

August 30, 2006

Pennsylvania Policy Project, 1979-2006

The Pennsylvania project will be the first comprehensive state database modeled on the national policy agendas project constructed by Baumgartner and Jones. This memo provides a brief outline of the datasets, staff, funding, modifications to the national codebook, current status of the project, and contact information. Please visit our website at www.temple.edu/papolicy for more information.

This project seeks to provide new tools for the study of state politics and policy – areas paid little attention in many universities and not always well understood by the public. Upon completion, researchers will have an enhanced ability to trace and analyze state policy and the dynamics of policymaking in our federal system, while policymakers will be able to gain a deeper understanding of the trends within the state. Like the national database, the Pennsylvania Policy Project will abstract and double code documents into more than 200 policy areas covering the years from 1979 to the present. We have begun work on a wide variety of documents shown below with their totals.

1. Legislative Bills and Resolutions (79,457)
2. Committee Hearings (4,802)
3. Governors' Press Clippings (72,904)
4. *Governing Magazine* (4,957)
5. Governors' Executive Orders (358)
6. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Opinions (6,000)
7. Public Opinion Polls (10)
8. State Budgets (27)

These documents provide a comprehensive historical record of policy within Pennsylvania and can be readily modeled other states. We hope that this project will diffuse to other states and help increase scholarly attention to state and local government; attract students to careers in state government; and increase the accessibility of government to the people. Here is an overview of datasets on which we are working or about to begin work. (Other datasets are in our plans.)

1. Legislative Bills and Resolutions

Approximately 79,000 bills and resolutions, of which approximately 10,000 are complete, will mirror the work done by the Congressional Bills Project. The text of these documents can be found online and hyperlinks will be able to take the researcher back to the original content of the bill or resolution. This dataset will track, along with the policy area, the sponsor of the bill, its legislative history including committee referrals and floor action, the governor's action, constitutional amendment history, and such cross-cutting aspects as whether legislation contains an appropriation, changes a tax, changes state or local governance, is commemorative, and affects the elderly.

2. Committee Hearings

Like the Congressional hearings at the national level, this dataset will track the approximately 5,000 House and Senate committee hearings. The House hearings are located in the House Archives at the

Statehouse in Harrisburg, while the Senate hearings have been transferred to CD. To date, the Senate hearings have been completed and track the committees and subcommittees, bills, amount of pages, city where hearing held, and cross-sectional aspects similar to those for bills, such as impact on the elderly, local governance, budgets, and taxes.

3. Governors' Press Clippings

These supplement the media records similar to the *New York Times* Index at the national level. Governor's press offices collect and circulate to senior staff and cabinet departments daily newspaper articles focusing on important happenings within the state. We initially depended on three major Pennsylvania newspapers – records without an index – but found the process cumbersome and inadequate at tracking state government. We are taking a random sample of the press clippings and to date have finished approximately 10,000 records. The newspaper articles are abstracted and then double coded by major topic and include numerous filters identifying government institutions and major policy areas: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, state agencies, local government, the federal government, interest groups, elections, governance changes, the budget, and tax and elderly policies. Most of the filters track those in the national database.

4. Governing Magazine

Similar to the *Congressional Quarterly* dataset, *Governing Magazine* tracks the policy trends within states across the country. The 5,000 records have been abstracted and double coded for their major topic areas. Like the press clippings that appear above, the same institutional and policy filters apply here. Two more have been included to track specific stories dealing with Pennsylvania and foreign governments.

5. Governors' Executive Orders

A scheme similar to the one tracking Executive Orders of the President at the national level will begin this fall tracking those of the Governor. A scheme for abstracting has yet to be developed for the 358 documents. We plan to include similar institutional and policy filters here.

6. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Opinions

Approximately 6,000 of these documents exist, but an abstracting scheme has yet to be developed in order to adequately track policy from this institution. Plans for developing a dataset will begin this fall. We plan to include similar institutional and policy filters here.

7. Public Opinion

Similar to the Gallup Poll at the national level, the Keystone Poll tracks the “Most Important Problem” facing Pennsylvanians. The data has been collected by Franklin and Marshall College; however, it only tracks public opinion from 1994. We are in search of earlier polling data.

8. State Budget

The Pennsylvania budget will be restated in constant dollars and consistent categories over time and, insofar as feasible, coded to match the policy codebook and cross-walked to the national budget codebook. This part of the project will begin this fall.

Team

The project is under the leadership of Dr. Joseph McLaughlin, an assistant dean in the College of Liberal Arts and senior fellow at the Institute for Public Affairs at Temple University. The project headquarters, at Temple University, is currently overseen by Project Coordinator, Dr. Wesley Leckrone and Assistant Project Coordinator, Jason Bossie.

This database is a collaboration of six universities, each with its own faculty leader and project team. In addition to Temple, the schools and their faculty leaders are: Frank Baumgartner, Pennsylvania State University; Beverly Cigler, Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg; David Miller, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh; Donald Kettl, director of the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania; Richard Stafford, Heinz School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie-Mellon University. Their contact information along with a biography of all the researchers at each of these universities can be found on our website at www.temple.edu/papolicy.

Revisions

There have been a number of substantive changes to the national codebook to make it more relevant to state government. We have changed the title of major topic code “Macroeconomics” to “Fiscal and Economic Issues” and major topic code “State and Local Government Administration” to “Local Governments and Governance.” There have been 10 substantive title changes to subtopics and the elimination of major topic 23 “Culture and Entertainment.” There are approximately 44 unused federal codes that have been left in tact.

The following is a list of 19 additions important in state government:

- 210: Abortion and Alternatives to Abortion
- 345: Provision and Regulation of Ambulance Services
- 712: Regulation of Hunting, Fishing and Recreational Boating
- 1212: Probate and Estate Law
- 1213: Property and Real Estate Law
- 1214: State Tort Law and Tort Law Reform
- 1402: Zoning and Growth Management
- 1411: General State Economic Development
- 1527: Regulation of Services
- 1528: Regulation of Alcohol
- 2016: State Lottery Operations
- 2031: State Commemorative Legislation and Resolutions
- 2400: Local Government and Governance (multiple topics)
- 2401: Counties

2402: Municipalities

2403: Governance of Multi-Purpose Special Districts, Agencies or Areas

2404: Local Tax and Revenue Policies, Including Property Tax Relief

2405: State Authorizations or Restrictions on Local Government Debt

2499: Other

Funding and Status

This project has been funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The three year budget is \$480,000, virtually all of which pays for student researchers. The costs of a functioning website may be more expensive than expected, and we are looking toward other resources to help with that part. We have completed the first year of the project and hope to have a fully functional, free, online database by the first half of 2008.

Data Collection

We had previously used Excel in the start of our project and then transferred to Access due to the increased variables and filters included. The Access form allows for easier completion of the data without having to scroll through a spreadsheet. Three of our forms (i.e., Bills and Resolutions, Governors' Press Clippings, and *Governing Magazine*) can be downloaded from our website along with an example. These forms have proved easier for our researchers to handle.

Since our project is spread across the six universities, the Pennsylvania Policy website readily allows researchers to check on updates, download the codebook, and access information from their home or school computers. We also have a function online that allows our graduate research managers to download data to the website which can be accessed by the project staff.

Contact

Please contact us and visit our website, www.temple.edu/papolicy, for more information.

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