

**SECULAR PERFORMANCE OF THE BANCADA RELIGIOSA IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES (2011-2018)**

***ATUAÇÃO SECULAR DA BANCADA RELIGIOSA NA CÂMARA DOS DEPUTADOS (2011-2018)***

***DESEMPEÑO SECULAR DE LA BANCADA RELIGIOSA EN LA CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS (2011-2018)***

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**ABSTRACT:** The Brazilian Political Science's literature demonstrates that the *bancada religiosa* acts in the Chamber of Deputies in order to defend typically conservative agendas linked to Christian morals and traditions. However, there are few works on the behavior of the members of the *bancada religiosa* in debates outside these themes. This article analyzes the performance of charismatic evangelicals and Catholics during the 54th and 55th legislatures, emphasizing their interest in secular agendas. To this end, we created a database through Data Science and webscraping, and the data were analyzed with the help of Python and R software. The data set includes, among other aspects, the participation in commissions and the bills filed by religious deputies in the period. It was possible to verify that there are agendas that go beyond the theme of customs, revealing interest in certain agendas normally considered as secular, but very important to the *bancada religiosa*.

**KEYWORDS:** Chamber of Deputies. “*Bancada religiosa*”. Legislative action. Bills. Secular repertoire.

**RESUMO:** A literatura da Ciência Política brasileira demonstra que a *bancada religiosa* atua na Câmara dos Deputados de modo a defender pautas tipicamente conservadoras, ligadas à moral cristã e aos costumes tradicionais. Porém, são escassos os trabalhos sobre o comportamento dos religiosos em debates alheios a esses temas. Este artigo analisa o desempenho de evangélicos e católicos carismáticos durante a 54ª e a 55ª legislaturas, enfatizando o seu interesse por pautas seculares. Para tanto, elaboramos um banco por meio de Data Science e webscraping, sendo os dados analisados com o auxílio de software Python e R. O banco compreende, entre outros aspectos, a participação em comissões e os projetos de lei protocolados pelos deputados religiosos no período. Foi possível averiguar que há agendas

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que extrapolam a temática dos costumes, revelando interesse por determinadas pautas normalmente consideradas como seculares, mas do interesse da bancada religiosa.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Câmara dos Deputados. Bancada religiosa. Ação legislativa. Projetos de lei. Repertório secular.

**RESUMEN:** La literatura de la ciencia política brasileña muestra que la bancada religiosa actúa en la Cámara de Diputados para defender agendas típicamente conservadoras, vinculadas a la moral cristiana y a las costumbres tradicionales. Existen pocos trabajos sobre el comportamiento de los religiosos en los debates no relacionados con estos temas. Este artículo analiza la actuación de los evangélicos y los católicos carismáticos durante las legislaturas 54 y 55, destacando su interés por las agendas seculares. Para ello, elaboramos una base de datos mediante Data Science y webscraping, siendo los datos analizados con la ayuda del software Python y R. La base de datos incluye, entre otros aspectos, la participación en comisiones y los proyectos de ley presentados por los diputados religiosos durante el periodo. Se pudo constatar que hay agendas que van más allá del tema de las costumbres, revelando el interés por ciertas agendas normalmente consideradas seculares, pero de interés para la bancada religiosa.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Cámara de los Diputados. Bancada religiosa. Acción legislativa. Proyectos de ley. Repertorio secular.

## Introduction

If we take the indirect election of a civilian to the presidency (in 1985) or the promulgation of the new Constitution (in 1988) as a landmark of redemocratization, we will see that the current Brazilian democratic regime has surpassed the mark of three uninterrupted decades of functioning. It may seem little, but it is the longest period of continuity of the institutions that make up a Democratic State of Law in our troubled republican history.

Many changes took place during this period: the party system (with some parties older than the democratic regime itself, since they were founded in 1979) continually fragmented (CARREIRÃO, 2014), endemic party migration (MELO, 2004) gave rise to frequent processes of merger or creation of new parties (ABRANCHES, 1998), the ban on migration during the mandate restructured the pattern of behavior (BINS, 2017), we went through governments of different ideological strands, we faced two impeachment processes and numerous political crises.

However, aside from instability, one of the rare phenomena that showed significant constancy was the difficulty for parties and leaders more linked to the right to assume themselves as such. In the 1980s, Rodrigues (1987) highlighted this phenomenon by stressing

that few constituent deputies identified themselves and the parties to which they were affiliated as belonging to the right. Since then, the permanence of the “embarrassed right” phenomenon has been constantly tested and proven, including the reference works by Pierucci (1987; 1999), Power and Zucco Jr. (2009) and Zucco Jr. (2011).

However, after these contributions, the first academic articles begin to emerge that bring evidence that the phenomenon in question may be losing ground within the Brazilian political elite. Even so, if we consider the analysis of the plenary pronouncements, until the last year of the 55th Legislature, except for a restricted (but extremely active) group of federal deputies who assumed they were right-wing, a large part of parliamentarians remained cautious in relation to assuming and to publicly mobilize such identity (QUADROS; MADEIRA, 2018).

