"Parties in Congress: A to Z (Part 1)"
Prof. Anthony Madonna
POLS 4105 Spring Semester
3/16/2021
University of Georgia

Course Updates (3/16/21)

EXAM 1:

Has been e-mailed back. They went well, though I graded them fairly easily. Average was an 89, which was around my expectation headed in.

section	median	mean	low	high	points
2	90	89.37	70	100	10
3	86.25	84.6	72.5	92.5	40
4	100	93.7	60	100	15
5	86.67	87.8	73.3	100	15
6	100	96	75	100	20
Exam 1	91	89.25	70	96	100

EMAILS:

Have a few outstanding. Don't hesitate to text or stick around for office hours.

MOVING FORWARD:

Grading now, it's been a mixed bag. Clarifications have helped.

On the reaction papers…

MOVING FORWARD:

Today: Parties in Congress; Thursday: U.S. Senate History.

For last week: Watch "Lincoln."

News 3/16

What do you guys have?

Vaccines, COVID Relief, Amazon unionization, Cuomo, Joe Manchin, minimum wage, the Senate parliamentarian's office, Russian sanctions, Iran deal, voting rights
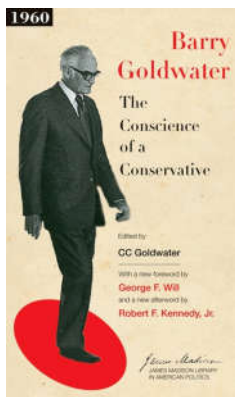
Party Theories

Ideology v. Party (the Debate):

Can you show a member's party affiliation *independently influences* a member's vote once you control for the member's ideology?

In other words, does someone like former Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) have an ideologically conservative voting record because he's a Republican OR is he a Republican because he is ideologically conservative?

Ideology

1960
Barry Goldwater
The Conscience of a Conservative

Edited by:
CC Goldwater

With a new foreword by
George F. Will
and a new afterword by
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

What is it?

Is it substantive?

Is it simply methodological? Meaning, is it primarily a number political observers use to predict behavior?

If it's substantive is it just a cue for voters or is there a deeper meaning and utility for it?

Certainly it provides a cue. A "conservative" is generally associated with lower taxes.

There is also a measurement component. It helps us predict policy output, which is useful.

Party Theories

Why do we care?

A really important question…

Do we vote for the member **_OR_** the party?

Knowing the influence of party helps voters make that choice.

It also helps analysts better predict legislative outcomes.

Above: Newly elected Rep. Mike Garcia (R-CA), who campaigned aggressively on being an "independent voice" in Washington.

Finally, if the goal is to fix problems stemming from "polarization," knowing the impact of parties is key. If parties are already impactful, then further strengthening them is unlikely to fix polarizations.

Party Theories

Above: Senate Republicans surround Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) after he waivered on a pivotal vote during the Judiciary Committee hearings on Supreme Court Appointee Brett Kavanaugh in 2018.

<u>Why might they matter independent of preferences?</u>

There is electoral value in maintaining a coherent partisan "brand name." It provides a useful cue for voters.

Parties can provide electoral resources by way of campaign cash. Moreover, they can offer institutional resources that may also help members campaigns (committees assignments, legislative favors, etc.).

Party pressure: members socialize with fellow partisans and do not want to alienate them.

Members are willing to trade their support on many issues, as they may not hold fixed positions on everything.

Party Theories

<u>Why might they **NOT** matter?</u>

In U.S. politics, members are expected to mobilize their own resources to win primary elections.

They represent geographic districts that incentivize them to defect from the party line when necessary.

Above: The top two delegate winners in the 2016 Republican primary, neither of whom enjoyed much support from the party establishment.

Legislative and Executive branch ambition does not reward members who campaign as loyal partisans.

Leadership resources to induce party loyalty are limited.

Party Theories: CPG

Above: Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

<u>Conditional Party Government (Aldrich and Rohde) ("CPG")</u>

Parties due have an independent impact on member behavior when the "conditions" are met.

Specifically, when intra-party homogeneity and inter-party heterogeneity are both high, the majority party should be more successful in structuring the House floor.

This is because rank and file members centralize authority to the Speaker and other leaders in a variety of ways (more control over committee appointments, allow them to use restrictive rules more, etc...).

Party Theories: CPG

How do the conditions in CPG work? To answer that, consider a hypothetical 11 member legislature organized on an ideological (left-right) unidimensional spectrum. There are six majority party Democrats ("D") and five minority party Republicans ("R").

When should power be centralized leading to more party effects?

D R D R D R R D D R

In the Figure above, neither condition is met. The majority Democratic party is not ideologically homogenous. Democrats are spread out all over the ideological spectrum. Nor are the two parties ideologically heterogenous, Republicans and Democrats overlap ideologically.

