

# Signaling Positions?

## The Politics of Executive Influence on Congressional Roll Call Voting

Anthony M. Bertelli and Jamie L. Carson\*

April 19, 2005

---

\*Department of Public Administration and Policy (Bertelli) and Department of Political Science (Carson), The University of Georgia. Corresponding author Bertelli (email: [bertelli@uga.edu](mailto:bertelli@uga.edu)). Paper prepared for an invited lecture at the George Washington Institute of Public Policy and Department of Political Science, George Washington University, Washington, DC, April 22, 2005. We wish to thank Keith Dougherty for very helpful insights. This is a preliminary draft. Please do not cite or quote without permission.

Although the constitutionally prescribed role of the president occurs in the final stages of the legislative process (signing or vetoing bills), other opportunities arise for presidential influence on policy outcomes. Indeed, modern presidents have taken a much more active role in shaping the development of legislation as it works its way through both chambers of Congress. One such attempt to influence legislative decision-making arises when a president takes a public position on legislation being considered in either the House or Senate. While such behavior is not always required, the president has the opportunity to support, oppose, or abstain from position taking on any issue that comes before Congress.

The announcement of a public position on roll call votes might be seen as a discretionary tool available to presidents to help them achieve their policy objectives by reinforcing their own policy preferences and attempting to sway undecided legislators (Shull 1997). By this president-centric logic, it may be argued that given the information costs associated with tracking legislation in the House or Senate, presidents express their opinion selectively on issues before Congress to maximize their chances of exerting influence in the legislative process. Moreover, presidents are more likely to engage in strategic position-taking on those issues most salient to their policy agenda. Presidents also may be unwilling to express a public position on a given issue if they suspect their viewpoint will carry little weight in the legislative arena, i.e., they may not be willing to incur the information costs. In sum, a president-centric view construes the position as a roll call level signal of presidential ideology. Indeed, this is the theory behind using such positions as data for presidential ideal point estimation (Poole 1998; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Bailey and Chang 2001; Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004).

Much of the extant literature on presidential-congressional relations has treated the position the president takes on legislation as an explanatory variable. Scholars typically have focused on presidential success as defined by congressional support for or against the position the president expresses with respect to legislation (see, e.g., Edwards 1989; Bond and Fleisher 1990; Fleisher and Bond 1996; Shull and Shaw 1999). Such an account is not well-grounded in separation-of-powers concerns, and may overstate this unilateral power of the president. After all, a member of Congress proposes a piece of legislation, and any position taken on that proposal represents a modicum of

agenda control over the issue space on which the proposal lies. Why does a president take a position on some bills and not others? What is the effect of such position taking on roll call voting?

In this paper, we formally examine these questions by considering three important elements of the above interaction between Congress and the president as it occurs on roll call votes. First, we treat the member of Congress introducing the bill (motioner) as a first-mover. Second, we explicitly model the role of presidential popularity and other valence characteristics in imposing political costs on legislator's voting decisions (Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts 2001). Third, we endogenize the position taken by the president within the separation-of-powers game and consider the strategic use of presidential leverage over roll calls short of the veto.

We examine key predictions of the model on presidential position-taking on roll data in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953-1998. Because the presidential position occurs prior to the roll call vote, it is important to empirically model this behavior as a sequential process. If we evaluate these processes separately, we run the risk of model misspecification resulting from a possible selection effect. Analyzing this relationship jointly with a probit selection model allows us to statistically control for sample selection bias, thus avoiding potential threats to statistical inference (Heckman 1979; Reed 2000; Lemke and Reed 2001).

## **1 Theories of Presidential Influence on Roll Call Voting**

The nature of the relationship between Congress and the president is, by constitutional design, remarkably complex. Although presidents cannot directly introduce legislation in either the House or Senate, they seek to exert as much influence as possible at various stages of the legislative process. Twentieth century presidents, for instance, have become notably more active in shaping legislation through their agenda-setting efforts (Edwards 1989; Neustadt 1990; Jones 1994, 1995; Covington, Wrighton, and Kinney 1995; Light 1999), lobbying legislators (Manley 1978; Collier 1997), and taking their message directly to the people (Hager and Sullivan 1994; Kernell 1997; Canes-Wrone 2001). Of course, individual presidents continue to play a pivotal role in the legislative process

in terms of signing or vetoing legislation (Copeland 1983; Rohde and Simon 1985; McKay 1989; Woolley 1991; Krehbiel 1998; Cameron 2000), but little has been written about their influence on roll calls short of the veto. This is our focus here.

Extant research on presidential-congressional relations provides a mixed assessment of how successful presidents historically have been in influencing policy outcomes. Edwards (1980) concludes that although Congress generally tends to support the positions of a presidential administration, it is unclear to what extent that support is the result of presidential influence. In his examination of presidential influence during the Johnson administration, Sullivan (1988) finds that Johnson was largely successful at building policy coalitions in Congress and encouraging members to switch positions and support the administration. Fett (1994) shows that the degree of emphasis the Carter and Reagan administrations placed on issues had little impact on how legislators voted. Additionally, Covington and Kinney (1999) demonstrate that the president has a greater chance of influencing decision making during the pre-floor stages of the legislative process.

