

“Governors Without Borders”

How U.S. Governors Extend Their Political Agenda Across States.

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Abstract

Governors have a central place in the U.S. democracy. This thesis explores how conservative governors use political power, and how they reach other states with their political agenda. Both formal and informal aspects of gubernatorial power play important roles in this process. In-depth studies of Governors Mitt Romney's health reform and Arnold Schwarzenegger's approach to environmental issues have helped to understand how these political areas are diffused from one state to another, and sometimes even to the federal government. The theory chapter includes political diffusion, executive orders, policy- and budget games, political motivation, and the concept of framing. Additionally, political affiliation and degree of idealism are important for the political diffusion's effect. The results of this study indicate that political diffusion from moderate Republicans is more effective in spreading policies than idealistic experiments and executive orders.

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1.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine how U.S. governors can use political power to influence the policies in other states than the state they are elected to lead. The gubernatorial office possesses various means by which policy can be influenced, altered, and confirmed. Additionally, the National Governors Association (NGA), and other governor's associations, play important parts in that work, hence political diffusion through the NGA is also researched. The main questions to be answered are: How do governors work to influence other states' healthcare and environmental policies? What measures do they use in this work, and what political power is exercised? Along these questions, another question arises: What are the threats governors face accompanying this work? These questions include, but are not limited to, research on the collaboration through the NGA and their influence on health care and environment in different states, and some of the political mechanisms used independently by the governor.

In the examination of gubernatorial powers to influence other regions with their policy, is also a review of some of the obstacles to reach the same goal. Particularly one disincentive for political diffusion across states is the harsh fronts and political environment between the parties. In contemporary American politics, asymmetric polarization has occurred as some Republicans have moved further right than Democrats have moved left (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). Polarization and the hard ideological borders are two elements that limit the governors' influence outside of their jurisdiction. This will be examined further down in the paper. This is also significant for the contemporary culture in the U.S., where the ideological gap between conservatives and liberals has become harder to overcome. This is in turn reflected in the U.S. Congress where collaboration across the aisle is difficult on certain issues. This is shown in the discussion of Medicaid below.

In addition to this, two governors and their work are examined closer to the relevant topic to serve as examples and case studies. Most prominently are Mitt Romney and his health reform in Massachusetts and Arnold Schwarzenegger's environmental policy in California. These two cases are relevant because the reforms are both implemented by Republicans, but the governors are considered to be moderates or centrists in their policies. Nevertheless, they also have had a significant impact beyond their states' borders.

This makes the study of modern conservative governors interesting in both healthcare and environmental policies. It is interesting to note a difference in these issues regarding popular support. Many Republican states, so-called red states, reject Medicaid, but they are supportive of certain actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. One of the questions that will be answered is why this is the case. The Great Kansas Experiment by Gov. Sam Brownback (2011-2018) exemplifies the idealistic barriers to healthcare reform. This experiment was Brownback's attempt to make "a reputation as a conservative leader" (Smith et al., 2019, p. 67). The aim of the experiment was to cut taxes and deregulate the state to make the government smaller. This was viewed by many critics as a hard right-wing Libertarian turn. Many feared he would turn on social issues as well (Smith et al., 2019). His experiment serves as an example of how idealistic tunnel vision prevents political diffusion. More information about this is presented later.

Other questions that are answered are: What kind of governors work in the NGA? Are there any indicators that certain governors refrain from working intergovernmental? What patterns are found among governors concerning intergovernmental work on health care and environmental issues? Are governors responsible for any policy diffusion across states on these topics? Do moderate Republicans have more political momentum than idealistic Republicans?

1.1 Limitations of the Thesis

Several issues are suitable for this study, but it is limited to the two political areas of health care and the environment. This makes it possible to do an in-depth study of two issues, rather than a broad and superficial study of many issues. That is the main reason for choosing healthcare and environmental policy. Furthermore, these issues are intertwined because much pollution leads to more healthcare spendings because of the damaging effects it has on people's health. Additionally, these issues are two controversial topics in U.S. politics. The healthcare chapter discusses the mechanisms used to enforce universal health care in the states. The environmental chapter starts generally but is then narrowed down to the adoption of alternative- and electric vehicles. This is a fairly new and interesting turn in U.S. state's environmental policies.

The polarization between Democrats and Republicans has increased since the late 1990s, primarily because of a rightwing turn in the Republican Party (Dimock et al., 2015). For instance, healthcare reforms that would make health services more available for less affluent people, such as the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare or ACA), do not have much support among Republicans. This would be one way of expanding the social safety net in the United States, but it is viewed by conservatives as a threat to state autonomy. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey, 66% of Republicans believe that poor people have easy lives because they can live off of governmental welfare, while 28% of Democrats believe the same (Dimock et al., 2015).

On environmental issues, the gap has also widened, where 59% of Republicans claim environmentally friendly measures hurt the economy and job availability (Dimock et al., 2015). This gives an impression of the overarching political environment the governors of the various states are maneuvering through. There are 55 governors, U.S. territories and commonwealths included, and 83 000 local governments (Mauk et al., 2022; National Governors Association, 2022a). The number of governors is thusly small compared to all the inferior levels of government. Governors are also held accountable by millions of voters. They need to make many considerations when they execute power.

Much political power is delegated to the lower levels of government. These local governments are established, in the first place, by the state government. For instance, air or water pollution will impact neighboring states if it is not dealt with properly. The state responsible for damages caused by global warming is not necessarily the same state that is impaired by it (Urpelainen, 2009). Thus, this is relevant from an intergovernmental perspective. Many of the climate activists and organizations are creating awareness of the fact that environmental issues cannot be solved merely by local initiatives. This has resulted in intergovernmental action against climate change, as Gov. Schwarzenegger has worked for. This is exemplified below.

Both environmental issues and healthcare reforms are important issues concerning society continuously. These topics are approached differently in different states and based on the leaders' political affiliations. That increases the difficulty for governors to maneuver through this political landscape and to execute adequate governance over the people they are elected to serve. On health reform, for instance, it is a pattern among predominantly conservative

southern states to refuse adoption and implementation of the Medicaid expansion, thus indicating a geographical and ideological barrier between these states, and other states (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2023). The environment concerns all states to a certain extent. Air pollution is spreading regardless of political affiliation and geography. This is why governors must implement intergovernmental measures for health care and the environment.

The examination of Medicaid expansion is a little longer than the examination of electric vehicles. That is mostly due to the recency of the nationwide adoption of electric vehicles. It has been a long tradition in the Republican party to deny anthropomorphic causes for climate change and sometimes work against environmentally friendly measures because of the economic cost (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). This is probably some of the reasons why the investment in green infrastructure has been delayed. Additionally, as shown later in the thesis, President Joe Biden's subsidization for electric vehicles, incentivizes even the red states to create a zero-emission car park.

One relevant example that will be further elaborated on below is political diffusion. Political diffusion is when state initiatives are executed, and other states follow with similar policy (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Successful policies within a state will be diffused to other states and adopted and adjusted to fit their needs. This can also apply to federal policies as Obamacare has some inspiration from the Act Providing Access to Affordable, Quality, and Accountable Health Care (from now: Romneycare) that Mitt Romney signed into law as a healthcare reform from when he served as governor of Massachusetts (Saper, 2014). This is also an important reason why health care is a suitable topic for this thesis. Because successful policies in areas of broad national interest provide opportunities for political advancement for state politicians. Some years after Romney introduced his healthcare reform in Massachusetts, he tried to become the next U.S. president.

Another example of how governors can impact other states is by advancing in the political system and achieving federal offices, of which Rep. Bobby Jindal in the U.S. House of Representatives and Sen. Mitt Romney in the U.S. Senate are examples. There are numerous examples of previous governors that have served as presidents of the United States, for instance, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. Bill Clinton has also been Chair of the NGA and used his term here to focus on welfare politics, which was also important in his presidency (National Governors Association, 2023c).

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The theoretical framework is presented before the case studies to show the limitations of the thesis. This includes an introduction to the role of the governors in the American democracy and what type of power they have within their states. This will give a point of departure to identify the methods they use to bring their political agenda into other states. Also, a presentation of the NGA is necessary to see how governors are organized nationally. Especially the NGA Center for Best Practices is important because this is one of the ways governors can diffuse their policies into other states, even though it is indirect.

Political diffusion is one of the essential methods governors use to extend their influence onto other jurisdictions. Thus, a more thorough investigation of the theory in this field is introduced below. The most important of these are learning and economic competition. Those mechanisms are presented in more detail and with proper examples to show better how they work and how states assess measures related to them. Other means governors can use are those legally delegated to them through state constitutions, political framing of legislation, and the motivations for their candidacy.

The chapter on health reform, and its inspiration for implementing it, is divided into several parts. Firstly, the chapter presents President Clinton's attempt at a health reform. This reform is introduced to show how a former governor climbed the political ladder to try and change the nation's health policies. He was also chair in the NGA from 1986-1987 and made his Chair's initiative on welfare politics, an area where he, as president, was more successful than health care (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019; National Governors Association, 2023c). A presidential and a gubernatorial health reform are two very different areas. Still, the principle of the states as laboratories of democracy, where reforms can be tested, applies in this case. It shows both how it is more effective for states to try reforms first, and it illustrates the resistance many exercises against federal initiatives if they are forced upon them.

Following President Clinton's health reform, a thorough examination of Governor Romney's health reform is presented where possible elements of political diffusion are identified. Other sources encouraging states to learn from Romneycare are scrutinized to show where political diffusion occurs and emphasize significant similarities with ACA's Medicaid expansion. Medicaid expansion and Romneycare share many features, and the hypothesis is that Obama

was inspired by the experiment Romney started in Massachusetts. A presentation and discussion of Medicaid expansion follow, and a look at how Republican governors have slightly changed their attitude towards ACA from 2012-2018. A majority of Republicans were critical but have become more open towards adopting the program (Singer & Rozier, 2020).

After the case study of healthcare reform and a discussion on this topic, the environmental issues are presented; especially examining the achievements of Gov. Schwarzenegger in California. After a general presentation of these, a closer study of measures connected to alternative and electric vehicles is looked at. California was chosen because of its long history as a green state and many environmentally engaged residents (USC Schwarzenegger Institute, n.d.). The hypothesis here is also that other states and the federal government have adopted California's green infrastructure laws and incentives.

1.3 Methodology and Source Material

This thesis is mainly built as an analysis of political tools, powers, and challenges governors have as executive leaders of autonomous states. The analysis is mainly based on the source material mentioned in the following paragraphs. The theory in this thesis is used as a framework to limit the number of means of governance to a comprehensible size. The different aspects of gubernatorial governance that are studied are chosen because of their impact and relevance in connection to the research questions. Political diffusion, for example, is a prevalent way to govern in another jurisdiction. Despite being a tool that mostly indirectly impacts intergovernmental policy, it is powerful in this manner when performed right. The barrier of partisanship is chosen because of the significant challenge it imposes in intergovernmental collaboration, especially when it includes bipartisan work as well. This challenge is also substantial within different states, as the example of Medicaid expansion in Virginia shows later (Laris & Vozzella, 2014; Moen, 2014).

