This Used to Be My Playground:
The Effect of Previous Legislative Experience on Gubernatorial Success

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Abstract: Anecdotal evidence suggests that presidents who served in Congress see greater levels of success compared to those with no prior legislative experience. And research on gubernatorial success has attempted to address this issue, too. But in both cases, data limitations – including small sample sizes and a focus on a narrow set of years or election cycles – preclude systematic analyses. Based on an original dataset of gubernatorial agendas and legislative successes and failures in all 50 states from 2003-2012, I find that under no circumstances does previous legislative experience affect gubernatorial success. These findings suggest that election battles over qualifications may be for naught. It is the composition and structure of the legislature that predicts executive success, not the resume of the governor. Solutions to some of our more pressing issues such as gridlock, then, likely will have to come from the legislature itself, rather than from the executive branch.

President Lyndon Johnson's relationship with Congress is often front and center when people think of his time in office. Despite some failures, Johnson's accomplishments, historians argue, include passing legislation at unprecedented speed (Bullion 2008). And there is no secret to this success. Johnson passed much of his agenda because he knew how to "manhandle" Congress. In the words of Jack Valenti, Special Assistant to Johnson, **"I don't know if they teach that in Government 101 in any of the schools, but it worked. The President got done what he needed to have done, but the telephone was his Excalibur, it was his sword, and no congressman was too much of a rookie to be called, nor too powerful a one to be importuned"** (LBJ 1991). Indeed, it was this ability that earned Johnson the nickname, "Master of the Senate" (Caro 2002). Johnson's previous congressional experience gave him an advantage in that he knew how and with whom to speak. Describing Johnson's approach to obtaining the votes for civil rights legislation, for example, civil rights activist James Farmer said**:**

> He was on the phone with Republican senators and with Southern Democrats and he was bargaining with them. He was telling them about some bridge that they wanted back home or some dam that they wanted. And he would help them with that if they would help him with this and give him this thing that he wanted, that the whole nation wanted and the nation had to have. And he was also reminding them in not-too-subtle tones that if they didn't support him, he would have ways of getting back at them. (LBJ 1991)

Compare Johnson to President Jimmy Carter, who was elected as an outsider, but faulted for his inability to work with Congress. Despite a Democratic majority in the House, Carter faced opposition at every turn. House Speaker Tip O'Neill would often not even answer Carter's calls (Bourne 1997). Many factors contributed to Carter's failures, but inexperience interacting with Congress was certainly among them. Just consider the "Water Projects Fiasco." Although Carter believed that eliminating several water projects from the budget would save money and reduce pork barrel spending, members of Congress, who considered these projects the "lifeblood of service to one's district," were outraged (Pfiffner 1988).

And then there was George W. Bush, who felt at a greater disadvantage with Congress than did his father. The senior Bush, having served in the House of Representatives, knew how the institution operated and developed relationships with members (Bush 2010; Draper 2006).

Previous legislative experience, in other words, seems a useful skill for presidents, not only in regard to knowing the rules and the system, but also for knowing how the people work. Yet as intuitive as the relationship between legislative service and executive success may seem, we actually know very little. With only a small number of presidents, systematic analyses are difficult to conduct and conclusions difficult to draw. We can, however, turn to the states to learn more about this relationship. After all, governors, too, come from both inside and outside the state government; and governors, too, are "chief legislators" (Herzik and Brown 1991).

To test the relationship between executive success and previous legislative experience empirically, I rely on an original dataset of more than 450 State of the State addresses (from 2003 – 2012) and the gubernatorial successes and failures that resulted. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, I uncover no evidence that previous state legislative experience affects gubernatorial success rates. Rather, it is the structure of the legislature – both in regard to party and institutional design – that plays the greatest role in a governor's achievements. Experience alone is not enough to advance a governor's agenda. As such, the electoral benefits of years of experience often lauded in candidate narratives may be overstated, and the conventional wisdom may need to be reconsidered.

