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Abstract*

This paper uses data from the Argentine House of Representatives to study the relationship between legislative effort and political success, as measured by reelection, becoming a leader of the House, and moving to higher political positions. It is found that more effort is associated with a higher probability of being reelected, and also that for those legislators that are reelected, higher effort is positively associated with acquiring leadership positions in the House. This happens in a context of fairly high legislative turnover and in a political context in which career paths of legislators are largely dictated by provincial party leaders. Interestingly, it is found that higher legislative effort is associated with a lower probability of improving politically outside Congress. These findings suggest the presence of various alternative career paths for Argentine politicians, and some degree of sorting. The paper concludes with some speculation on these politician types and with ideas for further research.

JEL classifications: C79, D02

Keywords: Political power, Legislators, Legislative performance

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1. Introduction

There is an important tradition of analyzing U.S. political career paths, jumpstarted several decades ago by Joseph Schlesinger (1966). That study, focusing on the U.S. Congress, offered a typology of “ambitions” that drive various political careers: “progressive” ambition (the officeholder aspires “to attain an office more important than the one he now seeks or is holding”), “static” ambition (a politician wishes to “make a long career out of a particular office”), and “discrete” ambition (the politician desires an “office for its specified term” only and intends to “withdraw from public office”). Many later studies built upon this typology (Hibbing 1982, 1991; Squire 1988, 1998). Herrick and Moore (1993) further refined it by adding the notion of “intrainstitutional ambition,” “the members’ desire for leadership positions within their present institution” (Herrick and Moore, 1993: 765).

The literature on Congress and on career paths of politicians, which until recently was largely centered on the U.S. case, has in the last several years been enriched by a number of contributions studying legislatures around the world. Within those developments, Latin American legislatures, which share some basic constitutional features with the U.S. case, have received some attention. One important book by Morgenstern and Nacif (2002) has set the agenda by emphasizing several unique characteristics that make the United State more of a special case. Many assumptions taken for granted in the “Congressional” literature become variables when seen in Latin American perspective, that is, when applied to congresses with lower levels of institutionalization than the U.S. Congress.¹ In particular, in many Latin American cases, legislators are not “single-minded” reelection seekers, and sometimes positions in the National Legislature are just a stepping stone in more convoluted careers that imply moving back and forth between national and local levels (Samuels, 2003; Botero, 2008; Lodola, 2009).

There is a parallel literature analyzing the legislative activity and “effectiveness” of (mainly) U.S. legislators, utilizing various objective and subjective measures of the work realized by legislators. A recent study by Padró I Miquel and Snyder (2006) relates some of

¹ Recent contributions to the study of political career paths in Latin America include Altman and Chasquetti (2005) for Uruguay, Samuels (2003) for Brazil, Botero (2008) for Chile and Colombia, Jones et al. (2002) for Argentina, and more recently Alcántara Saez (2008) with data from the Project on Latin American Parliamentary Elites (PELA) for the whole region. Siavelis and Morgenstern (2008) study the process of political recruitment and candidate selection, with country chapters by specialists on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay.

those measures of legislative effectiveness to incumbent's electoral success and to the probability of legislators moving to higher office.²

In this paper we contribute to the literature studying legislative performance and political career paths in the context of the Argentine case. We utilize a new dataset with various measures of legislative "effort" by Argentine politicians, and we relate this effort to political success, as measured by reelection, becoming a leader of the House, and moving to higher political positions. We find that more effort is associated with a higher probability of being reelected, and also that for those legislators that are reelected, higher effort is positively associated with acquiring leadership positions in the House. This happens in a context of fairly high legislative turnover and in a political context in which career paths of legislators are largely dictated by provincial party leaders. Interestingly, we find that higher legislative effort is associated with a lower probability of improving politically outside Congress. These findings suggest the presence of various alternative career paths for Argentine politicians, and some degree of sorting. The paper concludes with some speculation on these politician types and with ideas for further research.

In the next section we provide some contextual information on the Argentine political system, necessary to interpret the empirical analysis that follows.

2. Congress and Political Careers in the Argentine Political System

Argentina, which returned to democracy in 1983, is a federal republic consisting of 24 legislative districts: 23 provinces and an autonomous federal district. The National Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies (i.e., the House of Representatives) and the Senate. This study focuses on the House. Argentine deputies are elected using proportional representation in multimember districts (provinces) with a median district magnitude of 3 and a mean of 5.

