



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS

## MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTATION

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Donation-Based Ideal Points

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Jones Laboratory, Room 304

### ABSTRACT

Ideal point models were widely used for quantifying lawmakers' ideology or political positions from records of their behaviors, including votes and public speech. In this thesis, we present the Donation-Based Ideal Point Model (DBIP), an unsupervised probabilistic topic model that evaluates the political positions of politicians by examining the political donations they receive from various organizations and individuals. Although the DBIP does not consider voting records or political affiliations, it effectively separates lawmakers by party in a comprehensible manner. Furthermore, the model provides an insightful estimation of donors' political positions, even in the absence of their voting records or public political speeches. We use it to study Synthetic sample data and data from Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME): Public version 2.0.