Luck of the Draw?

Members' Bills, the Electoral Connection & Party List Placement

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Abstract

The legislative agenda in most parliamentary systems is controlled tightly by the government and bills offered by individual members' of parliament have low rates of success. Yet, MPs do seek to present (private) members' bills even where the rate of adoption is very low. We argue that members' bill serve as an electoral connection but also as an opportunity for MPs to signal competence to their co-partisans. To demonstrate the presence of an electoral connection we take advantage of an natural experiment in New Zealand's House of Representatives that takes the form of ballot from which members' bills are drawn randomly and show that survey respondents approve more of electorate MPs whose bills were drawn on the ballot. With respect to the party, members' bills are also shown to positively affect the MPs' place on the party list. In addition, we show that MPs respond to the incentives created by the voters and parties' willingness to reward legislative effort and, consequently, that electorally vulnerable legislators are more likely to place members' bills on the ballot.

1   Introduction

Parliamentary democracy is sometimes described as a chain of delegation; from voters to parliamentarians, from parliamentarians to the cabinet, from cabinets to ministers, and from ministers to the bureaucracy (Strøm, 2000). Each link in the chain of delegation may exhibit the common problems associated with principal-agent relationships. An interesting feature of this view of democracy is that, in contrast with a classical view of hierarchical organizations in which the principal at the top of the hierarchy is seen as wielding the greatest amount of power, the cabinet is typically seen as the most influential actor in the parliamentary chain of delegation. Thus, we appear to be more prone to ask whether voters hold governments accountable than their immediate agents, that is, their representatives in parliament (see, e.g., Powell, 2000; Powell & Whitten, 1993; Hellwig & Samuels, 2008).[1] Indeed, the view that parliament has limited influence on government policy is quite common and often the role of parliament is seen as being reduced to providing the cabinet with support in parliament and protection against votes of no-confidence.

This view of parliamentary democracy raises questions about whether the role of MPs extends beyond providing the government with legislative support and whether voters hold them accountable for their legislative behavior rather than for government performance. The latter can be seen as a precondition for MPs acting as faithful agents of their constituents. Without a promise of a reward, MPs have little incentive for pursuing their constituents' interests and are, instead, likely to align more closely with their party leadership (Kam, 2009).

The prospects of winning re-election is generally seen as one of the primary motives of legislators (Mayhew, 1974; Rae, 1971), which help align legislators' behavior with voters' interests. There is a rich literature, originating with the study of U.S. legislators (Cain et al., 1987), that argues that legislators have an incentive to cultivate a personal vote in order to maximize their chances of retaining office. Others have noted that the incentives to do so are also present in other political system but that the incentives vary in their intensity depending on, in particular, whether the type of electoral system allows legislators to translate personal following into more favorable electoral prospects (Carey & Shugart, 1996). The electoral system is, however, not the only important factor as Cox's (1987) work suggests — though sharing an electoral system with the U.S., legislators in the U.K. have shown themselves to be far less concerned with building a personal vote. Cheibub & Limongi (2002) point out that this is likely a function of the degree of centralization of decision-making, i.e., individual legislators' lack of ability to exert influence on policy. Martin (2013), similarly, draws attention to differences in how legislators cultivate a personal vote via fiscal legislative particularism (as in the US) or extra-legislative constituency service (as in Britain) and argues that particularistic mechanisms strengthen committees and generate differences in

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[1]Of course, the parliamentarians are the conduit for the voters' pleasure or displeasure with the government.

personal vote building activity on the different sides of the Atlantic.

In New Zealand, as in many parliamentary systems, control of the legislative agenda is firmly in the hands of the cabinet and while individual MPs can propose 'private member bills' or 'member bills' the right to do so is often restricted — and where it is not, a great majority of 'member bills' die in committees, are not placed on the agenda, or fail to be adopted. Mattson (1995), studying West European parliaments finds, e.g., that the passage rate of private members' bill ranges from 0 to 46% with a mean of 18.4% and median of 14%. New Zealand follows a similar pattern. During the 2002-05 electoral term eight of 34 members' bills were adopted while in the 2005-08 term only three out of 38 members' bills were passed into law (Spindler, 2009). Nevertheless, the mere act of proposing legislation may be important for MPs to signal effort to their constituents. Mattson (1995) also notes that there is significant variation in the ability of MPs to propose private members' bills, with majoritarian systems generally being more restrictive.

New Zealand is an interesting case for examining the incentive to propose 'member bills' and the rewards from doing so for two reasons. First, since the 1996 election, New Zealand has used a mixed member proportional system for parliamentary elections in which 70 members are elected in single member districts under plurality rule while the remaining 50 members are elected using proportional representation from a single national district.[2] Voters cast two votes; one for a candidate in their constituency and one for a national party list. The incentive to cultivate a personal vote thus varies among New Zealand MPs with those elected from the party list having less ability to gain from a personal following.[3]

Second, since 1993 the number of member bills has been limited by only allowing eight member bills on the Order Paper for first reading each member's day, which are every second Wednesday. When space becomes available, member bills are selected by lot to be placed on the Order Paper. MPs can enter bills in the ballot at any time but on average a ballot is held about once a month. Thus, random selection determines which MPs get to propose legislation and having it debated in the legislature. The ballot method was seen as a fairer and more efficient method of member bill selection than the previous 'first come, first serve' method (Spindler, 2009).

The fact that member bills are selected randomly has distinct advantages for evaluating whether legislative behavior affects voters' evaluation of MPs.[4] Where MPs do not face restrictions on proposing legislation, or where proposals are selected by some other non-random method, issues of endogeneity arise. For example, if electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely to propose member bills then estimates of their effect would tend to bias

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[2]Currently seven of the 70 single member districts are reserved for the Māori roll.

[3]The effect of these difference in MPs' incentive to cultivate a personal vote have been examined in other context where mixed member electoral systems are used such as in Germany, Mexico, Wales, and Scotland. See, e.g., Moser & Scheiner (2011); Ugues et al. (2012); Stratmann & Baur (2002); Klingeman & Wessels (2001); Kite & Crampton (2007); Lundberg (2006); Bradbury & Mitchell (2007).

[4]Loewen et al. (2014) have similarly taken advantage of random selection of which MPs are allowed to propose private members' bills in the Canadian Parliament.

estimates of the effect of member bills on electoral strength downwards. Exploiting this natural experiment helps resolve the endogeneity problem and allows us to estimate the causal effect of legislative action on voters' evaluations of MPs.

Below we examine several facets of the electoral connection between voters and their representatives. We consider whether the decision to submit a bill for the members' bills ballot is motivated by MPs' concerns with their personal vote or, perhaps, whether they serve as a tool for MPs to signal their quality to the party leadership. We then consider whether proposing a bill for the ballot and having one's bill drawn causes voters to have a more favorable view of the proposing MP. We begin by briefly reviewing the literature on the electoral connection in parliamentary systems before deriving several hypotheses about the behavior of MPs and voters.

2   The Electoral Connection

Mixed member electoral systems have become increasingly popular over the last couple of decades (Shugart & Wattenberg, 2001). One of the reasons for their popularity is that they are often seen as encompassing the positive qualities of both proportional representation and majoritarian electoral systems, i.e., they offer a way of attaining both proportional legislative representation and encouraging close ties between citizens and their representatives at the constituency level. Such electoral systems create two classes of MPs — those elected from the party list in the proportional representation part of the system (list MPs) and those elected in the single member districts (constituency MPs). A number of scholars have exploited this fact to examine how electoral systems shape the behavior of legislators (see, e.g., Ugues et al., 2012; Moser & Scheiner, 2011; Stratmann & Baur, 2002). As the fortunes of MPs elected in single member districts are tied more closely to the voters in their district, they have a bigger incentive to build a personal vote (Carey & Shugart, 1996). In contrast, list MPs are generally more dependent on their party as electoral success depends on occupying a seat sufficiently high on the party list. In addition, smaller districts may offer greater rewards for geographically targeted benefits or pork barrel projects — both because single member districts tend to be smaller and the incumbent MP can freely claim credit for such policies as his co-partisan MPs have little incentive to challenge her claims.

