

A Roll Call Vote Analysis of the Puerto Rican Assembly, 2013-2023

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Abstract

The investigation generated a data set using roll call votes in the Puerto Rican Assembly's Senate and House of Representatives from 2013-2024. Vote PDF files were gathered with a specialized web scraper, then standardized into a data set containing 8,449 bills and 327,773 individual votes cast by 356 legislators. I then applied the W-NOMINATE algorithm to calculate ideal point preferences for each legislator. During the 2021-2024 Assembly period, the distance between legislator policy preferences within the PNP increased, and the range of ideal points occupied by the PPD along the second NOMINATE dimension calculated shrank. Simultaneously, the PIP, MVC, PD, and other independent legislators have moved to occupy this vacuum in the second dimension, converging ideal points rather than to either the PNP or PPD. Despite significant ideological differences between them, this cohort of small parties and its voting patterns could hold outsized legislative leverage as a result of the PNP and PPD's weakened positions. Combined with in-person observations from an internship in the Senate in the Summer of 2024, this analysis suggests an emerging anti-establishmentarian cleavage in the Puerto Rican political landscape. The digitized roll call data are available in the [Yale Dataverse](#) to facilitate further scholarly research on Puerto Rican politics.

Introduction

The legislative branch of Puerto Rico is the Legislative Assembly, with an upper chamber, the Senate, and a lower chamber, the House of Representatives. Each chamber has a similar amount of power relative to the other, and members are elected by plurality vote. The Senate consists of 27 seats, with 16 members elected in eight equally populous senatorial districts with two seats each, and the remaining

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eleven being elected at-large. The House consists of 51 seats, with 40 being elected from 40 House districts with one seat each, and the remaining eleven being elected at-large (Gobierno de Puerto Rico, 2024). Should a single party or ticket win more than a two-thirds majority in either body, a minoritarian clause is activated: a number of opposition candidates will be declared elect, with the quantity and party affiliation of these varying depending on the vote share obtained by the winning party in the gubernatorial elections and the proportion of the gubernatorial vote obtained by the opposition parties (Gobierno de Puerto Rico, 2024).

All seats in the Assembly are elected every four years to serve identical-length terms during general elections in early November, whose winners comprise the following numbered Assembly; the current Assembly is the 19th². The four-year period during which the Assembly gathers is divided into eight sessions, each of which lasts from either January to June, or July to November.

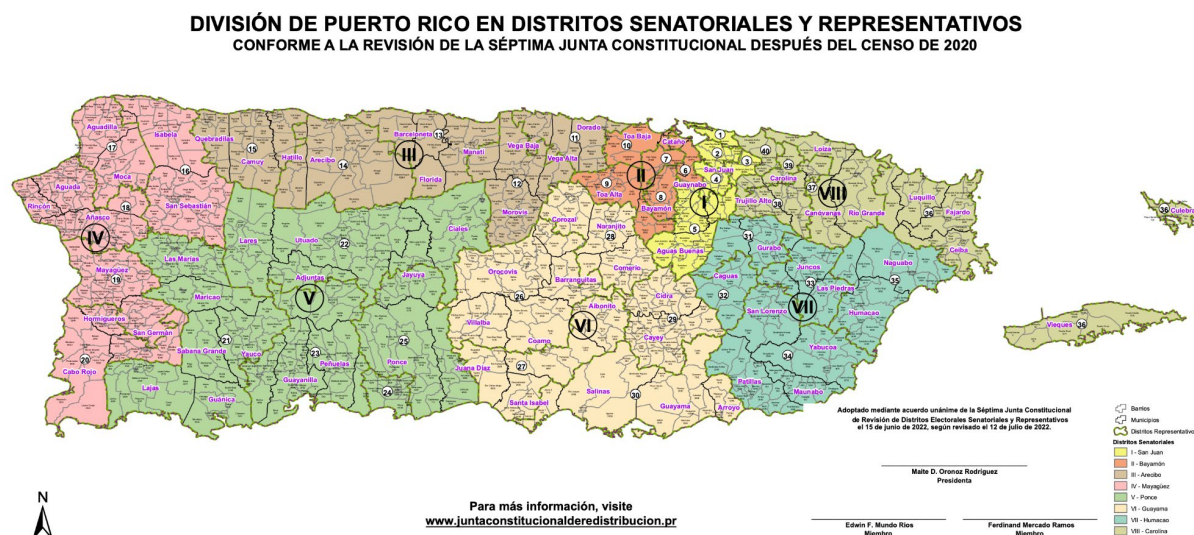


Figure 1. A current map of the Senate's eight districts, overlaid with the House's 40 districts. (Junta Constitucional de Puerto Rico, n.d.)

