

Literature Review:
**Sheriff Elections and the
Carceral System**

Sarah Kliment and Gwen Byrne

Background

Framing the Conversation

1 in 100

Americans will be
jailed each year



1 in 3 detainees is
housed in a jail
system

88% of jail detainees
are housed in the
custody of sheriffs

43 states do not have
any term limits for
sheriffs

98% of counties
elect their sheriffs

60% of the jail
population is comprised
of pretrial detainees

Article:

Jails, Sheriffs and Carceral Policymaking

Aaron Littman

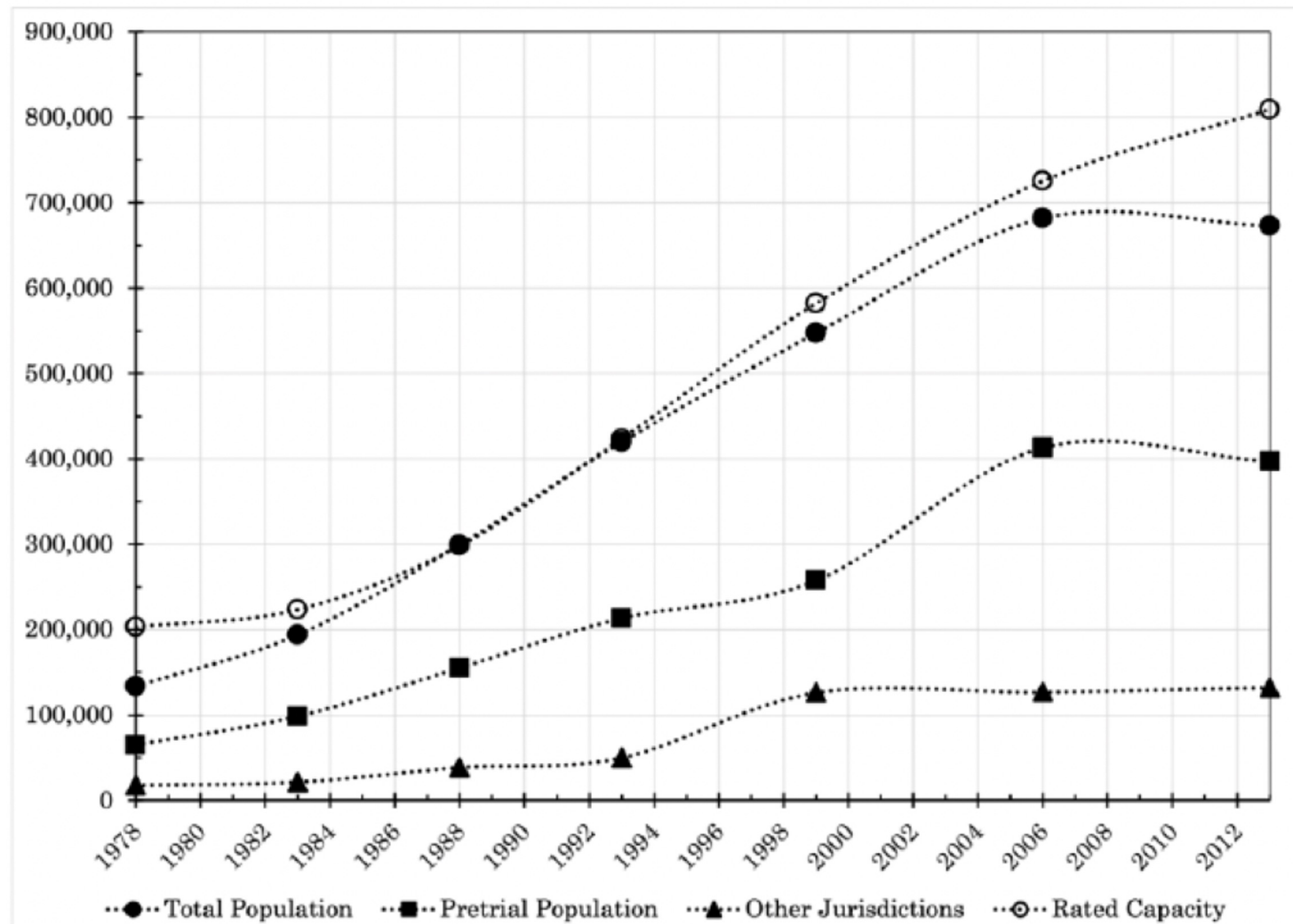
74 Vand. L. Rev. 861

Sheriffs As Bureaucratic Actors

“Sheriffs’ carceral policymaking reflects their interests as leaders of jail bureaucracies.”

