Ballot, Badge, and Bench: Black Representation in Southern Justice[†]

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Abstract

The election of law enforcement and judicial officials is a distinctive feature of American democracy. Yet, the democratic promise of elected justice sits uneasily alongside enduring racial disparities in the justice system. By compiling the most comprehensive dataset to date, covering all counties in the eleven former Confederate states from 1960 to 2024, we explore to what extent Blacks have closed their historical representation gap in the justice system. Using variation in federal oversight of local voting laws, we provide evidence on the effect of constraints on descriptive representation, emphasizing voter preferences, candidate supply, and mobilization. Early gains were limited by weak professional pipelines restricting candidate supply. Over time, as constraints eased and civil rights organizations intensified mobilization, Black representation increased substantially, particularly following the Black Lives Matter movement. Our findings highlight how political institutions, structural constraints, and organized mobilization jointly shape trajectories of Black representation in the justice system.

Keywords: Black Representation, Law Enforcement, Judicial Elections, Shelby *v.* Holder, Black Lives Matter

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1 Introduction

A distinctive feature of American democracy is the popular election of justice officials: judges, prosecutors, and sheriffs are frequently chosen at the ballot box. Virtually no other country relies as extensively on elections to fill judicial or policing positions (Lim and Snyder, 2021). Originating in the mid-nineteenth century, this system reflected a broader movement aimed at curbing elite control and enhancing public accountability. In the South, however, the democratic promise of elected justice was systematically undermined by entrenched racial hierarchies. Judicial elections in the antebellum South often served less as a mechanism of accountability than as tools to ensure that racially conservative judges replace anti-slavery incumbents, effectively transforming popular justice into a means of preserving racial order (Shugerman, 2012). Likewise, during the Jim Crow era, sheriffs "...were linchpins in the maintenance of white supremacy and its class-based and race-based privileges ..." (Moore, 1997).

The American practice of electing justice officials raises fundamental questions about political representation. Black communities, disproportionately affected by the actions of judicial and law enforcement officials — through racial profiling, sentencing disparities, and incarceration — remain underrepresented in these offices (Farris and Holman, 2024). The tension between democratic design and racial inequality has gained renewed attention amid national debates over policing and justice. Especially since the rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, advocates of criminal justice reform have emphasized that greater Black representation is essential to strengthening community trust and accountability.

Despite the prominence of these debates, systematic evidence on African American officeholding in the justice system remains scant, due to the lack of comprehensive data. This stands in stark contrast to a rich literature examining Black representation in legislative bodies at the federal, state and local levels.[1] In this paper, we fill this gap by assembling the most comprehensive dataset to date on Black officeholding in law enforcement and judicial positions in the U.S. South,

[1] For overviews of the literature on minority representation in legislative bodies, see Davidson and Grofman (1994), Marschall, Ruhil and Shah (2010), Shah (2014), and Atsusaka (2021).

spanning 1960–2024, to examine the extent to which African Americans have closed longstanding representation gaps among judges, prosecutors, and sheriffs.

To address this question, we draw on theories of descriptive representation that consider different constraints to minority officeholding in the justice system. One perspective emphasizes voter demand, arguing that voters favor candidates who adopt punitive approaches to crime (Sances, 2023), and that whites in particular — who tend to be more supportive of such measures than Blacks (Eckhouse, 2019) — may systematically disadvantage African American candidates if they believe that their racial backgrounds are correlated with how the law is interpreted or enforced. A related argument highlights racial backlash, whereby advances in Black political power provoke counter-mobilization that constrains representation in offices central to maintaining social order (Bernini et al., 2025; Komisarchik, 2026; Rahnama, 2025). A complementary perspective focuses on candidate supply, emphasizing the role of professional pipeline constraints. Offices such as judge or district attorney typically require formal credentials — most notably a law degree — that historically excluded many Black candidates (Burnett, 2009), while sheriff positions, though less formally restricted, are typically filled by professionals with prior law enforcement experience, shaped by informal institutional norms (Farris and Holman, 2024).

To study the evolution of Black representation in the justice system, we use the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, a federally mandated institutional intervention that altered demand- and supply-side constraints at the local level. We focus on one of its most consequential provisions, coverage, which placed Southern jurisdictions with the most severe histories of Black disenfranchisement under federal oversight.[2] Covered counties with larger shares of African Americans experienced a rapid expansion of Black political participation (Cascio and Washington, 2014) and white voter mobilization in response to Black political advances (Bernini et al., 2025). In turn, as the supply of minority candidates strongly correlates with the size of the minority electorate

[2] Of the eleven former Confederate states considered in our analysis, coverage applied to all counties of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia, and to 39 counties in North Carolina. In the 1975 reauthorization of the VRA, coverage was extended to take into account potential discrimination against language minorities. Given that our focus is on the effect of the VRA on Black representation, we adopt the 1965 definition of coverage. Results are robust if we drop counties covered by the 1975 reauthorization.

(Shah, 2014), these changes expanded the pool of potential African American candidates for political office. An important caveat, however, applies in the context of the justice system: the limited availability of qualified professionals may attenuate this relationship. Thus, pre-existing variation in the size of the Black electorate provides leverage to assess how constraints related to voter preferences and candidate supply jointly influenced the trajectory of African American officeholding in the justice system. Because these constraints may have evolved independently of VRA coverage, we use counties in the former Confederacy with a similar racial make-up but that were not covered by the Act as a comparison group.

For our analysis, we compile data on Black officeholding in local law enforcement and judicial positions between 1960 and 2024, drawing on both historical and contemporary sources. We find that in the first three decades following the Act, Black officeholding grew only modestly. By 1980, just 4.8% of covered counties had elected a Black judge, a figure that rose only slightly to 6.5% by 1990 — a limited gain compared to other local bodies, such as county commissions or city councils (Shah, Marschall and Ruhil, 2013; Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023). For above-county offices, such as prosecutors, the picture is even bleaker. As of 1980, there were no Black prosecutors in the South and, a decade later, districts with larger Black population shares in covered jurisdictions do not record any significant progress. A similar dynamic applies to sheriff elections. Even by 1990, more than 96% of covered counties continued to elect white sheriffs.

Why was progress so slow? We consider the main constraints to minority descriptive representation: voter demand and candidate supply. If voter preferences were decisive, Black candidates should perform well in majority-Black constituencies, where white backlash and voter bias against African American candidates are less likely to dominate. Yet even by 1990, only 13% of majority-Black counties had elected a Black sheriff and just 11% an African American judge. We also consider the role of white backlash to black empowerment. While the election of a Black county commissioner is associated to a decline in the probability of electing an African American sheriff, this effect is modest and unlikely to fully account for the observed pattern.

Supply-side theories posit that gains in representation hinge on the size of the qualified can-

didate pool. Historically, institutional barriers to Black Americans' access to legal education and policing careers substantially constrained this pipeline. Using county-level data on Black lawyers (for judicial offices) and Black police officers and detectives (for sheriffs), we find no evidence that these constraints were relaxed in covered counties following the VRA, suggesting that supply-side limitations played a central role in constraining representation in the justice system.

Next, we examine whether the trajectory of Black representation in law enforcement shifted in the long run — particularly during the 2010s and 2020s, amid a changing political and legal landscape shaped by the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which struck down the VRA's pre-clearance provision, and by the rise of BLM movement. We find that formerly covered jurisdictions experience substantial gains in Black officeholding after 2000. Contrary to concerns that *Shelby County v. Holder* would trigger renewed Black voter suppression, we show that these gains not only persisted but, in some cases, accelerated following the removal of federal oversight.

Having shown that supply-side factors played a pivotal role in limiting early gains following the VRA, we next examine whether constraints to professional pipelines began to ease in the long run. We find clear evidence that beginning in the early 2000s, the number of Black lawyers and law enforcement officers increased substantially in covered areas, widening the set of viable candidates for judicial and sheriff offices. Crucially, this expansion was reinforced by grassroots political infrastructure that had developed in covered areas during the civil rights era. Building on this foundation, civil rights and advocacy organizations increasingly focused on recruiting, training, and supporting Black candidates for law enforcement and judicial offices. Evidence from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) filings shows that, following the rise of the BLM movement, revenues of civil rights organizations surged after 2017, peaking at nearly $13 billion in 2020, providing substantial new resources for candidate development and electoral support. Consistent with this pattern, rare administrative data on candidate race for local offices in Louisiana show a marked increase in African American candidate supply: between 2007 and 2023 the share of Black candidates for sheriff and judicial positions rose from 10.7% to 18.7%.

At the same time, expanded candidate supply would be unlikely to translate into electoral success without voter engagement. Consistent with this view, survey evidence from the Cooperative Election Study (2006–2022) shows that in the post-*Shelby* period, Black respondents in covered states with historically larger Black populations were more likely than whites to be contacted by campaigns, to register, and to vote. Together, these patterns indicate that long-run gains in Black representation reflected the interaction of expanded candidate pipelines and organizational investments that simultaneously supported candidate recruitment and sustained voter engagement.

This paper makes both empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of minority representation in local government and law enforcement. Empirically, we shift attention away from well-studied legislative bodies — such as city councils, county commissions, and school boards — to elected law enforcement and judicial offices, which play a central role in the administration of justice, but remain understudied due to data limitations. Existing datasets on candidates in local elections — even the most comprehensive — provide only partial coverage of these offices and span much shorter time periods (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2023). To address this gap, we compile the most comprehensive dataset to date on the race of elected sheriffs and judges, covering more than six decades and all counties in the eleven former Confederate states.

Theoretically, we advance the understanding of representation in law enforcement by identifying and evaluating constraints that shape Black officeholding. We show that candidate supply — long recognized as a key constraint (Juenke and Shah, 2016; Fraga, Juenke and Shah, 2020) — was limited by professional pipelines that adjusted slowly to post-VRA enfranchisement. In the long run, however, this constraint eased, and its effects were amplified by sustained civil society mobilization, particularly after the *Shelby* decision and the rise of the BLM movement. Existing work has documented an increase in minority mobilization following *Shelby* (Cantoni and Pons, 2021; Komisarchik and White, 2025), and in response to police violence (Ang and Tebes, 2024). By linking changes in professional pipelines to interest group–led mobilization and voter outreach, our findings highlight how political institutions, structural constraints, and grassroots mobilization interact to reshape trajectories of Black political representation in the justice system.

2 Black Representation in Law Enforcement and the Judiciary

Salience of Local Justice Institutions. Local political institutions and descriptive representation matter because they shape citizens' most frequent interactions with the state. This is especially true in public safety and law enforcement. In 2020, 21 percent of U.S. residents aged 16 or older — roughly 53.8 million individuals — had some form of contact with the police (Tapp and Davis, 2022), far exceeding interactions with most other elected officials (Harris, 2024). Local courts also handle large caseloads; Louisiana's courts alone process about 440,000 cases annually, making them a central point of contact with the judicial system (Supreme Court of Louisiana, 2023).

Importantly, there is substantial evidence that minorities in the United States interact with the justice system at disproportionately high rates. African Americans are more likely to be stopped and searched by police (Pierson et al., 2020), arrested and incarcerated (Facchini, Knight and Testa, 2025; Pettit and Gutierrez, 2018). High-profile incidents — from the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson (Missouri) to the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis — brought renewed scrutiny to the issue of race within the justice system.

Gaps in Minority Representation. A growing body of research highlights the severe under-representation of minorities in the justice system. Extensive recent surveys conducted on sheriffs (Farris and Holman, 2024) and prosecutors (Wright, Baughman and Robertson, 2022) show that an overwhelming 92% of sheriffs and 90% of prosecutors are white. Likewise, the American bench remains disproportionately white. Although systematic data on local courts are not readily available, Ifill (1997) documents that African Americans are severely under-represented in state courts, where only 3.8 % of judges are Blacks. The call for reform of the justice system rests on the premise that the racial composition of law enforcement shapes its interactions with citizens — an assumption supported by empirical evidence that racial diversity influences how laws are enforced (Ba, Knox and Mummolo, 2021).

Candidate Supply and Professional Barriers. As argued by Shah (2014), an important determinant of minority representation is the supply of candidates. This supply might be shaped by a range of factors, including constituency characteristics, electoral rules, levels of trust in political institutions and organized grass roots mobilization. A unique feature of the justice system is that professional experience and qualifications play a first-order role in shaping candidate entry. Most states require judicial and prosecutorial candidates to hold a law degree, be licensed to practice, and meet additional requirements such as age, experience, and residency. Historically, limited access to legal education severely constrained the development of a professional pipeline for Black candidates. Although Howard University established a law school already in 1869, most white institutions excluded African Americans well into the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century. Even after landmark Supreme Court rulings mandated desegregation (e.g., the 1950 *Sweatt v. Painter* and the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*), many Southern law schools resisted integration (Kidder, 2003).

Efforts to broaden access to the legal profession, including the introduction of affirmative action in the late 1960s, yielded only gradual progress. A Carnegie Corporation report found that across 17 prominent Southern law schools, the number of Black first-year students rose from just 22 in 1969 to 171 in 1973 — still only 3% of total enrollment (Evans, 1973). The resulting scarcity of Black lawyers was striking. In Mississippi, for example, only three Black lawyers were practicing in 1965, a figure that rose to just 49 by 1973 — roughly one Black lawyer per 16,000 Black residents, compared to one white lawyer per 450 white residents (Evans, 1973).

Professional pipelines play an important role for sheriffs too. Although statutory requirements are less stringent, in some states professional credentials are mandated and recent work by Farris and Holman (2024) indicates that more than 95% of them have prior law enforcement experience in senior positions. Before the civil right movement, Black police officers in the South were rare (Rudwick, 1962). Even if, over time, their numbers increased, their duties and promotion prospects remained limited (Dulaney, 1996), constraining their ability to compete for the county's top law enforcement position.

Voter Preferences and Electoral Dynamics. Voter preferences may further reinforce these barri-

ers. Public opinion has long favored punitive 'tough-on-crime' policies (Enns, 2014; Gordon and Huber, 2002; Sances, 2023). As a result, Black candidates, who may be less inclined to embrace such stances, often face structural headwinds. Research shows that Black law enforcement officials tend to use less force, particularly in encounters with minority civilians (Ba, Knox and Mummolo, 2021; Hoekstra and Sloan, 2022; Jackson, Neshkova and Meier, 2023), and their presence can shape institutional behavior more broadly (Harris, 2024). Voter responses to these patterns may disadvantage Black candidates for law enforcement and judicial elections. A related constraint is white voter backlash in response to Black political advances. Prior research documents a surge in white mobilization following the VRA, particularly in counties where Black empowerment became visible (Bernini et al., 2025). This suggests that gains in Black representation in local legislative institutions may have triggered counter-mobilization that slowed progress in offices administering justice. Taken together, historical exclusion from professional pipelines and voter preferences provide a powerful framework for understanding the evolution of Black representation in the justice system.

