What Drives US Immigration Policy?
Evidence from Congressional Roll Call Votes

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Abstract

This paper investigates the determinants of the voting behavior of US representatives on immigration policy in the period 1970-2006. Our findings suggest that representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are more likely to support an open immigration policy towards the unskilled, while representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts are less likely to do so. Our evidence is robust to the introduction of additional economic controls, which capture the size of the welfare state and to a wealth of other ideological and non economic characteristics of the district. This paper thus represents the natural counterpart, in a democratic government setting like the one of the United States, to the findings of the literature on individual attitudes towards immigration, which has also highlighted the crucial importance of the labor market/economic channel in explaining individual preferences towards immigration.

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1. Introduction

Immigration policy is today one of the most hotly debated policy issues in the United States. Views on immigration differ greatly among the public, but the same is true even within the same political party. Indeed, in reporting on the debate spurred by the immigration policy reform proposal introduced in 2005 many observers have highlighted the divisiveness of the issue. Watanabe and Becerra (2006) for instance suggest that "The Republican Party,…, is split among those who want tougher restrictions, those who fear alienating the Latino vote and business owners who are pressing for more laborers to fill blue collar jobs in construction, cleaning, gardening and other industries." While in the recent past the platform of the Democratic Party has been consistently pro-immigration, traditional Democratic groups have also shown concerns with the increased inflows of foreign workers. While US labor unions now officially welcome Latinos and other immigrants, their rank and file have opposed growing inflows of foreign workers.[1]

The goal of this paper is to investigate whether economic drivers, and in particular the labor market characteristics of a given constituency, do systematically affect the voting behavior of elected representatives on immigration policy issues. To answer this question, we start by developing a simple theoretical model which links a district's factor abundance with its representative's voting behavior on immigration policy. The model suggests that in skilled labor abundant districts the local representative is more likely to support an open policy towards unskilled immigrants the more skilled labor abundant the district is. On the contrary, in unskilled labor abundant districts, the representative is less likely to support this type of policies the more unskilled labor abundant the district is.

We bring the predictions of the model to the data using a novel dataset we have constructed. It covers all recorded votes on immigration policy measures, which have been introduced in the US House of Representatives over the period 1970-2006. We have then complemented roll call voting records with a wealth of district level characteristics, to capture both the role of economic and non-economic drivers.

Our results suggest that economic characteristics, and in particular labor market factors are statistically significant and important drivers of a representative's voting behavior on immigration policy. In particular, we find that representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are more likely to support an open immigration policy towards the

[1] See Watts (2002)

unskilled, while representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts are less likely to do so. Our evidence is robust to the introduction of additional economic controls, which capture the size of the welfare state and to a wealth of other ideological and non economic characteristics of the district.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper represents the most comprehensive attempt to date to systematically investigate the economic and non-economic determinants of US individual representatives voting behavior on immigration policy. Previous studies have mainly focused on the introduction of individual legislation. For instance, Gonzalez and Kamdar (2000), investigating Congressmen voting behavior on the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (*H.R. 2202*), have found that representatives of district characterized by a higher share of workers employed in low-skill intensive industries tended to be more in favor of immigration restrictions. Fetzner (2006) found a similar result in his analysis of the voting on the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act *(H.R. 4437)* during the 109th Congress, but looking at the distribution of individuals across occupations in a given district.[2] Gimpel and Edwards (1999) in their substantive study have also analyzed individual bills, but paying little or no attention at all towards district level economic determinants.

An interesting recent paper by Milner and Tingley (2009) is the contribution in the literature that comes closest to ours in scope. The authors analyze a large panel of votes on immigration policy related issues which took place in the US Congress between 1979 and 2006, and explore the role of both economic and non-economic drivers of individual representatives' choices. Importantly, their analysis differs from ours in several key dimensions, involving both the methodology implemented, as well as the results obtained. First of all, our sample covers a longer time period. Secondly, Milner and Tingley (2009) include in their analysis all votes – both on final passage bills and on intermediate legislative steps[3] - while we focus exclusively on final passage bills, as expectations on the effects at the district level of floor amendments are less clear than for final passage votes. Third, the key proxy for the salient labor market characteristics of a given district in Milner and Tingley (2009) is represented by the share of individuals working in high skilled jobs,[4] whereas we use a more comprehensive measure based on educational attainment at the district level. The authors then distinguish

[2] He finds that support for the restrictive bill overwhelmingly came from representatives of districts characterized by a high share of blue collar employment.
[3] Typically, this involves floor amendments etc.
[4] This is defined as the percentage of working age persons in a district employed in executive, managerial, administrative and professional occupation.

four different types of legislative measures in their analysis, suggesting that those involving directly the number of visas for low-skilled workers should be those for which a district's economic characteristics should matter most. Interestingly, in all the specifications considered, district level labor market characteristics do not seem to affect the voting behavior of individual representatives.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the recent developments in the congressional history of US immigration policy. Section 3 presents a simple theoretical model, which drives our empirical investigation. Section 4 describes our data, while section 5 presents our empirical results. In section 6 we carry out a series of robustness checks, and section 7 concludes the paper.

2. Recent History of US Migration Policy

The votes included in our sample span the years 1970-2006, a period during which immigration has become once again the focus of much debate in the United States. In this section we provide a brief overview of the main immigration policy initiatives, which have been introduced in this period and characterize them with respect to their impact on unskilled immigration.

2.1 1970-1980

The US migration policy in the seventies was characterized by the introduction of a series of amendments to the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965, which had abolished the national-origin quota system and replaced it with a system emphasizing the importance of family ties and as a result had greatly simplified the family reunification process. As a consequence of the 1965 bill, total immigration increased by nearly 60 percent in the following decade.

Parallel with this shift in the composition of immigrants, economic conditions changed substantially. At the beginning of the seventies the US economy was hit by the first oil crisis and suffered from stagflation - high unemployment combined with high inflation. The US Congress reacted to this development by introducing a series of restrictive immigration policy measures. This change in attitude is already reflected in *H.R. 392* and *H.R. 891*, which passed the House of Representatives in 1973 with a clear majority. While the first bill contains provisions for employer sanctions to tackle the growing employment of undocumented immigrants, the second bill extended the 20,000 per-country cap to migrants from the Western

hemisphere. This measure was particularly aimed at limiting immigration from Mexico (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).[5] The dominant issue in the following years was the admission of refugees. The debate concerned mainly the distinction between immigrants and refugees, the annual limit for refugees, the scope for resettlement assistance, language and vocational training, and medical care for newly arrived refugees. [6]

2.2 1980-1990

Following the introduction of restrictive measures on immigration from the Western hemisphere and the growing flows of refugees, much of the immigration policy during the eighties was characterized by struggles and debates about the strong increase in illegal immigration and asylum seekers, especially from Haiti, El-Salvador and Cuba (Tichenor 1994). While we do not consider refugees in our analysis, we capture the discussion on illegal migration looking at various bills which have successfully passed the House of Representatives (*H.R. 1510, H.R. 3810, H.R. 4222, H.R. 619, and H.R. 45*). The two most important pieces of legislation in this context are the *Simpson-Mazzoli bill* (*H.R. 1510*), introduced in 1982 and named after its sponsors, and the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* (*H.R. 3810, IRCA*) of 1986. The two measures are closely intertwined, since the latter is a revised version of the former. During the 97th congress senator Alan Simpson (Republican, Wyoming) and congressman Romano Mazzoli (Democrat, Kentucky) took the initiative to introduce an important reform of the US immigration legislation.[7] One major provision of the bill made was to make it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit undocumented immigrants and the proposed legislation introduced also financial and other penalties for those employing illegal aliens. A second major component was the requirement for employers to attest their employees' immigration status. Last but not least it granted an amnesty to certain agricultural seasonal workers and immigrants who entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and had lived in the US continuously. The bill proposal was - from its very introduction on the Senate floor in 1982 - very controversial. The introduction of sanctions for employers drew strong opposition from liberal democrats, business groups and the Hispanic Caucus. Furthermore, the House leadership did not favor the idea of the bill reaching the floor for final