Gubernatorial Success and Previous Experience: Background and Expectations

Similar to anecdotes about the relationship between congressional experience and presidential success, stories abound regarding the benefit governors accrue when they have legislative experience. According to former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, her time in the

legislature allowed her to appreciate the work of the legislature much more, and "the knowledge that all political action is to some degree a consensus process, a collegial process" (Rosenthal 1991, 21).[1] Indeed, Rosenthal (1990, 20) concludes, based on a series of historical accounts, "that experience can only be helpful" for governors. Although narratives like these can be informative, little research systematically examines the direct influence of previous legislative experience on policy success.

The extant literature speaks not only to the way legislative experience can confer on an executive the understanding of the institution, but also its members. Research about friendships among legislators reveals that interpersonal relationships lead to similar voting patterns, a shared body of information, and "connections through which bargaining, exchanges of cues, and decision making transpire" (Calderia and Patterson 1987). These relationships also foster a sense of mutual respect, political loyalty, and esteem (Arnold et al. 2000). It is conceivable then, that a governor who had such relationships as a member of the legislature would be able to carry those over to the governor's mansion and predict who will vote with whom, know the right people to consult, and know the right things to say. And his old colleagues already respect and trust him (see also Neustadt 1960). Once again, qualitative claims can only get us so far. Empirical evidence is needed to demonstrate the potential strength of these friendships across institutions.

This is not to say that these theoretical claims are without any empirical support. Scholars have assessed the impact of experience on gubernatorial approval and popularity; a much more subjective measure of success. Hamman (2004), for instance, finds that having held local office

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[1] Rosenthal reiterates these points in his most recent work, *The Best Job in Politics* (2013). Although still not providing empirical support, Rosenthal uses several more anecdotes to

has a positive impact on approval; previous legislative experience has no effect. Using a someone different measure of "approval" – Sabato's rankings of outstanding governors – Sigelman and Smith (1981) find that local office, as well as statewide office, have a small, but *negative* effect, while previous legislative experience exerts a positive one. Different measures of approval produce different results.

The closest research pertaining to the impact of state legislative service on executive success is King et al. (2005). They analyze the relationship between previous legislative experience and gubernatorial popularity. When using an "experience index," they find that the more experience a governor has, the less popular he/she is. Of course, previously serving in the U.S. Senate gets the highest score on their index. Serving in the United States Congress does teach certain skills, but they may not be relevant to a particular state. Learning how to navigate the United States Senate under the fear of a filibuster, for example, is useless in states without a filibuster rule. Indeed, when King et al. parse experience into particular types, they find that state legislative experience positively correlates with gubernatorial popularity, whereas previous congressional experience's correlation is negative.

This research is of clear value for laying a theoretical groundwork regarding the role of previous experience on gubernatorial success. But it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the subjective approval rating measure and the "noise" included in measures of approval. At the presidential level, scholars have found that approval is often contingent upon a multitude of factors and events ranging from the somewhat reasonable, such as the state of the economy (Hibbs 2000), to the truly fantastical, such as natural disasters (Gasper and Reeves 2011; Reeves 2011) or the number of shark attacks (Achen and Bartels 2002). These findings suggest that

approval is likely a weak indicator of an executive's actual success while in office, and most certainly not an ideal measure for capturing the true value of previous legislative experience.

Aware of this limitation, some scholars have relied on more objective measures. For instance, previous legislative experience was used as a control in a one-year analysis of gubernatorial policy success. In this study, Ferguson (2003) finds that previous experience is statistically insignificant, although she acknowledges the limitations of focusing on just 1994. Her contribution, however, is that the capacity to pass the governor's agenda does not rest in the governor alone; legislative professionalism has a substantial impact on gubernatorial success, as does divided government. Kousser and Phillips (2012) also use an objective measure of success, although only for certain states in two years.

It is clear that with disparate data come disparate results. The literature, however, does build a strong foundation on which to build the theory presented here. With more suitable measures of both the dependent and independent variables, we can begin to reevaluate our previous claims and provide more data-driven evidence to some of our most enduring political narratives. Thus, I hypothesize that previous state legislative experience will lead to increased levels of gubernatorial policy success.

