

# Are Fewer Elections Better Elections? The Impact of On-Cycle Elections on the Electoral Experience <sup>\*</sup>

Joshua Ferrer,<sup>†</sup> *American University*

Zoltan Hajnal,<sup>‡</sup> *University of California, San Diego*

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## Abstract

Over the past decade, states around the country have moved to consolidate different elections to the same date. Despite this shifting landscape, we know little about what these reforms mean for the electoral process itself. Consolidating local elections with federal and statewide contests could make life easier for both voters and election administrators. But putting contests together could also put stress on the electoral process by asking voters to process a longer ballot and administrators to run different types of contests simultaneously. Utilizing original panel data on election timing and administrative and survey data, we find that switching to on-cycle elections leads to fewer elections, saves money, reduces the burden on election officials, and has a limited but positive impact on election quality. The one downside we observe—a small increase in voter wait times—could be addressed by redirecting some of the cost savings toward making voting easier.

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<sup>†</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Government.

<sup>‡</sup>Professor, School of Global Policy and Strategy.

# 1 Introduction

America is changing the way it elects its leaders. Over ninety percent of its elected officials serve in local offices (Lawless 2012). And until recently, the vast majority of these local officials were elected on days when the only positions up for election were at the local level.

But that is shifting. In a little over a decade, six states – including two of the most populous – have moved to consolidated elections with local contests occurring on the same day as state level and federal offices. Over the last few decades, the share of local offices that are elected on these on-cycle dates has doubled (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Hartney and Hayes 2021).<sup>1</sup> The share of on-cycle elections is likely to increase even more going forward. Twenty-nine states introduced election consolidation legislation last legislative cycle, and a dozen states enacted consolidating laws (Guzman 2025). More could do so in the future.

Previous studies have shown that moving local elections on-cycle has a number of benefits. It has a dramatic impact on voter turnout – doubling or more than doubling participation in local contests (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Marschall and Lappie 2025). Research also shows that the move radically impacts the composition of the vote (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023). Moving on-cycle makes the electorate much younger, more racially diverse, and less skewed by class and wealth (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022; Kogan, Lavertu, and Peskowitz 2018). These changes make the local electorate more representative of the underlying population.

In terms of its impact on turnout and the composition of the electorate, election timing is unlike every other electoral reform being actively considered in the United States. All of the traditional reforms – a list which includes automatic voter registration, universal vote-by-mail, ex-felon enfranchisement, same day registration, expanded early voting, extended polling hours, pre-registration for teens, and ranked choice voting – can increase turnout but

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<sup>1</sup>Change has been substantial at the mayoral and school board level as well (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023).

typically only by a small amount – usually a 1 to 5 percentage point increase (Burden et al. 2014; Chen et al. 2022; Dowling et al. 2024; Holbein and Hillygus 2016; Kaplan and Yuan 2020; Thompson et al. 2020; Uggen and Manza 2002; White and Nguyen 2022). Because these conventional reforms only have a marginal impact on overall turnout, they generally have little or no effect on the composition of the vote (Grimmer and Hersh 2024). By contrast, because election timing has such a large impact on both the number of Americans who vote and the types of Americans who vote – it is “the rare kind of policy that could change outcomes” (Grimmer and Hersh 2024).

Moving on-cycle also saves money and is popular. Moving all of a state’s local offices to the same dates as statewide contests could save most of what authorities spend on these elections (Durning 2023). Additionally, surveys regularly show that two-thirds of Americans favor voting in one election on one day rather than voting in multiple elections across multiple different days (Anzia 2013; Ketcham and Severns 2024). Critically, that support is nonpartisan, with clear majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents all favoring the move. In America’s polarized political environment, that cross-party agreement is rare. It is also part of the reason why states across the political spectrum have enacted election consolidation reforms and why further consolidation remains viable in almost every state.

But the on-cycle move also raises an important question. Putting all or most of America’s elections on the same day on the same ballot raises concerns about the electoral process itself. Skeptics worry that voters and election officials will not be able to handle the complexities of a longer ballot that includes a wide range of contests for different jurisdictions at different levels of office (Smith 2026). For voters, a longer, more complicated ballot could lead to longer stays in the voting booth and longer lines at the polls. For election administrators, more voters and more contests on the same date could create extra burdens that could ultimately lead to a less efficient voting experience and increased chances for administrative errors in ballot design and vote tabulation. In short, the election experience could get worse.

Yet, there are also reasons to expect election consolidation to improve elections for voters and administrators. Advocates argue that fewer election dates should lead to better elections. With fewer dates on the electoral cycle each year, election administrators should not have to prepare for as many different rounds of elections. That reduced burden could enable them to invest more time and effort into each individual election date. Election timing consolidation could also be more efficient for voters, who could do all of their voting at once, rather than voting multiple times across multiple dates. In short, the electoral experience could improve. Does holding local elections concurrently with state and federal elections improve or harm America's democracy? Does putting more contests on the same date lead to longer wait times, more mistakes, and declines in quality or does consolidation instead result in a more efficient electoral process? Despite growing attention to election timing, we know little about the effects of election dates on the electoral process itself. Before proceeding, advocates, skeptics, and others interested in improving American democracy should know whether fewer elections means better or worse elections.

This paper studies the effects of on-cycle elections on four key elements of the electoral experience: the number of different election days, the opinions of election administrators, objective indicators of election quality, and surveys of the voting experience. Utilizing original panel data on election timing both nationwide and for California and Florida, we find that switching to on-cycle elections 1) tends to lead to fewer elections, 2) reduces the burden on election officials, 3) has a limited but positive impact on election quality, and 4) does not substantially degrade the voters' experience, with the exception of slightly increased wait times at the polls. Taken together, our findings should provide reassurance that the rapid movement across states to consolidate local and federal elections will not substantially degrade the quality of election administration and that the move could improve the electoral experience in meaningful ways.

## 2 Data and Research Design

We collect original state-level panel data on election timing laws from 2014 to 2024. The panel is based on Anzia (2013) and is supplemented with yearly updates from the National Conference of State Legislators, Ballotpedia, and other online sources. States are coded on a 0–1 scale from 0 indicating local elections are required to be off-cycle to 1 indicating that they are required to be on-cycle. States where localities can choose their own dates are coded as either  $\frac{1}{3}$  indicating that most localities have chosen off-cycle elections or as  $\frac{2}{3}$  indicating that most localities hold on-cycle elections. We also focus on two individual states that allow cities to switch their own timing and have recently experienced significant variation in election timing: California (2000–2022) and Florida (2008–2018).<sup>2</sup> Because election administration in these states is at the county level, we calculate the percentage of cities in each county-year that hold local elections concurrently with state and federal elections.

We compile a wide range of panel data from administrative and survey sources to test the effects of on-cycle elections on election frequency, election administrators, election quality, and the voter experience. We calculate election jurisdiction-level election date frequency in two ways: using nationwide voter file data from L2 spanning 2014 to 2020, and manually from election dates listed on the websites of the 400 most populous counties from 2014 to 2024 (details of these datasets can be found in Section A.1 of the Online Appendix). We collect information on election officials by combining the 2019, 2020, and 2023 waves of the Early Voting Information Center’s Survey of Local Election Officials.<sup>3</sup> These include questions on workload, funding, staffing, job satisfaction, job goals, and support for election date consolidation.