[5] The *Immigration act of 1965* had imposed per-country ceilings only for immigrants from Eastern hemisphere nations. The overall hemispheric caps have been 120.000 for Western hemisphere nations (North, and South America) and 170,000 for nations from the Eastern hemisphere (Africa, Asia, Europe and Australia).
[6] The general distinction between refugees and immigrants is that the latter group leaves their country voluntarily, while the first group has to leave their country due to religious or political persecution (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).
[7] Though members of both chambers of the US congress are congressmen, usually only representatives of the house are referred as congressmen.

voting in an election year. For these reasons Mazzoli decided finally to pull the bill from the floor and to reintroduce it in the 98th congress (Lowell et al 1986, Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

The leadership structure in the House remained nearly unchanged in the 98th congress and the *Simpson-Mazzoli bill* faced again considerably controversy. After passing the different subcommittees, House floor action saw the consideration of 69 amendments. Most of the debate focused on the employer sanctions and the amnesty provisions. In particular, it was feared that the latter provision would have a dramatic impact on the numbers of immigrants that would be admitted in the US, because legalized immigrants were to be allowed to bring their relatives under the 1965 preference system (Gimpel and Edwards 1999). After much debate, the bill passed the House with a 216 to 211 vote, with a margin of only five votes, one of the narrowest in the whole immigration debate. Since the bill passed the Senate in a different version, the two texts went to a House-Senate conference committee where they died as no compromise could be reached.[8]

The push for a comprehensive immigration reform was strong enough for a new version of the bill to be introduced in the 99th congress in both chambers. The main difference from the original version was the addition of a temporary program for agricultural workers, which was requested by the agricultural lobby and strongly opposed by organized labor (Gimpel & Edwards 1999). The new version of the bill finally passed both chambers and was enacted on the 6th of November 1986 by President Reagan. The direction of the policy change is not straightforward to assess, due to the variety of different provisions contained in the bill. In fact the *IRCA* allowed almost 3.5 million illegal immigrants to be legalized as permanent immigrants (LeMay 2006). Furthermore, the bill implemented a controversial guest-worker program in the tradition of the *Bracero* program, which enables a legal inflow of unskilled farm workers.[9] For these reason, and following also Tichenor (1994), we have classified the *IRCA* as being pro immigration. Since the restrictionist impetus of the original version was much clearer we classify instead the original *Simpson-Mazzoli bill* as being against liberalizing immigration.

[8] If the house and senate approve two different versions of a bill, which happens frequently, house and senate can exchange amendments or set up a conference committee to negotiate and resolve the differences. The conferees are typically drawn from the standing committee with jurisdiction over the proposed bill and appointed by the speaker of the respective chamber. There are no formal rules for the outline of the conference meeting which furthermore takes place behind closed doors. In the end the majority of the conferees should sign a conference report which contains a negotiated compromise of both versions of the bill. This conference report must pass house and senate without the possibility of further amendments before it is cleared for presidential consideration (Davis 2006).

[9] The *Bracero program* was a famous temporary farm-worker program between Mexico and the United states. It allows between 1942 and 1964 Mexican farmers to work in the US for up to nine months (LeMay 2006).

The other legislations included in our analysis were all aimed at a more generous handling of illegal immigrants. *H.R. 618* allowed approximately 500,000 illegal immigrants from El Salvador and 200,000, from Nicaragua to stay in the US. The discussion in the house was mainly about the question whether the majority of the illegal immigrants from these two countries are fleeing from political oppression or poverty (Gimpel and Edwards 1999) Because of the unclear distinction between refugees and migrants and the huge dimension of both groups we decided to include the bill in our analysis. *H.R. 4222* extended the legalization provisions of the *IRCA* act by six months.[10] *H.R. 45* provided temporary protected status and work permits to illegal immigrants from China, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

2.3 1990-2000

The first major legislation of this period was the *Immigration Act of 1990* (*IMMACT*). In contrast to the *IRCA* this bill focused mainly on legal immigration and had two main goals: the revision of the existing visa allocation system and the introduction of new provisions for skilled immigration. The system of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965 heavily emphasized family reunifications and in particular it excluded immediate relatives from the annual immigration cap. As a consequence, the number and share of European immigrants had decreased continuously during the previous two decades, while the numbers of visas issued to immigrants of Asian and Latin American descent had increased heavily. For this reason the *IMMACT* established a new preference scheme with three categories: family- based immigration (approximately 74% of total), employment and business related immigration (20 percent of total) and a new diversity category (6 percent of total). Under the second category, people are admitted on the basis of skills and occupations, while the third category allocates green cards through a lottery program. The goal of the last category is to increase the number of immigrants from countries, which previously had low admission numbers. In practice, the proportion between family and employment immigration was not altered substantially (Gimpel and Edwards 1999). The major change introduced by the legislation was the increase of the new annual cap for legal permanent residents from 500.000 to 700.000. Finally, the act established also a short-term amnesty program to grant legal residence to up to 165,000 spouses and minor children of immigrants who were legalized under the *IRCA*.

As it soon became apparent, the *IRCA* had failed to stem the problem of undocumented immigrants entering the US. This increased the pressure on US policy makers to deal with

[10] Originally the amnesty program was scheduled to run from May 1987 to May 1988.

illegal immigration. One result was the introduction, in 1994, of the so called *Proposition 187* in California.[11] The proposition prevented illegal immigrants from having access to most public services, including public education, and was approved in a referendum by almost 60% of those entitled to vote. Although the measure became state law, it was later found unconstitutional by a federal court. Still, the message to Congress was clear and the Californian delegation was very active in trying to put immigration reform high on Congress' agenda (Gimpel and Edwards 1999, Le May 2006). A result of this initiative and the following debates is the second major immigration legislation of the 90ties: the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* (*H. R. 2202*) of 1996. Initially, the act increased the size of the U.S. Border Patrol to 10,000 agents over five years and mandated the construction of fences at the most heavily trafficked areas of the U.S.-Mexico border.[12] Furthermore, the bill introduced a pilot program to check the immigration status of job applicants. A third and very important provision made the deportation of illegal immigrants substantially easier. Previously, immediate deportation was triggered only for offences that could lead to five years or more in jail. Under the new act, minor offences such as shoplifting, were making an individual eligible for deportation. Last but not least the law restricted the federal benefits to illegal and legal migrants (e.g. an alien who is not lawfully present in the U.S. is ineligible for social security benefits). The bill became public law on September 30, 1996.

2.4 2000-present

The immigration policy in the recent years has been mainly influenced by concerns about illegal immigration and national security. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the fear of further attacks have been very powerful catalysts, which have led Congress to adopt a number of new measures on immigration. In line with this, all of the bills from this period which are included in our analysis (*H.R. 4437*, *H.R. 418*, *H.R. 4830*, *H.R. 6094*, *H.R. 6061*, and *H.R. 6095*) aimed at reducing illegal immigration and to tighten immigration law enforcement.

The most controversial and substantial legislative proposal was the *Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005* (*H.R. 4437*). One of its major provisions was the building of a fence along the US-Mexican border up to 700 miles (1120

[11] California belonged together with Texas and Florida d to the states which received the largest numbers of both illegal and legal immigrants during the 90ties.
[12] H.R 2202 authorized the US government to hire 1000 new Border Patrol agents each year for five years.

km) long at points with the highest number of illegal border crossings. Secondly, the act required the federal government to take custody of undocumented aliens detained by local authorities. This would put an end to the practice of "catch and release", whereby federal officials instruct local law enforcement to release detained undocumented aliens due to a lack of resources. Furthermore, the act would have introduced a fine of $3,000 to all undocumented aliens, who are captured in the US although they had agreed to leave voluntarily. Finally, the bill would have subjected a person who supports or hosts undocumented immigrant to up to five years in prison (Fetzner 2006). The bill was - amongst other events - the catalyst of the 2006 U.S. immigrant rights protests, during which US cities were floated by hundred thousands of immigrants and their supporters demonstrating against the new immigration policy. The bill passed the House of Representatives on December 16, 2005 by a narrow vote of 239 to 182. However, it did not pass the Senate and is therefore the only major immigration bills that did not became public law in the period we are considering in our analysis.

