

# Do Mayors Run for Higher Office? New Evidence on Progressive Ambition

Katherine Levine Einstein\*

David Glick†

Maxwell Palmer‡

Robert Pressel§

## Abstract

The mayor's office represents a theoretically excellent launchpad for higher office—especially for members of the Democratic Party, whose stable of potential candidates has been depleted in recent years by Republican dominance in state-level contests. We know relatively little, however, about the extent to which mayors run for higher office, as well as the type of mayors who choose to do so. This paper combines longitudinal data on the career paths of mayors of two hundred big cities with a novel survey of mayors to investigate these questions. While we find that mayors' individual and city traits—especially mayoral gender—have some predictive power, the overwhelming story is that a relatively low number of mayors—just under one-fifth—seek higher office. We suggest that ideological, institutional, life-cycle, and electoral factors all help to explain why so few mayors exhibit progressive ambition.

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\* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Boston University. kleinst@bu.edu.

† Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Boston University. dmlick@bu.edu.

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Boston University. mbpalmer@bu.edu.

§ B.A./M.A. Boston University, Class of 2016. rpressel@mit.edu.

# 1 Introduction

In a *Time Magazine* profile of New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, Larry Sabato cited the centrality of his experience as a mayor to his progression to higher office: “When he inevitably runs for President, Booker will claim executive experience from Newark and national expertise via the Senate” (Netwon-Small 2013). Booker is not alone in thinking of local office as a first step in a national political career. Democratic presidential runner-up (and Vermont senator) Bernie Sanders and Democratic vice presidential nominee (and Virginia Senator) Tim Kaine similarly launched their political careers as mayors. Politicians exhibiting progressive ambition frequently start at local offices before moving to state and then national political careers (Black 1972; Kazee 1994; Prinz 1993; Rohde 1979; Schlesinger 1966; Lawless and Fox 2005; Stewart 2012). In their Citizen Political Ambition Survey, Fox and Lawless (2005) find that potential office-seekers are well aware of this “career ladder;” 70% select a local office as their prospective first race, with between 30 and 40% of respondents indicating that they *eventually* plan to run for higher office (pp. 649). As the highest salience executive in a city, the mayor’s office presumably would comprise an excellent stepping-stone to higher office.

Despite all of this potential, we know relatively little about whether mayors actually exhibit high rates of progressive ambition. Indeed, the bulk of previous research examines the career paths of state legislators by investigating the personal and structural factors that shape when and why they seek higher office (Maestas 2000, 2003; Maestas et al. 2006; Fulton et al. 2006). Much of this literature focuses specifically on decisions about when to run for Congress, rather than higher office more generally (Maestas 2000; Powell 2000; Tothero 2003; Steen 2006; Maisel and Stone 2014). Within the context of statehouses, this focus makes sense. State legislators are likely most apt to seek higher *legislative* positions. Nonetheless, by largely limiting its focus to state legislators (just one plausible local office) and focusing primarily on one particular higher office—U.S. congressional representative—this scholarship necessarily provides researchers with an incomplete picture of progressive ambition about local politicians—particularly on the executive side.

The current empirical evidence on *mayors'* career ambitions is limited and decidedly mixed. Gittell (1963) contends that mayors generally are unsuccessful in seeking election to higher offices, particularly when they attempt to campaign outside their home city. Murphy (1980), on the other hand, argues that mayors tend to perform at similar levels to those coming from other “stepping-stone” offices—particularly state legislators.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he contends that the mayoralty is frequently the culmination of a political career, a point supported by other research (McNitt 2010). While all of these studies represent informative starting points—and yield important insights into separate research questions—these studies almost exclusively focused on a narrow subset of the nation’s largest cities.<sup>2</sup> While case studies of these cities with unique powers (Judd and Swanstrom 2014) are common (Sonenshein 1993; Mollenkopf 1994; Kaufmann 2004), focusing on roughly twenty abnormal cities necessarily limits the power to make generalizable insights into the mayoralty as a potential launchpad into higher office.

What’s more, these studies have largely eschewed questions about the *types* of mayors who seek higher office. We thus have little evidence on whether issues like race, gender, partisan context, and city institutional features shape mayors’ propensity to run for higher office. These questions have been the subject of a wide strand of scholarship on progressive ambition in other arenas (Fox and Lawless 2005; Lawless 2012).

This relative lack of information about mayoral ambition has potentially important representative and policy implications. In particular, there is strong evidence that ambitious politicians behave differently than their counterparts without aspirations for higher office. At the local level, Leroux and Pandey (2014) find that ambitious city leaders are more likely to use interlocal service delivery to enhance policy efficiency. State legislators with progressive ambition are more likely to monitor constituents’ opinions (Maestas 2003) and more professionalized state legislatures yield more representative policy outcomes in part because of the opportunities they afford for career progression (Maestas 2000).

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<sup>1</sup>Bledsoe’s (1993) study of city councillors, however, reveals that state legislative seats tended to be better routes for career advancement than the mayoralty.

<sup>2</sup>For example, although McNitt’s (2010) data includes 848 mayors, he only studies 19 “major American cities” longitudinally.

One practical implication of omitting mayors from studies of candidate entry for national office is the risk of overlooking a potential “bench” of liberal and/or minority candidates who are strongly represented in local government and hold a paucity of state level positions (Hertel-Fernandez and Skocpol 2016). In the most recent national election, former mayors Corey Booker, Julian Castro, and John Hickenlooper were reputed to be on Democratic presidential nominee Hilary Clinton’s vice presidential short-list. Three of the five spots in the first of the 2016 Democratic primary presidential debates were filled by former mayors (Bernie Sanders, Martin O’Malley, and Lincoln Chafee). Among other things, this paper asks whether these former mayors’ presence in national politics is the rule or a handful of salient exceptions to it.

To assess whether and what kinds of mayors do, in fact, pursue higher office, we collected different two data sets. The first is a comprehensive data set of the career trajectories of all mayors of cities over 150,000 people since 1992. In addition, we gathered similar data on the mayors of state capitals and states’ largest cities that were not already included in the population survey. These data provide rich and unprecedented access into the political ambitions of mayors, and encompass a broader range of cities than previously explored. Moreover, consistent with a growing body of scholarship (Gaddie 2004; Fox and Lawless 2005), we look at ambition prospectively, rather than retrospectively exploring the career paths of state legislators, members of Congress, governors, or presidents. We couple these historical data with a nationally representative survey of over 90 mayors of cities over 75,000 people—including many of the nation’s largest cities—that explores, among other issues, mayoral career ambition. This data set offers unprecedented access into the self-reported political ambitions of *elected officials* at the local level. Qualitative comments from the surveys help us elucidate proposed theoretical mechanism outlined in the next section.

Our data reveal that a strikingly low percentage of medium to big city mayors—less than one-fifth—seek higher office. In other words, the former mayors who played prominent roles in the 2016 election are outliers. Mayors disproportionately end their political careers without pursuing and/or filling higher offices. Using qualitative and quantitative data from our survey, we find evidence in support of a variety of mechanisms that might help to explain these results, including an

interest in working on urban issues, a dislike of partisanship, fundraising, and frequent campaigning, geographic/family preferences for staying put, and, a preference for executive positions and a corresponding distaste for legislative positions—particularly the U.S. House of Representatives. Interestingly, we also find some variation in which mayors are interested in running: most notably, we find evidence of a gender gap in which female mayors are less interested in pursuing higher office. Mayoral race, city racial context, city population, and city institutional features all also appear to have some limited predictive power in our historical data.

## **2 When Do Mayors Run?**

A wide body of scholarship on progressive ambition suggests that local offices generally are good starting points for higher office (Schlesinger 1966; Black 1972; Rohde 1979; Kazee 1994; Fox and Lawless 2005, 2010). In describing the electoral successes of former U.S. Senator Scott Brown, Stewart (2012) succinctly outlines why these offices provide effective political launchpads: “His success derived in part from his opportunity to hone his political skills through seeking election in a series of interlocking and ever-larger constituencies” (pp. 146). Holding local office—a relatively low-cost position to obtain—should create a natural constituency for an upwardly mobile politician and boost his or her sense of efficacy, an important driver of the decision to run for higher office (Fox and Lawless 2005). We should therefore expect at least some mayors to seek higher office.

On the other hand, there are reasons to expect mayoral positions to be different from other sub-national offices, and to therefore find a disproportionately small number of mayors pursuing higher office. We focus on four such reasons: 1) preferences for working on urban issues, 2) preferences for executive positions and/or distaste for the legislative process, 3) distaste for fundraising, partisanship, and frequent campaigning, and 4) geographic and family preferences for staying put. Obviously many politicians may share at least some of these preferences. Nevertheless, those who run for mayor and serve as mayor may have them more strongly and/or feel that other political offices are not worth pursuing.

It may be that for both ideological and institutional reasons, mayors' concerns and policy priorities are largely divorced from those pursued by elites in state and federal offices. Many mayors may genuinely love urban issues, and have little interest in national ones. In his work on party politics, Sorauf (1980) notes that the American urban machine is "provincially concerned with the city, and its politics are almost completely divorced from the issues that agitate our national politics" (pp. 70). Banfield and Wilson (1963) similarly contend that local parties rarely have a "concrete program or platform" (pp. 277). Issue passion is an important component of the decision to seek office (Wilson 1962; Canon 1990; Thomas 1990). If the issues motivating mayors are starkly different from those driving their counterparts in higher offices, then we may not observe high levels of progressive ambition among mayors.

Second, unlike state legislators, mayors would have to give up executive power and autonomy to join Congress. It may be that certain political leaders have natural inclinations for executive positions and others for legislative ones, or it may be that once one has executive power, it is hard to give up to be one of many in a potentially gridlocked legislature. This may be especially true in the case of the House of Representatives

Third, in many cases, running for higher office would require mayors to engage in significantly more fundraising, campaigning, and partisanship than their current positions do. The House of Representatives in particular is hyper-partisan, and requires constant campaigning and fundraising (Hall 2016). In many cases, local elections are less frequent, contentions, and partisan. In some places, the urban electorate may diverge widely from the district or statewide one such that the same positions and attributes that make one electable as a mayor may hinder one's chances for other offices. Finally, related both to being in a legislature and moving away from the typical mayoral agenda, mayors may prefer to avoid the ideological issues, and corresponding partisan loyalty, that they would confront outside of city politics. For better or worse, cities are prevented from, and/or get to avoid, some of these issues (Frug 1980; Peterson 1981; Vigdor 2004; Brooks and Phillips 2010; Gamm and Kousser 2013).