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<sup>2</sup>California is particularly of interest because much of its recent variation in election timing is exogenous to indicators of election quality in general elections. SB 415—the California Voter Participation Rights Act, enacted in 2015, required most cities to move to on-cycle elections. The law stipulated that cities where off-cycle municipal turnout rates are significantly lower than turnout rate in national elections must consolidate their local elections to match national election dates.

<sup>3</sup>[https://evic.reed.edu/previous\\_leo\\_surveys/](https://evic.reed.edu/previous_leo_surveys/)

We use five objective measures to assess local election administration quality for federal general elections: voter turnout, residual vote, provisional vote rate, absentee rejection rate, and the incidence of reporting errors. Data on voter turnout is from Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections and spans 2000 to 2024. We calculate turnout using highest-office vote counts for the numerator (president in years divisible by four and governor or senator in other even years) and number of voting-age residents in the denominator.<sup>4</sup> Residual vote and reporting errors are also calculated from Leip data. Residual vote is measured as the share of ballots cast without a vote for highest office (Kropf et al. 2020; Stewart et al. 2020). In difference-in-difference estimators, high residual vote rates can signal errors in election administration, such as poor ballot design or poorly maintained election equipment. A county is coded as having a reporting error when it has a negative residual vote, or in other words when more votes are reported for highest office than for overall turnout. Data on provisional ballots cast and absentee ballots rejected is from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission’s biannual Election Administration and Voting Surveys (EAVS) and span 2004 to 2024.<sup>5</sup> High rates of provisional voting and rejected absentee ballots can also indicate errors in election administration, such as inadequate election worker training and communication to voters. We calculate the provisional ballot rate as the share of total ballots that were cast provisionally. Absentee rejection rate is calculated as the share of absentee ballots that were rejected.

Finally, we capture data on voters’ experiences at the polls using the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.<sup>6</sup> We focus on three key indicators: self-reports of problems encountered while voting, voter wait times at the polls, and voter confidence in elections.

Our main estimation strategy is differences-in-differences, using unit and time fixed effects to measure the effect of a change from off-cycle to on-cycle local elections on the

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<sup>4</sup>We rely on county-level estimates from the National Cancer Institute’s Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results Program available at <https://seer.cancer.gov/popdata/singleages.html>.

<sup>5</sup><https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/datasets-codebooks-and-surveys-old>

<sup>6</sup><https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/projects/survey-performance-american-elections>

electoral experience for voters and administrators.<sup>7</sup> Estimation of effects are at the election jurisdiction level, typically county or county-equivalent<sup>8</sup> Additionally, we employ a range of individual-level controls for survey data.

## 3 Analysis

### 3.1 Do On-Cycle Elections Mean Fewer Elections?

One of the arguments for moving local elections to the same day as federal elections is that it will reduce the number of times that Americans have to go to the polls to cast their ballots. That argument has not, however, been systematically tested. Since one set of contests (e.g. municipal elections) in a given location can be moved on-cycle, while another set of contests in that same location (e.g. school district elections) can remain off-cycle, it is not clear whether more on-cycle elections actually means fewer election dates.

In Table 1, we test to see if moving on-cycle does, in fact, reduce the number of elections. Since election timing is largely determined by state law, we first look to see whether election jurisdictions in states that mandate on-cycle elections have significantly fewer elections than jurisdictions in states with off-cycle elections. That simple comparison suggests that on-cycle states have roughly 0.5 fewer elections per jurisdiction than off-cycle states each year, 20% fewer. That effect fades somewhat when we also include fixed effects for counties/municipalities—a pattern that is not all that surprising given that relatively few states shifted their laws on timing within the time frame that we examine (2014–2020).

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<sup>7</sup>Causal interpretation of our results is dependent on the parallel trends assumption. Our results are also susceptible to bias due to the staggered nature of treatment adoption. Due to the non-binary nature of treatment (with cities switching on-cycle and elections administered at the county level), we are unable to construct a time-series plot, employ heterogeneous-robust difference-in-difference estimators (Callaway and Sant’Anna 2021; de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfœuille 2020) or employ alternative panel estimators such as imputation-based or generalized synthetic control. For these reasons, we do not make unqualified causal claims.

<sup>8</sup>Election jurisdictions are at the municipal level for eight states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Elections are administered at the regional level in Alaska.

However, the effect is still substantively significant. Moving on-cycle leads to a 15% reduction in the annual number of elections administered. In the second half of the table, we focus on California and Florida, two states with more variation in timing and—in the case of California—a recent state mandated move to on-cycle dates. The Florida analysis indicates that all cities moving on-cycle within a county reduces the annual number of election dates by 1—a 34% reduction. The effect in California is even larger, though not as precisely estimated. Moving all cities on-cycle reduces a county’s election date load by 59%. The results certainly vary but all point in the same direction: moving local elections on-cycle substantially reduces the number of electoral dates. They are also robust to using manually collected election date data, found in Table A.2 in the online appendix.

Table 1: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Number of Election Days**

	Yearly Election Days			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
On-Cycle	-0.513 (0.242)	-0.383 (0.280)		
Percent On-Cycle			-1.525 (1.275)	-0.966 (0.494)
Jurisdictions	6295	6295	52	50
Years	7	7	7	5
Observations	44499	44499	364	250
Outcome Mean	2.51	2.51	2.57	2.92
Jurisdiction FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coverage	National	National	CA	FL

Robust standard errors clustered by state (columns 1 and 2) and jurisdiction (columns 3 and 4) in parentheses. On-cycle codings range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating all local elections are off-cycle, 1/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide whether to hold their elections off- or on-cycle but most hold them off-cycle, 2/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide but most hold elections on-cycle, and 1 indicating that all local elections are held on-cycle. Percent On-Cycle is the percentage of municipalities within an election jurisdiction (county) that hold their elections on-cycle. Yearly Election Days are calculated from L2 voter file data between 2014 and 2020, subsetted to registered voters who do not move over those years.

### 3.2 Do On-Cycle Elections Mean Better Elections?

A drop in the number of elections could have widely divergent effects. Reducing the number of elections could make life easier for voters (who have to travel to the polls less) and for election administrators (who have to prepare for fewer elections). But putting all or most of America’s electoral contests on the same ballot on the same day could also cause confusion and extra burdens for all involved. In extreme cases, voters could be asked to make choices across hundreds of divergent contests on a ballot that could spill across several pages. Likewise, election administrators will need to work through the complexities of a longer ballot that incorporates a range of different jurisdictions running different types of elections. In the most extreme cases, administrators have to run both nonpartisan and partisan contests while simultaneously creating a system that counts the vote across a wide number of contests that occur at different levels—a system that could include everything from a national presidential election, to statewide contests, state legislative races, municipal contests, school district competitions, and special district races.