The VRA as Empirical Leverage. The VRA of 1965 abolished tests and devices restricting access to the ballot and, through its Section 4 coverage formula, placed jurisdictions with the most severe histories of Black disenfranchisement under federal oversight, whereas Section 5 required these jurisdictions to obtain federal preclearance for changes to voting laws. These provisions generated sharp and geographically uneven expansion in political inclusion across the South. In covered counties, Black registration rates surged (Cascio and Washington, 2014), but these gains were accompanied by white counter-mobilization, including increases in white registration (Alt, 1994; Fresh, 2018; Bernini et al., 2025), efforts to suppress elective offices (Komisarchik, 2026), and other strategies to blunt the Act's effects (Trebbi, Aghion and Alesina, 2008; Eubank and Fresh, 2022). At the same time, civil rights organizations built durable grassroots infrastructures that supported sustained mobilization and monitoring. In particular, their coordinated litigation efforts in federal courts helped ensure the Act's continued effectiveness and contributed to the first durable wave of Black officeholding (Handley and Grofman, 1994).

The federally mandated intervention altered demand and supply constraints at the local level. In covered counties with larger Black populations, the VRA fundamentally altered the size and composition of the electorate, expanding opportunities for African Americans to seek office. At the same time, limited access to qualified professionals may have weakened the link between the size of the Black electorate and minority candidate supply. In the next section, we describe the data we assemble to trace how these shifting constraints translated into patterns of Black representation in law enforcement and judicial offices over time.

3 Data

We construct a novel dataset that integrates historical and contemporary records on Black elected officials in judicial and law enforcement offices, together with data on Black professionals in the legal and policing fields, across the eleven former Confederate states between 1960 and 2024.

Judges. Until 1990, our primary source is the National Roster of Black Elected Officials (NRBEO), published by the Southern Regional Council starting from 1969 and later maintained by the Joint Center for Political Studies. The NRBEO systematically recorded the names and position of Black elected officials but listed courts only by title and address, without specifying their jurisdiction. To address this, we rely on the American Bench (AB) directory (The American Bench, 1977), which enables us to identify whether a court's jurisdiction was county-level or spanned multiple counties. We hand-digitized the NRBEO data, cross-referenced them with the AB directory, and reconstructed consistent institutional structures over time. This procedure allows us to classify judicial offices into two categories: *i*) county-level courts; and, *ii*) above-county courts. For the latter, we use the AB directory and state Blue Books to reconstruct judicial district boundaries and assign counts of Black judges accordingly. The result is a harmonized dataset covering 25 distinct courts, summarized in Table A1.

After 1990, the NRBEO ceased publication. For the following decades, we draw on the Di-

rectory of Minority Judges of the United States (American Bar Association, 2001, 2008) and the American Bench Directory (Foster-Long, 2024), from which we digitized information on judges' race across state and local courts. For consistency, we restrict our attention to trial-level courts with stable institutional structures, and link them back to the courts identified in the NRBEO summarized in Table A1.[3]

Sheriffs. Through 1990, the NRBEO also reported the names of Black sheriffs, who are elected at the county level. For more recent years, we draw on a comprehensive panel database of sheriffs compiled by Daniel Thompson, which records their names and tenure, but does not report their race. Using this as a foundation, we manually coded the race of sheriffs by consulting official state records (e.g., Secretary of State publications), state-level sheriffs' associations, obituaries, news articles, and archival materials. This procedure enables us to identify the race of more than 90% of sheriffs serving in 2001, 2008 and 2016. For 2024, we code race directly from official directories maintained by sheriffs' associations in each state.

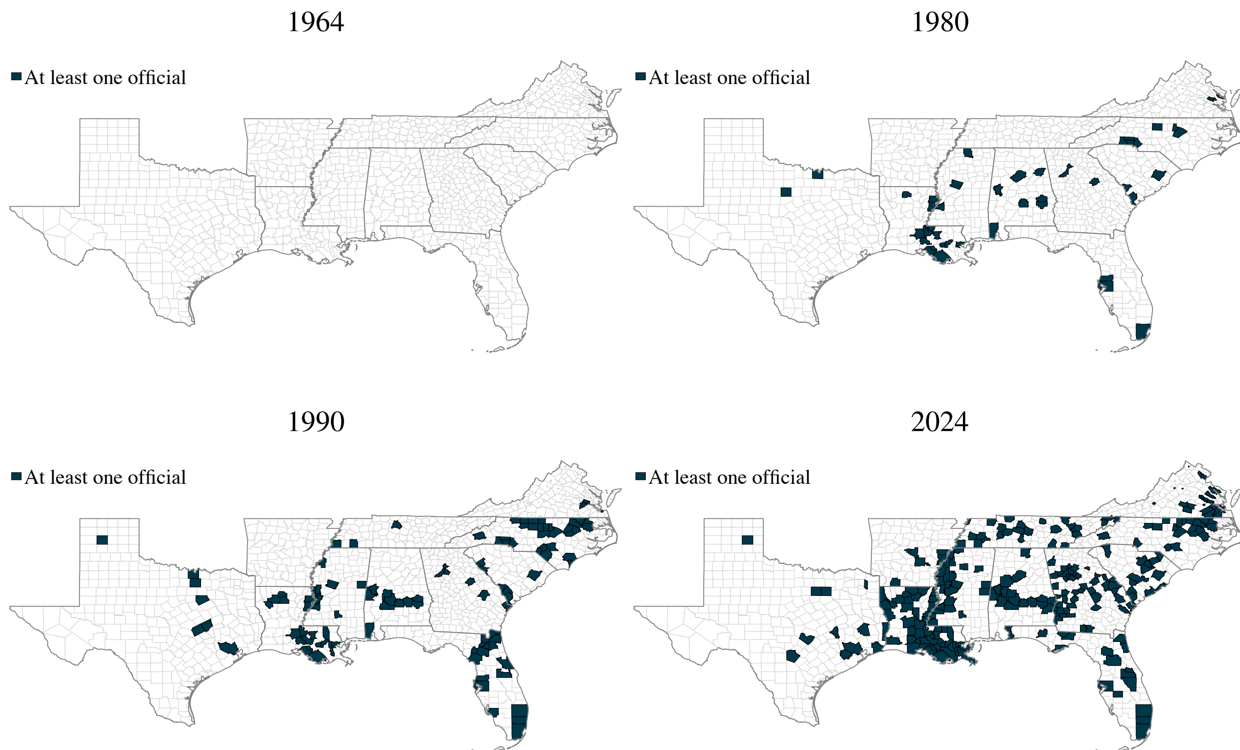
District Attorneys. The NRBEO reports information on the names of Black prosecutors until 1990. Because district attorneys are elected at the judicial-district level, encompassing multiple counties, we map NRBEO records to judicial districts reconstructed using the AB directory and state Blue Books. We supplement these historical sources with information from state Blue Books and state-level district attorneys associations.

Professional Pipeline. To capture Black representation in the broader legal and law enforcement professions, we compile county-level occupational data from the U.S. Census across multiple decades. For 1940 and 1950, we use full-count Census data to calculate the number of lawyers, judges, sheriffs, bailiffs, police officers, detectives, marshals, and constables (Ruggles et al., 2024, 2025). For 1980 and 1990, we rely on comparable measures from the Census Equal Employment

[3]For courts above the county level, we use state Blue Books and the American Bench directory to define consistent boundaries over time.

Opportunity (EEO) Tabulations (Manson et al., 2024). For 2000-2023, we extend the series using the 2000 1% state Census sample together with the American Community Survey (ACS).[4] These data allow us to trace the evolution of the professional pipeline and evaluate whether constraints in candidate supply shaped Black representation in judicial and law enforcement offices.

Figure 1: County-Level Presence of Black Elected Officials in the U.S. South



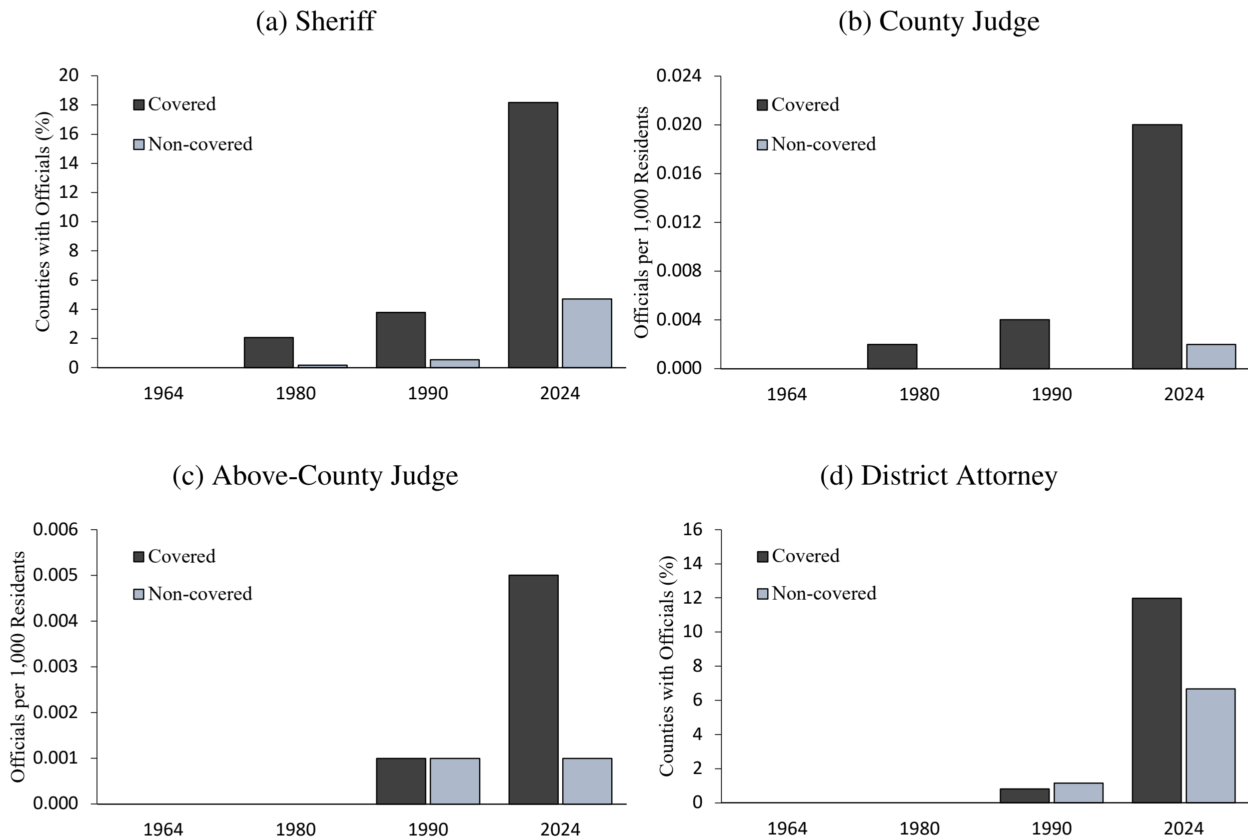
Notes: Shaded counties indicate the presence of at least one Black elected official in 1964, 1980, 1990, and 2024.

Descriptive Statistics of Elected Officials. The descriptive picture is stark. Prior to the VRA, no Black sheriffs or county-level judges served anywhere in the South. By 1980, the numbers had increased only modestly — to 13 Black sheriffs and 67 Black judges. For above-county offices, representation was even more limited: by 1980, only 10 Black judges served in multi-county jurisdictions and there were still no Black prosecutors across the entire region. By 1990, progress across these law enforcement and judicial offices remained modest. Only in the very long run we

[4]This source only reports state level information.

observe a remarkable increase in Black representation: 132 African American sheriffs and 128 county judges are in office in 2024; similarly, there are 56 above county judges and 30 district attorneys. Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of counties electing African Americans to judicial and law enforcement offices over time, highlighting that even by 1990 most of the limited observed gains in representation are concentrated in a few counties. Only very recently these gains become more widespread.

Figure 2: Summary Statistics on Black Representation, by VRA Coverage Status



Notes: The figure presents descriptive trends in Black representation in elected law enforcement and judicial offices by VRA coverage status for selected years between 1964 and 2024.

Figure 2 complements these maps by presenting key summary statistics on Black representation, disaggregated by coverage status.[5] The top two panels report outcomes for county-level offices, whereas the bottom two focus on above-county roles. For multi-office positions (judges),

[5] See Appendix Table A2 for more details.

we measure representation as the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents.[6] For single-office positions (sheriffs and district attorneys), we report the share of counties or judicial districts with a Black officeholder. Gains in Black representation are significantly larger in covered than in non-covered areas. At the county level, by 1980, 2.1% of covered counties had elected a Black sheriff, compared to just 0.2% of non-covered counties, and by 1990, this share nearly doubled to 3.8% in covered counties, while remaining negligible elsewhere. Judicial offices showed even slower movement: by 1990, covered counties had on average only 0.004 Black judges per 1,000 residents, whereas non-covered counties had virtually none. The bottom panels confirm that broader jurisdictions were even less conducive to change: neither covered or non-covered districts had elected a Black prosecutor or judge by 1980, and by 1990, the average number of Black judges in multi-county districts stood at only 0.001 per 1,000 residents in both groups, whereas there were only a handful of African American district attorneys in both groups.

The long-run data, however, show a striking shift. By 2024, nearly 18% of covered counties had a Black sheriff, compared to fewer than 5% of non-covered ones. County-level judgeships also saw steady progress, with the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents in covered counties rising five-fold between 1990 and 2024 (from 0.004 to 0.020), while representation in non-covered counties remained minimal. Above-county judgeships show progress as well, though from a much lower baseline: covered districts averaged 0.003 Black judges per 1,000 residents in 2024, compared to just 0.001 in non-covered districts. Similarly, the share of jurisdictions with a Black district attorney is twice as high in covered areas (12%) as in non-covered ones.

