

# Should Multiple Office-Holding be Forbidden to Politicians ? Evidence from France

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## Abstract

In this paper, we estimate the degree to which the practice of simultaneously holding local offices undermines French MPs' efficiency. We quantify legislative efficiency in two different ways. First, we measure the probabilities of running for and winning legislative elections. Secondly, we build quantitative indicators of individual activity in the French Parliament. We identify the causal effect of holding a local executive office by comparing the outcomes of those politicians who win a mayoral office by a small margin with those of politicians who lose such an office by a small margin.

Our first finding is that winning a mayoral office does not significantly increase the chances either of running for or winning a legislative election, once the endogeneity of holding local offices is taken care of through our Regression Discontinuity Design. Our second finding is that holding a significant local executive office reduces committee attendance by one third, an effect of the same magnitude as that of belonging to the opposition party rather than the majority party in Parliament. We reconcile those findings by making the conjecture that committee attendance is a national public good while the benefits of mayoral offices are restricted to the MPs' constituency.

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# 1 Introduction

In this paper, we estimate the degree to which the practice of simultaneously holding local executive offices together with a higher-level parliamentary office undermines French MPs' efficiency. In 2009, only 13% of French MPs did not simultaneously hold a local elected office. A very significant part of these local offices consist of very significant executive positions : over the period 1988-2009, more than a third of the French representatives were either the mayors of towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants or the presidents of regional councils (which includes the "Région" and the "Département").

Multiple office-holding is residual outside France. It is forbidden in southern European countries and never arose in Northern Europe (Caille (2000)). In the US, this practice is not forbidden by the federal constitution but it has gradually been forbidden in state constitutions (Calabresi & Larsen (1993)). Explaining the origins of the French specificity of the "cumul des mandats" is beyond the scope of this paper. The literature in political science has suggested that the unique combination of single-member districting for legislative elections, weak parties, centralisation of the state and prestige of mayoral offices is the reason for this French "exception" (Knapp (1991)).

Although quite exotic per se, this practice raises two issues of interest for an international audience. One is similar to the term limits debate: multiple office-holding may unduly lower competition in the political market because holding several positions unfairly increases the resources available to a politician for winning votes in the next elections (see Lott (1987)); a related concern is that multiple office-holding prevents potential entrants from signalling their quality to voters thanks to the management of small local offices.

The other issue raised by multiple office-holding is that it may create some conflicts of interest between a position as national legislator and a position as local executive. These conflicts of interest may take various forms. The most obvious one is pork-barrelling at the national level at the benefit of the constituency corresponding to the local office: MPs who are also mayors may have greater incentives to pander to their constituency and draw particularized governmental benefits from their legislative office. A more original conflict of interest concerns MPs' time allocation between activity in Parliament and local tasks : holding a local office entails some time-consuming tasks that would not be undertaken if a legislator were only a legislator. In this sense, multiple office-holding is an extreme form of personal vote, in the definition given by Cain et al. (1987). On the other hand, holding both offices may be more efficient if there is a high degree of complementarity between the two tasks.

In this paper, we tackle both issues using data on members of the French National Assembly and their main challengers for the period going from 1988 to 2009. We begin by measuring the degree to which holding a local office increases the probabilities of running for and winning legislative elections, as well as the degree to which holding a national office increases the probabilities of running for and winning local elections. This will give us a proper way of studying whether multiple office-holding provides some competitive edge over office-free candidates. It will also give us an upper bound on the degree to which voters value the practice of multiple office-holding.

In this sense, we use a modified version of the “efficient markets hypothesis” according to which election winning probabilities aggregate the information held by voters<sup>1</sup> on the costs and benefits of multiple office-holding.

These estimates are however not sufficient to estimate the welfare costs of such a practice since French MPs are elected in single-member districts that usually correspond to their local office when they hold one. Voters in legislative elections may then have a constituency bias in the sense that they over-value the particularized benefits drawn from a multiple office-holder and under-value the costs in terms of reduced participation to parliamentary activities that cannot be particularized. This is why in a second step, we take a direct look at French MPs’ activities in Parliament. We distinguish activities for which parliamentarians may easily engage in credit claiming, such as casework, and those for which this is more difficult, such as legislative committee work. Casework can be precisely identified in France because written questions sent to cabinet members by individual MPs are published and centralised in a single database. Committee work is proxied in this work by committee attendance, which we can trace thanks to the official publication of daily attendance records for each MP. Then, we estimate the effect of holding a local office on each of these tasks.

We identify the causal effect of holding a local executive office using the fact that mayoral offices are in France awarded through majoritarian elections. This allows us to compare the outcomes of those politicians who win a mayoral office by a small margin with those of politicians who lose such an office by a small margin. This Regression Discontinuity Design is appropriate in our case because in France national politicians usually run for mayoral offices in significant towns, where political competition is significant, so that there is a very significant number of cases where local election results evolve around the majority threshold (see Lee & Lemieux (2009) for details).

Our first finding is that winning a mayoral office does not significantly increase the chances either of running for or winning a legislative election. In fact, the whole of the very sizeable mayoral advantage that is commonly observed in legislative elections in France can be explained by the fact that those candidates who happen to be mayors are intrinsically more popular than the average candidate in a legislative election. Interestingly, a similar absence of effect of multiple office-holding is observed when one looks at the impact of being a MP on the results of local elections.

Our second finding is that holding a significant local executive office reduces committee attendance by one third, an effect of the same magnitude as that of belonging to the opposition bloc rather than the majority bloc in Parliament. This phenomenon is clearly driven by the local office but not by unobservable differences between holders and non-holders of local offices. We further estimate that aggregate committee attendance would be higher by at least 15% if multiple office-holding were forbidden. However, holding a local office does not induce MPs to significantly reduce their casework activity.

These results suggest that, in French electoral competitions, multiple office-holding does not

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<sup>1</sup>See Piketty (1999) for a review of such an information-aggregation view of political institutions.

give either an advantage or a disadvantage. They also shed light as to why voters may not punish multiple office-holders : such a practice does not seem to go at the expense of those activities that clearly benefit MPs' constituency, while its costs in terms of lesser committee attendance are spread over the whole nation. Thus, the unusual practice of multiple office-holding in France allows us to uncover an original form of pork-barrelling: while its usual definition covers budgetary and tariffs amendments (see Albouy (2009)), we argue that the allocation of time between legislative tasks may in itself be the source of a constituency bias that is detrimental to national welfare.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. In section 2, we give a description of the practice of multiple office-holding in France together with a theoretical discussion of its welfare effects. In section 3, we present the data we use as well as some descriptive statistics. In section 4, we detail our identification and estimation strategy for the measurement of the effects of multiple office-holding, while section 5 gives the results of these estimations and their interpretation. Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2 Institutional Background

The practice of multiple office-holding is a primary feature of French politics, yet it is rather understudied in the international academic literature<sup>2</sup> and thus very unfamiliar to non-French audiences. This is why we proceed here to a short description of this practice followed by a discussion of its theoretical underpinnings.

### 2.1 The Prevalence of the *cumul des mandats* in France

**Definition** In France, multiple office-holding translates as *cumul des mandats* and it is so prevalent that those politicians who thoroughly engage into the practice are called *cumulards*, a word that implies a negative judgment. While multiple office-holding potentially includes a wide array of different situations, we focus here on the situation in which a politician holds a national MP mandate together with one or more executive mandates at a lower level of administration, either as mayors of a town or as heads of regional administrations<sup>3</sup>. France is a centralised state, but one can coin an analogy with situations in federal countries in which politicians would be both legislators at the federal level and heads of public administrations at the state level.

One reason for such a focus is that this is virtually the only kind of multiple office-holding that remains authorized in France as of 2011<sup>4</sup>. It is also especially interesting because French MPs are direct representatives of French individuals, as opposed to senators who are elected by local

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<sup>2</sup>Apart from Knapp (1991), Foucault (2006) and François (2006).

<sup>3</sup>There are two such administrations beyond city councils in France: the "Conseil Général" runs public services such as roads administration, public transports, middle schools and welfare policy, at the level of each of the 96 metropolitan "Départements"; the "Conseil Régional" runs public services such as public transports, high schools, spatial planning and industrial policy, at the level of each of the 22 metropolitan "Régions". City councils themselves have broader functions, including very symbolic ones such as civil weddings.

<sup>4</sup>Until 1985, there was absolutely no rule limiting mandates in France, while until 2000 it was still possible to run several executive offices simultaneously. See Bach (2009).

politicians and are therefore “naturally” legitimate in holding both local and national offices, as is the case in many other European countries including Germany<sup>5</sup>.

**Historical Evolution** As soon as local offices were open to universal suffrage at the end of the 19th century, many MPs started the practice of *cumul des mandats* as can be seen from figure 1. Indeed, during the third and fourth Republics, about 30% of all metropolitan MPs were simultaneously mayors, while about 40% held at least one local mandate<sup>6</sup>. It has been argued<sup>7</sup> that the practice was instrumental in consolidating the parliamentary regime against potential *coups*, given that political parties were not well structured in France until after World War II and that the representatives of the central state at the local level, the *préfets*, had traditionally been instruments of political repression on behalf of the monarchs and the two Napoleons.

However, figure 1 shows as well that from the beginning of the fifth Republic onwards, the practice became even more widespread, quickly reaching a long-term level of 50% for mayoral positions and 70% for any local mandate, with peaks at 60% and 90% respectively<sup>8</sup>. This surge took place in spite of the existence of now well-structured parties. One likely explanation for this increase in the practice is that proportional representation was abandoned in the National Assembly as single-member districting for parliamentary elections was introduced. This has put more weight on local issues in electoral debates, thus giving a better chance to politicians well-established at the local level. It cannot be ruled out however, as Knapp (1991) mentions, that in the long-term the turn towards a semi-presidential regime and the greater weight given to local offices<sup>9</sup> have made multiple office-holding more attractive to politicians.

**Cross-sectional Characteristics** The time series we presented in figure 1 do not fully do justice to the weight of multiple office-holding in French politics. Three dimensions are investigated here in more detail: the heterogeneity in importance of local mandates held by MPs, the prevalence of the practice across political parties and the mandate characteristics of challengers to current MPs.

In Table 1, we detail the proportion of politicians holding a given mandate portfolio across different subgroups of candidates in parliamentary elections of the period 1988-2007: elected MPs vs. their challenger, incumbents vs. outsiders, left vs. right. One can readily explain the stability of the practice over the years: even though elected MPs hold mandates more often than their challengers in national elections, 57% of this latter group holds at least one mandate, so the *cumul des mandats* is rather immune to either local or national political cycles. This convergence towards multiple office-holding is confirmed by the fact that apart for mayoral positions in very small towns, the *cumul des mandats* takes place as much among the left-wing candidates as among the right-wing

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<sup>5</sup>See Caille (2000).

<sup>6</sup>Either at an executive or legislative position, in a city or other regional council.

<sup>7</sup>See Debré (1955) and Caille (2000).

<sup>8</sup>These peaks are typically related to intertwined political cycles as local elections may sometimes be close to national elections (up to 5 years) and some other times quite distant (down to one year).

<sup>9</sup>Public investment was progressively delegated to local councils from the 1960s onwards, and in 1982, the *décentralisation* laws devolved many regular state functions to local councils.

ones.

