

Political Ambition and Constituent Service: Does Ambition Influence How Local Officials Respond to Electoral and Non-Electoral Service Requests?

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Abstract:

Theoretically, political ambitions paired with elections generate more responsive elected officials. In this paper, we test whether the progressive political ambitions of public officials affect whether and how they respond to their constituents by conducting an experimental audit study where local public officials receive both an electorally related service request and a generic service request. We combine their responses (or non-responses) with data from a survey of these public officials conducted months prior about their political ambition in seeking higher office. We find that politically ambitious officials are more responsive to electorally oriented service requests and that there are systematic differences in the content of the responses of ambitious and non-ambitious elected officials. The political ambition of democratically elected representatives affects the responsiveness to and concern for constituent requests.

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“The politician as office seeker engages in political acts and makes decisions appropriate to gaining office”
-Joseph Schlesinger (1966, 6)

Democratic theory holds that the combination of elections and political ambition elicits democratic responsiveness. Writing in 1966, Joseph Schlesinger noted that “the central assumption of ambition theory is that a politician’s behavior is a response to his office goal” (6). Thus theoretically, political ambition paired with elections is the means by which constituents generate responsive actions from their elected representatives.

Scholars have long recognized that the way in which the representative interacts with their constituents is as important as or more important than the legislative actions they take and have highlighted the importance of responsiveness to constituent requests (Butler and Broockman 2011; Clingermayer and Feiock 1994; Fenno 1978; Koop 2016; Oliver 2012). Constituency services are essential to the job of an elected official (especially at the local level) (Clingermayer and Feiock 1994; Koop 2016; Oliver 2012; Serra and Cover 1992; Welch and Bledsoe 1988). They affect political careers (Cover and Brumberg 1982; Fenno 1978; Grose 2011) and are a key component of representation (Clingermayer and Feiock 1994; Grose 2011; Hall 1996; Oliver 2012; Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

In spite of the importance of constituent service to representation, previous studies of the effect of political ambition on representation and responsiveness have focused only on how ambition changes the relationship between constituent preferences and the policy actions of public officials (Hall 1996; Maestas 2003). Because policy oriented behavior is only a portion of

representation, the focus on the relationship between ambition and policy positions shows a woefully incomplete picture of how ambition affects representation.¹

In this paper, we study the relationship between political ambition and local elected officials' responsiveness to constituent requests using an innovative research design. We conduct an audit study of elected public officials using constituent requests and combine the results of that experiment with survey data previously collected from those same officials. While the number of audit studies examining the responsiveness of elected officials is rapidly growing, previous studies have largely used between subject designs and have only examined variation in legislator characteristics using externally measurable factors. (For a more comprehensive summary of previous audit studies of elected officials see Costa 2017.) Our use of a large scale survey in conjunction with an audit study using a within subject design allows us to measure progressive ambition in a detailed way and observe the relationship between ambition and the responsiveness for a different types of constituent requests.

In this study, we use a within-subject design that looks specifically at how the responsiveness of public officials varies by ambition across two different types of service requests—a standard request for information about a non-electorally related government service and a request for information about an electorally related government service. This allows us to

¹ There has been some work linking ambition to constituency services; however, this work is incomplete because it has taken ambition as a constant or has measured ambition using retrospective measures of who runs for office rather than prospective measures looking at who wants to run for higher office (e.g. McAdams and Johannes 1985). Progressive political ambition is not constant across public officials (Dynes et al. 2018; Maestas et al. 2006) and may even vary in response to the opportunities available (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Fox and Lawless 2011; Maestas et al. 2006), and as such, measuring ambition solely using the decision to run for higher office may limit the ability to draw inferences about the influence of ambition on behavior.

examine differences in how ambition affects these two different types of constituent services. In contrast to other research using audit studies, we also perform a detailed content analysis of the responses sent by elected officials. Our analysis provides new understanding about representative communication. Representation involves both the responsiveness of elected officials and also *the way* in which these officials respond (Grose, Malhotra, and Van Houweling 2015; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015). Moreover, whether and how public officials respond can have significant effects on citizens' political behavior (Butler and Hassell 2018; Panagopoulos 2011).

Our findings also show that ambition has a positive effect on the elected official's responsiveness to electorally-oriented service requests. On the whole, when compared to audit studies of state and national US public officials, we find that local officials are generally more responsive to constituent requests for information. However, requests for information about voter registration are even more likely to receive responses than are requests for information about recycling, and these effects are driven by politicians who are interested in seeking the opportunity to run for higher office.

Moreover, we also find that officials with progressive ambition are more likely to write longer responses and are more likely to encourage political action in response to emails requesting information about registering to vote than are non-ambitious public officials. However, we do not find evidence that ambition affects the content of elected officials' responses to *non*-electoral service requests. In short, political ambition increases the quality of representation, but only to certain types of constituent services as elected officials act

strategically and engage “in political acts...appropriate to gaining (higher) office” (Schlessinger 1966, 6).²

Progressive Political Ambition

The idea that political ambition influences the behavior of elected officials is not a new concept. Although scholars have largely considered variation in higher office seeking behavior to be the result of structural differences in incentives rather than underlying differences in interest in higher office, recent work has shown that underlying political ambition is not a constant trait across all public officials (Dietrich et al. 2012; Dynes, Hassell, and Miles 2018; Maestas 2003). In addition to institutional incentives, a variety of factors may also play a role in the ambition that individuals have for higher office. Higher elected office appeals to certain types of individuals whose characteristics and personality traits are more amenable to life in a rough and tumble political environment (Dietrich et al. 2012; Dynes et al. 2018). Underlying interests in seeking higher office also change as a result of the structure of opportunities available to individuals (Maestas et al. 2006).

Differences in ambition are important because they change the incentives for action that politicians have (Schlesinger 1966). Elected officials with progressive ambition have incentives to act differently from those without progressive ambition to reach their electoral goals.

² We recognize that progressive ambition among local public officials is also correlated with a number of other characteristics that could also theoretically influence responsiveness (Dynes et al. 2018). As such we also ran models where we analyzed how responsiveness to different requests varies by city population size, years in office, local government structure, local office held, gender, and personality (Big 5). None of the interactions between request type and these characteristics are significant (as should be expected given that they should not affect responsiveness to different types of request differently) suggesting that the root cause is ambition and not other individual factors that correlate with ambition. Those models are available in the online appendix.

Specifically, public officials with progressive ambitions need to enlarge their electoral base beyond their current electoral coalition to provide the foundation for future political aspirations.

On the other hand, politicians without progressive ambitions are less likely to need to expand their constituent base to continue to win elections.³ Both those with static ambition (a desire to seek re-election) and those with discrete ambition (a desire to leave office) are more likely to have already established the electoral base they need to win the office they will subsequently seek. In both cases, these public officials do not need to create new votes, but rather just need to maintain the coalitions they have formed.⁴ Moreover, many elected officials occupy seats where there is a chronic lack of competition (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000; Squire 2000), which reduces the chance that their actions will be fully scrutinized during the re-election campaign. This is especially true in local races (Krebs 1998), and our survey of local officials found that 86 percent of elected officials in our sample won their election by more than

³ Schlesinger (1966) also discusses how discrete ambition, which is the desire to leave public office, and static ambition, which is the desire to stay in office and run for re-election, impact behavior. While, we do not explicitly test the difference between discrete ambition and static ambition, previous research has provided strong evidence that lame-duck politicians fundamentally change their actions as a result (Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing 1994).

⁴ Fenno (1978, 172) does recognize that members of Congress engage in “expansionism” early in their careers; however, Fenno notes that that phase appears to end towards the end of the first term in office. While it could be that elected officials without progressive political ambition in their expansionist phase may behave more like elected officials with progressive ambition, given the early transition to a protectionist phase it is unlikely that these individuals are a significant portion of the unambitious. Moreover, the inclusion of these individuals as part of the unambitious group biases us against finding significant differences between those with static ambition and progressive ambition. As such, we can be more confident the differences between ambitious and non-ambitious elected officials may actually be larger than what we report here.

5 percentage points and 67 percent of local elected officials won their election by more than 15 percentage points. Thus, while we should expect local officials without political ambition to continue to service their constituencies, they do not need to expand their electoral support in the same way as elected officials who harbor progressive ambitions.

Just as the need to expand the electoral base differs between those without progressive ambition and those with progressive ambition, there are also differences in the approaches of those who have interest in higher office but do not yet see the opportunity and those who are “definitely” interested in running for higher office. Ambition is not static (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Fox and Lawless 2011) and ambition increases as opportunities and pathways to higher office become more salient (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Maestas et al. 2006; Schlesinger 1991). Those who are “definitely” interested in running for higher office are those who are more likely to have already laid the ground work for such actions including the electoral foundations needed for higher office (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Maestas et al. 2006).

On the other hand, those who are interested but who do not see a clear path will express interest but be less likely to indicate they are “definitely” running in the future. Simply, survey measures of ambition can be understood at least partially as a “response to the possibilities that lie before politicians” (Schlesinger 1991, 38). As such, not only do we expect differences in behavior between ambitious and non-ambitious elected officials, we should also expect differences between those who would be interested “if the opportunity presented itself” and those who are “definitely” interested in running. Those who are “definitely” interested in running are more likely already to have laid the electoral groundwork for a run (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Fox and Lawless 2011). Those who are interested in higher office “if the opportunity presented itself” are more likely to have not yet created that constituency that would allow them to run,

which is why they do not indicate they are “definitely” going to run (Balian and Gasparyan 2017; Maestas et al. 2006; Schlesinger 1991). The differences in the opportunities before these ambitious politicians also likely shape their behavior.

Political Ambition and the Behavior of Elected Officials

The study of how ambition affects representation is not new; yet, this vein of research has focused almost entirely on the behavior of elected representatives in the policy making sphere. We know political ambition influences the policy positions that legislators take (Francis and Kenny 1996; Hibbing 1986), the time and effort elected officials spend on policy activity (Herrick and Moore 1993), and on their attentiveness in listening and seeking to understand the policy preferences of their constituents (Maestas 2003; Parker and Parker 1985). In short, progressive ambition fundamentally changes the way in which legislators act in the policy sphere.

While scholars have long realized that behavior in the legislative and policy related spheres is not the only thing that matters to representation (Fenno 1978), only recently have scholars begun to spend more time investigating the responsiveness of representatives to service requests (e.g. Broockman 2013; Butler and Broockman 2011; Dropp and Peskowitz 2012; Grose et al. 2015) and their communication with constituents (e.g. Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012; Hassell and Monson 2016; Koop 2016). While these studies have focused on the nature and frequency of elected officials’ responsiveness to service requests, none of these recent works have examined the relationship between responsiveness and progressive political ambition.⁵

⁵ This is likely largely due to a lack of good measures of progressive ambition among elected officials. Dropp and Peskowitz (2012) and Butler et al. (2012) find negative relationships between electoral security and constituent service in an audit study which is consistent with other non-experimental work (Hassell and Monson 2016), but

Moreover, previous work that considers how progressive ambition might influence constituency service uses measures of ambition that do not account for individual variation in ambition. In the lone instance that we can find that examines the relationship between ambition and constituent services, McAdams and Johannes (1985) find that legislative officials who seek a higher political office in the subsequent election cycle do not allocate constituent service resources differently in the current election cycle than those who do not seek higher office. This lone study, however, relies on a dichotomous variable for the level of ambition and is measured retrospectively by whether the elected official ran for higher office in the subsequent election cycle. This fails to distinguish between those who are unambitious, those who have ambition but have not yet found the opportunity, and those who have the ambition and have already laid the groundwork for a run for higher office. This static measure of ambition fails to adequately differentiate between variations in the progressive ambitions of elected officials. Using a dichotomous variable for the level of ambition may cause researchers to miss important distinctions in ambition which can vary significantly across the population of elected officials (Dynes, Hassell, and Miles 2016; Maestas 2003).