The *Real ID Act* (*H.R. 418*) established regulations for State driver's licenses and new security standards for identification documents. It clearly addressed the issue of illegal immigration, because every driver's license applicant has now to present a proof of lawful immigration status. The *Border Tunnel Prevention Act* (*H.R. 4830*) prohibited the unauthorized construction, financing, or use of tunnels or subterranean passages that cross the international border between the United States and another country. The *Community Protection Act of 2008* (*H.R. 6094*) contained various measures to detain dangerous aliens, to ensure the removal of deportable criminal aliens, and to combat alien gang crime. The *Secure Fence Act* (*H.R. 6061*) picks up the issue of a fence at the Southern border which was already proposed in the controversial *Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.* The new bill allowed the construction of over 700 miles of double-reinforced fence along the border with Mexico in areas that have experienced illegal drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Finally, the *Immigration Law Enforcement Act of 2006* (*H.R. 6095*) strengthens the position of state and local authorities in dealing with the enforcement of immigration laws. Alien smugglers should be effectively prosecuted and the practice of “catch and release” should also be ended.

3. Theoretical framework

To analyze the drivers of the voting behavior of individual representatives, we will consider a simple model with *D* districts. Each district is populated by two types of agents, which are

either low skilled or high skilled. Each individual supplies one unit of either high skilled or low skilled labor, and in the domestic population there are N_L low skilled agents and N_H high skilled ones, so that the total population is given by $N = N_H + N_L$. Furthermore, let $\beta_L = N_L / N$, $\beta_H = N_H / N = 1 - \beta_L$ be respectively the share of low and high skilled in the domestic population.

Districts are heterogeneous with respect to their initial factor endowment. Each district produces only one output good according to a constant returns to scale production technology $Y=F(H,L)$, which can be expressed in intensive units as $y=f(h)$, where $y=Y/L$, $h=H/L$ etc. The production function is well behaved with $f'(h)>0$, $f''(h)<0$. Perfect competition in factor markets insures that the equilibrium rate of return to human capital r is given by $r=f'(h)$, while the wage rate w is $w=f(h)-hf'(h)$. In this simple setting, individuals care only about their income.

The preferences of each individual based in the district are represented by the district's congressman. We will assume that in choosing whether to support or not an immigration policy, the representative maximizes the utility level of the average citizen[13]. Thus, the representative's objective function can be written as

$$W = \beta_L w(h) + (1 - \beta_L) r(h) h \quad (1)$$

In our theoretical framework, the representative will choose between the status quo, and a policy that will decrease the capital labor ratio in the population. This assumption captures the policy choices available from our data, from which we have information on whether a congressman votes in favor or against a policy that increases the supply of unskilled labor.

We can establish the following proposition:

Proposition 1 The likelihood that a representative will support a more open migration policy towards the less skilled in decreasing in the share of the low skilled in the district's population.

[13] The choice of this objective function can be rationalized in a probabilistic voting setting in which two candidates compete for the seat in Congress and do not know the true preferences of the median voter. For more on this issue, see Drazen (2000).

Proof: From equation (1) and the factor market equilibrium conditions, we know $\frac{\partial W}{\partial h} = (1-2\beta_L)hf''(h) > (<)0$ if and only if $\beta_L > (<) \frac{1}{2}$, given that *f''(h)<0* for all *h*. Furthermore, notice that $\frac{\partial W}{\partial h \partial \beta_L} = -2kf''(h) > 0$, which establishes the result.

The working of proposition 1 is illustrated in Figure 1. Remember that a policy that liberalizes unskilled immigration leads to a reduction in the average skill level in the population. Thus, the representative of an unskilled abundant district (i.e. one for which $\beta_L > \frac{1}{2}$) will be less in favor of a policy increasing the number of unskilled migrants (and thus reducing *h*), the more unskilled abundant is the district. The opposite is true, on the other hand, if a district is

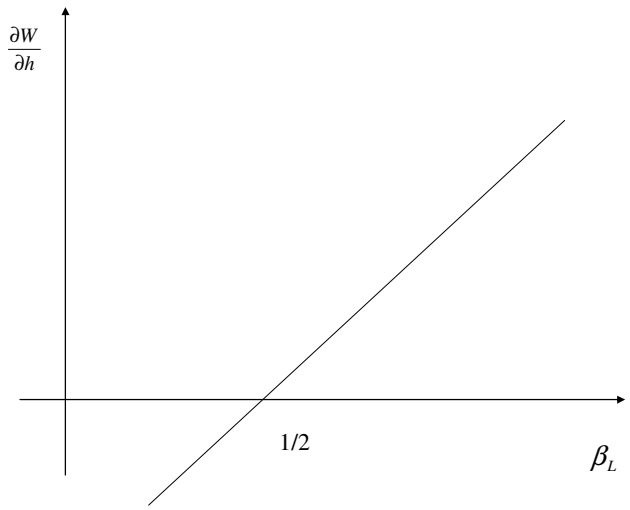

Figure 1: Skilled and unskilled abundant districts

skilled abundant. In that case, the higher is the share of skilled workers in the domestic population, the more likely it is for the local representative to support a migration policy that favors the unskilled. The result from proposition 1 represents the main prediction we will assess in our empirical analysis.

4. Data and summary statistics

The data for our analysis comes from various sources. We start by using the Congressional Roll Call Voting Dataset of the Policy Agenda Project and the Library of Congress to identify

and collect information on all legislative votes in the US House of Representatives which are related to immigration issues between 1970 and 2006. Roll call votes are recorded votes that enable to observe individual voting behavior of House representatives on single bills and amendments.[14] Since both data bases provide only rough information about the content of the bills we supplement them using additional resources, like the Congressional Quarterly publications and existing historical accounts like the one by Gimpel and Edwards (1999), to identify immigration related bills. In the second step, we use the full legislation text to classify the bills into four categories according to their main topic: general immigration, illegal migration, refugees and asylum, and naturalization and integration. We decided to restrict our analysis on bills belonging to the first two categories, because these two are the most connected to the inflow of foreign labor.

Furthermore, in our analysis we concentrate on bills with a potential impact on the supply of unskilled labor. In particular, for the purpose of our analysis an immigration bill is a piece of legislation that can either have a positive or negative impact on the size of the unskilled labor force in the US if it would come into force. We therefore exclude bills that deal with the provision of public goods to illegal migrants or federal reimbursement of health and education costs to states. Finally, we focus on *final passage votes*, which determine whether a bill passes the House or not. In doing so, we exclude votes on amendments which take place during the decision process on the House floor.[15] We have decided to follow this strategy, because the expectations on the effects of floor amendments are less clear than for final passage votes. Voting on amendments is likely to be connected to strategic voting and therefore might not distinctly reflect the interests of the legislator's constituency.[16] Table 1 illustrates the immigration votes in the US House of representatives which took place between 1970 and 2006, which satisfy the criteria discussed above and therefore constitute the basis of our

[14] Beside recorded votes exist two further ways of voting on a bill in the House: The first is voice voting which is the fastest method and is usually employed when a question is introduced on the floor. By this method the members who are in favour of the bill or amendment shout in unison "Aye", followed by those voting "No". In the case of a standing or division the principle is the same, except that the representatives who are in favour will rise and stand until counted instead of shouting. In both cases only the vote totals are announced, and no individual member votes are recorded. Votes are recorded by electronic device if they are demanded by at least of one fifth of the members present or if they are demanded by one member in the case that the quorum is not present (Davis 2006). The demand for recorded votes is a sign for a lack of consensus and indicates the presence of a controversial decision process (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

[15] For a comprehensive overview about the legislative process on the house floor see Davis (2006).