Historically, the primary cleavage in Puerto Rican politics has been the island's territorial status. These include independence, commonwealth status, statehood, and other intermediary options³, which have had other economic and social issues secondarily associated with each. Generally, status options which seek greater distance from the US have been associated with left-wing policies, while those which seek

² The Assembly, being formally created in 1952, quantifies the number of iterations since this date. The Senate and House, however, both existed independently before this date; the Senate is in its 27th iteration, and the House is in its 31st.

³ While independence, commonwealth status, and statehood have historically been the most popular (though their respective popularities have changed over time), other alternatives have been proposed. A free association similar to that of Micronesia has been proposed, and certain fringe elements advocate for a return to Spanish rule.

greater integration with the US have been associated with right-wing policies. This is shown in the two parties which have dominated the island's electoral politics throughout the latter half of the 20th century: the centrist, pro-commonwealth⁴ People's Democratic Party (PPD, in Spanish), and the center-right, pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP, in Spanish). While third parties have historically underperformed for a variety of social and political factors, the most recent elections in 2020 were heavily contested by them.

This electoral upswing came in the wake of the 2019 "Telegramgate" Protests, which began due to mass outrage at a leaked Telegram group chat with the PNP then-governor Ricardo Roselló and his cabinet members. The leaks contained numerous bigoted remarks aimed at political opponents, messages mocking the 4,695 people who died during Hurricane María, exposed a conspiracy to use news networks to control political narratives (Minet, et al., 2019), and were themselves preceded by other leaks and scandals in the Roselló administration. The resulting protests mobilized by some estimates nearly a third of the island's residents⁵ (O'Donnell, 2019), leading to the resignation of Roselló and a period of political turmoil over the selection of an interim governor. With large segments of the population being galvanized against the existing political establishment, the conditions arose for new parties and groups to seriously contest the PNP and PPD control of the government.

Though the percentage of votes obtained by the PNP and PPD in the gubernatorial elections had already been in decline since the 2016 elections, this decline only accelerated in the 2020 elections (CEE, n.d.-b). The current PNP governor, Pedro Pierluisi, only won with 33% of the vote, and three other parties won seats in both houses. These are the social-democratic, pro-independence Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP, in Spanish), the big-tent, anti-corruption and anti-colonialism Citizens' Victory Movement (MVC, in Spanish)⁶, and the right-wing, christian democratic Project Dignity (PD).

⁴ Commonwealth status refers to the current territorial arrangement. Many in the PPD advocate for an "enhanced" commonwealth status with revised provisions for autonomy and funding, while others in it favor a free association compact.

⁵ Protests against the Roselló administration were not just confined to Puerto Rico. Many in the large diaspora residing in the US and elsewhere in Latin America organized rallies and protests outside of the island.

⁶ The MVC and PIP are in an electoral alliance, simply called "La Alianza" (The Alliance). Since 2011, however, coalition tickets have been prohibited by the electoral code (Serrano, 2024). To get around this prohibition, The Alliance operates using a set list of mutually supported candidacies across mayoral, legislative, and island-wide posts. Most notably, the Alliance is backing PIP candidate Juan Dalmau Ramírez for governor, and MVC candidate Ana Irma Rivera Lassén for Resident Commissioner.

Data and Methods

The data set generated during this investigation contains 327,773 individual votes cast by 356 members of the Assembly across 8,849 bills during the 17th, 18th, and 19th Legislative Assemblies (2013-2024). For reasons detailed further below, NOMINATE was unable to run for the years of 2013 for the Senate, and 2014 and 2024 for the House.

Table 1. Legislators and Roll Call Votes Used in Senate NOMINATE Scores							
Year	Majority Party	Legislators Measured	Legislators Not Measured	Votes Used	Votes Not Used	1st Dimension Power (%)	2nd Dimension Power (%)
2013	PNP	27	0	53	21	95.60	97.07
2015	PNP	26	1	50	108	94.91	94.73
2016	PNP	27	0	131	192	95.46	98.17
2017	PNP	32	0	134	320	96.09	96.42
2018	PNP	32	0	181	324	95.43	97.07
2019	PNP	32	3	188	322	95.38	97.28
2020	PNP	31	4	131	211	95.34	95.61
2021	PPD	27	0	397	303	94.79	95.72
2022	PPD	28	0	592	422	93.99	95.69
2023	PPD	28	0	546	386	93.47	95.11
2024	PPD	27	0	152	62	92.61	94.43

Legislators which were not included in calculations within a certain year were excluded due to having cast an insufficient number of votes during the year to use in NOMINATE calculations. This occurs as a result of legislators leaving office prematurely, oftentimes by resigning or by passing away. In the case of the Senate, the years of 2017-2020 are noteworthy due to the minoritarian clause being activated after

the PNP won 21 of the 27 seats. This resulted in the PPD being granted three more seats, increasing the total number of legislators to 30. The roll call votes not used by NOMINATE were those in which all or nearly all legislators voted in the same manner, thus being irrelevant for calculating any of their NOMINATE scores.

