

APPENDIX FOR ONLINE PUBLICATION ONLY

May 19, 2026

A Additional Results and Robustness

Table A1: Rejection Rates by Agencies, States, and Cities

	Rejection Rate	No. of Filings	Mean Response Time (Days)
<i>Panel A: Federal Agencies (Top 10)</i>			
Federal Bureau of Investigation	0.345	3135	424
Central Intelligence Agency	0.672	826	424
Department of Justice	0.257	803	358
Department of Homeland Security	0.328	463	335
Department of Defense	0.265	422	478
National Security Agency	0.675	379	506
Army	0.241	315	312
Federal Communications Commission	0.055	310	71
Federal Trade Commission	0.147	266	45
Immigration and Customs Enforcement	0.227	256	378
<i>Panel B: States (Aggregation of Agencies)</i>			
New York	0.238	1261	108
Massachusetts	0.153	855	107
California	0.174	581	87
Texas	0.105	392	45
Florida	0.112	375	120
Illinois	0.224	361	57
Washington	0.073	358	107
Virginia	0.303	317	47
Pennsylvania	0.347	285	57
Tennessee	0.438	265	76
New Jersey	0.453	254	116
Georgia	0.188	239	50
Michigan	0.284	236	48
Arizona	0.072	209	107
North Carolina	0.082	208	139
Maryland	0.171	199	127
Ohio	0.163	190	67
Missouri	0.187	171	110
South Dakota	0.613	160	98
Rhode Island	0.063	159	32
Wisconsin	0.181	155	133
Connecticut	0.123	154	108
Arkansas	0.513	152	78
Delaware	0.440	150	109
Vermont	0.068	147	65
Colorado	0.096	146	56
Nevada	0.167	144	146
Alabama	0.618	136	339
Indiana	0.155	129	134
New Mexico	0.056	126	76

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Table A1: Rejection Rates by Agencies, States, and Cities (cont.)

	Rejection Rate	No. of Filings	Mean Response Time (Days)
Minnesota	0.087	126	99
Utah	0.248	125	83
Louisiana	0.256	121	123
North Dakota	0.126	119	32
South Carolina	0.261	119	74
Oklahoma	0.224	116	251
Kentucky	0.270	115	55
Iowa	0.115	113	61
New Hampshire	0.216	111	128
Kansas	0.309	110	77
West Virginia	0.267	101	52
Oregon	0.172	99	53
Idaho	0.124	97	60
Montana	0.079	89	91
Wyoming	0.102	88	38
Nebraska	0.218	87	72
Maine	0.163	86	94
Alaska	0.213	80	151
Mississippi	0.215	79	162
Hawaii	0.240	75	103
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<i>Panel C: Cities (Top 15)</i>			
New York City, NY	0.437	1016	166
Chicago, IL	0.150	942	54
Boston, MA	0.103	464	109
San Francisco, CA	0.088	340	114
Seattle, WA	0.111	307	171
Los Angeles, CA	0.290	269	125
Reno, NV	0.185	157	100
Atlanta, GA	0.177	141	86
San Diego, CA	0.073	137	52
Minneapolis, MN	0.093	129	140
Somerville, MA	0.078	129	59
Houston, TX	0.073	123	81
Denver, CO	0.098	123	36
Cambridge, MA	0.178	118	69
Niles, IL	0.061	114	20

Table A2: Matched Sample Analysis of Corruption and FOIA Responsiveness – No Small Matched Groups

This table presents the association between the state-level corruption rate from Campante and Do (2014) and the responses of FOIA requests filed in that state, focused on “matched groups” of at least five requests (see text for details). The dependent variable is $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, an indicator variable denoting that a request was rejected. The sample mean of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ is 0.16; the standard deviation of *Corruption Rate* is 0.12. In columns 4, 5, and 6, we require that the standard deviation of corruption within a “matched group” should be greater than 0. Standard errors are double clustered at the state and group level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.358** (0.140)	0.392*** (0.144)	0.382*** (0.138)	0.404*** (0.145)	0.346** (0.132)	0.277** (0.110)
<i>Log(Income)</i>			-0.062 (0.081)	-0.082 (0.095)	-0.104 (0.092)	-0.062 (0.077)
<i>Log(Population)</i>			-0.031** (0.012)	-0.028** (0.012)	-0.018 (0.011)	-0.011 (0.008)
<i>Average FOIA Score</i>						-0.006 (0.006)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Residents Only})$						0.251*** (0.048)
Fixed Effects						
Quarter of Submission		X	X	X	X	X
Matched-Group					X	X
Condition						
Matched-Group-level $\sigma(\text{Corruption Rate}) > 0$				X	X	X
<i>N</i>	17,605	17,605	17,605	11,653	11,653	11,653
<i>R</i> ²	0.014	0.057	0.068	0.065	0.259	0.286

Table A3: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections

This table examines whether jurisdictions with an upcoming election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond before election day, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.37, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.18 and 0.25, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable											
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$				$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$				$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.012 (0.027)	-0.136** (0.053)	-0.140*** (0.048)	0.410 (1.217)	-0.006 (0.017)	-0.081** (0.039)	-0.102*** (0.031)	0.794 (0.701)	-0.012 (0.020)	-0.047 (0.055)	-0.040 (0.049)	0.425 (1.179)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.320 (0.192)	0.212 (0.185)			0.407** (0.163)	0.343** (0.161)			-0.047 (0.138)	-0.077 (0.142)		
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.487*** (0.152)	0.489*** (0.145)	0.483*** (0.138)		0.290** (0.120)	0.360*** (0.096)	0.371*** (0.084)		0.136 (0.184)	0.102 (0.161)	0.090 (0.163)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Log}(\text{Income})$				-0.017 (0.110)				-0.062 (0.065)				-0.033 (0.113)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Log}(\text{Population})$				-0.022 (0.017)				-0.011 (0.011)				-0.007 (0.017)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Average FOIA Score}$				-0.001 (0.007)				-0.007 (0.006)				0.002 (0.007)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Residents Only})$				0.002 (0.056)				-0.015 (0.051)				0.024 (0.043)
Fixed Effects												
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X	X			X	X			X	X
N	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267
R²	0.296	0.299	0.345	0.345	0.312	0.313	0.390	0.391	0.262	0.262	0.300	0.300

Table A4: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections by Corruption Rate Quartile

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election across the four quartiles of the state-level corruption rate distribution have a different rate of failure to respond, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.37. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$	
	(1)	(2)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.228 (0.177)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Bottom Quartile Corruption Rate})$	-0.004 (0.041)	-0.035 (0.032)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{2nd Quartile Corruption Rate})$	-0.072* (0.036)	-0.056 (0.039)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{3rd Quartile Corruption Rate})$	-0.030 (0.032)	-0.013 (0.035)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Top Quartile Corruption Rate})$	0.143*** (0.045)	0.111*** (0.039)
Fixed Effects		
Matched-Group	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X
State		X
N	4,267	4,267
R²	0.300	0.345

Table A5: Request Characteristics Before Versus After Elections

This table presents the test of whether requests systematically differ during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election compared to the 180 days after the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election. The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-election request and at least one post-election request. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable *Agency Rejection Rate* (with a mean of 0.18) is the average rejection rate of the target agency’s category in our main analysis sample, while *Log Agency Requests* (with a mean of 1.86) captures the number of requests received by the FOIA request’s target agency according to our full sample of requests. The variable *Log Request Word Count* (with a mean of 5.22) is based on the number of words appearing in the title and content of each FOIA request; we control for an indicator for cases where we are unable to observe the content of the request, in which case we set this variable equal to zero. The mean of the dependent variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Police Request})$ is 0.38. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable			
	<i>Agency Rej. Rate</i>	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Police Request})$	<i>Log Agency Requests</i>	<i>Log Request Word Count</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.025 (0.043)	-0.069 (0.136)	-0.088 (0.058)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	0.004 (0.016)	0.063 (0.178)	0.215 (0.476)	0.369 (0.277)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X
Jurisdiction	X	X	X	X
N	3,191	3,191	3,191	3,191
R²	0.138	0.430	0.245	0.862

Table A6: Rejection Before Versus After Elections

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions have a different rate of rejection during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election compared to the 180 days after the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election. The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-election request and at least one post-election request. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable *Log Agency Requests* captures the number of requests received by the FOIA request’s target agency according to our full sample of requests. The variable *Log Request Word Count* is based on the number of words appearing in the title and content of each FOIA request; we control for an indicator for cases where we are unable to observe the content of the request, in which case we set this variable equal to zero. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.18. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.027 (0.024)	-0.048 (0.041)	-0.052 (0.038)	-0.053 (0.034)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.515*** (0.179)	0.366** (0.177)		
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.283** (0.132)	0.264** (0.108)	0.265** (0.107)
<i>Log Agency Requests</i>				0.010 (0.013)
<i>Log Request Word Count</i>				0.011** (0.005)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X
Jurisdiction			X	X
Agency Category				X
N	3,191	3,191	3,191	3,191
R²	0.076	0.078	0.272	0.295

Table A7: Rejection Before Versus After Real and Placebo Elections

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions have a different rate of rejection during the 180 days prior to mayoral or gubernatorial election date compared to the 180 days after mayoral or gubernatorial election date, using both real and placebo elections and separately estimating their effects. The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction’s real or placebo election date, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-election request, at least one post-election request, at least one pre-placebo-election request, and at least one post-placebo-election request. Placebo election dates are the first Tuesday in each November (or the second Tuesday if the first falls on the first day of the month) where no true election occurs in the jurisdiction during the preceding or following 360 days. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s election date, and the variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Placebo Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s placebo election date. The variable *Log Agency Requests* captures the number of requests received by the FOIA request’s target agency according to our full sample of requests. The variable *Log Request Word Count* is based on the number of words appearing in the title and content of each FOIA request; we control for an indicator for cases where we are unable to observe the content of the request, in which case we set this variable equal to zero. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.20. Standard errors are double clustered at the state and quarter-of-submission level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.043** (0.018)	-0.010 (0.045)	-0.030 (0.036)	-0.038 (0.033)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.556*** (0.191)	0.503** (0.188)		
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.196 (0.145)	0.288** (0.140)	0.280** (0.136)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Placebo Election})$	0.026* (0.014)	0.009 (0.026)	0.011 (0.028)	0.014 (0.028)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Placebo Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.059 (0.072)	0.053 (0.087)	0.026 (0.090)
<i>Log Agency Requests</i>				0.011 (0.009)
<i>Log Request Word Count</i>				0.014*** (0.004)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X
Jurisdiction			X	X
Agency Category				X
N	10,840	10,840	10,840	10,840
R^2	0.054	0.054	0.170	0.196

