

# Who's Keeping Working-class Americans Out of Office?

Political Gatekeepers and the  
Unequal Social Class Makeup of  
Government



A STATE OF DECLINE:  
WHAT A TABOR WOULD MEAN FOR OKLAHOMA<sup>1</sup>  
By Nicholas Carnes

Although State Question 726, the referendum to enact a Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) amendment, is currently tied up in the Oklahoma Supreme Court (facing charges that a substantial number of the signatures needed to put the issue on the November ballot were gathered illegally), TABOR sponsors' persistence in other states suggests that, sooner or later, Oklahomans will be pressured to write this budgetary restriction into their state constitution.

*What would a TABOR amendment do?*

Ordinarily, decisions about state taxing and spending in a given year are made through a series of negotiations and agreements involving both chambers of the Oklahoma legislature and the governor. A TABOR amendment would add a new rule to that process: from year to year, state expenditures would not be allowed to grow faster than the sum of inflation and total population growth. In other words, the Oklahoma legislature and the governor could only increase next year's overall budget for programs like public schools and health care by the amount that inflation and the state population increased during this year.

*How would a TABOR amendment affect Oklahomans?*

Although interest groups with ties to out-of-state organizations and a handful of Oklahoma politicians are currently fighting to insert this new rule into the Oklahoma Constitution, **TABOR's most prominent supporters have said very little about how this amendment would actually affect state spending on the government services that are vital to Oklahoma's families, communities, and businesses.**

<sup>1</sup> See also: "TABOR: A Budgetary Bill of Rights," <http://www.fiscalfreeze.com/oklahoma/oklahoma726.html>.

I didn't vote for anyone from  
the working class.



I didn't have any other choice.

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**BALLOT MARKING INSTRUCTIONS:**

a. With the marking device provided or a black ball point pen, completely fill in the oval to the left of each candidate's name. If you have more than one choice, like this:   of your choice.

b. Where authorized, you may vote for more than one candidate by filling in the oval to the left of each candidate's name on the Write-in line.

c. If you tear, deface or wrongly mark this ballot, you may request a replacement.

**PARTIAL OFFICES**

US House

(You may vote for ONE)

Tony Fox

Democrat

Ho

Rep

(You may vote for ONE)

Water H. Dalton

Democrat

Pat

Rep

Bar

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(You may vote for ONE)

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Republican

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(You may vote for ONE)

(You may vote for ONE)

**NC Secretary of State**  
(You may vote for ONE)

**Elaine Marshall**  
Democrat

**Ed Goodwin**  
Republican

**NC Superintendent of Public Instruction**  
(You may vote for ONE)

**June Atkinson**  
Democrat

**John Tedesco**  
Republican

**NC Treasurer**  
(You may vote for ONE)

**Janet Cowell**  
Democrat

**Steve Royal**  
Republican

**NC State Senate District 22**  
(You may vote for ONE)

**Mike Woodard**  
Democrat

**Milton Holmes**  
Republican

**House of Representatives District 30**  
(You may vote for ONE)

**Paul Luebke**  
Democrat

**PRESIDENT**

The offices of President and Vice President of the United States are not on this ballot. Straight Party voters voted separately.

President

of the

(You may vote for ONE)

Barack Obama

Democrat

Joe Biden

Democrat

Mitt Romney

Republican

Lin

Dem

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Republican

Write-in

**STRAIGHT PARTY**

a. Unless otherwise indicated, voters may vote for one candidate from each party.

Lawyer

CEO

Businessman

Lawyer

Teacher

Lawyer

Nonprofit Director

CEO

Business Consultant

Political Activist

CEO

University Administrator

Teacher

Businessman

Real Estate

Sociology Professor

Lawyer

Law Professor / Lawyer

CEO / Career Politician

Bus. Owner / Lawyer

Construction  
Worker

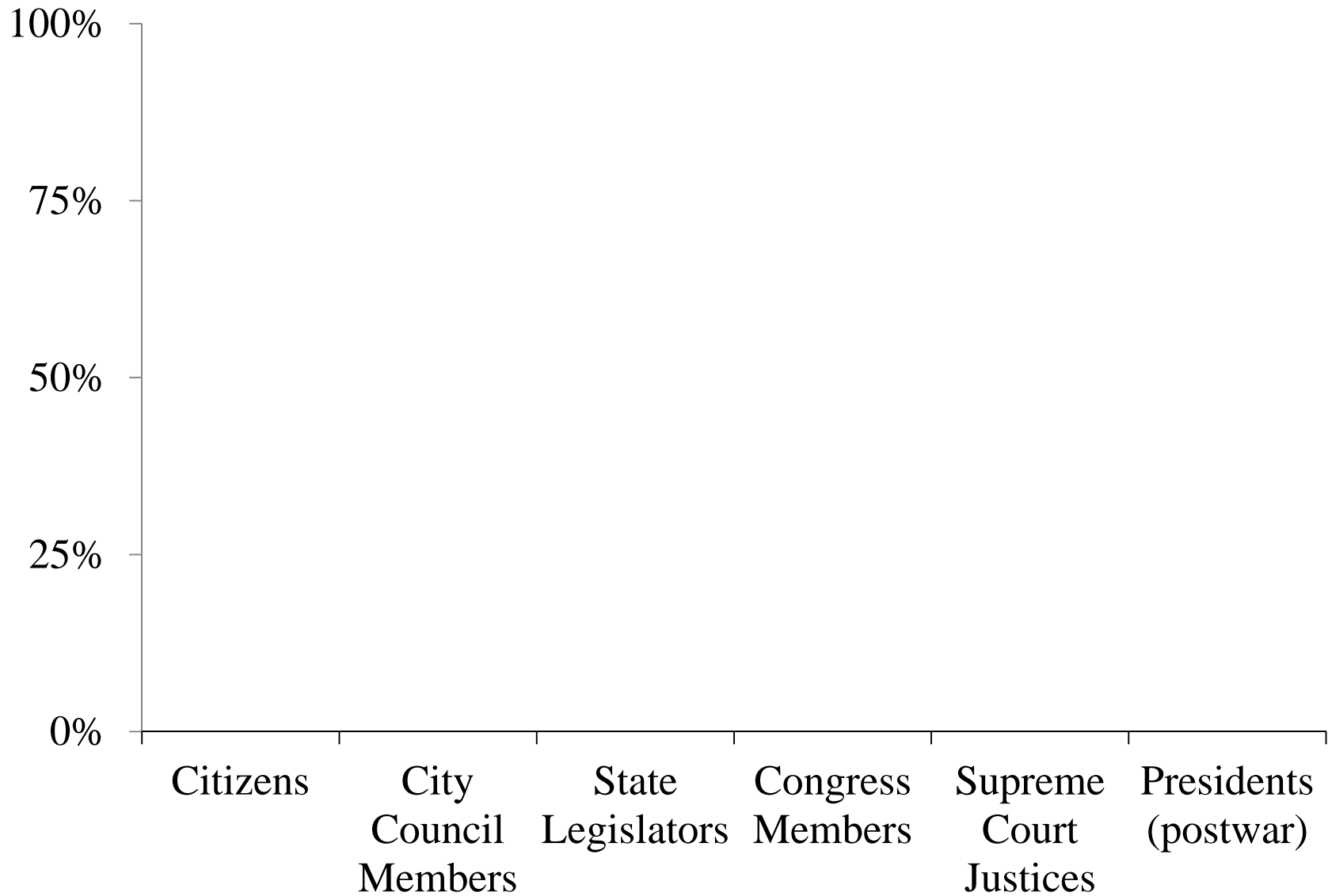
Waiter

Cashier

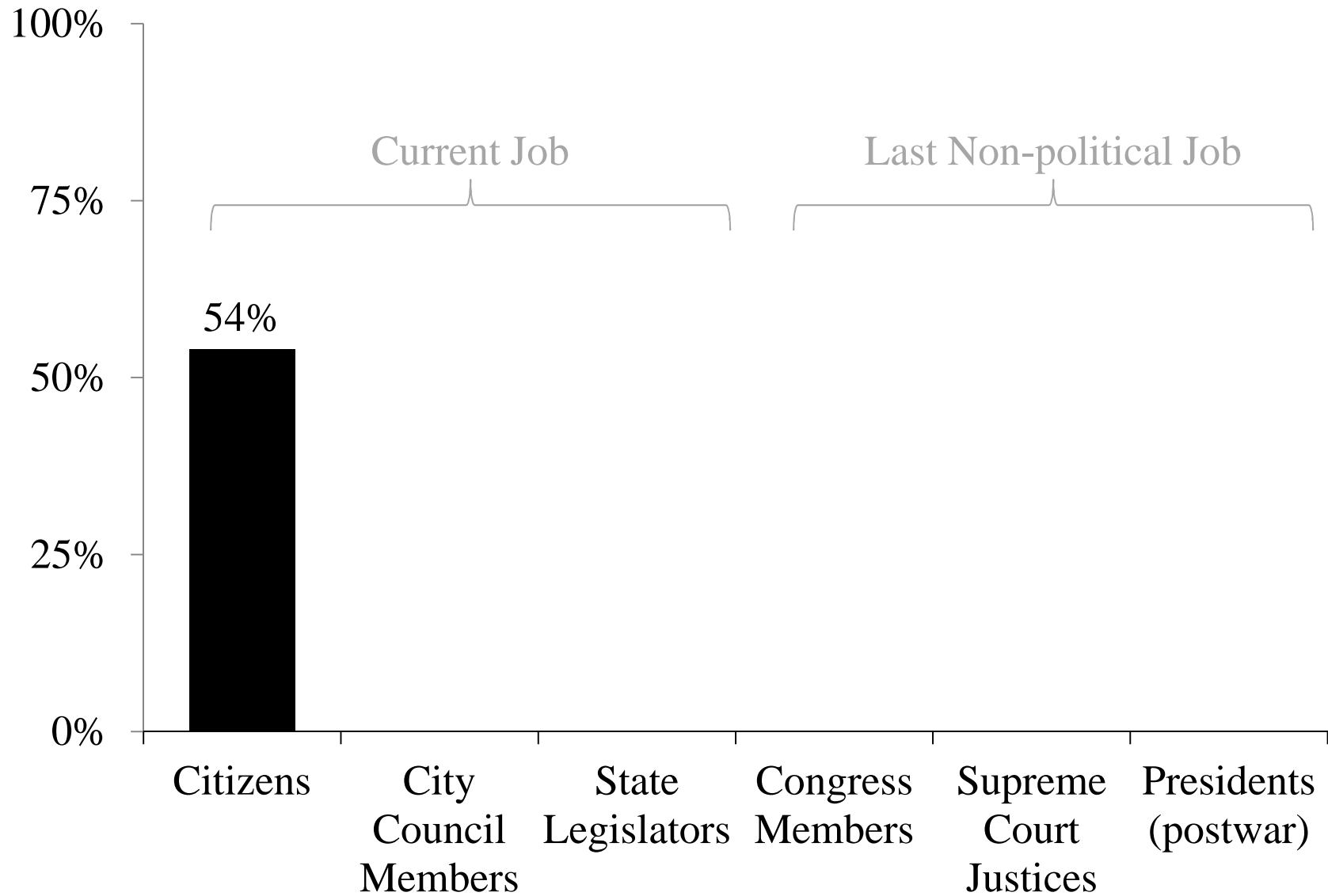
Receptionist

Why aren't these on the ballot?

