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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From cradle to congress: the effect of birthplace on legislative decision-making

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Abstract
The extent to which legislators pursue their privately held preferences in office has important implications for representative democracy and is exceedingly difficult to measure. Many models of legislative decision-making tacitly assume that members are willing and able to carry out the wishes of their constituents so as to maximize their reelection prospects and, in so doing, relegate their personal preferences. This project explores this assumption by examining the role that members' place of birth plays in shaping legislative behavior, apart from other politically relevant factors like partisanship. We find that birthplace exerts an independent influence on members' voting behavior. Using a variety of geographic measures, we find that members who are born in close proximity to one another tend to exhibit similar patterns in roll call voting, even when accounting for partisanship, constituency attributes, and a variety of other determinants of voting. We also demonstrate in a secondary analysis that the agricultural composition of members' birthplace influences their support for agricultural protection. Our findings suggest that members' personal history shapes the representational relationship they have with their constituents.

Keywords: agreement scores; agricultural protection; birthplace effects; legislative behavior; political geography; roll call voting

1. Introduction

What are the origins of legislators' policy positions? Canonical wisdom tells us that the quest for re-election is the central driving force behind members' legislative decisions (e.g., Fiorina, 1974; Mayhew, 1974; Shepsle and Weingast, 1981; Weingast and Marshall, 1988; Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Electorally minded theories prioritize constituency service and policy optimization (e.g., Fenno, 1978; Kingdon, 1989; Arnold, 1990), with comparatively less attention given to members' privately held preferences. In fact, it is often assumed that legislators possess the (near unlimited) resources necessary to consolidate complete information about constituent preferences, which they subsequently seek to reflect in a mirrored fashion (e.g., Baron and Ferejohn, 1989; Fearon, 1999; Axelrod, 2015).

Such assumptions suggest that members of Congress are essentially interchangeable insofar as their preferred clientele. In the modern, polarized era, this could lead to the conclusion that a Democrat is a Democrat and a Republican is a Republican. Yet not every legislative action has electoral implications or maps cleanly onto partisan cleavages. Members of Congress routinely cast

votes on diffuse and low-salience bills with little traceability, on which party is an imperfect predictor (e.g., Miller and Stokes, 1963; Arnold, 1990). While constituency preferences are undoubtedly meaningful to the representational relationship, they are not the sole driver of legislative behavior (Burden, 2007; Grimmer, 2013; Bernhard *et al.*, 2017). Even if members wanted to act strictly in accordance with the preferences of their constituents, they often lack the information necessary to do so (Butler and Nickerson, 2011; Broockman and Skovron, 2018). In the absence of clear directives, members are likely to draw upon their own experiences to guide their legislative decision-making. Furthermore, it is conceivable that members' personal experiences shape their decisions regarding which subconstituencies to prioritize (Fenno, 1977; Grose, 2011).

The extent to which legislators are guided by their personal views and preferences in office has important implications for representative democracy. Being able to parse out personal motivations via observed behavior has long interested scholars of American legislative politics. Of the studies that acknowledge the important role that members' personal experiences play in their legislative decision-making (e.g., Washington, 2008; Francis and Bramlett, 2017), empirical evidence has proven scarce given the difficulties associated with capturing legislators' privately held preferences.

We suggest that a member of Congress's birthplace can be leveraged to ascertain valuable information regarding her/his personal experiences. One's surroundings in their developmental years are critical to shaping the way they evaluate and respond to the world around them (Quintelier, 2015). For this paper, places of birth provide plausibly exogenous variation in members' experiences that can be distinguished from constituency-specific motivations. In line with the developing birthplace favoritism literature, we suggest that members born outside of the geographic area they represent have little *electoral* reason to act dissimilarly to other members who were born in and represent that geographic area, beyond the indelible imprint of birthplace (e.g., Do *et al.*, 2017; Dickens, 2018; Baskaran and da Fonseca, 2021; Mattos *et al.*, 2021). That is, we contend that finding evidence of convergence in members' behavior associated with geographic similarities in their places of birth, apart from their places of representation and other key determinants of decision-making (e.g., partisanship), suggests that legislative behavior is, at least in part, shaped by members' surroundings during formative years in their lives.

We examine the effects of birthplace on US House members serving in the 107^{th}–115^{th} Congresses (2001–2018), exploiting the significant variation in member birthplaces. In fact, on average, well over half of the membership is born outside of the district, one-third outside of the state, and one-quarter outside of the region that they represent. Cumulatively, our results demonstrate systematic variation in the decision-making of members of Congress based on the geographic location of their birth. First, legislators from similar geographic areas are more likely to agree on legislation. This effect is moderated by legislators' age, whereby the commonalities of birthplace are less meaningful when there is a large age disparity between members. Furthermore, we demonstrate in a secondary analysis that members' support for agricultural protection is shaped in a meaningful way by the agricultural makeup of the county in which they were born. These relationships are robust to various model specifications and unobserved confounders. Cumulatively, our findings suggest that members' personal history shapes the representational relationship they have with their constituents and that members, even if they desire to reflect the wishes of the voters they represent, are subject to constraints caused by their personal experiences.

2. Why place of birth matters

Research demonstrates that there is systematic variation in attributes across individuals living in different geographic areas of the US. Individuals living in close proximity to one another have repeated social interactions and are subject to the same features of and changes to their environment (Rentfrow *et al.*, 2009). Selection and socialization drive and reinforce the development of different political

opinions and partisan adherence in different settings (Gimpel *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, similar personalities cluster in regions and vary across borders (Rentfrow *et al.*, 2008). These regional differences lead to geographic variation in politically relevant characteristics such as ideology and partisanship (Krug and Kulhavy, 1973; Carney *et al.*, 2008; Rentfrow, 2010). Therefore, the geographic location within which people live has the potential to meaningfully influence the way they view the world around them. Importantly, for our purposes, geographic variation in individual-level attributes has implications for the behaviors of not only voters but legislators as well (Ramey *et al.*, 2017; Arceneaux *et al.*, 2018).

Moreover, childhood experiences and social environments are vital for the formation of political behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Caspi *et al.*, 2002; Moran *et al.*, 2011; De Neve, 2015). Meaningful childhood events linger throughout developmental years, commonly persisting for a lifetime (Quintelier, 2015), and the opinions derived from these circumstances influence responses to political events (Sears and Valentino, 1997; Valentino and Sears, 1998). For instance, childhood interventions have been shown to affect political participation in adulthood (Holbein *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, one's childhood geographic location influences the formative experiences that shape identities into adulthood (Scourfield *et al.*, 2006), and studies of public resource allocation demonstrate that politicians' identities play an important role in elite decision-making (e.g., Pande, 2003; Franck and Rainer, 2012). Succinctly, politicians often favor members of their own group identity, with birthplace logically contributing to the development of such identities.

Relatedly, the budding birthplace favoritism literature asserts a hometown bias, whereby politicians often prioritize their birthplace in the distribution of resources, independent of electoral support. This phenomenon has been observed in several contexts, including Europe (Carozzi and Repetto, 2016; Fiva and Halse, 2016; Baskaran and da Fonseca, 2021), Latin America (Mattos *et al.*, 2021), Africa (Burgess *et al.*, 2015; Dickens, 2018), and Asia (Do *et al.*, 2017), although this work has focused primarily on the effects of birthplace bias on distributive politics. On a base level, these forces ought to exist for members of Congress and may be measurable in members' observed legislative decisions (i.e., roll call votes).

Recent work examining the effects of legislators' ties to their district is consistent with our basic supposition — representation is shaped in important ways by the depth of members' experiences in their district. For instance, studies find that House members' history in their district has considerable implications for how they approach constituent communication (Hunt, 2022) and the extent to which they invest in constituent services (Crosson and Kaslovsky, N.d.). Taking this logic a step farther, legislators with roots in the same geographic area should possess more similar legislative proclivities than those with roots in different geographic areas, all else equal. We explore this logic below.[1] While much of the "local roots" literature to date focuses on the effects of a shared geographic identity (between voters and their representatives) on various aspects of the dyadic relationship (e.g., legislative styles, communication, resource allocation, etc.), our extension of this logic explores the effects of birthplace correspondence between legislators on convergence/divergence in legislative decision-making. Importantly, this extension provides insights into how legislators' places of birth shape their policy decisions, which have received limited consideration in the local roots literature (for an exception, see Crosson and Kaslovsky, N.d.). Furthermore, our framework allows us to evaluate the extent to which legislative decisions are informed by birthplace *independent* of members' district of representation, contributing to our understanding of whether members' behaviors are influenced (consciously or subconsciously) by considerations outside of electoral motivations.

The increasingly nationalized agenda and rising strength of national parties suggest that birthplace effects, which are geographically centered and produce local political cleavages that are distinctive

[1]While we focus here on legislative behavior, it is important to note that there is also rich literature that examines the underpinnings of the electoral advantages reaped by candidates with deep roots in their constituency (e.g., Key, 1949; Munis, 2021).

from national ones, are almost certainly less central to legislative decision-making than they once were (Hopkins, 2018; Lin and Lunz Trujillo, 2023). Nevertheless, even in the highly nationalized and polarized environment that characterizes the modern Congress, there remain conditional demands for legislators to pursue parochial interests and bipartisan compromise that are reflected in observed legislative behavior (Harbridge and Malhotra, 2011; Moore *et al.*, 2013; Feigenbaum and Hall, 2015; De Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw, 2020; Harbridge-Yong *et al.*, 2023).[2] Numerous studies find evidence of contemporary localized interests (e.g., spatial, financial, etc.) that supersede partisanship and ideology within certain policy domains that have disparate costs and benefits across geographic areas (Hankinson, 2018; De Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson, 2019; Marble and Nall, 2021).[3] After all, if local considerations were entirely subverted by national ones, we might expect members to be in (near) perfect lockstep with their party without electoral consequence; however, this appears not to be the case (Canes-Wrone *et al.*, 2002; Carson *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, the varied legislative agenda of the US House with respect to vote types and issue areas provides members with isolated opportunities to express birthplace-informed positions at odds with their party while maintaining overall high rates of party loyalty. For instance, partisan pressures vary markedly across types of votes, with members having considerably more leeway on final passage votes than on some other classes of votes (Ansolabehere *et al.*, 2001; Sinclair, 2002; Crespin *et al.*, 2013).[4] Therefore, the local forces that underpin birthplace effects, while perhaps weaker than they once were, are nevertheless present in the modern era. While members may be influenced by birthplace effects on even the most divisive partisan votes (perhaps subconsciously), we expect the effects of birthplace to be more evident when national partisan considerations are less central to the decision. We return to this later when we offer a series of robustness checks that isolate vote types, issues domains, and member electoral contexts that involve less partisan influence.