Fourth, and more practically, mayors—as local officeholders—may be reluctant for family or

life-cycle reasons to move from the local stage to state or national offices. State legislators (Gaddie 2004) and members of Congress (Theriault 1998) both stress the challenges of balancing family with these political offices. Unlike legislators, mayors do not serve in a wider governing body that requires them to spend significant time outside their own home city. This fact may make the leap to higher office—which would presumably require more time spent in their state’s capitol or Washington, D.C.—a challenging one for many mayors. Mayors get to work in, and lead, their chosen hometowns (usually while staying in their own homes) which increases the personal opportunity cost of higher offices.

In sum, for a variety of related reasons, the cost benefit analysis may be different for mayors than it is for other sub-national elected figures and mayors may feel that other elected positions offer fewer rewards, and more downsides such that the actual positions may be less attractive than their current ones. At a minimum, for many, a sure-thing mayoral position may be more attractive than a possible higher office (Berkman and Eisenstein 1999). This extended discussion prompts our simple central question: at what rate do mayors run for higher office? Within this broad query, however, is a subset of important questions about *what kinds* of mayors exhibit progressive ambition. We thus turn to exploring the types of individual and contextual factors that might promote or hinder mayoral career progression.

## **2.1 Individual Characteristics**

At the individual level, a rich body of scholarship suggests that a politician’s race and gender shape his/her propensity to run for higher office. In particular, ample empirical evidence reveals that being a member of underrepresented groups reduces progressive ambition (Constantini 1990; Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001; Fox and Lawless 2005; Lawless and Fox 2005). There are a variety of mechanisms at play here. Given the dramatic overrepresentation of white men in the vast majority of elected bodies in the United States, women and minorities may not believe that higher office is a realistic possibility (Fox and Lawless 2005). Moreover, members of historically excluded populations are less likely to be recruited (Eulau and Prewitt 1973; Matthews 1984),

may feel less efficacy as candidates, and/or lack a politicized upbringing (Fox and Lawless 2005). Taken together, this research leads us to anticipate that female, black, and/or Hispanic mayors will be less likely to run for higher office than their white and/or male counterparts.

## **2.2 Contextual Characteristics**

In addition, a variety of city-level contextual characteristics might affect whether a mayor chooses to run for higher office. Here, we highlight three: institutional configurations, size, and racial demographics.

Most large American cities have one of two forms of government: mayor-council or council-manager. Under the mayor-council system, the mayor typically acts as an executive with a large degree of autonomy. He/she can veto city council ordinances and is responsible for appointing a wide array of critical city officials (Judd and Swanstrom 2012). Conversely, under council-manager system—forged as part of the reform movement in response to urban political machines—the mayor and city council make policy decisions (typically with the council wielding greater authority), with a city manager taking responsibility for the day-to-day operation of government (Judd and Swanstrom 2012). Local political offices create natural constituencies and help the progressively ambitious bolster their political skills. We thus might anticipate that mayor-council systems, which confer more of these opportunities, should yield more successful candidates for higher office than mayors in council-manager systems. This logic suggests that mayors governing under mayor-council systems should evince greater progressive ambition than those in council-manager cities.

On the other hand, the same greater power that allows for constituency and skill development might also render governing in a mayor-council system more attractive than higher offices. Because they can wield greater influence and accomplish policy goals, these mayors might actually feel less frustrated in their current positions, and therefore less apt to pursue higher office.

The size of a city might similarly affect mayoral ambition. Stewart (2012) outlines why this constituency population matters: “[A]t each step along the way, the constituency of the old position



was a subset of the constituency at the new position. A career in elected office, therefore, often is a matter of winning a majority in a small constituency, shoring up that constituency through diligent service, and then using the smaller constituency as a base in trying to win a larger constituency” (p.144). Intuitively, larger cities, then should be more amenable bases for progressively ambitious politicians simply because they will comprise a larger share of any subsequent constituency. In addition, the challenges facing and the powers available to the mayors of large cities are unique (Judd and Swanstrom 2012). Thus, as with the mayors of mayor-council cities, the mayors of large cities will have more opportunities to develop their political skills, and will likely have greater confidence in their political efficacy. Therefore, we expect that mayors of larger cities will exhibit greater progressive ambition than their counterparts governing smaller cities.

Finally, city racial demographics might shape mayoral progressive ambition. In particular, representing a more disproportionately minority constituency might disadvantage mayors seeking higher office (and its likely whiter constituency). Indeed, if the intuition that lower offices provide the skills and constituencies necessary for higher political ambitions holds true, then representing a constituency whose racial demographics differ markedly from those of higher offices will likely provide fewer of those necessary skills and connections. Thus, we expect that mayors of cities with higher proportions of minorities will exhibit less progressive ambition than their counterparts governing whiter cities.

### **3 Historical Data on Mayors’ Career Trajectories**

To measure the degree to which former mayors actually choose to run for higher office we compiled a new data set of mayors in the United States. We collected information for all cities with populations greater than 150,000 people (based on total population in the 2013 American Community Survey). There are 165 such cities, ranging from New York City (population 8,268,999) to Pomona, California (population 150,006). We also added the 24 state capitals that do not meet this cutoff, and an additional seven cities which are the largest cities in their respective states but not

already in our sample, for a total of 196 cities. For example, no city in New Hampshire exceeds 150,000 people. Therefore, we include Concord, the state capital (pop. 42,419), as well as Manchester, the largest city in the state (pop. 109,942).<sup>3</sup> We include the state capitals and largest city in each state to ensure that at least one significant city in each state is included. This reflects the fact that major cities are defined by their contexts; the mayor of a city of 100,000 people in a state of 1 million people has a very different political position than the mayor of a city of 100,000 people in a state of 20 million people. Figure 1 maps the cities in our sample.<sup>4</sup>

For each city, we collected political career information on every person elected or appointed mayor from 1992 to 2015.<sup>5</sup> For each mayor, we collected a variety of information, including dates of birth and death, gender, race, political party (where available), and electoral history.<sup>6</sup> In particular, we sought to identify every elected office for which the mayor ran, both before and after serving as mayor. For example, Ed Rendell, the former mayor of Philadelphia, first won election as District Attorney in 1977. He later ran for governor (in 1986) and mayor (in 1987), losing in the Democratic primary in both cases. He then ran for mayor again in 1991 and won. He later was elected Governor of Pennsylvania in 2002. While there are many offices for which a mayor could run, we focused on statewide and federal races for this analysis. We excluded other local, county, and state legislative offices, as the relative power and prestige of these offices compared to even moderately sized and powerful mayoral positions is unclear. Overall, we collected data on 695 mayors. Table 1 provides summary statistics about the cities and mayors in our sample, and Table 2 lists the higher offices we include in the analysis.

To identify variations from specific urban circumstances, we merged data on individual mayors with information on city populations and institutional structures. We gathered racial and population

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<sup>3</sup>In South Carolina, which also lacks a city greater than 150,000 people, we only include Columbia (population 131,686), which is both the state capital and the largest city in the state).

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix Table A1 for a complete list of the cities in our sample.

<sup>5</sup>We exclude interim mayors who are not later elected or appointed to a subsequent term. In some cases we were unable to identify all of the mayors back to 1992. In these cases we collected as many mayors as possible. Excluding these cities does not substantively change our results.

<sup>6</sup>Collecting this data is challenging because, unlike most federal and state offices, there is no existing dataset on mayors. We primarily relied on city websites and local newspapers to assemble the list of mayors and biographical characteristics. For candidate information, we used each state's Secretary of State website, municipal election databases, and local newspapers.

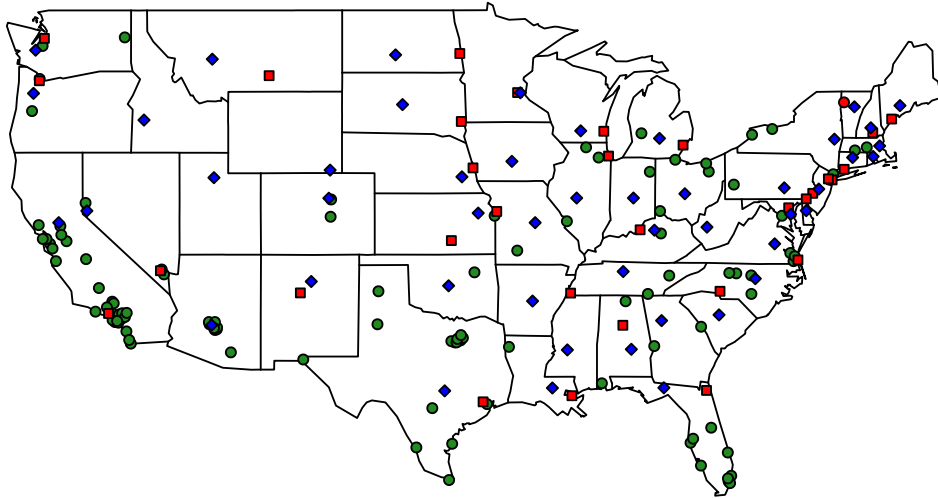


Figure 1: **Map of Cities in Sample.** Diamonds indicate state capitals; squares indicate the largest city in the state (if other than the state capital). Not shown: Anchorage, AK; Juneau, AK; Honolulu, HI.

Cities		Mayors	
N	191	N	695
Mean Pop.	385,571	% Women	15.54
Median Pop.	218,172	% Black	14.10
Mean Mayors	3.61	% Hispanic	6.62
% Strong Mayor System	49.74	Mean Tenure (years)	6.79

Table 1: Summary statistics for cities and mayors

data from the U.S. Census Bureau for the 1990, 2000, and 2010 censuses. To study each city’s institutional characteristics, we performed a comprehensive survey of city charters to identify term limits, length of mayoral terms, mayoral structure (classified as either a strong or weak mayor system), and the method of selection. Most of the mayors in our sample (97%) were directly elected by the voters, but a smaller subset (24) were appointed by the city council, generally from among their own ranks.<sup>7</sup>

One challenge in analyzing mayoral ambition historically is that the opportunity to run for higher office varies across individuals. Our sample includes some mayors who served in the 1990s and have had twenty years to consider running for higher office. Other mayors may have been

<sup>7</sup>This practice is generally used to fill a mayoral vacancy, but a few cities use this system to select mayors instead of direct election.

elected recently, and have had fewer opportunities to run. Some mayors serve for a long time in office, providing many opportunities to run as a current mayor, while others may not get reelected, or are constrained by term limits, but may have a longer period after serving, resulting in more opportunities after their mayoralty. We cannot fully control for this variation in opportunity. To partially address this, we conduct our analysis with two slightly different samples. The main analysis includes all of the mayors in our data, both former mayors and those currently serving. In the appendix, we repeat the analysis with a subsample of former mayors only.

