

Title page

Politics at Work:  
How Employers Deploy Their Workers to Shape American Politics and  
Policy

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## **Preface: Organizing for Corporate America**

Spirits were running high at the RightOnline conference in July 2010, where hundreds of conservative activists had assembled in the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas for the annual meeting of right-wing bloggers, pundits, and politicians.<sup>1</sup> Over two jam-packed days, participants attended panels celebrating the rise of the conservative Tea Party movement, and strategized about how to translate grassroots energy into electoral wins that coming November. In one session, an eclectic group took to the stage to announce an initiative billed as “Prosperity 101.” Led by GOP presidential contender Herman Cain – the candidate best known for his flat tax plan – the speakers bemoaned the fact that so many employees these days were casting ballots against their economic interests. As Linda Hansen, one of the speakers and the founder of the group selling Prosperity 101 had described elsewhere, American workers “may be voting to end their job – and they don’t even realize it.” Cain put the point more bluntly: “there are a lot of uninformed people [in the workplace]... They just have not been given access to easy-to-understand information about some of the garbage that they are hearing about these various pieces of legislation. So, it's this uninformed group that is the target for Prosperity 101.”

What could be done? As a short promotional video explained to the crowd, employers could host reading groups, lectures, and even short courses for their employees to educate them on free market economics using a new curriculum developed by Prosperity 101. Suggested readings included excerpts from conservative *Wall Street Journal* columnist Stephen Moore, one of the spokesmen for the curriculum, and other right-wing writers decrying the role of government and extolling the virtues of an unfettered free enterprise system. Policies like the minimum wage, corporate regulations, and climate change legislation all threatened prosperity – and thus workers’ job security. In one version of the curriculum, workers were told that tax rates

on business represent “an attack on American job security and our future securities as leader in the free market and free world,”<sup>2</sup> and reminded workers that the “rich pay more than their fair share” to government.<sup>3</sup> “Taxation, regulation, and legislation can all ... make it more difficult for a business to make a profit [and] will, in the end, negatively affect you and me. They make profits smaller, and smaller profits mean fewer jobs and less tax revenue collected by the government,” explained the course materials.<sup>4</sup> “Job security only comes through business prosperity...Business prosperity can only be achieved through free market, free enterprise policies,” the guide summed up.<sup>5</sup>

The possibilities of an employee economics curriculum were powerful, the speakers noted. “When we can educate them,” Hansen has boasted about the efforts, “we can begin to make a difference. It’s not the only way to take back our country, but it is one answer.” Cain was even more enthusiastic: “It’s conservatives’ answer to ACORN,” he likes to exclaim about these efforts, referring to the now-defunct progressive community group that had become a bugaboo for the right. Prosperity 101 not only could help companies to lobby for lower taxes and regulations, but could also secure votes for politicians who would protect America’s free market system.

What happens when employers, like the ones organized by Cain, Hansen, and Moore, attempt to recruit their workers into politics? What does it mean for American democracy that employers are trying to become community organizers? And have we ever seen this kind of corporate grassroots organizing before?

This book answers these questions. It documents, for the first time, how many companies are sending political messages to their workers, showing that one in four American employees has received a political message from a boss and half of all managers in recent surveys report

sending political messages to their workers. It explains why businesses are increasingly turning to their workers as a political resource to change elections and policy, arguing that changes in the balance of economic power between workers and managers, shifts in election and labor law, new workplace technologies, and entrepreneurial business group leaders have made it easier for employers to recruit their workers into politics. It documents the concrete ways that employer-led mobilization of workers can be a very effective tool for electing friendly politicians and ensuring favorable public policies. And it explores the consequences – both beneficial and worrisome – of this corporate mobilization for American politics.

The book shows that while employer mobilization helps to close some gaps in civic participation, there are serious issues raised by the employer political recruitment process. Workers fearful of losing their jobs are much more likely to report responding to their employers' political requests, raising the concern of economic coercion of workers by their managers. Indeed, nearly a third of workers report being concerned about the potential for employer political retaliation – and one in six employees has actually seen such retaliation at their jobs. Troublingly, lower-income workers were substantially more likely to report either the fear of political coercion or actual accounts of political retaliation from their bosses. Moreover, employer mobilization disproportionately favors a narrow set of policy interests and political goals, exacerbating already-existing imbalances of political power and voice. Above all, the book emphasizes that scholars, politicians, and citizens need to think of the workplace as a deeply political arena – and one that may well become an intimidating battleground without new protections for private sector workers.

## **Introduction: The New Office Politics**

Imagine that you and your coworkers begin receiving letters from your firm's CEO endorsing candidates for an upcoming election. Those messages not only list the politicians that your CEO prefers, but also contain the threat that your business might need to lay off workers if those candidates are not elected. As Election Day approaches, your managers ask you to volunteer for the campaigns of the political candidates that your CEO has endorsed. When some of your coworkers demur, the managers tell you that political volunteering is a requirement of your job, and that any worker who refuses could be fired. Can your employer get away with such a practice? Remarkably, the answer is often yes for private sector workers.

Thanks to changes in American election law associated with the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, as well as long-term shifts in the economic and technological context of the workplace, employers now have sweeping legal rights as well as the technical means to campaign for political candidates in the workplace. Employers can even require that their workers participate in politics as a condition of employment. Just as a private employer can discipline or fire a worker for failing to perform their regular duties, so too can managers discipline or fire workers for not participating in political activities that the firm deems part of a worker's job.

The latitude employers have for political campaigning can also encompass other, less extreme examples. An employer could simply choose to remind their workers to register to vote, or to turn out to vote for elections, sending emails to workers with links to a website that helps workers download registration forms and find their polling places. Or employers could inform workers about the implications of pending legislation in Congress or state legislatures, asking employees to contact their elected officials to support bills that would benefit company bottom

lines. And some contact might fall in between these categories, such as when managers refrain from explicitly endorsing candidates for elected office, but distribute “voter guides” to workers rating the policy stands of various political candidates. The similarity underlying all of these activities is that managers are using the relationship they have with their workers to promote particular political stances and behaviors. This is the subject of the book.

Employers’ abilities to engage in these practices are not merely hypothetical. Consider the following examples from the past few years:

- An Ohio coal-mining business invited Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney to a rally at their plant.<sup>6</sup> Miners were told that they would be required to attend the rally, and that they would not be paid for their participation. Although managers later explained that no one was actually required to attend the event, miners still reported showing up out of fear of discipline or even dismissal. One radio host summed up the incident in the following way: “what I gathered was employees feel they were forced to go. They had to take the day off without pay. That they took a roll call, and they had a list of who was there and who wasn’t and felt they wouldn’t have a job if they did not attend.”<sup>7</sup>
- Executives at Cintas, a provider of uniforms and other workplace supplies, and Georgia Pacific, a major paper product manufacturer, sent letters to their respective workforces expressing clear partisan stances during the 2012 election.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Georgia Pacific, executives distributed a flyer that indicated all of the candidates that the business had endorsed for the presidency down to state legislatures. These flyers also included warnings

that workers “may suffer the consequences” if the company’s favored candidates were not elected.<sup>9</sup> One such flyer is reproduced in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

**AS REPORTED BY IN THESE TIMES**

state: **OREGON**

**TUESDAY 10.16.12 REG. DEADLINE** **TUESDAY 11.06.12 ELECTION DAY**

**GENERAL EARLY VOTING**

**THURSDAY 10.18 IN PERSON BEGINS BALLOTS ARE MAILED TO ALL REG. VOTERS** **TUESDAY 11.06 APPLICATION DUE**

The following candidates in your state are among the candidates who have received support from a Koch company or KOCHPAC, the employee political action committee of Koch companies.

**KOCHVOTES.COM**

**PRESIDENT / VICE PRESIDENT**  
Mitt Romney / Paul Ryan

<b>U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>
Greg Walden	2

<b>STATE SENATE</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>
Brian Boquist	12
Tim Knopp	27
Doug Whitsett	28
Ted Ferrioli	30

<b>STATE HOUSE</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>
Bruce Hanna	7
Andy Olson	15
Vic Gilliam	18
Kevin Cameron	19
Jim Thompson	23
Julie Parrish	37
Bill Kennemer	39
Gene Whisnant	53
Mike McLane	55

Paid for by Koch Industries, Inc., 316.828.5500, www.kochind.com, and not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee or ballot issue committee.

Caption: Georgia Pacific mailer to Oregon employees. Reproduced from Elk 2012.

- A renewable energy company I interviewed encouraged its workers to contact their Members of Congress in an effort to reauthorize a federal tax credit for wind energy, warning its workers of the decline in sales of their products if the credit were to expire.
- In the wake of a number of highly publicized episodes of racial violence, Starbucks executives launched a campaign for their baristas to start conversations with their patrons about race relations in America.<sup>10</sup> Baristas would write the words “Race Together” on customers’ coffee cups. Staff were also encouraged to visit a company website with essays and videos about race relations.
- In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election, the CEO of a major timeshare company sent an email to all of his employees, warning workers that their jobs would be threatened by “another 4 years of the same Presidential administration.” If Obama were reelected, the CEO went on to say, he “[would] have no choice but to reduce the size of the company.”<sup>11</sup>
- At franchises of College Hunks Hauling Junk, a cleverly branded garbage removal and moving company, managers have regular “roll call” meetings with their workers to discuss political issues related to the “free enterprise” system. Managers discuss, for instance, how taxes and regulation affect companies’ profits and how to support political candidates who would maintain and expand free enterprise in the United States.<sup>12</sup> At one session, a manager explained to a room of movers how Mahatma Gandhi’s protest campaigns were about fighting unfair taxation – and how such levies were similar to the American federal government’s unjust taxation of job creators.



- During tight Congressional elections in 2010, a regional president at Harrah's casinos and resorts sent a spreadsheet to supervisors with rows for each employee working at the company's Las Vegas properties.<sup>13</sup> Supervisors were instructed to ask each of their employees whether they had voted in the race, and if not, why. A copy of the spreadsheet appears in Figure 2, and shows how managers were instructed to check with individual workers about when they were planning on voting.

Figure 2

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	Employer	Classification	Shift	Outlet or Area	10/26/2010	10/26/2010 and 10/27/2010
						Please include one code per employee. Leave blank if not yet voted. V = Voted, S = Swing Shift, G = Grave, DO = Day DR, T = Terminated, LOR = Leave, VAC = Vacation, SAT = Voting Saturday, * = Voting on 9:30	Please include one code per employee. Leave blank if not yet voted. V = Voted, S = Swing Shift, G = Grave, DO = Day DR, T = Terminated, LOR = Leave, VAC = Vacation, SAT = Voting Saturday, * = Voting on 9:30
GLORIO	WILLIAMS	Fleming	Baggage Handler		BELLS		
CORY	KONISHI	Fleming	Baggage Handler		BELLS		
MARIA	BADILLA	Fleming	Baker		PASTRY	DO	
CLARITA	ALONSO	Fleming	Baker	DAY	BAKERY	Day Shift	
MARIBETH	MOSS	Fleming	Baker		BAKERY	DO	
JOSE	AVILA-SANCHEZ	Fleming	Baker	GRAVE	BAKERY	Grave	
DANNY	GORDILLO-ROCHA	Fleming	Baker	DAY	BAKERY	Day Shift	
LISA	HARPER	Fleming	Baker		BAKERY	DO	
RAFAEL	GARCIA	Fleming	Baker		BAKERY	DO	
MAGED	MOHAMED	Fleming	Baker		BAKERY	DO	
EUGENE	BLANCHARD	Fleming	Baker		BAKERY	DO	
MARCOS	VALADEZ	Fleming	Barquet Server		CONRAD	LOA	
GREGORIO	DURAN	Fleming	Barquet Server		BANQUETS	DO	
DAVID	OSBORNE	Fleming	Barquet Server	EXTRA	BANQUETS	DO	
GEORGE	CASTILLO	Fleming	Barquet Server		BANQUETS	DO	
RUBEN	WITTA	Fleming	Barquet Server		BANQUETS	DO	
TERRANCE	SCHLEYHANN	Fleming	Barquet Server		BANQUETS	DO	
TANASE	DOCU	Fleming	Barquet Server		BANQUETS	DO	
ROGER	TUTTLEP	Fleming	Barquet Server	EXTRA	BANQUETS	DO	
PAMELA	BROGZELLER	Fleming	Barquet Server	EXTRA	BANQUETS	DO	
STEVE	REYNOLDS	Fleming	Barquet Server	EXTRA	BANQUETS	DO	
JESUS	LUGO	Fleming	Ball Starter		BELLS	LOA	
SYMBADORA	OLIVER	Fleming	Ball Starter		BELLS	DO	
JACQUELINE	HICKS	Fleming	Belman (Bellhop)	DAY	BELLS		
KELLY	KONISHI	Fleming	Belman (Bellhop)		BELLS		
ROLAND	PELLETIER	Fleming	Belman (Bellhop)		BELLS		
LUIS	PRADO	Fleming	Belman (Bellhop)	DAY	BELLS		
JUSTIN	THOMPSON	Fleming	Belman (Bellhop)		BELLS	DO	

Caption: Harrah's casino vote tracking in 2010 elections. Reproduced from Crum 2010.

All of these examples are legal under current federal election and labor laws. And all of these examples are cases of what I call *employer mobilization of workers* – when the top managers of a company attempt to change the political behaviors and attitudes of their

employees as a matter of company policy. By top managers, I refer to those senior executives who make, rather than merely implement, key company decisions. That means employer mobilization does not encompass cases of a single company employee trying to persuade their coworkers to support an issue or candidate. Employer mobilization also goes beyond instances of a single supervisor trying to channel support for a political position among her supervisees. Instead, employer mobilization refers to cases of top corporate executives attempting to use their workforce as a resource to change politics and policy, whether it is to encourage greater turnout (as with Harrah's), discourage support for specific political candidates (as with the coal mining company), build support for particular legislation (as with the renewable energy firm), or change the way that employees think about political issues (as with Starbucks or the junk hauling college students). Employer mobilization, as we will see, includes *both* recruitment of workers into specific political activities, as well as broader education initiatives aimed at moving worker attitudes and preferences. As one manager explained to me in an interview, employer mobilization efforts are most successful when they get employees "activated in their identity as workers," so they start thinking about their political interest in terms of their business and industry.

Given the fact that so many companies – including many large and prominent businesses – are now turning to their workers as a means of changing public policy, elections, and even the ways that workers construct their political identities, you might think that there would be a slew of surveys and studies tracking the prevalence of employer mobilization and its implications for workers, companies, and American politics. Yet, remarkably, you would be wrong. Beyond a smattering of investigative pieces from journalists, there is virtually no systematic work to date that could help us to understand how common mobilization is across companies and employees –

let alone what its effects might be on worker political attitudes and behaviors, public policy, and elections. This book represents one early step at answering those questions, and in the process unpacking what employer mobilization means for American democracy and political equality. In it, I make three main arguments:

- *Employer mobilization is prevalent:* Broad swaths of the business community describe mobilizing their workers into politics and many workers report that they have received political messages from their employers. According to surveys I describe in subsequent chapters, I estimate that half of American managers report mobilizing their workers in some way, and one out of four employees reported in 2015 that their bosses have ever attempted some kind of mobilization. That share increased to nearly four in ten employees around the 2016 election. Employer mobilization, in short, has become a central way that many Americans hear about political issues and are recruited into politics.
- *Employer mobilization shapes worker political participation, public policy, and elections and is now an important source of corporate influence in politics.* Corporate managers report that mobilization of their workers is one of the most important ways that their businesses engage in politics. In surveys I describe throughout the rest of the book, I show that managers rank mobilization of their workers as being just as effective at shaping public policy as hiring a professional lobbyist, and even more effective than making PAC contributions to political campaigns and participating in major business associations. And beyond managers' own perceptions, I provide a

range of evidence to show how employer messages deeply shape how workers think about politics, how Congress and state governments make policy, and which politicians are elected to federal and state office. To understand how businesses influence politics, we need to focus on employer mobilization.

- *Employer mobilization pulls workers into politics – yet raises serious normative concerns.* I document that employer mobilization is effective at recruiting workers into politics, including spurring workers to register to vote, turn out to vote, and contact their elected officials. Yet I also find that not all workers are equally likely to respond to their employers' messages. Workers who are especially fearful about their economic security, those who are worried about retaliation from their bosses, and those who lack political privacy at work are most likely to respond to their employers, raising concerns about economic coercion of workers by their managers. If workers are responding to their managers not because they are genuinely persuaded by corporate political messages, but rather because they are fearful of losing their jobs, we ought to worry that some workers are being pressured into giving up their political voice to their employers. Distressingly, I document that nearly three in ten employees is concerned about the possibility of political retaliation by their employer – and 16% of employees report that such retaliation actually happened to someone at their job. Lower-income workers, moreover, were substantially more likely to report concerns about political retaliation and accounts of actual coercion in the past than their higher-income counterparts.

The next nine chapters of the book make the case for each of these arguments, drawing on a range of evidence – surveys of workers and managers, interviews, experiments, and archival materials – which I document in more detail in chapter 2. For now, I turn to answering the question of why a close study of employer mobilization matters now more than ever.

### **<1>WHY DOES EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION MATTER – ESPECIALLY NOW?**

Why study employer mobilization when few others have? I believe there are strong academic and practical reasons why employer mobilization warrants a rigorous, scholarly treatment. To the extent that we want to understand the means through which Americans participate in politics, then we ought to care about employer mobilization as a new way that citizens are being recruited into politics. If we only focus on the usual suspects for civic recruitment – like political contacts from the parties, unions, churches, social clubs, and interest groups – then we will be missing a growing part of political life in the United States. As I show using new national survey data, employer recruitment efforts are about as effective at spurring worker political participation as outreach by the political parties and unions.

Aside from widening the picture of American civic engagement, employer mobilization also has important bearing on our understanding of corporate political behavior. As I discuss in the coming chapters, managers themselves report that mobilization is one of their most effective means of changing public policy. We do not need to only take managers' word for it, either. Looking across a number of case studies, I document concrete changes in politics, elections, and policy as a result of employer mobilization efforts. To ignore mobilization would be to neglect an important mechanism of corporate influence in the policymaking process.

Lastly, mobilization raises thorny ethical questions about the role employers should play in the political lives of their workers. What kinds of communications between managers and

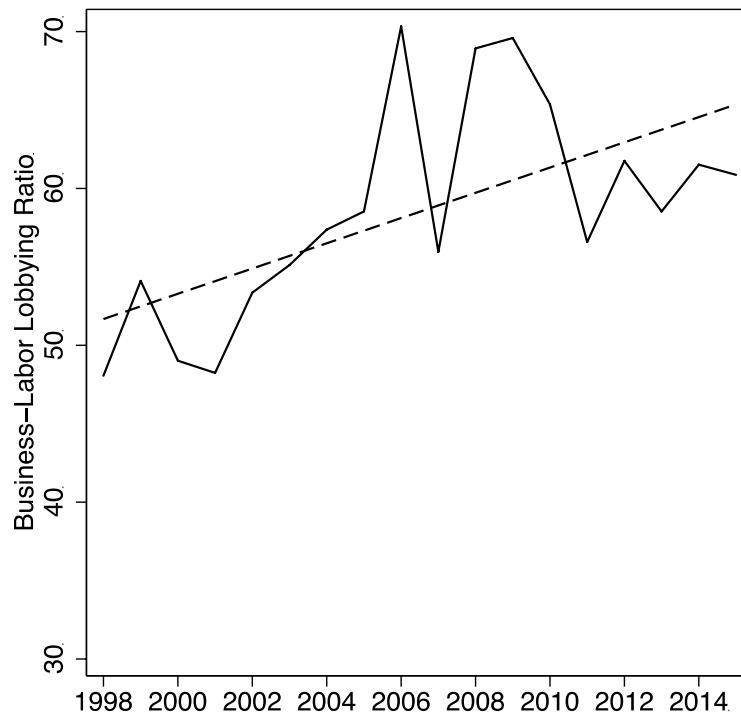
workers are acceptable and what kinds of messages should be banned? Do employer messages – especially those that rely on the threat of changes in employment or wages – infringe on the rights of workers to arrive at their political choices free from outside interference? These questions touch upon broader issues of economic power, corporate free speech, and worker political freedom, and merit a serious discussion between the public, corporate executives, and policymakers.

Apart from concerns about the agency of individual workers, many forms of employer mobilization may pose a challenge to our democratic institutions by granting disproportionate political influence to businesses. Even before the controversial *Citizens United* Supreme Court case, which lifted restrictions on corporate electoral giving, many citizens and politicians from the left and the right were worried about the disproportionate power that corporations possessed in the electoral and policymaking process. For instance, nearly half of all Democrats and well over half of all Republicans reported in 2009 that big business had “too much influence” over the decisions made by government.<sup>14</sup> And poll after poll finds that most Americans believe the government is more responsive to special interests than to ordinary citizens.

A growing body of academic research backs up the concerns of survey respondents. Regardless of the measure one chooses – the number of groups, breadth of political activity, or financial resources – organizations representing business interests do indeed vastly outnumber groups representing labor or the general public in Washington, DC. Figure 3 shows just how much better companies are represented in America’s capital than are labor unions, for instance, looking at disclosed dollars spent on federal lobbying.<sup>15</sup> Between 1998 and 2015, businesses spent an enormous 50 to 60 times as much on lobbying as did labor unions, according to the

Center for Responsive Politics – and the trend is upward over this period. Ordinary workers are outmatched compared to business, and that political gap is only growing.

**Figure 3**



Caption: Business lobbying vastly outweighs labor lobbying in Washington, DC. Figure shows the ratio of total federally disclosed lobbying spending by business relative to labor unions using data from the Center for Responsive Politics. Dashed line indicates trend line.

As Kay Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady sum up in their exhaustive survey of Washington interest groups: “although the weight of advocacy by organizations representing business interests varies across domains of organized interest activity, in no case is it outweighed by the activity of either organizations representing the less privileged or public interest groups.”<sup>16</sup> Corporations also possess outsized advantages in lobbying the states, especially states with only weakly professionalized, part-time legislatures that are highly dependent on business

lobbies for ideas, research, and other resources.<sup>17</sup> The product of these disparities in representation is captured in compelling research by Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, who find that organized business interests are substantially better represented in national policy decisions than either mass-based interest groups or average citizens.<sup>18</sup> The authors conclude that “business groups are far more numerous and active [in national politics]; they spend much more money; and they tend to get their way.”<sup>19</sup>

Employer mobilization therefore provides an additional opportunity for already-politically powerful businesses to further influence legislation, regulation, and elections at the federal and state levels. As we will learn, the priorities that businesses pursue through mobilization are not a random cross-section of policies. Companies are, by and large, seeking to lower their taxes and reduce regulations. And when managers educate their workers about politics, corporate messages often involve material that cheerleads the free market and attacks government action.

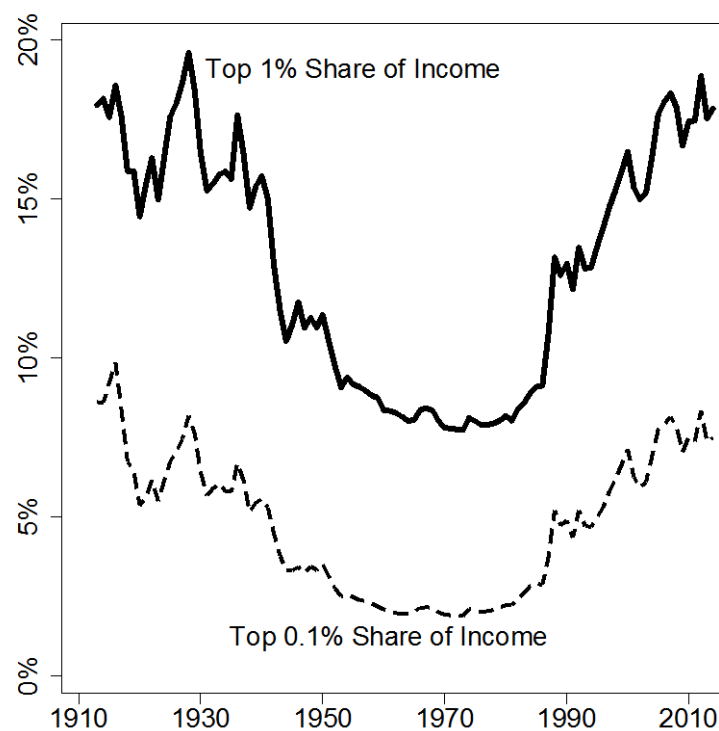
The fact that employer mobilization overwhelmingly benefits one narrow set of corporate and pro-market priorities over all others might be concerning at any historical juncture. But it is especially worrisome today. We are living in an era when powerful segments of the business community and the conservative movement have succeeded in demonizing the role that government plays in sustaining a prosperous economy.<sup>20</sup> Employer mobilization threatens to tilt the political playing field even more against government regulations and the investments that are necessary for a safe, productive, and relatively egalitarian society. It also threatens to enable greater capture of government by private interests. That is a consequence that ought to worry libertarians as much as liberals who are concerned about businesses using public policy to disadvantage their competitors. As we will see, employers often use mobilization as a tactic to



secure narrow provisions that disadvantage their competitors or customers – a form of regressive, upwardly-slanted redistribution.<sup>21</sup>

The rise in employer mobilization also comes at a time when we have seen skyrocketing levels of economic inequality, summarized in Figure 4. The top 1% is on pace to capture almost a fifth of all income in the United States – and the even more rarefied group of the top 0.1% is nearly set to take home a full tenth of all income. This concentration means that the wealthy managers and business owners who control major companies in the United States will have even more resources to invest into politics.