# Percent from Working-class Jobs

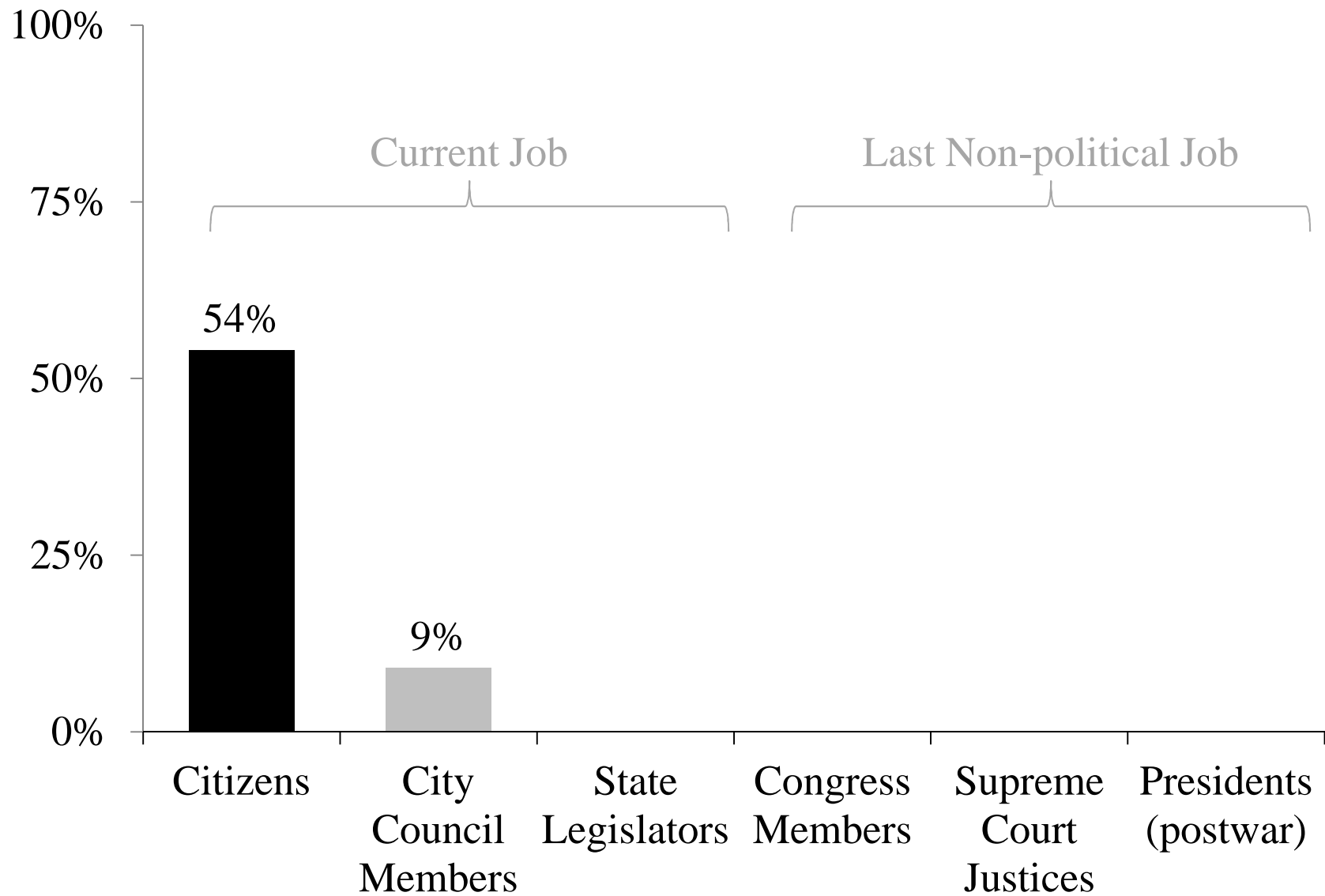


# Percent from Working-class Jobs

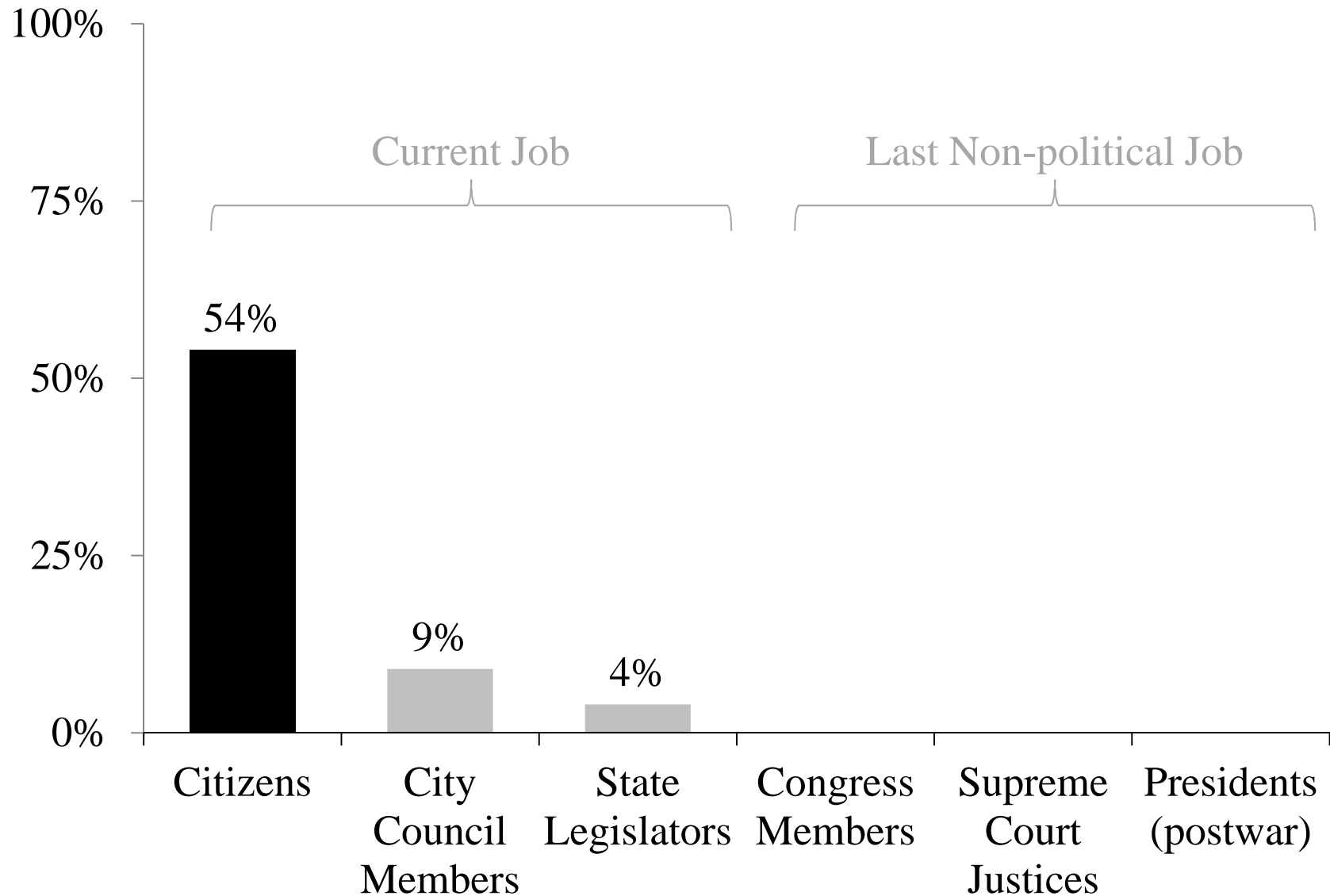




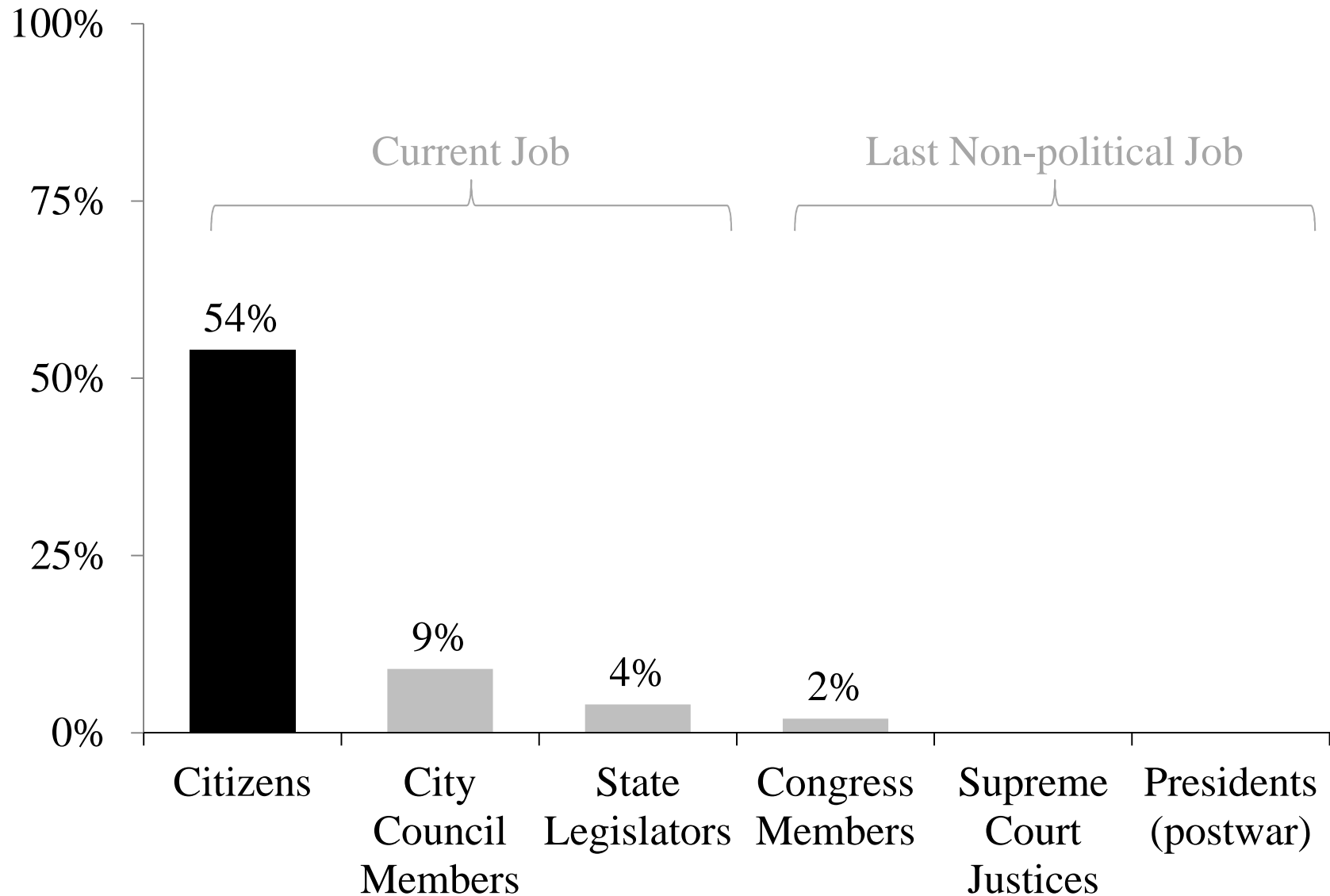
# Percent from Working-class Jobs



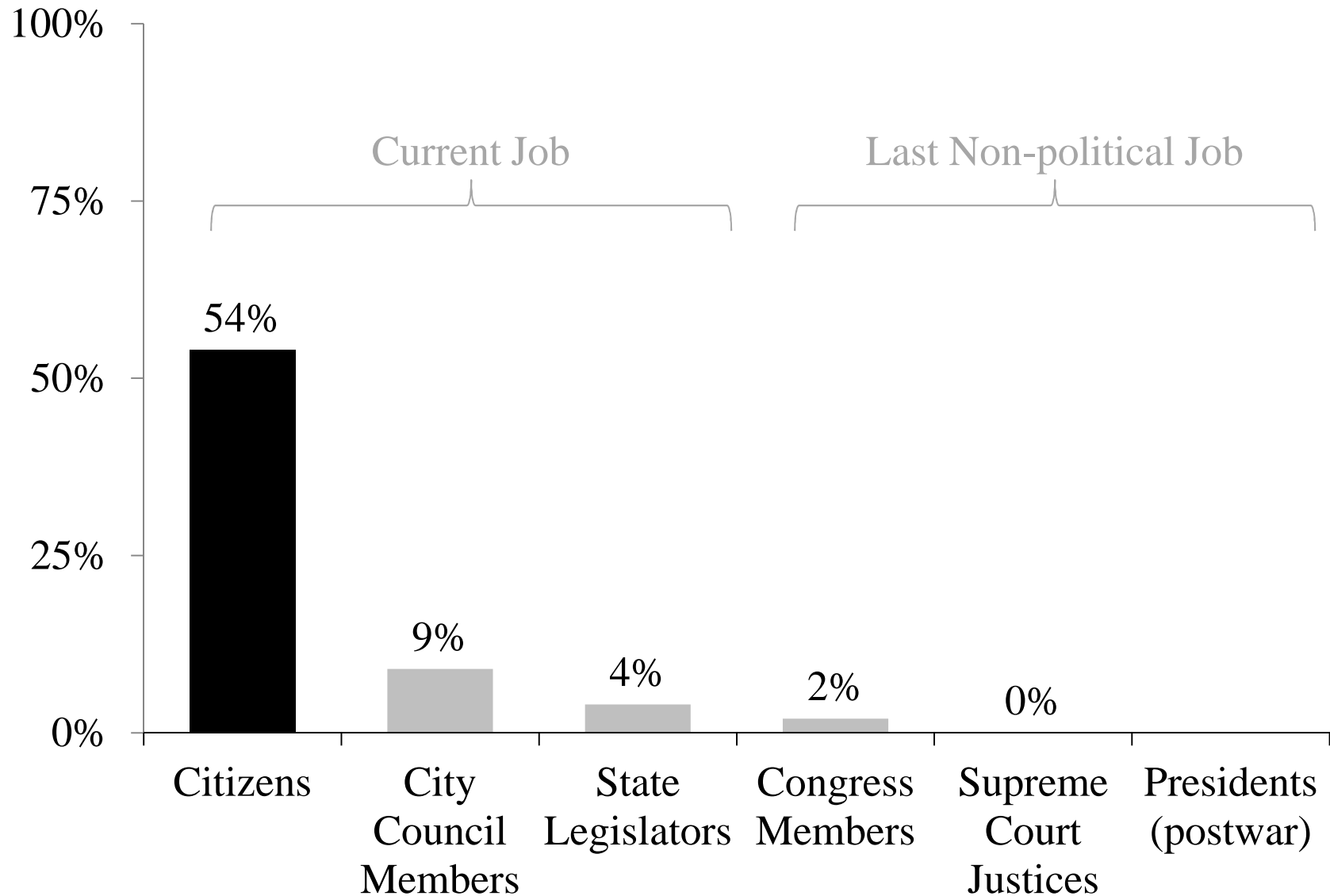
# Percent from Working-class Jobs



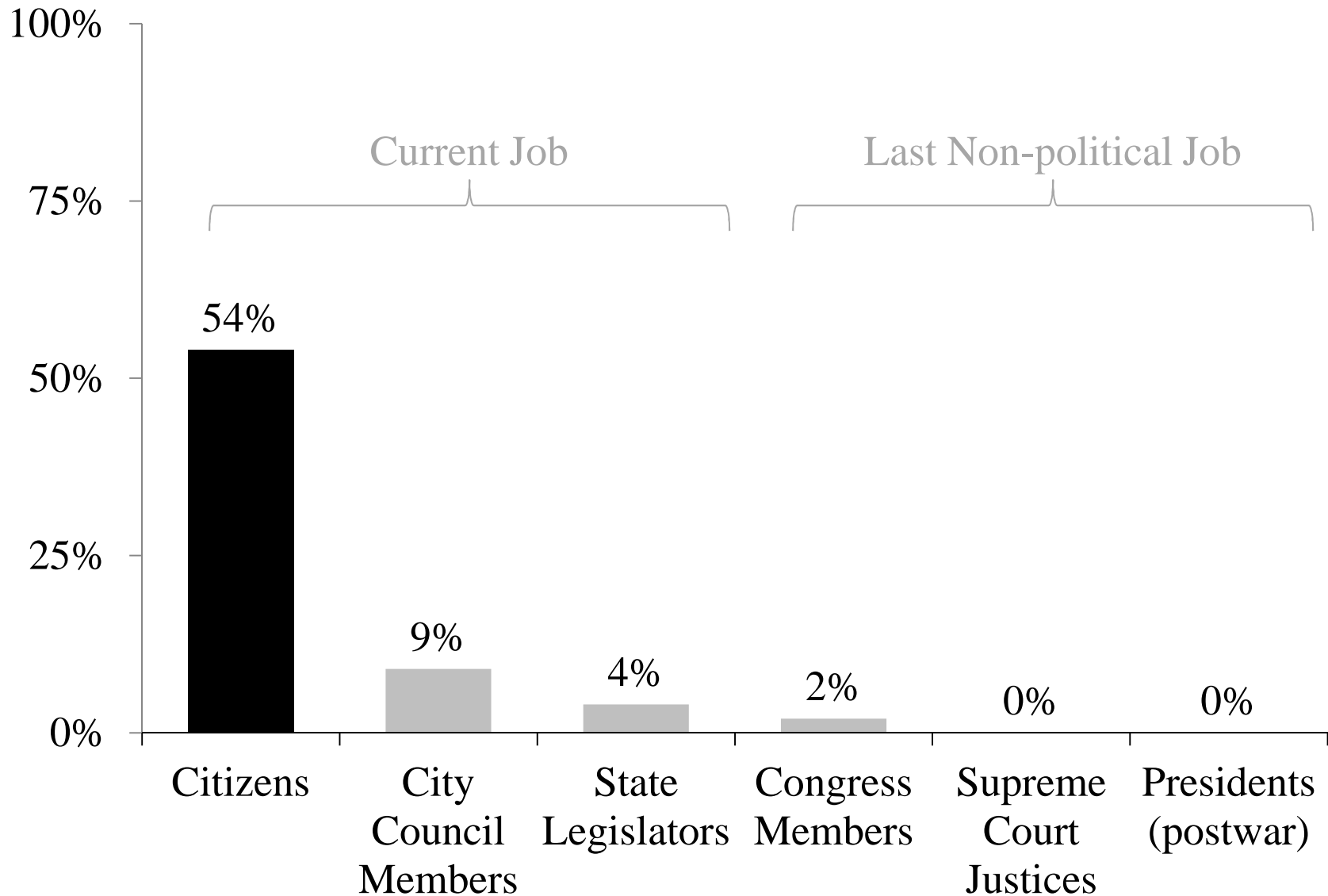
# Percent from Working-class Jobs



# Percent from Working-class Jobs



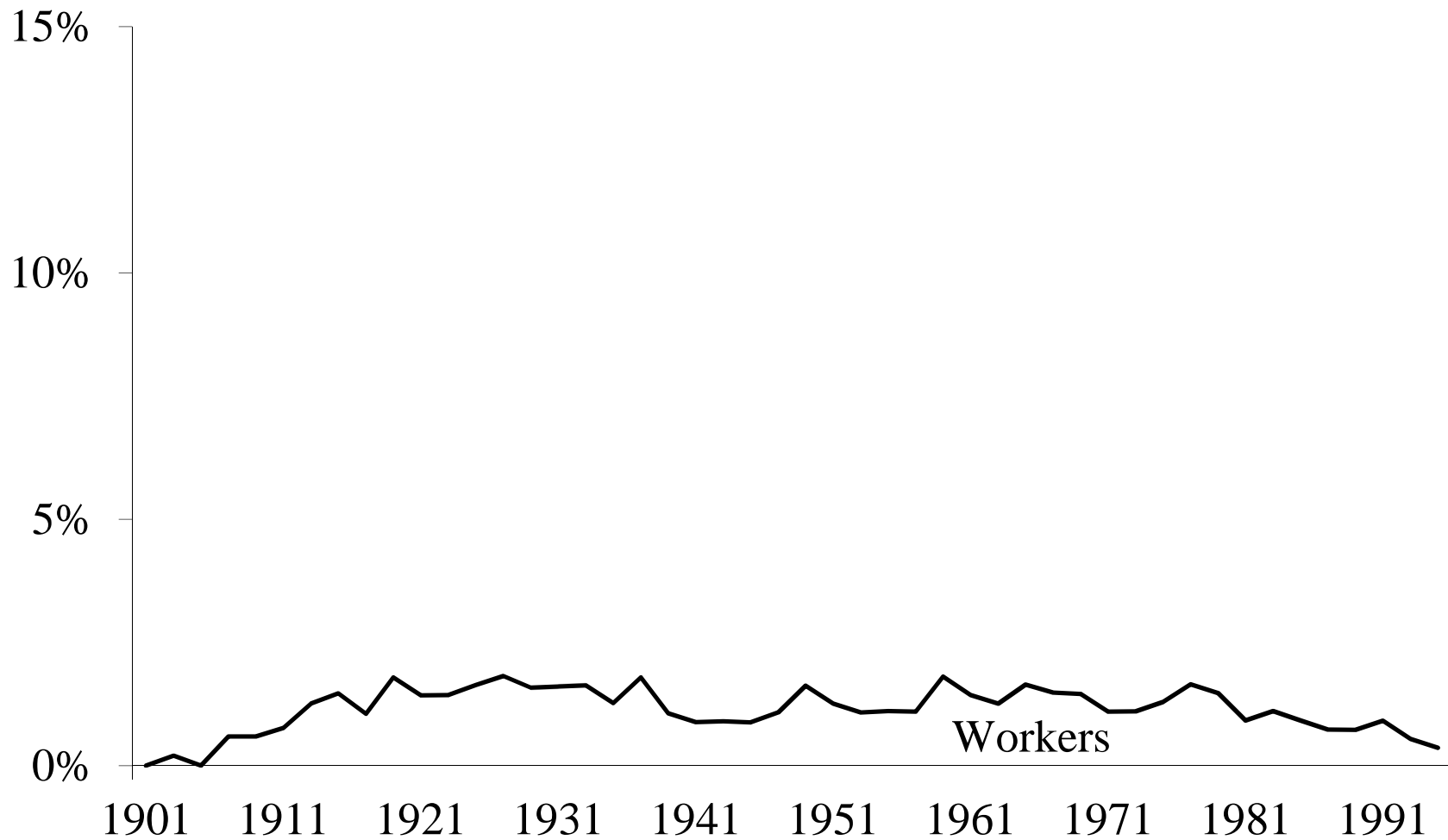
# Percent from Working-class Jobs



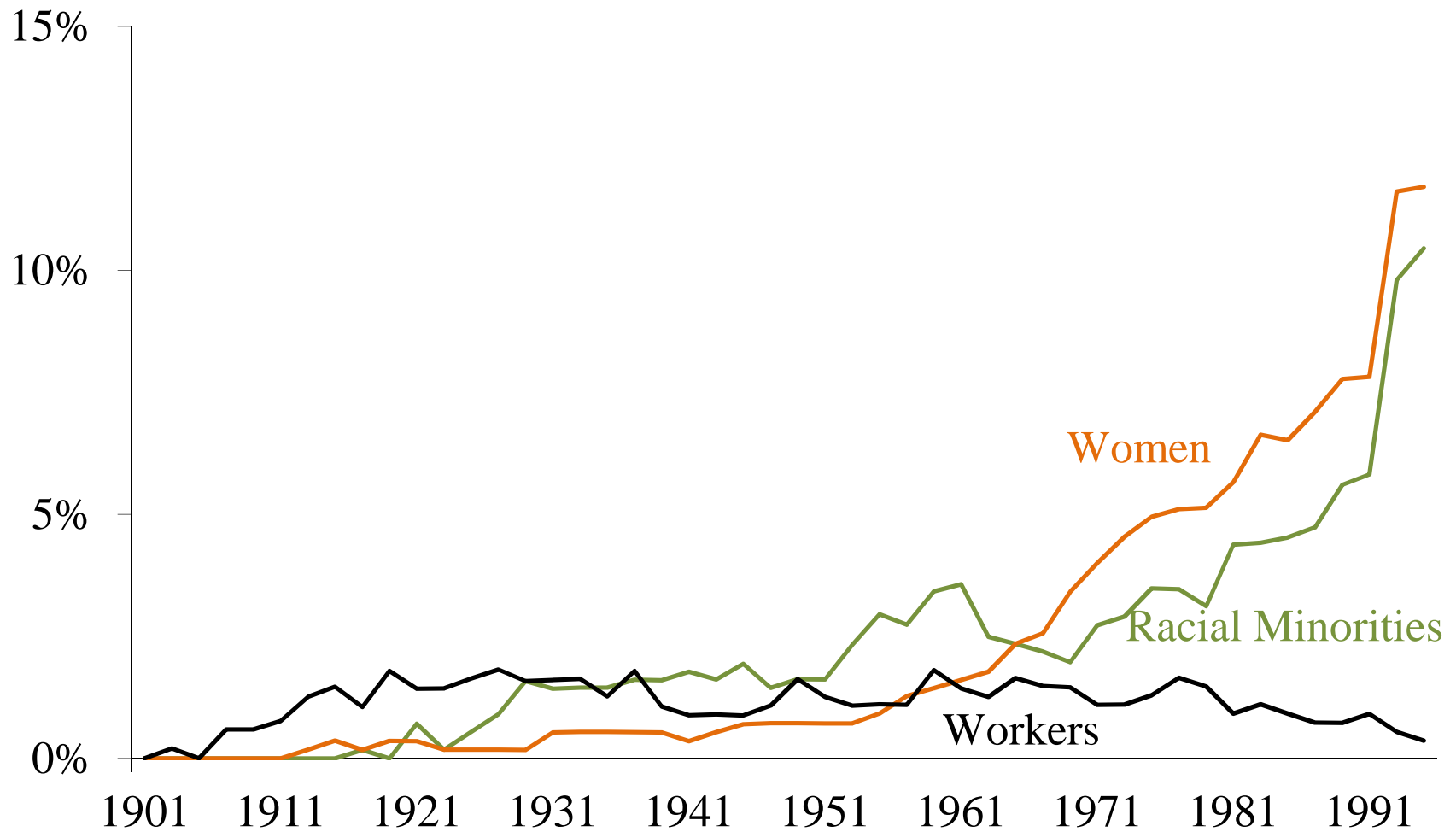
# The Makeup of Congress



# The Makeup of Congress



# The Makeup of Congress





# The Makeup of State Legislatures

1976	8% women	5% working class
2007	24% women	3% working class

# Research Questions

Does it matter that so few people from the working class end up in elected office?

- Yes—it biases economic policy  
(Carnes 2012; 2013; Grose 2013; Griffin & Anewalt-Rensburg 2013; Kraus & Callaghan 2014)

Article

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John D. C  
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Abstract: Does expos  
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decision-making such  
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**Keywords**  
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<sup>1</sup>University of C  
<sup>2</sup>University of N

Correspondin  
John Griffin, Un  
Email: john.grif

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OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

PLOS ONE

## Noblesse Oblig Maintenance a

Michael W. Kraus<sup>1</sup>, Bennet

Department of Psychology, University of M

### Abstract

Economic inequality is at hist  
And yet, predicting the beha  
challenge. Given that high s  
expected that high status m  
inequality in their legislative  
particularly among Democra  
economic inequality regardle  
race, or gender – was a sig  
relationship between social s

Citation: Kraus MW, Colquhoun B (2014) doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0085290

Editor: Alvin Kroschinsky, University of M

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Competing interests: The authors ha

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### Introduction

