

Congressional Conquest: Examining Factors Affecting Legislative Triumph

Hannah Henderson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ray Block, Jr., Department of Political Science/Public Administration

ABSTRACT

Because Congress maintains a reputation as the most powerful branch of our federal government in the policymaking process, it is crucial that we understand the ins and outs of these procedures that drive our nation. The factors of political party identification, Congressional house of origin (the House of Representatives or the Senate), Congressional subgroup of origin (committee, subcommittee, or caucus), and legislation type are examined to determine whether they affect legislation passage. Through collecting data on the 112th Congress and utilizing a binary logistic regression analysis, this research discovers that only legislation type and Congressional house of origin uphold statistical significance when it comes to passing bills in Congress.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the extreme influence of Congressional politics on the overarching American political spectrum, it is important to study, research, and understand the fundamental components of Congressional politics. “The design of the capital city with the House and Senate overseeing the other edifices of government is a fitting testimony to the founders’ vision of the legislature as the most powerful of the three branches of government and their devotion to republican politics,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 1: 221), thus proving the true importance of understanding Congress and its role in government. Specifically, the means with which Congress implements legislation and the factors impacting this process should receive adequate attention being the primary function of this ever powerful branch.

Within Congress there are of course the distinctions between the House of Representatives and the Senate, but we must also divide them into their respective party groups in order to determine how pieces of legislation are produced and passed. Exploring the party dynamics and the differences between the two houses will provide a more comprehensive analysis on the factors affecting legislative success, as defined by bill passage for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, I anticipate there to be differences between the House and the Senate, in addition to the impact of other factors including bill type, party identification, and origination within a committee or caucus. To simplify, this research will examine congressional legislation in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in order to determine the effects of bill type, party, and committee or caucus origination on legislation passage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

First and foremost, as Oosterwaal and Torenvlied note, “the study of political conflict in legislatures is primarily the field of political science, [but] the consequences of political conflict for the course and outcomes of the policy implementation process are an important object of study in the field of public administration,” (2011, 195), therefore providing the theoretical framework backing the importance of studying political conflict in the Congressional legislative process. Previous research has also found much information about Congressional policy making, the role of parties, and caucuses and committees, and their differing roles within the Congressional politics framework. “Politics is often described as the means of deciding ‘who gets what, when and how.’ In other words, politics is the business of making public policy,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 2:303) so we must understand the factors surrounding it. But the inter-branch and party dynamics must also be explained in order to fully comprehend how each piece of the puzzle fits together.

Because Harris and Tichenor (2010, 2:1) assert that, “the United States boasts the longest continuing political party system in the world,” we can only deduct that they are an important factor to consider when studying Congressional policymaking. Nicholson-Crotty and Miller state in their work that, “other factors, such as shared partisanship between the governor and the legislative branches, may be more important for bureaucratic influence

over legislative policy information,” (2011, 353). They further state that, “governments controlled by more than one party are likely to allow effective bureaucracies more discretion over implementation and room to innovate policy solutions and, thus, a greater ability to garner support from important constituencies,” (Nicholson-Crotty and Miller 2011, 353). In other words, party matters, especially as we have seen that, “politics has driven the development of the American policy-making process from the beginning,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 2:304).

Some researchers, including Nicholson-Crotty and Miller, argue that divided government leads to more focus on policy initiatives, which is after all the focus of Congress. “The political conditions at the time of enactment – in particular, the existence of divided government and the level of ideological disagreement between the House and Senate – influence the likelihood that a law will be amended,” (Maltzman and Shipan 2008, 252). Maltzman and Shipan further contend that, “laws passed under divided government, on the other hand, require compromises that can take the forms of vague or internally inconsistent provisions or that can result in a broader (and less coherent) range of provisions. Such compromises work to bring enough legislators and the president on board, allowing the bill to pass, but these compromises completely satisfy few of these actors,” (2008, 255).

Differing from Nicholson-Crotty and Miller’s (2011) notion that divided government is productive, Maltzman and Shipan contend that, “unified government will produce longer-lasting laws,” (2008, 256). They further contend that, “under unified government we would expect legislators to seek to protect their policy choices from political intrusion,” (Maltzman and Shipan 2008, 255; Moe 1989), or they would seek to compromise and work within their party groups to produce legislation that will succeed despite minority party opposition. As the literature suggests, party dynamics in government is complicated, but to understand policymaking and accountability in American government, it is imperative to understand the extent and channels of political parties (Gailmard and Jenkins 2007, 689). Therefore, it is important to note that, “if Schattschneider is right that parties are necessary for democracy, then we have to embrace political parties, not resist them,” (Noel 2010, 11; Schattschneider 1942).

