Disenfranchised and Defunded: *Shelby County v. Holder* and Racial Disparities in Government Finances

Noah McKinnie Braun*

October 2025

Click here for the most-recent version of this paper.

Abstract

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) caused dramatic changes in the political economy of the United States South, leading to greater equality between white and Black citizens across a range of political and economic outcomes. In the 2013 case *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down a core provision of the VRA that had enabled federal oversight of elections in states with a history of discriminatory voting practices, leading to a wave of voter suppression laws that decreased the political participation and political power of racial minorities across the South. Using data from the US Census Bureau, I test whether this decline in political power for minority citizens has increased racial inequality in state-level public spending. I find that municipal governments that were previously subject to preclearance and have larger Black populations saw decreases in state transfers since 2013, compared to similar municipalities with smaller Black populations.

*St Olaf College, Department of Economics. Email: braun13@stolaf.edu.

1 Introduction

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) is often regarded as the most consequential piece of civil rights legislation passed in United States history. The VRA prohibited any jurisdiction in the United States from implementing a "voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure ... in a manner which results in a denial or abridgement of the right ... to vote on account of race," specifically eliminating the use of literacy tests that had prevented Black Americans from registering to vote in much of the South. While most provisions of the VRA impacted the entire country, Section 4(b) contained a coverage formula that determined which states and political subdivisions would be covered by the special provisions in Sections 5-9, a formula that was written specifically to cover states with a history of racially discriminatory voting laws. The original formula covered any jurisdiction that,

1. As of November 1, 1964 used a "test or device" to restrict the opportunity to register and vote; and

2. Less than half of the jurisdiction's eligible citizens were registered to vote on November 1, 1964; or less than half of eligible citizens voted in the presidential election of November 1964

which covered the entire states of Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia, as well 39 counties in North Carolina.[1] This coverage formula was expanded in 1975 to protect "language minority groups", additionally covering the full states of Alaska, Arizona, and Texas, along with parts of California, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Michigan, New York, and South Dakota. The most impactful of the special provisions was Section 5, which required covered jurisdictions to receive federal approval before changing any electoral laws to ensure that they did not deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race.

[1]Three counties in Arizona, as well as one county in Hawaii and Idaho, were later found to also trigger preclearance.

This gave the Department of Justice the power to preempt racially discriminatory election laws and shifted the burden of proof of racial discrimination (or the lack thereof) from civil rights organizations to the states.

The Voting Rights Act led to an increase in Black political participation (Ang, 2019; Cascio and Washington, 2014; Filer et al., 1991; Fresh, 2018), the number of Black elected officials (Bernini et al., 2023b; Shah et al., 2013), and support for future civil rights legislation in Congress (Schuit and Rogowski, 2017). This increase in Black political power and representation directly impacted government policy, shifting state resources towards Black communities (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and reducing arrest rates for Black Americans by locally elected law enforcement officials (Facchini et al., 2025). Despite the success of the preclearance provision and the regular renewal of the coverage formula by Congress, it remained highly controversial and was invalidated by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) in 2013 in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Immediately following the *Shelby* ruling, a wave of new election laws that had previously been blocked by the Department of Justice, such as voter ID laws, were enacted by Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas.[2] This wave of restrictive voting laws was concentrated in Republican controlled states with large Black and Hispanic populations (Bentele and O'brien, 2013; Biggers and Hanmer, 2017) and increased the racial voting gap between Black and white Americans (Billings et al., 2024).

This paper studies whether the landmark ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder*, and the subsequent decline in Black political power, has impacted the level and distribution of public funds to local governments. To do so, I utilize variation in both the political jurisdictions that were covered by preclearance and which jurisdictions have larger Black population shares, as Black voters have been the main targets of voter suppression tactics in the South. I focus on an area of government spending that is easily geographically identifiable: state intergovernmental transfers to local governments. Utilizing a triple-difference approach, I test

[2]Virginia had also passed a voter ID law in February 2013 in anticipation of the *Shelby* ruling allowing for the law's implementation without need for federal approval.

whether there has been a decline in transfers is concentrated among jurisdictions that were previously covered by preclearance and have larger Black populations shares. Consistent with prior studies of the VRA and of *Shelby*, I focus my attention to states that were previously members of the Confederacy with similar histories of slavery, Black disenfranchisement, and opposition to federal civil rights legislation.

I find that municipal governments that were previously covered by preclearance and have an above-median Black population share within their own state experienced a 13.6% decrease in state transfers after preclearance was removed. This represents an economically significant decline in revenue, with state intergovernmental transfers accounting for approximately 19% of all municipal revenues in 2012. This affect is particularly concentrated in urban municipalities and is robust to both alternative samples of control municipalities and functional forms. By leveraging intrastate variation in the intensity of treatment, this paper helps fill a noted gap in the literature on how changes in electoral rules and voter turnout impact policy, specifically when the change in electoral rules is not full (dis)enfranchisement (Cantoni et al., 2025).

Alternatively, I find small, and not statistically significant, decreases in state transfers to counties and school districts. This result tracks changes in the functionality of local governments since the 1960s: county governments have increasingly acted as administrative arms of the state, providing federally and state-mandated services, while municipal governments have the freedom to focus on discretionary services. Because states rely on counties to administer essential services, state transfers to counties should be structurally resilient and less impacted by political conditions. Similarly, litigation in the state and federal courts has pushed states to create equitable funding formulas for schools based on average attendance, the number of at-risk students, the number of students with special needs, with adjustments made based off of local tax capacity (Dayton and Dupre, 2004). In contrast, state funding received by municipalities is more often entangled in state legislative budget battles (Frug and Barron, 2011). These factors combine to make municipal transfers uniquely vulnerable

to the changing political environment post-*Shelby*.

Adding to the evidence on the impact of *Shelby* on voter turnout, I find that previously covered counties with relatively larger Black populations experienced both a decline in turnout and in Democratic party vote share in post-*Shelby* presidential elections. While I don't see turnout rates by race, this result is consistent with prior work finding a decline in turnout among Black voters in counties with larger Black populations (Billings et al., 2024), and also suggests a possible *relative* decline in turnout among Black voters who support the Democratic party. I also gather data on the racial makeup of state legislators and find an increase in Black representation in state legislatures in both previously covered and not previously covered states post-*Shelby*, with a larger increase in states that were previously fully covered by preclearance. This result at the state level should be interpreted with caution, as I am unable to directly legislator demographics to the demographics of their district, and therefor have a limited number of state-level observations. But, it does suggest that the decline in turnout and reelection incentives is the likely driver of the decline in state transfers, as opposed to changes in racial representation (Henderson and Brooks, 2016; Jones and Walsh, 2018).

This paper contributes to the burgeoning literature studying the impact of the SCOTUS decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* in economics. Billings et al. (2024) provided the first evidence that the wave of voter suppression laws passed in the aftermath of the *Shelby* decision, documented by Komisarchik et al. (2025), increased the racial turnout gap in the states previously covered by Section 5. They find that the racial turnout gap has progressively increased since the *Shelby* decision and is concentrated in counties with larger Black and Hispanic populations, consistent with a theory of strategic implementation of voter suppression tactics (Epperly et al., 2020). Similarly, Ricca and Trebbi (2022) find an increase in the voter registration gap between minority and white citizens post-*Shelby*. While the *Shelby* decision has not returned voting in the United States to the pre-VRA landscape of mass disenfranchisment for racial minorities in the Southern states, it has led to significant

barriers to voting being passed and an increase in the racial turnout gap. I document that these changes in the aftermath of the *Shelby* decision have shifted government resources away from Black communities. Similarly, other papers have found that the *Shelby* ruling increased the Black-white wage gap in public sector jobs (Aneja and Avenancio-León, 2019a), the Black-white gap in mortgage applications, and increased hate crimes (Park et al., 2021).

This work most closely relates to the literature on the impact of voting rights on public spending. In particular, this work closely follows the work done by Cascio and Washington (2014) and Husted and Kenny (1997) documenting that the expansion of suffrage to Black Americans with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 significantly increased education spending in counties with more Black residents and an overall increase in spending on welfare, respectively. This shift in government priorities, driven by the expansion of voting rights to Black Southerners, had further downstream impacts on racial inequality, reducing Black-white wage (Aneja and Avenancio-León, 2019a) and education gaps (Jones and Shi, 2022), and additionally reducing Black infant mortality (Rushovich et al., 2024) and instances of political violence (Lacroix, 2023). Similarly, the expansion of suffrage to Black men during Reconstruction led to over 1300 Black Southerners gaining public office (Logan, 2020), and subsequently led to higher levels of taxation and public expenditure, particularly on education (Logan, 2020; Jones and Schmick, 2025). The expansion of suffrage to white women in the early 20th century coincided with an increase in state expenditures (Lott and Kenny, 1999) and increased education spending in white schools (Carruthers and Wanamaker, 2015). My work shares a parallel to these prior periods in US history, though representing regression with respect to political equality.

The next section outlines the theoretical motivation for the effects found in this paper, along with a historical summary of the political economy of the US South. Section 3 outlines the data I use. Section 4 outlines my empirical strategy. Sections 5 and 6 include my results on government transfers and political outcomes, respectively. Section 7 concludes.

2 The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act

The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 represented both a radical increase in federal involvement in elections and a key victory in the fight to create an interracial democracy in the United States. For the first time since the violent overthrow of the Reconstruction governments, Black Americans would be able to fully exercise their political rights. The history of Reconstruction, the violence of the Redemption era and Jim Crow, and the suppression of Black rights that necessitated federal intervention, are discussed further in the Appendix.

Although independent systems of disenfranchisement varied from state to state across the South, by the mid-20th century literacy tests and threats of violence remained as the two most significant barriers to voting for Black Southerners. While poll taxes had declined in their impact[3], the literacy test represented an often impenetrable barrier for Black voters in the seven Southern states that adopted them: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Title 1 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 barred the unequal application of voter registration requirements, such as literacy tests, but the test's local administration allowed white registrars to fail potential Black voters, regardless of their level of literacy or education. Threats of violence, epitomized by the murders of deacon Jimmie Lee Jackson and pastor James Reeb, and the violent attack by state troopers on unarmed protesters attempting to cross Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in March of 1965, haunted Black Southerners who attempted to exercise their right to vote.[4] And it was these acts of violence that forced President Lyndon Johnson to instruct his Attorney General, Nicholas Katzenbach, to draft "the goddamndest, toughest voting rights act that you can."

On March 17, 1965, a mere 10 days after Bloody Sunday, the Voting Rights Act of

[3]The passage of the 24th Amendment in 1964 outlawed poll taxes in all federal elections, though they were still being enforced in Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia for state elections.

[4]Intimidation and economic sanction were also common practices, in part displacing the prior usage of lynching as a form of social control (DeFina and Hannon, 2011). Blacks who attempted to register to vote 1960 in Madison Parish, Louisiana were referred to the sheriff. In Tennessee, the names of members of the Negro Civil & Welfare League were circulated and subsequently denied credit by local merchants and evicted from their land (on Civil Rights, 1961).