So power should be dispersed.

Party Theories: CPG

D R D   R
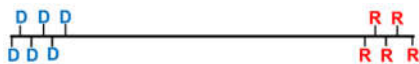D D R D R D R

D   D   D   D   D   D   R R R R

In both of the figures above, only one condition is met. In the top figure, the majority party is ideologically homogenous (i.e. the Democrats are all fairly liberal). However, interparty heterogeneity is low (i.e. the Republicans are also fairly liberal and the parties overlap). Accordingly, there is no need for the majority to centralize power.

In the second figure, interparty (between party) heterogeneity is high. There is a lot of ideological spread between the Democratic and Republican Party medians. However, intraparty homogeneity is low. Majority Party Democrats are spread out all over the ideological spectrum. Thus, centralizing power in the hands of a speaker is risky as they may move on policies where there is policy disagreement.

So power should be dispersed in both cases.

Party Theories: CPG

D D D   R R
D D D   R R R

In the Figure above, both conditions are met. The Majority Party Democrats are ideologically cohesive and there is significant spread between them and the Republican Party. Accordingly, they should centralize power under a Speaker.

These centralized powers will allow the Speaker and Majority Party to push through policies at a quick rate, thus allowing them to maximize policy gain.

So power should be centralized.

Party Theories: PCT

Above: Former Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) became the high-ranking elected official in American history to receive a prison sentence in 2016. He was released 13 months later.

Party Cartel Theory (Cox and McCubbins)

Party Cartel Theory ("PCT") concurs in the argument that parties have an independent impact on member behavior.

The House majority party's ability to employ negative agenda-control powers is unconditional. The House majority's control over the Rules Committee has been exercised throughout congressional history and tilts policy outcomes towards the majority.

Specifically, under PCT, the majority party is always able to keep divisive outcomes off the floor and "Hastert Rule" violations should always be low.

Party Theories: Pivotal Politics

Pivotal Politics (Krehbiel)

The theory of pivotal politics argues that parties do not have an independent impact on member behavior.

The key observation underlying it is that legislation must bypass numerous veto players in the legislative process before it becomes law. The pivotal player is then determined by ordering legislators by ideology in a unidimensional, spatial model and applying the relevant decision rule.

So in the contemporary House, the pivotal player is likely to be the House floor or committee median.

GENERAL SPEECHES - ONE HOUR
REP. DAVID SCOTT
D-Georgia, 13th District
Mableton, Jonesboro, Union City

Above: Rep. David Scott (D-GA), a member of the Blue Dog Coalition.

A to Z (Krehbiel)

Above: In Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde, Elle successfully uses the discharge petition to get Bruiser's bill to the House floor despite the duplicitous efforts of turncoat Congresswoman Victoria Rudd, who was ably performed by actress Sally Field.

Discharge Petition:

What is a discharge petition? Congressional Institute:

"Any Member may file a discharge petition with the Clerk of the House if a committee has failed to act on a bill after 30 legislative days. If a majority of House Members (218) sign a discharge petition, the House may consider a discharge motion to relieve the committee of its duties on the legislation in question. Once 218 Members sign the petition, a discharge motion is placed on the Discharge Calendar. It then must wait there for seven days. On the second or fourth Monday of each month, the House may consider discharge motions that have been on the Discharge Calendar for seven legislative days or more. If that motion is successful, the House essentially says to the committee, "Thanks for the help, but we'll take it from here." A Member who signed the petition may then request that the House debate the matter that was discharged. The House will then debate the bill in question under the regular order rules approved at the beginning of each Congress."

A to Z (Krehbiel)

Discharge petitions are rarely successful, but are frequently used as leverage. See the attempt to discharge DACA in the 115th Congress for example:

Roll Call 9/5/17 - Colorado Republican Rep. Mike Coffman wants to force Congress to vote on his legislation that would extend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Coffman said he plans to file a discharge petition to force a vote on legislation he introduced in January known as the Bridge Act. "Force Congress to act on it, I think otherwise, like the president, they kind of wanted to avoid making a decision on it," he told The Denver Channel.

Above: The discharge petition in action.

Politico 6/12/18: House Republicans will vote next week on two bills addressing the plight of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who face possible deportation, circumventing an intra-party war over immigration and delivering a major blow to moderate Republicans.