Table 1 also reveals that, when they are mayors, those politicians that credibly compete in national elections do not come from representative towns: more than 50% of the mayor-MPs manage towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants when such cities represent only 2.5% of all French towns; even more strikingly, more than a quarter of mayor-MPs come from cities with more than 30,000 inhabitants while there are only 250 *communes* of this size among a total of 36,000. This concentration of MPs and their challengers on bigger cities has several important consequences. First of all, this means that these MPs are essentially also managers of very sizeable organisations, the average staff of town halls held by an MP being greater than 600 employees (excluding Paris, Lyons and Marseilles)<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, in many cases national MPs hold at the local level what would be considered a full-time job in other contexts. Another effect of this big-city bias is that about 20% of the French population has a mayor or a deputy mayor who is also an MP, while about 15% of the population has a mayor or a deputy mayor who *tried* to be an MP but *failed*. Thus, if one thinks that the *cumul des mandats* creates significant benefits or significant ills for those who are represented by a *cumulard*, it is then intrinsically a sizeable source of inequalities across the French territory.

Furthermore, this drive of national-level politicians towards big town halls also means that MPs often have to fight in very competitive elections at the local level, always in the middle of the term of national legislators. In Table 2, we provide the proportion of MPs and their challengers who were candidates in significant<sup>11</sup> town hall elections in the middle of a National Assembly term. These figures reveal that little less than 45% of all French MPs bid for town halls when such local elections take place in the middle of a legislative term<sup>12</sup>. While a large part of those bids come from MPs who were already holding a town hall mandate at the beginning of their national term, 25% of those MPs who are not incumbent mayors decide to bid for a significant town hall. Not surprisingly, the former group has a much higher rate of successful bids as the latter, but overall what is striking is that 30% of MPs' bids fail which points to how competitive these elections in which MPs engage themselves really are. One consequence is that multiple office-holding is generally associated with high campaigning costs in the midst of parliamentary work<sup>13</sup>. Another is that a very significant amount of MPs are not effective *cumulards* in Parliament but would have very much liked to be one and in this sense introduce some near-random variation in the practice of multiple office-holding among MPs.

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<sup>10</sup>Those three cities are distinguished in all our analysis because their mayor is only subject to indirect suffrage following direct elections of district-specific mayors.

<sup>11</sup>Elections in cities with more than 9,000 inhabitants or major regional cities.

<sup>12</sup>That is, in 1989 (corresponding to the 1988-1993 legislature), 1995 (corresponding to the 1993-1997 legislature), 2001 (corresponding to the 1997-2002 legislature) and 2008 (corresponding to the 2007-2012 legislature).

<sup>13</sup>So much so that parliamentary work is officially stopped for about three months before town hall elections (see Avril and Gicquel (2004)).

## 2.2 Welfare Analysis of Multiple Office-Holding

To our knowledge, there has been so far no economic model of the practice of multiple office-holding. In this subsection, we aim to point to the main trade-offs that underpin any welfare analysis of the *cumul des mandats*. Such a welfare analysis should be put in relation with the many proposals to limit that practice that have filled the floors of the French Parliament with little success so far<sup>14</sup>. In our view, four building blocks of economic theory can be brought to bear here: the neoclassical theory of firms and takeovers, Industrial Organization, and the theory of public goods. We do not mean to provide a formalized model but more simply to use the main intuitions from these well-established economics toolboxes in order to analyse multiple office-holding.

**The Analogy Between Politicians and Managers** One can think of the many political offices present in a given country as a set of plants with heterogeneous levels of labor and capital inputs to be put under the management of an individual, the politician, whose ability to run these plants is drawn from a certain probability distribution. The question raised by multiple office-holding is the number and size of such plants that should optimally be managed by existing politicians. This is exactly the question raised in Lucas (1978) who asks what is the optimal size distribution of firms when managers are heterogeneous but each can manage different levels of inputs. We present a basic version of this model in what follows.

Assume:

- There is a group of politicians denoted  $i$  with mass 1.
- There is a fixed aggregate supply of  $N$  political offices of equal size. For each of these offices, the same voters pay a wage  $\omega$  and elect the candidate that yields the greatest amount of public goods.
- A politician with skill  $z_i$  can simultaneously run  $n_i$  political offices at a market price  $\omega$  per office and then produce  $z_i = n_i^\beta$  units of a public good, with  $\beta < 1$ .
- Politicians' ability  $z_i$  has a c.d.f. equal to  $P(z_i) = 1 - z_i^{-\alpha}$ , which means that the ability of politicians follows a Pareto distribution with a coefficient  $\alpha$  such that  $\alpha(1 - \beta) > 1$ .

Then one can prove the following steps:

- In the optimum we have that  $n_i^* = \left[ \frac{\beta z_i}{\omega} \right]^{\frac{1}{1-\beta}}$ .
- Therefore the distribution of politicians' office portfolio follows a Pareto distribution with a coefficient  $\alpha(1 - \beta)$  and a minimum value equal to  $\left[ \frac{\beta}{\omega} \right]^{\frac{1}{1-\beta}}$ .

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<sup>14</sup>See Bach (2009) for a thorough analysis of parliamentary debates on the *cumul des mandats*.

- The condition  $\sum n_i = N$  pins down the equilibrium remuneration of a political office to  $\omega^* = \beta \left[ N \left( 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha(1-\beta)} \right) \right]^{-(1-\beta)}$
- The equilibrium distribution of office portfolios is a Pareto distribution with a coefficient  $\alpha(1-\beta)$  and a minimum value equal to  $N \left( 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha(1-\beta)} \right)$ .

To the extent that the optimal number  $z_i$  is greater than  $n^*$  for some politicians (which is always the case for a Pareto distribution of politicians' ability), and in the absence of political market imperfections, any regulation limiting the number of offices simultaneously held by a politician to say  $n^*$  would be welfare-reducing. The reason is that such a policy would prevent the very gifted politicians from providing their extraordinary abilities to a large number of constituencies. The model allows us to quantify this loss; intuitively, it depends on the probability  $P(n_i^* \geq n^*)$  that the equilibrium office portfolio for a politician is above  $n^*$ . One can then prove that the welfare loss linked to capping political mandates is:

1. Increasing in  $\beta$ , the return to scale on office accumulation. In other words, when efforts made in different political offices are more complements than substitutes.
2. Decreasing in  $\alpha$ , the tail index for politicians' ability distribution. A low  $\alpha$  means that there are a few exceptional politicians rather than a large number of "average" ones.
3. Increasing in  $N$ , the aggregate supply of political offices. In other words, when there is a large number of available political offices.

Point 1. is an integral part of the debate on multiple office-holding in France: clearly, there are conflicts of interest between national and local offices, at least in terms of politicians' working time. It might as well be that what is seen and done at the level of a town hall might be useful when discussing legislative proposals at the national level. Likewise, managing a town hall may give legislators the necessary resources to undertake a proper control of the central government and the writing of law proposals, while being a legislator may allow mayors to properly negotiate with the *préfets* in a country where local administrations still depend financially on the central state. Agency theories can also be brought to bear here. For instance, if one thinks of politicians as motivated by career concerns<sup>15</sup>, then having multiple mandates may enhance the incentives given as termination threats are bigger: in a sense, intermediary local elections are the equivalent of mid-term House elections in the US. On the other hand, multitasking theories initiated by Holmstrom and Milgrom (1991) suggest that under moral hazard with imperfect signals about politicians' actions, having two different offices will lead to focusing one's efforts on to the task whose results are most readily visible. Typically, in the case of mayor-MPs, it is much easier to monitor mayors' actions than those of national MPs<sup>16</sup>; we should thus expect that mayor-MPs devote most of their time to their mayoral job at the expense of their legislative work.

<sup>15</sup>One example of such a model of politicians is Besley (2006).

<sup>16</sup>In a survey passed in November 2007 by the IPSOS institue, 88% of voters knew the name of their mayor while only 58% of them knew the name of their MP.

Point 2. is also often mentioned in political debates: defenders of multiple office-holding typically argue that there would be a sharp drop in politicians' quality if the best ones were to drop some of their offices. One should however think further: the model is static and assumes the distribution of politicians' ability as a given. Why is it that political parties cannot encourage the selection and/or training of new politicians? Couldn't it be that multiple office-holding leads to a self-perpetuation of this ability distribution?

Point 3. is sometimes an argument used in the debate. Indeed, in France there are officially many different local administrations at the head of which politicians can be elected: 36,000 city halls<sup>17</sup>, about 100 *conseils généraux*, and 22 *conseils régionaux*. However, this is a weak argument in the sense that these high numbers come from the very high number of very small offices and therefore politicians should accumulate more small offices, while in reality, when national politicians decide to accumulate local offices, they choose very sizeable ones<sup>18</sup>. It should also be mentioned that this large supply of offices is endogenous to a certain extent: in most European countries, the map of local administrations has been greatly simplified in the 20th century<sup>19</sup>; one of the reasons why this was not the case in France may have been that the *cumulards* heavily opposed it in Parliament.

Obviously, political markets suffer from imperfections that should taint the conclusion that limiting mandates is *always* welfare-reducing. However, the model has the advantage of underlining the potential costs to such a policy, against which the second-best benefits of mandate caps should be weighed. From now on, we provide the second-best arguments for limiting mandates together with some empirical tests of their validity.

**Multiple Office-Holding and Unfair Political Competition** Once the analogy between political offices and firms has been made, it is possible to think of the consequences of imperfect competition in political markets on the multiple office-holding debate. It may then be that in bidding for local mandates, national politicians try to ensure that other politicians in the district cannot develop the ability and reputational capital necessary to compete in the general election<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, given the resources available to mayors, it is easily understandable that this may give them an edge in both formal and informal campaign spending. Thus, the *cumul des mandats* reinforces politicians' ability to make credible threats to potential entrants, at the expense of citizens' welfare. This may then be a case for limiting the number of offices a politician holds, just as competition authorities ban some mergers when they are deemed to be abuses of a dominant position.

However, for this theory of "political predation" to be consistent, it has to be that potential entrants are financially constrained, otherwise the incumbent threat cannot be credible<sup>21</sup>. The typical

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<sup>17</sup>About half of all EU city halls.

<sup>18</sup>Yet this is a probably relevant point when it comes to decide on multiple office-holding across different but not hierarchical administrations such as town hall mandates and *conseil général* mandates.

<sup>19</sup>One could cite Sweden in the 1970s and Denmark in 2007 as prominent examples of such active "merger" policies.

<sup>20</sup>See Lott (1987) for some evidence of such nontransferable property rights in US politics.

<sup>21</sup>This is one of the key points of the modern theory of predation. See Motta (2004).

institution used to channel resources into political competition being political parties, it has to be that parties fail to promote entrants against incumbent MP-mayors. Typically then, the predation motive for limiting multiple office-holding will be valid only when the best potential entrants belong to the same party as the MP-mayors. This leads to the following testable proposition:

**Proposition 1** If multiple office-holding leads to unfair political competition, then in equilibrium obtaining one type of office should increase the probabilities of:

1. being a candidate in elections for another type of office
2. winning another type of office

**Multiple Office-Holding and Local Capture** Even in the absence of multiple office-holding, single-member districting for general elections leads to a commons problem: MPs' decisions affect the whole country but their incentive is to act only for the interests of their district. Multiple office-holding reinforces this constituency bias because cities of which MPs are mayors generally overlap with their legislative district. As already mentioned, this multiplies the incentives to allocate one's efforts towards the MP's district, but electors do not penalize this because the large costs from abandoning nationwide issues are perceived to be small by this specific part of the nation, and those costs are thus offset by the small yet very tangible benefits drawn from the ever more district-specific actions of the MP.

