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STATE BY STATE: HOW REPRESENTATION AFFECTS ABORTION POLICY

MOLLY BURNS
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Susan Welch
Professor of Political Science
Thesis Supervisor

Matthew Golder
Professor of Political Science
Honors Adviser

* Electronic approvals are on file.

ABSTRACT

Since the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, the policies governing abortion have varied widely by state. States can enact a wide range of possible restrictions. This work seeks to determine what accounts for those inter-state variations by analyzing the effects of state legislature characteristics and state population demographics on the restrictiveness of a state's abortion policy. The restrictiveness of the abortion policy is measured on a scale of 1-7, based on 7 possible abortion restrictions: "partial-birth" abortion bans, public funding restrictions, limitations on insurance coverage, parental involvement, mandated counseling, waiting periods, and TRAP laws. The key findings of this paper highlight the importance of women's, specifically Democratic women's, representation in the state legislature and its effect on producing less restrictive abortion policy in a state.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1973, in the landmark decision *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed the right to safe, legal abortion (Planned Parenthood 2019). Despite the court declaring this constitutional right, the road for people seeking abortions since then has not been so simple. Roe left the door open for certain restrictions on abortion, and later Supreme Court cases affirmed several restrictions. The *Roe* decision stated that the state cannot regulate abortion in the first trimester, but they can impose restrictions in the second and third trimester, even going so far as to allow prohibition (with exceptions to save the life or health of the mother) in the third trimester ("Roe v. Wade" 2020).

Leaving this door open meant that anti-choice state legislatures could pass numerous legislative restrictions in the years since Roe, and that subsequent Supreme Court cases could make passing restrictions even easier. For example, in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* (1992), the Court affirmed Roe's ruling, but expanded state authority to regulate abortion by establishing an "undue burden" standard that only prohibited restrictions if they posed a "substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability" ("Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey" 2020). In the wake of Casey, states have enacted several abortion restrictions each year. Since 2001, a total of 660 abortion limits have been imposed (Keating, Tierney, Meko, and Rindler 2019).

There is a large variation among states in which restrictions and how many restrictions are imposed on a person's right to safe, legal abortion. For the purposes of my research, I am interested in how the percentage of women in a state legislature is related to abortion restrictions in a given state. State legislatures play a larger role than people tend to realize. When women are in elected office, they tend to provide substantive representation for women (Swers and Rouse 2011). Therefore, I would expect women in state legislatures to advocate on behalf of women when it comes to abortion rights. That being said, women are not a monolith, so it is important to look at the individual characteristics of those women to understand how that affects the laws in a state as well. In particular, partisanship plays a huge role in shaping legislative votes. I will

examine that and the impact of key state demographics on abortion restrictions passed by states. My work is unusual in this area because it looks at abortion policy at three points in time.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Abortion Policy

   Abortion policy goes much deeper than whether abortion is legal or constitutional. Abortion policy encompasses a wide array of laws that determine access to abortion in each state. For my research, I have chosen seven general areas of abortion restrictions that occur within states across the country, which are listed in Table 1. While one might expect more restrictions in 2019, policy trends explain why that is not the case. Despite the last decade being characterized by record breaking numbers of restrictions enacted, 2018 restrictions were outnumbered by policies that protected abortion rights. The same was not true in 2011, the year in which more restrictions were passed than any other, and the number of restrictions far outweighed the number of protections enacted (Nash 2019). This is clear in Table 1, which shows that numbers of each restriction were highest in 2011, with only one exception. Public funding restrictions and parental involvement laws appear to be the most common types of restrictions, while limits on insurance coverage are the least common.

Table 1: Abortion Policies

Policy	# of States with Policy		First adopted
"Partial birth" abortion ban	1994	40	Before 1994, precise year unknown[1]
	2011	39	
	2019	22	
Public funding restrictions	1994	41	1977 ("Access Denied" n.d.)
	2011	33	
	2019	34	
Insurance coverage limited	1994	12	Before 1994, precise year unknown [2]
	2011	20	
	2019	11	
Parental involvement	1994	39	1980s (Myers and Ladd 2017)
	2011	43	
	2019	38	
Waiting period	1994	19	As early as 1979[3] (Khazan 2015)
	2011	29	
	2019	27	
Mandated counseling	1994	30	Before 1994, precise year unknown[4]
	2011	33	
	2019	18	
TRAP law	1994	0	2005 ("The TRAP" 2007)
	2011	44	
	2019	22	

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[1] Data on first partial birth abortion ban is unclear. The first federal ban was passed in 2003 (Santorum 2003), but it is unclear which state was the first to pass a similar ban and when.

[2] Data on first law limiting insurance coverage is unclear due to wide variation in implementation and lack of available information on when a limitation was first passed.

[3] Precise data on first waiting period law is unclear, but the article cites a waiting period law enacted in 1979.

[4] Data on first waiting mandated counseling law is unclear due to lack of available information on when a limitation was first passed.

Legislative Characteristics

Wide variation exists in the restrictiveness of abortion policies across the United States. Explanations differ, and scholars focus on possible factors: such as race, gender, or partisanship as the main determinant. However, as these factors become increasingly important issues in our politics, it is important to address all of them together when attempting to explain variations in abortion policy.

As we saw in table 1, "abortion policy" is an umbrella term for a wide range of different ways in which the state can restrict access to abortion. In order to understand abortion restrictions, a researcher must account for the numerous kinds of restrictions that exist. We have reason to believe that certain groups of people will have higher demand for abortion, and people have strong views about how available abortion should be. Those public demands must be mediated through the legislature, which means that characteristics of the legislature are important.

Kreitzer (2015), Berkman and O'Connor (1993), Norrander and Wilcox (2005) and Reingold (2019) all researched the effects of legislative demographics on state policy. Kreitzer found that in states with lower numbers of women in their legislatures, the probability of adopting anti-abortion rights policy was much higher. Partisanship mattered too; an increase in the proportion of Democratic women always decreased the probability of anti-abortion rights policy (Kreitzer 2015).