In sum, some existing research suggests that members of Congress' life experiences affect their legislative behavior (Swers, 2002; Grose, 2011; Lawless, 2012), although this connection has proven to be difficult to empirically demonstrate, especially for the membership at large (as opposed to subsets of the membership on the basis of descriptive characteristics). Given that childhood experiences and connections can be particularly formative to human behaviors and attitudes, it stands to reason that a member's birthplace plays an influential role in shaping her/his legislative decisions. Given the systematic geographic variation in politically relevant attributes in the US, it follows that members who are born in the same geographic location will exhibit convergence in legislative behavior, independent of other political factors (e.g., partisanship). Members' place of birth plausibly informs a number of considerations that precede, but meaningfully affect, their legislative decisions, including party affiliation, committee assignment requests, and the like. These antecedent considerations notwithstanding, we expect birthplace effects to be most pronounced on legislative decisions that have disparate costs and benefits across geographic areas and on which members are afforded the leeway to

[2]In Section A of the Supplemental Appendix, we revisit data in the study by Ansolabehere and Kuriwaki (2022) spanning 2006–2018 by separating out national issues from more local ones with geographically disparate implications and find that local issues play an independent and statistically meaningful role in shaping respondents' perceptions of issue agreement with their House Representative as well as their evaluation of the member. These findings emerge during a period marked by high levels of nationalization and polarization. Moreover, the effects of local issues hold even when restricting the data to include only those respondents who correctly identify the party of their member as well as respondents who belong to the same party as their member.

[3]In fact, Hopkins (2018) finds evidence of local effects when examining proximity to 9/11 targets and support for anti-terrorism spending, county-level crime rates, and support for anti-crime spending, as well as county-level unemployment and economic outlook.

[4]Section B of the Supplemental Appendix provides figures that show the proportion of party unity votes by vote type category (Crespin *et al.*, 2013), as well as the defection rates across agriculture votes, votes on general parochial issues (i.e., housing, military bases, migrant labor, and agriculture), and all other votes. In short, these figures demonstrate the considerable variation in party cohesion/loyalty across different categories of votes.

vote in accordance with parochial interests. We add the important proviso that other features of individuals' birthplace (e.g., racial composition, economic circumstances, population density, etc.) and their communication networks surely unify their experiences beyond geographic proximity (Baybeck and Huckfeldt, 2002; Moore and Reeves, 2017). For instance, those raised in large metropolitan areas share experiences that are unique to urban living. Therefore, we might consider geographic location to be just one factor that leaves an imprint on members, and so it might be considered a conservative estimate of life experience on legislative behavior.

We think that there are several plausible mechanisms through which birthplace can affect legislative behavior and by extension the convergence of legislative behavior among members. For instance, childhood experiences in a geographic area might socialize/condition future legislators to assume a set of attitudes or values that accompany them into their legislative careers. These experiences might also impart knowledge about issues that are particularly important to their birthplace communities. Another possibility is that legislators forge and maintain close connections with family and friends in/near their birthplaces whose perspectives inform their decisions. Yet another is that members possess deep emotional ties to their places of birth, leading them to be mindful of the interests of those who live there. There are undoubtedly other possibilities as well.

Provided that there is indeed systematic variation in the psychological attributes (Rentfrow *et al.*, 2009) and/or socialization (Gimpel *et al.*, 2020) of individuals living in different geographic areas in the US and that birthplaces create meaningful experiences and/or connections, then drawing upon Tobler's (1970, 236) First Law of Geography, whereby "near things are more related than distant things," Tobler's (1970, 236) it stands to reason that members born near (far from) one another should exhibit similarities (dissimilarities) in their legislative behavior, all else equal. We do not wish to suggest that *all* geographically proximal locations in the US bear marked resemblances, but rather that, *on average*, individuals with geographic connections (in state, region, and/or proximity) are more likely to share experiences and ties than those who do not. The powerful effects of these geographic connections have been demonstrated elsewhere (e.g., Rentfrow, 2010; Gerber *et al.*, 2013) and have been attributed to such factors as historical migration patterns, social interactions, environmental influences (e.g., climate and natural resources), and the like (Rentfrow *et al.*, 2008). To use a simple example, individuals raised in densely agricultural areas are likely to have a deeper understanding of the issues confronting farmers as well as stronger affective and relational ties to the farming community. The knowledge and attachments forged during formative years are likely to follow these individuals even if they go on to represent districts that have little agricultural presence. Thus, members born in close proximity to one another into places with similar agricultural compositions are likely to converge in their agriculturally related voting behavior, especially on decisions that afford them comparatively greater autonomy.

It is also important to note that members range widely in age and therefore may have very vastly relationships with their places of birth even when born and raised in the same geographic location. Numerous forces can lead to dramatic changes in the culture and physical environment of a particular area over time. For instance, the Baltimore, MD, that Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) was born into in 1940 was substantially different in various ways (e.g., economics, demographics, population size, etc.) from the one her colleague Scott Taylor (R-VA) was born into some 39 years later in 1979 (Crenson, 2017), and therefore we might expect these differences in their surroundings to lessen their shared experiences and likelihood of agreeing. Furthermore, it is conceivable that there exists some level of decay in birthplace effects with age, such that older members may have weaker ties (e.g., psychological attachments, personal connections, etc.) to their places of birth than their younger counterparts.[5] These possibilities suggest that birthplace effects may be quite different for members with sizable age disparities. Therefore, we arrive at the following proposition and corollary:

[5]Nostalgia, whereby individuals possess a "particularly acute form of place memory" (Farrar, 2011, 727), could mitigate or even reverse such decay. This possibility is empirically scrutinized in the analysis below.

Table 1. House members' places of birth, 2001–2018

	Members Born Outside			
Congress	District of representation	State of district	Region of district	50 states
107	209	143	108	12
108	217	149	115	13
109	230	150	114	14
110	239	156	120	18
111	247	165	130	21
112	251	168	126	18
113	257	170	128	19
114	257	165	124	23
115	271	180	137	32

Birthplace Agreement Proposition: Members of Congress who are born in close geographic proximity to one another are more likely to exhibit similarities in their roll call voting patterns relative to members of Congress who are born a greater distance from one another, all else equal.

Age Corollary: The effect of birthplace proximity should diminish when members have greater age disparities.

3. What do legislators who move look like?

Fully capturing the effect that place of birth has on a member of Congress is no trivial task, in large part because each individual experiences her/his birthplace in different ways. Some members were raised in wealthy neighborhoods, while others were not. Some members live in their place of birth for a long period of time, while others do not. Some members come from families with deep local roots in those communities, while others do not. The list goes on. In order to fully encapsulate the effects of birthplace, one would need to account for the specific, and myriad, circumstances that each member experienced. Instead, we use a relatively coarse measure as a first cut at exploring the effects of birthplace. In particular, we record the location of each member's birthplace and examine whether members who come from similar locations are more likely to converge in their policy positions.[6] We suggest that this rather blunt approach is likely to disadvantage finding a birthplace effect, and therefore our findings might be considered a lower bound of this effect.

We examine birthplace effects for members serving in the 107^{th}–115^{th} US House of Representatives (2001–2018). Table 1 presents the number of members who were born outside of the district they represent, as well as the count of members who were born outside of their district's state and region.[7] This table also presents the number of members born outside of the 50 states, including Washington, DC. As Table 1 notes, a sizable number of members were born outside of the geographic areas containing their district. In fact, well over a third of the membership was born outside their district's state during the period of analysis. Therefore, there is considerable variation across members in terms of their personal history with the geographic areas they represent.

Of course, a natural concern with an analysis of this sort is the possibility of non-random migration, particularly electorally motivated, strategic movement (i.e., carpetbagging). For instance, potential candidates could relocate to vicinages that provide them with a greater likelihood of winning office. From a theoretical standpoint, if we assume that dyadic congruence is an important

[6]Member birthplaces are recorded using the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. When necessary, the authors collected information on counties when not provided by the directory.

[7]We use the ICPSR regional designations of New England, Mid-Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, Solid South, Border States, Mountain States, Pacific States, and External States.

