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Nicolas Gavaille\*

## Abstract

This paper studies the characteristics of the ghost deputies of the French National Assembly, i.e. deputies who do not have any official recorded activity over a whole year. Using a rich dataset providing various information about all deputies from 1959 to 2012, the results indicate that the typical ghost deputy is an old man with a low level of schooling, member of a large party which does not support the government and who is elected in jurisdiction with a low level of political competition. However, personal characteristics are less and less correlated with performance over the years. Finally, ghost deputies face more difficulties to achieve reelection, but are penalized only at the first round, voters exclusively considering national factors at the second round.

**Keywords:** Bad politicians, Legislative activity, French politicians, Legislative elections, Vote-Popularity function

**JEL:** D72, J45

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