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# Who is ready to climb the hill? The effect of legislative activity on promotion to higher offices in Chile

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## ABSTRACT

Previous research suggests that bill initiation is a mechanism used by legislators to foster personal votes. This article puts forward a theory whereby legislative activity is understood as a form of party service. Bill initiation records are used by parties to inform their decisions on who is ready to be promoted. The theory is evaluated using an original data-set from the Chilean Chamber of Deputies. Our empirical findings make a strong case for the hypothesis according to which parties reward those deputies who have shown to be effective legislators.

**KEYWORDS** Legislative activity; progressive ambition; intra-party politics

## Introduction

Chilean deputies initiate hundreds of bills each year even though these bills have a low chance of being enacted or, for that matter, even receiving discussion on the floor of parliament. Only nine per cent of the parliamentary bills initiated between 1990 and 2010 became statutory law. More puzzling is that legislators spend a lot of time writing bills even though the Constitution does not allow them to initiate particularistic or clientelistic legislation (e.g. spending proposals, omnibus bills, etc.). Given the impossibility of cultivating a personal vote by initiating proposals, this paper asks why legislators spend time and energy on such legislative activities. This study finds that bill initiation records affect the probability that parties choose members of the lower house to run for a Senate seat or a leadership position (party whip and/or chamber directorate).

Previous research suggests that bill initiation is a mechanism used by legislators to foster personal votes by signalling to constituents that they are working for them (e.g. Bowler, 2010; Bräuninger, Brunner, & Däubler, 2012; Däubler, Bräuninger, & Brunner, 2016; Loewen, Koop, Settle, & Fowler, 2014; Williams & Indridason, 2018). However, those theories seem insufficient to explain the rationality of legislative activities if the constituency

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link is removed, which is the case when legislators cannot initiate constituency oriented bills including any kind of expenditure. Following new literature from parliamentary settings, legislative activities are also thought to matter for when legislators are promoted and selected by their parties (e.g. Däubler, Christensen, & Linek, 2018; Høyland, Hobolt, & Hix, 2019; Marangoni & Russo, 2018; Sieberer & Müller, 2017). Our research provides an alternative to constituency-based stories. We propose a theory where bill initiation is better understood as a form of party service. Parties resort to bill initiation records as an indicator to decide who is ready to advance in their career to a higher elected office. We put forward a hypothesis where members of the assembly who sponsor more bills are more likely to be promoted to higher offices.

To test the expectation that bill initiation leads to career advancement, we have collected new observations from the Chilean Congress. Until now, we knew little about how, or if, members' legislative activity related to promotion to higher offices in centralised party systems within presidential democracies. Our empirical findings offer support for the hypothesis that strong and centralised Chilean legislative parties promote deputies who initiate more bills. This simple observation has significant implications for our understanding of the importance of a neglected dimension of the legislative activity (i.e. private members' bills) members carry out in democratic assemblies. These results are telling of how parties orchestrate a sophisticated mechanism of access to higher offices considering factors such as ability and competence. We contribute to recent research on the effect of legislative activities on career advancement based mostly on parliamentary political systems. Both the theory and the empirical analysis provide a counterpoint to previous research on Latin American polities linking legislative activity to the building of personal votes (Crisp, Escobar-Lemmon, Jones, Jones, & Taylor-Robinson, 2004; Crisp, Kanthak, & Leijonhufvud, 2004) and the targeting of prospective constituencies in systems where legislators display ambition for subnational offices (Chasquetti & Micozzi, 2014; Micozzi, 2014; Samuels, 2003). Our work has implications for the study of legislative behaviour, intra-party politics, democratic institutions and political representation beyond the Latin American context, providing comparable estimates of the relationship between legislative performance and career advancement.

## Why legislative activity relates to promotion to higher office

Producing legislation is the *job description* of members' of democratic assemblies. Following Mayhew's (1974) work on the electoral connection, most of the literature conceives bill initiation as a mechanism to build personal reputations with constituents (Bräuninger & Debus, 2009; Bräuninger et al., 2012; Crisp, 2007; Crisp et al., 2004). The initiation of parliamentary bills by

incumbent legislators has been said to be positively associated with electoral success (Bowler, 2010; Loewen et al., 2014). Put simply, according to these studies, bill initiation is understood as a form of constituency service that helps members to signal to voters that they are working for them. For example, Barry Ames describes how Brazilian deputies sponsor bills and then use the printed version of those pieces of legislation to claim credit among constituents back home that they are working for them (Ames, 2001, p. 142).