"the duty of the Man of Wealth  
revenues which come to him sim  
called upon to administer, and strict  
administer in the manner which, in  
to produce the most beneficial re  
Andrew Carnegie [1].

The United States is in the mi  
economic inequality [2–4]. These  
place the most strain on those at th  
– poor and working class families  
increased poverty, unemployment  
social support, and homelessness [5]  
to combat economic inequality,  
democratic system to enact social  
individuals from growing wealth  
participation is one of the only a  
combat this economic trend, inve  
predict whether politicians will su  
of economic inequality remains an

In the present research, we exam  
members of the US House of Rep  
psychological research suggesting th

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# Research Questions

Does it matter that so few people from the working class end up in elected office?

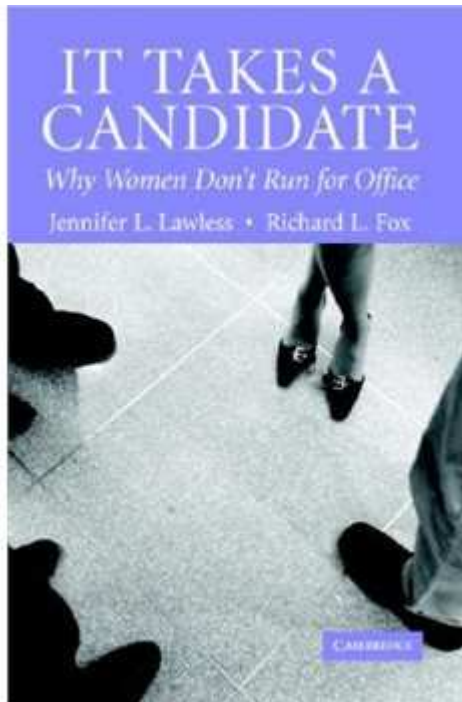
- Yes—it biases economic policy  
(Carnes 2012; 2013; Grose 2013; Griffin & Anewalt-Rensburg 2013; Kraus & Callaghan 2014)

What's keeping working-class people out of office?

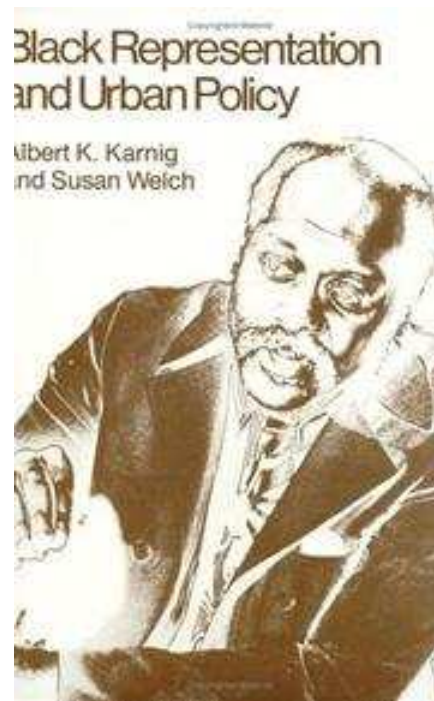
- We don't know . . .

# Why are there so few \_\_\_ in office?

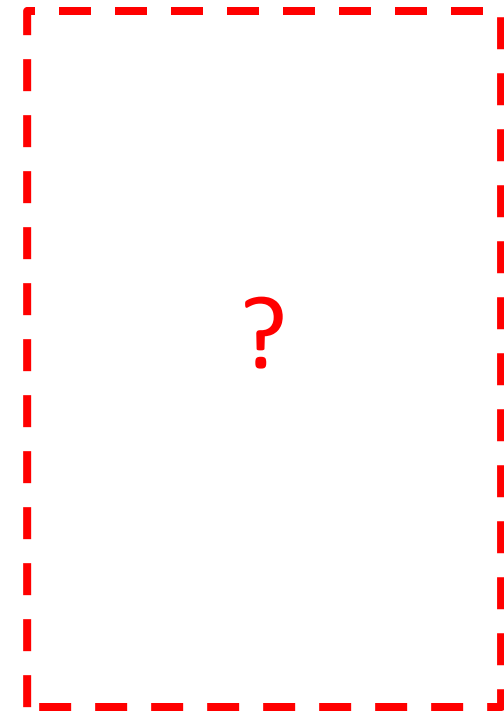
women



racial minorities



blue-collar workers



“[women] are not found in the professions from which politicians inordinately are chosen—the law and other broker-type businesses” (Clark 1994, 106)

“[f]ull integration of women into all of the pipeline professions . . . may take decades” (Lawless and Fox 2004, 26)

# Political Gatekeepers

the political and civic leaders who identify, recruit, train, and support political candidates

politicians, party officials, interest group leaders, activists, and journalists

# Why focus on gatekeepers?

- Everyone needs gatekeepers.
- Gatekeeping seems to be partly to blame for the shortage of other groups. (Crowder-Meyer 2010; Lawless and Fox 2005; Sanbonomatsu 2002)
- Gatekeepers may have incentives to recruit more affluent candidates.
- Gatekeeping strategies are the major reforms that are happening on the ground right now.
- Other explanations aren't panning out . . .