We begin with election administrators as they are the actors who actually run the election and may face the biggest burden during the transition to on-cycle elections. Our analysis of administrator views—which is displayed in Table 2—suggests that the move to on-cycle elections sharply reduces the burden on election officials. The diff-in-diff model indicates that shifting on-cycle leads to a sharp reduction in their workload. Election administrators report a 37% increase in the reasonableness of their workload. This is equivalent to moving their answer from “neither agreeing nor disagreeing” that their workload is reasonable to agreeing that it is. Administrators might worry that the reduced workload leads to a reduction in funding and support. While the latter appears to be true—we imprecisely estimate the average jurisdiction shedding 1.5 FTEs upon the move to on-cycle local elections (column 3)—administrators also become much more likely to report that the funding they receive is sufficient to do their job (column 2). The reduction in FTEs can explain studies finding cost savings in the move to on-cycle elections (Durning 2023).

Table 2: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Election Official Attitudes**

	Workload reasonable (1)	Funding sufficient (2)	FTEs (3)	Sense of accomplish (4)	Job turnout (5)	Job dispar (6)	Support for consolidation (7)
On-Cycle	1.146 (0.343)	1.557 (0.277)	-1.504 (1.683)	1.346 (0.084)	1.292 (0.303)	0.537 (0.216)	1.461 (0.466)
Years	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Observations	2103	2106	2086	1889	1921	2086	2099
Outcome Mean	3.10	3.26	5.94	4.51	3.78	3.47	3.48
Jurisdiction FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Data is from the 2019, 2020, and 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials. Individual controls are total number of registered voters in election jurisdiction and the age, gender, race, education, and salary of the election official. Column 1 is from the question: “My workload is reasonable”. Column 2 is reverse-coded from the question: “A lack of sufficient funding often prevents me from doing my job well.” Column 3 measures full-time equivalents, which is derived from taking the midpoint values of FTE ranges. Column 4 is from the question: “My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.” Column 5 is from the question: “It is part of my job to encourage voter turnout.” Column 6 is from the question: “Local election officials should work to reduce demographic disparities in voter turnout.” Column 7 is from the question: “Consolidate local, state, and federal elections to take place at the same time.” Besides for FTEs, all questions are on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

One net effect of all of this is a greater sense of accomplishment among election officials (column 4). After the move to on-cycle elections, administrators are also able to focus more on raising voter turnout (column 5) and reducing demographic disparities in voter turnout (column 6). Given the importance of voter turnout and the composition of the vote for representation, this increased focus could be vital to improving America’s democracy.

Finally, we examine whether administrators’ experience running on-cycle elections leads to changes in how they view election consolidation. Across the nation, local election official support for consolidation is broad. In each year of the Local Election Official Survey, slightly over half of all respondents support consolidating local, state, and federal elections. Only about 20 percent express opposition each year. Critically, experience with on-cycle elections increases that already high level of support. Our diff-in-diff analysis suggests that support for consolidated elections grows substantially in jurisdictions that have recently experienced the transition to on-cycle elections than it does in jurisdictions that have not. The effect is equivalent to moving from “Neither support or oppose” election consolidation to halfway

between “support” and “strongly support”. The fact that the officials who oversee elections are more enthusiastic about on-cycle elections after running those consolidated elections is telling.

### **3.3 Do On-Cycle Elections Impact Election Quality?**

In this section we evaluate the impact of election timing on the quality of election administration. In Table 3 we assess five objective metrics of election quality and performance: voter turnout, residual vote rate, provisional vote rate, absentee rejection rate, and outcome reporting errors. The analysis reveals no significant change in election quality on most of the measures we examine. There is no evidence that residual vote rates increase, no sign of gains in the provisional vote rate, and no rise in the incidence of reporting errors when election dates are consolidated. These null effects are evident at both the national level and in the Florida and California analysis. Across most indicators of election quality, on-cycle elections mirror off-cycle elections.

The only metric for which there might be a reduction in election performance is the absentee rejection rate. The national analysis suggests that consolidated elections may have a higher absentee ballot rejection rate. But this effect is not statistically significant ( $p = .057$ ) and is not replicated in the state-level analyses. In fact, the point estimate for Florida is larger in magnitude in the opposite direction, albeit imprecisely estimated. Taken together, it does not appear that consolidating election dates has any significant negative impact on election quality.

Election performance does appear to improve in one way. Consolidated general elections—at least in the national analysis—have significantly higher turnout than unconsolidated elections. In some respects that is remarkable. It suggests that adding lower tier local contests to a general election can increase turnout in higher profile federal contests for president and Congress. Should we really expect the addition of a city council or school board contest to a presidential ballot to increase participation in the presidential contest? Perhaps so (Phillips

2020). While local level contests gain relatively little national attention, for the candidates themselves and for many of the residents who vote in those lower tier contests, it matters who wins and who loses those contests. Because candidates for local office often work hard to bring their voters to the ballot box, it might not be unreasonable to expect their efforts to mobilize a small set of locally engaged residents who may not always participate in national contests. Indeed, the effect size—a 3 percentage point increase in turnout in general federal contests—may not be out of proportion to this kind of local level mobilization. At the same time, the fact that we uncover no similar increase in turnout in the California and Florida analysis indicates that further testing is required.

Table 3: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Election Quality**

	Voter turnout (1)	Residual vote (2)	Provisional rate (3)	Absentee reject rate (4)	Reporting error (5)
<i>Panel A: National</i>					
On-Cycle	0.032 (0.009)	0.005 (0.005)	0.010 (0.009)	0.013 (0.007)	-0.032 (0.027)
Counties	2918	2514	2753	2937	2601
Years	6	6	6	6	6
Observations	13829	11225	15911	16582	12091
Outcome Mean	0.53	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
<i>Panel B: California</i>					
On-Cycle Percent	0.006 (0.006)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.013 (0.013)	-0.019 (0.016)	
Counties	52	52	52	52	
Years	12	12	8	10	
Observations	624	624	414	495	
Outcome Mean	0.45	0.02	0.04	0.02	
<i>Panel C: Florida</i>					
On-Cycle Percent	0.005 (0.009)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.011 (0.011)
Counties	50	50	50	50	50
Years	6	6	6	6	6
Observations	300	300	300	299	300
Outcome Mean	0.52	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
Jurisdiction FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered by state (Panel A) or jurisdiction (Panels B-C) in parentheses. Turnout is measured as the share of voting-age residents who cast a vote in the presidential race for presidential years and the gubernatorial race for midterm years. Residual vote is measured as the share of ballots cast without a vote for president in presidential years and for governor in midterm years. Provisional ballot rate is measured as the share of ballots cast as provisionals. Absentee ballot rejection rate is the share of absentee ballots that are rejected. Reporting errors are when a county has a negative residual vote, or in other words when more votes are reported for highest office than for overall turnout. David Leip's U.S. Election Atlas provides turnout and election outcome data used to calculate residual vote and reporting errors. Provisionals and absentee ballot rejection rates are from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's EAVS reports. There is no output in Column 5 for California because of a lack of variation on the dependent variable: no counties in the state have a reporting error between 2000 and 2022.