However, Chile presents a case where legislators cannot initiate constituency-oriented legislation by constitutional mandate. Chilean members of Congress cannot sponsor spending legislation, which is a presidential exclusive prerogative.<sup>1</sup> Practically speaking, legislators are not allowed to put forward legislation including localised expenditures, projects or other benefits targeting their constituents. As such, they cannot engage in pork barrel politics. In extremis, electoral connection-based theories would predict that representatives ought to submit zero bills. Instead, and given that drafting bills requires effort, legislators might focus their attention on other activities that allow them to connect with their constituencies (e.g. case work, surgeries, speeches etc.). Because this is not the case – Chilean members do initiate lots of bills – the link provided by the constituency-based theoretical set up appears to be imperfect. Now, think of this less extreme scenario where legislators actually do initiate bills. By default, those pieces of legislation would have a national scope. Indeed, content analysis of records of bill submission in Chile confirms that the vast majority of legislators' bills have a national orientation (Marenghi, 2009). In this scenario, the constituency link is still flawed. The logic is simple. As Crisp and Ingall (2002, p. 741) note: '(...) bills with national focus are unlikely to target effectively specific electoral constituencies'.

Adopting a different angle, we argue here that bill initiation can be better understood as a form of party service. All else equal, parties prefer high ability representatives in more important offices within the party and the assembly. Bill initiation records provide parties with an indicator, although imperfect, of legislative capacity and readiness for promotion, reducing parties' uncertainty about potential agency losses. In this theoretical set up, legislators seeking higher office have incentives to please the party and they do so by resorting to legislative activities.

The literature has shown that legislators are not single-minded individuals' focused on their re-election only. In fact, legislators may seek higher elected offices or leadership positions within the organisation (Allen & Cutts, 2017; Hall & Van Houweling, 1995; Herrick & Moore, 1993), including party offices and cabinet positions (Kam, Bianco, Sened, & Smyth, 2010; Martin, 2016). However, having the ambition for climbing the hill is a necessary but not sufficient condition for career progression, especially in contexts

where party organisations control scarce political resources that members consider valuable (Hazan, 2006; Strøm, 1997). In fact, promotion to higher office in the chamber or outside of it is one of the most important incentives that leaders can offer to members (Saalfeld & Strøm, 2014, p. 390; Strøm & Müller, 2009, p. 30).

Parliamentary studies explaining the rationality of promotion pay attention to the interaction between parties and members with ambition for promotion. Higher office seekers must please the leadership to be promoted to executive posts. Ministerial selection literature reveals that ‘ministerial aspirants’ in the UK Parliament: ‘(...) must somehow make a mark, make a reasonable impression in the House’ (Searing, 1994, pp. 100–101). The importance of parties in managing their members’ ambitions for higher office is also observed in Latin American contexts. Local party leaders control legislators’ career advancement in Argentina (Jones & Hwang, 2005; Jones, Saiegh, Spiller, & Tommasi, 2002). In Costa Rica, where re-election is forbidden, party leaders control legislators’ career prospects outside the assembly (Carey, 1996).

One of the main activities members can resort to in order to impress their peers or the party leaders is initiating pieces of legislation. Recent evidence from European Parliamentary settings suggests that legislative activity correlates with career advancement. MPs seeking higher office in parliamentary democracies try to focus on legislative activities to obtain *the love* of the party leaders (Høyland et al., 2019; Sieberer & Müller, 2017). In the same token, Marangoni and Russo (2018) suggest that parties evaluate members re-selection based on their scores of legislative activity in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Research from the Dutch Tweede Kamer also proposes that those members seeking promotion to higher offices within the organisation are more active in initiating motions, although the authors did not find statistical confirmation for the hypothesis (Louwse & Otjes, 2016). Studies from the U.S Congress, where individualistic assumptions portray members controlling their own career prospects, surprisingly show how advancing legislative goals is a prerequisite to seeking higher office (Mayhew, 1991). On those lines, for example, Victor (2011) shows that members of the U.S House of Representatives with progressive ambition have greater incentives to show legislative specialisation in comparison to members who are not seeking higher offices. Volden and Wiseman (2014) show how first-term legislators who are more efficient in passing their bills are more likely to achieve higher offices.