In such a situation, the optimal correction would be a Pigouvian tax levied on legislative district electors when they decide to vote for a *cumulard*. Another way to implement this would be to tax those political parties that propose local office holders as candidates for national elections, just as is the case when it comes to enforce gender parity in general elections in France since 2001. This would be optimal because this would still allow very gifted politicians to accumulate offices, while a ban across-the-board would wrongly penalize those districts where the distribution of politicians' ability is extremely skewed. In order to test this, we need to distinguish MPs' activities that benefit the whole country from those activities that benefit only the MPs' district. The French political system gives little leeway to MPs for earmarking central state funds to their district, so we focus on an original characteristic of MPs' actions: the time and effort they devote to different legislative activities. This leads to the following testable proposition:

**Proposition 2** If multiple office-holding is the result of local electors' biases towards local issues, then in equilibrium becoming a MP-mayor should:

1. reduce the participation of MPs in legislative tasks that can not be easily attached to their district
2. increase or leave unchanged the participation of MPs in legislative tasks that can easily be attached to their district

## 3 Data Description

### 3.1 Data Construction

**Data on Offices and Electoral Results** In this paper, we look at the various effects of obtaining or losing a mayoral mandate in a significant town for those politicians that either have been elected as MPs or have ranked second in a general election<sup>22</sup>. We focus on these cases because they are the most prominent form of *cumul des mandats* in Parliament. These are also the mandate pairs for which we have the most up-to-date information.

Using public registers from the French Ministry of the Interior, we track mayoral bids in significant towns (more than 9,000 inhabitants or major town of a legislative district) for each wave of town hall elections since 1988, which means the years 1989, 1995, 2001 and 2008. In these elections, citizens vote for lists of candidate city councillors under the banner of a leader, the first on the list, who will be elected mayor if his list gets either an absolute majority in the first round or a relative majority in the second round. For each of those elections, we know the name of the leader of each list, its political leaning and its score in the different rounds of the election in which it competes. We also match names across town hall elections in order to determine whether or not a given candidate in one town hall election presents himself in the next town hall election as well.

In parallel, using *Le Monde* newspaper editions, we created a list of all major contenders in general elections since 1988, which means the years 1988, 1993, 1997, 2002 and 2007. In these elections, citizens vote for individuals with absolute majority in the first round and relative majority in the second round. For each of those elections, we know the name of the first two contenders ranked ex-post, their political leaning, their office portfolio at the time of the election<sup>23</sup> and their scores in each round. We also match names across general elections in order to determine whether or not a given candidate in one general election presents himself in the next general election as well.

Once we have these two datasets, we proceed to their matching using names, political leaning and area of both kinds of election. We complete the dataset with some demographics on legislative districts and cities, using the French Censuses run by INSEE in 1982, 1990 and 1999, and the COLTER surveys run by the same institution to collect information on local administrations. Since there are 555 legislative districts in metropolitan France, there are  $5 \times 2 \times 555 = 5550$  observations in the final dataset<sup>24</sup>. There are 975 instances in which current MPs bid for a town hall, and 746 cases for challengers. In Tables 1 and 2, which we have discussed *supra*, we present some of the main descriptive statistics from this hand-collected dataset.

**Data on Parliamentary Activity** Relative to what is available for the US Congress, there is very little academic work on French parliamentary activity during the fifth Republic<sup>25</sup>. One of the

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<sup>22</sup>These individuals are called *challengers* in the rest of the paper.

<sup>23</sup>Including type of office and location of the office.

<sup>24</sup>We keep in the dataset those MPs or challengers that do not bid for a town hall in between two general elections.

<sup>25</sup>The only econometric work we know of is Lazardeux (2005) who runs cross-sectional regressions of the number of questions written by French MPs to the government between 1997 and 2002.

major reasons for this is that the data has only recently been put in electronic form. However, once one is ready to hand-collect data, there is a significant wealth of data. Our theoretical discussion suggests that we find some MP activities that are very district-specific and some that are not. We have decided to focus our analysis on two such activities.

The first variable is the number of questions written each month to the government by an MP during the period 1988-2009. These questions are generally meant to relate to very specific issues touching the domain of a given government member. Government services then have some months to reply, which they most often do. In fiscal instances, these answers bind the future actions of the government. Both the question and the answer are published in the state newspaper, the *Journal Officiel*<sup>26</sup>, and the number of questions that can be asked by an MP is unlimited. These last two characteristics make this activity very palatable to electors, and it is therefore the paragon of casework activity, and nowadays very prominent on all French MPs' websites. The practice has also largely increased as electronic means of communication have improved: there were about 60,000 questions asked between 1988 and 1993, and double that number between 2002 and 2007.

The second measured activity is the attendance of MPs in legislative subcommittees. In French Parliament, the most part of legislative work is undertaken in subcommittees. In particular, all law proposals and amendments must be discussed in committees before going to the floor discussion. In addition, only amendments suggested by the commission as a whole have a significant probability of being passed. It is also mostly in these committees that government members are auditioned, and they have large powers of investigation. The number of those committees is limited to six, with very broad denominations. Four of them<sup>27</sup> are composed of about 70 MPs, while the remaining two<sup>28</sup> are comprised of about 140 of them.

Part of committees' importance in French Parliament comes from the fact that debates are not published, so that more truthful debates are potentially warranted<sup>29</sup>. This also means that MPs cannot easily engage in credit claiming and their work in this context is then less likely to be biased towards their district electors. However, to ensure some publicity, the agenda of each committee meeting is published as well as the attendance list, both in the *Journal Officiel*. This is the data source we have used to measure the attendance level, in terms of number of meetings attended each year by each MP during the period 1988-2009. Note that each committee organizes many meetings during the legislative season, about 91 per committee in 2007-2008, so that there may be very significant variation in attendance among MPs, even though MPs are supposed to suffer from financial penalties after a significant number of absences<sup>30</sup>.

We drop observations associated with MPs that stayed in the National Assembly for less than a month and then match these indicators of parliamentary efforts with some biographical variables

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<sup>26</sup>As well as in the National Assembly website.

<sup>27</sup>The commissions of Public Finances, of Foreign Affairs, of Defence, and of Laws.

<sup>28</sup>The commissions of Welfare Policy and of Economic Affairs.

<sup>29</sup>See Prat (2005) for a discussion of contexts in which theory predicts that the absence of transparency leads to better group decisions.

<sup>30</sup>Avril and Gicquel (2004) show that these official provisions were never effectively implemented since the beginning of the fifth Republic in 1958.

drawn from the National Assembly website, and with our electoral dataset, after having aggregated our performance measures at the MP-legislature level. There are then 2775 observations with complete information. In Table 3, we present descriptive statistics for our two measures of parliamentary activity. It confirms that there is indeed a very high dispersion of the indicators across MPs: many of them have close to zero activity, but a significant minority fares very highly, with as many as 67 questions per month and 126 meetings attended per year. It should also be mentioned that the correlation between the two indicators is equal to 0.05, which reflects the fact questions and meetings have different costs and serve very distinct goals.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

**Multiple Office-Holding and Electoral Performance** Tables 4 and 5 present some descriptive statistics on bidding and winning probabilities in the next municipal (resp. legislative) election depending on the performance in the previous legislative (resp. municipal) election. Being elected MP when one was already a serious contender is very highly correlated both with bidding for a town hall in the future, as the probability goes from 0.33 to 0.44, and with actually becoming a mayor in the future, as the probability goes from 0.15 to 0.31 (see Table 4). However, these effects gradually disappear as one decides to compare national politicians who participated in very disputed general elections: among participants in general elections with a margin between first and second smaller than 5 points, we do not see any significant difference anymore between being elected MP and losing. This holds for winning probabilities as well as for bidding probabilities, albeit with a less pronounced trend. This suggests that at least part of the correlations exposed in the whole sample are due to an unobserved popularity effect.

A similar picture arises when one looks at the effect of becoming a mayor (Table 5). In the whole sample, this increases the probability of winning the next legislative election from 0.20 to 0.51 and the probability of bidding for it from 0.63 to 0.82<sup>31</sup>. Again, these differences vanish when one looks only at politicians who participated in very disputed town hall elections.

Descriptive statistics show that unobserved popularity effects are a driving force in the correlations we observe between winning one kind of office and winning another kind of office. In later sections, it will be necessary to provide a setup in which we can fully account for such biasing forces.

**Multiple Office-Holding and Parliamentary Activity** Tables 6 and 7 present descriptive statistics on parliamentary activity for different periods (before and after municipal elections) and different types of MPs, depending on whether or not they are incumbent mayors and on whether or not they bid for a town hall in intermediary municipal elections. Regarding written questions, there are no significant differences across MPs, except for those MPs who decide to retire from their mayoral office and subsequently ask significantly less questions. This may point to the role of

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<sup>31</sup>These high bidding probabilities in absolute terms come from the fact that the sample is only comprised of individuals who were already serious contenders in past legislative elections.

written questions as a way of staying in the local political game.

Patterns are much more striking regarding committee attendance. Before municipal elections, the most significant difference is between those “indifferent” MPs who are not mayors and do not bid for a town hall on the one hand, and those “interested” MPs who either are already mayors or are bidding for a mayor position on the other hand. The former group, representing about half of the National Assembly, attends about 25% more meetings than the latter group. The post-municipal election period has a very different pattern. “Indifferent” MPs do not change behavior, but their level of activity is now matched by those initially “interested” MPs who lost the town hall election. What is more those MPs who were not initially mayors and then won a town hall reduce their committee activity to an even lower level than during their city hall campaign, pointing to an installation effect. Two conclusions may be drawn from this: multiple office-holding affects parliamentary activity even in anticipation of it, due to the cost of electoral campaigns; the accession to the mayoral position itself is likely to have a causal effect as individuals change their behavior over time depending on that.

It is also interesting to observe the behavior of parliamentary activity depending on how contested the municipal election is (Table 7). Contrary to electoral outcomes, one cannot see clear changes in differences between losers and winners in municipal elections as one focuses on more contested elections. This suggests that simple correlations between multiple office-holding and parliamentary activity are less likely to be biased.

## 4 Econometric Methodology

### 4.1 The Selection Problem

Multiple office-holding is not randomly allocated across French politicians. Our own theoretical model predicts that the most able politicians are more likely to engage in the practice. This would make us overestimate the positive impact of multiple office-holding on electoral results, and underestimate the negative impact of multiple office-holding on performance in Parliament. It might also be that MPs who care more about local issues and less about nationwide ones are more likely to bid for local offices. This would lead us to overestimate the negative impact of multiple office-holding on committee attendance in Parliament.

The consequence of this is that using simple OLS regressions to test our two propositions may not deliver credibly causal results. This is why we emphasize the use of differences-in-differences estimation and Regression Discontinuity Designs (RDD).

### 4.2 Regression Discontinuity Design

The descriptive evidence suggests that the comparisons between multiple office-holders and single office-holders might have dramatically different results when one looks at all kinds of politicians and when one focuses on politicians that won or lost one kind of office in a hard-fought election. This is exactly the spirit of the Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD), the intuition being that

in very contested elections, winning or losing is a matter of luck rather than anything else. In the following subsection, we explain how we implement this estimation strategy.

