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**What drives US Immigration Policy?
Evidence from Congressional Roll Call Votes**

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Abstract

Immigration is today one of the most hotly debated policy issues in the United States. Despite marked divergence of opinion even within political parties, several important reforms have been introduced in the post 1965 era. The purpose of this paper is to carry out a systematic analysis of the drivers of the voting behavior of US representatives on immigration policy in the period 1970-2006, and in particular to assess the role of economic factors at the district level. Our findings suggest that representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are more likely to support an open immigration policy towards the unskilled, whereas the opposite is true for representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts. This evidence is robust to the introduction of an array of additional economic and non-economic characteristics of the districts, and suggests that a simple factor analysis model can go a long way in explaining the voting behavior on immigration policy.

JEL Classification: F22, J61

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Introduction

Immigration and immigration policy have been among the most hotly debated policy issues in the United States ever since independence (Hatton and Williamson 2005), and recent evidence suggests that views on immigration continue to differ greatly among the public (Scheve and Slaughter 2001, Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter 2007, Mayda 2006). Interestingly, vastly heterogeneous opinions can be found also within - supposedly more homogeneous - political parties. For instance, in reporting on the debate spurred by the immigration policy reform proposal introduced in 2005, many commentators have highlighted the divisiveness of the issue. Watanabe and Becerra (2006) suggest that "The Republican Party is split among those who want tougher restrictions, those who fear alienating the Latino vote and business owners who are pressing for more laborers to fill blue collar jobs in construction, cleaning, gardening and other industries." At the same time, whereas in the recent past the platform of the Democratic Party has been pro-immigration, many Democratic constituencies have shown concerns with the increased inflows of foreigners. In particular, US labor unions have traditionally opposed growing inflows of foreign workers[1] - and much of their rank and files continue to do so - even if they now officially welcome Latinos and other immigrants.

Notwithstanding the very controversial nature of the debate, the post 1965 era has seen the introduction of a series of important immigration policy measures. The purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic analysis of the factors that have shaped the voting behavior of US House Representatives on new legislation on unskilled immigration introduced between 1970 and 2006.

In carrying out our analysis, we focus on the role played by the economic drivers of the voting decision and, in particular, by the labor market characteristics of a constituency. To frame our question, we start by developing a simple theoretical model in which heterogeneous districts differ in their relative endowment of skilled and unskilled labor. By changing factor supplies, immigration affects factor income, thus creating winners and losers.[2] An elected politician chooses to support or not an immigration policy initiative depending on whether or not it increases the constituency's weighted average welfare. The model suggests that – ceteris

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[1] See Watts (2002).
[2] See Berry and Soligo (1969). Empirical evidence on the effect of immigration on wages is more controversial. In particular, Borjas (2003, 2006) finds robust evidence on the adverse effect of immigration on natives workers' wages, whereas Card (2009), Ottaviano and Peri (2008) among others, find a much smaller – and often not significant effect.

paribus – an elected representative is more likely to favor an open policy towards unskilled immigrants the more skilled labor abundant his district is.

We assess the predictions of our stylized model using a novel dataset we have constructed. Our data cover all individual recorded votes on immigration policy measures affecting the supply of unskilled immigrants, which have been introduced in the US House of Representatives over the period 1970-2006. Individual level voting decisions are then complemented with a wealth of district level characteristics, covering both economic and non-economic drivers of individual voting decisions.

Our empirical analysis suggests that labor market characteristics – as captured by district level factor endowments - are statistically significant drivers of a representative's voting behavior on immigration policy. In particular, we find that representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are more likely to support an open immigration policy towards the unskilled, while representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts are less likely to do so. Quantitatively, the effects we find are important: an increase by one percentage point in the share of skilled workers in a district leads to approximately a one percentage point increase in the probability that the district representative will support a bill liberalizing unskilled immigration.

Besides the labor market characteristics of the district, the literature has suggested that other factors may affect voting behavior. Thus, to assess the robustness of our findings, we explore the role played by additional economic characteristics, by political/ideological drivers, and by ethnic features of the district. While several of these channels do play a role in shaping voting behavior on immigration, our main results are unaffected. The expected labor market impact of immigration is a robust driver of decision making on immigration policy matters.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper represents the most comprehensive attempt to date to systematically investigate the role of economic and non-economic drivers on immigration policy voting behavior in the post 1965 era. It is also the only one that directly exploit differences in factor endowments across districts to capture the extent of expected labor market competition brought about by new, unskilled, immigration.

The congressional politics of immigration policy has been the subject of an extensive array of previous studies. Gimpel and Edwards (1999), in their very comprehensive work on immigration policy making, analyze a variety of individual bills, but pay little or no attention

at all towards district level economic determinants. Goldin's (1994) study of the introduction of the literacy test provision is instead one of the pioneering contributions in the economics literature. Several other papers in this tradition have focused on single or a narrow set of legislative initiatives. For instance, Gonzalez and Kamdar (2000) have analyzed the 1996 Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (*H.R. 2202*) and have found that representative of district characterized by a higher share of workers employed in low-skill intensive industries tended to be more in favor of immigration restrictions. Fetzer (2006) found a similar result in his analysis of the voting on *H.R. 4437* during the 109th Congress, but looking at the distribution of individuals across occupations in a given district.[3] Bananian, Bodvarsson and Lowenberg (2006) - following a similar approach - have considered instead four important bills introduced between 1980 and 1996, and have focused on the role played by sectoral employment in shaping voting behavior. Besides covering a larger sample of votes, our analysis has the advantage of focusing on a direct measure of the educational achievement at the district level, which is less likely to react in the short run to changes in immigration policy at the national level.

An interesting, recent study by Milner and Tingley (2009) is the contribution in the literature that comes closest to ours in scope. The authors analyze a large panel of votes on immigration policy related issues which took place in the US Congress between 1979 and 2003, and explore the role of both economic and non-economic drivers of individual representatives' choices. Importantly, their analysis differ from ours in several key dimensions, involving both the data used and the methodology followed to carry out the study. First of all, our sample covers a longer time period. Secondly, Milner and Tingley (2009) include in their analysis all votes on migration – both on final passage bills and on intermediate legislative steps[4] - and also votes on immigration bills that are not expected to directly affect the labor supply in the United States. Our focus is instead narrower, as on the one hand we consider only those bills, which - as the literature has argued – directly impact the domestic labor supply. Furthermore, we focus exclusively on final passage bills, as expectations on the effects at the district level of floor amendments are less clear than for final passage votes. Third, Milner and Tingley use the share of individuals working in highly skilled jobs[5] as the key proxy for the district's labor market characteristics, whereas we use a more fundamental measure, which is based directly

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[3] He finds that support for the bill overwhelmingly came from representatives of districts characterized by a high share of blue collar employment.
[4] Typically, this involves floor amendments etc.
[5] This is defined as the percentage of working age persons in a district employed in executive, managerial, administrative and professional occupation.

on educational attainment at the district level. Interestingly – and differently from our analysis, they find only limited support for the role played by the labor market channel in shaping voting behavior.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the recent developments in the congressional history of US immigration policy. Section 3 presents a simple theoretical model, which drives our empirical investigation. Section 4 describes our data, while section 5 presents our empirical results. In section 6 we carry out a series of robustness checks, and section 7 concludes the paper.

1. A short overview of recent US Migration Policy

The votes included in our sample span over the years 1970-2006, a period during which the United States has seen immigration levels soaring and immigration policy becoming once again the focus of much debate. In this section we provide a brief overview of the main policy initiatives which have been introduced in this period, and highlight their impact on unskilled immigration. For a summary of the bills introduced in this period, see Table 1.

1.1 1970-1980

The US migration policy in the seventies was characterized by the introduction of a series of amendments to the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965, which had abolished the national-origin quota system and replaced it with a system emphasizing the importance of family ties and as a result had greatly simplified the family reunification process.