Together, these data convey three main points. First, progress through 1990 was limited across all law enforcement and judicial offices, and especially constrained in multi-county jurisdictions. Second, progress was geographically uneven: early breakthroughs were clustered in a small set of counties, leaving most of the South untouched. Third, in the long run, these geographic pockets of representation expanded into broader regional gains, with covered counties consistently outpac-

[6]All measures are expressed per 1,000 inhabitants. Alternative normalizations, such as dividing by the number of elective county government offices, yield consistent results. Unfortunately, systematic data on court size are unavailable, preventing us from using that as a denominator for judicial offices.

ing non-covered ones, and sheriff offices leading the way in reshaping the racial composition of Southern justice.

4 The Evolution of Black Representation in the Justice System

4.1 Empirical Strategy

To study how Black representation in local law enforcement and judicial offices evolved over time, we exploit the coverage formula in Section 4 of the Act, whereby jurisdictions that imposed a test or device restricting the right to vote and experienced a turnout rate below 50% in the 1964 presidential election were placed under strict federal monitoring. All counties in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia, as well as to 39 counties in North Carolina which were covered, also fell under pre-clearance provisions (section 5), requiring federal approval of any change in voting laws.

The VRA generated large and geographically uneven expansions in Black electoral participation, creating a unique opportunity to examine how changes in enfranchisement interacted with local demographics to shape trajectories of representation. As the latter might have changed independently of the VRA, we use Southern counties, with similar histories of Black disenfranchisement, but not subject to coverage, as a comparison group.

Our empirical strategy thus follows a triple-difference framework in the spirit of Cascio and Washington (2014), leveraging cross-county variation in pre-VRA Black population shares. The underlying idea is that counties with larger Black populations in 1960, subject to federal scrutiny (coverage), should have experienced greater gains in Black officeholding after 1965 compared to counties with similar racial make-up that were not covered by the Act. We operationalize this design using two complementary specifications. First, an event-study traces the dynamic effects of coverage before and after 1965, allowing us to assess the timing of representation gains — equation (1). Second, a long-difference specification summarizes cumulative changes between 1960 and subsequent decades, abstracting from year-to-year fluctuations — equation (2). In all our

specifications, we control for the standard pre-VRA county-level socioeconomic and demographic characteristics used in the literature (Cascio and Washington, 2014; Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023), summarized in panel C of Appendix Table A2.[7] Together, these approaches provide a consistent framework for comparing how the relationship between Black population share and Black officeholding evolved in covered versus non-covered counties. Figure A2 illustrates the design, highlighting how we combine variation in pre-VRA Black population shares with coverage status to estimate the Act's effect.

Our identification assumption is that, absent the VRA, trends in Black representation would have evolved similarly in treated and control counties. The absence of African Americans in law enforcement and judicial offices in both groups prior to the VRA is consistent with accounts of the former Confederacy as an enclave of authoritarian rule (Mickey, 2015). At the same time, research shows that beginning in the immediate postwar period, parts of the Outer South became more receptive to elements of the civil rights agenda (Schickler, 2016), raising the possibility of differential pre-trends in underlying political conditions. Such differences may not be directly observable in officeholding outcomes given the uniform lack of Black officials before 1965. We address this concern in Section 4.2 by examining pre-VRA trends in a set of related outcomes that capture variation in political change across Southern counties.

Event-Study Specification. To evaluate how the election of Blacks across local offices evolved over time after the passage of the VRA, we estimate the following event-study specification:

$$y_{cst} = \sum_{n \neq 1964} \gamma_n D_n^t Black_{c,1960} + \sum_{n \neq 1964} \theta_n D_n^t \left(Black_{c,1960} \times VRA_{cs} \right) + \mathbf{X}'_{cs}\beta + I_{st} + I_c + \varepsilon_{cst} \quad (1)$$

where y_{cst} denotes Black officeholding in county c of state s at time t, measured either on the extensive or intensive margins. $Black_{c,1960}$ is the 1960 share of African Americans in the county population, VRA_{cs} equals one for covered counties, and D_n^t is an indicator equal to one if $n = t$.[8] $\mathbf{X}_{cs}$

[7] In particular, we account for population, educational attainment, poverty, unemployment, share of population living in rural areas, cotton suitability, historical incidence of lynching and racial protests.

[8] We include separate VRA indicators for covered and non-covered counties in North Carolina.

is the vector of pre-VRA county-level controls described above (see footnote 7), fully interacted with VRA_{cs}. The model also includes state-year fixed effects (I_{st}) and county fixed effects (I_c).[9]

The reference year is 1964, the last election before the passage of the VRA. Thus, θ_n captures how the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and Black officeholding in covered counties diverged from that in non-covered counties, in year n relative to 1964.

Long-difference. To complement the event-study analysis, we also estimate a long-difference specification that summarizes how Black representation in local offices evolved over longer horizons. Specifically, this approach allows us to assess whether the relationship between the 1960 Black population share and the change in Black office holding over time differed systematically between covered and non-covered counties. By focusing on changes across decades, this specification abstracts from year-to-year fluctuations and provides a clearer picture of medium- to long-run shifts associated with VRA coverage:

$$\Delta y_{cs} = \gamma Black_{c,1960} + \theta \left(Black_{c,1960} \times VRA_{cs}\right) + \mathbf{X}'_{cs}\beta + I_s + \varepsilon_{cs} \tag{2}$$

where Δy_{cs} is the change in Black officeholding between 1960 and subsequent periods. I_s are state dummies that capture state-specific trends, and all other variables are defined as in equation (1).[10] Our main parameter of interest, θ, identifies the difference between treatment and control groups.

4.2 Patterns of Representation in the Local Justice System

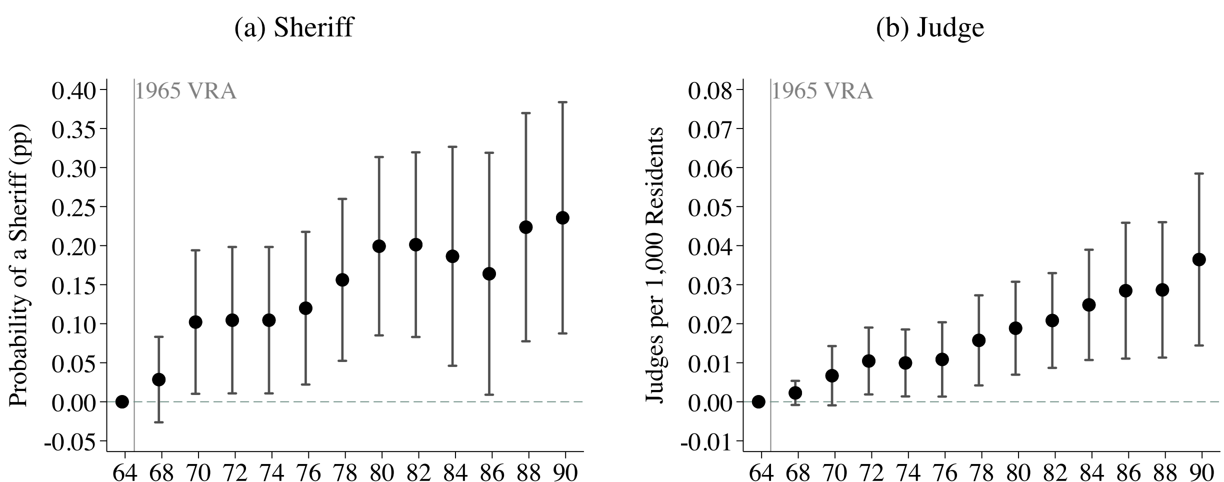
Sheriffs and County Judges. Figure 3 illustrates the effects of VRA coverage on Black officeholding for sheriffs and county-level judges through 1990, plotting the coefficient θ_n from equation (1), capturing the difference in the gradient between covered and non covered counties.

Panel A shows that covered counties with larger Black populations began electing African

[9]Because district courts were central to enforcing Section 5, we cluster standard errors at the judicial-division level to account for correlated shocks across counties within the same division. State district courts are organized by judicial divisions, which group multiple counties.

[10]Standard errors are clustered at the judicial-division level, consistent with the event-study specification.

Figure 3: Event-Study Estimates of VRA Coverage and Black Elected Representation, 1964-90



Notes: The figure plots event-study coefficients from equation (1) with 95% confidence intervals. Estimates come from regressions interacting VRA coverage with year indicators and the county's 1960 Black population share. Panel A shows effects on the probability that a county elected a Black sheriff, while Panel B shows effects on the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents. Coefficients are measured relative to the omitted baseline year (1964).

American sheriffs soon after 1965, with the gap relative to non-covered counties widening steadily over time. The long-difference estimates in column (1) of Table 1 confirm the size of these effects: by 1980, a 10 percentage point increase in the Black population share translated into a 2.2 percentage point higher probability of electing a Black sheriff in covered counties, rising further to 2.7 percentage points by 1990 (column (2)). These represent meaningful, yet limited, breakthroughs in a single-seat office where African American sheriffs had been virtually absent prior to the VRA.

Panel B points to a gradual but persistent increase in representation also for judges. Column (3) of Table 1 quantifies these gains: a 10 percentage point increase in the Black population share was associated with 0.003 more Black judges per 1,000 residents in covered counties by 1980, increasing to 0.004 by 1990 (column 4). While measured on a different scale than sheriffs, these effects are significant, even though the increase in the number of Black judges remains very small.

Taken together, these results suggest that while the VRA created openings for representation in county-level offices, progress was modest and concentrated in covered jurisdictions with large Black populations.

Table 1: Black Elected Officials in County-Level Offices Through 1990

Dep. Variable:	Sheriff		Judge	
	1964-80	1964-90	1964-80	1964-90
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.217**	0.270**	0.025**	0.039**
	(0.067)	(0.077)	(0.007)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	–0.012	0.037	–0.000	0.000
	(0.012)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.011	0.021	0.001	0.002
Adj. R-Square	0.08	0.13	0.17	0.17
N	1022	1022	831	831

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the change in the number of Black elected officials. All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \; p < .05$; $** \; p < .01$.

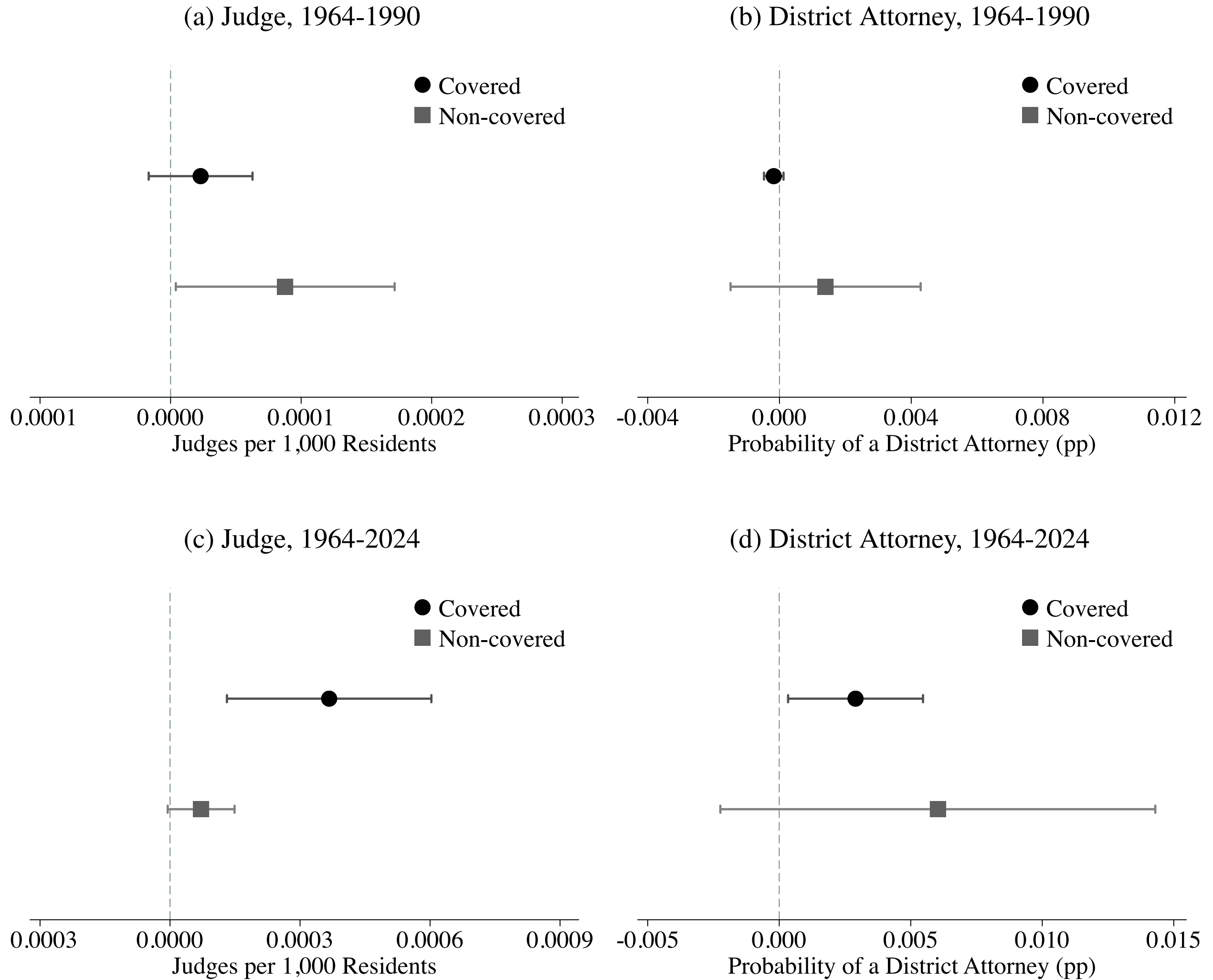
Above-County Judges and Prosecutors. Unlike sheriffs and county-level judges, prosecutors and above county judges are elected at the judicial-district level, typically encompassing multiple counties and using at-large electoral rules. This institutional design not only reduces the number of observations relative to county-level offices, but also makes minority votes more susceptible to dilution. A further complication is that district boundaries are not always stable over time. To ensure comparability, our analysis is restricted to the 225 districts with consistent boundaries, covering roughly two-thirds of the counties in our sample.[11] As none of the districts in non-covered jurisdiction is majority-black, we cannot rely on a suitable control group to estimate our triple-difference model. We thus separately estimate the effect of Black share for covered and non-covered districts.

The results, reported in Panels A and B of Figure 4, show no evidence of progress in Black representation in these higher-level offices. By 1990, the estimated effects remain close to zero for

[11]The restricted sample is balanced on observables compared to the overall sample.

both prosecutors and judges.[12] While these null results should be interpreted with caution given the nature of the sample, they are consistent with the expectation that bigger, at-large constituencies posed greater barriers to Black officeholding (Trebbi, Aghion and Alesina, 2008).