- Sheriffs have a vested interest in partnering with private companies to build new bedspace.
- Between 1978-2013, the number of jails participating the in building new beds grew by 50%, from half to three-quarters of all jails

FIGURE 1: COUNTY JAIL POPULATION AND CAPACITY, 1978–2013



Note:

**Don't Elect Me: Sheriffs and the Need For
Reform in County Law Enforcement**

James Tomberlin

104 Va. L. Rev. 113 (2020)

Budgets and Sheriffs

- For example in Georgia, “Clinch County's financial control [over the sheriff] is attenuated because (a) the State mandates Sheriff Peterson's minimum salary ... and (b) Clinch County sets the total budget but cannot dictate how Sheriff Peterson spends it... Payment of Sheriff Peterson's budget, when required by the State, does not establish any control by Clinch County over his force policy at the jail or how he trains and disciplines deputies.
- Sheriffs often advocate for increased funding because they serve as the largest providers of mental health and addiction care

Article:

**How Partisan is Law Enforcement? Evidence
from Sheriff Cooperation with Immigration
Authorities**

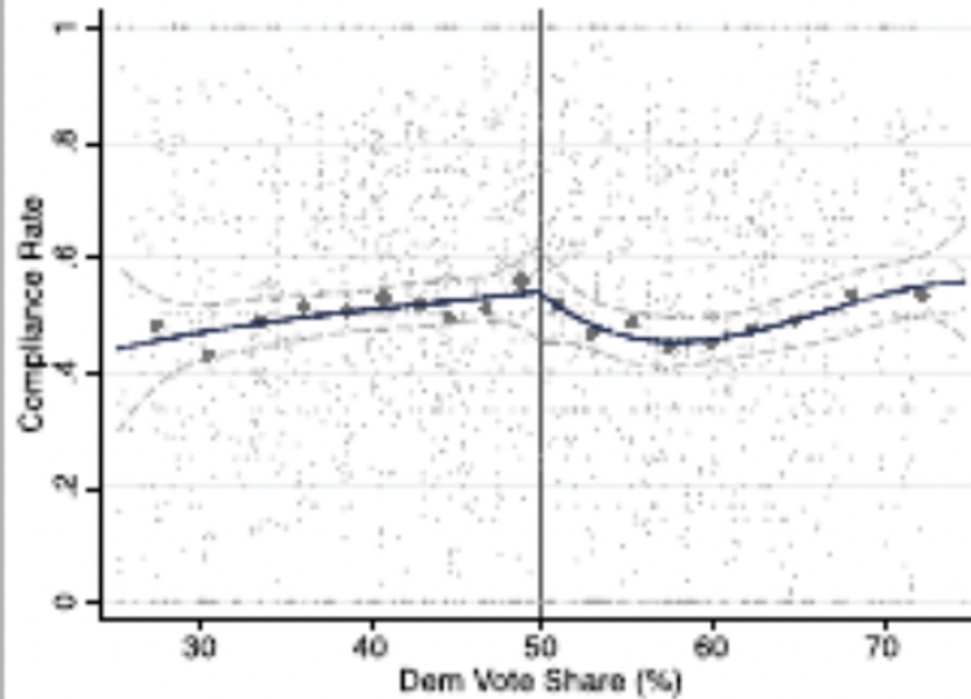
Daniel M. Thompson

114 Am. Pol. Sci. 222 (2019)

Sheriff Partisanship and Enforcement

- Democratic and Republican sheriffs from similar counties make similar immigration enforcement decisions
 - This is not limited to immigration enforcement
- Democratic sheriff candidates are much more likely to donate to Democratic candidates than for state and federal office than Republicans and vice versa

FIGURE 2. Republican and Democratic Sheriffs Comply With ICE Detainer Requests at the Same Rate



Each of the large dots represent binned averages of the underlying data. The small dots are the raw data. The blue line comes from a third-order polynomial regression of compliance rate on Democratic vote share fit separately for counties with Democratic and Republican winners.