However, as of the 2018 elections, the political scenario and the posture of numerous emerging leaders give strong signs that a decisive change in this pattern is taking place. The increase in the presence of deputies linked to the *bancadas*<sup>4</sup> of the “bullet, the Bible and the ox” – *bancadas* BBB (Portuguese initials) –, as well as the climate of polarization of the electoral debate and the victory of Jair Bolsonaro for the presidency, constitute concrete evidence of that the right is showing itself openly and massively for the first time in this democratic period.

Regarding specifically to one of the branches of the right, the so-called “evangelical bancada” (known for its conservative agenda, despite also having progressive parliamentarians within it), it is important to note that the process of abandoning “shame” has a previous genesis. Thus, the overcoming of the relative non-partisan quietism in the Constituent Assembly, the intense political-electoral activism, the creation of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in 2003, the numerical increase of the bloc in Congress, the growing opposition to progressive public policies, the conquest of strategic positions in and the mobilization of conservative identities as a political and electoral weapon made evangelical action in the public arena successful (and noisy). In an even more recent movement than the one led by Protestantism, the Catholic Church, especially through charismatic groups, invested in parliamentarians directly linked to their banners.

In the political debate, in the media coverage and even in academic works, the production on the religious bench (which theoretically would be formed by Evangelicals and Catholics) is certainly quite voluminous. However, the emphasis of such approaches usually

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<sup>4</sup> *Bancadas* (translated directly as benches, referring to the seat politicians occupy) is a term use to describe a group of parliamentarians of the same alignment, composing groups who act according ideals and try to put on schedule the same kind of decisions inside the Brazilian Congress



resides in the homogeneity of the group's performance in issues involving morals and customs. Thus, the defense of the traditional family, the opposition to public policies to promote the rights of LGBT groups, the intense struggle against “gender ideology” and attempts to stop the expansion of abortion are some of the elements that demonstrate Christian/conservative activism and inspire the punctual union of the agendas of evangelicals and Catholics in parliament, constituting one of the facets of the “new Brazilian right” (COWAN, 2014).

It is not possible, at this moment, to identify how much the shameful right-wing trend of exhaustion will last in time and whether it will have the breath to encompass most deputies linked to right-wing parties and the “BBB *bancadas*”. And that is not the focus of this article either. In fact, we propose to restrict the analysis in order to map and measure some patterns of parliamentary action of evangelical and Catholic charismatic deputies who are part of this *bancada* in the 54th and 55th legislatures (2011-2018) of the Chamber of Deputies.

According to the Glossary of Legislative Terms (2018, p. 2), parliamentary activity manifests itself as the “performance of activities related to the exercise of the mandate”, such as the elaboration, analysis and voting of different types of parliamentary proposals in the Committees and in the Plenary. In the legislative process, the production of Bills of Law (PL, Portuguese initials), one of the best known products of deputies' actions, is defined as the first step of legislative action. The work thus describes the action of congressmen in the elaboration of proposals considered “secular”, through the analysis of the content of some initiatives, when moral and customs issues are not in dispute.

The research, therefore, focuses on the evaluation of the parliamentary performance of evangelicals and charismatic Catholics, but emphasizing their positions on secular issues, linked, above all, to the area of the economy. Having as a time frame the space comprised by the two legislatures, we created a database through Data Science and webscraping, and the information was analyzed with the help of Python and R software. Public Finance and Budgets (CFT) and the legislative production of these deputies, through the mapping of Bills of Law filed in this institutional space. First, we will present a summary of the relationship between politics and religion in Brazil, as well as part of the conclusions from research published on the subject so far. Then, we will present the material, methods and data analysis session in order to show the conclusions.



## Politics and religion in Brazil: history and literature

As in many societies, the relationship between politics and religion is as old as it is complex in Brazil. Founded – at least from the formal point of view – by a decidedly Catholic empire, Brazil was born on the path of a simultaneously colonizing and evangelizing impetus, so that European adventurers interested only in raising riches lived in the New World with the Jesuit missions and with the ever-present influence of the magisterium of the Church of Rome.

Indeed, this influx remained even after independence, making itself visible in legal frameworks, in the action of political protagonists and in the *modus operandi* of the imperial state. It is not by chance that the Constitution of 1824 enshrined the patronage regime (according to which Catholicism was still recognized as an official religion, with the clergy considered, *roughly* speaking, as belonging to the body of State officials) and that one of the most serious crises nineteenth century politics was precisely the famous “Religious Question”, motivated by the insubordinate attitude of a bishop, D. Vital, in the face of the authority of D. Pedro II.

Not even the extinction of the patronage and the advent of a republic strongly inspired by positivism were enough to stifle Catholic influence in Brazilian politics. In spite of the Church-State separation and the resulting consequences (civil marriage, end of religious education and revocation of official religion status, for example), Catholicism continued to make itself felt through the bonds it had forged in society. This is how movements such as Catholic Action and Marian Congregations, embracing the Social Doctrine of Leo XIII and the calls of Pius XI, re-signified the capacity of Catholics to act in the Brazilian public debate, now making use of the expedient of transferring the line of front of militancy for the laity.