Figure 4: Black Elected Officials in Above-County Offices



Notes: The figure plots coefficients on the 1960 Black population share from the long-difference specification in equation (2), with 95% confidence intervals. Panels A and C report effects on the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents, while Panels B and D report effects on the probability that a district elected a Black district attorney.

Robustness Checks. In Appendix C, we conduct a series of robustness checks to assess the validity of our research design. We begin by examining pre-trends in several factors that could spu-

[12]For 1990, twelve of the covered districts in North Carolina include some counties that do not fall under Section 5 provisions. If we drop those districts, no Black district attorneys are found in the sample.

riously influence electoral outcomes following the VRA (Table A3). Following Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023), we consider changes in indicators of white supremacy (i.e., presence of KKK Klaverns — column 1 — and lynchings against African Americans — column 2) and prevalence of labor coercion (i.e., share of land devoted to cotton production — column 3). We also consider the evolution of Black political activism, proxied by the change in the presence of NAACP chapters (column 4), and a number of additional electoral outcomes. In particular, to capture voters' responses to partisan realignment on civil rights, we compare in column 5 support for Barry Goldwater — the 1964 Republican presidential candidate, who ran on an openly anti–civil rights agenda — with that of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. In column 6, we examine the change in the GOP vote share in presidential elections between 1940-1960. In columns 7 and 8, we consider instead the change in turnout as well as the competitiveness of gubernatorial races in the post-WWII period, which may have been affected by the Supreme Court ruling in *Smith v. Allwright, 321 US 649 (1944)*, which struck down the white primary. We conclude by examining, in columns 9 and 10 respectively, the change in malapportionment of the State House and Senate between 1950-1960, which has been linked to the disproportionate power of racially conservative rural areas (Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2004; Mickey, 2015).

The results indicate no statistically significant pre-trends across all variables, with the exception of the share of land devoted to cotton production and the change in the Republican vote share in presidential elections between 1940 and 1960. As shown in Appendix Table C2, the results remain robust to the inclusion of the 1959 cotton share (column 2) and the 1960 Republican vote share (column 3) as additional controls.

Next, we show alternative exercises designed to ensure that the estimated effects of VRA coverage are not the result of model specification, sample selection, or unobserved historical differences across counties. To probe concerns about heterogeneity and selection, we replicate the long-difference estimates on matched samples (using both coarsened exact matching and propensity-score stratification) and on a trimmed sample restricted to common support in the 1960 Black population share (Table C1). The results remain closely aligned with the baseline. We also con-

sider alternative model specifications and inference procedures. Dropping or adding baseline controls, excluding counties in Florida and Texas covered under the 1975 re-authorization (Table C2), restricting the sample to counties around the 1964 turnout cutoff for coverage, and varying the clustering of standard errors (Table C3) all yield similar results. Finally, we account for a wide range of potential historical confounders, including measures of residential segregation (Tables C4 and C5), local civil rights activism (Table C6), federal anti-poverty spending (Table C7), Black migration patterns (Table C8), and Reconstruction-era political participation (Table C9). In each case, the inclusion of these controls leaves the results essentially unchanged. Taken together, these exercises confirm that our conclusions are not driven by specification choice, sample composition, or omitted historical factors.

4.3 Sources of Limited Progress

The persistent under-representation of Black officials in law enforcement and judicial offices — even compared to other local bodies such as county commissions — suggests the presence of barriers specific to these roles. In this section, we examine constraints related to voter demand and candidate supply.

Voter Demand. If voters — particularly white voters — favor candidates who adopt punitive approaches to crime and believe that candidates' racial backgrounds are correlated with their law enforcement preferences, Black candidates would face greater electoral challenges where white voters constitute a dominant voting bloc. These challenges are further intensified by the fact that elections for these offices are typically held at large and that Black residents comprised a minority of the electorate in most counties. If the size of the Black electorate relaxes voter-demand constraints — and if turnout is higher where African Americans make up a larger share of the population (Fraga, 2016) — we would expect greater gains in counties where Black voters constitute a majority.

Although the number of majority-Black counties was relatively small (136 in 1960), which pre-

Table 2: Voter Composition and Black Representation

	Sheriff		Judge	
	Black	Non-Black	Black	Non-Black
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Majority-Black Counties				
1980	8%	92%	8%	92%
1990	13%	87%	11%	89%
Panel B: Non-Majority-Black Counties				
1980	0%	100%	2%	98%
1990	1%	99%	3%	97%

Notes: The table reports the percentage of counties with Black versus non-Black sheriffs and county-level judges in 1980 and 1990. Majority-Black counties are defined as those where the 1960 Black population exceeded 50%; all others are classified as non-majority-Black. Each row sums to 100%.

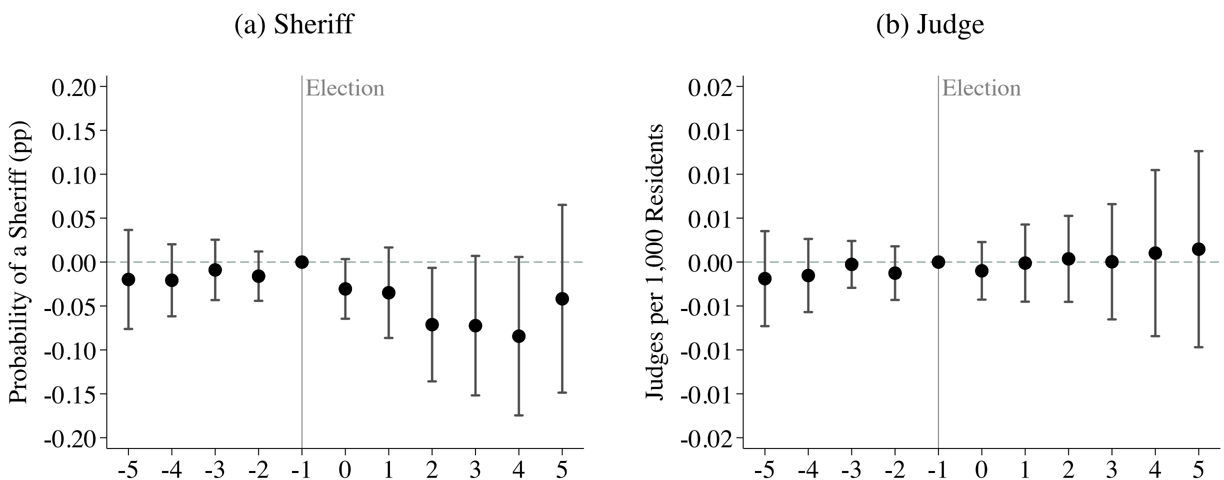
cludes a full regression analysis, descriptive patterns are nonetheless revealing. Table 2 compares outcomes across majority- and non-majority-Black counties. In 1980, not a single non-majority-Black county had a Black sheriff, and only 2% had a Black judge. By 1990, these figures were essentially unchanged. Majority-Black counties show some improvement, but representation remained visibly limited. In 1980, 92% of majority-Black counties had no Black judge and 92% had no Black sheriff. By 1990, these shares declined only slightly, to 89% and 87%, respectively.

Next we examine whether Black political breakthroughs in other local offices help explain the limited progress of African Americans in the justice system. Following Bernini et al. (2025), we treat the election of the first Black commissioner in a county as a salient event that may have triggered racial backlash. Using a leads-and-lags framework, we center the data on the year of each county's first Black commissioner election and estimate its dynamic effects on the likelihood of electing Black sheriffs and judges. To reduce concerns that geography alone drives the results, we restrict the sample to counties that elected at least one Black official between 1965 and 1990,

exploiting variation in timing rather than cross-sectional differences.[13]

Figure 5 reports the results, using the pre-election period as the omitted baseline. First, we find no evidence of differential pre-trends for either Black sheriffs (Panel A) or judges (Panel B), suggesting that our results are not driven by prior trajectories. Second, once a Black commissioner was elected, the likelihood of subsequent Black representation in law enforcement offices did not rise — and in the case of sheriffs, it may even have declined. While the timing of these first elections may be partly endogenous, the pattern is consistent with the idea that white voter mobilization in response to visible Black political gains dampened progress in other single-seat offices.

Figure 5: Representation in Law and Justice Around the First Black Commissioner Election



Notes: The figure plots event-study coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between VRA coverage and a series of leads and lags for an indicator equal to one in the year of the first election of a Black commissioner in the county. Panel A is a binary indicator equal to one if a county elected a Black sheriff in a given year. Panel B is the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents.

Overall, these results provide limited support for voter-demand–based explanations of persistent underrepresentation in law enforcement and judicial offices. While we find some evidence consistent with racial backlash following Black political breakthroughs in other offices, voter preferences alone do not account for the slow pace of progress — particularly given the lack of substantial gains even in majority-Black counties. This pattern points to the importance of other

[13]The data are grouped into two-year intervals, and the models include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, interactions between year dummies and baseline covariates, and interactions between VRA coverage and the timing of the first Black commissioner election.

constraints — most notably those related to candidate supply and institutional design.

Candidate Supply. To assess the role of candidate supply, we examine the professional pipeline into judicial and law enforcement offices. Because a law degree is typically required for county-level judgeships, the number of lawyers in a county provides a natural proxy for the potential pool of judicial candidates. For sheriff positions, since the overwhelming majority of sheriffs have prior law enforcement experience (Thompson, 2020; Farris and Holman, 2024), we use the number of Black police officers and detectives at the county level as an indicator of the potential pool of sheriff candidates.[14]

Figure A1 in the appendix illustrates the profound disparities in the distribution of lawyers. Before the VRA, Black lawyers (panel a) were exceedingly scarce, concentrated in a few urban areas and historically Black population centers. Even by 1990, their numbers remained very low. White lawyers (panel b), by contrast, were far more numerous and widely dispersed across the region throughout the period. This imbalance sharply constrained the pool of viable Black candidates for judicial office at the local level.

The picture looks somewhat different for law enforcement (panel c): Black police officers and detectives were more numerous and geographically dispersed even before the VRA, and their numbers grew substantially in the 1980s, particularly in urban areas and parts of the Deep South. Relative to the legal profession, the pathway into policing was broader and less encumbered by formal educational barriers, suggesting a potentially more accessible pipeline into sheriff offices. Yet, as argued by Dulaney (1996), their duties and promotion prospects remained limited, restricting their prospects to become the county's chief law enforcement officer.

Table 3 formalizes the descriptive patterns, presenting the estimates of our baseline long differences model. Columns (1) and (3) report estimates for the 1950-1980 period.[15] Column (1) shows

[14] By contrast, other local offices such as county commissioners typically impose no specialized requirements, making them more accessible to first-time candidates. This distinction helps explain why Black representation expanded more quickly in those roles (Bernini, Facchini and Testa, 2023).

[15] We use 1950 as the baseline since it is the last year with full-count census data. For 1980 and 1990, we rely on the EEO tabulations discussed in Section 3 and Appendix B. Results are robust to using the full-count census data of 1940 instead of 1950 as the baseline.

that counties with larger Black populations experienced greater growth in Black police officers, but this growth was unaffected by coverage. Column (3) indicates that changes in the number of Black lawyers were uncorrelated with both the 1960 Black population share and its interaction with coverage. In other words, the VRA did not directly expand the professional pipeline into either law enforcement or the legal profession. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the scope of the Act; nevertheless, this implies that professional pipelines constraints remained binding. Columns (2) and (4), which extend the horizon to 1990, reinforce this conclusion.

Table 3: Candidate Supply

Dep. Variable:	Policeman & Detective		Lawyer	
	1950-80	1950-90	1950-80	1950-90
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	–0.034	0.170	0.029	0.164
	(0.105)	(0.155)	(0.034)	(0.113)
Black Share, 1960	0.430**	0.722**	0.023	0.076
	(0.072)	(0.102)	(0.021)	(0.048)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.110	0.198	0.013	0.028
Adj. R-Square	0.34	0.48	0.11	0.18
N	1022	1022	1022	1022

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the change in the number of Black policemen and lawyers. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \ p < .05$; $** \ p < .01$.

Taken together, these results indicate that in the first twenty-five years after the passage of the VRA, supply-side bottlenecks curtailed the pool of viable candidates for judicial and law enforcement offices. As a result, the VRA's dramatic expansion of electoral access did not translate into a corresponding increase in potential candidate supply, highlighting that structural barriers continued to shape Black representation.

5 Black Representation in the Long Run

So far, we have examined the evolution of Black representation through 1990. We found that coverage had positive and statistically significant effects for sheriffs and county level judges, but that progress was limited. For above-county offices such as prosecutors and above county judges, we found instead no discernible effect.

What happened after 1990? In more recent decades, the trajectory of Black representation appears to have shifted. The supply of qualified Black candidates likely expanded, driven by rising law school enrollments, higher bar passage rates, and efforts to diversify law enforcement recruitment. At the same time, the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which effectively removed the VRA's coverage provisions, raised concerns about renewed vote-dilution practices that could undermine minority participation and representation. However, the durable grassroots organizational infrastructure that emerged from the Civil Rights Movement may have helped counteract these effects. To assess these competing forces, we analyze trends in Black officeholding in the judiciary and law enforcement through 2024.