1965 was introduced, and was soon signed into law on August 6th. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act outlawed the use of literacy tests and the implementation of any other policy that would deny the right to vote on account of race. Section 4(b) laid out a coverage formula that determined which states and political subdivisions would be covered by additional special provisions, initially covering the entire states of Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississipi, South Carolina, Virginia, and parts of North Carolina. Section 5 required that these covered jurisdictions receive federal approval, commonly referred to as "preclearance," before implementing new electoral laws. Sections 6 through 8 authorized the president to send federal examiners to the South to help with the registration of the thousands of Black citizens who had previously been disenfranchised.[5] Section 10 stipulated that poll taxes interfered with the right to vote and ordered the Department of Justice to sue Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia to abolish their poll taxes.[6]

The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 represented a political revolution within the United States. The use of federal officials to ensure Black enfranchisement, as well as restricting future changes to election laws for the majority of the former confederacy, upended the former system of political power and is referred to by some as the "Second Reconstruction" (Berman, 2015). Preclearance in particular stands out as the key component to the success of the Voting Rights Act, and was informed by previous attempts to extend civil rights to Black Southerners. Without preclearance, the Department of Justice would have to sue individual counties and states that pass racially discriminatory voting laws. These lawsuits could take many years, allowing elections to take place with discriminatory voting laws in place while the case works its way through the courts, and overwhelm the resources of the Attorney General.[7] Jurisdictions covered by preclearance saw significant increases in

[5]Federal examiners were sent 24 counties in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi in the summer of 1965, states in which only 2-10% of Black citizens were registered to vote (May, 2013).

[6]Federal courts struck down poll taxes in Texas (*United States v. State of Texas*, February 1966) and Alabama (*United States v. State of Alabama*, March 1966), and the March 1966 Supreme Court case, *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections*, banned the use of poll taxes in state elections nationwide.

[7]Both the slow implementation of the landmark school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the history of the all-white primary in Texas were key examples for the necessity of preclearance. See Marshall (1957) for a review of how the all-white primary persisted in Texas for almost two decades after

Black voter registration (Ang, 2019; Cascio and Washington, 2014; Fresh, 2018), and quickly; by May 1966, federal examiners had registered 235,348 new voters in Alabama, almost half of all eligible Black Alabamians (May, 2013), and Black voter registration reached 57% in Alabama and almost 60% in Mississippi by 1968 (Keyssar, 2009).[8] These same jurisdictions began to elect Blacks as their political officials at higher rates (Bernini et al., 2023a; Shah et al., 2013), including prominent veterans of the Civil Rights Movement Andrew Young and John Lewis. This increase in political power for Black citizens also improved their economic well-being, increasing equity in education spending (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and reducing Black-white education gaps (Jones and Shi, 2022). The Black-white wage gap was reduced (Aneja and Avenancio-Leon, 2019b), along with the infant mortality gap (Rushovich et al., 2024) and the gap in arrest rates (Facchini et al., 2025).

While the Voting Rights Act faced pushback from Southern politicians, it remained in force and was expanded in the late 20th century. This included an amenmdent passed in 1975 to expand coverage of the special provisions to "language minorities", which mandated multilingual election assistance and ballots if certain population thresholds were met.[9] The implementation of the language minority provisions saw a subsequent increase in Latino voter registration and Asian American turnout in protected counties (Fraga and Merseth, 2016) and an increase in Latino political representation on school boards. Increased political power for language minority voters also led to a reallocation of state educational funds to counties covered by the language provisions, causing increases in high school graduation rates and income levels (Harrison and Gamino, 2025).

The Voting Rights Act subsequently had its special provisions extended in 1982, 1992, and 2006, all during Republican administrations. While Republican politicians largely sup-

being initially ruled to violate the 14th amendment in *Nixon v. Herndon* (1927).

[8]While Black voter registration increased significantly in counties covered by preclearance, voter registration and turnout rates for Black voters were lower than white voters in every presidential election until 2012.

[9]Jurisdictions would be covered if the number of US citizens of voting age of a single language group was more than 10,000 people or more than five percent of all voting age citizens. The provisions also included separate qualifications for American Indians and Alaskan Natives living on reservations, a group of voters who still face significant barriers to voting (Jones and Grange, 2024).

ported the extension of the VRA due to political concerns, there was strong racial backlash against the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. The Democratic party's support for Civil Rights, beginning with President John F. Kennedy's proposal for legislation barring discrimination in public accommodations in the Spring of 1963, caused the defection of racially conservative white Southerners from the Democratic party (Kuziemko and Washington, 2018). Ang (2019) finds both an increase in minority political participation and a *decrease* in Democratic support in areas subject to federal oversight.[10] Similarly, Bernini et al. (2023a) find that federal preclearance, and the associated increase in Black political power, mobilized white voters and led to a long-run increase in hate crimes committed by white Southerners against Blacks. Southern officials also took quick action to diminish the value of Black votes by gerrymandering and changing county and city boundaries (Keyssar, 2009), eliminating elected positions to prevent Blacks from attaining political office (Komisarchik, 2018), and implementing at-large elections to prevent a Black minority from gaining political representation (Trebbi et al., 2008).

Part of this backlash was a growing conservative legal movement that took sharp aim at the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. One prominent lawyer within this movement, John Roberts, would go on to author the majority opinion in the 2013 case, *Shelby County v. Holder*, invalidating the coverage formula used to enforce the preclearance provisions of the VRA (Daley, 2023). Roberts' opinion argued that the continuously renewed coverage formula was no longer "grounded in current conditions" due to the advances that Black voters had made towards parity in voter registration and ascension to elected office. This opened the door for the states and counties previously restricted by preclearance to pass election laws that would previously have been ruled as a violation of the VRA, which they did en masse. The states that had previously imposed poll taxes, literacy tests, and instituted white primaries, immediately passed voter ID laws (Komisarchik et al., 2025) and restricted early voting. Two states, South Carolina and Texas,

[10]While this shift happened rapidly at the Presidential level, it wasn't until after the 1994 midterm election that the Republican party held the majority of Southern congressional seats.

passed the same voter ID laws that had been prevented by the Department of Justice when being reviewed under the preclearance provision two years prior. Previously covered states purged voters from registration rolls, including in ways that violated the National Voter Registration Act (Brater et al., 2018). The US Supreme Court has subsequently declined to intervene in protecting voting rights in the years since, including allowing voters to be illegally and incorrectly purged from the Virginia voter rolls in the weeks prior to the 2024 election.[11]

While these actions taken post-*Shelby* point towards a reversion towards a Southern political economy more reminiscent of the pre-VRA era, the empirical evidence paints a less clear picture. Voter ID laws, one of the most popular and controversial voting laws passed in the aftermath *Shelby*, drew wide-spread media attention due to their disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic voters, who are less likely to possess valid government IDs (Ansolabehere and Hersh, 2017; Barreto et al., 2009, 2019; Fraga and Miller, 2022). While multiple studies have found that these laws decrease turnout among voters who lack valid ID (Esposito et al., 2019; Hood III and Bullock III, 2012; Hood III and Buchanan, 2020), even having long-run effects after laws are struck down by the courts (Grimmer and Yoder, 2021), the largest nationwide study on voter ID laws found that states that had adopted voter ID laws saw no decrease in aggregate turnout and no increase in the racial turnout gap (Cantoni and Pons, 2021).

Although pre-VRA voting restrictions, such as the literacy test and political violence, were highly effective at preventing Black Americans from registering to vote, contemporary voting restrictions commonly have effect sizes similar to those of campaign advertisements (Grimmer and Hersh, 2024). It could therefore be argued that we would not expect the *Shelby* decision to have a significant impact on the political economy of the US South, despite evidence that decreasing the availability of convenience voting (Braun and Jones,

[11] https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/supreme-court-helps-virginia-illegally-purge-voters

2023), decreasing the number of poll workers and polling sites (Coll et al., 2024)[12], increased scrutiny of mail-in ballots (Miller et al., 2024), and increases in voter purges (Brater et al., 2018; Feder and Miller, 2020) have been implemented post-*Shelby* and increase both the cost of voting and racial voting gaps. There is also a relative dearth of strong empirical evidence of the policy effects of smaller voting reforms, creating further uncertainty (Cantoni et al., 2025).

More recent research on the impact of *Shelby* has established that the removal of preclearance from the South did increase racial inequality on some measures. Billings et al. (2024) find a significant increase in the Black-white turnout gap in previously covered southern counties, concentrated in counties with larger Black populations. Morris and Miller (2024) similarly find an increase in the racial turnout gap in states previously covered by Section preclearance that is concentrated in counties where voting policies had previously been blocked by preclearance. This increase in the voter turnout gap provides a explanation for downstream impacts on the racial wage gap (Aneja and Avenancio-León, 2019a) and racial gap in home ownership (Park et al., 2021). Park et al. (2021) additionally find an increase in racial hate crimes committed by white Southerners against Black Southerners in previously covered jurisdictions after the *Shelby* decision. This paper is the first, to my knowledge, to explicitly study the impact of the *Shelby* decision, and the subsequent decrease in Black political power, on government policy.

3 Data

This paper is interested in understanding how the increase in the Black-white turnout gap induced by *Shelby* has impacted the distribution of government spending by the Southern states. To do so, I focus on intergovernmental transfers, a geographically identifiable source

[12]Cantoni (2020) and Bagwe et al. (2022) find that increased distance to a voter's polling places causally decreases their likelihood of voting. Decreasing the number of polling places should therefore decrease turnout by increasing distance to polling places and increasing wait times, which are disproportionately higher for non-white voters (Chen et al., 2022; Cottrell et al., 2021).

of government spending, allowing me to test the hypothesis that the decline in Black turnout has shifted political power, and thus government resources, away from Black communities. I will additionally validate this relationship by testing for changes in voter turnout in counties that were impacted by the *Shelby* decision and have larger Black populations.

In my analysis, a local jurisdiction counts as "treated" if it was subject to additional federal oversight under Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act as of 2013, using data from the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. To ensure a proper comparison group of states with similar political cultures and histories, I restrict my main analysis to states of the former Confederacy, though then expand to cover the entire South, as defined by the Census Bureau, and all states that border "treated" states. Figure 1 shows which jurisdictions in the former Confederacy were covered by preclearance as of 2013. Figure A.1 shows what preclearnace coverage looked like for the entire continental United States.

3.1 Data on State Transfers

Data on intergovernmental transfers comes from the Census of Governments (COG), which collects tax and expenditure data for all levels of government. The COG does a complete census of government finances for all state and local governments every 5-years (those years ending in a 2 or a 7) and a sample of local governments in all other years. The data collected includes the number of employees and payroll amounts, along with detailed information on government finances, including spending and revenue by category. This makes the amount of intergovernmental transfers received by a specific local government a geographically identifiable measure of state government spending, making it suitable for a test of changing electoral incentives in the post-*Shelby* South. This data is cleaned and made publicly available by Pierson et al. (2015) as part of the "Government Finance Database".[13] My main results utilize the three full sample years before the *Shelby County v. Holder* ruling, 2002, 2007 and 2012, and the two full sample years following the ruling, 2017 and 2022.

[13]https://my.willamette.edu/site/mba/public-datasets

The main outcome variable is per-capita transfers received from state governments,[14] which remains an important revenue source for local governments, accounting for approximately 19% of all municipal revenue in 2012. Sub-national government spending is the main source of funding for local public goods, with state and local expenditures accounting for 76% of government support for public transportation, 81% of government support for policing, and 92% of government support for public K-12 education.