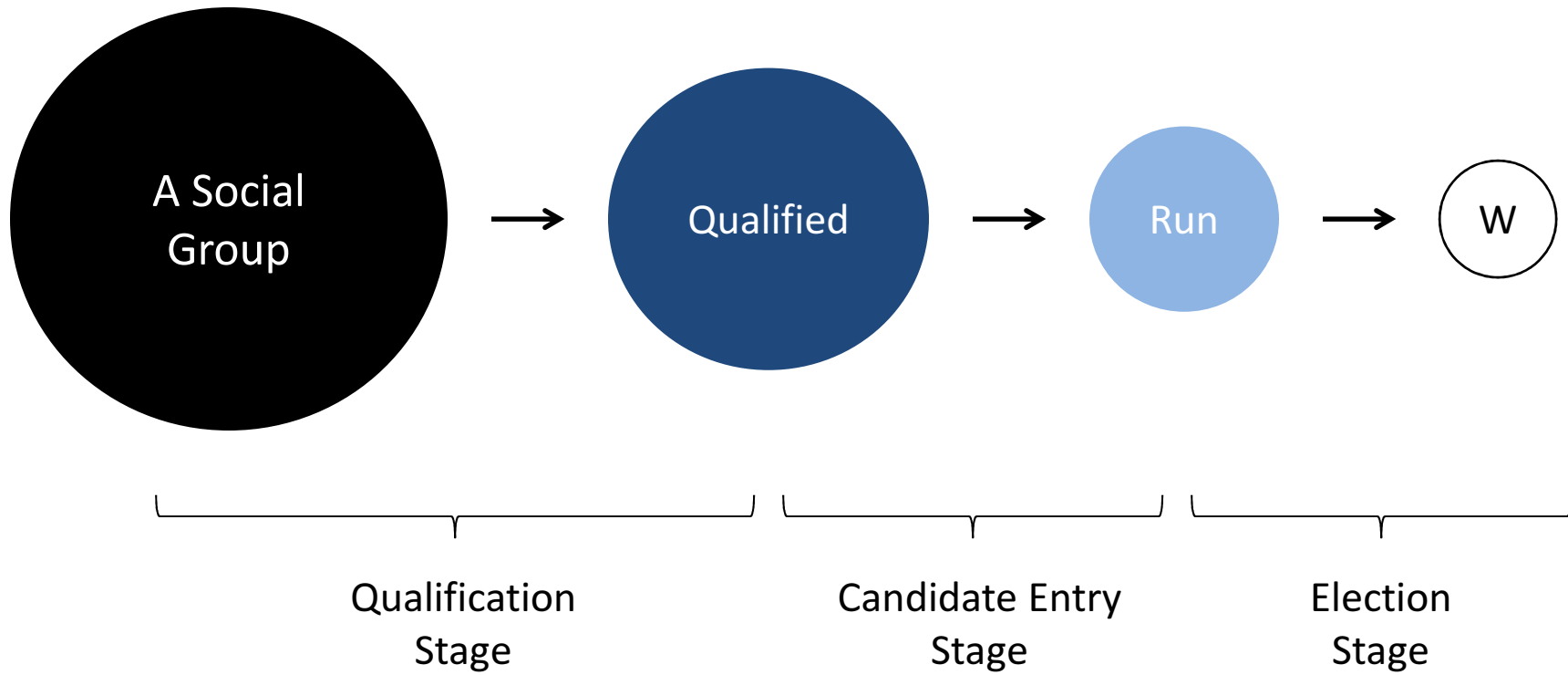


A Social Group

Qualified

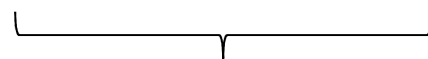
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Qualification  
Stage



Candidate Entry  
Stage



Election  
Stage

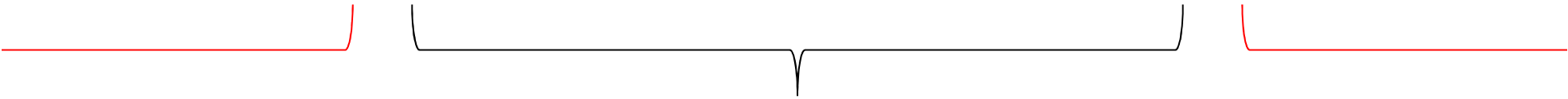
(Carnes 2013, ch. 6)

(Carnes 2013, ch. 6  
Sadin 2013)



- Cost of campaigning
- Decline of unions
- Lack of role models
- Structure of elections
- Strategies of parties
- Etc. . . .

**Why don't qualified workers  
run for office?**



Candidate Entry  
Stage

# My (Behavioral) Explanation

Qualified working-class Americans are . . .

- less likely to have the personal **resources** needed to run for office (e.g., time and money)
- less likely to **want** to run for office (e.g., interest and efficacy)
- less likely to be **encouraged** to run for office (e.g., gatekeeping)

# Why **NOT** focus on gatekeepers?

**There are no ready-to-use data.**

- Surveys of **gatekeepers** almost never happen.
- Surveys of **candidates and citizens** never ask about class and gatekeeping.

## 2012 National Candidate Study

Duke  
UNIVERSITY



University of California  
Berkeley

SEWANEE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

If you received a mail notice that you were selected for the 2012 National Candidate Study, [click here to enter your code and take the survey.](#)

The 2012 National Candidate Study is a **nonpartisan, confidential research study** jointly administered by Duke University, the University of Michigan, the University of California, Berkeley, and Sewanee: The University of the South.

The Study is an effort to understand the experiences and views of the remarkable people who run for public office in the United States.

If you have any questions, please email [ncs2012@duke.edu](mailto:ncs2012@duke.edu) or visit the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

Thank you in advance for participating and for all that you do to help your community and our democracy.

Nicholas Carnes  
Duke University

David Brookman  
University of California, Berkeley

Christopher Skovron  
University of Michigan

*Principal Investigators*

Melody Crowder-Meyer  
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## 2013 National Survey of Party Leaders

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Thank you in advance for participating and for all that you do to help your community and our democracy.

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# 2012 National Candidate Study

Survey in August 2012 of the ~10,000 declared candidates for state legislature.

- 2,000 responses (double our expectation).
- Wide range of questions:
  - What do politicians think their constituents think?
  - What makes running easy / hard?
  - **Who's running for office (race, class, gender)?**
  - **Who's being encouraged to run for office by various gatekeepers?**

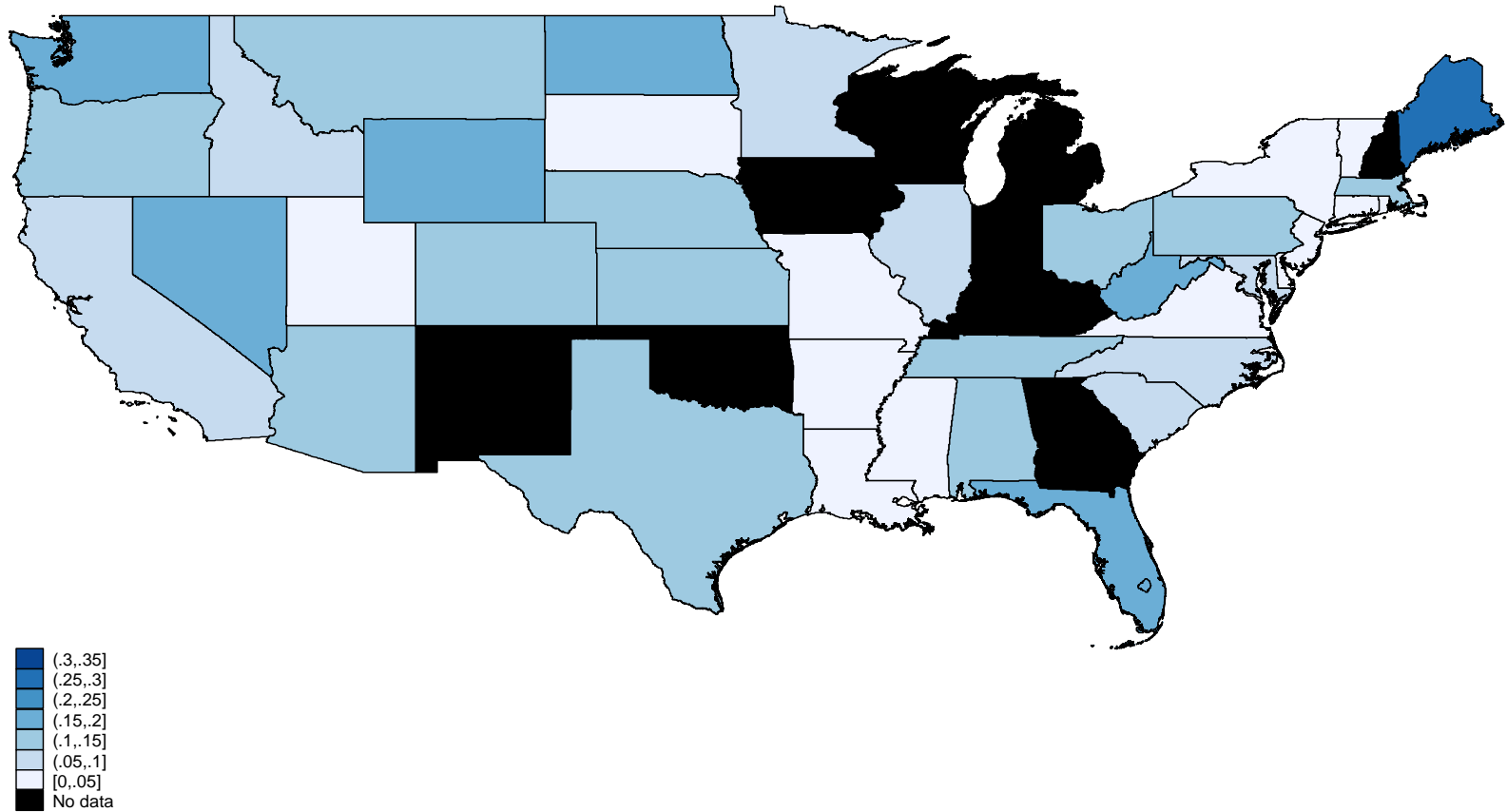


# 2013 National Survey of Party Leaders

Survey in November 2013 of the ~6,000 Republican and Democratic party leaders in each county, parish (LA), organized borough (AK), district (ND), city (CT), or sub-city unit (MA Dems only) excluding 9 states (GA, IA, IN, KY, MI, NH, NM, OK, WI)

- 801 responses to email; 330 responses to postal mail (still processing)
- Wide range of questions:
  - How is the local party organized?
  - How do party leaders identify and recruit candidates?
  - **Who's running for office (class, gender)?**
  - **Who are party gatekeepers encouraging to run for office?**

# NSPL 2013: Response Rates by State



# Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

- NCS 2012: Do working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers?
- NSPL 2013: Are party leaders less likely to encourage working-class candidates to run for office?

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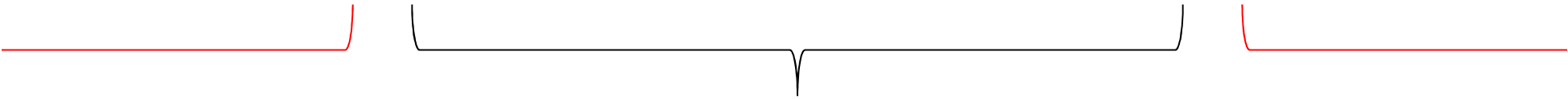
**A6.** What is your primary occupation? (If holding a political office is currently your primary occupation, what was your primary occupation before you got into politics?)

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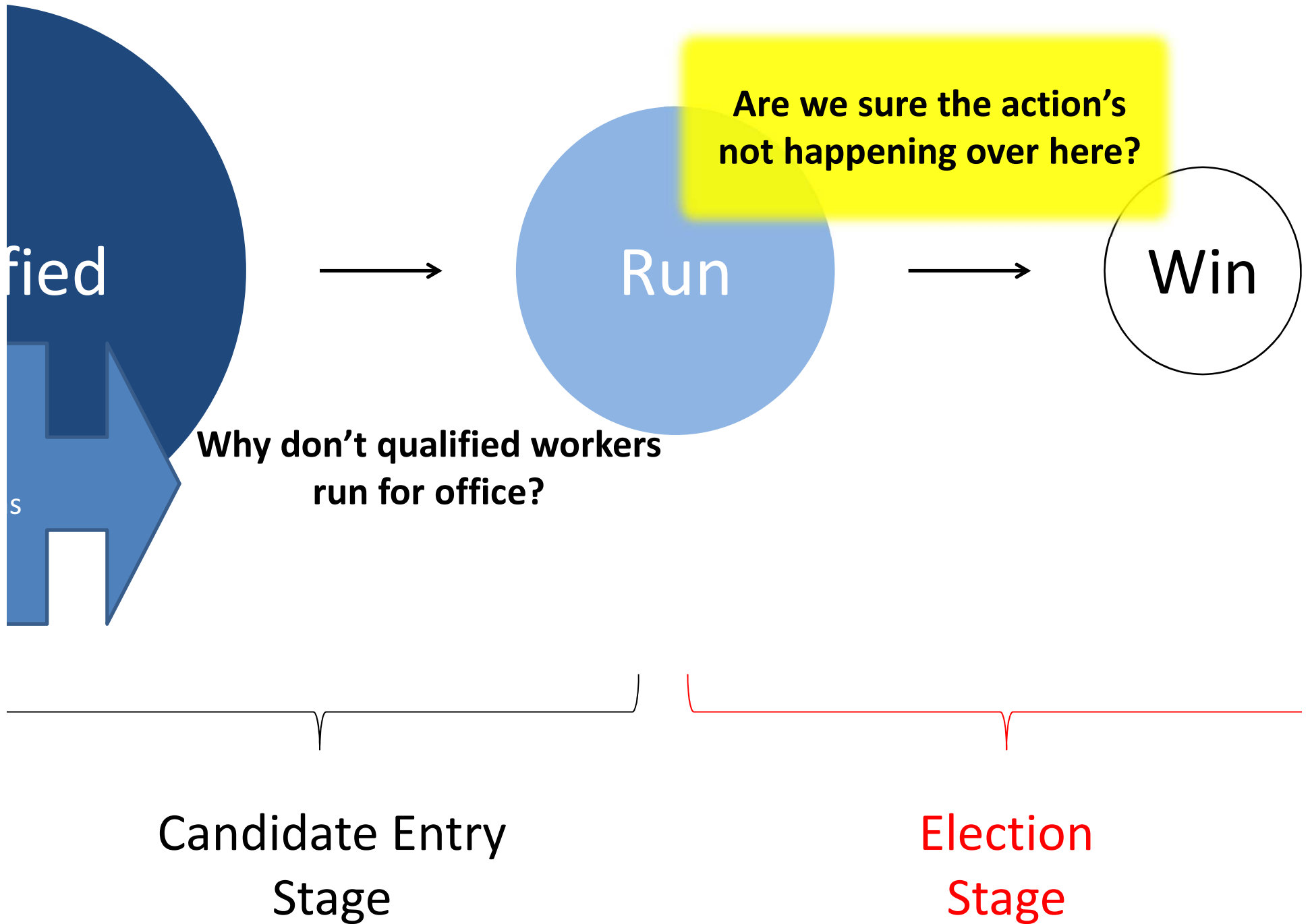


- Cost of campaigning
- Decline of unions
- Lack of role models
- Structure of elections
- Strategies of parties
- Etc. . . .