We focus on three binary dependent variables to assess the ambition and success of mayors in running for higher office. Our first dependent variable, *Candidate*, is coded as “1” if a mayor runs for a higher office after their first successful mayoral election, and “0” if they never do so, regardless of their success in actually winning higher office. This includes mayors who enter a party primary for higher office but do not win the primary. The second dependent variable, *Nominee*, is coded as “1” if the mayor is on the ballot in the general election as the Democratic or Republican nominee or as an independent. The third dependent variable, *Winner*, is coded as “1” if the mayor won election to a higher office. By definition, any mayor who wins an election to higher office is also coded as a nominee and as a candidate, and any mayor who is a nominee is also coded as a candidate. Thus, across the three dependent variables, the number of successful mayors decreases.

We begin by exploring the basic descriptive question of mayoral ambition: at what rate do mayors run for higher office? Figure 2 displays the proportion of mayors in our sample who: (1) run for higher office (*Candidate*); (2) win a primary for higher office (*Nominee*); and (3) win a general election for a higher office (*Winner*). On balance, these results suggest that mayors seldom seek higher office. Fewer than 20 percent of mayors run for higher office, fewer than 15 percent win a primary, and just over 5 percent win a general election. Given the size of the cities in our sample, this is striking. Less than one-fifth of mayors of the *nation's largest cities* seek higher office. These data mirror survey results from Fox and Lawless' (2005) survey of prospective political candidates; they find that a mere 19 percent of mayoral candidates are interested in higher office, compared

with a whopping 41 percent of state legislators.

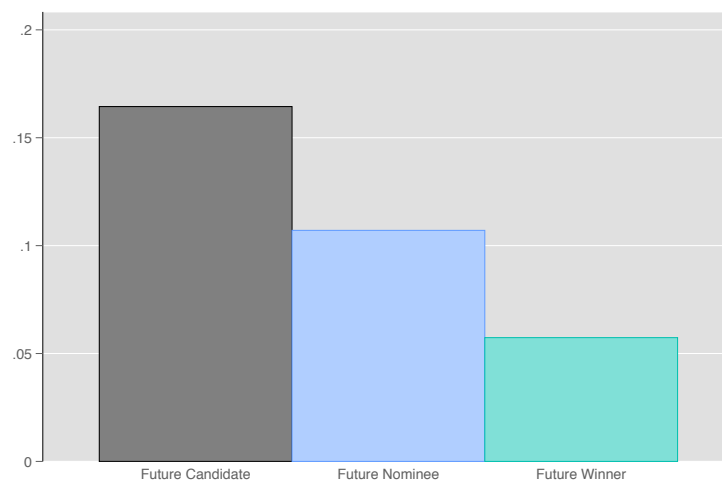


Figure 2

Table 2: List of Offices

Office	Candidate	Nominee	Winner
Governor	48	26	10
US House	34	19	9
US Senate	13	10	7
Other Statewide	10	8	3
Lieutenant Governor	9	8	6
State Attorney General	2	2	1
US President	2	1	0
State Treasurer	1	0	0
State Secretary of State	1	0	0

The numbers of mayors running for higher office are perhaps smaller than we might have predicted given the seeming attractiveness of mayoralty as a platform for the ambitious. Nonetheless, over the course of the 23 years covered by our sample, 91 mayors do seek higher office.<sup>8</sup> Table 2 outlines which offices these mayors opted to run for. The most popular office was governor—

<sup>8</sup>Some mayors run for multiple higher offices. 68 mayors run for one office, 18 for two, four for three, and one for four (Scotty Baesler, the mayor of Lexington, KY from 1982 to 1993, ran for governor in 1991 and lost; won election to the U.S. House in 1992 and was reelected in 1994 and 1996; ran for Senate in 1998 and lost, and ran again for the U.S. House in 2000 and lost).

comprising 40 percent of contests featuring a former mayor—consistent with our prediction that mayors would largely eschew legislative positions because of their ideological nature and lack of governing power.

Turning towards the question of *which* mayors run for higher office, Tables 3 and 4 display OLS coefficient estimates and standard errors for models predicting mayoral ambition based on individual-level and contextual characteristics, respectively. Each table includes five models. Models 1–3 regress the three dependent variables defined above (*Candidate*, *Nominee*, and *Winner*) on a set of mayor or city characteristics. Models 4 and 5 repeat Models 2 and 3, but restrict the sample to mayors who were candidates and nominees, respectively. The latter two models are therefore conditional on previous success. While Model 2 examines factors that contribute to being on a general election ballot for higher office across all mayors, Model 4 examines these same factors only for the mayors who chose to become candidates for higher office. Similarly, Model 3 examines factors that correlate with winning higher office among all mayors, and Model 5 examines these factors only for mayors who made it onto a general election ballot.

Starting with the individual-level model (Table 3)—which also includes control variables for the mayor’s political party—we find limited support for the prediction that black and Hispanic mayors would be less apt to run for higher office. Black mayors appear to be less likely to run for higher office generally; our coefficient estimates suggest that they are 10 percentage points less likely to run in a primary, all else equal. Moreover, we similarly observe a negative coefficient on mayoral Hispanic ethnicity. However, this estimate falls well short of conventional standards for statistical significance because of its large standard error.

The primary results in Model 1 similarly yield some support for the hypothesis that female mayors would be less likely to run for higher office. As with our results for Hispanic ethnicity, the coefficient estimate for gender, while large, falls short of conventional standards of statistical significance.

Strikingly, however, these individual-level variables appear only to affect *ambition*—that is, the decision to run in the first place. Conditional on a candidate running for higher office, there

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Female	-0.0515 (0.0403)	-0.00966 (0.0341)	-0.0311 (0.0249)	0.260 (0.162)	-0.305 (0.198)
Black	-0.0854** (0.0433)	-0.0824** (0.0365)	-0.0511* (0.0267)	-0.195 (0.176)	-0.104 (0.245)
Hispanic	-0.0220 (0.0603)	-0.0591 (0.0509)	-0.0324 (0.0372)	-0.383* (0.214)	0.0873 (0.379)
Democrat	-0.0468 (0.0363)	0.0263 (0.0306)	0.0176 (0.0224)	0.285*** (0.103)	0.0314 (0.149)
Independent	-0.209*** (0.0433)	-0.105*** (0.0365)	-0.0546** (0.0267)	-0.00290 (0.333)	-0.534 (0.525)
Constant	0.241*** (0.0293)	0.124*** (0.0247)	0.0656*** (0.0181)	0.503*** (0.0788)	0.534*** (0.122)
Observations	598	598	598	91	60
$R^2$	0.051	0.033	0.022	0.128	0.063

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 3: **Individual Variables.** Models 1–3 include the full sample of mayors. The dependent variables are a binary indicator of if (1) the mayor was a candidate for higher office, (2) the mayor was a candidate in the general election, and (3) the mayor won an election for higher office. Models 4 and 5 use the same DVs as models 2 and 3, respectively, but restrict the sample for (4) only mayors that were candidates in the primary, and (5) only mayors that were candidates in the general election.

is no consistent relationship between mayoral gender, race, or ethnicity and winning a primary or general election (Models 4 and 5). These non-relationships make sense in the context of our theorizing since the predictions focus on candidate ambition. So, our theoretical expectations (and seemingly, our results) help to explain *when* a mayor might choose to run for higher office, but not their success conditional on deciding to run. We can provide comparatively little insight into which mayors win higher office (at least in terms of individual-level attributes), though we note that one of our control variables—mayoral Democratic partisanship—is positively related with winning a primary election. It is also possible, of course, that our inability to draw strong conclusions about when mayors win primary and general elections is a consequence of small sample sizes.

Because so few mayors run for (and win) higher offices, we may simply lack a sufficient number of observations to generate generalizable conclusions about which mayors win higher offices.

Turning to Table 4, we also evaluate a series of predictions exploring how city-level characteristics might correspond with mayoral ambition. These models—which feature the same dependent variables as in Table 3—include controls for whether a city has term limits, location in the South, the city percent Democratic, and the state percent Democratic. As with our models of individual-level predictors, we only find theoretically consistent relationships between our contextual variables and mayors’ ambition when our outcome is whether or not a mayor runs for higher office in the first place. Consistent with our prediction that mayor-council systems would foster the development of political skills, we find that, all else equal, leading a strong-mayor city increases a mayor’s probability of running in a primary by almost 8 percentage points.

As with our models of individual-level predictors, we only find theoretically consistent relationships between our contextual variables and mayors’ ambition when our outcome is whether or not a mayor runs for higher office in the first place. Consistent with our prediction that mayor-council systems would foster the development of political skills, we find that, all else equal, leading a strong-mayor city increases a mayor’s probability of running in a primary by almost 8 percentage points. Finally, mayors of cities with a higher percent black are significantly less likely to run for higher office. Interestingly, this negative relationship does not hold for mayors of more Hispanic cities, though the coefficient estimate on percent Hispanic falls short of conventional standards of statistical significance. Perhaps because of Hispanics’ rising salience as a swing constituency (e.g. Hochschild et al. 2012), mayors of these communities strategically believe that they have a better chance of obtaining higher office.