These differences in the roles of MPs in New Zealand are also recognized formally to a degree — constituency MPs receive greater allowances for office and staff support than list MPs do.[5]. The incentives to engage in constituency service have been studied most extensively in majoritarian electoral systems, e.g., in the U.S. (Mayhew, 1974) and in the U.K. (Cain et al., 1987). These incentives may be magnified in MMP systems where rewarding constituency service does not necessitate abandoning one's favored party entirely as the voter

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[5]See, e.g., (Banducci & Karp, 1998). Constituency MPs receive a constituency allowance, ranging from $8,000 to $20,000, on top of the $7,000 basic allowance given to ordinary MPs.XXX add cite

can engage in split ticket voting — casting the 'electorate vote' to reward an incumbent and the 'party vote' for the most preferred party.

The electoral connection has been examined in a number countries and in line with this literature we expect electorate MPs in New Zealand to seek to cultivate a personal following with the aim of helping them win re-election.[6] Bowler (2010) argues, in the context of the UK parliament, that private member bills constitute one form of cultivating a personal vote. Loewen et al. (2014), similarly, suggest that in the face of limited opportunities to claim credit for policy initiatives or service, they will welcome any opportunity to increase name recognition or popularity. There are certainly reasons to be skeptical of the claim that member bills have much of an electoral impact and that other forms of constituency service may be more effective. Indeed, it appears fairly unlikely that voters pay much attention to what goes on within legislatures except maybe for the major issues on the policy agenda. When it comes to member's bills, which generally have little chance of success, we can be virtually certain that the vast majority of voters pay little attention to their content or who proposes them. That, however, does not mean that member's bills do not have an effect. While voters may pay limited attention to the day-to-day work of parliament, proposing member's bills may attract the attention of political journalists and help MPs establish themselves even if the bill itself does not receive much media coverage.[7] But occasionally they do. Writing in the New Zealand Herald, David Farrar notes, e.g., that

> [h]aving your bill selected from the ballot can be life changing for an MP. It can take you from an obscure backbencher to a national figure. Sue Bradford was already well known before her anti-smacking law was selected, but the bill saw her become one of the highest profile MPs." (Farrar, 2012)

Proposing member's bill may, thus, help MPs gain name recognition and even popularity.

While, on average, proposing a member's bill does not bring a MP a lot of attention, having proposed a bill may still allow the MP to signal effort and dedication to her constituents. This, of course, does not require media attention. MPs can highlight their legislative efforts in campaigning in their constituency and some of the parties do highlight member's bills on their websites. It may be the case that such efforts have little or no effect. Even so, MPs may still belief that proposing member's bill helps win votes — or be unwilling to risk not trying. Even if MPs expect the benefits to be fairly small it must be kept in mind that proposing a member's bill it is generally not a costly exercise — they are rarely substantial pieces of legislation — and, moreover, that the government maintains a firm grip on the legislative agenda. To put it bluntly, what else is a backbencher to do?

Bowler (2010) finds that MPs in marginal seats in the UK propose private member bills more frequently and Kellermann (2013) comes to a similar conclusion with regard to

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[6]See, e.g., Mezey (2008), Denemark (2000), Samuels (2000), Chubb (1963), Crisp et al. (2004), and Bogdanor (1985).

[7]While most member's bills don't attract much media attention, it is not that uncommon. A search for "member's bill" on the New Zealand Herald website turns up 923 stories containing the term.

early day motions. The incentive to propose member's bills, or engage in other forms of constituency work, is a function of the MPs electoral security. MPs in safe seats have little to gain for proposing a member's bill. In marginal districts, a member's bill is more likely to have a decisive effect on the outcome. While New Zealand MPs face similar incentives, those incentives are slightly more complicated because of the electoral system being a mixed-member proportional system where candidates for office may simultaneously run as electorate candidates and on the party list.[8] Thus, the meaning of occupying a safe seat is not as clear in New Zealand as where elections are conducted using majoritarian methods.

New Zealand MPs can attain electoral security in two ways. The MP can run in a 'safe' single member district, i.e., where her party traditionally wins large majorities or where the candidate enjoys the support of the voters for other reasons. We expect electorally vulnerable MPs to offer more members' bills than electorally secure MPs.

Hypothesis 1 *Electorate MPs in safe seats are less likely to propose members' bills.*

Alternatively, electoral security can be achieved by obtaining a seat relatively high on the party list. The proportional part of New Zealand's mixed-member system is based on a single national district. A candidate placed low on the party list is vulnerable in two ways. First, a decline in her party's vote share reduces the total number of votes allocated to the party. Second, because the electoral system is compensatory, the number of list seats allocated to a party depends on the number of electorate seats won by the party. Thus, the number of electorate seats won by the party can affect a list MP's chances of winning a seat. However, in that instance the list candidate's chances are only affected by the success of electorate candidates that are lower, or not present, on the party list.

While the importance of a personal vote to electorate candidates, and, therefore, the potential value of offering a members' bill is clear, it is not obvious that list candidates benefit in the same way. While the individual MP's legislative activity may benefit the party, the benefits for the MP are more diffuse. Offering members' bills may help the party win votes but the benefits accrue to the party as a whole but are unlikely to have a decisive effect on the MP's individual electoral fortune.[9] If members' bills have a positive effect on party support, the diffuse benefits may result in an under-supply of members' bills as the party's MPs have an incentive to free-ride on the effort of their co-partisans. While list MPs are unlikely to be motivated by personal vote incentives, offering members' bills may also be a way of building a reputations and to signal ambition, legislative competence, or other qualities valued by the party. List MPs may, therefore, face similar incentives as electorate MPs to offer members' bills but their audience is different, i.e., list MPs offer members' bills in the hope of obtaining a place higher on the party list. List MPs that face greater electoral uncertainty, that is, were lower on the party list in the past election, are expected to put

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[8]In 2008, almost all the MPs that ran as electorate candidate were also present on the party list.

[9]It is, of course, not necessarily the case that offering members' bills benefits the party. A high number of members' bills offered by a party's MPs might be interpreted as a lack of party discipline and legislative effectiveness, especially in the case of government parties.

greater effort into offering members' bills.

Hypothesis 2 *List MPs high on the party list are less likely to propose members' bills.*

The great majority of elected MPs, about 89% in 2008, run both as electorate and list candidates. The electoral rules imply that those elected from the party list failed to win a plurality in their electorate. In some sense, then, list MPs are more vulnerable as they are, a priori, less likely to pull of a win in their electorate and their chances on reelection are, therefore, almost entirely dependent on obtaining a favorable spot on the party list. More generally, MPs that are electorally vulnerable *both* in their electorate and occupied a seat low on the party list ought to face greater incentives to offer members' bills.

Hypothesis 3 *MPs that are electorally vulnerable both in their electorate and as list candidates are more likely to propose members' bills.*

The above hypotheses are predicated on the notion that offering members' bills does influence how voters, and parties, evaluate the candidates. Members' bill may do so in several ways. First, voters may notice the effort of MPs in proposing members' bill. It does, however, seem somewhat unlikely except for those voters that would be directly influenced by the legislation — or may, perhaps, have lobbied for it — or in exceptional cases where members' bills have addressed highly salient or controversial issues. An example of such a members' bill was the *Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill* introduced in 2012 that expanded the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions. Second, having proposed members' bills may be useful in the MP's reelection campaign both in terms of signaling her policy emphasis and as concrete evidence of the MP's legislative effort. Third, as noted above, journalists may pay attention to members' bills. While the bills' content is not always of great importance, they may still serve to draw attention to the MP. Members' bills may be more likely to be offered by backbenchers with high ambitions, MPs that are electorally vulnerable, and mavericks — all of which have the potential of making a good news story. The expectations about the effects of proposing members' bill are straightforward — proposing members' bills serves to improve the MPs' standing in her electorate.