Not only should we be interested in the political parties, but also the institutions with which they find themselves imbedded in. On the most basic level, “members of the U.S. House of Representatives, expected to take the initiative in national policy making, would be most sensitive to the short-term interests of regions smaller than a state. U.S. Senators would act on behalf of the longer-term interests of state governments and statewide constituencies,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 2:305). Harris and Tichenor provide the fundamental differences in the two houses and their respective roles in policymaking as envisioned by the founders. “The Senate played a subordinate policy role. Compared with the House, the U.S. Senate initiated relatively few laws, met for relatively few days, and took relatively few votes,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 2:310) so we can expect this to have an impact on the success of bills simply based off their respective chamber of initiation. Harris and Tichenor (2010, 2:309) note that, “the House typically held longer sessions than the Senate, initiated more legislation, and attracted far more publicity,” (Binder and Smith 1997).

Other scholars affirm their research in suggesting the vast differences between the House and the Senate. “Cox and McCubbins (2005, 94 – 96) explicitly doubt that the institutional tools controlled by the Senate majority party are as potent as those controlled by the House majority party,” (Gailmard and Jenkins 2007, 690). Additionally, Gailmard and Jenkins maintain that, “the Senate majority party should be *less* able to keep items off the agenda relative to the House majority party, due mainly to the Senate’s more minimalistic (and minority-party friendly) institutional structure and more permeable agenda,” (2007, 690). However, despite the more submissive role of the Senate, they do maintain some power unmatched by the House. “The Senate’s ability to delay legislation indefinitely became strategically important in the national policy process,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 2:310), suggesting that perhaps the Senate does indeed have a different sort of power over policymaking. Researchers have consistently proven that these institutions of government were founded on different principles and ideas, thus explaining their differing roles within the policy process.

Literature also describes the institutions within Congress and their respective roles in the governmental policymaking process. “Congressional power itself has devolved from more centralized leadership to committee and even subcommittee authority,” (Harris and Tichenor 2010, 1: 221), displaying the importance of understanding this system of leadership. In fact, Harris and Tichenor suggest that, “the new partisanship in Congress was essentially superimposed on the decentralized system of subgovernment politics,” (2010, 1:256), further proving the inevitable aspect of party government even within these Congressional subgroups.

Previous research has also found much information about Congressional caucuses and committees, and their differing roles within the Congressional politics framework. “Because its members do care about more than reelection, they adopt institutional structure and processes designed to harness individual energies to collectively important ends. Congress’s decentralized, specialized legislative committee systems – another set of institutions offering incentives for individual members to provide collectively beneficial goods – could not work effectively without some means for coordinating the activities of its diverse parts,” (Jacobson 2009, 240). Essentially, this

research suggests that without Congressional committees, much coordination within the system would be lost, and there would be no formal methodology for ensuring that legislators are working on behalf of their constituencies. After all, as they are held directly accountable to those that elect them, “Members of Congress (MCs) are said to have three goals – reelection, making good public policy, and attaining influence within Congress,” (Fenno 1973; Rocca and Gordon 2010, 387), all of which I believe to be interrelated to determine the policymaking actions of MCs.

However, despite the necessary nature of Congressional committees, it is imperfect, thus, “. . . the caucus system acts to counterbalance the inherent biases of the committee system by providing the floor with an informational perspective unrepresented within the committee system. Caucuses are an integral part of the ‘punctuated equilibria,’” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 407 – 409; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). “They [caucuses] allow for the coordination of legislative action outside the formal party and committee structure,” (Fiellin 1962; Hammond 1991, 1998; Hammond, Mulhollan, & Stevens 1983, 1985; Loomis 1981; Miller 1990; Ringe and Victor 2009; Stevens et al. 1974; Vega 1993). “Caucuses are well suited for providing the necessary organizational strength and informational expertise to allow the floor to counter committee biases. Typically, outlying caucuses counterbalance outlying committees by providing distinct information to the floor,” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 427). Ainsworth and Akins (1997, 410) also argue that caucuses exist to serve a “pre-committee function” as a means of identifying problems and the examining possible solutions. “In addition, caucuses are ‘much more efficient than four hundred and thirty-five legislative assistants doing research on an issue,’” (Hammond 1989, 367 – 368).