[16] For example, amendments can be used to kill bills on the floor. A well-known example in the political science and game theory literature is the Powell amendment of 1956. It referred to a House bill which aimed to increase federal funding for school construction. The Powell amendment proposed that funding should be only given to school districts which are free of racial segregation. Empirical evidence suggests that legislators anticipated that the adoption of the amendment would lead to a rejection of the related aid-to-education bill. The voting behavior of the legislators on the Powell amendment was therefore strongly influenced by strategic interests (Poole and Rosenthal 1997).

empirical analysis. It becomes obvious that most of the voting results are relatively close, and this reflects the controversial nature of immigration in the United States. For detailed information on the content of the various bills and their role in the history of US immigration policy see the discussion in section 2.

Next, we combine our data on immigration bills with the corresponding records of individual voting behavior of House representatives. This information is provided by the VOTEVIEW project (http://voteview.ucsd.edu) of Poole and Rosenthal (1997), which offers data of US congressmen voting behavior from 1798 to the present. In addition to this, the VOTEVIEW database contains a number of variables like the name of congressman, his party affiliation, state, and congressional district that enable us to distinctly identify the legislators and link them to their constituency. Finally, we combine our data on individual voting records with information on the economic and non-economic characteristics of the electoral constituencies. For this we use mainly Census data. However, for the period 1970 to 1990 the US Census bureau provides no information at the district level. For this period we instead use data from the Congressional District Data Files of Adler (2003) and Lublin (1997), who have aggregated Census data at the congressional district level taking into account the decennial redistricting.[17] The data on welfare generosity for the period 1970-2000 is from Pjesky (2006). For the recent years we have supplemented this information using the State Government Finances data base from the US Census Bureau. Data on share of Democratic votes, which proxies the ideological composition of an electoral district, comes from Lee et al. (2004) and for the 109th congress from Chandler et al. (2008).

Our dependent variable is the representative's voting behavior on immigration bills $Vote_{ijt}$ In the case of bills *liberalizing* immigration a vote coded 1 indicates that the district representative votes in favor of more open immigration and 0 otherwise. In the case of legislations *tightening* immigration laws a vote is coded 0 if the representative's vote is in favor of restricting immigration and 1 otherwise. The main explanatory variable of interest is the skill ratio of a congressional district, $Skill_{it}$, which is measured as the ratio of high-skilled individuals over 25 to total population over 25 at time t in congressional district i. High-skilled individuals are defined as those having earned at least a bachelor degree. According to

[17] The geographic definition of congressional districts changes following each census. This is due to the rule that the number of House representatives of each state should reflect the state's population as compared with other states, based on the decennial census counts. The congressional district should therefore have approximately an equal population size. During the 109th congress, i.e. in the years 2005 and 2006, each of the 435 House representatives has represented on average about 650,000 people. Adler (2003) and Lublin (1997) use for this reason the Congressional Data Books and associated data files which provide information about the restricting after decennial census.

our theoretical model we expect that the likelihood to vote in favor of liberalizing the immigration of unskilled workers increases with the share of the highly skilled population at working age.

Further economic controls at the district level are unemployment and the share of farm workers. We define unemployment as the share of unemployed individuals as a percentage of the total labor force**.** The share of farm workers, measured as the number of farm workers relatively to the total labor force, proxies for the size of the agricultural sector within a congressional district. As controls for the welfare state we include the median family income of a congressional district and a broad measure of welfare generosity at the state level. The latter encompasses state and local expenditures on welfare, healthcare and hospital as well as primary and secondary education.

Furthermore, we include a number of explanatory variables providing information about the *political channel*. Initially, we capture the ideological orientation of a representative by looking at his/her party affiliation and the liberal rating index. The latter is provided by the Americans for Democratic Action, which evaluate every congressman on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores assigned to more liberal politicians.[18] In addition, we control for whether the legislator belongs to the Hispanic Caucus in the congress. Furthermore, we use the share of Democratic votes in the past election as a proxy for the ideological orientation of a congressional district. As additional controls we included also information on the political affiliation of the House majority of the President

Finally, we take a look at the *geographic and network channels*. As a measure of regional agglomeration we include the share of the population living in urban areas, which should account for differences in attitudes towards immigration between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, we consider differences in the ethnic composition across congressional districts by including the share of foreign born, African-Americans and Hispanics in the population. By controlling for the change in the share of the foreign born population over time we account for the possibility that recent inflows of migrants might affect the attitudes towards prospective immigration in a different way than the current stock of immigrants.

[18] The ADA score is calculated annually on the basis of 20 selected key votes on a wide range of social and economic issues, both domestic and international. The selection is made by the ADA`s legislative committee without providing clear selection criteria. From the bills included in our analyses only two have been used for the construction of the ADA score (1987 H.R. 618, 1989 H.R. 45).

Table 2 provides summary statistics for our dependent and explanatory variables described above. Over the entire observation period, 37% of the representatives voted in favor of freer immigration. However, there are large differences over time: while prior to 2000 almost 43% of the district representatives voted in favor of freer immigration, after 2000 this figure declined substantially, to only about 28% of the total votes. The figures therefore correspond with the trends in US immigration policy we have discussed in section 2. The data on the skill composition of the resident population suggests that almost one out of five Americans over 25 holds at least a bachelor degree. This rather high figure is in part due to the fact that in our sample, six out of the sixteen bills we have included in our sample have been introduced during the 109th congress i.e. between 2005 and 2006.[19]

The skill ratio of the population shows, like the immigration voting behavior, a strong regional variation across congressional districts. Figures 1 and 2 highlight the correlation between the voting behavior on immigration issues and the skill structure for the congressional districts of New York state. We focus on the final voting on the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437) during the 109th congress. It becomes obvious that almost all congressmen who less restrictive immigration legislation represented districts with skill ratios above average.[20] However, the figure illustrates also that not all representatives from districts with high skill ratios voted in favor of a liberal immigration policy. This highlights the necessity to control for further economic as well as non-economic characteristics of the constituencies.

5. Empirical Analysis

As the theoretical model shows, the voting behavior of an individual representative on a migration policy bill aimed at expanding the inflow of unskilled workers is a function of the district's skill composition. In particular, representatives of districts, which are more skilled-labor abundant should be more likely to vote in favor of bills liberalizing unskilled migration. To the contrary, representatives of districts, which are more unskilled labor abundant, should be less favorable towards this type of bills. To assess our theoretical prediction, we estimate the following probit model:

$$prob(Vote_{ijt} = 1 | X_i) = \Phi(\beta_1 Skill_{it} + \beta_2 X_{it} + \beta_t I_t + \beta_s I_s) \quad (2)$$

[19] The educational attainment in the US has substantially improved during the recent years. Within the period 1970 to 2000 the population share over 25 with bachelor degree or more increased from 10.7% to 24.4% (Baumann and Graf 2003).

[20] The average skill ratio of New York's congressional districts during the 109th congress is 20%.

where Φ(.) represents the cumulative distribution function of a standard normal, β is a vector of parameters to be estimated and X is the vector of all explanatory variables specific to district *i.* Furthermore, in all specifications, we include time and state fixed effects (I_t, I_s) to account for unobserved, additive time- and state-specific effects.[21] In order to simplify the interpretation of our results, all our tables report marginal effects. Thus, our estimates capture the change in the probability of voting in favor of a more open immigration policy due to an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable, and a discrete change in the probability for dummy variables.

Table 3 contains our main specifications. Our initial set of regressions (columns 1-3) focuses on the effects of economic drivers that work through the labor market. As suggested by our theoretical model, we find that labor market complementarities are important: Representatives from districts where skilled workers are more abundant are more likely to support immigration policies aimed at increasing the supply of unskilled workers. This finding is robust and holds throughout our specifications – once we include additional district level controls.