The Dataset: State of the State Addresses and Legislative Success

As discussed, the key to examining the relationship between legislative experience and gubernatorial success lies in measurement. Both experience and success need to be operationalized with precision. Turning first to gubernatorial success, the literature gauges it as the percent of the governor's proposed agenda that was subsequently passed by the legislature (Ferguson 2003, Kousser and Phillips 2012). Thus, the first step requires obtaining each

governor's policy agenda. To do that, I relied on annual State of the State Addresses.[2] Given

before the legislature, these speeches are "the springboard for the chief executive to enter into the

legislative policymaking process" (Herzik and Brown 1991). Put somewhat differently, they

"constitute valid and reliable indicators of executive policy goals" (Ferguson 2003).[3] Second, I

compared the agendas I coded in each address to the legislative session record for that year in

that state.[4] Bills that passed – and that had exact or similar wording to that used in the address –

are coded as a success.

I completed these steps for all 50 states, from 2003-2012, for a total of 464 speeches

given by 120 individual governors.[5] Such a large dataset allows me to maximize the number of

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[2] The appendix provides an index that outlines the coding and anticipated direction of all
variables. State of the State addresses were provided by Pew Charitable Trust's State of the State
Project, as well as governors' personal websites. Missing speeches were provided by Jason
Windett, St. Louis University.

[3] In "Who Influences Whom?" (1999), Edwards argued against the use of the State of the
Union addresses to determine the presidential agenda due to the likelihood that a president's
agenda is going to change as major events occur. This concern does not apply to governors. As
state legislatures meet for a much shorter amount of time, extraneous events occurring
throughout the year are less likely to influence the governor's agenda during a legislative
session.

[4] I used LexisNexis State Capital, as well as local newspapers and state legislature
records, to obtain information about the passage of the relevant legislation.

[5] Governors typically do not give a State of the State address in years where there is no
legislative session. In certain states, the governor offers the policy agenda in the annual budget

governors and account for the effect of experience within the constraints of a particular state. Moreover, it allows me to leverage variation on key factors of interest. In particular, in my dataset, 42 governors have State House experience, 29 have State Senate experience, and 14 served in both chambers. Moreover, 18 governors served in the U.S. House, and six the U.S. Senate (one did both). Importantly, 15 governors in the dataset have no previous political experience whatsoever.[6]

The speeches covered a range of issues, from eliminating teacher tenure to the protection of salmon. Governors proposed anywhere between one and 44 issues in their addresses.[7] While each state has particular interests, no doubt, trends emerged as well. Not surprisingly, after the economic downturn in 2008, all subsequent years' speeches included discussions of jobs and economic development. Table 1 illustrates both the issue categories and some of the particular proposals mentioned by the governors.

Table 1 about here

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address. For states where this is the case, that was the speech I coded. Governors in some states can opt out of giving a State of the State address; the only time this happened was in Tennessee in 2003 and Louisiana in 2012.

[6] See the Appendix for descriptive statistics pertaining to gubernatorial success and select variables of interest. Data collection efforts continue for all missing data, largely pertaining to gubernatorial approval ratings.

[7] Governors with previous legislative experience have a proposal mean of 11.74, while governors without previous legislative experience have a proposal mean of 11.87. The difference is not statistically significant.

Just as the number of issues raised in the speeches varies, so does the rate of gubernatorial success. Overall, the average success rate was 58%. Success ranged from complete agenda failures (0% success) to complete successes (100% success). On its face, this number might seem high. But considering that the issues included in the speeches are the most important issues to the governor, and those on which he/she would likely pressure the legislature, the high success rate is to be expected.

