**Federalism and the Pennsylvania Legislature:**

**Partisanship and Intergovernmental Priorities**

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*Abstract: State governments use a variety of tools to make their policy preferences known to the federal government. Most existing studies of these tools focus on intergovernmental lobbying groups or individual state representatives in Washington, DC. These studies are instructive, but do not allow for a comparison of intergovernmental issue priorities among political parties. This study addresses this void through a longitudinal analysis of Pennsylvania state legislative resolutions to the federal government from 1979-2011. Through an analysis of this original dataset the study shows that there are varying levels of support for federal policy within the Pennsylvania legislature depending on partisan affiliation.*

**Introduction**

The lack of a formal division of policy responsibilities in the United States Constitution creates a dynamic system of intergovernmental relations. States often appear to be the junior member of the American partnership, feeling as though they have to fight to preserve their place in the federal system. State officials, like those at the federal level, are interested in achieving their personal policy and political goals. Consequently, they interpret federalism to suit the needs of their constituents and their partisan views.

The primary means of studying state positions on federalism issues has been an examination of the policy positions of intergovernmental (IGR) lobbying groups such as the National Governors Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures. This literature shows that states have difficulty achieving consensus on the details of intergovernmental policy issues. The IGR lobby generally seeks federal money and decision- making authority, but has difficulty agreeing on substantive statements of how these should be distributed. The primary reason is that diverse memberships result in a number of cleavages that divide the IGR lobby.

This paper examines one cleavage which has been understudied but has promise in helping us understand positions on federalism issues: partisanship. This assertion is tested through an examination of 1,773 resolutions to the federal government that were introduced in Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1979 to 2011. The analysis concludes that partisanship issue positions, rather than commitment to a theoretical concept of federalism, is the prime determinant of what Pennsylvania state legislators have asked of Washington.

**Literature**

The division of responsibility for policy in the American federal system is fluid and adaptable (Elazar 1962; Grodzins 1966; Wright 1990). Daniel Elazar argued that the “federalism of the Constitution was crystal clear, just as the division and sharing of powers was left ambiguous” (1988, 43). A major question in understanding American federalism is how states interact with Washington on questions of intergovernmental power. When do they want the federal government to assume responsibility for policymaking? In what situations do they want to retain decision making capabilities without federal interference? How much depends on party orientations and discrete state conditions?

*The Intergovernmental Lobbying Literature*

The existing literature exploring these questions focuses heavily on the agendas of intergovernmental lobbying groups (IGR) such as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) or National Governors Association (NGA). These studies are usually focused on the activities of individual organizations or genres of groups such as regional or professional associations (Arnold and Plant 1994; Brooks 1961; Hall 1989; Weissert 1983); IGR lobbying on specific issues or in a specific time period (Hays 1991; Levine and Thurber 1986; Marbach and Leckrone 2002); or providing case studies based on the levels of policy conflict or an existing policy typology (Haider 1974 and Cammissa 1995). Unfortunately, these groups have a difficult time reaching consensus on positions because of the diversity of their memberships and the fact that they focus on spatial rather than material interests (Haider 1974: 226 and Cammissa 1995:129). The difficulty of achieving quasi-unanimity on positions means that the IGR groups only address a small range of issues and then often only in philosophic terms rather than concrete policy statements (Haider 1974:217-18 and Smith 1998:356). This problem is particularly acute for the IGR group representing state legislative officials covered in this study (NCSL) since it represents 7,500 members (Cigler 1995:144-45 and Smith 1998:338-39). This means that the groups take no positions on issues where consensus cannot be reached and that even when positions are passed, there is no voice in the intergovernmental context for people in the minority.

*The IGR Literature and Cleavages Among Subnational Officials*

The priorities of the IGR lobbies are not an accurate portrayal of the multiplicity of subnational interests. However, the IGR lobbying literature provides instruction concerning the cleavages that prevent these officials from achieving consensus on the role of the federal government in intergovernmental relations. Elected officials are concerned about the substance of public policy, but their primary concerns are to ensure that they receive federal money and the authority to use the funds with minimal restrictions (Farkas 1971: 248-249; Haider 1974; Cammissa 1995; and Wallin 1998:139-140). Consequently, they accept federal activity, seeking advantageous terms rather than rolling back the national presence in their policy realms (Nugent 2009:50). Federal money allows state officials to “free ride” off the national government as they credit claim implemented intergovernmental policies for electoral advantage (Nicholson-Crotty and Theobald 2010:247).