Parallel with this shift in the immigrants channel of entry, economic conditions changed substantially. At the beginning of the seventies the US economy was hit by the first oil crisis and suffered from stagflation - high unemployment combined with high inflation. The US Congress reacted to this development by introducing a series of restrictive immigration policy measures. This change in attitude is already reflected in *H.R. 392* and *H.R. 891*, which passed the House of Representatives in 1973 with a clear majority. While the first bill contains provisions for employer sanctions to tackle the growing employment of undocumented immigrants, the second bill extended the applicability of the 20,000 per-country cap to migrants from the Western hemisphere contained in the 1965 act. This measure was particularly aimed at limiting immigration from Mexico (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).[6]

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[6] The *Immigration Act* of 1965 had imposed per-country ceilings only for immigrants from Eastern hemisphere nations. The overall hemispheric caps have been 120,000 for Western hemisphere nations (North, and South America) and 170,000 for nations from the Eastern hemisphere (Africa, Asia, Europe and Australia).

In the following years the dominant issue became the admission of refugees. The debate concerned mainly the distinction between immigrants and refugees, the annual limit for refugees, the scope for resettlement assistance, language and vocational training, and medical care for newly arrived refugees. [7]

1.2 1980-1990

Following the introduction of restrictive measures on immigration from the Western hemisphere and the growing arrivals of refugees, much of the policy debate during the eighties focused on the strong increase in the numbers of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, especially from Haiti, El-Salvador and Cuba (Tichenor 1994). While we exclude bills focusing on refugees from our analysis,[8] we capture the discussion on illegal migration looking at various bills which have been voted on in the House of Representatives (*H.R. 1510, H.R. 3810, H.R. 4222*). The two most important pieces of legislation in this context are the *Simpson-Mazzoli Bill* (*H.R. 1510*), introduced in 1982 and named after its sponsors, and the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* (*H.R. 3810, IRCA*) of 1986. The two measures are closely intertwined, since the latter is a revised version of the former.

During the 97th congress senator Alan Simpson (Republican, Wyoming) and congressman Romano Mazzoli (Democrat, Kentucky) took the initiative to introduce an important reform of the US immigration legislation. One major provision of the bill was to make it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit undocumented immigrants, and the proposed legislation introduced also financial and other penalties for those employing illegal aliens. A second major component was the requirement for employers to attest their employees' immigration status. Last but not least, the proposed legislation granted an amnesty to certain agricultural seasonal workers and immigrants who entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and had lived in the US continuously ever since. The bill proposal was - from its very introduction on the Senate floor in 1982 - very controversial. The introduction of sanctions for employers drew strong opposition from liberal democrats, business groups and the Hispanic Caucus. Furthermore, the House leadership did not favor the idea of such a controversial bill reaching the floor for final voting in an election year. For these reasons Mazzoli decided finally to pull

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[7] The general distinction between refugees and immigrants is that the latter group leaves their country voluntarily, while the first group has to leave their country due to religious or political persecution (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

[8] Refugees and asylum seekers usually do not gain immediately access to the host country's labor market. Furthermore, "warm glow" is likely to play an important role in shaping the voting behavior on policy measures towards refugees and asylum seekers (see Hatton 2004, Hatton and Williamson 2005).

the bill from the floor and to reintroduce it in the 98th congress (Lowell et al. 1986, Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

The leadership structure in the House remained nearly unchanged in the 98th congress and the *Simpson-Mazzoli Bill* faced again considerable controversy. After passing the different subcommittees, House floor action saw the consideration of 69 amendments. Most of the debate focused on the employer sanctions and the amnesty provisions. In particular, it was feared that the latter provision would have a dramatic impact on the numbers of immigrants that would be admitted in the US, because legalized immigrants were to be allowed to bring their relatives under the 1965 preference system (Gimpel and Edwards 1999). After much debate, the bill passed the House with a 216 to 211 vote, with a margin of only five votes, one of the narrowest in the whole immigration debate. Since the bill passed the Senate in a different version, the two texts went to a House-Senate conference committee, where they died as no compromise could be reached.

The push for a comprehensive immigration reform was strong enough for a new version of the bill to be introduced in the 99th congress in both chambers. The main difference from the original proposal was the addition of a temporary program for agricultural workers, which was requested by the agricultural lobby and strongly opposed by organized labor (Gimpel & Edwards 1999). The new version of the bill finally passed both chambers and was enacted on November 6, 1986 by President Reagan. The direction of the policy change brought about by the bill is not straightforward to assess, due to the variety of different provisions contained in the legislation. Two features of *IRCA* appear to be prominent though. First, it allowed almost 3.5 million illegal immigrants to be legalized as permanent immigrants (LeMay 2006). Furthermore, the bill implemented a controversial guest-worker initiative in the tradition of the *Bracero* program, which enabled a legal temporary inflow of unskilled farm workers. For these reason, and following also Tichenor (1994), we have classified the *IRCA* as being pro immigration. Since the restrictionist impetus was much clearer in the original *Simpson-Mazzoli Bill,* we have followed the literature and classified it as being against immigration liberalization.[9]

The other measure included in our analysis was aimed at a more generous handling of illegal immigrants and in particular *H.R. 4222* extended the legalization provisions of the *IRCA* act by six months.[10]

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[9] In a robustness check available upon request from the authors, we have verified that all our results are robust to the exclusion of the IRCA bill from our sample.

[10] Originally the amnesty program was scheduled to run from May 1987 to May 1988.

1.3 1990-2000

The first major legislation of this period was the *Immigration Act of 1990* (*IMMACT*). In contrast to *IRCA,* this bill focused mainly on legal immigration and had two main goals: the revision of the existing visa allocation system and the introduction of new provisions for skilled immigration. The system based on the *Immigration and Nationality Act* of 1965 heavily emphasized family reunification and in particular it excluded immediate relatives from the annual immigration cap. As a consequence, the number and share of European immigrants had steadily decreased during the previous two decades, while the numbers of visas issued to immigrants of Asian and Latin American descent had increased dramatically. For this reason the *IMMACT* established a new preference scheme with three categories: family- based immigration (approximately 74% of total), employment and business related immigration (20 percent of total) and a new diversity category (6 percent of total). Under the second category, people are admitted on the basis of skills and occupations, while the third category allocates green cards through a lottery program. The goal of the last category is to increase the number of immigrants from countries, which previously had a low number of admissions. In practice, the role of family reunification and labor market shortages driven immigration was not altered substantially (Gimpel and Edwards 1999). The major change introduced by the legislation was the increase of the annual cap for legal permanent residents from approximately 500,000 to 700,000. Finally, the act established also a short-term amnesty program to grant legal residence to up to 165,000 spouses and minor children of immigrants, who were legalized under the *IRCA*.

As it soon became apparent, the *IRCA* had failed to stem the problem of undocumented immigrants entering the US. This increased the pressure on US policy makers to deal with illegal immigration. One result was the introduction, in 1994, of the so-called *Proposition 187* in California.[11] The proposition prevented illegal immigrants from having access to most public services, including public education, and was approved in a referendum by almost 60% of those entitled to vote. The measure became state law, but it was later ruled unconstitutional by a federal court. Still, the message to Congress was clear and the Californian delegation was very active in trying to put immigration reform high on Congress' agenda (Gimpel and Edwards 1999, Le May 2006). A result of this initiative and of the following debates is the second major immigration legislation of the nineties: the *Illegal Immigration Reform and*

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[11] California, Texas and Florida are the states, which have received the largest numbers of both illegal and legal immigrants during the nineties.

Immigrant Responsibility Act (*H. R. 2202*) of 1996. Initially, the act increased the size of the U.S. Border Patrol to 10,000 agents over five years and mandated the construction of fences at the most heavily trafficked areas of the U.S.-Mexico border. Furthermore, the bill introduced a pilot program to check the immigration status of job applicants. A third and very important provision made the deportation of illegal immigrants substantially easier. Previously, immediate deportation was triggered only for offences that could lead to five years or more in jail. Under the new act, minor offences such as shoplifting, were making an individual eligible for deportation. Last but not least the law restricted the federal benefits to illegal and legal migrants (e.g. an alien who is not lawfully present in the U.S. is ineligible for social security benefits). The bill entered into force on September 30, 1996.

1.4 2000-present

The immigration policy in the recent years has been mainly influenced by concerns about illegal immigration and national security. The facts of September 11, 2001 and the fear of additional terrorist attacks have been very powerful catalysts, which have led Congress to adopt a number of new measures on immigration. In line with this, all of the bills from this period which are included in our analysis (*H.R. 4437, H.R. 418*, *H.R. 4830*, *H.R. 6094*, *H.R. 6061*, and *H.R. 6095*) are aimed at reducing illegal immigration and at tightening immigration law enforcement.