In their path-breaking study of presidential influence in the legislative arena, Bond and Fleisher (1990) systematically examine conditions accounting for presidential success during the post-war era. Bond and Fleisher depart from the research agenda that characterized the study of presidential-congressional relations since the early 1960s. Rather than focus on presidency-centric explanations for success, they argue that it is more instructive to study congress-centric explanations, especially those measured in terms of the ideological and partisan makeup of Congress. More specifically, Bond and Fleisher examine those situations in which presidents have taken a position on proposed legislation and evaluate presidential success in terms of coincidental legislative outcomes. Since members of Congress are independently elected, they find that factors such as ideology, partisan affiliation, and cues from the congressional leadership play a significant role in determining when presidents win or lose in the legislative arena. Our approach draws upon this view of congressional-executive relations.

More recent studies of executive-legislative relations have examined presidential position taking behavior to evaluate the degree to which presidents exert influence in legislative politics. In a follow-up study, Fleisher and Bond (1996) examine president-congressional relations since 1985 and find that

increased partisanship in the House resulted in a greater proportion of legislative defeats for Reagan and Bush I. Shull (1997) studies presidential-congressional relations longitudinally to evaluate the extent to which Congress and the president cooperate or disagree on the various issues that are taken up in the congressional agenda. Shull and Shaw (1999), while also examining presidential-congressional relations over time, consider multiple perspectives in explaining the degree to which both sides (as well as external forces) influence the final legislative outcome.

The chief executive regularly engages in strategic behavior when interacting with party leaders in Congress. The rational president seeks to exert influence in the legislative arena to achieve his ultimate goal: attaining desired policy outcomes. While a chief executive always has the opportunity to exert negative control over legislation through the power of the veto (Cameron 2000), this procedure offers him little or no opportunity to shape the legislation in the early stages of the lawmaking process. Ideally, the president prefers to exert positive control over the legislative agenda by influencing the behavior of members of Congress as they craft relevant legislation. This ultimately gives a president the opportunity to appear proactive instead of simply reactive to legislation under consideration in Congress. Given the president's positive agenda control, Congress, as first mover in the legislative process, should attempt to invoke that power strategically.

Expressing a public position on legislation being considered in Congress sends an unambiguous signal to the party leadership regarding how the president intends to respond when the legislation eventually crosses his desk for approval (Covington 1987). But vetoes are costly and relatively rare (Rohde and Simon 1985). Indeed, in many cases, publicly expressing a position is unwarranted since much of the legislation that the House considers is both non-partisan and non-controversial (Carson, Finocchiaro, and Rohde 2001). But, when an action on a particular bill becomes salient and highly politicized, a presidential position may be influential.

In addition to the factors discussed above, we would expect that the occurrence of divided government should strongly influence a president's incentive structure for participating in legislative politics. While a president enjoys numerous opportunities to showcase himself before the American public (Kernell 1997), his ability to set the tone of the national agenda can be circumscribed by one or both chambers of Congress. Even during periods of unified party control, majority party

legislators may be reluctant to fully embrace the presidents initiatives given the vastly different constituencies that legislators have to represent. However, when control of the two branches is divided between the two political parties, one might expect to observe ongoing struggles over the policy agenda, with a president more likely to disagree with Congress when he publicly expresses a position on legislation (Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997; Cameron 2000).

## 2 Model

Policy alternatives are arranged along a unidimensional space  $A \in [0, 1]$ . There are three actors in this complete information, spatial agenda setting game. The *motioner* is any member of a unicameral legislature who may propose a bill,  $x \in A$ , for consideration by the *floor*. One may think of the floor, for example, as the median member of the legislature. The *president* represents a separate institution of government that may take a position on  $x$  or remain silent.

All actors have continuous, single-peaked and symmetric utility. The actors  $j$  draw utility from induced preferences over policy less the transactions costs,  $c$ , of engaging in the legislative process such that their preferences can be represented as follows:

$$u_j = -w|j - x| - c \quad \forall x \in A, c \in \mathbb{R}^+, w \in \mathbb{R}^-, j \in [m, f, p]$$

The term  $w$  is a weight on the euclidean distance of the actual policy from the actor's ideal point (denoted  $m$  for the motioner,  $f$  for the floor, and  $p$  for the president) that makes that distance scale comparable to  $c$ .

The game proceeds as follows. In the first round, the motioner decides whether to propose a bill, incurring an arbitrarily small but finite cost  $c = \epsilon$  if she chooses to propose. This cost is reasonably imposed to prevent the motioner from making a proposal at the status quo ante ( $x = q$ ) if she knows that it will be the outcome.