**Specification Choice** Our baseline specification is very similar to that chosen by Lee (2008) for American Congressional elections. It consists in estimating the following equation :

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta T_i + \sum_{p=1}^d \gamma_{1p} \times m_i^p + \gamma_{2p} 1_{m_i < 0} \times m_i^p + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where  $\beta$  is an unbiased estimator of the effect of the treatment “Winning a Mandate” on dependent variable  $Y_i$ , and  $m_i$  is the vote share margin in the electoral contest for this mandate. Specification (3) approximates the link between the dependent variable and the vote share margin by a polynomial of degree  $p$  on each side of the majority threshold<sup>32</sup>.

The sample is made of all observations whose vote share margin  $m_i$  is between  $-h$  and  $h$ . For our study, we have decided to keep all points situated between -20 and 20 for both legislative and municipal elections, since most of the sample is then kept yet the observations very far from the winning threshold do not pollute the estimation of the polynomial.

In order to choose the relevant degree  $p$  of the polynomial, we use the method suggested by Lee and Lemieux (2009): we estimate equation (3) for several values of  $p$  with the exception that we add dummies for  $m_i$  belonging to small specific intervals<sup>33</sup>; we then test the joint significance of these interval dummies, the best specification being the minimal degree  $p$  for which this test does not reject insignificance of these dummies. In our sample, this method leads us to choose  $p = 1$  in most cases.

**Robustness Checks** In RDD, the most important robustness check is the “eyeballing” test: when one plots local averages of  $Y_i$  for each small interval of  $m_i$ , can one really “see” the discontinuity where it should be (at  $m_i = 0$ ) and nowhere else? This test also makes sure that the polynomial fit that is chosen does not miss the mark by a large amount. One may also check that the results hold with an additional degree for the polynomial or with a sample reduced to observations closer to the majority threshold.

It is also important to check that there is no systematic manipulation whatsoever of vote share margins around the threshold, in which case the variation around the threshold could not be considered as good as random. One way to test this is to check that crossing the majority threshold in  $t$  does not significantly affect variables measured before  $t$ . For instance, if there is manipulation, it is likely to be organized more often by those who won the previous elections, the incumbents. So we check that incumbency variables are insignificant using equation (1). Following McCrary (2008), we also check that there is no discontinuity in the density of vote share margins when one crosses the majority threshold.

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<sup>32</sup>It should be reminded that vote share margins are the difference in the share of votes between the winning score and the second best score. It is negative for losers and positive for winners.

<sup>33</sup>These intervals are of width 4 in our case: [-20;-16], [-16;-12], ..., [12;16],[16;20].

### 4.3 Differences-in-Differences

Since municipal elections take place in the middle of a legislative term, we may naturally try to compare the evolution of parliamentary activity when one earns or loses a mayoral office compared to the evolution for those whose mayoral status stays unchanged. If the unobserved component driving both parliamentary efforts and ability to win a mayoral office does not change over time, then this should allow to recover the causal effect of being a Mayor-MP. The estimation should define the treatment variable  $T_i^M$  as follows: equal to 0 if there is no change in mayoral status, -1 if incumbent mayor loses or abandons mandate after town hall election, and 1 if non-incumbent mayor wins mayoral mandate after town hall election. Then, we estimate the following equation :

$$Y_i^{post} - Y_i^{ante} = \alpha + \beta T_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where  $Y_i^{post}$  et  $Y_i^{ante}$  are the levels of parliamentary activity before and after municipal elections. Run in the whole sample, the diff-in-diff assumption may not hold because:

- MPs who had to run a political campaign but lost are considered to have similar counterfactual outcome evolutions to those of the “indifferent” mayors.
- MPs who were initially mayors and kept their city seat are also considered to have similar counterfactual outcome evolutions to those of the “indifferent” mayors.
- MPs who were initially mayors but did not bid are considered to have similar counterfactual outcome evolutions to those of the incumbent mayors that bid and lost.

Because of the time-specific cost of political campaigns themselves, none of these assumptions are likely to be valid. This is why we also run the estimation in (2) in the subsample of those MPs that actually have bid for town hall elections.

One can also use the diff-in-diff setup in order to analyse the causal effect of municipal campaigns themselves. The intuition is that by comparing the evolutions before and after the election of the “indifferent” MPs on one hand, and of the “interested” yet losing MPs on the other hand, one can argue that the difference-in-difference reflects the effect of the end of a political campaign. This is why we also estimate the following equation in the sample of MPs that never are mayors during a whole legislative term:

$$Y_i^{post} - Y_i^{ante} = \alpha + \beta C_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where  $C_i$  is equal to -1 when an MP has made a bid for a significant mayoral position, and 0 otherwise. The assumption is that in the absence of a bid, the “loser” and the “indifferent” MPs would have had parallel evolutions in terms of parliamentary work.

## 5 Results

Overall, the results from the regressions confirm the intuitions we drew from the descriptive statistics of the sample.

### 5.1 Multiple Office-Holding and Electoral Performance

**Graphical Evidence** Figure 2 plots the local averages of winning probability in the next town hall election depending on the vote share margin in the current legislative election. While there is an expected positive correlation between the two electoral results, the relationship looks very continuous so it does not seem like becoming an MP gives an advantage for becoming a mayor. Likewise figure 3 shows that neither is it the case that becoming an MP helps to bid for a town hall election.

Figures 4 and 5 plot the local averages of winning and bidding probabilities in the next legislative election depending on the vote share margin in the current municipal election. Again, it does not seem like there is any significant discontinuity at the majority threshold.

It therefore seems that our test of proposition 1 leads to rejecting the hypothesis that multiple office-holding is significantly associated with unfair political competition. The regression results will allow us to add more precision to this interim conclusion.

**Regression Results** In Table 8, we present the results from our RDD estimation of the effect of winning an MP mandate on future municipal elections. From this we can bound the advantage given by an MP mandate for winning a mayoral office between -0.065 and 0.055 in terms of probabilities<sup>34</sup>. This is small in absolute value but also compared to the existing studies about the legislative incumbency advantage, which is typically higher than 0.25 using the same RDD method<sup>35</sup>. Robustness checks in other columns of Table 8 and in Figure 6 do not invalidate our results. In particular, they do not point to any significant manipulation of voting results around the majority threshold.

In Table 9, one can see that we can bound the advantage given by a mayoral mandate for winning an MP office between -0.10 and 0.13 in terms of probabilities<sup>36</sup>. We can then rule out effects that are of the same magnitude as the typical municipal incumbency advantage<sup>37</sup>. Robustness checks in other columns of Table 9 and in Figure 7 do not invalidate our results. Overall, multiple office-holding does not seem to be the electoral weapon (or scarecrow) that many in French politics and media think it is.

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<sup>34</sup>With a 95% confidence interval.

<sup>35</sup>See Lee (2008) for the US and Bach (2009) for France.

<sup>36</sup>With a 95% confidence interval.

<sup>37</sup>See Chevalier (2007) for France.

## 5.2 Multiple Office-Holding and Parliamentary Activity

**Graphical Evidence** Figures 10 and 11 plots the local averages of the number of written questions and committee attendance for current MPs after intermediary town hall elections, depending on the vote share margin obtained in those elections. While there is no distinguishable effect of the majority threshold on the number of written questions, its effect on committee attendance is very visible, and represents a drop of about 40% in committee attendance following the earning of a significant mayoral position. The regression results should however help gauge the robustness of the result and make some other interesting distinctions of interpretation. However, these results seem to confirm Proposition 2 in that multiple office-holding considerably reduce MPs' efforts that have nationwide benefits but not significantly those whose benefits can be particularized for their constituency.

**Regression Results** In Table 10, we present the results from our RDD estimation of the effect of winning a mayor mandate on subsequent parliamentary activity. The results confirm that mayoral mandates have a massive effect on committee attendance (-37%) but no significant effect on written questions (-6%). The OLS result is not significantly different from the RDD effect, which suggests that endogeneity considerations are in fact not very important here. Quite interestingly, the negative effect on attendance seems to come mainly from those MPs who hold mandates in cities with more than 30,000. This is to be expected since the tasks involved in managing such administrations is immense and probably not compatible with sustained attendance in parliamentary committees. Robustness checks in other columns of Table 10 do not invalidate our results.

Finally, in table 11, we present the results from our differences-in-differences estimations. Results regarding the direct effect of holding a mayoral mandate are a bit smaller than the RDD coefficients but not by a significant margin. More interestingly, one can see that the pure effect of having to engage in a municipal electoral campaign is almost as high in absolute value as the effect of holding the sought mandate: such campaigns cause a 30% reduction in attendance relative to the "indifferent" MPs. Given that in every legislature, little less than 20% of all MPs run electoral campaigns in which there are not incumbents, the aggregate impact of this indirect effect is in fact very sizeable. Assuming that electoral campaigns are half as expensive in terms of time for incumbent mayors, we can compute that this "campaign" effect reduces aggregate attendance by about 3%. To this, one should add the direct effect of multiple office-holding, which in the aggregate represents a 11% drop in aggregate attendance, we can conclude that total attendance would be bigger by about 15% if MPs could not be mayors of significant towns. This is clearly a lower bound on the real aggregate effect since we did not consider the impact for MPs of being head or deputy head of a *conseil général* or a *conseil régional*, deputy mayor of a very significant town.

## 6 Conclusion

Multiple-office holding is very specific to France and yet we think that speaks to more general issues in political economy. From a theoretical point of view, this practice raises some issues that are similar to the term-limit debate. In practice, our results show that in France local offices do not provide a significant edge in national-level elections, and therefore this practice should not be banned on the grounds that it provides an unfair electoral advantage. In fact, the real issue brought by the *cumul des mandats* is related to those raised in the fiscal federalism literature. It is well-known that when politicians have to refer to two different constituencies, they will always pander to the one that is more localized and concentrated. What is interesting in our study is that we can precisely measure an original version of this mechanism, in the form of an additional distortion of time allocation by MPs towards activities that benefit only their district.

There are many aspects of parliamentary activity that have been overlooked in this study. We shall cite two of them. First of all, one should expect that there are many peer effects between MPs in Parliament, so that the aggregate impact of multiple office-holding is probably underestimated when one looks only at the impact of the practice on those who engage in it. Secondly, we feel that an analysis of the voting patterns in Parliament according to whether or not MPs are mayors or campaigning for mayoral positions would be instrumental in pointing out the biases linked to multiple office-holding more precisely than we did so far. This is something we intend to do in future research.