All roll call votes for the time period studied were compiled in a .csv format, which contains the following information:

- Assembly - Assembly during which the vote was cast (17th, 18th, or 19th)
- House - House in which the vote was cast; can be either the Senate (S) or House (H)
- Date - Date in which the vote was cast, in yyyy-mm-dd format
- Bill - Floor name of the bill
- Legislator ID - Unique four-digit number given to each legislator, with the first two digits representing earliest Assembly recorded of which they were a part of
- Legislator - Name of the legislator who cast a vote
- Party - Political party the legislator is affiliated to; Independents are classified as “Ind.” regardless of caucus
- Vote - Indicates the vote of any given legislator on any given bill; can be 1 (For), 0 (Against), 2 (Abstained), or 3 (Absent)
- Bill ID - Indicates a unique roll call vote file, as multiple bills often share the same floor name in different Assembly periods
- Vote ID - Indicates a unique vote cast by a legislator on a certain bill

Table 2. Legislators and Roll Call Votes Used in House NOMINATE Scores

Year	Majority Party	Legislators Measured	Legislators Not Measured	Votes Used	Votes Not Used	1st Dimension Power (%)	2nd Dimension Power (%)
2014	PNP	52	0	113	152	96.43	97.29
2015	PNP	51	0	67	226	96.15	96.25
2016	PNP	51	1	99	169	96.36	97.37
2017	PNP	51	1	146	145	95.58	96.77
2018	PNP	53	1	147	228	96.56	97.56
2019	PNP	51	2	124	201	94.85	95.33
2020	PNP	51	3	118	234	95.17	96.19
2021	PPD	51	1	173	241	93.81	96.53
2022	PPD	51	0	265	366	92.83	94.32
2023	PPD	50	4	164	242	93.51	93.31

During the data collection process, there were a variety of obstacles that had to be overcome. While the roll call votes for the 19th Assembly were easily accessible through the Senate and House pages respectively, roll call votes from before 2021 were only accessible using the legislature's database - the Unified Legislative Process System (SUTRA, in Spanish). Although generally usable for finding a given individual roll call vote, navigating SUTRA was oftentimes troublesome. The website often suffered from bugs, a lack of user optimization and slow loading times; there was also no function to download more than a single roll call vote at a time. Furthermore, many roll call votes were often unavailable, particularly in the earlier assemblies, and the files available varied between PDF and Word formats.

To gather the necessary files, a contractor-created, Python web scraping algorithm was utilized to automatically download, rename files by bill name, and categorize them by year, month, and date in a single folder structure. Of the bills listed on SUTRA, 1,782 did not have roll call vote files available for download. These are concentrated amongst the earlier years studied, where many months do not have any accessible roll call votes. Nevertheless, the program managed to collect 14,312 vote files. Although

this exploration encompasses the years of 2013-2024, the files downloaded stretch back to 2009. Those from the 16th Assembly (2009-2012) were unable to be used due to concerns explained further below, and had far less vote files available. Of all the files downloaded, 5,286 were from this time.

Of the remaining 9,026 files, 149 votes were not readable: 81 were bill texts which were wrongfully uploaded by SUTRA as roll call vote files, 56 were unable to be read by Adobe Acrobat's OCR function, 11 were uploaded as blank PDF pages, and one had all votes listed as "NA". Among the rest of the files, 2,120 were in DOC and DOCX format, all of which were converted into PDF format using a batch processor. Since older roll call votes were digitized by scanning a physical copy of the voting records, there were certain PDF files whose text was crooked or misaligned. This did not generally prove to be a significant problem, as the OCR was able to read the text. However, in select cases, the text was unable to be read and the files had to be manually re-oriented.