This emphasis leads to cleavages as state and local officials attempt to reap advantages for their constituent interests. One cleavage is between elected and appointed officials (Beer 1978). Both advocate for more federal funding, however appointed officials would prefer more specificity from Washington to ensure the money will be spent on their policy interests while elected officials would like to use the money at their discretion (Haider 1974:223). However, most of the cleavages are related to differences in spatial representation by subnational officials. Haider and Cammissa both show that state and local governments often split over who should receive direct funding from Washington and which level of government should be assigned decision making capabilities. There is also conflict among states as they find it difficult to achieve unity due to regional differences (Hall 1989) and issues related to size (Smith 1998:362). Perhaps more instructive for this paper are the local cleavages that arise within states: counties versus mayors (Haider 1974:219 and Marbach and Leckrone 2002: 54); rural, suburban and urban tensions (Haider 1974: 225-226 and Cigler 1995:144) and large cities versus small cities (Haider 1974:284).

*Literature on Partisan Cleavages and Federalism*

Unfortunately the IGR lobbying literature does not examine the potentially divisive role that partisanship can play in stifling state consensus on federal policy activity. Some political party literature shows neither Democrats nor Republicans have defended theoretical federalism or the interests of state or local governments in the federal system. The scholarship cites three reasons for this: a lack of centralized programmatic parties, candidate centered elections, and the prevalence of ideology in defending the structure of government. First, Grodzins (1960) argued that design of American government prevented strong political parties, thus preventing any coherent platform preserving focusing on the operation of federalism. Thus parties are only made national by joining together in “interstate coalitions” based on the collectivization of parochial interests (Elazar 1966:143). Epstein (1989) builds on this by claiming that the lack of programmatic parties in the United States releases partisans to focus on their discrete localistic needs rather than more abstract concepts such as federalism.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Second, candidate centered American elections encourage elected politicians to adhere to personal agendas rather than a party platform. Truman argues that individual ambition for various state and federal election positions leads to the “development of largely independent, hostile, and internally cohesive factional groupings” within state parties (1969:47). Consequently, federal officials are more concerned with the effects of policy on their own ambitions as opposed to the way it affects the powers of their state. Chubb (1985) reinforces this point by arguing that members of both parties rely on centralizing power in Washington because delivery of federal largess to their constituents promotes electoral success.

Finally, Nathan (1990:251-6) finds that partisan belief on issues of federalism is more related to ideological goals than fixed affiliation with structures of government interaction. He argues that there is a general predisposition of liberal Democrats toward a centralized federalism a la Grodzin’s marble cake model, while conservative Republicans favor contracting government and thus focus on scheme of dual federalism. However, adherence to these principles fluctuates depending on control of power in Washington. Thus, in times of liberal Democratic retrenchment, conservative Republicans can advocate devolution, while advocating centralization when they are in power so that they can cut the scope of federal government.

Numerous studies, particularly in the early 1980s, attempted to construct federalism voting indices. Like party support scores, they were designed to examine what types of legislators supported state and local autonomy in the federal system. All of the studies showed a mild to strong relationship between partisanship and support for state and local autonomy. Republicans in both houses of Congress were more likely to score higher on the federalism index than Democrats (Schechter 1983; Caraley and Schlussel 1986; Hero 1987; Hero 1988; Malaby and Webber 1991). Recent literature has found less support for this partisan theory of federalism. This has been particularly true of the last two presidential administrations with both George W. Bush (Conlan and Dinan 2007; Milkis and Rhodes 2007) and Barrack Obama (Conlan and Posner, 2011) stepping out of the usual partisan roles related to intergovernmental relations. It appears that support or opposition to federal intervention on intergovernmental issues is based more on policy preference than theoretical federalism (Posner 1998:36-56; Krane and Koenig 2005; and Peterson 2005). There is little attention to this at the state level, but there does appear to be some evidence that partisanship and ideology affect opposition to federal mandates at the state level (e.g. Palazzolo, Moscardelli, Patrick and Rubin 2008 and Regan and Deering 2009). In sum, while neither party appears to be completely “federalism friendly”, there is enough evidence to show that partisan affiliation may be an important determinant of support or opposition to federal policy activity.