**Figure 4**



Caption: Rising economic inequality in the United States. Data from the World Income and Wealth Database.

Employer mobilization, then, not only adds to the power of business and wealthy individuals – but does so at a time when imbalances of economic and political power are already large and continuing to grow quite rapidly. Even if we were not concerned about the potential for coercion in the workplace when employers communicate with their workers about politics, there are thus good reasons to be worried about the fact that organized business interests now have access to a new means of shaping elections and policy debates – especially since this is a means of engaging citizens in politics that other actors do not possess.

This imbalance is particularly troubling because the mobilization of citizens through the workplace is being done in an increasingly unbalanced environment, where labor unions struggle to maintain a presence throughout the private sector. A deep irony is that employer mobilization was inspired by labor unions' recruitment efforts in the workplace – as we will learn in chapter 5 – yet employer mobilization is currently unfolding in a context where the vast majority of private sector workers will never interact with a labor union. Just six percent of the private sector workforce was covered by a union in 2016, down from 24% in 1973. The political voices workers hear at work are more often than not from managers, meaning that employees only get one side of the political story. It is not a coincidence that employer mobilization is flourishing in the contemporary economy. We will see that the diminished voice that employees possess at work through the labor movement has played an important role in fostering an environment in which the costs faced by employers for recruiting workers into politics are considerably lower than they were in previous decades. In sum, employer mobilization is a trend that merits attention now more than ever – and that is what I intend to do in this book.

## **<1>PLAN FOR THE BOOK**

The rest of the book proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, I lay out a guide for thinking about employer mobilization both as a means of corporate involvement in politics and as a source of political recruitment for individual workers. The chapter describes why profit-seeking private-sector companies decide to become political recruiters – and in particular, the value that employer mobilization can offer to managers and the investors they serve. It also describes why workers might think about employer messages and requests as being distinct from messages they might receive from other political recruiters, like unions, parties, or political campaigns. The underlying message in this chapter is that employers, unlike nearly any other political actor, have direct control over the economic livelihood of the people they are trying to recruit. Employers also have the means of closely monitoring the participation of their workers in politics, potentially rewarding complying workers and punishing defiers. That means that we should expect that workers who are especially worried about the prospect of job loss or drops in their wages will be more responsive to their bosses’ political requests compared to workers who feel more secure in their jobs. The fact that economic security dictates employees’ responses to employer political requests represents an important contribution to our understanding of political behavior and participation. It also introduces a serious normative concern with employer mobilization that I continue to explore throughout the book.

In chapter 2, I summarize the data sources and methodological strategy I use to study employer mobilization in the United States. As this chapter explains, unlike other types of political recruitment, major surveys of American workers and voters do not ask about political contact with employers. I therefore had to design a series of new surveys of workers and managers to capture how often employer mobilization has occurred throughout the American labor force, and the effects it has had on politics and policy. I also describe how I triangulate

between a range of different sources, including surveys of workers, managers, and top legislative staffers, in-depth interviews with top corporate executives, and media accounts to understand why employer mobilization happens, where it is most effective, and the specific outcomes in legislative debates and elections that we can trace back to employer mobilization drives. Readers who are less interested in the methodological guts of this project can skip this chapter without losing much context and proceed directly to chapter 3, which begins to present the substantive conclusions from my research.

Given that so little research to date has focused on employer mobilization, Part I of the book aims to provide a comprehensive guide of what employer political recruitment efforts look like today – and how contemporary employer strategies compare to the past. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the landscape of employer mobilization in the United States as it stands in present day.

Chapter 3 provides a picture of employer mobilization from the perspective of managers – including how many businesses report mobilizing their workers, the messages and requests mobilization encompasses, and how managers rank mobilization as a political strategy. This chapter further explores when companies are most likely to make employee political recruitment part of their “core strategy” for changing policy, as one of my interviewees put it. Businesses were more likely to engage their workers in politics and to rate employee mobilization as being more effective when they already engaged in other political activities that complemented mobilization, when businesses faced specific regulatory threats from government, and when businesses monitored their employees’ political attitudes and behaviors more closely. The potential for worker backlash also weighed heavily on managers’ minds. When managers fear backlash, they are less likely to opt for mobilizing their rank-and-file workers, and more likely to switch to more traditional tactics, like giving electoral contributions or buying political ads.

Chapter 4 flips the perspective from managers to workers, and documents how many workers report receiving employer requests, what those requests and messages contain, what workers think about employer messages, and how messages have shaped workers' behaviors and attitudes. This chapter shows that most employer messages focus on specific policy issues facing companies, especially health care, education and training, taxes, and regulation. Messages related to voting – including reminding workers to register to vote or to turn out to vote on Election Day – were also quite common. By all accounts, as I illustrate, workers consider employer messages to be relatively persuasive: large proportions of surveyed workers report changing their political thinking and actions in some way as a result of employer mobilization.

A significant minority of workers also reports that their employers made explicit threats to them about job loss, wage cuts, or business closings linked to political outcomes. Workers tended to take these threats seriously. I follow up on the question of managerial threats by presenting data on the number of workers who either are concerned about the potential for employer coercion, or have actually seen such political retaliation at their jobs. This data presents a picture of a small but non-trivial swath of workplaces where employees, especially low-income workers, experience considerable pressure to toe the company line or face retribution.

I next contrast employer mobilization with political recruitment by labor unions, discussing how the prevalence and character of union messages differs from messages from managers and supervisors. In a final section of the chapter, I consider how employer mobilization shapes inequalities in civic participation, looking at the ways that employer recruitment both mitigates and exacerbates class differences in political action. Even as employer mobilization closed some gaps in political participation, it exacerbated others. I also find that it was disproportionately lower-income workers who reported changing their beliefs and attitudes

in response to employer messages, switching from more liberal positions and preferences to more conservative stands.

While chapters 3 and 4 focused on the contemporary picture of employer messages, chapter 5 takes a longer historical perspective to map out exactly how mobilization has evolved over time. I describe how a specific constellation of economic, legal, and technological changes spurred the return of employer mobilization to American politics since its heyday in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These shifts were insufficient, however, to make political recruitment into a viable political strategy on their own. Business associations were critical in teaching managers that mobilization was well within their legal rights. Associations also played an important role in selling managers the technical capacity necessary to mobilize workers.

Part II switches from describing what employer mobilization looks like to tracing the effects of employer messages on individual worker political participation, public policy, and elections. Chapter 6 explores how employer messages fit into our understanding of individual political participation. I first use a survey experiment of workers to show that messages that workers think come from an employer shift employee attitudes toward policy and employees' likelihood of engaging in the policy process by contacting Members of Congress. These experiments also provide evidence supporting the prediction I offered in chapter 1: that workers most concerned about losing their jobs would be more likely to respond to their employers' messages. The chapter next reviews surveys of workers who have received actual employer messages in the past to show that employer contacts shift these workers' political attitudes and behaviors – though not their basic knowledge about politics. Just as in the survey experiments, I also find that employees who were more concerned about losing their jobs were more likely to

respond to employer messages. Apart from these differences in economic security, I show that employee perceptions of employer monitoring also mattered, consistent with the employer-level findings from chapter 3. Employer political requests had the strongest effect on employees who perceived that their managers were tracking employee political behaviors and attitudes.

Workers reported that they were responding to employer messages, but can we actually observe changes in substantive policy outcomes as a result of employer mobilization? Chapter 7 marshals a range of data to show that employer mobilization has significant consequences for policymaking in Congress and the states. I first present results from a survey of top legislative staffers working on Capitol Hill to show that Congress pays especially close attention to the messages that employers have their workers send to US Senators and Representatives. I also report results from an experiment embedded in that survey that shows employee messages can deeply affect staffers' perceptions about their constituents' opinions, especially when Congressional offices are more attuned to the threat of joblessness in their districts and states. I next provide a case study involving a ballot initiative in Alaska to document the effect employer messages can have on state policy outcomes, presenting evidence that mobilization of workers helped to lower taxes on oil producers even in the face of significant public support for tax hikes on the oil and gas sector. In another example, I show that employer messages to workers opposing the Affordable Care Act were an important source of durable public opposition and skepticism to national health reform.

Chapter 8 moves from the realm of policy battles to elections, and focuses on the 2014 races to show how employer messages coordinated by a conservative business organization worsened the electoral fates of Democratic candidates in the 2014 election cycle. Employees subjected to more intensive recruitment drives were less likely to vote for Democratic

gubernatorial and House of Representatives candidates. I present evidence of this electoral effect at the level of states and across individual workers. Beyond convincing employees to cast ballots for employer-favored Republican candidates, I also show how employers can powerfully shape worker electoral giving. Candidates endorsed by the top management of companies ended up receiving substantially more contributions from employees at those companies compared to candidates who were not favored by managers.

In the two concluding chapters, I reflect on the implications of my findings for the study of American politics, as well as for judging the quality of American democracy at the ballot box and in the workplace. I summarize the positive and negative aspects of employer recruitment efforts, and then focus especially closely on the concerns created by coercive employer messages. I end by proposing a variety of reforms for addressing political intimidation at work, as well as discussing the political coalitions that might support such efforts. Polling data, I show, suggests that large majorities of Americans – including majorities of both Republicans and Democrats alike – believe in strict limits on employer abilities to recruit workers into politics. As I will argue, now is the moment to curb coercive employer mobilization practices before they spread further into the American labor force. To delay action will only increase the risk of inciting a political war at work between managers and employees.

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<sup>1</sup> This account draws from: The Independence Institute 2014; Truth Tour 2012; Stan 2011b.

<sup>2</sup> Nolan 2016. See “Course 3: American Job Security,” 27.

<sup>3</sup> Nolan 2016. See “Course 3: American Job Security,” 17.

<sup>4</sup> Hansen 2011, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Nolan 2016. See “Course 3: American Job Security,” 36.



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- <sup>6</sup> Eaton 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> Ravel and Weintraub 2015.
- <sup>8</sup> Greenhouse 2012.
- <sup>9</sup> Elk 2012b.
- <sup>10</sup> Starbucks 2015.
- <sup>11</sup> Keyes 2012. See also <https://www.jobcreatorsnetwork.com/call-the-roll/>.
- <sup>12</sup> Job Creators Network 2014a.
- <sup>13</sup> Crum 2010.
- <sup>14</sup> CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll, April 2009.
- <sup>15</sup> This is likely only a conservative measure of true lobbying spending; see e.g. Drutman 2015.
- <sup>16</sup> Schlozman et al. 2012, 442.
- <sup>17</sup> Hertel-Fernandez 2014.
- <sup>18</sup> Gilens and Page 2014.
- <sup>19</sup> Gilens and Page 2014, 575.
- <sup>20</sup> Hacker and Pierson 2016; Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016a.
- <sup>21</sup> For a libertarian case against “regressive rent-seeking,” see e.g. Teles 2014a.

## **Chapter 4: What Workers Say About Employer Mobilization**

On August 14<sup>th</sup> 2012, GOP presidential hopeful Mitt Romney visited a coal mine outside of Beallsville, Ohio to deliver a speech attacking the energy policies of Democratic opponent Barack Obama. “We have 250 years of coal, why in the heck wouldn’t we use it? And so, I want to take advantage of those energy resources,” Romney argued to the assembled crowd of mine workers. Throughout his speech, Romney was flanked by a number of coal miners dressed in blue overalls and hardhats, some with coal-stained faces from an earlier shift that day, making for a striking visual complement to the content of Romney’s remarks.

A campaign stop such as this one might not seem that unusual in the midst of a heated presidential election. But this event was different, as the owners of the coal mine had told their workers that attendance at the rally would be both mandatory and unpaid.<sup>1</sup> An executive with the mining company later attempted to clarify that management “communicated to our workforce that the attendance at the Romney event was mandatory, but no one was forced to attend.”<sup>2</sup> The mineworkers felt differently about this distinction. Workers told reporters that they showed up to the rally even if they opposed Romney out of fear of losing their jobs or being disciplined in some other way.<sup>3</sup> The wife of one miner explained that her husband “felt like [his managers] were pushing the Republican choice on him and he felt a little intimidated by that.”<sup>4</sup>

It turns out that the miners were justified in their concerns. Almost immediately after Obama was reelected, the Murray Energy CEO announced over one hundred layoffs, blaming the decision on the “war on coal” being waged by the Democratic administration.<sup>5</sup> In announcing the layoffs, the CEO lamented that the “American people have made their choice,” and in the

process the “takers outvoted the producers.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, Americans “will pay the price in their reduced standard of living and, most especially, reduced freedom.”<sup>7</sup>

Journalists who had covered Midwestern politics in the past explained that the corporate owner of the mine, Murray Energy, had a long history of pushing its employees to support Republican causes.<sup>8</sup> One investigative reporter put it bluntly: the firm had “for years pressured salaried employees to give to the Murray Energy political action committee (PAC) and to Republican candidates chosen by the company. Internal documents show that company officials track who is and is not giving [and] those who do not give are at risk of being demoted or missing out on bonuses.”<sup>9</sup> A coal miner expanded on that description, “There’s a lot of coercion. I just wanted to work, but you feel this constant pressure that, if you don’t contribute, your job’s at stake. You’re compelled to do this whether you want to or not.”<sup>10</sup>

One leaked document shows how Murray’s management emphasizes to employees just how closely bosses monitor workers’ political choices. In a March 2012 memo to his workers expressing disappointment at low political fundraising totals, the firm’s CEO included a list of workers who did not attend recent events, calling them out by name: “I do not recall ever seeing the attached list of employees...at one of our fund-raisers.”<sup>11</sup> Some employees felt that the threat of dismissal or discipline for not participating in firm political activities was very real, reporting that failing to back firm-favored candidates could hurt their jobs.<sup>12</sup> One former Murray foreman recently sued the company, alleging that she was terminated in part due to her lack of participation in firm-sponsored political fundraisers. The lawsuit went on to argue that the worker was fired to send a message to other employees who refused to back Murray’s favored candidates, arguing that “by firing [foremen]...[Murray’s CEO] knows and understands that he can and does create a concern among the remaining foremen that, if they fail to contribute to his

candidates, they may also lose their jobs.”<sup>13</sup>

Whatever Murray Energy was doing, it has been unquestionably successful. Since 1992, the company has raised over \$5 million in political donations, nearly entirely for Republicans. And the firm has held a string of large fundraisers for GOP stars such as Scott Brown, Rand Paul, David Vitter, Carly Fiorina, and Jim DeMint.<sup>14</sup> (As the 2016 GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump held an event with Murray, too.<sup>15</sup>) During his remarks at the 2012 rally, the firm’s CEO earned high praise from Romney, who declared to the crowd “I tell ya, you’ve got a great boss. He runs a great operation here.”<sup>16</sup>

How common are the efforts deployed by Murray Energy, especially the coal mine’s more coercive practices? And what do workers have to say about employer messages like the ones from Murray? This chapter explores those questions, laying out a descriptive landscape of employer mobilization from the perspective of workers, drawing on new national surveys of employees I have fielded over the past few years. The picture that emerges from these surveys largely parallels the findings from my previous look at the business side of mobilization. Not only is mobilization prevalent across many sectors of the American economy, but workers report that employer messages often affect how they think about political issues. Employees receiving employer political messages, I show, say that they have decided to register to vote, turn out to vote, contact lawmakers about pending legislation, and even cast ballots for particular candidates as a result of those messages.

While I find that most employees do not experience the kind of pressure that the Murray miners did, I do identify a third of workers who either think that political retaliation might be likely at their business or have observed such retaliation firsthand – and among lower-income workers, the share is much higher. Fully half of low-income workers reported the fear or

experience of political coercion, compared to only 26% of the highest-income workers. I also document an even broader set of workers who report that they either perceive a lack of privacy at work when it comes to their political decisions or choices or say that their employers have in fact discovered aspects of their political attitudes and votes. These findings raise the concern that employer mobilization may indeed be coercive in many businesses.

I conclude the chapter by evaluating whether employer mobilization moderates the stark inequalities in civic participation that exist across Americans of different socioeconomic standings. I reach mixed conclusions. On the one hand, employer messages help close the gap in voter registration and political volunteering between lower-income and higher-income workers. But, at the same time, employer mobilization exacerbates inequalities by income in who donates to political candidates and contacts their elected officials. What is more, it tends to be lower income workers who are disproportionately persuaded by employer messages to change their vote choices or stands on political issues – higher income workers are much less likely to report such persuasion. Yet lower income workers were no more likely to agree with their employers than their higher income counterparts. This introduces the possibility that poorer workers are being pressured into supporting their employers' favored stances and candidates, which tend to skew to the right and the GOP.

### **<1>THE WORKER PERSPECTIVE ON MOBILIZATION**

How many workers report receiving political messages from their bosses? And how do workers perceive those messages? Turning from the firm to the worker survey, I found that about one in four American employees (or about 34 million Americans if we extrapolate from the survey results) reported ever experiencing some form of political contact with the top managers at their main jobs as of spring 2015. That population is nearly the size of California, though

employees who are contacted by their bosses are of course spread out all over the country. That in turn means that workers collectively represent a potent political force for lobbying legislators and changing elections. As numerous managers reminded me in interviews, every politician represents an “employee constituency”.

I arrived at the overall estimate of employer mobilization by combining worker responses to two questions intended to capture the different varieties of mobilization that occur in the workplace. The first question asked about top management endorsing political candidates or parties, like the coal mining company and casino owner we met in the introduction, inquiring “Do the top managers in your main job make it clear which political candidates or party they prefer?” Respondents who answered yes to this question were coded as having experienced employer mobilization. In all, 16% of workers responded affirmatively to this question.

A second question asked about more specific varieties of employer mobilization that had ever occurred in the workplace; the question was worded as follows: “I am going to ask you about specific situations where your managers and supervisors may have contacted you about politics or political issues, such as contacting you about voting, political candidates, or public policies. Have you ever...?” The pollsters then asked workers if they had received an email about politics from managers and supervisors, received a letter about politics, received a phone call about politics, seen a posting on a company website about politics, had a meeting about politics, been asked to attend an event about politics, been asked to volunteer for a political campaign, received paycheck messages about politics, seen posters or flyers about politics, or had any other contact about politics. About 14% of workers responded affirmatively to these more specific items.

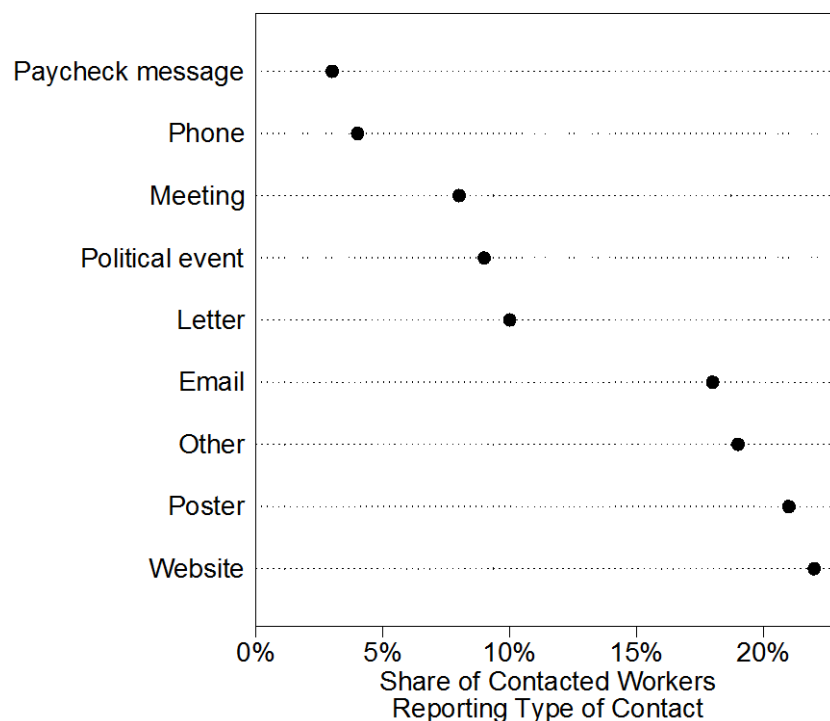
The combined worker survey estimate of mobilization (25% of employees) jibes well with a 2014 nationally representative telephone survey from Allstate and the *National Journal*, which found that about a third of employed workers reported that their employer had ever been vocal about their opinions on politics and legislation.<sup>17</sup> Of course, it is important to note that my worker survey and the Allstate-*National Journal* poll looked at whether employees had *ever* been exposed to political communications from their managers. Even setting aside the targeting that many employers do (as we saw earlier in this chapter), employer mobilization efforts vary from year to year as employers deal with specific policy threats or become involved in particular electoral battles.<sup>18</sup> There is undoubtedly a greater proportion of workers contacted during years with more policy decisions or elections at stake. Results from the 2015 national Cooperative Congressional Election Study indicate that just five percent of American employees heard from their top managers and supervisors from 2014 to 2015.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the 2016 version of that survey (the results of which I explore in more detail in this chapter) indicated that share of workers reporting political contact from their top managers and supervisors may have increased to 35% by the fall of 2016.

## **<1>HOW EMPLOYERS DELIVER POLITICAL MESSAGES TO WORKERS**

About one in four American workers reports ever receiving messages from their employers. How did workers receive these communications? Figure 4.1 examines the various ways that employers contacted their workers with political messages. Employers were most likely to convey political messages to their workers through company websites, posters, and emails. Letters, political events, and meetings were less common. Websites and emails are exactly the sort of contact that employers reported coordinating through specialized software that can easily be targeted to a subset of workers based on pre-defined characteristics. The least

common methods of contact included paycheck messages and phone calls. Still, these modes of contact were not entirely unheard-of. The US Chamber of Commerce, for instance, produced materials in 2012 that it encouraged employers to stuff in the paychecks of their employees supporting candidates in the upcoming election.<sup>20</sup> According to ABC News, the Chamber said it reached “7 million members, distributing payroll stuffers, posters, and postcards for businesses to turn out employees and sway their votes.” One such payroll stuffer included a newspaper clipping explaining why then-candidate Elizabeth Warren (now a Democratic Senator from Massachusetts) was “catastrophically antibusiness.”<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 4.1**



Caption: Methods of employer mobilization among contacted workers. Data from 2015 worker survey. Shares do not sum to 100% because workers could select more than one option. Denominator is all workers who reported employer mobilization (sample size: 273).



There was substantial variation in the medium of employer messages by company size. Separating workers by whether they reported working at companies either under 500 workers or 500 or more workers (as reported by workers themselves), we see that larger companies are much more likely to use websites, posters, and email messages than are smaller ones. Indeed, the rate of website contacting is more than twice as high for larger firms than smaller firms. In contrast, smaller firms were more likely to use in-person meetings than were larger firms. Firms were about equally likely to deploy paycheck messages, phone calls, or recruitment at political events regardless of size. Smaller firms, interviews reveal, are more comfortable using in-person meetings to discuss politics, and such meetings are also simply more practical than in a larger company. Larger companies, in contrast, are much more likely to rely on internal company websites to communicate with their workers about politics, consistent with the survey evidence.