Hypothesis 4 *MPs that propose members' bills are viewed more favorable by voters in their electorate.*

In addition to influencing voters' perception of the MP, members' bills may influence the opinion of the party and its leadership of the MP. The party leaders, and its members more generally, may consider a MP's effort in proposing members' bills to be an indicator of the MP's ambition and legislative effort, which in turn may influence the MP's rank on the party's national list. The method of establishing the party list varies across political parties in New Zealand although a review of the parties' constitutions reveal some shared features.[10]

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[10]`www.labour.org.nz/sites/default/files/constitution.pdf`. Accessed 3/1/2014; `www.mynational.org.nz/Attachment?Action=View&Attachment_id=565`. Accessed 3/1/2014; `www.greens.org.nz/sites/default/files/greenparty_constitution_110602new.pdf`. Accessed 3/1/2014.

First, there is a more or less open process where party list candidates are nominated by dues-paying party members or by constituency organizations. These nominations are then collected by the party's board of trustees at the central party headquarters and are then redistributed to regional list caucuses who then accept or reject those nominees using an "exhaustive ballot" system. The list of accepted candidates are then returned to the party headquarters, at which point a list ranking committee, made up of various party leaders and caucus members, ranks the candidates and establishes a final list based on perceived candidate quality and the need to have a descriptively representative party list. Thus, list MPs rely on the support of their fellow party members at three critical points: Getting nominated, getting accepted by the regional caucus, and then getting placed on the final party list by the members of the list ranking committee. Importantly, the level of support by each of these actors may be influenced by the MP's activity in proposing member bills.

There may, however, be important differences across parties in terms of whether proposing members' bill is seen in a positive or a negative light. In particular, government and opposition MPs are likely to face very different incentives. Government MPs are likely to be discouraged from offering members' bills as their parties control the legislative agenda. That is, legislation that is considered to have merit, or be sufficiently important, should find its way onto the government's legislative agenda. Members' bill offered by government MPs, thus, may hint at legislative dissent and may reflect poorly on the party's cohesion or bring up policy issues that the party is divided over (Spindler, 2009). Opposition MPs are in quite a different position as their parties have limited opportunities to influence the legislative agenda and members' bill can serve both to advantage the parties' agenda and, possible, to have a debate about policy issues that the government party has little interest or would rather avoid. Thus, in contrast to the government parties, the opposition parties appear not to be concerned with their MPs offering private member bills. Under the current government, this is, e.g., reflected by the fact that stories or information about members' bills are easily found on the opposition parties' websites whereas similar information is not easily found on the National Party's website.[11] This is also borne out by our data. On average, opposition MPs proposed three times as many members' bills.

MP's activity in offering members' bill can, therefore, affect their chances of obtaining a favorable seat on the party list. However, the effect is likely to be different between government and opposition MPs. Opposition MPs are more likely to benefit from offering members' bills as they don't represent a challenge to the party's agenda. That is, opposition MPs can use members' bills to signal their competence without any of the potential costs that government MPs may face from not toeing the party line.

Hypothesis 5 *Opposition MPs that offer members' bills during an electoral term or more likely to obtain a seat higher on the party list in the subsequent election.*

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[11]http://www.national.org.nz. Accessed 3/1/14; https://www.greens.org.nz/bills. Accessed 3/1/14; http://nzfirst.org.nz/what-we-stand-for. Accessed 3/1/14;

Government MPs find themselves in a more difficult position. While they stand to benefit from signaling effort and competence to their constituents by offering members' bill, doing so may not serve their party's purposes. Government parties may seek to curb personal vote seeking by punishing such behavior by placing the MP lower on the party's list — if government parties provide disincentives for offering members' bills for their MPs, government MPs are expected to careful tailoring their bills to avoid issues that are salient to their party. Overall, the effect of members' bills on government MPs list placement is ambiguous — it should generally be negative but if the MPs are successful in proposing bills that the government party is largely indifferent to then there would be no, or negligible, effect. However, members' bills should not positively affect government MPs' list placement as government parties' have little incentive to encourage members' bills.

To examine how the electoral connection conditions the behavior of MPs in New Zealand, we focus on members' bill proposal in the 49th parliament, using the results and party lists in the 2008 and 2011 elections to evaluate hypotheses about whether the more electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely to propose members' bills and, subsequently, whether their activity had the intended consequences. To answer the latter question we take advantage of a natural experiment generated by the fact that the opportunity to introduce members' bills in parliament is randomly assigned on the members' bill ballot.

3 Empirical Analysis

The 49th parliament was the fifth parliament elected since the implementation of the mixed-member proportional reform in the general election of 1996. Under the leadership of John Key, it was the center-right National Party's second time in government since the mixed-member proportional electoral system was adopted (Levine & Roberts, 2010). The National Party victory of 2008 followed a series of Labour party governments under Helen Clark during the 46th-48th parliaments (2000-2008).

The data on members' bills placed and selected on the ballot were gathered from the New Zealand parliamentary website.[12] Constituency level electoral results for the 2008 and 2011 elections were obtained from the constituency level electoral archive (Kollman et al., 2013) while the party lists fielded by the parties in the same elections were obtained from the website of the New Zealand Electoral Commission.[13] For the analysis of the effects of members' bills on MP approval we used the 2011 New Zealand Election Study.[14]

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[12]http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/legislation/proposed-bills/. Accessed 2/22/2014.

[13]http://www.elections.org.nz/. Accessed 2/22/2014.

[14]http://www.nzes.org/
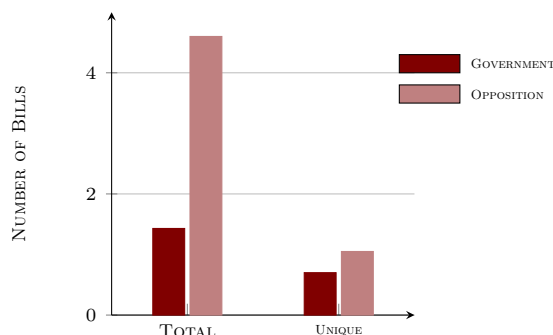
3.1   Proposing Members' Bills

The members' bill ballot is held whenever room opens on the Order Paper for each members' day, which typically means that a ballot is held once or twice a month. One or two bills are drawn on the ballot out of about 40 bills placed on the ballot by MPs each time. If a member's bill is not selected on the ballot, the MP is allowed to place the same bill on subsequent ballots. A total of 402 members' bill were placed on the ballot during the 49th parliament. The chances of success are fairly low. In the 49th parliament only 26 bills were drawn on the ballot (6.5%). Figure 1 graphs the average number of bills government and opposition MPs placed on the ballot during the 49th parliament. As one might expect, opposition MPs were more active when it comes to members' bills, placing a total of 330 bills on the ballot or on average 4.85 bills per MP. In contrast, government MPs placed 83 bills on the ballot, averaging only 1.43 bills per MP. Thus, only about 20% of all members' bills were placed by government MPs.

Figure 2 graphs the number of unique bills placed on the ballot by a MP as well as the number of attempts made. About 45% of the MPs didn't participate in the ballot at all. Of those that did take part, a plurality made only a single attempt. However, about 83% of the MPs who placed a bill on the ballot did so more than once. The great majority of the MPs, 71%, placed a single bill on the ballot with about 15% placing two separate bills on the ballot and 14% more than two.