“From these earlier findings, one might conclude that caucuses exist to maximize the amount and quality of information available for caucus members and that the floor gains informational benefits from caucus activity,” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 410 – 411). It is impractical to conduct all business within the full chamber of either the House of Representatives or the Senate. And as an alternative to the formal and necessary committee system, caucuses provide an outlet for members of Congress to discuss issues in depth and to reach across party lines. It is, of course, the role of party leaders to convince moderate MCs to toe the party line, according to Sean F. Evans, associate professor of political science at Union University in Jackson, TN, (Clemmitt 2010, 399). “For every committee we investigated, the Democratic members’ ideologies were statistically different from those of their Republican counterparts. In contrast, in only one instance were Democratic and Republican caucus members’ ideologies statistically different. Unlike committees, caucuses bring together members with common interests from across party lines,” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 415). However, that is not to say that party politics is entirely removed from the system; after all, politics is inherently a part Congressional politics.

“Committees are often viewed as serving their own self-interests, the interests of the legislature, or the interests of the party caucuses. A debate over the importance of parties in legislatures had resulted largely in response to the assertion that political parties are not central to the policymaking process in Congress,” (Krehbiel 1993, 1998; Schaffner 2004, 1 – 2). And because parties, and particularly party caucuses, may seem overly influential in Congressional politics, their influence spills over into the committees and other caucuses as well. “The interest has been in understanding whose interests committees generally reflect – those of the committee members, those of the full chamber, or those of party caucuses, (Maltzman 1997; Schaffner 2004, 4). In fact, “laws originally crafted by diverse political coalitions are less durable than those crafted by strong, unified coalitions, which are in a position to entrench their preferred policies and protect them from future change,” (Maltzman and Shipan 2008, 252), backing up the reasoning behind and necessity of party caucuses within Congress.

And although some have commented on caucuses solely existing as “second-tier committees dominated by junior legislators,” Ainsworth and Akins (1997, 413) argue that they are not. In fact, “whereas informational committees are bolstered by procedural rights and are necessarily nonoutlying and heterogeneous, caucuses may serve an informational purpose as homogeneous outliers or a heterogeneous nonoutliers. Caucuses fulfill an informational role as long as they counteract the formal, committee structure by providing information unavailable through the committee system,” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 416). A strong amount of research has explored the differences of caucuses and committees and remarks upon the notion that caucuses serve as a counter point to the formal committee system. And while both subgroups serve their own particular biases, “Caucus and committee memberships serve different purposes largely because caucuses represent different biases than the committee system. Caucus bias does not enhance committee bias; rather, caucus bias counterbalances committee bias,” (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 425 – 426).

“Traditionally, committees were viewed as acting independently of their colleagues who did not serve on the committee,” (Arnold 1979; Fenno 1973; Ferejohn 1974; Schaffner 2004, 4 – 5; Shepsle and Weingast 1984; Weingast and Marshall 1988). In other words, committees have been looked upon somewhat unfavorably as they are exclusively geared towards catering to committee members only. “Because members largely find themselves on committees based on their own assignment preferences, this may bias the committee membership and create

committees that are less representative of the chamber as a whole,” (Schaffner 2004, 5). “Thus, committees function as providers of particularistic benefits to the members assigned to them and their political allies rather than as contributors to the production of policies more representative of the full chamber,” (Freeman 1965; Lowi 1969; Ripley and Franklin 1980; Schaffner 2004, 5). A major potential downfall of Congressional committees is that they aren’t representative of the Congress with which they are embedded, especially as Maltzman and Shipan assert that the goal of MCs and the president is to develop laws that accomplish policy objectives and bind lawmaking coalitions (2008, 253).

Reasons for this potential downfall again go back to the inherent political nature of Congress and its subgroups. “Party caucuses control the selection of their members to the committee and the party has an incentive to assign members who will represent the party’s interests in the committee,” (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Schaffner 2004, 6). Schaffner, a researcher of state legislative politics specifically in the unicameral Nebraska legislature, noted the distinct and unique nature of the apolitical system that exists within that state. “Instead of relying on party caucuses to organize and assign members to committees, the Nebraska legislature has institutionalized a geographical-oriented caucus system to make these assignments. These caucuses are not formed informally by members; rather, they are created by rule and members are assigned to a caucus based on the legislative district they represent. Each caucus is given a particular number of seats on each committee and the caucuses and caucus leaders are instrumental in determining assignments for those seats,” (Schaffner 2004, 8 – 9). Because this is such a unique situation in politics where caucuses are inherently apolitical, there is not much other research suggesting the same thing. Rather, most research comments on the fact that by creating more stability and cohesion in the party caucuses, citizens are better able to hold their legislators accountable and legislatures may be better able to hold committees accountable. Thus, parties appear to not only facilitate the democratic relationship between citizens and their legislatures, but also between legislatures and their committees (Schaffner 2004, 20). Simply put, Kurian (2011, 2:449) mentions how this notion, “fosters greater debate and further exemplifies the deliberative nature that the founding fathers envisioned for legislating...and, as a result, is a healthy component of democratic governance.” Therefore, “‘party government’ in the U.S. House...rests on a fundamental contradiction: if the majority party relies on its control over the legislative process to engineer or restrict policy outcomes, it requires the (procedural) support of many members who oppose the intended (substantive) policy outcomes,” (Carroll and Kim 2010, 34; Schattschneider 1942). In other words, while parties can facilitate debate relationships externally, the internal implications on policymaking are contradictory in that it requires garnering support and compromise from members who oppose a particular proposal.