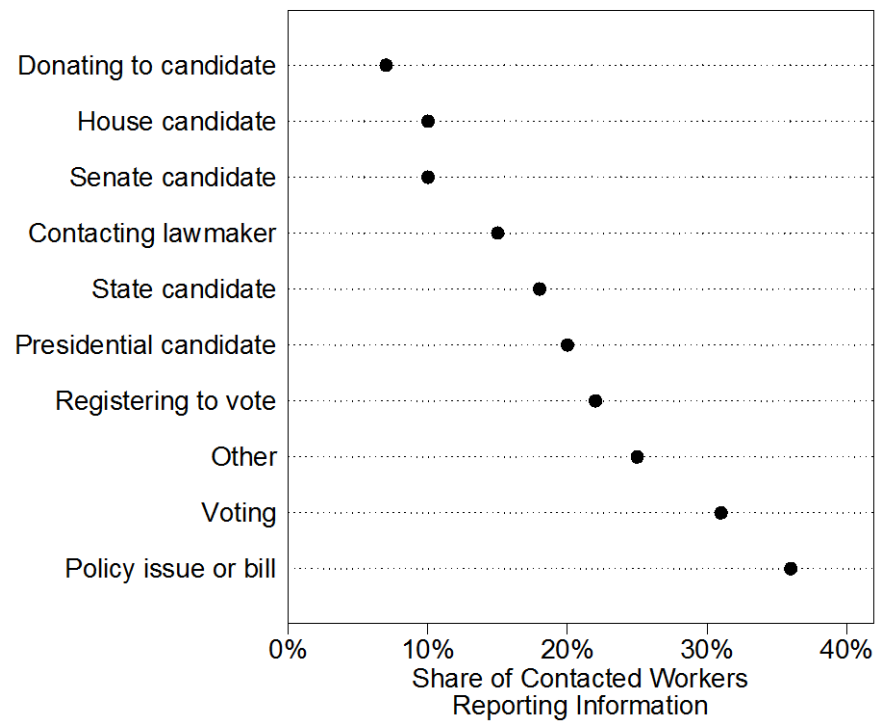
One important consideration for how companies deliver political messages to workers is whether workers have on-the-job access to corporate Internet and email accounts. Some workers regularly use computers to do their work (such as white-collar service workers), while others may not (say, manufacturing workers on an assembly line). Many mobilization packages offered to companies take this difference into account. In an “E2E [employer to employee political communication] Training Introduction” produced by the Job Creators Network, a right-leaning business group encouraging mobilization, the narrator explains that for managers to “reach off-line employees, you just need a place to show videos, a good printer, and some imagination. Most of our E2E tools are printable, so print and share where it makes sense, like a breakroom, mailboxes, paycheck envelopes, or newsletters. Queue up videos on your laptop, head to the breakroom and hit play during some downtime, or during a staff meeting. Have the boss treat everyone to pizza, then show videos, circulate print-outs, and get employees talking.”<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, at another large manufacturer, election mobilization involved marshalling not just content on the company's internal website and email messages, but also "Why Vote?" posters, slides on the internal company TV channel, flyers, branded promotional items (such as t-shirts, post-it note pads, stickers, and USB drives), monthly conference calls, weekly stories in the company newsletter, and on-site events with pizza – all strategies that could reach off-line workers.<sup>23</sup> As this training video and manufacturing business examples make clear, in-person meetings, flyers, and posters are much more important for firms in which workers do not have regular access to email or other electronic communications. Companies can also produce online content for workers to read on their own time at home, as Menards did with the online civics and economics course their owners created (see chapter 1).

#### **<1>ISSUES DISCUSSED IN EMPLOYER POLITICAL MESSAGES**

What did employers discuss with their workers about politics? The specific question posed to workers on the survey was as follows: "What did your manager or supervisor mention to you when they contacted you about politics or political issues?" Respondents had the option of choosing a similar set of answers as in the managerial survey, including information about registering to vote, turning out to vote, about a presidential candidate, a candidate for the US House, a candidate for the US Senate, a candidate for state government, a bill or policy issue, contacting a lawmaker, donating to a political candidate, or another kind of unspecified message. Figure 4.2 summarizes these responses from contacted workers.

**Figure 4.2**



Caption: Employer political messages reported by workers. Data from 2015 worker survey. Shares do not sum to 100% because workers could select more than one option. Denominator is all workers who reported employer mobilization (sample size: 273).

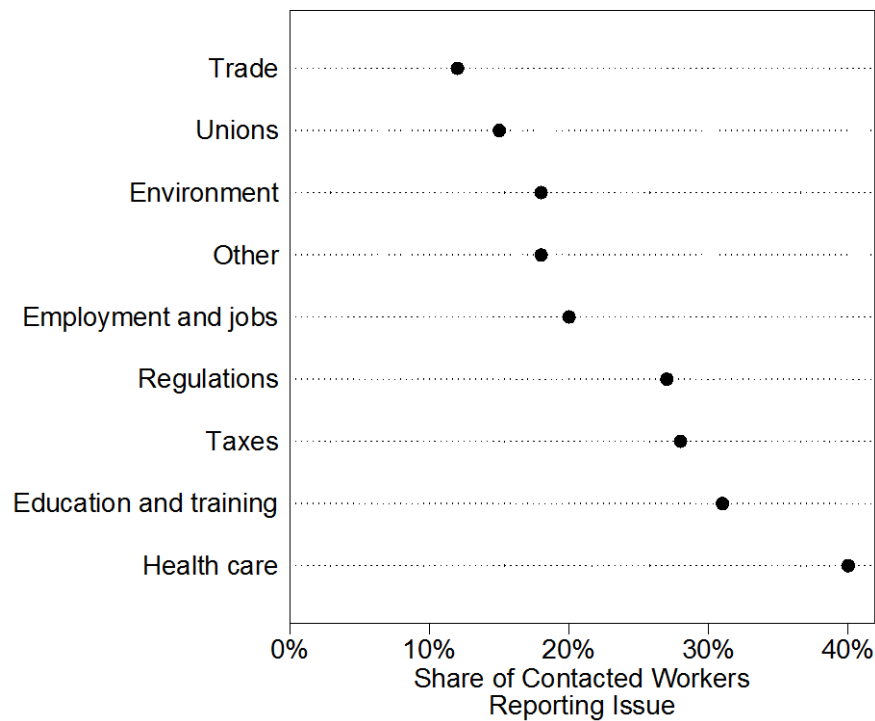
We can summarize the political intensity of employer messages that workers reported in the following way. At one end are efforts that consist of relatively non-partisan activities, such as helping workers to register to vote or turn out to vote, while at the other end are more explicitly partisan activities that urge workers to support specific candidates during elections. About 11% of all American employees experienced “get out the vote” type mobilization that only discussed voter registration and turnout and was plainly non-partisan. Another 6% of employees experienced mobilization that discussed political issues (such as bills under debate in a

legislature), but not political candidates. The final 7% of employees experienced mobilization that went beyond political issues to discuss political candidates.

As with the means of contact, there was also considerable variation in the type of information offered by employers by firm size. Compared to smaller firms, larger companies were much more likely to include messages about policy issues, bills, and contacting legislators. Smaller businesses were more likely to discuss messages about presidential candidates. The biggest difference in this comparison is thus the much more central focus of larger companies on policy.

What kind of policies did employers discuss with their workers? Another question tapped into this dimension of messages by asking the following of workers: “What issues did your manager or supervisor mention to you when they contacted you about politics? Did your manager or supervisor mention...” Figure 4.3 summarizes the answers to this question, showing that employers tended to most frequently address health care, followed by education, taxes, and regulations. Workers heard least about trade and unions from their managers. Of course, some of these differences may be due to recall effects – workers might be more likely to remember receiving messages about issues that were more prominently featured in the news around the time of the survey (like health care reform) or that were especially memorable. A more conservative interpretation of these results, then, would read them as the issues that employers included in their messages and which workers found to be most salient.

**Figure 4.3**



Caption: Employer political messages by issue. Data from 2015 worker survey. Shares do not sum to 100% because workers could select more than one option. Denominator is all workers who reported employer mobilization (sample size: 273).

Another way of considering variation in issues discussed by employers is to divide messages by whether they were more electorally focused or not. Electoral messages – those discussing candidates or parties – were much more likely to discuss taxes than were non-electoral messages that did not mention candidates or parties. The reverse was true for messages about education and training, which were much more likely to be discussed in non-electoral messages. Still, in practice these categories blur together, and a single electoral message from an employer might combine multiple issues together. Consider the message in a pamphlet from the Job Creators Network distributed to managers during the 2012 election. That document

described how GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney supported a “flatter, simpler, fairer tax code for all Americans that will help businesses, and families to prosper,” while Democratic opponent Barack Obama “would increase many types of taxes, including those on businesses that file taxes as individuals,” especially through his new health reform program.<sup>24</sup> That message clearly combined both health care and tax issues together with particularly important implications for small businesses that would face higher taxes on the revenue they passed through the individual income tax code.

### **<1>THREATS OF ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES IN EMPLOYER MESSAGES**

A final way that we can divide employer messages is by whether they included threats of job loss or wage and hour cuts if particular candidates were not elected or policies were not passed – like in the case of the Murray Energy workers we met at the start of this chapter. 20% of contacted workers – or about 7 million American employees, extrapolating from the survey – reported that their employer had ever issued at least one such warning, responding affirmatively to the question “When your manager or supervisor discussed politics or political issues with you, did your manager or supervisor ever mention changing or cutting worker hours because of politics, mention changing or cutting jobs because of politics, or mention closing offices or plants because of politics?” These threats made workers uncomfortable: workers who received at least one threat were three times more likely to indicate that they were uncomfortable with employer messages compared to workers who did not receive threats when asked “How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the contact you had with your manager or supervisor about politics and political issues?”

Workers who received threats were also substantially more likely to report that they feared for their jobs. While only slightly over half of workers who did not receive threats from

their employer reported concerns about their job security, 70% of workers who received threats from their employer reported such concerns (the question was “To what extent, if at all, do you worry about the possibility of losing your main job?”). This suggests that workers take economic threats about jobs and wages from their managers quite seriously. Companies recognize the importance of economic warnings, too. One corporate executive overseeing political mobilization at a Midwestern energy company recommended that other firms use warnings about economic losses to motivate greater employee participation in politics. Explained that executive, “One of the broadest incentive categories” to appeal to workers “is economic self-interest, including job security, paychecks, employee benefits, promotions, raises, bonuses, profit sharing, stock dividends and pensions. Economic interests may be manifested as fear or anticipation.”<sup>25</sup>

Table 4.1 outlines how the incidence of economic threats varies across the topics and issues discussed by employers. Threats about the economic consequences of politics or policies were most likely in messages about political candidates (especially for the House and the presidency) and about unions and trade, and were least likely to appear in messages about state government candidates, turning out to vote, bills or policy issues, and regulations and health care.

Threats can come in a variety of forms. Sometimes employers merely remind their workers that their job is on the line in upcoming elections. The Job Creators Network has taken such a tack. In the materials the Network distributes to its members, the Network explains to workers that voting “is an important way for you to not only do your civic duty, but to protect your job.”<sup>26</sup> In other cases, managers make a more explicit link between the election of particular candidates and workers’ jobs and wages. David Siegel, a time share mogul we will revisit in chapter 9, sent a message to his workers before the 2012 elections warning that “the economy

doesn't currently pose a threat to your job. What does threaten your job, however, is another four years of the same presidential administration.”<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, many companies have made the link between specific policies and workers' jobs to motivate participation. When Congress was considering major legislation to address climate change in 2009 and 2010, Tesoro, a large oil processor, dispatched its CEO to tour the company's refineries to explain to workers how the legislation “could force many companies” – including his own – “out of business,” and created a website for employees to learn about the “negative impact” the bill would have on Tesoro workers' jobs. The website also encouraged workers to write to their lawmakers to oppose the climate legislation.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 4.1. Economic Threats by Message Topics and Issues.<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Type of Message</b>	<b>Share of Messages with Threats</b>	<b>Issue Mentioned</b>	<b>Share of Messages with Threats</b>
House candidate	45%	Unions	46%
Presidential candidate	40%	Trade	40%
Contacting a legislator	39%	Employment or jobs	34%
Donating to a candidate	38%	Taxes	29%
Senate candidate	37%	Environment	28%
Registering to vote	32%	Education/training	26%
Bill or policy	27%	Health care	26%
Voting	27%	Regulation	25%
State candidate	24%	Other	27%
Other	25%		

<sup>a</sup> Data from 2015 worker survey. Denominator is all workers reporting employer mobilization and a particular topic or issue (total sample size: 273).

More detailed examples of these threats can be found in the material that Georgia Pacific and Cintas provided to their workers during the 2012 election, which included warnings that the companies might need to lay off workers if particular politicians were not elected. Table 4.2 summarizes excerpts from both of these messages.



**Table 4.2. Examples of Employer Messages with Threats of Job or Wage Loss.<sup>a</sup>**

Cintas	Georgia Pacific/Koch Industries
<p>“The upcoming Election on November 6th is one of the most important Elections of our time...It’s important for each of our voices to be heard this Election because the decisions that are made and the policies that are set by our government impact each of us personally as individuals...These decisions and policies could also have a significant impact on Cintas — on our ability to run our business effectively and efficiently, on our ability to attract and retain customers and on our ability to provide the level of benefits, opportunities, and development we believe our partners want, need and deserve...According to the Supreme Court, the new health care law amounts to the single largest tax on Americans and business in history... Under the new law, we estimate that our health care costs will increase by over \$50 million, taking the total we would need to spend to provide the same level of coverage we are currently providing to \$188 million... Finally, while some government regulation is needed for all businesses, the current economic uncertainty faced by many of our customers prevents them (and Cintas) from growing in the way we would like. The over-regulation that business is facing today from the various administrative agencies...is suffocating many companies. This uncertainty felt by many of our customers about their ability to run and grow their businesses prevents them from adding jobs which hurts our ability to grow and add jobs.</p>	<p>“While we are typically told before each Presidential election that it is important and historic, I believe the upcoming election will determine what kind of America future generations will inherit...If we elect candidates who want to spend hundreds of billions in borrowed money on costly new subsidies for a few favored cronies, put unprecedented regulatory burdens on businesses, prevent or delay important new construction projects, and excessively hinder free trade, then many of our more than 50,000 U.S. employees and contractors may suffer the consequences, including higher gasoline prices, runaway inflation, and other ills.”</p>

<sup>a</sup> Excerpted from Jamieson 2012; Elk 2012b.

Employer threats and warnings pose some tricky theoretical and empirical issues from the standpoint of my research. In an ideal scenario, I would know whether a worker had received

some kind of warning about changes to wages, employment, or working conditions from their managers that was tied to elections or policy debates and I would also know whether that warning was sincere, in the sense that managers actually did think that there was a strong probability that their business would need to adjust their labor practices in response to politics. (This is in contrast to empty threats that managers might make to workers intended to change workers' political behavior.) Unfortunately, it is difficult, if not impossible, to gather this sort of information, even if I were able to survey both workers and their managers simultaneously about economic warnings. Business decisions about layoffs and changes to workers' wages and working conditions are inevitably driven by a mix of factors, and it would be hard to pin down the contribution of any single change in policy on executives' thinking about labor policies.

In addition, managers often have a strong incentive to *overstate* the role of politics in their decision-making as a bargaining strategy with policymakers.<sup>29</sup> Dramatizing the potential effects of policy on unemployment or wage cuts can help managers gain leverage in negotiations over legislation, echoing the lesson from Charles Lindblom about the “structural power of business” we saw in chapter 1. For instance, during deliberations over national health reform in 2009 and 2010 a number of employers issued dire predictions that they would be forced to drastically cut health benefits in a bid to reduce their obligation to provide coverage to workers or pay a fine. Yet, as a *New York Times* analysis uncovered six years after the passage of the reform law, those predictions were generally wrong. Most companies, and especially big employers, have continued offering health insurance to their workers.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the time share mogul in Florida who threatened layoffs if Obama were reelected in 2012 ended up giving his workers across-the-board raises in 2015 after experiencing “the best year” in the company's history despite the gloomy predictions of the effect of Obama's policies on the economy.<sup>31</sup>

To be sure, there are some clear-cut cases of businesses whose economic success is directly tied to public policy. Coal-fired power plants, for instance, are directly threatened by environmental regulations that tighten standards on their carbon dioxide emissions. On the other side of the environmental debate, wind energy producers rely heavily on generous federal tax credits to lower the cost of constructing and operating wind turbines, and as a result, the wind industry actively mobilizes its employees to support renewal of that tax credit. The expiration of those credits would deal a serious blow to the financial viability of wind energy.

From the perspective of my analysis, however, distinctions about the accuracy and sincerity of the threats, warnings, or predictions that employers might make to workers about politics are somewhat beside the point. Regardless of the accuracy or sincerity of the threats, what matters is the fact that workers recognize that employers are uniquely positioned to act on those predictions. As long as the probability that an employer might act on those threats is greater than zero, these messages ought to weigh heavily on the minds of employees. The best parallel here is to the threats made during union drives: even though most of the time employers do not end up closing plants, stores, or factories after successful union elections, just the mere mention of those threats is often enough to sway workers into opposing the union, especially when made in concert with other threats of wage or benefit cuts.<sup>32</sup> As we will soon see, employer warnings about politics are similarly powerful.

### **<1>WORKER AGREEMENT AND COMFORT WITH EMPLOYER MESSAGES**

Having laid out the descriptive features of employer political recruitment, I next turn to workers' subjective perceptions of managers' messages. Did workers agree with employer messages, or were workers generally opposed to the information they were receiving from managers? I find that employees were divided over whether they agreed with their employers'

political material: about 47% of workers contacted by their bosses reported that they agreed with the messages, while the remaining workers either had no opinion (28%) or disagreed (25%; the exact wording of the question was “How much did you agree or disagree with the messages that your manager or supervisor provided to you about politics or political issues?” and workers selected from a five-point scale of agreement).

Workers were similarly divided over whether or not they felt comfortable with managers’ messages. 55% of workers reported that they were either very comfortable or somewhat comfortable with their employers’ political recruitment efforts, 15% were very or somewhat uncomfortable, and 29% had no opinion (the exact wording of the question was “How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the contact you had with your manager or supervisor about politics and political issues?” and workers selected from a five-point scale of comfort). Workers found employer messages about donating to candidates to be least comfortable, and were most comfortable with requests to contact legislators. Information about political candidates and voter registration and turnout fell somewhere in between these extremes. Looking across issues, workers found messages about unions and employment and jobs (such as the minimum wage) to be least comfortable, and those about trade and the environment to be most comfortable.

These patterns may reflect the fact that trade policy frequently unites the interests of managers and their employees, as do environmental regulations that potentially impose costs on companies. In contrast, unions and labor regulations (like the minimum wage) more clearly divide the interests of workers and management and therefore could make workers more uncomfortable. Extrapolating broadly, I estimate that some 42% of all the workers who were contacted by employers received messages that we might think united the natural economic

interests of workers and managers. I arrived at this estimate by combining together workers who received messages about the environment, trade, and education and training – three areas where we might think policies that were good for the company would be largely good for individual workers, too (at least from a purely economic perspective). These are the issues that chemical manufacturer DuPont, for instance, argues are ones that workers should “care about,” too, along with managers: “issues that have an impact on the way DuPont conducts its business and the company’s profitability have a direct impact on all our shareholders, including DuPont employees, retirees, and their families...DuPont employees and retirees reap the benefits of a successful company.”<sup>33</sup>

### **<1>THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF EMPLOYER MESSAGES**

Employer political messages are generally perceived to be ideologically conservative by workers. According to the worker survey, employees were most likely to report that their employers’ messages were conservative (43% of contacted workers reported such an ideology), compared to 27% of workers who reported liberal messages (the exact wording was “When your manager or supervisor contacted you about political issues, what were the political views of your manager or supervisor’s message?” and workers could choose from a five-point scale of political ideology). Most workers received messages that differed from their own personal ideology. Only 30% of contacted workers received messages that exactly matched their ideology on the same five-point scale. A full 66% of contacted workers, in contrast, received messages that were from the other side of the political spectrum as their own position – that is, liberal workers receiving conservative messages, conservative workers receiving liberal messages, and moderate workers receiving either liberal or conservative messages. (The remaining workers consist of those who received ideologically moderate messages.) Workers were most likely to rate messages about

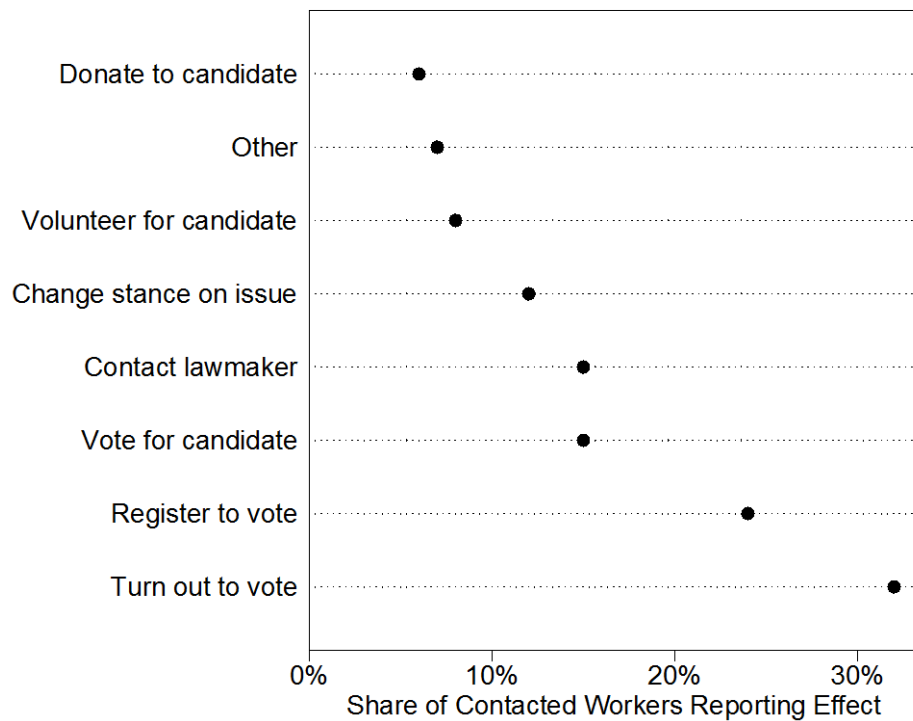
health care as conservative, and to rank messages about education and training as being relatively more liberal.

Employers' partisan slants were similarly conservative. When employees reported that their employer had a favored party, it was much more likely to be the Republicans, rather than the Democrats. The exact wording of the question was "Were the political candidates discussed by your manager or supervisor mostly Democrats, mostly Republicans, or were the political candidates evenly divided between the two parties?" Respondents chose from options that included all Democrats, mostly Democrats, evenly split between the parties, mostly Republicans, or all Republicans.

#### **<1>WORKER RESPONSES TO EMPLOYER MESSAGES**

Employers differ greatly in how they are delivering messages to workers, the content of those messages, and how their workers perceive and interpret those messages. But what do all of these communications add up to? Did employees report that these messages mattered to their political attitudes and decisions? To begin to answer this question, the worker survey asked respondents whether employer messages influenced a range of their behaviors and attitudes, specifically, "Did the political information you received from your manager or supervisor change your mind about politics or voting?", and gave workers the following choices to answer that question: "made you more likely to" register to vote, turn out to vote, vote for a particular candidate, volunteer for a political campaign, change your minds about a particular issue, contact a lawmaker about an issue, donate to a political candidate, or any other effect not previously specified. Figure 4.4 summarizes the responses to this question. In all, nearly half of contacted workers (47%) reported that employer messages changed at least one of the political practices or beliefs listed above.

**Figure 4.4**



Caption: Self-reported effects of employer mobilization on worker political behaviors. Data from 2015 worker survey. Shares do not sum to 100% because workers could select more than one option. Denominator is all workers who reported employer mobilization (sample size: 273).

Workers were most likely to report that employer political messages made them more likely to turn out to vote or to register to vote (32% and 24% of contacted workers reported these effects, respectively). 15% of contacted workers reported that their bosses' political messages made them more likely to vote for an employer's favored candidate, and another 15% of contacted workers reported that the message made them more likely to write to, or call, a legislator about a policy issue on behalf of an employer. Although these self-reports do not provide direct evidence of an effect of employer messages on political behavior on their own, they do indicate that a number of contacted workers perceive that employer messages are

shaping the ways that they are thinking about politics (I conduct a more rigorous test of these effects in Part II of the book).

