



## “Spatial Modeling in Congress”

Prof. Anthony Madonna  
 POLS 4620E  
 Lecture #11  
 University of Georgia

## Spatial Modeling in Congress: Outline

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- 2017 American Health Care Act
- “Regular Order”

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- Single-peakedness
- winset

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- Full participation
- Sincere voting

### Two dimensions

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- Indifference curves
- No obvious winner
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- Exercise

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What is a legislative body for? It is not merely to make laws. It is to decide on all questions of public grievance, to determine between the different views entertained by men of diverse interests, and to reconcile them both with justice. It must in some form hear the people. A negative decision by a legislative body is of as much value to the community as a law.

## 2017 American Health Care Act



In November 2016, after holding their majorities in both the House and the Senate and winning the White House, Republican Party leaders declared their top priority would be to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

The House had cast over 50 roll call votes on the floor to repeal President Obama's signature healthcare act by March of 2014 and made it a focal point in campaigns.

One House Republican cited this as an "ironclad commitment" to repeal the law.

## 2017 American Health Care Act

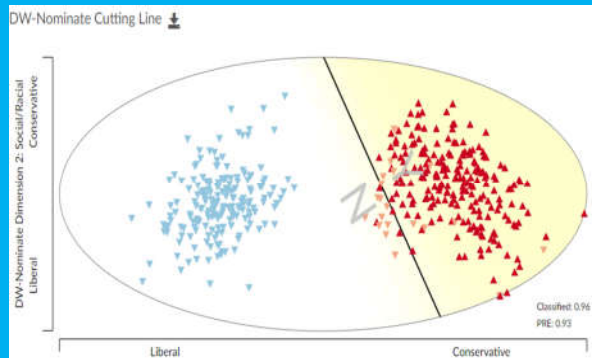
The American Health Care Act was unveiled on March 6, 2017.

The House then voted on four procedural motions with passed on near party-line votes. Despite pledges of unity, House leaders than pulled the bill after determining they lacked a majority in favor of the measure.

Nearly two months later, the House cast two more party-line votes on procedural motions. The bill than passed by a much more narrow 217-213 margin, with 20 defections.



## 2017 American Health Care Act



The six procedural votes in the House demonstrated a very unified Republican Party that cast 1396 “yes” votes with just 12 “noes”, for a party coalition of 99.25%.

This was consistent with the previous 50 repeal votes. But the final passage vote—and later defeat in the Senate—on a bill that was not a full repeal demonstrated a much more divided chamber.

This internal divide among Republicans was consistent with media coverage.

## “Regular Order,” Amendments and Leaders

In October of 2015, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) was elected Speaker of the House. Among other promises, Ryan pledged to allow more floor amendments through open processes and to return the House to “regular order” (DeBonis 2015).

Ryan’s predecessor, former-Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), had been aggressively criticized by members of both parties for his usage of special rules to bar amendments.

Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI): “When we offer amendments, they have to be approved by leadership before we get a vote on them and that’s not how our system is supposed to work,” he said. “Our system was designed to reflect the will of the people... And the speaker’s job is to ensure the system is open and [lawmakers] are given a fair opportunity to present their amendments.” “[The system] really broken.”



## “Regular Order,” Amendments and Leaders



Above: Ryan and Pelosi, neither of whom have any reason to root for LSU.

By May of 2018, Speaker Ryan and the 115th Congress had broken the record for the most closed rules in congressional history.

Ryan’s abdication of his promise for more open rules was not surprising given the difficulties inherent in contemporary lawmaking. Indeed, both Boehner and his predecessor, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) made similar “regular order” pledges on which they subsequently failed to deliver.

Legislation is getting longer and more complex (Curry 2015), interest group involvement has increased substantially over the past few decades (Drutman 2015), polarization has increased, and partisan control of Congress is highly competitive (Lee 2016).

This has led leadership to seek tighter control over the House floor in an effort to promote both their party’s policy goals and protect their electoral interests.