In addition, institutional structures and incentives outside of the control of the public official have a strong influence on whether or not that individual runs for office even after

make the assumption that all elected officials share the same ambitions. Moreover, Dropp and Peskowitz (2012) do not differentiate between service requests (which were electorally related) and policy requests (which were not). Butler and his coauthors (2012) do differentiate between policy and service requests and find that responses to policy requests decline with electoral security, but that service requests do not. Costa (2017) uses a meta-analysis and notes no overall difference in responsiveness between policy and service requests but does not differentiate between service requests that are electorally related and those that are not. However, as noted before, none of these studies directly examine any relationship between responsiveness and progressive ambition.

accounting for progressive ambition (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1987; Maestas et al. 2006; Rohde 1979). Thus, it is plausible that an individual with only a little ambition may be persuaded to run in a highly favorable district, while another candidate with significantly more desire to run for higher office declines to do so because of unfavorable institutional incentives.

Moreover, McAdams and Johannes (1986) look only at the allocation of congressional resources rather than responsiveness to different types of requests. While there may not be changes in the number of visits a member of Congress makes, or how he or she allocates staffing resources, elected officials should logically prioritize certain types of constituent services more than others depending on their ambition.⁶

Although previous research has assumed that progressive ambition incentivizes politicians to be more responsive on the whole, this view does not take into consideration how different responsibilities have differing effects on their ability to help them achieve their political goals. Politicians should have greater incentives to perform better in areas that better help them to achieve their goals. In short, the differences between politicians who are seeking to facilitate their progressive ambition and those who either do not have progressive ambitions or who have already laid the necessary groundwork to run for higher office should be greatest in areas that will facilitate opportunities to run for higher office.

Indeed, some forms of constituency service are more likely to produce future electoral opportunities than others. Work on constituent service that does not differentiate between service requests that are explicitly linked to elections (e.g. registering to vote or acquiring citizenship)

⁶ Significant work has looked at variation in responsiveness to constituent service requests relative to policy requests and how that varies with the electoral security of the representative (Butler et al. 2012; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Hassell and Monson 2016) but not how it varies with progressive ambition.

and other non-electoral service requests (e.g. assistance with access to government services) may miss important variation in the actions of elected officials. Helping constituents with electorally related services helps win the support of individuals who elected officials can be more certain will later participate in the electoral process, which can help them advance their political ambitions. In the mind of the official, helping someone to register to vote likely increases the likelihood that that individual will be a supporter in future campaigns.

Hypotheses

The preceding discussion leads us to outline a number of expectations for the effect of progressive ambition on constituent service. Given that responses to some constituent service requests have a stronger connection to future electoral success, we expect that the elected officials' responsiveness to different types of constituent service requests will also vary with progressive ambition. Specifically, we hypothesize that progressively ambitious elected officials will be more likely to respond to constituent service requests that have the potential to increase the electoral base of an elected official, such as a request to help register to vote, than a non-electorally related service request, such as questions about recycling procedures.

Hypothesis 1: Elected officials with progressive ambition will be more likely to be responsive to constituent requests related to electoral participation relative to non-electorally related service requests

At the same time, however, we expect these effects to be greatest among public officials who have ambition but have not yet seen the opportunity to run for higher office present itself. Measures of ambition are a “response to the possibilities that lie before politicians” (Schlesinger 1991, 38). Elected officials are more likely to express higher levels of ambition when they have a larger electoral base to run from (Balian and Gasparyan 2017). As we explained before, this leads to expected differences in behaviors between those who “definitely” will run, and those

who are interested in running “if the opportunity presented itself.” Elected officials who indicate they will “definitely” run for office are likely to have already established the electoral foundations necessary for a run for higher office. These individuals have less of a need to work to expand their electoral base through electorally related service than elected officials who indicate that they are interested in running “if the opportunity presented itself.” Individuals who are open but have not yet seen the opportunity to seek higher office should be more likely to be responsive to situations that would expand the base of support needed in order to make a run for higher office in the future.

Hypothesis 1A: Elected officials who are interested in running for higher office “if the opportunity presented itself” will be most responsive to constituent requests related to electoral participation relative to non-electorally related service requests.

We also expect that progressive political ambition will influence *how* elected officials respond to their constituents. Our expectations are that more ambitious elected officials (and especially those who might run “if the opportunity presented itself”) will write longer, more thoughtful, and more encouraging responses to requests for electorally related service. The need to expand an electoral base incentivizes ambitious politicians to provide better responses. We expect that these higher quality responses will be manifest in two ways. First, elected officials with progressive ambition will be more likely to thank constituents for their actions related to voting and to encourage constituents to vote because both expressing gratitude and encouragement to vote have a strong effect on future electoral participation (Panagopoulos 2011).

Hypothesis 2A: Responses by elected officials with progressive ambition to electorally related service requests will be more positive and encouraging in their responses to constituent requests for electorally related service than those without progressive ambition.

Second, we anticipate that ambitious politicians who are seeking to expand their electoral base will give more thorough answers in response to service requests about voting which will lead to longer responses.

Hypothesis 2B: Responses by elected officials with progressive ambition to electorally related service requests will be longer than responses by elected officials without progressive ambition.

In contrast, we do not expect the same effects for non-electoral requests. In these cases, the differences between ambitious and non-ambitious politicians should be minimal. Because non-ambitious politicians may still want to retain their seats, we expect them to continue to serve their districts; however, these non-electoral requests are not as directly tied to ambitious officials' motivations to enlarge and expand their electoral base which results in a level of responsiveness that is not significantly elevated above the responsiveness of unambitious politicians.

Hypothesis 3: Progressive Ambition will have no effect on the content of responses to non-electorally related service requests.

Survey of Elected Municipal Officials

We test these hypotheses with data collected from a field experiment that followed a two-wave survey of municipal officials in 2016. Invitations to the first wave of the survey were sent in May and June of 2016 to a sample of 27,862 elected mayors and legislators (e.g., city councilors, aldermen, supervisors, etc.) and high ranking staff (such as city managers and clerks) from 4,187 cities. Given the focus of this study, we exclude non-elected staff from the analysis. The sample was compiled by a for-profit organization that gathers contact information and email addresses of public officials from municipalities that have a website and a population above 10,000. The organization uses webcrawler software to identify when information changes on the

contact pages of each city's website and then has research assistants update its contact list of officials accordingly. Unfortunately, this approach had a high error rate. Based on Qualtrics' email tracking, only 18,567 (or 67%) of the email invitations were delivered to an active email address. In addition, we looked up a sample of 832 officials in the list and found that only 44% of the email addresses were accurate. 2,165 officials answered questions on the first wave of the survey, resulting in a response rate of 17.8 percent,⁷ which is similar to those from other surveys of municipal officials (e.g., Butler and Dynes (2016) report a response rate of 23%).

The second wave of the survey was conducted in June and early July of 2016. The sample consisted of the email addresses of elected mayors and city councilors (or equivalent) gathered previously in 2012 and 2014. Excluding the email addresses that were also in the first wave resulted in a list of 29,250 emails. The email addresses collected in 2012 were gathered in January through March of 2012 by a team of undergraduate research assistants who searched for the website of 26,566 US municipalities. The email addresses collected in 2014 were gathered in a similar fashion in early 2014 but excluded municipalities with a population below 3,000 due to the low percentage of small towns with websites. Given that these email addresses were gathered 2 to 4 years prior to this survey, we knew that a large percentage of the emails and names of the officials (in the case of cities that use generic email accounts for each office) would no longer be accurate. Indeed, 26% of the emails sent through Qualtrics were undeliverable. It is likely that many more of the email addresses are no longer monitored though they remain active. With 1,500 officials participating, the response rate for the second round of the survey was 6.9% although that probably underestimates significantly the actual response rate. In this paper, we analyze respondents from both survey rounds together.

⁷ The 17.8% is calculated as follows: $2,165 / (.4375 * 27,862)$.

An analysis of the respondents and sampling frame show that the officials who participated in the survey come from a wide variety of municipalities in terms of location, demographics, and institutional features. The survey also asked municipal officials about a wide range of items related to their political position. The officials in our sample vary significantly on many important political characteristics, including partisan identity, self-placed ideology, gender, term limits, partisan status of elections, electoral vulnerability, tenure, and expressed views on representation. For more details about the sample, please see the online appendix.

The primary independent variable in this analysis is local officials’ progressive ambition, which we measured by asking elected officials, “Which best characterizes your attitudes toward running for a higher office in the future?” Survey respondents had four options, which we list in Table 1, beginning with the answer that indicates the highest level of progressive ambition.

Table 1: Progressive Ambition among Surveyed Municipal Officials

Attitudes Toward Running for Higher Office	Frequency Choosing Each Attitude	Percent Choosing Each Attitude
1) Definitely: “It is something I definitely would like to undertake in the future.”	285	13%
2) Opportunity: “It is something I might undertake if the opportunity presented itself.”	579	27%
3) No Interest: “I would not rule it out forever, but I currently have no interest.”	914	43%
4) Never: “It is something I would absolutely never do.”	363	17%
TOTAL	2,141	100%

Although some previous analyses have bundled these four options into a dichotomous measure, we choose not to do so because we have specific expectations between those individuals who would run for office “if the opportunity presented itself” and those who will “definitely” run for office in the future. Specifically, as outlined in our hypotheses, we expect those who are looking for the opportunity to present itself to be more interested in building an electoral base so that the

opportunity might actually present itself. These individuals have ambition, but need to build the electoral base necessary to run for higher office for the opportunity to present itself. Elected officials who definitely would like to run for higher office are more likely to have already built that base and are either already running or waiting for an appropriate seat to become available (Black 1972).

One potential problem we recognize is that progressive political ambition is not randomly assigned. Elected local officials who harbor progressive ambitions are substantively distinct from non-ambitious political officials in a number of ways (Dynes et al. 2018; Maestas et al. 2006) many of which could also potentially influence responsiveness to citizen requests for services. As a result, we also run models that interact a variety of characteristics that correlate with ambition including individual personality traits, city size, years in office, local government structure, local office held, gender, and personality. None of the interactions of these variables with the experimental treatments outlined below are significant predictors of responsiveness or the content of the email responses, nor is this unexpected. While these characteristics might affect overall responsiveness, we should not expect responsiveness to different types of service requests to vary by these characteristics. These results are available in the online appendix. While we are obviously not able to test every possible factor, these null results contrasted with the findings detailed in the text provide strong assurances that the root cause of variations in responsiveness detailed here is ambition and not factors that correlate with ambition.