Most of the potential effects reported in Figure 4.4 are relatively straightforward to picture – we can easily imagine how an employer’s political message might push a worker to register or turn out to vote, or even to change their support for a candidate. But what do political volunteering requests look like in practice? One example comes from the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), the national trade group representing general contractors. AGC actively encourages its member businesses to deploy mobilization, and one especially promoted activity are “meet and greet” events with aspiring or elected officials.<sup>34</sup> As the AGC describes, “Developing relationships with a candidate can be a real help in influencing future public policy decisions. Since a strong personal relationship with policymakers is essential to successful grassroots advocacy, hosting such an event is an effective tool in building long-term relationships.”<sup>35</sup> One benefit that construction firms or contractors can offer politicians, AGC notes, is the opportunity to ask for support from workers, and to leave behind information on how a worker can contribute to, or volunteer for, a campaign.

## **<1>CONTRASTING UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS AS POLITICAL RECRUITERS**

How distinctive are employers as political recruiters? In chapter 6, I will directly compare the effectiveness of union, party, and employer appeals on workers’ political behaviors. For now, we can compare employers to the other major political actor in the workplace – unions – by asking workers about their perceptions of the effect of employer messages. As we will see, despite also mobilizing workers in their identity as employees, union political contact is quite different from employer mobilization. About 12% of employees reported ever experiencing political contact from a labor union in their workplace, or about half the share of employees who



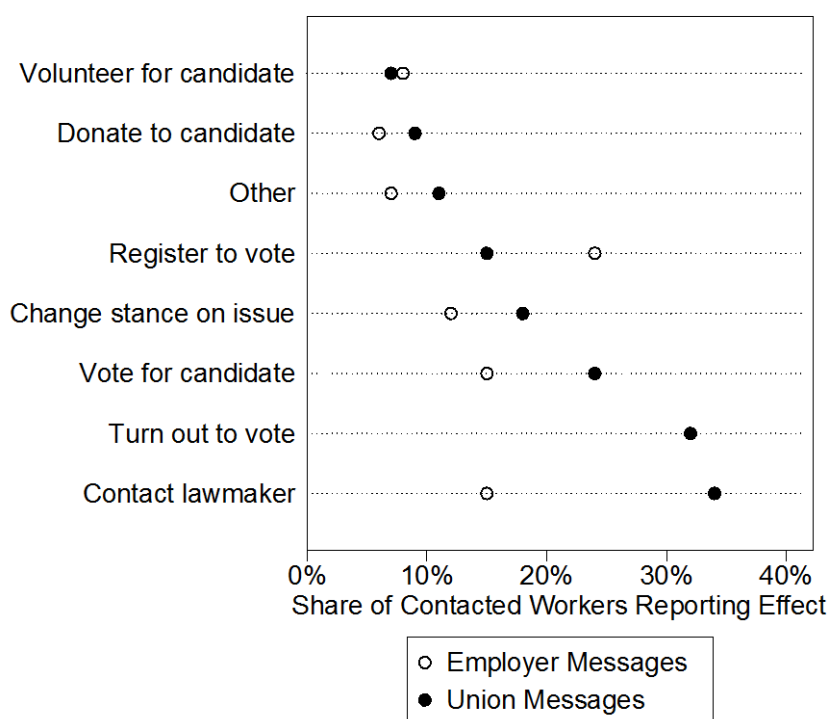
reported ever receiving political messages from their employers. It is clear from this comparison that employer voices far outweigh labor voices at work, which should come as no surprise given the dramatically weakened position of labor in the U.S. economy. (I find a similar disparity looking at the 2016 CCES data on employer mobilization, too.) The share of wage and salary workers participating in unions steadily declined from 24% in 1973 to 11% in 2016, according to the Current Population Survey.

Workers responded to labor messages differently from employer messages. Recall that in all, 47% of workers who received messages from their employers reported that those messages changed at least one of their political behaviors. By comparison, a slightly greater share – 54% – of workers who received messages from a union reported that they had been affected by labor communications. Still, given that far fewer workers received labor messages than did employer messages, the overall number of workers affected by union messages was much lower than for employer mobilization efforts. About 12% of all American employees (or perhaps some 17 million Americans, extrapolating from the survey results) were affected by employer messages, while only 6% of employees (or about 9 million Americans) reported an effect from labor messages.

Aside from the overall differences in the behavioral effects reported by workers, there were also striking contrasts between the sort of effects associated with employer and labor messages. Figure 4.5 compares workers' self-reports of the effect of either employer or labor messages on political behaviors and attitudes. Union messages were much more likely than employer messages to spur workers to contact their legislators. 34% of union message recipients reported such an effect, compared to only 15% of employer message recipients. Union messages were also more likely to change workers' vote choices. Nearly a fourth (24%) of union message

recipients reported an effect on vote choice, while the comparable share for employer messages was only 15%. One area where employers appeared to be more effective than unions, at least according to workers' self-reports, was voter registration. 24% of employer message recipients reported that they were more likely to register to vote as a result of employer mobilization, compared to only 15% for union mobilization targets. The fact that unions are less effective with voter registration likely represents the fact that union members are already much more likely to be registered to vote than non-union members, so there is not much more that labor unions can do to affect this behavior.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 4.5**



Caption: Self-reported effects of employer and union messages. Data from 2015 worker survey. Denominator is all workers reporting either employer mobilization or labor mobilization (employer messages sample size: 273; union messages sample size: 75).

## **<1>COORDINATION BETWEEN LABOR AND EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION**

I have described union and employer messages as if they are conducted separately from one another. But in some cases, employers do coordinate with unions on political mobilization efforts. This is especially true for regulatory and trade issues. For instance, a manager at a railroad company I interviewed reported working closely with his industry's union on "economic regulatory issues, passenger issues...and railroad retirement and unemployment insurance programs." The railroad company and the union also collaborated on anything that might endanger the economic health of the industry. "It's basically self-preservation," explained the executive. Similarly, a major metal manufacturer, also heavily unionized, reported working with the union in their industry on safety issues and other regulatory changes that brought together the interests of workers and employers.

In general, however, interview evidence suggests that corporate coordination with unions was relatively uncommon, even in businesses with a substantial union presence. In fact, one government affairs executive at a heavily unionized telecommunications firm reported to me that he thought that collaboration with the union on political mobilization went against the union's collective bargaining agreement. After checking with the union, I discovered collaboration was not prohibited, but the fact that the top government affairs executive at the company believed it to be so is revealing, indicating that coordination is simply not something that was on his radar.

The worker survey also provides evidence that most workers are not exposed to coordinated messages from employers and unions. Most workers who reported union mobilization did not also report employer mobilization: 68% of the workers who reported union contact reported no employer contact. In fact, the worker survey results suggest that unionized workers were more likely than non-unionized workers to receive anti-union messages. These

results indicate that unionized firms are more likely to be sending conservative messages to their workers criticizing the labor movement, rather than collaborating with unions.

Not only can firms send out political messages that go against union efforts, but companies also have the legal right to squelch any labor political recruitment that is not directly relevant to workplace issues. Although employee on-the-job mobilization related to working conditions, wages, and employment is shielded against employer retaliation by federal labor law, no similar protection exists for more general political messages not pertaining to the workplace. As one labor law expert has explained, “if a union wanted to hand out political materials in the workplace not directly relevant to the workers’ interests—such as providing a list of candidates to support in the elections—the employer has the right to ban that material.” Employers can “even prohibit its distribution on lunch breaks or after shifts, because by law it’s the company’s private property.”<sup>37</sup> Far from being equal partners, most employers and unions keep each other’s mobilization at arm’s length.

### **<1>POLITICAL MONITORING, PRESSURE, AND COERCION AT WORK**

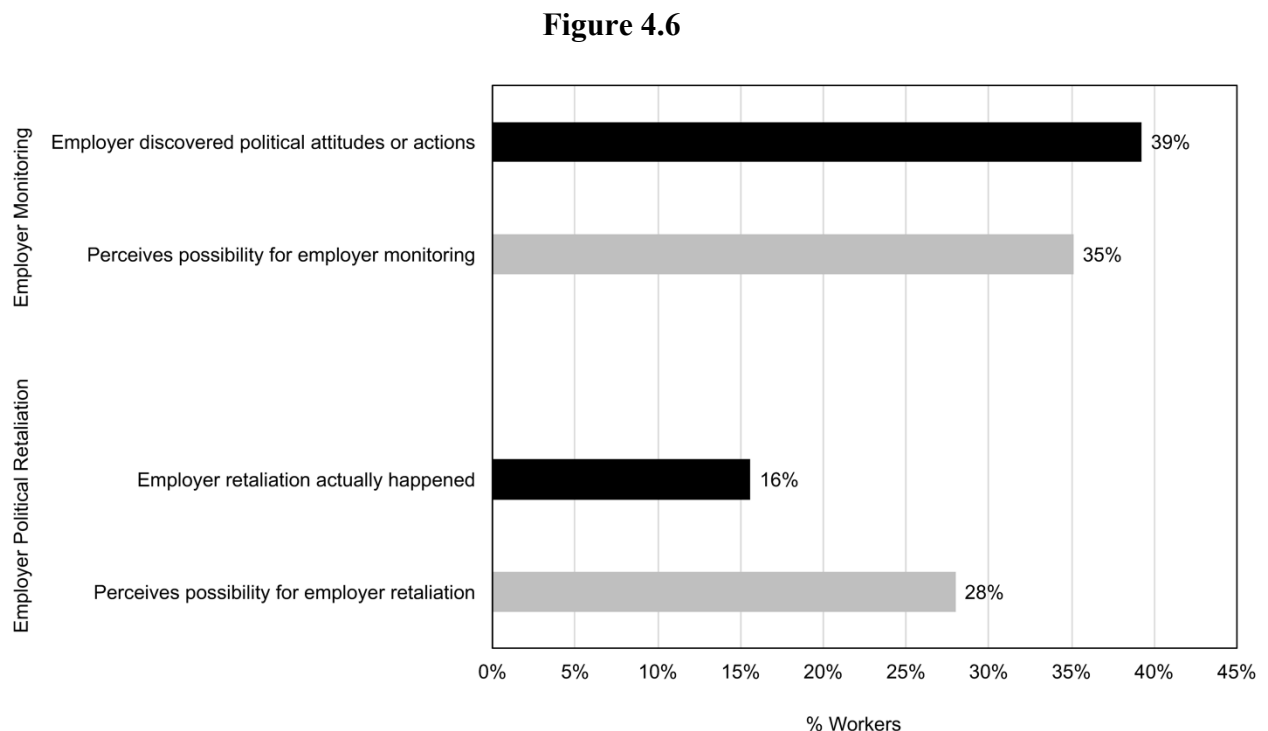
One of the normative concerns looming behind employer mobilization is whether managers are using implicit or explicit threats of economic retaliation to spur workers to participate in politics in certain ways. The example I provided of Murray Energy at the start of this chapter illustrated one extreme case of such pressure, with workers reporting that their managers were closely tracking their participation in company-sponsored political requests and then threatening to punish defying employees. How common is such monitoring and pressure?

Unfortunately, my 2015 worker survey did not ask respondents about these aspects of employer mobilization. But a subsequent battery of questions, which I fielded on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES), did ask employees about precisely these

issues. I asked non-self-employed workers – the same population that I targeted for my 2015 telephone survey – about the following issues (the exact survey question wording appears in parentheses next to each item):

- Whether employees thought their employers could monitor their political choices and actions (“How likely is it that your main employer can track your political views and actions, such as keeping track of whether you voted or which candidates you support?” Responses: “very likely,” “somewhat likely,” “somewhat unlikely,” “very unlikely,” and “don’t know”).
- Whether employees said their employer had actually discovered something about their political choices (“Has a manager or supervisor at your main job ever discovered whether you voted or which candidates you support? Check all that apply.” “Discovered whether I voted,” “discovered which candidates I support,” and “discovered something else about my politics”).
- Whether employees thought their employer might punish them for their political views or actions (“How likely is it that you might miss out on opportunities for advancement or promotion at your main job because of your political views or actions, including which candidates you support?” Responses: “very likely,” “somewhat likely,” “somewhat unlikely,” “very unlikely,” and “don’t know”).

- Whether employees said that their employer had actually punished workers for their political views or actions (“As far as you can remember, have any of the following things happened to someone at your main job in part because of his or her political views or actions? Check all that apply:” “Someone was fired,” “Someone missed out on a promotion,” and “Someone was treated unfairly”).



Caption: Workers reporting perceptions and actual occurrences of employer political monitoring and political retaliation. Data from 2016 CCES survey. Denominator is non-self-employed workers (sample size: 459).

Figure 4.6 plots the topline responses to each of these items, expressed as a proportion of all non-self-employed workers. Looking first at employer monitoring, 35% of workers perceived the possibility for at least some employer surveillance – these workers said that monitoring was

“very likely” or “somewhat likely,” or said that they did not know one way or another. (This estimate is 21% excluding workers who said that they did not know). A nearly identical proportion of workers – 39% – said that their employer had actually discovered their political actions or beliefs in the past. In the previous chapter, we saw that employers often tracked the political participation of their workers in order to establish whether workers followed through on their political requests. It thus appears that many workers do in fact recognize the possibility for this sort of tracking – and that their employers have indeed discerned their political views and actions. Though it is perhaps surprising – and worrisome – that so many employees doubt the secrecy of their votes in the workplace, my results are consistent with past polling that indicates that over four in ten Americans believe that it would not be difficult for “politicians, union officials, or the people you work for to find out who you voted for, even if you told no one,” and that over one in ten Americans reported that “a politician, union official, or someone you work for” had “ever found out who you voted for” because of imperfections or errors in the voting process.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, employer monitoring on its own is benign: employers might simply be using this information to assess the effectiveness of their campaigns. What makes employer mobilization coupled with close monitoring more concerning is the possibility that employers would punish workers for failing to participate – or participating in ways contrary to managerial preferences. Figure 4.6 indicates that 28% of workers perceived that they might miss out on a promotion or other possibility for advancement because of their political views or actions (this was the proportion of workers reporting it was “very likely,” “somewhat likely,” or that they did not know one way or another). Though lower than the proportion of workers who said that

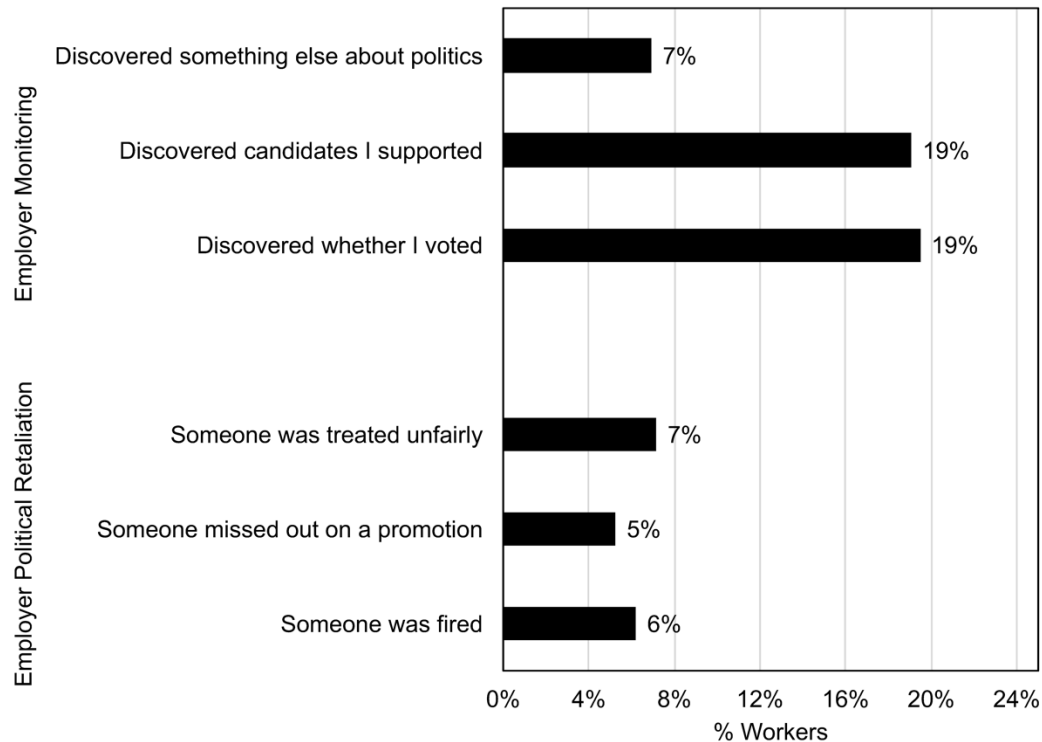
monitoring might be possible, it is still striking that just over one in four employees think that their political views and actions could affect their treatment at work by their managers.

Perhaps even more strikingly – and worryingly from the perspective of employer mobilization – 16% of workers said that political retaliation *had in fact occurred in their workplace*. That is, a full one-sixth of the employed labor force said that someone at their job was treated unfairly, missed out on a promotion, or was fired as a result of political views or actions. Summing up workers who perceived the possibility for employer political retaliation with those who had actually seen such backlash at their jobs, we can say that a full 34% of employees might be subject to employer political coercion one way or another.

Figure 4.7 zooms into the actual instances of employer monitoring and retaliation that workers reported in the survey. Looking first at monitoring, we see that about equal proportions – just shy of one-fifth of all workers – reported that their employers had discovered whether they voted at all and for which candidates workers voted. Thus, for a non-trivial proportion of the American labor force, there is not actually a secret ballot – at least at work. A much lower proportion of workers (just 6%) reported that their employers had discovered some other aspect of their political participation. Turning next to employer retaliation, we see that roughly similar proportions of workers – about 5% to 7% – reported each of three employer actions punishing workers for political views or behaviors: firing workers, passing workers over for a promotion, or treating workers in an otherwise unfair manner. Together, these responses, totaling one-sixth of the labor force, represent the most troubling aspects of employer mobilization, raising the worry that workers are being pressured into toeing their company's political line and thus sacrificing their own political autonomy.



**Figure 4.7**



Caption: Workers reporting actual occurrences of employer political monitoring and political retaliation. Data from 2016 CCES survey. Denominator is non-self-employed workers (sample size: 459).

It is important to consider the fact that the full ramifications of an employer retaliating against an employee for political views or actions go well beyond the individual worker who was punished. As we saw with the example of Murray Energy, the punishment or dismissal of a single employee for political reasons sends a strong message to the remaining employees to get with an employer's agenda – or leave the company altogether. Indeed, even the mere suggestion

of economic consequences for incorrect political choices might be enough to convince wavering employees to support the company's political program – especially if employees perceive the potential for monitoring as we saw earlier. It is likely no coincidence, then, that 63% of employees who perceive the potential for economic retaliation at their job also perceive the possibility of employer monitoring (contrast that figure with just 24% of employees who did not perceive the possibility for economic retaliation). Monitoring and retaliation, then, tend to go hand in hand.

### **<1>DOES EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION MODERATE CIVIC INEQUALITIES?**

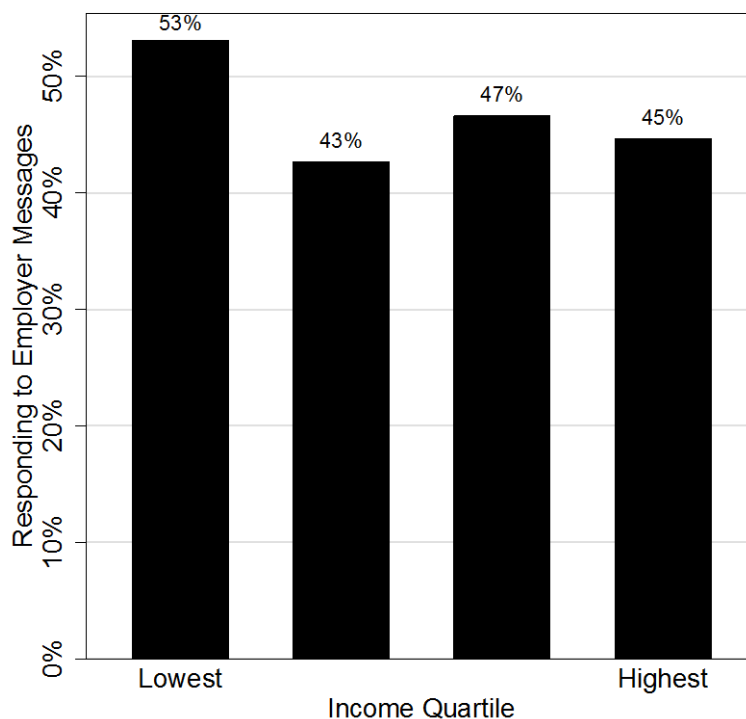
The final issue I consider is how employer political mobilization changes the landscape of civic participation in the United States. Extensive past work in political science has shown that lower-income and lower-educated workers are much less likely to participate in politics in nearly every way – from voting to donating to campaigns to following political news.<sup>39</sup> These inequalities in participation, in turn, are thought to contribute to inequalities in representation, since politicians have few incentives to represent citizens who do not make their voices heard in politics.<sup>40</sup>

Are employer messages – and worker responses to those messages – exacerbating or moderating these civic inequalities? One way of answering this question is to examine income differences in who responds to employer messages. If we see a negative relationship, with lower-income individuals more likely to change their behaviors as a result of employer mobilization, then it would suggest that employer messages are mitigating income disparities in participation, pulling lower-income individuals into politics. On the other hand, if there is no relationship between responses to employer messages and income, then we might think that employer messages do not do much to reduce civic gaps by class. And a third possibility is that it is only

the most advantaged workers who are responding to employer requests for participation, worsening income inequalities in civic participation.

Figure 4.8 begins to answer this question by considering the income gap in worker responses to employer messages, returning to the 2015 worker survey data. Each bar shows the share of workers in each of four income quartiles who responded to employer messages. There is not much of a pattern across income groups. Workers in the lowest income quartile (with family incomes averaging about \$25,000 to \$30,000) had a slightly higher rate of response than other quartiles, but the relationship is not a strong one (the highest quartile represents families averaging incomes over \$150,000). At least in the aggregate, then, employer messages are not moderating civic inequalities – but nor are employer messages increasing them.

**Figure 4.8**



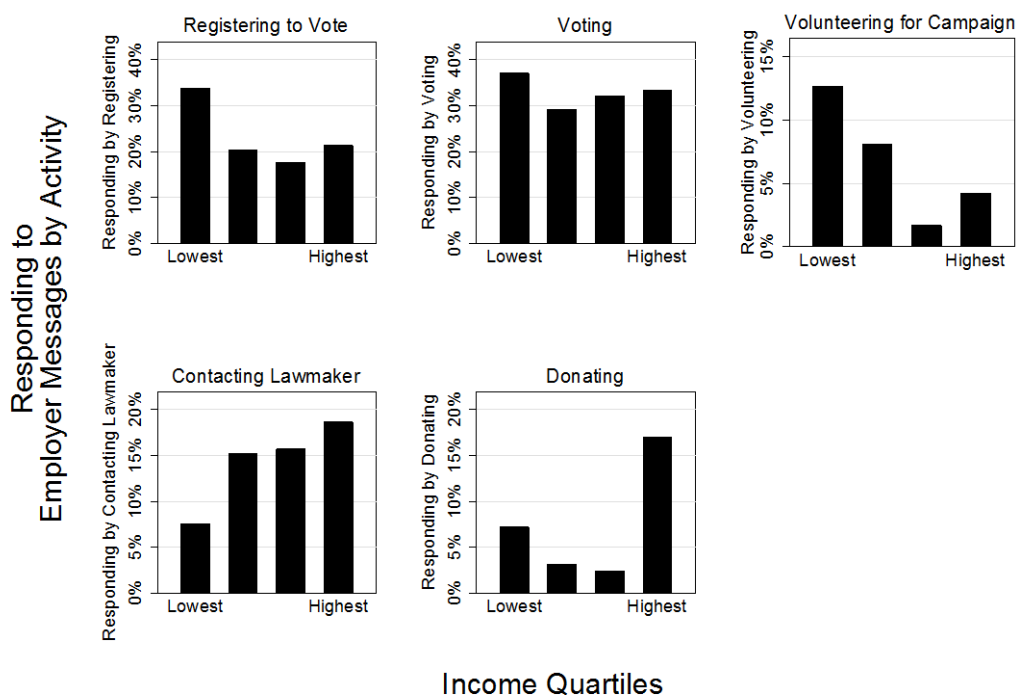
Caption: Worker responses to employer messages by income quartile. Figure shows the share of each income quartile responding to employer messages (i.e., reporting an effect). Data from 2015 worker survey. Denominator is all workers who received employer messages by quartile. Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 249).