## **4 Mayors’ Preferences: Survey Evidence**

To better understand the key insight of our historical data—that mayors seldom run for higher office—we turn to a second novel data source: a nationally representative survey of mayors of



	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Largest City in State	0.137*** (0.0347)	0.0699** (0.0292)	0.0122 (0.0210)	-0.0969 (0.117)	-0.0820 (0.135)
State Capital	0.0127 (0.0346)	0.0198 (0.0291)	-0.00736 (0.0209)	0.0745 (0.130)	-0.200 (0.143)
Strong Mayor System	0.0816** (0.0342)	0.0592** (0.0288)	0.0494** (0.0207)	0.0460 (0.135)	0.0769 (0.157)
Mayoral Term Limits	0.0281 (0.0310)	0.00718 (0.0260)	-0.0164 (0.0187)	-0.0654 (0.119)	-0.234* (0.137)
South	-0.0337 (0.0410)	-0.0188 (0.0344)	0.00929 (0.0248)	0.0106 (0.166)	0.268 (0.187)
% Black	-0.0530 (0.117)	-0.0257 (0.0982)	-0.0773 (0.0706)	0.0627 (0.431)	-0.855 (0.513)
% Hispanic	0.131 (0.0835)	0.0835 (0.0702)	-0.0434 (0.0505)	0.0143 (0.342)	-1.101*** (0.361)
% Dem Vote in City	0.0232 (0.156)	0.00558 (0.131)	0.191** (0.0942)	-0.138 (0.686)	2.385*** (0.713)
% Dem Vote in State	-0.0607 (0.220)	-0.0596 (0.185)	-0.0974 (0.133)	0.00503 (1.008)	-0.692 (1.038)
Constant	0.0666 (0.106)	0.0597 (0.0892)	-0.00771 (0.0642)	0.729 (0.443)	-0.0173 (0.489)
Observations	585	585	585	85	55
$R^2$	0.054	0.027	0.026	0.024	0.343

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4: **Contextual Variables.** See Table 3 for model definitions.

cities over 75,000. We recruited *all* mayors from cities over 75,000 (465 in the U.S.) to participate in an in-person/phone survey on a wide array of topics. 94 mayors participated—a response rate of 20%. Table 5 compares the participating cities’ traits to the total population of U.S. cities with more than 75,000 residents. In sample mayors largely resemble the demographics of the country as a whole. The participants, however, generally skew toward bigger cities; this population

skew is unsurprisingly linked with a bias towards somewhat poorer cities with differing racial demographics. Participating cities are also slightly more likely to be strong mayor cities. For a study of mayoral career ambition, this skew is not especially problematic; if anything, it means that more of the mayors in our sample have thought of and/or are plausible candidates for higher office. This is an advantage of our survey over other comparable surveys of local officials (Butler et al. 2015); while these studies are able to use an impressive number of observations to run interesting experimental analyses, they lack the large city elites who comprise the most likely pool from which draw candidates for higher office. This skew towards larger cities, however, may render our estimate of the proportion of mayors interested in higher office greater than it might have been with a more representative sample.<sup>9</sup>

	In Sample	All Cities Over 75k
N	94	465
Population	281,722	222,946
% Black	18.1%	14.5%
% Hispanic	18.7%	24.5%
Median Income	\$50,107	\$ 55,010
Median Housing Price	\$193,393	\$237,049
Poverty Rate	15.1%	13.5%
Unemployment Rate	9.9%	10.1%
Strong Mayor	41.0%	36.1%

Table 5: In sample city traits vs. the national population

Table 6 illustrates that the participating mayors come from a variety of backgrounds. The relatively large number of female and black mayors allows us to make comparisons along racial and gender lines; the small number of Hispanic mayors (4) means we must be tentative, though, in testing for ethnic effects. Our sample is strikingly representative along partisan lines; our sample is 65% Democrat and 35% Republican, figures that closely mirror the national rates in larger cities (Gerber and Hopkins 2011).

<sup>9</sup>This skew may be somewhat surprising; at first glance, it seems like it should be much easier to schedule interviews with the mayors of small cities rather than their counterparts governing larger communities. Our experience running this survey over multiple years, however, suggests that the mayors of larger cities have more professionalized scheduling offices, which actually made it easier to schedule our 15-30 minute phone/in-person interviews.

Female	26%
<b>Race</b>	
White	79%
Black	14%
Hispanic	4%
<b>Partisanship</b>	
Democrat	65%
Republican	35%
<b>Highest Degree</b>	
BA/BS	41%
JD	31%
MBA	5%
PhD	4%
Other	19%
<b>Years in Office</b>	5.7

Table 6: Traits of participating mayors

The survey included two questions about career ambitions intermingled with items addressing a variety of topics. This wide ranging survey assures us that mayors did not opt in because of an atypical interest in discussing career trajectories. The first question asked mayors, “If you could no longer be mayor of your city, how appealing would each of the following positions be?” Mayors were then asked to rate a series of positions on a five-point scale ranging from “very unappealing” to “very appealing.” These jobs were: city councilor, state legislator, U.S. congressman/congresswoman, U.S. senator, governor, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Secretary of Transportation, and something outside of government. We selected these career paths informed by initial historical data collection on the career paths most plausibly available to former mayors. In addition, we opted to include those two particular cabinet offices because they were occupied by former mayors at the time we conducted the survey. The second question we asked centered on recruitment. We asked “During your time as mayor, have you been seriously recruited or encouraged to run for a different political office?”

Because virtually all interviews were conducted in person or over the phone, we were able to ensure that responses to our questions came directly from mayors and not staffers/advisors.

Moreover, in many cases, we asked follow questions, allowing us to further understand mayors' career ambitions (or lack thereof). Those in-depth follow ups provide texture to many of our theoretical predictions outlined above.

Figure 3 displays mayors' mean ratings of other political offices and non-governmental work. This plot suggests two general findings: (1) mayors are not especially enthusiastic about filling other governmental offices and (2) to the extent they are enthusiastic, their preferences align with the influence and prestige of the other offices. Perhaps the most striking result is the very high relative appeal of non-governmental work which was by far the highest rated option on average. Over 80 percent of mayors rated such jobs as "very appealing" or "appealing." No single government job came close to matching those figures. Importantly, this relatively lukewarm take on higher office does not appear to be a consequence of lack of encouragement. When asked whether they had been "seriously recruited" for higher office, 75 percent said yes. Moreover, because we conducted the interviews over the phone, we were able to, at least in some cases, determine that these recruitment efforts were credible.

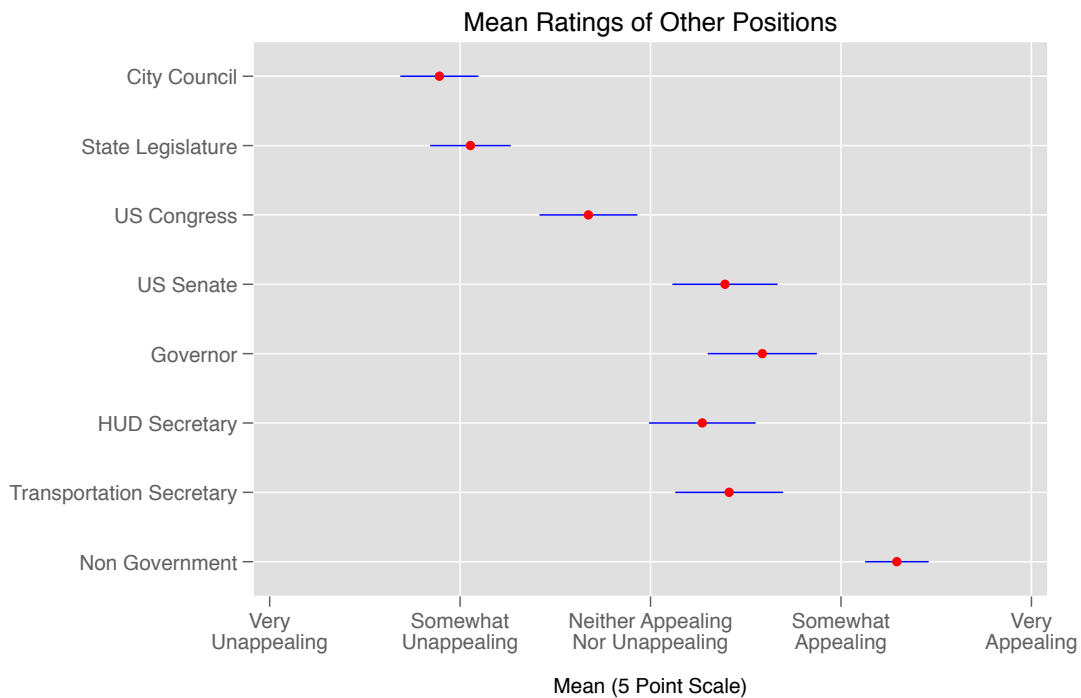


Figure 3: Mayors' mean ratings of the appeal of other positions

Of course, at least some mayors viewed some of the higher offices as attractive. To the extent mayors saw other government jobs as appealing, their aggregate preferences did not differ in meaningful ways from what one might expect based on power and prestige. A majority of mayors viewed four of the political jobs listed—U.S. Senate, governor, HUD Secretary, and Transportation Secretary—as very or somewhat appealing. Conversely, only 30 percent of mayors expressed similarly positive sentiments about running for U.S. Congress, and only 10 percent exhibited any interest in city council or state legislature. That is, there is no evidence that mayors as a group had unusual or idiosyncratic preferences over the set of offices. We do not see, for example, evidence of a singular focus on urban issues. The two elected offices dealing with state and local issues were almost universally unattractive. Moreover, while it was generally well regarded, the position of HUD secretary, which would allow one to focus almost exclusively on city issues, did not stand out from the other appealing positions. In sum, based on the overall attractiveness ratings, it appears that mayors' views of other government positions are rather conventional.

Figure 4 further unpacks mayors' views towards the three elected positions that could plausibly be described as more prestigious than the mayor's office: governor, Senate, and House. It displays the proportion of mayors who labeled each of the three positions as either appealing or very appealing. Two aspects of the graph stand out. First, as with the more comprehensive plot in Figure 3, mayors have little interest in running for Congress. Only about one third of mayors rated Congress at least appealing and only five percent described it very appealing. This is notable because in many cases it is likely the natural next step for many ambitious mayors, yet few (including most mayors of cities that are much smaller than a congressional district) have interest in it. What's more, it offers some support for two of our proposed mechanisms that help explain why mayors might not run for higher office: that they have a distaste for the legislative process generally and that they especially revile the partisan fighting, fundraising, and frequent elections that are an integral part of running for and serving in the House. The second striking result in Figure 4 is the relative parity of the Senate and governor options. About 66 and 60 percent found governor and Senate appealing, respectively. These differences are not significant ( $p=.41$ ). About 72 percent of

those that were enthusiastic about governor were also enthusiastic about Senator, and 87 percent of those who saw the Senate as appealing felt similarly about the governor’s office. In sum, these results suggest little differentiation between the two statewide offices. When juxtaposing the Senate and governor’s offices, we have less of a clear preference for executive positions. However, to the extent there is differentiation there is at least suggestive evidence that while most mayors are interested in both positions, to the extent that some are only interested in one, that position is likely to be governor.