In the next round, the president takes a position,  $\pi$  that agrees ( $\pi = x$ ) or disagrees ( $\pi = q$ ) with the proposal at no cost ( $c = 0$ ). Though the president does not have the opportunity to avoid taking a position on the bill, we argue that presidential silence can be treated empirically as a case where  $\pi = x$ , an assumption of implicit consent on non-controversial roll calls (70-80 percent of all roll calls in the House) with which he agrees (Carson, Finocchiaro and Rohde 2001). The president favors  $x$  or  $q$  only as it affects policy outcomes, and gets no additional value from disagreeing or agreeing with the floor if it does not change the floor’s voting behavior.

Finally, the floor votes to accept or reject  $x$ , where acceptance of the proposal yields a policy outcome  $x$  and rejection results in the retention of the status quo policy. When  $\pi = x$  and the floor votes for  $q$  or when  $\pi = q$  and the floor votes for  $x$ , we say that the floor and president are in *disagreement*. Otherwise, these actors are in *agreement*. Disagreement generates for the floor a transaction cost  $c > 0$ , while agreement is costless.<sup>1</sup>

Since information is complete, subgame perfect Nash equilibria can be found through backward induction. As a benchmark for comparison, we first consider the situation where the floor incurs no transactions costs from disagreement (thus, correspondingly  $w = 1$ ). We use  $W_j(q)$  to denote the winset (or at-least-as-preferred set) of actor  $i$  on  $q$ . Proofs are presented in the appendix.

**Proposition 1 (Absence of Disagreement Costs)** *In the absence of transactions costs to the floor from disagreement with the president’s position, the motioner chooses  $x \in W_f(q) \cap W_m(q)$  such that  $|m - x|$  is minimized. If  $W_f(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty, the game ends with no proposal and policy at  $q$ .*

Essentially, without transactions costs imposed on the floor for disagreement, presidential position-taking is strategically irrelevant. However, the game becomes substantially more interesting when disagreement costs are included. The impetus for our modeling is clear from this benchmark result. The strategic question is whether the president “opens the gate” to those disagreement costs that

---

<sup>1</sup>We further assume that when  $c = -w(|f - x| - |f - q|)$ , the floor will incur  $c$ . Though the assumption is made for technical reasons, it can be justified by considering that collegiality and expected future benefits from agreements in the course of legislative business matters at the margin.

he can impose on the floor and whether they are sufficient to pull the floor into  $W_p(q)$  without a veto. Indeed, a veto with no chance of override in our model can simply be interpreted as  $c$  sufficient to pull the floor into  $W_p(q)$ . Popular presidents expend political capital when vetoing legislation (Groseclose and McCarty 2001), and thus the imposition of political costs falls along a continuum from the position to the veto threat and ultimately the veto.

We characterize scenarios of divided and unified government with respect to the configuration of ideal points about the status quo. For example, in the definition commonly used in the party effects literature, periods of divided partisan government occur when the president does not share party affiliation with the majority party in the legislature. We define the situation where  $p < q < f$  or  $f < q < p$  to be *divided government*. Though our definition makes no reference to party, we expect that it is substantially more likely to occur during divided partisan government than unified partisan government. Given this caveat, we can state the following:

**Proposition 2 (Divided Government with Disagreement Costs)** *Under divided government, the following outcomes prevail:*

- (a) *When the motioner and president have ideal points on the same “side” of  $q$  along the policy space  $A$  while the floor is on the opposite “side” of  $q$  and if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , then  $x$  will lie along  $\overline{pq}$  if  $|m - q| > |p - q|$  or along  $\overline{mq}$  if  $|m - q| < |p - q|$ . The president endorses  $x$ , and the floor agrees with the president and votes for  $x$ . Otherwise, no proposal is made and policy is  $q$ .*
- (b) *When the motioner and floor have ideal points on the same “side” of  $q$  along the policy space  $A$  while the president is on the opposite side of  $q$  and if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , then  $x$  will lie along  $\overline{fq}$  if  $|m - q| > |f - q|$  or along  $\overline{mq}$  if  $|m - q| < |f - q|$ . The president takes a position against  $x$ , and the floor disagrees with the president and votes for  $x$ . Otherwise, no proposal is made and policy is  $q$ .*

In case 2(a), a proposal is made that is supported by the president only if the president can induce sufficient disagreement costs to “roll” the floor. Otherwise, no proposal is made. Likewise, in case

2(b), the proposal is not made if the president can induce a high level of disagreement costs because it cannot be sustained in the floor’s cost-benefit calculation. Note that persistence of the status quo outcome represents a presidential “victory” in a class of cases. The president’s cost shifting mechanism does not allow him to get precisely what he wants, since he has no proposal power, but rather to avoid what he does not want.

Define *unified government* as occurring when  $p < f < q$  or  $f < p < q$ . We can then state the following observation.