### 3.4 Do On-Cycle Elections Lead To A Better Voting Experience?

The results so far suggest that shifting to on-cycle elections has few negative effects and may in fact lead to increased turnout and reduced burdens on administrators. But we have not yet assessed the principal actors in democracy: the voters themselves. To best gauge the impact of on-cycle elections, we need to know how changes in election dates alter the experience of voters. To assess those experiences we turn to the four most recent waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections with county identifiers—a national survey of registered voters designed to offer insight into the voting process.

Even though consolidated elections add more contests, there is little sign in Table 4 that on-cycle elections degrade the voter’s experience. As the table indicates, Americans who vote on-cycle are not more likely to report problems in the voting process. They report slightly longer waits at the polls—3.5 additional minutes, on average—but this effect is not statistically significant ( $p = .15$ ). Critically, their trust in the electoral process does not change. Moving on-cycle does not have a statistically significant effect on their trust in the efficacy of their own vote or their trust in the efficacy of the national electoral process (in Table A.3 in the Online Appendix, we also show that moving on-cycle does not significantly affect voters’ trust in their county and state vote as well). Across these metrics, moving on-cycle has little demonstrable impact on the voting experience.

Given the concerns expressed by on-cycle opponents about the effects of a longer ballot, we conduct additional tests of wait times. Instead of using a numerical measure of wait times imputed from ordinal categories, we examine the effect of election dates on each possible wait time segment: no wait, up to 10 minutes, up to 30 minutes, up to an hour, and more than an hour. The descriptive results appear on the left panel of Figure 1 and the regression results with controls appear on the right panel (tabular results can be found in Table A.4 of the Online Appendix). The descriptive results reveal only minor differences in wait times between voters who live in off-cycle jurisdictions and those that live in on-cycle jurisdictions. However, the statistical results give a different picture. In jurisdictions that move to on-

Table 4: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Experiences**

	Problem (1)	Wait (min) (2)	Voter Confidence	
			Own (3)	Nation (4)
On-Cycle	-0.000 (0.009)	3.467 (2.373)	-0.043 (0.046)	0.075 (0.041)
Years	4	4	4	4
Observations	47968	27891	41717	45861
Outcome Mean	0.04	9.89	0.71	0.34
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

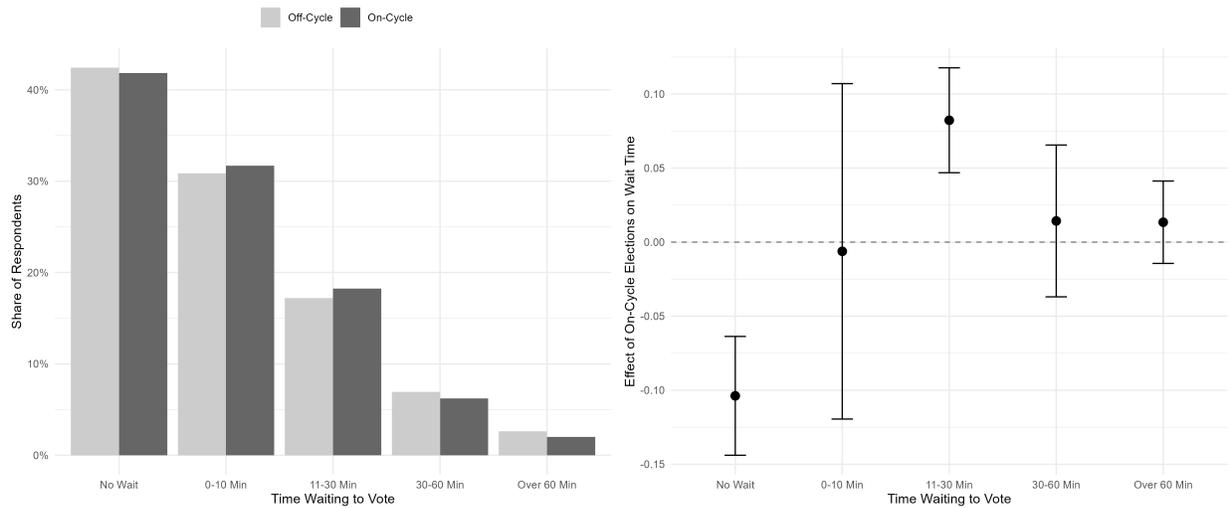
Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity. Data from the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.

cycle elections, the share of voters who report no wait times declines by about 10 percentage points. This is offset by a nearly equivalent increase in voters waiting between 11 and 30 minutes. There are no significant effects on voters waiting between 0 and 10 minutes, or on voters waiting more than 30 minutes to vote.

These increases in wait times are not surprising given that voters are being asked to vote on many additional contests on the same day. Thankfully, they do not appear to exacerbate excessively long wait times at the polls<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, any increase in the costs of voting—no matter how small—is something that legislators should consider incorporating into their legislative plans. Wherever election consolidation is being contemplated, legislators should consider tools to make voting easier, incentives to spur ballot-design improvements, and additional financial support to the local administrators tasked with implementing consolidated elections (Ketcham and Severns 2024). These additional measures, which might include more voting equipment, more poll workers, more polling locations, and greater access to early vot-

<sup>9</sup>The 2014 Presidential Commission on Election Administration recommends 30 minutes as the upper limit that any citizen should have to wait to cast a ballot. <https://web.mit.edu/supportthevoter/www/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf>

Figure 1: **On-Cycle Elections May Modestly Increase Wait Times.** The left panel presents the distribution of wait times in jurisdictions and years with on-cycle elections compared to those with off-cycle elections. Only jurisdictions in states with all off-cycle or all on-cycle state and local elections are included. The right panel presents estimates of the effect of on-cycle elections on the probability a resident experiences a given wait time at the polls. The estimates in the right panel come from separate regressions of a dummy variable for each category of wait time on jurisdiction and year fixed effects and individual-level age, gender, race, education, income, and party identification controls. Both plots rely on data from the 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2022 waves of the Survey of the Performance of American Elections.



ing and absentee voting options, could be funded by funnelling some of the substantial cost savings of on-cycle elections back into the elections themselves.

## 4 Discussion

The rapid adoption of on-cycle elections across the country raises real concerns for the electoral process. Aligning different electoral contests on the same day both lengthens and complicates the ballot—two changes that could challenge voters and election officials. At the same time, with more contests decided on one day, it raises the stakes to get things right and the consequences for administrative errors. The analysis presented in this article suggests that these concerns are largely unwarranted. On almost all measures, we find that moving on-cycle has no negative effects on election administrators, on voters, and on the electoral process. Instead, we uncover a number of positive attributes: by reducing the number of election dates, on-cycle elections significantly reduce the burden on election administrators. That reduced workload allows election officials to focus more of their time and energy on core democratic outcomes like increasing turnout and making the electorate more representative of the underlying population. The net result is a slight increase in voter turnout in national general elections, few discernible changes in election performance metrics, and a strikingly similar voting experience for individual voters.