3.2 Other Municipal Characteristics

To compare how transfers and voter behavior changed within individual states with respect to the racial composition of local jurisdictions, I merge my previous data sources with demographic data from the 2010 Full Count Census and the 2010-2014 American Community Survey. Specifically, I use the racial and ethnic composition, the share of residents who live in an urban area, and the share of the population that is under 18. I use the racial composition to compare localities with varying Black population shares. By doing so, I compare relative changes in state transfers to counties with relatively larger and smaller Black population shares, within a given state. I also use the educational attainment, the unemployment rate, and poverty rate of each jurisdiction as measured in the 2010-2014 ACS estimates as control variables. These variables were gathered from the IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System (Manson et al., 2024).

Table 1 summarizes the key municipal variables used in my analysis, split by preclearance coverage. Previously covered municipalities have larger Black and Hispanic populations than non-covered municipalities. They additionally differ in terms of economic characteristics, with previously covered counties having lower education levels and higher levels of poverty. Table A.1 additionally shows the same set of variables, but split by both preclearance coverage and whether they have an above/below median Black population share.

While counties receive larger transfers on average, these transfers are also structurally

[14]The COG also estimates population within a municipality during each year it is sampled, limiting concerns about migration driving my results.

stable and less likely to be influenced by changes in state politics. Figure A.2 plots the within-unit variation in log per-capita state transfers for county and municipal governments between 1992-2012, the twenty years period before the *Shelby* decision. Transfers to individual counties exhibit less variance over time than transfers to municipalities, highlighting the higher level of discretion that state governments have for allocating transfers to municipal governments.

My empirical strategy, detailed in Section 4, accounts for these observable differences, as well as other potential sources of unobserved heterogeneity. To directly address potential bias derived from differences across treated units, I later restrict my sample to municipalities that have common support in their Black population share and their estimated likelihood of being covered by the preclearance provision.

3.3 Political Data

Additionally, I want to test for the impact of the *Shelby* decision on voter turnout and political representation. For measuring changes in voter turnout and party vote share, I use data from the MIT Election Data and Science on the turnout in presidential elections, measured at the county level (Data and Lab, 2018). To test for changes in racial representation within state legislators, I gather data from multiple sources. The first is the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, as cited in King-Meadows and Schaller (2007), which includes data on the number of Black state legislators from 1984-2001. For my post-*Shelby* measures, I use data from both the National Conference of State Legislatures and data drawn from official state government websites.

4 Empirical Strategy

To measure the impact of the *Shelby* decision on the distribution of government transfers, I estimate the following triple difference equation,

$$\ln(y_{ist}) = \beta \cdot Cov_i \times Post_t \times AMB_{is} + \\ \alpha \cdot AMB_{is} \times Post_t + \mu \cdot Cov_i \times Post_t + \gamma_{st} + \lambda_i + \epsilon_{ist} \tag{1}$$

where y_{ist} is the real per capita state intergovernmental transfers to jurisdiction i, in state s, in year t. Cov_i is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if jurisdiction i was covered by the pre-clearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act before the *Shelby County v. Holder* ruling, and $Post_t$ takes a value of 1 for all years after the *Shelby* ruling. To test for changes in intergovernmental transfers across counties with differential racial compositions, AMB_{is} is a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the Black share of the population in jurisdiction i is above the median share for all jurisdictions in state s. This means that my coefficient of interest, β, is capturing relative changes in transfers between jurisdictions in the top-half of the distribution for black population share and jurisdictions in the bottom half of the distribution. This design allows to explicitly test for intra-state changes in transfers based on the racial composition of receiving counties. Standard errors are clustered at the state-level, as part of my treatment variable is assigned at the state level and to allow for correlation of errors between observations within the same state.

I also include state-by-year fixed effects, γ_{st}, which account for time-varying trends for each individual state, and individual municipality fixed effects, λ_i, which will capture time-invariant characteristics of each municipality. The state-by-year fixed effects help ensure that I am only capturing variation driven by changes within individual state budgets. This equation will compare the change in intergovernmental transfers between municipalities that have a relatively large Black population share to those with a relatively small Black population share, between municipalities that were previously covered by preclearance to those not previously covered by preclearance, before and after the *Shelby* ruling. The estimate of β will be causally identified if, in the absence of the *Shelby* decision, real per capita sate transfers would have grown at the same rate in covered and non-covered area that fall within

the same half of the distribution of Black share.

The proposed causal mechanism underlying this shift is that many of the election reforms passed since 2013, such as voter ID laws, the removal of polling places, and restrictions on early voting, would have been stopped by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act *and* have disproportionately impact Black voters. The evidence of preclearance being a binding constraint is significant, both anecdotally with respect to the timing of the passage of large election reforms laws and in actions taken by the Department of Justice to block the implementation of voter ID laws in South Carolina and Texas in 2011. The disproportionate impact of individual laws on Black voters has been established for voter ID laws and restrictions on early voting, as well as in an overall increase in the Black-white turnout gap post-2013.

Identification within this triple-difference setup is not contingent on random assignment, but does rely on the parallel trends assumption. While there is no way to prove the existence of parallel trends in the counterfactual, I am able to estimate the following event study which provides evidence of parallel trends in the pre-period:

$$y_{ist} = \sum_{t \neq 2012} \beta_t \cdot Cov_i \times year_t \times AMB_{is} + \sum_{t \neq 2012} \alpha_t \cdot AMB_{is} \times year_t + \sum_{t \neq 2012} \mu_j \times Cov_i \times year_t + \gamma_{st} + \lambda_i + \epsilon_{ist} \tag{2}$$

In the event study format, $year_t$ is a year indicator, with 2012, the year prior to the *Shelby* decision, serving as the base year. The estimates of β_t for $t < 2012$ allow me to test the parallel trends assumption between treatment and control groups. As shown below, these estimates are all close to zero and insignificant, both with and without controls and across multiple functional forms.

To provide further evidence of this causal mechanism, I additionally estimate an event study design similar to 2, but replaces the logged real per capita state intergovernmental

transfers with the turnout share and Democratic party vote share in Presidential elections:

$$y_{cst} = \sum_{t \neq 2012} \beta_t \cdot Cov_c \times election_t \times AMB_{cs} + \sum_{t \neq 2012} \alpha_t \cdot AMB_{cs} \times year_t + \sum_{t \neq 2012} \mu_j \times Cov_c \times year_t + \gamma_{st} + \lambda_c + \epsilon_{cst} \tag{3}$$

In this regression, $election_t$ represents an indicator variable that is equal to 1 for each election year in the sample, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020, and 0 otherwise. As a county's citizen voting-age population is inconsistently available between 2004 and 2020, I define turnout share as the total number of votes in county c in year t divided by the over-18 population of county c in year t, $y_{cst} \frac{votes_{cst}}{population_{cst}}$. The over-18 population is taken from the 2000, 2010, and 2020 full-count census and linearly interpolated for the 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 elections. Democratic party vote share is defined as the number of votes cast for the Democratic party candidate in county c in year t divided by the total number of votes cast for any presidential candidate in county c in year t, $y = \frac{Demvotes_{cst}}{Totalvotes_{cst}}$.

5 State Transfers

5.1 Baseline Results

Figure 2 depicts the event study coefficients of interest and the confidence intervals from estimating equation 2 on state transfers, showing a decline in transfers to municipalities with an above-average Black population share that were previously covered by preclearance in 2017 and 2022. 2012, the year before the preclearance formula was invalidated, serves as the baseline. The negative effect increases from 2017 to 2022, and the pre-period values for 2002 and 2007 are both statistically insignificant and close to zero. This finding tracks that of Billings et al. (2024), who find that the negative impact of Black voter turnout increases between 2014 to 2018, and Park et al. (2021) who find that the negative effect grew between

the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. This result is also shown to be robust to weighting observations by their logged population, as measured by the Census of Governments.

The triple-difference results from estimating equation 1 across different model specifications are summarized in Table 2. Column (1) utilizes only municipality and year fixed effects, while column (2) adds state-by-year fixed effects. Columns (3) and (4) add additional race controls and demographic controls, respectively. Column (5) includes all fixed effects and control variables and additionally weights municipalities by the log of their population. The estimate of β associated with the triple interaction term is negative and statistically significant across all specifications, with the estimated effect size ranging from a 13.65-14.4% decrease in transfers across columns (2)-(5).

I additionally reestimate equations 1 and 2 utilizing a continuous triple-difference approach, replacing the binary variable AMB_{is} with the Black population share for each municipality as a continuous variable. Table 3 summarizes the triple-difference results across different specifications, and figure 3 displays the β coefficients and standard errors from the triple interaction in the event study. Column (1) of table 3 uses only municipality and year fixed effects, with column (2) adding state-by-year fixed effects. The addition of state-by-year fixed effects causes the estimated effect to shrink, but also allows for more precise estimation. Columns (3) and (4) again add additional municipality controls, with column (5) adding population weights. Figure 3 shows a delayed decrease in transfers compared to figure 2, only beginning in 2022.

5.2 Robustness Checks

This section showcases heterogeneity in my results based on the urban rural divide and demonstrates that my baseline results are robust to alternative specifications. Table 4 explores heterogeneity in my results. Column (1) reproduces column (4) from table 2, and columns (2)-(4) show that this result is not driven by differences in population size. Column (2) adds the logged population of the municipality as a control, while columns (3) and (4)

restrict to only municipalities with a population of over 1,000 and under 100,000 respectively. Neither result is statistically significantly different form column (1), suggesting my results are not driven by particularly large or small municipalities. Column (5) restricts to only municipalities that are denoted as 100% rural in the 2010 Census, and are both significantly smaller than my main result and no longer statistically significant. In contrast, column (6) restricts to only municipalities that are at least 50% urban in the 2010 Census, showing a slightly larger effect. This is consistent with the argument that voter suppression tactics, and therefore the corresponding decline in public spending, are likely to be strategically targeted towards areas they will have the largest effect.

Table 5 includes my sensitivity tests for my main specification. Column (1) again replicates my main result, with column (2) now restricting to only municipalities where Blacks are the largest non-white group. Column (3) removes municipalities where the majority of the population identifies as Black, showing that majority white municipalities with significant Black populations are being negatively impacted. Columns (4)-(6) then restrict to municipalities with common support to ensure that results are not driven by underlying differences in municipal characteristics between areas that were and were not previously covered by preclearance. As previously covered areas have larger Black population shares, column (4) drops municipalities with a Black population share below the 10th percentile of the non-preclearance sample and above the 90th percentile of the preclearance sample. Column (5) trims the sample to include only municipalities where there is common support in the propensity to have been covered by preclearance. Column (6) uses the propensity scores both to trim the sample and as the regression weights.[15] Results maintain significance at at least the 10% level across all specifications.

Additional robustness checks are included in the appendix and listed below. Figure A.3 replicates the results of column (4) in table 2, dropping one state at a time in each regression.

[15]Propensity scores are estimated using a logit regression of an indicator for preclearance coverage on 2010 Black population share, 2010 Hispanic population share, the 2010 urban share, and the 2010 poverty rate. Municipalities in column (6) are weighted according to their probability of having been covered by preclearance.

Estimates are stable and maintain statistical significance across these specifications, indicating that my result is not driven by a single state within my sample. Figure A.4 similarly does this for the results in table 3.

While the *Shelby* setting does not involve staggered timing, Ortiz-Villavicencio and Sant'Anna (2025) establish that the common implementations of triple-difference, such as taking the difference between two DiDs or three-way fixed effects regressions, can lead to biased results if the parallel trends assumption conditions on the inclusion of covariates. I therefore re-run the event study equation detailed in equation 2 and summarized in figure 2, but exclude all covariates aside from the main triple-interaction, the associated double-interactions, and fixed effects necessary for identification. The results are plotted in figure A.5, with all pre-2012 β values being close to zero and statistically insignificant.