Research on political power and the means available for U.S. governors are the main components of this thesis. The theoretical framework is based on research on different aspects of political and gubernatorial power in the U.S. Definitions and categorizations of these tools are based on the same research to identify easier what elements come to play in different situations. The governor's various political- and budgetary tools from Kousser &

Phillips (2012), for instance, is central in establishing what mechanisms governors can use in negotiations with state legislatures, including the veto power with its regional variations, within their own states. Singer & Rozier (2020) have interesting results from a study on framing of Medicaid expansion policy, which is more thoroughly presented below. Lastly, the definition and categorization of political diffusion by Shipan & Volden (2008) is a very useful tool in examining the effects of governors' policies on health care and environmental issues. The categories mentioned in that study are also used in this thesis. Political motivation can also be a factor, and it is mentioned briefly below and rests on the results from Fredriksson (2011).

Statements and the autobiographies by Govs. Romney (2010) and Schwarzenegger (2012) have also been used to show their view on the issues they faced. The autobiographies are helpful in establishing what the intentions of their initiatives were. It additionally gives insight to how they worked with policies close to their heart without breaking party lines too hard. Romney was more loyal to the conservative principles than Schwarzenegger was. However, both of them managed to collaborate across the aisle and export their policies, in some form, to other states, and even other countries.

There is scarcely any modern literature available on the NGA and its role in directly influencing state policies, which makes it more interesting and challenging to research. Herian (2011) has written a book on how the NGA and contemporary governorship influence the federal government on policy issues. This thesis builds on much of the same theory. Herian's theoretical framework is based on earlier research on the topic and includes many studies on governors and intergovernmental management. It is a helpful approach to this thesis. Besides, Herian (2011) is more updated than much of the research on the field. It makes a more relevant framework and uses more accurate definitions than older studies, which are helpful but inadequate. Also, the NGA's web page and the NGA Center for Best Practices (from now: NGA Center) contain much helpful information and resources for further reading. Some of these are being used further down in this thesis.

The way governors influence other states directly from one state to another state, or through the NGA, and the threats they face, are primarily at focus. Thus, expanding the field of research not only to cover the lobbying effect NGA has on the federal government, as Herian (2011) is doing, but also how individual governors, or the NGA, lobby towards other states.

The lobbying by the NGA on the federal level, is not dealt with in this thesis, but Herian (2011) contains insight on that topic for further reading. The research in this thesis is mainly limited to conservative governors but takes some examples from, and comparisons with, Democratic governors where it is appropriate. How individual governors can influence federal policy is still interesting, however, because this will necessarily have consequences for other states. Because the governors of each state are responsible for the federal funds a state receives, they can have a strong influence on federal policies.

2.0 Theory

2.1 What Is Political Power?

Political power is of great impact, and this is an important term in this paper. The definition of power is having the ability to make others do something that they otherwise may not do. Features in this definition include authority and persuasion, however, it is not limited to those (Mueller, 1987). Political power can be both formal and informal. The formal power is mechanisms attached to the office and founded in each state's laws. Informal power is other means of which the governor can use to achieve his or her goals. For instance, the governor can endorse a particular candidate for state legislator. If the governor is popular enough, the candidate will benefit from this endorsement in the campaign. If elected, the legislator must probably do something in return, like propose legislation that the governor wants (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). An example of formal power is the veto that most states provide for the governor. Informal power is, for example, when Gov. Abbott in Texas obtains a loyal legislative branch that follows his lead, which is explained more in detail later (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022b).

2.2 The Governor's Place in the American Democracy

The governors work on the border between federal and local politics. They are the chief executives of the states in which they are elected, while they are also subordinate to federal authority. The local governments mentioned above, do not have any power that is not delegated by the state's legislators and executives. In a state, the governors have similar duties to the president. However, they enjoy more control over the state budget than the president does, and many of them have the line-item veto, which is explained below (Mauk et al., 2022).

The president, au contraire, possesses four advantages the governors lack. The first is time to make appointments and meetings. Secondly, states usually have elections for several public positions, hence the governors are forced to work with the people chosen by the residents, while presidents can pick their own secretaries and department heads (Mauk et al., 2022). Five states have an election only for governor and lieutenant governor, and they can pick the rest of the cabinet. The most extreme case of a voter-based governor's administration is in North Dakota, where fourteen officials are elected (Ferguson & Bowling, 2008).

Thirdly, the voters can bypass the executive branch in lawmaking processes by taking the proposal directly to the legislature or demand a referendum. Governors are then left with less control over new laws. Another way governors are bypassed in state legislation is the organizing of special district governments. These authorities aim to solve specific problems, but can develop into powerful regional offices over time (Mauk et al., 2022). The special districts are founded especially on issues that cross state borders to make a more sustainable solution to them. State legislatures are thus not stealing the power from governors, but they are trying to find more efficient ways of dealing with the problems (Mauk et al., 2022).

2.3 The Powers of an American Governor

In this section, the powers of American Governors within their states are presented. It is useful to know how governors work within states in order to examine how they work intergovernmentally. Specifically, the negotiations with the state legislature and work connected to the lower local governments and elected officials on the respective levels. The governors are elected to be the executive power of a state. As for U.S. presidents, the governors do not have any legislative powers in the process of making laws. Instead, the governor's role is to either affirm a law by signing it, or veto the law (Kousser & Phillips, 2012).

Governors are the states' managers. They are responsible for executing laws that the legislators write and approve, or stop them, and they are developing the states in the political performance (National Governors Association, 2023d). They are not legislators and do not possess the authority to write or present new laws due to the balance of powers in the USA. They can, however, write executive orders, which are another important tool of executive

governance (National Governors Association, 2023d). It is the governors that are blamed if a state fails or receive credit when a state succeeds. Since governors are so visible in a state's political affairs, they have to apply various measures to achieve political victories in their states. There are two areas where governors can use power to convince the legislature of their states to help pass desirable policies for themselves. This is through policy negotiations and budgetary processes (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). In the following paragraphs, these are presented through the research of Kousser & Phillips (2012), and the strengths and weaknesses of each process are discussed.

2.3.1 Veto Power

The governor's veto power varies from state to state. In some states, the governor can merely veto the whole bill, while in 44 states, the governors have a line-item veto that allows them to reduce or cancel expenditures on appropriation bills. Wisconsin has a very specific veto power the governor can use in so much detail that letters and single digits can be altered or removed from the bill (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). The veto power gives the governors some leverage because it can be used to "buy" legislation. If a legislator writes and passes a law that supports the governor's agenda, then the governor can sign into law a bill that the legislator wants in return (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). The line-item veto is an excellent tool to prevent deadlocks when legislators and governors disagree because some of the legislation can be approved.

The primary target for the legislative branch is to pass laws, so if the governor and legislature disagree too much, the state will go into a deadlock, and nothing will be done. The veto can be overridden, so the governor must carefully exercise this. If the governor's approval ratings are high, the threats of vetoing legislation are more credible because he or she can handle the backlash. (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). The approval ratings are also crucial for the legislators because working together with popular governors increases the chances of reelection or other offices. Furthermore, state bureaucratic administrations pay more attention to, and work closer with, gubernatorial administrations with high approval ratings (Dometrius, 2002).

2.3.2 The Policy Process

The policy process, or "policy game," as Kousser & Phillips (2012, p. 33) call it, builds on Romer & Rosenthal's (1978) theory: The setter model (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). The

essence of the setter model is how two parts negotiate when only one of them can set the terms for a deal and the other can only reject or accept it. Governors can only veto or sign into law the bills authored by the legislators. The legislators are setting the terms, and governors need to influence this before the legislation reaches their desks to gain political victories.

Each year, the governors give a State of the State address. This speech is similar to the State of the Union address the president gives, and draws much attention from the media, and the constituency, in the respective states (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). This is one way the governors deliver their agenda to the state. If the address is well formulated and received, the legislature can experience pressure to write laws favoring the governor's wishes. If the governor has many like-minded legislators in office, the agenda is easier to complete than if the opposite is the case.

Framing is another way governors can shape policy. This is the method politicians, in general, use to shape how information about a specific policy is conveyed to the audience. It is a way governors can analyze the public discourse and see how controversial topics are understood (Singer & Rozier, 2020). Framing can occur in various arenas, but the State of the State addresses are well suited for this purpose, for example, the framing of Medicaid expansion in 2017 by former Michigan Gov. Snyder (2011-2019). This method will be examined closer below and is one important tool that governors have used in refraining from the adoption of the Medicaid Expansion.

2.3.3 Executive Orders

Executive orders are one of the formal powers the governors possess. They are used to make and implement laws in their states and might compensate for the voter-based election of state heads. This is also a way of forming laws and interpretations of them, without negotiations with the legislators. The legislators do have the power to overturn executive orders, but the governor can veto the legislative decision in return (Ferguson & Bowling, 2008). If they do not reach an agreement, they will end up in a deadlock, and since many state legislators have other duties to attend to, the governors are more likely to win long-term deadlocks.

The access to executive orders, and their foundation for this mandate, varies from one state to another. Some states imply this authority in practice, while others explicitly authorize governors with this power through their constitutions. However, some states have strict rules on what situations in which these kinds of orders are permissible, for instance, in response to federal programs or during some disasters (Ferguson & Bowling, 2008). Nevertheless, it is a common tool used by governors, also in areas of substantial political nature, like redirecting money or directing executive actions (Ferguson & Bowling, 2008). This practice is, in some cases, controversial and can be viewed as undemocratic. Moreover, it makes states unpredictable and unreliable, just as the U.S. has been on global climate efforts as Democrats and Republicans are undoing each other's decisions (Wolf, 2021).

2.3.4 The Budgetary Process

Contrary to the policy-making process, the budgetary process leaves more room for the executive branch to accomplish important victories within the state. This is partly due to the deadline for the affirmation of state budgets and partly because governors have more time to leave the negotiations on hold (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). The governors are full-time government employees and receive their salaries from their position. The state legislators are elected either into a Citizen legislature or professional legislature, depending on the state in which they are elected. In the latter case, the legislature can survey state affairs and does not need to rely as much on the governor postponing negotiations as the first. They can also bargain for a longer period of time than the Citizen legislature because then the legislators normally do not reside in the capital and earn a living elsewhere while serving the public (Dometrius, 2002).

2.4 The NGA

The National Governors Association (from now: NGA) is an intergovernmental organization the governors use to influence policy, and to participate with, in the federal arena. The NGA was founded in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt because he wanted the governors' opinion on environmental policy (Herian, 2011). This historical background makes the NGA even more relevant in studying its impact on states' environmental measures. Today, it has evolved into a bipartisan project where governors can convene and find common ground on various issues that are urgent for all the states, territories, and commonwealths in the U.S. A reform in the organization ensured its position as an effective lobbying group after the

introduction of the New Deal programs (Herian, 2011). They have offices to help new governors to start their work, as well as offices to support the staffs of the different gubernatorial administrations (National Governors Association, 2022a).

The Executive Committee is the annually elected, leading body of the NGA. It comprises nine members, with the Chair and Vice Chair serving as leaders (National Governors Association, 2022b). As Chair and Vice Chair, one has a special responsibility to lead the organization. Every newly elected Chair also has the opportunity to make the agenda of the NGA by specifically focusing on one important issue; this is called the “Chair’s initiative.” For instance, New Jersey Gov. and current NGA Chair Phil Murphey (2018-) presented his Chair’s initiative called “Strengthening Youth Mental Health,” where he calls for all states to work together to achieve better understanding and help for those suffering from mental illness (National Governors Association, 2023a). This sets the agenda for this chair’s main political concern. The organization is still working on other issues, but it puts a particular focus on one issue close to the chair’s heart.