The most controversial and substantial legislative proposal was the *Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005* (*H.R. 4437*). One of the major provisions of the bill was the building of a fence along the US-Mexican border up to 700 miles (1120 km) long, at points with the highest number of illegal border crossings. Secondly, the act required the federal government to take custody of undocumented aliens detained by local authorities. This would put an end to the practice of "catch and release", whereby federal officials instructed local law enforcement officers to release detained undocumented aliens due to a lack of resources. Furthermore, the act would have introduced a fine of $3,000 to all undocumented aliens, who were captured in the US and had previously agreed to leave the country voluntarily. Finally, the bill would have subjected a person who supports or hosts undocumented immigrant to up to five years in prison (Fetzer 2006). The bill was - amongst other events - the catalyst of the 2006 U.S. immigrant rights protests, during which US cities were floaded by hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their supporters demonstrating against the new immigration policy. The bill passed the House of Representatives on December 16, 2005 by a narrow vote of 239 to 182. However, it did not pass the Senate and is

therefore the only major immigration bill that did not became public law in the period we are considering in our analysis.

A series of less pervasive legislative initiatives have been instead introduced during the same period. The *Real ID Act* (*H.R. 418*) establishes regulations for State driver's licenses and new security standards for identification documents. It mainly addresses the issue of illegal immigration, because it requires every driver's license applicant to present a proof of lawful immigration status. The *Border Tunnel Prevention Act* (*H.R. 4830*) prohibits instead the unauthorized construction, financing, or use of tunnels or subterranean passages that cross the international border between the United States and another country. The *Community Protection Act of 2008* (*H.R. 6094*) contains various measures that greatly simplify the detention of dangerous aliens, that ensure the removal of deportable criminal aliens, and that enhance police officers' ability to combat alien gang crime. The *Secure Fence Act* (*H.R. 6061*) reignited the debate on a fence at the Southern border, which was already proposed in the controversial *Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*. The new bill led to the construction of over 700 miles of double-reinforced fence along the border with Mexico in areas that have experienced illegal drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Finally, the *Immigration Law Enforcement Act of 2006* (*H.R. 6095*) intends to strengthen the position of state and local authorities in dealing with the enforcement of immigration laws. Alien smugglers shall be more effectively prosecuted and an explicit effort shall be made to end the practice of "catch and release".

2. Theoretical framework

To analyze the drivers of the voting behavior of individual representatives, we consider a simple model with D heterogeneous districts. Each district is populated by low skilled and high skilled individuals - and we assume the supply of each production factor to be potentially heterogeneous across agents. District i is populated by N_{Li} low skilled agents and N_{Hi} high skilled ones, so that the total population is given by $N = N_{Hi} + N_{Li}$. Furthermore, let $\beta_{Li} = {N_{Li}}/{N}$, $\beta_{Hi} = {N_{Hi}}/{N} = 1 - \beta_{Li}$ be respectively the share of low and high skilled in the domestic population.

Districts are heterogeneous with respect to the relative size of the skilled and unskilled populations. Each district produces only one output good according to the same, constant returns to scale production technology $Y=F(H,L)$, which can be expressed in intensive units as

$y=f(h)$, where $y=Y/L$, $h=H/L$ etc. The production function is well behaved with $f'(h)>0$, $f''(h)<0$. Perfect competition in factor markets insures that the equilibrium rate of return to human capital r is given by $r=f'(h)$, while the wage rate w is $w=f(h)-hf'(h)$. In this simple setting, individuals care only about their income.

The preferences of native individual residing in the district are represented by the district's congressman. In choosing whether to support or not an immigration policy, the representative maximizes the utility level of the average citizen.[12] Thus, the representative's objective function can be written as

$$W = \beta_{Li} w \left(\cdot \right) + \left(1 - \beta_{Li} \right) r \left(\cdot \right) \quad (1)$$

Two alternative policy options are available to the representative: maintaining the status quo, or adopting a measure that will change the human capital - labor ratio in the population. This simple setting captures the main features of our data, from which we have information on whether a congressman votes in favor or against a policy that increases the relative supply of unskilled labor.

The main result of our analysis can be summarized in the following

Proposition 1 The likelihood that a representative will support a more open migration policy towards the more (less) skilled is increasing in the share of the low (highly) skilled in the district's population.

Proof: From equation (1) and the factor market equilibrium conditions, we know

$\dfrac{\partial W_i}{\partial h_i} = \left(1 - \beta_{Li} - \beta_{Li} h_i \right) f'' \left(\cdot_i \right) > (<)0$ if and only if $\beta_{Li} > (<) \dfrac{1}{1+h_i}$, given that $f''(h_i)<0$

for all h. Furthermore, notice that $\dfrac{\partial W}{\partial h \partial \beta_{Li}} = -(1+h_i) f'' \left(\cdot_i \right) > 0$, which establishes the result.

As long as the relative weight attached to skilled labor in the objective function of the politician is lower than the relative supply of skilled labor in the district ($\dfrac{1-\beta_{Li}}{\beta_{Li}} < h_i$), an increase (decrease) in the skilled labor supply is viewed favorably (negatively) by the politician. Across jurisdictions, a district with a higher share of low (highly) skilled in the

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population is more (less) likely to favor an inflow of skilled immigrants. The working of proposition 1 is illustrated in Figure 1, and represents the main prediction we will assess in our empirical analysis
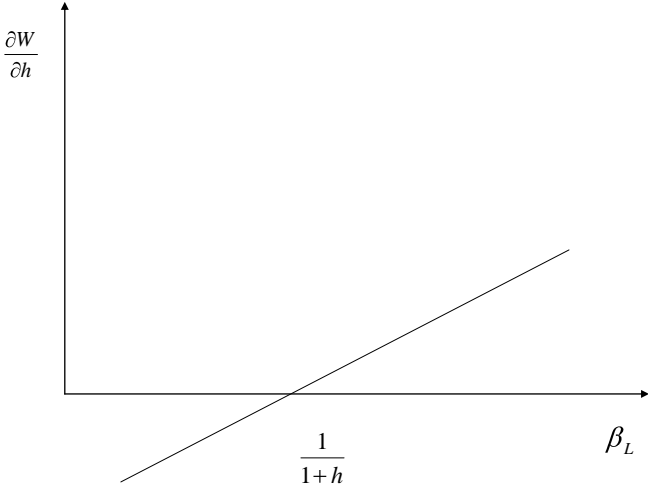
Figure 1: Skilled and unskilled abundant districts

3. Data and summary statistics

The data for our analysis comes from various sources. We start by using the Congressional Roll Call Voting Dataset of the Policy Agenda Project and the Library of Congress (THOMAS) to identify and collect information on all legislative votes in the US House of Representatives which are related to immigration issues between 1970 and 2006. Roll call votes are recorded votes that enable to observe individual voting behavior of House representatives on single bills and amendments.[13] Since both data bases provide only rough information about the content of the bills, we have supplemented them using additional

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[13] Beside recorded votes, two additional types of votes take place in the House: The first is "voice voting", which is usually employed when a question is introduced on the floor. By this method the congressmen who are in favour of the bill or amendment shout in unison "Aye", followed by those voting "No". In the case of a standing or division the principle is the same, except that the representatives who are in favour will rise and stand until counted instead of shouting. In both cases only the vote totals are announced, and no individual member votes are recorded. Votes are recorded by electronic device if they are demanded by at least of one fifth of the members present or if they are demanded by one member in the case that the quorum is not present (Davis 2006). The demand for recorded votes is a sign for a lack of consensus and indicates the presence of a controversial decision process (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

resources, like the Congressional Quarterly publications and existing historical accounts like the one by Gimpel and Edwards (1999), to identify immigration related bills. In the second step, we use the full text of the legislation to classify the bills into four categories according to their main topic: general immigration, illegal migration, refugees and asylum, and naturalization and integration. We restrict our analysis to bills belonging to the first two categories, because those are the ones most directly linked to the inflow of foreign labor.