The picture changes substantially when we turn to income gaps in specific political activities, as in Figure 4.9. Each panel shows the relationship between income (in quartiles, as before) and a specific political response to employer messages. Lower-income workers were far more likely than higher-income workers to respond to employer messages by engaging in two of the activities: registering to vote and volunteering for political causes. Employer messages thus appear to reduce inequalities in participation for these political behaviors, disproportionately encouraging lower income workers to register and turn out for political causes. The relationship is especially striking for political volunteering: workers in the lowest income quartile were more than two times more likely than workers in the highest quartile to report that they volunteered in response to their employer's messages (and more than six times more likely than those in the third quartile to report such a response). It is likely that higher-income workers were already volunteering and registering at very high rates even without employer messages, tempering the effects that employer mobilization could have on these groups.

But lower income workers were not universally more likely to respond to employer messages. Workers with the highest family incomes were substantially more likely than workers with the lowest incomes to respond to employer messages by contacting their lawmakers and donating to political campaigns (though these findings are less certain than those for volunteering and registering). The difference was particularly large for legislative contacting:

highest-income quartile workers were nearly two and a half times more likely than lowest-quartile workers to report contacting lawmakers in response to employer messages. For these activities, then, employer messages were exacerbating the existing tendency of wealthier workers to participate more than poorer workers. And in the case of voting in general, there were no differences in responses to employer messages by income at all.

**Figure 4.9**

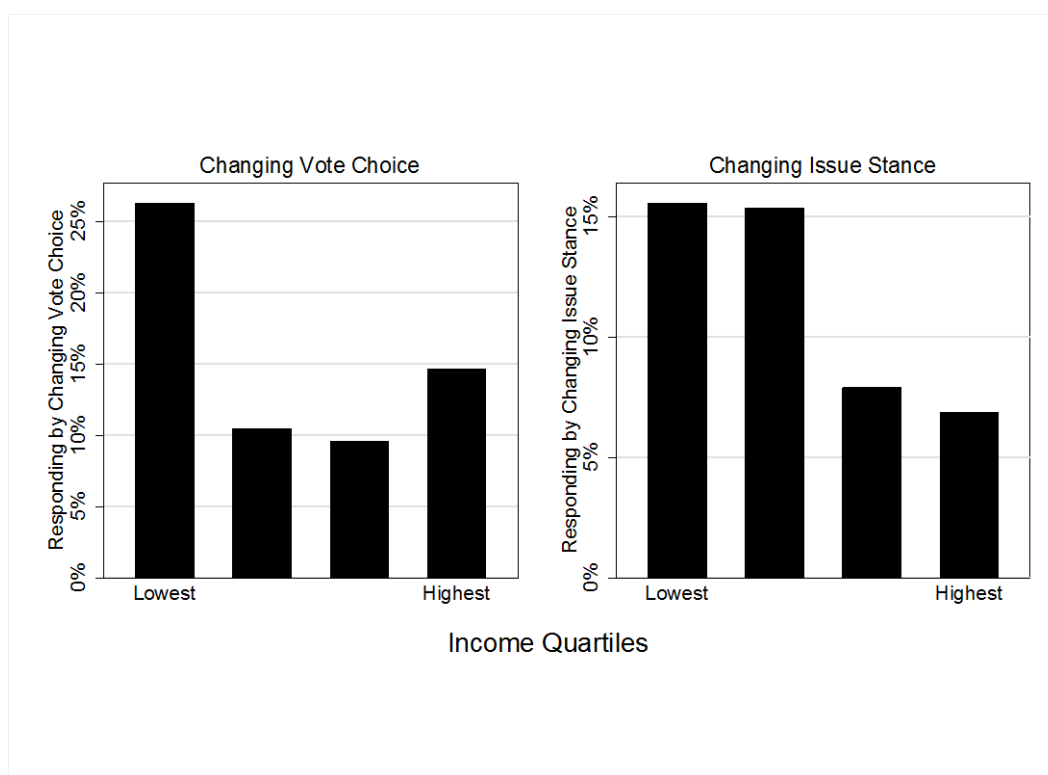


Caption: Worker responses to employer messages by income quartile for each political activity. Data from 2015 worker survey. Figure shows the share of each income quartile responding to employer messages by political activity. Denominator is all workers who received employer messages by quartile. Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 249).

The cross-cutting effects of employer messages by income thus make it difficult to take away a single message about the implications of employer mobilization for civic inequalities.

While these messages reduce income gaps in some areas of political life, especially volunteering, they reinforce gaps for other activities, like legislative contacting. A further complication of this analysis is that it does not consider *for whom* workers are casting their ballots, or which issues and candidates workers are supporting as a result of employer mobilization. I address this question in Figure 4.10, which examines differences by income in whether workers reported changing their vote choice or changing their stance on an issue as a result of employer messages. In both cases we can clearly see very sharp income differences. Lower income workers are more likely than higher income workers to report that they changed their preferences and attitudes. In both cases, workers in the lowest quartile were around twice as likely as those in the highest quartile to report changing their political positions as a result of employer messages.

**Figure 4.10**

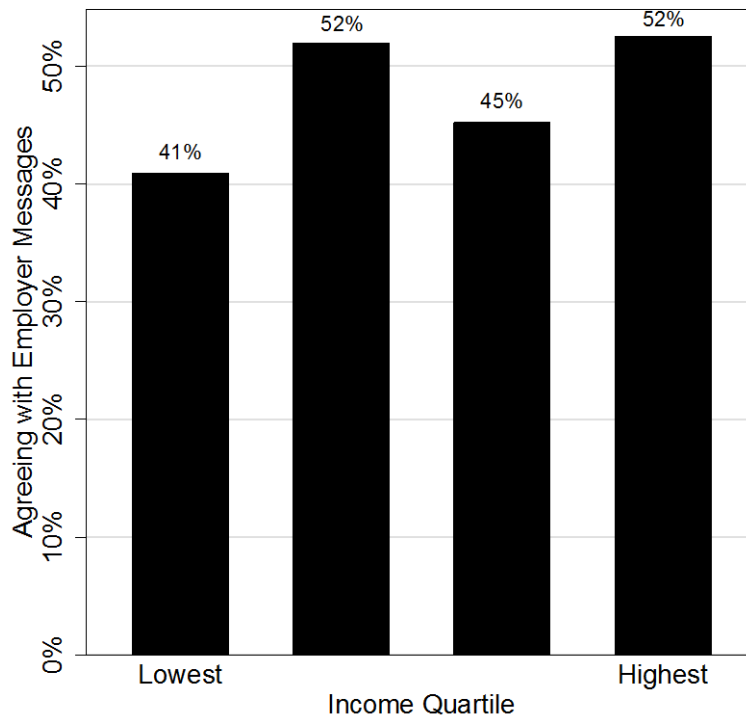


Caption: Worker responses to employer messages by income quartile, political persuasion. Data from 2015 worker survey. Figure shows the share of each income quartile responding to employer

messages by type of political persuasion (changing vote choice or issue stance). Denominator is all workers who received employer messages by quartile. Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 249).

Is the disproportionate effect of employer messages on lower-income citizens indicative of greater support for employer messages among poorer Americans? To the extent that I can answer this question with the existing survey data, it seems the answer is no. Poorer workers were no more likely to report agreeing with their employer's political stances compared to wealthier workers, and if anything, wealthier workers were slightly *more* likely to agree with their bosses, as reported in Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.11**

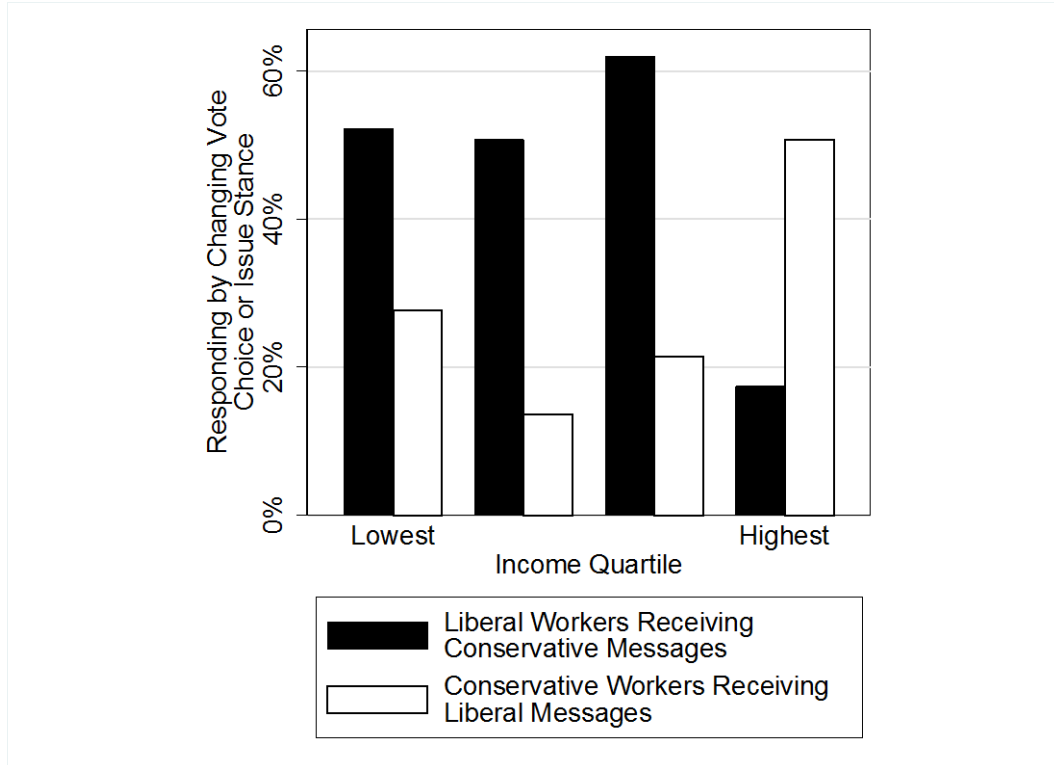


Caption: Share of workers agreeing with employer messages by income quartile. Data from 2015 worker survey. Figure shows the share of each income quartile agreeing with employer message. Denominator is all workers who received employer messages by quartile. Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 249).

Lower-income workers were more likely to change their vote choices and issue stances to match their employers. Were these mostly liberal workers changing to conservative positions, or vice versa? Figure 4.12 shows the share of workers who reported changing their issue or candidate support in each quartile that were either liberal workers receiving conservative messages from their bosses, or conservative workers receiving liberal messages from their managers. (The remaining category, which I do not plot, consists of workers who received messages that were aligned with their ideology, such as liberal workers receiving liberal messages from their employers.) Across the bottom three income quartiles we can see that it was much more likely to be left-leaning workers who reported receiving – and subsequently switching to – conservative positions than it was conservative workers switching to liberal positions. It was only among the wealthiest workers that we were more likely to see conservatives switching to liberal positions. Examining employer partisan endorsements, rather than the overall ideology of managerial messages, I find a similar story: low-income workers who changed their vote choice were disproportionately likely to switch to the Republican candidates favored by their employers.



**Figure 4.12**



Caption: Ideological cross-pressures from employer messages by income quartile. Data from 2015 worker survey. Figure shows the share of each income quartile who reported changing their vote choice or issue stance and that were either liberal workers receiving conservative messages (solid black bars) or conservative workers receiving liberal messages (hollow bars). Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 249).

The considerable persuasion of lower-income workers to conservative and Republican stances raises potentially worrisome normative questions. Should we think about these persuasion effects for lower-income workers as closing inequalities in political knowledge and participation? Or should we be concerned that the new political activities and preferences of lower-income workers are not reflective of workers' "true" preferences or self-interests? These issues harken back to older debates in political science and sociology about the distribution of

political power I described in chapter 1, in which some scholars argued that elites in society had the power to change the preferences of citizens to go against their own self-interest, much like the concept of false consciousness.<sup>41</sup>

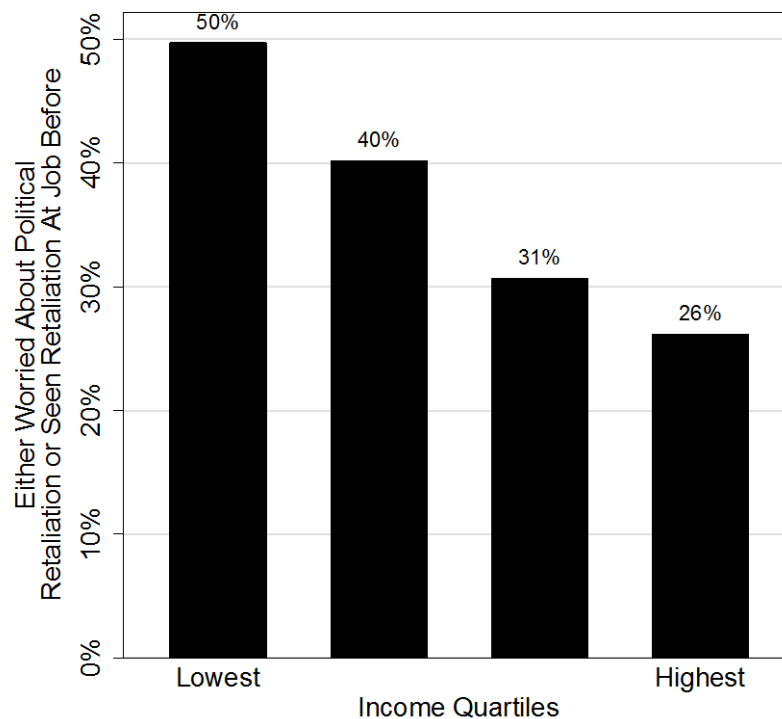
One way of pushing forward with this issue is to return to the 2016 CCES data to see if lower-income workers are more concerned about political retaliation than are higher-income workers. If lower-income workers are no more likely to fear political retaliation from their bosses than are higher-income workers, then we might be less concerned that lower-income workers are being coerced into supporting their employers' positions against their interests. But if lower-income workers fear punishment from their employers more than their higher-income counterparts, then we would have stronger reasons to think that poorer workers are being pressured into changing their political stances and practices against their self-interest.

Figure 4.13 evaluates this question and shows that worries of political retaliation at work are much more prevalent among lower-income workers than higher income workers (I divide workers, as before in the telephone survey, into four equally-sized groups based on their self-reported family income). The figure plots workers who either reported the possibility of political retaliation from their managers, or who said that they had actually witnessed such retaliation at their jobs before.

There is almost a perfectly one-to-one relationship between family income and the proportion of workers reporting the possibility of political retaliation at their jobs. Nearly half of all workers in the lowest income quartile either reported a concern for retaliation or said that such retaliation had happened before. That proportion fell to 40% of workers in the second quartile, 31% in the third quartile, and just 26% in the highest-income quartile. There is thus a

24-percentage point gap in the experience or fear of political retaliation at work between the lowest and highest-earning workers in the 2016 CCES sample.

**Figure 4.13**



Caption: Workers reporting perception or actual occurrence of employer political retaliation at their job by income quartile. Data from 2016 CCES. Income is measured by total family income (sample size: 495).

Figure 4.13 suggests that lower-income workers might be much more likely to be pressured by their employers into changing their political preferences and practices than are higher-income workers, raising the concern that the shifts from left to right I identified in Figure 4.12 might represent coercion just as much as persuasion. Ultimately, however, the survey evidence I have presented cannot adjudicate between these very different conclusions, which

turn on how one defines workers' self-interest – an impossible task to do in an objective manner. And some skeptical readers might wonder if the low-income workers who are indicating large effects of employer messages are simply reporting “non-attitudes” – that is, employer messages did not really change workers' preferences so much as simply introducing a transient consideration that workers pulled from the top of their heads when queried by pollsters.<sup>42</sup> Still, the fact that lower-income workers are no more likely than higher-income workers to report agreeing with their employers and yet still report changing their behaviors to match the conservative positions espoused by their bosses strongly suggests that economically vulnerable workers may be pursuing right-leaning stances with which they disagree in order to preserve their employment and wages.

### **<1>TURNING AMERICANS INTO EMPLOYEE VOTERS**

Drawing on original surveys of workers, this chapter has complemented the picture of employer mobilization I provided from the perspective of managers in chapter 3. We have seen the prevalence of employer messages, as well as the forms those messages take and how workers responded to them. At least by workers' own accounts, employer messages can often be a powerful source of political beliefs and actions. Yet even as employer messages shape worker political behavior, there are reasons to be concerned about some – though certainly not all – efforts at employer political outreach. A significant proportion of workers, nearly 40%, reports that their political choices are not actually private at work (including 39% of workers who said that their turnout or vote choices were actually discovered by their bosses). That monitoring opens the door for employers to potentially reward and punish workers for their political actions – and we saw that nearly a third (28%) of workers were worried about just that. Even more

distressingly, 16% of workers said that they had actually seen political retaliation at their jobs before.

As we will soon see, those perceptions of privacy, or lack thereof, make a big difference for how workers respond to employer messages. If you think your bosses are keeping tabs on how you vote, whose political campaigns you support, or which lawmakers you contact and may punish you for making the wrong choices, you will likely feel pressure to toe your employer's political line much more closely than if you believe in your political privacy at work and are not worried about potential retaliation.

Lastly, I showed that it is difficult to come to a clear conclusion about how employer mobilization shapes civic inequality. While employer messages close some gaps in political participation by income – such as for volunteering – employer messages reinforce other inequalities. We also saw that it tended to be lower-income Americans who were most likely to have their preferences and stances changed by managers, and that this persuasion had a heavily conservative and Republican slant. When business associations and companies talk about turning Americans into “employee voters” – Americans who see their political interests through the lens of their workplace – it tends to produce voters who favor the causes most closely associated with the GOP and the conservative movement.

This raised other thorny issues about whether workers were becoming more informed, or whether employer contacting is convincing poorer workers to oppose their own interests and support corporate-favored causes and candidates – potentially because of the fear of economic retaliation. Available evidence points to the latter, more pessimistic conclusion, given that lower-income workers were no more likely to agree with their employers than were higher-income workers and lower-income workers were also much more concerned about political retaliation

than their higher-income counterparts. But ultimately, regardless of which of these normative assessments holds, it remains the case that employer mobilization helps companies to obtain concrete benefits from public policy and politics, as we will see in Part II. For now, we turn to the question of how employer mobilization has changed over time – and why we are in a period where mobilization is an increasingly appealing strategy for corporate managers.

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<sup>1</sup> Eaton 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Eaton 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Banerjee 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Banerjee 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Mufson 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Mufson 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Mufson 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Banerjee 2012.

<sup>9</sup> MacGillis 2012.

<sup>10</sup> MacGillis 2012.

<sup>11</sup> MacGillis 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Cochenour 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Ward 2014b.

<sup>14</sup> MacGillis 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Drabold 2016.

<sup>16</sup> MacGillis 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Allstate/*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll XXI.

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<sup>18</sup> See the appendix to this chapter for a more detailed analysis that shows how targeting can help to explain the differences in reported mobilization between the firm and worker surveys by industry.

<sup>19</sup> See the results reported in: Hertel-Fernandez 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Lafer 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Good 2012.

<sup>22</sup> See: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=46&v=FwX8ZH9QajY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=46&v=FwX8ZH9QajY).

<sup>23</sup> 2009 Innovation Award Submission from Meaghan Killion Joyce (International Paper).

Available from author.

<sup>24</sup> Zornick 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Kramer 2000, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Zornick 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Greenhouse 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Snyder and Brush 2009.

<sup>29</sup> On businesses' incentives to strategically oppose legislation, see Broockman 2012; Hacker and Pierson 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Abelson 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Keyes 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Bronfenbrenner 1997.

<sup>33</sup> DuPont EmployeeVoice. Frequently Asked Questions. See: [http://www.bipac.net/dupont/dupont\\_faqs.pdf](http://www.bipac.net/dupont/dupont_faqs.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> AGC n.d.-a, n.d.-b.

<sup>35</sup> AGC n.d.-a, 6.

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<sup>36</sup> In general, my findings of the effects of union messages on worker behavior are consistent with past research that shows how unions can increase turnout and change workers' political preferences (Ahlquist et al. 2014; Leighley and Nagler 2007; Flavin and Hartney 2015; Kim and Margalit 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Ames and Elk 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Gerber et al. 2012, 84.

<sup>39</sup> Schlozman et al. 2012.

<sup>40</sup> For one summary, see McElwee 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Lukes 2005; Gaventa 1982.

<sup>42</sup> Bartels 2003; Converse 1964; Zaller 1992.



## Chapter 7: Employer Mobilization and Public Policy

In chapter 4, we heard from a government affairs officer at an extractive resource manufacturing company that made extensive use of mobilization during elections and, more importantly, during policy battles. That manager said that he kept close track of worker participation in requests to workers to attend townhalls, write to lawmakers, and participate in the regulatory rule-making process because that way he “can keep track of who is a champion, who has responded to every single request or letter.” He said that these champions were a critical part of how the company responded to potential policy threats. Reiterating Representative Tip O’Neill’s old adage that “all politics is local,” this government affairs officer explained that his company had employees and direct suppliers in 41 states, making it possible to “get local” with state and Congressional politicians from each of those constituencies. When “legislative proposals or regulatory proposals...create political exposure, risk, [or] opportunity,” this manager could thus activate the workers or suppliers who lived in the specific states and districts of relevant lawmakers, getting those workers to bombard an elected official with calls, letters, emails, and even appearances at local townhalls.

He gave the example of a recent Congressional showdown over reauthorization of the US Export-Import bank as an example of how his employee base could pressure wavering politicians to toe the company’s legislative line. Created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934, the Export-Import bank provides financial backing for foreign purchases of US-manufactured goods. The bank is intended to facilitate American companies making overseas sales that might be too risky to do without a government backstop. For years Congress easily reauthorized the bank’s operations with votes from both parties. In recent years, however, the libertarian far-right wing of the Republican party has taken aim at the bank as a prime example of “crony capitalism.”<sup>1</sup>

Newly-elected Tea Party lawmakers in 2012 and again in 2015 threatened to hold up the bank's reauthorization as part of their fight against big government.

The manufacturer I interviewed depended heavily on the bank's loans to sell its extractive resource equipment overseas, and so was deeply concerned about the prospect that Congress might block the bank's renewal in 2015. Accordingly, the manufacturer began "educating our workers on the Ex-Im [Export-Import] bank and its importance" to the company's bottom line. In emails, Internet material, and mailings, the company explained to workers that if the bank "is not reauthorized, the people working on the line making equipment would lose their jobs because that equipment would not be sold."

The government affairs division at the manufacturer then identified the key GOP members of Congress that might be swayed by pressure from their constituents, and sent action alerts to the employees in those states and districts to contact their Senators and Representatives. As the executive explained to me, once workers got the action alert about the Export-Import bank reauthorization, "they can click it and send a letter [to their Member], [which] makes a difference." The hope, he explained, was that "the Member of Congress will go to their staff, the poor young guy or girl who is answering the phone and reading emails and making tally marks for or against the [Export-Import bank] bill" – and the Member would see the overwhelming support "from the grassroots in their constituency" for reauthorization of the bank. It was especially effective, the manager mentioned, for employees to convey the potential economic consequences of failing to reauthorize the bank to Congress. Ultimately, the government affairs officer credited his company's employee mobilization with "moving the needle" on a number of wavering Republicans. The Export-Import bank was indeed eventually reauthorized by Congress at the end of 2015.<sup>2</sup>

This company, like many of the ones I interviewed, made employee mobilization a central piece of its political recruitment efforts. According to the company's internal mobilization website, the employee recruitment program "brings together the hard-working people of [the company] to ensure your voice is heard by our nation's policymakers... Together we can help shape policies that strengthen America's energy future, protect our jobs and enable us to provide the energy America needs."

Zooming out from the specific example of the Export-Import bank skirmish, how effective are employer mobilization strategies, like the ones mentioned by the manufacturer, at actually shaping Congressional decision-making and policy? Certainly corporate managers in my interviews and survey data indicate that they feel that employer mobilization can shape the decisions that legislators ultimately make. But while managerial perceptions are persuasive, identifying specific evidence that greater mobilization changed the course of policy debates would help us to see whether workplace recruitment has a substantive effect on American politics or not. That is the question I tackle in this chapter.

I first review the results of a new survey of senior legislative staffers to show how employer-initiated employee messages to Congress shape how Congressional offices view their constituents' preferences and ultimately make policy. The survey indicates that the top aides in Congressional offices take employee messages very seriously – in many cases even more seriously than comparable correspondence from ordinary constituents or other interest groups because of the potential job losses threatened by employee letters.

