

STATE POLITICS AND POLICY CONFERENCE 2026

Program



“State Politics at 250 Years of Independence”

Chicago, IL

Thursday, June 4 – Saturday, June 6, 2026

Hosted by Loyola University Chicago and the University of Illinois Chicago

Sponsored by the State Politics and Policy organized section of the American Political Science Association, University of Illinois Chicago College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the University of Illinois Chicago Department of Political Science, Loyola College of Arts and Sciences, the Loyola Department of Political Science, the Institute for Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois, the Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois Springfield, and DeGruyter Brill.



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Schedule Overview

Thursday, June 4

Meet at Navy Pier 5:00 pm
Pre-Conference Reception, Hosted by City Cruise 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Friday, June 5

Breakfast 8:00 – 9:00 am
Regents Hall, Lewis Towers

Panel Session 1 9:00 – 10:30 am
Corboy Law Center

Panel Session 2 10:45 am – 12:15 pm
Corboy Law Center

Lunch 12:15 – 1:45 pm
Regents Hall, Lewis Towers

Panel Session 3 1:45 – 3:15 pm
Corboy Law Center

Panel Session 4 3:30 – 5:00 pm
Corboy Law Center

Graduate Poster Session & Reception 5:00 – 6:30 pm
Beane Hall, Lewis Towers

Dinner & Awards 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Regents Hall, Lewis Towers

Saturday, June 6

Breakfast & Business Meeting 8:30 – 9:30 am
Regents Hall, Lewis Towers

Panel Session 5 9:30 – 11:00 am
Corboy Law Center

Panel Session 6 11:15 am – 12:45 pm
Corboy Law Center

Panel Schedule

PANEL SESSION 1 – FRIDAY, JUNE 5 – 9:00 –10:30 AM

PUBLIC OPINION I

Room: TBD

Chair: Justin Phillips

Discussant: Michael Auslen

When Independents Matter: Electoral Ambiguity and State Lawmaking

Seongjoon Ahn, University of Iowa

Reducing Non-Response Bias in Sampling Frames and Weighting in State Surveys

John Curiel, YouGov

Party Cues, Perception Updating, and the Behavioral Consequences of Fusion Voting

Eric Loebb, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater; **Ben Melusky**, Old Dominion University

Support for Making Voting More Convenient: A Long-Term Perspective

Todd Donovan, Western Washington University; **Shaun Bowler**, University of California, Riverside

FEDERALISM

Room: TBD

Chair: Mary Kroeger

Discussant: Lauren Futter

Frenetic Federalism: State Applications to the Rural Health Transformation Program

Samuel Harper, University of Tampa

Federalism, States, and a Changing Republic

Jason Rosensweig, Northwestern University

State Authority and Tribal Relations: Mapping the Structure and Scope of Indian Affairs Commissions

Elise Blasingame, Emory University; **Adiba Syed**, Georgia Institute of Technology; **Alexa Bowman Olay**, Georgia Institute of Technology; **Michelle Lee**, Georgia Institute of Technology

LEGISLATIVE POLITICS

Room: TBD

Chair: Laurel Harbridge-Yong

Discussant: Nate Birkhead

Do Rights Restrictions Drive Out Talent? How Policymakers React to Evidence of Migration Losses

Michael Nelson, Pennsylvania State University; **Chris Witko**, University of California, Davis

Does Legislator Training Improve Policymaking?

Jeff Harden, University of Notre Dame; **Mackenzie Dobson**, University of Tennessee Knoxville; **Emma Schroeder**, University of Notre Dame; **Dan Butler**, Washington University in St. Louis; **Jim Curry**, University of Notre Dame; **Thad Kousser**, University of California, San Diego

Some Considerations for Regression Analysis of Legislative Effectiveness Scores

Frederick Boehmke, University of Iowa; **Taylor Tokos**, University of Iowa

PANEL SESSION 2 – FRIDAY, JUNE 5 – 10:45 AM – 12:15 PM

GENDER AND MORALITY POLICY

Room: TBD

Chair: Tracy Osborn

Discussant: Rebecca Gill

The Anti-Vice Squad: Women's Organizing, Suffrage, and State Legislative Control of Vice in the Early 1900s

Mirya Holman, Hobby School, University of Houston; **Christina Wolbrecht**, University of Notre Dame; **Michael Olson**, Washington University in St. Louis

Abortion Storytelling and Contentious Policymaking in a Conservative Post-Dobbs Legislature