Furthermore, in our analysis we concentrate on bills with a potential impact on the supply of unskilled labor. In particular, for the purpose of our analysis an immigration bill is a piece of legislation that can have either a *direct* positive or negative impact on the size of the unskilled labor force in the US if it would come into force. We therefore exclude – for instance - bills that deal primarily with the provision of public goods to illegal migrants or federal reimbursement of health and education costs to states. Finally, we focus on *final passage votes*, which determine whether a bill passes the House or not. In doing so, we exclude votes on amendments which take place during the decision process on the House floor.[14] We have decided to follow this strategy, because the expectations on the effects of floor amendments are less clear than for final passage votes. Voting on amendments is likely to be connected to strategic voting and therefore is less likely to distinctly reflect the interests of the legislator's constituency.[15] Table 1 illustrates votes on immigration legislation that took place in the US House of Representatives between 1970 and 2006, which satisfy the criteria discussed above and therefore constitute the basis of our empirical analysis. As it can be easily seen, most of the votes are relatively close, and this reflects the controversial nature of immigration policy in the United States. For detailed information on the content of the various bills and their role in the history of US immigration policy, see the discussion in section 2.

Next, we combine our data on immigration bills with the corresponding records of individual voting behavior of House representatives. This information is provided by the VOTEVIEW project (http://voteview.ucsd.edu) of Poole and Rosenthal (1997), which offers data on US congressmen voting behavior from 1798 to the present. In addition to this, the VOTEVIEW database contains a number of variables like the name of congressman, his party affiliation,

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[14] For a comprehensive overview about the legislative process on the house floor see Davis (2006).

[15] For example, amendments can be used to kill bills on the floor. A well-known example in the political science literature is the "Powell amendment" of 1956. It referred to a House bill which was meant to increase federal funding for school construction. The Powell amendment proposed that funding should only be given to school districts which are free of racial segregation. Empirical evidence suggests that legislators anticipated that the adoption of the amendment would lead to a rejection of the related aid-to-education bill. The voting behavior of the legislators on the Powell amendment was therefore strongly influenced by strategic interests (Poole and Rosenthal 1997).

state, and congressional district that enable us to distinctly identify the legislators and link them to their constituency. Finally, we combine our data on individual voting records with information on the economic and non-economic characteristics of electoral constituencies. For this we use mainly Census data. However, for the period 1970 to 1990 the US Census bureau provides no information at the district level. For this period we instead use data from the Congressional District Data Files of Adler (2003) and Lublin (1997), who have aggregated Census data at the congressional district level taking into account the decennial redistricting.[16]

Our dependent variable is the representative's voting behavior on immigration bills $Vote_{ijt}$ In the case of bills *liberalizing* immigration a vote coded 1 indicates that the district representative votes in favor of more open immigration and 0 otherwise. In the case of legislations *restricting* immigration a vote is coded 0 if the representative's vote is in favor of restricting immigration and 1 otherwise. The main explanatory variable of interest in our analysis is the skill ratio of a congressional district, $SkillRatio_{it}$, which is measured as the ratio of high-skilled individuals over 25 to total population over 25 at time t in congressional district i. High-skilled individuals are defined as those having earned at least a bachelor degree. According to our theoretical model we expect that the likelihood to vote in favor of liberalizing the immigration of unskilled workers increases with the share of the highly skilled population at working age.

Further economic controls at the district level are unemployment and the share of farm workers. We define unemployment as the share of unemployed individuals as a percentage of the total labor force. The share of farm workers, measured as the number of farm workers relatively to the total labor force, proxies for the size of the agricultural sector within a congressional district. Moreover, we also control for the industrial structure of a district by including the share of individuals employed in manufacturing, construction and wholesale and retail in the total labor force. To capture the role of welfare state drivers, we use the median family income of a congressional district.

Furthermore, we include a number of explanatory variables providing information on the ideological characteristics of the representative/district. In particular, we capture the ideological orientation of a representative by looking at his/her party affiliation and at the first

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[16] The geographic definition of congressional districts changes following each census. During the 109th congress, i.e. in the years 2005 and 2006, each of the 435 House representatives has represented on average about 650,000 people. In the construction of their data, Adler (2003) and Lublin (1997) use Congressional Data Books and associated data files which provide information about the restricting after decennial census.

dimension of the DW nominate score.[17] This index is provided by the VOTEVIEW project (http://voteview.ucsd.edu) and increases in congressman's conservatism. As an alternative, we also use the ADA score, which evaluates every congressman on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores assigned to more liberal politicians.[18] The latter is constructed by the American for Democratic Action, a lobby group, and the main difference with the DW nominate score is that it uses only votes on a subsample of bills, whereas the DW nominate score makes use of every roll call votes in each congress, and is based on a more sophisticated estimation procedure. Furthermore, we use the share of Democratic votes in the past election as a proxy for the ideological orientation of a congressional district.[19] As additional controls we included also information on the political affiliation of the House majority and of the US President. Finally, we consider data on contributions from Political Action Committees (PACs) which comes from the Federal Election Commission (http://www.fec.gov/).

To study the role of immigrant networks and additional ethnic characteristics of the district, we use Census data, and measure the share of foreign-born, Afro-Americans and Hispanics in a district's population. By controlling for the change in the share of the foreign born population over time we account for the possibility that recent inflows of migrants might affect congressmen' preferences towards prospective immigration differently than the existing stock of foreign workers. Furthermore, we incorporate the ethnic background of congressmen by controlling whether a congressman is of Afro-American or Hispanic descent. These data is based on registers provided by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (http://velazquez.house.gov/chc/) and the Congressional Black Caucus (http://www.thecongressionalblackcaucus.com/).

Finally, we explore also the additional role played by geography in shaping voting on immigration policy. To this end, we include the share of the population living in urban areas, to capture potential differences in attitudes towards immigration between rural and urban areas. We further investigate cross-state differences in voting on immigration bills by running separate regressions for congressmen from South-Western and high immigration states.

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[17] The second dimension of the DW score measures for our observation period the conflict about civil rights for African-Americans.

[18] The ADA score is calculated annually on the basis of 20 selected key votes on a wide range of social and economic issues, both domestic and international. The selection is made by the ADA`s legislative committee without providing clear selection criteria. From the bills included in our analyses no one has been used for the construction of the ADA score.

[19] Data on share of Democratic votes comes from Lee et al. (2004) and for the 109th congress from Chandler et al. (2008).

Table 2 provides summary statistics for the variables we have described above. Over the entire observation period, 36% of the representatives voted in favor of freer immigration. However, there are noteworthy differences over time: while up to 1990 almost 41% of the district representatives supported freer immigration, after 1990 this figure declined substantially, to only about 32% of the total votes. These figures closely reflect the declining support towards unskilled immigration which we have documented in section 2. The data on the skill composition of the resident population suggests instead that on average, in our sample almost one out of five Americans over 25 holds at least a bachelor degree. This rather high figure is in part due to the fact that out of the twelve bills we have included in our final sample, five have been introduced during the 109th congress i.e. between 2005 and 2006.[20]

The skill ratio of the population shows, like the voting behavior on immigration, a strong variation across congressional districts, and the main goal of our paper is to investigate whether there exists a systematic relationship between a representative's voting behavior on immigration and the relative skill composition of his home district. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate very clearly this point. Focusing on the congressional districts of New York state, we plot in Figure 1 the votes cast on the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act (*H.R. 4437*) introduced during the 109th congress. In Figure 2, on the other hand, we use census data to construct the district level share of highly skilled in the population. As it can be easily seen, almost all congressmen who supported less restrictive immigration legislation represented districts with skill ratios above average.[21] However, the figure illustrates also that not all representatives from districts with high skill ratios voted in favor of a liberal immigration policy. This highlights the necessity to systematically control for additional economic and non-economic characteristics of the constituencies, and we will do so in the next section.

4. Empirical Analysis

As the theoretical model suggests, the voting behavior of an individual representative on a migration policy bill aimed at expanding the inflow of unskilled workers is a function of the district's skill composition. In particular, representatives of districts, which are more skilled-

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[20] The educational attainment in the US has substantially improved during the recent years. Within the period 1970 to 2000 the population share over 25 with bachelor degree or more increased from 10.7% to 24.4% (Baumann and Graf 2003). The bills *H.R.4830* and *H.R.2578* are not included in our final sample since they are characterized by a unanimous vote.
[21] The average skill ratio of New York's congressional districts during the 109th congress is 20%.

labor abundant are expected to favor bills liberalizing unskilled migration. To assess our theoretical prediction, we estimate the following probit model:

$$prob(Vote_{it} = 1 \mid Z_{it}) = \Phi \left(\beta_1 Skill_{it} + \beta_2 X_{it} + I_t + I_s + I_t \times I_s \right) \quad (2)$$

where $Vote_{it}$ is a dichotomous variable taking value of one if the representative elected in district i votes in favor of a bill liberalizing unskilled immigration at time t, $\Phi(.)$ represents the cumulative distribution function of a standard normal, $Skill_{it}$ is the share of the population over 25 years old with at least a bachelor's degree, X_{it} is a vector of additional explanatory variables specific to district i and β is the vector of parameters to be estimated. Furthermore, in all specifications, we include time (I_t) and state fixed effects (I_s) to account for unobserved, additive time- and state-specific effects,[22] and we also allow for the effect of state-specific unobserved shocks to vary over time, by considering a full set of two ways interactions (I_t x I_s). In order to simplify the interpretation of our results, all our tables report marginal effects. Thus, our estimates capture the change in the probability of voting in favor of a more open immigration policy due to an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable, and a discrete change in the probability for dichotomous variables.