For illustrative purposes, the basic intuition underlying our theory is developed here as a counterpoint to stories linking legislative activity to electoral connection incentives. Also using the Chilean case as an illustration of their model, Crisp et al. (2004) think of ideological positions that legislators adopt by cosponsoring bills, as ‘*currencies*’ that members can use later to obtain support in their constituencies. According to their research, voters can

extract legislators' positions from both the content of the proposals and from whom legislators cosponsor with (pp. 703–704). As it stands, however, having complete and accurate information about voters' preferences on each major policy (and issue), and its potential impact on the electoral competition, is unrealistic most of the time. Assuming that constituents are aware of their representatives' policy ties is also problematic. More importantly here, this is not informative of the rationale explaining what more bills indicate to the party and the effect of bill initiation records on promotion to higher offices.

Following our theoretical intuition instead, we can think of members' legislative activities as providing parties –not constituents – with a measure of members' ability and talent for the legislative work.<sup>2</sup> We assume that parties have incentives to reward with promotions to those members who are not only loyal but also demonstrate extra abilities. The underlying logic is simple. As Miquel and Snyder (2006, p. 347) point out: 'As a law-producing organization, an efficient legislature allocates talent to where it is needed and productive. It also employs incentives schemes that reward lawmakers who are diligent, skilled, and effective'. As highlighted in the literature on delegation, in promoting members to higher –and more influential – offices, parties want to avoid delegation losses or adverse selection. They can do so, for example, by 'pre-screening' members on the basis of their previous performance (Fernandes, 2016; Depauw, 2003) in order to obtain information on the aspirants' qualities and skills (Müller 2000, p. 327). Because initiating legislation requires effort and time in collating information, drafting proposals and building a coalition of sponsors (Woon, 2009, p. 29), those records provide parties with information of representatives aptitudes and readiness for promotion. As it stands, legislative activity appears to be more informative for parties seeking to avoid delegation losses in comparison to other characteristics of parliamentarians, such as age. Intrinsic qualities as such are not necessarily informative of diligence and skills.<sup>3</sup> Our theory predicts that higher office seekers expend more effort, through greater levels of legislative activity, in order to convince party leaders that they are of extraordinary ability.<sup>4</sup>

This measure of legislative capacity as an indicator used for promotion is superior to alternatives measures such as party discipline/unity using roll calls. Those stories would explain upward mobility as a function of factors such as an aspirant discipline in following the party line. Research linking both shows mixed results (Depauw & Martin, 2009; Kam, 2009) and the link remains ambiguous. Moreover, in scenarios characterised by high levels of party discipline and cohesion, loyalty on roll calls or *toeing the party line* is insufficient to explain upward mobility (Yildirim, Kocapınar, & Ecevit, 2017). More plausible, roll call voting monitoring provides information to the leaders for eventual punishment (career regression) rather than for reward.

The theory this article advances seeks to be applicable to the general phenomena of legislators' upward mobility. The empirical examination of

the argument focuses on offices within the party/legislature and higher elected offices within a bicameral assembly. It is worth clarifying that we do not assume here that higher elected offices and positions of leadership within the organisation are equivalent phenomena per se. However, what really matters is promotion to higher office rationale, which we conceive as equivalent. The underlying principle is simple. As Hazan (2006, p. 4) noted: ‘Parliament in general, and parties in particular, provide and control the distribution of influence, perks and re-(s)election. In short, institutions have what parliamentarians want.’ This is particularly true in party-constrained institutional environments, like the case of Chile. In those settings, party leaders have the keys of upward mobility. Indeed, a necessary condition for our mechanism linking legislative activity to promotion to higher offices is that party leaders fiercely control promotion in the context of a hierarchical organisation. Put simply, our model holds if parties have what progressive ambitious legislators *want*. As it stands, this rationale is valid for the two modalities of progressive legislative careerism covered here.

In the case of higher elected offices, a run for the upper chamber, we are not merely downplaying the importance of personal votes. It is well known that parties often poll districts to see who they should nominate or promote. More convincing, however, is conceiving aspirants’ electoral competitiveness as an intrinsic quality rather than as the underlying mechanism of promotion. *Ceteris paribus*, parties always prefer to nominate candidates with higher chances of winning. Therefore, it would be misleading to model electoral competitiveness as the exogenous component explaining promotion to higher elected office. Parties, as we advance here, look for something else members can offer. In particular, legislative activity records are an indicator used by parties to select more effective political personnel. Following our set up, we advance the following expectation:

**Hypothesis:** Legislators who introduce more bills are more likely to be promoted by their parties to higher offices within the legislature and the party.