Jamie Morgan, Tulane University; **Anna Mahoney**, Dartmouth College; **Clare Daniel**, Tulane University; **Grace Riely**, Rush University

Legislators Matter: How Descriptive Representation Affects Who Testifies in Legislative Hearings

Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, University of Maryland, College Park

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Room: TBD

Chair: Dick Winters

Discussant: Dave Doherty

Divergent Trust: Ideology and Confidence in Police, Prosecutors, and Judges

Damon Cann, Utah State University; **Jamie Carson**, University of Georgia; **Jeff Yates**, Binghamton University; **Josh Baldwin**, University of Georgia

“Leave Illinois Without Moving—Demand a New State!”: MAGA Anti-Urbanism and the New Illinois Secession Movement

Steven Corey, Columbia College Chicago

Trust in Government and Compliance with Stay-at-Home Orders in American States

Oguzhan Dincer, Illinois State University

Closer, Calmer, More Trusted: Explaining the Trust Gap Between Federal and Subnational Government in the United States

Fred Gui, Louisiana State University; **Rongbo Jin**, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

JUDICIAL POLITICS

Room: TBD

Chair: Michael Nelson

Discussant: Laura Moyer

State High Court Ideological Responses to Court-Curbing Introductions

Meghan Leonard, Illinois State University; **Hayley Munir**, Illinois State University; **Joseph Ross**, Florida Gulf Coast University; **Michael Catalano**, University of Scranton

Gender, Race, and the Criminal Justice Priorities of State Chief Justices

Richard Vining, University of Georgia; **Teena Wilhelm**, University of Georgia; **Joshua Baldwin**, University of Georgia; **Levi Hudson**, University of Georgia

Gatekeeping Justice: Administrative Burdens and State Trial Courts

Abby Matthews, University at Buffalo; **Tracee Saunders**, Penn State University

ELECTIONS AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Room: TBD

Chair: Eric Gonzalez Juenke

Discussant: Paru Shah

Primary Rules and the Representativeness of State Electorates

Todd Donovan, Western Washington University; **Sami DeRagon**, University of Iowa;
Brendan Meckler, University of Iowa; **Caroline Tolbert**, University of Iowa

Tides of Direct Democracy: The Cyclical Ideology of American Ballot Measures, 1902–2024

Craig Burnett, Florida Atlantic University; **Daniel Smith**, University of Florida; **Abida Sultana**, University of Florida

Is an Early Voter an Informed Voter? The Consequences of Early Voting for Down-Ballot Races

Todd Makse, Florida International University; **Anand Sokhey**, University of Colorado Boulder

Examining Post-Shelby Polling Location Closures in Georgia

Kyshah Nichols-Smith, Duke University; **Hye Ryeon Jang**, Morehouse College

PANEL SESSION 3 – FRIDAY, JUNE 5 – 1:45 – 3:15 PM

ROUNDTABLE 1 — Coding State Legislator Race/Ethnicity: Toward a More Collaborative Effort

Room: TBD

Panelists:

Beth Reingold, Emory University
Bernard Fraga, Emory University
Eric Gonzalez Juenke, Michigan State University
Paru Shah, Rutgers University
Jatia Wrighten, Virginia Commonwealth University
Atiya Stokes-Brown, Coastal Carolina University

ROUNDTABLE 2 — LLM-Based Measurement of State Legislative Activity

Room: TBD

Panelists:

Ethan Dee, Amazon
Alex Garlick, University of Vermont
Andrew Ballard, Florida State University
Mackenzie Dobson, University of Tennessee Knoxville
Martin Gandur, Florida State University
Craig Volden, University of Virginia

Alan Wiseman, Vanderbilt University
Jennie Sweet-Cushman, Chatham University
Rebecca Gill, University of Nevada – Las Vegas
Christopher Zorn, Pennsylvania State University

ROUNDTABLE 3 — The Representational Tax of Political Violence: Threats, Harassment, and Democratic Capacity in U.S. Local and State Government
Room: TBD

Panelists:

Alexandra Filindra, University of Illinois Chicago
Laurel Harbridge Yong, Northwestern University
John Cluverius, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Nathan Kalmoe, University of Wisconsin—Madison
The Honorable Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor, Cambridge, Massachusetts

PANEL SESSION 4 – FRIDAY, JUNE 5 – 3:30 – 5:00 PM

PUBLIC OPINION II

Room: TBD
Chair: Caroline Tolbert
Discussant: Vlad Kogan

Partisanship and Policy Implementation Tradeoffs

David Doherty, Loyola University Chicago; **Conor Dowling**, University at Buffalo;
Michael Miller, Barnard College