It is important to highlight, in this particular, the political results obtained by another important movement, the Catholic Electoral League (LEC), which in a way was the predecessor of religious pressure groups of the present time. “In the election of 1933, to compose the Constituent Assembly, most of the candidates supported by the LEC were elected”. After all, “The Catholic Church was interested in the election of candidates committed to the Catholic cause, because only then would it be possible to maintain the link between the religious institution and the State” (DEBALD, 2007, p. 57, our translation). As a result of this representation, the Magna Carta encompassed several Catholic demands, such as the mention of God in the preamble, the reintroduction of religious teaching and the guarantee of the presence of priests in barracks and prisons.



Contrary to the conservatism that characterized the aforementioned movements, the 1960s saw the advent of more prominent progressive groups within Brazilian Catholicism. In addition to the figure of D. Hélder Câmara and the stance adopted by sectors of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), the so-called “Catholic Left” found itself projected by certain inclinations radiated by the Second Vatican Council and by Liberation Theology. This is the case of the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs), a movement that directed many Catholic communities to the “preferential option for the poor” and to participate in the “popular struggles” against the civil-military regime (COUTINHO, 2009). The left, too, now had a Catholic arm.

In parallel with this new current, Brazilian Catholicism continued to produce movements of a conservative nature, with the Brazilian Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP. Portuguese initials), founded in 1960 by Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, a layman who, with the support of the LEC, had been elected deputy for the 1934 constituency with the highest number of votes in the country.

Some of the themes that most mobilized campaigns by the TFP were against agrarian reform; in defense of the monogamous and indissoluble family; against abortion; against television immorality; against the disarmament of civilians; against Catholic progressivism, against the Landless Workers Movement (MST, Portuguese initials), in favor of agribusiness, etc. (ZANOTTO, 2010, p. 95, our translation).

If the LEC was a forerunner in the strategy of occupation of political spaces by the religious in the Brazilian republic, parallels can also be drawn between the agenda described above and the appeals of the religious bench today. In short, yesterday, as today, it was a matter of defending traditional Christian morality, putting a brake on movements and public policies with a progressive bias.

On the other hand, the specific proselytizing of evangelicals only gained effective conditions to become politically relevant after the redemocratization that took place in the 1980s. Until then, the undisputed predominance of Catholicism in society made the resonance of demands coming from Protestant sectors marginal. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2010), the group called “evangelical” (which brings together the churches of traditional Protestantism, Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals)

made up only 6.6% of the Brazilian population in 1980, but passed to 15.4% in 2000 and a considerable 22.2% in 2010<sup>5</sup>.

If the number of believers could naturally give political weight to evangelical churches, a paradigm shift was also noted in the posture of these institutions over time, transforming what was potential into reality. In fact, the book published by an evangelical political advisor in 1986, Josué Sylvestre – symptomatically titled *Brother Votes for Brother* –, showed that pastors from different denominations worked to reach another level of representation of Christian agendas, making themselves candidates orchestrated to represent the interests of their flocks in the profane world. If in 1982 only 12 federal deputies belonged to the evangelical ranks, in 1986 this number jumped to 32, while in 2002 there were already 51 evangelical congressmen (MARIANO, 2005).

Thus, an unprecedented player in Brazilian politics was consolidated, which in many moments joined the preexisting secular and Catholic right to introduce a new dynamic to the political-ideological clashes in the country.

This is because Catholics, of course, did not abstain from political militancy in redemocratized Brazil. In parallel with the less visible initiatives driven by the ecclesiastical hierarchy and its multiple institutional channels, Catholics to some extent resumed part of the impetus of Catholic Action and the LEC through Catholic cultural centers and the Charismatic Renewal movement.

In the first case, realizing the growing repercussion of conservative ideas in Brazilian society, the creation of entities such as D. Bosco Center and Anchieta Center was envisioned, aimed at disseminating traditional Catholic doctrine by offering training courses, the publication of books and the dissemination of messages on social networks. In the second case, that of the charismatics, it was perceived that the popularity gained (especially among young people) by “singing priests” linked to the movement constituted capital that could also be channeled into political representation.

This unquestionable and persistent ability of religious groups to interfere in the strictly political sphere allows the Brazilian context to be included in the idea of “quasi secularism” suggested by Catroga (2006). It is not without reason, therefore, that scholars are interested in the political action of such groups, especially in parliaments.

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<sup>5</sup> Some projections assume that the number of evangelicals tends to exceed that of Catholics in the first half of the 21st century. (ALVES *et al.*, 2017).



Indeed, the most widely circulated academic research on the role of evangelicals in Brazilian politics began in the 1990s, through precursors such as Mariano and Pierucci (1992), Freston (1994) and Burity (1994). It was a question, at that moment, of understanding a movement whose dimension was still unpredictable, since it was recent and which only allowed for a glimpse of the nature of its core and the objectives that cherished its protagonists.

