

The Amateur Advantage: Understanding the Rise of Inexperience in Congress & Congressional Elections

Book Prospectus

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After Elizabeth Esty (D-CT) announced she would not seek reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018, two women emerged to run in the Democratic primary for Connecticut’s 5th hoping to replace her as the district’s next representative. Mary Glassman had the kind of political pedigree one would expect from a competitive office-seeker. Glassman had served eight terms as the first selectman for Simsbury, CT and, during her tenure, the town was named one of the “Top 100 Best Places to Live in America” for three consecutive years (Stoller 2015). Glassman built her campaign narrative around her political background, telling voters that: “We need someone who is ready to work for the people of the district on the first day. We need a candidate with experience, a proven track record of winning...I am that candidate” (Pazniokas 2018). Having prior elected experience also meant that Glassman had ready access to a campaign infrastructure and a long list of potential donors to call on the moment she jumped into the race to replace Esty. These kinds of political connections allowed Glassman to raise an impressive \$100,000 within her campaign’s first thirty days. In contrast, Jahana Hayes had never held nor run for a seat in public office before throwing her hat in the ring for the Democratic nomination in Connecticut’s 5th. Hayes had a notable record as an educator—she was recognized as the “National Teacher of the Year” in 2016—but she lacked Glassman’s political bonafides. Yet, rather than treating her inexperience as a weakness, Hayes made her newcomer status a cornerstone of her campaign; she implored voters to consider the perspective she would bring to office as a Black woman, additionally noting her background as a teenage mother and someone who had experienced homelessness. Hayes went as far as to tell voters: “My greatest gift to you is my lack of political experience because when I go to Washington I will work for you and for no one else” (Ryser 2018).

Theories of congressional candidate success would point to Mary Glassman as the likely primary election victor over Jahana Hayes. Past literature demonstrates that there are significant electoral benefits to having previously held elected office and these benefits help experienced politicians to outperform candidates with no prior elected experience (e.g., Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Jacobson 1989; Carson, Engstrom and Roberts 2007). Connecticut’s Democratic Party similarly saw value in Glassman’s elective background and gave her its backing over Hayes during the state’s endorsement convention.¹ Even though Hayes lost out on her party’s endorsement and was

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¹In Connecticut, prior to the primary, the parties hold endorsement conventions where delegates cast votes for

billed by many as a long shot, she continued to vigorously campaign leading up to the primary—and these efforts paid off. Just two months after the endorsement convention Hayes had raised \$461,000 compared to Glassman’s \$457,000. On August 14th, Jahana Hayes defied expectations and defeated Mary Glassman to become the Democratic nominee for Connecticut’s 5th by a vote margin of 62 to 38 percent. Hayes went on to win the general election against Republican nominee and former Meridian mayor Manny Santos, making her the first Black Democratic House member elected from Connecticut.

Jahana Hayes’ election to Congress is notable, not only because she lacked elected experience, but because she won her seat by defeating opponents who possessed elected experience in both the primary *and* general election. Although Hayes’ victory could be dismissed as an anomaly, this upset represents a broader shift in the relationship between political experience and success in congressional elections. From the 1980s to the mid-2010s, three-quarters of newly elected members to the U.S. House of Representatives had previous elected experience; in contrast, just *half* of freshmen elected from 2016 to 2020 held prior office. Our book broadly examines this shift in the dynamics of electoral success among candidates who lack prior office-holding experience—who we refer to as “amateur” candidates.

Why have amateurs become more successful in congressional elections recently, and what are the implications for legislative politics and American democracy? We present two answers to this question. First, we demonstrate a democratization of campaign resources in modern elections; this shift has equalized the fundraising “edge” that experienced candidates have traditionally held over their amateur counterparts. Second, we show that particular kinds of candidate characteristics and identities have become strong predictors for success in modern elections. Importantly, we demonstrate that these electorally advantageous identities primarily belong to candidates who lack an elected background. In the latter part of our book, we look beyond campaigns to examine the representational and legislative consequences of electing more political neophytes to Congress. We examine how amateur politicians who are elected to the U.S. House behave once they enter the chamber and demonstrate that there are representational trade-offs associated with a more inexperienced legislature.

Background

Scholars have long known incumbency to be the number one predictor of candidate success (e.g., Erikson 1971; Mayhew 1974; Jacobson 2015). For the last two decades, incumbent reelection rates have exceeded 90% in nearly every election. Recognizing this, a voluminous literature has developed to measure and understand the reasons for the incumbency advantage (Erikson 1971; Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Carson, Engstrom and Roberts 2007; Jacobson 2015).