The position of NGA Chair seems to draw many candidates that are pragmatic and focused on bipartisan policy. Which is consistent with the interest of the organization. Highly idealistic and partisan politicians would not attain a majority of votes in this organization. The members are working together on issues, trying to find common ground, and working with colleagues in Congress. This is opposed to many of the leaders of the Republican Governors Association (from now: RGA) or the Democratic Governors Association (from now: DGA), that are more partisan in nature (Jacobson, 2014). These organizations are dedicated to the election and reelection of their party’s candidates. An exception from the rule must be Gov. Phil Murphey, who serves both as NGA Chair and DGA Chair.

Some politicians have been accused of using these organizations as tools to achieve higher offices in the federal government. One recent example is Louisiana’s former governor, Bobby Jindal (2008-2016). He was already known through his high-profile jobs but accomplished better political experience in the NGA and enhanced his political and social capital for future national jobs (Jacobson, 2014). He did serve in the House of Representatives first and then ran for governor in Louisiana to win in 2007. Jindal’s past includes bipartisan work, for instance, he served as executive director of the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare in 1988. He tried to win the gubernatorial

bid in 2003 but lost. In 2015, he entered the race to become the GOP's presidential candidate but lost to Donald Trump (History, n.d.).

The NGA is only one of several gubernatorial organizations, and many of the governors are also members of either the Western Governors' Association, Coalition of Northeastern Governors, Midwestern Governors Association, and the highly partisan RGA and DGA. Although, the three first-mentioned, organizations are similar in objective to the NGA, they are regionally limited but are promoting bipartisan work that will lift the regions' interests, which they represent (Coalition of Northeastern Governors, 2022; Midwestern Governors Association, n.d.; Western Governors' Association, 2022). The RGA and the DGA work mainly with electing, re-electing, or supporting governors and gubernatorial candidates of the appropriate party (Democratic Governors Association, 2022; Ducey & Ricketts, 2022).

The NGA is considered to be a public interest group. The definition of a public interest group entails the fulfillment of certain criteria. There are different types of interest groups, but this thesis uses the definition of Herian (2011) and refers mainly to governmental lobbying organizations. The objective of public interest groups is mainly what characterizes them, because they aim for policies that benefit themselves as well as their constituents (Herian, 2011). The policies lobbied for are beneficial to the public. In the following, the most important characteristics of the NGA as a public interest group are commented on. This gives an impression of how the organization works and what separates them from other interest groups.

The governors in the NGA have two advantages in the factor of political access. Public interest groups should have access to the policymaking processes to be able to influence the outcome. The first advantage of the NGA is that the gubernatorial office has high prestige in the U.S., and the governors are acquainted with political mechanisms and presumably law-making in their own states. Furthermore, many members of Congress are former governors and serve the same constituencies as the current governor, thus, the negotiations can benefit both actors in some instances (Herian, 2011). This strengthens the NGA's position in policymaking because, in contemporary America, no single group achieves its goal without being part of a network (Berry, 1993). A network where Congressional politicians and governors work together is a strong union if they are on the same terms and work towards the same goals.

The lobbying techniques of the NGA are connected to the access they have to law-making processes. The most notable method the NGA uses in Washington D.C. is direct lobbying where they present arguments directly to the lawmakers, and they attend hearings to give their opinion there (Herian, 2011). This method is known as a constrictive form of lobbying, and is also common among other interest groups in the U.S. With this approach, which uses mechanisms in the American democracy, the groups are able to raise funds from businesses and foundations, for instance, that share the same objective (Berry, 1993). Here too, the governors have the advantage of being government employees, knowing the system, and having status as part of executing legislation (Herian, 2011). The members of a public interest group are of significance, and the NGA has many prominent members because it consists of governors and experts. This gives them a “natural” upper hand in policymaking. They are noticed among many leading people in the country attending their meetings – among others; members of Congress and the U.S. President (Herian, 2011).

The shadow side of the membership base of the NGA is the partisan issues facing the members when they assemble. The different governors have different agendas in their respective states, and for the NGA to function as a bipartisan project, they must find common ground despite their differences. Typically, the NGA needs broad consensus before taking a stance, for instance, as they did in collaboration with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators in objecting to the short amount of time states were given to adapt to the Real ID Act (Belluck, 2006). This form of networking with other interest groups strengthens the group's credibility and has a more powerful impact on the federal legislature. However, the NGA do sometimes experience partisan division like when they wanted to implement Medicaid in the states (Herian, 2011).

The Real ID Act was a measure trying to make the driver's licenses and ID cards in the U.S. more reliable. The law was passed in 2005 and is the result of an increasing need for security after the terror attack on September 11th, 2001. The states have to meet the federal standard of issuance and production of this identification because this is what will be needed to access federal buildings, commercial flights, or nuclear plants, for instance (Krajewska, 2020). The Department of Homeland Security (from now: DHS) was responsible for the plan and worked tightly with the states, however, they did not work as closely with the governors and state

legislatures, by whom they were harshly criticized. They circumvented them and worked with the states' Departments of Motor Vehicles (from now: DMV).

The then South Carolina Republican Gov. Mark Sanford (2003-2011) accused the Real ID Act of being an “unfunded mandate” where the federal government regulated, and the states paid the price (Krajewska, 2020, p. 405). Its enforcement deadline has been extended several times and is now due on May 7th, 2025. The NGA is not against the law's aim, and they are supportive of the intentions behind it (National Governors Association, 2022c). Yet, governors have been critical of the short amount of time that initially was given for the enforcement of it, and the unfunded mandates that followed. This is a good example of how the governors united in the NGA and cooperated to work against an unwanted law.

When 26 states, many of which were Republican-led, numerous individuals and the National Federation of Independent Businesses sued Obamacare, a clear division between the Republican red states and the Democratic blue states became apparent. A division like this becomes a challenge for bipartisan projects, especially for the NGA, where healthcare policies are part of their work. California and Democrat-led states supported the law, as well did the U.S. Congress. The Supreme Court ruled, in the majority opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts, that the *National Federation of Independent Businesses et al. v. Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services et al.* in 2012, could be standing and was constitutional (Chief Justice John Roberts, 2012; Vogue & Duster, 2011). An example like this shows the difficulties of uniting the governors on controversial issues. This will be discussed further down in the paper. There are still a handful of states that have not adopted the Medicaid expansion.

2.4.1 NGA Center of Best Practices

The NGA Center is the branch of the NGA that helps new governors enter the office and start working in their states. It has an advisory function for governors and their policy staff when facing policy challenges in states under their jurisdiction. The NGA Center is also analyzing situations to prepare governors for issues they might face, and help them stay ahead of problems (National Governors Association, 2022b). The NGA Center is a way governors can diffuse policies because they obtain documents and results on successful policies in other states and share this with other governors (Herian, 2011).

A recent example of works of the NGA Center is the “toolkit” that provides governors with a guide to implement or transform Medicaid in their states, called *The Future of Medicaid Transformation: A Practical Guide for States*. This work is helpful for state executives and gives an overview of processes and problems that have to be worked with to transform the healthcare system in a state (Tewarson et al., 2016). The toolkit is a good example of how the NGA Center works, where they observe different states, and collect data, to give empirically-based advice to other states. It also shows that learning is a better political diffusion mechanism than imitating. Because states need to adapt the reform to meet their needs and capacity.

The Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion entails that states participating in the program provide health insurance for everyone under 65 years, with a few exceptions. Furthermore, those eligible for Medicaid are entitled to receive a package that covers essential health benefits (Musumeci, 2012). The essential health benefits are ten categories specified in the ACA and include, for example, doctor’s services, prescription drugs, and pregnancy-related consultations. States receive federal funds that cover 100% of Medicaid costs the first three years of the implementation and 90% of the cost permanently after this, (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020).

2.5 Political Diffusion

Political diffusion is a way of spreading policies to other jurisdictions, and it can transpire intentionally or unintentionally. Policy diffusion is defined as pressure to implement policies that comes from outside the polity, from one government to another. Thus, a policy from local interest groups or lobbyists from within the polity is not political diffusion in this context (Shipan & Volden, 2008). It can be a good way of sharing successful policies with other states and local governments as long as it is done right. If one simply copies the policy of a government and writes it into law without any adjustments to meet local needs, the policy is at a high risk of failing. This is referred to as the diffusion mechanism of imitation, and focuses on the actor rather than the policy (Shipan & Volden, 2008).

If a policy is successful in one state, other states are more likely to adopt that policy, and adjust it to their own states. For instance, the success of health insurance coverage in Massachusetts after Romneycare was implemented, could be one of the factors that made

other states adopt Medicaid to their states and why Obamacare was signed into law (Saper, 2014). This mechanism is called learning because it focuses on the policy; whether it were successful, and what made it so. Individual states work in this way as laboratories for democratic development (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Other states, and the federal government, can observe the development within states when considering new policies.

The learning aspect of political diffusion is important and one of the main drivers for policy adoption, because it is easier to learn from a policy that already has been tried than starting from scratch. Together with learning, economic competition makes a decisive factor in political diffusion. Economic competition is considered by the governments that assess whether they should implement a new policy, this is especially seen in healthcare and welfare politics because states fear to become “welfare magnets” (Shipan & Volden, 2008).

Wisconsin was considered a welfare magnet before Gov. Thompson (1987-2001), and previously chair of the NGA, started his W2 welfare reform in the state. Before this reform, businesses moved out of state while people receiving welfare increased. Gov. Thompson’s reform required education and work for welfare recipients (Thompson & Bennett, 1997). He forced the trend in the other direction.

States that benefit from a policy adoption based on what neighboring states are doing, are using the economic competition mechanism actively. This could be the case when all the governors have an increased investment in electric vehicles, charging stations, and battery factories. In 2022, about half of the U.S. Governors included the need for more electric and alternative vehicles in their State of the State addresses. In Alabama, for instance, they are building a battery factory that Gov. Kay Ivey (2017-) claims the whole nation will come to for the necessary resources they will produce (Dougherty & Grimshaw, 2022).

Additionally, states receive about 80% of federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to incentivize greener infrastructure. Hence, the adoption of policies is carefully considered in light of political and economic losses and gains. This explains the primary function behind the economic competition mechanism. The last mechanism of policy diffusion, as Shipan & Volden (2008) categorizes them, is coercion; however, this mechanism is not prevalent in the U.S. but can be relevant in some cases. This should be scrutinized more in another paper about Congress’ power over the states (Shipan & Volden,

2008). An example of an attempt at coercion is the mandatory Medicaid expansion the Obama administration wanted before the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.

Shipan & Volden (2008) tested these diffusion mechanisms on anti-smoking laws in different cities within different states and based one hypothesis on each of the mechanisms. The hypothesis of the learning mechanism was that a city was more likely to adopt a policy if it was successful in other cities. The economic competition hypothesis anticipated a decrease in the chance of adopting a policy if the outflow created negative economic consequences for one's own city, and an increase in chance if the opposite were the case. These hypotheses were confirmed through empirical data. The odds of a city adopting anti-smoking laws were at 49% if the law proved successful in another city. These hypotheses are transferable to apply to state-level policies. They can be found, for instance, in the adoption of electric vehicles in California, and other states, or the adoption of the Medicaid expansion.