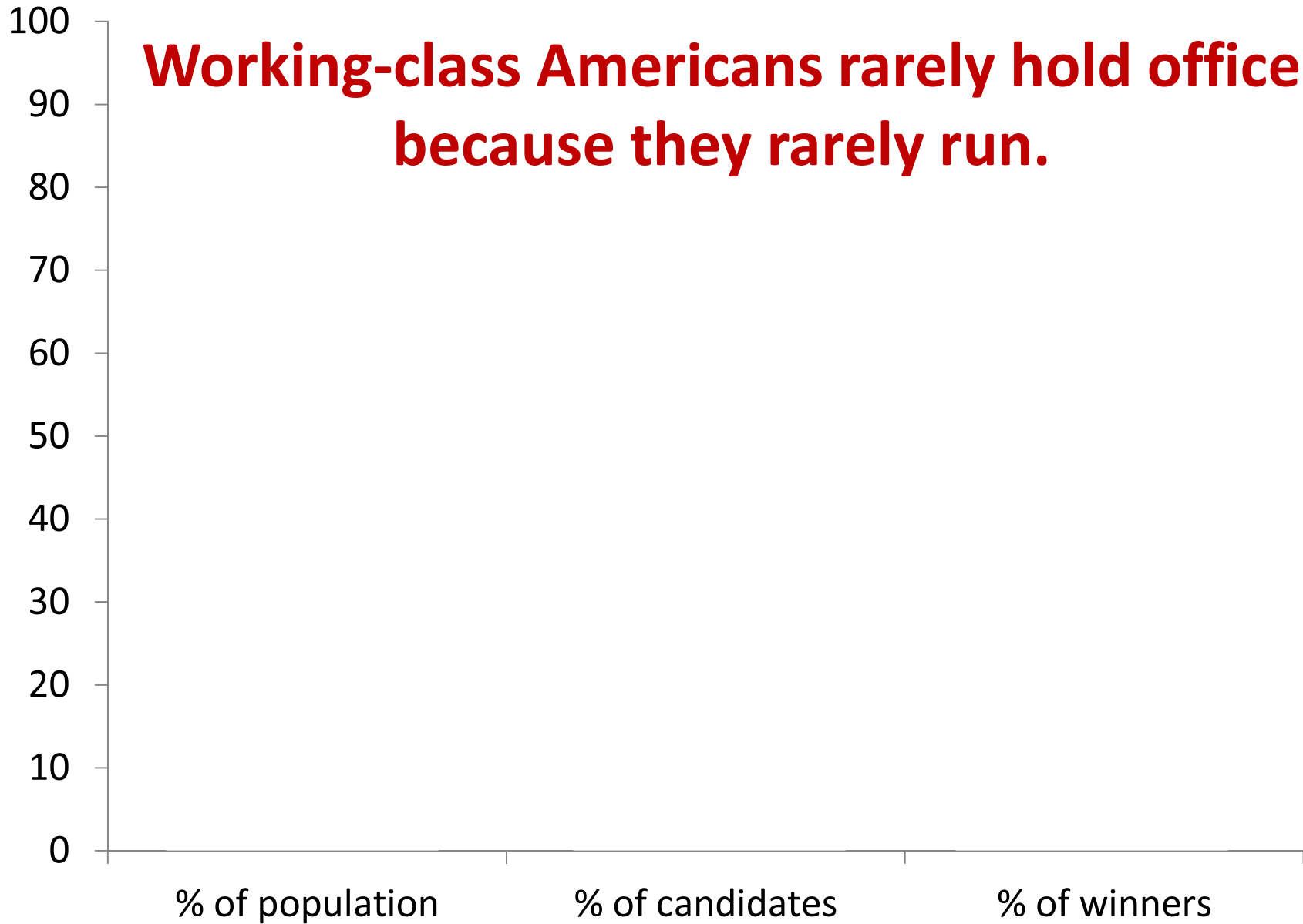
**Why don't qualified workers  
run for office?**



Candidate Entry  
Stage



**Working-class Americans rarely hold office  
because they rarely run.**





# My (Behavioral) Explanation

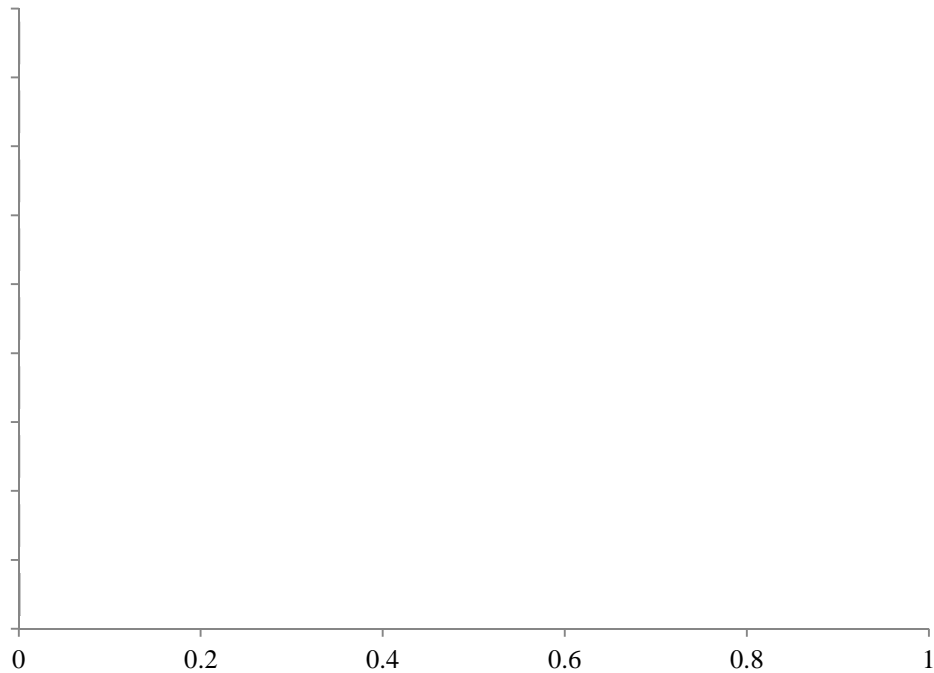
## Qualified working-class Americans

- are less likely to have the personal **resources** needed to run for office (e.g., time and money)
- are less likely to **want** to run for office (e.g., interest and efficacy)
- are less likely to be **encouraged** to run for office (e.g., gatekeeping)

	Encouraged me to run for the first time	Discouraged me from running for the first time
National leaders in my political party		
State leaders in my political party	✓	
County or local leaders in my political party	✓	
Sitting politicians	✓	
Other local community leaders	✓	
National interest or community groups		
Local interest or community groups		
A formal candidate training program		
My employer		
Members of my family		
Members of the media		
Other		

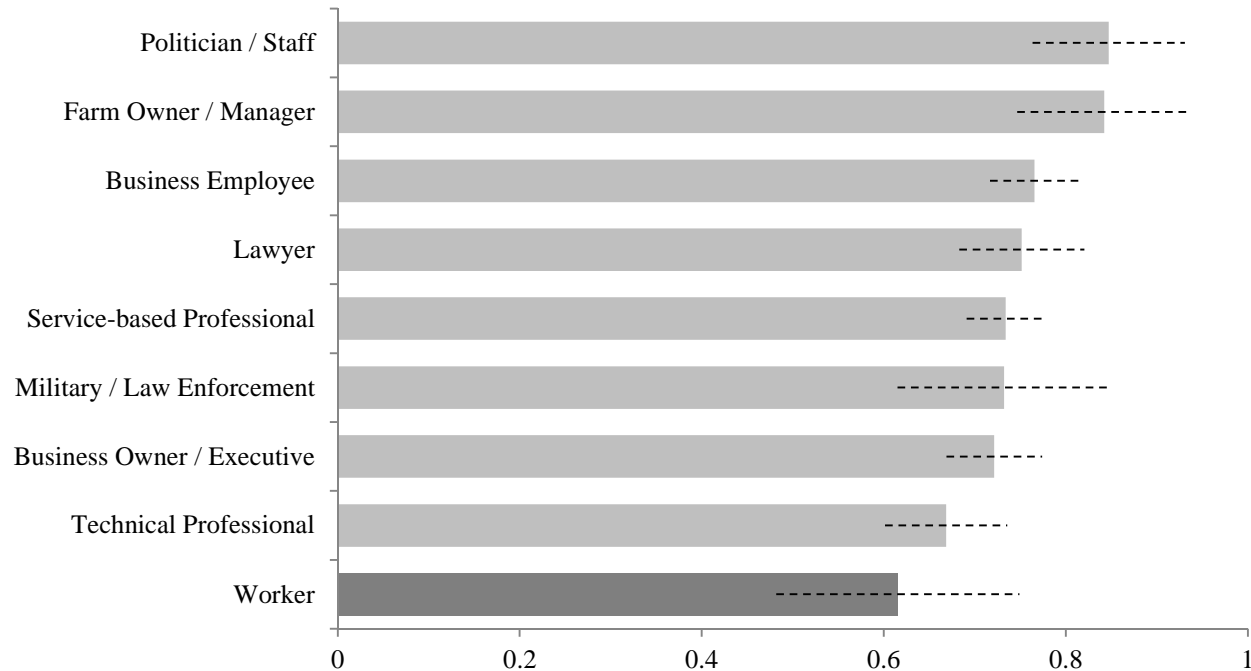
Do gatekeepers encourage workers?

# Do gatekeepers encourage workers?



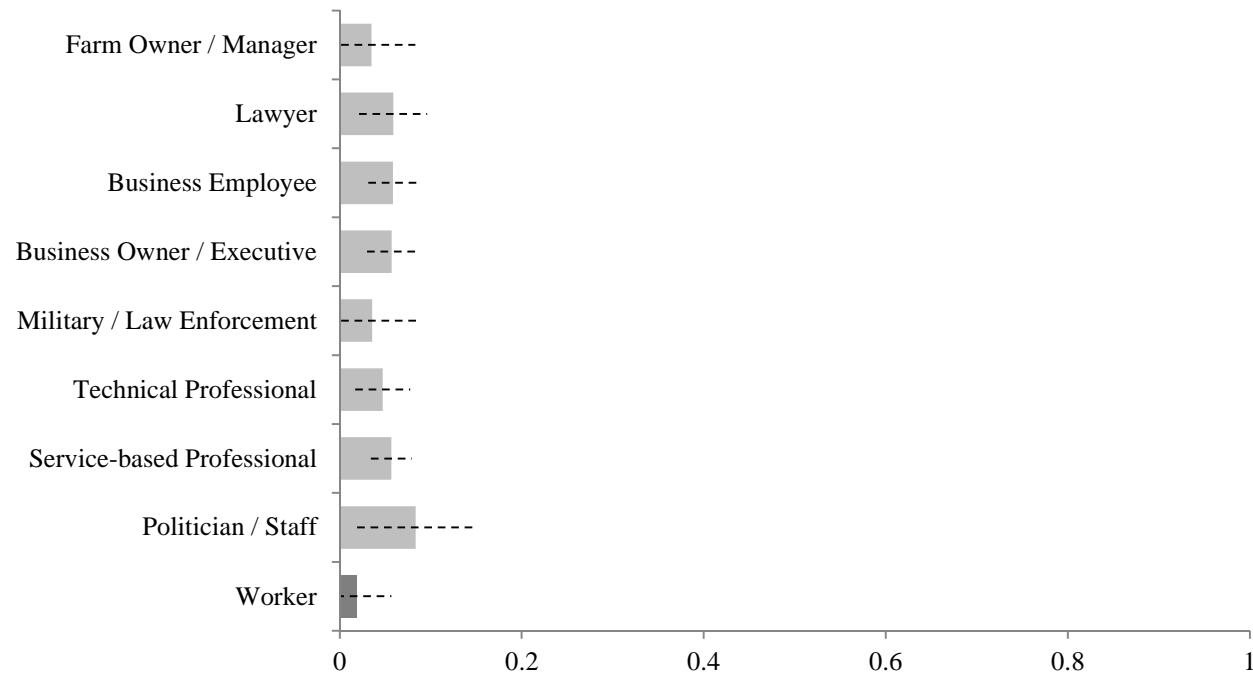
Proportion encouraged to run by **interest groups**

# Do gatekeepers encourage workers?



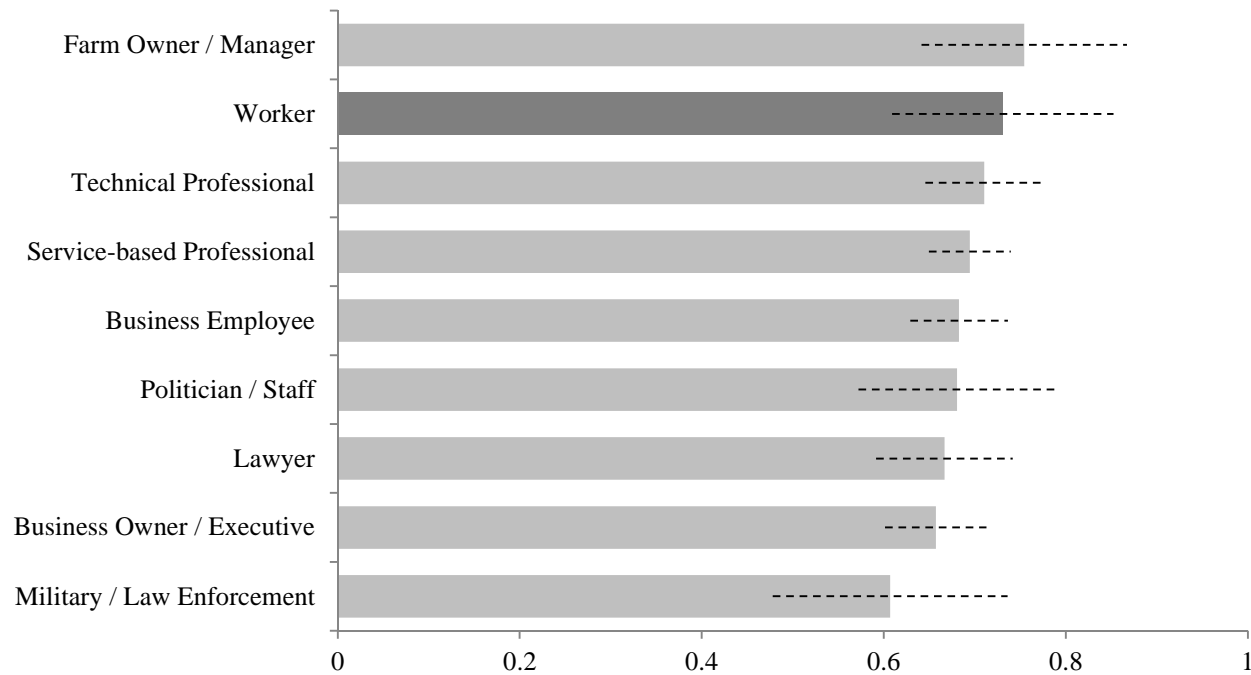
Proportion encouraged to run by **politicians / leaders**

# Do gatekeepers encourage workers?



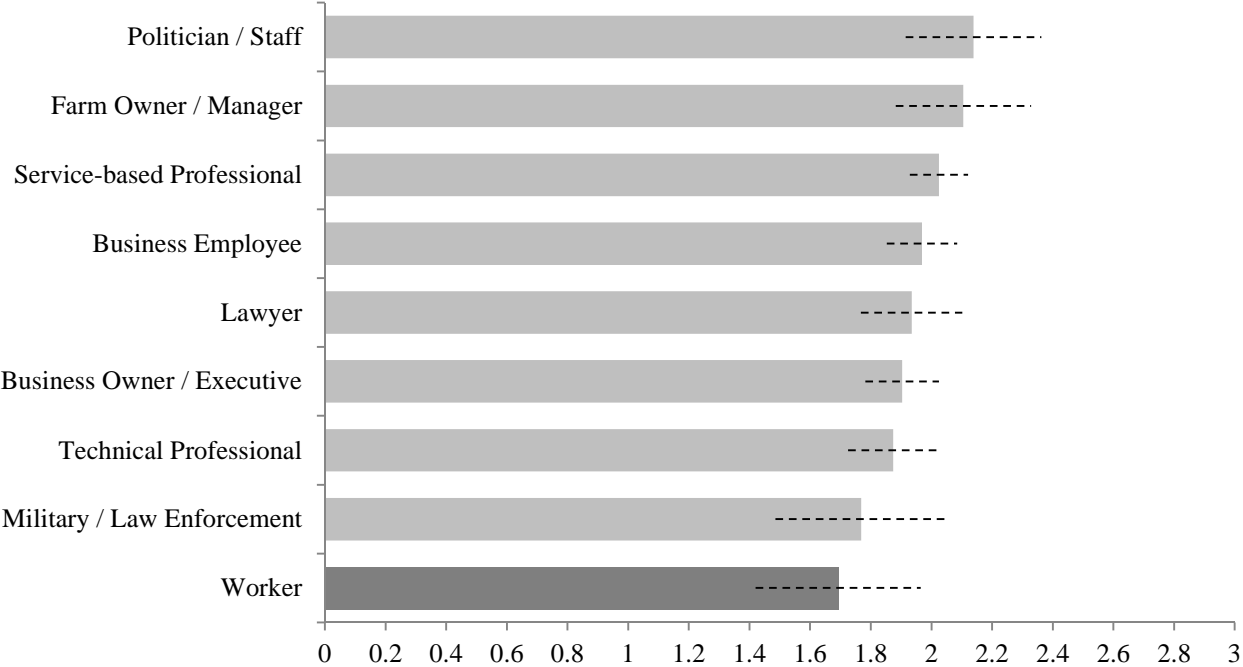
Proportion encouraged to run by **journalists**