Table A.3 expands the set of control states beyond the former Confederacy, including all states that border a treated municipality and the entire South region as defined by the US Census Bureau. Results are marginally weaker while maintaining statistical significance.

While the log-linear regression approach is commonly used in the Voting Rights Act literature,[16] it has been shown that heteroskedasticity may undermine results in the log-linear framework, with the Poisson pseudomaximum likelihood serving as an alternative solution (Manning and Mullahy, 2001; Silva and Tenreyro, 2006). As such, table A.2 replicates my main results using the PPML estimator with fixed effects proposed by Correia et al. (2020).

I test the robustness of my main result to other cutoffs of the racial/ethnic composition of municipalities. While I use the median value within a given state in the main analysis to determine my binary treatment variable, A.6 plots the β coefficient and corresponding standard errors for a version of equation 1 that uses quartiles, with quartile 1 representing the municipalities with the lowest Black population share within their state. In table A.4, I

[16]Cascio and Washington (2014) use the log-linear model to estimate the impact of the passage of the VRA on state transfers; Aneja and Avenancio-Leon (2019b) and Aneja and Avenancio-León (2019a) use the log-linear model to estimate the effect of the passage of the VRA and of *Shelby* on wages, respectively; Park et al. (2021) use the log-linear model to estimate the impact of *Shelby* on mortgage applications and approvals by race.

also replicate the main results from table 2 using 10% Black population share, the median Black population share for all municipalities in my main sample, as the cutoff for treatment in place of the within-state median value.

5.3 Falsification Tests

Additionally, we can compare the impact of the *Shelby* decision on transfers to municipalities, which are more exposed to political influence, to the impact on transfers to county governments, which should be structurally resilient due to their administrative role within the federal system. Table 7 shows the result of running equation 1 on county level data, where there is no effect of the *Shelby* decision on transfers to counties with above-median Black population shares. Table A.5 similarly tests for changes in transfers to counties using Black population share as a continuous variable, finding a null result.

This result makes sense within the larger political context of the United States South, and tracks with changes in government spending since the 1960's. The most significant change in intergovernmental transfers is the rise of school funding formulas, which require states to provide education funding based on variables such as the number of full-time students, the number of at-risk, special education, or exceptional students students, with adjustments for local tax capacity. From 2002-2017, over 80% of all state transfers to county governments were for education purposes, money that is largely distributed via funding formulas.[17] While discriminatory changes in education funding may take place in the future, it would require states to legislate in opposition to State Supreme Court rulings, which have broadly ruled that education is a right for all state residents and that states have an affirmative duty to provide it (Heise, 1994). This is in sharp contrast to when the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965, when education funding in the South was highly unequal between counties with larger and smaller Black populations, as highlighted by Cascio and Washington (2014).

Due to the administrative role of county governments, focusing on non-educational fund-

[17]The Census of Governments did not publish data on the category of intergovernmental transfers for 2022.

ing does not significantly change the intuition or empirical results. Table A.6 again shows the output of a triple-difference regression comparing counties with above vs below median Black population shares, that were covered vs not covered by preclearance, before vs after the *Shelby* decision, but on non-educational state transfers. Results are not statistically significant and are imprecisely estimated.

6 Mechanisms

6.1 Voter Turnout

I now turn to data on voting at the county level to connect the impact of the *Shelby* decision and the declining political power of Black southerners. Panel A.7a of Figure A.7 plots the coefficients from equation (2) taking turnout share as its outcome. Figure A.7 documents a decline in turnout of .66-0.72 percentage points in counties previously covered by the preclearance provisions of the VRA, that have an above median Black population share within their state, in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. While this does not explicitly show a change in voting by race, it does show a decline in political participation in areas that were most likely to be targeted for voter suppression tactics post-*Shelby* (Billings et al., 2024). This establishes the causal link between the end of preclearance and the decline in transfers to these counties established in the previous section. While prior work has established it is likely that a decline in turnout among Black voters is the driving force behind this result, even if the decline in turnout is race neutral it would still lead to a widening of the racial gap in government spending due to the distributional shift in government transfers.

Panel A.7b plots coefficients from the same event study model but takes Democratic vote share as its outcome. While the estimate in 2020 is noisy and statistically indistinguishable from 0, both coefficients in the post-*Shelby* period indicate a decline in Democratic vote share of between 1.33-1.48 percentage points. As Black voters in the US overwhelmingly support the Democratic party, this can be taken as another piece of suggestive evidence that

the decline in turnout in Panel A.7a is driven by a decline in turnout among Black voters. It could also provide an alternative hypothesis for the decline in transfers going towards Black counties: a decline in Democratic political power in the US South and a decline in racial representation in southern legislators. The alliance between Black voters and the Democratic party was solidified during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and as such a decline in Democratic political power could lead a shift in government resources away from Black Americans, regardless of voter turnout. Similarly, a decline in Democratic political power could lead to a reduction in Black political representation in state legislators, further eroding Black political power (Griffin, 2014).

6.2 Racial Representation

Despite significant progress in the 21st century, descriptive representation for non-white racial minorities in United States political offices has remained disproportionately low. While the 118th Congress has the largest share of non-white members in history, members of Congress are still far more likely than the overall U.S. population to be non-Hispanic White (75% vs. 59%), a a gap that is about as wide as it was in 1981.[18] Part of the reason this gap remains is that the vast majority (80%) of racial and ethnic minority members in the 118th congress are members of the Democratic Party. It therefore stands to reason that a decline in Democratic political power in the US South, particularly if driven by a decline in Black turnout, may increase this racial representation gap.

To test this, I adopt a version of the underrepresentation measure used by Ricca and Trebbi (2022) in their study of minority representation in US cities,

$$u_{st} = p_{st} - c_{st} \tag{4}$$

where p is the Black share of the state population and c is the Black share of the state

[18] https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/01/09/u-s-congress-continues-to-grow-in-racial-ethnic-diversity/

legislature. A positive value for u_{st} represent underrepresentation while a negative value represents relative overrepresentation for Black voters in their state. As data on the racial makeup of state legislators is not consistently available during the time period I study, I estimate a simple long-difference equation,

$$u_{s,2000} - u_{s,t} = \beta \cdot Cov_s \tag{5}$$

which regresses the change in a state's underrepresentation measure between 2000 and either the 2015, 2020, or 2023 underrepresentation measure, on an indicator variable, Cov_s which is equal to 1 if the entire state was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the VRA. A positive coefficient on β would represent a relative closing of the underrepresentation gap in previously covered states, while a negative coefficient would represent a widening of the gap.

Table 6 shows the coefficients from the three regressions. These results suggest that in spite of a decline in turnout and Democratic vote shares in more Black counties, the underrepresentation gap has not widened in previously covered states, relatively to previously uncovered states that were members of the former Confederacy. The closest coefficient to significance is in column 3, which would actually suggest that the underrepresentation gap has closed by relatively *more* in previously covered states.

7 Conclusion

On June 25th, 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the preclearance coverage formula of the Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional, rolling back one of the most important victories for civil rights in US history. The majority opinion, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, argued that the country "has changed," with the coverage formula previously in place bearing, "... no logical relationship to the present day." This was in spite of the ample evidence, considered by Congress in their decision to re-authorize the

preclearance coverage formula in 2006, suggesting that covered localities were still attempting to limit Black political power. While these methods often consisted of "second-generation barriers," that are subtler and less effective than poll taxes, literacy tests, and lynchings, they still acted to restrict minority voter power and undermine our democratic system. These practices have not gone away in the since 2013, as evidenced by the expansion of restrictive voting laws across the South and Virginia's removal of 1,600 voters from voter rolls less than 90 days before the 2024 election.

The *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg compared to, "... throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet," immediately led to a wave of discriminatory voting laws that had previously been prevented by preclearance, leading to a widening of the Black-white voting gap across the South. I test whether this decline in Black political power has shifted state resources away from localities with larger Black populations that were previously covered by the preclearance formula, compared to other localities within the former Confederacy. Using a triple-difference design, I demonstrate that transfers to these municipalities declined, suggesting that the same communities being harmed by suppressive voting laws are now receiving fewer state resources. This result is robust to a wide-range of alternative specifications and is consistent with prior evidence on the effects of (dis)enfranchisment on government spending.

My findings highlight that the United States has regressed from the goal of both political and economic equality for all of its citizens, and added additional evidence to that smaller reforms to our electoral system can have downstream impacts on public policy. Further research on the downstream impacts of restrictive voting laws is still needed, ideally across temporal and geographic contexts. Racial inequality in the United States, along with the racially divided nature of partisan politics, distinguish the US from other settings where smaller reforms may have more limited impacts. The impact of these reforms in the 21st century US is also different than earlier time periods, where fewer protections for minority citizens existed. Despite the changes that the United States has seen since the 1960's, the

necessity of protecting the right to vote for all citizens has remained.

References

Anderson, Carol. 2018. *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Aneja, Abhay P, and Carlos F Avenancio-León. 2019a. "Disenfranchisement and Economic Inequality: Downstream Effects of Shelby County v. Holder." In *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, Volume 109. 161–65.

Aneja, Abhay P, and Carlos F Avenancio-Leon. 2019b. "The effect of political power on labor market inequality: Evidence from the 1965 Voting Rights Act." *Unpublished working paper*.

Ang, Desmond. 2019. "Do 40-year-old facts still matter? Long-run effects of federal oversight under the Voting Rights Act." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 11 (3): 1–53.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Eitan D Hersh. 2017. "ADGN: An Algorithm for Record Linkage Using Address, Date of Birth, Gender, and Name." *Statistics and Public Policy* 4 (1): 1–10.

Bagwe, Gaurav, Juan Margitic, and Allison Stashko. 2022. "Polling Place Location and the Costs of Voting."Technical report, Technical Report. https://jmargitic. github. io/JM/Margitic_JMP. pdf.

Barreto, Matt A, Stephen A Nuño, and Gabriel R Sanchez. 2009. "The Disproportionate Impact of Voter-ID Requirements on the Electorate: New Evidence from Indiana." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42 (1): 111–116.

Barreto, Matt A, Stephen Nuño, Gabriel R Sanchez, and Hannah L Walker. 2019. "The Racial Implications of Voter Identification Laws in America." *American Politics Research* 47 (2): 238–249.

Bentele, Keith G, and Erin E O'brien. 2013. "Jim Crow 2.0? Why states consider and adopt restrictive voter access policies." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (4): 1088–1116.

Berman, Ari. 2015. *Give us the ballot: The modern struggle for voting rights in America*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Bernini, Andrea, Giovanni Facchini, Marco Tabellini, and Cecilia Testa. 2023a. "Black empowerment and white mobilization: the effects of the Voting Rights Act."Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Bernini, Andrea, Giovanni Facchini, and Cecilia Testa. 2023b. "Race, Representation, and Local Governments in the US South: The Effect of the Voting Rights Act." *Journal of Political Economy* 131 (4): 994–1056.

Biggers, Daniel R, and Michael J Hanmer. 2017. "Understanding the Adoption of Voter Identification Laws in the American States." *American Politics Research* 45 (4): 560–588.

