

**AMERICAN  
POLITICS  
CONFERENCE**

---

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

**JUNE 23-24, 2022**



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

---

**CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE  
GOVERNMENT**

Harris School of Public Policy

# AMERICAN POLITICS CONFERENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

June 23-24, 2022

Harris School of Public Policy Keller Center Sky Suite  
1307 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE  
GOVERNMENT  
Harris School of Public Policy

## A NOTE FROM THE LEADERS OF THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

Welcome to the American Politics Conference!

We are so thrilled to have you here at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy for the Center for Effective Government's first academic conference, focused on critical issues facing American politics. Over the next two days, we look forward to engaging the original research presented by faculty and graduate students on enduring themes of American democracy: elections, lobbying, design of political institutions, accountability, representation, and more.

At the University of Chicago, the Harris School, and the Center for Effective Government, we place a premium on the open and rigorous exchange of ideas about policy and politics with an eye towards building more effective, inclusive, and responsive governing institutions. As you hear from the wide range of experts and voices here this week, we encourage you to keep these principles in mind.

We'd like to offer a few words of thanks to those who have played an important role in the Conference. First, our deep appreciation to the Conference's principal organizers, Harris School Assistant Professors and CEG Faculty Affiliates Alexander Fourinaies, Daniel Moskowitz, and Adam Zelizer, for their vision and hard work in bringing this conference to fruition and assembling such a stellar slate of presenters, discussants, and attendees. We must also express our gratitude to the entire Center for Effective Government team and our colleagues at the Harris School of Public Policy and University of Chicago for their partnership and support. We're grateful, too, to the Harris School, the University's Social Science Division, and Wicklow Capital for their continued financial support of CEG, which makes conferences like this possible. And finally, we are thankful to all of you, particularly those who have made the trip from across the country, for joining us this week and offering your scholarship, insights, and attention to this important work.

Thank you again for participating in the American Politics Conference. We hope you enjoy your time here at the University of Chicago.

Sincerely,

William Howell  
Director

Sadia Sinhu  
Executive Director

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## DAY 1 | JUNE 23

- 12:00 pm**    **Lunch and Conference Welcome**  
*William Howell, Sadia Sindhu*  
*(University of Chicago)*
- 1:30 pm**    **“Policy Consequences of Civil Society:  
Evidence from German-American Counter-  
Mobilization to Prohibition”**  
*Presenter: Benjamin Schneer*  
*(Harvard University)*  
*Discussant: Shigeo Hirano (Columbia University)*
- 2:40 pm**    **Break**
- 3:10 pm**    **“The Impact of Judicial Diversity on Case  
Outcomes in Federal Courts”**  
*Presenter: Ryan Hübert*  
*(University of California, Davis)*  
*Discussant: Jörg Spenkuch*  
*(Northwestern University)*
- 4:20 pm**    **Break**
- 4:50 pm**    **Roundtable Discussion**  
*Presenters:*  
*Chandler James, Ben Shaver, Karthik Srinivasan,*  
*Sidak Yntiso*  
*(University of Chicago)*
- 6:00 pm**    **Closing**

### COCKTAIL RECEPTION AND DINNER TO FOLLOW AT

*Nella Pizza e Pasta*  
*1125 E 55th Street*  
*Chicago, IL 60615*

## DAY 2 | JUNE 24

- 8:30 am**    **Light Breakfast**
- 9:00 am**    **“Can Elite Allegations of Election Fraud  
Demobilize Supporters?”**  
*Presenter: Zac Peskowitz (Emory University)*  
*Discussant: Anthony Fowler*  
*(University of Chicago)*
- 10:10 am**    **Break**
- 10:40 am**    **“Throwing Away the Umbrella: Minority  
Voting after the Supreme Court’s Shelby  
Decision”**  
*Presenter: Mayya Komisarchik*  
*(University of Rochester)*  
*Discussant: Christopher Berry*  
*(University of Chicago)*
- 11:50 am**    **Lunch**
- 1:00 pm**    **“Reversion to the Mean, or their Version of the  
Dream? Characteristics of 2016-2020 Latino  
Vote Switchers”**  
*Presenter: Bernard Fraga (Emory University)*  
*Discussant: Marc Meredith*  
*(University of Pennsylvania)*
- 2:10 pm**    **Break**
- 2:40 pm**    **“Lemons in the Political Marketplace: A Big-  
Data Approach to Detect ‘Scam PACs’”**  
*Presenter: Zhao Li (Princeton University)*  
*Discussant: Eleanor Powell*  
*(University of Wisconsin-Madison)*
- 3:50 pm**    **Conference Conclusion**