However, in parallel with the increase in the number of believers, the success followed by churches such as *Universal do Reino de Deus* in the direction of occupying political spaces meant that a large volume of new works began to identify more visible and perennial patterns. Thus, the target of most of the studies migrated to the performance of the concrete case of what was then called “evangelical bench”. Among this huge universe of research, Bohn (2004), evaluates the ingredients that form the moral vision of evangelical voters transferred to political platforms of deputies-pastors. Natividade and Oliveira (2009) examine the positions adopted by the caucus in relation to public policies discussed in the National Congress, just as Almeida (2017) relates the caucus with conservative movements in general, as well as Rodrigues-Silveira and Cervi (2019) weave relationships between the number of existing churches at regional levels and the vote obtained by evangelical federal deputies and Mariano and Gerardi (2019, 2020) scale the strategies carried out by evangelicals in specific presidential elections, such as that of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

Thus, the caucus' ideology, its performance in parliament on issues dear to Christian morality, its ties to the right in general, its constituencies, and its lobbying efforts in majority elections were well mapped by a justifiably broad literature.

Research focused on understanding the role of charismatic Catholics in parliaments is less abundant. Although the small number of charismatic parliamentarians can, a priori, explain such a gap, it is important to consider that there is a potential for growth (or, at least, stabilization) of Catholic activism in the Chamber of Deputies, as suggested by the solidity of the Church in Brazil and its history of interaction with the political sphere.

Even so, articles such as those by Silveira (2008) demonstrate how the religious/theological singularities of the Charismatic Renewal are transferred to the scope of the political vision, Almeida and Freitas (2009) analyze the bills presented by deputies linked to the movement and Procópio (2012) points to the diversity of profile shown by charismatic candidates in elections.

Both in works that investigate evangelical parliamentarians and those that address charismatics, it is clear, however, that the bulk of research efforts focus on understanding





strictly religious behavior, given that ideological and moral issues are directly related to their confessional loyalties. In this sense, there is a visible lack of studies that measure the secular performance of these deputies. In summary, it is in this task that we intend to focus on the following lines.

### **Mapping the secular performance of religious**

The time frame of this research configures the 54th and 55th legislature (2011-2018) in the Chamber of Deputies. We inserted the variable “religious self-declaration”, in order to reach the group of “religious”, as if it were a political party. The research uses information from the Chamber's Open Data Portal (BRASIL, 2022a), having as instruments the Python and R Codes and Data Science and Webscraping methods, for the composition of the research database (which we call legislative production), as it includes all types of bills, amendments, initiatives and votes, as well as several other categories.

For the arrangement of the databases, the research considers the set of federal deputies with a mandate in the analytical framework<sup>6</sup>. Data extraction used public data on the performance of political agents, through an API – Application Programming Interface (BRASIL, 2022b). Using this application, through Webscraping, a tool for extracting Big Data from the internet, we created a code to obtain the participation of parliamentarians in Commissions and the set of all parliamentary propositions in the clipping, which provides empirical support for the research. The list of deputies and analyzes will be shared on the investigation's GitHub, on the internet<sup>7</sup>.

In order to describe the action of evangelical and charismatic Catholic parliamentarians in parliament, the data analysis considers the participation in commissions and the drafting of bills. In the classification process, the confessional self-declaration of the deputies reflects, therefore, the actors' belonging to a certain set of beliefs and religious practices. Respecting this statement, the survey classifies deputies as “evangelical” and “charismatic Catholics”, totaling 106 deputies (evangelicals = 96 and charismatics = 10), in both legislatures.

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<sup>6</sup> In the 54th legislature, the deputies were (N = 628) and in the 55th (N = 596), which exceeds the amount of 513 due to substitutions, deaths, cancellation of mandates, among other factors. Evangelicals represent 97 cases, and charismatics, 8. Parliamentarians without religious affiliation total 813 occurrences, in both legislatures.

<sup>7</sup> See GERARDI, André. Repositório. Dados da pesquisa Evangélicos, católicos e ação legislativa: o padrão secular de atuação da “bancada religiosa” na Câmara dos Deputados (2011-2018). Postado em 2021. Available: [https://github.com/andregerardi/direita\\_crista\\_br](https://github.com/andregerardi/direita_crista_br). Access: 29 Apr. 2022.



The analysis of the material strengthens the centrality of the individual legislative process of congressmen in the elaboration of requirements, public speeches, amendments, Bills and other thirty proposal formats, given that it totaled N=165,541 cases in the clipping. The legislative output of Christians and deputies in general, by year, can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1** – General legislative output of Christians in the House (2010-2018)