**Proposition 3 (Unified Government with Disagreement Costs)** *Under unified government, the president will endorse  $x$  and the floor will agree with the president in all cases except: (a) when  $f < m < p < q$  and  $m \notin W_p(q)$ , and (b) when  $m < f < p < q$  and  $m \notin W_p(q)$ .*

Presidential influence in unified government through cost shifting has its greatest effect when the president prefers an outcome near the status quo as against a more distant motioner and floor preferences.

### 3 Data and Methods

Our hypotheses dealing with presidential position-taking as well as presidential success in Congress are tested on a data set comprised of all roll call votes in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1953-1998. To model factors influencing presidential position-taking and the likelihood of success in the context of a selection model, we analyze two binary variables: a selection variable indicating whether or not a president takes a public position on legislation under consideration in the House, and a dependent variable indicating whether or not the final legislative outcome coincides with that position. The president’s position on legislation was calculated by *Congressional Quarterly* and is based on statements given in press releases and public appearances with respect to legislation under consideration by the majority party in the House. Our measure of presidential success is determined by whether or not the final legislative outcome coincides with the revealed preferences

of the president.

Since we are interested in the costs of disagreement imposed on the floor, we include a measure of presidential approval as a measure of those costs, operationalized in terms of the percentage of the public who indicate support for the president. Approval ratings were collected from Gallup Polls which, since 1935, have asked the question, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way [president’s name] is handling his job as president?” (Edwards 1990). Presidential approval is a continuous measure that theoretically ranges from a minimum value of 0 to a maximum value of 100. We include the percent of the public that approved of the president in the month preceding the roll call vote taken in the House.

Though future drafts of this paper will examine more hypotheses drawn from the model presented above, we focus our attention on the disagreement costs aspect of the theoretical predictions and test the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1** *In periods of divided [unified] government, as presidential approval increases (disagreement costs increase), the president’s likelihood of success on those roll calls on which he expresses a position increases [decreases].*

Employing presidential approval as a measure of political capital, we hypothesize that presidents with greater stores of political capital have the ability to induce greater disagreement costs on members of Congress.

### 3.1 Control Variables

An additional important explanatory variable in our analysis is the absolute difference between the president’s ADA score and the overall House ADA score. ADA scores are inflation-adjusted (Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1999). This variable allows us to assess the extent to which ideological distance between the president and Congress affects the likelihood of success on legislative initiatives. Since we should expect the incidence of presidential success to vary as a function of

partisan control of Congress based on our theoretical results (see also Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997), we split the sample into two groups (divided and unified partisan control) and conduct the analysis separately on each sample.

To isolate the effects of ideological distance on success, we include controls for a number of covariates that should be theoretically related to presidential position-taking and success in the House. Given that an electoral context may affect presidential behavior in much the same way it impacts legislative behavior (Mayhew 1974), we include a dummy variable to determine whether patterns of presidential position taking and success vary during election years. For this variable, years in which elections occur are coded 1 whereas non-election years are coded 0.

Previous scholarship suggests that the propensity for presidential position taking may vary depending on the specific era under consideration (see, e.g., Shull 1997; Shull and Shaw 1999). To control for potential temporal differences in position-taking behavior, we include a dichotomous variable that differentiates between the pre- (1953-1974) and post-reform (1975-1998) Congresses. Votes taken during the post-reform era are coded 1, while those occurring during the pre-reform era are coded 0. This also allows us to capture any congress- or vote-specific differences that may be present in our dataset since the number of recorded roll calls increased dramatically in the House in the post-reform era (Rohde 1991).

Drawing on David Rohde's roll dataset for the U.S. House, we control for several characteristics of each roll-call. First, it is well-known that presidents are likely to vary in their pattern of position taking behavior with respect to the nature of the issue under consideration (Shull 1997). Thus, we include a dummy variable indicating appropriations bills. Second, we control for the proportion of legislators in both the majority and minority party voting yea on the roll call, since this could serve as an indicator of the location of the proposal along the policy space. Since this measure is not generated until the congressional vote (theoretically after the position taken by the president), we include it only in the main equation. Given that the president's past record of success with Congress could affect his current position-taking behavior, we include a measure of presidential success on roll call votes the month prior. Third, we include a control for the first year of a presidential administration since patterns of presidential position-taking behavior and success may be greater

during the “honeymoon” period of a presidency.

Our formal argument leads us to suspect that position-taking and presidential success on roll calls are interrelated and sequential. If we fail to control for such dependencies in our analysis, we run the risk of introducing selection bias into our results (Heckman 1979). When the two processes are related but estimated separately, any correlation between the disturbance terms can produce inconsistent or inefficient estimates resulting from a selection effect. To statistically control for selection bias in the analysis of presidential position taking, we employ a probit selection model that estimates an additional parameter  $\rho$ , which represents the correlation between the disturbance terms of the dependent variables.

