization and the success of Democrats in legislative elections, which he attributes to the increasing trend of divided government in U.S. states. However I argue that Fiorina’s

theory on the positive relationship between state legislative professionalization and divided government is restricted to the early time of professionalization, and it does not provide the full understanding about the relationship between these two variables. Also, my theory provides a possible explanation why Squire only finds a weak relationship between professionalization and divided government. Since professionalization has a dual effect on forming divided government, a positive effect through incumbency and a negative effect, unless separating those effects, it is possible that each effect is canceled out by each other. As my theory suggests, in order to capture correctly how professionalization works on the probability of divided government we need to control for the incumbency effect.

The main purpose of this paper is providing a theoretical understanding on legislative professionalization.⁷⁾ Specifically we are interested in the effect of legislative professionalization on divided government, and based on the extensive survey of existing literature we propose the dual effect of professionalization. Then the obvious next step should be testing the hypotheses and confirming the theoretical argument. However, currently we leave the job as a future research agenda. We could have found a couple of possible ways to test the hypotheses with existing election data, but they are questionable for different reasons. The reasoning is as following.

How could we test the relationship between professionalization and the divided government as presented in this paper? The first choice

7) What have caused the legislative professionalization and how it has developed differently among states are another research area (see e.g., Mooney, 1995; Rosenthal 1996; King 2000).

of the dependent variable in the analysis might be the incidence of a divided government, that is, whether the election outcomes in different offices in each state result in a divided government.⁸⁾ However, there are two problems in this state-level analysis. First of all, the operation of an incumbency effect is not very clear in the state level data. Since my first hypothesis is the indirect role of the incumbency advantage on the increase of divided government, I need a variable of the incumbency advantage. One candidate could be the percentage of incumbents running in each election in each state. However, it is questionable whether this aggregate variable captures the individual-level incumbency advantage. Moreover, when we use the percentage of incumbents running in each state as a measure of the incumbency advantage, it is not easy to decide how we should combine the proportions of incumbents running in the House and Senate elections together at the state-level regression. It can produce more questions than answers, for example, if we give the same weight to the proportions of incumbents for reelections in the Senate and House elections.

Second, more importantly, the state-level analysis may not provide complete understanding of the dynamics of voters' incentives to elect a divided government. Obviously, divided government is formed when several conditions are met altogether. First, a majority voters should vote for a gubernatorial candidate from one party in a state and second, a majority of legislators from the other party should get a

8) One of the two major independent variables is a measure of state legislative professionalism. There are several measures available (e.g., Squire, 1997, 2007; King, 2000).

majority of votes in each district. That is, since elections are held in each district and for different offices, a governor and a legislator, voters' intention to make a divided government in some districts does not always guarantee the election of a divided government as an outcome. For this reason, it can be problematic if we do not distinguish a state which has 5% of the opposition party legislators and a state which has 45% of the opposition party legislators. Also, treating a state with 55% of nongubernatorial party legislators and a state with 85% of nongubernatorial party legislators equally as just states of divided government could lose important information. Note that the arguments we made so far in this paper are all about the intensity of voters' intention to support a divided government in terms of the level of professionalization and the incumbency benefit. Therefore, if we adopt this kind of state level analysis, we might end up with an indeterministic result since we do not use all the information about voters' motivation.

For these reasons, I believe that we need more micro-level analyses instead of dealing with each state election result as one observation. Most of all, in this paper we focus on a story from the voter's side, that is, how electoral institutional changes affect voters' incentives when voting. Therefore, a micro-level analysis is expected to work better for our interest. The smallest possible unit of observation we can currently use is a legislative election result at the district level. In order to evaluate the effect of professionalization on the voters' incentive to elect a divided government at the district level, we could operationalize the dependent variable according to whether the nongubernatorial party candidate won the state legislative

election in each district. The variable takes 1 when the nongubernatorial party candidate won the legislative election in a district and otherwise, it takes zero. Obviously, this dependent variable does not directly measure the probability of having a divided government. Rather, it reflects (among other things) the intention to elect a divided government in each district. However, this variable is positively connected with the probability of having a divided government at least indirectly since as more nongubernatorial party candidates are elected, it is more likely to have a divided government. Since there is not full information about other voters' preferences and voters' decisions are simultaneous, it is possible that some voters fail to elect a majority of the opposition party legislators even if they want to. In this case, still, this variable can capture the positive tendency of having a divided government. Therefore, considering that electoral results are decided by voters' collective actions in the presence of uncertainty, this variable has an advantage since it measures voters' intention to elect a divided government, not just considering the actual outcomes of split-ticket voting.

However, there are also questions raised against this variable. Most of all, the empirical analysis using this district level data is an indirect test of our argument on the relationship between professionalization and divided government. It takes into account voters' intention to build a divided government but it certainly does not measure the probability of having a divided government. Therefore, in order to examine voters' conscious and unconscious intention to make divided government resulting from the professionalization in state legislatures, we need an individual level

research, for which we do not currently have available data to use.