The hypothesis of economic competition proved strong as well. When cities within ten miles did not have anti-smoking laws, the city would not implement them either because of the negative consequences of outflow (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Though this study was done on cities, the theory is applicable to state-level policies, and for this thesis the learning- and economic competition mechanisms are the most relevant because this is what a governor may take credit for. Additionally, the resistance conservative governors made against the coercive expansion of Medicaid is also a mechanism of political diffusion, only reversed in accomplishment. The learning mechanism described in Shipan & Volden (2008) is closely linked to the NGA Center's policies recommended to other states. The NGA Center learns about the elements of a successful policy that made it so and guides other states that are willing to adopt the same policies.

2.6 Political Motivation

Motivation for implementing policies can vary between elected politicians. While voters normally prefer policy-oriented politicians, the politicians usually split into two groups: policy driven, and office driven. The first group works towards implementing their preferred policies and usually sets their political agenda before the election. The latter normally tries to imitate the first group because the people in that group know what the voters prefer. Nevertheless, in office they are implementing policies that will secure reelection rather than

their own personal preference (Fredriksson et al., 2011). This entails good policies. Career politicians are thought of as something bad, maybe in the U.S. especially, but to win reelection, they need to satisfy the voters. This can make the outcome beneficial for all parts. The integrity of the politicians can be questioned but the outcome, most likely, benefits the common good. The lack of integrity is in the literature referred to as lacking “character” as well (Fredriksson et al., 2011).

One example of how governors rule differently based on their chances is the differences between governors that are eligible for reelection and lame duck governors. Lame duck governors, those that face a term limit and cannot run for governor again, have a decrease in environmental spending per capita (Fredriksson et al., 2011). This occurs mainly in the lame duck period. As long as the governor is eligible for reelection, he or she has more to gain on environmentally friendly spending and investment and is therefore statistically more office motivated on these issues preceding the lame duck period (Fredriksson et al., 2011). This serves as only one example, and the study from which the results are taken from is mostly focused on environmental issues, of how governors rule, and their motivation for implementing policies. The principle, the policy driven politicians versus the office driven politicians, is transferable to other issues as well, and some might want to advance from gubernatorial office to federal positions after a lame duck term.

3.0 Health Care

This chapter of the thesis includes a closer examination of health reforms in the U.S. It explains the success of Massachusetts health reform with former Gov. Romney and advances from there to the closely related Obamacare. Obamacare met much resistance from Republican governors, especially in the South. These problems are considered in more detail here. It is also clear that the views on health care vary with the governor's ideological stance. That might be why Mitt Romney is viewed as a moderate Republican, because of his fiscally conservative views, but also because he advocates for a government that takes responsibility for its citizens' well-being, not something a Libertarian would do, as shown below.

3.1 President Clinton's Healthcare Reform Failure

Health care in the U.S. has traditionally been paid for by the consumer. Since the 1930s, many attempts at healthcare reform have taken place and divided the American social service

system into several agents. Today, the healthcare providers are separated into three groups: the government, the private businesses, and charitable foundations or voluntary work (Mauk et al., 2022). During the Clinton Administration, public spending was cut from the budget, and he was criticized for undermining public health care and returning to a more privatized system (Mauk et al., 2022). This may be part of the reason why President Clinton was perceived as fiscally conservative, while on other issues, he was socially liberal.

In 1993, President Clinton released his plan for healthcare reform. At the time, over 30 million Americans were uninsured and 20 million more were only partially insured (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019). A significant number of uninsured Americans have thus been a problem for decades and is one of the reasons why healthcare coverage has been prioritized in liberal healthcare reforms. Included in this plan was managed competition and employer-provided insurance. These are elements that are important in both Romneycare and Obamacare. The unemployed would be covered by the government (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019).

President Clinton failed with his healthcare reform, as opposed to President Obama, who succeeded. One reason might be that he did not engage with the Congress as well as President Obama. President Clinton provided First Lady Hillary Clinton and Ira Magaziner with the task of making the proposal. This avoided many hearings and votes on the outline of the plan (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019). As a former Arkansas governor and NGA Chair, Clinton focused on welfare reform, and he was more successful in this field, than health care. A way he was able to have an impact wider than the Arkansas jurisdiction was by climbing the political ladder to U.S. President. President Clinton is one of many examples of governors that have climbed this ladder.

3.2 Romneycare

Romneycare is the aforementioned healthcare reform carried out in Massachusetts while Mitt Romney served as governor from 2003-2007. At the time when this plan was enforced, many politicians and states observed the attempt at healthcare reform in the U.S. health system. However, it was not a completely new and original policy. The plan was a bipartisan compromise that the state legislature reached, and Republican Governor Romney signed it into law, to meet the people's need for more affordable health care without abolishing the private system (The Lancet, 2007). Romney's plan was originally cheaper than the outcome

and did not include non-vital benefits. Some of the state legislators wanted to include all the state's benefits, and thus negotiated a law that raised the over-all price (Tanner, 2006).

At first, Romney was skeptical about expanding health care to cover everyone. In his gubernatorial campaign, he had promised not to raise taxes but universal healthcare costs billions of dollar (Romney, 2010). After he realized that the federal government already pays for treatment at hospitals, he knew the money could be redirected to individual health insurances, and the cost of coverage would not be as high as anticipated (Romney, 2010).

This plan made health insurance more accessible for less affluent individuals and families. In Massachusetts in 2006, 11.9% of the residents were uninsured. This was less than the national level, at the time, with 17.8%, but it is still relatively high. 40% of Massachusetts' uninsured could afford health care but did not, for various reasons, buy it (Romney, 2010). After the reform started in Massachusetts, the percentage of residents without insurance sank gradually, and in 2014 the estimates of uninsured residents were around two-three percent (Saper, 2014). Later numbers confirm that this has been steady since 2014 (Conway, 2019). The national level of uninsured follows the same pattern as Massachusetts but not to the same extent. By 2021, 10.2% of the national population was uninsured (Tolbert et al., 2022).

Despite being a bipartisan project, it has received critique from the Libertarian right. While Massachusetts is keeping the private institution of healthcare providers and the plan is cheaper than President Clinton's attempt at a national healthcare reform. They are creating an "artificial marketplace" that the government controls (Tanner, 2006, p. 3). Furthermore, the government forces a product on its citizens and threatening them with tax penalties if they do not comply. It will also be challenging to determine how to pursue those that fail to purchase coverage, many of whom may be elderly, homeless, mentally ill, or illegal immigrants. Additionally, the residents that do not file their tax returns are not pursued either because that is where one shows healthcare coverage (Tanner, 2006).

Romneycare is said to be an inspiration to Obamacare, however, Mitt Romney tried to persuade the voters during his presidential campaign, as the Republican candidate, to object to Obamacare. This was because of the clause that required everyone to be insured (Hogberg, 2011). Romney required the same of Massachusetts' residents when he served as governor and implemented Romneycare. The difference is that he argues that the federal government

should not coerce states to impose this mandate but rather choose for themselves (Hogberg, 2011). He is using the argument of state autonomy, which has great momentum among conservatives. Political diffusion through coercion was made with great resistance from the Romney campaign. Nevertheless, the similarities are many, and this has been one way he, as a governor, has influenced policies exceeding his jurisdiction onto a federal level, and into other states as well. Learning is the main mechanism of political diffusion that has an influence on this matter. Medicaid expansion into additional states will be discussed later.

The main concerns of the critics can be summarized as more government-controlled competition, more bureaucracy, and more taxes. This will happen because the Massachusetts Health Care Connector (from now: Connector), the government-controlled market, will be an organ merging the small groups and individual market for health insurance. Furthermore, the subsidizing of individuals that cannot afford insurance is pushing the economic burden on the taxpayers (Tanner, 2006). However, the predictions that the plan would not last were erroneous since it kept the percentage of uncovered very low (Saper, 2014). Moreover, this legislation inspired other states to propose similar laws.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank without any attachments or obligations to the Republican party, has shown support for Romneycare. They have written articles that encourage states to adopt and adapt this policy to serve residents of their own; learning from what is good and adjusting the pitfalls (Moffit, 2007). Additionally, they contributed to the plan themselves (Romney, 2010). This is also an example of political diffusion, exactly as described above. The governor needs to do nothing to spread his policy because conservative governors and legislators might look to the Heritage Foundation for advice. On this issue, they are working similarly to the NGA Center. Among suggestions for improvement in other states is avoiding a certification process in addition to the ones already required by state laws (Moffit, 2007). Likewise, the Connector's authority to set a standard for acceptable coverage is incompatible with plans already in the state which force about 200,000 Massachusetts residents to spend more money on insurance than necessary (Moffit, 2007).

While the Libertarian right criticizes the Connector, others praise it for being an innovative way of providing managed competition to ensure affordable and quality health care for everyone. A second success has been redirecting subsidies from institutions to individuals, through federal waivers (Moffit, 2007). While a constructive way of regulating competition

and raising the quality of insurance content, the Connector must be created instead of other regulations and standardizations in a state, rather than added to them. It is a good plan for small business employees because it allows them to bring their insurance with them to new employers. Unfortunately, it limits the insurance providers in offering various plans at different costs (Moffit, 2007).

During the implementation of Romneycare, the small businesses were overlooked and benefited the least from these new policies. Romney's original plan focused on individuals' choice, and would also help small businesses with more accessible administrative work and remove obstacles of participation and contribution (Archambault, 2010). While people with low income receive health insurance for next to nothing, the small businesses could have hired those individuals and provided them with health insurance in exchange for rate relief. This would have saved Massachusetts very much in subsidies (Archambault, 2010). This is one of the other pitfalls the Heritage Foundation warns other states against if they are going to implement similar laws in their constituencies.

The main reason Romneycare failed to support small businesses was the outcome of the health premiums that turned out to be too expensive. Despite the Connector's attempt to make targeted plans for small businesses, they were not unique compared to those already in the market (Archambault, 2010). The political agenda of the Connector was also a problem because it consists of a voting majority, and the representatives does not always prioritize the wishes of the small businesses in the state. Furthermore, the Connector standardized the insurances so the variety of plans was limited and highly regulated. This made it difficult for small businesses to find a suitable plan. Moreover, this led to the withdrawal of four carriers, which represent 90% of the private insurance market, from the Connector (Archambault, 2010).

Small businesses are more vulnerable to state regulations compared to bigger corporations that stretch nationwide. A small business in Massachusetts is defined as a business with 50 full-time equivalent (from now: FTE) employees, or less (Archambault, 2014). The larger corporations are exempt from parts of the state laws because they are regulated by federal laws. Hence, when Massachusetts sets the standard for affordability and minimum creditable coverage, they may be higher than what the federal laws require. Small Massachusetts businesses were then forced to follow through while large companies did not have to

(Archambault, 2010). Many attempts to keep control of the healthcare costs have been short-sighted and not entirely satisfying. Former Massachusetts Governor Patrick (2007-2015) tried to cap premium rates while rejecting increasing premiums because the viability of insurers is jeopardized by these policies (Archambault, 2010). Other states considering similar laws should therefore learn from Massachusetts' mistakes on cost control and find long-term solutions that are sustainable also when the economy is reeling.