Next, I review the results of two case studies that indicate the potential reach of employer mobilization into the policymaking process. The first one focuses on how Alaskan oil producers used mobilization of their workers to retain large corporate tax breaks even in the face of

significant public support for a tax hike on oil companies. A second case study looks at employer messages about the Affordable Care Act during the health reform law's early years. Employer messages, I show, helped to sow early skepticism about the law. The case studies and Congressional survey together show that the accounts I received from corporate managers were generally accurate: employer-initiated recruitment of workers can indeed "move the needle" on public policy across a wide range of issues.

### **<1>HOW EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION CAN SHAPE CONGRESSIONAL DECISIONMAKING**

As the interviews and survey evidence revealed, many companies deploy mobilization to shape policymaking in Congress. Companies report, for instance, having their workers write to, or call, their Member of Congress to support bills that companies favor. As International Paper, a major pulp and paper products manufacturer, puts it to its workers in a guide for contacting legislators, if the company is against a piece of legislation, workers should tell their Member of Congress that they oppose the bill "because it would have serious economic disadvantages and could result in layoffs at our facilities."<sup>3</sup>

One example of the sort of letter that companies might ask workers to send to their Member of Congress is shown below. This alert comes from an extractive resource manufacturing company I interviewed, and was intended to oppose Obama-administration efforts to offset reductions in the corporate tax rate through new taxes on the oil and gas sector. In typical form for these sorts of letters, the information is pre-populated based on information that the company would have on their workers, though each employee is encouraged to customize the letter to add their own personal touches.

The Honorable [Representative Last Name]

U.S. House of Representatives  
1230 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [Last Name],

As your constituent, I'm writing today to tell you about an issue that is important to me and to the company I work for.

As a citizen who is proud to work in the oil and natural gas industry, I'm concerned about President Obama's call to raise taxes on the industry. My hard work, and that of my colleagues, helps to ensure that Americans have the fuel they need to power their everyday lives.

During this year's State of the Union Address, President Obama discussed the importance of job growth. I agree. Americans need all the jobs they can get. With the uncertain economy and continued high unemployment rates, our country cannot afford to pass measures that stifle the growth of America's oil and natural gas industry---an industry that supports over 9 million jobs.

Raising taxes on a crucial source of energy is not a long-term solution to our nation's challenges. Instead, it's one that will threaten our country's energy security and place

millions of jobs at risk. With the right policies, America's oil and natural gas industry can create more jobs and provide more revenue for the federal government.

[Company] is known for its leading innovation in [Areas of Innovation].

We have an opportunity to chart a new course that leads to economic and energy security. With your support and the support of you colleagues in Congress, we can get our country back on the right path!

Sincerely,

[Employee Name]

[Employee Address]

In having their employees contact Members of Congress, employers like the manufacturer I interviewed are following an increasingly common playbook that many other interest groups use in attempting to influence legislation. Indeed, Congressional offices report that the total sum of constituent mail they receive has increased nearly 300% from 2002 to 2010 (and over 500% in the House of Representatives).<sup>4</sup>

Despite the mounting volume of communications, Congressional staffers – the frontline aides responsible for reviewing constituent messages and presenting summaries and recommendations for policy action to their Members – still report that they make an effort to respond to each and every letter, email, fax, and phone call they receive. “Constituents who take the time to contact our office directly ... about their concerns are given priority treatment. Their

comments are recorded, and the data is shared with the entire staff for immediate action,” explained one House Legislative Director in an anonymous survey.<sup>5</sup> Congressional staffers indicate that personal contact from constituents still has a significant effect on Members of Congress’ decision-making, too. According to one 2015 survey conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation, a non-partisan, non-profit organization that studies best practices for Congressional offices, about 90% of legislative staffers said that individualized postal letters or emails would have “a lot of positive influence” or at least “some influence” on the decisions of their Member of Congress if the Member had not already made up their mind.<sup>6</sup> The only two categories of contact that were reported to be more effective by staffers were in-person visits from constituents and contact from community leaders who represented groups of other constituents. In fact, letters and emails were reported to be more effective than visits from lobbyists or endorsements of the news media.

The Congressional Management Foundation survey indicates a mechanism through which employer mobilization could be shaping Congressional decisions. But that study did not compare the effectiveness of employer-initiated messages with letters generated by other interest groups or individual constituents. How do staffers perceive employer-initiated employee contact with Congress? And are employer-initiated employee messages to Congress taken as seriously as letters from ordinary citizens or non-profit citizens’ associations? To answer this question, I – along with two of my political science colleagues, Matto Mildenberger and Leah Stokes – conducted a survey of top staffers in US Senate and House offices during the fall of 2016 (see chapter 2 for the full methodology). In all, 101 of these top staffers, generally Chiefs of Staff or Legislative Directors, completed our online questionnaire.

One way of getting at legislative staffers' perceptions of employer mobilization is simply to ask them how useful it is for businesses to recruit employees to contact their offices about pending legislation. To do this, my collaborators and I first gave staffers the following prompt: "Businesses often contact Congressional offices to support or oppose policy proposals. Thinking about the ways that businesses have contacted your office about policy proposals in the past year, which strategies have been most useful to your office as you deliberate over legislation?" We then asked staffers to rate how useful different business strategies had been for their offices, including "Having their employees write to your office with their opinions about policy", "Offering research and assistance drafting legislation, including model bill language", "Offering political advice, such as talking points and polling data", and "Having their employees support your member's electoral campaign."

**Table 7.1. Legislative Staffers Rank Business Strategies for Shaping Legislation.<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Business Strategy</b>	<b>Extremely Or Very Useful</b>	<b>Moderately Or Slightly Useful</b>	<b>Not At All Useful</b>
Having employees write to office	30%	61%	9%
Having employees support campaign	11%	51%	39%
Offering assistance with legislation	49%	44%	7%
Offering political advice	28%	56%	16%

<sup>a</sup> Data from 2016 legislative staffer survey. Sample sizes are as follows: having employees write to office (88), having employees support campaign (85), offering assistance with legislation (87), and offering political advice (87).

I have summarized the staffer ratings of these different strategies in Table 7.1. Research and assistance in drafting legislation was reported to be the most useful thing that businesses could do to help top Congressional aides, with 49% of staffers reporting that such a strategy was



“extremely” or “very” useful – consistent with past work that identifies this sort of informational lobbying as being very important for harried, busy staffers who do not have enough time or resources to conduct the research needed for writing bills on their own.<sup>7</sup> One mode of employer mobilization – having employees write to Congress with their opinions about pending bills – came in second at 30% of staffers, followed closely by companies offering political advice, including talking points and polling. Staffers were, on average, least likely to report that businesses encouraging employees to support the election campaign of their Member was helpful. These initial results suggest that employer mobilization can be helpful in the eyes of top legislative staffers, especially when it involves having employees express their support for, or opposition to, particular policy proposals.<sup>8</sup>

Not all offices responded to the questions about business strategies in the same way, however. In particular, there were two important factors that shaped legislative staffers’ perceptions of employer mobilization: partisanship and attention to election challenges, especially primary challenges. Disaggregating the survey results by party, Republicans tended to rate corporate lobbying strategies as being more useful than Democrats. The biggest difference was for the ranking of having employees support a Member’s electoral campaign: 72% of Republicans ranked this as being useful, compared to only 53% of Democrats. As we will see in the following chapter, this makes sense given that employer electoral drives tend to favor Republican over Democratic candidates. The second major difference across Congressional staffers was for those offices that reported that concerns about “primary opponents” were either “extremely” or “very” important when we asked staffers “What shaped your thinking on whether your member should support or oppose ... policies?” Staffers in offices that reported that they were concerned about primary challengers were also substantially more likely to report that

electoral employer mobilization was useful to them. A full 92% of these offices (out of 12 total respondents) reported that having businesses mobilize workers to support members' electoral campaigns was useful. This also makes sense to the extent that employer mobilization can help vulnerable candidates win competitive primary races.

These results from the legislative staffer survey indicate that employer mobilization can be an important tool for Congressional offices in tight races or as their Members deliberate over public policy decisions. Yet the self-reports by staffers do not capture whether employer-initiated employee communications or contact with Congress are more or less effective than other types of communications that Congressional offices might receive. To answer this question, we can next turn to an experiment embedded in the legislative staffer survey. In that experiment, my collaborators and I asked staffers to imagine that they had received constituent communication on a bill pending in Congress – something like the message from the extractive resource manufacturer I describe above. Staffers were randomly assigned to receive different descriptions of the constituent communications, with the variations indicated in brackets as follows: “Imagine your office is considering a bill that is under debate in Congress. Your office receives [2, 20, 200] letters from constituents [supporting, opposing] this bill. The letters have very [similar, different] wording to one another. The letter writers identify themselves as [employees of a large company based in your constituency, constituents, members of a non-profit citizens group].”

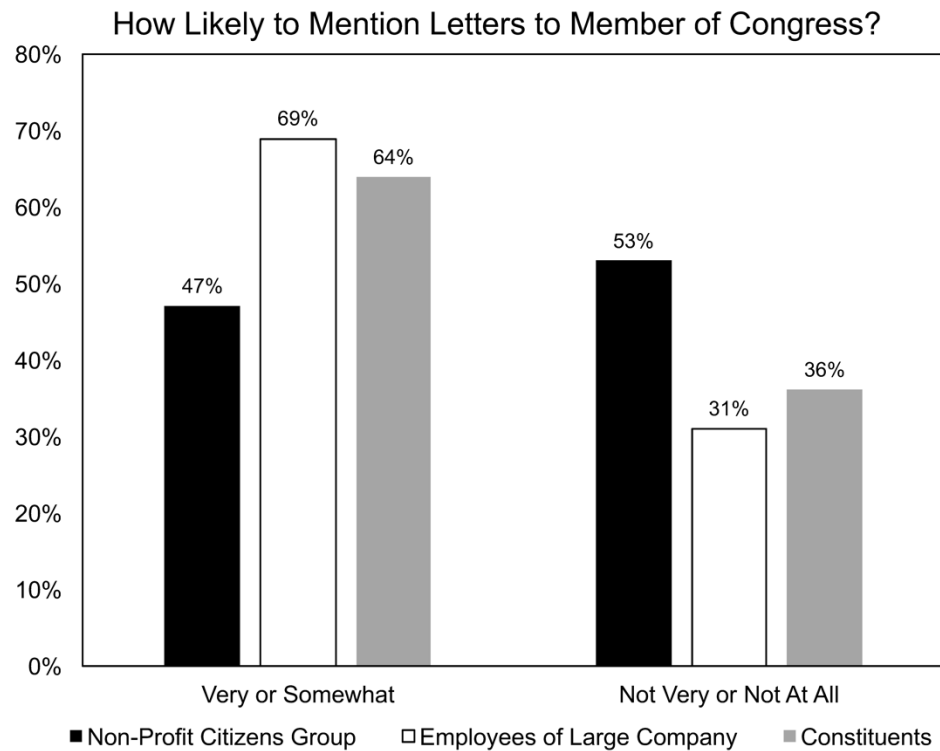
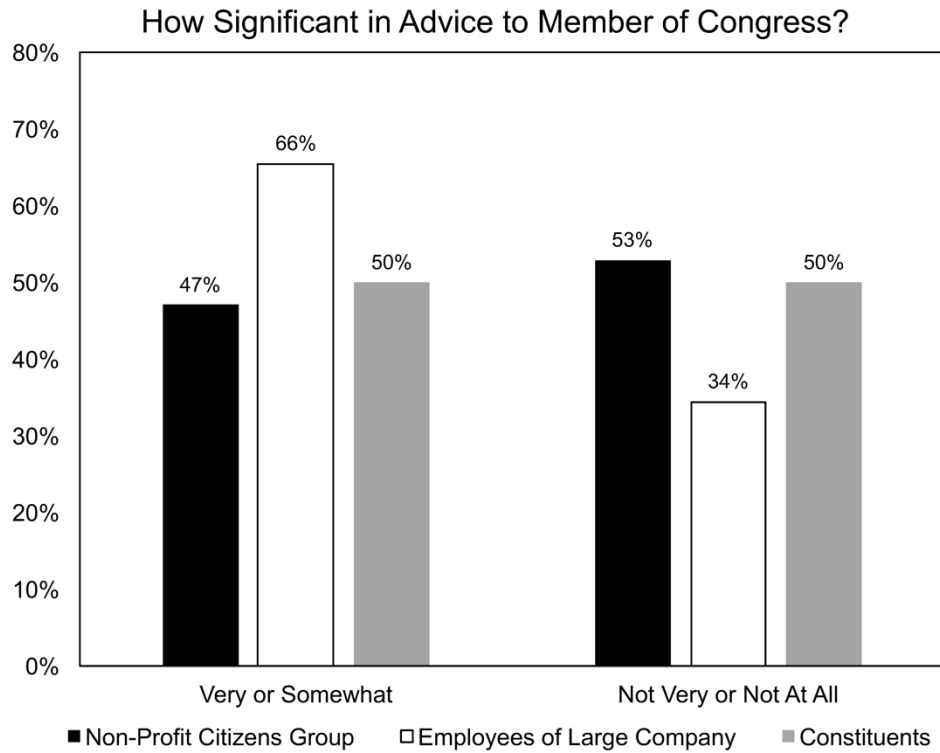
The survey then asked staffers three questions about the effect of those letters on their deliberations over the bill in question: “How likely are you to mention these letters to your Member?”; “How significant would these letters be in your advice to your Member about their position on the bill?”; and “How representative do you think these letters are of your

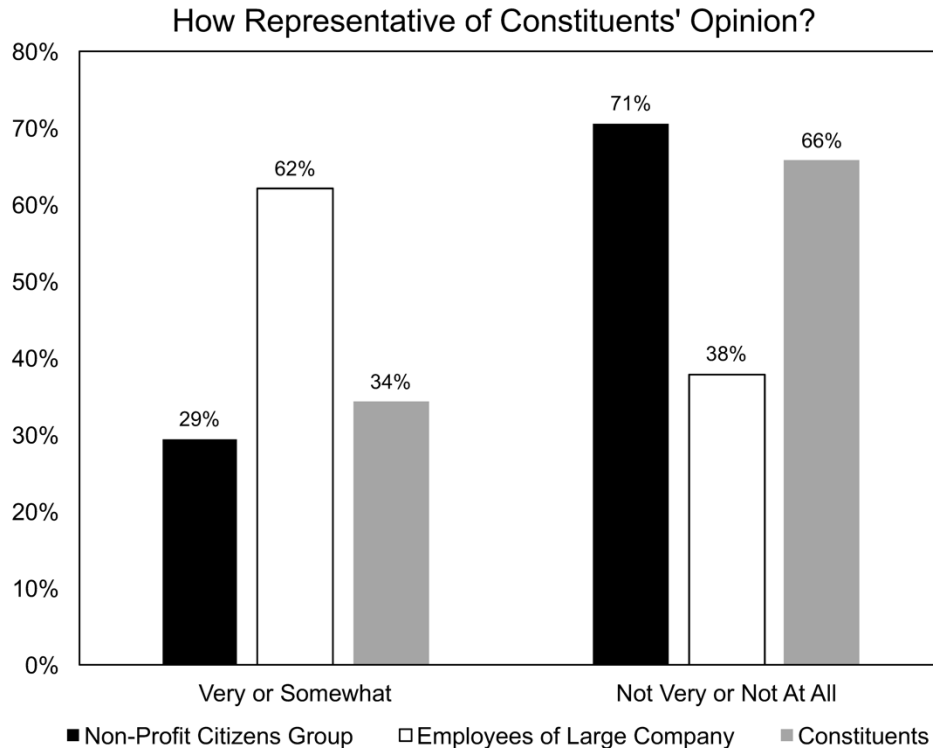
constituents' opinions?" Staffers responded to each of these questions on a one through four scale: "not at all," "not very," "somewhat," and "strongly."

By randomly assigning staffers to read some combination of the details of the hypothetical letters, I can estimate the causal effect of a staffer receiving messages coordinated through an employer's mobilization drive – as compared to letters sent from ordinary citizens or a nonprofit advocacy group. To be sure, this experiment is stripped of much of the important political context that accompanies debates over Congressional legislation. But the advantage is that it can reveal the exact effect of employee messages on staffers' thinking about legislation.

Figure 7.1 reviews the findings from the communications experiment, plotting how staffers responded to the three questions if they thought the letters had come from employees, ordinary constituents, or members of an advocacy group. Looking first at whether or not staffers would mention the letters to their bosses, we see that staffers were more likely to indicate that they would be "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to report employee letters to their Member of Congress, but the difference with the other two categories of authors was not large. In general, the authorship of the letters did not matter much for whether staffers would brief their Member on those communications. That finding is consistent with the fact that many offices have policies in place to review all constituent correspondence, regardless of authorship.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 7.1**





Caption: Top Congressional staffer perceptions of constituent messages from employees, individuals, and advocacy group members. Data from 2016 legislative staffer survey. Sample sizes for each of the treatment groups are as follows: 17 for staffers who saw “non-profit citizens group” condition, 29 for staffers who saw “employees of a large company” condition, and 36 for staffers who saw “constituents” condition.

The picture changes, however, when we asked staffers how significant the letters would be in their advice to their Member of Congress on whether to support or oppose the hypothetical bill. No staffer reported that letters from non-profit citizens’ groups would be “very” significant in their advice to their bosses, compared to 8% of staffers who thought the letters were from ordinary constituents, and 14% of staffers who thought that the letters were from employees. In all, over 65% of staffers who thought the letters were from employees said that the letters would be “very” or “somewhat” significant as they considered how to brief their Member, compared to

50% for constituent-written letters and 47% for the non-profit advocacy group letter-writers.<sup>10</sup> Employer-initiated letters from workers, then, have the potential to carry extra weight in the minds of staffers when staffers and Members are considering legislation – well above and beyond the effects of letters from ordinary citizens or other interest groups.

The final plot in Figure 7.1 shows how top legislative staffers interpret constituent correspondence as reflecting (or not) the public opinion of their state or district as a whole. This is perhaps the most consequential effect of constituent communication, as messages not only inform lawmakers about the position of the specific letter-writer but also shape legislators' perceptions of their constituents' preferences more generally. As the plot reveals, employee messages are substantially more relevant as staffers form perceptions of their constituents' opinions than either messages from individual citizens or advocacy groups. A whopping 62% of staffers who saw messages from employees reported that the messages were “very” or “somewhat” representative of their constituents' opinions, compared to just 34% of staffers who thought the letters were from ordinary constituents and 29% of staffers who thought the letters were from advocacy groups.<sup>11</sup> Over a third of staffers who thought the letters were from non-profit advocacy groups and about 11% of staffers who received hypothetical letters from individual constituents reported that those letters were *not at all representative* of their constituents' opinions. A significant portion of top Congressional staffers, then, were ready to dismiss the representativeness of letters from ordinary citizens or advocacy groups – but not letter-writers who identified themselves as being employees at a large business staffers represented.

One common concern for any grassroots organization mobilizing citizens to contact elected officials is that those officials may discount the opinion of a large number of letters that

come from the same organization; that is, there are diminishing returns to having additional mobilized employees contact a Member's office. The staffer survey revealed no evidence of such diminishing returns: regardless of whether staffers thought that there were 20 or 200 letters coming from the same employer, they were just as likely to think that employee letters were more significant and representative as compared to constituent or advocacy group communications.

In a similar vein, although staffers were less likely to evaluate letters that were "very similar" in their wording positively – only 2% of staffers thought that such letters would be "very significant" for their Member's decision-making – employee letters were not disproportionately penalized by staffers for being carbon-copies of one another. Staffers discounted near-identical letters from employees in the same way as they did letters from advocacy groups or ordinary citizens. Thus, the downside risks of employers mobilizing employees to contact Congress – at least as captured on this legislative survey – are no greater than the downside risks for other groups.

While troubling for the representation of ordinary citizens in the legislative process, this simple experiment reveals a powerful mechanism through which employers can shape the thinking of top legislative aides – and through them – Members of Congress. Top legislative staffers have a strong bias in favor of correspondence from private sector employees, above and beyond ordinary constituents, which creates the possibility for employers to shape how Members vote on legislation and perceive district opinion more generally.

Why is it that Members are so attuned to correspondence from mobilized employees and not other interests? One explanation is that certain offices view businesses as being a more important part of their political constituency than other offices. If that is the case, we should

expect that Congressional offices that report relying on business more frequently for legislative help would be more attuned to employee letters over the letters from other sources.

One item on the staffer survey lets me test this possibility. That item asked top Congressional staffers to indicate how important a variety of information sources had been for their thinking about legislation, and one of those sources was “information from businesses.” In all, 42% of senior legislative staffers said that information from businesses was either “extremely important” or “very important” in their thinking and recommendations to their bosses.

Were these staffers more attuned to the hypothetical employee letters we presented to them? I found little evidence for this prediction. In fact, staffers who reported that they were *less* reliant on businesses for information about legislation were actually *more likely* to say that they would report the employee letters to their bosses than staffers who said that they were *more* reliant on business.<sup>12</sup> What are we to make of this surprising finding? One explanation is that offices that rely more heavily on businesses already have strong relationships with executives representing employees in their districts and states. As a result, those offices might find employee letters less surprising or relevant. In contrast, offices that have weaker ties to business might find employee letters more unusual or useful when they do receive them.

If not office ties to businesses, what else can explain the deference that staffers give to employer-initiated employee messages over letters from ordinary constituents and interest groups? Another explanation is that staffers are more attuned to employee letters because of concerns about job loss in their district or state. Since employee correspondence often reflects the threat of greater unemployment – as the examples I gave earlier from International Paper and the extractive resource manufacturer indicate – then legislators from districts and states facing higher joblessness should be more attuned to those letters from businesses than messages from



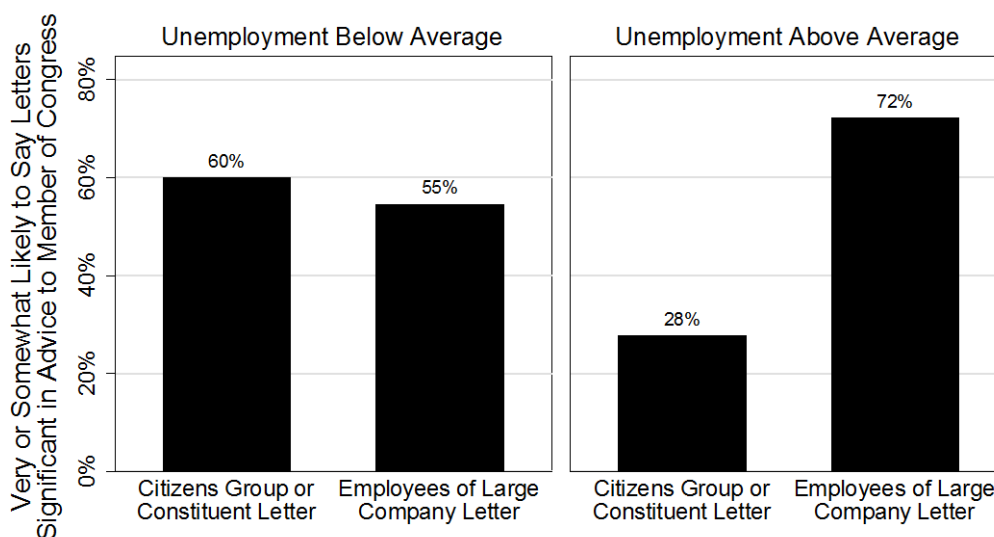
other constituents. Warnings from many employees working at the same business saying that their employer might need to make layoffs if a lawmaker votes one way might carry more weight when that lawmaker is already facing the prospect of high joblessness among their constituents.

I can test this explanation by seeing whether staffers representing states and districts with higher unemployment were more responsive to the employee condition in the survey experiment. I use data on average unemployment by Congressional district and state over a five-year period, from 2011 to 2015. While this relatively lengthy window is necessitated by the available data from the US Census Bureau, it also has the benefit of smoothing out shorter-term ups and downs in labor market conditions. This unemployment rate should thus reflect districts and states with persistently high unemployment in recent years – exactly the Congressional offices that might be most attuned to business concerns.

