

# State-wide Fragmentation of Television Markets and Political Representation in the US Congress

Patrick Balles\* Ulrich Matter† Alois Stutzer‡

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## Abstract

Media reporting about politicians' behavior is an important mechanism in a democracy to keep citizens informed and to hold representatives accountable. How much news providers report about which political actors thereby depends on how political and media markets are organized. We study US congressional politics and exploit variation in the relative size of media markets within states. In particular, states are divided into different numbers of television markets so that some are more integrated, while others are more fragmented. As citizens want to learn about their members in Congress, profit-oriented media providers are hypothesized to report relatively less on senators than on House representatives in more fragmented states (and vice versa in states with a more integrated television market). Exploiting, first, data on the spoken manuscripts in local stations' news reports, we find evidence that senators from states with fragmented television markets receive less coverage compared to individual House members. Importantly, we find that this is reflected in voters' knowledge about their members from both chambers. Second, we study the consequences of differential electoral pressure. Based on roll-call data and a new measure of constituency preferences, senators from more fragmented states are found to represent the preferences of their voters less well when deciding on legislative bills, while the opposite is true for their colleagues in the House.

**Keywords:** Media economics, electoral incentives, campaign finance, legislative voting

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\*University of Basel, Faculty of Business and Economics, Peter Merian-Weg 6, 4002 Basel, Switzerland; email: patrick.balles@unibas.ch.

†University of St. Gallen, Swiss Institute for International Economics and Applied Economic Research, Bodanstrasse, 9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland; email: ulrich.matter@unisg.ch.

‡University of Basel, Faculty of Business and Economics, Peter Merian-Weg 6, 4002 Basel, Switzerland; email: alois.stutzer@unibas.ch.

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