Table 3 contains our main specifications. Our initial set of regressions (columns 1-3) focuses on the effects of economic drivers that work through the labor market. As suggested by our theoretical model, we find that labor market complementarities are important: Representatives from districts where the share of skilled workers in the population is higher are more likely to support immigration policies aimed at increasing the supply of unskilled workers. This finding is robust and holds throughout our specifications – once we include additional district level controls.

Furthermore, column (2) indicates a positive relationship between a district's unemployment rate and voting on liberalizing low-skilled immigration. As it will turn out, this finding – which is somewhat counterintuitive but common in the literature (see for instance Gimpel and Edwards 1999) – is likely to be due to an omitted variable bias (see column 11).

To control for the importance of the sectoral dimension of employment, the role of which has been emphasized for instance by Gonzalez and Kamdra (2006), we also include the share of

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[22] We use state rather than district fixed effects because the use of district fixed effects over a long time horizon is problematic, since the geographic definition of congressional districts changes following each decennial census. See also footnote 16.

workers employed in agriculture (column 3). A priori, the sign of the correlation between the importance of agriculture and voting behavior on migration policies favoring the unskilled is ambiguous. On the one hand, as unskilled (and illegal) migrants are very likely to end up working in agriculture (Hanson and Spilimbergo 1999, 2001), we expect them to compete with native workers in that sector, and the larger is the share of domestic workers employed in agriculture in a given district, the less likely the district representative will be to support open migration policies. On the other hand, the more important is agriculture in the economy of a given district, the more likely it is that interest groups representing this sector will be able to convince politicians that they need an abundant labor supply (possibly made up by immigrant workers) to keep agriculture competitive. Empirically, we find that the share of farm workers is negatively correlated with the likelihood to vote in favor of immigration liberalization, but the result we find in column (3), as we will discuss later on, does not turn out to be robust.

In the second set of regressions (column 4), we capture instead the role of the welfare state. There is an abundant literature highlighting the importance of this channel in shaping individual-level attitudes towards immigration (Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter 2007, Dustmann and Preston 2007, Facchini and Mayda 2009), and thus we expect the welfare state to be also an important driver of individual representatives' voting behavior. In particular, in the presence of cross-district redistribution carried out by the welfare state, we expect *richer* constituencies to be less favorable towards unskilled immigration, as unskilled immigrants are net receivers of benefits from the welfare state.

Our findings are broadly consistent with the theoretical expectations. Representatives of richer districts are substantially less likely to support unskilled immigration (column 4), and this result is very robust to the introduction of additional controls (column 5-11).[23]

The third channel we consider, whose importance has also been highlighted in the literature (Gimpel and Edwards 1999), is the political/ideological channel. First, we control for the representative's party affiliation. We find that belonging to the Democratic Party is positively and significantly correlated with the likelihood of voting in favor of immigration liberalization (column 5 of Table 3). This result is in line with earlier findings by Gimpel and Edwards (1999), who conclude that "recorded votes on immigration policy have become more partisan over time, even after controlling for alternative influences on congressional decision

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[23] Notice that –as we include a full set of state and year interactions in all our empirical analysis - we cannot separately control for the extent of redistribution carried out at the state level.

making such as region and constituency characteristics."[24] Interestingly, it is worth noticing that accounting for the representative's party affiliation substantially reduces the effect of the share of farm workers on the congressman voting behavior, reducing its magnitude. This suggests that the results in columns (3) through (4) were driven by an omitted variable bias. Indeed, district characterized by a higher employment share in agriculture tend also to be more conservative, and without controlling for ideology the sectoral composition effect was confounded with the ideological dimension.

An elected representative's party affiliation is only an imprecise proxy for a *district's* partisan leaning, as it has been recently argued for instance by Lee et al. (2004). For this reason, in column 6 we also control for the extent of party strength in the previous election. Interestingly, we find that representatives of districts with a higher share of Democratic votes in the last congressional election are more likely to support legislations liberalizing immigration.

In the last five columns of Table 3 (specifications 7-11) we examine the role of what we name the *geographic* and *network* channels. It is well known that migrants tend to concentrate in urban areas (Card 2009) and thus it is important to understand whether congressmen elected in more urban constituencies vote differently from those elected in more rural areas. The result in column (7) suggests that the likelihood of congressmen to support more open immigration policies towards unskilled labor increases with the share of the population living in urban areas. Importantly, our findings in column (8) highlight that representatives of districts with a higher share of foreign-born are more likely to vote in favor of liberalizing unskilled immigration. There are at least two possible explanations for why existing immigrants might have a preference for liberalizing immigration even if they are likely to end up competing in the labor market with the new immigrants: social and family networks, and identification with minorities. In the first case, individuals prefer freer immigration because it helps relatives and friends from abroad to enter the US – this channel has been found to be very important also in the labor market (Munshi 2003). The second channel refers instead to the situation in which previous immigrants identify with new immigrants due to their own immigration experience.

To assess the effects of shocks to the demographic composition of a district, in column (9) we also control for the growth rate in the share of foreign born (Money 1997). Interestingly, we

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[24] The authors provide evidence that the cleavage between Republicans and Democrats have steadily increased since the 96th congress (1979-80), whereas Republicans tended to oppose liberalized immigration.

find that recent spikes in the share of foreign born are negatively correlated with the probability of congressmen to support immigration liberalization, even though the results are not statistically significant.

Finally, in column (10) and (11) we assess the role played by the racial composition of the district, focusing on the importance of the share of Hispanics and African-Americans. While we don't find a significant relationship between congressmen's voting behavior and the share of Hispanics in the population, the positive and significant coefficient for Afro-American suggests that the identification with minorities might be important.[25] Indeed, there is some evidence suggesting that African American legislators tend to see the immigration issue within a minority rights framework. Based on the ideas of civil rights and equal opportunity they build political coalitions with other ethnic minorities and tend to support open immigration policies (Gimpel and Edwards 1999, Gonzales and Kamdar 2000, Fetzer 2006). Interestingly, accounting for the share of African American in the population makes the unemployment rate statistically insignificant at conventional levels. This suggests that our previous findings were driven by an omitted variable bias: Afro-Americans are more likely to be unemployed, and representatives of districts with a high share of Afro-Americans are more likely to support open immigration policies.[26]

To conclude, the results in Table 3 provide strong support for the predictions of our simple theoretical model. Congressmen's are more likely to support measures increasing the availability of unskilled labor the higher is the share of high skilled workers in a given district. This result is robust to the introduction of additional economic channels − like the welfare state channel, and other non-economic channels, like the political/ideological channel and additional geographic/network controls which affect legislators voting behavior.

5. Robustness checks

In this section we assess the robustness of our main results in a number of ways. We start by considering in Table 4 alternative measures of the role played by economic characteristics of the district. In column (1) we replace the share of highly skilled– defined as the fraction of individual over 25, which have completed at least a bachelor degree - with the share of low skilled individuals (*Alternative SkillRatio*) - defined as the share of individuals which have

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[25] The insignificance of the coefficient for Hispanics might be driven by the small size of the Hispanic population during the early congresses.
[26] Indeed, we also run a specification identical to the one reported in column 11, from which we excluded the unemployment share, and the coefficient on Afro-American is positive and strongly significant. The results are available upon request from the authors.

completed less than four years of high school. Our results are in line with the model predictions: The likelihood of congressmen to vote in favor of freer unskilled immigration is negatively correlated with share of the unskilled population in the constituency. The results for the impact of other district characteristics are similar to the ones in our preferred specification, i.e. column (11) of Table 3.

