

Sorting of Candidates: Evidence from 20,000 Electoral Ballots*

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Abstract

Using over 20,000 electoral ballots from proportional representation elections, we document that political parties systematically sort candidates on the ballots according to their valence and *intra* party value. Valence, measured by education level, captures the public value of the candidates, while *intra* party value, measured by political donations and membership, represents the value of the candidate to the party. The patterns we observe are consistent with market mechanisms between candidates and party leaders where the party leaders benefit from the valence and *intra* party value of candidates and offer ballot positions (i.e. the probability of winning a seat) in exchange. We show that candidates with high valence and those who possess more *intra* party value are placed in higher level positions, despite the fact that candidates with more *intra* party value tend to receive relatively fewer votes than their counterparts with the same characteristics in the same position on the ballot. We also show that as a party expects to hold more council seats and thus has more bargaining power over candidates, the share of their candidates with higher *intra* party value increases. Overall, we provide strong evidence that political parties skew political representation based on a quid pro quo relationship with the candidates.

JEL Codes: H70, P16, D72.

Keywords: ballots, election, party, candidates, donations

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