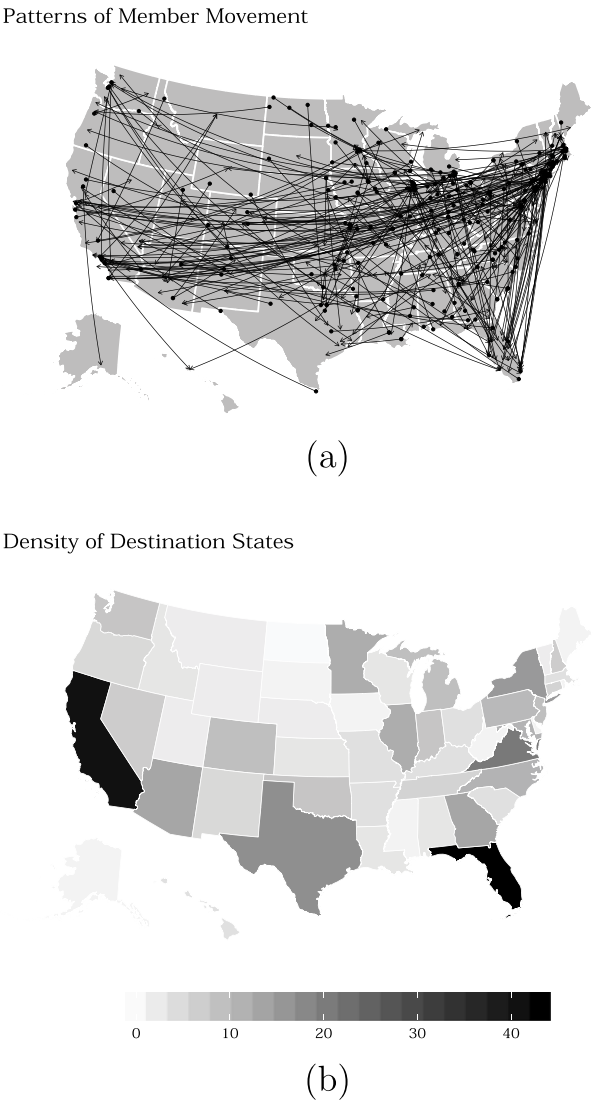


Figure 1. Member relocation from the place of birth with the 50 states.
Notes: Figure 1a presents members' movement from their city of birth to the geographic center of the district they represent, and Figure 1b presents a density plot of the destination states for members who moved from their birthplace.

condition for winning office, such migration should conceal rather than exacerbate birthplace effects (i.e., members moving to congenial districts). From an empirical standpoint, many members move from their place of birth when they are quite young, likely well before they ever considered running for elective office. In fact, 64.7% of members who were born outside of their district's state did not attend high school in their state of birth, meaning that they left their place of birth at a comparatively young age. We revisit this observation in a later robustness check.

Figure 1a shows the patterns of movement from members' city of birth to the geographic center of the district they represent, and Figure 1b presents a density plot of the destination states for members

who moved from their birthplace.[8] Importantly, migration is fairly widespread, and so the movement is neither to select states nor to neighboring states. Rather, most states prove to be destinations for future members, and the distances of travel are noteworthy.[9] We find that the average distance of movement from a US-born member's place of birth to her/his district of representation is over 860 miles or roughly the driving distance from New York, NY, to Milwaukee, WI.

Given that many members move from their place of birth at a relatively young age, migration strikes us as plausibly orthogonal to electoral considerations. We conduct a balance test to examine whether members who are born outside of the state or region they represent possess observable characteristics that are meaningfully different from those who were born in the state or region they represent. We do so by estimating a series of logistic regression models with a dependent variable measuring whether the member was born in the state or region containing the district that she/he represents.[10] We look at a selection of traits and behaviors that have important implications for representation (e.g., Stratmann, 2000; Gerrity *et al.*, 2007; Grose, 2011), including age, gender, race, district-level democratic support, conservatism, and chamber seniority.[11] The purpose of including measures of conservatism and chamber seniority is to capture members' stable ideological predispositions and electoral security. Since these measures are the outgrowth of observed legislative decisions—the phenomenon of interest in this study—we also estimate the models without these measures. Furthermore, we include state (region) fixed effects for birth states (region) as well as the states (regions) containing the district of representation.

The results of the balance test are presented in Table 2. In general, we find that members who were born outside of their district's state (region) are not statistically different from those who were born in their district's state (region) in terms of the covariates included in the test. The one exception is the age variable, which proves to be negative and statistically significant for democratic members when using state as the geographic area of interest and for all members when using region and including the complete list of covariates. This would imply that, for these subsets of members, those representing districts in their birth state (region) are, on average, slightly younger than those representing districts outside of their birth state (region). We struggle to concoct a story in which voter receptivity to older candidates is a motivating force for strategic migration. Furthermore, we include in Table 2 an omnibus test for each model to examine whether the coefficients on the covariates (other than the fixed effects) are jointly equal to zero [see Wald p-values] (e.g., Arceneaux *et al.*, 2006; Kumar, 2022), and we find no evidence of imbalance at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.[12]

[8]We record the coordinates of the epicenter of the city in which the member was born as well as the epicenter of the district that the member represents. To identify these coordinates for birth city, we use the website `latlong.net`. We use the Tiger/Line Shapefiles from the US Census to identify the coordinates for the US House districts. We use the `R` package `urbnmapr` to generate the figures (Strochak *et al.*, 2019). Note that, due to an idiosyncrasy with the mapping function, we needed to choose a city to characterize the states of Alaska and Hawaii and used Anchorage and Honolulu, respectively.

[9]Section C of the Supplemental Appendix presents a comparison of inmigration rates—the percentage of people moving into a state as a share of all movers—across members and the US population (2004–2005). We find that the patterns of inmigration across members and the population are strikingly similar, with the distributions of inmigration rates being statistically indistinguishable from equality.

[10]Estimating these models using a linear probability model does not substantively change the following results.

[11]We measure a member's age in terms of integer values. Gender is measured using an indicator variable for members who identify as female, and race is measured using indicator variables for members who identify as black and/or hispanic. District Democratic support is measured as the district-level percentage of the two-party vote received by the Democratic presidential nominee in the most recent presidential election, using the results of the current presidential election in presidential election years and the previous presidential election in midterm election years. Conservatism is measured using first dimension DW-Nominate scores (Poole and Rosenthal, 1985), and chamber seniority captures the number of continuous years of service in the chamber.

[12]See Section D of the Supplemental Appendix for unconditional balance tests that examine whether the distributions of the individual covariates differ across members who were and were not born in the state/region of representation, using the

Table 2. Balance test across members born inside and outside the state/region of representation

	Born in the State of District					
	All members		Democrats		Republicans	
Age	−0.0119	−0.0197	−0.0509*	−0.0670*	−0.0031	−0.0190
	(0.0097)	(0.0110)	(0.0221)	(0.0249)	(0.0172)	(0.0200)
Female	−0.3485	−0.3268	−0.5370	−0.4499	−0.4355	−0.4742
	(0.2653)	(0.2722)	(0.4883)	(0.4941)	(0.5971)	(0.6103)
Black	−0.3556	−0.3551	0.4818	0.4550	−0.5979	−0.7792
	(0.4169)	(0.4208)	(0.7746)	(0.8098)	(1.4374)	(1.4674)
Hispanic	0.6689	0.6225	0.7081	0.6577	−1.0456	−1.4247
	(0.5410)	(0.5473)	(0.7750)	(0.7925)	(1.0108)	(1.0294)
District Democratic Support	0.0133	0.0064	0.0061	−0.0006	0.0239	0.0151
	(0.0100)	(0.0118)	(0.0223)	(0.0253)	(0.0233)	(0.0237)
Conservatism		−0.3143		−0.9625		−2.3762
		(0.3289)		(2.0951)		(1.3998)
Chamber Seniority		0.0414		0.0859		0.0779
		(0.0315)		(0.0639)		(0.0655)
Constant	0.0261	0.6425	3.2146	3.9389	−0.7015	0.5123
	(1.1471)	(1.2148)	(2.1891)	(2.2639)	(2.3593)	(2.4442)
Birth State Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
District State Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
N (i.e., Unique Members)	908	907	312	312	425	424
Wald *p*	0.1622	0.1396	0.1583	0.1852	0.7911	0.3768
	Born in the Region of District					
	All members		Democrats		Republicans	
Age	−0.0149	−0.0201*	−0.0248	−0.0271	−0.0018	−0.0119
	(0.0091)	(0.0103)	(0.0149)	(0.0165)	(0.0140)	(0.0157)
Female	−0.4215	−0.4275	−0.2640	−0.3059	−0.3261	−0.2694
	(0.2351)	(0.2415)	(0.3419)	(0.3525)	(0.4269)	(0.4340)
Black	−0.2613	−0.2762	0.1233	0.0122	2.2522	2.1989
	(0.3895)	(0.3933)	(0.5029)	(0.5183)	(2.7170)	(2.7118)
Hispanic	0.2545	0.1998	0.7158	0.6226	−0.0014	0.0551
	(0.4633)	(0.4684)	(0.6103)	(0.6172)	(1.0366)	(1.0472)
District Democratic Support	−0.0021	−0.0103	−0.0181	−0.0284	−0.0065	−0.0077
	(0.0085)	(0.0103)	(0.0149)	(0.0174)	(0.0162)	(0.0167)
Conservatism		−0.4090		−1.7596		0.2972
		(0.3102)		(1.5101)		(1.0757)
Chamber Seniority		0.0233		−0.0090		0.0844
		(0.0295)		(0.0424)		(0.0528)
Constant	1.2761	1.9534*	4.8192*	5.0552*	−0.3368	−0.2092
	(0.7781)	(0.8884)	(1.7391)	(1.7591)	(1.1497)	(1.4287)
Birth Region Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
District Region Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
N (i.e., Unique Members)	959	958	422	422	533	532
Wald *p*	0.0964	0.1018	0.2011	0.2811	0.9237	0.7804

Notes: Standard errors are given in parentheses. * denotes $p \leq 0.05$.