Furthermore, the results indicate a positive relationship between district's unemployment and voting on liberalizing low-skilled immigration. This finding might appear somewhat surprising, as unskilled immigrants are likely to harm the labor market opportunities of competing native workers thus reinforcing or increasing existing unemployment. However, similar results have been found by Gimpel and Edwards (1999) who have looked on the voting behavior on various amendments of immigration bills and by Facchini et al. (2008), who have carried out the analysis at the sectoral level. Several possible arguments can explain this finding. On the one hand, most of the bills tightening immigration laws include provisions about employer sanctions for illegal employment. These sanctions do not only harm the employment opportunities of illegal immigrants, but as well the ones of natives working in the shadow economy. Dell`Anno and Solomon (2008) find a clear positive relationship between the shadow economy and unemployment in the US.[22] They conclude that the shadow economy can help reducing the negative impact of increasing unemployment by absorbing unemployed individuals. It is therefore plausible for representatives from districts

[21] We use state instead of districts fixed effects for two reasons: First, the use of district fixed effects over a long time horizon is problematic, since the geographic definition of congressional districts changes following each census. Second, district fixed effects in general capture all time-invariant district characteristics, and a number of our control variables are from the decennial Census showing no annual variation.

[22] Dell`Anno and Solomon (2008) define the shadow economy as the part of the economy that operates outside the purview of government regulations.

with high unemployment to vote against the tightening of immigration rules, and by this against the implementation of stricter labor market regulations. Alternatively, higher unemployment rates might be the result of tight labor market regulations (see for instance the findings in Scarpetta (1996) and Elmeskov et al. (1998)) and representatives from these districts might see more liberal immigration policies as a way of increasing the labor market competitiveness and thus reduce the distortions that represent the primary source of unemployment. Last but not least, Gimpel and Edwards argue that "members from impoverished areas instead vote ideologically, seeing generous immigration policy as a matter of social justice and civil rights."

To control for possible sectoral effects we also include the share of workers employed in agriculture (column 3). A priori, the sign of the correlation between the importance of agriculture and voting behavior on migration policies favoring the unskilled is ambiguous. On the one hand, as unskilled (and illegal) migrants are very likely to end up working in agriculture (Hanson and Spilimbergo 2001), we should expect them to compete with native workers in that sector, and the larger is the share of domestic workers employed in agriculture in a given district, the less likely it would be for the district representative to support open migration policies. On the other hand, the more important is agriculture in the economy of a given district, the more likely it is that interest groups representing these interests will be able to convince politicians that they need an abundant labor supply (possibly made up by immigrant workers) to keep the sector competitive. Empirically, we find that the share of farm workers is negatively correlated with the likelihood to vote in favor of immigration liberalization, but the result we find in column 3, as we will see later on, does not turn out to be robust.

In the second set of regressions (columns 4 and 5) we capture instead the role of the welfare state. There is an abundant literature highlighting the importance of this channel in shaping individual-level attitudes towards immigration (Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter 2007, Dustmann and Preston 2007, Facchini and Mayda 2009), and thus we expect the welfare state to be also an important driver of individual representatives' voting behavior. In particular, in the presence of redistribution carried out by the welfare state, we expect *richer* districts to be less favorable towards unskilled immigration, as unskilled immigrants are net receivers of benefits from the welfare state. We also control for the size of the welfare state at the *state* level, and we expect that the bigger is the welfare state, the less favorable the local representative will be towards unskilled immigrant, once again because of the expected

spillover effect, which benefits low skilled/poor immigrants at the expense of wealthier domestic residents.

Our findings are broadly consistent with our expectations. Representatives of richer districts are substantially less likely to support unskilled immigration (column 4), and this result is very robust to the introduction of additional controls (column 5-11). On the other hand, while the sign of the coefficient on the *size* of the welfare state is consistently negative, its significance level is not very high (column 5).[23]

The third channel we consider, whose importance has also been highlighted in the literature, is the political/partisan channel. First, we control the representative's party affiliation. We find that belonging to the Democratic Party is positively and significantly correlated with the likelihood of voting in favor of immigration liberalization (column 6 of Table 3). This result is in line with earlier findings by Gimpel and Edwards (1999), who conclude that "recorded votes on immigration policy have become more partisan over time, even after controlling for alternative influences on congressional decision making such as region and constituency characteristics."[24] Interestingly, we should notice that controlling for the representative's party affiliation substantially reduces the effect of the share of farm workers on the congressman voting behavior, making it no longer statistically significant. This suggests that the results in columns (3) through (5) were driven by an omitted variable bias. Indeed, district characterized by a higher employment share in agriculture tend also to be more conservative, and without controlling for ideology the sectoral composition effect was confounded with the ideological dimension. This finding continues to hold also in all other specifications we have introduced in Table 3. An elected representative's party affiliation is an only imprecise proxy for a *district's* partisan leaning, as it has been recently argued for instance by Lee et al. (2004). For this reason, in column 7 we also control for the closeness of the race in the previous election. Interestingly, we find that districts with a higher share of Democratic votes in the last congressional election are more likely to support legislations liberalizing immigration.

In the last four columns of Table 3 (columns 8-11) we examine the role of what we name the *geographic* and *network* channels. It is well known that migrants tend to concentrate in urban areas (Card 2009) and thus it is important to understand whether representatives from more

[23] The low significance of the coefficient in all specifications may be due to the fact that our fiscal exposure variable is the only variable included at the state level.
[24] The authors provide evidence that the cleavage between Republicans and Democrats have steadily increased since the 96th congress (1979-80), whereas Republicans tended to oppose liberalized immigration.

urban areas vote differently from representatives from more rural areas. In column (8) we allow for a non-linear relationship by including also a squared term. The effects we find are not robust. In particular, while the benchmark specification would suggest the existence of a U shaped relationship, once we control also for the role of share of immigrants in the district (column 9), the urban/rural dimension does not appear to be any longer significant. Our results highlight, that representatives of districts with a high share of foreign-born inhabitants are more likely to vote pro liberalizing immigration. There are at least two possible explanations for why existing immigrants might have a preference for liberalizing immigration even if they face the burden to compete economically with the new immigrants: social and family networks, and identification with minorities. In the first case, individuals prefer freer immigration because it helps relatives and friends from abroad to enter the US – this channel has been found to be very important also in the labor market (Munshi 2003). The latter refers to the situation that previous immigrants identify with new immigrants due to their own immigration experience.

To assess the effects of shocks to the demographic composition of a district, in column 10 we also control for the growth rate in the share of foreign born. Interestingly, we find that recent spikes in the share of foreign migrants are negatively correlated with the probability of congressmen to vote pro immigration. This result is consistent with both a labor market and a welfare state argument. On the one hand, as long as the labor market adjustment to immigration is not instantaneous, recent inflows of immigrants are likely to worsen the position of competing domestic workers in the labor market, thus reducing support in the local constituency for more liberal immigration policies. Furthermore, they are also likely to increase pressure on the welfare state, as newly arrived immigrants are in general less integrated in the host society and have a stronger need for assistance (Borjas 1999). Finally, congressmen have no incentive to defend immigrants' interests since they do they are not enfranchised.

Finally, in column (11) we assess the role played by the racial composition of the district, focusing on the importance of the share of African-American. While we don't find a significant relationship, the positive coefficient suggests that also in this case, identification with minorities might be important. Indeed there is some evidence suggesting that African American legislators tend to see the immigration issue within a minority rights framework. Based on the ideas of civil rights and equal opportunity they build political coalitions with

other ethnic minorities and tend to support expansive immigration policies (Gimpel and Edwards 1999, Gonzales and Kamdar 2000, Fetzner 2006).

To conclude, our benchmark results provide strong support for our simple theoretical model. Congressmen's likelihood to support measures increasing the availability of unskilled labor increases with the abundance of high skilled labor in a given district. This result is robust to the introduction of additional economic channels – like the welfare state channel, and other non-economic channels, like the political/partisan channel and additional geographic/ethnic controls which affect legislators voting behavior.

