

***Smoke Signals:
State Policy Responses to National Government Discussions***

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October 2012

Abstract

The national government can influence state-level policymaking by adopting laws that specifically direct the states to take certain actions, or by providing financial incentives to take certain actions. But can national institutions also influence state-level adoptions by drawing attention to an issue and by providing information about it, even when these activities do not produce laws? In other words, do policy *ideas* diffuse from the national government to the states? In this paper we examine whether hearings and the introduction of bills in Congress about antismoking restrictions influence state-level adoptions between 1975 and 2000. Our findings reveal that national policy discussions do stimulate state policy adoptions, but only for states with professional legislatures, strong policy advocates, or high economic stakes.

* Prepared for presentation at the 2012 APPAM meetings, Baltimore. Thanks to Graeme Boushey, Marieka Klawitter, Anna Klimova, Brady West and seminar and conference participants at the Midwest Political Science Association conference and the University of Michigan for helpful comments. Please send questions and comments to pjmccann@uw.edu, cshipan@umich.edu, or volden@virginia.edu.

Smoke Signals: State Policy Responses to National Government Discussions

The federal system in the United States creates opportunities for both the national government and state governments to create policies and programs to address societal problems. Because these separate but interconnected governments can observe each other's actions, policies that are stymied or not practical at one level might flourish at another. Furthermore, the different levels of government can react to each other's activities. Because of the high visibility of national-level actions, for example, states can observe and learn from these activities. In other words, consideration of policies at the national level can diffuse to the states and influence state-level policy adoptions.

Policy diffusion is often thought of in horizontal terms, as with the spread of policies across countries or among the American states. Occasionally such studies include consideration of other levels of government (e.g., Nicholson-Crotty 2009), bringing in aspects of vertical policy diffusion. Such vertical policy diffusion may take a bottom-up form, such as where local policies spread to the state level (e.g., Shipan and Volden 2006), where state policies serve as experiments for the national government (e.g., Boeckelman 1992, Mossberger 1999, Weissert and Scheller 2008), or where countries' experiences provide the basis for international policy choices (e.g., Radaelli 2000). In contrast, top-down vertical policy diffusion results when the actions of a higher governmental level influence those of lower levels (e.g., Daley and Garand 2005, Wood 1991). Sources of such top-down influence range from intergovernmental grant conditions (e.g., Welch and Thompson 1980; Allen, Pettus, and Haider-Markel 2004) to mandates (e.g., Posner 1998, Woods and Bowman 2011) to preemptive lawmaking (e.g., Hills 2007, Shipan and Volden 2008).

Such studies tend to focus on state *laws* that are adopted following national *laws* that feature such grants, mandates, or preemptions. Therefore, these works join questions of policy diffusion quite late in the public policy process, after national policy decisions are made and all that is left to study are the state responses. In contrast, a small but growing literature on horizontal policy diffusion explores earlier stages in the policy process, such as proposals made before state legislatures or interest group formation, which serve as precursors to policy adoption (e.g., Karch 2007).

Extending such a focus earlier in the public policy process to top-down policy diffusion is especially important to understand the working of federal systems. Scholars of federalism are often interested in the question of which policy areas are handled by which level of government. By focusing only on the decisions that come after national laws are passed, we join the discussion only *after* that key question has already been answered. In contrast, in this study we begin earlier in the public policy process, when issues are first discussed in congressional hearings and tentative proposals are offered in congressional bills. How do state governments respond to such activities?

If the American system acts through *cooperative federalism* (e.g., Elazar 1962, Grodzins 1966), we would expect that such tentative steps by the national government should draw attention to a common policy problem to be solved jointly by states and the national government. Upon seeing congressional attention, states would help devise policy solutions, and some would adopt policies, serving as laboratories for other states and for the national government. In contrast, the American system could be thought of as one of *competitive federalism* (e.g., Dye 1990, Kenyon and Kincaid 1991, Volden 2005), in which politicians at all levels seek to claim credit for popular programs and successes, while passing off blame for higher taxes and

emerging crises. In such a view, state policymakers may see tentative national activities as attempts to trespass into state issues, either spurring state action ahead of national encroachment or allowing states to step aside and let national officials take the first dive into turbulent and politically perilous new policy areas. Reactions will be more oriented around politics than around finding policy solutions to common problems.

As with such conflicting views of American federalism, we argue that responses to national policy discussions will vary by state. However, we believe such variance will be systematic, rather than random. That is, key aspects of the states' political and economic environments help determine how state governments respond to national policy attention. Specifically, highly professional state legislatures will rise to the challenge issued by national government involvement. Ambitious politicians in such states will seize upon policy solutions entertained at the national level and advance them in their home states. In contrast, politicians in less professional state legislatures will read national activity as a sign that the national government may well address the issue at hand, so they can turn to other pressing business.

Similarly, states with active policy entrepreneurs and interest groups will see an opportunity in the heightened awareness promoted by national government policy discussions to push their policy agendas. Policymakers in states without such groups will view the lack of such entrepreneurs in the face of the formation of a nationwide agenda as evidence against acting hastily on the issue at hand. Finally, states that are highly influenced economically by the policy choices being entertained nationally will seek to act first, to either gain a first-mover advantage or to mitigate potentially adverse national government decisions. States that are less likely to face an economic impact from the national policy decisions will not feel the urgent need to act in response to national policy discussions.

We explore these expectations by examining the policy choices that states made in response to congressional hearings and sponsored bills in the area of antismoking restrictions between 1975-2000. During this time period, the state and national roles in smoking policies were still being formed, and each level of government was exploring its policy options. How states responded to both local initiatives and national debates would set the stage for the state-by-state patchwork of policies in effect today.

In the next section, we develop our theoretical expectations for how states react to national government policy discussions. We then discuss the data used to discern just how active the national and state governments were on this important issue of public health. We then turn to the results, showing broad overall support for the claims noted above and the hypotheses developed below. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study for our understanding of policy diffusion and of American federalism.

The Logic of Intergovernmental Policy Influence

Why might federal policy activity influence state actions, even if that federal activity falls short of producing actual national laws? We identify three paths by which federal activity can have this influence. First, such activity increases the amount of attention paid to an issue, or its salience. Second, this activity signals the enhanced willingness of the federal government to confront the issue. And third, such activity provides policymakers with information about a policy issue and how to deal with it – information about the specific nature of the problem, about potential policy solutions, and about political costs and benefits tied to these solutions. We turn now to each of these mechanisms.

To start with, national activity, by drawing *attention* to a policy issue, can bring it to the front of the legislative agenda for states. State legislators – like all legislators – function on information overload and need signals from the environment about which areas deserve attention (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). When the national government pays attention to a policy problem – debating it, searching for answers, considering alternatives, and so on – this sends a signal to state-level actors about the prominence and salience of the issue. And as Nicholson-Crotty (2009) has demonstrated, increased salience of an issue causes legislators to reject a longer-term approach, in which they favor detailed study and consideration of the pros and cons of various alternatives, in favor of a short-term perspective, in which they adopt laws more quickly.¹

Second, national activity cannot even begin without some political support for policy change at the national level. The amount of such activity, and the progression of new proposals through later stages of the public policy process, thus *signals* the extent of support for policy change at the national level. For the time-pressed state policymakers described above, the national action may provide relief, indicating that state policy responses are unneeded because federal action is imminent. Indeed, national policy discussions reveal information about the policy preferences of national-level politicians and the likelihood and location of a final national policy (e.g., Dubnick and Gitelson 1981; Hamilton and Wells 1990; Allen, Pettus, and Haider-Markel 2004). Depending on the nature of that revealed information, state policymakers may therefore step back through deference to national policymakers or step up their efforts to formulate policies on their own.

¹ Similarly, Eshbaugh-Soha (2006) has shown that increased salience raises the likelihood that elected officials will address an issue.