Therefore, we contend that the balance tests provide at least some empirical support for the exogeneity of birthplace, although we also appreciate that we cannot speak to correlations with other unobserved, but politically relevant, variables. This is not to say that members *never* relocate strategically, just that, on average, members born outside of the state or region that they represent look substantially similar to those born in their district's state or region. While we are hesitant to go so far as to assume "as-if" randomness in this study, the logical and statistical underpinnings are present (Dunning, 2008). Nevertheless, in an effort to better establish the relationship between birthplace and

Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for continuous variables and a two-tailed difference in proportions test for dichotomous variables. In short, we find only one isolated instance of an imbalance with respect to gender.

legislative behavior, we take the additional step in the analyses below of controlling for various factors that influence legislative decisions, as well as performing numerous robustness checks and sensitivity analyses.

4. Birthplace agreement

We begin by examining the effect that birthplace has on the likelihood that House members adopt identical positions on recorded votes during the period of analysis. Since geographically concentrated interests are varied and often quite difficult to identify and quantify, this approach allows for the myriad birthplace issues that could motivate legislative behavior by tapping into the basic spatial logic that members born near one another are more likely to exhibit similar proclivities with respect to the issues that affect their places of birth.[13] In a sense, this approach allows us to consider all geographically specific policy considerations without needing to measure them directly. We generate agreement scores for all pairwise combinations of unique members in a given Congress across all roll call votes.[14] Therefore, the resulting score for an individual pair of members documents the proportion of all roll calls in a given Congress on which these members cast the same recorded vote.[15] For each Congress, we arrive at a vector of $(n \times [n-1])/2$ agreement scores for all pairwise combinations of members, where n denotes the number of members casting votes in a given Congress.[16]

To explore the *Birthplace Agreement Proposition*, we then determine, for each pairwise combination of members, the geographic correspondences in their places of birth and representation by recording whether they were born in or represent districts in the same state and region. We also measure the distance (in miles) between the epicenters of the members' cities of birth as well as the distance between their districts of representation.[17] We provide different measures of geographic correspondence—state, region, and distance—to allow for the possibility that different units are independently or jointly relevant. To examine the *Age Corollary*, we also record the difference in age between each pairwise combination of members.

We estimate the fractional logistic regression model shown in Equation (1). Since the outcome is bound to the unit interval, this estimation strategy yields consistent estimators and ensures that predictions are likewise bound to the unit interval (Papke and Wooldridge, 1996).[18]

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Agree} \quad = \quad & \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{k} \beta_i \text{BirthGeo}_g + \beta_{k+1}\text{Age} + \sum_{p=k+2}^{2k+1} \beta_p \text{BirthGeo}_g \times Age + \\ & \sum_{r=2k+2}^{3k+1} \beta_r \text{RepGeo}_g + \boldsymbol{\beta}'\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\gamma}'\mathbf{z} + \epsilon. \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

Agree $\in [0, 1]$ denotes the agreement score between pairwise members. BirthGeo accounts for the geographic correspondence in birthplace between members, and RepGeo accounts for the geographic

[13] For a related, proximity-dependent, logic, see Key's (1949) notion of "friends and neighbors" voting.

[14] For a similar application of agreement scores, see Rogowski and Sinclair (2012).

[15] We use the roll call data made publicly available on `voteview.com`, and code absences and other unrecorded activities as missing data. Therefore, "agreement" on a particular roll call vote requires that both pairwise members cast either "yea" or "nay" votes.

[16] Section E of the Supplemental Appendix graphically presents the distributions of agreement scores for pairwise members belonging to the same and different parties. Unsurprisingly, the agreement scores for members of the same party are, on average, considerably higher and less variable than for members belonging to different parties.

[17] See Section 3 for details regarding the categorization scheme used for region and the process for identifying the coordinates used in calculating the distance measures. We use the Haversine method to measure distances in miles, which calculates the shortest distance between coordinates (Kim *et al.*, 2023), using the `R` package `geosphere` (Hijmans *et al.*, 2017).

[18] Note that results are substantively similar when estimating the models using ordinary least squares. Alternatively, if we drop member pairs with agreement scores of zero or one and estimate the models using beta regression, we likewise arrive at substantively similar results to those reported below.

correspondence in district of representation between members, where $g \in \{\text{state}, \text{region}, \text{distance}\}$ measures the correspondence in terms of state, region, and distance (in miles) between the epicenters of the vicinages, respectively.[19,20] $k \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ provides for all combinations of geographic measures of birthplace. To maintain consistency within a model, we require only that the same measure(s) of geographic units be used for both birthplace and representation correspondences (e.g., when including the state of birth in the model, we likewise include the state of representation). Age denotes the difference in age, using integers, between the pairwise combination of members. We include the interaction between BirthGeo and Age to account for the possibility that members experience the same place of birth in different ways depending on when they were born, as articulated in the corollary. All combinations of measures of birthplace correspondence are, therefore, interacted with age.

In addition to the key independent variables, we also include a variety of covariates, denoted $\mathbf{x}$ (with corresponding vector of coefficients, β), that measure correspondences between pairwise combinations of members in terms of important characteristics that influence their likelihood of adopting identical positions on roll call votes. In particular, we include indicator variables measuring whether pairwise members identify as belonging to the same party, gender, and race, as well as continuous measures of the difference in Democratic support between the pairwise members' districts and the difference between the pairwise members' chamber seniority.[21] We also include Congress fixed effects to account for baseline differences in the propensity for members to agree with one another, denoted $\mathbf{z}$ (with the corresponding vector of coefficients, γ). All models are estimated with robust standard errors.[22]

Furthermore, separately accounting for pairwise correspondences in Democrats and Republicans, to control for possible baseline imbalances across parties, yields virtually symmetrical party effects, and doing so does not substantively alter our results (see Section G of the Supplemental Appendix). We do not include a measure of members' pairwise ideological distance to avoid using a roll call-based measure (e.g., DW-Nominate) of voting disparities to predict the propensity for members to adopt the same positions on roll call votes (i.e., agreement scores). We note that when using the ideological scores developed by Bonica (2018), which are not derived from roll call votes, our central findings are substantively unchanged. However, doing so requires us to drop two Congresses from our analysis (i.e., 114^{th}–115^{th} Congresses [2015–2018]), and so we do not include this measure in the models reported below in effort to retain all available data.[23]

We restrict our analysis to members born in and representing districts in the 48 continental US states because of (1) complications relating to categorizing the states and regions of those born outside of the US and (2) concerns relating to the outliers (in terms of distance) introduced when including those born in or representing districts outside of the continental US. To the latter point, the maximum distance between the birthplaces of pairwise members without this restriction is 12,247.3 miles, which is certainly problematic.[24] We note, however, that imposing these restrictions, which is

[19]The $\text{BirthGeo}_{\text{state}}$ variable (coded 1 if pairwise members were born in the same state and 0 if not) has a mean of 0.04, a median of 0, and a standard deviation of .20. The $\text{BirthGeo}_{\text{region}}$ variable (coded 1 if pairwise members were born in the same region and 0 if not) has a mean of 0.16, a median of 0, and a standard deviation of .37. Finally, the $\text{BirthGeo}_{\text{distance}}$ variable (coded as distance, in miles, between pairwise members' cities of birth) has a mean of 990.91, a median of 848.32, and a standard deviation of 653.30.

[20]Note that using logged distance (i.e., Log[*distance*+1]), as done by Crosson and Kaslovsky (N.d.), yields substantively similar results. See Section F of the Supplemental Appendix for results.

[21]Details regarding these measures are discussed in Footnote 11.

[22]Clustering standard errors on repeated member pairs has an infinitesimal effect on the standard errors and therefore yields substantively similar results to those reported below.

[23]See Section H of the Supplemental Appendix for results when including the Bonica (2018) measure. Except for changes with regard to the coefficient on the Same State of Birth variable in some models, which proves to be the least informative geographic variable, the results are substantively similar to those reported below.

[24]This particular pairwise combination includes Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), born in Bangkok, Thailand, and James Himes (D-CT), born in Lima, Peru.

important for properly measuring the effect of distance, eliminates only 52 unique members during the entire period of analysis. Furthermore, estimating the following models over all members yields substantively similar results to those reported below.[25]

Given our inability to know the precise timing of when members moved from their place of birth, one could have concerns about the plausibility of birthplace effects. After all, many of these members could have moved from their place of birth before developing cognitive awareness of it and/or deep personal ties. While we think this should disadvantage a statistically discernible birthplace finding, it is nevertheless a reasonable concern. Therefore, we perform a robustness check by separately restricting our analysis to those members who attended high school in the county of their birth. Since length of residency is generally thought to strengthen geographic attachments (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Anton and Lawrence, 2014), we might deduce that these members lived in their place of birth a sufficient duration for it to leave an imprint on them.[26] We opted to use high school attendance in counties of birth for this robustness check since many individuals, especially in rural regions, attend high school in adjacent towns, making the requirement of high school attendance in one's city of birth particularly restrictive. Nevertheless, using high school attendance in city of birth as a requirement for inclusion does not substantively alter the results, nor does using the more relaxed assumption of high school attendance in the member's state of birth.

