

## Revolving Doors and Political Selection

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Abstract :

So-called revolving door laws restrict public servants from representing private interests before the government after they leave office. While they mitigate potential conflicts of interest by imposing constraints on post-public service employment, these restrictions also bring about trade-offs as they might reduce the pool of candidates for public positions, by lowering the overall benefits of holding office. We study the consequences of revolving-door laws for the selection of legislators across U.S. states, exploiting the staggered roll-out of revolving-door laws across states over time.

We first show that, as anticipated, the laws reduce the probability that a legislator registers as a lobbyist after leaving office.

More substantively, we show that treated states experience an increase in the probability of uncontested elections, driven primarily by a reduction in the entry of potential challengers and an increase in incumbents' probability of re-running. We provide a simple model of politician career incentives to interpret the results.