Processing and compiling the data into a usable spreadsheet format posed a significant challenge. Since there were no available programs or tools which could reliably read PDFs and transpose their information into a CSV file, an R script capable of such a function was written from scratch. By converting the files' texts into strings, separating the names of each legislator and their votes, and deducing the vote date and bill from the file's name and location in the folder structure, the program successfully compiled the names and votes of legislators for any given bill included in the data set. Due to errors inherent to using OCR software on scanned documents, however, names were oftentimes spelled incorrectly or with slight variations. Fixing this required first having a list of each legislator's name, spelled correctly, accompanied by a unique identifier for each legislator. Using inexact string matching packages, the vast majority of OCR errors were corrected by matching the misspelled names to those on the name list. Using the legislator ID assigned during this process, legislators were also labeled with their party affiliations.

While inexact matching was able to clean up most of the data, there were still some name spellings which were unable to be fixed by the process. A second round of inexact matching with a lower sensitivity was implemented to further remove remaining errors⁷, but a select number of names with wildly incorrect spellings - or in many cases, the lack of any name at all - still remained. Since these were few in number, however, they were manually corrected by cross referencing the incorrect names to their corresponding bills. During this manual process, the list of corrected names was also observed to ensure that all inexact matches were executed correctly. With the reading errors fully corrected, the data for each house across

⁷ For some earlier data segments, this procedure was run multiple times and verified to ensure legislators' names were properly matched.

the assemblies measured was compiled, and other identification numbers for unique bills and votes cast were added.

Results and Interpretation

The resulting data set of roll call votes was analyzed using the W-NOMINATE R package. As a variant of the NOMINATE algorithm, it similarly assumes that legislative preferences can be condensed into two plottable scores, that these legislative preferences take the shape of a single, symmetric ideal point, and that legislators vote to minimize the policy distance to their ideal points (Poole K., et al., 2007). By using weighted utility functions, W-NOMINATE can calculate the distance of legislators' preferences relative to one another based on how and when legislators vote on bills and translate this into visualizable cartesian data for each legislator.