6. Robustness checks

In this section we assess the robustness of our main results in a number of ways. We start by considering in Table 4 alternative measures of the economic and welfare state channels. In column 1 we replace the share of highly skilled in a district – defined as the fraction of individual over 25, which have completed at least a bachelor degree, with the share of low skilled individuals (*Alternative SkillRatio*) - defined as the share of individuals which have completed less than four years of high school. Our results are in line with the model predictions: The likelihood of congressmen to vote in favor of freer unskilled immigration is negatively correlated with share of the unskilled population in the constituency. The results for the other district characteristics are similar to the ones in our preferred specification, i.e. column (11) of Table 3. Interestingly, using this alternative measure to capture the labor market effect of immigration increases also the magnitude of the coefficient of our measure of the welfare state size, making it significant at the five percent level.

To measure the size of the welfare state in column (1) we had used our benchmark definition, which includes both state and local expenditures on welfare, healthcare and hospitals as well as primary and secondary education. In columns (2) and (3) we use instead less comprehensive measures of the size of the welfare state. In particular, in column (2) we include only expenditure on welfare, healthcare and hospitals, while in column (3) we focus only on welfare. While these new measures are not significant, the qualitative results on our main labor market driver are not affected and the same holds true for our other controls. Notice that all our controls for the size of the welfare state – due to availability- can only vary at the state level over time. To account for all other possible state and year specific drivers, in column (4) we introduce a full set of state-year interaction terms. The sign and significance level of the coefficients of our main explanatory variables are unaffected.

We turn next to consider in Table 5 several robustness checks concerning the political/partisan channel and the importance of immigrant networks. We start by replacing, in column (1) the legislator's party affiliation, with his/her ADA score, where a higher score indicates that the politician is more `liberal' (see section 4 for the definition). Our results suggest that more liberal politicians are more likely to vote in favor of pro-immigration measures, but our other controls are not affected.

As Latinos are by far the largest ethnic group among recent migrants in the US, in column (2) we examine whether Hispanic congressmen behave differently from Non-Hispanic legislators, but we don't find any conclusive evidence. This result has to be treated with caution though, as the number of Hispanic representatives in Congress has been very low for the first twenty-five years of our sample, and has increased substantially only in recent years. On the other hand, the results from column (3) suggest that the share of the Hispanic population at the district level has an important effect on representatives' voting behavior, thus strengthening the argument on family ties and networks. Congressmen from districts with a high share of Hispanics in the population are ceteris paribus more likely to vote for an open immigration policy. Finally, in columns (4) and (5) we have taken a closer look at the government structure. In particular in column (4) we have controlled for whether the representative belongs to the party that has controls the House, while in column (5) we have also controlled for whether the representative belongs to the party controlling the House and that of the president. We find belonging to the majority is negatively correlated with the likelihood to support pro immigration measures, but that the introduction of these additional controls does not affect our main results.

Finally, in table 6 we carry out a series of robustness checks involving geographic controls and changes of sample size. In column (1) we control for the nine different US regions identified in the Census, instead of states, where we omit the *Pacific* region. Interestingly, we find that congressmen from *New England* are significantly more likely than congressman from the *Pacific* region to support a more liberal immigration policy towards the unskilled, while legislators from the *East South Central* region are significantly less likely to do so. This is in line with similar findings of Gimpel and Edwards (1999), who have documented strong differences between congressmen from Northern and Southern states concerning immigration policies. They conclude that Southern congressmen have built a steady opposition to liberalize immigration policies. Our results show that this regional divide continues to hold in a weaker

version even after controlling for economic, ideological and ethnic differences at the district level. Once again, our main coefficients of interest are not affected.

In the remainder of Table 6 (columns (2)-(4)) we carry out instead a set of robustness checks changing the size of our sample. Regression 2 shows the results if we only include voting records on the four major immigration reforms (H.R.3810, H.R.2202, H.R.4300, and H.R.4437). In column (3) we restrict instead our sample to the voting behavior of congressmen from the Sunbelt States, which are characterized by a strong population growth during the decades we are considering. Last but not least (column 4), we focus on the voting behavior of legislators belonging to States which received huge inflows of immigrants (the 15 states with the highest average increase in the share of the foreign-born population during our observation period). Our qualitative results continue to hold.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have developed a simple theoretical model to analyze the drivers of the voting behavior of individual representatives on immigration policy, which emphasizes the role played by the skill composition of the constituency. Our model predicts that legislators of a skilled abundant district will be more likely to favor a policy increasing the number of unskilled immigrants, the more skilled labor abundant is their district. The opposite is true if a district is unskilled labor abundant. In that case, the higher is the share of unskilled workers in the district population, the less likely it is that the representative will support a migration policy favoring the inflow of unskilled foreign workers.

We have assessed the predictions of our model on a novel dataset, which includes all US House of Representatives voting records on immigration policy related measures over the period 1970-2006. We have found that labor market factors, as captured by the complementarity /substitutability between the domestic and foreign labor force are key drivers of congressmen voting behavior. Representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are systematically more likely to support an unskilled immigration liberalization bill, while representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts are less likely to do so. This result is remarkably robust and continues to hold when we control for a wealth of additional economic and non-economic drivers.

In many ways our results can be thought of as the natural counterpart, in a democratic government setting like the one of the United States, to the findings of the literature on individual attitudes towards immigration, which has also highlighted the crucial importance of

the labor market/economic channel in explaining individual preferences towards immigration (Scheve and Slaughter 2001, Mayda 2006, Facchini and Mayda 2008).

As for future work, we plan to use the rich dataset we have constructed to investigate the voting behavior of elected politicians on different aspects of globalization. For instance, a simple economic Heckscher-Ohlin model would suggest that international trade and international factor mobility should be substitutes from the point of view of the labor market effects, since international trade in goods can effectively be thought as the purchase of embodied factor services. We plan to investigate whether this simple prediction holds in the data, i.e. whether given district economic characteristics a politician will vote in the same way on a measure increasing the supply of unskilled labor as he votes on a trade bill alleviating the import of labor-intensive products. We believe that answering these questions will greatly increase our understanding of the political economy of globalization.

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Table 1: Final passage votes on immigration issues in the House of Representatives 1970-2006

	Cong	Date	Bill	Topic	Keyword	Direction	Yes	No
1	93	3.5.1973	H.R.392	Illegal Migration	Employer Sanctions	Contra	297	63
2	93	26.9.1973	H.R.891	Immigration	Rodino bill	Contra	336	30
3	98	20.6.1984	H.R.1510	Illegal Migration	Simpson-Mazzoli Bill	Contra	216	211
4	99	9.10.1986	H.R.3810*	Illegal Migration	Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)	Pro	230	166
5	100	21.4.1988	H.R.4222	Illegal Migration	Extension of legalization by 6 months	Pro	213	202
6	100	28.71987	H.R.618	Illegal Migration	Suspension of deportations	Pro	237	182
7	101	25.10.1989	H.R.45	Illegal Migration	Temporary protected status/work permit	Pro	258	162
8	101	3.10.1990	H.R.4300*	Immigration	The 1990 Immigration Act (IMMACT)	Pro	231	192
9	104	21.3.1996	H.R.2202*	Illegal Immigration	Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act	Contra	333	87
10	105	25.3.1998	H.R.2578	Immigration	Visa Waiver program	Pro	407	0
11	109	10.2.2005	H.R.418	Illegal Migration	Real ID Act	Contra	261	161
12	109	16.12.2005	H.R.4437*	Illegal Migration	Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act	Contra	239	182
13	109	14.9.2006	H.R.6061	Illegal Migration	Secure Fence Act	Contra	283	138
14	109	21.9.2006	H.R.6094	Illegal Migration	Community Protection Act of 2006	Contra	328	95
15	109	21.9.2006	H.R.4830	Illegal Migration	Border Tunnel Prevention Act	Contra	422	0
16	109	21.9.2006	H.R.6095	Illegal Migration	Immigration Law Enforcement Act of 2006	Contra	277	140

Cong and *Date* describe the congress/date in which/when the vote took place. *Bill* shows the name under which the bill is originating in the House of Representatives ("H.R."). Major immigration legislations are marked with an asterisk (*). *Topic* classifies the broad issue of the bill. *Keyword* provides some basic information about the content of the legislation. *Direction* shows whether the bill is pro or contra liberalizing immigration. *Yes/No* show the overall number of Yes/No Votes.

