

The Impact of the 2017 Women's March on Female Political Representation

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Abstract

Can female-led protests improve women's participation in the political sphere? The 2017 Women's March is the largest single-day progressive feminist protest to ever happen in the U.S. and a showcase of female leadership. I exploit the geographic variation in congressional districts' exposure to protests to investigate the impact of the March on the supply of female politicians in partisan primaries. Utilizing difference-in-differences designs and event-study analyses that leverage proximity to the nearest protest, I find heterogeneous results across partisan primaries. The March affects the supply of female Republican politicians: doubling proximity leads to a 60% increase of the share of female conservative candidates, suggesting a backlash. The March also increases the demand for women in Republican primaries and their probability of moving to the following stage of the electoral competition. As regards Democratic primaries, I find no evidence of an effect of the uprisings. Moreover, I investigate the consequences for women's representation in federal politics. Results point towards the Democratic Party implementing a strategy that allows them to capitalize on the Women's March and to gain seats in the US House, but I find no evidence of an effect of the uprisings on women's election probabilities.

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