Candidates with past elective experience have traditionally enjoyed some of the same benefits that contribute to the incumbency advantage. Running a successful campaign for Congress often necessitates hiring pollsters, purchasing advertisements, and holding campaign events—all of which require money. Indeed, existing work consistently shows that candidate fundraising levels are highly predictive of future electoral victory (e.g., Biersack, Herrnson and Wilcox 1993; Bonica 2017). Among non-incumbents, candidates with previous elected experience have been identified as especially strong fundraisers. This fundraising acumen stems, in part, from experi-

candidates. The candidate gaining the most support is given the party endorsement. The endorsed candidate earns the first spot on the ballot and a special designation to signal that they are the party-backed candidate.

enced candidates' access to established campaign infrastructure, pre-existing networks of potential donors, and party connections (Squire and Wright 1990; Herrnson 1992; Berkman and Eisenstein 1999). Existing research also finds that voters prefer candidates who possess traits like honesty, integrity, experience, and competence (e.g., Mondak 1995; Fridkin and Kenney 2011; Buttice and Stone 2012). Past political experience has long been regarded as a rational heuristic used by voters to simplify the task of identifying candidates who might possess these kinds of desirable traits (Fiorina 1981; Funk 1997; Hirano and Snyder Jr. 2019).

Given these advantages, experienced candidates have historically been seen as more electorally viable than their inexperienced counterparts and, therefore, have enjoyed overwhelming success in elections. As a consequence, researchers regularly employ prior office-holding experience as a key variable for identifying high-quality, viable candidates among the thousands of competitors who run for Congress each election cycle. There is reason to believe, though, that the relationship between political experience and success may be changing. We demonstrate that amateurs today are more often besting experienced candidates to win seats in Congress, calling into question whether a career in politics presents a significant electoral advantage.

Key Contributions

Our research makes several important contributions to the study of congressional elections and the resulting implications for democratic politics. We offer a reconsideration of long-held theories regarding candidate success. Although it remains the case that incumbents and experienced candidates perform well in elections, inexperienced candidates are being elected to Congress today at rates not seen since the widespread adoption of primaries in the mid-20th century. Prior office-holding is no longer the reliable metric for candidate viability that it once was—with increased frequency, amateurs are mounting credible and successful campaigns. This finding represents a major departure from long-held perceptions about the value of elective experience, and has important implications for research on candidate viability in modern elections.

Our book's theoretical framework focuses on several meaningful changes that have made the environment of U.S. elections more favorable to amateur politicians. First, we argue that resources vital for mounting a serious, strategic congressional campaign are now more obtainable for inexperienced candidates. This open money environment means that being the “party's candidate”—typically an incumbent or candidate with elective experience—no longer carries with it a monopoly over competitive financial resources. In today's digital age, social media provides an alternate means for candidates to engage with potential donors. Furthermore, candidate can easily connect with a national donor base using online fundraising platforms like WinRed and ActBlue. Candidates today can more aptly mount a grassroots campaign effort and need not rely on traditional modes of political communication to make themselves known to voters and donors.

Second, we argue that the recent rise of identity politics in U.S. elections has broadened the scope of valence characteristics that resonate with voters. Past political experience is now only one of many heuristics that voters may use to identify candidates who possess desirable traits and qualities (e.g., McDermott 2009; Grossmann and Hopkins 2016; Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson 2019). In tandem with the rise of identity politics, the number of marginal congressional districts—where both parties have a competitive shot at winning the general election—has dwindled. The vast majority of congressional districts today are safely partisan; in these races, winning the primary may be a candidate's only major obstacle to attaining office. Identity-based voting cues are

especially relevant in primary elections—an electoral context where partisanship is held constant (Kirkland and Coppock 2018). Although a variety of identities may present electoral value to candidates in modern elections, we posit that amateurs most benefit when the identities they possess are (1) highly salient to same-party voters and (2) absent among candidates with an elected background. Among Republicans, we show that political “outsiders” who possess no connections to politics—elected or otherwise—make up close to a majority of newly elected Republican members of Congress (MCs). Among Democrats, we find that female and non-white candidates have been especially successful in recent elections. Importantly, the vast majority of Democrats running in elections today lack elected experience.