*States as a Test Ground for Understanding Cleavages*

The most useful manner to examine these cleavages is by studying the intergovernmental policy positions of individual states. Scholars have generally neglected this topic although several have made first attempts at exploration (Cingranelli 1983; Jensen 2010; Jensen and Emery 2011; Nugent 2009; Pelissero and England 1987; Smith 1998). These studies have been primarily descriptive in their examination of the activities of individual state lobbying or the intergovernmental activities of governors and their staffs. Missing from this literature is a longitudinal exploration of the intergovernmental policy priorities of either an individual or multiple states. This study addresses this void by using state legislative resolutions to the federal government to explore the specific policy topics of import to Pennsylvania. Resolutions are policy positions passed by one or both houses of a state legislature making requests of the federal government.[[2]](#endnote-2) They have received scant attention in the literature, but are a useful tool to understand the intergovernmental policy preferences of individual states over time (Leckrone and Gollob 2010).

Resolutions are fundamentally designed to voice explicit preferences supporting or opposing federal action across a wide range of policy issues (for an example, see Appendix A). Some lack policy content since they ask Congress to name a bridge or designate a date to commemorate a person or event. However, as shown by Appendix A’s example, most resolutions include serious statements of policy bolstered by factual evidence and a policy prescription. Our prior research polled legislators in several states on how and why they used resolutions to the federal government (Gollob and Leckrone 2011). We found two primary reasons why legislators used resolutions. First, they give state legislators a vehicle to transmit preferences to Congress and enter them into the official record of legislative deliberation.[[3]](#endnote-3) Second, resolutions contributed to the larger scope of agenda setting and deliberation occurring in Washington, DC. One state legislator claimed resolutions might influence the agenda if “a critical mass of states express the same policy goal”.[[4]](#endnote-4) At a minimum, resolutions to the federal government appear to help reinforce arguments being concurrently discussed by advocates for a state. We are not arguing that these resolutions influence Congress or that they affect policy outcomes. However, prior research shows that state legislators believe they are effective in conveying a policy position. Consequently they are a valid measure for understanding what states want from the federal government.

**Research Questions and Data**

We claim that partisanship is the most important variable in determining the tone and content of state legislators’ statements on federalism. We test this claim by analyzing resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly between 1979 and 2011. There are three questions guiding our analysis. The first tests this theory against other potential variables and the remaining two take a more nuanced look at partisanship and federalism.

The first question asks which, if any, of the contending variables listed above impact Pennsylvania state legislators’ support or opposition of federal actions as expressed in resolutions. The contending variables include individual (sponsor partisan identification), district (urban/rural dynamics) and state (regional influences) variables. Our second research question examines the level of partisan congruence by examining the policy issues of resolutions sponsored by Republican and Democratic Pennsylvania state legislators. We analyze whether there are different policy foci for the two parties and whether there is a difference in support or opposition to federal policy within these policy categories on the basis of party.

Finally, we analyze whether partisan alignment between Harrisburg and Washington, DC has an impact on the support or opposition of Washington’s actions as expressed through resolutions. The existing literature cited above has no clear conclusion on the level of congruence on intergovernmental issues between members of a state party and their counterparts at the national level. Some literature implies that state officials band together regardless of party to oppose undesired federal action. Other scholars imply that the ideological predispositions of each party make it more likely that positions on intergovernmental policies will be nationalized. We test this by analyzing the relationship between partisanship support for resolutions and the partisan affiliation of the branch of government addressed in the resolution. This is undertaken to determine whether partisan identification at the state level translates into support or opposition for partisan policy proposals in Washington.