Billings, Stephen B, Noah Braun, Daniel B Jones, and Ying Shi. 2024. "Disparate racial impacts of Shelby County v. Holder on voter turnout." *Journal of Public Economics* 230 105047.

Brater, Jonathan, Kevin Morris, Myrna Pérez, and Christopher Deluzio. 2018. *Purges: A growing threat to the right to vote*. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Braun, Noah McKinnie, and Daniel B Jones. 2023. "Reduced Flexibility in Voting Differentially Impacts Black Voters."

Cantoni, Enrico. 2020. "A Precinct Too Far: Turnout and Voting Costs." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (1): 61–85.

Cantoni, Enrico, and Vincent Pons. 2021. "Strict ID laws don't stop voters: Evidence from a US nationwide panel, 2008–2018." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136 (4): 2615–2660.

Cantoni, Enrico, Vincent Pons, and Jerome Schafer. 2025. "Voting Rules, Turnout, and Economic Policies." *Annual Review of Economics* 17.

Carruthers, Celeste K, and Marianne H Wanamaker. 2015. "Municipal housekeeping: The impact of women's suffrage on public education." *Journal of Human Resources* 50 (4): 837–872.

Cascio, Elizabeth U, and Ebonya Washington. 2014. "Valuing the vote: The redistribution of voting rights and state funds following the voting rights act of 1965." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (1): 379–433.

Chacón, Mario L, Jeffrey L Jensen, Sidak Yntiso et al. 2021. "Sustaining democracy with force: black representation during Reconstruction." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1 (3): 319–351.

Chen, M Keith, Kareem Haggag, Devin G Pope, and Ryne Rohla. 2022. "Racial disparities in voting wait times: Evidence from smartphone data." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 104 (6): 1341–1350.

Chyn, Eric, Kareem Haggag, and Bryan A Stuart. 2024. "Inequality and Racial Backlash: Evidence from the Reconstruction Era and the Freedmen's Bureau."Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

on Civil Rights, The United States Commission. 1961. "Voting: 1961 Commission on Civil Rights Report."

Coll, Joseph A, Elizabeth Maltby, and Rene R Rocha. 2024. "Race and democratic

decline in the United States: How minority population growth affects election administration." *Social Science Quarterly*.

Correia, Sergio. 2016. "Linear Models with High-Dimensional Fixed Effects: An Efficient and Feasible Estimator."Technical report, Working Paper.

Correia, Sergio, Paulo Guimarães, and Tom Zylkin. 2020. "Fast Poisson estimation with high-dimensional fixed effects." *The Stata Journal* 20 (1): 95–115.

Cottrell, David, Michael C Herron, and Daniel A Smith. 2021. "Voting lines, equal treatment, and early voting check-in times in Florida." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 21 (2): 109–138.

Daley, David. 2023. *Antidemocratic: How the Other Side Rigged Our Democracy and Still Threatens Our Future*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Data, MIT Election, and Science Lab. 2018. "County Presidential Election Returns 2000-2020." 10.7910/DVN/VOQCHQ.

Dayton, John, and Anne Dupre. 2004. "School funding litigation: Who's winning the war." *Vand. L. Rev.* 57 2351.

DeFina, Robert, and Lance Hannon. 2011. "The legacy of black lynching and contemporary segregation in the south." *The Review of Black Political Economy* 38 (2): 165–181.

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. 1903. *The souls of black folk: Essays and sketches*. AC McClurg & Company.

Epperly, Brad, Christopher Witko, Ryan Strickler, and Paul White. 2020. "Rule by violence, rule by law: Lynching, Jim Crow, and the continuing evolution of voter suppression in the US." *Perspectives on Politics* 18 (3): 756–769.

Esposito, Francesco Maria, Diego Focanti, and Justine S Hastings. 2019. "Effects of Photo ID Laws on Registration and Turnout: Evidence from Rhode Island." Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Facchini, Giovanni, Brian Knight, and Cecilia Testa. 2025. "The franchise, policing, and race: Evidence from arrests data and the Voting Rights Act." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 17 (4): 134–154.

Feder, Catalina, and Michael G Miller. 2020. "Voter purges after Shelby: Part of special symposium on election sciences." *American Politics Research* 48 (6): 687–692.

Filer, John E, Lawrence W Kenny, and Rebecca B Morton. 1991. "Voting laws, educational policies, and minority turnout." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 34 (2, Part 1): 371–393.

Foner, Eric. 2019. *The second founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction remade the Constitution*. WW Norton & Company.

Fraga, Bernard L, and Julie Lee Merseth. 2016. "Examining the causal impact of the voting rights act language minority provisions." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 1 (1): 31–59.

Fraga, Bernard L, and Michael G Miller. 2022. "Who Do Voter ID Laws Keep from Voting?" *The Journal of Politics* 84 (2): 1091–1105.

Fresh, Adriane. 2018. "The effect of the Voting Rights Act on enfranchisement: evidence from North Carolina." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (2): 713–718.

Frug, Gerald E, and David J Barron. 2011. *City bound: How states stifle urban innovation*. Cornell University Press.

Griffin, John D. 2014. "When and why minority legislators matter." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (1): 327–336.

Grimmer, Justin, and Eitan Hersh. 2024. "How election rules affect who wins." *Journal of Legal Analysis* 16 (1): 1–25.

Grimmer, Justin, and Jesse Yoder. 2021. "The durable differential deterrent effects of strict photo identification laws." *Political Science Research and Methods* 1–17.

Harrison, James M, and Aaron M Gamino. 2025. "Re-righting the law: The impact of VRA preclearance on language minorities." *Economics & Politics*.

Heise, Michael. 1994. "State constitutional litigation, educational finance, and legal impact: An empirical analysis." *U. Cin. L. Rev.* 63 1735.

Henderson, John, and John Brooks. 2016. "Mediating the electoral connection: The information effects of voter signals on legislative behavior." *The Journal of Politics* 78 (3): 653–669.

Hood III, MV, and Scott E Buchanan. 2020. "Palmetto Postmortem: Examining the Effects of the South Carolina Voter Identification Statute." *Political Research Quarterly* 73 (2): 492–505.

Hood III, MV, and Charles S Bullock III. 2012. "Much Ado About Nothing? An Empirical Assessment of the Georgia Voter Identification Statute." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 12 (4): 394–414.

Husted, Thomas A, and Lawrence W Kenny. 1997. "The Effect of the Expansion of the Voting Franchise on the Size of Government." *Journal of Political Economy* 105 (1): 54–82.

Jones, Chelsea N, and Coryn Grange. 2024. *Voting on Tribal Lands*. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.

Jones, Daniel B, and Ethan Schmick. 2025. "Reconstruction-era education and long-run Black-White inequality." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 17 (3): 165–196.

Jones, Daniel B, and Ying Shi. 2022. "Reducing racial inequality in access to the ballot reduces racial inequality in children's later-life outcomes." *Available at SSRN 4037634*.

Jones, Daniel B, Werner Troesken, and Randall Walsh. 2012. "A Poll Tax by Any Other Name: The Political Economy of Disenfranchisement."Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Jones, Daniel B, Werner Troesken, and Randall Walsh. 2017. "Political participation in a violent society: The impact of lynching on voter turnout in the post-Reconstruction South." *Journal of Development Economics* 129 29–46.

Jones, Daniel B, and Randall Walsh. 2018. "How do voters matter? Evidence from US congressional redistricting." *Journal of Public Economics* 158 25–47.

Keyssar, Alexander. 2009. *The right to vote: The contested history of democracy in the United States*. Basic Books.

King-Meadows, Tyson, and Thomas F Schaller. 2007. *Devolution and black state legislators: Challenges and choices in the twenty-first century*. SUNY Press.

Komisarchik, Mayya. 2018. "Electoral Protectionism: How Southern Counties Eliminated Elected Offices in Response to the Voting Rights Act."Technical report, Working Paper, Harvard University.

Komisarchik, Mayya, Ariel White et al. 2025. "Throwing Away the Umbrella: Minority Voting after the Supreme Court's Shelby Decision." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 20 (2): 269–305.

Kuziemko, Ilyana, and Ebonya Washington. 2018. "Why did the Democrats lose the South? Bringing new data to an old debate." *American Economic Review* 108 (10): 2830–2867.

Lacroix, Jean. 2023. "Ballots instead of bullets? The effect of the voting rights act on political violence." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 21 (2): 764–813.

Logan, Trevon D. 2020. "Do black politicians matter? Evidence from Reconstruction." *The Journal of Economic History* 80 (1): 1–37.

Logan, Trevon D. 2023. "Whitelashing: Black politicians, taxes, and violence." *The Journal of Economic History* 83 (2): 538–571.

Lott, John R, Jr, and Lawrence W Kenny. 1999. "Did women's suffrage change the size and scope of government?" *Journal of Political Economy* 107 (6): 1163–1198.

Manning, Willard G, and John Mullahy. 2001. "Estimating log models: to transform or not to transform?" *Journal of health economics* 20 (4): 461–494.

Manson, Steven, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Katherine Knowles, Tracy Kugler, Finn Roberts, and Steven Ruggles. 2024. "IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 19.0 [dataset]." `http://doi.org/10.18128/D050.V19.0`.

Marshall, Thurgood. 1957. "The Rise and Collapse of the "White Democratic Primary"." *The Journal of Negro Education* 26 (3): 249–254.

May, Gary. 2013. *Bending toward justice: The Voting Rights Act and the transformation of American democracy*. Basic Books.

Miller, Michael, Kevin Morris, Ian Shapiro, and Coryn Grange. 2024. "Restrictive Mail Voting Rules Burden Minority Voters: Evidence from Texas."

Morris, Kevin, and Michael Miller. 2024. "Did Shelby County v. Holder Increase the Racial Turnout Gap?" *Available at SSRN 4736882*.

Ortiz-Villavicencio, Marcelo, and Pedro HC Sant'Anna. 2025. "Better Understanding Triple Differences Estimators." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2505.09942*.

Park, Seongjin, Arkodipta Sarkar, and Nishant Vats. 2021. "Political voice and (mortgage) market participation: Evidence from minority disenfranchisement." *Available at SSRN 3891961*.

Perman, Michael. 2001. *Struggle for mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908*. Univ of North Carolina Press.

Pierson, Kawika, Michael L Hand, and Fred Thompson. 2015. "The government finance database: A common resource for quantitative research in public financial analysis." *PloS one* 10 (6): e0130119.

Ricca, Federico, and Francesco Trebbi. 2022. "Minority underrepresentation in US cities."Technical Report w29738, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Rushovich, Tamara, Rachel C Nethery, Ariel White, and Nancy Krieger. 2024. "1965 US Voting Rights Act Impact on Black and Black Versus White Infant Death Rates in Jim Crow States, 1959–1980 and 2017–2021." *American Journal of Public Health* (0): e1–e9.

Schuit, Sophie, and Jon C Rogowski. 2017. "Race, representation, and the voting rights act." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (3): 513–526.

Shah, Paru R, Melissa J Marschall, and Anirudh VS Ruhil. 2013. "Are we there yet? the voting rights act and black representation on city councils, 1981–2006." *The Journal of Politics* 75 (4): 993–1008.

Silva, JMC Santos, and Silvana Tenreyro. 2006. "The log of gravity." *The Review of Economics and statistics* 641–658.

Sinha, Manisha. 2024. *The Rise and Fall of the Second American Republic: Reconstruction, 1860-1920*. Liveright Publishing.