² Diermeier, Keane and Merlo (2005) provide a very rich study of political careers in the U.S. Congress utilizing econometric techniques from labor economics. They show that Congressional experience increases later wages both in the public and private sector, but at a decreasing rate. They distinguish among "types" of politicians, who differ both in their tastes for different aspects of the rewards from office and in their skills. Politicians differ both according to observed characteristics (e.g., age, educational background, family background, party affiliation, and prior political experience) and unobserved or "latent" characteristics. The two latent characteristics are: i) political skill (i.e., politicians are either "skilled" or "unskilled") which refers to the ability to win elections; and ii) the politician's political ambition or desire for legislative accomplishment. They show that representatives have unobservable characteristics that give them comparative advantages for being in Congress, and that there exists positive selection bias, in that those incumbents who run for reelection are better politicians and have a higher chance of being reelected.

Deputies are allocated to the provinces based on their population (according to the 1980 census); every province receives a minimum of five deputies and no province receives fewer deputies than it held during the earlier 1973-76 democratic period. One half of the Chamber is renewed every two years, with each of the 24 electoral districts renewing one half of its delegation, or the closest integer approximation. In each election to the Chamber there are 16 districts that elect two or three deputies, four districts that elect four or five deputies, and the four large districts electing nine (Cordoba and Santa Fe), 13 (City of Buenos Aires) and 35 (Province of Buenos Aires) deputies. Deputies are elected from closed party lists using the D'Hont divisor form of proportional representation.

During the period under analysis Argentine politics was dominated by two political parties, the Partido Justicialista (PJ, the Peronists) and the Union Civica Radical (UCR, the Radicals). National-level third parties, sometimes on the right, sometimes on the left, achieved some ephemeral success, but tended to vanish after one or two elections.³ There are also a number of provincial-level parties that occasionally reach the provincial governorship and a few congressional seats at the national level (Sin and Palanza, 1997).

Recent scholarship on the Argentine political system has tended to argue that the National Congress is a rather weak policymaking arena, even in Latin American comparative perspective (Spiller and Tommasi, 2003 and 2007; Inter-American Development Bank, 2005; Saiegh, 2010). As documented in Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin (1999) and Jones et al. (2002), the careers of Argentine legislators are short, and most Argentine legislators spend just a single term in Congress. The median deputy serves only one term in office. The brevity of Argentine legislative careers does not seem to be driven by the decision of voters to “throw the rascals out,” but by the decision of whoever makes up the party lists for Congress not to re-nominate most incumbents. Table 1 (from Altman and Chasqueti, 2005) shows that the very low percentage of legislators returning to their seat (17 percent) is driven mostly by the very low percentage (26 percent) seeking reelection.

³ The main reason for that is that these metropolitan-based parties are not able to have the wide territorial reach of PJ and UCR, and given various biases in the electoral system (malapportionment in the Lower and especially upper House, majoritarian and partisan biases in the province, per Calvo and Micozzi, 2005) they are unable to translate one or two decent elections into enough public offices to become sustainable in a country in which the use of the (national, provincial, and municipal) state apparatus is crucial in the development of party politics (Scherlis, 2008).

Table 1. Reelection Rates in Some Countries of the Americas

TABLE 1
RE-ELECTION RATES IN SOME COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

Country	Length of Term	Percentage Seeking Re-election	Percentage Winning (of those seeking)	Percentage Returning to Office
United States (1996)	2	88	94	83
Panama (1999)	4	87.5	49.2	43
Chile (1993)	4	76	78	59
Colombia (1990)	4	n.a.	n.a.	48
Uruguay (1999)	5	72.3	64.9	47
Brazil (1995)	4	70	62	43
Venezuela (1993)	5	n.a.	n.a.	32*
Bolivia (2002)	4	n.a.	n.a.	22*
Argentina (1997)	4	26	67	17
Costa Rica (2001)	4	0	0	0
Mexico (1997)	3	0	0	0

Notes: *Represents the average of both chambers (40.28 per cent Deputies, 24.20 per cent Senate).

Source: Altman and Chasquetti (2005).

Some authors have explored the process of preparation of the lists of candidates to the National Chamber, most notably De Luca, Jones and Tula (2002) and Jones (2008). The main conclusion of such analyses is that the process is heavily centered at the provincial level, with a very important role of local political machineries. Even though there is some interprovincial variation (with things slightly different in some of the largest districts), in the median Argentine province, a small click of provincial party leaders has the largest influence on candidate nomination. This influence is stronger in the cases in which the party dominates the provincial executive, in which case the provincial governor plays a central role (De Luca, Jones and Tula, 2002; and Jones, 2008).