Antecedents and Consequences of State Identity in the United States

Deborah Schildkraut, Tufts University; **Rongbo Jin**, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

50 States, 50 Democracies: Understanding Cross-State Variations in Public Conceptions of Democracy in the United States

Seongjoon Ahn —University of Iowa

Mass Origins of Party Position-Taking

Justin Phillips, Columbia University; **Gerald Gamm**, University of Rochester;
Michael Auslen, University of Texas at Austin

EXECUTIVE POLITICS

Room: TBD
Chair: Kelly Smith

Discussant: Fred Gui

Bureaucratic Turnover After Civil Service Rollbacks

Ben Goehring, University of Virginia

Agenda Setting by Governors in the State Legislature

E.J. Fagan, University of Illinois Chicago

Southern Gubernatorial Inaugurals and the Politics of Identity, Values, and Policy

Austin Trantham, Saint Leo University; **J. Cherie Strachan**, University of Akron

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND GUN VIOLENCE

Room: TBD

Chair: Todd Collins

Discussant: Patrick Gauding

State Pardons, Commutations, and the Determinants of Clemency

Anna Gunderson, University of Texas at Austin

Artificial Eyes in the Sky and Ears to the Ground: Public Attitudes Toward Expanding Police Use of Surveillance Technology

Magic Wade, University of Illinois Springfield

The Relationship Between Concealed Carry Permit Laws on Gun Ownership and Gun Carry Practices in the United States

Tannuja Rozario, Everytown for Gun Safety; **Alexandra Filindra**, University of Illinois Chicago; **Paul Teas**, University of Chicago

Public Elite Discourse in the Shadows of Mass Shootings

Jack Kappelman, University of California, Los Angeles; **Agustin Markarian**, Loyola University Chicago; **Haotian Chen**, University of California, Los Angeles; **Amanda Mauri**, University of Maryland

PANEL SESSION 5 – SATURDAY, JUNE 6 – 9:30 – 11:00 AM

GENDER AND POLITICS

Room: TBD

Chair: Mirya Holman

Discussant: Abby Matthews

An Intolerably Risky Decision: Gender, Safety, and Judicial Ambition in the States

Laura Moyer, University of Louisville; **Tao Dumas**, The College of New Jersey; **Todd Collins**, Western Carolina University

Local Media Coverage, Gender, and Legislative Accountability

David Nguyen, Washington University in St. Louis; **Jaclyn Kaslovsky**, Washington University in St. Louis; **Michael Olson**, Washington University in St. Louis

What Counts as a Women's Issue? An Empirical Approach to Gendered Policy in State Legislatures

Jennie Sweet-Cushman, Chatham University; **Christopher Zorn**, Pennsylvania State University; **Rebecca Gill**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Talk of the Town, or Talked Over? Analyzing Gendered Speech, Time, and Agendas in U.S. City Council Meetings

Alixandra Yanus, High Point University

POLICY DIFFUSION

Room: TBD

Chair: Fred Boehmke

Discussant: Todd Makse

Policy Feedback and Diffusion Across the U.S. States

Kelly Smith, Stetson University

Laboratories of Justice: The Diffusion of Specialty Courts Across California Counties, 1990–2019

Patrick Gauding, University of the South

Advancing U.S. Climate Policy in High and Low-Barrier State Regimes

Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo, Christopher Newport University; **Joshua Basseches**, Tulane University; **Trevor Culhane**, Brown University; **Galen Hall**, University of Michigan

Elite Socialization Diffusion in the American States: A Theoretical Foundation and Preliminary Test

Joshua Jansa, Oklahoma State University; **Daniel Mallinson**, Penn State Harrisburg

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Room: TBD

Chair: Matt Grossman

Discussant: EJ Fagan

Media and Democracy without the Electoral Connection

Michael Auslen, University of Texas at Austin

House Party? Reimagining Intergenerational Party Transmission

Daniel Smith, University of Florida; **Yuguo Wang**, University of Florida

Issue Agendas and Polarization in State Legislatures, 2009–2025

Connor Phillips, Carnegie Mellon University

PANEL SESSION 6 – SATURDAY, JUNE 6 – 11:15 AM – 12:45 PM

INTEREST GROUPS AND INSIDERS

Room: TBD

Chair: Virginia Gray

Discussant: John Cluverius

Indexing American Interest Groups

Alex Garlick, University of Vermont; **Galen Hall**, University of Michigan; **James Strickland**, Florida State University

