

# THE POLITICAL CLASS AND REDISTRIBUTIVE POLICIES

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## Abstract

We study the relationship between the composition of the political class and the size of government. First, we use a citizen-candidate model to show that the extension of suffrage is inconsequential for government spending when stricter eligibility requirements are in place. The removal of eligibility requirements, on the other hand, leads to the election of less wealthy politicians and the enactment of more redistributive policies. We test these predictions empirically using data from the 13 U.S. original states. We find no robust correlation between the extension of the franchise and government spending or the composition of the political class. However, the subsequent elimination of eligibility restrictions is associated with an increase in government spending and the election of state senators with a less elite background. (JEL: D70, D72, D78, H72)

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