To date, little attention has been given to the issue of “selection effects” in studies of American political behavior, particularly those dealing with patterns of public position taking. A notable exception is the analysis conducted by Timpone (1998), who examines the effects of registration requirements on individual voting behavior and argues that vote choice ought to be understood as a two-stage decision process (involving first the decision to register to vote and then voting in the election). Berinsky (1999) also finds evidence of a selection effect in an analysis of public opinion polls examining governmental efforts to integrate schools.

Since presidents publicly express positions on certain issues and not others, case selection is an important factor to consider statistically in analyses examining presidential position taking behavior. If presidents choose not to express a public position on a given House roll call vote, their actions can be considered as nonevents. However, if we fail to systematically examine why presidents abstain on certain types of votes, we risk missing the underlying motivations for their behavior. Perhaps presidents choose not to express a public position because they believe doing so will hurt them politically. Or, they may not feel it is worth the effort to support a particular legislative initiative that will eventually be defeated. Regardless of their reasoning, we can only begin to understand presidential behavior by examining both events and nonevents.

## 4 Empirical Results

The results of our analysis for periods of divided government are presented in Table 1 while our estimates for periods of unified government are presented in Table 2. With respect to the presidential approval variable, we observe that its effect on both position-taking and presidential success on roll call votes is positive under periods of divided government. However, the reverse is true under periods of unified government in terms of presidential position taking. And, as expected, the sign is positive in predicting presidential success during unified government. As presidential approval measures the disagreement cost that can be imposed on the floor by the president, these results are consistent with the predictions of Hypothesis 1. The president's gatekeeping role is more important under divided government where popular presidents can impose costs on legislators who disagree with them.

As we see from the results during periods of both divided and unified government, presidential success decreases as the ideological distance between the president and the House increases. This spatial distance variable has no effect on position-taking by the president during periods of divided government. However, with unified government, a significant effect is observed in the selection equation.

In terms of the remaining control variables, we observe that presidents are less likely to succeed as well as take positions on roll calls during the postreform era (1974-present), although it is positive and insignificant in terms of presidential success during periods of unified government. We also see that the president is less inclined toward position-taking on appropriations legislation than other bills considered in the House. Under divided government, the president is less likely to succeed on appropriations legislation relative to other issue areas. It appears that the president is more likely to succeed on roll calls in his first year during periods of divided government, but not during periods of unified government where his store of political capital most likely does not extend as far. Nevertheless, we observe that under periods of unified government, first year presidents are significantly less likely take positions, quite possibly because he is still trying to establish himself

politically with his party’s leadership in the House. <sup>2</sup>

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have constructed a formal argument regarding presidential position-taking on roll call votes in the U.S. House. We argue and provide some suggestive empirical evidence that presidents can impose costs on legislators who disagree with their announced positions. Moreover, our empirical results indicate the presidents can utilize their approval in the form of political capital to persuade legislators to support their policy positions. Since members of Congress are aware of this presidential role, they can construct the legislative agenda strategically to induce presidents to take positions and invoke such disagreement costs.

Furthermore, we identify a potentially interesting subset of separation-of-powers issues. Presidential positions are endogenous to a separation-of-powers game that results in the passage of legislation. Indeed, presidential positions, we have argued, have more to do with agenda-setting in the legislative process than revealed presidential ideology. Through the ability to take positions, presidents may influence legislation in a peculiar form of negative agenda control for the reasons stated above. Popular presidents, rich in political capital, can have greater influence than unpopular presidents who have an inferior ability to induce disagreement costs on legislators.

We stress the importance of considering the context in which the position taken by the president reveals any preference over legislative outcomes. Announcing a position in the strategic context we model in this paper is unlike the revelation of preferences through demand (i.e., a willingness to pay curve). This has measurement implications. Proposition 2 states that presidential positions are invoked to “roll” a House floor that prefers outcomes on the opposite side of the status quo from the president and the member of Congress proposing the legislation. This suggests that the president’s announced position will appear extreme relative to that of the House floor. Proposition 3 describes scenarios in which presidential positions are taken against proposed legislation only

---

<sup>2</sup>In an alternative specification of the models, we included fixed effects to capture any president-specific effects that might have otherwise changed the results. These fixed effects in no way changed the substantive interpretation of our primary covariates, thus we elected not to include them in the reported results.

when the floor and motioner prefer substantial changes in the status quo policy, a view not shared by the president. In all of these cases, the president's announced positions appear extreme relative to those of members of Congress. This logic provides theoretical leverage in understanding the extremity of reported ideal point estimates for presidents on the same scale as legislators (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Poole 1998; Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004; Bailey and Chang 2001).