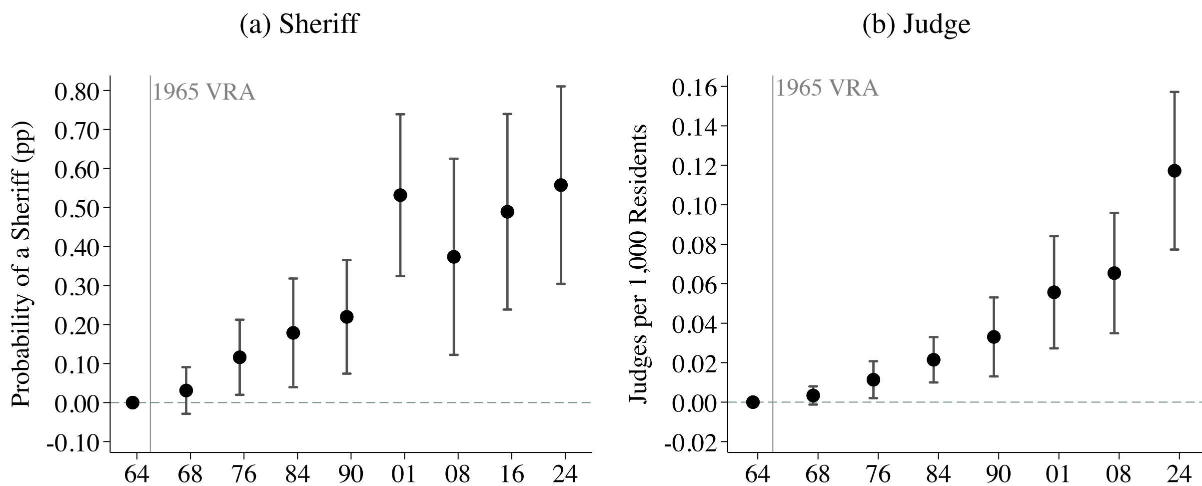
Once again, we deploy our triple difference identification strategy to estimate the long term effects of coverage. A concern is that county racial composition and socio-economic conditions may have changed substantially since 1960, complicating causal inference. Figure A3 in the appendix shows, however, that the share of African Americans is very persistent over time (e.g., the 1960 Black population share is highly correlated with later shares).[16] We also test whether our treatment variable (the interaction of 1960 Black share and VRA coverage) is associated with subsequent changes in education, unemployment, poverty, or population growth. Figure A4 in the appendix shows no evidence of differential post-treatment trends, reinforcing the validity of our research design.

Figure 6 presents the extended event-study results and Table 4 the long-difference estimates. Covered counties with historically high Black populations continued to experience faster growth in

[16] The correlation between the 1960 and 2000 Black population shares is 0.91; between 1960 and 2020 it is 0.87.

Black officeholding, both for sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B). Noticeably, this upward trajectory persisted even after the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* ruling. While civil rights advocates warned that this would have enabled renewed voter suppression — citing subsequent adoption of voter ID laws and polling place closures in several Southern states — Black representation in covered counties continued to increase. Progress is also recorded in above county offices (such as judges and prosecutors) with significant long-term gains in formerly covered jurisdictions with historical larger shares of Black Americans (Panels C and D of Figure 4). Why did gains persist, and in some cases accelerate, after the VRA's core enforcement mechanism was dismantled? We highlight two mechanisms: candidate supply and mobilization.

Figure 6: Event-Study Estimates of VRA Coverage on Black Representation, 1964-2024



Notes: The figure plots event-study coefficients with 95% confidence intervals from regressions interacting VRA coverage with year indicators and the 1960 Black population share. Panel A reports effects on the probability that a county elected a Black sheriff in a given year. Panel B reports effects on the number of Black judges per 1,000 residents.

Candidate Supply. Rising Black educational attainment and professional access helped ease supply-side constraints. Figure 7 shows long-run trends in the supply of Black professionals by coverage status, using state level Census occupational data through 2020.[17] Panel A and B show that both covered and non-covered states experienced steady growth in Black police officers and lawyers, and trends are similar between the two groups of states until 1980. Considering that

[17] Post-1990 EEO tabulations no longer report data at the county level.

Table 4: Black Elected Officials in County-Level Offices in 2024

Dep. Variable:	Sheriff	Judge
	1964-2024	1964-2024
	(1)	(2)
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.123**
	(0.155)	(0.029)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.003
	(0.095)	(0.004)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.114	0.011
Adj. R-Square	0.34	0.20
N	1022	831

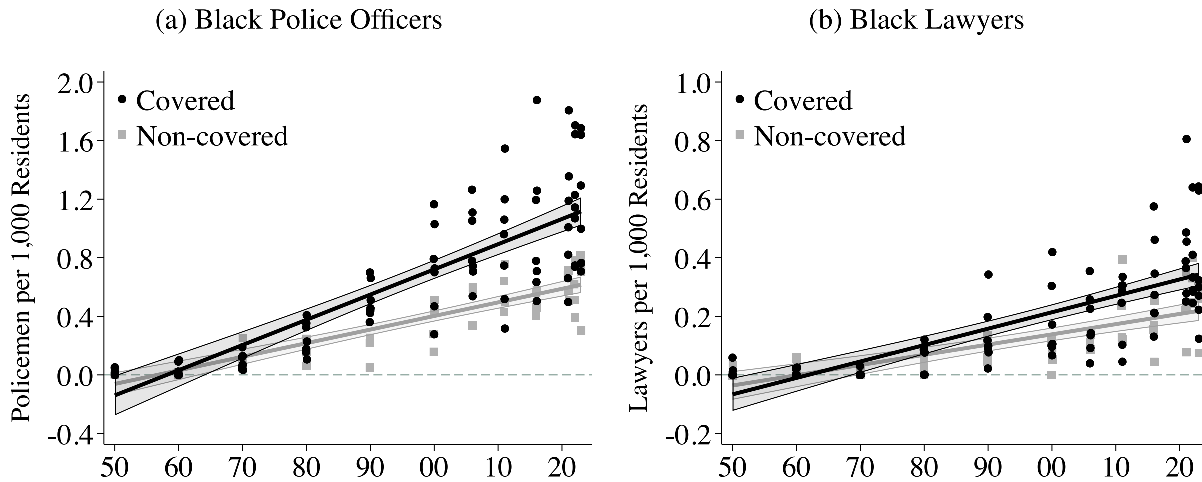
Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the change in the number of Black elected officials. All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \, p < .05$; $** \, p < .01$.

covered states have larger Black populations, this pattern indicates that the race gap in these professions is not closing in the two decades following the passage of the VRA. However, beginning in the 1990s, covered states display steeper upward trends: the increase in Black police officers starts earlier, and is more pronounced, whereas for Black lawyers a clear divergence emerges after 2000. Together, these patterns imply that, as the race gap in law enforcement and legal professions declines, supply-side constraints have gradually eased in the long run.

Ideally, we would also like to know whether the growth in the pool of potential candidates translated into more Black individuals actually running for office. Louisiana provides a rare systematic source, as the state reports the race of all candidates for sheriff and judicial offices on the Secretary of State's website. Using these data, we find that between 2007 and 2023 the share of Black sheriff candidates nearly doubled (from 10.7% to 18.7%), while between 2008 and 2020 the share of Black judicial candidates increased from 15.2% to 20.1% (Louisiana Secretary of State, 2025). We observe a similar pattern in the data from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023), which infers candidate race for local offices in a sample of large counties. The share of Black candidates

in covered counties rose from about 12% in the late 1990s to roughly 22% in 2020, while remaining flat at around 17% in non-covered counties. Taken together, these patterns point to a long-run expansion in both the potential and actual pool of Black candidates.

Figure 7: Long-Run Access to Law Enforcement and Legal Careers



Notes: The figure shows long-run trends in access to law enforcement and legal careers for Black candidates. Panel A reports Black police officers per 1,000 residents, and Panel B reports Black lawyers per 1,000 residents — occupational pools for sheriff and judge positions. Estimates are shown separately for VRA-covered and non-covered jurisdictions.

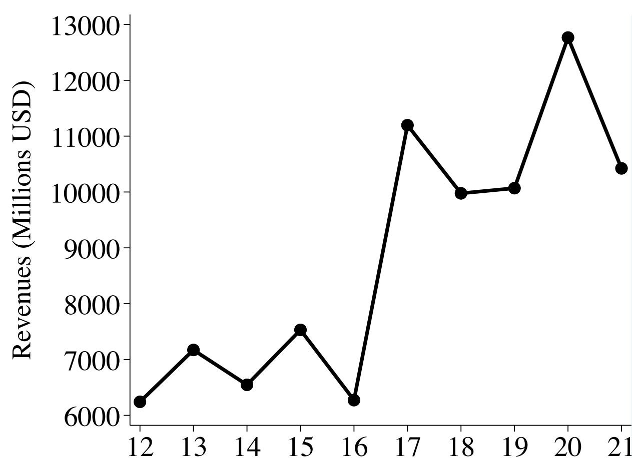
Mobilization. Civil rights grassroots organizations, which expanded following the passage of the VRA, became a durable feature of the Southern political landscape.[18] Following *Shelby County v. Holder* and the rise of the BLM movement, organizations such as the ACLU and NAACP — which had long challenged violations of the VRA's coverage provisions — expanded their efforts beyond litigation to include the recruitment of Black candidates and the promotion of voter engagement in law enforcement and judicial elections. Advocacy groups increasingly targeted sheriff, judge, and prosecutor races (traditionally low-salience contests) with recruitment and support for Black candidates. Color of Change, for example, launched a 2018 initiative to elect progressive Black prosecutors, combining recruitment with voter education, while The Collective PAC, founded in

[18] For example, in all Southern states other than Georgia, Louisiana, and South Carolina (for which data are unavailable), between 1964 and 2025 the share of covered counties with an NAACP branch more than doubled, rising from 40% to 83%, while the share in non-covered counties increased only from 22% to 34%.

2016, trains and supports Black candidates for judicial and law enforcement offices across the South.[19]

We provide two pieces of suggestive evidence of this mobilization. First, IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics show that revenues for civil rights and voter engagement nonprofits surged after 2017, peaking at nearly $13 billion in 2020 (Figure 8).[20] This coincided with renewed attention to racial justice after the 2016 presidential election and George Floyd's murder in 2020. For instance, Color of Change's membership quadrupled in days after the 2020 event, and the National Bail Fund Network raised $75 million in just two weeks (Goldmacher, 2020). This evidence points to the BLM movement as a major catalyst for expanding the resources of organizations supporting Black candidates.

Figure 8: Civil-Rights Nonprofit Organizations and Black mobilization



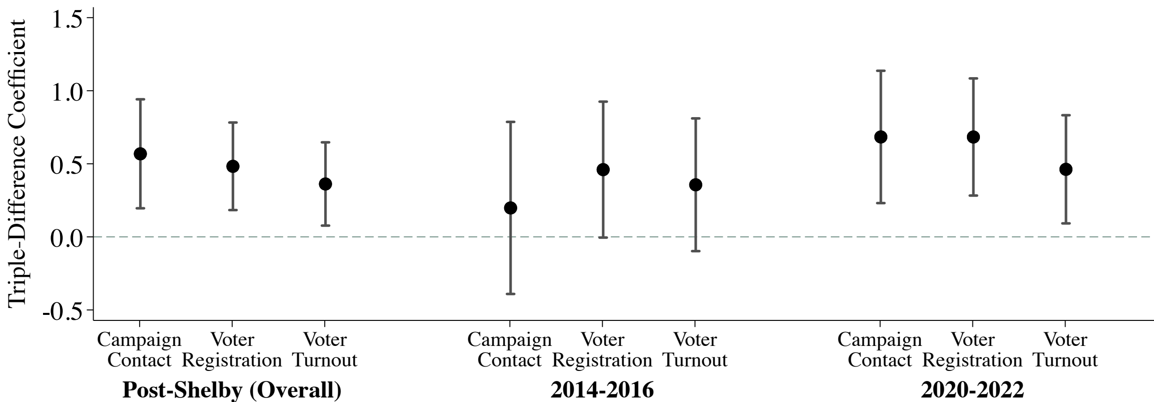
Notes: The figure shows total annual revenues (in millions USD) for civil-rights nonprofits (IRS categories R20, R22, R40, R60), 2012-2021.

Second, we examine Black voter mobilization using Cooperative Election Study data from 2006 to 2022, focusing on campaign contact, registration, and turnout across the eleven Southern states in our sample (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023). We analyze differences by race, by coverage status (interacting the 1965 VRA coverage indicator with the 1960 Black share), and

[19]Partnering with HBCUs, bar associations, and reform-oriented legal groups, the organization has endorsed over 1,000 Black candidates and helped elect dozens to office.

[20]We consider four nonprofit categories — civil rights (R20), minority rights (R22), voter education and registration (R40), and civil liberties (R60) — and analyze IRS Form 990 data from 2012 to 2021.

Figure 9: Black Mobilization Outcomes



Notes: The figure plots triple-difference coefficients (with 95% confidence intervals) from Cooperative Election Study (CES) data (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023) that interact respondent race (Black vs. white), treatment (VRA coverage × 1960 Black share), and a post-*Shelby* indicator.

across pre- and post-*Shelby* periods. As shown in Figure 9, after the 2013 Supreme Court decision, Black voters in covered states with historically large Black populations became significantly more likely than white voters to report being contacted by campaigns, registering, and voting. These effects are strongest in 2020-2022, coinciding with the peak of the BLM movement.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the convergence of an expanded candidate pipeline and heightened civil society mobilization reshaped the political landscape for judicial and law enforcement offices. Despite the rollback of formal federal oversight, Black representation accelerated in the long run, pointing to the importance of sustained grassroots activism and structural investments in candidate supply.

6 Conclusions

After the killing of George Floyd, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund renewed its call to 'reimagine public safety' by increasing Black representation in leadership across the justice system — arguing that communities cannot build trust in the justice system when those enforcing the law do not reflect the people they serve (NAACP, 2021). This call echoed decades of frustration over the persistent

under-representation of Blacks among sheriffs and judges, even in counties with sizable Black populations and formal voting protections. The urgency of this issue was underscored in a June 2020 congressional hearing organized by the House Judiciary Committee, where lawmakers and advocates stressed that achieving racial justice requires not only reforming policing practices but also addressing who holds power within the courts and law enforcement.[21]

Our study contributes to this debate by documenting the long-run evolution of Black representation in elected law enforcement and judicial offices across the U.S. South. For decades following the Civil Rights Movement, progress was modest: while some breakthroughs occurred in local legislative bodies, sheriffs' and judges' offices remained overwhelmingly white. We show that this stagnation reflected mutually reinforcing barriers: persistent supply-side bottlenecks (especially in the legal profession) and racial backlash against early Black political advances. Over time, however, the trajectory shifted. Beginning in the early 2000s, Black representation in covered counties increased substantially, even after federal oversight of elections was curtailed by the Supreme Court in 2013. We attribute these gains to the convergence of two forces: the gradual expansion of candidate supply, as more Black lawyers and law enforcement officers entered the professions, and intensified mobilization by civil rights organizations, amplified by the rise of the BLM movement. Together, these developments reversed decades of stagnation and reshaped the racial composition of local justice leadership.

These findings carry two important implications. First, legal protections such as the VRA, while essential, are not sufficient on their own; long-lasting change requires parallel investments in candidate pipelines, grassroots mobilization, and political infrastructure. Second, the trajectory of recent decades underscores the central role of civil society (advocacy groups, community organizations, and activist networks) that expanded opportunities for Black candidates and sustained mobilization even after federal oversight was weakened. As national debates over policing and racial justice continue, understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for democratic accountability but also for community trust and the legitimacy of the justice system.

