

Partisan Trends in the Federal Election Commission Nicholas Foley, 22'

The Federal Election Commission dictates and enforces federal campaign finance laws. Its members vote on advisory opinions, enforcement cases, and regulations. For example, the role of this agency includes levying fines, approving edits to proposed regulations, and issuing advisory opinions. The regulatory body is comprised of up to six members, with a maximum of three Democrats and three Republicans. A plurality of four votes is required for regulations to pass. The majority of my work focused on the votes in regulatory areas. I updated the list of votes, however, for advisory opinions, enforcement cases, and regulations. Specifically, I copied each commissioner's votes from the FEC database ranging from 1990 to 2021 and entered them into a spreadsheet. I rearranged the structure of the data to feed into an R package, which is statistical software that can scale the votes to reflect similarities and differences in Commissioner voting patterns. We can show the total number and distribution of votes on regulations. Therefore, we can show the correlation of voting within a party. The results of our data implied three major findings. First, there is lots of deadlock in the FEC. Figure 1 shows that 3-3 votes are the most common result in MURs, advisory opinions, and regulatory votes. Second, the Commissioners that are currently serving tend to vote along party lines more consistently than did past Commissioners. Figure 1 shows that current Commissioners, represented by circled dots, have a higher correlation of votes within their own party on non-unanimous issues. Lastly, the data shows that Republican Commissioners, especially those currently serving, tend to vote along party lines far more often than Democratic Commissioners.

Figure 1

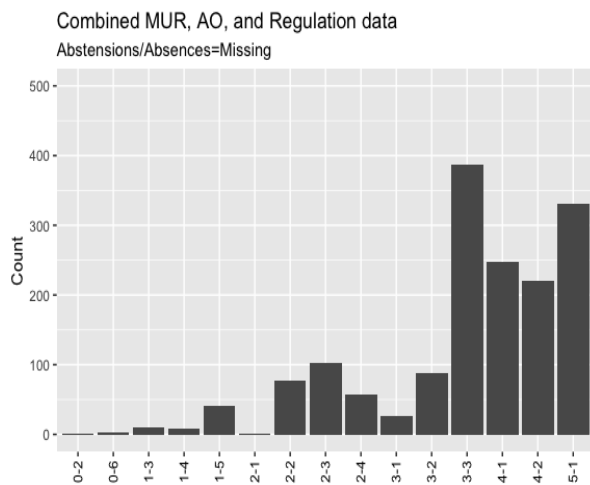
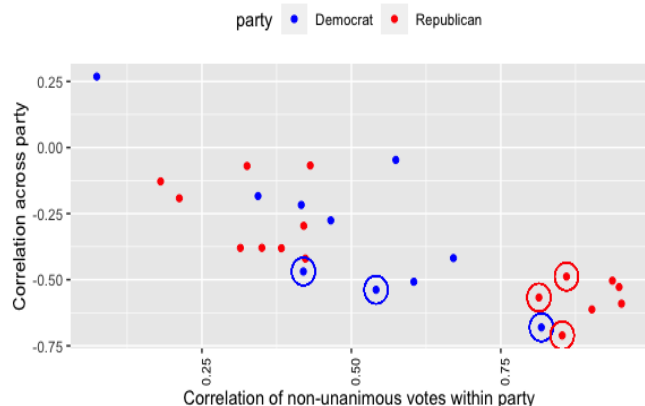


Figure 2

Vote Patterns in FEC Votes on
Advisory Opinions, Enforcement cases, and Regulations
Entries are Commissioners.
Circled entries are currently serving



Source: FEC.gov

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