Table A8: Matched Sample Analysis of Rejection Before and After Elections

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions have a different rate of rejection during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election compared to the 180 days after the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election. The sample consists of matched groups of requests, focusing on groups with at least one pre-election request OR at least one post-election request, and at least one request not filed within 180 days of an election. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Post-Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election 180 days after the election date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.17. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.009 (0.018)	-0.072* (0.040)	-0.101*** (0.030)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.401*** (0.146)	0.380** (0.143)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.249** (0.123)	0.354*** (0.093)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Post Election})$	-0.007 (0.014)	0.051 (0.038)	0.039 (0.036)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Post Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		-0.213* (0.110)	-0.145 (0.103)
Fixed Effects			
Matched-Group	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X
State			X
N	5,521	5,521	5,521
R²	0.311	0.312	0.383

Table A9: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections, Varying Failure Definitions

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The dependent variable takes the value of one in columns 1-3 if the FOIA request received a rejection, a “No Documents” response, or a “Delayed Response.” The dependent variable takes the value of one in columns 4-6 if the FOIA request received any response other than a full or partial completion or received a “Delayed Response.” The dependent variable takes the value of one in columns 7-9 if the FOIA request received a rejection, a “No Documents” response, or a “Delayed Response,” with a sample limited to closed requests (i.e., requests resulting in rejection, completion, partial completion, or “No Responsive Documents.” The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable in columns 1-3 is 0.56, and the dependent variables in columns 4-6 and 7-9 have means 0.59 and 0.57, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

11

	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$ Definition:								
	All Requests Sample						Closed Requests Sample		
	Incl. $\mathbb{1}(\text{No Documents})$			Incl. All Non-Completions			Incl. $\mathbb{1}(\text{No Documents})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.003 (0.018)	-0.064 (0.043)	-0.071* (0.037)	-0.004 (0.015)	-0.060 (0.036)	-0.069** (0.032)	-0.000 (0.017)	-0.057 (0.041)	-0.066* (0.036)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.283** (0.130)	0.237* (0.133)		0.280** (0.126)	0.237* (0.126)		0.298** (0.133)	0.253* (0.136)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.235* (0.129)	0.261** (0.115)		0.217* (0.112)	0.247** (0.106)		0.221* (0.124)	0.251** (0.114)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	6,839	6,839	6,839
R^2	0.300	0.301	0.324	0.305	0.305	0.329	0.319	0.319	0.343

Table A10: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: Journalist Heterogeneity

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Journalist})$ takes the value of one if we identified the submitter of the FOIA request as a journalist. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.37, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.17 and 0.25, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable					
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$		$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$		$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.145** (0.068)	-0.069 (0.087)	-0.094** (0.047)	-0.030 (0.080)	-0.072 (0.074)	0.045 (0.094)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	0.467*** (0.167)	0.161 (0.248)	0.343*** (0.098)	0.086 (0.185)	0.112 (0.179)	-0.358 (0.279)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Journalist}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.024 (0.046)	-0.064 (0.085)	-0.001 (0.042)	-0.075 (0.089)	0.044 (0.055)	-0.092 (0.091)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Journalist}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.356 (0.268)		0.299 (0.216)		0.547** (0.245)
Fixed Effects						
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State	X	X	X	X	X	X
N	4,050	4,050	4,050	4,050	4,050	4,050
R^2	0.356	0.357	0.403	0.403	0.312	0.312

Table A11: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: Other Request Characteristics

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Home State})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request’s target jurisdiction was in the submitter’s state of residence, as determined in section D, while *Agency Rejection Rate* is the average rejection rate of the target agency’s category in our sample of rejected and completed state and local requests. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.37 in the sample in column (1) and 0.37 in the sample in column (2). Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$	
	(1)	(2)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.203** (0.079)	-0.201** (0.092)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	0.501*** (0.148)	0.474*** (0.173)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Agency Rejection Rate}$	0.345 (0.387)	0.403 (0.484)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Home State})$		-0.095 (0.063)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \mathbb{1}(\text{Home State})$		0.041 (0.073)
Fixed Effects		
Matched-Group	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X
State	X	X
Agency Type	X	X
N	4,266	4,049
R^2	0.350	0.361

Table A12: Matched Sample Analysis of Other Request Characteristics Around Elections

This table presents the test of whether requests systematically differ during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The variable *Agency Rejection Rate* is the average rejection rate of the target agency’s category in our sample of rejected and completed state and local requests, with a mean of 0.18. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Home State})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request’s target jurisdiction was in the submitter’s state of residence, as determined in section D, with a mean of 0.06. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable			
	<i>Agency Rejection Rate</i>		$\mathbb{1}(\text{Home State})$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.003 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.006 (0.009)	0.008 (0.013)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	-0.006 (0.007)	-0.007 (0.007)	0.049 (0.075)	0.061 (0.080)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.006 (0.010)		-0.054 (0.040)
Fixed Effects				
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X
N	4,267	4,267	4,050	4,050
R^2	0.593	0.593	0.549	0.549

Table A13: Monthly Number of FOIA Requests Submitted Around Elections: 6-Month Cutoff

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions, including both cities and states, have a different volume of FOIA requests submitted during the six months prior to relevant (mayoral or gubernatorial) elections. Observations are jurisdiction-months, comprising both city-months and state-months, from January 2010 through June 2021 in all 50 states and the 475 cities receiving FOIA requests via MuckRock appearing in the ALGED’s data on mayoral elections. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one for city-months in the six months prior to a mayoral election in the city, and one for state-months in the six months prior to a gubernatorial election in the state. The mean of the dependent variable, $N(\text{Requests})$, is 0.28. Standard errors are double clustered at the jurisdiction (state or city) and monthly date level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $N(\text{Requests})$			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.012 (0.029)	0.005 (0.024)	-0.000 (0.024)	0.000 (0.020)
Fixed Effects				
Jurisdiction level		X	X	X
State			X	X
Year				X
N	72,450	72,450	72,450	72,450
R^2	0.000	0.075	0.104	0.125

Table A14: Analysis of Rejections Around Elections: Restricting to Matched Groups

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The sample of “all requests” includes all clearly resolved requests filed within the sample period in the cities and states in our elections sample, while the sample of “matched groups” restricts to matched groups of requests with at least one request filed in a jurisdiction in the 180 days prior to the election date and at least one request filed in a jurisdiction not in the 180 days prior to the election date. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.19 for the sample in columns 1-3 and 0.18 for the sample in columns 4-6. Standard errors are clustered at the state level and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$					
	All requests			Matched groups		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.023 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.044)	-0.045 (0.028)	-0.011 (0.018)	-0.072* (0.039)	-0.094*** (0.027)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.489** (0.202)	0.470** (0.199)		0.547*** (0.178)	0.491*** (0.174)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.140 (0.137)	0.254** (0.105)		0.238* (0.137)	0.332*** (0.103)
Fixed Effects						
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X
N	13,399	13,399	13,399	4,268	4,268	4,268
R^2	0.045	0.045	0.123	0.074	0.074	0.172

Table A15: Matched Sample Analysis of Clear Resolutions Around Elections

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of clear resolutions to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or completion, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected or Completed})$, is 0.63, while the variables $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$, and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ have means of 0.11, 0.52, and 0.23, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable											
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected or Completed})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.059* (0.034)	-0.055 (0.034)	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.074** (0.031)	-0.084*** (0.026)	-0.000 (0.009)	0.015 (0.029)	0.029 (0.025)	-0.013 (0.015)	-0.046 (0.037)	-0.050 (0.033)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	-0.039 (0.065)	-0.082 (0.072)		0.293*** (0.104)	0.239** (0.102)		-0.332*** (0.111)	-0.321*** (0.111)		0.002 (0.116)	-0.024 (0.119)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.216* (0.119)	0.205* (0.116)		0.275*** (0.100)	0.316*** (0.090)		-0.059 (0.097)	-0.110 (0.086)		0.130 (0.127)	0.134 (0.119)
Fixed Effects												
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X			X
N	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232	7,232
R²	0.326	0.326	0.335	0.202	0.204	0.260	0.343	0.343	0.366	0.231	0.231	0.263

Table A16: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: 120-Day Pre-Election Windows

This table examines whether jurisdictions with an upcoming election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond before election day, during the 120 days prior to the jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election 120 days prior to the election date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.42, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.17 and 0.32, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable								
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.011 (0.022)	-0.052 (0.064)	-0.067 (0.061)	0.012 (0.017)	-0.041 (0.045)	-0.067* (0.034)	0.011 (0.023)	0.024 (0.076)	0.017 (0.071)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.237 (0.185)	0.191 (0.184)		0.384** (0.158)	0.346** (0.157)		-0.125 (0.147)	-0.115 (0.154)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.246 (0.204)	0.271 (0.199)		0.205 (0.153)	0.286** (0.123)		-0.054 (0.277)	-0.054 (0.256)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899	3,899
R²	0.290	0.290	0.338	0.301	0.301	0.375	0.272	0.272	0.313

Table A17: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: 150-Day Pre-Election Windows