# Do gatekeepers encourage workers?



Proportion encouraged to run by **party leaders**

# Working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers



**Total Gatekeeper Support**



**Even though workers are just as qualified.**

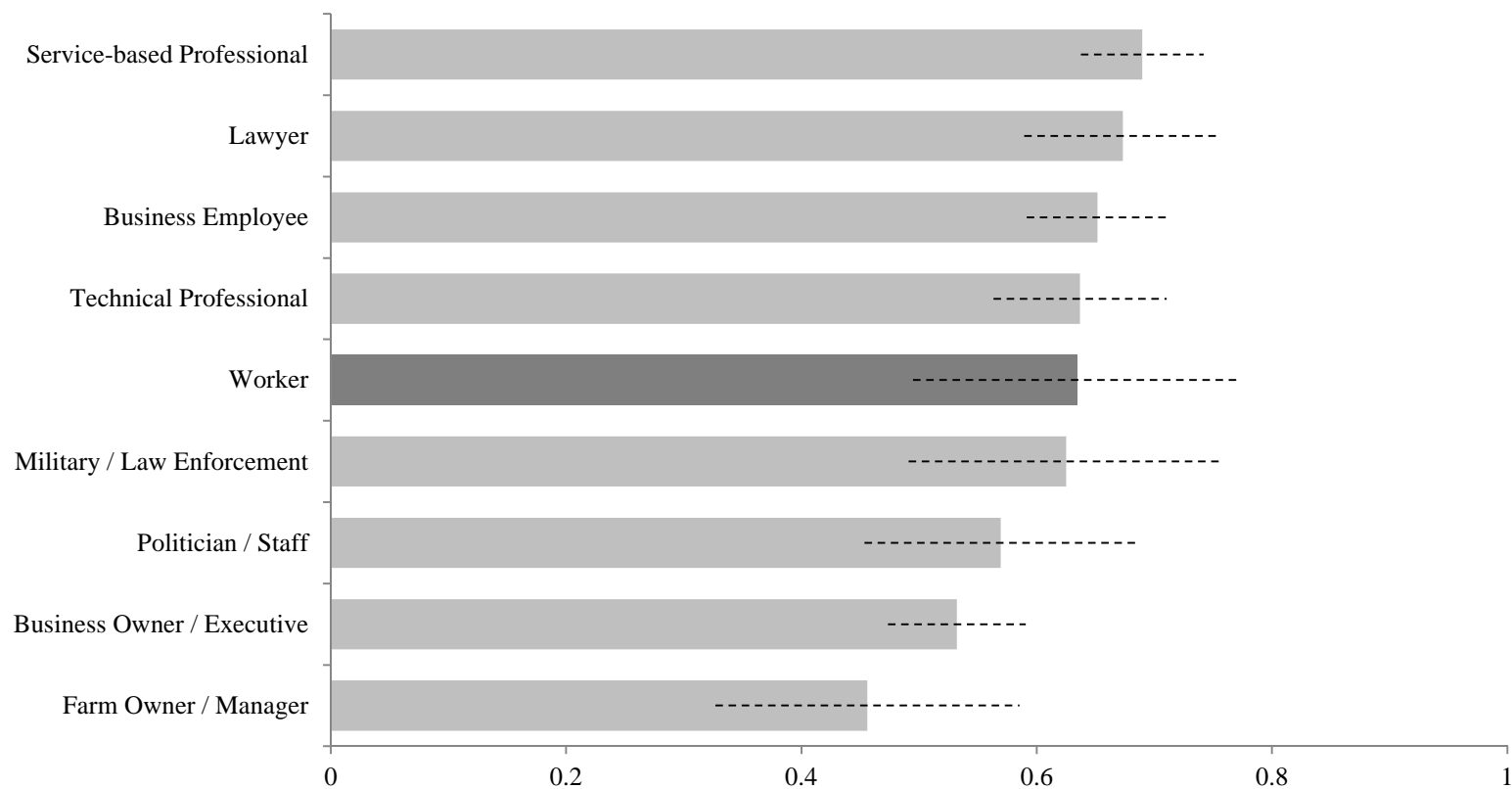
**C2.** Before deciding to run for the first time, did you feel seriously concerned about any of the following political challenges? (check all that apply)

- Discrimination against me based on my race, gender, class, etc.
- The need to raise lots of money
- Negative advertising against me
- The difficulty of running a campaign
- The difficulty of holding office
- Losing the election
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

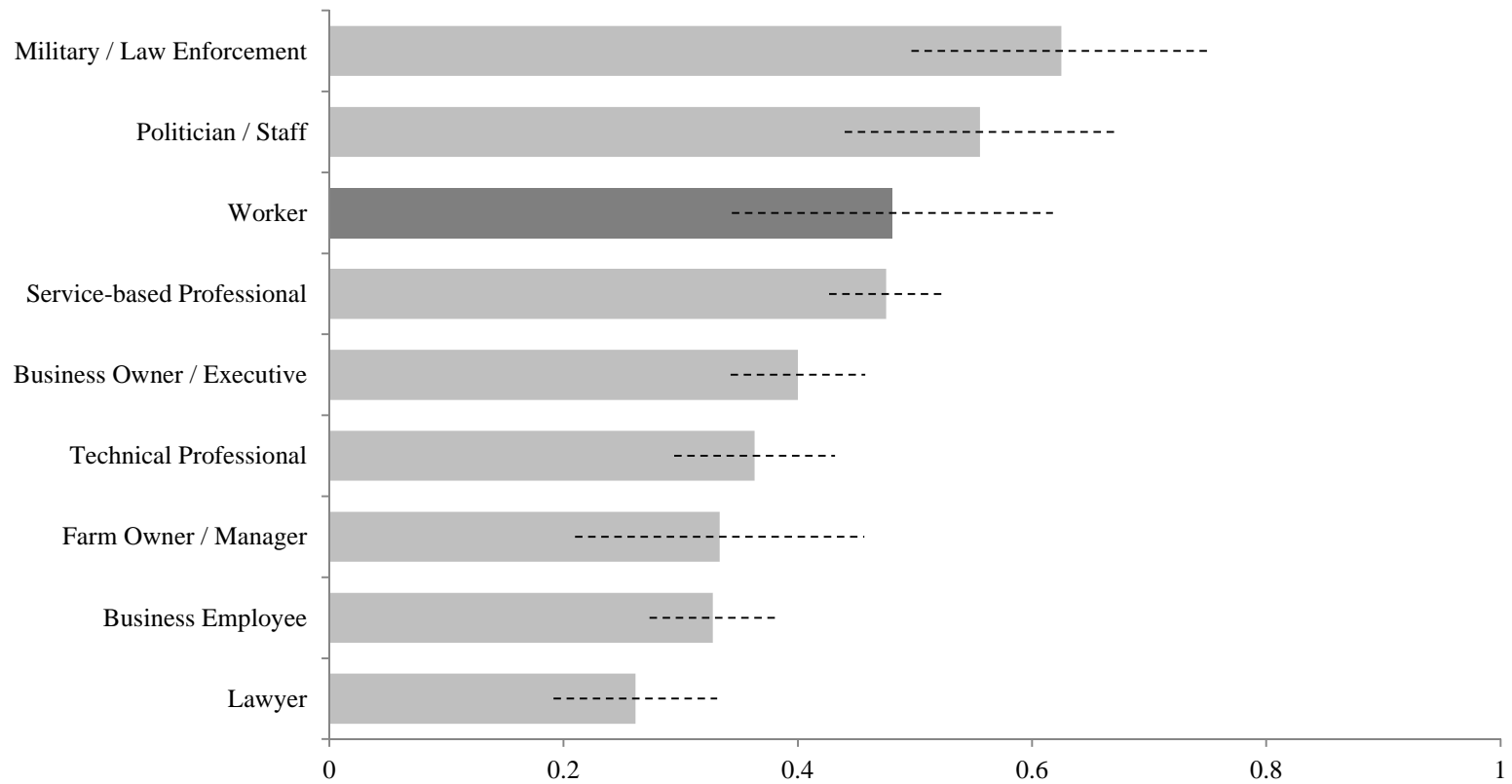
**C3.** Many people who think about running for office choose not to because of the many personal challenges entailed in seeking public service. When you first ran for elected political office, did you feel seriously concerned about any of the following? (check all that apply)

- My privacy
- The privacy of my family
- Giving up leisure time
- Giving up work time
- Giving up time with family and friends
- Losing out on income while campaigning
- Losing out on income while serving in office
- Losing the job I had at the time

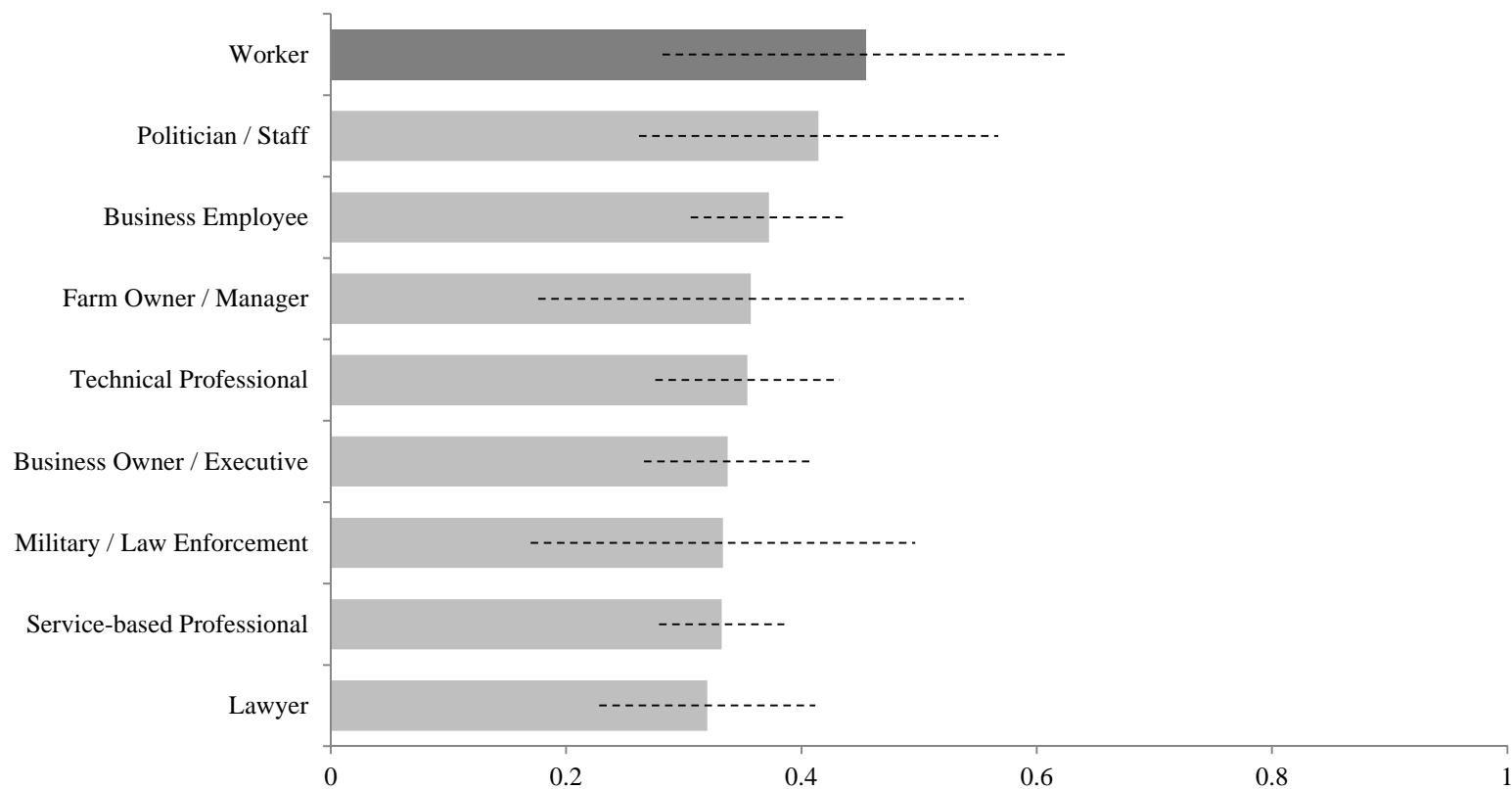
# Proportion who Didn't Worry about Fundraising



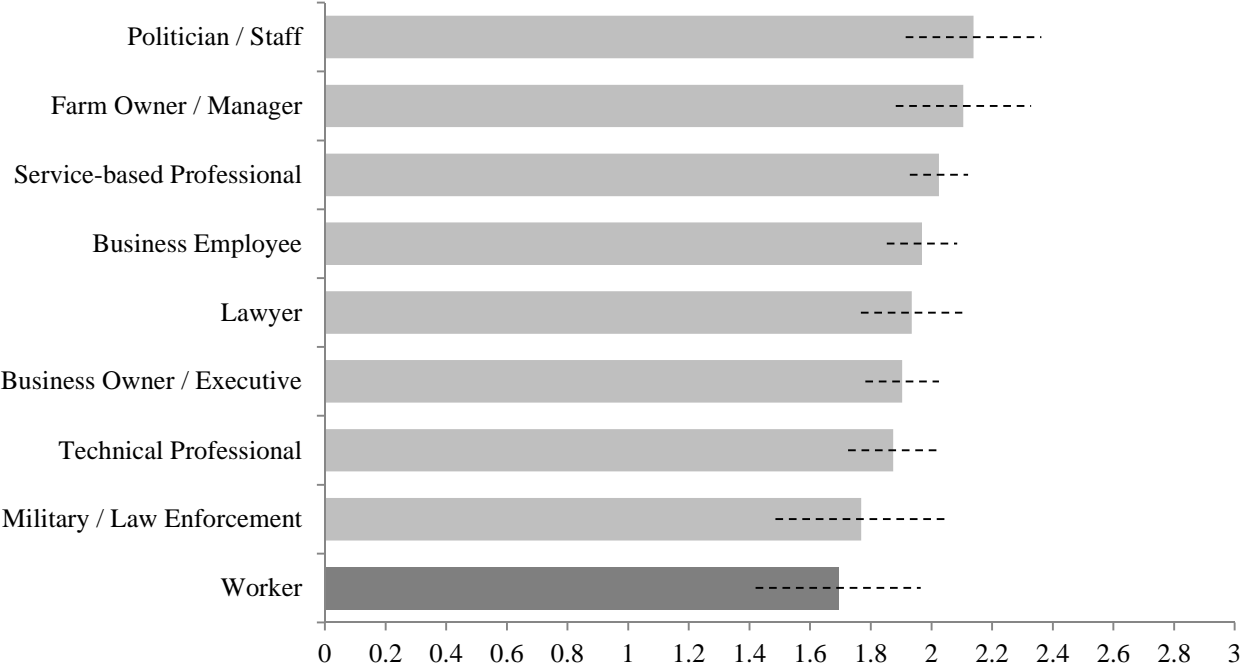
# Proportion who Didn't Worry about Job/\$



# Proportion who Didn't Worry about Time



# Working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers



**Total Gatekeeper Support**

# Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

- NCS 2012: Do working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers?
- NSPL 2013: Are party leaders less likely to encourage working-class candidates to run for office?