In the remainder of Table 4 we further explore the role played by sectoral employment. In column (2) we modify our benchmark specification (column 11 in Table 3) by controlling for the share of employment in manufacturing, whereas in column (3) we consider employment in the construction and retail sectors. In neither case is the sign and significance of our main explanatory variable affected. Interestingly, representatives of districts in which manufacturing is more important tend to be less favorable towards unskilled immigration, whereas the opposite is true for districts in which construction and retail play a bigger role (even though the latter effect is not statistically significant).

We turn next to consider in Table 5 several robustness checks concerning the political/ideological channel. We start by replacing, in column (1) the legislator's party affiliation, with his/her DW nominate score, where a higher score indicates that the politician is more `conservative' (see section 4 for the definition). Our results suggest that more conservative politicians are more likely to vote against pro-immigration measures, but once again the sign and significance of our main explanatory variable is hardly affected. In column (2) the representative's ideological leaning is instead measured using the ADA score, where a higher score indicates that the politician is more liberal (see section 4 for the definition). The findings in column (2) are fairly comparable to those in column (1). In columns (3) and (4) we control respectively for whether the politician belongs to the House majority and for whether a politician in the majority belongs also to the same party as the president. In both cases, belonging to the House majority has a negative impact on the likelihood to support a liberalization in immigration policy towards the unskilled, but our main result on the role of the labor market channel are hardly affected.

So far our analysis of the drivers of an individual representative's voting behavior has focused on the role played by the characteristics of the district's average voter. At the same time, it has been widely argued that in democratic societies the aggregation of individual preferences is likely to be a much richer process. In particular, when it turns to immigration policy, a recent strand of the literature has emphasized the activities carried out by pressure groups (Facchini and Willmann 2005, Facchini, Mayda and Mishra 2008, Hanson and Spilimbergo 2001). For

instance, Facchini, Mayda and Mishra (2008) have used a new dataset, which allows to identify the purpose of the lobbying activity to show that in the United States lobbying at the sectoral level has a statistically significant and important effect on the allocation of work and related visas across sectors. To assess the role of organized groups on the voting behavior of elected representatives unfortunately we cannot follow the same procedure, as the data used by Facchini, Mayda and Mishra (2008) does not allow for the identification of the politician, which has been contacted by the lobby. We use instead political action committee contributions – which are available since 1979 – and can be easily traced to the elected official. In particular, we focus on the role played by contributions offered by corporations (PacCorporate) and by unions (PacLabor). The presumption is that corporations will favor more lax immigration policies as more immigrants will decrease labor costs, whereas unions are against this type of policies for exactly the same reason. As Political Action Committee Contributions (PACs) measure lobbying effort on a variety of different issues, we have considered a politician to have been "influenced" for the sake of immigration policy if the corporate (labor) contributions he/she has received are at or above the eightieth percentile of all corporate (labor) contributions in that year.[27] Interestingly, neither corporate nor labor PAC contributions appear to affect the voting behavior of elected officials on immigration policy (column 5). This finding resembles a similar result in Facchini, Mayda and Mishra (2008), where PAC contributions are also shown not to be a significant driver of immigration policy, whereas the opposite is true for lobbying expenditure.[28] More importantly, including lobbying does not affect the sign and significance of our main results.[29]

In Table 6 we consider two robustness checks on the network channel. As Latinos are by far the largest ethnic group among recent migrants in the US, we start by considering whether Hispanic congressmen behave differently from Non-Hispanic legislators, but we don't find any conclusive evidence. This result has to be treated with caution though, as the number of Hispanic representatives in Congress has been very low for the first twenty-five years of our sample, and has increased substantially only starting from the mid nineties. Finally, in column (2) we look at whether Black congressmen behave differently from Non-Blacks on immigration issues, and we find that members of the Black congressional caucus tend to be more in favor of open immigration policies (see also the discussion in Section 5).

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[27] We have experimented with different thresholds, and the results do not change substantially.

[28] As mentioned, PAC contributions are hard to trace to a particular issue, and as a result this is a rather imprecise measure of the intensity of the lobbying activity.

[29] Notice that the number of observations in column (5) falls substantially, as we do not have measures of political action committee contributions before 1979, and therefore have to exclude observations on the first two bills in our sample.

Finally, in table 7 we carry out a series of robustness checks involving the geography of immigration and changes in the sample size. In column (1) we carry out our analysis focusing only on the four major immigration reforms (*H.R.3810*, *H.R.2202*, *H.R.4300*, and *H.R.4437*. In column (2), we restrict our sample to the voting behavior of congressmen from the Sunbelt states, which are characterized by strong population growth during the decades we are considering. Finally, in column (3), we focus instead on legislators belonging to states which received large inflows of immigrants (the 15 states with the highest share of foreign-born in the population during our observation period). In all these cases our main results are not affected, i.e. the expected effect of immigration on the district's labor market is a key determinant in the representative's voting behavior.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we have developed a simple theoretical model to analyze the drivers of the voting behavior of individual representatives on immigration policy, which emphasizes the role played by the skill composition of the constituency. Our model predicts that legislators will be more (less) likely to favor a policy increasing the number of unskilled (skilled) immigrants, the more skilled labor abundant is their district.

We have assessed the predictions of our model on a novel dataset, which includes all US House of Representatives voting records on immigration policy over the period 1970-2006. We have found that labor market factors, as captured by the complementarity /substitutability between the domestic and foreign labor force are key drivers of congressmen voting behavior. Representatives from more skilled labor abundant districts are systematically more likely to support an unskilled immigration liberalization bill, while representatives from more unskilled labor abundant districts are less likely to do so. This result is remarkably robust and continues to hold when we control for a wealth of additional economic and non-economic drivers.

As for future work, we plan to use the rich dataset we have constructed to investigate the voting behavior of elected politicians on different aspects of globalization. For instance, a simple economic Heckscher-Ohlin model would suggest that international trade and international factor mobility should be substitutes from the point of view of the labor market effects, since international trade in goods can effectively be thought as the purchase of embodied factor services. We plan to investigate whether this simple prediction holds in the data, i.e. whether given district economic characteristics a politician will vote in the same way on a measure increasing the supply of unskilled labor as he votes on a trade bill alleviating the

import of labor-intensive products. We believe that answering these questions will greatly increase our understanding of the political economy of globalization.

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Table 1: Final passage votes on immigration issues in the House of Representatives 1970-2006

	Cong	Date	Bill	Topic	Keyword	Direction	Yes	No
1	93	3.5.1973	H.R.392	Illegal Migration	Employer Sanctions	Contra	297	63
2	93	26.9.1973	H.R.891	Immigration	Rodino bill	Contra	336	30
3	98	20.6.1984	H.R.1510	Illegal Migration	Simpson-Mazzoli Bill	Contra	216	211
4	99	9.10.1986	H.R.3810*	Illegal Migration	Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)	Pro	230	166
5	100	21.4.1988	H.R.4222	Illegal Migration	Extension of legalization by 6 months	Pro	213	202
6	101	3.10.1990	H.R.4300*	Immigration	The 1990 Immigration Act (IMMACT)	Pro	231	192
7	104	21.3.1996	H.R.2202*	Illegal Immigration	Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act	Contra	333	87
8	105	25.3.1998	H.R.2578	Immigration	Visa Waiver program	Pro	407	0
9	109	10.2.2005	H.R.418	Illegal Migration	Real ID Act	Contra	261	161
10	109	16.12.2005	H.R.4437*	Illegal Migration	Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act	Contra	239	182
11	109	14.9.2006	H.R.6061	Illegal Migration	Secure Fence Act	Contra	283	138
12	109	21.9.2006	H.R.6094	Illegal Migration	Community Protection Act of 2006	Contra	328	95
13	109	21.9.2006	H.R.4830	Illegal Migration	Border Tunnel Prevention Act	Contra	422	0
14	109	21.9.2006	H.R.6095	Illegal Migration	Immigration Law Enforcement Act of 2006	Contra	277	140

Cong and *Date* describe the congress/date in which/when the vote took place. *Bill* shows the name under which the bill is originating in the House of Representatives ("H.R."). Major immigration legislations are marked with an asterisk (*). *Topic* classifies the broad issue of the bill. *Keyword* provides some basic information about the content of the legislation. *Direction* shows whether the bill is pro or contra liberalizing immigration. *Yes/No* show the overall number of Yes/No Votes.