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## Appendix: Tables and Figures

Table 1: Local Office Portfolios of First Two Candidates in French Parliamentary Elections (1988-2007)

	Elected MP	Main Challenger	Incumbent MP	Outsider	Left-wing	Right-wing
<b>Mayor</b>	48.9%	31.4%	49.7%	32.9%	37.7%	42.2%
- more than 3500 inhabitants	37.7%	22.2%	38.6%	23.3%	29.5%	30.3%
- more than 9000 inhabitants	28.8%	14.8%	29.8%	15.7%	21.7%	21.8%
- more than 30000 inhabitants	13.6%	5.6%	14.8%	5.7%	9.6%	9.6%
- Paris/Lyons/Marseilles	0.9%	0.3%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Average city population	26025 (1108)	17560 (956)	27602 (1211)	17108 (890)	24026 (1132)	21665 (1059)
Average staff size of town hall	636 (31)	427 (28)	688 (35)	401 (24)	595 (31)	522 (30)
<b>Deputy mayor</b>	9.9%	8.2%	7.7%	10.1%	9.3%	8.8%
- more than 30000 inhabitants	6.5%	5.0%	4.9%	6.3%	5.7%	5.7%
<b>Head of <i>Conseil Général</i></b>	3.7%	0.5%	3.9%	0.8%	1.6%	2.5%
<b>Head of <i>Conseil Régional</i></b>	1.4%	0.3%	1.6%	0.3%	0.4%	1.3%
<b>At Least One Local Mandate</b>	77.7%	57.2%	77%	60.1%	63.3%	70.9%
<b>Nb. of Observations</b>	2775	2775	1714	3154	2579	2971

*Note* : Percentage points are expressed as a fraction of the subgroup defined on top of each column : for example, 48.9% of those candidates eventually elected as MPs are mayors. A politician is included in these tables as soon as he was ranked 1st or 2nd in any legislative election during the period 1988-2007, except as regards deputy mayors for which data was not available in 2007. Local mandates include executive offices in all local administrations, and legislative offices at the level of the *conseil régional* and the *conseil général*. Data on city population and town hall staff exclude Paris, Lyons and Marseilles. Standard errors are in parentheses. Data sources : *Le Monde*, French Censuses, COLTER survey on French local administrations.

Table 2: Electoral Bids of National-level Politicians in Significant Town Hall Elections

	MP			Main Challenger		
	All	Non-Incumbent Mayor	Incumbent Mayor	All	Non-Incumbent Mayor	Incumbent Mayor
<b>Bid in Town Hall Election</b>	43.9%	25.3%	88.0%	33.6%	22.9%	88.0%
<b>Victory in Town Hall Election</b>	30.9%	11.7%	76.7%	14.8%	4.3%	70.8%
<b>Number of Inhabitants in Targeted City</b>						
Mean	47429	54166	43501	43767	52687	32401
Median	30489	35227	27432	26618	29932	21905
<b>Staff Size of Targeted Town Hall</b>						
Mean	1155	1322	1052	1056	1232	791
Median	675	815	589	620	712	496
<b>Targeted City Inside Legislative District</b>	97.3 %	96.7%	97.8%	95.8 %	93.2%	99.3%
<b>Population Share of Targeted City in Legislative District</b>	39.9% (1.9%)	48.9% (1.7%)	33.8% (1.1%)	38.9% (2.3%)	46.5% (1.7%)	28.6% (1.3%)

*Note* : We only consider here electoral bids for town halls in cities of more than 9,000 inhabitants or cities that are the major town of a legislative district. Incumbent mayors are those politicians who were mayors of the targeted city at the time of the legislative elections preceding the mayoral elections. MPs are those politicians who were elected MPs in the last general election; main challengers are those politicians who came second in the last general election. Population and staff figures do not include Paris, Lyons and Marseilles. Standard errors are in parentheses. Data sources : *Le Monde*, French Minister of the Interior, French Censuses, COLTER survey on French local administrations.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Individual Parliamentary Activity

	Mean	P25	P50	P75	Min	Max
<i>Number of written questions (per month)</i>	2.69	0.57	1.4	2.94	0	66.98
<i>Number of committee meetings attended (per year)</i>	14.8	5.9	12	20.6	0	126

*Note* : One should read the table as follows : on average, each MP asks 2,69 written questions per month; 25% of MPs ask less than 0,57 written questions per month. Variables are computed for all MPs elected during general elections that stayed in the National Assembly for more than a month. Each indicator is computed with respect to the effective time spent as MP during a whole legislature. Data sources : Base Questions Assemblée Nationale, *JO Lois et Décrets*.

Table 4: The Effect of Winning a Legislative Election on Next Town Hall Election: Descriptive Evidence

	Probability of Winning Town Hall	Probability of Bidding for Town Hall
	<i>Sub-samples</i>	<i>Sub-samples</i>
	$-\infty < m < \infty$ $-20 \leq m \leq 20$ $-10 \leq m \leq 10$ $-5 \leq m \leq 5$	$-\infty < m < \infty$ $-20 \leq m \leq 20$ $-10 \leq m \leq 10$ $-5 \leq m \leq 5$
<i>Vote Share Margin of Victory in Last Legislative Election</i>		
<i>Loses Last Legislative Election</i>	14.8% (0.8%)	18.3% (1.0%)
<i>Wins Last Legislative Election</i>	30.9% (1.0%)	29.1% (1.2%)
<i>Number of Observations</i>	4440	4440
	2936	2936
	1878	1878
	980	980
	22.4% (1.9%)	33.7% (1.2%)
	21.1% (1.3%)	36.3% (1.6%)
	28.0% (1.5%)	44.0% (1.3%)
	22.0% (1.9%)	43.3% (1.6%)
	36.1% (2.2%)	39.8% (2.2%)

Note : One should read the table as follows : politicians who lose a legislative election by less than a 20 point difference with the winner have a 0.183 probability to win a town hall during the next municipal elections. Vote share margins are defined when there is a second round or when the first round includes only two candidates. In other cases, the vote share margin of victory is considered to be infinite. The probabilities of winning are expressed unconditional on a bid. Standard errors are in parentheses. Data sources : French Ministry of the Interior.

Table 5: The Effect of Winning a Town Hall Election on Next Legislative Election: Descriptive Evidence

	Probability of Winning Legislative Election	Probability of Bidding for Legislative Election
	Sub-samples	Sub-samples
	$-\infty < m < \infty$ $-20 \leq m \leq 20$ $-10 \leq m \leq 10$ $-5 \leq m \leq 5$	$-\infty < m < \infty$ $-20 \leq m \leq 20$ $-10 \leq m \leq 10$ $-5 \leq m \leq 5$
<i>Vote Share Margin of Victory in Last Town Hall Election</i>		
<i>Loses Last Town Hall Election</i>	19.5% (1.7%)   26.4% (2.9%)   26.8% (3.4%)   31.7% (4.6%)	62.9% (2.1%)   69.5% (3.0%)   70.2% (3.5%)   69.2% (4.5%)
<i>Wins Last Town Hall Election</i>	51.0% (1.8%)   40.6% (2.6%)   35.6% (3.4%)   30.0% (4.6%)	82.0% (1.4%)   77.1% (2.3%)   75.8% (3.1%)   76.0% (4.3%)
<i>Number of Observations</i>	1332   584   362   204	1332   584   362   204

Note : One should read the table as follows : national-level politicians who lose a municipal election by less than a 20 point difference with the winner have a 0.338 probability to win a legislative election during the next general elections. Vote share margins are defined when there is a second round or when the first round includes only two candidates. In other cases, the vote share margin of victory is considered to be infinite. The probabilities of winning are expressed unconditional on a bid. Standard errors are in parentheses. Data sources : French Ministry of the Interior.

TABLE 6 – Patterns of Parliamentary Activity Around Intermediary Town Hall Elections

Status of the MP	Number of written questions (per month)		Number of attended meetings (per year)		Nb. Obs.
	<i>Before the Election</i>	<i>After the Election</i>	<i>Before the Election</i>	<i>After the Election</i>	
<b>Is not an Incumbent Mayor:</b>					
<i>Does not Bid for Town Hall</i>	2.74 (0.15)	2.74 (0.19)	15.7 (0.38)	15.74 (0.44)	1096
<i>Bids for Town Hall and Wins</i>	2.32 (0.26)	2.01 (0.27)	13.13 (0.76)	10.69 (0.88)	165
<i>Bids for Town Hall and Loses</i>	2.9 (0.53)	2.65 (0.36)	12.53 (0.64)	15.8 (0.84)	201
<b>Is an Incumbent Mayor:</b>					
<i>Does not Bid for Town Hall</i>	1.88 (0.28)	1.21 (0.16)	12.47 (1.26)	11.75 (1.51)	62
<i>Bids for Town Hall and Wins</i>	2.29 (0.16)	2.17 (0.16)	13.07 (0.58)	12.95 (0.66)	473
<i>Bids for Town Hall and Loses</i>	2.21 (0.56)	1.45 (0.25)	13.44 (1.25)	16.87 (1.72)	69
<b>All MPs</b>	2.58 (0.11)	2.45 (0.11)	14.41 (0.26)	14.63 (0.31)	2066

Note : Each indicator is computed with respect to the effective time spent as MP during the considered period, and only for those politicians who were still MPs at the time of the town hall election. Data sources : French Ministry of the Interior, Base Questions Assemblée Nationale, *JO Lois et Décrets*

Table 7: Patterns of Parliamentary Activity After Municipal Elections Depending on Town Hall Vote Share Margin

	Number of written questions (per month)			Number of attended meetings (per year)		
	<i>Sub-samples</i>					
	$-20 \leq m \leq 20$	$-10 \leq m \leq 10$	$-5 \leq m \leq 5$	$-20 \leq m \leq 20$	$-10 \leq m \leq 10$	$-5 \leq m \leq 5$
<i>Vote Share Margin of Victory in Last Town Hall Election</i>						
<i>Loses Last Town Hall Election</i>	2.2 (0.32)	2.03 (0.33)	2.26 (0.50)	15.8 (1.00)	16.45 (1.19)	14.94 (1.48)
<i>Wins Last Town Hall Election</i>	1.94 (0.22)	2.25 (0.36)	2.34 (0.52)	12.5 (0.84)	13.38 (1.13)	12.92 (1.56)
<i>Number of Observations</i>	439	279	154	439	279	154

Note : One should read the table as follows : national-level politicians who lose a municipal election by less than a 20 point difference with the winner ask 2.2 questions per month after the town hall election. Vote share margins are defined when there is a second round or when the first round includes only two candidates. In other cases, the vote share margin of victory is considered to be infinite. Each indicator is computed with respect to the effective time spent as MP during the considered period, and only for those politicians who were still MPs at the time of the town hall election. Standard errors in parentheses. Data sources : French Ministry of the Interior, Base Questions Assemblée Nationale, *JO Lois et Décrets*

Table 8: The Effect of Winning a Legislative Election on Next Town Hall Election: Regressions

Specifications	$ m  \leq 20$ (1)	<b>Higher-Degree Polynomial</b> (2)	$ m  \leq 10$ (3)
<p><b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Winning Town Hall</b> Wins Last Legislative Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i></p>	<p><b>-0.006</b> (0.029)</p> <p>1 2936</p>	<p><b>-0.068</b> (0.043)</p> <p>2 2936</p>	<p><b>-0.057</b> (0.040)</p> <p>1 1878</p>
<p><b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Bidding for Town Hall</b> Wins Last Legislative Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i></p>	<p><b>0.026</b> (0.030)</p> <p>1 2936</p>	<p><b>0.011</b> (0.044)</p> <p>2 2936</p>	<p><b>0.023</b> (0.040)</p> <p>1 1878</p>
<p><b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Winning Town Hall if Bid</b> Wins Last Legislative Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i></p>	<p><b>-0.072</b> (0.059)</p> <p>1 1140</p>	<p><b>-0.192*</b> (0.085)</p> <p>2 1140</p>	<p><b>-0.182*</b> (0.077)</p> <p>1 748</p>
<p><b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Being Incumbent Mayor</b> Wins Last Legislative Election</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i></p>	<p><b>-0.013</b> (0.028)</p> <p>1 2936</p>	<p><b>-0.021</b> (0.040)</p> <p>2 2936</p>	<p><b>0.002</b> (0.037)</p> <p>1 1878</p>