The key explanatory variable in the analysis is state legislative experience, with the expectation that it will result in greater levels of gubernatorial success. Unlike much previous research, I do not rely on a simple dichotomous variable for all legislative experience; after all, I don't expect that experience outside the state legislature will contribute to success in equal measure. Although any type of previous experience should bolster success – as it confers familiarity and information about the political system an outsider would not have – some should be more valuable than others. I expect governors with previous state legislative experience to have specific knowledge regarding the legislature and legislators with whom they now must interface. In that regard, it should be the most helpful. Accordingly, I created a number of experience variables: (1) experience in each chamber of the state legislature, (2) whether the governor ever served as lieutenant governor, (3) whether the governor was ever elected to any other political office, and (4) whether the governor ever served in the United States Congress.

Beyond previous experience, a series of additional factors should also affect gubernatorial success. The first set of factors are gubernatorial. It is important to account for whether the governor held a leadership position in the state legislature and for how long he/she served. Whether the governor was in the minority or majority in the legislature is also relevant; if a governor was the victim of an obstructionist majority, for example, then he/she might opt not to

deal with them as an executive. Alternatively, he/she could have learned how to maneuver around them and identify who was most malleable.

The second set of additional factors that could affect gubernatorial success can be classified as executive factors. Across the 50 states, governors have varying levels of institutional power. The more institutional power a governor has, the more legislative success he or she will see (Ferguson 2003). I capture this with Beyle's most recent power rankings, which are an amalgamation of several institutional factors including whether the governor is elected as a part of a ticket or alone, tenure potential, budgetary powers, and veto power. I also control for the governor's public approval in the given year, since "legislators cannot fail to be impressed" with governors who obtain large vote margins or high approval ratings (Rosenthal 1990; but see Ferguson 2003). Governors also tend to have their highest level of political capital in the first year in office, although the longer governors serve, the more they may understand what is feasible (Kousser and Phillips 2012). I include a Years in Office variable to test these competing hypotheses. Whether a governor is term limited may also have an impact on legislative success, as the legislature may be unresponsive to lame ducks. Alternatively, in election years, governors may avoid contentious legislation and have a less ambitious agenda so as to achieve higher levels of success.

Third, it is important to account for several factors associated with the political environment the governor must navigate. More specifically, the level of polarization in the legislature is likely to correlate negatively with gubernatorial success. As we have seen at the federal level, as polarization increases, it becomes more difficult for legislation to pass (Jones 2001). It's also possible, however, that in these circumstances, previous legislative success may become more valuable, as the governor will have the knowledge of how previous agreements

were reached. (To this end, I introduce an interaction between polarization and previous legislative experience.) Divided government should also decrease gubernatorial success; if the state legislature is of a different party than the governor, then it has little reason to support the executive's policy agenda (Krehbiel 1998). This dynamic will be heightened with compounded divided government, in which both chambers differ from that of the governor (Ferguson 2003). Once again, though, it is possible that friendships with and knowledge of *legislators* will help governors even in times of divided government, so I introduce an interaction between divided government and previous legislative experience.

Additionally, we must consider that not all state legislatures are created equal and that different institutional structures may lead to varying levels of success. To account for this institutional variation, I include Squire's measure of legislative professionalism (Squire 2007).[8] On one hand, some previous research concludes that the more professional the legislature, the more successful a governor is. On the other hand, as professionalism increases, a legislature has more resources to challenge the governor (Dilger et al. 1995). Professionalized legislatures also have careerist legislators dedicated to their party and getting re-elected. Thus, the legislators may not be as amenable to supporting legislation with which their constituents disagree. For a similar reason, I include a gauge of *legislative* term limits, which were adopted in the 1990s in several state legislatures as a move to de-professionalize legislatures (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000).

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[8] Legislative professionalization is a "concept that assesses the capacity of both legislators and legislatures to generate and digest information in the policymaking process" (Squire 2010, 75). Often characterized as how closely a state legislature resembles Congress, traditional measures of legislative professionalism include legislator salary, session length, and staff size.

Because term limited legislatures place governors with previous legislative experience at an information advantage, but also break the bonds of friendship that governors may have had with certain legislators, I include an interaction between term limited legislatures and previous legislative experience.

Finally, I include two control variables: (1) the economic conditions of the state play a role in a governor's success. National economic trends play less of a part in constituents' opinions of governors, but state level factors, such as unemployment, are significant (Howell 1990, Ferguson 2003); and (2) the sex of the governor. Scholars have argued that across industries, female leaders are more collegial and more cooperative than their male counterparts. (Jewell and Whicker 1993; Konrad, Kramer, and Erkut 2008).

Overall, this dataset and the manner in which I operationalize my expectations allow for the first direct and systematic assessment of the relationship between gubernatorial success and legislative experience. This research also examines an understudied time period, as most relevant literature ends in the early 1990s. This is valuable, as many states have since seen term limits go into effect and their legislatures polarize.

Findings and Analysis

In order to operationalize my central hypothesis regarding the value of experience, I regress previous legislative experience on gubernatorial success. Table 2 presents the results of the OLS regression analyses.[9] Table 2 makes clear that previous state legislative success – regardless of the amount of time served or the leadership positions held – does not have a

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[9] To increase the power of the model, I ultimately combined both forms of legislative experience into dichotomous variable indicating whether a governor had served in either chamber. Alternate analyses available in the Appendix in Table B.

substantive or statistically significant impact on gubernatorial success.[10] These governors know how the system works and know how the people work, yet receive no benefit from these factors. (And this is the case regardless of the year of office.).[11] Federal experience, however, is actually burdensome. The negative effect of congressional experience is not only statistically significant, but also relatively strong: having served in Congress decreases a governor's level of success by 11 percentage points. Given that the average number of bills proposed is approximately 12, an effect of 11 percentage points is substantial; it represents approximately 1.25 more successes or failures. It may be that those with federal experience perceive themselves as better equipped to handle certain issues and are more isolating than their peers with other experiences. Thus, distinguishing among different types of legislative experience is vital.

Table 2 about here

The results also make it quite clear that the political environment clearly affects gubernatorial success. The way that polarization of the chamber exerts an impact on success,

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[10] State legislative experience remains insignificant even when I dropped all controls from the model.

[11] Krehbiel makes the argument for "honeymoon" period in his work *Pivotal Politics*. President Johnson, too, believed in the "honeymoon" period and made every attempt to move as much legislation through Congress as he could during this time (Phiffner 1988). Other presidents have done the same. But the null results here suggest that neither the "honeymoon period" nor ample years of previous experience have an effect on gubernatorial success. This discredits the claims made by Kousser and Phillips (2012) that governors have the most political capital immediately following their elections

however, is unexpected.[12] Higher levels of polarization *increase* success, although only marginally. And regardless of the governor's experience in a polarized legislature, his success level remains the same (see the insignificant interaction term in Model 2). In the states, we may not have reached the tipping point between partisan success and gridlock. Divided government, as hypothesized, decreases gubernatorial success by approximately one agenda item (9%). And here too, previous legislative experience does not mitigate the effect (the interaction term introduced in Model 3 is insignificant).

The institutional factors pertaining to the legislature have the strongest effects on gubernatorial success. Professionalism, too, plays a substantial role. Strikingly, governors who serve in states with professionalized legislatures see a 35-percentage point decrease in success (or approximately 4.5 agenda items). While this result counters previous findings, it substantiates the initial intuition of many scholars (see Dilger et al. 1995). With a limited number of days to accomplish his or her goals, members of a less professional legislature may find it better to compromise early. Once again, previous legislative experience does not provide a significant benefit to gubernatorial success even under these conditions (see the interaction term in Model 5).

Additionally, term limited state legislatures have a positive and substantively significant impact on gubernatorial success: serving as a governor presiding over a term limited legislature increases success by 10 percentage points. The executive is at an information advantage, although, counter to my hypothesis, this advantage does not come from having served within the legislature.

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[12] It is of note that not all states have seen increased levels of polarization over time, although that is the norm (Shor and McCarty 2011).