4.1. Birthplace agreement results

Table 3 presents the results of the models shown in Equation 1. We find evidence of birthplace effects regardless of the geographic measures (or combination thereof) used. In the models that include only a single geographic measure of birthplace correspondence (i.e., Models 1–3), the birthplace correspondence variables across the models, as well as their interaction with age, are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Among these models, the distance measure (i.e., Model 3) provides the best fit, having the the lowest bias-corrected Akaike Information Criterion (AICc), whereas the indicator for birth state correspondence (i.e., Model 1) fares the worst. We find strong evidence that the best model fit among the various combinations of these variables can be found in Model 6, which accounts for both birth region correspondence and the distance between members' birthplaces. In fact, the probability that Model 6 is the best approximating model among the alternatives exceeds 93 percent, with the next nearest competitor being Model 7 at a mere 5 percent.[27]

Using Model 6, we find that the correspondence in region of birth and the distance between birthplaces independently affect the likelihood that members agree on roll call votes. Sharing a birth region is positively related to agreement, and distance is negatively related to agreement, as expected, with both being statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. This implies that members who were born in the same region and those born within close proximity to one another are more likely to agree, all else equal. Furthermore, their interaction with age behaves as expected, with increasing age disparity moderating downward the effect of the constitutive birthplace terms. In sum, we find evidence that place of birth has a measurable effect on aggregate legislative behavior, as predicted by the Birthplace

[25] See Section I of the Supplemental Appendix. In order to perform this analysis on all members, we code home country as the home state for members born outside of the 50 US states and include ICPSR regions for "external states and territories," "North America (not US)," "West Indies," "British Isles," "Western Europe," "Eastern Europe," "Mediterranean Countries," "Asia," and "Central and South America (not Mexico)."

[26] Of course, it is possible that some of these individuals moved from their place of birth at a young age and then returned around the time of high school. We cannot account for this possibility, but it strikes us as a sufficiently uncommon occurrence and one that would, again, disadvantage a birthplace effect.

[27] For a more detailed discussion of the method for deriving the probability of best model, see Symonds and Moussalli (2011) and Snipes and Taylor (2014).

Table 3. Member agreement scores as a function of place of birth—members born in and representing the continental US

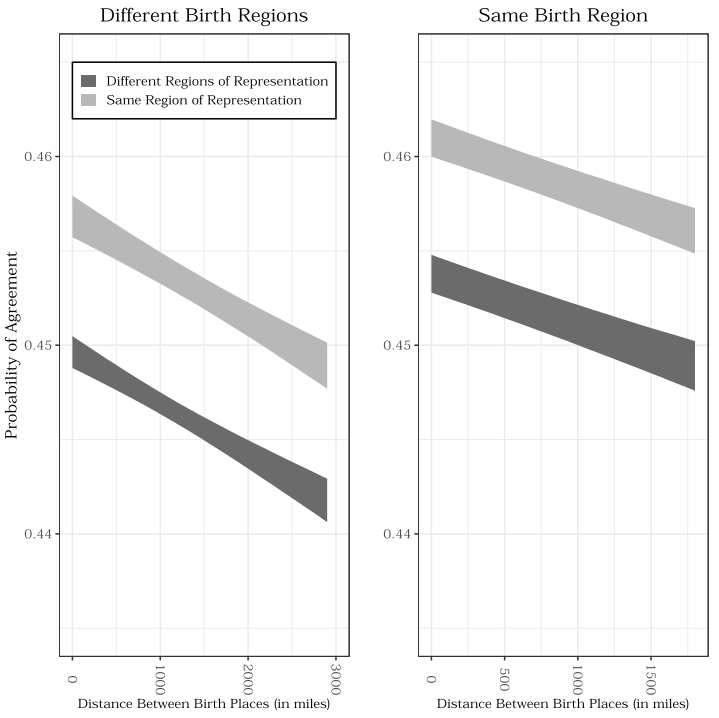
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Same State of Birth	0.0172*			−0.0022	0.0037		−0.0057
	(0.0049)			(0.0055)	(0.0050)		(0.0055)
Same Region of Birth		0.0196*		0.0202*		0.0095*	0.0109*
		(0.0026)		(0.0030)		(0.0029)	(0.0032)
Distance Between Places of Birth			−1.17e-05*		−1.22e-05*	−1.10e-05*	−1.12e-05*
			(1.49e-06)		(1.56e-06)	(1.63e-06)	(1.64e-06)
Difference in Age	−0.0010*	−0.0009*	−0.0014*	−0.0009*	−0.0014*	−0.0012*	−0.0013*
	(6.64e-05)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(7.02e-05)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Same State of Birth × Difference in Age	−0.0005†			0.0003	−0.0001		0.0003
	(0.0003)			(0.0004)	(0.0003)		(0.0004)
Same Region of Birth × Difference in Age		−0.0008*		−0.0009*		−0.0005*	−0.0006*
		(0.0002)		(0.0002)		(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Distance Between Places of Birth × Difference in Age			4.20e-07*		4.13e-07*	3.20e-07*	3.29e-07*
			(9.29e-08)		(9.64e-08)	(1.02e-07)	(1.02e-07)
Same State of Representation	0.0386*			0.0056	0.0208*		0.0007
	(0.0032)			(0.0036)	(0.0033)		(0.0036)
Same Region of Representation		0.0398*		0.0383*		0.0290*	0.0288*
		(0.0017)		(0.0020)		(0.0019)	(0.0021)
Distance Between Districts			−2.23e-05*		−2.02e-05*	−1.51e-05*	−1.50e-05*
			(9.91e-07)		(1.04e-06)	(1.09e-06)	(1.10e-06)
Same Party	2.4280*	2.4277*	2.4278*	2.4277*	2.4278*	2.4276*	2.4276*
	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)
Same Gender	0.0168*	0.0154*	0.0133*	0.0155*	0.0138*	0.0136*	0.0136*
	(0.0011)	(0.0011)	(0.0011)	(0.0011)	(0.0011)	(0.0011)	(0.0011)
Same Race	−0.0543*	−0.0522*	−0.0557*	−0.0521*	−0.0553*	−0.0537*	−0.0537*
	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)
Difference in District Democratic Support	−0.0122*	−0.0122*	−0.0122*	−0.0122*	−0.0122*	−0.0122*	−0.0122*
	(4.52e-05)	(4.52e-05)	(4.52e-05)	(4.52e-05)	(4.52e-05)	(4.51e-05)	(4.52e-05)
Difference in Chamber Seniority	−0.0031*	−0.0031*	−0.0031*	−0.0031*	−0.0031*	−0.0031*	−0.0031*
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.3919*	0.3833*	0.4325*	0.3833*	0.4290*	0.4158*	0.4160*
	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0029)	(0.0025)	(0.0029)	(0.0031)	(0.0031)
Congress Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
N (i.e., Unique Member Pairs)	799,994	799,994	799,994	799,994	799,994	799,994	799,994
Δ_iAICc (i.e., Change in AICc)	41.3858	14.5286	7.8372	20.3668	11.6195	0	5.9586
w_i (i.e., probability of best model)	9.59e-10	0.0007	0.0185	3.52e-05	0.0028	0.9307	0.0473

Notes: Robust standard errors are given in parentheses. All "same" variables are indicators of whether the paired members have identical values on the given measure. All "difference" variables measure the absolute difference between the paired members on the given measure. The Distance Between Places of Birth variable measures the distance between the paired coordinates of member birth cities in miles using the Haversine method (i.e., shortest distance between two points). * denotes $p \leq 0.05$, and † denotes conditional $p \leq 0.05$ for non-linear interaction terms.

Agreement Proposition, with differences in age diminishing these effects, as predicted by the Age Corollary.

Figure 2 shows the 83.5 percent confidence intervals for predicted agreement scores as a function of distance (in miles) between pairwise members' birthplaces, generated by the best fitting model (i.e., Model 6).[28] We use 83.5 percent confidence intervals since we are interested in assessing statistical significance at $\alpha = 0.05$ on the basis of confidence interval overlap (Goldstein and

[28]In the left panel of Figure 2a as well as Figure 2b, the maximum birthplace distance permitted in the figure is 2,892 miles, which is the greatest distance between any two locations in the continental US (i.e., the distance between Point Arena, CA and



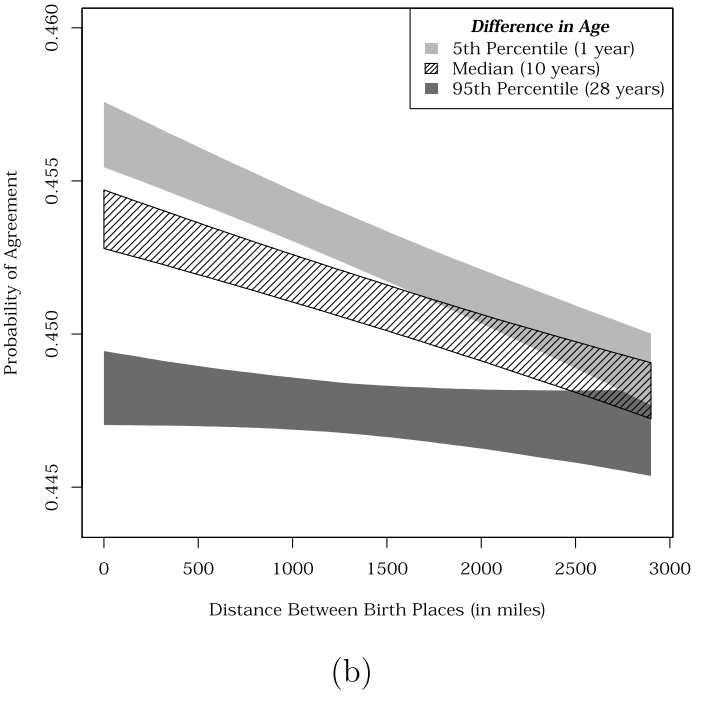


Figure 2. Regional, birth distance, and age effects on predicted probability of agreement.
Notes: Figure 2a presents the predicted agreement scores over distance (in miles) when varying the combinations of correspondences between members' brithplace regions and regions of represenation, and Figure 2b presents these predictions when varying differences in members' age.