Other researchers have also attempted to measure this in terms of roll call votes and cosponsorships, measures that have proven to predict legislative action as a function of caucuses and committees. “A measure of ‘connectedness’ from bill cosponsorships that significantly predicts roll call vote choice, controlling for ideology and partisanship,” (Fowler 2006; Ringe and Victor 2009). “Whether through cosponsoring bills or committee service, there are clearly many ways for legislators to form networks with one another, and studies are just beginning to tap the complexity and richness of these approaches,” (Carpenter, Esterling, & Lazer 2004; Crisp, Kanthak, & Leijonhufvud 2004; Esterling 2007; Gimpel, Lee, & Pearson-Werkowitz 2008; Koger, Masket, & Noel 2009; Ringe and Victor 2009; Whiteman 1995). However, while it may be in the best interest of policymaking for legislators to connect and work together, there are rather divisive tactics occasionally employed. “When national leadership is seen as legitimately ‘up for grabs,’ lawmakers’ incentives to battle to the death over legislation greatly increase, to avoid giving the other party a perceived win,” explains associate professor of political science Frances E. Lee of the University of Maryland in College Park, (Clemmitt 2010, 400). Lee also mentioned the notion of practicing “party teamsmanship,” or beefing up opposition rather than encouraging bipartisanship, as a likely factor in political polarization, (Clemmitt 2010, 400). Fundamentally, literature suggests that political parties, Congressional houses, and subgroup type are all important distinct, important factors to consider when studying the policymaking process. After all, as Nicholson-Crotty and Miller put it, “the relationship between the politics and administration of public policy is a key question in the study of public administration and democratic theory,” (2011, 348).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While previous research on Congressional policymaking suggests many things about the factors affecting this vital process, there has really never been any study discussing the likelihood of different types of legislation to pass. Several research questions can be formulated regarding the true effectiveness of party identification, Congressional house of origin, Congressional subgroup type, and legislation type, as it relates to their overall successfulness in bill passage:

Research Question 1: Will political parties be the most significant factor in bill passage? Does being a member of the same political party as the president affect the likelihood that your legislation will pass?

Research Question 2: Will Congressional house of origin be a significant factor in bill passage? Do bills that initiate in the House of Representatives stand a higher chance of passage than bills that initiate in the Senate?

Research Question 3: Will Congressional subgroup type prove to be a significant determinate of bill passage? Does a bill originating from a committee, subcommittee, or caucus stand a higher chance of passage?

Research Question 4: Will the type of legislation proposed affect its ultimate passage? Does one type of legislation appear more likely to pass than others?

METHODOLOGY

Ideally, in order to completely examine and compare data to gain a comprehensive analysis, I would be examining data across multiple Congresses. However, due to the impracticality of analyzing such a significant number of pieces of legislation from several sessions of Congress, my research will focus only on a portion of the 112th Congressional session, from September 6, 2011 through September 8, 2011; I randomly selected the date range and analyzed 100 pieces of legislation introduced in that time frame. I will look at both the House of Representatives and the Senate and determine where the most bills originated, the party identification of each bill, the type of legislation, and which subgroup the bill initiated in. As I mentioned above, gaining this information from past Congresses has proven to be more difficult due to the vast number of pieces of proposed legislation for any given Congress. Also, it might be difficult to determine if a bill initially originated in a particular caucus, committee, or subcommittee because there may be instances where not all members of a given subgroup have signed on as cosponsors. However, this can be resolved by seeking information for individual legislators, if needed, and tracing the caucuses, committees, and subcommittees they are a part of. Furthermore, there may also be instances in which legislation has multiple sponsors from both houses of Congress, thus making the house of initiation difficult to decipher. Specifically, all of this information will be tracked in an extensive database which will allow for a comprehensive data analysis approach of the 100 pieces of legislation. I will be tracking all of the following information: proposal number, proposal abstract, bill type (bill, joint resolution, concurrent resolution, simple resolution or report), author's party identification and whether or not it is consistent or divergent with that of the president, subgroup type (committee, subcommittee or caucus), bill passage, and origination in the House or the Senate.