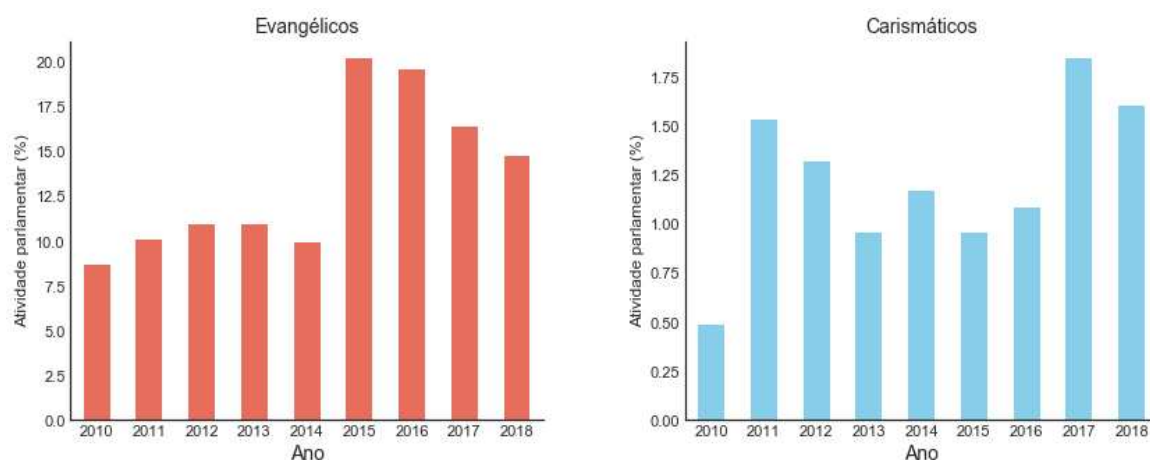
Year	charismatic	evangelicals	Total of the Chamber
2010	37	657	7608
2011	408	2684	26641
2012	245	2025	18589
2013	207	2367	21738
2014	143	1215	12260
2015	264	5554	27565
2016	189	3415	17441
2017	407	3624	22123
2018	185	1704	11576
<b>Total</b>	<b>2085</b>	<b>23245</b>	<b>165541</b>

Source: Devised by the authors using data from the Chamber of Deputies

It is noticed that the performance varies a lot and does not reveal a straight pattern of rise or decline of activism in legislative production. The peak of production from evangelicals was in 2015 (with 5,554) and that of charismatics was in 2011 (408), showing an increase of more than 230% in their production, in that year alone. It is also clear that the production of evangelicals is vastly greater, which is largely due to the much larger number of parliamentarians. Finally, it should be noted that in 2015, evangelicals alone accounted for just over 20% of the production of the entire Chamber of Deputies, which indicates a growth of more than 100% compared to the activity in 2014.



**Graph 1 – Legislative production of Christian deputies, per year (%)**



Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from the Chamber of Deputies

With more than forty variants, the Requests, if added to the Parliamentary Speeches (N=88,018), represent more than half (53%) of the deputies' actions in the 54th and 55th legislatures<sup>8</sup>. Although important, such production does not aim at proposing public policies, regulation and even the production of laws, since they denote an inspection and publicity activity, most of the time. Based on this fact, a filter condensed all the bills and their variants into a single variable, called Law Projects, given that it represented 13% of the bank (21,569 out of 165,541), which is described in Table 2:

**Table 2 – Types of proposals from Christian deputies, by legislature (2010-2018)**

Types of Bills	53 <sup>rd</sup> Leg.*			54 <sup>th</sup> Leg.			55 <sup>th</sup> Leg.		
	C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G
Bill	3	53	724	56	900	7299	170	2301	10426
Complementary Law Project	1	1	32	5	34	421	9	67	489
Proposal for Inspection and Control		3	25	3	18	181	7	43	202
Proposed Amendment to the Constitution		2	49	4	32	408	4	89	426
Bill for Suspension of Normative Acts of the Executive Branch.		2	21	1	24	121	18	85	508
Conversion Bill		1	10		3	44			1
Draft of Legislative Decree		1	11		11	67	1	12	43
Draft Resolution of the National Congress			1			4			4
Draft Legislative Decree of Referendum or Plebiscite					2	16		1	6
Writing Proposal for the Loser in the First Round						3			0
Preliminary Report Presented with Amendments						2			5
Preliminary report						1			1
Draft Legislative Decree of Provisional Measure						0		1	8
Proposal						0			3
Bill of the House of Representatives (SF)						0			3

<sup>8</sup> Since the weakening of the Federal Government in 2015, religious deputies have increased participation in public debates, as well as increased criticism of public policies, which results in an increase in the number of requests and speeches..



Bill for Amendment of Legislative Decree									2
Federal Senate Bill									1
Proposal for Normative Instruction									1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1024</b>	<b>8567</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>2599</b>	<b>12129</b>

Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from Chamber of Deputies

N total = 21.569

C = charismatic, E = evangelicals, G = General

\* Data are for the year 2010 only.

It is worth noting that the number of Draft Legislative Decree (PDL, Portuguese initials) to Suspend Acts of the Executive Power grew considerably in the 55th Legislature, a period that coincides with the second Dilma Rousseff government (plunged into crises that culminated in impeachment) and with the Michel Temer government. (a “buffer mandate” also characterized by crises). The number of Law Projects (PL's) authored by Christians grows, but follows a general movement.