3.3 The Affordable Care Act

When the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, it had the same aim as Romneycare did; to ensure that all citizens obtained insurance. Either the insurance would be bought privately, which includes through an employer, or through a Medicaid expansion where low-income families receive public financial support (Wilensky, 2012). It is similar to Romneycare in the incentive to buy insurance, as well. If a citizen does not have health coverage, he or she receives a penalty charge. The coverage expansion is financed through savings from the Medicare program and adjusts the productivity of Medicare even if healthcare providers are ineffective. This will increase the price for Medicare clients (Wilensky, 2012). The ACA's Medicaid has become the basis for healthcare coverage for numerous low-income families in the USA. Low-income families are those that receive up to 138% above the Federal Poverty Level (from now: FPL), which is about \$20,120 in 2023 (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2023).

Republicans and Democrats are both looking to Massachusetts to learn from the experiment with healthcare reform. What they learn from Gov. Romney's attempt at affordable and quality health care is, for the Democrats, a good example and valuable source for further enhancement of America's healthcare system. The Republicans, on the other hand, argue that Massachusetts' Romneycare system is a clear indication of how bad health care turns out when the government is involved in it. An example is that Massachusetts had the highest premium rates when it was introduced (Archambault, 2014). However, recently Massachusetts has managed to cut the costs of health care, ranking in 44th place in the most expensive states (including D.C.). South Dakota became the most expensive one (Masterson & Danise, 2022).

The companies in Massachusetts that are providing their employees with healthcare coverage are doing so out of moral conviction. The employers see it as their duty to provide health care

insurance for their workers. They are making the same offer, but at an affordable rate for high-income employees, and unaffordable for low-income employees. This way, the companies avoid penalties for not offering health insurance, those with high income enjoy tax benefits and the ones with lower income qualify for subsidies (Archambault, 2014). Conservative politicians are normally arguing from an economic point of view, or a moral point of view on healthcare policy. This is elaborated on in detail below.

Archambault (2014) argues that the moral reasoning from employers cannot be transferred to other states like New Mexico, Arkansas, or Texas because of the difference between workers. The level of income in Massachusetts is 20% higher than the national average. Furthermore, Romneycare excludes families earning from 300% to 400% above the FPL - which Obamacare covers - from the subsidies. In Massachusetts, this is a minority of the residents but in states like Arkansas or Mississippi, the majority of the residents are below this income level (Archambault, 2014). This can potentially harm the national economy even more, because of the increased number of subsidies that have to be handed out to those families.

Obamacare, moreover, requires a higher percentage of the individual's income than Romneycare and the penalty for employers that do not provide health care is higher (Archambault, 2014). These are also dangers of the national healthcare reform that must be considered by other states to implement the Medicaid Expansion successfully. Massachusetts is an affluent state, while other states might suffer gravely from these measures. Not all businesses can handle the affordable insurance requirement nor the penalty for failing to provide the minimum requirement. These should be adapted to the economy in each state that implements it.

The aim of adopting ACA's Medicaid expansion was to provide residents in the different states with affordable health care, better quality of health care, and different economic measures (Guth, Garfield, et al., 2020). Both Romneycare and Obamacare had some economic issues before they were implemented. The following paragraphs deal with the Medicaid expansion and how it has been received in different states, and the consequences of not adopting it.

3.4 Medicaid Expansion

In 2023, thirty-nine states, including Washington D.C., have adopted and implemented Medicaid. South Dakota and North Carolina have adopted it but have yet to implement it. Eleven states have not adopted it, and all of them are in the South except Wyoming and Wisconsin (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2023). There are various reasons why states may not have adopted this legislation; either political, legal, or other factors could play a role in this. Following are some examples from the states on how it was implemented.

The Kaiser Family Foundation (from now: KFF) distinguishes between four main categories of implementation initiatives: 1) Standard Legislative Process, 2) Standard Legislative Process with a section 1115 Waiver that modifies the Traditional Expansion Program, 3) Executive Action, and 4) Ballot Initiative (Antonisse & Rudowitz, 2019). Section 1115 Waivers provide states with an opportunity to try different Medicaid approaches than federal statutes require (Guth, Hinton, et al., 2020). Of the mentioned processes, the third is the most interesting in this case because it is the one category that governors control the most.

As mentioned earlier, the Supreme Court deemed the Affordable Care Act as a constitutional law and affirmed the need for minimum essential coverage (individual mandate). The individual mandate set an amount of tax penalty for those that did not have coverage. By 2014, all U.S. citizens were required to obtain health insurance. However, the majority of the Supreme Court assessed the Medicaid Expansion as “unconstitutionally coercive” because it did not give states enough information to consent to the adoption and implementation of the law (Musumeci, 2012, p. 1). Additionally, the states were at risk of losing federal Medicaid funds if they rejected the expansion. In 2017, the individual mandate was practically dissolved. The penalty was capped to one-twelfth of the percentage of income or flat dollar amount multiplied by the number of months without coverage. There were some exemptions one had to claim or report an exempt, which is no longer required since the Tax Cut and Jobs Act was signed into law by President Trump (Rosso, 2020).

That President Trump practically removed the individual mandate is viewed by contemporary Republicans as removing an unconstitutional government mandate. However, this piece of legislation has a conservative origin. The Heritage Foundation advocated this mandate already in 1989, and Republican Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa claimed a big and

bipartisan consensus to this idea at the time Mitt Romney called for Obama to implement it nationally (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019). The main theory for the strong conservative opposition to the idea in more recent years, is that they did not want to accredit a political opponent as Obama with a bipartisan victory. Sen. Grassley changed his view on the issue, and called the individual mandate “unconstitutional” after President Obama embraced it, and Senate Minority Leader McConnell kept the Republicans from supporting the law (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019, p. 304). This pattern in the Congress, at the federal level, is mirrored by the states’ Republican governors, and this attitude switches back after Trump enters office. This is explained in more detail below.

Executive orders are used in several states to avoid the legislature, and to adopt and implement the Medicaid Expansion. In Kentucky and West Virginia, former Democratic Governors Beshear (2007-2015) and Tomblin (2010-2017) adopted the law through this mechanism. In Pennsylvania, former Republican Governor Corbett (2011-2015) was able to bargain for an 1115 Waiver and implemented the Medicaid expansion in 2014 (Antonisse & Rudowitz, 2019). However, critics have challenged this way of implementing new healthcare codes in the states; both Kentucky and Alaska, for instance, have been brought to court for this (Antonisse & Rudowitz, 2019). In Ohio, the legislature rejected every attempt to adopt and implement Medicaid. Despite this, former Republican Governor Kasich (2011-2019) managed to persuade the Legislature’s Controlling Board, with seven members, to use federal Medicaid funds to implement it (Antonisse & Rudowitz, 2019).

The states that have refused to adopt the Medicaid Expansion have legislatures that have passed laws to ensure that the executive branch does not take any shortcuts around the legislative branch. In Wisconsin, the legislature prohibited the governor from making changes in the Medicaid program without their approval. This law was signed by Gov. Walker (2011-2019) while serving his last term, the lame duck term, just before Democratic Gov. Evers’ term (2019-) (Antonisse & Rudowitz, 2019). There may be many motifs for this. Based on some of the states that have introduced the Medicaid expansion through executive orders and governor’s powers, it is not unlikely that other states’ legislatures tried to prevent this in their states. It resembles “negative” or “reversed” learning diffusion, where governors have performed an act that other states learned from and prohibited.

The NGA has taken a respectful stance toward the different approaches to Medicaid expansion. In a letter to the Congress, the then NGA Chair McAuliffe and Vice Chair Sandoval, both personal supporters of the expansion, urge them to make meaningful healthcare reform. They acknowledge and respect the different states' views on the matter (National Governors Association, 2017). They call for meaningful health reform in the private market, and predictable and reliable funds for the Medicaid states. In the 2023 State of the State addresses, many governors focused on health care. Georgia Gov. Kemp (2019-), who has not adopted Medicaid, did negotiate an analogous agreement with the federal government to fund healthcare coverage for low-income families. The current Democratic Kansas Gov. Kelley (2019-) is explicitly calling for the adoption of Medicaid (National Governors Association, 2023b). Since the topic is very controversial among the states, the NGA seems to have taken a neutral stance. It supports the states that have implemented, and want to implement, it, but they are not forcing other states into it. The NGA does not make any requirements on this issue for the members either.

3.4.1 Same Party but Different Views on Medicaid Expansion

Even though the ACA is very similar to Romneycare in practical matters, and though it may be one of the most significant victories for Romney's gubernatorial career, it did not run well among other conservative governors when Obama presented his idea. In the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama accuses Mitt Romney of wanting to radically change the healthcare system "even if it means running from his past as the architect of health reform in Massachusetts." (Obama, 2012, p. 1381). In this statement, he implies himself that Obamacare and Romneycare are of the same nature and purpose. Romney also claims that the ACA is fundamentally different from Romneycare because he did not include an option for buying insurance from a public provider (Romney, 2010).

As a politician, Obama would most likely not give credit to his political and presidential opponent for a law he wants to implement himself. Though studies show that he did look to the Massachusetts experiment when he was going to propose his own healthcare reform. Furthermore, Jonathan Gruber from MIT, that contributed to the outline of both Romneycare and Obamacare saw few differences. He claimed it was "the same fucking bill" (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019, p. 303). Romney's aim was to provide universal healthcare coverage without involving the government too much (Romney, 2010). This self-understanding of the political

goal did not have enough impact on other states as Obamacare involved government options for health insurance. The learning mechanism of political diffusion has been used in this case, though the law was adapted to fit Obama's public health agenda of government provided health care.

The difference between the two laws lies, according to Romney, in the states' right to tailor the reform to suit the needs of their residents. He does not want a "2700-page solution from Washington" but a consumer and patient focused insurance program with fair competition (Romney, 2012, p. 1381). These might seem like nuances, and if one reads closely at Obamacare's and Romneycare's layout, they are. However, it touches on the sore issue that Americans frequently discuss, connected to many new legislations: State autonomy. This was also what the Supreme Court confirmed in the *National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius*; states could not be forced to adopt Medicaid, even though the law was intended to be compulsory for all states when the Obama administration executed it. State autonomy was also the challenge when the Supreme Court made same-sex marriage legal across the states in 2015 or when the use of the Confederate flags on public buildings was discussed in the South (Dionne, 2016).

The arguments used most often by Republican governors between 2012-2018, were of negative nature and related to the economic aspects of the Medicaid expansion. The period with the most occurrence of negative framing on Medicaid expansion was between the Supreme Court ruling in 2012 and the presidential election of the same year (Singer & Rozier, 2020). Former Gov. Nicki Haley (2011-2017) claimed that the Medicaid expansion would be an expensive law that kept the status quo in South Carolina. Other Republican governors wanted to wait and learn before making a decision on whether to adopt Medicaid or not (Singer & Rozier, 2020). Another reason for waiting, at least for the presidential election, was Mitt Romney's promise to repeal Obamacare and make "real" healthcare reform if he was elected president (Romney, 2012; Singer & Rozier, 2020).

After President Obama's reelection in 2012, and Romney's defeat, more Republican governors changed their views on the issue. In Nevada, former Gov. Sandoval (2011-2019) aimed at a full expansion and started to frame Medicaid in a much more positive manner, using economic reasons as the main arguments, and hence became one of the first conservative governors in office to endorse the plan (Sanger-Katz, 2013; Singer & Rozier,

2020). Former Gov. Scott in Florida (2011-2019) also wanted to adopt the Medicaid expansion program but did not convince the legislature. Furthermore, he ran on a straightforward anti-Obamacare platform in his gubernatorial campaign (Sanger-Katz, 2013). This gives the impression of Gov. Scott as an office motivated politician, and suggests a lack of character (Fredriksson et al., 2011). Former Utah Gov. Herbert (2009-2021) wanted to adopt Medicaid because the federal tax dollars would either benefit themselves in Utah, or it would benefit D.C. and other states that did adopt the healthcare reform (Singer & Rozier, 2020).