## Committee-Gatekeeper Overview



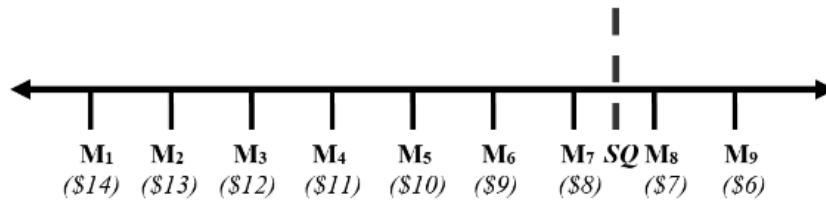
Above: Former House Rules Chair Harold “Judge” Smith (D-VA) used his negative agenda-setting powers effectively to impact policy output.

Premise behind this exercise is to demonstrate the importance of agenda-setting and rules.

These powers have fluctuated between party leadership and committees throughout history.

But they substantially impact policy output.

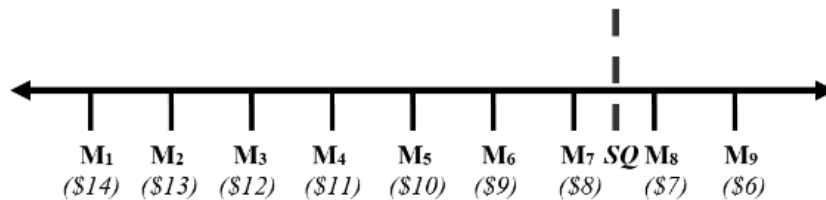
### Unidimensional Spatial Model: Terms



Assume the figure above represents a nine-member legislature. These nine members are ordered on a left (liberal) – right (conservative) ideological spectrum, with M1 being the most liberal, and M9 being the most conservative.

These members hold preferences on the federal minimum wage that vary from \$14 dollars (M1) to \$6 dollars (M9). In this example, the dashed line labelled SQ represents the existing (status quo) policy of \$7.50.

### Unidimensional Spatial Model: Terms

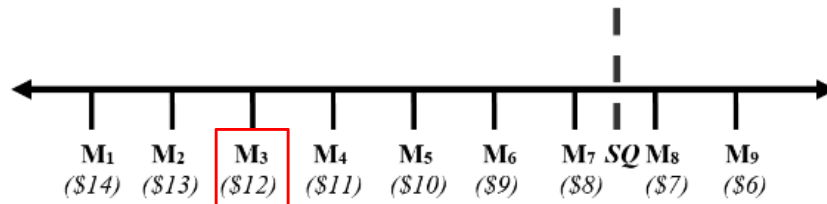


For M<sub>3</sub>, \$12 represents the individual's **ideal point** or most preferred policy position.

In unidimensional spatial games, we assume members have **single-peaked preferences**. Meaning, their utility slopes away equally on both sides as positions are further away from the ideal point. So under this assumption, M<sub>3</sub> is indifferent between M<sub>2</sub>'s ideal point of 13 dollars and M<sub>4</sub>'s ideal point of 11 dollars.

The **winset** comprises the set of points a majority prefers to a given position. So the winset for M<sub>3</sub> is M<sub>4</sub>, M<sub>5</sub> and M<sub>6</sub>.

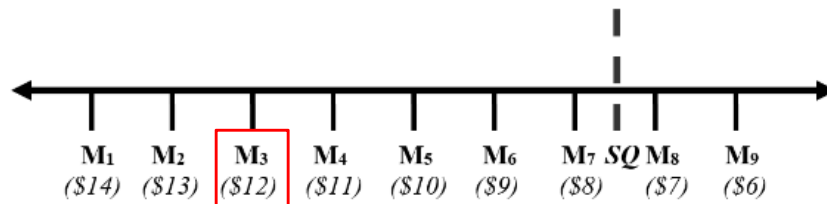
## Unidimensional Spatial Model: MVT



In the game above, assume a committee reported a bill to the floor at M<sub>3</sub>'s ideal policy (\$12).

Under an open rule, anyone on the floor can offer an amendment. Accordingly, under the **median voter theorem**, policy should collapse to M<sub>5</sub>'s ideal policy of \$10 (Black 1948).

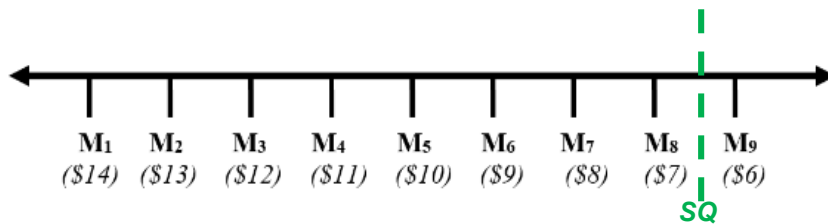
## Unidimensional Spatial Model: Rule Types



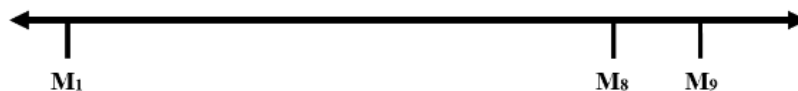
If the committee's bill is reported to the floor under a **closed rule** that bars any amendments, the floor is forced to choose between M<sub>3</sub>'s ideal policy of \$12 or the existing status quo of \$7.50. In this scenario, a majority (M<sub>1</sub>, M<sub>2</sub>, M<sub>3</sub>, M<sub>4</sub> and M<sub>5</sub>) of the committee prefer \$12 to \$7.50 and would vote for the committee bill.

This represents a substantial shift in policy from the \$10 outcome under the open rule scenario. This is consistent with former Rep. John Dingell's (D-MI), well-known quote: "If you let me write the procedure, and I let you write substance, I'll screw you every time (Evans 1999, 607)."

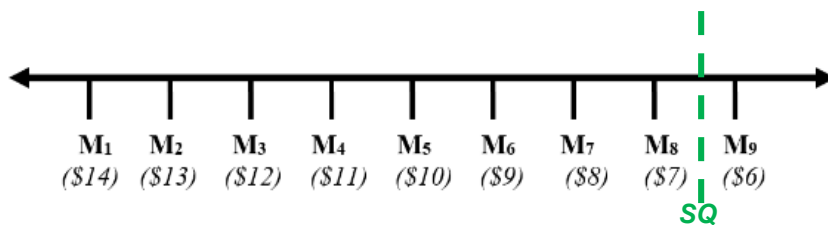
### Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Open Rule



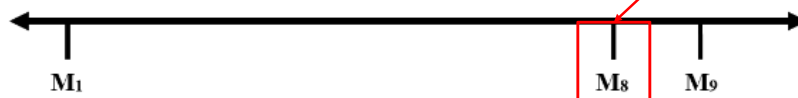
Let's assume the same figure above represents the preferences of members on the floor, though with the SQ falling at \$6.50. But let's assume the figure below represents a three-member committee that oversees the relevant policy area. Assuming simple majority rule on the committee, where will the committee's proposal be located?



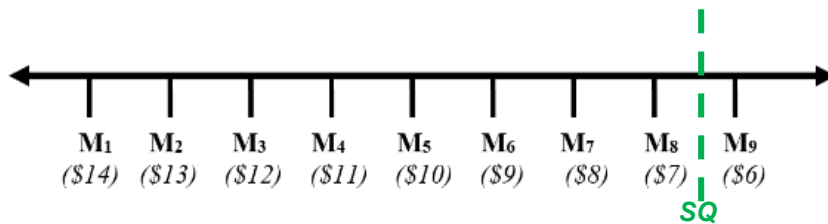
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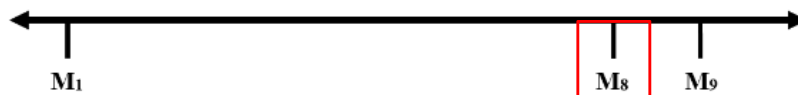
That's right! Under the median voter theorem, policy would collapse to  $M_8$ , the committee's median position. So the committee bill would provide for a \$7 minimum wage.



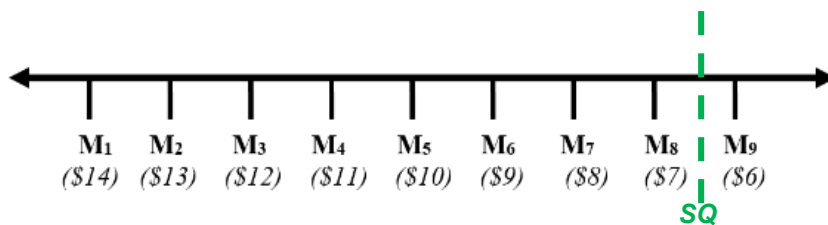
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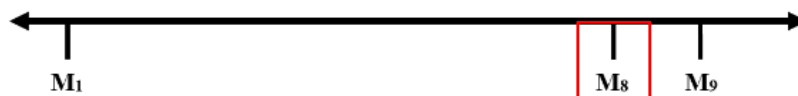
Given this, should the committee report the bill to the floor under an open rule? Remember: Under an open rule, they know that their bill will be amended to the floor median,  $M_5$ .



### Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Open Rule

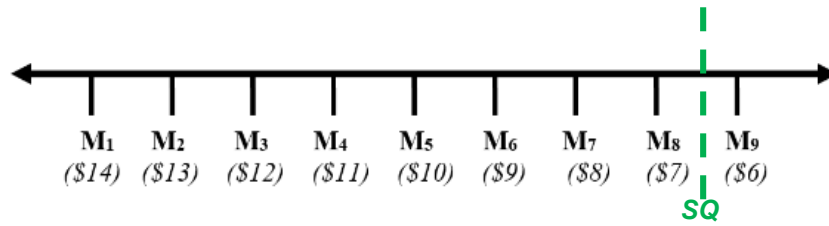


Correct! The Committee would **NOT** report the bill because they know policy would collapse to the median,  $M_5$ , under an open rule. And a majority of members on the committee ( $M_8$  and  $M_9$ ) prefer the status quo to  $M_5$ .

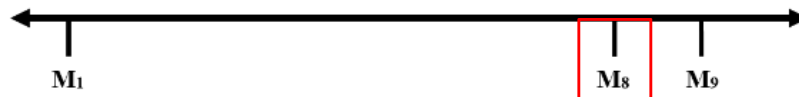




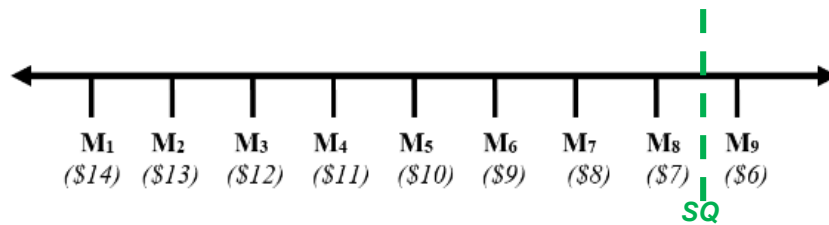
### Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Closed Rule



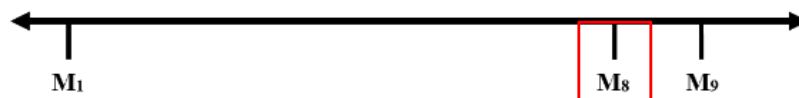
Given the committee's proposal and the status quo, under a closed rule should the committee report the bill to floor? Why or why not? Remember: under a closed rule the floor will be forced to either vote for the committee's bill or the status quo.



### Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Closed Rule



Correct! The Committee **WOULD** report the bill because they know a majority of the floor would prefer their bill,  $M_8$ , to the status quo under a closed rule.



## Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Open Rule

**Table 1: Final Policy Outcome by Rule Type and Committee Decision**

	OPEN	CLOSED
REPORT	Floor Median	Committee Median <b>OR</b> Status Quo
BLOCK	Status Quo	Status Quo

The committee's decision is on the left, the rule environment (which is given) is either open or closed. Regardless of the rule type, if the committee "blocks" the bill, the policy will stay at the status quo.

Under an open rule, the policy will always collapse to the floor median. Therefore, the committee should report their bill only if a majority of committee members prefer the floor median to the status quo.

## Committee-Gatekeeper Game: Closed Rule

**Table 1: Final Policy Outcome by Rule Type and Committee Decision**

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Under a closed rule, the committee must first determine whether a majority of the floor would support their proposal (the committee median) over the status quo. If so, they should report the bill. If not, the final policy will be the status quo regardless, so they should block

## Questions, Concerns, Angry Rants?



Next: More spatial modeling. And House rules!