Ledes and Labor: How Local News Affects Union Organizing*

Matthew Johnson
Duke University
& NBER

Sinja Leonelli
NYU Stern

Asa Royal
Harvard Kennedy School

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Abstract

Union organizing has declined sharply in the United States in recent decades, even as measures of latent demand for union representation have remained persistently high. We show that a parallel decline in another institution—local newspapers—has contributed to this "representation gap." We first provide descriptive evidence that newspaper coverage of union election campaigns is highly localized and strongly predicted by the number of newspapers headquartered in the county. Using two identification strategies, we then find that the weakening or closing of local newspapers leads to substantially fewer union elections in the affected county. We consider two mechanisms through which the news environment may influence a worker's decision to organize: by affecting the risk of employer retaliation, and by changing the perceived benefits of organizing. While we do not find evidence of increased interference by employers, local newspapers facilitate a spillover in organizing: narrowly successful union elections lead to more elections in subsequent years, but only where union activity receives news coverage. Embedding this mechanism in a simple model, we show that eliminating this news-driven spillover can fully account for the decline in union elections following newspaper weakening. Our results highlight the media environment as a key determinant of collective action.

*Johnson: matthew.johnson@duke.edu; Leonelli: sinja.leonelli@stern.nyu.edu; Royal: asa_royal@g.harvard.edu. We thank Marina Silva for excellent research assistance. We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the Russell Sage Foundation.

1 Introduction

Labor unions increase their members' wages (Beauregard et al., 2025; Card, 1996) and job amenities (Knepper, 2020). However, the frequency which with workers seek to form a union in their workplace–by holding an election–has steadily fallen over the past several decades. Around 1970, there were roughly 3.5 elections annually per 100,000 workers; by 2019, that number had fallen to 0.37 (Figure 1). Part of this decline in union organizing may reflect decreases in demand for unions among some workers, for example due to international trade (Charles et al., 2026), widening inequality (Biasi et al., 2025), and social insurance expansions (Aizawa et al., 2024a). At the same time, latent demand for labor unions has appeared consistently high (Figure 2). Over 50% of workers in a 2019 survey reported that they would vote for a union in their workplace if given the opportunity, a larger proportion than in similar surveys in 1977 and 1995 (Kochan et al., 2019). The sources of this so-called "representation gap" are likely myriad and not fully understood (Hertel-Fernandez, 2020).

One potential source of this gap is the parallel decline of another U.S. institution: local newspapers. The number of newspapers per capita in the U.S. has also decreased since the mid 20th century (Figure 1), and those remaining in operation have experienced reductions in reporting capacity and circulation (Abernathy, 2018). These trends could have consequences for the union organizing process. Organizing for a union election is lengthy, uncertain, and requires sustained coordination between co-workers (Naidu, 2022). Employers may be more likely to interfere in election campaigns when news coverage of such actions is less likely. News coverage of successful elections in the community may also increase workers' perceived returns from organizing and thus propagate winning elections into more local organizing. Estimating these effects, however, poses numerous empirical challenges due to the myriad economic forces underlying the changing media environment (Cagé, 2016).

In this paper, we assess whether and why local newspapers affect workers' propensity to organize for labor unions.

We first provide descriptive evidence that local newspapers are consequential for the me-

dia environment surrounding union organizing. Using a combination of scraping and manual review, we determined whether a 50-percent subset of union elections from 1990 through 2022 received any newspaper coverage. Having at least one newspaper headquartered in the county where an election takes place increases the probability that it receives any news coverage by more than 50%; having more newspapers further increases this probability, but at a decreasing rate. At the same time, the number of newspapers headquartered in neighboring counties has a precise null effect on news coverage, consistent with the news environment for union activity being highly localized. That is, the strength of local newspapers substantially determines the news environment surrounding union activity.

Motivated by this descriptive evidence, we then use two identification strategies to examine the consequences of weakening local newspapers for union organizing. First, we use newspaper closures as a discrete shock to the local news environment (e.g., Gao et al., 2020; Gentzkow et al., 2011; Leonelli, 2022). In our main specification, we use a stacked difference-in-difference model comparing counties with newspaper closures between 1975 and 2010 to bordering counties without newspaper closures in the five years preceding or ten years after the closure. This design accounts for changes in correlated local economic conditions that may trigger newspaper closures (Gentzkow et al., 2011); furthermore, given the localized nature of news coverage for elections, the risk of spillovers is quite low. Second, we use the staggered entry of Craigslist across counties as a shock to news production. By creating competition for classified ad revenue, the entry of Craigslist drastically reduced newspapers' resources, leading to decreases in news circulation, journalistic staff, and political coverage (Djourelova et al., 2025; Seamans and Zhu, 2014). At the same time, there is no evidence that Craigslist affected job finding rates or other aspects of labor market functioning (Kroft and Pope, 2014).

Using both designs, we find that a decline in the count or strength of local newspapers leads to a substantial decrease in union organizing activity. The average newspaper closure in our sample led to 9% fewer union elections over the next ten years ($p < .01$). The

entry of Craigslist into a county led to roughly 30% fewer elections over the next five years ($p < .01$). Heterogeneity analysis corroborates that these effects reflect a change in the news environment for union (and other local political and economic) activity, as opposed to other contemporaneous forces or secondary effects. Closures of newspapers with high baseline circulation, which constitute the largest shock to the news environment, have an especially large effect on elections; the effect of low-circulation newspaper closures is small and statistically indistinguishable from zero. Moreover, the effect of Craigslist on elections is entirely driven by counties 1) where local newspapers were relatively likely to cover union elections at baseline, and 2) that had any local newspapers at baseline in the first place.

We next investigate two mechanisms through which local newspapers may have such a large effect on union elections: retaliation by employers and social learning among workers. Although technically illegal under the National Labor Relations Act, employer interference in the union organizing process is reported to be widespread and increasing over time (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). However, using a variety of measures and approaches, we find no evidence that the weakening of local newspapers has increased employers' propensity to interfere with the organizing process or to retaliate against organizing workers.

Newspapers may also influence the frequency of elections by affecting workers' perceived returns to organizing. Organizing exhibits strategic complementarity: workers are more likely to take action to organize when they perceive a larger share of their co-workers as supportive of unions (Naidu, 2022). However, because discussing union interest openly at work can risk employer retaliation, workers' beliefs about co-worker support may be biased downward. News stories of successful union campaigns at other workplaces in one's community may lead workers to update these beliefs and, in turn, become more likely to engage in organizing themselves.

To test this idea, we examine whether barely successful union elections lead to more elections in the same county over the next few years, and how the news environment moderates this effect. Because close union elections exhibit non-random bunching near the 50%

cutoff (Frandsen, 2021), we use a "difference-in-discontinuities" design, comparing changes in the number of elections in the same county in the three years after an election in which the union barely wins or barely loses. Overall, we find a positive but small and statistically insignificant effect. However, in counties where newspaper coverage of union elections tended to be relatively high (above the sample median), we find clear evidence for such contagion: in these counties, the average successful elections leads nearly two additonal elections over the next three years, a roughly 25% increase relative to the baseline mean. We find a null effect in counties where union elections tended to get little to no news coverage.

A news environment in which union activity receives media attention propagates successful organizing into more organizing. But to what extent can this explain the reduced form effects of newspaper weakening on elections? To gauge this magnitude, we simulate a simple model of union elections. We model the number of annual elections in a county as a Poisson random variable with a log likelihood determined by a county random effect, a time trend, and (based on our difference-in-discontinuity estimates above) a function of winning elections in recent years. We impose that the entry of Craigslist in a county shuts off this contagion term and simulate the time path of elections. This model implies that the arrival of Craigslist leads to roughly 31% fewer elections over the next five years. This model-implied effect of Craigslist is essentially identical to our reduced-form estimated effect of Craigslist entry on elections (31%). That is, newspapers' role in propagating successful elections into more organizing can fully explain why their exit or weakening leads to fewer elections.

Our study contributes to two literature streams. First, we contribute to the literature on the causes and consequences of the decline in labor unions. Prior work has shown that industry shifts, competition, social insurance, and wage inequality affects union organizing. (e.g., Ashenfelter and Pencavel, 1969; Ahlquist and Downey, 2023; Charles et al., 2021; Biasi et al., 2025; Aizawa et al., 2024b). We show that the decline in local news has contributed to the decrease in union elections.

Second, we contribute to the literature on the political and economic effects of local news coverage. Prior literature has shown that local news can impact voting behavior, political accountability, and misconduct (e.g., Gentzkow et al., 2011; Johnson, 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Heese et al., 2022). Our paper shows that local newspapers do not just act as monitors, but also that they provide information that helps facilitate local collective action.

2 Background and Data

2.1 Union Formation in the U.S.

The process of union formation in the U.S. is governed by the 1936 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Whereas in some other advanced countries union coverage is often at the sectoral level, the unit of bargaining in the U.S. is the establishment. The process to form a union and secure its recognition requires multiple steps.[1] First, at least 30 percent of the workers in a proposed bargaining unit must sign a card petitioning for an election. Second, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) determines eligibility and whether to authorize a secret ballot election. Third, the union and employer both campaign until the election. If either the union or the employer believes the other side is acting in violation of the NLRA, they can issue claims of Unfair Labor Practice (ULPs) with the NLRA. Fourth, if a majority of workers vote in favor of the union, the employer is obligated to bargain with the union. From then, the union and employer negotiate over a first contract.

