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

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

I didn’t have any other choice.
Why aren’t these on the ballot?
Percent from Working-class Jobs

Citizens
City Council Members
State Legislators
Congress Members
Supreme Court Justices
Presidents (postwar)
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members
- State Legislators
- Congress Members
- Supreme Court Justices
- Presidents (postwar)

Current Job: 54% from working-class jobs
Last Non-political Job:
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%

Current Job vs. Last Non-political Job

- Presidents (postwar)
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%
- State Legislators: 4%
- Congress Members: 0%
- Supreme Court Justices: 0%
- Presidents (postwar): 0%
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%
- State Legislators: 4%
- Congress Members: 2%
- Supreme Court Justices: 0%
- Presidents (postwar): 0%

Current Job

Last Non-political Job
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%
- State Legislators: 4%
- Congress Members: 2%
- Supreme Court Justices: 0%
- Presidents (postwar): 0%
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
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The Makeup of Congress

![Graph showing the percentage of workers in Congress over time from 1901 to 1991.](image-url)
The Makeup of Congress

- Women
- Racial Minorities
- Workers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Women</th>
<th>Percentage of Working Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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-Remsburg 2013; Kraus & Callaghan 2014)
Legislation of the Effort to the Establishment

Noblesse Oblige, Maintenance and

Michael W. Kraus*, Benjamin Nee, Claudia Angell

Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract

We relate legislation of the effort to the establishment of the noblesse obligation to the maintenance of the noblesse obligation. The noblesse obligation is a social norm that requires the wealthy to support the less fortunate. We argue that the noblesse obligation is maintained through the legislative process. We present evidence that legislative efforts to maintain the noblesse obligation are effective.

Keywords: Legislation, Noblesse Oblige, Maintenance, Wealth, Politics

Introduction

The noblesse obligation is a social norm that requires the wealthy to support the less fortunate. The noblesse obligation is maintained through the legislative process. We present evidence that legislative efforts to maintain the noblesse obligation are effective.

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WHITE-COLLAR GOVERNMENT

THE HIDDEN ROLE OF CLASS IN ECONOMIC POLICY MAKING

NICHOLAS CARNES
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-Remsburg 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; Sanbononomatsu 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

Run

W
A Social Group

→ Qualified

→ Run

→ W

Qualification Stage

Candidate Entry Stage

Election Stage
A Social Group → Qualified → Run → W

Qualification Stage → Candidate Entry Stage → Election Stage

(Carnes 2013, ch. 6) → (Carnes 2013, ch. 6, Sadin 2013)
Why don’t qualified workers run for office?

Candidate Entry Stage

Qualified

Run

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

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 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
Christopher Skovron
University of Michigan
Principal Investigators

David Broockman
University of California, Berkeley
Melody Crowder-Meyer
Sewanee: The University of the South

2013 National Survey of Party Leaders

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David Broockman
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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?
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?
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?)
Why don’t qualified workers run for office?

Cost of campaigning
Decline of unions
Lack of role models
Structure of elections
Strategies of parties
Etc. . . .
Are we sure the action’s not happening over here?

Why don’t qualified workers run for office?

Candidate Entry Stage

Election 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)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encouraged me to run for the first time</th>
<th>Discouraged me from running for the first time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National leaders in my political party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State leaders in my political party</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County or local leaders in my political party</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting politicians</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other local community leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National interest or community groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local interest or community groups</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A formal candidate training program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of my family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of the media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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?

![Graph showing the proportion encouraged to run by journalists by different worker types.]

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.
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

- Service-based Professional
- Lawyer
- Business Employee
- Technical Professional
- Worker
- Military / Law Enforcement
- Politician / Staff
- Business Owner / Executive
- Farm Owner / Manager
Proportion who Didn't Worry about Job/$

- Military / Law Enforcement
- Politician / Staff
- Worker
- Service-based Professional
- Business Owner / Executive
- Technical Professional
- Farm Owner / Manager
- Business Employee
- Lawyer
Proportion who Didn't Worry about Time

- Worker
- Politician / Staff
- Business Employee
- Farm Owner / Manager
- Technical Professional
- Business Owner / Executive
- Military / Law Enforcement
- Service-based Professional
- Lawyer
Working-class candidates receive less encouragement from gatekeepers.
Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

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Two Perspectives on Gatekeeping

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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 hink candidates from *working-class jobs* (e.g., factory workers, restaurant servers, receptionists) tend to be...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More</th>
<th>The same</th>
<th>Less</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualified to hold office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to convince to run</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferred by voters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at fundraising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at campaigning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Party leaders see workers as bad candidates.

- Qualified
- Easy to convince
- Good at fundraising
- Good at campaigning
- Preferred by voters

Options: Less, The same, More
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)

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

- NSPL 2013: Are party leaders less likely to encourage working-class candidates to run for office? **Yes**
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.
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:
Campaign Bootcamp

Nevada State AFL-CIO
September 20, 2013 – September 21, 2013
SENATE DISTRICT 8 SCENARIO
Welcome!

![Image of group of people with certificates]
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).
My (Behavioral) Explanation

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- Once we understand the individual-level causes, we need to step back and study the structural forces behind them.
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- We still need to study the role of resources and aspirations (and how those interact with gatekeeping).
- 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.