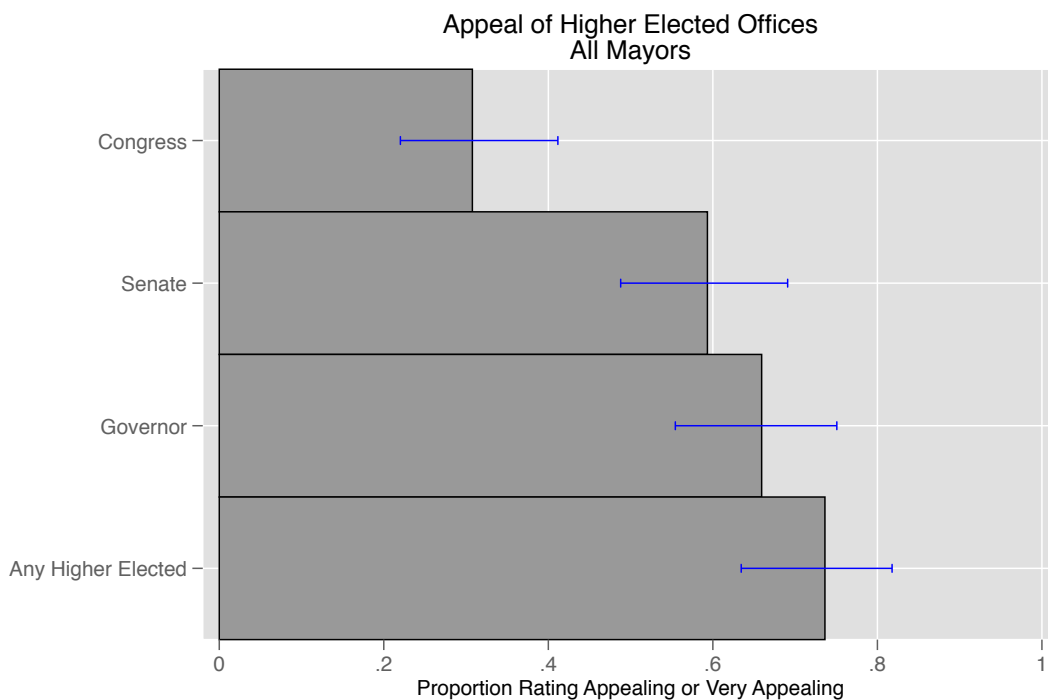


Figure 4: The proportion of mayors who rate higher elected offices as appealing or very appealing

Our qualitative evidence provides at least tentative support for some of our proposed theoretical explanations for a lack of mayoral interest in higher office. One mayor we spoke with indirectly bolstered our theory that mayors were more attracted to offices that tackled urban issues in discussion his enthusiasm about a national position like HUD Secretary. This northeastern mayor of a medium-sized city noted the attractiveness of the position because “CDBG funds [Community Development Block Grants from HUD] are a lifeline for urban mayors.” In other words, he found this national position attractive at least in part because it would allow him more power and authority to

work on urban issues.

Several mayors highlighted the unattractiveness of legislative positions—a qualitative sentiment that conforms with our quantitative evidence on mayors’ low ratings of the U.S. Congress. One western mayor observed: “I decided a long time ago that I don’t have a great legislative personality. I like to surround myself with intelligent people and have some control over that....U.S. Congress, I thought about it at one time, but have decided I’d be miserable.” Any mayor moving to Congress would naturally be a junior member, creating a large negative power/autonomy gap between her current position and her hypothetical new one. Indeed, one mayor of a medium-sized southern city who had been recruited for higher office worried about his inability to accomplish policy goals, particularly because he would “have to wait so long to move up in seniority.”

Relatedly—and again consistent with mayors’ distaste for Congress—several mayors emphasized the unappealing nature of the fundraising, frequent elections, and partisan bickering endemic to the House of Representatives. The mid-sized city mayor quoted above said he had no interest in running for Congress because you “have to run every two years and [it’s] so partisan.” Another southern mayor similarly dismissed moving on to Congress: “I wouldn’t want to run every two years.”

Finally, we also found some support for our expectation that a geographic preference for staying put would mute mayoral career ambition. One western mayor rated all other higher offices—including those in her own state—as relatively unappealing, noting: “I don’t have a grand master plan of what I want to run for next...I have 4 kids at home. [Being mayor] is a great opportunity to build my community.”

Our individual-level survey data also allow us to further unpack which kinds of mayors show an interest in running for higher office. We focus on assessments of the House, Senate, and governor offices as the three most plausible avenues for *electoral* progressive ambition. The other elected offices were almost universally panned and one cannot choose to run for the cabinet positions in the same way one runs for other elected positions. Figure 5 by reports the proportion of mayors rating each electoral position at least appealing by six variables of interest that speak to a variety of

the potential sources of variation comprising personal traits (sex, time in office, and partisanship) and city attributes (institutional form, city size, and distance to Washington, D.C).

By far the most notable source of variation is the mayors' sex. Males are much more enthusiastic about each of the more prestigious elected offices, sometimes significantly so. While the small number of female mayors renders our confidence intervals large, the pattern is clear and large in magnitude across all higher offices; female mayors were 20-30 percentage points less likely to view higher offices as appealing. These differences are even starker when limiting the analysis to those who rated each job "very appealing" (e.g. those most likely to pursue higher office) in Figure 6. Almost *none* of the female mayors saw the higher offices as being very appealing. Only 5 percent saw the Senate and governorship as very appealing, respectively, compared to about 30 and 50 percent of male mayors. (Interestingly, neither group rates Congress as very appealing, again consistent with our other results revealing a mayoral antipathy towards Congress.) This is especially striking given that our sample surveys individuals who *have already run for and won political office in a medium- to large-sized city*. In other words, our sample should select for a disproportionately politically ambitious set of women. Even among these politically-minded women, there is a significant ambition gap.<sup>10</sup>

This lack of progressive ambition among female candidates does not appear to be a consequence of a disproportionate recruitment of male candidates. Remarkably, an identical proportion of male and female mayors—75 percent—reported being recruited for higher office. This evidence contrasts with scholarship that finds that party elites recruit men more than women (Fox and Lawless 2010; Crowder-Meyer 2013) and bolsters recent evidence that women are less receptive to recruitment efforts than men (Preece, Stoddard, and Fisher 2015; Butler and Preece 2016; Preece 2016).

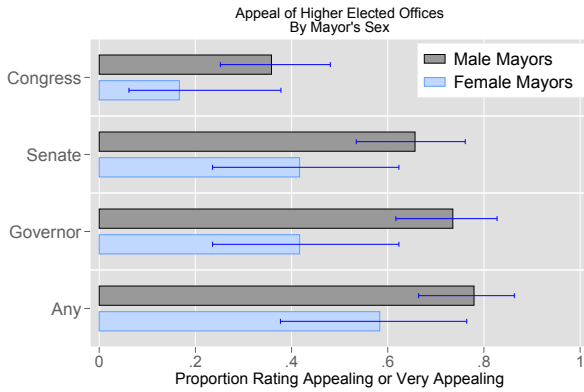
The other two mayoral level traits do not exhibit notable variation. Newer and experienced mayors and Democratic and Republican ones exhibit largely similar levels of ambition.

Contrary to some of the theoretical expectations, city level traits have little relation to pref-

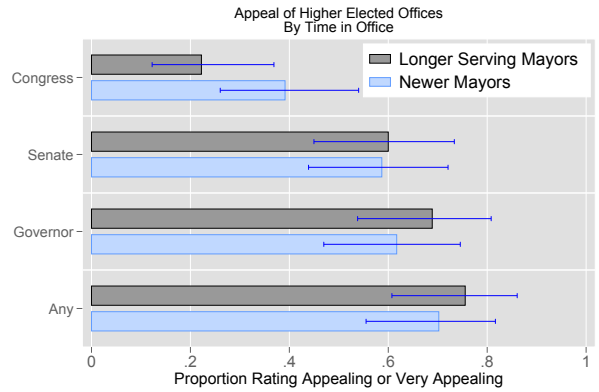
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<sup>10</sup>Regression models with full controls (Table A9) largely confirm these results. Though our gender coefficient is not statistically significant in all models, it is consistently negative and similar in magnitude.

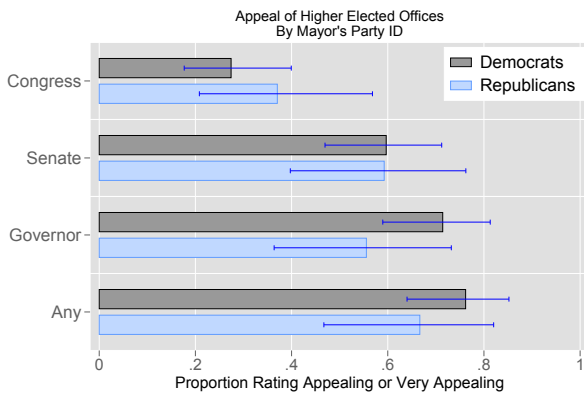




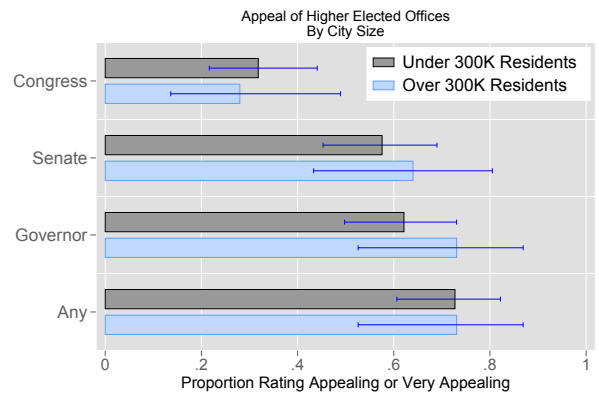
(a) Sex



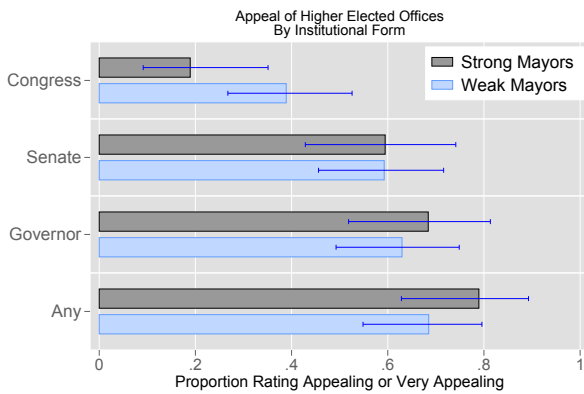
(b) Time in Office



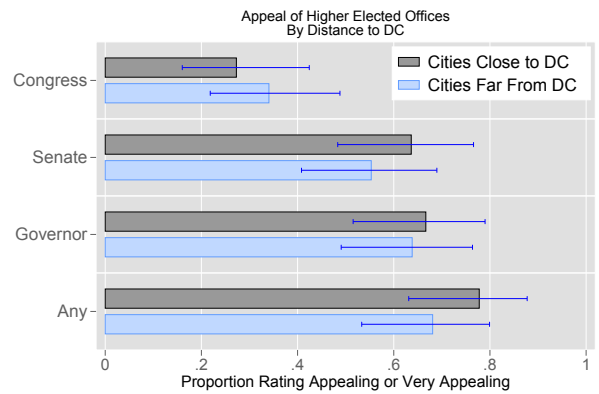
(c) Political Party



(d) City Size



(e) Institutional Form



(f) Distance to Washington, D.C

Figure 5: Proportion of mayors rating each electoral position as appealing by individual traits (sex, time in office, partisanship) and city attributes (institutional form, city size, and distance to Washington, D.C.).