Third, national policymaking activity can provide *information* about the alternatives that are available for dealing with a policy issue – for example, which potential solutions are likely to be most effective. In other words, national institutions, by engaging in policymaking activities, provide a forum for the discussion of policy problems and the benefits and pitfalls that are associated with different political solutions. Furthermore, national political discussions provide a stage for the entrance of political entrepreneurs and pressure groups on the various sides of a debate. Because state legislators have limited amounts of time and expertise, especially compared to Congress, they may monitor national policy activities as a short-cut to gaining information about the policy environment (Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery 2009). This learning process provides the states with knowledge about policies they can experiment with in their own jurisdictions, thereby potentially facilitating action and increasing both the speed and likelihood of adoptions.

Due to increased policy attention and salience, fear of national intervention, and information about the political and policy landscape, national policymaking activity thus can increase the likelihood of state legislative adoptions. Our first hypothesis summarizes this view.

Increased Attention Hypothesis: *The likelihood of state policy adoptions will increase when the national government raises issues of concern to states.*

However, states may learn from committee hearings and floor debates that potential policy solutions are also difficult to adopt, politically controversial, and rife with unintended consequences. Such discoveries may limit state policymaking activities. Likewise, state policymakers may either like the direction in which the national government is moving, or hope that potential future national action will relieve the state of having to wade into a complex policy area. In this view, states may sit on the sidelines, watching the national discussion, and only

become involved in the policymaking game if the national government does not seem to be moving in the right direction, or moving at all, as in the case of presidential vetoes stimulating state action (Karch 2010). This competing view is summarized as follows.

Intergovernmental Deference Hypothesis: *The likelihood of state policy adoptions will decrease when the national government raises issues of concern to states.*

Given the competing nature of these first two hypotheses, it seems impossible that they both could hold true. Yet, this is exactly what we believe is the case, as we look across the states. That is, in some states we expect the increased attention effect to be dominant, whereas elsewhere intergovernmental deference is the main effect. Which is the larger effect will depend on the politics and economics of policymaking across the states. In particular, we focus on three specific traits that vary by state: the professionalism of a state's legislature, the interest group environment in the state legislature, and the economic importance of the policy within the state.

First, as is well known, state legislatures differ markedly in their level of *professionalism*. Some state legislatures, such as in Michigan or California, meet regularly, attract highly-qualified members meriting high pay, and have large staffs, including those who help standing committees develop expertise on topics within their jurisdiction. Other states, such as New Hampshire or South Dakota, have "citizen legislatures" that meet less often, pay their members a much lower salary, and tend to have fewer personal and committee staffers (Squire 2007). And such professionalism matters for policymaking. As Rogers (2005) and others have demonstrated, states whose legislatures bear the hallmarks of professionalism are more able to adopt laws and do so at a higher rate than states with less professional legislatures.

More professional state legislatures tend to have greater *capacity* to tackle policy issues (Huber and Shipan 2002), and to learn from the actions of others. To begin with, members of

these legislatures are more likely to monitor policy activities at the national level, in part because they may be considering a run for a national, as opposed to state, office. Thus, they are more likely, when compared to their counterparts in less professional legislatures, to notice an increase in attention to an issue at the national level and to allocate their own time accordingly.

Additionally, because they have developed some expertise, both among their staff and in their committees, more professional legislatures are better able to take advantage of the activities at the national level in determining what sorts of state laws they should pass. And because they meet more frequently, they are more likely to be able to free up room on their agendas to pass these laws.

Even if less professional legislatures notice the activities at the national level, and even if they can use the information they glean from these activities to identify specific actions that they want to take, they may simply lack the capacity to successfully move the issue through the legislative process. Moreover, less professional state legislators observing that Congress is tackling an issue might decide that they can turn their attention to other concerns. Shipan and Volden (2006) find that less professional legislatures are unlikely to build upon local policy experiments to bring about state laws, while more professional legislatures translate local policies into state law at a greater rate. The following hypothesis reflects a similar logic.

State Legislative Professionalism Hypothesis: *Less professional state legislatures will be less likely to adopt policies generating significant national government activity, while more professional state legislatures will be more likely to adopt policies generating significant national government activity.*

Beyond the professionalism of state legislatures, policymaking in the states is determined by a host of other factors, such as underlying economic policy effects and citizen preferences. At the institutional level, such considerations may manifest themselves in terms of interest group

activities. Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery (2009) demonstrate that congressional hearings can affect interest group activity in the states. Yet, even absent such an effect, the existing interest group landscape in a state may affect how the state government responds to the national policy discussion. In particular, strong policy advocates will take advantage of national level discussions and the enhanced policy salience they bring to further advance their policy agendas. They will raise key points from congressional hearings in a politically sophisticated manner and adapt congressional proposals to particular state purposes.

In contrast, states without such strong policy advocates may remain unmoved by national policy discussions. No one will bring those debates to the attention of state policymakers, and the opportunity raised by heightened policy salience will pass the state by. In a similar manner, Shipan and Volden (2006) find that state policy advocates built upon local actions, while their absence diminished state reactions to local policy adoptions. This conditional response to activities by other governments can be characterized as follows.

Interest Group Activism Hypothesis: *State legislatures with strong interest group activism will be more likely to adopt policies generating significant national government activity, while state governments with limited policy activists will not be responsive to national government policy activity.*

In addition to legislative professionalism and interest group activism, *economic interests* in a state may condition the effects of national activities by causing states to closely monitor the national arena for information about potential policies that would affect the state economy. If the national government seems close to passing a policy, especially if it is a policy that poses a threat to the industry, then those states with closer economic ties to that industry would be more likely to enact policies in the hopes of decreasing the likelihood of federal laws. This reaction is related to the pressure valve effect in vertical diffusion (Shipan and Volden 2006), whereby the

pressure on higher levels of government to act is reduced when enough lower levels of government enact laws in the same policy area.

Another view points in the same direction. If an industry is powerful within a state, and opposes legislation, then it might have successfully bottled up this legislation for a number of years. Meanwhile, other states in which the industry is less strong may have already adopted some of these laws. Once the national government starts paying attention, however, this empowers the industry's opponents in the pro-industry states, and these states no longer can resist passing the sorts of laws that economically disinterested states have already passed. In effect, then, national activity pressures these recalcitrant states to act. However, given the powerful economic considerations, policymakers in such a state may pass a very watered-down version of the proposal gaining support at the national level, establishing a moderate status quo against which a new national proposal must be compared.² Such logic results in the following.

Economic Importance Hypothesis: *State governments will be more likely to adopt policies generating significant national government activity on issues of high economic importance to the state, while states will not be responsive to national government policy activity on issues of low economic importance.*

The above conditional effects hypotheses suggest positive state policy responses to national government discussions, but only among those states with professional legislatures, strong interest group advocates, or significant economic stakes in the policy choice. States not meeting these conditions will either be unaffected by national government discussions or will be deferential to national policymakers, as suggested by the Intergovernmental Deference Hypothesis. While each of these three conditional hypotheses seems plausible, it is worth noting

² Future work exploring the content and strength of laws, above and beyond the question here of whether any law passes, would be welcome.

that each is falsifiable, and indeed that a certain logic exists for effects running in quite the opposite direction. For instance, because of their reduced capacity, less professional state legislatures may be dependent on the national government to lend a hand in developing policy proposals about a policy area. Or, regarding economic importance, states with strong economic stakes in an issue may have well formulated policy positions that are unlikely to be swayed by national government discussions. Ultimately, support for these hypotheses (or the alternatives to them) must be judged empirically, through the type of analyses to which we now turn.

Data and Empirical Analyses

Although our hypotheses are general and likely to hold in numerous policy areas, in this article we focus on one specific policy area: antismoking policies. The tobacco policy area, specifically in what are known as clean indoor air laws, provides a useful case study of federal diffusion patterns because significant state-level policy enactment, national-level political debate and action, and scientific controversy and consensus have all occurred over a period of time (here analyzed from 1975-2000) during which data are available to test all of our hypotheses. The conditional effects hypotheses are especially open to empirical testing in this area, as states varied over this time period in their legislative professionalism, their health policy interest group activism, and in the economic importance of tobacco to the state.

