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## De Jure and De Facto Determinants of Power: Evidence from Mississippi

by Graziella Bertocchi, Arcangelo Dimico  
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### Abstract:

We evaluate the empirical relevance of de facto vs. de jure determinants of political power in the U.S. South between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. We apply a variety of estimation techniques to a previously unexploited dataset on voter registration by race covering the counties of Mississippi in 1896, shortly after the introduction of the 1890 voting restrictions encoded in the state constitution. Our results indicate that de jure voting restrictions reduce black registration but that black disfranchisement starts well before 1890 and is more intense where a black majority represents a threat to the de facto power of white elites. Moreover, the effect of race becomes stronger after 1890 suggesting that the de jure barriers may have served the purpose of institutionalizing a de facto condition of disfranchisement.

**Text:** See [Discussion Paper No. 6741](#)



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