[21] House Judiciary Committee Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices and Law Enforcement Accountability, June 10, 2020 (https://www.congress.gov/event/116th-congress/house-event/110775).

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Supporting Information for

Ballot, Badge, and Bench:

Black Representation in Southern Justice

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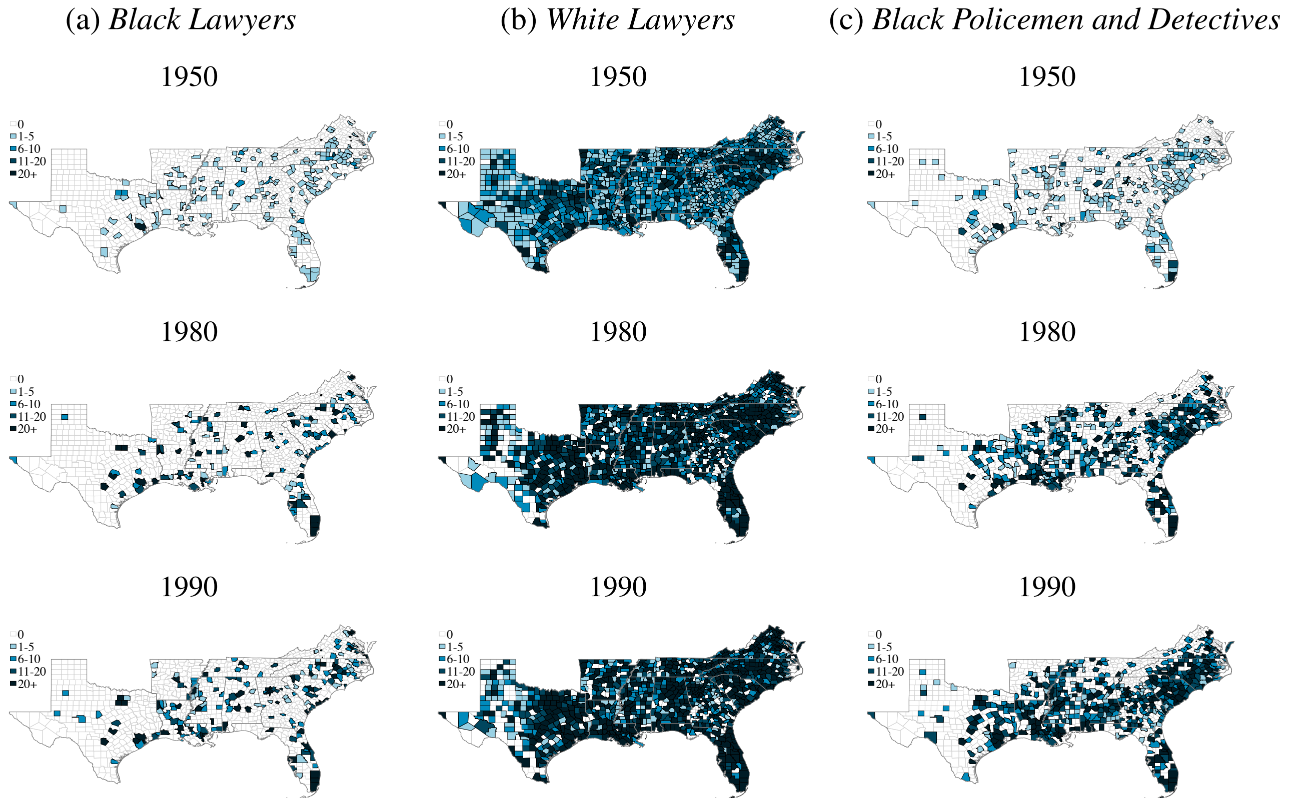
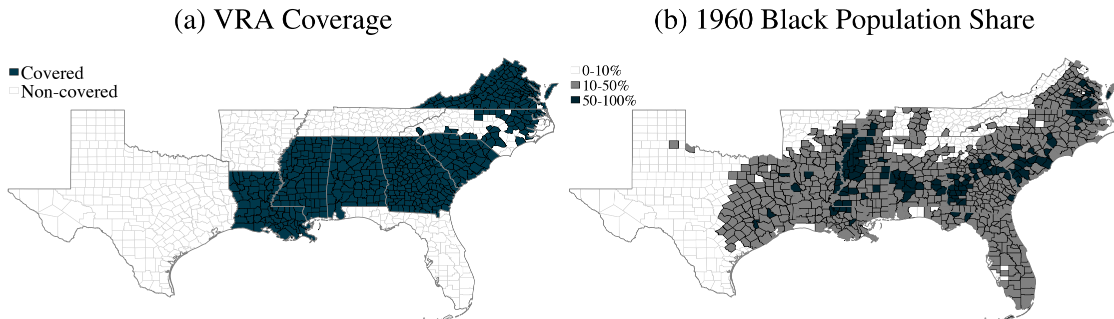
A Additional Figures and Tables

Figure A1: Number of Legal and Law Enforcement Professionals by Race and Year



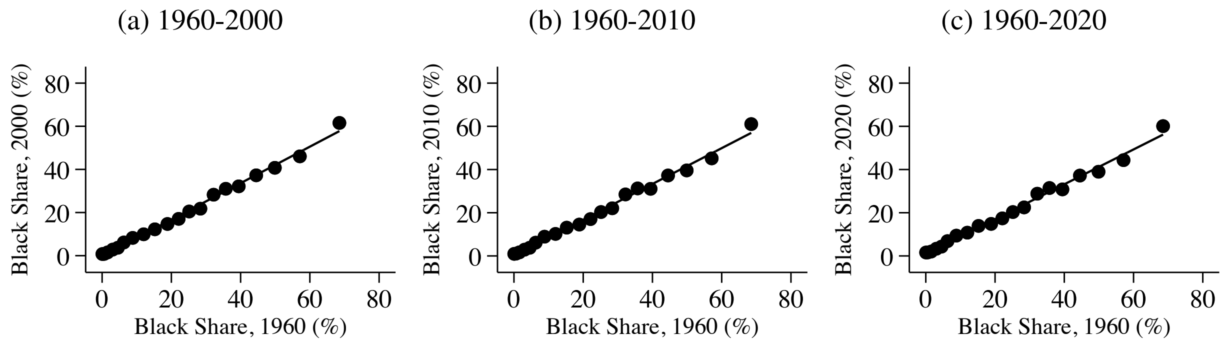
Notes: The maps display the number of Black lawyers (left column), white lawyers (middle column), and Black policemen and detectives (right column) across counties in 1950, 1980, and 1990.

Figure A2: Identification Strategy



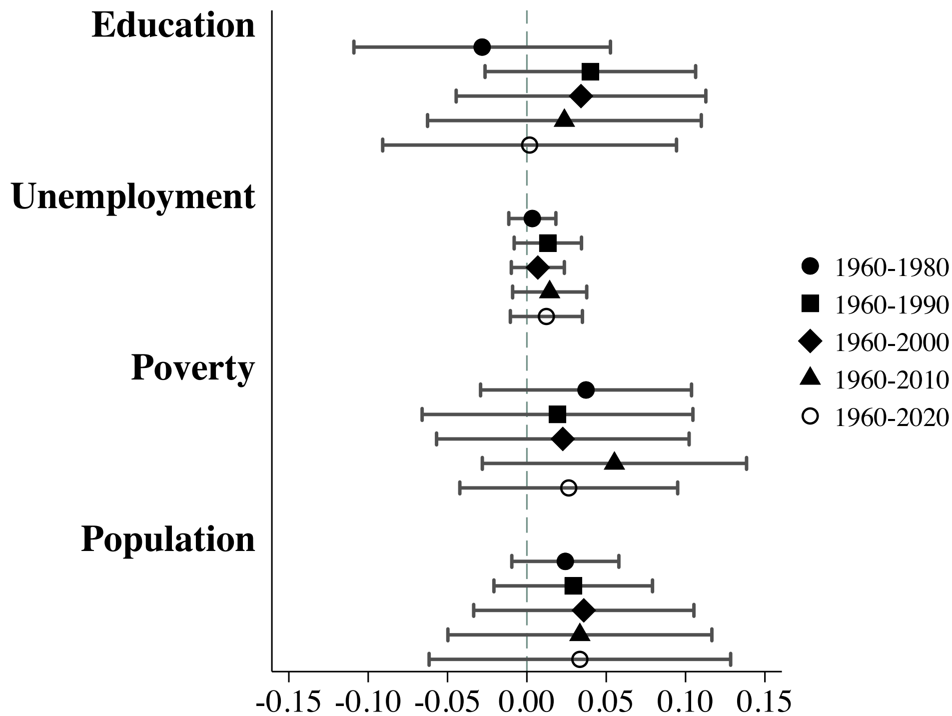
Notes: The maps depict the geographic and demographic components of the identification strategy. Panel A indicates counties covered by Section 5 of the 1965 VRA. Panel B shows counties grouped by their 1960 Black population share.

Figure A3: Persistence of Black Population Shares, 1960-2020



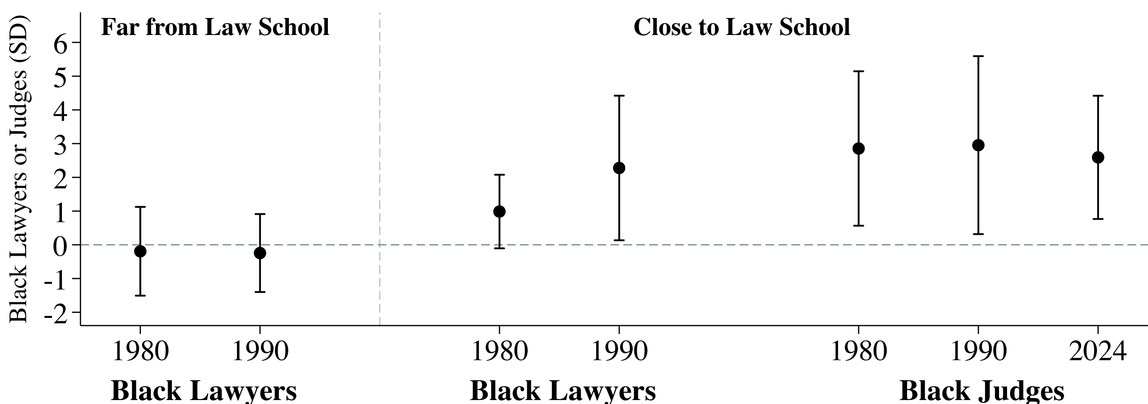
Notes: The figure plots the relationship between the Black population share in 1960 and the Black population share in subsequent decades (2000, 2010, 2020) at the county level. Each panel reports a binscatter with counties grouped into twenty equal-sized bins of the 1960 distribution.

Figure A4: Post-Trends in Socio-economic Characteristics



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and VRA coverage for four county-level socioeconomic outcomes: education, unemployment, poverty, and population. Coefficients are estimated for changes in each outcome relative to 1960, at 10-year intervals (1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020).

Figure A5: Distance to Law Schools



Notes: The figure plots the coefficients (with corresponding 95% confidence intervals) on the interaction between the 1960 Black population share and VRA coverage. Counties are categorized as close or far using a median split of distance to the nearest ABA-approved law school within the state in 1960 (approximately 115 km, or 71 miles).

Table A1: Elected Courts by Jurisdiction

State	*County-Level*	*Above County*
Alabama	District Court Probate Court	Circuit Court
Arkansas	County Court	
Florida	County Court	Circuit Court
Georgia	State Court Probate Court Magistrate	Superior Court
Louisiana	City Court* Justice of the Peace*	Civil District Court Criminal District Court District Court
Mississippi		Chancery Court Circuit Court
North Carolina		Superior Court
South Carolina	Probate Court	Circuit Court
Tennessee	General Session**	Chancery Court Circuit Court
Texas	County Court	District Court

* Source: https://voterportal.sos.la.gov/electedofficials
** Source: https://tncourts.gov/courts/general-sessions-courts/judges.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

	Covered Counties					Non-covered Counties				
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Obs
Panel A: Black Elected Officials in County Offices										
Judge (Per 1,000 People)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	418	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
1980	0.002	0.0	0.0	0.1	418	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
1990	0.004	0.0	0.0	0.2	418	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	490
2024	0.020	0.1	0.0	1.3	418	0.002	0.0	0.0	0.1	490
Sheriff (% of Counties)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	583	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	551
1980	2.058	14.2	0.0	100.0	583	0.181	4.3	0.0	100.0	551
1990	3.774	19.1	0.0	100.0	583	0.544	7.4	0.0	100.0	551
2024	18.182	38.6	0.0	100.0	583	4.719	21.2	0.0	100.0	551
Panel B: Black Elected Officials in Above-County Offices										
Judge (Per 1,000 People in Districts)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	125	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1980	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	125	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1990	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	125	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
2024	0.005	0.0	0.0	0.1	96	0.001	0.0	0.0	0.0	60
District Attorney (% of Districts)										
1964	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	245	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1980	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	245	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	87
1990	0.816	9.0	0.0	100.0	245	1.149	10.7	0.0	100.0	87
2024	11.982	32.5	0.0	100.0	217	6.667	25.2	0.0	100.0	60
Panel C: County Characteristics										
Black share, 1960	0.335	0.2	0.0	0.8	583	0.134	0.1	0.0	0.7	551
Unemployment (%), 1960	5.082	1.8	1.3	11.9	583	4.878	2.2	0.0	15.9	551
Poverty line (%), 1960	47.420	14.6	5.8	77.8	583	43.746	14.8	0.0	78.0	551
Population (thousands), 1960	35.484	58.4	1.9	634.9	583	40.956	101.9	0.6	1243.2	551
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	73.955	8.5	26.6	93.5	583	70.742	9.6	31.9	89.8	551
Rural farms (%), 1960	21.366	15.0	0.0	64.8	583	21.387	15.2	0.1	77.3	551
Cotton suitability	0.261	0.2	0.0	1.3	506	0.586	0.4	0.0	1.4	516
Pro-Black protest, 1960-64	1.117	5.7	0.0	74.0	583	0.543	3.2	0.0	46.0	551
Anti-Black protest, 1960-64	0.305	2.1	0.0	37.0	583	0.054	0.5	0.0	9.0	551
Lynchings (%), 1930-40	0.178	0.9	0.0	12.1	583	0.126	0.9	0.0	15.2	551

Notes: Black share in 1960 is reported as a proportion (ranging from 0 to 1) rather than a percentage, for consistency with the empirical specifications.