Staffers from high unemployment constituencies were no more likely to say that they would mention employee letters to their bosses (the first outcome). But I do find very strong evidence that Congressional staff from high unemployment areas were more likely to say that employee letters (as opposed to constituent or citizens group letters) would be significant in their advice to their Member of Congress. Figure 7.2 shows how staffers responded to the hypothetical employee letters differently depending on the unemployment rate in their district or state. I have divided staffers into two groups: those from districts and states with above and below average unemployment (the average unemployment rate over 2011 to 2015 was 7.8%). Staffers representing districts or states with below-average unemployment responded to employee letters about the same way as they did to letters purportedly from individual constituents or citizens groups. Nearly 55% of these staffers who thought the letters were from employees at the same large company said that the letters would be “very or somewhat significant” in their advice to

their Member of Congress. That is not all that different from the 60% of staffers who saw the citizens group or ordinary constituent letters condition and said the same thing.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 7.2**

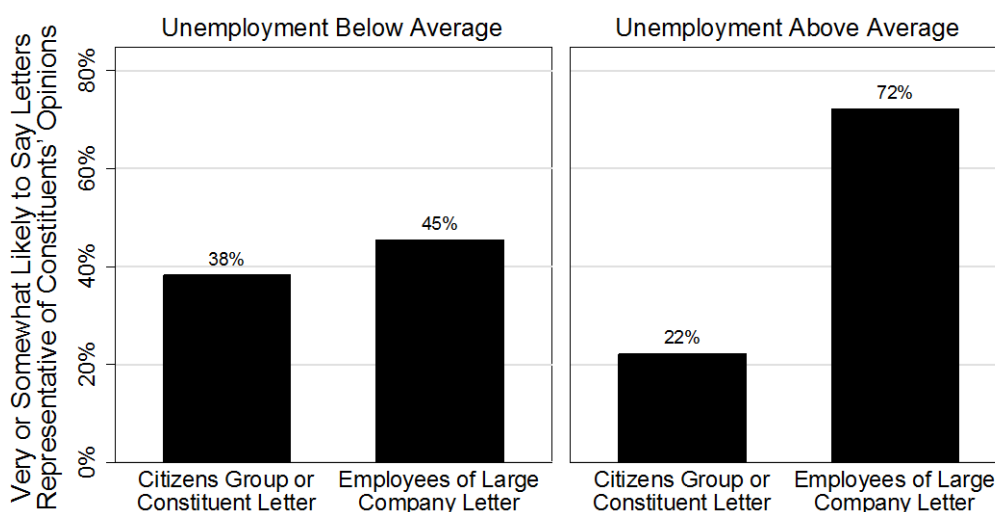


Caption: District and state unemployment and share of top Congressional staffers saying that letters would be “very or somewhat significant” in their recommendations to their Members of Congress. Data from 2016 legislative staffer survey and the American Community Survey (2011-2015 file). Average unemployment rate: 7.8%. Sample sizes: 35, 11, 18, and 18, respectively.

The picture looks very different when we turn to the staffers from districts and states with above-average unemployment. Here, there was a 44-percentage point difference between how staffers responded to the citizens group and individual constituent letters and the employee letters. Fewer than one in three of these staffers said that citizens group or individual constituent

letters would be “very or somewhat significant” in their advice to their Member of Congress. By contrast, over seven in ten of these staffers said the same thing when they thought the letters came from employees. Staffers from high-unemployment districts and states were much more attuned to letters from employees when thinking about their recommendations to their bosses.

**Figure 7.3**



Caption: District and state unemployment and share of top Congressional staffers saying that letters would be “very or somewhat representative” of public opinion in their constituency. Data from 2016 legislative staffer survey and the American Community Survey (2011-2015 file). Average unemployment rate: 7.8%. Sample sizes: 35, 11, 18, and 18, respectively.

Staffers from constituencies with higher joblessness also were more likely to think that employee letters were representative of their constituency as a whole, as shown in Figure 7.3.<sup>14</sup> As before, there was not much of difference in how staffers representing below-average

unemployment districts and states responded to employee letters, as opposed to letters from citizens groups or individual constituents. 38% of these staffers said that citizens group or constituent letters were “very or somewhat representative” of their constituency as a whole, compared to 45% of staffers who saw the employee letters.

There was an entirely different response among high-unemployment Congressional offices. Only 22% of staffers from these high-joblessness districts and states said that letters from citizens groups and individual constituents were “very or somewhat representative” of their Member’s district or state. There was a seventy-percentage point difference with staffers who saw the hypothetical employee letters: 72% of staffers in the employee letters condition said that these letters were “very or somewhat representative” of their constituents as a whole.

In sum, the Congressional staff survey shows results highly consistent with descriptions from my managerial interviews that discuss how employee communications to politicians carry the threat of potential repercussions in a way that other communications to Congress may not. Employee letters indicate that a well-mobilized group of citizens (and potential voters) in a Member’s constituency care deeply about an issue – and might be willing to vote against the Member should they not follow through on their demands.<sup>15</sup> Just as importantly, these employee letters also signify the threat of unemployment more generally, as employees channel corporate warnings about layoffs if legislators do not follow the company’s recommendations, echoing the descriptions of structural business power from Charles Lindblom that we reviewed in chapter 1.<sup>16</sup> Those warnings of joblessness resonate especially strongly for Congressional offices that are more attuned to the poor economic conditions in their local communities. But Congress is not the only institutional arena in which employer messages can carry significant heft. In the next section, we will see how employer recruitment efforts shape state policy decisions, too.

## **<1>MOBILIZING FOR TAX CUTS ON OIL PRODUCTION IN ALASKA**

As Governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin – the former 2008 GOP vice presidential nominee – had overseen a sharp increase in taxes on the state’s oil producers.<sup>17</sup> As fuel prices soared across the country, Palin wanted to make sure that her state got its share of the oil industry’s record profits. She ultimately succeeded in passing controversial legislation that amounted to a \$1.6 billion tax hike on oil companies like BP, ConocoPhillips, and Exxon Mobil. Unsurprisingly, the measure was opposed by those oil companies, and after the law had passed, the president of BP Alaska expressed hope that “once the impact of this legislation is clear, the administration and the legislature will revisit the issue.”<sup>18</sup>

Six years later, newly elected GOP Governor Sean Parnell announced his support for a measure to repeal Palin’s tax, replacing the state’s graduated tax rates on oil companies with a flat rate. Proponents of SB21, which included the major oil companies operating in the state, argued that a lower tax rate was necessary to spur greater investment and recover from the Palin tax hike. A consultant for the oil industry explained that if “you look at worldwide investment levels over the last few years, they’ve risen tremendously [but under the Palin plan] we’ve stayed flat. In fact, we’ve declined some. SB21 is a response to that, to try and increase the amount of investment that’s coming in the state.”<sup>19</sup> Defenders of the old progressive tax system countered that SB21 would mean that “oil companies get the biggest share, a much larger share of that [profit]” flowing from oil production.<sup>20</sup> Repealing Palin’s tax hike also meant much less revenue for the state – including the generous dividends the state offers to residents. Ultimately the oil companies won the legislative debate, and on a mostly party-line vote SB21 passed the Republican-controlled Alaskan legislature in April 2013.<sup>21</sup>

Alaskan affiliates of BIPAC's Prosperity Project played an important role in mobilizing voters to contact their legislators to support SB21.<sup>22</sup> As the Chairman of BIPAC's Alaskan chapter put it: "This victory is huge...Even more exciting is that the Prosperity Project tools were a central part of the effort...As a result, over 12,400 letters to legislators were generated on the oil tax issue alone. In this state, that is a LOT!"<sup>23</sup> The Chairman summed up that: "Industry is pretty pleased" with the fruits of their mobilization campaign.<sup>24</sup> His enthusiasm was well founded. 12,400 letters to the legislature amounts to over 200 letters per member of the Alaskan statehouse, and represents correspondence from about 2% of the entire adult population in the state.

Proponents of more progressive taxes on the oil producers were not ready to concede defeat, however, and immediately announced that they would be challenging SB21 with a voter referendum in the upcoming primary election. A "yes" vote on Ballot Measure 1 would repeal SB21 and restore the Palin-era progressive tax rate structure, while a "no" vote would leave the current tax regime – with its lower rates on oil producers – in place. An intense political campaign around the measure ensued. Supporters of the referendum emphasized the unfairness of SB21 for Alaskans, the negative effects of SB21 on state finances, and the need for ordinary citizens to have a say in the control of their state's natural resources. Organized interests supportive of the repeal of SB21 included two major unions in Alaska (the State Employees Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers), as well as donations from several wealthy individuals.<sup>25</sup> Sarah Palin even campaigned for the repeal vote.<sup>26</sup> In all, repeal proponents spent a little over half a million dollars.<sup>27</sup>

Opponents of the ballot drive included many state Republican organizations, business groups, several labor organizations (most prominently the Teamsters), and the major oil

companies with a presence in Alaska.<sup>28</sup> Their campaign emphasized the need for lower taxes on oil production to spur investment and job creation. Individual firms – especially the oil companies – poured millions of dollars into the campaign. BP and ExxonMobil, for instance, each contributed more than \$3.6 million to the effort.<sup>29</sup> The opposition campaign could thus count on over \$14 million to spend on ads and voter outreach, or more than 28 times the amount held by proponents of the old tax system.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the fact that proponents of the ballot initiative were so badly outspent, polling conducted during the campaign suggested a dead heat between the two sides, with a sizeable contingent of undecided Alaskans.<sup>31</sup> In an effort to persuade undecided voters and shore up support for their preferential tax scheme, a number of the oil companies launched an aggressive workplace mobilization campaign to contact their employees and convince them to vote against the ballot measure.

Prosperity Alaska, BIPAC's affiliate in the state, created a website for employers to show to their workers that included a variety of arguments against the referendum. "It's about attracting investment to boost production," the site argued, stating that the reasons to support SB21 were simple: it created a "business-friendly tax structure that will compel oil companies to fund high-cost Alaska projects, ultimately resulting in more oil production...and increased revenue to the state."<sup>32</sup> Prosperity Alaska also suggested a number of creative activities for employers to encourage greater turnout opposing the ballot measure. Employers could urge their employees to post selfies with their ballots on social media, hold turn-out contests within different divisions within companies and between different firms, and place bets on how high turnout would be at a particular workplace.<sup>33</sup> Another priority of Prosperity Alaska was to

encourage employees to cast early ballots, if possible, so that their votes would be locked up in advance of the election – “Vote Early, Vote Today!” implored the Prosperity Project.<sup>34</sup>

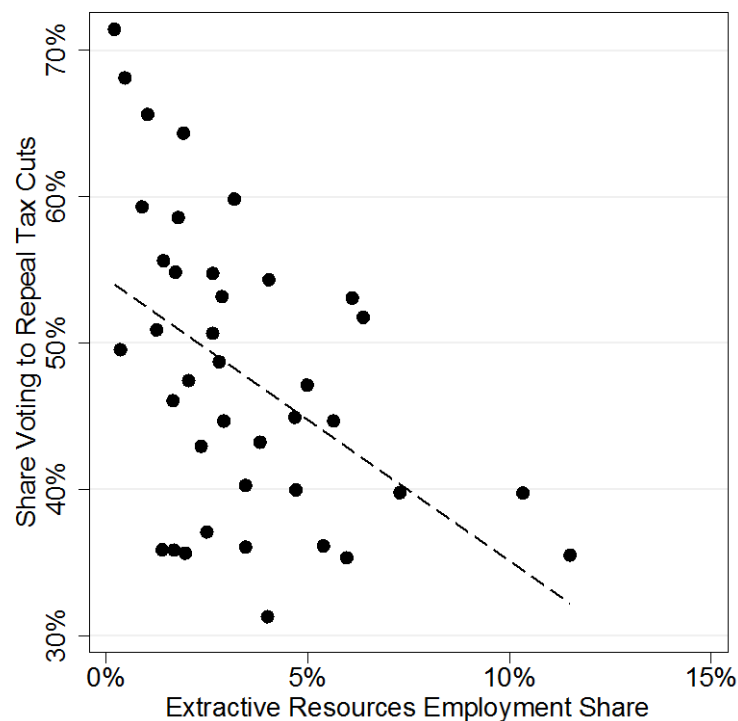
Some oil producers went even further in their mobilization efforts. As one investigative journalist discovered, ConocoPhillips workers at the Alaskan oilfields were called into a “safety stand-down” meeting in January, 2014 – an event typically only used after a major workplace accident.<sup>35</sup> But rather than hearing from managers about safety standards, ConocoPhillips workers were instead given a presentation on why they should vote against the upcoming ballot measure – which included warnings that if the measure passed, ConocoPhillips might have to make significant layoffs. There was no room for workers to question the company’s position. “The feeling was that if we didn’t stay quiet we could get blackballed,” explained one construction worker. All throughout the summer, ConocoPhillips had “distributed signs, buttons, branded pens, and magnets urging workers to vote against the tax break repeal,” warning that the company might “re-evaluate” its planned investment in the region if the measure passed and the tax cuts were revoked. The other two major oil companies operating in Alaska – ExxonMobil and BP – also engaged in similar practices. BP, for its part, barraged its workers with emails, townhalls, and other messages through the year. Said one BP worker: “They let it be known that if SB 21 was repealed that there would be layoffs...It was clear how they wanted us to vote.”

Did the oil producers’ efforts affect the referendum, which ultimately failed with 52.7% of poll-goers voting to retain the tax cuts on oil companies? An ideal research design would compare the votes cast by otherwise similar Alaskan workers who did and did not receive employer messages. Unfortunately no such survey of Alaskan voters exists. The next best approach might examine the turnout and vote choices of Alaskans in geographic areas with higher and lower levels of mobilization by the oil companies. Again, disappointingly, we are



limited in knowing where employers did and did not engage in mobilization – no such records exist. As an alternative, however, we can use a measure of the concentration of employment in the oil and gas sector as a rough proxy for the prevalence of employer mobilization, since this was the industry engaged in the most extensive mobilization during the debate over tax cuts. We would expect that areas where Alaskans were more heavily reliant on employment in the oil and gas sector would have been more likely to oppose the referendum in light of extensive employer mobilization.

**Figure 7.4**



Caption: Employment in extractive resources sector and support for Alaskan tax cuts on oil production. Unit of analysis is the state lower chamber legislative district. Extractive resources employment data from the American Community Survey, 2009-2013 sample. Ballot Measure 1 data from the Alaska Division of Elections.

Using data at the level of Alaskan state legislative districts (the smallest geographic level with available data), we see precisely this pattern, as demonstrated by Figure 7.4. Areas where more workers were employed in the extractive resources sector were much more likely to vote “no” on the referendum, supporting the status quo tax system with big breaks for oil producers. A five percentage point increase in the share of workers employed in the extractive resources sector is predicted to have reduced support for the ballot measure by about ten percentage points.<sup>36</sup>

We might be concerned, however, that the relationship in Figure 7.4 is picking up on the underlying liberalism of particular geographic areas, and not necessarily the deployment of employer messages. Perhaps areas where there is greater employment in the extractive resources sector are simply more conservative and supportive of business interests. To account for this factor, we can use President Obama’s vote share in the 2012 election as a measure of political ideology within each district. Even taking into account past support for President Obama, however, we continue to see a relationship between the share of workers in the extractive industries and support for the referendum. A five percentage point increase in the share of workers employed in the extractive resources sector of the economy is predicted to have reduced support for the ballot measure by about eight percentage points, after accounting for Obama’s past electoral performance.<sup>37</sup>

While providing initial evidence in support of employer mobilization, the relationship identified in Figure 7.4 does not test the specific mechanism of employer recruitment. It might be the case that oil and gas sector workers would have supported the tax cuts even without employer messages. To dig deeper, we can take advantage of the fact that oil and gas companies were encouraging their workers not only to vote against the ballot measure, but also to cast absentee

and early ballots, as opposed to voting in person on Election Day. As BIPAC has argued in its materials to employers, “In today’s mobile workplace, absentee voting is vitally important—and many people forget they have that option. Let’s not lose even one vote!”; accordingly BIPAC has recommended that employers begin absentee and early voting ballot drives months before an election.<sup>38</sup>

We can thus examine not only the *overall level of support for the ballot measure*, but the *difference in support for the ballot measure between absentee or early voters and regular voters*. In areas of more intensive employer mobilization, we would expect that there would be a larger gap in support for the ballot measure between absentee and regular voters, given that mobilized workers would be casting absentee or early ballots – and those early ballots would be disproportionately in favor of retaining the tax cuts. This analysis is especially compelling because factors that might lead some areas to support or oppose the ballot measure (such as underlying political ideology) are no longer a concern.

Table 7.2 tests the relationship between the extractive resource workforce and the gap in support for the tax cuts between regular and early/absentee voters. For districts in the lowest fourth of extractive resource employment (or about 1% of workers employed in gas and mineral extraction), there was a gap of only 0.4 percentage points in the level of support for Ballot Measure 1 between regular and early/absentee voters. But shifting to a district with the highest concentration of extractive resource employment (or about 7% of workers employed in extraction) increases the gap between early/absentee and regular voters to about five percentage points.<sup>39</sup> This analysis thus shows that there was a bigger gap between the choices of regular voters and early/absentee voters in areas of higher employment in the extractive resource industry – precisely what we would expect if more intensive employer mobilization campaigns

were convincing extractive resources employees to cast early and absentee ballots in favor of retaining the tax cuts.

**Table 7.2. Difference Between Support for Alaskan Ballot Measure 1 Between Early/Absentee and Regular Voters, by Extractive Resources Employment.<sup>a</sup>**

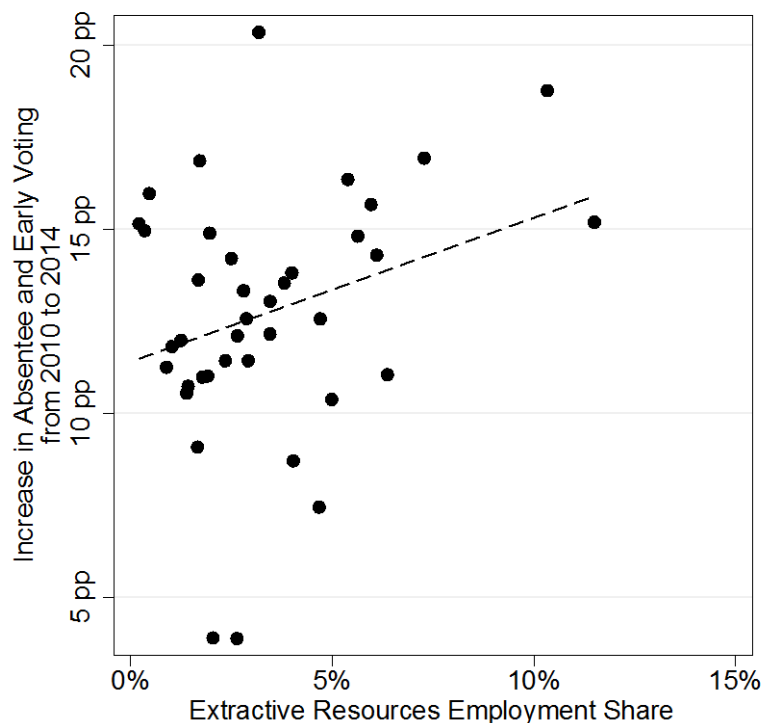
	Extractive Resource Employment Quartile			
	Low			High
Difference in Support for Tax Cuts Between Regular and Early/Absentee Voters	0.4 pp	1.9 pp	3.7 pp	4.7 pp

<sup>a</sup> Unit of analysis is the state lower chamber legislative district (39 districts). Extractive resources employment data from the American Community Survey, 2009-2013 sample. Ballot Measure 1 data from the Alaska Division of Elections. Ballot Measure 1 would have repealed the tax cuts on oil production.

Another way of testing the mobilization pathway in Alaska is to see whether employer mobilization encouraged greater early/absentee voting in general. To do this, we can compare the change in the early/absentee vote in the previous off-cycle election (2010) and in 2014, the year when the oil production tax cuts were on the ballot. If oil and gas companies were indeed encouraging their workers to cast early ballots for the tax cuts, then we should see the biggest increases in early/absentee voting between 2010 and 2014 in the districts with a greater concentration of employment in the extractive industries. This analysis is appealing because it focuses on change in early voting over time *within* electoral districts, holding constant fixed characteristics of the districts that might otherwise explain why some areas saw higher rates of early voting in 2014 compared to others.

Figure 7.5 probes this relationship and shows that all geographic areas saw increases in the rate of absentee and early voting on Alaskan ballot measures from 2010 to 2014. But the largest increases in early and absentee voting were concentrated in areas dominated by the extractive resources industry, indicated by the upward-sloping trend line. Each percentage point increase in the concentration of employment in the extractive resources sector is predicted to have increased the rate of early and absentee voting from 2010 to 2014 by about four-tenths of a percentage point – a modest but substantively relevant effect.<sup>40</sup> This plot is consistent with extractive resources firms encouraging their workers to cast early and absentee ballots in advance of the election.

**Figure 7.5**



Caption: Change in ballot measure early and absentee voting from 2010 to 2014 by extractive resources employment. Unit of analysis is the state lower chamber legislative district. Extractive

resources employment data from the American Community Survey, 2009-2013 sample. Ballot Measure 1 data from the Alaska Division of Elections.

To be sure, this analysis is not definitive. It may well be the case that oil and gas sector workers were simply more likely to support the tax cuts and to file absentee or early ballots than other types of voters, regardless of the employer messages they received (or alternatively, workers in these areas might have been responding to other sources of information about the ballot measure outside of work, too). Still, considering the analysis of the difference between absentee/early voters and regular voters in their support for the tax cuts, the difference in absentee/early voting rates between 2010 and 2014, and the qualitative evidence of the intensive mobilization campaign launched by the oil companies and Prosperity Alaska, this case study offers a sizeable body of evidence that mobilization played a role in winning an important victory for Alaskan oil producers. We will see the consequences of employer mobilization for another prominent policy debate in the following section.

### **<1>EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION AGAINST THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT**

If you were an employee of Cintas – a major provider of office uniforms and other workplace supplies – in the fall of 2012, you would have received a rather ominous series of communications from your company’s CEO in the run-up to that year’s elections. As we saw in chapter 4, one letter cautioned workers about the negative impact that the new national health reform program would have on the company’s bottom line.<sup>41</sup> Cintas’ CEO wrote that “the new health care law amounts to the single largest tax on Americans and business in history” and estimated “that our health care costs will increase by over \$50 million.”<sup>42</sup> With those costs in mind, the CEO warned about the effect of the health reform law on the company’s “ability to run our business effectively and efficiently, on our ability to attract and retain customers and on our

ability to provide the level of benefits, opportunities, and development we believe our partners want, need and deserve.”<sup>43</sup> The message to workers was clear: Obamacare, as the 2010 Affordable Care Act had been dubbed, would be very bad for Cintas’ operations.