To answer these questions, this study utilizes a unique dataset of legislative resolutions introduced in both houses of the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1979 to 2011 (the 96th through the first session of the 112th Congress). A total of 1,773 resolutions to the federal government were culled from the Pennsylvania Policy Database Project (PPDP) at Temple University. This project, funded by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, includes a usable database containing over 100,000 bills, resolutions, governors’ speeches, state Supreme Court decisions and print articles from the Commonwealth (see McLaughlin, et.al 2010 and www.temple.edu/papolicy). Each piece of data was coded with one of twenty policy topic headings developed by Policy Agendas Project (see Baumgartner and Jones 2002, 29-46 and [www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)) and adapted to state politics by the PPDP.[[5]](#endnote-5)

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Some of the data provided by the PPDP includes the primary sponsor of each resolution, the session it was introduced, information on whether the resolution was passed and the policy code. Additional analysis was conducted by the authors to assess the content and level of support for federal policy and mandates. Each resolution was analyzed to determine if it supported or opposed existing policy or proposed actions by the federal government. Criteria from the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (1994) were used to determine if resolutions mentioned a mandate.[[6]](#endnote-6)

A total of 1,773 resolutions were introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1979 to 2011. Representatives introduced 1,288 resolutions to the federal government and Senators introduced 485 resolutions. Of the 1,773 resolutions only 133 were purely commemorative in nature, meaning that they lack any substantive policy content or policy prescriptions.[[7]](#endnote-7) Of the 1,640 substantive resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly, a majority (52%) were addressed to the United States Congress, followed by the President of the United States (21%) and both the President and Congress combined (16.5%). Only 4.3% of all resolutions were addressed to the United States Supreme Court.

Overall the resolutions were supportive of federal activity (62.7%). However, the mention of a mandate made legislators less likely to approve of Washington’s actions. Of the resolutions where there was a positive tone, 91.4% did not mention a mandate. Conversely, 70% of resolutions that mentioned a mandate opposed federal action in that policy area. This is consistent with the literature arguing that state officials tolerate or support federal action provided it does not impinge on their authority.

The resolutions were broadly distributed across the policy codes. The most used policy codes were either areas where the federal government has almost complete control of policy or where there is a heavy element of intergovernmental relations. Among the top five most used policy topics, defense (#1) and international affairs/foreign aid (#5) are primarily the responsibilities of the federal government. However, there are also components of these policy areas that affect the Pennsylvania economy. For example, there was a strong focus on defense during the rounds of military base reductions after the Cold War given the economic consequences that base closures had on localities within the Commonwealth.

INSERT CHART 1 HERE

Health (#2) and environment (#4) received attention because they are important intergovernmental programs. An analysis of the budget data from the PPDP shows that health was the second largest source of expenditures by the state of Pennsylvania from 1979 to 2011. Given this policy topic’s budgetary importance and the fact that Medicaid is a shared program, there is little wonder why state legislators paid attention to health. The environment was one of the top policy topics for a different reason: 46.3% mentioned mandates. This topic had the most references to mandates. Consequently the legislators used it regularly to deride what they perceived as federal overreach.

Finally, government operations constituted the third most used policy topic. This category includes many topics related to the federal government that affect states, such as the Census, election procedures and intergovernmental relations. The last of these subcategories accounted for 3.2% of all resolutions to the federal government by Pennsylvania because it includes discussion of mandates, block grants, and general state-federal relations. In sum, the overall record of attention by the Pennsylvania legislature to these specific issues is in line with expectations.

**Results**

*Question 1: Variables Affecting Support of or Opposition to Federal Action*

The literature highlights several important cleavages that prevent unanimity among state officials when creating an intergovernmental agenda. We argue that of these contending variables, partisanship plays a significant role in determining state officials’ attitudes toward federal action. To test this we use logistic regression with support of or opposition to federal policy as the dependent variable and measures of the contending explanations as the independent variables.