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote $_{ijt}$	4906	0.36	0.48	0	1
SkillRatio $_{it}$	4902	0.19	0.09	0.02	0.57
Alternative SkillRatio $_{it}$	4902	0.29	0.13	0.04	0.75
Farm Worker $_{it}$	4899	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.22
Manufacturing $_{it}$	4897	0.18	0.08	0.03	0.52
Wholesale and Retail $_{it}$	4899	0.17	0.03	0.09	0.43
Construction $_{it}$	4479	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.16
Unemployment $_{it}$	4899	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.22
Family Income $_{it}$	4906	33184	18977	30	91571
Democrat $_{it}$	4906	0.52	0.50	0	1
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	4890	0.53	0.25	0	1
DW Nominate $_{it}$	4906	0.03	0.43	-0.72	1.69
ADA $_{it}$	4779	45.48	37.15	0	100
Majority $_{it}$	4906	0.56	0.50	0	1
MajorityPres $_{it}$	4906	0.10	0.30	0	1
PacLabor $_{it}$	3898	0.20	0.40	0	1
PacCorporate $_{it}$	3898	0.20	0.40	0	1
Urban $_{it}$	4903	0.75	0.23	0.00	1.00
Foreign-born $_{it}$	4906	0.08	0.09	0.00	0.59
FB growth $_{it}$	4906	0.46	0.77	-0.82	6.00
Afro-American $_{it}$	4906	0.12	0.15	0.00	0.92
Hispanic $_{it}$	4752	0.09	0.14	0.00	0.84
Hispanic Caucus $_{it}$	4906	0.03	0.18	0	1
Black Caucus $_{it}$	4902	0.07	0.25	0	1

Vote $_{jit}$ is coded as 1 if the representative of district i at time t votes on bill j in favor of immigration, 0 otherwise. *SkillRatio $_{it}$* measures the percentage of the population over 25 with at least a bachelor degree. *Alternative SkillRatio $_{it}$* is the percentage of the population over 25 with less than 4 years of High School. *Farm Worker $_{it}$* measures the share of farm workers in the total labor force. *Manufacturing $_{it}$* describes the share of individuals employed in manufacturing in the total labor force. *Wholesale and Retail $_{it}$*, respectively *Construction $_{it}$*, measure the share of people employed in wholesale and retail, respectively construction, in the total labor force. *Unemployment $_{it}$* is the share of unemployed individuals in the total labor force. *Family Income $_{it}$* measures the median family income within a district in dollars. *Democrat $_{it}$* is a dummy coded as 1 if the representative of the district belongs to the Democratic Party. *Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$* is the Democratic share of the two-party vote at the past House elections. *ADA $_{it}$* ranks every house representative on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores assigned to more liberal politicians. *DW Nominate $_{it}$* is an individual ideology score increasing in conservatism. *Majority $_{it}$* is a dummy coded as 1 if the party of the district representative has the majority in the house, 0 otherwise. *MajorityPres $_{it}$* is a dummy coded as 1 if the party of the district representative has the majority in the house and is the same like the one of the president of the US, 0 otherwise. *Urban $_{it}$* describes the share of the population living in urban areas. *PacLabor $_{it}$* and *PacCorporate $_{it}$* are dummy variables that take the value 1 if the contributions from labor, respectively corporate, related Political Action Committees (PACs) of congressman i are above the 80th percentile of all Labor/Corporate PAC contributions in year t. *Foreign-born $_{it}$* measures the share of foreign-born individuals in the total population. *FB growth $_{it}$* measures how the share of *Foreign-Born* share has changed related to the previous period. *Afro-American $_{it}$* is the share of Afro-American individuals in the total population. *Hispanic $_{it}$* is the share of individuals with Hispanic origin in the total population. *Hispanic caucus $_{it}$* is a dummy coded as 1 if the representative is of Hispanic origin, 0 otherwise. *Black caucus $_{it}$* is a dummy coded as 1 if the representative of the district is of Afro-American origin, 0 otherwise.

Table 3: Empirical results for all constituencies and immigration bills

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration										
SkillRatio $_{it}$	-0.306	1.351**	0.971**	1.251**	1.235**	1.212**	0.950**	0.811**	0.813**	0.978**	0.980**
	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.27)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.20)
Unemployment $_{it}$		10.29**	10.72**	9.587**	5.261**	5.032**	4.239*	3.903**	3.913*	4.257**	2.935
		(2.04)	(1.37)	(1.74)	(1.54)	(1.85)	(1.81)	(1.37)	(1.56)	(1.52)	(1.63)
Farm Worker $_{it}$			-4.279**	-4.498**	-1.649**	-1.536**	0.237	0.156	0.153	-0.015	0.117
			(0.77)	(0.71)	(0.60)	(0.58)	(1.00)	(0.86)	(0.86)	(0.95)	(0.83)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)				-0.236	-0.134	-0.120*	-0.145*	-0.112*	-0.112**	-0.121*	-0.089*
				(0.15)	(0.070)	(0.051)	(0.065)	(0.047)	(0.040)	(0.050)	(0.036)
Democrat $_{it}$					0.392**	0.340**	0.327**	0.322**	0.324**	0.372**	0.381**
					(0.023)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.040)	(0.027)	(0.029)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$						0.153*	0.133	0.121	0.122	0.122	0.069
						(0.072)	(0.079)	(0.076)	(0.071)	(0.085)	(0.075)
Urban $_{it}$							0.387**	0.231*	0.231*	0.237*	0.123
							(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)
Foreign-born $_{it}$								1.025**	1.048**	1.004**	0.980**
								(0.25)	(0.27)	(0.32)	(0.32)
FB growth $_{it}$									-0.013	-0.012	-0.014
									(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Hispanic $_{it}$										0.143	0.302
										(0.16)	(0.17)
Afro-American $_{it}$											0.347*
											(0.14)
Observations	4441	4441	4441	4441	4441	4426	4426	4426	4426	4290	4290
Pseudo R-squared	0.207	0.298	0.324	0.328	0.442	0.442	0.451	0.464	0.464	0.461	0.463
Log Likelihood	-2323	-2056	-1979	-1968	-1635	-1628	-1603	-1565	-1565	-1537	-1530

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. All specifications include year and state fixed effects as well as state*year interactions. ** Significant at 1%, * significant at 5%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables.

Table 4: Robustness Checks: Economic channel

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration		
SkillRatio $_{it}$		0.820**	1.120**
		(0.20)	(0.23)
Alternative SkillRatio $_{it}$	-1.096**		
	(0.30)		
Unemployment $_{it}$	3.020	2.680	3.354
	(1.70)	(1.63)	(1.79)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	0.509	-0.312	0.233
	(0.82)	(0.84)	(0.81)
Manufacturing $_{it}$		-0.455*	
		(0.19)	
Constr/Ret $_{it}$			0.649
			(0.90)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	-0.0758*	-0.0750*	-0.0932*
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Democrat $_{it}$	0.378**	0.383**	0.390**
	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.109	0.0643	0.0808
	(0.082)	(0.076)	(0.072)
Urban $_{it}$	0.089	0.084	0.098
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	1.430**	1.037**	1.096**
	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.34)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.008	-0.010	-0.007
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Hispanic $_{it}$	0.371	0.294*	0.260
	(0.22)	(0.14)	(0.19)
Afro-American $_{it}$	0.451**	0.339*	0.318
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.17)
Year Effects	yes	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes	yes
State * Year Interactions	yes	yes	yes
Observations	4290	4290	3961
Pseudo R-squared	0.463	0.464	0.459
Log Likelihood	-1531	-1527	-1435

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. ** Significant at 1%, * significant at 5%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables. Notes (1) The *Alternative SkillRatio $_{it}$* is the percentage of the population over 25 with less than 4 years of High School. (2) *Manufacturing $_{it}$* measures the share of individuals employed in manufacturing in the total labor force. (3) *Constr/Ret $_{it}$* measures the share of people employed in wholesale & retail and construction in the total labor force.