Email Audit Experiment

Using a list of generic first and last names, we created ten (five male, five female) Gmail accounts from which we sent requests to the officials who had previously participated in our

survey.⁸ We utilize a three-wave within person design for this experiment. Each elected official received two emails requesting assistance in gathering information sent during one of three waves.⁹ One of these two service oriented emails asked for assistance finding information about an electorally related topic (information about how long an individual needed to live in an area prior to registering to vote) while the other asked for assistance with a non-electorally related topic (information about what could and could not be recycled in the community). The exact text for these specific treatments and the rest of the email is displayed in Box 1. In Figure 1, we provide an example of what one of the emails looked like in Gmail. Almost every aspect of the email text was randomized to increase the external validity of the emails and decrease the possibility that officials would associate the emails with one another.

We randomized the order in which each of the emails assigned to an official was sent. To avoid possible contamination effects, we waited at least one week in between sending each wave of the emails to each of the 2,141 elected municipal officials. We did not see a decrease in the response rate over time.

⁸ The accounts were created with the names: Amy Bennett, Andrea Davis, Ann Thomas, Eric Bennett, Jason Anderson, Joshua Wood, Melissa Wood, Michael Davis, Tiffany Anderson, and Will Thomas. In other work, we also looked at the effect of gender on the responsiveness of male and female elected officials. We found no effect of gender of the constituent on the responsiveness of elected officials, nor were public officials more responsive to constituents who share their gender.

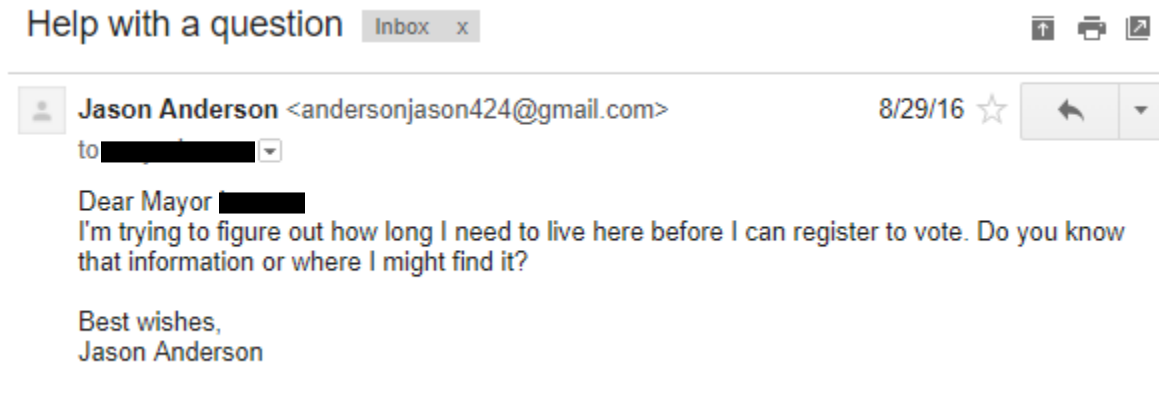
⁹ Public officials also received a third email regarding a policy related issue which we do not analyze here.

Box 1: Email Treatment Text

Subject:	Quick Question / Help with a question / Request for Assistance
Salutation:	[BLANK] / Hello / Hi / Dear
Recipient's Name:	[BLANK] / [TITLE] [LASTNAME] / [FIRSTNAME LASTNAME]
Punctuation:	[BLANK] / : / ,
Introduction:	[BLANK] / For whatever reason, I couldn't find this online. / I've been in the area a little while, but / I'm newer to the area and
Segue:	I'm trying to figure out / I was wondering if you could help me figure out / I wanted to know / I was wondering / I was wondering if you could tell me
Recycling Service Treatment:	what can be recycled and what cannot. Do you know [that information or where I might find it / the answer or where I could find this out]?
Voter Registration Service Treatment:	how long I need to live here before I can register to vote. Do you know [the answer or where I could find this out / that information or where I might find it]?
Valediction:	[BLANK] / Thanks, / Best wishes, / Sincerely, / Thanks for considering this request, / Regards, / Best, / Thanks in advance, / I appreciate the help,
Sender's Name:	Amy / Amy Bennett / Andrea / Andrea Davis / Ann / Ann Thomas / Eric / Eric Bennett / Jason / Jason Anderson / Joshua / Joshua Wood / Melissa / Melissa Wood / Michael / Michael Davis / Tiffany / Tiffany Anderson / Will / Will Thomas
Sender's Email Address:	andersonjason424@gmail.com / andersontiffany424@gmail.com / annthomas.blue@gmail.com / bennett.amy149@gmail.com / davisandrea.aac@gmail.com / davismichael.aac@gmail.com / ebennett5661@gmail.com / willthomas.blue@gmail.com / woodjoshua.93@gmail.com / woodmelissa93@gmail.com

Notes: The above is the text used to create the emails sent to the elected municipal officials in the email audit study. Figure 1 shows an actual email sent using the text above. Assignment to the different conditions were not completely independent of the other conditions in the following cases: 1) Every official received two service request emails, one about recycling and one about registering to vote (and a third email with a request for the elected officials position on a policy which we do not analyze here) 2) The email addresses were associated with a specific sender's name. 3) No official received more than 1 email from senders with the same last name (there are five last names among the senders and associated email addresses and a male and female first name associated with each last name.)

Figure 1: Example Email Request



Results

Our findings indicate that municipal officials overall are responsive to email requests. As reported in Table 2, elected municipal officials responded to 70.8% of the voter registration email messages they received and 67.4% of the recycling email messages they received. Both of these response rates are significantly higher than reported response rates to constituent letters at the Congressional and state legislative levels.¹⁰

In Table 2 we show tests for whether the different email request treatment conditions affected local officials' response rates. As we indicated previously, we sent officials two different service requests, one with no electoral content (dealing with recycling) and one with more electoral significance (dealing with voter registration). On the whole, as expected, we find that officials are more likely to respond to voter registration email requests than to the non-electoral service request by 3.4 percentage points ($p < .01$).

¹⁰ For example, Butler et al. (2012) finds that members of Congress (state legislators) responded to 52% (51%) of service-related letters and 38% (19%) of policy related letters. Our results are slightly higher than the response rate of the one other study of local elected officials which examined only the responses of elected officials from large cities (Butler and Crabtree 2017).

Table 2: Do local officials’ response rates differ based on the email request treatments?

Email Request Treatment:	Voter Registration	Recycling	Difference
Response Rate	70.8%	67.4%	3.4
95% C.I.	(68.8, 72.7)	(65.4, 69.3)	(0.6, 6.2)
Obs.	2,141	2,141	

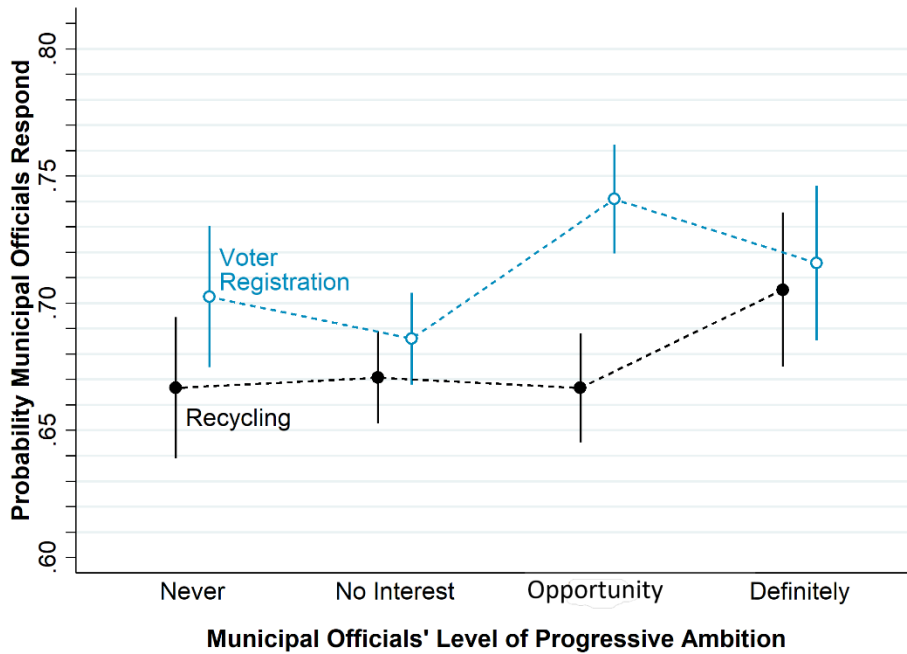
To examine the role of ambition in the differences in response rates found above, we now test whether progressively ambitious officials are more likely to respond to service requests that have a direct impact on their electoral goals. We begin by presenting predicted mean response rates to the different email treatments by the officials’ progressive ambition in Figure 2. To mitigate possible bias caused by omitted variables that may correlate with officials’ progressive ambition and propensity to respond to emails generally, we take advantage of the within-subjects design of our experiment and use a subject-level fixed effects model to estimate response rates and how they differ between the treatment conditions. This allows us to account for a myriad of individually constant factors that might also affect the behavior and responsiveness of elected officials including gender, city and staff size, electoral security, and time in office.¹¹

The results in Figure 2 illustrate that overall, elected officials are more likely to respond to emails about voter registration than recycling, but this difference is largest and only statistically significant among officials who express interest in running “if the opportunity

¹¹ This does not eliminate the possibility of spurious correlation as ambition is not randomly assigned and correlates with a number of factors that might also increase responsiveness. However, as we note elsewhere, we also analyzed other factors that have been shown to correlate with political ambition. A smattering of those results are available in the online appendix. None of the results we examined are significant, and the incorporation of these additional interactions does not affect the results presented here.

presented itself” (diff. = 7.4; $p < 0.001$), consistent with Hypothesis 1A. Though elected officials who were “definitely” interested in running for higher office had the second highest response rate to the voter registration emails, they also had the highest response rate to the recycling emails, resulting in a small difference in response rates between the two treatments (diff. = 1.1; $p = 0.367$). The estimated differences in response rates for elected officials without progressive ambition are also smaller than the difference found among those who might run “if the opportunity presented itself” (Never: diff. = 3.5; $p = 0.103$. No Interest: diff. = 1.5; $p = 0.203$).

Figure 2: Probability of Response by Email Topic and Progressive Ambition



Notes: Points are the predicted probability of the municipal official responding to either the Voter Registration (blue) or Recycling (black) email based on the model in tables 3 and 4. Bars are the 95% confidence interval.

Table 3: Difference-in-Differences Estimate of Response Rates by Email Topic and Progressive Ambition

	(1)
Voter Registration Treatment	0.074 [0.022] p=0.001
Definitely * Voter Registration	-0.064 [0.038] p=0.046
No Interest * Voter Registration	-0.059 [0.029] p=0.020
Never * Voter Registration	-0.038 [0.036] p=0.141
Constant	0.698 [0.006] p=0.000
Observations	4,282
Number of fixed effects	2,141
R-squared (within)	0.006

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is *Responded to Email*, which is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official responded to our email and 0 otherwise. The baseline conditions are the recycling treatment and subjects who indicated an interest in running for higher office “if the opportunity presented itself.” The coefficients on the indicator variables for the different levels or progressive ambition are omitted because these independent variables are subsumed in the subject-level fixed effects. We do not use a logit or probit model with fixed effects because they can produce biased estimates due to the incidental parameters problem. This is especially a concern in models with fewer than 15 observations per fixed effect (Katz 2001). In this analysis, we have just two. Standard errors are shown in brackets and clustered by municipal official. One-tailed p-values are shown under the standard errors.