Table A3: Pre-VRA trends

Dep. variable:	KKK Klavers	Black Lynchings	Cotton Share	NAACP Chapters	Republican Vote Share		Gubernatorial Elections		Malapportionment Of the State	
					1952-64	1940-60	Turnout	Competitiv.	House	Senate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Black share, 1960 X VRA	0.000	–0.000	0.047*	0.005	–0.003	0.008**	0.001	–0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.021)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Black share, 1960	0.001†	0.000	–0.063**	–0.005	0.009**	0.013**	0.005**	0.001	–0.001	–0.001
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.019)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Mean Dep. Variable	0.010	–0.147	–2.326	0.069	0.261	1.301	0.610	–0.032	0.123	0.093
Adj. R-Square	0.19	0.98	0.19	–0.01	0.84	0.75	0.81	0.31	0.52	0.31
N	1022	1022	1138	1022	1022	1010	1007	1012	1022	1022

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the change in the outcome indicated in each column heading. All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. When the dependent variable is the share of land devoted to cotton, the control set excludes the share of rural farms and cotton suitability. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

† $p < .10$; $* \ p < .05$; $** \ p < .01$.

B Variable Definitions and Sources

Appendix B.1 provides a description of the data on Black elected officials and the other outcome variables considered in this paper. Appendix B.2 and B.3 presents the details of the main regressors and all the additional variables, respectively.

B.1 Outcome Variables

Judges. For the pre-VRA period, we rely on Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). From the enactment of the VRA through 1990, our main source is the *National Roster of Black Elected Officials* (NRBEO). First published by the Southern Regional Council in 1969, the NRBEO provided information on Black elected officials across national, state, and local levels beginning in 1968. For over two decades, the Joint Center for Political Studies updated the roster through questionnaires sent to known officeholders, phone verifications with jurisdictions, news clippings, and information from government offices and civil rights organizations. As the NRBEO is only available in paper form, we digitize these data to construct the number of Black judges elected. For later years, we use the *Directory of Minority Judges of the United States* (American Bar Association, 2001, 2008) for judges elected in 2001 and 2008, and the *American Bench Directory* (Foster-Long, 2024) for judges elected in 2024.

Sheriffs. For the pre-VRA period, we again rely on Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). From 1965 through 1990, we use the NRBEO, which systematically recorded Black sheriffs across Southern counties. For the 2001, 2008, and 2016 elections, we build on Daniel Thompson's comprehensive database of sheriffs, which provides names and tenure but not racial identifiers. To address this gap, we manually coded the race of officeholders using multiple independent sources, including Secretary of State publications, state sheriffs' associations, obituaries, news articles, and archival materials. This coding procedure enables us to recover the racial composition of sheriffs with over 90% coverage in these years. For 2024, we compile race-coded information directly from the official directories of sheriffs' associations in each of the eleven Southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

District attorneys. Before the VRA, data are from Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023). Through 1990, the NRBEO serves as the main source. Because district attorneys are elected at the judicial-district level, we map NRBEO records to district boundaries reconstructed from the *American Bench Directory* and state Blue Books. For 2024, we rely on state-level associations and official directories: the Alabama District Attorneys Association, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the

Mississippi Judiciary Directory from the Secretary of State's Office, the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, the South Carolina Judicial Branch, the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, the Texas State Directory, and the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council.

Lawyers and law enforcement. To measure the professional pipeline into judicial and law enforcement offices, we compile historical and contemporary data on occupational categories closely linked to these positions. For 1940 and 1950, we use full-count Census data to obtain the number of: *i*) lawyers and judges; *ii*) sheriffs and bailiffs; *iii*) policemen and detectives; and, *iv*) marshals and constables (Ruggles et al., 2025, 2024). For 1980 and 1990, we draw on the Census Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Tabulations, which provide comparable data on *i*) lawyers; *ii*) judges; *iii*) sheriffs and bailiffs; and, *iv*) policemen and detectives (Manson et al., 2024). For 2000, we supplement these series with the 1% state Census sample. Finally, for the period 2006-2023, we use the American Community Survey (ACS).

B.2 Main Regressors

VRA coverage. Our coverage variable is an indicator equal to one for the counties that were covered by Section 5 of the VRA in 1965 and zero otherwise. All counties of six states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia) were covered, whereas only 39 of the 100 counties of North Carolina were covered. Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee, and Texas were not covered. The North Carolina counties covered in 1965 are as follows: Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Camden, Caswell, Chowan, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hertford, Hoke, Jackson, Lee, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Robeson, Rockingham, Scotland, Union, Vance, Washington, Wayne, and Wilson.

Black population share. We calculate the Black population share in 1960 from the County and City Data Book 1947-1977 (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012).

B.3 Additional Variables

Control variables. We construct nine county-level controls to capture baseline demographic, socioeconomic, and historical conditions. From the *County and City Data Book 1947-1977* (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2012), we obtain 1960 measures of: *i*) total population; *ii*) the share of adults (25+) without a high school diploma; *iii*) the unemployment rate; *iv*) the share of families with income below $ 3,000; and *v*) the share of residents living on farms. Cotton suitability is measured using a county-level index of maximum potential cotton

yield from Hornbeck and Naidu (2014). To capture racial mobilization and conflict in the years immediately preceding the Voting Rights Act, we use data on pro- and anti-Black protests between 1960 and 1964 from Olzak et al. (2011) and matched from cities to counties. Finally, we account for historical racial violence using the number of lynchings of Black individuals between 1930 and 1940, scaled by the Black population, based on data we digitized from Ramey and McWilliams (2017). Together, these controls provide a comprehensive portrait of the demographic, economic, and racial landscape of Southern counties prior to the VRA.

Judicial divisions. We construct judicial divisions from several sources. Alabama: U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Arkansas: U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District), U.S. District Court (Western District). Florida: U.S. Attorney's Office (Northern District and Middle District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Georgia: U.S. Attorney's Office (Southern District), U.S. District Court (Northern District and Middle District). Louisiana: U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District), U.S. District Court (Middle District and Eastern District). Mississippi: U.S. District Court (Northern District and Southern District). North Carolina: U.S. District Court (Western District, Middle District, and Eastern District). South Carolina: U.S. District Court. Tennessee: U.S. Attorney's Office (Middle District), U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District). Texas: U.S. Attorney's Office (Western District, Northern District, and Eastern District), U.S. District Court (Southern District). Virginia: U.S. District Court (Western District and Eastern District).

Electoral rules. Information on the electoral system used to select members of county governing bodies in the pre-VRA period comes from the *Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments* (1957). Based on this source, we construct an indicator equal to one for counties in covered states where members of county governing bodies were elected under single-member district (SMD) rules (Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia) and zero otherwise.

Candidate-level data. We draw on two complementary sources. First, the Louisiana Secretary of State provides official records reporting the race of all candidates, including those running for sheriff and judicial offices (Louisiana Secretary of State, 2025). Second, we use the dataset assembled by de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023), which systematically infers candidate race for local offices across the United States. Together, these sources supply rare and consistent evidence on the racial composition of candidates in sheriff and judicial elections.

Civil society and voter mobilization data. We use two sources to capture trends in mobilization. First, IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics provide information on civil rights nonprofit organizations between 2012 and 2021. We classify nonprofits according to

the IRS National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities — civil rights (R20), minority rights (R22), voter education and registration (R40), and civil liberties (R60) — and report both the number of active organizations and their combined revenues. Second, we draw on the Cooperative Election Study from 2006 to 2022 to examine campaign contact, voter registration, and turnout across the eleven Southern states in our sample (Schaffner, Ansolabehere and Shih, 2023).

Socioeconomic characteristics and Black population shares, 1980-2020. We extend our baseline county-level controls to later decades using U.S. Census and related sources. Educational attainment (share of adults aged 25+ without a high school diploma), unemployment rates, and total population are drawn from the decennial Census in 1980, 1990, and 2000, as provided through the IPUMS NHGIS database (Manson et al., 2024), while for 2010 and 2020 we rely on ACS five-year estimates from NHGIS (2009-2013 and 2019-2023 samples). Poverty rates are obtained from NHGIS for 1980, 1990, and 2000, and from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program for 2010 (Poverty and Median Income Estimates, Small Area Estimates Branch) and 2020 (Poverty and Median Household Income Estimates). County-level Black population shares for 2000, 2010, and 2020 are taken from StatsAmerica.

Table B1: Variable Description

Variable	Description	Source
Outcome Variables		
Judges	Number of Black judges elected, per 1,000 residents.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990); American Bar Association (2001, 2008); Foster-Long (2024).
Sheriffs	Number of Black sheriffs elected.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990); Thompson database with supplemental coding from state records, associations, obituaries, news, and archives (2001, 2008, 2016); state sheriffs' association directories (2024).
District attorneys	Number of Black district attorneys elected.	Bernini, Facchini and Testa (2023) for pre-VRA; NRBEO (through 1990), mapped to judicial-district boundaries using the *American Bench Directory* and state Blue Books; state associations and directories (2024).
Lawyers and law enforcement	Number of Black professionals in law and law enforcement occupations.	U.S. Census full-count data (1940, 1950); Census EEO Tabulations (1980, 1990); 1% state Census (2000); ACS (2006-2023). Categories include lawyers and judges, sheriffs and bailiffs, policemen and detectives, and marshals and constables.
Main Regressors		
Black population share	Share of Black residents in county population (1960).	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Coverage (VRA)	Indicator for counties covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.	U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division.
Control Variables		
Families below poverty line (%), 1960	Share of families with income below $3,000.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Population, 1960	Total county population.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Unskilled workers (%), 1960	Share of adults (25+) without a high school diploma.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Rural farms (%), 1960	Share of residents living on farms.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Cotton suitability	Index of maximum potential cotton yield by county.	Hornbeck and Naidu (2014).
Pro-Black protest, 1960–64	Number of pro-Black protest events.	Olzak et al. (2011).
Anti-Black protest, 1960–64	Number of anti-Black protest events.	Olzak et al. (2011).
Unemployment (%), 1960	County unemployment rate.	Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (2012).
Lynchings (%), 1930-40	Lynchings of Black individuals per Black population, 1930-1940.	Ramey and McWilliams (2017).
Additional Variables		
Judicial divisions	Judicial division boundaries used for clustering.	Constructed from U.S. Attorney's Offices and U.S. District Court districts.
Electoral rules	Indicator for counties with single-member district (SMD) rules in the pre-VRA period.	*Census of Governments, Elective Offices of State and Local Governments* (1957).
Candidate-level data	Racial composition of candidates in sheriff and judicial elections.	Louisiana Secretary of State (2025) and de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023).
Civil society and voter mobilization data	Measures of nonprofit activity and voter engagement.	IRS Form 990 data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2012-2021); Cooperative Election Study (2006-2022).
Socioeconomic characteristics and Black population shares, 1980-2020	Educational attainment, unemployment, poverty, population, and Black population shares.	IPUMS NHGIS Census data (1980, 1990, 2000); ACS 5-year estimates (2009-2013, 2019-2023); SAIPE poverty estimates (2010, 2020); StatsAmerica (2000, 2010, 2020).

C Robustness Checks

This appendix provides a series of robustness checks that complement the results reported in Sections 4 and 5. We examine changes in the number of Black sheriffs and judges between 1964 and 1990 (Panels A and B) and between 1964 and 2024 (Panels C and D), thereby capturing the medium- and long-run effects of the VRA. Across all specifications, the estimates remain stable and closely aligned with our baseline results.

C.1 Heterogeneity and Selection

A key concern is that our results may be driven by selection into coverage or heterogeneity across counties. Table C1 addresses this issue. Column (1) reproduces the baseline long-difference estimates. In column (2), we restrict the sample using Coarsened Exact Matching, which balances observable covariates between covered and non-covered counties and thus reduces concerns that imbalance drives our findings. In column (3), we apply propensity-score stratification: we first estimate the probability of coverage using logistic regression, transform the scores into the linear predictor of the log-odds, and then stratify counties into bins of similar propensity. Covered and non-covered counties are compared within each stratum. Finally, in column (4) we trim the sample to the common support defined by the 1960 Black population share, addressing concerns that the larger Black populations in covered counties might disproportionately drive the estimates. In all cases, the results remain closely aligned with the baseline.

C.2 Alternative Specifications

Table C2 explores the robustness of our findings to alternative model choices. Column (2) includes the share of land devoted to cotton in 1959, replacing cotton suitability. In column (3), we add the 1960 Republican vote share, to ensure that baseline political alignment does not confound the treatment effect. Columns (4) and (5) exclude subsets of counties that could plausibly drive the results: the five Florida counties and all Texas counties brought under coverage in 1975. Across all specifications, the estimates are nearly identical to the baseline, indicating that results are not driven by modeling choices or influential subsets of the sample.

C.3 Treatment and Clustering

Table C3 examines alternative definitions of treatment and inference. In column (2), we restrict the sample to counties with a 1964 presidential turnout rate between 40% and 60%, thereby excluding counties with unusually high or low turnout. One of the requirements for Section 5 coverage was that turnout in 1964 fell below 50 percent, so this exercise parallels a regression discontinuity

approach, comparing counties that were similar on this dimension but lay on opposite sides of the cutoff. In columns (3) and (4), we vary the clustering of standard errors. Clustering at the state level provides a conservative adjustment for correlated shocks within states, while the Conley method accounts for spatial correlation in errors across neighboring counties (using a 100 km radius). Across all alternatives, the results remain robust.

C.4 Residential Segregation

Table C4 incorporates historical measures of segregation to test whether our results simply reflect underlying differences in racial segregation across counties. We first draw on Cook et al. (2023), who compile the number of Green Book establishments across Southern counties in 1939, 1948, and 1955. The presence of such establishments provides a proxy for the degree of racial exclusion in local economies. We include both the levels and growth rates of Green Book entries across these periods. In columns (5)-(7), we consider segregation indices from Logan and Parman (2017), including the overall segregation index, the Black-white dissimilarity index, and the Black isolation index, which capture the intensity of residential segregation and racial isolation in the early to mid-20th century. Estimates remain highly stable across all specifications, suggesting that historical segregation patterns do not drive our findings. Finally, Table C5 disaggregates the Green Book data by category in both 1939 and 1948, providing a more detailed test of whether specific dimensions of segregated local economies account for our results.