Dependent Variable

In order to assess the influence of national activities on state policy adoptions, the dependent variable in our analysis is coded as having a value of 0 in the years a state has not yet enacted the policy and 1 in the year of the adoption. Once a state adopts a law, it is then dropped

from the dataset in subsequent years. We focus on two specific types of antismoking policies: laws that restrict smoking in government buildings and those restricting smoking in restaurants.³ We obtained the data for the dependent variable from the MayaTech Corporation, which updated and corrected the National Cancer Institute's State Cancer Legislative Database. Between 1975 and 2000, 40 states enacted laws restricting or banning smoking in government buildings and 32 states enacted similar laws for restaurants.⁴ Our analysis focuses on whether the timing of these adoptions was influenced by national government policy activities.

Key Independent Variables

The crucial explanatory variable in our analysis is a measure of federal policy activity. In particular, we want to assess whether policy activity that falls short of legislation, and thus does not directly create mandates or financial incentives for states to act, nevertheless affects state-level policy adoptions. To create our measure of federal policy activity, we focus on the actions of Congress and utilize data from the Policy Agendas Project and the Congressional Bills Project.⁵ The Policy Agendas Project organizes and makes available on-line data on the activities of the U.S. federal government from 1947 onward. From the Policy Agendas Project, we downloaded all congressional hearings and searched for the following terms: tobacco, smoking, nicotine, cigarette, cigar, youth access, smoke, environmental tobacco smoke (or ETS),

³ The former category includes both laws that specifically affect government buildings and also laws that limit smoking in all workplaces in the state.

⁴ Other smoking restrictions, such as cigarette taxes or youth access restrictions could form the basis of future studies replicating and extending the findings uncovered here.

⁵ The websites for these datasets are <http://www.policyagendas.org/> and <http://www.congressionalbills.org/>.

in any field (e.g., title, description, and so on). Any hearing that did not include one of these search terms was discarded.⁶

We then repeated the same process, using the Congressional Bills Project, which is a database of public and private bills introduced in the U.S. House and Senate since 1947. Because this database includes policy topic and subtopic coding based on the Policy Agendas Project's codes, we were able to search for, and identify, all bills introduced in the 94th through the 106th Congresses for both the Senate and the House.

The resulting dataset included 1,292 federal activities from 1975-2000, of which 299 were hearing days (House, Senate, and Joint), 716 were House bills introduced, and 277 were Senate bills introduced. Using these observations as a starting point, we then narrowed the data down to those activities that focused on the main arguments used to advance antismoking restrictions in government buildings and restaurants. In particular, these arguments tended to focus on the negative health effects of smoking and second-hand smoke. Therefore, we used the Policy Agendas Project's major topic and subtopic area codes to narrow the data down to those federal activities specifically dealing with health.⁷ This approach reduced the activities to 98 hearing days and 403 bills (287 in the House and 116 in the Senate) for a total of 501 federal policy activities in the realm of tobacco and health. As shown in Figure 1, these activities vary

⁶ We also captured the number of lines in State of the Union addresses and Executive Orders that dealt with the same tobacco issues from the Policy Agenda Project's databases. We do not include them in this analysis due to the low number – only 2 Executive Orders and 13 State of the Union mentions across the time period. Analyses including these measures are not substantively different from those reported here.

⁷ For example, a hearing related to tobacco price subsidies would have appeared in our first sweep through the datasets, but not our second. We also conducted, but ending up not using, a third sweep in which we eliminated all bills and hearings that were specifically about youth smoking. Removing these bills had little effect on any of our results.

considerably by year, with the health-related subset of tobacco activities closely tracking all tobacco activities ($r = 0.97$).⁸

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Within the Health and Tobacco Activities data, bill introductions dominate the number of activities followed by hearing days held, both of which occurred at substantial levels throughout the time period of our study, as shown in Figure 2. From these data we create *Federal Activities*, a variable that captures the relative number of hearings and bill introductions that occur in any given year. Specifically, to create a common scale, we normalized the number of House bills, Senate bills, and overall congressional hearing days to each take a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. We then added these three values together to give an overall *Federal Activities* score.⁹ Like its component parts, this score has a mean value of zero. Consistent with Figures 1 and 2, *Federal Activities* ranges from a low value of -2.15 in 1980 to a high value of 4.03 in 1997. In terms of interpretability, each one-unit increase in this variable is equivalent to a one-standard-deviation rise in any of its component parts (House bills, Senate bills, hearing days).

[Figure 2 about here]

In examining whether federal activities spur state-level adoptions, temporal issues become paramount.¹⁰ Crucially, we lag our measure of federal activity. Thus, we examine whether the hearings and bill introductions in year $t-1$ affect state-level policy adoptions in year

⁸ Examples of bills and hearings are provided in Tables A1 and A2 in the appendix.

⁹ Such an approach gives equal weight to each of these three components with each on the same normalized scale. Alternative measures that combine together all congressional bills or that place a somewhat greater weight on hearings than on bills yield similar results to those reported below.

¹⁰ To account for duration dependence, we also examined the effects of including year and year-squared as controls (including year dummies would not allow for the inclusion of the *Federal Activities* variables, which vary over time but not across states). Since neither time trend was significant across any of the models and did not change the substantive interpretation of the results, they are excluded from the models reported.

t. We also include current year (i.e., year *t*) federal activities in the model. As Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery (2009) point out, a positive and significant coefficient on this variable would result from both the federal government and the states contemporaneously responding to a common policy disturbance.¹¹

Lagged Federal Activities is therefore used to test the Increased Attention Hypothesis and the Intergovernmental Deference Hypotheses. In the other three hypotheses, we consider how the effect of federal activities is contingent upon other factors: the level of state legislative professionalism, the state interest group environment, and the economic ties of the state to tobacco. Therefore, we create interactions between *Lagged Federal Activities* and measures of professionalism, advocacy, and economic ties.

Specifically, *Legislative Professionalism* is Squire's professionalism index, which compares each state legislature's salary, average days in session, and staff per member to those of Congress.¹² Thus, the overall index represents how closely the state's legislature approximates the characteristics of Congress, with a hypothetical measure of 1.0 representing a state legislature that exactly matches Congress on those traits (Squire 1992, 2007). Apart from any interactions with federal activities, we expect a positive effect from professionalism, since more professional legislatures are more productive and pass more laws (Rogers 2005).

¹¹ In our dataset, the correlation between the total level of attention this year and last year is 0.09, the correlation between this year and last year's bills introduced is -0.37, and the correlation between hearings from this year and last is -0.004. Consequently, we are able to include both lagged and current measures in the same regression without multicollinearity concerns. This differs from Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery (2009), who cannot include both variables because they are looking at the overall number of hearings (which is relatively constant from year to year) and thus are plagued with a 0.95 correlation between these variables. Models excluding the contemporaneous variable do not change the substantive interpretation of the results, but do feature decreased efficiency in the standard errors, as would be expected.

¹² This measure ranges from the least professionalized state legislature at 0.027 (New Hampshire in 2000) to the most professionalized state legislature at 0.659 (New York from 1983-1991).

We capture interest group activism with *Health Organization Lobbyists*, a ratio of the number of lobbyists working in the state on behalf of health organizations, relative to the overall number of lobbyists in the state, based on the data of Goldstein and Bearman (1996). We expect this variable to be positively associated with the adoption of statewide antismoking laws generally. And the interaction of *Health Organization Lobbyists* with *Lagged Federal Activities* is used to test the Interest Group Activism Hypothesis.

We operationalize state economic ties to the tobacco policy area by measuring the state's total *Tobacco Production* in millions of pounds for each year of the study. We expect a negative coefficient for the direct effect of *Tobacco Production* (again in the absence of federal activity), indicating that states in which tobacco plays a bigger role are less likely to enact restrictions on smoking. Its interaction with *Lagged Federal Activities* is used to test the Economic Importance Hypothesis.