Berkman and O'Connor studied two areas of abortion policy: public funding and parental notification. They found that with a greater number of women in the legislature, a state is less likely to require parental notification. Public funding, on the other hand, is less aligned with the number of female legislators and more with other social welfare policies. (Berkman and O'Connor 1993). Norrander and Wilcox (2005) also found that more women legislators made it less likely that a state would pass a parental consent law, which would require a minor to get a parent's approval before obtaining an abortion. Reingold (2019) explains that women legislators are "more likely to care about women's issues and practice more egalitarian, consensus-building leadership".

Members of racial and ethnic groups in legislatures also advocate on behalf of their communities by initiating policy change or blocking harmful policy. In 1993, Meier and

McFarlane found that the percentage of African Americans in a population is positively related to that state's abortion funding policy, and the percent Black and Hispanic are positively related to the amount of abortions that actually get funded. This reflects their idea that once policy is in place, politics take a back seat to demand within the state. Bureaucrats will attempt to meet those demands when implementing policy. They found that Black and Hispanic women, along with employed women and urban women, would be the most likely groups to have high demand for abortion (Meier and McFarlane 1993).

My research builds on these prior studies in the following way. Like Reingold, I will explore women legislators' impact on the formation of public policy, in my case, state abortion policy. I hope to provide clarity on Reingold's mixed results on the impact of legislative women on the policy outcome. Previous research has found that the presence of women in state legislatures has an impact on state abortion policy, but none of that research was current. I plan to investigate the effects of the most recent class of state legislative women on abortion policies that have passed in their states. My research will build upon Kreitzer's work by examining abortion legislation in the states during three different years: 1994, 2011, and 2019. I will also expand her work by including not only women's representation in state legislatures, but by taking other demographics into account, such as race. I hope to build on Meier and McFarlane's findings about how the demand of different demographic groups affect specific areas of abortion policy. I will look beyond abortion funding to examine these effects on seven dimensions of abortion policy, to see if these demands and their effects have changed over time. Kreitzer's research confirms an expectation I already had about abortion restrictions, which was that when there are more women, particularly Democratic women, there will be less abortion restrictions passed. However, this finding does not give me any insight into the ways in which characteristics like race play a role in a state's abortion policy.

My work goes farther than the Berkman and O'Connor study by addressing five additional types of restrictions to the two they studied. It is important to account for the various types of abortion restrictions, because the effect of independent variables can differ based on which type of restriction you are analyzing. It will be important for me to take these findings into account and expand on them in my own research. In addition to researching more restrictions, my research will account for changes in abortion attitudes over time. The varying effects on

certain types of abortion policy may be different now from when Berkman and O'Connor researched this topic in 1993.

Other factors shaping abortion policy

I will also examine several factors other than women legislators that affect policy making. These factors include partisanship and ideology, education, and labor force participation.

Partisanship and ideology

Partisanship and ideology can override gender influences. Kreitzer (2015), Medoff and Dennis (2002), Camobreco and Barnello (2008) and Kahane (1994) examined effects of partisanship and ideology on state abortion policy. Kahane (1994) found that the ideology of policy makers plays an important role in determining their position. Kreitzer found that the probability of passing anti-abortion rights policies decreases with a Democratic governor (Kreitzer 2015). Camobreco and Barnello explain that while the gender of legislators can play a key role in a state's abortion policy, partisanship can overwhelm those effects (2008). In other words, we might expect a state with more female legislators to have more liberal abortion policy, but not if most of those women are Republicans. Medoff and Dennis found the anti-abortion ideology of the Republican party combined with Republican institutional control of state government to be the strongest determinant of a state enacting a TRAP law. They also found that the political ideology of the state population is insignificant in determining whether a state enacts a TRAP law (Medoff and Dennis 2002). However, Norrander and Wilcox (2005) found that overall abortion policies are determined by the state's policy culture, meaning whether the overall state ideology is conservative or liberal. For example, a "liberal tradition" in other policy areas tends to also produce liberal abortion policy (Norrander and Wilcox 2005). These factors are important to my analysis because it shows that one can't look at the influence of gender without examining partisanship and ideology.

I will build on Kahane's finding about partsanship by examining the relationship of partisanship to abortion policy. For example, if a legislature has a larger number of Democratic members, I expect their abortion policy to be less restrictive. I intend to build on Medoff and Dennis's research by looking at the effects of the partisanship on the state legislature on not only TRAP laws, but on other types of abortion restrictions as well. Party affiliation may be more

significant when looking at one abortion restriction over another. In other words, partisanship might affect different policies differently.

The effect of partisanship on abortion policy may also vary by state. For example, Kreitzer's finding that a Democratic governor decreases anti-abortion rights policy may differ if the state legislature is controlled by Republicans. I will also investigate the ways in which partisanship and gender in the legislature interact by building on Camobreco and Barnello's finding that partisanship can overwhelm gender. If the percentage of women in the legislature is high, but the percentage of Democratic women is low, it will be interesting to see what relationship this has with the level of abortion policy restrictiveness.

State Characteristics

State population characteristics might also influence policy in their effects on who gets elected to the legislature and their effects on public opinion.

Labor force participation

Medoff (2002) found that women in the labor force have a greater demand for abortion. According to Kahane (1994), labor force participation plays an important role in determining the position state legislative bodies take on legal abortion. Labor force participation will be included in my analysis, and I intend to look further into this finding by determining whether labor force participation translates to less restrictive abortion policies.

Education

According to a 2019 Pew Research Center poll on abortion attitudes, support for legal abortion increases as level of education increases ("Public Opinion on Abortion" 2019). Therefore, if a higher percentage of the population has a college degree or higher, I would expect the state to be more pro-choice and for the policies to reflect that. A 2012 Pew Research Center survey found that women who are highly educated have children later in life (Livingston 2019). Therefore, women who have a Bachelor's degree or higher will likely support policies that grant them the most control of their reproductive decisions in order to delay getting pregnant.