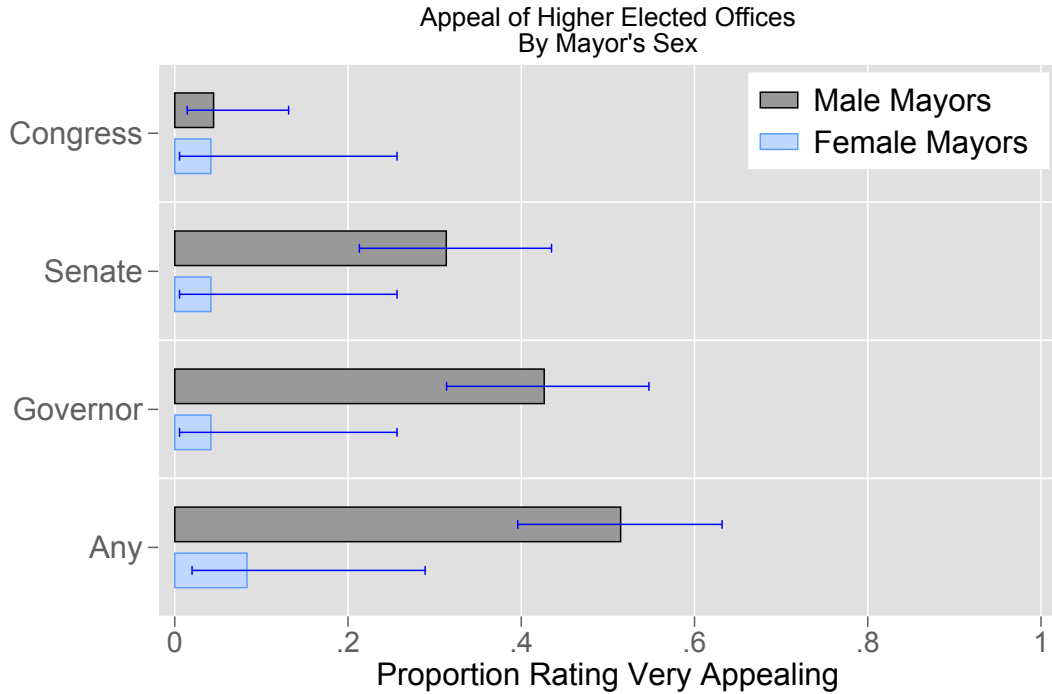


Figure 6: The proportion of male and female mayors rating the elected offices “very appealing.”

erences over the other offices. Strong and weak mayors are equally enthusiastic about the other higher offices. At least as notably, mayors of big (over 300,000 residents) and smaller cities gave similar responses. These similarities included their evaluations of Congress. One might expect that Congress would be more exciting to smaller cities mayors since would represent an increase in constituent size. Lastly, a city’s distance to Washington DC did not affect its mayor’s interest in national office.<sup>11</sup>

## 5 Electoral Obstacles to Running for Higher Office

While we have uncovered interesting variations in *which* mayors run for higher office largely consistent with theoretical expectations, one central finding stands out as needing further exploration: the extent to which mayors of large cities choose not to run for higher office. Indeed, in light of research suggesting that local office should comprise an excellent jumping off point for progres-

<sup>11</sup>Table A10 displays similar results in full regression models with controls.

sively ambitious candidates, the fact that fewer than one-fifth of mayors of cities over 100,000 seek higher office is striking.

We have proposed a number of explanations for this result—including interest in urban issues, executive preference, geographic location, and distaste for fundraising, frequent elections, and partisan bickering—and found some support for all of them, particularly the ideological and electoral factors that render the House of Representatives especially unattractive. Here, we highlight one additional, and important possibility: that the mayor’s office is significantly more attractive than any other office that mayors could plausibly attain as a consequence of important electoral constraints.

The mayoralty may generally be more attractive than previously believed, particularly for officials governing the nation’s largest cities. Mayors Rahm Emanuel of Chicago and Tom Barrett of Milwaukee are two examples of ambitious politicians who, after serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, opted to become mayors. Some mayors in our interview sample worried that the contemporary partisan climate renders the governor’s office unappealing (we discuss this in greater depth below). Others expressed concerns that federal cabinet offices were too laden with bureaucratic restrictions to be effective; one mayor of a medium-sized southern city said that he found the idea of becoming the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development unappealing because it is a “well meaning but highly bureaucratic organization [where it is] hard to be effective.” It could be that being an executive of a large city, then, is equally or more attractive than most other political offices, including federal legislative positions that we might plausibly have theorized as being positions of upward mobility.

As executives of large cities, mayors might only be inclined to leave office for attractive state- and federal-level executive positions such as the governor’s office and cabinet level positions that are more challenging to obtain than, say, a congressional seat. A number of mayors in our historical sample—including Bill Haslam of Knoxville, Rudolph Giuliani of New York, Tom Barrett of Milwaukee, and Gavin Newsom of San Francisco, to name just a few—attempted (and, in the cases of Haslam and Newsom, succeeded) to make just such a political leap. The mayor of a large southern city summarized the appeal of the governor’s office as rooted in perceptions of executive

efficacy: “As mayor, I have the capacity to move the needle on really important issues, and I think governor’s the same way. ” Efficacy was similarly a motivation for many mayors to select federal cabinet offices as attractive, with many mayors enthusiastic about the ability to control important funding sources. Mayors also felt that they had the policy expertise for (at least some) federal cabinet positions, particularly the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and Energy. As one mayor of a large Midwestern city succinctly put it, being the Secretary of Transportation would be “very appealing” because “I know a lot about it.” Thus, mayors might only leave their positions for very competitive higher offices, explaining the relatively low rates of progressive ambition. Their low ratings of the House of Representatives further bolster this possibility.

Several electoral factors may make these generally competitive offices especially challenging for mayors to attain. Anti-urban sentiments among suburban and rural voters could pose a potent obstacle. While state legislators and governors have, at times, successfully fostered urban-suburban-rural coalitions (Orfield 1997; Weir, Wolman, and Swanstrom 2005), conflict between cities, their surrounding communities, and more rural locales is more often the norm (Dreier, Moltenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004; Weir, Wolman, and Swanstrom 2005; Nall 2015; Cramer 2016).

Part of this general anti-urban sentiment may further be exacerbated by the fact that cities are, on average, more diverse than suburbs and, especially, rural communities (Frey 2014). Thus, a progressively ambitious minority mayor—or even just a mayor of a diverse city—may face perceptions that s/he favors urban and minority constituencies, rather than the whiter, less urban statewide electorate, when running for higher office. Such perceptions can be damaging; some research on descriptive representation in Congress finds that white constituents are more likely to contact and favorably assess those representatives with which they racially identify (Gay 2001). More generally, s/he may run up against white perceptions of racial threat, particularly in places where the racial demographic gap between city and state is especially large (Key 1949; Giles and Buckner 1993; Glaser 1994; Taylor 1998).

One recent case where such dynamics may be at play is Michael Coleman of Columbus’ cur-

rent non-decision about whether to run for governor in 2018. Despite his popularity with local Democratic activists, Coleman—who is black—has been reluctant to express interest in running for governor. Political scientist Paul Beck attributes part of this reticence to Coleman’s race: “An African-American has not won a statewide contest in Ohio” (Sullivan 2015).

The tight link between race and vote choice means that the gap between cities and the suburbs and rural areas in their state is also a divide between liberals and conservatives (or, as one southern mayor in our survey described his city, a “blueberry in a bowl of tomato soup.”) This partisan gap is similarly dissuasive to many mayors contemplating higher office because it both creates a more challenging electoral calculus *and* it renders effective governance less likely. One southern mayor stated that, while she has had been approached about running for higher office, she had no interest in the governor’s office in particular because of her state’s partisan politics; she rated running for governor as “unappealing” because of “our state legislature. I’d like to get something done.” She said she “it would definitely be more appealing” to run if her state legislature were less conservative.

Indeed, the seemingly widespread perceptions of governing inefficacy at the state and (especially) federal levels have led mayors to view cities as the only places where exciting (and often) progressive legislation can get passed. As the mayor of a western city put it, cities “are where you actually get work done.” Until views of state and federal government become more positive, many politicians who would likely be high quality political candidates—particularly for the Democratic party—will eschew higher office.

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## Appendix

Table A1: List of Cities in the Sample

City	Population (2013)
New York, NY <sup>†</sup>	8,268,999
Los Angeles, CA <sup>†</sup>	3,827,261
Chicago, IL <sup>†</sup>	2,706,101
Houston, TX <sup>†</sup>	2,134,707
Philadelphia, PA <sup>†</sup>	1,536,704
Phoenix, AZ <sup>*†</sup>	1,473,639
San Antonio, TX	1,359,033
San Diego, CA	1,322,838
Dallas, TX	1,222,167
San Jose, CA	968,903
Austin, TX <sup>*</sup>	836,800
Jacksonville, FL <sup>†</sup>	829,721
Indianapolis, IN <sup>*†</sup>	828,841
San Francisco, CA	817,501
Columbus, OH <sup>*</sup>	800,594
Fort Worth, TX	761,092
Charlotte, NC <sup>†</sup>	757,278
Detroit, MI <sup>†</sup>	706,663
El Paso, TX	660,795
Memphis, TN <sup>†</sup>	650,932
Boston, MA <sup>*†</sup>	629,182
Seattle, WA <sup>†</sup>	624,681
Baltimore, MD <sup>†</sup>	621,445
Washington, DC	619,371
Denver, CO <sup>*†</sup>	619,297
Nashville-Davidson, TN <sup>*</sup>	614,908
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY <sup>†</sup>	601,611
Milwaukee, WI <sup>†</sup>	596,459
Portland, OR <sup>†</sup>	594,687
Las Vegas, NV <sup>†</sup>	591,496
Oklahoma City, OK <sup>*†</sup>	590,995
Albuquerque, NM <sup>†</sup>	556,495
Tucson, AZ	523,278
Fresno, CA	500,819
Sacramento, CA <sup>*</sup>	471,477
Long Beach, CA	465,424
Kansas City, MO <sup>†</sup>	462,378
Mesa, AZ	447,002
Virginia Beach, VA <sup>†</sup>	442,151
Atlanta, GA <sup>*†</sup>	432,589

\*State capital. <sup>†</sup>Largest city in the state. Continued on next page...