Using statistical analysis, the data I collect will be entered into a database and compared accordingly. A binary logistic regression analysis will enable me to examine the factors across the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively and determine which factors ultimately impact legislation passage. Simply in analyzing the raw data before it is entered into the statistical analysis software will enable me to draw initial conclusions based on comparing the numbers alone. However, by utilizing statistical analysis software, it enables me to rule out spurious relationships to ensure that there is indeed a direct and statistically meaningful correlation between these various factors and legislation passage. Upon deriving the data from the statistical analysis software, it will be easy to interpret and analyze and search for the variables with values that denote a statistically significant correlation.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Because this research is aimed at determining the affect of political parties, Congressional house of initiation, Congressional subgroup type, and legislation type, in terms of bill creation, sponsorship, and passage, several hypotheses can be formulated regarding the proposed differences among subgroups:

Hypothesis 1: The number of bills passed with sponsors of the same political party identification as the president will be higher than the number of bills passed with sponsors of differing political party identification.

In thinking about how the political system tends to operate, we can anticipate that like-minded individuals will side with each other when it comes to sponsoring and passing legislation. Therefore, I believe it is safe to say that we can anticipate Democrats in the 112th Congress to be more successful at sponsoring successful bills than Republicans, due to the presence of a Democratic president.

Hypothesis 2: The number of successful bills that originate in House of Representatives will be higher than the number of successful bills that originate in the Senate.

The House of Representatives is naturally the more accountable house of Congress due to the fact that each congressperson faces reelection every two years; in other words, elections for seats in the House are held every two years. Senatorial elections are held every six years. Because members of the House of Representatives are almost always campaigning for reelection, they are more directly accountable to their constituencies; thus we can expect the House of Representatives to be more successful.

Hypothesis 3: The number of successful bills that originate in Congressional caucuses will be higher than the number of successful bills that originate in Congressional committees.

Generally speaking, caucuses are groups of legislators with similar interests despite their party affiliation or ideological beliefs. Committees, on the other hand, are groups of legislators with diverse goals and interests from different parties representing the interests of their unique constituencies by accepting a position on a committee that could serve their district particularly well. Therefore, we should expect caucuses to be more successful due to the fact that their members have similar goals across various political ideologies.

Hypothesis 4: Resolutions will be more successful at passage than bills in general.

Because of the differing nature of the various types of legislation, we can anticipate certain types of legislation to be more successful than others. For example, resolutions can typically be used to honor a fallen hero, deceased Congressman, etc., and are therefore more agreeable than controversial budget or abortion legislation.

RESULTS

Inconsistent with some of my hypotheses, the results in fact show that a few of the variables were insignificant. First of all, the variable that was not even tested that was initially going to be was the session of Congress. However, being that the 100 pieces of legislation I analyzed were all from the 112th Congress, there was no need to examine the statistical significance of this variable. Secondly, being that each piece of legislation was also designated as being directly related to a committee, I was unable to determine any significance of that variable and it was therefore not a factor in the regression analysis. Thirdly, as Table 1 will show, only two of the other variables ended up displaying statistical significance. In fact, the two variables concerning political parties that I thought would be the most significant turned out to be rather insignificant. Looking to Table 1, we can see that the party identification of the sponsor, independently of whether or not it was consistent with the party identification of the president, had no statistical significance whatsoever on determining legislation passage. I am not surprised by the two factors that were significant, however. Legislation type and Congressional house of initiation proved to be the only statistically significant factors affecting bill passage. With a p-value of .000, legislation type proves that there is some truth to hypothesis 4. And with a p-value of .033, Congressional house of initiation is a significant predictor of legislation passage, and speaks to the truth of hypothesis 2.

Table 1. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting Legislation Passage

	Logistic Regression Coefficients	
	Logit Estimate	Standard Error
Bill type (1 = bill, 2 = joint resolution, 3 = concurrent resolution, 4 = simple 5 = resolution or report)	1.267**	(.302)
Is author's party identification consistent with that of the President (1 = Yes, 0 = otherwise)	-3.635	(2.612)
Party Identification of Sponsor (1 = Democrat, 2 = Independent, 3 = Republican)	-1.460	(1.312)
Where Bill Initiates (1 = Committee, 2 = Subcommittee, 3 = Caucus)	-1.623*	(.760)
Constant	2.156	(3.878)

Source: 100 pieces of legislation from the 112th Congress

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, one-tailed test.