Chapter 3

Theory and Hypotheses

Theory: *The demographics and partisanship of the legislature and the state are factors that correlate with the restrictiveness of a state's abortion policy.*

My study examines several factors that could shape abortion policy outcomes to provide a comprehensive explanation for why abortion policies are more restrictive in some states than others.

Legislature Characteristics

H1: *When there are more women in a state legislature, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

As noted above, this hypothesis has been widely studied, as abortion is mainly thought of as a women's issue and therefore women legislators are expected to be particularly influential in this area. As we saw, results have been mixed, see Berkman and O'Connor (1993), Kreitzer (2015), and Reingold (2019).

H2: *When Democrats hold a majority in the state legislature, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

I will use the common terms "pro-choice" and "pro-life" to reflect those who believe in women's right to choose and those who believe abortions should not be allowed by the government. I recognize that these terms are politicized but reflect in a distinct way each group's beliefs. The Democratic party is the pro-choice party, so much so that its commitment to reproductive freedom is part of its party platform: "we believe that safe abortion must be part of comprehensive maternal and women's health care" ("Protect Our Values" 2019). In contrast, the Republican party platform states that "We oppose the use of public funds to promote abortion or fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide for elective abortions…" (The 2016 Republican Party Platform 2016). Additionally, abortion attitudes have followed the trend of party polarization. In other words, the overall trend is that Democrats have become more staunchly pro-choice, while Republicans have doubled down on a pro-life ideology Gallup" 2019). As party polarization increases, politicians avoid straying from what their base wants in

order to avoid electoral consequences. The Democratic base is predominantly pro-choice, therefore I hypothesize that a Democratic majority in a state legislature is unlikely to pass restrictive abortion policy.

H3: *When there are more women who are Democrats in a state legislature, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

Women's policy influence yields mixed results because of the presence of both Democratic and Republican women. Republican women favor different abortion outcomes than Democratic women. As members of a party that favors banning abortion, there is significantly more pressure on Republican women (on top of their internal values) to vote in favor of laws that restrict abortion access. In fact, a 2019 NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found that Republican women express more opposition to abortion than Republican men (McCammon 2019). Democrats, in contrast, are overwhelmingly opposed to banning abortion ("Public Opinion on Abortion" 2019), which, in partisan terms, is coined pro-choice. This coupled with the fact that women are more likely to advocate on behalf of women's issues (Swers and Rouse 2011), leads me to hypothesize that the presence of Democratic women will result in less restrictive state abortion policy.

H4: *When a larger percentage of the legislators are Black, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

Representatives for racial and ethnic minorities are likely to advocate on behalf of minority interests (Reingold 2019). An NPR survey found that 67% of African Americans think abortion should be legal in all or most cases ("Barbershop" 2019). In fact, some studies have shown that approval of abortion is greater among Blacks than it is for whites (Carter, Carter, and Dodge 2009). Therefore, if we couple Reingold's finding with the results of the NPR survey, Black state legislators will be more likely to respond to their community's beliefs that abortion should be legal, and advocate for less restrictive abortion policy. If Black state legislators advocate for less restrictive abortion policies, I hypothesize that state legislatures with more Black legislators will pass less restrictive abortion policies.

State Characteristics

H5: *When there is a Democratic governor in the state, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

As discussed in Hypothesis 4, the Democratic party is pro-choice, therefore Democratic policymakers have very little incentive to support pro-life policy. Because Democratic governors have the power to veto or sign policies that come out of state legislatures, they hold a lot of power in determining whether a state's abortion policy is restrictive. If the state legislature has a Democratic majority, I hypothesized that they would pass pro-choice legislation, and therefore a Democratic governor will sign that legislation into law. If there is a Republican majority and a Democratic governor, I hypothesize that the presence of a Democratic governor will decrease the likelihood of restrictive abortion policy being enacted.

H6: *When a majority of the state's population is Democratic, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

When a majority of the state's population is Democratic, one can assume that the state legislature will reflect that and be majority Democratic as well. Because Democrats are more likely to be pro-choice, and assuming my hypothesis about a Democratic majority in the legislature is true, a Democratic state population would lead to less restrictive abortion policies.

H7: *When a larger percentage of the state's population is Black, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

Data from the Public Religion Research Institute found that over half of African Americans think abortion is wrong, yet 67% of African Americans still think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. According to political scientist Andra Gillespie, Black voters see themselves as conservative, but that conservatism looks different from white conservatism. For most Black voters, race is a salient issue and "so they have chosen the political party that they think is best on civil rights issues, and so that party also happens to be the party that's pro-choice" ("Barbershop" 2019). Additionally, I suspect that the effect of systemic barriers to reproductive healthcare for Black women plays a role in Black support for legal abortion. Restrictive abortion laws disproportionately harm poor women, and women of color, including Black women. This combination of factors leads me to hypothesize that when a larger percentage of a state's population is Black, that state will have less restrictive abortion policy.

H8: *When women's labor force participation is higher in a state, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

When the labor force participation is higher, it is less likely that the legislature will pass pro-life legislation. More specifically, I hypothesize that women's labor force participation is the key determinant, as the work of Kahane (1994) and Medoff (2002) suggest.

H9*: When a larger percentage of the state's population has a college degree, the abortion policy will be less restrictive.*

As I described above, people with more education are more supportive of abortion rights, not restrictions.

Chapter 4

Methodology

My cases include state abortion policies in all 50 states in 1994, 2011, and 2019. My unit of analysis will be states during my case years. I purposefully chose years that frame growth in the number of abortion restrictions. I will utilize a cross-sectional analysis at these three points in time. That is, I will collect data on the dependent and independent variables in 1994 and compare them and do the same for variables in 2011 and 2019.