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- NCS 2012: Do working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers? **Yes**
- NSPL 2013: Are party leaders less likely to encourage working-class candidates to run for office?



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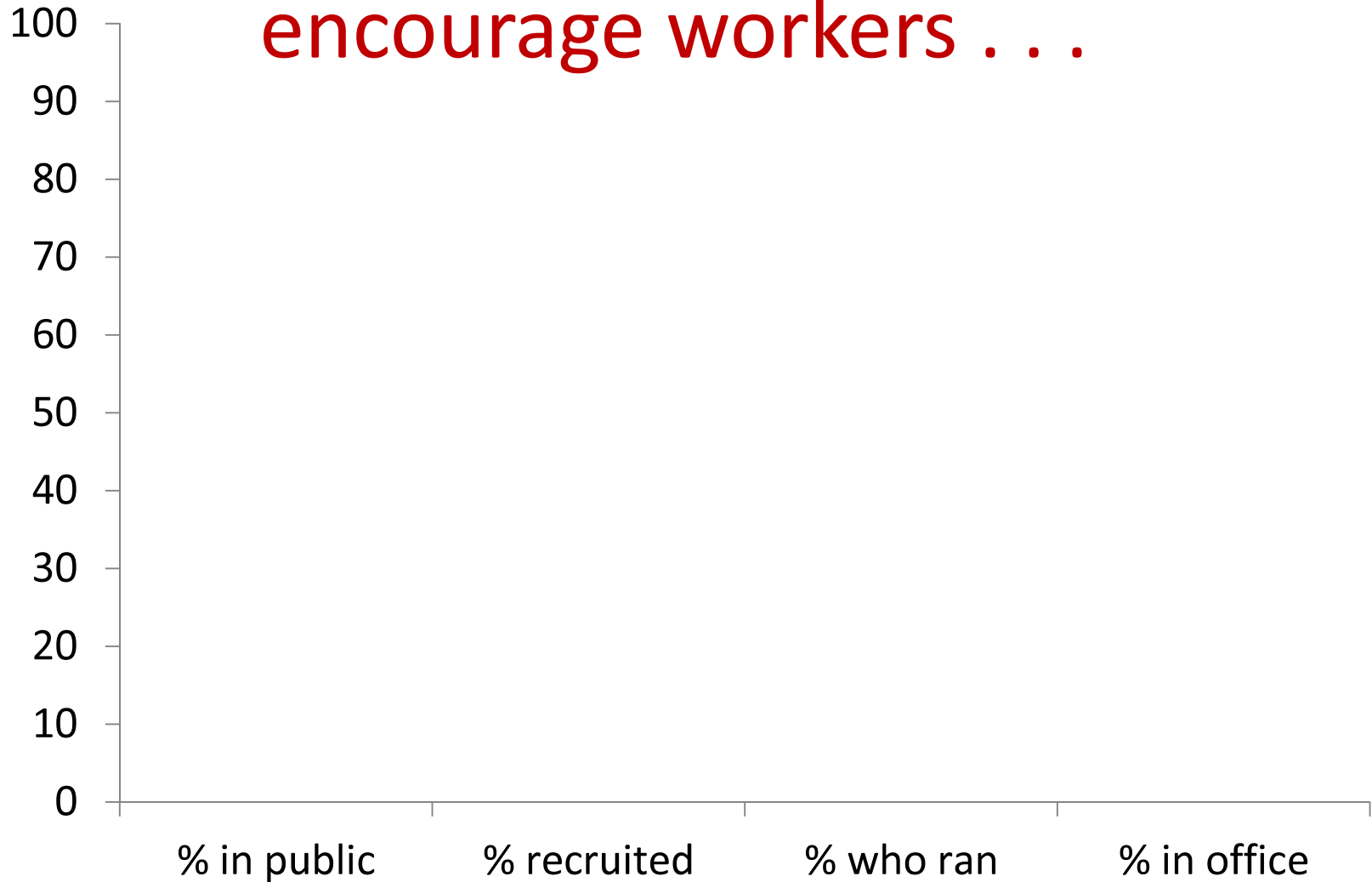
**In the last few elections, what percentage of the following groups would you estimate were employed in working class jobs (e.g., factory workers, restaurant servers, receptionists) at the time?**

The potential candidates your party tried to recruit 20 %

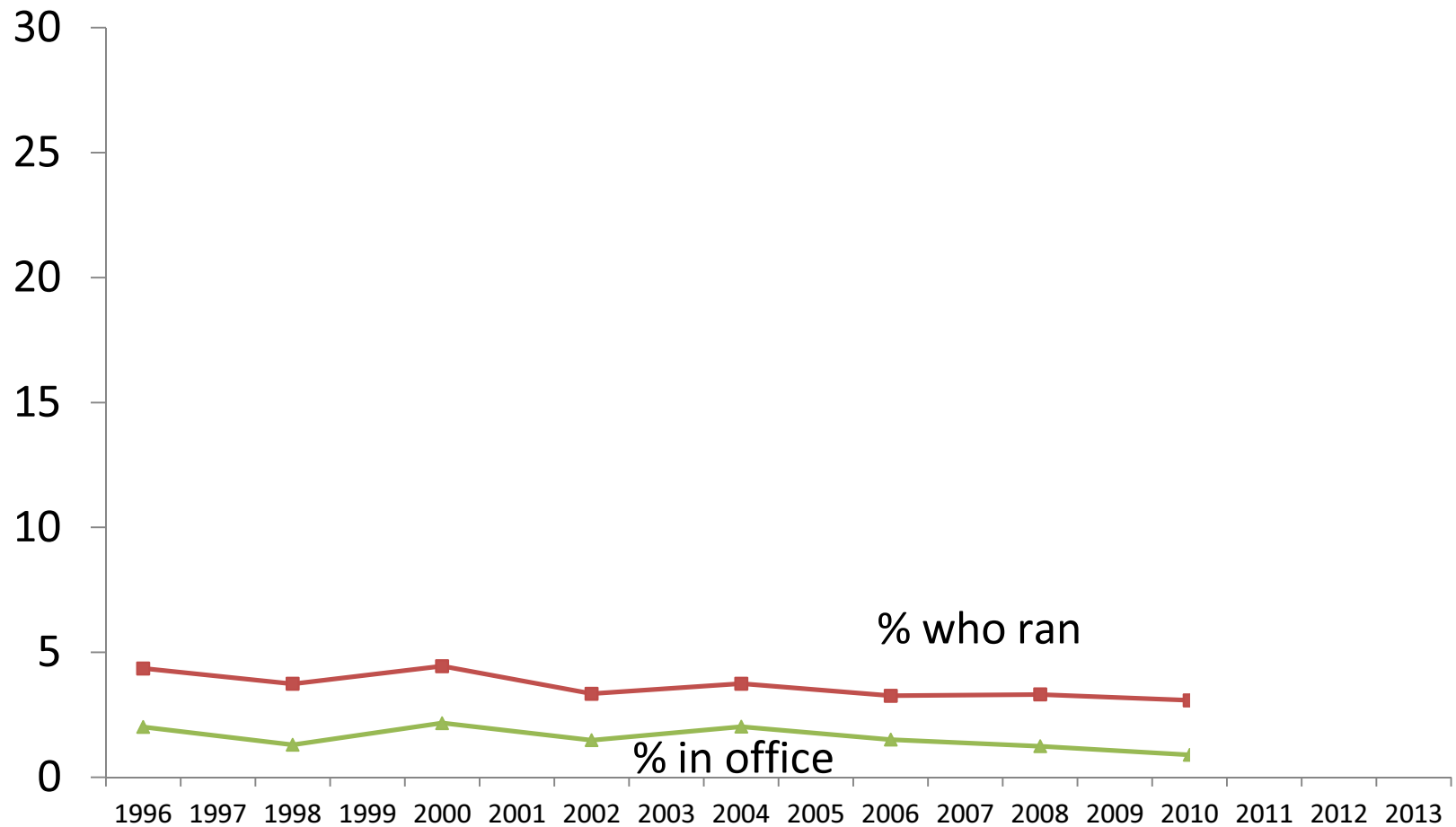
Your party's candidates for county and local office 30 %

Your party's current county and local officeholders 10 %

# Party leaders are less likely to encourage workers . . .



. . . probably more than they admit.

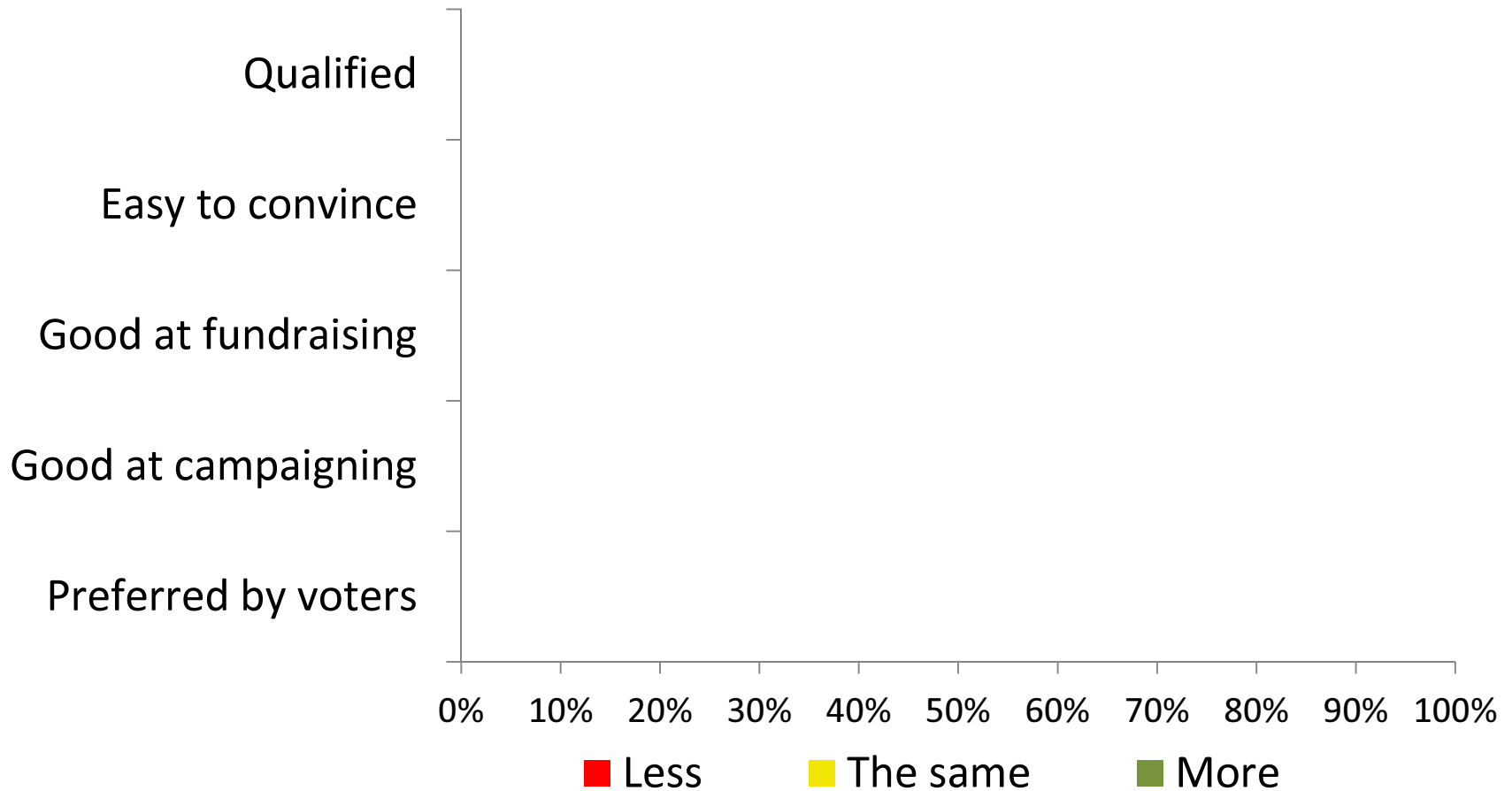


Why?

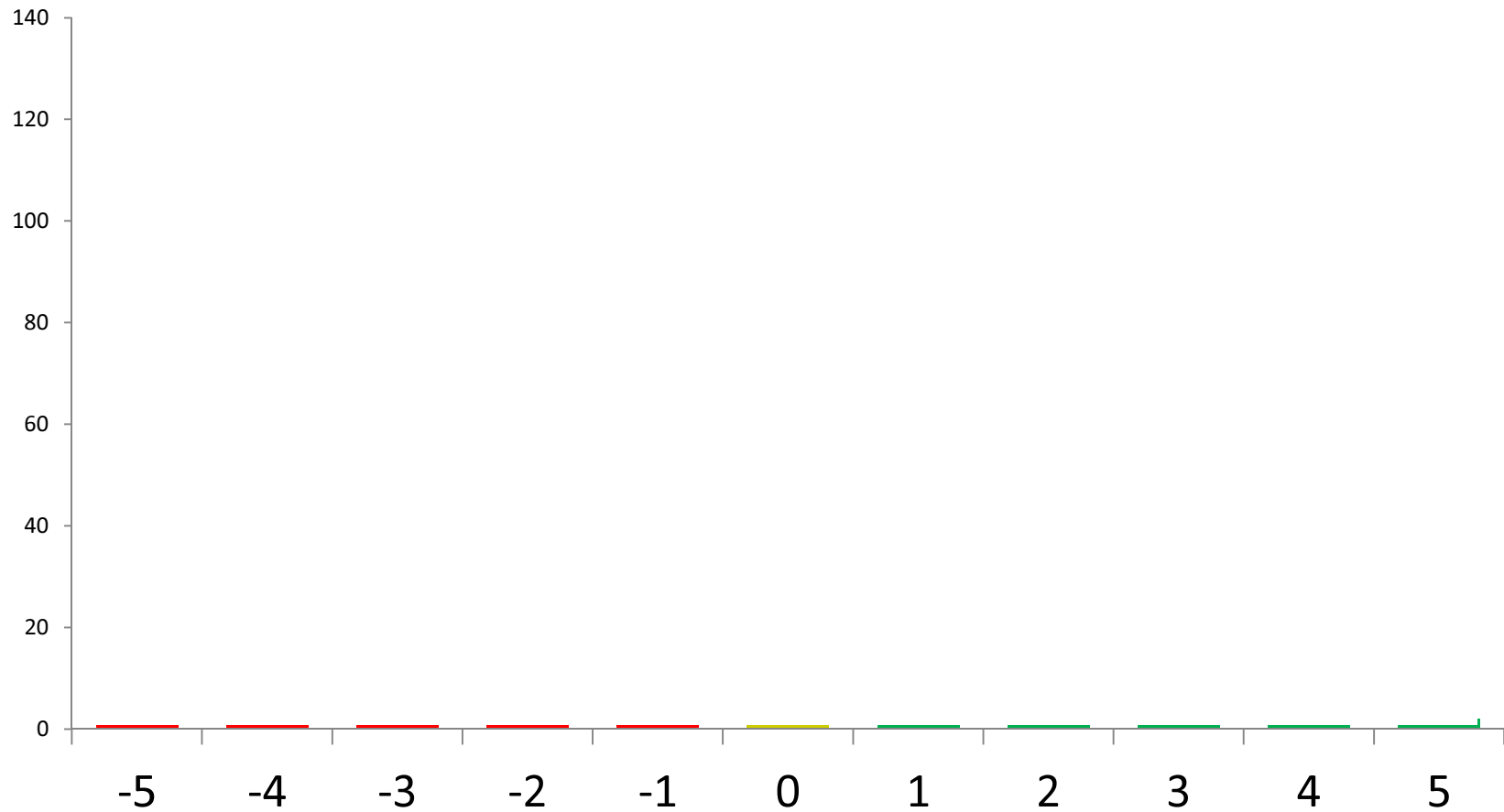
In races for county and local office in your area, relative to candidates with professional backgrounds, do you think **candidates from working-class jobs** (e.g., factory workers, restaurant servers, receptionists) tend to be...