This process is often long, uncertain, risky, and requires sustained coordination between workers (Naidu, 2022). It often takes months between the first step of organizing and when an election actually takes place. Organizing requires sustained effort over this period. The NLRA technically forbids employers from interfering in the election process, but enforcement is sparse and regulatory fines are small: remedies for ULPs like unlawful firings are limited to reinstatement and back pay, often after substantial delays (Weiler, 1982). Though diffi-

[1] See (Naidu, 2022) for more details about this process.

cult to measure comprehensively, reports of employer interference in elections are common (Bronfenbrenner, 2000)

2.2 Data on Union Elections

We obtain data on all closed union representation cases filed with the NLRB from 1965-2022 that had at least one associated union election. We compile this data from three sources: 1) an AFL-maintained list of all 1965-1999 NLRB representation cases; 2) an archive of case data from the NLRB's 1999-2010 case tracking system; 3) the NLRB's live case tracking system, which provides data on union elections from 2010 onward.

For each case, these data contain the case filing/closing date, the election date(s), the number of votes for and against the union(s), the number of challenged ballots, the total number of employees eligible to vote, the employer establishment locations involved, the employee bargaining units involved, and the unions involved.

We take multiple steps to assign each representation case to counties. When a case includes the county of the associated establishment(s), we default to using it. Some of our data do not include establishment counties but include either establishment ZIP codes or establishment cities and states. When ZIP codes are available, we crosswalk ZIP codes to counties using ZIP-county crosswalk files from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development. When only employer cities are available, we measure the geographic overlap between cities and counties using their respective geographic outlines and assign fractional case counts to counties that overlap cities where establishment elections took place based on the proportion of the overlap.[2]

We assign each case to counties based on the fraction of employer establishments in the case that belong to the respective counties. For example, if a representation case involves two establishments in both Durham County, North Carolina and one establishment in Orange County, North Carolina, we assign 0.67 representation cases to Durham County and 0.33

[2]We obtain city shapefile polygons from OpenStreetMap and county shapefile polygons from the Census.

representation cases to Orange County.

For secondary analysis, we also obtain ULP claims from the NLRB from 1999 through 2022. These are cases filed by either employees or employers to inform the NLRB of actions deemed unlawful under the NLRA, such as bargaining in bad faith/refusal to bargain, or intimidating/retaliating against employees who engage in union activities.

We aggregate both the union election cases and ULP cases to the county-year level.

2.3 Local Newspaper Landscape in the U.S.

Local newspapers have long served as a primary source of information about local firms, governments, and communities. The median newspaper sells more than 80% of its copies in its home county, and local newspapers continue to produce the majority of original news content in the United States (Abernathy, 2018; Gentzkow et al., 2011). Because their readership is concentrated locally, local newspapers have strong incentives to cover local firms and institutions, and they have greater access to local sources such as employees, suppliers, and local government than national outlets (Heese et al., 2022; Miller, 2006). This gives local newspapers an informational advantage that makes them particularly effective at uncovering and disseminating information about local firms and institutions. Beyond information production, local newspapers act as monitors of corporate and government conduct, with their coverage shown to affect firm behavior, employee behavior, regulatory enforcement, and political accountability (Gao et al., 2020; Heese and Leonelli, 2026; Johnson, 2020; Leonelli, 2022).

Despite this central role, the local newspaper industry has been in sharp decline (Metzger, 2025). Since 2005, close to 3,500 newspapers have ceased publication and the number of newspapers per 100,000 Americans has fallen from 3.0 to 1.6 . More than 210 U.S. counties now lack any local news source, and approximately 50 million Americans live with limited or no access to local news. While some outlets have transitioned to digital formats, consolidation by large media conglomerates and steep reductions in newsroom staff (75% decline since 2005)

mean that these outlets produce substantially less original local content than the newspapers they replaced.

2.4 Data on Local Newspapers

We collect data on newspapers with daily publishing frequency and create a dataset of newspaper closures starting in 1970. To create this dataset, we combine data from the United States Newspaper Panel (USNP), Gao et al. (2020), and Abernathy (2018) as well as manually collected data from Editor & Publisher Yearbooks. For data sources that do not include the county in which a given newspaper operates, we assign the newspaper to a county based on the city where it is located. We reconcile any differences between the data sources manually and the resulting dataset contains the count of local newspapers by county and year.[3] We record a newspaper closure when there is a net decrease in the number of local daily newspapers for a given county-year. In addition, we collect data on the circulation of closing newspapers. We obtain circulation data from USNP where available, and manually collect circulation figures from the Editor and Publisher Yearbook for newspapers not covered by USNP. For each closing newspaper, we use the circulation figure from the single year closest to but preceding the closure, going back up to four years if necessary. In counties with multiple simultaneous closures, we average circulation across the closing newspapers.

3 (When) Are Union Elections Newsworthy?

Before we turn to the effect of local newspapers on union elections, we conduct descriptive analysis of news coverage of union elections. This analysis serves two purposes: (i) we validate whether local newspapers cover union elections in the first place, and (ii) we investigate how "localized" the market for news about union elections is.

[3]Similar to prior research, we record a newspaper closure when a newspaper (1) ceases to exist, (2) merges and leaves the county, or (3) decreases its publishing frequency to fewer than four times a week. Fan (2013) shows that mergers lead to decreased news content and increased prices. In addition, frequency changes are often accompanied by downsizing, which leads to a decrease in local coverage (Gao et al., 2020).

For this analysis, we scrape news articles for a random subset of 50% of the union elections in our sample from 1990-2022 using two sources, newspapers.com and NewsBank. We searched for articles using the keywords "NLRB", "election", "union", and variations of the establishment name, and we restrict the search to newspapers in the same state and the months between the opening and closing of the union election case. However, including words like "election" and "union" can create false positive hits, especially when newspapers are searched by the page which can include multiple articles with varying topics. Therefore, research assistants manually reviewed the news articles found for each union election case to ensure that we remove false positives. On average, we find news coverage for about 8% of union elections.[4]

We begin by exploring whether election or county characteristics predict the likelihood of news coverage using an OLS regression. The dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether the union election received news coverage, and we include year fixed effects in the regression. The results are displayed in Figure 3. The first set of independent variables is at the election level and includes *log(Eligible Voters)*, *log(Ballot Challenges)*, *log(Case Length)*, and *Union Victory*, which capture the number of eligible voters, the number of ballot challenges, the case length in days, and whether the union won, respectively. All of the variables are positively related to news coverage. The second set of independent variables is at the county level and we include *log(Population)* which captures the population of the county where the union election is held and *Urban* which is a binary indicatory that equals 1 if the county falls into a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). We find that the likelihood of news coverage decreases with population, but is higher for urban counties.

Lastly, we include variables related to newspaper presence. We find that an election is substantially more likely to get news coverage if there are any newspapers headquartered in

[4]Note that this is likely a lower bound estimate. While we include variations of the establishment name in our search to be as comprehensive as possible, newspapers may still refer to the establishment differently. In this case, we would not be able to pick up the news coverage. After searching more manually for news coverage of a random subset of elections for which we initially did not find coverage, we expect that the "true" rate of news coverage is likely closer to 10%.

the county. Relative to the omitted category of having zero newspapers in the county, having at least one newspaper in the county raises the probability of news coverage by roughly 50% (roughly 4 percentage points relative to a sample mean of 8%). The likelihood of coverage rises moderately for counties with 2 to 4 or with 5 or more papers, but the increase is more muted.

However, we find that the average number of newspapers in bordering counties of the county where the union election takes place has a precise null effect on the probability of news coverage. Combined, these coefficients support the idea that the market for news coverage of union elections is highly localized, which is consistent with local newspapers viewing the county in which they are headquartered as their primary customer base (e.g., Gentzkow et al., 2011).

Second, we explore whether news coverage of union elections varies by state. To do so, we re-estimate the above regression and include indicators for all states, but exclude the variables related to newspaper presence. Figure 4 shows how union election news coverage varies by state, using California as the benchmark. The states with the highest share of union elections covered are Vermont, South Carolina, and North Carolina while the states with the lowest share of union elections covered are New Jersey, Mississippi, and Arkansas (as well as Washington DC). Overall, the state fixed effects do not follow a simple geographic or politically partisan pattern, but rather highlight that the extent to which union elections receive news coverage varies substantially across space, which is variation that we use in subsequent analysis.

4 Empirical Strategies to Estimate the Effect of Local News on Union Organizing

The challenge in estimating the effect of a decrease in local news on union elections is that concurrent, unrelated factors could jointly determine the two. Therefore, we employ two

identification strategies using (i) the staggered rollout of Craigslist across counties, and (ii) newspaper closures as discrete shocks to the availability of local news.

4.1 Strategy #1: Craigslist Entry

Our first identification strategy exploits the staggered entry of Craigslist across U.S. counties between 1995 and 2010 as a shock to local news production. Craigslist is the world's largest online platform for classified ads, and its entry into local markets created direct competition for classified ad revenue, which accounted for approximately 30% of newspapers' total revenues in 2000. Djourelova et al. (2025) and Seamans and Zhu (2014) document that Craigslist entry led local newspapers to reduce newsroom staff, circulation, and local political coverage, consistent with a weakening of the local news environment. At the same time, there is no evidence that Craigslist affected job finding rates or other aspects of local labor market functioning (Kroft and Pope, 2014), which is important for our setting given that union organizing is closely tied to local labor market conditions.