This allows me to compare many different variables at the same point in time. Because a cross-sectional analysis gives a "snapshot" of the unit of analysis (Lewis-Beck et al. 2004), I have chosen to collect data for years that mark growth in the number of abortion restrictions as table 1 indicates. Those years capture the changes I wish to study. I want to determine why some states have more restrictive abortion policies than others, and why that may have changed between my case years. To do so, I need to measure my independent variables at the times that correspond with growth in restrictive abortion policy. I will run both cross-tabulation and regression analyses in SPSS software to test for the effects of my independent variables in each case year.

My independent variables include demographics and partisanship of both the state legislature and the state population. For the state legislature, I look at the percentage of women, the percentage of Democratic women, the percentage of Black legislators, and the percentage of Democratic legislators. For the state population, I include the Black population, the percentage of the population with a college degree, women's labor force participation, and the percentage of the state that voted Democrat in the most recent presidential election. Data on the legislative demographics come from the National Conference of State Legislatures (Mahoney 2019; Cullen 2008) and the Center for American Women in Politics ("CAWP" 2020). Data on the state demographics can be found in the CQ Voting and Elections Collection ("Voting and Elections Collection" 2020), and Census data, more specifically Statistical Abstracts ("Statistical Abstracts Series" 2018).

My dependent variable is state abortion policy. I measured seven different abortion restrictions shown in Table 1. I gave each state a score from 1 to 7, 1 being the least restrictive, 7 being the most. If the restriction exists in any way, it will be worth one point. For example, if the state requires any kind of mandated counseling and any level of parental involvement, its restrictiveness score would be 2 if there were no other restrictions. The data on these laws come from NARAL annual reports ("*Who Decides*" 1997; "*Who Decides*" 2011) and the Guttmacher Institute ("An Overview of Abortion Laws" 2020).

Table 2 shows the intercorrelations among my scale items. All correlations are positive in each time period. The Cronbach alpha values for each year are all above .7, indicating that my scales are all reliable as measured by this standard reliability index. Additionally, the reliability increased each time period indicating that views on different abortion restrictions are becoming more cohesive. Overall, it is clear then that my scale is measuring attitudes toward whether abortion should be restricted or not.

Table 2: Correlations Among Abortion Restriction Measures

	1994					
	"Partial birth" abortion ban	Public funding restricted	Insurance coverage limited	Parental involvement	Mandated counseling	Waiting period
"Partial birth" abortion ban	1.000	.286	.164	.217	.306	.288
Public funding restricted	.286	1.000	.141	.505	.255	.260
Insurance coverage limited	.164	.141	1.000	.185	.268	.139
Parental involvement	.217	.505	.185	1.000	.453	.416
Mandated counseling	.306	.255	.268	.453	1.000	.639
Waiting period	.288	.260	.139	.416	.639	1.000

a. Cronbach's alpha=.725

b. All intercorrelations are significant at .05 or below

2011

	"Partial birth" abortion ban	Public funding restricted	Insurance coverage limited	Parental involvement	Mandated counseling	Waiting period	TRAP law
"Partial birth" abortion ban	1.000	.434	.237	.342	.434	.428	.398
Public funding restricted	.434	1.000	.327	.440	.376	.416	.255
Insurance coverage limited	.237	.327	1.000	.329	.414	.447	.302
Parental involvement	.342	.440	.329	1.000	.440	.474	.383
Mandated counseling	.434	.376	.414	.440	1.000	.843	.125
Waiting period	.428	.416	.447	.474	.843	1.000	.060
TRAP law	.398	.255	.302	.383	.125	.060	1.000

a. Cronbach's alpha=.810

b. All intercorrelations are significant at .05 or below

2019

	"Partial birth" abortion ban	Public funding restricted	Insurance coverage limited	Parental involvement	Mandated counseling	Waiting period	TRAP law
"Partial birth" abortion ban	1.000	.349	.210	.309	.342	.495	.351
Public funding restricted	.349	1.000	.364	.719	.336	.657	.608
Insurance coverage limited	.210	.364	1.000	.298	.306	.490	.405
Parental involvement	.309	.719	.298	1.000	.421	.609	.498
Mandated counseling	.342	.336	.306	.421	1.000	.609	.426
Waiting period	.495	.657	.490	.609	.609	1.000	.656
TRAP law	.351	.608	.405	.498	.426	.656	1.000

a. Cronbach's alpha=.852

b. All intercorrelations are significant at .05 or below

Chapter 5

Results and Analysis

I first tested my hypotheses by looking at simple bivariate correlations between each independent variable and the abortion restrictiveness score in each year (Table 3). In 1994, only the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher was correlated significantly with abortion restrictiveness. A higher percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree was correlated with lower abortion restrictiveness scores, as predicted.

By 2011 and again in 2019, the relationship between partisanship and abortion restrictiveness grew much stronger. All three measures of Democratic strength were significantly linked to fewer restrictions: larger percentage of Democratic legislators, Democratic votes for President, and women who are Democrats. The proportion of women also correlated positively and significantly with fewer abortion restrictions. In fact, all independent variables except the percentage of Black state legislators and women's labor force participation were correlated significantly with abortion restrictions. However, contrary to my hypothesis, the state Black population was correlated with higher, not lower, abortion restrictiveness scores. The proportion of Black state legislators was not significantly correlated at all.

Table 3: Correlations Between Abortion Restrictiveness and Each Independent Variable

	1994	2011	2019
% Women in the Legislature	-.22	-.55**	-.57**
% of Women Legislators who are Democrats	-.21	-.31*	-.59**
% Democrats in the Legislature	-.16	-.44**	-.74**
% Democratic Votes for President	-.12	-.55**	-.35**
% Black in the legislature	-.02	.19	.18
% State Black Population	.02	.28*	.24*
% of Population with Bachelor's degree or higher	-.31*	-.46**	-.54**
% Women's Labor Force Participation	.02	-.20	-.22

a. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed)
b. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed)
c. N=50 (except % Democrat in legislature and % women who are Democrats, Nebraska has nonpartisan legislature)

Larger correlations in 2011 and 2019 demonstrate the increasingly strong relationship between abortion attitudes and partisanship. In 1994, the ideological gap between Democrats and Republicans in support for abortion rights was about 15 percent. It steadily grew in following years, with the gap hovering around 30 percent in the 2010s (Gallup 2019). This trend is likely related to increasing numbers of women in the Democratic party and migration of more educated people into the Democratic party. In 1994, 48 percent of women affiliated with or leaned toward the Democratic party ("Trends in Party Affiliation" 2018). That number rose to about 51 percent in 2011, and 56 percent in 2018. Education has seen a greater shift, with 54 percent of voters with a college degree identified with or leaned toward the Republican party, compared to only 39 percent of those voters leaning toward or identifying with the Democratic party. In 2017, those numbers basically flipped, with 63 percent leaning toward or identifying with the Democratic party, and 31 percent with the Republican party (Willingham 2018).