These findings are important because they address one of the most important concerns related to election date consolidation (Smith 2026). What we learn here – that elections run as smoothly or even more smoothly when elections are consolidated – tells us that the previously documented turnout (Marschall and Lappie 2025; Phillips 2020), representational (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022), and cost-saving (Durning 2023) benefits to on-cycle elections are not offset by major declines in the electoral process itself. We do uncover marginal increases in voter wait times that warrant further attention. But this could be ameliorated by using the money saved in staff reduction from consolidating election dates to purchase more voting equipment, hire more poll workers, and extend early voting hours around the consolidated elections.

It is important to recognize there are still trade-offs to moving municipal elections on-cycle. Consolidated elections might reduce attention to local political affairs. They could

also increase partisanship and polarization at the local level. More work on these topics is certainly warranted, and politicians should consider these potential downsides when weighing whether to consolidate election dates.

Nevertheless, our findings have significant implications for American democracy. They matter first and foremost because election timing has enormous potential to impact almost all aspects of the local democratic process. Moving to on-cycle presidential dates has a massive impact on turnout for local offices— doubling or more than doubling participation (Anzia 2013; de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Marschall and Lappie 2025). There is little doubt that moving to consolidated elections is the single most important change that reformers can undertake to increase turnout in local contests. That means that by moving on-cycle, states like Arizona, California, Nevada, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia will likely add more than 10 million new voters to local democracy by the time those reforms are fully implemented. Los Angeles alone added more than half a million voters when that city held its first November even year mayoral contest in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

There is also little doubt that the move to on-cycle dates changes who votes more than other reforms. The fact that on-cycle elections greatly increase the share of local voters who are young and who are Americans of color means that a move on-cycle makes local democracy more representative of local communities (Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022). The net effect is a local government that is also more representative of the local population and policies that are more in line with the median resident (Dynes, Hartney, and Hayes 2021; Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2025). In short, future changes in election timing could have a dramatic impact on local democracy.

These findings also matter because more election timing reform is likely. Despite recent reforms around the country, most of America remains off-cycle (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023; Durning 2023). Over 60 percent of America’s local elections are still held off-cycle, where turnout is exceptionally low and extremely skewed (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023;

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<sup>10</sup><https://laist.com/news/politics/turnout-la-mayoral-race-2022>

Hajnal, Kogan, and Markarian 2022). If legislators continue the trend of having Americans vote once in on-cycle elections rather than voting on different dates for different offices, then it will no doubt transform local democracy (Anzia 2013; Ketcham and Severns 2024).

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# Online Appendix

Intended for online publication only.

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# A.1 Election Day Frequency Data Collection

## A.1.1 L2 Dataset

Our primary method for calculating election day frequency uses nationwide voter file data from L2 that spans 2014 to 2020. Following best practices (Kim and Fraga 2022), we list the dates of state voter files used in Table A.1 in Table A.1. All state voter files record individual voter participation histories, indicating whether a ballot was cast by each voter on every election date in the state.

To calculate how many elections local election officials administer each year in the United States, we first filter to registered voters who are continuously in the voter file between 2014 and 2021 and maintain the same residential address throughout that period. This is to avoid the false positives that are created when people who relocate cast ballots in both their old and new jurisdictions in the same year. We count an election as occurring on a date in a jurisdiction if at least 1 vote is recorded as being cast. <sup>11</sup>

Table A.1: L2 Voter File Dates Used

State	Election Date						
AK	4/18/2014	AK	3/13/2015	AK	7/28/2015	AK	8/26/2015
AK	12/9/2015	AK	2/9/2016	AK	5/21/2016	AK	6/22/2016
AK	9/23/2016	AK	1/27/2017	AK	5/25/2017	AK	8/15/2018
AK	10/2/2018	AK	5/3/2019	AK	7/2/2019	AK	2/24/2020
AK	8/14/2020	AK	10/9/2020	AK	2/3/2021	AK	7/4/2021
AK	11/3/2021	AK	11/24/2021	AL	3/18/2014	AL	4/10/2015
AL	7/29/2015	AL	10/14/2015	AL	12/9/2015	AL	1/24/2016
AL	3/7/2017	AL	6/13/2017	AL	11/1/2017	AL	7/7/2018
AL	5/16/2019	AL	6/12/2019	AL	8/27/2019	AL	2/17/2020
AL	2/24/2020	AL	4/10/2020	AL	8/14/2020	AL	10/9/2020
AL	2/24/2021	AL	7/5/2021	AL	11/3/2021	AL	11/14/2021
AR	4/11/2014	AR	3/24/2015	AR	7/28/2015	AR	8/31/2015
State	Election Date						

<sup>11</sup>An additional source of bias is the omission of local and special election data from some state voter files. It is not possible to correct such missing data. However, there is no reason to believe that the omission of local and special election dates correlate with jurisdictions moving on-cycle.

State	Election Date						
AR	3/15/2016	AR	9/23/2016	AR	3/29/2017	AR	7/5/2017
AR	1/30/2018	AR	9/20/2018	AR	5/13/2019	AR	9/21/2019
AR	2/7/2020	AR	2/24/2020	AR	4/11/2020	AR	7/30/2020
AR	3/16/2021	AR	11/3/2021	AZ	3/14/2014	AZ	4/22/2015
AZ	7/28/2015	AZ	10/3/2016	AZ	4/12/2017	AZ	8/26/2017
AZ	10/24/2017	AZ	8/27/2018	AZ	5/10/2019	AZ	10/21/2019
AZ	2/19/2020	AZ	6/16/2020	AZ	10/23/2020	AZ	1/13/2021
AZ	5/20/2021	AZ	7/5/2021	AZ	11/3/2021	CA	3/21/2014
CA	5/21/2015	CA	9/29/2016	CA	7/8/2017	CA	8/17/2018
CA	8/2/2019	CA	7/2/2020	CA	8/24/2021	CO	5/5/2014
CO	5/5/2015	CO	7/28/2015	CO	1/30/2016	CO	10/13/2016
CO	12/15/2016	CO	2/8/2017	CO	6/1/2017	CO	12/27/2017
CO	8/8/2018	CO	12/20/2018	CO	5/8/2019	CO	8/31/2019
CO	1/23/2020	CO	2/26/2020	CO	4/23/2020	CO	6/24/2020
CO	8/24/2020	CO	10/30/2020	CO	12/23/2020	CO	5/28/2021
CO	7/5/2021	CO	11/3/2021	CT	3/14/2014	CT	3/25/2015
CT	7/28/2015	CT	8/17/2015	CT	3/9/2016	CT	9/23/2016
CT	1/20/2017	CT	6/9/2017	CT	8/27/2018	CT	5/8/2019
CT	6/3/2019	CT	2/21/2020	CT	8/14/2020	CT	10/13/2020
CT	3/30/2021	CT	7/13/2021	DC	3/14/2014	DC	3/7/2015
DC	7/28/2015	DC	3/1/2016	DC	9/23/2016	DC	2/15/2017
DC	6/19/2017	DC	3/1/2018	DC	5/3/2019	DC	6/5/2019
DC	1/13/2020	DC	3/2/2020	DC	4/30/2020	DC	7/30/2020
DC	1/30/2021	DC	7/5/2021	DE	3/20/2014	DE	2/23/2015
DE	8/18/2015	DE	9/23/2016	DE	1/17/2017	DE	1/11/2018
DE	8/18/2018	DE	10/12/2018	DE	5/10/2019	DE	10/3/2019
DE	2/16/2020	DE	8/14/2020	DE	10/23/2020	DE	3/24/2021
DE	7/5/2021	DE	11/3/2021	FL	3/17/2014	FL	1/28/2015
FL	5/16/2015	FL	3/1/2016	FL	3/6/2017	FL	8/2/2018
FL	7/4/2019	FL	7/30/2020	FL	7/20/2021	GA	4/20/2014
GA	9/1/2015	GA	9/23/2016	GA	8/16/2017	GA	7/5/2018
GA	6/11/2019	GA	7/24/2020	GA	7/16/2021	HI	5/1/2014
HI	9/23/2016	HI	3/22/2017	HI	8/27/2018	HI	10/24/2019
HI	10/22/2020	HI	7/5/2021	IA	5/2/2014	IA	1/27/2015
IA	3/25/2015	IA	7/28/2015	IA	9/5/2015	IA	10/18/2016
IA	1/31/2017	IA	6/13/2017	IA	8/25/2018	IA	8/27/2018
IA	5/10/2019	IA	11/26/2019	IA	1/9/2020	IA	3/3/2020
IA	4/23/2020	IA	8/6/2020	IA	10/22/2020	IA	3/4/2021
IA	7/7/2021	IA	11/3/2021	ID	3/20/2014	ID	2/23/2015
State	Election Date						