This table examines whether jurisdictions with an upcoming election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond before election day, during the 150 days prior to the jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election 150 days prior to the election date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.40, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.17 and 0.29, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable								
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.012 (0.028)	-0.081 (0.063)	-0.091 (0.058)	-0.004 (0.016)	-0.065* (0.037)	-0.092*** (0.027)	-0.008 (0.021)	-0.002 (0.064)	-0.000 (0.058)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.304 (0.192)	0.247 (0.194)		0.411** (0.162)	0.362** (0.164)		-0.067 (0.147)	-0.062 (0.158)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.272 (0.193)	0.294 (0.181)		0.238** (0.112)	0.326*** (0.087)		-0.024 (0.223)	-0.041 (0.197)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210	4,210
R²	0.287	0.288	0.337	0.304	0.305	0.383	0.257	0.257	0.299

Table A18: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: 270-Day Pre-Election Windows

This table examines whether jurisdictions with an upcoming election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond before election day, during the 270 days prior to the jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election 270 days prior to the election date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.32, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.17 and 0.19, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable								
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.011 (0.026)	-0.134*** (0.040)	-0.149*** (0.036)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.090*** (0.031)	-0.108*** (0.026)	-0.006 (0.017)	-0.051 (0.038)	-0.056 (0.036)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.363** (0.175)	0.242 (0.174)		0.425*** (0.152)	0.344** (0.156)		-0.015 (0.116)	-0.059 (0.118)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.480*** (0.104)	0.530*** (0.096)		0.320*** (0.088)	0.383*** (0.074)		0.176 (0.130)	0.191 (0.126)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817	4,817
R²	0.285	0.287	0.336	0.318	0.320	0.394	0.223	0.223	0.258

Table A19: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: 360-Day Pre-Election Windows

This table examines whether jurisdictions with an upcoming election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond before election day, during the 360 days prior to the jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election 360 days prior to the election date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.32, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.17 and 0.19, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable								
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.012 (0.020)	-0.102*** (0.037)	-0.116*** (0.040)	-0.001 (0.015)	-0.059** (0.028)	-0.076*** (0.028)	-0.013 (0.014)	-0.047 (0.035)	-0.053 (0.035)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.398** (0.164)	0.297* (0.174)		0.413*** (0.150)	0.348** (0.155)		0.049 (0.106)	0.012 (0.121)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.351*** (0.106)	0.414*** (0.116)		0.227*** (0.078)	0.290*** (0.078)		0.130 (0.130)	0.161 (0.132)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229	5,229
R²	0.300	0.301	0.349	0.320	0.321	0.395	0.237	0.238	0.270

Table A20: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections: Earliest Elections as Deadlines

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction's election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. Failure to respond is determined by whether agencies issue a response within the shortest amount of time between request submission and an election in the same jurisdiction for each matched group. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed with a department in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.50, and the means of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$ and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$ are 0.18 and 0.40, respectively. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable								
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$			$\mathbb{1}(\text{Delayed Response})$		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.011 (0.028)	-0.089 (0.060)	-0.091* (0.054)	-0.006 (0.017)	-0.081** (0.039)	-0.102*** (0.031)	-0.018 (0.021)	-0.017 (0.059)	-0.010 (0.051)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.275 (0.190)	0.208 (0.183)		0.407** (0.163)	0.343** (0.161)		-0.045 (0.163)	-0.044 (0.166)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.304 (0.182)	0.305* (0.172)		0.290** (0.120)	0.360*** (0.096)		-0.005 (0.204)	-0.029 (0.182)
Fixed Effects									
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X			X
N	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267
R²	0.330	0.331	0.375	0.312	0.313	0.390	0.324	0.324	0.363

Table A21: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections with Controls for Requests Received by Agencies

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.37. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.012 (0.027)	-0.100 (0.060)	-0.097* (0.055)	-0.012 (0.027)	-0.069 (0.076)	-0.066 (0.069)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.315 (0.193)	0.204 (0.185)		0.315 (0.193)	0.204 (0.185)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$		0.503*** (0.153)	0.505*** (0.145)		0.500*** (0.154)	0.501*** (0.147)
<i>Log(Total Agency Requests)</i>	0.005 (0.014)	0.007 (0.014)	0.012 (0.013)	0.005 (0.014)	0.013 (0.016)	0.018 (0.015)
<i>Log(Annual Agency Requests)</i>	0.001 (0.016)	0.002 (0.017)	-0.004 (0.016)	0.001 (0.016)	-0.007 (0.019)	-0.013 (0.018)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Log(Total Agency Requests)}$		-0.011 (0.009)	-0.013 (0.008)		-0.037 (0.027)	-0.038 (0.024)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Log(Annual Agency Requests)}$					0.034 (0.033)	0.034 (0.029)
Fixed Effects						
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X
N	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267	4,267
R²	0.297	0.299	0.345	0.297	0.299	0.346

Table A22: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections by Agency Level

This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions (cities in columns 1-3, states in columns 4-6) with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.36 for the sample in columns 1-3, and 0.39 for the sample in columns 4-6. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$					
	City Agencies			State Agencies		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.028 (0.036)	-0.135* (0.075)	-0.145** (0.066)	0.026 (0.040)	-0.111 (0.098)	-0.107 (0.092)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.220 (0.235)	0.155 (0.218)		0.416** (0.172)	0.239 (0.181)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.427* (0.229)	0.426** (0.201)		0.516* (0.287)	0.544** (0.260)
Fixed Effects						
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X
N	2,549	2,549	2,549	1,273	1,273	1,273
R²	0.300	0.301	0.355	0.322	0.326	0.398

Table A23: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections by Incumbent’s Political Party

This table presents the test of whether cities and states with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond prior to an election, during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The sample is restricted to FOIA requests submitted in jurisdictions where the most recent election (at most 60 months prior to submission) was won by a Republican in columns 1-3 or by a Democrat in columns 4-6. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.34 for the sample in columns 1-3 and 0.38 for the sample in columns 4-6. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$					
	Republican Incumbent			Democratic Incumbent		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.019 (0.046)	-0.138 (0.102)	-0.164 (0.100)	-0.015 (0.028)	-0.092 (0.060)	-0.097* (0.055)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	0.609*** (0.178)	0.373* (0.207)		0.213 (0.251)	0.154 (0.239)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.609** (0.294)	0.672** (0.286)		0.302* (0.170)	0.309** (0.153)
Fixed Effects						
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X
N	1,143	1,143	1,139	2,454	2,454	2,451
R^2	0.358	0.362	0.425	0.307	0.308	0.356

Table A24: Matched Sample Analysis of Failure to Respond Around Elections by Incumbent’s Vote Margin

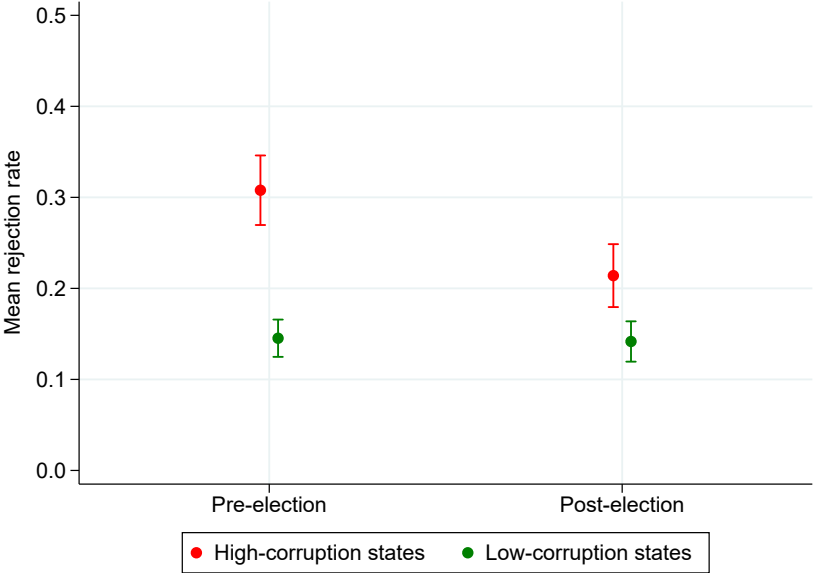
This table presents the test of whether jurisdictions with an election have a different rate of failure to respond to FOIA requests, defined as either a rejection or failure to respond during the 180 days prior to the jurisdiction’s election when we match the given FOIA request to other identical FOIA requests that were filed to a government agency in a different jurisdiction by the same submitter. The sample is restricted to FOIA requests submitted in jurisdictions where the most recent election (at most 60 months prior to submission) was decided by a close contest, defined as an election where the winner defeated the runner up by a vote margin of less than five percentage points in columns 1-3 or less than ten percentage points in columns 4-6. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed with a department in a jurisdiction that had an election within 180 days following the initial request date. . The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$, is 0.32 for the sample in columns 1-3 and 0.37 for the sample in columns 4-6. Standard errors are double clustered at the matched group and state level, and are reported in parentheses. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Dependent Variable: $\mathbb{1}(\text{Failure})$					
	5% Vote Margin			10% Vote Margin		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	-0.021 (0.045)	-0.108 (0.123)	-0.050 (0.148)	-0.048 (0.052)	-0.094 (0.115)	-0.093 (0.132)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	-0.084 (0.280)	-0.236 (0.450)		0.028 (0.230)	-0.037 (0.295)	
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$		0.362 (0.528)	0.167 (0.621)		0.199 (0.379)	0.182 (0.468)
Fixed Effects						
Matched-Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarter of Submission	X	X	X	X	X	X
State			X			X
N	445	445	441	886	886	883
R^2	0.396	0.397	0.452	0.367	0.367	0.411

Figure A1: Rejection Rates Before and After Elections, by Corruption Rate (Above/Below Crossing Point)

The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction’s mayoral or gubernatorial election, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-election request and at least one post-election request. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.18.