Cross-Tabulations

Table 3 provides an additional test of my hypotheses. Now I turn to looking at these relationships in a little more detail through crosstabulations, In this section, I will focus on the bivariate relationships between my abortion restrictiveness scale and several key independent variables: percentage of women who are Democrats, percentage of legislators who are women, women's labor force participation, and the state's Black population.

Table 4 shows the cross-tabulations for the relationship between women who are Democrats and abortion restrictiveness in 1994, 2011, and 2019. In all 3 years, there were fewer restrictive abortion policies in place in states with higher proportions of women who are Democrats. That relationship grew stronger in each period. In 1994, in states with relatively few Democratic women, 65 percent have restrictive abortion legislation compared to only 17 percent of the states having such legislation when they have large proportions of Democratic women. The relationship, however, was not significant at the .05 level. In 2011, 82 percent of states with fewer Democratic women had the most restrictive abortion policy, while only 33 percent of states with high proportions of Democratic women had the most restrictive abortion policy. This stronger relationship is significant.

In 2019, 65 percent of states with the lowest proportion of Democratic women had highly restrictive policies, compared to 17 percent of those with the highest proportion of Democratic women. On the other hand, fully 72 percent of states with the highest proportion of women who are Democrats have the least restrictive policies compared to only 6 percent of states with the fewest women who are Democrats. This reflects the strongest relationship of the three, significant at the .00 level. Therefore, I conclude that when there are more women who are Democrats in a state legislature and a state has a history of electing Democratic women, the abortion policy will be less restrictive. This relationship has grown over time, confirming the correlations in table 2.

Table 4: The Relationship of Women who are Democrats and Abortion Restrictiveness

1994

(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women who are Democrats	Low	12	24	65	17 (100)
	Medium	21	36	43	14 (100)
	High	33	50	17	18 (100)

a. N=49 (Nebraska legislature is nonpartisan)
b. Chi square=8.46
c. Sig=.08
d. % Women who are Democrats= The percentage of women in the legislature who are Democrats

2011

(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women who are Democrats	Low	6	12	82	17 (100)
	Medium	7	36	57	14 (100)
	High	39	28	33	18 (100)

a. N= 49 (Nebraska legislature is nonpartisan)
b. Chi square=12.13
c. Sig=.02
d. % Women who are Democrats= The percentage of women in the legislature who are Democrats

2019

(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women who are Democrats	Low	6	29	65	17 (100)
	Medium	36	21	43	14 (100)
	High	72	11	17	18 (100)

a. N= 49 (Nebraska legislature is nonpartisan)
b. Chi square= 16.38
c. Sig=.00
d. % Women who are Democrats= The percentage of women in the legislature who are Democrats

Table 5 shows the cross-tabulations for the relationship between women in the legislature and abortion restrictiveness in the three years. In 1994, there is no clear relationship. The proportion of states with the most women legislators have the same proportion of restrictive abortion policies (39 percent) than states with the least (40 percent). For 2011, 70 percent of states with the lowest proportion of women had high abortion restrictiveness cores, while only 39 percent of states with the highest proportion of women had such scores. In 2019, the relationship is somewhat stronger, with 70 percent of states with the lowest proportion of women legislators having high abortion restrictiveness scores, and only 29 percent of states with the highest proportion of women legislators in the same range. The relationship in both years was only significant at the .06 level, however. For 2011 and 2019, my hypothesis is tentatively confirmed in that states with more women in the legislature and that have a history of electing women are more likely to enact less restrictive abortion policy.

Table 5: The Relationship of Women in the Legislature and Abortion Restrictiveness

1994

(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women in the Legisature	Low	10	50	40	10 (100)
	Medium	24	29	47	17 (100)
	High	26	35	39	23 (100)

a. N=50

b. Chi square=1.76
c. Sig=.78

2011
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women in the Legislature	Low	0	30	70	10 (100)
	Medium	18	6	77	17 (100)
	High	26	35	39	23 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=8.89
c. Sig=.06

2019
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women in the Legislature	Low	20	10	70	10 (100)
	Medium	24	24	53	17 (100)
	High	57	22	22	23 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=9.11
c. Sig=.06

Table 6 shows the cross-tabulations for the relationship between women's labor force participation and abortion restrictiveness. I hypothesized that higher women's labor force participation would be related to less restrictive abortion score, but that is not confirmed for 1994. The percentage of states with the most restrictive abortion scores were the same (44 percent) for low and high women's labor force participation. In 2011, there appears to be a stronger relationship. 78 percent of states with low women's labor force participation had the most restrictive abortion policy, while only 44 percent of states with high women's labor force participation had the most restrictive abortion policy. Similarly, in 2019, 56 percent of states with low women's labor force participation were in the most restrictive abortion policy range, with only 22 percent of states with high women's labor force participation were in the same range. Therefore, my hypothesis about women's labor force participation is confirmed only in

2019, a relationship that reaches the .05 level of significance. In 2011, there is a relationship, but it is not significant.