Finally, our manuscript evaluates the repercussions of having more political neophytes in Congress. Having new voices in government is important, especially if these perspectives belong to people from groups underrepresented in lawmaking. These new voices could help increase representational diversity in a chamber that skews heavily towards white men and career politicians. On the other hand, the influx of candidates who lack legislative experience may be concerning for the institution as a whole. Existing work shows that politicians with previous legislative experience are especially effective at navigating Congress’s complex policymaking environment (e.g., Volden and Wiseman 2014). By the same token, amateur politicians may be especially *ineffective* lawmakers because they lack institutional knowledge and political acumen. Evaluating the behavior of newly elected, amateur lawmakers in Congress, we find that these politicians are more apt to engage in representational activities with ties to their salient political identities than are experienced legislators. We go on to assess the legislative effectiveness of inexperienced representatives by examining their staff hiring patterns, rates of bill introduction, committee service, and ability to generate earmarks for their district. We find that, across multiple dimensions, political neophytes are less effective legislators.

To evaluate electoral dynamics across time, we systematically compiled data on the political backgrounds, personal characteristics, and campaign fundraising for candidates who ran for the U.S. House of Representatives between 1980 to 2020. First, we collected information on the past elected experience for all candidates who appeared on the ballot in a primary or general election for the House of Representatives between 1980 to 2020 (N=31,106). Information about each candidate’s prior elected experience was manually coded from newspaper archives, the Google News aggregator, official government biographies, online obituaries, social media profiles, and candidates’ campaign websites. We successfully identified the elected backgrounds for over 90% of all candidates present in our data. Additionally, we manually linked fundraising profiles with collected biographical information for each of the 31,000 candidates present in our data. Second, we compiled complete political and professional histories on all newly elected MCs from 1980 to 2020 (N=1,326). This data collection effort allows us to evaluate the kinds of political positions—elected or otherwise—that newly elected MCs held prior to their election to Congress. To collect these political histories, we relied on member biographies provided by the Office of the Historian for the U.S. of Representatives, personal profiles from the media, and other biographical summaries (e.g. obituaries). We plan to release our comprehensive data on candidates and members as open-source materials upon our book’s publication.

Review of the Market

Our work updates the discipline's long-held understanding of the relationship between elected experience and success in U.S. congressional elections, as established by seminal works that have collectively garnered thousands of citations since publication (e.g., Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Jacobson 1989; Canon 1990, 1993). We go on to identify changes in the environment of congressional elections that are facilitating amateurs' rising success, namely the democratization of campaign resources and the recent rise of identity politics. In this way, our book builds on recent work documenting the importance of money in U.S. elections (e.g., Thomsen 2022; Bonica 2020). It additionally contributes to a burgeoning literature documenting the rise of anti-establishment sentiment among voters in the United States and abroad (e.g., Carreras 2012; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2018; Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson 2019; Uscinski et al. 2021). Finally, our book interacts with a long line of literature assessing the electoral viability of candidates from underrepresented populations (e.g., Fox and Lawless 2004; Dolan 2018).

Audience

The aim is to produce a clear, comprehensive, and original analysis of the relationship between inexperience, electoral success, and congressional behavior. The manuscript is designed for the field of political science but will find relevance in communications, economics, sociology, and psychology as well. It will be of interest to colleagues and graduate students, but will also be accessible to a wider readership of undergraduates, journalists, and practitioners. The main target readership will be in the U.S., although the thematic approach will raise relevant questions for the broad study of legislatures and representation in the international market. This book will be of interest to a number of different organized sections of the American Political Science Association: Legislative Studies, Representation and Electoral Systems, Political Communication, and Political Organizations and Parties. The book will provide a secondary text for graduate and undergraduate courses about legislatures, elections, and political parties, among others.

Several theoretical and empirical components of this book manuscript are forthcoming in *The American Journal of Political Science*, underscoring the importance of this line of research. However, the contents of our book manuscript go far beyond those topics covered in this article. Our *AJPS* piece primarily focuses on describing *what* has changed about the relationship between elective experience and success in congressional elections; our book unpacks *why* these changes have occurred. Importantly, our book also explores the downstream consequences of today's observed shift towards amateurism in elections by evaluating the quality of representation and policymaking afforded by amateur lawmakers. These elements make our book a valuable contribution and essential read for audiences independent of other published materials.