It is in this context of a (supposedly) rather weak national congress, low reelection rates, and political careers centered in the provinces (from where candidates are entered in closed party lists), that we study the effects of legislative effort on being reelected, climbing to House leadership, and moving up to more desirable offices.⁴

⁴ Jones et al. (2002), one of the first modern analyses of the Argentine Congress, define Argentine legislators as “amateur legislators–professional politicians.” Lodola (2009) provides a far-reaching analysis of political careers at the provincial level.

3. Data, Statistical Methods, and Results

3.1 Data

Our dataset contains information on House representatives for the period 1983 to 1995.⁵ The dataset was constructed based on official registries of the Congress and on the *Directorios Legislativos* published by Fundacion Directorio Legislativo.

We are interested in the determinants of three political outputs: reelection in the House (*Reelected*), becoming a leader of the chamber (*Leader*, defined as president or vice-president of the chamber, chair of a committee, and majority or minority president or vice-president), and improving politically outside Congress (*Improved position*, defined as becoming president or vice-president of the country, governor or vice-governor of a province, national senator, national minister, or provincial minister).

Summary statistics are presented in Table 2. In the period 1983 to 1995, only 20 percent of incumbents were reelected, about 14 percent of representatives held a position of leadership in Congress, and 5 percent went on to political positions considered better than being a Representative.

Table 2. Summary Statistics

	Mean	Standard deviation	Observations
		Outputs of interest	
Reelected	0.197	0.398	996
Leader	0.140	0.286	996
Improved position	0.053	0.225	996
		Legislators' effort	
Floor attendance (in %)	64.529	15.985	974
Committee attendance (in %)	56.730	20.742	960
Number of bills introduced	3.823	5.164	994
Number of bills ratified	0.159	0.311	994
Effort	0.000	1.262	958
		Legislators' personal and political characteristics	
Age	50.590	10.063	996
Male	0.920	0.272	996
Seniority	1.641	1.595	996
College degree (no lawyers)	0.215	0.411	996
Lawyers	0.366	0.482	996
Size	27.535	26.720	996

⁵ We use data from 1983 to 1995 since after 1995 there are no consistent data available on two of our key variables: committee attendance and floor attendance.

The database includes four objective measures of individual legislative effort/performance for House representatives: *floor attendance* (as percentage of legislative floor sessions), *committee attendance* (as percentage of committee sessions), the number of *bills introduced* by the legislator, and the number of those *bills* that were *approved*. This database constitutes an extension of the data collected in Dal Bó and Rossi (2011). We believe that these metrics, while noisy, do serve as proxies for different and relevant dimensions of legislative effort. In order to draw general conclusions in a context of multiple effort measures, we construct an index of legislative *effort* that aggregates the four measures described above. The index is constructed using the principal component (which accounts for 40 percent of the total variance). We have performed all the empirical exercises reported below also using the individual measures of effort, and the results are quite similar across measures, except when explicitly noted.

Our data also includes various legislator individual and political characteristics, such as *age* at the time of entering the House, *seniority*, the total number of legislators that entered the House representing the district (*Size*), and a series of dummy variables equal to one when the legislator: is *male*, is a *lawyer*, and holds a *college degree* other than lawyer.

As reported in the lower panel of Table 2, the average age of entry of representatives in the House between 1983 and 1995 is 49 years old. As in many others legislatures, the Argentine Congress has an extremely low share of women legislators, at approximately 8 percent.⁶ About 58 percent of legislators hold a college degree, and 37 percent of legislators are lawyers.⁷

3.2 Statistical Methods

We aim to estimate the following regression model:

$$Y_{it} = \gamma E_{it} + \alpha X_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{it} is the output (Reelected, Leader, and Improved position) of legislator i in term t , E is effort, γ is the parameter of interest, X is a matrix of legislators' characteristics, and ε is the error term. A typical concern when conducting inference for the estimated parameters of equation (1) is that the errors for the same legislator might not be independent across terms. To address this concern we report all standard errors clustered at the legislator level.

⁶ The number has increased after a law mandating a 30 percent gender quota was adopted in 1991.

⁷ It is worth clarifying for U.S. readers that in Argentina a law degree is attained at the "college" level. There are few Argentine legislators with graduate studies (Palanza, Scartascini and Tommasi, 2012).