We obtain data on the timing of Craigslist's entry into local markets from Djourelova et al. (2025). For each Craigslist website, the entry date is either directly available from Craigslist's expansion page or assigned based on the first snapshot recorded by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. To define the area served by each website, Djourelova et al. (ibid.) assign the county or counties corresponding to the location in the website's URL.[5]

For this identification strategy, we follow Djourelova et al. (ibid.) and use within-county variation in the timing of Craigslist entry:

$$Elections_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \tau_t + \beta * PostCraigslist_{c,t} + \Gamma X_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t},$$

where the subscript c represents a county and t represents a year. The outcome variable is the number of union elections at the county-year level and $PostCraigslist_{c,t}$ is an indicator

[5]For example, chicago.craigslist.org is assigned to Cook and DuPage counties, while westernmass.craigslist.org is assigned to Hampden, Hampshire, Worcester, Berkshire, and Franklin counties.

that equals one for county c in the year after the entry of a local Craigslist website. $X_{c,t}$ includes the natural log of county population and number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), the two variables that Djourelova et al. (2025) show predict the timing of Craigslist entry. α_c represents county fixed effects and τ_t represents year fixed effects. We include both never-treated and not-yet-treated counties as the control group and estimate the model using the heterogeneity-robust estimator of Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020) to account for potential treatment effect heterogeneity in staggered adoption settings. We cluster standard errors at the county level.

The validity of this identification strategy rests on the timing of Craigslist entry being unrelated to pre-existing trends in union organizing. Djourelova et al. (2025) document that, conditional on log population and the number of local Internet service providers, the timing of Craigslist entry is uncorrelated with local newspaper characteristics, including circulation, staffing, and classified ad reliance. This pattern is consistent with Craigslist's expansion being driven by market demographics and internet availability rather than strategic considerations related to local newspaper or labor market conditions. We follow Djourelova et al. (ibid.) and control for log population and the number of Internet service providers throughout.

The summary statistics for this identification strategy are displayed in Table 1. In this sample, the average county-year has 0.71 union elections and about 36% of the sample are treated counties (i.e., counties where Craislist entered during our sample period).

4.2 Strategy #2: Newspaper Closures

Our second identification strategy exploits newspaper closures as discrete shocks to the local news environment. The main concern with using newspaper closures to identify the effect of local news on union organizing is that the same underlying economic conditions that drive newspaper closures may also affect union organizing activity (such as economic downturns). To address this, we compare counties with newspaper closures to bordering counties without

newspaper closures, subject to similar local economic conditions (Leonelli, 2022).[6] Gentzkow et al. (2011) document that the median newspaper sells more than 80% of its copies in its home county and that coverage focuses predominantly on local happenings, consistent with news being a highly local product. Our evidence in Section 3 corroborates this point for our specific setting, as the number of newspapers in bordering counties has no effect on news coverage of union elections. Thus, a newspaper closure in one county is unlikely to affect news coverage of union activity in a neighboring county, limiting the potential for spillovers.

For this identification strategy, we estimate the regression

$$Elections_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \tau_t + \beta_1 * Closure_c + \beta_2 * Post_t + \beta_3 * Closure_c * Post_t + \Gamma X_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{c,t},$$

where the subscript c represents a county and t represents a year. $X_{c,t}$ includes the percent of workers in manufacturing and the natural log of county population. The outcome variable is the number of union elections at the county-year level and we employ a pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood (PPML) specification to accommodate the count nature and non-normal distribution of the outcome (**Cohn˙2022**). We implement a stacked dataset structure (Cengiz et al., 2019; Gormley and Matsa, 2011) to alleviate concerns about heterogeneous treatment effects and the resulting negative weights in TWFE models (Barrios, 2021; Goodman-Bacon, 2021). For each newspaper closure, we construct a cohort that includes the treatment county and all bordering counties without newspaper closures, covering the five years before and ten years after the closure. We include county-by-cohort fixed effects and year-by-cohort fixed effects as well as urban-by-year fixed effects to control for potential differences in trends between urban and rural counties.

We follow Gao et al. (2020) and restrict our sample to "impactful" closures, defined as closures in counties with at most three daily newspapers prior to the closure, to ensure that each closure represents a meaningful reduction in local information dissemination. Further,

[6] Leonelli (2022) employs a similar Border-County design and finds no difference in economic indicators such as population, employment, or income between treatment and control counties.

we restrict our sample to closures between 1970 and 2010 to ensure sufficient pre- and post-closure data coverage for all closures in the sample. Of the 685 newspaper closures in this sample, 397 are impactful closures and constitute our main estimation sample.

The summary statistics for this identification strategy are displayed in Table 2. In this sample, the average county-year has 2.29 union elections and 15% of the sample are treated counties (i.e., counties with newspaper closures).

5 The Effect of Local Newspaper Strength on Union Organizing

This section investigates the extent to which a decrease in local newspaper strength affects union organizing efforts. We begin by describing our main results using both empirical strategies in Section 5.1 and verifying the robustness of our results in Section **??**. Then we explore which types of union elections are impacted in Section 5.3, before turning to variation in the magnitude of the effect in Section 5.2.

5.1 Main Results

We begin by discussing the results using the Craigslist identification strategy in combination with the heterogeneity-robust DiD estimator from Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020), described in Section 4.1. The results are displayed in Table 3, Column (1). We find that Craigslist entry leads to 0.42 fewer union elections per treated county, accumulated over an average of 3.05 post-treatment years, relative to a pre-entry mean of 1.31 union elections, representing a 32% decline.[7] This translates to approximately 466 fewer elections across the 1,110 treated counties over the post-treatment period. Figure 5 Panel A displays the results graphically. The effect takes hold in the year Craigslist enters the local market and grows in

[7]Dividing the cumulative effect by the average post-treatment horizon implies an average annual decline of approximately 10.5%.

magnitude over time, with no evidence of pre-trends.

Next, we turn to our second identification strategy, comparing bordering counties with and without newspaper closures in a stacked DiD design, as described in Section 4.2. The results are displayed in Table 4, Column (1). We find that newspaper closures reduce union elections by approximately 8.5% per county-year, on average over the ten post-closure years. Given a pre-closure mean of 5.50 union elections in treated counties, this corresponds to approximately 0.48 fewer union elections per county-year. Across the 397 closures in our sample, this amounts to over 10,000 fewer union elections in treated counties over the 10-year post-closure period. Figure 5 Panel B plots the dynamic treatment effect, showing that union elections begin declining the year after the newspaper closure, with no evidence of pre-trends.

Taken together, both strategies show that weakening the local news environment reduces union organizing activity.

5.2 Heterogeneous Effects by Size of Shock to the News Environment

The above results show evidence consistent with weakening news landscapes reducing union elections on average. To ensure that our results are truly driven by changes in the underlying news landscape, we utilize its diversity for heterogeneity tests. In particular, we should see stronger effects in locations in which the shock (whether Craigslist entry or a newspaper closure) constituted a larger change to the news landscape for union elections.

We begin with two cross-sectional tests using the Craigslist design. First, we examine whether the effect of Craigslist on union elections is stronger in counties that had a newspaper in the year before Craigslist entry (the average county had 0.25 newspapers before Craigslist entry). If the effect on union elections stems from changes in the news landscape, we should see significantly weaker effects when there were no newspapers to begin with. We do not categorize control counties based on whether they had newspapers before the Craigslist

entry because this cannot be defined for never-treated counties (i.e., we only restrict the treated counties in the subsamples). The results are displayed in Table 3, Columns (2) and (3) as well as Figure 6 Panel A. Consistent with this, our results are concentrated in counties with a newspaper headquartered in the county in the year before Craigslist entry. In counties without a newspaper prior to Craigslist entry, we find no significant decrease in union elections.

Second, we examine whether the effect depends on the extent of union election news coverage in the county prior to Craigslist entry. If our results are driven by changes in the news landscape, the effect should be larger in counties where newspapers previously covered union elections. We operationalize this by restricting the scraped news coverage data to 1990 to 2000, conditioning on counties with at least one union election during that period and counties with newspapers before Craigslist entry. The median share of union elections covered is about 5%, which we use to classify treated counties into high and low coverage counties (we do not restrict the control counties for the same reason as above). The results are displayed in Table 3, Columns (4) and (5) as well as Figure 6 Panel B. Craigslist entry has a somewhat stronger effect in counties with historically higher union election news coverage, with an average total effect of -67% compared to -48% in counties without such coverage.

Next, we present cross-sectional results for the Border-County identification strategy in Table 4. First, we examine whether the effect is stronger for closures occurring before 1996, when alternative news sources like the internet were more limited and newspapers played a larger role in local information dissemination. The median closure year in our sample is 1991 and 65% of closures take place before 1996. The results in Column (2) show that the effect is concentrated in pre-1996 closures, with an average decrease of 10%.[8] The dynamic effects are shown in Figure 6 Panel C.

Second, we examine whether the effect is stronger for newspapers with high pre-closure circulation, as wider-reaching newspapers represent a larger loss to the local news landscape.