Table 6: Relationship of Women's Labor Force Participation and Abortion Restrictiveness

1994
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women's Labor Force Participation	Low	22	33	44	19 (100)
	Medium	36	29	36	14 (100)
	High	11	44	44	18 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=2.96
c. Sig=.57
d. % Women's Labor Force Participation= The percentage of the women in the labor force

2011
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
% Women's Labor Force Participation	Low	11	11	78	18 (100)
	Medium	29	21	50	14 (100)
	High	17	39	44	18 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=6.25
c. Sig=.18
d. % Women's Labor Force Participation= The percentage of the women in the labor force

2019

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Low	Medium	High	(%)
% Women's Labor Force Participation	Low	17	28	56	18 (100)
	Medium	50	0	50	14 (100)
	High	50	28	22	18 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=9.94
c. Sig=.04
d. % Women's Labor Force Participation= The percentage of the women in the labor force

Table 7 shows the cross-tabulations for the relationship between a state's Black population and abortion restrictiveness. For each year, the Black population appeared to have no relationship to the restrictiveness of abortion laws. If anything, as we saw in the correlation table, a higher state Black population was related to more restrictive abortion laws. For each year, the percentage of states with higher Black populations had more cases in the most restrictive abortion policy range than states with lower Black populations.

Table 7: Relationship of Black State Population and Abortion Restrictiveness

1994
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
State Black Population	Low	32	32	37	19 (100)
	Medium	18	27	55	11 (100)
	High	15	45	40	20 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=2.65
c. Sig=.62

2011
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
State Black Population	Low	26	37	37	19 (100)
	Medium	9	27	64	11 (100)
	High	15	10	75	20 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=6.83
c. Sig=.15

2019
(% of states in each category)

		Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws			Total N
		Least	Medium	Most	(%)
State Black Population	Low	47	26	26	19 (100)
	Medium	46	9	46	11 (100)
	High	25	20	55	20 (100)

a. N=50
b. Chi square=4.47
c. Sig=.35

The positive relationship between Black population and more restrictive abortion policies likely has something to do with the concentration of Black populations in Southern states, which tend to be more conservative, more Republican, and have more abortion restrictions. These relationships are demonstrated in Table 8, where we see that the number of states that have the highest proportion of Blacks are in the South, and that the number of cases in the highest range of abortion restrictiveness scores are also concentrated in the South (and the Midwest).

Table 8: Relationships Among State Black Population, Abortion Score and Region 2019

% of Black population distribution in each region

		Region				
		Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Total
State Black Population	Low	26	16	5	53	19 (100)
	Medium	27	27	18	27	11 (100)
	High	20	15	65	0	20 (100)

% of Abortion score range in each region

		Region				
		Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Total
Restrictiveness of Abortion Laws	Least	11	32	11	47	19 (100)
	Medium	10	30	40	20	10 (100)
	Most	43	0	48	10	21 (100)

Tables 4 through 7 demonstrate that I have checked the hypotheses involving each of my key independent variables. The next step in the analysis is to see how those independent variables work together through multivariate analysis.

Analyzing Abortion Policy through Multivariate Analysis

Before launching into my regression analyses, I checked the degree of intercorrelation among my independent variables. I suspected there would be strong interrelationships, for example, among the various measures of Democratic strength in the state. With high correlations, my regressions findings would be distorted due to multicollinearity, meaning that change in one variable are associated with changes in the other and you would no longer be analyzing each variable independently (Frost 2019).

Table 9 shows that many independent variables are related to one another, For example, the percentage of Black state legislators was highly correlated with state Black population. The more Black voters in the state, the more legislators who are Black. Thus in my regression analysis, I eliminated the Black state legislator variable.

The percentage of Democrats in the legislature and the percentage of women who are Democrats were also highly correlated as we expected, so I included the percentage of women who are Democrats and eliminated the percentage of Democratic legislators. The percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree was correlated with the percentage of women in the legislature, so I included percentage of women in the state legislature. I included the percentage of women who are Democrats and percentage of women in the legislature since they were my key independent variables.

Table 9: Correlations Among Independent Variables

	% Women in the Legislature	% Democratic Women	% Democrats in the legislature	% Democrats in the state	% Black in State Legislature	% State Black Population	% Bachelor's Degree or Higher	% Women's Labor Force Participation
% Women in the Legislature	1	.23**	.14*	.37**	-.24**	.37**	.61**	.36**
% Democratic women	.23**	1	.77**	.38**	.22**	.24**	.27**	-.07
% Democrats in the Legislature	.14*	.77**	1	.38**	.08	.12	.02	-.05
% Democrats in the State	.37**	.38**	.38**	1	.06	.04	.43**	.08
% Black in the Legislature	-.24**	.22**	.078	.06	1	.91**	-.05	-.34**
% State Black Population	-.37**	.24**	.12	.04	.91**	1	-.11	-.35**
% Bachelor's Degree or Higher	.61**	.27**	.02	.43**	-.05	-.11	1	.45**
% Women's Labor Force Participation	.36**	-.07	-.05	.08	-.34**	-.35**	.45**	1

a. ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed)
b. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed)

Regressions

In my pared down model, I regressed abortion policy on state Black population, women who are Democrats, women's labor force participation, and women in the state legislature. The results are shown in table 10. In 1994, only the percentage of women in the legislature was

statistically significant at or below .05, using a one-tailed test though the percentage of women who are Democrats was nearly significant. This relationship between women in the legislature and abortion restrictions is negative, meaning that a higher percentage of women is related to fewer abortion restrictions.

Table 10: Multivariate Analysis of Abortion Restrictions

1994

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.703	3.669		1.282	.104
	% State Black population	-.00	.033	.000	-.002	.500
	% Women who are Democrats	-.028	.017	-.259	-1.645	.054
	% Women's Labor Force Participation	.036	.061	.098	.591	.279
	% Women in State Legislature	-.071	.039	-.334	-1.803	.039

a. Dependent variable: 1-7 score, 7 being most restrictive
b. Selecting only cases for which year=1994
c. R^2= .358

In 2011, both women who are Democrats and the percentage of women in the state legislature were statistically significant, with the relationship between abortion policy and the percentage of women in the legislature being stronger. Both relationships are negative, with both more women and Democratic women leading to less abortion restrictions.