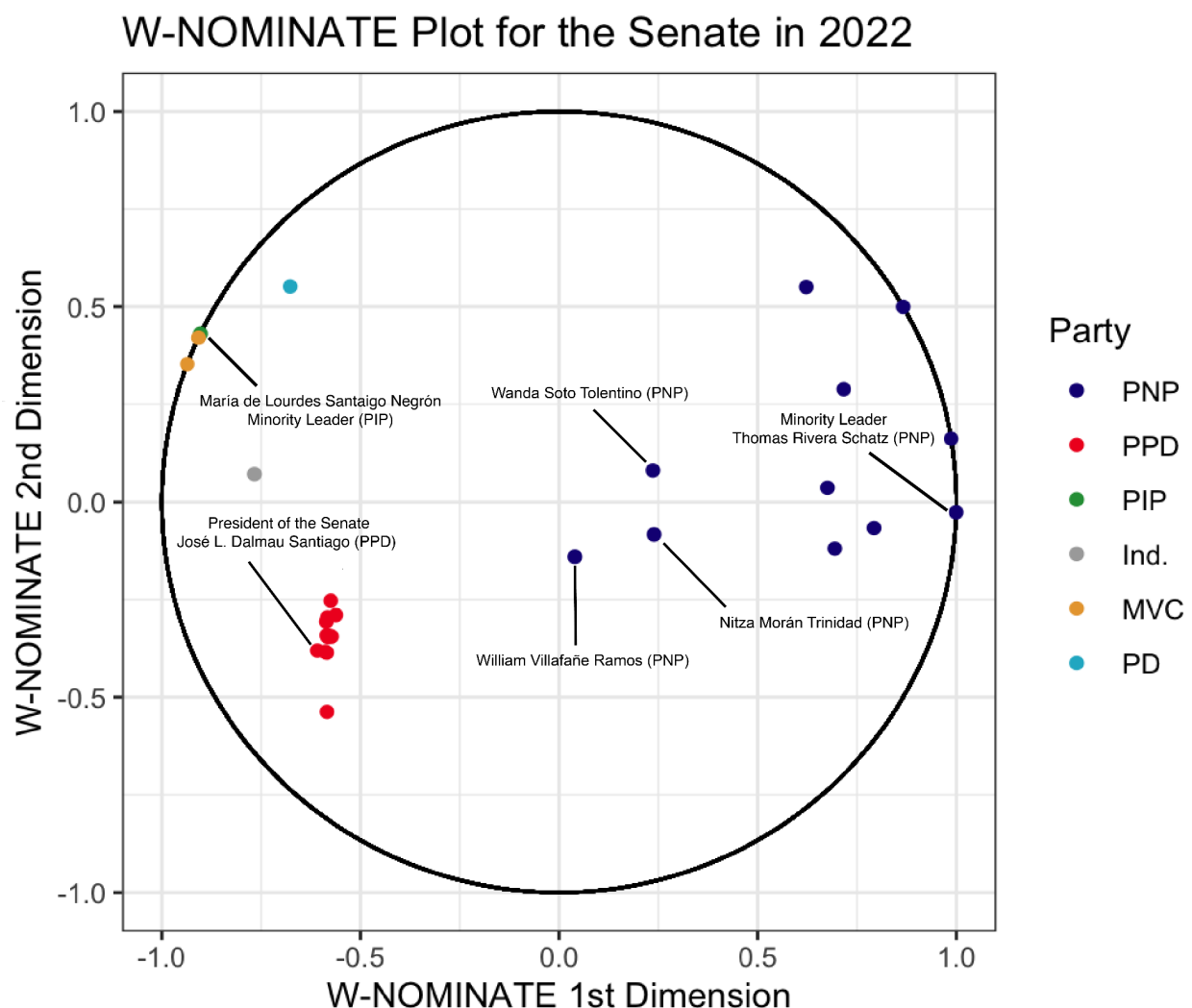


Figure 2. W-NOMINATE scores for senators in 2022

Typically, the first dimension, on the x-axis, is a general left-right spectrum, with positive values indicating a right-wing alignment, and negative ones indicating a left-wing alignment. In this case, the first dimension refers to broadly socioeconomic and environmental issues, such as healthcare and environmental protections⁸. The second dimension can refer to other cleavages which vary depending on the government and time period being analyzed. For this study, the second dimension represents the territorial status of the island, with negative values favoring the status quo, while positive values favor changing it.⁹

The diagrams generated using these scores, as shown in Figure 2, plot the resulting scores for each legislator. The figure also highlights the positions of important senators, such as PPD Senate President José Dalmau Santiago, PNP Minority Leader Thomas Rivera Schatz, and PIP Minority Leader María de Lourdes Santiago.

In this example, one can observe a general divide between the right-wing PNP and left-wing PPD, PIP, and MVC. While these three parties may broadly be considered to form the “left” of the Assembly, they do not caucus together. Rather, as the PPD commands a majority on its own, the PIP and MVC form a part of the opposition, which itself is fractured into separate party caucuses¹⁰. Compared to the PPD, the PNP is much more dispersed along the both NOMINATE dimensions. This is seen with the remaining three non-ranking senators mentioned in Figure 2, who all cluster towards the center away from their PNP colleagues. This suggests that, as a result of lowered party unity, certain members may be more inclined to vote in line with the majority.

The figure above also depicts the positions of important members of the assembly, such as PPD Senate President José Dalmau Santiago, PNP Minority Leader Thomas Rivera Schatz, and PIP Minority Leader María de Lourdes Santiago. The remaining three senators mentioned are notable for their outlying position relative to other PNP members. While this example alone is helpful for understanding dynamics both between parties and within the PNP, observing year-after-year trends reveals multiple broader trends.

⁸ This category encompasses a wide spectrum of political ideas, and as such the first dimension positioning of parties such as the PD may be misleading if used to infer their espoused views; the reasons for their positioning on the chart, and what they mean, are elaborated in detail below.

⁹ This second dimension measures favoring changing the status quo, rather than any particular territorial status option.

¹⁰ Regardless of size, all parties select their own Minority Leader and, whenever possible, a Minority Whip.

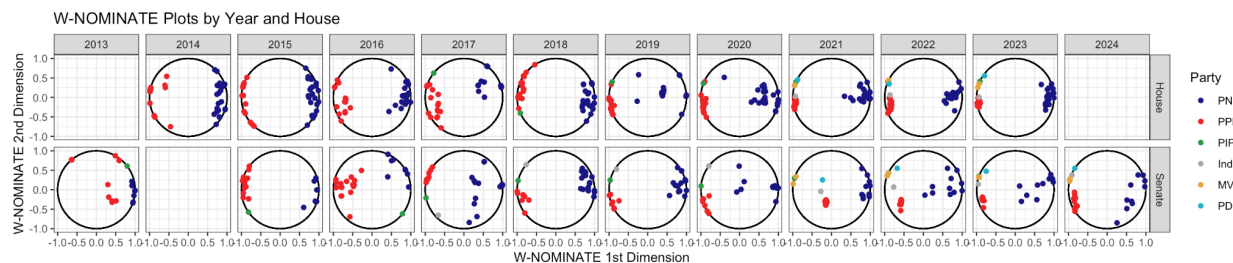


Figure 3. W-NOMINATE scores across the House and Senate from 2013-2024.