3.3 Results

Table 3 presents estimates on the relationship between effort and the probability of been reelected. In columns (1) in Table 3 we report OLS estimates of equation (1). In this model, Effort has a positive and significant coefficient suggesting a positive correlation between effort and the probability of reelection. These results provide evidence that is consistent with the hypothesis that effort pays. In columns (2) to (5) we show that the findings are robust to controlling for district and party dummies, and also to estimating equation (1) using a Probit specification.

Table 3. Determinants of Reelection

	Dependent variable: reelected				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Effort	0.039*** (0.011)	0.040*** (0.011)	0.040*** (0.011)	0.037*** (0.011)	0.038*** (0.010)
Age		-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.005*** (0.001)	
Male		-0.016 (0.058)	-0.013 (0.056)	-0.005 (0.057)	
Seniority		0.028*** (0.010)	0.026*** (0.010)	0.023** (0.010)	
College degree		0.010 (0.035)	0.004 (0.036)	-0.001 (0.035)	
Lawyer		0.035 (0.029)	0.021 (0.028)	0.013 (0.029)	
Size		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.070 (0.044)	
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	958	886	886	886	958
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	Probit

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are in parentheses. For the Probit model we report marginal effects. *Significant at 10%; **Significant at 5%; ***Significant at 1%.

The size of the effect appears considerable relative to the effects of other observable characteristics. Reelection is positively correlated with seniority and negatively correlated with age. The positive connection to seniority and negative connection to age are common results in other contexts (Hibbing, 1982; Levitt and Wolfram, 1997). In the more-studied context of long U.S. congressional careers, legislators become more likely to retire as they age, while they tend to be reelected more often when they have already served more terms. This latter result should not interpret causally, since it might reflect unobservable characteristics.

Having established that legislative effort seems to pay in terms of reelection, we now explore whether legislative effort is related to climbing to leadership positions in the House. Herrick and Moore (1993) have expanded Schlesinger's typology to add a fourth type of "intra-institutional" ambition, the desire for leadership positions within the House, "a unique form of ambition that results in behaviors distinct from those generated by either progressive or static ambition" (1993: 766). We construct a variable called "leader," which is defined as being president or vice-president of the chamber, chair of a committee, or president or vice-president of a majority or minority bloc within the Chamber. We regress this dummy variable on the same variables as in Table 3 for the subset of legislators who were reelected. Table 4 suggests that conditional on being reelected, effort is positively correlated with becoming leader of the House.⁸

Table 4. Determinants of Leadership of the House Conditional on Being Reelected

	Dependent variable: Leader				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Effort	0.081*** (0.027)	0.077*** (0.027)	0.070** (0.029)	0.065* (0.034)	0.088*** (0.034)
Age		-0.010** (0.004)	-0.008* (0.004)	-0.008* (0.004)	
Male		-0.118 (0.214)	-0.108 (0.159)	-0.045 (0.228)	
Seniority		0.012 (0.027)	0.020 (0.025)	0.031 (0.027)	
College degree		0.198 (0.124)	0.159 (0.127)	0.207 (0.131)	
Lawyer		-0.105 (0.106)	0.000 (0.101)	0.017 (0.110)	
Size		0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)	
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	137	135	135	135	137
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	Probit

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are in parentheses. For the Probit model we report marginal effects. *Significant at 10%; **Significant at 5%; ***Significant at 1%.

⁸ In this regression, *seniority* appears as not significant for House leadership. This is because we have restricted the sample to those legislators that were reelected; that is, we excluded freshmen, since our main variable of interest was the effect of previous effort on leadership, and by construction you cannot be a leader if you were not reelected. But, if we analyze the cross section of leadership positions across the range of seniority (which in our sample goes from 1 to 4 periods), we find that freshmen are less likely to be leaders in the whole sample, and that there is not much variation among those serving 2, 3 and 4 periods. This connects to the fact, discussed later, that more durable legislators tend to get important assignments also early in their careers, suggesting an element of sorting.

Table 5 reports estimates on the relationship between effort and the probability of improving politically after leaving Congress (i.e., becoming president or vice-president of the country, governor or vice-governor of a province, national or provincial minister, or national senator). Strikingly, effort is negatively correlated with the probability of improving politically after leaving Congress.