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the district-decade level.  $m$  is the vote share margin in the last legislative election \*\*:  $p < 0.01$  \*:  $p < 0.05$

Table 9: The Effect of Winning a Town Hall Election on Next Legislative Election: Regressions

Specifications	$ m  \leq 20$ (1)	Higher-Degree Polynomial (2)	$ m  \leq 10$ (3)
<b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Winning Legislative Election</b> Wins Last Town Hall Election  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>0.017</b> (0.058) 1 636	<b>0.010</b> (0.072) 2 636	<b>-0.063</b> (0.081) 1 393
<b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Bidding for Legislative Election</b> Wins Last Town Hall Election  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>0.045</b> (0.054) 1 636	<b>0.088</b> (0.064) 2 636	<b>0.044</b> (0.071) 1 393
<b>Dep. Var.: Probability of Winning Legislative if Bid</b> Wins Last Town Hall Election  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>-0.007</b> (0.072) 1 468	<b>-0.054</b> (0.087) 2 468	<b>-0.105</b> (0.101) 1 287
<b>Dep. Var.: Vote Share Margin in Last Legislative</b> Wins Last Town Hall Election  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>3.379</b> (2.934) 1 600	<b>3.676</b> (3.208) 2 600	<b>5.202</b> (3.338) 1 373

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the district-decade level.  $m$  is the vote share margin in the last town hall election \*\*:  $p < 0.01$  \*:  $p < 0.05$

Table 10: The Impact of Winning a Mayoral Office on Parliamentary Activity: Regressions

Specifications :	Baseline RDD		Naïve Regressions		Robustness Checks on RDD (all obs.)		
	RDD : $ m  \leq 20$	RDD : $ m  \leq 20$ Big city halls	OLS	OLS : Big city halls	Higher-Degree Polynomial	$ m  \leq 10$	Pre-Election Level of Activity
<b>Dep. Var. : Written Questions (log)</b> Wins Mayoral Office  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>-0.064</b> (0.132) 0 421	<b>0.322</b> (0.175) 0 222	<b>-0.071</b> (0.067) 1943	<b>-0.028</b> (0.087) 1943	<b>-0.208</b> (0.186) 1 421	<b>0.045</b> (0.166) 0 263	<b>-0.119</b> (0.118) 0 435
<b>Dep. Var. : Committee Attendance (log)</b> Wins Mayoral Office  <i>Degree of Polynomial</i> <i>Observations</i>	<b>-0.372**</b> (0.103) 0 432	<b>-0.606**</b> (0.148) 0 229	<b>-0.302**</b> (0.059) 1948	<b>-0.548**</b> (0.082) 1948	<b>-0.403**</b> (0.148) 1 432	<b>-0.417**</b> (0.129) 0 273	<b>-0.047</b> (0.087) 0 460

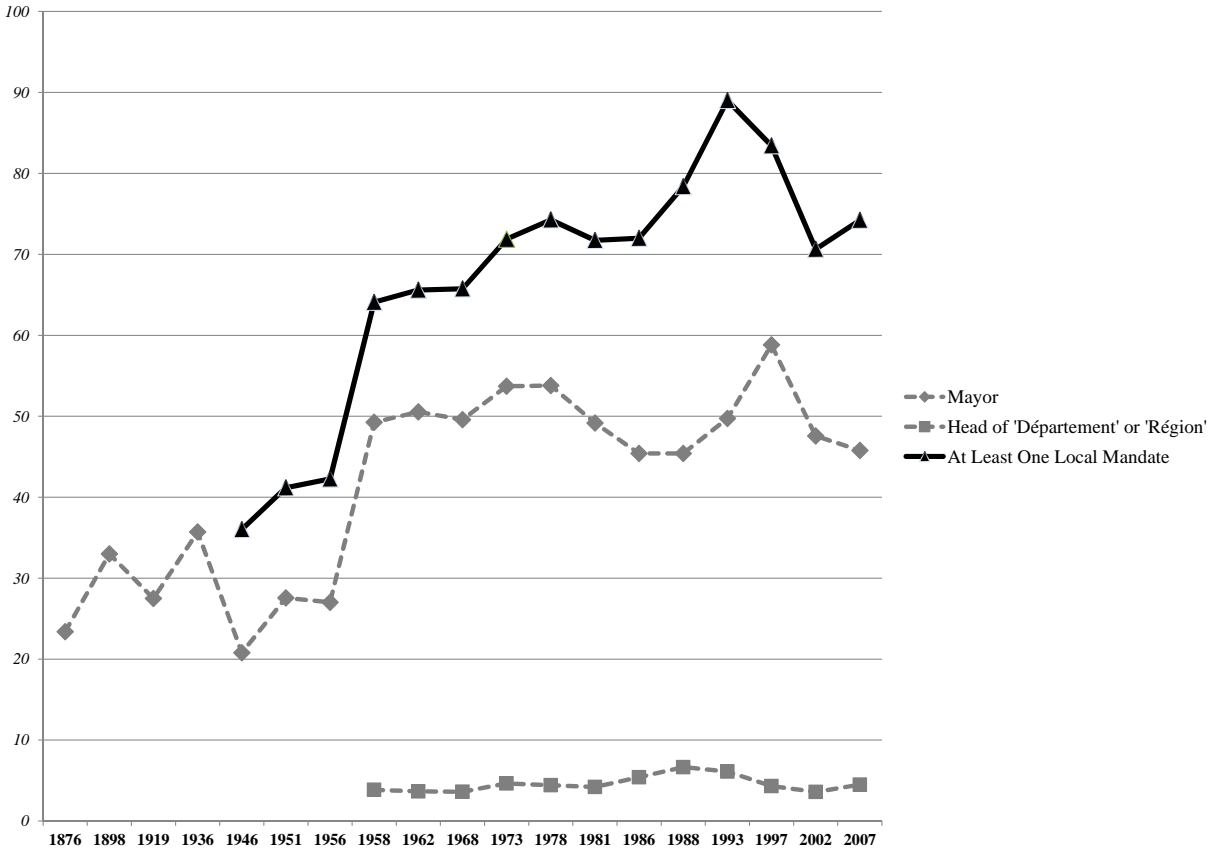
Note : Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the politician level. \*\*:  $p < 0.01$  \*:  $p < 0.05$ .  $m$  is the vote share margin in the last town hall election. City halls are big when city population is above 30,000 inhabitants.

Table 11: Differences-in-Differences Estimation of the Impacts of Bidding and Winning Town Hall on Parliamentary Activity

Dependent Variable : $Y_i^{post} - Y_i^{ante}$	Committee attendance (log)			Written Questions (log)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)	(4)	(4)
<b>Treatment Effect of Mayoral Office</b>	<b>-0.210**</b> (0.055)	<b>-0.319**</b> (0.062)		<b>0.033</b> (0.064)	<b>-0.011</b> (0.076)	<b>-0.011</b> (0.076)
<b>Treatment Effect of Town Hall Campaign</b>			<b>-0.300**</b> (0.064)			<b>-0.031</b> (0.076)
Only MPs bidding for town hall	No	Yes	-	No	Yes	-
Only MPs who never are mayors	-	-	Yes	-	-	Yes
Observations	1920	831	1224	1879	811	1197

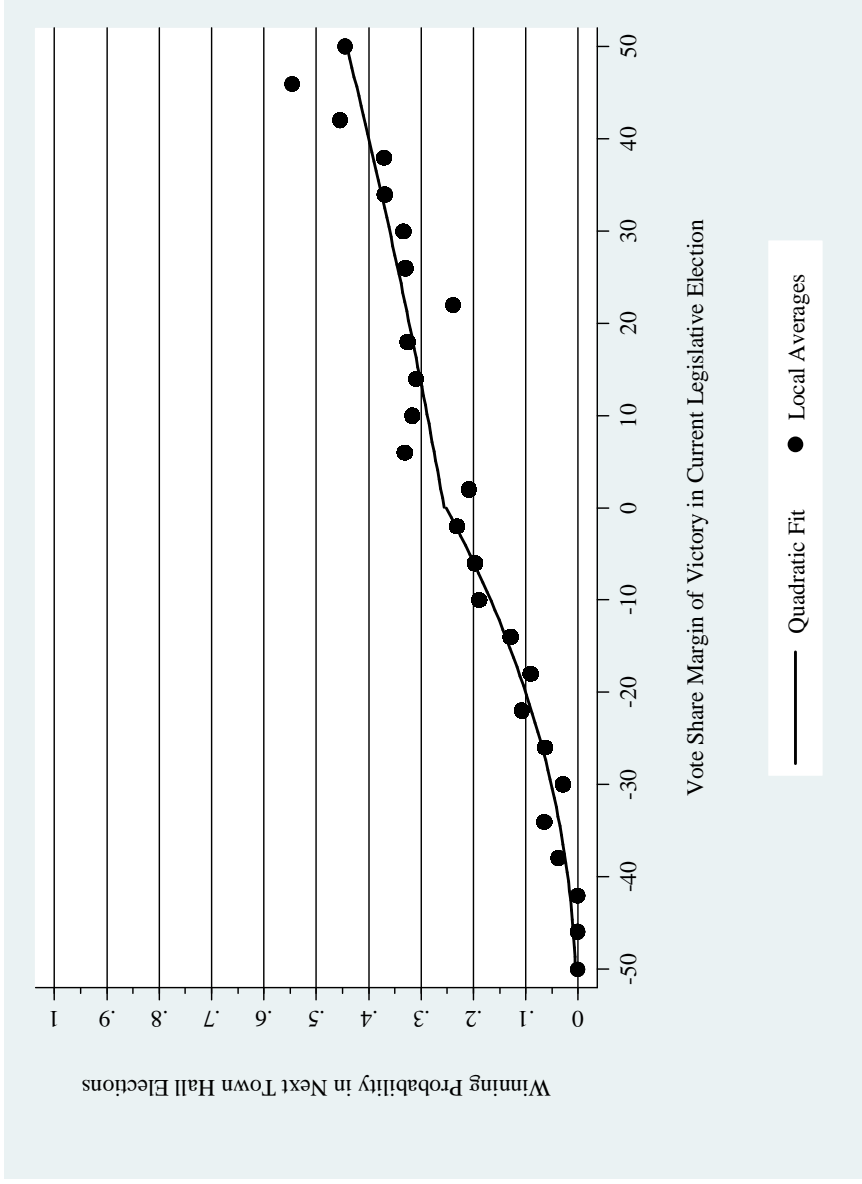
Note : Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the politician level. \*\*:  $p < 0.01$  \*:  $p < 0.05$ . Treatment Effect of Mayoral Office takes three different values : 0 if no change in mayoral status, -1 if incumbent mayor loses or abandons mandate after town hall election, and 1 if non-incumbent mayor wins mayoral mandate after town hall election. Treatment Effect of Town Hall Campaign is equal to -1 when the MP bids for a significant town hall and 0 otherwise.