The results withstand alternative specifications that allow me to focus on several important individual issue areas. Given that each state faces its own challenges, some issues are prioritized in some states and not in others. I identified more than 100 specific issues raised, and then I coded, following the convention in the literature, each issue into the seven substantive areas: (1) social welfare, (2) economy, (3) taxes and spending, (4) defense and security, (5) civil and social order, (6) race and social groups, and (7) government functioning (see Hayes and Lawless 2016; Petrocik 1996). If any area would demonstrate a clear advantage for those with previous legislative experience, it should be in the domain of taxes and spending or the economy. After all, these issues come up time and time again, so governors with previous legislative experience would certainly have dealt with them in their lives as legislators. Such might not be the case for other issues, many of which might arise for the first time during a governor's term. The data reveal no support for this expectation. Table 3, which presents the results of difference of means tests in each issue area, indicates no statistically significant differences in levels of legislative success between governors with and without legislative experience.[13]

<div align="center">**Table 3 about here**</div>

Conclusion

James Sundquist, a former senator staffer, subcabinet member, and political scientist, once said, "The balance between executive and legislative power depends more on the attributes

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[13] It is possible that governors with previous experience choose to propose legislation on different issues given their knowledge of the legislature. In order to assess this possibility, we would need to examine the same state over time when there was variation in governors' levels of experience. Preliminary investigations into such a scenario reveal this does not appear to be the case.

of the president than on the character of Congress" (Rosenthal 1990, 67). Journalist Ezra Klein made a similar argument regarding the way the media cover politics – with a "West Wing" mentality, in which they consider the executive to be the main character, and the legislature and all other actors just supporting players.[14] Legislators and governors often also contend that a great amount of difficulty arises when the governor lacks legislative experience. We need look no further than Deval Patrick's first year as governor of Massachusetts. After a long and contentious legislative session, Patrick expressed his frustration with the process. A legislator of Patrick's own party responded that, "the comments reflect Patrick's lack of political experience and an inability to work with a deliberative legislative body."[15] It is likely that these sentiments are echoed in legislative chambers throughout the country.

The results presented in this paper demonstrate, however, that there is little empirical basis for these claims. Regardless of the amount of institutional power, institutional knowledge, personal knowledge, or popularity, the make-up of the state legislature plays a crucial role in the success of the governor. The governor's background does not. At its core, these conclusions indicate that no governor stands alone. Perhaps this explains why many governors begin their speeches heralding the friendships they have in the chamber or the friendships they hope to make. They are very much aware that they cannot succeed without the help of their legislature.

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[14] Klein, Ezra. "Paul Ryan Isn't Running for President." He's After Something Even Bigger." *Vox*. January, 14 2015. http://www.vox.com/2015/1/14/7537371/paul-ryan-presidential-run

[15] Benner, Tom. "Politics; Governor, lawmakers swap public rebukes at State House." *The Patriot Ledger (Quincy, MA)*. October 24, 2007 Wednesday. Date Accessed: 2016/04/08.

But governors apparently don't need to have these relationships upon being sworn in, as long as they can build them once in power.

The larger normative implications of these results reinforce what many in academia already know: the importance of down-ballot voting. There is much fanfare surrounding the vote for an executive, both for presidents and governors. But voters must still pay attention to whom they are voting for at the state legislative level. The legislators who sit in those seats will be imperative to the success or failure of a governor's agenda. If the public wants to see greater levels of government productivity, then it is necessary to consider both sides of the legislative process: the legislature and the executive. With the incumbency rate for state legislatures at almost 97%, it may seem as if this might not matter: many state legislative seats go uncontested or see weak challengers. If voters are diligently and continuously choosing these representatives, then this is not necessarily a problem. Alternatively, if voters are, not aware of the candidates, their issues, or their previous behaviors, this is a great cause for concern. Practitioners, then, must be tasked with ensuring that the public is aware of the possible ramifications of their votes. Gridlock will not be broken overnight, but voters must be pushed to understand that a change in executive is unlikely to be the solution to this issue.

The results from this research also suggest that we might want to reexamine much of the previous literature when it comes to gubernatorial success. A more objective measurement of success could go a long way. More research on the relationships between divided government, polarization, and agenda success may also provide answer to many questions posed at the federal level. Under what circumstances can we break up legislative gridlock? We see evidence that term limits produce higher levels of gubernatorial success, but these are currently unconstitutional at the federal level. Is there another way? Do executives behave differently in

times of great partisanship? Do they propose fewer agenda items? These are all important areas of inquiry if we want to develop our understanding of interbranch relationships and the balance of power.

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Table 1. Coding Scheme for Issues in the State of the State addresses.

Topic	Sampling of Issues
Social Welfare	Childcare, education (tenure reform, funding formulas, early childhood education, truancy, higher education, state provided financial aid), Medicaid, prescription drugs, healthcare reform, mental health, women's health, clean energy, mine safety, water safety, land conservation
Economy	Jobs, small business incentives, mortgages, minimum wage, tourism, research and development
Taxes and Spending	Property tax reform, Homestead Exemptions, Income Tax, sales tax holidays, budget approval, government spending, Rainy Day Funds
Defense and Security	Veteran's affairs, Homeland Security, G.I. Bill extensions, Yellow Ribbon Funds, border security
Civil and Social Order	Abortion, illegal drugs, correction reform, sexual offenders, gun control, faith-based initiatives, immigration, capital punishment, driving laws
Race and Social Groups	Gay marriage, LGBTQ issues, minority issues, discrimination, affirmative action
Government Functioning	Consolidation of offices, government transparency, campaign finance reform, ethics reform, approval of Cabinet, state employee benefits/pensions

Table 2. The Effect of State Legislative Experience on Gubernatorial Success.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Previous Political Experience					
Previous Lt. Governor	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
State Legislative Experience	-0.03	0.08	-0.04	0.01	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Congressional Experience	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.11***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Other Political Experience	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Executive Factors					
Republican	-0.04	-0.03	-0.04*	-0.04	-0.04*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Lame Duck Term	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Lame Duck Year	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Election Year	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Approval Rating	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Gubernatorial Power	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years Served	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Legislative Factors					
Professionalism	-0.35***	-0.36***	-0.35***	-0.30**	-0.36***
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Legislative Term Limits	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.11**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Professionalism*Experience				-0.22	
				(0.23)	
Term Limits*Experience					-0.02
					(0.06)
Political Environment					
Divided Government	-0.09***	-0.09***	-0.09**	-0.09***	-0.09***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Split Chamber Control	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Polarization	0.04**	0.07***	0.05**	0.04**	0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Polarization*Experience		-0.08			
		(0.05)			
Divided Government*Experience			0.01		
			(0.06)		
Constant	0.60***	0.57***	0.60***	0.58***	0.60***
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Observations	397	397	396	397	397
R-squared	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21

Entries are OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors, clustered at the governor level. All models include controls (gender, unemployment, and number of items proposed). Levels of significance: ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1

Table 3. Mean Success Rate across Issue Area

Issue Area	State Legislative Experience	No State Legislative Experience	N
Social Welfare	.552	.541	352
Economy	.462	.397	192
Taxes and Spending	.461	.441	255
Defense and Security	.667	.617	60
Civil and Social Order	.593	.610	189
Race and Social Groups	.485	..233	26
Government Functioning	.443	.483	268
Note: In no case is the difference between experience and no experience statistically significant (at $p < .10$).			

Appendix

Table A.