In summary, the theory this article advances conceives bill initiation as a form of party service. Under the conditions examined here, progression to higher office is an intraparty driven mechanism whereby parties decide on who is going up based on members’ legislative visibility.

## Bill initiation and progressive ambition in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies

### *Bill initiation*

The Chilean case provides a good illustration of our model. Parliamentary bills (*mociones*) can be initiated by a minimum of one deputy to a maximum of ten. Chilean members of Congress are not allowed to sponsor

bills after the proposals are introduced. Thus, bills are a good indicator of effort and attention. The ability of legislators to perform constituency service is severely restricted by the constitutional provisions regulating the legislative activity.

According to the Chilean Constitution, legislators are banned from introducing bills including spending. Omnibus legislation is also banned. The limitation of private members' bills, as a mechanism to connect with constituents, is contained in other disposition of the Chilean legislative institutions: the exclusive initiative. Legislators are not allowed to initiate legislation on the following matters: loans; wages; pensions; taxes; collective and social security; budget; creation of public services, among others (Constitution of the Republic, Article 65). Not surprisingly, given those institutional incentives, just a small portion of the bills introduced by Chilean deputies (2.13 per cent) are constituency orientated (Marenghi, 2009). Case work, local activities and speeches appear to constitute mechanisms exploited to connect with constituents (Alemán, Ramírez, & Slapin, 2017). As a matter of fact, every last week of the month is reserved for constituency work, in what is known as the *district week* (Chamber of Deputies Regulation Code, Article 38). A quote from an interview conducted with a former deputy and party whip is illustrative of the point:

There are several cases of former deputies who were recognized for their legislative work. But most of them lose the re-election. The legislative work is unknown and it matters little. More important is solving daily problems of your constituency. When they vote for you, they do not vote for who is the most talented lawmaker. (Former Deputy and Party Whip; author's own translation)<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the 2000s, both national and regional press started to monitor legislators' legislative activity more systematically. *El Mercurio*, one of the main and influential Chilean newspapers, published an article weeks before the 2013 congressional election that reported a ranking with the 'hard-working' legislators according to the number of bills they initiated in the last legislative term. The report also named those deputies running for a Senate seat and their respective records of bill initiation as a measure of productivity. The same newspaper reported in 2017 how parties care about their position in the ranking. According to one Chilean deputy interviewed, 'parliamentary party groups tell their staff: We (the party) are short of bills, let's build a package'. A quote from an interview with a Chilean politician we interviewed as part of this research is illustrative of the aforementioned: 'The increase in the bill initiation numbers is explained by the press effect. Since 2003, the press started monitoring legislator's attendance number, productivity and so on (...)' (Chilean Senator, Former Deputy and Party Leader interviewed by the author).



The above does not mean that legislators can just initiate lots of nonsensical bills. Legislators and parties' reputations may be damaged by being associated with bills lacking originality or quality. As the case examined here shows, press monitoring includes periodical checks on bills content and quality. Press reports include pieces of analysis on parliamentary bills quality, using plagiarism software to detect copy-paste from other bills or even from Wikipedia (El Mercurio, 2014). By introducing poorly drafted bills, legislators risk becoming well known as '*Senator or Deputy Wikipedia*'. Press articles report that only 14 per cent of the bills present a certain level of plagiarism (El Mercurio, 2014). On the contrary, almost 80 per cent of the bills initiated by Chilean deputies between 2006 and 2011 can be classified into specific policy areas, such as: education, health, foreign policy, political institutions, economy, transportation, labour, etc (UNDP, 2014).

### *Progressive career patterns in the Chilean assembly*

Career advancement in Chile is hierarchical, resembling in that regard, other political systems where legislators do not return to subnational or local posts, as in Spain (Montero, 2007) or the U.S. The Chilean political system is also unitary and strongly centralised. In Chile, subnational offices are not elected ones. The most frequent outcome is that Chilean legislators *do not look back*. That scenario contrasts with cases like Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay.