Chapter Synopsis

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the motivation for our book. We begin the chapter with a motivating example, documenting the 2018 primary election success of amateur politician Jahana Hayes over experienced officeholder Elizabeth Etsy. We explain that theories of congressional candidate success would predict Etsy to easily best Hayes. This is because experienced candidates benefit from

a variety of electoral advantages, including established fundraising networks and a reputation in public service. Experienced candidates also tend to be especially strategic in their emergence decisions, running most often in open seats. Taken together, these components explain why prior officeholders account for the vast majority of new members elected to Congress each year.

After providing an overview of the “experience” advantage, we go on to outline extant expectations about amateurism in congressional elections. This review of existing research can be summarized with the following takeaways: (1) amateurism places candidates at a significant electoral disadvantage in congressional races, and (2) because of this, amateur candidates most often win office due to exceptional circumstances. We then introduce recent trends in amateur success, specifically the rising number of amateur candidates winning U.S. House elections and the growing proportion of amateur lawmakers comprising the U.S. House of Representatives. This sets forth our primary research questions: why have amateur candidates become more successful in congressional elections recently, and what are the implications for legislative politics? We go on to introduce our theory regarding political amateurism in politics today. We argue that inexperienced candidates are more successful in modern elections because they have access to the kinds of electoral resources and benefits that are critical to mounting a serious campaign. We conclude this chapter by discussing our methodological approach and summarizing subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Reexamining Candidate Experience and Success

Chapter 2 begins by exploring emergence- and success-driven explanations for amateur candidates’ recent successes in congressional elections. We first ask whether amateurs today are seeing greater success at reaching Congress because experienced candidates are running less often. We find no evidence, though, of such a relationship: experienced candidates’ emergence patterns have not significantly changed since the 1980s. This means that experienced candidates are winning seats in Congress by besting their more experienced competition. We go on to descriptively evaluate the kinds of electoral contexts where amateurs are winning more often today than in the past. We find that amateurs today are winning seats in safely partisan districts by defeating incumbents and experienced competitors in primary elections. As a final analysis, we employ a regression discontinuity design to isolate the effect of nominating an amateur over an experienced candidate on a party’s general election performance. This approach allows us to assess whether political amateurism is still an electoral disadvantage in modern congressional races. We find no evidence that political amateurs today perform worse in general elections relative to narrowly nominated experienced candidates from the same party.

We conclude the chapter by putting forward our theory to explain why inexperienced candidates are now more often beating experienced candidates and incumbents in primaries. We argue that amateurs today more often possess the kinds of electoral benefits that have historically advantaged previous officeholders. First, the democratization of campaign resources has made it easier for candidates to fundraise in the absence of party or political connections. The explosion of digital media, small-dollar donor platforms, and outside spending have all reduced barriers to fundraising for amateur candidates. Second, the rise of identity politics in U.S. elections has broadened the scope of valence characteristics that offer candidates electoral value to extend beyond past elective experience. Among Republicans, we expect candidates who are ideologically-extreme and/or lack a political background (i.e. not a career politician) to perform more favorably. Among Democrats, we expect female candidates and candidates of color to perform more favorably. We

argue that these identities and candidate characteristics align with social groups and ideological values that have become foundational to each party’s identity (e.g., Grossmann and Hopkins 2016; Mason 2018; Porter, Treul and McDonald Forthcoming). Importantly, we also posit that these newly salient identities disproportionately belong to amateurs, narrowing the gap between them and experienced candidates.

Chapter 3: The Fundraising Environment

In this chapter, we empirically demonstrate that amateur candidates are now more often competitive fundraisers in congressional elections. We begin by estimating a regression model that assesses the relationship between fundraising and success in primary elections. We demonstrate that strong fundraisers have a greater probability of winning their elections. We then examine time trends in fundraising among experienced and amateur candidates. We go on to show that (1) amateurs now compose the majority of top fundraisers in elections, and (2) a greater number of amateurs today meet or exceed the fundraising potential of experienced candidates.

Why are amateurs better at fundraising today than in the past? We argue that amateurs benefit from today’s online campaign environment. It was once the case that being a strong fundraiser required extensive personal networks, such as those acquired by long-time politicians (Herrnson 1992; Bonica 2017). Today, though, candidates can easily connect with potential donors from all around the country online, and these donors can easily give to candidates using online fundraising platforms like WinRed and ActBlue. We posit that experienced candidates today still disproportionately rely on their local networks (i.e., “friends, family, and familiars”) to fundraise. Conversely, we expect that amateur candidates employ a “nationalized” fundraising strategy.