(a) 180 days pre- and post-election, aggregated



(b) 180 days pre- and post-election, monthly

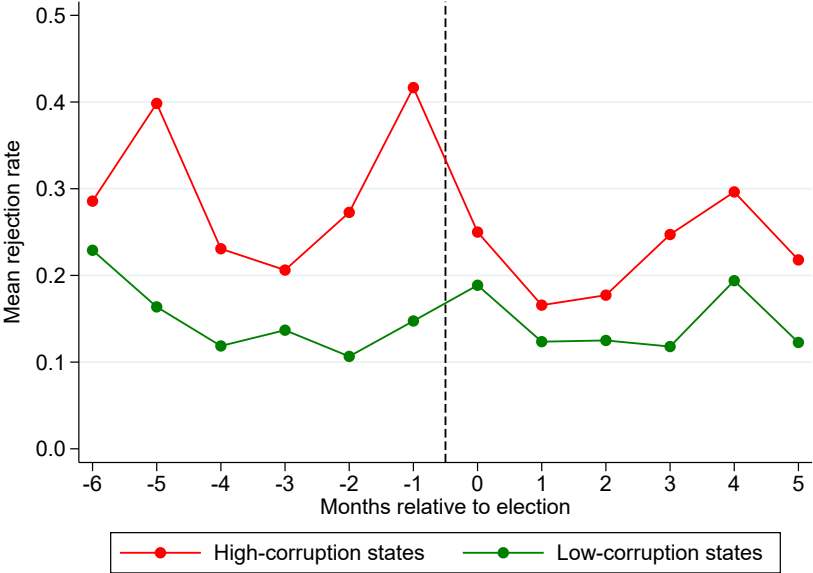
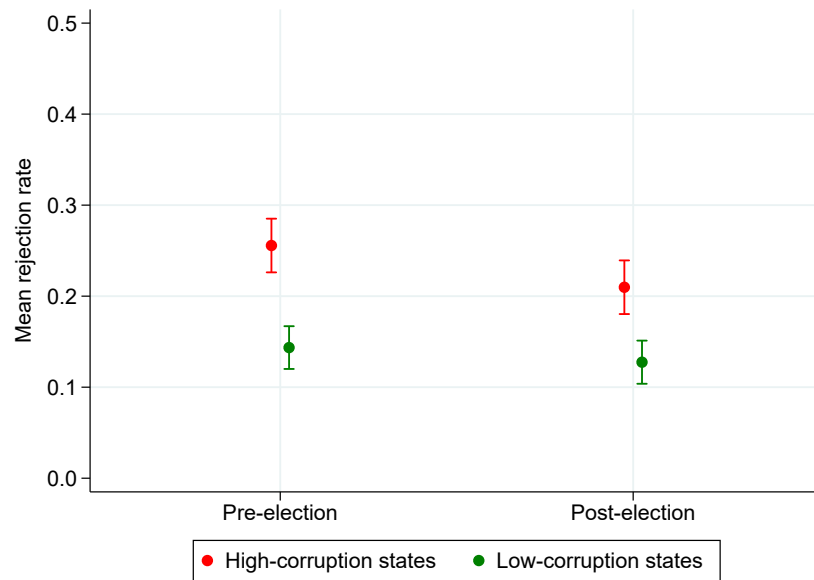


Figure A2: Rejection Rates Before and After Elections, by Corruption Rate (Above/Below Sample Median)

The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction's mayoral or gubernatorial election, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-election request and at least one post-election request. Requests are split by whether they are filed in states above or below the median state corruption rate in the sample of requests. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.18.

(a) 180 days pre- and post-election, aggregated



(b) 180 days pre- and post-election, monthly

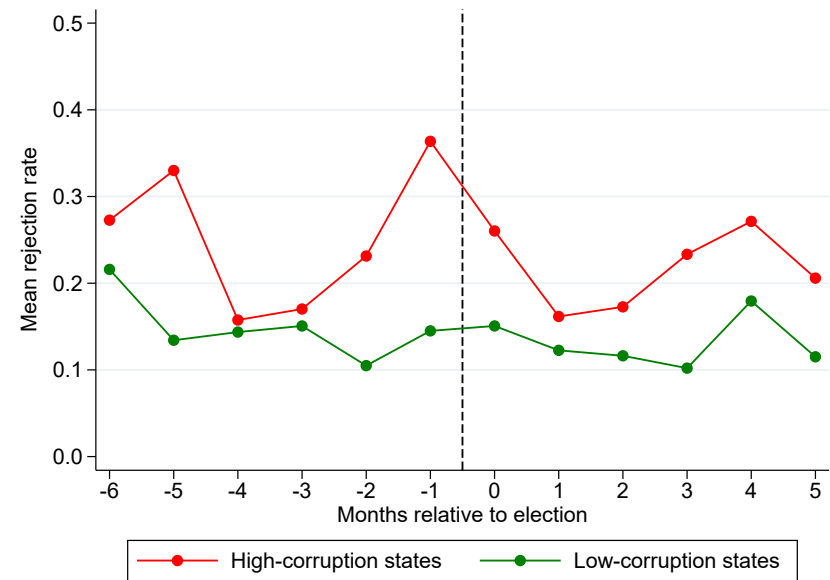
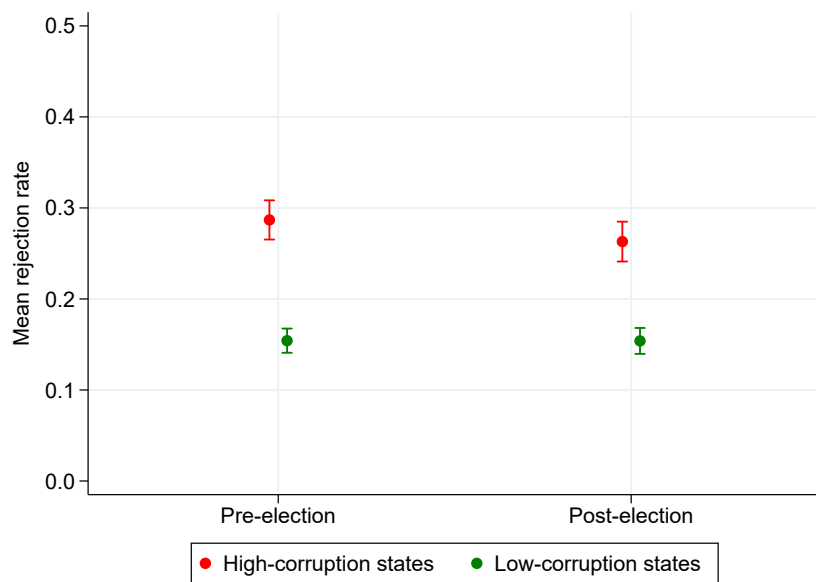


Figure A3: Rejection Rates Before and After Placebo Elections, by Corruption Rate (Above/Below Crossing Point)

The sample consists of requests that were filed within 180 days of their jurisdiction's *placebo* mayoral or gubernatorial election date, focusing on jurisdictions with at least one pre-placebo-election request and at least one post-placebo-election request. Placebo election dates are the first Tuesday in each November (or the second Tuesday if the first falls on the first day of the month) where no true election occurs in the jurisdiction during the preceding or following 360 days. The mean of the dependent variable, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, is 0.20.

(a) 180 days before and after placebo election, aggregated



(b) 180 days before and after placebo election, monthly

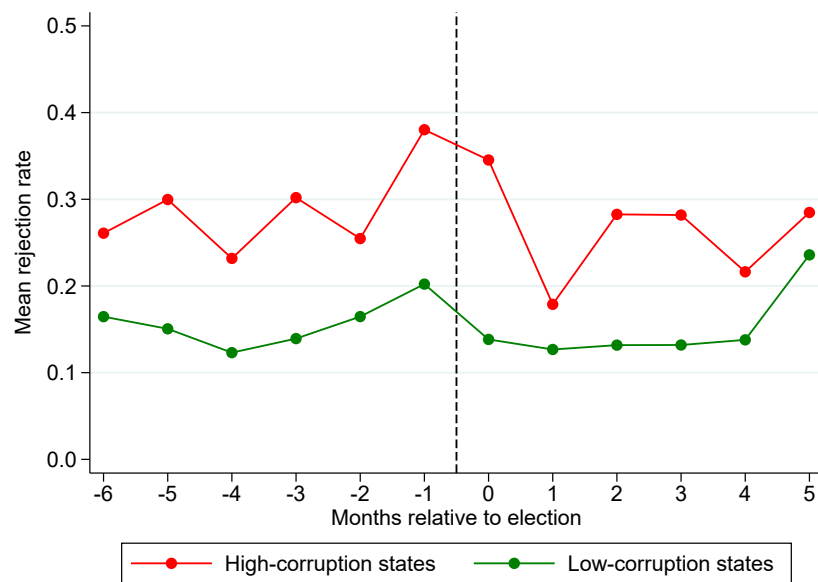


Figure A4: Main and Interaction Term Estimates when Dropping Individual States and Census Regions

This figure presents coefficients estimated via our main elections analysis regression equation with state fixed effects. Each estimate is obtained by fitting the equation to a sample omitting the corresponding state or census region. Dashed red lines mark the baseline estimates obtained by dropping “none” of the states from our sample. Error bars mark 95% confidence intervals using standard errors that are two-way clustered at the state and matched-group level.