Variable	Description	Coding	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothesized Direction
Dependent Variable					
Gubernatorial Success	% of Governor's proposed legislation passed.	**0-1**	**.578**	**.236**	
Independent Variables					
Gubernatorial Variables					
Previous State Legislative Experience	Whether or not the governor was ever elected to the State Legislature.	**0,1**			+
Majority Party (House and Senate)	If the governor was in the state legislature were they a member of the majority or minority party.	**0,1**			?
Years Served in State House/Assembly	The length of time the governor served in the State House.	**0-16**	**1.89**	**3.18**	+
Leadership Position in State House	A dummy for whether or not the governor held a leadership while in the State House.	**0,1**			+
Years Served in State Senate	The length of time the governor served in the State Senate.	**0-30**	**2.18**	**4.81**	+
Leadership Position in the State Senate	A dummy for whether or not the governor held a leadership role wile in the State Senate.	**0,1**			+
Previous Congressional Experience	Whether or not the governor was ever elected to Congress	**0,1**			+
Years Served in House of Representatives	The length of time the governor served in the House of Representatives.	**0-21**	**1.29**	**3.43**	?
Years served in U.S. Senate	The length of time the governor served in the Senate.	**0-21**	**.37**	**2.26**	?
Previous Lieutenant Governor	Whether or not the governor was ever Lieutenant Governor.	**0,1**			+
Previous Other Elected Office	If the governor was ever elected to a statewide or local office including; mayors, city council, attorney general, etc.	**0,1**			+

Variable	Description	Range	Mean	SD	Sign
Governor's Power Score	An institutional power rating, provided by Thad Beyle.	15-29	20.71	2.41	+
Governor's Approval Ratings	% Approve of the governors performance, data provided by Thad Beyle, Survey USA, local newspapers, and similar sources.	0-100	53	13.81	+
Years in Office	The actual number of years the governor has held office.	Beginning at 0 if first year.	3.21	2.64	?
Election Year	Dummy for whether or not it is an Election Year, provided by Carl Klarner.	0, 1			+
Lame Duck	Dummy for whether or not the governor is a "lame duck."	0, 1			-
Term Limited	Dummy for whether or not the governor is term-limited, provided by Carl Klarner.	0, 1			?
Political Environment Variables					
Divided Government	Dummy for whether the governor and the legislature are of the same party.	0, 1			-
Compounded Divided Government	Dummy for whether both chambers are of the same party.	0, 1			-
State Polarization	Shor and McCarty Party Polarization Scores	.443 – 3.042	1.45	.48	-
Institutional Variables					
Professionalism	Squire Index	.027-.626	.18	.12	?
Term-limited	Dummy for whether or not the legislature is term-limited.	0,1			?
Control Variables					
Unemployment Rate	State unemployment rate.	2.5-13.8	6.21	2.20	-
Gender	Dummy for whether the governor is female.	0,1			+
Proposed	Number of issues proposed by a given governor.	1-44	11.81	6.64	-

Table B. The Effect of State Legislative Experience on Gubernatorial Success

Variables	(1)	(2)
Previous Legislative Experience		
Lt Governor	0.03	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)
State Lower Chamber	-0.02	-0.09
	(0.04)	(0.13)
Years in the Lower Chamber		0.01
		(0.01)
Governor was in Majority		-0.00
		(0.07)
Served in Lower Chamber Leadership		0.03
		(0.07)
State Senate	-0.02	-0.29*
	(0.03)	(0.15)
Years in Senate		-0.00
		(0.01)
Governor was in Majority		0.08
		(0.08)
Served in Senate Leadership		0.10
		(0.07)
U.S. House	-0.14***	-0.12**
	(0.05)	(0.05)
U.S. Senate	-0.08	-0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Other	-0.03	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Executive Variables		
Republican	-0.03	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Lame Duck Term	-0.03	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Lame Duck Year	0.02	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Election Year	-0.02	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Approval Rating	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Power Score	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years Served	-0.01	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Political Environment Variables		
Divided Government	-0.08**	-0.08**
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Split Legislative Control	0.04	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Polarization	0.04*	0.04
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Institutional Variables		
Professionalism	-0.37***	-0.31**
	(0.12)	(0.13)
Legislative Term Limits	0.11***	0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Proposed	-0.00*	-0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.55***	0.78***
	(0.17)	(0.21)
Observations	382	378
R-squared	0.20	0.22

Entries are OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors, clustered at the governor level, in parentheses. All models include controls. Levels of significance: *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$