Testa, Patrick A, and Jhacova Williams. 2025. "Political foundations of racial violence in the post-reconstruction south." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* qjaf045.

Trebbi, Francesco, Philippe Aghion, and Alberto Alesina. 2008. "Electoral rules and minority representation in US cities." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (1): 325–357.

Williams, Jhacova. 2022. "Historical lynchings and the contemporary voting behavior of Blacks." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 14 (3): 224–253.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Not Covered by Preclearance		Covered by Preclearance	
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.
Panel A. Funding				
Per-capita Transfers, 2002-2012	189.0	70.8	135.8	54.5
Per-capita Transfers, 2017-2022	251.3	83.3	162.2	59.2
Panel B. Municipal Characteristics				
Population, 2010	11586.7	43698.7	10362.6	59530.2
Share White, 2010	0.757	0.229	0.622	0.250
Share Black, 2010	0.139	0.197	0.229	0.244
Share Hispanic, 2010	0.0719	0.111	0.120	0.188
Share Urban, 2010-2014	0.484	0.472	0.428	0.465
Share HS Grad, 2010-2014	0.820	0.0980	0.796	0.104
Share Employed, 2010-2014	0.888	0.0631	0.895	0.0688
Share Below Poverty Line, 2010-2014	0.207	0.115	0.217	0.122
N	1570		3540	

Notes: Includes all municipalities in states of the former Confederacy. The entire states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas were covered by Section 5, along with parts of Florida, North Carolina, and Texas. All of Arkansas and Tennessee were not covered by Section 5. Demographic data comes from the 2010 US Census and the 2010-2014 American Community Survey.

Table 2: Triple-difference: Differential Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers by Above/Below Median Black Share

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0196	0.0448	0.0347	-0.6510	-0.7840
	(0.0852)	(0.0494)	(0.0691)	(0.6379)	(0.6468)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.1110*	-0.1556***	-0.1506***	-0.1466**	-0.1456**
	(0.0565)	(0.0390)	(0.0383)	(0.0475)	(0.0537)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	19,817	19,817	19,817	19,809	19,807

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality. AMB is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality has an above median Black share of its population within its state. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a municipality has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the municipality that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table 3: Triple-difference: Differential Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers by Black Population Share

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0528	0.0333	0.0368	-0.6600	-0.8652
	(0.0681)	(0.0513)	(0.0536)	(0.6957)	(0.6835)
Post X Cov X % Black	-0.4863***	-0.3504***	-0.3598***	-0.2767**	-0.2217**
	(0.1315)	(0.0706)	(0.0699)	(0.1096)	(0.0925)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	19,832	19,832	19,832	19,822	19,820

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality. % Black is the share of the municipality that identified as Black in the 2010 Census. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include %Hispanic, the share of the municipality that identified as Latino or Hispanic in the 2010 Census. Demographic controls include the share of the municipality that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table 4: Triple-difference: Heterogeneity by Municipal Population

	log(per-capita state transfers)					
	Baseline Result	Control for log(*population*)	Over 1,000 Population	Under 100,000 Population	Rural Municipalities	Urban Municipalities
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post X Cov	-0.6510	-0.5075	-1.4604	-0.6661	-0.3934	-0.7214
	(0.6379)	(0.6666)	(0.8440)	(0.6598)	(0.6839)	(1.1729)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.1466**	-0.1373**	-0.1190	-0.1422***	-0.0854	-0.1653**
	(0.0475)	(0.0466)	(0.0760)	(0.0427)	(0.1125)	(0.0709)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,809	19,809	13,387	19,289	8,888	10,534

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality fixed effects. Column (1) reproduces the result from column (5) of Table 2. Column (2) includes the log population as a control variable. Column (3) restricts to municipalities with a maximum population between 2002-2022 of at least 1000 people. Column (4) restricts to municipalities with a maximum population between 2002-2022 of fewer than 100,000 people. Column (5) restricts to fully rural municipalities. Column (6) restricts to municipalities that are at least 50% urban. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table 5: Triple-difference: Sensitivity to Specification

	log(per-capita state transfers)					
	Baseline Result	Blacks Largest Non-white Group	Remove Majority Black Municipalities	Common Support In Black Share	Common Support In P-Score	Inverse P-score Weighting
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post X Cov	-0.6510	-0.8960	-0.8313	-0.9564	-0.5539	0.0731
	(0.6379)	(0.6909)	(0.9502)	(0.7845)	(0.6913)	(0.6959)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.1466**	-0.1852*	-0.1316**	-0.1130*	-0.1385**	-0.1711**
	(0.0475)	(0.0898)	(0.0424)	(0.0606)	(0.0556)	(0.0730)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,809	12,001	16,907	17,081	19,319	19,319

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality fixed effects. Column (1) reproduces the result from column (5) of Table 2. Column (2) restricts to municipalities where the Blacks are the largest non-white group. Column (3) removes counties that are majority Black. Column (4) restricts to municipalities with at least as high as the 10th percentile of share Black for the control sample (.08%) and less than the 90th percentile of share Black for the treated sample (61.4%). Column (5) restricts to municipalities with propensity scores at least a high as the minimum propensity score among the treated sample and less than the maximum propensity score among the untreated sample. Column (6) maintains the same counties in column (5) and weights treated municipalities by their propensity score, p, and untreated municipalities by p/(1-p). All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table 6: No Increase in Black Underrepresentation

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	$u_{s,2000} - u_{s,2015}$	$u_{s,2000} - u_{s,2020}$	$u_{s,2000} - u_{s,2023}$
Covered State	0.1197	0.7983	2.131
	(1.835)	(2.407)	(1.829)
Sample	Former Confederacy	Former Confederacy	Former Confederacy
Observations	16	16	16

All specifications use the 2000 Black share of state legislators for calculations of $u_{s,2000}$ and either the 2015, 2020, or 2022 Black share of state legislators for calculations of post-*Shelby* underrepresentation, $u_{s,t}$. Errors are clustered at the state level.

Table 7: Triple-difference: No Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers to County Governments

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0363	-0.0459	-0.0473*	-0.1994	-0.0286
	(0.0342)	(0.0283)	(0.0219)	(0.6646)	(0.5438)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.0511	-0.0352	-0.0252	0.0061	0.0006
	(0.0321)	(0.0299)	(0.0284)	(0.0416)	(0.0357)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	5,713	5,713	5,713	5,710	5,710

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the county level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include county fixed effects. AMB is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county has an above median Black share of its population within its state. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a county has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the county that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

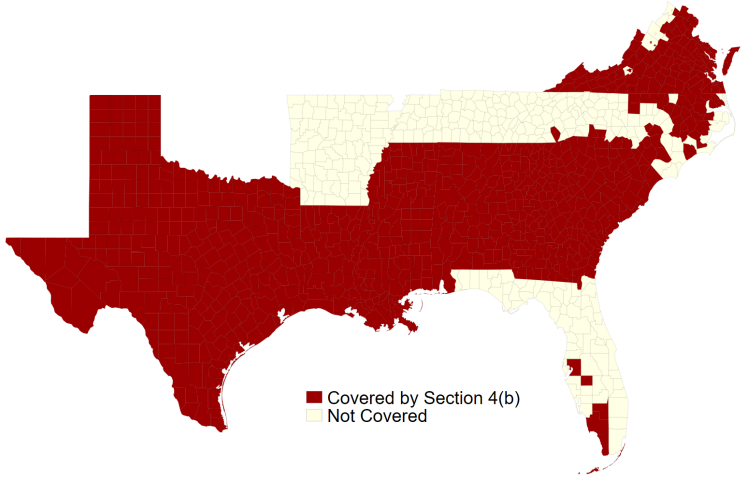


Figure 1: VRA Coverage as of 2013; Former Confederate States

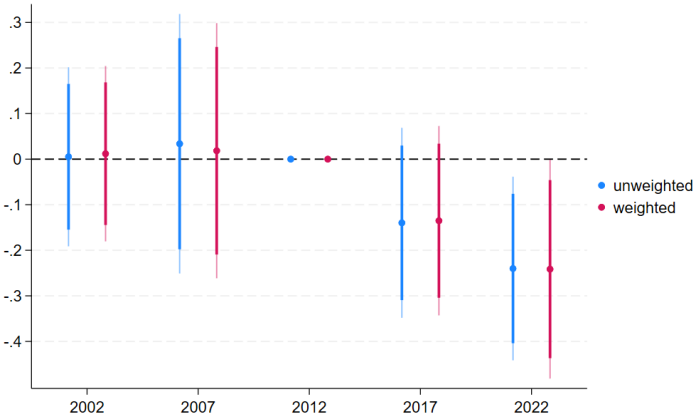


Figure 2: Decline in Transfers to Cities with Above Median Black Population Shares, in Counties covered by Section 4(b), Post-*Shelby*; Restricted to former Confederate states.

Reported estimates are the triple interaction term, $Cov_i \times election_t \times AMB_{is}$, and logged per-capita transfers is the outcome variable. Regression uses robust standard errors clustered at state level. Includes both race and demographic controls.

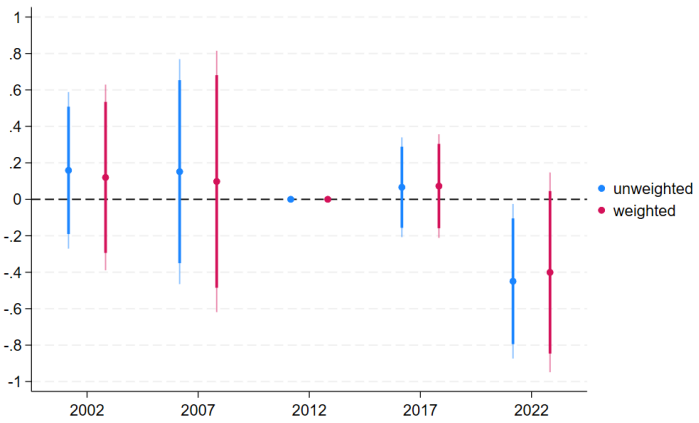
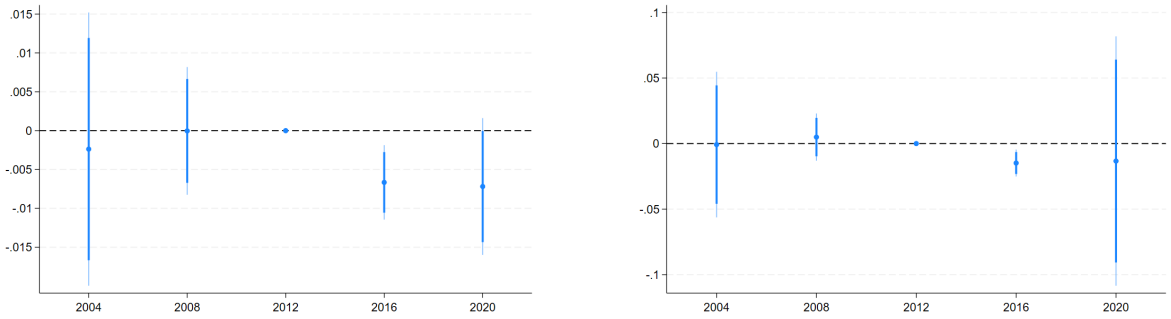


Figure 3: Decline in Transfers to Cities with Above Median Black Population Shares, in Counties covered by Section 4(b), Post-*Shelby*; Restricted to former Confederate states.