	More	The same	Less
Qualified to hold office			✓
Easy to convince to run			✓
Preferred by voters			✓
Good at fundraising			✓
Good at campaigning			✓

# Party leaders see workers as bad candidates.



# Party leaders see workers as bad candidates.





# An Alternative Explanation

- Party leaders aren't looking in the right places

**We are interested in learning more about how your party finds candidates to run for office.**

Thinking about elections over the past five years, how often have your party officials **looked for new state legislative, county, or local office candidates . . .** (check one per row)

	Rarely or Never	Sometimes	Often
Among people active in election and issue campaigns (e.g., volunteers, activists, campaign managers)	✓		
Among those already holding other offices (e.g., commission members, city council members)	✓		
Among business and professional groups (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)	✓		
Among those working in specific, high-skilled occupations (e.g., business, law, medicine)	✓		
Among education or youth-related organizations (e.g., PTA, Youth Activities League)	✓		
In labor unions	✓		
In ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations	✓		
In service or fraternal organizations	✓		
Based on recommendations from current officeholders	✓		
Based on recommendations from financial donors	✓		
Based on recommendations from people in party members' personal networks	✓		
By posting ads, or sending mass e-mails or mailings	✓		
Using voter lists	✓		

# An Alternative Explanation

- Party leaders aren't looking in the right places
  - Where party leaders look for candidates is weakly associated with the number of working-class candidates they say they recruit.
  - What party leaders think of workers is **strongly** associated with the number of working-class candidates they say they recruit.

# Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

- NCS 2012: Do working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers? **Yes**
- NSPL 2013: Are party leaders less likely to encourage working-class candidates to run for office?

# Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

- NCS 2012: Do working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers? **Yes**
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# Implications

- Political gatekeepers are partly responsible for the shortage of working-class Americans in political office.

# My (Behavioral) Explanation

## Qualified working-class Americans

- are less likely to have the personal **resources** needed to run for office (e.g., time and money)
- are less likely to **want** to run for office (e.g., interest and efficacy)
- are less likely to be **encouraged** to run for office (e.g., gatekeeping)

# Implications?

- Political gatekeepers are partly responsible for the shortage of working-class Americans in political office.
  - Squares with research on other historically under-represented groups.
- Political scientists should probably be paying more attention to gatekeeping in general.
- Reformers are probably on the right track.





# New Jersey State AFL-CIO

*The Voice of Working Families in the Garden State*



[Political Education \(COPE\)](#)

[Legislation](#)

[E-Activist Network](#)

[Form a Union](#)

[Re](#)

## Political Education (COPE)

[Labor 2012 Toolkit](#)

[Voter Registration Toolkit](#)

[COPE News](#)

[Voter Resources](#)

[Labor Candidates Program](#)

[Labor Candidates Resolution](#)

[Become a Labor Candidate](#)

[Become an E-Activist](#)

[Customizable Flyer Form](#)

[Volunteer Opportunities](#)

[Important Election Dates](#)

## When Union Members Run, Working Families Win!

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE) ensures that the voice of New Jersey's working families is heard in the political arena. Our WORKER/VOTER program sponsors worksite voter registration for union members throughout the year. When elections approach we organize "LABOR WALKS" in which thousands of union member volunteers walk the state's election precincts and join with local union affiliates at their workplaces, informing our union sisters and brothers about candidates' positions on working family issues. And on Election Day we mobilize thousands of volunteers to Get-Out-The-Vote.

No one can represent working families and their unions better than working people themselves. That's why the New Jersey State AFL-CIO sponsors an ongoing program to recruit, train, mentor, and support union sisters and brothers running for elected office. Through the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Candidates School, union members gain the skills they need to succeed in the political arena. New Jersey voters have elected union members to public office **692 times** since 1997! These working men and women have a proven track record of placing the interests of working families first.

Now, for the first time in New Jersey history, union members serve in powerful leadership positions of both houses of the New Jersey State Legislature. Senator Steve Sweeney (Ironworkers 399) is the Senate President, Assemblyman Joe Egan (IBEW 456) is a Deputy Majority Leader and the Chairman of the Labor Committee, Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (IUOE 68) is a Deputy Majority Leader and the Vice Chairman of the Regulated Professions Committee, Assemblyman Nelson Albano (UFCW 152) is the Vice Chairman of both the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and the Law and Public Safety Committee, Assemblyman Paul Moriarty (AFTRA) is the Vice Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Committee, Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo (IBEW 269) is the Vice Chairman of the Telecommunications and Utilities Committee, and Assemblyman John Amodeo (IUOE 825) serves on the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and the Transportation, Public Works and Independent Authorities Committee. As a result of labor's successful program to recruit, train, mentor, and support union members' election campaign efforts, labor's success in the legislative arena has grown substantially and many statewide pro-worker policies and laws have been implemented including:

## E-Activist

[Join the New Jersey State AFL-CIO E-Activist Network](#)

[Tell a Friend](#)



## Upcoming Events

- [All Events](#)

## Annual Events

**Election Day**  
November 6, 2012





## **Campaign Bootcamp**

**Nevada State AFL-CIO**

**September 20, 2013 – September 21, 2013**

**SENATE DISTRICT 8 SCENARIO**





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## Welcome!



# Future Work

- Candidates and party leaders report that gatekeepers do less to encourage workers.
  - We still need to hear from qualified citizens (2014 National Survey of Qualified Citizens)
  - We still need to measure the effect of gatekeeping (sample of 2013 NSPL; local election field experiments)
- We still need to study the role of resources and aspirations (and how those interact w/ gatekeeping).

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- Once we understand the individual-level causes, we need to step back and study the structural forces behind them.

% of State Leg. from the Working Class

10  
8  
6  
4  
2  
0

0

10

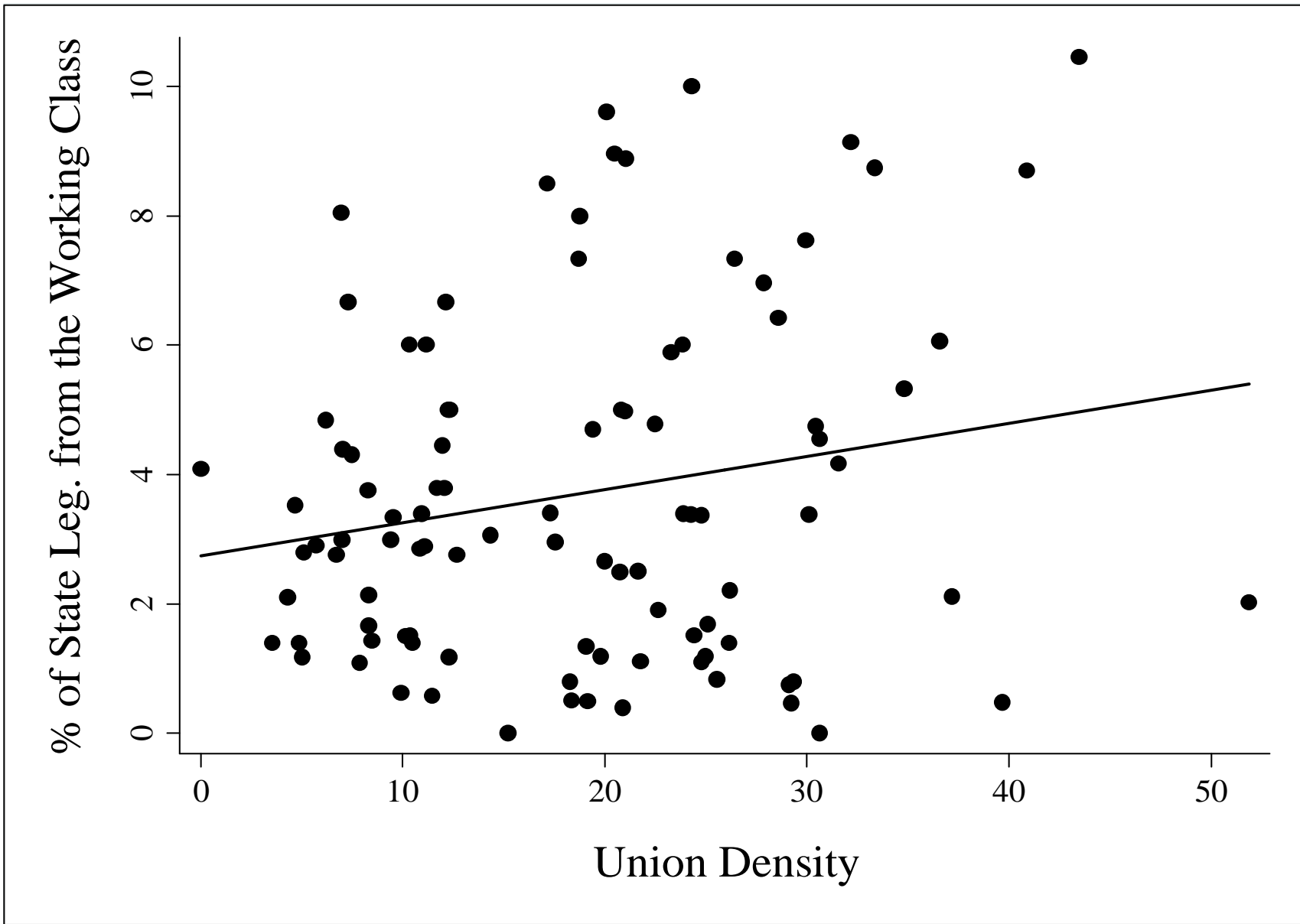
20

30

40

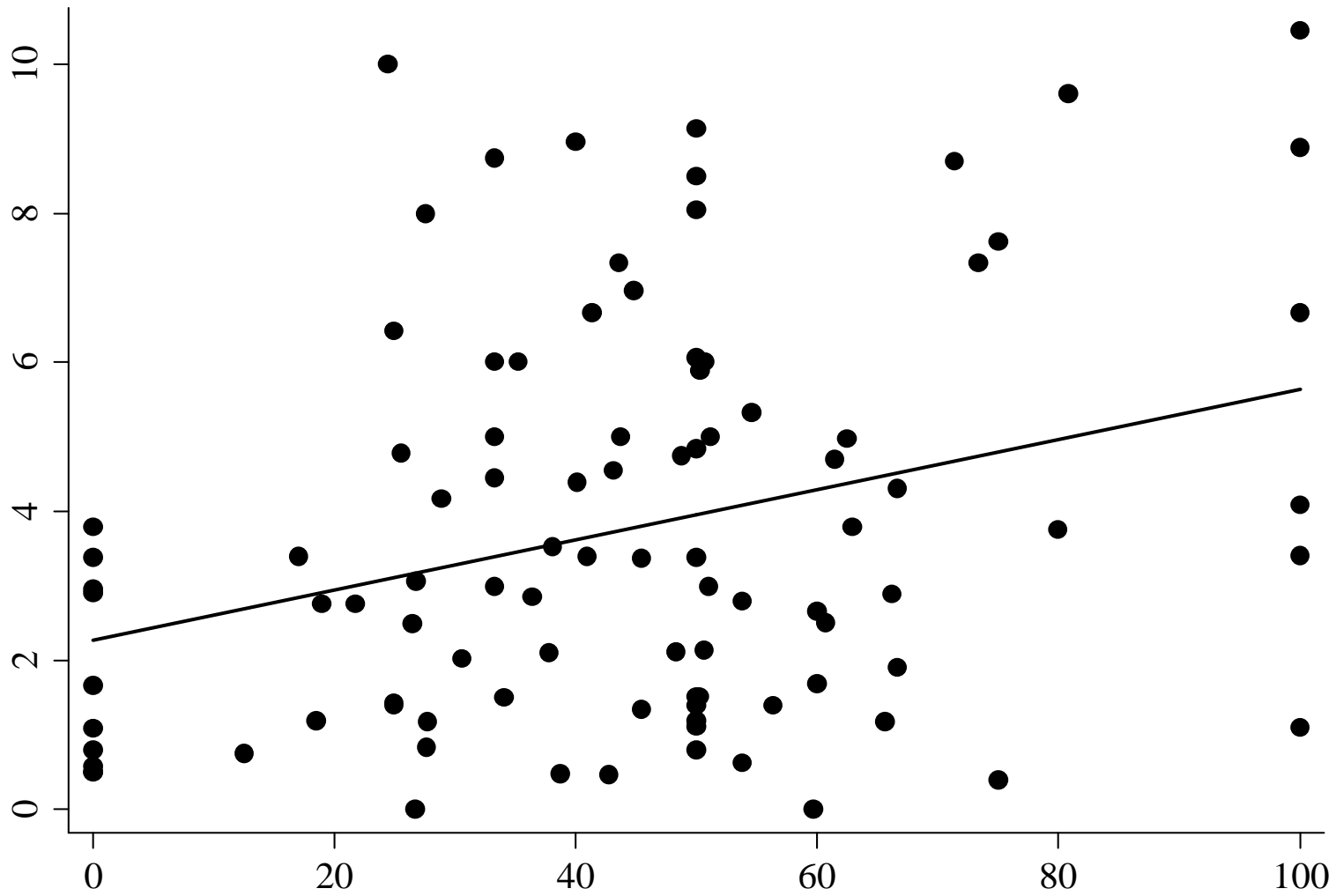
50

Union Density





% of State Leg. from the Working Class



% of Campaign / Party Staff from the Working Class

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- Once we understand the individual-level causes, we need to step back and study the structural forces behind them.
- **We need to start turning this research into action.**

BY THE UPPER CLASS, FOR THE UPPER CLASS?  
REPRESENTATIONAL INEQUALITY AND ECONOMIC POLICYMAKING IN  
THE UNITED STATES

Nicholas Carnes

A DISSERTATION  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICS

Adviser: Christopher H. Achen

September 2011



I'll only be voting for white-collar candidates.