Figure 1: Proportion of French MPs Simultaneously Holding a Local Office (in %)



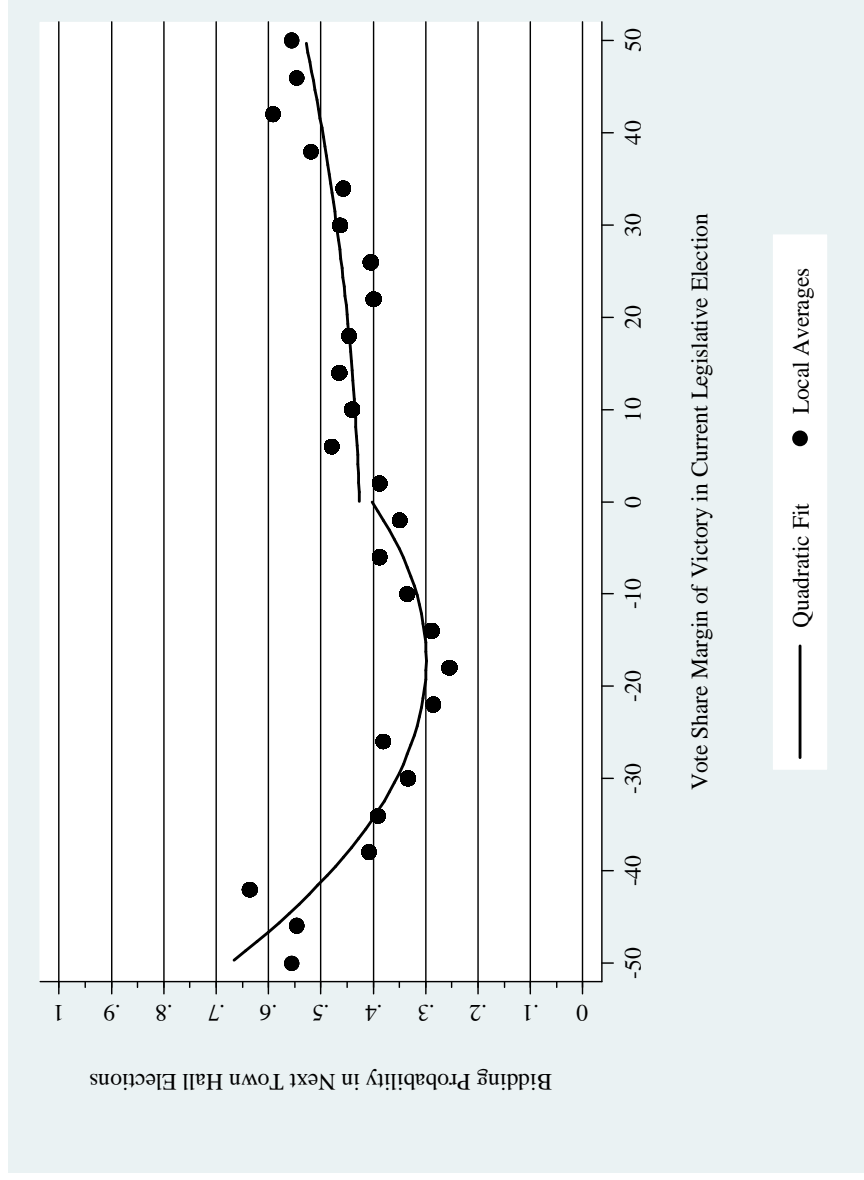
*Note* : Holding at least one local mandate means that the MP holds at least one executive or legislative local office at the same time that he is an MP. Official titles for heads of “Département” or “Région” are “Président du Conseil Général” and “Président du Conseil Régional”. These figures are computed for French metropolitan MPs at the beginning of each new National Assembly (“législature” in French). Data sources are Masclet (1982) until 1981, and hand collection from *Le Monde* newspaper from 1986 onwards.

Figure 2: The Impact of Winning a National Office on the Probability of Winning the Next Town Hall Election



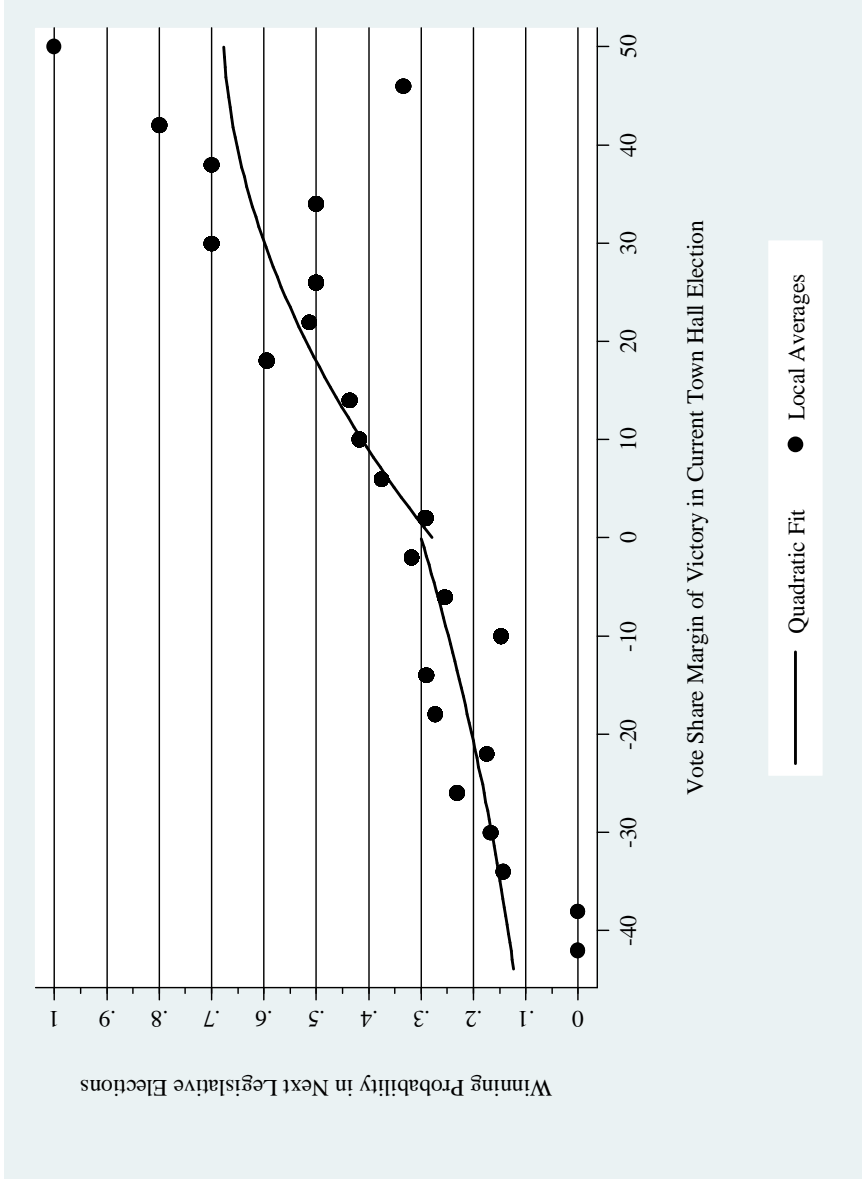
*Note* : The probability of winning in the next town hall election is unconditional on bidding for it. The data include all legislative elections and municipal elections in towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants held in metropolitan France between 1988 and 2008.

Figure 3: The Impact of Winning a National Office on the Probability of Bidding for the Next Town Hall Election



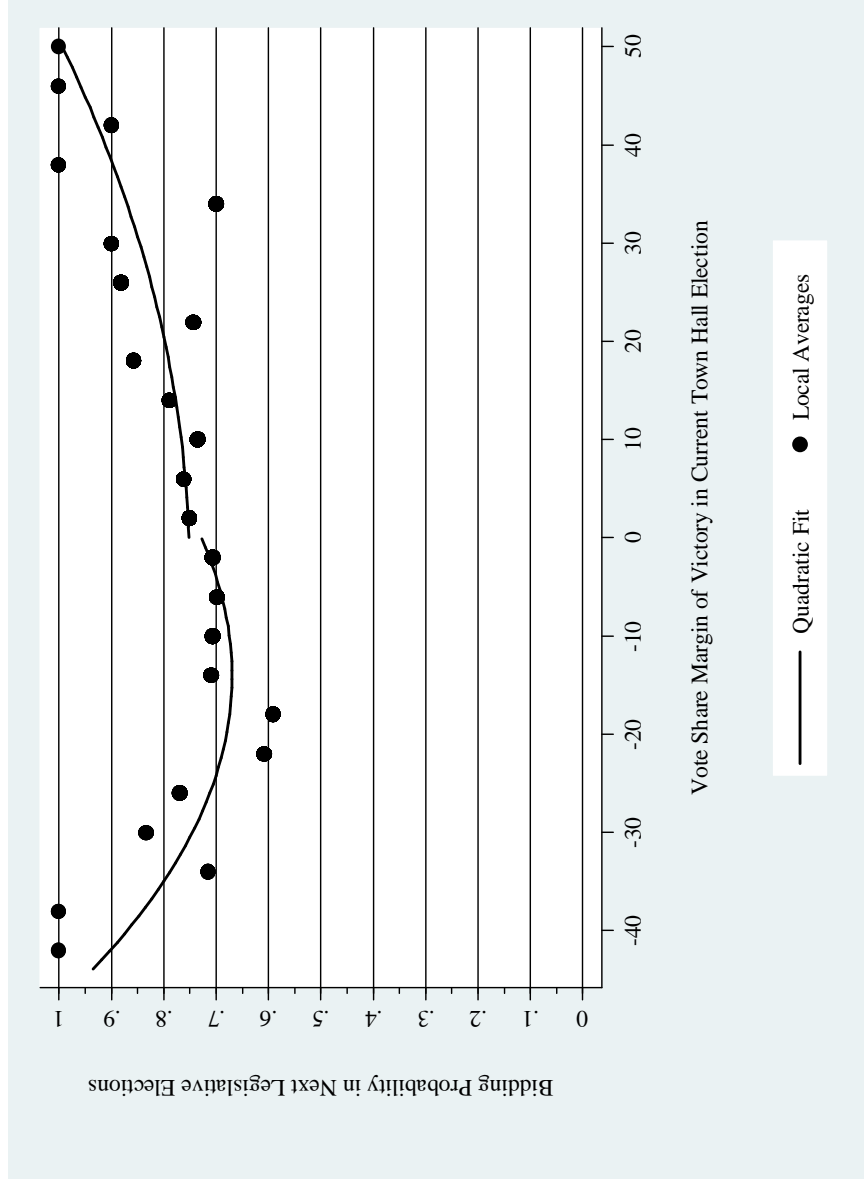
*Note* : The data include all legislative elections and municipal elections in towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants held in metropolitan France between 1988 and 2008.