(a) Omitting Individual States

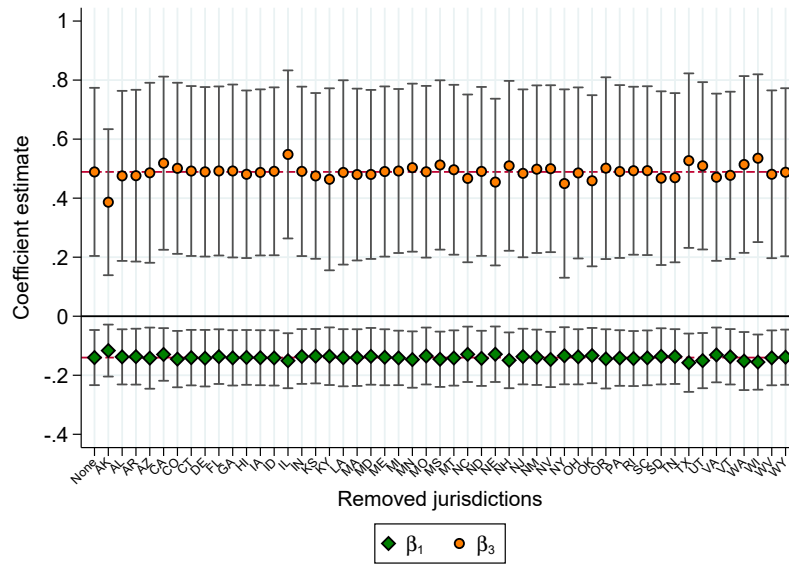


Figure A5: Main and Interaction Term Estimates when Dropping Agency Categories

This figure presents coefficients estimated via our main elections analysis regression equation with state fixed effects. Each estimate is obtained by fitting the equation to a sample omitting the corresponding category of agencies. Dashed red lines mark the baseline estimates obtained by dropping “none” of the categories from our sample. Error bars mark 95% confidence intervals using standard errors that are two-way clustered at the state and matched-group level.

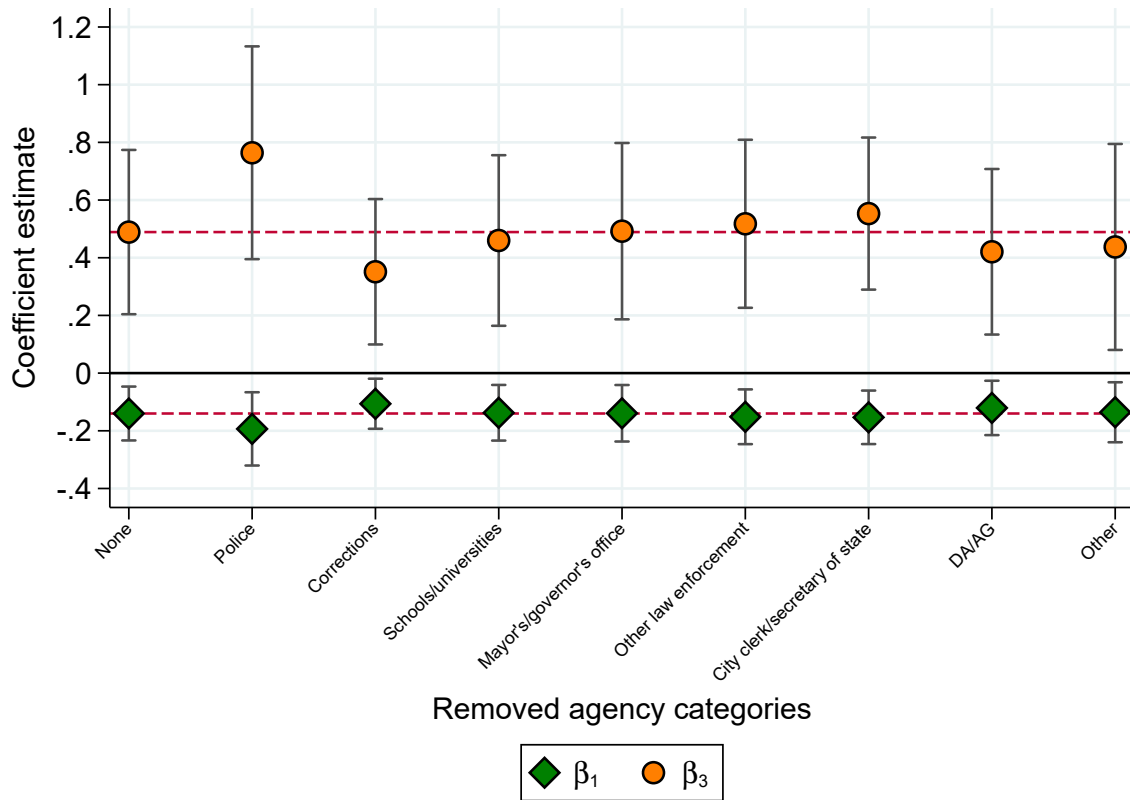
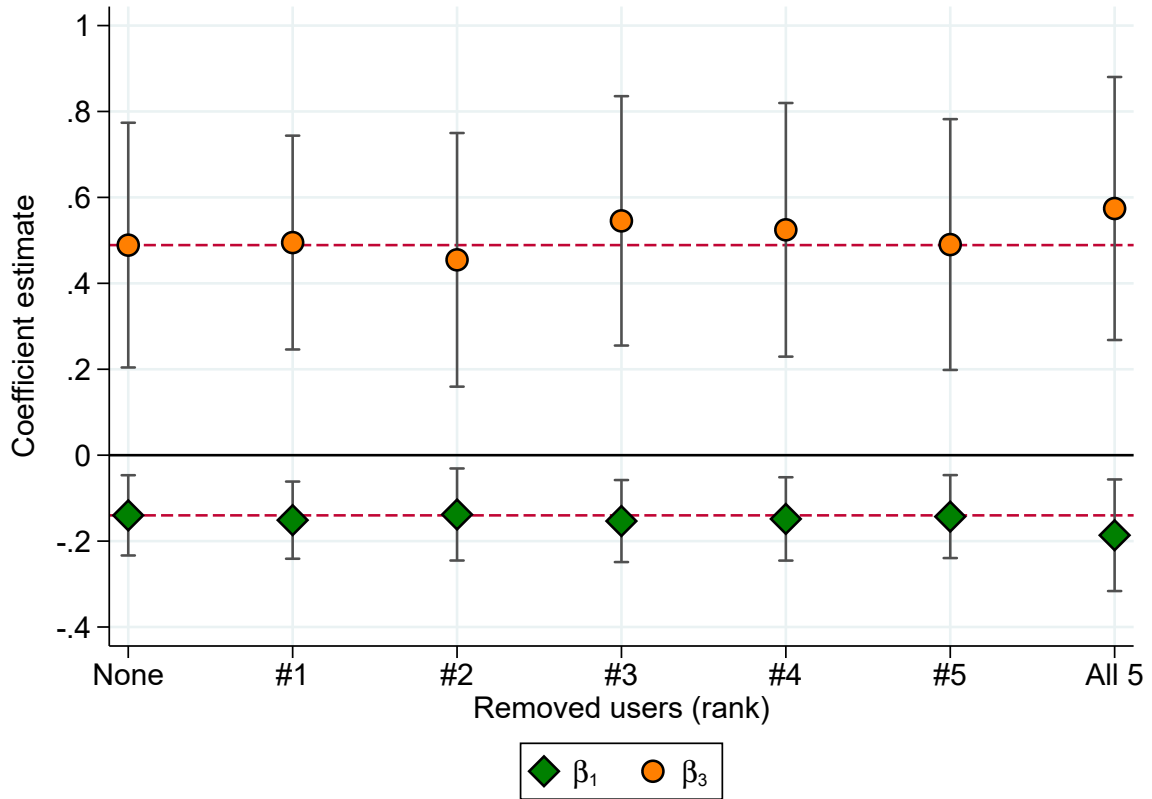


Figure A6: Main and Interaction Term Estimates when Dropping Top Five Submitters

This figure presents coefficients estimated via our main elections analysis regression equation with state fixed effects. FOIA request submitters are ranked according to the number of requests they account for in our sample, and each estimate is obtained by fitting the equation to a sample omitting one of the top five submitters. Dashed red lines mark the baseline estimates obtained by dropping “none” of the submitters from our sample. Error bars mark 95% confidence intervals using standard errors that are two-way clustered at the state and matched-group level.



B Data Appendix

Figure B1: Frequency of Identical FOIA Requests within Matched Group

This figure plots the frequency of group sizes across matched groups of identical FOIA requests (i.e., same content) submitted by the same person to various agencies.

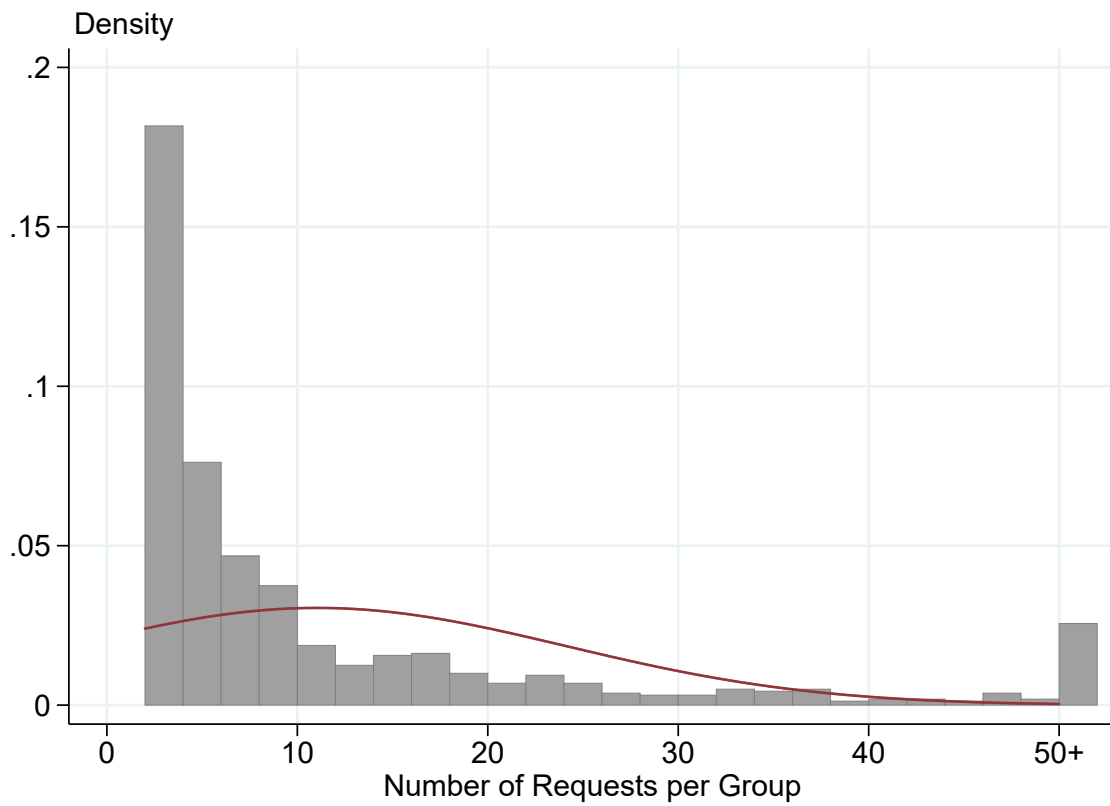


Figure B2: Number of State and Local Requests by Agency Category

This figure plots the number requests in our sample of 67,810 state and local FOIA requests submitted to each agency category we identify. The fraction of all state and local requests submitted to each agency category is displayed above the corresponding bar.