Strong legislative party organisations play a crucial role in shaping legislative outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Political parties are fundamental in crafting legislators' careerism. National leaders retain nomination control, office access, Committee assignment and several political resources within the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The re-selection process is biased in favour of loyal incumbents (Alemán & Navia, 2016; Morgenstern & Siavelis, 2008, p. 373; Navia, 2008). Chilean electoral institutions appear to strengthen the importance of party labels (Chaisty, Cheeseman, & Power, 2018, p. 148). Up to 2016, the electoral system to elect both deputies and senators was technically proportional (D'Hondt procedure), but with the lowest possible magnitude in each constituency ( $M = 2$ ). Parties had strong incentives to be organised into two coalitions (Rabkin, 1996).<sup>7</sup> Both coalitions presented a list with two aspirants. The usual outcome with the binominal system was each coalition obtaining one seat in each district. Subsequently, electoral competition occurred most of the time within each list (Rabkin, 1996).

An important number of deputies build careers in Congress. Not surprisingly, Carey (2002, p. 234) believes that it '(...) is entirely appropriate to apply theories premised on re-electoral assumption to the Chilean Congress'. Nevertheless, Chilean deputies also build careers within Congress, a highly hierarchical structure, in a progressive fashion. In every election, a significant number of deputies run for a Senate seat after being nominated by their parties.

For example, between 1993 and 2013, 34 per cent of the elected senators were deputies in the previous term (UNDP, 2014). Chilean senators' mandate lasts for 8 years. Presidential and Congressional elections are held simultaneously every four years. Senators' term in office is double of the term of the President of the Republic and the term of deputies. Half of the Senate is renewed every general election, and the other half is renewed the next election. The criteria are that, in one election, those senatorial districts from regions with an even number (II, IV, VI, VIII, etc.) are renewed, while in the next elections those seats from odd regions (I, III, V, etc.) are renewed.

The Chilean Senate has a long-term tradition of greater influence and policy power (Agor, 1971). According to the literature, the Chilean Senate has been recognised as a deliberative body isolated from the political conflict of the Chamber of Deputies. Paused and calm deliberations are expected to be held in the Senate committees and crucial agreements about the legislative agenda take place in committees and on the floor (Note, 2002). Senators define the Senate as an arena of reflection and moderation more focused on long-term policy implications. In comparison to the Chamber of Deputies the Senate is a more technical chamber where more serious policy making takes place (Note, 2002). In previous decades, the Senate has increased its formal power over the nomination of authorities and its influence over policy (Berríos & Gamboa, 2006). Political experience appears to be a main factor describing the composition of the Chilean Senate in comparison to other Latin American assemblies (Llanos & Sanchez, 2006). However, the above does not mean that the Chilean Senate is a *council of ancients* where candidates are somehow appointed as a function of their age. In fact, recent research shows the opposite: age has a negative effect on the probability of developing a progressive career in the Chilean assembly (Saldaña, 2014). The above goes in line with our expectation that promotion is driven by members' legislative performance.

Specialisation within the Chilean Chamber of Deputies is comparatively high (Carey, 2002; Palanza, Scartascini, & Tommasi, 2016). In the Chilean Congress, position within the organisation matters. Leadership positions and committee chairs grant important influence to those members (Carey, 2002) and regularly, the press reports how members fight for access to such positions. Leadership spots and chairs in important committees are subject to intense bargaining at the beginning of each legislative session and, as said, are usually a motive for intense intra-party and intra-coalition conflict.

As it stands, both higher offices within the Chamber of Deputies and Senatorial seats represent important promotions for progressively ambitious incumbent deputies. Ambition for higher office and careerism within the assembly coexists with centralised and dominant national parties that are much stronger than their counterparts in Latin America and in the U.S Congress.

## Legislative data and results

Our legislative data corresponds to the period 1994–2010. Information to build the dependent variable – Promotion – was obtained from official sources. Legislative profiles and electoral records were obtained from the Congress National Library website ([www.bcn.cl](http://www.bcn.cl)) and the Chamber of Deputies official website ([www.camara.cl](http://www.camara.cl)).

This study focuses on the factors that influence whether legislators are promoted to higher offices. Two types of higher office are considered here: firstly, promotion to run a campaign for the Senate and, secondly, promotion to higher offices within the lower chamber (party whips and the directorate). Our response variables present a dichotomous setup, assuming the values of 1 (success in obtaining a promotion) and 0 (failure) only. A logit model seems the appropriate strategy to apply to these data. The unit of observation is each legislator. Because we have repeated observations in our data (with some deputies appearing more than once in the sample), we resort to clustering the standard errors (Rogers, 1993).