Table A1: **List of Cities in the Sample** (continued)

<b>City</b>	<b>Population (2013)</b>
Colorado Springs, CO	425,805
Omaha, NE <sup>†</sup>	422,499
Raleigh, NC*	414,530
Miami, FL	407,526
Oakland, CA	397,011
Cleveland, OH	394,335
Tulsa, OK	393,709
Minneapolis, MN <sup>†</sup>	389,112
Wichita, KS <sup>†</sup>	383,703
Arlington, TX	371,267
New Orleans, LA <sup>†</sup>	357,013
Bakersfield, CA	352,918
Tampa, FL	343,768
Honolulu, HI <sup>*†</sup>	340,639
Anaheim, CA	340,081
Aurora, CO	332,820
Santa Ana, CA	328,719
St. Louis, MO	318,955
Riverside, CA	309,150
Corpus Christi, TX	308,993
Pittsburgh, PA	306,062
Anchorage, AK <sup>†</sup>	300,950
Lexington-Fayette, KY	300,843
Cincinnati, OH	297,150
Stockton, CA	294,406
St. Paul, MN*	288,802
Toledo, OH	285,459
Newark, NJ <sup>†</sup>	277,357
Greensboro, NC	273,228
Plano, TX	266,740
Lincoln, NE*	262,365
Henderson, NV	261,953
Buffalo, NY	260,568
Fort Wayne, IN	254,435
Jersey City, NJ	251,717
Chula Vista, CA	248,048
St. Petersburg, FL	246,642
Orlando, FL	244,931
Norfolk, VA	244,090
Chandler, AZ	241,096
Laredo, TX	240,524
Madison, WI*	237,395
Durham, NC	234,922

\*State capital. <sup>†</sup>Largest city in the state. Continued on next page. . .

Table A1: **List of Cities in the Sample** (continued)

<b>City</b>	<b>Population (2013)</b>
Lubbock, TX	233,162
Winston-Salem, NC	232,219
Garland, TX	230,177
Glendale, AZ	230,047
Baton Rouge, LA*	229,426
Hialeah, FL	228,943
Reno, NV	228,442
Chesapeake, VA	225,597
Scottsdale, AZ	221,283
Irvine, CA	221,266
Irving, TX	220,856
North Las Vegas, NV	219,725
Fremont, CA	218,172
Gilbert, AZ	215,683
Birmingham, AL <sup>†</sup>	212,295
San Bernardino, CA	211,528
Rochester, NY	210,624
Boise, ID* <sup>†</sup>	209,726
Spokane, WA	209,478
Richmond, VA*	207,878
Des Moines, IA* <sup>†</sup>	205,415
Montgomery, AL*	204,760
Modesto, CA	202,629
Fayetteville, NC	201,755
Tacoma, WA	200,890
Shreveport, LA	200,715
Oxnard, CA	199,574
Akron, OH	199,038
Aurora, IL	198,726
Fontana, CA	198,692
Yonkers, NY	197,493
Augusta-Richmond, GA	196,395
Mobile, AL	195,116
Little Rock, AR* <sup>†</sup>	195,092
Columbus, GA	194,949
Glendale, CA	193,381
Huntington Beach, CA	193,197
Amarillo, TX	193,153
Grand Rapids, MI	189,735
Salt Lake City, UT* <sup>†</sup>	188,141
Tallahassee, FL*	183,638
Huntsville, AL	182,317
Worcester, MA	181,901

\*State capital. <sup>†</sup>Largest city in the state. Continued on next page. . .

Table A1: **List of Cities in the Sample** (continued)

<b>City</b>	<b>Population (2013)</b>
Newport News, VA	181,025
Knoxville, TN	180,830
Grand Prairie, TX	178,195
Providence, RI*†	178,056
Brownsville, TX	177,795
Santa Clarita, CA	177,366
Overland Park, KS	176,520
Jackson, MS*†	173,997
Garden Grove, CA	172,785
Chattanooga, TN	170,246
Oceanside, CA	169,407
Santa Rosa, CA	169,005
Fort Lauderdale, FL	168,603
Rancho Cucamonga, CA	167,743
Port St. Lucie, FL	166,641
Ontario, CA	165,702
Tempe, AZ	164,742
Vancouver, WA	164,111
Springfield, MO	161,189
Cape Coral, FL	158,415
Sioux Falls, SD†	157,675
Lancaster, CA	157,368
Pembroke Pines, FL	157,324
Eugene, OR	157,318
Peoria, AZ	157,152
Salem, OR*	156,937
Elk Grove, CA	155,350
Corona, CA	155,227
Palmdale, CA	153,885
Springfield, MA	153,428
Salinas, CA	152,340
Rockford, IL	152,138
Pasadena, TX	150,785
Pomona, CA	150,006
Bridgeport, CT†	147,216
Columbia, SC*†	131,686
Topeka, KS*	127,625
Hartford, CT*	125,130
Charleston, WV*†	123,267
Springfield, IL*	116,495
Lansing, MI*	114,274
Manchester, NH†	109,942
Fargo, ND†	108,371

\*State capital. †Largest city in the state. Continued on next page. . .

Table A1: **List of Cities in the Sample** (continued)

<b>City</b>	<b>Population (2013)</b>
Billings, MT <sup>†</sup>	105,864
Albany, NY*	98,424
Trenton, NJ*	84,349
Wilmington, DE <sup>†</sup>	71,525
Santa Fe, NM*	69,976
Bismarck, ND*	67,034
Portland, ME <sup>†</sup>	66,318
Cheyenne, WY* <sup>†</sup>	59,466
Carson City, NV*	54,080
Harrisburg, PA*	49,188
Olympia, WA*	48,338
Jefferson City, MO*	43,330
Concord, NH*	42,419
Burlington, VT <sup>†</sup>	42,284
Annapolis, MD*	38,722
Dover, DE*	37,366
Juneau, AK*	32,660
Helena, MT*	29,596
Frankfort, KY*	27,453
Augusta, ME*	18,793
Pierre, SD*	13,984
Montpelier, VT*	7,755

\*State capital. <sup>†</sup>Largest city in the state.

Table A2: **List of Mayors Who Won Higher Office**

Name	City	Office Won	Election Year
Jerry Abramson	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY	Lieutenant Governor	2011
Michael Albano	Springfield, MA	Governor's Council	2012
Scotty Baesler	Lexington-Fayette, KY	US House	1992
Mark Begich	Anchorage, AK	US Senate	2008
Cory Booker	Newark, NJ	US Senate	2013
Phil Bredesen	Nashville-Davidson, TN	Governor	2002
Bobby Bright	Montgomery, AL	US House	2008
Jerry Brown	Oakland, CA	State Attorney General	2006
Jerry Brown	Oakland, CA	Governor	2010
David Cicilline	Providence, RI	US House	2010
Emanuel Cleaver	Kansas City, MO	US House	2002
Norm Coleman	St. Paul, MN	US Senate	2002
Bob Corker	Chattanooga, TN	US Senate	2006
Bob Duffy	Rochester, NY	Lieutenant Governor	2010
Kay Granger	Fort Worth, TX	US House	1996
Frank Guinta	Manchester, NH	US House	2010
Frank Guinta	Manchester, NH	US House	2014
Gary Hanson	Sioux Falls, SD	State Commissioner	2002
Bill Haslam	Knoxville, TN	Governor	2010
John Hickenlooper	Denver, CO	Governor	2010
Mike Johanns	Lincoln, NE	Governor	1998
Mike Johanns	Lincoln, NE	US Senate	2008
Tim Kaine	Richmond, VA	Lieutenant Governor	2001
Tim Kaine	Richmond, VA	Governor	2005
Tim Kaine	Richmond, VA	US Senate	2012
Dirk Kempthorne	Boise, ID	US Senate	1992
Dirk Kempthorne	Boise, ID	Governor	1998
Byron Mallott	Juneau, AK	Lieutenant Governor	2014
Pat McCrory	Charlotte, NC	Governor	2012
Harry Mitchell	Tempe, AZ	US House	2006
Tim Murray	Worcester, MA	Lieutenant Governor	2006
Gavin Newsom	San Francisco, CA	Lieutenant Governor	2010
Martin O'Malley	Baltimore, MD	Governor	2006
Ed Rendell	Philadelphia, PA	Governor	2002
Norma Torres	Pomona, CA	US House	2014
Raymond Wieczorek	Manchester, NH	State Executive Council	2002

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Female	-0.0723* (0.0434)	-0.0258 (0.0366)	-0.0392 (0.0277)	0.239 (0.174)	-0.313 (0.214)
Black	-0.0981** (0.0490)	-0.0974** (0.0414)	-0.0591* (0.0314)	-0.242 (0.190)	-0.0234 (0.272)
Hispanic	-0.0209 (0.0646)	-0.0617 (0.0546)	-0.0376 (0.0413)	-0.374* (0.217)	0.0547 (0.381)
Democrat	-0.0592 (0.0405)	0.0229 (0.0342)	0.0179 (0.0259)	0.268** (0.108)	0.0538 (0.154)
Independent	-0.237*** (0.0470)	-0.120*** (0.0397)	-0.0658** (0.0301)	-0.0120 (0.338)	-0.548 (0.526)
Constant	0.274*** (0.0329)	0.142*** (0.0278)	0.0785*** (0.0210)	0.512*** (0.0816)	0.548*** (0.125)
Observations	523	523	523	86	56
$R^2$	0.064	0.040	0.027	0.119	0.063

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A3: **Individual Variables — Former Mayors Only**. See Table 3 for model definitions.