The units of analysis are 923 substantive resolutions submitted into the Pennsylvania General Assembly between 1992 and 2011 that address the activities of Congress, the president, or both branches. The dependent variable is the support of or opposition to (0=opposition, 1=support) existing or proposed federal policy as expressed in the resolutions. The independent variables in the model include: 1) sponsor party identification (0=Republican, 1=Democrat); 2) the regional location of the sponsors’ home district in Pennsylvania (southeast, southwest, central, northeast, northwest dummy coded); and 3) the percentage of population living in an urban area in the sponsors’ legislative district (0% to 100%).[[8]](#endnote-8) Because longitudinal data for some of the independent variables is not available prior to 1992, the analysis only includes resolutions submitted between 1992 and 2011.

Data for the partisan identification of each sponsor was obtained through the PPDP. The PPDP provides the name of each resolution’s primary sponsor which we then pared with their partisan affiliation. The second independent variable is the regional location of each sponsors’ legislative district. The county(ies) that each sponsor represents were identified using the Wilkes University Election Statistics Project (<http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/index.html>). The results were then linked to a regional location using the county-region alignment adopted by the Center for Opinion Research’s Franklin and Marshall Poll of Pennsylvania (http://www.fandm.edu/fandmpoll).[[9]](#endnote-9)

The final independent variable, urban/rural district dynamics, is collected through two sources. The first is the Census Bureau, which began linking census data to state legislative districts beginning with the 2000 census. Using *State Legislative Elections: Voting Patterns and Demographics* (1998) we were able to extend our analysis back to 1992.

Results of the logistic regression show that both sponsor party identification and the urban characteristics of sponsors’ legislative districts exhibit a statistically significant relationship with the tone of resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly between 1992 and 2011. The positive coefficient for sponsor partisan identification (B *=* .417, S.E. = .147, *p* < .05) shows that Democratic sponsors are more likely to be positive in their tone than are Republicans. The odds ratio of 1.52 indicates that Democrats are more likely to introduce positive resolutions into the Pennsylvania General Assembly than are Republicans.

Considering urban districts are generally more liberal, and therefore more likely to be represented by Democrats, it is not a surprise that state legislators representing urban districts are more positive in their resolutions than are legislators representing rural districts (B *=* .006; S.E. = .002; *p* < .05; Exp(B) 1.006). Although there is some alignment between regional location and urban/rural characteristics, the regions are large enough to not simply act as another measure of urban characteristics. In fact, the regional location of sponsors’ legislative districts is not statistically significant.[[10]](#endnote-10) Combined, these findings suggest that partisanship does influence Pennsylvania state legislators’ stances on federalism while regionalism does not.

*Question 2: Partisan Congruence by Policy Issue*

The issue of whether Republicans and Democrats establish areas of issue ownership is important to the study of intergovernmental relations. If partisanship at the state level does influence the content of messages it sends to Washington, DC, it might be possible to predict the future policy foci of a state given its legislative partisan distribution. Our dataset allows us to test whether partisanship does have an impact on the policy topics of resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania state legislature between 1979 and 2011.

By simply examining Chart 2, it is difficult to draw firm generalizations as to whether Democrats and Republicans exhibit issue ownership. While differences do exist between Republicans and Democrats in most policy issue areas, the differences are generally small. Policy areas that have less than a five percent differential between Republican and Democrat sponsorship include fiscal/economic, health, agriculture, education, transportation, and defense policies.

INSERT CHART 2 HERE

However, looking at policy areas where there are varying levels of activity we find that the parties do establish some areas of issue ownership. For instance, Democrats are more active in submitting resolutions in the areas of labor/employment/immigration, energy, law/crime/family, social welfare, community development and housing, banking/finance/domestic commerce, space/science/communications, and international affairs. Moreover, Republicans are more active in submitting resolutions in the areas of civil rights, environment, state government operations, public lands, and local government and governance. Don’t forget that resolutions addressing the environment had high mentions of federal mandates, which can explain Republicans emphasis on this issue. Further testing this relationship, a chi square test shows that there is a statistically significant association between sponsors’ party identification and the policy topic of their resolutions.[[11]](#endnote-11) This means that there is a relationship between sponsor party identification and the policy issues of resolutions.