The Republican governors became even more divided after President Trump won the election in 2016. Those that had adopted Medicaid wanted the program to continue, while those strongly opposed saw a real chance to repeal it this time (Singer & Rozier, 2020). Michigan adopted Medicaid under the ACA law and called the program “Healthy Michigan.” This way of executing the Medicaid expansion in the state is, according to former Gov. Snyder, a good way of spreading his solution to healthcare reform under the given law. He claims that the program “can work for the rest of the country,” and he is going to influence his “federal partners” in this regard (Snyder, 2017). This indicates a wish to be a learning platform for other states, and to diffuse policy. It could also be an indication of a policy-motivated governor.

Other framing points that were made were of moral character. Former Gov. Kasich of Ohio referred to his faith in supporting the Medicaid expansion. He would not let the state “turning their back on “those who live with the least among us”” (Singer & Rozier, 2020, pp. 502-503). Furthermore, former Gov. Christie (2009-2013) of New Jersey, an ally of the Trump administration, used moral language against Republicans that wanted to replace and repeal the law. This also aligns with the pattern of economic or moral arguments commonly used by Republican governors, similar to the arguments used by business owners in Massachusetts (Archambault, 2014; Singer & Rozier, 2020). This type of language increased after the Trump Administration started. More idealistic governors doubled down on their critique against Medicaid expansion. Former Gov. Brownback of Kansas claimed the law would help “able-bodied adults” at the expense of “truly vulnerable Kansans,” and former Georgia Gov. Deal (2011-2019) said that if you provide someone with something for free then “it’s going to be very difficult to take that away.” (Singer & Rozier, 2020, p. 503).

3.5 The Ideological Obstacle to Reform

Although the views on the Medicaid expansion vary, the statistics show that because of the ACA's Medicaid expansion, more Americans are insured now than ever before. Antecedent to when ACA was written into law, the national rate of uninsured was 17.8% and has dropped to 10.2% (Tolbert et al., 2022). Imitating the mentioned pattern of Massachusetts, but not to the same extent. The expansion of Medicaid is considered the leading force for this trend. Furthermore, consistent with the trend of adopting Medicaid, the typical uninsured, non-elderly in the U.S. per 2022 are low-income, working families. People of color were in the majority of the uninsured, at 61.3%. Three-quarters of the uninsured live in the South or West, for instance, 20.5% of the uninsured live in Texas (Tolbert et al., 2022). In other words, many of the uninsured live in states that have not adopted or implemented the ACA.

Gov. Brownback mentioned in his first State of the State Address in 2012, that he wanted a review of Medicaid. This review was performed by Lieutenant Governor Coyler. He recommended to collaborate with for-profit managed care, practically a free-market solution (Smith et al., 2019). This is practically a privatization of Medicaid, rather than the Massachusetts model with a state-controlled market through the Connector. The privatized system is called KanCare and was established in 2013. It prohibits Medicaid expansion without the legislature's approval. Gov. Brownback, with support from the Kansas legislature also refused to ensure Medicaid expansion to cover the poorest of the state (Smith et al., 2019).

Kansas joined the Interstate Health Care Compact, which allows states to regulate healthcare services themselves. This law was controversial because Medicare services are funded through the federal government as block grants and the state can tailor its healthcare services as it pleases. This law was signed by Gov. Brownback in 2014 (Smith et al., 2019).

Brownback's experiment started to fail during his second gubernatorial term, one of the problems he faced was rising healthcare costs. He blamed it on ACA and defended KanCare, but the defense was not convincing. KanCare did not comply with U.S. law and risked losing its funds. This, and several other economic disasters, made the legislature stop the Kansas experiment. However, they did not manage to override his veto on Medicaid expansion (Smith et al., 2019). Gov. Brownback left Kansas politics after this, but he did advance and held the position as ambassador at large for international religious freedom. However, his

reputation made the vote close, as Democrats questioned his devotion also to advocate LGBTQ+ rights. He was confirmed with a 49-49 deadlock vote in the U.S. Senate but Vice President Pence cast the tie-breaking vote (Smith et al., 2019).

Kansas is not the only state that has refused Medicaid expansion. Texas' opposition to the Medicaid expansion is extraordinary because many state politicians, including Republicans, see how the state will benefit from the federal funding simultaneously as the poorest in the state receive health care. It is a win-win. However, Texas Gov. Abbott has great influence over Republican state legislators (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022b). They want to stay loyal to the party and block all attempts to adopt Medicaid. Gov. Abbott's political career includes much opposition against ACA. He has filed two lawsuits against it, first as Texas' attorney general in 2010, and then again after he entered gubernatorial office (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022b).

In 2022, Gov. Abbott ran yet another time for Texas Governor against Democrat Beto O'Rourke. In this election, the Medicaid expansion was promised by the Democratic candidate, while Republicans barely mentioned Abbott's stance. Among Texans, 69% support the law, so this might be one of the reasons (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022a). O'Rourke accused Abbott of being the only one left before the state can adopt the Medicaid expansion. Still, Abbott was elected for another term, and his control over the conservative legislators makes it difficult for healthcare reform, as long as Republican legislators are loyal to him (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022a, 2022b). This shows how much ideological loyalty, and informal political powers, can benefit the gubernatorial agenda in certain areas.

The case of Wisconsin is, however, different from its fellow states that have not adopted Medicaid. Former Gov. Scott rejected Medicaid, but many uninsured have since enrolled in the states' own BadgerCare Medicaid waiver, a program that provides low-income families with health coverage (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2015). By 2021, Wisconsin had 6.4% uninsured, while neighboring Michigan had 6.2%. Illinois and Indiana have, respectively, 8.1% and 8.8% non-elderly uninsured, so other factors are also important when calculating the amount of uninsured residents in a state (Tolbert et al., 2022). Massachusetts was the state with the lowest amount of non-elderly uninsured, at 2.9% in 2021.

The question of why these states do not adopt Medicaid under the ACA is hard to answer. There are many actors involved in the legislative process in the states. Therefore, Governors

are not the only politicians to blame. Gov. Scott, as mentioned above, wanted healthcare reform in Florida but was stopped by the legislature. In Wisconsin, the legislature did not want the reform and convinced lame duck Gov. Walker to sign into law legal obstacles for the governor elect, Evers. Why are these states not arguing the same way as other conservative states, like Utah, where they argued on the basis of responsible use of tax dollars? Another economic argument used in favor of the law is that the implementation of Medicaid will be practically free once implemented, as the federal government covers all costs for the first three years, and 90% of it permanently.

Virginia had an intense political debate over Medicaid expansion in 2014. This is an example from a state with a Democratic governor, but it serves as a significant contribution to this thesis. The Republican legislators in the Virginia House of Delegates convinced Democratic Senator Puckett to withdraw so they could have the majority to stop Gov. McAuliffe (2014-2018) from expanding Medicaid (Moen, 2014). This was accomplished at the time. One of the legislators accused the Governor of threatening to cut economic funding to his district if they did not support the law, which was later denied by one of McAuliffe's spokesmen (Laris & Vozzella, 2014). However, that could be a real threat since the governor has leverage in the negotiations of budgetary priorities (Kousser & Phillips, 2012). Medicaid was expanded to Virginia in 2018 and became a success for the uninsured, low-income individual, and the state has of 2021, eight percent uninsured (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2023; Vachon, 2021).

Contemporary Republican leaders have, however, due to asymmetric polarization, have moved so far to the right on economic issues, among others, that they are passed self-proclaimed right-wing parties in other nations (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). This is also seen in Virginia where Republicans do not buy the economic promises ACA entails, because the federal government is not perceived as a reliable business partner (Laris & Vozzella, 2014). However, this could also support the notion that this is not purely an economic and political issue, but an ideological issue as well. The Republicans have, according to Hacker & Pierson (2020), moved further right than their voters. This right-wing turn is claimed to be encouraged by a group funded and directed by the Libertarian Koch Network.

4.0 Global Warming and Environmental Issues

The next issue to be studied is global warming and environmentally friendly measures that governors execute to enhance climate action. There are different approaches to this topic and

many areas to focus on. As mentioned in the introduction, environmental issues are an important and relevant topic because these have an impact reaching further than the state jurisdictions. It is a global problem, and it is interesting to study how governors are taking measures to slow down the greenhouse gas emission and general pollution.

California is known for being innovative on many environmental measures, and Governor Schwarzenegger (2003-2011) was a politician with ambitious goals in this field while he served his gubernatorial terms. California has a long tradition of actively inciting progress on climate action (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). Thus Gov. Schwarzenegger's California will serve as a point of departure for gubernatorial influence on environmental issues. However, the thesis will also look closer at the bipartisan- and intergovernmental investments in alternative and electric vehicles. The many governors that focused on, or mentioned, alternative and electrical vehicles in their 2022 State of the State addresses make this an interesting turn on environmentally friendly events, even in traditional conservative, and oil, states such as Alabama and Texas.

Local environmental policies are sometimes seen as unnecessary and useless because it does not help to solve the problem of global warming. One can still be hurt by natural disasters caused by climate change despite the reduction of pollution. However, Johannes Urpelainen (2009) identifies three advantages of local measures against climate change. The first is the competitive advantages it gives local economies if their policies are successful. It also allows for new technological innovations. This boosts the economy and creates workplaces. The second advantage is that local government can lower the budget on healthcare costs if carbon dioxide producing projects are reduced. Less pollution will result in less environmentally related sickness. The third reason for local climate change policies is that it has political advantages for the local government. They know the constituents better than a national, or federal, government, hence, they can implement locally adjusted policies. Furthermore, they can transfer to other influential positions in interest groups, or gain the endorsement of environmental groups (Urpelainen, 2009).

4.1 Governor Schwarzenegger's Green California

While serving as California's chief executive, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed many environmentally friendly policies into law. He also tried to convince other states for example

Michigan, to follow in his footsteps, and he negotiated international agreements, for instance, with the UK. These are some examples that will be examined closer below. In 2005, Schwarzenegger issued an executive order that promised California's advances to cut greenhouse gas emissions in the future. The plan included a step by step decrease in emissions, starting with 11% in 2010. The first step is a small one for the state because it is at the same level as pollution was in 2000. Nonetheless, by 2050 the aim is to cut 80% of the emission of the 1990s level, and that is also what scientists have calculated as necessary if climate action is going to have an effect (Pelley, 2005). There are specific actions that are enforced to reach these goals, for instance, compulsory renewable energy sources for utilities by 2010 and reducing the cars' CO₂ emissions starting in 2009. This could have a wider effect since California is among the biggest economies in the world, with its size close to the UK's or France's (Pelley, 2005).

Right after Schwarzenegger issued the executive order in 2005, committing California to reduce pollution from the state, he issued a statement defending his measures. He did it for the children in the state, and also because "we see the science and we see the threat" (Schwarzenegger, 2005, p. 63). He established a Climate Action Team to work with him to produce innovative policies on this issue. He also worked internationally to learn from others, and to teach others. Japan's former Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, is one of the people he looks to when taking action within California. Moreover, Schwarzenegger advocated, and still does, for international, and intergovernmental cooperation on climate change, since it is not a problem that can be solved locally alone (Schwarzenegger, 2005).