In Table 3, we examine the difference-in-differences of responses to different service requests across levels of progressive ambition, using an OLS regression with fixed effects that interacts the officials’ level of progressive ambition with the treatment assignment. Since

officials who expressed interest in running “if the opportunity presented itself” had the largest difference in response rates between the two treatment conditions, we use this as the baseline category. In addition, since each official’s level of progressive ambition is constant across all observations for that official, the coefficients for each level of ambition are subsumed into the fixed effects and not shown in the results in Table 3.

On the whole, we find that the large difference in response rates among those who were interested in running “if the opportunity presented itself” is statistically significant from the difference in response rates among those who expressed either no interest or that they would definitely run. The difference-in-differences also approaches statistical significance at the 0.1 level when comparing those who were interested “if the opportunity presented itself” to those who indicated running for office is something they would “absolutely never do.” Though these heterogeneous treatment effects are not substantively huge, they are similar in size to the effect of emailers’ race on elected officials’ response rates as found by Butler and Broockman (2011), in which white state legislators were about 7 percentage points less likely to respond to emails sent by someone with a black name. Our findings show that progressive political ambition plays a significant role in predicting the probability of responding to constituency requests consistent with our expectations as laid out in Hypothesis 1A.

Length of Response

Although the substantive differences in response rates are significant, what about the way in which elected officials respond? We start by examining the overall length of responses from ambitious and non-ambitious public officials. We measured the length of the responses from elected officials in two steps. First, we employed research assistants to go through each email

message and remove headers and other superfluous information, other than the email text from the municipal official. Next, we used software to generate a word count for each email message.¹² To mitigate concerns of post-treatment bias (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018), we follow Coppock's (2018) recommendations and set the word count of non-responses to zero rather than consider them missing.¹³ We fit both a fixed effects model (similar to the one used in Table 3) and a zero-inflated negative binomial regression model predicting the word count by the interaction of progressive ambition and the topic of the email. The full model results are in the appendix.

Progressively ambitious elected officials write more words in response to electoral service requests than are non-ambitious elected officials. As can be seen in Figure A.7 in the online appendix, those who express an interest in running “if the opportunity presented itself” or will “definitely” run write 55 and 49 words on average in their responses while those who will never run or currently have no interest wrote 41 and 42 words on average. On average, ambitious politicians write a sentence worth of words more. In contrast, we do not see as strong of a trend across ambition for requests for information about recycling, where the average word counts from the least to the most ambitious are 46, 47, 54, and 47. Though the differences-in-differences are not quite statistically significant (see Tables A.7 and A.8 in the appendix), they are in the right direction in line with Hypothesis 2B.

¹² We went through each of the email responses and cleaned up the text to ensure that the word counts are accurate.

¹³ Results are very similar if we exclude non-responses from the analysis. The primary difference is that the word count is on average about 60 words higher across all treatment conditions.

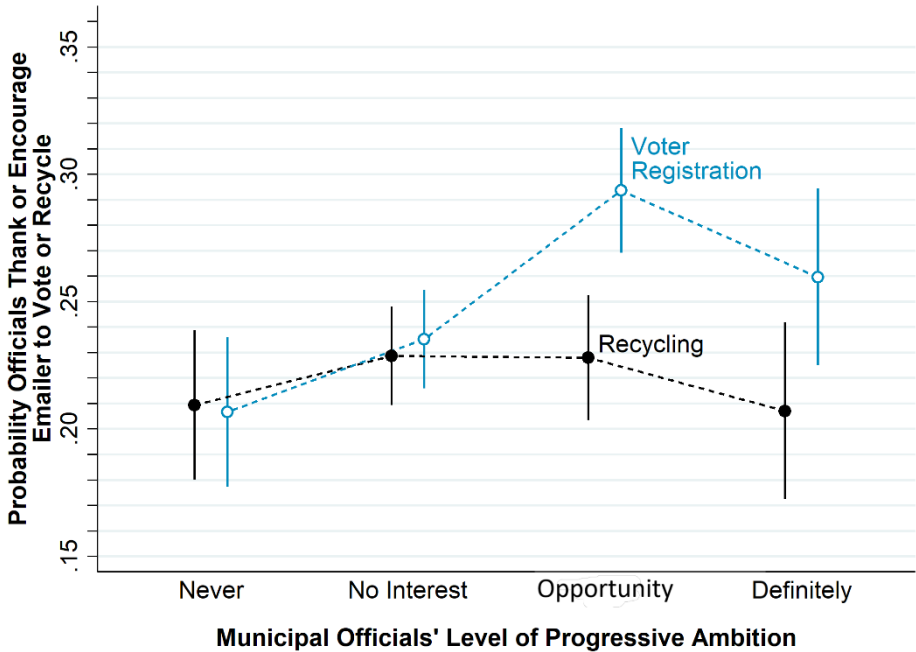
Response Content

The length of a response to a request for service, however, does not provide a clear indicator of the overall quality of those responses. To better test the hypothesis that ambitious politicians will craft better and more thoughtful responses to electoral related service requests than non-ambitious politicians, we need to know whether the content of those messages varies. As outlined in Hypothesis 2A, we argue that ambitious politicians are more likely to encourage their constituents to vote and to express gratitude for their interest in voting compared to their propensity for doing so in their responses to recycling inquiries. The results presented here provide strong support for these expectations.

To test Hypothesis 2A, we employed a research assistant to read every single email response and dichotomously code whether the email encouraged the respondent to either vote or register to vote, encouraged the respondent to recycle, thanked the constituent for their interest in voting, or thanked the constituent for their interest in recycling. While one research assistant was coding the entire corpus of email responses, several undergraduates were randomly assigned a set of 700 emails to code for the presence of gratitude or encouragement. The coding was double-blind. None of the coders were aware of the topic of the research project and none of them knew who had been assigned to code other sets of emails. Intercoder agreement for the items presented here was 83 and 84.5% and the Cronbach's alpha was .65, each of which meet dominant thresholds for intercoder reliability (McHugh 2012). We had at least three coders code each message, and we use a majority rule to create our dichotomous measure.¹⁴

¹⁴ Complete information on the email coding process is available in the online appendix.

Figure 4: Probability that Municipal Officials Thank or Encourage Constituent to Vote or Recycle by Email Topic and Progressive Ambition



Notes: Points are predicted probabilities from Table 4. Bars are the 95% confidence interval.

To examine whether ambitious municipal officials are more likely to thank or encourage constituents in their response to inquiries about voter registration than about recycling, in Figure 4 we show the probability that elected officials thank constituents for either voting or recycling or encourage constituents to vote or recycle in their email responses to the recycling service request (solid point estimates) or voter registration one (hollow point estimates). As expected, those with more ambition are much more likely than elected officials without progressive ambition to thank constituents for voting or encourage constituents to vote in response to a voter registration email. Not only are these differences statistically significant, they are substantively meaningful. While 21% of officials who say they “never” plan to run thank constituents for inquiring about registering to vote or encourage them to vote, this number stands at 29.2% among opportunistically ambitious elected officials. Comparing this to the probability that an

opportunisticly ambitious elected official will do the same in response to an email about recycling (23%), suggests that municipal officials seeking opportunities to run for higher office respond differently to constituents who are signaling an interest in voting.

Consistent with our expectations, we find that more ambitious municipal officials are more likely to encourage constituents to vote or register to vote than to recycle (Hypothesis 2A) and that this difference is largest among those who express interest in running for higher office “if the opportunity presented itself” (Hypothesis 1A). Though not quite statistically significant, we also find a substantively large difference among those who are “definitely” running. At the same time, the probability that elected officials thank a constituent for recycling or encourage a constituent to recycle does *not* vary by ambition. This strongly supports the idea that progressive ambition selectively conditions how elected officials respond, with greater responsiveness when the activity helps advance their political goals.

In Table 4, we further examine whether the difference-in-differences in the content of elected officials’ responses vary by different levels of progressive ambition. Once again, to account for possible omitted variable bias, the results in Table 4 are from a linear probability model with subject-level fixed effects that take advantage of the within-subjects design of our experiment. Employing a fixed effects model allows us to account for any time-invariant subject-level variables such as perceived opportunities to run for higher office, staff size, electoral security, and time in office that might also correlate with progressive ambition and the content of elected officials’ email responses.¹⁵

¹⁵ Again, while ambition is not randomly assigned, interactions of other variables with constituent request type do not produce significant results as we outlined in Footnote 11 and in the following section.

Table 4: The Influence of Progressive Ambition on the Language Used in Constituent Requests

	(1) Thanks or Encourages Constituent about Voting or Recycling
Topic = Voter Registration	-0.003 [0.030] p=0.537
Definitely * Voter Registration	0.055 [0.046] p=0.115
Opportunity * Voter Registration	0.068 [0.039] p=0.039
No Interest * Voter Registration	0.009 [0.036] p=0.375
Constant	0.222 [0.006] p=0.00
Observations	4,282
Number of fixed effects	2,141
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level. DV is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official thanked or encouraged voting (for voter registration inquiries) or recycling (for recycling inquiries) in the email response and 0 otherwise. We count non-responses as 0's, consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. The baseline conditions are the recycling treatment and subjects who indicated they would "Never" run for higher office. The coefficients on the indicator variables for the different levels of progressive ambition are omitted because these independent variables are subsumed in the subject-level fixed effects. We avoid using logit and probit models due to the incidental parameters problem (Katz 2001). Standard errors are shown in brackets and clustered by each individual municipal official. One-tailed p-values are shown under the standard errors.

Consistent with our hypothesis, the difference-in-differences are statistically significant and indicate that those who express interest in running "if the opportunity presented itself" are

more likely to thank constituents for voting or encourage constituents to vote, than they are to thank them for recycling or encourage them to recycle relative to local officials without progressive ambition. These effects are not merely the result of ambitious public officials being a more gracious type since we do not find a similar effect on encouraging or thanking constituents about recycling in response to a recycling related service request.

Overall, these results show that ambition has an effect on both the likelihood of response and the content of those responses. Municipal officials who lack interest in running for higher office include fewer words in their responses to voter registration requests than those with progressive ambition. Publicly elected municipal officials with ambition for higher office are also more likely to express gratitude and encouragement to their constituents for voting and registering to vote in a way that non-ambitious elected officials do not. Consistent with expectations, these effects are greatest for those who express an interest in running “if the opportunity presented itself.” Moreover, we do not see these same differences for non-electoral related requests for information about recycling.

Robustness Checks: Other Possible Characteristics?