Considering the 10 main areas of linkage of these bills, in the 54th Legislature, deputies in general presented more initiatives in the areas “Labor and Employment” and “Public Administration”, a fact that was also verified in the subsequent legislature. Evangelical parliamentarians invested in the areas of “Public Finance and Budget”, “Human Rights and Minorities” and “Public Administration”, while charismatics focused on the sector of “Human Rights and Minorities”, “Public Administration” and “Homages” . This is what is extracted from the analysis of Graph 2:



**Graph 2** – Propositions of Christian deputies by thematic area (2011-2018) in (%)



Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from Chamber of Deputies

The ideological performance of Christians in the area of Human Rights, an area that brings together many discussions involving the theme of customs, is quite pronounced. Religious activism in this sector indicates a higher rate compared to other deputies in both legislatures, to the point of revealing itself to be the main field of religious militancy, especially in the 55th administration. In this legislature, evangelicals presented more initiatives in sectors associated with Public Administration, Development and Economy, showing greater interest than charismatics in the areas of “Labor and Employment”, “Consumer Defense” and “Health”.

It is also worth noting that “Public Finance and Budget” was the area with the highest volume of propositions by evangelicals during the 54th Legislature. If we consider that several other areas make up his legislative agenda, it is clear that, as with the charismatics, his interests during his term go beyond themes more associated with the churches. Therefore, there is an important secular agenda, which indicates that the representation of Christian deputies cannot be conceived as monothematic (they are not there in the name – only – of religion).

The approval rate of projects accepted for publication did not exceed 1% in the two legislatures in the case of evangelicals. The charismatics approved 1.4% of their proposals in the 55th Legislature, given that they represented 1.6% in the general group in the 54th



legislature and 1% in the 55th, demonstrating a certain homogeneity (Table 3). The low number of approved proposals is not, however, a novelty in the legislative process, since most of the projects, although being processed jointly in several Permanent or Special Committees, remain long periods awaiting opinions and different referrals, as well as being withdrawn by the authors. . Unconstitutional proposals are filed with the Constitution and Justice and Citizenship Commission (CCJC, Portuguese initials), and projects that do not indicate the source of funds for their implementation have the same fate in the Public Finance and Taxation Commission (CFT, Portuguese initials).

Table 3 shows some categories in the two legislatures. If we compare the classes, in the 55th legislature, there is a reduction of proposals destined to the archive, as the projects start to be processed jointly in several Special Commissions, constituted in the period in which the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies was occupied by the deputy of the Assembly of God, Eduardo Cunha (PMDB-RJ). In this administration, the share of bills filed decreased, without resulting in a greater number of approved proposals. In fact, there is a reduction of proposals filed in the 55th, in relation to the 54th, in general.

**Table 3** – Status of proposals submitted by Christian deputies and legislature

Proposal status	54 <sup>th</sup> Legislature*			55 <sup>th</sup> Legislature*		
	E.	C.	G	E.	C.	G
Archived	35,8	49,3	44,8	30,4	30,6	28,6
Processing together	27,5	21,7	25,0	39,5	36,8	36,7
Awaiting Opinion	6,3	4,3	3,7	6,0	9,6	8,1
Withdrawn by the Author	5,6	4,3	4,7	2,5	1,4	2,6
Transformed into a Legal Standard	1,1	0	1,6	0,6	1,4	1,0

Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from Chamber of Deputies

\* The data do not add up to 100%, as we only selected the three most frequent situations.

Considering Christian projects, the conversion into a legal norm does not include proposals from economic areas, although it links a good number of initiatives in the field of “Public Finance and Budget”, which require technique, legal language and indication of sources of funds for their admission. “Homages and commemorative dates”, however, represent 39% of the accepted proposals of evangelicals (11 of 28) and 33% of charismatic Catholics (1 of 3), including the modification of the nomenclature of roads, bridges, viaducts, schools and other public infrastructure. It is true that such initiatives have little impact on the public budget, generating, however, political results, public visibility and accountability to the electoral bases.



Another point that interests us concerns the thematic commissions in which the projects of Christian deputies were appreciated in greater volume. From the data processing, we arrive at Table 4. The presentation summarizes the ten main committees in which deputies bind their bills. The behavior of both groups is similar in the two legislatures, since 100% of the bills are submitted to the Bureau, which is responsible for redistributing such proposals, eventually sending them, a posteriori, to the Commissions. The data show that most of the projects are retained by the Bureau: almost half of the projects, regardless of the parliamentary group responsible for their formulation, with the exception of the Charismatics, with more than 60% of the proposals retained by the Bureau in the 54th legislature.

**Table 4** – Path of proposals sent by Christians to the Bureau by legislature

Commissions	54 <sup>th</sup> legislature			55 <sup>th</sup> Legislature		
	evangelicals	charismatic	General*	evangelicals	charismatic	General*
BUERAU	46,1	61,9	53,5	37,1	38,6	36,6
CCJC	15,9	7,1	12,4	17,2	15,8	16,5
PLEN	7,6	7,1	7,7	8,9	5,4	7,9
Diverse	6,8	9,5	6,1	7,5	8,7	6,8
CFT	6,3	2,4	6,7	6,7	9,8	8
CSSF	4,1	7,1	3,3	6,2	8,7	6,2
Without description	4	2,4	3,7	1,7	0,5	1,7
CTASP	2,3	0	1,5	2,9	2,2	3,7
CE	1,5	0	0,8	1,7	1,6	1,9
ARCHIVE	1	2,4	0,6	0	0	0

Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from Chamber of Deputies

\* The total does not reach 100% due to the fact that we selected only 10 main areas, where the proposals are linked, as well as we did not enter data from the 53rd legislature.