Cintas was not the only company that was sending pessimistic messages about the effect of Obamacare on its workforce. The CEO and founder of Papa John’s, the national pizza delivery chain, announced that the health reform program was going to cost his business between \$5 to \$8 million annually and speculated that franchise owners were going to have to slash employee hours to avoid the new requirements on large employers to provide minimum health insurance coverage for their full-time workers.<sup>44</sup> Although John Schnatter, the company’s CEO, said that he was not “pro or against” the reform law, Schnatter compared Obamacare to the federal postal service, arguing that “the worst entity in the world for running the thing [Obamacare] is the government.”<sup>45</sup> The CEO of restaurant chain Applebee’s in New York, Zane Terkel, gave a similar television interview to announce that the health reform program would prevent him from hiring new workers or building new restaurants in the region.<sup>46</sup> “We’ve calculated it will be some millions of dollars across our system. So what does that say — that says we won’t build more restaurants. We won’t hire more people — exactly the opposite of what the President says,” argued Terkel.<sup>47</sup> Even small businesses joined the chorus. One evangelist for employer mobilization relayed a powerful account of how a restaurant owner in Wisconsin communicated the dangers about Obamacare to his workers, which she had taken as a model for other small businesses. According to that champion for mobilization, the restaurant owner

heard his employees talking about the benefits of Obamacare. And he thought, they have no idea that this might put them out of a job. What will I do? And so he gathered all of

his employees together, and put 100 pennies on the table...these 25 pennies are what I use to pay for the food in this restaurant...These 20 some pennies are the lights, the air conditioning, the utilities. These over here are the ones that pay your wages and benefits. Here's the taxes. And he had like three pennies left, and he said, this is what I take. But since Obamacare, he took money out of his pocket, put it on the table, and said, I don't take home any more. That means that some of you might not be working here soon. And those of you who are might be serving fewer chips and salsa. And you know, simple things like that can wake up ... people who still haven't understood that our free enterprise system is something we need to protect.<sup>48</sup>

In short, a range of employers were communicating with their workers about the Affordable Care Act soon after it had passed to warn of the negative consequences that firms would face as a direct result of the law. Did these messages ultimately affect worker attitudes and perceptions of the Affordable Care Act? Answering this question is important because the public's skepticism of the program in its early years has made it difficult for Democrats to propose important and necessary changes to the law. It also made it more appealing for Republicans, including President Donald Trump, to run against the health reform program in recent elections.<sup>49</sup>

As we learned in chapter 4, about 10% of employees reported that they had ever heard from their employers about health care or health policy related issues. Messages about health care tended to come in communications from employers endorsing presidential candidates, as well as discussions of specific legislation pending at the state and the federal level, certainly consistent with employers communicating to their workers about the ACA. But the worker

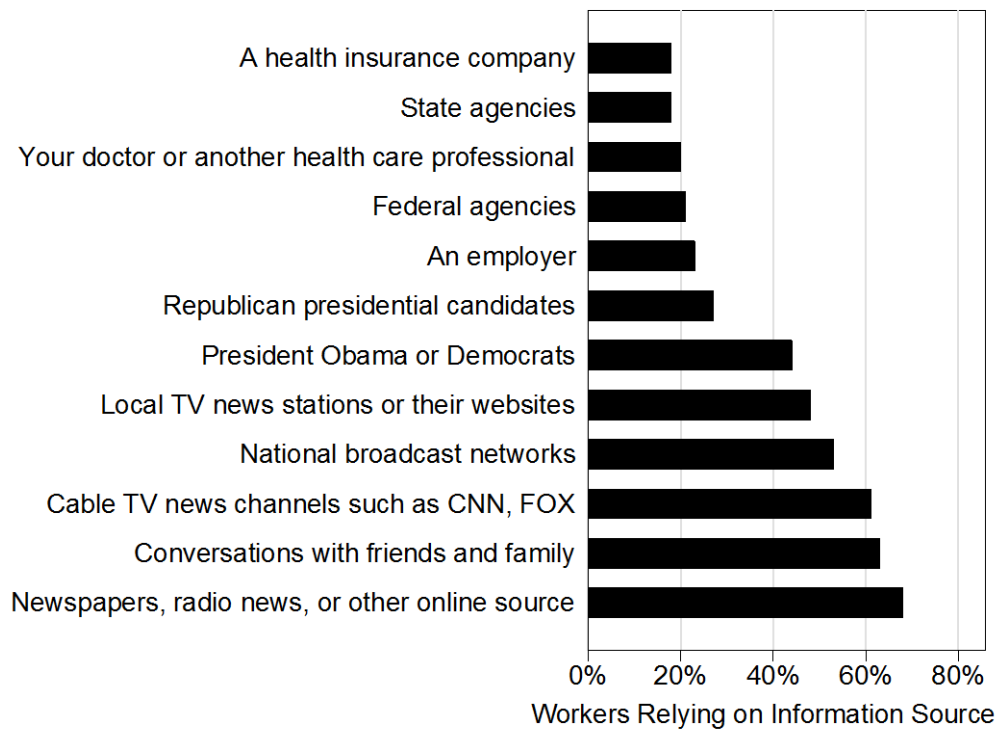


survey did not ask respondents whether they had received messages specifically about the health reform program, nor did it inquire into their attitudes towards the ACA, making it difficult to use that poll to establish a relationship between the receipt of employer messages about the ACA and worker attitudes about the health reform program. Fortunately, another survey, fielded by the well-respected, non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation, provides just such information.

Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, Kaiser has commissioned a monthly nationally representative telephone poll of American adults asking respondents about their perceptions of, and experiences with, the national health reform law. One of those tracking polls, fielded more than a year after the passage of the ACA in December, 2011, asked Americans to list the sources from which they had received information about health reform. That list included employers as an option. The Kaiser survey, fielded on a national sample of 1,212 adults, thus provides a perfect opportunity to study the effect of employer information on perceptions of the ACA.

Figure 7.6 summarizes the share of workers reporting relying on different information sources about national health reform. Workers were most likely to report relying on newspapers (68%), conversations with friends and families (63%), and cable news networks (61%) in 2011. But a significant share of workers – 23% – reported that they had relied on information from their employers during this early period of the ACA’s implementation. Workers were about as likely to turn to employers as they were to rely on Republican presidential candidates, federal agencies (including the Department of Health and Human Services, the main federal agency administering the health reform law), and their doctors or other health care professionals for information about the ACA.

**Figure 7.6**



Caption: Sources of information about the Affordable Care Act. Data from 2011 Kaiser survey. Employed respondents only (sample size: 438).

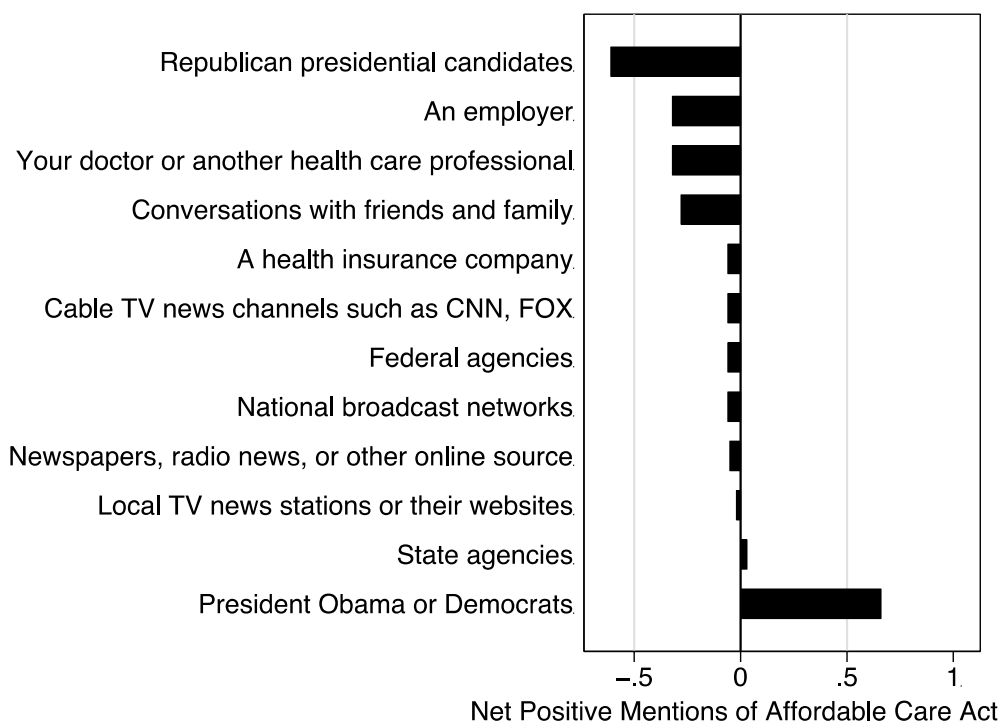
Were employers neutral providers of information about the national health reform law, or did employers have a slant favoring or opposing the ACA? The Kaiser survey asked respondents who ranked a particular information source as being their “most important source” whether the outlet was mostly positive or negative in its orientation toward the ACA. Using the responses to that question, we can generate a composite measure of how positive or negative a particular source was towards the ACA by subtracting the share of respondents indicating that a source was mostly negative from the share of respondents reporting that a source was mostly positive.

Figure 7.7 summarizes the ideological slant of the sources listed in Figure 7.6. Values above zero

indicate that more respondents ranked a source as being positive towards the ACA than ranked the source as being negative towards the ACA; values below zero indicate the opposite.

Figure 7.7 shows, unsurprisingly, that information from President Obama or other Democrats tended to be disproportionately positive toward the ACA. Information from state agencies, local TV stations, and newspapers tended to be more evenly divided towards the ACA, without much of a slant one way or another. Information from families and friends, doctors and other health care professionals, and employers, on the other hand, all tended to be heavily skewed against the ACA. Reassuringly for the validity of this survey question, respondents indicated that information from Republican presidential candidates for the 2012 race was the most negative toward the ACA – a finding that certainly resonates with the tone of the campaign.<sup>50</sup> Though not as extreme as GOP presidential contenders, employers were also overwhelmingly negative toward the ACA in their communications with workers. 42% of respondents indicated that employers gave them negative information about the ACA, while only 10% of respondents reported receiving positive information from their bosses. The Kaiser survey fits with the results from my own worker survey, which indicated that employer messages about health care tended to be disproportionately conservative in tone.

**Figure 7.7**



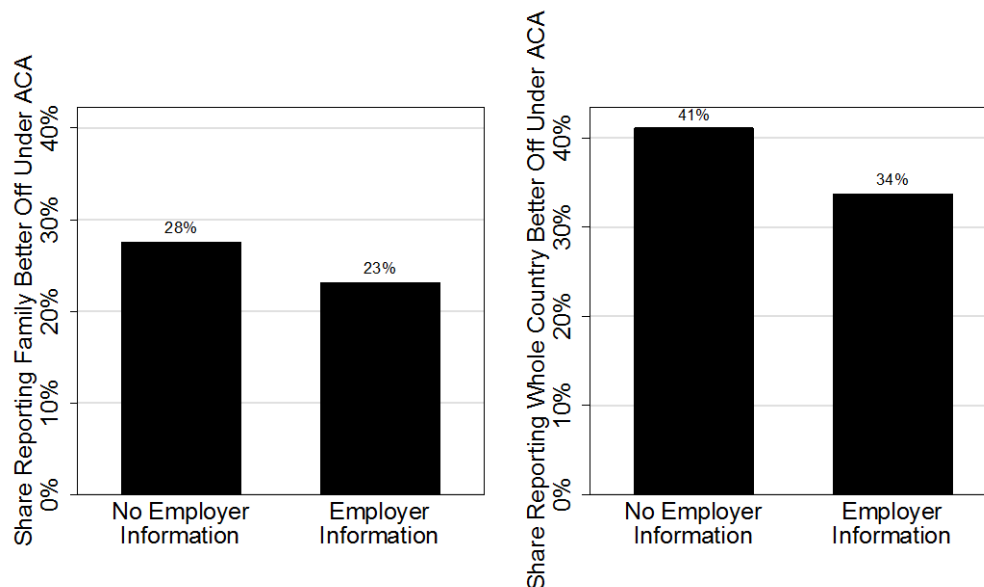
Caption: Slant of information sources toward the Affordable Care Act. Data from 2011 Kaiser survey. Employed respondents only (sample size: 438).

Did the information that workers received from their employers influence how workers viewed the ACA at the end of 2011? To answer this question, we can examine another survey question that assesses respondents' perceptions of the health reform law. The question asked about the effects of the ACA on respondents and their families, as well as the country as a whole ("Do you think (you and your family/the country as a whole) will be better off or worse off under the health reform law, or don't you think it will make much difference?").

If conservative employer messages were affecting these outcomes then we would expect that workers who had received messages from their employers about the ACA would be less likely to report that the ACA made them better off compared to workers who did not receive

such pessimistic messages from their bosses. Figure 7.8 provides initial evidence of just such an effect. Individuals responding to the Kaiser survey who relied on employer-provided information about the ACA were less likely to say that they felt the ACA left the whole country, as well as themselves and their families, better off. Just over 40% of respondents who did not rely on employer information felt that the ACA left the whole country better off, but that share fell by seven percentage points for respondents who reported relying on employer information about the law (right plot). Similarly, respondents relying on employer information were five percentage points less likely to say that they thought that the ACA left themselves and their families better off (left plot).

**Figure 7.8**



Caption: Attitudes toward the Affordable Care Act and reliance on employer information. Data from 2011 Kaiser survey (sample size for both plots: 593).

Figure 7.8 does not account for other factors that might explain the relationship between attitudes toward the ACA and employer information, however. To more accurately measure the effect of employer information on these two outcomes, we can conduct an analysis controlling for the other sources of information a respondent reported relying upon (such as from newspapers or from political candidates), as well as a range of other important respondent characteristics. These characteristics include any other factors that might plausibly lead some respondents to be exposed to employer information *and* to hold particular views about the ACA. Accordingly, I account for education, race and ethnicity, political ideology, partisan identification, self-reported health, household income, age, gender, self-reported knowledge about the ACA, and insurance status. (Refer to the appendix to this chapter for full variable information, as well as complete regression results.)

Table 7.3 summarizes how the receipt of employer messages shaped respondent perceptions of the ACA by comparing workers who did and did not receive employer messages about the ACA, controlling for other factors. Respondents who received employer messages about the ACA were about nine percentage points less likely to believe they and their families were better off under the ACA compared to respondents who did not receive employer messages, other factors held constant.<sup>51</sup> There were similar differences in attitudes between contacted and non-contacted workers on perceptions of the effect of health reform on the country as a whole. Respondents reporting employers as a source of information about health reform were seven percentage points less likely to believe the country was better off under the ACA compared to respondents who did not receive employer messages, other factors held constant.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 7.3. Employer Information and Attitudes About the Affordable Care Act, 2011.<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Effect of Relying on Employer Information</b>
Probability of thinking you and your family will be better off under the health reform law	26% to 17%
Probability of thinking the whole country will be better off under the health reform law	40% to 34%

<sup>a</sup> Data from 2011 Kaiser survey. Sample sizes: 739 and 726, respectively. Table shows the change in the predicted probability that a survey respondent believes that they are personally better off under the ACA (top row) or the whole country is better off under the ACA (bottom row) associated with relying on employer information about the ACA. Results account for education, race and ethnicity, political ideology, partisan identification, self-reported health, household income, age, gender, self-reported knowledge about the ACA, and insurance status, as well as other sources of information. See appendix and text for more details.

How persuasive was the information given by employers to their workers about the ACA? The Kaiser survey permits me to answer this question by assessing whether or not respondents changed their opposition to components of the ACA after hearing pro-ACA arguments delivered by the survey administrators. Respondents who indicated opposing the individual mandate – the requirement that nearly all Americans buy health insurance or pay a fine – were randomly assigned to receive two of four possible messages in support of that provision on the survey.<sup>53</sup> Initially, 65% of workers indicated that they were unfavorable to the mandate.<sup>54</sup> Of these employed respondents who started out opposed, 45% reversed their position after being exposed to pro-ACA messages; the remaining respondents said that they were still unfavorable toward the mandate despite the pro-ACA messages they had just heard.<sup>55</sup>

If employer information was especially persuasive to Americans, then we might expect that those individuals who received their ACA information from employers would be less likely to be persuaded by the survey's pro-ACA messages than those respondents who received their information from other sources. Alternatively, if employer information was generally unconvincing, then we might expect that respondents who received their health reform information from employers would be more likely to shift their stances on the mandate after receiving pro-ACA messages from the survey administrators. A third possibility is that on net, employer messages were neither especially persuasive nor unconvincing, making recipients of corporate communications about the ACA no more or less likely to change their stances towards the individual mandate.

To adjudicate between these alternatives, I examine whether recipients of employer information were more likely to start favoring the individual mandate, after accounting for the same set of worker characteristics I described above, as well as the other possible sources of health reform information. Recipients of employer information who initially disagreed with the individual mandate were about 14 percentage points less likely to come around to supporting that provision of the ACA than were individuals who received their information about health reform from other sources.<sup>56</sup> Put differently, nearly half of the respondents who did not receive employer information were persuaded to temper their opposition to the ACA, compared to about 34% of respondents who relied on their managers for information about the health reform law. Employer messages about the ACA thus appear to produce cynical attitudes that are more durable than messages from other information sources.

A final advantage to the Kaiser survey is that it permits me to test an important question about employer mobilization: to what extent are employers communicating to their workers



about issues on which managers are deeply knowledgeable and where workers might benefit from employer information – and to what extent are employers simply conveying a political or ideological position? The ACA provides a good case for evaluating this question because employers are, plausibly, one of the most important sources of information about health policy for the majority of workers who receive their health insurance coverage through the workplace.<sup>57</sup> For these workers covered by employer-based health plans, it makes good sense to listen to what top managers and supervisors say about the effects of the Affordable Care Act. If employer messages about health reform were mostly non-political and technical, referring to the effects of the law on workplace health plans, we would expect that workers covered by employer-sponsored health insurance plans would be more likely than non-workplace-covered workers to receive information about the ACA from their employers. We might also anticipate that employer-covered workers would be more likely to shift their attitudes in response to information about the law from managers and supervisors.

As I show in the appendix to this chapter, neither of these propositions held up in the survey. Workers who did not receive health insurance coverage from their employers were just as likely to report receiving information from their employers about the health reform law as were workers who did depend on employment-based health insurance. In addition, workers tended to become more pessimistic about the health reform law regardless of whether they got their coverage through the workplace or not. This evidence from the Kaiser survey strongly suggests that employers were not simply communicating the technical effects of the Affordable Care Act to their insured workers who might be affected by the law's changes, but rather were communicating political or ideological positions opposing the law to all workers.

## **<1>EMPLOYER MOBILIZATION AND PUBLIC POLICY**

“Send a letter to your legislators, urge them to stop the unnecessary overreach!” implored one action alert to the employees of a large manufacturing company that I interviewed for this book. “It is critical that you are part of the policy discussions occurring at the federal and state levels that impact how our industry does business,” the company further reminded its workers. This chapter has examined what happens when companies, like that manufacturer, make their employees part of policy discussions in federal and state government. It showed that employer efforts to engage their workers in the legislative and regulatory process can indeed produce big returns for companies’ bottom lines.

The legislative staffer survey showed that staffers report taking employer-initiated employee letters to Congress very seriously. In fact, staffers may even take those employee letters more seriously than similar correspondence from ordinary citizens or even other advocacy groups. The correspondence experiment indicated that top Congressional aides thought that employee letters would be both more significant in their recommendations to their bosses and more representative of their constituents’ opinion as a whole than letters from individual constituents and citizens groups. I further showed that employee letters are especially persuasive for Congressional offices that are more sensitive to economic conditions in their districts and states, demonstrating how employee letters may carry the economic threat of job loss. That backs up assessments made by former Members of Congress, too. One past GOP Representative from Virginia, Tom Davis, noted that when he was in Congress and “a company would come into my office that had 100, 200, or 1,000 citizens that lived in my district – and the issue that they wanted to discuss would impact them [as employees of a company] – that was the most important thing to me as a legislator.”<sup>58</sup>

Beyond Congress, the case study of the Affordable Care Act demonstrated that employer communications can sway workers' opinions and preferences about important public policies. Using an unusually rich set of survey data, I was able to trace how employer messages led workers to become more durably skeptical of the health reform program in the law's early years. That case study was especially important because it allowed me to adjudicate whether employer messages carry more heft when they focus on areas where employers conceivably have economic or practical expertise they can share with workers. As I documented, it was not the case that employers were more likely to communicate negative messages about the Affordable Care Act to workers who were receiving workplace-sponsored health insurance. That means that employers were expressing skepticism about the law even in cases where the employer and employee might not have been directly affected by the health reform program. Instead, confirming the results from chapter 4, employer messages about the health reform law tended to be more ideologically-oriented.

The effect of employer mobilization on public policy extended well beyond the federal government. In the case of the Alaskan ballot initiative, we saw evidence that managers may have convinced their workers to change the ways in which they were voting (to cast early or absentee ballots), as well as changing their support for taxes on oil producers. A concerted employer recruitment drive of employees in the oil production industry in that state helped to retain a business-friendly tax code, even in the face of significant public opposition.

Between managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of employer-led mobilization presented in chapter 3 and the results from this chapter, there is good reason to think that mobilization does matter in determining the policies that elected officials in the United States ultimately enact. And they affirm that employer mobilization has a conservative, pro-market

bent, helping firms to advance their bottom lines by defeating regulations, lowering taxes, and dismantling social programs. We will see further evidence for this tilt of employer messages in the following chapter, which shows how employer mobilization efforts in recent years have helped to elect Republican politicians to state and federal office.

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<sup>1</sup> For background on the Export-Import battle, see Weisman 2015; Gold and Hamburger 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Dillow 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://bipac.net/page.asp?g=ip\\_test&content=toolkit\\_telephone\\_calls&parent=BIPAC](http://bipac.net/page.asp?g=ip_test&content=toolkit_telephone_calls&parent=BIPAC).

<sup>4</sup> CMF 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Fitch et al. 2017, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Fitch et al. 2017, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Drutman 2015; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Hertel-Fernandez 2014.

<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with Hansen 1991.

<sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.congressfoundation.org/component/content/article/85-resources/82-dealing-with-backlogged-mail-in-congressional-offices>.

<sup>10</sup> The difference between employee letters and constituent letters and non-profit citizens group letters is statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>11</sup> The difference between employee letters and constituent letters and non-profit citizens group letters is statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>12</sup> The difference in the effect of the employee letters and constituent letters and non-profit citizens group letters is 2.19 units on the 1-4 scale for staffers who said that business information was “not at all” important in their decisions ( $p < 0.05$ ) and -0.38 units for staffers who said that

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business information was “extremely important” ( $p=0.22$ ). The difference in estimates is significant at  $p<0.05$ .

<sup>13</sup> The difference in the effect of the employee letters and constituent letters and non-profit citizens group letters is 0.10 units on the 1-4 scale for staffers in below-average unemployment districts and states ( $p=0.77$ ) and 0.72 for staffers in above-average unemployment districts and states ( $p<0.01$ ). The difference in estimates is significant at  $p=0.12$ .

<sup>14</sup> The difference in the effect of the employee letters and constituent letters and non-profit citizens group letters is 0.10 units on the 1-4 scale for staffers in below-average unemployment districts and states ( $p=0.73$ ) and 0.89 for staffers in above-average unemployment districts and states ( $p<0.01$ ). The difference in estimates is significant at  $p<0.05$ .

<sup>15</sup> See also Hansen 1991 and Kollman 1998.

<sup>16</sup> See also Butler 2014 for similar findings but with an alternative mechanism.

<sup>17</sup> Lane 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Rosen 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Hatch 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Hatch 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson 2014.

<sup>22</sup> BIPAC 2013.

<sup>23</sup> BIPAC 2013.

<sup>24</sup> BIPAC 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Ballotpedia 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Troll 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Ballotpedia 2014.

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<sup>28</sup> Ballotpedia 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Ballotpedia 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Ballotpedia 2014.

<sup>31</sup> PPP 2014.

<sup>32</sup> [http://prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?content=OilTaxReform3&g=ALASKA\\_B](http://prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?content=OilTaxReform3&g=ALASKA_B).

<sup>33</sup> See: [http://prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?content=gotv&g=ALASKA\\_B](http://prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?content=gotv&g=ALASKA_B).

<sup>34</sup> See

[http://prosperityalaska.org/alaska\\_b/2014VoteEarlyForAlaskasPrimaryPosters\\_VotePin.pdf](http://prosperityalaska.org/alaska_b/2014VoteEarlyForAlaskasPrimaryPosters_VotePin.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> This account from Woodman 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>37</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>38</sup> See:

<http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/~media/2F518AFDCC84483F9DE10C9B1BF9BCFD>

[/Conducting\\_GOTV\\_Activities.pdf](#) for BIPAC's early voting campaign generally, and

[http://www.prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?g=alaska\\_b&content=earlyvoting&parent=alaska\\_b](http://www.prosperityalaska.org/page.asp?g=alaska_b&content=earlyvoting&parent=alaska_b)

for Alaska specifically.

<sup>39</sup> Difference between high and low quartile significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>40</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>41</sup> Jamieson 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Jamieson 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Jamieson 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Lipscomb 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Lipscomb 2012.

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<sup>46</sup> Ungar 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Strasser 2012.

<sup>48</sup> The Independence Institute 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Though see Jacobs and Mettler 2016 for evidence of recent shifts in public support for the ACA, especially for those who have experienced the benefits of the policy.

<sup>50</sup> Collins et al. 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>52</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>53</sup> These pro-ACA arguments included the following: “Under the reform law, most Americans would still get coverage through their employers and so would automatically satisfy the requirement without having to buy any new insurance”; “Without such a requirement, insurance companies would still be allowed to deny coverage to people who are sick; “Without such a requirement, people may wait until they are seriously ill to buy health insurance, which will drive up health insurance costs for everyone”; and “People would not be held to this requirement if the cost of new coverage would consume too large a share of their income.”

<sup>54</sup> The question text was: “Next, I’m going to read you several elements of the health reform law. As I read each one, please tell me whether you feel very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable about it. The law will require nearly all Americans to have health insurance by 2014 or else pay a fine. Would you say you feel very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable about that?”

<sup>55</sup> The question text was: “What if you heard that...? Would you still have an unfavorable view of requiring nearly all Americans to have health insurance, or would you now have a favorable view of that requirement?”

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<sup>56</sup> Difference statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>57</sup> Long et al. 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in BIPAC 2016.