C.5 Black Activism and Political Mobilization

Table C6 introduces controls for historical Black activism to test whether our estimates are driven by variation in local mobilization prior to the VRA. We include several measures from different sources. First, we add the number of NAACP chapters in 1964, normalized by the Black population in 1960, to capture the local organizational infrastructure of the civil rights movement. Second, we include an indicator for the presence of at least one Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) protest event between 1942 and 1964. Third, we use the number of Black church members in 1936 (per Black population) as a proxy for religious-based civic capacity. Fourth, we incorporate the number of Black U.S. military enlistments at the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940, which has been shown to correlate with civic engagement and subsequent activism. Fifth, we add indices of racial discrimination derived from a principal components analysis of political and economic measures of exclusion. Finally, we control for the number of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Klaverns operating between 1964 and 1966, standardized by the white population in 1960, to account for local repression. Across all specifications, the inclusion of these controls does not alter our results, suggesting that the estimated effects are not simply capturing pre-existing differences in Black political mobilization or white resistance.

C.6 War on Poverty Spending

Table C7 tests whether our results are confounded by federal anti-poverty initiatives of the 1960s. We focus on the Community Action Program (CAP), one of the central pillars of the War on Poverty, which directed substantial resources to local governments between 1965 and 1968. Using data from Bailey and Duquette (2014), we replicate the long-difference model in equation (2), interacting VRA coverage with measures of baseline poverty as well as with several indicators of CAP expenditures. These include thresholds of household income in 1960, child poverty rates, and per capita CAP funding over different horizons. Across all specifications, the estimates remain virtually unchanged, indicating that federal anti-poverty spending does not account for our findings.

C.7 Migration

Table C8 examines whether postwar migration patterns confound our results. Counties with higher rates of Black in- or out-migration after WWII may have experienced different political and demographic trajectories, potentially influencing representation independently of VRA coverage. To address this concern, we incorporate measures of net Black migration over the entire 1940-1960 period, as well as separately for the 1940-1950 and 1950-1960 decades. In all cases, the estimates remain stable, indicating that migration dynamics do not drive our findings.

C.8 Historical Black Political Power

Table C9 examines whether our results are confounded by county-level variation in Black political participation during Reconstruction. Places with stronger Black political traditions may have followed distinct representational trajectories even in the absence of the VRA. To address this concern, we use data on race-specific registration rates in 1867 from Williams (2022) and on the presence of Black politicians during 1865-1880 from Logan (2020). We interact coverage with measures of both voter registration (Black and white) and political officeholding (whether a county elected at least one Black politician, and the share of Black politicians relative to the 1900 Black population). We also estimate a specification including all interactions simultaneously. In all cases, the results remain consistent with the baseline, indicating that our findings are not driven by deep historical legacies of Black political power.

Table C1: Robustness: Heterogeneity on Observables and Unobservables

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials			
	Baseline	CEM	Stratifying Propensity	Trimming Black Pop.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.107†	0.346**	0.270**
	(0.077)	(0.059)	(0.099)	(0.077)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.037	0.274**	0.037
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.071)	(0.027)
N	1022	1014	1022	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.021*	0.053**	0.039**
	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.024*	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.010)	(0.000)
N	831	824	831	831
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.429**	0.533**	0.540**
	(0.155)	(0.158)	(0.191)	(0.155)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.401**	0.745**	0.401**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.148)	(0.095)
N	1022	1014	1022	1022
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.110**	0.122**	0.123**
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.029)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.025	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.019)	(0.004)
N	831	824	831	831

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \; p < .05$; $** \; p < .01$.

Table C2: Robustness: Alternative Specifications

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials				
	Baseline	Cotton Share	1960 Rep. Share	Reauthorization	
				Florida	Texas
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990					
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.269**	0.272**	0.270**	0.259**
	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.078)	(0.077)	(0.080)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.035	0.035	0.037	0.047
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.034)
N	1022	1022	1020	1020	780
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990					
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.039**	0.040**	0.039**	0.039**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	–0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	831	829	829	589
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024					
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.535**	0.526**	0.544**	0.528**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.155)	(0.178)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.387**	0.421**	0.397**	0.413**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.098)	(0.095)	(0.127)
N	1022	1022	1020	1020	780
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024					
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.124**	0.124**	0.123**	0.120**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.006
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)
N	831	831	829	829	589

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \; p < .05$; $** \; p < .01$.

Table C3: Robustness: Treatment and Clustering

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials			
	Baseline	Turnout 40%-60%	State Cluster	Conley 100km
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.165†	0.270†	0.270**
	(0.077)	(0.099)	(0.129)	(0.037)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	–0.009	0.037	0.037
	(0.027)	(0.014)	(0.028)	(0.026)
N	1022	684	1022	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.024†	0.039†	0.037**
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.006)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000†
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	577	831	831
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.369*	0.540**	0.540**
	(0.155)	(0.169)	(0.133)	(0.086)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.360**	0.401**	0.401**
	(0.095)	(0.115)	(0.069)	(0.075)
N	1022	684	1022	1022
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.125*	0.123**	0.119**
	(0.029)	(0.056)	(0.033)	(0.016)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.002	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
N	831	577	831	831

Notes: The table estimates the long difference model in equation (2). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
$\dagger$ $p < .10$; $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table C4: Controlling for Residential Segregation

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials						
	Baseline	Green Books Establishments			Residential Segregation		
		1955	All Estab. 1939-55	Growth 1939-55	Segregat. Index	Dissimil. Index	Isolation Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.275**	0.273**	0.293**	0.269**	0.331**	0.271**
	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.092)	(0.076)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.034	0.035	0.015	0.039	0.044	0.028
	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.024)
N	1022	1015	1015	1021	970	1010	1010
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.040**	0.039**	0.039**	0.042**	0.043**	0.042**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	–0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	–0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	824	824	830	782	821	821
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.551**	0.551**	0.547**	0.548**	0.690**	0.518**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.154)	(0.153)	(0.157)	(0.170)	(0.157)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.403**	0.401**	0.393**	0.408**	0.420**	0.389**
	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.091)	(0.096)	(0.104)	(0.095)
N	1022	1015	1015	1021	970	1010	1010
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.123**	0.122**	0.123**	0.105**	0.115**	0.110**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.025)	(0.028)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.005	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	831	824	824	830	782	821	821

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments from Cook et al. (2023), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of all Green Book establishments present in 1955, standardized by the Black population in 1950 in columns (2); ii) the average number of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 (both years included) in columns (3); iii) the growth rate of all Green Book establishments between 1939 and 1955 in columns (4). Using the index present in Logan and Parman (2017), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: iv) the Segregation Index, the Dissimilarity Index, and the Isolation Index, respectively, in columns (5), (6), and (7). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \ p < .05$; $** \ p < .01$.

Table C5: Controlling for Green Book Establishments as a Share of Total Establishments

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials						
	Baseline	Establishments in 1939			Establishments in 1948		
		Restaur.	Gas Station	Total	Restaur.	Gas Station	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.234**	0.223**	0.225**	0.284**	0.268**	0.284**
	(0.077)	(0.080)	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.077)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.032	0.036	0.035	0.010	0.036	0.022
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.025)	(0.026)
N	1022	1008	1017	1019	1015	1019	1021
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.040**	0.039**	0.039**	0.039**	0.039**	0.039**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	–0.000	–0.000	–0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	821	827	829	825	828	830
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.543**	0.522**	0.544**	0.534**	0.573**	0.568**
	(0.155)	(0.161)	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.156)	(0.153)	(0.159)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.393**	0.396**	0.377**	0.398**	0.366**	0.373**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.100)	(0.092)	(0.102)
N	1022	1008	1017	1019	1015	1019	1021
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.126**	0.124**	0.124**	0.123**	0.122**	0.124**
	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	831	821	827	829	825	828	830

Notes: Using data on Green Book establishments and total establishments from Cook et al. (2023), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of Green Book restaurants in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants in 1935 in column (2); ii) the number of Green Book gas stations in 1939, standardized by the total number of gas stations in 1935 in column (3); iii) the number of Green Book restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1939, standardized by the total number of restaurants, gas stations, and hotels in 1935 in column (4). Columns (5) to (7) replicate the previous analysis for 1948 Green Book establishments and 1948 total establishments. The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \ p < .05$; $** \ p < .01$.

Table C6: Controlling for Potential Forces Promoting Black Activism

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials						
	Baseline	NAACP Chapters	CORE Events	Black Church	WWII Enlistment	Discrimin. Index	KKK
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.269**	0.286**	0.281**	0.276**	0.333**	0.282**
	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.094)	(0.081)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.037	0.023	0.038	0.038	0.021	0.038
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.033)
N	1022	1022	1022	1022	988	958	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.038**	0.038**	0.039**	0.046**	0.048**	0.037**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.012)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	831	831	831	798	772	831
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.540**	0.569**	0.547**	0.566**	0.644**	0.473**
	(0.155)	(0.156)	(0.151)	(0.157)	(0.161)	(0.188)	(0.153)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.401**	0.383**	0.404**	0.412**	0.345**	0.439**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.092)	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.104)	(0.092)
N	1022	1022	1022	1022	988	958	1022
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.098**	0.122**	0.124**	0.137**	0.129**	0.095**
	(0.029)	(0.024)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.026)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.004	0.002	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	831	831	831	831	798	772	831

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the number of NAACP chapters in 1964, standardized by the Black population in 1960 in column (2); ii) an indicator for the presence of a Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) event between 1942 and 1964 in column (3); iii) the number of members in Black churches in 1936, standardized by Black population in column (4); iv) the number of Black U.S. military enlistment during the onset of WWII, standardized by the number of eligible men in 1940 in column (5); v) one indicator of discrimination (obtained via principal component analysis, PCA) for political components and economic components in column (6); vi) the number of KKK Klaverns between 1964 and 1966, standardized by the white population in 1960 in column (7). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.

† $p < .10$; $* \; p < .05$; $** \; p < .01$.

Table C7: Controlling for Spending on the War on Poverty

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials						
	Baseline	Poverty			CAP Expenditure p.c.		
		Below 1,000	Below 2,000	Child Poverty	Total 1965-68	Average 1965-68	1965
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.206**	0.193**	0.251**	0.262**	0.266**	0.258**
	(0.077)	(0.069)	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.076)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.012	0.018	0.014	0.035	0.035	0.035
	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.027)
N	1022	1022	1022	880	1022	1021	1022
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.030**	0.035**	0.039**	0.038**	0.038**	0.036**
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	–0.000	–0.000	–0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	831	831	737	831	830	831
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.484**	0.478**	0.530**	0.545**	0.546**	0.538**
	(0.155)	(0.146)	(0.145)	(0.146)	(0.157)	(0.156)	(0.159)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.365**	0.352**	0.315**	0.400**	0.402**	0.406**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)
N	1022	1022	1022	880	1022	1021	1022
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024							
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.108**	0.116*	0.135*	0.125**	0.125**	0.124**
	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.046)	(0.062)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.001	–0.001	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	831	831	831	737	831	830	831

Notes: Using data on the War on Poverty from Bailey and Duquette (2014), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the share of the population with an income below 1,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (2); ii) the share of the population with an income below 2,000 U.S. dollars in 1960 in column (3); iii) the child poverty rate in column (4); iv) the real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965-1968, in column (5); v) the average real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965-1968, in column (6); vi) the real federal CAP expenditure per capita, 1965, in column (7). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.

Table C8: Controlling for Black Net Migration Rate

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials			
	Baseline Specification	Migration Rate 1940-60	Migration Rate 1940-50	Migration Rate 1950-60
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.269**	0.224**	0.268**
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.080)	(0.076)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.037	0.038	0.037
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.027)
N	1022	1022	1000	1018
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.038**	0.039**	0.038**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	831	810	830
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.552**	0.531**	0.532**
	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.162)	(0.155)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.401**	0.412**	0.400**
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.098)	(0.095)
N	1022	1022	1000	1018
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024				
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.126**	0.123**	0.124**
	(0.029)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	0.003	0.004	0.003
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
N	831	831	810	830

Notes: The table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black net migration rate 1940-1960 in column (2); ii) the Black net migration rate 1940-1950 in column (3); iii) the Black net migration rate 1950-1960 in column (4). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
† $p < .10$; $* \ p < .05$; $** \ p < .01$.

Table C9: Controlling for Historical Black Political Power

Dep. Variable:	Black Elected Officials					
	Baseline	1867 Registration		1865-80 Politicians		All
		Black Registr.	White Registr.	Dummy Variable	Share	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Sheriff, 1964-1990						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.270**	0.308**	0.316**	0.280**	0.308**	0.326**
	(0.077)	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.083)	(0.081)	(0.080)
Black Share, 1960	0.037	0.003	0.004	0.025	–0.008	–0.015
	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.028)
N	1022	810	816	1022	1022	810
Panel B: Judge, 1964-1990						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.039**	0.039**	0.039**	0.038**	0.039**	0.038**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Black Share, 1960	0.000	–0.000	–0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	831	619	625	831	831	619
Panel C: Sheriff, 1964-2024						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.540**	0.453**	0.425*	0.631**	0.558**	0.550**
	(0.155)	(0.163)	(0.170)	(0.186)	(0.161)	(0.202)
Black Share, 1960	0.401**	0.482**	0.482**	0.361**	0.393**	0.450**
	(0.095)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.100)	(0.089)	(0.122)
N	1022	810	816	1022	1022	810
Panel D: Judge, 1964-2024						
Black Share, 1960 X VRA	0.123**	0.121**	0.115**	0.133**	0.120**	0.137**
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.042)	(0.030)	(0.045)
Black Share, 1960	0.003	$0.002^{\dagger}$	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.001)
N	831	619	625	831	831	619

Notes: Using data on Black and white registration from Williams (2022), and on Black politicians from Logan (2020), the table replicates the long difference model in equation (2) including the interaction of the coverage (VRA) dummy with: i) the Black registration rate in 1867 in column (2); ii) the white registration rate in 1867 in column (3); iii) a dummy variable equal to 1 for the counties with at least one Black politician between 1865 and 1880 in column (4); iv) the share of Black politicians between 1865 and 1880, relative to 1900 Black population, in column (5); v) all interactions simultaneously in column (6). The dependent variable is the 1964-1990 change in sheriffs (Panel A) and judges (Panel B), and the 1964-2024 change in sheriffs (Panel C) and judges (Panel D). All regressions include state dummies, the 1960 Black population share, and its interaction with the coverage (VRA) dummy. Robust standard errors in parenthesis are adjusted for clustering by judicial divisions.
$\dagger$ $p < .10$; $*$ $p < .05$; $**$ $p < .01$.