The floor votes will effectively stop the effort by moderate Republicans in tandem with Democrats to force a vote on their immigration plans through a so-called discharge petition. The moderates do not appear to have the 218 signatures needed to circumvent leadership and force a vote on their own bipartisan bills to codify the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

A to Z (Krehbiel)

Background and Theory

What is the A to Z Spending Bill? Democratic-controlled House, but many members are worried about the upcoming election. Bill is sponsored by Rep. Bill Zeliff (R-NH). He gets Rep. Rob Andrews to co-sponsor it with him. Measure is co-sponsored by more than 218 members.

How did Zeliff find Andrews?

Waffler: A member who co-sponsored the bill but refused to sign the discharge petition.

Theory: Party is correlated with preferences, but has no independent influence on members.

Above: Former Rep. Bill Zeliff (R-NH)

A to Z (Krehbiel)

Hypothesis

Waffling should be related to preferences, NOT to party. So preference extremity should be negatively associated with waffling and unrelated to partisanship.

So in the figure above, the likelihood of "waffling" should increase the more liberal one is on the ideological spectrum. Regardless of their party affiliation.

Above: Former Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ)

A to Z (Krehbiel)

<u>Methods and Results</u>

Data: National Taxpayers Union scores for ideology (and ADA scores).

Conclusion: "In total, the findings support the conclusion that if majority-party leadership influence occurred on so-called procedural tactics surrounding A to Z, such influence was attributable mainly to preferences, somewhat to the receptivity of money-committee and low-seniority members, but almost not at all to Democratic leaders exerting disproportionate pressure-or disproportionately successful pressure-on members of their own party (Krehbiel 1995, 920)."

Above: This article suggests that to the extent there is a party, it's not a great one.

Binder et al. (1999) A to Z

Argument: "We argue here that it is premature to reject the hypothesis that majority party leaders can exert an independent effect on the behavior of their caucus members.

We reach this conclusion by reexamining the 1994 "A to Z" discharge petition campaign in the U.S. House of Representatives, a case in which preferences rather than partisanship are said to provide the superior account of legislative behavior (Krehbiel 1995). We draw from the same spatial model used by Krehbiel, explore the conditions most likely to reveal significant party behavior, scrutinize the properties of two alternative measures of preferences, and show that party effects are indeed visible in the A to Z case. Legislative theories, we conclude, may in fact need to incorporate a partisan element (Binder et al. 1999, 815-816)."
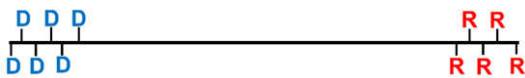

Binder et al. (1999) A to Z

Problem?

The National Taxpayers Union is a partisan interest group. They are incentivized to score members in a way that artificially polarizing them.

Even if the true spatial array of members looks like the figure above…The NTU will make appear like the figure below…

Why?

Binder et al. (1999) A to Z

Why does this matter? It means that according to the data Krehbiel is using, party is almost entirely correlated with "ideology."
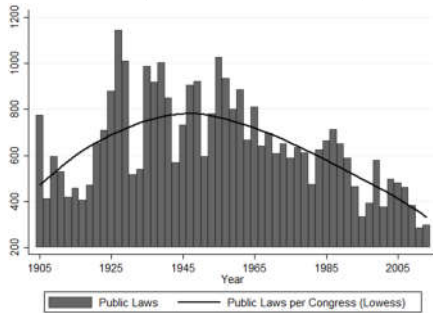

Using non-partisan data, Binder et al. find a significant party effect.

Conclusion: "As suggested by MacRae nearly 30 years ago, unraveling the effects of party and preferences is not simple. As Krehbiel has pointedly shown, it is not enough to show that a strong majority party achieved the policy outcomes preferred by its members. "Politics," Krehbiel suggests, "should be significantly different with parties from what it is without them" (1993, 240).
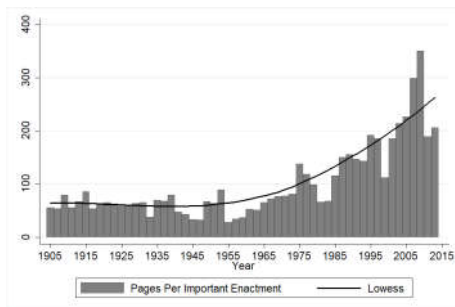
Clearly in the A to Z case, politics without parties should have led to the discharge of A to Z. A majority of the House had cosponsored the bill, so a majority of the House should have signed the discharge petition. That did not happen. Both journalistic accounts and statistical analysis suggest that party leaders targeted fellow partisans in seeking to derail the discharge campaign. The A to Z outcome cannot be accurately explained with recourse to a nonpartisan theory (Binder et al. 1999, 828-829)."

Congressional Productivity

Much, much fewer public laws per Congress.

Congressional Productivity

Legislation is much, much longer though.

What constitutes a landmark law?

Questions, Concerns, Angry Rants?

Senate Amending.