	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Largest City in State	0.155*** (0.0385)	0.0861*** (0.0323)	0.0137 (0.0241)	-0.0629 (0.123)	-0.116 (0.139)
State Capital	0.00620 (0.0382)	0.0196 (0.0321)	-0.00419 (0.0239)	0.0855 (0.137)	-0.133 (0.148)
Strong Mayor System	0.0956** (0.0380)	0.0619* (0.0319)	0.0582** (0.0238)	-0.0100 (0.140)	0.0934 (0.163)
Mayoral Term Limits	0.0279 (0.0341)	0.00413 (0.0286)	-0.0225 (0.0213)	-0.0729 (0.122)	-0.262* (0.139)
South	-0.0326 (0.0449)	-0.00709 (0.0377)	0.00875 (0.0281)	0.0674 (0.171)	0.189 (0.191)
% Black	-0.0785 (0.128)	-0.0633 (0.107)	-0.0828 (0.0800)	-0.0863 (0.447)	-0.675 (0.530)
% Hispanic	0.155* (0.0938)	0.0876 (0.0787)	-0.0401 (0.0588)	-0.0854 (0.356)	-1.023** (0.383)
% Dem Vote in City	0.0923 (0.174)	0.0662 (0.146)	0.235** (0.109)	0.0676 (0.720)	2.211*** (0.753)
% Dem Vote in State	-0.218 (0.246)	-0.200 (0.207)	-0.183 (0.154)	-0.319 (1.039)	-0.576 (1.065)
Constant	0.113 (0.117)	0.104 (0.0978)	0.0182 (0.0730)	0.827* (0.454)	0.0228 (0.492)
Observations	510	510	510	80	51
$R^2$	0.066	0.033	0.032	0.028	0.358

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A4: **Contextual Variables — Former Mayors Only**. See Table 3 for model definitions.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Female	-0.494 (0.380)	-0.127 (0.407)	-0.931 (0.746)	1.699 (1.127)	-1.338 (0.893)
Black	-0.778* (0.408)	-1.012** (0.496)	-1.269* (0.757)	-1.016 (0.845)	-0.446 (1.001)
Hispanic	-0.198 (0.511)	-0.830 (0.750)	-0.861 (1.041)	-1.903* (1.078)	0.403 (1.577)
Democrat	-0.268 (0.254)	0.252 (0.310)	0.314 (0.421)	1.391*** (0.523)	0.131 (0.595)
Independent	-2.834*** (0.739)	-2.731*** (1.036)	0 (.)	0.0201 (1.457)	0 (.)
Constant	-1.123*** (0.198)	-1.948*** (0.256)	-2.640*** (0.348)	-0.0201 (0.352)	0.135 (0.486)
Observations	598	598	478	91	59
Pseudo $R^2$	0.077	0.069	0.027	0.108	0.035

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A5: **Logit Models — Individual Variables.** See Table 3 for model definitions.

	(1) Candidate	(2) Nominee	(3) Winner	(4) Nominee	(5) Winner
Largest City in State	0.997*** (0.271)	0.724** (0.322)	0.263 (0.430)	-0.445 (0.500)	-0.534 (0.816)
State Capital	0.0846 (0.284)	0.205 (0.330)	-0.107 (0.455)	0.353 (0.559)	-1.762* (1.001)
Strong Mayor System	0.676** (0.290)	0.717** (0.351)	1.260** (0.537)	0.202 (0.562)	0.529 (0.924)
Mayoral Term Limits	0.233 (0.260)	0.0794 (0.312)	-0.449 (0.460)	-0.293 (0.493)	-1.386* (0.824)
South	-0.325 (0.351)	-0.240 (0.417)	0.261 (0.570)	0.0353 (0.703)	1.636 (1.124)
% Black	-0.308 (0.899)	-0.198 (1.070)	-1.715 (1.509)	0.324 (1.815)	-5.656* (3.291)
% Hispanic	1.111 (0.687)	0.997 (0.826)	-1.056 (1.356)	0.0475 (1.422)	-7.564*** (2.731)
% Dem Vote in City	0.101 (1.294)	0.0190 (1.543)	4.033* (2.080)	-0.583 (2.882)	17.99*** (6.409)
% Dem Vote in State	-0.442 (1.841)	-0.618 (2.165)	-2.085 (2.796)	-0.0619 (4.223)	-6.329 (6.270)
Constant	-2.517*** (0.879)	-2.796*** (1.032)	-4.495*** (1.348)	1.016 (1.857)	-3.541 (2.785)
Observations	585	585	585	85	55
Pseudo $R^2$	0.062	0.042	0.070	0.019	0.318

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A6: **Logit Models — Contextual Variables.** See Table 3 for model definitions.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Candidate	Nominee	Winner	Nominee	Winner
Female	-0.670* (0.402)	-0.307 (0.432)	-1.024 (0.748)	1.526 (1.145)	-1.322 (0.923)
Black	-0.829* (0.436)	-1.146** (0.550)	-1.235 (0.760)	-1.203 (0.879)	-0.100 (1.104)
Hispanic	-0.185 (0.519)	-0.820 (0.755)	-0.907 (1.044)	-1.824* (1.066)	0.248 (1.578)
Democrat	-0.318 (0.266)	0.206 (0.323)	0.275 (0.424)	1.285** (0.529)	0.223 (0.614)
Independent	-2.935*** (0.743)	-2.805*** (1.038)	0 (.)	-0.0276 (1.459)	0 (.)
Constant	-0.944*** (0.208)	-1.788*** (0.266)	-2.439*** (0.350)	0.0276 (0.358)	0.190 (0.493)
Observations	523	523	410	86	55
Pseudo $R^2$	0.090	0.079	0.029	0.099	0.031

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A7: **Logit Models — Individual Variables — Former Mayors Only.** See Table 3 for model definitions.

	(1) Candidate	(2) Nominee	(3) Winner	(4) Nominee	(5) Winner
Largest City in State	1.054*** (0.282)	0.835** (0.335)	0.285 (0.433)	-0.290 (0.519)	-0.823 (0.868)
State Capital	0.00948 (0.300)	0.178 (0.346)	-0.0311 (0.454)	0.413 (0.589)	-1.258 (1.000)
Strong Mayor System	0.741** (0.304)	0.689* (0.367)	1.306** (0.545)	-0.0524 (0.579)	0.594 (0.933)
Mayoral Term Limits	0.221 (0.272)	0.0362 (0.327)	-0.546 (0.468)	-0.326 (0.503)	-1.472* (0.817)
South	-0.306 (0.366)	-0.0871 (0.436)	0.296 (0.580)	0.304 (0.720)	1.055 (1.119)
% Black	-0.457 (0.926)	-0.561 (1.116)	-1.677 (1.480)	-0.354 (1.836)	-4.344 (3.307)
% Hispanic	1.243* (0.727)	0.996 (0.876)	-0.819 (1.359)	-0.402 (1.463)	-7.021** (2.761)
% Dem Vote in City	0.648 (1.366)	0.737 (1.636)	4.537** (2.146)	0.330 (2.967)	17.12*** (6.612)
% Dem Vote in State	-1.772 (1.993)	-2.259 (2.354)	-3.460 (2.955)	-1.481 (4.309)	-6.084 (6.524)
Constant	-2.067** (0.929)	-2.244** (1.089)	-3.995*** (1.379)	1.445 (1.893)	-3.190 (2.804)
Observations	510	510	510	80	51
Pseudo $R^2$	0.072	0.048	0.080	0.022	0.330

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table A8: **Logit Models — Contextual Variables — Former Mayors Only.** See Table 3 for model definitions.

VARIABLES	(1) Congress	(2) Senate	(3) Governor	(4) AnyHigher	(5) Recruited
Democrat	-0.25 (0.51)	0.28 (0.48)	1.11** (0.52)	0.83 (0.53)	-0.01 (0.57)
MinorityMayor	-0.52 (0.64)	-0.61 (0.54)	-0.61 (0.58)	-0.69 (0.58)	0.36 (0.67)
FemaleMayor	-0.91 (0.62)	-0.98** (0.50)	-1.60*** (0.53)	-1.01* (0.53)	-0.16 (0.59)
LongServingMayor	-0.74 (0.48)	0.13 (0.44)	0.41 (0.49)	0.39 (0.49)	1.62*** (0.57)
Constant	-0.03 (0.47)	0.50 (0.46)	0.34 (0.47)	0.70 (0.48)	0.45 (0.50)
Observations	90	90	91	91	92

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table A9: **Individual Variables.** The dependent variable (models 1-4) is a binary indicator of whether a mayor rated a higher office as appealing or very appealing. For model 5 it is an indicator of whether the mayor reported being seriously recruited to run for another office. All coefficients are from logit models with standard errors in parentheses.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Congress	Senate	Governor	AnyHigher	Recruited
PercentBlack	1.36 (2.33)	2.49 (2.27)	5.69* (3.32)	3.82 (3.33)	0.65 (4.27)
PercentHispanic	-1.17 (1.82)	-0.43 (1.58)	-1.49 (1.74)	-0.87 (1.66)	-1.66 (2.06)
CityProportionDemocrat	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)
StrongMayor	-0.72 (0.69)	0.38 (0.62)	0.32 (0.71)	0.75 (0.73)	0.37 (0.92)
StateProportionDemocrat	0.92 (4.83)	7.08 (5.05)	4.80 (5.11)	2.51 (5.15)	-11.29* (6.08)
StateCapital	1.18 (0.80)	0.20 (0.78)	1.84 (1.20)	1.37 (1.17)	-0.36 (1.29)
LargestInState	-0.64 (0.83)	0.58 (0.78)	0.56 (0.96)	0.34 (0.92)	1.46 (1.39)
LogDistanceToDC	1.04* (0.59)	0.38 (0.48)	1.53** (0.63)	1.07* (0.60)	0.93 (0.73)
LogPopulation	0.15 (0.44)	-0.02 (0.42)	-0.51 (0.47)	-0.61 (0.47)	-1.12** (0.56)
Constant	-9.16 (6.41)	-2.83 (5.91)	-7.26 (6.65)	-0.91 (6.36)	12.73 (7.83)
Observations	69	69	70	70	71

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table A10: **Contextual Variables.** The dependent variable (models 1-4) is a binary indicator of whether a mayor rated a higher office as appealing or very appealing. For model 5 it is an indicator of whether the mayor reported being seriously recruited to run for another office. All coefficients are from logit models with standard errors in parentheses.