Healy, 1995; Maghsoodloo and Huang, 2010). In addition to distance, Figure 2a varies combinations of correspondences between members' birthplace regions and regions of representation, and Figure 2b varies differences in members' age. Other variables are set to amplify differences across pairwise members by setting party, gender, and race to be equal to zero, indicating that members differ across these terms and setting all other comparison measures to their mean. Therefore, we should naturally expect the agreement predictions generated for such pairwise members to be quite low, and this approach gives us insights regarding the force of birthplace among members who are predisposed to disagree.[29]

Unsurprisingly, we find in Figure 2a that members who share both birthplace and representation regions have the highest baseline likelihood of agreement, and those who differ in both have the lowest. Importantly, birth region—seen in the intercept shift *across* panels of Figure 2a among members with the same correspondence in representation region—exerts a statistically meaningful effect on agreement scores across all values of birthplace distance. In addition, among all regional combinations, increasing distance between birthplaces leads to a statistically meaningful decrease in the likelihood of agreement. On average, members born in close proximity to one another in the same birth region are roughly 1.2 percentage points more likely to agree with one another than those born in different birth regions and a great distance from one another. Considering that this effect accounts for roughly 9 percent of the standard deviation of agreement rates for members belonging to different parties during the period of analysis, this finding suggests that birthplace explains a non-trivial amount of the variation in opposing party members' propensity to agree. In fact, this effect size implies that for members who bare considerable differences and are therefore highly unlikely to agree on roll call votes, those born in close proximity to one another in the same birth region are expected to agree on 16.4 more votes per Congress than members born a great distance from one another in different birth regions, using the mean number of roll call votes per Congress during the period of analysis.

As a reminder, this portion of the analysis examines *all* roll call votes, irrespective of vote and issue types, and so naturally it includes many votes on which we should expect birthplace effects to be quite limited, in particular votes involving minimal localized implications and considerable party pressure. Therefore, we take the additional step of estimating the models in Table 3 after restricting the roll call votes to those dealing with a particularly prominent parochial issue area: agriculture (Browne, 1995; Adler, 2000; Paarlberg, 2011).[30] We find that the effects of birth place are substantially larger than they are when including all roll call votes (see Section J of the Supplemental Appendix), as evidenced by the constitutive birthplace coefficients being almost universally larger in absolute value. In fact, we find that the birthplace effect nearly triples (to 3.3 percentage points) compared to the effect identified in the unrestricted analysis above (of 1.2 percentage points).[31]

We also estimate the models after restricting the roll call votes to include only non-party votes and/or votes on final passage, both of which are recognized as vote types that afford members greater independence from their party (Sinclair, 2002; Young and Wilkins, 2007; Crespin *et al.*, 2013). Again, birth place effects are considerably larger when making each of these restrictions (see Section J of the

West Quoddy Head, ME). In the right panel of Figure 2b, the maximum birthplace distance permitted is 1800 miles (i.e., the distance between Prado Verde, TX and Rodanthe, NC), since members are required to be born in the same region.

[29]Note that the statistical results of the simulation are robust to changes in the values of the controls.

[30]We use the Political Institutions and Public Choice (PIPC) database to identify roll call votes on agricultural issues. Since the more refined (i.e., focused) PIPC issue coding used in the subsequent analysis was discontinued during the 112^{th} Congress (2011–2012), we must rely on the more expansive topic codes from the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) so as to span the period of analysis (using major topic codes 400-499). Given that the CAP codes have a more expansive definition of agricultural topics (e.g., food inspection and safety, etc.), the CAP coding logically disadvantages member agreement.

[31]As a side note, we also find that the coefficients on the indicator variable measuring whether pairwise members belong to the same party is smaller in magnitude across all model specifications, which supports the claim that member decisions on agriculture votes are, indeed, less likely to be motivated by partisan considerations.

Supplemental Appendix).[32] In addition, we estimate the models after restricting the membership to include only those members who represent tenuous districts that favored the out-party presidential nominee in the current (for presidential years) or previous (in midterms) presidential election, as these members are most likely to exhibit partisan independence (Carson *et al.*, 2010), and we find a striking increase in the birthplace effect yet again (see Section J of the Supplemental Appendix).[33] Therefore, these robustness checks make clear that the effects identified in Table 3 are persistent and quite conservative.

Figure 2b shows the influence of age on the birthplace distance effects for members born in different regions but representing the same region and otherwise possessing the dissimilar attributes described above. We set the birthplace region correspondence to zero to more realistically evaluate the range of birthplace distance, although doing otherwise generates similar results. For illustrative purposes, we select the 5^{th}, 50^{th}, and 95^{th} percentiles of the difference in age variable. As can be seen, the negative constitutive age term shifts the likelihood of agreement downward for all values of distance between birthplaces. Importantly, the effect of birthplace distance is attenuated with increasing differences in age, as expected. While there is a statistically significant negative effect of birthplace distance for the lowest two categories of age difference (i.e., the 5^{th} percentile and median), the effect of distance is no longer statistically meaningful for the highest category of age difference. In sum, we find evidence that with increasing age differences between members, the distance between their places of birth plays a much less pronounced role in predicting their likelihood of agreement. This squares with our understanding that members who were born in the same place but are of significantly different ages may have experienced their birthplace in vastly different ways and/or may have considerably different attachments to their place of birth.

We further explore the above models by restricting our analysis to only those members who attended high school in the county in which they were born. As a reminder, this is done in effort to better identify members who resided in their place of birth a sufficient amount of time for their birthplace to leave a cognitive imprint and/or for members to develop deep ties. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 4. These results are substantively similar to those without the high school attendance restriction (Table 3). Notably, the additional restriction on high school attendance yields even stronger birthplace effects. The key constitutive terms on birth state, region, and distance are considerably larger in absolute value in each of the model specifications, which is broadly consistent with the notion that birthplace effects should be stronger among those who experience their place of birth for longer durations.

Section K of the Supplemental Appendix provides the predicted agreement scores, with 83.5 percent confidence intervals, for pairwise members who attended high school in their county of birth, using the best fitting model from Table 4 (i.e., Model 3). We also include the predictions for pairwise members who *did not* attend high school in their county of birth, to further explore the logic that these members should have comparatively weaker birthplace effects due to moving from their place of birth at an earlier age. We find that when members attended high school in their county of birth, they have a statistically higher likelihood of agreeing when born in close proximity to one another (by 1 percentage point) and three times the overall birthplace effect when compared to the unrestricted analysis (see Figure 2b). Conversely, when members did not attend high school in their county of birth, we find a markedly lower baseline level of agreement and no statistically discernible birthplace effect, as we might expect.

We note that there is considerable variation across cities within the US in terms of their range of distances to other locations within the US. In particular, the distance between a city and its most

[32] We center the predicted agreement rates when the distance between places of birth is equal to zero, which allows for a direct comparison of the birthplace effects across the vote type categories, given that the un-centered predictions have substantially different baseline agreement rates.

[33] We again center the predictions when the distance between places of birth is equal to zero to allow for comparability across member categories.

Table 4. Member agreement scores as a function of place of birth—members born in and representing the continental us & attended high school in the county of their birth

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Same State of Birth	0.0339*			−0.0146	0.0007		−0.0241
	(0.0120)			(0.0134)	(0.0124)		(0.0134)
Same Region of Birth		0.0522*		0.0563*		0.0290*	0.0349*
		(0.0063)		(0.0070)		(0.0069)	(0.0074)
Distance Between Places of Birth			−3.45e-05*		−3.50e-05*	−2.81e-05*	−2.93e-05*
			(3.83e-06)		(3.99e-06)	(4.22e-06)	(4.24e-06)
Difference in Age	−0.0012*	−0.0010*	−0.0022*	−0.0010*	−0.0023*	−0.0019*	−0.0020*
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Same State of Birth × Difference in Age	−0.0001†			0.0014*	0.0008		0.0016*
	(0.0006)			(0.0007)	(0.0007)		(0.0007)
Same Region of Birth × Difference in Age		−0.0014*		−0.0017*		−0.0007*	−0.0011*
		(0.0003)		(0.0004)		(0.0004)	(0.0004)
Distance Between Places of Birth × Difference in Age			9.75e-07*		1.06e-06*	8.17e-07*	8.70e-07*
			(1.94e-07)		(2.02e-07)	(2.16e-07)	(2.17e-07)
Same State of Representation	0.0155			0.0143	0.0080		0.0124
	(0.0087)			(0.0099)	(0.0091)		(0.0099)
Same Region of Representation		0.0040		−8.97e-05		−0.0037	−0.0068
		(0.0048)		(0.0054)		(0.0052)	(0.0057)
Distance Between Districts			−1.10e-05*		−9.96e-06*	−1.15e-05*	−1.08e-05*
			(2.95e-06)		(3.10e-06)	(3.23e-06)	(3.26e-06)
Same Party	2.4008*	2.4008*	2.4007*	2.4008*	2.4008*	2.4008*	2.4008*
	(0.0032)	(0.0032)	(0.0032)	(0.0032)	(0.0032)	(0.0032)	(0.0032)
Same Gender	−0.0123*	−0.0130*	−0.0123*	−0.0127*	−0.0120*	−0.0127*	−0.0124*
	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0026)
Same Race	−0.0657*	−0.0647*	−0.0710*	−0.0646*	−0.0705*	−0.0698*	−0.0696*
	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)
Difference in District Democratic Support	−0.0128*	−0.0128*	−0.0128*	−0.0128*	−0.0128*	−0.0128*	−0.0128*
	(9.50e-05)	(9.51e-05)	(9.51e-05)	(9.51e-05)	(9.51e-05)	(9.51e-05)	(9.51e-05)
Difference in Chamber Seniority	−0.0018*	−0.0018*	−0.0018*	−0.0018*	−0.0018*	−0.0017*	−0.0018*
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Constant	0.4095*	0.4018*	0.4602*	0.4015*	0.4587*	0.4495*	0.4496*
	(0.0052)	(0.0053)	(0.0060)	(0.0053)	(0.0061)	(0.0064)	(0.0064)
Congress Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
N (i.e., Unique Member Pairs)	177,629	177,629	177,629	177,629	177,629	177,629	177,629
$\Delta_i \mathrm{AICc}$ (i.e., Change in *AICc*)	12.0714	7.9658	0	13.5833	5.6260	4.8784	10.5945
w_i (i.e., Probability of best model)	0.0020	0.0159	0.8515	0.0010	0.0511	0.0743	0.0043