**Table 1: Estimates for Periods of Divided Government**

Variable	Coefficient	(Robust SE)
Main Equation: Presidential Success		
Election Year	0.014	(0.043)
Spatial Distance between President and House	-0.005**	(0.002)
Presidential Approval	0.007**	(0.002)
Proportion of House Members Voting Yea	0.042	(0.036)
Postreform Era	-0.422**	(0.057)
Appropriations Legislation	-0.232**	(0.043)
First Year of Presidency	0.131*	(0.052)
Intercept	-1.219**	(0.105)
Selection Equation: Presidential Position Taking		
Election Year	-0.067†	(0.035)
Spatial Distance between President and House	-0.001	(0.001)
Presidential Approval	0.010**	(0.001)
Postreform Era	-0.336**	(0.048)
Previous Presidential Success	-0.071†	(0.038)
First Year of Presidency	0.014	(0.044)
Appropriations Legislation	-0.197**	(0.034)
Intercept	-0.996**	(0.085)
$\rho$	.999**	(0.001)
N		11730
Log-likelihood		-7243.774
$\chi^2_{(7)}$		297.449

Significance levels : † : 10% \* : 5% \*\* : 1%

**Table 2: Estimates for Periods of Unified Government**

Variable	Coefficient	(Robust SE)
Main Equation: Presidential Success		
Election Year	-0.030	(0.102)
Spatial Distance between President and House	-0.003	(0.005)
Presidential Approval	0.006 <sup>†</sup>	(0.004)
Proportion of House Members Voting Yea	0.093	(0.127)
Postreform Era	0.308	(0.253)
Appropriations Legislation	-0.188	(0.175)
First Year of Presidency	0.040	(0.115)
Intercept	1.133**	(0.432)
Selection Equation: Presidential Position Taking		
Election Year	0.051	(0.061)
Spatial Distance between President and House	-0.006**	(0.003)
Presidential Approval	-0.004 <sup>†</sup>	(0.002)
Postreform Era	-1.209**	(0.079)
Previous Presidential Success	0.041	(0.116)
First Year of Presidency	-0.095	(0.064)
Appropriations Legislation	-0.189**	(0.052)
Intercept	0.610**	(0.228)
$\rho$	-.811	(.438)
N		5315
Log-likelihood		-3348.289
$\chi^2_{(7)}$		33.11

Significance levels : † : 10% \* : 5% \*\* : 1%

## References

- Bailey, Michael, and Kelly H. Chang. 2001. "Comparing Presidents, Senators, and Justices: Interinstitutional Preference Estimation." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 17: 477-506.
- Berinsky, Adam. 1999. "The Two Faces of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 1209-1230.
- Bond, Jon R. and Richard Fleisher. 1990. *The President in the Legislative Arena*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cameron, Charles M. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 313-329.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Michael C. Herron, and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2001. "Leadership and Pandering: A Theory of Executive Policymaking." *AJPS* 45: 532-550.
- Carson, Jamie L., Charles J. Finocchiaro, and David W. Rohde. 2001. "Consensus and Conflict in House Decision Making: A Bill-Level Examination of Committee and Floor Behavior." Paper delivered at the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting.
- Clinton, Joshua D., Simon Jackman, and Doug Rivers. 2004. "The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Voting: A Unified Approach." *American Political Science Review* 98: 355-370.
- Collier, Kenneth E. 1997. *Between the Branches: The White House Office of Legislative Affairs*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Copeland, Gary W. 1983. "When Congress and the President Collide: Why Presidents Veto Legislation." *The Journal of Politics* 43: 696-710.
- Covington, Cary R. 1987. "'Staying Private': Gaining Congressional Support for Unpublicized Presidential Preferences on Roll-Call Votes." *The Journal of Politics* 49: 737-755.
- Covington, Cary R. and Rhonda Kinney. 1999. "Presidential Success Through the Legislative Process: Agenda Setting and Agenda Enactment." Paper delivered at the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting.
- Covington, Cary R., J. Mark Wrighton, and Rhonda Kinney. 1995. "A 'Presidency-Augmented' Model of Presidential Success on House Roll-Call Votes." *AJPS* 39: 1001-1024.
- Edwards, George C., III. 1980. *Presidential Influence in Congress*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company.

- Edwards, George C., III. 1989. *At the Margins: Presidential Leadership of Congress*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Edwards, George C., III. With Alec M. Gallup. 1990. *Presidential Approval: A Sourcebook*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Edwards, George C., III, Andrew Barrett, Jeffrey Peake. 1997. "The Legislative Impact of Divided Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 545-563.
- Fett, Patrick J. 1994. "Presidential Legislative Priorities and Legislators Voting Decisions: An Exploratory Analysis." *The Journal of Politics* 56: 502-512.
- Fleisher, Richard and Jon R. Bond. 1996. "The President in a More Partisan Legislative Arena." *Political Research Quarterly* 49: 729-748.
- Groseclose, Timothy, Steven Levitt, and James Snyder. 1999. "Comparing Interest Group Scores across Time and Chambers: Adjusted ADA Scores for the U.S. Congress." *American Political Science Review* 93: 33-50
- Groseclose, Timothy and Nolan McCarty. 2001. "The Politics of Blame: Bargaining before an Audience." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 100-119
- Hager, Gregory L. and Terry Sullivan. 1994. "President-centered and Presidency-centered Explanations of Presidential Public Activity." *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 1079-1103.
- Heckman, James D. 1979. "Sample Selection Bias as a Specification Error." *Econometrica* 47: 153-162.
- Johnson, Timothy R. and Jason M. Roberts. 2004. "Presidential Capital and the Supreme Court Confirmation Process." *Journal of Politics* 66: 663-683.
- Jones, Charles O. 1994. *The Presidency in a Separated System*. Washington, D.C.: The Bookings Institution.
- Jones, Charles O. 1995. *Separate But Equal Branches: Congress and the Presidency*. Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.
- Kernell, Samuel. 1997. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lemke, Douglas and William Reed. 2001. "War and Rivalry among Great Powers." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 457-469.
- Light, Paul C. 1999. *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*.