DISCUSSION

The factors that I was initially interested in examining for importance turned out with no relevance to the study itself. First of all, being that each bill was related to a committee, that variable couldn't be further examined. However, I think it takes something very important away from the study. As many researchers who have studied committees and caucuses explained their vastly different roles within the institution of Congress, it would have proven extremely beneficial to understand how these subgroups operate within the policymaking arena. As Ainsworth and Akins (1997, 426) and also Baumgartner and Jones (1993) observe, the structures of both committees and subcommittees change much more slowly than some in Congress desire. Countering the inherent committee biases, caucuses fit within the notion of 'punctuated equilibria,' (Ainsworth and Akins 1997, 426; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). These essential and apparent differences within the Congressional subgroups would have been an interesting dynamic to explore and one to study for statistical significance in this research, but unfortunately the variable was held to a constant and could not be considered a factor in bill passage.

Like Congressional subgroup type, the session of Congress was also held constant throughout the study. Initially, I wanted to gather data across several sessions of Congress to compare and contrast the differences between the sessions, examine party dynamics of each session (divided or unified government; Congress controlled by one party or each house controlled by one of the two main parties; etc.), however it was just not practical to do so. Given that Maltzman and Shipan suggest that, "if it is more difficult for politicians to pass laws under divided government, then we might expect that when a law *does* pass under divided government, it is more likely to live a long life," (2008, 254), I believe it is necessary to research the difference between these various sessions of government, something this study regrettably failed to accomplish. Due to the massive volume of legislation introduced each day by members of Congress, it would have been extremely time consuming to gather the most ideal data set in order to create a more comprehensive study in which session of Congress could have been a testable variable.

Additionally, I was rather shocked that political party appeared to have no statistical significance whatsoever. Clemmitt rightfully notes that, "parties have always been part of the political process – providing a philosophical framework to help politicians communicate issues to voters and help candidates campaign and raise funds. Only infrequently, however, have the leading American political parties been so polarized that bipartisan cooperation was nearly impossible," (2010, 398). Two important things are noted here: first that parties are a perpetual part of the political process and second that they can also be extremely polarizing. Therefore, due to their crucial role in the process, you'd expect them to play a significant role in helping or hurting legislation from passing. Also, again playing up the importance of studying unified vs. divided government, because parties are so polarizing there should be reason for one party to have sponsored more successful bills than the other especially in a state of unified government, again a place where this study fell flat due to the constraints of the data. Furthermore, with E. E. Schattschneider's (1942) idea of "party government" in mind, it "implies that the majority party uses the legislative process to limit legislative policy outcomes that would be otherwise available for majorities on the floor of the House," (Aldrich 1995, 215; Carroll and Kim 2010, 35; Cox and McCubbins 2005, 47). Thus, if "party government" is truly a strong force within the institution of Congress, I would've expected it to be significant, which could again be attributed to issues with the data set itself.

However, it was not surprising to me that Congressional house of initiation was significant. Being that the House of Representatives is significantly larger in size than the Senate, I initially expected the House to actually introduce and pass more legislation than the Senate. In their study of party control in the House, Carroll and Kim find that, "the leadership's positive power means advancing policy *most* of its members prefer – even when support is not universal," (2010, 35) thus providing some context as to why House bills appear to be rather successful. In addition to the House perhaps having more party control, the Senate in general has less control over the legislation that reaches the floor. "Most importantly for comparisons of agenda setting, the Senate has much less control than the House over what issues are raised and considered by the body," (Gailmard and Jenkins 2007, 689). Being a statistically significant variable, it was consistent with previous research and my hypothesis that the House of Representatives would pass more legislation than the Senate.

Finally, although there was no literature discussing the different types of legislation and their likely passage or failure, I assumed that this variable would still maintain some level of significance. As the data shows, nearly every joint resolution and concurrent resolution passed, as opposed to a majority of bills failing, a phenomenon that should receive at least a little more attention and research. If a certain type of legislation has a greater likelihood of passage, then you may assume that it would be relied upon more often than we see resolutions used. However, these

different types of legislation serve different functions, and should be studied more within the context of the greater policymaking process to determine their true affect when compared with other factors.

CONCLUSION

Overall, while the results may not have been as comprehensive and conclusive as I ideally would have liked to see, we can still take away some important messages from this research. First, it is incredibly important to take note of the variables that were statistically significant. Legislation type and Congressional house of initiation both appeared to be strong factors in determining legislation passage, and should receive further attention when discussing policymaking and the process of passing legislation. While there has already been a substantial amount of research conducted on the dynamics of the two Congressional houses, not enough attention has been given to legislation type and its affect on passage.

