



A Deliberative Conception of Reproductive Politics: Georgia House Bill 481

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigates the research question, "What economic, political, and cultural factors explain the voting behavior on Georgia House Bill 481?" Georgia House Bill 481 (HB 481) is a proposed anti-abortion act that would ban abortion access beyond six weeks with minimal exceptions in the state of Georgia. This study thoroughly observes twelve independent variables: party ID, race, gender, religion, age, MSA, marital status, parental status, the familial status of daughters, the parental status of sons, years of service, and the branch of the Georgia state legislature. The dependent variable utilized in this research is the individual votes submitted by each Georgia state legislator on Georgia House Bill 481. Correlation analysis and eleven cross-tabulations describe the relationship each independent variable has with the dependent variable. The cross-tabulation analyses show that five of the twelve independent variables are statistically significant. Party ID, race, and gender are the most reliable predictors of legislative voting behavior on HB 481.



Research Question

What economic, political, and cultural factors explain the voting behavior of Georgia state legislators on HB 481?

Literature Review

- Over the past two decades, political polarization has doubled—increasing party apathy and extreme partisan legislation across America (Doherty, 2014). Abortion is one of the most polarizing issues in our nation.
- *Roe v Wade* went into effect in 1973—protecting a woman's right to abortion (*The Chicago Tribune*, 2001).
- Following the establishment of *Roe*, the pro-life community attempts to overturn *Roe* by implementing policies that block abortion access.
- Donald Trump fulfilled his campaign's promises by appointing two pro-life Supreme Court Justices, permitting states to de-fund Planned Parenthood, and by implementing the global gag rule.
- Conservative lawmakers view these political changes as an opportunity to advance a strict anti-abortion agenda; therefore, intentionally introduce unconstitutional abortion bans, desiring an opportunity to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (Mazzei, 2019).
- Kemp co-authored Georgia's six-week abortion ban known as HB 481 or The Living Infants Fairness Equality (LIFE) Act.
- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Planned Parenthood, and the Center for Reproductive Rights immediately filed a challenge to block Kemp's legislation (Desanctis, 2019).
- A federal judge is currently blocking HB481 from going into effect.

Data and Methods

The unit of analysis for this study are the Georgia state legislators. The dependent variable utilized in this research are the individual votes submitted by each Georgia state legislator on Georgia House Bill 481. The independent variables are party ID, race, gender, religion, age, MSA, marital status, parental status, the familial status of daughters, the parental status of sons, years of service, and the branch of the Georgia state legislature.

Table 1: Variables, Characteristics, and Sources

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.	Source(s)
VOTE	0	1	0.566	0.497	Georgia General Assembly
PARTY	0	1	0.586	0.494	Georgia General Assembly
RACE	0	1	0.705	0.457	Georgia General Assembly
GENDER	0	1	0.682	0.467	Georgia General Assembly
RELIGION	0	1	0.872	0.379	Georgia General Assembly, campaign websites, social media platforms
AGE	0	1	0.886	0.318	Georgia General Assembly, campaign websites, social media platforms
MSA/NON MSA	0	1	0.345	0.477	Georgia Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas
MARITAL STATUS	0	1	0.782	0.414	Georgia General Assembly
PARENTAL STATUS	0	1	0.809	0.394	Georgia General Assembly
DAUGHTERS?	0	1	0.609	0.498	Georgia General Assembly, campaign websites, social media platforms
SONS?	0	1	0.595	0.492	Georgia General Assembly, campaign websites, social media platforms
YEARS OF SERVICE	0	44	6.78	5.83	Georgia General Assembly
BRANCH	0	1	0.236	0.426	Georgia General Assembly

Hypotheses

- H1: A Republican legislator is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a Democratic legislator.
- H2: A white legislator is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a non-white legislator.
- H3: A male legislator is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a female legislator.
- H4: A religious legislator is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a non-religious legislator.
- H5: A legislator older than 65 is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a legislator younger than 65.
- H6: A legislator from a rural area (non-MSA) is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a legislator from an urban area (MSA).
- H7: A married legislator is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a single legislator.
- H8: A legislator with children is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a legislator without children.
- H9: A legislator with a daughter is more likely to vote against HB 481 than a legislator without a daughter.
- H10: A legislator with a son is more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than a legislator without a son.
- H11: Legislators who have served over ten years are most likely to vote in favor of HB 481.
- H12: House legislators are more likely to vote in favor of HB 481 than Senators.

Findings

Table 2 shows a correlation analysis of the vote and Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 show cross-tabulations for the key statistically significant variables.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of the Vote on HB 481

Independent Variables	Vote
PARTY	0.936**
RACE	0.717**
GENDER	0.483*
RELIGION	0.121
AGE	0.148
MSA/NON-MSA	0.365*
MARITAL STATUS	0.411*
PARENTAL STATUS	0.272
DAUGHTERS?	0.178
SONS?	0.190
YEARS OF SERVICE	-0.074
BRANCH	0.099

N=221
*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 3: Cross-tabulation Vote by Party

	DEMOCRAT	REPUBLICAN	MISSING	TOTAL
NO	90 98.9%	6 4.6%	0	96 43.4%
YES	1 1.1%	124 95.4%	1	125 56.6%
MISSING	4	10	5	1
TOTAL	91 100%	130 100%	5	221

Cramer's V: 0.936 **
P<.05**

Table 4: Cross-tabulation Vote by Race

	NON-WHITE	WHITE	MISSING	TOTAL
NO	64 98.5%	32 20.5%	0	96 43.4%
YES	1 1.5%	124 79.5%	0	125 56.6%
MISSING	3	11	5	19
TOTAL	65 100%	156 100%	5	221

Cramer's V: 0.717 **
P<.05**

Table 5: Cross-tabulation Vote by Gender

	FEMALE	MALE	MISSING	TOTAL
NO	55 78.6%	41 27.2%	0	96 43.4%
YES	15 21.4%	110 72.8%	0	125 56.6%
MISSING	3	11	5	19
TOTAL	70 100%	151 100%	5	221

Cramer's V: 0.483**
P<.05**

Table 6: Cross-tabulation Vote by MSA/non-MSA

	URBAN	RURAL	MISSING	TOTAL
NO	82 56.6%	80 40.8%	0	96 43.4%
YES	63 43.4%	116 81.6%	0	125 56.6%
MISSING	9	5	5	19
TOTAL	145 100%	76 100%	5	221

Cramer's V: 0.365**
P<.05**

Conclusion

This study finds strong support for H1, H2, H3, H6, and H7. Party ID and race are the most significant independent variables:

- There are zero non-white Republican legislators in the Georgia General Assembly
- Only 6 Republicans voted against HB481
- 124 white legislators voted in favor of HB 481 (79.5% of white legislators)
- 1 non-white legislator voted in favor of HB 481 (1.5% of non-white legislators)

Gender differences are conditioned by race:

- 70 women voted on HB 481
- 15 voted in favor of HB 481 – all of which are white
- 0 non-white female legislators voted in favor of HB 481

Until hyper-polarization diminishes among American citizens, extreme legislation will continue to be drafted and party affiliation will likely remain a critical determining factor for predicting voting behavior.