2011

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	10.804	4.577		2.360	.012
	% State Black population	.049	.033	.224	1.511	.069

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
% Women who are Democrats	-.033	.019	-.258	-1.765	.043
% Women's Labor Force Participation	-.030	.076	-.054	-.395	.348
% Women in state Legislature	-.116	.049	-.369	-2.391	.011

a. Dependent variable: 1-7 score, 7 being most restrictive
b. Selecting only cases for which Year = 2011
c. R^2= .362

In 2019, both the percentage of women who are Democrats and women in the legislature were highly significant at the .05 level. The variance explained by the four variables in the regression equation increased noticeably in 2019 with an R^2 of .46 compared to .36 in the 1994 and 2011 regressions. That means that the variables are explaining more of the variation in 2019 than before.

2019

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.176	4.269		2.384	.011
	%State Black population	.043	.032	.171	1.336	.094
	% Women who are Democrats	-.062	.019	-.461	-3.346	.001
	% Women's Labor Force Participation	-.022	.074	-.036	-.293	.386
	% Women in State Legislature	-.068	.043	-.244	-1.587	.060

a. Dependent Variable: 1-7 score, 7 being most restrictive
b. Selecting only cases for which Year = 2019
d. R^2= .464

The percentage of women in the legislature was significant in each year, while the proportion of Democratic women was significant in 2011 and 2019. Both of these variables were

related to fewer restrictive abortion policies. The coefficient for Democratic women was larger and more significant than women in the legislature in 2019 only.

It is important to note that while I have discussed the relationship between women who are Democrats and abortion restrictiveness as meaningful, I realize that women who are Democrats in 2019 did not produce most of the abortion restriction legislation I have discussed for any year. Therefore, I am going to look more carefully at causal relationships. I expected that states with more women legislators in 2019 likely had more before too and would have less restrictive abortion policy. I expected the same for Democratic women legislators.

In fact, the percentage of women legislators in 2019 was correlated at .70 with the percent women legislators in 1994, 25 years before, though only at .19 with women legislators in 2011. The percentage of Democratic women legislators in 2019 was correlated at .31 with the percentage of women who are Democrats in 1994, and at .70 in 2011. So, as I had expected, the states having more women legislators and more Democratic women legislators in 2019 also had them before. Those women, in turn, helped shape the legislation in place in 2019. And the 2011 legislation also might have been shaped by women and Democratic women serving before them. In order to determine the significance of past women legislators and past Democratic women legislators on abortion policy in 2011, I ran a regression with the percentage of women legislators and Democratic women legislators in 1994, the results of which are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Impact of History of Women and Democratic Women Legislators on 2011 Abortion Policy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	10.163	.803		12.661	.000
	Democratic Women Legislators 1994	-.037	.010	-.272	-3.855	.000
	Women State Legislators 1994	-.147	.019	-.558	-7.904	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Abortion Restrictiveness Score 2011

b. $R^2 = .318$

The relationship between both Democratic women and women legislators and abortion policy in 2011 is statistically significant in the predicted direction (as seen in Table 11). States with a higher percentage of women legislators in 1994 had fewer restrictive abortion policies in 2011, and the same was true for higher percentages of Democratic women. Thus, my expectation was proven true.

To determine the significance of past women and Democratic women legislators on abortion policy in 2019, I ran a regression with these variables in both 1994 and 2011, shown in Table 12.

The relationship between women legislators in 1994 and abortion policy in 2019 is also statistically significant in the predicted direction. States that had a higher percentage of women legislators in 1994 had fewer restrictive abortion policies in 2019. States that had more women legislators in 1994 also had them in 2019, which in turn suggests that the relationship between the 2019 percentage of women legislators and less restrictive abortion laws could be because the state had at least a quarter century tradition of women state legislators.

The relationship between the 2011 percentage of women legislators was also significant, but in a positive direction, meaning that more women legislators was related to more abortion restrictions in 2019. I suspect that this is related to the fact that in a show of rebellion against the passage of Obamacare (Pramuk 2019), Republicans claimed midterm election victories in 2010 that led to their control of 53 percent of state legislative seats in the United States. This to a more conservative agenda across the board, regardless of gender (Smith 2010). Therefore, the surge of Republican women from 29 percent of women legislators in 2010 to 38 percent in 2011 ("Women in State Legislatures" 2010, "Women in State Legislatures" 2011) may have complicated the expected effects of large numbers of women legislators. It is likely that the women elected were mostly conservative who came in as a part of this Republican wave of 2010.

The relationship between Democratic women and abortion restrictiveness is statistically significant in 2011, but not 1994. As with women legislators, this suggests that a recent tradition of Democratic women legislators led to less restrictive abortion policies. The stronger relationship between 2011 Democratic women and abortion restrictiveness is likely related to the

growing partisan gap regarding abortion attitudes, as discussed above. In other words, partisanship played a larger role in 2011 and 2019 than in 1994.

Table 12: Impact of History of Women and Democratic Women Legislators on 2019 Abortion Policy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	9.502	.973		9.768	.000
	Women State Legislators 1994	-.138	.020	-.455	-6.990	.000
	Women State Legislators 2011	.053	.023	.144	2.265	.013
	Democratic Women Legislators 1994	-.003	.013	-.022	-.271	.394
	Democratic Women Legislators 2011	-.072	.012	-.490	-6.157	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Abortion Restrictiveness Score 2019

b. R^2=.453

A history of both women and Democratic women legislators were significant in producing less restrictive abortion policy in 2011. A tradition of electing Democratic women grew more significant between 1994 and 2011 in producing less restrictive abortion policy in 2019. The significance of women legislators in 2011 was obscured by Republican majorities across state legislatures.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

My analysis produced many findings about the relationship between state legislators, state population, and abortion policy. Specific characteristics of both state legislators and state populations play a role in determining how restrictive a state's abortion policy is. While Reingold (2019) found that the impact of legislative women on policy outcome is unclear, I demonstrated that in terms of abortion policy, states with more women in the legislature as well as a history of electing women had less restrictive abortion policies in both 2011 and 2019. Because my analysis did not include years prior to 1994, it is unclear whether a history of electing women had an effect on abortion policy in 1994.