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
$Vote_{ijt}$	5744	0.40	0.49	0	1
$SkillRatio_{it}$	5738	0.19	0.09	0.02	0.57
$Alternative\ SkillRatio_{it}$	5738	0.30	0.13	0.04	0.75
$Farm\ Worker_{it}$	5735	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.22
$Family\ Income_{it}$	5744	31277	18198	30	91571
$Unemployment_{it}$	5735	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.22
$State\ Fiscal\ Exposure_{it}$	5744	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.14
$State\ Fiscal\ Exposure1_{it}$	5744	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.06
$State\ Fiscal\ Exposure2_{it}$	5744	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.09
$Democrat_{it}$	5744	0.53	0.50	0	1
$Share\ Democrat\ Votes_{it}$	5728	0.53	0.25	0.00	1.00
ADA_{it}	5607	46.19	36.94	0	100
$Hispanic\ Caucus_{it}$	5744	0.03	0.18	0	1
$Majority_{it}$	5744	0.56	0.50	0	1
$MajorityPres_{it}$	5744	0.09	0.28	0	1
$Urban_{it}$	5741	0.75	0.23	0.00	1.00
$Foreign\text{-}born_{it}$	5744	0.08	0.09	0.00	0.59
$FB\ growth_{it}$	5744	0.45	0.76	-0.82	6.00
$Afro\text{-}American_{it}$	5744	0.11	0.15	0.00	0.92
$Hispanic_{it}$	5588	0.09	0.14	0.00	0.84

$Vote_{jit}$ is coded as 1 if the representative of district i at time t votes on bill j in favor of immigration, 0 otherwise. $SkillRatio_{it}$ measures the percentage of the population over 25 with at least a bachelor degree. $Alternative\ SkillRatio_{it}$ is the percentage of the population over 25 with less than 4 years of High School. $Farm\ Worker_{it}$ measures the share of farm workers in the total labor force. $Unemployment_{it}$ is the share of unemployed individuals in the total labor force. $Family\ Income_{it}$ measures the median family income within a district in dollars. $State\ Fiscal\ Exposure_{it}$ measures the state and local expenditures on public welfare, Health and Hospital, elementary and secondary education in relation to state personal income. $State\ Fiscal\ Exposure1_{it}$ captures the state and local expenditures on public welfare in relation to state personal income. $State\ Fiscal\ Exposure2_{it}$ measures the state and local expenditures on public welfare, Health and Hospital in relation to state personal income. $Democrat_{it}$ is a dummy coded as 1 if the representative of the district belongs to the Democratic Party. $Share\ Democrat\ Votes_{it}$ is the Democratic share of the two-party vote at the past House elections. ADA_{it} ranks every house representative on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores assigned to more liberal politicians. $Hispanic\ caucus_{it}\ is$ a dummy coded as 1 if the representative of the district is of Hispanic origin, 0 otherwise. $Majority_{it}$ is a dummy coded as 1 if the party of the district representative has the majority in the house, 0 otherwise. $MajorityPres_{it}$ is a dummy coded as 1 if the party of the district representative has the majority in the house and is the same like the one of the president of the US, 0 otherwise. $Foreign\text{-}born_{it}$ measures the share of foreign-born individuals in the total population. $FB\ growth_{it}$ measures how the share of *Foreign-Born* share has changed related to the previous period. $Afro\text{-}American_{it}$ is the share of Afro-American individuals in the total population. $Hispanic_{it}$ is the share of individuals with Hispanic origin in the total population. $Urban_{it}$ describes the share of the population living in urban areas.

Table 3: Empirical results for all constituencies and immigration bills

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration											
SkillRatio $_{it}$	-0.306	1.305***	1.122***	1.567***	1.550***	1.706***	1.679***	1.240***	1.132***	1.113***	1.099***
	(0.22)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Unemployment $_{it}$		9.965***	10.33***	9.121***	9.129***	6.291***	6.098***	5.450***	4.981***	4.878***	4.331***
		(1.33)	(1.13)	(1.35)	(1.33)	(1.35)	(1.36)	(1.25)	(1.06)	(1.06)	(1.12)
Farm Worker $_{it}$			-2.755***	-3.098***	-3.113***	-0.594	-0.564	1.510	1.235	1.202	1.182
			(0.91)	(0.88)	(0.87)	(0.73)	(0.71)	(0.96)	(0.94)	(0.92)	(0.88)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)				-0.324**	-0.319**	-0.163**	-0.143***	-0.165***	-0.147***	-0.146***	-0.126***
				(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.064)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.046)
Fiscal Exposure $_{it}$					-3.645	-4.068*	-4.073*	-4.150*	-3.407	-3.288	-3.313
					(2.43)	(2.16)	(2.13)	(2.15)	(2.36)	(2.34)	(2.36)
Democrat $_{it}$						0.479***	0.403***	0.386***	0.381***	0.383***	0.390***
						(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$							0.239***	0.178**	0.177***	0.180***	0.148**
							(0.063)	(0.071)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Urban $_{it}$								-0.455	-0.150	-0.171	-0.149
								(0.34)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.32)
(Urban $_{it}$) ^{2}								0.698***	0.371	0.381	0.306
								(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.24)
Foreign-born $_{it}$									0.935**	0.966**	1.083***
									(0.41)	(0.40)	(0.42)
FB growth $_{it}$										-0.0281**	-0.0309**
										(0.012)	(0.013)
Afro-American $_{it}$											0.233
											(0.14)
Year Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	5738	5735	5735	5735	5735	5735	5719	5719	5719	5719	5719
Pseudo R-squared	0.163	0.235	0.243	0.249	0.250	0.379	0.381	0.394	0.400	0.401	0.402
Log Likelihood	-3221	-2943	-2912	-2890	-2886	-2388	-2373	-2324	-2300	-2298	-2294

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. *** Significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables.

Table 4: Robustness Checks: Economic & welfare channel

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration				
$SkillRatio_{it}$		1.114***	1.112***	0.906***
		(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.21)
Alternative $SkillRatio_{it}$	-1.104***			
	(0.25)			
$Unemployment_{it}$	4.297***	4.312***	4.224***	3.596**
	(1.11)	(1.15)	(1.19)	(1.59)
Farm $Worker_{it}$	1.727**	1.192	1.241	0.710
	(0.84)	(0.85)	(0.83)	(0.71)
ln (Family $Income_{it}$)	-0.119***	-0.129***	-0.129***	-0.103**
	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.043)
Fiscal $Exposure_{it}$	-4.718**			
	(2.35)			
Fiscal $Exposure1_{it}$		0.0935		
		(2.79)		
Fiscal $Exposure2_{it}$			3.836	
			(3.85)	
$Democrat_{it}$	0.385***	0.389***	0.389***	0.410***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Share Democrat $Votes_{it}$	0.197***	0.148**	0.149**	0.0576
	(0.067)	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.071)
$Urban_{it}$	-0.371	-0.165	-0.179	-0.295
	(0.33)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.31)
$(Urban_{it})^2$	0.451*	0.313	0.321	0.385
	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.26)
Foreign-$born_{it}$	1.609***	1.110***	1.145***	1.163***
	(0.39)	(0.41)	(0.41)	(0.34)
FB $growth_{it}$	-0.0233	-0.0321**	-0.0321***	-0.0153
	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.015)
Afro-$American_{it}$	0.297*	0.231	0.237	0.215
	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.16)
Year Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes
State * Year Interactions	no	no	no	yes
Observations	5719	5719	5719	5196
Pseudo R-squared	0.402	0.401	0.402	0.475
Log Likelihood	-2293	-2297	-2296	-1837

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. *** Significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables. Notes (1) The Alternative $SkillRatio_{it}$ is the percentage of the population over 25 with less than 4 years of High School. (2) Fiscal $Exposure1_{it}$ captures all state and local expenditures on public welfare, health and hospitals. (3) Fiscal $Exposure2_{it}$ captures all state and local expenditures on public welfare. (4) State*Year Interactions included.