Reported estimates are the triple interaction term, $Cov_i \times election_t \times AMB_{is}$, and logged per-capita transfers is the outcome variable. Regression uses robust standard errors clustered at state level.



(a) Turnout Share in Presidential Elections

(b) Democratic Vote Share in Presidential Elections

Figure 4: Declining Turnout and Democratic Vote Share by Preclearance Coverage and Above-median Black Share

A Appendix: Additional Results

A.1 Reconstruction and Jim Crow

The end of the Civil War and the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments (13th-15th) marked a new, albeit short-lived, era of multiracial democracy in the United States of America. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, except as criminal punishment. The first section of 14th Amendment established birth-right citizenship, overturning the decision made in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that stated that Black Americans could not be citizens, guaranteed a right to do process, and equal protection under the law. The second section established that a state's electoral representation should be reduced for states that deny or abridge the ability of its (male) inhabitants from voting. The third section bars any individual who, having previously taken an oath to protect the constitution, engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or gave aid to its enemies, from holding federal or state office.

Finally, the 15th Amendment prohibits the federal and all state governments from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." While representing a radical shift in the electoral system of the United States, the 15th Amendment was also remarkable for what it did not include. For one, it failed to confer a positive right to suffrage for all citizens (*United States v. Reese,* 1876), merely preventing the government from giving "preference" to one citizen over another on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. This was a purposeful decision, made out of compromise with more conservative members of the Republican party who objected to broader language that would have prevented discrimination based on education, property, or religious beliefs, as well as language specifically banning the use of literacy tests (Foner, 2019). While the Amendment brought Black men into the fold, it amounted to what many consider only a partial suffrage that could too easily be undermined.[19]

Despite its limitations, the passage of the 15th marked both the completion of the second founding and the beginning of violent racial backlash from white southerners (Foner, 2019). The enfranchisment of Black men led to over 1300 Black elected officials across the South during Reconstruction, which increased tax revenue, public spending, and Black literacy (Logan, 2020). A central aim of Black elected officials and the Freedman's Bureau was the expansion of educational opportunities for recently freed people, which increased literacy rates and occupational standing for children who experienced additional years of schooling

[19]During debate on the passage of the 15th, Congressman Willard Warner noted that nine-tenths of the Black population could be disenfranchised by literacy or property qualifications in the state of Alabama (Foner, 2019).

during the Reconstruction era (Jones and Schmick, 2025). The Freedman Bureau, which Du Bois (1903) described as "one of the most singular and interesting attempts made by a great nation to grapple with vast problems of race and social condition", embodied the modern conception of the social state (Sinha, 2024) and had positive impacts on Black registration and Black office holding (Chyn et al., 2024). The presence of the Freedman's Bureau interacted positively with the presence of federal troops, who were important for protecting the civil and political rights of Black southerners and whose presence enhanced Black office holding (Chacón et al., 2021).

The eventual disillusion of the Republican Party with the Reconstruction project and subsequent withdrawal of federal troops from the South increased violence against Black southerns and effectively ended Black suffrage in the former Confederacy, the consequences of which are still felt today. The first stage of Black disenfranchisment is referred to by Perman (2001) as the "vote manipulation phase," which included both violence and intimidation, as well as fraud and other extralegal measures to undermine access to the ballot box. Violent attacks were most prominent in counties with greater Black political efficacy (Logan, 2023) and that had a larger presence of Freedman's Bureau field offices (Chyn et al., 2024). This first stage of disenfranchisment was associated with larger reductions in Black turnout than the second stage, which utilized legal measures such as poll taxes and literacy requirements (Jones et al., 2012).

Racial violence in the form of lynchings was prominent in more Democratic-leaning counties (Testa and Williams, 2025) and deterred black citizens from voting in the Jim Crow era (Jones et al., 2017) and into the 21st century (Williams, 2022). After racial violence had succeeded in returning white Democrats to power in the South, the passage of poll taxes and the literacy test completed the project of disenfranchisement and ended this period of multiracial democracy. Both poll taxes and literacy tests largely exempted white men through the use of grandfather clauses, and even those Black citizens who were willing to risk the violence that attempting to vote entailed were regularly prevented by the cumulative nature of poll taxes[20] and the blatantly racist manner in which literacy tests were evaluated (Anderson, 2018). The systems for paying poll taxes and registering to vote were also purposefully complex in an attempt to prevent new voters from participating, and registrars would often fail to notify Black applicants of their successful (or unsuccessful) attempt to register (on Civil Rights, 1961). Some states went as far as to install white primaries for selecting Democratic candidates, which, given the Democratic party's dominance of the South, gave

[20]Would be voters had to pay the tax retroactively for every year they had been "eligible" to vote but hadn't paid the tax. When Rosa Parks registered to vote in 1945, she was required to pay a poll tax of $16.50, the equivalent of almost $300 in 2025 (May, 2013).

white voters sole say in the selection of politicians.

A.2 Additional Tables and Figures

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

		Not Covered by Preclearance		Covered by Preclearance	
	All Municipalities	Below Median Black	Above Median Black	Below Median Black	Above Median Black
Panel A. Funding					
Per-capita Transfers, 2002-2012	152.2	203.4	172.2	128.8	142.3
Per-capita Transfers, 2017-2022	189.6	259.3	225.8	167.9	157.2
Panel B. Municipal Characteristics					
Population	10738.71	5738.452	18341.39	4642.608	15673.45
Share White	.663573	.8796602	.6167305	.7602136	.4917267
Share Black	.2015352	.0226882	.2736219	.0716366	.3774168
Share Hispanic	.1049842	.0677082	.0767467	.1407214	.0998293
Share Urban	.4454775	.4422047	.5330236	.3902551	.4639376
Share HS Grad	.8032039	.8339218	.803789	.8090168	.7832789
Share Employed	.8929329	.8992835	.8757912	.9118055	.8790807
Share Below Poverty Line	.2141153	.1815904	.2372169	.1781047	.2537996
N	5110	840	729	1715	1822

Restricted to states of the former Confederacy. Demographic data comes from the 2010 US Census and the 2010-2014 American Community Survey.

Table A.2: Triple-difference: Poisson psuedo-likehood regressor

	Per-capita state transfers				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0186	-0.2385***	-0.3252***	-1.4912	-0.6510
	(0.1090)	(0.0705)	(0.0915)	(2.2374)	(0.6379)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.2033**	-0.1681*	-0.1416	-0.1798**	-0.1466**
	(0.0880)	(0.0896)	(0.1066)	(0.0762)	(0.0475)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Regressor	PPML	PPML	PPML	PPML	Linear
Observations	24,353	24,353	24,353	24,336	19,809

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality. AMB is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality has an above median Black share of its population within its state. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a municipality has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the municipality that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level. Columns 1-4 are estimated using a Poisson pseudo-likelihood regression (PPML) using the ppmlhdfe package (Correia et al., 2020), and column 5 replicates the results from table 2 using the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table A.3: Triple-difference: Robustness to Set of Control States

	Per-capita state transfers					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Post X Cov	-0.8614	-0.5782	-0.6510	-0.8265	-0.5581	-0.7840
	(0.6625)	(0.6664)	(0.6379)	(0.6577)	(0.6633)	(0.6468)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.0845	-0.0916*	-0.1466**	-0.0945	-0.1015*	-0.1456**
	(0.0487)	(0.0482)	(0.0475)	(0.0546)	(0.0541)	(0.0537)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
States	Border	Census South	Former Confederacy	Border	Census South	Former Confederacy
Observations	26,722	26,491	19,809	26,720	26,489	19,807

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality fixed effects, State X Year fixed effects, race controls, and demographic controls. Columns 1 and 4 use all states of the former Confederacy plus all states that border a state fully covered by preclearance: Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. Columns 2 and 5 use all states within the region as defined by the US Census Bureau: the former Confederate states plus Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. Columns 3 and 6 use only states that were members of the former Confederacy. Columns 1-3 are unweighted and columns 4-6 use logged population weighting. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table A.4: Triple-difference: Differential Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers with "High" Black Municipalities defined as greater than 10%

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0626	0.0497	0.0445	-0.6324	-0.7880
	(0.0617)	(0.0499)	(0.0698)	(0.6447)	(0.6579)
Post X Cov X High Black	-0.1937**	-0.1476**	-0.1433**	-0.1407**	-0.1240**
	(0.0767)	(0.0484)	(0.0483)	(0.0592)	(0.0551)
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	19,854	19,854	19,817	19,809	19,807

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the municipality level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include municipality. High Black is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality has a Black population share above 10%. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a municipality was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a municipality has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the municipality that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table A.5: Triple-difference: Differential Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers by Above/Below Median Black Share

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.0431	-0.0457*	-0.0230	-0.1128	0.0920
	(0.0401)	(0.0208)	(0.0192)	(0.5237)	(0.4271)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.0822	-0.0083	-0.0114	0.1505	0.1078
	(0.1046)	(0.0826)	(0.0770)	(0.1330)	(0.1078)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	5,713	5,713	5,713	5,710	5,710

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the county level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers as the outcome, and include county fixed effects. AMB is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county has an above median Black share of its population within its state. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a county has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the county that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

Table A.6: Triple-difference: Differential Impact of *Shelby* on Transfers by Above/Below Median Black Share

	log(per-capita state transfers)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Post X Cov	0.1877	-0.0984	-0.0707	-0.8523	-0.4707
	(0.2001)	(0.1065)	(0.0936)	(1.2875)	(1.2513)
Post X Cov X AMB	-0.0768	-0.0499	-0.0261	0.0596	0.0465
	(0.1294)	(0.1409)	(0.1317)	(0.1219)	(0.1075)
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State X Year FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographic Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Population Weighted	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	5,702	5,702	5,702	5,699	5,699

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

All specifications are at the county level and take the natural log of per-capita state transfers that are not for education as the outcome, and include county fixed effects. AMB is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county has an above median Black share of its population within its state. Cov is an indicator that takes the value of 1 if a county was previously covered by the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act. Post is an indicator that takes the value of 1 for years after the *Shelby County v. Holder decision*, 2017, and 2022. Race controls include an indicator for whether a county has an above median Hispanic population share within its own state. Demographic controls include the share of the county that is urban, the share of residents who have graduated from high school, the share who are employed, and the share who have incomes below the poverty line. All controls are interacted with Post and Cov. All specifications use robust standard errors clustered at state level, utilizing the reghdfe package (Correia, 2016).