Table 5. Determinants of Improvement in Political Position after Leaving Congress

	Dependent variable: Improved position				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Effort	-0.024*** (0.006)	-0.025*** (0.006)	-0.024*** (0.006)	-0.026*** (0.006)	-0.025*** (0.006)
Age		-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	
Male		0.047*** (0.009)	0.048*** (0.009)	0.046*** (0.011)	
Seniority		0.005 (0.005)	0.005 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	
College degree		0.045** (0.021)	0.047** (0.021)	0.042** (0.021)	
Lawyer		0.035** (0.018)	0.042** (0.019)	0.045** (0.018)	
Size		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.019 (0.068)	
Party dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
District dummies	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	958	886	886	886	958
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	Probit

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are in parentheses. For the Probit model we report marginal effects. *Significant at 10%; **Significant at 5%; ***Significant at 1%.

This result contrasts with the findings of the U.S. literature (for instance, Padró I Miquel and Snyder, 2006). On the positive side, the result assuages the possible concerns about unobserved third variables (such as “energy” or “personality”) driving the results of the previous tables, as such traits should also correlate positively with climbing up politically.

4. Career Paths and Types of Argentine Legislators

Of course a full analysis of career paths of Argentine politicians is beyond the scope of this paper, but we believe that we add a little brick to that broader enterprise through the empirical exercises just described. What these results suggest, when put in conjunction with some ancillary knowledge of the Argentine case, is that there are (as argued in other cases) various alternative

career paths in Argentine politics. Most Argentine legislators (around two-thirds) are neither reelected nor move to the most desirable higher positions of President, Vice-President, Senator, Governor, Vice-Governor, or National or Provincial Minister. There are other legislators, though, who tend to be reelected, some of them two and three times. These reelected legislators tend to be overrepresented among leaders of the House (48 percent of the leaders are legislators who have been reelected). These legislators tend to be those who work harder in Congress. Finally, there are some politicians who pass through Congress, tend not to stay there very long, and then move along to better political positions. These politicians tend to work less than their counterparts while in Congress. This is consistent with the view of Argentine politics in the extant literature, which argues that the House, unlike in cases like the United States, tends not to be a very desirable place for ambitious politicians.

In this analysis we do not have all the detailed information about prior career paths,⁹ nor a complete analysis of later career steps, but we provide an interesting glimpse into some aspects of those political careers from the perspective of what is that these politicians do while in the Argentine House of Representatives.

Looking into the positions held by Argentine National Deputies immediately after the end of their term in office, Jones (2008) finds that a number of them (30 percent) move to positions (other than the top ones) at the subnational level (such as lower tier executive branch, mayor, and municipal cabinet minister or councilor). If we add those to the ones that stay in National Congress representing the province and that move to high positions in the province, we find evidence of the provincial-centeredness of political careers to which various previous authors have referred (Jones et al., 2002; Jones, 2008; Micozzi, 2009; Ardanaz, Leiras, and Tommasi, 2012).¹⁰ Also, this and the information on previous careers is consistent with the depiction of Jones et al. (2002) that most Argentine legislators are “amateur legislators” but “professional politicians,” and Congress is not the centerpiece of their careers.

Focusing on those legislators who do get reelected, we can observe that even though long congressional careers are rare in the Argentine Chamber, there are a few legislators that do have

⁹ For some useful information on such “prior” aspects of political careers see Jones (2008) and Lodola (2009). For the class of 1991-1995 (the last full class in our sample) Jones et al. (2002) indicate that the prior positions held by incoming Argentine Deputies were: provincial legislator (29 percent), national legislator (18 percent), provincial executive branch (14 percent), municipal government (13 percent), lower tier national executive branch (9 percent), party activity (9 percent), other (10 percent).

¹⁰ Micozzi (2009) provides intriguing evidence indicating that national legislators who expect to continue their careers at the subnational level tend to submit legislation that serves as signals to their local constituencies.

such careers. Within the time frame of our empirical analysis, there were a total of 693 legislators (83 percent) who served only one term, 118 (14 percent) who served two terms, 21 (2.5 percent) who served three terms, and only one legislator who served four terms.¹¹ We have explored the characteristics of those legislators who tend to serve longer terms.