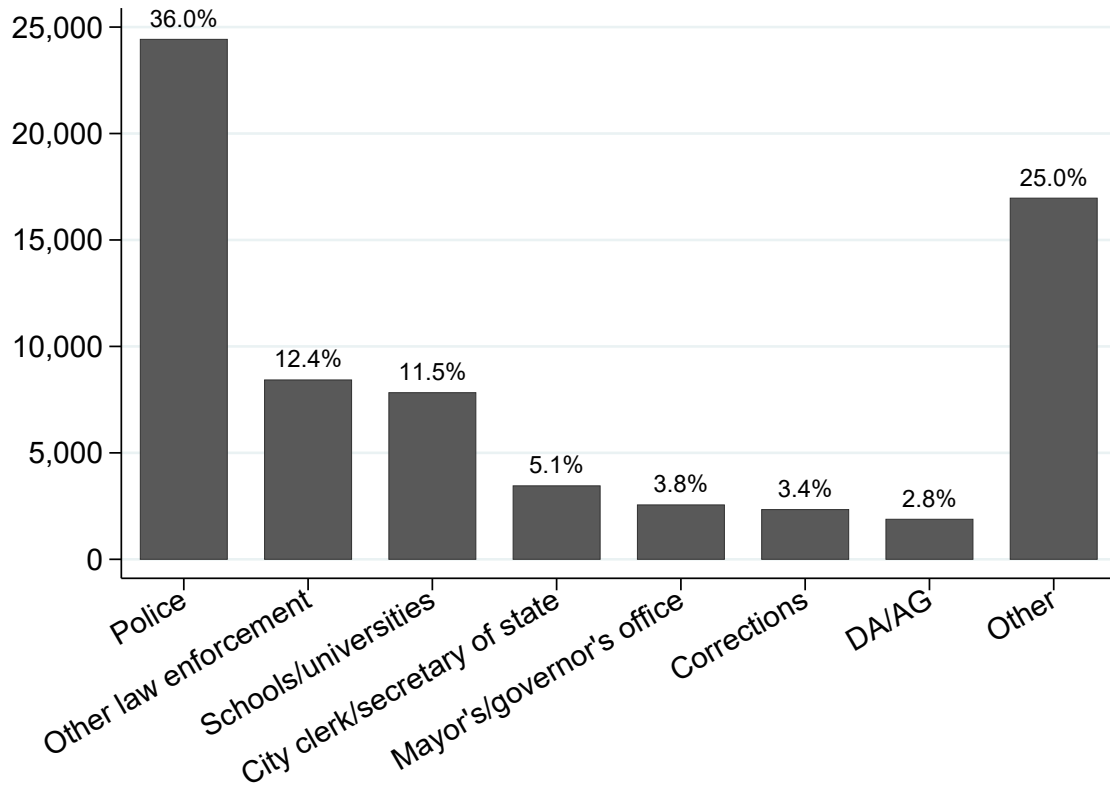


Figure B3: Number of Submitters by Occupational Category

This figure plots the number of submitters in our full sample of 99,396 MuckRock requests who are identified as journalists, researchers, or other professionals. For each occupational category, the fraction of all submitters for whom we identify any occupation is displayed above the corresponding bar.

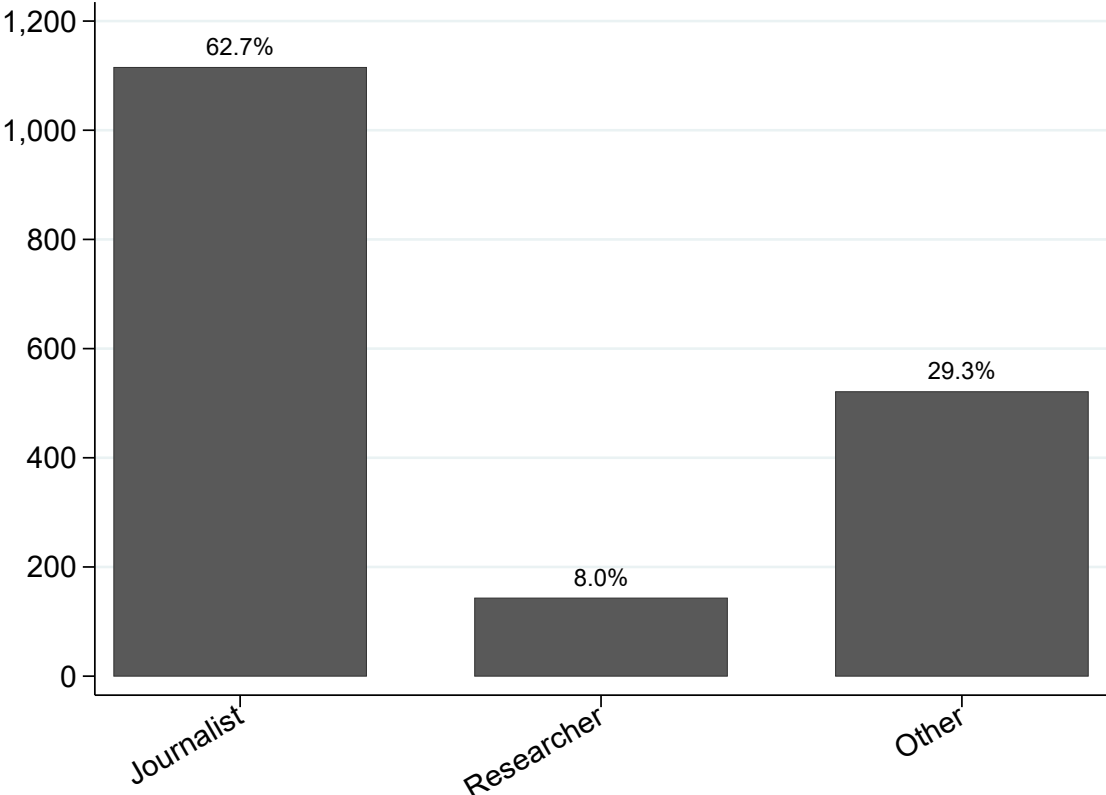


Figure B4: Within-State Correlation of Annual Corruption Convictions per 100,000 Residents

We use the 1989, 1999, and 2002 annual Report to Congress on the Activities and Operations of the Public Integrity Section to obtain annual corruption convictions in each state from 1976–2002, imputing missing values using averages of surrounding five-year periods. We use annual state population statistics to compute corruption convictions per 100,000 residents in each state-year. We then average these values across the 1976–1989 and 1990–2002 and correlate the measures in each state.