Our predictor is *Legislative Activity*. This is the (logged) number of bills initiated by each deputy. Legislative records (*Fichas Parlamentarias*) at the individual level were read in order to obtain the number of proposals initiated by each deputy. Some descriptive statistics are useful to make sense of the distribution of the variable. The average number of bills sponsored by each legislator is around 40 bills. All the subjects in our sample introduce at least one bill. Around 30 per cent of the legislators in our sample submitted more than 40 bills. The maximum number of bills initiated by a single MP in a given legislative session is 301. Given the variable skewed distribution, with some deputies introducing a very large number of bills, we take the log of bills. The logarithmic transformation also helps in simplifying the interpretation of the impact of the variable on the outcome.

Several controls were included in the models. A first control is *First-Term*, which is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 for those newcomers' members and 0 otherwise. The literature shows how promotion to ministerial posts relates to factors such as tenure and experience in parliamentary systems (O'Malley, 2006; Searing, 1994). If anything should be expected here, it is a negative effect of inexperience on promotion to higher offices. A second control is the total vote share (%) obtained by each deputy in the last election (*Vote Share*). As discussed above, parties often pool members' electoral competitiveness. Frequently, Chilean deputies who run for a senatorial seat, do so in the same region where their districts are located. A potential impact of this variable is a positive effect on the outcome. *Women* is also a dummy variable taking the value of 1 for female legislators, and 0 otherwise. This is included to see if gender has an effect on promotion to higher offices. Both *Party Whip* and *Chamber Leader* are dummy variables that capture the members' position

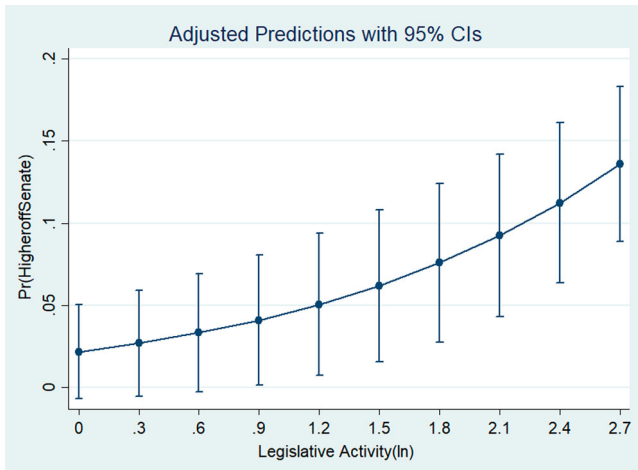
within the party in the assembly and/or the organisation directorate. These variables allow us to test whether having previous leadership positions helps legislators to secure a nomination for a senatorial race or remain in the leadership. Finally, *Non-Government* is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 for those members from the opposition and independents, and 0 otherwise.

The main results are reported in Table 1. In Model 1, the response variable is capturing whether a given member is nominated by the party to compete in a race for a Senate seat. According to Model 1, the coefficient of the variable *Legislative Activity* is positive and goes in the expected direction (statistically significant at the 0.01 level). In general, the predictor holds in the model after controlling for other factors. However, more substantive interpretation is obtained by examining predicted probabilities. As Figure 1 shows, those legislators who more actively initiate legislative proposals have a greater chance of seeing their names on the electoral ballot in the elections for the Senate. As the number of bills increases, this probability rises. The predicted probability of being nominated for a Senate race is .02 for those less visible members and .13 for the maximum value observed in our data. The coefficient of the variable *First-Term* is positive and statistically significant at the .05 level. This result can be interpreted as follows. In legislative environments where specialisation and careerism are fundamental characteristics, it is difficult to picture parties promoting newcomers to advance to higher offices in the organisation. Given such scenarios, parties have incentives to block those less experienced

**Table 1.** Determinants of promotion to higher office.

Independent Variables	(Model 1) DV: Promotion to higher elected office	(Model 2) DV: Promotion to Whip/Chamber leader
Legislative activity/bills(ln)	0.721*** (.19)	0.461*** (.17)
First-term	-0.656** (.26)	0.147 (.25)
Vote share (%)	0.042*** (.01)	0.012 (.01)
Non-government	-0.044 (.30)	-0.617*** (.25)
Women	-0.551 (.52)	0.151 (.41)
Party whip	0.424 (.30)	0.630** (.27)
Chamber leader	0.163 (.35)	0.113 (.36)
Constant	-4.485*** (.81)	-3.562*** (.86)
Log pseudo likelihood	-230.38	-221.00
Hosmer-Lemeshow's (p-value)	.31	.47
Observations	472	472

Notes: Clustered standard errors are in parentheses: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ .



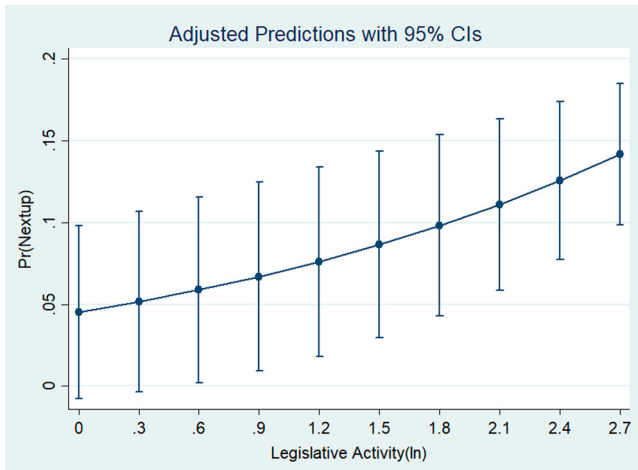
**Figure 1.** Predicted probabilities promotion to the Senate

members from having their names in the electoral ballot for a senatorial seat. The logic in this case fits our theory: parties' incentives to reduce adverse selection explain why less tenured members are less likely to be promoted. We can think of this result as complementary with our model.

According to Model 1, *Vote Share* (a control variable) in the previous election has an effect on the probability of being nominated for a Senate seat competition. *Vote Share* has a positive coefficient and it is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Marginal effects confirm that those deputies obtaining greater share of the vote in the previous election are more likely to be promoted to the Senate. This result endorses that parties nominate competitive candidates. However, we model electoral competitiveness thinking of it as an intrinsic quality of the promotion process rather than the underlying mechanism explaining it. Political parties are highly unlikely to shoot themselves in the foot by nominating electorally weak candidates. After taking into account electoral competitiveness, our predictor holds in the model, and more importantly, further analysis confirmed the effect of *Legislative Activity* on the response variable.

Model 2 examines a different type of career advancement. Here, the response variable is promotion to higher offices within the lower chamber (whips and leadership).

The outcome is a dummy variable that assumes the value of 1 for success and 0 otherwise. Model 2 keeps the same covariates used to analyse the factors explaining promotion to the Senate in Model 1. As [Table 1](#) shows, *Legislative Visibility* has a positive coefficient and it is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Among the rest of the covariates, only *Non-Government* and *Party Whip* are statistically significant. So, those members that serve as a



**Figure 2.** Predicted probabilities promotion to party/Chamber offices

party leader in the previous period are more likely to be promoted again to the same position or to the chamber directorate. Again, more substantive interpretation of the effect of our predictor is obtained from predicted probabilities. As Figure 2 shows, those legislators who more actively initiate legislative proposals have a greater chance of being promoted to higher offices within the party or the Chamber of Deputies. The predicted probability of being promoted is .04 for those less visible members and .14 for the maximum value observed in our data.

In sum, we find statistical confirmation for our hypothesis. In spite of not serving the purpose of building personal votes, Chilean deputies spend time initiating tons of bills and the parties do care about the party legislative record.

Our empirical findings make a strong case for the hypothesis according to which parties reward those deputies who have shown to be effective legislators. The results demonstrate that Chilean deputies who introduce more bills are also promoted at a higher rate. After taking into account for *Vote Share*, as a proxy for electoral competitiveness, Model 1 confirms that legislative activity is considered by parties when they nominate legislators for a higher office race. The fact that inexperienced members are less likely to be promoted to the Senate confirms our theoretical story. Model 2, in turn, shows that advancement within the low chamber, to leadership positions, also correlates with legislative activity.