To evaluate our first set of hypotheses, concerning the effect of electoral vulnerability on the incentive to place bills on the members' bill ballot, we consider the number of bills each MP placed on the members' ballot. As we discuss above, proposing members' bill can be seen to have an effect for different reasons. For example, if the MP seeks to signal legislative effort placing the same bill on the ballot repeatedly and proposing several different bills may be both be effective strategies, i.e., in either case her name appears on each ballot and

Figure 2: Bills Placed on the Ballot By MP:
Total Number of Bills & Unique Bills
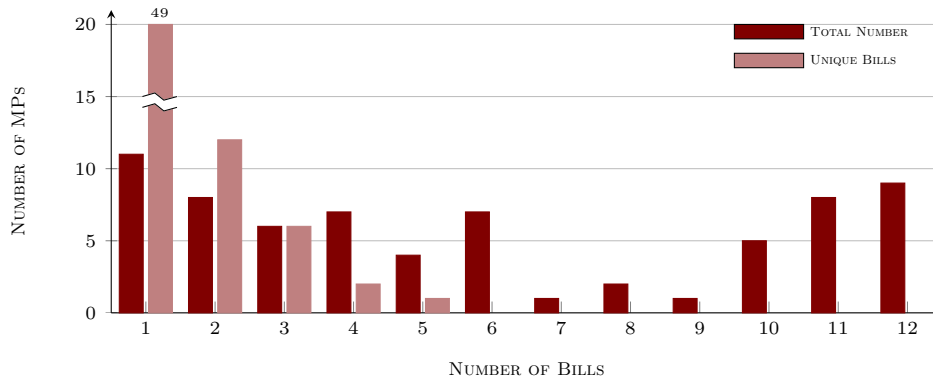
Source: New Zealand Parliament (www.parliament.nz)

is more likely to be noticed by party members or journalists. Similarly, if the benefits are only expected to be realized if the MP's bill is drawn and debated in parliament, however, then the number of attempts rather than the number of unique bills is more relevant for maximizing the probability of (one of) the MP's bills being selected. If, on the other hand, the MP is targeting his constituents the number of unique bills placed on the ballot may be more effective, i.e., the MP may benefit more from having advocated several different issues. For these reasons we measure the number of members' bills placed on the ballot in two different ways. First, the number of times the MP placed a bill on the members' bill ballot. Second, the number of unique bills the MP placed on the ballot.

Our key independent variables measure the MP's electoral safety. As the New Zealand uses a mixed-member proportional system, MPs can be vulnerable either because of their level of support in their electorate or because they occupy a seat relatively low on the party list. List Safety is the difference between the number of seats won by the MP's party in the 2008 election and the MP's place on the party list in the 2008 election. Similarly, SMD Safety is the MP's margin of victory in her electorate in the 2008 election. Higher values indicate in both instances a greater degree of electoral safety and the hypothesis that electoral safety matters is then supported if the estimated coefficients of the variables are positive. An interaction between the two variables is also considered as MPs that are both low on their party's list and have limited support in their electorate are the most vulnerable. In contrast, an MP that, e.g., won by a large margin in her electorate in 2008 has little reason to worry about her placement on the party list.

Several control variables are included in the estimated models. Gov't MP is an indicator variable coded one for government MPs and zero else. As we have argued that placing members' bills on the ballot is potentially seen as a rebelion for government MPs, we also examine an interaction between Gov't MP and SMD Safety. If that is the case, the

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coefficient for the interaction term should be negative, indicating that government MPs reduce their members' bill activity more rapidly than opposition MPs as their margin of victory in their electorate increases.[15] The mixed-member electoral system implies that the MPs face different incentives depending on whether the anticipating campaigning as electorate or list candidates (or both). To take account of these incentives we include a control for the MPs campaign in the 2008 election. The variables SMD ONLY and LIST ONLY indicate whether the MP ran, respectively, only in the electorate and only on the party list with the baseline category being MPs that both ran as electorate and list candidates.[16] MP POSITION is a count variable indicating the number of major responsibilities the MP had during the 49th parliamentary sitting, such as portfolios, committee seats, party leadership positions (e.g., party whip), Speaker of the House, or Attorney General. Finally, MIDTERM is an indicator variable for those MPs that exit parliament during the term or were elected during the parliamentary term in by-elections — and, thus, had fewer opportunities to place bills on the ballot.[17]

The dependent variables are counts of the number of members' bill placed on the ballot so it is appropriate to estimate the effects the explanatory variables with count models. The measure of members' bill activity that corresponds to the total number of (non-unique) bills placed on the ballot is over-dispersed, i.e., the variable's variance is larger than its mean, so negative binomial regressions are used when considering the total number of attempts. When examining the number of unique bills placed on the ballot, where over-dispersion is not a problem, we use Poisson regression models.

Table 1 shows the estimated count models. There is clear evidence that electoral vulnerability matters regardless of whether the dependent variable is the total number of members' bills attempts or the number of unique bills placed. Greater safety, whether in the electorate or on the party list, reduces the MP's members' bill activity. [Add substantive interpretation.] The coefficient for the interaction of the two electoral safety variables is correctly signed but is not statistically significant. Government MPs appear to be less likely to place bills on the ballot although the effect fails to reach the conventional levels of statistical significance ($p \in [.22 - .29]$). Similarly, the interaction between government MP and electoral safety for electorate MPs provides an indication that government MPs respond more sharply to electoral vulnerability although there is considerable statistical uncertainty about the effect.[18]

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[15] An interaction between LIST SAFETY and GOV'T MP is not considered because MPs that are vulnerable because of their position on the party list rely on their party to obtain a better place on the party list and, thus, do not face similar incentives to place bills on the ballot to begin with.

[16] We use the 2008 campaign as a proxy for the MPs expectations about whether she will campaign as an electorate and/or list candidate in the 2011 election.

[17] This is a rough measure since all exits and all by-elections don't occur at the same time but the substantive conclusions are not affected by the exclusion of the MPs that did not serve the full term.

[18] Government MPs should, similarly, be more sensitive to their safety on the party list and the evidence does, again, point in that direction but fails to reach the conventional levels of statistical significance. The results are not shown here but are available upon request.

Table 1: Member Bill Attempts & Electoral Safety: Count Models

	(1) All Attempts[†]	(2) All Attempts[†]	(3) All Attempts[‡]	(4) Unique Bills[‡]	(5) Unique Bills[‡]	(6) Unique Bills[†]
List Safety	-0.052***	-0.048***	-0.052***	-0.034***	-0.033***	-0.034***
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(0.0012)	(<0.001)
SMD Vote Safety	-1.41**	-0.89	-1.19*	-1.48***	-1.36**	-1.36**
	(0.024)	(0.20)	(0.090)	(0.0058)	(0.020)	(0.022)
List*SMD Safety		-0.066			-0.021	
		(0.15)			(0.59)	
Gov't*SMD Safety			-0.67			-0.32
			(0.49)			(0.66)
Gov't MP	-0.34	-0.35	-0.34	-0.28	-0.29	-0.32
	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.29)	(0.27)	(0.25)
SMD Only	0.97	0.73	0.83	0.58	0.50	0.51
	(0.26)	(0.41)	(0.35)	(0.46)	(0.54)	(0.53)
List Only	-0.30	-0.30	-0.29	-0.12	-0.13	-0.10
	(0.41)	(0.41)	(0.42)	(0.73)	(0.70)	(0.76)
MP Position	-0.37**	-0.36**	-0.36**	-0.22*	-0.21*	-0.21*
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.082)	(0.096)	(0.090)
Midterm	-0.42	-0.33	-0.42	-0.43	-0.38	-0.41
	(0.37)	(0.48)	(0.37)	(0.35)	(0.41)	(0.37)
Constant	2.16***	2.15***	2.17***	0.39*	0.39*	0.40*
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(0.065)	(0.060)	(0.057)
Observations	122	122	122	122	122	122
Log Likelihood	-228.3	-227.2	-228.1	-109.6	-109.4	-109.5
χ^2	71.46	73.65	71.95	77.02	77.31	77.21
α	1.070	1.065	1.064			
$\bar{\chi}^2$	119.2	120.7	117.8			

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

[†] — Negative Binomial Regression, [‡] — Poisson Regression

Overall, despite the small sample size, the results suggest that MPs are affected by electoral concerns and that their behavior reflects both concern about their ability to win votes in their electorate as well their standing within the party.