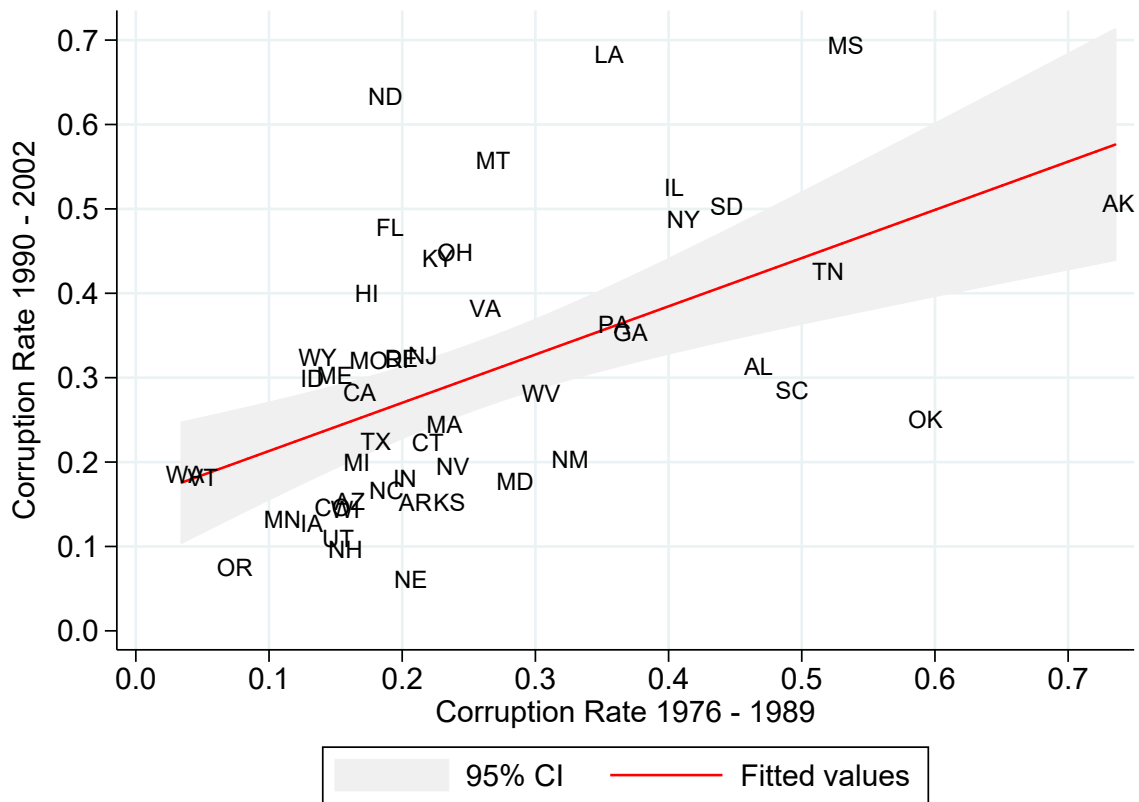
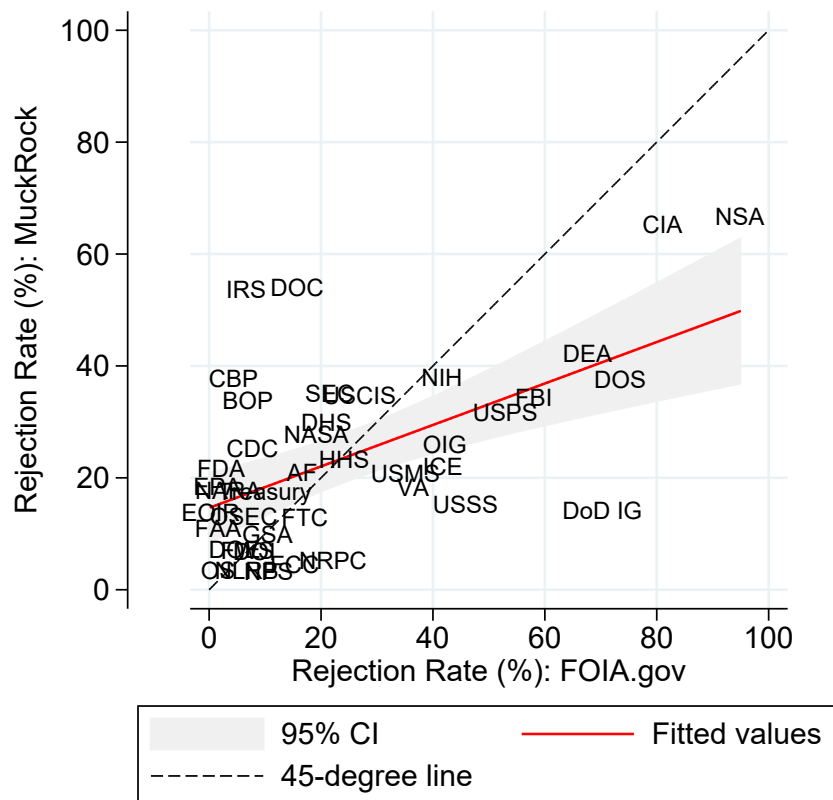


Figure B5: Federal Agency Rejection Rates: MuckRock vs. Official Data 2012-2023

The sample consists of 41 federal agencies (including bureaus, commissions, corporations, departments, and offices) identified in both data from MuckRock and in the federal government’s annual agency FOIA reports provided through FOIA.gov. Full rejections (“full exemption denial” responses in the FOIA reports) and full completions (“full grant” responses in the FOIA reports) processed each year are summed for each agency between 2012 and 2023, and rejection rates are computed for each agency by dividing the number of full rejections by the sum of full rejections and full completions. Agencies are excluded if they issued fewer than 50 full rejections or full completions to MuckRock requests between 2012 and 2023. The raw correlation between the two rejection rates across agencies is $\rho = 0.57$ while the bivariate regression yields a coefficient of 0.37 ($p < 0.01$).



C Multinomial Analysis of Elections and FOIA Request Outcomes

Since FOIA requests may result in a variety of outcomes beyond completion or rejection, it is natural to consider modeling responses to requests using a multinomial logit regression. However, porting our empirical strategy of comparing outcomes within matched groups of requests into this approach presents a number of practical issues. With 373 matched groups and 35 quarters of submission in our analysis sample of 7,232 FOIA requests, it is computationally intensive to condition matched-group fixed effects out of the likelihood function (for example, using Stata’s “xtmlogit” command), and controlling for matched-group dummies (for example, using Stata’s “mlogit” command) generates an incidental parameters problem and fails to identify category-specific parameters for matched groups without variation in a given category, preventing a maximum likelihood estimator from converging. Accordingly, we make the following adjustments to our estimation approach in order to adapt to the multinomial logit setting:

1. We omit matched-group fixed effects from our multinomial logit specifications
2. We combine all outcomes other than $\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$, $\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$, and $\mathbb{1}(\text{No Documents})$ into a single “Other” category
3. We omit requests submitted in the first quarter of 2013, since almost all requests received a $\mathbb{1}(\text{No Documents})$ response (and none were rejected)
4. We cluster our standard errors either on matched groups or on states, rather than two-way clustering on both matched groups and states

We present average marginal effects of $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$, *Corruption Rate*, and $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \text{Corruption Rate}$ on the probability of each request response category, computed using estimates from multinomial logit regressions with quarter-of-submission fixed effects in Tables C1 and C3 (clustering standard errors on matched groups in the former and on states in the latter), and with both quarter-of-submission and state fixed effects in Tables C2 and C4 (clustering standard errors on matched groups in the former and on states in the latter),

Table C1: Multinomial Logit: Quarter FE, Matched-Group Clusters

This table documents average marginal effects on state and local request response probabilities by state-level corruption rates prior to elections with estimates from a multinomial logit prediction model. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election six months prior to the election date. The residual dependent variable category, Other, indicates the request receives a response other than rejection, completion, or “No Documents.” Standard errors are clustered at the matched-group level, and are reported in parentheses. The sample omits requests submitted in the first quarter of 2013. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Status Category			
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{No Docs})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$	Other
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.015 (0.041)	0.043 (0.038)	-0.063** (0.028)	0.004 (0.018)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	-0.463*** (0.065)	0.210*** (0.055)	0.268*** (0.049)	-0.015 (0.032)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	-0.004 (0.131)	-0.182 (0.121)	0.206** (0.084)	-0.020 (0.065)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission			X	
State				
N		7,124		
Pseudo-R^2		0.073		

Table C2: Multinomial Logit: Quarter + State FE, Matched-Group Clusters

This table documents average marginal effects on state and local request response probabilities by state-level corruption rates prior to elections with estimates from a multinomial logit prediction model. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election six months prior to the election date. The residual dependent variable category, Other, indicates the request receives a response other than rejection, completion, or “No Documents.” Standard errors are clustered at the matched-group level, and are reported in parentheses. The sample omits requests submitted in the first quarter of 2013. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Status Category			
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{No Docs})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$	Other
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.036 (0.039)	0.036 (0.036)	-0.070*** (0.024)	-0.001 (0.017)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	-0.087 (0.123)	-0.154 (0.115)	0.244*** (0.073)	-0.003 (0.061)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission			X	
State			X	
N		7,124		
Pseudo-R^2		0.114		

Table C3: Multinomial Logit: Quarter FE, State Clusters

This table documents average marginal effects on state and local request response probabilities by state-level corruption rates prior to elections with estimates from a multinomial logit prediction model. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election six months prior to the election date. The residual dependent variable category, Other, indicates the request receives a response other than rejection, completion, or “No Documents.” Standard errors are clustered at the state level, and are reported in parentheses. The sample omits requests submitted in the first quarter of 2013. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Status Category			
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{No Docs})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$	Other
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.015 (0.038)	0.043 (0.037)	-0.063* (0.033)	0.004 (0.020)
<i>Corruption Rate</i>	-0.463*** (0.116)	0.210*** (0.081)	0.268*** (0.092)	-0.015 (0.052)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	-0.004 (0.124)	-0.182 (0.130)	0.206** (0.092)	-0.020 (0.066)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission		X		
State				
N		7,124		
Pseudo-R^2		0.073		

Table C4: Multinomial Logit: Quarter + State FE, State Clusters

This table documents average marginal effects on state and local request response probabilities by state-level corruption rates prior to elections with estimates from a multinomial logit prediction model. The variable $\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$ takes the value of one if the FOIA request was filed to a government agency in a jurisdiction that had an election six months prior to the election date. The residual dependent variable category, Other, indicates the request receives a response other than rejection, completion, or “No Documents.” Standard errors are clustered at the state level, and are reported in parentheses. The sample omits requests submitted in the first quarter of 2013. * indicates significance at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level, and *** at the 1% level.

	Status Category			
	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Completed})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{No Docs})$	$\mathbb{1}(\text{Rejected})$	Other
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election})$	0.036 (0.032)	0.036 (0.035)	-0.070*** (0.026)	-0.001 (0.021)
$\mathbb{1}(\text{Election}) \times \textit{Corruption Rate}$	-0.087 (0.105)	-0.154 (0.123)	0.244*** (0.075)	-0.003 (0.068)
Fixed Effects				
Quarter of Submission		X		
State		X		
N		7,124		
Pseudo-R^2		0.114		

D Data Collection on MuckRock Submitters

In this appendix, we describe our approach to collecting information on the states of residence and occupations for the 4,193 unique usernames in our full sample of FOIA requests from MuckRock. We combine information provided directly in submitters' MuckRock profiles – in particular, their display names and, where applicable, journalistic affiliations and social media handles – with web searches for their display names.

For each username, we execute a web search of their MuckRock display name (typically the submitter's full name used in communications with the recipients of their requests). We then identify online profiles from `MuckRack.com` accounts, in accordance with the large representation of journalists on the MuckRock platform, as well as professional bios, LinkedIn accounts, and social media accounts with matching names as potential matches. Aiming to replicate the information available to the recipients of FOIA requests, we use information on the number of potential matches and corroborating details from MuckRock profiles and FOIA requests belonging to the username to determine a most probable match, yielding no information in cases where we could not confidently identify a most probable match. Using these online profiles for the most probable matches, we extract locations and self-described occupations for each submitter.