Partisan divides are more obvious when the tone of resolutions are analyzed. Each resolution was coded using a measure to determine whether it expressed support or opposition to existing or proposed federal policies. Chart 3 illustrates substantial differences between the political parties concerning levels of support for federal action across policy domains.

INSERT CHART 3 HERE

Democrats supported federal activities 66% of the time versus 58% for Republicans. The 8% differential between parties is unsurprising given Republican ideology and rhetoric about small government and federalism. Issue ownership is also supported by the finding that there were statistically significant differences between Republicans and Democrats in their support of federal policy in the policy areas of labor/employment/immigration, environment, and law/family/crime.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Analysis of support or opposition to federal mandates provides further evidence that resolutions reflect partisan beliefs of the appropriate role of the federal government in state affairs. Republicans were more likely to mention federal mandates than were Democrats (21% to 16%). Environmental policy and government operations were the top two issues mentioning mandates for both the GOP and the Democrats. Not surprisingly, Republicans were also more likely to oppose the imposition of mandates than were Democrats (89% to 78%).

*Question 3: Partisan Congruence across Levels of Government*

Federal-state relationships could be influenced by the partisan alignment between state legislators and the party in power in Washington, DC. At issue is the question of whether support or opposition to federal activities is primarily a result of shared partisan priorities between the state and national political parties or if levels of support/opposition remain constant regardless of the party in power in Washington, DC. If partisan alignment between state legislators and Washington, DC has an impact, we would expect to see more positive resolutions submitted by state legislators when their party is the majority party in Washington, DC and the opposite when their party is the minority party in Washington. This is in keeping with the literature showing that party is a predictor of support or opposition for presidential agendas (Grose and Middlemass, 2010) and individuals’ support or opposition to their party’s legislative program in the states (Jenkins 2008).

To measure partisan alignment, the partisan identity of each resolution’s sponsor was compared to the majority party of the federal branch to which the resolution was addressed. For example, if a Republican state legislator introduced a resolution to a Republican president then their partisanship is aligned. If the same sponsor introduced a resolution addressed to Congress controlled by Democrats then their party identity is not aligned. Moreover, if a Republican state legislator introduced a resolution to both a Republican president and Democrat controlled Congress then their party identity is split (given that the federal government is divided). The data analyzes 1,640 substantive resolutions introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly between 1979 and 2011.

The results in Table 2 suggest that federal-state partisan alignment does not affect the tone of resolutions submitted to the Pennsylvania General Assembly. State legislators of both parties exhibited only middling support of Washington, DC when their party was in control in Washington. While both parties were more supportive of Washington when their parties were in the majority in Washington than when their party was the minority party in Washington, this isn’t definitive proof that federal-state party alignment has any explanatory power. Moreover, a chi-square test supports this finding showing no statistically significant relationship between tone and federal-state partisan alignment (sorted by partisan affiliation of sponsor).[[13]](#endnote-13)

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The data does show that state legislators were most supportive of Washington during periods of divided government in Washington. One plausible explanation of this finding is that state party support of their national parties is most important during periods of partisan division in Washington, DC. A rallying of the troops, if you will. Another plausible explanation is that state legislators don’t request major changes to the status quo of federal-state relationships during periods of partisan divide in Washington, DC. Instead, state legislators seek to protect those attributes of federal-state relationships that they view as positive. A final explanation is that state legislators attempt to influence Congress with kindness during periods of partisan division rather than throwing fuel on the fire by deepening existing partisan cleavages in Congress. These explanations have face validity but require further testing to validate.

Looking at only substantive resolutions that were passed by the Pennsylvania General Assembly between 1979 and 2011 (N=710) we see much of the same story. Instead of analyzing partisan alignment between sponsors and Washington, DC, Table 3 examines partisan alignment between Democratic and Republican controlled chambers in Harrisburg and partisan control in Washington, DC.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

In comparing the partisan control of the Pennsylvania chamber that passed the resolution to the party control of the federal branch the resolution was addressed to, there doesn’t appear to be a relationship. If national party politics influenced the passage of supportive or oppositional resolutions at the state level we would expect to see more support when partisanship at the national and state level align. What is clear in Table 4 is that support is highest during periods of divided government and lowest when state-national partisanship is not aligned. These results are consistent with the above findings and indicate that little to no relationship exists.