As mentioned previously, one possible concern with this analysis is that by restricting our analysis to ambition and ignoring the fact that ambition is correlated to a number of other individual and institutional characteristics (Black 1972; Dietrich et al. 2012; Dynes et al. 2018), we may be finding correlations between ambition and responsiveness that are spurious rather than causal. We readily admit that ambition is not randomly assigned nor are we experimentally increasing ambition. For instance, larger cities are more likely to attract individuals to run for city office with professional goals that include higher office (Oliver 2012) and those same cities are also more likely to have an institutionalized system that facilitates better responses to

constituent requests, or that individuals with certain traits and characteristics are both more likely to have ambition and more likely to be responsive to constituent requests. To test these possible spurious relationships, we also analyzed other factors such as personality and city size. The results of the analysis, which can be found in the Online Appendix (Tables A.10 through A.19), demonstrate that none of these factors are substantively or statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our evidence shows that progressive ambition increases responsiveness in line with their electoral goals. Specifically, we find that electorally ambitious elected officials take advantage of opportunities to broaden their electoral base which they can use in seeking higher office, and accordingly, they respond differently to different types of requests from constituents for service. Progressive political ambitions create an incentive for elected officials to be more responsive to the needs and requests of constituents in areas that help them achieve their electoral goals.

Because of their ambitions and the need to create a larger political base to support a run for higher office, elected officials who have progressive ambitions take advantage of opportunities to broaden their political base. Ambitious politicians want to encourage new voters to register to give them the best opportunity to seek higher office. As such, service requests from constituents related to the electoral process elicit different responses depending on the electoral goals of the elected official. We especially find that local officials who would run for office “if the opportunity presented itself” are even more attentive to electoral related service requests in an attempt to create that opportunity.

In addition, we also find that harboring progressive political ambitions significantly affects the way that electoral officials frame their responses in their communications with

constituents. The more ambitious the local official, the more likely they are to thank their constituents for expressing an interest in voting or encourage them to vote. Given the strong impact of communications from politician on the behaviors of constituents (Broockman and Butler 2016; Bullock 2011; Butler and Hassell 2018), these differences can have a significant and substantive effect on the participation rates of voters. These small gestures of thanks and encouragements not only reflect well on the ambitious politician, but they also have a significant effect on future voter participation (Panagopoulos 2011).

Taking a holistic view, these findings are consistent with the theoretical expectations about the effect of ambition on responsiveness to constituent service requests. Progressive political ambition influences the responses of elected officials to certain types of constituent service requests. We find evidence that local officials with ambition are more responsive and provide better responses to service requests that deal with electoral motivations.

On the whole, however, we find that, politically ambitious or not, municipal officials are more responsive to their constituents than other elected officials in other positions. The 71% and 68% response rates to the electoral and non-electoral service requests compare much more favorably to the 52% and 51% response rates of members of Congress and state legislators, respectively. In that sense, local elected officials are doing an excellent job serving their constituents. However, politically ambitious elected officials are opportunistic and seize the chances presented to create the appropriate conditions to allow a run for higher office; which is why they are the most likely to encourage a new voter in the area to register. Ambitious municipal officials who are seeking opportunities to run are reacting to a chance to broaden their base of electoral support. From this we conclude that ambition is one of many motivations that influence how responsive municipal officials are to constituent requests.

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Supplementary Online Appendix for

**Political Ambition and Constituent Service: Does Ambition Influence How Local Officials
Respond to Electoral and Non-Electoral Service Requests?**

Survey of Local Public Officials

The survey was conducted in two waves sent to two different samples of municipal officials. Invitations to the first wave were sent in May and June of 2016 to a sample of 27,862 elected mayors and legislators (e.g., city councilors, aldermen, supervisors, etc.) from 4,187 cities. Subjects were recruited via emails with a link to the survey. We sent each potential subject three emails one to two weeks apart, inviting them to participate. The sample was compiled by a for-profit organization that gathers contact information and email addresses of public officials from municipalities that have a website and a population above 10,000. The organization uses webcrawler software to identify when information changes on the contact pages of each city's website and then has research assistants update its contact list of officials accordingly.

Unfortunately, this approach has a high error rate. Based on Qualtrics' email tracking, only 18,567 (or 67%) of the email invitations were delivered to an active email address. In addition, we looked up a sample of 832 officials in the list and found that only 44% of the email addresses were accurate. 2,165 officials answered questions on the first wave of the survey, resulting in a response rate of 17.8% based on the number of accurate emails in the list.¹⁶ This rate is similar to those from other surveys of municipal officials (e.g., Butler and Dynes (2016) report a response rate of 23%).

The second wave of the survey was conducted in June and July of 2016. The sample consisted of the email addresses of elected mayors and city councilors (or equivalent) originally gathered in 2012 and 2014. Excluding the email addresses that were also included in the first wave resulted in a list of 29,250 emails. The email addresses collected in 2012 were gathered in January through March of 2012 by a team of undergraduate research assistants who searched for

¹⁶ The 17.8% is calculated as follows: $2,165 / (.4375 * 27,862)$.

the website of 26,566 US municipalities. The email addresses collected in 2014 were gathered in a similar fashion in early 2014 but excluded municipalities with a population below 3,000 due to the low percentage of small towns with websites. Given that these email addresses were gathered 2 to 4 years prior to this research project, we knew that a large percentage of the emails and names of the officials (in the case of cities that use generic email accounts for each office) would no longer be accurate. Indeed, 26% of the emails sent through Qualtrics were undeliverable. It is likely that many more of the email addresses are no longer monitored though they remain active. With 1,500 officials participating in the second wave of the survey in 2016, the response rate for the second round was 6.9%, although this probably vastly underestimates the true response rate given that many email addresses were likely no longer monitored.

The graphs and figures in this section provide additional descriptive statistics about the officials and municipalities in our sample as well as all municipalities across the U.S. The population of municipalities and demographic data on them are from the U.S. Census Bureau. We defined municipalities as general-purpose local governments using the following categorizations from the Census Bureau:

- Incorporated Places: In most states, they are called cities, towns, boroughs, and villages.
- Consolidated Cities: These are a “unit of government for which the functions of an Incorporated Place and its county or Minor Civil Divisions have merged.”¹⁷
- Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs) in CT, ME, MA, MI, MN, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, and WI. In these states, they are usually called townships or towns. We included Minor Civil Divisions from these states based on the Census Bureau's assessment that “Most of the

¹⁷U.S. Census Bureau. 2012. “Geographic Terms and Concepts { County Subdivision”, http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_cousub.html (January 9, 2014).

MCDs in [these] twelve states ... serve as general-purpose local governments that can perform the same governmental functions as incorporated places.”¹⁸

This resulted in a list of 24,083 municipalities. In the tables and figures, we use the term city instead of municipality to save space.

Tables A.2 and A.3 display the percent of respondents from each state as well as the percent of officials emailed from each state (i.e., respondents and non-respondents). The last column in both tables displays the percent of all municipalities from each state. As illustrated by these tables, respondents come from all states, save for Hawaii, and the percent from each state is similar to the percent of officials emailed from each state, though some states appear to have higher response rates than others. These results, combined with those in Tables A.4, clearly show that our sample of municipal officials are quite diverse in terms of the states and types of municipalities they represent.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Table A.2: Respondents from Each State (AL-MT)

	Respondents from each state		Officials Emailed from each state	Municipalities in each state
	Freq.	Percent	Percent	Percent
Alabama	31	0.91%	1.55%	1.85%
Alaska	9	0.26%	0.37%	0.61%
Arizona	45	1.32%	1.43%	0.38%
Arkansas	35	1.02%	1.25%	2.00%
California	230	6.72%	6.89%	2.09%
Colorado	71	2.08%	2.26%	1.13%
Connecticut	68	1.99%	1.91%	0.80%
Delaware	12	0.35%	0.36%	0.23%
District of Columbia	0	0.00%	0.03%	0.00%
Florida	113	3.30%	3.70%	1.80%
Georgia	57	1.67%	2.31%	2.20%
Hawaii	0	0.00%	0.03%	0.04%
Idaho	16	0.47%	0.55%	0.81%
Illinois	207	6.05%	6.32%	5.21%
Indiana	56	1.64%	2.07%	2.29%
Iowa	72	2.10%	1.71%	3.79%
Kansas	43	1.26%	1.17%	2.51%
Kentucky	32	0.94%	1.37%	1.68%
Louisiana	12	0.35%	0.60%	1.23%
Maine	40	1.17%	1.23%	2.13%
Maryland	45	1.32%	0.89%	0.77%
Massachusetts	126	3.68%	2.73%	1.60%
Michigan	200	5.85%	4.77%	6.46%
Minnesota	134	3.92%	3.83%	3.63%
Mississippi	25	0.73%	0.73%	1.20%
Missouri	112	3.27%	2.71%	3.84%
Montana	11	0.32%	0.26%	0.53%

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Table A.3: Respondents from Each State (NE-WY)

	Respondents from each state		Officials Emailed from each state	Municipalities in each state
	Freq.	Percent	Percent	Percent
Nebraska	10	0.29%	0.52%	2.13%
Nevada	9	0.26%	0.14%	0.09%
New Hampshire	22	0.64%	0.76%	1.03%
New Jersey	131	3.83%	4.60%	2.40%
New Mexico	27	0.79%	0.71%	0.43%
New York	228	6.66%	5.54%	6.44%
North Carolina	131	3.83%	2.92%	2.24%
North Dakota	14	0.41%	0.35%	1.43%
Ohio	145	4.24%	4.93%	3.85%
Oklahoma	26	0.76%	0.82%	2.37%
Oregon	74	2.16%	1.62%	0.97%
Pennsylvania	136	3.98%	3.96%	4.82%
Rhode Island	17	0.50%	0.54%	0.18%
South Carolina	26	0.76%	1.09%	1.08%
South Dakota	13	0.38%	0.36%	1.25%
Tennessee	66	1.93%	1.49%	1.42%
Texas	137	4.00%	5.47%	4.91%
Utah	65	1.90%	1.29%	0.99%
Vermont	24	0.70%	0.60%	1.17%
Virginia	65	1.90%	1.37%	1.01%
Washington	64	1.87%	2.22%	1.16%
West Virginia	24	0.70%	0.54%	0.93%
Wisconsin	147	4.30%	4.78%	6.49%
Wyoming	18	0.53%	0.34%	0.39%
Total	3,421	100%	100%	100%

Table A.4 provides descriptive statistics about the municipalities in and out of our sample. The data come from multiple sources, as indicated in the notes on Table A3. Column 1 displays information about all municipalities. It is important to note that the large majority of cities are small, rural, and overwhelmingly non-Latino white. The mean population is just 9,118 while the median population is 1,324. To provide an additional comparison to the types of municipalities where most Americans live, Column 2 displays the same descriptive information

except that the sample of all municipalities is weighted based on each municipality's population as a proportion of the total population of all municipalities. With these weights, the mean city's population jumps to 583,120 and the median's is 62,298. This is more reflective of where most Americans live. For instance, if all of the municipalities are ordered by population from smallest to largest, the median resident across all cities would be found in Maple Grove City, MN, a suburban city with a population of 61,567, which is right at the median in the population weighted results in Column (2). The 25th percentile resident is in a city of 17,000 while the 75th percentile is in one of 260,000.