State	Election Date						
ID	7/29/2015	ID	3/2/2016	ID	10/5/2016	ID	3/20/2017
ID	7/25/2017	ID	8/25/2017	ID	8/21/2018	ID	8/27/2018
ID	5/3/2019	ID	7/10/2019	ID	2/24/2020	ID	8/14/2020
ID	10/4/2020	ID	3/16/2021	ID	7/5/2021	ID	11/3/2021
ID	11/17/2021	IL	3/16/2014	IL	3/2/2015	IL	9/23/2016
IL	9/27/2017	IL	8/27/2018	IL	5/14/2019	IL	3/3/2020
IL	7/16/2021	IN	3/27/2014	IN	5/6/2015	IN	7/29/2015
IN	8/7/2015	IN	2/7/2016	IN	9/23/2016	IN	4/7/2017
IN	7/12/2017	IN	10/12/2017	IN	3/16/2018	IN	10/17/2018
IN	5/3/2019	IN	8/1/2019	IN	1/22/2020	IN	2/27/2020
IN	5/7/2020	IN	8/24/2020	IN	1/15/2021	IN	7/8/2021
KS	3/16/2014	KS	2/26/2015	KS	7/29/2015	KS	12/11/2015
KS	9/23/2016	KS	2/16/2017	KS	6/19/2017	KS	7/9/2018
KS	5/3/2019	KS	6/11/2019	KS	2/24/2020	KS	3/18/2020
KS	7/15/2020	KS	3/16/2021	KS	8/24/2021	KY	3/19/2014
KY	3/5/2015	KY	7/29/2015	KY	12/12/2015	KY	2/21/2016
KY	9/23/2016	KY	3/3/2017	KY	6/23/2017	KY	5/2/2018
KY	9/29/2018	KY	5/10/2019	KY	11/18/2019	KY	2/26/2020
KY	8/14/2020	KY	9/14/2020	KY	5/11/2021	KY	11/3/2021
KY	12/8/2021	LA	3/20/2014	LA	2/23/2015	LA	5/17/2015
LA	7/29/2015	LA	12/12/2015	LA	1/29/2016	LA	9/23/2016
LA	2/14/2017	LA	7/17/2017	LA	10/31/2017	LA	6/25/2018
LA	5/15/2019	LA	9/24/2019	LA	12/11/2019	LA	2/27/2020
LA	8/14/2020	LA	10/18/2020	LA	1/22/2021	LA	7/7/2021
LA	11/3/2021	MA	3/16/2014	MA	4/2/2015	MA	12/12/2015
MA	2/26/2016	MA	9/28/2016	MA	4/11/2017	MA	10/17/2017
MA	5/11/2018	MA	1/18/2019	MA	5/10/2019	MA	8/15/2019
MA	2/19/2020	MA	5/29/2020	MA	9/28/2020	MA	1/19/2021
MA	7/8/2021	MA	12/19/2021	MD	3/26/2014	MD	2/25/2015
MD	7/29/2015	MD	12/12/2015	MD	10/3/2016	MD	1/20/2017
MD	6/9/2017	MD	9/7/2017	MD	2/22/2018	MD	5/10/2019
MD	6/20/2019	MD	12/17/2019	MD	2/28/2020	MD	5/7/2020
MD	8/21/2020	MD	2/15/2021	MD	7/5/2021	MD	11/3/2021
MD	12/17/2021	ME	3/20/2014	ME	4/29/2015	ME	7/29/2015
ME	12/12/2015	ME	10/5/2016	ME	4/7/2017	ME	11/1/2017
ME	4/28/2018	ME	5/3/2019	ME	7/17/2019	ME	2/24/2020
ME	6/18/2020	ME	9/29/2020	ME	5/28/2021	ME	7/5/2021
ME	11/3/2021	MI	3/17/2014	MI	2/28/2015	MI	12/11/2015
MI	9/28/2016	MI	2/21/2017	MI	7/17/2018	MI	10/1/2018
State	Election Date						