The collection of plots above shows the NOMINATE scores for each representative across the years examined for both the House and Senate. Plots whose names begin with “S” are from the Senate, while those beginning with “H” are from the House. Since NOMINATE requires a certain amount of roll call votes to calculate legislators’ ideal points, years without enough roll call votes available - 2013 and 2024 for the House, and 2014 for the Senate - were unable to be included.

Throughout most years, particularly 2013-2020, the PPD and PNP are plotted opposite to one another, indicating that their voting patterns were generally inverted. From 2021-2024, however, the space the PPD occupies across the second W-NOMINATE dimension shifts. Whereas before it reliably had legislators across the entirety of this dimension, in the current Assembly (2021-2024) it is shown as being restricted to only half of this dimension at any given time. In contrast to this, the PIP, which has tended to vote closer to the PPD, now occupies the latter half of the second dimension not occupied by the PPD alongside the MVC and PD. This result seems to reflect the PPD’s shrinking policy space with regards to the territorial status. Although historically the PPD has had elements which have advocated for reform of the territorial status, those who would advocate for change might find the smaller parties’ proposals for a full fledged status convention to be more appealing, as such a measure implies a more fundamental rethinking of Puerto Rico’s relationship with the United States.

The PPD was not the only major party that saw change, however. During this same period, the PNP has increasingly become less cohesive as a voting bloc, with a significantly greater spread in voting preferences between PNP members compared to PPD members. Taken in conjunction with one another, these trends indicate two potential phenomena at play: firstly, the formation of a similarly-voting bloc amongst the minority parties, and secondly, its emerging position as a potential kingmaker amidst electoral gridlock.

The emergence of this bloc is unexpected; while the PIP and MVC are currently in an electoral alliance, the PD is known for its staunch right-wing stances on topics such as abortion, LGBTQ+ issues, and

other social issues. According to the underlying logic of the W-NOMINATE model, the PD should be voting much closer to the PNP rather than left-wing parties. NOMINATE, however, bases its ideal point calculations on how often and when legislators vote similarly to others. Even if conventional wisdom and the parties' sworn positions indicate otherwise, the PD seems to vote in line with the PIP and MVC more often than with either the PPD or PNP.

Despite the ideological differences that are readily apparent, these small parties often have more overlap with one another than one might believe at first glance. The PIP and MVC, for example, have much in common as a result of sharing policies, positions and their electoral alliance (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, n.d); (Victoria Ciudadana, n.d.). The PD, however, also shares a healthy number of policy preferences with these two: among other things it believes in declaring health and healthcare as essential services, increasing environmental protections, and auditing and increasing oversight on government and financial institutions (Proyecto Dignidad, n.d.). These causes, though evidently not exclusive to the left, do represent mutual policy preferences that all of these share. While these commonalities may not decrease the very real and heated contentions across policy and rhetoric, they seem to nevertheless allow for representatives to vote in line with each other often.

The lack of inter-party cohesion between all minority parties also has the potential to put such legislators in an empowered position depending on the circumstances. If the MVC, PIP, PD, and independent legislators reach a consensus on a certain bill, their collective votes could make or break its passage. Inversely, should they disagree and fracture in their votes, their individual legislators would have a similarly large impact on a bill's passage. This latter phenomenon is particularly important, as the PNP's legislators have become increasingly spread out in their voting preferences compared to the PPD or to their previous legislative periods. With a less cohesive PNP, legislators from this party are more likely to defect from the party consensus, furthering the potential for legislative upsets. Between a fractured PNP and a cramped PPD, this emerging cohort of parties finds itself in a unique, potentially powerful position.

In the long run, the emergence of non-bipartisan legislators combined with a historic decline in the PNP and PPD's gubernatorial vote shares could signal a significant change in the balance of political power. If this decline continues to be reflected in the legislature, as it was to a limited degree in the election of the most recent Assembly, this surging group of small parties will continue to grow in their ability to shape legislation and contest the control traditionally held by the two large parties. While such a political configuration is unlikely to last, as electoral pressures in the plurality system would exert themselves over the long run to consolidate partisan makeup (Cox, 1997), it opens the door for a rare change in the

dominant political forces. It is too early to predict the nature of this change; the only certainty of such a process is that Puerto Rican politics will not emerge unchanged.