In addition to secure proper data to test our hypotheses, in order to validate our argument we need to confirm the relationship between the professionalization and the power relationship between the executive and the legislature in a systematic way. Do voters understand the legislative professionalization as the change of the power relationship between the governor and the legislature in the state government? Do voters expect the change of the power relationship will result in a different policy outcomes?

There are several things we may proceed to strengthen our argument. First, we could ask if voters see the policy positions taken under divided government change with regard to the level of legislative professionalization. Second, we could show that some individual voters who preferred divided government with an amateur legislature less prefer it with a professionalized legislature. By taking these further steps, we could constitute more direct evidence that voters' institutional considerations on policy outcomes under divided government are indeed the causal mechanism underlying the negative effect of legislative professionalization on the probability of divided government.

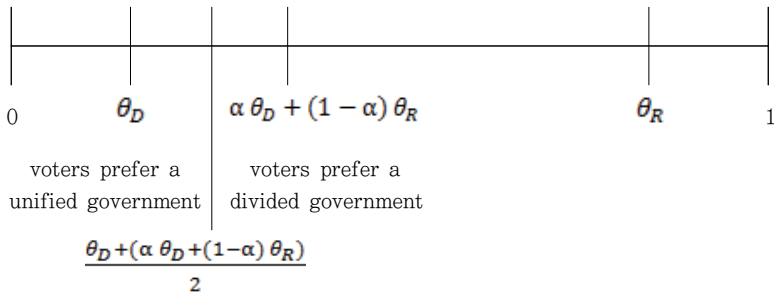
Appendix

Let θ_D and θ_R denote the policy positions of party D and R, respectively, where $0 < \theta_D < \theta_R < 1$. Voters' ideal points are distributed in $[0,1]$ and they have a euclidian preference over implemented policy, that is, a voter prefers a policy closer to his ideal point. The final policy is determined as $\alpha \theta_E + (1-\alpha) \theta_L$, where θ_E is the executive's ideal policy position, θ_L is the legislature's ideal policy position, and α is the weight the executive has over the legislature when bargaining the policy ($1/2 \leq \alpha \leq 1$). In our model, the executive is the governor, and α is assumed to be bigger than $1/2$ since governors have been playing a bigger role in making the state policy against the state legislatures.

For simplicity, let θ_E and θ_L be decided by which party takes a control of each branch. That is, if a candidate from party D is elected as an executive, then $\theta_E = \theta_D$. Also, when party D takes a majority of a legislature, then $\theta_L = \theta_D$. Let's assume that voters have a good expectation on which party wins the executiveship and suppose a candidate of party D is expected to win for the executive. In this case, making a unified government results in θ_D as a final policy while making a divided government results in $\alpha \theta_D + (1-\alpha) \theta_R$. Then voters whose ideal points are less than $[\theta_D + (\alpha \theta_D + (1-\alpha) \theta_R)]/2$ do straight ticket voting while voters whose ideal points are bigger than $[\theta_D + (\alpha \theta_D + (1-\alpha) \theta_R)]/2$ split their ballots.

Let α and α' refer different level of power relationship, where $\alpha' < \alpha$. Since $\alpha \geq 1/2$, note that α' implies more balanced power relationship between the executive and the legislature comparing to α .

Then, $\alpha \theta_D + (1-\alpha) \theta_R < \alpha' \theta_D + (1-\alpha') \theta_R$. Therefore, $[\theta_D + (\alpha \theta_D + (1-\alpha) \theta_R)]/2 < [\theta_D + (\alpha' \theta_D + (1-\alpha') \theta_R)]/2$, which means as α gets smaller, closer to $1/2$, less voters split their ballots between the executive and the legislature. When the policy under the Democrat-Republican government is little bit moderate, some Democrats prefer it to an extreme policy under unified Democrat government. However, as the policy under the divided government becomes too moderate, it loses the support from some Democrats whose ideal points are not very moderate.



<Electoral choice with a Democrat Governor>

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Abstract

U.S. State Legislative Professionalization: Redefining the Connection to Divided Government

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This paper theoretically investigates the link between the U.S. state legislative professionalization and the incidence of divided government. Morris P. Fiorina provides a hypothesis attributing the growth of divided government to state legislative professionalization, but Peverill Squire only finds a weak relationship between these two variables. I argue that the institutional effect of professionalization has not been captured correctly. Including voter side decision making processes, I hypothesize that there are two different effects of professionalization on the divided government. First, legislative professionalization increases the incumbency advantage which encourages split ticket voting behavior and the occurrence of divided government. Second, based on a balancing theory, I propose that there is a negative institutional effect of legislative professionalization. Based on these hypotheses I propose that the incumbency benefit should be controlled for in order to capture the institutional effect of professionalization on voters' incentives to elect a divided government.

Key Words

legislative professionalization, divided government, balancing theory, incumbency advantage, split-ticket voting