## PAPERS AND PRESENTERS | DAY 1



**BENJAMIN SCHNEER**

Harvard University

### ***“Policy Consequences of Civil Society: Evidence from German-American Counter-Mobilization to Prohibition”***

What impact do mass civil society groups have on public policy? We study this issue by analyzing opposition to national prohibition by German-American groups and associations in the early twentieth century, before and after state-sponsored suppression of them that coincided with U.S. entry to World War I. We measure German-American civil society and organizational strength across time and geography based on historical club directories, newspaper directories and petitioning activity. Comparing votes in the House of Representatives on two near-identical proposals for constitutional amendments---the defeat of the Hobson Prohibition Amendment in 1914 and the successful passage of the eventual Eighteenth Amendment in 1917---we find suppression mattered most in districts located at the middle of the German-American population distribution, where we hypothesize representatives were most persuadable. We estimate that without suppression of German-American organizations the Prohibition Amendment would not have received enough support for passage. Our findings add to an understanding of when and under what circumstances groups and organizations successfully influence public policy and provide a new explanation for the passage of the Prohibition Amendment.



**RYAN HÜBERT**

University of California, Davis

### ***“The Impact of Judicial Diversity on Case Outcomes in Federal Courts”***

As President Biden accelerates a decades-old push to diversify the federal courts through his appointments of federal judges, the debate about the impact of judicial diversity on legal outcomes is unsettled. Prior research on diversity and judging has focused almost exclusively on the question of how the unique perspectives of more diverse judicial appointees induce them to resolve cases differently than “comparable” judicial appointees with less diverse backgrounds. But this research does not answer a more fundamental question: do these more diverse appointees, taken as they are, actually resolve cases differently than their cohorts’ less diverse appointees? Using an original dataset of more than 100,000 civil rights cases filed in twelve federal district courts, we find that assignment of a case to a judge who is non-White or a woman has no statistically significant effect on case outcomes for Democratic appointees but causes more pro-defendant outcomes for Republican appointees. Our results are consistent with a theory of bargaining over judicial appointments in which Republican presidents take advantage of Democrats’ preference for diversity on the bench to put forth more conservative judicial nominees.

## PAPERS AND PRESENTERS | DAY 2



**ZAC PESKOWITZ**  
Emory University

### ***“Can Elite Allegations of Election Fraud Demobilize Supporters?”***

We investigate turnout decisions against the backdrop of the high-profile, unsubstantiated allegations of electoral fraud in the 2020 presidential election made by President Trump and his allies. We examine the relationship between attitudes toward Trump and the decision to turn out in the 2021 Georgia runoff. At the precinct-level, we employ five alternative measures of Trump popularity and a specification with precinct fixed effects to show that precincts where Trump is popular experienced large relative declines in turnout in the runoff. We undertake an individual-level analysis by employing statistical learning algorithms to characterize the relationship between stated Trump attitudes and respondent demographics. We estimate the relationship between turnout in the Georgia runoff and Trump attitudes using a variety of research designs that control for unobserved heterogeneity in turnout propensity. We find that Trump supporters experienced large relative turnout declines, 1.67 percentage points in our base specification, in the runoff. Our findings are consistent with the perspective that extreme and well-publicized allegations of electoral fraud can discourage citizens from participating in the democratic process.