Focusing on the 22 who served more than two terms, we do find some interesting patterns. These legislators tend to be well known but not “superstar” politicians. They tend to serve on fewer committees (that is, to be more specialized), tend to be assigned to those committees considered most central to Argentine politics (Budget, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Housing, Industry, Social Security, Defense, General Legislation, Labor), and tend to reach leadership positions in the House more often (even in their initial terms as legislators). The places in the lists they tend to enter, for the cases of the larger provinces (where lists are not trivially short), have a mode around the third and fourth place. In general, they are not salient enough to be the top name in the list, yet they are important enough that the parties want to make sure they get (or stay) in Congress. It would not make sense to ask the same question for those districts that elect only two, three, or four deputies at each round. As a matter of fact, we find that these long-lived legislators tend to come from large districts more often than not: 17 out of the 22 (or 77 percent) are from the four largest districts (while these districts have 51 percent of the total deputies in the House).

All of this suggests that, in spite of the relative weaknesses of Argentine Congress and of the relative weakness of national-level parties in comparative perspective, parties still manage to have a small cadre of “professional legislators” who tend to be the ones in charge of interacting with the Executive in the most important matters such as the budget.¹² In line with the interpretation of the workings of the Argentine Congress by Jones and Hwang (2005) who argue that, in spite of the provincial-centeredness of political careers, national parties still manage to

¹¹ Things have not changed a whole lot over time with increased democratic experience. Looking at the most recent cohort of 2007-2011, one finds 71 percent serving their first term, 21 percent serving their second, 5 percent serving their third, 2 percent serving their fourth, and 1 percent serving their fifth (Palanza, Scartascini and Tommasi, 2012).

¹² These 22 individuals include a few relatively well-known economists, such as Jesús Rodríguez and Raul Baglini (from the UCR) and Jorge Matzkin and Oscar Lamberto (from the PJ), all of who have played an important role in budget discussions, as well as a few heavyweight politicians and lawyers such as Leopoldo Moreau, Jorge Vanossi and Federico Storani, who served on politically strategic committees such as general legislation and constitutional affairs. Seventeen of the 22 long-lasting legislators come from the two large “national” parties, and two others (Oscar Alende and Alvaro Alsogaray) are the undisputed leaders of the “third parties” (on the left and right, respectively) of that time. Note that the third parties do not occupy any additional institutional spaces of power, so that it is natural for their leaders to “focus” on the House.

work as legislative cartels, our findings suggest that some of these strong (but not superstar) legislators are the ones providing most of the important work over time. It is not surprising that this partisan public good is provided primarily by large districts, for which there is more substitution across political types given their larger contingents. Clearly, these are educated guesses, and more research on this is needed.

Coming to those 54 politicians that after their stint in Congress move on to better positions (including important candidacies, whether they won or not), there are a few things that our preliminary analysis suggests. First, their stay in the House tends to be brief. The majority of these achievers stayed only one period in the House, a few of them stayed two periods, and only three of them stayed three periods (including the leader of the right-wing third party, A. Alsogaray, who was a losing Presidential candidate). That also indicates that there is little overlap between the political “stars” and those politicians who stay long in Congress, suggesting the presence of sorting among politicians. Furthermore, these tend to be political actors that are more “salient” and well-known by the general public, which is reflected in the fact that they tend to occupy higher positions in the party lists than most legislators and, in particular, than the “specialists” who stay longer in Congress. Sixty one percent of the progressing politicians appeared first in their lists, and 80 percent of them appeared in the top two places in their lists.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we explore the connection between legislative effort and the career paths followed by legislators. We find that, in a party list system, and in a political context of a relatively weak national Congress and low overall reelection rates, still, legislators who “work harder” tend to be reelected more often. Furthermore, we find that among those reelected, the ones that put more effort are more likely to achieve leadership positions. On the other hand, we find that legislative effort is negatively related to moving up to better political positions.

Taking all these results together, and with the use of some ancillary information of the case, we believe that we are glimpsing at diversified career paths. Most people who pass through Congress stays only one period and then move (back?) to other political positions (they are professional politicians although amateur legislators). A small number of legislators have longer stints in Congress. These tend to be skilled legislators, mainly from large districts, who tend to serve in important committees, work harder, and are more likely to achieve leadership positions

within the House. Finally, some political stars, after serving a brief stint in the House, move up to more desirable political positions. Interestingly, these politicians who progress beyond the House are the ones that work less while in Congress (at least as measured by the legislative activities we analyze in this paper).

Even though the paper leaves many important questions unanswered, it does provide some insights into the workings of political career paths, legislative organization and political parties in Argentina in a way that also pushes a comparative agenda on these issues beyond the better-studied U.S. case.

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