The Federalism of CEOs' Campaign Contributions

Mary Kroeger, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; **Maria Silfa**, Ohio State University

North Carolina DEI Policy Impacts for Nonprofit Organizations

Jennifer Beightley, UNC Charlotte; **Lauren Azevedo**, UNC Charlotte

EDUCATION AND PARENTING

Room: TBD

Chair: Eric Hansen

Discussant: Josh Jansa

A Pipeline for Extracting Data from Videos of Complex State and Local Political Events

Tyler Simko, University of Michigan; **Mirya Holman**, University of Houston; **Andreas Küpfer**, Technical University of Darmstadt

How Much Do Voters Care About Student Learning?

Vladimir Kogan, Ohio State University; **Michael Hartney**, Boston College

The Political Context of the 2026 Parental Rights Amendment in Texas

Dave Rausch, West Texas A&M University; **Mary Rausch**, West Texas A&M University

From Policy to Practice: Factors Affecting Child Marriage Policies in the United States

Mimosa Khatun, Independent Scholar

GRADUATE POSTER SESSION—FRIDAY, JUNE 5 – 5:00 – 6:30 PM
Beane Hall, Lewis Towers

Redistricting Relationships: Insight into Federal and State Legislative Relationships through Campaign Contributions, Elections and Redistricting

Kristen Adams, The Ohio State University
Discussant: Conor Dowling

The Strength of State Parties

Emily Anderson, University of Notre Dame
Discussant: Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

Regulating in the Dark: Carbon Blindness in State-Level Electricity Tariff Design

Alexi Barrett, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Discussant: Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo

Bothered Enough to Vote? Local Conditions, Nuisance, and Political Participation

Danielle Beavers, The Pennsylvania State University
Discussant: J. Cherie Strachan

Beyond the ACA: The Role of Gender Composition in State Legislatures on Gender-Specific Healthcare Coverage

Lola Browne, University of Virginia; **Emma Huizenga**, Michigan State University
Discussant: Beth Reingold

You're Hot Then You're Cold: Feelings of Warmth and Anti-Transgender Policy Support

Brody DeBettignies, University of Iowa; **Abbie Eastman**, Washington University in St. Louis
Discussant: Justin Phillips

Contemporary Election Policy Polarization in American Legislatures

Jess Esplin, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Discussant: Seongjoon Ahn

The Illusion of Access: Structural Barriers to Speaking at City Council Meetings

Erin Fisher, Purdue University
Discussant: Alixandra Yanus

Medicaid Provider Restrictions and Obstetric Care After Hospital Closures
Sophia Helland, University of Southern California
Discussant: Jamie Morgan

Chronically Online at the State House? The Incentives and Resources that Predict State Legislators' Social Media Presence
Abigail Hemmen, University of Notre Dame
Discussant: Atiya Stokes-Brown

Electoral Competition and Strategic Issue Expansion into Election Policy: Organized Groups in State Legislatures
Joseph Loffredo, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Discussant: Connor Halloran Phillips

Arenas of the Urban Commons, Power Beyond Procedure: Formal Rules, Informal Institutions, and the Art of Governance in Washington, D.C.'s Advisory Neighborhood Commissions
Christine Miller, University of the District of Columbia
Discussant: Damon Cann

Who Drives Renewable Energy Siting? A Geospatial Analysis of Local Level Solar Farm Distribution
Jasper Neath, Purdue University
Discussant: Rebecca Bromley-Trujillo

The Consequences of Inexperience: Term Limits and Legislative Productivity
Jordon Newton, Washington University in St. Louis
Discussant: Dave Rausch

Aggressive & Passive Language in State of the State Addresses
Bailey Oates, Michigan State University
Discussant: Ben Goehring

The Causes of Uncontested Elections: A New Evaluation Using Cast Vote Records
Mason Reece, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Discussant: Todd Donovan

Examining National Party Influence on Gubernatorial Candidate Platforms Through Pre-Primary Endorsements
Christine Semeniuk, The Pennsylvania State University

Discussant: Craig Burnett

Second-Class by Design: Federalism and the Architecture of Otherization in CRIPA

Katherine Sevin, University of Colorado – Boulder

Discussant: Anna Gunderson

Institutions and Bill Complexity in the States

Taylor Tokos, University of Iowa

Discussant: Christopher Zorn

Negative Position Taking in State Legislatures

Timothy Yen, University of Iowa

Discussant: Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz