

“Power in the House”

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Power in the House: Outline

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IV. Conclusion

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Course Updates

WHAT IS THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD?

From CRS:

"The Congressional Record is the most widely recognized published account of the debates and activities in Congress. The Record often reflects the intent of Congress in enacting legislation...

The Constitution mandates that each house shall keep and publish a journal of its proceedings. Accordingly, the House and Senate Journals, which are summaries of floor proceedings, are the official accounts of congressional proceedings, but the Record is better known and the most useful."

For your purposes, you might want to think about the Congressional Record covering your bill's debate as a episode of a television show.

HeinOnline, Congress.gov, the GPO, A Century of Lawmaking, are all streamlining services that can provide you with certain episodes (some with the full set). Congress.gov, for instance, provides the Congressional Record from 1994 on.

The Congressional Record will not cover committee consideration. But does provide you with floor debate.

Consider yourselves lucky you have so many online sources for it. "BACK IN PROFESSOR MADONNA'S DAY, THERE WILL ONLY HARD COPIES AND HE HAD TRUDGE THROUGH THREE FEET OF SNOW TO GET TO THE LIBRARY TO....". You get the point.



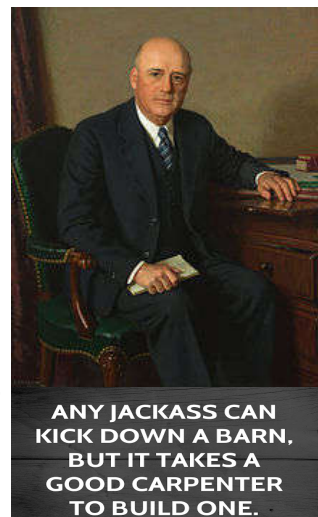
Cooper-Brady: Background

An accessible, older article that examines congressional history and partisan power.

Background:

Both Reed and Cannon were **STRONG** party leaders who took control over House rules and ruled the chamber with an iron, czar-like fist.

Speaker Sam Rayburn (D-TX), in contrast, was said to have a laid back manner of operating the House. He never twisted arms or tried to force outcomes. A Southern Democrat, liberals often accused him of being weak.



Above: Former House Speaker Sam Rayburn (D-TX) and his most famous quote (arguably).

Cooper-Brady: Key Question and CW



Above: Former House Speaker Uncle Joe Cannon and a fly-swatter.

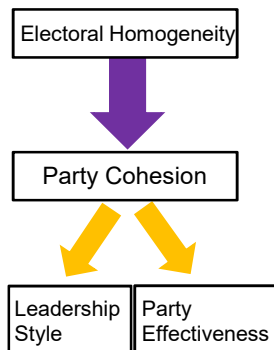
Question:

What determines how chamber leaders operate the House?

Conventional Wisdom:

Individual leader's attitudes/personality determine leadership style.

Cooper-Brady: Argument



Above: A poorly made flow chart of their argument.

Argument:

Members policy preferences, external and antecedent to Congress determine both the assertiveness of party leaders and policy outcomes. Leaders behavioral style and party success are not generally related.

Both are constrained by institutions which provide a primary role for electoral homogeneity and party cohesion.

Cooper-Brady: Method

Method:

They compare the speakerships of Reed & Cannon to Rayburn.

They use party voting scores to show Reed & Cannon presided over an era of high party cohesion and electoral cohesion.

On the latter point, they show substantial intra-party variance between district characteristics in Rayburn's era to the strong speakers.



Cooper-Brady: Conclusion and Limitations



Above: Former House Speaker Paul Ryan suggests slowing things down a bit.

Conclusion:

Leadership personality and characteristics are overvalued.

Limitations:

“Style” and “effectiveness” are assumed, but not clearly defined.

No control for party size.

The party cohesion vote threshold (90%) seems arbitrary.

Questions, Concerns, Angry Rants?



Next: Spatial Modeling and Congress