



Thesis Defense

Computer Science Master's Program

“Generating a Novel Legislator Organization Alignment Score”

By **Brandon Lin**

Abstract:

Ever since the 2010 Citizens United v. FEC, corporations and organizations have been able to contribute expenditures and resources into political legislators and campaigns. It has become apparent over the years that organizations can exercise significant influence in direct ways to influence campaigns across the United States. During this period, Digital Democracy has collected large amounts of data pertaining to legislative bill information, voting patterns, and donations on behalf of the California public to raise awareness. Digital Democracy has also released its own scoring system that compares the amount of aligning votes between a legislator and an organization. However, this may not capture the full details on how a legislator's behavior aligns with an organization.

This thesis presents a novel legislator organization score using the data from Digital Democracy in order to build a comprehensive scoring system that takes into account multiple ways organizations can influence how a legislator can vote, including scores pertaining to vote alignment, donations, party alignment, party deviation, and party leaders. Utilizing surveys and interviews with multiple experts in the field, we found that our scoring system is a viable alternative to just using vote alignment while capturing more information than the previous score. This score is more useful in calculating the full extent of how a legislator's behavior may align with an organization's interests.

Date: Thursday, December 5th, 2024

Time: 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Location: 14-238b

Committee: Dr. Khosmood, Dr. Dekhtyar, and Dr. Jones

