

# *Money Is Not Everything: Political Contributions and Legislative Cosponsorship in Chinese Taiwan*

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## *Abstract*

Beyond partisanship, what can foster cosponsorship of proposals in a legislature filled with intense partisan competition? To answer this question, using public materials released by Taiwan's Supervision Yuan and Legislative Yuan, this article established two networks of members of the 9th Legislative Yuan: the Contribution Similarity Network (CSN) and the Joint Proposal Network (JPN). The CSN connects 2,649 companies and 168 corporation groups with legislators through political donations, while the JPN connects legislators to each other in terms of their cosponsorships. The results indicate that political contribution similarity is an important factor in the co-signing behavior of legislators, but the influence varies by legislative topic. Specifically, legislators who receive similar corporate donations are more likely to cosponsor proposals that are not

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controversial and opposed by the public (“uncertain vote proposals”), such as financial and industrial development proposals. In contrast, political contribution similarity has no significant effect on the cosponsorship of “vote-risk proposals,” such as labor and human resources policies and environment and resources policies, because these proposals are prone to social controversy and backlash. These findings reveal the specific characteristics of “crony capitalism” in Taiwan’s legislature. They also imply that, when examining the electoral system in Taiwan, money politics is as important as party politics, and the logic of the former does not completely coincide with that of the latter.

In a regime with competitive elections, partisan competition in the legislative branch is common. In these rivalries, cosponsorship is an important means to establish cooperative alliances and a good way to influence legislation during its initial stage. In this regard, Chinese Taiwan (Taiwan hereafter) is typical of other regions.

Since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) entered the Legislative Yuan in 1986, the legislature has become an arena with strong party competition. At present, the Legislative Yuan, split between legislators from different parties, has evolved into a highly ideological forum. It is therefore easier to cosponsor a proposal with legislators from one’s own party. Such a strategy not only demonstrates party cohesion and issue ownership, but also helps legislators to achieve party policy goals.<sup>1</sup> However, partisanship does not always dominate. For example, the draft amendment to Article 107 of the Insurance Law was jointly proposed by Kuomintang (KMT) member Lu Shiow-yen; DPP members Chen Lai Su-mei, Chuang Jui-hsiung, and Chiu Chih-wei; and Non-Party Unity Coalition member Kao Chin Su-mei.

The fact that such a proposal was sponsored by members of different parties raises an intriguing question: Beyond partisanship, what can foster cosponsorship of proposals in a legislature filled with intense partisan competition? To answer this question, we examined public materials released by Taiwan’s Supervision Yuan and Legislative Yuan and established two networks of members of the 9th (2016–2020) Legislative Yuan: the Contribution Similarity Network (CSN) and the Joint Proposal Network (JPN). The CSN connects 2,649 companies and 168 corporate groups with legislators through political donations, while the JPN connects legislators with each other through their cosponsorships. The results show that