In column (3), we display data on municipalities that had at least one official who was invited to participate in the survey. In other words, these are the municipalities of officials in our sampling frame. Finally, in column (4), we have data on municipalities that had at least one respondent to the survey—i.e., our actual sample. Overall, the municipalities of officials whom we emailed or who responded are quite similar to each other and fall between the municipalities where most Americans reside (Column [2]) and the broader sample of all municipalities (Column [1]), with the municipalities with respondents (Column [4]) slightly more similar to those in Column (2) than the municipalities emailed (Column [3]).

Figures A.2 through A.4 display a density plot of the different municipal characteristics found in table A.4. What stands out is how similar municipalities with respondents are to all of the municipalities with officials included in the sampling frame. The one area where the distributions are most different are in population, in which respondents were more likely to be from slightly larger municipalities.

Table A.4: Characteristics of Municipalities by Sample Status

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		All Cities	All Cities, weighted by pop.	Cities Emailed	Cities w/ at least 1 Respondent
City Population	Mean	9,118	583,120	26,001	39,969
	Median	1,324	62,298	7,481	11,936
% Population Minority	Mean	15.5%	33.3%	21.3%	21.6%
	Median	5.8%	28.3%	12.0%	13.2%
% Population w/ Some College or More	Mean	19.5%	18.6%	19.8%	19.8%
	Median	19.3%	18.4%	19.8%	19.8%
Median Income (in 2012 \$1,000)	Mean	\$46.9	\$55.6	\$55.0	\$56.3
	Median	\$41.8	\$48.1	\$48.5	\$50.2
% Population Not in Labor Force	Mean	28.4%	28.0%	28.4%	28.1%
	Median	27.3%	27.0%	27.3%	27.2%
% Population Unemployed	Mean	8.5%	9.1%	8.6%	8.5%
	Median	7.5%	8.7%	7.8%	7.7%
% Population Homeowners	Mean	16.2%	17.3%	17.3%	17.3%
	Median	16.3%	17.3%	17.3%	17.3%
% Population with 2nd Mortgage	Mean	0.8%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
	Median	0.6%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Form of Government					
	% Mayor/Council without City Manager	65.7%	50.6%	53.9%	50.8%
	% Mayor/Council with City Manager	14.8%	40.0%	29.9%	36.4%
	% Commissioners	1.6%	1.3%	1.2%	1.5%
	% Supervisors	17.5%	8.0%	14.6%	11.2%
	% Town Meeting	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
	% Representative Town Meeting	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%
	% with some Town Meeting decision-making	17.6%	8.6%	5.9%	11.2%
	% with Home Rule Charter	19.6%	47.5%	30.9%	36.3%
	% with Republican Rep. in U.S. House	47.5%	38.7%	51.1%	49.5%
Citizens' Policy Preferences (only for cities w/ pop. at or above 25k; range: -1 to .6; higher = more conservative)	Mean	-0.08	-0.18	-0.07	-0.08
	Median	-0.05	-0.15	-0.03	-0.04

Notes: Column (1) includes all cities, towns, Population figures are from the 2010 U.S. Census. Form of government figures are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Census of Governments. The partisanship of the Representative of the U.S. House that represents each city is based on Congressional membership in March, 2016. Cities that crossed multiple House districts were matched to the district in which a plurality of the city's population resided. Citizens' Policy Preferences are from The American Ideology Project, which are estimated based on surveys conducted from 2000 to 2011. See Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013) for more details on this measure.