**MAYYA KOMISARCHIK**  
University of Rochester

### ***“Throwing Away the Umbrella: Minority Voting after the Supreme Court’s Shelby Decision”***

The Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* dramatically changed the Voting Rights Act, ending the “preclearance” process that had required federal approval before places with a history

of discrimination changed their voting procedures. Dissenting justices and voting-rights advocates feared the decision could allow changes to election administration that would suppress minority voter participation. This paper evaluates the decision’s impact on election practices and on Black and Hispanic voter registration and turnout. Using administrative data and a difference-in-differences design comparing places affected and unaffected by the court’s decision, we find minimal changes in minority registration and voting in the post-Shelby period. We then delve into possible mechanisms that could underlie this pattern, using a variety of data sources to examine changes in state and local voting laws and practices as well as the possibility of public backlash and countermobilization.



**BERNARD FRAGA**  
Emory University

### ***“Reversion to the Mean, or their Version of the Dream? Characteristics of 2016-2020 Latino Vote Switchers”***

In 2020, support for Joe Biden among Latina/o/x voters was 8 percentage points lower than support for Hillary Clinton in 2016, the largest drop of any racial/ethnic group. While much media and academic attention has (rightly) focused on understanding the impact of misinformation, COVID concerns, and racial animus on Latino voters in 2020, we take a step back and seek to clarify the demographic and core ideological characteristics of Latino voters who voted for Donald Trump in 2020. Using a mix of national survey data and voter file records, and disaggregating components of electoral change, we find evidence for both an ideology-driven reversion to the mean in 2020 Latino vote choice and a population of newly-engaged U.S.-born Latino children of immigrants who were mobilized by ex-President Trump. The results point to a more durable Republican shift than currently assumed.

## PAPERS AND PRESENTERS | DAY 2



**ZHAO LI**

Princeton University

### ***“Lemons in the Political Marketplace: A Big-Data Approach to Detect ‘Scam PACs’”***

‘Scam PACs’ are political action committees (PACs) in the United States that solicit campaign contributions to enrich their creators (e.g., political consultants) instead of advancing the campaigns or causes they purport to champion. In the 2018 election cycle alone alleged scam PACs collectively raised more than \$106 million, which could have fully funded 140 average House campaigns. Scam PACs’ proliferation and lack of regulatory oversight not only undermine PACs’ accountability to donors, but also generate a lemons problem in the political marketplace. To reduce the information asymmetry that donors face in discerning scam PACs, I first examine how scam PACs that have been identified by media reports differ from comparable legitimate PACs on aggregate attributes related to their fundraising and expenditure patterns, regulatory compliance, donor characteristics, and PAC donor and personnel networks. Building on these descriptive analyses, I construct a supervised machine learning algorithm that systematically detects scam PACs in U.S. federal elections.

## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

The University of Chicago Center for Effective Government (CEG) is a nonpartisan academic initiative that aims to strengthen democratic institutions and improve the capacity of government to solve public problems. Founded in 2019 at the Harris School of Public Policy, CEG works to solve the problems of government ineffectiveness with a multi-faceted theory of action. The Center builds bridges between its stakeholders—scholars, students, practitioners, leaders, journalists, and advocates—and organizes its work and activities around the key areas of ideas, education, and engagement.

## ABOUT THE HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

For more than three decades, the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy has been steadfastly committed to advancing policy based on evidence, not ideology. Guided by this exacting perspective, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and nearly 4,000 alumni take on the world’s most important problems using the latest tools of social science. As the second-largest professional school at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy offers a full range of degree and executive education programs to empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a real social impact throughout our global society. This is Harris Public Policy: Social Impact, Down to a Science.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE  
GOVERNMENT**

Harris School of Public Policy

**SCAN BELOW**

*to learn more about the*

**AMERICAN  
POLITICS  
CONFERENCE**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

**CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE  
GOVERNMENT**

Harris School of Public Policy

[effectivegov.uchicago.edu](http://effectivegov.uchicago.edu)

 [@UChicagoCEG](https://twitter.com/UChicagoCEG)