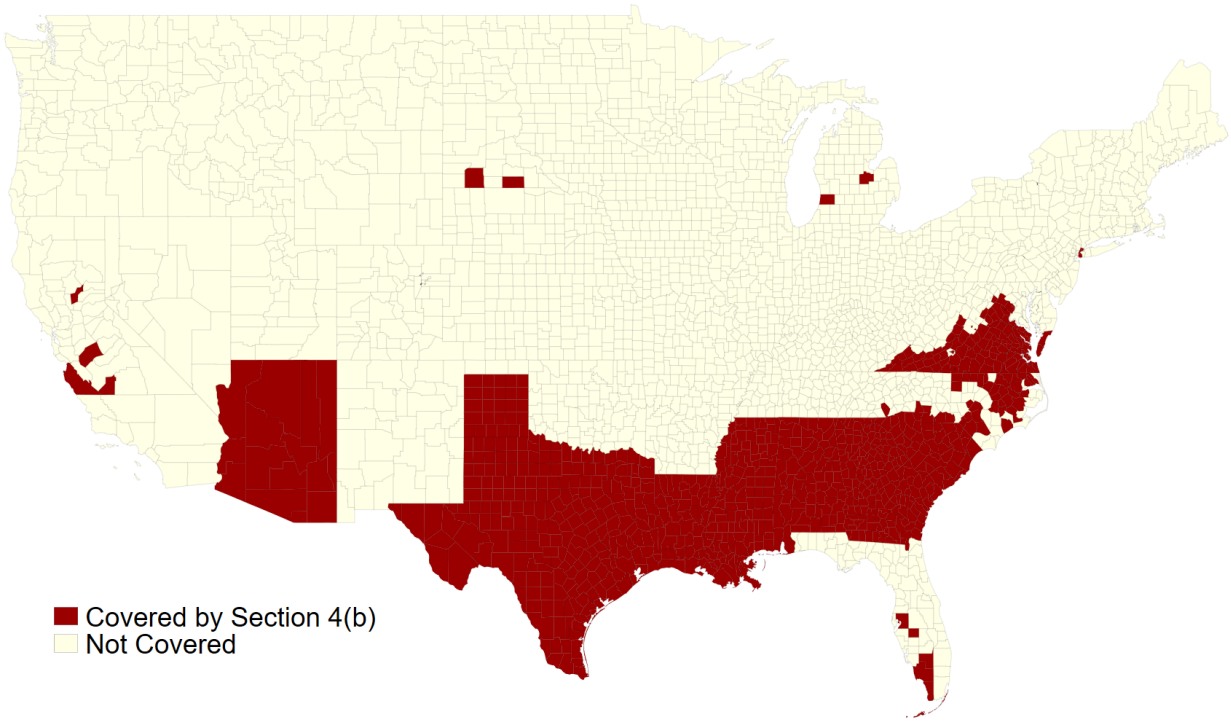


Figure A.1: VRA Coverage as of 2013

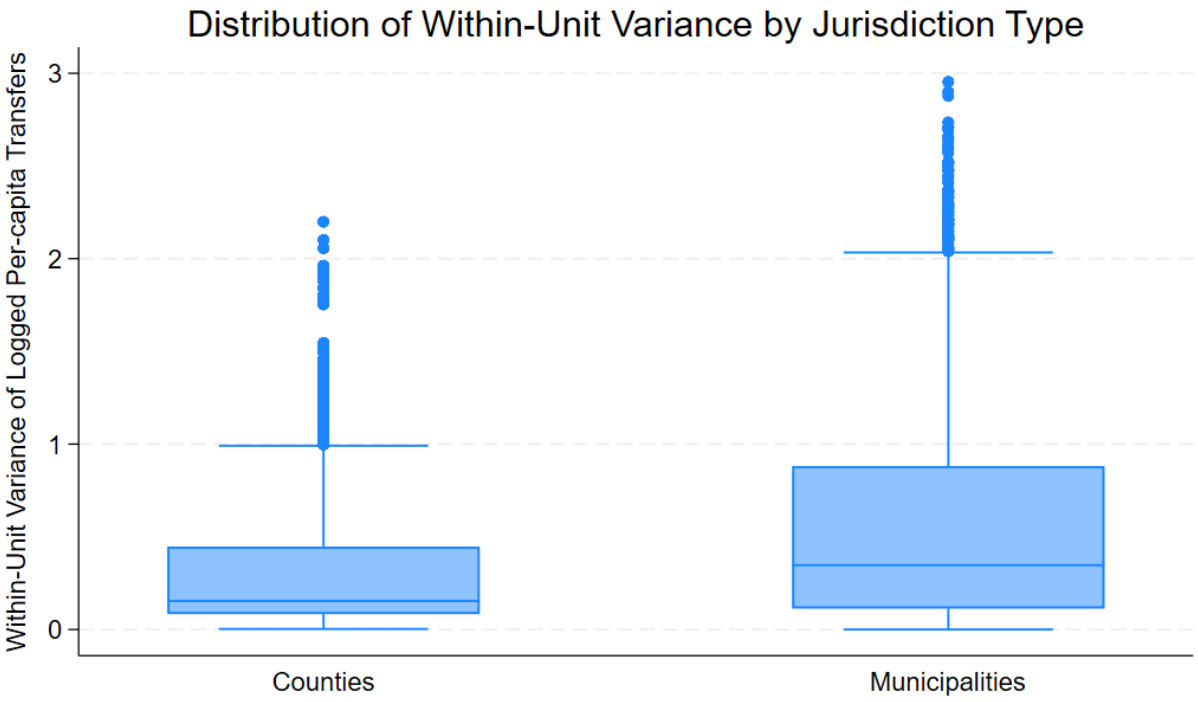


Figure A.2: Per-capita transfers to municipalities exhibit higher variance than transfers to counties: 1992-2012

Plots the within-unit variance of logged intergovernmental transfers to municipal and county governments. Include all municipal and county governments within the former Confederate states. Data from the 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2012 Census of Governments.

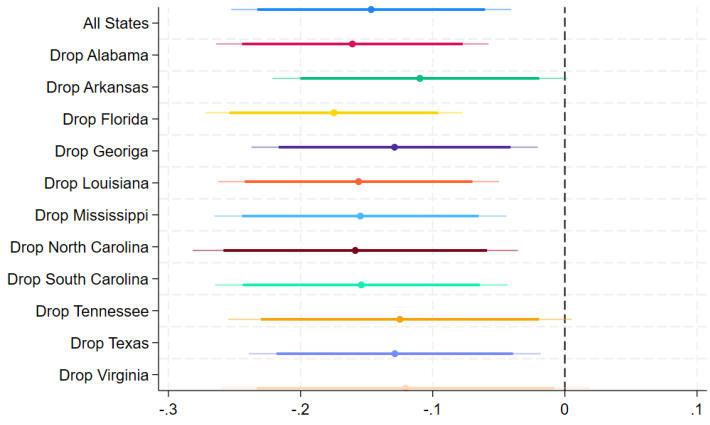


Figure A.3: Table 2 robust to dropping individual states

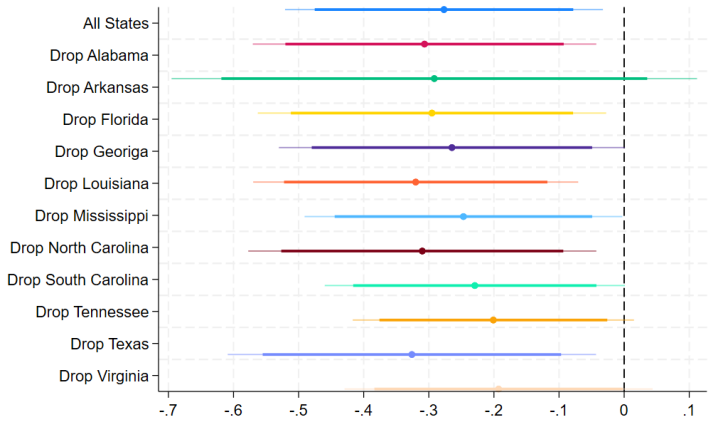


Figure A.4: Table 3 robust to dropping individual states

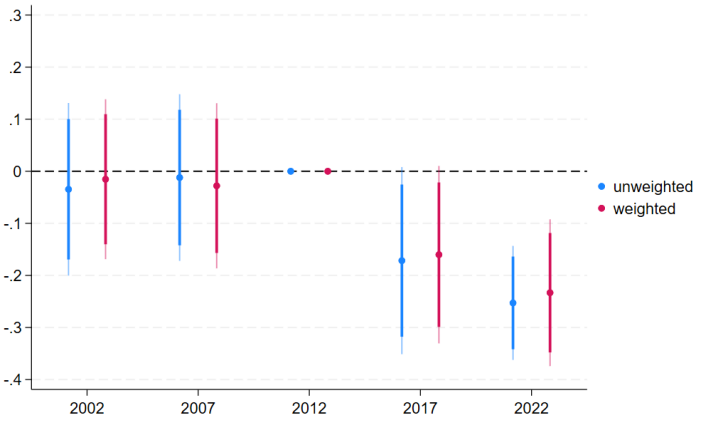


Figure A.5: Decline in transfers to cities with larger Black population shares.

Reported estimates are the triple interaction term, $Cov_i \times election_t \times AMB_{is}$, and logged per-capita transfers is the outcome variable. Regression uses robust standard errors clustered at state level. Results match those of Figure 2, but omit race and demographic control variables.

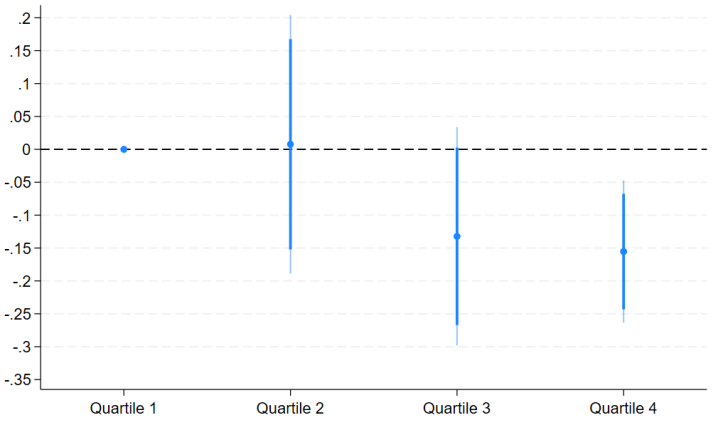
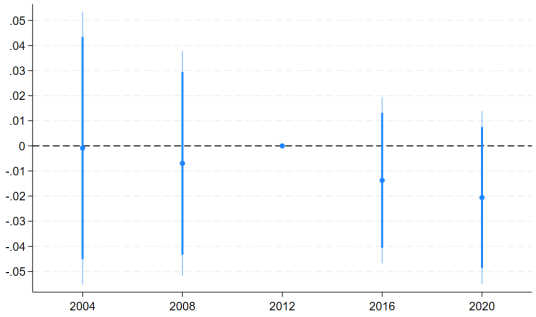
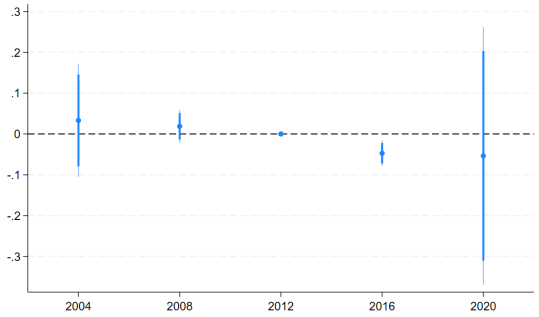


Figure A.6: Decline in transfers to cities with larger Black population shares.

Reported estimates are the triple interaction term, Cov_i, $Post_t$, and an indicator for which quartile of Black share a municipality falls into within its own state. Quartile 4 is the group with the highest Black share, and Quartile 1 is the group with the lowest Black share. Logged per-capita transfers is the outcome variable. Regression uses robust standard errors clustered at the state level.



(a) Turnout Share in Presidential Elections



(b) Democratic Vote Share in Presidential Elections

Figure A.7: Declining Turnout and Democratic Vote Share by Preclearance Coverage and County Black Share