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Appendix A. Roll Call Vote Formats and OCR

Although the R script written for data processing functioned for a majority of the roll call vote files, problems emerged due to variances in the vote files' formats. While most files shared a "row" format, wherein the names of legislators and their votes were in two parallel columns in the middle of the page, two formats were unable to be processed. The first of these is a "grid" format, with a box for each voting option available that was checked depending on the legislators' votes. This format was frequently used in the earlier assemblies, but was almost entirely discontinued by the 19th Assembly.

The difficulty in processing these vote files stems from an inability to consistently read the boxes checked in the PDF. String- or text-based methods to read the boxes were unable to be used, though there was a method tested which converted the OCR text into strings and measured the spaces between "X"s checked on the boxes to read votes which saw limited success. Even if this obstacle was overcome, however, a second problem emerged with how absences were recorded. Rather than having a dedicated box to check, legislators had their names crossed off in cases of absences. This was troublesome, as the OCR software was unable to properly read any names which were crossed off. Since the roster of legislators serving at any given time changed frequently due to different legislators leaving and entering office, this ruled out any methods which involved "filling in the blanks" for unreadable legislator names. Lastly, there were different kinds of these grid formatted files, many of which varied in the categories for their checkboxes.

The second of these formats was much more similar to the more common row format, but had two smaller rows instead of one large one. Due to the OCR process not registering the break between the two columns, there were difficulties in successfully dividing the column strings in two, as the names were often misspelled and varied in the presence or shortening of middle names. This format was only found from November 2023 onwards in the House, and was not used outside of this time. Together, these file types represented a significant portion of the downloaded files: 2,209 were the grid type, and 403 were the two-column type.

Appendix B. Data Processing and W-NOMINATE

Upon generating the collection of W-NOMINATE points seen earlier in Figure 3, there were certain anomalies which were observable in the plots. Some, particularly in earlier years, are especially apparent. For the Senate in 2013, the PPD and PIP are much closer to the center than in other plots, and the PIP appears to vote further to the right than in other plots in 2016. Additionally, the PNP seems to be more spread out than in other years in the Senate in 2017. These abnormalities are likely related to the problems faced during data collection and processing; since a notable portion of the roll call votes were in an unprocessable format, the remaining votes may not have represented the complete policy sphere voted on during a given year, thus skewing the ideal points calculated.

Outside of these, a notable outlier was the Senate for 2021, whose initial plot showed the PPD to be concentrated along the positive values of the second dimension. This contrasts strongly with other years in 2021-2024, where PPD legislators overwhelmingly occupied the negative values of this dimension. This misalignment stemmed from a quirk of W-NOMINATE's calibration. In order to properly assign a coordinate value to each legislator, W-NOMINATE requires a manual input for the "most conservative" legislator for each dimension. For all calculations, the most conservative legislators were always set to be a member of the PNP. In the case of the Senate in 2021, however, the particular senator chosen was first elected during the current assembly. When replaced with a senior senator, the results flipped the PPD's position on the second dimension to more closely resemble those of comparable years. For this particular case, using any freshman senator would result in the second dimension being positive, while using any senior senator would correct this. For the House and Senate in 2023, however, not all senior senators had this result.

This aforementioned flipping is potentially connected to ideological differences within the PNP, whose assembly members are being used as the anchor points in W-NOMINATE. For example, as previously mentioned, for the Senate in 2021, the PPD is inverted when a freshman senator is chosen. One of these, William Villafañe, was supported by current PNP governor Pedro Pierluisi for candidacy as Resident Commissioner (Pierluisi, 2024). This contrasts with senior senator Thomas Rivera Schatz, who publicly opposed Pierluisi's election in favor of Jennifer Gonzalez for governor in 2020 (Ayala, et al., 2024); (El Nuevo Día, 2019). For this time frame in the Senate, it was generally observed that freshmen senators mostly supported Pierluisi and senior senators may have been more likely to back Jennifer Gonzalez.

This reflects a rift which has emerged between those who supported each candidate within the PNP, which is also seen in the decline in party cohesion from 2021-2024.

Appendix C. In-Person Observations of the Puerto Rican Legislature

While undertaking this research, I worked during this summer as a legislative advisor for María de Lourdes Santiago, the senator for the PIP. As a part of my experience, I had the opportunity to observe firsthand the electoral and social dynamics of the Senate, and to a lesser degree, of the House. With regards to the small party bloc that I have posited, I would argue that it is, for all intents and purposes, not a practical way to conceive of normative Puerto Rican politics. While it may be the case that the MVC and PIP vote together with the PD enough to have similar NOMINATE scores, this in no way indicates that they are collaborating in any capacity. To the contrary, the antagonisms between the two cohorts and their bases seem to far outweigh any of the on-paper similarities, and there does not seem to be room for coordination between the two.