Table 5: Robustness Checks: Political channel

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration				
SkillRatio $_{it}$	0.788**	0.748**	0.857**	0.894**	1.351**
	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.36)
Unemployment $_{it}$	2.194	2.345	2.549	2.818	3.014*
	(1.29)	(1.40)	(1.47)	(1.59)	(1.46)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	0.446	0.635	-0.0781	0.107	-1.010
	(0.84)	(0.86)	(0.87)	(0.81)	(0.72)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	-0.100**	-0.0744*	-0.0544	-0.0767*	-0.141
	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.21)
Democrat $_{it}$			0.401**	0.408**	0.481**
			(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.045)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.00882	0.138*	0.0798	0.0601	0.103
	(0.062)	(0.066)	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.14)
DW Nominate $_{it}$	-0.636**				
	(0.049)				
ADA $_{it}$		0.00633**			
		(0.00052)			
Majority $_{it}$			-0.222**		
			(0.021)		
MajorityPres $_{it}$				-0.234**	
				(0.014)	
PacLabor $_{it}$					0.0494
					(0.044)
PacCorporate $_{it}$					-0.0000588
					(0.035)
Urban $_{it}$	0.129	0.0525	0.117	0.141	0.0585
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	0.853**	0.868**	0.871*	0.983**	1.026*
	(0.28)	(0.30)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.42)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.00918	-0.0163	-0.0137	-0.0134	-0.0123
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.018)
Hispanic $_{it}$	0.175	0.223	0.307*	0.257	0.544*
	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.22)
Afro-American $_{it}$	0.119	0.169	0.291*	0.292*	0.620**
	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Year Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
State * Year Interactions	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	4290	4172	4290	4290	3464
Pseudo R-squared	0.491	0.483	0.487	0.478	0.481
Log Likelihood	-1450	-1434	-1462	-1487	-1224

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. ** Significant at 1%, * significant at 5%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables. Notes (1) *DW Nominate $_{it}$* is an individual ideology score increasing in conservatism. (2) ADA $_{it}$ is a measure of how liberal a politician is computed by the Americans for Democratic Action. It ranges from 0 to 100, and a higher score indicates a more liberal politician. (3) Majority $_{it}$ a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the congressman belongs to the party controlling the House. (4) MajorityPres $_{it}$ takes a value of 1 if the congressman belongs to the party that controls the House and the one of the President. (5) PacLabor $_{it}$ and PacCorporate $_{it}$ are dummy variables that take the value 1 if the contributions from labor, respectively corporate, related Political Action Committees (PACs) of a congressman are above the 80th percentile of all Labor/Corporate PAC contributions in year t.

Table 6: Robustness Checks: Network channel

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration		
SkillRatio $_{it}$	0.755**	0.964**
	(0.19)	(0.21)
Unemployment $_{it}$	2.948*	2.402
	(1.32)	(1.31)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	0.302	0.242
	(0.72)	(0.78)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	-0.0918*	-0.0795*
	(0.039)	(0.035)
Democrat $_{it}$	0.329**	0.393**
	(0.024)	(0.026)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.0773	0.0434
	(0.065)	(0.082)
Urban $_{it}$	0.154	0.110
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	1.142**	0.941**
	(0.26)	(0.29)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.0160	-0.0129
	(0.012)	(0.014)
Hispanic $_{it}$		0.349*
		(0.15)
Afro-American $_{it}$	0.260*	
	(0.13)	
Hispanic Caucus $_{it}$	0.00904	
	(0.078)	
Black Caucus $_{it}$		0.361**
		(0.083)
Year Effects	yes	yes
State Effects	yes	yes
State * Year Interactions	yes	yes
Observations	4426	4290
Pseudo R-squared	0.466	0.470
Log Likelihood	-1560	-1510

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. ** Significant at 1%, * significant at 5%. See end of table 2 for a definition of the variables. Notes (1) *Hispanic Caucus $_{it}$* is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the politician belongs to the Hispanic caucus. (2) *Black Caucus $_{it}$* is a dummy that takes a value of 1 if the politician belongs to the Afro-American caucus.

Table 7: Robustness checks: Geography & sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Dependent Variable: Vote on liberalization of unskilled immigration		
SkillRatio $_{it}$	1.124*	1.181**	0.969**
	(0.56)	(0.23)	(0.26)
Unemployment $_{it}$	4.849*	-1.462	0.540
	(1.94)	(1.93)	(1.78)
Farm Worker $_{it}$	2.275	0.185	0.263
	(1.42)	(1.11)	(1.02)
ln (Family Income $_{it}$)	-0.214	-0.299**	-0.0545
	(0.35)	(0.080)	(0.13)
Democrat $_{it}$	0.567**	0.428**	0.417**
	(0.038)	(0.028)	(0.038)
Share Democrat Votes $_{it}$	0.00538	0.426**	0.223*
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.11)
Urban $_{it}$	0.591*	0.123	-0.0856
	(0.23)	(0.34)	(0.21)
Foreign-born $_{it}$	1.371*	0.665**	1.244**
	(0.64)	(0.17)	(0.38)
FB growth $_{it}$	-0.0507*	-0.00296	-0.0263
	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.019)
Hispanic $_{it}$	-0.0773	0.662**	0.597**
	(0.36)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Afro-American $_{it}$	-0.00698	0.0756	0.453*
	(0.37)	(0.11)	(0.18)
Year effects	yes	yes	yes
State effects	yes	yes	yes
State * Year Interactions	yes	yes	yes
Observations	1422	1144	2322
Pseudo R-squared	0.470	0.425	0.460
Log Likelihood	-518.3	-453.4	-863.2

The table reports marginal effects of probit regressions. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are presented in parentheses. ** Significant at 1%, * significant at 5%. In column (1) we include only voting records on major immigration legislations included (see table 1: H.R.3810, H.R.2202, H.R.4300, and H.R.4437). In column (2) we include only voting records of representatives from *South-Western states* included (Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah). Finally, in column (3) we include only voting records of representatives from *High Immigration States* (15 states with the highest share of foreign-born population) included (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Oregon, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington).

Figure 1: Voting on H.R.4437, New York State 109th Congress.
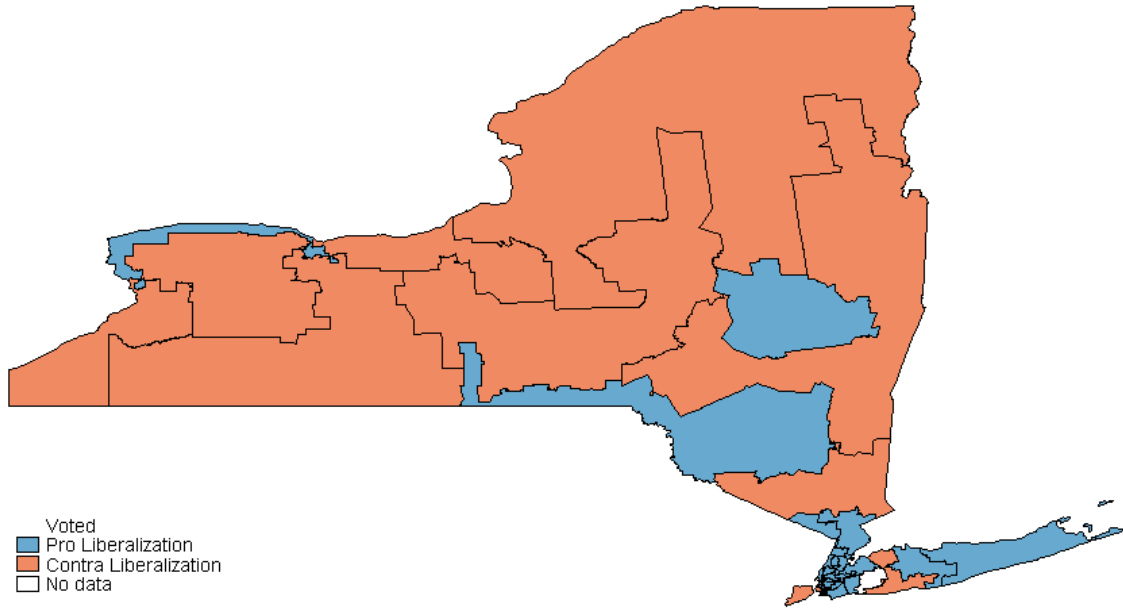

Voted
- Pro Liberalization
- Contra Liberalization
- No data

Figure 2: Skill ratio, New York State 109th Congress.

Share of High Skilled
- (0.31,0.57]
- (0.26,0.31]
- (0.20,0.26]
- [0.08,0.20]