**Conclusions and Future Research**

This paper has used a new means of assessing the intergovernmental agendas of states over time. A database of more than 1,700 resolutions from 1979 to 2011 was constructed to examine the under-studied topic of the relationship of partisanship and intergovernmental relations. State legislative resolutions to the federal government were used to determine whether there are partisan differences in the types of issues states raised with the federal government and whether there are varying levels of support for federal action. The study contributes three findings to the existing literature.

First, the dataset as a whole lends credence to prior research showing that state governments have accepted the federal government’s place as the lead partner in the American intergovernmental relations. Sixty-two percent of all resolutions were positive concerning the role of federal policy and those that were not were often related to displeasure with federal mandates. Consequently, state officials appear willing to work cooperatively with the federal government as long as their authority to make decisions is not completely displaced.

Second, partisanship proved to be a statistically significant factor in determining support of or opposition to federal policy. Compared to other widely accepted explanations, partisanship was shown have a significant influence on support of or opposition to existing or proposed federal policy as expressed in resolutions. Partisanship was also shown to have a significant relationship with the policy focus of resolutions. Third, we found that partisanship at the state level was not impacted by the partisan composition in Washington, DC. This indicates that state party positions remain consistent even when they find their partisan priorities out of sync with Washington.

It is difficult to draw firm generalizable conclusions from a single case study of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. However, the resulting conclusions move beyond the existing literature and provide a deeper understanding about state attention to intergovernmental issues. Studies of national and regional intergovernmental organizations allow scholars to explore areas of state consensus on federalism issues. However, studying state resolutions to the federal government provides a more nuanced understanding of the issues that are more conflictual on the basis of partisan concerns and therefore not addressed by peak IGR groups.

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**Appendix A: Example of Resolution to Congress: Pennsylvania House Resolution 775 of 2010**

A RESOLUTION

Memorializing the Congress of the United States to refrain from imposing unfunded mandates on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its citizens.

WHEREAS, The taxpayers of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are already facing the prospect of difficult budget cycles because of diminished tax revenues and growing public entitlement obligations; and

WHEREAS, This situation is expected to grow worse because of:

(1)  an end to Federal stimulus money;

(2)  unfunded pension obligations;

(3)  urgent infrastructure needs;

(4)  the General Assembly's other budgetary obligations; and

WHEREAS, According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 12% of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's population is now enrolled in Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, This enrollment costs the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania billions in public assistance programs, thus making welfare entitlements one of the top spending categories in the State budget; and

WHEREAS, The Urban Institute estimates the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will see an additional 818,390 people become eligible, representing a 25% increase in those enrolled in the Medicaid program if Medicaid eligibility is increased to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level as contained in HR No. 3590, passed by the United States Senate; and

WHEREAS, On September 9, 2009, the President of the United States promised that legislation being considered by the Congress of the United States would not add to the Federal deficit but was silent about states bearing the weight of unfunded mandates; and

WHEREAS, Data from the National Conference of State Legislatures shows the impact on states will be significant from this increase with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's added matching obligation to total $2.31 billion in the 2014-2019 period; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania memorialize the Congress of the United States to refrain from imposing unfunded mandates on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its citizens; and be it further 

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the office of each United States Senator and to the office of each of the members of the United States House of Representatives.

**Table 1: Policy Topic Codes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Policy Topics** | | |
| * Fiscal and Economic Issues * Civil Rights and Liberties * Health * Agriculture * Labor, Employment, Immigration * Education * Environment | * Energy * Transportation * Law, Crime, and Family * Social Welfare * Community Development, Housing Issues * Banking, Finance, Domestic Commerce * Defense | * Space, Science, Technology, Communications * Foreign Trade * International Affairs and Foreign Aid * State Government Operations * Public Lands and Water Management * Local Government and Governance |

**Chart 1: Number Resolutions Introduced into the Pennsylvania General Assembly 1979-2011**

**Chart 2: Party Sponsorship of Resolutions Introduced in the Pennsylvania General Assembly 1979-2011**

**Chart 3: Partisan Support for Existing or Proposed Federal Policy 1979-2011**

Note: \* indicates statistical significance of p<.05 for Chi-square test of independence.