State	Election Date						
MI	5/13/2019	MI	8/30/2019	MI	3/2/2020	MI	8/14/2020
MI	9/20/2020	MI	11/3/2021	MI	1/5/2022	MN	3/17/2014
MN	3/3/2015	MN	7/31/2015	MN	12/12/2015	MN	2/25/2016
MN	10/3/2016	MN	3/10/2017	MN	7/22/2017	MN	7/31/2018
MN	8/27/2018	MN	5/10/2019	MN	10/3/2019	MN	2/25/2020
MN	8/14/2020	MN	10/19/2020	MN	2/14/2021	MN	7/23/2021
MO	3/19/2014	MO	3/2/2015	MO	7/30/2015	MO	9/3/2015
MO	9/28/2016	MO	12/1/2016	MO	2/8/2017	MO	6/7/2017
MO	6/28/2018	MO	10/5/2018	MO	5/10/2019	MO	6/3/2019
MO	2/20/2020	MO	6/23/2020	MO	9/22/2020	MO	2/11/2021
MS	3/17/2014	MS	3/17/2015	MS	7/29/2015	MS	12/13/2015
MS	2/19/2016	MS	10/3/2016	MS	7/27/2017	MS	3/23/2018
MS	9/18/2018	MS	3/11/2019	MS	5/12/2019	MS	8/8/2019
MS	3/3/2020	MS	6/9/2020	MS	8/17/2020	MS	3/23/2021
MS	11/3/2021	MT	3/18/2014	MT	3/27/2015	MT	7/30/2015
MT	12/13/2015	MT	10/3/2016	MT	1/25/2017	MT	7/14/2017
MT	8/3/2018	MT	5/3/2019	MT	6/13/2019	MT	2/29/2020
MT	3/14/2020	MT	8/19/2020	MT	12/14/2020	MT	11/3/2021
MT	11/22/2021	NC	3/27/2014	NC	7/29/2015	NC	10/19/2016
NC	5/24/2017	NC	6/28/2018	NC	5/10/2019	NC	8/14/2020
NC	5/18/2021	ND	3/17/2014	ND	4/15/2015	ND	7/31/2015
ND	12/13/2015	ND	9/28/2016	ND	2/9/2017	ND	3/21/2018
ND	9/8/2018	ND	5/13/2019	ND	10/14/2019	ND	2/28/2020
ND	8/15/2020	ND	9/18/2020	ND	3/18/2021	ND	7/5/2021
ND	11/3/2021	NE	3/18/2014	NE	3/25/2015	NE	7/29/2015
NE	12/13/2015	NE	10/3/2016	NE	1/13/2017	NE	5/25/2017
NE	7/11/2018	NE	5/3/2019	NE	11/26/2019	NE	2/20/2020
NE	3/18/2020	NE	6/27/2020	NE	1/20/2021	NE	7/30/2021
NE	11/3/2021	NH	3/17/2014	NH	10/13/2014	NH	3/20/2015
NH	7/29/2015	NH	9/11/2015	NH	12/13/2015	NH	10/3/2016
NH	8/15/2018	NH	8/27/2018	NH	5/13/2019	NH	10/22/2019
NH	1/5/2020	NH	3/3/2020	NH	7/30/2020	NH	3/25/2021
NH	7/5/2021	NJ	4/22/2014	NJ	2/25/2015	NJ	7/30/2015
NJ	12/12/2015	NJ	9/29/2016	NJ	3/31/2017	NJ	4/25/2017
NJ	9/20/2017	NJ	3/6/2018	NJ	10/16/2018	NJ	3/1/2019
NJ	5/13/2019	NJ	9/30/2019	NJ	2/26/2020	NJ	5/12/2020
NJ	6/18/2020	NJ	9/9/2020	NJ	3/11/2021	NJ	7/11/2021
NJ	8/26/2021	NJ	11/3/2021	NJ	1/5/2022	NM	3/20/2014
NM	3/19/2015	NM	7/29/2015	NM	12/13/2015	NM	3/12/2016
State	Election Date						

State	Election Date						
NM	9/28/2016	NM	2/8/2017	NM	8/12/2017	NM	10/26/2017
NM	8/21/2018	NM	11/7/2018	NM	5/3/2019	NM	6/17/2019
NM	6/24/2019	NM	11/9/2019	NM	2/24/2020	NM	4/15/2020
NM	8/24/2020	NM	2/25/2021	NM	7/9/2021	NM	11/3/2021
NM	1/4/2022	NV	3/14/2014	NV	1/30/2015	NV	5/28/2015
NV	7/29/2015	NV	12/13/2015	NV	10/7/2016	NV	1/13/2017
NV	5/24/2017	NV	11/24/2017	NV	8/10/2018	NV	5/3/2019
NV	6/4/2019	NV	1/11/2020	NV	2/22/2020	NV	4/22/2020
NV	8/5/2020	NV	12/17/2020	NV	6/13/2021	NV	7/7/2021
NV	11/3/2021	NY	4/15/2014	NY	7/28/2015	NY	10/23/2016
NY	6/17/2017	NY	8/14/2018	NY	7/25/2019	NY	8/24/2020
NY	11/3/2021	OH	3/17/2014	OH	7/29/2015	OH	10/5/2016
OH	6/30/2017	OH	6/28/2018	OH	5/22/2019	OH	5/3/2020
OH	5/28/2021	OK	3/17/2014	OK	3/26/2015	OK	7/29/2015
OK	12/13/2015	OK	2/24/2016	OK	10/3/2016	OK	1/12/2017
OK	4/22/2017	OK	6/8/2017	OK	8/6/2018	OK	10/9/2018
OK	5/3/2019	OK	8/13/2019	OK	1/10/2020	OK	2/25/2020
OK	4/15/2020	OK	6/1/2020	OK	7/29/2020	OK	9/19/2020
OK	2/8/2021	OK	11/3/2021	OK	12/8/2021	OR	3/17/2014
OR	4/16/2015	OR	7/29/2015	OR	12/13/2015	OR	10/26/2016
OR	1/13/2017	OR	6/6/2017	OR	9/13/2017	OR	7/26/2018
OR	8/27/2018	OR	5/8/2019	OR	6/25/2019	OR	1/7/2020
OR	2/25/2020	OR	7/17/2020	OR	2/5/2021	OR	7/9/2021
OR	11/3/2021	PA	5/1/2014	PA	7/29/2015	PA	3/8/2016
PA	8/4/2017	PA	8/24/2018	PA	8/22/2019	PA	7/2/2020
PA	7/16/2021	RI	3/19/2014	RI	3/6/2015	RI	7/29/2015
RI	12/13/2015	RI	10/3/2016	RI	1/18/2017	RI	6/8/2017
RI	7/17/2018	RI	8/27/2018	RI	5/10/2019	RI	8/16/2019
RI	12/4/2019	RI	2/28/2020	RI	8/15/2020	RI	10/1/2020
RI	3/16/2021	RI	7/7/2021	SC	10/22/2014	SC	4/9/2015
SC	10/31/2015	SC	2/11/2016	SC	10/3/2016	SC	2/24/2017
SC	8/31/2017	SC	4/4/2018	SC	9/11/2018	SC	9/5/2019
SC	12/18/2019	SC	2/21/2020	SC	6/4/2020	SC	9/16/2020
SC	5/21/2021	SC	11/3/2021	SD	3/20/2014	SD	7/29/2015
SD	10/6/2015	SD	12/13/2015	SD	2/15/2016	SD	9/28/2016
SD	2/20/2017	SD	6/16/2017	SD	6/8/2018	SD	5/11/2019
SD	5/23/2019	SD	11/26/2019	SD	2/18/2020	SD	2/25/2020
SD	8/19/2020	SD	1/22/2021	SD	7/6/2021	TN	3/18/2014
TN	2/23/2015	TN	7/30/2015	TN	9/11/2015	TN	10/2/2016
State	Election Date						