At the end of Gov. Schwarzenegger's terms, he could show to many achievements in the field of climate change, for example, the intergovernmental coalition Western Climate Initiative with Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington, to reach a common goal of carbon emissions (USC Schwarzenegger Institute, n.d.). In addition, he claimed that since California was the world's eighth largest economy, per 2011, they were capable of shaping the environmental policies around the world (Schwarzenegger, 2011). As governor, he managed to gather several different people, across party lines and ideologies, to work together to form a greener state. One of the main arguments against many of the measures put in place in California during Gov. Schwarzenegger's administration, was that unemployment raised. However, Schwarzenegger could inform that it was the new, green workplaces that hired people and created new jobs. Furthermore, environmentally friendly policies reduced state

healthcare costs, because at the time, 19,000 people died of smog-related illnesses (Schwarzenegger, 2011).

Schwarzenegger's international focus on climate change action is visible in the agreement International Oceans, Environment, Health, and Aviation Law. This is an agreement between the UK, represented by Prime Minister Tony Blair, and California with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. California presents the issue as so urgent, they cannot wait for action taken by the federal government (Crook, 2006). The agreement is, for the most part, a reciprocal commitment to share best practices, work together and keep each other responsible, in advancing green energy, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and develop new technology. The main obstacle for California is that the federal U.S. Constitution prohibits states from entering international treaties without the consent of Congress (Crook, 2006). Nevertheless, this shows how seriously California took environmental issues, and why they have been among the leading U.S. states on this issue. Maybe this was done to push other states, and the federal government to do the same.

One of the problems with the local actions for combating climate change is that this is viewed as ineffective and hopeless as long as the major polluters, the large nations, are contributing. The problems of free riders are predominant because they are free riding on the provision of others, making the measures a waste of time (Urpelainen, 2009). Despite this, many of the world's environmentally friendly measures are executed on the local level, even within the EU (Urpelainen, 2009). Since local efforts statistically exceed and precede the national ones, this provides a solid explanation as to why California took global warming and climate change into its own hands, instead of waiting for the federal government. If successful, the policies will diffuse to other states and nations.

There might be several reasons why California became a leading green state, both the aforementioned economic capacity the state has, and the eager politicians serving there, are important contributing factors. California has reduced its fossil fuel production and consumption and, since they are a state government, they are closer to the residents, thus having more information about preferable measures than the federal government, making it less risky to enforce (Urpelainen, 2009). California has continued to reduce greenhouse gas emissions gradually, and during the lockdowns from 2020, they reduced it even more because people traveling with automobiles decreased significantly. However, due to the great

wildfires and the following carbon dioxide emissions in California, these measures and results were practically annulled (Briscoe, 2022).

Even though California has been, and is, one of the leading green states, many other states started prior to the federal government with environmental issues. New Jersey committed itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the 1990s level by 2005, Texas executed a renewable portfolio standard in 1999, and Michigan enacted a greenhouse gas inventory in 2005, and former Gov. Granholm (2003-2011) has actively advocated for green jobs in the state (Urpelainen, 2009). These are all critical measures in the battle against global warming, however, California's frequency of new environmental measures has been great.

Schwarzenegger wanted to continue his political agenda after his last gubernatorial term ended. He announced the new Institute at the University of Southern California (USC); called the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy. This institute is dedicated to research on the policy areas that he cared the most about, including climate change (Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012). This institute is compared to the presidential libraries that are continuing the legacy of presidents. USC Schwarzenegger Institute is thus a research and recommendation platform that diffuses the political legacy of Gov. Schwarzenegger. He might also have wanted to join the presidential campaign at some point, but he could not because he "wasn't a natural-born US citizen," as the United States Constitution demands (Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012, p. 463).

4.2 Alternative and Electric Vehicle Measures in California

In 2002, the California Assembly, the legislature in California, established through Assembly Bill No. 1493, ch. 200, that passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks are responsible for 40% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the state ("Public Contracts: Electronic Transmission," 2002). This bill was signed into law by the governor and started in many ways the process of reducing car emissions. It is not only in California that transportation is responsible for major greenhouse gas emissions. All over America, this is a problem making up 26% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions (Scheitrum, 2020). These policies are a continuation of the Zero Emission Vehicle program California implemented in 1990. This is also claimed to be a push for electric cars in the USA (Graham et al., 2014).

Governor Schwarzenegger continued with actions to cap greenhouse gas emissions from among other areas; cars and infrastructure. He set a goal in 2007, to lower carbon intensity by 10% in California by 2020. The law became effective in 2011. This is when he introduced the Low Carbon Fuel Standard (from now: LCFS) (USC Schwarzenegger Institute, n.d.). This would make the transportation sector to purchase fuel to meet a target of carbon intensity, and if it exceeds this target they receive deficits, or credits when they are below. It creates a market for fuel providers where low-carbon fuel providers can sell credits to high-carbon fuel providers, that can, in turn erase their deficit (Scheitrum, 2020). When the LCFS credit system was implemented, it was made to avoid a carbon tax, which would be another alternative for cutting transportation emissions. However, this sort of policy would meet greater opposition from political opponents (Scheitrum, 2020). In 2015, the goal was still far from being reached when natural gas fuel only applied for one percent of fuel consumption in California, zero percent was hydrogen, and 0.10% was electrical (Scheitrum, 2020).

In 2012, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. (2011-2019) of California signed an executive order where he continued the fight against climate change, and specifically ordered further advancements in zero-emission vehicles. As reasons for this order, he mentions that California is leading the nation in greenhouse gas emission reducing policies, and that since California is one of the biggest markets for cars and light trucks, they must lead by example. Additionally, the state is prominent in technological innovation and education (Brown, 2012). Gov. Brown ordered various state agencies to make sure metropolitan areas were able to accommodate zero-emission vehicles, the state's manufacturing sector had to expand production of zero-emission vehicles, the private investor will invest in it and state academic and educational institutions will continue to research the field for innovative discoveries (Brown, 2012).

Another innovative achievement Gov. Schwarzenegger tried to reach, was to build a hydrogen highway in California. This highway has 50 hydrogen fueling systems and is aimed at making a great impact on the market for hydrogen driven vehicles (USC Schwarzenegger Institute, n.d.). This project, which was started early in the Schwarzenegger administration, has not yet carried the fruits it promised. It has been an expensive experiment, costing the state \$125 million just to make the fuel stations function. Furthermore, the highway has not reached from coast to coast, as it was envisioned (Halper, 2021). California can often diffuse environmental policies to other states but in this case, many of the states have skipped their

turn to implement similar hydrogen projects. Hydrogen driven cars have thus far been a failing project in California, but electric vehicles have proven more successful. In 2020, for instance, 1.1 million of the 14 million nationwide car purchases, were electric, zero-emission cars (Halper, 2021). It is a small number compared to some European countries, but it is at least a start in the U.S.

One intergovernmental measure, that California made together with seven other states in 2013, was expanding the 1990 Zero Emission Vehicle program with an aim to put 3.3 million electric cars on the road. These states combined, make up 23% of the passenger vehicle market and can make a difference (Graham et al., 2014). This is a clear example of how these states expand their influence on environmental issues. Even though this has been a long-term process, it still shows the significance of political diffusion over time. In 2020, current Gov. Gavin Newsom (2019-) of California signed a similar Memorandum of Understanding with other states, that acknowledge California's leading example on this issue and confirm the importance of California's Zero Emission Vehicle program ("Multi-State Medium- and Heavy-Duty Zero Emission Vehicle," 2020). A shadow side to these initiatives is the program's lack of coordination with states that do not share this program and also federal laws. In any case, when automobile merchants sell zero-emission vehicles in states enrolled in the program, it allows the same group of sellers, to sell fuel inefficient vehicles in other states (Graham et al., 2014).

4.3 Incentives for Purchasing Alternative and Electric Vehicles

Hybrid-electric cars can be seen as a compromise, and not sufficient to address the emissions caused by the U.S. car park. With enough drivers, however, switching to this type of car, the emissions will naturally decrease. The hybrid-electric vehicles are more energy efficient, for instance, the energy lost by breaking is instead regenerated into more battery power (Diamond, 2009). It is not the same as zero-emission vehicles, but maybe the government's incentives on hybrid vehicles could be applicable to fully electronic vehicles as well. Two incentives that are used in both cases are the tax deduction, or credit (depending on the state), and high occupancy vehicle (from now: HOV) lane privileges (Diamond, 2009).

The economic benefits received by hybrid-electric cars are even better for fully electric vehicles because one does not need any fossil fuel. This claim is valid as long as the power is

cheaper than fossil fuel. The HOV lane privileges depend on the local conditions, for instance in Utah, HOV lanes are available for everyone that is willing to pay a \$50 monthly fee. However, in Virginia, this incentive was very successful (Diamond, 2009). Interviews among California households, show that those who owned hybrid-electric cars before 2009 did it to save money on gas and reduce pollution (Diamond, 2009). Economic and environmental incentives were thus, driving forces for the purchase of these, as well as a green profile.

Of the many environmentally friendly measures, and actions against global warming, those of alternative and electric vehicles are the ones zoomed in on in this thesis. This has been a developing process in many countries and in U.S. states. It is an exciting topic for governments and private actors. Just for commute in America, about 76% drive their personal cars (Ritcher, 2022). This indicates a great potential market for greenhouse gas reduction if the cars they drive are emission neutral. Pew Research Center found that two-thirds of Americans support incentives and measures for increasing the use of electric vehicles. However, only 42% were inclined to buy an electric vehicle themselves. The trend is clear, Democrats, young people (age 18-29), and people living in cities are the most inclined to buy electric vehicles (Carey et al., 2022). Regardless of who is willing to buy them, the extensive support for the initiatives in this field is what makes it interesting, and probably also why so many governors support these measures in their own states.

The Obama administration had an ambitious goal to put one million electric vehicles on the roads by 2015. This goal was abolished by the federal government, however, the U.S. Department of Energy funds research and innovative initiatives in this kind of transport (Graham et al., 2014). Gov. Schwarzenegger claims this is due to his Global Warming Solution Act in California. After California and Schwarzenegger were sued by a coalition of auto companies and manufacturers - and won - Obama, he claims, “basically adopted California’s standard,” and the coalition of automakers had to produce more fuel efficient, and cleaner, cars to reduce pollution (Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012, p. 549).

Furthermore, companies and local governments are taking action to make electric vehicles an attractive and functional alternative, for instance, by increasing public charging station availability or ensuring cheaper parking in the cities. California had HOV lane privileges for hybrid cars from 2007-2011, but after that only qualified electric cars, meaning zero-emission, fully electric cars, obtain this access (Graham et al., 2014). California, along with

Colorado, provided a \$1,000-\$2,500 tax credit on top of a federal tax credit of \$7,500 for qualified electrical cars.

