



The Right Type of Legislator: A Theory of Taxation and Representation

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Martedì 31 marzo 2015, ore 12.00, Aula della Scuola di Dottorato, Palazzo Cà Borin, Via del Santo 22

Many theories of taxation suggest that legislators desire to bring "pork" to their districts will result in higher spending, and thus, taxation. Yet the US, where pork is an important part of a legislators job, has lower taxes than European countries, where legislators largely do not compete for pork. Our analysis adds a simple assumption to standard models to reconcile them with this fact. Our assumption---that those who are successful in the private sector will also tend to be successful in negotiating transfers for their district---allows our theory to match stylized facts about class representation in legislators. The model can then be used to examine policies aimed at increasing descriptive representation in legislatures. We find that many suggested policies have no, or negative, effects on descriptive representation, including: increasing the number of representatives, allowing parties to choose candidates, giving parties some ability to discipline legislator preferences, or allowing outside parties the ability to screen candidates. On the other hand, two policies are found to be particularly effective for increasing descriptive representation: proportional representation, and reducing the importance of pork.