**Table 2: Sponsor-Washington, DC, Partisan Alignment on Support of or Opposition to Existing or Proposed Federal Policy 1979-2011**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduced Resolutions** | **Republicans Hold DC Power** | **Democrats Hold DC Power** | **Divided DC Government** |
| **PA Democrat State Legislator Sponsor** | 50.4% Support | 52.1% Support | 63.5% Support |
| **PA Republican State Legislator Sponsor** | 46.7% Support | 40.6% Support | 50.4% Support |

**Table 3: Harrisburg-Washington, DC, Partisan Alignment on Support of or Opposition to Existing or Proposed Federal Policy 1979-2011**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Passed Resolutions** | **Republicans Hold DC Power** | **Democrats Hold DC Power** | **Divided DC Government** |
| **Democratic Majority in Chamber of PA Legislature** | 42.5% Support | 61.7% Support | 70.7% Support |
| **Republican Majority in Chamber of PA Legislature** | 51.3% Support | 42.2% Support | 57.2% Support |

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1. Epstein implies that the lack of a party devoted to protecting state and local governments is one of the reasons for the rise of intergovernmental lobbying organizations. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Legislative resolutions to the federal government are also referred to as Memorials. For a more extensive overview of the origins and historical use of resolutions to Congress, please see (Leckrone and Gollob 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Resolutions to Congress are entered into the Congressional Record. Abstracts of the resolutions are entered for resolutions submitted to the House of Representatives, while the full text is becomes part of the official record for resolutions received by the Senate.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Research on resolutions to the federal government is very thin. However, this concept reinforces conclusions from previous studies on a federal balanced budget amendment (Nice 1986) and opposition to REAL ID (Regan and Deering 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. This coding methodology has been widely employed in the policy field including databases such as the Congressional Bills Project ([www.congressionalbills.org](http://www.congressionalbills.org)) and the international Comparative Agendas Project ([www.comparativeagendas.org](http://www.comparativeagendas.org)). For a bibliography of the research employing this coding scheme see <http://www.policyagendas.org/biblio>. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The Pennsylvania Policy Database codes data by reading the abstract of the resolution created by the General Assembly’s Legislative Reference Bureau. The abstract contains enough information to understand the policy topic of the resolution but not enough to understand exactly what is being asked of the federal government or if there is a mandate present. Consequently, this project examined the full text of the resolution when coding for tone and mandates. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The following is an example of a commemorative resolution: “A Resolution memorializing AMTRAK to designate the station at 30th and Market Streets in Philadelphia as the Pennsylvania Station.” [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Early analysis examined several models with a variety of independent variables that were subsequently dropped from this model. Independent variables that were excluded from this model include: the average household income in sponsors’ home district; average social security income in sponsors’ home district; and ten year party competition in sponsors’ home district. Because turnover is low in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, sponsor partisan identity was highly correlated with the ten year district party competition variable. Moreover, the region of Pennsylvania was highly correlated with the average household income in sponsors’ home district and the average social security income in sponsors’ home district. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The Franklin and Marshal College Poll separates out Philadelphia and Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) as their own regions of Pennsylvania. We merged Philadelphia and Allegheny County with their appropriate regions (southeast and southwest). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. The pseudo R square = .03 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Chi-square test results: *χ2*= 48.24 (19), *p* < .01. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Results of chi-square results for Dem/Republican sponsor and oppose/support: *χ2*= 12.7 (1), *p* <.000. Results for individual policy topics: Labor/Employment/Immigration *χ2* = 5.6 (1), *p* <.05; Environment *χ2* = 3.9 (1), *p* <.05; Law, Family and Crime *χ2* = 4.15 (1), *p* <.05 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Chi-sqχuare test results: Republicans *χ2*= 4.76 (2), *p>* .05; Democrats *χ2*= 5.46 (2), *p >.05*

    [↑](#endnote-ref-13)