



2 MAY 2016 LEAH STOKES

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Electoral Backlash Against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy

Retrospective voting studies typically examine policies where the public has common interests. By contrast, climate policy has broad public support but concentrated opposition in communities where costs are imposed. This spatial distribution of weak supporters and strong local opponents mirrors opposition to other policies with diffuse public benefits and concentrated local costs. I use a natural experiment to investigate whether citizens living in proximity to wind energy projects retrospectively punished an incumbent government because of its climate policy. Using both fixed effects and instrumental variable estimators, I identify electoral losses for the incumbent party ranging from 4 to 10%, with the effect persisting 3 km from wind turbines. There is also evidence that voters are informed, only punishing the government responsible for the policy. I conclude that the spatial distribution of citizens' policy preferences can affect democratic accountability through 'spatially distorted signalling', which can exacerbate political barriers to addressing climate change.

Bio

Leah Stokes is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). She received her PhD in Public Policy and Masters in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Her research examines renewable energy politics across North America, using qualitative and quantitative methods. She also researches international environmental negotiations, particularly on mercury and climate change, as well as environmental behavior change campaigns. To date, her research has been published in The American Journal of Political Science, Energy Policy, Environmental Science & Technology and Global Environmental Politics. Leah has received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Martin Family Fund, and the MIT Energy Initiative. Prior to academia, Leah worked at the Parliament of Canada, Resources for the Future and the Initiative for Policy Dialogue. She holds a BSc from the University of Toronto and an MPA from Columbia University.

Center for Climate and Energy Decision Making Seminars



2 May 2016
12:00pm EDT

Wean Hall 3701
Carnegie Mellon University

Coffee and Refreshments will be served at 10:15am. Seminar is presented under the auspices of CEDM and the department of Engineering and Public Policy.

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