[8]The effect is calculated as $(e^{(0.014-0.121)} - 1) \times 100 =$ -10.15%.

High Circulation is an indicator variable that equals one if the closing newspaper had above 75th percentile circulation in the years before closure, approximately 28,000 daily copies. Consistent with this, Column (4) 12% decrease in union elections following the closure of a high-circulation newspaper. The dynamic effects are shown in Figure 6 Panel D.

Overall, the heterogeneity analyses corroborate that the effects on union elections identified in Section 5.1 are due to changes in the local news environment rather than other contemporaneous forces. We display the coefficient plots for the heterogeneity analyses in Figure 6.

5.3 Which Types of Union Elections do Newspapers Affect?

We next explore whether the effect of weakening news landscapes is concentrated in particular types of union elections. For example, elections with lower levels of worker support or fewer eligible voters may be more likely to drop out of the organizing process when the news environment weakens.

We present results using both identification strategies in Table 5 Panels A and B, comparing union elections along three dimensions. First, we split elections by outcome, comparing successful elections, defined as more than 50% of votes cast in favor of the union, to unsuccessful ones. Second, we examine heterogeneity in worker support, splitting elections into low support (vote share at or below the 25th percentile, corresponding to 36% of votes cast for the union), close elections (vote share between 40% and 60%), and high support (vote share of 80% or above). Third, we split elections by size using the median number of eligible voters as the threshold, which is 24 eligible voters in our sample.

Across all three dimensions and both identification strategies, we find that weakening news landscapes reduce union elections broadly. The negative effects are not concentrated in a particular type of election, suggesting that the decline in union organizing reflects a general dampening of organizing activity rather than the elimination of small or marginal elections alone.

6 Why Does Union Organizing Depend on Local News?

Why does the local newspaper environment have such a stark effect on union elections? We propose and test for two plausible mechanisms: affecting the intensity of employer interference, and facilitating social learning among workers that affects the expected returns from organizing.

First, the presence of newspapers could deter employers from interfering with union elections. Especially given the weak enforcement of the NLRA and limited financial penalties from charges of Unfair Labor Practices, employers might be more reluctant to interfere in elections when they risk receiving negative publicity from doing so. Local newspapers serve as monitors for a range of corporate misconduct (Dyck et al., 2010; Gao et al., 2020; Heese et al., 2022) and regulatory noncompliance (Campa, 2018), and the threat of publicity for violating labor standards has been shown to be a substantial deterrent in other settings (Johnson, 2020). By reducing the threat of such publicity, the closure or weakening of local newspapers might increase the latent threat of employer interference and retaliation, making workers more reluctant to initiate the organizing process.

Second, news coverage of local union elections and other union activity can provide information and act as a signal to local non-unionized employees. Union organizing exhibits strategic complementarity: workers' willingness to initiate organizing efforts is higher when they perceive a larger share of their co-workers to be supportive of unionization (Naidu, 2022). However, talking openly about union preferences and interest in organizing is risky: employers may initiate anti-union tactics or retaliate against organizing workers upon learning of organizing efforts (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Logan, 2006). As a result of this need for secrecy, workers' beliefs about co-worker support may be downward biased.

Learning about a successful union campaign in one's community may signal that local support for unionization is high, leading workers to revise their beliefs upward. Such a revision raises the expected returns from organizing and thus may encourage more workers to initiate their own organizing for an election.

However, workers have to know that successful organizing in their community has occurred to learn from it. Newspaper coverage of successful campaigns is a primary means for other workers to learn about it. That is, if such social learning indeed matters for workers' organizing decision, then newspaper coverage of successful union elections may facilitate a "ripple effect" of successful organizing into more local elections.

6.1 Does Weakening Local News Increase Employer Interference in Union Organizing?

As described above, the weakening of local newspapers may increase employers' latent willingness to interfere in union elections. Measuring this latent willingness poses numerous challenges. For one, employers have many available tactics to (legally and illegally) interfere in union elections (Freeman and Kleiner, 1990), some of which may be unobservable. Furthermore, any *realized* interference in elections is only observed conditional on workers initiating the election process. Workplaces in which the latent probability of retaliation is highest may not initiate elections in the first place. Moreover, even conditional on an election taking place, workers may fear that filing a ULP claim may itself trigger employer retaliation. Each of these factors create a form of selection bias in observed measures of employer interference.

With these challenges in mind, we consider multiple measures of employers' interference in the election process. Our first measure is based on ULP claims by employees, which are available from 1999 through 2022. To account for the potential selection bias in claims filing, we use the percent of ULP claims that are upheld by the NLRB, in the spirit of the threshold model by Dahl and Knepper (2021). We also create an analogous measure considering only ULP cases that are not related to union elections to reduce any cross-contamination from the main effect on union elections. In addition, we use the average case length of elections that take place, as longer case lengths (the time lapse between the petition to hold an election and the election itself) is often indicative of employers' engaging in delay tactics (Wang and

Young, 2023). Lastly we use measures of the average number of challenged ballots as well as the percent of elections with challenges ballots that take place.

The results are displayed in Table 6 Panels A and B for both identification strategies. We do not find a discernible effect of weakened news landscapes on any of the measures discussed above, meaning that there is no evidence of employer retaliation changing significantly.

6.2 Do Local Newspapers Propagate Winning Elections into More Organizing?

As we described above, newspapers may facilitate social learning about local support for unionization, facilitating "ripple effects" of successful elections into mor organizing. A challenge to testing this mechanism empirically is that successful union elections are more likely to take place in counties with favorable environments for organizing.

In light of these factors, we employ a Differences-in-discontinuities design, where we compare the *change* in the number of union elections in a given county in the years before and after a union election (i.e. the "difference") in which the vote share is above 50% versus in which the vote share is less than 50% (the "discontinuity"). Given evidence of non-random bunching just below the 50% threshold (Frandsen, 2021), suggesting employer interference in close elections, we exclude observations with vote shares between 48% and 52%.

Formally, for focal election i in county c taking place in month t, we estimate

$$\underbrace{\Delta\text{Elections}_{i,c,t}^{+36,-36}}_{\substack{\#\text{ elections in county } c \\ \text{(next 3–39 months)} \\ -\text{ (prior 3–39 months)}}} = f(\text{VoteShare}_i - 0.5) + \beta\mathbf{1}(\text{VoteShare}_i \geq 0.5) + \boldsymbol{\gamma}'\mathbf{X}_{c,t} + \varepsilon_{i,c,t} \qquad (1)$$

β represents the extent to which successful elections create a "ripple effect" leading to more elections in the county. We hypothesize that this ripple effect, if relevant, will be larger in areas in which union activity is more likely to receive newspaper coverage. To capture

this heterogeneity, we split the sample into counties in which the share of elections over the period 1990–2004 that received newspaper coverage was above or below the sample median.

In our baseline specification, we include focal elections from 1975 through 2016, and $\mathbf{X}_{c,t}$ includes controls for the log of county-level population, the share of county-level employment in manufacturing, and year fixed effects. We use the *rdrobust* package (Calonico et al., 2017) to select the bandwidth around the cutoff, to obtain point estimates and standard errors, and to select bins in the plots that visualize the discontinuity.

Figure 7a shows the LATE estimate of (barely) successful union elections on future organizing in the county for the entire sample. There is no clear evidence of a discontinuous change in future elections around the threshold. However, in Figure 7b we only include counties with high news coverage of union elections and see a strong discontinuity at the threshold. In this subsample, (barely) successful union elections lead to roughly 2 more union elections—a 25% increase— in the same county over the subsequent three years, relative to unsuccessful elections ($\hat{\beta} = 1.84, p = .07$).In contrast, there is no discernible effect of successful elections on future organizing in counties in which news coverage of elections is essentially non-existent (Figure 7c).

6.3 Assessing the Explanatory Power of the Mechanisms

Local newspapers facilitate a ripple effect of successful union organizing campaigns into more elections. This "ripple effect" is consistent with models of social learning in which learning of a successful union drive in one's community raises one's expected returns to organizing.

But to what extent can this relationship explain our estimated effect of newspaper weakening on union elections in Section 5.1? To answer this question, we consider a simple model of union organizing. We model the number of elections for county c and year t as

$N_{c,t} \sim \text{Poisson}(\lambda_{c,t})$, with

$$\log(\lambda_{c,t}) = \alpha + \beta_1 \log(\text{pop}_{c,t}) + \underbrace{\beta_2 t}_{\substack{\text{time} \\ \text{trend}}} + \underbrace{u_c}_{\substack{\text{county} \\ \text{random} \\ \text{effect}}} + (1 - CL_{c,t}) * \underbrace{(\sum_{\ell=1}^{3} \gamma_\ell W_{c,t-\ell})}_{\substack{\text{contagion} \\ effect}} \tag{2}$$

where $W_{c,t} \sim \text{Binomial}(N_{c,t}, p)$ is number of winning elections, and p is the (exogenous) probability that an election is successful. That is, the log likelihood is a function of a constant, a county random effect (u_c), a time trend t, log population, and a function of prior winning elections. γ reflects the extent to which recent successful elections lead to more elections today.