The effect of Democratic women legislators proved even stronger, lending credibility to Camobreco and Barnello's (2008) finding that partisanship can overwhelm the effects of gender. A higher percentage of Democratic women coupled with a history of electing Democratic women led to less restrictive abortion policy in a state. The significance of the relationship between Democratic women and abortion policy grew over time, likely due to the growing strength of partisanship around the issue of abortion.

My hypothesis that higher women's labor force participation would lead to less restrictive abortion policy only proved true in 2019, and further analysis would be needed to determine why that is. It is possible that the measure is not robust enough to capture the dynamics of women's roles in society, and therefore does not do enough to explain variations in state abortion policy.

The effects of a state's Black population on abortion policy were unexpected. Despite research demonstrating Black support for abortion rights, states with higher Black populations had more restrictive abortion laws. My analysis suggest that this is due to the fact that higher Black populations tend to be in Southern, conservative states. Those states in turn tend to produce more restrictive abortion policy.

Overall, Democratic women appeared to be the strongest determinant of a state's abortion policy. Both the proportion of Democrats in the legislature and women in the legislature were related to less restrictive abortion policies, so it is unsurprising that the presence of and history of electing women who are Democrats would have a strong relationship to less restrictive policies.

Other findings were less significant, but still informative about what conditions create state abortion policies. The percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher was highly correlated with the percentage of women in the legislature, so I dropped it from the regression. Because my analysis found the proportion of women legislators to be significant in leading to less restrictive abortion policy, one can assume that a population with more education is also related to less restrictive abortion policy. I also had to drop several other potentially interesting variables due to multicollinearity, and still others because I did not have good data. While this was necessary, it is possible that these omissions could have detracted from the full picture of what affects abortion policy in a state.

These findings can be useful to those who seek to understand the wide variation in abortion policy across the United States. I suggest that future works analyze the intersection of race and gender to determine if, for example, Black women have a stronger effect on abortion policy than Black men. I would also suggest that future works examine the effects of women legislators prior to 1994, and the years between 1994, 2011, and 2019 in order to better understand the ways in which a history of electing women legislators affects abortion policy in a given year.

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ACADEMIC VITA OF MOLY BURNS
burnsmolly0@gmail.com

Education

(Graduation May 2020)

The Pennsylvania State University, Main Campus- *College of Liberal Arts: Political Science, B.A. with a minor in Women's Studies*

Honors

- Student in the Penn State Schreyer Honors' College
- President's Freshman Award- 4.0 GPA in the first semester of Freshman year
- Superior Academic Achievement Certificate for the Fall Semester of 2017
- Dean's list- GPA of 3.5 or higher (Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019)

Experience- Involvement

March 2020-Present

Penn State Students for Bernie- *Campus Corps Leader*

- Hosting one phonebank a week
- Creating weekly social media campaigns and keeping track of how many members participate
- Conducting one on ones with members of the organization
- Making weekly recruitment calls

June 2019-March 2020

Penn State Students for Warren- *President*

- Running the group's social media in order to make announcements, attract new members, and connect with other campus chapters across the country
- Attending bi-weekly chapter leader trainings with the Warren campaign
- Organizing and running group meetings
- Organizing all group events including Get Out the Vote efforts and social events

April 2019-Present

Penn State College Democrats- *Political Affairs Chair*

- Helping to organize phone banks and canvassing trips
- Organizing and participating in Get Out the Vote efforts- events designed to mobilize Democratic voters
- Establishing a working relationship with the Centre County Democratic Committee
- Working with the Executive Board of the College Democrats to organize on-campus events for progressive causes

January 2018-March 2019

Penn State College Democrats- *General Member*
- Phone banking: Call registered voters leading up to the elections to speak with them about their policy priorities and provide information about Democratic candidates
- Canvassing: Knocking on doors to inform voters about campaign issues
- Set up a table in a frequently-trafficked area on campus and encourage students to register to vote or speak with them about Democratic candidates
- Knock doors leading up to/on election day and speak with people about Democratic candidates

June 2018-September 2019

Schreyer Scholar Advancement Team- *Scholar Ambassador*
- Represent the Schreyer Honors' College at various events to attract prospective students and make alumni feel welcome and proud
- Give tours of Schreyer housing to give students an idea of what life is like as a Schreyer student
- Build relationships with prospective students and alumni to foster an expansive network which provides opportunities for development
- Crowdfunding Initiative: Work with a small group of Ambassadors to launch a "Let's Grow State" Campaign for increased mental health resources within the Honors' College

June 2018-August 2019

F.O.R.M. Consulting- *Consultant*
- Work one-on-one with students applying to college to give them support and information regarding the application process
- Edit application essays for student applicants to ensure that they are written clearly, creatively, and tailored to the school they are applying to
- Give any guidance or encouragement necessary to help prospective students through the application process

August 2016-May 2018

Schreyer Honors College Student Council - *Recruitment Committee Member*
- Worked with prospective and accepted students to assist with their transition process and be a resource in any way possible
- Spoke on panels about personal experiences as well as give general information to provide students with a realistic perspective of life as a Schreyer student

Work Experience

July 2019-Present

Centre County Democratic Committee – *Intern*
- Serve as a liaison between the Centre County Democratic Committee and the Penn State College Democrats
- Attend and assist with organizing voter registration, canvassing, and phone banking
- Carry out any other duties necessary to organize events and campaign for Democratic candidates

March 2019-November 2019

Pipe Higgins 2019 Campaign for County Commissioners – *Intern*
- Serve as a liaison between the County Commissioners and the Penn State College Democrats and the Penn State Campus in general
- Provide insights into the priorities of students and how they relate to a County Commissioner platform
- Manage social media accounts and website for the campaign
- Carry out any other duties necessary to the campaign