State	Election Date						
TN	2/17/2017	TN	7/6/2017	TN	7/19/2018	TN	5/10/2019
TN	7/5/2019	TN	2/20/2020	TN	3/31/2020	TN	5/20/2020
TN	10/18/2020	TN	3/29/2021	TN	7/19/2021	TX	3/19/2014
TX	7/31/2015	TX	9/30/2016	TX	8/21/2017	TX	6/29/2018
TX	5/24/2019	TX	5/24/2020	TX	6/12/2021	UT	3/20/2014
UT	3/6/2015	UT	7/29/2015	UT	8/7/2015	UT	12/13/2015
UT	10/3/2016	UT	1/25/2017	UT	6/2/2017	UT	8/22/2018
UT	8/27/2018	UT	5/3/2019	UT	8/3/2019	UT	2/27/2020
UT	4/7/2020	UT	8/11/2020	UT	9/30/2020	UT	3/26/2021
UT	7/8/2021	UT	11/3/2021	VA	3/14/2014	VA	4/18/2015
VA	7/31/2015	VA	9/30/2015	VA	12/14/2015	VA	9/28/2016
VA	3/29/2017	VA	10/7/2017	VA	8/27/2018	VA	8/30/2018
VA	2/25/2019	VA	5/11/2019	VA	6/17/2019	VA	9/16/2019
VA	3/1/2020	VA	8/15/2020	VA	9/9/2020	VA	5/28/2021
VA	7/10/2021	VA	11/3/2021	VA	1/4/2022	VT	3/19/2014
VT	3/20/2015	VT	7/31/2015	VT	12/13/2015	VT	2/11/2016
VT	9/21/2016	VT	2/14/2017	VT	5/31/2017	VT	6/12/2017
VT	6/11/2018	VT	8/27/2018	VT	5/12/2019	VT	8/22/2019
VT	2/12/2020	VT	2/27/2020	VT	8/3/2020	VT	9/11/2020
VT	5/28/2021	VT	7/4/2021	VT	11/3/2021	WA	3/19/2014
WA	5/5/2015	WA	7/29/2015	WA	9/10/2015	WA	12/14/2015
WA	10/28/2016	WA	12/23/2016	WA	5/24/2017	WA	9/16/2017
WA	12/19/2017	WA	7/15/2018	WA	5/12/2019	WA	5/22/2019
WA	10/15/2019	WA	12/20/2019	WA	3/3/2020	WA	4/20/2020
WA	7/22/2021	WI	3/18/2014	WI	3/3/2015	WI	7/31/2015
WI	9/8/2015	WI	10/3/2016	WI	3/30/2017	WI	6/2/2018
WI	5/10/2019	WI	6/23/2019	WI	3/3/2020	WI	3/21/2020
WI	5/31/2020	WI	9/29/2020	WI	2/24/2021	WI	11/3/2021
WV	4/16/2014	WV	3/16/2015	WV	7/29/2015	WV	9/10/2015
WV	12/14/2015	WV	9/28/2016	WV	4/3/2017	WV	9/20/2017
WV	8/14/2018	WV	11/6/2018	WV	5/12/2019	WV	9/5/2019
WV	2/27/2020	WV	3/29/2020	WV	8/15/2020	WV	10/6/2020
WV	3/11/2021	WV	7/9/2021	WY	3/19/2014	WY	3/30/2015
WY	7/29/2015	WY	8/6/2015	WY	12/13/2015	WY	9/28/2016
WY	2/2/2017	WY	7/17/2017	WY	7/26/2018	WY	8/27/2018
WY	5/12/2019	WY	9/6/2019	WY	3/2/2020	WY	8/14/2020
WY	10/9/2020	WY	1/13/2021	WY	7/6/2021		
State	Election Date						

### **A.1.2 Manual Data Collection**

We manually collect data on the number of elections administered each year between 2014 and 2024 from county websites for the 400 most populous counties. In total, we were able to collect at least 1 year's worth of data for 346 jurisdictions and full panel data for 315 counties. The correlation between the manually collected workload data and the L2 voter file method is  $r = .69$ .

## A.2 On-Cycle Elections and Number of Election Days Using Manual Data Collection

Table A.2 is identical to Table 1 in the main analysis, with manually collected election date data used instead of election date data calculated from the voter file. The results are similar albeit it slightly less consistent than those in the main analysis. Column 1 shows a noisy null relationship between jurisdictions in on-cycle states and yearly number of election days. When states switch to on-cycle, jurisdictions typically see a 1 election date reduction over each 4-year period (column 2). Column 3 implausibly estimates an increase in yearly election days in counties with municipalities that move on-cycle, although it is imprecisely estimated and not statistically significant. On the other hand, Florida counties see a nearly mean-size decrease in the yearly number of election days when all of their municipalities switch from off- to on-cycle (column 4). This is a statistically significant effect. Taken together, we interpret this as additional evidence that consolidating municipal elections on-cycle generally reduces the number of election days administrators conduct each year.

Table A.2: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Number of Election Days**

	Yearly Election Days			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
On-Cycle	0.098 (0.340)	-0.252 (0.186)		
Percent On-Cycle			1.006 (1.399)	-2.373 (0.757)
Years	11	11	7	5
Observations	3815	3815	198	141
Outcome Mean	2.86	2.86	2.59	3.06
Jurisdiction FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coverage	National	National	CA	FL

Robust standard errors clustered by state (columns 1 and 2) and jurisdiction (columns 3 and 4) in parentheses. On-cycle codings range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating all local elections are off-cycle, 1/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide whether to hold their elections off- or on-cycle but most hold them off-cycle, 2/3 indicating municipalities are allowed to decide but most hold elections on-cycle, and 1 indicating that all local elections are held on-cycle. Percent On-Cycle is the percentage of municipalities within an election jurisdiction (county) that hold their elections on-cycle. Yearly Election Days are calculated from manually collected data for the 400 most populous counties between 2014 and 2024.

## A.3 Additional Voter Experience Results

Table A.3 shows tabular results for the right panel of Figure 1 in the main analysis, estimating the effect of on-cycle elections on the average voters' wait time.

Table A.3: Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Confidence

	Very Confident Vote Counted Correctly			
	Own Vote (1)	County Vote (2)	State Vote (3)	National Vote (4)
On-Cycle	-0.043 (0.046)	-0.011 (0.031)	-0.017 (0.044)	0.075 (0.041)
Years	4	4	4	4
Observations	41717	46011	45986	45861
Outcome Mean	0.71	0.61	0.52	0.34
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity.

In Table 4 of the main analysis, we estimate the effect of jurisdictions switching to on-cycle municipal elections on voters' confidence that their own vote and their national vote is counted correctly. Table A.4 expands that analysis to include voters' county vote (column 2) and state vote (column 3). The results are similarly null.

Table A.4: **Effect of On-Cycle Elections on Voter Wait Times**

	No Wait (1)	Wait 0-10 min (2)	Wait 10-30 min (3)	Wait 30-60 min (4)	Wait > 1 hr (5)
On-Cycle	-0.104 (0.020)	-0.006 (0.058)	0.082 (0.018)	0.014 (0.026)	0.013 (0.014)
Years	4	4	4	4	4
Observations	27891	27891	27891	27891	27891
Outcome Mean	0.44	0.31	0.16	0.06	0.02
County FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses. Individual controls are age, gender, race, education, income, and party identity.