Secondly, the party identification variables that were not significant were indeed a surprise. Because of their highly influential role and rather imbedded nature within the process, I anticipated the variables of party identification to play a very significant role in determining the passage or failure of legislation. But as mentioned above, perhaps these variables would show up more if a higher volume of legislation from multiple sessions of Congress were studied. The same goes for Congressional subgroup variable, and as mentioned the Congressional sessions, as they remained constant throughout this data set. In the future, additional research needs to be done in order to conduct a more thorough analysis spanning across multiple sessions of Congress with many more pieces of legislation from each session, varying in times of unified or divided government in order to obtain the most comprehensive, complex, and accurate data set to solidify the preliminary conclusions of this study.

LIMITATIONS

As discussed above, this research cannot be considered comprehensive due to the limitations of the data set itself. Therefore, this study is not as generalizable as I had initially hoped and needs more time and work in order to achieve the full potential I had envisioned. Because there is so much data out there that could be collected and analyzed, this research can be furthered in many directions. Perhaps then the two variables that became irrelevant, Congressional session and Congressional subgroup type, that were held constants in this data set could become additional factors that affect the passage of legislation. Also, perhaps there would have been a more significant impact of party identification of legislation sponsors given a much more expanded data set examining multiple sessions of Congress. Essentially, with more data this research can be expanded and considered more comprehensive in terms of its implications for legislation passage in Congress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Ray Block, Jr. for his advising, counseling, guidance, and support throughout this project. It would not have been possible without his invaluable assistance. I would also like to thank the entire department of political science/public administration faculty for their encouragement throughout my undergraduate career. Finally, I thank my family and friends for supporting me in everything I do, particularly this project.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, Scott H. and Frances Akins. 1997. "The Informal Role of Caucuses in the U.S. Congress." *American Politics Quarterly*. 25 (October): 407.
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Arnold, Douglas. 1979. *Congress and the Bureaucracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Binder, Sarah A. and Steven S. Smith. 1997. *Politics or Principle?: Filibustering in the United States Senate*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Bowman, Ann and Richard C. Kearney. 1986. *The Resurgence of the States*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Carpenter, D. P., Esterling, K. M., & Lazer, D. M. J. 2004. "Friends, brokers, and transitivity: Who Informs Whom in Washington Politics?" *Journal of Politics*. 61 (August): 224 – 246.
- Carroll, Royce and Henry A. Kim. 2010. "Party Government and the 'Cohesive Power of Public Plunder.'" *American Journal of Political Science*. 54 (January): 34 – 44.
- Clemmitt, Marcia. 2010. "Gridlock in Washington: Is Congress too polarized to act?" *CQ Researcher*. 20 (April): 385 – 408.

- Clinton, Joshua D. and John S. Lapinski. 2006. "Measuring Legislative Accomplishment, 1877 – 1994." *American Journal of Political Science*. 50 (January): 232 – 249.
- Clinton, Joshua D. et al. 2012. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress." *American Journal of Political Science*. 56 (April): 341 – 354.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crisp, B., Kanthak, K., & Leijonhufvud, J. 2004. "The Reputations Legislators Build: With Whom Should Representatives Collaborate?" *American Political Science Review*. 98: 703 – 716.
- Esterling, K. 2007. "Buying Expertise: Campaign Contributions and Attention to Policy Analysis in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review*. 101: 93 – 109.
- Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1973. *Congressmen in Committees*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Ferejohn, John. 1974. *Pork Barrel Politics: Rivers and Harbors Legislation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fiellin, A. 1962. "The Functions of Informal Groups in Legislative Institutions." *Journal of Politics*. 24: 72 – 91.
- Freeman, J. Leiper. 1965. *The Political Process: Strategies, Rules, and Procedures*. Rev ed. New York: Random House.
- Gailmard, Sean and Jeffery A. Jenkins. 2007. "Negative Agenda Control in the Senate and House: Fingerprints of Majority Party Power." *The Journal of Politics*. 69 (August): 689 – 700.
- Gimpel, J., Lee F. E., & Pearson-Werkowitz, S. 2008. "The Check Is in the Mail: Interdistrict Funding Flows in Congressional Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52: 373 – 394.
- GovTrack. 2004. "Bills and Resolutions." <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/> (April 27, 2012).
- Hammond, Susan W. 1989. "Congressional Caucuses in the Policy Process." In *Congress Revisited*, eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 2nd Ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Politics.
- Hammond, Susan W. 1991. "Congressional Caucuses and Party Leaders in the House of Representatives." *Political Science Quarterly*. 106: 277 – 294.
- Hammond, Susan W. 1998. *Congressional Caucuses in National Policy Making*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hammond, S. W., Mulhollan, D. P., & Stevens, Jr, A. G. 1983. "Congressional Caucuses: Legislators as Lobbyists." In *Interest Group Politics*, eds. A. Cigler and B. A. Loomis. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Hammond, S. W., Mulhollan, D. P., & Stevens, Jr, A. G. 1985. "Informal Congressional Caucuses and Agenda Setting." *Western Political Quarterly*. 38: 583 – 605.
- Harris, Richard A. and Daniel J. Tichenor, eds. 2010. *A History of the U.S. Political System: Ideas, Interests, and Institutions*. 3 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC – CLIO, LLC.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2009. "Elections, Representation, and the Politics of Congress." In *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 7th Ed. New York: Pearson Education.
- Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1991. *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science*. 23 (April): 235 – 266.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Koger, G., Masket, S., & Noel, H. 2009. "Partisan Webs: Information Exchange and Party Networks." *British Journal of Political Science*. 39: 633 – 653.
- Kurian, George Thomas, ed. 2011. *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*. 5 vols. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Loomis, B. A. 1981. "Congressional Caucuses and the Politics of Representation." In *Congress Revisited*, eds. L. C. Dodd and B. I. Oppenheimer. 2nd Ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Lowi, Theodore. 1969. *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Maltzman, Forrest. 1999. *Competing Principals: Committees, Parties, and the Organization of Congress*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Maltzman, Forrest and Charles R. Shipan. 2008. "Change, Continuity, and the Evolution of the Law." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52 (April): 252 – 267.
- Miler, Kristina. 2008. "Caucuses, Constituents, and Congressional Representation." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association, Chicago.

