

The Electoral Value of Constituency Questions in Hungary and Romania

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Abstract

Drawing on an unique dataset that combines legislative behavior data and electoral results at the most recent elections in Romania (2008, 2012) and Hungary (2014), the study assesses the overall electoral value of parliamentary questions dealing with local issues, as well as the electoral consequences of five types of constituency questions. Moreover, it also evaluates the incumbency advantage at the three elections and the relationship between constituency questions and candidacy and re-nomination decisions.

Our multivariate regression analyses illustrate that the effect of constituency questions is clearly distinguishable from that of the overall parliamentary effort of the MPs. Constituency question brought Romanian MPs significantly more votes at each of the last two elections. In Hungary, the effect is either non-significant or negative, which is mainly explained by the limited scope for a personal vote at the 2014 elections.

An additional important finding is that asking constituency questions matters for re-nomination in Romania in 2008, and for SMD candidates in Hungary. The evidence regarding the electoral payoff of the five types of constituency questions is rather mixed, but generally it seems that MPs are better off asking questions targeting a larger audience (e.g. about local infrastructure or local events) rather than asking questions about individual problems.