The term $(1-CL_{c,t})$ means that the "ripple effect" of prior wins is shut off when Craigslist enters a county, consistent with the evidence that the entry of Craigslist substantially reduced local newspapers' coverage of labor and political issues in the area.

We simulate the path of elections under Equation 2 and compare it to the path of elections under a version of Equation 2 in which $CL_{c,t}$ does not shut off the ripple effect of prior wins. We compute the gap in the number of elections in a county under the two scenarios as a measure of the consequence of shutting off the ripple effect dynamics.

We estimate $\alpha, \beta_1, \beta_2, u_c$ via a random effects Poisson model and take p from data. We plug in plug in γ_ℓ based on the difference-in-discontinuities estimate reported in Figure 7b.[9] We simulate the model 500 times to obtain point estimates and confidence intervals.

Figure 8 reports the results implied from this model. The arrival of Craigslist leads to an immediate drop in elections that grows over time. Remarkably, the overall implied loss in elections–31%–is essentially identical to our reduced form estimated effect of Craigslist on elections reported in Figure 5 Panel A.

That is, this simple model implies that the negative effect of the arrival of Craigslist on

[9]Specifically, the point estimate in the regression corresponding to Figure 7b implies that a successful union election leads to 28% more elections over the next three years. Based on this, we use $\gamma_l = log(1.28)/3 = 0.08$

union organizing can be entirely explained by its dilution of the "social learning" dynamics of successful elections.

7 Conclusion

In this paper we examine the relationship between local news and union organizing. In the first part of the paper we show that news coverage of union elections varies significantly based on locality and the characteristics of the union election. For example, successful and larger union elections are more likely to receive news coverage.

In the second part of the paper we establish the relationship of local news and union organizing by employing two identification strategies. First, we focus on Craigslist entries as they had a significant negative impact on the local news landscape. Second, we employ a stacked DiD design, comparing counties with newspaper closures to bordering counties without newspaper closures. In both cases, we find that a decrease in the local news leads to a decrease in union elections.

We find that this effect is stronger for counties where union elections are covered more often, when less alternative news dissemination is available, and when the decrease in local news is more significant (i.e., a newspaper with high circulation closes).

Our mechanism tests reveal that union elections have a "ripple" effect, where successful union elections lead to more subsequent union elections, but only when there is high news coverage of union elections. Contrary, we do not find that changes in the news landscape affect employers' likelihood of interfering with union elections.

Our study helps address the disparity between steady (and high) preferences for union organizing and the decrease in union organizing. In particular we show that the decline in local news has contributed to the decline in organizing.

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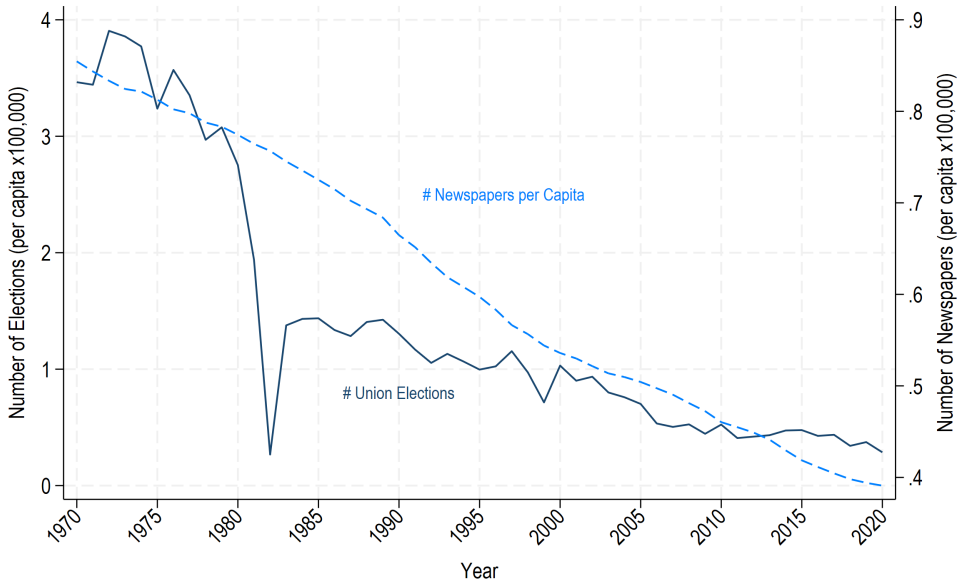
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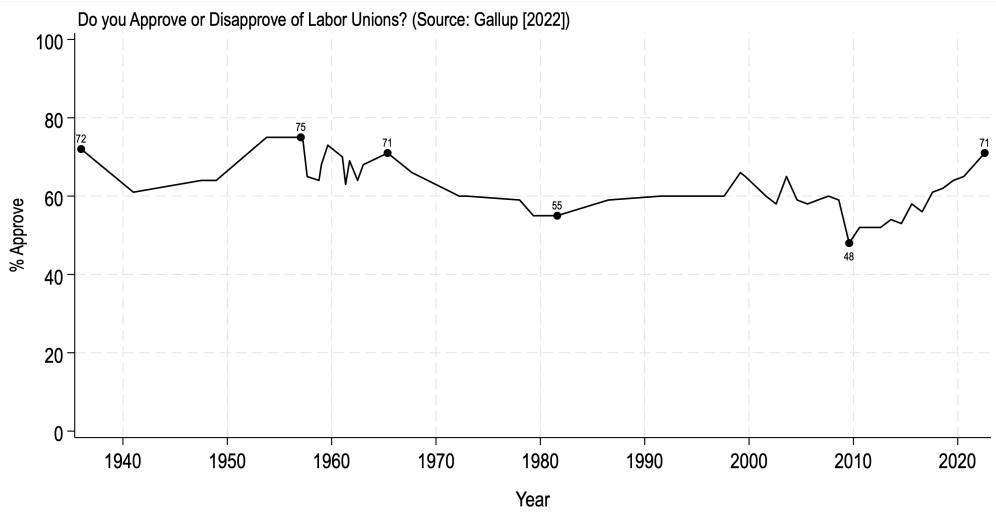
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Figure 1: Number of Union Elections



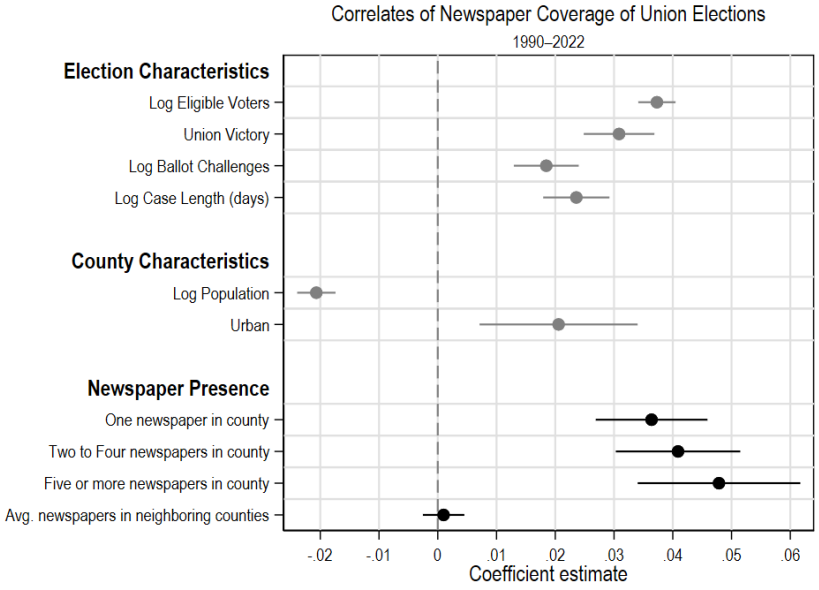
Notes: This figure plots the number of union elections filed with the NLRB per capita, multiplied by 100,000 (left axis) and the number of daily newspapers per capita, multiplied by 100,000 (right axis), from 1970 to 2022. Union election data are obtained from the NLRB. Newspaper data are obtained from the Editor & Publisher Yearbook, USNP, Gao et al. (2020), and Abernathy (2018).

Figure 2: Public Approval of Labor Unions



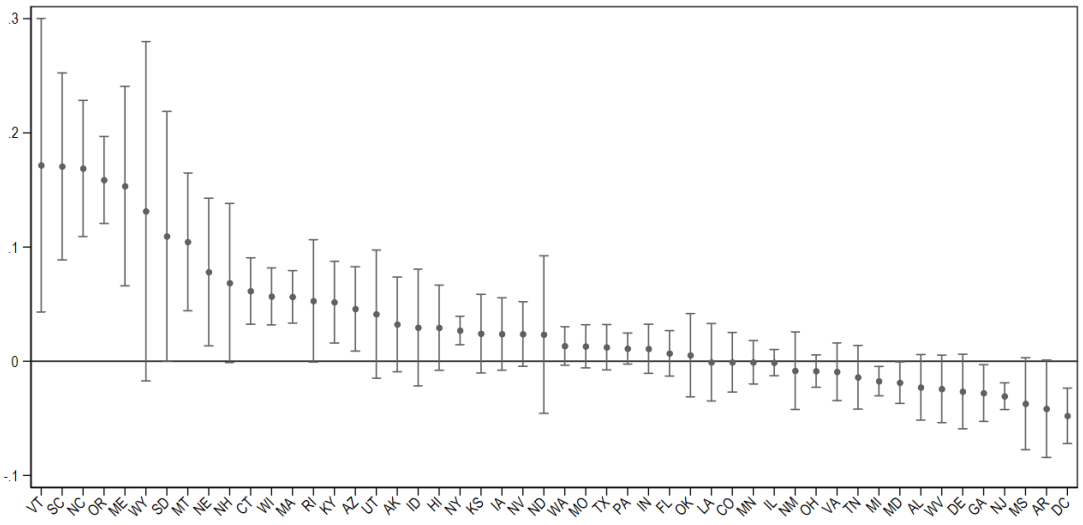
Notes: This figure displays the percentage of U.S. respondents who approve of labor unions, based on annual Gallup polls (see here).