- Miler, Kristina. 2010. *Constituency Representation in Congress: The View from Capitol Hill*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Miler, Kristina. N.d. "The Constituency Motivations of Caucus Membership." *American Politics Research*. Forthcoming.
- Miller, C. M. 1990. "Agenda-Setting by State Legislative Black Caucuses: Policy Priorities and Factors of Success." *Policy Studies Review*. 9: 339 – 354.
- Moe, Terry M. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In *Can the Government Govern?* ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, DC: Brookings, 267 – 329.
- Mooney, Christopher Z. 1994. "Measuring U.S. State Legislative Professionalism: An Evaluation of Five Indices." *State & Local Government Review*. 26: 70 – 78.
- Nicholson-Crotty, Jill and Susan M. Miller. 2011. "Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Influence in the Legislature." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. 22: 347 – 371.
- Niskamen, William A. 2003. "A Case for Divided Government." *Cato Policy Report*. March/April 2003: 2.
- Noel, Hans. 2010. "Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don't." *The Forum*. 8: 1 – 19.
- Oosterwaal, Annemarije and René Torenvlied. 2011. "Policy Divergence in Implementation: How Conflict among Decisive Legislators Reinforces the Effect of Agency Preferences." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Inc.* 22 (July): 195 – 217.
- Pierson, Paul. 2003. "Public Policies as Institutions." Presented at the Yale Conference on Crafting and Operating Institutions, New Haven, CT.
- Ringe, Nils and Jennifer Nicoll Victor. 2009. "The Social Utility of Informal Institutions." *American Politics Research*. 37 (September): 742 – 766.
- Ripley, Randall and Grace Franklin. 1980. *Congress, Bureaucracy and Public Policy*. Rev ed. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- Rocca, Michael S. and Stacy B. Gordon. 2010. "The Position-taking Value of Bill Sponsorship in Congress." *Political Research Quarterly*. 63 (June): 387 – 397.
- Schaffner, Brian F. 2004. "Committee Representativeness in the Absence of Parties." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Schattschneider, E. E. 1942. *Party Government*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1984. "Legislative Politics and Budget Outcomes." In *Federal Budget Policy in the 1980s*, eds. Gregory Mills and John Palmer. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.
- Stevens, A. G., Jr., Miller, A. H., & Mann, T. E. 1974. "Mobilization of Liberal Strength in the House, 1955 – 1977: The Democratic Study Group." *American Political Science Review*. 68: 667 – 681.
- Squire, Peverill. 1992. "Legislative Professionalization and Membership Diversity in State Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 17: 69 – 79.
- U.S. Government Printing Office. 2011. "Federal Digital System: America's Authentic Government Information." <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/home.action> (April 27, 2012).
- United States House of Representatives. 2011. "Directory of Representatives." <http://www.house.gov/representatives/> (April 27, 2012).
- United States Senate. 2011. "Senators of the 112th Congress." http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm (April 27, 2012).
- Vega, A. 1993. "Congressional Informal Groups as Representative Responsiveness." *American Review of Politics*. 14: 355 – 373.
- Weingast, Barry R. and William J. Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress: Or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets." *Journal of Political Economy*. 96: 132 – 163.
- Whiteman, D. 1995. *Communication in Congress: Members, Staff, and the Search for Information*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.