Another noteworthy aspect is that evangelicals and charismatics increased the percentage of proposals sent to the Finance and Taxation Commission during the 55th Legislature, a behavior that accompanies the general group, although the charismatics have filed fewer proposals in percentage terms in the 54th, in relation to later legislature.

What is striking, however, is the fact that the charismatics obtained the highest rates of proposals submitted to the Bureau in both legislatures, despite forming a much smaller group than evangelicals and almost insignificant in relation to deputies in general. There is, therefore, a non-negligible activism on the part of the charismatics with regard to legislative production.

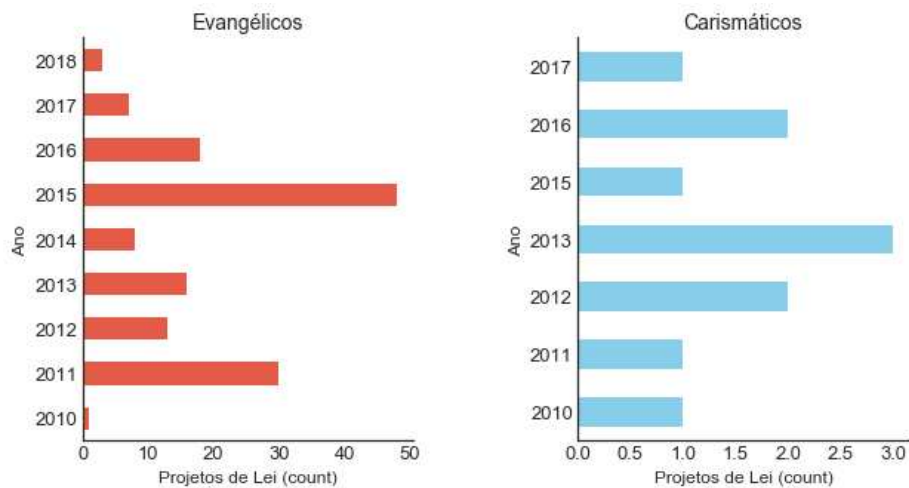
In order to obtain parliamentary action without ties to moral and customs issues, in line with the objectives of the investigation, the modeling considered projects not associated with



typical areas of political activism of evangelicals and Catholics: “human rights”, “education”, “public security”, “homages” and “health”, to analyze the performance in “economy” themes, certainly with a greater secular inclination.

As an important mechanism for the approval of matters within the scope of the legislative process, the Public Finance and Taxation Commission (CFT), given its focus, can be a path to unravel the secular characteristics of religious performance in relation to the presentation of projects. of law of its authorship. Based on this assumption, we searched for proposals in the area of Finance and Budget, reaching a total of 144 (evangelicals) and 11 (charismatics), as shown in Graph 3:

**Graph 3** – Proposals in the area “Public Finance and Budget” (total per year)



Source: Devised by the authors, based on data from Chamber of Deputies

From the list of evangelical deputies, 55 names have proposals in the area of “Public Finance and Budget”, among them one clearly progressive (Chico Alencar – PSOL<sup>9</sup>-RJ). Among the charismatics, six proposed initiatives in this commission (one being an openly progressive: Alessandro Molon (PSB<sup>10</sup>-RJ). or exempt taxes for specific categories and activities, the exception being the Complementary Law Project (PLP) 324/2016, authored by the charismatic missionary, linked to Canção Nova, Flavinho (PSB-SP). the great fortunes”, arguing his justification that “all levels and social classes pay in a solidary way the high costs to get out of the financial crisis in which the State finds itself, and not only the less favored bear the fiscal and financial constraints”.

<sup>9</sup> PSOL, Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (Socialism and Liberty Party).

<sup>10</sup> PSB, Partido Socialista Brasileiro (Brazilian Socialist Party).





Tax exemption is characterized as a pattern of legislative action by congressmen linked to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. PL 6167/2013 by deputy Izalci Lucas (PSDB<sup>11</sup>-DF) “grants exemption from income tax on teachers' remuneration”. In the justification, he attributes this differentiation to the “giant relevance of the activity”, as this would be a way of reestablishing the “dignity of the profession”. (the same deputy is also a supporter of the School Without Political Party Program). In PL 4871/2016, deputy Eros Biondini (PROS<sup>12</sup>-MG) proposes “tax incentives for the purchase of bicycles”, in order to “reduce the harm caused by the use of motor vehicles”.