3.2   Rewarding Legislative Action: List Placement

The results above indicate the MPs do perceive electoral success to be influenced by placing members' bills on the ballot — either because they belief the act of proposing members' bills signals legislative effort or because they believe the chance of presenting a bill in parliament is beneficial. While the legislators' beliefs about the effects of members' bills seem likely to be grounded in reality, the question whether members' bills do have these effects is an empirical question. We begin by examining the hypothesis that members' bill affect the parties' evaluations of the MPs as reflected in their position on the party list in the election following the 49th parliament. In effect, the interesting question is whether placing members' bills on the ballot affects the MP's position on party's list compared with the previous election. Focusing on the change in list position poses a slight methodological problem as the MP's list position in 2008 constrains how far she can move up the list, i.e., the MP occupying the third seat in 2008 can at most move up two seat. Thus, the distribution of changes in list position is potentially truncated. To solve this issue we treat the list position in 2011 as the dependent variable while controlling for the list position in 2008 (SEAT 2008) and estimate Tobit regression with the data being truncated at one.[19]

The dependent variables from the previous subsection are the main independent variables of interest. That is, for the reasons we discussed above, we consider both the total number of, possible non-unique, bills placed on the members' ballot (NO. ATTEMPTS) and the number of unique bills (NO. UNIQUE BILLS). The theoretical expectations are that government and opposition parties will view MP's attempts at presenting members' bills in different light, i.e., opposition parties see a role for members' bills both in embarrassing the government politically and in advancing policies that are consistent with the party's policy agenda. Government parties on the other hand are more likely to perceive members' bills as a challenge to its agenda. To capture these potential differences in the role of members' bills, the measures for the number of bills placed on the ballot are interacted with an indicator variable for whether the MP is a member of the government party. Other controls are whether the MP was elected from the party list (LIST ELECTED) and the number of responsibilities held by the MP (MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY) including ministerial posts, party leadership positions (e.g., party whip), committee chairs, House leadership positions (e.g., Speaker or Leader of the House), or Attorney-General.

The estimation results, shown in table 2, provide some support for hypothesis 5. The

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[19]Note that the two approaches are very similar. Modeling the change in position one would write: $Position_{2011} - Position_{2008} = X\beta + \varepsilon$. Adding $Position_{2008}$ to both sides of the equation gives us the model employed below except for the coefficient for $Position_{2008}$ not being restricted to equalling zero and applying Tobin's method for dealing with truncation.

Table 2: Climbing the List: Tobit Regression

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
No. Attempts	-0.037	-0.24		
	(0.86)	(0.31)		
Govt*Attempts		0.77*		
		(0.081)		
No. Unique Bills			-0.92	-2.08*
			(0.33)	(0.078)
Govt*Unique				3.10
				(0.11)
Major Responsibility	-1.75***	-1.69**	-1.90***	-1.91***
	(0.0097)	(0.010)	(0.0057)	(0.0047)
Gov't MP	8.94***	7.13***	8.72***	6.95***
	(<0.001)	(0.0026)	(<0.001)	(0.0034)
Seat 2008	0.64***	0.61***	0.64***	0.60***
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
List Elected	1.72	1.28	1.95	1.93
	(0.29)	(0.43)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Constant	0.81	2.56	1.69	3.70
	(0.71)	(0.28)	(0.46)	(0.15)
σ	6.99***	6.86***	6.96***	6.86***
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Observations	93	93	93	93
Log Likelihood	-299.1	-297.6	-298.6	-297.3
χ^2	154.4	157.4	155.3	157.9

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

estimated coefficients in columns 1 and 3 indicate that placing members' bills on the ballot has a slight negative effect on the MP's list position. Not surprisingly, as members' bills are expected to affect government and opposition MPs in different ways, the effect is statistically insignificant. Models 2 and 4 include an interaction between the number of bills placed on the ballot and being a government MP. These models suggest that the effect does differs for government and opposition MPs. For government MPs, the effect of the total number of bills placed on the ballot is positive — indicating that government MPs the place more bills on the ballot obtain a seat lower on the party list. For each members' bill attempt, a government MP moves down half a seat $(.53, p = .17)$ on the party list. Opposition MPs, however, appear to benefit slightly $(-.24, p = .31)$ when focusing on the total number of attempts. Similar differences are seen when considering the effects of unique bills placed on the ballot. Each unique bill moves a government MP down a seat on the party list $(1.02, p = .5)$ but an opposition MP up two seats $(-2.08, p = .08)$.

Overall the results are in line with our expectations — opposition parties tend to reward and government parties tend to punish members' bill activity — although in statistical terms the findings are not overtly strong. That said, given the limited number of observations and the fact that in most instances a change in list position is not going to affect the MP's chance of re-election, it is somewhat surprising to find any differences between government and opposition MPs. The two largest parties won 101 seats in the 2008 election and 93 seats in 2011. For only a few MPs, those among the last to be elected from the party list, will relatively small changes in list position matter. The vast majority of MPs (89% in 2008) ran in both an electorate and on a party list and of them a majority won their electorate (62% in 2008). Thus, it would appear that changes in list positions between elections, when the result of placing members' bills on the ballot, is largely symbolic value.

3.3   Rewarding Legislative Action: Approval

We now turn our attention to the question whether voters evaluate MPs that place members' bills on the ballot or those that able to present their bills in parliament. The New Zealand Election Study ask respondents to indicate how strongly they approve or disapprove of their electorate MP on a five point scale. The analysis includes only those respondents that were able to identify their electorate MP. While it appears reasonable to restrict the analysis to those voters, as they would be the ones that are most likely to be aware of the MP's effort in placing members' bills on the ballot, we have argued that the effects of members' bills don't necessarily require voters to be aware of the MPs activities. We, for example, assume that MPs that propose members' bills may be more likely to catch the attention of voters because they receive more media attention as a result of their legislative effort. However, the New Zealand Election Study does not record the respondents' electorates so the only way to match a respondent with a district is by considering whether the respondent can identify her MP.

To model the respondents' answers to the MP approval question we use ordered logit model, considering the total number of attempts to place a bill on the ballot, the number of unique bills placed on the ballot, and whether the respondent's MP was one of the lucky one to have her bill drawn on the ballot. In focusing on whether the MP had a bill drawn on the ballot, we are able to take advantage of the members' bill ballot forming a natural experiment, i.e., members' bill are drawn at random. The natural experiment allows us to establish a causal relationship as the random selection of bills implies that the treatment (a MP's bill being drawn) is exogenous and the possibility of endogeneity is, thus, eliminated. There are, however, some complications as the probability of having a bill drawn is not completely endogenous, i.e., in order to have a bill drawn the MP must have placed a bill on the ballot and the more bills she has placed, the better her chances. In order to deal with this issue, we also estimate models that only include respondents represented by MPs that placed a bill on the ballot, include controls for the number of times the MP placed a bill on the ballot, and estimate the models for subsamples of respondents whose MPs placed the same number of bills on the ballot.

The main reason for focusing on the natural experiment generated by the members' bill ballot is, of course, the possibility that MPs that place bills (more often) on the ballot are different from other MPs. That is, it may be that some other factor, whether characteristic or context, induces the MP to place more bills on the ballot and causes voters to evaluate her more highly. This is one version of the popular refrain 'correlation doesn't imply causation'. Given these issues it would be fair to ask why bother estimating the models that only consider the number of attempts and the number of unique bills placed on the ballot. The reason is simple. While the above refrain is certainly true, it is also true that 'correlation does not imply no causation'. That is, in some instances there are good reasons to think that a causal relationship exists even when one can only estimate correlations. Consider the number of bills placed on the ballot. As we have argued theoretically and shown empirically, electoral vulnerability affects MPs attempts at proposing members' bills. Electorally vulnerable MPs typically suffer from lower levels of approval. Thus, if placing bills on the ballot has no effect on approval, a negative coefficient would be expected for the number bills placed on the ballot in the models estimated here. While examining effects of the number of bills placed on the ballot doesn't offer the clean identification that the natural experiment offers, it does offer some insight into the question whether legislative effort matters apart from the chance of having one's bill debated.