Figure A.2: Density Plot of Municipalities' Population by Sample Status

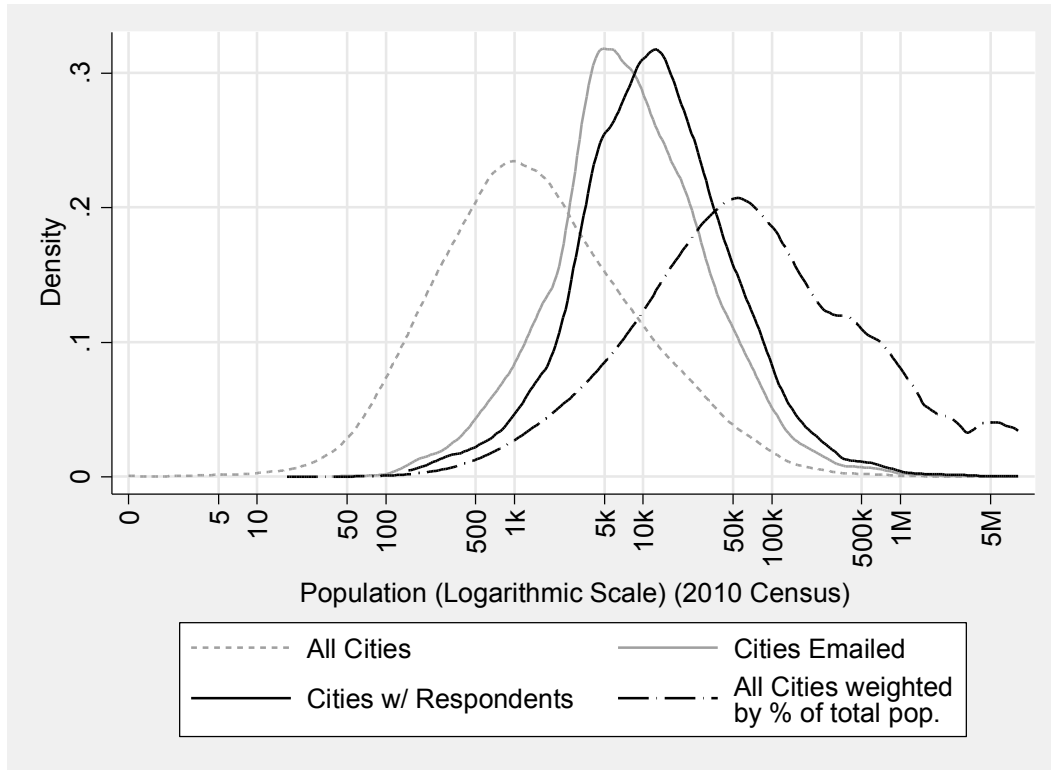


Figure A.3: Density Plot of Municipal Characteristics from Table A3, Part I

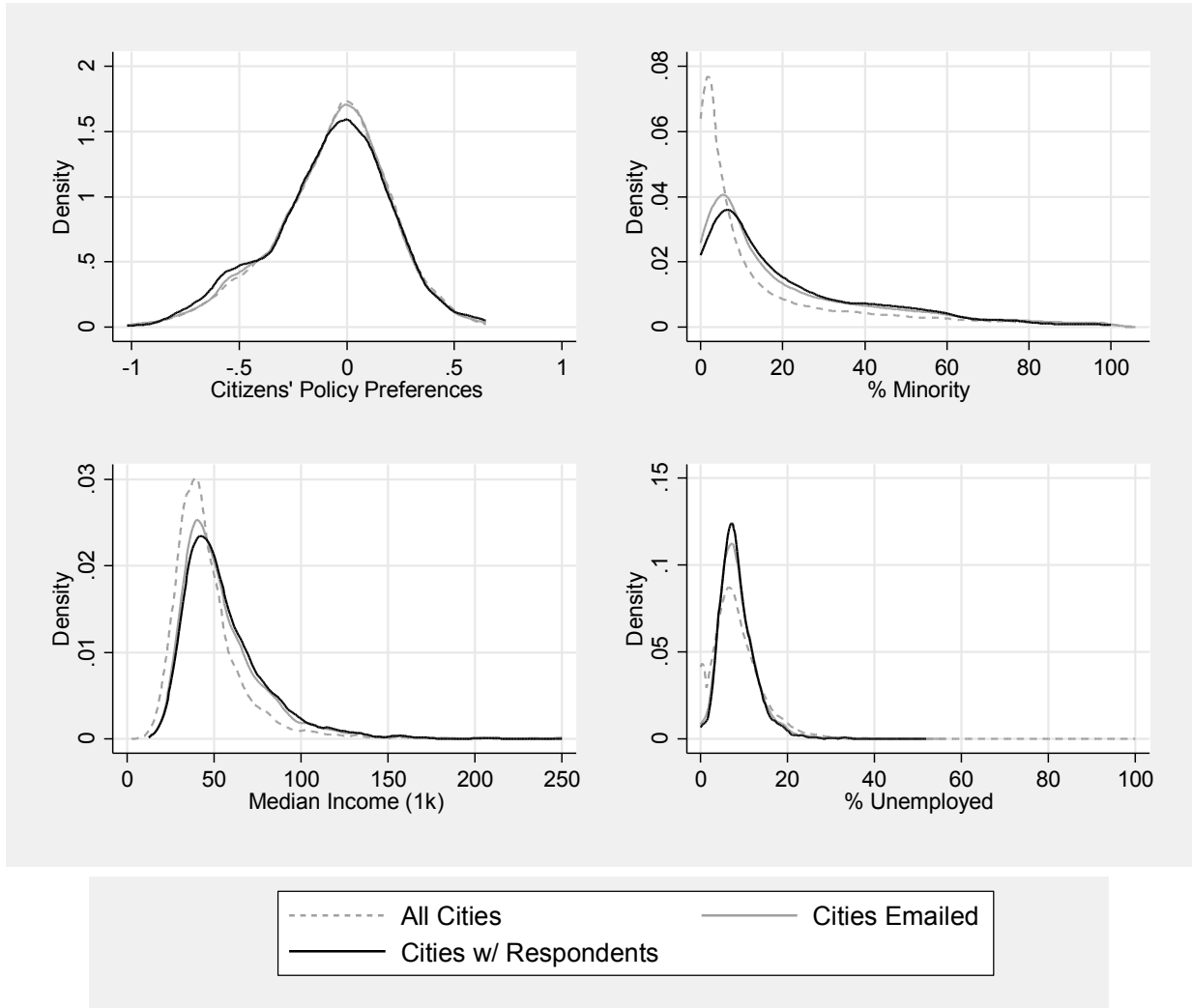


Figure A.4: Density Plot of Municipal Characteristics from Table A3, Part II

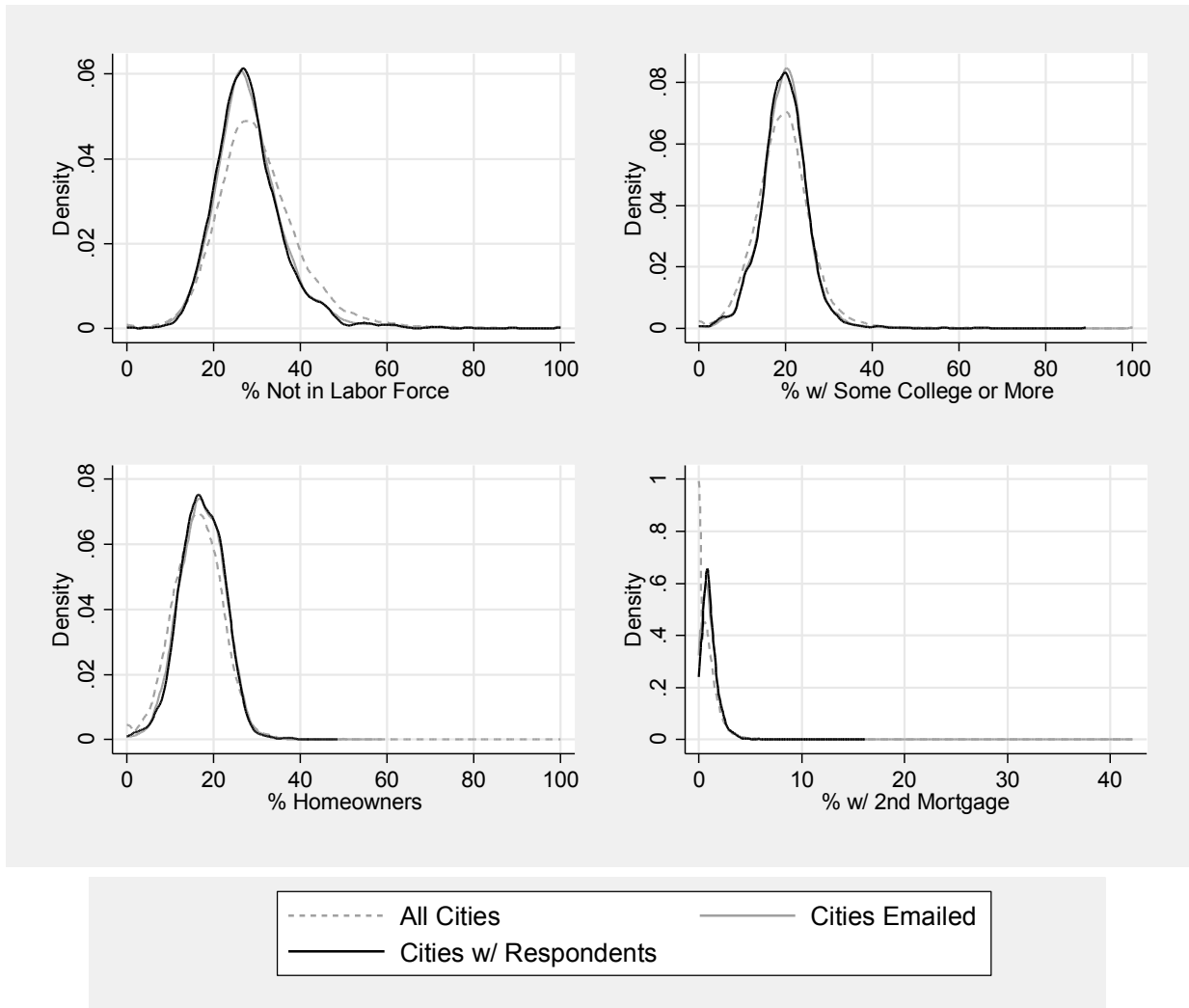


Table A.5 displays individual level data on the officials emailed (the sampling frame) and the actual respondents (the sample). In general, there are very little data available on municipal officials outside of the data we gather in the survey. However, based on the officials' titles, which we collect for all officials emailed, we can identify mayors in the sampling frame. The results in Table A.5 indicate that mayors in municipalities without city managers, meaning these mayors were the chief executive in charge of their municipality's daily operations, were more likely to respond to our survey request than members of the main legislative body (e.g., city

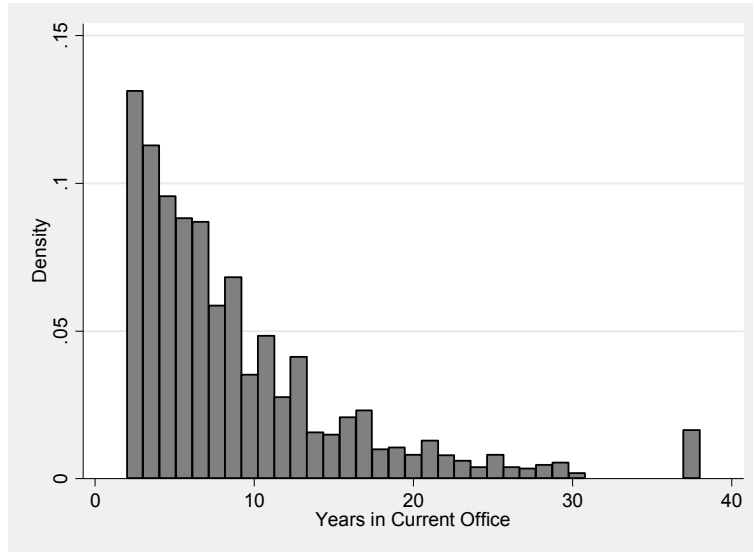
council). On the other hand, mayors in cities with city managers, meaning these mayors were a member of the governing legislative body and not the chief executive of the municipality, responded at similar rates as the other legislators in their municipalities. Finally, we are also able to identify officials' gender as it is indicated in the list we used from the for-profit organization that gathers elected officials' contact information. For those gathered from municipal websites, we identified officials' gender based on the proportion of females with that first name in public social security records. Female officials were more likely to respond, though this difference is substantively small.

Table A.5: Descriptive Statistics of Officials Emailed and Respondents

		Officials Emailed	Respondents
<hr/>			
% Mayors			
In cities without City Managers	Mean	13.4%	18.0%
	95% C.I.	(12.9%, 13.9%)	(16.1%, 19.9%)
In cities with City Managers	Mean	11.2%	12.7%
	95% C.I.	(10.7%, 11.7%)	(11.0%, 14.3%)
<hr/>			
% Female	Mean	28.3%	31.5%
	95% C.I.	(27.8%, 28.7%)	(29.9%, 33.0%)
<hr/>			

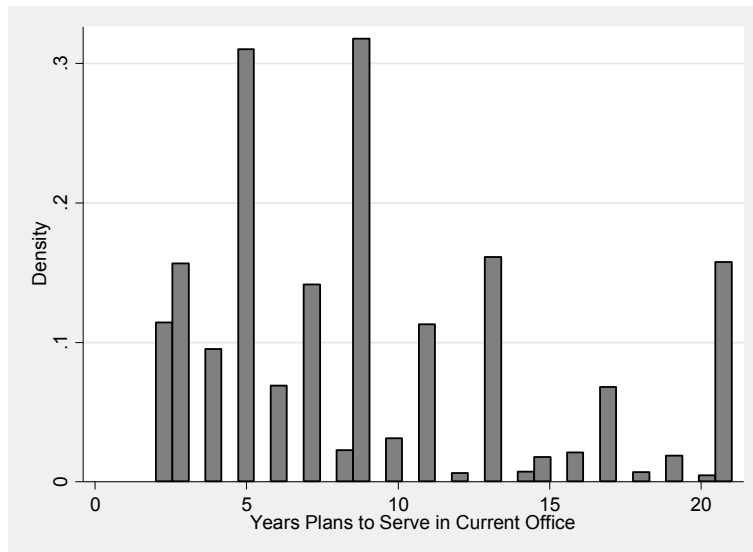
Finally, to illustrate that our sample of officials is diverse in terms of other politically important variables, we provide some descriptive statistics on the sample in table A.6 and figures A.5 – A.6. These data are from responses in the survey and show that our sample of officials vary significantly in terms of their partisan identity, self-placed ideology, term limits, partisan status of elections, electoral vulnerability, tenure, views on representation, static ambition, and progressive ambition.

Figure A.5: Histogram of Years Served in Current Seat



Notes: Histogram shows response to question: “How many years have you served in your current office?” Response options ranged from 1 to 29 in one year increments and “30 or more.”

Figure A.6: Histogram of Years Planning to Serve in Current Office



Notes: Histogram shows response to question: “How many years do you hope to serve in your current office?” Response options ranged from 1 to 19 in one year increments and “20 or more.”

Table A.6: Characteristics of Respondents based on Survey Questions and Responses

Q: What party do you identify with?		Q: Are there term limits for your current office?	
	%		%
Republican	35.3	Yes	19.3
Democrat	34.0	No	80.7
Independent or Unaffiliated	27.0	TOTAL	100
Other	3.7		
TOTAL	100		
Q: Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as:		Q: By how many percentage points did you win your last election for this office?	
	%		%
Very Liberal	3.6	below 1% point	2.3
Liberal	12.8	1 to almost 5% points	7.7
Somewhat Liberal	14.3	5 to 15% points	18.8
Middle of the Road	24.6	More than 15% points	34.8
Somewhat Conservative	21.7	I ran uncontested	32.3
Conservative	20.0	I lost or did not run again	4.1
Very Conservative	3.1	TOTAL	100
TOTAL	100		
Q: Which of the following best describes how individuals are elected to your position?		Q: When it comes to important issues, elected officials should...	
	%		%
The elections are NON-PARTISAN (i.e., candidates' party DOES NOT appear on the ballot)	73.0	(1) Do what their constituents want, even if it conflicts with what the elected official thinks is right.	4.0
The elections are PARTISAN (i.e., candidates' party appear on the ballot)	27.0	(2)	11.4
		(3)	24.1
		(4)	40.5
		(5) Do what they think is right, even if it conflicts with what their constituents want.	20.0
TOTAL	100	TOTAL	100

Coding the Emails

We downloaded the content from each email account merged them and converted the files to one .csv file. That file had the complete text each of each email and two id variable columns we used to merge our content analysis results with the survey data. Our final corpus of cleaned emails included 7,600 email responses. A small number of those are follow-up responses from the original sender. For the analyses in this paper, follow-up responses are combined with original responses, which slightly lowers the N on our analyses.

Following Druckman and Parkin (2005) and Druckman (2014), we hired a research assistant to go through each of the emails and code them according to the codebook below. We then recruited a team of coders who completed the coding activity for course credit using the same instructions. Each volunteer was assigned a random set of approximately 700 emails, which they were expected to code. Two other coders also coded the same set of 700 emails. The files were anonymized, such that the volunteers could not identify who had the same set of emails to code. Here is the breakdown of the inter-rater reliability measures for the items we use in this paper:

Do they encourage recycling or thank the emailer for recycling (alpha=0.653)

Do they encourage recycling or thank the emailer for voting (alpha=0.644)

To account for the discrepancy in coding on the items, we employ a majority rule coding scheme. If two or more coders coded the item as yes (1), we also do so in our analyses. When only one of the coders marked it as yes (1), we code it as a zero. We also note that the encourage/gratitude recycling scores percent agreement is 83 and the encourage/gratitude for voting percent agreement is 84.5, both of which exceed the recommended threshold (McHugh 2012).

Content Analysis Coding Instructions

You have been given a spreadsheet with several columns. Your job is to fill in the empty columns with numbers consistent with the coding scheme described below. You are to fill in columns E through N based on the text in column A, WITHOUT editing the other columns. You are to read the text found in the column (Text to Edit) and decide the appropriate numbers to fill in the blank columns based on your reading of the text. This means that you must read the entire text. Be as objective as possible. Other people have been randomly assigned to code some of the same text as you, so we can measure the accuracy of your coding scheme. If you put in values that do not make sense, we will easily be able to identify what you are doing.

If the text in cell A is something other than communication with an elected official, leave all of the cells blank for that row.

Text to Edit = body text of email that RA's should clean up so that it doesn't have our original email in it.

