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The politics and economics of pork barrel spending: The case of federal financing of water resources development

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Abstract

This paper empirically investigates the economic and political factors that have influenced annual Corps of Engineers water resource spending. Despite the common view that “pork barrel” spending is economically unjustified and purely politically motivated, economic factors have been important in determining water resource spending. From 1865–1920, economic development and industrialization increase spending, and from 1921–1988, spending appears to be counter-cyclical. There is also evidence that majority parties control spending levels in the post-Civil war period, while in recent times, legislators act under a norm of “constrained universalism” and are influenced by the costs to their constituents of increased spending.



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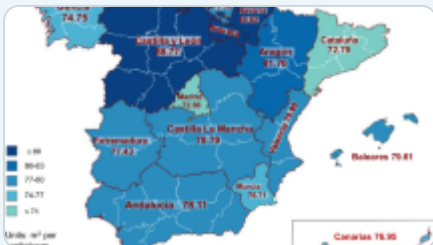
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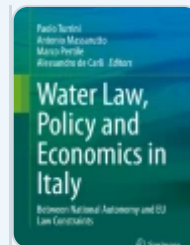
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