Figure 3: Correlates of Newspaper Coverage of Union Elections



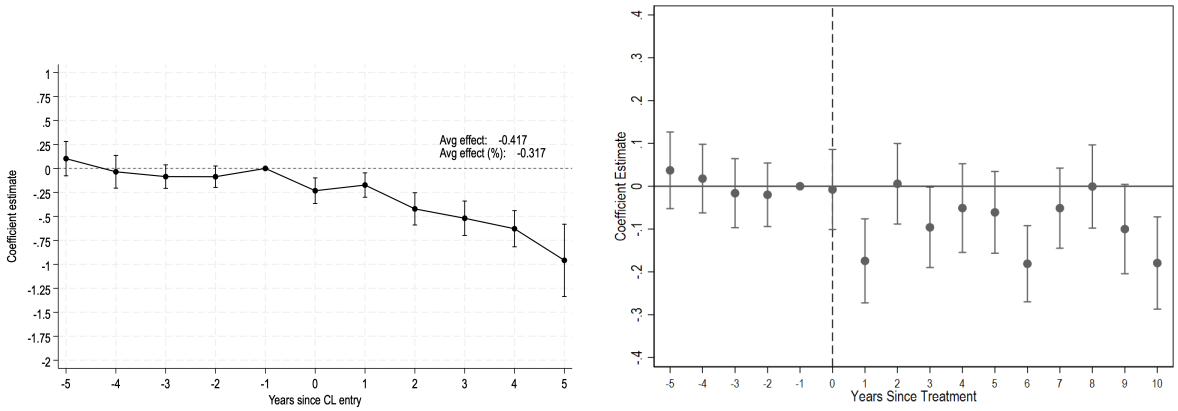
Notes: This figure displays coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals from an OLS regression of a binary indicator for whether a union election received newspaper coverage on election-level, county-level, and newspaper-presence variables. The sample includes a randomly selected 50% subset of union elections from 1990 to 2022. Election-level variables include the log of eligible voters, the log of ballot challenges, the log of case length in days, and an indicator for union victory. County-level variables include the log of county population and an indicator for whether the county falls within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (*Urban*). Newspaper presence variables include indicators for one, two to four, and five or more newspapers headquartered in the county, as well as the average number of newspapers in bordering counties. All specifications include year fixed effects.

Figure 4: Geographic Variation in News Coverage of Union Elections



Notes: This figure displays state fixed effect estimates from an OLS regression of a binary indicator for whether a union election received newspaper coverage on election-level and county-level characteristics and state fixed effects, omitting California as the baseline. The sample includes a randomly selected 50% subset of union elections from 1990 to 2022. The figure displays coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals.

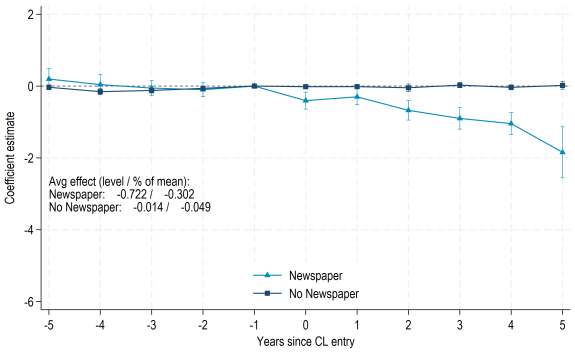
Figure 5: The Effect of Weakening News Environments on Union Elections



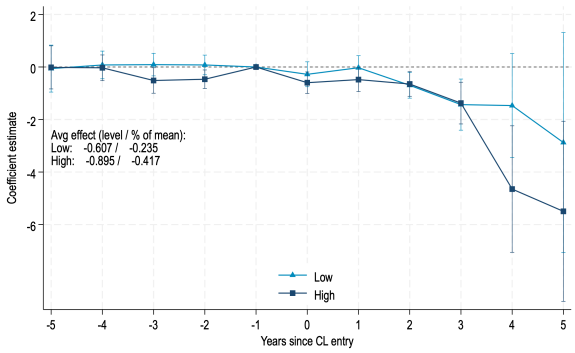
(a) Craigslist Identification Strategy (b) Border-County Identification Strategy

Notes: Panel A plots the dynamic treatment effect of Craigslist entry on the number of union elections at the county-year level, estimated using the heterogeneity-robust difference-in-differences estimator of Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020) as shown in Table 3 Column (1). The specification includes county and year fixed effects and controls for the natural log of county population and the number of Internet service providers. Year 0 denotes the year of Craigslist entry. Panel B plots the dynamic treatment effect of newspaper closures on the number of union elections at the county-year level, estimated using a stacked pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood specification as shown in Table 4 Column (1). The specification includes county-by-cohort and year-by-cohort fixed effects, urban-by-year fixed effects, and controls for the percent of workers in manufacturing and the natural log of county population. Year 0 denotes the year of the newspaper closure and the year prior is the omitted baseline period. Both panels display 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered at the county level.

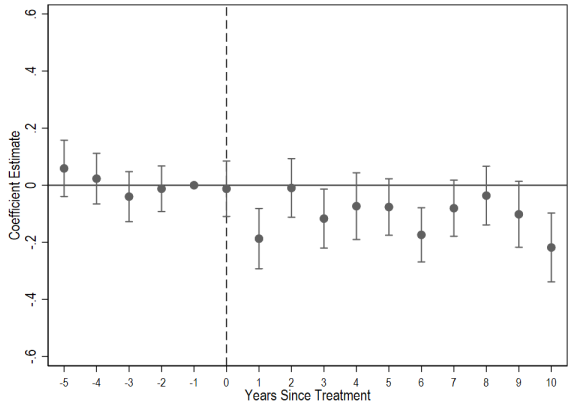
Figure 6: Dynamic Plots for Cross-Sectional Results



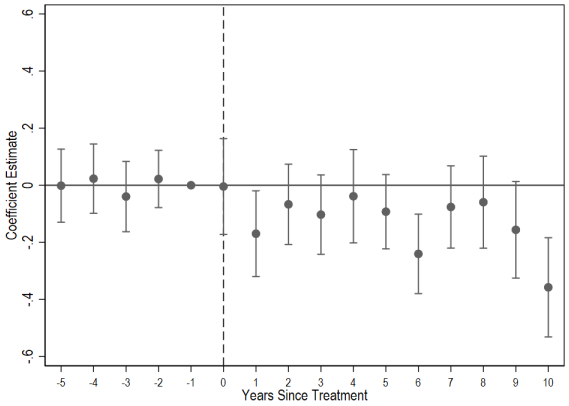
(a) (No) Newspaper before Entry



(b) High (Low) News Coverage



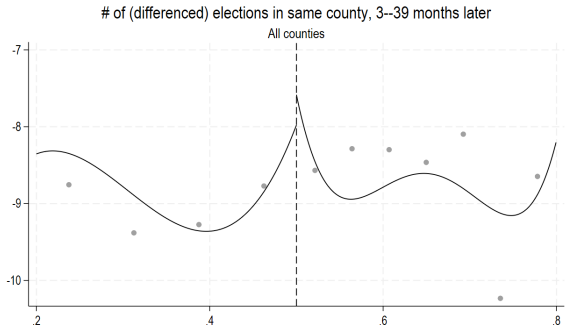
(c) Early Closure



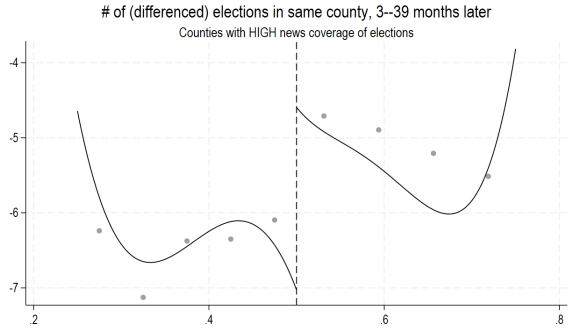
(d) High Circulation

Notes: This figure plots dynamic treatment effects for four cross-sectional heterogeneity analyses. Panel A plots effects separately for counties with and without a newspaper headquartered in the county in the year before Craigslist entry, as shown in Table 3 Columns (2) and (3). Panel B plots effects separately for counties with above- and below-median historical news coverage of union elections (defined over the period 1990–2000), as shown in Table 3 Columns (4) and (5). Panels C and D plot dynamic treatment effects from the border-county stacked pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood specification. In Panel C, we restrict to observations for which *Closure Pre 1996* equals 1 (Table 4 Column (2)). In Panel D, we restrict to observations for which *High Circulation* equals 1 (Table 4 Column (3)). All panels display 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered at the county level.