For our main analysis sample of matched groups of requests filed relative to elections, we execute these web searches and extractions manually, identifying locations and self-described occupations for 116 out of 128 submitters (90.63%). For the rest of our full sample of 99,396 requests, we automate these web searches using ChatGPT's API platform, after which the most probable matches for each submitter are manually evaluated by a team of research assistants. Our automated search relies on OpenAI's `gpt-4o-search-preview` model, which is specialized for web searches in the Chat Completions API. In our full sample, we identify self-described occupations for 1,779 out of 4,193 submitters (42.43%).

E FOIA Request Word Clouds

We consider the distribution of word frequencies in the titles of all non-federal requests in our full sample of FOIA requests downloaded from MuckRock. From each title, we first remove all punctuation, numbers, whitespace, non-ASCII characters, and a list of common stopwords (comprising mostly pronouns and prepositions), and we convert all pluralized words to their singular form. We then remove the acronyms “FOIL” and “FOIA” (along with the components of their expansions) and the words “record” and “request.” Additionally, we remove the common words “department” and “agency” and the names of all states and all cities in our sample.

Using the resulting set of pre-processed titles, we measure the frequency of all words and bigrams. In order to avoid overweighting terms in large batches of similar or identical requests, we focus on samples collapsed to the username-level, so that each word and bigram is counted only once per submitter. We alternatively collapse our samples at the matched-group level, so that words and bigrams from each matched group of requests are counted only once. In order to focus on the meaningful content of the request titles, rather than the routinely included target jurisdictions, target agencies, format, and timing of the requests, we then remove a set of common words and bigrams; namely:

- The words “office,” “center,” “division,” “bureau,” “police,” “county,” “file,” “document,” “doc,” “report,” “public,” “data,” “city,” “state,” “district,” “received,” “untitled,” “sheriff,” “mayor,” “governor,” “clerk,” “dept,” “seattle,” “nypd,” “chicago,” “boston,” “san,” “new,” “nyc,” “los,” “regarding,” “related,” “including,” “years,” “months,” “january,” “february,” “march,” “april,” “may,” “june,” “july,” “august,” “september,” “october,” “november,” “december,” and “present”
- The bigrams “school district,” “county sheriff,” “police dept,” “office mayor,” “mayor office,” “governor office,” “office governer,” “attorney office,” “sheriff office,” “city police,” “district attorney,” “city clerk,” “city hall,” “public health,” “health human,” “intelligence center,” “public safety,” “state police,” “attorney general,” “county sheriff,” “county police,” “state police,” “city policy,” “highway patrol,” “public school,” “city council,” “city manager,” “fusion center,” “county school,” “police data,” “immediate disclosure,” “complete electronic,” “electronic copy,” “copy public,” “public received,” “district response,” “district including,” “including district,” “district complete,” “mi civic,” “last page,” “response year,” “police officer,” “public dated,” “document related,” “material pre,” “s office,” “april april,” “ny state,” “alameda county,” “la county,” “palm beach,” “clark county,” and “santa cruz”

Using the filtered bag-of-words and bag-of-bigrams, we create word clouds highlighting the most common words and bigrams appearing in state and local FOIA request titles.

Figure E2: Bigrams in non-federal request titles

(a) All requests



(b) Police requests



(c) Non-police requests



Figure E3: Words in non-federal request titles: aggregated at the matched-group level

(a) All requests



(b) Police requests



(c) Non-police requests

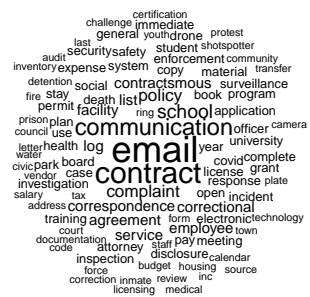


Figure E4: Bigrams in non-federal request titles: aggregated at the matched-group level

(a) All requests



(b) Police requests



(c) Non-police requests



F Illustrative Examples

We provide further details on each of the examples provided in Section 2.

- **Rahm Emanuel and the Laquan McDonald scandal** This is the canonical example of the more general phenomenon we document in our data. On October 20, 2014, 17-year-old Laquan McDonald was fatally shot by a Chicago police officer. The earliest related FOIA request related to the case that we could find was a January 2015 petition from an MSNBC producer requesting copies of reports related to the shooting as well as dashcam footage. The request was rejected in February 2015, shortly before the Mayoral election that began on February 24, 2015. In rejecting the request, the police department argued that releasing the materials could harm an ongoing investigation, and the department was therefore justified in withholding it under the state’s Freedom of Information laws. However, after extensive litigation, the materials were finally released in November 2015.³⁹

In the narrative that emerged in subsequent years, it became clear that the forcefulness with which the FOIA request was rebuffed reflected a more concerted effort by the mayor’s office to suppress details of the case, at least until after the closely contested mayoral race. John Kass of the *Chicago Tribune*, for example, conjectured that the dashcam video in particular – which was quite damning – would have led to a loss of support for Emanuel in the black community, which in turn may have led to a loss in the closely contested runoff election. Emanuel’s opponent shared this view, observing after the election that, “[the Laquan McDonald video] would definitely have changed the political environment. The rug would have been pulled out from under many political leaders’ feet. Things would have been different.”⁴⁰

The push for secrecy was driven in part by the mayor’s office itself, according to emails that became public (via a New Year’s Eve dump at the end of 2015). As *Time* described it, “On New Year’s Eve the city of Chicago released more than 3,000 e-mails related to McDonald’s death, many of which show a concerted effort by city attorneys to keep the video from public view.”

- **Buffalo Billion scandal** “Buffalo Billion” was the informal appellation of an economic development initiative that aimed to revitalize Upstate New York. By mid-2014, questions were being raised about how contracts were being awarded amidst allegations

³⁹See, e.g., “The Laquan McDonald Shooting Keeps Exposing Critical Flaws in Illinois’ Freedom of Information Act,” Mike Dumke, *Pro Publica*, December 19, 2018.

⁴⁰“If police shooting video had been released sooner, would Emanuel be mayor?” John Kass, *Chicago Tribune*, November 26, 2015.

of bribery and bid-rigging. The first freedom of information request related to Buffalo Billion contracts was filed on July 30, 2014 by investigative journalist Jim Heaney. The response, received in September 2014, was so heavily redacted that Heaney wrote in a subsequent article that, “FOI requests have not been honored,” and that he had, “never, in my nearly four decades as a reporter, encountered such heavy handed tactics to thwart the release of information.”⁴¹ Note that, as with the Chicago case described above, the scandal was brewing ahead of a gubernatorial election in November 2014.

In this case, the connection to elected officials is much more direct, since Buffalo Billion was a project undertaken by the governor’s office. And it was similarly the governor’s office that chose not to respond to FOI requests until compelled to do so by court order. As a *New York Times* article described the governor’s office’s intransigence and foot-dragging in 2017, “The decision, issued last week but filed with the Albany County Clerk’s office on Thursday, compels the governor’s office to release, within 45 days, schedules, email and other records requested by The Times under New York’s Freedom of Information law. The Cuomo administration had fought to keep the documents secret on multiple grounds, including that disclosing them might compromise the criminal investigation.”⁴²

As the discussion around the Laquan McDonald case suggests, it was widely believed that the mayor knew of the contents of the video and his office was involved in efforts to keep it out of public view. There are instances in which this pressure is more explicit, as in the two cases below:

- Atlanta Water Bills In March 2017, Atlanta’s Department of Watershed Management (DWM) received an open records (i.e., FOIA) request for billing, payment and usage records from a local television station for a set of addresses – what turned out to be properties owned by then-mayor Kasim Reed, his brother. (At the time, the mayor’s property had a disconnect notice and his brother’s was under investigation for water theft. The request was later broadened to include all city council members.)

In messages later obtained under a further open records request, the mayor’s press secretary instructed a DWM employee to: “be as unhelpful as possible,” “drag this out as long as possible,” and “provide information in the most confusing format available.”

⁴¹ “Suppression of Buffalo Billion Spending Records,” Jim Heaney, *City & State New York*, December 22, 2014.

⁴² “Cuomo’s Office Ordered to Release Records Sought by Times in Graft Inquiry,” Sarah Maslin Nir, *New York Times*, July 14, 2017.

The records request was only honored after the threat of litigation.⁴³

The municipal hierarchy made it straightforward for the mayor's office to push to suppress such information: open records requests at the DWM were handled by its communications department, which reported to its commissioner. And the commissioner, in turn, was appointed by the mayor. This is by no means an unusual state of affairs. In general, top city and state bureaucrats are political appointments – as documented by de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2025), in mayor-governed cities, police chiefs are usually appointed by the mayor, and state police administrative leaders are almost always governor-appointed (The Council of State Governments, 2021).

- Control of Richmond FOIA office The final illustrative example we include in the revised paper highlights the possibility that the entire FOIA response process can be co-opted by political figures. This case came to light because of a whistleblower complaint from the city's Freedom of Information Act Officer, Connie Clay, who was dismissed, she claimed, after raising concerns about non-compliance with FOIA laws. Of particular note, Clay had alerted the city's Finance Director that she had several overdue FOIA requests, including one asking for details on the mayor's salary.

It is again straightforward to see the channels of influence exercised by elected officials. the Finance Director (who was accused of non-responsiveness to FOIA requests) is appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer, who in turn is chosen by the mayor, subject to city council (also elected leaders) approval. The same is true for the director of the Office of Strategic Communications and Civic Engagement, the official who oversees FOIA responses (and the person who fired Connie Clay).

⁴³See "Trial to start Monday in Georgia's first-ever public records case," J. Scott Trubey, WSB-TV, December 15, 2017.