Electric vehicle incentives are not only beneficiary for the consumers but also for the state government. The greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector are lowered which will reduce different health costs related to air pollution. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was an exception of environmentally focused Republican governors before 2010. He is self-conscious about this and mentions in his autobiography that many thought it was unnatural for him to be a Republican because of his “pro-choice, pro-gay, pro-lesbian, pro-environment, pro-reasonable gun control, pro-reasonable social safety net” views (Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012, p. 466). However, he did agree with the conservatives on economic issues. This aligns well with Republican politicians’ views on electric vehicle policy incentives, because in the cases where Republican governors made compromises on electric vehicle implementation, tax credits were the tool to use politically (Hayashida et al., 2021). Schwarzenegger is a centrist, and his policies reflects this. Maybe the use of fiscally conservative investments to achieve liberal goals is a good way of attracting independent, and moderate voters.

Economic factors are also playing an important role in whether a state implements electric vehicle incentives or not. Some states are dependent on revenues from the gasoline tax, and losses in this area affect states differently. Furthermore, states are more likely to adopt successful policies from neighboring states than try measures themselves (Hayashida et al., 2021). This draws on the theory of political diffusion, both the learning- and economic competition mechanisms. Because different economic costs are a barrier to implementing electric vehicle measures even if neighboring states have successful experiences.

4.4 Federal Investment in Green Infrastructure

When President Joe Biden entered office, he was committed to battle climate change in various ways. One way he tried to reach the political aims of environmentally friendly policies was by signing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (from now: IIJA). This was seen, by the political right, as an omnibus spending bill from the Democratic agenda of public spending. On the other hand, some Democrats claimed it did not go far enough to address climate change (Pramuk, 2021). It is a sign of moderate policy, and

compromise, when the idealists on both sides claim that the legislation does not go far enough.

Despite these allegations, the bill was supported, too, from both sides of the aisle. The bill that promised about \$1 trillion to various infrastructural measures included some essential incentives for electric vehicles. \$7.5 billion are dedicated to build a nationwide network of charging stations and promote the adoption of electric vehicles. Additionally, this program will create manufacturing jobs and green workplaces (The White House, 2021). Another investment that can help enhance environmentally friendly commute in the U.S., is the replacement of fossil fuel driven buses with electric buses, both for public transit and for school transit, and ferries. This, the Biden administration predicts, will also create more demand for battery factories in the US (The White House, 2021).

This latter point is mentioned in the State of the State Address 2022, by Governor Ivey (2017-). They are building a battery factory in Alabama to produce batteries for electric vehicles. This is, in the speech, addressed as a patriotic and blue-collar friendly action. Because the push for electric vehicles makes America dependent on foreign products and workforce in battery manufacturing, but “Alabama’s hardworking, non-union workforce” will make sure that technology advancement stays in the U.S. and that “Made in Alabama is committed to bring back Made in America.” (Ivey, 2022, p. 4). This seems like a conservative camouflage for environmentally friendly measures. If the battery factory is successful, which it most likely will be, it will create green workplaces for Alabamians, and it will boost the state’s economy when other states buy products from them. This is the economic competition mechanism of political diffusion.

Other states are also exploiting the opportunities the IIIJA provides. An interactive map on the NGA’s webpage links the different states' measures to see how they plan to advance their electric- and alternative vehicle infrastructure in the coming years, and how much federal funding they receive in doing so (National Governors Association, n.d.). Texas, for instance, plans to install charging stations with no greater than 50 miles between each other except for rural areas where 70 miles between each station is the aim (Texas Department of Transportation et al., 2022). The federal funds handed to California will also be used to enhance zero-emission vehicle production.

The transport sector was one of the biggest polluters in California in the 90s and continued to be so into the 2000s. Even now, this is the case, but Californians have kept their faith in zero-emission vehicles and Gov. Newsome continues the Californian tradition with a focus on this. Executive order (EO) N-19-19 gives the California State Transportation Agency (from now: CalSTA) authority to fund measures helping to meet the state's climate goals (California State Transportation Agency, 2021). And Executive Order N-79-20 requires all new cars on the market to be zero-emission vehicles by 2035, and the same for trucks by 2045 (California State Transportation Agency, 2021).

In Alabama, too, the state government tries to convince Alabamians to buy electric cars. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs coordinates the program "Drive Electric Alabama." The main focus of this initiative is to educate people on the advantages of electric vehicles. Among the most important reasons are the environmental benefits and Alabamian workplaces (Drive Electric Alabama, n.d.). It is interesting to notice that a conservative state like Alabama, that refuses to adopt Medicaid, is so eager to implement measures for electric vehicles. Alabama exploits its position as one of the top four states in U.S. automobile production, and tries innovatively to stay among these with the battery factory in Coosa County. This will be the first of its kind in the U.S. (Underwood, 2022). The prediction is that the products of this factory will boost the Alabama economy and create green workplaces.

4.5 Threats to Climate Action

A barrier for many Americans regarding electric vehicle purchase is mainly split into three concerns: Price, range, and charging station availability (Cage & Granados, 2022). In California, cities are determined to reach a higher percentage of electric vehicles on the road, Los Angeles, for instance, wants to reach 80% by 2035. California as a whole has ambitious goals of modernizing the car park to green vehicles, but by 2021 they have only 40% of the charging capacity (Hsu & Fingerman, 2021). Many of the programs, such as the LCFS and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, are already incentives by the government to adopt these cars. However, predominantly affluent, well-educated individuals own eclectic cars (Hsu & Fingerman, 2021).

Public charger availability and purchasing price are threats for low-income families considering a new vehicle. Affluent people who also own their own homes, have home-chargers, but people living in apartments or in crowded neighborhoods do not possess this same opportunity. Additionally, research shows that African-American and Hispanic communities will have less access to public chargers in California (Hsu & Fingergerman, 2021). Consequently, low-income individuals, and members of the African-American and Hispanic communities, are less likely to purchase electric vehicles. Also, in the used market for these types of cars since the driving range is shorter than on a new one, and the availability is inadequate for charging (Hsu & Fingergerman, 2021). The state government should see this problem and start to build available and functioning charging stations in these areas to expand the electric vehicle market in the state. Even though the U.S., with California as a lighthouse, transitions into a greener car park, the complete change will take much time (Cage & Granados, 2022).

Similar to conservative leaders that oppose the Medicaid expansion, the Republican leaders have opposed climate actions involving regulations and taxation. Voters and politicians are on this area influenced by the Koch Network, the Chamber of Commerce, and fossil fuel companies that lobby for their own interests in different states (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). So even though many governors have plans for building and bettering green infrastructure in their states, some lobbyists try their very best to limit and repeal this effort. Additionally, the results of the measures taken in California, for instance, are hard to pinpoint. After three decades of greenhouse gas and carbon dioxide emission reducing actions, California with the other Western states, are the ones with the worst air quality in the U.S. (Rodriguez-Delgado, 2022). They do not seem to lose all motivation for climate action, even though some businesses claim the problem lies elsewhere.

Political framing of climate action is a problem. Many Republicans do not believe in global warming, and if they do, they claim it is not caused by human activity (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). Climate action is frequently framed as a Liberal hoax, a way of enforcing more taxation and expand the government. The media's framing of global warming is of great importance because many people's opinions are formed by this. Furthermore, how people frame this on a more casual level on social media is important in this regard (Jang & Hart, 2015). The difference between Republican and Democratic states in framing climate change on Twitter is significant.

While framing in red states included “real” and “hoax” frequently, the blue states focused on “action” and “impact.” Though the acceptance of the scientific consensus behind global warming outweighs the denying of it in the U.S., there are a majority of Republicans that do deny it, and this is mirrored in their framing of the issue on the social media platform Twitter (Jang & Hart, 2015). This might be one of the reasons why climate action is harder for Republican governors in red states to implement environmentally friendly measures, and even harder to diffuse these policies to other states. Schwarzenegger was a Republican governor in a predominantly blue state, which may be one of the factors for his success on climate action.

5.0 Conclusion

This thesis suggests that the learning mechanism of political diffusion is the most influential way of governing across states as a governor. Even though the governor is not in control of how other states adopt and implement policy, it is still of great impact when the policy is first successfully executed in a state. In some cases, as with the ACA, it can end up as federal law and have the desired effect of reaching far outside of the single state’s borders. President Obama was inspired by Romneycare, as confirmed by those contributing to write the law, and implicitly by Obama himself (Kruse & Zelizer, 2019; Obama, 2012). However, this mechanism works closely with the economic competition mechanism, and states experiencing too much financial loss will probably not adopt the law (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Some might continue their political legacy by establishing think tanks, or as Schwarzenegger did; establish a university institute to research the issues he cared about.

Learning diffusion is also the primary method Schwarzenegger and California have used to expand their field of influence in environmental policy. Compared to Romney’s healthcare reform, Schwarzenegger has collaborated more actively with other states and nations. Furthermore, he has pushed the federal government and other states in the direction of climate action because the federal government took too long to act. He claims himself that his laws inspired other states and the federal government and these are the fruits seen in Obama’s environmentally friendly policies (Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012). The process of electric vehicle adoption started fairly recently, and much of this can be owed to California’s efforts. Other states are now taking action, such as Alabama, that are innovatively and actively pursuing a greener infrastructure.

This thesis argues furthermore that executive orders and stark political language are methods that, through this document, have not ended up with the best diffusional results. Executive orders can be an effective tool within a state, but as far as the pattern of Medicaid Expansion shows, it is inefficient for political diffusion. As exemplified above, governors in some states, such as Alaska and Kentucky, enforced laws this way, while other legislatures prohibited later their own governors from that, as Michigan and Florida did. Negative framing can backfire on the politicians, as it did for the conservative governors that changed their views on Medicaid expansion during the 2012 timespan from the Supreme Court ruling to the presidential election (Singer & Rozier, 2020).

Coercion is not much used, and in those instances where coercion has occurred, it has seemingly had the reversed effect of what was intended. ACA cannot be forcefully implemented in states, and the NGA respects states' different views on the matter of Medicaid expansion. The governors started 2023 by addressing health care in their State of the State Addresses, and many mentioned expansions of some sort in their speeches (National Governors Association, 2023b). Medicaid expansion has much public support, so it is probable that more states will turn to this solution for uninsured residents (Krisberg & Leffler, 2022a).

It seems like the more ideologically bound a governor is, the less likely are the policies he or she produces, to spread into other states. The idealistic Republicans are more affected by lobbying groups and the Koch Network, while moderate Republicans, such as Romney and Schwarzenegger, are more pragmatically oriented and seemingly more successful (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). That is why Romneycare was a bipartisan law, slightly more expensive than he initially wished, but satisfactory for the majority of both parties in Massachusetts.

To have any political momentum and to reach out wider than one's own state, one needs to be moderate and willing to cooperate across party lines. As President, one might be slightly more idealistic, but governors do reach further with policies when they meet in the middle. This is partly why tracks of Gov. Romney's healthcare reform are prevalent in ACA and why Schwarzenegger's environmental policies stretch, not only across states, but into other nations as well (Crook, 2006; Schwarzenegger, 2011; Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012). Since environmental issues cannot be solved locally alone, this method of negotiating with other

nations proved successful in seeking attention from the federal government. On the other hand, the Great Experiment in Kansas barely reached outside of Kansas' borders. Brownback continues to work with politics, but recently it has been lobbying for religious committed politicians, and not in public and elected office (Dallas, 2022). Of the five most popular governors in the U.S. per 2020, four of them were Republicans, but they were executives in states with a Democratic majority (Hacker & Pierson, 2020). They were moderate enough to make an impact and be taken seriously as public servants rather than ideological saviors.

6.0 References

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