Notes: Robust standard errors are given in parentheses. All "same" variables are indicators of whether the paired members have identical values on the given measure. All "difference" variables measure the absolute difference between the paired members on the given measure. The Distance Between Places of Birth variable measures the distance between the paired coordinates of member birth cities in miles using the Haversine method (i.e., shortest distance between two points). * denotes $p \leq 0.05$, and † denotes conditional $p \leq 0.05$ for non-linear interaction terms.

distant counterpart within the US (i.e., maximum distance) will be smaller for more centrally located cities than those located on the coasts. Since cities have different maximum distances, we wish to eliminate the possibility that our results are being driven by cities with extreme maximum distances. Therefore, we identify the smallest maximum distance for a city within the continental US and restrict our data to include pairwise distances no greater than this value. Specifically, the contiguous geographic center of the US is Lebanon, KS, with a maximum distance (to Hamlin, ME) of approximately

1600 miles. Section L of the Supplemental Appendix presents the results of the analysis using these restricted data, and our findings are substantively unchanged. If anything, the effect of birthplace distance is more pronounced. In addition, Section L of the Supplemental Appendix includes the predicted agreement scores, with 83.5 percent confidence intervals, as a function of distance (in miles) between members' birthplaces, using the best fitting model (i.e., Model 3). Even with the restricted range, we find a birthplace effect that is slightly larger than that reported in Figure 2b. In fact, for members of a similar age, the birthplace effect is roughly 50 percent larger when restricting the data in this fashion. This suggests that extreme maximum distances (exceeding 1600 miles) are making negligible contributions to the results when using the unrestricted data.

To address any concerns that there might be partisan dependencies in the movement of members from their place of birth to the location they would eventually represent (i.e., geographic partisan sorting), we compare the partisan composition of the county in which members were born, using the percentage of the two-party vote received by the Democratic presidential nominee in members' county of birth in the presidential election immediately preceding their birth year (Amlani and Algara, 2021), to the partisan composition of members' district during their first term in office. To begin, the correlation in Democratic support across these locations is quite weak ($r = 0.09$). However, we estimate the models in Table 3 after restricting the membership to include only those members who experienced a significant shift in partisan composition from their place of birth to their place of representation—including members in the lowest and highest deciles of raw change in Democratic support (i.e., district Democratic support less birth county Democratic support).[34] For these members, we can eliminate spatial partisan sorting as an explanation for the birthplace effects identified above. The results of this analysis can be found in Section M of the Supplemental Appendix, and we find that the results are robust to this restriction.

Section N of the Supplemental Appendix provides sensitivity analyses of the key independent variables in Model 6 — the birthplace region and distance variables. We are particularly interested in understanding how robust these findings are to unobserved confounders (Cinelli and Hazlett, 2020).[35] To perform this sensitivity analysis, we use the Difference in District Democratic Support variable as a benchmark for assessing the strength of the confounder(s) needed to undo the statistically significant effects observed. We use this benchmark because of the enormous role that district partisanship plays in shaping members' legislative behavior (Carson *et al.*, 2010), which is also apparent in our model results. In short, the confounder(s) would have to be larger than three times the size of the Difference in District Democratic Support variable to negate the effect of the distance variable and more than twice the size to negate the effect of the region variable. This finding, in concert with the plausible independence of birthplace, gives us some confidence that birthplace is causally related to the pairwise agreement of members.

Section O of the Supplemental Appendix provides an additional robustness check in which we restrict our analysis to include only those pairwise combinations of members representing the same state (region) but born in different states (regions). We do this to minimize the possibility that the statistically significant effect of birthplace distance found above is being driven exclusively by members who were born in and represent the same state (region), for whom we would expect the strongest correspondence in behavior, *a priori*. Therefore, this restriction creates a more demanding test of the birthplace thesis, as it requires the birthplace distance effect to operate among those pairwise members who represent similar geographic areas and thus experience broadly comparable electoral constraints, but were born in different geographic circumstances. Importantly, the results of this analysis show that our distance measure is unperturbed, remaining statistically significant, and in the

[34]Using other reasonable thresholds for inclusion yield substantively similar results.

[35]We use the `R` package `sensemakr` (Cinelli and Hazlett, 2020) to explore the sensitivity of the model, estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) (as required by the package). When using OLS, the results are substantively similar to those reported above.

expected direction for both the constitutive and interaction terms. Therefore, even among members who were born in different states (regions), those born in closer proximity to one another are more likely to converge in their voting behavior.

We conclude this section with a brief exploration of a single, yet important, possible mechanism driving birthplace effects—identity. It would be exceedingly difficult to ascertain the precise mix of mechanisms responsible for members' birthplace effects, not the least because the set of mechanisms at play may well depend on complex spatiotemporal circumstances (Machamer *et al.*, 2000). Nonetheless, we believe that identity is a particularly viable mechanism given the extensive research linking individuals' place of birth to their self identities (e.g.,Hernandez *et al.*, 2007; Stanley, 2022). To do so, we revisit the models in Table 3 by separating out those states that rank highly (i.e., in the top 10) in terms of (1) residents' state pride and (2) smallest total area (in square miles). With respect to the former, it has been shown elsewhere that group pride is an important element in the expression of strong group identity (de Figueiredo, Jr. and Elkins, 2003; Huddy and Ponte, 2019; Gustavsson and Stendahl, 2020). To the latter, cohesiveness and homogeneity are central features of group self-categorization and strong group identities (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Huddy, 2001), with smaller geographic areas lending themselves to these conditions. We find that the state-level birthplace effects are statistically significant and sizable for the states associated with strong group identities across all model specifications, as shown in Section P of the Supplemental Appendix. In fact, for these states, the birthplace effect not only surpasses all other states, but becomes larger in magnitude than the birthplace effect associated with region.[36]

5. A policy-specific application: Support for agricultural protection

To this point, we have examined pairwise correspondences in members' voting behavior, under the supposition that members born in close proximity to one another will have a greater propensity to agree. However, this approach does not tap into the specific policy demands of a member's birthplace. In effort to address this, we turn to examining the determinants of member support for agricultural protection, a policy domain that is both complex and has long been recognized as prioritizing parochial interests in legislative decision-making (Browne, 1995; Adler, 2000; Paarlberg, 2011). In particular, we draw upon the excellent work of Bellemare and Carnes (2015), which is one of the most comprehensive studies on this topic to date. Bellemare and Carnes' work examines the effects of a member's electoral demands for agricultural protection (via constituents), along with her/his past career experience in agriculture and contributions received from agricultural political action committees (PACs), on the member's likelihood of being designated a "Friend of the Farm Bureau" in the 106^{th}–110^{th} Congresses (1999–2008). The authors suggest that the "Friend" measure is "arguably [their] best overall measure of legislative action on agricultural issues: it covers a wide range of actions, both at the floor voting stage and behind the scenes" (Bellemare and Carnes, 2015, p. 24).

We contribute to this research by considering the agricultural composition of a member's place of birth (around the time of her/his birth), in effort to explore whether member decision-making is informed by the parochial interests of their birthplace. To do this, we add to the Bellemare and Carnes (2015) models a measure of the number of acres of harvested cropland located in the member's birthplace county around the time of her/his birth, normalized to the unit interval for ease of interpretation.[37] This measure captures the scale of agricultural production in a county and so does well to tap demand for agricultural protection (Whatley, 1985; O'Donoghue and Whitaker, 2010).

[36]We note that reasonable variation in the number of states included in these categories does not substantively alter our results.

[37]We use the "Cropland Harvested: Acres" measure from the US Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture to construct this measure. We use the census values that are most temporally proximal to the member's year of birth. For members born before 1970, we use the 1964 census. For members born from 1970 to 1978, we use the 1974 census. For members born from 1979 to 1987, we use the 1982 census. For members born from 1988 to 1997, we use the 1992 census.

We use county-level data since it is the smallest geographic unit available to us, and therefore it is the area most likely to inform a member's experience. We note that using alternative measures, including the county-level number of farms (with and without harvested cropland), yields substantively similar results to those reported below.[38] Importantly, the demands for agricultural protection between members' birthplace and the district they represent exhibit important differences, with a correlation of 0.34.[39]

We build upon the Bellemare and Carnes (2015) models by also examining the determinants of members' positions on all agriculture votes during the period of analysis. To do this, we use a Bayesian Item Response Theory model to estimate dynamic ideal points for each member serving during the period of analysis over the votes identified by the Political Institutions and Public Choice (PIPC) database as having an agricultural focus (see Section R of the Supplemental Appendix for a table of votes).[40] We provide for members to have different ideal points before and after redistricting (1999–2002 and 2003–2008), to allow for the possibility that members experience different electoral forces in the two periods.[41] The scale is bound to the unit interval, with increasing values representing greater support for agricultural protection. We otherwise use the identical set of covariates used in the above "Friend" models.