Figure 4. The June 2024 staff of the office of Senator María de Lourdes Santiago Negrón

What stuck with me the most during my experience, however, was the sense of a forming anti-establishmentarian cleavage. While certain right-wing groups or parties such as the PD were seen by the MVC and PIP as generally unpleasant, they were not the main political concern. Rather, the PPD, and

especially the PNP, were seen as being the primary political targets and threats to re-election. This makes sense given the context of the PIP, MVC, and PD's recent rise: the Telegramgate protests of 2019 brought together a large grassroots movement whose factions, while fractured after their rallying call of demanding the governor's resignation faded away, still carried much of their respective momentums into the 2020 elections.

Furthermore, there was a palpable sense of excitement for the future electoral prospects. This anticipation of a seismic shift in the coming elections is something that had not previously been seen. The PIP, for example, while having won two representatives in the last election cycle, has existed continuously since 1946 with little electoral success. This optimism does not seem to be without cause; beyond a declining vote share of the PNP and PPD in the gubernatorial elections, the most recent polling has consistently put the PIP and MVC's joint gubernatorial candidate, Juan Dalmau, at second place in the race.

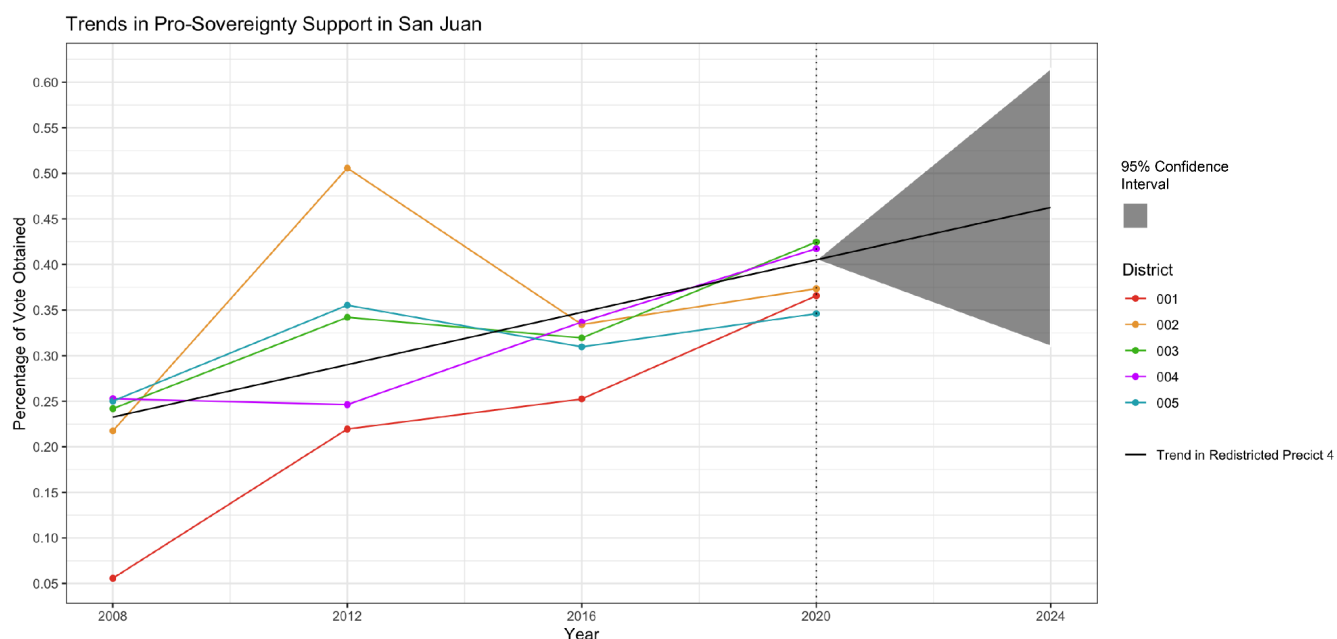


Figure 5. Projected possible vote share of PIP-MVC candidates in House District 4 based on previous pro-sovereignty voting trends.

This surge could potentially even reach the legislature, whose plurality voting system puts smaller parties at a disadvantage. In certain key districts, particularly those in the San Juan metropolitan area, MVC and PIP candidates could have a significant chance of winning. This is noteworthy, since all current small party and independent legislators are currently occupying at-large seats.