Figure 4: The Impact of Winning a Mayoral Office on the Probability of Winning the Next National Election



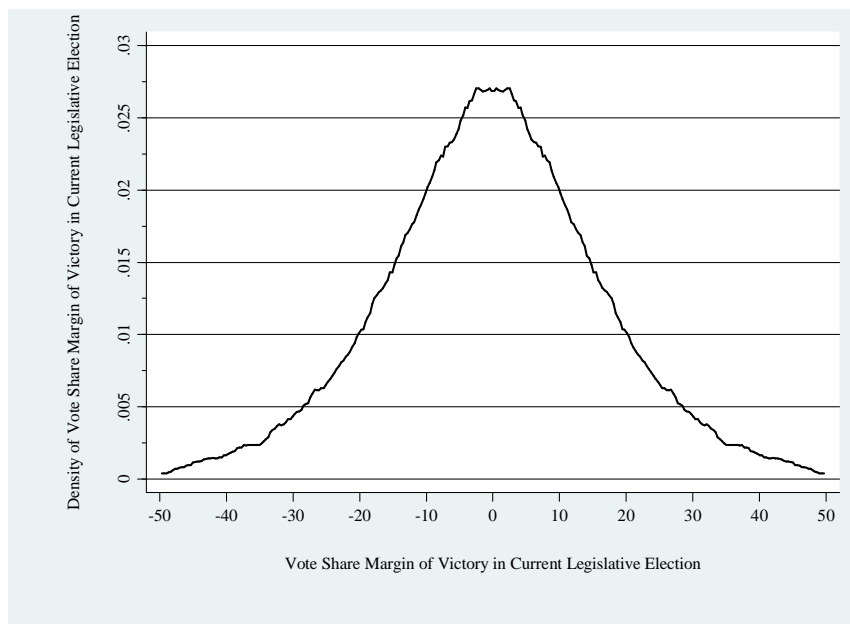
*Note* : The probability of winning in the next national election is unconditional on bidding for it. The data include all legislative elections and municipal elections in towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants held in metropolitan France between 1989 and 2002.

Figure 5: The Impact of Winning a Mayoral Office on the Probability of Bidding for the Next National Election



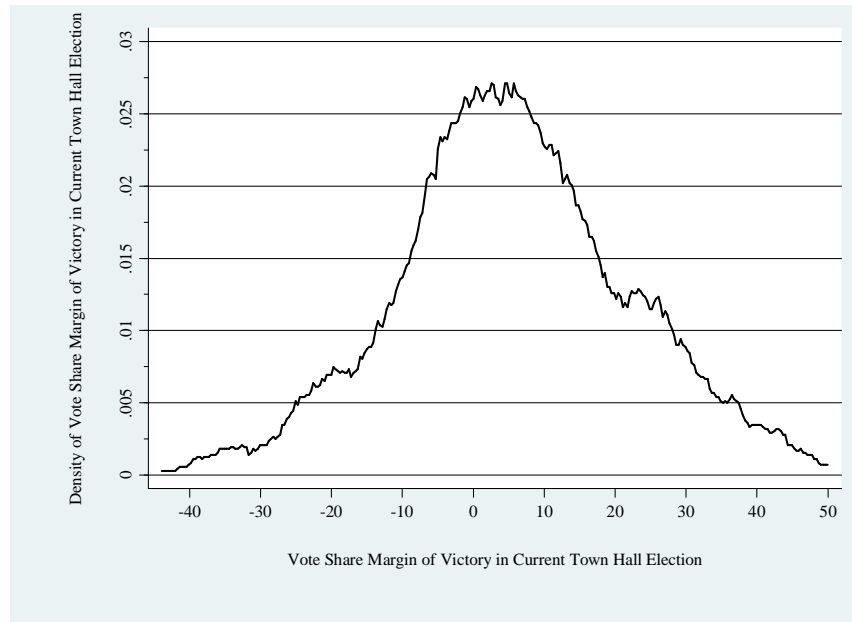
Note : The data include all legislative elections and municipal elections in towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants held in metropolitan France between 1989 and 2002.

Figure 6: The Density of Vote Share Margins in Legislative Elections between 1988 and 2007



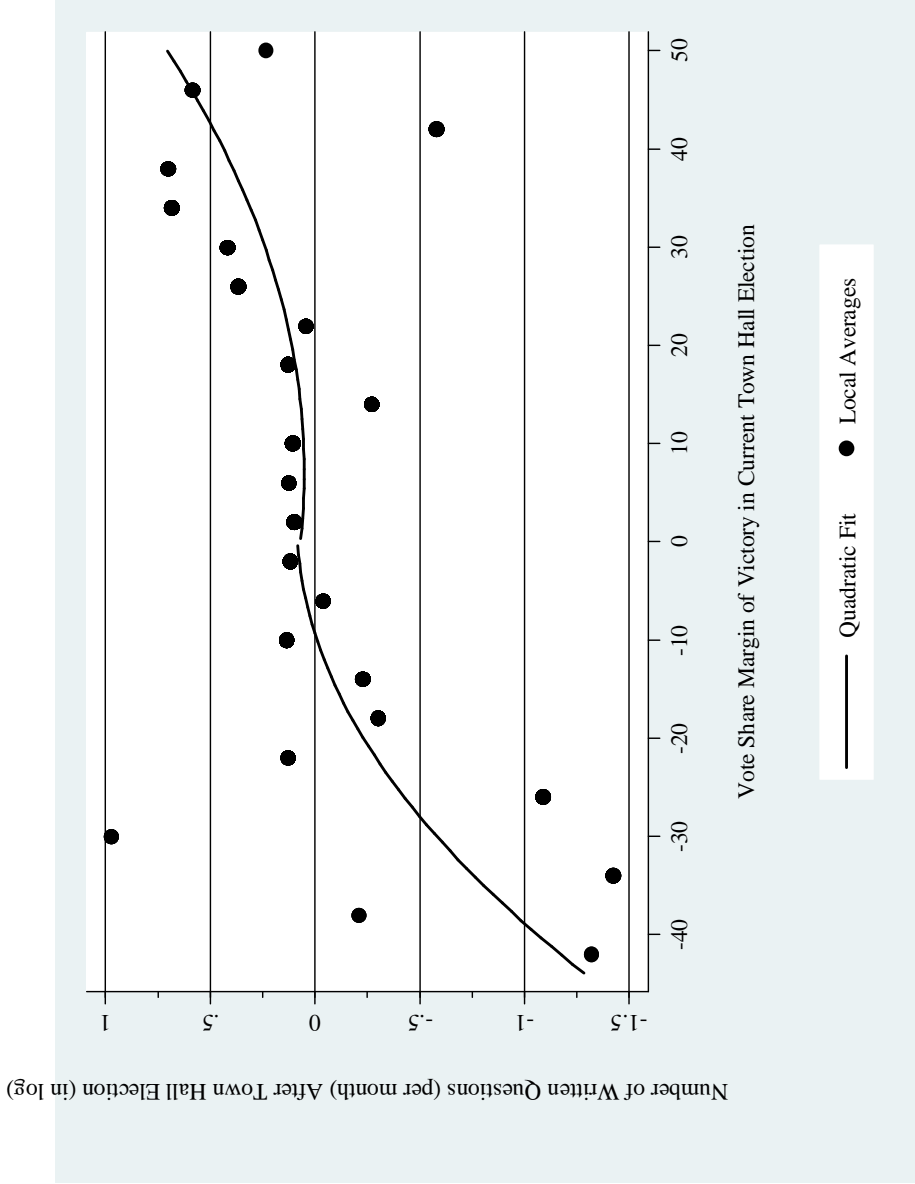
Note : The density of vote share margins is computed over all candidates in legislative elections with either a first round with two candidates or a second round. It is computed using a rectangular kernel with a bandwidth equal to 4.

Figure 7: The Density of Vote Share Margins in Town Hall Elections between 1989 and 2008



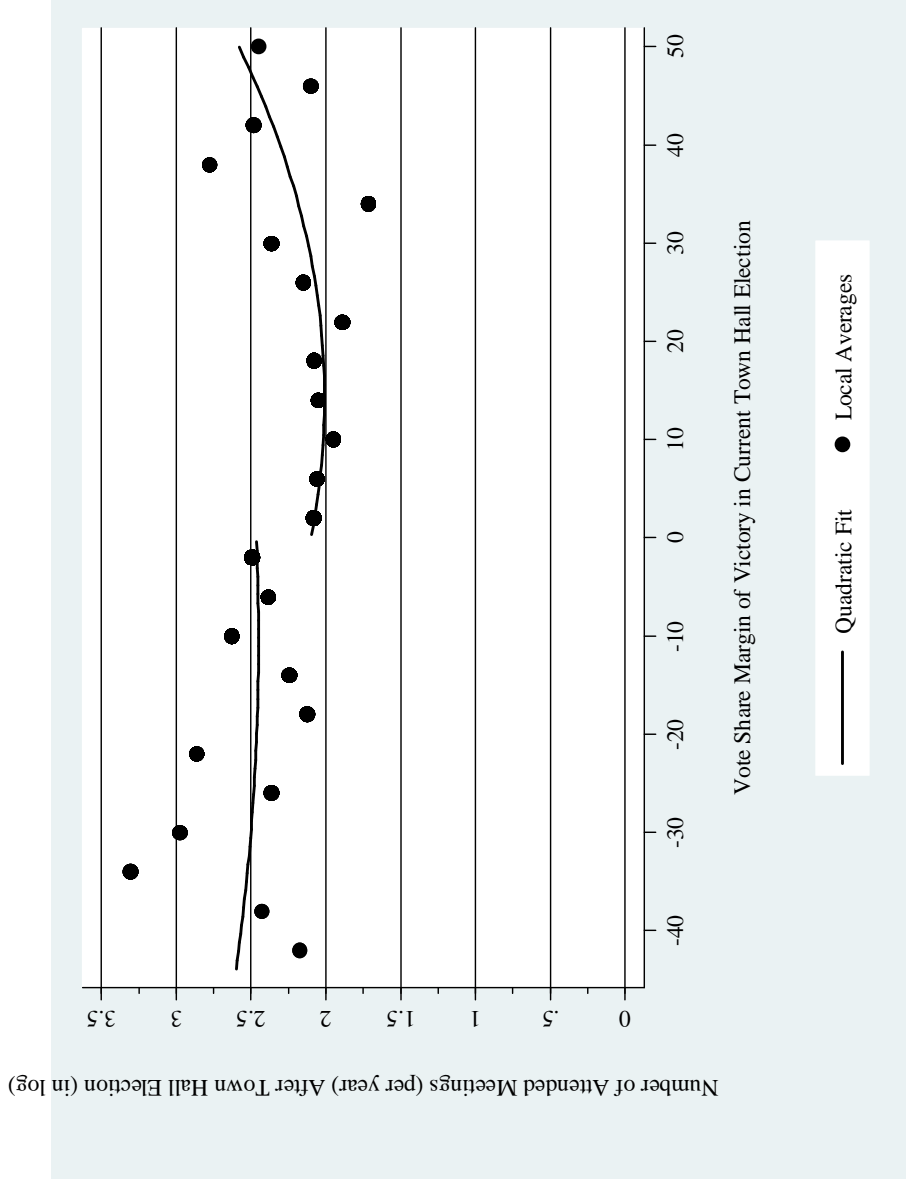
Note : The density of vote share margins is computed over all national-level politicians bidding in town hall elections with either a first round with two candidates or a second round. It is computed using a rectangular kernel with a bandwidth equal to 4.

Figure 8: The Impact of Winning a Mayoral Office on MPs' Official Casework Activity



Note : The data include all municipal elections held between 1989 and 2008 in metropolitan French towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants.

Figure 9: The Impact of Winning a Mayoral Office on Legislative Committee Attendance



Note : The data include all municipal elections held between 1989 and 2008 in metropolitan French towns with more than 9,000 inhabitants.