Across a series of analyses, we show that amateurs garner a majority of their campaign contributions from individual donors who hail from *outside* their own congressional district while experienced candidates garner more individual donations from *inside* their district. We find that experienced candidates’ reliance on in-district donors is especially pronounced at the start of the campaign. Amateurs, on the other hand, still get their early fundraising from outside the district. As further evidence of this in/out-of-district fundraising dynamic, we look to patterns in small-dollar giving donated through the platforms WinRed and ActBlue in 2020.²

To explain why amateurs are successful at fundraising nationally, we rely on several illustrative case studies. These examples document amateurs who targeted out-of-district donors in their fundraising campaigns through social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) and endorsement networks (e.g., Our Revolution and Club for Growth). We also tie back to our introductory story from Chapter 1 on Jahana Hayes, who relied heavily on out-of-district donors.

Chapter 4: The Appeal of Identity Politics

In this chapter, we explore the kinds of valence characteristics and identities that advantage candidates in today’s elections. We expect Republican candidates who are ideologically-extreme and/or lack a political background to perform more favorably in open seat primaries. Among Democrats, we expect female candidates and candidates of color to perform more favorably in

²Small dollar donations are not required to be reported as itemized donations by individual candidates, only conduit committees like WinRed and ActBlue. We constrain our analysis to 2020 because, before this election, the Republican Party did not have a small dollar giving platform. WinRed was first launched in 2019.

primaries. We also expect that these identities disproportionately belong to amateurs, helping to account for these kinds of candidates' disproportionate success in recent elections.

To test our theory, we begin by estimating a series of regressions that examine the relationship between candidate descriptive characteristics and the probability of winning an open seat primary. Among Republicans, we find that past elective experience no longer has a statistical relationship with primary election victory. Using data on the complete political and professional histories of newly elected members of Congress, we go on to show that a near-majority of freshmen Republicans today lack any political experience—elected or otherwise. We find no relationship, however, between a Republican candidate's ideological extremity and their probability of winning the primary. Among Democrats, we find that in recent elections female candidates and candidates of color have become statistically significantly more likely to win their primary than their male and white counterparts. We demonstrate that female candidates and candidates of color running in elections today are less likely to possess elected experience than in the past. We also descriptively discuss the identity contrasts between amateurs and the incumbents whom they defeated in primaries. These include some notable examples of amateur candidate successes, such as David Brat's defeat of Eric Cantor in 2014 and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's defeat of Joseph Crowley in 2018. We find amateurs who "primaried" incumbents more often possessed the kinds of descriptive characteristics identified in our empirical analyses.

These findings underscore the important role that identity politics plays in congressional elections today. However, our preceding analyses do not explicitly link voter preferences for these identities to candidate success in elections. To better evaluate this relationship, we first examine the self-presentation strategies of congressional candidates. If candidates perceive that their identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, and lack of political experience) are desirable to voters, they should highlight these characteristics above other facets of their identities. To that end, we conduct a semi-supervised content analysis of biographical text collected from the campaign websites of U.S. House candidates who ran in 2018 and 2020. We find that candidates who possess the kinds of salient political identities identified above dedicate a greater proportion of their website biographical narratives to discussing these personal characteristics. Additionally, we are fielding a survey of 2024 congressional primary election voters to directly ask about voter preferences on candidate traits and characteristics. Our survey includes a vignette experiment where we ask respondents to rate their feelings towards a fictitious candidate after reading a brief biography. We randomly vary the fictitious candidate's gender for Democratic respondents and the fictitious candidate's past elected experience for Republican respondents. This design allows us to causally identify the effect that identity has on primary election voters' evaluations of candidates.

Chapter 5: Inexperienced Candidates and Representation in Congress

In Chapter 5 we turn the reader's attention to the behavior of amateur politicians *inside* of Congress. This chapter assesses the type of representation afforded to constituents who are represented by amateurs as compared to more experienced lawmakers. The first section focuses on the changing face of Congress, highlighting the increased diversity that amateurs have brought to the U.S. House in recent years. We expect amateurs to help diversify Congress because they have not advanced through the traditional political opportunity structure, which favors affluent white men. On the Democratic side, we show that amateur candidates tend to bring descriptive diversity, and on the Republican side, amateur candidates tend to bring a diversity of occupational experience.