Controls

In order to assess the influence of federal policy activities on state policy adoption (both contingent and not), we also control for a variety of well-established factors that are known to be associated with the probability that a state will adopt an antismoking policy. Here, we include all of the controls used by Shipan and Volden (2006) in their study of statewide antismoking adoptions.¹³ Specifically, first, we include several controls with respect to pressure groups, including the power of health advocates and the number and power of tobacco industry proponents. Second, we also include controls for citizen and producer pressures such as the percent smokers in the state and the proportion of the state's budget spent on health. Third, we

¹³ Thanks to Shipan and Volden for making their data available to us.

include a dummy variable for the Synar amendment, a law passed by Congress in 1992 that required states to meet certain conditions with respect to the sale of cigarettes to minors (under age 18) or lose grant funding.

Finally, we include measures of government preferences. These include governmental activism, using the Berry et al. (1998) measure of government ideology (where higher values represent more liberal governments) and measures of unified Democratic and unified Republican state governments. More activist governments should be associated with a higher likelihood of passing laws, unified Democratic governments would be expected to be more likely to enact smoking restrictions, and unified Republican governments less likely to do so. We also control for local-to-state effects, using the proportion of state population covered by local antismoking restrictions. This measure is the proportion of the state's population that was covered at the start of each year for that particular type of antismoking law (government building restrictions or restaurant restrictions) and would be expected to be negative. Finally, we include a measure of state-to-state diffusion (horizontal diffusion of antismoking policies) with a rough approximation of the connections between states as the proportion of contiguous neighbors who have already enacted the same policy prior to that year. As more neighbors pass restrictions, the likelihood that a state will do so also increases. Variable descriptions and summary statistics are offered in Appendix Table A3.

Results

As is typical for policy diffusion studies since the pioneering work of Berry and Berry (1990), we perform an event history analysis on our data, using logit due to the dichotomous nature of our dependent variables. Removing states after they have adopted a policy yields a

total of 678 observations when government building restrictions is the dependent variable and 807 observations when analyzing restrictions on smoking in restaurants. In addition, we use robust standard errors and cluster by state to account for potential issues of heteroskedasticity and temporal dependence.

Independent Effect of National Activity

The Increased Attention Hypothesis and Intergovernmental Deference Hypothesis present competing views of how states might respond to heightened national policy discussions, either with a greater likelihood of policy adoption or with a lower likelihood. We present the tests of these hypotheses in Table 1, where Model 1 focuses on government buildings and Model 2 focuses on restaurants, and where the key variable of interest is *Lagged Federal Activities*. The coefficient in Model 1 is positive and that in Model 2 is negative, although neither attains statistical significance at conventional levels. Therefore, we find no evidence that an increase in federal activities leads directly to more (or fewer) state-level adoptions in the following year. This could mean that federal activities have no effect on state adoptions; or it could be that any effect is filtered through other political and economic variables.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Before exploring such conditional effects, we reflect on the other findings from Table 1, which are consistent across later model specifications. In particular, *Current Federal Activities* takes a positive coefficient, consistent with the idea that the same pressures that stimulate national discussions in any given year also stimulate state policy adoptions. This is an important control, as it helps account for any other factors that affect the likelihood of attention to and action on antismoking policy issues nationwide in any given year. Beyond that crucial finding,

we see support for the idea that tobacco-producing states are less likely to adopt antismoking measures, health organization lobbyists spur legislative actions, liberal governments are more likely to adopt restrictions, and there is a horizontal diffusion of restaurant restrictions based on geography. These are all in line with our expectations, and help establish that the baseline models of Table 1 are performing as expected.

The Conditional Role of State Legislative Professionalism

As discussed above, the variability of state characteristics points to the possibility that different states view national-level attention through different lenses. What this means is that national activities may spur some states more than others. In Table 2 we present our tests of the State Legislative Professionalism Hypothesis, through an interaction between *Lagged Federal Activities* and *Legislative Professionalism*. The positive and statistically significant coefficient on the interaction shows support for the hypothesis, with lagged activities having a more stimulant effect in states with higher state legislative professionalism.

[Insert Table 2 and Figure 3 about here]

Given the difficulty in interpreting interaction effects generally, we illustrate the size of these effects across the entire range of *Legislative Professionalism* in Figure 3, where the top panel shows the effects from the government buildings equation and the lower panel shows the effects for restaurant restrictions.¹⁴ The upward sloping lines reflect support for the State Legislative Professionalism Hypothesis. The dashed lines illustrate a 90% confidence interval, such that there is a 5% probability of the true relationship being below the lower dashed line or

¹⁴ The figures, drawn using Fred Boehmke's *grinter* command in *Stata*, show dY^*/dX on the y-axis, or the change in the log odds of enacting a restriction as the state characteristic examined changes.

above the upper dashed line. Thus, in Figure 3a, we can say with 95% confidence that, for states with a legislative professionalism score above about 0.27, greater federal activity in the prior year is associated with greater government building restrictions in the current year. For a highly professional state like Michigan, with an average professionalism score of about 0.5, each one-unit increase in *Lagged Federal Activities* is associated with about an 80% rise in the odds of the adoption of a government buildings restriction.

A similar pattern appears for restaurant restrictions, as seen in Figure 3b. Here, however, in addition to strong evidence of enhanced adoption by professional legislatures, less professional legislatures are actually less likely to adopt restaurant restrictions when the federal government is engaging in policy discussions. For states with professionalism scores near zero like New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, and New Mexico, each one-unit increase in *Lagged Federal Activities* is associated with a decline in the odds of adopting a restaurant restriction by about 30%. Such a finding is consistent with the Intergovernmental Deference Hypothesis, but only for states with the least professional legislatures. For states with moderate levels of legislative professionalism, neither an effect of deference to the national government nor the increased attention effect dominates the other. These states appear to be neither stimulated nor deterred by national government discussions. In combination, the findings of Table 2 and Figure 3 offer strong support for the conditional effects of the State Legislative Professionalism Hypothesis.

The Conditional Role of Health Organization Lobbyists

The Interest Group Activism Hypothesis suggests that the effect of national policy discussions is not only conditional on state legislative professionalism but also on the interest

group environment. In particular, we hypothesize that policy advocates will take the national policy discussions and use them to further advance their agendas. To explore this possibility, we interact *Health Organization Lobbyists* with *Lagged Federal Activities*, and report the results in Table 3. Once again, we find a positive coefficient on the interaction, and one that achieves statistical significance in Model 6 for restaurant restrictions. These results are suggestive of enhanced responsiveness to federal activities within states that feature a large community of health organization lobbyists.

[Insert Table 3 and Figure 4 about here]

Once again we illustrate the size of these effects, now for the entire range of *Health Organization Lobbyists* in Figure 4. Consistent with the Interest Group Activism Hypothesis, there is a positive marginal effect of *Lagged Federal Activities*, but only for states with high levels of health organization lobbyists. In particular the effect is positive and statistically significant where the ratio of health lobbyists to all lobbyists exceeds 0.10 for government building restrictions and 0.17 for restaurant restrictions. When about twenty percent of state lobbyists have a focus on health, each one-unit increase in *Lagged Federal Activities* is associated with a rise in the odds of adoption by about 70% for government building restrictions and by about 50% for restaurant restrictions. In contrast, states with very few health-oriented lobbyists tend to be nonresponsive to national government discussions, or even potentially deferential to the national government in such circumstances.

The Conditional Role of State Tobacco Production

Our third conditional hypothesis focuses on the ways in which economic ties may alter the effect of national activities. We utilize tobacco production as a measure of these ties and

report the results in Table 4. The findings once again suggest that state responsiveness is conditional, here in line with the Economic Importance Hypothesis. The coefficient on the interaction of *Lagged Federal Activities* and *Production* is positive in both models, and statistically significant ($p = 0.027$, one-tailed) in the case of government building restrictions.