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Manley, John F. 1978. "Presidential Power and White House Lobbying." *Political Science Quarterly* 93: 255-275.

Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

McKay, David. 1989. "Presidential Strategy and the Veto Power: A Reappraisal." *Political Science Quarterly*. 104: 447-461.

Neustadt, Richard E. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: The Free Press.

Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Poole, Keith T. 1998. "Recovering a Basic Space From a Set of Issue Scales." *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 954-993.

Reed, William. 2000. "A Unified Statistical Model of Conflict Onset and Escalation." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 84-93.

Rohde, David W. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rohde, David W. and Dennis M. Simon. 1985. "Presidential Vetoes and Congressional Response: A Study of Institutional Conflict." *American Journal of Political Science* 29: 397-427.

Shull, Steven A. 1997. *Presidential-Congressional Relations: Policy and Time Approaches*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Shull, Steven A. and Thomas C. Shaw. 1999. *Explaining Congressional-Presidential Relations*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Sullivan, Terry. 1988. "Headcounts, Expectations, and Presidential Coalitions in Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 567-589.

Timpone, Richard. 1998. "Structure, Behavior, and Voter Turnout in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 92: 145-158.

Woolley, John T. 1991. "Institutions, the Election Cycle, and the Presidential Veto." *American Journal of Political Science* 35: 279-304.

## Appendix

*Proof of Proposition 1.* By assumption, all proposals in  $W_m(q)$  are preferred by the motioner to the status quo, and our utility assumptions ensure that the motioner will not make a proposal that makes her worse off than at  $q$ . Suppose the motioner proposes  $x \notin W_f(q)$ . Then since  $c = 0$ , regardless of the president's action, the floor would reject any such outcome and policy would be  $q$ . But, the motioner would not incur  $c = \epsilon$  to achieve  $q$  given our utility assumptions. Thus, if there exists some  $x \in W_f(q) \cap W_m(q)$ , the motioner will propose it and will choose  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$ . If none exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . *Q.E.D.*

*Proof of Proposition 2.* We show this by examining the possible orderings of  $p, q, m, f$  under divided government. We can find the SPNE in each case through backward induction.

- (i)  $m < p < q < f$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  if it exists to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_p(q)$ ,  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , but since  $W_f(q) \cap W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty in this case, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_m(q) \cap W_p(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , i.e., when the disagreement cost is larger than the weighted spatial component of the floor's utility. In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_p(q)$ , which given the configuration of ideal points in this case, is a subset of  $W_m(q)$ . Since the president may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in the intersection is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ , the president will endorse  $x$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_p(q)$  such that  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the motioner will choose it to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is our claim.
- (ii)  $p < m < q < f$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  if it exists to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , but since  $W_f(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty in this case, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_m(q) \cap W_p(q)$

if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ . In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_m(q)$  since  $W_m(q)$  is a subset of  $W_m(q)$ , since he may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in the intersection is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_m(q)$  such that  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the motioner will choose it to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is our claim.

(iii)  $f < m < q < p$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president does not endorse  $x$ , but the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ . The floor will vote for proposals in  $W_m(q)$  since  $W_m(q) \subset W_f(q)$ . However, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_m(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , i.e., if the disagreement cost at  $x$  is less than the spatial benefit from  $x$ . In round 2, the president will only endorse  $x \neq q$  in  $W_p(q)$ , but since  $W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty in this case, the president will endorse no  $x$  that makes the motioner better off than  $q$ . Thus, the president will not endorse  $x$ . However, if  $\exists x$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president cannot induce sufficient disagreement costs to keep the floor from voting in favor of that  $x$ . If such  $x$  exists, the motioner will propose it in round 1 to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is our claim.