Our descriptive analyses rely on the political and professional histories we collected on freshmen members, specifically examining differences in the descriptive diversity, educational attainment, wealth, and professional backgrounds (e.g., military, business owner, white-collar executive) of amateurs versus experienced politicians. These descriptive patterns are important in and of themselves, as one of the frequent criticisms of Congress is that it is not reflective of the American public. If amateurs are helping make Congress look more like the public, this, in and of itself, could be normatively positive.

We next compare the quality of substantive representation afforded by amateur and experienced politicians. We expect amateur members who were elected to Congress, in part, for their diverse identities to place a special focus on representing the collective interests of these same-identity groups. Similarly, members who know they rely heavily on out-of-district donors to get elected will place a greater emphasis on pleasing their national donor base (Canes-Wrone and Miller 2022). Because of this, we expect that amateurs will focus comparatively *less* of their time and resources on local constituency representation than will experienced politicians. To investigate this theory, we take a multi-pronged approach. First, we begin by analyzing staffing patterns to discern members' allocation of staff between their district and D.C. as well as their allocation of staff across job functions (e.g., constituency service vs. communications). In another set of analyses, we assess amateur and experienced politicians' relative interest and success at attaining direct benefits for their district via earmarks. In one specific test, we employ a structural topic model to evaluate the kinds of projects sponsored by various members, conditional on their descriptive identities and prior elected backgrounds. In a final analysis, we dig deeper into member legislative strategies to investigate whether amateurs propose bills on different topics than experienced candidates.

This chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of substantive representation versus descriptive representation. Our goal here is not to make normative claims about the value of one form of representation over another; instead, we seek to demonstrate the representational trade-offs associated with having more amateur lawmakers.

Chapter 6: Inexperienced Candidates and Legislating in Congress

This chapter continues our exploration of the downstream consequences associated with electing more inexperienced politicians to Congress, with a specific focus on legislating. Here we examine how inexperienced members compare to their experienced colleagues on metrics such as committee assignment, bill sponsorship, party unity, and legislative effectiveness. The data collected thus far suggest that candidates who come into the chamber without prior elected experience begin their congressional careers at a legislative disadvantage as compared to their more experienced colleagues; they do not sponsor as many bills, nor do they meet expectations when it comes to legislative effectiveness. This suggests that amateurs are at a legislative disadvantage when they enter Congress because they lack institutional knowledge; differences are particularly stark between those members who enter the chamber having served in a legislature previously (i.e., state legislators) and those who never have. Amateurs do, however, have similar initial committee assignments to their experienced counterparts, but we also find that in their second Congress, assuming they run for reelection, amateurs lag significantly in committee placement. We expect this is indicative of amateur candidates failing to behave in ways that make them appealing to the party for plum committee assignments. The chapter concludes by noting that our ability to make broad conclusions on amateurs' legislative performance is constrained by our time series. Because ama-

teur successes are recent, and the types of amateurs elected today are different than in the past, we cannot assess their legislative behavior longitudinally. We caution that our results are suggestive but not conclusive with respect to the longer-term impacts of a more inexperienced legislature.

Chapter 7: Rethinking (In)Experience in Congressional Elections

This chapter concludes our book by summarizing our findings regarding inexperienced politicians in modern American politics, emphasizing two key takeaways. First, having an elected background is no longer the consistent predictor for electoral success that it once was. Indeed, we demonstrate that, in modern elections, inexperienced candidates are elected to Congress at rates similar to experienced candidates. Second, there are representational trade-offs associated with electing more political neophytes to Congress. Having new voices in government is important, especially if these perspectives belong to people from groups traditionally underrepresented in lawmaking. However, amateur politicians seem to be especially *ineffective* lawmakers, potentially because they lack the institutional knowledge possessed by their more experienced colleagues. We end the book by looking at the 2022 congressional election and demonstrate a marked decrease in the number of experienced candidates running for office. We also show that inexperienced freshmen drew a greater number of amateur primary challengers in 2022 than their experienced counterparts.

Current Progress and Timeline

Some of our theoretical framework in Chapter 2, and several of the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 are forthcoming in article form at *The American Journal of Political Science*. We currently have preliminary drafts of Chapters 1 through 5, and most of our empirical analyses for these chapters are complete. We are completing our data collection for analyses in Chapters 6 and 7. The final wave of the survey employed in Chapter 5 will be conducted in August. Therefore, we expect to have a complete manuscript ready for submission in Fall/Winter 2024.

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