[Insert Table 4 and Figure 5 about here]

The conditional nature and size of the effects are again best shown visually, as in Figure 5. In particular, for moderate to large tobacco producers (those producing more than 0.05 million tons of tobacco in a year) the marginal effect of national government discussions on the probability of enacting a government building restriction is positive and statistically significant. For example, for a state producing about 100,000 tons of tobacco per year, such as Georgia, Tennessee, or Virginia, each one-unit increase in *Federal Activities* in any given year is associated with about a 40% rise in the odds of a state government building restriction in the following year. For high producers, such as Kentucky or North Carolina, each one-unit increase in federal policy discussions is associated with more than double the odds of a government building restriction, when compared to the low-adoption baselines for such high-tobacco-producing states. Although the plot for restaurant restrictions reveals a similarly upward sloping line, the marginal effect of federal activities is not statistically significant for any value of *Tobacco Production*. Thus, while the evidence provides some support for the Economic Importance Hypothesis, that support is not as strong as it was for the other conditional hypotheses.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our analysis contributes to a fuller overall understanding of three important aspects of the American political system: policy diffusion, federalism, and legislative politics. First, our finding that national policy discussions can affect state policy enactment, at least under some conditions, extends current scholarship on vertical diffusion. More specifically, we show that policy *ideas* can diffuse in a top-down fashion, not just through grant conditions and mandates but also because national discussions may influence state policymakers' perceptions of the benefits of the policy, of the importance of the issue, and of their need to act. Second, and related, our conclusions fall in concert with scholarship on cooperative and competitive federalism, wherein states and the national government both seek to solve common policy problems, but are cautious about how the actions of one another influence their own options. Third, our study provides additional insight into the ways in which Congress can influence other political actors, even when it does not pass laws (e.g., Ferejohn and Shipan 1990). In particular, we show that Congress can affect policy by engaging in various types of activities, such as hearings and bill introductions, as these ideas diffuse across levels of government in our federal system. In a system with a high degree of congressional gridlock, it is important to consider how congressional actors can nevertheless stimulate the generation of policy solutions through the bills they sponsor and the hearings they hold.

Notably, we did not find that national activities affect all states equally. Indeed, we initially found no overall significant direct effect of federal activities. Instead, we found that these activities mattered only under some conditions, and that their effects were moderated by state-level characteristics. Thus, while top-down diffusion occurs, it does not occur unconditionally, but instead depends on the professionalism of a state's legislature, on interest group activism, and on the economic importance of the policy area to the state.

While our results are promising, we also recognize that our analysis faces several limitations. First, we do not unpack the underlying *mechanisms* of top-down diffusion, which could be based on learning, imitation, and even anticipatory adaptation by the states.¹⁵ What exactly do state policymakers read into the smoke signals they observe from the national level? Second, we look at only three state-level characteristics – professionalism, interest groups, and economic importance. Other factors also might modify the effects of national level activities.¹⁶ Third, by focusing on policy enactments, we limit our consideration to the influence of national activities on state-level *adoptions*. The various choices of policymakers at earlier stages in the policy process, though, are important factors in ultimate policy enactment. We expect that we are underestimating the effect of national policy activities on state-level actors by only considering those policies that are successfully passed by states.

Finally, Karch (2007) finds a “percolation effect” whereby a few states innovate, national actors then take up the policy debate, and eventually the rest of the states join the parade. In our analysis, we focus on only the second and third steps of this process, ignoring bottom-up vertical diffusion. The possibility that a few innovator states stimulate national activity, which then generates top-down diffusion, indicates that further research is merited. Does the national government play a mediating or moderating role with respect to state policy diffusion? In other

¹⁵ Moreover, if states are learning from national-level activities, what exactly do they learn? Do states learn how to define policy problems and connect them to policy solutions, do they learn about the contentiousness or ambiguity of the policy area, or do they learn about the policy preferences and the likelihood of bill passage in the national legislature?

¹⁶ Another possibility is that national attention interacts with citizen ideology. Some studies (e.g., Nicholson-Crotty 2009, Mooney and Lee 2000) have suggested that the influence of ideology on state legislative actions is dependent on the salience of the issue. To test this, we interacted our measures of attention with Berry et al.’s measure of citizen ideology. If the hypothesis about a link between salience and public opinion were correct, we would expect to find that the marginal effect of public opinion increases as salience (or attention) increases. Although we do find that the predicted effect is positive, it is not statistically significant across different model specifications.

words, if we consider innovators separately from later adopters, would vertical top-down diffusion still be apparent or does it just mediate state-to-state diffusion? Alternatively, for late adopters to enact a policy, does it take the combined effort of both early innovators and national actors? Having moved beyond the focus on top-down diffusion taking place solely through grant conditions and mandates, scholars are now poised to address such questions on a much larger scale.

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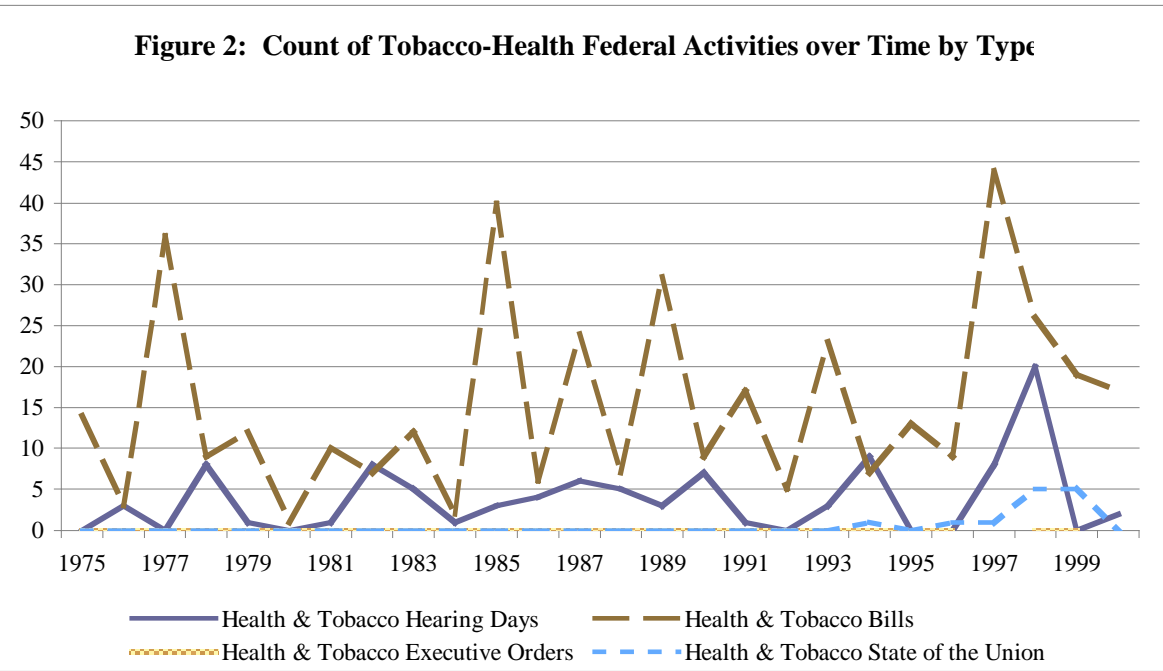
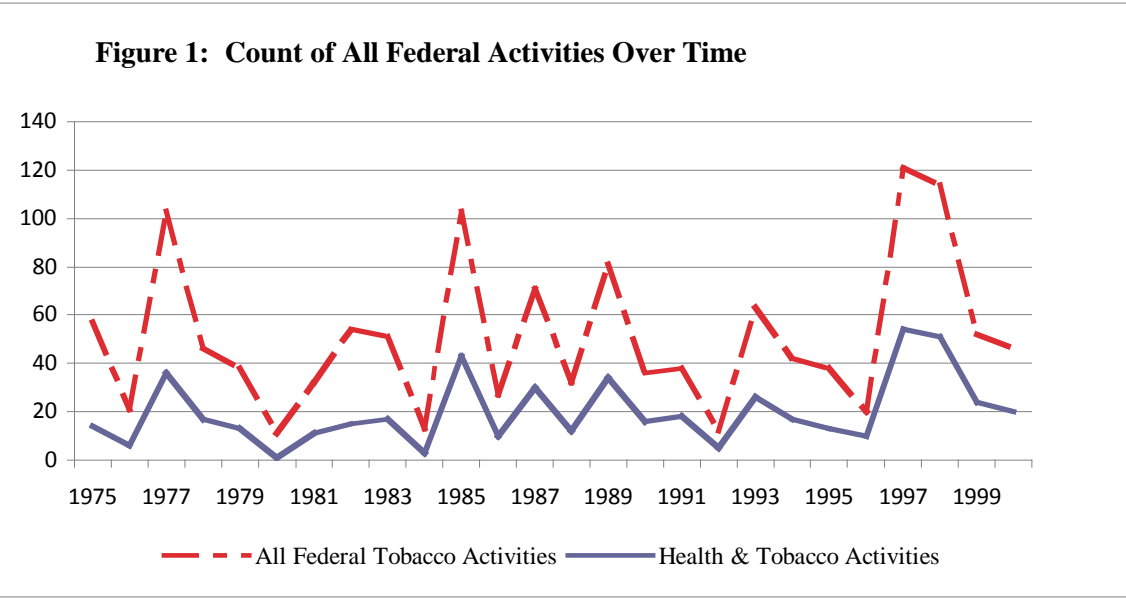