As far as evangelicals are concerned, there are also three projects aimed at taxing large fortunes, but, in general, the same liberal emphasis on economic matters that guided the charismatic agenda: only 37 of the 144 projects do not explicitly aim to reduce taxes or grant tax exemptions. Of these, a good part is focused on issues that go beyond taxation, such as the transfer of the Social Integration Program (PIS) and the Contribution to the Financing of Social Security (COFINS, Portuguese initials) to states and municipalities, the renegotiation of the debts of these entities and the review aspects of the Fiscal Responsibility Law. In the others, the expressions “exemption” and “income tax deduction” (or similar) appear in the project's own menu.

The pastor of the Assembly of God, João Campos (PSDB-GO), in PL 1661/2011 (BRASIL, 2011), intends to allow “spouses, *companions* to opt for the special taxation regime”. Campos, in this proposal, does not reveal the defense of the traditional family, since he recognizes: “this joint *family* taxation would be advantageous even in cases where one of the *spouses* is unemployed”. The proposal was submitted in 2011, when the Federal Supreme Court (STF) already recognized same-sex marriage as a family entity. In the Finance and Taxation Commission (CFT), deputy João Gualberto (PSDB-SE), rapporteur of Campos' proposal, voted for rejection, for generating tax waiver “without having presented the estimate of the budgetary-financial impact”<sup>13</sup> and the proposal was shelved.

It should be noted that there is also an agenda that is simultaneously “secular” and defending the interests of churches. Inspired by PLP 470/2009, by deputy Gustavo Fruet (PSDB-PR), PLP 239/2013, authored by deputy from the Assembly of God, Marcos Rogério

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<sup>11</sup> PSDB, Partido Social Democracia Brasileira (Brazilian Social Democracy Party).

<sup>12</sup> PROS, Partido Republicano da Ordem Social (Republican Party of Social Order).

<sup>13</sup> BRASIL. Câmara dos Deputados. Projeto de Lei nº 1.661, de 2011. Available: [https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop\\_mostrarintegra?codteor=1513839&fi-lename=Tramitacao-PL+1661/2011](https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?codteor=1513839&fi-lename=Tramitacao-PL+1661/2011). Access: 05 Oct. 2020.



(PDT<sup>14</sup>-RO), amends the National Tax Code to establish “the procedures to be observed for the suspension of immunity”, which are provided for in Article 150, item IV, items “b” and “c”, of the Federal Constitution. Thus, it prohibits the imposition of taxes on “temples of any cult”, as well as taxes on the “patrimony, income or services of political parties, including their foundations, of workers’ union entities, of educational and social assistance institutions, without for profit, meeting the requirements of the law”. It should also be noted that the PRB<sup>15</sup> is commanded by pastors and bishops from the Universal do Reino de Deus Church<sup>16</sup> (IURD, Portuguese initials), while the PSC<sup>17</sup> is controlled by pastors from the Assembly of God. Marcos Rogério, therefore, names religious temples and the like as beneficiaries of tax immunity.

Except for similar initiatives, most of the projects point to the fact that the defense of economic liberalism by evangelicals transcends the mere interest of the institutions to which they belong, and that such defense comes in handy given that it serves an important “secular agenda” of the religious and their churches.

## Conclusions

There is a lack of studies that address aspects unrelated to the religiosity of Christian parliamentarians, despite the voluminous literature available on the role of religious deputies in Brazilian parliaments. However, the data presented here make it clear that secular issues are also part of the political activity of these actors.

It is quite likely that religious ties assume a central character in the mandate agenda of evangelicals and charismatic Catholics in the Chamber of Deputies, especially if we consider their loyalties, the basic demands of their electorates and the repercussion carried by the agendas that involve morals or social customs. However, propositions referring to other themes are present in a considerable number of propositions. Although the refinement of the research is imperative, the presence of topics such as Criminal Law in the list of propositions presented

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<sup>14</sup> PDT, Partido Democrático Trabalhista (Democratic Labor Party).

<sup>15</sup> PRB, Partido Republicano Brasileiro (Brazilian Republican Party) which in 2019 changed its nomenclature to “Republicans” and today has 32 congressmen and two senators.

<sup>16</sup> Since 2011, the PRB has been chaired by Marcos Pereira, currently a federal deputy, licensed pastor of the IURD and former vice-president of Record Network. In 2016, Pereira took over the Ministry of Development in the Temer government.

<sup>17</sup> The Christian Social Party (Partido Social Cristão - PSC) is led by Pastor Everaldo, from the Assembly of God. The 55th legislature had 10 federal deputies, and in the 56th 13 deputies affiliated to the party were elected.



may suggest that religious people eventually have interests in common with the “bullet bancada”, another vector of the Brazilian right today.

At the same time, a closer analysis by the Public Finance and Taxation Commission could generate broader conclusions on the secular agenda. However, we already have elements to infer that the projects authored by the religious deputies in this commission assume, in general, a strongly liberal character from the economic point of view, which directly serves one of the main secular interests of the churches (tax exemption). There may be another connection with the “new Brazilian right” and with Bolsonarism in particular (at least regarding the liberal discourse that was present during the 2018 presidential campaign).

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