Table 5: Robustness Checks: Political & network channel

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration					
SkillRatio $_{it}$	0.893***	1.104***	1.470***	1.006***	1.054***
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.19)
Unemployment $_{it}$	2.917***	4.308***	4.027***	4.057***	4.158***
	(0.97)	(1.06)	(1.23)	(1.06)	(1.10)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	1.699*	1.182	1.054	0.788	1.102
	(0.87)	(0.88)	(1.03)	(0.87)	(0.88)
Fiscal Exposure $_{it}$	-0.134***	-0.124***	-0.105**	-0.101**	-0.115***
	(0.039)	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.039)	(0.044)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	-4.686*	-3.300	-3.795	-3.308	-3.285
	(2.41)	(2.33)	(2.45)	(2.25)	(2.34)
Democrat $_{it}$		0.389***	0.417***	0.430***	0.416***
		(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)
ADA $_{it}$	0.0720***				
	(0.0048)				
Hispanic Caucus $_{it}$		0.0119			
		(0.059)			
Majority $_{it}$				-0.192***	
				(0.024)	
MajorityPres $_{it}$					-0.284***
					(0.022)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.230***	0.148**	0.136**	0.182***	0.134*
	(0.069)	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.069)
Urban $_{it}$	-0.0834	-0.154	-0.482	-0.181	-0.206
	(0.30)	(0.31)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)
(Urban $_{it}$) ^{2}	0.191	0.308	0.543**	0.308	0.342
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.24)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	0.829*	1.071**		1.079**	1.088**
	(0.45)	(0.42)		(0.51)	(0.46)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.0315**	-0.0307**	-0.0207	-0.0321**	-0.0305**
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Afro-American $_{it}$	0.0435	0.237*	0.295*	0.167	0.211
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Hispanic $_{it}$			0.690**		
			(0.27)		
Year Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	5585	5719	5572	5719	5719
Pseudo R-squared	0.430	0.402	0.402	0.417	0.413
Log Likelihood	-2137	-2294	-2247	-2237	-2252

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. *** Significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables. Notes (1) *ADA $_{it}$* is a mesuare of how liberal a politician is computed by the Americans for Democratic Action. It ranges from 0 to 100, and a higher score indicates a more liberal politician. (2) *Hispanic Caucus $_{it}$* is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the politician belongs to the Hispanic caucus. (3) *Hispanic $_{it}$* is the share of the population of Hispanic origin in a given district. (4) *Majority $_{it}$* a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the congressman belongs to the party controlling the House. (5) *MajorityPres $_{it}$* takes a value of 1 if the congressman belongs to the party that controls the House and the one of the President.

Table 6: Robustness checks: Geography & sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration				
SkillRatio $_{it}$	1.198***	0.989**	0.679***	0.911***
	(0.21)	(0.42)	(0.26)	(0.30)
Unemployment $_{it}$	5.021***	4.390**	3.503**	3.451***
	(1.17)	(1.73)	(1.74)	(1.23)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	0.941	2.736***	-0.0338	0.689
	(0.78)	(0.98)	(0.71)	(1.67)
Fiscal Exposure $_{it}$	-0.0832	-0.202	-0.0783***	-0.0135
	(0.055)	(0.25)	(0.026)	(0.20)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	0.684	6.441**	1.251	-17.31**
	(1.04)	(3.28)	(2.25)	(7.70)
Democrat $_{it}$	0.389***	0.520***	0.367***	0.441***
	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.037)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.162***	-0.0527	0.155**	0.178**
	(0.062)	(0.11)	(0.071)	(0.088)
Urban $_{it}$	-0.458	0.378	-0.0964	0.710
	(0.30)	(0.34)	(0.42)	(0.48)
(Urban $_{it}$) ^{2}	0.502**	0.0970	0.273	-0.451
	(0.23)	(0.28)	(0.34)	(0.40)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	1.018***	1.350***	1.477***	1.663***
	(0.30)	(0.51)	(0.43)	(0.46)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.0293**	-0.0759***	-0.0237	-0.0415***
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.013)
Afro-American $_{it}$	0.131	0.113	0.327*	0.308
	(0.14)	(0.32)	(0.19)	(0.20)
New England	0.216***			
	(0.050)			
Middle Atlantic	-0.0329			
	(0.028)			
East North Central	0.00274			
	(0.030)			
West North Central	0.0547			
	(0.056)			
South Atlantic	-0.0555			
	(0.052)			
East South Central	-0.194***			
	(0.038)			
West South Central	-0.0315			
	(0.061)			
Mountain	0.0534			
	(0.073)			
Year effects	yes	yes	yes	yes
State effects	no	yes	yes	yes
Observations	5719	1633	2295	2817
Pseudo R-squared	0.383	0.451	0.384	0.390
Log Likelihood	-2369	-614.3	-935.2	-1192

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. *** Significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%. Notes (1) The regional classification corresponds to the one from the US Census Bureau. *New England*: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont; *Middle Atlantic:* New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania; *East North Central*: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin; *West North Central*: Iowa, Kansa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota. *South Atlantic*: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia; *East South Central*: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee; *West South Central*: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas; *Mountain*: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming. The reference category is *Pacific*: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington. In column (2) we include only voting records on major immigration legislations included (see table 1: H.R.3810, H.R.2202, H.R.4300, and H.R.4437). In column (3) we include only voting records of representatives from *Sunbelt States* included (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia). Finally, in column (4) we include only voting records of representatives from *High Immigration States* (15 states with the highest share of foreign-born population) included (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Oregon, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington).

Figure 1: Voting on H.R.4437, New York State 109th Congress.

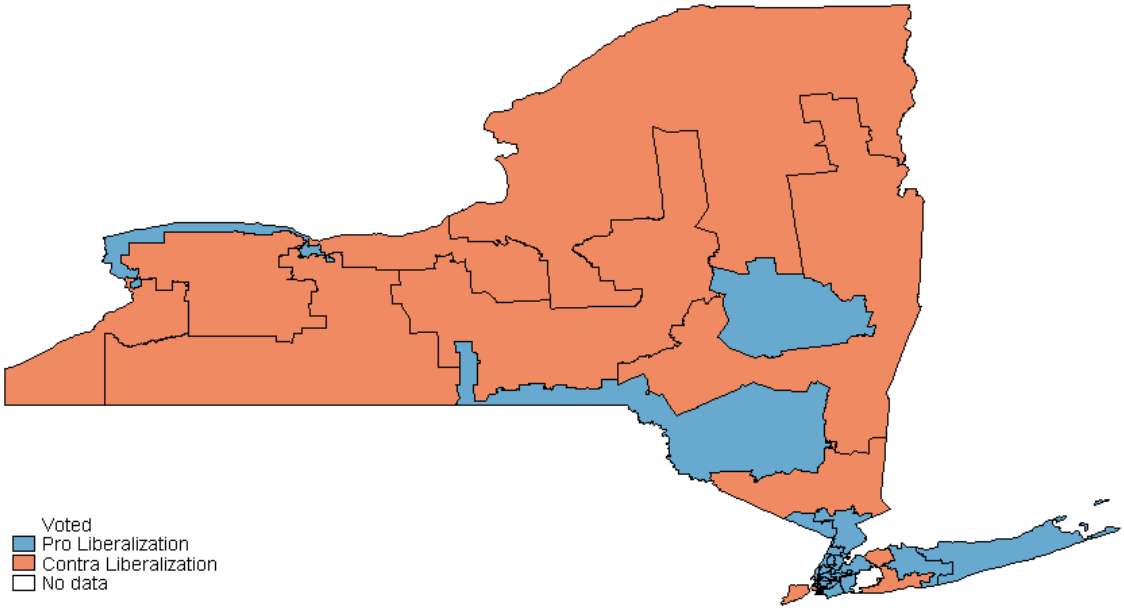

Figure 2: Skill ratio, New York State 109th Congress.