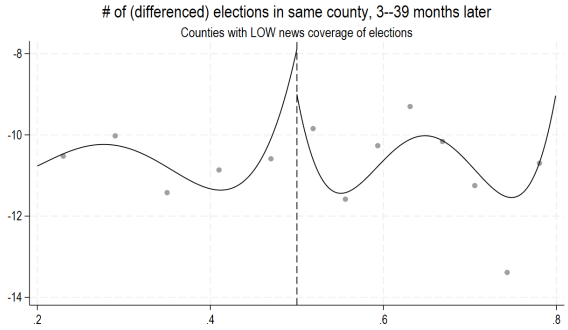
Figure 7: The Ripple Effect of Union Elections



(a) Overall sample



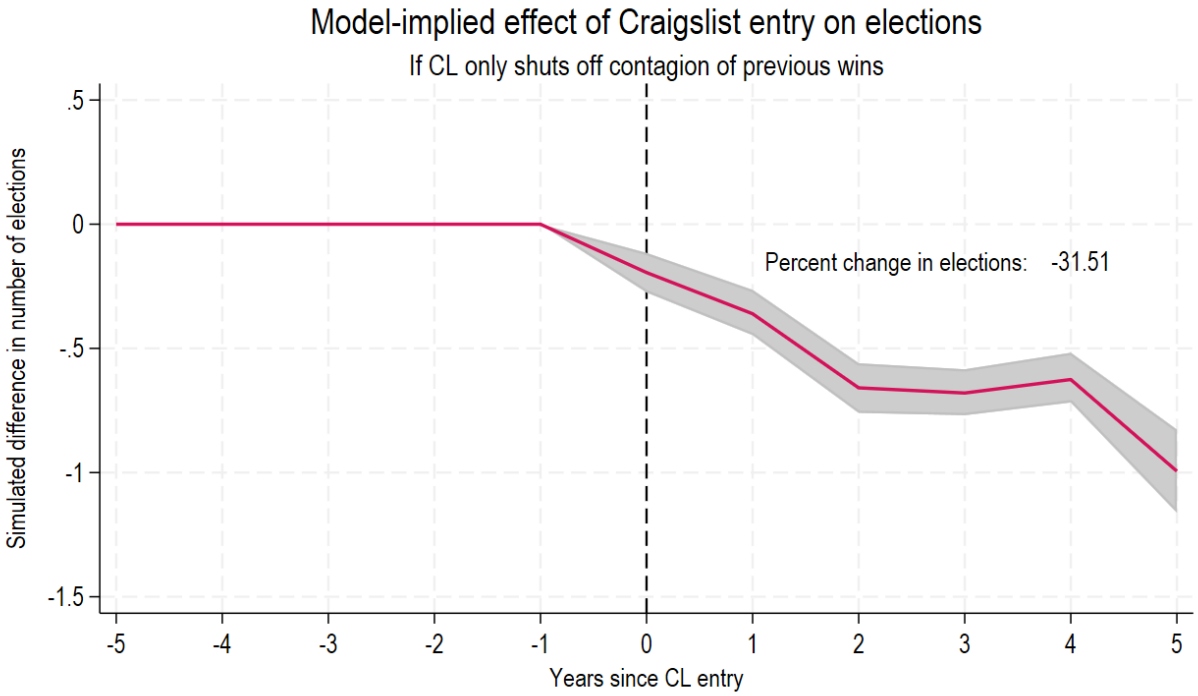
(b) High news coverage counties



(c) Low news coverage counties

Notes: This figure displays the results of a "donut" differences-in-discontinuities, estimating whether there is a discontinuity at the 50% vote-share in subsequent union elections after a union election in the same county. The difference in subsequent union elections is measures over a three year pre- and post-period, omitting the three months around the focal union election. In addition, the specification omits union elections with vote shares between 48% and 52%. The sample is restricted to union elections with at least 20 votes and we include controls for the % of workers in manufacturing as well as log(population). "High (Low) news coverage counties" are counties in which the share of union elections in the county 1990–2004 that received news coverage was above (below) the sample median.

Figure 8: The Simulated Effect of Craigslist Entry on Union Elections Under A Model of Social Learning



This figure displays the simulated effect of Craigslist entry on the number of union elections, based on the model described in Equation 2. The outcome is the simulated difference in the number of elections per county between the scenario in which Craigslist entry shuts off the contagion term and the counterfactual in which it does not. The model is simulated 500 times. The solid line shows the point estimate and the shaded region shows the 95% confidence interval.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Craigslist Identification Strategy

	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	P10	P25	P50	P75	P90	Max
Main Outcome										
# Elections	49,728	0.71	3.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.81	106.00
Population	49,728	92,406.52	298,462.53	272.00	5,373.00	11,310.00	25,192.50	63,480.50	181,984.00	9,818,700.00
Number of ISPs	49,728	4.42	4.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.06	7.26	10.63	33.89
Cross-sections										
Share of Elections Covered	9,328	0.11	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.15	0.29	1.00
# Newspapers before Craigslist	49,344	0.25	0.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	12.00
Election Characteristics										
# Successful Elections	49,728	0.42	1.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	67.00
# Non-Successful Elections	49,728	0.29	1.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	47.80
# Close Elections	49,728	0.18	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09	31.00
# High-Support Elections	49,728	0.20	1.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	56.55
# Low-Support Elections	49,728	0.17	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	32.90
# Elections w/ High Eligible Voters	49,728	0.38	1.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	61.00
# Elections w/ Low Eligible Voters	49,728	0.33	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	54.83
Employer Interference										
Pct ULP Cases Upheld	19,945	0.45	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.44	0.67	1.00	1.00
Pct Non-Election ULP Cases Upheld	15,566	0.39	0.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.57	1.00	1.00
Avg Case Length (days)	12,441	103.77	195.45	10.00	44.00	49.00	56.00	86.00	173.32	4,831.00
Avg Challenged Ballots	12,441	2.11	6.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	2.00	5.00	220.00
Pct Elections w/ Challenged Ballots	12,441	0.43	0.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.36	1.00	1.00	1.00

Notes: This table provides descriptive statistics for the analyses using the Craigslist identification strategy. The unit of observation is the county-year. *# Elections* is the number of union elections filed with the NLRB at the county-year level. *Population* is the county population. *Number of ISPs* is the number of Internet service providers in the county, following Djourelova et al. (2025). *Share of Elections Covered* is the share of union elections in the county from 1990 to 2000 that received newspaper coverage, conditional on at least one election having taken place. *# Newspapers before Craigslist* is the number of daily newspapers headquartered in the county in the year before Craigslist entry. *# Successful (Non-Successful) Elections* is the number of union elections in which the union received more (no more) than 50% of votes cast. *# Close Elections* is the number of elections with a vote share between 40% and 60%. *# High-Support (Low-Support) Elections* is the number of elections with a union vote share of 80% or above (at or below the 25th percentile, corresponding to 36%). *# Elections w/ High (Low) Eligible Voters* splits elections at the median number of eligible voters, which is 24. *Pct ULP Cases Upheld* is the share of Unfair Labor Practice claims filed by employees that are upheld by the NLRB. *Pct Non-Election ULP Cases Upheld* is the analogous measure restricted to ULP cases not related to union elections. *Avg Case Length (days)* is the average number of days between the petition to hold an election and the election itself. *Avg Challenged Ballots* is the average number of challenged ballots per election. *Pct Elections w/ Challenged Ballots* is the share of elections with at least one challenged ballot. Union election and ULP data are obtained from the NLRB. Newspaper data are obtained from the Editor & Publisher Yearbook, USNP, Gao et al. (2020), and Abernathy (2018). Control variable data are obtained from the Census and the Federal Communications Commission.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Border County Identification Strategy

	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	P10	P25	P50	P75	P90	Max
Main Outcome										
# Elections	43,314	2.29	6.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	6.00	132.00
DiD										
Closure	43,314	0.15	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Post	43,314	0.63	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Controls										
Urban	43,314	0.60	0.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Pct Manufacturing	43,314	0.21	0.16	0.00	0.04	0.09	0.18	0.30	0.43	5.00
Population	43,314	198,747.52	460,689.31	780.00	9,260.00	19,567.00	51,205.00	181,468.00	530,012.00	10,105,708.00
Cross-Sections										
Avg Circulation	39,957	26,979.71	64,941.83	300.00	2,209.00	3,496.00	7,015.00	28,048.00	51,987.00	762,639.00
High Circulation	39,957	0.24	0.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Closure Year	6,327	1,991.68	10.43	1,971.00	1,978.00	1,984.00	1,991.00	2,000.00	2,007.00	2,010.00
Closure Pre 1996	43,314	0.65	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Election Characteristics										
# Successful Elections	43,314	1.29	3.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.96	77.00
# Non-Successful Elections	43,314	1.00	2.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	75.00
# Close Elections	43,314	0.54	1.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	38.00
# High-Support Elections	43,314	0.60	2.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	56.55
# Low-Support Elections	43,314	0.61	1.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	48.00
# Elections w/ High Eligible Voters	43,314	1.16	3.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	92.00
# Elections w/ Low Eligible Voters	43,314	1.12	3.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	73.00
Employer Interference										
Pct ULP Cases Upheld	19,625	0.40	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.39	0.53	1.00	1.00
Pct Non-Election ULP Cases Upheld	8,655	0.38	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.36	0.51	0.99	1.00
Avg Case Length (days)	18,066	103.50	172.17	0.00	40.24	50.29	64.29	100.79	176.50	6,292.00
Avg Challenged Ballots	18,066	1.74	5.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	2.00	4.00	307.00
Pct Elections w/ Challenged Ballots	18,066	0.52	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	1.00	1.00	1.00