The results of this analysis can be found in Table 5, using OLS with standard errors clustered on unique members throughout.[42] The key independent variables in Bellemare and Carnes' models are presented in italics. Column 1 replicates the Bellemare and Carnes (2015) model for House members only, since our study does not include senators, and we find that their results hold when subsetting the data in this fashion. Column 2 simply introduces our measure of birth county acres of cropland harvested to the model in Column 1, and the resulting coefficient on this variable is both positive and statistically significant, suggesting that increasing the number of acres of cropland harvested in the member's county of birth over the range of observed values (i.e., the unit interval for the normalized measure) increases the likelihood of being a "Friend" of the Farm Bureau by nearly 21 percentage points. In fact, when looking at the standardized coefficients, shown in Column 3, we find that this birthplace variable has a larger marginal effect on "Friend" status than a member's career in agriculture, and even the proportion of farm constituents in the member's district—two of the three key independent variables in Bellemare and Carnes' (2015) models.[43]

Columns 4–7 present the results of the models with member ideal points as the dependent variable. These models introduce the birthplace variable to the collection of covariates used by Bellemare and Carnes (2015), including their key independent variables both individually and collectively. The results of these models closely resemble those from the "Friend" analysis. In each of these models,

[38] See Section Q of the Supplemental Appendix for results using these alternative measures.

[39] This correlation is calculated using our measure of (normalized) birth county acres of cropland harvested and Bellemare and Carnes' (2015) measure of the proportion of farm constituents.

[40] The corresponding PIPC issue codes are 910–919, as well as 201 and 202. This results in a total of 54 votes.

[41] There are insufficient data in some Congresses to estimate Congress-specific ideal points. In order to impose temporal comparability across periods, we anchor the scale using two members who are assumed to be stable across the periods. We identify Fortney "Pete" Stark (D-CA) as having a negative value on our scale and Roger Wicker (R-MS) as having a positive value, which we selected because Stark had the 2^{nd} lowest average American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) score and a 0 average "Friend" rating over the period and Wicker had the highest average AFBF score and a 0.8 average "Friend" rating, using the Bellemare and Carnes (2015) data. We estimate uni-dimensional scores using a standard Gibbs sampling algorithm. After discarding the first 50,000 iterations (i.e., burn-in), we run the sampler for 5,000,000 iterations. We retain (i.e., thin) every 500^{th} iteration for a total of 10,000 posterior estimates for each member's support for agricultural protection.

[42] We estimate the models using OLS for the sake of consistency with Bellemare and Carnes' (2015) approach. However, we note that using fractional logistic regression for the ideal point models, as we do in the agreement score analysis above, yields substantively similar results. See Section S of the Supplemental Appendix for these results.

[43] We also estimate structural equations that allow birthplace (i.e., acres of cropland harvested) to influence "Friend" of the Farm Bureau designation directly as well as via the member's self-selection into the Republican Party. We find a substantial increase in the total effect size of birthplace, confirming our earlier hunch that we underestimate the impact of birthplace by examining only its direct effect on legislative behavior. Code and results are available from the authors upon request.

Table 5. Member support for agricultural protection

	Friend of the farm bureau			Agricultural Protection Ideal Point			
	Replication	Including	Standardized				
	(house only) Column 1	Birth variable Column 2	Coefficients Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
Birth County Acres of Cropland Harvested (normalized to the unit interval)		0.2061*	0.0629	0.1408*	0.1292*	0.1456*	0.1206*
		(0.0902)		(0.0527)	(0.0550)	(0.0552)	(0.0513)
Proportion of Career in Agriculture	0.1836	0.2078	0.0418	0.0923			0.0346
	(0.0999)	(0.1161)		(0.0856)			(0.0825)
Proportion of Farm Constituents	2.3938*	1.7643	0.0438		1.4517		1.1333
	(0.7730)	(0.9013)			(1.3748)		(1.2956)
Log of Agriculture PAC Contributions	0.0171*	0.0165*	0.0974			0.0087*	0.0081*
	(0.0038)	(0.0042)				(0.0026)	(0.0027)
Poverty Rate in District	−0.8735*	−0.8646*	−0.0961	−0.4051	−0.4660	−0.4125	−0.4697
	(0.3662)	(0.3984)		(0.2729)	(0.2641)	(0.2652)	(0.2596)
Median Income in District (&#x0024 1000)	−0.0055*	−0.0045*	−0.0970	−0.0042*	−0.0040*	−0.0040*	−0.0039*
	(0.0019)	(0.0020)		(0.0012)	(0.0013)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)
Member of the House Agriculture Committee	0.0877*	0.0772*	0.0482	0.0581*	0.0536*	0.0538*	0.0451*
	(0.0347)	(0.0384)		(0.0192)	(0.0201)	(0.0195)	(0.0205)
Republican	0.3785*	0.3901*	0.3900	−0.1480*	−0.1473*	−0.1561*	−0.1550*
	(0.0290)	(0.0315)		(0.0154)	(0.0153)	(0.0155)	(0.0154)
Proportion of Republican Constituents	−0.1237	−0.0998	−0.0165	0.1682	0.2140	0.1922	0.2310
	(0.1935)	(0.1930)		(0.1412)	(0.1388)	(0.1385)	(0.1360)
Female	−0.0136	−0.0293	−0.0202	−0.0091	−0.0075	−0.0075	−0.0054
	(0.0254)	(0.0255)		(0.0163)	(0.0162)	(0.0162)	(0.0161)
Age	−0.0005	0.0001	0.0026	0.0006	0.0007	0.0005	0.0005
	(0.0010)	(0.0010)		(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)	(0.0006)
Constant	0.7006*	−0.2459	−3.21e-08	0.7683*	0.7314*	0.7496*	0.7210*
	(0.1455)	(0.1722)		(0.0942)	(0.1012)	(0.0944)	(0.0998)
Congress Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
State Fixed Effects	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
N	2,159	1,780	1,780	780	780	780	780

Notes: Standard errors are clustered on unique members. * denotes $p \leq 0.05$.

the birthplace variable is positive and statistically significant. Increasing the number of acres of cropland harvested over the observed range increases a member's agricultural protection ideal point by roughly one-eighth or more of the scale. To put this into perspective, the difference in median ideal points of the parties during this period is 0.18, and so the size of this birthplace effect is just shy of the distance between the parties on the agricultural protection dimension.[44]

[44] A rich literature has uncovered the existence of rural and urban identities (Lyons and Utych, 2021; Lunz Trujillo, 2022; 2024), and it stands to reason that members who are born in rural (urban) areas will, to some extent, retain that identity if they represent an urban (rural) district. We believe that the rural-urban divide could well be one of the contributing factors to a birthplace effect. Nevertheless, when accounting for rural counties of birth in the models in Table 5 by using Rural–Urban Commuting Area codes (see Lunz Trujillo, 2022), the results are substantively unchanged (See Section T of the Supplemental Appendix).

6. Discussion

For decades, studies of legislative behavior have been steeped in the logic that legislators are single-minded seekers of re-election (Mayhew, 1974). This tradition is well-founded and generally unobjectionable to us. However, we suggest that members' pursuit of electoral goals is constrained to some extent by their personal experiences. There are a number of reasons why we should expect members to have some personal constraints. For one, members are humans with formative life experiences that, consciously or subconsciously, inform their decision-making. Moreover, even if members were willing to act according to any whim of their constituency, members operate with incomplete information regarding those preferences and must rely to some extent on their personal experiences and connections when making such inferences (Butler and Nickerson, 2011; Broockman and Skovron, 2018).

While we are not alone in positing that personal experiences and privately held preferences shape legislative decision-making, there are challenges to empirically evaluating these claims. When relying on observed legislative behavior, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which it is motivated by personal versus constituency preferences, especially when considering that elections are a marketplace for enforcing policy congruence between the representative and her/his constituents (Lott and Bronars, 1993). Changes in a member's electoral circumstances, such as the decision to retire, redistricting, and the like, only go so far in adjudicating this matter (e.g., Rothenberg and Sanders, 2000). Except for isolated, and unusual, circumstances that make a member's personal motivations germane and measurable (e.g., Baumann *et al.*, 2015), this has been an exceedingly difficult question with which to analytically grapple.

We do so in this project by leveraging variation in member birthplaces. A sizable portion of the membership was born a considerable distance from the district that they represent. For these members, there is little to be gained electorally by adopting positions that are informed by their place of birth. Furthermore, there are a variety of reasons to believe that birthplace can impact legislative behavior. For instance, studies make clear that an individual's place of birth plays a formative role in shaping her/his psychological composition (Rentfrow *et al.*, 2008) as well as personal and emotional ties (Oxfeld and Long, 2004). Therefore, we predict that members who are born in close proximity to one another will exhibit similarities in their voting records, even if they represent very dissimilar locations. Our findings support this supposition. We also demonstrate the importance of birthplace in an examination of members' support for agricultural protection, a policy domain characterized by parochial considerations. We find that the agricultural makeup of members' county of birth informs their legislative behavior in powerful ways.

This study demonstrates that representation, while largely motivated by members' (controlled) appeals to their constituents, exhibits evidence of members' internal workings. To this extent, representational congruence between members and their constituents is constrained, at least in part, by members' personal attributes. These findings comport with some of the extant literature on descriptive representation (e.g., Gamble, 2007; Grose, 2011) and "local roots" (Hunt, 2022; Crosson and Kaslovsky, N.d.) in concluding that members' experiences and shared histories matter. In short, we find that the way that members internalize policy questions is shaped by the world they entered into.

We think that there are several interesting avenues for future research in this vein. For instance, we believe that there is value in extending this study to other elective bodies (e.g., US Senate), as well as examining whether birthplace informs other important legislative behaviors, like co-sponsorship. Furthermore, we think that there is room for useful refinements and elaborations to our measures of the myriad factors that shape members' developmental experiences (e.g., race), to more fully account for how birthplace affects legislative decision-making. Moreover, this work raises larger questions about the normative implications of personal experiences for quality of representation. We leave these, and other, matters for future studies.

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