Figure 3a: Contingent Effect of Legislative Professionalism (Government Buildings)

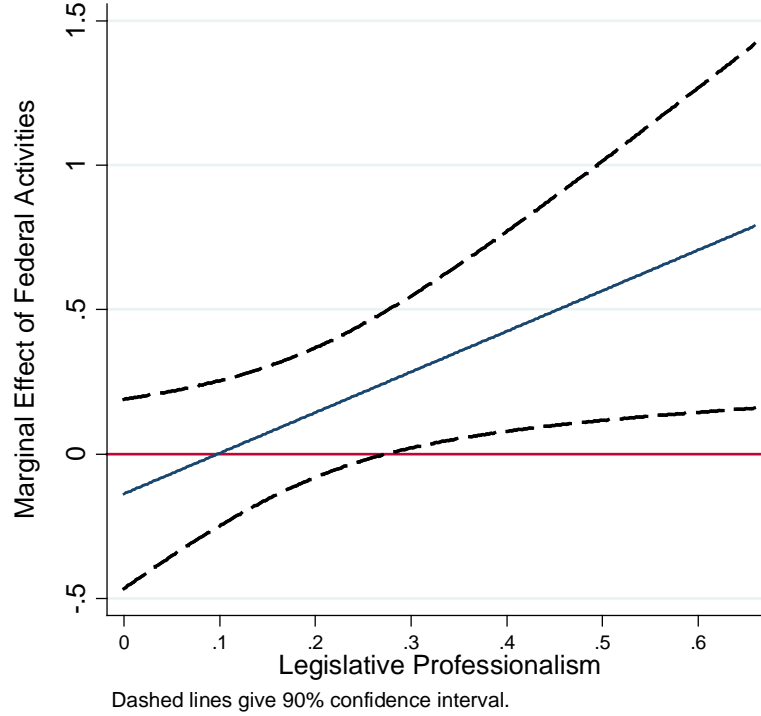


Figure 3b: Contingent Effect of Legislative Professionalism (Restaurants)

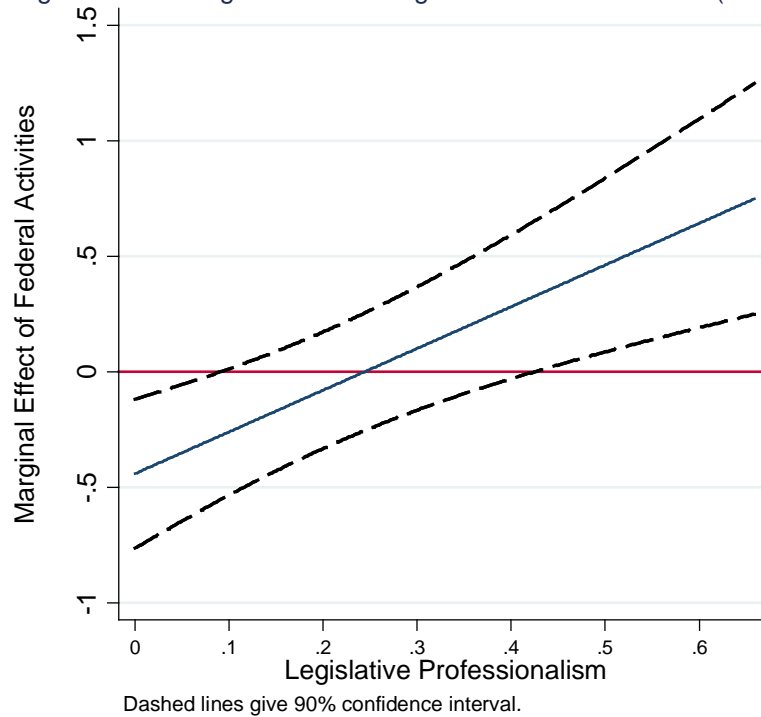


Figure 4a: Contingent Effect of Health Organization Lobbyists (Government Buildings)

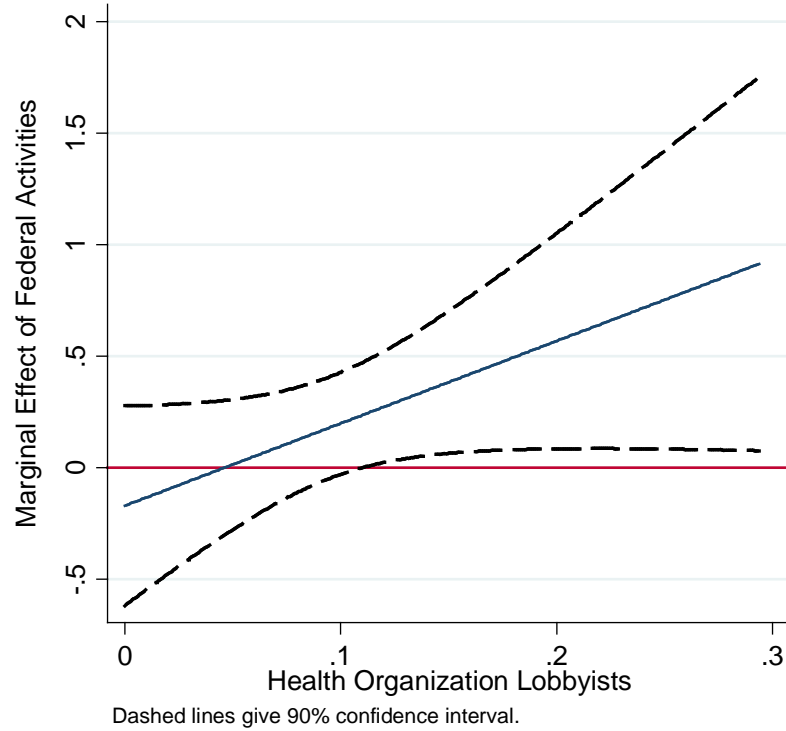


Figure 4b: Contingent Effect of Health Organization Lobbyists (Restaurants)

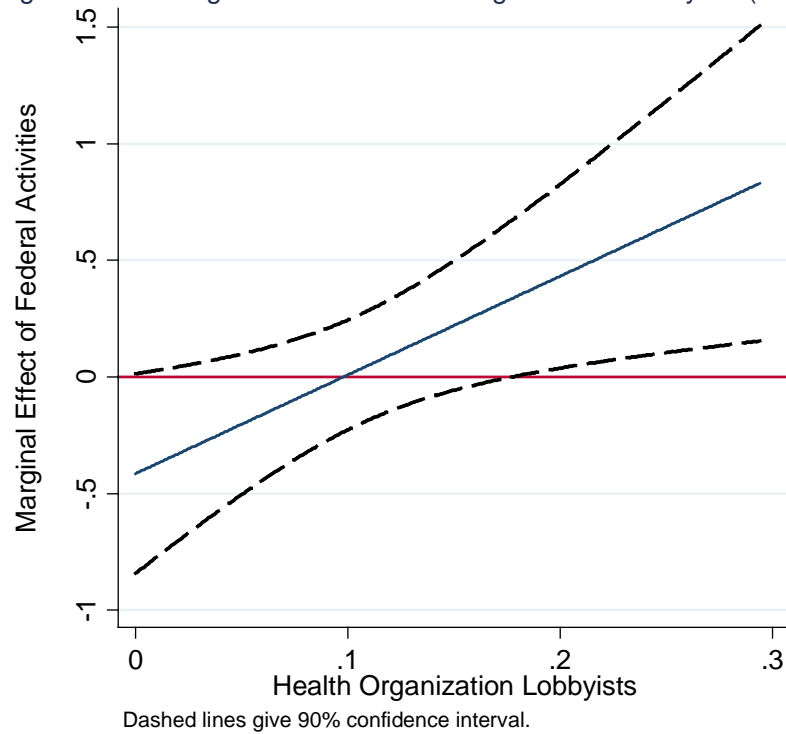


Figure 5a: Contingent Effect of Tobacco Production (Government Buildings)