(iv)  $m < f < q < p$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  if it exists to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_f(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president does not endorse  $x$ , but the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ . However, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_f(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ . In round 2, the president will only endorse  $x \neq q$  in  $W_p(q)$ , but since  $W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty in this case, the president will endorse no  $x$  that makes the motioner better off than  $q$ . Thus, the president will not endorse  $x$ . If  $\exists x$  such that  $x \in W_f(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president cannot induce sufficient disagreement costs to keep the floor from voting in favor of that  $x$ . If such  $x$  exists, the motioner will propose it in round 1 to minimize  $|m - x|$ , since in this configuration of ideal points,  $W_f(q) \subset W_m(q)$ . This is our claim.

*Q.E.D.*

*Proof of Proposition 3.* We show this by examining the possible orderings of  $p, q, m, f$  under divided government. We can find the SPNE in each case through backward induction.

- (i)  $p < m < f < q$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  if it exists to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_f(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , as long as  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ . In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_m(q)$  since  $W_m(q)$  is a subset of  $W_p(q)$ , and since he may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in the intersection is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_m(q)$  such that  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the motioner will choose it to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is our claim.
- (ii)  $f < m < p < q$ : We make the following claim: (a) If  $m \notin W_p(q)$  round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president fails to endorse  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . (b) If  $m \in W_p(q)$  round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . (c) If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ . The floor will vote for proposals in  $W_m(q)$  since  $W_m(q) \subset W_f(q)$ . However, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_m(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ . In round 2, the president will endorse  $x \neq q$  in  $W_p(q)$  (case a), but if  $W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty, the president will endorse no  $x$  that makes the motioner better off than  $q$  (case b). If  $\exists x$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president cannot induce sufficient disagreement costs to keep the floor from voting in favor of that  $x$ . If such  $x$  exists, the motioner will propose it in round 1 to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is a restatement of our tripartite claim.
- (iii)  $f < p < m < q$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x = m$ , the president endorses  $x$  and the floor agrees. If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , and since  $W_f(q)$  is a superset of  $W_m(q)$ , the floor will vote for  $x \in W_m(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ . In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_p(q)$ , which given the

configuration of ideal points in this case, is also a superset of  $W_m(q)$ . Since the president may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in  $W_m(q)$  is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ , the president will endorse  $x$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_m(q)$ , the president will endorse it and  $c = 0$ , and since  $W_f(q) \supset W_m(q)$ , the floor will vote for that  $x$ . Thus, in Round 1, the motioner will make the unconstrained choice of  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is  $x = m$ , our claim.

(iv)  $p < f < m < q$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x = m$ , the president endorses  $x$  and the floor agrees. If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , and since  $W_f(q)$  is a superset of  $\bigcap W_m(q)$ , the floor will vote for  $x \in W_m(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ . In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_p(q)$ , which given the configuration of ideal points in this case, is a superset of  $W_m(q)$  and  $W_f(q)$ . Since the president may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in  $W_f(q) \supset W_m(q)$  is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ , the president will endorse  $x$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_m(q)$ , the president will endorse it and  $c = 0$ , and since  $W_f(q) \supset W_m(q)$ , the floor will vote for that  $x$ . Thus, in Round 1, the motioner will make the unconstrained choice of  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is  $x = m$ , our claim.

(v)  $m < p < f < q$ : We claim that in round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  if it exists to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_p(q)$ ,  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q)$ , but since  $W_f(q) \cap W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty in this case, the floor will only vote for  $x \in W_m(q) \cap W_p(q)$  if  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ . In round 2, the president endorses  $x \in W_p(q)$ , which given the configuration of ideal points in this case, is a subset of  $W_m(q)$ . Since the president may choose only  $x$  or  $q$  and any  $x$  in the intersection is by our utility assumptions preferable to  $q$ , the president will endorse  $x$ . Thus, if  $\exists x \in W_p(q)$  such that  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) < c$ , the motioner will choose it to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is our claim.

(vi)  $m < f < p < q$ : We make the following claim: (a) If  $m \notin W_p(q)$  round 1, the motioner chooses  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president fails to endorse  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . (b) If  $m \in W_p(q)$  round 1, the

motioner chooses  $x$  to minimize  $|m - x|$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president endorses  $x$ , and the floor votes in favor of  $x$ . (c) If no such  $x$  exists, the motioner chooses not to propose and the game ends with policy at  $q$ . In round 3, the floor will vote in favor of any  $x \neq q$  that is in  $W_f(q) \cap W_m(q)$  as well as any  $x \neq q$  in  $W_m(q)$  but not  $W_f(q)$  so long as  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ . In round 2, the president will endorse  $x \neq q$  in  $W_p(q)$  (case b), but if  $W_p(q) \cap W_m(q)$  is empty, the president will endorse no  $x$  that makes the motioner better off than  $q$  (case a). If  $\exists x$  such that  $x \in W_m(q)$  and  $-w(|f - x| - |f - q|) > c$ , the president cannot induce sufficient disagreement costs to keep the floor from voting in favor of that  $x$ . If such  $x$  exists, the motioner will propose it in round 1 to minimize  $|m - x|$ , which is a restatement of our tripartite claim.

*Q.E.D.*