Several control variables that appear likely to affect MP approval are included in the models. L-R DISTANCE is the absolute ideological distance between the respondent's self-placement on the left-right scale and her placement of the electorate MP's party. Respondents are expected to approve more of MPs from ideologically proximate parties. The survey also includes a question about how much the respondent approves of the electorate MP's party. MP's PARTY APPROVAL is expected to be positively correlated with the respondent's

evaluation of the MP.[20] APPROVAL OF MPS IN GENERAL captures the respondent's evaluation of MPs in general. The variable is included to account for heterogeneity in the respondents' attitudes towards parliamentarians, i.e., some respondents may approve of all MPs while others may disapprove. Finally, the models include controls for the MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES of the MP and YEARS MP measures how long the MP has served in parliament.

Table 3: MP APPROVAL: NO. & UNIQUE ATTEMPTS, BILLS DRAWN

	(1) All MPs	(2) All MPs	(3) All MPs	(4) All MPs	(5) Only Proposers
NO. ATTEMPTS	0.066***			0.076***	
	(<0.001)			(0.0030)	
NO. UNIQUE BILLS		0.25***		-0.16	
		(0.0068)		(0.44)	
BILLS DRAWN			0.35***	0.23	0.31**
			(<0.001)	(0.22)	(0.017)
L-R DISTANCE	-0.0025	-0.0022	-0.0020	-0.0025	0.0019
	(0.31)	(0.38)	(0.42)	(0.31)	(0.64)
MP'S PARTY APPROVAL	0.28***	0.28***	0.28***	0.28***	0.24***
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
APPROVAL OF MPS IN GENERAL	-1.12***	-1.12***	-1.12***	-1.13***	-1.14***
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
RESPONSIBILITIES	0.11***	0.10**	0.084**	0.10**	0.11
	(0.0062)	(0.011)	(0.025)	(0.012)	(0.27)
YEARS MP	-0.0013	-0.0032	-0.0019	-0.0011	-0.021
	(0.87)	(0.71)	(0.83)	(0.89)	(0.13)
CUTPOINT:					
1	-7.31	-11.0	-8.43	-6.93	-46.4*
2	-5.86	-9.54	-6.97	-5.46	-45.0
3	-3.74	-7.43	-4.87	-3.35	-42.8
4	-1.60	-5.29	-2.73	-1.20	-40.8
OBSERVATIONS	1467	1467	1467	1467	581
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-1764.3	-1767.9	-1768.5	-1763.3	-708.2
χ^2	431.9	419.2	390.9	434.8	122.0

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 shows the results of the estimation of the ordered logit model. In all cases the standard errors are clustered by electorate. The first three columns consider the effects of the two different measures of the number of bills placed on the members' bill ballot and the number of times a MP's bill was drawn on the ballot. Each of the measures has a positive effect on the respondents' approval of the MPs. In the fourth column, which includes all three variables, we find that only the total number of bills retains a statistically significant

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[20] MP's PARTY APPROVAL may, in large part, be determined by the respondents' evaluation of their electorate MP. However, the substantive conclusions are not affected by the exclusion of the variable.

effect on approval. While these results suggest that merely participating in the ballot is more important than offering new bills or having one's bill drawn, these results must be taken with a grain of salt. The three variables are correlated, which inflates the estimated standard errors and can make the coefficient estimates unstable. Moreover, the results in the first four columns of the table include all MPs but, as mentioned earlier, MPs that participate in the ballot may differ from MPs that don't participate. Column 5 presents the results of the ordered logit model for the subsample of respondents whose MPs placed at least one bill on the ballot. The effect of the number of bills drawn remains influential when the analysis is restricted to the subsample, suggesting that respondents reward MPs for being able to have their bills debated in parliament.

While these findings are suggestive, some ambiguity still remains about the value of having one's bill drawn. That is, in column 4 in table 3, BILLS DRAWN failed to reach statistical significance ($p = .22$) and the legislative effort of MPs still varies a lot in the model in column 5. Further conditioning the estimated models on legislative effort is methodologically straightforward except for the fact that estimating ordered logit models on smaller subsample places considerable demands on the data. For example, the subsample of respondents whose MPs placed a single bill on the ballot consists of only 136 observations. Because of these data limitation, four ordinary least square models are estimated; for MPs that made a single attempt, for MPs that made two or three attempts, for MPs proposed one unique bill, and for MPs that proposed two unique bills.[21]

The results of the ordinary least square models support the hypothesis that the chance of presenting a bill in parliament does affect the MP's approval rating (see table 4). The effect is positive across all the subsamples with *p*-values ranging from .029 to .096. In substantive terms the effect is fairly substantial. Each additional bill drawn increases the MPs average approval rating between .2 and .4 points on the 5 point approval scale, which corresponds to between one in every five voters and two in every five voters ranking the MP one point higher on the scale.

In sum, there is clear evidence of members' bill mattering when it comes to respondents' approval of their MPs and, also, that they may matter in two distinct ways. First, as the results in 4 show, having one's bill drawn on the members' ballot and having the opportunity to present a members' bill in parliament affects MP approval. Second, the results in table 3 suggest that, at least some, respondents are willing to give their MP an 'A' for effort — merely placing a bill on the members' bill ballot also appears to positively affect the MP's approval rating. Respondents, thus, appear to reward legislative effort, which makes sense as placing a bill on the ballot is about the only thing that the individual MP can do.

Placing a new bill on the ballot or having one's bill drawn would be expected to have bigger impact on approval than placing an 'old' bill on the ballot again. An 'old' bill is

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[21]We combine those respondents whose MPs made two or three attempts as there are too few observations to consider those in separate models. These model were also estimated using order logit. The results tell substantively the same story and are included in the appendix.

Table 4: Bills Drawn & MP Approval:
Conditioning on the Number of Attempts & Unique Bills

	(1) One Attempt	(2) Two or Three Attempt	(3) One Unique Bill	(4) Two Unique Bill
BILLS DRAWN	0.40**	0.40**	0.19*	0.26**
	(0.029)	(0.049)	(0.096)	(0.040)
L-R DISTANCE	-0.0035**	0.0065	-0.00058	0.0014
	(0.038)	(0.17)	(0.78)	(0.80)
MP's PARTY APPROVAL	0.11***	0.12***	0.13***	0.036
	(0.0032)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(0.63)
APPROVAL OF MPs IN GENERAL	-0.54**	-0.38**	-0.45***	-0.33*
	(0.027)	(0.046)	(<0.001)	(0.082)
RESPONSIBILITIES	-0.11*	0.29***	0.075	0.054
	(0.082)	(0.0051)	(0.31)	(0.31)
YEARS MP	0.014***	-0.0023	-0.012	0.0042
	(<0.001)	(0.89)	(0.18)	(0.44)
CONSTANT	-24.8***	7.96	27.9	-4.26
	(0.0014)	(0.81)	(0.12)	(0.69)
OBSERVATIONS	136	117	452	98
R^2	0.428	0.372	0.329	0.112

Ordinary least square regression. *p*-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

old news to those that pay close attention to parliamentary politics. Placing the same bill on the ballot over and over again can be expected to have an effect as it does signal effort, even if a fairly minimal effort, and the MP may also hope to convey that she is persistent. Nevertheless, new bills or actually having one's bill debated is more likely to be newsworthy and help raise the profile of the MP. The results (table 3, columns 1-3) suggest that this expectations are born out by the data. Each additional attempt nets the MPs considerable less positive approval than placing a new bill on the ballot or having her bill drawn.[22]