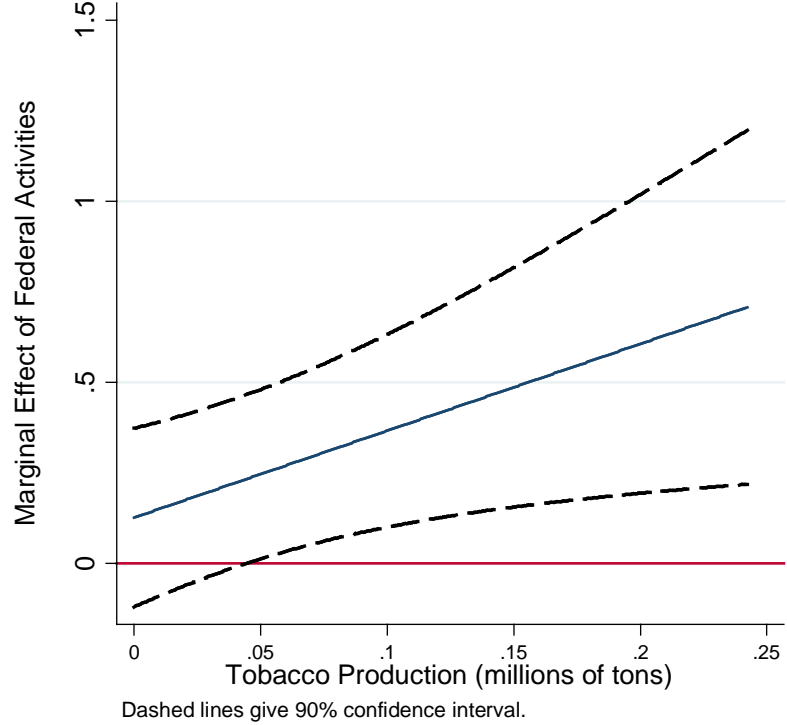


Figure 5b: Contingent Effect of Tobacco Production (Restaurants)

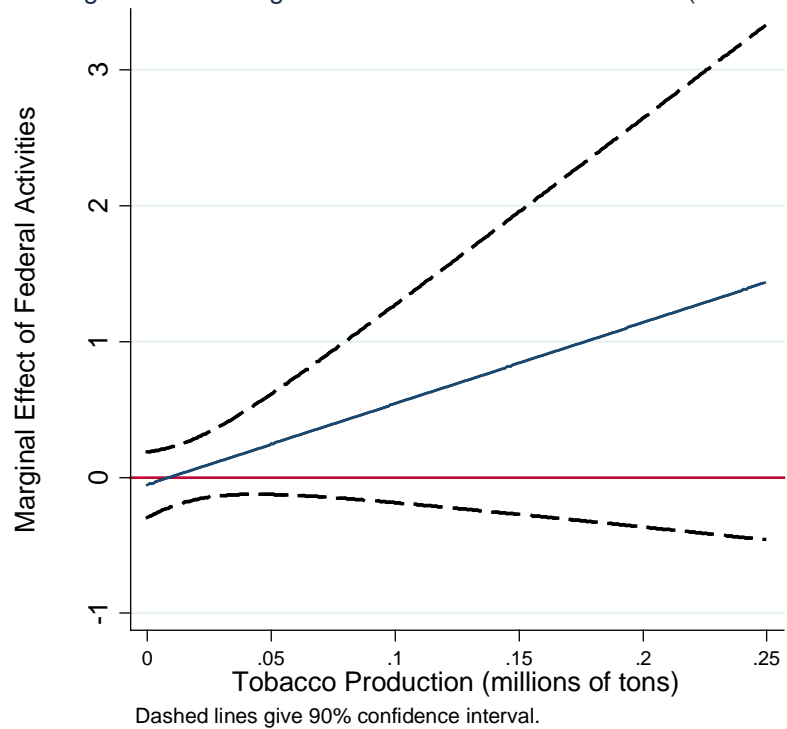


Table 1: Influence of Federal Activities on State Antismoking Restrictions

	Model 1 Government Buildings	Model 2 Restaurants
Lagged Federal Activities	0.165 (0.135)	-0.025 (0.136)
Legislative Professionalism	-1.475 (1.808)	-1.718 (1.845)
Production (millions of tons)	-2.788 (2.601)	-15.676 (15.724)
Tobacco-Producing State	-0.809* (0.492)	-1.223** (0.616)
Current Federal Activities	0.334** (0.139)	0.294** (0.133)
Synar Amendment Dummy	-1.783* (1.019)	-0.945 (0.778)
Health Organization Lobbyists	0.282 (2.821)	10.674*** (3.755)
Health Orgs. Influence	0.492* (0.294)	0.594** (0.299)
Tobacco Lobbyists	-21.996 (19.777)	-28.658 (26.380)
Tobacco Influence	-0.394 (0.433)	0.081 (0.613)
Percent Smokers	0.007 (0.073)	-0.037 (0.099)
Government Ideology	0.035*** (0.013)	0.035** (0.014)
Unified Democrats	-0.118 (0.530)	0.049 (0.647)
Unified Republicans	0.303 (0.996)	0.192 (0.929)
Proportion Spent on Health	14.301 (24.946)	37.492 (27.872)
Proportion of Population with Local Restriction	0.988 (2.397)	-0.447 (1.566)
Proportion of Neighbors with Restrictions	0.948 (0.724)	2.064** (0.880)
Constant	-4.877** (2.051)	-5.957* (3.126)
N	678	807
Wald $\chi^2(17)$	77.69***	56.23***

Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by state). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Table 2: Contingent Effects of State Legislative Professionalism

	Model 3 Government Buildings	Model 4 Restaurants
Lagged Federal Activities	-0.138 (0.193)	-0.440** (0.190)
Legislative Professionalism	-1.644 (1.931)	-1.864 (2.027)
Lagged Activities × Professionalism	1.407* (0.739)	1.805*** (0.564)
Production (millions of tons)	-3.138 (2.594)	-15.767 (15.371)
Tobacco-Producing State	-0.789 (0.489)	-1.196* (0.632)
Current Federal Activities	0.359*** (0.140)	0.320** (0.135)
Synar Amendment Dummy	-1.673* (0.969)	-0.945 (0.759)
Health Organization Lobbyists	0.594 (2.879)	11.280*** (3.990)
Health Orgs. Influence	0.507* (0.293)	0.592* (0.306)
Tobacco Lobbyists	-22.221 (19.813)	-29.864 (26.742)
Tobacco Influence	-0.325 (0.451)	0.109 (0.632)
Percent Smokers	0.011 (0.072)	-0.026 (0.100)
Government Ideology	0.034*** (0.013)	0.036*** (0.014)
Unified Democrats	-0.073 (0.525)	0.049 (0.645)
Unified Republicans	0.329 (0.998)	0.190 (0.930)
Proportion Spent on Health	13.357 (25.952)	36.876 (27.929)
Proportion of Population with Local Restriction	1.345 (2.479)	-0.241 (1.608)
Proportion of Neighbors with Restrictions	0.862 (0.731)	2.069** (0.900)
Constant	-4.935** (2.061)	-6.335** (3.177)
N	678	807
Wald $\chi^2(18)$	90.09***	119.23***

Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by state). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3: Contingent Effects of Health Organization Lobbyists

	Model 5 Government Buildings	Model 6 Restaurants
Lagged Federal Activities	-0.170 (0.263)	-0.414* (0.252)
Health Organization Lobbyists	0.571 (3.232)	12.263*** (3.650)
Lagged Activities × Health Organization Lobbyists	3.692 (2.385)	4.236** (1.985)
Legislative Professionalism	-1.494 (1.783)	-1.620 (1.875)
Production (millions of tons)	-2.811 (2.582)	-14.944 (15.784)
Tobacco-Producing State	-0.743 (0.497)	-1.302** (0.654)
Current Federal Activities	0.330** (0.138)	0.289** (0.133)
Synar Amendment Dummy	-1.761* (1.012)	-0.915 (0.768)
Health Orgs. Influence	0.475 (0.292)	0.584* (0.299)
Tobacco Lobbyists	-21.301 (20.054)	-31.176 (26.848)
Tobacco Influence	-0.387 (0.416)	0.028 (0.618)
Percent Smokers	0.002 (0.072)	-0.048 (0.098)
Government Ideology	0.034** (0.013)	0.036** (0.014)
Unified Democrats	-0.086 (0.525)	0.057 (0.641)
Unified Republicans	0.296 (0.989)	0.266 (0.946)
Proportion Spent on Health	12.534 (25.801)	38.221 (27.862)
Proportion of State Population With Local Restriction	1.062 (2.436)	-0.490 (1.571)
Proportion of Neighbors with Restrictions	0.934 (0.728)	2.037** (0.881)
Constant	-4.703** (2.045)	-5.844* (3.040)
N	678	807
Wald $\chi^2(18)$	82.99***	58.79***

Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by state). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Table 4: Contingent Effects of State Tobacco Production

	Model 7 Government Buildings	Model 8 Restaurants
Lagged Federal Activities	0.126 (0.145)	-0.053 (0.141)
Production (in millions of tons)	-3.935 (2.896)	-27.578 (23.719)
Lagged Activities × Production	2.399* (1.243)	5.965 (4.664)
Legislative Professionalism	-1.291 (1.848)	-1.859 (1.856)
Tobacco-Producing State	-0.799 (0.497)	-1.065 (0.671)
Current Federal Activities	0.326** (0.140)	0.288** (0.133)
Synar Amendment Dummy	-1.809* (1.054)	-0.969 (0.788)
Health Organization Lobbyists	0.016 (2.898)	10.789*** (3.813)
Health Orgs. Influence	0.500* (0.292)	0.586** (0.299)
Tobacco Lobbyists	-22.793 (19.884)	-26.708 (26.597)
Tobacco Influence	-0.506 (0.448)	0.130 (0.629)
Percent Smokers	0.007 (0.072)	-0.037 (0.100)
Government Ideology	0.034** (0.014)	0.033** (0.014)
Unified Democrats	-0.102 (0.529)	0.073 (0.652)
Unified Republicans	0.316 (0.997)	0.152 (0.924)
Proportion Spent on Health	14.186 (25.018)	38.008 (27.724)
Proportion of State Population With Local Restriction	1.005 (2.422)	-0.354 (1.568)
Proportion of Neighbors with Restrictions	0.957 (0.731)	2.028** (0.878)
Constant	-4.834** (2.037)	-5.909* (3.144)
N	678	807
Wald $\chi^2(18)$	108.41***	53.67***

Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by state). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Appendix

Year	Cong	Bill	Chamber	Title
1975	94	4190	House	A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 to increase the excise tax on cigarettes, and to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a trust fund to be used to fund the research programs of the National Cancer Institute.
1981	97	4957	House	A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act and the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act to establish a national program under an Office of Smoking and Health to inform the public of the dangers from smoking, to change the label requirements for cigarettes, and for other purposes.
1987	100	1008	House	A bill to protect the health of nonsmokers working and visiting in United States Government buildings from the hazards of involuntary smoking by restricting smoking to designated areas in all buildings or building sections occupied by the United States Government.
1996	104	4245	House	A bill to restrict the access of youth to tobacco products, and for other purposes.
1998	105	3738	House	To establish a responsible United States international tobacco policy, to prevent tobacco companies from targeting tobacco products to children, to ensure no government promotion of tobacco overseas, to curb smuggling of tobacco products, to establish the American Center on Global Health and Tobacco, and for other purposes
2002	107	2626	Senate	A bill to protect the public health by providing the Food and Drug Administration with certain authority to regulate tobacco products.

Year	Congress	Description	Chamber
1976	94	cigarette smoking and disease	Senate
1978	95	effect of smoking on nonsmokers	House of Representatives
1982	97	comprehensive smoking prevention education	Senate
1986	99	restrict smoking to designated areas in all federal buildings	House of Representatives
1990	101	tobacco health hazards, regulation. of advertising	Senate
1994	103	environmental tobacco smoke, public health service act	House of Representatives
1997	105	examine proposed negotiated settlement of product liability against tobacco companies	Senate
1998	105	review FDA regulatory authority over tobacco products	Senate
2000	106	Examines State tobacco use prevention and reduction programs funded by settlement payments from lawsuits against tobacco companies	Senate
2003	108	Considers Youth Smoking Prevention and State Revenue Enforcement Act	House of Representatives

Table A3: Variable Descriptions and Summary Statistics

Variable	Description	Mean	St. Dev.
<i>State Adoption of Government Buildings Restrictions</i>	Dummy = 1 if state adopts first government buildings restriction in this year	0.057	0.231
<i>State Adoption of Restaurant Restrictions</i>	Dummy = 1 if state adopts first restaurant restriction in this year	0.038	0.192
<i>Federal Activities</i>	Normalized measure of extent of congressional hearings and bills introduced	0.000	1.515
<i>Legislative Professionalism</i>	Squire's (1992) updated professionalism index	0.204	0.125
<i>Production (millions of tons)</i>	State tobacco production in millions of tons	0.020	0.075
<i>Tobacco Producing State</i>	Dummy = 1 if tobacco produced in state	0.327	0.469
<i>Synar Amendment Dummy</i>	Dummy = 1 after Synar amendment took effect	0.308	0.462
<i>Health Organization Lobbyists</i>	Proportion of lobbyists in the state working for health organizations, based on 1994 snapshot	0.084	0.057
<i>Health Orgs. Influence</i>	Dummy = 2 if health organizations among top ten lobbying groups in state, = 1 if among top twenty, = 0 otherwise, based on 1994 snapshot	0.900	0.807
<i>Tobacco Lobbyists</i>	Proportion of lobbyists in the state working for tobacco industry, based on 1994 snapshot	0.016	0.009
<i>Tobacco Influence</i>	Dummy = 2 if tobacco industry among top ten lobbying groups in state, = 1 if among top twenty, = 0 otherwise, based on 1994 snapshot	0.140	0.448
<i>Percent Smokers</i>	Percent of adults who smoke in the state	24.9	3.33
<i>Government Ideology</i>	Ideology score for state government	50.2	22.9
<i>Unified Democrats</i>	Dummy = 1 for Democrats controlling state legislature and governor	0.339	0.474
<i>Unified Republicans</i>	Dummy = 1 for Republicans controlling state legislature and governor	0.119	0.323
<i>Proportion Spent on Health</i>	Proportion of state expenditures spent on health	0.033	0.012
<i>Proportion of Population with Local Government Buildings Restrictions</i>	Proportion of state population living in localities with restrictions on smoking in public workplaces at the start of this year	0.071	0.133
<i>Proportion of Population with Local Restaurant Restrictions</i>	Proportion of state population living in localities with restaurant restrictions at start of year	0.072	0.136
<i>Proportion of Neighbors with Gov. Buildings Restrictions</i>	Proportion of geographic neighbors with government buildings restrictions at start of year	0.428	0.358
<i>Proportion of Neighbors with Restaurant Restrictions</i>	Proportion of geographic neighbors with restaurant restrictions at start of year	0.327	0.331