- e) **Do they encourage the person to recycle?** 0=no, 1=yes
- f) **Do they encourage the person to vote and/or register to vote?** 0=no, 1=yes
- g) **Do they express gratitude to the person (or thank them) for their interest in recycling?** 0=no, 1=yes
- h) **Do they express gratitude to the person (or thank them) for their interest in voting or willingness to vote?** 0=no, 1=yes
- i) **Do they invite the person to contact them if they have any additional questions or problems?** 0=no, 1=yes
- j) **Do they ask the person to contact them to talk about the person's question or request in more detail?** 0=no, 1=yes
- k) **Do they say that they are in favor of bringing more business into the community or allowing more commercial or retail development?** 0=no, 1=yes
- l) **Do they say that they are opposed to bringing more business into the community or allowing more commercial or retail development?** 0=no, 1=yes
- m) **Do they say that they are in favor of parks, preserving green space, or keeping a small town feel?** 0=no, 1=yes
- n) **Do they say that they are opposed to parks, preserving green space, or keeping a small town feel?** 0=no, 1=yes
- o) **Do they mention things that they have done in office to preserve the small town feel, or stop new retail, commercial or industrial development?** 0=no, 1=yes
- p) **Do they mention things that they have done in office to bring new business to town or to promote new retail, commercial or industrial development?** 0=no, 1=yes
- q) **Do they ask the person any follow-up or clarification questions?** 0=no, 1=yes

Here are some examples of how to code the text:

Example 1:

Dear Michael,

I am attaching a copy of the recycling guide. You can also find it at the town's website, [redacted], under the Frequently Asked Questions menu.

If you plan to vote in November you can save time on election day by registering in advance. If

*you do that ahead of time your name will be on the poll list and all you have to remember is to bring your photo I.D. when you come to vote. Let me know if you would like to do this.
[redacted name]*

- e) 0
- f) 1
- g) 0
- h) 0
- i) 0
- j) 1
- k) 0
- l) 0
- m) 0
- n) 0
- o) 0
- p) 0
- q) 0

Example 2:

You can register immediately

- e) 0
- f) 0
- g) 0
- h) 0
- i) 0
- j) 0
- k) 0
- l) 0
- m) 0
- n) 0
- o) 0
- p) 0
- q) 0

Example 3:

I am sorry Amy, I don't know. You can contact [redacted] for more information on City of [redacted] commercial and retail development. Call her at 608-348-9741.

Thanks much.

[Redacted]

- e) 0
- f) 0
- g) 0
- h) 0
- i) 0
- j) 0

- k) 0
- l) 0
- m) 0
- n) 0
- o) 0
- p) 0
- q) 0

Example 4:

Hi Michael, I don't use Facebook, so there isn't anything written. I would be very happy to visit with you anytime. I'm at City Hall frequently, so you can set up a time to visit or talk on the telephone. Thanks, [redacted]

- e) 0
- f) 0
- g) 0
- h) 0
- i) 0
- j) 1
- k) 0
- l) 0
- m) 0
- n) 0
- o) 0
- p) 0
- q) 0

Example 5:

You can register to vote at any time, must have ID with a current address and to vote in the upcoming election, one must register by October 18th. If you need registration forms or have any other questions, please call me at [redacted]. I am very glad you are planning to register, because your vote is very important.

- e) 0
- f) 1
- g) 0
- h) 1
- i) 1
- j) 0
- k) 0
- l) 0
- m) 0
- n) 0
- o) 0
- p) 0
- q) 0

Full Results Referred to in the Text

Table A.7: Difference-in-Differences Estimate of Response Length by Email Topic and Progressive Ambition

	(1)
Voter Registration Treatment	1.2 [4.7] p=0.397
Definitely * Voter Registration	-0.2 [8.3] p=0.492
No Interest * Voter Registration	-6.5 [5.7] p=0.125
Never * Voter Registration	-5.9 [6.5] p=0.182
Constant	48.7 [1.1] p=0.000
Observations	4,282
Number of fixed effects	2,141
R-squared (within)	0.002

Notes: Table displays coefficients from an OLS regression with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is the word count in the email response from the official. In calculating the word count of the responses, we count non-responses as zero words, consistent with Coppock’s (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. The baseline conditions are the recycling treatment and subjects who indicated they were interested in running for higher office “if the opportunity presented itself.” The coefficients on the indicator variables for the different levels or progressive ambition are omitted because these independent variables are subsumed in the subject-level fixed effects. We do not use a logit or probit model with fixed effects because they can produce biased estimates due to the incidental parameters problem. This is especially a concern in models with fewer than 15 observations per fixed effect (Katz 2001). In this analysis, we have just two. Standard errors are shown in brackets and clustered by each individual municipal official. One-tailed p-values are shown under the standard errors.

Table A.8: Predicting Email Length

	Word Count (Non-Response=0)
Topic = Voter Registration	1.138 [4.759]
No Interest * Voter Registration	-5.905 [6.503]
Opportunity* Voter Registration	-6.632 [5.706]
Definitely * Voter Registration	0.690 [8.259]
Constant	48.815 [1.101]**
Observations	4,280
Number of fixed effects	2,150
R-squared	0.002

Note: Entries are coefficients from a zero-inflated negative binomial model predicting the word count in email messages. In calculating the word count of the responses, we count non-responses as zero words, consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. All of these estimates were calculated with subject-level fixed effects to control for subject-level covariates and take advantage of the within-subject design of the experiment. Baseline categories are as follows: topic (Recycling), ambition (Never). Standard errors in brackets. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ^ $p < 0.1$, two-tail test.

Table A.9: Estimated Response Rates by Email Topic and Officials' Progressive Ambition using within-subject design

Progressive Ambition (from highest to lowest)	Voter Registration	Recycling	Difference between Registration & Recycling
Definitely	71.8%	70.4%	1.4
95% C.I.	(68.8, 74.9)	(67.5, 73.5)	(-4.6, 7.5)
Obs.	285	285	
Opportunity	74.3%	67.0%	7.3**
95% C.I.	(72.2, 76.4)	(64.9, 69.1)	(3.0, 11.6)
Obs.	584	584	
No Interest	68.4%	67.1%	1.3
95% C.I.	(66.6, 70.2)	(65.3, 68.9)	(-2.3, 4.9)
Obs.	983	919	
Never	70.4%	67.1%	3.3
95% C.I.	(67.6, 73.1)	(64.3, 69.9)	(-2.2, 8.9)
Obs.	362	362	

Notes: Cells in the middle two columns show estimated response rates to the two treatment conditions (Voter Registration or Recycling email) by the officials' level of progressive ambition (Definitely, Opportunity, Not Interest, or Never). The right column shows the difference in response rates to the treatment conditions. All of these estimates were calculated using a linear probability model with subject-level fixed effects to control for subject-level covariates and take advantage of the within-subject design of the experiment. We do not use a logit or probit model with fixed effects because they can produce biased estimates due to the incidental parameters problem. This is especially a concern in models with fewer than 15 observations per fixed effects (Katz 2001). In this analysis, we have just two.

** p-value<.01; * p-value<.05; ^ p-value<.10

Covariates of Progressive Political Ambition

We hypothesize a moderating influence of progressive ambition on the relationship between the topic of the email the elected official receives and their responsiveness to these emails. We do not experimentally induce ambition, so we cannot be certain that ambition is motivating the observed differences in responsiveness and not something else. In this section, we present similar models to those utilized in the text; replacing ambition with possible confounding variables we have in the dataset that predict ambition (Dynes, Hassell, and Miles 2018) to alleviate concerns that some other factor might be driving the results in the paper. We note that none of the interactions are statistically significant.

Table A.10: Previous Election was Close

	(1) Responded
Won previous election by 5% pts. or less (1=yes)	-
Voter Registration	0.034 [0.012]** p=0.005
Won previous election by 5% pts. or less * Voter Registration	-0.006 [0.039] p=0.885
Constant	0.674 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,294
Number of fe	2,147
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.11: Perceived Probability of Winning the Legislative Seat

	(1) Responded
Probability similar candidate could win state legislative seat (Scale from 0 to = 100)	-
Voter Registration	0.039 [0.029] p=0.186
Probability of Winning * Voter Registration	-0.000 [0.000] p=0.732
Constant	0.684 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	3,912
Number of fixed effects	1,956
R-squared	0.003

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.12: Perceived Probability Similar Candidate Could Win

	(1) Responded
Probability current seat filled by similar candidate (Scale from 0 to 100)	-
Voter Registration	0.052 [0.035] p=0.133
Probability of Similar Candidate Winning * Voter Registration	-0.000 [0.001] p=0.520
Constant	0.681 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,052
Number of fixed effects	2,026
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.13: Anticipated Length in Current Office

	(1) Responded
Anticipated length in current office (in years.)	-
Voter Registration	0.027 [0.024] p=0.258
Anticipated Length in Office * Voter Registration	0.000 [0.002] p=0.834
Constant	0.678 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,136
Number of fixed effects	2,068
R-squared	0.003

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.14: Tenure in Current Office

	(1) Responded
Tenure (years in current office)	-
Voter Registration	0.040 [0.020]* p=0.045
Tenure * Voter Registration	-0.001 [0.002] p=0.667
Constant	0.674 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,246
Number of fixed effects	2,123
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.15: Term Limits

	(1) Responded
Term limits exist for current office (1=yes)	-
Voter Registration	0.038 [0.013]** p=0.004
Term Limits * Voter Registration	-0.014 [0.029] p=0.632
Constant	0.673 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,310
Number of fixed effects	2,155
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.16: City Population

	(1) Responded
Log of Population	-
Voter Registration	0.017 [0.070] p=0.812
Log of Population * Voter Registration	0.002 [0.007] p=0.803
Constant	0.662 [0.005]** p=0.000
Observations	5,478
Number of fixed effects	2,739
R-squared	0.004

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.17: City Has a Manager Form of Government

	(1) Responded
Manager Form of Government (1=yes)	-
Voter Registration	0.025 [0.014]^ p=0.076
Manager Form of Government * Voter Registration	0.011 [0.022] p=0.627
Constant	0.664 [0.005]** p=0.000
Observations	5,010
Number of fixed effects	2,505
R-squared	0.003

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.18: City Has a Mayor Form of Government

	(1) Responded
Mayor Form of Government (1=yes)	-
Voter Registration	0.032 [0.015]* p=0.034
Mayor Form of Government * Voter Registration	-0.007 [0.021] p=0.733
Constant	0.664 [0.005]** p=0.000
Observations	5,010
Number of fixed effects	2,505
R-squared	0.003

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ p<0.1

Table A.19: City Has Partisan Elections

	(1) Responded
Partisan elections (1=yes)	-
Voter Registration	0.042 [0.013]** p=0.002
Partisan elections * Voter Registration	-0.025 [0.027] p=0.673
Constant	0.673 [0.006]** p=0.000
Observations	4,312
Number of fixed effects	2,156
R-squared	0.005

Notes: Table displays coefficients from a linear probability model with fixed effects at the subject-level where dependent variable is listed in the column label. Each is an indicator variable that equals 1 if the municipal official stated this in the email response and 0 otherwise. In this coding, we count non-responses as not thanking and not encouraging (or 0's), consistent with Coppock's (2018) recommendation to avoid post treatment conditioning. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, ^ sp<0.1

Appendix References

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