4   Conclusions

Parliamentary systems tend to be characterized by tight control of the legislative agenda by the government and high levels of party discipline. As a consequence, members of parliament generally face a limited scope of actions outside their parties when it comes to achieving their career goals, whether related to policy or their reelection chances. Private members'

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[22]Of course, column 4 in table 3 suggests that the number of attempts might be more important than the other variables. One must keep in mind, however, that the three variables are correlated and that there is considerably more variation in the number of total attempts than the other variables. Thus, if the number of total attempts has a slight effect then maximizing the likelihood of observing the actual outcome may allocate more of the effect to the number of attempts as it affects a greater number of respondents, which may lead to an underestimate of the effect of the other two variables.

bills, or members' bills, are one opportunity for MPs to achieve such goal. There are many reasons why MPs might not want to purse a strategy of proposing members' bills. First, while there are some cross-national differences, members' bills are usually highly unlikely to be adopted by the legislature and become law. Second, offering members' bills can be a costly exercise — especially for government MPs whose parties may put a premium on party discipline. Third, elections in parliamentary elections — in part because party discipline is high — tend to be party focused, i.e., voters pay greater attention to the party platforms, or party leaders, than the individual candidates. In such circumstances it is not clear that an MP would benefit much from striking out on her own by proposing a members' bill. Fourth, some electoral systems, e.g., closed list proportional representation systems, vastly limit the value of a personal vote and, therefore, diminish the incentive to propose members' bill or engage in other legislative activity that might otherwise appeal to voters. Yet, MPs do propose members' bills.

In this paper, we have sought to explain why MPs propose members' bills and to show that, despite everything, members' bills represent a form of an electoral connection. In particular, we show that electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely to propose members' bills and that voters respond by evaluating them more favorably. We choose New Zealand because its electoral rules and parliamentary procedures have particular features that are conducive for studying members' bills. Its mixed-member proportional system has distinct benefits. In order to say something, hopefully, interesting about the electoral connection the system under study ought to provide MPs with at least minimal incentives to build a personal vote. The presence of single-member districts provides this condition in New Zealand — electorate MPs have a strong incentive to build a personal following, especially if they are located in electorates where their party is weak and if they are placed low on the party list. Another, related, advantage of the mixed-member system is that it creates, as many have noted, two classes of MPs — electorate and list MPs — that differ in terms of the importance of the personal vote. List MP owe their parliamentary seat to the party and have, therefore, little incentives to worry about a personal vote. We find, however, that there is an electoral connection when it comes to list MPs but that it is quite distinct from the one that electorate MPs must grapple with. Vulnerable list MPs, those that are low on the party list, are more likely to offer members' bill. In this instance the goal of the MP is not to signal competence or legislative effort to the voters but rather to the members of their own party that influence the nomination of candidates to the party list.

The major advantage of studying New Zealand is that the ability to introduce members' bill in the legislature is decided by lot as in some other Westminster systems, e.g., the U.K. (Bowler, 2010) and Canada (Loewen et al., 2014).[23] The members' ballot generates a natural experiment, which allows for the estimation of the causal effect of presenting members' bills in parliament. We find that MPs that have a bill drawn on the ballot have higher levels of

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[23]Of course, whether New Zealand remains a Westminster system is open for debate.

approval among respondents in the 2011 New Zealand Election Study. The effect is quite substantial — as many as 20-40% of the respondents are estimated to rate a MP that has had a bill drawn on the ballot a point higher on the five-point approval scale than a MP that didn't have the same luck. These are rather remarkable figures considering that it is unlikely that the respondents pay close attention to whether their MPs present members' bills. However, we have argued that such politically attuned voters are not a necessary condition for members' bills to affect voters' attitudes. The MPs, themselves, e.g., can bring the members' bills to voters' attention when campaigning for reelection. Members' bills may also serve to draw media attention to the MP — whether it is because of the content of the bill or because it signals ambition, or electoral vulnerability, to political journalists.

The total number of bills and number of unique bills placed on the ballot also affect the MPs' approval rates positively but, of course, it is not possible to assert that there is a causal relationship running from placing bills on the ballot and approval. However, if MP approval affects the incentive to place a bill on the ballot it seems more likely that MPs who face a poor approval rating are more likely to place bills on the ballot. That is, indeed, what we find when examining how often MPs place a bill on the ballot and, thus, if endogeneity is a problem it is likely to bias the estimates of partaking in the ballot downwards.

The number of times the MPs take part in the ballot does introduce a potential confounding factor into the natural experiment. Simply put, the more often the MP places a bill on the ballot, the greater are her chances of having her bill selected. Thus, the MPs whose bills are eventually drawn may differ from MPs in general. The argument above about MPs facing low levels of approval having a greater incentives to place bill on the ballot helps mitigate this problem but we also address it by comparing MPs that placed the same (or similar) number of bills on the ballot and find that the effects of having a bill drawn on approval remain positive.

In sum, we find fairly strong evidence for members' bills serving as an electoral connection in New Zealand. Moreover, we find that proposing members' bills also affects the parties' nomination of candidates to the party list but that the effect is the opposite for government and opposition MPs. As we argue, it appears that government MPs' main role is seen to be to support the government program while proposing members' bills, whether to further the opposition party's agenda or simply to challenge the government, is regarded as a part of the opposition MPs' job. The incentives generated by the voters and parties' response to members' bills help explain our initial finding that electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely to place members' bills on the ballot — or rather, that the MPs behavior is a rational response to the political context they find themselves in.

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Appendix

In this appendix we present some alternative model specification. When considering the effect of members' bills on placement on the party list one might reasonably assume that whether the MP was elected in an electorate or from the party list will affect the party's decision to place the candidate higher or lower on the party list. We consider this by including interacting the number of bills placed on the ballot, whether the government MP or not and whether the MP was elected from list to capture these effects. While the results fail to reach the traditional criteria to be judged statistically significant the results are suggestive. As before, there are indications that government MPs are punished for proposing members' bills but the effect is smaller for government MPs that were elected from the party list. That may appear counter-intuitive as MPs that successfully have run in an electorate ought to be less concerned by list placement and sanctions in terms of placing the MP lower on the party list is unlikely to affect the MP and has mostly symbolic value. However, there are likely selection effects here that our data fails to capture. The types of proposals offered by electorate and list MPs may differ, i.e., the incentives of electorate MPs are to offer bills that appeal to voters in their electorate while list voters, because they owe their seat to the party, will be more likely to offer bills that the party is less likely to object to — and may even value as if it is selected it means that some other bill hasn't been selected. We have not pursued a systematic analysis of this possibility as the number of bills is very limited, making such exercise unlikely to bear fruit especially as the triple interaction terms risk multicollinearity and inflated variances of our estimates.

Table 5 considers whether members' bill affect the vote shares of MPs. In short, in contrast with Loewen et al. (2014) we find no effect on vote share. However, this finding is not altogether surprising. Unlike in the Canadian case where members are drawn from the ballot, rather than bills, MPs in New Zealand choose to place a bill on the ballot — and the decision to do so is probably not random. Electorally vulnerable MPs, as we have shown, are more likely to place bills on the ballot, which would tend to deflate whatever positive effect members' bills might have on vote share. In addition, working with aggregate data raises question about ecological inference issues and the number of observations are quite low.

In table 7 we consider a specification of the ordered logit models for MP approval that include interactions between the number of members' bills and whether the MP is a government MP. The results suggest that both government and opposition MPs do gain from proposing members' bills but that the effect tends to be bigger for government MPs. As government MPs may be more likely to face sanctions from their parties, they are more likely to propose bills that serve to strengthen their personal vote. Opposition MPs on the other may simple seek to embarrass the government or to make its life difficult. The goal of such bills may just as often be intended to shore up support for the MP's party as for the MP herself.

