

Determining Ideology of FEC Commissioners

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The purpose of this project was to create ideology scores for members of the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC is composed of most six commissioners, including no more than three from either party, and the Commission votes on legal questions pertaining to campaign finance. Through qualitative and anecdotal evidence, recent observers have found an increase in polarization among the committee. Professor Franz and I worked to test this hypothesis quantitatively, determining whether Democrat and Republican members had truly moved further apart over time.

Much of the work involved creating a database of votes, which was needed to run the scaling procedure. The information for every vote is stored on the FEC website, but in a format not conducive to analysis. For each vote, the pertinent information was entered into a spreadsheet. In total, the data set included approximately 5,000 votes.

The scaling itself was performed through