Notes: This table provides descriptive statistics for the analyses using the border-county identification strategy. The unit of observation is the county-year. *# Elections* is the number of union elections filed with the NLRB at the county-year level. *Closure* equals one for counties with a newspaper closure and zero for bordering control counties. *Post* equals one for years at or after the newspaper closure. *Urban* equals one if the county falls within a Metropolitan Statistical Area. *Pct Manufacturing* is the share of county-level employment in manufacturing. *Population* is the county population. *Avg Circulation* is the average daily circulation of the closing newspaper in the year closest to but preceding the closure, going back up to four years; in counties with multiple simultaneous closures, this is averaged across closing newspapers. *High Circulation* equals one if the closing newspaper had above 75th percentile circulation. *Closure Year* is the year of the newspaper closure. *Closure Pre 1996* equals one for newspaper closures occurring before 1996. Election characteristic and employer interference variables are defined as in Table 1. Union election and ULP data are obtained from the NLRB. Newspaper data are obtained from the Editor & Publisher Yearbook, USNP, Gao et al. (2020), and Abernathy (2018). Control variable data are obtained from the QCEW, Census, and BLS.

Table 3: Regression Results using the Craigslist Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable: *# Elections*	(1) Overall	(2) Newspaper	(3) No Newspaper	(4) News Coverage	(5) No News Coverage
Craigslist Entry	-0.417***	-0.722***	-0.014	-0.878***	-0.634***
	(0.070)	(0.121)	(0.028)	(0.172)	(0.181)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Avg. Pre Effect	-0.026	0.020	-0.093	-0.073	0.120
Avg. Effect (%)	-31.711	-54.870	-1.096	-66.783	-48.192
Used Observations	33,886	28,434	27,210	24,979	25,030

Notes: This table reports coefficient estimates from difference-in-differences regressions estimated using the heterogeneity-robust estimator of Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020). The dependent variable is the number of union elections at the county-year level. *Craigslist Entry* captures the average cumulative effect of Craigslist entry on union elections over the post-treatment period. *Avg. Pre Effect* reports the average pre-treatment placebo effect across the pre-treatment horizons, which serves as a test of parallel pre-trends; values close to zero indicate no evidence of differential pre-trends. *Avg. Effect (%)* converts the average cumulative effect to a percentage change relative to the pre-entry mean. Column (1) reports the baseline estimate for all treated counties. In Columns (2) and (3), treated counties are split based on whether a newspaper was headquartered in the county in the year before Craigslist entry (*Newspaper* vs. *No Newspaper*); control counties are not restricted. In Columns (4) and (5), treated counties are split based on whether the share of union elections receiving news coverage from 1990 to 2000 was above or below the sample median of 5% (*News Coverage* vs. *No News Coverage*), conditional on having at least one union election and a newspaper before Craigslist entry; control counties are not restricted. All specifications include county and year fixed effects and control for the natural log of county population and the number of Internet service providers. Standard errors are clustered at the county level and t-statistics are reported in parentheses. All variables are defined in the notes to Tables 1 and 2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels (two-tailed), respectively.

Table 4: Regression Results using the Border-County Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable: *# Elections*	(1)	(2)	(3)
Closure × Post	-0.089***	0.014	-0.039
	(-3.88)	(0.25)	(-1.18)
Closure × Post × Closure Pre 1996		-0.121**	
		(-2.01)	
Closure × Post × High Circulation			-0.089*
			(-1.85)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed Effects:			
Stack-County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stack-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urban-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cluster	County	County	County
Observations	43,314	43,314	39,957
Used Observations	32,099	32,099	29,526
Pseudo R-squared	0.7555	0.7555	0.7552
Avg. # Elections Treat & Pre	5.495	5.495	5.725
Avg. Cross-Section Variable		0.687	0.289

Notes: Notes: This table reports coefficient estimates from stacked pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood regressions. The dependent variable is the number of union elections at the county-year level. *Closure* equals one for counties with a newspaper closure and zero for bordering control counties. *Post* equals one for years at or after the newspaper closure. Column (1) reports the baseline estimate. In Column (2), *Closure* × *Post* is interacted with *Closure Pre 1996*, an indicator for newspaper closures occurring before 1996, when alternative news sources were more limited. In Column (3), *Closure* × *Post* is interacted with *High Circulation*, an indicator for closing newspapers with above 75th percentile pre-closure circulation. All specifications include county-by-cohort and year-by-cohort fixed effects, urban-by-year fixed effects, and controls for the percent of workers in manufacturing and the natural log of county population. The dataset is stacked by closure event, with each cohort covering five years before and ten years after the closure. Standard errors are clustered at the county level and t-statistics are reported in parentheses. All variables are defined in the notes to Tables 1 and 2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels (two-tailed), respectively.

Table 5: Effects of Changing News Landscapes by Election Characteristics

Panel A: Craigslist Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable:	(1) # Successful Elections	(2) # Non-Successful Elections	(3) # High-Support Elections	(4) # Close Elections	(5) # Low-Support Elections	(6) # Elections w/ Many Eligible Voters	(7) # Elections w/ Few Eligible Voters
Craigslist Entry	-0.166***	-0.252***	-0.111***	-0.061	-0.116***	-0.264***	-0.155***
	(0.064)	(0.044)	(0.027)	(0.050)	(0.029)	(0.053)	(0.055)
Controls:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Avg. Pre Effect	-0.042	0.016	0.019	-0.061	0.044	-0.031	0.004
Avg. Effect (%)	-0.228	-0.432	-0.334	-0.191	-0.337	-0.371	-0.257
Used Observations	33,886	33,886	33,886	33,886	33,886	33,886	33,886

Panel B: Border-County Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable:	(1) # Successful Elections	(2) # Non-Successful Elections	(3) # High-Support Elections	(4) # Close Elections	(5) # Low-Support Elections	(6) # Elections w/ Many Eligible Voters	(7) # Elections w/ Few Eligible Voters
Closure × Post	-0.077***	-0.108***	-0.121***	-0.082**	-0.124***	-0.067**	-0.109***
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.030)
# Elections Treat & Pre	3.422	2.880	1.909	1.765	2.076	2.961	3.372
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stack-County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stack-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urban-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cluster	County	County	County	County	County	County	County
Observations	26,795	27,021	19,433	22,306	22,580	28,349	25,237
Pseudo R-squared	0.687	0.629	0.590	0.527	0.561	0.642	0.679

Notes: This table reports coefficient estimates from difference-in-differences regressions examining whether the effect of weakening news landscapes is concentrated in particular types of union elections. Panel A uses the Craigslist identification strategy with the heterogeneity-robust estimator of Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020). Panel B uses the border-county stacked pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood specification. In both panels, the dependent variable varies by column. Standard errors are clustered at the county level and t-statistics are reported in parentheses. All variables are defined in the notes to Tables 1 and 2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels (two-tailed), respectively.

Table 6: Effects of Changing News Landscapes on Employer Interference

Panel A: Craigslist Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable:	(1) Pct ULP Cases Upheld	(2) Pct Non-Election ULP Cases Upheld	(3) Avg Case Length (days)	(4) Avg Challenged Ballots	(5) Pct Elections w/ Challenged Ballots
Craigslist Entry	-0.011	-0.003	1.585	-0.077	-0.041
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(8.768)	(0.313)	(0.026)
Controls:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Avg. Pre Effect	0.004	0.001	-17.433	-0.112	-0.037
Avg. Effect (%)	-0.024	-0.007	0.014	-0.033	-0.096
Used Observations	11,121	11,121	6,595	6,595	6,595

Panel B: Border-County Identification Strategy

Dependent Variable:	(1) Pct ULP Cases Upheld	(2) Pct Non-Election ULP Cases Upheld	(3) Avg Case Length (days)	(4) Avg Challenged Ballots	(5) Pct Elections w/ Challenged Ballots
Closure × Post	0.016	-0.009	0.010	0.074	-0.025
	(0.026)	(0.049)	(0.035)	(0.068)	(0.024)
# Elections Treat & Pre	0.409	0.396	104.166	2.029	0.545
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stack-County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stack-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urban-Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cluster	County	County	County	County	County
Observations	18,608	8,008	16,574	13,839	15,640
Pseudo R-squared	0.061	0.065	0.627	0.456	0.100

Notes: This table reports coefficient estimates from difference-in-differences regressions examining whether weakening news landscapes affect employer interference in union elections. Panel A uses the Craigslist identification strategy with the heterogeneity-robust estimator of Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020). Panel B uses the border-county stacked pseudo-Poisson maximum likelihood specification. In both panels, the dependent variable varies by column. Standard errors are clustered at the county level and t-statistics are reported in parentheses. All variables are defined in the notes to Tables 1 and 2. ***, **, and * indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels (two-tailed),