Table 5: Climbing the List: Tobit Regression

	(1) est1 b/p	(2) est2 b/p	(3) est3 b/p	(4) est4 b/p
model				
No. Attempts	0.048 (0.82)	-0.087 (0.81)		
No. Unique Bills			-0.87 (0.37)	-1.11 (0.56)
Govt*Attempts		0.99 (0.17)		
List*Attempts		-0.11 (0.82)		
Govt*List		-1.96 (0.64)		-1.32 (0.76)
Govt*List*Attempts		-0.35 (0.70)		
Govt*Unique				5.65* (0.054)
List*Unique				-2.01 (0.42)
Govt*List*Unique				-3.24 (0.38)
Major Responsibility	-1.77*** (0.0077)	-1.70*** (0.0094)	-1.95*** (0.0040)	-2.02*** (0.0021)
Gov't MP	8.89*** (0.000068)	8.02*** (0.0051)	8.52*** (0.00010)	7.58*** (0.0083)
Seat 2008	0.62*** (9.6e-18)	0.60*** (4.6e-16)	0.62*** (6.6e-18)	0.55*** (8.5e-14)
List Elected	1.73 (0.30)	2.81 (0.36)	2.00 (0.23)	5.04 (0.14)
Constant	1.36 (0.53)	2.08 (0.44)	2.45 (0.28)	3.83 (0.17)
sigma				
σ	7.01*** (1.9e-22)	6.87*** (5.0e-22)	6.99*** (1.8e-22)	6.73*** (4.5e-22)
Observations	92	92	92	92
Log Likelihood	-296.1	-294.6	-295.7	-292.4
χ^2	145.4	148.4	146.1	152.7

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6: WINNING VOTES: OLS REGRESSION

	(1) est1 b/p	(2) est2 b/p	(3) est3 b/p	(4) est4 b/p	(5) est5 b/p	(6) est6 b/p
NO. ATTEMPTS	-0.0048 (0.20)	-0.0071 (0.12)				
GOVT*ATTEMPTS		0.0070 (0.35)				
NO. UNIQUE BILLS			-0.015 (0.36)	-0.030 (0.16)		
GOVT*UNIQUE				0.036 (0.25)		
MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY	-0.013 (0.13)	-0.011 (0.22)	-0.013 (0.16)	-0.011 (0.25)	-0.0098 (0.27)	-0.0097 (0.27)
GOV'T MP	0.0036 (0.90)	-0.017 (0.64)	0.0056 (0.85)	-0.022 (0.56)	0.012 (0.68)	0.011 (0.74)
NO. BILLS DRAWN					-0.0065 (0.84)	-0.0082 (0.84)
GOVT*DRAWN						0.0047 (0.94)
Constant	0.055* (0.054)	0.062** (0.036)	0.050* (0.093)	0.063** (0.049)	0.032 (0.22)	0.032 (0.23)
Observations	79	79	79	79	78	78
R^2	0.0388	0.0501	0.0284	0.0454	0.0169	0.0170

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 7: MP Approval: Ordered Logit
Interaction w/Gov't MP

	(1) All MPs b/se	(2) All MPs b/se	(3) All MPs b/se	(4) All MPs b/se	(5) Only Proposers b/se	(6) Only Proposers b/se
Approval of MP						
No. Attempts	0.033*			0.048*		0.034
	(0.020)			(0.028)		(0.027)
No. Unique Bills		0.10		-0.11		
		(0.11)		(0.24)		
Bills Drawn			0.066	0.019	0.082	0.069
			(0.13)	(0.24)	(0.18)	(0.15)
Gov't*Attempts	0.045			0.083		0.080
	(0.047)			(0.080)		(0.069)
Gov't*Unique		0.068		-0.22		
		(0.19)		(0.42)		
Gov't*Drawn			0.35*	0.44	0.21	0.24
			(0.20)	(0.34)	(0.30)	(0.26)
L-R Distance	-0.0023	-0.0022	-0.0021	-0.0023	0.0014	0.0012
	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0025)	(0.0044)	(0.0043)
MP's Party Approval	0.28***	0.28***	0.29***	0.28***	0.25***	0.24***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.037)
Approval of MPs in General	-1.12***	-1.12***	-1.12***	-1.12***	-1.14***	-1.14***
	(0.100)	(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Responsibilities	0.14***	0.14***	0.13***	0.13***	0.26*	0.18
	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.15)	(0.17)
Years MP	0.0065	0.0079	0.0093	0.0076	-0.0016	-0.0080
	(0.0087)	(0.0089)	(0.0089)	(0.0088)	(0.015)	(0.016)
1.Governing National Party	-0.48**	-0.51**	-0.54**	-0.48*	-0.56	-0.59
	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.36)	(0.50)
cut1						
Constant	8.05	11.0	13.5	10.3	-8.35	-21.0
	(17.2)	(17.6)	(17.6)	(17.6)	(29.9)	(32.2)
cut2						
Constant	9.52	12.4	15.0	11.7	-6.94	-19.6
	(17.2)	(17.7)	(17.7)	(17.6)	(29.9)	(32.2)
cut3						
Constant	11.6	14.6	17.1	13.9	-4.77	-17.4
	(17.2)	(17.7)	(17.7)	(17.6)	(29.9)	(32.2)
cut4						
Constant	13.8	16.7	19.3	16.0	-2.74	-15.4
	(17.3)	(17.7)	(17.7)	(17.6)	(29.9)	(32.2)
Observations	1467	1467	1467	1467	581	581
Log Likelihood	-1758.6	-1760.6	-1760.1	-1756.9	-706.1	-703.8
χ^2	469.9	445.9	431.9	490.0	121.8	154.5

Table 8 is the same as table 4 except the approval models estimated are ordered logit models rather than OLS models. We opted for presenting the OLS models in the body of the paper as the number of observations is small when we condition on the number of attempts. Estimating ordered logit with such small samples demands a lot of the data. That said, the findings are the same in substantive terms — MPs whose bills are drawn on the ballot are significantly more likely to be rated higher by the survey respondents.

Table 8: MP Approval: Ordered Logit
No. Attempts & Unique

	(1) One Attempt b/se	(2) 2 or 3 Attempts b/se	(3) One Unique b/se	(4) Two Unique b/se
APPROVAL OF MP				
BILLS DRAWN	0.88**	0.77**	0.35*	0.33***
	(0.37)	(0.31)	(0.20)	(0.12)
L-R DISTANCE	-0.012***	0.013**	-0.0016	0.0038
	(0.0040)	(0.0061)	(0.0053)	(0.013)
MP's PARTY APPROVAL	0.22***	0.32***	0.26***	0.13
	(0.054)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.14)
APPROVAL OF MPs IN GENERAL	-1.76***	-1.15***	-1.18***	-0.89**
	(0.60)	(0.44)	(0.21)	(0.38)
RESPONSIBILITIES	-0.22	0.56***	0.17	0.043
	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
YEARS MP	0.019***	0.014	-0.027*	0.0090
	(0.0058)	(0.037)	(0.016)	(0.010)
cut1				
CONSTANT	30.0**	23.7	-59.7*	12.7
	(12.3)	(75.1)	(32.3)	(21.5)
cut2				
CONSTANT	31.5**	24.7	-58.3*	14.3
	(12.3)	(75.1)	(32.3)	(21.2)
cut3				
CONSTANT	34.1***	28.0	-56.1*	16.3
	(12.1)	(75.0)	(32.3)	(21.1)
cut4				
CONSTANT	36.8***	30.2	-54.0*	18.2
	(12.2)	(75.2)	(32.4)	(20.9)
Observations	136	117	452	98
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-149.0	-124.0	-544.9	-123.0
χ^2	.	.	253.2	.