## Discussion and implications

In some environments, bill initiation may be unlikely to constitute an avenue for members to build up constituency support. This study provides an answer

to the puzzling question of why legislators spend time drafting bills when they cannot signal constituents back home that they are working for them. In examining the factors that affect the probability that members of the lower house would be chosen to run for the Senate or promoted to leadership offices, this article advances an innovative proposition: members' legislative activities are better understood as a form of party service. In party controlled legislatures, promotion to higher offices is best explained as the outcome of the interplay between progressive ambitious members and their parties. In this game, parties' decisions are informed by members' legislative records. Our empirical findings make a strong case for the hypothesis according to which Chilean legislative parties promote deputies who initiate more bills. The underlying mechanism here is not the bills themselves, but rather bill initiation records, as an indicator of legislative capacity and readiness that bill initiation counts are measuring. Parties make strategic use of records on members' legislative activities to curb adverse selection. Past records of legislative activity (bill initiation here) provide party leaders with information on members' skills and competence.

From a comparative perspective, this study shows that intraparty dynamics in certain presidential systems other than the U.S Congress can exhibit similarities to parliamentary democracies. This is under certain conditions, such as strong national parties controlling career advancement and enforcing high levels of party discipline. Individualistic assumptions, well-established in the study of the U.S Congress, are not necessarily applicable to other presidential democracies. On the contrary, as in parliamentary systems, in presidential democracies parties can play a decisive role shaping legislators' futures. This article also provides a contrast with settings where legislative activity relates to subnational ambition in the Latin America context. We add to this literature providing original evidence from a case where career advancement shows a territorial ladder in a bicameral system in which higher office within the assembly represents a substantive increment of political influence and power.

Some implications about the Chilean case need to be mentioned briefly. Firstly, Chilean legislative parties are not only important in terms of legislative outcomes and the fate of the powerful Chilean president's agenda. They are crucial for orchestrating political careers and the legislative organisation. A second implication is related to previous research on legislative careers and ambition in the Chilean Congress. Conventionally, political ambition in Chile has been characterised as static. Empirical works on bill sponsorship in Chile also departs from that assumption of legislators as 'singled minded seekers of re-election' (Carey, 2002; Crisp et al., 2004). This article provides a different image, disputing the exclusive focus on the static nature of political careers in the Chilean Congress. There are no convincing reasons to expect a

relationship between static legislative careerism and bill drafting in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies.

The findings provided in this article suggest new paths for further research on intraparty politics in Latin American legislatures. This research highlights the importance of including the analysis of intraparty politics in settings where the importance of legislative parties is assumed to be irrelevant or secondary, as is the case with presidential democracies. This study also shows the importance of examining data other than roll call voting. From the perspective of members, we need to analyse how such legislators with complex ambitions fabricate sophisticated legislative portfolios to take advantage of different prerogatives within the assembly.

Further research needs to consider other types of career advancement, such as ministerial selection, high offices within the national bureaucracy and other positions within the party. Such disaggregation could provide us with a complete picture on what occurs and why, generating comparable estimates.

## Notes

1. For example, Article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic establishes that the Chilean Congress cannot increase the services, benefits and the budget defined by the President. The administration of the finances, salaries, pensions and any kind of public payments is also an exclusive prerogative of the Chilean President. The exclusive initiative prerogative also includes social security norms, the administrative and political organisation of the country, imposition or reduction of taxes, etc.
2. Note that in doing so, we allow bill initiation to operate as an intraparty signalling mechanism analogous to the notion that bill cosponsorship is used by legislators to signal policy positions to other members of the assembly, or specifically to the pivotal legislator (Kessler & Krehbiel, 1996).
3. We develop more on this in the next section.
4. The allocation of non-elected position of influence within the organisation (or 'mega-seats') have been said to influence legislators behaviour, as Martin (2014) shows in his research on the Irish case.
5. The interviews were conducted during August and September 2016 in Santiago Chile. The author interviewed a dozen legislators and staff. The interviews were semi-structured. The survey plan was simply obtaining some insights of the Chilean case and to provide context.
6. The Chilean party system is one of the most institutionalised in Latin America alongside the party systems of Costa Rica and Uruguay (Mainwaring, 2018). In the legislative arena, parties from the government coalition in Chile coordinate with the executive in the legislative process (Toro & Hurtado, 2016).
7. In 2015, a comprehensive electoral reform was passed in the Chilean Congress. The binominal electoral system was replaced with a more proportional system. The first elections under the new electoral system took place in 2017 (Gamboa & Morales, 2016).



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